= Mongolian language =

The Mongolian language (in Mongolian script : , Mong?ol kele ; in Mongolian Cyrillic : ?????? ??? , Mongol khel) is the official language of Mongolia and largest @-@ known member of the Mongolic language family . The number of speakers across all its dialects may be 10 million , including the vast majority of the residents of Mongolia and many of the Mongolian residents of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region . In Mongolia , the Khalkha dialect , written in Cyrillic (and at times in Latin for social networking) , is predominant , while in Inner Mongolia , the language is dialectally more diverse and is written in the traditional Mongolian script . In the discussion of grammar to follow , the variety of Mongolian treated is Standard Khalkha Mongolian (i.e. , the standard written language as formalized in the writing conventions and in the school grammar) , but much of what is to be said is also valid for vernacular (spoken) Khalkha and other Mongolian dialects , especially Chakhar .

Some classify several other Mongolic languages like Buryat and Oirat as dialects of Mongolian , but this classification is not in line with the current international standard .

Mongolian has vowel harmony and a complex syllabic structure for a Mongolic language that allows clusters of up to three consonants syllable @-@ finally . It is a typical agglutinative language that relies on suffix chains in the verbal and nominal domains . While there is a basic word order , subject ? object ? predicate , ordering among noun phrases is relatively free , so grammatical roles are indicated by a system of about eight grammatical cases . There are five voices . Verbs are marked for voice , aspect , tense , and epistemic modality / evidentiality . In sentence linking , a special role is played by converbs .

Modern Mongolian evolved from Middle Mongol , the language spoken in the Mongol Empire of the 13th and 14th centuries . In the transition , a major shift in the vowel harmony paradigm occurred , long vowels developed , the case system was slightly reformed , and the verbal system was restructured . Mongolian is distantly related to the Khitan language . It belongs to the Northern Asian linguistic area including the Turkic , Mongolic , Tungusic , Korean and Japonic languages . These languages have been grouped under the still @-@ debated Altaic language family and contrasted with the Mainland Southeast Asia linguistic area . Mongolian literature is well attested in written form from the 13th century but has earlier Mongolic precursors in the literature of the Khitan and other Xianbei peoples .

= = Geographic distribution = =

Mongolian is the official national language of Mongolia , where it is spoken by nearly 2 @.@ 8 million people (2010 estimate) , and the official provincial language of China 's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region , where there are at least 4 @.@ 1 million ethnic Mongols . Across the whole of China , the language is spoken by roughly half of the country 's 5 @.@ 8 million ethnic Mongols (2005 estimate) However , the exact number of Mongolian speakers in China is unknown , as there is no data available on the language proficiency of that country 's citizens . The use of Mongolian in China , specifically in Inner Mongolia , has witnessed periods of decline and revival over the last few hundred years . The language experienced a decline during the late Qing period , a revival between 1947 and 1965 , a second decline between 1966 and 1976 , a second revival between 1977 and 1992 , and a third decline between 1995 and 2012 . However , in spite of the decline of the Mongolian language in some of Inner Mongolia 's urban areas and educational spheres , the ethnic identity of the urbanized Chinese @-@ speaking Mongols is most likely going to survive due to the presence of urban ethnic communities . The multilingual situation in Inner Mongolia does not appear to obstruct efforts by ethnic Mongols to preserve their language . Although an unknown number of Mongols in China , such as the Tumets , may have completely or partially lost the ability to speak their language , they are still registered as ethnic Mongols and continue to identify themselves as ethnic Mongols . The children of inter @-@ ethnic Mongol @-@ Chinese marriages also claim to be and are registered as ethnic Mongols .

= = Classification and dialects = =

Mongolian belongs to the Mongolic languages . The delimitation of the Mongolian language within Mongolic is a much disputed theoretical problem , one whose resolution is impeded by the fact that existing data for the major varieties is not easily arrangeable according to a common set of linguistic criteria . Such data might account for the historical development of the Mongolian dialect continuum , as well as for its sociolinguistic qualities . Though phonological and lexical studies are comparatively well developed , the basis has yet to be laid for a comparative morphosyntactic study , for example between such highly diverse varieties as Khalkha and Khorchin .

The status of certain varieties in the Mongolic group ? whether they are languages distinct from Mongolian or just dialects of it ? is disputed . There are at least three such varieties : Oirat (including the Kalmyk variety) and Buryat , both of which are spoken in Russia , Mongolia , and China ; and Ordos , spoken around Inner Mongolia 's Ordos City .

There is no disagreement that the Khalkha dialect of the Mongolian state is Mongolian . Beyond this one point , however , agreement ends . For example , the influential classification of San?eev (1953) proposed a " Mongolian language " consisting of just the three dialects Khalkha , Chakhar , and Ordos , with Buryat and Oirat judged to be independent languages . On the other hand , Luvsanvandan (1959) proposed a much broader " Mongolian language " consisting of a Central dialect (Khalkha , Chakhar , Ordos) , an Eastern dialect (Kharchin , Khorchin) , a Western dialect (Oirat , Kalmyk) , and a Northern dialect (consisting of two Buryat varieties) . Some Western scholars propose that the relatively well researched Ordos variety is an independent language due to its conservative syllable structure and phoneme inventory . While the placement of a variety like Alasha , which is under the cultural influence of Inner Mongolia but historically tied to Oirat , and of other border varieties like Darkhad would very likely remain problematic in any classification , the central problem remains the question of how to classify Chakhar , Khalkha , and Khorchin in relation to each other and in relation to Buryat and Oirat . The split of [t?] into [t?] before * i and [ts] before all other reconstructed vowels , which is found in Mongolia but not in Inner Mongolia , is often cited as a fundamental distinction , for example Proto @-@ Mongolic * t?il , Khalkha / t?i? / , Chakhar / t?il / ' year ' versus Proto @-@ Mongolic * t?øhelen , Khalkha / tsoo??? / , Chakhar / t?ool?? / ' few ' . On the other hand , the split between the past tense verbal suffixes -s? in the Central varieties vs. -d??? in the Eastern varieties is usually seen as a merely stochastic difference .

In Inner Mongolia , official language policy divides the Mongolian language into three dialects : Southern Mongolian , Oirat , and Barghu @-@ Buryat . Southern Mongolian is said to consist of Chakhar , Ordos , Baarin , Khorchin , Kharchin , and Alasha . The authorities have synthesized a literary standard for Mongolian in whose grammar is said to be based on Southern Mongolian and whose pronunciation is based on the Chakhar dialect as spoken in the Plain Blue Banner . Dialectologically , however , western Southern Mongolian dialects are closer to Khalkha than they are to eastern Southern Mongolian dialects : for example , Chakhar is closer to Khalkha than to Khorchin .

Besides Mongolian , or " Central Mongolic " , other languages in the Mongolic grouping include Dagur , spoken in eastern Inner Mongolia , Heilongjiang , and in the vicinity of Tacheng in Xinjiang ; the Shirongolic subgroup Shira Yugur , Bonan , Dongxiang , Monguor , and Kangjia , spoken Qinghai and Gansu regions ; and the possibly extinct Moghol of Afghanistan .

As for the classification of the Mongolic family relative to other languages , the Altaic theory (which is increasingly less well received among linguists) proposes that the Mongolic family is a member of a larger Altaic family that would also include the Turkic and Tungusic , and usually Koreanic languages and Japonic languages as well .

= = Grammar = =

The following description is based primarily on Khalkha Mongolian . In particular , the phonology section describes the Khalkha dialect as spoken in Ulaanbaatar , Mongolia 's capital . The

phonologies of other varieties such as Ordos , Khorchin , and even Chakhar , differ considerably . In contrast , most of what is said about morphology and syntax also holds true for Chakhar , while Khorchin is somewhat more diverse .

= = = Phonology = = =

This section discusses the phonology of Khalkha Mongolian with subsections on Vowels , Consonants , Phonotactics and Stress .

= = = = Vowels = = = =

The standard language has seven monophthong vowel phonemes . They are aligned into three vowel harmony groups by a parameter called ATR (advanced tongue root) ; the groups are ? ATR , + ATR , and neutral . This alignment seems to have superseded an alignment according to oral backness . However , some scholars still describe Mongolian as being characterized by a distinction between front vowels and back vowels , and the front vowel spellings ' ö ' and ' ü ' are still often used in the West to indicate two vowels which were historically front . The Mongolian vowel system also has rounding harmony .

Length is phonemic for vowels , and each of the seven phonemes occurs short or long . Phonetically , short / o / is highly divergent from long / o / , being the central vowel [?] .

In the following table , the seven vowel phonemes , with their length variants , are arranged and described phonetically .

Khalkha also has four diphthongs : / ui , ?i , ?i , ai / .

ATR harmony . Mongolian divides vowels into three groups in a system of vowel harmony :

As mentioned , for historical reasons these have traditionally been labeled as " front " vowels and " back " vowels . Indeed , in Romanized transcription of Mongolian , the vowels / o / and / u / are often conventionally rendered as ? ö ? and ? ü ? , while the vowels / ? / and / ? / are expressed as ? o ? and ? u ? (this is also the case in the nonphonological sections of this article) . However , for modern Mongolian phonology , it seems more appropriate to instead characterize the two vowel @-@ harmony groups by the dimension of tongue root position . There is also one neutral vowel , / i / , not belonging to either group .

All the vowels in a noncompound word , including all its suffixes , must belong to the same group . If the first vowel is ? ATR , then every vowel of the word must be either / i / or a ? ATR vowel . Likewise , if the first vowel is a + ATR vowel , then every vowel of the word must be either / i / or a + ATR vowel . In the case of suffixes , which must change their vowels to conform to different words , two patterns predominate . Some suffixes contain an archiphoneme / A / that can be realized as / a , ? , e , o / . For example :

orx household + -Ar (instrumental) ? orxor by a household

xar?? sentry + -Ar (instrumental) ? xar??ar by a sentry

Other suffixes can occur in / U / being realized as / ? , u / , in which case all ? ATR vowels lead to / ? / and all + ATR vowels lead to / u / . For example :

aw to take + -U? (causative) ? aw??

If the only vowel in the word stem is / i / , the suffixes will use the + ATR suffix forms .

Rounding harmony . Mongolian also has rounding harmony , which does not apply to close vowels . If a stem contains / o / (or / ? /) , a suffix that is specified for an open vowel will have [o] (or [?] , respectively) as well . However , this process is blocked by the presence of / u / (or / ? /) and / ei / . E.g. ?r @-@ ?? came in , but ?r @-@ ?? @-@ ?a inserted .

Vowel length . The pronunciation of long and short vowels depends on the syllable 's position in the word . In word @-@ initial syllables there is a phonemic contrast in length . A long vowel has about 208 % the length of a short vowel . In word @-@ medial and word @-@ final syllables , formerly long vowels are now only 127 % as long as short vowels in initial syllables , but they are still distinct from initial @-@ syllable short vowels . Short vowels in noninitial syllables differ from short vowels in initial syllables by being only 71 % as long and by being centralized in articulation . As they are

nonphonemic , their position is determined according to phonotactic requirements .

= = = = Consonants = = = =

The following table lists the consonants of Khalkha Mongolian . The consonants enclosed in parentheses occur only in loanwords .

Mongolian lacks the voiced lateral approximant , [l] ; instead , it has a voiced alveolar lateral fricative , / ? / , which is often realized as voiceless [?] . In word @-@ final position , / n / (if not followed by a vowel in historical forms) is realized as [?] . The occurrence of palatalized consonant phonemes seems to be restricted to words that contain [? ATR] vowels . Aspirated consonants are preaspirated in medial and word @-@ final contexts , devoicing preceding consonants and vowels . Devoiced short vowels are often deleted .

= = = = Syllable structure and phonotactics = = = =

The maximal syllable is CVVCCC , where the last C is a word @-@ final suffix . A single short vowel rarely appears in syllable @-@ final position . If a word was monosyllabic historically , * CV has become CVV . [?] is restricted to codas (else it becomes [n]) , and / p / and / p? / do not occur in codas for historical reasons . For two @-@ consonant clusters , the following restrictions obtain :

a palatalized consonant can be preceded only by another palatalized consonant or sometimes by / ? / and / ? /

/ ? / may precede only / ? , x , ? , ?? / and / ? /

/ j / does not seem to appear in second position

/ p / and / p? / do not occur as first consonant and as second consonant only if preceded by / m / or / ? / or their palatalized counterparts .

Clusters that do not conform to these restrictions will be broken up by an epenthetic nonphonemic vowel in a syllabification that takes place from right to left . For example , hojor ' two ' , a?il ' work ' , and saarmag ' neutral ' are , phonemically , / x?jr / , / at?? / , and / sa?rm? / respectively . In such cases , an epenthetic vowel is inserted so as to prevent disallowed consonant clusters . Thus , in the examples given above , the words are phonetically [x?j? ? r] , [at???] , and [sa?rm??] . The phonetic form of the epenthetic vowel follows from vowel harmony triggered by the vowel in the preceding syllable . Usually it is a centralized version of the same sound , with the following exceptions : preceding / u / produces [e] ; / i / will be ignored if there is a nonneutral vowel earlier in the word ; and a postalveolar or palatalized consonant will be followed by an epenthetic [i] , as in [at???] .

= = = = Stress = = = =

Stress in Mongolian is nonphonemic (does not distinguish different meanings) and thus is considered to depend entirely on syllable structure . But scholarly opinions on stress placement diverge sharply . Most native linguists , regardless of which dialect they speak , claim that stress falls on the first syllable . Between 1941 and 1975 , several Western scholars proposed that the leftmost heavy syllable gets the stress . Yet other positions were taken in works published between 1835 and 1915 .

Walker (1997) proposes that stress falls on the rightmost heavy syllable unless this syllable is word @-@ final :

A " heavy syllable " is here defined as one that is at least the length of a full vowel ; short word @-@ initial syllables are thereby excluded . If a word is bisyllabic and the only heavy syllable is word @-@ final , it gets stressed anyway . In cases where there is only one phonemic short word @-@ initial syllable , even this syllable can get the stress :

More recently , the most extensive collection of phonetic data so far in Mongolian studies has been applied to a partial account of stress placement in the closely related Chakhar dialect . The

conclusion is drawn that di- and trisyllabic words with a short first syllable are stressed on the second syllable . But if their first syllable is long , then the data for different acoustic parameters seems to support conflicting conclusions : intensity data often seems to indicate that the first syllable is stressed , while F0 seems to indicate that it is the second syllable that is stressed .

= = = Morphology = = =

Modern Mongolian is an agglutinative , almost exclusively suffixing language , the only exception being reduplication . Most of the suffixes consist of a single morpheme . There are many derivational morphemes . For example , the word bajguullagynh consists of the root baj- ' to be ' , an epenthetic -g- , the causative -uul- (hence ' to found ') , the derivative suffix -laga that forms nouns created by the action (like -ation in ' organisation ') and the complex suffix ? ynh denoting something that belongs to the modified word (-yn would be genitive) .

Nominal compounds are quite frequent . Some derivational verbal suffixes are rather productive , e.g. jar ' - ' to speak ' , jarilts- ' to speak with each other ' . Formally , the independent words derived using verbal suffixes can roughly be divided into three classes : final verbs , which can only be used sentence @-@ finally , i.e. -na (mainly future or generic statements) or ? ø (second person imperative) ; participles (often called " verbal nouns ") , which can be used clause @-@ finally or attributively , i.e. -san (perfect @-@ past) or -maar (' want to ') ; and converbs , which can link clauses or function adverbially , i.e. -? (qualifies for any adverbial function or neutrally connects two sentences) or -tal (the action of the main clause takes place until the action expressed by the suffixed verb begins) .

Roughly speaking , Mongolian has eight cases : nominative (unmarked) , genitive , dative , accusative , ablative , instrumental , comitative and directional . If a direct object is definite , it must take the accusative , while it must take the nominative if it is unspecific . In addition to case , a number of postpositions exist that usually govern genitive , ablative , or comitative case or a form of the nominative that has sometimes -Vn either for lexical historical reasons or analogy (thus maybe becoming an attributive case suffix) . Nouns can take reflexive @-@ possessive clitics indicating that the marked noun is possessed by the subject of the sentence : bi najz (-) aa avarsan I friend @-@ reflexive @-@ possessive save @-@ perfect ' I saved my friend ' . However , there are also somewhat noun @-@ like adjectives to which case suffixes seemingly cannot be attached directly unless there is ellipsis . Plurality may be left unmarked , but there are overt plurality markers , some of which are restricted to humans . A noun that is modified by a numeral usually does not take any plural affix .

Personal pronouns exist for the first and second person , while the old demonstrative pronouns have come to form third person (proximal and distal) pronouns . Other word (sub-) classes include interrogative pronouns , conjunctions (which take participles) , spatials , and particles , the last being rather numerous .

Negation is mostly expressed by -güj after participles and by the negation particle bi? after nouns and adjectives ; negation particles preceding the verb (for example in converbal constructions) exist , but tend to be replaced by analytical constructions .

= = = Syntax = = =

= = = = Phrase structure = = = =

The noun phrase has the order : demonstrative pronoun / numeral , adjective , noun . Attributive sentences precede the whole NP . Titles or occupations of people , low numerals indicating groups , and focus clitics are put behind the head noun . Possessive pronouns (in different forms) may either precede or follow the NP . Examples :

The verbal phrase consists of the predicate in the center , preceded by its complements and by the adverbials modifying it and followed (mainly if the predicate is sentence @-@ final) by modal

particles , as in the following example with predicate bi?sen :

In this clause the adverbial , helehgüjgeer ' without saying [so] ' must precede the predicate 's complement , üünijg ' it @-@ accusative ' in order to avoid syntactic ambiguity , since helehgüjgeer is itself derived from a verb and hence an üünijg preceding it could be construed as its complement . If the adverbial was an adjective such as hurdan ' fast ' , it could optionally immediately precede the predicate . There are also cases in which the adverb must immediately precede the predicate .

For Khalkha , the most complete treatment of the verbal forms is Luvsanvandan (ed .) 1987 . However , the analysis of predication presented here , while valid for Khalkha , is adapted from the description of Khorchin by Matsuoka 2007 .

Most often , of course , the predicate consists of a verb . However , there are several types of nominal predicative constructions , with or without a copula . Auxiliaries that express direction and aktionsart (among other meanings) can with the assistance of a linking converb occupy the immediate postverbal position , e.g. uu? orhison drink @-@ converb leave @-@ perfect ' drank up ' . The next position is filled by converb suffixes in connection with the auxiliary , baj- ' to be ' , e.g. ter güj? bajna s / he run @-@ converb be @-@ nonpast ' she is running ' . Suffixes occupying this position express grammatical aspect , e.g. , progressive and resultative . In the next position , participles followed by baj- may follow , e.g. , ter irsen bajna s / he come @-@ perfect be @-@ nonpast ' he has come ' . Here , an explicit perfect and habituality can be marked , which is aspectual in meaning as well . This position may be occupied by multiple suffixes in a single predication , and it can still be followed by a converbal Progressive . The last position is occupied by suffixes that express tense , evidentiality , modality , and aspect .

= = = = Clauses = = = =

Unmarked phrase order is subject ? object ? predicate . While the predicate generally has to remain in clause @-@ final position , the other phrases are free to change order or to wholly disappear . The topic tends to be placed clause @-@ initially , new information rather at the end of the clause . Topic can be overtly marked with bol , which can also mark contrastive focus , overt additive focus (' even , also ') can be marked with the clitic ? , and overt restrictive focus with the clitic l (' only ') .

The inventory of voices in Mongolian consists of passive , causative , reciprocal , plurative , and cooperative . In a passive sentence , the verb takes the suffix -gd- and the agent takes either dative or instrumental case , the first of which is more common . In the causative , the verb takes the suffix -uul- , the causee (the person caused to do something) in a transitive action (e.g. , ' raise ') takes dative or instrumental case , and the causee in an intransitive action (e.g. , ' rise ') takes accusative case . Causative morphology is also used in some passive contexts :

The semantic attribute of animacy is syntactically important : thus the sentence , ' the bread was eaten by me ' , which is acceptable in English , would not be acceptable in Mongolian . The reciprocal voice is marked by -ld- , the plurative by -tsgaa- , and the cooperative by -lts- .

Mongolian allows for adjectival depictives that relate to either the subject or the direct object , e.g. Ljena nücgen untdag ' Lena sleeps naked ' , while adjectival resultatives are marginal .

= = = = Complex sentences = = = =

One way to conjoin clauses is to have the first clause end in a converb , as in the following example using the converb -bol :

Some verbal nouns in the dative (or less often in the instrumental) function very similar to converbs : e.g. , replacing olbol in the preceding sentence with olohod find @-@ imperfective @-@ dative yields ' when we find it we 'll give it to you ' . Quite often , postpositions govern complete clauses . In contrast , conjunctions take verbal nouns without case :

Finally , there is a class of particles , usually clause @-@ initial , that are distinct from conjunctions but that also relate clauses : bi olson , harin ?amd ögöhgüj I find @-@ perfect but you @-@ dative give @-@ imperfective @-@ negation ' I 've found it , but I won 't give it to you ' .

Mongolian has a complementizer auxiliary verb ge- very similar to Japanese to iu. ge- literally

means ' to say ' and in converbal form ge? precedes either a psych verb or a verb of saying . As a verbal noun like gedeg (with n ' or case) it can form a subset of complement clauses . As gene it may function as an evidentialis marker .

Mongolian clauses tend to be combined paratactically , which sometimes gives rise to sentence structures which are subordinative despite resembling coordinative structures in European languages :

In the subordinate clause the subject , if different from the subject of main clause , sometimes has to take accusative or genitive case . There is marginal occurrence of subjects taking ablative case as well . Subjects of attributive clauses in which the head has a function (as is the case for all English relative clauses) usually require that if the subject is not the head , then it take the genitive , e.g. tüünij idsen hool that.one @-@ genitive eat @-@ perfect meal ' the meal that s / he had eaten ' .

= = Loanwords and coined words = =

In distant times Mongolian adopted loanwords from Old Turkic , Sanskrit (these often through Uighur) , Persian , Arabic , Tibetan , Tungusic , and Chinese . Recent loanwords come from Russian , English , and Chinese (mainly in Inner Mongolia) . Language commissions of the Mongolian state have been busy translating new terminology into Mongolian , so that the Mongolian vocabulary now has jerönhijlög? ' president ' (" generalizer ") and ?ar ajrag ' beer ' (" yellow kumys ") . There are quite a few loan translations , e.g. , galt tereg ' train ' (' fire @-@ having cart ') from Chinese hu?ch? (?? , fire cart) ' train ' . Other loan translations include mun chanar (essence) from Chinese shízhì (?? , true quality) , khün am (population) from Chinese rénk?u (?? , person mouth) , erdene shish (corn , maize) from Chinese yùm? (?? , jade rice) and bügd nairamdakh uls (republic) from Chinese gònghéguó (??? , public collaboration nation) .

Examples of Sanskrit loanwords used in contemporary Khalkha Mongolian include shashin (??? sasana , religion) , sansar (????? sans?ra , space) , avyas (?? ? ??? abhyasa , talent) , buyan (??? ? ? punya , good deeds) , agshin (? ? ?? k?ana , instant) , tiv (? ? ??? dvipa , continent) , garig (? ? ?? graha , planet) , tsadig (???? j?taka , tales , stories) , shuleg (? ? ??? ?loka , poems , verses) , badag (??? padaka , strophe) , arshan (????? ra?ayana , mineral water , nectar) , shastir (??? ? ? ? ? shastra , chronicle) , bud (??? budh , Mercury) , sugar (??? ? ? shukra , Venus) , barhasvadi (???? ? ??? vrihaspati , Jupiter) and sanchir (??? shani , Saturn) .

Examples of Persian loanwords used in contemporary Khalkha Mongolian include anar (anar , amethyst) , baishin (pishiwan , building) , bars (fars , tiger) , bers (farzin , chess queen / female tiger) , bold (pulad , steel) , bolor (bulur , crystal) , gunjid (kunjut , sesame) , gindan (zindan , prison) , dari (daru , powder / gunpowder) , duran (dur , telescope) , duranbai (durbin , telescope / microscope) , devter (daftar , notebook) , nom (nameh , book) and hurmast (ahuramazda , high god) .

Examples of Chinese loanwords used in contemporary Khalkha Mongolian include banz (?? b?nzi , board) , laa (? là , candle) , luuvan (?? lúobo , radish) , khuluu (?? húlu , gourd) , denluu (?? d?nglù , lamp) , chiiden (?? qìd?ng , electric lamp) , biir (?? b? 'r , paintbrush) , gambanz (??? zh?nb?nzi , cutting board) , chinjuu (?? q?ngji?o , pepper) , juutsai (?? ji?cài , leek) , moog (?? mógu , mushroom) , tsuu (? cù , vinegar , soy sauce) , baitsaa (?? báicài , cabbage) , mantuu (?? mántou , steamed bun) , shiigua (?? x?gu? , watermelon) , naimaa / maimaa (?? m?imài , trade) , goimon (?? gùamiàn , noodles) , dan (? d?n , single) , gan (? g?ng , steel) , lantuu (?? lángtou , sledgehammer) , tsonkh (?? ch?anghu , window) , buuz (?? b?ozi , dumplings) , khuushuur (??? h?osh?o 'r , fried dumpling) , zutan (??? r?zh?t?ng , cream soup) , bantan (?? f?nt?ng , flour soup) , jan (? jiàng , soy) , van (? wáng , king) , gunj (?? g?ngzh? , princess) , gun (? g?ng , duke) , janjin (?? ji?ngj?n , general) , taigan (?? tàijiàn , eunuch) , pyanz (?? piànzi , recorded disk) , guanz (?? gu?nzi , restaurant) , lianhua (?? liánhu? , lotus) , khuar (?? hu? 'r , flower , used in names) , toor (?? táo 'r , peach) , intoor (??? y?ngtáo 'r , cherry) , zeel (? jie , borrow , lend , with Mongolian denominal verb suffix -l-) , vandui (?? w?ndòu , pea) , yanz (?? yàngzi , manner , appearance) , shinj (?? xìngzhì , characteristic) , sampin (?? suànpán , abacus)

, liir (?? lí 'r , pear) , bai (? páizi , target) , jin (? j?n , weight) , bin (? b?ng , pancake) , khuanli (?? huángli , calendar) , shaazan (?? sh?ocí , porcelain) , khantaaz (??? k?nd?udu , sleeveless vest) , puntuuz (??? f?ntiáozi , potato noodles) and tsai (? chá , tea) .

In the 20th century there are numerous daily life words loaned from Russia : doktor (doctor) , ostol (table) , shokolad (chocolate) , vagon (train wagon) , kalendar (calendar) , sistem , podvoolk (from futbolka T @-@ shirt) , yavlaga (apple) , galavsaa (sausage) , galstuk (red scarf) and mashin (car) . In recent times due to fast @-@ phased social and cultural transformations , the Mongolian language loaned numerous words from English ; some have gradually evolved as official terms : menejment , computer , fail (file) , marketing , kredit , onlain (online) , mesej (message) . Most of these are confined to the Mongolian state .

Despite having a diverse pool of loanwords Mongolian uses more native vocabulary than languages like Japanese or Korean where words of Chinese origin take up to 60 % of vocabulary . Volker Rybatzki points out the relative lexical purity of Mongolian in The Mongolic Languages (2003)

On the basis of a tentative survey of 452 lexical items it seems that the Mongolic languages can be divided into six categories , depending on how large the proportion of Common Mongolic items in their vocabulary is .

(1) Below 50 per cent : The only language belonging to this category is Mangghuer , in which the proportion of Common Mongolic vocabulary would seem to be as low as 39 per cent . It is obvious that Mangghuer has suffered a massive loss of native vocabulary , making it , at least lexically , a good candidate for a ? mixed language ? .

(2) 50 @-@ 64 per cent : This category comprises , not surprisingly , two other languages of the Gansu @-@ Qinghai complex , Bonan (50 per cent) and Santa (56 per cent) , as well as Moghol (52 per cent) .

(3) 65 @-@ 84 per cent : This category comprises the two remaining languages of the Gansu @-@ Qinghai complex , Mongghul (72 per cent) and Shira Yughur (77 per cent) , as well as Dagur (81 per cent) .

(6) Above 95 percent : This category comprises the rest of the dialects of Mongol proper , notably Khalkha and Khorchin (as well as , apparently , Modern Written Mongol) , in which the proportion of native vocabulary in the sample is as high as 98 per cent . Lexically , at least , these are the ? most Mongolic ? of all Mongolic idioms .

= = Writing systems = =

Mongolian has been written in a variety of alphabets , making it a language with one of the largest number of scripts used historically . The earliest stages of Mongolian (Xianbei , Wuhuan languages) may have used an indigenous runic script as indicated by Chinese sources . The Khitan large script adopted in 920 CE is an early Mongol (or according to some , para @-@ Mongolic) script .

The traditional Mongolian script was adapted from Uyghur script probably at the very beginning of the 13th century and from that time underwent some minor disambiguations and supplementations . Between 1930 and 1932 , a short @-@ lived attempt was made to introduce the Latin script in the Mongolian state , and after a preparatory phase , the Mongolian Cyrillic script was declared mandatory by government decree . It has been argued that the 1941 introduction of the Cyrillic script , with its smaller discrepancy between written and spoken form , contributed to the success of the large @-@ scale government literacy campaign , which increased the literacy rate from 17 @.@ 3 % to 73 @.@ 5 % between 1941 and 1950 . Earlier government campaigns to eradicate illiteracy , employing the traditional script , had only managed to raise literacy from 3 @.@ 0 % to 17 @.@ 3 % between 1921 and 1940 . From 1991 to 1994 , an attempt at reintroducing the traditional alphabet failed in the face of popular resistance . In informal contexts of electronic text production , the use of the Latin alphabet is common .

In the People 's Republic of China , Mongolian is a co @-@ official language with Mandarin Chinese in some regions , notably the entire Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region . The traditional alphabet has always been used there , although Cyrillic was considered briefly before the Sino @-@ Soviet split . There are two types of written Mongolian used in China : the traditional Mongolian

script , which is official among Mongols nationwide , and the Clear script , used predominantly among Oirats in Xinjiang .

= = Linguistic history = =

The earliest surviving Mongolian text may be the Stele of Yisüngge , a report on sports composed in Mongolian script on stone , which is most often dated at 1224 or 1225 . The Mongolian @-@ Armenian wordlist of 55 words compiled by Kirakos of Gandzak (13th century) is the first written record of Mongolian words . From the 13th to the 15th centuries , Mongolian language texts were written in four scripts (not counting some vocabulary written in Western scripts) : Uyghur Mongolian (UM) script (an adaptation of the Uyghur alphabet) , ' Phags @-@ pa script (Ph) (used in decrees) , Chinese (SM) (The Secret History of the Mongols) , and Arabic (AM) (used in dictionaries) . While they are the earliest texts available , these texts have come to be called " Middle Mongol " in scholarly practice . The documents in UM script show some distinct linguistic characteristics and are therefore often distinguished by terming their language " Preclassical Mongolian " .

The Yuan dynasty referred to the Mongolian language in Chinese as " Guoyu " (Chinese : ??) , which means " National language " , a term also used by other non @-@ Han dynasties to refer to their languages such as the Manchu language during the Qing dynasty , the Jurchen language during the Jin dynasty (1115 ? 1234) , the Khitan language during the Liao dynasty , and the Xianbei language during the Northern Wei .

The next distinct period is Classical Mongolian , which is dated from the 17th to the 19th century . This is a written language with a high degree of standardization in orthography and syntax that sets it quite apart from the subsequent Modern Mongolian . The most notable documents in this language are the Mongolian Kangyur and Tengyur as well as several chronicles . In 1686 , the Soyombo alphabet (Buddhist texts) was created , giving distinctive evidence on early classical Mongolian phonological peculiarities .

= = = Changes in phonology = = =

= = = = Consonants = = = =

The research into the reconstruction of the consonants of Middle Mongol has engendered several controversies . Middle Mongol had two series of plosives , but there is disagreement as to which phonological dimension they lie on , whether aspiration or voicing . The early scripts have distinct letters for velar plosives and uvular plosives , but as these are in complementary distribution according to vowel harmony class , only two back plosive phonemes , * / k / , * / k? / (~ * [k] , * [q?]) are to be reconstructed . One prominent long running disagreement concerns certain correspondences of word medial consonants among the four major scripts (UM , SM , AM , and Ph , which were discussed in the preceding section) . Word medial / k / of Uyghur Mongolian (UM) has , not one , but two correspondences with the three other scripts : either / k / or zero . Traditional scholarship has reconstructed * / k / for both correspondences , arguing that * / k / got lost in some instances , which raises the question of what the conditioning factors of those instances were . More recently , the other obvious possibility has been assumed , namely that the correspondence between UM / k / and zero in the other scripts points to a distinct phoneme , / h / , which would correspond to the word @-@ initial phoneme / h / that is present in those other scripts . / h / (sometimes also called / x /) is sometimes assumed to derive from * / p? / , which would also explain zero in SM , AM , Ph in some instances where UM indicates / p / , e.g. debel > Khalkha deel .

The palatal affricates * ? , * ?? were fronted in Northern Modern Mongolian dialects such as Khalkha . * k? was spirantized to / x / in Ulaanbaatar Khalkha and the Mongolian dialects south of it , e.g. Preclassical Mongolian kündü , reconstructed as * k?ynty ' heavy ' , became Modern Mongolian / xunt / (but in the vicinity of Bayankhongor and Baruun @-@ Urt , many speakers will say [k?unt])

. Originally word @-@ final * n turned into / ? / ; if * n was originally followed by a vowel that later dropped , it remained unchanged , e.g. * k?en became / xi? / , but * k?oina became / x?in / . After i @-@ breaking , * [?] became phonemic . Consonants in words containing back vowels that were followed by * i in Proto @-@ Mongolian became palatalized in Modern Mongolian . In some words , word @-@ final * n was dropped with most case forms , but still appears with the ablative , dative and genitive .

= = = = Vowels = = = =

The standard view is that Proto @-@ Mongolic had * i , * e , * y , * ø , * u , * o , * a . According to this view , * o and * u were pharyngealized to / ? / and / ? / , then * y and * ø were velarized to / u / and / o / . Thus , the vowel harmony shifted from a velar to a pharyngeal paradigm . * i in the first syllable of back @-@ vocalic words was assimilated to the following vowel ; in word @-@ initial position it became / ja / . * e was rounded to * ø when followed by * y . VhV and VjV sequences where the second vowel was any vowel but * i were monophthongized . In noninitial syllables , short vowels were deleted from the phonetic representation of the word and long vowels became short .

E.g. * imahan (* i becomes / ja / , * h disappears) > * jama?n (unstable n drops ; vowel reduction) > / jama (n) / ' goat'

and * emys- (regressive rounding assimilation) > * ømys- (vowel velarization) > * omus- (vowel reduction) > / oms- / ' to wear'

This reconstruction has recently been opposed , arguing that vowel developments across the Mongolic languages can be more economically explained starting from basically the same vowel system as Khalkha , only with * [?] instead of * [e] . Moreover , the sound changes involved in this alternative scenario are more likely from an articulatory point of view and early Middle Mongol loans into Korean .

= = = Changes in morphology = = =

= = = = Nominal system = = = =

In the following discussion , in accordance with a preceding observation , the term " Middle Mongol " is used merely as a cover term for texts written in any of three scripts , Uighur Mongolian script (UM) , Chinese (SM) , or Arabic (AM) .

The case system of Middle Mongol has remained mostly intact down to the present , although important changes occurred with the comitative and the dative and most other case suffixes did undergo slight changes in form , i.e. , were shortened . The Middle Mongol comitative -lu? @-@ a could not be used attributively , but it was replaced by the suffix -taj that originally derived adjectives denoting possession from nouns , e.g. mori @-@ tai ' having a horse ' became mor 'toj ' having a horse / with a horse ' . As this adjective functioned parallel to ügej ' not having ' , it has been suggested that a " privative case " (' without ') has been introduced into Mongolian . There have been three different case suffixes in the dative @-@ locative @-@ directive domain that are grouped in different ways : -a as locative and -dur , -da as dative or -da and -a as dative and -dur as locative , in both cases with some functional overlapping . As -dur seems to be grammaticalized from dotur @-@ a ' within ' , thus indicating a span of time , the second account seems to be more likely . Of these , -da was lost , -dur was first reduced to -du and then to -d and -a only survived in a few frozen environments . Finally , the directive of modern Mongolian , -ruu , has been innovated from uru?u ' downwards ' . Social gender agreement was abandoned .

= = = = Verbal system = = = =

Middle Mongol had a slightly larger set of declarative finite verb suffix forms and a smaller number of participles , which were less likely to be used as finite predicates . The linking converb -n became

confined to stable verb combinations , while the number of converbs increased . The distinction between male , female and plural subjects exhibited by some finite verbal suffixes was lost .

= = = Changes in syntax = = =

Neutral word order in clauses with pronominal subject changed from object ? predicate ? subject to subject ? object ? predicate , e.g. ,
" Kökseü sabraq spoke saying , ' Alas ! You speak a great boast .... ' "
The syntax of verb negation shifted from negation particles preceding final verbs to a negation particle following participles ; thus , as final verbs could no longer be negated , their paradigm of negation was filled by particles . For example , Preclassical Mongolian ese irebe ' did not come ' vs. modern spoken Khalkha Mongolian ireegüj or irsengüj .