



## **The Current Status of English Education in Mongolia**

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### **Biography:**

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### **Abstract:**

This essay describes the developments of English language education in the People's Republic of Mongolia since the country's democratic revolution in 1990. Although the use of English in Mongolia has been thriving since this time, virtually no information about this phenomenon has been reported. Therefore, an overview of the country's English language planning policy and governmental and non-governmental English language projects since 1990 will be provided. The acquisition of English among Mongolian students will also be discussed through an evaluation of a study conducted at the National University of Mongolia. Finally, the implications of English on the general education system and the population will also be described in detail.

## I. Country Background

A landlocked country located between China and Russian Siberia, Mongolia was for many years unknown to the outside world. With a population of less than three million in an area almost the size of Alaska, (CIA World Factbook, 2000) Mongolia was for centuries a land of nomadic herders and itinerant traders. Indeed, “their location in North Asia, with its extremes in temperatures and resultant short growing season, precludes intensive agriculture. Grasslands in the central part of the country have traditionally sustained most of the Mongol population, who tended sheep, goats, yaks, horses, and camels” (Rossabi, 1998). From before the time of Christ, separate clans and tribes occasionally clashed; however, the bulk of the inhabitants remained intertwined through the commonalities of the Mongolian language (a member of the Ural-Altai family), an observance of Shamanism and sky-god worship (known in Mongolian as *Tenger*) and the traditional nomadic responsibilities of hospitality and cooperation.

Mongolia’s relative isolation ended in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the country’s tiny population and unfamiliarity to the outside world, the influence of Mongolia would soon stretch well beyond its borders. Genghis Khan, who began uniting Mongolia’s disparate clans in his young adulthood, eventually coalesced the Mongolians into a fighting force the world had never seen. In a matter of decades they had, “...captured and controlled the Silk Roads. He (Genghis Khan) had conquered all the way west through Central Asia and Russia to the Caspian Sea, south past Beijing to the Yellow River, and southwest to Persia. It is still the largest empire ever conquered under one man’s rule” (Sabloff, 2001).

After the death of Genghis Khan and his immediate offspring, the Mongol empire dissipated, resulting in the introversion of the country over the ensuing centuries. One major reform did occur during this period when, “Late in the sixteenth century, one khan sought to use religion as a unifying force. He invited what eventually turned out to be the third Dalai Lama to Mongolia to instruct and perhaps to convert the Mongolian elite to Tibetan Buddhism. The nobles as well as commoners converted virtually en masse” (Rossabi, 2). Four centuries later, Tibetan Buddhism remains the predominant religion in the country.

Due to its small nomadic population and lack of military capacity, Mongolia was easy prey for the expansionist Qing dynasty of China in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Mongolia fell under Chinese suzerainty, and did not gain independence until the collapse of the Qing in 1911. This autonomy was short lived however, as only a decade later, Russian troops and their Mongolian supporters arrived on the heels of the Bolshevik revolution and established the world’s second Communist nation in 1921. Though Mongolia retained its independent status from Moscow, its citizens found themselves isolated from the outside world as they were subjected to the domination of a totalitarian regime. For decades, Mongolia underwent forced collectivization and industrialization. It was not until seventy years later, when the Soviet Union collapsed, that Mongolia finally achieved its liberation with a peaceful democratic revolution.

As their former Communist patron disintegrated in 1990, Mongolia was immediately plunged into economic chaos due to the revocation of their primary economic support. The people of Mongolia, with virtually no experience and after years of socialist planning, were suddenly forced to enter the competitive global market. “During the early 1990’s, inflation

reached a high of 300%, shop shelves were bare, people lost their jobs...in an effort to cope with the collapse, which was estimated as equal to the sudden loss of 50% of the entire national expenditure”(Mayhew, 2001). After several years of dire economic conditions, the country slowly began to climb the road to reconstruction. Mongolians learned how to function in a market economy, as the international community contributed large amounts of aid. Now that fifteen years have passed since Mongolia became democratic, the capital of Ulaanbaatar and the small towns that dot the steppe and the Gobi desert have changed dramatically. The land of the blue sky, while playing host to fast food, the Internet and international cinema, is now also undergoing the social and systemic upheaval that is faced by many other newly independent nations. As historian Nasan Dashdendeviin Bumaa states:

“...Mongolia has achieved its goals, that is, independence and democracy within a market economy structure, but the cost has been high. Many lost their lives; even more suffered from economic, physical and human rights deprivations during the frequent periods of restructuring; and the incessant intergenerational struggle continues”(2001).

*Soon after the gates were opened to the flood of Westernization, Mongolians quickly realized that their new system demanded a new foreign language. The Russian tongue of their former Soviet big brother had served them well for many years, but if Mongolians hoped to enter the global free market, communication in English was of paramount importance. Therefore, a change in the*

*linguistic policy of the educational system was vital if the coming generation was expected to contribute to the development of the new Mongolia.*

## **II. English Language Planning Policy Since the Democratic Revolution**

### **Governmental Policies and Programs**

The democratic revolution of 1990 not only had a substantial impact on the nation's economy, but also had profound consequences for the entire Mongolian educational structure. Due to the withdrawal of economic resources and the comprehensive reorientation of the society, Mongolian schools suffered immensely. This was especially discouraging to the general population and the education system, as despite being an isolated and restrictive Communist nation, the Mongolian government successfully provided access to quality universal education for the entire country. This task was exceptionally challenging as the population was dispersed over an enormous area and contained a large percentage that was frequently mobile (as in the case of nomadic pastoralists). By the end of the 1980's, the astonishingly high adult literacy rate was, according to official statistics, 99% (Khamsi & Stolpe, 2004).

During the first years of the 1990's, when the economic crisis was at its most dire, and before the international community began contributing substantially to the development of the country, schools across Mongolia endured unprecedented dropout rates and a significant reduction in student performance. As Mongolian schools are particularly difficult to finance due to harsh weather conditions and a partially

nomadic population (Ibid, 6), the early 1990's were especially taxing for Mongolian students and teachers alike. However, after more than a decade of assistance and the steady enhancement of the economy, the education system is currently recovering. Although official statistics do not place overall student performance at pre-1990 levels, many schools and institutions are gradually advancing and may meet their primary goals of increased student test scores and improvement in students' general abilities in languages and sciences by the end of the current decade (Namsrai, 2003).

Amidst the reorientation of the educational system in the early 1990's, a major issue surfaced that had not been previously addressed. Up until that time, Russian had been the premier foreign language taught in secondary schools and universities across the country. Russian also functioned as the premier second language in many academic, business and political contexts. As Mongolia was a satellite nation that was culturally and politically attached to the greater Soviet empire, the Russian language was of such great importance that knowledge of it was often a requirement for higher education and many professional positions (Namsrai, 5).

With the collapse of Mongolia's Communist system, the numerous bureaucratic positions, study abroad opportunities and business ventures that required a working knowledge of Russian ceased almost completely. The casual use and study of Russian also quickly lost prestige for the general population, as Mongolians discovered its limited use outside of the former U.S.S.R. Now that Mongolia was finally beginning to recognize the West and its pervasive influence, the understanding that English was of vital importance began to take hold. The linguistic map of the world had shifted significantly during the seventy years of Mongolia's isolation, and its people were

only now coming to realize that English, not Russian, had become the preeminent international language.

As English was rarely studied in Mongolia previously, teachers were virtually nonexistent when English began to spread throughout the country after the democratic revolution. Before 1990, the study of English was strictly confined to the select few students in the National University of Mongolia's interpreter class, and qualified teachers of the language numbered less than a dozen (Ibid, 5). The Education Ministry therefore concluded that in order to overcome the pressing lack of English teachers, a large-scale program to retrain former Russian teachers needed to be undertaken. Beginning in 1992, the government began training teachers in academic-year intensive training courses. Since the graduation of the first class, approximately 400 Russian language teachers have been trained to serve as English teachers, and the majority of them are currently teaching in secondary schools in the city and countryside (Ibid, 5). Each major state university in the capital of Ulaanbaatar (National University of Mongolia, University of the Humanities, Mongolian Technical University, Mongolian Teacher's Institute) has also established bachelors and masters of arts programs for English teacher preparation. As of 2003, there were a total of 634 English teachers working at state secondary schools, 64 teaching in state college or university departments, and approximately another 50 working in private secondary schools or universities (Mongolian Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2003).

Due to the increasing influence of English in the early 1990's, the study of the language grew tremendously in secondary schools and private institutes across the country. In light of this, the government decided that an official policy on language

teaching needed to be made if fundamental reforms were to be instituted at the national level. Although several major but unofficial reforms in language education had been instituted several years beforehand (such as the teacher retraining courses discussed above), the Ministry of Education did not make an official policy decision on the teaching of English language until 1995. Even after its policy had been approved, the government still had not appreciated the overwhelming influence that English had achieved in just a few short years:

A specific policy was adopted by the Ministry of Education in January 1995. The first policy made the study of Russian and English mandatory for all secondary and university students with more emphasis on the learning of Russian. After a year however, this policy was revised because it had become obvious by then that English was essential...and as a result, English usurped the place formerly occupied by the Russian language”(Namsrai, 3).

The National Policy on Teaching Foreign Languages of 1995 officially stated that students entering the fifth grade of a public state school had the choice to study English or Russian. Students were then required to study their chosen language for six years (from fifth grade, approximately the age of thirteen, to graduation in tenth grade, approximately the age of eighteen) for a total of 655 hours (National Policy on Teaching Foreign Languages, 2). As soon as this policy was implemented, students overwhelmingly chose to study English, thereby forcing the government to increase the number of English teachers at the secondary level, and increase the percentage of

English classes as compared to Russian to almost two to one. The number of English students further burgeoned as a result, and according to parents across the country, English became the most important subject for students to master (Namsrai, 4).

A further change to English language education was implemented with the victory of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) in the national election of 2000. The newly elected parliament drafted a white paper stating that English should receive further emphasis in the education system due to Mongolia's integration with the world economy, the rise of tourism and the overall benefits of studying the primary international language (2000). The government has mandated that wherever possible, students should begin studying English in the fourth grade, and that all English students should continue studying in the newly added eleventh grade. The plan is set to take effect in late 2005 and would increase total student classroom hours at the time of graduation from 655 to over 700, and increase the total years studied from five to, in some cases, seven (Mongolian Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2000).

#### *Governmental and Non-Governmental English Language Projects Since 1990*

Despite the Mongolian government's efforts to address the needs of teachers and students, the lack of substantial funds and expertise hindered the continued development of the country's fledgling English policies. This paucity of economic resources prevented necessary improvements from taking place, such as in-service training and the provision of adequate materials. Retrained English teachers and university graduates found themselves teaching with an inadequate grasp of the

language, lack of a concrete understanding of TEFL methodology and few English language or classroom resources. As the Ministry of Education finally began to realize how crucial the study of English language was, it embarked on several cooperative projects with international organizations and NGO's to assist in the implementation of English teaching across the country.

In 1991 the Ministry of Education signed its first memorandum of understanding with an international organization with the express purpose of providing English language teaching in the capital of Ulaanbaatar and the countryside. Since then, The U.S. Peace Corps and the Ministry of Education have worked to partner volunteer EFL teachers with Mongolian counterparts in university English departments and secondary schools. Governmental education centers in provincial capitals (*aimags*) have also accepted dozens of Peace Corps teacher trainers over the last decade to conduct workshops in TEFL methodology and teaching skills. Peace Corps teacher trainers have also been responsible for retraining Russian teachers in aimags with severe shortages of English teachers. The Peace Corps was also the first organization in Mongolia to sponsor the composition of culturally appropriate English language learning materials and curricula.

Another major project commenced in 1996, when the Ministry of Education's division of secondary education, in partnership with the Ulaanbaatar English for Special Purposes Institute, received a grant from the Asian Development Bank to conduct teacher training in various aimags. The National Teacher Training Program organized methodology workshops for a total of 310 teachers over a four-year period from late 1996 to the end of the academic year of 2000 (NTTP, 2000). The series of

bi-yearly workshops focused on developing the abilities of teachers who had only received the Ministry of Education's academic-year standard training course in English and who desired additional language development and assistance in understanding basic communicative teaching methods.

Despite efforts by the NTTP, Peace Corps, Volunteer Services Overseas and other organizations, English teachers were still not receiving satisfactory training in language development and methodology due to their limited amount of study. In a survey conducted in 2001 among 84 countryside and 62 city secondary school English teachers, 82% stated that their academic-year retraining course and bi-yearly 1-2 day workshops were still unsatisfactory in assisting them to teach to the best of their ability. When asked to compare their experiences learning English with their previous Russian education, respondents overwhelmingly stated that their training in Russian language and methodology was far more extensive and detailed than their study of English (Cohen, 2001). This is due to the fact that all Russian teachers during the Communist period studied Russian for at least 7-10 years, and many received further training for an academic year somewhere in the Soviet Union. Even though it was financially impossible for the newly independent Mongolian government to train new English teachers on the same level as they were trained in Russian only decades previously, the survey results indicated that it was imperative for English teachers across the country to receive additional development.

In order to accomplish this objective on a systemic level, the Ministry of Education initiated a project with the Soros Foundation to create a team of certified Mongolian teacher trainers. Two teachers from each *aimag* (total of 44), 20 teachers from

Ulaanbaatar secondary schools and 15 university lecturers were selected to participate in a year long course in language development, methodology, teacher training and mentoring. Upon graduation, each teacher returned to their school district, university department or aimag and assumed responsibility for conducting in-service teacher training workshops, mentoring sessions and testing and evaluation of students and faculty. Since the establishment of the project in 2003, over 35 one-day workshops, 30 several-day seminars and over 100 mentoring sessions have been conducted (Soros Foundation Mongolia Report, 2003). The project has been one of the most successful attempts at in-service teacher education to date, as the training and programs are entirely organized by Mongolian teachers, and all seminars and workshops are designed expressly for local educators (Ibid, 9)

In 1998 the Ministry of Education also established a partnership with the Soros Foundation to produce a set of English textbooks for secondary schools. Until then, English classes at state secondary schools were unstandardized and teachers were unable to properly ascertain their students' levels based on explicit criteria. Teachers also had tremendous difficulties in planning their lessons, as teaching resources and textbooks were almost completely unavailable. The first series of the textbooks was completed for grades 5-10 in 2000 (the entire series is currently being reedited to include new material) and now that the textbooks are being used at every state secondary school in the country, the Ministry of Education has been able to draft an official series of changes to its national English language curriculum.

The curriculum standards for English language teaching, which were revised in 2003

and will be officially instituted in 2005, address the following areas:

- All English classes and teachers' syllabi should be based on specific competencies in the four skills found in the national textbook series.
- All testing and evaluation will be based on these competencies.
- Learning through the communicative and constructivist approaches will be emphasized.
- If teachers use topics and subjects outside of the textbook, they must be culturally and educationally appropriate.
- The teaching of grammar should be integrated and tested with the four skills, and not taught as a separate subject (N. Mira, 2003).

As English grows to an even higher level of popularity, new developments in English education in Mongolia will likely occur in the coming years. In 2000, the MPRP government promulgated an official white paper on English education. It stated that the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with participating international organizations, should seek to do the following: diversify the English resources of schools across the country, further update English curricula to a concomitant level with "international" standards and construct English "villages" for summer school programs.

However, with the recent ousting of the MPRP by the Democratic Coalition in the June parliamentary election of 2004, whether these promises will be met is currently unclear. The newly elected coalition has also not yet stated its official policy on English education. What is apparent, however, is that English has become one of the most important keys to the overall success of the Mongolian education system, and continuing the advancement of English education at the secondary and tertiary level will most likely be a high priority for any future government.

### **III. Issues of English Acquisition among Mongolian Students**

Due to the paucity of English speaking students in the country until only a decade ago, there has previously been little opportunity to study how Mongolians acquire and learn English. As the number of students and users has risen steadily since 1990 to make English the most widely learned language in Mongolia, the issue of English acquisition among the population has become a vital one. Therefore, a more complete understanding of how Mongolians learn English can contribute to more effective teaching practices by native and nonnative teachers in the country, and assist in the creation of more relevant curricula. Finally, another major reason why it is important to discover the learning capacities of Mongolian students is that English speakers throughout Mongolia, like in many other countries, are beginning to compose their own form of nonstandard English. As Bhatt states, “Linguistic and literary creativity in English is determined less by the usage of its native speakers and more by the usage of nonnative speakers, who outnumber native speakers 4:1”(2001). “Mongolian English”

serves as a language of communication in many instances, and influences the acquisition and general use of the language in the country. Appreciating the development of Mongolian English can therefore provide further insights into how English is acquired in the country.

Observing the distinctive areas where learners either possess a high degree of interference between the L1 and L2, have particular learning difficulties, or display surprising ease can assist teachers in elucidating the specific needs of Mongolian students. However, as no data had been previously collected on the subject of English acquisition among Mongolian students, an observational study was conducted in 2003 at the National University of Mongolia in order to meet this goal. Two English classes containing 15 and 17 senior year students each (ages ranged from 19-25) were monitored over the course of the academic year. Both classes were general English courses, and held students who began the course testing at an intermediate to high-intermediate level.

From September until January and from mid-February to June, students' daily classroom performance, assignments, exams and essay samples were monitored and evaluated by the course instructor. Students were also individually interviewed on a monthly basis, asked to complete a survey on discrete grammatical subjects taught in the course, and kept a journal addressing their particular language learning difficulties. Through the above methods, observational data were culled on the acquisitional capabilities of the study participants and the specific areas of learning where students had the most difficulty. The topics discussed below represent the areas that were most revealing of the survey participants' learning abilities, and indicate some of the

particularities unique to Mongolian English language learners (*See Appendix I for further detail on this study*).

### **1) Verb Tenses**

Among the thirty-two students surveyed, the overwhelming majority had difficulty in acquiring the past perfect and future perfect. These two tenses caused more problems and mistakes (both written and spoken) than any of the other verb tenses combined. Present perfect, the progressive tenses and even irregular past tense verb usage caused much less of a problem for students. Many students noted in their journals that the major reasons for this were due to the comparisons and contrasts between the Mongolian and English verb tense system. The past and future perfect are theoretically evident in Mongolian, but are virtually absent from the colloquial language (Kullman, 1996), and although Mongolian operates on a largely 3 tense system (past, present, future), a present perfect equivalent and future and past progressives can be easily formed through aspectual changes in the syntax.

### **2) Articles**

The difficulty in article acquisition for EFL learners who speak an L1 that does not contain definite and indefinite articles is well known (*for an introduction to the particular issues faced by these speakers, see Murcia & Freeman, 1999*). The Mongolian language does not contain articles, but rather forms definite and indefinite constructions by using specific numbers, word order or case endings (Kullman, 87). The bulk of student article errors on exams and essays dealt with substitution of *one* for *a* or *an* and word order inversion when a definite article is required—especially by

shifting the object to the head of the sentence. For example, the following correct statement with a definite article, “*I ate lunch at the cafeteria yesterday.*” would be improperly changed to, “*The cafeteria, I ate lunch there yesterday.*” Students also had particular trouble using the definite article for collective nouns and often substituted a plural –s marker in its place, e.g. *the rich, the majority, the infirm* mistakenly changed to *riches, majorities, infirms*. This is most likely due to L1 interference, as collective subject nouns are often pluralized in Mongolian.

### 3) The Eight Major Mongolian Case Suffixes

Modern Mongolian has eight cases, and each is formed by suffixation with the root word. The following table displays each case with its equivalent English meaning.

(Kullman, 78):

Cases:	Meaning:	Transliteration & Meaning
Nominative	Who	<i>Ger-Home</i> (No suffix in nominative case)
Genitive	Whose	<i>Ger(een)-The home's</i>
Dative-Locative	To whom	<i>Ger(t)-To, in the home</i>
Accusative	Whom	<i>Ger(iig)-The home</i>
Ablative	From whom	<i>Ger(eec)-From home</i>
Instrumental	By whom	<i>Ger(air)-By, through home</i>
Comitative	With whom	<i>Gereenkhen(tei)-With home (family)</i>
Directive	Towards whom	<i>Ger(pyy)-Towards home</i>

The eight above cases function as the basis of noun phrase structure, and as such, they

are essential to the form and meaning of basic Mongolian syntax. Due to this, Mongolian EFL learners suffer a high level of interference in English grammatical areas that relate directly to their basic L1 case structure. The following examples illustrate the specific problematic features that the bulk of those surveyed reported difficulty with in their journals. Student opinions were confirmed by analyzing the results of their exams and essay assignments.

**A. Nominative-**As the nominative case does not allow suffixation, students had few problems with this case. However, as Mongolian does not distinguish between sexes in the third person singular, there is often confusion between *he* and *she*. Those surveyed also at times struggled when addressing someone substantially older or younger. This was due to the lack of separate words based on formality in the second person singular (*you*) in English, while Mongolian possesses *ta* for elders, and *chee* for those younger or familiar.

**B. Genitive-**The genitive construction in Mongolian is relatively similar to that of English. Basic genitive constructions such as: *the moon's light*, *my friend's chair* and *the dog's collar* are essentially identical to those in English. The major difference in the genitive case lies in the lack of the partitive preposition *of* in the Mongolian grammar. Examples such as: “*This is a good part **of** the movie*” and, “*That is a picture **of** my mother*”, are structurally impossible in Mongolian. Therefore, deficient English examples such as, “*This is John's picture*” (John does not own the picture but rather, it is a picture *of* John), and “Do you like the steppe's flowers?” (The steppe does not own

the flowers—they are flowers *of* the steppe) were frequently uttered by students.

**C. Dative**-The dative case ending in Mongolian (*d* or *t*) can be translated as: *at, in, to* or *on*. There was therefore a high degree of confusion between these prepositions among many of the less advanced students.

**D. Accusative**-The accusative case in Mongolian is equivalent to the definite article and demonstrative pronoun in English, and does not distinguish between the two. The survey participants therefore often misinterpreted the usage difference between *the* and *this* or *that*.

**E. Ablative**-The ablative case is very commonly used in Mongolian. Not only is it used in the same situations as English, e.g. “Where are you **from**?” “*I received a letter from my brother.*” etc., but it is also commonly used in many other important grammatical constructions. The following examples taken from student essays, illustrates the problem of over usage due to direct translation from the L1. The students often used the ablative case unnecessarily in interrogative structures such as: “*Please ask from me.*” comparative sentences such as: “*This book is better from that book.*” and some cause and effect statements such as: “**From** the rain, we couldn’t go hiking.”

**F. Instrumental**-The main point of interference in this example results from the overuse of the word *by*. The Mongolian language uses a single suffix (listed above) for

most English instrumental prepositions (*by, of, through, along* and *as*). Based on their exam results, and total time spent in class reviewing the subject, the acquisition of these prepositions and their proper instrumental usages, was particularly difficult for those surveyed. Even at the end of the academic year, the higher-level students admitted that they continued to have difficulty in using the English instrumental case properly.

**G. Comitave**-The usage of this case is nearly identical to that of English, and therefore causes little trouble among Mongolian learners.

**H. Directive**-This case translates as the English *to* or *towards*. The usage and sentence position is almost the same as in English, and students had little trouble in mastering it.

#### **4. Active Versus Passive**

The difference between forming active and passive constructions, and the appropriate usage of them in discourse, presented surprisingly little difficulty for the survey participants. Typical passive constructions, such as: “*Minerals are being mined in the Gobi desert*” “*They were caught by the police*” and, “*We were taken for a ride*” are formed in Mongolian simply by adding a causative suffix to the verb. However, as Murcia and Freeman state, “...it is learning when to use the English passive that presents the greatest long-term challenge to ESL/EFL students”(344). In light of the students’ actual usage, the majority of those surveyed also had little trouble in replicating the appropriate passive structures at the appropriate times. This was due to

the similar nature of passive voice usage in Mongolian and English. Students noted many situational examples where passive is used in both languages, such as: when the agent is unknown, the communicator is being delicate or attempting to shift focus from the agent, or if the agent is obvious and unnecessary to supply.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The rise of English in the last decade has had a profound impact on all aspects of Mongolian society. Mongolians have realized the integral role that English currently plays as an international language and are therefore struggling to learn it as rapidly as possible. As Mongolia has recently attempted to integrate itself with the global economy, English has become the preoccupation of virtually every professional in the capital city, and is a requirement for almost every job interview at international organizations and businesses. “If the popularity of English grows anymore,” as a professor of English mentioned, “it will become a virtual second language among our younger generation.”(S. Hongorzul, 2003)

As the functionality of English in public and private spheres increases, the notion that English may become a “virtual second language” among the next generation of professional Mongolians may potentially occur. Not only is English becoming a necessity in Mongolian offices, but its usage in the country is also blossoming due to the internationalization of the arts (pop music & cinema), mass media (the Internet, television news and radio broadcasts in English) and most of all, the influx of foreign

tourists and investment in the decade since the fall of Communism.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, due to the fact that the total speakers of Mongolian number less than eight million worldwide, and the total population of the People's Republic of Mongolia is less than three million, knowledge of English is almost a necessity in communicating with and understanding the outside world. As English has only recently been introduced in Mongolia, and the education system and country have still not fully modernized, it may still be quite some time before English becomes as widely used, and the fluency of its population becomes as strong, as is evidenced in other nations. To what degree English becomes further integrated into the fabric of Mongolian society, and whether or not it will truly become an integral second or foreign language will be answered in the years to come. Whatever the case may be, one important fact remains for the future generation of Mongolians: English is here to stay.

#### **Appendix I: Research Methodology and Results for Survey on English Acquisition at the National University of Mongolia**

- 1) **Purpose of the Study:** To determine what aspects, if any, of English grammar acquisition are unique to Mongolian learners. To discover the reasons for these particularities through classroom monitoring and student interviews.
  
- 2) **Background on Survey Participants:** 2 sophomore-year general English classes were observed of 15 and 17 students respectively. The students ranged in ages

from 19 to 25 and began the class with intermediate to high-intermediate language levels. All students spoke Mongolian as their first language.

### 3) **Data Sources:**

**A) Classroom Observation, Assignments, Essays & Exams:** Individual student performance was monitored on a weekly basis by the instructor, through classroom observation, the grading of various assignments and exams and the reading of student essays. All errors in students' productive skill areas (speaking & writing) in the grammar topics that were explicitly taught or reviewed during the course period were noted by the instructor. At the end of each semester, any commonalities in the class's rate of errors or general acquisition of grammatical patterns was evaluated in the attempt to discover the specific causes of students' particular learning failures or successes.

**B) Student Journals & Interviews:** Students kept a weekly journal of their language learning and recorded and evaluated their own performance. The students were then interviewed on a monthly basis by the instructor, who is an advanced speaker of Mongolian, and discussed the reasons why certain aspects of English grammar proved either challenging or facile for them. The following table displays the mutual conclusions of the students and instructor on each of the topics that was either taught or reviewed in class during the academic year. The topics of the study that proved most enlightening of Mongolian students are discussed in detail above.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Analysis</b>
1) Phrasal Verbs	As in many other languages, phrasal verbs are non-existent in Mongolian. Therefore, students had many difficulties with aspects of PV formation and separation.
2) Partitives & Collective Nouns	See above for more detail.
3) Past Perfect	See above for more detail.
4) Articles	See above for more detail.
5) Subject-Verb Agreement	Students reported this topic to be difficult, especially when writing. Nothing particular seemed to cause any specific problems for the Mongolian students however. Students merely noted that the lack of English style S-V agreement in Mongolian was to blame for any learning obstacles.
6) Prepositions	See the section, “The Eight Major Mongolian Case Suffixes” above for more detail.
7) Comparatives	The only specific problem in this topic stemmed from the overuse of the ablative case. See the section on ablative case under “The Eight Major Mongolian Case Suffixes” above for more detail.
8) Future Perfect	See the section on “Past Perfect” above.
9) Conditionals	This topic was fairly simple for those surveyed to master. Students noted that conditionals are formed

	through relatively similar syntax in English and Mongolian.
10) Relative Clauses	Students found this topic to be of comparatively little trouble, as their L1 forms relative clauses in a similar fashion as English.
11) Present Perfect	This topic, and its meaning differences between simple past, caused little difficulty for the Mongolian student. See the section on “Verb Tenses” for more detail.
12) Plurals	Mongolian has a far more complex methodology of forming plural nouns than English. Therefore, the simple –s suffix and other plural exceptions, presented little difficulty for those surveyed.
13) Passive Voice	See above for more detail.
14) Reported Speech	The similarities between the L1 and L2 in the form and usage of this topic made this easy for both surveyed groups.
15) Past Tense (Including Irregular Verbs)	A typical problem for almost all language students, irregular past tense verbs caused surprisingly little trouble for the surveyed students. Students merely noted that this was due to their ability in rote memorization of the irregular past tense forms. This topic should be further studied, as irregular verbs are completely absent from the Mongolian language, and therefore should in theory present more problems than they did in the two groups

	surveyed.
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**C) Student Survey:** At the end of the academic year, the students were asked to rate their comparative opinions on each of the major grammar topics that were covered during the entire survey period. The following table displays the ratings for each topic in descending order of difficulty. The information provided further evidence for discussion on the grammar acquisition issues of the surveyed group.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>4 (Very Difficult)</b>	<b>3 (Difficult)</b>	<b>2 (Less Difficult)</b>	<b>1 (Easy)</b>	<b>Average Rated Difficulty (Out of 32 Respondents)</b>
1) Phrasal Verbs	23	6	3	0	3.625
2) Partitives & Collective Nouns	18	10	4	0	3.4375
3) Past Perfect	20	5	3	4	3.28125
4) Articles	17	10	0	5	3.21875
5) Subject-Verb Agreement	13	8	8	3	2.96875
6) Prepositions	15	6	4	7	2.90625
7) Comparatives	6	15	9	2	2.78125
8) Future Perfect	8	12	3	9	2.59375

9) Conditionals	7	10	5	10	2.4375
10) Relative Clauses	7	9	7	9	2.4375
11) Present Perfect	8	8	4	12	2.375
12) Plurals	9	5	7	11	2.15625
13) Passive Voice	4	8	5	15	2.03125
14) Reported Speech	2	3	11	16	1.90625
15) Past Tense (Including Irregular Verbs)	0	4	8	20	1.5

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