Some Morphosyntax of Mongolian

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0. Introduction

After gaining a basic understanding of the phonetics and phonology of Mongolian, we moved on to look at larger segments of the language, namely, its morphology and syntax. While it would be impossible to gain a full understanding of the morphosyntax in Mongolian over the course of the just roughly two months (that goes for phonology too), we have tried our best to hone in on what might be considered as fundamental sentence structures in order to reveal the larger building blocks of the Mongolian language. In this paper, I will provide an overview of those structures, providing examples along the way. This paper will be divided into the following sections: clause structure, case markers, conjugation and negation, particles, pronouns, deixis, and relative clauses.

Before moving on, it should be mentioned that the website "Wiktionary.org," which is a website that contains information about the languages of the world, will occasionally be mentioned in this paper. In this website, linguists contribute information about the world's languages which must receive confirmation before it becomes an official entry on the website. While the information on "Wiktionary.org" may not be as solidified as information found in publish book or article, it consisted of data that was consistent with the elicitations from our speaker and was thus utilized for digital documentation of word and morpheme data.

1. Clause Structure

The unmarked constituent order of a sentence is Subject-Object-Verb, as seen in (1).

(1)   pɑt   xarandaː   -k   xokaɬa   -β
          bat   pencil   ACC   snap.tr   PST
       "Bat broke the pencil."

We will look at the accusative case in the next section of this paper, but for now all we need to know is that case markers are suffixes, making Zoloo (a person's name) the object in (1).

Before moving on to case markings, we must show evidence as to why we can consider Mongolian to be a language with a nominative-accusative pattern. In order to do this, we can look at a transitive version of (1) in which the patient "pencil" is the single argument of the sentence, as seen in (2) below.

(2)
xaranda: xokara   –β
 pencil   snap.intr   PST
"The pencil broke."

Based on the fact that the patient-like single argument "pencil" in (2) is marked in the same way as the agentive subject (i.e. no suffix) in a two-argument sentence in (1), we can confirm that Mongolian is a nominative-accusative language.

2. Case Markers

2.1. Nominative marker –ø

We have just seen that the subject of a transitive sentence and the single argument of an intransitive sentence are marked in the same way: they both do not take on any marker. Rather, it might be better to say that this lack of marker for the nominative case is actually a null marker. Thus, if we explicitly mark all cases in a sentence, we would end up with something like (3) below.

(3)
pɑt   –ø   tsaɬa: –k   tsʰəxɨ   –β
bat   NOM   zoloo   ACC   hit   PST
"Bat hit Zoloo."

2.2. Accusative marker –(ɪ)k

During the elicitations it was noticed that while some direct objects such as Zoloo in (3) took on an accusative marker, other times the object was unmarked. Our informant told us that the accusative marker correlates with definiteness (e.g. *X-(i)k* = "the X") while the lack of accusative marker correlates with indefiniteness (i.e. *X-ø* = "a(n) X"). However, this did not quite seem to be an accurate correlation due to the fact that (1) the accusative marker attached

to personal pronouns and proper nouns and (2) our consultant often had difficulties distinguishing between "the" and "a(n)" in English.

Guntseteg and Klein (2009) provide an explanation for the usage of the accusative marker *-(i)k* using two reasons: "differential object marking" and "differential embedded subject marking." For the purpose of this paper, we shall only discuss the former. According to Guntseteg and Klein, one of the primary triggers of differential object marking is referentiality, for which they use Aissen's (2003) Referentiality Scale, as seen in (4) as a model.

(4) personal pronouns > proper names > def. NPs > indef. specific NPs > indef. non-specific NPs

Specifically, Guntseteg and Klein state that "if the direct objects are realized by personal pronouns, proper names and definite noun phrases, the accusative marking is obligatory." In addition to the example in (3), the sentence in (5) shows another example where a proper name as a direct object takes the accusative marker.

(5)
pɑt	tsɑɬɑ:	**–k**	xara	–β
bat	zoloo	**ACC**	see	PST

"Bat saw Zoloo."

In (5), "Zoloo" is the theme of the sentence and is therefore not as "prototypically" patient-like as in (3), but still takes an accusative marker. The same goes for pronoun nouns as well, as seen in (6).

(6)
pi	tʰɪt	nar	**–ɪk**	xara	–β
1sg	3	pl	**ACC**	see	PST

"I saw them."

Just as Guntseteg and Klein (2009) state, this accusative marker appears to be obligatory in the case of proper nouns and personal pronouns. However, once we get into the territory of common nouns, things are not as easy. Guntseteg and Klein state that "accusative marking on weak indefinite and incorporated noun phrases is ungrammatical." In the case of transitive sentences elicited from our consultant where the direct object was a common noun, our

consultant told us that that direct object could either have an *-(i)k* accusative marker or not. This can be observed blow in (7a&b).

(7a)

pɑt	jama:	**-k**	par(i)	**-β**
bat	goat	**ACC**	catch	PST

"Bat caught the goat."

(7b)

pɑt	jama:	**-ø**	par(i)	**-β**
bat	goat	**NOM**	catch	PST

"Bat caught a goat."

Once again, while our consultant differentiated these two sentences in terms of "the" vs. "a," based on Guntseteg and Klein (2009), (7a) would infer that there is a certain goat to which the speaker is referring, while (7b) would be unclear as to whether the speaker is referring to any particular goat. In conclusion, while there is some correlation between definitiveness as the usage of the accusative case marker in Mongolian, there does not seem to be any accurate way to translate it into English.

2.3. Dative/Locative case *-(n)t*

This particular case marker was realized the same way phonologically and was therefore believed to be the same morpheme with multiple uses. (8) and (9) show examples of the morpheme used as a dative case marker.

(8)

pɑt	tsaɫa:	**-t**	nam	-ɪk	əkə	**-β**
bat	zoloo	**DAT**	book	ACC	give	PST

"Bat gave the book to Zoloo."

(9)

natat	**-t**	tʰam	pæːʃɪŋ	pæː	-ɣaː
1sg	**LOC**	big	house	is	IPFV

"I have a big house."

Sentences like (9), where the dative/locative case marker expressed someone owning something (in this case a house), were very common. Additionally, the apparent same morpheme was used to express existence in a location as seen in (10) and direction of motion as seen in (11).

(10) kevin æŋkɪ **–t** pæ: –n
      kevin classroom **LOC** is NPST
      "Kevin is in the class."

(11) pi æŋkɪ **–t** –a: nam –a: aβə –tʃ iɾɪ –sɨŋ
      1sg classroom **LOC** RFLX book RFLX take PROG come PST
      "I brought my book to my class."

It should be noted that it in (11), instead of –t, it seemed preferable to our consultant to use the morpheme –ro: or –ɬo: which roughly translate to the English preposition "to." However, our consultant says that it is okay to use the locative case marker –t here as well.

2.4. Genitive Case –ni / –in / –i / –n / –kin

Phonologically speaking, the genitive marker in Mongolian took on a number of different forms. However, a detailed description of this phonological variation will not be ventured in this paper. Below are several examples of the usages of the genitive case marker in Mongolian.

Position of figure with respect to ground

(12) tsaɬo puskɥi **–n** art pæ: –n
      man woman **GEN** Behind is NPST
      "The man is behind the woman"

In typical instances of this pattern, the figure is the subject of the sentence and the ground takes on the genitive. In (12) the figure is "man" and the ground is "woman." Thus, "woman" takes the genitive marker.

Possession – Inalienable

(13) maʃin **–i** ɔrt taɬ –n tsʰaɣaŋ ʊŋktʰe pæ: –n
      car **GEN** front –side direction white color is NPST
      'The front of the car is white'

Possession – Alienable

(14) ɪn paɬ paɬt **–in** nam
      this FOC Bolt **GEN** book
      "This is Bolt's book."

When used to describe possession, the possessor takes on the genitive case marker similarly to English possessive clitic *'s*.

Other

(15)　　ɔs　　**–ni**　　ʃiɬ　　**–in**　　saβ　　xakara　　–β
water　　**GEN**　　glass　　**GEN**　　container　　shatter.intr　　PST
"The glass water container just broke."

(16)　　pi　　tʰeme:　　**–ni**　　max　　it(ɪ)　　–mer　　pæ:　　–n
1sg　　camel　　**GEN**　　meat　　eat　　want to　　is　　NPST
"I want to eat camel."

In (15) *ʃiɬ–in saβ* "glass-GEN container" seems to correlate to something like "a container that is made of glass" while the larger phrase *ɔs–ni ʃiɬ–in saβ* "water-GEN glass-GEN container" correlates to something like "a container that is made of glass which contains water." In (16) *tʰeme:–ni max* "camel-GEN meat" seems to simply mean "the meat of a camel."

2.5 Comitative Case　　*–tʰe: / –tʰœ: / –tʰæ:*

The comitative case was found to be used for two different purposes: (a) to express "togetherness" in performing as action and (b) to attach to common nouns to form a word that seems to form a type of stative predicate. An example of (a) can be seen below in (17) and an example of (b) can be seen in (18a&b).

(17)　　pat　　tsaɬa:　　**–tʰœ:**　　jɛɾɪ　　–β
bat　　zoloo　　**COM**　　talk　　R PST
"Bat talked with Zoloo."

(18a)　　pat　　tʃarkaɬ　　**–tʰæ:**　　pæ:　　–n
bat　　happiness　　**COM**　　is　　NPST
"Bat is feeling happy (right now)."

(18b)　　pi　　mənk　　**–tʰe:**
1sg　　money　　**COM**
"I have money. (lit. I am in a state of being with money)"

The usages found in (18a&b) were found to be a significantly productive way of modifying nouns and expressing states, which are very similar usages to English adjectives. However, it does not seem to be enough evidence of the existence of adjectives in Mongolian.

2.6. Ablative Case *–(k)a:s*

The ablative case marker attaches to the source of some movement or transfer, as seen in (19a&b) or the source of some comparison, as seen in (20).

(19a)	pɑt	tsaɫɑ:	**–ka:s**	nam	–ɪk	aβə	–β
	bat	zoloo	**ABL**	book	ACC	take	PST

"Bat took/got the book from Zoloo."

(19b)	pi	maŋkaɫ	**–a:s**	irɪ	–sɨŋ
	1sg	Mongolia	**ABL**	come	PST

"I came from Mongolia."

(20)	pɑt	–in	pæ:ʃɪŋ	mini	pæ:ʃɪŋ	**–ka:s**	tʰam
	bat	GEN	house	1sg.GEN	house	**ABL**	big

"Bat's house is bigger than my house."

2.7 Instrumental Case *–(k)a:r / (k)e:r*

The instrumental case marker attaches to the tool or instrument by which an action is performed. Examples can be seen in (21a&b).

(21a)	pi	tʃʰoɫo:	**ka:r**	tsʰaŋx	xakaɫ(a)	–tʃax	–saŋ
	1sg	rock	**INST**	window	shatter.tr	UW	PST

"I broke the window with a rock."

(21b)	pi	tʰuɫxu:r	**e:r**	xa:ɫəq	aŋkœɫk(a)	–tʃax	–saŋ
	1sg	key	**INST**	door	open.tr	UW	PST

"I opened the door with the key."

3. Conjugation

Verbs in Mongolian always seem to simply take a suffix attached to the verb stem, which generally end in verbs. The majority of these suffixes are meant to express tense and aspect.

3.1. Infinitive *-x*

The most basic form of a verb seems to one suffixed with *-x*. This is because standalone verbs elicited from our consultant took on this particular suffix. As we did not elicit a lot of data with this suffix in sentences, it is difficult define. However, in addition to being defined as an infinitive in Gaunt (2004), the fact that basic standalone verbs took on this suffix seem to imply it is an infinitive. The suffix was occasionally found in sentences such as in (22).

(22)	æŋk	ʧʰi	–n	xiʦe:	ɪxɬɪ	**–x**	βe
	classroom	2sg (fam.)	GEN	when	start	**INF**	Q

"When does your class start?"

3.2. Non–past tense (or durative) suffix *-n*

The most common verb suffix found in Mongolian was the *-n* suffix. According to Gaunt (2004) and fitting to the data elicited, the *-n* suffix expresses present/future, which is why the term "non–past tense" was chosen (inspired by the widely used terminology in Japanese which also expresses both present/future tense). Other sources such as the website "Wiktionary.org" have called this suffix the "durative" tense suffix, as it generally expresses a sense of continuity. For example, the suffix is often used with statives such as in (23a&b).

(23a)	paɬɔ:r	ʊʦɨk	–ni	xaʧo	–t	pæ:	**–n**
	eraser	pen	GEN	side	LOC	is	**NPST**

"The eraser is next to the pen."

	pɑt	xaɬo:ʦʰə	–ʧ	pæ:	**–n**
(23b)	bat	feel.hot	PROG	is	**NPST**

Bat is feeling hot

In (23&b), the non–past suffix attaches to *pæ:–*, which is a verb stem that roughly translate to "is." Up until this point, the non–past suffix was found attached solely to this verb. What is particularly worth mentioning about (23b) is that the verb "is" is attached to another verb "feel.hot" via the progressive suffix *-ʧ* which we will look at in the next section. We can find this same structure of V–PROG–is–NPST also in cases where the V is more of a dynamic verb, as seen in (24).

(24)

puskʉi	tsaɬo	-kin	ɔrt	aɬx(ə)	-tʃ	pæː	-n
woman	man	GEN	front	walk	PROG	is	**NPST**

"The woman is walking in front of the man."

What is interesting is that this non-past/durative suffix does not have to be combined with a verb in its progressive form; it can also be combined with various past test verbs as seen in (25).

(25)

jamaː	uxɪ	-tʃɨx	-sɨŋ	pæː	-n
goat	die	UW	PST	is	**NPST**

"The goat is dead."

Our consultant described the situation in (25) as follows: a goat died, the speaker did not see it die, and the speaker comes up to the dead goat and finds it already dead. Our consultant confirmed that this sentence perhaps could be translated as "the goat is dead" rather than "the goat died" although both of these meaning seem to be embedded into the complex verb *uxɪ-tʃɨ-sɨŋ pæː-n*. If anything, this seems perhaps to reveal the stative quality of *pæː-n* (is-NPST/DUR) such that (25) describes the goat in the state of being dead.

3.3. Progressive aspect suffix / verb linker *-tʃ*

We have just seen a few examples (23a, 23b, and 24) where the suffix *-tʃ* is used to express the progressive aspect. However, it seemed to also be used as a connector of two verbs without having any particular tense or aspect, which can be seen in (26a&b).

(26a)

pi	sorqoːɬ	-roː	-kaː	nam	-aː	aβə	-tʃ	irɪ	-sɨŋ
1sg	school	to	RFLX	book	RFLX	take	**linker**	come	PST

"I brought my book to my school."

(26b)

pi	suː	oː	-tʃ	tʃʰata	-tak
1sg	milk	drink	**linker**	can	HAB

"I can drink milk."

What is different about the examples in (26a&b) is that the verb that comes after *-tʃ* is not *pæː-* "is." It is not quite clear if the *-tʃ* suffix hear holds any particular meaning. Thus, it may be more accurate to consider *-tʃ* to sometimes function as only a linker without any particular aspect. However, this does not take away from the likelihood that *-tʃ* expresses the

progressive aspect when connected with "is," as we can see a distinction in tense/aspect between (24) and (25).

3.4. Habitual aspect suffix *-tɨk / -tak*

The habitual aspect suffix *-tɨk / -tak* was used to describe situations in which there was a sense of permanence or regularity of an action. An example of regularity can be seen in (27).

(27)	pi	ʊtʊr	bur	sorqo:ɬ	-t	jaβa	**-tak**
	1sg	day	each	school	LOC	go	**HAB**

"I go to school every day."

A distinction in permanence can be observed in (28a&b) such that the habitual suffix expresses being in China at least semi-permanently (e.g. living in China for an extended period of time) while the NPST/DUR suffix expresses being in China temporarily (e.g. being in China on vacation).

	tʰɪr	puskɥi	xjɛtʰat	-t	pæ:	**-tɨk**
(28a)	3sg	woman	China	LOC	is	**HAB**

She is in China (permanently)

	tʰɪr	puskɥi	xjɛtʰat	-t	pæ:	**-n**
(28b)	3sg	woman	China	LOC	is	**NPST**

"She is in China
(temporarily)."

3.5. Imperfective aspect suffix *-ɣa:*

The imperfective suffix *-ɣa:* showed similar characteristics to the habitual aspect suffix, but is used more often to describe possession/relation that is alienable, such as in (29).

(29)	Natat	-t	tʰeme:	pæ:	**-ɣa:**
	1sg	DAT	camel	is	**IPFV**

"I own a camel."

According to our consultant, the habitual aspect suffix can also be used instead of the imperfective. However, because our consultant initially used *-ɣa:* here it is to be assumed that this is preferred over the habitual aspect suffix.

Conversely, our consultant said that the sentence in (30) can also take either the habitual aspect suffix or the imperfective aspect suffix. However, in this case, the version with the habitual aspect suffix was uttered first and is therefore assumed to be preferred. Our consultant described *-ɣa:* to have a lesser degree of permanence than the *-tɨk/tak*, which makes sense since the relationship between an owner and a camel is not as permanent as the relationship between a younger and older sister.

(30)	natat	–t	ɪktʃʰ	pæ:	–tɨk
	1sg	DAT	older.sister	is	**HAB**

"I have an older sister"

3.6 Past tense suffixes

Perhaps the most complicated features of Mongolian are the different past tense suffixes. A lot of times these suffixes were interchangeable. While sometimes our consultant was able to explain the difference between each verb form, other times it was not as clear. Even in Ujiyediin (1998), where a detailed chapter on the differences between each of the four past tense suffixes is provided, it was not possible to sum up the differences in a simple manner. To make matters even more complex, just as we saw in (25) ("the goat died / is dead"), conjugated verbs can combine with conjugated *pæ:–* "is" to add additional meaning. Thus in this section, the goal is not to provide a detailed description of every single combination and describe the differences. Rather, the goal is to give a basic overview of the conjugated verb forms seen in the elicited data and described nuances when possible.

3.6.1. "Recent past" suffix *-β* and "non-recent past" suffix *-sɨŋ/-saŋ*

Out of all the elicited data, these two past tense suffixes (especially *-β*) were the most common. The general intuition of our consultant was that verbs suffixed with *-β* described events that happened recently, and *-sɨŋ/-saŋ* described events that happened not recently. A representative example of the recent past suffix is found in (31) while a representative example of the non-recent past suffix can be observed in (32).

(31)	jama:	ɔna	–β
	goat	fall	**R PST**

"The goat (just recently) fell."

(32)　　　pɑt　　ɵŋkɵrsɵŋ　　tɑɬɑː　　xanʊkt　　potɑː　　it(ɪ)　　–sɨŋ
　　　　　bat　　last　　　seven　　days　　rice　　eat　　**NR PST**

　　　　　"Bat ate rice last week."

　　　It must be noted that the degree of how recent an event occurred is relative. However, we can still see a clear difference between the events in (31) and (32) primarily due to the "just recently" aspect of (31) and the "last week" in (32).

3.6.2. Past tense suffix –ɬaː / –ɬeː

　　　The –ɬaː / –ɬeː past tense suffix was the least common out of all of the past tense forms. There was no particular characteristic that it expressed other than expressing that an event occurred in the past. An example can be seen below in (33).

(33)　　　tʃʰi　　sæŋ　　kɥi　　–ɬeː
　　　　　2sg (fam.)　　well　　run　　**PST**
　　　　　You ran well. (familiar/informal)

　　　The situation described above was that a coach was uttering this sentence to his/her pupil after they had just finished a race. The recent past tense suffix –β could also be used here instead of –ɬeː without any change in meaning known to our consultant.   This, however, is not quite evident enough to make any special claims.

3.6.3. "Unwitnessed" / past tense suffix –tʃɨx / –tʃax

　　　The reason for naming this particular suffix the "unwitnessed" suffix is that our consultant often described sentences that contained *V-tʃax-saŋ pæː-n* (V-UW-NR PST is-DUR) as events that happened a while age (due to NR PST) and that were not witnessed by the speaker, as seen in (34)

(34)　　　jamaː　　ɔn(a)　　–tʃax　　–saŋ　　pæː　　　–n
　　　　　goat　　fall　　**UW**　　**NR PST**　　is　　NPST
　　　　　"The goat fell (a while ago and speaker did not see it
　　　　　happen)."

However, it seems that this is not always the case. Take for example, (35).

(35)   pi   kųi   –ʧɨx   –sɨŋ
             1sg   run   **UW?**   **NR PST**
        "I ran here."

The sentence in (35) is an answer in response to the question "how did you get here so quickly?" Since it is the speaker who performed the action, it seems difficult to imagine that the speaker did not witness the event of himself/herself running to the destination. It is possible, however, that *–ʧɨx / –ʧax* can also carry the meaning that the event was not witnessed by the listener.

In fact, there is some additional evidence that this might be the case. The sentences in (3a–c) all carry the same meaning according to our consultant. What is important here is that all of these sentences are responses to the question "what happened?" which means that the listener who supposedly asked this question does not know what happened and therefore presumably did not witness the event. Thus while, our consultant explicitly states that the speaker who uttered the sentence in (36b) witnessed the container breaking, we might imagine that the use of the potential unwitnessed suffix here is used to put the event in the perspective of the listener, who did not witness the event. However, there is no explicit evidence for this so we shall not conclude that *–ʧɨx / –ʧax* suffix is only used to describe unwitnessed events.

(36a)   ɔs   –ni   ʃiɬ   –in   saβ   xakara   –β
           water GEN glass GEN container shatter.intr **R PST**
           "The glass water container just broke."
(36b)   ɔs   –ni   ʃiɬ   –in   saβ   xakar(a)   –ʧax   –ɬa:
           water GEN glass GEN container shatter.intr **UW?**   **PST**
           "The glass water container just broke. (speaker saw event)"
(36c)   ɔs   –ni   ʃiɬ   –in   saβ   xakar(a)   –ʧax   –saŋ   pæ: –ɬa:
           water GEN glass GEN container shatter.intr **UW?**   **NR PST** is   PST
           "The glass water container just broke."

Overall, there are too many combinations of past test suffixes to include every single one of them in this paper. In addition, they seem extremely complex especially when combined with one another and combined with *pæ:–* "is."

3.7. Negation

There are a couple of ways to negate sentences in Mongolian, namely: by negating a verb, as seen in (37a), or negating a noun, as seen in (37b).

(37a)   pi   su: o(:)   –tak   **–kɥi**
         1sg   milk   drink   HAB   **NEG**
         "I don't drink milk"

(37b)   mini   pæːʃɪŋ   tʰam   **pɪʃ**
         1sg.GEN   house   big   **NEG**
         "My house is not big."

The affirmative counterparts can be seen in (38a&b) respectively.

(38a)   pi   su: o(:)   –tak
         1sg   milk   drink   HAB b
         "I do drink milk"

(38b)   mini   pæːʃɪŋ   (pɑɬ)   tʰam
         1sg.GEN   house   (is)   big
         "My house is big."

In the case of (37a) compared to (38a), the negation is as simple as just adding the negative marker *–kɥi* to the sentence. In the case of (37b) compared to (38b), it is almost but not quite as simple. The reason for this is that while it is natural to have *pɑɬ* (focus marker/is) in the affirmative counterpart, it is not natural to say this in the negative counterpart. However, according to our informant, is also possible to omit *pɑɬ* in (38b) as well. In this case, negating a sentence would be as simple as adding the negative marker/particle *pɪʃ*.

4. Particles and Suffixes

It is sometimes difficult to differentiate a suffix and a particle. Items were usually classified as a particle if it was documented that way on the website "Wiktionary.org" or if our language consultant pronounced it separately in slow speech. Otherwise, it was documented as a suffix.

4.1. Focus / Topic particle *paɬ*

The focus or topic particle could also have been translated as "is." The difference between this particle and *pæ:-* "is" seemed to be related to the semantics of the predicate of the sentence. A good example of this can be seen in (39a&b).

(39a) pɑt tʃarkaɬ –tʰæ: **pæ:** **–n**
bat happiness COM **is** **NPST**
"Bat is feeling happy (right now)."

(39b) pɑt **pɑɬ** tʃarkaɬ –tʰæ: xɨŋ
bat **FOC** happiness COM person
"Bat is a happy person."

While the head of the predicate in (39b) is more clearly a noun (*xɨŋ* "person), the predicate of (39a) appears to be a noun-case marker combination. This noun-case marker *tʃarkaɬ-tʰæ:* (happiness-COM) seems to correlate to something like "with happiness," meaning that (39a) may be translated as "Bat is with happiness." While we should try to stay away from forcing English translations onto Mongolian, it should aid in demonstrating how the two predicates are different. The main point to take away from this is that the focus/topic marker *paɬ* is used when the predicate of the sentence is a noun. Proving the part-of-speech of a word in another language is a difficult task, and perhaps this explanation may be an oversimplification. Nevertheless, based on the elicited data and English translation of those data, this explanation seems to make the most sense from an English-speaker perspective.

4.2. Reflexive / polite suffix –(k)a: / –(k)e:

This suffix (maybe a particle) seemed to have a clear meaning of expressing reflexivity. In addition, our consultant described this particle sometimes as expressing politeness. Usage as a reflexive particle can be seen in (40a) while usage as a politeness marker can be seen in (40b).

(40a) tsʰɪtske: jupkʰ **–e:** ora –β
titske skirt **RFLX** tear.tr R PST
"Titske just tore her skirt."

(40b)   ʦukeːr   **-eː**
          okay   **RFLX**
                Reply to "thank you" and "are you okay"

While our consultant described the *-eː* in (40b) as expressing politeness, since the speaker in this sentence would be talking about him/herself, it seems easy to imagine that the particle in (40b) expresses reflexivity as well.

4.3. Question particles *oː* and *pe/βe*

Mongolian exhibited two different types of question particles: *oː*, which was used for yes/no questions, and *pe/βe*, which were used for questions with interrogative pronouns. An example of *oː* is found in (41a) and an example of *pe/βe* is found in (41b).

(41a)   ʧʰam   -t   ɪkʧʰ   pæː   -ɣaː   **joː**
          2sg   DAT   older.sister   is   IPFV   **Q**
                "Do you have an older sister?"
(41b)   tʰɪr   xɨŋ   **pe**
          3sg   who   **Q**
                Who is that?

5. Pronouns

Pronouns were another difficult aspect of Mongolian as the language implements a much different system than English. First of all, Mongolian does not differentiate between genders in terms of pronouns. When our sentences that we elicited contained English "he" or "she," our consultant seemed troubled when trying to figure out how to translate it to Mongolian and informed us that there is usually no different personal pronoun for males and females. Thus, the gender-neutral singular third person pronoun *tʰɪr* was used, as seen in (42a) and (42b)

(42a)   **tʰɪr**   ʊtʊr   pur   kцi   -tɨk
          3sg   day   each   run   HAB
                "She runs every day."

(42b)   tʰɪr   pɑɬ   pɑt
          3sg   FOC   bat
                "He is Bat." or "That is Bat."

One distinction that Mongolian does make is one related to politeness or familiarity. Take (43a&b) as examples.

(43a)   tʰa   tsuke:r   o:
             2sg (pol.)   okay   Q
          Are you okay? (polite)

(43b)   tʃʰi   tsuke:r   o:
             2sg (fam.)   okay   Q
          Are you okay? (familiar)

At the most fundamental level (and potentially the only level), the polite second-person singular pronoun is used toward someone who is older, while the familiar second-person singular pronoun is use toward someone is the same age or younger.

Mongolian pronouns seem to change their forms based on the case marker that attaches to it. Take for example, the first singular pronoun *pi* and what appear to be its genitive and accusative forms in (44a-c):

(44a)   pi   pæ: -n
          1sg   is   NPST
          "I am (Bat)." (In response to the question "Who is Bat?")

(44b)   mi   ni   nɛr   -ɪk   pɑt   kɛ   -tɨk
          1sg   GEN   name   ACC   bat   call   HAB
          "My name is Bat." (Lit. My name is called
          Bat.)

(44c)   namæ   -k   pɑt   kɛ   -tɨk
          1sg   ACC   bat   call   HAB
          "My name is Bat." (Lit. I am called Bat.)

(43a)'s *pi* is the basic form of the first-person singular pronoun when no case markers follow. In (43b), *mi* together with the genitive marker *ni* forms the first-person singular genitive pronoun. It is possible that *mini* has become lexicalized such that is now one word which carries the meaning "1sg.GEN." In (43c), *namæ* occurs when the accusative marker follows.

Once again, it is possible that this has become lexicalized to form a single word *namæk* which is the "accusative form" of the first-person singular pronoun. As a matter of fact, this was the understanding of how all case-marked pronouns worked until seeing how pronouns change with the dative/locative and comitative case markers, as seen in (45a-d).

(45a)

ʧʰam	–t	ɪkʧʰ	pæ:	–ɣa:	jo:
2sg	LOC	older.sister	is	IPFV	Q

"Do you have an older sister?"

(45b)

ɵntʉr	tsaɬo	ʧʰam	–tʰæ:	o:ɬtsa	–x	kɛ	–ʧ	ir(ɪ)	–sɨŋ
tall	man	2sg	COM	meet	INF	call	PROG	come	NR PST

"Tall man came to see you (but you were not here.)

(45c)

natat	–t	ɪkʧʰ	pæ:	–ɣa:
1sg	LOC	older.sister	is	IPFV

"I have an older sister"

(45d)

natat	–tʰæ:	xamtʰ	jaβ
1sg	COM	together	go

"Go with me (command)."

From these examples we can see that in both the cases of the first-person singular pronoun and the second-person singular pronoun, the pronouns take the same form for both the dative/locative case marker and for the comitative case marker. This hints that the case-marked pronouns are not lexicalized pronouns based on the semantics provided by the case markers (e,g *ʧʰamt* = 2sg.LOC and 2sg.COM) , but rather that the pronoun is influenced by the phonology of the attached case marker and is separate from the case marker (e.g. *ʧʰam* = 2sg, *–t* = LOC, and *–tʰæ:* = COM). In this case, it seems that case markers that begin with alveolar stops cause the pronoun to take on the forms found in (45a-d).

It still could be the case, especially for the genitive and accusative marked pronouns, that case-marked pronouns are lexicalized as one word. At this point, however, it is unclear. This particular aspect of Mongolian requires further investigation.

6. Deixis

Mongolian did not display a very wide range of deictic demonstratives. In fact, only one was observed, as seen in (46)

(46)   ɪn   pɑɬ   ʊts�
       this   FOC   pen

"This is a pen."

While we attempted to get a word for "that" as opposed to "this," *ɪn* seemed to be used for both "this" and "that." In the case of the sentence "Who is that?" the direct translation was more like "Who are they?" as seen in (47).

(47)   tʰɪr   xɨŋ   pe
       3sg   who   Q

Who is that?

7. Relative Clauses

Mongolian is a head-final language. Observe the sentence in (48a) and the relative clause sentence based on (48a) in (48b).

(48a) pi   ʊnθ: ʊtʊr   **nam**   xotaɬta -tʃ   aβə   -β
       1sg   today day   **book**   buy   PROG   take   R PST

"I bought a book today."

(48b) ɪn   pɑɬ   mini   ʊnθ: ʊtʊr   xotaɬta   -tʃ   aβ(ə)   -saŋ   **nam**
       this FOC   1sg.GEN today   day   buy   PROG   take   NR PST **book**

"This is the book that I bought today."

In particular, we should pay attention to the fact that *nam* "book" comes in the final position of the clause in a relative clause.

8. Final Remarks

This paper has provided a brief description of the morphosyntax of Mongolian. However, this is by no means a comprehension report. The points that were focused on in this paper were based on the interests of the writer, and many aspects which were not as deeply investigated were left out from this paper. Some noteworthy mentions are the transitive/intransitive distinction, evidentiality, question pronouns, and a further investigation on parts-of-speech in Mongolian. Furthermore, it was impossible to elicit every single morphosyntactic aspect of the language in the allotted time for elicitation.

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Abbreviations and Special Symbols

1	First person
2	Second Person
3	Third Person
()	Denotes segments which are found lexically in a word but not salient in pronunciation of certain form
ABL	Ablative
ACC	Accusative
COM	Comitative
DAT	Dative
fam.	Familiar
FOC	Focus marker
GEN	Genitive
Gloss	Meaning
HAB	Habitual
INF	Infinitive
INST	Instrumental
intr.	Intransitive
IPFV	Imperfective
LOC	Locative
NEG	Negative
NOM	Nominative
NPST	Non-past
NR PST	Non-recent past
pl	plural
pol.	Polite
PROG	Progressive
PST	Past
Q	Question particle
R PST	Recent Past
RFLX	Reflexive
sg	singular
tr.	transitive
UW	Unwitnessed