REGULATIONS ON USE

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Background
The field manuals were originally intended as working documents for internal use only. They were supplemented by verbal instructions and additional guidelines in many cases. If you have questions about using the materials, or comments on the viability in various field situations, feel free to get in touch with the authors.

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FOLK DEFINITIONS OF IDEOPHONES
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Project	Categories across Language and Cognition
Task	Eliciting folk definitions of ideophones
Goal of task	Studying the meaning and use of ideophones using video-recordings of spontaneous, informal explanations.
Prerequisites	A list of ideophones. Familiarity with the Expressives task (Tufvesson 2007) is useful.
Outcome	Ideophones are typologically widespread, but reliable data on their meaning and use is still very scarce. Data contributes to a description of ideophones in the field language. The pooled cross-linguistic data will also constitute an initial step towards a comparison of the meaning and use of ideophones across languages, culminating in an overview publication or —if there is enough interest— a collected volume.

Background[3]

Ideophones are marked words that depict sensory events, like English *hippety-hoppety* 'in a limping and hobbling manner' or Siwu *mukumuku* 'mouth movements of a toothless person eating', *nyɛnɛnɛ* 'sensation of shivering', and *nyãkãnyãkã* 'sensation of grooved texture'. Their rich semantics has often been singled out for comment and presented as a challenge for lexicographers and translators (Childs 1993; Noss 1999; Nuckolls 2000), but despite some pioneering papers by William Samarin (1967; 1970), there are surprisingly few attempts at determining the meaning of ideophones. This task is a field procedure in ideophone research that provides a way of constructing rich primary data (Bernard et al. 1986) in a planned context while ensuring a large amount of spontaneity and freedom.

Folk definitions are explications or paraphrases in the language under investigation (rather than the language of analysis). Folk definitions have been used as a guide to semantics in anthropological linguistics, especially within the ethnoscience paradigm. Most studies in this domain have been primarily interested in the semantic principles underlying the construction of such definitions (e.g. Casagrande and Hale 1967; Manes 1980). However, it is also possible to extract information on the types of words defined: in the Papago folk definitions collected by Casagrande and Hale, most verbs, for example, are defined by describing a scene or event; nouns for natural kinds usually get an attributive definition listing characteristic properties or attributes; and body-parts and material culture are mostly defined functionally. Even if folk definitions by linguistically naïve speakers do not usually correspond to the lexicographer's ideal of both *characterising* and *delimiting* the meaning of a given term, they can be highly useful as a complement to other lexicographic methods.

Task

The task consists of video-recording speakers' spontaneous, informal explanations of ideophones in their own language and analysing these. Its crucial properties are (1) its reliance on the language under study itself, (2) its insistence on oral, spontaneous

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[3] Thanks to Sylvia Tufvesson and Nick Enfield for input on the development of this entry.

explanation, and (3) its use of video recording to capture essential multi-modal information such as gesture, posture, and facial expressions.

First, the actual work is done in the speaker's own language. This means, first of all, that the pool of potential participants is maximised to include basically everyone with communicative competence in the language. No writing skills are needed, and nothing bars monolinguals (often an interesting group from a sociolinguistic point of view) from participating. It means, secondly, that the dubious step of providing translation equivalents in the investigator's metalanguage (usually one or another variety of SAE) is postponed at least until *after* the process of data collection; the data of course will be much the richer for it.

Secondly, turning to the nature of the explanations, it is important to note that the exercise takes place where both the speaker and the phenomenon under investigation are most at home: the realm of spoken language. The speaker, usually one at a time[4] (though the audience will play a role too), is simply asked to 'explain' or 'clarify' certain words in their own language. No further instructions are given as to how the explanations should be constructed, nor is any clue provided about the nature of the words to be explained. This is so that we can learn about the 'unmarked' way of thinking and talking about ideophones. The ideophones themselves will simply be read aloud one by one by the investigator or an assistant.

Third, the explanations are videotaped. The advantages of video recordings are obvious, chief among them the sheer richness of the data compared to audio recordings and/or field notes. It is especially important to capture gestural behaviour, as its importance to ideophonic performance has long been noted but not adequately studied. In addition, consultants find it easier to help transcribe video recordings because of the many non-verbal cues that can be attended to in deciphering the material.

Research questions

1. What strategies are used in informal explanations of ideophones? (Some possibilities are mentioned under Analysis below.)

2. What do structure and content of the explanations teach us about naïve speakers' understanding of the meanings of ideophones?

Directions for use

1   Have a list of ideophones ready. Sixty ideophones can be done in under an hour. The ideophones are read from the list in a set order to make transcription easier. Be prepared to take note of ideophones that are new or that differ in any way from the ones on your list.

2   Collect definitions from several different speakers to control for idiolectal variation and idiosyncratic explanation strategies. Aim for definitions of at least 20 ideophones by three different speakers (collecting this would not take more than two hours in all).

3   (Optionally.) Include some nouns and verbs to be able to compare the explanatory strategies used.

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[4] A variant with a group of speakers is also possible, and has at times proven quite fruitful. There is a payoff however in terms of clarity: with a group of people it is more difficult to satisfy the conditions for a useful recording of constant quality; in addition, the resulting materials will be more difficult to analyse.

4   Preferably, the session should take place outdoors in an open space. The space should be not too public (otherwise there will be too much interference of passersby), but certainly not too confined either. A compound or garden usually does fine.

5   The speaker should have the feeling that they are communicating with an audience rather than speaking into the camera, so they should be provided with cues signalling attention and engagement by the fieldworker and/or a few others. (Too many people present, and the folk definitions become self-conscious performances or loose focus; too few, and the speaker may loose interest. The language proficiency of the fieldworker is a factor too. Tinker with this to determine the best circumstances for your field site.)

6   Aim to gather data for both male and female speakers. It is probably advisable to start with assistants that are middle-aged and older, for they usually have the widest knowledge of ideophones. Start with people who are expressive and not shy to appear on camera.

7   Do a first rough time-aligned transcription of the data in the field, to clarify any questions that may arise. Glossing and gesture analysis follow later. If you keep to the order on your list this will speed up the transcription process and make later comparisons easier.

Recording Tips

1   Always make sure to have the full body of the speaker in the shot; all kinds of movements may turn out to be significant. Some speakers like to walk around, especially while enacting certain ideophones. Use a wide angle lens to capture as much as possible, and point out the approximate range to the speaker (so that they do not walk out of the visual field).

2   In general, keep camera movement to the minimum; it will be difficult to analyse the parts of the recording where the camera is moving.

3   Avoid sessions that are too long. Although this depends on the energy and resourcefulness of the speaker, it is probably good to take a short break at least after every hour of recording.

4   The usual recording 'best practices' obtain, e.g.: use an external microphone connected to the camera for higher quality sound; have a backup sound recorder running; bring ample replacement batteries.

Analysis

This task generates rich data that can be used to study the meaning and use of ideophones. Working from time-aligned transcriptions of the video recorded folk definitions, determine what kind of strategies speakers use to explain the meanings of ideophones. If you have also gathered folk definition of some other major word classes, compare them to see if and how they differ from each other.

In a pilot of this task done with speakers of Siwu, a Kwa language of eastern Ghana, the following strategies are used to define ideophones (arranged roughly in order of frequency): describing a scene in which they would be used; using synonyms and antonyms as semantic anchoring points to delimit their meaning; citing a typical use case (for example, an insult); accompanying the words with illustrative gestures; and providing a verbal paraphrase. These strategies are often combined. The scenes and use cases provide crucial information on how ideophones are typically used (to be validated with corpus data) and on the background knowledge that underpins their use; synonyms and antonyms throw light on the lexical

structuring of the domain; and gestures provide detailed semantic cues that are all but impossible to attain with verbal paraphrase.

For an example of how gestures elucidate the lexical semantics of ideophones, consider the case of the Siwu ideophones *giligili* vs. *minimini*. The difference between them turns out to be hard to articulate; both seem to be about some kind of roundness. However, looking at the gestures in the folk definitions of four different speakers, a clear distinction emerges. In explaining *giligili*, all four speakers draw a circle in space, often with their index finger. In contrast, for *minimini*, all speakers gesture a sphere with both hands. We see thus that the gesture changes with the word form, suggesting that *giligili* should be glossed as 'circular outline' and *minimini* as 'spherical' — a distinction that is in line with their everyday use (e.g. dig a circular pit [*giligili*], make the lump of fufu round [*minimini*]). Iconic gestures are a useful complement to verbal explication because they are good for depicting image-schematic aspects of the meaning of ideophones.

Appendix: examples of transcribed folk definitions from Siwu

These examples illustrate what folk definitions can look like and how they may be useful for understanding the meanings of ideophones.

1   Folk definition of *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* 'thin, fragile' by speaker FK

ìra	*nɛ́*	*ǹ-se*	*pɛtɛpɛtɛ-pɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛ*
thing	REL	SC:REL-be	IDPH.thin.fragile-INT3
			|—G1 —|

ì-i-gbògbòrò
it-NEG-IDPH.sturdy
 |—G2 —|
ì-i-tòtòrò
it-NEG-IDPH.thick
   |—G3—|
ì-se   pɛtɛpɛtɛ-pɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛ
it-COP IDPH.thin.fragile-INT3
       |—G4   —|

G1: BH symmetric, gently pinching an imaginary thin object between thumb and forefinger
G2: BH symmetric, making fists at chest-level
G3: RH index finger being pinched with thumb and forefinger of the LH as if measuring thickness
G4: LH palm up, RH palm down, lightly tapping at the fingertips of the extended index fingers

"Something thin and fragile. It's not strong; it's not thick; it is thin and fragile."

DISCUSSION. Each of the four ideophone tokens in this definition is supported by a single time-aligned depictive gesture. The first gesture accompanying *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* depicts something very thin being measured between the fingertips; the gentle tapping of forefinger and thumb underlines the fragility evoked by the ideophone. The next ideophone, *gbògbòrò*, forcefully contrasts with this fragility by evoking an image of toughness and power. Ideophone and gesture form a multi-modal unit embedded in a negative construction, so in effect the speaker is saying 'it is not like *this*', where 'this' is the image of strength and toughness evoked by

ideophone plus gesture. The same holds for the next ideophone+gesture constellation. Here the measuring event of the first gesture is repeated, but this time with the thickness of one finger being pinched between forefinger and thumb; again a negative construction indicates 'it is not thick like *this*'. The contrast is underlined by a final repetition of *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* with a slightly modified variant of the first gesture, this time lightly tapping at the fingertips of the extended forefingers. The cumulative effect of these ideophone+gesture constellations is a maximum of explicitness with a minimum of words: *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* is not strong; it's not thick; it is thin and fragile.

2 Folk definition of *ɣàáà* 'water gushing' by speaker RO

n-du   sɛ ɣàááàà
MI-water   go IDPH.gushing:INT
'Water is gushing *ɣàáà*.'

gɔ   kàdo pɛ, ǹgɔ n-du   sɛ ɣàáà   mì-bò   à-yo   amɛ
when rain beat, how MI-water go IDPH.gushing SCR.MI-enter A.PL-house inside
'When it has rained, the way the water gushes *ɣàáà*, entering the houses.'

mì-sɛ   kere ɣàáà   wàáà   mì-sɛ   i   kà-kɔi   biara kɛkɛ
SCR.MI-go just IDPH.gushing IDPH.splash SCR.MI-go LOC KA-place each   every
'It just goes *ɣàáà* (gushing) *wàáà* (splashing) into everyplace.'

"Water is gushing *ɣàáà*. When it has rained, the way the water gushes *ɣàáà*, entering the houses. It just goes *ɣàáà* (gushing) *wàáà* (splashing) into everyplace."

DISCUSSION. RO first provides a single sentence exemplifying the use of the ideophone: "water gushes *ɣàááàà*". Then he sketches a scene all too familiar in this mountain village: how when it rains, water gushes forth, splashing all over and flooding everything. In his explanation he provides us not only with an everyday context in which this ideophone is likely to be used, but also with a second ideophone *wàáà*, closely related in meaning and form. (That both are existing, conventionalised forms was checked later with other speakers.)

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