

Urbanization and Language Shift in Inner Mongolia: an intergenerational survey design

Sarala Puthuval

University of Washington

12th Urban Language Seminar, Inner Mongolia University, 2014

- **Research Questions**

- For predicting the future of the Mongolian language in China, how important is it to consider urban Mongols?
- How do patterns of language shift differ between urban and rural environments?
- How do patterns of daily language use among bilingual speakers differ between urban and rural environments? Does this help to explain any differences in the pattern of language shift?

- **Data Sources**

- Census reports and maps
- Previous language use survey results
- New survey data focusing on language shift
- Interviews

Key Terms

- **Language Transmission:** the unbroken sequence of native-language acquisition by children⁷
- **Language Shift:** the process by which a language gradually ceases to be transmitted from parents to children in a community
- **Reversing Language Shift:** a framework for assistance to threatened languages (originated by Joshua Fishman²)

Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)^{2;3;8;9}

2	Provincial	Used in education, work, mass media, and gov't within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Comm.	Used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	In vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	In vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	Used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	Used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use it among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	Moribund	Only remaining active users are grandparent generation and older.



Mongolian, Peripheral

LANGUAGE

A language of China

ISO 639-3

[mvf](#)

Alternate Names

Inner Mongolian, Menggu, Monggol, Mongol, Southern-Eastern Mongolian

Population

3,380,000 in China (1982). Population includes 299,000 Chakhar, 317,000 Bairin, 1,347,000 Khorain, 593,000 Karachin, 123,000 Ordos, 34,000 Ejine. 2,500,000 monolinguals.

Location

Nei Mongol Province, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region; Liaoning, Jilin, Hebei, Gansu, Ningxia, and Heilongjiang provinces, Urumchi to Hailar.

Language Maps

[China](#)

Language Status

2 (Provincial). Statutory provincial working language in Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and other places (1984, Ethnic Regional Autonomy Act, Articles 10 and 21). Language of recognized nationality: Mongolian.

Classification

[Altaic](#), [Mongolic](#), [Eastern](#), [Qirat-Khalkha](#), [Khalkha-Buriat](#), [Mongolian Proper](#)

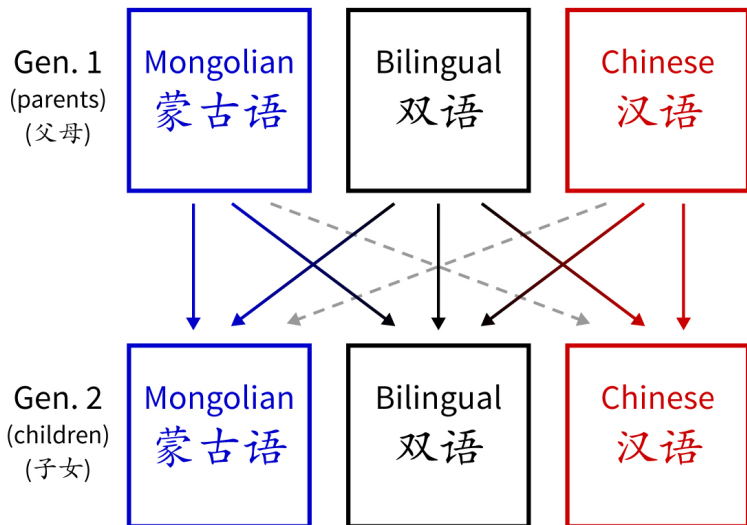
Dialects

Chahar (Chaha'er, Chakhar, Qahar), Ejine, Jirim (Gorlos, Jalait, Kalaqin, Khorchin), Jostu (Eastern Tumut, Ke'erqin, Kharachin, Kharchin, Kharchin-Tumut), Jo-Uda (Bairin, Balin, Keshikten, Naiman),

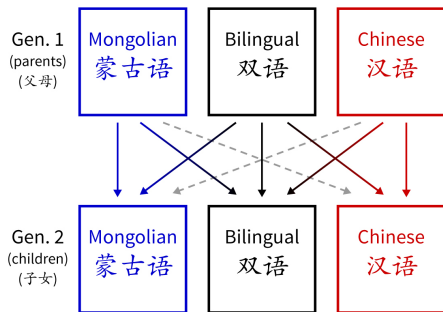
Inner Mongolia is not a single speech community

- Ethnic Mongols are distributed across a diverse array of locations and lifestyles, from grassland nomads to Yellow River farmers to urban workers and intellectuals.
- Individual Mongols have different attitudes towards language and ethnic identity, as well as different economic motives for language learning.^{1;4--6}
- This diversity makes the region an especially interesting subject for a quantitative investigation.

A Conceptual & Statistical Model of Intergenerational Language Transmission

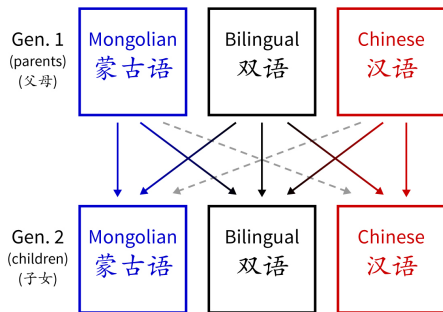


Implementation



- Requires data that includes family relationships as well as language ability
- Data is analyzed in terms of *transition probabilities* between the parent's and the child's state

Interpretation



- Parent-child differences reveal the influence of the external environment
- Provides a finer-grained view of change over time (compared with a standard apparent-time design)

How do patterns of language shift differ between urban and rural environments?

- Has the rate of shift from Mongolian to Chinese remained constant over time? If not, what is the direction of change? (Expected result: increasing over time)
- Is the rate of shift different in urban environments than in rural ones? (Expected result: higher in urban environments)
- Is the *direction of change* in the rate of shift over time different in urban versus rural environments? (Expected result: ??)
- Supposing that the rate of shift has increased over time, and that the rate of shift is higher in urban areas, we can infer that at least some of the increased rate over time is accounted for simply by the increased proportion of urban residents. But how much? And how much is accounted for by an increase in the rate of shift among rural residents? (Expected result: ??).

References

- [1] Borchigud (Bao), W. (1994). *When is a Mongol? The process of learning in Inner Mongolia*. PhD dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle.
- [2] Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. No. 76 in *Multilingual Matters*. Clevedon ; Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.
- [3] Fishman, J. A. (2001). From theory to practice (and vice versa). In J. A. Fishman (Ed.) *Can threatened languages be saved?: reversing language shift, revisited: a 21st century perspective*, no. 116 in *Multilingual matters*. Clevedon ; Buffalo: Multilingual Matters.
- [4] Hoff, L. M. (2013). *Ramifications of rapid urbanization for women in Hohhot, China*. PhD dissertation, Biola University, La Mirada, California.
- [5] Jankowiak, W. (1993). *Sex, death, and hierarchy in a Chinese city: An anthropological account*. Columbia University Press.
- [6] Khan, A. (1996). Who are the Mongols? state, ethnicity and the politics of representation in China. In M. J. Brown (Ed.) *Negotiating ethnicities in China and Taiwan*, (p. 125–159). Berkeley: University of California Institute of East Asian Studies.
- [7] Labov, W. (2007). Transmission and diffusion. *Language*, 83(2), 344–387.
- [8] Lewis, M. P., & Simons, G. F. (2010). Assessing endangerment: Expanding Fishman's GIDS. *Revue roumaine de linguistique*, 2, 103–119.
- [9] Lewis, M. P., Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (Eds.) (2013). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 17th Edition*. Dallas: SIL International.