

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2019

Round 1



Problem 7. Harmongolian (20 marks)

Here are some words in Mongolian. Normally, Mongolian is written in the Cyrillic script, but for ease of reading, these words have been transcribed into Latin script. For each word, the singular, plural, and 'directive' (meaning 'to' or 'towards') forms are given, as well as the pronunciation of the singular form. Some forms have been replaced by numbers (1) to (10). Note: in the Pronunciation column,

- a colon (:) after a vowel marks vowel length
- ´ over a vowel marks stress
- [ɣ] denotes a consonant like [g], but pronounced further back in the mouth.

Singular	Plural	Directive	Pronunciation (sing.)	Translation
<i>havčaar</i>	<i>havčaarud</i>	<i>havčaarluu</i>	[xavčá:r]	'dog'
<i>örh</i>	<i>örhүүд</i>	<i>örhrүү</i>	[érx]	'household'
<i>mangar</i>	<i>mangar nar</i>	<i>mangarluu</i>	[mángar]	'fool'
<i>hun</i>	<i>hun nar</i>	<i>hunruu</i>	[xóŋ]	'man'
<i>övs</i>	<i>övsүүд</i>	<i>övsrүү</i>	[évs]	'grass'
<i>heer</i>	<i>heerүүд</i>	<i>heerlүү</i>	[xé:r]	'field'
<i>neg</i>	<i>negүүд</i>	(1)	[néɣ]	'ace (playing cards)'
<i>denlүү</i>	<i>denlүүчүүд</i>	<i>denlүүрүү</i>	[denlú:]	'lamp'
<i>zutan</i>	<i>zutanud</i>	<i>zutanruu</i>	[zótan]	'cream soup'
<i>sugar</i>	<i>sugarud</i>	<i>sugarluu</i>	[sóɣar]	'Venus (planet)'
<i>šüleg</i>	(2)	(3)	[šúleg]	'poem'
<i>gal</i>	<i>galud</i>	<i>galruu</i>	[gál]	'fire'
<i>nuguu</i>	<i>nuguuчууд</i>	<i>nuguuruu</i>	[nʊɣó:]	'back (body part)'
<i>nökör</i>	(4)	(5)	[nékər]	'husband'
<i>darga</i>	(6)	(7)	(8)	'mouth'
<i>gölög</i>	<i>gölögүүд</i>	<i>gölögrүү</i>	[gélɔɣ]	'puppy'
<i>aav</i>	<i>aav nar</i>	<i>aavruu</i>	[á:v]	'father'
<i>hүүhen</i>	<i>hүүhen nar</i>	<i>hүүhenрүү</i>	[xú:xen]	'woman'
<i>ovog</i>	(9)	(10)	[ovóɣ]	'surname'

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2019

Round 1



Q.1. Fill in the missing forms (1-10) in the table.

Q.2. One of the following Mongolian words was originally a loanword from another language: *nutag*, *künda*, *šoron*, *gudamž*, *ehner*. Which one is it? How do you know?

Q.3. Complete the table below.

Q.3.	Singular	Plural	Directive	Pronunciation (sing.)	Translation
(a)	<i>haančlah</i>				'king'
(b)	<i>gürvel</i>				'lizard'
(c)	<i>delgүүр</i>				'store'
(d)	<i>zuun</i>				'century'
(e)	<i>čanar</i>				'quality'

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2019

Round 1



Solution and marking.

Scoring (max 27)

- **Q.1:** 1 point per correct answer, no half marks (max 10)
- **Q.2:** 1 for *künda*, 1 for mentioning vowel harmony (max 2)
- **Q.3:** 1 for each correct word or pronunciation, no half marks (max 15)
 - Accept *a* for *a* in pronunciation column.
 - Accept alternative diacritics for consonants in transcription: *s~š*, *c~č~ĉ*.
 - Accept pronunciations without [...], and *uu* for *u*.
 - But insist on
 - umlauts in transcription
 - accents and *u* vs *ʊ*, *g* vs *g* in pronunciation.

Q.1.	1) negrüü	2) šülegüüd	3) šülegrüü	4) nökör nar
	5) nökörlüü	6) dargačuud	7) dargaruu	8) [dárğa]
	9) ovoguud		10) ovogruu	
Q.2.	künda because it violates vowel harmony. (Accept equivalent explanations such as “... because the vowels should match”.)			

Q.3.

Singular	Plural	Directive	Pronunciation (sing.)	Translation
<i>haančlah</i>	<i>haančlah nar</i>	<i>haančlahruu</i>	<i>[xá:nčlax]</i>	'king'
<i>gürvel</i>	<i>gürvelüüd</i>	<i>gürvelrüü</i>	<i>[gürvel]</i>	'lizard'
<i>delgüür</i>	<i>delgüürüüd</i>	<i>delgüürlüü</i>	<i>[delgú:r]</i>	'store'
<i>zuun</i>	<i>zuunuud</i>	<i>zuunruu</i>	<i>[zó:ŋ]</i>	'century'
<i>čānar</i>	<i>čānaruud</i>	<i>čānarluu</i>	<i>[čānar]</i>	'quality'

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2019

Round 1



Commentary

Mongolian displays vowel harmony. Vowels are divided into two categories: *advanced tongue root* (+ATR: *e, ö, ü*) and *retracted tongue root* (-ATR: *a, o, u*) depending on the position of the tongue in the mouth. (This distinction is sometimes expressed in terms of ‘front’ and ‘back’ vowels.) In native Mongol words, either all vowels are +ATR or all vowels are -ATR.

- To form the plural:
 - use the word *nar* for human nouns;
 - otherwise, add *-ch-* if the noun ends with a vowel;
 - add *-üüd* if the vowels are +ATR, otherwise *-uud*
- To form the directive:
 - add *-/-* if the noun ends with *-r*, otherwise, *-r-*;
 - add *-üü* if the vowels are +ATR, otherwise *-uu*
- To find the pronunciation:
 - $h \rightarrow [x]$
 - $u \rightarrow [ʊ]$, $ö \rightarrow [ø]$, $ü \rightarrow [u]$
 - in +ATR words, $g \rightarrow [g]$; in -ATR words, $g \rightarrow [ɣ]$
 - Stress falls on the leftmost long vowel. If there are no long vowels, it falls on the leftmost syllable.
 - (Note: the Mongolian stress system is much more complex than this, but in the two-syllable words above, this rule suffices. See [this paper](#) for more information.)