

Linguistics Challenge

Kurmanji Kurdish

Photo and puzzle by N. Bailey

The Kurdish people number at least 25 million. Kurdish is an important member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. There are several dialects of Kurdish. Kurmanji Kurdish is spoken by about 12-15 million people, living in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria and is represented by three literary standards and several speech varieties. Some speakers also live in the southern parts of the former Soviet Union, especially in Armenia and Georgia. The following puzzle is from the variety of Kurmanji Kurdish spoken in the former Soviet Union. This variety is normally written in Cyrillic script (like Russian), but is presented here in a modified Latin script:


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1. Ez h'irç'ê dibînîm

2. Tu dir'evî

3. Tu min dibînî

4. H'irç' dir'eve

5. Ez dir'evim

6. Tu h'irç'ê dibînî

English translations in random order

- A. You see Bear.
- B. You see me.
- C. Bear runs.
- D. You run.
- E. I see Bear.
- F. I run.

Put the letter of the correct translations in the boxe

There are two parts to this puzzle. First, match the English translations to the Kurdish sentences. Second, what do you think the following Kurdish sentence means?

H'irç' min dibîne. Type the English translation here. Your score.

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