
Modelling ideophonic variation

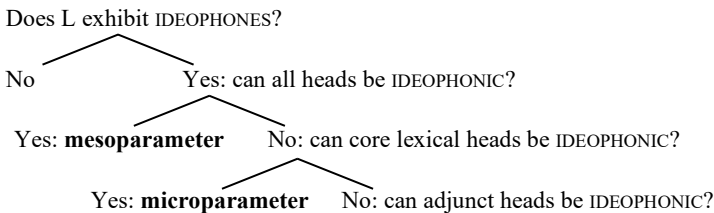
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Ideophones are an open lexical class of marked words depicting sensory imagery that occur unevenly across languages. This has been attributed to descriptive factors like the degree of conventionalization or the range of semantic categories ideophones can express (Dingemanse et al. 2015). The present study combines Brentari & Padden's (2001) model of depictive constructions in sign languages with the parametric hierarchy hypothesis (Biberauer & Roberts 2016) to account for the variation between ideophonic languages (ILs) and non-ideophonic languages (nILs). Brentari & Padden distinguish between core and non-core lexical components. Similarly, ILs feature ideophones as stable, core lexical items carrying different grammatical functions, while in nILs they remain peripheral and less conventionalized. Typological variation between ILs and nILs can thus be modelled by the distribution of ideophones across the core and non-core lexicon. The parametric hierarchy partitions parameters into different kinds, allowing for a more fine-grained illustration of ideophonic variation within and across languages:

(1) Parametric hierarchy for ideophonic variation



If ideophones occupy more space in the core lexicon, they should be more integrated in the system and therefore carry more grammatical functions. Therefore, more ideophones in core lexical heads (e.g., verbs and nouns) are expected in ILs, whereas in nILs they are largely confined to adjuncts (e.g., adverbials). Furthermore, it implies that languages that exhibit ideophones in a higher node of the hierarchy are expected to display them at lower levels as well.

References: • Biberauer, T. & I. Roberts (2016). Parameter typology from a diachronic perspective: the case of conditional inversion. In *Theoretical approaches to linguistic variation*, 259–292. John Benjamins Publishing Company • Brentari, D. & C.A. Padden (2001). Native and foreign vocabulary in American sign language: a lexicon with multiple origins. In *Foreign vocabulary in sign languages*, Psychology Press, 87–119. • Dingemanse, M., Blasi, D. E., Lupyan G., Christiansen, M. & P. Monoaghan (2015). Arbitrariness, iconicity, and systematicity in language. In *Trends in cognitive sciences* 19(10), 603–615.