

AN OUTLINE OF MÖDÖ PHONOLOGY AND GRAMMAR

1. PHONOLOGY

1.1 Consonants

Mödö has 33 (34) consonant phonemes, as follows (orthographic symbols used):

	<i>Labial</i>	<i>Dental</i>	<i>Palatal</i>	<i>Velar</i>	<i>Labio-velar</i>	<i>Glottal</i>
Implosive	'b	'd	'j			'
VI. Stops	p	t	c	k	kp	
Vd. Stops	b	d	j	g	gb	
Pre-nasalised	mb	nd	nz nj	ŋg	ŋb	
Nasals	m	n	ny	ŋ	ŋm	
VI. Fricatives	f	s				h
Vd. Fricatives	(v)	z				
Trill		r				
Lateral		l				
Approximants			y		w	

Note that in the Lörī dialect /v/ occurs in many words where southern Mödö has /b/.

1.2 Vowels

There are nine vowels in two harmony sets.

<i>Set 1</i>		<i>Set 2</i>	
ī	u	i	o
ē	ö	e	ɔ
		a	

The two sets operate in a vowel harmony system, the main feature of which is that in any single word the vowels will generally belong all to one set. There are some exceptions, the most common being that /a/ occurs in the first syllable of a number of nouns belonging to Set 1. The only operation of vowel harmony beyond the word is in the inalienable possessive construction.

dò nyòkpó	"head of the wild cat"
dò kè'dè	"head of the elephant"

1.3 Tone

Mödö has two level tones, which are a feature of the syllable; that is, each syllable bears only one distinctive tone. Long vowels are best regarded as two syllables in sequence since they may carry tone glides. These tone glides are simply a fusion of high-low or low-high on adjacent syllables.

/dàá/	“well”
/mèé/	“spear”

1.4 Syllable and word structure

Syllables in Mödö are either V or CV, so words always end in a vowel. However, in colloquial speech there is a tendency to drop final vowels after nasal consonants, which become syllabic and take the tone of the vowel.

/’déní/	perfect tense marker, is pronounced as [dén]
/témò/	“soft and squashy”, is pronounced as [tém]

A majority of words consist of two or three syllables, with some of four or five syllables, and a few monosyllables, the latter mostly pronouns and function words.

Loan words are assimilated to the Mödö syllable structure, either by adding extra vowels or by deleting final consonants.

Arabic [burɪʃ]	“mat”	----->	Mödö /bírísí/
Arabic [ʃanduːg]	“chest, trunk”	----->	Mödö /sàndúù/

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