

How is a Language of a Minority Surrounded by an Overwhelming Majority Changed? Its Implications on Language Contact Studies¹

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Abstract: Mongolian spoken in Inner Mongolia, as is well-known, is suffering from structural changes not only in the lexicon but also in the grammar under the strong influence of Chinese. The presence of mixed constructions of Mongolian and Chinese had been reported earlier even in the 1980s but the details were in the spotlight as late as in this century. According to some foregoing studies including the ones by the author, it seems that the state of affairs in some area is so critical that most Mongols speak Chinese as the first language and Mongolian spoken there can be regarded as a kind of endangered language. However, the process of language loss is not always unanimous; even in the same area the degree of Sinicization is different depending on speakers' social status, occupation, education, and so on. The key lies in such socio-linguistic factors. To be examined in this paper are three Mongolian students studying in our university; one is from Fusing Mongolian Community, Liaoning Province, another two students are from the eastern part of Inner Mongolia. They are all Mongolian in ethnicity but are different one another in their performance of Mongolian as communicative tools; they represent different stages of language loss. The contrast is clear as for the degree of acceptability of Chinese-Mongolian mixed constructions. This study will contribute to Mongolian linguistics as well as general socio-linguistics.

Keywords: Mongolian, Sinicization, socio-linguistics, Inner Mongolia, Liaoning, language loss

Özet: İç Moğolistan'da konuşulan Moğolca, bilindiği üzere, Çincenin güçlü etkisi altında hem söz varlığı hem de dilbilgisi açısından yapısal bir değişime maruz

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kalmaktadır. Moğolca ve Çince karışık yapıların varlığı 1980'li yılların başından beri bilinmekle birlikte bu konunun ayrıntıları ancak içinde bulunduğumuz yüzyılda gündeme gelmeye başlamıştır. Bu makalenin yazarının da içinde bulunduğu birtakım araştırmacıların konuyla ilgili olarak yürüttüğü araştırmalara göre, bazı bölgelerde durum oldukça ciddidir; çoğu Moğol Çinceyi ilk dil olarak konuşmakta, bölgede konuşulan Moğolca ise tehlike altındaki bir dil olarak kabul edilmektedir. Bununla beraber bölgedeki dil yitimi süreci her zaman aynı ölçüde değildir; aynı bölgenin içinde bile Çinlileşmenin derecesi konuşurun sosyal mevkisi, mesleği, eğitimi gibi toplumdilbilim unsurlarına göre değişmektedir. Bu makalede incelemek üzere üniversitemizde okuyan üç Moğol öğrenci seçilmiştir. Bu öğrencilerden biri Çin toplumunun içinde eriyen bir Moğol topluluğunun yaşadığı Liaoning eyaletindedir. Diğer iki öğrenci ise İç Moğolistan'ın doğu bölgesindedir. Üçü de Moğol kökenli olmakla birlikte, Moğolca'yı iletişim aracı olarak kullanmaları bakımından farklı özellikler göstermekte ve dil yitiminin farklı aşamalarını temsil etmektedirler. Karşıtlık Çince-Moğolca karışık yapıların kullanım derecesine göre açığa çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışma Moğol dilbilimin yanı sıra genelde toplumdilbilime de katkıda bulunacaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Moğolca, Çinlileştirme, toplumdilbilim, İç Moğolistan, Liaoning, dil yitimi

1. Owing to the present-day socio-economic situation, whether and to what degree a Mongol succeeds in life depends largely on his or her fluency of Chinese. In fact, some Mongols, especially those living in urban areas, cannot speak or even understand Mongolian at all and speak Chinese only, some others are bilinguals and the others can speak Mongolian. As is well-known, Mongolian in Inner Mongolia Province and in the other districts/provinces in China is now rapidly and radically suffering from structural changes caused by language contact with Chinese and as a result a kind of Mongolian-Chinese mixed language has come into being. The presence of this mixed language was reported as early as in the 1950th but it is only in this century that descriptive studies of it have appeared.

Striking among characteristics of this language is of verb-phrase (VP hereinafter) structure. Yi Liqi 2010² reported the details of VP structure of

² Yi, Liqi (2010): Mongolian Verb Formation Based on Chinese Loanwords. *Studies on Humanities and Social Sciences of Chiba University* 21. pp. 299-319. Department of Humanities and Social Sciences of Chiba University. (in Japanese)

Xilinghot dialect³ (see also Hasi Erdun et. al. (eds.) 2012)⁴. Bao Lianqun 2012 reported that of Dörbüt dialect in Heilongjiang province⁵. In both dialects Chinese words are verbalized in three ways. At the first step, a

³ Yi 2010 adopted a strategy of Muysken (Muysken, Pieter (2000): *Bilingual Speech. A Typology of Code-Mixing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000, pp.184-220) and introduced to us three essential ways for verbalizing Chinese forms:

1. Chinese stems + Mongolian inflectional suffixes
2. Chinese stems + Mongolian derivational suffixes
3. Chinese stems + Mongolian verb *ki-*

Tentatively we follow this. It is noted that 1 corresponds to example (3), 2 to (2) and 3 to (1). Construction 1 and 2 are unanimously accepted by all the consultants in Xilinghot but the last one is not. Yi examined further whether the disyllabic stems with which 1 and 2 are accepted can stand in 3 or not. Presented below is the list of consultants:

Name	Gender	Age	academic career	occupation	duration of residence
<i>B</i>	F	53	university	library staff	29
<i>O</i>	F	40	professional school	doctor	23
<i>S</i>	F	42	junior high-school	private manager	25
<i>YR</i>	F	42	university	doctor	37
<i>G</i>	F	38	high-school	house wife	23
<i>Y</i>	F	27	university	high-school teacher	22
<i>A</i>	F	27	university	civil servece	22
<i>HH</i>	M	54	junior college	civil servece	51
<i>HL</i>	M	32	university	lawyer	27
<i>X</i>	M	27	professional school	civil servece	24
<i>H</i>	M	26	university	civil servece	22

List of consultants (Yi 2010)

⁴ Hasi Erdun et al. (eds.). *The Status Quo and Evolution of Language Use of Mongolian in Mid-banner Left Wing of Horqin*. The commercial Press. 2012. (in Chinese)

⁵ Bao, Lianqun (2011): *Language Contact and Language Change; in the case of Dorbed Mongolian Community Language in Heilongjiang Province, China*. Gendai Tosho. 2011. (in Japanese)

Chinese form, whether it is a verb or a noun, is followed by a Mongolian generic verb *ki-* ‘to do’. This phenomenon has universally been observed at the beginning stage of language contacts; for example, Japanese verbalizes words of foreign origins by attaching them with a generic verb *-suru* ‘to do’, such as *kopii-suru* ‘to copy’ or so. Needless to say, *kopii* is a direct reflex of E. *copy*. It should be noted that in this case the original foreign forms are borrowed as nouns in Japanese, irrespective of their original grammatical categories. The next case in Xilinghot dialect, cited from Yi 2010, is of the same kind:

(1) *shizong ki-gsen kümün-iyen olu-γad...*

missing do Perf. VN person Refl. find Conv.

“He (or she) found the person missing ...”

A borrowed word Ch. *shizong* ‘missing’ functions as the main part of verb phrase, with Mo. *ki-* ‘to do’ attached.

2. Japanese stops there. *Kopii*, of which origin is E. *copy*, cannot be utilized as a verb; it must be followed by a generic verb *-suru* ‘to do’. But Xilinghot Mongolian (as well as Dörbüt Mongolian) makes further steps. There we find a construction of a Chinese word followed by Mongolian inflectional suffixes and derivational suffixes without any convening elements. In other words, Chinese forms behave as if they were native Mongolian verbs, even if the forms are not originally verbs. The examples below cited from Yi 2010 are typical:

(2) *yao dian kai-ju baina siu.*

drug store run Conv. Cop. Part.

“He (or she) is running a drug store.”

Mo. *yao dian kai*, corresponding to Ch. *yao dian kai* ‘run a drug store’, follows a Mongolian converbal suffix. In the following sentence we find a Mongolian deverbal derivational suffix directly follows a Chinese noun.

(3) *bitegei shen jing-te-ged bai.*

Proh. nerve Deriv. Conv. Cop.

“Do not be nervous.”

Mo. *shen jing* is Ch. *shen jing* 'nerve'. This form is never used as a verb stem in Chinese but in Mongolian it behaves as if it were a full verb, with Mo. *-te*, a derivational suffix connected directly.

The presence of these two phenomena is proof that Chinese elements penetrate deeper into the structure of VP in Xilinghot (and also Dörbüt) Mongolian than foreign elements of English or other languages penetrate into that in Japanese, since we never come across such constructions in Japanese⁶.

3. Such penetrations, however, are not always unanimous. Kobayashi have pointed out the importance of socio-linguistic viewpoint in linguistic research of them⁷. It is shown, partly through reanalysis of Yi's data of Xilinghot Mongolian, that the degree of acceptability of above-cited constructions are dependent on speakers' ages, academic careers as well as occupations, which correlate their familiarities with Chinese⁸. The details are omitted here in order to avoid useless repetition.

⁶ As for how foreign elements have been adjusted to the structure of Japanese, see Kobayashi, Yoko and Higuchi, Koichi. Language contacts in Mongolian; the past and the present in comparison with Japanese. *Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Comparative Linguistic and Cultural Studies among Chinese, Japanese and Korean*. Yanbian University. Yanji. 2016. (forthcoming)

⁷ For details, see also Kobayashi's papers. Kobayashi, Yoko. Language changes in the Mongolian language under the influence of the Chinese language in Inner Mongolia. *ABSTRACTS of the 55th Permanent International Altaistic Conference held at Cluj-Napoca, Rumania*. 22. Cluj-Napoca. 2012. Kobayashi, Yoko. A Preliminary study of language changes of Mongolian in Inner Mongolia caused by language contacts with Chinese. *MONGOLICA 20, a special issue containing the papers of The Tenth International Congress of Mongolists held at Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia 2011*. pp. 412-419. Ulaanbaatar. Kobayashi, Yoko. Changes of spoken Mongolian in Inner Mongolia caused by language contact with Chinese. *Монголские языки: ИСТОРИЯ И СОВРЕИЕННОСТЬ. Материалы международной научной конференции* 63-65. Российская Академия Наук Институт Лингвистических Исследований Санкт-Петербург. 2013. Kobayashi, Yoko. Changes in verb-phrase structure in Mongolian in the Inner Mongolia Province cause by language contact with Chinese. *Synchronic and diachronic studies on Altaic languages, Proceedings of the 11th Seoul Altaistic Conference*. National Seoul University. pp. 65-78. Seoul. 2013.

⁸ The reanalysis is made as follows; they are divided into two, the younger (aged 26-32) and the older (aged 38-54) and an average for each is taken. As has been

In short, the younger and the longer academic career, the lower the acceptability, while the older and the shorter academic career, the higher the acceptability. This contrast, which seems to be strange to us at the first sight, can be taken as proof that bilingualism has been established among the younger. They recognize Chinese and Mongolian as two different languages and use both correctly. On the other hand, the older seem still to be in language mixture. It may be because they did not study Chinese systematically at school, so that their knowledge of Chinese is fragmentary. A hypothesis can be established that language mixture goes ahead bilingualism and after the stage of the latter, one language inferior in strength may become endangered.

Thus, the acceptability depends on how and to what degree speakers have been exposed to and have been influenced by Chinese. Such vertical view, as it were, is necessary in linguistic analysis of this kind of the so-called Mongolian-Chinese mixed languages. On the other hand, another view, a horizontal one, is indispensable as well. To be focused in this paper is this aspect.

4. Kobayashi's works aforementioned show further that the acceptability differs among speakers, even if they are nearly of the same ages and academic careers, based on her own research on her colleagues, namely four international students from three different points of Inner Mongolia shown below:

birthplace	gender	age	academic career
Ulanhot	F	27	University
Chifeng	F	25	University
Chifeng	M	25	University
Tongliao	F	25	University

The results is as follows: in only 10 out of 49 items, such as an item Ch. *faxian* 'to find', the answers of both groups are unanimously 'no' while in the rest 39 items the answers are split. Thus, almost no paralle-

shown by Kobayashi abovementioned, the acceptability varies among each item but at the same time and more importantly, there is a marked tendency in accordance with consultants' ages.

lisms can be seen between both groups. That is, there exist differences of the acceptability among dialects. Indeed, dialectal differences are also found in the other constructions.

Construction 1 and 2 are unanimously accepted by all the consultants in Xilinghot but the two are not always accepted in the other dialects. The contrasts are very sharp in some words; the table given below shows the distribution of answers as for the first ten forms in the list of Yi 2010. Regional differences are also found in the other constructions. The construction of Chinese stems + Mongolian Inflectional/Derivational suffixes, which are fully accepted in Xilinghot region, are not always so in others; the contrasts are also very remarkable in some words.

	<i>mofa</i> <i>n</i>	<i>zhete</i> <i>ng</i>	<i>luosu</i> <i>o</i>	<i>qifu</i>	<i>shan</i> <i>gban</i>	<i>liuxu</i> <i>e</i>	<i>daol</i> <i>uan</i>	<i>shizo</i> <i>ng</i>	<i>jiehu</i> <i>n</i>	<i>daom</i> <i>ei</i>
Ulanhot	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chifeng 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chifeng 2	+	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	-
Tongliao	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Total	2	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	1	0

Dialectal differences among our four consultants as for the first 10 items of Yi's list.

'+' means 'Yes' and '-' means 'No'

Ch. *mofan* "to imitate", *zheting* "to turn from side to side", *luosuo* "verbose", *qifu* "to bully", *shangban* "to go to work", *liuxue* "to study abroad", *daoluan* "to make trouble", *shizong* "to be missing", *jiehun* "to marry" and *daomei* "to have bad luck".

Clear discrepancies are found not only between Xilinghot and the other areas; they are found among three regions and even in the speakers from the same region. For example, Chifeng 1 says "yes" in only two items out of 49, while Chifeng 2 says "yes" in 26 items out of 49. The key lies in their social backgrounds. Chifeng 1, brought up in downtown of the city, mainly speaks Chinese at home. To the contrary, Chifeng 2, grown up

in steppe, speaks solely Mongolian at home. According to his own description, in Japan he has heard Chinese spoken by Chinese international students in his daily life far more often than in Inner Mongolia. Development of mass-media, however, is now changing nomadic life in steppe. It is reported children living in steppe, exposed to Chinese TV programs for children, can speak standard Chinese far more fluently than their parents. It is expected that young Mongolians like Chifeng 2 will rapidly decrease in number in the near future.

5. Attractive above all are Tongliao's answers; they are different from those of the other three. She freely uses Chinese words as stems in the *ki*-construction, whether they are monosyllabic or dissyllabic. According to her description, however, she never connects any inflectional or derivational suffixes to the Chinese words usable as stems in the *ki*-constructions and also she never utilizes the Chinese words which allow Mongolian inflectional or derivational suffixes as stems in the *ki*-construction; that is, two kinds of Chinese words are strictly distinguished and are in complementary distribution. As far as has been analyzed, we find no semantic or any other features that can help us distinguish the two categories. This is quite a unique phenomenon, since such a distinction can be never found among the other three consultants. This may be interpreted as a reflection of her idiolect; she has established her own grammar of her Mongolian-Chinese mixed language. If such idiolectal variations grow larger and larger in future, young Mongols may feel difficulty in communication by the Mongolian-Chinese mixed language and begin to use Chinese solely to communicate each other. It is reportedly one of the general courses of decay of a language.

Description and making record of this process and the other phenomena discussed so far is a task for us, non-Mongolian Mongolists. It also will contribute to Mongolian linguistics as well as general studies of language contacts a lot.

Abbreviations

Conv. converb	Cop. copula	Deriv. derivational suffix
Part. particle	Perf. perfective	Proh. prohibitive
Refl. reflexive	VN verbal-non	