

# Postverbial constructions with the deictic motion verb *kel-* 'come' in Western Yugur

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# Research questions

- ① What are the functions of a postverbal construction with the deictic motion verb *ke/-* in the Western Yugur language?
- ② Are there possible contact-induced changes in terms of this structure?

# Roadmap

- 1 The language
- 2 The definition: What is a postverbal construction?
- 3 PVC with *ke/-* in Western Yugur
- 4 A brief comparison with contact languages
- 5 Possible explanation

# The language

- also known as Sarı Uyğur, Yellow Uyghur
- the northeastern group of the Turkic languages
- the Yugur people (裕固族) inhabit the Sunan Yugur Autonomous County (肃南裕固族自治县), Gansu Province, China
- the speakers refer to their language as, joɣər lar or joɣər sɔz
- close contact with Chinese, Tibetic (Amdo), Mongolic (Mongolian, and Eastern Yugur)
- 2,000 active and 1,000 fluent speakers (Zhong 2019)
- a severely endangered language (Moseley 2010)

	total Yugur population	active speakers	fluent speakers
number	14,706 <sup>1</sup>	2,000	1,000
percentage	–	13.6%	0.07%

Table 1: About the Western Yugur speaking-population

<sup>1</sup> This is recorded in the 2020 Chinese census.



## The language (II)

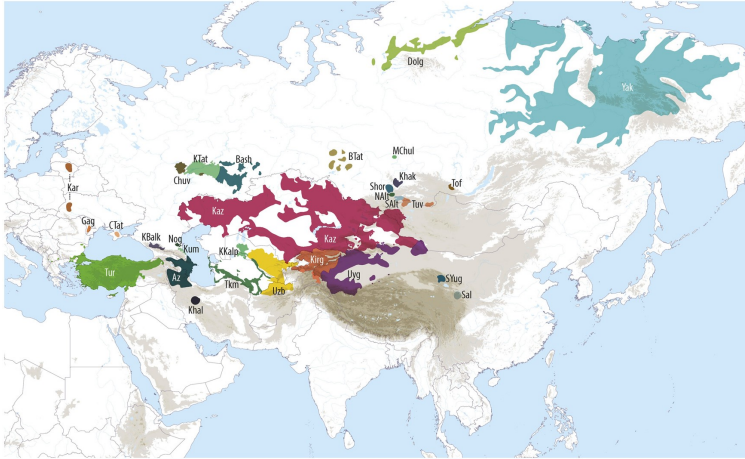


Figure 1: Distribution of the Turkic languages, cf. Savelyev & Robbeets (2020)

## The language (III)

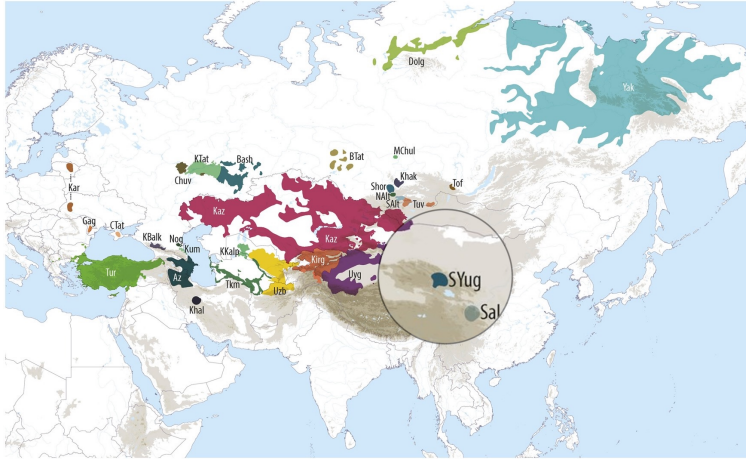


Figure 2: Distribution of the Turkic languages, cf. Savelyev & Robbeets (2020)

# The language (IV)



Figure 3: Endangerment of Western Yugur / Saryg Yugur, cf. Moseley (2010)

# The language (V)



Figure 4: Endangerment of Western Yugur / Saryg Yugur, cf. Moseley (2010)

## The language (VI)

- Yugur people speak
  - ① one of their native ethnic languages: Eastern Yugur (Mongolic), Western Yugur (Turkic)
  - ② the local Chinese variety
- intensively bilingual
- Zhou (2005) claims that the community speaks the Lanyin Chinese dialect.
- In fact, the speakers rather speak Mandarin Chinese with a Hexi (河西) accent, which needs further investigation to see whether this is a generational difference.
- The language is heavily influenced by its neighbouring languages, with Chinese contributing most significantly to its phonology, lexicon, and morphosyntax.

# The definition

- In Turkic languages, a **postverbal construction** (PVC) refers to an analytic grammatical unit composed of a **main verb (V1)** expressing the lexical meaning and an **auxiliary verb (V2)** expressing actionality or other grammatical concepts, which are connected by a converb suffix (Johanson 2021: 597).
- A postverbal construction is a type of verbal complex predicate. A verbal complex predicate refers to “a monoclausal construction with a single set of argument positions, consisting of at least two verbs” (Bisang et al. 2023).
- **Converbs** are traditionally defined as dependent adverbial verb forms, which are usually considered to be non-finite and are prototypically marked with a single affix (usually a suffix), and function as (de)verbal adverbs (Ross 2024: 317–318).
- In Turkic languages, converbs can function as linking elements in postverbal constructions (Johanson 2021: 599).

## The definition (II)

- There are generally two types of converb suffixes involved in a PVC in most Turkic languages.
  - ⟨A⟩ converb suffix: a type of converb suffix ending in a vowel<sup>2</sup>.
  - ⟨B⟩ converb suffix: a type of converb suffix ending in a labial stop.

### (1) Kazakh spoken in China

Aygül kel- e jat- ħr.

Aygul come- ⟨A⟩ CVB POSTV.lie-AOR3

'Aygul is coming.' (Abish 2016: 12)

### (2) Modern Uyghur

U uyu- p qal-di.

s/he sleep- ⟨B⟩ CVB POSTV.stay-PST3

'S/he fell asleep (unconsciously).' (introspection)

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<sup>2</sup>Small-capitalised A and B represent alternative realisations according to the vowel harmony rules in Turkic languages. For Western Yugur, the ⟨A⟩ converb suffix corresponds to -a, -e, -i, -v; the ⟨B⟩ converb corresponds to -p/-k, -ip/-ik, -up/-uk, -yp/-yk.

# PVC with *kel-* in WYu

- Functions of {-CVB *kel-*} in WYu

- ① cislocative  
*denoting an action carried out towards the deictic centre*
- ② continuity of action  
*an action is carried out for some time and up to some later orientation point*
- ③ resultative  
*expressing the consequence or effect of the main verb*
- ④ discourse marker  
*a fixed single unit of multiple elements, which improves the coherence of speech*



## PVC with *kel-* in WYu (II)

- Functions of {-CVB *kel-*} in WYu:

① **cislocative**, ② continuity of action, ③ resultative, ④ discourse marker

- (3) pər avaka kʰərək kettə  
pər avaka kʰər-ək kel-tə  
one old.man enter-CVB POSTV.come-PST  
'An old man came in.' (ybe202408170101.mp4, 00:51:16)

- (4) ene tʰeryen tʃʰoqeɣa quzu tʰusək kelalmayan  
ene tʰeryen tʃʰoqe-ɣa quzu tʰus-ək kel-al-ma-yan  
also bus sit-CVB down get.down-CVB POSTV.come-ABIL-NEG-PTCP  
'Then they took the bus but couldn't get off.' (ybe202408170101.mp4, 01:57:57)

N.B.: the ⟨B⟩ converb in Western Yugur yields a velar stop (by anticipatory assimilation).

## PVC with *kel-* in WYu (III)

- Functions of {-CVB *kel-*} in WYu:

① cislocative, ② **continuity of action**, ③ resultative, ④ discourse marker

- (5)    *pezək*                      *keyente*                      *la*    *pezək*                      *jitə*    *saq<sup>həs</sup> jasayanta*                      *la*  
         *pezə-k*                      *kel-yen-te*                      *la*    *pezə-k*                      *jitə*    *saq<sup>həs</sup> jasa-yan-ta*                      *la*  
         *grow.up-CVB POSTV.come-PTCP-LOC PRT* *grow.up-CVB seven eight be.age.of-PTCP-LOC PRT*  
*pəlovərtə*                      *na*  
*pəl-ovər-tə*                      *na*  
*know-CONT-COP PRT*

‘When I grew up, by the time I was seven or eight years old, I knew it.’ (ybe202408170101.mp4, 01:23:43)

- (6)    *antaqa jozək*                      *kiyen*  
         *antaqa joz-ək*                      *kel-yen*  
         that    *pass-CVB POSTV.come-PTCP*

‘That is how we lived.’ (ybe202408170101.mp4, 00:42:04)

## PVC with *kel-* in WYu (IV)

- Functions of {-CVB *kel-*} in WYu:

① cislocative, ② continuity of action, ③ **resultative**, ④ discourse marker

- (7) am po\_ poləspoltonə o xosən pəse la am məntɕar ɔryenek  
am po\_ poləspolto-nə o xosə-n pəl-se la am məntɕar ɔryen-ek  
now BRK<sup>3</sup> custom-ACC that all-ACC know-COND PRT now a.little get.used.to-CVB  
keptə na  
kel-əp-tə na  
POSTV.come-CVB-COP PRT

‘Now they knew the custom and gradually got used to it.’ (ybe202408170101.mp4, 02:07:04)

- (8) am p<sup>h</sup>aq<sup>h</sup>asa p<sup>h</sup>aq<sup>h</sup>ak kelomastə sa  
am p<sup>h</sup>aq<sup>h</sup>a-sa p<sup>h</sup>aq<sup>h</sup>a-k kel-o-mas-tə sa  
now poop-COND poop-CVB POSTV.come-CONT-AOR.NEG-COP PRT

‘When we try to poop, we can’t get it out.’ (ybe202408170101.mp4, 00:44:45)

<sup>3</sup> The abbreviation BRK stands for word breaking.

## PVC with *kel-* in WYu (V)

- Functions of {-CVB *kel-*} in WYu:

① cislocative, ② continuity of action, ③ resultative, ④ **discourse marker**

- (9)    tej   tej   øryenkenta            t<sup>h</sup>iş şəntş<sup>h</sup>əntuita            nakə am   sa   tikelse  
         tej   tej   øryen-ken-ta        t<sup>h</sup>iş şəntş<sup>h</sup>əntui-ta            nakə am   sa   **te-kel-se**  
just just study-PTCP-LOC DM production.team-LOC that now PRT **say-POSTV.come-COND**  
mal        mut<sup>h</sup>oŋ            əyeəiaoto   a   şz<sub>1</sub>ye            k<sup>h</sup>ərap<sup>tə</sup>  
mal        mut<sup>h</sup>oŋ            əyeəiao-to   a   şz<sub>2</sub>-ye            k<sup>h</sup>ə-r-əp-tə  
livestock shepherd.child school-COP that inside-DAT get.in-CVB-COP  
'When I just started school, I came to the school for children of shepherds in the production team.' (ybe202408170101.mp4, 00:40:35)

N.B.: The *tikelse* here might be a case of lexicalisation.

## PVC with *kel-* in WYu (VI)

- Functions of {-CVB *kel-*} in WYu:

① cislocative, ② continuity of action, ③ resultative, ④ **discourse marker**

- (10) jolya e<sup>ht</sup>ise la qajto la antay metɕar metɕar sej vatə, am  
jol-ya e<sup>ht</sup>-se la qajto la antay metɕar metɕar sej par-tə, am  
road-DAT arrive-COND PRT everywhere PRT that small REDUP~ vegetables to.be-COP now  
la tikese janjyto  
la te-*kel*-se janjy-to  
PRT say-POSTV.come-COND potato-COP  
'When we got on the road, there were many small vegetables everywhere. Today we call it  
potato.' (ybe202408170101.mp4, 00:48:47)

N.B.: The *tikese* here might be a case of lexicalisation.

## A brief comparison with contact languages

Functions of *lái* (来) in Chinese generally correspond with {-CVB *ke/-*} in WYu. Below is the grammaticalisation path of *lái* (来) in Chinese, as described by Xu (2004), C.-h. Liu (2012), Sun & Bisang (2020).

*lái* 'come'

content verb → auxiliary verb → directional marker → aspect marker (perfect and perfective)  
→ duration  
→ continuation  
→ discourse marker

Figure 5: Grammaticalisation path of *lái* 'come' in Chinese

## A brief comparison with contact languages (II)

Functions of *lái* (来) in Chinese are generally well studied, particularly the ones of Standard Chinese. Here we introduce them briefly.

- *lái* (来) used as a **full verb**

### (11) Standard Chinese (Pǔtōnghuà)

他 来 了

tā lái le

s/he come PST

'S/he came.' (introspection)

### (12) Standard Chinese (Pǔtōnghuà)

他 没 来

tā méi lái

s/he NEG come

'S/he didn't come.' (introspection)

## A brief comparison with contact languages (III)

- **cislocative** use of *lái* (来) in Chinese

(13) Standard Chinese (Pǔtōnghuà)

你 把 那 本 书 拿 来

nǐ bǎ nà běn shū ná lái

you ACC that CLF book take come

‘Bring that book here.’ (introspection)

(14) Standard Chinese (Pǔtōnghuà)

他 带 来 一 副 画

tā dài lái yì fú huà

s/he carry come one CLF painting

‘S/he brought a painting along.’ (introspection)



## A brief comparison with contact languages (IV)

- **resultative** use of *lái* (来) in Chinese

- (15) Ancient Chinese recorded in a Buddhist text

吾 已 食 来， 不 须 复 办。

wú yǐ shí lái bù xū fù bàn

I already eat PFV NEG need again prepare

'I have already taken a meal; there is no need to prepare one again.' (法句譬喻经 Fǎjùpìyùjīng 'Dhammapada', 4th century, cf. C.-h. Liu [2012: 104])

Here, the *lái* (来) in example (15) can also be interpreted as a perfect/perfective marker.

- (16) Middle-plain Mandarin, Xi'an

英语 说 去 说 不 好， 听 去 一般 都 能 听 来 呢。  
jəŋ<sup>21</sup>jy<sup>53</sup> sə<sup>21</sup> tɕh<sup>21</sup> sə<sup>21</sup> pu<sup>21</sup> xo<sup>53</sup> th<sup>21</sup>əŋ<sup>21</sup> tɕh<sup>21</sup> ji<sup>24</sup> pæ<sup>21</sup> to<sup>21</sup> nəŋ<sup>24</sup> th<sup>21</sup>əŋ<sup>21</sup> læ<sup>24</sup> ni<sup>21</sup>

English speak go speak NEG good listen go normally all can listen come:PFV PRT

'English, as for speaking, I can't speak it well; as for listening, normally I can all understand.'  
(p.c. with Dr. Xiang Li)

## A brief comparison with contact languages (V)

This kind of use is also observed in the Chinese dialect spoken by Yugur speakers.

- (17) Northwest Chinese dialect, Sùnán

tʰa<sup>44</sup> tʰiŋ<sup>21</sup> lɛ<sup>53</sup> liɔ<sup>21</sup>

他/她 听 来 了。

s/he listen come:PFV PRT

‘S/he understood it.’ (fieldnotes)

- (18) Northwest Chinese dialect, Sùnán

tʰa<sup>44</sup> tʰiŋ<sup>21</sup> pu<sup>44</sup> lɛi<sup>21</sup>

他/她 听 不 来。

s/he listen NEG come:PFV

‘S/he doesn’t understand it.’ (fieldnotes)

## A brief comparison with contact languages (VI)

Compare the following sentences

- (17) Northwest Chinese dialect, Sùnán

t<sup>h</sup>a<sup>44</sup> t<sup>h</sup>iŋ<sup>21</sup> lɛ<sup>53</sup> liɔ<sup>21</sup>

他/她 听 来 了。

s/he listen come:PFV PRT

'S/he understood it.' (fieldnotes)

- (19) Western Yugur, Mínguā

ko aŋnak ketto

ko aŋna-k kel-to

s/he listen-CVB POSTV.come-PST

'S/he understood it.' (ybe202410300101.mkv, 00:00:45)

## A brief comparison with contact languages (VII)

Compare the following sentences

- (18) Northwest Chinese dialect, Sùnán

t<sup>h</sup>a<sup>44</sup> t<sup>h</sup>iŋ<sup>21</sup> pu<sup>44</sup> lei<sup>21</sup>

他/她 听 不 来。

s/he listen NEG come:PFV

'S/he doesn't understand it.' (fieldnotes)

- (20) Western Yugur, Mínguā

ko ɕoztə aŋnak kemento

ko ɕoz-tə aŋna-k kel-men-to

s/he word-ACC listen-CVB POSTV.come-CVB.NEG-COP

'S/he didn't understand.' (ybe202410300101.mkv, 00:02:44)

## A brief comparison with contact languages (VIII)

- discourse marker use of *lái* (来) in Chinese

(21) Standard Chinese (Pǔtōnghuà)

这 一点 说来 不足为奇

zhè yìdiǎn shuōlái bùzúwéiqí

this point DM not.surprising

‘As for this point, it is not surprising...’ (*The Silent Majority* (沉默的大多数) by Xiǎobō Wáng (王小波), cf. BLCU Corpus Center, Xun et al. [2016])

(22) Standard Chinese (Pǔtōnghuà)

说起来 上午 还 有 些许 的 日光 .....

shuōqǐlái shàngwǔ hái yǒu xiēxǔ de rìguāng ...

DM morning still to.have some PARTITIVE daylight

‘Speaking of which, there was some daylight in the morning...’ (*The Birth of the Bird Child* (日光流年) by Liánkē Yán (阎连科), cf. BLCU Corpus Center, Xun et al. [2016])

## A brief comparison with contact languages (IX)

Compare the following sentences

- (21) Standard Chinese (Pǔtōnghuà)

这 一点 说来 不足为奇

zhè yìdiǎn **shuōlái** bùzúwéiqí

this point DM not.surprising

‘As for this point, it is not surprising...’ (*The Silent Majority* (沉默的大多数) by Xiǎobō Wáng (王小波), cf. BLCU Corpus Center, Xun et al. [2016])

- (10) Western Yugur, Míng huā

jol-ya e<sup>h</sup>t-se la qajto la antay metɕar metɕar sej par-tə, am  
road-DAT arrive-COND PRT everywhere PRT that small REDUP~ vegetables to.be-COP now

la **te-kel**-se janjy-to

PRT **say-POSTV.come**-COND potato-COP

‘When we got on the road, there were many small vegetables everywhere. Today we call it potato.’ (ybe202408170101.mp4, 00:48:47)

## A brief comparison with contact languages (X)

{-CVB *kel-*} in WYu versus *lái* (来) in Chinese

functions	{-CVB <i>kel-</i> } Western Yugur	<i>lái</i> (来) Chinese	{-CVB <i>käl-</i> } Modern Uyghur
cislocative	✓	✓	✓
continuity of action	✓	✓	✓
resultative	✓	✓	–
discourse marker	✓	✓	–

Table 2: Summary of comparison

## A brief comparison with contact languages (XI)

Another example from the Santa (Dōngxiāng) language in the Gānsù-Qīnghǎi linguistic area.

(23) Santa (Dōngxiāng), Mongolic

alima baolu-dzu *irə* wo

fruit ripe-CVB *come* PFV

‘The fruit ripened.’ (cf. Z. Liu [2009: 146])

We can see that the languages in the Gānsù-Qīnghǎi linguistic area have some shared features in terms of the use of the V2 position for a complex predicate.



## Possible explanation

- The resultative and discourse marker uses were copied from Chinese
- The Western Yugur language has accommodated them with an unbalanced manner
- The resultative function is more widely adopted and spread
- The discourse marker use is still in its early stages of entering Western Yugur morphosyntax

## Possible explanation (II)

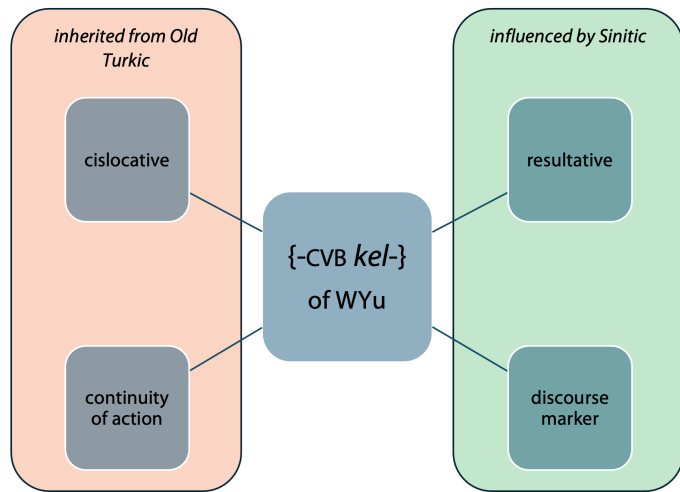


Figure 6: Mixed functions of {-CVB *kel-*} in WYu

## Open question

Can we really exclude the possibility of independent evolution?

## Acknowledgment

The fieldwork trips to the Western Yugur-speaking community have been funded by the Endangered Language Documentation Programme.



### ENDANGERED LANGUAGES DOCUMENTATION PROGRAMME

Documenting and preserving the world's  
linguistic diversity for future generations

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# Glossing abbreviations

ABIL	ability
ACC	accusative
AOR	aorist
BRK	word breaking
CLF	classifier
COND	conditional
CONT	continuity of action
COP	copula
CVB	converb
DAT	dative

DM	discourse marker
LOC	locative
NEG	negative
PFV	perfective
POSTV	postverb
PRT	particle
PST	past
PTCP	participle
REDUP	reduplication

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t̚sova-t-te!  
trouble-CAUS-COP  
'Thank you!'

