ON SEMANTIZATION OF PHONEMES IN YAKUT FIGURATIVE VERBS
(ON THE MATERIAL FROM THE GREAT DICTIONARY OF THE YAKUT LANGUAGE)

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ABSTRACT
The phenomenon of language figurativeness is correlated with the world view and understanding that root in ethnic background knowledge of the world surrounding speakers of the language. The picture of the world is reflected in figurative verbs emotionally and expressively, thus making up the national specific character of vocabulary. Based on the material from the Great Academic Dictionary of the Yakut Language, we made a structural-semantic analysis of figurative verbs of visual perception denoting the image, appearance, walk of a stout person in the framework of the structural model Б-Л with its analogies. The analysis reveals variant words formed on this phonetic model. The semantic analysis of the root and affix parts of figurative verbs shows that all vowel and consonant phonemes in the model bear certain semantic load, resulting in all verbs becoming semantically independent and distinguishing by additional semantic nuances.

Keywords: figurative verb; structural model of figurative verbs; phonosemantics; structural semantic analysis, lexical system, ideophone.

INTRODUCTION
The Yakut language, also called the Sakha language is a Turkic language, spoken in Sakha republic, in northeastern Russia. Among Turkic languages, Yakut belongs to a special Yakut subgroup in the Uyghur-Oguz group of the East-Hun branch. The Yakut language enjoys a special place among Turkic languages due to its deviant features developed as a result of geographical isolation from other Turkic languages. In terms of its grammatical structure it is close to ancient Turkic languages, while its vocabulary is heterogeneous. The major body of words is of the common Turkic origin, however, long-term contacts of the Yakut language with old-Mongolic, Tungusic languages, and Russian greatly influenced the Yakut vocabulary. Many differences from other Turkic languages may be explained through the language of ancient runic monuments, where similar phenomena are found and their possible ways of formation are outlined (Ubryatova 1972).

A long interaction with Tungusic and Mongolic languages strongly influenced phonetics, grammar as well as vocabulary of the Yakut language. Phonosemantic and onomatopoeic words in Yakut vocabulary represent an integral system. In contrast to other Turkic languages, they are considered as two separate categories of words (Ubryatova 1982, 367). Figurative verbs appear as copies of images of sound and motion. They make up a special group due to their quantitative abundance and specific semantics. In a number of Turkic studies and grammars such words are combined with onomatopoeic words into one category (ibid, 375).
Though making up a large group in the modern Yakut language, figurative verbs of visual perception have not been studied in separate lexico-semantic groups up to the present. This paper is the first attempt to perform a structural-semantic analysis of the most productive figurative verbs of visual perception based on the model Б-Л- (БАЛ-, БЫЛ-, БЭЛ-) characterizing appearance and parts of body of a stout person.

The major research method is the structural analysis that provides a way of revealing the word formation potential of figurative verbs. We also used the componential analysis to analyze the components of a word’s meaning that allow speakers of the language to relate words to a specific semantic field using their cultural linguistic background. Using the sampling method, figurative verbs of visual action characterizing appearance and walk of a stout person were selected from a lexicographic source, the Great Dictionary of the Yakut Language (Sleptsov 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2017). The Great Dictionary of the Yakut Language includes vocabulary and phraseology of the modern literary Yakut language, common dialect words, folk terminological vocabulary, figurative words of colloquial speech, those of the language of literature now in wide use. Moreover, the Dictionary features specific folklore corpus (archaic words and phrases), formula phrases found in written texts of the Yakut epic “Olonkho”. Thereby, the Dictionary is a real code of the rich world of lexical semantics of the language of the Yakut (Sakha) through which one can cognize mentality, national character, lifestyle, and culture of Sakha people. Besides, the material from the academic card catalog for the Great Dictionary of the Yakut Language, Institute for Humanities and Problems of Indigenous Peoples of the North SB RAS was utilized.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION


Figurative words in the Yakut language were first described by a Russian political exile I.A. Khudyakov. In his book “Brief Description of the Verkhoyansk Okrug [district]” he wrote that “one cannot but notice that the Yakut language is extraordinarily rich in figurative words …” (Khudyakov 1969, 375). His work is of great importance because he was the first to collect and record a significant number (about 500) of Yakut figurative words.

Also, the early records of figurative words can be found in works of S.V. Yastremskiy (1938) and A.E. Kulakovskiy (1979). S.V. Yastremskiy noted: “Expressiveness and figurativeness are given voice thanks to so called figurative phrases” (Yastremskiy1938, 222). Aleksey Kulakovskiy referred to figurative words as ‘picturesque’, being built by “some secret laws of linguistics and (they) will long stay an unsold mystery for linguists” (Kulakovskiy 1979, 386). He also noted that ‘picturesque’ words defy record and to identify one, it is necessary to compare its meanings with those of several semantically close words (ibid, 385).

In Yakut linguistics, a certain view of figurative words was established after T.E. Sosin had compiled the “Dictionary of Figurative, Onomatopoeic, and Pair Words” in 1939 (Sosin 1939). It is then when the study of this interesting part of Yakut vocabulary started.

This way, the work by L.N. Kharitonov “Invariable Words in the Yakut Language” was published in 1943, being the first research into Yakut figurative words. He was the first who used the term ‘figurative words’. He emphasized that in terms of lexical-grammatical characteristics and usage, figurative words are distinct from other parts of speech (Kharitonov 1943). Meanings of figurative verbs, their main semantic groups, and aspect forms are extensively studied in another monograph “Types of Verbal Stem in the Yakut Language” in 1954. Here, L.N. Kharitonov recognizes three types of verbal stems: 1) verbs of action-state; 2) onomatopoeic; 3) figurative verbs. Meanings of figurative verbs are covered, where the major role is played by perception and motion, for the most part, the visual image (Kharitonov 1954, 203).
L.N. Kharitonov deepens and extends his research into the aspect forms of verbs in “Forms of the Verb Aspect in the Yakut Language” where he made a contrastive analysis of aspect forms of Yakut verbs with Turkic and Mongolic parallels for the first time. He concluded that “the system of aspect forms of figurative verbs is a characteristic feature of the Yakut language. In Turkic and Mongolic languages these forms did not fully and progressively advanced as they did in Yakut” (Kharitonov 1960, 175).

In terms of phonosemantics, figurative verbs were studied by L.A. Afanasiev. He was the first to reveal the phonosemantic nature of figurative words, to characterize vowel and consonant ideophonemes by the example of the Yakut language. He compiled a dictionary containing 3150 figurative words (Afanasiev, 1993).

In the monograph by S.D. Eginova “Figurative Adjectives of the Yakut Language (Compared with the Buryat and Kyrgyz Languages)” (Eginova 2014), a comparative analysis of Yakut figurative adjectives with those of the Buryat and Kyrgyz languages was made on a rich material through the figurative picture of the world.

Figurative and onomatopoeic words are studied in terms of expressivity by A.M. Nikolaeva. She classified this layer of Yakut vocabulary as a layer of vivid expressivity (Nikolaeva 2014). The structure and semantics of Yakut figurative verbs characterizing appearance and walk of a person are considered from the comparative-contrastive perspective, using onomatopoeic words of the Mongolian language, in the paper by S.M. Prokopieva and V.D. Monastyrev (Prokopieva, Monastyrev 2017). Universal features of Yakut and Mongolian verbs of visual perception characterizing appearance, parts of body, and walk of a person have been found.

Figurative verbs make up a separate category of words due to their specific semantics. Type semantics of figurative verbs is directly related to outward characteristics of subject’s walk (person and animal), movement, figure, pace, rhythm of motion, etc. The dominant role is played by the verbs of visual perception.

Semantically, figurative words are variant words built by a certain sound model. Diverse sound variation of figurative words serves to express subtle nuances of the same notion. It is this limitation of the semantic range that causes blurred boundaries between particular words, making it difficult to interpret the meaning of such figurative words. To illustrate, let us consider the most productive figurative words formed by the model Б-Л (БАЛ-, БЫЛ-, БЭЛ-) (see Table 1), generally characterizing appearance of a stout person, parts of their body. These roots mainly arise from onomatopoeic words, e.g. БАЛ refers to the sound of falling of a jelly-like, semifluid, or doughy substance; БЫЛ refers to flopping of a soft, semifluid substance; БЭЛ refers to flopping of a soft and moist substance (Kharitonov 1954, 260). Therefore, the sound БАЛ is associated to a wide, plump form of something of somebody; БЫЛ to a prominent fleshy substance; БЭЛ to a widely spreading form of something or somebody. The onomatopoeic roots develop their figurative semantics through verbal affixes -ҕай(-гэй), -лай(-лэй), -тай(-тэй). The variation of the affix element caused by gradation of its initial consonant contributes to formation of new lexemes that differ from other related verbs only by the form of the affix element. Therefore, the form changes not for phonetic but semantic reasons (Kharitonov 1954, 233): бал+ҕай, был+ҕай, бэл+тэй; бал+тай, был+тай, бэл+лэй; бал+лай, был+лай, бэл+тэй (see Table 1). Let us illustrate by examples from the Great Dictionary of the Yakut Language.

**AFFIX -ҕай(-ГЭЙ)**

БАЛҕай – become stout, broaden (e.g. of a stout person: Суон дьяхтар сырдығы барытын сабардаан түннүк аттыйгар балғайган түрар (Sleptsov 2005, 162). ‘A stout woman, blocking all the light, is standing broadened at the window’.

БЫЛҕай – grow too stout, with flesh unevenly bulging out (of a fat body): Дыллээх хотун Былҕай, мылтаар сирээдээх, быллайбыт суон дьяхтар (Sleptsov 2005, 699). ‘The mistress of the house Ulyana, a woman with a round face, grown fat bulging frame’.

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БЭЛГЭЙ - be, look too wide and flat (e.g. of face): Үөрэн дьэ сирэйэ бэлгэйбит дии(Sleptsov 2005, 850). ‘Of joy his face widened in smile’.

**AFFIX -ЛАЙ (-ЛЭЙ)**

БАЛЛАЙ – look swollen, expanded (e.g. of a lip, face): Ланкыы оюннъор улахан уоха ордук баллайбит, сирэйэ кытаран хаалбыт (Sleptsov 2005, 164). ‘The old Lankyy blew up his big lips, his face became red’.

БЫЛЛАЙ – 1. be too fleshy and prominent (of a lip): Хоргуппут кыра оҕолуу алларая уоха баллайын, титирээн барда (Sleptsov 2005, 854). ‘Like a child throwing a tantrum his lower lip, swollen, started trembling’.

БЫЛЛЭЙ – be too wide, round-extended (e.g. of lips, face, wet boots): Этэрбэс ибили сирэйэ дьиэс-куос бэллэйит (Sleptsov 2005, 854). ‘The boots, having soaked, widened’.

**AFFIX -ТАЙ, (-ТЭЙ)**

БАЛТАЙ – look large, wide: Сана уол бэлтэйбит бэлтэйбит кытархай сирэйэ дьыэ-кус кус дуол (Sleptsov 2005, 854). ‘The boots, having widened large felt boots, he can hardly walk’.

БЫЛТАЙ – 1. Stick out, peep out from behind something. 2. Come out from something (Sleptsov 2005, 710).

БЭЛТЭЙ – be very wide, rounded, and slightly bulging (of face): Митэрээс, бэлтэйбит кытархай сирэйэ дьыэ-кус кус дуол, ол-бу диян кыл ээриҥнээтэ (Sleptsov 2005, 854). ‘Miterees, turning hither and thither his rounded red face, showed his displeasure’.

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<th>TABLE 1. Affixes</th>
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These figurative verbs denote various nuances of the notion ‘become stout’. A specific feature of these figurative verbs is that variation of the vowel phonemes in the root (БАЛ-, БЫЛ-, БЭЛ-) precludes the formation of a new lexical unit with a new nuance of the given meaning in its semantics. However, in the modern Yakut language, some verbs have lost their figurative meaning, e.g. БЫЛТАЙ that yet kept the figurative meaning in the adjective БЫЛТАЯР built from this verb ‘bulged, round (of cheeks)’.

**CHANGE OF THE INITIAL ROOT CONSONANT (see Table 2)**

According to the phonetic rules of the Yakut language, the initial consonant phoneme of a root built on the model Б-Л can change, e.g. from Б to М (МАЛ-, МЫЛ-, МЭЛ-) and respectively to Дь (ДЫАЛ-, ДЫЫЛ-, ДЫЭЛ-), Нь (НЫАЛ-, НЫЫЛ-, НЫЭЛ-), С (САЛ-, СЫЛ-, СЭЛ-). Consonant phonemes in these roots are of crucial importance and form the models of figurative verbs that transform into separate lexical units through vocalization. Thus, figurative verbs formed from these roots using the given affixes in most cases share the same ‘become stout’ but differ in nuances denoting some particular characteristic of appearance of parts of body of a stout person. Formation of such figurative verbs is not accidental as each consonant and vowel phoneme contributed an additional nuance to the common semantics of the verbs.

Let us give some examples to compare semantics of figurative verbs:

БЭЛГЭЙ – be very wide, rounded, and slightly bulging (of face): Митэрээс, бэлгэйбит кытархай сирэйэ дьыэ-кус кус дуол, ол-бу диян кыл ээриҥнээтэ (Sleptsov 2005, 710). ‘Miterees, turning hither and thither his rounded red face, showed his displeasure’.
МЭЛТЭЙ – be, look rounded, wide (usually of face, full moon): Мардынныр сүрөө гур болуут айыпты ызылмур (Слецтов 2009, 403). ‘Марджаньютов’s face looked rounded as a full moon’.

ДЫЛТЭЙ – be, look large and round: Пайдаланың ыязылмур дылтэй (Слецтов 2006, 527). ‘Panteley (his face) widened smiling’.

НЬЭЛТЭЙ – be, look flattened and widened downwards: Одонверор өөрөө ныэлтэй ийт. ‘The old man wreathed in joy’.

СЭЛТЭЙ – look like a rounded, swollen extremity; thicken, swell at the end: Сэлтэй ийт муррунаху саалдынаы өүүстө ызлүү ынктары бүт (Слецтов 2012, 561). ‘We were afraid of the striped bull with a swollen muzzle’.

The examples demonstrate that almost all these verbs denote an image of a round, wide face since the phoneme з from the models Б – Л, М – Л, Дь – Л, Нь – Л, С – Л transmits the image of something wide and flat. Alongside with that the meaning of each verb has some additional nuance, e.g. the meaning of the verb БЭЛТЭЙ in addition to a wide and flat face involves an additional component of being rounded. The meaning of the verb НЬЭЛТЭЙ is distinguished by an additional sense of being flattened. The verb СЭЛТЭЙ denotes an integral image of a wide face with a sticking out large fleshy nose thickened downwards. МЭЛТЭЙ is used not only to describe the form of a face but a full moon and sun as well. The phoneme ы gives to the models Б-Л, М-Л, Дь-Л, Нь-Л, С-Л the idea of the space not fully taken, with the meaning of a small size being characteristic. The major figurative meaning of these verbs is the image of something small that sticks out. The following verbs are built by this model:

БЫЛТАЙ – stick out, be, look chubby, fleshy (usually of child’s face, cheeks): Олбөр аягыттын эмни сүрөөванын бүлтэй ий (Слецтов 2005, 850). ‘Under the fence there bulges a froliesome boy (his face)’.

МЫЛТАЙ – be, look round,单品 bulging cheeks (of face): Оскана сүрөө өөрөө мылтэй ийт, дырынан туулыгынан ылын (Слецтов 2009, 386). ‘Oksana’s face rounded with joy, she is singing with a clear voice’.

ДЫЛТАЙ - have a white cheeky face (usually of a blooming girl or a young woman): Хобороос уйбута-төпүүт, икк ийн ызылтэй бүлтэй сүр (Слецтов 2006, 496). ‘Khoboroos grew chubby-full, both cheeks rounded’.

НЬЫЛТАЙ - have a white round glossy face (usually of a girl, young woman): Қыыс бөөлөөөгө ыгы баанын ныылтэй ий (Слецтов 2012, 412). ‘As the girl grew up her snub nose turned even more up’.

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Here, the verbs БЫЛТАЙ, МЫЛТАЙ, ДЫЛТАЙ clearly demonstrate the image of a bulging full cheek. The meaning of the verb НЬЫЛТАЙ earned an additional figurative representation of white color, with it usually belonging to a little girl or a young woman. The meaning of the verb СЫЛТАЙ shows some development to abstraction of semantics, only the idea of something small, round, and bulging is left from figurative notions. The phoneme а in the models Б-Л, М-Л, Дь-Л, Нь-Л, С-Л depicts an extremely large volume, size of the given form, emphasizes hardness of the objects, its heavy awkward form.

БАЛТАЙ – look too stout and big (of an object, person): Барахан балтаян киңин ызыл тыйын интихинэрик дылхатар (Слецтов 2005, 176). ‘One will listen to the words of this sweet plump woman’.


НЬЫЛТАЙ - have a wide and flat face, stand out by this looks (of a person with a flattened nose and heavy eyelids): Баанын көхөсүн этипкөкөн баран, нылытаян оюлор дыңгөн сүзыктиргин (Слецтов 2010, 85). ‘Vanya, having coughed, raised his wide face and started his story’.

СЫЛТАЙ – widen, be too wide in the upper (or front) part: Виты нүүрөө туук жаш маа эзбүлүү сүлүү, төбөтө салтаян таңышта (Слецтов 2011, 194). ‘Vitya’s beloved boots made by his mother, having got wet, widened’.

As the examples show, the verbs МАЛТАЙ, ДЫЛТАЙ, НЬЫЛТАЙ characterize one’s face in a figurative way, while the verbs БАЛТАЙ, СЫЛТАЙ describe figure of a person or object whose shape look like an extremely large volume of something.
Here we only consider figurative verbs built by the root model Б-Л, ДЬ-Л, М-Л, НЬ-Л, С-Л + the affix -ТАЙ(-ТАЙ). The affixes –ҔАЙ (-ГЭЙ), -ЛАЙ (-ЛЭЙ) are used to form the figurative verbs бэлгэй, былҕай, балҕай, мэлгэй, малҕай, ньэлгэй, бэллэй, быллай, баллай with the same meanings. Since they do not fall into the system sequence, we will not include them into this discussion.

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<th>Initial consonant of the root</th>
<th>Vowels in the root</th>
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<td>э</td>
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The analyzed figurative verbs represent only a part of the given matter. Actually, there are many verbs characterizing a stout person. Figurative verbs naturally may be formed in abundance by varying alternations of consonant and vowel phonemes. Due to their emotional-expressive figurative semantics these words belong to colloquial speech. From this perspective, even their collection and record present certain problems, not to speak of interpretation of meanings in both Yakut and Russian. Since the time of E.K. Pekarskiy’s “Dictionary of the Yakut Language” (1899) there has been established the practice to determine meanings of figurative verbs as follows: the meaning itself is presented, then the reference part is given in the brackets, i.e. an additional interpretation showing, for example, what or who the meaning of the verb relates to. Such way to explain meaning somehow let us perceive the whole idea included in the verb’s semantics. The peculiarity of these verbs is that it is almost impossible to adequately translate them into Russian. Therefore, their meanings have to be translated using various parts of speech, usually adjectives or even nouns.

CONCLUSIONS
The research results reveal a characteristic feature of Yakut figurative verbs that the major part of them are variant words built by a certain phonetic model. The discussed figurative verbs give the whole image of, in this case, a stout person. The variation of vowel phonemes in the model, which consists of consonant phonemes, each time forms a new semantically independent verb characterizing a particular trait of person’s appearance, parts of body. This phenomenon is well developed in the Yakut language.

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