

KURMANJI-ENGLISH GRAMMAR TERMINOLOGY

A research-based terminology guide for Kurmanji grammar learners, writers and editors

Scope: Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish), Latin/Hawar spelling. This is not a Sorani terminology list.

Editorial method and caution

This glossary distinguishes A = attested/common in the consulted learning/reference material; D = descriptive Kurmanji rendering whose exact form may vary across authors; and I = international technical loanword used in linguistic discussion. These labels describe editorial confidence, not formal standardization. The list is a curated reference, not an officially approved terminological standard.

Why the distinction matters

Kurmanji has grammatical gender, direct and oblique case, ezafe linking, and a tense-sensitive alignment pattern. English labels are useful for teaching these structures, but direct word-for-word substitution can obscure how Kurmanji actually works. For example, kirde (subject) should not automatically be equated with “agent” in every clause; likewise, future reference is not always a single inflectional tense.

Core illustrated examples

Ez diçim. — I go / I am going. (present, first-person singular)

Ez hatim. — I came. (simple past, intransitive)

Min ew dît. — I saw him/her/it. (past transitive; oblique agent)

kitêba min — my book. (ezafe/possession)

Ez dixwazim ku ew were. — I want him/her to come. (ku + subjunctive)

Sounds & writing

Kurmanji term	English equivalent	Type	Meaning / note
alfabe	alphabet	A	Writing system
tîp	letter	A	Written symbol
deng	sound	A	Speech sound
dengdêr	vowel	A	Vowel sound
bêdeng	consonant	A	Consonant sound
bilêvkirin	pronunciation	A	How a form is spoken
nivîsîn	writing	A	Writing
rastnivîs	orthography / spelling	D	Writing conventions
kîte	syllable	D	Pronunciation unit
tekez / tekezî	stress / emphasis	D	Terminology varies by source

Words & classes

Kurmanji term	English equivalent	Type	Meaning / note
peyv / peyv	word	A	Lexical unit
rêziman	grammar	A	Language structure
navdêr	noun	A	Names a person, thing or concept
cînav	pronoun	A	Stands in for a noun phrase
rengdêr	adjective	A	Describes a noun
hoker	adverb	D	Modifies a verb, adjective or clause
lêker	verb	A	Action, event or state
daçek	preposition / adposition	D	Relation marker; usage varies
girêdek	conjunction	D	Connects units
baneşan	interjection	D	Exclamation
hejmar	number / numeral	A	Number expression
diyarker	determiner	D	Specifies a noun phrase
navê taybet	proper noun	D	Personal/place name
navê giştî	common noun	D	Non-proper noun
lêkera alîkar	auxiliary verb	D	Supports another verb
lêkera pêkhatî	compound verb	D	Multi-element predicate
lêkera veguhêz	transitive verb	D	Takes an object
lêkera negerguhêz	intransitive verb	D	No direct object

Nouns & pronouns

Kurmanji term	English equivalent	Type	Meaning / note
zayenda rêzimanî	grammatical gender	A	Masculine/feminine classes
nêr	masculine	A	Masculine gender
mê	feminine	A	Feminine gender
yekjimar	singular	D	One referent
pirjimar	plural	D	More than one
navdêra nediya	indefinite noun	D	Non-specific reference
navdêra diya	definite noun	D	Identifiable reference
cînavên kesane	personal pronouns	A	ez, tu, ew, em...
cînavên xwerû	direct-case pronouns	D	ez, tu, ew...
cînavên tewandî	oblique pronouns	D	min, te, wî/wê...
cînavên xwe	reflexive pronouns	D	xwe
cînavên pirsî	interrogative pronouns	D	kî, çi...
cînavên nîşanî	demonstrative pronouns	D	ev, ew...
xwedîbûn	possession	A	Ownership/belonging
rêza ezafeyê	ezafe construction	D	Linking noun and modifier
ezafe	ezafe linker	A	Linking morphology
rewşa rasterast	direct case	D	Direct-case form
rewşa tewandî	oblique case	D	Oblique-case form
rewşa bangkirinê	vocative case	D	Addressing someone
lihevhatin	agreement	D	Morphological matching

Verbs & tense

Kurmanji term	English equivalent	Type	Meaning / note
rehê lêkerê	verb stem	D	Base for inflection
rehê dema niha	present stem	D	Present-series stem
rehê dema borî	past stem	D	Past-series stem
dema niha	present tense	A	Present-time reference
dema borî	past tense	A	Past-time reference
dema bê / pêşeroj	future time reference	D	Often constructed, not one uniform tense
raboriya hêsan	simple past	D	Past event
raboriya berdewam	past imperfective	D	Ongoing/habitual past

Kurmanji term	English equivalent	Type	Meaning / note
kirde	subject / agent (context-dependent)	D	Not always equivalent to agent
bireser	object	D	Object of verb
tewandin	inflection / declension	D	Form change
veguherandin	conjugation / change	D	Context-dependent usage
ferman	imperative	A	Command
qedexe	prohibition	D	Negative command
neyînîkirin	negation	D	Negative construction
erênî	affirmative / positive	D	Nonnegative form
merc	condition	A	Condition
hevokên mercî	conditional clauses	D	If-clauses
awayê daxwazî	subjunctive mood	D	Dependent/wish-type forms
awayê ragihandinê	indicative mood	D	Statement mood
awayê fermanî	imperative mood	D	Command mood
aliyê kiryarê	voice	D	Active/passive distinction
kiryarî	active voice	D	Agent-focused active
neyarkiryarî	passive voice	D	Passive; naming varies
sedemkarî	causative	D	Causing an action
ergatîvîtiya parçebûyî	split ergativity	I	Technical label, often borrowed
aspekt	aspect	I	Imperfective/perfective distinction
perfekt	perfect construction	I	Technical label
kopula	copula	I	Linking verb/equative ending

Sentence & discourse

Kurmanji term	English equivalent	Type	Meaning / note
hevok	sentence	A	Complete syntactic unit
riste	clause	D	Clause terminology varies
hevoka sereke	main clause	D	Independent clause
hevoka girêdayî	subordinate clause	D	Dependent clause
hevoka pirsî	interrogative sentence	D	Question
hevoka neyînî	negative sentence	D	Negative clause
hevoka şertî	conditional sentence	D	Conditional statement
hevoka pêkhatî	complex sentence	D	Multiple clauses

Kurmanji term	English equivalent	Type	Meaning / note
rêza peyvan	word order	D	Order of constituents
kirde-bireser-lêker	subject-object-verb (SOV)	D	Neutral canonical order
girêdana ku	ku-clause linking	D	Complement/relative uses
hevoka pêwendîdar	relative clause	D	Modifies noun phrase
pirs	question	A	Interrogative meaning
bersiv	answer	A	Response
ravekirin	explanation	A	Exposition
berawirdkirin	comparison	D	Comparing two forms
zêdetir / -tir	comparative	D	Comparative meaning
herî	superlative marker	A	Highest degree
girêdana peyvan	coordination	D	Linking equals
girêdana binhevokî	subordination	D	Linking dependent clauses
agahdariya nû	focus / new information	D	Discourse-dependent
mijar	topic	A	What sentence is about
pêşxistin	fronting	D	Moving constituent forward
vegotina nerasterast	reported speech	D	Indirect report
rasterast vegotin	direct speech	D	Quotation

Word formation

Kurmanji term	English equivalent	Type	Meaning / note
pêşgir	prefix	D	Attached before stem
paşgir	suffix	D	Attached after stem
qertaf	affix	D	Bound morphological element
morfem	morpheme	I	Smallest meaningful unit
morfolojî	morphology	I	Word structure
sentaks	syntax	I	Sentence structure
fonolojî	phonology	I	Sound patterns
fonetîk	phonetics	I	Speech sounds
semantîk	semantics	I	Meaning
pragmatîk	pragmatics	I	Meaning in use
zimannasî	linguistics	A	Language science
zarava	dialect	A	Language variety

Kurmanji term	English equivalent	Type	Meaning / note
standardkirin	standardization	D	Developing shared conventions
navdêrkirin	nominalization	D	Making a noun
rengdêrkirin	adjectivization	D	Making adjective
dubarekirin	reduplication	D	Repetition-based formation

Notes for publication

Use a single spelling system across your site. Prefer the exact Kurmanji term only where your chosen editorial source uses it consistently; otherwise provide the English term in parentheses on first mention. Do not label Sorani grammatical vocabulary as Kurmanji. For specialized labels such as “split ergativity,” retain the English term alongside a descriptive Kurmanji explanation until a terminology editor verifies the preferred form.

Research sources

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