

**THE USE OF IDIOMS BY THE SAKHA CLASSICAL WRITER  
AMMA ACHCHIGIYA**

**УПОТРЕБЛЕНИЕ ИДИОМ КЛАССИКОМ ЯКУТСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ  
АММА АЧЧЫГЫЙА**

**KLASİK SAHA YAZARI AMMA ACHCHIGIYA'NIN DEYİMLERİ KULLANIMI**

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**ABSTRACT**

In this paper we will analyze how the Sakha classical writer N. E. Mordinov–Amma Aççıgıya uses idioms in his works. We will consider cases of synonymous idioms and types of idiomatic variation. Also touched upon will be issues related to idiomatic polysemy, new idiom coining, frequency of idiomatic occurrence, the use of idioms in indirect (author's) versus direct (character's) speech. We will also discuss for which stylistic functions the author employs idioms.

**Keywords:** Sakha Language, Amma Aççıgıya, Idioms, Synonymous Idioms, Idiomatic Variants, Morphological Variation, Stylistic Function.

**АННОТАЦИЯ**

Данная статья посвящена изучению особенностей употребления идиом (фразеологических единиц) в произведениях классика якутской литературы Н. Е. Мординова–Амма Аччыгыйа. Будут рассмотрены случаи фразеологических синонимов и типы фразеологической вариативности. Также, статья коснется вкратце таких вопросов, как полисемия, неологизмы, частотность, употребление идиом в прямой речи (персонажа) и косвенной речи (автора). Также вниманию читателя будет представлено обсуждение стилистических функций, выполняемых фразеологизмами в текстах автора.

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**Ключевые слова:** Якутский Язык, Амма Аччыгыя, Идиомы (Фразеологизмы), Синонимичные Фразеологизмы, Фразеологические Варианты, Морфологическая Вариативность, Стилистические Функции.

## ÖZET

Bu makalede, Saha klasik yazarı N.E. Mordinov- Amma Aççıgya'nın eserlerinde deyimleri nasıl kullandığı incelenmiştir. Eşanlamlı deyimler ile deyimlerin farklı tipleri üzerinde durulmuştur. Deyimsel çokanlamlılık, yeni deyim üretimi, deyimlerin kullanım sıklığı ve deyimlerin yazar tarafından dolaylı kullanımı ile doğrudan kişiler tarafından kullanımı arasındaki kıyaslama da incelenmiştir. Son olarak, yazarın deyimleri hangi biçembilimsel kaygılarla kullandığı da irdelenmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Saha Dili, Amma Aççıgya, Deyimler, Eşanlamlı Deyimler, Deyimsel değişimler, Morfolojik Değişimler, Biçembilimsel İşlev

The first Sakha phraseologist N. S. Grigoriev recorded approximately 3000 idioms in his dictionary, of which 114 were taken from the works by the Sakha classical writer Amma Aççıgya (Vinokurov, 2008: 94). This is a considerable contribution made by the classical writer to the compilation of the dictionary. In this paper we will study the idiomatic content of the works by Amma Aççıgya. Our sample includes more than 200 idioms taken from his creations<sup>1</sup> by the method of continuous sampling. Generally speaking, the main task performed by idioms in any writer's work is to color and enrich the language stylistically, add meaning nuances, make the writing more catching to the reader's eye. Amma Aççıgya is no exception in this respect. In this paper we will investigate the specific methods and ways with which this general goal is achieved by the writer.

One function fulfilled by idioms is substitution for one word. In such a way, the writer not only avoids repeating the same word over but also adds emotional connotations to the overall meaning of the text. Consider the first four examples<sup>2</sup>. Here we have four different idioms with a similar meaning 'to be(come) angry, be in bad disposition caused by anger; change one's countenance in/to anger (among other emotions)' all substituting for a single word *kuhur* 'become angry': *kije-naara xollor* 'his anger-habit deteriorates', *kije kiirbit*

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<sup>1</sup> Our search for idioms included several literary sources which will be abbreviated as follows: A: Alcarxay (1966), SK 1: Saasky kem (1994; reprinted from the first 1944 edition), SK 2: Saasky kem (1982; reprinted from the second 1952 edition), TA 1: Talılıbit ayımñılar (1966), TA 2: Talılıbit ayımñılar (1967), TA 3: Talılıbit ayımñılar (1969).

<sup>2</sup> The following abbreviations were used: 1/2/3 – first/second/third person; acc – accusative case; adv – adverbializing suffix; aor – aorist; caus – causative; C – complementizer *dien* (introducing the finite subordinate clause); coll – collective; cond – conditional mood; cv – converb; dat – dative case; exist.cop – existential copula *baar*; fpt – future participle -IAX; hab – habitual participle marker – AaččI; instrum – instrumental case; neg – negation; neg.cop – negative copula *suox*; pass – passive; past – past tense marker –DI; pl – plural; poss – possessive (when not crucial for the overall meaning, omitted from glosses to save space); ppt – past participle – BIT; prop – the proprietive suffix –LAAX; ptc – particle; sg – singular; sim – similitive; v.aux – auxiliary verb; wh.pron – a wh-pronoun.

‘his anger entered’, *muja kiirbit* ‘his torment entered’, *ñuura xollor* ‘his face deteriorates’. It is interesting to note here that in the second, later version of the novel ‘Saasky kem’ the writer decided to substitute a more neutral word *kuhur* for the idiom *kije kiirbit*: thus, the second example in SK 2 was changed to *oğonñor kuhurbit kiehetiger ...*, giving us an indirect indication that the word substituted for by the idioms is indeed *kuhur*.

(1) Tuspa buruo tuhunan ihit-ter ere, Mikiite orduk kiñ-e–naar-a xoll-or. (SK 2: 447)

independent smoke about hear-cond ptc, Mikiite especially anger-poss.3–habit-poss.3 spoil-aor

‘As soon as Mikiite hears about setting up his own household, he especially becomes angry.’

(2) Oğonñor kiñ-e kiir-bit kiehe-tiger bert ügüs kihi-leex cie kurus buol-ar.

old.man anger-poss.3 enter-ppt evening-poss.3.dat quite many people-prop house sad become-aor

‘On those evenings when the old man becomes angry, the whole house with quite many people living in it sinks into sadness.’ (SK 1: 116)

(3) Emie muñ-a kiir-bit dien botugurah-al-lar.

again torment-poss.3 enter-ppt C whisper-aor-pl

‘They are whispering that he is angry again.’ (SK 1: 116)

(4) Iksa kiehe ... ñuur-a xoll-on salğalastaa-n kiir-de.

near evening face-poss3 spoil-cv shiver-cv enter-past.3

‘On the near evening he came in shivering and angry.’ (SK 1: 107, 2: 204)

The above four idioms form a synonymic row. Other members of this synonymic row include *sireye* (*sireyin bihuta*) *xolunna* ‘change one’s countenance (in anger); lit. his face (the shape of his face) spoiled/deteriorated’ (Nelunov 2002: 131), *xaana ularıyar* ‘change one’s countenance (in anger); lit. his blood is changing’ (Grigoriev 1974: 115; Nelunov 2002: 311), *xaana xamsaata* ‘change one’s countenance (in anger); lit. his blood moved’ (Grigoriev 1974: 115; Nelunov 2002: 311), *kije-naara alcanna* ‘become angry; lit. his anger-habit broke’ (Grigoriev 1974: 42; Nelunov 1998: 219), *sireye-xarağa alcanna* ‘change one’s countenance (in anger); lit. his face-eye broke’ (Grigoriev 1974: 74; Nelunov 2002: 129). Some of these are also encountered in the novel ‘Saasky kem’: for instance, *xaana xamsaata* (p. 142, p. 245), *sireye xolunna* (p. 291).

At this point we face the issue of phraseological synonymity versus phraseological variation. Their demarcation from each other presents a number of challenges to those linguists working in the field of phraseology. Nazarian argues on the basis of French that phraseological/idiomatic variants of a given idiom are modifications of this source idiom accepted by general usage, with semantic identity preserved among the variants. The variants are characterized as being based on the same image, having the same meaning, function in the sentence and belonging to the same grammatical class, i.e. substantive, verbal, adjectival or adverbial (1987: 225). Different types of idiomatic variation are distinguished: 1) componential; 2) morphological; 3) derivational; 4) phonetic; 5) quantitative; 6) syntactic; 7) combined (Yuzdova 2009: 162; *our translation*). On the other hand, idiomatic synonyms differ in their underlying images (Nazarian 1987: 231). When

applied to the above synonymic row in Sakha, we can identify two pairs of variants: 1) *sireye xolunna* ‘his face changed in anger; lit. his face deteriorated’ – *ñuura xolunna* ‘his face changed in anger; lit. his face deteriorated’; 2) *kiŋe-naara alcanna* ‘he became angry; lit. his anger-habit broke’ – *kiŋe-naara xollor* ‘he became angry; lit. his anger-habit deteriorated’. The latter pair is marked as being part of idiomatic variation by both Grigoriev (1974: 42) and Nelunov (1998: 219). As for the first pair, the variant *ñuura xolunna* has not been registered either by Nelunov (2002) nor by Grigoriev (1974). Thus, *ñuura xolunna* should be recognized as an invention of the writer and one small piece of evidence to the assumption that variation of idioms indicates the dynamic development of phraseological units in a given language in general (Yuzdova 2009).

Amma Ačçıgıya is quite prolific in employing both synonymous idioms and idiomatic variants. The examples in (5) and (6) are encountered on the same page in the writer’s work, apparently with the goal of making on the reader a stronger impression of the bandits running away. Both idioms *ataxxa biller* ‘run away, escape, flee; lit. let one’s legs know, announce to one’s legs’ and *tiŋileŋe xaraarda* ‘run away, escape, flee; lit. his heel got dark in the distance’ are members of the synonymic row. Other members of this row with the meaning ‘run away, take to one’s heels’ are *buut bier* ‘lit. give a thigh’, *tilex bier* ‘give a heel’, *tias xomun* ‘gather noise’, *tiŋiŋin teskilet* ‘lit. cause one’s breath to escape’. However, our data search did not deliver any occurrences of these synonyms in the works considered.

(5) Bancııt-tar atax-xa bil-ler-di-ler.

bandit-pl leg-dat know-caus-past-pl

‘The bandits took to their heels.’ (TA 1: 377)

(6) Abaŋa aŋıyax komsomol-uġar, pioneer-ıġar kıaytar-an tiŋilex-ter-e xaraar-da.  
(TA 1: 377)

Abaŋa few komsomol-poss.3.dat, pioneer-poss.3.dat lose-cv heel-pl-poss.3 blacken-past.3

‘Having lost to (been defeated by) Abaga’s few komsomol members and pioneers, they fled away.’

As for idiomatic variants, above we have seen two pairs representing componential variation – when idioms vary in one of their components, either nominal *sirey/ñuur* ‘face’ in *sireye xolunna* / *ñuura xolunna* or verbal *alcan* ‘break, become destroyed, go bad’ and *xolun* ‘break, become destroyed, go bad’ in *kiŋe-naara alcanna* ‘he became angry’ / *kiŋe-naara xollor* ‘he became angry’. The components modified are lexical synonyms of each other. Another term for such idiomatic variants is *lexical variants* used by Nazarian (1987: 229).

As expected, given the agglutinative nature and rich morphology of the Sakha language, we find a large number of morphological variants. One of the idioms with the highest number of occurrences is *sanaa-ta kōn-nō* ‘his mood improved, he got into a good mood (especially after a period of despondency); lit. his thought straightened’. This idiom consists of two components which can change morphologically depending on the grammatical context. For instance, it can function as an independent finite sentence as in (7) where the subject role is performed by the nominal component of the idiom which acquires different agreement suffixes depending on the possessor’s person and number features. The same applies to the verbal component of the idiom *kōn* ‘straighten’ which can

take on all kinds of tense, mood, aspect, converb, participial and other verbal suffixes. For example, in the second line of the example in (8) it bears the immediate precedence converb suffix *-öörü* (allomorph of *-AarI*) whereas the anterior converb affix *-ön* appears in (10). In (9) we see a syntactic type of idiomatic variation, namely, when the entire idiom is syntactically transformed into a relative clause modifying the nominal *kiehe* ‘evening’ with the adverbial meaning of time. The idiomatic modification in (9) is in fact combined syntactic and morphological since the verbal component has properly taken on the past participial suffix as required by the grammatical context.

(7) *sanaa-m/sanaa-ŋ/sanaa-ta/sanaa-bit/sanaa-ğit/sanaa-lar-a kön-nö*  
 thought-poss.1sg/-poss.2sg/-poss.3/-poss.1pl/-poss.2pl/-pl-poss.3 straighten-past.3  
 ‘My/your/his/our/your/their mood improved.’

(8) *sanaa-ta kön-ör / thought-poss.3 straighten-aor*  
*sanaa-ta kön-öörü / thought-poss.3 straighten-cv*  
*sanaa-ta kön-nöğ-üne / thought-poss.3 straighten-cond-3sg*  
*sanaa-ta kön-üö suoğ-a / thought-poss.3 straighten-fpt neg.cop-3*

(9) *Sanaa-ta köm-müt kiehe-tiger bert körücüös-tük bılırgı-mı keps-iir.*  
 thought-3 straighten-ppt evening-3dat quite funny-adv past-acc tell-aor

‘On the evening when he is in good spirits he recounts the past quite funnily.’ (SK 1: 116)

(10) *Sarsıarda ştab-ka kel-bit-e ... Tişko sanaa-ta kön-ön tohuy-ar.*  
 morning HQ-dat come-ppt-3 Tişko thought-poss.3 straighten-cv wait-aor

‘When he came to the HQ in the morning, Tishko was waiting for him in good mood.’ (SK 2: 520)

Another point of our discussion concerns the frequency of occurrence. Here we are faced with two issues independent from each other. On the one hand, some idioms are used repeatedly. For instance, we have located up to ten occurrences of the synonymous pairs *kiŋe-naara xollar* ‘he gets angry; lit. his anger-habit goes bad’, *kiŋe-naara kiirer* ‘he gets angry; lit. his anger-habit enters’ and *sanaata könnö* ‘his mood improved; lit. his thought straightened’, *sanaata kötöğ-ülün-ne* ‘his mood lifted; lit. his mood lift-pass-past.3’ in a single novel, namely, *Saasky kem* ‘Springtime’. The latter idiom is exemplified in (11).

(11) *Mikiite coŋ-ŋo kerexse-t-en sanaa-ta kötöğ-üll-e sılc-ar khi e-te.*

Mikiite people-dat respect-caus-cv thought-3 lift-pass-cv v.aux-aor person v.aux-past.3

‘Mikiite was in elated mood because he earned people’s respect and interest.’ (SK 2: 322)

This is quite unusual, since most of the time most of the idioms are used only once, sometimes twice or thrice. If we contemplate upon the possible reasons behind this frequent occurrence, what springs to mind are some tentative suggestions like the following ones. First of all, the idioms have a sentential structure with the subject and predicate: the subject bears agreement suffixes indicating person and number of the implied possessor which can be elided whereas the verbal component can attach a rich array of verbal affixes. This makes the idioms more susceptible to idiomatic variation, notably, morphological

modification of component parts. On the other hand, an idiom like *ataxxa biller* ‘take to one’s heels; lit. leg-dat know-caus’ can only have the verbal component modified. The number of idiomatic variation is important for the occurrence frequency of a particular idiom since a higher potential for variation preempts a situation when constant repetition becomes dull and starts to pall on the readers. The more variants a particular idiom has, the more flexibility is allowed to the writer with respect to using this idiom over and over again since the reader will be ‘guiled’ into thinking that each time he comes upon a different idiom. Idioms which have a more rigid internal structure, which are more fixed (as in fact befits an idiom par excellence) are less likely to be subjected to constant repetition.

A second tentative reason, in our opinion, behind the possibility of a more frequent occurrence for certain idioms lies in the fact that these idioms seem to be founded upon images which are simpler in expressive and emotive terms. When we hear *kiŋe-naara xollor* ‘he gets angry; lit. his anger-habit goes bad’, *kiŋe-naara kiirer* ‘he gets angry; lit. his anger-habit enters’ or *sanaata kōnnō* ‘his mood improved; lit. his thought straightened’, *sanaata kōtōg-ülün-ne* ‘his mood lifted; lit. his mood lift-pass-past.3’, we can perceive a general image behind the idiom created by the meanings of the component words and this image helps us arrive at or guess the meaning of the whole idiom. Thus, what happens in the case of such idioms is that the idiomatic meaning can be detected from the overall picture composed of the separate meanings of the component parts. In other words, we can say that the more semantic transparency is displayed by an idiom, the higher its frequency may be if other contributing factors such as e.g. variation potential are also met.

A second issue related to the frequency of occurrence independent from the one just considered has to do with the density with which idioms can occur over a certain span of text. As a matter of convenience, it has become conventional to identify a single page as a reference point for counting purposes when studying published literary works of classical Sakha writers such as Amma Aççıgıya. Quite expectedly, there are more pages with no single occurrence of any idiom than those which do contain one or more idioms. Nevertheless, our search results yielded one page with five occasions of different idioms. In the second version of the novel *Saasky kem* ‘Springtime’ the writer decided to get rid of two idioms. This suggests that the writer shows a tendency over time to restrict and become more moderate in his employment of idioms. Gotovtseva (2012) in fact shows that if we take frequency of idiomatic occurrence to be an indicator of the author’s individual style – idiostyle (citing Glinkina 2005), then Amma Aççıgıya’s writing style is characterized by an average use of idioms.

(12)1) *sanaa-ta kōm-müt* / thought-poss.3 straighten-ppt

‘he is in good mood’ (SK 1: 116; SK 2: 250)

2) *kiŋ-e xollu-but* / anger-poss.3 go.bad-ppt ‘he is angry’ (SK 1: 116; SK 2: 250)

3) *kiŋ-e kiir-bit* / anger-poss.3 ‘he is angry’ (SK 1: 116)

4) *muŋ-a kiir-bit* / torment-poss.3 ‘he is in bad mood’ (SK 1: 116; SK 2: 250)

5) *bilas muos-taax kiir-bit* / long horn-prop enter-ppt

‘he is in rage; lit. the one having long horns entered him’ (SK 1: 116)

The issue of the density of idiomatic occurrence concerns not only large textual extracts but also smaller units of which any textual discourse is made up, namely, the actual sentences. Here the same question as above can be asked. Our data counts yielded a number

of sentences which contain two idioms. Two examples are shown in (13) and (14). Here the two idioms are not each other's synonyms. In (13) these are *kula turbut* 'be agitated, excited, get into high gear, run high; lit. his animal rose' and *ilii-atax buol* 'help; lit. be hands and legs', in (14) – *ikki ardılarigar uu toxtubat doğorduular* 'bosom friends, as thick as thieves; lit. friends such that water cannot spill between them' and *ayağa xaydiağınan* 'at the top of his lungs; lit. until his throat bursts/tears up'.

(13) Bancııt-tar kihil-ı kıydaa-tax-tar-ıma, xaya ere cikti-nen ikkihin bay-aarı  
bandit-pl red-acc drive.away-cond-pl-3, wh.pron ptc miracle-instrum 2.time get.rich-cv  
kıl-a tur-an sılc-ar, ilii-atax buol-ar.

animal-poss.3 rise-cv v.aux-aor, hand-leg be-aor

'Wanting to get rich for the second time by some miracle when the bandits drive out the red, he is in a state of great excitement, helping around and lending his hand.' (SK 1: 267)

(14) Kyra Uybaan "... Oxonoos Mappıyap uonna Luxa Behieleyep...ikki ardılarigar uu toxtu-bat

Small Uybaan "...Oxonoos Mappıyap and Luxa Behieleyep...two between water spill-neg.aor doğor-duu-lar...ayax-tar-a xayd-ıağ-ınan ıl-ıl-lar-ın ere bil-er "con-nor" die-bit.

friend-sim-pl...throat-pl-poss.3 tear-fpt-instrum sing-aor-pl-acc ptc know-aor people-pl say-ppt

'Small Uybaan said "O. Mappıyap and L. Behieleyep are two bosom friends as thick as thieves, they are the kind of people who only know how to sing at the top of their lungs".' (SK 2: 410)

However, quite often the two co-occurring idioms are in a synonymous relation in which case the author uses them to strengthen and clarify his description, as exemplified in (15) and (16) where the idioms in question are *innitin il* 'overcome, defeat, get the upper hand; lit. take his front' and *eeqin etit* 'overcome, get the upper hand, wring consent from; lit. force to say yes' in (15), *köksö kejeete* 'calm down, feel relieved; lit. his back broadened' and *xarağa sırdaata* '1) feel relieved, breathe with relief, 2) grow warmer, soften, become mollified; lit. his eyes brightened' in (16). This device is pervasive in Sakha literature and its origins can be located in folklore, including the Sakha epos *olonkho*, and it is referred to by researchers as syntactic parallelism (Vinokurov 2011).

(15)...min eyigin ... inni-gin ıl-an, eex-xin et-it-en araxs-ar-ım buol-uo!

...I you.acc front-2sg take-cv, yes-2sg.acc say-caus-cv separate-aor-1sg be-fpt

'I will only leave you alone after I get the better of you.' (SK 2: 266)

(16) ...Eyigin çugas baar... dii sanaa-tax-pına, köxs-üm keñ-iir,

...you.acc close exist.cop...C think-cond-1sg, back-poss.1sg broaden-aor,  
xarağ-ım sırd-ıır buol-ar-a...

eye-poss.1sg brighten-aor be-aor-3

'When I thought that you were close, I used to calm down and feel relieved.' (SK 2: 241)

Another issue which also deserves attention is that of polysemy. It should be noted that the author shows consistency in sticking with one meaning of a polysemous idiom. For instance, the idiom *atağar turuor* [leg-poss.3.dat stand-caus] ‘lit. put someone on his feet’ has three meanings 1) ‘heal, cure (from a disease)’, 2) ‘raise, bring up’, 3) ‘agitate, stir up somebody, bring about turmoil’. However, only the second meaning is used (17): here we have the intransitive, non-causativized version *atağar turda* [leg-poss.3.dat stand-past.3] ‘he matured, grew up, he was raised, brought up; lit. he stood on his legs’. The same applies to the idioms cited above: in (16) the idiom *xarağa sırdaata* (which has two meanings as shown above) is used with the first meaning. Another polysemous idiom already encountered is *kula turbut* ‘lit. his animal rose’: apart from the meaning in (13) ‘be agitated, excited’, it has a second meaning ‘be furious’.

(17)...atax-tar-ıgar tur-an bar-ıax-tar-a...

...leg-pl-poss.3.dat stand-cv leave-fpt-pl-3

‘...they will leave after they grow up...’

(SK 2: 353)

Next, we turn to considering the stylistic functions of idioms. According to Nazarian, phraseology serves the emotional sphere of language and the main function of idioms is the function of figurative and expressive characterization (1987: 32). Indeed, when describing people or situations, resorting to idioms instead of single words makes the language much more vivid thanks to the expressive power of idioms. This was already mentioned above when we talked about the function of idioms substituting for one word. Another example is given in (18) where instead of using an expressively bland single word the writer skillfully selects an idiom to refer to people’s indifference.

(18)Con süreğ-e xalıñ, ist-en bier-bet-ter.

people heart-poss.3 thick, listen-cv v.aux-neg.aor-pl

‘People are callous, they just wouldn’t listen.’

(SK 2: 199)

On the other hand, metaphorical characterization through idiomatic phrases can replace not just single words but longer spans of text, whole passages. Consider the examples in (19) and (20) where the situation presented cannot be described using a single word. However, the writer, instead of simply narrating in emotionally neutral words, chooses to depict the situation in emotionally laden idioms. Both sentences contain an idiom *uyatğar uu kiirde* ‘find oneself in a critical situation, panic, worry, be in great distress; lit. water entered his nest’. In both sentences the distress referred to with the help of the idiom is caused by the sudden death of a valuable ox, a very important farm animal and the people who experience the loss are poor. However, in (19) the poor family in question owns the ox whereas in (20) the ox belongs to a rich family whose servants living in the cowshed will be blamed which extremely aggravates the state of affairs. Therefore in (20), to show the ultimate degree of despair and the overwhelming feeling of terror experienced by farm workers, the writer uses a second idiom to sharpen the effect caused on the reader, namely, *ürün küne ölböödüybüt* ‘to be near/close to death, within a hair of death; lit. his white sun paled’.

(19)Uya-lar-ıgar uu kiir-de.

nest-pl-poss.3.dat water enter-past.3

‘They were panicking and extremely anxious.’

(SK 2: 231)

(20) Xoton cie-ğe olor-ooççu xamnaççit aymax uya-tıgar uu kiir-bit, ürün kün-e ölböödüy-büt.

cowshed house-dat live-hab servant coll.ptc nest-p<sup>oss</sup>3.dat water enter-ppt, white sun-p<sup>oss</sup>3 pale-ppt

‘The servants living in the cowshed panicked feeling the nearing of death.’ (SK 1: 166)

Another stylistic function performed by idioms is their use as euphemisms, to replace words describing unpleasant situations such as passing away. In (21) the author is talking about the tragic and heroic death of two pilots. The idiom used is *uhuktubat (uhun) uutun utuyda* ‘to die, pass away; lit. he slept his non-awakening (long) sleep’: it manifests reverential regard and deference to the pilots. On the other hand, the idiom used in (22) *ejin-cühün buolan xaal* ‘die suddenly, e.g. from an accident; lit. acquire a mottled, variegated shape, appearance’ has a slight connotation of disrespect and is indicative of the speaker’s attitude towards the old man in question.

(21) Ikki boyobuoy letçik-tar...uhuktu-bat uu-lar-in utuy-a sıt-al-lar.

two military pilot-pl... awaken-neg.aor sleep-pl-poss.3.acc sleep-cv lie-aor-pl

‘Two military pilots are resting here sleeping their eternal sleep.’ (A: 142)

(22) Kırçağas kihi sotoru ejin-cühün buolan xaal-lağ-ina, belem bay-duol, cie-uot.

old person soon different-face become-cv v.aux-cond-3, ready wealth-vastness, house-hearth

‘If the old man soon accidentally dies, there you have ready wealth and housing.’

(SK 2: 106-107)

If we consider the distribution of idioms across different registers, such as direct versus indirect speech, we can see that Amma Aççıgıya uses idioms in direct speech to display the speaker’s, i.e. the character’s attitude towards another character in the novel. In (23) the author puts the idiom *köturder tihiim miilete, kördör xaraqım cüköte* ‘precious child, only child; lit. the gum of my pulled tooth, the cornea of my seeing eye’ in the mouth of Bahiuxtır Balbaara, the grandmother of the novel’s protagonist Mikiite, to show her loving and affectionate attitude towards her grandson when another character, a representative of the rich family Luka Veselov comes to fetch Mikiite to make him work on his farm and Balbaara defends her grandson and kicks Luka himself out.

(23) Kötur-der tihi-im miile-tin, kör-dör xaraq-ım cükö-tin

pull-cond tooth-poss.1sg gum-poss.3.acc, see-cond eye-poss.1sg cornea-poss.3.acc

dje xajdax gın-an küüs-k-ünen ildj-e bar-ar-gyn kör-döq-üm!

well how do-cv force-poss.2sg.instrum take.away-cv leave-aor-poss.2sg.acc see-cond-1sg

‘Let’s see just how you will forcibly take away the gum of my pulled tooth, the cornea of my seeing eye (=precious, the only child)!’ (SK 1: 191)

The utterance in (24) belongs to Daariya, a kind, sympathetic old woman: it shows the general negative attitude of the poor people towards the rich. The insatiable greed of the latter is manifest in the idiomatic comparison coined by the writer specifically for this purpose – *kumaxxa iiktiir keriete* ‘like pissing in the sand’. Whereas in (25) the idiom

*iriex suolun irdee, toj suolun tordoo* ‘hunt down/track down relentlessly’ is used to show not only the attitude of the speaker who is a revolutionary, a Red soldier, towards the White but also his strong and resolute character, his determination to bring his cause to an end. Also note that the example in (26), just like (24), (15) and (16), presents another case of syntactic parallelism discussed above.

(25) Baaj-ga bier-er kumax-xa iikt-iir keriete – utary in-en ih-er.

rich-dat give-aor sand-dat piss-aor like – immediately get.absorbed-cv v.aux-aor

‘Giving to a rich person is like pissing in the sand – it gets absorbed right away.’

(SK 1: 18)

(26) Bihigi bancıt-tar irienex suol-lar-in irdee-n, toj suol-lar-in tordoo-n bar-  
iax-pit.

we bandit-pl thawed trail-pl-poss.3.acc track.down-cv, frozen trail-pl-poss.3.acc chase-  
cv go-fut-1pl

‘We will go after the bandits pursuing them relentlessly.’ (SK 1: 285)

For finalizing remarks, we have seen that Amma Ačçıgıya as a classic of the Sakha literature demonstrates apt and skilful use of idioms as means of expressive characterization, as euphemisms to mitigate and soften unpleasant occasions, to show his own attitude towards his characters. Idioms are used rather restrictively, in moderation. Sometimes the depository of available idioms proves insufficient for the writer, in which case he masterfully invents a new idiom.

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