Mohammed Aminu Muazu
Katwal Pemark Isah
University of Maduguri

A descriptive analysis of Miship ideophones

Abstract. The article explores ideophones in Miship. The study reveals that ideophones in the language can be classified into four major types, namely adjectival ideophones, noun intensifying ideophones, verb intensifying ideophones and ideophpnes expressing a state of being. Similary, the study establishes the following as permissible Miship ideophones syllable structures: cvc, cvc-cvc, cvc-cvv, cvc-cvcvc, cvc-cvcvc, and cvcvc-cvc.

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to examines types of Miship ideophones, with a view to ascertaining their function and syllable structure. Several studies reveal that ideophones have caught the attention of many linguists. They have been found in abundance in African languages. Ameka (2001) discussed them in conjunction with adjective word classes in Ewe. Amha (2001) attempted to translate them. Creise (2001) identified uninflected predicate lexemes in Setswaana ideophones. According to Kunene (2001), they are the closest linguistic substitute for physical acts. They are used to create a surreal world that offers the audience a sensory perception of what is represented.

Newman (2001) argued that Hausa ideophones differ from other types of words and that they form part of the structure of a language and must be treated accordingly. Roulon-Doko (2001) identified ideophones in Gbaya Kara as adjective-adverbs. Samarin (2001) , who worked intensively on ideophones in Gbaya found that ideophone cannot be invented by an individual, that they can be applied incorrectly, and that they are vulnerable to attrition in

situations of urbanisation and rapid change. Ikoro (1998:12) describes ideophones in Kana, which belongs to the Benue-Congo branch of the Niger-Congo language family, as symbolic words which are phonologically peculiar and used to name, dramatise, or describe an action or event with more precision. A Kabba ideophone may follow a noun, a verb or an adjective. They are characterised by reduplications of one or two syllables, a series of identical vowels, and by tonal patterns consisting either of all high tones or of all low tones. They consist of two, three or four syllables, and contain unusual consonant clusters.

According to Noss, (cited in Moser (2004: 276) a good storyteller uses ideophones effectively and profusely, eliciting spontaneous laughter from both young and old. Ideophones have been defined as a 'vivid representation of an idea in sound', 'a phonologically peculiar set of descriptive or qualificative words' and a 'prominent member of the lexicon of any African language'. Noss (1985) considers ideophones to be sensual, denoting what is felt or what is observed through the senses: through sight, hearing feeling, smell and taste. Grammatically ideophones constitute either adverbial modifiers or adjectival modifiers. Moser (2004: 276) states that in Kabba ideophones are recognized by their repeated syllables and a series of all high tones or all low tones. They are often pronounced with extra emphasis.

Often it is impossible to literally translate the meaning of an ideophone. According to Moser (2004) some idephones can be used to describe different action, but others only go with one specific action. A pastor efficient in using ideophones keeps his audiences spellbound. Today these are pre-dominantly older people. However, some younger persons are also able to use them; this causes laughter, especially when they are used incorrectly or in a novel way. They occur in four different kinds of syntactic structures: copula clauses, adjectives, noun phrases and verb phrases. Those that occur with the copula *to be* function as an adjectival modifier. The ideophone immediately follows the copula, which is preceded by

a noun (NP + COP + IDEO).

Having reviewed as well as enumerated all the above facts with respect to characteristics and functions of Setswana, Hausa, Gbaya, Kanna, Ewe and Kabba ideophones, we will now use it as basis and building block for how to treat Miship ideophones. Based on the above facts, we discovered that Miship ideophones can be classified as enumerated below.

2. Types of Miship ideophones

The majority of African idiophones are qualifiers, and Miship ideophones are not exceptions. In Miship, a number of words are frequently used as ideophones, which occur for instance as qualifiers of utterances, which denote any of the following: appearance, colour, intensity, manner, motion, size, smell, sound, state, and taste. Miship ideophones based on their functions can be classified or categorized into four types, namely (i) adjectival ideophones, (ii) noun intensifying ideophones, (iii) verb intensifying ideophones, and (iv) ideophones expressing states of being. Like all ideophones, the Miship ideophones fulfil such traditional functions as qualifying adjectives, verbs, and nouns. In general, it can be said that Miship ideophones are adverbial in nature and intensifyg things that may change or may vary in degree.

2.1. Adjectival ideophones. Miship adjectival ideophones are formed through a complete reduplication process. The adjective and tone in question is completely reduplicated in order to derive the ideophones:

Adjective	ideophone
míyár	míyár-míyár
fat	very fat
yon	yon-yon
big	very big
kəp	kəp-kəp
short	short

ɓaan	ɓaan-ɓaan
hot	very hot
saan	saan-saan
fair	very fair

We wish to explain that colour word adjectival ideophones are formed differently from the common adjectival ideophones in the language. Intensifiers uses are associated with each colour:

Adjective	intensifier	ideophone
Pìyà	sák-sák	pìyà-sák-sák
White	very	snow-white
təp	bit-bit	təp bit-bit
black	very	cold black
naa	jew-jew	naa jew-jew
red	very	blody red

2.2. Noun intensifying ideophones. Some Miship ideophones can occur as qualifiers, which intensify nouns. These ideophones (intensifiers) come immediately after the nouns. A single ideophone marks the intensification:

nouns	intensifier	ideophone
lé	təp-dərak	lé təpdə rak
cloth	big	big cloth
mat	pwar-bwat	mat pwar-bwat
woman	very thick	thick /fat looking woman
shubakwa	fír-few	shubakwa-fír-few
maize	dry	dry maize
gong	kur-mus	gong-kur-mus
nose	not pointed	not a pointed nose
lə	ling-king	lə-ling-king
room/house	scarttered	scattered room/house
ngu	kur-kuk	ngu-kur-kuk
man/person	fat and short	fat and short person

2.3. Verb intesifying ideophones

Some Miship ideophones can occur as qualifiers, which intensify verbs. These ideophones (intensifiers) come after the verbs:

Verbs	intensifier	ideophone
tong to sit down	kwa'ar-kəng properly	tong-kwa-kəng properly sited
yaghal to stand	par-shat suddenly/immediately	yaghal par-shat to stand up suddenly/immediately
yaa to catch	bit-ɓing suprinsingly	yaa-bit-ɓing to be cought supringly
nare to dive	ɗar-ɗáu straightness	nare-ɗar-ɗáu to dive straight into a river
sənasə to run	par-shart suddenly	sənasə-par-shart to talk suddenly

2.4. Ideophones describing /expressing state of being

Some Miship idiophones are used to express a state of being such as happiness, sadness, feelings, actions, etc. When critically observed they function as interjections in the language. This implies that in Miship, some words can be used as interjections, adverbs as well as idiophones, depending on the context in which one uses them. It has also been realized that an intensifiers can have a dual function implying that it can intensify a noun as well as verb depending on the context of the sentence formulated:

Ideophones	Gloss
kwa'ar kəng	describing the state of sitting down
kəng gə ləng	expressing propotion
fwak-but	describing the state of swelling
ɗar-dərak	expressing something big/huge
par-shat	expressing /describing suddenlyness
pwar-bwat	describing thickness/fatness
ling-king	describing scattered nature of place/thing
kus-kung	describing dryness
fɨr-few	describing the nature of dryness
nus nung	expressing shapes
kur-mus	describing pointed ness /sharpness
shar-shaw	describing dryness

kur-kuk   describing shortness and fatness

bit ɓing   expressing suprise

     The above examples show clearly that in Miship, there are sounds (ideophones) that are only used to express "state of being". They do not intensify anything but are rather used for expressing things while some have dual function as illustrated above.

3. Syllable structure of Miship ideophones

Samarin (1971) cited in Jibrin (1984), stated that a great majority of African ideophones have a CVC syllable structure, which are reduplicated. In most cases, the final consonant as well as the word final syllable cannot be only /n/,/k/,/t/ or /b/, which are not only found in non-ideophonic words, but also in several other phonemes. While Aston cited in Jibrin (1984), explains that the syllable structures of the common Bantu language ideophone is made up of CV (v). However, the transparency of this structure is modified somehow in various Bantu languages, where non-prominent syllables have been subjected to altered glottalic and timing mechanisms, which reduce their nuclei to short, unvoiced vowels or completely omit them in some cases.

     In the same vein, Newman (1968 and Galadanci 1971) stated that the syllable structures which are permissible in ideophones of most African languages are: CVC, CV, and CCV respectively. Based on the above examples of Miship ideophones the following ideophonic words structures are identified in the language: CVC; CVC-CVC; CVC-CVV; CVC-CVCVC; CVC-CVCVC and CVCVC-CVC: Examples of such ideophone structure in the language are illustrated in example 6.

(i) CVC	(ii) CVC-CVC	(iii) CVC-CVV
ák	s-kung	dar-ɗau
it	ír-few	
ew	ar-shat	

(iv) CVC-CVCVC	(v) CVCCVCVC	(v)CVCVC-CVC
təp-dərak	kəng-gələng	kwa'ar-kəng

The following possible forms of idiophone syllable structures are realized from the example of ideophones enumerated above: CVC; CVC- CVC; CVC-CVV; CVC-CVCVC, CVCCVCVC; and CVCVC-CVC. Similarly, it is also realized that short vowels occur in CC syllables and also only occurring CC sequence is found in the middle of words and consists of final consonants of any syllable plus the initial consonant of the next syllable. Similarly we observed that some of the ideophone have diphthong which is very rare in most Chadic ideophones. In a nut shell, we can state that this paper has dwelt on Miship ideophones, because we discovered that they perform an important socio-linguistics function as well as constitute an important word class in the language.

Bibliography

Ameka, F. 2001. Ideophones and the nature of the adjective word class in Ewe, In voeltz F.K. Erhard and Kilian-Hatz, Christa (eds) Amsterdam: John, Benjamins. 25-48

Amha, A. 2001. Ideophone and compound verbs in Wolaitta. In Voeltz.K.Erhard andKilian-atz, Christa (ed) *Ideophones*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 49-62.

Anderson, S . (ed) 1991. *Tone in five Languages of Cameroon*, Arlington: University Texas.

Creissels, D. 2001. Setswana ideophones as uninflected predicate lexemes. InVoeltz F.k. Erhard and Kilian-Hartz, Christa (ed) *Ideophones.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 75-85.

Galadanci, K. (1971) Ideophones in Hausa, Harsunan Nigeria. Kano; Vol 1.pp 12-26.

Greenberg, J. H. 1955. *Studies in African Linguistics Classification*. New Haven: Compass Publishing Company.

Greenberg, J.H.1963. *The Languages of Africa*. Bloomfield: Indiana University Press.

Kunene, D. P. 2001. Speaking the act: the ideophone as a linguistic rebel. Voeltz F.K. Erhard and Kilian- Hartz, Christa (ed) *Ideophones.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 183-191

Meek, C.K.1931. *Tribal Studies of Northern Nigeria* (vol2)London: Kegan,Trench,Trubner and Co. Ltd.

Moser, R. 2004. *Kabba A Nilo-Saharan Languages of the Central African Republic*. Lincom-Europa Academic publishers Muenchen Germany.

Mu'azu, M.A. 2003.The Morphology of Kilba Verbs. Unpublished Ph:D. Dissertation, University of Maiduguri.

Mu'azu, M.A. 2009. The Kilba People, Language, Problems and the way forward. *The Humaniscus Academic Journal of Humanities, Social Science andPhilosophy*. Palanky University of Olomouc, Czeck Republic. Vol, 2 pp 53 - 73.

Mu'azu; M.A. 2009. *A grammar of the Kilba Language*. Lincom-Europa: Academic publisher Muenchen-Germany.

Newman, P.1977a. Chadic Classification and Reconstruction. *Afro-asiaticLinguistics*, 5 (1): 1-42.

Newman, P. 1977b. "Chadic Extension and Pre-Dative Verbs Forms in". *Studies in Africa*.

Newman, P.1980. *The Classification of Chadic Within Afro-asiatic* . Universitaire Press.

Newman, P.1990. Nominal and Verbal plurality in Chadic" *Publications in Languages and Linguistics* 12, Dordrecht: Foris Publication.

Newman, P.2000. *The Hausa Language Reference Grammar.* New Haven London: University Press.

Newman, P. 2001. Are ideophones really as weird and extra-syntactic as linguists make them out to be? In Voeltz. F.k. Ehhard and Kilian-Hatz, Christa (ed) *Ideophones*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 251-258

Noss, P. 1985. The ideophones in Gbaya syntax. In Gerrit Dimmendal (ed) *Current Approaches to African Linguistics.* Vol. 3:6 Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

Pulgram, E.1970. *Syllable, word, Nexus, Cuscus.* The Hague: Mouton.

Roulon, D. P. 2001. The Status of ideophones in Gbaya. In voeltz F.K. Erhard and Kilian-Hatz, Christa (ed) Ideophones. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. 287-301.

Rufa' I, A.1979. "Principal Sources of Lexeme Formation in Hausa" *Harsunan Nigeriya*. IX; 1-18,C.S.N.L, Bayaro University Kano.

Samarin, W. J. 2001. Testing hypotheses about African ideophones. In Voeltz K. Erhard and Kilian-Hatz Christa (ed) IdeophonesAmsterdam: John Benjamins. 321-337

Welmers,W .1973. *African Language Structure*. Barkely U.C. Press.