The Functioning of the Anabar Dolgan Language and the Dialect Vocabulary of the Sakha Language

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Abstract: Under conditions of intensive development in the northern and Arctic territories, the issue of preserving the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Peoples of the North and the Arctic of Russia is becoming increasingly relevant. Within this context, this article studies linguistic ecology in light of sustainable development and wellbeing in communities of Dolgan and Evenki—small-numbered indigenous peoples living in the Arctic zone of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), Russia. Linguistic ecology is associated with the study of factors affecting the functioning and development of language, as well as with the search for ways and means of preserving and enriching language. Monitoring the processes taking place in the speech practices of society makes it possible to judge some negative phenomena and trends in the language.

Keywords: Anabar Dolgan language, dialect, linguistic diversity, linguistic ecology, Sakha language

The linguistic situation in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is of particular interest to sociolinguists. Yakutia is a multi-ethnic region in which about 120 languages function to varying degrees (Nikiforova and Koriakina 2007). Two languages, Russian and Sakha, have the status of state languages, while the languages of the Peoples of the North—Even, Evenki, Dolgan, Chukchi, and Yukaghir—have the status of official languages (Vasileva 2012). Whereas in some countries the terms “state language” and “official language” are interchangeable, there is a significant difference between them in the Sakha Republic. According to Article 46 of the 1994 Constitution of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), “the languages of the Peoples of the North of the Republic are official
in settlements where they are concentrated;” thus, legally, the usage of these languages is restricted to certain areas. One of these languages, Dolgan, is officially spoken only in the Anabar District of Yakutia, particularly in the village of Iuriung-Khaia. According to the 2010 Russian Census, the number of Dolgan speakers is 1,054, or 13.4 per cent of the Dolgan people, so Dolgan is classified as a definitely endangered language by the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger (Moseley 2010).

The Dolgans are one of the “youngest” populations in the Russian Arctic and the northernmost population in the world that speaks in a Turkic language. In fact, linguistically, the Dolgan language is so close to Sakha that it raises the question as to whether Dolgan actually is a separate language. However, ethnically and culturally, Dolgans are closer to Tungus peoples, as they engage in a Tungusic lifestyle of reindeer herding. This “discrepancy between ethnic and linguistic affiliation” (Stapert 2013: 3) is due to the history and origin of the Dolgan people. According to Boris Dolgikh, the Dolgan nationality was formed in the course of close contact between various ethnic groups—Tungusic Evenki of different clans, Turkic Sakha (or Sakha-speaking groups), and later Zatundra Russian peasants (Dolgikh 1963). As Stapert points out, if we consider the Dolgan language only from a linguistic point of view, “Dolgan may well be considered a dialect of Sakha, but as soon as socio-cultural factors are taken into account, it is clearly a separate language” (Stapert 2013: 62). In this case, we first consider the Anabar Dolgan language through the theory of linguistic ecology, since we take into account mostly its contemporary socio-cultural environment (and briefly its historical context). Data for this (surveys) were obtained by the authors during fieldwork in Iuriung-Khaia village, a settlement where Dolgans are concentrated in Yakutia. The second part of the article deals with the linguistic analysis of the vocabulary of The Dictionary of the Iuriung-Khaian Dolgan Dialect, created by Dolgan native speakers. We believe that the lexical and etymological analysis of this authentic vocabulary will reflect the history and ethnic contact-based origin of the population.

This study is conducted in the context of linguistic ecology. The very idea was first used by Charles Voegelin, Florence Voegelin, and Noel Schutz (1967), but it was Einar Haugen who fully described its meaning through the analogy of an ecosystem and biodiversity (Haugen 1972). Since then, different variations of the concept have emerged: “the ecology of language,” “ecolinguistics” (Fill and Mühlhäusler 2001; see also Bastardas-Boada 2019). However, we follow the ideas of Lenore
Grenoble, who writes that “the field of language ecology studies the interrelationships between speakers and their languages as situated in their full (contemporary and historical) context” (Grenoble 2011: 30). Even though Grenoble uses the term “language ecology” rather than “linguistic ecology,” we believe the main idea remains mostly the same, and an implicit and critical part of linguistic ecology is the fact that language is not isolated from other social, cultural, and ecological factors, but interacts with them. It involves including in the subject of study not only degradation processes, but also processes of positive development in the language, as well as the preservation and development of national linguistic consciousness and linguistic identity. The wellbeing of the native language is considered an important indicator of the wellbeing of society, since language not only reflects but also shapes thinking; regulates behavior, interpersonal, and intercorporate relations; and is a universal tool for management, education, and development. Grenoble and Lindsay Whaley discuss the strong connection between native language and the wellbeing of the society (Grenoble and Whaley 2021).

Our study is based on field materials collected in 2021 in Anabarskii District. On 25–30 August 2021, the research team of the International Research Laboratory “Arctic Linguistic Ecology” of North-Eastern Federal University conducted field research in the villages of Iuriung-Khaia and Saskylakh in the Anabar National (Dolgan-Evenki) District. The researchers included the head of the laboratory, professor at the University of Chicago (USA) Lenore A. Grenoble; lead researcher Ninel V. Malyshева; senior researcher Antonina A. Vinokurova; senior researcher Marina I. Kysylbaikova, and junior researcher Atalina V. Timofeeva. The fieldwork focused on the languages of the indigenous Peoples of the North—Dolgan, Evenki, and Yukaghir—as well as the Sakha language. The current state of these languages is directly related to global socio-economic factors and the laws of social development. The main purpose of the trip was to collect authentic material on the modern language situation in the Anabar region to determine the features of their functioning, as well as to identify unique language processes occurring in the context of industrial development and globalization. As part of the sociolinguistic surveys, new material was collected on the functioning of the languages of the indigenous Peoples of the North, primarily the Dolgan language in the context of Sakha-Russian bilingualism in this district and an active language shift in this territory.
The Sociolinguistic Landscape of Anabar District

The central task of this part of the research is to substantiate the functional classification of the languages spoken in the Anabar District. The classification is based on measurements of specific functional types by highlighting functional dominants from the entire repertoire of social functions of one or another linguistic community, that is, the most socially significant and most intensively functioning areas of communication. In turn, the functioning of the language in these areas is measured in terms of intensity. For measurements, we used such quantities as demographic power, communicative power, symbolic power, confessional power, economic and ICT factors, and their correlation. There is no consolidated data for these indicators, so additional data were collected during field work. Additional features we considered include the presence of writing, its traditions, the social background of native speakers, the nature of the settlement of residents, and other features. The study of changes in the traditional economy and everyday culture against the backdrop of a changing reality in the places where indigenous Peoples of the North are concentrated and the impact of migration and urbanization on changes was carried out according to plan within the framework of fieldwork in the Anabar region.

The Anabar National (Dolgan-Evenki) Ulus (district) is located in the extreme north-west of the Republic of Sakha between 71 degrees and 76 degrees north latitude; it borders the Bulun and Olenek ulusy of the republic, as well as the Taimyr District of the Krasnoyarsk Region. A stable demographic situation exists, since the region still maintains a traditional way of life with reindeer herding and fishing. Since 2014, the number of reindeer has been growing annually, and in 2020, the reindeer headcount was 20,862. Fishing, along with the production of fish and meat products, has been developing, creating jobs for the population, especially for young people. Industrial companies located on the territory of the ulus allocate dividends to the budget of the Anabar region and contribute to the creation of additional jobs. The culture of the Dolgans and Evenki is developing, too: a gathering of reindeer herders and the traditional Baianai holiday are held annually; the modern cultural centers “Heiro” in Iuriung-Khaia and “Diamond” in Saskylakh have been built in recent years. Folk craftsmen continue to create unique national costumes, utensils, and other national products.¹

Two main settlements—the villages of Saskylakh and Iuriung-Khaia—are located on the right bank of the Anabar River, which flows into the Laptev Sea. Saskylakh is the administrative center of the region
and one of the largest ports on the river, with an airport located to the south of the village. Due to the relatively developed infrastructure in the village, where Evenki mainly live, various sociolinguistic processes take place, such as globalization (children and youth are influenced by the Internet, and thus speak mostly in Russian). Also of particular interest is the village Iuriung-Khaia, as it is the only place in the republic where Dolgans are concentrated. Out of a total population of 1,217 people, the majority are Dolgans (898); the remainder are Evenki (35), Evens (19), and Sakha (193) (Filippova, 2020).

The main methods of collecting material were a sociolinguistic survey of the population of different ages and nationalities, a linguistic experiment, and interviews. In total, 50 residents of the Anabarskii ulus were interviewed, statistical sociological data were collected for the last five years, and extralinguistic (ethnographic, cultural, economic, and other) factors influencing the current state of the languages of the Peoples of the North were preliminarily determined.

Twenty-five people were involved as informants in the village Iuriung-Khaia. This sample consisted of 10 men and 15 women, with eleven people aged 19–35, eight people aged 36–59, and six people aged 60 and older. In Saskylakh, a total of 25 residents (18 women and 7 men) were interviewed, with four people aged 19–35, thirteen people aged 36–59, and eight people 60 and older. More than 30 hours of audio and video material were recorded and about one thousand photographs were captured.

In the village of Iuriung-Khaia, all residents consider themselves Dolgans, and many claim that they speak a special idiom—a mixed language or some kind of idiosyncratic language (neither Sakha nor Russian). Our sociolinguistic survey and in-depth interviews exploring the linguistic biography of the respondents showed that, in Iuriung-Khaia, the boundaries between the Dolgan and Sakha languages are indeed very blurred. To the question “What language (or languages) do you speak fluently?” most of the inhabitants of Iuriung-Khaia did not give a confident answer. Such answers were articulated in phrases such as: “We speak ‘our’ language” (i.e., something between Sakha and Dolgan); “I speak Sakha using Dolgan vocabulary;” or “Dolgan language is, in fact, Sakha language.”

Despite this, even if the language of the respondents is very close to the Sakha language, they use it as a special marker of their identity. Many families in Iuriung-Khaia engage in traditional reindeer herding, which makes them deeply connected to the place in a broad sense (since they migrate with herds). They also have a special feeling that they
live in the far north, and many claim that Iuriung-Khaia is the world’s northernmost year-round settlement.

In Saskylakh, the situation is somewhat more complicated, since, along with ethnic Dolgans, we interviewed many ethnic Evenki. They also have a strong sense of identity, evidenced by the fact that many representatives of both groups came to the interview in national dress. The linguistic ecology here is further complicated by the fact that Saskylakh is the administrative center of the district, and consequently there is significant movement of people coming and going.

Another system-forming factor is the presence of the diamond mining industry: the company Anabar Diamonds employs about 700 people in the winter and about 1200–1300 people in the summer to mine alluvial diamonds. The workers live outside the territory of Iuriung-Khaia in a separate complex, so interaction with the local population is minimal. However, Saskylakh is a transportation center, since the only nearby airport is located here.

The current state of the Dolgan and Evenki languages in these two settlements of the Anabar ulus is quite complex. A linguistic shift toward Sakha (and sometimes Russian) language is visible, but it is also necessary to outline the border between the Sakha and Dolgan languages among the inhabitants of Iuriung-Khaia. The population feels the need to increase the level of teaching of native languages in kindergartens and schools, and to train specialists who speak them. To find an answer to these and other sociolinguistic problems of the region, a field trip was carried out.

The Dolgans in Iuriung-Khaia are deeply connected to the Dolgans living in the Taimyr Dolgano-Nenetskii region, some de facto (having recently moved from there) and others more ideologically. In connection with marriage or other family relations, interesting migration processes take place between the village of Iuriung-Khaia and two villages in the Taimyr region. Of the respondents who fell into the quota sample, two natives of the village of Khatanga in the Krasnoyarsk Territory had married Iuriung-Khaians and moved to their husband’s homeland. Unlike the Iuriung-Khaian people, the Dolgans who come from the Taimyr Dolgan-Nenets region and moved to the Anabar region as adults quite confidently distinguish between the Iuriung-Khaia Dolgan and Krasnoyarsk Dolgan dialects. So, Krasnoyarsk Dolgan women emphasized that they spoke Dolgan in their homeland, but in Anabar they more often spoke in Sakha. As a result of the linguistic analysis of their oral speech during a sociolinguistic survey and experiment, some differential features of the two variants (dialects) of Dolgan were revealed.
Compared with the indigenous inhabitants of Iuriung-Khaia village, the phonetic features of the literary Dolgan language are more pronounced in the speech of the Krasnoyarsk Dolgans. For example, the use of a voiced velar plosive [ɡ] instead of either: 1) a voiced uvular spirant [ʁ], similar to sound r in French rue, rouge (pictorial rendering—gh>g) as in alghaan>algaan “blessing”; or 2) a voiceless velar plosive [k] (graphic rendering—k>g) as in kiniler>giniler “they.” In the Sakha language, the sound [ɡ] is practically absent in the word-initial position.

In the oral speech of respondents from the Krasnoyarsk region, there is a greater degree of influence of the Russian language. The mixing of codes between Dolgan and Russian, according to our observations, is greater than among the speakers of the Iuriung-Khaia dialect. It should be noted that one of the Krasnoyarsk Dolgan women we interviewed preferred to undergo the linguistic experiment (the retelling of the cartoon) in Russian rather than in Sakha and Dolgan. On the contrary, older indigenous inhabitants of Iuriung-Khaia retell the same cartoon in the Sakha language more freely. Only two or three people managed to fulfill the request to use the words of the Dolgan language as much as possible, citing two or three words or expressions. Preliminary conclusions show the process of a language shift, the gradual assimilation of a minority language (Dolgan) under the influence of substratum languages: in the village of Iuriung-Khaia—Sakha, in the village of Khatanga—Russian.

The fieldwork in Anabar showed that the factors influencing language shift in the Anabar district are language contacts, migrations, urbanization, and industrial development of the northern territories. Migration is widespread in the Arctic in general, due to various socio-economic, humanitarian, political, and climatic factors, and entails serious changes in lifestyle; it may also bring ethno-social tension. The preservation of a traditional way of life in Anabar, especially reindeer herding, contributes to a higher level of language preservation, both in terms of its transmission to the next generation and in terms of the preservation of various language domains.

**Specific Features of the Anabar Dolgan Language Vocabulary**

In the context of globalization and social factors, including those associated with active migration, urbanization changes, and industrial development of certain territories, there is a gradual but constant
erosion of languages and dialects, which threatens a significant loss of information about the functioning of languages in synchrony and diachrony. If we talk about languages being vulnerable and endangered, the dialects are under even greater threat of extinction; therefore recording, documentation, analysis, and digital processing of them are required. In this regard, the study of the Dolgan language and its dialects is becoming increasingly important, especially because of the debate on whether the Dolgan language is a dialect of Sakha or a separate language. Since the majority of linguists agree that the basis of the vocabulary is made up of words of Sakha origin (Petrov 2018; Ubrietova 1985), we decided to observe the vocabulary of the Iuriung-Khaian dictionary in relation to Sakha vocabulary. The vocabulary of dialects of the Sakha language is characterized by significant unity; most of it is the same as the vocabulary of the national language. If the phonetic and morphological differences of the dialects of the Sakha language have been studied to a certain extent, then this cannot be said in relation to their lexical features. According to a number of scientists, the disappearance of local dialects and dialects of the Sakha language is expected in the near future, followed by the possibility of extinction of the language of the Sakha people. According to S. A. Ivanov, a specialist in the field of Sakha dialectology, special attention needs to be placed on studying the lexicological aspects of Sakha dialects (Danilova et al. 2018). Accordingly, it is important to note the results of the project on the collection of dialect material that was not previously recorded and not included in lexicographic sources.

During fieldwork, valuable material was obtained, in particular *The Dictionary of the Iuriung-Khaian Dolgan Dialect*. The authors-compilers A. E. Spiridonova and V. E. Spiridonov are enthusiastic teachers at the Iuriung-Khaia secondary school. The dictionary was published in the district printing house in 2001. Consisting of 751 dictionary entries, it is of particular interest to researchers of the Dolgan language, as the authors, being indigenous inhabitants of Iuriung-Khaia village, included words that reflect the specifics of the Iuriung-Khaia Dolgan dialects: the names of household items; hunting, reindeer herding, and fishing terms; names for types of indigenous food; and words of colloquial style. The main material for the dictionary was the works of local authors, issues of the local newspaper *Anaabyr uottara*, as well as information from elderly informants. The electronic scanned version of the dictionary was given to our laboratory by one of the authors, Aksinia Egorovna Spiridonova. The scientific processing of the dictionary is relevant because the language of the Iuriung-Khaia Dolgans as
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A separate dialect has hardly been studied. The features of this dialect require further in-depth study, including in a comparative aspect with Krasnoyarsk Dolgan and with the language of the Essei Sakha.

Digitization and downloading of the material collected during fieldwork under the project “Preservation of Linguistic and Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development of the Arctic and Subarctic of the Russian Federation” and their subsequent morphological, phonetic, lexical, and etymological analysis on the LingvoDoc linguistic platform will be one of the first times that large-scale linguistic processing of a large array of linguistic data is carried out using digital technologies. This undertaking will form a base to aid in the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Dolgan people.

We analyzed the lexical composition of the Dolgan dialect dictionary of the Iuriung-Khaia settlement. Eight main thematic groups were identified: wildlife vocabulary (six subgroups: deer, fish, birds, plants, trees, insects), geographical vocabulary and weather, somatics, everyday vocabulary (five subgroups: clothes, utensils, housing, hunting, fishing), actions, description of a person, colloquial vocabulary, proper names.

The most numerous thematic groups are the vocabulary of wildlife (in particular, that related to deer) and everyday vocabulary. An etymological analysis was preliminarily carried out to determine which linguistic layer each word belonged to, that is, what language is the word borrowed from? Etymological analysis showed that the largest layer is Sakha, followed by Evenki and Russian. The basis of the Evenki layer is the vocabulary related to reindeer husbandry (and everyday vocabulary arising from it) and some animal names. Of course, the specifics of the Iuriung-Khaia Dolgans are precisely their unique way of life; it is reindeer herding that distinguishes the Dolgans from the Sakha. Words of Russian origin are mainly found in proper names; however, the phonetic way of forming the Dolgan variants of Russian names differs significantly from the Sakha ones (e.g., the Russian name Aleksei is Ölöksöi in Sakha and Öchüör in Dolgan, while the Russian name Vasilii is Bakhylai in Sakha and Bahii, or Basiiik in Dolgan). This may indicate that proper names entered the vocabulary of the Dolgan language directly from the Russian language, and not through the Sakha language. Interesting observations were found with the change in the meaning of words in the Dolgan language when borrowing: for instance, we see a narrowing of meaning in the Sakha word tohuur (a method of hunting) which began to designate more precisely the fish caught in this way, while we see an expansion of meaning in the
Russian *kommissioner*—in Dolgan, *hamykhaar* means “cultured, educated person.” From the point of view of phonetic and phonological changes, the following was found: monophthongization of diphthongs, the transition gh>g, which is clearly displayed in the word of Yakut origin *syargha*—*syrga*. The fieldwork in Anabarskii ulus showed that a complex historical-linguistic, differentiated approach to the description of the Dolgan language is needed. Further study of deeper lexical connections and processes that took place in the language is required. Thanks to the study of the functioning of Sakha (Turkic, Mongolian), Tungus-Manchu, and Slavic layers in the vocabulary of the Dolgan language, it seems possible to clarify some issues of Dolgan ethnogenesis. Based on the results of linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis, we consider the prevalence of Sakha vocabulary in the Iuriung-Khaia dialect of the Dolgan language to be one of the catalysts for a linguistic shift; it reveals a gradual process of assimilation of the Dolgan (minority) language under the influence of the substratum language of Sakha in the village of Iuriung-Khaia.

As part of the fieldwork, rich linguistic material on Sakha phytonyms and zoonyms was collected, obtained by the method of questioning and survey. The total amount of material collected was more than 7,000 lexical units denoting various names of plants and animals in the Sakha language, including dialect names (60 per cent). More than 70 per cent of the informants were elderly, with an average age of 82 years, representing various spheres of society: herbalists, healers, shamans, *algyschyts* (a person who holds the ceremony of traditional blessing), reindeer herders, cattle breeders, archival, museum, and ethnographic workers. As part of field trips, archival and museum materials as well as folklore and ethnographic sources stored in museums and libraries in the surveyed areas were reviewed and processed.

The analysis of dialect units denoting various plant and animal names in the Sakha language revealed that many plant and animal names and their varieties have dialect equivalents of different linguistic origins and territorial distributions. Questionnaire data made it possible to determine that, in conditions of dialect delimitation, some speakers cannot abandon such familiar names, conditionally called proper lexical dialect words, which significantly replenish the dialect vocabulary of the Sakha language. The vocabulary of any language constantly responds to various changes in the life of its speakers. Today, under the influence of globalization processes, new words and names appear in the vocabulary of the Sakha language, associated with changes in economic activity, relations between people, new concepts and knowledge,
and so forth. At the same time, some words that are obsolete and out of use in one dialect may continue to live in peripheral dialects.

The dialect units collected within the framework of this project are systematized into the following three groups:

1) Proper dialect vocabulary, that is, words having a limited territorial territory of use and not included in the vocabulary of the literary language, for example: *bocho* “small broad whitefish,” *darky* “mouse,” *syylang* “snake,” *temeld’igen* “dragonfly,” *ular otono* “bearberry,” *ehe bollöötö* “bearberry,” *amynn’yar* “rosehip ,” *börö tingilege* “raspberry,” *saarba atagha* “cloudberry,” *yt tyla* “cloudberry,” *köpökh otono* “cloudberry,” *taastaakh oton* “red currant,” *boroduuna* “currant,” *myhyyttyk otono* “bump,” *tibükte* “honeysuckle,” *ütügünde* “honesuckle,” *taarbaghan tingilege* “Arctic raspberry,” *tübe otono* “cowberry,” *achaakhta* “mountain ash,” *chagylakh* “larch,” *meeme* “bear.” A characteristic feature of the above lexemes is their narrow regional use, as they are understandable only to the inhabitants of the given area and are unknown to speakers of other dialects, especially in the literary language. Some of them are deep archaisms that have an equivalent only in ancient Turkic, ancient Mongolian, and in some modern Turkic and Mongolian languages; for example, Sakha *syylakh* “snake” // other Turkic *yylan* “snake” is a native Turkic word motivated by the verb *yyyl-* (Sakha *syyl-*), and the parallelism *n* // *ng* is found in Turkic languages and Sakha dialects. Many of the listed words have not received wide distribution and active use because they penetrated into individual dialects of the Sakha language directly from neighboring dialects of other languages or through constant contacts with foreign-speaking individuals; for example, Sakha *meeme* “bear” // Yukaghir *meme* “bear.” The appearance of some neologisms at a later time is not excluded, such as *darky* “mouse.” It is not possible to establish the past use of these words on a general Sakha scale, and today it is difficult to consider them obsolete, since they are beyond the limits of even passively existing vocabulary. Therefore, we conditionally categorized some of them as deep archaisms, still living in some peripheral dialects and occasionally reminiscent of ancient Turkisms, Mongolisms, Evenkisms, as they are unlikely to ever enter the vocabulary of active use. It should also be noted that some dialect lexemes coincide in meaning with literary words, differing from them in their origin and phonetic design; that is, they become somewhat synonymous—for example, *alchakh* “frog,” which in meaning corresponds to the literary *bagha* “frog.” Thus, from the point of view of semasiology, such dialectisms replenish the composition of synonymous words of the Sakha language.

3) Vocabulary that does not have territorial restrictions in use and is in this sense common to the people; it is neutral in relation to the literary language, for example: *byrdakh* “mosquito,” *kiird’üges, kiird’üges* “chipmunk,” *ürümechchi* “butterfly, moth,” *khabd’y* “partridge,” *khanai* “crested duck,” *khoroy* “two-year-old male deer,” *chaappara* “falcated duck,” *chyngyrykaan* “mouse,” *yalaki, yalyky* “partridge.” The lexeme *byrdakh* is known in all dialects; however, it is a characteristic lexical feature of northeastern dialects, synonymous with the word *kumaar* from Russian *komar* for mosquito—a lexical feature of the central, Olekma-Vilyui, and northwestern dialect zones. The lexemes *kiird’üges* (Viliuiskii, Bulunskii, Zhiganskii, and Kangalasskii districts of Yakutia) and *kiird’üges* (Verkhneviliuiskii, Viliuiskii, and Ust-Maiskii districts) mean the name of a chipmunk and are in a synonymous relationship with the words *d’iriki* and *myhyttyk*; the literary name of them is considered to be *moghotoi*. The Sakha lexeme *ürümechchi* seems to be a common word used in the meaning of “butterfly, moth.” We assume that the word *ürümechchi*, approved as a literary norm, is in a synonymous relationship with the words *ylaakh (laakh, looh, luoh, lah, lyakh, ylyakh)* and *lörüye (lüörüü, looruo)*, which arose under the influence of Evenki dialects. The analysis of these foundations shows that the word *lyakh* is characteristic of the dialects of the central dialect zone, while *ylyakh* belongs to the dialects of the Lena-Vilyui Sakha; the variant *lak* is readily used in the north-
eastern and northwestern dialects, while the Anabar and part of the Bulun Yakuts prefer to use the names löörüye, löörüö, looruo. The lexical unit khabd’y, meaning “partridge,” is used along with widespread use of the word kuruppaasky (from the Russian dialect word kuroppasha), although throughout the eastern dialect array the word khabd’y is preferred, whereas only a single case of use was found in the dialects of the central dialect zone and in the speech of the Olekminskii and Olenetskii Sakha.

The above words now have the potential to penetrate into the sphere of the literary language, thereby acquiring a strategic space for geographical distribution. It should be noted that, in conditions of modern intensive mutual influence between the literary language and oral folk speech, any dialect word easily penetrates into the vocabulary of the literary language, and literary norms are introduced into dialect speech, almost without encountering serious obstacles. Dialect lexical units, penetrating into the sphere of the literary language, enrich its vocabulary. However, the overuse of dialectisms in works of art, newspapers, magazines, and radio and television broadcasts would cause difficulty in their timely and correct perception, thus reducing the strength of their impact.

Dialect vocabulary is constantly changing as it is replenished with new words formed in morphological and syntactic ways. A particularly noticeable fact is that it is usually enriched by the lexicalization of metaphorical transfers of the direct meanings of independent and even auxiliary words. In addition, the lexicalization of numerous attributive phrases is very characteristic of dialect speech: aaghy oghus “spider,” ad’yrgha kyyl “wolf,” bagha balyk “big-browed fish,” bya balyk “Siberian lamprey,” bychyk kharakh “black goose,” inneleekh mas “hawthorn,” kugas kyrby “kestrel,” kugas kyyl “ferret,” kudan kuqhas “polar loon,” mungur kuturuk “weasel,” and others. At the same time, in the dialects of the Sakha language there are obsolete words of Proto-Turkic and other linguistic origin that have already gone out or are gradually going out of active use. In the dialect vocabulary of the Sakha language, an interesting linguistic fact can be traced: a fear of wild animals generated by ancient ideas along with a particularly careful and good-natured attitude towards representatives of the animal and plant world of native nature have imposed a taboo on the use of many of their names in speech; as a result, various euphemisms and euphemistic expressions arose, such as, “to the owner of the taiga.” More than a hundred names have been assigned to the bear and its cub, more than twenty
names to the wolf, and about thirty names to the defenseless and shy white hare, while the truly noble elk has more than fifty euphemistic names. The need to carry out traditional economic activities in the harsh conditions of the North (horse breeding, cattle breeding, reindeer husbandry, hunting, fishing, etc.) contributed to the development of exceptional observational skills among the Sakha. The dialect vocabulary of the Sakha language was constantly replenished due to borrowings: there are numerous archaic and actively used words that have ancient Turkic and ancient Mongolian correspondences (Antonov 1971; Radloff 1908; Rassadin 1973, 1980; Sleptsov 2007; Ubriatova 1985). Very often there are Evenkisms and Russianisms, Even words, and also some Yukaghir and Chukchi lexemes, which is quite a natural phenomenon in conditions of long-term joint or neighborly residence and active language contact based on bilingualism.

Conclusions

The results of the sociolinguistic and field research that we carried out in the Anabar National (Dolgan-Evenki) Ulus allow us to assume that the functioning of the Dolgan language as an independent language raises several questions: On the one hand, is the Dolgan language an independent language? On the other hand, does it represent the northwestern dialect zone of the Sakha language? This is due to the presence of many similarities and correspondences, both in grammatical and lexical-semantic aspects, among the speakers of the Dolgan language living in the territories of the settlements of Iuriung-Khaia and Saskylakh. At the same time, there is a pronounced identification on the part of the native speakers themselves: more than 80 per cent of the interviewed informants identified themselves as representatives of the Dolgan ethnic group. Moreover, according to the residents of the Anabar region, the language they speak is defined by them as “our own language.” The Dolgans of Anabar understand “our own language” not as either the Sakha language or the Dolgan language, but as a mixture between these languages. In the colloquial speech of native speakers of the Dolgan language, the functioning of Yakut words and phrases adapted to the Dolgan manner is observed. For example, the following phonetic correspondences are observed: 1) the Yakut consonant element $kh$ to Dolgan $k$: Sakha $kharchy$ “money” // Dolgan $karchy$ “money,” Sakha $baryakhkha$ “let’s go” // Dolgan $baryakka$ “let’s go,” Sakha $khaar$ “snow.”
 winter Dolgan kaar “snow;” 2) Sakha voiced uvular fricative “gh” to Dolgan “g”: Sakha aga “father” / / Dolgan aga “father,” Sakha baga “frog” / / Dolgan baga “frog”, Sakha saghalaa “begin” / / Dolgan sagalaa “begin.” At the same time, there is a stable preservation of the lexical meaning of words and phrases in relation to the Dolgan language and to the Sakha language. In addition, the grammatical structure of sentences seems to be stable, which also leads to the hypothesis of the functioning of Dolgan as a dialect of the northwestern dialect zone of the Sakha language. However, in the context of the linguistic ecology, taking into account the historical, social, and cultural background of the Dolgan people in the Anabar district, as well as their ethnic self-identification, we come to the conclusion that Dolgan is a separate language. Since it is definitely endangered in the territory of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) at least, greater attention should be paid to preserving it and sustaining linguistic diversity in Yakutia.

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Note


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