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# Colloquial Turkish

The Complete Course  
for Beginners

Jeroen Aarssen and Ad Backus

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Jeroen Aarssen  
Ad Backus  
Tilburg,  
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# Introduction

Turkey is sometimes referred to as the bridge between Europe and Asia, since a small part of it is located in Europe (west of the Bosphorus, called **Trakya** ‘Thrace’) and the larger part in Asia (**Anadolu** ‘Anatolia’). Turkish is the official language of the Republic of Turkey, and the native language of around 55 million people (90% of the population of 64 million). Worldwide, the number of speakers is 60 million. Outside Turkey, you’ll find speakers of Turkish in, for instance, Germany (1.8 million), Bulgaria (800,000), Cyprus (177,000), The Netherlands (200,000) and the UK (40,000).

The language family to which Turkish belongs is called *Turkic*. Other Turkic languages, most of them spoken in Central Asia, are Uzbek, Azerbaidjani, Turkmenian, Kazakh, Kirghiz, Uyghur and Yakut. Some believe that Turkish and Mongolian are related, although this is still somewhat controversial.

An eye-catching characteristic of Turkish is that it has long words. Turkish words are relatively long, since the language is agglutinative. In the word ‘agglutinative’ you can detect the English word ‘glue’. In fact, Turkish has a special way of ‘glueing’ parts of sentences to one another. First, you have words (nouns or verbs) which you can find in a dictionary. Second, there are so-called suffixes, little parts which have a meaning, but which cannot be used on their own. These suffixes have to be ‘glued’ to nouns or verbs. A big challenge for you as a language learner will be to understand this process of agglutination.

## How this course works

This book is mainly organised around dialogues. Grammatical explanations are usually followed by exercises. In these exercises, you can practise newly learned information as well as information already digested in previous lessons. The key at the back of this

book plays a central role (a key role, if you like). Apart from providing the right answers to the exercises, it contains additional information and explanations about specific grammatical features of Turkish. Therefore, it is essential to use the key every time you have finished an exercise.

The main focus of this course is on the colloquial spoken language. In addition, we've included a number of written texts, taken from various sources. Some of these are most likely a bit too difficult to grasp in their totality: the key is again an important instrument for tackling these texts. It will tell you exactly on which elements to focus your attention.

There is also a audio with dialogues and exercises from the textbook. Use this audio for improving your pronunciation and listening proficiency.

New words in a dialogue or an exercise are always listed below the text. If you don't know a word and it's not there, you must have seen it before but forgotten it. The thing to do in that case is to look for it in the glossary; you'll find the English translation there. Example sentences will also contain new words once in a while. As these sentences are always accompanied by a translation, you can easily find the meaning of any unfamiliar words. As a general point, we would advise you to go back a few lessons once in a while and read through dialogues and example sentences, especially if you notice there are quite a few words in the lesson you are currently working on that you were apparently supposed to know already. But even if that is not the case, reading through Turkish dialogues and sentences in previous lessons is a good way of refreshing your command of vocabulary and turns of phrase. In the process, it will probably improve your self-confidence, as you will notice that, no matter how much you're struggling with the current lesson, you have obviously learned a lot already.

From this book you will learn Turkish. You will at least be able to handle everyday situations in Turkey and to read some Turkish texts. However, there is not a single language course in the world that can teach you every aspect of a language. We therefore strongly recommend that you complement this textbook with other activities and materials:

Buy a Turkish newspaper!

Purchase a dictionary!

Get hold of a grammar book!

Go to Turkey for a holiday!

Practise your Turkish in a Turkish restaurant!

Please enjoy this course. İyi çalışmalar!



## Alphabet and pronunciation (Audio 1: 2–3)

Before the ‘writing reform’ of 1928 the Arabic alphabet was used. Nowadays, Turkish uses the Latin script, with a small number of modifications. It has 29 characters:

- a** as *u* in English ‘truck’
- b** as *b* in English ‘bus’
- c** as *j* in English ‘John’
- ç** as *ch* in English ‘chocolate’
- d** as *d* in English ‘door’
- e** as *e* in English ‘bed’
- f** as *f* in English ‘find’
- g** as *g* in English ‘gutter’
- ğ** **yumuşak g** or ‘soft g’: between vowels **ğ** is not pronounced; at word endings it lengthens the previous vowel
- h** as *h* in English ‘help’, but at word endings as *ch* in Scottish ‘loch’
- ı** almost as *i* in English ‘bird’. Note that the dot is always absent, to distinguish **ı** from **i**.
- i** as *ee* in English ‘bee’. Even when written in capital, the **i** always keeps the dot: Turkey’s former capital is called **İstanbul**, and not Istanbul
- j** as *j* in French ‘jeune’
- k** as *k* in English ‘keeper’
- l** as *l* in English ‘love’
- m** as *m* in English ‘moon’
- n** as *n* in English ‘noon’
- o** as *o* in English ‘lot’
- ö** as *ö* in German *Wörter*, or almost as *u* in English ‘blur’
- p** as *p* in English ‘paper’
- r** unlike English, Turkish has a ‘tongue-tip’ **r**, at word endings slightly aspirated
- s** as *s* in English ‘sink’
- ş** as *sh* in English ‘shoe’
- t** as *t* in English ‘tie’
- u** as *oo* in English ‘book’



**ü** as *ü* in German *für Elise*, which is pronounced in front of the mouth, with rounded lips. You could try to imagine Peter Sellers as Inspector Clouseau pronouncing the ‘oo’ in ‘my room’

**v** as *w* in English water

**y** as *y* in English you

**z** as *z* in English zebra

Now listen to the pronunciation of the following words on tape:

av – Avrupa – bacak – bahar – can – Cengiz – çıktı – çekirdek – duvar – düz – ellerinde – emin – foya – fuar – gittik – göl – ağır – dağ – sabah – hasret – ılık – kılıç – jeton – jandarma – kadar – keçi – leblebi – lamba – mum – melek – niye – nihayet – Orhan – otobüs – örneğin – öperim – pul – piyasa – radyo – rüya – siyaset – sandalye – şöyle – şalgam – tuvalet – tebrik – umarım – Urfa – ünlü – üzüldüm – var – vezir – yavru – yoksa – zaman – zemin

# 1 Nasılsın?

How are you?

In this lesson you will learn how to:

- say 'hello', 'goodbye', and greet people
- say the names for family members
- understand and make simple introductions
- use the present tense
- say 'with', 'my', and make plurals



## Dialogue 1 (Audio 1: 4)

Merhaba

Hello

*Mustafa and Ayhan run into each other at the bus station. However, they don't have all that much to say to each other*

MUSTAFA: Merhaba, Ayhan, nasılsın?

AYHAN: İyidir, teşekkür ederim. Sen nasılsın?

MUSTAFA: Ben de iyiyim.

AYHAN: Peki, görüşürüz.

MUSTAFA: *Hello, Ayhan, how are you?*

AYHAN: *Fine, thank you. And you?*

MUSTAFA: *I'm fine too.*

AYHAN: *Well, see you.*

## Key vocabulary

|                        |           |                   |              |
|------------------------|-----------|-------------------|--------------|
| <b>merhaba</b>         | hello     | <b>nasılsın?</b>  | how are you? |
| <b>iyi</b>             | good      | <b>iyidir</b>     | it is good   |
| <b>teşekkür ederim</b> | thank you | <b>ederim</b>     | I do         |
| <b>sen</b>             | you       | <b>ben</b>        | I            |
| <b>de</b>              | too       | <b>iyiyim</b>     | I'm fine     |
| <b>peki</b>            | OK        | <b>görüştürüz</b> | see you      |

## Language point

### Greetings

The greetings used in the dialogue above are relatively informal. They are used between friends, colleagues or acquaintances. The dialogues in this lesson are all informal. In Dialogue 2, John meets Mehmet for the first time, and greets him with **merhaba** 'hello'. However, if the situation had been more formal, for instance, if Mehmet and Cengiz hadn't known each other so well, the slightly more formal **günaydın** 'good morning/afternoon', would have been better. John takes leave with **iyi günler** 'goodbye', a little bit less informal than **görüştürüz** 'see you'. Also note how Cengiz greets his friend Mehmet: with the colloquial **ne haber?** 'what's up?' (literally 'what's the news?'), an equivalent of **merhaba**. The standard reply to **ne haber?** is **iyilik** 'I'm fine', which is based on the same word as **iyiyim** above: **iyi**, 'good'. Literally, **iyilik** means 'goodness', and **iyiyim** means 'I am good.' Mehmet answers with another informal form, which has the same meaning as **sen nasılsın: senden** 'and you?' (*literally*: 'from you?').



### Dialogue 2 (Audio 1: 5)

Ne haber?

What's up?

*Cengiz has spotted Mehmet on the street and walks up to him to introduce him to John*

CENGİZ: Merhaba, Mehmet, ne haber?

- MEHMET: İyilik. Senden?  
 CENGİZ: İyiyim, teşekkürler. Bu John. İngiliz arkadaşım.  
 JOHN: Merhaba.  
 MEHMET: Memnun oldum. Türkiye'yi beğeniyor musunuz?  
 JOHN: Evet, çok seviyorum.  
 MEHMET: Çok güzel. Cengiz, şimdi eve gidiyorum.  
 CENGİZ: Tamam, yarın görüşürüz.  
 MEHMET: Peki, görüşürüz. John, iyi günler.  
 JOHN: İyi günler.
- CENGİZ: *Hello, Mehmet, how are things?*  
 MEHMET: *Fine. How are you?*  
 CENGİZ: *Fine, thanks. This is John. He's my English friend.*  
 JOHN: *Hello.*  
 MEHMET: *Nice to meet you. Are you enjoying being in Turkey?*  
 JOHN: *Yes, I like it very much.*  
 MEHMET: *That's good. Cengiz, I have to go home.*  
 CENGİZ: *OK, see you tomorrow.*  
 MEHMET: *OK, see you. John, goodbye.*  
 JOHN: *Goodbye.*

## Key vocabulary

|             |                                                |                      |                          |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| teşekkürler | thanks                                         | bu                   | this                     |
| İngiliz     | English                                        | arkadaşım            | my friend                |
| arkadaş     | friend                                         | Türkiye <sup>1</sup> | Turkey                   |
| beğenmek    | to like (something)                            | beğeniyor            | he/she likes             |
| musunuz?    | do you?                                        | evet                 | yes                      |
| çok         | much, many, very                               | seviyorum            | I love                   |
| sevmek      | to love (something)                            | güzel                | nice, beautiful,<br>good |
| çok güzel   | that's good ( <i>literally</i> :<br>very nice) | şimdi                | now                      |
| ev          | house                                          | gitmek               | to go                    |
| tamam       | OK (similar to <b>peki</b> )                   | yarın                | tomorrow                 |

### Exercise 1

Rearrange the words on the right to match the English translations on the left.

1 The **-yi** ending indicates that **Türkiye** is a direct object. The ending is discussed in [Lesson 6](#).

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| thanks              | <b>görüŖürüz</b>    |
| hello               | <b>nasılsın?</b>    |
| yes                 | <b>iyiyim</b>       |
| goodbye             | <b>teŖekkürler</b>  |
| what's up?          | <b>tamam</b>        |
| how are you?        | <b>memnun oldum</b> |
| see you             | <b>ne haber?</b>    |
| OK                  | <b>iyi günler</b>   |
| pleased to meet you | <b>evet</b>         |
| I'm fine            | <b>merhaba</b>      |

## Language point

### Introducing people

In the dialogue above, Cengiz uses **bu** 'this' to introduce John to his friend. Note that the phrase he uses simply consists of **bu** and the name **John**. Turkish does not use a word for 'is' in these types of sentences. In the last of the examples below, the word **öğretmen** 'teacher' is followed by the ending **-im**, which means 'I am'. It can also mean 'my', so that **öğretmenim** can mean both 'I'm a teacher' and 'my teacher'. In **arkadaşım** and **adım**, the ending **-im** indeed means 'my'. It is stuck on to the nouns **arkadaş** 'friend' and **ad** 'name'. The word **benim** also means 'my'. The two meanings of the ending **-im** will be explained more fully later on, starting in this lesson.

|                            |                    |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Ben Cem.</b>            | I am Cem.          |
| <b>Adım Cem.</b>           | My name is Cem.    |
| <b>Bu benim arkadaşım.</b> | This is my friend. |
| <b>Öğretmenim.</b>         | I'm a teacher.     |

## Dialogue 3

Bu babam ve annem

**This is my mum and dad**

*John now introduces his family members to Cengiz*

- CENGİZ: Merhaba, dostum, nasılsın. Beni ailenle tanıştırmıydın?
- JOHN: İşte, bu babam. *Dad, this is Cengiz.*
- CENGİZ: Hoş geldiniz, beyefendi.
- JOHN: *You are supposed to say 'Hoş bulduk' now, dad.*
- Evet, bu da annem. *Mum, Cengiz.*
- CENGİZ: Hoş geldiniz, hanımefendi.
- JOHN'S MUM: Hoş bulduk (*to John: I heard that!*)
- JOHN: Bu gençler kardeşlerim: Jimmy ve Eileen.
- CENGİZ: Siz de hoş geldiniz.

NB: In the following translation, '(...)' stands for the things that are said in English in this dialogue.

- CENGİZ: *Hello, my friend, how are you? Won't you introduce me to your family?*
- JOHN: *Well, this is my dad. (...)*
- CENGİZ: *Welcome, sir.*
- JOHN: *(...) Yes, and this is my mother. (...)*
- CENGİZ: *Welcome, madam.*
- JOHN'S MUM: *The pleasure's mine. (...)*
- JOHN: *Those young people are my brother and sister: Jimmy and Eileen.*
- CENGİZ: *And welcome to you, too.*

## Key vocabulary

|                       |                                |                     |                                        |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>dost</b>           | friend                         | <b>dostum</b>       | my friend                              |
| <b>beni</b>           | me                             | <b>aile</b>         | family                                 |
| <b>ailenle</b>        | with your family               | <b>tanıştırmak</b>  | to introduce                           |
| <b>tanıştırmıydın</b> | introduce                      | <b>mısın?</b>       | do you?                                |
| <b>işte</b>           | well                           | <b>baba</b>         | father                                 |
| <b>babam</b>          | my father                      | <b>hoş geldiniz</b> | welcome                                |
| <b>beyefendi</b>      | sir                            | <b>hoş bulduk</b>   | ( <i>answer to hoş geldiniz</i> )      |
| <b>da</b>             | too, and ( <i>same as de</i> ) | <b>anne</b>         | mother                                 |
| <b>annem</b>          | my mother                      | <b>hanımefendi</b>  | Madam                                  |
| <b>genç</b>           | young                          | <b>gençler</b>      | young people                           |
| <b>kardeş</b>         | brother or sister              | <b>kardeşlerim</b>  | ( <i>here:</i> ) my brother and sister |
| <b>ve</b>             | and                            |                     |                                        |
| <b>siz</b>            | you ( <i>plural</i> )          |                     |                                        |

## Language point

### Endings

You may have noticed that phrases that mean ‘my ...’ all end in **-m**, e.g. **babam** or **annem**. This is because Turkish uses an ending, attached to the noun, to indicate possession. The **-m**, plus sometimes the preceding vowel, means ‘my’. In fact, Turkish uses such endings for practically every grammatical function. You will encounter the pattern time and time again, when we will discuss case endings, verb tenses and many more.

The structure of the possessive nouns is as follows. In **babam**, the root word meaning ‘father’ is **baba**. The ending is **-m**. In **dostum**, the basic word is **dost**, ‘friend’. Here the ending is **-um**. Both **-m** in **babam** and **-um** in **dostum** mean ‘my’. When the preceding vowel is used and when not, depends on the last sound of the basic word. If it ends in a vowel, only **-m** is used. Note that the vowel of the suffix is not always the same. It is a **u** in **dostum** and an **i** in **kardeşim**. This is because of another typical feature of Turkish, called vowel harmony (see page 12). For now, study the following examples:

|                       |                                                |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>dost</b> friend    | <b>dostum</b> my friend                        |
| <b>gün</b> day        | <b>günüm</b> my day                            |
| <b>kardeş</b> sibling | <b>kardeşim</b> my brother <i>or</i> my sister |
| <b>arkadaş</b> friend | <b>arkadaşım</b> my friend                     |

**Dost** is a more intimate word for ‘friend’ than an **arkadaş**. You will use **arkadaş**, a more neutral word, most of the time and **dost** for close friends.

The dictionary forms of verbs contain an ending, too, the infinitive ending **-mek/-mak**. Whether the vowel is an **e** or an **a** again depends on vowel harmony. When you look up ‘to go’ in a dictionary, you will find the infinitive **gitmek**, consisting of the stem **git-** and the ending **-mek**.

### Exercise 2

Many of the words in the dialogue above contain endings. The following is a list of word stems. Go through the dialogue and identify the endings these words carry. Make a list of these and see if you can identify the meaning of each one on the basis of the translation.

The stems are: **dost**, **nasıl**, **aile**, **baba**, **gel**, **bul**, **anne**, **kardeş**.

### Exercise 3

Pretend you're travelling to Turkey with your family to show them what a great country it is, and you are met at the airport by a friend who you will all be staying with. Introduce everyone, using the words given below (you may have to choose between the last two). The word **erkek** means 'male', **kız** stands for 'female'. Start each sentence with **bu**, and remember that there is no word that expresses 'is'.

my husband – **kocam**; my wife – **eşim**; my brother – **erkek kardeşim**; my sister – **kız kardeşim**; my boyfriend – **erkek arkadaşım**; my girlfriend – **kız arkadaşım**

NB: **eşim** is given here as translating 'my wife', but it can actually be used for 'my husband' as well.



### Dialogue 4 (Audio 1: 6)

#### Ailem

#### My family

*John and his family have arrived at Cengiz's house. The latter introduces his relatives to his guests*

JOHN: Cengiz, ailemi tanıyorsun. Ama onlar da senin ailenle tanışmak istiyorlar.

CENGİZ: Tamam. Bu Ahmet Bey, babam. Bu kız kardeşim Müjgan. İngilizce biliyor, yani önemli bir kişi. Bu beyefendi, onun kocası, adı Mustafa.

JOHN: Oğlan kim?

CENGİZ: O Orhan, Ali'nin çocuğu.

JOHN: Erkek kardeşin nerede?

CENGİZ: Ali şimdi İngiltere'de. Bu da annem, Nursen Hanım.

JOHN: *Well, Cengiz, you know my family. But they would like to get to know yours too.*

CENGİZ: *OK. This is Ahmet Bey, my father. This girl is Müjgan, my sister. She speaks English, so she's an important person. This man is her husband, his name is Mustafa.*

JOHN: *Who's the boy?*

CENGİZ: *That's Orhan, Ali's boy.*

JOHN: *Where is your brother?*



CENGİZ: *Ali is in Britain right now. And here is my mum, Nursen Hanım.*

## Key vocabulary

|                          |                   |                     |                        |
|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| <b>ailem<sup>2</sup></b> | my family         | <b>tanıyorsun</b>   | you know               |
| <b>tanımak</b>           | to know (someone) | <b>ama</b>          | but                    |
| <b>onlar</b>             | they              | <b>senin</b>        | your                   |
| <b>ailen</b>             | your family       | <b>-le</b>          | with                   |
| <b>tanışmak</b>          | to get to know    | <b>istemek</b>      | to want                |
| <b>istiyorlar</b>        | they want         | <b>İngilizce</b>    | English (the language) |
| <b>biliyor</b>           | she knows         | <b>bilmek</b>       | to know (something)    |
| <b>yani</b>              | so                | <b>önemli</b>       | important              |
| <b>bir</b>               | one               | <b>kişi</b>         | person                 |
| <b>onun</b>              | her               | <b>kocası</b>       | her husband            |
| <b>koca</b>              | husband           | <b>adı</b>          | his name               |
| <b>ad</b>                | name              | <b>oğlan</b>        | boy                    |
| <b>kim</b>               | who               | <b>o</b>            | that                   |
| <b>çocuk</b>             | child             | <b>Ali'nin</b>      | Ali's                  |
| <b>çocuğu</b>            | his child         | <b>nerede</b>       | where                  |
| <b>İngiltere</b>         | England           | <b>İngiltere'de</b> | in England             |

## Language points

### Articles

Turkish has no articles. That means that a simple noun, such as **şehir**, can mean 'town', and 'the town' as well as 'a town'. The context will usually provide abundant clues as to how such a noun has to be translated exactly. Having said that, the numeral **bir** ('one') sometimes means 'a'. You have encountered **bir** in the dialogue above, when Cengiz mentioned that his sister is **önemli bir kişi**.



### Vowel harmony (Audio 1: 7)

Turkish has a specific feature in word endings, which is called vowel harmony. The vowels of these endings may change, depending on

2 For **-i**, see footnote 1. It indicates a direct object: **ailemi**.

the last syllable of the preceding noun or verb stem. There are in fact two types of vowel harmony: two-fold endings can have **e-** or **a-** forms. The vowels in four-fold endings are either **ı, i, u** or **ü, ö**. It all has to do with place of articulation in the mouth.

It all may seem ridiculously complicated right now, but the experience of most learners of Turkish (or other languages with vowel harmony) is that it soon becomes second nature. This is for two reasons. First, the harmony is based on very natural sounds. Second, many of the relevant suffixes are so frequent that they appear in virtually every sentence. This way of course you get ample opportunity for practice. For the time being the following overview is sufficient:

|                                   |                         |   |          |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|---|----------|
| Two-fold ( <b>e</b> or <b>a</b> ) | after <b>e, i, ü, ö</b> | > | <b>e</b> |
|                                   | after <b>a, ı, u, o</b> | > | <b>a</b> |
| Four-fold ( <b>ı, i, ü, u</b> )   | after <b>e, i</b>       | > | <b>ı</b> |
|                                   | after <b>a, ı</b>       | > | <b>ı</b> |
|                                   | after <b>ü, ö</b>       | > | <b>ü</b> |
|                                   | after <b>u, o</b>       | > | <b>u</b> |

The vowel that decides what form the ending is going to take is the last vowel in the stem.

Examples: the suffix **-im** 'my' is four-fold, so it can appear as **-im**, **-ım**, **-üm** or **-um**.

the suffix **-le** 'with' is two-fold, so it can appear as **-le** or **-la**.

the suffix **-ler** (plural) is two-fold, so it can appear as **-ler** or **-lar**.

|                          |                  |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| <b>kardeş-im-le</b>      | with my brother  |
| <b>arkadaş-ım-la</b>     | with my friend   |
| <b>kardeş-ler-im</b>     | my brothers      |
| <b>arkadaş-lar-ım</b>    | my friends       |
| <b>kardeş-ler-im-le</b>  | with my brothers |
| <b>arkadaş-lar-ım-la</b> | with my friends  |

Note that when the noun that **-im** is suffixed to ends in a vowel, only an **-m** is added, so that in these combinations vowel harmony plays no role. Examples are **ailem** 'my family' and **arabam** 'my car', as well as of course **babam** and **annem**. Some more examples:

**Arkadaşlarımla Almanya'ya gidiyoruz.**

We're going to Germany with my friends.

**Bu yeni evim.**

This is my new house.



#### **Exercise 4 (Audio 1: 8)**

Fill in the correct form of the ending. The first one has been done already.

- 1 **ailem**\_\_\_ with my family **ailemle** (as the last vowel in **ailem** is 'e')
- 2 **kadın**\_\_\_ women (**kadın** 'woman')
- 3 **arkadaş**\_\_\_ with a friend
- 4 **kişi**\_\_\_ persons
- 5 **dost**\_\_\_ with my friend
- 6 **ev**\_\_\_ my house
- 7 **adam**\_\_\_ with men (**adam** 'man')
- 8 **Türk**\_\_\_ Turks
- 9 **ad**\_\_\_ my name
- 10 **öğretmen**\_\_\_ with my teachers

#### **Exercise 5**

Re-read the first two dialogues carefully, and pay special attention to the greetings. Then try to fill in the right forms below, without consulting the dialogues again.

CENGİZ: Merhaba John, \_\_\_\_\_?

JOHN: İyiyim, \_\_\_\_\_ ederim. Sen \_\_\_\_\_?

CENGİZ: Ben de \_\_\_\_\_. Türkiye'yi beğeniyor musun?

JOHN: Çok beğeniyorum. Şimdi eve gidiyorum.

CENGİZ: Tamam, yarın \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Language points**

### **Verb endings**

In the dialogues for this lesson you have met several sentences of the type 'This is . . .' and 'I am' . . . When you compare the sentences beginning **Bu John** and **İyiyim**, you will notice that they both contain a form of 'to be' in the translation. You may notice as well that of the Turkish sentences, the one that has a third person subject (*this* is) has no ending, while the one with a first person subject

(I am) does: the **-yim** in **iyiyim**. Unlike English, Turkish does not use separate pronouns (such as *I, you* or *we*) but verb endings instead. Except, that is, for third person subjects, in which case there is neither ending nor pronoun. For ‘He is a good friend’ you say **İyi bir arkadaş**, while ‘You’re a good friend’ is **İyi bir arkadaşsın**. In the first of these sentences, **arkadaş** has no ending. Note that no pronouns are used to translate ‘he’ and ‘you’.

You have already met a few of these endings, and you will meet them over and over again, as practically every sentence in Turkish contains one of them. So you don’t need to learn them by heart, as they will become second nature to you before you know it. Still, in order to provide a clear picture of the endings, consider the following, in which the verb stem **yap-** ‘to do’, is followed by the present tense ending **-iyor** and the person endings:

|                   |             |                     |                          |
|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>yapıyorum</b>  | I do        | <b>yapıyoruz</b>    | we do                    |
| <b>yapıyorsun</b> | you do      | <b>yapıyorsunuz</b> | you do ( <i>plural</i> ) |
| <b>yapıyor</b>    | she/he does | <b>yapıyorlar</b>   | they do                  |

The relevant endings are **-um** for first person singular (the same as for ‘my’), **-sun** for second person singular, **-uz** for first person plural, **-sunuz** for second person plural and **-lar** for third person plural. For third person singular, there is no ending. Some more examples:

|                                             |                                    |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Türkçe öğreniyorum.</b>                  | I’m learning Turkish.              |
| <b>Güzel Türkçe konuşuyorsun.</b>           | You’re speaking Turkish very well. |
| <b>Kız kardeşin güzel Türkçe konuşuyor.</b> | Your sister speaks good Turkish.   |
| <b>Türkçe öğreniyoruz.</b>                  | We’re learning Turkish.            |

So in forming a Turkish sentence, you should proceed as follows. If the subject would be a pronoun in English, do not use one. Remember that the subject will be expressed through the verb ending: **-im** for ‘I’, **-sin** for ‘you’ etc. If you want to say ‘I’m learning’, you need to start out with the verb ‘learn’. This is **öğren-**, then you add **-iyor**, the present tense indicator. For the ‘I’ part, you then add the ending **-um**, so that you end up with **öğreniyorum**.

You might be wondering why the translations of the example sentences sometimes contain a progressive verb form (e.g., *learning*) and sometimes a simple present tense form (e.g., *speaks*).

The present tense of **-iyor** is the basic present tense in Turkish and covers both English tenses. (However, there is another present tense in Turkish, which you have encountered already in the formulaic phrases **teşekkür ederim** and **görüştürüz**, but we won't discuss that until [Lesson 8](#).)

Finally, it should be mentioned that the difference between **-sin** and **-siniz** is not just that of singular and plural. As in many other languages, the plural form of the second person is also used as the *polite* form of address. Strangers in Turkey will usually address you with **-siniz**.



## Dialogue 5 (Audio 1: 9)

### Türkçe öğreniyorum

#### I'm learning Turkish

*In a corner, John's sister Eileen and Cengiz's sister Müjgan have struck up a conversation. Eileen has learned some basic Turkish, and is practising it right away*

- EILEEN: Biraz Türkçe konuşuyorum.  
 MÜJGAN: Ah, çok güzel konuşuyorsun. Nerede öğrendin?  
 EILEEN: Teşekkür ederim. Evde öğrendim.  
 MÜJGAN: Burada mutlaka daha da çok öğreneceksin. Ben sana yardım edeceğim.  
 EILEEN: Affedersin, anlamadım. Tekrarlar mısın?  
 MÜJGAN: Ben sana yardım edeceğim. 'I will help you' demek.  
 EILEEN: *I speak a bit of Turkish.*  
 MÜJGAN: *Oh, you speak it very well. Where did you learn it?*  
 EILEEN: *Thanks. I've learnt it at home.*  
 MÜJGAN: *Here you'll surely learn more. I'll help you.*  
 EILEEN: *Sorry, I didn't get that. Can you repeat it?*  
 MÜJGAN: *Ben sana yardım edeceğim. That means 'I will help you'.*

### Key vocabulary

|                 |                   |                    |             |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| <b>biraz</b>    | a little, a bit   | <b>konuşuyorum</b> | I speak     |
| <b>konuşmak</b> | to talk, to speak | <b>öğrendin</b>    | you learned |
| <b>öğrenmek</b> | to learn          | <b>evde</b>        | at home     |

|                    |                                  |                         |                                  |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>burada</b>      | here                             | <b>mutlaka</b>          | surely, definitely               |
| <b>daha</b>        | more                             | <b>öğreneceksin</b>     | you will learn                   |
| <b>sana</b>        | you ( <i>literally</i> : to you) | <b>yardım edeceğim</b>  | I will help you                  |
| <b>affedersin</b>  | sorry, excuse me                 | <b>anlamadım</b>        | I didn't understand              |
| <b>anlamak</b>     | to understand                    | <b>tekrarlar mısın?</b> | can you repeat (it)?             |
| <b>tekrarlamak</b> | to repeat                        | <b>demek</b>            | to say ( <i>here</i> : it means) |

### Exercise 6

Fill in the correct ending.

- 1 **Öğretmen**\_\_\_\_\_ I am a teacher
- 2 **Dost**\_\_\_\_\_ my friend
- 3 **Bil**\_\_\_\_\_ we know
- 4 **Tanıştırıyor**\_\_\_\_\_ he's introducing
- 5 **Aile**\_\_\_\_\_ my family
- 6 **Konuşuyor**\_\_\_\_\_ you (*pl.*) are talking/speaking
- 7 **Öğreniyor**\_\_\_\_\_ they are learning
- 8 **Yardım ediyor**\_\_\_\_\_ I'm helping

### How to find words in the dictionary

As a general rule, pay attention to the beginning of words if you want to know the meaning of the noun or verb stem. If there is a discrepancy between what you find in the glossary at the end of the book, or in a dictionary, and the word as it appears in the text, it is likely that there is a suffix attached to the word in the text. It won't take long before you will start to spot the more frequent suffixes. In fact, you may already have developed a feel for not only **-im** ('my'), **-ler** (plural) and **-le** ('with'), but also for **-iyor** (present tense), **-de** ('in', 'at'), **-e** or **-ye** ('to') and **-di** (past tense).



### Reading text (Audio 1: 10)

Try to read the following, difficult text. It is not important to understand every single detail of it. Could you try to answer the questions that follow, without looking at the translation in the Key?

*Cengiz and his sister Müjgan are waiting for a plane at Esenboğa airport in Ankara. Their brother Ali, coming back from a holiday*

*in Britain, may arrive any minute. Suddenly, Cengiz hears a familiar voice. It's Uncle Halil*

HALİL: Tesadüfe bak!

CENGİZ: Merhaba, Halil Amca, nasılsınız?

HALİL: Vallahi, iyiyim, sağ ol. Sen nasılsın?

CENGİZ: Fena değil, amca, teşekkür ederim.

HALİL: Ya annen ve baban nasıl?

CENGİZ: Annem iyi. Babam biraz rahatsız.

HALİL: Geçmiş olsun. Kardeşlerin iyi mi?

CENGİZ: İyiler. Aslında Ali'yi bekliyoruz. Birazdan gelecek.

HALİL: Öyle mi? O zaman beraber bekleyelim. Yaklaşık bir senedir görmedim onu. Şey, bu güzel kız kim?

CENGİZ: Tanımıyor musunuz? Bu Müjgan, benim kız kardeşim!

HALİL: Öyle mi? Çok büyümüş!

*At that moment Ali arrives at the scene*

Uncle Halil first says **bak** 'look here', and refers to a **tesadüf**. Can you guess what this word means? **Vallahi** 'I swear' is used here as an intensifier of **iyiyim**. **Sağ ol** is more informal than **teşekkür ederim**, but means the same. Halil asks Cengiz how he's doing. If we tell you that **değil** means 'not', what would Cengiz's answer **Fena değil** mean? Cengiz's father is **biraz rahatsız**, and when Halil hears this news, he uses the idiom **geçmiş olsun** 'May it be past'. So, what is **biraz rahatsız**? If we tell you that **-ecek** expresses future ('shall'/'will'), what would **birazdan gelecek** mean (considering the reason why they are at the airport)? Note the ending **-elim**, in **beraber bekleyelim** 'let's wait together', which in this case indicates a proposal. **Yaklaşık bir senedir** means 'For a year or so'. Halil does not seem to recognise Müjgan. Cengiz asks **Tanımıyor musunuz** 'Don't you recognise her?' Apparently, Müjgan has **büyümüş** a lot. Can you guess why Halil does not recognise her at first?

## A short history of Turkey

The territory of modern day **Türkiye** 'Turkey' is divided between the small European part **Trakya** 'Trace' (West of the **Boğaziçi** 'Bosporus') and the larger Asian part **Anadolu** 'Anatolia'. This area has continuously been playing an important role in the **tarih** 'history' of both the **Orta Doğu** 'Middle East' and **Avrupa** 'Europe'.

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One reason was the significance of the Bosphorus, a narrow strait, the only gateway to the **Kara Deniz** 'Black Sea'. As early as 7500 BC, civilisations were present in Anatolia. Traces of these early inhabitants can still be seen in the **Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi** 'The museum of Anatolian Civilisations' in Ankara, or at the site of Çatal Höyük. Many **yüzyıllar** 'centuries' later, around 2000 BC, the Hittites came to the area and developed the great Hittite Empire. Some small kingdoms on the western coast (such as the city of Troy) challenged the Hittite dominance, but Troy itself was attacked by the Greeks (the Trojan War, as depicted by Homer, took place near the small **köy** 'village' of Truva). After the Hittites, Greek warriors came and conquered parts of Asia Minor; later on the Greeks were defeated by the Persians, who in turn were driven off by **Büyük İskender** 'Alexander the Great'. Later, the Roman Empire also had its impact on **sanat** 'art' and **mimarlık** 'architecture' of the region. After the decline of Rome, the city of Byzantium, (later called Constantinople, now **İstanbul**) became the capital of the East Roman, or Byzantine, Empire. Gradually, Turkish tribes came to Anatolia, and founded small kingdoms. The **Selcuk** 'Seljuk' Turks decisively defeated the Byzantines and forced them to retreat to Constantinople. Much later again, in 1453, the **Osmanlı** 'Ottoman' Sultan **Fatih Mehmet** 'Mehmet the Conqueror' was able to conquer Constantinople. From that day, the Ottomans considered themselves to be the legitimate heirs of the Roman legacy.



# 2 Tatil yapıyoruz

We're on holiday

In this lesson you will learn how to:

- say something about yourself and your present situation
- tell people what you've done recently



## Dialogue 1 (Audio 1: 11)

### Ankara'da

#### In Ankara

*Müjgan is showing Eileen around in Ankara. She is trying to find out what her guest is interested in doing*

MÜJGAN: Nereleri görmek istiyorsun?

EILEEN: Bakalım, bir dakika, oradaki bina ne?

MÜJGAN: İşte bu, ünlü etnoğrafya müzesi.

EILEEN: Biraz dolaşalım. Vaktim çok. Sonra, bazı yerlere daha gideceğim. Güzel bir park var mı buralarda?

MÜJGAN: Var, birkaç sokak ileride Gençlik Parkı var.

EILEEN: Ah, güzel. Gidelim.

MÜJGAN: *What places would you like to see?*

EILEEN: *Let's see, just a minute, what's that building over there?*

MÜJGAN: *Well, that's the famous ethnographic museum.*

EILEEN: *Let's just walk around a bit. I have plenty of time. I'll go to some more places later. Is there a nice park somewhere around here?*

MÜJGAN: *Yes, a few streets ahead there's the Gençlik Park.*

EILEEN: *Ah, good. Let's go.*

## Key vocabulary

|                   |                                      |                  |             |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| <b>nereleri</b>   | what places                          | <b>sonra</b>     | later       |
| <b>görmek</b>     | to see                               | <b>bazı</b>      | some        |
| <b>istiyorsun</b> | you want, you like                   | <b>yerlere</b>   | to places   |
| <b>bakalım</b>    | let's see                            | <b>yer</b>       | place       |
| <b>bir dakika</b> | (just) a minute                      | <b>gideceğim</b> | I'll go     |
| <b>oradaki</b>    | over there, yonder                   | <b>var</b>       | there is    |
| <b>bina</b>       | building                             | <b>var mı</b>    | is there?   |
| <b>ne</b>         | what                                 | <b>buralarda</b> | around here |
| <b>işte</b>       | well                                 | <b>birkaç</b>    | some, a few |
| <b>ünlü</b>       | famous                               | <b>sokak</b>     | street      |
| <b>dolaşalım</b>  | let's walk around                    | <b>ileride</b>   | ahead       |
| <b>dolaşmak</b>   | to walk around                       | <b>Gençlik</b>   | Youth       |
| <b>vaktim çok</b> | I have plenty of time<br>(see below) | <b>gidelim</b>   | let's go    |

## Three remarks:

- 1 The construction **vaktim çok** 'I have plenty of time' contains the word **vaktim** (= **vakit** 'time' + **-im** 'my'). (More in Unit 4.) Some words in which the second syllable contains an **-i-** lose it when it is followed by a suffix starting with a vowel. So, it is not **vakitim** but **vaktim**. Likewise, the word for 'city' is **şehir**. 'My city' is **şehirim**, not **şehirim**.
- 2 You may wonder where the verb 'to be' is in Turkish, e.g. in **oradaki bina ne?** 'What is that building over there?' Well, in Turkish 'to be' is in fact not a full-fledged verb, but merely a personal ending. Remember **iyiyim** 'I am fine' and **Bu John** 'This is John' in Unit 1. The first example shows that 'I am' is **-yim**; the latter shows that the third person singular form of 'to be' ('he/she/it/John is' in English) has in fact no ending. There's more on 'to be' in [Lesson 4](#).
- 3 Note that in her last sentence, Müjgan says **var** 'there is' twice. When a question contains **var** and the answer is positive, you can simply reply **var**, in which case it means 'yes'.



## Dialogue 2 (Audio 1: 12)

### Parkta piknik

#### A picnic in the park

*The two women have found a nice place to have a picnic. Müjgan asks Eileen about her life in Britain*

- MÜJGAN: Nerede oturuyorsun, Eileen?  
 EILEEN: Londra'da oturuyorum. Oraya hiç gittin mi?  
 MÜJGAN: Gitmedim. Anlatsana biraz, evin nasıl, güzel mi?  
 EILEEN: Evet, tam merkezde. Oldukça büyük, ve bahçesi var. Büyüklüğü benim için yeterli.  
 MÜJGAN: Güzel. Yalnız mı oturuyorsun?  
 EILEEN: Evet. Erkek arkadaşım var, ama o Oxford'da oturuyor. Maalesef.  
 MÜJGAN: Sizinle gelmedi mi?  
 EILEEN: Gelmedi. Çalışıyor.  
 MÜJGAN: Ne iş yapıyor?  
 EILEEN: Öğretmen. Fransızca dersi veriyor.  
 MÜJGAN: *Where do you live, Eileen?*  
 EILEEN: *I live in London. Did you ever go there?*  
 MÜJGAN: *No, I didn't (literally: I did not go). Tell me, how's your house, is it nice?*  
 EILEEN: *Yes, it's right in the centre. It's fairly big, and it has a garden. The size is enough for me.*  
 MÜJGAN: *Nice. Do you live by yourself?*  
 EILEEN: *Yes. I have a boyfriend, but he lives in Oxford. Unfortunately.*  
 MÜJGAN: *He didn't come with you?*  
 EILEEN: *No, he didn't (literally: he did not come). He is working.*  
 MÜJGAN: *What kind of job does he do?*  
 EILEEN: *He's a teacher. He teaches French lessons.*

### Key vocabulary

|             |                 |            |              |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|--------------|
| oturuyorsun | you live        | hiç        | ever         |
| oturmak     | to live, to sit | gittin mi? | did you go?  |
| oturuyorum  | I live          | gitmedim   | I did not go |
| oraya       | to there        | anlatsana  | tell me      |

|                    |                   |                        |                            |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>anlatmak</b>    | to tell           | <b>yalnız</b>          | alone                      |
| <b>evin nasıl?</b> | how's your house? | <b>sizinle</b>         | with you                   |
| <b>nasıl</b>       | how, what kind of | <b>maalesef</b>        | unfortunately              |
| <b>tam</b>         | right, precisely  | <b>gelmedi</b>         | he did not come            |
| <b>merkezde</b>    | in the centre     | <b>gelmek</b>          | to come                    |
| <b>merkez</b>      | centre            | <b>çalışıyor</b>       | he works, he is<br>working |
| <b>oldukça</b>     | fairly            | <b>çalışmak</b>        | to work                    |
| <b>büyük</b>       | big               | <b>iş</b>              | job                        |
| <b>bahçesi var</b> | it has a garden   | <b>ders</b>            | lesson                     |
| <b>bahçe</b>       | garden            | <b>Fransızca dersi</b> | French lessons             |
| <b>büyüklik</b>    | size              | <b>veriyor</b>         | he gives                   |
| <b>için</b>        | for               | <b>vermek</b>          | to give                    |
| <b>yeterli</b>     | enough            |                        |                            |

## Language point

### Verbs

In order to produce even the simplest sentences you need to know something about verb tenses. For example, if you want to say when you arrived, you need to put the verb in the past tense, as in 'I came yesterday', because you did the arriving sometime in the (recent) past. Similarly, if you want to say what line of work you're in, you will want to use the present tense, because you are describing something that is still going on. All this is true for Turkish as it is for any other language.

It is important to learn at least the two basic forms of present and past tenses right away. These are the endings **-iyor**, the present tense ending and **-di**, the past tense ending.

But remember that where you would use forms of 'to be' in English, such as *I am sick*, *are you a teacher?* etc., you do not need **-iyor**. A personal ending (I, you, they, etc.) on the noun or adjective is enough. In the past tense, **-di** is needed, however.

### Exercise 1

Without translating, say whether you need a verb with **-iyor** or **-di** in the translations of the following sentences or whether you should only use one of the personal suffixes.

- |                      |                        |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 The food is ready. | 6 Did you know that?   |
| 2 They came early.   | 7 She's not going.     |
| 3 Where do you work? | 8 I like it very much. |
| 4 It's a nice day.   | 9 Where is she?        |
| 5 They came early!   | 10 He's a young man.   |



### Dialogue 3 (Audio 1: 13)

## Buyurun

### There you are/ What can I get you

*Bülent and Sabahat have arrived in Antalya for a weekend at the beach. They are sitting at an outdoor cafe and are about to order*

- GARSON: Hoş geldiniz. Buyurun.  
 SABAHAT: Hoş bulduk.  
 GARSON: Ne içersiniz?  
 SABAHAT: Bir kola ve bir bira lütfen.  
 GARSON: Hemen getireyim.

*(The waiter returns)*

- GARSON: Buyurun, bir kola ve bir bira.  
 SABAHAT: Teşekkürler.  
 GARSON: Bir şey değil.

*(The waiter hangs around)*

- GARSON: Buraya ilk defa mı geliyorsunuz?  
 SABAHAT: Evet, ilk defa. Geçen yıllarda hep İzmir'e gittik.  
 GARSON: Kaç gün kalacaksınız?  
 SABAHAT: Bu hafta sonu Antalya'da kalıyoruz. Ondan sonra biraz gezmek istiyoruz.  
 GARSON: Ne zaman döneceksiniz?  
 SABAHAT: Gelecek hafta gideceğiz.  
 GARSON: İyi tatiller.  
 SABAHAT: Teşekkürler.  
 GARSON: *Welcome. What can I get you?*  
 SABAHAT: *Thank you.*  
 GARSON: *What would you like to drink?*  
 SABAHAT: *A coke and a beer, please.*

- GARSON: *Let me bring that right away.  
There we are, one coke and one beer.*
- SABAHAT: *Thank you.*
- GARSON: *You're welcome.  
Is this your first time here?*
- SABAHAT: *Yes, it's the first time. In previous years, we've always  
gone to İzmir.*
- GARSON: *How many days will you be staying?*
- SABAHAT: *We're staying in Antalya for the weekend. After that we  
want to travel around a bit.*
- GARSON: *When will you return?*
- SABAHAT: *We'll go next week.*
- GARSON: *Have a nice holiday.*
- SABAHAT: *Thank you.*

## Key vocabulary

|                       |                                                          |                     |                                    |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>içersiniz</b>      | you ( <i>plural</i> ) drink                              | <b>gittik</b>       | we went, we have                   |
| <b>içmek</b>          | to drink                                                 |                     | gone                               |
| <b>lütfen</b>         | please                                                   | <b>kaç</b>          | how many                           |
| <b>hemen</b>          | right away,<br>immediately                               | <b>gün</b>          | day                                |
| <b>getireyim</b>      | let me bring                                             | <b>kalacaksınız</b> | you ( <i>plural</i> ) will<br>stay |
| <b>getirmek</b>       | to bring                                                 | <b>kalmak</b>       | to stay                            |
| <b>bir şey değil</b>  | you're welcome<br>( <i>literally: it's<br/>nothing</i> ) | <b>hafta sonu</b>   | weekend                            |
|                       |                                                          | <b>hafta</b>        | week                               |
| <b>değil</b>          | not                                                      | <b>son</b>          | end                                |
| <b>ilk</b>            | first                                                    | <b>kalıyoruz</b>    | we stay                            |
| <b>defa</b>           | time                                                     | <b>gezmek</b>       | travel/walk/drive<br>around        |
| <b>geliyorsunuz</b>   | you ( <i>plural</i> ) come                               | <b>ne zaman</b>     | when                               |
| <b>buraya</b>         | to here                                                  | <b>döneceksiniz</b> | you will return                    |
| <b>geçen</b>          | last, previous                                           | <b>gelecek</b>      | next, coming                       |
| <b>yıl</b>            | year                                                     | <b>gideceğiz</b>    | we'll go                           |
| <b>geçen yıllarda</b> | in previous years                                        | <b>tatil</b>        | vacation, holiday                  |
| <b>hep</b>            | always, all                                              | <b>iyi tatiller</b> | have a nice holiday                |
| <b>İzmir'e</b>        | to İzmir                                                 |                     |                                    |

## Language points

### Forming the present tense

You first take the verb stem and add **-iyor** to it. Then you add the personal ending. (Remember that this ending is necessary because in Turkish you do not usually use words meaning ‘I’, ‘you’, ‘we’ etc.)

So, the steps you need to make in order to say ‘I give a book’ are:

- 1 Find the verb stem. In a dictionary you will usually find **vermek** ‘to give’. The **-mek** part is the infinitive ending, so the stem is **ver-**.
- 2 Add **-iyor** to give **veriyor-**.
- 3 Add the personal ending. For ‘I’ that is **-im** or a variant of it (which form exactly depends on vowel harmony). After **-iyor**, the vowel is always **u**, because the **o** in **-iyor** never changes. In our example, this gives us **veriyorum** ‘I give’.
- 4 Now you need to make clear that it is *a book* you give: **bir kitap veriyorum**. Note that the verb comes last.

### Forming the past tense

You follow the same steps if you want to say that you gave a book some time ago, i.e. in the past. Only now you use **-di**.

- 1 Find the verb stem **ver-**.
- 2 Add **-di**: **verdi-**.
- 3 Add the personal ending **-m**: **verdim**.
- 4 Put the other words you need before the verb: **bir kitap verdim**.

With these two endings you will have what you need, as far as grammar goes, to say most of the basic things you would want to say in the early stages of language learning. In this and the other early lessons, you will encounter most of the more frequently used verbs.

### The endings: the present tense with -iyor

Since Turkish uses personal *endings* (not personal *pronouns* such as ‘I’, ‘you’ etc.), the verb endings change to show who the subject is. In the case of **-iyor** (see p 15) they are:

|                 |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| <b>-iyorum</b>  | I   |
| <b>-iyorsun</b> | you |