

# ALL SHADES OF ICONICITY: IDEOPHONES, ONOMATOPOEIA, AND SOUND SYMBOLISM

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## ***Introduction***

*Iconicity* is understood (after Charles Sanders Peirce (1940)) as a relationship of resemblance between the signifier and the signified. It is known to penetrate all levels of language: modern languages across the globe are reported to contain iconic (imitative) words in their lexicons – ideophones, onomatopoeic, and mimetic words (see Anderson 1998, Bańko 2009, Bartens 2000, Childs 1988, Hinton et al. 1994, Körtvélyessy 2011, Moreno-Cabrera 2020, Voeltz et al. 2001, Voronin 2006). Signed languages also have a high percentage of self-evident, ‘transparent’ signs (Frishberg 1975, Klima & Bellugi 1979, Nyst 2016, Perniss et al. 2017, Taub 2001). Iconicity is also attested in morphology and syntax (Fischer 2001, Haiman 1985, Landsberg 1995), for example, it manifests itself in the form of sentence structure which reflects the sequence of the events which are being described.

*Iconicity studies*, thus, is a relatively novel branch of linguistics developing on the crossroads of lexicology, phonetics and phonology, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, etymology, language typology, semiotics, semantics and pragmatics, and cognitive sciences. This area of research focuses on origin and evolution, typology, and function of imitative lexical elements in different languages (see Akita 2009, Dingemanse 2012, Enckell & Rézeau 2003, Kakehiet al. 1998, Shliakhova 2004, etc.). Also, iconicity deals with less evident cases of form-meaning similarity, such as sound symbolism, including phonaesthetic sound symbolism (Abelin 1999, Jespersen 1933, Ohala 1994).

*Ideophones* are understood as “member[s] of an open lexical class of marked words that depict sensory imagery” (Dingemanse 2019: 16). For example, *bukukuku-kuu-kuu-kuu* ‘cry of a hawk’ (Nuckolls et al. 2016: 99); Ewe *tsaklii / klitsaa* ‘rough surface’ (Ameka 2001: 31); Wolaitta *wununuúk’a* ‘very, very small’ (Amha 2001: 52). They are known for their violating phonotactic rules of the language, containing extra-inventory phonemes, and showing general lack of syntactic and morphological integration (examples see Hinton et al. 1994; Voeltz et al. 2001).

Ideophones can be onomatopoeic (that is, they denote sound), for example, Cayuga *mbláō* ‘frog’s croak’ (Mithun 1982: 53), Jamingung *ngunkulurrb* ‘to

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mumble’ (Schultze-Berndt 2001: 357), etc. In this respect they correspond to *onomatopoeic interjections* registered in Indo-European languages: English *splash, pop, pip*; Russian *плюх* [*pljukh*] ‘plump’, *хлоп* [*khlop*] ‘clap, slap’, *дзинь* [*dzin*] ‘ting-a-ling’; Polish *auć* /awt̩ɛ/ ‘outch’, *brr* /br:/ (expression of feeling cold), *brzdęk* /bzɔɛŋk/ ‘thrum’, *chlup* /xlup/ or *plusk* /plusk/ ‘splash’, *pyk* /pik/ ‘pow’, *łubudu* /'wubudu/ ‘kaboom’, etc.

*Sound symbolism* describes such relationships of resemblance as, for example, between front, high-pitched vowels and small size (as in *teeny, wee, bit*, etc., also see *bouba-kiki* effect (Köhler 1929)). Such correspondences are revealed with statistical methods on large amount of data.

Variation within iconic lexicon is also great. There is a juxtaposition between non-lexicalised ideophones / imitative interjections *vs* the lexicalised ones. Thus, a non-lexicalised *zzz* is more iconic than a lexicalised *buzz*, a non-lexicalised *grr* is more iconic than the lexicalised *growl* (Anderson 1998: 335).

Also, language change (especially change in form under the influence of regular sound changes) affects onomatopoeia as it obscures the original form-meaning correlation of onomatopoeic words. For instance, cf. Old English *blētan* and Present-day English *bleat* /bli:t/ (from Flaksman, 2017), Old Icelandic *yla* (< Proto-Norse *\*ula* ‘to howl (of wind)’) and Present-day Icelandic *yla* /i:la/.

### ***Research question***

This workshop, therefore, focuses on all shades of iconicity, from the description and comparison of different classes of imitative words (ideophones, onomatopoeic, and sound symbolic words) to various iconic and sound-symbolic phenomena in languages across the globe. We welcome talk proposals on the following iconicity-related subjects, among others:

- Onomatopoeic words and ideophones – their typology and classification
- System-integration and markedness of ideophones / imitative interjections
- Diachronic changes in imitative vocabularies
- Cross-linguistic studies in lexical iconicity and sound symbolism
- Imitative words as parts of speech and their syntax
- Experimental research on sound symbolism
- Iconicity in gesture
- Iconicity in animal communication

Thus, the workshop is designed for the purpose of discussion of differences and similarities between iconic words and related phenomena in languages from different families.

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