

# On the Mongolian verb of motion *yav-* 'to go, to travel, to leave'

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## 1. Introduction

Since the 1970s, verbs of motion as an important part of the vocabularies of most languages have been extensively studied by cognitive linguists, in particular, Talmy (1975, 1985, 2000), Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1992), Slobin (1996), and others.<sup>1</sup> Based on Talmy's terminological apparatus (Figure, Path, Manner, Ground, etc.), a series of studies have featured the "universals" of the usage of verbs of motion in many languages.

This cross-linguistic research has shown that languages tend to fall into two major classes in terms of how they express meaning connected to motion in space – these are the "verb-framed" vs. "satellite-framed" languages. According to this classification, the Altaic languages generally belong to the former class. Recently, Nakazawa (2007, 2009) has focused on verbs of motion in Mongolian. Some recent studies have emphasized the necessity of both more focused and intense methods of apprehending the verbal systems of motion in various languages (Word-Allbritton 2004: 9–10).

It is my conviction that that the descriptive approach to particular languages, based on careful examination of larger samples of language data, contributes important information to the pragmatics of the studied languages. The description of their semantics, including the grammaticalized and figurative usage of particular verbs of motion, may become one of the clues to comprehending the "linguistic mind" and the ways in which particular languages view and reflect on the world.

The present paper continues a discussion of the topic of verbs of motion in Mongolian and Sibe, which I described in previous articles (Zikmundova 2010,

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<sup>1</sup> See the bibliography by Slobin and Matsumoto at <http://www.lit.kobe-u.ac.jp/~yomatsum/motionbiblio1.pdf>.

2011), and continues the examination of the Sibe verb *yaf-* (2013). The general translation of the Sibe verb *yaf-* and the Khalkha Mongolian verb *yav-* are largely similar, covering the meanings ‘to go’, ‘to travel’, ‘to depart’, and in a more the abstract or figurative sense referring to various aspects of existing.

The verbs of motion which I examined in previous papers (Sibe *gen-* ‘to go there, to go’ and *ji-* ‘to come here’, Khalkha Mongolian *oč-* ‘to go there’, *ir-* ‘to come here’) form a part of a largely coherent system of verbs of motion consisting of antonymical pairs with distinct spatial semantics, which is typical of Altaic languages in general. However, the verb with the general meaning of motion, examined in the present article, lacks some characteristics of this system, tending rather to resemble the usage of verbs of motion in the “satellite-framed” languages. In particular, while it is difficult to establish an accurate English translation of the verbs ‘to come here’ or ‘to go there’ which would encompass the entire range of meanings, both the Sibe verb *yaf-* and the Mongolian verb *yav-*, including much of their figurative meanings, are aptly translated with the English verb ‘to go’. An important difference between English on the one hand and both Sibe and Mongolian on the other lies in the emphasis on motion as the basic aspect of life, which is mirrored in the semantics of both of these verbs.

In the present paper I examine the semantics of the Khalkha Mongolian verb *yav-*, based on examples from Modern Khalkha Mongolian. The analyzed data come from various sources: folktales and proverbs retrieved from the Database of Mongolian folklore texts at <http://www.signeta.cz/textsearch/>, interviews recorded by V. Kapišovská in the Khentii Province of Mongolia in 2014, utterances noted during everyday conversations in 2015, and texts and conversations available on the Internet. The examples are roughly divided into “literal” and “figurative” usage and further classified into tentative groups according to the manner of usage.

## **2. The verb *yav-* expressing the literal meaning of ‘motion’**

The basic semantics of the verb *yav-* is connected to the process of motion. Within its range of meanings, the emphasis on ‘leaving, or setting off [in motion]’ and ‘to undertaking a journey’ seem to be especially frequent.

### **2.1. The verb *yav-* designating the process of motion**

The general meaning of motion in space seems to be the basic and most important component within the semantics of the Mongolian verb *yav-*. In this literal meaning

the agent is usually either an animate being, or an object for which such motion is a typical action. In this type of usage spatial determination may be either present (sentences 1 and 2) or absent (sentence 3). Unlike in other Mongolian verbs of motion, however, here the semantic emphasis is on the motion itself rather than on its goal or direction.

- (1) *Нэгөө хүн тэр явж байна.*  
 nögö xün **ter yav-ž** **bai-na.**  
 that\* person **that go-CT<sup>2</sup>** **be-IMPRF**  
 (\*in reference to a previously mentioned fact)  
 ‘That [previously mentioned] person **is walking/riding over there.**’
- (2) *Би сайн морио унаад*  
 bi sain mori-ō un-ād  
 I good horse-ACC-POSS ride-CP  
  
*саадгүй цаашаа явна.*  
**sādgüi cāšā yav-na.**  
 without.obstacles further go-IMPRF  
 ‘I will ride [on] my good horse and **proceed smoothly.**’
- (3) *Улаан ширх явна. Үүнийг ална уу?*  
 ulān širx yav-na. Ūn-īg al-na uu?  
 red louse go-IMPRF this-ACC kill-IMPRF Q  
 ‘A red louse is **creeping [towards the location of the speaker]**. Should I kill it?’

## 2.2. The verb *yav-* – expressing the meaning of a journey with a specific purpose

While designating the process of motion, many of the examined examples can also be interpreted as referring to a whole journey with a certain goal and purpose, which may be either overtly expressed (4)–(7), or understood from the context (9). When the goal of motion is defined spatially, it is mostly in the lative case (4), (9). In

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<sup>2</sup> The abbreviations in the interlinear glosses follow, for the most part, the list of standard abbreviations available at <https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/Glossing-Rules.pdf> (Leipzig glossing rules). The rest is abbreviated from grammatical terms used in Vacek and Luvsandorj (2004).

colloquial usage, however, the case suffix is often omitted (8). When the purpose of motion is expressed by a verb, the latter mostly has the form of a verbal noun in the instrumental case, which is a form typically used for the expression of purpose – (7), (9), or employs an analytic construction. When the purpose of motion is expressed by a noun, it usually stands in the dative-locative (6), (10).

- (4) *Ta gadaɣɯaa явсан юм уу?*  
 ta gada-gšā yav-san yum uu?  
 you outside-LAT go-NP PTC Q  
 ‘Oh, you have gone elsewhere? [You are not here?]
- (5) *Нараа эгч Монгол явсан.*  
 Narā egč Mongol yav-san.  
 naraa elder.sister Mongolia go-NP  
 ‘Aunt Naraa went to Mongolia/ is in Mongolia.’
- (6) *Арван гурван жилийн анд явсан аав*  
 arvan gurban žil-īn an-d yav-san āv  
 ten three year-GEN hunt-DL go-NP father  
  
*хаан чинь хүрээд ирэв.*  
 xān čin‘ xūr-ēd ir-ev.  
 where POSS.2SG arrive-CP come-PRET.PERF  
 ‘Your father, who left for a hunt of thirteen years, has come back.’
- (7) *Гадаадад сурахаар явах хүмүүст*  
 gadāda-d sura-x-ār yava-x xümūs-t  
 abroad-DL study-NF-INS go-NF people-DL  
  
*банкны батлагаа гаргана.*  
 bankn-ī batlagā garga-na.  
 bank-GEN certificate issue-IMPRF  
 ‘We issue a bank certificate for those who go to study abroad.’
- (8) *Аав аа, аав аа! Ямар мориороо явах вэ?*  
 āv-ā, āv-ā! Yamar mori-or-ō yava-x ve?  
 father-VOC father-VOC what horse-INS-POSS.REF go-NF Q  
 ‘Father, with which horse should I go?’

- (9) *Нөхөр маань Баянхонгор аймаг руу ажил*  
*nöxör mǎn’ Bayanxongor aimag-rū ažil*  
 husband POSS1PL.GEN Bayankhongor aimag-LAT **work**  
*хийхээр яваад эзгүй байсан.*  
*xī-x-ēr yav-ād ezgüi bai-san.*  
**do-NF-INS go-CP** absent be-NP  
 ‘My husband **went** to Bayankhongor aimag **to work** and was not at home.’
- (10) *Ухнанд явсан хүү ямаа ишиглэсэн хойно ирэв.*  
**uxnan-d yav-san** хүү yamā iṣigle-sen xoino ire-v.  
**ram-DL go-NP** boy goat give.birth-NP after come-RET.PERF  
 ‘The boy who **went to fetch the ram** returned after the goats gave birth.’

### 2.3. The verb *yav-* expressing the meaning ‘to set oneself in motion, to leave’

In everyday colloquial usage, the verb *yav-* is frequently used in connection with leaving a certain site, setting off, etc.

- (11) *За одоо явцгаая!*  
*za odō yav-cgā-ya!*  
 PTC now **go-VP-VOL**  
 ‘So, let’s **go** now!’
- (12) *Ээж явсан юм уу?*  
*ēž yav-san yum ū?*  
 mother **go-NP** PTC Q  
 ‘**Has Mother left?**’
- (13) *Явахаасаа өмнө надаас юу хүссэнээ ав!*  
**yava-x-ās-ā** ömnö nad-ās yū xüs-sen-ē av!  
**go-NF-ABL-POSS** before 1SG-ABL what wish-NP-ACC-POSS take-IMP  
 ‘Before you **leave**, take anything you wish from me.’
- (14) *Явна явна гэж ямааны мах барав...*  
**yav-na yav-na** ge-ž yamān-ī max bara-v.  
**go-IMPRF go-IMPRF** say-CI goat-GEN meat finish-RET.PERF  
 ‘Saying “**I am leaving**,” he finished off the meat of an [entire] goat.’

- (15) *Тэр охин урьд нь гэрээсээ хоёр,*  
 ter oxin ur'd n' ger-ēs-ē xoyor,  
 that girl before POSS3SG home-ABL-POSS two  
*гурван удаа явж байсан гэнэ.*  
 gurban udā **yav-ž bai-san** ge-ne.  
 three time **go-CI be-NP** say-IMPRF  
 'They say that formerly this girl **had left** home two or three times.'
- (16) *Дахиж гэрээсээ хэзээ ч явахгүй.*  
 daxiž ger-ēs-ē xezē č yava-x-güi.  
 again home-ABL-POSS when PTC **go-NF-NEG**  
 'I will never **leave** home again.'
- (17) *Тэнд очоод сураглал охиныг маань байхгүй,*  
 tend oč-ōd suragla-tal oxin-ig mān' baix-güi,  
 there go.there-CP ask-CT daughter-ACC 1PL.GEN be-NF-NEG  
*явчихсан гэсэн.*  
**yav-čix-san** ge-sen.  
**go-INT-NP** say-NP  
 'When we went there to ask, we were told our daughter wasn't there; she **had left**.'

### 3. Modal and grammatical usage of the verb *yav-*

#### 3.1. The verb *yav-* expressing a modality of continuous motion

A frequent type of phrase is one where the verb *yav-* is preceded by another verb of motion in the form of an imperfective converb. In such phrases, the function of the verb *yav-* may be interpreted as modal, foregrounding the notion of continuous motion. This kind of usage is typical for dependent phrases with a temporal meaning (sentences 20–22).

- (18) *Хүчтэй нарны шуурга Дэлхийг чиглэн ирж явна.*  
 xüčtei narn-ī šūrga delxī-g čigle-n ir-ž yav-na.  
 strong sun-GEN storm Earth-ACC head-CM come-CI go-IMPRF  
 'A strong sun storm **is heading towards** the Earth.'

- (19) *Хоёр залуу цирк үзээд гарч явна.*  
 xoyor zalū cirk üz-ēd **gar-č** **yav-na.**  
 two youngster circus see-CP go.out-CI go-IMPRF  
 ‘Two young men are **leaving** the circus after a performance.’
- (20) *Уртын даваа даваад баруун тийшээгээ*  
 Urtin davā dav-ād barūn tī-šē-gē  
 Urtyn pass surmount-CP west there-LAT-POSS.REF  
*бууж явахад ...*  
**bū-ž yava-x-ad...**  
**descend-CI go-NF-DL**  
 ‘As they crossed the Urtyn Pass and **were descending** in a westerly direction...’
- (21) *Буцаж явах замдаа осол гаргасан.*  
**buca-ž yava-x** zam-d-aa osol gar-ga-san  
**Return-CI go-NF** way-DL-POSS.REF accident go.out-CAUS-NP  
 ‘**On the way back**, he caused a car accident.’
- (22) *Гэртээ харьж явтал гудамжны*  
 ger-t-ē **har’-ž** **yav-tal** gudamžn-ī  
 home-DL- POSS.REF **return.home-CI** **go-CT** treet-GEN  
*өнцөгт гоё бүсгүй зогсохыг үзээд*  
 öncög-t goyo büsgüi zogsox-īg üz-ēd  
 corner-DL beautiful woman stand-NF-ACC see-CP  
 ‘**As he was returning** home, he saw a beautiful woman standing on the corner of the street...’
- (23) *Гурван хүн машинаар чоно хөөж яваад осолджээ.*  
 gurban хүн mašin-ār čono **хөө-ž** **yav-ād** osold-žē.  
 three person car-INS wolf **hunt-CI** **go-CP** crash-PRET.IMP  
 ‘Three people, **hunting** wolves while [driving] in the car, were in an accident.’

### 3.2 The verb *yav-* expressing a modality of intensity and change

This modal usage is derived from the basic semantics of ‘setting oneself in motion’ or ‘leaving’. In this type of phrases the verb *yav-* adds a modal colouring of an intensive and persistent change of state (Ex. 24–26), or of an intensive action (27).

- (24) *Их л ойгомжгүй болоод явчихлаа.*  
 ix l oilgomžgüi **bol-ōd** **yav-čix-lā.**  
 much PTC incomprehensible **become-CP** **go-INT-PRES.PERF**  
 ‘It **became** very confusing.’
- (25) *Сайхан болоод явчихлаа шүү.*  
 saixan **bol-ōd** **yav-čix-lā** šü.  
 nice/good **become-CP** **go-INT-PRES.PERF** PTC  
 ‘It **became** better; it **improved** a lot.’
- (26) *Машины наймаанд яваад амьдрал*  
 mašin-ī naimān-d yav-ād am’dral  
 car-GEN business-DL go-CP life  
 ‘под’ *хийгээд явчихлаа.*  
 ‘pod’ **xīg-ēd** **yav-čix-lā.**  
 ‘pod’ **do-CP** **go-INT-PRES.PERF**  
 ‘After I [started] doing trade in buying and selling cars, my life **improved.**’
- (27) *Унтаж байтал толгой дээр минь*  
 unta-ž bai-tal tolgoi dēr min’  
 sleep-CI be-CT head on POSS1SG  
*нэг юм таш баш хийгээд явчихлаа шүү.*  
 neg yum **taš baš** **xīg-ēd** **yav-čix-lā** šü.  
 one thing **tash bash** **do-CP** **go-INT-PRES.PERF** PTC  
 ‘When I was sleeping, something **made a bumping noise** above my head.’

### 3.3. The verb *yav-* in auxiliary function

A situation that describes two speakers encountering each in open space, when one or both speakers are in motion, employs the verb *yav-* as the final member of a verb phrase following other verbs which are non-motion verbs (28–31). In this kind of situation—typical in the life of nomadic herders – the verb *yav-* may possibly be interpreted as expressing a grammatical meaning very close to the auxiliary



existential verb *bai-* ‘to be.’ In most of the examples below, the verb *yav-* could be replaced by *bai-* without any substantial change in the meaning of the sentence.

- (28) *Барон Унгерний тухай судлах зээд яваа юм уу?*  
 baron Ungern-ī tuxai **sudla-x** **ge-ēd** **yav-ā** yum ū?  
 Baron Ungern-GEN about **research-NF** **say-CP** **go-NI** PTC Q  
 ‘So you **are travelling with the purpose of studying** Baron Ungern?’

- (29) *Та нар юунд яваа хүмүүс вэ?*  
 Та-нар **yūn-d** **yav-ā** xümūs ve?  
 you-PL **what-DL** **go-NI** people Q  
 ‘What is **the purpose** of your journey?’

- (30) *Намайг алж идэх шахлаа.*  
 Nama-ig al-ž ide-x šax-lā.  
 1SG-ACC kill-CI eat-NF press-PRES.PERF  
  
*Тэгээд би ингэж зугатаж явна.*  
 tegēd bi inge-ž **zugata-ž** **yav-na.**  
 so I like.this **flee-CI** **go-IMPRF**

‘They almost killed me, so **I am running** like this.’

- (31) *Бар чи юундаа ингэж их сандарч явна?*  
 bar či yūn-d-ā ingež ix  
 tiger you what-DL-POSS.REF like.this much  
  
*сандарч явна?*  
**sandar-č** **yav-na?**  
**be.anxious-CI** **go-IMPRF**  
 ‘Why **are you so anxious**, tiger?’

- (32) *Судалгаа хийж явсан ажилтныг хутгалж амь насыг нь хохироосон хэрэг гарчээ.*  
**sudalgā** **xī-ž** **yav-san** **ažilt-n-ig** **xutgal-ž**  
**research** **do-CI** **go-NP** worker-ACC stab-CI  
  
*амь насыг нь хохироосон хэрэг гарчээ.*  
 am’ nas-ig n’ xохirō-son xereg gar-čē.  
 life age-ACC POSS3SG harm-NP matter go.out-PRET.IMP  
 ‘It happened that an employee was stabbed to death **while doing field research.**’

- (33) *Үүргээ гүйцэтгэж яваад хоёр цагдаа*  
 ūrgē **güicetge-ž** **yav-ād** xoyor cagdā  
 task-POSS.REF **fulfill-CI** **go-CP** two policeman  
*амиа алджээ*  
 ami-a ald-žē  
 soul-POSS.REF lose-PRET.PERF  
 ‘Two policemen lost their lives **while in service**.’
- (34) *Ихэнхдээ хоолыг нь дээрэмдээд явсан юм.*  
 inenxdē xōl-ig- n’ **dēremd-ēd yav-san yum.**  
 mostly food-ACC POSS3SG **rob-CP go-NP PTC**  
 ‘He **was** mainly **stealing** their food.’

### 3.4. The verb *yav-* as a member of a complex descriptive expression

The verb *yav-*, when forming part of a complex description of actions, shows lesser variability in its usage than other verbs of motion. This is due to its lack of a concrete deictic function.

#### 3.4.1. The verb *yav-* in initial phrasal position

When placed in initial phrasal position, the verb *yav-* usually describes either a departure with consequent motion (35–38) or a process of motion (39–40). In the latter case, it often adds a modal colouring of slight expectation followed by surprise (39).

- (35) *Хөөш чи талханд яваад ир!*  
 xōš čī **talxan-d yav-ād ir!**  
 hey you **bread-DL go-CP come**  
 ‘Go buy bread, please!’
- (36) *Аав аа, аав аа, би алтан мөнгөн*  
 āv-ā, āv-ā, bi altan möngön  
 father-VOC father-VOC I golden silver  
*аргайндаа яваад ирье!*  
 argain-d-ā **yav-ād ir-ye**  
 playing.bone-DL-POSS.REF **go-CP come-VOL**

‘Father, I will **go fetch** my golden and silver playing bones.’

- (37) *Би өчигдөр Хархорум хот яваад ирсэн.*  
 Bi öčigdör Хархорум хот **yav-ād** **ir-sen.**  
 I yesterday Kharkhorum city **go-CP** **come-NP**  
 ‘Yesterday I **paid a visit** to Kharakhorum city.’

- (38) *Тэгэхээр нь хонь явж байсан*  
 tege-x-ēr n’ хон’ **yav-ž** **bai-san**  
 do.so-NP-INS POSS3SG sheep **go-CI** **be-NP**

*газарт яваад иржээ.*  
 gazar-t **yav-ād** **ir-žē**  
 place-DL **go-CP** **come-PRET.IMP**

‘And so he **arrived** at the place where the sheep **had been** before.’

- (39) *Яваад очсон чинь Дорж сууж байна.*  
**yav-ād** **oč-son** čin’ Dorž sū-ž bai-na.  
**go-CP** **go.there-NP** PTC Dorj sit-CI be-IMPRF  
 ‘I **arrived** there and, oops, Dorj was sitting there.’

- (40) *Гэрт нь яваад очиж зүрхэлсэнгүй*  
 ger-t n’ **yav-ād** **očī-ž** zürxel-sen-güi.  
 home-DL POSS3SG go-CP go.there-CI dare-NP-NEG  
 ‘He did not dare to **go directly** to her place.’

### 3.4.2. The verb *yav-* in final phrasal position

When used as a final component of verbal phrases, the verb *yav-* often expresses a spatial meaning of motion directed away from the location of the speaker, or from the scene of the action.

- (41) *Дүү чинь өчигдөр ирээд явсан.*  
 dū čin’ öčigdör **ir-ēd** **yav-san.**  
 younger.sibling POSS2SG yesterday **come-CP** **go-NP**  
 ‘Your brother **came around** yesterday.’

- (42) *Орос, буриад, хамниган хүмүүсүүдийг*  
 oros, buriad, xamnigan xūmūis-ūd-ig  
 Russian, Buryat, Khamnigan people-PL-ACC

- зэвсгийн хүчээр аваад явсан.  
 zevsg-īn xüč-ēr av-ād yav-san.  
 arm-GEN power-INS take-CP go-PERF  
 ‘By using the might of weapons, he **took away** the Russian, Buryat and Khamnigan people.’
- (43) Сурч байсан сургуулиас нь аваад явсан.  
 sur-č bai-san surgūl’-ās n’ av-ād yav-san.  
 study-CI be-NP school-ABL POSS3SG take-CP go-NP  
 ‘They **took her out** of the school [where] she had been studying.’
- (44) ”Дараа уулзъя” гээд ороод явчихсан гэнэ.  
 “darā ūlz-ya” ge-ed or-ōd yav-čix-san ge-ne.  
 later meet-VOL say-CP enter-CP go-INT-NP say-IMPRF  
 ‘She said “See you later”, **entered** the house (and disappeared).’
- (45) Мафийн гишүүн оросын шоронгоос халбагаар  
 Maf-īn gišūn oros-īn šorong-ōs xalbag-ār  
 mafia member Russian-GEN prison-ABL spoon-INS  
 нүх ухаад гараад явчихаж.  
 nūx ux-ād gar-ād yav-čixa-ž.  
 hole dig-CP go.out-CP go-INT-PRET.IMP  
 ‘A member of the mafia **escaped** from a Russian prison [by] digging a hole with his spoon.’
- (46) Яаж чамайг ийм хэцүү үед хаяад  
 yāž čama-ig īm xecū üye-d xay-ād  
 how 2SG-ACC such difficult time-DL throw-CP  
 яаж чадав аа.  
 yav-ž čad-av ā.  
 go-CI can-PRET.PERF PTC  
 ‘How could he **abandon** you in such a difficult time?’
- (47) Манай эндээс морь унаад явсан.  
 mana-i end-ēs mor’ un-ād yav-san.  
 1PL.GEN here-ABL horse ride-CP go-NP  
 ‘He **left** our place **riding** [our] horse.’

- (48) *Чөтгөр... хоёр шавар хүн үрүү эргэн тойрон*  
*čötgör... xoyor šavar xün ürü ergen toiron*  
*demon... two clay person towards around around*
- шээж бузарлаад яваад өгч гэнэ.*  
*šē-ž buzarl-ād yav-ād ög-č ge-ne.*  
*urinate-CI pollute-CP go-CP give-PRET.IMP say-IMPRF*  
 ‘The devil **defiled** the two clay people **by urinating** on and all around them, **and left.**’

#### 4. Derived and figurative usages of the verb *yav-*

When considering the range of meanings of the Khalkha Mongolian verb *yav-*, it is nearly impossible to distinguish between basic and derived meanings. The material yields a large portion of examples closely connected with motion; at the same time, the verb *yav-* may also designate a more general meaning. In some cases, it is best translated with existential verbs (cf. section 3.5).

##### 4.1. Designation of an activity connected with movement

The verb *yav-* is frequently used as a representative expression for an action connected with movement. In these types of phrases, the action is usually specified by a noun — the object or goal of the action — in the dative-locative case.

- (49) *Охин чинь хичээлдээ явж байгаа юу?*  
*oxin čin’ xičēl-d-ē yav-ž baig-ā yū?*  
*daughter 2SG-GEN class-DL-POSS.REF go-CI be-NI Q*  
 ‘Does your daughter **go to school?**’
- (50) *Хүү... малдаа явдаг болж гэнэ.*  
*xū... mal-d-ā yav-dag bol-ž ge-ne.*  
*boy... beasts-DL-POSS.REF go-NU become-PRET.IMP say-IMPRF*  
 ‘The boy **began herding his beasts** regularly.’
- (51) *Бид охиноо алдчихлаа гээд... аль сайн*  
*bid oxin-ō ald-čix-lā ge-ēd... al’ sayin*  
*we daughter-POSS.REF lose-INT.PRES.-IMP say-CP which good*
- мэргэч төлгөч, бөө, ламаар явсан.*  
*mergeč tölgöč, bō, lam-ār yav-san.*  
*good seer shaman lama-INS go-NP*

‘Since our daughter was missing, we **visited** every good **diviner, shaman and lama.**’

- (52) *Тэгэхэд* ‘Амьд байна. *Нэг* хүнтэй *хамт*  
 tege-xe-d ‘am’d bai-na. neg xün-tei **xamt**  
 do.so-NF-DL alive be-IMPRF one person-SOC **together**  
*яваад* *байна*’ *гэсэн.*  
**yav-ād** **bai-na**’ ge-sen.  
**go-CP** **be-IMPRF** say-NP

‘And they said: “She is alive, she is **(living, moving)** **together** with another person.”’

#### 4.2. Derivational meanings of ‘living, spending time’

An extremely frequent abstract usage involves instances where the verb *yav-* is used to refer to life in general, making one’s living, success or lack thereof, one’s conduct, and so on.

- (53) *Залуудаа* *сайн явсан* *нь*  
 zalū-d-ā **sain yav-san** n’  
 young-DL-POSS **good go-NP** POSS3SG  
*наслахад* *мэдэгдэнэ.*  
 nasla-xa-d mede-gde-ne.  
 grow.old-NF-DL know-PAS-IMPRF

‘If you **live well** in your youth, the results become evident when you grow old.’

- (54) *Муу явахад* *нөхөр хол сайн явахад* *садан ойр.*  
**mū yav-ax-ad** nōxör hol **sain yav-ax-ad** sadan oir.  
 bad go-NF-DL friend distant good go-NF-DL relative close  
 ‘When **things aren’t going well**, friends are far away; when **things are going well**, relatives are close by.’

- (55) *Үнэнээр* *явсан* *хүн үхэр тэргээр* *туулай гүйцнэ.*  
**ūnen-ēr yav-san** xün üxer terg-ēr tūlai güic-ne.  
**truth-INS go-NP** person cow cart-INS rabbit reach  
 ‘Those who **live in truth** can overtake a rabbit with an oxen cart.’

- |      |                  |                   |                |                      |            |
|------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|------------|
| (60) | <i>Бид өсөх</i>  | <i>ээж заггүй</i> | <i>явсаар</i>  | <i>байгаад</i>       | <i>аав</i> |
|      | bid ösö-x        | ge-ž zavgüi       | yav-sār        | bai-gād              | āv         |
|      | we grow-NF       | say-CI busy       | go-CP          | be-CP                | father     |
|      | <i>ээжийнхээ</i> | <i>хөгширч</i>    | <i>байгааг</i> | <i>анзаардаггүй.</i> |            |
|      | ēž-īnx-ē         | xөгšir-č          | bai-gā-g       | anzār-dag-güi.       |            |

mother-GEN-POSS.REF    grow.old-CI    be-NI-ACC    notice-NU-NEG  
 ‘**Being busy** with [our] growing up, we do not notice how our parents grow old.’

- (61) *Дүгрэг      гэдэг      үг      явсаар      байгааг*  
*dügreg      ge-deg      üg      yav-sār      bai-gād*  
 “Dügreg”    say-NU    word    go-CA    be-CP  
*төгрөг      болсон      байхаа*  
*tögrög      bol-son      baixā.*  
 “tögrög”    become-NP    probably  
 ‘It seems that the word “dügereg” evolved into [the word] “tögrög” **over time**.’

#### 4.4. Figurative usage in place of an existential verb

The verb *yav-* may be also idiomatically used for inanimate objects, in which case it is best translated with an existential verb. Such usage has rich emotional associations, for the most part making the statement more agreeable to the listener.

- (62) *Миний      түрүүвч      чиний      цүнхэнд      явж      байна      уу?*  
*Min-ī      tūrīvč      čin-ī      cünxen-d      yav-ž      bai-na      ū?*  
 1SG-GEN    purse      2SG-GEN    bag.DL    go-CI    be-IMPRF    Q  
 ‘Is my purse in your bag?’

#### 4.5 Expression of intention, change of direction

In modern texts, the figurative usage of the verb *yav-*, in the sense of ‘change of direction, intention’, etc. is common. This manner of usage, corresponding to that of European languages and possibly also the result of the influence of the latter, seems nonetheless to conform with the general semantics of the Mongolian verb.

- (63) *Нийгэм      хаашаа      яваад      байна?*  
*nīgem      xāšā      yav-ād      bai-na?*  
 society    where.to    go-CP    be-IMPRF  
 ‘Where is society **headed**?’



#### 4.6. Metaphor for death

As in many other languages, the verb *yav-* is used as a euphemistic expression in reference to death.

- (64) *Жасрайн Жанцан энэ ертөнцөөс гэнэт явчихаж.*  
*Žasrain Žancan ene yertönc-õs genet yav-čix-až.*  
*Jasrain Jantsan this world-ABL suddenly go-INT-PRET*  
 ‘Jasrain Jantsan has suddenly **left** this world.’

#### 4.7 Problems in delimitation of „literal“ and „figurative“ meaning

Finally, it seems necessary to introduce one important feature of the semantics of the verb *yav-*. Many instances of usage, which a European linguist would most likely – according to the mode of European linguistics – label as figurative, modal, auxiliary, and so on, actually convey the basic and literal meaning of movement. Nonetheless, a semantic overlap with the derivational meanings of existence, living, or the modality of continuous action, still occurs. The following two examples, both taken from folkloric texts, show the verb *yav-* being used in syntactical or logical parallels in both the literal and basic meaning of motion, along with the figurative meaning of mode of existence, behaviour, habit, and so on.

The first series of examples, taken from the folktale known as *Цуут цагаач гүү, цолмон цагаан унага* (Cūt cagāč gū, colmon cagān unaga), is taken from the section in which the White Mare advises its foal on how to act in his own independent life; the foal subsequently disregards this advice only to then discover the White Mare’s reasons behind it. Here, examples of both the literal meaning of movement (67), (69), along with the meaning of habitus or mode of existence (65), (66), (68), (70) accumulate in logical parallels, linked by the image of the life of a Mongolian horse, for whom constant motion is the basic mode of life.

- (65) *Айлын бууцан дээр битгий унтаж яваарай.*  
*ail-in būcan dēr bitgī unta-ž yav-ārai.*  
*family-GEN camping.ground on PROH sleep-CI go-IMP*  
 ‘**Do not sleep** in empty camping grounds.’
- (66) *Эрүүл газар унтаж яваарай.*  
*erül gazar unta-ž yav-ārai.*  
*healthy place sleep-CI go-IMP*  
 ‘**Do sleep** in healthy places.’

- (67) *Ижилтэйгээ* *явахдаа* *адууны*  
 ižil-tei-gē *yava-x-d-ā* adūn-ī  
 alike-SOC-POSS.REF *go-NF-DL-POSS.REF* horse-GEN  
*захад* *гарч* *яваарай.*  
 zach-ad *gar-č* *yav-ārai.*  
 edge-DL *go.out-CI* *go-IMP*  
 ‘When you **walk/run** with your herd, always **keep to the side** of the herd.’
- (68) *Усанд* *орж* *ус* *уухдаа* *түрүүнд*  
 usan-d *or-ž* us ū-x-d-ā *türün-d*  
 water-DL enter-CI water drink-NF-DL-POSS.REF front-DL  
*нь* *орж* *ууж* *яваарай.*  
 n’ *or-ž* ū-ž *yav-ārai.*  
 POSS3SG enter-CI *drink-CI* *go-IMP*  
 ‘When going to the waterside to drink, **be** among the first **to** (step into the water) and **drink**.’
- (69) *Адууны* *дунд* *явсан* *чинь* *ижлүүд* *нь*  
 adūn-ī *dund* *yav-san* čin’ *iž-lūd* n’  
 herd-GEN among *go-NP* PTC alike-PL POSS3SG  
*өшиглөж* *алчих* *гээд* *явуулсангүй.*  
 öšiglö-ž *al-či-x* ge-ēd *yav-ül-san-güi.*  
 kick-CI kill-INT-NF say-CP *go-CAUS-NP-NEG*  
 ‘While he was **running** inside the herd, the horses were kicking him, trying to kill him and **did not let him run**.’
- (70) *Адууныхаа* *захад* *нь* *гараад* *явсан*  
 adūn-ī-xā zach-ad n’ *gar-ād* *yav-san*  
 herd-GEN-POSS.REF border-DL POSS3SG *go.out-CP* *go-NP*  
*аятай* *сайхан* *явдаг* *болов* *гэнэ.*  
 ayatai saixan *yav-dag* *bol-ov* *ge-ne.*  
 pleasant nice *go-NU* *become-PRET.PERF* say-IMPRF  
 ‘As he (**learned to**) **stay** to the side of the herd, he finally **began enjoying** an agreeable **life**.’

The next example is from a folk song. The four rhymes display syntactic parallelism, which is a typical device in Mongolian poetry. In the first and the third lines, as a basis of comparison, the verb *yav-* is used in its more literal meaning of movement, whereas in the second and fourth lines *yav-* functions as a modal verb: its usage is figurative, referring to certain aspects of life and human behaviour.

- (71) *Уулаар            явдаг            угалзын            зан,*  
  - ūl-ār            **yav-dag**            ugalz-īn            zan,
  - mountain-INS **go-NU**            ibex/muflon-GEN    character
 ‘To roam in the mountains is the ibexes’ custom,

- (72) *Уулзаад        явдаг        хүний        зан,*  
  - ūlz-ād        **yav-dag**        хүн-ī        zan,
  - meet-CP        **go-NU**        person-GEN    character
 ‘To live meeting others is a human custom,

- (73) *Үүрээр        явдаг        үхрийн        зан,*  
  - ūr-ēr        **yav-dag**        үхр-īn        zan,
  - dawn-INS        **go-NU**        cattle-GEN    character,
 ‘To walk at dawn is the habit of cattle,

- (74) *Үерхэж        явдаг        багын        зан.*  
  - üerxe-ž        **yav-dag**        bag-īn        zan.
  - be.friends-CI        **go-NU**        little-GEN    character.
 ‘To become close (friends) is the habit of children/youth.’

## 5. Conclusion

The main semantics of the Khalkha Mongolian verb *yav-* are connected to motion in the general sense. It refers to motion in space with either no concrete spatial definition (1.1), or with the emphasis on departing from a certain location (1.3). Even when the goal, course and manner of motion are specified in various ways, the emphasis is still placed on the process of motion itself. In more general or abstract usage, the verb *yav-* often represents the meaning of an entire journey with a specific goal or purpose (1.2). Syntactically, when the spatial goal of motion is expressed, it does not bear the dative-locative case (used mainly to express the purpose of motion), but, instead, the lative case (or postpositional construction), which corroborates the idea of the lack of inherent spatial features of this verb.

Similarly to other verbs of motion, the verb *yav-* is used as a component of complex descriptive designations of actions, which is a typical feature of most Altaic languages. The scale of usage options, however, is relatively small, being mostly limited to the expression of one of the basic lexical meanings (2.4.1) or the spatial meaning of motion away from a certain point (2.4.2).

Likewise, the Mongolian verb *yav-* displays, in comparison to other verbs of motion, relatively few modes of modal usage, which may be the result of its lack of concrete spatial and deictic features. The two main modal meanings of the verb, stemming from its two basic “semantic cores”, convey the meaning of durativity or continuity of an action (2.1), and the modality of intense or abrupt change (2.2).

The material used for this study yields examples of usage which could be labelled as auxiliary in the narrower sense (i.e. having predominantly grammatical function) (2.3). This feature, absent in the cases of other verbs of motion, reflects the verb’s semantic connection to existence.

In its basic figurative meaning, the Mongolian verb *yav-* refers to life, existence and its various modes and manners. While, generally speaking, in many cultures, motion is perceived as the representation of life, in the traditional Mongolian nomadic culture, where constant movement is the basic condition of survival, the association of motion with life seems to be even more implicit and essential. Hence, the figurative meaning of the verb *yav-* covers almost all spheres connected to existence, including staying, dwelling, making one’s living, behavior, degree of success in a given endeavor, and so on. The boundaries between the literal and figurative meanings are often difficult to distinguish when these aspects of life happen to overlap with the actual process of motion, as shown in section 3.7.

In my two previous papers (Zikmundová 2009 and 2010) I examined two verbs of motion, whose meaning may be roughly translated as ‘to come here’ and ‘to go there/to visit’, in both Khalkha Mongolian and Jungarian Sibe. In both languages these verbs are antonyms and form part of a coherent system of verbs of motion with distinct spatial meanings and deictic functions.

The verb *yav-*, while being one of the basic verbs of motion, does lack some features usually characteristic of verbs of this system. It does not convey such inherent spatial meaning. Instead, its greater ambiguity with regard to space, as well as its main semantic contours, both resemble the semantics of equivalent verbs in European (“satellite-framed”) languages, in particular, the English verb ‘to go’.

## Abbreviations

|           |                              |
|-----------|------------------------------|
| ABL       | Ablative                     |
| ACC       | Accusative                   |
| CA        | Converbum abtemporale        |
| CAUS      | Causative                    |
| CC        | Converbum conditionale       |
| CI        | Converbum imperfecti         |
| CM        | Converbum modale             |
| CP        | Converbum perfecti           |
| CT        | Converbum terminale          |
| DL        | Dative-locative              |
| GEN       | Genitive                     |
| IMP       | Imperative                   |
| IMPRF     | Imperfective verb            |
| INS       | Instrumental                 |
| INT       | deverbal suffix of intensity |
| LAT       | Lative                       |
| NEG       | Negative                     |
| NF        | Nomen Futuri                 |
| NI        | Nomen Imperfecti             |
| NU        | Nomen usus                   |
| PAS       | Passive                      |
| PL        | Plural                       |
| POSS      | Possessive                   |
| POSS.REF  | Reflexive possessive suffix  |
| PRES.PERF | Presens Perfecti             |
| PRET.IMP  | Preteritum Imperfecti        |
| PRET.PERF | Preteritum Perfecti          |
| PROH      | Prohibitive particle         |
| PTC       | Particle                     |
| Q         | Question marker              |
| SOC       | Sociative                    |
| TOP       | Topic particle               |
| VOC       | Vocative                     |
| VOL       | Voluntative                  |
| VP        | Verbum pluritativum          |

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