

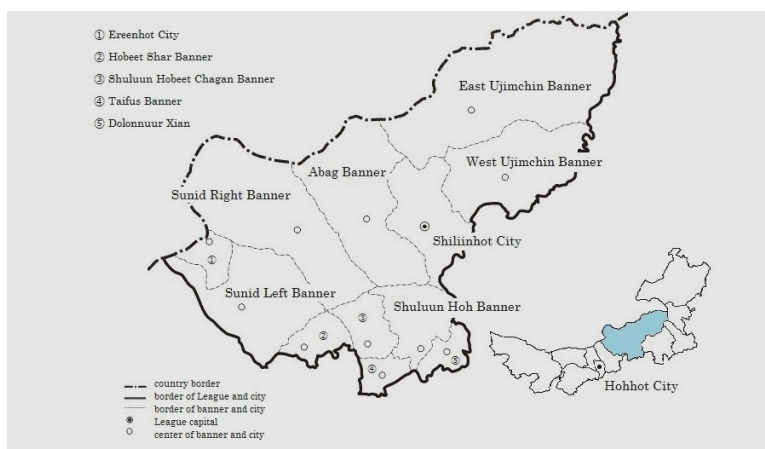
## A Case Study of Language as a Medium of Instruction of Mongolian Schools in Inner Mongolia

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Key words: minority education, medium of instruction, Inner Mongolia

### 1. Introduction

This paper is a report about a research on the issues pertaining to the minority language education of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. It focuses on the current situations related to the heritage of the mother tongue in the Mongolian minority schools in the pastoral area, such as the Ujimchin area (Map. 1). It also shows the school choice and the medium of instruction of the Mongolian minority schools and some Chinese schools which are located in the said area. The aim of this paper is to show the connection between the school choice and the language used as the medium of instruction.



**Map. 1:** Map of Shiliingol League, Inner Mongolia

In elementary schools of Inner Mongolia, students have been studying three languages since the 1990's, Mongolian as the mother tongue; Chinese as the second language; and English as the foreign language. In the first grade, Mongolian and Chinese are being taught in class. Their number of lessons in one week has a ratio of

10:3 respectively. Students then begin to study all of the three languages as early as third grade. Mongolian, Chinese and English have a ratio of 7:4:3 based on their number of lessons in one week. However, the result of the interviews conducted among language teachers concludes that they find it difficult to get a good evaluation from this kind of situation of language education. A Mongolian teacher said in an interview that the three-language education in lower grades of elementary schools causes negative implications and confusion towards learning their native language which is Mongolian.

## 2. The Medium of Instruction of the Mongolian Schools

**Table 1: Schools and languages in Inner Mongolia**

Schools	Mongolian A-Type	Mongolian B-Type	Chinese
Medium of instruction	Mongolian	Chinese	Chinese
Language 2	Chinese	English	English
Language 3	English	Mongolian	—

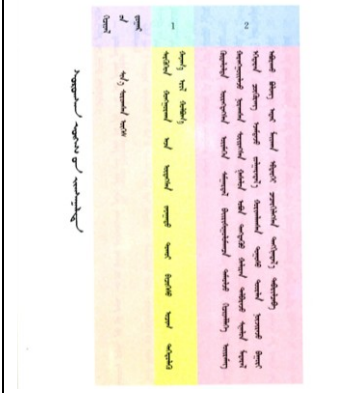

Sources: The time tables of the Mongolian schools and Chinese school in Hohhot and West Ujimchin Banner.

Mongolian parents and students have a common question to ask as soon as the latter enter elementary school, which language between Mongolian and Chinese has to be used as the medium of instruction in their studies. Table 1 shows the two types of Mongolian schools and their languages in Inner Mongolia: the A-Type which is called “*hūhe angγi*” in Mongolian and B-Type or “*hūhegčín angγi*”. In A-Type, Mongolian is the medium of instruction. Chinese and English are added as a subject to study. This type is the main style in Inner Mongolia, especially in the pastoral area. On the other hand, Chinese is the medium of instruction in B-Type, having Mongolian and English added as subjects. This type is mainly executed in the big cities, and also out outside of Inner Mongolia. The textbooks and teaching materials vary for each type. In some cases, both types coexist in one school. These two types have been widely used by the other minority areas such as Uyghur and Tibet. In Chinese school<sup>1</sup> there haven’t any minority languages to study, English is a foreign language.

<sup>1</sup> Chinese school, in the minority areas they distinguish the ethnic schools from Chinese school, in Mongolian called ‘kitad surγayuli’(Han-Chinese school).

For the Mongolian elementary students, having to learn three kinds of languages in A-Type brings a large amount of difficulties for them. Some teachers said that learning three languages is hard for lower grades to understand the sounds and vowels of each language. Sometimes, it results with losing the mother tongue. The B-Type confirms that the mother tongue changes as foreign language level. They need an assistance of Chinese language to learn Mongolian. Figure 1-1 shows a vocabulary list from a textbook of A-type; and 1-2 is a list from a textbook for B-Type. In 1-2, we can confirm that all the Mongolian vocabulary are translated into Chinese, which means that they have to know Chinese as the first step, and then learn Mongolian. This is similar to the traditional method of foreign language acquisition. In this case, they use second language to learn Mongolian.

**Figure 1: Two Types of Mongolian Vocabulary List**

1-1	1-2
	

Sources: 1-1, Dumdadu bay\_a suryayuli-yin kele bičig nairayulqu jöblel (2011:238).

1-2, Dumdadu bay\_a suryayuli-yin kele bičig nairayulqu jöblel (2009:91).

Table 2 shows the races and the languages used as medium of instruction of the students in the West Ujimchin Banner. There are five preschools, two elementary schools, one junior high school and one high school, all having Chinese as the medium of instruction. Their classifications are seen in the races and in the medium of instruction of Table 2. There are 3,141 Mongolian students in the Classification of Races under the Elementary School column. But there are 2,139 students who study in Mongolian in the Medium of Instruction under the same column. Such kind of

diversities can be observed from all levels. The percentages of nonnative language educating Mongolian students in all levels within one academic year are as follow: 48.6% in the preschools; 31.9% in the elementary schools; 14.9% in the junior high schools; 13.1% in the high school. In the case of some preschool more than 50% of learners are Mongolian students who study in Chinese. This ratio has been growing year after year. And, because a lot of Mongolian students reject studying in Mongolian at Mongolian schools, it results a vicious circle to the Mongolian minority education damaged. It will become even worse in the future and might face a crisis on minority education. Because of the school choice, Mongolian children prefer to study at Chinese schools as the medium of instruction rather than Mongolian.

**Table 2: The Students in Races and in the Medium of Instruction** (people)

Stages	Preschool	Elementary School	Junior High School	High School	Total
Total	651	4,430	1,799	1,319	8,199
Classification of the Races					
Mongolian	399	3,141	1,521	1,052	6,113
Han-Chinese	245	1,227	263	247	1,983
Others <sup>2</sup>	7	62	15	20	104
Classification of the Medium of Instruction					
Mongolian	205	2,139	1,295	914	4,553
Chinese	446	2,291	504	405	3,646
Nonnative Language Educated Mongolian Students					
	194	1,002	226	138	1,560
	48.6%	31.9%	14.9%	13.1%	25.5%

Sources: ‘A statistics of students in the West Ujimchin Banner 2009’.

### 3. Conclusion

This paper is a report about a research on issues pertaining to the minority language education of Inner Mongolia. It focuses on the Mongolian minority schools in the pastoral areas. From the situation of B-Type schools, we can conclude that it is a

<sup>2</sup> Includes the minority groups are, Hui, Manchu and Dawur.

heritage language education. The empowerment of the two languages is observable. The different settings in society, school and family has affected the situation about the language use and environment of Mongolian and Chinese. For the Mongolian students, it is a great handicap and is very challenging to do. It will also influence the coverage of minority education. And because they evade such kind of caps, recently a large number of minority students enter Chinese schools unavoidably. Due to the backdrop of the language contact in Inner Mongolia at the preschool stage more effort needs to be put into teaching the native language. Therefore, the ratio of Mongolian students who study in Chinese is growing yearly. However, so many Mongolian students reject studying in Mongolian at Mongolian schools, which leads the Mongolian minority education being damaged, and will become even, more damaged in the future.

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## 内モンゴルにおける教授言語に関する事例

ボルジギン・ムンクバト

### 【要約】

本稿は、内モンゴルにおけるモンゴル民族学校の教授言語に関する事例研究である。内モンゴルにおいては、民族学校に「甲乙式」の学校や学級がある。それは教授言語がモンゴル語かないかによって区別されている。甲式はモンゴル語が教授言語、乙式は漢語が教授言語である。他の少数民族地域においても同様な例がある。それと並行して漢族学校もある。その意味で、子供たちにとって学校選択により何語で教育を受けるかが決定される。内モンゴル内外何れにおいても地域的差がある。地方において、民族学校と漢族学校しかない状況で、漢族学校に数多くにモンゴル人子供が在籍する現状である。民族学校の児童生徒の減少と母語教育を受けることができない実態である。それは、民族教育の存亡に関わる大きな課題になりつつあると言える。