Semantic derivation of iconic Indo-European roots with the initial bh-

The reconstruction of Indo-European roots and generally of the Indo-European family’s proto-language itself was one of the first and the most important achievements of the comparative historic linguistics. The giant work started by F.Bopp, R.Rask, J.Grimm, followed and summarized by A.Schleicher and a whole pleiad of outstanding scientists, got crowned with the “Indo-Germanic Etymological Dictionary” by J.Pokorny (1) and the famous two-volume “Indo-European Language and Indo-Europeans” by T.V.Gamkrelidze and V.V.Ivanov (2). Seemingly, all issues in this field have been discussed and solved. Yet it should be noticed that however technically perfect an etymological study would be, it is considered as a version, a hypothesis, an individual interpretation. Different etymological dictionaries, appeared after J.Pokorny and representing concurrent views on origins of certain words and meanings, show the striking evidence of it.

One of the latest dictionaries of the kind, suggesting its particular view on language evolutionary processes, is the “Etymological Dictionary of Germanic Languages” by V.V.Levitsky (3). The author advances, for instance, new hypotheses: on the semantic syncretism ‘cut/tie, weave/bend’ exposed in certain i.-e. roots; on alternation of the extenders iə- – u- in i.-e. roots, leading to the Germanic alternation [i – iə – a] or [iu – au – a]; on the i.-e. root *bʰā- that expressed the ideas of ‘sound’ and ‘light’ taking their origin from the meaning ‘intermittent movement’; on the same babbling word for naming elder and younger members of family.

V.V. Levitsky proves these hypotheses in one of his recent monographs “Semantic and Phonetic Links in the Indo-European Lexicon” (4) using a special method of quantitative analysis. Thereby, the syncretism of the meanings ‘cut/tie/bend’, that are the most recurrent in the dictionary, was justified. The hyperseme [movement], associating three meanings in the statistic experiment, such as ‘vibrate’, ‘move to and fro’, ‘skip, shake, move quickly’, is linked with the meaning ‘bend’ as well as with all three syncretic hypersemes ‘cut/tie/bend’. According to the results of the qualitative (etymological) analysis, the meaning ‘sound’ belongs to derivatives of the hyperseme [movement], whereas the quantitative analysis also showed its relationship with hypersemes [dissociate], [join], [bend]. Besides, the hyperseme [sound] has strong and superstrong links with the hypersemes [color] and [shine]. Such abundance of its links makes it possible to suggest a nuclear status of this meaning in the system of Indo-European.

The quantitative analysis of V.V. Levitsky revealed a number of links of the hyperseme [humid, liquid], notably, with the main hypersemes [dissociate], [join], [bend], [movement], [sound] and, moreover, with the hypersemes [color], [press], [spread], [taste], [release]. The author notes that our suggestions (5) concerning the links of the sense [flow, pour, liquid] with the meanings ‘soil, spoil’, ‘shine’, ‘see’, ‘flexible’, ‘rotate’, ‘tie’ correspond almost completely to the inferences resulting from the quantitative analysis.

V.V. Levitsky unifies under the general hyperseme [taste] such semes as ‘meal’, ‘bitter’, ‘sweet’, etc. and detects its link with the hypersemes [dissociate] (‘cut’, ‘split’), [bend] and [movement]. Explaining the reasons of these links, the author resorts, in particular, to the etymological data: lat. cēna ‘meal’ (< *kerstnā) – lit. kirsti ‘hit, hack’; gr. dais - daizō ‘divide’. J.Trier, for instance, interprets this link as juice extraction from trunks or roots of plants (6: 78), while we correlate the process of eating with the action ‘gnaw’ referring it to the hyperseme [cut] (5: 185).

According to statistic calculations of V.V. Levitsky, the hyperseme [harm] forms strong links with the following hypersemes: [cut], [bend], [throw], [movement], [press], [burn], [big, strong, hard]. These inferences got also corroborated through etymological analysis: i.-e. *($s)mer- ‘rub’ > lat. morbus ‘sickness’, ohg. smerzan ‘be sick’ (1: 737). The same links of the semes [cut] and [harm] can be seen in other roots: lat. dolère ‘hurt’, doläre ‘split’ (<*del- ‘cut, split,’); oe. gehornian ‘insult, blame’ < i.-e. *sker- ‘cut’ (4: 56).

Summing up the conclusions of the comparative study of semantic links through qualitative and quantitative analysis, V.V. Levitsky argues that the results of etymological research completely correspond to the data calculated from the statistic approach. But, nevertheless, the reverse is not always evident. The scholar brings forward the version that in cases of “incompatibility” of qualitative and quantitative analysis’ data, the given hypersemes are mostly suggested to be the derivates of the main nuclear hypersemes. As an example of this “incompatibility”, Levitsky cites the neighborhood of hypersemes ‘harm’, ‘guard, surround’, ‘grasp’, ‘perceive’, ‘calm, still’ and ‘burn’. In the review of this book we suggested a more comprehensible interpretation of possible link between them (V.V. Levitsky placed it in the Conclusion). If we put the meaning ‘grasp’, by definition iconic, as a central in this row, the denoted action possesses a number of features making possible the derivation to any of these hypersemes: ‘grasp’ (‘take’) > ‘perceive’; ‘grasp’ (‘strangle’) > ‘harm’; ‘grasp’ (‘squeeze, hold’) > ‘guard, surround’; ‘grasp’ (‘squeeze, immobilize’) > ‘calm, still’; ‘grasp’ (‘envelop in flames’) > ‘burn’. Our own data from different languages witness other contiguities of ‘grasp, squeeze’ > ‘container’, ‘cold’, etc. (4: 218-219). Hereby, the problem of compatibility/incompatibility of semantic shifts turns to be the problem of interpretation of center and periphery of language’s semantic system.

It is worth to note the basic point that brings V.V. Levitsky to his original etymological inferences: semantic components observed in definitions of roots with the same initial consonant, agree with the set of meanings of fully identical (“homonymous”) by their structure roots. Our own research matches the scholar’s viewpoint.

A number of our works (5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) and of our students’ dissertations (12, 13) demonstrate a strong trend of ascending of various meanings to a limited set of
semantic prototypes which are hypothetically iconic by their phonosemantic nature. The fact of presence of links between such and such meanings and fields was established on the ground of a certain formal-semantic kinship, e.g. by an initial consonant, by an initial phonesteme, by a final phonesteme (rhyme). Like any etymological study which follows the same principle, inferences of the kind rest hypothetical. That is why, for the sake of reliability and cogency in substantiating links, it is useful to resort to data of polysemey, homonymy and etymology. In the study below we decided to focus on the directions of semantic development of Indo-European roots in different languages, limiting essentially by the iconic stock. Under the iconic stock we mean roots characterized by the unity of formal articulating-symbolic features and attributed meanings. The referents of iconicity are supposed to be qualities and processes of manual, bucral activities and onomatopoeias (vocal signals) which are the most accessible for imitation by speech apparatus. The identification of semantic development’s vectors from ancient iconic roots to the modern state in one and different language branches could shed light on universal evolutionary trends of semantics, named “semantic laws”. The used data are taken from the dictionaries of J. Pokorny (1), V.V. Levitsky (3), Grandaigns d’Hauterive (14).

We suggest observing the semantics of roots with the initial aspirant *bh- and their derivates in different Indo-European languages as a part of this work (repeated meanings are not cited).

The root *bhā- is given in the dictionaries as two homonyms: bhā- ‘speak’ and bhā- ‘shine’. The first corresponds by its meaning to bucal and vocal activities, i.e. iconic referents. The combination of the aspirant plosive [bh] with the open [a] is the best illustration of language gesture imitating labial activities and intensive sound.

bhā- ‘speak’ >
Gr. I. phēmē ‘say’; phēs ‘speak’; phēmē ‘reputation’; II. phō-no ‘voice’.
From Lat. > Fr. 1. fable ‘fairy tale’. 2. fée ‘fairy’. E. fable; Sp. habla ‘speech’.

bhā- ‘shine’ >
Skr. bhā- ‘light’; bhānti ‘he speaks’.
Gr. phainō ‘show’; phasis ‘accusation’; phantasma ‘appearance’; phantasia ‘image’; phanos ‘lamp’.
From Gr. >Sp., It. fantasma ‘fantom, ghost’, E. fantastic; fancy; G. Bann ‘leaflet’.

Interpretation.
According to Levitsky’s quantitative and qualitative analysis (4: 51), the meaning ‘sound’ reveals strong and superstrong links with the meanings ‘color’ and ‘shine’. In the case of hypothetically homonymic roots bha- and bha- it seems logical to suppose the polysemic derivation of the latter from the former based on an audio-visual synesthesia.

bher- ‘bring, carry’ >
3. OE. byrian, G. gebühren ‘befit’, OHG. giburian ‘happen’, Ol. byrja ‘start’ (V.V. Levitsky suggests the following way of the meaning’s development: ‘bring, to be brought’ > ‘happen’ > ‘befit’; from our viewpoint: ‘born > child > start’), Ol. byr ‘fair wind’, E. (dial.) bir ‘strength, energy’, Lat. fortuna ‘happiness, luck, destiny’;
4. E. berth ‘place, location’;
5. Rus. brat ‘take’, Gr. phôr ‘thief’;
6. Sp., It. furtivo, Fr. furtif ‘secret’.

Interpretation.
The meaning ‘bring, carry’ belongs to the domain of iconic reference, i.e. manual activities. However the formal structure of the root bher- does not fit to symbolize this action. If the majority of semantic derivates yield to a rational explanation of shifts, the meanings ‘place, location’, ‘thief’, ‘secret’ could hardly correlate with the basic ‘carry’. Consequently, there should be another meaning consolidating on the one hand all these 6 directions of semantic development and, on the other hand, apt to be symbolized by articulation features of the root’s phonetic structure. We suggest as such the meaning ‘grasp, squeeze’ which also belongs to manual activities. From this point ‘bring, carry’ could be treated as a derivate from ‘grasp, squeeze’ > ‘take + move’. The other directions (1-3) are obviously linked with it. The presence of the meaning ‘place, location’ in the semantic system of bher- is easier to explain through the passage ‘squeeze’ > ‘to be in (hand)’ > ‘place’; the meaning ‘thief’ as a derivate from ‘squeeze, grasp’; the meaning ‘secret’ < ‘hide’ > ‘squeeze’. The articulating-symbolic potencies of initial bilabial [b] make it possible to symbolize actions like squeezing, closing.

Hereby, the semantic derivation of the root bher- is distributed by 6 directions (fields) ascending to the basic iconic meaning ‘squeeze, grasp’: 1) ‘carry, bring’, 2) ‘born’; 3) ‘happen’; 4) ‘place, location’; 5) ‘take’; 6) ‘hide’.

bher- ‘bubble, boil’, ‘move brusquely’ >
1. I.-E. *berhes- ‘quick’, E. bird (V.V. Levitsky explains this word as a result of the development ‘splitted > chip’ > ‘small object > bird’, but, to our view, small size cannot be a motivating feature of bird, since it can be also big. It is more probable that one of its striking features is the quickness of its movement and also quick flappings of wings.

Interpretation.
The meaning ‘bubble, boil’ is obviously onomatopoeic. The main symbolic function belongs apparently to the vibrant -r. The dissonant trembling of this process transfers synesthetically to ‘brusque movements’ (see gr. phrimā). The first direction of semantic development which could be provisionally generalized by the same ‘burn’, is motivated by the cause-effect contiguity of burning and boiling processes. In its turn, the meaning ‘burn’ shifts to ‘heat’, ‘f ever’ and emotional glow ‘ardent’. The second direction under the provisional name ‘liquid, dense’ is also the result of cause-effect shifting ‘boil’ > ‘scum’ > ‘liquid, dense’.

bher- ‘cut, rub, split, scratch’ >
4. OE. bearu, Ol. berr ‘coniferous forest’, OHG. baro ‘forest’;
5. G. Borte ‘edge’, Ol. barð ‘border’;

Interpretation. The meaning ‘cut, rub, split, scratch’ could be qualified as onomatopoeic (a distinctive disharmonic trembling sound while tearing or cutting smith.). Like in the case of bher- cited above, the symbolic function belongs to –r-. The original meaning develops in 6 directions: 1) ‘various actions with sharp instruments’ and sharp instruments themselves; 2) ‘hit’ (a tight syncretism with ‘cut’); 3) ‘wood’ (material); 4) ‘wood, forest’ (derivative from the previous); 5) ‘edge’ (that has to be cut); 6) ‘hole’ (effect of action ‘hit, stab’).

bher-4 ‘buzz, grumble’ >
E. bark, Br. bressum ‘cry’, Ukr. brehati ‘bark’.

Interpretation. Onomatopoeic, vocal signals. V.V. Levitsky treats this root as a derivate from bhá ‘shine’ or bhá- ‘speak’ (see above). To our view, the bilabial [b] is apt to symbolize mainly bucal activities, in particular, vocal signals. In its turn this serves as a ground for the audio-visual synesthetic shift ‘vocal signals’ > ‘light radiation’.

bher-5 ‘bright, light brown’ >
E. beaver, OlInd. babhrú-h, E. brown, Fr. brun ‘brown’, E. bear.

Interpretation. We do not consider this root as a separate one. It is more probable that the meaning ‘brown’ derives from ‘wood’ with its authentic color. Then the chain of shifts would look like ‘cut’ > ‘wood’ > ‘brown’. Maybe the motivating nominative feature for beaver and bear is not color, but a functional aspect. The beaver is famous mainly as gnawing, and the bear as a scratching animal. Hereby both correlate tightly with the meaning ‘cut’.

bher-6 ‘spike, edge, smth. salient’.

Interpretation. This root does not seem separate. The meanings ‘spike, edge’ are direct derivatives from the iconic meaning of the root bher- ‘cut’. V.V. Levitsky makes the same suggestion.

*bhel- 

bhel-1 ‘flower, leaf’ >

German. origin > E. bloom, G. Blume ‘flower’. There is a suggestion about the derivation of E. blood and G. Blut from the Germ. meaning ‘flower’ (associating with the red color of flower), though this version is doubtful (see below).

bhel-2 ‘noise, sound’ >
Gr. phlénaPHos ‘chat’; Lat. flere ‘cry’; flebilibis (firstly belongs to a crying voice) ‘pitiful’, then ‘weak’ > Fr. faible, E. feeble, Sp. feble, It. fiaveole.

German. origin > E. bell; bellow; blubber; G. bellen ‘bark’.

bhel-1 ‘blow, inflate’ >
Gr. pa-phlázó ‘boil’ (= ‘inflate, burst’);

German. origin > OHG. bald, It. baldo, E. bold;
OHG. balla, Sp. bala, Fr. balle, E. ball;
E. belly; bellows; bulk; bolster.

bhel-4 with extension bhleg-, bhleig- ‘shine’ >
Skr. bhálam, bhárgah ‘flash’; Gr. phlegó ‘set on fire’; phloX ‘flame’, phlegma ‘fire’.

Lat. fulgere ‘flash’; fulgor ‘thunder’ > OF. flambé; flamer ‘flame’; Fr. foudre ‘thunder’; E. flame, G. Flamme; It. fulgere, Sp. flagrar ‘flash’.

German. origin > ‘white’: Fr. blanc, Sp. blanco, It. bianco, prob., Fr. blême, G. blass ‘pale’; E. bleach, G. bleichen.

Interpretation. Like in the case of synesthetic audio-visual link of the roots’ meanings bha- and bha-, the forms bhel- and bhel- expose a similar derivation: ‘vocal signals, sound’ > ‘flash’. The consonant structure of this root (bilabial aspirant + lingual) easily imitates uppermost bucal activities, namely ‘vocal signals’. The action ‘blow, inflate’ is another aspect of it, expressed in the meaning of the root bhel-1. As it follows from the examples of formal-semantic development of this root, its meaning transforms into ‘round’, ‘voluminous’, ‘empty’. As for the meanings ‘leaf’ and ‘flower’ which are hypothetically attributed to the homonymous root bhel-1, from our viewpoint, they could be treated as derivatives from ‘blow, inflate’ by two concurrent features: ‘round’ (shape of flower and leaf) and ‘enlarge, grow’ (dynamic feature). Concerning the proposed version of the derivation of the meaning ‘blood’ from the ‘flower’, we are not sure that red color is prototypical for flower. The Levitsky’s version, ascending these words and, correspondently, meanings to the I.-E. root *bheu- ‘flow, be liquid’ (Cf. ‘flow, inflate’ (Grandsaignes d’Hauterive: 22), looks more attractive and reliable. By this latter meaning the given form interfaces with bhel-1, that is, it could be its variant.

It is interesting to compare the latter forms and meanings to the I.-E. root *bheu- ‘grow; to be’ that gave birth to numerous derivates: Skr. bhávati ‘he is’, Gr. phóu ‘enlarge, grow’, phusís ‘nature’, phuteúō ‘to plant’, Lat. fui (perfect from sum ‘I am’), futurus ‘should be’, fieri ‘become’; probus (from pror-bho-s ‘growing directly’) ‘honest’, probare ‘approve’, proba ‘proof’.


Viewing the iconic structure of the root (bilabial aspirant), it is easy to suggest the semantic development ‘inflate’ > ‘enlarge’ > ‘grow’ > ‘be’. It is worth noting that the idea of existence, being is originally linked with organic developing world.

Summing up an interim phono-semantic study of homonymous variants of several Indo-European roots, we can claim that iconicity does give the nominative ground for the further lexical semantic extension. All studied roots with the initial bilabial aspirant bh- revealed three kinds of iconic reference: bucal, manual and
Lexical causatives in Azeri Turkish: syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characteristics of simple lexical causatives in Azeri Turkish language on the basis of Role and Reference Grammar

1. Introduction

In this paper semantic, syntactic and pragmatic characteristics of simple causatives (root, morphological and helping causatives) will be discussed in Role and Reference Grammar. These kinds of constructions are sentences in which a person, an event or a phenomenon called actor which as a motivator or stimulator constructs another person or thing called undergoer that in this paper accepts or remains in a given status. In addition to the abstract and introduction, the main part of the present paper consists of four sections. In the second section related literature is reviewed, in the third part methodology of the paper for data analysis is represented, in the fourth section data analysis is discussed and finally in the fifth section results of data analysis are argued.

2. Review of related literature

Iranian and also non-Iranian writers of Persian grammar for many years before have noticed that a morpheme adding to the verb valency, often deals as the one which changes intransitive verbs into their transitive counterpart. Abdul-Azim Garib, et. al. (1991) introduced adding /-nd/ to intransitive verbs as a method of transitive verb making process. They have also stated that besides intransitive verbs, transitive ones sometimes are changed into transitive forms in the same way. For example, /xordan/ ‘eating’ changes to /xorândan/ ‘cause

Works Cited


List of Abbreviations

E. - English;
Fr. - French;
G. - German;
Göt. - Gothic;
Gr. - Greek;
I.-E. - Indo-European;
Ir. - Irish;
It. - Italian;
Lat. - Latin;
ME. - Middle English;
Mfr. - Middle French;
OE. - Old English;
OE. - Old English;
OHG - Old High German;
OL. - Old Icelandic;
Oln. - Old Indian;
Rus. - Russian;
Skr. - Sanskrit;
Sp. - Spanish;
Sw. - Swedish;
Ukr. - Ukrainian.

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