

The Sounds of Transliterated Letters from Arabic and Persian
(courtesy of George deF. Lord, Athens, GA)

Vowels	Sounds like English letter:	Example
a	“a” as in hat or man	
á	“a” as in father	Riḍván (rez vahn)
ah, aḥ	short, not long “a,” plus “h” (like “ack” without the k sound)	Aḥmad
áh, áḥ	as “ah” is usually pronounced in English. If followed by another vowel, pronounce the “h.”	Alláh-u-Abhá (Allah-haw-AbHAH, not “Allow Abhá!”)
ar	like “ar” in “Larry”	mard (Persian for “man”)
aw	like “ow” in “flow”	Naw-Rúz
i (no accent)	e as in bed	Riḍván
í (with acute accent)	i as in machine	Bábí
u	like a in “wall” or o in “for”	‘Abdu’l-Bahá
ú	like “oo” in “food” or u in “flute”	Bárfurúsh (note that the two u’s have different sounds)
Consonants		
‘ (ain)	like the stop in “uh-oh”	Bahá’u’lláh
b	b	
<u>ch</u>	ch as in “church”	
d	d	
ḍ (note dot underneath)	z	Riḍván
<u>dh</u>	z	Ádhirbáyján (Azerbaijan)
f, g, h	f, g, h respectively	

<u>gh</u>	sort of like French or German “r”; same as “q”; in a pinch, pronounce it like hard English “g.”	Yá Alláhu'l-Mustágháth!
ḥ (with dot underneath)	h (no difference in Persian pronunciation)	Raḥmat, Aḥmad
j, k, l, m, n, p	j, k, l, m, n, p respectively.	
<u>kh</u>	like “ch” in German	<u>Khádim</u> (Khadem)
q	see “ <u>gh</u> ”	Qá'im
r	like Spanish r (quick trill)	Riḍván
s, t, v, y, z	s (hard), t, v, y, z respectively	
ṣ, ṭ, ḏ (with dot underneath)	s, t, z respectively - no change in Persian pronunciation.	
<u>th</u>	s (hard)	<u>Thábit</u> (name: Sabet)
<u>zh</u>	like s in “pleasure”	Mahmúdnizhád

Shoghi Effendi was born and raised in Arabic-speaking Palestine (considered part of Syria at the time), and of course spoke fluent Arabic. When using Arabic-language Bahá'í terms or quoting the Writings while speaking with Persians, he would use Persian pronunciation; with Arabs, he used standard Arabic pronunciation. **With western Bahá'ís, he used the Persian pronunciation of Arabic.**

The Persian way of pronouncing both Persian and Arabic tends to put equal emphasis on all syllables, or accent the last syllable slightly more, as in French.

“Persian” or “Fársí”? Same language. Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice and the National Spiritual Assembly are very, very consistent: they always say “Persian” when writing in English. Why? Because the language has always had that name in English, just as we say “Spanish,” “French” and “Arabic” rather than “español,” “français” and “árábí.” (It isn't something to make a fuss over, though.)

Turkish is yet another language of revelation, as ‘Abdu'l-Bahá wrote a few tablets in Turkish. The title “Effendi,” as in “Abbás Effendi” (‘Abdu'l-Bahá) and Shoghi Effendi, is Turkish. It was probably chosen because ‘Akká and Haifa were under Turkish control until World War I, when the British took control of Palestine.

Bahá'u'lláh may well have learned Turkish, but His Tablets to the Sultan of Turkey were revealed in Arabic.