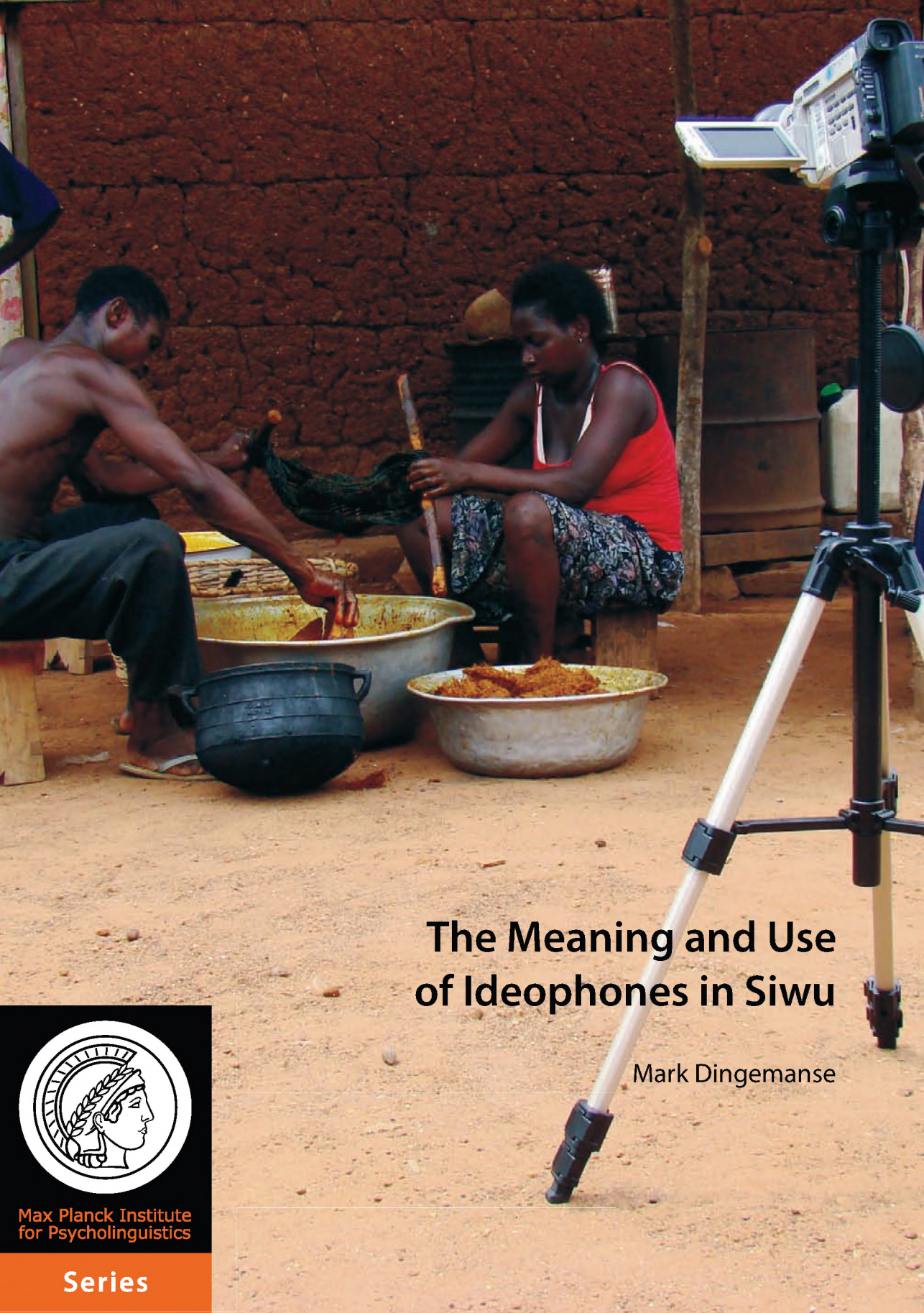

The Meaning and Use of Ideophones in Siwu

Mark Dingemanse

Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics

Series

The Meaning and Use of Ideophones in Siwu

Cover photo: Making palm oil in Akpafu-Mempeasem, Ghana, March 2008

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op het gebied van Letteren

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Outline

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1 Introduction

Àsi kpoo, ìlo kpoo
"You sit *kpoo*, it remains quiet *kpoo*."
(If you do nothing, nothing gets done.)

Siwu proverb

1.1 Introduction

Picture a late afternoon in the mountainside village of Akpafu-Mempeasem, eastern Ghana. A handful of people hang around in the shade of a mango tree when a farmer stops by to offer them some fruit for sale. A lively discussion ensues about the quality of the goods. One person notes that the cassava is nicely smooth ***sinisinisinisini*** and that the avocado has the perfect oblong egg-like shape ***sɔdʑɔlɔɔɔɔ***; another agrees, but suspects that the banana, unripe as it is, would make one's teeth feel chalky ***tìtìrìtìì***. The farmer grins and leaves the fruit. Payment will follow later. The language spoken is Siwu; the words in bold are ideophones.

This thesis is concerned with ideophones — what they mean and how they are used by speakers of Siwu. Along the way we will see, among other things, that ideophones are a markedly special kind of words; that their meanings are surprisingly specific and closely linked to perception and the senses; that they are ubiquitous in everyday conversations in Siwu; that they are also used in such disparate genres as greeting routines and funeral dirges; and that people use them to share in sensory experiences and to sort out matters of experiential knowledge.

Why study ideophones? This has been a question put to me by many people, linguists and laymen alike, and it shows that there is still some way to go towards a proper understanding of the significance of ideophones to the science of language. This thesis travels part of that way. As I show in these pages, ideophones provide us with a unique opportunity to study culturally shaped ways of attending to the perceptual world. They shed new light on language and creativity, on the relation between everyday talk and verbal art and on the link between visual and verbal modes of language. They demonstrate how speech can depict sensory imagery, challenging received views about the importance of the

arbitrariness of the sign. They encourage us to innovate theory and methods because traditional linguistic practices largely fail to capture them. They show how a linguistic device can combine aesthetic gratification and communicative precision. As Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo, one of my consultants, puts it: "Ideophones are like pepper. Without them, speech is *buàà* [tasteless]."

Ideophones are found in many languages around the world, but up to now linguistic science has largely failed to come to terms with them. Indeed, investigators of Standard Average European languages have tended to marginalise them as "playthings, not the tools of language" (Müller 1895) and even "the lunatic fringe of language" (Frankis 1991). A recent volume compiling important primary research calls them "a step-child of modern linguistic science" (Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001a). An additional problem is that they are traditionally regarded as hard to elicit, with their meaning and use characterised as "elusive" and "unpredictable".

This thesis does not take such a pessimistic view. Instead, it confronts the difficulties head-on, using a bricolage of methods —some old, some improved, some new— to get a handle on the meaning and use of ideophones. The data come from Siwu, a richly ideophonic language spoken in a small-scale, rural community in eastern Ghana, in the linguistic region where ideophone systems were first described one and a half century ago. The methods range from video-recording natural conversations to stimulus-based elicitation and from pile-sorting tasks to the collection of folk definitions. Theoretical perspectives are drawn from semiotics, semantic typology, conversation analysis and the ethnography of speaking. Out of this, ideophones emerge as a vivid and versatile communicative device repaying close analytical attention.

1.2 Aims and scope

We have learned a lot about ideophones since the earliest descriptions of them in the 1850s. We know that ideophones are a linguistic device found in many of the world's languages, and numerous detailed case studies have thrown light on the deviant phonotactics, expressive morphology, sound-symbolic properties and morphosyntactic behaviour of this class of words.

Somehow however, the emphasis in ideophone research has always been predominantly on form rather than function, on formal properties rather than contexts of use. There is a need for a more holistic perspective on ideophones, one

that places them squarely where they belong: in situated everyday interaction. Without it, ideophone research remains rather like museum entomology — the study of pinned specimens in glass-covered drawers. With it, we can start to take into account the vivid sensory meanings of ideophones, their place in the wider linguistic ecology, and their social and cultural backdrop. As I hope to show in this thesis, our understanding of ideophony will be much the richer for it.

Two areas in which our understanding of ideophones is still severely limited are semantics (the meanings of ideophones) and social interaction (their actual use in discourse). It is no coincidence that these areas are also the most difficult to investigate, requiring field research, participant observation, intricate elicitation techniques and extensive corpora of naturally occurring data. Addressing these weak spots holds the promise of contributing to a more holistic perspective on ideophones. While the need for a broader perspective has been articulated before (Samarin 1965; Childs 2001), recent technological advances and developments in the field of linguistics —such as the increased recognition of the primacy of everyday conversational data— have made possible exciting new methods and directions of research.

This thesis profits from these new possibilities by taking a multi-methods approach. Part I develops a typologically informed view of ideophones as *marked words that depict sensory imagery*, taking special care to show that the depictive mode of representation of ideophones is fundamental to their meaning and use. Part II provides general ethnographic and linguistic background information and describes the place that ideophones take in the linguistic ecology of Siwu. Part III couples a variety of elicitation methods with folk definitions, a pile-sorting task, and evidence from meta-linguistic comments to yield a more comprehensive view of the meanings of ideophones in Siwu. Part IV uses an extensive video-recorded corpus of the use of ideophones in naturally occurring talk and special genres of verbal art as the foundation for an empirically grounded investigation of the interactional uses of ideophones. It also uses empirical data to address two long-standing issues in ideophone studies: the question of ideophone creation and the relation between ideophones and gesture. Part V concludes the thesis and sketches future directions.

1.2.1 How to read this thesis

There are many ways to read this thesis. Readers who start at the beginning will be able to follow the arguments as they develop and build on each other. But the parts and chapters are also designed to stand alone fairly well and there is a good deal of cross-referencing to help the non-linear reader.

Those who come to this thesis with an interest in the cultural background and the ways of speaking of the Mawu people will be most interested in chapters 4, 11 and 12. Readers with a typological orientation will want to juxtapose the cross-linguistic treatment in chapter 2 with the details of the Siwu system in chapter 6, and then treat the chapters in Parts III and IV as basic data for a comparative outlook on the meaning and use of ideophones. Those with an interest in the use of ideophones in social interaction will want to concentrate on the chapters in part IV. Readers interested in the relation between ideophones and gesture will find material of interest in chapters 9 and 14. Those with an interest in the anthropology of the senses will find chapters 8, 10 and 11 central. They may want to check the linguistic background on constructions of perception in §5.6. In general, before traversing the thesis in a non-linear way I do recommend reading chapter 2 to build necessary common ground.

The remainder of this introductory chapter describes the fieldwork setting, methods, sources of data, and community involvement.

1.3 Fieldwork and data

This study is based on data collected in Ghana during four field trips between 2007 and 2009: June-July-August 2007, February-March 2008, July-August-September 2008 and March-April 2009. The last revisions were made during a fifth fieldtrip in January-February 2011. Of the over 38 weeks spent in Ghana, two weeks were spent on conferences in Winneba (26th West African Linguistics Congress, July 2008) and Ho (2nd Workshop on the Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages, August 2008); the remaining 36 weeks (9 months) were spent in the Siwu-speaking village of Akpafu-Mempeasem in the central Volta Region.

During the first four field trips I collected two paper field notebooks, 124 digital entries (180 pages) of linguistic field notes, 150 digital entries (85 pages) of ethnographic notes, approximately 30 hours of video recordings and another 30 hours of audio recordings. I transcribed and glossed over 70 minutes of everyday

spontaneous conversations, 60 song texts and 10 monologic narrative texts. During the fifth trip I had the occasion to do a final check of the data.

1.3.1 Field work setting

In Akpafu-Mempeasem (Mempeasem for short) I lived in the compound of the Wurapa family as *Yàòsɛ*, or Yao junior. My senior namesake was Rev. Albert Yao Wurapa, head of the family, former synod clerk of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, and a prominent elder in the community. Right at the start of the first fieldtrip, Rev. Wurapa introduced me at a communal gathering, where he explained my work as the scientific study of the customs and ways of speaking of the Mawu, and encouraged the community to adopt me in their midst and help me where possible. The response was overwhelming. The people of Mempeasem have been tremendously helpful in every way, from teaching me their language to organizing recording sessions, and from helping out with elicitation tasks to contributing riddles and stories.

The nine months in the field were split into multiple fieldtrips since an important goal was to collect and transcribe a corpus of everyday conversations and there were, at the time, no facilities for digitising the videotapes in the field. The modus operandi was to live in Mempeasem for some months while learning Siwu, taking part in Mawu society, doing targeted fieldwork sessions and videotaping everyday conversations. Back home I would have the videotapes digitised, listen in real time to all of the recordings to select episodes to transcribe, and create first versions of time-aligned transcription files. During the next trip I worked my way through the preprocessed material with the help of my main consultant Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo, while also doing more targeted elicitation sessions and recording new material.

There are advantages and disadvantages to this way of working. An important advantage of working with pre-processed material is efficiency. Doing detailed transcriptions is one of the most time-consuming activities, and not the most pleasurable for consultants at that. Eliminating as many bottlenecks as possible from that process makes it more expedient and more satisfying. A disadvantage is the fact that a total of nine months spread over five fieldtrips is not enough to attain fluency in a hitherto poorly described language. Although my knowledge of vocabulary, and ideophones in particular, sometimes allows me to pass as a good speaker of Siwu (the use of ideophones being a sign of eloquence in Mawu

society), in point of fact my command of the language at the point of completion of this study can be fairly characterised as mediocre: good enough for partaking in simple face-to-face conversations and some fairly complex interactional routines, but still lacking fluency in production. It is much less of a problem to parse and understand recorded conversations after the fact, a skill that has been refined through over nine months of participant observation, countless transcription and translation sessions, and continued exposure to recordings of naturally occurring talk when not in the field.

The language of everyday life in Mempeasem is Siwu. Virtually all Mawu (except some elderly women) also speak Ewe, the language of nearby market towns and the church and the language of instruction in primary school. People younger than 40 (and some educated elderly people) additionally speak either Ghanaian English or Pidgin English picked up from travelling merchants. In the field, I would speak Siwu with elderly people and switch between Siwu and English with younger people. Targeted elicitation sessions always took place in Siwu; some of the more complex tasks I prepared together with Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo, translating the instructions into Siwu so that he could administer them without interference from me. More informal sessions would alternate between Siwu and English.

To avoid preventable priming effects, I never announced any specific interest in ideophones while in Kawu — my usual line being that I wanted to learn the "customs and ways of speaking" of the Mawu. During later fieldtrips, in the course of many conversations and transcription sessions, only my closest consultants learnt more about my specific goals. In the course of our work together this led to some interesting meta-linguistic comments by them on the use of ideophones, some of which are discussed in later chapters (e.g. §2.5 and §13.4).

1.3.2 Data collection

Apart from what I learned of the language by immersion in the speech community, data was collected in planned sessions, in the form of video recordings of everyday social interaction, and in community documentation events. These ways of data collection are described below.

1.3.3 Elicitation

Targeted data collection included sessions driven by questions arising from the data, stimulus-based elicitation sessions, and the collection of folk definitions. Almost all of the sessions were audio-recorded; additionally, some of the stimulus-based elicitation sessions were video-recorded. Planned sessions were aimed at collecting information on the structural properties of Siwu, thus completing the picture gained from immersion in the speech community, from transcribed texts, and from the published literature. Usually, I prepared a session by noting down a number of open questions or starting points for elicitation. During sessions, I recorded data either in paper notebooks or enter it into a laptop computer directly, in the latter case using a database (for lexical material) and a standardised document format (for grammatical elicitation). Every day I processed all data gathered, summarizing the results in an overview document, updating the lexical database and taking note of follow-up questions and gaps in the data.

Sometimes I used specific materials for targeted lexical and grammatical elicitation. Stimulus sets used include the set of six Language of Perception field tasks (Majid and Levinson 2007a) and the Topological Relations Pictures, also known as BowPed (Bowerman and Pederson 1992). Other materials used include Booth's *Small Mammals of West Africa* (1960), Boorman's *West African Insects* (1981), selected elicitation tasks from Bouquiaux & Thomas's (Bouquiaux and Thomas 1992) *Studying and Describing Unwritten Languages* and Dahl's TMA questionnaire (Dahl 1985:198–206).[1] Other data collection efforts focused specifically on ideophones. The Language of Perception stimulus set turned out to be very useful in this regard, as described in chapter 8. I also videotaped folk definitions of ideophones by four speakers (2 male, 2 female). The results are described in chapter 9. Then I carried out a pile-sorting task with 14 speakers, using a subset of 60 ideophones; the results of this task are presented in chapter 10. I used Sylvia Tufvesson's *Expressives* tasks (Tufvesson 2007) to elicit ideophones using video and sound clips. Also, by way of a pilot, I asked speakers to describe some video clips downloaded from YouTube: a baby doing its first steps, a staggering drunk, a four-legged robot moving around and an excerpt from

[1] I thank Rebecca Defina and Felix Ameka for supplying me with an Ewe translation of the latter, which I used in conjunction with Dahl's English version.

Monty Python's *Ministry of Silly Walks*.[2] Finally, knowing that ideophones for manners of walking tend to be common in West-Africa (e.g. Westermann 1907; Geurts 2002) I used the Slobin Manner Clips to elicit descriptions of specific manners of walking. Though they all helped to shape the arguments made in this thesis, not all of these sources of data make their appearance in the chapters to follow. I have decided to focus on those methods and approaches that shed the broadest light on the meaning and use of ideophones in Siwu, and that seem to offer the most promise for a broader cross-linguistic research program.

A final note is in order. I regard elicited data as complementary to data from informal everyday conversation. Collected as it is in settings that are constrained and unfamiliar to members of the speech community, it may not tap into the full range of linguistic devices available to speakers. In this lies both its value and its risk. The value is that it provides a way to quickly sample a specific domain that would otherwise have to be pieced together from a million other places. The risk is that elicitation presents an incomplete and skewed picture. Throughout this thesis I mitigate this risk by never relying just on elicited data and by always cross-checking claims and analyses with data from naturally occurring speech.

1.3.4 Recordings of naturally occurring speech

An important source of primary data for the present study is naturally occurring speech. I recorded everyday social interaction in a variety of informal settings, including personal environments such as family compounds as well as public spaces. Situation types range from idling in the public square to common joint activities such as the production of palm oil, but all of them are characterised by a great degree of informality. Length of interactions ranges from less than one minute to more than two hours. The number of participants ranges from two to eight, and relationships of speakers are almost always intimate, as can be expected in a small-scale face-to-face society like this. Individual speakers in these recordings vary by age, social status, and sex, though in most multi-party conversations the participants appear to be from roughly the same generation. Informed consent was always sought and obtained before starting a recording. People being recorded were aware of the purpose of the research and consented to

[2] I thank Nick Enfield for suggesting the Ministry of Silly Walks clip. It was very much enjoyed by the participants and resulted in some marvellously detailed ideophonic descriptions.

these recordings being archived and to portions of them being shown in presentations to anyone interested.[3]

The corpus comprises over 10 hours of video recordings of 10 interactions, of which over 70 minutes have currently been transcribed in detail. The modus operandi of transcription was as follows. Beginning with an interest in ideophones, I started transcribing selected places where people were using ideophones. I always transcribed the broader context of an ideophonic utterance, usually transcribing the whole of the larger episode (where 'episode' is loosely defined — its boundaries could be marked by a notable change of topic, prolonged silence, a shift in participants, or a change of action). The transcribed part of the corpus amounts to close to 3000 utterances of natural, day-to-day conversational interaction. In the transcribed part of the corpus there are 219 ideophone tokens.

Video recordings allow us to tap into the multimodal richness of the speech situation. In this respect they take us well beyond decontextualised one-line texts and disembodied voices on tape. Yet video recordings, too, have their limitations. They do not, for instance, capture dimensions such as smell, touch and bodily presence. More seriously perhaps, video recordings bring their own version of the observer's paradox. To what extent does the camera, and the awareness of being recorded, influence people's behaviour?

This is an issue that is worth some elaboration, as video recordings of naturally occurring speech are still a relatively uncommon data source in the humanities. It seems appropriate, then, to present as first extract from the corpus in this thesis an exchange that reflects the moderate weirdness of talking in the presence of a microphone and a video camera on a tripod. Three ladies and an elderly man are visible in the frame. They are sitting on a bench before a weathered mud wall; having just finished singing some old songs, they are now engaged in small talk. The man (A) is taking a good look at the microphone with the fluffy windshield, noting how odd it looks "with those threads here." His wife (B) quips, "the *àkpòfà* people are among us," likening the microphone's headgear to *àkpòfà*, the extravagant Yoruba-style head scarf known across West-Africa. Then a third (C)

[3] To protect the privacy of the participants, transcripts in this thesis have been anonymised and the supplementary materials at http://thesis.ideophone.org/ include only sound clips, unless the speaker has consented to the video being made public too.

takes a shot at the camera: "You see how he stands there with hanging legs, looking at us?"[4]

Extract 1.1 Camera « 00:18:15 « Some songs **(S)**[5]

1 A *...kù ma-... kù ma-dɔ̀tì ǹgbe*
...with MA-... with MA-thread here
With... with the threads over here.

2 C [*eee!*
INTJ
eee!

3 D [*ɛ̀hɛ!*
INTJ
indeed!

4 B =*àkpɔ̀fà mà-turi ɣɛ i karũ*
headgear MA-people stand LOC ground
The headgear people are among us [lit. stand on the ground]

5 C =*a-ɔ-nya gɔ ɔ-sà ngba-*[*i ɔ̀-ɣɛ ɔ̀-to*] *ɔ̀-nyɔ bo ngbe*
2SG-PF-see way 3SG-hang legs-DIM 3SG-stand 3SG-PROG 3SG-look 1PL here
Have you seen how he stands there with hanging legs looking at us?
((pointing at camera))

6 A [((laughs)]

7 C *ɔ̃̀ ɔ̀-to ɔ̀-su ɔ̀-kɛ̀lɛ̂*=*gu nɛ*
3SG.IND 3SG-PROG 3SG-take 3SG-go=COM TP
He's taking us along!

8 D =*ɛ̀hɛ!*
INTJ
indeed!

9 C =*mmmm*
INTJ
mmmm

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[4] I translate the gender-neutral animate pronoun ɔ- with 'he' to capture the fact that speaker C uses an animate (as opposed to the default inanimate) pronoun to refer to the camera.

[5] Recall that data extract marked **(S)** can be inspected in the online supplementary materials. For glossing and transcription conventions used in the transcripts, see pages 408-410.

Exchanges such as these show that participants at times can be keenly aware of the presence of the camera and the reality of being recorded. At the same time, the mundane character of the exchange is reassuring. Precisely this type of talk — the exchanging of light-hearted judgements as a kind of running commentary on trivial events— is one of those ordinary and commonplace things that make up many instances of informal social interaction in Mawu society. By joking about the fluffy windshield of the microphone, by casting the microphone as an Yoruba immigrant, eccentric but still familiar, and by "humanizing" the staring camera as it stands on its ludicrously thin tripod legs, these speakers are appropriating the strangeness of the situation, turning it into one of those ordinary situations in which they laugh together and mutually orient to shared ways of perceiving the world (Moerman 1988:112).

The excitement about the camera usually wears off after some minutes, as people broach other topics in conversation and return to whatever activity is at hand, be it pressing palm oil together, pounding food, removing kernels from a load of corn cobs, waiting for a taxi to a nearby market town, or just hanging out. Though I recognise the difficulty in demonstrating that their behaviour in such cases is not significantly different from that in similar situations in which there is no camera, the difference, if any, is exceedingly hard to detect in the data I collected. People are comfortable being recorded and there appears to be nothing in their conduct or speech that suggests they are doing anything special.

Occasionally, participants display their awareness of being recorded. Such episodes are interesting for revealing the participants' own construals of the situation. Extract 1.2 below is an example from one of the longer recordings in the corpus, taped during the making of gunpowder. At 47 minutes into the recording, the four men busy manufacturing gunpowder are talking about how to distinguish real from fake gunpowder (some of this data is analysed in §11.5). Just as one of them is sharing his own experience of sieving gunpowder, the spouse of one of the others, who just arrived on the scene, calls from the background: "Uncle, whatever you're saying is entering (the camera) crisply!" (line 76). Another person, walking towards the men, repeats the reminder: "It is entering!", adding the utterance final particle *ló* to mark it as a piece of advice.

The response by the original speaker is a matter-of-factly "Yeah, it is entering" (line 78). Another quickly adds that "this is the way he [the researcher] wants it", adding the particle *ni* to his utterance to mark it as something that should have been known (line 81; see see §5.3.4 on these final particles). As it turns out, the

men are perfectly aware of the situation, and they fall over each other to clarify that this is exactly the way it is supposed to be (lines 83-94). In explaining the situation to the people in the background, the men display awareness of being recorded ("all of it is entering") as well as an understanding of the goal of the recording ("he wants us to speak Siwu", "we'll just be talking, and that is how our words will be gathered").

Extract 1.2 That's the way he wants it « 00:47:05 « Gunpowder **(S)**

74 D *ì-lɔ ì-ɔ́-fiɛ awe pètorò su bò-su*
it-hold it-PF-shine like petrol take 1PL-take
It will shine like the petrol t- we take

75 *[bò-su bò- bò- bò-kàkulétì*
1PL-take 1PL- 1PL- 1PL-calculate
we take- we- we- we measure.

76 ► E [(?) *si te mìḍe ika ite ìbo kpiɛkpiɛ*
if PROG 2PL-speak word it-PROG it-enter IDPH.neatly
(Uncle?) whatever you're saying is entering (the camera) crisply!

77 F *ìte ìbo lo*
it-PROG it-enter FP.ADVICE
It's entering!

78 D *ɛ̀ɛ̀ ìte ìbo*
INTJ it-PROG it-enter
Yeah, it's entering.

79 (0.9)

80 A [(?)

81 B [*ǹgbɔ ɔto ɔ́bie ni*
how 3SG-PROG 3SG-want FP.URGENT
That's the way he wants it!

82 (0.5)

83 A *Siwu to ɔ́(bie) [ɔso ite ìbo pelepele*
Siwu PROG 3SG(want) reason it-PROG it-enter IDPH.completely
Siwu he wants, so it's entering totally.

84 B *[ǹgbɔ ɔto ɔ́bie ni*
how 3SG-PROG 3SG-want FP.URGENT
That's the way he wants it!

85 (0.3)

86 D [*èhɛ nɛ ngɔ́ siwu amɛ ɔto ɔ̀yɛ sɔ (gɔmmɔ̀) nɛ*
INTJ TP how Siwu inside 3SG-PROG 3SG-say QT REL.Ɔ:D.DST TP
indeed, "in Siwu", he was saying, (that one.)

87 A [*ǹgbɔ to ɔ̀bie nɛ*
how 3sg-prog 3sg-want it
That's the way he wants it.

88 (0.3)

89 *ɔ̃ nɛ sɔ àkàɖe wa ɔ̀to ɔ̀-*
3SG.IND TP QT A.speaking REL.A 3SG-PROG 3SG-
He himself said that everything we say, he'll-

90 (0.2)

91 B *(ɛ) bo-à-ɖe (yɛnɛ)*
1PL-FUT-speak
So we'll speak (?)

92 A *ɛ̀hɛɛ̀ boàɖe*
INTJ 1PL-FUT-speak
Indeed, we'll speak

93 (0.4)

94 *kùgɔǹgbe pelee i-sakanya nɛ*
with:REL.Ɔ:D.PRX IDPH.completely it-come.together TP
so that all (our words) are gathered.[6]

It is reassuring to see that the participants in this exchange display an acute understanding of the nature and goal of the recording. But perhaps the most interesting thing about the whole exchange is the turn by E that touches it off (line 76). Apparently, for this person, who was not present when the goal of the recording was announced, the talk at that point displayed enough of a lack of awareness of the recording device to warrant a word of warning!

The men's down-to-earth response illustrates that they do not think much of being recorded: Siwu he wants, so it's all going in. Indeed, before this particular exchange, the men have spent the greater part of an hour chatting about all sorts of things, from tall stories of hunting adventures to where to get the best deals on petrol, and from technicalities of gunpowder manufacture to an argument about

[6] The verb used here, *sakanya*, can be translated as "mix" or "bring together". The idea is that recording will "mix" or "bring together" the words in just the way they are interwoven in actual talk.

who is to supply *akpeteshie* (a locally made gin) when the day's work will be finished. It is this kind of naturally occurring, casual talk that makes up the corpus informing this thesis.

1.3.5 Community documentation events

A good amount of data was collected in collective documentation events aimed at recording performances of verbal art, including narratives, songs and riddles. Some of these get-togethers, like a riddling session in June 2007, a festival in Akpafu-Mempeasem in August 2007, and performances by a quartet of Siwu singers in 2008 and 2009, were organised by the community. Others, for example a small-scale storytelling event in August 2008, were organised at my initiative. A valuable collection of funeral dirges (on which see chapter 12) was collected at the initiative and with the help of Timothy 'T.T.' Akuamoah in Akpafu-Todzi in August 2008.

These community documentation events, apart from tapping into genres that are not regularly encountered in everyday social interaction, also signify the interest that the community itself takes in the documentation of their language and culture. The dirges collected in August 2008 are a good example. Recognizing that the genre is moribund, since only elderly women still know it, Timothy Akuamoah felt that it needed to be documented and enlisted my help to make high-quality audio recordings that (a) could serve as a durable documentation of this genre and (b) could be made locally available on CD to be played at funerals. The first time these dirges were played at a funeral they sparked a wave of interest. Similar documentation events continue to be an important way of collecting data on special genres.

1.3.6 Giving back

In the context of explaining how I collected data with the help of the community it seems appropriate to mention some of the ways in which I attempted to contribute back.

In the archives of the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft, deposited in the *Bremen Staatsarchiv* (described in Brydon 1984; Jones 1986; Büttner and Martens 2001) there is not only the fairly unexciting *Stationschronik* for the Akpafu mission station (Bürgi 1921), but also a wealth of pictures dating from between 1900–1932. The *Basel Mission* archive (http://bmpix.org) holds a couple more early

photos from the period 1890-1900. With the financial help of the MPI library I obtained copies of all these materials for distribution in Kawu. The existence of this rich photographic documentation was unknown there, so the over 150 photos aroused great interest when I presented them in early 2008. During the 2008 Iron Festival in Akpafu-Todzi, a billboard displaying a selection of ironwork-related photos from the archive was one of the crowd pullers. I have deposited copies of the full collection with the Siwu Language Committee and with several elders and chiefs in the community. Some of them have since been used on the annual calendar produced by the Siwu Language Committee. In general, I have worked closely with the Language Committee, a community effort with representatives from all Mawu villages and especially with its two main representatives, Stephen Addae and John Atsu.

I have also worked with the Language Committee to retranscribe and translate (from German) some of the earliest Siwu texts to be written down. These three texts, found in Funke (1920), comprise a fable featuring Tortoise and Leopard, a text on the worship of traditional deities and a brief description of ironworking. The plan is for these texts to be brought out as a booklet accompanied with pictures from the Bremen archives. Digital copies of publications relevant to Mawu history and ethnography (e.g. Asante 1889; Plehn 1898; Schosser 1907; Rattray 1916), as well all linguistic resources on Siwu known to me, were deposited with the Language Committee and distributed to interested community members. Since the majority of these early publications are in German I translated key passages of them to English and made them available in print as well as on the web.

Recordings of the community documentation events mentioned above were also made available to the community. Materials distributed in this way include the proceedings of a 2007 Festival of folk songs and dances, edited at the MPI and distributed on VCR, VCD and DVD media; a collection of songs composed and performed by the Siwu Singers on tape and CD (and, it may be mentioned, picked up by a regional radio station afterwards); and the 2008 collection of funeral dirges mentioned above, made available on two CDs. As with the texts, digital copies of all of the audio recordings were deposited with the Language Committee.

1.3.7 Equipment and software

In the field, I used Moleskine notebooks and a Panasonic Toughbook CF-73 (2007-2008) and CF-F8 (2008-2010). For audio recordings, I used the Zoom H2 and H4

recorders and the Roland Edirol R-09 recorder, recording in 16bit 44kHz PCM wave format and occasionally (for some particularly long elicitation sessions) in 320kbit mp3 format. Video material was recorded onto DV tape using a Sony handycam and digitised later in MPEG-2 format.

I used ELAN (Wittenburg et al. 2006) for time-aligned transcription of audio and video recordings. For my main lexical database, I used SIL Fieldworks Language Explorer (FLEx) because it offers a robust relational database with XML-export formatted according to the Lexicon Interchange Format (LIFT). I used Phonology Assistant, a program that taps into the FLEx database, to automate many of the more repetitive tasks that come with doing phonological analysis (Dingemanse 2008). For some older databases, including a custom database of several published wordlists of Siwu data, I used Toolbox. I digitised my ethnographic notes using Fieldworks Data Notebook, a data management tool linked up with the lexical database and cross-categorised with the Outline of Cultural Materials categories (Murdock et al. 1987). For bibliographical note taking and reference management I use Zotero (http://zotero.org/).

1.4 Conventions and data sources

For ease of reference, the abbreviations used in interlinear glosses and the transcription conventions are included in the back matter (page 409 and page 410, respectively).

Translations of German and French sources are my own unless mentioned otherwise.

The source of data cited is indicated according to the conventions in Table 1.1. Note that **(S)** indicates that an audio or video clip is available in the online supplementary materials at http://thesis.ideophone.org/.

How cited	Description
"Extract x.y," followed by:	*Data extract from:*
• [title] « [timecode] « [source]	• Video corpus of everyday conversation, where [source] is the corpus identifier.
• Folk definition	• Collection of folk definitions (chapter 9).
Superscript following example:	*Example from:*
• {source}	• Notes made during dated fieldwork session
• {date}_{consultant}	• Utterance from the video corpus of everyday conversation, where [source] is the corpus indentifier.
• LOP_{task}_{stimulus}_{participant}	• Language of Perception task (chapter 8).
• PS_{participant}	• Descriptions of piles in the pile sorting task (chapter 10).
• BP_{picture}	• Descriptions of BowPed pictures (Bowerman 1993).
uncited	Notes made during fieldwork sessions
uncited	Working dictionary with 2062 entries and 2350 example sentences

Table 1.1 Data sources

I Ideophones

> Research on ideophones is beset with problems of finding a cross-linguistically valid definition for the term 'ideophone' and its progress has been hampered by emphasizing the peripheral and the irregular nature of ideophones.
>
> Felix Ameka (2001)

Like so many things, ideophones are easy to identify yet elusive to define. The two chapters in this part of the thesis provide the historical and theoretical backdrop to later parts by discussing what makes ideophones so identifiable, providing a typologically informed definition, and reviewing the various theoretical angles from which they have been investigated.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the nature of ideophones as a phenomenon in human language. It defines ideophones as *marked words that depict sensory imagery*, definition that is broad enough to serve as a general cross-linguistic characterisation of the phenomenon while leaving room for the details to be spelled out for specific languages. (For Siwu, this spelling out of the details is done in chapter 6.) It develops the argument that a fundamental characteristic of ideophones is *depiction*, and shows how this semiotic characterisation throws light on many aspects of ideophony.

Chapter 3 surveys the varied theoretical approaches to ideophones in the recent history of linguistics. Two main ways of making sense of ideophones emerge from this review of the literature. The first is to straitjacket them in Greco-Roman and by extension Standard Average European models of grammar, which has the effect of marginalizing and trivializing the phenomenon. The second is to stress their utter difference from all other linguistic devices, which sometimes leads to luminary observations but has the unfortunate side-effect of rendering them as an exotic phenomenon, insulated from ordinary language. A fruitful approach to ideophones recognises their special characteristics without losing sight of the broader linguistic ecology in which they find their place.

2 Defining ideophones

> These words are the most graphic in the language, they are the "colouring" words, the stories and common speech of the people are full of them.
>
> J. Whitehead (1899)

2.1 Origin of the term

The words that are the topic of this thesis have not always been known as ideophones. Before the 1930s, they were discussed under diverse labels such as specific or peculiar adverbs (Koelle 1854a; Vidal 1852), Intensitäts- und Frequenzadverbien (Schlegel 1857), onomatopoeia (Aston 1894; Peck 1886; Bittremieux 1926), descriptive adverbs/adverbes descriptifs (Christaller 1888; Junod 1896), indeclinable adjectives (Whitehead 1899), Lautbilder (Westermann 1907; Westermann 1927a), picture words (Westermann 1930), vocal images (Lévy-Bruhl 1910; Werner 1919), mots expressifs (Grammont 1901), spezifische Verstärkungsadverbien (Prietze 1908), (onomatopoeic) interjections (Wilson 1847; Brandstetter 1916), indeclinable verbal particles (McLaren 1906), echoisms (Smith 1920), radical descriptives (Watkins 1937) and many more (see Samarin 1971:131f. and references therein).

Though confusing at times, this proliferation of terminology highlights some significant aspects of ideophones. Some labels identify ideophones with phenomena familiar to the investigators (onomatopoeia, adverbs, interjections); others characterise their semantic functions (expressive, descriptive, intensifier); yet others focus on morphosyntactic behaviour (indeclinable, radical); and finally, some focus on their mode of signification (echoism, Lautbild, image). All of these aspects are important for a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, and I come back to them below.

In 1935, Clement Martyn Doke in his influential *Bantu Linguistic Terminology* introduced the label "ideophone" and provided the following definition:

> A vivid representation of an idea in sound. A word, often onomatopoetic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, action, state or intensity (Doke 1935:118).

Doke's definition was of immense importance in systematizing and unifying research on ideophones, and it remains the most widely cited definition of ideophones today. The first world congress on ideophones (Köln, 1999) and the subsequent publication of an edited volume bringing together research traditions from all continents (Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001b) established "ideophone" as the *de facto* cross-linguistic designation of the phenomenon,[7] although "expressive" and "mimetic" remain in use in the prolific research traditions of South-east Asian and Japanese linguistics.

Before discussing Doke's characterisation in more detail, it is useful to trace the history of the term ideophone a bit further back. Although it is commonly assumed that Doke invented the word "ideophone" (e.g. Alexandre 1966:9; von Staden 1977:195; Tedlock 1999:119; but see Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001a:2), this is not the case — in fact, Doke gave a new definitional twist to an already existing term.[8] One use of the term particularly current in Doke's time was that by the psychologist-phonetician Edward Wheeler Scripture.[9] For Scripture, *ideophone* was the acoustic correlate of the *ideogram*, the holistic perception of a printed word. As he wrote in his *Elements of Experimental Phonetics*, "printed words are perceived in wholes as ideograms and not as combinations [...]. [W]ords may be perceived under conditions that exclude any perception of the single elements." (Scripture

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[7] 'Ideophone' had been used outside of African linguistics before that; for example in studies of Semai (Diffloth 1972), Jamaican creole (DeCamp 1974), English (Smithers 1954; Wescott 1977; Frankis 1991), Japanese (Hamano 1986), Korean (Lee 1992; Sien 1997), Yir-Yoront (Alpher 1994), Quechua (Nuckolls 1996), and Lai (Patent 1998).

[8] Kulemeka (1995) quotes from a 1968 letter from Doke to Derek Fivaz, published in Doke (1982): "I was busy on preparing my Bantu Linguistic Terminology, [...] while pondering the German term *Lautbilder*, the term 'ideophone' came suddenly to my mind [...] so it first appeared in Bantu Linguistic Terminology in 1935; then in my Textbook of Lamba in 1938, and in my Zulu Grammar Third Edition (1939). And it is now widely used."

[9] In all likelihood, Scripture in turn adopted the term from an earlier use. The first occurrence of the term according to the Oxford English Dictionary is in 1881 by Alexander J. Ellis. The reference is to an unpublished announcement; as OED lexicographer Jesse Sheidlower (p.c. January 2008) tells me, "The OED is citing a printed card announcing two of the London Dialectical Society's November meetings, mailed by Ellis to James Murray (they were friends), and subsequently deposited by Murray in the OED archives."

1902:128). He then proceeded to draw a parallel between the 'image' of the printed word and that of the auditory word:

> It may be suggested that auditory words and phrases form 'ideophones' just as printed ones form 'ideograms'. The further distinctions may be made of ideograms and ideophones into sensory (visual words and auditory words) and motor ones (written words and spoken words). In all probability the most prominent features of a phonetic unit are first perceived and the details are gradually filled in. (Scripture 1902:132)

Thus for Scripture, an ideophone was a unit of sound that is perceived as a holistic whole rather than as a combination of some parts; and this holistic whole represents one idea. This is a very psycholinguistic notion, implying a theory of language processing and comprehension. Scripture's use of the term must have gained some currency, for a few years later we find the term "ideophone" included in the 1909 supplement to the *Century Dictionary*. In that definition of the word and its two derivatives we can already identify the seeds of Doke's usage of the term:

> **ideophone** […] In *phonetics*, the auditory symbol of a word or phrase that is perceived as a whole and thus constitutes a single idea. […]
> **ideophonetics** […] The method of direct representation of ideas by vocal sounds.
> **ideophonous** […] Representing ideas by vocal sounds; pertaining to ideophonetics. (Whitney and Smith 1909:623)

It is this idea, "the representation of ideas by vocal sound", that we find at the core of Doke's definition. But whereas Scripture's term was a psycholinguistic label for what we may call the acoustic percept of any word, Doke made it a grammatical term by limiting its application to a peculiar class of words. Doke's most important innovation therefore lies not so much in the term itself, nor in its definition, but in his insistence that this is a recognizable class of words that is different from other words.

2.2 Towards a cross-linguistic definition of ideophones

Although Doke's semantic characterisation of ideophones offers a useful heuristic and has been widely cited, there are several reasons why as a definition of ideophones it is not the most helpful one. First, published as it is in Doke's *Bantu Linguistic Terminology*, it is self-consciously limited to Bantu. Second, it does not really highlight what makes ideophones special. To say that ideophones "describe

… in respect to manner" etc. is to downplay an important point about their mode of signification, which is depictive (see below; though to be fair, this is probably what Doke implied by "vivid representation"). Third, the definition suffers from the unclear status of the included list (is it exhaustive or open-ended?) and due to hedges like "often onomatopoetic." Most of these objections were already voiced by Kunene (1965:19–20); see also Samarin (1971:133), who observes that authors writing on ideophones have often been "content to quote Doke's definition of them rather than justify their classification."

Justifying the existence of a category of ideophones or any other word class in a given language is something that has to be done on language-internal grounds. This is done for Siwu in chapter 6. For the moment however I am interested in the question whether we can arrive at a useful cross-linguistic characterisation of the phenomenon. This question is prompted by the various claims of the universality or quasi-universality of ideophones that are on record. For example, Diffloth (1972:440) notes that "[m]any natural languages have a basic class of words which have been called 'ideophones'," and Kilian-Hatz states "without hesitation" that "ideophones are a universal feature of human language" (2001:163). Janis Nuckolls takes a more qualified stance, noting that ideophones are "typologically widespread" (Nuckolls 2004:131), but that their occurrence depends on "extralinguistic social and cultural factors" (2004:132).

A cross-linguistic definition of the phenomenon would capture the commonalities that have led researchers to posit these claims of (quasi-) universality. To be clear, I do not think it is fruitful to assume *a priori* that there is a universal grammatical category of ideophones. To say so would imply that a Platonic category of ideophones somehow exists independently of particular languages, and I do not think there is evidence for that (nor is it clear what that evidence would have to look like). Given the fact that language structure varies to a great extent across languages (Haspelmath 2007; Evans and Levinson 2009), the commonalities that lead us to employ the label "ideophone" for similar word classes across different languages will be primarily semantic-functional rather than grammatical-structural (cf. Croft 2003:13ff.). Here it is useful to consider the following observation by Samarin:

> Any Africanist who tries to tell an 'outsider' what an ideophone is ends up with a description that is only partly linguistic. A succinct formal definition can be given of Gbeya 'descriptive adverbs,' but one is generally inclined to volunteer information

> about their meaning and use as well, and these have so far defied specification. (Samarin 1966:162)

I take it that by "a description that is only partly linguistic", Samarin makes a point similar to the one made above: a cross-linguistic description of ideophones must necessarily rely on more than grammatical-structural features. Under the functionalist view of language taken here (e.g. Dryer 1997; Croft 2001; Croft 2003; Haspelmath 2007), grammatical-structural features belong to the domain of individual languages, as grammatical categories have only language-particular existence.

This does not of course preclude the possibility that certain types of structures, or (more to the point in this particular case) certain ways of exploiting the semiotic affordances of speech, recur across linguistic systems. If we do find commonalities of this type, it is "at least convenient to employ labels that have been employed for similar word classes in other languages" (Dryer 1997:118). Samarin's inclination "to volunteer information about their meaning and use" thus should not surprise us — it is precisely such semantic-functional characteristics, along with certain structural similarities, that have allowed students of language to identify Bantu "ideophones" with Mon-Khmer "expressives" (Diffloth 1972), and these two with Japanese "mimetics" (Kita 1997), to take just three language families that are phylogenetically unrelated. I take it that to recognise the similarities that underlie these acts of classification, it is "at least convenient" to have a cross-linguistic definition of ideophony.

2.3 A definition: Marked words that depict sensory imagery

The definition of ideophones employed here is designed to be broad enough to serve as a general cross-linguistic characterisation of the ideophonic phenomenon while leaving room for the details to be spelled out for specific languages.

(1) **Definition.** Ideophones are marked words that depict sensory imagery

Ideophones are *marked* in the sense that they stand out from other words. Exactly how this works out in a given language is a fact that belongs to the description of that language, but claims about the marked status of ideophones abound in the literature: ideophones are "very striking" (Vidal 1852:15 on Yoruba), "phonologically peculiar" (Newman 1968:107 on Hausa and Tera), "words of unusual phonological shape" (Childs 1988:27 on Kisi), "their

phonological structure clearly differs" (Frajzyngier 1989:196 on Pero), "distinguished by their aberrant phonology" (Kruspe 2004:102 on Semelai), and "structurally marked" (Klamer 2002:263 on Kambera). This cross-section of the literature is representative in the sense that in claims about the distinctiveness of ideophones, the focus has often been on the phonological/phonotactic peculiarity of ideophones. In fact however there are more aspects that make ideophones stand out from other words. The most prominent are special word forms, expressive morphology, relative syntactic independence and foregrounded prosody (Childs 1994a); these are elaborated for Siwu in chapter 6. My use of "marked" is intended to capture the basic fact that ideophones mark themselves (and are marked by speakers) as different from ordinary vocabulary.[10] I will argue below that the structural markedness of ideophones serves an important semiotic function: it signals the fact that ideophones employ a different mode of representation, namely that of depiction.

With regard to the markedness of ideophones, one point of possible confusion must be addressed. It has been occasionally implied that ideophones tend to employ sounds that are extra-systemic, i.e., not part of the ordinary phoneme inventory of a language. This appears to be an exaggeration: in every ideophonic language inspected so far (see bibliography) *most* ideophones feature the regular phonemes of the language. What makes ideophones so different from ordinary vocabulary is most of the time not the fact that they employ different sounds, but that they employ mostly the same sounds in a wider range of possible configurations. Skewed phonotactic distributions and special word forms contribute much more to the markedness of ideophones than peculiar sounds per se. For Siwu, these characteristics are detailed in §6.2-§6.4 (pp. 134ff. below).

Secondly, ideophones are *words*, that is, conventionalised minimal free forms with specifiable meanings.[11] This is supported by the fact that speakers are able to

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[10] The sense in which I am using 'marked' is closest to Haspelmath's (2006) sense 3 ("overt coding" in the sense of "signaled", "coded", "indicated"). While Haspelmath recommends doing away with the term "marked" altogether, the alternative he suggests for this particular sense, "overt coding", could be taken to imply a particular "marker", prototypically a piece of morphology, which is not necessarily the case for ideophones. Hence, I stick to my qualified use of the term "marked" in the sense of "signaled", "indicated".

[11] Haspelmath (2011) points out some difficulties for a cross-linguistic concept of "word". The complications have to do with cases in which different senses of wordhood do not coincide and with criteria that fail to distinguish between words and smaller units (minimal signs) or words and larger

describe their meanings consistently (see for instance chapter 9) and by the fact that ideophones have been described by lexicographers from early on (Vidal 1852; Westermann 1905; Doke and Vilakazi 1953; Blanchard and Noss 1982; Asano 1978, to mention just a selection). Ideophones are thus not free expressive noises or spontaneous acts of mimicry. Although few authors have found it necessary to stress this point (Liberman 1975:140 is an exception), I note it explicitly because the word status of ideophones has occasionally come under fire and the question of their semantics has been problematised. For example, the Nigerian literary scholar Okpewho has claimed that "[i]deophones are not like ordinary words to which meanings are readily assigned. They are simply sounds used in conveying a vivid impression" (Okpewho 1992:93). Under a sympathetic reading, this is a claim about their mode of signification (I come back to this below and in chapter 7), but it comes close to claiming that ideophones are not words. This would be one step too far, as the evidence from many languages shows that ideophones are in fact conventionalised linguistic signs with relatively stable meanings. That is not to say that ideophones do not present interesting problems in the domain of semantics; this is a point taken up in later chapters, especially in Part III.

Third, ideophones are special in the way they represent their referents: they *depict* rather than describe. In the literature on ideophones, this difference in mode of representation has been noted under many different sets of contrasting terms: commentative vs. presentive/dramatic (Kunene 1965; Fortune 1962), prosaic vs. expressive (Diffloth 1972), analytic vs. affecto-imagistic (Kita 1997), discursive vs. performative (Nuckolls 1995), descriptive vs. mimetic (Güldemann 2008), to mention just the most prominent ones. The contrast that all of these sets point to boils down to the basic distinction between description and depiction. I will say more about this important distinction below in §2.5, but for the purposes of the present discussion, it can be illustrated by comparing two ways of representing a certain way of walking. Consider the prosaic description "be walking unevenly and out of balance" and the ideophone *gbadara-gbadara* with roughly the same meaning. The former DESCRIBES the gait whereas the latter DEPICTS it. The word *gbadara-gbadara* —an existing Siwu ideophone— is in effect a little performance,

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units (phrases). Although this is less of a problem for ideophones, my use of "word" here could in fact be exchanged for the more primitive and well-defined concept "root" that Haspelmath (2011:70) proposes.

inviting us to 'look' in such a way that we make believe we are actually experiencing the scene depicted.

The depictive mode of representation of ideophones is the key to their performativity, their dramatisation, their expressivity and their imagistic nature. As Daniel Kunene has noted,

> Having created a surreal world, the ideophone invites the audience to perceive with their senses that which it represents, whether aural, visual, olfactory, and so on. (Kunene 2001:119)

Which brings us to the final element of the definition: ideophones depict *sensory imagery*. "Sensory imagery" is understood here as perceptual knowledge that derives from sensory perception of the environment and the body (Paivio 1986; Barsalou 1999).[12] That ideophones evoke sensory imagery has been recognised commonly and from early on in ideophone research. For example, Koelle (1854a:283) notes that "they are eminently expressions of feelings (German, *Gefühlsworte*)"; Westermann (1907:129) describes them as "means to recreate perceptions in sound";[13] Fortune (1962:5) notes that they refer to "colour, taste, smell, texture, postures, gaits, activities, and conditions of every kind"; Noss (1986:243) states that they "denote what is felt or what is observed through the senses"; Kita (1997:381) notes that "they can refer to perceptual events in different sensory modalities"; and Nuckolls (1995:146) observes that they communicate "salient sounds, rhythms, visual images, and psychophysical sensations that are drawn from perceptions of the environment and bodily experience".

It is worth dwelling briefly on the range of sensory imagery evoked by ideophones. A common Western folk model of sensory perception has it that perception is about taking in information from the outside world through sensory modalities, of which (in this folk model) there are five: vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell. Twentieth century scientific taxonomies are more inclusive, including not just extero-receptors (the traditional five) but also intero-receptors

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[12] Despite the visual origin of the term, "imagery" is not usually thought of as exclusively or even primarily visual in nature. Rather, it refers to perceptual knowledge grounded in experience in a broad sense.

[13] Original German: "[Mittel] um einen empfangenen Eindruck unmittelbar durch Laute wiederzugeben"

and proprio-receptors (Geurts 2002:8–9 and references therein). The semantic range covered by ideophones points to this more inclusive view of perception: they evoke not just perceptions of the external world, but also kinaesthetic sensations, interoceptive experience and balance — hence sensory imagery (see chapters 8 and 10 for more details on the sensory meanings of ideophones). Ideophones do not simply depict events "out there" so much as they aim to recreate perceptions grounded in bodily experience.[14]

Summarizing, to say that ideophones are MARKED means that they stand out from ordinary words. To say that they are WORDS means that they are subject to conventionalisation, that their meanings are socially mediated and that they are distinct from involuntary cries or creative mimicry. To say that ideophones are DEPICTIVE means that they employ a depictive mode of representation which invites people to experience them as performances and which lends them their imagistic semantics. Finally, to say that ideophones depict SENSORY IMAGERY means that they draw on perceptual knowledge derived from events of sensory perception.

2.4 Comparison with other definitions

It is useful to review a number of definitions proposed in the literature to highlight some of the observations that I have benefited from as well as some of the limitations that have led me to propose the definition above. I limit the discussion to definitions that appear to be intended to have cross-linguistic application, of which in fact there are not very many. In this respect, it seems that little has changed since Samarin's observation that "most writers have been content to quote Doke's definition [of ideophones] rather than justify their classification" (1971:133).

Westermann, writing in German and before Doke brought the term 'ideophone' into wider use, defines a *Lautbild* as follows: "a sound complex which, in the experience of the native, represents an immediate vocal response to a received sensory perception, which therefore gives immediate and adequate expression to

[14] A previous version of this definition used "sensory events" instead of "sensory imagery" (Dingemanse 2009b:84). However, I now feel that the term "sensory events" insufficiently emphasises the experiential nature of the semantic content of ideophones.

an inner sensation"[15] (1927a:319). This description covers the fact that ideophones evoke subjective perceptions. Its weakness lies in the claim that a *Lautbild* is a "an immediate vocal response to a received sensory perception." This makes it rather sound like ideophones are spontaneous vocalisations and seems to offer little ground for the shared, conventionalised nature of ideophones, even though in his other work Westermann displays a keen awareness of the fact that the meanings of ideophones are socially mediated.

Doke defines the ideophone as follows: "A vivid representation of an idea in sound. A word, often onomatopoeic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, action, state or intensity." (1935:118). I noted the virtues and vices of this definition above, so I will only reiterate that despite its universal application by others, Doke actually conceived it within the context of Bantu linguistics, and that his concern in this context was more with the status of ideophones as a grammatical category in Bantu than with properly characterizing the phenomenon functionally or semantically.

Cole (1955:370) defines ideophones as "vivid vocal images or representations of visual, auditory and other sensory or mental experiences". This is essentially a semantic definition, which is good insofar as it avoids reference to language-particular structural features. However, as pointed out above, there is in fact at least one structural fact about ideophones that recurs time and again in language-particular observations, and that is their structural markedness. Another problem is that in the absence of further explanation, the term "vivid" (probably taken over from Doke) seems subjective. Although this subjective characterisation of ideophones as vivid appears to be widely shared, I would argue that it derives from their markedness (which makes them stand out) coupled with their depictive mode of signification (which makes them like performances).

Very much in line with Doke and Cole, Pei's *Glossary of Linguistic Terminology* (1966) defines the ideophone as "[a] form that conveys an impression, not meaning, and describes a predicate in respect to manner, colour, sound, action, etc." The latter part is taken over straight from Doke, though puzzlingly leaving out a number of semantic categories. The former part, in which Pei stresses that ideophones convey "an impression, not meaning", is more interesting. What

[15] Original German: "[ein] Lautkomplex, der für das Empfinden der Eingeborenen eine unmittelbare lautliche Reaktion auf einen empfangenen Sinneseindruck darstellt, der also einem inneren Gefühl unmittelbaren und adäquaten Ausdruck verleiht".

exactly this distinction is meant to convey remains unclear, but it leaves the impression of a contrast between "meaning" in the sense of lexical, conventionalised denotation and "impression" as —presumably— a vague, fleeting notion. If this implies that what ideophones convey is not conventionalised, not specifiable, and not stable, Pei's definition is on the wrong track, as we will see in later chapters. Pei does tap into the intuition that there is *something* different about ideophones, but his statement appears to confuse an insight about mode of representation with issues of lexicalisation and conventionalisation.

Newman (1968:107) defines ideophones as "[a] phonologically peculiar set of descriptive or qualificative words." This definition is quite useful in that it points to a structural feature of ideophones —their phonological markedness— and does not insist (as Doke did for Bantu) on viewing ideophones as a grammatical category. However, as pointed out above, ideophones are not just peculiar in terms of phonology but also in their word forms, susceptibility to expressive morphology and foregrounded prosody.[16] Newman characterises his definition as "vague and unformalised" (1968:107). Perhaps this refers to the phrase "descriptive or qualificative", which remains underspecified and does not highlight what is special about their mode of representation.

DeCamp (1974:54) defines the ideophone as "a word which conveys an impression of an action or a sound rather than naming it or directly imitating it". This remains very close to Cole's semantic definition, but improves on it by being more specific about the mode of representation. By contrasting "convey[ing] an impression of an action or a sound" with "naming it", DeCamp gets at the distinction between depiction and description; and by contrasting it with "directly imitating it", he gets at the experiential nature of the depictions — the fact that ideophones, in my terms, depict sensory imagery rather than events "out there" in the world. DeCamp's definition however is exclusively semantic and does not attend to the structural markedness of ideophones; additionally, its use of the term "impression" (though not here in putative opposition to "meaning") is potentially vulnerable to misunderstandings much like Pei's.

A whimsical definition that is nonetheless worth taking note of is the one by William Welmers in his *African Language Structures*: "ideophones are those words

[16] More recently, Newman (2001) has argued that the extra-systematicity of ideophones has been exaggerated in the literature, and that "in the final analysis ideophones are part of the structure of a specific language and have to be viewed in the context of that language" (2001:252). I fully agree.

that are such fun to use" (Welmers 1973:474). Welmers draws attention to an aspect that few others have taken care to highlight: the playfulness of ideophones. The way I see it, this playfulness derives from their depictive mode of signification. The link is easy to see if we consider that depiction is a form of performance (see §2.5 below for elaboration). Although I think playfulness is an important property of ideophones (Dingemanse 2011a) it is not their defining characteristic, nor is the use of ideophones limited to contexts in which they are used for fun (see chapter 11 on ideophone use in everyday speech and chapter 12 on their use in funeral dirges and greetings).

Tedlock (1999), in a review article in the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, offers the following definition: "[i]deophones are words or phrases that do the work of representation by phonetic means." This definition shifts the burden of representation wholly on the phonetics of ideophones, and this is problematic. Those of us who do not speak Zuni (a language isolate spoken in New Mexico, USA) will not be able to tell the meaning of *ky'alh* or *ch'uk'i-* based on phonetic means alone.[17] As conventionalised words, the interpretation of ideophones is at least partly socially mediated. Besides, as I will show in chapter 7, the issue of "representing by phonetic means" is much more complicated than it may seem at first sight. The definition proposed here gets around this issue by defining ideophones as depictive. Depiction does indeed invite the mapping of sense onto sound, but it always relies on a certain measure of conventionalisation (as will be elaborated in more detail below) .

David Crystal's *Dictionary of Linguistics & Phonetics* defines the ideophone as "any vivid (ideophonic) representation of an idea in sound, such as occurs through onomatopoeia" (Crystal 2003:225). Here too Doke's legacy is obvious, though in what follows Crystal is careful to note that "in Bantu linguistics, it is the name of a particular word class containing sound-symbolic words" (*ibid.*). The same problems obtain as with Doke's definition: What exactly is the meaning of "vivid"? Can it be any "idea"? This passes by the obvious sensory nature of the meanings of ideophones. Is not every word in some way a representation of an idea? Somehow it fails to pick up the distinctiveness of ideophones, unless "vivid" is meant to do that job. More subtly, the definition does not attend to the possibility that any

[17] These Zuni ideophones evoke "splash" and "sounds like that of eye popping out of its socket" respectively (Tedlock 1999:119).

involuntary cry or spontaneous imitative vocalisation can be a "vivid representation of an idea in sound", which renders it vulnerable to the same pitfall as Pei's (1966) definition.

Philip Noss defines ideophones as follows: "Ideophones are a class of words that represent the full range of sensual experience including sound, sight, smell, taste and feeling. Not only do they imitate noises (onomatopoeia), they also express action and motion; they portray color, odor and texture; and they reveal manner, intensity and emotion." (Noss 2004). It is hard to improve on this definition, as it recognises the special mode of signification of ideophones (as words that represent, imitate, express, portray, reveal) and emphasises the wide-ranging sensory nature of their meaning while pointing out that they form a (presumably lexical) class of their own. If there would be one thing it misses out on it would be the marked form of ideophones, which according to the argument developed here invites people to treat them as depictions and contributes to their forming a class.

The seminal volume on ideophones edited by Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz (Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001b) does not in fact contain an attempt at defining ideophones cross-linguistically (something also noted in a review by Vajda 2003:824), but in a recent encyclopedia article, one of the editors supplies the following definition: "an ideophone is defined as a proper word class that is complementary to descriptive word classes of the analytic dimension (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) on the one hand and to the purely appellative interjections and exclamations on the other hand." (Kilian-Hatz 2006:510). This is defining by negation: the definition does not actually spell out any characteristics of ideophones. However, it does accomplish a number of things. It distinguishes ideophones as a proper word class apart from two types of word classes: "descriptive word classes in the analytic dimension" and "appellative interjections and exclamations". It also places ideophones outside of the "analytic dimension" (a term sourced to Kita's (1997) proposal that ideophones employ a different mode of meaning, discussed in §2.7.3 below). I would like to argue that the definition proposed above achieves both of these tasks in a positive way: 'depictive', in the sense used in the definition and elaborated in §2.5 below, captures the fact that (i) ideophones are "complementary to descriptive word classes", and (ii) that ideophones are distinct from interjections and exclamations insofar as the latter are not *depictive of*, but more prototypically *responses to* perceptions (this crucial

distinction between the oft-confused categories of ideophones and interjections is elaborated in §6.7.1 below).

Childs (1994a) does not offer a definition of ideophones[18], but does provide a number of useful comments on the problem. For Childs, ideophones are best defined using a combination of structural and semantic criteria. At the same time, he notes that:

> [w]ithin a particular language further definitional problems arise. We will have to say that no one feature can be considered criterial; a constellation of characteristics differentiates ideophones from other word categories. (…) It is thus best to think of ideophones as a prototype category with a core of good members. The full set of ideophones also contains less optimal members radiating outward from this core type and becoming less and less ideophone-like. (Childs 1994a:181)

The definition of ideophones proposed here is compatible with Childs' proposal to think of ideophones as a prototype category. The definition gives an indication of what prototypical ideophones are like. Within any particular language, the full set of ideophones will also contain less prototypical members, and it may well shade off into other word classes so that one who expects sharp boundaries will soon run into trouble. We will see this illustrated for Siwu in chapter 6.

Summarizing, the proposed definition of ideophones as *marked words that depict sensory imagery* builds on previous characterisations of the phenomenon and attempts to capture the cross-linguistically robust features of ideophones: their structural markedness, their status as conventionalised simplex linguistic signs, their depictive mode of representation and their sensory semantics. As noted, rather than stipulating necessary and sufficient conditions for ideophonehood, the definition characterises a general prototype and in doing so provides a reference point for discussions of language-particular implementations.

2.5 The fundamentally depictive nature of ideophones

It has been long recognised that there is *something* about ideophones that makes them different from ordinary words. This has been variously attributed to their

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[18] But note the following definition in his dissertation on Kisi: "Ideophones are words of unusual phonological shape and limited morphology, which typically convey some vivid image" (1988:27). This foregrounds the structural markedness and imagistic semantics of ideophones, though it does not bring out their depictive mode of representation.

structural markedness, their syntactic aloofness, or their imagistic semantics. In this thesis I argue that it is fundamentally a difference in mode of representation, and that the other formal factors either support this or follow from this. I propose that ideophones are fundamentally depictive words. To appreciate what this means, it is useful to start with some examples from naturally occuring speech.

Examples (2) and (3) are from different conversational settings; one comes from a conversation between two women about what happened to the neighbourhood when a certain person died, the other from talk during the making of gunpowder by some men. What is common to both is that the ideophone is (a) in final position, (b) uttered with a shift into higher pitch (marked here by ↑) and (c) expressively prolonged. The effect is that the ideophones are set apart from the rest of the utterance as words that attract attention.[19]

(2) **(S)** *bo kagbàmìkù gaǹgbe ne, ka-ɔ̃-lo-ma ↑kanana.nananana↑*
1PL area REL.KA-here TP, ING-3SG.TP-silence-3PL IDPH.silent.EM4
As for our neighbours, he silenced them ↑*kananana*↑! Palm oil_4

(3) **(S)** *krɔ̃ ne, kù-wà gɔ-ǹgbe kù-nyɔ ↑ɖɔbɔrɔɔ.ɔɔɔ↑*
now TP, KU-stuff REL.KU-here KU.S-look IDPH.soft.EM
Now this stuff here, it looks soft ↑*ɖɔbɔrɔɔɔ*↑! Gunpowder

These two examples are by no means atypical; in fact, the majority of ideophonic utterances in the corpus feature the ideophone in utterance-final position and uttered with such expressive features as higher pitch and expressive morphology (see §6.5 for the numbers). Janis Nuckolls (1995; 1996) has called this *performative foregrounding*. Clearly, people are doing something here with the ideophones that is quite different from what they do in the rest of the utterance.

We get a sense of what it is that they are doing from the following stretch of conversation, taken from a heated argument about what it is that geckos do to us in our sleep. According to Speaker A, geckos insert their tongue in our mouth and suck our blood. His wife and cousin remain incredulous; what kind of tongue do geckos have, after all? This A explains as follows:

[19] Recall that data excerpts marked **(S)** are available for inspection at http://thesis.ideophone.org/.

Extract 2.1 Geckos [line 17-26] « 00:01:26 « Argument **(S)**

17 A *ɔ̀-sɛ ɔ̀-ɖi ɔ̃ ɔnyagɛmi ɔ-sɛ̀ ↑bélélé.lélélé↑*
3SG-HAB 3SG-take 3SG.POSS tongue 3SG-go IDPH.bélélé.EM3
It takes its tongue and goes ↑*bélélélélélé*↑

18 ► *ɔ̀-bra-ũ̀ ↑tagbaraa:↑*
3SG-make-Ɔ.OBJ IDPH.long.EM
It makes it ↑*tagbaraaa*↑ [long]!

19 *nya ɔ̀nyagɛmi gɔ pià (i) bò kànya*
see tongue REL.Ɔ be (LOC) 1PL.POSS mouth
See the tongue in our mouth,

20 *a-ɔ̀-nyà ngbɔ̀ ɔ-brà bɛbɛbɛɛ*
2SG-PF-see how SCR-make IDPH.wide
you've seen how it is *bɛbɛbɛɛ* [wide].

21 C *m-hm*
m-hm
m-hm

22 A *à-nya-a?*
2SG-see-Q
D'you see?

23 C *m-hm*
CONT
m-hm

24 A *ɔso sí kà-a-ta à-bie sɔ̀ a-ɣɛ̀ ìra nɛ̀,*
reason if ING-2SG-PROG 2SG-want QT 2SG-say thing TP
So if you're about to say something,

25 ► *nɔso kà-a-bra-ũ̀ ↑nnnnnnn[nn↑*
therefore ING-2SG-make-Ɔ.OBJ DEMONSTRATION
you are going to make it *nnnn* (demonstrates by sticking out tongue)

26 C [*èhɛh*
indeed
Indeed.

The logic of A's argument need not concern us here; what I want to focus on are the two lines marked by arrows (►), which are nearly identical in form. The first, in line 18, has an ideophone in utterance-final position, with the by now

familiar features of performative foregrounding. The second, in line 25, has an actual performance in the exact same position: a demonstration of extending the tongue accompanied by a nasal sound (transcribed as *nnnnn*). Both of these items are introduced by the same verbal material: *X bra-ũ̀ Y*, or 'X makes it Y', where Y is the ideophone or demonstration. Both of them are doing basically the same thing: they *depict* something. Just as the depictive demonstration *nnnnn* invites us to imagine what the human tongue is like while we speak, the performatively foregrounded ideophone *tagbaraa* in line 18 invites us to imagine what the gecko's tongue is like.

We thus see the similarity of ideophones to actual demonstrations in this excerpt of naturally occurring speech. The observation that ideophones, like demonstrations, are depictive performances ties in with important work by Clark & Gerrig (1990).[20] Clark & Gerrig outline three fundamental methods of performing communicative acts: indicating, describing and depicting.[21] We can illustrate these methods with A's argument about geckos. If A wants to get his audience to know what geckos can do with their tongue, he could INDICATE it by pointing at the tongue of an actual gecko, enabling his audience to grasp his intention by direct experience. He can also DESCRIBE it, for example with the assertion "the gecko sticks out its tongue", using symbols that signify by convention and so allow the listeners to recover his intention. This he does in the first part of line 17. Finally, he can DEPICT it by performing a demonstration (either using an ideophone, as in line 18, or using his own tongue, as in line 25) and getting his audience to recognise his intention to depict certain aspects of the gecko tongue action.

These three methods are fundamentally different from one another. Indications are done by locating things. Descriptions are more like abstract propositional representations, to be interpreted according to a conventional symbol system.

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[20] I thank Herb Clark for bringing this to my attention.

[21] Clark & Gerrig call the third method "demonstration", which for them implies "depiction" but is slightly broader than it in two ways. As they explain, demonstrations "belong to a family of *nonserious actions* that includes practicing, playing, acting, and pretending" (1990:766, emphasis mine), and secondly, they are "selective depictions" in that they are selective in what aspects they depict of their referents (1990:767ff.). However, any depiction is necessarily nonserious in the sense that it depends on the recognition that we are not looking at the real thing (Walton 1973; see also main text below), and any depiction is selective in that it only depicts aspects of the thing depicted (Gombrich 2002[1960]). Therefore, I use the term "depiction" as the umbrella term in this discussion.

Depictions differ from these two in that they work by "enabling others to experience what it is like to perceive the things depicted" (Clark and Gerrig 1990:765). Communicative acts can rely on one of these methods, or (more often) on combinations of them. A verbal utterance for example (description) may be accompanied by a deictic gesture (indication) and may include a quotation that enacts aspects of the quoted material (depiction). Or more tailored to the case at hand: a verbal utterance (description) may at its edge feature a performatively foregrounded, expressively prolonged stretch of speech that evokes sensory imagery (depiction).

For that is my suggestion: ideophones are first and foremost depictive signs: words that enable others to experience what it is like to perceive the sensory imagery depicted. Several lines of evidence point to this. Below I show first that they are flagged as depictions and that they are explained in terms of "seeing as" by language users. In the next section I discuss other tell-tale signs of the depictive status of ideophones.

Ideophones are flagged as depictions in actual use. To see how this works, let us go back to an earlier example, repeated as (4) below for convenience. This utterance is taken from a conversation which is analysed in more detail in chapter 11 (Extract 11.7, see pp. 276ff.). As far as descriptions go, it is clear enough: it describes the neighbourhood being silenced following the passing away of a community member. Tacked onto the end is an ideophone, and both the sudden rise in pitch (marked by ↑) and the expressive morphology (glossed as EM, see §6.4) mark it as different from the preceding material.

(4) **(S)** *bo kagbàmìkù gaǹgbe ne, ka-ɔ̃-lo-ma ↑kanana.nananana↑*
1PL area REL.KA-here TP, ING-3SG.TP-silence-3PL IDPH.silent.EM4
As for the neighbourhood, it silenced them *kanananananana*! Palm oil_4

The ideophone at the end of the utterance provides a depictive rendering of the scene that invites the listener to imagine what it would have been like to be there. The aloofness from the rest of the utterance, the shift into higher pitch and the expressive reduplication conspire together to tell the listener to treat the verbal material of the ideophone differently. In a stream of descriptive signs, the ideophone is calling out as it were, saying "I am a depiction!". It is the performative foregrounding of ideophones that distinguishes them from the

surrounding descriptive material and that flags them as a depicting strip of behaviour.

In terms of Bateson's (1955) theory of play and fantasy, the performative foregrounding of ideophones serves as a "metacommunicative frame". To explain this notion, Bateson uses the analogue of a picture frame:

> The picture frame tells the viewer that he is not to use the same sort of thinking in interpreting the picture that he might use in interpreting the wallpaper outside the frame. (Bateson 1955)

Paraphrasing this, we may say that the performative foregrounding of an ideophone tells the listener that he is not to use the same sort of thinking in interpreting the ideophone that he might use in interpreting the verbal material outside the frame. Of course, the verbal material outside our ideophone is usually a lot more informative than the wallpaper around Bateson's picture frame, and in fact often has a bearing on how we are to interpret the ideophone (and vice versa). Twisting the metaphor somewhat, we may say it is more like the mutually supportive relation of a museum label accompanying a painting, or of text and graphics in a comic strip. The basic point remains: if one stretch of speech features two fundamentally distinct modes of representation, the switch from one to the other has to be signalled. For ideophones, this is achieved by performative foregrounding and by their frequent lack of integration with the descriptive material of the utterance.

In this connection we may note the strong cross-linguistic tendency of ideophones to appear at utterance boundaries rather than embedded within utterances. On the view put forward here, this typological fact receives a straightforward explanation: if a communicative move features both descriptive and depictive content in the verbal channel, it is most efficient to have one follow the other, so that a switch in mode of representation has to be signalled only once.

Having started this section with an extract from an actual conversation that shows that ideophones are being used as demonstrations, it seems fitting to end it with some revealing metalinguistic observations on the nature of ideophones by Siwu speakers. One explanation by my consultant Ruben Owiafe runs as follows:

Extract 2.2 "Words that illuminate matters" [Ruben Owiafe] **(S)**

1 R *Àtɔ̃mɛ wa bó-bra ŋ̀gbe pelepelee ne.*
A.PL-message REL.A 1PL:PST-do here ADV.completely TP
All the words that we did here.

2 *Wã nɛ …. ŋ̀gɔ à-kparara ìra.*
A.TP TP … how A.S-illuminate thing
Those words … they illuminate matters.

3 *À-kparara ne, sɔ ma-a-nyà mà*
A.PL-illuminate TP, QT 3PL-FUT-see 3PL
They illuminate things so that people will see them.

4 B *Ma-a-nyà ne màɖi ìte.*
3PL-FUT-see TP 3PL-take NOM-teach
They will see and take a lesson from it.

5 R *Si a-nyà ŋ̀gbe ne, nyà nɛ ìɖe ŋ̀gbe*
if 2SG-see here TP, see REL.I I.S-be here
If you see this here (points to his right), you see how it is here (points to his left).


Figure 2.1 Ruben Owiafe's explanation: "seeing as" as a key feature of ideophones

For Ruben Owiafe, ideophones are words that illuminate matters, that help people *see* how things are. His folk explanation of the mode of signification of ideophones, illustrated in Figure 2.1, points to "seeing as" as a key to interpreting ideophones: "if you see this here," (points to his right), "you see how it is here" (points to his left). In other words, the ideophone provides you with an experience that makes you see this other scene.

This fits well with the depictive nature of ideophones; recall Clark & Gerrig's characterisation of depiction as enabling others to experience what it is like to perceive the thing depicted. It is also analogous to what Daniel Kunene, another native speaker of an ideophonic language, has written: "The speaker-turned-actor re-presents to, or re-creates or dramatises for, his audience (...) the event or situations which he wishes them to observe" (Kunene 1965:20). Another consultant, Ɔdimɛ, explains how ideophones guide the imagination of the listener:

Extract 2.3 "We use them to let people's minds go" [Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo]

OK "We use them to describe some kind of actions and some kind of ... this-thing."

MD "You could do that without?"

OK "We c-... You could do that without, but, [you use them] to let people's minds go, or... get more understanding of what you are talking about"

To paraphrase the combined assessments of Ruben and Ɔdimɛ, ideophones "let people's minds go", guiding their imagination to "see" an event. Ideophones are depictions, not just in virtue of their form and meaning, but also in actual use, where their depictive status is signalled by performative foregrounding. Their *status aparte* in the stream of speech can be compared to the frame of a painting, their sound as the canvas at which we are invited to "look" in such a way that we make believe we are actually experiencing the scene depicted. In that sense, the German term *Lautmalerei* (painting in sound) in the early literature on ideophones was remarkably apt — not because ideophones are imitative (a view that, as we will see in chapter 7, doesn't suffice for paintings nor for ideophones) but because they invite the listener to savour them as depictions.

2.6 Depiction and convention

Since the notion of depiction is fundamental to understand ideophony, it is useful to discuss it in some more detail. The description/depiction distinction has generated a considerable literature (see, among others, Gombrich 2002[1960]; Goodman 1968; Walton 1973; Zemach 1975; Rossholm 1995; Scholz 2000, for perspectives from aesthetics and semiotics; Clark and Gerrig 1990; Güldemann 2008, for more linguistically grounded treatments; and Kosslyn 1980; Kosslyn, Thompson, and Ganis 2006 for perspectives from psychology). From this literature

a number of points about depictions emerge that seem especially useful to shed light on the case of ideophones.

Walton (1973) and Zemach (1975) have pointed out that depictions differ from descriptions in how they are to be interpreted. This is demonstrated in the simple fact that we do not look at a painting in the same way as we look at the symbols on the page of a novel. While we look at the symbols with a view to decoding them as a description of a scene, we look at the painting in such a way that we make believe we are in fact looking at the scene depicted in it. This is not to say that we cannot read a novel and vividly imagine the scene described; only that it would be a category mistake to say this is a result of looking at the symbols on the page in the same way as we look at the paint particles of the painting. The paint particles on the canvas depict, while the symbols on the novel's pages describe (see Walton 1973 for more on novels and depiction).

This is entirely consistent with what we saw of ideophones so far, for instance in the gecko scene, in which the speaker presented us first with an ideophone and thereafter with a demonstration in the exact same verbal frame. The speaker insists that we perceive the ideophone as well as the demonstration in such a way that we make believe we are in fact looking at the gecko extending its tongue. It also meshes with Ruben Owiafe's explanation: we "see" an ideophone and this helps us "see" the event. The poet, linguist and Sesotho speaker Daniel Kunene notes that a speaker may invite his audience to view an act depicted by an ideophone, often using the word *bona* 'look' to announce an ideophonic depiction (2001:189).

A second point is that, in Goodman's (1968) terms, depictions are formed from analog, dense symbol systems. The term "analog" captures the fact that in depictions, changes along various dimensions of the material will make analogical differences in its interpretation. For instance, different grades of shading in a drawing may correspond to different shades of luminance in the scene represented; or in depictions of a man, "any difference in height among images constitutes a difference in height of man represented" (Goodman 1968:226). What is dense about such a system is that between any given two points in the representational system there is a third; the system is not discrete but analog. Descriptions on the other hand are typically formed from discrete, articulate

symbol systems in which the symbol tokens sort into a generally finite amount of different characters.[22]

How does this apply to the difference between ideophones and ordinary words? Two aspects of ideophones stand out in this respect. The first is what I call their RELATIVE ICONICITY (to be discussed in more detail in §7.4.2). This is the fact that in ideophones, related forms often map onto related meanings (Westermann 1927a; 1937; Diffloth 1976, among others). For instance, the Siwu ideophone *foforo* depicts a perception of 'light weight'; it may be used to describe a thin book that is not very heavy. Another ideophone, *fɛfɛrɛ*, evokes a similar perception, but lighter; it would not be used for a book, but it might be used for a leaf. The change in vowel quality corresponds to a change in perceived weight.[23] Ordinary words on the other hand tend to have what Diffloth (1976:250f.) calls the property of "lexical discreteness": small differences in form do not correspond to small differences in meaning. Take for instance the Siwu noun *ìyo* 'house'; there is no companion noun (*ìyi*, let's say) that means 'small house'.

The second feature of ideophones that shows that they partake of a Goodman-type "dense symbol system" lies in the remarkable freedom with which ideophones are handled by speakers (Jaques 1941; Fortune 1971:247; Derbyshire 1979:190–1; Nuckolls 1999:241, among others). To give an example from Siwu, the ideophone *kananaa* 'quiet' can be pronounced with variable numbers of syllables on different occasions; in the example we saw before, we saw it uttered with four additional repetitions of the final syllable. A little later in the same conversation it is used by the same speaker, but now in its basic trisyllabic form:

(5) *i-ɔ̀-lo,* *i-ɔ̀-lo* *kananaa*
it-PF-be.silent, it-PF-be.silent IDPH.silent
It has become silent. It has become silent *kananaa.* Palm oil_4

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[22] This is an abbreviation of course. I am ignoring factors like co-articulation and prosody not because they are not important, but because they have been argued to be very much like another depictive layer on an essentially descriptive base (e.g. Liberman 1979 and references therein).

[23] This and other cases of form-meaning mappings in ideophones are discussed at more length in chapter 7, where various limitations are also noted. For now I shall limit myself to pointing out that the bulk of ideophones is conventionalised, so that certain forms exist while others don't (for example, there is no conventionalised form *fafara-fa* in Siwu, although we might be able to infer its meaning based on existing forms like *fɛfɛrɛ-fɛ* 'light as a feather'). Chapter 13 goes into the matter of creativity and ideophone genesis.

Ideophones may thus be freely lengthened and reduplicated to depict perceptions at various intensities, much like the shading in a drawing represents different grades of brightness. The details of this system, which I call "expressive morphology" after Zwicky & Pullum (1987), are described for Siwu in §6.4. This way of using speech depictively is not limited to ideophones and ideophonic languages, as shown by such familiar examples as English "a huuuuuge fish" — a phenomenon known as "grading" (Bolinger 1961), more recently called "analog acoustic expression" by Shintel, Nusbaum & Okrent (2006). In the Siwu corpus, however, it is much more common for ideophones to undergo such expressive modification than it is for other words, and this is another clue to their fundamentally depictive status.

The final point about depiction that I want to make here is that it is important not to equate depiction with simple resemblance. The reason is that interpreting a depiction always requires an awareness of certain representational conventions (Gombrich 2002[1960]; Goodman 1968; Zemach 1975). This addresses a question that may have come up for certain non-Siwu speaking readers. They may have wondered, "how exactly is *kananaa* depictive of silence?" The answer must be: part depiction, part convention. As regards its depictive properties, we saw above that the speaker may freely prolong the word to suggest intensity; we may also note that in Siwu ideophones, long final vowels often suggest durativity (more on these iconic mappings in §7.4). Furthermore, we may note that in actual use, the speaker may performatively depict the silence by producing the ideophone with a hushed voice (more on this in §7.5). But if we ask why it should be *kananaa* and not, say, *fututuu*, I think we enter the realm of convention.

On this point we can learn a lot from Ernst Gombrich's dissection of processes of perception and illusion in art. One lesson of his *Art and Illusion* (2002[1960]) is that there is never a depiction that does not rely to some extent on convention. For instance, writing on line drawings, Gombrich notes that:

> we have become so obedient to the artist's suggestions that we respond with perfect ease to the notation in which black lines indicate both the distinction between ground and figure and the gradations of shading (Gombrich 2002:33)

Depictions always make use of culture-bound (that is, socially mediated) representational conventions, and to fully appreciate them a certain knowledge of these conventions is required. With ample examples from the history of Western figurative art, Gombrich shows that what is considered a "good" or "lifelike"

depiction is not simply judged by mere physical resemblance, but is subject to convention and intimately tied to the goals of the artist, the cultural tradition in which the work is embedded and the ways in which the perception of the spectator has been conditioned.

All of these aspects stress the interplay of depiction and representational conventions, and so it is with ideophones. Ideophones are never simple imitations interpreted in a vacuum. Were this to be the case, the ideophone systems of different languages could easily be interchangeable and unconventionalised. Yet we find that they are not; instead, they tend to bear a language-specific signature, so that a Siwu ideophone is recognizably different from a Japanese ideophone; and they are conventionalised, so that a Siwu speaker can tell that *fɛfɛrɛ* is an existing ideophone and *ɖiɖiri* is not. What this means is that ideophones are conventionalised items in a linguistic system. That is, their forms subsist on the structural features of the system[24] and their meanings are socially mediated. Note that this conventionalised status does not preclude them from having a fundamentally depictive mode of representation, just like the particular representational conventions that Van Gogh relies on do not preclude his *Almond Blossom* from being depictive. There is a common idea that convention is the enemy of iconicity. I prefer a more constructive view: convention helps guide the imagination by specifying the representational conventions through which the depictive verbal material of the ideophone is to be interpreted.

Summing up the discussion so far, this section clarified the nature of depiction and discussed the difference with description. Depictions differ from descriptions in how they are to be interpreted. Depictions are furthermore distinctive in that they are formed from analog, dense symbol systems: in depictions, gradual changes in formal characteristics correspond to gradual changes in meaning. Finally, representational conventions play an important role in the interpretation of depictive material. These three points are directly applicable to ideophones. First, as we saw in §2.5, ideophones are treated by speakers as special words — words that help one "see" things. Second, in actual use as well as in their forms, ideophones show signs of forming part of a dense symbol system in Goodman's

[24] The fact that they build on the structural features of the larger linguistic system does not prevent them from being structurally marked within this system (even with some occasional lapses outside it, like a stray phoneme or two in selected items). In this connection, Gérard Diffloth speaks of ideophones as "a parallel sublanguage grafted on, and parasitic on, the conventional one" (1994:108).

sense. Third, the interpretation of ideophones is not driven merely by natural resemblance. Like all depictions, ideophones are subject to certain representational conventions, and their interpretation is always socially mediated.

2.7 Ideophony and depiction in the broader context

As I mentioned before, the fact that there is *something* different about the mode of representation in ideophones has not gone unnoticed in the literature. In fact, what has been discussed here under the broad distinction of description versus depiction has been rendered in many different terms. Table 2.1 below lists the most prominent examples. These sets of terms usefully highlight some of the characteristics we already saw above, for example the performative nature of ideophones (Nuckolls), the analog nature of their mode of representation (Bolinger), their iconicity (Liberman) and the prosaic nature of the surrounding verbal material (Diffloth).

DESCRIPTION	DEPICTION	
commentative/narrative	presentive/dramatic	(Kunene 1965; Fortune 1962)
notional	expressive	(Carr 1966)
description	depiction	(Goodman 1968; Zemach 1975; Kosslyn 1980; Clark and Gerrig 1990)
digital	analog	(Bolinger 1968)
prosaic/cognitive	expressive/iconic	(Diffloth 1972; 1980)
arbitrary/referential	iconic/metaphoric	(Liberman 1975)
plain	expressive	(Zwicky and Pullum 1987)
referential	stylistic	(Hymes 1991)
discursive	performative	(Nuckolls 1995)
propositional/analytic	affecto-imagistic	(Kita 1993; 1997)
description	mimesis	(Donald 2005; Güldemann 2008)

Table 2.1 Terms for the description/depiction contrast in the literature

Some of the accounts mentioned in Table 2.1 are especially instructive in the present context. For Güldemann (2008), the depictive nature of ideophones fits within a broader functional domain of *mimesis*. Liberman (1975) usefully sets out some of the differences between arbitrary and iconic signs, but also emphasises the fact that much of language use is of a hybrid character with respect to these two extremes. Kita (1997; following Diffloth 1972) associates descriptive material

with propositional representations of the kind dealt with in formal semantics, while depictive material according to him is more imagistic and affective in nature. In what follows I outline some specific proposals of these authors that will be of relevance in later chapters.

But before we go into that, a terminological note. The term "depictive" has also been used in a different sense in work on secondary predication. Secondary predicates are items such as *raw* in *She ate the food raw* (Nichols 1978; Schultze-Berndt and Himmelmann 2004; Himmelmann and Schultze-Berndt 2005). In the secondary predication literature, the term "depictive" is not in opposition to "descriptive" and does not refer to a different mode of representation, as it does here. Rather, depictive secondary predication is the type of secondary predication that expresses an eventuality related to one participant of the main predicate (*raw* in relation to *the food* in the above example). It is in opposition to resultative secondary predication, which expresses something that is the case because the main predicate takes place (as in *He swept the floor clean*).[25] The important difference in the meaning of the term "depiction" notwithstanding, there is a clear conceptual connection between ideophones and secondary predication: both are expressions of states of affairs related to the main predicate. This link has not been overlooked (cf. Schultze-Berndt 2001; Schultze-Berndt and Himmelmann 2004:98; Tolskaya 2004) but it will not be further developed here, as the concern of this chapter is with depiction in the "mode of representation" sense.

2.7.1 More linguistic devices utilise depiction

Ideophones are not the only linguistic device to utilise depiction. In §2.5 above I already mentioned Clark & Gerrig's (1990) proposal that quotations are selective depictions of verbal behaviour which require the listener to recognise that the speaker is not merely describing but enacting or demonstrating. Another domain of communicative behaviour in which depiction plays an important role is depictive gesture (McNeill 1992; Kendon 2004; Streeck 2008). In fact, as Clark & Gerrig have argued, "Most theories of language use take for granted that all

[25] The distinction between depictive and resultative secondary predication was introduced by Halliday (1967). The extensive use of "depictives" in the secondary predication literature is one of the reasons that I stick to the term "ideophones", even though "depictives" would be a better name in several respects (considering the importance of the depictive mode of signification to ideophones and the slightly misleading implications of the term "ideo-phone").

language use is description. If our proposal is correct, demonstrations are as much a part of ordinary discourse as descriptions are, and they too must be accounted for in any general theory of language use" (1990:764–5).

One account that takes seriously the centrality of depiction in language is Tom Güldemann's recent typological study of quotative indexes (2008; see also Güldemann 2002). In it, Güldemann surveys not only quotation, but also ideophones, depictive gesture and the representation of non-linguistic sound, and shows that there are important structural isomorphisms across these domains in a diverse sample of African languages. For instance, in many languages they can be introduced by one and the same construction, often involving a quotative marker (Güldemann 2008:276). Güldemann proposes a unified treatment of these domains as part of a larger functional domain called "mimesis". His proposal is worth quoting in full:

> The central characteristic of this domain which is common to all four types is that the speaker gives a marked, stylistically expressive representation of a state of affairs. The behavior of the speaker is such that (s)he PERFORMS the communicated state of affairs rather than linguistically describing it, as if the unmarked employment of the signs of language failed to achieve the particular communicative goal. The speaker attempts to demonstrate, to reinstantiate, to imitate, to replay the event as close to the purported original as is desired in the context and as human means of expression allow him/her to do so.
>
> This common characterization motivates the term under which the form expression types will be subsumed here: the discourse-insertion of representational gesture, ideophones, non-linguistic sound and DRD [Direct Reported Discourse, MD] is called here MIMESIS. (Güldemann 2008:286–7)

Güldemann's unified treatment builds on work by a range of authors, including Daniel Kunene, who has stressed the importance of *performance* to ideophony as well as its close connection to gesture (Kunene 1965; 2001); and the psychologist Merlin Donald, who has argued for "mimesis" as a general human capacity that underlies and scaffolds symbolic language (Donald 1998; 2005). We will come across several of the domains discussed by Güldemann in later chapters, for example in an overview of quotative constructions in Siwu in chapter 5.7, in our investigation of the gestures used in folk definitions in chapter 9 and in a review of ideophones and gesture in everyday speech in chapter 14.

2.7.2 The relation between ideophones and phonaesthemes

While previous sections have emphasised the distinctness of ideophones as depictive signs, it is important to recognise that depiction in language is not necessarily an all or nothing affair. In a study of intonational meaning, Liberman (1975:140–8) argues that the descriptive/depictive opposition (arbitrary/iconic in his terminology) defines two extremes and that a lot of language use has to be characterised with reference to both. As he notes:

> In many cases (e.g. English) there is not a clearly identifiable ideophonic section of the lexicon, as there is in Bahnar, Korean, etc., but rather scattered classes of examples which have ideophonic or partly ideophonic character, and which shade off into areas where meanings are iconically arbitrary. (Liberman 1975:146)

One of these "scattered classes of examples" is the case of English phonaesthemes (Firth 1930; Bolinger 1950; Bergen 2004 and references therein): submorphemic elements found across a number of semantically related words. Familiar examples are *gl-*, found in a large number of words related to 'vision' and 'light' (glimmer, glisten, glitter, gleam, glow, glint, etc.) and *sn-*, found in many words related to 'mouth' and 'nose' (snore, snack, snout, snarl, snort, sniff, sneeze, etc.) (examples from Bergen 2004:290). Such phonaesthemes are psychologically real for speakers of English, as Bergen has shown. Phonaesthemes have been documented in many of the world's languages; besides English, Bergen cites literature on phonaesthemes in Indonesian, other Austronesian languages, Japanese, Ojibwa and Swedish.[26]

What is the relation between such phenomena and ideophony? The first thing to note is that if phonaesthemes are defined as "frequently recurring sound-meaning pairings that are not clearly contrastive morphemes" (Bergen 2004:290), then these are very common in ideophone systems. Indeed this is one of the characteristics singled out by Diffloth (1972) in his review of South-East Asian ideophone systems. Showing how certain phonemes and phonological properties in Bahnar ideophones co-vary with meaning, he argues that "vowel height must be considered a separate morpheme, by usual morphological standards. And once we

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[26] Siwu, too, has phonaesthemes in its ideophones. They are discussed in chapter 7 under the heading of "relative iconicity": related forms mapping onto related meanings. An example from Siwu is word-initial *ny-*, found in ideophones involving some kind of torsion, wriggling, wrinkling or twisting, as in *nyãkãnyãkã* 'wrinkled', *nyɛmɛrɛ-nyɛmɛrɛ* 'small snake wriggling', *nyagbalaa* 'sharp taste/pungent smell'.

begin the search for recurrent partials with associated meanings, there seems to be no way to stop: … morphological analysis will decompose the whole phonological substance of an ideophone" (Diffloth 1972:442–4). It is no coincidence, then, that two of the four languages other than English cited by Bergen as having phonaesthemes are well-known for their large ideophonic systems:[27] Japanese (Aston 1894; Martin 1952; Hamano 1998; Kita 1997) and Indonesian (Brandstetter 1916; Uhlenbeck 1952; Carr 1966).[28] The difference appears to be chiefly one of gradation: whereas English phonaesthemes usually make up only part of otherwise descriptive words, in ideophones the form-meaning mappings are more pervasive as the whole word takes on a depictive mode of signification.

Phonaesthemes show that depiction is never far away in language. Language users are always ready to connect form and meaning, be it unconsciously or consciously.[29] For instance, historical linguists have shown that such statistical prevalences of form-meaning pairings as phonaesthemes may be seized upon by neologisms — a "snowballing effect" (Bergen 2004:307; citing Blust 2003 on Austronesian; Joseph 1983 on Indo-European). In a review of the sound-symbolism literature, Janis Nuckolls remarks that "The development of phonesthemic patterns is powerful evidence for a kind of sound-symbolic creativity that is protracted through generations, below the threshold of awareness for most, yet assented to and thereby engineerd by entire communities of speakers" (Nuckolls 1999:238). This is what we see in phonesthemes as well as in ideophones.

However, despite some structural similarities, there are important differences between ideophone systems and phonaesthemes. Ideophones are not simply phonaesthemes writ large. Phonaesthemes are submorphemic patches of form-

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[27] Oddly, Bergen nowhere makes this connection: none of the ideophone literature is cited in his work (Bergen 2001; 2004); in fact, the term ideophone does not appear in it. The converse also appears to hold true: connections to the phonaestheme literature are rarely made in studies of ideophones. Rare exceptions include Jakobson & Waugh (1979), Childs (1988), Fordyce (1988) and an important review by Nuckolls (1999).

[28] Bergen also cites Blust (2003) on phonaesthemes in Austronesian — a huge language family including Indonesian and other ideophonic languages such as Kedah Malay (Collins 1979), Kambera (Klamer 1999), Ilocano (Rubino 2001) and Numbami and Jabem (Bradshaw 2006). It is not clear however whether ideophony is a common feature of Austronesian languages.

[29] That is not to say that analysts should be quick to do the same (see §7.2 on the limits of iconicity). However, analysts should certainly always be aware of the multiple semiotic affordances of speech.

meaning pairings integrated in fundamentally descriptive signs — instances of Bolinger's analog sea washing up the digital shores, one could say.[30] Ideophones on the other hand are fully depictive signs, whole words that are foregrounded as speech heard in a special way. If phonaesthemes suggest hints of meaning in a rather unassuming way, ideophones are their eye-catching counterparts, wearing the extravagant garb of performative foregrounding as an open invitation to map sound onto sense. What is typologically remarkable about ideophonic languages, then, is not so much that they utilise depiction per se, but that in their ideophone systems depiction is taken to a whole new level. In later chapters it will become clear what possibilities this grants users of ideophonic languages in terms of the meanings (part III) and uses (part IV) of ideophones.

2.7.3 On meaning and mode of representation

There is a final tangle to be sorted out, and this concerns the relation between the current proposal that ideophones are fundamentally depictive signs and related proposals by Diffloth and Kita that ideophones involve another "mode" or "dimension" of meaning. This touches on issues of language and representation.

The basic idea goes back to a brief but rich paper by Gérard Diffloth (1972).[31] Noting that the pervasive sound-symbolism of ideophones creates "outlandish problems" (1972:444) for generative theories of grammar, Diffloth proposes that ideophones employ a different mode of meaning, which he calls the "expressive mode":

> the problem is that sound symbolism implies an identity between elements of meaning and elements of sound, an identity which the device of *rewrite rule* necessarily destroys. This fact about ideophones could be incorporated in generative theory by postulating that language has, in addition to the cognitive mode of meaning —which has been the sole object of study so far— an expressive mode of

[30] This is one of Bolinger's metaphors for language: "language is digital, not analog: its units function by being either present or absent, not by being present in varying degrees. … But the digital island floats on an analog sea. … It would not be surprising if now and then a bit of the analog sea washed over the digital island." (Bolinger 1968:17).

[31] Carr's (1966) opposition of an "expressive pole" and a "notional pole" in the lexicon could be cited as a historical precursor. Other obvious influences include of course Bühler's notion of the *expressive function* of language (Bühler 1934; see also Foolen 1997) and its subsequent adoption by Jakobson (1960).

> meaning, characterized by symbolism, and formally represented by some device other than a rewrite rule. (Diffloth 1972:445)

Diffloth proposed that this could account for some of the peculiarities of ideophones. To give just one example, it could account for their apparent syntactic redundancy —i.e. the fact that ideophones often appear to provide information that is already expressed in the clause they modify, as in "being silent *kananaa* [silent]"— by stipulating that the ideophone is a rendering in the expressive mode of information that the preceding clause expresses in the cognitive mode.[32]

Diffloth's proposal has been expanded by Sotaro Kita in a line of work that started in the early 1990s (Kita 1993; 1997; 2001). The central argument in this work is that a two-dimensional semantic representation is necessary to account for the semantics of ideophones. The two dimensions distinguished are the *analytic dimension*, which has been "the main focus of formal semantic theories" (Kita 1997:386), and the *affecto-imagistic dimension*, which is Kita's term for Diffloth's expressive mode of meaning. According to Kita, the meaning representation of ideophones is to be sought primarily in the affecto-imagistic dimension rather than in the analytic dimension, or in other words, that ideophones are much more strongly linked up with mental imagery than prosaic linguistic items are.

When Diffloth and Kita published their versions of the hypothesis that the meaning of ideophones is tightly linked to perceptual knowledge, the mainstream

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[32] There is a distinct, though not wholly unrelated related, notion of an "expressive dimension" of meaning in the work of Christopher Potts (e.g. 2003; 2005; 2007). For Potts, swear words like *damn* and *bastard* are "expressives", and he puts forward a formal analysis of the way in which these words manipulate the intensity of expressive feeling as well as its valence (positive or negative). Among other things, this analysis postulates an expressive dimension of meaning to account for some of the peculiarities that these words show. Potts account is helpful in that it shows one way to formalise what at first sight look like idiosyncratic properties of swear words (see Potts 2007:166–7). Some of these properties appear to be shared with ideophones: *independence*, in that ideophones, too, appear to contribute a dimension of meaning that is separate from the regular descriptive dimension; *descriptive ineffability*, in that ideophones, too, have been described as difficult to paraphrase; and *repeatability*, in that if an ideophone is repeated or reduplicated, the effect is not one of redundancy but one of intensification. However, Potts' formalisation is limited to the contextual effects of swear words in terms of valence and arousal. This is not enough to account for the rich and highly specific sensory meanings of ideophones, which we will encounter in later parts of this thesis. (Note, by the way, that the term "expressives" as a plural of the noun "expressive" is also a label for ideophones in the South-East Asian literature (see §2.1). Potts and the South-East Asian francophone linguistics tradition seem to be mutually unaware of each other's choice of terminology.)

assumption in linguistics was that linguistic meaning could be exhaustively characterised as a-modal and propositional. Kita cites as an example Jackendoff, who maintained that "[t]here is a SINGLE level of mental representation, *conceptual structure*, at which linguistic, sensory and motor information are compatible" (Jackendoff 1983:17). Against this, Kita proposed that "there are two levels of representation, the analytic dimension and the affecto-imagistic dimension, in which language and various kinds of mental information are compatible" (1997:409). Today we can see these proposals in the light of a more general move in the cognitive sciences toward emphasizing the importance of mental imagery (in the broad sense of perceptual knowledge) in human cognition. Many psychologists have increasingly come to stress the importance of mental imagery and affect (Paivio 1971; 1986; 2007; Kosslyn 1980; Kosslyn, Thompson, and Ganis 2006; Barsalou 1999; 2008), and there is now overwhelming evidence from neuroscientific studies that mental imagery plays a fundamental role in many aspects of human cognition (Kosslyn, Thompson, and Ganis 2006:CH4; Barsalou 2008; but see Pylyshyn 2002 for a sceptic's view). In linguistics, uptake has been slower, but here, too, there is "mounting evidence that language comprehension involves the activation of mental imagery" (Bergen et al. 2007:733; cf. also Pulvermüller 1999).[33]

The way is open for a proper characterisation of the mental representations that ideophones are linked up with. In this thesis I supply linguistic and behavioural evidence that will be of help for that general project, showing that ideophones are tightly intertwined with perceptual knowledge (see especially chapters 8-10). I do this without necessarily committing to a specific proposal as to the character of cognitive representations of meaning. Kita's proposal (analytic and affecto-imagistic) and Jackendoff's (conceptual structure and spatial structure) are incompatible enough to suggest at least three dimensions. On the other hand, Barsalou (1999) has argued that both conceptual and perceptual knowledge could be grounded ultimately in a single multimodal representation. I do not at this

[33] Jackendoff, too, has in recent work acknowledged the importance of at least some form of perceptual knowledge to linguistic meaning. He now subdivides meaning into *conceptual structure* (CS) and *spatial structure* (SpS), the latter being a representation that "receives and integrates inputs about shape and spatial layout from the haptic system (sense of touch), auditory localisation, and the somatosensory system (felt position of one's own body)" (Jackendoff 2002:346). Note the thoroughly multimodal, multisensory nature of this proposed structure.

point have a stake in this debate; I will only note that abstract, a-modal, decontextualised representations appear insufficient to describe the rich sensory meanings of ideophones. Any theory of their cognitive content will have to take account of this.

In closing, let me clarify the relation between the proposals of Diffloth and Kita and the perspective developed here. Though the accounts by Diffloth and Kita are important for their insistence on the sensory semantics of ideophones, their emphasis on *meaning* potentially obscures the importance of *mode of signification*. Many words have meanings in the domain of sensory imagery and affect; not all of these are ideophones. As I argued in this chapter, the crucial thing about ideophones is not their sensory meanings; it is the fact that these meanings go hand in hand with a depictive mode of signification. Note, too, that depiction in the sense used here is distinct from iconicity. At this point I part ways with Diffloth (1976; 1980), for whom iconicity is the crucial feature distinguishing the "expressive" from the "cognitive". The chief problem for any account placing so much emphasis on iconicity is that it is difficult to deal with the considerable numbers of ideophones that are not transparently iconic and yet function exactly the same in the linguistic system. This matter is treated at length in chapter 7 (esp. §7.5), where I tease apart depiction ("invitation to seeing as") and iconicity ("resemblance to") and argue that the former is more fundamental to how ideophones work than the latter.

In sum, the perspective developed here foregrounds the central role of depiction to understanding the nature of ideophones. Later chapters will show that the depictive nature of ideophones is not just the key to their sensory meanings (part III) but also to their interactional uses (part IV).

2.8 Conclusions

In this chapter I defined ideophones as *marked words that depict sensory imagery*. I have shown how this definition builds on previous characterisations and how it differs from them. Though this chapter briefly explained the elements of the definition, they are justified in more detail in later chapters. The idea that ideophones are *marked* as different from other words receives support from the formal characteristics discussed in chapter 6. The idea that they are *words*, conventionalised lexical items with stable meanings, is demonstrated throughout all of the chapters in part III and IV by the fact that speakers handle them in

consistent ways even when presented in isolation. The sensory nature of the meanings of ideophones is demonstrated in part III, particularly chapter 8 and 10.

Much of the present chapter was devoted to unpacking what can be thought of as the rich point of the definition: the claim that ideophones are *depictions*. As depictions, ideophones enable others to experience what it is like to perceive the scene depicted. I justified this claim by showing that ideophones are closely akin to physical demonstrations; that they are flagged as depictions in actual use; that speakers explain them in terms of "seeing as"; and that they show formal characteristics of depictive signs such as relative iconicity and expressive morphology.

I also pointed out that depiction is not to be equated with simple imitation or physical resemblance. Depictions make use of culture-bound (that is, socially mediated) representational conventions. Interpreting a depiction always requires some awareness of these conventions. It is this socially mediated nature that gives ideophone systems their language-specific signature. Finally, I considered depiction in relation to some broader issues, drawing attention to Güldemann's wide-ranging account of mimesis in language, sketching the relation of ideophones to phonaesthemes, and discussing the issue of meaning versus mode of representation.

What emerges from all this is a picture of ideophones as words characterised by a depictive mode of representation, but words all the same: organic elements of a conventionalised linguistic system. What Edward Sapir wrote about onomatopoeia, then, also holds for ideophones: "They are just as truly creations of the human mind, flights of the human fancy, as anything else in language. They do not directly grow out of nature, they are suggested by it and play with it" (Sapir 1921:6).

3 A research history of ideophones

> No group of words is as visible and yet as elusive as the ideophone, none is subject to as much misunderstanding and discrimination. Although sporadically written about since Clement Doke attempted to define it in 1935, the ideophone tends to receive relatively casual treatment in grammars.
>
> Philip Noss (1986)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an overview of research into ideophones, past and present. Although ideophones touch on many things, an attempt is made here not to duplicate the voluminous literatures on sound-symbolism (some excellent overviews are Bühler 1934:Ch13; Jakobson and Waugh 1979; Hinton, Nichols, and Ohala 1994; Magnus 2001:12–33), interjections (e.g. Ameka 1992a; Kockelman 2003) and "expressive" language in its various senses — including affect, emotional language and swear words (e.g. Foolen 1997; Potts 2007), phonological expressiveness (e.g. Fudge 1970), expressive morphology (e.g. Zwicky and Pullum 1987) and poetic expressiveness (Tsur 1992).[34] Though I have done my best to cover the relevant literature on ideophones, my discussion may be somewhat biased towards research published in Western academia (in German, English, and French) and on African languages. For pre-1950 sources this bias is justified by the fact that African linguistics was the first linguistic tradition in which ideophones were recognised as a significant linguistic device. I do note with particular regret, however, that I miss out on rich bodies of literature in Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese.[35]

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[34] An excellent study charting the relation between ideophones and other forms of expressive language is Samarin (1970a).

[35] For Japanese, much of this literature is indexed in Akita (2009b). I am not aware of similar bibliographies for the Korean and Vietnamese linguistic areas. Two dissertations on Korean ideophones (Lee 1992; Sien 1997) cite surprisingly little Korean works. Durand (1961) does cite some contemporary Vietnamese linguists.

This trip through the literature will introduce us to aspects of ideophones that have fascinated students of language and culture. Before take-off, I wish to point out two broad patterns that emerge especially in the early literature, which we can see as two strategies to make sense of ideophones. The first is to stress their difference from anything the investigator knows. For instance, when Owen Emeric Vidal first came across ideophones in Yoruba, he declared them to be a "singularly unique feature" of the language, and confidently announced, "therefore I shall not waste time in comparing it with the adverbial systems, whatever they may be, of other African languages" (Vidal 1852:17). Time has shown him to be wrong on this count; and yet Vidal was not the only one to think so.

The second strategy is to interpret ideophones wholly in terms of categories known in the investigators' language, usually adverbs, onomatopoeia or interjections. Many early grammars are modelled closely after the Greco-Roman type, in which these classes are peripheral and small. In such grammars, room for adverbs of place, time and manner was limited, and onomatopoeia and interjections were not even thought worthy of more than a passing mention. A good example is Grout's description of the *Zulu language*, whose chapter on interjections is worth quoting in full (Grout 1849:421): "*Interjections.* The principal interjections are: —*au! mame! mamo! maye! o! ou!.*" The broader point is that in grammars of the Greco-Roman type, there was no place for a class of words that did not readily fit the system. As a consequence, ideophones were often trivialised or ignored.

3.2 Early sources

The earliest extant linguistic document to mention imitative words is Pāṇini's *Ashṭādhyāyī* on Sanskrit, usually dated to the 4th century BCE. Pāṇini's succinct statements on the matter are found in sutra's I.4.62, V.4.57, VI.1.98-100 and VIII.2.4. They only mention two structural facts about imitative words (*anukáraṇa*): such words are followed by the quotative *–iti*, and often occur in reduplicated form. The combination of ideophones and quotative marking is of course well known and is discussed elsewhere in the thesis (§2.7, §5.7). Although *anukáraṇa* refers to 'imitation' in general[36] it is likely that in Sanskrit this class was

[36] Pāṇini's term *anukáraṇa* in the sutras referenced above is translated as *schallnachahmendes Wort* by Böhtlingk (1887:38) and as *sound-imitation word* by Vasu (Pāṇini 1962:196). In early Indian literature, the word *anukáraṇa* is used in the general sense of 'imitation' or 'mimesis' (Ley 2000). It seems

limited to onomatopoeic words (Hoffkann 1952). In the wider Indian context, a short list of ideophones is found under this same term *anukáraṇa* in an 8th century AD dictionary of Ancient Tamil, a Dravidian language (Chevillard 2004).

In Western philology, some of the first works making a point of mentioning ideophone-like words are two grammatical treatises of Japanese. A characterisation from Rodrigues' 1604 *Arte da lingoa de Iapam* is worth quoting in full (I cite here from an abridged French version by Landresse from 1825):

> §81. The Japanese have a great number of adverbs which serve not only to express the manner of an event, but which also indicate the sound, the noise, the position of the thing. (...) Many of these adverbs are formed by repetition of the same word, to express the manner in which a thing is done, or the sound of the thing: like *farafara*, 'sound of rain or tears falling' (Rodriguez 1825[1604]:87)[37]

Rodriguez provided not only a semantic characterisation (words that indicate manner, sound, noise and position[38]) but also a structural observation: many of them are reduplicated "to express the manner in which something is done, or the sound of it". Another early grammar of Japanese, Diego Collado's *Ars grammaticae Iaponicae linguae*, called these words *adverbia sonus* and characterised them as "aduerbia concludendi & aduertendi", adverbs that conclude and claim attention (Collado 1632:56).

It would take until halfway through the 19th century before ideophones were recognised as a phenomenon worthy of mention in Western linguistics, and it seems that the first descriptions came from students of African languages. In the 1850s, three different linguists independently noted large numbers of ideophones in three West-African languages. The first of them, Vidal (1852) in a foreword to

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unnecessary to limit its meaning to the imitation of sound (i.e. onomatopoeia), especially since (1) *–iti*, the grammatical formative marking ideophones according to Pāṇini, is also used to mark gestures and reported discourse in Sanskrit (Whitney 1950[1889]:405) and (2) ideophones in the Indian linguistic area are, at least nowadays, by no means limited to the imitation of sound (Emeneau 1969).

[37] Original French: "§81. Les Japonais ont un grand nombre d'adverbes dont ils se servent non-seulement pour exprimer les modifications d'une action, mais qui indiquent encore le son, le bruit, la position de la chose. (...) On forme encore un grand nombre d'adverbes par la répétition du même mot, pour exprimer la manière dont se fait une chose, ou le son de cette chose : comme *farafara*, bruit de la pluie ou des larmes qui tombent."

[38] By "position", Rodriguez probably refers to posture rather than to spatiotemporal location. In any case, ideophones in present-day Japanese do not encode the spatiotemporal location of an event (Kita 1997:404).

Crowthers dictionary of Yoruba, noted "a most observable peculiarity in the use of [adverbs]" (1852:15):

> Thus, for example, in sentences where we should employ the word "very" let the subject of which we were speaking be what it might, the Yoruban would express the same meaning with far more of definiteness and precision by a separate adverb in each case, no two of which could be used convertibly. (Vidal 1852:16)

Vidal went on to describe the amazing semantic specificity of Yoruba ideophones, giving examples like *fiofio* 'height (of sth. connected to the ground)' and *tiantian* 'height (of sth. separated from the ground and at distance from it)'. He also noted that many verbs seem to have their own specific ideophone, as in *pon rokiroki* 'be yellow *rokiroki*' vs. *pipa roro* 'be red *roro*'. Unaware of a similar phenomenon in other African languages, he exclaimed that "[t]his singular feature of the Yoruba language is unique" (Vidal 1852:17).

As it happens, just two years later Sigismund Wilhelm Koelle, one of the founding fathers of African linguistics, published a grammar of Kanuri, a Saharan language of Central Africa (Koelle 1854a) and a grammar of Vai, a Mande language of Liberia (Koelle 1854b). In the Kanuri grammar, Koelle noted that "[t]hese singular adverbs which seem to be common in African languages, as they exist also in the Aku and Vei, have something in their nature which may be compared to the onomatopoetica, or something in which the immediate, instinctive sense of language particularly manifests itself." Another three years later, Schlegel, unaware of the work of either Vidal or Koelle, devoted a long section of the first grammar of Ewe, a Kwa language from southern Ghana and Togo, to "a special type of adverbs of intensity and frequency, which has seen a very rich development".[39] He noted that these words are often reduplicated. Not content with filing them away as adverbs or onomatopoeia, he wondered about the reason for their abundance in Ewe and hypothesised that this might be due to "an urge to illustrate all conceivable variations of concepts" (1857:114), noting in passing that this may also be why they are often accompanied by gestures.

With the first descriptions of ideophone systems in Yoruba, Vai, Kanuri and Ewe, we may justifiably call the 1850s the decade of the discovery of African ideophones in Western linguistics. The findings did not attract great interest at the

[39] Original German: "eine besondere Art von Intensitäts- und Frequenzadverbien, welche eine sehr reiche Entfaltung erfahren hat."

time. Although August Pott cited some Yoruba ideophones in his *Doppelung (Reduplikation, Gemination)*, the first large-scale typological study of reduplication (Pott 1862:276f.), in the same year, the influential philologist Max Müller, working from a more limited language sample, could still confidently declare that imitative words "constitute a very small proportion of our dictionary" and that "they are playthings, not the tools of language" (Müller 1899[1862]:486).

As language description in Africa continued, ideophones began to be noticed more often, especially in the Bantu languages of Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, grammars by McLaren (1886) on Nguni (southern Bantu, present-day South Africa), Hetherwick (1889) on Yao (southern Bantu, present-day Malawi), Junod (1896) on Ronga (southeastern Bantu, present-day Mozambique), Whitehead (1899) on Bobangi (northwest Bantu, present-day RDC/DRC), and Stapleton (1903) on eight Congo languages all devote at least some pages to ideophones. Carl Meinhof, in his comparative grammar of Bantu languages (1906), noted that there are "words that are used to evoke many ideas, not just imitative of sound"[40] and subsumes them under interjections.[41] Still, for every early grammar that does mention ideophones there are several that keep silent on the matter. Examples of early Bantu grammars that do not mention anything like ideophones are descriptions of Nguni (Boyce and Davis 1844; Appleyard 1850), Mpongwe (Wilson 1847), Herero (Viehe 1897), Hehe (Velten 1899) and Lunyoro (Maddox 1902). All of these describe Bantu languages which are likely to have had plenty of ideophones at the time of publication (Samarin 1971).

Some of the early treatments stand out because of their sensitivity to everyday language use. For example, in the following description by Whitehead we recognise not only the depictive nature of ideophones and their rich and specific semantics, but also their common occurrence in everyday speech:

> These words are the most graphic in the language, they are the "colouring" words, the stories and common speech of the people are full of them, and often they have such force that sentence after sentence can be constructed by means of them, without the use of a single verb, the verb being indicated by these indeclinable adjectives. (Whitehead 1899:18)

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[40] Original German: "Wortbilder, die zum Ausdruck von vielen Vorstellungen, nich nur schallnachahmend, gebraucht werden." (Meinhof 1906:81; as cited in Watkins 1937:85).

[41] On the common confusion of ideophones and interjections, see §6.7. Incidentally, Meinhof does not mention these words in his later *Introduction to the Study of African Languages* (1915).

Outside of African linguistics, there was not a great amount of literature on the phenomenon in this period, though there did appear a study of 'Japanese onomatopes' by Aston (1894) which has some interesting observations on the sensory properties of ideophonic words, noting that "this element of onomatopoeia has not received the attention which its great importance demands" (Aston 1894:343).[42] At the turn of the century, Maurice Grammont (1901) published a comparative study focusing on Indo-European languages which introduced the term *expressifs* for this phenomenon in the Francophone literature.

3.3 Junod and Westermann: recognition beyond African linguistics

Throughout the second half of the 19th century we see a gradually accumulating body of knowledge that helped form the foundation for more sophisticated accounts of the meaning and use of ideophones. Around the turn of the century, two such accounts appeared that would decivisely shape the conception of ideophony within African linguistics and beyond. They were written by the linguist-ethnographer-missionaries Henri Alexandre Junod (from Switzerland, working in Southern Africa) and Diedrich Hermann Westermann (from northern Germany, working in West Africa). The works of those scholars were not only read widely by African linguists, but would also reach huge numbers of people through Lévy-Bruhl's well-known and controversial work on primitive mentality (see below).

It is perhaps not a coincidence that Junod should be one of the first linguists to offer a well-balanced assessment of the significance of ideophones, for he was an extremely prolific and wide-ranging field worker, publishing a Ronga translation of the bible, a grammar and quadrilingual vocabulary (1896), a collection of chants and texts (1897), and an ethnography (1898), the English translation of which would become an early anthropological classic (The Life of a South African Tribe, 1912). In his grammar, Junod described the *adverbes descriptifs* of Ronga as monosyllabic words that evoke a spectacle, a sound, an idea, a movement, an

[42] This is the earliest source mentioned in Akita's bibliography of sound-symbolic phenomena in Japanese (Akita 2009b). In South-East Asian linguistics, Gérard Diffloth (p.c.) is not aware of any pre-20th century sources on ideophones. It thus seems that African linguistics was the first subtradition in Western linguistics to recognise the significance of the phenomenon.

appearance, or a noise.[43] He thus recognised a structural fact about ideophones (markedness through special word forms) and noted their depictive nature and their sensory meanings. It is worth quoting at some length from his account, because Junod usefully framed a number of issues that even today are off the beaten path in ideophone research — everyday discourse, language ideologies and sociolinguistic variation. On the first topic, he noted:

> Il suffit d'avoir assisté à quelques conversations de noirs, dans la liberté de la nature, lorsqu'ils n'étaient sous aucune contrainte, pour avoir remarqué quelle prodigiouse quantité d'expressions de ce genre ils ont à leur commande.[44] (Junod 1896:196)

Though previous authors did note that ideophones seem to come in large numbers, none of them said much about their contexts of *use*. So Junod, with his contemporary Whitehead, was among the first to point to everyday conversation as an important locus of ideophone use. Junod then invoked the voice of a critic to preempt an objection that was all too common at the time, namely that such imitative use of language must surely be childish and unbecoming:

> On dira peut-être: "C'est là une manière enfantine de parler; il ne vaut pas la peine de s'y arrêter." Bien au contraire! L'esprit infiniment mobile, primesautier de la race se reflète dans ce parler pittoresque. Il réussit à rendre par ces mots-là des nuances qu'un langage plus posé ne saurait exprimer.[45] (Junod 1896:196f.)

The objection —a common one when Westerners encounter linguacultures in which imitative language is not considered childish but rather a sign of eloquence (Nuckolls 2004)— nicely illustrates the issue of language ideology that has always

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[43] Original French: "§378. *Adverbes descriptifs.* Nous désignons par ce terme une sorte de mots que les grammairiens bantou envisagent généralement comme des interjections, des onomatopées. Ce sont des vocables généralement d'une seule syllabe au moyen dequels les indigènes expriment l'impression soudaine, immédiate causée sur eux par un spectacle, un son, une idée, ou décrivent un mouvement, une apparence, un bruit." (Junod 1896:196)

[44] Translated in Lévy-Bruhl (1966[1910]:145) as follows: "It is quite enough to have listened to some of the perfectly free and unrestrained conversations of Negroes to note the immense number of expressions of this kind which they have at command."

[45] Translated in Lévy-Bruhl (1966[1910]:145) as follows: "We may be inclined to say perhaps, "It is merely a childish way of speaking; not worth the trouble of listening to." Quite the contrary! The naturally versatile and ready-witted mind of the race is reflected in this picturesque language. Through such words it succeeds in expressing shades of meaning which a more restrained language could not render."

been a factor to reckon with in ideophone research. No doubt similar objections were often the reason that earlier grammarians did not think these words worthy of mention at all. Junod however was aware of the nuanced shades of meanings expressed by these words. Having seen them used not just in everyday speech but also in songs and tales (Junod 1897), he stressed their poetic potential and emphasised their artful nature. Finally, he wrote that "many of these words are truly incorporated in the language, understood by everyone, and their knowledge and use must be investigated" (Junod 1896:197).[46]

Diedrich Hermann Westermann, one of the founding fathers of African linguistics, started his scholarly career in West-Africa working on Ewe, a language spoken in present-day Ghana and Togo. In his first dictionary and grammar of Ewe (Westermann 1905; 1907), he already drew attention to the depictive adjectives, which he calls *Lautbilder* ("picture words" in the (1930) English version). It is not known to what extent Westermann was inspired by Schlegel's (1857) account — cited under *benutzte Literatur*— but his introduction of the phenomenon is reminiscent of Schlegel's, emphasizing the rich development of this class of words due to the "near uncontrollable urge" ("fast unbezwinglichen Lust") to depict sensory perceptions in sound (Westermann 1907:129). But Westermann offered more detail. First, he made the link between sensory perception and ideophones more explicit. He noted for example that ideophones often co-occur with verbs of perception, and that "the more the meaning of a verb is removed from the sensory domain, the more these special adverbs [ideophones, MD] disappear and make place for more general ones like *ŋutɔ* 'very', *geɖe* 'many', *kakáka* 'to a great extent', etc."[47] (Westermann 1907:83). Also, to illustrate the abundance of ideophones in Ewe, he gave a list of almost forty ideophones that can be used with the verb *zɔ* 'to go/walk', including such examples as *zɔ hlóyihloyi* 'walk with many objects dangling about', *zɔ kpúɖukpuɖu* 'rapid walking of a small person' and *zɔ vɛ̃vɛ̃* 'gait of a fat and stiff person' (Westermann 1907:84). This list of carefully glossed

[46] Original French: "Il faut cependant avouer que l'usage de ces adverbes desciptifs varie beaucoup avec les individus. Certains en émaillent leurs discours jusqu'à les rendre incompréhensibles pour quiconque n'est pas initié. Ils en inventent même de nouveaux. Néanmoins beaucoup de ces mots sont vraiment incorporés dans le langage, compris par chacun, et il faut chercher à les connaître et à les employer." (Junod 1896:197)

[47] Original German: "Je mehr übrigens der Begriffsinhalt eines Verbum dem Bereich des Sinnlichen entrückt wird, desto mehr schwinden auch diese speziellen Adverbien, und es treten an ihre Stelle allgemeinere, wie *ŋutɔ* sehr, *geɖe* viel, *kakáka* in hohem Maße etc." (Westermann 1907:83)

words —concrete examples that vividly illustrated the appeal to the senses made by ideophones— made a wide impact. The philosopher Lévy-Bruhl quoted it word for word in his (1910) *Les Fonctions Mentales dans les Sociétés Inférieures*. Even today it is cited outside of African linguistics, for example in Slobin's (2004) typological study of motion verbs and in Geurts' (2002) study of the cultural construction of sensory perception.

In the decades that followed, Westermann often returned to the topic of ideophones, or *Lautbilder*. Two studies (Westermann 1927a; 1937) compared ideophones across a handful of West-African languages and made him the first to outline several cross-linguistically recurrent sound-symbolic mappings: high tones, light vowels and voiceless consonants evoking smallness, clearness, and speed, versus low tones, dark vowels and voiced consonants evoking large size, dullness and slowness. He noted that factors like reduplication, tone, vowel quality, vowel quantity, and muscle tension of consonants appeared to impinge on the meanings of ideophones. He also claimed ("wen ich es auch nur für einzelne selbsterlebte Fälle beweisen kann" (1927a:319)) that ideophones can be created spontaneously, a theme recurrent in the literature since that time. Fresh evidence on this matter is discussed at length in chapter 13 below.

In hindsight, we can see Junod's and Westermann's perceptive comments as something of a turning point in ideophone studies: far more than a mere adverb class grown out of scale, ideophones were shown to be worthy of study in and of themselves. Testimony to their significance is the fact that both accounts are quoted at length in Lévy-Bruhl's (1910) influential work. Lévy-Bruhl however had his own theoretical axe to grind. To him, this kind of imitative language use, intimately tied to perception, was evidence of a so-called "primitive mentality" that thinks always in singularities and never in abstract concepts. Citing Westermann's list of Ewe ideophones for ways of walking, he claimed that "for the minds in question, the general concept of walking in general never presents itself in isolation; it is always a certain way of walking which is depicted in sound"[48] (Lévy-Bruhl 1910:186). Incidentally, to make this argument, Lévy-Bruhl had to brush away the fact that in Westermann's examples, the ideophones depicting the

[48] Original French: "[Au contraire,] pour les esprits don't il s'agit, jamais la conception de la marche en général ne se présente isolée; c'est toujours une certaine manière de marcher qu'ils dessinent vocalement".

particular manners of walking were in fact all modifying the verb *zɔ*, which clearly did supply the general concept of travel or going.[49]

Lévy-Bruhl's work was widely read and influenced thinking about language and mind far beyond African linguistics. Artists were fascinated by these accounts of exotic forms of language — this was the period in which Tristan Tzara wrote his onomatopoeia-inspired *Poèmes Nègres* (Tzara 1996[1918]) and Hugo Ball turned to primitive chants in search of "the innermost alchemy of the word" (Ball 1971[1916]). A little later, the influential Modernist poet Ezra Pound spoke of "Lévy-Bruhl's account of primitive languages in Africa" which "records languages that are still bound up with mimicry and gesture" (Pound 1934:21).[50] And so, while Junod's and Westermann's perceptive accounts stood at the base of the serious study of ideophones which was to become "part of the Africanist subtradition in linguistics" (Tedlock 1999:118), Lévy-Bruhl's version of them as signs of primitive mentality came to dominate outside this subtradition (cf. Nuckolls 1995:147).

3.4 Doke and beyond

Clement Martyn Doke was a linguist working mainly on South African languages. He was concerned with describing Bantu languages in their own terms (Doke 1934:354) and developed a standardised framework in his *Bantu Linguistic Terminology* (1935). It is in this framework that the term ideophone was introduced —though not coined, see §2.1— as a general label for what before then was known under a bewildering variety of terms. In his *Outline Grammar of Bantu* (Doke 1943), Doke insisted on recognizing ideophones as a word class on a par with more traditional parts of speech like nouns and verb. Finally, in his *Basis of Bantu Literature*, he devoted two sections to the important role that ideophones have to play in Bantu verbal art, summarizing his views as follows:

> [The ideophone] is of great value in emotional literature, in poetry, and in graphic narrative. […] In the ideophone Bantu languages have a rhetorical vehicle surpassing anything in European languages. (Doke 1948:287)

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[49] Ten pages after the famous list of ideophones for ways of walking, Westermann describes one of several productive ways of deriving abstract concepts from verbs in Ewe. The first example given is *zɔzɔ* 'the going, the walk', derived from *zɔ* 'go/walk' (Westermann 1907:94).

[50] Elsewhere (Dingemanse 2011b) I have juxtaposed Ezra Pound's views of the poetic image with the poetic qualities of Siwu ideophones.

Doke's insistence on the ideophone as a word class on a par with nouns and verbs, and as a rhetorical device to be reckoned with, was arguably one of the most influential advances in ideophone studies. It implied that a study of a Bantu language simply would not be complete without a description of its ideophone system. In the next decades, this launched a flowering of studies of ideophones in Bantu and wider African linguistics. In the longer term, it helped bring a measure of respectability to the study of such words in general.

Although immensely important for the emancipation of ideophone studies, Doke's towering figure over the field also led to a narrower perspective on the meaning and use of ideophones. Where Whitehead (1899) and Junod (1896) noted the importance of ideophones in everyday speech, for Doke it was a "rhetorical vehicle" that was mainly of use in narrative and poetry. And where Westermann noted the intimate ties to sensory perception (1907) and pioneered research into crosslinguistic as well as language-particular form-meaning mappings in ideophones, Doke payed attention to their form only and recommended classifying ideophones according to the number of syllables or tonal melodies (Doke 1931:221; 1948:300). As Samarin notes: "Doke could have done more with his data than he did" (Samarin 1971:137). Doke's perspective foregrounded narrative as the locus of ideophone use, and backgrounded the intricate semantics of ideophones as well as their roles in everyday speech.

In two seminal publications on ideophones in Shona and Sesotho, Fortune (1962) and Kunene (1965) highlighted the *performative* nature of ideophones. They make a distinction between two styles of speaking: a plain narrative style and more dramatic style.[51] In Fortune's words, ideophones constitute a "vivid re-presentation or re-creation of an event in sound" (1962:6). The ideophonic style is thus performative and evocative, as opposed to the matter-of-fact style of what he calls 'formal' language use. The notion of *performance* also plays an important role in Kunene's work. As he writes, 'The speaker-turned-actor re-presents to, or re-creates or dramatises for, his audience, by means either of the ideophone alone (i.e. linguistically), or of ideophone and gesture (i.e. linguistically and by imitation simultaneously) or by gesture alone, the event or situation which he wishes them to observe' (1965:22). According to Kunene, underlying the use of ideophones is a

[51] Their terminology diverges: what Fortune calls "formal" or "verbal', Kunene calls "narrative" and "commentative"; on the other side of the opposition there is the "free" or "ideophonic" style (Fortune), which in Kunene's terms is "dramatic' or "presentive".

wish to make the audience not merely listen to, but experience the narrated events. This highlights the importance of a participating audience to ideophonic performance.

Alexandre (1966) represents one of the first attempts at classifying the meanings of ideophones. He distinguishes (A) ideophones that evoke a sensory perception (auditory, visual, tactile, gustative, or olfactive); (B) ideophones that illustrate or evoke the behaviour of animate entities (physical and moral); (C) ideophones that illustrate the aspect, state etc. of diverse objects (movement, situation, position, aspect) (Alexandre 1966:14). Significant parts of his B and C categories can in fact be subsumed under a broader conception of perception that includes kinesthesia and proprioception — as is customary in modern-day work and as I do in this thesis. Alexandre's category B furthermore illustrates the intimate links between sensory modes and moral codes (Geurts 2002).

Around the same time, an innovative article by Paul Newman (1968) took ideophone studies beyond Bantu by arguing that Doke's insistence on ideophones as one part of speech may be appropriate for Bantu, but should not be taken to be definitional of the ideophone systems of other languages. As he noted, "while one may speak of ideophonic words in Hausa as a single class from a phonological/semantic point of view, one must syntactically separate them into at least three grammatical classes: adjectival-intensifiers, verbal-intensifiers, and descriptive-adverbs." (Newman 1968:111).

It was in this same period, though for a large part independently of Doke, that the Western study of ideophonic phenomena outside of African linguistics got off the ground seriously.[52] Following Hoffkann's (1952) study of ancient Indian languages, Emeneau (1969) published an overview of ideophonic phenomena ("onomatopoetics") in the Indian linguistic area. Uhlenbeck (1952) and Carr (1966) wrote about expressive/phonesthetic words in the Austronesian Indonesian and Malay. Several studies appeared of ideophones in Mon-Khmer languages (Durand 1961 on Vietnamese; Banker 1964 on Bahnar; Henderson 1965 on Khasi;

[52] There are not many works from the first half of the 20th century that point to the significance of ideophones in non-African languages. One exception is Brandstetter's (1916) seminal comparative study of Indonesian languages: "A strikingly large percentage of the [Indonesian] vocabulary is of onomatopoeic origin" (1916:349); "In [Indonesian] sentences we very often find the predicate accompanied by an interjection, mostly an onomatopoeic one. (…) Now in such sentences as these the verb may also be omitted so that the interjection by itself plays the part of a predicate." (1916:215).

Watson 1966 on Pacoh). Furthermore, Jendraschek (2001) mentions a literature on ideophones in Turkic languages, of which Marchand (1953) on Turkish and Householder (1962) on Azerbaijani are exponents in Western academia (however, a larger portion of this literature is in Russian and Turkish). If Akita's (2009b) bibliography of Japanese studies of mimetics is a good indication, it looks like the 1960s were a fruitful period in this tradition too — whereas he lists 3 studies for the 1930s, 4 for the 1940s and another 4 for the 1950s, there are 23 studies in the 1960s.[53]

3.5 The crosslinguistic encounter: Samarin and Diffloth

Up to the late 1960s, the different threads of ideophone studies were effectively insulated from each other. Although Newman supplied a phonosemantic definition of ideophones that joined Bantu ideophones with similar phenomena in non-Bantu languages across Africa, there was no cross-fertilisation between the geographical subtraditions of Japan, South-East Asia, India, Turkey and sub-Saharan Africa.[54] It was the work of William Samarin and Gérard Diffloth that would bring together many of these threads and that powerfully articulated a more holistic perspective on the phenomenon.

In an important overview article summarizing some of his findings on African ideophones, Samarin (1970a) identified African ideophones with the "onomatopes" of Azerbaijani (a Turkic language) and Malagasy (an Austronesian language), the reduplicated adverbs of Mon-Khmer languages (Austroasiatic), the "impressionistic adverbs" of Korean (usually considered an isolate) and with similar phenomena in Tamil (a Dravidian language of India), Thai (Tai-Kadai, mainland South-East Asia) and the American Indian languages Yokuts (Yokutsan, California) and Waiwai (Karib, Brazil and Guyana). As he noted:

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[53] The crop is not nearly as rich in studies of Japanese in Western academia. Martin (1952) does offer some morphophonemic notes on what he calls 'impressionistic adverbs' in Japanese.

[54] I have found only two isolated and largely forgotten exceptions from before the 1970s: one is Prietze's (1908) study of "intensifying adverbs" in Hausa and Kanuri, which noted a parallel with Turkish reduplicative alliterative forms like *qap qara* 'pitch black' and *kup kuru* 'completely dry' (Prietze 1908:317). The other is a study of Middle English ideophones by Smithers (1954), which took the term 'ideophone' from Doke and linked the phenomenon to Bantu ideophones and to the Ewe *Lautbilder* described by Westermann.

> Elsewhere in the world … we find similar classes of words. What is striking about them, as with African ideophonic words, is that (1) they display a great deal of play with sounds, that (2) they are predominantly reduplicative, that (3) their phonology is in some respects different from that of all other words, and finally, that (4) they have very specific meanings sometimes difficult to define. (Samarin 1970a:160)

Only two years later, independently from Samarin's comparative work, Gérard Diffloth (1972) published his *Notes on Expressive Meaning*, a dense article focusing on the semantic problems posed by ideophones. In it, he noted parallels between ideophonic systems of Bantu, Chadic, Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, the Munda and Mon-Khmer branches of Austroasiatic, Austronesian, Japanese and Korean. Diffloth wrote:

> Such a wide geographic and historical distribution indicates that ideophones are a characteristic of natural language in general, even though they are conspicuously undeveloped and poorly structured in the languages of Europe. (Diffloth 1972:440)

The crosslinguistic perspective breathed fresh air into studies of ideophone systems. Samarin placed ideophony in the wider context of the expressive use of language, noting parallels not just to the ideophone systems of other languages but also to other linguistic phenomena such as expressive intonation, language games and ritual language, which all share an *aesthetic* element: "the property of speech forms to attract attention primarily to themselves rather than to the message they convey" (Samarin 1970a:165; citing Garvin and Mathiot 1960:787).

Developing a more holistic perspective on ideophones was only one of Samarin's accomplishments. Noting a need for more precision in lexicographic methods (Samarin 1967:35), he developed a battery of methods for investigating the meanings of ideophones. Besides directly eliciting information about the meaning of ideophones and the contexts in which they can be used, these methods include paraphrasing (1967:38), investigating the lexical relations (synonyms and antonyms) of ideophones (1967:38ff.), investigating phonosemantic correlations (1970b:28) and devising questionnaires to measure consistency and variability of forms and meanings of ideophones (1970b:28). Samarin's work set an example in its insistence on definitional rigour and methodological precision in ideophone studies.[55]

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[55] It is interesting to reflect on the question why earlier authors could get by without much definitional rigour and still feel they were talking about the same phenomenon. The answer probably lies in the

Meanwhile Diffloth (1972; 1976), picking up a topic that had been more or less untouched since Westermann (1927b; 1937), drew attention to the various types of iconic mappings between form and meaning seen in ideophones and noted that these non-arbitrary mappings pose problems for models of language that rely on a strict dichotomy between meaning and phonological form. To solve this problem, he proposed that the meanings of ideophones belong to an "expressive" mode of meaning which is opposed to the "cognitive". For Diffloth, the expressive mode of meaning is crucially based on iconicity (Diffloth 1972:445; 1980:49), whereas the cognitive mode of meaning is equated with the more traditional symbolic or propositional meaning. The distinction remained somewhat underspecified in Diffloth's papers on the subject, but was taken up and given more substance by Sotaro Kita (Kita 1993; 1997). I discussed it in §2.7.3 above. Another important contribution by Diffloth was his (1994) article titled "*i: big, a: small*", which emphasised the role of conventionalisation in a field where iconicity is often naively equated with imitation (see §2.6 and chapter 7 for discussion).[56]

3.6 Recent approaches

Well into the second half of the 20th century the number of studies of ideophones becomes too large to survey in extenso here, so I pick out a few salient threads. An important partial consolidation of ideophone research is an edited volume on *Sound Symbolism* (Hinton, Nichols, and Ohala 1994) in which there are overviews of ideophone systems in African languages (Childs 1994a), Australia (especially Yir-Yoront) (Alpher 1994) and Austro-Asiatic (especially Bahnar) (Diffloth 1994). Tucker Childs studied ideophones in a range of African languages, focusing on their phonology and morphology in Kisi (an Atlantic language of Guinea and Sierra Leone) and on their fate in urban settings and in cases of language contact in southern Africa (Childs 1994b; 1996; 1998, among others). Two important findings from Childs' work are (1) that ideophones in southern African Bantu languages tend to be tied to rural identities, leading to their loss in urban varieties, and, related to this, (2) that ideophonic systems are found in some contact languages, but only if the substrate language has ideophones and the new

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peculiarities of ideophony as a cross-linguistic phenomenon, which make it easy to define 'by example'. See §6.8 for discussion.

[56] But see Gordon & Heath (1998), who argue that Diffloth's data does in fact fit cross-linguistic patterns of sound-symbolic associations.

variety does not symbolise urbanity (Childs 1994b:273). On the topic of contact languages, Bartens (2000) supplied convincing evidence for the retention of ideophones in Atlantic creoles.

Kulemeka (1994; 1996; 1997) wrote on ideophones in Chichewa and also offered a useful comparison of the African and Asian subtraditions in ideophone studies (Kulemeka 1995), noting that in Africa, the focus has been predominantly on the word class status of ideophones (the legacy of Doke and Newman), while in Asia the focus was more on iconic patterns in ideophones (following authors like Martin, Uhlenbeck and Diffloth).

Janis Nuckolls (1990; 1992) initiated a fruitful line of ethnographically grounded work on ideophones in Runa, culminating in the books *Sounds Like Life* (1996) and *Lessons from a Quechua Strongwoman* (2010a) in which she documents the linguistic and cultural ecology of ideophones in this lowland Ecuadorean variety of Quechua. Her research, investigating the use of ideophones in narratives and their relations to the aspectual system, points to the intimate ties between ideophones, conversational involvement and constructions of the perceptual world. She has described ideophones as "a distinctive style of conversational involvement and a special type of performance functioning as a cinematic-like verbal text" (1995:166). In recent work, she has focused on the poetics of ideophony (Nuckolls 2006) and described how the perceptual world comes to life in the sound-symbolic aspects of Runa language use (Nuckolls 2010a).

The 1990s saw the birth of the empirical study of ideophones and gestures, almost one-and-a-half century after Schlegel (1857) noted their common co-occurrence. Kita (1993; 1997) studied gesture and ideophones in Japanese narratives, showing that ideophones are often accompanied by time-aligned iconic gestures. To account for this, he worked out Diffloth's (1972) proposal that the semantics of ideophones involves an imagistic mode of meaning. Apart from Klassen (1999), an intricate study of gestures in a Shona *ngano* performance, there is still not much work on the close relation between ideophones and gesture. I present a case study of ideophones and gesture in a corpus of everyday conversation in chapter 14.

Kita may also be seen as the forerunner of more experimentally grounded studies of ideophony. A recent study compared novel sound-symbolic words with novel non-sound-symbolic words, suggesting that 3-year-old Japanese children correctly generalise the meanings of the sound-symbolic words, but not of the non-sound-symbolic (Imai et al. 2008). The authors suggest that "iconic scaffolding"

may play an important role in early verb learning. Gasser, Sethuraman and Hockema (2005) investigated the iconicity of ideophones and nouns in Japanese and Tamil, and found that ideophones exhibit more iconicity than concrete nouns. An important PhD dissertation by Akita (2009a) studied morphophonological, morphosyntactic and semantic characteristics of Japanese ideophones using grammatical, statistical and experimental methods. Akita proposed a Lexical Iconicity Hierarchy, according to which highly iconic ideophones tend to be realised more in the periphery of the clause and poorly iconic ideophones tend to be realised in the core of the clause. I touch on these issues in §6.6 (on frequency and grammaticalisation paths) and §7.5 (on iconicity and the typology of ideophone systems).

A major descriptive effort was the edited volume following the first world-wide conference on ideophones (Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001b; see Vajda 2003 for a review). This volume contains studies of a wide range of ideophonic languages. It is this volume that established the term "ideophone" as the common denominator of the phenomenon, although as noted above, some subtraditions retain their own terminology. Still, the emancipation of the ideophone is not quite completed according to the editors. In the introduction they note that "in spite of a fairly voluminous literature attempting to catalogue and describe them, they have remained a step-child of modern linguistic science" (Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001a:2).

Indeed much remains to be done. For example, it is apparently still possible to publish a book length study of the syntax of a Bantu language (Mchombo 2004) without any mention of ideophones, despite the fact that ideophones form an integral part of the linguistic system and of the competence of speakers.[57] But ideophones will not go away when ignored, just as the richness of meaning as it emerges in situated interaction does not go away when one worries only about truth value. Several of the more forward-looking contributions in the Voeltz &

[57] A commonplace counter-argument would be that such an omission is justified because "ideophones have no syntax". This is of course trivially not true, if only because there are grammatical constructions that introduce ideophones (Fortune 1971; Güldemann 2008). More importantly, such a statement would be a formidable syntactic claim in itself and as such it would need to be properly substantiated rather than simply assumed. Note that ideophones have been shown to have quite interesting syntactic properties in Bantu in general (Samarin 1971) and in Chichewa, the language that Mchombo describes, in particular (Watkins 1937:85f.; Mvula 1982; Kulemeka 1994; 1996; 2000).

Kilian-Hatz volume emphasise this point. What is needed, in the words of Felix Ameka, is recognition of the fact that "contrary to being peripheral elements, ideophones form an integral part of the languages in which they occur and they should therefore not be ignored, but should be considered in their typological characterizations" (Ameka 2001:25). Similarly, Paul Newman has stressed that "in the final analysis ideophones are part of the structure of a specific language and have to be viewed in the context of that language" (Newman 2001:252). I would add to this that to further our understanding of ideophones, it is essential to study not just the form they take within the larger linguistic system, but also their meaning and use in situated social interaction.

II Siwu

> The Akpafus must immediately strike even the most casual observer as a people differing from the surrounding tribes. Their huts are flat roofed (with mud) instead of the conical grass-roofed houses of the Ewe race. Their language is not Ewe, but a remnant of some ancient tribal idiom.
>
> R. S. Rattray (1916)

The three chapters in this part of the dissertation introduces the Siwu language and its speakers. Rattray's turn of phrase above, "a remnant of some ancient tribal idiom," construes Siwu as belonging to the past, and indeed he and other colonial officials were convinced that minority languages like Siwu did not have a future. Almost a century later, nothing could be further from the truth. Siwu is alive and well, and language use is vigorous in all domains of life, with the exception of formal education and church services. Perhaps the prevailing language attitude of many Siwu speakers is best expressed by my friend and consultant Timothy Akuamoah, who when his school-going daughter once addressed him in English, said: "If you do not speak Siwu to me in my home, I will not pay your school fees!"

Chapter 4 provides a brief ethnographic sketch of the Mawu, situates the Siwu language in its geographical and phylogenetic context, and surveys the work on ethnography and linguistics that has appeared in the less than 150 years since the first written mention of Siwu.

Chapter 5 provides an elementary overview of the major grammatical structures of Siwu. Its goal is twofold: first, to equip the reader with enough background knowledge to be able to understand the grammatical structure of examples and excerpts presented in the thesis, and second, to sketch the linguistic backdrop against which ideophones in Siwu should be understood.

Chapter 6 presents the ideophone system of Siwu. Traversing different levels of linguistic structure, from phonology and phonotactics to word forms to grammatical constructions, it shows that ideophones form a clearly recognizable word class. Corpus data shed light on possible grammaticalisation paths and relations to other word classes.

4 The Mawu, Kawu and Siwu

> Of the people of Boem, these are the brightest … The diligence of these people, their hospitality and their easygoing behaviour pleased us so much that we really came to love them.[58]
>
> David Asante (1889)

4.1 Ethnographic context

The speakers of Siwu call themselves the Mawu. They live in a total of eight villages scattered about in the mountains east of Lake Volta and north of Hohoe in Ghana. They number about 13,000-18,000,[59] though there is also a sizable diaspora in Ghana's major cities and abroad. Their land (Kawu in Siwu) is divided into Akpafu (Northwest) and Lolobi (Northeast), corresponding to a dialectal division (see Ogbete 1998; Atsu 2003 for historical background on this divide). The name "Akpafu" is an exonym given to the Mawu people and their land by the neighbouring Ewe people. One widespread folk etymology has it that this name has its origin in the sound made by the bellows (*kpafu, kpafu*). Another folk etymology, popular among women, is that it a shortened form of something Mawu women say in the (Ewe) markets, namely *kpa fu mɛ* "gather and heap it for me".

Kawu is a forested upland environment in the Togo Hills, geologically a folding of the late pre-Cambrian period comprised of shales and sandstones (Pole 2010; Robertson 1921). The Lolobi area, in the valley of the river Dayi, is less

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[58] David Asante (1834-1892) was the son of a christianised chief in Akropong who made several journeys through what is today the central Volta Region of Ghana. He wrote down his experiences in Twi and sent the report to Basel, where it was translated into German by J.G. Christaller. Original German: "Unter den Boe-Leuten sind die hiesigen die aufgewecktesten [wörtl. Boe-Leute, deren Augen geöffnet sind ein wenig, (das) sind die Hierleute]. … Der Fleiß dieser Leute, ihre Gastfreundlichkeit und ihr ruhiges Benehmen gefiel uns sehr, so daß wir sie recht lieb gewannen" (Asante 1889:128).

[59] Ghana Ministry of Health statistics recorded 13,422 people living in the villages of Akpafu and Lolobi in 2002. Estimates of the total population size vary. Ring et al. (2002a:5) state that "more than 18,000 Siwu-speaking people live in the Hohoe district of Ghana's Volta Region, with an estimated total of as many as 25,000 if those living outside the traditional area are included." The Ethnologue (Lewis 2009) mentions a population of 27,000 in 2003.

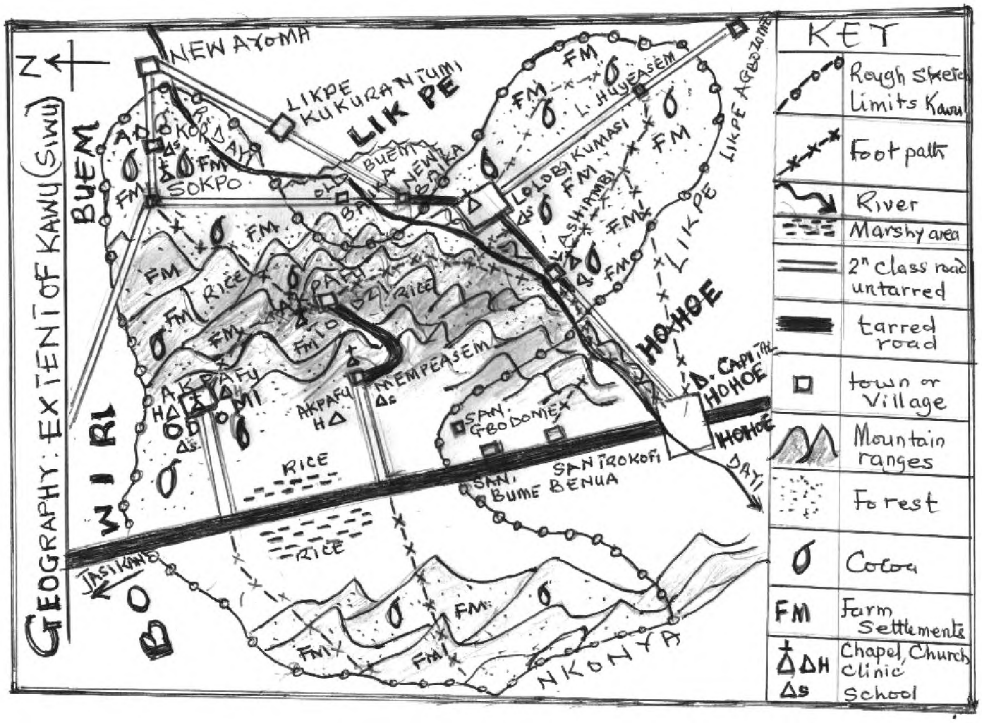

Figure 4.1 A map of Kawu by the Siwu Language Committee (2003) **(S)**

mountainous than the Akpafu area. Kawu has a tropical monsoon climate with a humid rainy season and a dry season, though temperatures are somewhat lower than many other parts of Ghana because of the higher altitude.

In the Akpafu area, iron-bearing rocks are found in quartzitic outcrops between altitudes of 260m and 460m. The towns of Akpafu and the neighbouring Santrokofi people are historically bound up with these iron-bearing outcrops in that they were the site of an age-old iron industry and part of long-distance trading networks in iron (Herold 1892; Rattray 1916; Darkoh 1964; Pole 1982; 2010 among others). This industry collapsed in the late nineteenth century. Remains of iron digging, smelting and forging activities can still be seen at Todzi, the oldest Mawu town, and since 2008, the ironworking tradition is honoured by a biannual Iron Festival (*kàtore iyi*).

While the Mawu people have lived in their current territory for around two centuries, their oral traditions record several earlier places of residence. These

include Atebubu (a place along the Kumasi-Salaga trade route in central Ghana), the area around Tsìto in the Western Volta Region,[60] and most recently the hills of the Togo Plateau west of the current location. The latter locality is called *Awubeamɛ* ("in the mountains of the Mawu"), and the migration from this place to the current location of the Mawu is recorded in the oral traditions of the Mawu (Ogbete 1998) as well as in those of the people presently inhabiting this area, the Nkonya (Lilley 1925). This most recent migration also occasioned the separation of the Akpafu and Lolobi sections of the Mawu (Ogbete 1998).

Mawu villages consist of groups of compounds connected by dense networks of footpaths. The village features a public forum (*ìtiri*) for community assemblies, next to which are stone seats for the clan elders, arranged in a circle (*ɔ̀ka*). Extended families live in compounds that consist of a handful of rectangular buildings organised around an open courtyard, often with a large tree for shade. Most of the houses and storage places in Kawu are built from mud kneaded with water and rolled into balls (*àsekpe*). In the larger type, the mud walls are plastered on the outside, which makes the structure more durable and allows the houses to be painted. Most houses are painted in light pastel colours that contrast with the red earth. Storage places are generally left unplastered and a rusty brown colour like the soil. Roofs are mostly of corrugated iron sheets nowadays, but they used to be flat mud roofs resting on wooden crossbeams. The architectural style of the houses was frequently remarked upon by early travellers as it was very different from the round huts with thatched roofs of the surrounding peoples.

Most Mawu are subsistence farmers with several small plots of hilly land at walking distance (30 minutes to 2 hours) where they grow corn, cassava, yam and plantain, as well as an indigenous species of upland rice and other crops. Some families have larger tracts of land where they grow imported rice (which is less labour-intensive than the indigenous species) and cocoa for trade. The indigenous upland rice species (*kàwumɔ*[61]) is an important ritual food, and the occasion of its

[60] The place Tsìto is mentioned in several independently recorded oral traditions of the Mawu (Höftmann and Ayitevi 1968:231; Ogbete 1998:8). Archaeological investigations of the Tsìto area have uncovered an Iron Age site; moreover, an ironworking population called the Mawu figures in the tradition of the Ewe-speaking Awudome people who now live there (Agorsah 1978:8).

[61] A compound of *kàmɔ* 'rice' and the *–wu* ethnonym found in Siwu, Mawu, and Kawu.

first harvest is a day of celebration (*kàmɔ iɖe* 'rice celebration').[62] It is also the main ingredient of one of the special dishes of the Mawu, *kàmɔ krã̀ gu ɔ̀gbàkusi* ('rice porridge with bean stew'). The most important starchy foods are fufu,[63] yam, cassava and rice; protein comes from chicken, goat meat, dried fish, or bushmeat. As in many West-African cultures, the oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*; *kùbɛrɛ* in Siwu) is used for many purposes: oil is extracted from the palm fruits and kernels, the fronds are used in basketry, the leaves are used to make brooms, and the sap is extracted to make palm wine and stronger distilled drinks.

The rhythm of life is dependent on the seasons. The rainy season, roughly from May to August, is the busiest period on the farms. During work-intensive seasons (for instance the rice growing period at the end of June), farm work is done in groups of 5 to 10 persons called *ìkoseguri*. School, church and government-related activities are organised according to the seven-day week that is now standard in Ghana. Some activities, especially traditional rites, are still reckoned with the traditional six-day calendar (on which see Thomas 1924) in which *ìkulu* plays an important role as the holy day.[64] The six day week runs thus: *ìkulu* - *ìkuluìkpɛnɛɖeakatɔ̃* - *ìkuluìkpɛnɛtsora* - *ìpɔ* - *ìpɔìkpɛnɛɖeakatɔ̃* - *ìpɔìkpɛnɛtsɔra*. The week has basically two reference points, *ìkulu* and *ìpɔ*, and the other days are organised with reference to these (the day names can be literally translated as 'first day after ìkulu', 'second day after ìkulu', etc.). Traditionally, those with farms on the western side of the Todzi range did not farm on *ìkulu*, while those with farms on the eastern side do not farm on *ìpɔ*.

Mawu society is divided into six clans: Kàlɛsea, Dzakuwa, Màsatsiri, Màjìretei, Kpadjia and Magadagbe (Agudze 1991:7).[65] Political offices are normally rotated

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[62] Agudze (1991:viii) notes that this festival is historically an annual feast of food offering to the gods, and calls it *Tokpaikɔ kàmɔ iɖe* (the rice celebration of *Tokpaikɔ*, a traditional deity).

[63] *Fufu* is a common staple food of West Africa, made by boiling starchy root vegetables and pounding them with a mortar and pestle.

[64] For instance, many deities are sent food offerings on the morning of *ìkulu*. In the years 2006-2009 the Siwu Language Committee produced a calendar of the modern type with the traditional six-day calendar superimposed.

[65] Not all of these clans are represented in every village, though they are all present in the capital Akpafu-Todzi. Clans divide up in subclans or families. One such subclan is that of the Màkɔ̃, which probably has its origin in the Makɔ people of which several oral traditions in the region relate. This "powerful tribe" was defeated by the combined forces of Buem, Akpafu and Santrokofi, and the survivors were subsumed into the surrounding peoples. The Màkɔ̃ used to speak a different language (*Sìkɔ̃* in Siwu) (see Debrunner 1962:114f.).

amongst clans, and elders (*ɔ̀kpakpa/mà-*) from the different clans form the village council. Orthogonal to this clan division are age groups (*ìsɛ̀guri/à-*), male and female age sets to which individuals remain permanently attached. Traditionally, the age group was an important institution for socializing young individuals into essential tasks like farming, hunting, craftsmanship, self defence and leadership (Ogbete 1998). Age groups are led by *ìsɛ̀guri makpakpa* or 'age group elders', tutors from a senior age group. Since the latter half of the twentieth century the age group system has started to lose importance. The regular seven year cycle of age group initiations (*ìsɛ̀i*) has been interrupted several times and it is no longer automatically the case that all young people are ceremonially inducted into age groups.

Political organisation is by small polities with a council of officials headed by the chief. The Akpafu area has a paramount chief (*ìgara kpakpa*) seated in Akpafu-Todzi, the traditional capital. Every village also has its own chief. The most important political offices are (1) *ìgara/mà-*, the chief (2) *àmãnkràdɔ̀*, the 'owner of the land' who oversee leases of land; (3) *ɔ̀tsiami*, the chief's spokesman; (4) *asafoatse*, or commander of the troops. Except for the word for 'chief', *ìgara*, which appears to be an indigenous Siwu word, all of these offices have Akan or Gã names, and it is quite clear that the chieftaincy structure has been modelled on the Akan system, probably during the invasion of political life by the Akan halfway through the 19th century (cf. Nugent 1996; Brydon 1981 for similar observations on the Likpe and Avatime peoples; Johnson 1965 for the broader historical picture).

Even though the Akan system has overshadowed earlier political structures of the Mawu, there remain signs of the importance of the institution of elderhood (*sìkpakpa*) and there is documentary evidence for a society of priestesses (*màbia*) and the now defunct office of head priest. Elders are responsible for the worship of traditional deities and take seats in traditional arbitration courts, the main channel through which disputes and conflicts are resolved. The *màbia* society used to consist of twelve priestesses, two from every clan, who mediated between the people and the supernatural and performed ceremonial duties during funerals and official occasions. The head priest, with his characteristic round hat (*ìkòto gliglià*), occupies a central position on the impressive picture of a funeral ceremony from

the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft archives (Figure 4.2).[66] There is little information on the official duties of the head priest, but Debrunner writes of the closely related *Balɛɛ* (Santrokofi) that he, as the representative of the ancestors, was responsible for the people as a whole, and that the priesthood lineage was carefully memorised (Debrunner 1969:558).

Figure 4.2 Funeral in Akpafu, ca. 1900 (*Totenfeier in Akpafu*, 7.1025-3977)

Since the first establishment of a mission station in the 1900s by German missionaries in Akpafu-Todzi, churches have sprung up everywhere in Kawu and nowadays most Mawu identify themselves as Christians. Although traditional notions of ancestors and deities connected to clans and to the land remain strong, most indigenous religious symbols and institutions have been banished by the churches. Examples include statuettes of traditional deities (*kùɣɔ/à-*), sacred stools (*ìɣara/à*), the female priest cult of *màbia* and ceremonies like *sikafɔ* (puberty rites

[66] We know that this is the head priest because the same person appears in two other pictures (7.1025-0553 and 7.1025-0529) where he is identified as such.

for girls) and *ìɣara isɔrɛ* ('consecration of the stool').[67] Traditional deities are closely connected to the land: water sources, rivers, mountains, and other important landmarks all have their own deity, often bearing the same name as the place. The worship of traditional deities is organised by clan; for instance, the Kpadzia clan is responsible for the shrine of Tokpaikɔ at Akpafu-Todzi. Clan eldership involves performing sacrifices and other duties for the deity connected to the clan. An elder who performs these duties is called *kùɣɔkpakpa* ('deity elder'). Traditional worship of the deities is enacted in the form of periodical food offerings and in song, dance and dramatic performance. Although traditional worship has officially been replaced by various forms of Christianity, many traditional religious customs are still practiced and the religious life of the Mawu can be best characterised as informal syncretism. A rich vein of traditional religious practices has been described by Francis Agudze in his (1991) study of Tokpaikɔ worship .[68]

Marriage (*kùyirĩ*) involves a bride price (*kàretã*, literally "gift for spouseship") given to the family of the bride. In-group marriage is preferred, but due to increased mobility intermarriage with other peoples is quite common. Most marriages nowadays are contracted under the ordinance of the church, which has exercised strong influence on the form of the institution. Early sources and oral traditions note a variety of marriage practices, including polygyny and several types of prearranged marriage, the most common of which was that arranged by families when candidates reached a marriageable age (Pfisterer 1904; Ogbete 1998). One other type of arranged marriage noted by both Pfisterer and Ogbete was one in which a young man, by materially supporting a pregnant woman, would automatically effect betrothal even before the child was born. Should the child be a girl, then it would be the young man's wife; should it be a boy, it would be his friend for life (Ogbete 1998:29). Although these traditional practices have officially disappeared, many men have mistresses, which they materially support.

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[67] Some of these items and rites have not disappeared but have rather gone underground. For instance, many families keep their sacred stool safely locked away; many people still offer prayers to the ancestors on *ìkulu*, the traditional resting day; and I witnessed an indoors *ìɣara isɔrɛ* ritual in Mempeasem in 2008. When I once showed a century-old archive picture of traditional funerary rites to some women, I was told that some families still observe these rites behind closed doors.

[68] I thank Kofi Agawu for sending me a copy of this thesis, which proved hard to come by in Ghana or elsewhere.

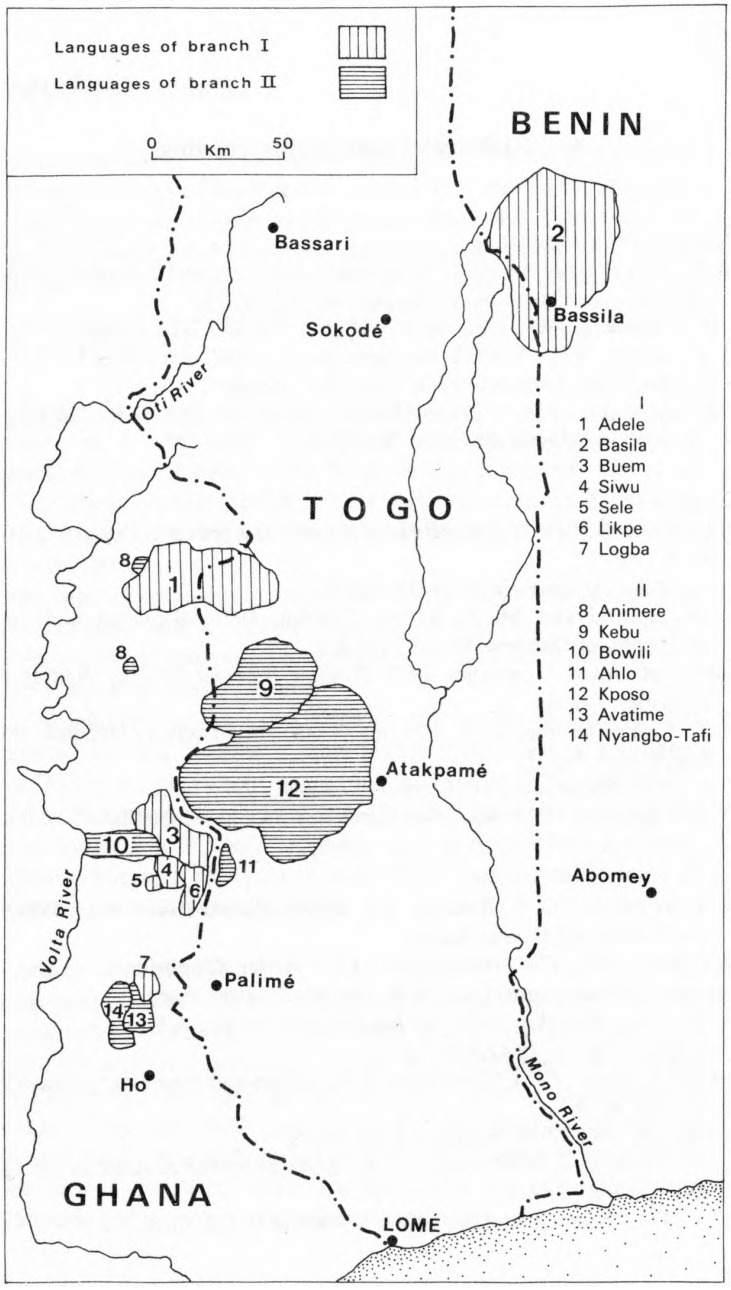

Figure 4.3 Distribution of the GTM languages. Branch I and II correspond to Heine's *Na-* and *Ka-Togo* (Kropp Dakubu and Ford 1988; based on Heine 1968a)

4.2 The Siwu language in context

The Siwu language is usually classified as one of the Ghana-Togo Mountain (GTM) languages (Figure 4.3). The closest relatives of Siwu are languages from the Na-Togo group established in Heine's (1968) classification of the GTM languages, branch I (vertically striped) in Figure 4.3. The Na-Togo group itself divides into three branches. The first includes Gidire (Adele, spoken in central eastern Ghana and central western Togo) and Anii (Basila, spoken in Benin). The second, which Heine calls the Buem-group, includes Siwu and its three direct geographical neighbours: Lɛlɛmi (Buem), Sɛlɛɛ (Santrokofi) and Sɛkpɛlé (Likpe), all spoken in the central Volta Region north of Hohoe. The third branch is comprised of Ikpana (Logba), spoken somewhat further to the south. Logba and the Buem-group are more closely related to each other than to the Gidire/Anii branch.

The Ghana-Togo Mountain grouping has gone through quite a few name changes over the last century. Bernhard Struck (1912) was the first to group together these languages under the label *Semibantu von Mitteltogo* ('semi-Bantu from central Togo'). Diedrich Westermann (1927b), in his classification of what where then known as the Sudanic languages, adopted Struck's grouping but called it *Togorestsprachen*; the English version of this label, "Togo Remnant Languages" was brought into currency by Westermann and Bryan's (1952) seminal reference work on West-African languages. At the time, it was a loose geographical-typological grouping based mainly on the elaborate noun class systems of the languages (the reason Struck called them "Semibantu"); lack of comparative data prevented a more definitive phylogenetic classification. In an overview of his classification, Westermann did note that "etymologically and in their word forms (CV root) they are close to the Kwa languages, and they occupy a position midway between these and the Gur languages" (1935a:147).[69] In the 1960s, Bernd Heine (1968a) carried out comparative research among the group and established a basic division into Ka-Togo and Na-Togo, mnemonically named after the word for 'meat' in the languages. Dakubu and Ford (1988) renamed this cluster the Central Togo languages, but since the mid-90s, the term Ghana-Togo Mountain languages has become more common. No comparative study of the languages has appeared in print since Heine (1968). Roger Blench (2001; 2009) has presented a tentative

[69] Original: "Etymologisch und in der Wortform (Stämme KV) stehen sie den Kwasprachen nahe und nehmen etwa eine Mittelstellung ein zwischen diesen und den Gursprachen."

reclassification of the group, noting the internal diversity of GTM as a whole and questioning whether GTM as a whole forms a distinct branch of Kwa. According to him, the clusters and languages of GTM "could be treated as branching from the broader Kwa stem" (Blench 2006:7).

The contact history of the Kawu region shows a varied range of outside influences over the last few centuries, including trade relations (and occasional border skirmishes) with the surrounding peoples of Bowiri, Nkonya and Balɛɛ (Santrokofi) as well as with the Ewe, occupation by the Ashanti troops when they crossed the Volta around the 1860s, and close political relations with the Buem state in the late nineteenth century (Lilley 1925; Höftmann and Ayitevi 1968; Debrunner 1964). In the 1890s, a mission station was established in Akpafu-Todzi. Sociolinguistic information from this period is scarce, but Schosser, one of the first missionaries there, reports that during the arrival of his wife "[w]omen and children had climbed onto the flat roofs and they called out "Aweno, Aweno" ['lady', MD], for many the only word they know in the Ewe language" (Schosser 1907:29). Nowadays, practically all Mawu are bilingual in Ewe, which since its introduction by missionaries has become not only the language of the church but also the official regional language of education. The contact history of the wider GTM area is summarised in Kropp-Dakubu (2009).

4.3 Earliest sources

The first documentary evidence of the GTM languages and peoples dates back to only 150 years ago, when German missionaries and colonial officials started exploring the hinterland of their protectorate, Togoland. In this overview I will focus on the area where Siwu and its immediate neighbours are spoken nowadays, which I refer to as the Togo Plateau area.

The first mention of several of the GTM languages is in an 1867 document by Christian Hornberger, member of the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft (Bremen). It is an overview of the Ewe area which also reports briefly on several non-Ewe speaking peoples, including "Afatime", "Nyankpo", "Tafi", "Logba", "Akpavu", "Lolobi", "Sandrokofi" and "Kposo". Hornberger noted the peculiar architecture of the Santrokofi/Akpafu/Lolobi area — cubical, flat-roofed mud structures, instead of the thatch-roofed houses of the Ewe. The article contains a map that is quite accurate for the southern GTM area. At the northern border of the Ewe territory it

lists "Sandrokofi", "Lolobi" and "Akpavu".[70] Very soon after Hornberger's exploratory trip, however, the Ashanti crossed the Volta and invaded the inland Ewe country, "following a policy of deliberate devastation" (Johnson 1965). Of this period, Mawu oral history has it that they maintained friendly relations with the Ashanti invaders, which may have resulted in less war damage, but which strained the relations with the neighbouring peoples (Ogbete 1998:16–19).[71]

In 1884, Germany established the Togoland protectorate, and in the following years there was a flurry of inland travels (No author stated 1886 offers a useful overview map), resulting in further reports on the Togo Plateau area trickling in. Asante (1886), for example, recorded the numbers 1-10 in thirteen languages, including "Boɛ" (Buem), "Akabu" (Akebu), Adɛlɛ and Tribu, and notes that "Sandrokofi" and "Akpavu (or Apafo)" supply the region with ironware. Christaller (1889) notes that Boem includes three towns with blacksmiths, Santrokofi, Akpafu and Lolobi, "which probably also have their own language". In this same period, the Basel and Bremen missions started looking for ways to expand their activities to the Togo Plateau area, which until then had been on the fringe of their respective spheres of influence (the Basel mission operating west of the Volta and the Bremen mission operating in southern and central Eweland). It is in the travel journeys of their missionaries that we find the first ethnographic information on the peoples of the Togo Plateau area, and specifically on the Mawu (Akpafu). Their languages however, were not of the slightest concern to these missionary organisations. In fact, both were seeking to impose their own standardised language on the Togo Plateau area: the Basel mission was pushing Twi, the Bremen mission was pushing Ewe.

4.4 Previous work: Ethnography

Many of the early ethnographic notes on the Mawu focus on their iron industry, something they were famous for throughout the region (Herold 1892; Hupfeld

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[70] A green line on the map depicts Hornberger's journey, reaching up to the Santrokofi area; it is not known whether he also visited Akpafu and Lolobi.

[71] Cf. Also R.S. Rattray, who quotes "the native chronicler" as saying "the Ashantis passed them (the Akpafus) by with the words 'We have not come to make war on them who build flat-topped huts'" (Rattray 1916:431). Ogbete (1998) even notes that the Akpafu hosted the Ashantis. From a military point of view, it is quite probable that the Ashantis were interested in the ironworking skills of the Mawu.

1899; Pole 1982).[72] The earliest description of Kawu is quite special in that it was written by an African missionary, David Asante, in his native language Twi. A German translation by the eminent linguist J.G. Christaller appeared in 1889 (Asante 1889). According to the account itself, this was the first time that Europeans set foot in Kawu. Asante's account of the Mawu people is very sympathetic. Abbreviating from his account (which provides much detail on the iron industry):

> The town is big, its main street wide. […] They first led us to a place where we could refresh ourselves; from there we went to salute the king, an old, powerfully built man. They took us to the forges and showed us everything they make there. […] Their giant king was very amiable and wanted us to stay for several days. […] Of the people of Boem, these are the brightest. […] Because of their ironwork, everything is well-organised; for people from all places come here to buy iron tools. […] The diligence of these people, their hospitality, and their easygoing behaviour pleased us so much that we really came to love them.[73]

Asante's account includes detailed descriptions of the making of charcoal, the smelting furnaces, the tools of the blacksmith and the products of the local iron industry. There is no information on language or other cultural practices; nor is there, notably, any indication of the iron industry being in crisis. A mere ten years later, Hupfeld (1899) noted that only a handful of furnaces in Akpafu were still in working order, while all that was to be found in Santrokofi was abandoned remains.

Around the same time, the German colonial official Rudolf Plehn published his *Beiträge zur Völkerkunde des Togo-Gebietes* ('contributions to the ethnography of the Togo area') (Plehn (1898).[74] Plehn's brief description of Akpafu is part of an

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[72] This is well illustrated by the fact that Westermann's (1905) dictionary of (southern) Ewe includes a word *Akpafumla* 'bush knife from Akpafu'.

[73] Asante's tone was not always so favourable; of the reception in Santrokofi, their next stop, he wrote that "The Santrokofi people are not like the Akpafu, who showed us all of their work; they didn't even want to sell us their iron tools; they feared that we would bring it to Europe, imitate it and sell it cheaply so that no one would buy their products anymore". Leaving aside the fact that this fear would actually come true in the next few decades, Asante's characterisations should probably not be taken at face value; behind them are complex patterns of allegiances and identities. The Santrokofi probably had ample reason to be distrustful of David Asante, whose Ashanti identity linked him to the bloody turmoil of the 1870s in which the Akpafu and Santrokofi took opposing sides.

[74] In some secondary sources (notably Heine 1968a) Plehn's work is incorrectly dated 1895.

ethnographic survey which also is one of the earliest sources on several other GTM languages (e.g. Santrokofi, Logba, Likpe, Lelemi, Ahlo). Apart from information on housing, iron industry and oral traditions, there are linguistic notes which would be edited and published one year later by Seidel (1899). The most striking peculiarity of material culture in the Togo Plateau area was not lost on Plehn: a large part of his study is devoted to sketches of the different building structures, and like others before him, he noted that the flat-roofed, cubical mud houses (German *Lehmkastenhäuser*) of the Akpafu and Santrokofi show markedly different building techniques from those of the surrounding peoples.

Songs were another interest of Plehn. His survey includes two fragments of Siwu songs, noted down in an unreliable transcription. These songs are the oldest fragments of Siwu verbal art to appear in print. One of them runs like this:

11. *mekoko lofomadisu*
– ∪ ∪ – – – ∪ –

Wörtlich: »Die Henne, die Küchlein«.
Der Sinn dieses Liedes ist:
»Wie die Henne die Küchlein beschützt, so beschützen die Apafu-Leute die umwohnenden Stämme.«

Figure 4.4 One of the Siwu songs written down by Rudolf Plehn (1898)

Plehn recorded only the single line *mekoko lofomadisu*, but we are fortunate to find a fuller version of it in Agudze's 1991 University of Ghana thesis (Agudze 1991:101). It turns out to be a fragment from a song cycle dedicated to the Mawu deity Tokpaikɔ: *Ɔ̀ɖe kɔkɔ nɛ ɔ̀fu mabi iso* {3SG-be fowl TP 3SG-cover PL.children on} 's/he is a hen covering the chicks'. Serendipitously, it is relevant to the very topic of this thesis, since ideophones feature prominently in the remainder of the song cycle, recorded by Agudze but not by Plehn. In chapter 12 we will encounter other cases of ideophones in ceremonial verbal art, and we will see how such cases shed light on the relation between the aesthetics of everyday language and verbal art.

I mentioned the friendly tone of David Asante's very first ethnographic notes on the Mawu in part to offset the gloomy remarks of Andreas Pfisterer, the first missionary to establish a mission post at Akpafu (today's Akpafu-Todzi) in 1897.

He was originally with the Basel Mission, but was dismissed[75] in 1899, upon which he remained an independent missionary in Akpafu for a few years. A fairly detailed ethnographic report by Pfisterer was published in the journal of the Bremen mission in 1904. Though it appears he did not speak much Siwu, these notes touch on a wide range of topics, including material culture such as housing and the iron industry; socio-economical conditions; social institutions like polygamy, slavery and marriage; religious beliefs on reincarnation, ancestors, deities, sacred objects; the *màbia* society of priestesses; and funeral customs. Very conscious of the fact that he was writing for the loyal and pious supporters of the Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft in Germany, Pfisterer delivered these notes in a gloomy tone, stressing the "obscurity and confusion" of the religious beliefs and their "cruel and unnatural customs."

Pfisterer abandoned the Akpafu station by 1902, leaving behind an unfinished house and the Ewe-speaking catechist Mensa. Thus notes Herman Schosser, the next missionary to arrive, in a brief work titled *Akpafu: ein Stück Kultur- und Missionsarbeit in Deutsch Togo* ('Akpafu: a period of civilisation and missionary activitity in German Togo') (Schosser 1907). Like Pfisterer's ethnographic sketch, this booklet was primarily intended as public relations material for the supporters back home. The amount of new ethnographic detail is disappointing; in fact, apart from a verbatim copy of Pfisterer's account, it consists mainly of lengthy reports on the building activities for Schosser's house and the new school. Local names and events are rarely mentioned. One of the things we learn from Schosser's booklet as well as from the mission station chronicles (Bürgi 1921) is that very few men (and even less women) had any knowledge of Ewe at the time. The work of the Bremen mission, which centred on Ewe as the language of education and religion, was to thoroughly change this situation. Nowadays Ewe is the language of most churches as well as the language of primary education.[76] Perhaps the most

[75] The circumstances surrounding this dismissal remain unclear. On his own account (Pfisterer 1904), the Basel mission started in the area in the hope that it would be possible to use Twi, but soon "it appeared that it was more in the interest of the Buem people to learn Ewe instead of Twi; therefore, the whole area was given to the Norddeutsche Mission" (p. 11).

[76] This may change in the future. A translation of the New Testament in Siwu was completed in 2009 and is now read in churches alongside the Ewe bible. Moreover, the Siwu Language Committee, led by Stephen Addae and John Atsu, is working to provide Siwu educational resources for the first years of primary school.

interesting ethnographic material produced in this period is a description of a funeral by Friedrich W. Kruse (1911).

Apart from the two articles by Pfisterer and Kruse, then, the missionaries stationed for almost thirty years in the Akpafu station produced no documentation, ethnographic or linguistic, on the people they sought to enlighten. This is in stark contrast not only to Ewe (which saw impressive work from early on due to being elected as the written language), but also to other mission stations that had missionaries with strong linguistic and ethnographic interests, such as Amedzofe. Fortunately, some of these missionaries, including the prolific Emil Funke, also paid a number of visits to the Akpafu mission station, resulting in a collection of original texts in Siwu (Funke 1920) —a text on religious worship, one on ironwork, and a long narrative— and important photographic material (43 pictures made together with Stoevesandt in 1927/1928).[77]

In 1952, Paul Hinderling published *Notizen von den Togo-Restvölkern* ('Notes on the Togo Remnant Peoples'), a valuable study containing much original material on the Akpafu and Santrokofi. Included are notes on tradition and history, nutrition, housing, arts and crafts, social structure, birth, marriage and death, religion, priests and cults, and worldview. Some of these notes are quite brief, others provide more detail, but all are invaluable as they together provide the first ethnographic sketch of the Mawu and the closely related Santrokofi. Importantly, Hinderling provided detailed information about his sources: three men from the church council in Todzi and one "pagan" called Kwosi Modja from Mempeasem. Debrunner (1969) contains additional information focused on religious beliefs, based on interviews in Akpafu and conversations with his Mawu students at the Teachers' Training College in Akropong.

The next decade saw a linguistic-ethnographic research project in the central Volta Region led by a team of researchers affiliated with the Humboldt Universität Berlin and invited by the University of Ghana (Höftmann and Berger 1965). A great deal of data was collected in the Höftmann project, most of it in the Lɛlɛmi-speaking Buem area, but with excursions to Akpafu, Bowili, Likpe, Lolobi and

[77] These pictures, and about a hundred more related to Akpafu, can be found in the Staatsarchiv Bremen, under 7.1025 (Norddeutsche Missionsgesellschaft). Some are in group 2.02 (Akpafu), others are unsorted and can only be found by sifting through the archive. I have deposited digital and paper copies of all pictures related to Akpafu with several elders and chiefs in the Akpafu area, as well as with the Siwu Language Committee.

Santrokofi. The 1965 project overview mentions the collection of oral traditions, narratives, songs, audio and video recordings besides cartographic and demographic data. It appears that only a fraction of the material has been published.[78] Most relevant for our present concerns is an overview paper comparing oral traditions of "some of the so-called remnant peoples" of the central Volta Region (Höftmann and Ayitevi 1968), which includes a fragment of an oral history collected in Lolobi (p. 231-234).

Some work done at the University of Ghana remains unpublished and little known. Addom (1970) is a description of ironworking techniques. Also in the 1970s, a number of texts on ironworking and on the history of Lolobi were taped and transcribed by Fr. van Hussen and Robert Iddah (van Hussen and Iddah 1971).[79] Francis S.K. Agudze (1991) produced an important thesis on Tokpaikɔ worship, mentioned above, which includes close to 40 fully transcribed songs and detailed ethnographic and musicological descriptions. Another native of Kawu, H.B.K. Ogbete, published a collection of oral traditions of the Mawu (Ogbete 1998), including detailed information on recent historical events and valuable ethnographic details on marriage, birth, death, chieftaincy and farming. Like Hinderling fifty years before him, Ogbete includes detailed information on his sources; but whereas Hinderling's interviews took place in Twi, Ogbete's insider perspective makes the documentation all the more valuable. More widely disseminated is the work of Kofi Agawu on northern Ewe ethnomusicology. Agawu's work is without parallel, and it is thanks to his combination of formidable musicological scholarship and native speaker sensibilities that we have detailed descriptions of the "sound world of Kawu" (Agawu 1995:8–28) and of major aspects of the musical and verbal art of the Mawu (Agawu 1988a; 1988b; 1989; 1990; 1995; 2001; 2003; 2006).

4.5 Previous work: Linguistics

The earliest linguistic study mentioning some of the languages of the Togo Plateau is a comparative article by J.G. Christaller. It is significant for noting some common typological features of the Kwa languages: inherent complement verbs,

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[78] I thank Hildegard Höftmann for generously sharing her field notes on Siwu with me.

[79] Thanks are due to Len Pole for sending me an English transcipt of tape III-6 on iron smelting and smithing. The current provenance of the tapes is unknown and Robert Iddah (p.c.) has mentioned that some of the tapes were reused for other recordings after transcription.

the use of body part terms in experiencer constructions, the structure of basic locative constructions, and the ubiquity of ideophones: "especially significant in these languages are certain descriptive adverbs that intensify the meaning of the verb, even though their sound is totally different from the verb and they are not dependent on it"[80] (Christaller 1888:173–4).

The first documented samples of Siwu are found in the ethnographic material by Rudolf Plehn (1898) and in an edition of his linguistic notes edited by Seidel (1899). Plehn's transcription (and therefore Seidel's edited material) is not without problems: several distinctions are not marked (e.g. the distinction between /ɛ/ and /e/, and /ɔ/ and /o/) or irregularly marked (e.g. tone and voicing contrasts in consonants). After Plehn, Emil Funke (1920) recorded three texts in a very careful transcription, also marking tone; these texts as well as well as the Plehn/Seidel material were subsequently used by Diedrich Westermann in an article containing a grammar sketch of Siwu and several other languages (1922) and in a comparative overview of the noun classes of languages of the region (1935b).

Bertho, in *Les dialectes du Moyen-Togo*, included 135 words of Siwu from the Lolobi region (Bertho 1952:1088–9); unfortunately, the transcription is little better than the Plehn/Seidel material. A much more carefully transcribed wordlist was published by Mary Esther Kropp Dakubu in the *Comparative African Wordlists* series (Kropp 1967). With more than 2000 items, it is the biggest published Siwu wordlist to date. There is also a 625-item "Wordlist for African languages", undated but probably produced during the flurry of activity at the University of Ghana in the 1970s, that was found in the nachlass of John Stewart at Edinburgh in 2007. It is transcribed in a careful hand and includes data from Siwu, Sɛlɛɛ and Ahlɔ̃.[81]

Bernd Heine's (1968a) comparative study of the GTM languages (then still called the Togo Remnant Languages) applied the comparative method to newly collected data, thereby providing a much needed update on the internal classification of the group. It established Siwu as a member of the Na-Togo group, most closely related to Lɛlɛmi, Sɛlɛɛ and Sɛkpɛlé, with Logba following at some

[80] Original German: "Besonders häufig in diesen Sprachen sind gewisse beschreibende Adverbien, die der Begriff des Verbs verstärken, obwohl sie lautlich von dem betreffenden Verb ganz veschieden und garnicht von ihm abhängig sind".

[81] A companion wordlist, also undated, has data for Avatime, Tafi, Nyaŋgbo, Logba, and Lɛlɛmi. Both of these wordlists were scanned by me and are available on the GTM website (http://gtmlanguages.org/).

distance. The large comparative study was followed by case studies on the noun class system (1968b), the allocation of loan-words (1968c) and the consonants of the Proto-Buem group (Heine 1969).

In the 1970s, Kevin Ford worked with native speaker Robert Iddah at the University of Ghana on the phonology, tonology and grammar of Siwu. Though the resulting grammar remained unpublished, it is the richest and most accurate source on the Lolobi dialect of Siwu (I thank Kevin Ford and Robert Iddah for generously sharing the manuscript with me). Much of it also applies to the Akpafu dialect; in fact, the most noticeable dialectal differences seem to be limited to allophonic variation and a number of morphophonological assimilation processes which are regressive in Akpafu and progressive in Lolobi (examples in §5.2.3). Selections of the Siwu material have been published over the years (Ford 1973; Iddah 1980; Ford and Iddah 1987; Kropp Dakubu and Ford 1988), but much remains unpublished.

In 1981, Andy Ring carried out a sociolinguistic study of many of the Ghana-Togo mountain peoples, focusing on bilingualism in Ewe. For the Kawu area, he found that there were relatively few Ewe speakers living among the Mawu (11 per 100 Siwu speakers in Kawu towns). While Siwu is the main language for domestic use and traditional public functions, schooling, political rallies and church services show a relatively high amount of Ewe usage. According to Ring's measures, the overall level of Ewe comprehension in Akpafu/Lolobi at that time was "relatively low" at an average of 66%, with men in the 31 to 50 year age group peaking at 94% (Ring 1981:44).

In the late 1990s, GILLBT (the Ghana Institute for Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation, a subsidiary of SIL International) started literacy and translation work in several minority languages of the Volta Region, including Siwu. A literacy committee was formed and initial descriptive work on the language was carried out by a team including Stephen Addae and John Atsu under the leadership of Andy Ring. A phonology sketch (Ring, Addae, and Atsu 2002b) and a grammar sketch (Ring, Addae, and Atsu 2002a) were published by GILLBT and a translation of the New Testament was completed in April 2009. As of 2008, Kevin Ford has resumed work on the Siwu grammar with Robert Iddah, intending to prepare a revised version for publication.

5 Grammatical preliminaries

Àtɔ̃mɛ loyi mɛ iti oo, àlà kasiakɔ̃ na mɛ̀
"Words fill my head, because I have nowhere to put them"

Siwu funeral dirge

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a sketch of the phonology and grammatical structures of Siwu, along with an overview of selected semantic-functional domains. The goal is twofold: first, to provide the reader with sufficient context to understand the grammatical build-up of examples and conversational extracts given in the following chapters; and second, to sketch the linguistic ecology in which the ideophones of Siwu take their place.

The first part of the chapter starts with an overview of the phonology and moves on to the most important grammatical structures. Word class distinctions, noun class and agreement systems, basic clause structures and some types of complex sentences are surveyed. The second major part of the chapter discusses three semantic-functional domains that are especially relevant to the linguistic ecology of ideophones. Section §5.5, on property denoting expressions, surveys the ways in which one can state that something has a certain property in Siwu, section §5.6 covers the broader domain of talk about sensory perception in Siwu and §5.7 discusses the domain of reported discourse. A detailed discussion of ideophones is left for chapter 6.

5.2 Phonology sketch

Previous published and unpublished descriptions of Siwu (Heine 1968a; Kropp 1967; Iddah 1980; Kropp Dakubu and Ford 1988; Ring, Addae, and Atsu 2002a) slightly differ in the number of consonants they recognise. This is mainly due to differences in how they approach phonological processes. Here I distinguish the following 20 phonemes:

	bilabial	labio-dental	apico-odental	alveolar	palatal	velar	labio-velar	glottal
plosives	p		t		ts [c]	k	kp	
	b			ḍ	dz [ɟ]	g	gb	
fricatives		f		s				(h)
		(v)						
nasals	m			n	ny [ɲ]			
trill				r				
approximants				l	y [j]		w	ɣ [ʕ]

Table 5.1 Consonant inventory and orthography of Siwu[82]

All voiceless consonants have conditioned voiced allophones following /n/; see §5.2.3. The palatal plosives /c/ and /ɟ/ have a certain degree of affricate articulation and could therefore be transcribed as [tʃ] and [dʒ] (as Iddah (1980) does).[83] The phoneme /ḍ/ has the allophones [d̪] (apico-dental) following nasals and [d] (apico-alveolar) elsewhere.[84] The symbol used is taken over from Ewe orthography; there is no retroflex realisation. The nasal /n/ has the allophones [ŋm] before labio-velars (*n-gba* [ŋ͡m-gba] 'life'), [ŋ] before velars (*ǹ-gu* [ŋ̀-gu] 'sheabutter'), and [n] elsewhere.[85] The phoneme /r/ has a number of free variants:

[82] Symbols in round brackets occur only in ideophones and loanwords. For the orthographic symbols /ts/, /dz/, /ny/ and /y/, the IPA values are given in square brackets.

[83] Deviating from all other descriptions, Heine (1968a:104) lists the palatal stops /c/ and /ɟ/ as well as the affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/. According to my information, [c] / [tʃ] and [ɟ] / [dʒ] are not phonologically contrastive in Siwu.

[84] According to Kropp(1967:3), /d/ and /ḍ/ contrast in Siwu. However, in her lexical data, the occurrence of apico-dental /d/ is limited to loan-words like *dɔ́ktà* and positions following /n/ (*pàndè* 'cricket', *màɣe-du* 'honey' < *màɣe* 'bees' + *n-du* 'water'), so the contrast does not appear to be phonemic (cf. also Addae & Atsu (2002a:12).

[85] As for /ɲ/, Heine posits a velar /ŋ/ with allophones [ɲ] for vowels /a, ɛ, e, i, ɔ/, [ŋ] before /u, w/ and [ʷŋ] before consonants. In my corpus, phonetic [ɲ] indeed rarely occurs before /u/ and /o/ (but cf. *nyua* [ɲua] 'cease, stop'), but the same holds for [n] and this seems difficult to account for in Heine's analysis. Since phonetic [ɲ] is much more frequent overall, I write /ɲ/ (orthographically *ny*).

alveolar trill [r], alveolar approximant [ɹ] and alveolar flap [ɾ]. The first realisation is by far the most common in the Akpafu dialect; the latter two are heard in the speech of some individuals in Akpafu. It is my impression that they are more common in the Lolobi dialect.

Two phonemes occur only in ideophones and loanwords: the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ and the voiceless glottal fricative /h/. It is interesting to note that the former fills a gap in the inventory, something that is common for 'extra-systemic' sounds in expressive vocabulary according to Mithun (1982:53). Examples of /v/ are *vàà* 'gaping wide', *vɛlɛvɛlɛ* 'dizzy'; examples of /h/ are *huahuahua* 'gluttonously', *hamà* 'hammer (< German)', *ɔ̀hĩã* 'suffering (< Twi)'. Two further sounds only occur in some loanwords from Ewe: [ɸ] in *sefofo* [sɛ-ɸoɸo] 'flower' and [z] in Ewe *fòmizì* 'hare'.

The sound rendered orthographically as /ɣ/ presents a somewhat ambivalent case. Phonetically, it has been characterised as a pharyngeal approximant by Ford & Iddah (1973:5) and as a "dorso-velar frictionless continuant" by Kropp (1967:3). Phonemically, its status is unclear. Funke believed that it represented an elided consonant and transcribed it as /'/ (1920:267n1). For Heine (who likewise transcribes it as /'/), it has the allophones [ʔ] word-finally and [h] in all other environments (1968a:105). Kropp (1967:3) on the other hand presumes that "it is usually a mutation alternant of y [phonetic [j], MD], with which it seems to be on the borderline of complementary distribution." Ford & Iddah note in their unpublished grammar that "the pharyngeal approximant [ɣ] becomes the palatal [y] after the close front vowel [i] and before a front vowel" (Ford and Iddah 1973:§0.1.3). In my own lexical data, /ɣ/ and /y/ are indeed to some extent in complementary distribution: /y/ is common before the close vowels /i/ and /u/, whereas /ɣ/ is common before open-mid /ɛ/ and /ɔ/. There is also evidence of an active assimilation process, first of all in some nouns in the i/a noun class (1)a, and secondly in the gerunds of verbs, which are formed by prefixing the nominaliser *i-* (1)b.

(6) a *i-yatà* [ijatà] 'leaf', *a-yatà* [aʕatà] 'leaves'
b *ɣa* [ʕa] 'lick' → *ìɣa* [ìja] 'licking'
ɣɛ [ʕɛ] 'say' → *d*[ijɛ] 'saying'

Phonetically, [ʕ] is pronounced with the tongue lying low and the jaw more open than in [j]. In some careful pronunciations it almost sounds like a vowel [ɛ] without initial glottal closure. Thus the word for 'god', written /ɣaa/ by

Atsu/Addae, may sound like [ɛʕaa], and the verb /ɣa/ 'buy' sometimes has this same feature, e.g. in /ɔɣà sàmùrà/ [ɔɛʕà sàmùrà] 'he bought a tortoise'. In fact, German sources like Pfisterer (1904) and Hinderling (1952) write *Ea* for God, and Funke has *Aɛ'ɔ Isumu* 'serving the gods' (kùɣɔ/àɣɔ 'deity').[86] Because the synchronic relation between phonetic [j] and [ʕ] is not entirely clear at this point, I transcribe surface forms. An additional wrinkle is that Siwu orthography does not always adequately distinguish between /w/ and /ɣ/. For instance, the very root *–wu* of Siwu, Mawu and Kawu has this same reflex of Proto-Buem */f/, as seen in the fact that the Mawu are called *Ba-fu* by the neighbouring Sɛlé. Ignoring the tone pattern, the word *Ɔwu* [ɔʕu] 'Ɔwu person' is indistinguishable from orthographic *ɔ̀ɣu* [ɔ̀ʕu] 'oven'. In keeping with established Siwu orthography, I write *ɔwu* for the former and *ɔ̀ɣu* for the latter.

5.2.1 Vowels

There are seven oral and five nasalised vowel phonemes in Siwu. Heine lists seven nasalised counterparts, but in my data /ẽ/ and /õ/ do not occur (cf. also Ford and Iddah 1973:6; Ring, Addae, and Atsu 2002a:17).

	FRONT	CENTRAL	BACK	nasal counterparts	
CLOSE	i		u	ĩ	ũ
CLOSE-MID	e		o		
OPEN-MID	ɛ		ɔ	ɛ̃	õ
OPEN		a			ã

Table 5.2 Vowel inventory of Siwu

[86] Historically, Siwu /ɣ/ corresponds to a labiodental fricative or labial stop in its closest relatives Lɛlɛmi, Sɛlé and Sɛ-kpɛlé (Heine 1969:37–8). (Note though that Heine does not treat /ɣ/ at all in this article even though he does list the phoneme in his 1968 comparative study.) For example, compare the cognates for LEAF: Lɛlɛmi *li-vetè/a-* : Siwu *i-yatà/a-* : Sɛlé *lɛ-fatà* : Sɛkpɛlé *lɛ̀fàńtó/à-* (other examples are Siwu *ɣe* 'to swell', *kuɣɛ̃* 'sun', and *ì-kui/à-* 'bone'). There is also a historically distinct phoneme /y/, reflected in the cognates for SMOKE (Lɛlɛmi *ú-yɔ́* : Siwu *ku-yɔ* : Sɛlé *kɔyɔ̀* : Sɛkpɛlé *kuyuə*) and NAME (Lɛlɛmi *lɛ-ɲi/a-* : Siwu *ì-yerè/à-* : Sɛlé *le-yoòtò/à* : Sɛkpɛlé *dì-ye* : Adele *dì-yèrè/à-*).The synchronic allophones of /ɣ/ in Siwu can be seen in the singular and plural forms of the word leaf: *i-yatà* [ijatà], *a-yatà* [aʕatà]. There is a question of which is an allophone of which — is [ʕ] an allophone of /y/ before back vowels or is [j] an allophone of /ɣ/ before front vowels? I will have to leave the matter unresolved for now.

Whereas most GTM languages have intricate systems of vowel harmony (Kropp Dakubu and Ford 1988), Siwu only shows the remains of such a system in the form of co-occurrence restrictions on vowels within roots (Ford 1973).

5.2.2 Tone

Tone is lexically distinctive in Siwu, and three tones (Low, High, Extra-high, abbreviated as L, H, E respectively) are marked as follows: L by a grave accent (à), H has no marking (a) and E is shown with an acute accent (á). The difference in pitch between L and H is larger than that between H and E,[87] which is why I use the labels Low, High and Extra-high rather than Low, Mid, High. The distribution of the E tone is very limited in underlying forms; for example, in monosyllabic noun roots and verbs only L and H are contrastive,[88] and the E tone can be shown in most cases to derive from complex processes of tonal change (Ford and Iddah 1973; Kropp Dakubu and Ford 1988).[89] The two contrastive tones generate four possible tonal melodies for monosyllabic nouns with a noun class prefix: L (*ɔ̀-tù* 'heart'), H (*n-du* 'water'), L·H (*ɔ̀-tu* 'gun') and H·L.[90] The latter is not attested due to a historical process which has replaced this melody with H·HL in Siwu. Neighbouring Sɛkpɛlé still has the H·L pattern, and the change is exemplified by such pairs as given below (Ford and Iddah 1973:13):

(7)

Sɛkpɛlé	Siwu
kokpà	*kukpaà* 'leg'
kamà	*kamaà* 'back'
dibì	*ibiì* 'drum'

There are complicated processes of tonal change in Siwu, most of them involving progressive assimilation based on an intrinsic tonal subclassification of nouns and verbs. A basic distinction is between nouns that have a raising effect on following words versus nouns that do not. Two contexts in which the raising

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[87] A similar observation has been made for Lɛlɛmi (Allan 1973:76).

[88] Compare Lɛlɛmi, where 'High tones are never found in Noun Stems nor in Verb Roots or Verb Stems.' (Allan 1973:81).

[89] In fact the extra-high tone could possibly be analysed as an upstep, in which case the Siwu system would be a two register tone system with upstep similar to Engenni (Snider 1999). (I thank Sophie Salffner for this suggestion.)

[90] I regard an LL pattern on two tone bearing units as an L melody.

process is active can be seen in (8) below: adjectival modification, illustrated by combining nouns with the H·H·H adjective *siare* [si.a.re] 'large' to form "(the) large X"; and the possessive construction, illustrated by combining nouns with the H·H·H noun *ɔkala* 'shadow' to form "the shadow of X".[91]

(8)				
	RAISING (R)	*ɔ̀turi* 'person'	*ɔ̀turi síáre*	*ɔ̀turi ɔ́kála*
		ndu 'water'	*ndu síáre*	*ndu ɔ́kála*
		kàremí 'mudfish'	*kàremí síáre*	*kàremí ɔ́kála*
	NEUTRAL (N)	*ɔ̀fà* 'uncle'	*ɔ̀fà siare*	*ɔ̀fà ɔkala*
		ìra 'thing'	*ìra siare*	*ìra ɔkala*
		ɔ̀kpakpa 'elder'	*ɔ̀kpakpa siare*	*ɔ̀kpakpa ɔkala*

Ford (1988:138–9) outlines how several different sets of tonal processes are active in mutually exclusive environments, and so help to reinforce syntactic boundaries. One set of rules is active mainly within the noun phrase (in possessor + possessed, N + adjective, N + numeral contexts, among others), whereas another set is active within the predicate (for instance in NP subject + verb, Verb + nominal and Conjunction + nominal contexts). Example (9) contrasts two contexts in which the ideophone performs different grammatical functions. (A more detailed description of the grammatical functions of ideophones is found in §6.5 below.) Example (9)a shows an NP with an ideophone functioning grammatically as an adjective modifying the noun. The rule set that operates within the NP becomes active and the ideophone *kpìnàkpìnà* is raised to *kpínákpínà* following the RAISING noun *ndu*. Note that the final *–à* is not raised; this is the adjectivizing suffix. Example (9)b shows a construction in which the ideophone functions as a predicate. Since *ndu* and *kpìnàkpìnà* are now in different syntactic domains (and separated by the easily elided subject cross-reference marker *ɔ*), *ndu* fails to exercise its raising effect on the following elements.

(9) a *ndu* *kpínákpínà*
ndu kpìnàkpìnà-à
water IDPH.black-ADJ
black water

[91] More research is needed to clarify why *siare* 'large' changes to *síáre* E·H·H while ɔkala 'shadow' changes to *ɔ́kála* E·E·H.

b *ndu* *(ɔ-)kpìnàkpìnà*
ndu ɔ-kpìnàkpìnà
water SCR-black
the water is black

As we will see in more detail in §6.5, ideophones rarely appear in these two constructions in everyday discourse. In the corpus, ideophones occur most commonly at clause edge, either as adverbial modifiers or as complements of two place verbs. In these contexts, ideophones are not influenced by processes of tonal change.

5.2.3 Assimilation and elision

There are numerous processes of assimilation and elision in Siwu. Very common is one in which voiceless consonants undergo progressive voicing, first noted by Funke (1920:267fn1). This happens in a number of contexts, including the following: after the nasal class prefix N-, as in the nominal pairs of singular and plural forms in (10) below; after the nasal allomorph *n-* of the first person pronoun *lo-*, as in (11); and after the negative imperative *ɖà*, as in (12).

(10) *kà-tɔrɛ̃ / ǹ-dɔrɛ̃* 'firewood'
ku-kpâ / n-gbâ 'leg'
ǹ-du 'water' / *kà-tu* 'waterplace'

(11) *ǹzɛ* *lòsu* *aɖera*
ǹ-sɛ lò-su aɖera
1SG-HAB 1SG-take food
I usually take food

(12) *ɖà* *mra* *nyagala*
ɖà bara nyagala
NEG make quarrel
don't quarrel

Vowel elision is also common, as shown in examples like *ìn'ɔle* (< *ì-na ɔ̀le*) 'it lacks strength' and *ìb'ɔmɛ̃rɛ̃* (< *ì-ba ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃*) 'it has sweetness' (the elided vowel is marked with an apostrophe). Such forms are resyllabified, with the tone of the omitted vowel docking onto the retained vowel. In the examples above, this yields a falling tone: [ì.bɔ̂.mrɛ̃] and [ì.nɔ̂.le]. This form of slurred speech functions as a

dialect marker, as the Lolobi dialect has progressive elision in the same context, yielding [ì.bâ.mrɛ̃] and [ì.nâ.le] respectively.

The preverbal complex is a common locus of vowel assimilation in Siwu. For example, the marker of the progressive *to* (which has its origin in a periphrastic construction involving the verb *to* 'hold' though this meaning is now opaque) can surface as *to*, *ta*, or *te* depending on the immediate context, as shown in (13)a-c. To make matters more complex, the first pronoun in this construction is often elided, yielding [tolòkpase], [temìkpase] and [tamàkpase] respectively.

(13) a *ǹdo* *lòkpase*
lò-to lò-kpase
1SG-PROG 1SG-fall
I am falling

b *(mì)te* *mìkpase*
mì-to mì-kpase
2PL-PROG 2PL-fall
you-PL are falling

c *(mà)ta* *màkpase*
mà-to màkpase
3PL-PROG 3PL-fall
they are falling

Morpheme-by-morpheme breakdown of Siwu speech is sometimes made difficult by the fact that the three processes described here can be active at the same time. This is shown by the example in (14). Starting from the verb backwards, the vowel of the 1st person singular subject cross-reference marker *lò* is elided and gives way to the vowel from the marker of future/potential *–a–*. This regressive process even reaches the vowel of the progressive *to*, yielding *ta*. Meanwhile its consonant, being a voiceless consonant eligible to undergo progressive assimilation of voicing following nasals, changes into [d] following the form *ǹ-* (which is itself a free variant of the 1SG morpheme *lò*).

(14) *ǹda* *làakpase*
n-to lò-a-kpase
1SG-PROG 1SG-FUT-fall
I'll be falling

A range of intermediate forms is possible when the speech is produced at varying speeds and with varying levels of care. Other attested forms of this same utterance are *ta làakpase*, where the 1SG subject cross-reference marker is elided from the progressive coverb, and *ǹdo lòakpase*, where the regressive vowel assimilation is wholly absent.

5.2.4 Phonotactics

The canonical syllable type in Siwu, like in Kwa in general, is CV. The nucleus of the syllable is the vowel (V), which also bears the tone. C may be filled by any consonant in the language under the restrictions noted above (e.g. /v/ is rare except in ideophones). Complex onsets do not generally occur, with the possible exception of ambiguous consonant-liquid (CL) sequences in words like *bara* 'do' or *giligili* 'round [2d]'. The pronunciation of these CL sequences varies freely (even within speakers) between [bra ~ bə̆ra ~ bara], with the shorter versions being more typical of rapid speech and the longer occuring in slow, deliberate speech. The elision of V_1 in a CV_1LV_2 structure in rapid speech is in line with general Kwa patterns (Kropp Dakubu 2006:274; Kropp 1967:3).[92] V syllables without consonantal onset do not occur in lexical roots of nouns, but are common in morphological markers like noun class prefixes and pronominal forms. Other occurring syllable types are N (a syllabic nasal) and V: (a long vowel). The latter is confined to ideophones, as in *wòdòròò* 'deep', *kananaa* 'silent'.

Verb roots are most commonly of the form CV. Many multisyllabic verb forms show signs of being derived from original CV forms by means of suffixation of verbal extensions like *–dza* or *–rV* (*tidza* 'shake' < *ti* 'shiver', *sɛ́ra* 'seat somebody' < *sɛ́* 'sit'). It is not always possible to trace multisyllabic roots back to their putative monosyllabic base. Some verbs have the structure CV_1V_2 , as in *biɛ* 'cry', *ɖòè* 'kill'. Based on their tonal behaviour as well as evidence from pluractional formation (see §5.3.10 below) these are analysed here as truly disyllabic verbs.

Noun roots are predominantly disyllabic, although there is a significant subgroup of monosyllabic roots of the form CV. The great majority of noun roots is

[92] Ring et al. (2002:24) posit a 'transitional vocalisation' between consonant and liquid, implying, it would seem, an original form of *bra* for *bara*. This is typologically unlikely, as pointed out in the main text. See also §5.3.10 for evidence from pluractional verb formation.

obligatorily accompanied by a noun class prefix of the form V, CV, or N.[93] Typical forms of nouns therefore are V-CV (*ì-yo* 'house',), V-CVCV (*ɔ̀-ɣɛrɛ* 'pancreas', *ì-sidà* 'danger cloth', CV-CV (*kà-gbo* 'ground beetle', *kù-be* 'mountain'), CV-CVCV (*kà-bɛku* 'adder', *kù-dziri* 'tree') and N-CV (*ǹ-gba* 'life', *ǹ-dã̀* 'palmwine').

The forms of ideophone roots are highly distinctive from nouns and verbs. They are discussed in §6.2.

5.3 Basic grammatical structures

The following sections sketch some of the basic grammatical structures of Siwu. Grammatical relations in Siwu are determined by constituent order, subject cross-referencing on the verb and forms of pronominal arguments in the clause. There are two sets of subject cross-reference markers: one is used in pragmatically unmarked main clauses and the other elsewhere. Noun phrases are head-initial and modifiers (except qualifiers in some cases) agree with the noun head in noun class (but not number).

There is a small set of underived adjectives, but a very productive adjectiviser *–a* which derives adjectives from stative verbs and ideophones. Possessor precedes possessed, and is juxtaposed to it without an overt linker. Aspect, tense and negation are marked partly in the verbal complex, partly by serial verb constructions and partly by adverbial modifiers. Locative predication involves a locative verb (from a set including two general locative verbs and several more specific positional verbs), a locative preposition marking the reference object and optionally a postposition (grammaticalised from body parts and environment terms).

5.3.1 Major word classes

Two major word classes of Siwu are Noun and Verb, which are distinct in a number of ways. First, in isolation, nouns consist of a stem plus a class prefix (*ɔ̀-turi* 'person', *ì-yo* 'house'). Verbs have no such morphology (*pɛ* 'to beat', *bù* 'to be rotten'). Second, all verbs can take a prefix *i-* which makes them like a noun (*ì-pɛ* 'beating', *i-buù* 'rotting'). Third, in full clauses, verbs are the locus of TAM and number/noun class inflection, whereas nouns show no such morphology.

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[93] A zero class prefix (∅) marks a group of animate nouns and loan words which take a *ma*-prefix in the plural.

Another major word class in Siwu is that of Ideophones. I will go deeper into the nature of this class in chapter 6; at this point, I will just note that ideophones are interesting as a special case in that they stand out as special words even when we disregard grammatical criteria — their deviant phonotactics, special word structures, expressive morphology, sensory semantics and foregrounded prosody serving to mark them as a lexical class quite independently of their grammatical status. Grammatically, they have affinities with verbs, for example the fact that most of them can take the nominalising prefix *i-* (*i-ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* 'softness' < *ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* 'soft') and the adjectival suffix *–à* (*ɖɔbɔrɔ-à* 'soft'); yet the fact that they are most commonly used in utterance-final position means that they are clearly not simply a subclass of verbs.

Nouns, Verbs and Ideophones are significantly different from each other in terms of word length (counted in phonemes). A variance analysis of the word length of 305 verbs, 799 nouns and 290 ideophones shows that the differences between these three groups are statistically significant: $F(2, 1390) = 270.56$, $p < .0001$.[94] The majority of ideophones are three or four syllables long (in the latter case often a fully reduplicated disyllabic base), as against nouns which are usually monosyllabic or disyllabic (and which are clearly marked for their category by nominal prefixes) and verb roots which are usually monosyllabic. Word length is thus available to speakers and learners as a reliable cue for word class status (cf. Kelly 1992 on phonological cues for word-classes).

A number of further classes can be distinguished besides Nouns, Verbs and Ideophones; for present purposes, the most important are Adjectives, Ideophonic Adverbs, Utterance-final Particles and Interjections. These are discussed in the following subsections.

5.3.2 Adjectives

Adjectives proper form a small closed class; examples include *ɣɛtɛ* 'new', *kuɣere* 'old', *sɛɛ̀* 'good', *siarè* 'large'. Adjectives follow the noun. They cannot be used predicatively, as example (15) shows.

Property-expressing verbs and ideophones can occur as adjectival modifiers if they are derived using a suffix *–à*. An example of a noun phrase containing both a derived verb and a true adjective can be seen in (16) below.

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[94] I thank Asifa Majid for computing these statistics from the coded data I supplied.

(15) * *ìyo* *ma-tsue-dze* *ne, ma-siarè* [correct: *ma-mɔ̀* 'they be.big']
I.SG-house MA.PL-build-AG TP, MA.S-big
(as for) the house-builders, they are large

(16) *ɔ̀-were* *gbòlò-à* *siarè*
ɔ-river be.deep-ADJ large
the deep, wide river

Adjectives (simple as well as derived) may also be nominalised, in which case they agree with the modified noun. For example, (17)a has a nominalised adjective *kù-siàrè* 'big one' referring to a noun from the KU-gender (*ku-nuarɛ* 'shame'), and (17)b has a nominalised derived adjective *mi-yululu-à* 'chill one' referring to a noun from the N-gender (*n-du* 'water').

(17) a *kunuarɛ* *kosò* *lɛ* *kuɖò* *kùsiàrè*
ku-nuarɛ kosò (ɔ-)lɛ ku-ɖo kù-siàrè
KU-shame small (SCR-)be.good KU-surpass KU-big
small shame is better than big shame [lit. 'small shame is good, it surpasses big one] Siwu Agbā

b *ndu* *tɔ̂tɔà* *gu* *miyululuà*
n-du tɔ̂tɔ-à gu mi-yululu-à
MI-water IDPH.hot-ADJ and AGR.MI-IDPH.cold-ADJ
hot and cold water [lit. 'hot water and cold one'] Gunpowder

We will encounter Adjectives again when we discuss the broader semantic-functional domain of property denoting expressions in §5.5 below.

5.3.3 Ideophonic Adverbs

Ideophonic Adverbs are words with adverbial meanings and ideophonic forms, like *pɔpɔɔpɔ* 'chock-full', *kooŋ* 'only', *kɛŋkɛŋkɛŋ* 'not at all' and *tutuutu* 'exactly'. Meaning-wise they function much like simple adverbials of time and quantity. They share with ideophones peculiar word forms, a susceptibility to expressive morphology, a position at the right clause edge, and the fact that they are often prosodically foregrounded in actual usage. At the same time, they stick together in a number of ways, so that they are best analysed as a subset within the broader class of ideophones. For instance, of the five ideophonic constructions outlined in §6.5 below, they occur only in the Adverbial and Utterance constructions. They do

not take the nominaliser *ì-*, cannot function as the main verb of a sentence, and cannot be derived into adjectives.

A part of this subclass consists of triplicated monosyllables. These rarely occur in a form other than their usual triplicated shape (again unlike other ideophones, which as outlined in §6.4 are highly susceptible to expressive morphology). Here are the members of the form class that have been isolated so far:

(18) *dùdùùdù* 'not at all'
pɛpɛɛpɛ 'precisely' (< Ewe?)
tutuutu 'exactly' (< Ewe?)
lɛlɛɛlɛ 'to the brim'
pɔpɔɔpɔ 'chock-full'
gbɔgbɔɔgbɔ 'until, so long as'

The second syllable in these triplets is always halflong, giving the words a distinctive rhythmic pattern (e.g. [dùdù·dù], [pɛpɛ·pɛ]). I often heard *pelepele* 'completely' pronounced as [pleple·ple], i.e. with the same distinctive rhythm.

5.3.4 Final particles

Final particles perform a range of functions related to matters of the speech event, marking such phenomena as illocutionary force and epistemic stance. Four particularly common ones will be discussed here.

Consider the declarative sentence in (19).

(19) *ɔ̀tò akɛlɛ̀*
ɔ̀-to ɔ̀-a-kɛ̀lɛ̀
3SG-PROG 3SG-FUT-go
she will be going

Using utterance final particles, speakers can indicate their stance, and position themselves as more or less knowledgeable as regards the topic under discussion. For instance, the statement from (19) above can be converted into several subtly different utterances using utterance final particles, illustrated by the examples below.

(20) *ɔ̀tò akɛlɛ̀ ni!*
ɔ̀-to ɔ̀-a-kɛ̀lɛ̀ ni!
3SG-PROG 3SG-FUT-go FP.URG
She will be going! (you should already understand)

(21) *ɔ̀tò akɛlɛ̀ ló!*
ɔ̀-to ɔ̀-a-kɛ̀lɛ̀ ló
3SG-PROG 3SG-FUT-go FP.ADV
She will be going, I advise you! (I know better than you display you do)

(22) *ɔ̀tò akɛlɛ̀ ɣɛ̀ɛ̀*
ɔ̀-to ɔ̀-a-kɛ̀lɛ̀ ɣɛ̀ɛ̀
3SG-PROG 3SG-FUT-go FP.WNDR
Will she be going, I wonder? (you know better than I do)

(23) *ɔ̀tò akɛlɛ̀ bɛ̀rɛ̀*
ɔ̀-to ɔ̀-a-kɛ̀lɛ̀ ɛbɛ̀rɛ̀
3SG-PROG 3SG-FUT-go FP.DISJ
Will she be going, or what? (I realise there are other options)

The particle *ni* conveys a speaker's urgent demand for attention and implies that the assertion is something which the speaker figures should have already been understood by the addressee. It can occur with declaratives and imperatives, but not with interrogatives. The particle *ló* marks the speaker's intent for the utterance to be taken as an advice. With the particle *ɣɛ̀ɛ̀* the speaker marks his or her lack of knowledge. It may also be used at the end of phrases to thematise a topic, as in *Ata ɣɛ̀ɛ̀?* 'and what about Ata?'. In this respect it is similar to Ewe *ɖé* (Ameka 1991:54). Finally, *ɛbɛ̀rɛ̀* indicates that the speaker realises there are other options.

5.3.5 Interjections

Interjections typically index speakers' stances to events in the immediate context of the speech event (Ameka 1992a; Goffman 1978). They are monomorphemic and can make up an independent utterance (the main feature distinguishing them from particles). They are *responses to* rather than *depictions of* events (the main feature distinguishing them from ideophones, fleshed out in §6.7). Following Ameka (1992a) it seems useful to distinguish *primary interjections*, that is, words that are not used otherwise, from *secondary interjections*, which are phrases that come to be used as interjections by virtue of their notional semantics. An example of the latter is the phrase *Laàmà gu ɔ̃ ɔre Kɔ̀kɔ!*, which literally means something like 'God and

his spouse Kɔ̀kɔ' and which is used as an exclamation of astonishment or dismay, much like English 'Good lord!'.

In Ameka's taxonomy, important categories of primary interjections are (i) expressive interjections,[95] expressing the speaker's state, like *àdzêì* 'ouch!', *iii bububu*[96] 'I am very surprised by what I have just perceived/come to know' and *m̀bâ* 'I am physically exerting myself';[97] (ii) conative interjections, expressing a wish to bring about something, as in *sss* 'I want attention', the archaic *kpènɛbu* 'call for silence when the subject of gossip is coming along', and such animal-directed interjections as *káì* 'call to drive away goats' and *shwí* 'call to shoo away chickens (cf. Ewe *suí*); and finally, (iii) phatic interjections that are used 'in the establishment and maintenance of communicative contact' (1992a:114), like *àtúù* 'I embrace you', an expression that is used all over southern Ghana (Ameka 1992b:247) and interjections of acclaim like *òho* and *yuɛ*. The latter are common in responses to multi-unit turns. For example, during a formal speech, the audience may intersperse acclamations of *òho* and *yuɛ* following each turn by the speaker. Such interjections are subject to 'social placedness conditions' (Evans 1992); for example, in certain settings, it is not the audience at large, but only someone occupying a special role like the town crier or the chief's spokesman who may intersperse interjections of acclaim. Closely related to interjections are routines like *kàfara* 'I apologise' and *ǹdzo (buɛbuɛbuɛ)* 'I feel sorry for you'.

5.3.6 Noun classification and agreement

Siwu nouns are exhaustively classified into noun classes, signaled by a prefix on the root. Thus *ì-yo* 'house' is in the I-class, *kù-dziri* 'tree' is in the KU-class, and *ɔ̀-turi* 'person' is in the Ɔ-class. Although previous descriptions of the Siwu noun class

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[95] This is Ameka's term. It should not be confused with the "expressives" from South-East Asian linguistics, which are here called ideophones. It is closer to Christopher Potts' use of the term "expressive" (see footnote 32 on p. 52 above).

[96] Despite its looks, all the evidence suggests that this interjection is monomorphemic. In my corpus, there is some variation in forms (*iii bububu, iii pupupu, iii pupuù, iii bubuí*), but neither *iii* nor *bububu* ever appears alone.

[97] This interjection seems to provide a case uncatered for in Ameka's taxonomy, which takes all expressive interjections to be about 'mental states' and distinguishes only between 'emotive' and 'cognitive'. It seems that *m̀bâ* is rather an example of a category of 'strain grunts' (the term is Goffman's; other examples would include Dutch *Oef!* as in *Oef! Dat is zwaar* 'Ugh! that is heavy!'). One instance in the Siwu corpus occurs when a stout lady repositions herself on a low seat.

system (Heine 1968a:120–1; Ford and Iddah 1973:9) have presented it as consisting of 8 neat singular-plural pairings (modelled, it would seem, after an idealised Bantu system), the Siwu system is in fact more complicated in at least three ways: firstly, many of the resulting class pairs actually are a heterogeneous bunch of morphological classes; secondly, there are clusters of non-count nouns in several classes; and thirdly, the agreement system hinges on the single morphological classes rather than on the pairings. These facts suggest a greater role for the unpaired classes and a less central role for the class pairings.

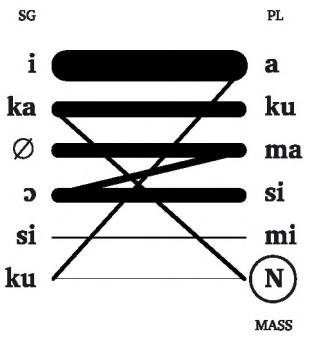
CLASS PAIRING	FREQ	EXAMPLE	RELATIVE FREQUENCIES
i/a	33%	*ì-yo/à-* 'house'	
ka/ku	17%	*kà-rɔdzaì/kù-* 'bird'	
∅/ma	16%	*kpise/ma-* 'ghost'	
ɔ/si	15%	*ɔ̀-tu/sì-* 'gun'	
ɔ/ma	7%	*ɔ̀-turi/mà-* 'person'	
ka/N	4%	*kà-ɣɛɛ̀/ǹ-* 'mortar'	
ku/a	4%	*kù-dziri/à-* 'tree'	
si/mi	2%	*sì-ri/mì-* 'yam'	
ku/N	<1%	*kù-kpaà/ǹ-* 'leg'	
N	2%	*n-du* 'water'	

Table 5.3 Class pairings and their relative frequencies (indicated by thickness of connecting line)

There are ten different noun class prefixes, on the basis of which nouns are classified into morphological classes. Number is closely intertwined with both the individual morphological classes and the way they pair up. Table 5.3 shows the class pairings ordered by frequency. The figure in the right column of the table visualises both the frequency as well as the relationships between singular and plural morphological classes. Some pairs, like *i/a* and *ka/ku*, tend to pair up reciprocally (so that all nouns with the singular prefix usually co-occur with the plural prefix and vice versa). Some individual classes (*si-*, *N-*) are ambiguous with respect to number, playing for singular or non-count in one pairing and for plural in another. Such classes can be said to convey plurality only insofar as they alternate with another class for singularity. For example, the *N*-class conveys

plurality for some nouns that have a singular in *ka*, e.g. *kà-tɔ̃rɛ̃/ǹ-dɔrɛ̃* 'firewood'; for most of its other members, it conveys a non-count sense.

Agreement is strictly morphological: the prefix of the noun is predictive of the agreement marking. Agreement is marked on the verb in the form of bound subject pronouns and object pronouns, on cardinal numbers from 1 (*ɔwɛ̂*) up to 7 (*kɔdzɛ*)[98], on relative pronouns and demonstratives. Agreement is also shown on the following forms: *-re* 'possessum pronoun', as in (24); *-rèrè* 'any' as in (25); and *-mama* 'other', as in (26).

(24) *ìba amɛ ma-**re** nɛ, ìwo amɛ ma-sì*
mud inside MA-ones TP, hole inside MA.PL-live
the mud ones [i.e. *mà-gbã* 'crabs'], they live in holes

(25) *mĩ kà-mì-ɖe i-**rèrè** nɛ mì-ɣe*
2PL.IND ING-2PL-take AGR.I-any REL.I 2PL-know
You all, now tell any [story] that you know] (*ìnatĩka* 'story')

(26) *à-kpɛ wa-ǹgbe ɔ́-ɔ-ninà, tã́=mɛ̀ à-**mama***
A.PL-fish REL.A-here SCR-PF-spoil, give=1SG.O AGR.A-other
these fishes are spoilt, give me others

Based on the agreement patterns, we can distinguish 8 AGREEMENT CLASSES, which are mnemonically named after the class prefixes (I, A, KA, KU, etc.). For example, *sì-ri* 'yam' and *sì-ko* 'books' both belong to the SI agreement class; *à-dziri* 'trees' and *à-yo* 'houses' to the A agreement class; and *n-du* 'water' and *mì-ri* 'yams' to the MI agreement class. There is an almost perfect one to one mapping between morphological class and agreement patterns. Class ɔ- and Ø- both belong to agreement class Ɔ, while *N-* and *mi-* together belong to agreement class MI.

Selected points from the agreement paradigms are illustrated in the following examples (with agreement morphemes in bold). Table 5.4 below shows the full set of paradigms of agreement proforms.

(27) ***kù**-bɔibi **gɔ** sɛ **kù**-fɛrɛre i **ka**-tò ne,*
KU.PL-small.animal REL.KU HAB KU-fly LOC KA-up TP
the small animals which have been flying up high...

[98] Compare this to closely related Lɛlɛmi, where only the numeral 1 takes full concord and a limited form of concord applies to the numerals 2-6 (Allan 1973:184–6; Höftmann 1971:49).

kɔ̃ *lo-ta* *sɔ* ***ku****-a-kɔ* *ɔ-rɔ̃gô*
KU.IND DEP-stand Q KU.S-FUT-take Ɔ-woman
...they stood up to take a woman.

(28) ***mà****-bara* *àlà* ***mà****-bòrèni* ***kù****-ɖù* ***gɔ****-ìngbe* *ne,*
3PL-do with MA-whiteman KU-gunpowder REL.KU-D.PRX TP
they make with [X] this gunpowder (...)

(29) *sàmùrà* ***ũ****-ɖe* ***kɔ̃*** ***ɔ****-kpakpa*
Tortoise Ɔ.TP-be KU.IND Ɔ-elder
Tortoise is their$_{KU}$ elder (i.e. of *kù-bɔibi fɛrɛrɛà* 'the flying animals')

(30) ***kà****-bɛku* *to* ***kà****-nyɛmrɛnyɛmrɛ*
KA-snake PROG KA.S-IDPH.zigzag
The snake is wriggling/zigzagging

PREFIX	AGR. CLASS	SUBJECT (S)	RELATIVE	OBJECT (O)	INDEPENDENT
ì-	I	i-	nɛ-	nɛ̃	nɛ̃
à-	A	a-	wa-	wã	wã
mà-	MA	ma-	ma-	mã	mã
ɔ̀-, Ø-	Ɔ	ɔ-	gɔ-	ɰ̃	ɔ̃
sì-	SI	si-	dzɛ-	sɛ̃	sɛ̃
kà-	KA	ka-	ga-	kã	kã
kù-	KU	ku-	gɔ-	kɔ̃	kɔ̃
N-, mì-	MI	mi-	mɛ-	mɛ̃	mɛ̃

Table 5.4 Noun classes and agreement paradigms

Demonstratives follow the noun and are formed of the relative pronoun plus *ìngbe* 'here' and *mmɔ̂* 'there'. Thus, *ɔ̀-rɛ̃rɛ̃ gɔ-ìngbe/gɔ-mmɔ̂* 'this/that man', *ì-yo nɛ-ìngbe/nɛ-mmɔ̂* 'this/that house'.

5.3.7 Personal pronouns

The agreement proforms for the animate Ɔ and MA agreement classes are the point of contact with the personal pronoun series, which primarily serve to identify the principal speech roles of speaker and addressee. Some of the distinctions are illustrated in examples (31) and (32).

(31) ***fɔ,*** *tã* ***mɛ̃̀*** ***ũ*** *i-pɛmi*
2SG.IND, give 1SG.O 1SG.POSS I-knife
you, give me my knife

(32) ***mà****-ba* *a-kpɛ* *a-wɛ̃* *i* ***ma*** *asàbù amɛ*
3PL.S-have A.PL-fish AGR-one LOC 3PL.POSS net inside
they have some fishes in their net

		SUBJECT	OBJECT	INDEPENDENT	POSS.
SINGULAR	1	lo	mɛ̀	mɛ	ũ
	2	a	ɔ̀	fɔ	fɔ
	3	ɔ	ɔ̃̀	ɔ̃	ɔ̃
PLURAL	1	bo	bo	bo	bo
	2	mi	miì	mi	mi
	3	ma	ma	ma	ma

Table 5.5 Siwu personal pronouns

The third person plural pronoun *ma-* is also used as a generic reference, shifting the construal from 'an agent doing something' to 'something being done', as exemplified below. Thus in (33) "they should tie up your child", *ma-* does not refer to actual people who should tie up the child. Likewise, in (34) there is no "they" who should have plastered the wall (in fact the speaker is here talking about the wall of a structure he built himself). Instead, *ma-* has generic reference and yields a passive reading.

(33) (to a woman whose child escapes all the time, roaming the compound)
ì-ɖe *sɔ* *kà-****ma****-kɔra* *fɔ* *ɔbi* *fiɛ* *a-à-ɣɛ* *ku-tsùɛ̀*
I.S-be QT ING-3PL-tie.up 2SG.POSS child before 2SG.S-FUT-speak KU-speech
your child should be tied up before you start saying stuff [lit. "it is the case that they should tie up your child"]

(34) (about the outer wall of a structure)
ì-nyɔ *wòsòròò,* ***ma****-ì-plastà*
I.S-look IDPH.rough, 3PL:PST-NEG-plaster
it looks rough, it is not plastered [lit. "they have not plastered"]

As seems common in the GTM languages (cf. Westermann 1903 for Logba; Allan 1973 for Lɛlɛmi), pronominal conjunction is constructed using an inclusive plural form, as in *mi gu ma* 'you$_{SG}$ and them' (lit. 'you$_{PL}$ and them') and *bo gu ɔ̀* 'I and you' (lit. 'we and you').

5.3.8 Basic clause structure

The basic order of elements in an unmarked declarative sentence is as follows:

(35) NP_{SUBJ} V NP_{OBJECT}

In a simple transitive clause the object is obligatorily expressed (36), while in a simple intransitive clause some reference to the subject is obligatory (37).

(36) *kpɛkpɛ ɔ-ɖò ɔ̀-bi*
dog SCR-bite ɔ-child
the dog bit the child

(37) *sina ɔ-nina*
meat SCR-spoil
the meat is spoilt

Grammatical relations are established primarily by word order and by agreement patterns. Verbal agreement morphology follows a basic nominative-accusative pattern in that A and S subjects have the same agreement morphology, while transitive objects show different forms. The difference also shows in the locus of verbal morphology: subject (A + S) forms are come before the verb while their object counterparts follow the verb.

There are two subject cross-reference markers, both neutralised for person, number and noun class. The first is used in main clause types, while the second, *lo-*, occurs in dependent clause types like topic constructions (39) and same-subject relative clauses (40). Following Ameka's terminology (2007a:1069f., describing the same patterning in closely related Sɛkpɛlé), I will call the first the non-dependent subject cross-reference marker, glossed SCR, and the second the dependent subject cross-reference marker, glossed DEP).

(38) *ìyo ma-tsue-dze ɔ-kpi*
house MA-build-AGENT SCR:AOR-die
the builders of the house are dead

(39) *ɔ̃* *lo-tsùè* *nɛ*
3SG.IND DEP-burn TP
he burned, that one!

(40) *so* *gɔ-* *so* *gɔ* *lo-mɔ̀* *↑tititi.tititiri↑*
elephant REL elephant REL.ɔ DEP-be.big IDPH.enormous
the elephant-, the elephant which is *↑tititi.tititiri↑* (enormous) Drums

Relative clauses can be represented by the scheme {S REL AGR-verb}, where REL is a relative pronoun agreeing with S, and AGR a full agreement pronoun in the case of non-subject relative clauses, as in (41)a, and the dependent subject cross-reference marker (glossed DEP) in the case of same subject relative clauses, as in (41)b.

(41) a *ɔ̀turi gɔ maɖòè*
ɔ̀-turi gɔ ma-ɖòè
ɔ-person REL.ɔ 3PL-kill
the person whom they killed

b *ɔ̀turi gɔ lòkpi*
ɔ̀-turi gɔ lò-kpi
ɔ-person REL.ɔ DEP-die
the person who died

5.3.9 Aspect, tense and negation

Aspect and tense meanings are expressed partly in the verbal complex, partly by serial verb constructions and partly by adverbial modifiers. The discussion here will proceed from the main verb leftward and outward. For reference, here is the approximate linear structure of the verb phrase, with the categories to be discussed in curly brackets:

(42) (SCR-{aspectual preverbs}) {ING}-SCR{AORIST/PST}—{FUT/PERF}—V

Preverbal markers between subject cross-reference and verb mark future and perfective, as shown in (43)a,b. The future morpheme *-a-* implies that the narrated event is to take place in the future. The perfective -ɔ̀- marks the narrated event as completed.

(43) a *lò-a-su* *aɖera [làasu aɖera]*
1SG:AOR-FUT-take food
I will take food

b *lo-ɔ̀-su* *aɖera*
1SG:PST-PF-take food
I have taken food

Next, a contrast between past and aorist is marked by the tone of the preverbal subject cross-reference marker (SCR): Low for Aorist, as in (44)a, and High for Past, as in (44)b. The tonal contrast between Aorist and Past is especially clear when nothing precedes the SCR. Tonal change under the influence of preceding words often obscures the underlying tone of the SCR. How these tonal changes play out with the marking of tense is a problem that cannot be solved within the scope of this sketch.

(44) a *lò-su* *aɖera*
1SG:AOR-take food
I take food [I am now reaching out to take it]
b *lo-su* *aɖera*
1SG:PST-take food
I took food

An ingressive morpheme *kà-* can precede the subject cross-reference marker. The ingressive focuses on going into a situation and brings a sense of imminence to a predication. It is incompatible with the perfective -ɔ̀-, probably due to a clash with the meaning of the latter, which presents the event as completed.

(45) a *kà-lo-sɛ*
ING-1SG-go
I am just about to go
b *kà-ì-bara* *gelegele-gele*
ING-I.S-do IDPH.sparking-EM1
it starts to glitter Gunpowder

Several aspectual distinctions are made by preverbs in a serial-type construction. Three common aspectual preverbs are PROGRESSIVE *to* (< 'to carry'), HABITUAL *sɛ* (< 'to go'), CONTINUOUS *la* (< 'to hold') respectively. They are illustrated in (46)a,b,c, respectively.

(46) a *lò-to lò-su aɖera [ìndo lòsu aɖera]*
1SG:AOR-PROG 1SG:AOR-take food
I am taking food
b *lò-sɛ lò-su aɖera [ìzɛ lòsu aɖera]*
1SG:AOR-HAB 1sg-take food
I usually take food
c *lo-la lo-ɔ̀-su*
1SG:PST-CNT 1SG:PST-PF-take
I have been taking food (continuously)

5.3.10 Pluractional

A very productive process of pluractional reduplication in verbs denotes the iteration of some action in time and/or space (on pluractionality, see Newman 1990; 2000:423–9). The process is a prefixal partial reduplication of the first syllable of the verb, yielding *kɛkɛ* 'tear up, slice' < *kɛ* 'tear, cut', *babara* < *bara* 'do' and *bibiɛ* > *biɛ* 'cry'. The action described may involve a plural NP, as in (47), or a singular NP as agent of the repeated action, as in (48).

(47) *à-kùtu sã̀-sã̀rã̀ i kùdziri àmɛ̀*
A.PL-orange PLUR-hang LOC tree inside
the oranges hang on the tree [BP_45]

(48) *ɔ̀-to ɔ̀-su kɔ̃̀rɔ̃̀ ɔ-pi-pia n-du mɛ-mɔ̀ àmɛ̀*
3SG-PROG 3SG-take hand 3SG-PLUR-put MI-water AGR.MI-there inside
he's dipping his hand (repeatedly) in that water there
sɔ ɔ̀-to ɔ̀-fo-fore ngbè
QT 3SG-PROG 3SG-PLUR-pour here
(in order) to pour it (repeatedly) here [Gunpowder]

The pluractional formation provides insight into the morphophonology and phonotactics of Siwu verbs. Outputs like *bibiɛ* 'cry$_{PLUR}$' and *ɖòɖòè* 'kill$_{PLUR}$' (**biɛbiɛ*, **ɖòèɖòè*) show that CV_1V_2 verbs like *biɛ* 'cry' and *ɖòè* 'kill' are truly bisyllabic forms (in line with their tonal behaviour). Outputs like *babara* 'do$_{PLUR}$' and *tetere* 'run$_{PLUR}$' show that the underlying form of roots featuring consonant-liquid sequences is CVLV (*bara*, *tere*), despite the fact that they are often pronounced as CLV ([bra], [tre]). As expected, sometimes the pluractional forms take on a more specialised meaning (*nyɔnyɔ* 'search' < *nyɔ* 'look').

5.4 Selected semantic-functional domains

The following three sections discuss three semantic-functional domains that are especially relevant to the linguistic ecology of ideophones. They are, in order, property denoting expressions (§5.5); talk about sensory perception (§5.6); and reported discourse (§5.7).

5.5 Property denoting expressions

Ideophones depict sensory imagery. Since this sensory imagery is often related to objects (as when talking about the appearance of a piece of cloth or the posture of a person), it is useful to survey the broader domain of property-denoting expressions in Siwu to see the place ideophones take in this ecology.[99] There are several ways to state that something has a certain property in Siwu. They break down into three broad groups: (I) the use of a modifying expression in an NP, (II) a one-place predicate denoting a property and (III) a two-place predicate with the complement of the predicate denoting a property. Some of these constructions have several subtypes.

Type I concerns modifying expressions within an NP. There are two subtypes. The first, which I will designate the Adjectival construction, involves basic adjectives, as in (49)a. There is an adjectivising suffix *–à* which can be used to derive adjectives from stative verbs and ideophones, as in *kɔ̃kɔ̃-à* 'ripening' < *kɔ̃kɔ̃* V, *yululu-à* 'cold' < *yululu* IDPH. Such deverbal and deideophonic adjectives function just as normal adjectives, as in (49)b. On their own, NPs like these have an indefinite reading ('a big house', 'cold water').

(49) a *ìyo siarè*
ì-yo siarè
I-house big
big house

b *ndu yululuà*
n-du yululu-à
MI-water IDPH.cold-ADJ
cold water

[99] The structure of this section is inspired by Ameka's (2007b) analysis of closely related Sɛkpɛlé (Likpe).

The second way to form a modifying expression in an NP is a relative clause. Unlike the adjectival construction, this relative construction yields a definite reading, as in (50).

(50) *ìyo gɔ lòmɔ̀*
ì-yo gɔ lò-mɔ̀
I-house REL.Ɔ DEP-be.big
The house which is big

Type II, Predicative for short, is a one-place construction in which the head of the predicate denotes a property. Predicates that can be used in this constructions include basic property-denoting verbs like *lɛ* 'be good', *mɔ̀* 'grow/be big', *rɛtɛ* 'be ripe/red', *yuɛ* 'be unripe/green', *kɔ̃kɔ̃* 'be ripening', but also many ideophones, as in (51)b.

(51) a *ìyo mɔ̀*
ì-yo (ɔ)-mɔ̀
I-house (SCR)-be.big
the house is big (lit. 'the house has become big')
b *ìyo kpìnàkpìnà*
ì-yo ɔ-kpìnàkpìnà
I-house SCR-IDPH.be.black
the house is black

On the surface, the predicative construction in (51)b is very similar to the Type I Adjectival construction, especially given the fact that the subject cross reference marker ɔ- is easily elided. But the difference emerges in their tonal behaviour. In the adjectival Type Ia construction in (52)a, the effect of the raising noun *ndu* is to raise the tone of the ideophone *kpìnàkpìnà* — except for a final L tone. In the Type II construction in (52)b on the other hand, the same word fails to have this influence. In fact, the subject cross-reference marker ɔ- surfaces in a more slowly delivered version of (52)b. This marker, elided in the colloquial version, is taking the tonal influence and blocking its spreading to the next word. Another clue for this analysis lies in the fact that (52)a has an indefinite reading ('some/any black water'), whereas (52)b is understood to be about a particular instance — in line

with the analysis of the first as a Type I Adjectival, and the second as a Type II Predicate construction.[100]

(52) a *ndu kpínákpínà* (I) Adjectival
n-du kpìnàkpìn-/à
MI-water IDPH.be.black-ADJ
black water

b *ndu (ɔ)kpìnàkpìnà* (II) Predicative
n-du (ɔ-)kpìnàkpìnà
MI-water (SCR-)IDPH.be.black
the water is black

Type III property denoting expressions are two-place constructions in which the complement of the predicate expresses a property. There are two subtypes. The first, which I will call the Nominal Property construction, is a construction in which the predicate is a have-verb and the complement a nominal property concept like *ɔ̀be* 'sharpness' (53), *ɔ̀rãrã̀* 'weight' (54), *ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃̀* 'sweetness' (55), or *ɔ̀ɖo* 'bitterness', *ɔ̀le* 'power'. These nominal property concepts are not many in number, but they are relatively frequently used.

(53) *ì-pèmi ba ɔ̀be*
I.SG-knife have Ɔ-sharpness
the knife is sharp (lit. has sharpness)

(54) *ǹ-dɔ̃rɛ̃̀ mɛ-mmɔ̀ ba ɔ̀rãrã̀*
MI-firewood REL.MI-D.DST have Ɔ-weight
that firewood there is heavy

(55) *kù-ka ba ɔmɛ̃rɛ̃̀*
KU.SG-song have Ɔ-sweetness
the song is sweet

The second subtype of Type III, which I will call the Attributive construction, is an identity-like construction in which a copulative verb predicates the property. The property itself is encoded usually as an ideophone, as in (56). Adjectives or verbs are not used in this construction.

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[100] Additionally, we may hypothesise that the final L tone in (52)a can be identified as the adjectivising suffix *–à*.

(56) *ìyo se kpìì*
ì-yo (ɔ)-se kpìì
I.SG-house (SCR)-be IDPH.big
the house is big

Summarizing, the three types of property-denoting expressions are (I) modifying expressions in NPs, including as subtypes the Adjectival construction and the Relative construction; (II) one-place constructions in which the head of the predicate (a basic property-denoting verb or an ideophone) denotes a property; and (III) a two-place construction in which the complement of the predicate expresses a property, including as subtypes the Nominal Property and the Attributive constructions. Ideophones take part in all three types: they can be transformed into adjectives (Type I), function as predicates (Type II) and can be used in the Attributive construction (a subtype of Type III). Thus ideophones are closely involved in the domain of property-denoting expressions in Siwu. Section §6.5 will discuss in more detail the constructions in which ideophones are used.

5.6 Constructions of perception in Siwu

To set the context for later chapters in which we will discuss the ways in which ideophones are implicated in talk about perception, the present section briefly outlines the language of perception in Siwu. Talk about perception is of course closely related to the semantic domain of property-denoting expressions, which is discussed in the previous section from a more grammatical point of view. Although some overlap is inevitable, the present section focuses more on perception (the act) than on perceptions (the product). The focus is especially on the linguistic and cultural construction of perception (Howes 1991; Classen 1993; Geurts 2002).

"Constructions of perception" is used here in a double sense. The first sense is that of linguistic constructions —ways of describing events of perception— which make up the Siwu ways of talking about perception. The properties of these constructions can be described in linguistic terms. But the significance of these constructions goes beyond the linguistic system: as they are used in everyday social interaction, they reflect and modify how perception is culturally construed. This is the second sense: the linguistic resources discussed here represent *construals of perception*.

The main verbs of perception in Siwu are *nyɔ* 'look/explore' and *nɔ̀* 'hear/perceive', along with collocations like *pɛgu nyɔ* 'touch' (lit. 'touch see') *ti nyɔ* 'taste' (lit. 'dip see'), *fɔ̃rɛ̃ nɔ̃* 'smell' (lit. 'smell hear'). The collocational patterning of the two basic verbs *nyɔ* 'look/explore' and *nɔ̀* 'hear/perceive' suggests a fundamental opposition between two components or construals of perception events in Siwu: active/explorative sensing and passive/inchoative perceiving. The first verb (*nyɔ* 'look/explore') is used not only for vision, but also in taste and haptic touch constructions, while the second (*nɔ̀* 'hear/perceive') is used for hearing, smell and passive touch (as shown in Table 5.6). That is, the linguistic construal of vision, taste and haptic touch in Siwu focuses on sensing as a controlled, explorative act; hearing, smell, and passive touch on the other hand are construed more as passive-inchoative events of perception.

	SEE	TOUCH	TASTE	HEAR	SMELL
nyɔ 'look/explore'	***nyɔ***	*pegu* ***nyɔ***	*ti* ***nyɔ***	*kã atsue*	*(fɔ̃rɛ̃)*
nɔ̀ 'hear/perceive'	*nyà*	***nɔ̀***	*- (nɔ̀)*	***nɔ̀***	***nɔ̀***

Table 5.6 Active/explorative (*nyɔ*) and passive/inchoative (*nɔ̀*) sensing in Siwu

Note that this basic division in Siwu carves up the space of sensory perception in a different way than the traditional textbook distinction between the "proximate" senses (olfaction, taste, touch) and the "distal" senses (vision, hearing).[101] The latter basically relies on distance: proximity sensing happens close to the body, while distal sensing is concerned with perceiving objects more distant from the body. The Siwu way of carving up the space makes equal phenomenological sense: seeing, tasting and (active) touching must necessarily involve some controlled act of sensing on the part of the experiencer, while hearing, smell and (passive) touch do not necessarily involve such control. This is an example of how cross-cultural data on the language of perception can elucidate the ways in which perception is simultaneously shaped and constrained by cultural and psychophysical forces.

To see how this distinction plays out, consider the following cases. Example (57) below comes from spontaneous descriptions of acts of sensory perception

[101] See for example Slobin (1971), Howes (Howes 1991), Classen (1993), among many others.

following the pile-sorting task (described in more detail in chapter 9). This particular example is a description of in-mouth sensation.

(57) *si a-tì ìra a-nyɔ i kanya amɛ* (...)
if 2SG-dip thing 2SG-see LOC mouth inside,
If you taste something [lit. dip thing see] in your mouth,
à-tɔ̃mɛ wã̀ a-a-nɔ̀ ɔnyagɛmi iso
A-word REL.A 2SG-FUT-perceive tongue on
those words are what you'll perceive on the tongue. PS:OK
["those words" are: *yululu* 'cold sensation', *yuayua* 'punctual-iterative burning sensation', *saaa* 'cool sensation', *nyagbalaa* 'sour' and *buàà* 'watery, tasteless', all from the pile-sorting task]

Paraphrasing this description, we can say that in-mouth sensation, as linguistically construed in Siwu, involves the explorative act of "dipping and seeing" (*ti … nyɔ*) following by a more passive-inchoative state of "perceiving" (*nɔ̀*).

The sense of touch is also construed as a two-phase activity involving first the explorative act of "touching and seeing" (*pɛgu nyɔ*) with the finger, as in (58), and then the passive-inchoative "perceiving" (*nɔ*) within the finger (59). The act of perception described with *nyɔ* in (58) could well have taken place in the dark, showing that *nyɔ* is used here in a general sense of "explore" rather than in a narrow visual sense. The actual tactile percept (e.g. "rough") is often described using ideophones (cf. §5.5 and §8.2). When asked "how do you know?", the answer, in (60), is that "I *felt* [lit. perceive] that it is rough" — showing that *nɔ* covers feeling-in-the-body.

(58) *ǹ-to lò-pɛgu nyɔ gu ṹ i-rɔ̃́*
1SG-PROG 1SG-hit.INSTR look with 1SG.POSS finger
I'm feeling with my finger [lit. touch look with finger] 20070729_OK_GA

(59) *lo-nɔ̀ i ṹ a-rɔ̃́ɪ̃́ amɛ*
1SG:PST-perceive LOC 1SG.POSS A-finger inside
I felt (it) in my finger [lit. perceive inside finger] 20070729_OK_GA

(60) *lo-nɔ̀ sɔ ì-bara wòsòròò*
1SG:PST-hear QT it-do IDPH.rough
I felt that it's rough [lit. perceive that it does rough] 20070729_OK_GA

The sense of smell can similarly be construed as an explorative act followed by a more passive-inchoative perception: *fɔ̃rɛ̃ nɔ̀* 'sniff hear/perceive'. Thus in (61), the verbal elements of "I want to smell (it)" could be literally translated as "sniff and perceive (it)" or perhaps "sniff to perceive (it)". The smell verb *fɔ̃rɛ̃* is rarely used intransitively (as in "I smell" or "it smells") (though see the discussion of source-based constructions below). Connected to this, it does not seem to have the same negative connotation as similar verbs in many languages (where "it smells" may often be glossed as "it stinks").

(61) *lò-bie sɔ la-à-fɔ̃rɛ̃ lo-nɔ̀*
1SG-want QT 1SG-FUT-smell 1SG-hear
I want to smell (it)

Viberg (1984) has explored the conflations of verb meanings across different sensory modalities. He makes a basic distinction between controlled, intentional sensing (which he calls *activity*) and stative, uncontrolled sensing (which he calls *experience*). These two components, which construe the perceptual event from the perspective of the experiencer, are further juxtaposed against a *copulative* component, which focuses on the experienced entity. These three semantic components, tabulated against the five traditional sensory modalities, form the basis of a Viberg table. For Siwu, the following Viberg table can be constructed:

	Activity	Experience	Copulative (source-based)
SEE	*nyɔ* 'look/explore'	*nyà* 'see'	*nyɔ* 'look', *se* 'be', *bara* 'do'
HEAR	*kã̀ atsue* 'squeeze ears'	*nɔ̀* 'perceive'	*bara* 'do', *rè* 'sound'
TOUCH	*pɛgu nyɔ* 'touch explore'	*nɔ̀* 'perceive'	*se* 'be'/*ba* 'have'/*bara* 'do'
TASTE	*tì nyɔ* 'dip explore'	*nɔ̀* 'perceive'	*se* 'be'/*ba* 'have'/*bara* 'do'
SMELL	*fɔ̃rɛ̃* 'smell'	*nɔ̀* 'perceive'	*fɔ̃rɛ̃* 'smell', *se* 'be'

Table 5.7 Viberg table for Siwu

Some languages feature activity/experience oppositions such as English look/see, listen/hear. In Siwu, the only regular opposition of this kind is in the visual modality (*nyɔ* 'look' vs. *nyà* 'see'). The more important opposition in Siwu is the one we saw above, between active/explorative sensing *(nyɔ)* and passive

perceiving (*nɔ̀*). This is also apparent from the distribution of the verbal resources in the first two columns of the Viberg table.

The examples so far have been of experiencer-based constructions, in order to show how events of perception are linguistically construed. In terms of corpus frequency, such experiencer-based construals appear to be less common than source-based constructions, listed in the rightmost column of the Viberg table above. To these we now turn.

Siwu has a range of source-based constructions, which are grouped in the rightmost column of Table 5.7 above roughly in order of decreasing frequency (constructions which do not show enormous differences in frequency are separated by "/"). The most common constructions across the senses involve three general verbs: *se* 'be', *ba* 'have' and *bara* 'do'. Some examples are below.

(62) *ì-se minimini*
I.S-be IDPH.spherical
it is spherical

(63) *ì-ba miɔmiɔ*
I.S-have IDPH.pointy
it is pointy

(64) *ì-bara sùkùrù-sùkùrù*
I.S-do IDPH.sound.of.grinding
it goes *sùkùrù-sùkùrù* [makes a grinding sound]

(65) *ì-bara pɔ̀tɔ̀ɔ̀*
I.S-do IDPH.rotten
it is rotten

The most general of these is *se* 'be'. This verb can be used for virtually all source-based construals of sensory perception and in that sense is quite similar to the English copula (cf. "it's green / sweet / rough / loud / stinky"). The other two general verbs appear to encode a distinction between percepts as permanently exhibited by objects (*ba* 'have') versus percepts of a more intermittent character (*bara* 'do'). The former are construed more as properties, while the latter are construed more as events. For instance, auditory percepts, which by their nature are non-permanent, are expressed either with the verb *bara* 'do' or with a more specific verb *rè* 'sound', but never with *se* 'be' or *ba* 'have'. Likewise, the state of

being rotten is treated as a transient state rather than a permanent property of an object, as shown by the use of *bara* 'do' in (65).

While the three general verbs discussed above are common across the senses, three sensory modalities have dedicated verbal resources for source-based construals of perception: Vision, Sound and Smell. Examples of vision and smell are in (66) and (67). The verb *fɔ̃rɛ̃*, when used in a source-based construal, is used either with an adverbial component (it smells *kɔ̃rɔ̃kɔ̃rɔ̃* 'pleasantly'), or with a simile (smells like soap), or with both (smells *kɔ̃rɔ̃kɔ̃rɔ̃* like soap).

(66) *ndu nyɔ kpìì̀*
water look IDPH.static
the water looks still

(67) *ìte ìfɔ̃rɛ̃ alɛ ɔ-kwai*
I.S-PROG I.S-smell like Ɔ-soap
it smells like soap

Nominal resources for talking about perception are relatively scarce. Abstract perceptual terms include *kulu* 'noise/sound', *sìlɔ* 'voice/sound', *ɔfiã* 'scent' and *ìpɛgu* 'presence' (which is a nominalised form of the verb *pɛgu* 'touch' or 'hit with'). Other abstract terms can be derived from verbs and through a productive process of nominalisation: *ì-nya* 'vision, seeing' (NOM-see), *i-tì i-nyɔ* 'taste' (NOM-dip NOM-look), ì-fututu-à (NOM-IDPH.white-ADJ). Finally, under property denoting expressions (§5.5) I discussed a small number of nominal property concepts like *ɔ̀be* 'sharpness' and *ɔ̀rãrã* 'weight' which are predicated with *ba* 'have'.

5.7 Reported discourse

The domain of reported discourse has often been pointed out to be of special relevance to ideophones (Samarin 1971; Meeussen 1975; Childs 1994a; Güldemann 2008), one of the reasons being that ideophones in many languages are introduced by a quotative marker. Though this is not the case for most ideophones in Siwu (see §6.5), a sketch of the ways of doing reported discourse in Siwu will be useful to better understand the possible relations between the domains. In this sketch I will adopt the terminology developed by Tom Güldemann in his *Quotative Indexes* (2008). Güldemann defines REPORTED DISCOURSE (RD) as follows:

> Reported discourse is the representation of a spoken or mental text from which the reporter distances him-/herself by indicating that it is produced by a source of consciousness in a pragmatic and deictic setting that is different from that of the immediate discourse. (2008:6)

A reported discourse construction consists of a QUOTATIVE INDEX (QI, the linguistic structure signalling RD) and a QUOTE, the block of reported discourse itself. The most common type of RD-construction in Siwu is of the form V QI {...}, where V can be a speech verb like *ɣɛ* 'say' or *karɛ* 'ask', QI is the quotative marker/complementiser *sɔ* and {...} is the QUOTE.

The examples below demonstrate the use of *sɔ* to signal direct reported discourse, (68)-(69) and non-direct reported discourse (70). Note that Güldemann's definition of RD is not restricted to actual instances of speech; RD may also include texts that were never actually uttered (for example private speech and what Tannen (1989) calls 'constructed dialogue'), and, we may add, that have yet to be uttered. An example of the latter category is (71), where the piece of non-direct reported discourse refers to a possible speech event in the future. Speech verbs used in RD-constructions include *ɣere* 'tell', *karɛ* 'ask' and *ɣɛ* 'say'.

(68) *ɔyɔ̀ ɣɛ* ***sɔ*** *"aĩ!"*
then say QT yes
So just say "yes!"

(69) *ɔ̃ ɔ-ɣere mɛ̀* ***sɔ*** *"Ɖaa,"...*
3SG.TP 3SG.S-tell 1SG.O QT sister
He himself told me, "sister,"...

(70) *ɔ-ɣere-ũ* ***sɔ*** *ɔ-làlà ne, ...*
3SG.S-tell-3SG.O QT 3SG-PLUR.wait TP, ...
He told her to wait a little, ...

(71) *ɣere-ũ* ***sɔ*** *ɔ̀-tã̀-ɔ sìkã̀ si a-kɛ̀lɛ̀ Kpalime*
tell-3SG.O QT 3SG-give-2SG.O money if 2SG-go Kpalime
tell him that he give you money so you to go to Kpalime [Gunpowder]

Sometimes *sɔ* directly follows a nominal representing the speaker, as in (72) and (73). In such contexts the structural position of *sɔ* would make it seem like a quotative verb. However, it clearly is not a verb, as shown by the fact that it does not bear bound pronouns or TAM morphology. Compare example (74)a, featuring

the two-place speech verb *ɣere* 'tell' with bound pronouns and quotative/complementiser *sɔ*, with (74)b, featuring the shorthand RD-construction in which there is no such verb and *sɔ* stands on its own. The only pronominal forms that *sɔ* does co-occur with in this shorthand construction are topicalised subject pronouns, illustrated with *mɛ* in (74)b.

(72) *Aku* ***sɔ*** *kà-ku ɔ-pɛ̀*
PSN QT KA-mourn 3SG.S-beat
Aku [said] that he started mourning

(73) *fɔ ɔnyirɛ̃rɛ̃í* ***sɔ*** *lo-fɔ à-làfa a-nyɔ̂ lò-bɔ-ɔ*
2SG.POSS brother QT 1SG-collect A-hundred AGR.A-two 1SG-bring-2SG.O
your brother [said] that I should collect 200 and bring it to you

(74) a *lo-ɣere-ũ* ***sɔ*** *{…}*
1SG.S-tell-3SG.O QT {…}
I told him that {…}

b *mɛ* ***sɔ*** *{…}* **lo-sɔ-(ũ)* {…}
1SG.IND QT {…} 1SG-QT-(3SG.O) {…}
I [said] that {…} *I [told] him that {…}

In everyday conversations and narratives, RD-constructions often simply consist of the quotative *sɔ* and the quote, without the speaker being overtly specified in the RD-construction. In such cases, the speaker is retrievable from the context. No structural difference is made between direct and indirect quotation, though sometimes this distinction may be recoverable from the orientation of deictic elements in the clause. In (75), a background clause sets the scene ("by that time the vulture had come"), followed after a pause by an RD-construction (cf. Güldemann 2008:43). The next turn in the same story, (76), consists of nothing more than the quotative *sɔ* and a piece of non-direct reported discourse. The speaker here is understood to be the one addressed in the previous turn. Likewise, in actual conversation, the speaker is often apparent from the sequential context and so can be left out, as in (77).

(75) *nɛ ɔwi-gɔ ìkolòmò ɔ-ɔ̀-kɛ̀lɛ̀ nɛ,* ***sɔ*** *"fɔ ɔrã̀ ɣɛ̀ɛ̀?"*
TP time-REL vulture SCR-PF-go TP, QT 2SG.POSS husband FP.WNDR
And by that time Vulture had come; [he] said, "what about your husband?" Stories

(76) ***sɔ*** *ɔ̃* *ɔra* *ɔ-ɔ̀-ɖe* *katɔ̃*
QT 3SG.POSS husband SCR-PF-take lead
[she] said that her husband had taken the lead Stories

(77) (in reply to a question "did you hear what she said?")
sɔ *ũ* *ɔre* *na* *ǹgbe*
QT 1SG.POSS wife lack here
[she] said that my wife isn't here Palm oil_1

While the main function of *sɔ* in the corpus is to signal reported discourse, there are a number of other widespread uses. Some are related to what Güldemann (2008:422f.; following Larson 1978) calls AWARENESS ATTRIBUTION: the use of quotative/complementiser *sɔ* with verbs of perception and cognition. Naturally occurring examples are *bù* 'think' (78), *ɣe* 'know' (79), *nɔ̀* 'perceive/understand' (80), and even the English verb *regard* in an interesting case of code-switching in (81).

(78) *à-bù* ***sɔ*** *i-ra* *pɔkɔsɔɔ* *i-ɖe* *ǹgbe?*
2SG.S-think QT I-thing IDPH.easy I.S-be here
you think that this is an easy thing? Palm oil_1

(79) *à-ɣe* ***sɔ*** *kà-rabra siarè kà-ɖe* *ǹgbe*
2SG.S-know QT KA-work big KA.S-be here
you know that this here is a big job! Palm oil_1

(80) (kid (age 6) repeatedly asking her parents to leave some palm fruit fibre)
mì-i-to *mi-nɔ̀* ***sɔ*** *mi-nyɛ̃ɖɛ̃* *mi-kuti-i?*
2PL-NEG-PROG 2PL-perceive QT 2PL-squeeze 2PL-remain-Q?
are you not hearing that you should squeeze and leave [some]? Palm oil_1

(81) *à-ta* *à-regardi-ũ* ***sɔ*** *ignorant*[102]
2SG-PROG 2SG-regard-3SG.O QT ignorant
you are regarding her as *ignorant* Geckos

Another common use of *sɔ* is in naming — either in a construction like (82), very much akin to the shorthand RD-construction of examples (75)-(77), or with the specific naming verb *rɔ̃*, as in (83). Naming of course is conceptually close to

[102] The code-switching example in (81) comes from a fierce debate in which the speaker is talking about an uneducated "she." It is one of only a handful of examples of Siwu-English code-switching in my corpus.

reported discourse in that a naming construction can be seen as a "word quotation" (Güldemann 2008:399; citing Partee 1973).

(82) *bo Mawu sɔ "ipipi"*
1pl name QT "ipipi"
We Mawu say "ipipi" (steam) [for home-distilled alcohol] Gunpowder

(83) *mɛ ma-rɔ̃ sɔ Joseph*
1SG.TP 2PL-call QT Joseph
my name is Joseph (lit. me they call Joseph)

The final use of *sɔ* to be discussed here is complementation. Here, the relation with reported discourse is more tenuous, though a conceivable link is via awareness attribution-type constructions, in which states of affairs are encoded without the "utterance" meaning component of plain RD-construction.

(84) *kɔ̃ lo-ta* ***sɔ*** *ku-a-kɔ ɔrɔ̃gô*
KU.TP DEP-stand QT KU.S-FUT-take Ɔ-woman
they stood up to take a woman (lit. 'that they will take a woman') Stories

(85) *ǹ-ɖe* ***sɔ*** *a-a-bara à-ɖo ɛɛɛ Fo Ɖoɖo…*
NEG-BE QT 2SG-FUT-do 2SG-surpass uhm bro PSN
It's not that you'll make more than uhm bro Ɖoɖo… Gunpowder

(86) (to a woman whose child escapes all the time, roaming the compound)
ì-ɖe ***sɔ*** *kà-ma-kɔra fɔ ɔbi fiɛ a-à-ɣɛ ku-tsʊ̀è*
I.S-be QT ING-3PL-tie.up 2SG.POSS child before 2SG.S-FUT-speak KU-speech
your child should be tied up before you start saying stuff [lit. …they should tie up your child…] Women

The resulting pattern of polyfunctionality of *sɔ* is very much in line with the general picture sketched for quotative indexes by Güldemann (2008). What is the relation of reported discourse constructions to ideophonic constructions in Siwu? As it happens, this relation is more tenuous than in some of the ideophonic languages discussed by Güldemann. The five main constructions in which ideophones are used (see §6.5 below) do not include the use of quotative devices. In fact, only a small subset of ideophones, those imitative of sound, can be introduced by the quotative marker *sɔ*. An example from the conversational corpus is the following:

(87) *sɔ ↑"gbúùǹ"!*
QT IDPH.explosion
(It'll) go ↑"*gbúùǹ*" [boom] Gunpowder

Elicitation confirms that it is not possible for the majority of ideophones to be introduced in this way. What this shows is that in Siwu, the quotative marker *sɔ* is closer to the "utterance" sense of grammaticalised quotative indexes than to a general introducer of mimetic expressions.

Incidentally, this is not the only way in which ideophones imitative of sound (*phonomimes* for short, adopting a term from Japanese linguistics) are different from other ideophones. Two other points of contrast are that their forms are generally more marked (showing closed syllables and a wider variety of tonal melodies) than those of other ideophones and that they cannot be used in the Predicative or Adjectival constructions. Although the ideophone literature has not often commented on this (though see Kilian-Hatz 2001; Akita 2009a), there is reason to suspect that a broad distinction between ideophones imitative of sound versus the rest has wider cross-linguistic validity. The reason is a semiotic one. As will be outlined in chapter 7, ideophones imitative of sound rely on the simplest iconic mapping possible in spoken language: they depict sound with sound. Ideophones depictive of non-auditory sensations of necessity rely on iconic mappings that are more abstract. Quite probably, this fundamental semiotic difference underlies the qualitative difference between the two types.

6 Ideophones in Siwu

> Ideophones are like pepper. Without them, speech is *buàà*.[103]
>
> Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo, 2008

6.1 Introduction

There is in Siwu a sizable class of *marked words that depict sensory imagery*. This class, as a lexical class, is sufficiently large and conspicuous to be recognised as a salient category in the linguistic ecology of Siwu. Its properties include deviant phonotactics, special word structures, expressive morphology, syntactic aloofness, foregrounded prosody, sensory semantics and a depictive mode of signification. Most of these properties are discussed in the following sections, while others (sensory semantics and depictive mode of signification) will be treated in extenso in later chapters.

Descriptions of ideophone systems in particular languages often focus on the word class status of ideophones. Significantly however (and in stark contrast to word class debates focusing on nouns and verbs), the issue in descriptions of ideophone systems is never whether there are ideophones in a given language, but rather what to do with them. That is, the question which words are ideophones and which are not is rarely at issue; the main problem is usually the grammatical status of the ideophone. From this two important points arise. First, it is apparently not difficult to identify ideophones in any given language, especially not when they are numerous. Second, the actual grammatical status of these words seems often a lot more difficult to ascertain. Could there be a relation between these points? Could it be that the easy identifiability of ideophones-as-ideophones is related to their apparent syntactic slipperiness? I come back to this issue in the final section of in this chapter.

[103] *Buàà* is a Siwu ideophone evoking blandness.

6.2 Phonology: word length and phonotactics

Ideophones are conspicuous words in Siwu. They stand out first of all due to sheer word length. The majority of ideophones are three or four syllables long (in the latter case often a fully reduplicated disyllabic base), as opposed to nouns which are usually disyllabic or trisyllabic and verb roots which are usually monosyllabic. On average, Siwu ideophones are longer than verbs and nouns. As already mentioned in §5.3.1, a variance analysis of the word length (counted in phonemes[104]) of 305 verbs, 799 nouns and 290 ideophones shows that the differences between these three groups are statistically significant: $F(2, 1390) = 270.56$, $p < .0001$. As noted before, this means that word length is available to speakers and learners as a reliable cue for ideophone status (Kelly 1992). Table 6.1 below lists a few typical verbs, nouns and ideophones to illustrate the difference in length.

verb		**noun**		**ideophone**	
sɛ	'go'	*kà-tu*	'waterplace'	*pumbuluu*	'round and fat'
ɖi	'remove'	*ì-yo*	'house'	*wòsòròò*	'rough'
fiɛ	'shine'	*ɔ̀-turi*	'person'	*vɛlɛvɛlɛ*	'dizzy'
rɛ̃	'be drunk'	*sì-tia*	'insult'	*gadàm*	'stamping'

Table 6.1 Some typical verbs, nouns and ideophones

An oft-cited characteristic of ideophones is the occurrence of marginal speech sounds, but the importance of this feature seems to be consistently overrated. In Siwu, only 6 ideophones out of 352, or a meagre 2%,[105] feature a marginal phoneme, the voiced labiodental fricative /v/ (e.g. *vààà* 'gaping wide', *vèlɛ̀vèlɛ̀* 'dizzy') which does not occur in non-ideophonic native vocabulary.[106] This shows

[104] Thus *sɛ* "go" counts 2 phonemes while *nyɛnɛnɛ* [ɲɛnɛnɛ] counts 6 (the reduplication is part of the base form; there is no shorter form of this ideophone although there are longer forms — see §6.4). A more reliable measure of word length might be duration in actual production, but I do not have that kind of data currently, nor is it clear how one would control for all the extra variables that come into play.

[105] Percentages given further on will be based on a closely analysed inventory of 352 ideophones unless noted otherwise.

[106] The only occurrence of /v/ in a non-ideophonic word in my database is *fívà* 'fever', a loanword from English.

that it would be futile to define ideophones on the basis of the occurrence of extra-systemic sounds, as has sometimes been proposed (e.g. Tedlock 1999:119). It also shows that ideophones are an integral part of the broader linguistic system. (As an aside, it is noteworthy that the one marginal phoneme that does occur in Siwu ideophones, namely /v/, fills a gap in the broader phoneme inventory (cf. Diffloth 1980:57; Mithun 1982:53 for similar observations).)

What is more distinctive about the phonology of ideophones in Siwu is their phonotactics, at once more restricted and more free than other Siwu words. It is more restricted in terms of constraints on segmental features like vowel quality, tone and nasalisation, and more free in that there are more possible syllable structures.

Starting with the first, vowel distribution is rather strikingly restricted: 80% of ideophones features only one vowel throughout the word. I will call these MONOVOCALIC ideophones. They are ideophones like *vɛlɛvɛlɛ* 'dizzy', *kpakpara* 'hard and dry', *kananaa* 'silent', *wòsòròò* 'rough', *nyagbalaa* 'pungent', etc. Examples of the rarer type of multivocalic ideophones are *mũnyɛ̃mũnyɛ̃* 'twinkling', *nyìnàà* 'coagulated', *towàà* 'splash'. There are no ideophones featuring more than two different vowels. The range of tonal melodies in ideophones is likewise limited: 90% of ideophones are MONOTONAL, i.e. either Low (*gbràgbràgbrà* 'hailstones violently pouring down') or non-Low (*pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth'). The remaining 10% of ideophones have either simple alternating tone pattern (*tsɔ̀kwɛtsɔ̀kwɛ* 'irregular sawing motion/sound'), or a falling melody (*kpɛtɛ̀ɛ̀* 'sopping wet', *gbʉ̂ʉ̀m* 'resounding explosion', *dzaà* 'sudden appearance'). Table 6.2 shows the amount of monovocalic and monotonal ideophones in the inventory.

	MONOVOCALIC		MONOTONAL	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Percentage	81%	19%	91%	9%

Table 6.2 Monovocal and monotonal ideophones (N = 352)

What is the significance of these phonotactic regularities? Vowels and tone are of course closely intertwined phonetically: the tone of a syllable is carried by the vowel. There is in fact another vowel-related feature that behaves in much the same way: nasalization, if present, it also a feature of the whole word in

ideophones: *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* 'intensely sweet', *fũɛ̃fũɛ̃* 'malleable', *pɛ̃ɛ̃* 'focal red'. We can see these phonotactic regularities as a kind of feature harmony. Vowel quality, tone and nasality behave as if they are specified for the ideophone as a whole, something that is not the case in multisyllabic prosaic vocabulary. One effect of this is that it invites us to see the ideophone as a holistic unit. The feature harmony of ideophones thus lends support to the notion that ideophones, as depictions, constitute a different way of using the materiality of speech.

But why would feature harmony of vowels and related phonetic cues be the more common case in ideophones? Here is one hypothesis. Since vowels often depict suprasensory attributes like intensity, magnitude and quality (Marks 1978), and since these attributes often vary across, but rarely *within* percepts, one would expect them to vary across, but not so much *within* ideophones — as indeed they do in Siwu, and also, it seems, in most other ideophonic languages. One could then go further and hypothesise that ideophones that are not monovocalic or monotonal focus on change and variation in their construal of the depicted sensory event. This also appears to hold: *mũnyɛ̃mũnyɛ̃* 'twinkling' brings into focus differences in brightness, *tsoàà* 'splash' a sudden movement of water. All this gets us into the much broader issue of iconic form-meaning mappings in ideophones, a topic that I am trying to save for a later occasion (see chapter 7, esp. §7.4.1 for this case). The important thing to note here is that the form of ideophones tells us something about their nature as depictions in speech.

In terms of syllable structures, ideophones show more freedom than ordinary words. All of the regular syllable structures found in Siwu words also occur in ideophones, but there are a number of additional ones found only or mainly in ideophones: CV: (open syllable with long vowel), CVN (closed syllables, in which the coda can only be a nasal) and $CV_1V:_2$ (a diphthong ending in a long vowel, as in *buàà* 'bland'). The latter type is rare even in ideophones, so I will not discuss it here.

A considerable number of ideophones (38%) end in a long vowel (e.g. *nyadàà* 'sensation of stretching', *sɨ̀kìtìì* 'leathery'). Quantity does not have a contrastive function in Siwu, and the fact that long vowels occur so regularly in ideophones contributes to the distinctiveness of these words. Note that these long vowels are not merely expressive lengthening (on which see §6.4); they are kept in citation forms and speakers insist that they belong to the word. For instance, literate Mawu immediately correct cases in which this long vowel is not written, e.g. *kanana* > *kananaa* 'silent'.

Closed syllables are relatively rare in Siwu; they only occur in ideophones (*tɔndɔlɔɔ* [tɔn.dɔ.lɔː] 'protruding eyes'), some loanwords (*tsîs* 'cheese', *ìkɔ̀fɛ̃m* 'guineafowl' < Twi) and some ethnobiological terms (*pɛmbɛ* [pɛ̄m.bɛ̄] 'stink ant', *dɔ̀ɔ̀ŋ* 'Goliath beetle'). Ethnobiological nomenclature of course has sound-symbolic origins in many languages (Berlin 1994). The ideophones that feature word-final closed syllables are mostly imitative of sound: *gadàm* 'stamping', *tòlontòlontòlon* 'water drops', *gbʉ́ʉ̀m* 'resounding explosion'.

6.3 Ideophonic word forms

Ideophones come in a variety of word forms. Table 6.3 below lists the nine basic word forms found in the ideophone inventory of Siwu. These structures are the base forms of ideophones, without the additional expressive morphology they often come with in actual use (on which see §6.4). The first six types (altogether 59%) feature one or another form of inherent repetition. Apart from this there is a group of simplex forms with three distinctive structures: the triconsonantals, of the form $C_1VC_2VC_3VV$; the monosyllables, often with a long vowel; and the disyllables of the form C_1VC_2VV. Together these basic word forms account for 97% of the ideophone inventory, leaving only a handful of rather outlandish forms such as *gbrrr* 'sensation of electric shock' and *korrro karrra* 'gnawing through bones' (the repeated /r/ symbolises a geminate thrilled [rː]).

		form	%	examples
reduplicated	1	A·B·A·B	28%	*vɛlɛvɛlɛ* 'dizzy', *bɔgɔbɔgɔ* 'flexible'
	2	A·A(A…)	9%	*sɛsɛsɛsɛ* 'shivering', *ɖiɛɖiɛ* 'running engine'
	3	A·A·B	9%	*gbògbòrò* 'tough', *fɛfɛrɛ* 'light-weight'
	4	A·B·B	8%	*ɣèrèrè* 'disgusting', *kananaa* 'silent'
	5	A·Aː·A	3%	*susuusu* 'dim-witted', *bɛbɛɛbɛ* 'broad'
	6	A·B·C·A·B·C	2%	*gbadaragbadara* 'tottering gait of drunkard'
simplex	7	A·B·Cː	17%	*wùrùfùù* 'fluffy'
	8	A	13%	*sùùù* 'continuous burning sensation'
	9	A·Bː	8%	*nyàɖàà* 'sensation of stretching out'
		total	97%	

Table 6.3 Basic word forms of Siwu ideophones

Some formal aspects of these word forms deserve mention here. There are the different types of repetitive structures, which include reduplication, triplication and repetition of monosyllables. These are inherent to the words (there is no putative root **vɛlɛ* for *vɛlɛvɛlɛ* 'dizzy' or **kana* for *kananaa* 'silent'), which is why I use the term INHERENT REPETITION. Table 6.3 uses a simple mnemonic notation for the different types of inherent repetition, in which capital letters stand for syllables. A·B·A·B marks the full reduplication of a disyllable seen in *vɛlɛvɛlɛ*, A·B·B marks the partial suffixal reduplication pattern of *kananaa* 'silent', and A·A:·A marks the triplication of monosyllables in *susu:su* 'dim-witted'. A feature of the triplicated forms is that the central syllable is slightly lengthed to yield, e.g. [susu:su], something that also happens in Ewe and may be due to inherent metric requirements of the language (Agawu 1995:35; Ameka 1999:81).

Another common word form is the rather distinctive triconsonantal type (Type 7 in Table 6.3) which features a trisyllabic monovocalic root $C_1VC_2VC_3VV$ (e.g. *wòsòròò* 'rough', *tɛgɛlɛɛ* 'shallow', *nyɔ̃kɔ̃tɔ̃ɔ̃* 'weak', *dzìnìtìì* 'confused'). I call this form triconsonantal because the basis seems to be a triconsonantal template which is both monovocalic and monotonal. The C_3 position is limited to alveolar or labial places of articulation, with more than two thirds of the tokens in my corpus having /r, l/ and the rest /t, s, d, f, dz/. There seems to be a tendency to harmonise the voicing of the last two consonants (*ɣɛkpɛtɛɛ* 'fragile', *lupusuu* 'fat' vs. *màgàdə̀ə̀* 'hard to swallow', *wagadzaa* 'course-grained') but there are also some counterexamples to this (*dzìnìtìì* 'confused').

The monosyllabic ideophones (Type 8) usually have a single vowel, but a markedly long one at that. In normal speech as well as in isolation, the vowel is distinctly longer than the final vowel of triconsonantals. I mark this orthographically by writing words from this group with three vowel characters, e.g. *saaa* 'cool sensation', *ɣèèè* 'many living things swarming'. (I do not think this should lead to the recognition of three distinctive vowel lengths in Siwu in general; these differences obtain only in ideophones and elsewhere in the language vowel length is not contrastive.)

One can think of the inventory of word forms in Table 6.3 as a collection of ideophonic templates. Kimi Akita has described a similar variety of word forms in the inventory of Japanese ideophones. He calls them "morphophonological templates", and stipulates that satisfying one of these templates is a "primary prototype condition" for membership in the ideophone category in Japanese (2009a:107ff.). What this means is that these templates are a more reliable

indicator of ideophonehood than general morphological properties such as reduplication. This is also the case for Siwu. It is not sufficient to say that ideophones are often reduplicated. This accounts for only 59% of the inventory and disregards the internal variation within that subset.[107] But if a Siwu word satisfies one of the 9 templates in the above set, it is quite likely to be an ideophone. We thus see that besides word length and phonotactics, word form is another reliable cue to ideophone status.

6.4 Expressive morphology

The relation between ideophones and morphology is an ambivalent one. Some authors (Johnson 1976) have taken the absence of morphology to be the essence of ideophony, and the general unwillingness of ideophones to take part in everyday inflectional morphology has been noted by many observers (e.g. Diffloth 1972; Newman 1968). Against this unwillingness to partake in garden variety morphology stands a remarkable susceptibility to playful word formation processes — what Zwicky and Pullum (1987) call "expressive morphology."

Expressive morphology always comes on top of what is already there; on top, that is, of the basic ideophonic word forms described in the previous section. The two basic types of expressive modification that apply to Siwu ideophones are reduplication and lengthening, and the form of the ideophone is largely predictive of what expressive morphological processes can apply to it. Table 6.4 below repeats the 9 basic word templates of Siwu ideophones and shows how they can be modified. A colon (":") indicates lengthening, while "+" indicates that the number of possible repetition of this syllable pattern is in principle unlimited, though the actual number of repetitions in the Siwu corpus of everyday interaction is rarely above 5-7. For instance, in the corpus of everyday interaction we find expressively modified forms of *gelegele* (Type 1) that feature between 1 and 5 additional repetitions of the disyllabic base **gele*, and forms of *kananaa* (Type 4) that feature between 1 and 5 additional repetitions of the final syllable (examples from actual usage follow below).

Looking over Table 6.4 below, it becomes apparent that the different types of expressive modification are all but mutually exclusive and produce output forms that cannot be mistaken for other templates. They respect and leave intact the

[107] Haiman's (2009) "Why do ideophones reduplicate?" falls prey to this problem.

distinctness of the different ideophonic templates, thereby indirectly confirming the reality of these templates.

		form	EM	examples	*impossible forms
reduplicated	1	A·B·A·B	·A·B +	*vɛlɛvɛlɛ-vɛlɛvɛlɛvɛlɛ*	**vɛlɛvɛlɛ-vɛ*
	2	A·A(·A)	·A +	*sɛsɛ-sɛsɛsɛsɛsɛ*	
	3	A·A·B	·A	*gbògbòrò-gbò*	**gbogboro-ro*
	4	A·B·B	·A +	*ɣèrèrè-rèrèrè*	**ɣèrèrè-ɣè, *ɣèrèrè-ɣèrèrè*
	5	A·A:·A	n.a.	*susuusu*	**sususususu*
	6	A·B·C·A·B·C	·A·B·C +	*gbadara-gbadara-gbadara*	**-rara, *-gba*
simplex	7	A·B·C:	:, A·B·C +	*wùrùfùùù, wùrùfù-wùrùfù*	**-fùfù, *-wù*
	8	A	:	*sùùù > sùùùùùù*	**sùùù-sùùù*
	9	A·B:	:	*nyàɖàà-àààà:*	**nyàɖàà-ɖàà, *nyàɖàà-nyà*

Table 6.4 Types of expressive morphology (EM) in Siwu ideophones

Most of the expressive morphological processes are unbounded in the sense that they do not specify an upper limit on the number of repetitions or the extent of lengthening. This is in contrast to ordinary reduplicative morphology, for instance the pluractional formation, which consists of the very regular prefixal partial reduplication of the first syllable of verbs (§5.3.10). None of the expressive morphological processes in Table 6.4 applies outside of the domain of ideophones. Later on, in §6.5, we will see that expressive morphology only occurs when ideophones are maximally free, that is, maximally aloof syntactically. All this suggests that expressive morphology is indeed, as Zwicky & Pullum have suggested, "in a domain orthogonal to the grammar" (1987:9).

Two points need to be made in this connection. First, even though expressive morphology is markedly different from ordinary morphology, it is not disorderly (a point also emphasised by Zwicky & Pullum 1987). The processes outlined above do not apply indiscriminately to each and every ideophone. They take specific ideophonic templates as input and produce an output that is regular, though not as bounded as ordinary morphology. Second, the fact that ideophones are subject to morphological processes that are "orthogonal to the grammar" provides another piece of evidence for the proposal that ideophones employ a fundamentally

different mode of signification: that they are depictive as opposed to descriptive signs. We saw in §6.2 that the segmental material of the base forms of ideophones makes them stand out as a distinctive word class; here we see that the morphological processes they are subject to also treat them as special, confirming once again the point that ideophones are hearable as special words.

Let us consider some examples from real usage to illustrate the operation of expressive morphological processes. Example (88), taken from a conversation about getting old and growing white hair, features an expressively modified form of the ideophone *fututuu* 'pure white' (Type 4). Because repeated syllables can be counted, the gloss supplies the number of repetitions. Thus, "EM6" signifies 6 additional repetitions of the repeatable unit, which is the final syllable for Type 4 ideophones. Example (89), taken from a conversation about gunpowder, features the ideophone *gelegele* 'shiny' (Type 1) with five additional repetitions (EM5). Example (90), from a conversation about elephant skin, shows how Type 3 ideophones are expressively modified. Finally, (91) shows the expressively modified ideophone *ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* 'soft' (a Type 7 form). Expressive lengthening is less easy to measure than repetition, so the expressive morphology in cases like this is glossed with EM without a number.

(88) *ì-se fudza fututu-tutututututu.*
it-be white IDPH.pure.white.EM6
it is white *fututututututututu* [pure white] Some_songs

(89) *màbòrèni ku-re nìtɔnìtɔ ne, kù-se ↑gelegele-gelegelegelegelegele↑*
white.man KU-one self.REDUP TP, KU.S-be IDPH.shiny.EM5
the imported stuff itself is ↑*gelegelegelegelegelegelegele*↑ [shiny] Gunpowder

(90) *totoro-↑to:*
IDPH.thick-EM
totoro-↑to:! [thick] Drums

(91) *kɔ̃rɔ̃ ne, kùwà gɔ-ǹgbe kù-nyɔ ↑ɖɔbɔrɔɔɔɔɔ↑*
now TP stuff AKU-dem SKU-look IDPH.soft.EM
Now this stuff here, it looks ↑*ɖɔbɔrɔɔɔɔɔ*↑ [soft] Gunpowder

There is a final issue that needs to be discussed here. What does expressive morphology do in semantic or pragmatic terms? Zwicky & Pullum talk about the "pragmatic effect" of expressive morphology, noting that "[e]xpressive morphology is associated with an expressive, playful, poetic, or simply

ostentatious effect of some kind" (1987:6). Here we need to recognise a possible confound. Expressive morphology in ideophones and elsewhere tends to be bound up with prosodic conspicuousness: dramatic pitch excursions and prosodic peaks which essentially amount to *foregrounding* in the Prague school sense, "the use of the devices of the language in such a way that this use itself attracts attention" (Havránek 1964:10). But at least in Siwu (and I suspect in general) there is good reason to tease apart foregrounding from expressive morphology. For one thing, ordinary words may also be foregrounded and thereby associated with "an expressive, playful, poetic, or simply ostentatious effect of some kind" (Zwicky & Pullum 1987:6). Yet they are not normally susceptible to expressive morphology of the kind we see in ideophones. Another place where this contrast plays out is in song. As we will see in chapter 12, expressive morphology allows ideophones (but not ordinary words) in dirges to perform a task that is normally taken care of by what musicologists call fillers or 'vocables' (see §12.4). Thus the asymmetry runs deep, and any account of expressive morphology needs to consider this.

Early studies of ideophones often simply characterised the effect of expressive morphology as "intensification" (e.g. Schlegel 1857; Prietze 1908; Burbridge 1938). This may be too vague, but it does point in the right direction, namely towards the idea of shading or gradation. "Gradation" is appropriate as a metaphor because of its graphical connotation. A graphical artist uses different gradations to render different intensities of light. In the same way we can think of the expressive morphology in ideophones as providing for the possibility of different gradations: different shades of meaning. On this view, the morphological contrast between ordinary words and ideophones is a consequence of the different modes of representation they employ. Expressive morphology provides ideophones with a degree of expressive freedom that is more akin to the free handling of paint than to the symbol-juggling we do with ordinary words.

6.5 Syntax: ideophonic constructions

In Siwu, the canonical syntactic home of ideophones is toward the end of the clause, often modifying the clause as a whole. There are several constructions within which ideophones are used. The five most common ones, together accounting for 95% of ideophone tokens in the corpus, will be discussed below. Table 6.5 shows the relative frequencies of these five constructions. In the

following discussion, all examples are taken straight from the corpus of everyday conversation unless otherwise noted.

Construction	Tokens	Percentage
Adverbial	101	46 %
Attributive	56	26 %
Utterance	27	12 %
Adjectival	13	6 %
Predicative	11	5 %
Other	11	5 %
Total	219	100 %

Table 6.5 Ideophone constructions in the Siwu corpus **(S)**

The Adverbial construction is by far the most common construction, accounting for 46% of the tokens in the corpus. It has the ideophone occuring as a modifier of a predicate phrase, as in (92) and (93) below. Semantically, the ideophone in this construction type provides a depictive rendering of the scene described in the predicate phrase: the head becoming white *futututu* in (92), and the neighbourhood being silenced *kananaa* in (93).

(92) *i-tì si i-fudza-ɔ futututututututu*
CI-head if SI-be.white-2SG.O IDPH.pure.white.EM4
That your head may become white *futututututututu* [pure white]. Some_songs

(93)**(S)** *Bo kagbàmìkù gaŋgbe ne, ka-ɔ̃-lo ma kanananananananana*
our area KA-D.PRX FOC, ING-he.TP-silence them IDPH.silence.EM5
Our neighbours, he silenced them *kanananananananana* [silence] Palm oil_4

Many ideophones in this construction tend to combine with specific verbs; for instance, *futututu* with *fudza* 'be white' and *kananaa* with *lo* 'be silent'. The literal English translations of such collocations often have a ring of redundancy to them: "being white pure white", "being silenced silent". This redundancy is due to the fact that a literal translation is an attempt to render in wholly descriptive terms what is in fact a combination of description (predicate phrase) and depiction (ideophone) in Siwu. To overcome this false sense of redundancy, I include the ideophonic material in the English translation. I do this not to suggest that ideophones are untranslatable, but rather to remind the reader that ideophones

are depictive signs. So *futututu* and *kananaa* in the examples above depict the whiteness and the silence whereas the preceding verbal material describes it.

The second most common construction is the Attributive construction, accounting for 26% of the tokens. As with the Adverbial construction, here too the ideophone is realised in utterance-final position; but in this case the ideophone appears as the complement of a two-place predicate. The Attributive construction can be seen as a type of identity construction, involving relatively general two-place verbs like *se* 'be', *ba* 'have', *bara* 'do' or *nyɔ* 'look' (see §5.6 on the semantic distinctions made by these verbs in constructions of perception). In this construction, the ideophone provides a depictive rendering of some property of the subject of the predicate: the subject "looks *ɖɔbɔrɔɔɔɔ*" in (94) and "does *gelegele*" in (95).

(94)**(S)** *kɔ̃rɔ̃ ne, kùwà gɔ-ǹgbe kù-nyɔ ↑ɖɔbɔrɔɔɔɔɔ↑*
now TP stuff AKU-dem SKU-look IDPH.soft.EM
Now this stuff here, it looks *ɖɔbɔrɔɔɔɔɔ* [soft] Gunpowder

(95) *kà ì-bara gelegelegelegele*
ING I.S-make IDPH.shiny.EM2
It'll be *gelegelegelegele* [shiny] Gunpowder

The third most common construction (12% of the tokens) is the Utterance construction. In it, the ideophone comprises an intonation unit on its own, so it is maximally free. In example (96), the ideophone *tsintsintsin* 'neatly' follows as an independent unit after an utterance that is syntactically and intonationally complete. Likewise, in (97), the ideophone *totoro* 'thick' isn't part of the utterance that precedes it but forms its own intonation unit.

(96)**(S)** *Alɛ Kàntɔ kùgɔ ɔ̀-sɛ ɔ̀-bara ũ a-ra lo. ↑Tsintsintsintsintsin!↑*
like PSN how 3SG-HAB 3SG-do his things FP IDPH.neatly.EM4
Just like Kàntɔ, the way he does his stuff. *Tsintsintsintsintsin!*
[neatly] Gunpowder

(97) *kɔ̃rɔ̃, ì-rɔ nɛmɔ̀ sina, so akodzɛ. Totoro-↑to:!↑*
now I-thing.INDEF REL.I-there meat elephant A.PL-skins IDPH.thick-EM
Now the meat of that thing, elephant skins. *Totoro-↑to:↑!* [thick] Drums

This construction highlights the ability of ideophones to function as syntactically independent depictive renderings of sensory imagery — as

"microscopic sentences", to use a term by Gérard Diffloth. This independence is one of the features that has sometimes led linguists to equate ideophones with interjections. However, the relative independence of ideophones in this construction is qualitatively different from the way in which interjections have been said to be independent. Instances of ideophones in the Utterance construction occur virtually always in a broader topic-comment format (as in these two examples). When interjections are used as utterances in themselves they do not exhibit this topic-comment format. Put differently, an interjection on its own may constitute a complete move at talk, whereas an ideophone normally needs to be supported by other talk (cf. Ameka 1992a:113). Section §6.7 elaborates on the distinctness of ideophones and interjections.

There is a close relationship between Utterance and Adverbial constructions. In the Adverbial construction, the ideophone is omittable, that is, the sentence would be grammatically acceptable without the ideophone. The ideophone is in that sense independent from the rest of the sentence, though it is part of the same prosodic unit. It is easy to see how this construction can transform into one in which the ideophone follows after the syntactic and prosodic completion of the sentence, forming its own utterance.

The three constructions discussed so far are the most common ones; together, they account for 84% of the ideophone tokens in the Siwu corpus. It is worth noting that all of them provide a relatively great amount of freedom to the ideophone, which occurs at the right clause edge in the Adverbial and Attributive constructions and on its own (following a topic) in the Utterance construction. In these common constructions, the ideophone is not burdened by ordinary morphology, and, as shown in many of the examples, it freely undergoes expressive morphology. All of this is different in the remaining two constructions.

The fourth ideophone construction is the Adjectival construction, which we already saw in §5.5. In this construction, exemplified in (98) and (99), the ideophone directly modifies a noun; its status as an adjective is often (though not always) signalled by the adjectival suffix *–à*, which is also used to derive adjectives from stative verbs. In this construction, the ideophone is thus embedded within a noun phrase and bears ordinary morphology. Very few of the examples in the corpus feature expressive morphology or performative foregrounding; indeed, the ideophones in this construction appear to function very much like ordinary derived adjectives (on which see §5.3.2 and §5.5).

(98)**(S)** *bo-nà ɔ̀-rɛ̃rɛ̃ gbogboro-à kere*
1pl-get ɔ-man IDPH.tough-ADJ just
We've got a sturdy man here. Palm oil_1

(99) *n-du tɔ̂tɔ-à gu mi-yululu-à*
MI-water fire.fire-ADJ with A.MI-IDPH.cold-ADJ
Hot water and cold. Gunpowder

In the Adjectival construction, ideophones are also susceptible to regular processes of tonal change, for instance the raising process described in §5.2.2. The Adjectival ideophone tokens in the corpus do not happen to be modifying nouns that have a raising effect, so example (100) is elicited as a variation on (98). It shows that the tone of the ideophone *gbogboro* 'tough' is raised to extra-high following the Raising noun *ɔ̀-turi* 'person':

(100) *bo-nà ɔ̀-turi gbógbóró-à kere*
1PL-get ɔ-person IDPH.tough-ADJ just
We've got a sturdy person here.

The final construction is the Predicative construction, in which the ideophone is head of a predicate phrase, occupying the slot in which verbs normally appear. In this construction the ideophone bears subject agreement morphology like a normal verb would. Thus in (101), the ideophone *ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* 'soft' is the head of a predicate, bearing a subject cross reference marker and the ingressive aspectual marker *kà*. Example (102) has the ideophone *gbegbe* 'stiff' bearing a dependent subject cross-reference marker and used as a predicate in a relative clause.

(101)**(S)** *igɔ̀ ne bo gu Tasì ɔ́-kã̀ ne kà-ɔ-ɖɔbɔrɔɔ ɔso ne*
TDBY TP 1PL with PSN SCR:PST-squeeze TP ING-SCR-IDPH.soft reason TP
The day before yesterday, me and Tasì wrung [the palm fruit fibre][108]
because it was becoming soft. Palm oil_4

(102) *ìnɛ̀ŋ̀gbe lo-gbegbe, ìnɛ̀ŋ̀gbe ne ɔ̀nukuare, bò-i-si wo*
REL.I.here DEP-IDPH.stiff REL.I.here TP truly 1PL-NEG-HAB be.able
The stiff one, this one, truly, we couldn't handle it. Palm oil_4

[108] This refers to the production of palm oil, in which palm fruit fibre (*sìbara*) is wrung in a special type of net (*kàsukutu*) to press out the oil.

There are some structural similarities between the Adjectival and Predicative constructions. Both have the ideophone performing a role normally taken up by verbs in the language: functioning as an adjective in the first case and as the head of a predicate phrase in the second. Two further points worth mentioning are that in these constructions, ideophones are never subject to expressive morphology and intonational foregrounding (more on this in the next section) and that they tend to convey background information rather than foreground information. For instance, in (101) above, the speaker's main point is not the palm fruit fibre becoming *ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* 'soft', but rather the fact that she did the work the day before yesterday. Likewise in (102), the primary business of ideophone is to establish reference to a prior topic of speech, not to depict some sensory imagery.

Finally, Table 6.5 has a category "Other" which lumps together a small number of cases of ideophones occurring in syntactic environments that do not slot neatly into the five prior types. It is possible that some of these would be more common in a corpus that is larger or constituted differently, but in all, they seem to be of marginal importance in terms of use with ideophones. One example from this heterogenous category, namely an onomatopoeic ideophone used in a Quotative construction, has been discussed in §5.7 above.

6.6 Syntactic integration and expressiveness

Much has been made of the syntactic aloofness of ideophones (Kunene 1965; Diffloth 1972, among many others), and rightfully so: the Siwu data, too, shows that a great measure of syntactic independence is the predominant case for ideophones. However, the less common case of syntactic integration is at least as interesting, because it throws light on how ideophones may come to be normal words.

Looking over the five main constructions in which ideophones appear in the Siwu corpus, they break up in two groups, not just in terms of frequency, but also in terms of morphosyntactic behaviour. The first group comprises the Adverbial, Attributive and Utterance constructions. In these constructions, as noted, the ideophone has a great deal of morphosyntactic freedom, appearing as it does at clause edge or on its own and unburdened by ordinary morphology. These constructions, which I call "Free" for short, account for the great majority of ideophone tokens in the corpus: 84% percent (cf. Table 6.5 on p. 143). The second group consists of the Adjectival and Predicative constructions. In these, the

ideophone is more deeply embedded and more burdened by morphology. They can be called "Bound". Though the Bound constructions account for only 11% of tokens in the corpus, they are all the more interesting for their non-ideophonic flavour.

		Free constructions		Bound constructions	
		Adverbial	Attributive	Adjectival	Predicative
syntactic integration	ordinary morphology	✗	✗	✓	✓
	tonal change	✗	✗	✓	✓
expressive features	expressive morphology	✓	✓	✗	✗
	prosodic foregrounding	✓	✓	✗	✗

Table 6.6 Syntactic integration and expressive features in Siwu ideophones

Comparing the Free and Bound constructions, we see that they differ not only in frequency and morphosyntactic integration, but also in terms of expressive morphology and prosody. In Free constructions, ideophones show ample expressive morphology (see §6.4) as well as prosodic foregrounding (marked by the arrows "↑" in the examples). In Bound constructions on the other hand, the ideophones behave just like ordinary words: instead of flaunting expressive morphology, they come to bear ordinary morphology, and instead of carving out their own intonational contour they yield to the intonational contour of the sentence, including any processes of tonal change that may apply. Table 6.6 visualises this inverse relation by tabulating the four main constructions[109] against two marks of syntactic integration and two features of expressiveness.

What this shows is that there is a trade-off between syntactic integration and expressiveness. Basically, syntactic freedom means expressive freedom, and tighter integration of the ideophone into the sentence comes with a loss of expressive features (cf. Dumestre 1998 for similar observations on Bambara). Why would this

[109] Leaving out the Utterance construction, which behaves like the other two Free constructions.

be so? We can start answering that question by breaking it down into smaller issues. For instance, is there anything special about the kinds of ideophones that occur in Bound constructions? Table 6.7 lists all of them.

Ideophone	Tokens	Free	Bound	Diversity index[110]
ɖɔbɔrɔɔ 'soft'	13	9	4	3 sp, 2 ep
pɔkɔsɔɔ 'quiet/slow'	11	10	1	8 sp, 5 ep
gbegbe:gbe 'stiff'	9	8	1	4 sp, 2 ep
kpokporo 'hard'	8	5	3	6 sp, 6 ep
wĩrĩwĩrĩ 'many small things'	6	4	2	6 sp, 4 ep
gbogboro 'tough'	5	1	4	2 sp, 2 ep
kpìnàkpìnà 'black'	5	2	3	3 sp, 1 ep
yuayua 'burning'	4	3	1	3 sp, 2 ep
gɔdɔrɔ 'crooked'	3	2	1	2 sp, 2 ep
mɛlɛmɛlɛ 'sweet'	2	0	2	1 sp, 1 ep
yululu 'cold'	2	1	1	1 sp, 1 ep
nyanyarĩĩ 'dirty/bad'	1	0	1	1 sp, 1 ep
Total tokens	69	45	24	

Table 6.7 Ideophones that appear in both the Free and Bound constructions

In terms of semantics, the ideophones that have been attested in both Free and Bound constructions do not seem to be outliers in the ideophone inventory; their meanings range from temperature to texture and from surface appearance to shape. However, there does appear to be a relation to frequency. For instance, Table 6.7 shows that most ideophones that occur in Bound constructions tend to occur also in Free constructions, and more frequently so. Could it be that ideophones that occur in Bound constructions are those that are especially widely known and commonly used? To answer this question, we can examine the type/token ratios. In the corpus as a whole, there are 219 ideophone tokens of 104 types. The mode (the most frequently occurring number) in the distribution is 1,

[110] In a relatively small corpus as this there is a possibility of speaker variation unduly influencing statistics. This column gives the reader a way to gauge this possible influence by specifying how many speakers (sp) in how many different episodes (ep) have used this ideophone type.

as shown in Table 6.8. This means that the majority of ideophone types occur just once in the corpus of everyday conversation, and only a small number of ideophones occur with higher frequency. What is striking is that all of the ideophones that occur in Bound constructions are from this narrow high frequency range. Table 6.8 shows that for the 12 ideophones that appear in Free as well as Bound constructions, the mode, that is, the most frequent number of tokens, is 5, as against 1 for the corpus as a whole. So ideophones that can occur in Bound constructions tend to be high frequency ideophones.[111]

	Types	Type/token ratio	
		mode	*average*
All ideophones	104	1	2.1
Subset that appears in Free and Bound constructions	12	5	5.8

Table 6.8 Type/token ratios for ideophones in the corpus

This implies a lexicalisation scenario. Ideophones, normally free, can be tamed. They can be pressed into service as ordinary words. The more frequently an ideophone is used, the easier it will be to recruit it as an ordinary word.[112] The role of frequency in this process may have to do with the fact that high frequency of use tends to wear off the features —like performative foregrounding and expressive morphology— that mark ideophones as *special*. We have here, then, a way to make ideophones more normal.

That ideophones in such contexts become more like ordinary words is shown not only by the loss of expressive features, but also by a greater susceptibility to ordinary morphosyntactic operations. For instance, normally (that is, in Free

[111] At first sight this may look like a possible sampling bias. Couldn't it be that in a larger corpus, all ideophones would sometimes occur in Free as well as in Bound constructions? This assumes that the probability of occurring in Bound constructions is the same for all ideophones. However, if that were the case, one would expect to find many more ideophones with a low overall type/token ratio in Table 6.7 above.

[112] Kimi Akita (p.c. April 2011) tells me that Japanese corpus data is consistent with this frequency hypothesis: the more frequent mimetics are, the more easily they can be used as verbs in Japanese. Specifically, there is a statistically significant difference between low frequency and high frequency mimetics with regard to the possibility of them being used as verbs.

constructions), ideophones are not negated, nor are they used in question formation. However, we find both in the following rhetorical question and answer sequence, taken from an argument about geckos and their tongues.

(103) *bo ɔnyagɛmi gɔ i kànya ngbe ne, ǹda ɔ-kpokporo ɔ-sɛ̀?*
1PL Ɔ.tongue REL.Ɔ LOC mouth here TP, how Ɔ.S-IDPH.hard Ɔ.S-HAB
The tongue which is in our mouth, how *kpokporo* [hard] is it?
ì-i-kpokporo.
it-NEG-IDPH.hard
It isn't *kpokporo* [hard]. Geckos

Examples like this remind us that ideophones are not insulated from the rest of the language. Although their typical syntactic aloofness and their performative foregrounding is designed to fool us (according to the argument developed in this thesis) into thinking that they are a different species of signs, they are nevertheless linguistic signs, built as they are from the same segmental material as ordinary words (§6.2). Lawrence Marks has remarked that "[s]peech sounds have the potential to suggest meaning, not because they are speech, but because they are sound" (1978:196). This also works the other way around: ideophones —speech heard in a special way— have the potential to be used as ordinary words, not because they are sound, but because they are speech.

Finally, the perspective developed here allows us to make a corrective note on a previous proposal concerning ideophones and grammaticalisation by Dwyer and Moshi (2003). Dwyer and Moshi propose to distinguish between two categories of ideophones: "pure" (or "primary") and "grammaticalised" ideophones. The former are ideophones that "belong to the expressive dimension", while the latter are ideophones that "belong to the analytic dimension" (*ibid.* p. 174). The basic opposition between "expressive" and "analytic" modes of meaning is adopted from Diffloth and Kita (as discussed in §2.7.3), but Dwyer and Moshi go a step further in proposing that some ideophones are "pure", that is, purely in the expressive dimension, while others are "grammaticalised" into the analytic dimension. Based on their talk of "two categories of ideophones" (p. 174, 180), they appear to envision this as a feature of the ideophone itself: it is either pure or grammaticalised. The problem of this dichotomisation of the ideophone inventory is that it presents an essentially static view of the phenomenon: an ideophone is either "pure" or "grammaticalised". The corpus data examined here shows that it

is better to think in terms of ideophone *tokens*. One and the same ideophone *type* may be used as a free ideophone in one case, and as a bound ideophone on the way to grammaticalisation (or normalization) in another. This is readily illustrated by a pair of examples from the present chapter, (94) and (101), repeated below for convenience.

(104)**(S)** *kɔ̃rɔ̃ ne, kùwà gɔ-ǹgbe kù-nyɔ ↑ɖɔbɔrɔɔɔɔɔ↑*
now TP stuff AKU-D.PRX SKU-look IDPH.soft.EM
Now this stuff here, it looks *ɖɔbɔrɔɔɔɔɔ* [soft] Gunpowder

(105)**(S)** *igɔ̀ ne bo gu Tasì ɔ́-kã̀ ne kà-ɔ-ɖɔbɔrɔɔ ɔso ne*
TDBY TP 1PL with PSN SCR:PST-squeeze TP ING-SCR-IDPH.soft reason TP
The day before yesterday, me and Tasì wrung [the palm fruit fibre] because it was becoming soft. Palm oil_4

Under Dwyer and Moshi's proposal, it would be impossible to choose whether *ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* is a "primary" or a "grammaticalised" ideophone: its performative foregrounding, expressive lengthening and syntactic freedom in (104) would suggest the former category, while its intonational inconspicuousness and its syntactic embedding in (105) would suggest the latter. Clearly then, the corpus data shows that the extent to which ideophones are pure or grammaticalised is a feature of tokens (actual instances of use), not types (lexical entries).

There is a larger point here. Whereas another type of analysis would have portrayed the ideophone system as essentially static, the corpus data shows its dynamic nature and affords us a peek into processes of language change at a very basic causal level: the actual utterances in everyday social interaction (Croft 2000). As Merleau-Ponty has remarked, "*languages* ... are the silt and sedimentation of acts of *parole*" (1945:229).[113]

6.7 Formal relationships to other word classes

As the previous sections show, Siwu ideophones form a part of the lexicon that is in many ways quite distinct from other parts. Yet this distinctness does not mean total insulation from other linguistic devices. This section discusses the

[113] Original French: "*langages* ... sont le dépôt et la sédimentations des actes de *parole*" (emphasis in original).

relationships between ideophones and verbs, nouns, ideophonic adverbs and interjections.

First, let us consider Verbs. We already saw the affinities between verbs and ideophones in the Adjectival and Predicative constructions. A natural consequence of the lexicalisation path suggested in the previous section is that there might be verbs derived from ideophones. A possible example is the item *dzoroo* 'be far', which has the semblance of an ideophone and can be used in the Adverbial and Attributive constructions, but which is most commonly used as a predicate, in which case its long final vowel is shortened, as in *Kùbe ɔ-dzoro* {PLN SCR-be.far} 'Kùbe is a far place'. This form appears to waver between the typical ideophone and the typical verb, so much so that it is difficult to decide whether to transcribe it with a long or a short final vowel.

There are also some cases of ideophones and verbs which may be related. *Bɛbɛɛbɛ* 'wide, horizontally extended', for example, may be related to the verb *bɛ* 'be wide'; *fututuu* 'pure white' may be related to the verb *fudza* 'be white'[114]; and *minimini* 'round 3D' may be related to the verb *mini* 'encircle'. The *minimini/mini* example may actually be part of a broader pattern of reduplicated ideophones doubling with unreduplicated verbal counterparts. Other examples would include *dɛgɛdɛge* 'sensually delicious', which has a variant *dɛgɛɛ* (e.g. *ɔ̀gbàkusì ɔ́-dɛgɛɛ* {porridge SCR-be.delicious} 'the *ɔ̀gbàkusì* is mouth-watering'[115]), and *dɔlɔdɔlɔ* 'smooth', which has a verbal counterpart *dɔlɔɔ* with a similar meaning. In all of these cases it is difficult to establish the direction of the derivation, although given the fact that monovocal CVCV forms are rare in the verbal inventory, one might speculate that the verbal forms are derived from the ideophones. On the whole however, such cases are quite rare; I am aware of maybe ten examples at most.[116] In this respect, Siwu is quite different from some Southern Bantu languages, for which a large number of verbs and ideophones have been said share root material

[114] And both of these may well bear a diachronic relationship with the root *fu-* 'white' which is widespread in Kwa languages.

[115] *ɔ̀gbàkusì* is a traditional Mawu dish made of rice porridge (of the local brown rice) and a stew with beans, palmoil, pepper, served with —preferably— bushmeat. It is eaten only on special occassions.

[116] A complicating factor is that there appears to be idiolectal variation. It seems that for some of these forms, some speakers prefer the non-reduplicated forms as citation form, whereas others use the reduplicated forms.

(the direction of the derivational relation often being unclear) and for which there are productive ways of deriving ideophones from verbs (Samarin 1971).

Moving on to Nouns, we see some possible derivational relations, but even more tenuous than with verbs. Nouns may be derived from ideophones in Siwu. Often this concerns ethnobiological vocabulary, for example *kà-gbugburugbu* 'dwarf' (from *gbugburu* 'short and stocky') and nouns of onomatopoeic origin like *kpɔ̀ɔkpɔ̀* 'duck', *ì-fokofoko* 'lung' (cf. *fukafuka* 'breathing heavily') and *kɛsɛkɛsɛ* 'brush-tailed porcupine (*Atherurus Africanus*)', the latter named after the warning rattle it produces with its tail. Ideophones also can come in handy to describe new cultural items, as in *kà-fututu* 'television', derived from the ideophone *fututu* 'pure white' in the time of black and white television. In a few cases there are ideophones with nominal counterparts. For instance, the ideophone *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'tasty/sweet' and the noun *ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'good taste/sweetness' are clearly related. Nominal reduplication could be a possible way to derive ideophones from nouns. For instance, *ɔ̀tɔ̂tɔ̂* (< *ɔ̀tɔ̂* 'fire') has come to mean 'warm/hot' and can be used as a derived adjective (*sìna tɔ̂tɔ̂à* 'warm meat'). Its reduplicated form would make it sound ideophonic, but its tonal pattern (involving two rises) betrays its nominal source. Similarly, we will see in §8.2 that a beady texture may be described as *kùbikubi* (< *kùbi* 'bead', with the reduplication possibly contributing distributive semantics). Again, the reduplication makes it possibly ideophonic but the tone pattern betrays its non-ideophonic source (as ideophones are predominantly monotonal).[117]

In §5.3.3 I already described a category of Ideophonic Adverbs that have adverbial meanings and expressive forms. This class, which includes words like *pɔpɔɔpɔ* 'chock-full', *kooŋ* 'only' and *tutuutu* 'precisely' can be characterised as a subset of ideophones. Like other ideophones, the members of this subclass have peculiar word forms and come with performative foregrounding in actual use. However, their meanings are more abstract, mainly relating to time and quantity, and their use is restricted to the Adverbial and Utterance constructions.

[117] The examples mentioned here could be analysed as cases of reduplication used to derive quality terms from nouns. On the whole, this appears not to be a common process.

6.7.1 Ideophones and interjections

The final word class whose relationship to ideophones we need to consider is the class of Interjections. This class, too, has been described briefly above (§5.3.5), but it bears mentioning here because ideophones and interjections have commonly been confused, especially by analysts of Standard Average European languages.

Before the term "ideophone" came into wider use, one of the labels used for the phenomenon in some early Bantu grammars was "interjection". The confusion extends to today: even in recent years some linguists have used the term 'interjection' for onomatopoeic words (e.g., Landar 1985) or erroneously collapsed the classes of ideophone and interjection (e.g., Pinker and Jackendoff 2009). There are indeed some superficial similarities between the two classes. I will mention three: (1) both are often phonologically marked and have peculiar word forms, (2) both can constitute utterances on their own, and (3) both are often said to be about emotions and sensations. On closer examination, these similarities only serve to underline the distinctiveness of ideophones and interjections. With regard to the first point, cross-linguistically, interjections allow more outlandish forms than ideophones. On the second point, ideophones are often at least paratactically part of another utterance (as we saw for Siwu in §6.5), so they are not as independent as interjections. On the third point, ideophones are indeed "about" emotions and sensations in one way or another, but it is in the nature of this aboutness that the distinction between ideophones and interjections can be seen most clearly.

Interjections index speaker's stances to events in the immediate context of the speech event, very much like direct reactions (Goffman 1978; cf. Ameka 1992a; Wilkins 1992). I knock over a vase and say, "Oops!"; in picking up the pieces, I cut myself and say, "Ouch!" Those are prototypical examples of interjections expressing emotional or cognitive states. Now imagine ideophones being like that. This would evoke visions of speakers of ideophonic languages looking at the world in utter bewilderment, emitting response cries at every tree shaking in the wind *kpakpakpa*, at a tortoise lumbering across the road *kpɔtɔrɔ-kpɔtɔrɔ*, or at a person sitting timidly *kpìì̀*. Needless to say, that is not what ideophones do. Indeed it is difficult to see how the idea that ideophones are like interjections can be upheld seriously in the face of the enormous ideophone inventories (into the thousands) that some languages have. The key difference is that ideophones are not immediate responses to events; they are depictions of events.

In Peircean semiotic terms, interjections have a strong indexical component; they tend to be rooted in the here and now, associated to it by contiguity (Wilkins 1992; Kockelman 2003). A similar observation was made by Goffman when he pointed out that interjections ("response cries" in his terms) tend to be "a case of exuded expressions, not intentionally sent messages" (1978:800). Ideophones on the other hand do not have this necessary indexical connection to the here and now: they are used as freely for past events, future events and imagined events as for events in the immediate context. This is because they are doing a different job.

The key semiotic difference between the two classes is reflected in their usage. We do not find ideophones as immediate responses to events; rather, we find them in descriptions of events. To return to the analogy of the knocked-over vase, an ideophone would not express the immediate response ("Oops!") of the person who knocked it over, though it could be used to depict the event of the vase rolling over (*gulugulu*) and its subsequent smashing into smithereens (*wɔsɔwɔsɔwɔsɔ*). The difference is readily illustrated by the following case from the Siwu corpus of everyday interaction. The setting is one in which two people are working together squeezing palm fruit fibre in a net to produce palm oil. At one point, a bit of oil squirts out onto B's arm, and a brief exchange ensues. The point to note in this exchange is the contrast between the immediate response to this event in line 2 (featuring the interjection *oh*[118] plus an apology) and the subsequent rehashing of the event in line 5 (featuring a verbal description plus the ideophone *tsùrù*).

Extract 6.1 *Oops…* it came out *tsùrù* « 00:44:41 « Palm oil_1 **(S)**

1 ((some oil squirts onto B's arm))
2 ► A ***oh,*** *ǹdzo* *ló*
INTJ pardon FP.ADV
Oh, sorry!
3 B *oh!*
INTJ
Oh! ((no worries))

[118] A description of the semantic and sequential specifics of the interjection *oh* fall outside the scope of this section, but some of its uses appear to be quite similar to what has been said about English *oh* as marking a change of state in the speaker (James 1978; Heritage 1984a; Ameka 1992a; Wilkins 1992). Note also, by comparing lines 2 and 3 in Extract 6.1, that the sequential position of *oh* is crucial to its interpretation.

4 (0.4)
5 ► A *ɔ̀bɔrɛ kere ibɔrɛ kere* ***↓tsùrù↓***
PFOC-come.out just it-come.out just IDPH.squirt
It just squirted out *↓tsùrù↓*!
6 (0.2)
7 B *ànyɛnyɛ ǹgbe*
2SG-PLUR.squeeze here
You squeezed it out here.

Interjection and ideophone play very different roles in this sequence. The interjection in line 2 is turn-initial, contiguous to the event and can be seen as an immediate response to it. So it is a prototypical case of a response cry in Goffman's sense. The ideophone in line 5 on the other hand is nothing like that. It is turn-final (an example of the Adverbial construction discussed above) and comes couched in an account of what happened. This account combines a description of the event ("it just squirted out") with a depiction of it ("*↓tsùrù↓*"). So rather than being a *response to* the event, as the interjection in line 2 is, the ideophone provides a *depiction of* the event in the service of rendering it more intelligible. The account is accepted by B in line 7, though with a subtle adjustment in terms of agency ("it just squirted out" vs. "you squeezed it").

The division of labour we see in this extract from an actual conversation is entirely typical of the use of ideophones and interjections in the Siwu corpus. Ideophones and interjections differ formally, semiotically and interactionally. The examination of natural conversational data in other languages featuring both word classes is likely to reveal a similar situation.

6.8 Conclusions

Having discussed the main properties of ideophones in Siwu, from phonology to word forms and from expressive morphology to grammatical constructions, we are finally in a position to address the word class issue that was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

Word classes in a language are generally defined in terms of a combination of grammatical and semantic criteria internal to that language (Schachter 1985; Dryer 1997; Croft 2003; Dixon 2010). This has never been entirely unproblematic from a typological perspective — precisely because word class status turns on language-internal evidence, the cross-linguistic status of just about any word class

has been contested. For ideophones specifically, the word class issue has been a constant locus of debate (Newman 1968; Kulemeka 1995; Beck 2008, among many others), ever since Doke (1935) asserted their status as an independent word class in Bantu. One thing we can learn from the word class debates is that one soon runs into trouble if a solution is to be sought in terms of distributional criteria alone. The solution adopted here is foreshadowed in my approach to a cross-linguistic definition of ideophones (§2.2): it recognises that both formal-distributional criteria as well as semantic-functional considerations enter into the definition of a word class, and that any given word class is always going to have fuzzy edges and boundary cases.

But let us not focus on the boundary cases too soon; the evidence reviewed in this chapter suggests that a proper word class of ideophones can be recognised in Siwu. There are quite a number of properties that are reliable cues to ideophone status.[119] The most important of these include word length and peculiar phonotactic patterns (§6.2); a special set of ideophonic word forms that function as templates (§6.3); and a set of expressive morphological processes that respect these templates (§6.4). From the distributional facts surveyed in §6.5 a further cue can be adduced: ideophones tend to occur at the far right edge of the utterance; and as if that is not enough, in §6.6 we saw that ideophones tend to come clearly tagged with prosodic foregrounding. This latter point is directly related to a semiotic criterion that can be invoked, namely the depictive mode of representation, which helps to set ideophones apart from other words.[120] All of these features conspire together to set apart ideophones as a word class in Siwu.

The fuzzy edges of the class come into view when we consider relationships to other classes, discussed in §6.7. For instance, there is a subclass of ideophonic adverbs which is more restricted in both semantics and distribution. Also, certain affinities between ideophones and verbs come to light in the two bound constructions, and the fact that ideophones in these constructions behave more like verbs, points to a possible way of deriving verbs from ideophones.

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[119] It is useful to put it this way because this foregrounds not the analyst's preoccupation but the very real task that faces every user of the culturally transmitted artefact that is language, namely to construct its categories and constructions on the basis of reliable cues in actual instances of use.

[120] See §2.5 for various types of evidence for this claim about the fundamental mode of representation employed by ideophones.

In one sense, then, the class of ideophones in Siwu is not so different from many other word classes, consisting as it does of a large set of members that fit the formal-distributional and semantic-functional criteria well, and fuzzy edges that shade into subclasses and other major word classes. Yet the differences are instructive. Earlier on I alluded to the fact that discussions of the word class issue in the ideophone literature differ quite markedly in nature from classic parts of speech debates. Take the noun/verb debate (e.g. Kinkade 1983; Van Eijk and Hess 1986; Evans and Osada 2005, among many others): both sides rely on subtle distributional facts and intricate technical evidence to stake out different territories for nouns and verbs (or to argue against this). In contrast, ideophones are usually approached from the other side, as it were: they stand out as speech heard in a special way even before one has started to consider the grammatical evidence. So the question which words are ideophones and which are not is rarely at issue; the main problem is usually taken to be their grammatical status. Rather illustratively, an earlier incarnation of Beck (2008), a careful study of ideophones in relation to other word classes in Upper Necaxa Totonac, was titled "What to do with the ideophones?" (Beck 2002). Another common template title for studies of this issue is "The status of the ideophone in [language X]" (e.g. Kulemeka 1994; Roulon-Doko 2001).

Detailed studies of the place occupied by ideophones within the linguistic ecology of particular languages are essential, not just as descriptions of individual languages but also as additions to the typological database. This is why this chapter has done essentially the same. Still, important though such studies may be, we should not let them obscure a fundamental point: the fact that, in the words of Felix Ameka, "ideophones are first and foremost a type of words" (2001:26).[121] This statement, which may seem somewhat tautological at first (after all, which class of words is not a type of words?) is appropriate in talking about ideophones precisely because they *mark themselves* as first and foremost a type of words. In the framework of this thesis we can sharpen this and say that

[121] Ameka makes this suggestion in the course of an argument that in Ewe, a Kwa language of Ghana and Togo, there is no grammatical word class of ideophones as such, but that "ideophonic words can fall into any syntactic class of the language" (p. 32). However, the suggestion that ideophones can fall into "any syntactic class" may overstate the actual distributional patterns in Ewe. For instance, nominal and interjectional ideophones are highly restricted. Corpus data would likely reveal relations between frequency and flexibility, just as in Siwu (§6.6).

ideophones are first and foremost depictive words, and that this is the most important characteristic setting them apart from ordinary words.

The sheer ubiquity of ideophones in the worlds' languages, from Japan and South-East Asia to Africa and from India and Turkey to South America, should make it abundantly clear that depiction in speech, and in particular, a class of marked words that depict sensory imagery, is a common feature of human language. This class of depictive words has its own distinct profile in every language, and yet there are also general properties that transcend the particulars. It is through descriptions of the ideophone systems of individual languages that we are now beginning to see these properties. The structural markedness of ideophones is one such property. Their susceptibility to expressive morphology is another. Their depictive mode of representation a third (to which of course the earlier two are also related, for reasons argued in chapter 2). Speech being linear and predominantly in one mode of representation, the switch to the other mode has to be signalled, and from this follows another general structural property: the tendency of ideophones to occur at utterance boundaries[122] and to be syntactically aloof.

This chapter showed how these general properties of ideophones play out in Siwu. Along the way we are starting to reap the fruits of the multi-methods approach followed. For instance, the semiotic perspective developed in chapter 2 enhanced the description of the formal properties of ideophones with an understanding of the function of some of these properties. Likewise, corpus data from everyday conversations provided us with the relative frequencies of ideophones and ideophonic constructions and thereby made it possible to build an empirically grounded account of ways in which ideophones may become more like normal words. In time, the rise of descriptions of ideophone ecologies built on rich primary data will help us to understand ideophone systems within and across languages, in their synchronic and diachronic dimensions.

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[122] I may add here the observation that although cross-linguistically we find ideophones occurring either at the start or at the end of utterances (and in some language at both ends), the latter pattern seems to be more common; speculatively, one could note that this is in line with the cognitive and interactive generality of the ordering of Topic and Comment.

III Meaning

> Ideophones are not like normal words to which meanings are readily assigned. They are simply sounds used in conveying a vivid impression.
>
> Isidore Okpewho (1992)

The rich semantic detail of ideophones has been singled out for comment by many, and is often presented as a challenge for lexicography and translation. If, as the literary scholar Okpewho says, ideophones are "not like normal words", what do they signify, and how are they interpreted? This is the problem addressed in the next four chapters.

While one may quarrel with Okpewho's description of ideophones as "simply sounds", his statement can be seen as an apt characterisation of the semiotic process involved in ideophony: the use of the affordances of speech to depict sensory imagery. Chapter 7 investigates the iconic mappings found in ideophones but also emphasises the importance of performance to their interpretation.

What do ideophones signify? From early on, the link of ideophones to sensory perception has been recognised, but it has rarely been explicitly investigated. Chapter 8 reports on a series of elicitation tasks that systematically probe a number of perceptual domains: tactile texture, taste, colour, shape, sound and smell. Though not all domains are equally elaborated, ideophones emerge as a key expressive resource in sensory talk.

Is it true that meanings are not readily assigned to ideophones? Chapter 9, a study of folk definitions of Siwu ideophones, shows that speakers converge on ways of explaining them, sketching scenes and using gesture and verbal paraphrase to capture the depictive meanings of ideophones.

How is the domain of ideophones conceptually structured? Chapter 10 provides insight into the intensional semantics of ideophones through a sorting task. A cluster analysis of the results confirms the tight link between ideophones and sensory imagery by showing that the domain is organised by aspects of sensory perception. Explanations by the subjects afterwards provide rare insight into the cultural construction of perception in Siwu.

7 Iconicity, performance and depiction in ideophones

> Speech sounds have the potential to suggest meanings;
> they have, not because they are speech, but because they are sounds.
>
> Lawrence Marks (1978)

7.1 Introduction[123]

One of the recurring points in the literature on ideophones is that they are pervasively iconic, or sound-symbolic, phonosemantic, mimetic. All of these roughly interchangeable terms have the same basic import, namely that ideophones are not just arbitrary linguistic signs but that there is in them some perceived resemblance between their form and meaning. In this chapter I explore this idea. I show that there are some significant types of iconic mappings in Siwu ideophones, but I also argue that there are limits to iconicity, that performance characteristics are often overlooked but of crucial importance, and that ideophones are in fact best seen as primarily depictive rather than iconic words.

Iconicity in language relies on the natural fact that linguistic signs are not passive labels paired with abstract meanings, but that their *sensory properties* afford certain possibilities for suggesting meaning (Wundt 1922; Bühler 1934; Marks 1978; Jakobson and Waugh 1979; Tsur 1992). How does one go about depicting sensory imagery in words? The question can be reframed as follows: what are the properties of speech and of sensory imagery such that there can be iconic mappings between the two? There are several. First of all, since speech is sound, it can be used to mime non-speech sound. But speech is a lot more than the acoustic signal: since it is bodies that do the talking, there is also a rich internal structure in the form of articulatory gestures, and this internal structure can be harnessed to depict certain aspects of perceived events. Additionally, since speech is itself a kind of sensory experience, it shares with other sensory experiences a

[123] Portions of this chapter appear in Dingemanse, Mark. 2011b. 'Ezra Pound among the Mawu: Ideophones and Iconicity in Siwu,' in Pascal Michelucci, Olga Fischer, and Christina Ljungberg (eds.) *Semblance and Signification* (Iconicity in Language and Literature, 10). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

number of basic suprasensory attributes,[124] and this generates an extensive possibility space for iconic mappings, as we will see below.

The discussion that follows builds on the Peircean sense of iconicity, defined as a perceived resemblance between form and meaning. A large literature exists on lexical iconicity (usually under the heading of "sound-symbolism"), and the first part of this chapter contributes to it by suggesting that there are three overarching types of iconic mappings at work in iconic vocabulary across the world's languages: imagic iconicity, Gestalt iconicity and relative iconicity. The second part of the chapter takes on two important issues that have remained poorly developed in the literature but that are central to a proper understanding of ideophony. The first concerns the importance of the actual performance in establishing mappings between sound and sense. The second concerns a problem that is often conveniently ignored in ideophone studies: the fact that not all ideophones are transparently iconic. Confronting this problem helps clear up a long-standing confusion by showing that it is not iconicity, but rather the depictive mode of representation is fundamental to ideophony. It is necessary to be aware of this problem even before we get into the discussion of lexical iconicity, so the next section outlines a few caveats.

7.2 Limits to iconicity

Ideophones are too often characterised simply as imitative words. For example, we saw in §2.4 that several authors make sound-symbolism crucial to their definition of ideophones. In reality, the picture is much more complex for at least three reasons. Firstly, because ideophones are never exclusively iconic (Nuckolls 1992). Like all linguistic signs, they mix Peircean modes of signification (for example, they are symbolic in that they are subject to conventionalisation so that their interpretation is partly socially mediated; and they are indexical to the extent that they *point to* perceptions, inviting the listener to see for themselves). Secondly, because there are several types of iconicity at play in ideophones, and simple imitation is but one of them (and a minor one at that). Thirdly, because not all ideophones are transparently iconic. This last point, which is sometimes too easily

[124] Suprasensory attributes are properties or dimensions that apply to sensory experiences in all modalities (Marks 1978:51). Since Külpe (1893), three such attributes have been generally accepted: INTENSITY, DURATION and QUALITY. Thus all sensations have some degree of intensity; all have some quality; and all have some span in time.

glossed over by those who investigate sound-symbolism in ideophones, bears underscoring.

Not all ideophones show transparent form-meaning mappings, for there are limits to the iconic representational powers of speech. That speech can mimic non-linguistic sound is trivial, and that it can depict aspectual structure and intensity is also widely attested (see §7.4ff below), but beyond that we quickly run out of possibilities. Thus, while the aspectual structure of a sawing movement can be depicted by reduplication, it is less clear how one would go about depicting a colour in speech. And yet we do find ideophones for colours — not just in Siwu, but in many ideophonic languages. In fact, cross-linguistically, the meanings of ideophones frequently extend over all sensory modalities and also include inner feelings and sensations, thus encompassing many percepts that are difficult to map iconically in speech (take for instance Siwu *kpɔkɔtɔɔ* 'nervous feeling' or *ɣɛkpɛtɛɛ* 'frail').[125] Anticipating the discussion of relative iconicity below, we may note that even though colour as such may be difficult to depict in speech, there are ways to depict *relations* between colours by means of *relations* in sign forms. Still, it is quite unlikely that this strategy could scale to accommodate all possibly relevant dimensions of the varieties of sensory experience. This is what Karl Bühler meant when he wrote that sound-symbolism could never form a "coherent representational field" in language (Bühler 1934:203). To reiterate, there are limits to the iconic representational powers of speech, and there is reason to be careful in ascribing iconicity to ideophones. Below I come back to the implications of this for the class of ideophones as a whole.

With these caveats out of the way, there are still significant regularities in form-meaning mappings to be accounted for in Siwu ideophones, and it is these regularities that we will now inspect.

7.3 Imagic iconicity

IMAGIC ICONICITY (the term is based on Peirce 1932; see Haiman 1985) means that the sound of the word mimics a sound in the real world. Examples from Siwu include ideophones evoking sounds of collision and explosion (*gbûm̀* 'explosion [boom]', *kpà* 'dry impact [bang]', *tuu* 'dull impact [thud]'), water-related sounds

[125] To be clear, these words are members of the *form class* of ideophones, a class that is defined (for Siwu) in terms of a number of formal properties (see Chapter 6) rather than in terms of iconicity.

(*kpɔtsɔkpɔtsɔ* 'water bubbling', *tòlontòlontòlon* 'water dripping') and other ecologically-relevant sounds (*korrrò karrrà* 'gnawing through bones', *gadàm* 'stamping', *kìrìrì-kìrìrì* 'scratching of claws').

Semiotically, this is the simplest type of mapping; it is probably also the most familiar, as the existence of onomatopoeia is usually granted even by the staunchest proponents of the fundamental arbitrariness of the sign (Müller 1899; Newmeyer 1992). The simplicity of the mapping brings with it inherent limitations. First, and most obviously, only sound can be represented directly in the modality of speech. Imagic iconicity in sign language is therefore another thing altogether (Perniss 2007; Perniss, Thompson, and Vigliocco 2010). Second, words employing imagic iconicity are never perfectly faithful copies of the sound mimicked — as conventional linguistic signs they are embedded in the language system and largely dependent on the affordances of its phonemic inventory. This is the relative arbitrariness that, as De Saussure famously pointed out, holds even for onomatopoeia.

Numerically, imagic iconicity is of minor importance in the Siwu corpus; only about 8% of the inventory can be classified as directly imitative of sound. (I should note that there is also a handful of nouns of onomatopoeic origin like *kpɔ̀ɔkpɔ̀* 'duck', *ì-fokofoko* 'lung' and *kɛsɛkɛsɛ* 'brush-tailed porcupine', the latter named after the warning rattle it produces with its tail.) Clearly, most Siwu ideophones do not directly imitate sound. But not only are onomatopoeic ideophones relatively rare in Siwu, they also deviate from other ideophones in several ways. For example, they cannot be used as verbs and do not appear in some of the most common ideophonic constructions; and unlike most other ideophones, they *do* appear in the quotative construction. It seems that this broad distinction between ideophones imitating sounds and ideophones depicting other types of sensory events has wider cross-linguistic validity (as noted before in §5.7).

It is worth noting that not all ideophones depicting acoustic phenomena are necessarily of the imagic iconic type. Take for instance the ideophone *kpɛnɛnɛ* 'shrill, piercing [of sound, esp. voice]'. Instead of imitating a particular type of sound, as *gbíìǹ* or *tòlontòlon* do, *kpɛnɛnɛ* picks out a psychoacoustic property (roughly, brightness). We get a better feel for its meaning when we consider that it has an semantic opposite *wɔrɔrɔ* 'low, hoarse [of sound, esp. voice]'. The relevant psychoacoustic property seems to be brightness; the correspondence of the front vowel /ɛ/ and the back vowel /ɔ/ with different shades of brightness has been

well documented (Marks 1978:76-80). This, then, brings us from imagic iconicity —sound mimicking sound— to more complex types of mappings.

7.4 Diagrammatic iconicity

In DIAGRAMMATIC ICONICITY, a relationship between forms bears a relation to a relationship between meanings. Diagrammatic iconicity brings with it a wider range of possible mappings because the full range of sensory attributes of speech —including acoustic dimensions, articulatory gestures and temporal unfolding— can be used to suggest meaning. At the same time, in exchanging the direct mapping of sound onto sound for mappings that offer more degrees of freedom, we enter the realm of the *weakly iconic* (Lyons 1977:103). Here the meaning of signs cannot be deduced solely on the basis of their form, even though knowing the meaning and the representational system we can see some resemblance of form and meaning. Two types of diagrammatic iconicity are found in Siwu ideophones, and, I propose, in sound-symbolic vocabulary in general. The first, GESTALT ICONICITY, holds for individual words, while the other, RELATIVE ICONICITY, plays out in the relations between multiple words and multiple meanings.

7.4.1 Gestalt iconicity

GESTALT ICONICITY holds when there is a resemblance between word structure and structure of the perceived event. I base the term on Bühler, who noted that words may be "Gestalt-faithful" (Bühler 1934:208). Gestalt iconicity is a type of diagrammatic iconicity in that a relation between forms (the parts of the word) has a resemblance to a relation between meanings (in this case parts of the perceived event, i.e. its aspectual-temporal unfolding).

Gestalt iconicity is highly apparent in the word structures of some Siwu ideophones. Inherently reduplicated ideophones, for example, predominantly evoke perceptions of iterated or distributed events, like *mũnyɛ̃mũnyɛ̃* 'sparkling light', *sàsàsàsàsà* 'pulsatile release of urine', *biribiri* 'sowed at close intervals', *gidigidi* 'running energetically', *tsɔ̀kwɛtsɔ̀kwɛ* 'irregular sawing motion', *nyɛnɛnɛ* 'shivering' and *kpɔrɔkpɔrɔ* 'drizzling rain'. Monosyllabic ideophones, on the other hand, often evoke perceptions of unitary events, like *gbíùǹ* 'explosion', *dzâ* 'sudden appearance', *kpiɛ* 'careful step of an antelope', *pɔ* 'frog hop', *wãĩ* 'bright flash'. Words of the latter sort cannot be reduplicated, though they may sometimes be

repeated.[126] Monosyllables with an extra-long vowel (marked here by three vowel characters) typically depict unitary events that are also durative, like *saaa* 'cool sensation', *ɣàààà* 'flowing quietly without obstruction', *kããã̀* 'looking attentively'.

What is common to these examples is that the form of the word betrays something of the perceived event structure. Thus, in *mũnyɛ̃mũnyɛ̃* 'twinkling of light' the recurrence of the base **mũnyɛ̃* (which cannot occur on its own) corresponds to recurring elements in our perception of the visual pattern; in *dzâ* 'sudden appearance' the unitary form of the ideophone corresponds to the punctual nature of the perceived event; and in *ɣàààà* 'flowing quietly without obstruction' the extra-long vowel corresponds to the durative nature of the perceived event. Table 7.1 lists the most important Gestalt iconic mappings in Siwu ideophones. These regularities appear to be especially robust for ideophones evoking percepts with salient aspectual-temporal structure, such as movement, visual phenomena and sound. Thinking back to the suprasensory attributes (see note 124 on p. 163), we can note that one thing Gestalt iconicity taps into is the suprasensory attribute of DURATION and its cousin aspectual unfolding.

WORD FORM	EVENT	EXAMPLES
monosyllabic	unitary	*vuuu* 'wind blowing' *kpa* 'cluck',
open σ + long V	durative	*suuu* 'continuous burning sensation'
closed syllable	closure	*gadàm* 'stamp', *gbʉ́ʉ̀m* 'explosion'
reduplicated	distributive/ iterative	*mukumuku* 'mumbling', *yuayua* 'punctual burning sensation'
trisyllabic + redup	complex path	*gbadara-gbadara* 'walk like a drunk', *kpɔtɔrɔ-kpɔtɔrɔ* 'walk like a tortoise'
non-monovocalic	irregularity	*tsɔ̀kwɛtsɔ̀kwɛ* 'sawing', *wɔ̃rãwɔ̃rã* 'spotted'
ABB reduplication	onset + open end	*tsiriri* 'squirt'

Table 7.1 Some Gestalt iconic mappings in Siwu ideophones

[126] Repetition and reduplication are distinct in Siwu ideophones. In repetition, there are pauses between the repeated tokens (marked here by a comma). Thus, the frog hops *'pɔ, pɔ, pɔ'* and not *pɔpɔpɔ*, and the antelope may walk *'kpiɛ, kpiɛ'* but not *kpiɛkpiɛ* (which happens to be another ideophone — 'sizzling hot').

In the discussion of the phonotactics of ideophones in §6.2 we saw another regularity in form that appears to tell us something about meaning. Many Siwu ideophones show feature harmony: vowel quality and related phonetic cues behave as if they are specified for the ideophone as a whole. A possible reason for this is that vowels often depict suprasensory attributes like intensity, magnitude and quality, and as I speculated in §6.2, "since these attributes often vary across, but rarely *within* percepts, one would expect them to vary across, but not so much *within* ideophones — as indeed they do in Siwu, and also, it seems, in most other ideophonic languages." This proposal helps explain the monovocalic and monotonal nature of many ideophones. Moreover, the ideophones that are not monovocalic appear to be exceptions that prove the rule. So while *gelegele* 'shiny' depicts a glowing light source, *mũnyɛ̃mũnyɛ̃* 'twinkling' focuses on differences in brightness; whereas *tsarara* 'fluid' depicts the fluid state of a liquid, *nyìnàà* 'coagulated' depicts the change of state of a liquid into a thickened mass; while *ɣàà* depicts water flowing steadily, *tsoàà* 'splash' is a sudden movement of water; and where *fututuu* 'pure white' depicts a state of uniform whiteness, *wɔ̃rãwɔ̃rã* 'spotted' highlights the irregular distribution of colour patches.

We have to ask —mindful of the caveat in §7.2— whether we are not over-eager in ascribing Gestalt iconicity to ideophones. Though it is not possible to offer conclusive proof within the scope of this chapter, two arguments can be made. Firstly, it would be rather surprising if the distribution of forms over meanings were reversed, as in the hypothetical **dzâ* 'twinkling of light' and **mũnyɛ̃mũnyɛ̃* 'sudden appearance', or **pɔ* 'shivering' and **nyɛnɛnɛ* 'frog hop'. That is, the distribution of forms over meanings at least in the examples discussed here seems too skewed to be arbitrary. I leave this as an empirical question, which can be tested along the lines of earlier studies of iconicity and expressivity in the lexicon (Klamer 2002; Gasser, Sethuraman, and Hockema 2005). Secondly, there is a suggestive piece of evidence in the form of the hand gestures that accompany folk definitions of ideophones (see chapter 9). For example, in explaining *mũnyɛ̃mũnyɛ̃* 'twinkling of light', speakers make flashing gestures in synchrony with the reduplicated base **mũnyɛ̃*. And in explaining *bɔgɔbɔgɔ* 'resilient', speakers repeatedly bend an imaginary cane, the bending gestures perfectly aligned with

the repetitions of **bɔgɔ* (see Extract 9.9 on p. 223). Ideophone and gesture work together to depict imagery of sparkling lights and a resilient cane, respectively.[127]

There is the possibility that some of the ideophones that do not appear to be transparently iconic do in fact reflect perceived event structure. While it is clear that ideophones do project a certain cognitive construal of events (cf. Nuckolls' (1995) analogy with cinematic techniques), I am hesitant to accept their form as the only indication of such construals, because circularity is never far away. For example, I might claim that the monosyllabic, prolonged ideophone *ɣèèè* 'animals swarming in great numbers' entails a holistic construal of the swarming event as opposed to a construal that focuses on the distributive nature of the event (in which case we would expect reduplication), chalking it up as another example of Gestalt iconicity, but this would sidestep what is in fact an empirical question. Gesture again provides suggestive evidence —*ɣèèè* comes with a single left to right flowing hand gesture— but the issue merits further research and could in fact be a fruitful locus for cross-linguistic investigation. For example, consider the Japanese ideophone *uja-uja* 'many small things gathered together and moving' (Figure 7.1, page opposite). Does this form, which, unlike Siwu *ɣèèè*, is reduplicated, entail a construal of a swarming event that focuses more on its plurality?

7.4.2 Relative iconicity

RELATIVE ICONICITY involves mapping a relation between forms onto a relation between meanings. Like Gestalt iconicity, it is a type of diagrammatic iconicity; but unlike Gestalt iconicity, which focuses on the internal structure of signs and meanings, relative iconicity concerns a relation between multiple signs that has a resemblance to the relation between multiple meanings. As an example, recall *kpɛnɛnɛ* 'high, shrill voice' and *wɔrɔro* 'low, hoarse voice'. In these two signs, the relation between the front vowel /ɛ/ and the back vowel /ɔ/ bears a resemblance to the relation between their objects, a sound high in brightness versus a sound low in brightness (on brightness as a psychoacoustic attribute of sound, see Marks (1978)).

[127] It remains to be shown, of course, that this is more than mere synchronisation of motor processes.

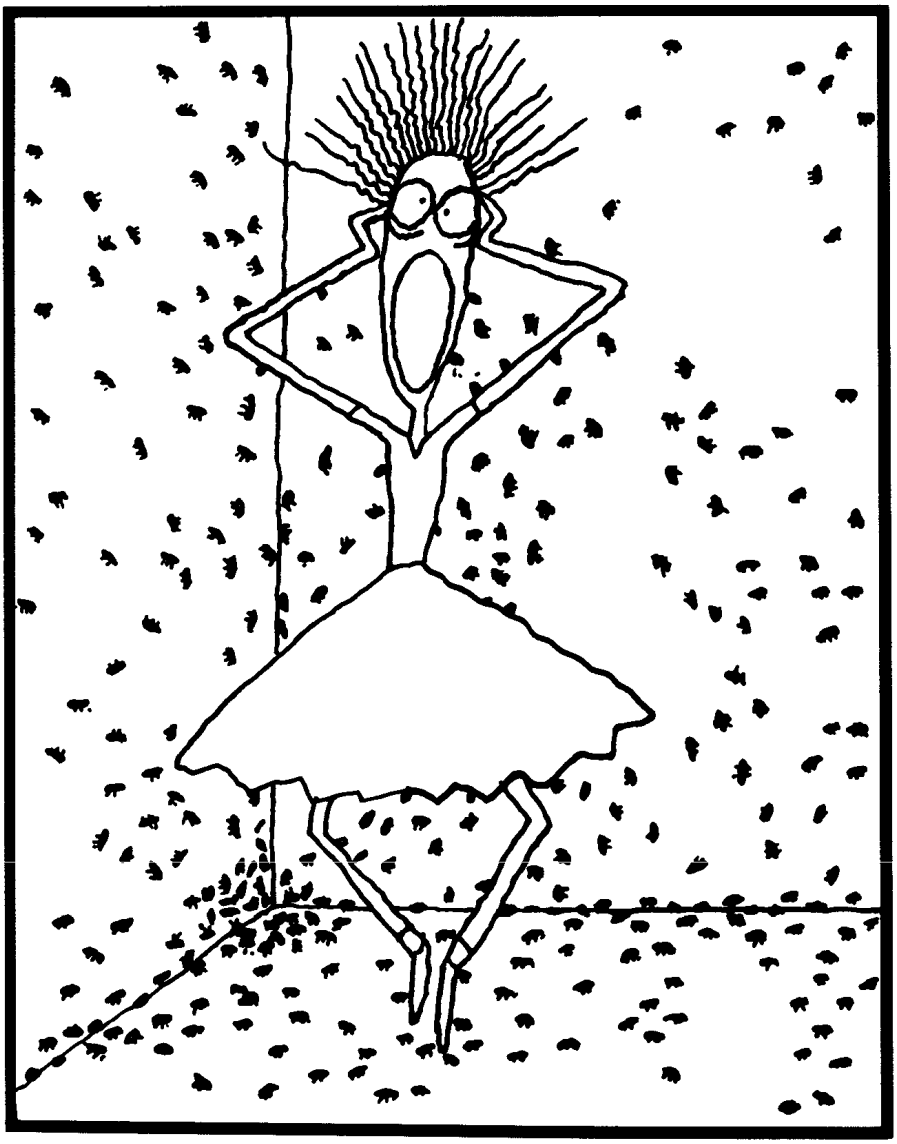

Figure 7.1 The Japanese ideophone *uja uja* illustrated (Gomi 1989:24)

Many sets of ideophones show relative iconicity. The members of such sets differ minimally from each other in both form and meaning. This can be seen as a form of templatic morphology in that there is a stable segmental skeleton, which we can call the template, and a variable part in which members of a sound-symbolic series appear. In (106) for example, the vowel slots in the template *pVmbVlVV* can be occupied by /ɔ/, /u/, or /i/, resulting in different shades of the basic meaning 'protruding (of the belly)'. The template holds together the three ideophones, signifying that they belong to the same domain of sensory quality.

(106) *pɔmbɔlɔɔ*
pumbuluu 'protruding (of the belly)' (/ɔ/ is largest, /i/ is smallest)
pimbilii

Or take the contrast between *foforo-fo* 'lightweight (e.g. as a slim person)' and *fɛfɛrɛ-fɛ* 'very lightweight (e.g. as a feather)', exemplified in (107) and (108) below. The different magnitudes are represented by the relation between front vowel /ɛ/ and the back vowel /o/.

(107) *ɔ-sɔ̀* *ɔ̀rãrã,* *ɔ̀so* *ɔ̀bra* *foforofo*
3SG:PST-lose weight, reason 3SG-make IDPH.light
she lost weight, so now she is *foforofo* [light]

(108) *kàkosɛ́í* *ba* *fɛfɛrɛfɛ*
paper.piece have IDPH.very.light
the piece of paper is *fɛfɛrɛfɛ* [very light]

It is not only vowels that change. In the pair *tsratsratsra* 'fast and light walk' and *dzràdzràdzrà* 'fast and heavy walk' the differences in the weight of the moving figure are represented by the relation between the voiceless palatal affricate /ts/ and its voiced counterpart /dz/ as well as by the difference in tonal melody (high versus low).

Relative iconicity is attested in ideophone inventories all over the world. Westermann (1927a) was the first to outline several recurrent relative iconic mappings in the ideophone systems of a number of West-African languages, for example high tones, light vowels and voiceless consonants evoke smallness, clearness and speed, whereas low tones, dark vowels and voiced consonants evoke large size, dullness and slowness. Since then, mappings like these (especially vowel contrasts) have become one of the most widely researched topics in sound

symbolism; useful reviews are Marks (1978) and Hinton, Nichols and Ohala (Hinton, Nichols, and Ohala 1994). Recent work by Sylvia Tufvesson (2011) on ideophones in Semai (Aslian, Malaysia) has examined in detail how the device of relative iconicity ties together related sensory experiences and enables the encoding of gradient perceptual experiences by gradient linguistic forms.

Many of the cases of relative iconicity in Siwu ideophones can be grouped under the heading of magnitude symbolism and fit what has been called the frequency code (Ohala 1984; 1994): the observation that sounds made by large animals and objects tend to feature low acoustic frequencies, while sounds made by small animals and objects tend to be high in acoustic frequencies. One could say that they hook into the suprasensory attribute of INTENSITY. But there are also cases like *saaa* 'cool sensation [e.g. ginger]' and *suuu* 'burning sensation [e.g. pepper]', in which the different vowel qualities map onto different but related sensory qualities rather than a scalar attribute like intensity. In such cases there seems to be no reason other than convention why /a/ should go with 'cool' and /u/ with 'burning' (Diffloth 1994), but still the resemblance between the words marks them as being about the same kind of sensory experience. One could say that such cases represent the use of relative iconicity to capture the suprasensory attribute of QUALITY.

A special case of relative iconicity is that of phonaesthemes: submorphemic elements found across a number of semantically related words. Some examples from English were discussed in §2.7.2. Phonaesthemic patterns are also found in Siwu ideophones. An example is word-initial *ny-*, found in ideophones involving some kind of torsion, wriggling, wrinkling or twisting: *nyãkãnyãkã̀* 'wrinkled', *nyɛgɛɖɛɛ* 'twisted, crooked', *nyɛmɛrɛ-nyɛmɛrɛ* 'small snake wriggling', *nyɔ̃ɔ̃ɔ̃* 'big snake wriggling', *nyènènè* 'shivering of cold' , *nyɔ̃kɔ̃tɔ̃ɔ̃* 'writhing due to being nauseated', *nyagbalaa* 'sharp taste/pungent smell', *nyanyarɪ̃ɪ̃* 'general disapproval'.

Two points should be made in this connection. First, this example points to the possible role not only of speech sounds, but also of articulatory movements and sensations in the depictive work that ideophones do. It is tempting, for instance, to form an association between the evocation of twisting, writhing, wriggling movement in these words and the twisted configuration of the tongue in articulating the phonaestheme */ny-/*. Even though this kind of association is at this point difficult to prove, the very fact that we are tempted to form it implicates that the listener and speaker, too, may be tempted in the same way, thereby partly grounding the rich meaning of the ideophones in the rich bundle of perceptual

structures that make up the word as it is uttered (see Diffloth 1972:444 for some pertinent suggestions on this topic). The second point concerns the distribution of phonaesthemes. Unlike in languages like English, where phonaesthemes are scattered through the general lexicon, it is my impression that in Siwu such patterns are restricted to the ideophonic portion of the lexicon. I merely mention this impression to flag it as an issue for further research; to my knowledge, no systematic investigation has compared the differential distribution of phonaesthemes in ideophonic and non-ideophonic languages.

In all, about one-fifth of the Siwu ideophone inventory partakes in sets of relative iconicity. Like primary and Gestalt iconicity, relative iconicity is clearly visible in the Siwu ideophone corpus, though it is not a feature of all ideophones. So it appears that not all ideophones are transparently iconic. This is what the remainder of the chapter comes to terms with. But before we move on it is useful to take stock of what we learnt so far.

As we saw in §7.3, imagic iconicity is semiotically speaking the simplest type of mapping, and it underlies the imitation of sound with sound seen in the subset of ideophones that is often called onomatopoeia. Gestalt iconicity enables ideophones to evoke the suprasensory attribute of DURATION (and its cousin aspectual unfolding), while relative iconicity can be seen to capture the suprasensory attributes of INTENSITY and QUALITY. This leads to an important observation: the principles of Gestalt and relative iconicity enable ideophones to move beyond the imitation of singular events toward cross-modal associations, perceptual analogies and generalisations of event structure. Together, the three principles of imagic, Gestalt and relative iconicity provide a semiotic explanation of what makes ideophones good at depicting sensory imagery.

7.5 Beyond lexical iconicity

So far we have seen a number of different kinds of iconic form-meaning mappings in Siwu ideophones. Though they are common enough to be apparent in many ideophones, and to function as a repertoire for ideophone creation (see chapter 13), collectively they do not appear to apply to all ideophones in the inventory. The same appears to hold for the ideophone inventories of many other languages, although one would be hard-pressed to find researchers stating this clearly. Have ideophone enthusiasts (native speakers as well as linguists) been overzealous in

iconicizing ideophones, or are there other good reasons for the fact that the form of ideophones is so often identified with their meaning?

This is a problem that indirectly affects many studies of ideophones, so it is worth elaborating a bit. Some authors have insisted that the class of ideophones be restricted to words containing regular form-meaning mappings (Fordyce 1983; 1988 on Yoruba and English) or have simply defined ideophones as words showing a direct connection between sounds and the meanings they convey (e.g. Svantesson 1983; Wayland 1996; Johnson 1976; Maduka 1988; Tedlock 1999). Kulemeka (1995) correctly identified this practice as problematic, pointing out that it excludes many words that are members of the same form class but whose iconic status is less clear-cut. Instead he recommended a structure-based rather than a sound-symbolism based approach, proposing that the class of ideophones should be defined on language-internal structural grounds rather than in terms of sound-symbolism.

Even though I find myself largely in agreement with Kulemeka's view (cf. the structural description of the ideophone system of Siwu in chapter 6), I do not think that should be the end of the story: clearly there is *something* about ideophones that invites us to treat their form and meaning as closely intertwined. I suggest that this something is more than just the lexicalised iconic patterns that the literature has tended to focus on so far. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to digging deeper. Two lines of reasoning are developed. One is aimed at the performative side of depiction; it argues, in brief, that lexicalised iconicity is only part of the story, and that we need to look at what can be done in actual performance. The other takes its cue from an analog in figurative art; it explains why we should not get hung up on the putative lifelikeness of ideophonic forms, because that obscures the fact that it is the depictive mode of representation that is of primary importance.

7.5.1 Ideophones and performance

The focus of the preceding sections has been on iconic form-meaning mappings in the lexical forms of ideophones. We can think of these mappings as lexicalised iconicity. To identify and describe some of the regularities of these mappings, we have been looking at phonemic renditions of ideophones in isolation. This has been the modus operandi of the great majority of studies of iconicity in ideophones (Westermann 1927a; Diffloth 1972; Wescott 1975; Jakobson and

Waugh 1979; Maduka 1988; Hamano 1998; Egbokhare 2001, among many others). But these sanitised phonemic representations are at far remove from actual instances of use. We can get a much better view of the depictive nature of ideophones if we examine their use in actual speech. It is there, in the ideophonic performance, that the power of depiction in speech can be experienced in full force.

One of several ideophone researchers to have drawn attention to the importance of the ideophonic performance is Janis Nuckolls (1995; 1996; 1999). Nuckolls has described how ideophones in Pastaza Quechua performatively express aspectual phenomena like durativity and perfectivity. She has also innovatively drawn from cinematic terminology like "close-up shot", "wide angle shot", "fast motion shot" and "slow motion shot" (1995:150) to capture the kinds of imagery evoked by ideophonic performances in Pastaza Quechua narratives.

Nuckolls' emphasis on the importance of performance is borne out in the Siwu data. Consider the following example, taken from the corpus of everyday conversation. The speaker, A, is just launching a telling about a time the previous week when she pounded a small amount of rice to make rice flour. In line 5, she follows up her description of the pounding of some rice (*ǹdo lowètè*, 'I'm pounding') with an ideophonic performance, depicting the pounding with a repeated *kpɔ*. In itself —that is, generalizing over instances of its use— this ideophone *kpɔ* can be translated as "sound of physical impact". From its phonemic transcription in isolation we can already glean an impression of a combination of imagic iconicity (a resemblance to the sound of hard things hitting each other) and Gestalt iconicity (a resemblance between the monosyllabic word structure and the spatiotemporal structure of the hitting event). But it is through A's performance in line 5 that it becomes a vivid depiction of the pounding event. The depiction is set off from the preceding description by a brief pause (0.2s). Features of its performance include a markedly higher pitch and a slow-paced repetition of *kpɔ* that is not mere word repetition, even less reduplication, but rather an accurately timed recreation of the pounding event.[128]

[128] In normal speech, silences of this length (0.9s) are hearable as markedly long pauses. In the ideophonic performance in this example, they tend to mark the speaker of our example as someone "pounding like an elderly lady", as one of my consultants remarked on the basis of my reenactment. The original speaker was indeed an elderly lady.

Extract 7.1 Pounding « 0:30:53 « Palm oil_4 **(S)**

1 (5.0)
2 A *igɔ̀ ɖedà ilɛ ló-sè*
TDBY WH place 1SG:PST-come.from
last week, wherever I was
3 *fiɛ ló-bà la-a-bara kàmɔ-kaɣɛ́ ló*
before 1SG:PST-come 1SG-FUT-make RICE-DIM.mortar FP.ADV
when I prepared a small mortar of rice
4 (0.7)
5 *ǹdo lowètè* (0.2) *↑kpɔ↑* (0.9) *↑kpɔ↑* (0.9)
1SG-PROG 1sg-pound IDPH.impact IDPH.impact
I'm pounding, (0.2) *↑kpɔ↑* (0.9) *↑kpɔ↑* (0.9)
6 ((telling continues))

The pounding example shows that ideophones imitative of sound can in actual performance serve to create accurately timed depictions of events. A subtly different case is the following, which gives us the chance to contrast the performances of two semantically opposite ideophones. The fragment is taken from a conversation during the making of gunpowder. Speaker D explains that while sieving a batch of gunpowder to remove any remaining lumpy bits, one should exercise the greatest care, for there is a danger of self-ignition. He performatively depicts this with a greatly slowed-down enunciation of the ideophone *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'slowly, gently' (line 31-32).

Extract 7.2 Sieving « 0:46:13 « Gunpowder **(S)**

31 D *iyɔ̀ nɛ ɔ̀ti kere a-à-ti*
then TP PFOC-shake just 2SG-FUT-shake
so then you'll just be sieving
32 *<pɔkɔsɔ[ɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔ[ɔɔɔɔɔɔ>*
IDPH.slowly
<pɔkɔsɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔɔ> [slowly]
33 A [*dzɛ aba- d- ɛ- [>si ababara >'eterè<* *iɔmɔɛ ɔ̀tɔ̂!<*
if 2SG- if 2SG-PLUR.do IDPH.harshly it-PF-catch fire
if you d- d- ɛ- >if you did it >*'eterè*< [harshly] it'd catch fire<
34 D [ee!
35 ((conversation continues))

The duration of D's performance of *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'slowly, gently' in line 31-32 is 1.6 seconds, making up more than half of the total length of his utterance in line 1. In contrast, the total length of A's performance of *teterèè* 'loudly, harshly' in line 33 is 0.2 seconds, and its pronunciation is rushed. D's performance invites us to project into the drawn-out and carefully articulated *pɔkɔsɔɔɔɔɔɔɔ* a great slowness and care in sieving; A's throwaway performance of *teterèè* 'loudly, carelessly' on the other hand evokes precisely the lack of care that would lead to an explosion. Additionally, D's performance in line 32 features another depictive device: gesture. While pronouncing the ideophone *pɔkɔsɔɔ* he enacts the slow, careful moving of the sieve.

Timing is only one of the things that can be depicted in ideophonic performances. Another is intensity, which may show itself in the loudness of the ideophonic performance. Consider the following explanation of *kpoo* 'still' by Ella (for background on folk definitions of ideophones, see chapter 9). In the scenario she enacts, a person is standing motionless *kpoo*, which elicits a question ('what's the matter with you?'). What is notable about the combination of description and ideophonic depiction in this explanation is that the latter differs from the former in just about all aspects of performance: it is pronounced at a higher pitch, a slightly slower pace, a lower volume and with a whispery voice quality.[129] These performance characteristics function not just to set the depiction apart from the rest of the sentence; they also help to enact the event depicted.

Extract 7.3 Folk definition of *kpoo* 'still' by Ella (excerpts) **(S)**

1	E	°↑*kpooooooo*↑°
		IDPH.still.EM
		°↑kpooooooo↑°
2		*Oh! Be ɖo-ɔ̀ à-yɛ kpoo gbɔ?*
		INTJ what hurt-2SG.O 2SG-stand IDPH.still manner
		Oh! What hurt you that you stand *kpoo* like that?
3		°*À ɣɛ ↑kpooooo*↑°
		2SG-stand IDPH.still.EM
		°You stand ↑*kpooooo*↑°

[129] Not all of these aspects could be marked in the textual transcript, so the reader is advised to check out the clip in the online supplementary materials for sound and image.

4 *Ɔ̀nyɛ ato-o?*
sickness 2SG-hold-Q
Are you sick?
5 *fiɛ aɣɛ °kpoo: gbɔ?°*
before 2SG-stand IDPH.still manner
that you're standing °*kpoo:* like that?°
6 *Itì te ìɖoɖo mɛ̀ ɔ̀so lòɣɛ °↑kpooo↑°*
I.head PROG I.S-PLUR.hurt 1SG.O reason 1SG-stand IDPH.still.EM
I'm having a headache so I'm standing °↑*kpooo*↑°
7 *Ɔ̀yu to mɛ̀, ɔ̀so lòɣɛ °↑kpooo↑°*
cold hold 1SG.O, reason 1SG-stand IDPH.still.EM
I'm feeling cold, so I'm standing °↑*kpooo*↑°

In an earlier chapter (§2.6) I mentioned another ideophone to do with silence, *kananaa*, in the context of a potential question: how does a given string of sounds come to be associated with a given meaning? I invoked a sceptical reader asking "How exactly is *kananaa* depictive of silence?" The same could be asked of *kpoo*. The answer I gave in that context —part depiction, part convention— still stands, but here we see that it can be misleading to ask this question of a sanitised phonemic string. It is in the actual performance that the full depictive potential of an ideophone comes to the fore.

At this point, a question that might fairly be raised is to what extent these are the analyst's judgements rather than the speaker's. True, the hushed voice happens to be there with *kpoo* 'still' and not with *teterèè* 'loud', but is it *produced as* a performative depiction? This sceptical query would target not just the claims made above but also the careful descriptions of ideophonic performances in Quechua by Nuckolls mentioned above. To confront this problem I decided to do an informal breaching experiment.

The goal of a breaching experiment (Garfinkel 1967) is to discover whether departures from ordinary practices and taken-for-granted norms are treated as such — that is, treated as departures that are sanctionable in some way. If they are, we may expect that the way they are treated sheds light on how the practices themselves are constituted. In the case at hand, the assumption is that speakers fashion their ideophonic performance in particular ways to depict aspects of sensory imagery. We can address this assumption by behaving contrary to it and seeing how speakers react to this. To this end, I selected some of ideophones from

the corpus and created a number of Siwu sentences that in written form were grammatical and made perfect sense. I then asked a number of Siwu speakers to "listen to a bit of speech" and to "improve it if needed." I pronounced the sentences in a normal way, except for the ideophonic performance, in which I varied the variables that I argued above to be at play (loudness, timing, and aspectual unfolding), making them incongruent with their assumed optimal values.

To show how this works, consider the following transcript of a trial involving the ideophone *kpoo* 'still'. As shown by the arrows and capitals, my performance featured an intonationally foregrounded and loudly pronounced version of the ideophone (line 1). It is important to note that these performance characteristics per se —intonational foregrounding and loudness relative to the preceding verbal material— are not at all uncommon for ideophones: we find many examples like this in the corpus. The difference of course is that in this case the performance is designed to be incongruent with the particular event (stillness and silence) that the ideophone is supposed to enact.

Extract 7.4 Breaching experiment: *kpoo* 'quiet' (AW) **(S)**

1 M *nɔ̀mɛ nɛ, ɔ̀magɛ̃ se ↑KPOOOO↑*
today TP town be IDPH.quiet
Today, the town is ↑*KPOOOO*↑ [quiet]
2 (1.7)
3 A *nɔ̀mɛ nɛ, ɔmagɛ̀̃ ìse kpoooo*
today TP town it-be IDPH.quiet
Today, the town is *kpooo* [quiet]
4 (0.4)
5 M *nɔmɛ nɛ, ɔmãgɛ̃ ìse ↑KPOOOO↑*
today TP town it-be IDPH.quiet
Today, the town is ↑*KPOOO*↑ [quiet]
6 (1.4)
7 A *ɖà- ɖà ɣɛ teterèè kàtsorakɔ̃*
NEG.IMP speak IDPH.loud KA.last.place
Don- Don't speak loudly at the end.
8 (0.3)

9 M *aaa, àooo*
INTJ okay
Ah, okay.

Here is what happened. After my initial performance, my consultant repeated the sentence, but, crucially, he left out the exaggerated performance characteristics of my rendition (line 3). I then repeated the sentence, making sure to copy exactly his intonation contour, but again pronouncing the ideophone loudly and with intonational foregrounding (line 5). After this second breach, he produced a normative formulation to point out his problem with the performance: "Don't speak loudly at the end."

However, perhaps my consultant was simply normalizing the utterance; perhaps the problem was not so much the incongruence of the delivery with the supposed event depicted by the ideophone as its general difference from the preceding material. The next trial shows that this is probably not what was happening. It involves the same ideophone we saw before in the pounding event (Extract 7.1 above). The claim I made there was that the ideophone's slow-paced delivery was an exquisitely timed depiction of the pounding event. To test this assumption I breached it by speeding up the delivery of the ideophone repetitions. My delivery brought the ideophone in line with the rest of the sentence in terms of speed. If normalisation were at issue, in this case there should be nothing to normalise. If however there were unwritten rules of ideophone performance, my delivery would be corrected.

Extract 7.5 Breaching experiment: *kpɔ, kpɔ* 'pounding' (ƆG) **(S)**

1 M *ǹdo lowètè fufu, lowètè kpɔ kpɔ kpɔ kpɔ kpɔ*
1SG-PROG 1SG-pound fufu 1SG-pound IDPH IDPH IDPH IDPH IDPH
I'm pounding fufu, I pound *kpɔ kpɔ kpɔ kpɔ kpɔ*
2 (0.5)
3 Ɔ *ǹdo lowètè fufu. kpɔ* (0.3) *kpɔ* (0.3) *kpɔ*
1SG-PROG 1SG-pound fufu IDPH IDPH IDPH
⊦ G1 ⊣ ⊦ G1 ⊣ ⊦ G1 ⊣ (G1: pounding movement)
I'm pounding fufu. *kpɔ* (0.3) *kpɔ* (0.3) *kpɔ*

As expected, my consultant repeated the sentence almost verbatim, with one crucial difference: the ideophonic performance was delivered almost twice as slow as my own rendition (every *kpɔ* plus pause took him .45s instead of my .24s).

Clearly normalisation is not at issue here; rather, my delivery of the ideophone was treated as a performance, but an imperfect one that needed setting right. The consultant's version repaired it by slowing it down. Moreover, he introduced another depictive technique, a clear mark of performance: a gesture of a clenched fist moving down in synchrony with the pounding movement depicted by the ideophone.

Other trials showed the same kind of pattern. A drawling delivery of the ideophone *gìdìgìdì* 'energetically' was corrected to a much more hurried version, accompanied by running movements **(S)**. A performance of the ideophone *kpu* 'sound of dull impact' as *kpuuuu* (lengthening the final vowel) was corrected to ↑*KPÛ*↑, markedly louder and performed as a short burst of energy accompanied by a hitting gesture **(S)**. A performance of the ideophone *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'slowly, carefully' that featured a number of quick-paced repetitions was brought down to one slowly pronounced token.[130]

Let me wrap up the argument. There is one thing uniting the actual performances in the corpus and the elicited corrections of my breaches: they bring to life the depicted event in a way that ordinary words, or indeed my deliberately incongruent performances, do not. This is the hallmark of depiction. Recall from chapter 2 that depictions work by enabling others to experience what it is like to perceive the things depicted. This is precisely what these performances accomplish. Thus, while lexical iconicity provides ideophones with several ways to depict sensory imagery, the full power of depiction in speech is unleashed in the actual performance.[131]

From the timed *kpɔ, kpɔ* and the slow *pɔkɔsɔɔ* to the hushed *kpooo* and the rushed *gidigidi*, the overall picture we get is that ideophonic performances enable the listener to experience something of the qualia structure of the sensory experience. On the basis of the data considered here, we can already predict that

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[130] Audio clips for these trials can be found in the online supplementary materials. A fuller version of a breaching experiment would feature congruent and incongruent performances, carefully balancing ideophones and performance characteristics to see which performance characteristics are treated as repairable (and hence accountable) for which ideophones. It would also add manipulations of non-ideophonic words to compare the types of corrections made. There is a lot more to say about this, but for now it will have to be added to the pile of issues flagged for further research.

[131] Of course the thoroughly multimodal nature of the performances (including body movement, facial expressions, and gestures) also plays an important role here. I have not stressed this in the present discussion because this topic is discussed at some length in chapters 9 and 14.

the combined power of lexicalised iconicity and actual performance must make ideophones a powerful device to enable others to share in sensory experiences. We will have the occasion to investigate this intuition in detail in Part IV of the thesis.

7.5.2 Ideophones and artists' renditions

Above I flagged one final complication that remains to be addressed: what about ideophones relating to sensory imagery that seems difficult to depict in speech? This is a curious problem that is rarely confronted in the ideophone literature. Indeed, many accounts of ideophones as sound-symbolic words would have us believe that neat iconic form-meaning mappings are all we find in ideophone inventories (but see Akita 2009). It is probably no coincidence that most treatments of sound symbolism in ideophones have tended to focus on examples that involve relatively concrete things like magnitude and aspectual structure. Yet cross-linguistically, the meanings of ideophones extend to all sensory modalities and also include inner feelings and sensations. How does one iconically map colours, internal sensations, or cognitive states? Is iconicity really the point of ideophones like Siwu *fùrùfùrù* 'seeing things in a blur' or Japanese *iya iya* 'with a heavy heart' (Gomi 1989)? As noted above, some authors have tacitly recognised this problem and have simply wished it away by making iconic form-meaning mappings a defining feature of ideophones. This is vastly undesirable, as it offers no account of the words that are members of the same form class but whose iconic status is less clear-cut. But how then can we handle such cases?

At issue is a crucial distinction between iconicity (perceived resemblance, for short) and depiction. The problem has an analog in figurative art. As the art historian Ernst Gombrich (2002[1960]) has shown, not all paintings can be said to bear an equal amount of resemblance to external reality; in fact different periods are known to have had different standards of "lifelikeness". And yet there is a distinct and consistent interpretive frame we bring to all of these representations: we tend to view them as depictions rather than read them as texts (Gombrich 2002[1960]; Walton 1973). We view them as such not primarily because they show a certain resemblance to external reality, but rather because they are presented to us as depictions. To see that resemblance to external reality is less crucial than the mode of representation, consider the familiar case of an artist's rendition of the internal structure of an atom (for instance, Lithium in Figure 7.2). Such a representation concerns entities like electrons, protons and neutrons that

cannot even be directly apprehended by our senses, and yet we feel that it is reasonably successful in letting us experience aspects of what the atom is like — successful enough, at any rate, for illustrations of this type to accompany descriptions of atomic structure in many textbooks. The point is that artists' renditions communicate well. They do so thanks to their depictive mode of representation and in spite of their frequent lack of direct correspondence to what is perceived or perceivable.

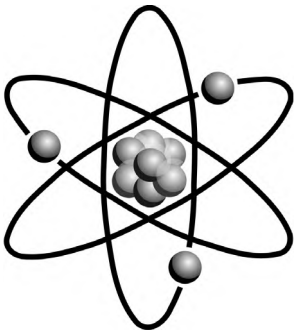

Figure 7.2 Artist's rendition of a Lithium atom

The crucial feature, then, is not "resemblance to" but "invitation to seeing as".[132] How does this help in our case of ideophones whose iconic status seems less clear-cut? By reminding us that it is not in the first place iconicity, but depiction that determines how speakers and listeners treat ideophonic word forms. Just as a picture frame makes the viewer more inclined to interpret the material inside it as a depiction, so will speech material be treated as a depiction if it is presented as one. Seen in this light, an ideophone like *fùrùfùrù* is the artist's rendition of blurry vision in Siwu: it is an adequate depiction because it is treated as such in the speech community.[133] If we want to invoke the term iconicity here at all, we would have to call it COERCED ICONICITY.[134] The depictive nature of the ideophone coerces us into thinking of the word as an adequate rendition of the depicted event. Some ideophones, then, may be considered good ideophones not so much

[132] For another analogy, consider a set of lines that can be interpreted as depicting a face. If these lines are instantiated as a pattern in the bark of a tree, one is unlikely to see it as a depiction — it is just a strip of bark. If the same piece of bark is framed and encountered in an art exhibition, it is likely to be seen as a depiction. What counts the most is not the resemblance but the framing (the "invitation to seeing as").

[133] In a trivial way this holds for all ideophones of course. The difference between *fùrùfùrù* and more clear-cut cases may be expressed by saying that *fùrùfùrù* is an adequate depiction *only* because it is treated as such in some speech community, whereas many other ideophones can be said to be adequate depictions *not only* because they are treated as such in some speech community *but also* because of certain perceivable form-meaning correspondences.

[134] This term was suggested to me by Felix Ameka.

because form resembles meaning *a priori*, but because they are like other ideophones in being presented as depictions.

There is some suggestive evidence from experiments carried out by Kimi Akita (2009a) to support this point. Akita investigated sound symbolic interpretations of ideophones and non-ideophones. In one experiment, speakers of Japanese rated novel words for size of an imagined referent. Consonant voicing, vowel quality and morphophonological similarity to ideophones were systematically varied in the novel words. In a follow-up experiment, the novel words were placed in a sentential frame that specified part of their meaning. The results suggest that subjects were more inclined to 'see' magnitude symbolism in novel words that sounded like ideophones than in novel words that sounded like ordinary words; and crucially, the effect was strongest for ideophone-like words presented in an ideophonic construction. In terms of the present discussion, people were most inclined to see form-meaning mappings in novel words when they were presented as depictions.

A final point. Artists' renditions do not spring out of nothing. It would probably be difficult for them to do their work in the absence of a core class of depictions that show some iconic grounding in the reality as apprehended by our senses. Without a prior tradition of depicting concrete objects and scenes of everyday life, the artist's rendition of the atom would not exist. Likewise, we may assume that ideophone systems start with a relatively concrete core, and if the idea of having a depictive word class catches on, it may extend to more abstract areas. 'Concrete' and 'abstract' here are not discrete properties but rather two sides of a continuum defined by resemblance of form to meaning; and resemblance in turn is inversely related to degrees of freedom available in the iconic mapping. Thus, ideophones mimicking sound show a relatively great degree of resemblance and a low degree of freedom in iconic mapping (for in imagic iconicity, there has to be some match in spectrographic information). Ideophones depictive of non-auditory sensory imagery use weakly iconic mappings like Gestalt and relative iconicity that offer more degrees of freedom (more ways of suggesting sense with sound) and hence a lesser degree of direct resemblance. Finally, the ideophones I discussed above as artist's renditions may show very little or no resemblance at all except through coerced iconicity.

If, as I propose, the more concrete core is needed as a backdrop or counterweight to what I have called here "artist's renditions", this generates the following typological hypothesis: we should expect to find ideophone systems that

have the concrete core but not much else besides; we should also find ideophones systems with the concrete core and extensions, to varying degrees, into more abstract areas; but we should not find systems that entirely lack the concrete core yet have a class of depictive words for more abstract areas.

This is exactly what we find, in the form of an implicational hierarchy in the typology of ideophone systems. There are languages whose ideophone systems appear to be limited mainly to onomatopoeic ideophones: the concrete side of the continuum. Examples are Navajo (Southern Athabaskan, Reichard 1950; Webster 2008a) and Upper Necaxa Totonac (Totonac-Tepehua, Beck 2008).[135] In contrast, there are no reports of languages whose ideophone system is limited to the abstract side of the continuum, featuring only ideophones depicting cognitive states and inner sensations that are difficult to map iconically in speech. This is in line with my proposal that depictions of more 'abstract' sensory imagery cannot exist in a vacuum but must build on existing practices of depiction that are anchored in more tangible iconic mappings.[136]

Among the many languages with ideophone systems that go beyond the imitation of sound we may expect further differentiation, though few descriptions include enough information on semantic domains and iconic mappings to judge this at this point. And there is no doubt that factors other than semiotic underpinnings are also of relevance with regard to the differential elaboration of ideophone systems. Interestingly, in the largest systems described so far, for

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[135] These authors do not comment explicitly on this. Webster uses the terms 'ideophone' and 'onomatopoeia' interchangeably, and indeed his examples are all limited to the imitation of sound. Beck states that "Many [Upper Necaxa Totonac] ideophones—like ideophones in other languages—are onomatopoeic" (2008:3). He does cite a number of ideophones depicting non-auditory (or not exclusively auditory) sensory imagery, so clearly Upper Necaxa Totonac goes a bit beyond having just onomatopoeia.

[136] A related but different proposal is Kimi Akita's "Lexical Iconicity Hierarchy" (LIH, Akita 2009a). The LIH is primarily a proposal about a relation between the degree of iconicity and the degree of morphosyntactic integration of ideophones (2009a:20-27). Using evidence from a sample of eight languages, Akita shows that the more onomatopoeia-like an ideophone is, the more peripheral its syntactic realization tends to be (2009a:249-270). Akita conjectures that the LIH might also be reflected in "the order of abundance of each type of mimetics within and across languages" (2009a:21). This seems only partly right: although onomatopoeia appear to be universal, they rarely are the most numerous type in languages with significant ideophone systems. This is due to the fact that imagic iconicity is not just the most concrete, but also the simplest type of iconic mapping. It is too limited to provide much expressive power.

instance Gbaya, Semai and Japanese, the proportion of sound-imitating ideophones is relatively low. This too is not surprising from the perspective taken here: imagic iconicity is the simplest mapping and therefore the most limited. Once we enter the realm of what Lyons (1977:103) has called the weakly iconic we gain a much larger possibility space for iconic mappings, at the expense, of course, of direct anchoring in simple similarity.

7.6 Conclusions

Ideophony is speech heard in a special way. I argued for its fundamentally depictive nature in previous chapters, and here we saw how this works out in some detail. The first part of this chapter described certain regularities in iconic form-meaning mappings in Siwu ideophones. While only a small proportion of ideophones is directly imitative of sound (i.e. shows simple imagic iconicity), the devices of Gestalt and relative iconicity allow ideophones to move beyond the imitation of singular events towards perceptual analogies and generalisations of event structure. From lexical iconicity we moved on to consider performance as the locus where the full power of depiction in speech becomes apparent. In performance, the sensory properties of the word —articulatory gestures as well as sound— are foregrounded, thereby opening up the way for iconic mappings between sound and sense. I showed how performance characteristics like loudness, timing and voice quality conspire with lexical iconicity to bring sensory imagery to life. An informal breaching experiment confirmed that ideophone performances are treated as accountable aspects of utterances, that is, that they are *produced as* depictive performances which may be judged on the basis of their success in enabling the listener to experience what it is like to perceive the event. Finally, we considered the problem of ideophones that are not transparently iconic. This led us to recognise the fundamental importance of depiction ("invitation to seeing as") rather than iconicity ("resemblance to") in how ideophones work. It also gave us insight into some issues in the typology of ideophone systems.

An important observation of this chapter is that the three principles of imagic, Gestalt and relative iconicity, coupled with the affordances of actual performance, provide a straightforward explanation of what makes ideophones good at depicting sensory imagery. It is useful to consider whether it could have been otherwise. Why do ideophones depict sensory imagery and not, say, discrete

objects in the world, or spatial relations between them (Kita 1997)? The answer lies, I think, primarily in the semiotic properties of the medium.

Ideophones, as depictive signs in spoken language, are confined to the linear medium of the speech stream as it unfolds over time. Both the speech stream and sensory perceptions share a number of crucial properties (including but not limited to duration, aspectual unfolding and intensity), and these properties can be exploited by iconic form-meaning mappings. Discrete objects in the world on the other hand do not share many such properties with the speech stream. One could note that the speech stream is not continuous, and that this could be a basis for mapping discrete objects to discrete chunks of speech. However, without other shared properties to anchor this mapping it is difficult to see how this could lead to a relation of iconicity between sign and object; indeed, the resulting mapping would be better described as symbolic (Peirce) or arbitrary (de Saussure). What about spatial relations? Here we can turn to another corner of the design space of human language: the sign languages of the deaf. Signs in a sign language, due to their visual-spatial nature and the affordance of simultaneity, are much better at depicting spatial relations than ideophones in spoken language ever could be (Meier, Cormier, and Quinto-Pozos 2002; see Perniss 2007 for a case study of iconicity in German Sign Language). In sum, modality is all-important to the question of what iconic mappings are possible and likely.

One aspect of iconicity in ideophones that has been insufficiently discussed in this chapter is the role of articulatory gestures. There is no doubt that ideophones harness the rich articulatory structure of embodied speech as they do their work of depicting sensory imagery. Some persuasive, though mainly introspective arguments concerning this issue have been made by Diffloth (1976) and Nuckolls (1996), and rather than add more of the same I decided in this chapter to think in more general (and generalisable) semiotic terms. If future methods enable us to move beyond introspection, it is my expectation that the devices of imagic, Gestalt and relative iconicity can be revised where necessary and applied to these rich iconic mappings.

8 Eliciting ideophones: the Language of Perception tasks

> ...it is in the area of meaning however that ideophones present the most interesting problems.
>
> Gérard Diffloth (1972)

8.1 Introduction

Ideophones are about sensory imagery. But about what kind of sensory imagery exactly? While the link between ideophones and the senses has long been recognised, it is important to get a handle on the kinds of perceptions evoked by ideophones and to see them in the broader context of the linguistic resources for describing perceptual events. Using elicitation tasks designed to investigate how languages encode perception, this chapter probes six specific perceptual domains in search of the role of ideophones in the language of perception.

To investigate the role of ideophones in the linguistic coding of perceptual domains, I used six tasks developed in the framework of the Language of Perception project of the Language and Cognition Group at the MPI for Psycholinguistics (see Majid and Levinson 2007b for an overview of the tasks). The data was further supplemented by purely verbal elicitation tasks and by an investigation of the corpus. The six tasks were: (1) a texture booklet with ten different textures; (2) a taste kit with the five basic tastes (sweet, sour, bitter, salt, umami); (3) a colour booklet consisting of 80 Munsell-validated colour chips; (4) a booklet with 20 basic shapes; (5) a scratch-and-sniff booklet for smell; and (6) a set of 10 sound pairs varying in tempo, loudness and amplitude. For each task, 10 to 14 Siwu speakers from the village of Akpafu-Mempeasem were presented with the stimuli and asked to name them one by one.

Stimulus-based elicitation imposes order on a domain that may be served by a great diversity of linguistic structures. It provides help in mapping a territory, makes it possible to judge how consistently certain terms are being used, and provides a *tertium comparationis* which can be used in cross-linguistic semantic typology. The constrained nature of stimulus-based elicitation does impose some

limitations. An obvious limitation is the fact that stimuli rarely cover a domain exhaustively or systematically. This is especially the case in the shape, texture and smell tasks. Another possible limitation is the fact that the order in which stimuli are presented may influence the responses. To mitigate this effect, stimulus items have been presented in the same order for participants. Although this does not guarantee that there is no effect of order of presentation, it does neutralise it across subjects, thereby making it possible to compare the response patterns of different subjects.

First, a bird's eye view of the results. The responses to the tasks were classified into four categories: (a) ideophones (e.g. *gìlìgìlì* 'circular', *wùrùfùù* 'fluffy', *kpìnàkpìnà* 'pitch black'), (b) other descriptive perceptual labels (e.g. *yuɛ* 'be unripe', *kɔnà* 'corner', *ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'sweetness'), (c) source-based responses (e.g. *ìɣata* 'leaf', *ìwɔ̃mi* 'star', *tsítsɛrɛ* 'sugar') and (d) evaluative responses (e.g. *lɛ* 'be good').

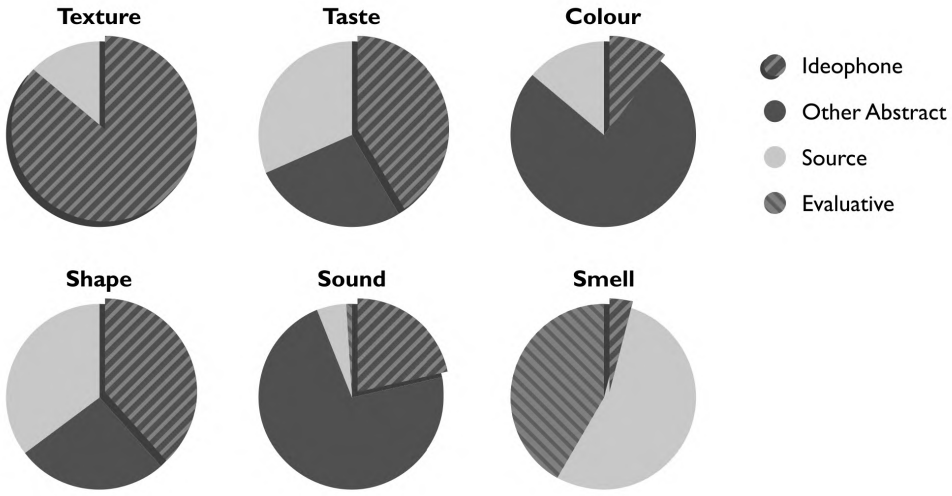

Figure 8.1 Response types in the Language of Perception tasks **(S)**

Figure 8.1 shows the types of responses per task. The most important thing to notice is that even in this thoroughly unfamiliar and constrained setting speakers turn to ideophones to describe sensory perceptions. Ideophones were used in all

six tasks, and they were especially common in the texture, taste and shape tasks.[137] This in itself is a significant finding, because it goes against the persistent theme in the literature that ideophones are elusive and hard to elicit (Mithun 1982:46; Moshi 1993; Blench 2010; and see Samarin 1970b for an early dissenter of this view). It suggests that ideophones are a key expressive resource in sensory talk in Siwu. In the following sections I describe the results of the individual tasks with an eye to what they can tell us about the meaning and use of ideophones.

8.2 Tactile texture

In the texture task, blindfolded participants explored ten different textures with their fingers and were asked to label the resulting haptic (tactual-kinaesthetic) perceptions (see Table 8.1). There were 26 response types, 13 of which, all ideophones, account for 90% of the response tokens. This means that subjects used a number of specific ideophones quite consistently to describe the 10 stimuli. Some ideophones with relatively general meanings were used often; for example, *wòsòròò* 'rough' and *pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth' account for about half of the responses, with the best examples (jagged fabric for *wòsòròò*, plastic sheet and yoga mat for *pɔlɔpɔlɔ*) receiving near-unanimous consistency.

These results illustrate the value of having multiple consultants. Variety in the responses indicates possible variety in how the stimulus is perceived, and can tell us more about the linguistic resources in the domain than a single, consistent response does. Consider the felt stimulus: it combines surface roughness (*wòsòròò*) with a hairy fluffiness (*wùrùfùù*), and if pressed, it dents in a flexible way (*fũ̃ɛfũ̃ɛ*). Different subjects attend to these different aspects of the haptic sensation. How do we know that these ideophones are not just synonyms, and that they really target these different aspects of sensory perception? Because a pile sorting task (see chapter 10) shows that malleability and surface texture are distinguished as two salient aspects of haptic touch sensations, and because additional elicitation reveals that *wùrùfùù* 'fluffy' can also be used of hairy things that are not *wòsòròò* 'rough', and that *fũ̃ɛfũ̃ɛ* 'malleable' can also be used of malleable things that are

[137] A common evaluative response pattern in the smell task involved the antonyms *krɔ̃krɔ̃* "smelling good" and *nyanyarĩĩ* "dirty/smelling bad". These words are formally ideophones, but they are coded as evaluative here because their primary meaning is evaluative and general across all stimuli, in contrast to the the ideophonic responses in the other tasks, which are not primarily evaluative and which target precise perceptions.

not *wùrùfùù* 'fluffy' nor *wòsòròò* 'rough'.[138] Thus, the response patterns reveal how ideophones target different aspects of sensory perception.

Stimulus	Most common responses
1. felt	*wùrùfùù* 'fluffy' (5), *wòsòròò* 'rough' (4), *fũ̃ɛ̃fũ̃ɛ̃* 'malleable' (3)
2. beads	*kùbi-kubi* 'beads' (10), *àyibi-anyibi* 'small beads' (1), *kùkpo-kukpo* 'knobs' (1)
3. fur (synthetic)	*fũ̃ɛ̃fũ̃ɛ̃* 'malleable' (6), *wùrùfùù* 'fluffy' (4)
4. jagged (fabric)	*wòsòròò* 'rough' (11)
5. feather	*pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth' (7), *wùrùfùù* 'fluffy' (1), *fiɛfiɛ* 'silky' (1)
6. plastic (sheet)	*pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth' (11), *ɖɛkpɛrɛɛ* 'fine' (1)
7. curved ridges (wide spacing)	*wòsòròò* 'rough' (5), *sìri-siri* 'lines' (3), *nyãkãnyãkã* 'grooved' (1)
8. cork	*wòsòròò* 'rough' (9)
9. rubber (yoga mat)	*pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth' (11)
10. straight ridges (small spacing)	*wòsòròò* 'rough' (9)

Table 8.1 Common responses in the texture task (with number of tokens)

For another example, consider the feather stimulus. While about half of the participants used *pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth', other labels included *fiɛfiɛ* 'silky', *ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* 'soft', *wùrùfùù* 'fluffy', *fɛfɛrɛ* 'lightweight' (not a texture term), and complex descriptions combining ideophonic labels, as in (109) and (110). The roughness in (109) probably refers to the perceptible shaft of the feather stimulus.

(109) *pɔlɔpɔlɔ* *ku* *wòsòsòò*
IDPH.smooth with IDPH.rough
'smooth and rough' LOP_texture_5_9

[138] Some of this can also be inferred by comparing responses from within the task — thus, the feather stimulus is judged mostly *wùrùfùù* 'fluffy' and *pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth' (as opposed to *wòsòròò* 'rough'). However, in all cases, further elicitation focused on getting actual usage instances and folk definitions of the ideophones elicited using the Language of Perception stimuli.

(110) *ìse pɔlɔpɔlɔ gàke wùrùfùù ànaà*
it-COP IDPH.smooth but IDPH.fluffy too
'it is smooth but at the same time fluffy' LOP_texture_5_11

While exploring the cork texture, one subject noted that "it is not *pɔlɔpɔlɔ*; not *wòsòròò* either; it is a little *wòsòròò* though" (111), creatively using the diminutive noun class suffix *kà-* to derive *kàwòsòròò* "a little roughness".

(111) *ì-i-se pɔlɔpɔlɔ, ì-i-se wòsòròò ànа … ìse kà-wòsòròò*
it-NEG-COP IDPH.smooth it-NEG-COP IDPH.rough too … it-COP KA-IDPH.rough
'it's not (really) smooth, it's not (really) rough either… but has a little roughness' LOP_texture_8_8

Of note is furthermore that virtually all of the non-ideophonic response tokens in the texture task concerned the "beads" stimulus, which was described by most people as *kùbi-kubi* {bead-REDUP} 'beads'. The irregular LH-HH tone pattern betrays the non-ideophonic status of this response. Recall that in ideophones, there are only three possible tonal melodies: all Low, all High, or an alternating tonal pattern. In this form, the tone of the second *ku-* is raised from L to H following the final H of the preceding noun, as happens regularly in nominal compounds. Apart from the beads stimulus, the sole other example of a non-ideophonic response in this task is *sìri-siri* {line-REDUP} 'lines'. Examples like these show that there is a thin line between ideophony and reduplicated forms, and point to a possible source for new ideophones.

The texture task did not exhaust the tactile ideophones of Siwu — other ideophones in the domain of haptic touch evoke such haptic perceptions as *pukupuku* 'clotty', *fòdzòfòdzò* 'spongy and soft', *dɛkpɛrɛɛ* 'fine-grained (e.g. flour)', *safaraa* 'coarse-grained (e.g. sand)', *kpɔlɔkpɔlɔ* 'unpleasantly slippery (e.g. muddy road, mudfish)', *bɔgɔbɔgɔ* 'flexible', *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* 'thin and fragile'.

The overall picture that emerges from the responses in this task is that texture ideophones target diverse but specific aspects of haptic perception, such as surface texture, compliance and flexibility. Note that in glossing these ideophones in English it is often necessary to use source-oriented terms (fluff, groove, silk, bead, clot, grain), whereas in Siwu, the ideophones bear no relation whatsoever to other lexical items. Thus, the Siwu ideophones pinpoint specific aspects of haptic perceptions in and of themselves.

8.3 Taste

The taste kit consists of four solutions of sucrose (sweet), sodium chloride (salty), quinine hydrochloride (bitter) citric acid monohydrate (sour) and one capsule filled with glutamate (umami or savoriness). These stimuli thus cover the five basic tastes for which there are receptors. Note that 'taste', as commonly used, also includes olfactory and tactile components. These are not targeted by this task, but additional elicitation does reveal a wide range of taste-related terms, most of them ideophonic. The first four solutions were sprayed on the consultant's tongue in order. Before and after every solution, the consultant rinsed his/her mouth with water. The umami came in powder form and was put on the consultant's tongue with a little spoon.

First, the results of the elicitation task. The three most common terms used in relation to the five taste stimuli are *ɔmɛrɛ̃* (or its ideophonic variant *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃*), *nyagbalaa* and *ɔɖo* (or its ideophonic variants *ɔɖooɖo/ɔɖoɖoɖoɖo*). It seems that these are the three main categories of taste in Siwu. They map onto the five taste stimuli in the following way (note that the first column leaves out other responses to focus on these three categories):

Stim.	Basic labels	Source-based	Other labels
SWEET	*ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃* (5), *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛrɛ̃* (5)	*tsitsere* 'sugar' (1)	*nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* 'sweet' (1)
UMAMI	*ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃* (5), *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* (3)	*kiɨ̀pù* 'bouillon' (9), *m̀ma* 'salt' (1)	*saaa* 'cool' (2)
SOUR	*nyagbalaa* (11)	*ɔ̀madzi* 'lemon' (2)	*ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'palatable' (1)
SALT	*nyagbalaa* (5)	*m̀ma* 'salt' (10)	
BITTER	*ɔ̀ɖo* (6) / *ɔ̀ɖooɖo* (6)	*Para* 'paracetamol' (1)	

Table 8.2 Common responses in the taste task (with number of tokens)

The nominal property concept *ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃* and the corresponding ideophone *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* cover both the sweet and umami stimuli. It can be glossed as 'tasty, palatable'. The ideophone *nyagbalaa* is used mainly for the sour stimulus, and occasionally for the salt stimulus. Based on wider elicitation, I gloss it as 'pungent'. Finally, the noun *ɔ̀ɖo* and its ideophonic variant *ɔ̀ɖooɖo* uniquely map onto the bitter stimulus. It is glossed as 'bitter'; etymologically, it is related to the verb *ɖo* 'bite'.

Of interest is the consistent mapping of a source-based term to the glutamate stimulus: *kiìp/kiìpù*, used by 9 out of 12 subjects. This is the word for the Maggi *cube*[139] of bouillon, marketed in Ghana by Nestlé since 1975. The main ingredient of this product is monosodium glutamate. For two people, the glutamate stimulus also brought up the ideophone *saaa* 'cool sensation on the tongue', perhaps due to a local cooling effect caused by the process of dissolving the crystalline MSG (112). The umami stimulus, presented as small white grains, looked like salt, but this confused only one of the subjects. Another noted the possible confusion, but concluded that 'it isn't salt, it's just tasty' (113).

(112) *ì-se saaa alɛ Maggi-kiip*
it-COP IDPH.cool like Maggi-cube
it is cool like a Maggi cube (of bouillon) LOP_taste_5_10

(113) *ì-ba ɔmɛ̃rɛ̃; alɛ… ì-i-si ì-ɖe mùma, ɔmɛ̃rɛ̃ kere ì-ba*
it-have tasty; like… it-NEG-HAB it-be salt taste just it-have
it's tasty; like… it isn't salt, it's just is tasty LOP_taste_5_2

Additional elicitation addressed the reverse question: what referents produce the taste sensations described by these terms? Things that taste *nyagbalaa* 'pungent/sour' include *àkùtu* 'orange', *ɔ̀màdzìì* 'lemon', some types of *kuwa* 'medicinal herbs', *àkùtubàbi* 'tangerine', and two drugs sold in Ghanaian markets: *QuickAction* and *F-Pack*. The *ɔɖo* 'bitter' taste is mainly associated with *kuwa* 'medicinal herbs' and with Western medicines like *Para* — paracetamol. Foods and substances that taste *ɔmɛ̃rɛ̃* and *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'tasty' include *kɔ̀ɖu* 'banana', *kàdo-du* 'fresh rainwater', *kutu* 'soup' and *sinaà* 'meat'. This shows that this taste category is primarily about food being tasty or palatable, and not just about 'sweetness' in the sense of being sugary.

A notable case is the ideophone *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃*, depicting an intensely sweet taste. Fruits and substances that are said to taste like this include *màyedu* 'honey' and *tsitsèrɛ̀* 'sugar', but the best examples are said to be two wild forest fruits: *ìpòfà-ibi* 'katamfe a.k.a. miracle fruit (*Thaumatococcus daniellii*)' and *kàmɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃ĩ* 'serendipity berry (*Dioscoreophyllum cumminsii*)'.[140] Both of these fruits produce an

[139] English *cube* [kju:b] > Siwu *kíipù* [kíipù]

[140] The careful reader will note that the *kàmɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃ĩ* berry has an ideophonic name which can be glossed as KA.DIM-IDPH.tasty-DIM, or 'little delicious thing'.

intensely sweet taste that is slow to develop, but persists for an unusually long time compared to sucrose. The unique taste properties of these two forest fruits have been known throughout the forests of West-Africa for centuries, and to Western science for about 150 years (Daniell 1855; Inglett and May 1968). Their sweet taste is due to the proteins thaumatin and monellin respectively, which are about "100,000 times sweeter than sugar on a molar basis and several thousand times sweeter on a weight basis" (Inglett and May 1969; Kim et al. 1989). It is this kind of intense sweet sensation that *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* refers to. The sucrose solution in the Taste task was not sweet enough to elicit this ideophone for most subjects (only one out of twelve subjects used it), and this is another illustration of the fact that ideophones depict very specific sensory imagery in and of themselves.

While the five stimulus items provide a rough guide of the domain of tongue-taste, it seems that the wider picture of in-mouth sensation in Siwu would need to account for at least the following dimensions:

TONGUE-TASTE	*ɔ̀ɖo/ɔɖooɖo* 'bitter'
	ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃/mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃ 'palatable'
	nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃ 'intensely sweet'
	ɣɔ̀ɔ̀ɔ̀ 'bland'
	bùàà 'tasteless'
TEMPERATURE	*saaa* 'cool sensation (continuous)'
	sùùù 'burning sensation (continuous)'
	yùàyùà 'burning sensation (punctual-iterative)'
TACTILE IN-MOUTH	*sikitii* 'hard to chew' (e.g. pig skin)
PERCEPTION	*gɛ̃gɛ̃rɛ̃gɛ̃* 'hard pieces' (e.g. cassava and yam)
	tsuàɪ̃ɪ̃ 'elastic' (e.g. well-pounded fufu)
	màgàdɑ̃ɑ̃ 'hard to swallow' (e.g. yam slice)
	tìtìrìtìì 'astringent' (e.g. as caused by unripe banana)
FLAVOUR	*nyagbalaa* 'pungent'

Table 8.3 Dimensions of in-mouth sensation distinguished in ideophones

In summary, the wider domain of taste is well served by ideophones in Siwu. In the elicitation task, subjects used the expressive affordances of ideophones to mark the distinction between sour (*nyagbalaaaa* 'intensely *nyagbalaa*') and salt

(*nyagbalaa* 'just so-so nyagbalaa'). There are two nouns, *ɔ̀mɛ̃̀rɛ̃̀* 'good taste' and *ɔ̀ɖo* 'bitterness' with ideophonic variants *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'tasty' and *ɔ̀ɖoɖo* 'bitter'. It is not clear which is derived from which. For the majority of subjects, the sweet stimulus was not strong enough to elicit the ideophone *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* 'extremely sweet', which depicts the extreme sweetness of several types of jungle berries indigenous to this area.

8.4 Colour

The colour stimuli (Majid and Levinson 2007c) consist of a booklet of 80 chromatic Munsell chips in twenty hues at four brightness levels, presented in a fixed random order. This is a subset of the World Color Survey stimuli (Kay et al. 2009).

There is no word for 'colour' in Siwu, nor in one of the surrounding languages, although it is marginally possible (for younger speakers at least) to use the word *kalà* from Ghanain English. The responses are divided roughly evenly between source-based descriptions and stative-like verbs that are more or less like colour terms. It should be noted that not all chips received descriptors by all subjects; on average, about 14% of the chips were left unnamed, with at one extreme one subject naming all chips and at the other extreme one subject naming only 64%. Chips in the purple and blue range appeared particularly difficult to name, except by younger people, who recruited the loan words *pink* and *bùluù*. Not very many ideophones are used in the responses, most importantly *kpìnàkpìnà* 'dark/black' and *wɔ̃rãwɔ̃rã* 'patched'. The word 'leaf' was commonly used in source-based descriptions because it can assume so many different colours, as illustrated in (114) and (115). Sometimes ideophones figure in these source-based descriptions, as *fɔrɔfɔrɔ* 'fresh/succulent [of leaves]' in (115).

(114) *i-yatà nɛ kà-ɖe buri i karõ*
I-leaf REL.I KA-land rotten LOC KA-ground
leaf which is in a rotting place on the ground [LOP_colour_61_EF]

(115) *i-yatà fɔrɔfɔrɔ*
I-leaf IDPH.fresh.succulent
fresh/succulent leaf [LOP_colour_18_EF]

The most common labels in the responses are *kpìnàkpìnà* 'dark/black', *fudza* 'white', *rɛtɛ* 'be ripe/red', *yuɛ* 'be unripe/green' and *kore* 'be dry'. The first is a

proper ideophone, the other four are verbs. The 'white' verb is related to a widespread Kwa-root *fu* 'white'. *Rɛtɛ* and *yuɛ* are primarily used for the concepts of 'ripe' and 'unripe' rather than 'red' and 'green'. The verb *rɛtɛ* 'ripe/red' for example is also used for fruits that are not red when ripe, e.g. *kɔ̀ḍu rɛtɛà* {banana be.ripe-ADJ} 'ripe banana'. The verb *yuɛ* 'unripe/green' cannot be used for the striking colour of rice fields in the rainy season (which to the English eye looks green); for this visual sensation, *kpìnàkpìnà* 'dark/black' is used instead. The verb *kore* 'be dry' was used to refer to a range of brownish colours.

On a later fieldtrip, a focal colour task was done to identify the best or "focal" exemplars in Munsell space of the terms collected (Majid 2008). The stimulus consists of a card with 80 circular colour patches (the same set as used in the Language of Perception colour naming task) plus 4 achromatic patches. This task was done with 10 speakers for nine terms related to colour in some way or another. Most of these terms occurred as responses in the earlier elicitation task, but I also included three ideophones that surfaced in additional elicitation: *fututu* 'pure/intense white', *pɛ̃ɛ̃* 'pure/intense red' and *gɛ̀ɛ̀*[141] 'bright/emitting red' — the former usually an adverbial modifier of *fudza* 'be white' and the latter two adverbial modifiers of *rɛtɛ* 'be ripe/red'. The two ideophones related to red differ in the following way: *pɛ̃ɛ̃* covers red surface reflections, as in blood —(116) below— or red skin or paint, while *gɛ̀ɛ̀* depicts a warm glow or emission of light, for example of flames or a lantern as in (117).

(116) *ìma* *ì-rɛtɛ* *pɛ̃ɛ̃*
I-blood I.S-be.red IDPH.purely.red
blood is purely red

(117) *ɔ̀kanɪɛ* *to* *ɔ-sà* *gɛ̀ɛ̀*
Ɔ-lantern PROG Ɔ.S-shine IDPH.warm.glow
the lamp shines with a warm light

The response patterns in the focal colour task divide the descriptors into three broad types: (I) common terms that stand on their own (*kpìnàkpìnà* 'black', *fudza* 'white', *rɛtɛ* 'ripe/red', *yuɛ* 'unripe/green'); (II) the ideophonic modifiers *fututu* 'pure white', *pɛ̃ɛ̃* 'pure/intense red' and *gɛ̀ɛ̀* 'bright/emitting red', which most

[141] Not all consultants nasalise *gɛ̀ɛ̀* 'bright/emitting red'. There appears to be free variation between *gàà* and *gɛ̀ɛ̀*.

consultants spontaneously put in a construction modifying the corresponding term from group I (e.g. *fudza fututu, rɛtɛ pɛ̃ɛ̃*); and (III) environmental terms (*kore* 'dry', *wɔ̃rɑ̃wɔ̃rɑ̃* 'patched', *pukutuu* 'dirty') that lead consultants to look around for an example in the natural environment before they make a choice on the colour chart. While consultants are willing to consider chips on a colour chart as referents for type I and II terms, they are considerably less willing to do this for type III terms. For example, when prompted to pick an exemplar for *kore* 'be dry' (a term used for chips in the brownish range in the colour task), one consultant asked:

(118) *ɨyatà kore-à ɛbèrɛ̀?*
leaf be.dry-ADJ or?
like a dry leaf or what? LOP_focal_kore_EO

Types I and II bear a special relation to each other. While consultants are willing to point out a range of patches as possible referents for any type I term (as the results from the colour task also show), they are not willing to do this for the ideophonic modifiers. For these, they pick out one patch, and this is always the one they also pick as the focal exemplar of the corresponding type I term. Thus it appears that the ideophonic modifiers of *fudza* 'be white' and *rɛtɛ* 'be red' pick out quite narrow focal hues. This is again an indication that ideophones target specific aspects of sensory perception.

The overall picture that emerges from these tasks is that there appears not to be a relevant and coherent domain of experience in Siwu that neatly maps onto the English category *colour*: subjects use a mix of stative verbs, source-based descriptors, environmental terms and ideophones to describe colour patches of the Munsell charts. While the ideophonic modifiers *fututu, pɛ̃ɛ̃* and *gɑ̃ɑ̃* pick out narrow focal ranges, the latter two refer not simply to objectified colour but also to source properties: surface reflection versus emission. Additional elicitation shows that something like SURFACE APPEARANCE is more likely to be a coherent domain in Siwu. For instance, in the pile sorting task discussed in chapter 10, consultants consistently grouped *kpìnàkpìnà* 'dark/black' and *fututu* 'pure white' with *gelegele* 'shiny' and *wɔ̃rɑ̃wɔ̃rɑ̃* 'patched', showing that these together constitute a salient domain for speakers of Siwu.[142] The importance of surface physical properties in

[142] The pile sort only included a selection of terms, mostly ideophones, across a wide range of domains. It did not include verbs such as *yuɛ* 'unripe/green' and *rɛtɛ* 'ripe/red'.

lexical sets that also cover the domain of "colour" has often been downplayed in the Basic Colour Terms literature (Berlin and Kay 1969; Kay and Kuehni 2008), but is known from in-depth analyses of these domains in many languages (e.g. Conklin 1955; Dimmendaal 1995; Levinson 2000; Wierzbicka 2008).

8.5 Shape

The shape task consists of a twenty-page booklet with a number of basic geometric shapes. The shapes include a star, cone, cube, ellipse, triangle, square, sphere, circle, flower and rectangle. The majority of responses to these geometric shapes was source-based, including such terms as *ìwɔ̃mi* 'star', ɔ̀dɔ̃ 'bell' (loan from Ewe, for the cone stimulus), *triangle* 'triangle' (for the triangle) *ìɖakagù* 'box' (for the square stimulus), *kàɣogodɔ̃* 'doorway' (for the rectangle), *ìkɔkɔɣo* 'egg' (for the ellipse) and *ahɔ̀hɔ̀ɛ* 'mirror' (for the square and rectangle). But a number of shapes drew ideophonic responses quite consistently. These were:

(119) CIRCLE *gìlìgìlì* 'circular' (round-2D)
SPHERE *minimini* 'spherical' (round-3D)
CONE *miɔmiɔ* 'pointed'
ELLIPSE *gìlìgìlì* 'circular', *sɔdzɔlɔɔ* 'oblong'

Some subjects were quite creative in describing the shapes. For example, one description below derives the noun 'pointy place' (for something like corner) by combining the locativiser *kà-…-kɔ̃* 'place related to' with the ideophone *miɔmiɔ* 'pointy'. This shows that ideophones may occasionally undergo morphological processes that are normally confined to ordinary words. (This is rare in the corpus of everyday discourse though.)

(120) *ì-ra nɛ lò-ba kà-miɔmiɔ-kɔ̃ a-ka a-nnà,*
I-thing REL.I DEP-have KA-IDPH.pointy-place A-time AGR.A-four
'A thing which has four pointy places,
gàke kɛ̃̀rɛ̃̀ kɛ̀kɛ́ì
but be.extended little
but which is extended a little' LOP_shape_1_20

Additional elicitation revealed many more shape-related ideophones. Some of these refer to shapes in general (121), while others refer specifically to body characteristics (122). The body-specific shape ideophones are often limited in their

use to collocations with the body part term in question. Their main use seems to be as body epithets (see also Blench 2010).

(121)	*gɔgɔlɔ*	'zig-zagging with smooth corners'
	gɔdɔrɔ	'crooked'
	krɔ̀kɔ̀tɔ̀ɔ̀	'bent in one place (sharp angle)'
	tɔrɔrɔ	'straight'
	tɛgɛlɛɛ	'flat, extended in the horizontal plane and non-extended in the vertical'
	bɛbɛɛbɛ	'wide, extended in the horizontal plane'
	sadʒala	'oblong and lumpy' [e.g. of yam slices or of a coconut stripped of its outer skin with a few strokes of the cutlass]
(122)	*kpɛsɛsɛɛ*	'protruding lips' (used with *ɔ̀nyako* 'lip')
	lɔ̀tɔ̀ɔ̀	'hanging down heavily' (of udder, breast)
	fiɛroo	'small buttocks' (used with *àmɔrɛ̃̀sɛ* 'buttocks')
	gɔrɔ	'protruding ears' (used with *àtsue* 'ears')
	pɔkɛɛ	'hollow cheeks' (used with *kànya* 'mouth')

To summarise, the shape task sheds light on the expressive resources that speakers use creatively in talking about shape, and hints at the important role ideophones have to play in this domain. Siwu has few nouns for abstract shapes, but it does have many shape-related ideophones which encode highly specific shape distinctions.

8.6 Sound

The sound stimuli (Majid, Senft, and Levinson 2007a) consist of twenty audio files in pairs that vary in perceived loudness, pitch and tempo. Consultants listen to the stimuli pair-wise and are asked to provide separate descriptions for each sound file.

In the Siwu data, a difference in pitch is described by most participants as *bà karõ* 'be low' (lit. have ground) vs. *kɔlɛ* 'be high' (lit. jump). Some also use a gendered opposition, with *sìrɛ̃̀rɛ̃̀lɔ* 'male voice' for low sounds and *sìrɔ̃̀gólɔ* 'female voice' for high-pitched sounds. The difference in loudness is marked in many different ways, including the adjectives *siarè* 'big' and *kɛ̀kɛì* 'small', the verb *rè* 'sound' and its negative form *i-ì-rè* 'doesn't sound', and the ideophones *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'gently, softly' vs. *teteree* 'loud, high intensity'. Some terms seem to conflate pitch

and loudness, like *ìlɔmi* 'small sound' (high in pitch, low in volume) versus *ìlɔgbo* 'big sound' (low in pitch, high in volume). (Also, for some subjects, it seems that *bà karõ* 'be low' and *kɔlɛ* 'be high/jump' can be used to describe a loudness contrast.)

The ideophones used most commonly in this task, *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'gently, softly' and *tètèrèè* 'loud, high intensity', are not sound-related ideophones per se but refer to a more general perception of intensity. *Tètèrèè* for example can also be used for 'hard' in the sense of a hard hit, while *pɔkɔsɔɔ* is commonly used for 'slow'. Additional elicitation does reveal ideophones specific to the auditory domain which target more specific perceptual qualities. For example, *kpɛnɛnɛ* depicts a shrill, piercing voice, whereas *wɔ̀rɔ̀rɔ̀* depicts a low-pitched and hoarse, gruff voice, both of them referring primarily to the human voice. *Sukuru-sukuru* depicts the sound of grinding pepper in an earthenware mashing-bowl, and *kiriri-kiriri* depicts the scratching of claws.

We saw some additional ideophones for specific sounds in the discussion of imagic iconicity in §7.3. It is worth reiterating the observation made there that ideophones for acoustic phenomena are not necessarily simply imitations of sounds. Take for instance the *kpɛnɛnɛ* and *wɔ̀rɔ̀rɔ̀*. Instead of imitating a particular type of sound, as *gbíìǹ* 'explosion' or *tòlontòlon* 'drops' do, *kpɛnɛnɛ* and *wɔ̀rɔ̀rɔ̀* depict certain psychoacoustic properties of human voices without directly imitating these voices. Still, even such ideophones lean towards the more specific rather than towards the abstract, and in that sense they confirm the general picture that ideophones depict specific aspects of sensory perception rather than abstracted properties such as (in the domain of sound) loudness, pitch or tempo.

8.7 Smell

The 12 smell stimuli (Majid, Senft, and Levinson 2007b) come from a booklet called the *Brief Smell Identification Test*. Each page in the test has a patch that is scratched to release the scent. The included scents are, in order of appearance: cinnamon, turpentine, lemon, smoke, chocolate, rose, paint thinner, banana, pineapple, gasoline, soap and onion. There are obvious limitations to this stimulus set, for example it is relatively small and it contains smells that are not ecologically relevant and in some cases not even known. Still, the results give a handle on how smell is described in Siwu.

Talk about smell is usually couched in valenced terms. The two main terms here are *kɔ̃rɔ̃kɔ̃rɔ̃* 'smelling good' and *nyanyarĩĩ* 'unpleasant' — the latter not a proper smell term, but a term more generally used for perceptions of dirtyness and filthyness. The general verb for 'smell', *fɔ̃rɛ̃*, is used in the copulative sense with an adverbial component (123) or with a simile (124) or with both (125).

(123) *ì-te ì-fɔ̃rɛ̃ kɔ̃rɔ̃kɔ̃rɔ̃*
I-PROG I-smell IDPH.pleasant.scent
It smells good [LOP_smell_1_3]

(124) *ì-te ì-fɔ̃rɛ̃ alɛ DDT*
I-PROG I-smell like DDT
It smells like DDT [LOP_smell_7_8]

(125) *ìtefɔ̃rɛ̃ nyanyarĩĩ alɛ ira bu awe*
ìto ì-fɔ̃rɛ̃ nyanyarĩĩ alɛ ìra bu awe
I-prog I-smell IDPH.unpleasant like thing rotten like
It smells bad like something rotten [LOP_smell_8_4]

The task did not elicit many abstract descriptive labels for specific smells; the majority of responses (almost 60%) were source-based descriptions of an astonishing variety. All subjects recognised onion (*iburà*); some young men recognised thinner and turpentine as paint-related smells. Many smells were recognised as non-indigenous, judging from source-based descriptions like *pencil eraser, àsra* 'tobacco' (a loan from Ewe), *Chinese rub* (all for 1:cinnamon) or *peènti* 'paint', *kerosine, brake fluid, DDT* (all for 8:thinner). About 40% of the responses were in terms of *kɔ̃rɔ̃kɔ̃rɔ̃/nyanyarĩ* 'good/bad', which makes smell the domain with the biggest number of evaluative responses of all tasks. This is not exceptional cross-linguistically speaking — talk of smell tends often to be evaluative (Classen 1993). Three responses featured the ideophone *nyagbalaa* 'pungent' (in response to the turpentine, smoke and paint thinner smells), and one the ideophone *yɔbɔɔ* 'temperate' (in response to the 'lemon' smell). I should note that the latter ideophone has proved difficult to translate, as only one consultant used it, who himself paraphrased it as "it is slooooow smelling, like our local apple" (the reference is to a small bitter fruit).

Summing up, talking about smell is usually done in evaluative terms. If there is a need to pick out a specific smell, one uses a source-based term. The ideophonic

inventory for smell elicited in the task is limited to *kɔ̃rɔ̃kɔ̃rɔ̃* 'good smell', the general negative evaluative ideophone *ŋyaŋyarɪ̃ɪ̃* 'bad', the flavour ideophone *nyagbalaa* 'pungent' and the ideophone *ɣɔbɔɔ*. Additional elicitation uncovered one other specific smell ideophone: *pɪ́ɪ́* 'penetrant smell of drying cocoa', a smell that envelopes many compounds when fermented cocoa beans are drying in the sun. (The penetrant nature of this smell is due to the volatile acetic acid that evaporates during the drying process.) Although a more ecologically informed probing of the domain may reveal more smell terms, at present there is evidence for only a limited system in Siwu.

8.8 Conclusions

The goal of this chapter has been to investigate whether ideophones can be profitably elicited using dedicated stimuli and to examine the sensory semantics of ideophones in selected perceptual domains. We saw that in talk about the sensory world, ideophones are aided by such diverse devices as verbs of perception, source-based descriptors and nominal property concepts. They occupy a central place in several perceptual domains —especially texture, taste and shape— and in fact none of the domains examined does without them. This suggests that ideophones are a key resource in talk about perception in Siwu.

Other important points of this chapter include the following. First, dedicated stimulus materials can be a fruitful way to elicit ideophones, especially when data from multiple speakers is pooled. Data from multiple subjects allows for checks on consistency and provides insight into different aspects of the stimuli that subjects may be attending to. We saw this in the texture task, where different responses to the same stimulus encode different aspects of the haptic sensation, showing that some subjects may attend to, say, malleability, while others attend to surface texture (independent evidence from the pile sorting task shows this distinction to be of relevance).

A second point is that stimulus-based elicitation always has to be embedded in a wider analysis of the system, keeping in mind Conklin's advice that "only the intracultural analysis of … lexical sets and their correlates can provide the key to their understanding and range of applicability" (1955:340). We saw this in the taste task, where additional research uncovered an ideophone *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* which specifically encodes the extreme sweet sensation of certain indigenous jungle berries. And we saw it in the domain of colour, where broader elicitation shows

that the responses to the colour task sort into distinct form classes (general stative verbs and highly specific ideophones), and that "surface appearance" is probably a more coherent domain in Siwu than the narrower "colour".

Although this chapter has focused on Siwu, the results are of wider significance in at least two ways. First, they establish that ideophones are indeed sensory words par excellence. Second, they suggest that stimulus materials like these can play a key role as a *tertium comparationis* in developing a semantic typology of ideophones. Only with language-independent methods of analysis can we hope to be able to compare ideophone systems around the world in detail — the next step forward in ideophone research.

9 Determining the meaning of ideophones: folk definitions

> Ideophones are not like normal words to which meanings are readily assigned. They are simply sounds used in conveying a vivid impression.
>
> Isidore Okpewho (1992)

9.1 Introduction

Is it true, as Isidore Okpewho stated, that meanings are not readily assigned to ideophones? This chapter presents a study of folk definitions of Siwu ideophones that shows that speakers converge on ways of explaining them, sketching scenes and using gesture and verbal paraphrase to capture aspects of the depictive meanings of ideophones in isolation.

Folk definitions have commonly been used as a guide to semantics, especially in the ethnoscience paradigm. Most of the work in this domain has been primarily interested in the semantic principles underlying the construction of such definitions (Casagrande and Hale 1967; Manes 1980). This literature has shown that folk definitions can be highly informative as a window into natural language semantics, even if they do not usually correspond to the lexicographer's ideal of both *characterizing* and *delimiting* the meaning of a given term. But does this also hold for ideophones? Recalling Okpewho's statement above, if ideophones are "not like normal words", will speakers be able to describe the "vivid impressions" they evoke?

The rich semantic detail of ideophones has been singled out for comment by many authors (Samarin 1967; Diffloth 1972), and is often presented as a challenge for lexicography and translation (Childs 1993; Noss 1999; Nuckolls 2000; Lydall 2000). William Samarin, in several studies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was the first to outline a number of fruitful approaches to study the meanings of ideophones. In *Determining the meaning of ideophones* (1967), he described the use of basic lexicographic methods, focusing particularly on the techniques of paraphrasing and the elicitation of synonyms and antonyms (1967:38). Another brief article on field procedures (Samarin 1970b) listed methods like

exemplification, concordance and onomatopoeia recognition, and recommended the use of questionnaires and text collections to study ideophones.

Samarin's lexicographic methods will stand the test of time, but a lot has changed in the area of field methods and technology since the 1970s, so that it is now possible to supplement them with other methods. For instance, Samarin (1970b:28) describes a procedure of "exemplification", which consists of having assistants write down example sentences as well as explanatory comments. Two drawbacks to this method are immediately apparent. First, the pool of possible assistants is limited to those who are literate in the language under study; second, the spontaneous nature of folk explanations is lost in the laborious transition to the written dimension. This chapter presents a procedure for collecting folk definitions of ideophones as well as some of the results from its application in Siwu.

9.2 A procedure for collecting folk definitions of ideophones[143]

In its essentials the method simply boils down to 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 explanation, (3) its use of rich media representations. Let me clarify and motivate these properties in turn.

1. 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 is postponed at least until *after* the process of data collection; the data of course will be much the richer for it.

2. The exercise takes place in an environment where both the speaker and the phenomenon under investigation are most at home: the realm of spoken language. Speakers, usually one at a time[144] (though the audience will play a role too), are

[143] A version of this elicitation task has been published in the 2010 Language & Cognition Field Manual (Dingemanse 2010).

[144] A variant with a group of speakers is also possible, and has in fact 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

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 talking and thinking about these words. The ideophones themselves will simply be read aloud from a list by the investigator or an assistant.

3. The explanations are videotaped. The importance of gesture in ideophonic performance has long been noted (see §9.4 below), but has been paid mostly lip service until recently, one of the reasons being that it was difficult for field researchers to do any extensive video recording. Now that video technology has become cheaper and more portable, there is little reason for not using it. The advantages of video recordings are obvious, chief among them the sheer richness of the data compared to audio recordings or field notes without recordings. In addition, I found that 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.

Taken together, then, these instructions comprise a field procedure in ideophone research that offers a way of constructing rich primary data (Bernard et al. 1986) in a planned context while ensuring a large amount of spontaneity and freedom. Some more specific directions for use of the method are included in Dingemanse (2010). In the remainder of the chapter I describe some of the results of my own use of the method.

9.2.1 Four examples

To get started, let us take a look at four typical examples, one each from the four different speakers who helpfully provided the explanations. The speakers are Foster, a man in his 40s, recorded in August 2007; Ruben, a man in his 60s, recorded in March 2008; Ella, a woman in her 50s, recorded April 2009; and Beatrice, a woman in her 50s, also recorded in April 2009. All speakers were recorded independently of each other and had not seen any of the others performing the task.

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for a useful recording of constant quality; in addition, the resulting materials will be more difficult to analyse.

In some of the transcripts in this chapter, gestures are marked by ⊦ Gx ⊣ , where *x* indexes a prose description given below the interlinear representations. These prose descriptions in particular are a poor replacement for the real gestures, and the reader is advised to consult the video clips at http://thesis.ideophone.org/part-3/folk-definitions/ to see what some of these gestures look like and how they are embedded in the multimodal folk definitions.

The first folk definition we will examine is one of the ideophone *ɣààà* by Ruben (Extract 9.1).

Extract 9.1 Folk definition of *ɣààà* 'gushing' by Ruben **(S)**

1 R *n-du* *sɛ* *ɣàà:*
MI-water go IDPH.gushing:EM
Water is gushing *ɣààà*.

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

3 *mì-sɛ* *kere* *ɣààà* *wààà*
SMI-go just IDPH.gushing IDPH.splash
It just goes *ɣààà* [gushing] *wààà* [splashing]

4 *mì-sɛ* *i* *kà-kɔi* *biara* *kɛkɛ̀*
SMI-go LOC KA-place each every
it goes into every place.

"Water goes *ɣààà* [gushing]. When it has rained, the way the water goes *ɣààà*, entering the houses. It just goes *ɣààà* [gushing] *wààà* [splashing] into every place."

Ruben first provides a single sentence exemplifying the use of the ideophone: "water goes *ɣààààà*". Then he sketches a scene all too familiar in the tropical mountain village of Akpafu-Mempeasem: 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 *wààà*, closely related in meaning and form. (That both are existing, conventionalised forms was checked later with other speakers.) Ruben's explanation uses techniques that are common in the folk definitions by all

speakers: he describes an everyday scene to which the ideophone can be applied, and supplies an ideophone that is similar in meaning.

The next definition (Extract 9.2) is one by Foster. He explains the ideophone *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* in a succinct way, relying on gestures and antonyms as semantic anchoring points.

Extract 9.2 Folk definition of *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* 'thin-fragile' by Foster **(S)**

1 F *ìra* *né* *ì-se* *pɛtɛpɛtɛ-pɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛ*
thing REL SC.DEP-be IDPH.thin.fragile-EM3
⊦ G1 ⊣
Something that is *pɛtɛpɛtɛ-pɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛ* [thin-fragile]

2 *ì-i-gbògbòrò*
I.S-NEG-IDPH.tough
⊦ G2 ⊣
It is not *gbògbòrò* [tough].

3 *ì-i-tòtòrò*
I.S-NEG-IDPH.thick
⊦ G3 ⊣
It is not *tòtòrò* [thick].

4 *ì-se* ↑*pɛtɛpɛtɛ-pɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛ*↑
I.S-COP IDPH.thin.fragile-EM3
⊦ G4 ⊣
It is thin and fragile.

G1: both hands symmetric, gently pinching an imaginary thin object between thumb and forefinger
G2: both hands symmetric, clenching fists at chest-level and flexing arm muscles
G3: right hand index finger being pinched with thumb and forefinger of the left hand as if measuring thickness
G4: left hand palm up, right hand palm down, lightly tapping at the fingertips of the extended index fingers

"Something that's *pɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛ* [thin-fragile]. It's not *gbògbòrò* [tough]; it's not *tòtòrò* [thick]; it is ↑*pɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛpɛtɛ* ↑ [thin-fragile]."

Each of the four ideophone tokens in Foster's 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: the arm muscles are flexed with clenched fists. 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 *gbògbòrò* [strong]; it's not *totoro* [thick]; it is *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* [thin and fragile].

Gesture also plays an important role in the definition of *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'quiet' by Beatrice (Extract 9.3). (Beatrice is assisted by another speaker, C, in this excerpt.)

Extract 9.3 Folk definition of *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'quiet' by Beatrice **(S)**

1	B	*pɔkɔsɔɔ:*
		IDPH.quiet.EM
		pɔkɔsɔɔ: [quiet]
2		(1.0)
3		*pɔkɔsɔɔ:*
		IDPH.quiet.EM
		⊦ G1 ⊣
		pɔkɔsɔɔ:
4		(1.0)
5		*ìra né ma pɔkɔsɔɔ:*
		I.thing REL.I DEP/have IDPH.quiet.EM
		⊦ G2 ⊣
		something that is *pɔkɔsɔɔ:*
6	C	*ì-na gìḍìgìḍì*
		I.S-lack IDPH.vigorous
		it's not vigorous

7 B *ì-na gìdʲì-*
I.S-lack IDPH.vigorous
⊦G3 ⊣
it's not *gìdʲì-*
8 *i- ì-na* (0.9) *ǹda ni?*
I.S I.S-lack how FP.URG
⊦G4 ⊣
it's- it's not... (0.9) what shall I say?
9 (1.0)
10 *↑kprakpra↑, ì-na ↑kprakpra↑*
IDPH.energetic I.S-lack IDPH.energetic
⊦G5 ⊣ ⊦G5 ⊣
↑kprakpra↑, it lacks *↑kprakpra↑*
11 *ì-ba pɔkɔsɔɔ:*
I.S-have IDPH.quiet.EM
⊦G6 ⊣
It is *pɔkɔsɔɔ:* [quiet]

G1: cups both hands in resting position
G2: both hands flat, palm down, slowly moving downwards
G3: shrugs left shoulder
G4: clenched fists, arm movements suggesting running
G5: arm movements suggesting running
G6: both hands flat, palm down, moving outwards and downwards

"*Pɔkɔsɔɔ:. Pɔkɔsɔɔ:.* Something that is *pɔkɔsɔɔ:.* (C interjects: It doesn't have *gìdʲìgìdʲì* [vigor].) It lacks *gìdʲì-* ⊦*running movement*⊣ — what shall I say? *↑Kprakpra↑*, it lacks *↑kprakpra↑* [energy]."

Beatrice starts out by repeating the word twice, and then puts it into a sentence (line 5), with low-key hand movements suggesting a lack of energy and intensity. Her partner suggests an antonym *gìdʲìgìdʲì* 'vigorous', which she initially takes over but finds wanting (line 7). Then something interesting happens: struggling to find a better word, she fills in the Attributive construction with a gesture of high energy arm movements suggesting running. The sensory imagery is already there in the gesture, but the speech stays behind. Having finally retrieved the ideophone *kprakpra* 'energetic', she repeats this alternative antonym together with the running movements, and brings the explanation full circle by contrasting all of this energetic, exuberant sensory imagery with a slowly pronounced *pɔkɔsɔɔ*, the final

vowel drawn out somewhat, accompanied by the same simple gesture as before: both hands flat, palm down, moving outwards and downwards.

Like Foster's explanation of *pɛtɛpɛtɛ*, Beatrice's explanation of *pɔkɔsɔɔ* is rather light on verbal paraphrase but makes up for it with effective depiction in speech and gesture. The other speakers, independently, do much the same in their explanations of *pɔkɔsɔɔ* (not shown here). Foster uses the exact same gesture as Beatrice (hands flat, palm down, slowly moving downward). Ruben acts out various activities (weeding, walking and eating) at a very slow pace, dramatically slowing down his own pronunciation of the ideophone *pɔ.kɔ.sɔɔɔɔɔɔ* to show, rather than tell, the meaning. Ella repeats the ideophone, looks for a suitable image, and then describes the slow movement of a snake as *pɔkɔsɔɔ*.

The final of our first four examples is a definition of *gbògbòrò* 'tough' by Ella (Extract 9.4).

Extract 9.4 Folk definition of *gbògbòrò* 'tough' by Ella **(S)**

1 E *ɔ̀bi mayè gbògbòrò-↑gbò↑ gbɔ!*
child 3PL-give.birth IDPH.tough-EM1 way
├ G1 ┤
The child they bore is *gbògbòrò-↑gbò↑*!

2 *E! Ɔ̀bi gɔ ɔ̀-gbògbòrò kere!*
INTJ child REL.Ɔ 3SG-IDPH.tough just
├ G1 ┤
Oh! That child is just *gbògbòrò*!

3 *Ata ɔ-bùà ɔ-gbògbòrò kere*
PSN 3SG-be.very 3SG-IDPH.tough just
├ G1 ┤
Ata, he's just extremely *gbògbòrò*.

4 *Atasi ɔ̃, ɔ̀-se ↑wɛrɛrɛrɛrɛrɛrɛrɛ↑*
PSN 3SG.TP 3SG-be IDPH.gaunt.EM
├ G2 ┤
Atasi on the other hand, she's *↑wɛrɛrɛrɛrɛrɛ↑* [skinny]!

5 *Ata ɔ̃ ne, ↑gbògbòrò↑!*
PSN 3SG.TP TP, IDPH.tough
├ G1 ┤
But Ata, he's *gbògbòrò*.

G1: flexing of arms' muscles with clenched fists

G2: palms of both hands put together to leave a very narrow space

> "The child they bore is *gbògbòrò-↑gbò↑* [powerfully built]! Oh! That child is just *gbògbòrò*. Ata, he's just extremely *gbògbòrò*. Atasi on the other hand, she's *↑wɛrɛrɛrɛrɛrɛ↑* [skinny]! But Ata, he's *gbògbòrò*."

Ella here explains the ideophone *gbògbòrò* 'tough, powerfully built' by giving an example from real life: a boy that is said to be powerfully built. She then goes on to contrast this to another type of build: *wɛrɛrɛrɛrɛ*, the thin and bony look of a very lean person, for instance his sister Atasi.[145] Like Foster in Extract 9.2 above, Ella uses a distinct gesture with the ideophone *gbògbòrò*, making clenched fists and flexing her arms' muscles to depict toughness and power. To depict *wɛrɛrɛ* 'gaunt', she puts together her flat hands, leaving a very narrow space between them.

In sum, when asked to explain a word, speakers have various strategies at their disposal. They can describe an everyday situation in which it would be used; they can accompany the word with illustrative gestures; they can use synonyms and antonyms as semantic anchoring points to delimit its meaning; and they can offer a verbal paraphrase or approximate definition. In providing folk definitions of ideophones, Siwu speakers use a combination of the above strategies. We saw them in the four examples above; the following sections describe three of them in more detail.

9.3 Everyday contexts of use

One of the most natural ways to explain an ideophone is to describe a scene in which it would be used.[146] Take for instance Ruben's description of *ɣààà* 'water gushing', which starts by giving a paradigmatic example sentence ('water goes *ɣààà*') and then works out a scenario in which the event depicted by the ideophone occurs: the heavy rains of the rainy season. Or Ella's explanation of *gbògbòrò* 'tough and powerful', where she uses the example of two kids, one of them powerfully built *gbògbòrò*, the other lean and skinny *wɛrɛrɛ*.

A strategy related to the framing of everyday situations is to provide fixed expressions featuring the ideophone. Some examples of these are given in (126); they range from (a) an exclamation when one suddenly understands a point (one

[145] Ata and Atasi are generic person names in Siwu.

[146] This has also been noted by Diffloth (1972) for South-East Asian languages and by Baronti (2001) for explanations of ideophones in K'iche', a Mayan language from Guatemala.

sees the light *waĩĩ* 'brightly') to (b) a demand for silence in public gatherings, (c) the formulaic reply to the morning greeting exchange (see chapter 12 for details), or (d) an insult. The latter category is relatively common for ideophones depictive of aspects of the human body and human behaviour. For example, in explicating *lɛkɛrɛɛ* 'somewhat plump', one speaker jokingly cited the insult in (127).

(126) a *ì-kpa waĩĩ* {it-be.clear IDPH.bright} 'it's perfectly clear'
b *mì-lo kananana* {2pl-be.silent IDPH.silent} 'be still!'
c *à-rɛ kpooo* {2sg-sleep IDPH.serene-Q} 'did you sleep well?'
d *kànya gbagbadzɛɛ* {mouth IDPH.wide} 'wide mouth'

(127) *rùì mmɔ ìyiri lɛkɛrɛ-a!*
get.away there belly IDPH.plump-ADJ
'Move away from there, fatty!' [lit. plump belly]

Insults and ideophones happen to go well together because one of the basic techniques of insults is to speak ill of a person's physical characteristics, and ideophones provide just the sort of specific imagery that is needed to do so effectively. It should be noted, however, that very few ideophones in Siwu are inherently abusive. Most ideophones are not at all insulting in daily use, and derive their abusive meaning in insults primarily from their creative application to bodily characteristics.

A good example of how this works in practice is Ruben's explanation of the ideophone *miɔmiɔ* 'pointy'. To explain this ideophone, he starts out with an example: the tip of a pen. However, possibly because someone in the background cites a funny insult (*kaitì ba miɔmiɔ*, 'pointy pinhead'[147]), Ruben gets the idea of a little tease. Extract 9.5 presents an excerpt of his subsequent explanation of *miɔmiɔ*.

Extract 9.5 Folk definition of *miɔmiɔ* 'pointy' by Ruben (excerpt) **(S)**

1 R *miɔmiɔ*
IDPH.pointy
Miɔmiɔ.

[147] This utterance derives its quality as an insult from the diminutive noun class marker on the noun 'head' (normally *itì*, now *kaitì*) as much as from the imagery of the ideophone.

2 *pɛ pén tã mɛ!*
throw pen give me
Throw me that pen.
3 (2.0) ((points to the tip of the pen to explain *miɔmiɔ*))
4 C *kaitì ba miɔmiɔ* ((suggested by C, a background lister))
KA.DIM-head have IDPH.pointy
You pointy pinhead!
((4 lines omitted in which Ruben explains this funny insult))
9 R *kɔ̃rɔ̃ ne*
now TP
Now.
10 *fɔ ɔfa Yao ne*
2SG.IND brother PSN TP
You, brother Yao. ((pointing to the investigator))
11 *fɔ ɔ̀ɣɔ̃ miɔmiɔ*
2SG.IND nose IDPH.pointy
Your nose is *miɔmiɔ*.
12 *fɔ ɔ̀ɣɔ̃, ɔ̀ɣɔ̃ miɔmiɔ*
2SG.IND nose nose IDPH.pointy
Your nose is a *miɔmiɔ* nose.
13 (4.0) ((Ruben and the investigator —a.k.a. brother Yao— laugh together))
14 R *a-ŋya-a?*
2SG-see-Q
Do you see?
15 *sì-tia si-ɖe ló!*
SI-insult SI.S-be FP.ADV
That's a tease, mind you!

"*Miɔmiɔ*. Throw me that pen. (Points to tip of pen to explain *miɔmiɔ*.) … Now. You, brother Yao. Your nose is *miɔmiɔ*. It's a *miɔmiɔ* nose. (Laughing together.) Do you see? That's a tease, mind you!"

This example, apart from providing a pointed characterisation of the investigator's nose, neatly illustrates how easy it is for ideophones to be used in insults, thanks to their perceptual semantics. There is nothing in *miɔmiɔ* that is inherently insulting; it is its creative application to a body part that makes it so. In

this sense the technique of using ideophones in insults is rather like the device of simile. Indeed sometimes both are combined, as in *itì lèkɛ̀sɛ̀ɛ̀ alɛ ìtoreta* 'your head is *lèkɛ̀sɛ̀ɛ̀* [huge] like an anvil'. Similar observations are made by Samarin in his (1969) description of Gbeya insults.

A related use of ideophones that surfaces in the folk definition is an evaluative frame, in which ideophones are used to highlight deviations from communal norms or averages, often related to body posture or manners of movement. I was first alerted to this myself when I learned about ideophones like *gbadara-gbadara* 'walking like a drunk' and *kpɛ̃gɛ̃ɛ̃* 'proud upright body posture', which clearly have evaluative connotations. But even ideophones with fairly neutral meanings can be used in this way. An example from the folk definitions is the following excerpt from Ella's explanation of *kpoo* 'still' (Extract 9.6).

Extract 9.6 Folk definition of *kpoo* 'still' by Ella (excerpts) **(S)**

8 E °↑*kpooooooo*↑°
IDPH.still.EM
°↑kpooooooo↑°
9 *Oh! Be ɖo-ɔ̀ à-ɣɛ kpoo gbɔ?*
INTJ what hurt-2SG.O 2SG-stand IDPH.still manner
Oh! What hurt you that you stand *kpoo* like that?
10 °*À ɣɛ ↑kpooooo*↑°
2SG-stand IDPH.still.EM
°You stand ↑*kpooooo*↑°
11 *Ɔ̀nyɛ ato-o?*
sickness 2SG-hold-Q
Are you sick?
12 *fiɛ ayɛ kpoo gbɔ?*
before 2SG-stand IDPH.still manner
that you're standing *kpoo* like that?
13 *Itì te ìɖoɖo mɛ̀ ɔ̀so lòɣɛ ↑kpooo*↑
I.head PROG I.S-PLUR.hurt 1SG.O reason 1SG-stand IDPH.still.EM
I'm having a headache so I'm standing ↑*kpooo*↑
14 *Ɔ̀yu to mɛ̀, ɔ̀so lòɣɛ ↑kpooo*↑
cold hold 1SG.O, reason 1SG-stand IDPH.still.EM
I'm feeling cold, so I'm standing ↑*kpooo*↑

> "°↑*Kpoooo*↑°. Oh! What's the matter with you that you're standing *kpoo* like that? °You stand ↑*kpoooo*↑° Are you sick? That you're standing *kpoo* like that? 'I'm having a headache, that's why I'm standing ↑*kpooo*↑.' 'I'm feeling cold, that's why I'm standing ↑*kpooo*↑.' "

Ella here exemplifies a use of *kpoo* 'still, silent' that highlights the hunched-up, passive body posture of someone who is suffering from something. She asks the kind of questions that someone behaving like that gets asked by family members: "What's the matter with you? Are you sick?" Then she changes perspective to respond to these questions, providing the typical reasons (a headache, feeling cold) that may lead one to behave so passively and silently.

Summarizing, the common strategy of explaining ideophone by framing situations and citing expressions from everyday life allows us to tap into the background knowledge against which ideophones are understood and provides us with a window into the real-life use of ideophones. In chapter 11 we will see how speakers of Siwu do things with ideophones in everyday interaction, using them, for instance, to render fine details in stories, to joke with each other, and to subtly negotiate issues of experiential access and epistemic independence. The fact that these contexts of usage also make their appearance in folk definitions of ideophones shows that the procedure is a highly useful one in the study of the meaning and use of ideophones. Moreover, folk definitions, if collected with different speakers of different genders and age groups, can provide a useful corrective for inadvertent sampling biases. For instance, the evaluative use exemplified by Ella's explanation of *kpoo* happens to be not very common in the conversational corpus, but is quite common in the folk definitions (and indeed documented for neighbouring Ewe in an ethnographic study (Geurts 2002)). This points to an avenue for further research.

9.4 Depictive gestures

It has often been noted that folk definitions of ideophones are replete with gestures. For instance, Samarin noted: "It turned out that some of the meanings I isolated were based almost exclusively on gestures. On the assumption that informants were leaning too heavily on their gestures to convey the meanings, I have tried, unsuccessfully, to get them to verbalise without gestures" (1971:153). The occurrence of gestures in informal explanations is not in itself surprising; what is striking however in the folk definitions of Siwu ideophones is their sheer

ubiquity, the fact that they are often time-aligned with the ideophones,[148] and the fact that in many cases, gestures are preferred over verbal paraphrase in explanations of ideophones.

What kind of gestures are we talking about? The great majority of these time-aligned gestures are depictive in nature. Depictive gestures are non-conventionalised forms that depict aspects of the accompanying speech (McNeill 1992). They are a useful complement to verbal explication because they are good for visualizing aspects of the sensory imagery that ideophones depict. They may be even better for this purpose than ordinary words. As Diffloth has noted, "many speakers cannot find exact paraphrases and prefer to repeat the ideophone with a more distinct elocution, accompanied by facial expressions and body gestures if appropriate" (1972:441).

What can such gestures tell us about the meanings of ideophones? Let us take the case of *gìlìgìlì* vs. *minimini*. The difference between these ideophones turns out to be hard to articulate in Siwu; both seem to be about some kind of roundness. However, looking at the gestures accompanying the folk definitions (Figure 9.1), a clear distinction emerges. While explaining *gìlìgìlì*, all four speakers draw a circle with their index finger. In contrast, while explaining *minimini*, all four speakers produce a two-handed gesture depicting a sphere. We see thus that the gesture reliably changes with the word form, suggesting that *gìlìgìlì* should be glossed as 'circular (round 2D)' and *minimini* as 'spherical (round 3D)'.

Since video clips of these folk definitions are available in the online supplementary materials it is not necessary to discuss all four speakers' definitions in detail. Those by Beatrice show how the visual displays also help elucidate the paraphrases. In Extract 9.7, Beatrice matches her gesture of *gìlìgìlì*, a circle drawn in a horizontal plane, with a description of a hole in the ground, making it clear that *gìlìgìlì* refers to the circumference of the hole. In her description of *minimini* on the other hand (Extract 9.8), she enumerates four types of fruit, all round, and accompanies every single one of them with a depictive gesture of a little sphere.

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[148] I have no comparable collection of folk definitions of non-ideophonic vocabulary, but my impression is that in such definitions, ideophones are indeed more often accompanied by time-aligned iconic gestures than non-ideophonic words. Some kind of coupling between ideophones and gesture has been noted often in the literature, but the actual extent of gesture-ideophone co-occurrence in conversational discourse has not been empirically studied. Chapter 13 presents the results of a first investigation of this issue.

Figure 9.1 Depictions of *gìlìgìlì* 'circular' (left) and *minimini* 'spherical' (right) **(S)**

Extract 9.7 Folk definition of *gìlìgìlì* 'circular' by Beatrice **(S)**

1 ↑*gìlìgìlì-gìlìgìlìgìlì*
IDPH.circular-EM3
Gìlìgìlì-gìlìgìlìgìlì [circular]
2 (5.0)
├ G1: circle drawn with right index finger
3 ((2 lines omitted))
4 *má-ḍi ìwo, ìwo nyɔ* (0.2) ↑*gìlìgìlì-gìlìgìlìgìlì*
3PL.PST-dig hole hole look IDPH.circular-EM3
end G1┤
A hole has been dug, it looks (0.2) ↑*gìlìgìlì-gìlìgìlìgìlì* [circular]

"↑*Gìlìgìlì-gìlìgìlìgìlì*↑. A hole has been dug; it looks ↑*gìlìgìlì-gìlìgìlìgìlì*↑."

Extract 9.8 Folk definition of *minimini* 'spherical' by Beatrice **(S)**

1 *minimini*
IDPH.spherical
minimini [spherical]
2 *ìkùtu; mangɔ̀; peà; ìḍùba*
orange mango avocado papaya
├G1 ┤ ├G1 ┤ ├G1 ┤ ├G1 ┤ (G1: both hands cupped to form a sphere in space)
orange, mango, avocado, papaya
3 *mìba minimini*
SMI.PL-have IDPH.spherical
they are *minimini* [spherical]

"*Minimini.* Orange, mango, avocado, papaya — they are *minimini.*"

Likewise, Ruben draws a circle on the sandy ground to exemplify *gìlìgìlì* 'circular', and takes his own head as an example of *minimini* 'spherical'. Ella takes the mortar as an example of *gìlìgìlì*. Foster does not even give examples; he simply does all the work with the same two contrastive gestures that all the others use.

Another instructive example of the use of depictive gestures in folk definitions of ideophones is the way Ruben opens his definition of *bɔgɔbɔgɔ* (Extract 9.9). He repeats the bare ideophone once to show his recognition and then puts it in an attributive construction. Ruben does little to define the ideophone verbally, but makes up for it with an effective gesture. The meaningful phase of the gesture, the

repeated bending of an imaginary cane, is perfectly aligned with the second occurrence of the ideophone; it is moreover synchronised in the sense that the two bending events align very precisely with the two *bɔgɔ*'s. Thus the reduplication of the ideophone is mirrored in the repeated gesture, and speech and gesture work together to depict a resilient cane.

Extract 9.9 Folk definition of *bɔgɔbɔgɔ* 'flexible' by Ruben **(S)**

1 *bɔgɔbɔgɔ* — *ì-se* *bɔgɔbɔgɔ*
IDPH.flexible — I-COP IDPH.flexible
⊦ G1 ╪ G1 ⊣
G1: bends imaginary cane, paced with the reduplicated base of the ideophone.
"*Bɔgɔbɔgɔ*, it's *bɔgɔbɔgɔ*."

In §9.2.1 we already saw two instances of the use of gesture to arrive at very concise definitions: in the explanations of *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* 'thin + fragile' and *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'quiet' by Foster and Beatrice, respectively. What is interesting about those cases is that they use a form of negative definition. Foster (in Extract 9.2) simply defines *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* by introducing it with a gentle pinching gesture and then contrasting it to two other ideophone + gesture constellations: *gbògbòrò* 'tough', presented with a gesture of toughness and power, and *totoro* 'thick', presented with a gesture depicting thickness. Beatrice depicts *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'quiet' with a gesture of two flat hands, palm down, moving downwards, and contrasts it with the high energy running movements that come with the ideophone *kprakpra* 'energetic'.

Gesture also provides independent confirmation of the phenomenon of relative iconicity (described in §7.4.2). Comparing the gestures accompanying folk definitions of members of ideophonic templates, we see that the actual spatial extent of the gestures covaries with the vowels of the different members. This can be seen, for instance, in Ruben's definitions of *lukuruu* and *lɛkɛrɛɛ*, video clips of which can be found in the online supplementary materials.

In conclusion, then, gestures offer important clues about the lexical semantics of ideophones. From cases like *gìlìgìlì* 'circular' versus *minimini* 'spherical' we see that the depictive gestures that come with ideophones can be highly consistent. And this is not an isolated example; there are many cases of high similarity in depictive gestures across speakers, for instance *gbògbòrò* 'tough' (cf. Extract 9.2 and Extract 9.4), *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'quiet', *pumbuluu* 'fat + round' and many others. Among other things, this shows that ideophones are robustly conventionalised words with

stable meanings. The sensory meanings of ideophones may be hard to capture in ordinary words, but depictive gestures help to give expression to the imagery they evoke.

Let me close this section with a word on gestures and conventionalisation. The *giligili/minimini* clips show striking convergences in the gestures used by four different speakers. These and other examples raise the question if these gestures should not be thought of as at least partly conventionalised. There is not going to be a simply yes/no answer to this question (Okrent 2002). The first thing to note is that there are at least two distinct possible sources for the similarity in form of the gestures across speakers: the gestures may look the same because they are attempts to depict the same kind of sensory imagery, or they may look the same because they are subject to some kind of social convention. The first would be be regularity due to underlying conceptual commonality, the second would be regularity due to convention. Both are possible, and it is of course easy to see that repeated regularity may over time turn into socially mediated convention.

There is reason to think, however, that the gestures considered here are still at some remove from the conventionalised end of the continuum. Take the gestures coming with *minimini* 'spherical'. Despite important similarities, there is also a great deal of variation: Ruben spreads out his arms out wide as if to encompass a large sphere, Beatrice brings her cupped hands together four times to model four round types of fruit, while both Ella and Foster enact the sculpting of a medium-sized sphere. So the gestures differ at least in terms of size, position of the articulators, and method of representation (Kendon's (2004:160) "modelling" versus "enactment"). Given the amount of variety across these different parameters, it is more likely that the similarities we see are due to the commonality of the sensory imagery depicted rather than due to convention. Based on examples like this, it seems safe to conclude that the similarity of gestures across ideophone tokens of a type may often simply be due to a commonality in what is depicted, while keeping open the possibility that some such gestures, by sheer force of habit, may attain a degree of conventionalisation.

9.5 Sense relations

Another recurrent feature in the folk definitions of ideophones is the use of synonyms (near semantic neighbours) and antonyms (words with incompatible

meanings). These sense relations can tell us more about the conceptual structuring of the domain of ideophones.

Take, again, Foster's succinct explanation of *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* (Extract 9.2). Foster delimits the meaning of *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* by mentioning two lexical opposites, both ideophones: *gbògbòrò* 'sturdy' and *tòtòrò* 'thick'. After that, the original ideophone is simply restated as if to say that this definition must be sufficient. This is not an isolated example; it is a very common strategy in the folk definitions collected so far. What this easy access to semantically related ideophones suggests is that ideophones do enter into sense relations with other ideophones.[149]

The use of semantic anchoring points in folk definitions provides a number of important clues about sense relations in the domain. First, the relations are always horizontal. There are no relations of hyperonymy or hyponymy within the Siwu ideophone inventory.[150] That is, there is no general ideophone for 'being fat' of which ideophones like *lɛkɛrɛɛ* 'plump', *lukuruu* 'fat' and *pimbilii/pumbuluu/pɔmbɔlɔɔ* 'fat + rounded' would be hyponyms. Ideophones appear to operate all on the same level of specificity and can only be related to each other in non-hierarchic ways, i.e. in terms of greater or lesser similarity or compatibility in meaning.

This leads to a second point about sense relations in the domain of ideophones: there are many incompatible items, but very few, if any, binary antonyms or true lexical opposites. We see this from the fact that speakers often pick multiple semantic anchoring points to explicate the meanings of ideophones (e.g. Foster contrasting *pɛtɛpɛtɛ* 'thin-fragile' with *gbògbòrò* 'tough' and *tòtòrò* 'thick', and Beatrice contrasting *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'quiet' with *gìdʲìgìdʲì* 'vigourous' and *kprakpra* 'energetic'.) Typical examples of binary antonyms in English are *long : short*, *hot : cold* (Lyons 1977:ch. 9; Cruse 1986:ch. 12). Although there are ideophones which can be glossed like this, the relations between them are never simply binary. For instance, *yululu* is not simply 'cold', it is a specific sensation of object temperature that can be contrasted with *nyènènè* 'cold (body temperature)'. (So one can swim

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[149] Samarin (1970) reports the same for Gbeya. On the other hand, Diffloth (1972) states that ideophones do not enter into lexical relations in Semai and other South-East Asian languages; however, according to Sylvia Tufvesson (p.c.), Semai speakers use much the same strategies in explanations of ideophones as the ones described here, including the use of closely related and opposite words. Perhaps Diffloth uses "lexical relations" to refer narrowly to relations like binary antonymy and (idealised) synonymy, in which case his statement would hold for Siwu, too.

[150] Watson (2001) has noted the same for South-East Asian ideophones.

in water that is *yululu* and come to feel *nyènènè* as a result.) On the 'hot' end of the spectrum, we have ideophones like *yuayua* 'punctuated burning sensation', *kpiɛkpiɛ* 'lukewarm [of liquids]' and *sùùù* 'burning sensation on the skin', the latter of which, incidentally, has a counterpart *saaa* 'cool sensation on the skin'. The same thing holds for 'long' versus 'short'. There are ideophones like *krukutuu* 'short and crooked', *tɛbɛrɛɛ* 'short [of time]', *tuguluu* 'short and fat'; and ideophones like *tagbaraa* 'long [of elongated objects]', *sĩĩĩ* 'long [implying fictive motion]' *bɛlɛlɛ* 'extended', *sadzala* 'oblong and lumpy'. If these do not look like simple binary antonyms, it is because they are not.[151] So although similarity judgements can be made about ideophones, and are in fact made good use of in the folk definitions, the domain certainly does not display the full array of lexical relations outlined in standard textbooks (Lyons 1977:ch. 9; Cruse 1986:ch. 12). This makes good sense on the view that the meanings of ideophones are not abstract, but refer to highly specific sensory imagery derived from perceptions.

Another point to be drawn from the use of lexical relations in folk definitions concerns an apparent constraint involving words linked by relative iconicity, like *lɛkɛrɛɛ* 'fat1' and *lukuruu* 'fat2'. One might expect *lɛkɛrɛɛ* 'fat1' to be recruited as a useful synonym in defining *lukuruu* 'fat2', but it is not. In fact, words related by relative iconicity rarely make an appearance in each other's folk definitions. Thus, *gbegbere-gbe* (roughly, 'toughness') is paraphrased with the help of *tãtãnã-tã* 'tough, strong', but not with its near neighbours *gbagbara-gba* and *gbogboro-gbo* (other shades of toughness), both of which also trigger *tãtãnã-tã* by themselves. Similarly, *krɔkɔtɔɔ* and *krukutuu* both trigger *kèkéí sɛiii* 'very small' but not each other, although both denote various shades of shortness. This suggests that a sound-symbolic cluster as a whole, rather than its members on their own, stands in relation to its synonyms. Indirectly, this seems to support the psychological reality of these clusters. There is another indication that there is something special about them. In separate elicitation sessions, I found that speakers often will say something like "yeah, that's roughly the same" if they have just explicated one member of the cluster and are confronted with another one. It is as if the

[151] In fact, from the point of view of the Siwu lexicon, binary antonymy is overrated. There are often verbs or collocations that express one scale and these are negated if need be. Thus the verb *kãrã* 'be tall' defines a scale of tallness, but there is no antonym 'be short' (*ũ-i-kãrã* {3SG/NEG-NEG-be.tall} 'he is not long'); and the noun *ɔtɔ̂* 'fire' is used in expressions like *ìba ɔtɔ̂* 'it's hot' or *ìna ɔtɔ̂* 'it is not hot' (it has fire/lacks fire, respectively).

meanings are so similar that speakers tend to see them as one blob in semantic space.

This raises an important question. Do *lukuruu* and *lɛkɛrɛɛ* have independent status at all, or should we only recognise a template *l·k·r:* of which instantiations are generated on the fly? No, that would be one step too far. First, only *lukuruu* and *lɛkɛrɛɛ* exist; when asked to explicate the analogical new-formations *likirii*, *lɔkɔrɔɔ*, or *lakaraa*, speakers are quite adamant that these are not existing words. Second, if pressed gently and given some time, speakers are able to communicate the subtle difference between *lukuruu* and *lɛkɛrɛɛ* —indeed, the difference shows in the shape of their gestures **(S)**— and they do so consistently across sessions and independently from each other. One way to think about this is that the template holds together the different related forms and signals that they are all in the same sensory domain. Within this domain the ideophones, differing minimally in form, depict different shades of of meaning, much in the same way as different gradations of pencil strokes in a drawing represent different grades of luminance. (See Tufvesson (2011) for a beautiful case study of how this works for colour, smell and sound ideophones in Semai, a Mon-Khmer language spoken on Peninsular Malaysia.) Once again, then, this points to the fundamentally depictive nature of ideophones.

9.6 Conclusions

This chapter outlined a procedure for collecting folk definitions of ideophones, and outlined some of the results that can be obtained using this procedure. In particular, we examined three commonly used strategies in the folk definitions: the framing of everyday situations, the use of depictive gestures and the use of sense relations as semantic anchoring points.

The everyday situations that are often used to "frame" ideophones express important aspects of the background knowledge against which ideophones are understood and provide a window into the real-life use of ideophones. Similarly, fixed expressions and special usage contexts like insults, body epithets and evaluatives point to possible cultural preoccupations. I suspect that it is in these kinds of semantic-functional specialisztions that there are important differences to be found between the ideophone systems of different linguacultures (on linguaculture, see Friedrich 1989). The principled investigation of the differential elaboration of ideophone systems is long overdue. Using the procedure outlined

here, it is possible to collect the kind of data that will help us to move forward in this area.

The second common strategy is the use of gesture. Although it has been known for a long time that there is a close connection between ideophones and depictive gestures, this becomes especially clear in the folk definitions, where all speakers have frequent recourse to them. (Chapter 14 discusses ideophones and depictive gestures in everyday discourse.) The most important reason for their ubiquity here is probably the fact that the sensory imagery evoked by ideophones is often more easily expressed in gesture (which shares with ideophones a depictive mode of signification) than in ordinary, descriptive words. The remarkable consistency of the gestures across four speakers is a sign of the fact that ideophones in Siwu have stable meanings and are robustly conventionalised.

The third common feature of the folk definitions is the use of other ideophones —similar as well as dissimilar in meaning— as semantic anchoring points. The use of this technique in the definitions allows us to draw some conclusions about the sense relations exhibited by ideophones. Within the domain of ideophones, there are no true (binary) antonyms and no relations of hyponymy or hyperonymy. This suggests that all ideophones operate at a similar level of specificity, something that I suggest is due primarily to their depictive mode of signification and the fact that they target highly specific sensory imagery. Curiously, ideophones that differ minimally in form and meaning like *lukuruu* and *lɛkɛrɛɛ* rarely figure in each other's definitions, suggesting a special psychological status for the relation that I identified on semiotic grounds as *relative iconicity* in §7.4.2. This is, again, a pointer to the depictive nature of ideophones.

There are plenty of issues that I have not been able to go into in this chapter. I will just mention a few of them here. The folk definitions highlight the remarkable susceptibility to expressive morphology that is so typical of ideophones. Chapter §6.4 provided a description of the possibilities (e.g. lengthening, reduplication) that come to life in everyday discourse as well as in these folk definitions. Although ideophones were always presented to the speakers in dictionary format, basically sanitised roots without expressive morphology and performative foregrounding, all of this comes back as soon as the speaker gets hold of the ideophone to explain and enact it.

The folk definitions also show that negation may be usefully deployed with ideophones, even though this is quite rare in everyday discourse. There have been conflicting claims in the literature about the issue of ideophones and negation. A

number of authors give examples of negated ideophones (Fortune 1962; Samarin 1965; Fivaz 1984; Newman 1968); others maintain that ideophones display a general antipathy towards negation (Diffloth 1972; Kita 1997; Johnson 1976; Kilian-Hatz 2006). I suspect that this contradiction may be attributed in large part to a failure to distinguish different types of data sources. In Siwu, ideophones can be negated or not, depending on where you look. In natural speech, ideophones rarely occur in negated form; in folk definitions on the other hand, negated ideophones are often given as semantic anchoring points. The resistance to negation in spontaneous speech can be explained by the fact that the primary function of ideophones in such contexts is usually to *evoke* an image, not negate one. However, there is also room for language-specific —and even construction-specific— variation on this point. For instance, in §6.6 we saw that when ideophones are not foregrounded as depictions but are used to convey background information, they are more likely to be integrated syntactically and to undergo morphosyntactic processes like negation.

Something that remained implicit in this chapter is the possibility of gender and age-related differences in the knowledge of ideophones. Aware of the possibility (Samarin 2001) I took care to balance gender in the collection of the folk definitions, but neither in the folk definitions nor in the broader corpus did I detect any striking differences. There *are* interesting individual differences that I have not been able to go into. For instance, Foster tends to provide verbal paraphrases more than the others; Ella produces succinct examples and often acts out the ideophones; Beatrice prefers to describe cultural models in fair detail; and Ruben is by far the most verbose and expressive, always ready to act out ideophones and use objects and kids from the compound as examples.

In conclusion, then, determining the meanings of ideophones is no less of a daunting task now that it was ten, or fifty, or hundred years ago. However, I hope to have shown at least that folk definitions can be usefully employed in the ethnographically grounded investigation of the meaning and use of ideophones. They reveal order, stability and precision in cultural meaning systems that somehow have come to be regarded as erratic, variable and vague. Perhaps this is because they let us hear something that has too often been drowned out by our theoretical trepidations: the voices of the speakers of ideophonic languages themselves.

10 Conceptual structuring in ideophones: a sorting task

> We have hardly begun to study the classification of human experience revealed by ideophones.
>
> William Samarin (1965)

10.1 Introduction[152]

How is the domain of ideophones conceptually structured? Despite the fact that the existence of ideophones as a word class has been known for a long time, we still know little about the semantic structure of the domain. Though there have been several attempts at semantic classifications of ideophones (e.g. Alexandre 1966; Samarin 1965; Dhoorre and Tosco 1998), all of them are plagued by the same problem: they rely on the analyst's categories and therefore may tell us more about the analyst's intuitions than about the structure of the domain itself. The aim of this chapter is to go beyond analysts' judgements and to explore the conceptual structure of the domain of ideophones by empirically capturing native speakers' intuitions.

The method used is a pile sorting task. Pile sorting is a technique to discover how people conceptualise and classify items in a certain domain (Weller and Romney 1988:20–6; Bernard 2006:311–6). Participants sort a set of items into piles, and data from several participants is then pooled for statistical analysis. Pile sorts have been done with a wide variety of items, from English nouns (Miller 1969), to Navaho food concepts (Perchonock and Werner 1969), to biological specimen (Berlin 1992; Boster 1987), and these studies have shown that sorting tasks are a fruitful way to explore the conceptual structure of a domain.

[152] I thank Gijske de Boo for the initial idea of doing a sorting task with ideophones. In preparing this study I have benefited from the assistance of Asifa Majid, with whom I discussed the design of the study. She also helped to carry out the statistical analysis and provided detailed comments on a first writeup. Dan Dediu kindly wrote an R-script to convert the rows and columns of my data sheets into summed equivalence matrices.

10.2 Method

In the task described here, 14 literate speakers of Siwu sorted 58 ideophone cards by similarity in meaning. The 58 ideophones were selected on the basis of corpus frequency and occurrence in the structured elicitation tasks, as follows. A first selection included all ideophones of which there were at least two tokens in the corpus of naturally occurring speech at the moment of selection (March 2009). There were 38 such ideophones. A second, smaller selection included ideophones of which there were more than three response tokens in the Language of Perception tasks (see chapter 8). There were 26 such ideophones. Discounting overlaps between the two sets left 20, bringing the total at 58. The result is a frequency-based selection of ideophones of which two-thirds come straight from the corpus of naturally occurring speech and one third come from a set of elicitation tasks probing different perceptual domains (the full set is included in Appendix §17.5).

The cards were laminated slips of paper, 105x35mm, with the ideophones printed on them in Siwu orthography (i.e. without tone-marking). The cards were presented to participants in a 6x10 array, arranged according to a fixed random order. While laying down the array of cards before the participant, the ideophones were read out loud to make sure they were familiar to the participant. The great majority was indeed familiar to all participants. Three items, *belele, lelele* and *mɛlɛmɛlɛ*, were not always directly recognised by all participants. If this was the case, they were presented in an example sentence lifted from the conversational corpus. The instructions were to put together "words that are similar, words that are akin." (*atɔ̃mɛ wa lòkote, wa lòɖe manyibi*). Most participants intuitively got the idea from these deliberately underspecified instructions. If necessary, an example was given using ideophones not included in the set (*lɛkɛrɛɛ* 'fat' and *pumbuluu* 'bulging fat').

By grouping some ideophones together and by separating them from others, speakers make choices that reflect their intuitions about the structure of the domain. These choices thus provide us with access to native speakers' intuitions. We can analyse the results in a number of ways. First, the aggregated pile sorts of all participants can be inspected by means of statistical methods to throw light on the conceptual structure of the domain. The methods used in this chapter are multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis. Second, we can ask participants to reflect on the piles after sorting. As we will see, this provides insight into the cultural construction of perception in Siwu.

10.3 Results

Pile-sorting items involves making choices about similarities and differences between them. We can keep track of these choices by recording for every pair of ideophones the number of times they are grouped together. For instance, if one participant groups *minimini* 'spherical' with *gìlìgìlì* 'circular', this number is one. If all fourteen participants do the same (as indeed they did), the number is fourteen. Keeping the scores in this way for all ideophone pairs across all participants gives us a matrix of 58x58 cells, in which the value of each cell represents the number of times a particular pair of items was piled together. This so-called summed equivalence matrix can then be used as input for the statistic analyses.

Let us first consider some descriptive statistics. The theoretical maximum number of piles is 58 (this is when every item constitutes its own pile). The actual average number of piles was 27.5, the minimum was 21 and the maximum was 36. Although participants were encouraged to pile as many items as possible, singleton piles were allowed because it was judged inappropriate to force participants to pile items that they indicated did not belong with any other items. The average number of singletons per participant was 11. There were no items that were singletons for all 14 participants, but the three items that were in a pile less than 10 times are *pɛpɛɛpɛ* 'precisely' (a singleton pile for 7 participants), *pelee* 'completely' (singleton for 10 participants), *kunukunu* 'completely empty' (singleton for 13 participants). That these items remained unpiled so often indicates that participants judged them as most different from all other items. In the case of the ideophonic adverbs *pɛpɛɛpɛ* and *pelee*, this provides independent evidence for their qualitative difference from ideophones proper (see §5.3.3).

More interesting is the conceptual structure that emerges from all the pile sorting solutions taken together. In a pile sort of so many items, this data is best explored visually. The following sections discuss the Siwu data from the perspective of two analytical techniques: multidimensional scaling (MDS) and cluster analysis. Before we take a look at the data it is useful to consider what we might expect. Clearly, there is not going to be a single "right" way of grouping these 58 items. Indeed, different participants may well employ different types of reasoning for their choices. This is a limitation of the free pile sort that researchers have tried to address by constraining the task in several ways (Weller and Romney 1988:22ff.). However, such constrained formats are usually less suitable for large numbers of items so they were not used here. Taking this into account, we can

note that *if* clear groupings emerge in the final results, these will reflect features or dimensions that are robustly shared in the participant pool.

10.4 Multidimensional scaling

The sorting task provides us with 14 individual takes on the similarity relations between 58 ideophones. Multidimensional scaling computes a spatial map of this complex data matrix that tries to do justice to the similarity relations between all the items. Essentially, it transforms a complex data matrix into an *n*-dimensional space to allow for visual inspection. To do this, it displays the items in such a way that the more similar two items are, the closer they are placed, and the more distinct, the further apart they are placed. With complex datasets, the transformation inevitably involves some distortion. A high number of dimensions minimises the distortion, but the resulting visual model can be difficult to comprehend for the human eye. Too few dimensions on the other hand may lead to a solution which does not reveal enough of the structure in the data (Steyvers 2006).

MDS supplies measures that indicate how well the model corresponds to the data. Two such measures are the R-square value, which indicates what proportion of variance of the scaled data is accounted for in the MDS result (R-square values of $>.6$ are generally considered acceptable); and Kruskal stress, which measures badness-of-fit (thus the lower the Kruskal stress value the better). Deciding how many dimensions to use takes into account these measures as well as the interpretability of the configuration. For the analysis of the Siwu data below, a three-dimensional solution was chosen. This solution has quite a number of interpretable configurations, and the Kruskal stress value is acceptable at .21 (for a 2-dimensional solution, the stress jumps to .27; for a 4-dimensional solution, it is only slightly lower at .20).

MDS provides a spatial model of the data, but does not supply an interpretation. Sometimes a "dimensional interpretation" suggests itself, focusing on the distribution of clusters of items along the dimensions of the plot. Data clustering in the space can also lend itself to a "neighbourhood interpretation" (Kruskal and Wish 1978:43), which focuses on similarities of items clustering together. Kruskal and Wish (1978) suggest using both types of interpretation to explain as much of the spatial arrangement as possible.

Figure 10.1 is an MDS plot for a three-dimensional solution. Glosses for the ideophones in the plot can be found in Appendix 17.5. The first thing to note is that there are several clearly interpretable clusters. These are circled and indicated in the plot. One group, with *saaa* 'cool sensation', *nyagbalaa* 'pungent', *buàà* 'tasteless', *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* 'intensely sweet' and *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'sweet', can be characterised as TASTE. Another cluster includes *dɔbɔrɔɔ* 'soft', *safaraa* 'coarse-grained', *wòsòròò* 'rough', *fũɛ̃fũɛ̃* 'malleable', *wùrùfùù* 'fluffy', *pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth', *fiɛfiɛ* 'silky', *kpɔlɔkpɔlɔ* 'slippery' and *pɔtɔpɔtɔ* 'soggy'. These ideophones seem to form a domain of HAPTIC TOUCH. Another group is comprised of *gelegele* 'shiny', *fututu* 'pure white', *kpinakpina* 'black' and *wɔ̃rɑ̃wɔ̃rɑ̃* 'spotted'. This domain we may summarise as SURFACE APPEARANCE. A further cluster is formed by *minimini* 'spherical' and *gìlìgìlì*

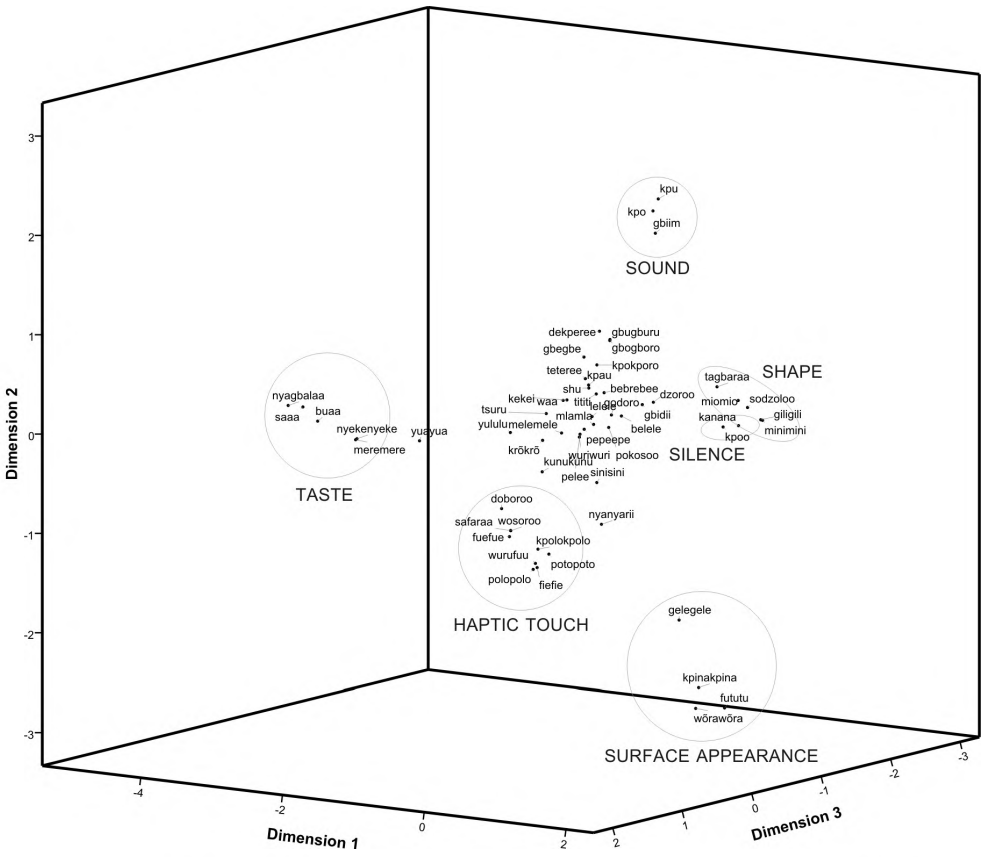

Figure 10.1 3D MDS plot, some clusters labelled (Kruskal's stress .21) **(S)**

'circular' (these two tightly together) and *sɔ̀dzɔ̀lɔ̀ɔ̀* 'oblong', *miɔmiɔ* 'pointed' and *tagbaraa* 'long', suggesting a broader domain of SHAPE. These clusters, along with a few smaller ones (SILENCE and SOUND), appear in the periphery of the plot, showing that the ideophones are maximally similar to one another and maximally distinct from other groups.

Apart from these clearly interpretable clusters, is it also possible to formulate a dimensional interpretation? The vertical dimension of the plot (dimension 2) may be most promising in this regard: the top area of the plot features ideophones evocative of (acoustic) events like *gbîm* 'explosion' and *kpu* 'sound of impact', while the bottom area features ideophones evocative of states, like *fututu* 'pure white' and *kpìnàkpìnà* 'black'. This is suggestive of the factor of activity that commonly recurs in semantic differential studies (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum 1957; Boster 2005): the "active" pole here would be the upper area and the passive pole would be the lower area of the plot. However, the other dimensions are more difficult to interpret. It is useful to consider what kind of factors might be relevant. Apart from activity, two factors recurring in semantic differential studies are evaluation (good/bad) and potency (strong/weak). These do not seem to play a role here. For instance, if evaluation were relevant, we might expect ideophones like *buàà* 'tasteless' and *nyanyarĩĩ* 'dirty' to cluster together, and to be drawn far apart (on one dimension) from ideophones like *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'delicious' and *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* 'intensely sweet'; but this is not the case. The factor of potency can be related to the suprasensory attribute of intensity that we encountered in chapter 7; but this factor, too, does not appear to be relevant. For instance, there are ideophone pairs that differ mainly in terms of intensity (e.g. *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'delicious' and *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* 'intensely sweet', or *gbogboro* and *gbugburu*, evoking different shades of 'tough'), but these pairs stick closely together instead of being drawn apart. In fact, a look at the company they keep is revealing: the first two cluster with other items in the field of TASTE, while the other two appear in a cluster that could be labelled FIRMNESS. This is an important clue about the structure in the data.

Indeed, the nature of the clusters formed (TASTE, HAPTIC TOUCH, SHAPE, SURFACE APPEARANCE, SOUND) provides us with a likely explanation of why simple dimensionality may be absent in this dataset. These clusters have the character of discrete sensory qualities concerning different modalities of sensory experience. The sensory modalities differ in discrete, qualitative ways: they do not necessarily form a uniform or low-dimensional space psychophysically or cognitively. So the

reason that we do not find simple dimensionality could be the sheer variety of sensory experience.[153] The MDS analysis therefore points to the importance of different modalities of sensory experience in the dataset.

10.5 Cluster analysis

Another method to analyse data from sorting tasks is hierarchical cluster analysis. Hierarchical cluster analysis captures the main clusters that emerge from the aggregated sorting solutions. A tree diagram ("dendrogram") visualises these similarity relations. While MDS turned out to be useful for identifying some highly distinctive clusters in the data, a cluster analysis offers another view of patterns in the data and may reveal higher-order groupings.

Hierarchical cluster analysis takes all sorted items and successively joins them, starting with the ones that are most similar (i.e. that were grouped together most often) and continuing in hierarchical fashion. The process thus aggregates larger and larger clusters and makes visible the similarity relations between them.

There are several methods for computing cluster similarity. The method used here is the average linkage method between groups (also known as UPGMA). This method computes the distance between two clusters A and B as the average of all distances between pairs of items in A and in B. It does not presuppose a particular type of structure in the data, and performs well when the items fall apart into natural clumps or when they all belong together. It can be contrasted with the single linkage method (also known as nearest neighbour), which computes cluster distance as the distance between the two nearest elements in two clusters. A well-known problem of the single linkage method is a phenomenon called "chaining", in which otherwise dissimilar clusters are forced together due to single elements being close to each other (Romesburg 1984:137). The average linkage method usually avoids this problem, which is why it was used in this analysis. [154]

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[153] A good example of simple dimensionality in a linguistic dataset is Croft & Poole's (2008:26–7) MDS analysis of tense and aspect markers. In their MDS plot, the points are spread out over the spectrum in such a way that two broad dimensions can be proposed, one for tense (with past and future at opposing ends), and one for aspect (with imperfective and perfective at opposing ends).

[154] Somewhat puzzlingly, the dendrogram in Figure 10.2 does appear to display some form of chaining: all clusters are joined or "chained" to the mouth-feel cluster. In a re-computation using average linkage within groups (UWGMA) there is no higher order chaining. As the recomputation shows essentially the same clusters for distances of 20 and lower, the discussion below is not affected.

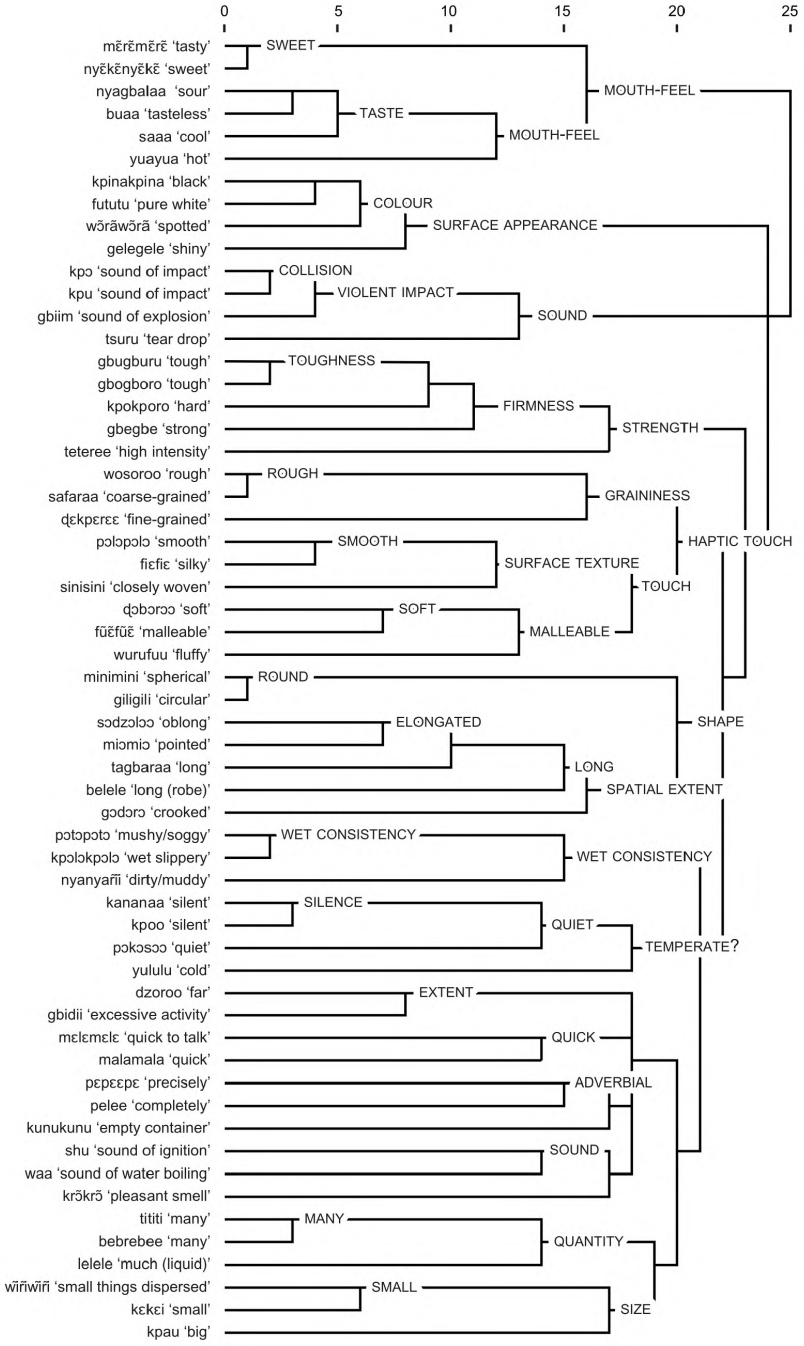

Figure 10.2 Dendrogram using average linkage, some branches labelled **(S)**

In hierarchical cluster analysis, an agglomeration schedule shows how the clusters are formed successively. A coefficient value, representing the distance between two items being clustered together at each stage, indicates how well the cluster fits the data. For example, a relatively large increase in coefficient values from one step to the next indicates that the resulting cluster is much less homogeneous than clusters joined at a previous step. A dendrogram visually represents how clusters are joined. In the dendrogram, the coefficients connected to the clusters are translated into branch lengths. The shorter the branch linking two items, the more similar the items are.

Figure 10.2 shows the dendrogram for the hierarchical cluster analysis. The clusters and branch lengths visualise the structure that emerges from all individual grouping solutions together. If we can work out what unites the items in a cluster, we have good grounds to assume that this is what has been psychologically salient to the participants themselves. This is what the labels attempt to do: they formulate coherent categories for the groups of ideophones that emerge from the sorting efforts of all 14 participants together.

Let us first take a look at the clusters with a relatively high internal similarity (distances of 10 or lower). All of these are conceptually coherent and can be given a label that has to do with aspects of sensory perception: SWEET, TASTE, SURFACE APPEARANCE (including COLOUR), VIOLENT IMPACT (including COLLISION), TOUGHNESS, ROUGH, SMOOTH, SOFT, ROUND, ELONGATED, WET CONSISTENCY, SILENCE, EXTENT, MANY and SMALL. This confirms what we saw in the MDS analysis: the strongest groupings involve aspects of sensory perception.

Many of these low-level clusters also join to form coherent higher-order groups. Such higher-order clusters (distances of 20 or lower) include MOUTH-FEEL (merging SWEET and TASTE), SOUND, STRENGTH, HAPTIC TOUCH (merging GRAININESS, SURFACE TEXTURE, and MALLEABLE), SHAPE (merging ROUND and SPATIAL EXTENT), WET CONSISTENCY (extended with one member), QUIET (extended with one member), and QUANTITY, and SIZE. It is noteworthy that even at this level, virtually all clusters can be made sense of in terms of qualities of sensory experience.

Some pairs of items are particularly notable for their close association: for instance, *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'sweet/tasty' with *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* 'intensely sweet', *wòsòròò* 'rough' with *safaraa* 'coarse-grained', *minimini* 'spherical' with *giligili* 'circular', and the collision sounds *kpɔ* and *kpu*. The distances between the members of these pairs are minimal, meaning that most if not all 14 participants have grouped them together. The similarity of the members of some of these pairs raises the question

whether participants have perhaps been grouping on the basis of similarity in form, in which case our semantic labels might be somewhat premature. Although this possibility cannot be ruled out entirely, it is rendered highly unlikely by the fact that similar-sounding but semantically incongruent words are in most cases far apart. For instance, although *gelegele* 'shiny' is very similar in form to *giligili* 'circular', it is grouped not with that word but with three formally dissimilar words in the domain of SURFACE APPEARANCE (indeed, a look at the data matrix shows none of the 14 participants grouped *gelegele* with *giligili*). The same holds for pairs like *pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth' and *kpɔlɔkpɔlɔ* 'slippery', *kpɔ* 'collision' and *kpoo* 'silence', and *sinisini* 'closely woven' and *minimini* 'spherical', all of which are formally quite similar but meaning-wise dissimilar, and all of which are rendered far apart. This suggests that similarity in meaning trumps similarity in sound or orthographic form. It also makes the items in which sound and meaning are clearly intertwined (e.g. *gbugburu* and *gbogboro* 'tough, firm', *kpɔ* and *kpu* 'collision sounds') stand out as distinctive, supporting the principle of relative iconicity described in chapter 7.

It is worth briefly discussing the status of the labels employed in these analyses in the light of a problem that was raised earlier: that of the analyst's versus the native speaker's categories. An example of analysts' categories would be Alexandre's (1966) categorisation of ideophones from Bulu (Bantu, Cameroon) into three main groups: those evocative of sensory perceptions, those evocative of types of behaviour, and those illustrating manner and/or state. These categories label similarities spotted by the analyst in a list of ideophones compiled by the analyst. Contrast this with the term "surface texture" that labels the cluster uniting *pɔlɔpɔlɔ* 'smooth', *fiɛfiɛ* 'silky', and *sinisini* 'closely woven' in the dendrogram in Figure 10.2. This term labels a similarity relation that emerges from the aggregated sorting solutions of 14 native speakers. Although the particular term may be the analyst's formulation, it is not the analyst's category. The term "surface texture" is in a sense secondary; what really matters is the coherent cluster that emerges in the aggregated sorting solutions. The ontological status of the labels in Figure 10.2 is thus quite different from that of Alexandre's categories.

There is nothing wrong in principle with analysts' categories, as long as they are clearly identified as such. However, there is something to be said for the primacy of native speakers' intuitions in the domain of sensory perception. The last decades have documented formidable variety in cultural constructions of perception (Howes 1991; Classen 1993; Geurts 2002; Majid and Levinson 2011).

There is a genuine possibility that similarities spotted by the analyst tell us more about the folk model implicit in the analyst's metalanguage than about the structure of the language under study. For instance, Alexandre further divides his category of ideophones that evoke sensory perceptions into "auditive, visual, tactile, gustative, and olfactive" (1966:14). Here we easily recognise the five senses model of the analyst's own metalanguage, French. But the cluster analysis of 58 Siwu ideophones brings to light structures that are not easily fitted into this model: categories that may combine information from multiple modalities (e.g. WET CONSISTENCY, which may combine vision, touch and perhaps evaluation), or categories at a finer grain (as in HAPTIC TOUCH, which includes separate clusters of SURFACE TEXTURE, MALLEABILITY and GRAININESS).

In sum, then, both the MDS analysis and the cluster analysis show that the 14 participants grouped the 58 ideophones predominantly by aspects of sensory perception. The MDS analysis suggests that the 58 ideophones do not fit in a uniform or low-dimensional space, but instead that they form clusters of qualitively different aspects of sensory experience. The cluster analysis has revealed the internal structure of some of these clusters and their relations to each other. The validity of the perceptual labels proposed for the most salient clusters is underlined by the explanations given by the speakers themselves, as we see in the next section.

10.6 Individual strategies and explanations

After completion, the participants were asked if they could explain why they made the choices they did. Though introspective reflection may not accurately reflect the actual reasoning employed during the sorting, it does give us insight in the structure of the domain by showing not just how people think about it, but also how they talk about it.

The first thing revealed by these explanations is that there are many different possible reasons to group items together. Metaphorical uses are one reason; for example, one person said he piled *yuayua* 'iterated burning sensation' with *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'slow, cautionary' because both could be applied to people, citing the contrasting collocations *ɔ̀turi yuayua* 'hot, ill-tempered person' and *ɔ̀turi pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'calm, cautious person'. Another possible strategy is to group ideophones on the basis of causal chains — one participant for example said he grouped *teteree* 'high intensity' with

kpɔ 'sound of dry hit' based on the scenario of hitting someone *teteree* so that it sounds *kpɔ* (128):

(128) *lowĩ-ũ̃* *teteree,* *kpɔ!*
1SG-hit-3SG.O IDPH.intense IDPH.impact
'I hit him *teteree* (and it sounded) *kpɔ*!'

Overall however, such associative strategies cannot have been very common, as coherent qualities of sensory perception emerge as the most salient feature of the sorting solutions.

The explanations of the piles, besides supporting the conclusion that sorting was done primarily by aspects of sensory perception, provide interesting insights into the cultural construction of perception. Some of them are quite succinct. For instance, participant EO says "you hear (it)" of a pile grouping SOUND ideophones (129), and "you see (it)" of a pile of ideophones that includes most members of the SURFACE APPEARANCE cluster (130).

(129) *à-ta* *à-a-nɔ*
2SG-PROG 2SG-FUT-hear
You hear (it).
[pile: *gbíím̀* 'sound of explosion', *kpu* 'sound of dull impact', *kpɔ* 'sound of dry impact']

(130) *à-ta* *à-a-nyɔ*
2SG-PROG 2SG-FUT-see
You see (it).
[pile: *fututu* 'pure white', *gelegele* 'shiny', *wɔ̃rãwɔ̃rã* 'patched']

Other explanations offer more detail. One of the participants, OK, offers elaborate explanations of all of his piles, which happen to correspond closely to the clusters in the overall cluster analysis. Two things are notable about his explanations. First of all, they support the semantic labels that we were able to uncover in the cluster analysis, often spelling out in considerable detail the organizing principles of the groupings. Secondly, these explanations offer an insider view of sensory perception in Siwu that would be hard to get otherwise.

Let us sample some of his explanations. The first pile is TASTE. "If you taste something," OK says of five ideophones in (57), "those words are what you will perceive on the tongue."

(131) *si a-tì ìra a-nyɔ i kanya amɛ* (...)
if 2SG-dip thing 2SG-see LOC mouth inside,
If you taste something [lit. dip thing see] in your mouth,
à-tɔ̃mɛ wã a-a-nɔ̀ ɔnyagɛmi iso
A-word REL.A 2SG-FUT-perceive tongue on
those words are what you'll perceive on the tongue.
[pile: *yululu* 'cold sensation', *yuayua* 'punctual-iterative burning sensation', *saaa* 'cool sensation', *nyagbalaa* 'sour' and *buàà* 'watery, tasteless']

Of pile of two ideophones related to sweetness, he explains in (132): "If you eat, the way you see the taste on the tongue. Whether it's a good taste, *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* or *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃*." Continuing his explanation, he goes a little beyond his pile, dragging in *nyagbalaa* 'sour' and *ɔɖoɖoɖo* 'bitter' — the latter not even part of the pile-sorting task: "Or whether you twist your face. There are things that make you twist your face. These are *ɔɖoɖoɖo* or *nyagbalaaa*." (133). Here, we see that an evaluative distinction is made between good and bad tastes. However, the items still belong together because they are about what you "see" on the tongue if you eat something.

(132) *si a-ɖe ara, kùgɔ a-nya ɔ̀mɛ̃rɛ̃... ɔ̀nyagɛmi yɛ̀ɛ̀, ɔmɛ̃rɛ̃ sɛi*
if 2SG-eat things, way 2SG-see taste, tongue FP.WNDR taste good
"If you eat stuff, the way you experience the taste on the tongue. Whether it's a good taste."
[pile: *mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃* 'tasty', *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* 'sweet']

(133) *yee a-nyì kàtɔ̃. Àra ne aɖe, si a-nyì kàtɔ̃...*
or 2SG-twist face things TP 2SG-eat, if 2SG-twist face
Or if you twist your face. There are things that make you twist your face.
ì-ba ɔɖoɖoɖo ne; ì-nyagbalaaa ne
I.S-have IDPH.bitter TP; I.S-IDPH.sour TP
It is bitter *ɔɖoɖoɖo*; it is sour *nyagbalaa*.

The next pile groups two SMELL terms. He explains that "if you perceive a smell in your nose, those two are what you perceive" — where "those two" refers to the ideophones *nyanyarɪ̃ɪ̃* and *kɔ̃rɔ̃kɔ̃rɔ̃* (134).

(134) *si a-nɔ̀ ìra ɔfiã̀ i ɔwɔ amɛ ne,*
if 2SG-perceive thing smell LOC nose inside TP
If you perceive a smell in your nose,
wã̀ a-nyɔ nɛ-ǹgbe, à-a-nɔ̀ wã̀
TOP.A AGR.A-two REL-here, 2SG-FUT-hear OBJ.A
those two are what you perceive.
[Pile: *nyanyarĩ̃* 'unpleasant/bad' and *kɔ̃rɔ̃kɔ̃rɔ̃* 'pleasant smell']

Of a pile grouping SURFACE TEXTURE ideophones, he explains: "if you rub something with your fingers, you perceive it. You perceive whether it is *sinisini* or *fiɛfiɛ*." (135).

(135) *si a-sasala ì-ra guàlà fɔ àrɔ̃ĩ̃; kùgɔ a-nɔ̀ nɛ*
if 2SG-REDUP.rub I-thing INSTR 2SG.POSS A-finger how 2SG-perceive OBJ.I
If you rub something with your fingers, the way you perceive it.
a-nɔ̀ nɛ, ì-ba sinisini ɣee fiɛfiɛ
2SG-perceive OBJ.I, I.S-have IDPH.closely.woven or IDPH.silky
You perceive it, (whether) it is *sinisini* [closely woven] or *fiɛfiɛ* [silky].

Of a cluster that we can label GRANULARITY, he says:

(136) *si ma-kote àra, alɛ ɔrãŋ gɔ awe ne, (…) si a-pia kɔ̃rɔ̃*
if 3PL-grind things, like ɔ-flour REL.ɔ like TP (…) if 2SG-put hand
If things are ground, the way the flour is, if you put your hand in,
ì-à-wo-se ɖɛkpɛrɛɛ, wòsòròò ɣee sàfàràà
it-FUT-be.able-COP IDPH.fine.grained, IDPH.rough or IDPH.coarse
it can be *ɖɛkpɛrɛɛ*, *wòsòròò*, or *sàfàràà*.
[Pile: *ɖɛkpɛrɛɛ* 'fine-grained', *wòsòròò* 'rough' and *sàfàràà* 'coarse-grained']

Note that most of these explanations take essentially the same form: some action is specified (putting in mouth, rubbing with fingers, putting your hand in) that results in an event of perception. All of these descriptions are experiencer-based, and they show a sensitivity to the basic distinction made in Siwu between active-explorative sensing and passive-inchoative perceiving (§5.6).

Another set of explanations takes a more source-based perspective. For example, of the cluster that has been labelled WET CONSISTENCY, OK says:

(137) *ne sí sɔ ì-ra … ì-ba alɛ ndu*
TP if QT I.thing … I.S-have like water
Now this is like … if something is watery.
[Pile: *kpɔlɔkpɔlɔ* 'wet slippery', *pɔtɔpɔtɔ* 'soggy']

And of the cluster labelled SURFACE APPEARANCE, he explains:

(138) *ì-ra nɛ ì-te ì-fiɛ. Ↄ-fiɛ se ì-fiɛ.*
thing REL.I I.S-PROG I-shine. PFOC-shine COP I.S-shine
Something which shines. Shining it shines.
[Pile: *gelegele* 'shiny', *fututu* 'pure white', *kpìnàkpìnà* 'black']

Finally, of a cluster of SOUND-related ideophones, OK explains that it is about "How things sound. *Kpɔ, kpu, tsurù, gbíímì* — the sounding of things" (139).

(139) *kùgɔ ara se rè*
how things COP sound
How things sound.
kpɔ, kpu, tsurù, gbíímì; àra irè
IDPH.impact IDPH.impact IDPH.drop IDPH.explosion things NOM-sound
Kpɔ, kpu, tsurù, gbíímì — the sounding of things.

In summary, these folk explanations not only provide evidence for the tight link between ideophones and sensory imagery, they also are a window into the cultural construction of sensory perception in Siwu. Take for instance the domain of surface appearance. Already in the discussion of the colour task results in §8.4 we saw that Siwu does not appear to have a dedicated domain of colour. The pile-sorting task suggests that instead, a domain that we can characterise as SURFACE APPEARANCE forms a more coherent field for Siwu speakers. And if the consistent grouping across 14 speakers is not enough, the explanations provide a coherent articulation of how this domain is conceptualised, both in experiencer-based terms (*nyɔ* 'seeing', in EO's explanation) and in source-based terms (*fiɛ* 'shining', in OK's explanation).

10.7 Conclusions

The results from the sorting task as well as the explanations given afterwards support the fundamentally sensory nature of the meanings of ideophones. They

also powerfully demonstrate that a sorting task gives us a way to probe the structure of a domain without imposing preconceived categories.

It is worth reiterating that it could have been otherwise. The participants could have sorted on the basis of evaluation, potency and activity. They could also have based their groupings on non-semantic properties like word length and/or word structure (grouping *saaa* 'cool sensation' with *kpoo* 'silence', *tagbaraa* 'long' with *pɔkɔsɔɔ* 'slow', and *yuayua* 'burning sensation' with *fiɛfiɛ* 'silky') or on general similarity in sound (*gìlìgìlì* 'circular' with *gelegele* 'shiny', *kpu* 'sound of impact' with *kpoo* 'silence'). Even though it is quite possible that some of the participants used such criteria occasionally, in the overall results they don't have much going for them. What is most salient to people sorting ideophones is their sensory nature.

Let us take stock of the most important findings of this chapter. The pile sort contributes another piece in the puzzle of ideophones and the senses. In chapter 7, we focused on aspects of ideophones that highlight the unity of the senses: iconic mappings like GESTALT ICONICITY and RELATIVE ICONICITY that transcend sensory modalities by representing suprasensory attributes like INTENSITY, ASPECTUAL UNFOLDING and DURATION. These reflect general principles that underlie the potential of ideophones to depict sensory imagery. Chapters 8 and 9 established that ideophones depict specific sensory perceptions in and of themselves, showing a great diversity of meanings. In this chapter, we charted this territory of sensory imagery, guided by the sorting decisions of native speakers of Siwu. For these speakers, ideophones are saliently organised by richly diverse aspects of sensory perception, from SURFACE APPEARANCE to SPATIAL EXTENT and from MOUTH-FEEL to HAPTIC TOUCH. The pile-sort thus enabled us to explore how the domain as a whole (or at least the cross-section of it used in the task) is structured conceptually by speakers; and it showed that aspects of sensory perception form its main organizing principle. Once again ideophones emerge as sensory words par excellence.

Two broader points can be made. The first is that the sorting task can be a powerful tool to explore the intensional meanings of ideophones, and by extension of any semantic domain (Miller 1969; Perchonock and Werner 1969; Weller 1984). It is therefore an important tool in the toolkit of semantic analysis, which often relies on intuitive reasoning combined with distributional evidence, and could be used more widely in semantic typology, which hitherto has often focused on extensional semantics (e.g. Levinson, Meira, and The Language and Cognition

Group 2003; Majid et al. 2004). Sorting tasks allow us to explore the conceptual structure of a domain without imposing our own preconceived categories.

The second point is that the sorting task shows that Siwu speakers can fruitfully and consistently reason about ideophones, even when they are presented out of their normal context. This is inconsistent with the view that ideophones are "simply sounds used in conveying an impression" (Okpewho 1990:93). It also clashes with the view that ideophones are "in most cases semantically empty but context dependent", as Moshi (1993:190) has claimed for on ideophones in KiVunjo-Chaga, a Bantu language of Tanzania. Clearly, Siwu ideophones have stable meanings that speakers can reliably access and reason about. It is of course theoretically possible that the Siwu system is special in this regard, and that the ideophone systems of other languages are considerably less stable and more elusive. But even while allowing for some cross-linguistic variation on this point,[155] it would be thoroughly implausible for any language to feature a class of words that is, in Moshi's words, "semantically empty but context dependent". (Context dependency is of course not the problem; all linguistic signs are heavily context dependent. The main problem is the notion that a class of linguistic signs could be semantically empty. This is the kind of extraordinary claim that requires extraordinary evidence.) To be fair, semantics is not the main concern of Moshi's otherwise excellent study of ideophones in KiVunjo-Chaga; I have merely highlighted his statement here because it provides a pithy expression of a more widespread pessimism about the meanings of ideophones (Childs 1993; Noss 1999; Lydall 2000; de Schryver 2009; Blench 2010). The key point is this. If the meanings of ideophones are challenging and difficult to describe, this is an opportunity to work with stronger and more varied methodological tools rather than a reason for pessimism. The contribution of this chapter, then, lies not just in mapping the conceptual structure of the domain of ideophones in Siwu, but also in providing another method to address issues of meaning empirically rather than impressionistically.

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[155] For instance, there may be sociolinguistic factors affecting recall of ideophones, as in the urban setting described by Childs (1994b:272). Also, there is differentiation within ideophone systems, with some ideophones being more common and conventionalised than others (Diffloth 1980:55). Chapter 13 documents a number of cases of ideophone creation.

IV Use

> If one had to sum up their character in a short phrase one might say that they are poetry in ordinary language.
>
> E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1962)

Rarely if ever have ideophones been studied where they are most common: in situated, everyday talk-in-interaction. Yet it is there —not in word lists or elicited monologues— that grammar emerges. It is there, then, that we may expect to find answers to core questions about ideophony. The next four chapters explore some of these questions.

Chapter 11 examines how to do things with ideophones. Working from actual episodes of naturally occurring conversation, it uses the methodology of Conversation Analysis to find out what people are doing in using ideophones. Ideophones afford many interactional uses, from pursuing uptake to navigating complex territories of stance and knowledge. These uses are grounded in the core properties of ideophones surveyed in earlier chapters.

Chapter 12 juxtaposes two disparate types of discourse: the mundane everyday greeting routine and the highly poetic funeral dirge. I show how the use of ideophones in these genres is distinctive but bears clear relationships to the patterns of ideophone use in social interaction that the previous chapter has uncovered. This chapter can be seen as a case study of how the aesthetics of everyday language use may give rise to techniques of verbal artistry and ritual communication.

The final two chapters shed new light on two old issues in ideophone studies — claims that have come to be part of the received view but that are in fact based on surprisingly scarce evidence. Chapter 13 looks at ideophone creation. Does it happen, and if yes, how common is it really, and what can it tell us about creativity in language? Chapter 14 is concerned with the relation between ideophones and gesture. Do ideophones indeed tend to come together with gestures, as is often claimed in the literature? If so, how often does this occur, does discourse type matter, and what might be the reason for this coupling?

11 How to do things with ideophones: a social interactional approach

> Il suffit d'avoir assisté à quelques conversations de noirs (…) pour avoir remarqué quelle prodigieuse quantité d'expressions de ce genre ils ont à leur commande.
>
> Henri Junod (1896)

11.1 Introduction

The best way to find out when and why people use ideophones is to gain access to real language use. Rich corpora of language-in-use, until recently difficult to collect and considered too messy for serious research anyway, are increasingly starting to become recognised for what they are: the closest we can get to a faithful representation of everyday social interaction. It is in interaction —not in word lists or elicited monologues— that grammar emerges; it is there, then, that we may expect to find answers to core questions about ideophony.

We have already seen that a corpus of natural conversational data throws new light on many aspects of ideophones. To give three examples from previous chapters, the reason for the markedness of ideophones becomes clear only when we see them in use as depictions (§2.5), our understanding of their syntax is enriched by taking into account the relative frequencies of different ideophonic constructions in a corpus (§6.5), and their iconic qualities are only seen in entirety in the actual performance (§7.5). This chapter takes on more specific questions of function that can be answered with such a corpus. When do people use ideophones? How do they use them? Who uses them, and in what kinds of situations?

Even a cursory inspection of the Siwu corpus makes clear that ideophones occur in a wide range of interactions. Workers producing palm oil comment on the consistency of the fruit fibre they are processing (*pɔtɔpɔtɔ* 'mushy') or complain about the old squeezing net (*kàba gbegbeegbe* 'it's stiff'); someone staring aimlessly attracts comments from passersby (*ɔ̀karɑ̃ kpìì̀* 'he is sitting petrified'); my landlord, caught by heavy rains during work on the farm, exclaims *lobu kpɛtɛ̀ɛ̀* 'I am soaked

to the skin' upon his return home; and men making gunpowder anticipate the ceremonial gunfire by creating a sensory spectacle: "The gunmen will shoot *tawtaw*, the sound rolls in your ears *ɽrrɔ̂ŋŋ̀* and you'll stand there awe-struck *kanananananana*." Are there commonalities underlying the use of ideophones in these different situations? What are the core interactional uses of ideophones?

The title of this chapter pays homage to the philosopher J.L. Austin's influential work on speech as a form of action. As Austin noted, "what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation" (1962:138). In this spirit, the present chapter explores the use of ideophones in naturally occurring conversations. I first review some previous proposals about the use of ideophones and then present data from the Siwu corpus of naturally occurring conversations. It will be seen that the previous proposals are too limited to account for the data in some cases and too sweeping in others. This points to a need to deconstruct received views about the use of ideophones, and to reconstruct the picture from the ground up by examining their use in naturally occurring interaction. I consider what properties of ideophones underlie their interactional uses, and so arrive at a more empirically grounded perspective that incorporates the previous proposals but also offers the explanatory power to accommodate the new findings.

11.2 Previous observations and proposals

In the 150-odd years since the first descriptions of ideophones, there has been no shortage of anecdotal references to their ubiquity in speech. An example is the epigraph to this chapter, taken from Henry Junod's grammar of Ronga (1896:196), repeated here in English as quoted in Lévy-Bruhl (1966): "It is quite enough to have listened to some of the perfectly free and unrestrained conversations of Negroes to note the immense number of expressions of this kind which they have at command." Another observation comes from a grammar of Bobangi by Whitehead, who wrote: "These words are the most graphic in the language, they are the 'colouring' words, the stories and common speech of the people are full of them" (Whitehead 1899:18). However, despite these early observations on the commonality of ideophones in everyday talk, the next century of ideophone research was to background "common speech" and foreground narrative as the locus of ideophone use. Burbridge (1938) for example, in a brief note on the use of ideophones, only focused on their use in stories; and the great Bantuist Doke

remarked that the ideophone is "a rhetorical vehicle of great value in emotional literature, in poetry, and in graphic narrative" (1948:286–7).

This narrower perspective emphasised the use of the ideophone as a dramatic rhetorical device (Doke's term), something that would be built on by later studies of ideophones in Shona and Sesotho by Fortune and Kunene. In two seminal publications (Fortune 1962; Kunene 1965), these authors made a distinction between two styles of speaking: a plain narrative style and more dramatic style.[156] A number of interrelated claims emerge from their work. In Fortune's words, ideophones constitute a "vivid re-presentation or re-creation of an event in sound" (1962:6). The ideophonic style is thus performative and evocative, as opposed to the matter-of-fact style of what Fortune calls "formal" language use. The notion of *performance* plays an important role in Kunene's work. As he wrote, "The speaker-turned-actor re-presents to, or re-creates or dramatises for, his audience, by means either of the ideophone alone (i.e. linguistically), or of ideophone and gesture (i.e. linguistically and by imitation simultaneously) or by gesture alone, the event or situation which he wishes them to observe" (1965:22). So, according to Kunene, underlying the use of ideophones is a wish to make the audience not merely listen to but experience the narrated events. This highlights the importance of a participating audience to ideophonic performance.

The factors of participation and performance appear in more elaborated fashion in the work of Janis Nuckolls on Pastaza Quechua (a language of Ecuador). Nuckolls' work (1992; 1995; 1996; 2000; 2004; 2010b, among others) is by far the most detailed examination of the use of ideophones in any society to date, and has yielded a number of specific claims that I will engage with in this chapter. Two important explanatory devices in Nuckolls' work are the notions of PERFORMANCE and INVOLVEMENT.

First, concerning performance, Nuckolls (1995) builds on Richard Bauman's work on performance as a mode of communication (Bauman 1975; 1986). Bauman defines performance as an artful way of speaking that communicates "through the present appreciation of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself" (Bauman 1986:3). In "Verbal art as performance", Bauman (1975) integrates a variety of perspectives on the performative functions of language, notably

[156] Their terminology diverges: what Fortune calls 'formal' and 'verbal', Kunene calls 'narrative' and 'commentative'; on the other side of the opposition there is the 'free' and 'ideophonic' style (Fortune), which in Kunene's terms is 'dramatic' and 'presentive'.

Jakobson's *expressive function* (a focus on the message for its own sake, (Jakobson 1960:354) and Havránek's notion of *foregrounding*, the use of linguistic devices "in such a way that this use itself attracts attention" (Havránek 1964:10). Building on Bauman's notion of performance, then, Nuckolls notes that ideophones are precisely foregrounded in this way, as evidenced by "repetition, reduplication, and other kinds of intonational elaboration" (Nuckolls 1995:148). Ideophones are foregrounded moments of performance. We saw the importance of this point in chapter 7 (esp. §7.5), where an informal breaching experiment confirmed that Siwu ideophones are accountably produced as performances. Kunene's talk of the "speaker-turned-actor" (1965:22) is thus very apt.

Second, concerning involvement, Nuckolls uses this term in a sense that can be traced back to the work of Wallace Chafe and Deborah Tannen: involvement as an attitudinal alignment, as being emotionally engaged (Chafe 1982; Tannen 1982). Most generally, it refers to the efforts made by interlocutors to participate in a conversation. In this sense it can also be related to John Gumperz' (1982) use of the notion "conversational involvement" in his work on discourse strategies. For Gumperz, speakers as well as listeners are involved in creating and sustaining conversational involvement. Nuckolls argues that ideophones have a role to play in the regulation of involvement: "sound symbolic performances create a general kind of involvement because they invite the listener to project into a simulated experience of an action, event, or process." (Nuckolls 1992:54f.). The argument is that the imagery supplied by ideophones invites listeners to be involved in the conversation. Here, Nuckolls cites the work of Deborah Tannen (e.g. Tannen 1989), in which imagery is argued to be one of the most important devices for creating involvement. It seems that the kind of involvement Nuckolls has in mind is seen as a special, more intense version of the more general supply of speaker involvement in Gumperz' model.

However, the notion of involvement is not unproblematic. As an explanatory device in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, it has had a chequered history (see esp. Besnier 1994 and references therein). The problem is that it combines intuitive plausibility with empirical vagueness. As Besnier has pointed out, "whatever definitions have been offered in the literature indicate that the notion is extremely broad in scope" (1994:281) — from Deborah Tannen's "an internal, even emotional connection individuals feel, which binds them to other people as well as to places, things, activities, ideas, memories, and words" (Tannen 1989:12) to Lakoff's "emotional connection, interest, and concern" (Lakoff 1990:19; as cited

in Besnier 1994:281). This raises all sorts of questions, most of which are not easy to answer. If ideophones "create involvement between interlocutors" (Nuckolls 1992), we must ask: how does this involvement manifest itself? Can we point to it? Is it a characteristic of individuals, interactions, or utterances? How do personal involvement and interpersonal involvement relate to each other? Do participants in verbal interaction orient to involvement or to the lack of it? Unfortunately, this part of Nuckolls' argument is not as well developed as other parts.[157] For example, her account appears to waver between seeing involvement as a characteristic of discourse (when she talks of ideophonic speech as "a distinctive style of conversational involvement" (1995:166)) and as a characteristic of the interlocutors, especially the listener (when she says the listener "projects into this [ideophonic] simulation and is thereby involved" (1996:100)). In fact, even though many of her analyses refer to "the listener" being involved, the actual behaviour of the listener (whose responses one might expect to show signs of this putative involvement) is rarely included in the data excerpts.[158] The effect is an account that is broadly believable but at the same time at an uncomfortable remove from the facts on the ground — the actual turn-by-turn unfolding of conversation.[159]

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[157] This may be in part because the data excerpts that Nuckolls builds her argument on mostly come from narratives with few participants occurring within an extended interview format. Nuckolls does note that she "recorded a lot of naturally occurring conversations and elicited many stories" (1996:17).

[158] A seeming exception is a riveting conversational narrative of an anaconda catching a tapir (Nuckolls 1996:83–93), in which a recipient does figure. However, Nuckolls makes clear that this narrative came embedded in an interview which aimed at "understanding the meaning of sound-symbolic adverbs" (p. 82), and that she herself was the main recipient (p. 95-96). This sheds doubt on its usefulness as a record of what native Pastaza Quechua speakers do following ideophones. Accordingly, Nuckolls herself does not use it for this purpose. However, Herlofsky (1997) *does* — see note 159.

[159] In a paper on the use of ideophones in Japanese, Herlofsky (1997) sets out to sharpen the notion of involvement by arguing that "this involvement, when manifested as actual participation, is clear and concrete". Though his first example, taken from Nuckolls' work, must be disqualified for reasons mentioned in note 158 above, he cites two exchanges from a Japanese talk show to demonstrate that ideophones "encourage interlocutionary involvement and participation, which can result in a mingling of the speaker/listener roles to a point where they overlap considerably" (p. 38). The first of the exchanges involves an ideophone becoming the topic of discussion (speaker K quotes his daughter using an ideophone, and interviewer T later quotes this daughter's use of the ideophone as evidence of her young age), and so is not particularly good evidence for the role of ideophones in encouraging involvement, though it does raise interesting sociolinguistic questions. The second is an exchange about how cookies turn out *guunya* "soggy" when they should be *pari* "crunchy". While this nicely illustrates

Nuckolls also emphasises the convivial nature of ideophone use in Pastaza Quechua. She notes that "[s]ound-symbolic discourse is not used by the Pastaza Quechua in situations of conflict; it is used by people who are relaxed and at ease. (…) Sound symbolism lends itself to contexts in which amicability and goodwill prevail." (Nuckolls 1996:13). Similar ideas are found in the work of Jean Lydall (2000; 2011) on ideophones in Hamar, an Omotic language of Southern Ethiopia. According to Lydall, Hamar speakers delight in using ideophones in tellings of personal adventures, funny stories, myths and fairy tales. She argues that ideophones produce feelings of mutual understanding:

> Because of their dense and often untranslatable nature, ideophones generate feelings of shared mental and emotional states, and thence shared identity, among those who use and enjoy them. (Lydall 2000:18–19)

Nuckolls and Lydall work on entirely unrelated languages and have developed their proposals independently from each other. It is therefore rather interesting that they reach similar conclusions, focusing on the "involvement" and "mutual understanding" generated by ideophones in vivid narratives. However, Lydall's work falls prey to some of the same pitfalls as Nuckolls'. The main problem is, again, the uncomfortable distance between the claims made and the actual unfolding of the interactions in which ideophones are used. For instance, the case studies in Lydall's "Having fun with ideophones" (2000) make it clear that ideophones are indeed abundantly used in Hamar. But the cases are presented in translated and abbreviated form, mostly leaving out the responses of the audience and thus omitting crucial evidence. When Lydall claims that "ideophones makes the narrative more vivid, persuasive, and generally more entertaining" (2000:18) or that they sometimes are used "to demonstrate the authenticity of the subject matter" (2000:7), the reader may well be prepared to believe her, but is not actually shown the evidence.

We have, then, a number of distinct observations and proposals to engage with under the broad heading of ideophones and social interaction. One is the observation that stories and common speech, in Whitehead's (1899:18) words, "are full of them". This is a discourse-level observation that would be more useful if we could fill it in with more detail. A second is the notion of the ideophone as a

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the use of ideophones in assessments, Herlofsky's analysis does not, I think, adequately distinguish the degree of participation imposed by the talk show format from that possibly following the ideophones.

special expressive device. According to Fortune and Kunene, this implies a contrast between two styles of speaking, narrative versus dramatic. This claim is difficult to assess because it is not clear at what level the contrast is supposed to operate — is it at the level of lexical choice, at the utterance level, or at some greater level, like that of situation type? (Levinson 1988 outlines some of the general problems with such claims about stylistics.) And would the narrative-dramatic distinction turn solely on ideophones? The observations of Janis Nuckolls and Jean Lydall are the most specific: for Nuckolls, ideophones create involvement through sound-symbolic performance, and they appear to be primarily used in contexts characterised by amicability and goodwill; for Lydall, ideophones produce feelings of mutual understanding and serve to make narratives generally more entertaining.

On balance, I think we have to conclude that the proposals reviewed here are mostly of a tentative nature, remaining as they do at the level of generalities and abstracting away from the particularities of spontaneous situated interaction. This holds especially for Doke, Fortune and Kunene, who mostly rely on isolated words or at most sentences as examples; but it even holds to some extent for Nuckolls and Lydall, whose analyses tend to burden the participants with more involvement and mutual understanding than seems warranted from the data. Even though these earlier proposals present the contours of fruitful ways of thinking about ideophones, their empirical foundations are underspecified. How can we remedy this situation? Gérard Diffloth expressed the difficulties well when he wrote:

> We must therefore watch for the ideophone and catch it in full flight; but in the heat of the action and animated discussion in which they are born, who would have the gall to interrupt everybody to be able to check a vowel, a meaning, an intention? (Diffloth 2001:267)[160]

Who indeed, we may ask. Interrupting an animated conversation anytime an ideophone flies by is a sure-fire way to kill any spark of spontaneity. Fortunately, it is a lot easier to interrupt a recording; and even if intentions remain inaccessible to us, the sequential structure of conversation can give us access to participants'

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[160] Original French: "Il faut donc guetter les expressifs et les attraper au vol ; mais dans le feu de l'action et de la discussion animée où ils naissent, qui aurait le culot d'interrompre tout le monde afin de pouvoir vérifier une voyelle, un sens, une intention?" I have taken the liberty to exchange the term 'expressive' for 'ideophone' in the translation (see §2.2).

interpretations of the ongoing talk. Looking at recordings of naturally occurring conversation will be the modus operandi of the remainder of this chapter.

11.3 Conversation Analysis

One way to be more empirically precise about what people do with ideophones is to not abstract away too soon from the particularities of situated interaction, but to see how social action and order is accomplished in the "moment-by-moment, turn-by-turn organisation of everyday conversational interaction" (Schegloff, Ochs, and Thompson 1996:3). In interaction, participants work to coordinate on shared understandings and act toward goals in the social world. This process is facilitated by two features of communication that render participants' actions more accessible. First, the techniques the speaker uses to make himself understood are accessible not just to the recipient but also to the analyst. A video recording of a conversational sequence is an empirical record of the communicative moves in that sequence. Second, in the unfolding conversation we find participants constantly revealing their own interpretations of previous turns. So not only do we have the communicative moves on record, we also find, in the sequence, the participants' own interpretations of these moves. These features of conversational interaction provide us with analytic access to participants' understandings of each other's talk.

This observation is the cornerstone of Conversation Analysis (CA) (Heritage 1984b; Goodwin and Heritage 1990; Levinson 1983; Schegloff 2007; Liddicoat 2007; Sidnell 2010). The essentials of the methodology can be described as follows: first, obtain recordings of naturally occurring interaction; second, collect recurrent patterns in the data; and third, show how these patterns are oriented to by participants. A social interactional approach like CA shifts the question from "Why do people use ideophones?" to "What are people doing in using ideophones?". Everyday conversation is basic to social life in many ways. This chapter therefore focuses on the use of ideophones in everyday, mundane conversations.

I should note that my starting position is somewhat different from typical CA inquiries in that I proceed not using "unmotivated looking" (Sacks 1984a:27) but focus on a pre-identified linguistic device, even though there is no guarantee that such a device will line up neatly with some type of social action (as Schegloff 1984 notes for questions). In fact, I mentioned above that even a cursory look at

the data shows that ideophones can have many meanings and perform multiple functions. Am I not asking for problems by starting out with an interest in a specific linguistic device? Here the special nature of ideophones becomes relevant. Ideophones stand out from other types of linguistic devices in several ways. They stand out, they draw attention to themselves as words *qua* words. In this respect, ideophones could be compared to laughter: an easily identifiable behaviour that can fruitfully be analysed in situated interaction to reveal its manifold functions (Jefferson, Sacks, and Schegloff 1987; Glenn 2003).[161] This chapter, then, is interested in ideophones as a pervasive and conspicuous linguistic device used in some everyday conversational contexts.

11.3.1 Data sources

In §1.3.4 I detailed the process of data collection, which I will summarise briefly here. The data considered in this chapter come from a variety of Siwu interactions, all of them recorded in the village of Akpafu-Mempeasem. The settings are family compounds and public spaces. Situation types range from hanging around in the village square to common joint activities such as the production of palm oil. All of these situations are characterised by a great degree of informality. Length of interactions recorded ranges from less than one minute to more than two hours. The number of participants ranges from two to five, and relationships between speakers are almost always intimate, as can be expected in a small-scale face to face society like this. Individual speakers in these recordings vary by sex, social status and age, though in most multi-party conversations the participants are from roughly the same generation.

The corpus comprises over 10 hours of video recordings of 10 interactions, of which over 70 minutes have currently been transcribed at variable levels of detail. Beginning with an interest in ideophones, I selected episodes in which people were using ideophones. I always transcribed the broader context of an ideophonic utterance, usually transcribing the whole of the larger episode (where 'episode' is loosely defined — its boundaries could be marked by a notable change of topic, prolonged silence, a shift in participants, or a change of action). The transcribed part of the corpus amounts to 3000 utterances of natural, day-to-day conversational interaction. Within this corpus there are 219 ideophone tokens.

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[161] I thank Nick Enfield for this observation.

All interactions were transcribed first in ELAN (Wittenburg et al. 2006), a tool that allows time-aligned annotation of video and audio recordings. The transcripts were then produced from these ELAN files. It is good to keep in mind that transcripts are not simply "written down talk". Transcripts are interpretations as well as selective representations of talk (Green, Franquiz, and Dixon 1997). To allow the reader to make up his or her own mind about the Siwu data to the greatest possible extent, audio clips of the interactions can be inspected at http://thesis.ideophone.org/ (video clips are not publicly available for privacy reasons).

11.3.2 Basic concepts

To streamline the discussion of the data in the following sections, let me first introduce some relevant notions that have been developed within the CA framework. The discussion will necessarily be brief; most of these notions will get more texture in the following sections, in which we will see them at work in actual interactions. Importantly, although I introduce them here without the context in which they were described and motivated, these notions are not theoretical concepts, but inductive discoveries grounded in empirical analysis of what people say and do in everyday social interaction.

A basic structural fact about social interaction is its sequential structure; the fact that speakers change and that turns at talk follow each other, forming a conversational sequence. This turn-taking has been shown to be governed by a "simplest systematics" (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974). The turn-taking system ensures the orderly and finely timed transition of speaker/hearer roles that is so typical of spontaneous conversational interaction. Some basic features of this turn-taking system can be summarised as follows: (1) Turns are constructed using TURN-CONSTRUCTIONAL UNITS like sentences, clauses, phrases and lexical units; (2) Turn allocation is based on a set of rules, and involves either a "self-selection" or a "current speaker selects next" technique. (3) These rules specify the fine details of the turn allocation process. This crucially involves TRANSITION RELEVANCE PLACES (TRPs), at which a turn is completed and the floor becomes potentially available for the next speaker. Transition is not just dependent on turn completion (marked by a TURN-COMPLETION POINT) but also on the interlocutors' understanding of the social action being performed by the turn in question. For instance, if the speaker is understood to telling a story, this generally involves an asymmetric allocation of

turns in which the teller has the floor until story completion, and during which the listener is expected to align, for example by offering VOCAL CONTINUERS that basically treat the turn as still in progress (such a turn is then a MULTI-UNIT TURN).

In conversation, participants often are able to choose between non-equivalent ways of responding. Not all of these response types are of equal standing; some are preferred while others are dispreferred, and this is captured by the concept of PREFERENCE ORGANISATION (Atkinson and Heritage 1984:53–56).[162] For instance, Pomerantz has shown that in response to an initial assessment, agreement is often the preferred next action; and that disagreement in this sequential context is a dispreferred next action (Pomerantz 1984). An important finding of conversation analysis is that preferred responses are structurally simpler than dispreferred responses. The latter are typically delivered after some significant delay, with a preface marking their dispreferred status, and with an account of why the preferred response is not forthcoming (Levinson 1983:307).

EPISTEMIC ACCESS (what is knowable to whom) is interactionally relevant in several ways. For example, Pomerantz (1980) has shown that participants orient to the difference between matters that a person knows by virtue of being that person (for example one's name, how one feels), and matters that a person has access to by virtue of the knowings being occasioned (for example what your friend did yesterday, which is something that your friend may have told you). The former are called Type 1 knowables, the latter Type 2 knowables. Participants treat one another as possessing privileged epistemic access to the former type of experiences, and as having primary rights to narrate them. Heritage & Raymond (2005) describe how the sequential positioning of assessments implies certain rights to knowledge (e.g. a first position assessment carries the implied claim that the speaker has primary rights to evaluate the matter assessed), and demonstrate that participants may work to defeat such implications, for example by upgrading or downgrading assessments.

What is knowable to whom also constitutes a resource that may be interactionally exploited. Pomerantz (1980) describes how speakers' formulations of "limited access" can serve to solicit an account without explicitly requesting it (Schegloff 1996). For example, in "I saw you drive by last night" (Pomerantz

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[162] Note that PREFERENCE is a technical term. It does not have to do with subjective preference or evaluation.

1980:188), the speaker's formulation of his own limited access can serve to solicit an account of that setting. Heritage & Raymond focus mainly on issues of rights management. As they note, "the distribution of rights and responsibilities regarding what participants can accountably know, how they know it, whether they have rights to describe it, and in what terms is directly implicated in organized practices of speaking." (2005:16). If this focus on issues of rights management depicts access as a territory, the micropolitics described by Heritage & Raymond can be likened to crossborder skirmishes claiming and contesting epistemic access.[163]

In interaction, speakers often display a certain STANCE. Stance "indexes aspects of the speaker's position with regard to what they are saying" (Clift 2006:570). It is the speaker's "epistemological assessment" (Mushin 2001:xi; as cited in Clift 2006) of what they are saying, covering things like certainty or doubt, information source and reliability of knowledge. Many linguistic devices can be used to indicate stance: lexical resources like "presumably" or "allegedly", linguistic devices such as reported speech (Holt 1996; Clift 2006), and grammatical categories such as evidentiality in languages that have them (Aikhenvald 2004). Speakers can use these resources to do subtly different interactional work relating to stance. For instance, Clift (ibid.) has argued that the use of grammatical evidentials, an explicit strategy, orients to epistemic accountability: "the speaker's accountability with regard to the truth of what is said" (p. 583). In contrast, the use of reported speech as an "interactional evidential", a more implicit strategy, orients to epistemic authority: "the relative authority (or indeed subordination) of the speaker over a co-participant with respect to what is said" (p. 583).

One place in which stance often becomes interactionally visible is in stories (Stivers 2008). In ordinary conversation, stories usually do not report "just the facts" (if that is at all possible, cf. (Sacks 1986); rather, stories are told in order to do something —to boast, to tease, to explain, to complain, et cetera (Schegloff

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[163] There is another use of the term access in the CA literature, and this refers to *providing* access, typically through tellings (Stivers 2008). Stivers characterises it as follows: "By 'access', I do not mean simply that the recipient is provided with information but rather that they are provided with the means to understand what it was like to experience the event being reported through the eyes of the teller." (Stivers 2008:31–2). While I will return to the important observation that speakers do work to provide recipients with "the means to understand what it was like to experience the event being reported", I will try to stick to the primary use of the term access as relating to epistemic authority.

1997)— and insofar as this is the case, they are hearable as conveying a personal perspective on, and a certain stance towards the narrated events.

The telling of a story invites displays of ALIGNMENT on the part of the recipient. When a recipient acknowledges that a telling is in progress, for example by respecting the fact that the teller has the floor until story completion and by supplying vocal continuers, he or she *aligns* with the storytelling activity. Competing for the floor in this context would be a disaligning action in that it does not recognise the "structural asymmetry of the storytelling activity" (Stivers 2008:34). The hearer may also support and endorse the teller's perspective, which is captured by the notion of AFFILIATION. At story completion, affiliative uptake constitutes the preferred response, and it involves taking a stance that mirrors that of the speaker (of the narrative events as funny, sad, etc.).

Goodwin (1986a), in a paper highlighting the collaborative nature of storytelling, describes how the launching of a telling invites different opportunities to participate, and how, moreover, such opportunities can be used by the audience to interactively shape the talk in progress. This PARTICIPATION STRUCTURE represents opportunities for recipients to actively display their alignment to, and their understanding of the talk in progress. Various techniques are at the disposal of recipients to do this interactional work: for instance, gaze (Kendon 1967; Rossano, Brown, and Levinson 2008), body posture (Goodwin 1984) and vocal continuers and nods (Stivers 2008), among other things.

Where in this interactional machinery do ideophones fit? I do not expect there is a simple answer. This chapter is a first foray into a complex terrain. The existing literature has suggested a number of possible inroads, but the routes now need to be tested against interactional patterns. This is what is done in the following sections. I proceed as follows: first, I present a transcript of one episode of everyday interaction. Working through this transcript, some patterns of ideophone use will be signposted. These patterns will then be explored in other episodes of interaction, teasing apart the work speakers do with ideophones from what recipients do with them, and noting some differences between types of tellings and turn-by-turn talk.

11.4 Ideophones and experience

The interaction we will examine first is from a recording during the making of palm oil. The setting is in a family compound where some people are sitting

around doing nothing in particular. Participant A is sitting on a bucket (and has been since her arrival some twenty minutes ago). Participant D is walking around the compound in search of her "water-drinking-thingy". In analysing this interaction it is useful to know that in Kawu, water is normally drunk using a calabash, and a common place for such a calabash to be found is floating in a bucket.

Extract 11.1 Bucket « 0:38:33 « Palm oil_4 **(S)**

1 D *ilɛ ló-sɛ̀ ìrɔ né to lo-nɛ gu àlà ndu-u*
place 1SG:PST-put I.thing.INDEF REL.I PROG 1SG-drink with INSTR water-Q
where did I place my water-drinking-thingy?
2 A ((sitting on bucket, shifts gaze towards D, remains silent))
3 (1.8)
4 D *lɛ tɔ́-*
in buck-
In the buck-
5 (0.4)
6 D *mɛ-ɣɛ sí lo-nyɔ̀ ìra iwɛ̃ pia ì tɔkpo amɛ ne*
1SG.IND-say if 1SG-look thing one be.in LOC bucket inside TP
I'm really saying that I want to see if there's anything in the bucket.
7 (0.4)
8 A *kùira kùira nà*
nothing nothing lack
Nothing at all.
9 (2.4)
10 ► A *tɔkpò kùnùkùnù*
bucket IDPH.empty
The bucket is *kunukunu* [totally empty]
11 ((D accepts account and goes on to look elsewhere))
12 (2.4)

A question is aired by D: "where is my water-drinking-thingy?" A recipient for this question is not directly selected vocally or through gaze, but since A is the only one present, this invites her response. She shifts her gaze toward the speaker, displaying the fact that she at least registered the talk, but her puzzled look functions to initiate an expansion by D. D elaborates with "in the buck-",

interrupts her speech, and rephrases her request as "I'm really saying that I want to see if there's anything in the bucket". After a brief but notable silence, which is hearable as prefiguring a dispreferred response (Pomerantz 1984), participant A responds with "Nothing at all."[164] A relatively long silence (2.4 seconds) follows. In this position (where a response by D would be relevant), the silence suggests that D is not satisfied with A's response to her question. Speaker A responds to this silence with a turn that is hearable as a redoing of the former one: it once again asserts that the bucket is empty (line 10).

The form this turn takes is peculiar. It replaces the earlier prosaic term *kùìra* 'nothing' with an ideophonic rendering of the emptiness. One way to look at this redoing is from the point of view of lexical selection. Talk often involves selection from among alternative resources. As Schegloff has noted, "this selection is a locus of interactional order, exploited to accomplish determinate actions" (Schegloff 2000). So we can ask: why that now? A has already provided an answer to D's question, but the silence suggests that D is not satisfied. If A is to maintain her position, she will have to upgrade it. It is in this context that we find the ideophone *kùnùkùnù*, depicting the total emptiness of a container. In using this ideophonic depiction, A can be seen to make an appeal to direct experience: she provides D with a depictive performance, inviting her to metaphorically "see for herself" that there is nothing in the bucket. This stronger appeal to A's direct epistemic access is finally accepted by D, who goes to look elsewhere.

Importantly, the order in this sequence corresponds to a general pattern: prosaic descriptions can be upgraded by means of ideophones. The reverse ordering —an ideophone upgraded by a prosaic description— is not attested in the corpus. This inherent ordering of lexical resources in talk-in-interaction reveals something about the nature of ideophones. It shows that they are not merely an alternative lexical resource, a type of fancy adverb perhaps, but that they are qualitatively different in constituting more direct appeals to personal experience, and hence implicitly stronger claims of epistemic authority.

The depictive nature of ideophones makes them a neat device to index epistemic authority in much the same way as reported speech has been shown to be (Holt 1996; Clift 2006). In the English data examined by Clift, reported speech

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[164] We know that A probably knows well what is (not) in the bucket because she can be seen to inspect it before she takes it and uses it as a seat some fifteen minutes before the current exchange. D was not around then.

functions as an "interactional evidential", providing for powerful evidential displays. We see here that ideophones are used similarly. Note that this corroborates earlier typological work on the similarities between ideophones and reported speech (Kunene 1965; Güldemann 2008), and that this is entirely in line with the depictive nature of both reported speech (Clark and Gerrig 1990) and ideophones (§2.5ff, cf. Güldemann 2008:ch4).

Ideophonic appeals to epistemic authority are not always treated as appropriate or satisfying. We see this in Extract 11.2, taken from the same recording but some twenty minutes later. The participant structure is different at this point, as is the activity that the participants are engaged in. Now A is sitting together with B to squeeze palm-oil out of palm fruit fibres using the *kàsukutu*, or squeezing net, and B is having some doubts about the fitness of A for this task.

Extract 11.2 Gbegbegbe [lines 14-26] « 0:59:11 « Palm oil_4 **(S)**

((Lines 1-13 record a first conflict, where B doubts A's abilities and says she would rather have had a young man to help her squeeze, upon which A retorts, "Just squeeze!".))

14 (3.2)
((A and B start squeezing again))

15 B *kere mɛ-i-té mì-bɔrɛ*
just MI.S-NEG-PROG MI.S-appear
It's just not coming out.

16 *mì- ì-i-te ì-ba*
MI.S- it-NEG-PROG it-come
The oil... it isn't coming.

17 (0.2)
((A and B untwist the net))

18 *ǜ-i-to ɔ̀-wo nyɛdɛ̃̀*
3SG-NEG-PROG 3SG-be.able twist
She can't twist.

19 (2.1)

20 A (*kɔ̀mḿ*) *i gɔ-gbè*
LOC REL.ɔ-this
( ) As for this one,

21 (0.6)

22 ► A *kàsukutu ba gbegbegbe*
squeezing.net have IDPH.rigid
the kàsukutu is *gbegbegbe* [rigid].
23 (0.7)
((A and B hold the net still))
24 ((B laughs, looks away))
25 (0.5)
26 B *ne nnɔɛ sɔ̃ɔ̃ mì-ɖe ira-ɔ̀ nɛ-ǹgbe ame krɔ̃ ló*
(?) oil only MI.S-be I-thing-INDEF REL.I-this inside now FP.ADV
Well, there is oil all over it now!

After the first disagreement, A and B have another go at squeezing the palm oil from the net, but B soon gives up (line 15-16) and goes on to directly hold her collaborator A accountable (line 18). After some silence, A refuses to accept the blame and passes the buck to the squeezing net. The words in which she does this can be heard to be an expansion of her earlier objections, which already mentioned the *kàsukutu* (lines 7, 9, not included here).

Interesting for present purposes is that A's turn in line 22 employs an ideophone to make a specific claim about the net: it is *gbegbegbe* 'rigid'. Here the issue of lexical selection becomes relevant again. If A's business was simply to inform her collaborator of a problem with the *kàsukutu*, she could have accomplished this by saying so, either by naming the net (as indeed she did earlier on) or by saying that there's a problem with it (the unmarked way of doing that would be something like *kàkukutu ɔ-kpi* or *ka-ɔ-kpi* for short: "there's trouble with the net"). However, A does more than just informing, and this is necessary because a complaint has been lodged against her which motivates stronger action. As in the earlier example, the ideophone, a performative depiction, vividly attests to the sensory experience of the speaker and thereby underlines her epistemic authority. In this context however it fails to persuade her interlocutor. A's claim is brushed aside by her collaborator, first by treating it as a laughable (line 24), then by complaining that the net has now soaked up all the oil (line 26). B can do this because she has handled the net just like A, and so has firsthand access to its perceptual properties. She is free to disagree.

So while in the Bucket extract we saw that the use of ideophones can be a successful appeal to personal sensory experience, here we see that this breaks down in cases of equal access. This is entirely expected if indeed ideophones are

hearable as appeals to personal sensory experience. These first two excerpts thus show how ideophones can be used by participants in sorting out epistemic matters in talk-in-interaction.

11.5 Fake gunpowder: ideophones at work

The next interaction we will look at is from a three-party conversation during the making of gunpowder. We enter the scene at 45 minutes into the recording. Participant A is the main gunpowder expert, and during this exchange he is adding some ingredients to the gunpowder mix in the mortar. B is a close family member of A who lives in the same compound and who has been present from the beginning of the work as an onlooker-turned-helper. C and D are brothers from another family who arrived some twenty minutes before our scene and have since been onlookers occasionally helping out. D is the main speaker in this exchange; C does not participate. This first part of the excerpt usefully exemplifies a range of resources available to the recipients to carry out the interactional tasks facing them: gaze, vocal continuers, body position and head nods.

Extract 11.3 Fake gunpowder [lines 1-8] « 0:45:48 « Gunpowder **(S)**

0 (3.0)

1 D *kù-wɛ̃ àna pia nɛ*
KU-one again be TP
There's another type.

2 A (0.9)
((gazes towards D))

3 D *kɔ̃ sɛ-mà-su mà-bara àlà màbòrèni uh*
KU.TP HAB-3PL-take 3PL-make INSTR white.man uh
That one they use to make that kind of imported, uh,

4 *kù-ɖu gɔ-ǹgbe*
KU.gunpowder REL.KU-D.PRX
gunpowder.

5 A *mm*
mm
mm

6 D *nɛ nɖe kántáfìtì*
that SCR-be counterfeit
That one's a fake.

7 A ((stops his activity))
((leans forward while gazing towards speaker))
8 B ((slight nod))

D starts his telling after a prolonged silence (3.0) with a phrase topicalised with *nɛ* followed by a pause, a common way to initiate tellings. Right after D's introduction, A gazes to speaker D. Gaze towards the speaker at story onset is often used to signal that the recipient recognises that the speaker is launching on an extended turn at talk (Rossano, Brown, and Levinson 2008:188). A's gaze overlaps with D's specification of the topic of the telling: gunpowder (line 3-4).[165] The syntactic completion of line 3-4 marks a transition-relevance place (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) where other parties to the conversation could speak next. At this point, A passes the opportunity to take the floor and reaffirms his alignment with the telling activity by issuing a vocal continuer *mm* (line 5). D resumes speaking and provides an assessment that makes clear what his telling is going to be about: fake gunpowder. In response to this, A displays full orientation to the speaker by noticeably stopping his activity and leaning forward while still gazing towards the speaker. Goodwin (1984) has shown how body position can function as a visual display of engagement.

Up until this point the other person present, B, has not explicitly aligned or disaligned with the telling activity. He has been oriented towards A for most of the time, though shifted his head towards D following A's gaze. When D has structurally completed his introduction of the topic, B also assumes the role of recipient. He does so with a slight head nod (line 8). Stivers has shown for American English tellings that nods in mid-storytelling environments convey something different than vocal continuers. According to her, with a nod, recipients "claim to have achieved some measure of access to and understanding of the teller's stance" (2008:32). This seems to hold for the Siwu data too: the nod comes at a place where the teller's attitude towards the topic (the gunpowder as fake) has just become clear. Thus when B assumes the role of recipient, he does so in the

[165] The story preface exploits an affordance of the Siwu noun class system: a noun class marker *ku* is used in topic position in line 1 long before the referent itself is introduced (*kùḍu* 'gunpowder' at the end of line 3). This provides the recipient with a small amount of information about the properties of the referent —in this case, that it is a non-animate entity belonging to the class of *ku*-things— while at the same time implying that more is coming (Contini-Morava 1996 discusses a similar use of noun class markers in Swahili).

fashion of someone who knows what the teller is talking about. This can be seen to be relevant later on.

In the following lines of the conversation, teller D produces the body of his telling, organizing it to display movement towards a climax. As he does so, we see that the recipients' responses change from low-key vocal continuers and head nods to increasingly elaborate responses.

Extract 11.4 Fake gunpowder [lines 9-18] « 0:45:48 « Gunpowder **(S)**

9 D *màbòrèni kuḍu nìtɔnìtɔ n-ḍe kuḍu ló*
white.man KU.gunpowder self.REDUP SCR-be KU.gunpowder FP.ADV
The imported gunpowder itself is gunpowder, mind you

10 B [((slight nod)) mm
mm
mm

11 D *gàke sí á-pia kɔrɔ̃, kere a-nya sɔ̀ ee- eh- eh-*
but if 2SG-put hand, just 2SG-see QT umm uh uh
but if you put your hand in, you just see that umm... uh uh

12 ► D *fɔ kɔ̀rɔ̃̀ ɔ-brà kpìnàkpìnà.kpìnàkpìnà*
2SG.POSS hand SCR-make IDPH.dark.black.EM2
your hand becomes *kpìnàkpìnàkpìnàkpìnà* (dull-black).

13 A *m̀-hmm*
CONT
m̀-hmm

14 ► D *màbòrèni ku-re nìtɔnìtɔ ne, kù-se ↑gelegele.*[*gelegelegelegelegele*↑
white.man KU-one self.REDUP TP, KU.S-be IDPH.shiny.EM5
The imported stuff itself is ↑*gelegelegelegelegelegelegele*↑ (shiny).

15 B [*gelegele* ((nod))
IDPH.shiny
[*gelegelegele* (shiny)

16 A [↑*m-ḿḿ* ((nod))
m-ḿḿ
[↑m-ḿḿ
[17→

17 B [ɔ̀- ɔ̀-↑*fiɛ mùnyɛ̀mùnyɛ̀*
SCR- SCR-shine IDPH.sparkling
[it ↑shines *mùnyɛ̀mùnyɛ̀* [sparklingly]

18 D [*si a-pia kɔ̀rɔ̃̀ ne,*
if 2SG-put hand TP
[if you put your hand (in it),
((further elaboration))

With A and B having both aligned with the telling activity (lines 7-8), D in line 9 proceeds with his telling. His next turn features the final particle *ló*, the import of which is roughly comparable to the English comment clause "mind you" (see §5.3.4). It coincides with another slight head nod by participant B, immediately followed by a vocal continuer (line 10). D's conjunction *gàke* 'but' then projects an opposition: imported gunpowder is gunpowder alright, but "when you put your hand in it, your hand becomes dull black". (For "dull black", D here uses the ideophone *kpìnàkpìnà*, marked as a depiction by its utterance-final position but not otherwise strongly foregrounded.) The way this opposition is phrased, particularly the combination of the particle *ló* and the conjunction *gàke* "but", is hearable as expressing the teller's stance that this result (a dull black appearance of the gunpowder on the skin) is contrary to what might be expected. Stivers (2008) has shown that when tellers provide recipients with access to their stance, this makes relevant an affiliative action on the part of the recipient, for instance claiming access by nodding or mirroring the teller's stance. However, such an affiliative action is not forthcoming here. Both recipients treat the telling as still in progress. They continue their gaze towards the speaker, and participant A passes the floor with a vocal continuer *m̀-hmm* (13) that is somewhat more elaborated than his earlier one.

D continues by expanding on the reason for a dull black appearance on the skin being counter-expectational: the stuff itself looks in fact shiny. His way of putting this is quite marked: the subject ("imported stuff") is topicalised and the ideophone *gelegele* "shiny" is spoken with a dramatic pitch rise and expressive reduplication. This launches a quick succession of overlapping responses by the recipients. Before we look into that, let us first focus for a moment on the "why that here?" of the ideophone used by the teller in line 14. One way of looking at this question is from the point of view of lexical selection. An obvious lexical alternative here would be the verb *fiɛ* 'shine'. If D's concern was just to inform the recipients of a certain property of gunpowder, this verb would have sufficed. But D uses a highly specific ideophone, shifting to a higher intonation and expressively reduplicating it. What additional interactional work is being done?

The local sequential context offers one clue. As noted, D communicated his stance in (12), thereby inviting an affiliative response which, however, does not follow. The expansion in (14) provides more detail about the reported event (through the highly specific meaning of the ideophone) and about the teller's stance (as it is an expansion of the earlier displayed stance that the result was counterexpectational). Stivers (2008:44) has noted that providing more detail, or finer "granularity" (Schegloff 2000) is a common way of providing recipients with more precise specification of the reported event and of the teller's stance. Selting (1994) has shown that switches from non-emphatic to emphatic style make relevant displays of alignment. D's "it's ↑*gelegelegelegelegelegelegele*↑" combines these techniques and is hearable as thereby pursuing uptake. Uptake is indeed forthcoming: B immediately repeats the ideophone *gelegele*, while A produces a vocal continuer which is noticeably longer and higher intoned than the ones in his previous moves (lines 5, 13). Structurally a display of alignment treating the turn as still in progress, this vocal continuer is also hearable as affiliative due to its prolongation and the emphasis added on top of it, mirroring the teller's emphatic style. Both A and B accompany their responses with a head nod, a claim of access and thus a further display of affiliation that is made relevant by D's stance-taking.

Extract 11.5 Fake gunpowder [lines 14-17] « 0:45:48 « Gunpowder **(S)**

14 D *màbòrèni ku-re nìtɔnìtɔ ne, kù-se ↑gelegele.*[*gelegelegelegelegele*↑
white.man KU-one self.REDUP TP, KU.S-be IDPH.shiny.EM5
the imported stuff itself is ↑*gelegelegelegelegelegelegele*↑ (shiny)

15 ► B [*gelegele* ((nod))
IDPH.shiny
[*gelegelegele* (shiny)

16 A [↑*m-ḿḿ*↑ ((nod))
m-ḿḿ
[↑m-ḿḿ↑
[17→

17 ► B [*ɔ̀- ɔ̀-↑fiɛ mùnyèmùnyè*
SCR- SCR-shine IDPH.sparkling
[it ↑shines *mùnyèmùnyè* [sparklingly]

Now let us look at B's responses to D's assertion in more detail in Extract 11.5 (repeated from Extract 11.4). As noted above in §11.3.2, a first position assertion

like D's "it is *gelegelegele* [shiny]" carries the implication that the speaker has primary epistemic rights over the matter formulated in the turn (Heritage and Raymond 2005). What B does in (15) is confirm D's assertion by repeating its most prominent part, the ideophone. Moreover, this partial repeat is upgraded with an immediately latched on assertion *ɔ̀fiɛ mùnyɛ̀mùnyɛ̀* "it shines *mùnyɛ̀mùnyɛ̀* [sparklingly]", featuring another ideophone. Thus, B first echoes D's ideophone and then supplies another ideophonic rendering of the scene. B's alternative rendering is in agreement with D's depiction. It uses the general verb *fiɛ* 'shine' (supporting the point made above about lexical selection) and an ideophone functioning as an adverbial modifier. *Gelegele* (D's ideophone, repeated by B) is normally used to depict a glow of light. *Mùnyɛ̀mùnyɛ̀* (B's subsequent contribution) is normally used to depict a twinkling, for example of stars in the sky or of light reflecting from a water surface. Both can be used to refer to the case at hand; they may be said to represent different but compatible construals of the depicted event. What interactional work is being accomplished by B's partial repeat followed by a different construal of the event?

One structural feature of B's responses is that they show progressively upgraded displays of access (Pomerantz 1984; Heritage 2002). Recall that B first assumed the role of recipient with a head nod (line 8), a display that may claim some measure of access. The modified repeat of *gelegele* in 15 re-asserts what D reports, and together with a nod it forms a more engaged claim of access. Finally, the alternative rendering of the scene that follows is hearable as more than a claim of access; it can be seen to be a *demonstration* of access. It is as if B says, "I'm with you (*gelegele*, nod), in fact, here is how *I* see it: *mùnyɛ̀mùnyɛ̀*." This is a high-risk, high-payoff strategy: by choosing to reword D's assertion, B is taking the risk of displaying a wrong interpretation (a risk that would be avoided if he kept to a *claim* of access by simply repeating D's words). But if his interpretation is right, the payoff is high too: he will have *demonstrated*, not merely claimed, that he has epistemic access. With this alternative ideophonic depiction of the scene, B thus displays a concern to demonstrate that he has independent epistemic access to the territory covered by D's assertion.[166]

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[166] Note that the claim is not that ideophones are the only way, or even the main way, for B to display this kind of concern. Recall that the interest of this chapter is not to discover the one and only function of ideophones (if there were such a thing); rather, it is to explore the interactional uses to which

This brings us to the final issue that I want to discuss in relation to this exchange. There is a palpable element of competition here, reflected not only in the subtly modified assessments[167] but also in the struggle for the floor: B's turns are produced in full overlap with D's prolonged ideophone, and D moves on to a further elaboration without acknowledging B in any way (line 18).[168] While the competition is localizable in the sequential features of this exchange, it is notable that it has been considerably more overt earlier on in the extended interaction. For example, in an exchange about 20 minutes before the current one, D's brother C is interfering with the work done by A (nosing around in the ingredients and asking pedantic questions) and is told off by B for thinking he knows better.

The broader point is that in the context in which these interactions are taking place —the situated activity of making gunpowder— "gunpowder" constitutes not just any topic in talk, but a domain of expertise in which issues of status, competence, and epistemic primacy come into play. C. Goodwin (1986a) has discussed such issues in a close analysis of talk among friends about automobile racing, finding that "access to [a] domain of discourse can provide a testing ground through which participants can negotiate their expertise and competence vis-à-vis one another" (1986a:284). This also seems to be at play in the exchange examined here. The reporting of experiences relating to distinguishing real from fake gunpowder is not a mere anecdote; it functions as an arena in which expertise and competence are negotiated. What is interesting for present purposes is the role played by ideophones in these negotiations. Arguably, ideophones can play this

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ideophones are put in everyday conversation, with a view to examining how these uses may be grounded in the properties of ideophones. See also §11.8 below.

[167] Stivers (2005), working with American English conversational data, has shown that when speakers do modified repeats in second position, this often typically involves both alignment (agreement about the matter formulated in the prior) and a measure of competitiveness ("competing with the prior speaker's right to socioepistemic authority over the matter at hand" (Stivers 2005:132)). In the Siwu data in this extract and elsewhere, similar patterns can be seen. For example, here as in some of Stivers' examples, the confirmation is unsolicited by the first speaker, which contributes to its competitiveness.

[168] This further elaboration of the sequence can in itself be taken to signal some kind of interactional trouble, but this is not the place to go into that. Schegloff (2007) has noted that in American English exchanges that do not achieve minimal closure but instead linger on, this can often be shown to be due to dispreferred responses. Kaoru Hayano (2011), working on Japanese data, provides another possible reason for such protracted sequences: interactants may agree with each other on the topical matters, but may still be doing epistemic business, such as doing work to defeat implications of epistemic dependence and sorting out matters of epistemic primacy.

role because of their intimate ties to sensory experience. As depictions of sensory imagery, they make for particularly strong appeals to personal experience and hence epistemic authority.

11.6 What tellers do with ideophones

To further investigate the interactional work done with ideophones, it seems useful first of all to tease apart tellers' use of ideophones from recipients' use of ideophones. This distinction can be motivated structurally; tellers tend to be the first to use ideophones, and their use of ideophones establishes the field in which the recipient may use ideophones — both in the structural sense that recipients' ideophones typically come in second position following tellers' ideophones, and in the semantic sense that recipients' ideophones are either repeats of tellers' ideophones or semantically closely related items. Thus, though both tellers and recipients may use ideophones, they do different interactional work with them.

What do *tellers* do with ideophones? The Gunpowder exchange examined above points to the importance of ideophones in providing more specificity in the pursuit of uptake. Recall that D brings a first description, fails to get much uptake (nothing from B, a mere structural alignment from A), and elaborates with an expansion involving a highly specific and emphatically foregrounded ideophone. This ideophone supplies more detail about the matter at hand and about the stance of the speaker (by specifying the reason for the earlier described result being unexpected). D's expansion, with the emphatic ideophone, thus is hearable as pursuing uptake — and successfully so, for uptake follows quickly.

Other data are in line with this pattern. Consider the following extract. The setting is the same compound as in the Bucket extract we saw above, but half an hour earlier and with different participants. We enter the conversation at a point where B is busy stirring the fibre in the cooking pot. A couple of neighbours hang around, some with the intention of helping to press the palm fruit fibre once it is boiled, others just for exchanging the morning greetings and doing some socializing. One of the neighbours, D, is telling a personal narrative of some recent events in her neighbourhood — specifically, the events surrounding the death of D's close family member Kɔdzo. Since B is busy, the other neighbour C is the main recipient at first. The context of D's telling is that when Kɔdzo fell sick, nobody from the neighbourhood was there to help, so help had to be called in from outside the village. D played a role in this.

Extract 11.6 Kɔdzo [lines 1-7] « 0:08:35 « Palm oil_4 **(S)**

1 D *bo ne, bo-i-kare sìkã ló*
1PL TP, 1PL-NEG-ask money FP.ADV
As for us, we don't ask for money
2 *ɔ̀là kasiakɔ̃ pɛ ló*
except hospital just FP.ADV
except for the hospital.
3 *si sɔ̀ ìra ɔ-nyà bò*
if QT thing SCR-need 1PL
If we are in need of something,
4 *fiɛ bo-bɔ̀rɛ̀ [bo- bo- kere a*-à-t[ã bo adzuni]*
then 1SG-appear 1PL- 1PL- just 2SG-FUT-give 1PL mind
we come to you and you'll give it a thought.
5 B [((drops pan in cooking pot, reels backwards))]
6 C ((gazes towards B))
7 C [( ) *ndzo ló!*
INTJ FP.ADV
( ) oops, watch out!
8 (0.3)
9 D *ì-i-ɖe sìkã ló*
it-NEG-be money FP.ADV
It's not about the money!
10 ► *Kɔ̀dzo,* (0.3) *Kɔ̀dzo to ɔ̀↑biɛ nnɔmɛ, nɛ̀ngbe* [$_{12}$*ne ɔ̀-sɛ tsùrù*
PSN PSN PROG 3SG-cry tears REL-this TP 3SG-go IPDH.drop
Kɔdzo, (0.3) Kɔdzo was ↑crying, he went *tsuru*
((beat gesture morphing into a gestural depiction of the tears flowing))
11 ► *tsùrù tsùrù tsùrù tsùrù tsùrù* *
IDPH.drop IDPH.drop IDPH.drop IDPH.drop IDPH.drop
tsuru tsuru tsuru tsuru tsuru *
12 C [*ii-bubu te ɔ̀biɛ ɔ̃-ɔ-biɛ kaku-u?*
INTJ SBJC PFOC-cry 3SG.TP-PF-cry crying-Q
Oh! Why should HE have been crying?
13 B ((turns body towards C and D))

14 C (0.6) *ɔ̀-to ɔ̀-biɛ kàku*
3SG-PROG 3SG-cry crying
(0.6) he was crying *
15 C *ne fiɛ m[ɛ̀ sɔ,*
TP then 1SG.INDEP QT
so I say to myself,
16 D [*igɔ̀ nɛ-mɔ-*
moment REL.I-that
At that moment-
17 ((D turns head away from C))
18 C *kùnyɛ kuwɛ̃ kuwɛ̃ i-i-ɖe sɔ̀ nyà sɔ ɔ̀nyɛ gɔ̀ŋ̀gbe*
illness none none it-NEG-be QT look QT illness REL.ɔ-this
"There is nothing here that indicates that this
19 *ɖe ɔ̀kpi nyɛ ló*
be death illness FP.ADV
could be a fatal disease."

D starts with an account that seems organised to highlight the proper behaviour of the family: she relates how they have never imposed on the neighbours (line 1-4), and notes that this case was not even about money (6). During the first turns of D's multi-turn unit, C displays alignment by turning her body and gaze toward the speaker. However, her attention is soon diverted by something happening in her visual periphery: B accidentally drops a small pan into the cooking pot and reels backwards on account of the splashing hot liquid. C turns her gaze towards B and issues a word of caution (6-7).

After a short pause, D continues her telling (8), but not without adjusting for the trouble with recipiency that has arisen. Features of her subsequent talk seem designed to regain audience attention, in particular (i) the topicalisation and repetition of the subject in 10, (ii) the shift into an emphatic speech style ("Kɔdzo is CRYING"), and (iii) the expansion of that description with a performative rendering of the scene using an ideophone that is repeated five times along with a depictive gesture that is synchronised with it (10-11). These features work together to invite displays of alignment. The ideophone *tsùrù-tsùrù-tsùrù-tsùrù-tsùrù-tsùrù* depicts what the verb prosaically expresses; it provides the listeners with a way to experience what it is like to perceive the narrated scene.

Following this peak, B turns her body toward the other two participants and displays orientation to the telling (13). At the same time however, a struggle for the floor ensues: C, who was the main recipient earlier on, starts to produce an account of her own in overlap with D's expressively modified ideophonic depiction.[169] Thus when D's turn reaches completion, the audience structure has shifted: whereas she began her telling with C actively aligning and B busy in the background, B is now aligning while C actively disaligns and has in fact started producing overlapping talk that may be hearable as a competitive move because topically, D's telling has not reached a possible completion point.

C's intervention in line 12 (which topicalises Kɔdzo's crying and takes it as the point of departure for an account that may be hearable by D as an attempt to ward off culpability[170]) is not attended to by the others and is sequentially deleted (Jefferson 1978:229) — that is, it is not acknowledged in any way in the subsequent talk. D in fact treats it as inappropriate by actively disaligning, looking away and producing overlapping talk that continues her own telling (16-17). At this point, C's aside can be considered a failure — but so can D's telling, at least in the sense that C, who started out as the selected recipient, has actively disaligned. Some work has to be done to resolve this interactional trouble and bring the sequence to a closure.

Extract 11.7 Kɔdzo [lines 20-26] « 0:08:35 « Palm oil_4 **(S)**

20 (0.7)
21 D *ɔ̃́* *ì-ɔ-rố*
3SG.TP it-PF-finish
So for him, it's finished.
22 C [( ) ((prepares gesture, then "freezes" to attend to D))

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[169] The order of turns and the degree of overlap is difficult to represent in the transcript. Though I have indicated the starting point of the overlap by "[" and the end point by an asterisk "*", here is a description for clarity: basically, lines 12-14 are fully overlapped by 10-11; the prolonged repetition of the ideophone *tsuru* stretches over part of 12 and the whole of 13 (B's display of aligment) and 14 (C's expansion). Note that an audio clip is available in the online supplementary materials.

[170] C's talk (line 12) starts out as an unsolicited confirmation of D's assertion (that Kɔdzo was crying). In this position, as a modified repeat (Stivers 2005:137), it is hearable as a competitive move in terms of asserting epistemic primacy or independence. Apparently C has some knowledge of the events D is relating. It is possible that her intervention is designed as an account of her own involvement in the matter.

23 D [*bo kagbàmìkù gaǹgbe ne,*
1PL neighbourhood REL.KA-this TP,
As for this neighbourhood of ours,

24 ► *ka-ɔ̃-lo ma ↑kanana.*[*nanananana*
ING-PF-be.silent 3PL.OBJ IDPH.silent.EM5
it has silenced them *↑kanananananananana!*

25 C [*mm-mm*= ((abandons "frozen" gesture))
mm-mm
mm-mm (indeed)

26 B =*↑krɔ̃ Ama krɔ̃, fɔ á-bɔ̀ m̀mɔdi krɔ̃̂*
now PSN now, 2SG.INDEP 2SG:PST-have strength now
Well, Ama, *you* really did your very best.

After a noticeable pause (20), D resumes her telling, rounding off the aside about Kɔdzo's crying (21) and returning to the topic of the neighbourhood that she started out with. C, who started another overlapping turn in 22, at this point visibly abandons her attempt and turns her gaze to teller D instead. What is most striking about the way D completes her telling is that it is done in an emphatic speech style and that it prominently features an ideophone which is expressively prolonged.

By now the pattern starts to look familiar: the ideophone, as a performative depiction, provides the recipients with access to the experiential qualities of the reported event. In this context, it also reinforces the stance of the speaker that the neighbourhood is to be held accountable for the lack of help and therefore is silenced rightly. Stance-taking by the speaker invites an affiliative action by the recipients (Stivers 2008); the emphatic speech style invites displays of alignment (Selting 1994); and displays of alignment and affiliation do indeed follow at this point of possible completion. There is uptake both by C, who visually displays alignment[171] and agrees with a prolonged *mm-mm* (25), and by B, who offers a compliment (26). B's compliment mirrors the stance of the teller in that it turns on the teller's juxtaposition of her own conduct (assessed as appropriate in lines 1-4,

[171] C's visual display of alignment consists of returning her arms to home position (Sacks and Schegloff 2002; Kendon 1975). She had been keeping a gesture in pre-stroke hold (Kita 1993:7) since line 22, when her attempt to take hold of the floor was interrupted by D's turn in line 23. Her abandoning this gesture displays alignment with D by giving up the competition for the floor.

9) with the unhelpful attitude of the neighbourhood. The affiliative responses of the recipients, the preferred response type at story completion (Stivers 2008:33), bring the sequence to a closure.

In the data considered so far, speakers appear to use ideophones in order to provide recipients with the means to experience what it was like to perceive the reported event. In the sequential context of a telling, such ideophonic performances appear to invite uptake by recipients. A good way to test this induction would be a context in which uptake is in fact not forthcoming. We may predict that a speaker would intensify his or her attempts to provide access and pursue uptake in various ways, including using more ideophones. The following extracts show exactly this.

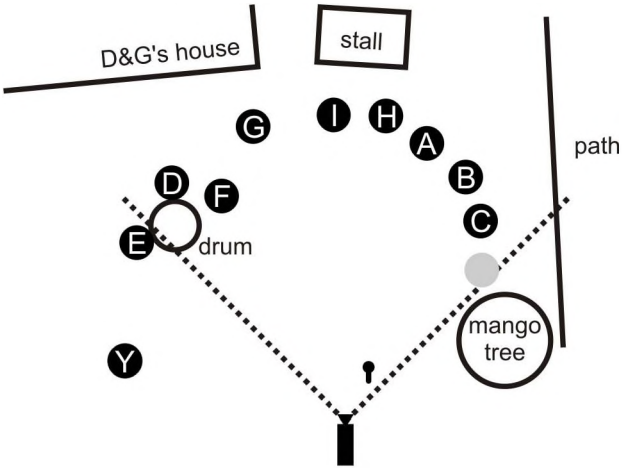

Figure 11.1 Bird's eye view of the setting for the 'Elephant' extract

The setting is Joseph's compound, which functions as a public space along the main road through the village. The place is never empty; someone comes along to buy some tangerines or sugar from Joseph's wife's little stall, another comes by for Joseph's sandal repair service, and there are always some people hanging around on the bench in the shade of the mango tree. Around eight people are copresent in the frame; additionally, there are some people outside of the frame that sometimes contribute to the interactions. A notable feature is the presence of a woman (C) who does not speak Siwu but only Twi (one of the major languages of Ghana). She does appear to understand some Siwu. None of the others speak much Twi except

the woman sitting next to her (B). Due to the great number of people present, interactions in this setting have a somewhat fleeting character and it is often a challenge for speakers to attract the attention of potential recipients and to keep them engaged. Figure 11.1 is a bird's eye view of the setting, showing participants and camera placement.

Extract 11.8 Elephant [lines 1-27] « 0:45:57 « Drums **(S)**

1 C ((speaking Twi, understood only by her neighbour B))
2 A [*ne mɛ̀ sɔ ... uhh... bé ta mà-rɔ̃-ɔ̃?*
TP 1SG.INDEP QT ... uhh... what PROG 3PL-call-Q
[Just what I'm saying... uhh... what do you call it?
3 B ((shifts gaze to C))
4 A *e[eè ìrɔ*
uhh thing.INDEF
e[ee this-thing
5 C [((speaking Twi))
6 (1.6)
7 A *sô*
elephant
elephant
8 (0.4)
9 *kɔ̃rɔ̃,* (?) *ì-rɔ nɛ́mɔ sina, so a-kodzɛ*
now, I-thing.INDEF REL.I-D.DST meat, elephant A.PL-skins
now, the meat of that thing, elephant skins
10 B [((shifts gaze from C to her right))
11 E ((talks to co-worker D in background))
12 B ((shifts gaze toward E))
13 ► A *totoro-↑to:↑*
IDPH.thick.EM1
totoro-↑to:↑ [thick]
14 (0.3) *a-fɛ̃ a-fɛ̃, à-su hamà,*
2SG-roast 2SG-roast, 2SG-take hammer,
(0.3) you roast and roast, you take a hammer,
15 *àtere àtere àtere àtere àtere*
2SG-beat 2SG-beat 2SG-beat 2SG-beat 2SG-beat
you beat and beat and beat and beat and beat!

16 [*fiɛ kere a-à-fore fiɛ*]
now just 2SG-FUT-rinse now
and then you wash it,
17 I [((turns gaze away from A, towards D))]
18 A [*á-a-su à-pia-*
2SG-FUT-take 2SG-put
you take and put-
19 D [*màwɛ sɔ kàɣɛ amɛ nɛ ma-pia ma-we*[↓*tè*
3PL-some QT mortar inside TP 3PL-put 3PL-pound
some say that you put it in the mortar and you [↓POUND
20 G ((turns gaze to D, away from basket))
21 A [*irɔ̀* (0.6)
thing.INDEF
this thing (0.6)
22 ► D ↑*dĩĩĩ*[*:*
IDPH.impact.resonance.EM
↑dĩĩĩ:
23 A [*so ɔko*
elephant skin
elephant skin
24 I *-ǹ-na (i-ɖe:)*
-who it-be-Q
-who (is that?) ((gaze still towards D))
25 A [*so ikɔdzɛ*
elephant skin
elephant skin ((turns head to the right, towards D perhaps))
26 D [*Nuku*
PSN
Nuku ((answers D's question))
27 F [*màpɛ sɛ́ màp*[*ɛ*
3PL-beat HAB 3PL-beat
beating is what they do ((back turned to A, gaze towards D))

The technique used by A to initiate her telling is a Siwu form of the "speaking of X" format (Jefferson 1978:221): she tacks onto the preceding talk with "Just what I say, …". She produces this preface in overlap with C, who it will be

recalled, speaks Twi. This leads to interactional trouble; A starts out her turn gazing towards B, but B, the only person understanding Twi, turns towards C (line 3). Features of A's following turns then appear to be designed to regain recipiency. For example, her use of the recognitional deictics (see Enfield 2003 on this term) *bé ta màrɔ̃ɔ̃?* "WHAT-d'you-call-it" and *irɔ̀* "this-thing" can be seen to make an appeal to the other participants' engagement.[172] Then, she pauses, re-introduces the topic, pauses briefly again, and expands her telling (7-9). Following this, still none of those present has clearly displayed alignment to her telling, and in fact potential recipiency shrinks because one person starts talking to someone else (11) and B seems to shift her gaze towards that starting interaction (12). Then A finishes her turn with an ideophone: *totoro-↑to:* "thick!" (13). The point to notice is that again, the ideophone is delivered structurally as a "peak of involvement" in Selting's (1994) terms: it is emphatically styled by means of high-pitched intonation and partial reduplication. However, while we saw in earlier excerpts that recipients treat such ideophonic performances as calling for displays of alignment and affiliation, in this case there is no noticeable uptake. She then elaborates with an animated description of how to soften the skin by hammering it (lines 14-16), but none of this results in uptake by others. In fact, people are actively disattending. In particular, on the other side of the compound, D competes for the floor by starting a turn in overlap with A's unfinished turn (line 19), and draws the gazes from I and G. Throughout D's turns, A attempts to continue her telling (including another case of recognitional deixis in line 21 and simple topic mentions in lines 23, 25). However, a large part of her potential audience is now attending to D, with G gazing at him, I asking him a question for clarification (line 24) and F responding to his "some say that" with a view of his own (line 27).[173]

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[172] Whether or not A really can't think of the word (elephant/elephant skin) we cannot know, but given the fact that she has herself used both "elephant" and "elephant skin" some 20 seconds before the present turn (the datum is not included in this extract), it is likely that this is a case of "forgetfulness as an interactive resource" (Goodwin 1987). What is interesting is the use of recognitional deictics to appeal to the joint attention of those copresent. This appeal essentially rests on the fact that the meanings of such items "[draw] attention to the speaker's assumption that the listener can figure out what the speaker is referring to" (Enfield 2003:102). This pragmatic use of recognitional deictics (doing more than just referring by exploiting the fact that their meaning is explicitly interactional) meshes well with the conventionalised meaning of such items proposed by Enfield.

[173] Incidentally, note the use of emphatic speech style and an ideophone by D in lines 19, 22.

If this data seems chaotic, that is precisely the point. The fleeting character of the exchanges on Joseph's compound makes visible how fragile the notion of an audience can be in an informal context with multiple people present and potentially participating. Participation frameworks are formed one moment and fracture in the next, revealing a fission-fusion dynamics that is one of the typical features of informal non-dyadic interaction in societies around the world.[174] The reason to focus on it here is because it lets us see the techniques people use to secure an audience in such contexts. The claim is that ideophones may form one such technique, and that this is revealed not only when they actually work like that, but perhaps especially when they don't work like that, prompting participants to intensify their efforts to secure an audience and get uptake.

Two more excerpts from the same interaction will show how this pattern essentially repeats itself: A expands her telling, few people attend or align, and A designs her turns to regain recipiency, the most prominent strategy being the use of ideophones to provide increased access and invite displays of uptake. Extract 11.9 follows three unsuccessful attempts by A to reinitiate her telling, all of them interrupted by a different speaker. By now, several interactions are going on in parallel and A attempts to select a specific addressee by gaze (28) while F and D continue the trajectory of their own sequence (29-31, 34). A's attempts culminate in another ideophonic performance, this time using a different ideophone (35). It is louder than any of her preceding turns (and any of the turns by the other speakers for that matter) and delivered in an emphatic style that displays her stance that the properties of elephant skin are quite remarkable. A's displaying of her stance and her providing increased access (using the specific, perceptual semantics of the ideophone) invite displays of alignment and affiliation. This time, one recipient treats it as such, aligning and affiliating with a vocal continuer and a nod (line 36).

Extract 11.9 Elephant [lines 28-36] « 0:45:57 « Drums **(S)**

28	A	[*àlɛ*	[*so*	*ikɔdzɛ*
		like	elephant	skin
		like,	elephant skin ((gazes toward I))	

[174] There is some work on the sensitiveness of social and interactional structures to the number of participants, but it is still relatively sparse (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974:713-4; Goodwin and Goodwin 1990; Schegloff 1995; and especially Egbert 1997 and references cited therein).

29 F [*so* *ɔko-ò?*
elephant hide-Q?
elephant hide?

30 D *aĩ*
yes
yep

31 F *((nods))*
((nods))

32 I *mà-w[etè* ( )
3PL-pound
they pound (it)
[31→

33 A [*so* *ikɔ[dzɛ*
elephant skin
elephant skin

34 F [*so* *ikɔdzɛ , màpɛ* *sɛ́* *màpɛ*
elephant skin 3PL-beat HAB 3PL-beat
elephant skin, beating is what they do

35 ► A -↑*GBOGBORO-↑GBO*
IDPH.tough-EM1
-↑GBOGBORO-↑GBO! (tough)
((high intensity beat gesture emphasizing ideophone))

36 I ((nods)) *mm*

The third extract follows after some intervening talk about how big elephants are and how people were able to kill them in the old days. A attempts to start another telling again and again, but has trouble finding an audience. In (59), she expands with an assessment about the size of elephants which is sequentially ignored by the others, possibly because it is not topically coherent with the adjacent prior talk between B, G, H and C, which is about how elephants used to be killed.

Extract 11.10 Elephant [lines 59-70] « 0:45:57 « Drums **(S)**

59 A [↑*so:* (0.8) *so* *m-mɔ̀*
elephant elephant DEP-be.big
↑elephant (0.8) the elephant is big

60 C *(Twi not transcribed)*
((in Twi, to B: using stones))
((A shifts gaze to C))

61 H *ɔ̀tu máapɛ-ũ*
gun 3PL:PST-beat-3SG.OBJ
they shot 'm with the gun ((in another sequence))

62 C *(Twi not transcribed)*
((in Twi, to B: they used sticks and stones))

63 B *mm*
mm
mm

64 C ((Twi)) *
((in Twi, to B: explains and gestures how elephant were killed)) *

65 A [*so-*[
elephant
eleph-

66 B [*mm* ((directed towards C))
mm
mm

67 A [*so-*
elephant
eleph-
[63→

68 ► [*so,** *ɔ-mɔ̀* [↑↑*tititi.tititi*↑ *kpũãã*↑
elephant, SCR-be.big IDPH.enormous.EM3 IDPH.huge
[the elephant,*[175] it is big [*tititititititi* (enormous) *kpũãã* (huge)
((gestures "big"))

69 C [<*Twi*>
((Twi, unclear))

70 H *nɛ* [*kɔ̃rɔ̃́, beḛdeḛ*
TP now, what.be.PLUR
now, what-d'you-call-it

[175] This point marks the end of the overlap with 59.

71 A [*ìrabi i-ɖe-e?*
thing-DIM it-be-Q
d'you think it's a small thing?
((turns toward H))

A starts again, but interrupts herself (64), possibly orienting to the fact that an overlap with C's turn, still in progress, might be treated as inappropriate. Following the active disalignment of B (who aligns and agrees with C instead in 61) she restarts and interrupts herself yet again (67).[176] Finally, she produces a turn which after possible syntactic completion shifts to an emphatic speech style and features two ideophones. Significantly, this is a repeat of the assessment that was ignored in 59, except this time it is considerably upgraded by the shift to emphatic speech style and the inclusion of two ideophones (68). *Tititititi* 'huge' is spoken at a dramatically high pitch and is expressively lengthened; it is followed by another ideophone evoking the enormous size of the elephant. Note how these ideophones modify the verb that already expresses 'being large'; they provide a vivid depiction of the reported event. In the sequential context, and especially as an upgrade and expansion of a series of unsuccessful attempts to take the floor, this is hearable as pursuing uptake. Even this dramatic attempt does not succeed and is sequentially ignored, however (69, 70), after which A starts attending to other talk, dropping her own thread (71 and further).

One more thing is worth noting about this case: both ideophones in (68) follow after a point of possible syntactic completion. This feature, shared by two of the most common ideophone constructions in the language (the Utterance and Adverbial constructions as defined in §6.5), makes it possible to expand a turn without seeming to be repairing or redoing it — a technique that is especially useful in the pursuit of uptake.[177]

Let me summarise the argument so far. The claim is that speakers use ideophones to provide recipients with a particularly effective means to experience what it is like to perceive the reported events. In the Gunpowder and Kɔdzo interactions, we saw that *recipients* orient to this by treating these ideophonic performances as inviting displays of alignment and affiliation. What we see in the above excerpts from the Elephant interaction is that *speakers*, too, can orient to

[176] The accumulation of self-initiated restarts in this interaction would be worth a separate study.

[177] I thank Kaoru Hayano for this observation.

this affordance of ideophones: in the absence of uptake, they can use ideophones to provide increased specificity in the pursuit of uptake. Once again, we can see how the depictive nature of ideophones makes them suitable for this task. Now, let us turn to what recipients do with ideophones.

11.7 What recipients do with ideophones

It has rarely been noted before that not only tellers, but also recipients use ideophones in social interaction.[178] The reason for this omission is easy to see; it is the fact that the two main sources of data for linguists have long been the isolated example sentence and the elicited monologic narrative text, both of which abstract away from the deeply intersubjective nature of everyday language use. In everyday conversation, recipients use ideophones in orderly ways, of which we saw examples in the Gunpowder exchange: (1) they may echo a teller's ideophone, and/or (2) they may supply their own ideophone within the field established by the telling, most often following a teller's prior ideophone. The echoing of ideophones can probably be subsumed under a broader practice of various ways of repeating prior speech (on which see Pomerantz 1984; Tannen 1984; Stivers 2005). What is more interesting perhaps is the second case, in which recipients make a point of providing a different ideophonic rendering of some scene.

The following extract provides another example of this practice, and makes more visible the fact that speakers are oriented to what recipients accomplish by it. It occurs a short time after the earlier fake gunpowder extract and may be occasioned by it. D tells of a certain type of sieve used in gunpowder manufacture, which can be used to measure the petrol content.

Extract 11.11 Sieve « 00:46:51 « Gunpowder **(S)**

68 D *ì-ba sànu gɔ́ àna kumi᷄gɔ ì-ɖe a-à-kàkulétì ɛ ɛɛ pètorò*
it-have sieve REL again the.way it-be 2SG-FUT-measure u uh petrol
There is also this type of sieve which you use to measure u-uh the petrol content.

69 *fiɛ a-à-su à-fore,*
when 2SG-FUT-take 2SG-pour
When you pour the stuff (through it),

[178] See Goodwin (1986b) for background on the roles of hearers in conversation.

70 ► *fiɛ i-à-bara kɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋ.kɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋ,*
when it-FUT-make IDPH.glitter.EM5
it'll go *kɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋ!* (glittery)
71 *fɔ nìtɔ kà-a-nyaà*
2SG.INDEP self ING-2SG-see
you'll see it for yourself.
72 ► A ( )- (0.2) *kà-ì-bara gelegele.gelegele*
ING-it-make IDPH.shiny.EM2
( )- (0.2) It'll go *gelegelegelegele!* (shiny)
73 D *ɛ̀hɛɛ̀*
indeed
Indeed.
74 *ì-lɔ ì-ɔ́-fiɛ awe pètorò su*
it-hold it-PF-shine like petrol take
It will shine like the petrol t- we- take
75 *bò-su bò- bò- bò-kàkulétì*
1PL-take 1PL- 1PL- 1PL-calculate
we take- we- we- we measure.

When D starts, there is no visible recipiency; he is sitting on the side while both A and B are busy looking at the mortar in which the ingredients are being mixed and pounded. When he uses not a prosaic description but instead delivers an animated ideophonic performance (*kɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋkɛlɛŋ*), A does look up and responds by agreeing. But A does more than just agree: he supplies a subtly different ideophonic depiction (*gelegelegelegele*). By responding in this way, A displays affiliation (by not disagreeing with the basic claim) and at the same time demonstrates access (by supplying an alternative depiction of the scene). As in the earlier exchange, A communicates in effect, "I agree, I'm with you; in fact, here is how *I* see it". In doing this, A displays a concern with asserting his epistemic independence. A, it will be recalled, is the main gunpowder expert in the village; more pertinent to the immediate local context, at the very moment of discussion he is the one carrying out expert activities relating to the topic at hand. Thus A's being-the-expert is continuously made relevant by the fact that all of the conversations from the Gunpowder recording are situated in, and revolve around, a setting in which A is busy manufacturing a keg of gunpowder

Indeed D treats A's response as doing more than agreement. Had A done *just* agreement, this would have made it relevant for D to continue his telling directly. Instead, D inserts an agreement token "èhɛ̃ɛ̃̀" in turn, showing that he considers A's turn to have done not just a confirmation of his own prior turn, but also an assertion that makes relevant a ratification of A's independent epistemic authority in the matter. We thus see that the "terms of agreement" (Heritage and Raymond 2005) are being negotiated here using ideophones. Two other features of this exchange bear mention. First, note how D in line 71 glosses the relevance of his ideophonic performance: "you'll see it for yourself." This underlines the evidential nature of ideophones that speakers draw on in interaction. Another noteworthy detail is that D closes by offering a summary description in prose (line 74-75), and that this summary uses the general verb *fiɛ* 'shine' — supporting the earlier claim that this verb is a viable alternative lexical resource for the ideophone *gelegele* 'shiny'.

Let us return to what recipients do with ideophones. If one of the relevant actions for recipients in mid-telling environments is to affiliate with the speaker (Stivers 2008), doing so by supplying one's own ideophonic depiction is a particularly powerful way of accomplishing this. It is not just a claim of access (as a nod is), it is a *demonstration* of it — in effect a particularly powerful way of saying "I'm with you". Because of the depictive nature of the ideophone, this demonstration has the added effect of asserting independent first hand experience. As we saw in this excerpt, tellers orient to this additional work that recipients do with ideophones.

The work that recipients do with ideophones is not evenly distributed across the corpus. In some contexts, recipients do not use ideophones at all, or merely repeat the speaker's ideophones. In others, recipients not only repeat the speaker's prior ideophones but also supply their own; moreover, they may even volunteer ideophonic depictions before the speaker does. Is this merely unconditioned variation, or can this asymmetry be linked to structural features of the interactions? It appears that the structural asymmetry can be linked to an asymmetry in terms of *epistemic access*. The pattern looks like this: if you tell me something that we both can be expected to have epistemic access to (for example, because it concerns a domain of expertise that we share, or because it narrates material that is common knowledge), it is appropriate for me as a recipient to claim access by echoing your ideophones or to demonstrate access by supplying my own ideophonic rendering. If, on the other hand, you tell me something that

I'm not expected to have epistemic access to (for example, because it is your private experience, or because it narrates an event that I do not and cannot have knowledge of), it is inappropriate for me as a recipient to do these things.

Now showing that something does not tend to happen is, of course, a tricky business. So, I first discuss a case that transparently involves a telling of common knowledge in which the recipient freely joins in with the speaker sharing access, after which we will consider the other side of the coin.

The first case is a telling of a special type. It is an existing story from the *ìnatĩka* ("spider-stories") genre, and as such can be considered to be common knowledge in the community. The setting is a compound in which some kids and young men are helping an elderly lady pick kernels off a load of corn cobs, while telling each other stories. This particular story is a tale of the sky animals choosing a new king. We enter the story at a point where an important contender, Eagle, is appearing in the sky.

Extract 11.12 Eagle « 0:26:17 « Stories **(S)**

1 O *finikpoo ɔ́ɔ̀bɔrɛ*
eagle 3SG-PF-emerge
Now Eagle had appeared.

2 *sɔ ɔ̃ nɛ, ɔ̃ lo-mɔ̀ ɔ-ɖò,*
QT 3SG.TP TP, 3SG.TP DEP-be.big 3SG-surpass,
As for him, he is the biggest,

3 *ɔso ɔ̀̃-n-to ɔ̀-ba ɔ̀̃-a-ɖe sigara nɛ*
reason 3SG.TP-DEP-PROG 3SG-have 3SG.TP-FUT-eat chieftaincy TP
so he should be getting the chieftaincy.

4 ► *ka-ɔ-bɔrɛ vùùùùùù ɔwuri amɛ*
ING-3SG-appear IDPH.sound.of.wind sky inside
He appeared *vuuuu* in the sky;

5 *ta ìkpa, ɔrɛ̃ndɛ̃̀ ìkpa nɛ ǹdɛ̃ndɛ̃ iso*
up.to branch, silk.cotton I.branch REL.I center on
flew to the branch, the branch of the silk cotton tree, halfway.

6 *ìkpa ndɛ̃ndɛ̃,* [(0.6)
branch center
Halfway the branch,

7	A			[*gbîi-*		
				IDPH.boom		
				gbîi-		
8 ►	O	*mùmɔ*	*ɔ-sɛ*	*ɔ̀-a-sò*	*ɔ-ɣo,*	[↑*gbîùm*
		there	3SG-go	3SG.TP-FUT-land	3SG-jump,	IDPH.boom
		there he came down to land,				*gbîùm*!
9 ►	A					[↑*gbîùm*
						IDPH.boom
						↑*gbîùm*
10		(0.4)				
11	A	[*ìkpa-*				
		branch				
		the branch-				
12	D	[*i-kpi?*				
		I.S-die				
		it broke?				
13	O	*-ìkpa*	*ìipɛgu*	*sò*		
		I.branch	I.S-NEG-touch	REFL		
		-The branch didn' t move.				

Our main interest is with the second half of the excerpt cited here, though note, incidentally, that the teller uses an ideophone (*vùùù*) in line 4 to render the scene in more detail. O organises his telling to work toward a climax by depicting the Eagle hovering in the sky and then cutting to a series of short turns offering increasing detail: Eagle flies towards the branch, the branch of the silk cotton tree, to the middle, the middle of the branch… At precisely this point, recipient A anticipates the climax by volunteering an ideophonic depiction of the Eagle landing "thud" on the branch (7). This is indeed a point where this ideophone would have been structurally and topically appropriate, but as it happens, the teller continues his telling in terminal overlap with this turn, completing the telling with an ideophone himself: "there he came down to land, *gbîùm*!" (8). Exactly synchronised with this ideophone by the teller is A's second insertion of the ideophone (9). This second attempt by A is produced with a more emphatic style than the first.

Taking this telling as an example, two points are to be noted. First, it appears that recipients monitor the progression of the telling for positions where affiliation

by means of an ideophone may be relevant. If an ideophone is inserted at a place which turns out not to be appropriate it can be sequentially deleted.[179] Second, in tellings such as this, the ideophones used by teller and recipients are often the same. This is in contrast to what we saw for example in the Gunpowder excerpts, where recipients supply alternative ideophonic renderings more often. It thus appears that in communal narratives, participants are concerned with displaying *common access*, whereas in interactions like the Gunpowder one, participants are concerned with displaying *independent access*.

As mentioned above, what we see recipients do in these communally shared tellings is not what they always do. There seems to be a structural asymmetry to the effect that it is inappropriate for recipients to claim or demonstrate access using ideophones in cases where they do not have this access. Ideally, we would have a case where this supposed constraint is breached and we could draw conclusions from the way this breach is treated. I have not seen such a breach in the Siwu corpus, so for now we will make do with a weaker type of evidence, namely an excerpt that at least illustrates the tendency.

This interaction occurs around the beginning of the Gunpowder recording. The teller A relates how one time, in 1981, he was making gunpowder together with some others when a violent explosion occurred. His main selected recipient is B, who may or may not know the story, but who certainly was not around back then. Throughout the telling, B displays alignment with the telling activity as well as affiliation with the teller. He nods, sometimes issues a request for clarification, and in general displays engaged recipiency. We enter the telling at a point where it is getting to a first climax.

Extract 11.13 1981 « 0:08:01 « Gunpowder **(S)**

1 A *ŋ̀gɔ̀ to ɔ̀se nɛ̀*
DEP-REL PROG 3SG-dry TP
so the one who is drying it,

[179] Note that in this case, O treats A's first try as *positionally*, but not *topically* inappropriate: he continues his telling in terminal overlap with it, not changing his course of action to acknowledge her try, but he does choose to use the same ideophone himself. Even if we cannot judge for certain whether it is *relevantly* the same (that is, whether he chooses it following A), what he does not do is select a different rendering, or avoid an ideophone altogether. That makes his turn hearable as agreeing to (and possibly retroactively endorsing) the topicality of A's first try.

2 (0.8)
3 *nɛ ɔ́ta ɔsisi puta kùḍu kú ḍaḍìsɛ̃ĩ*
TP 3SG:PST-stand 3SG-take.PLUR put gunpowder with pot
He stood up and took the gunpowder and the pot
4 (1.4)
5 *ǹgɔ sɔ̀ kà-ɔ̀-foedzà ɔ̀fore i ɪfara iso*
how QT ING-3SG-throw 3SG-pour LOC winnower on
the way he's pouring it on the winnower![180]
6 (1.2)
7 *↑kùgɔ ɔnyà ɔ̀foedza ǹgɔǹgbe sí ɔ̃̀-a-taraà*
way 3SG-intend 3SG-throw REL.ɔ-this SUBJ 3SG.TP-FUT-raise
↑the way he just pours that stuff while raising
8 B [( )
9 ► A [*ḍ- ḍaḍì↑sɛi* ((gesture, finger-snap)) [*↑↑gbúúumǹ!*
p- pot IDPH.boom
the p- the ↑pot, ((gesture, finger-snap)) *↑↑gbúúumǹ!*
10 ► B [*↑kpû↑*
IDPH.bam
↑kpû↑
11 (2.0)
12 A ((gestures explosion with both arms))
13 *kùḍu ɔ-ɔ̀-pɛ*
gunpowder SCR-PF-beat
The gunpowder exploded.
14 B [((nods))

Our interest is in lines 7-14. A has been organizing the telling toward a climax, among other things by acting out the man pouring the gunpowder over the winnower and by shifting into an emphatic speech style in 7. B anticipates the high point —an explosion— by throwing in an ideophone (*kpu!)* while A is depicting the explosion with a wild gesture and a finger snap, following up quickly with an ideophone himself (*gbúúumǹ!*). After a pause, the speech style shifts to normal again and what has been co-told and depicted through ideophones and

[180] The gunpowder is poured on a winnower (a flat piece of wood normally used to separate chaff from grain) so that it can dry in the sun.

gesture is summarily expressed in prose: *kùḍu ɔ̀pɛ* "the gunpowder exploded". B agrees and affiliates, claiming access with a nod.

Similar structural high points occur as the telling continues, from a description of teller and protagonist A's being blown against a tree by the blast and finding himself on fire *sàsà* (lines 41-47, Extract 11.14) to a description of how his burnt clothing fuses to his skin *pàtapàta* (lines 58-61, Extract 11.15). But two things are different from the first excerpt above. First, in the following scenes, A relates and depicts with ideophones very personal sensory experiences (the experience of being on fire, the experience of having burnt clothes sticking to one's skin), matters which one probably must have experienced oneself in order to fully relate to. In comparison, most people can be expected to know what happens when a bucket full of gunpowder is ignited. Second, B, although still an engaged listener, does not echo or supply any of A's ideophones. Extract 11.14 and Extract 11.15 represent these exchanges.

Extract 11.14 1981 [lines 46-49] « 0:08:01 « Gunpowder **(S)**

46 A *kàlòpiɛtɛ̀ i bɛrɛdzo iso lomɔɛ bɛrèdzo lòto kùgɔ̀ŋgbe*
ING-1SG-lean LOC palm on 1SG-grip palm 1SG-hold ?-REL.ɔ-here
I'm leaning against a palm tree, keep holding it like this.

47 ► *ǹdo lotsùè ↑sàsà↑*
1SG-PROG 1SG-burn IDPH.sizzling
I'm burning ↑*sàsà*↑!

48 *a*[*wu-*
cloth-
my clothes-

49 B [*m̀mɔ ɔ̀wuri ɔ́su-ɔ* ( )
there wind SCR:PST-take-2SG.OBJ
so the blast took you there? ( )

Extract 11.15 1981 [lines 58-61] « 0:08:01 « Gunpowder **(S)**

58 A *iyɔ̀ àwu wa lòpia nɛ*
then A.cloth REL.A 1SG-put.on TP
So the cloth that I'm wearing,

59 ► *a-ɔ-nya pàtapàta siare gɔ mà*[*tã se* [*ǹgɔ̀ŋgbe*
2SG-PF-look IDPH.sticky big REL.ɔ attach be REL.ɔ-here
see how it it's *pàtapàta* in big patches sticking to my skin here

60	B		((nods))	[*mm*	[*mm*
				CONT	CONT
			((nods))	mm	mm
61	B	*mm*			
		CONT			
		mm			

Now let me clarify the argument. In the context of this telling, an explosion of gunpowder is treated as making relevant a demonstration of access by means of an ideophone (line 10), while ideophonic depictions of the experience of being on fire (line 47) and of having burnt clothes sticking to one's skin (line 59) are not so treated.[181] There may be a number of reasons why the recipient does not supply an ideophone in the latter two cases. I submit that one of them is the fact that in these cases, the recipient may want to avoid to do something that is hearable as intruding into epistemic territory that the speaker may defend as his own. In the Siwu corpus, there is not a single instance of a recipient echoing or supplying an ideophone in response to a speaker's ideophone depicting distinctively personal matters. Though recipients do not hesitate to display alignment in such cases (as B does in 60-61), there is not the concern to claim or demonstrate access using an ideophone that we see in many other cases. This pattern fits the well-known observation that participants "have primary rights to know and describe their own thoughts and experiences" (Heritage and Raymond 2005; Goffman 1983; see also Sacks 1984b; Kuroda 1973; Kamio 1994). What it tells us about recipients' use of ideophones is that recipients orient to the fact that ideophones are hearable as making claims of epistemic access.

Summarizing this section, what do recipients do with ideophones? They either (1) echo the speaker's ideophones as one way of *claiming* access, or (2) supply their own ideophones as a particularly powerful way of *demonstrating* access. Although basically affiliative, these claims and demonstrations can accomplish different goals on top of that. For example, in tellings that touch on domains of expertise in which issues of status and competence come into play, recipients seem concerned with displaying *independent access* by supplying their own ideophonic

[181] While the concern of this section is with recipients' use of ideophones, note how Extract 11.15 presents another clear example of a speaker's ideophone being treated by the recipient as inviting displays of affiliation.

depictions, whereas in communal narratives, recipients seem concerned with emphasizing *shared access* by echoing and even anticipating ideophonic climaxes. Throughout, the use of ideophones by recipients shows a sensitivity to what Heritage and Raymond (2005) call the "terms of agreement". Recipients freely use ideophones in tellings that involve common knowledge; they make sure to manage the independence of their access in tellings that touch on their own epistemic territories; and they avoid intruding on territories of knowledge and feeling that speakers may defend as their own.

11.8 Conclusions

We are now in a position to evaluate earlier proposals and sharpen our views about how to do things with ideophones. I started the chapter with a brief review of the most important previous proposals. For Doke, ideophones are a rhetorical vehicle belonging to emotional literature, poetry and stories; for Fortune and Kunene, they are the hallmark of a dramatic speech style; for Nuckolls and Lydall, they index conviviality and create involvement through sound-symbolic performance. Having seen ideophones at work in several episodes of everyday social interaction, we can see where these proposals are coming from and we can see some of their limitations.

Before going into the limitations, though, it is worth noting that there *is* in fact one type of context that fits these previous proposals quite well. This is the communally shared narrative of which we saw one example (Extract 11.12 on page 268).[182] There we see the ideophone in use as what one could call a rhetorical device; we see that it comes with a dramatic (emphatic, performatively foregrounded) speech style; we see what one might call "involvement", or more precisely, we see that when speakers organise the telling toward a climax, often using ideophones, recipients treat this as inviting displays of affiliation; and we see "people who are relaxed and at ease" in contexts "in which amicability and goodwill prevail" (Nuckolls 1996:13), or more precisely, we see speaker and recipient co-constructing structural high points and anticipating climactic moments by means of ideophones that can be seen to emphasise their shared access and stance. Not coincidentally, this context —the communally shared

[182] At least four further examples of basically the same pattern (co-telling at climactic points, recipients joining in with ideophones) are found in the corpus, all during the telling of known stories.

narrative— is precisely the one that has been the main focus of ideophone studies since Doke.

As soon as we move beyond known territory, things turn out to be more complex. *Pace* Doke, we saw several examples of ideophone use in situated interactions that have little to do with emotional verbal art. Besides, these uses cannot meaningfully be grouped under the label "rhetorical vehicle", as speakers and recipients may use ideophones in everyday social interaction to accomplish different goals. *Pace* Fortune and Kunene, ideophones are not intrinsically bound up with a certain dramatic narrative style; as we have seen, they occur in many different conversational contexts, including perfectly mundane everyday exchanges. *Pace* Nuckolls and Lydall, ideophones do not invariably "create involvement". In fact their use in non-communally shared tellings and turn-by-turn talk actually highlights their usefulness as devices to negotiate issues of epistemic inequality, something quite antagonistic to these authors' views, which depict ideophones basically as idyllic markers of an unproblematically shared perceptual world.

The findings in this chapter provide empirical support for some of the earlier proposals, but only in the limited domain of the communally shared narrative that has long been the staple of ideophone studies. Beyond that, we saw that speakers and recipients do a good deal more with ideophones than has been noted before. We were able to see this because the thrust of this chapter was not to discover some single universal function of ideophones à la Doke's "dramatic rhetorical vehicle". Rather, the conversation analytic approach taken here allows for the observation that indeed sometimes ideophones do become a rhetorical vehicle in the hands of a speaker, but the real question is when they do so, what it is about ideophones that affords this use, and what are their other uses. So the modus operandi has been to explore where ideophones, as one among many devices available to participants, turn up in the sequential structure of conversation, and what uses participants can be seen to make of them.

We started out looking at two mundane exchanges in which speakers could be seen to use ideophones as an appeal to personal experience. From there we went on to study the use of ideophones in tellings or multi-turn units in which speakers describe some event and display their stance. In these tellings, we saw several devices and sequential patterns at work that have been described in previous analyses of interactional data. For example, we know that in tellings, speakers have various techniques to provide increased access to the narrated events and

their stance toward them (Stivers 2008), and that such techniques include providing more detail by describing events at finer granularity (Schegloff 2000) and delivering talk in an emphatic speech style (Selting 1994). We know that providing increased access is treated by recipients as making relevant displays of alignment and affiliation (Stivers 2008; Jefferson 1978). We know that recipients may do work in second position to assert their epistemic access, authority, or independence (Pomerantz 1984; Heritage and Raymond 2005; Stivers 2005). What has become apparent from the Siwu data is that ideophones are a linguistic device in which these matters —emphatic speech style, fine granularity, displays of stance and demonstrations of epistemic access— often come bundled together.

Ideophones afford varied interactional uses. Tellers use ideophones to provide more specificity, sometimes in the pursuit of uptake, sometimes to stress their epistemic primacy, and recipients orient to these different interactional courses of action. Recipients in turn may also use ideophones, in certain contexts displaying a concern with *independent epistemic access* by supplying their own ideophonic depictions, in others displaying a concern with emphasizing *shared epistemic access* by echoing and even anticipating ideophonic climaxes. We may summarise this by saying that ideophones are the next best thing to having been there.[183] This is underlined by the fact that the use of ideophones by interactants shows a great sensitivity to issues of epistemic access and authority. For instance, recipients freely use ideophones in tellings that involve common knowledge; they make sure to manage the independence of their access in sequences that touch on their own epistemic territories; and they avoid intruding on territories of knowledge and feeling that speakers may defend as their own.

Throughout the chapter I pointed out how these uses build on several fundamental properties of ideophones that have been investigated elsewhere in this thesis: their depictive mode of representation, their high semantic specificity, and their tight links to sensory experience. The contributions of these features are not always easy to separate from each other, but here are some of the ways in which the work done by interactants builds on them: (1) The sensory imagery evoked by ideophones renders them an effective tool for underscoring personal experience and hence epistemic authority (as in the Bucket, Gunpowder and Sieve excerpts) or for sharing together in such experiences (as in the Eagle and 1981

[183] I owe this turn of phrase to Steve Levinson.

excerpts). (2) The combination of high specifity and sensory semantics makes them an effective device for recipients to claim and/or demonstrate understanding (as in the Gunpowder, Sieve and Eagle excerpts) while at the same time subtly negotiating issues of epistemic access and independence (as in the Gunpowder, Sieve and 1981 excerpts). (3) The high semantic specificity of ideophones makes them a useful device for speakers/tellers to provide increased granularity (as we see in the Gunpowder, Kɔdzo and Sieve excerpts, among others). (4) Their depictive mode of signification, bringing with it an emphatic speech style, makes them a useful device to pursue uptake (as in the Elephant and Kɔdzo excerpts). (5) The fact that ideophones may be appended paratactically to a syntactically complete clause makes them useful for expanding a turn in pursuit of uptake because it means that one can expand a turn with an ideophone without seeming to be redoing or repairing it (as in the Elephant excerpt).

Over a century ago, Henri Junod noted of ideophones that "many of them are truly incorporated in the language, understood by everyone, and their meaning and use should be investigated." Though the study of their meaning took off in earnest with the work of William Samarin and Gérard Diffloth around the 1970s, the study of their use has lagged behind. This chapter investigated the actual use of ideophones in a corpus of everyday talk-in-interaction. We saw that previous analyses are too restricted to be able to account for the data in some cases and too sweeping in others. This chapter presented a new perspective that incorporates the previous proposals but also offers the explanatory power to accommodate the new findings.

More data is needed, from Siwu as well as from other languages. There is no doubt that new data will reveal more interactional uses of ideophones and will allow a refinement of the findings of this chapter. Yet I believe that the approach followed here will remain relevant, grounded as it is on close analytic attention to situated talk-in-interaction and on a consideration of the properties of ideophones that underlie their interactional uses. Far from being mere "playthings" (Müller 1899) or "simply sounds used in conveying impressions" (Okpewho 1992), ideophones emerge as a vivid and versatile communicative device well repaying analytic attention.

12 Ideophones in unexpected places: greetings and funeral dirges

> There is beauty in communality, a sense of belonging, the security of never being alone, not even in death.
>
> Kofi Agawu (2006)

12.1 Introduction[184]

In the previous chapter we looked at how people do things with ideophones in everyday talk. While everyday interaction forms an important baseline of ideophone use, specific ways of speaking may show interesting specialised uses of ideophones. In this chapter I discuss two genres that are characterised by, among other things, relatively frequent use of ideophones.

I should clarify right away that the term "unexpected" in the title of this chapter will get less and less appropriate as we proceed. The argument will be that if we build on the observations from the previous chapter, the use of ideophones in these highly specialised, ritualised genres should not surprise us. What the title refers to is the received view about where to expect ideophones and where not to expect them. The focus on narrative in ideophone studies, in large part due to the fact that elicited stories have always been a major resource for field linguistics, has given rise to a number of common expectations about ideophones, for instance that they are most typical of an "informal language register" and that their function is "to dramatise a narration" (Kilian-Hatz 2001:156).

The two genres examined in this chapter go against these intuitions in their own ways. Greetings, for one, are not usually thought of as loci of dramatic performance, and insofar as ideophones are thought to perform that function, they are unexpected here. The issue with funeral dirges on the other hand is that they are clearly not part of an informal spoken register; instead, they belong to a formalised genre that seems antagonistic to the spontaneous, idiosyncratic use of

[184] This chapter is a substantially revised and extended version of Dingemanse (2009b).

ideophones that, we are told, is so typical of their use (Burbridge 1938; Moshi 1993).

This study is not the first to investigate the use of ideophones in special ways of speaking. Although the main focus of ideophone studies has always been on narrative contexts of use, there have been a number of important investigations of ideophones across different genres. A fine example is Philip Noss' sustained study of the verbal art of Gbaya, an Ubangi language of central Africa (e.g. 1975; 1989; 2001; 2003; 2005). Noss exemplifies ideophone use from three literary genres in Gbaya: traditional folk tales, contemporary written poetry and ideophone poems. He eloquently describes the multiple layers of meaning taken on by ideophones in these different contexts:

> In conclusion, the meaning of the Gbaya ideophone is found in the network of ideas and sounds from which the artist draws; the meaning is in the aesthetic tradition and its interpretation before the audience; it is in the artist's selection and placement of the ideophones in their poetic context; it is in the social and cultural setting that is the past and present world of the Gbaya; the meaning is in the vital and dynamic nature of the ideophones themselves. (2001:269)

In a similar fashion, studies of the use of ideophones in specific genres (e.g. Mphande (1992) on ideophones in African verse, Klassen (1999) on Shona *Ngano* performances, Mous (2000) on Iraqw riddles, Lydall (2000) on Hamar stories and ritual prayers and Anthony Webster (2008b; 2009) on Navaho written poetry, among others) bring to the fore the significance of what Janis Nuckolls, in a study of the poetics of ideophones, has called their *culturally situated performance styles* (Nuckolls 2006).

There is, however, in these studies a lack of baseline data. One feels that to appreciate the special functions of ideophones in such contexts, a necessary precursor would be a solid idea of their workings in everyday discourse, "the primordial site of language use in the natural world" (Goodwin and Heritage 1990:289). Many of the literary notions and analytic categories that have been employed in reference to techniques of verbal artistry and hence also to ideophones —notions like aesthetic involvement, enaction, evocation, foregrounding, multimodality— ultimately must derive from affordances of everyday social interaction. That is the baseline which, for ideophones in Siwu, I outlined in the preceding chapter. Grounding our investigation in the perspective

developed there, we will now proceed to take a closer look at the "unexpected" places.

12.2 Ideophones in greetings

Elaborate greeting exchanges are common in West-African societies, and the Mawu are no exception to this (Irvine 1974; Ameka 1991:385–8, 499–555; Ameka 2009; Agawu 1995:42–5). As Kofi Agawu notes, "[f]rom a very early age, Northern Ewe learn to greet one another. Different greeting formulas are used at different times of day to renew, consolidate, or sometimes initiate relationships" (Agawu 1995:42). Before going into the Siwu morning greeting that will be the focus of this section, let me spend a few words on what greetings are. In an important cross-cultural study of greeting exchanges, Duranti established a set of criteria for identifying speech exchanges as greetings. They are:

1. near-boundary occurrence;
2. establishment of a shared perceptual field;
3. adjacency pair format;
4. relative predictability of form and content;
5. implicit establishment of a spatio-temporal unit of interaction; and
6. identification of the interlocutor as a distinct being worth recognizing.

(Duranti 1997:67)

Most of the criteria are self-explanatory. Some are about the form and content of greeting exchanges: greetings come in a paired format (3) and their unfolding is relatively predictable (4). Some specify what we might call boundary conditions of occurrence: there has to be a shared perceptual field (2) and the interlocutor has to be recognised as a being worth greeting (6). Some refer to possible interactional functions: greeting exchanges occur near the boundaries of episodes of interaction, serve to set off such episodes (1, 5), and constitute a minimal proper conversation (Sacks 1975). The Siwu greeting exchanges that we will examine conform to these criteria.

There has long been a common notion that greetings are mainly "phatic"[185], that is, merely aimed at establishing or maintaining contact, and that they are highly predictable exchanges which may be so routinised as to have virtually no propositional content. Ample cross-cultural research has shown that this

[185] On phatic communion, see Malinowski (1936), Senft (2009).

conception of greetings is too limited, and that in many cultural contexts greetings take on additional functions such as information-getting (e.g. Ameka 1991:499–555; Duranti 1997 and references therein). This is also the case for Siwu, as we will see below. Duranti (1997) draws attention to the fact that many studies of greeting exchanges have focused on their social functions, sequential organisation, or illocutionary force, while considering the actual verbal content of only secondary importance (Ameka 1991:499–500). If the present discussion does the opposite by focusing on verbal content to the neglect of some of the other perspectives, it is only because this is not the place for a comprehensive account of greetings in Siwu, which would certainly require the drawing together of all of these strands of inquiry.

The Siwu greeting exchange consists of one or more adjacency pairs, the verbal content of which varies with the time of day and with the time elapsed since the last exchange. There are some conditions in which greeting is not done, for instance on the way to the latrine or if parties have already exchanged greetings for this part of the day. The minimally appropriate exchange consists of one adjacency pair. It is used in situations when circumstances or social relationships do not invite a longer and more contentful exchange. Anything less would amount to an insult; in line with Duranti's criterion 6 it would imply that the interlocutor is not a distinct being worthy of recognition. This discussion is confined to the morning greeting exchange, but there are similar routines for noon (midday) and afternoon (return from farm). Extract 12.1 gives the first (and minimal) adjacency pair of the morning greeting.

Extract 12.1 Minimal morning greeting [field notes 22-06-2008]

1	A	*lò-ya*	*ɔ̀*
		1SG-greet	2SG.OBJ
		I greet you!	
2	B	*a-rɛ*	*kpoo-o*
		2SG-sleep	IDPH.quiet-Q
		Did you sleep *kpoo* [peacefully]?	

The first turn of the sequence involves an utterance which literally states "I greet you". B's reply to this initial turn is a formulaic inquiry into the well-being of A. The pronominal elements in these turns will vary according to speaker and addressee number. For example, two people walking by a family in a compound

would greet them with *bò ya mì* "we greet you-PL", and the reply would be pluralised likewise: *mì rɛ kpoo?* "did you-PL sleep *kpoo* [peacefully]?".

The point of our present interest is that the response inquires about the previous night's sleep using the ideophone *kpoo*, evoking silence and stillness. This makes *kpoo* the most frequently heard ideophone in Siwu, at least during morning time. It is, however, highly routinised in this context. [186] This is shown for example in the fact that the polar question of which it is a part does not invite a direct answer; the exchange may either simply stop here, or, if it is expanded, this is along fairly predictable lines which never involve an explicit response to this question. This makes it difficult to answer the "why that here?" question that we have been asking of ideophones in the previous chapter. A look at an extended exchange will shed more light on the possible reasons of ideophones occurring in greetings.

Greeting exchanges, especially those in the morning, often extend beyond the minimal form given above. The exact form they take depends on a myriad of factors — social relationships, kinship ties, time since last encounter, social debts, the activity either participant is (going to be) involved in, et cetera. For people close to each other, it can include detailed inquiries into the wellbeing of other members of the household; for travellers returning home, it may fluidly transition into an exchange of the latest news. One extension that I have heard multiple times, though it is much less formulaic than the minimal form, is the one in Extract 12.2. It directly follows the one in Extract 12.1.

Extract 12.2 Expanded morning greeting [field notes 22-06-2008]

3 A *màturi-ɔ̀ rɛ-ɛ?*
people-INDEF sleep-Q
Did your people sleep well?

4 B *imɔ-ɔ̀ rɛ-ɛ?*
?3PL-INDEF sleep-Q
How about yours?

[186] As an ideophone, *kpoo* is used commonly beyond this greeting; it can be used to describe someone who is sitting still and timidly, it can be heard in calls for silence (*mìlo kpooo!* 'you.PL be silent *kpoo*!'), and it is featured in the proverb *àsi kpoo, ilo kpoo* "if you do nothing, nothing will get done."

5 A *a-sarɛ-ɛ?*
2SG-be.healthy-Q
Are you feeling good?
6 B *aĩ, lo-sarɛ ló!*
yes 1SG-be.healthy FP.ADV
Yes, I'm good indeed!
7 A *kpokporokpoo?*
IDPH.hard.EM1-Q
Kpokporo-kpo [going strong]?
8 B *kpokporokpo alɛ ìta!*
IDPH.hard-EM1 like stone
kpokporo-kpo like a stone!

In this extended sequence, there is first a further general inquiry into the well-being of the household (3-4), and then two pairs of turns aimed at the addressee personally (5-6 and 7-8). Structurally, the sequence is built as a series of polar questions and responses. In this series, there is a clear ordering from the general and formulaic to the increasingly personal, culminating in the ideophonic question and response pair in line 7-8. The image conveyed by the ideophone *kpokporo* in this context is one of bodily hardness ('going strong' or 'being in glowing health'), a positively valuated state which is in opposition to bodily weakness, for which there are also several ideophones (e.g. *gbìɔ̀ɔ̀* 'weak', *ɣɛkpɛtɛɛ* 'fragile').

A polar question "advances a hypothesis for confirmation" (Bolinger 1957:104; as cited in Heritage and Raymond in press). The hypotheses advanced in this sequence (lines 3, 5, 7) are increasingly specific. Our focus is on the last of the question-answer pair, the first part of which simply consists of an ideophone and a question marker (marked by lengthening and intonation). Loading a polar question with an ideophone in this way is somewhat akin to the high-risk, high-payoff interactional technique we saw in the previous chapter, where a recipient supplies his own ideophonic rendering of a scene to demonstrate (rather than merely claim) access. What is similar in each case is the strong appeal to epistemic access implied by the ideophone.

The general principle can readily be illustrated with an example from English. The very general "Are you okay?" in a greeting exchange does not embody a very strong presumption about the state of the speaker (though as a polar question it already intrudes more on the territory of the recipient than the open and highly

formulaic "How are you"). Now imagine a speaker asking "Do you feel vigorous?" in a greeting exchange. This is a much stronger presumption, reaching further into the epistemic territory of the recipient, and this makes it a stronger appeal to epistemic access. *Kpokporokpo* could be likened to "vigorous", though arguably its depictive mode of representation makes it even more specific. In this intrusion on the epistemic territory of the addressee lies a risk, but the possible payoff is high — for if a positive response follows, both participants will have built agreement over a very specific and personal epistemic territory.

The positive answer does indeed follow, and it follows in the form of a repetition with an expansion. Responses involving repetition are quite common in the context of extended greeting sequences (see for instance lines 5-6 above). Writing about repetition in responses to polar questions in general, Heritage and Raymond note that this "asserts the respondent's epistemic and social entitlement to the matter being addressed and does so by 'confirming' rather than affirming the proposition raised by the questioner, thereby claiming more epistemic rights over the information required than the original yes/no question conceded." (Heritage and Raymond in press). In greeting exchanges this is of course entirely expected: the speaker is asking the recipient about their personal state, ready to accept the recipient's claim of primary epistemic rights over this matter.[187] Thus, in the extended greeting sequence culminating in the ideophonic polar question and response, the participants co-construct a very strong form of agreement. Whereas Heritage & Raymond (2005:36) have shown that in deploying assessments, persons often "work to establish the independence of their access to evaluated states of affairs as a basis of agreement" , in these extended greeting sequences it appears that the interactional work moves towards establishing *shared access* rather than independent access.

Thus in a greeting sequence which starts out as phatic and routinised, increasingly specific questions help build a strong sense of interpersonal engagement. Ideophones naturally fit into this strategy as they evoke highly specific meanings and are regularly used in conversational contexts where participants display a concern with shared access. Indeed my consultant Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo, reflecting on what speakers might be trying to do in a turn like line 7 in

[187] That the speaker indeed is ready to accept the recipient's claim of primary epistemic rights shows in the fact that one rarely if ever hears a greeting sequence featuring what Pomerantz calls "Type 1 knowables" (see §11.3.2) in which the speaker subsequently takes issue with the participant's response.

Extract 12.2, commented that "they *really* want to know how you are" — the implicit presumption being that this is not necessarily the case in a minimal greeting sequence (cf. Sacks 1975 on the lack of interest in an accurate answer in common American English greetings like "how are you?").

We find an interesting piece of serendipitous evidence for the special function of ideophones in greetings in an obituary note in a funeral memorial booklet:[188]

> In Akpafu language[189] there is a word which is used to describe an individual's state of health. The word is "Krukrukru". Mama Dzua always greeted close, extended family members as well as all people in the community "Krukrukru" with a big, broad smile on her face. She was not used to greeting our children in the general way "How are the children?" but by their names "How is Eli? How is Mawuli? How is Awo Ya? Etc. etc. (Wurapa family 2007:4)

This biographical anecdote makes a distinction between the "general way" of greeting and a more personally engaged approach. Both the mentioning of individual children and the use of the ideophone *krukrukru* are given as examples of the latter, more engaged style; and crucially, both techniques presume a degree of incursion into personal epistemic territories that exceeds what is called "the general way".

The use of ideophones in greetings, then, is unexpected only at first sight. More precisely, it is unexpected only under the traditional view of the ideophones as mere narrative embellishments, and of greetings as mere phatic routines. What we see here is that the use of ideophones in greeting exchanges is a natural extension of their interactional use in everyday discourse, and that use especially that emphasises and builds shared experiential access. Diachronically speaking, this may even extend to the minimal greeting sequence which, it will be recalled, always features the ideophone *kpoo*. Even if *kpoo* may have lost some of its expressivity in that formulaic context, the fact that it was recruited there in the first place points not just to the importance of phatic communion, but to a true sense of interpersonal engagement in Siwu greetings.

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[188] Funeral services in Ghana are usually accompanied by a memorial booklet containing the order of service as well as biographical notes and personal statements by close family members of the deceased. Such booklets are nearly always in English, though I know that in this case the text was written by a native speaker of Siwu (Akpafu). Mama Dzua was a member of the Wurapa family that provided me with a home in Akpafu-Mempeasem; her passing away and the funeral preceded my coming to Kawu.

[189] Recall that "Akpafu language" is the exonym for Siwu.

12.3 Funeral dirges

Funeral dirges (*sìnɔ* in Siwu) are a special genre of verbal-musical art performed during the period of public mourning preceding a burial. The musical structures of these dirges and their place in the larger context of the funeral have been described in considerable detail in a series of studies by Kofi Agawu (1988b; 1989; 1990). Agawu's rich analyses provide a good example of what Steven Feld has pointed out in relation to lament forms in the South Pacific:

> I would argue that lament forms (…) can profitably be approached first as very thick texts indeed, texts whose form, function, and meaning can be apprehended by confronting the intersection of musical, verbal, folkloric, literary, psychological, gender-related, and sociological constructs. (Feld 1999:263)

The indigenous term for Siwu dirges is *sìkubiɛnɔ*, a compound of *sìnɔ* 'dirge' and *biɛ kàku* 'mourn'. The broader framework in which the dirges take their place is comprised of the rites that accompany a death, described as *makɔ-ǜ makola* {3PL-take-3SG.OBJ 3PL-hide} "taking and hiding him/her" (Agawu 1988b). For these rites two broad models exist, a Christian and a non-Christian one. The former is the most common nowadays, and Christian hymns form the main type of music figuring in it, since the singing of traditional dirges is discouraged by the church. The non-Christian model features more dirges at its different stages, but such funerals are increasingly rare, as the great majority of Mawu people now adhere to some form of Christianity. The main context in which the dirges used to be sung was the funeral vigil during the night preceding the actual burial. Some dirges are specific to certain times or events (for example, in the middle of the night or at dawn); others may be sung freely.

The first mention of the dirges dates back a century, to a missionary report about the funeral practices of the Mawu (Kruse 1911). The missionary Friedrich Kruse, stationed in the mountain village of Akpafu-Todzi, noted that "[t]he singing is in general very monotone; it is performed by cantors and choirs. The cantors step forward and speak with the deceased in a singing, lamenting tone and relate the latest moments of the deceased to those present. Greetings and prayers are passed on to earlier deceased." (1911:191)[190]

[190] Original German: "Der Gesang ist im allgemeinen sehr eintönig; er wird von Vorsängern und Chören ausgeführt. Die Vorsänger treten vor und sprechen mit der Toten in einem singenden, klagenden Ton

What are these dirges about? This is covered well by Agawu, so it seems best to quote him at some length:[191]

> The main philosophic thrust of the dirge is making sense of death through reflection, through extrapolation from the material world in which we live, and through speculation about the spiritual world towards which we move daily. Actual references embrace the entire gamut of existence including humans (children [usually children of the deceased]), nonhumans (plants, rivers, domestic and nondomestic animals), and spirits (ancestors, lesser gods, and the Supreme God). Questions are often used to frame those profound experiences that mortal man is unable to explain. Thus the inevitability and seriousness of death are captured in the rhetorical question, "Who will not be bathed by the death sponge?" ("Nna lei ya pie kukpi sapō?"). The chilling, descriptive, "death sponge," conflates the dual images of a daily practice and the unique activity of physically washing the corpse. (…)
> Among the metaphors most frequently used in the Akpafu dirges are those associated with travel, the transfer growing out of a literal reading of death as passage from this world to the next. The deceased is asked to extend our greetings to the people in the other world: "When you get there we greet them" ("Si awo bo yama"). This is also the phrase used in everyday language to take leave of someone embarking on a journey. Or, "The river is very full; let them place the raft on it and come" ("Owere ōōyi lēlēlē, masia kudē si maba"). Here the belief is that the other world is "beyond the river;" therefore going there entails crossing the river. Metaphors for death include disease (for which man has as yet not found a cure)—"There is a certain illness (whose) medicine does not yet exist" ("Ōnyē ō pia, kua ē kuna"—sleep ("He slept deeply") ("Ōrēsirē sōmōlōō"), and a fall ("Father slipped but did not stand") ("Tete 'tura ne wuíya"), this last mirroring aspects of Akpafu physical geography, complete with streams, rivers, and rocks. (Agawu 1988b:85–6)

The total number of dirges is unknown, though it is certainly declining. In the late 1980s, Agawu recorded a total of 58 dirges in four Mawu villages, noting that "[t]here is a vast repertoire of songs that accompanies [funeral rites]. A

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und erzählen dabei den Anwesenden die letzten Beschäftigungen und Erlebnisse der Toten. Es werden auch Grüße und Bitten an früher Verstorbene mitgegeben."

[191] Agawu uses an improvised orthography, as a Siwu orthography did not exist in 1988. The Siwu phrases in this quotation can be rendered in the modern orthography as follows: *Ǹna lei-à-pie kùkpi sapɔ?* {who DEP-NEG-FUT-bathe death sponge}; *Ɔ̀were ɔ-ɔ̀-yi lɛlɛɛlɛ, màsia kuɖɛ si màba* {river ɔ.S-PF-fill IDPH.to.the.brim, 3PL-put raft/bridge if 3PL-come}; *Ɔ̀nyɛ̃-ɔ̀ pia, kuwa ɛ kuna* {illness-INDEF exist, KU-medicine ? KU.S-lack}; *Ɔrɛ sirɛ sɔmɔlɔɔ* {3SG-sleep sleep IDPH.deep}, and *Tete (ɔ)-tura ne ũi-ya* {Father (scr)-slip 3sg/neg-stand}.

conservative estimate would be about three hundred" (Agawu 1989:23). In the period 2007-2009 I recorded about 50 dirges. A quick sampling suggests that less than half of the dirges in these collections overlap (with interesting variations in the overlapping portions), so that the current documentation would cover less than a third of what once was there.

Siwu *sìnɔ* are an endangered genre. Already in 1988 Agawu wrote that "since the older women who know the dirges and have sung them since they were young are not passing their skills on to younger ones, the dirge may well be on its last legs" (1988b:100). Two decades later, the situation is more grim. Two main factors are contributing to the decline of the dirges in Kawu: first of all the fact that many churches continue to discourage their use, preferring edifying hymns and gospel songs instead; and secondly, the coming of electricity to the villages in the mid nineties, which has led to a veritable arms race in sound systems for playing loud gospel music during wakes. Vocally performed dirges are no match for this.

Let us move on to a discussion of the linguistic aspects of the dirges. Here too, Agawu has done important pioneering work (e.g. 1988b:86–90; 1990), especially on the interaction of melodic and prosodic resources. My discussion will focus on grammatical and semantic aspects. First, an example. The dirge below was recorded in August 2007 in Mempeasem.

Dirge 1 (*Mɛ̀ sɔ màturi pia mɛ̀* ~ I thought I had company)[192] **(S)**[193]

SOLO/ALL	*mɛ̀ sɔ màturi pia mɛ̀*	I thought I had company
	sêgbe kàku kaɖè	not knowing it meant mourning
	sêgbe nnɔmɛ miɖè	not knowing it meant tears
	sêgbe ìsoma iɖè	not knowing it meant sadness
	sêgbe àsekpe aɖè	not knowing it meant graves

The Siwu verse is beautifully economic in expression. It contains only two verbs: *pia* 'be (with)' and *ɖe* 'be (existential)' (the *sɔ* that is translated as 'thought' is the quotative here expressing a thought of the singer). An English translation

[192] The labels SOLO/ALL/CHORUS provide some information on the way the dirge is sung. Dirges are performed in a call-response structure. In some cases a solo singer and the chorus alternate in performing the full song — this is such a case. In other cases, the text of solo and chorus differ. *Mîlo kananaa* (Dirge 2 below) is an example of that. More details can be found in Agawu (esp. 1988b:86ff.).

[193] Recall that all materials marked with (S) can be inspected in the online supplementary materials.

cannot do without marking tense, but in Siwu, the poem does not contain any tense or aspect markers, being set in an aorist-like default that can be interpreted as recent past or present. In performance, the final vowel of the first utterance is pronounced [e:] instead of [ɛ]; the effect is an end rhyme with the final copula *ɖe* of all the other lines.

Contributing to the terse feel of the dirge is the focus construction which emphasises the content words in the last four Siwu lines ('mourning it is; tears it is; sadness it is; graves it is'). Also note that the content words belong to four different grammatical genders in Siwu, a fact reinforced by the agreement morphology on the 'be'-verb: the first is a "thing" noun in KA, the second a liquid/mass noun in MI, the third a nominalised verbal construction (< *ma so* 'hold self') in I, and the fourth a plural inanimate noun in A.[194] Although it is difficult to say whether this pattern is as striking to native speakers as it is to the analyst, one could think of it as a case of "subliminal verbal patterning in poetry" (Jakobson 1980). By fronting the content words and by presenting all four of them in the exact same frame, the dirge invites performers and audience alike to meditate on the inevitable consequences of being surrounded by mortality. We may think we are lucky to have company, but in the end it turns out to be mourning, tears, sadness, graves.

The enumeration of closely related tropes ("parallelism") is a common technique in verbal art around the world (Fox 1991; Mannheim 1998; Bright 1990; Sherzer 2002) and it is also common in the funeral dirges of the Mawu. Some examples of semantically parallel words commonly used in Siwu *sìnɔ* are:

(140)	*katu / ɔ̀wore*	waterplace / river
	ɔ̀rɛ̃rɛ̃ / ɔ̀pròpròi	man / young man
	ɔnyiì / ɔtalɛpò / ɔ̀rɔ̃gó bielè	mother / nursing woman / true woman
	wo / sɛ̀	reach / go
	si / sia / pia	sit / be on / be in
	ìyosate / ɔ̀turisate	owner of the house / important person
	ìwo / sìse	pit / grave mound
	kanana / ɖĩɖĩɖĩ	silent / tranquil
	mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃ / nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃	tasty / intensely sweet

[194] See §5.3.6 (page 109) for grammatical background on the noun class system.

Parallelism is not always binary. For instance, a dirge called "Morning has broken, but she is still asleep" (*Kàɖe ɔsɛ̃ ne ɔ̀rɛ sìrɛ*) features a triple parallel between *ɔ̀nyìì* 'mother', *ɔtalɛpɔ̀* 'nursing woman' and *ɔ̀rɔ̃gó bielè* 'true woman'. Similarly, in *Mìlɔmìɔ̀sɔ kàbɔ̀ba* ("Keep on going, we will follow") there is a four-way parallel involving elder siblings, brothers, younger siblings and siblings. This is where parallelism marges into the poetic device of listing.

More interesting perhaps is the fact that parallelism is not always lexical. For instance, one of the dirges in the corpus features an alternation of grammatical morphemes: the normal negative *–i-* and the habitual negative *–si-*. In *Mìlo kananaa* below (Dirge 2), the lead singer varies between the imperative *mì-lo kanana* ('you-PL be still') and the future/potential *mì-a-lo kanana*, which gives it a subjunctive reading ('(that) you-PL be still'). In another dirge, the lead singer alternates two pronunciations of *si* 'if': *si* and *dze*, the latter being a more archaic form. The fact that the lead singer may introduce these variants on the fly testifies to the role of creativity in this art form and points to possible ways in which the dirges may have evolved over the years.

A final striking characteristic of the linguistic form of the dirges is that a sizable number of them prominently feature one or more ideophones. To this we now turn.

12.4 Ideophones in funeral dirges

About a quarter of the dirges recorded in 2007-2009 (12 out of 54) feature one or more ideophones.[195] Consider the dirge below, titled *Mìlo kananaa* "Be still *kananaa*" (Dirge 2). The dirge, giving voice to the realisation that death strikes everyone —childless women just as well as nursing mothers— revolves around the ideophone *kananaa*, evoking a tranquil silence. Like all of the dirges, it is sung in a call-response structure. The first line is sung solo and its core is repeated by the chorus; this is repeated, followed by the stanza. Text, melody and performance work together to create a compelling work of art.

Mìlo kananaa features parallelisms within and across lines. Within lines, the powerful contrast between *ɔlɛmã̀* 'barren woman' and *ɔtalɛpo* 'nursing mother' is used to silence all — one's status in life is of no relevance whatsoever to death.

[195] Kofi Agawu has since sent me the full collection of 58 funeral dirges recorded in 1986; he notes that these too are 'rich in ideophones' (p.c. August 2009).

Across lines, grave (*ìwo*, literally 'pit') and grave-mound (*sìse*, literally 'clay heap') are parallels that help establish poetic balance.

Dirge 2 (*Mìlo kananaa* ~ Be still) **(S)**

SOLO	*mìlo* ***kanana*** *si mìsɛ i mi ayo*	} REPEAT
CHORUS	*mìlo* ***kananaa***	
CHORUS	*ɔlɛmã̀ ìwo, ɔtalɛpo ìwo, mìloo*	
	ɔlɛmã̀ sìse, ɔtalɛpo sìse	
	mìlo ***kanana*** *si mìsɛ i mi ayo*	

Be still *kanana* and stay in your houses
be still *kananaa*
(see) the barren woman's grave, the nursing mother's grave, be still
(see) the barren woman's mound, the nursing mother's mound
be still *kanana* and stay in your houses.

Our special interest is of course in the ideophone. *Kananaa* is a very common ideophone, often heard in requests for silence or to refer to the absence of bustling life in the town on a morning when everyone is gone to farm. The dirge revolves around this ideophonic depiction of silence, returning to it time and again. One would have to be very reductionistically inclined to note that technically it may not provide much new information (the verb *lo* 'be silent' being in principle enough to express the event). The bland notion of "information" is of course wholly beside the point if we try to think about the function that lament forms such as these may have. More to the point would be something like Radcliffe-Brown's suggestion of the function of ritual wailing among the Andaman islanders: "to affirm the existence of a social bond between two or more persons" (Radcliffe-Brown 1964:240; as cited in Urban 1988:385). If we think back to one of the things we saw ideophones do in everyday settings —emphasising shared access to experiences— we can already discern a possible reason for ideophones being featured so prominently in this genre.

The next example allows us to explore some more structural matters. This dirge also centers around the ideophone *kananaa* 'silent'. It describes the mourners going out to the farm (or the waterplace) and returning only to find the house wholly empty and silent *kananaa*.

Dirge 3 (*Ilo kananaa* ~ It is still *kananaa*) **(S)**

SOLO	*Ìlo* ***kananaa***
	lòkpa sia lóbà nɛ ilo ***kananaa***
	lòkpa katu lóbà nɛ ilo ***kananaa-nana****-oo*
CHORUS	*lòkpa sia lóbà nɛ iyo* ***kananaa****{-****nana****}*
	lòkpa kere lóbà nɛ iyo ***kananaa-nana***
	lòkpa kere lóbà nɛ iyo ***kananaa-nana***
	lòkpa kere lóbà nɛ iyo ***kananaa-nana***
	ìyo ***dĩdĩdĩ***

It's still *kananaa.*
I went to the farm and came back, now it's *kananaa* [still]
I went to the waterplace and came back, now the house is *kananaa* [still]
[Chorus repeats this line with subtle variations, described below]
The house is *dĩdĩdĩ* [dead silent].

This dirge reflects on how death cruelly and unexpectedly invades everyday life. You leave the house for a mundane activity like farming or fetching water, and when you return, you find it dead silent *dĩdĩdĩ* — one of your loved ones has died.

Note first the parallelism of *sia* 'farm' and *kàtu* 'waterplace', both places at moderate distance from the house bound up with everyday activities. Note, next, a parallelism in sound in *ìlo kananaa* and *ìyo kananaa*. These phrases are not grammatically equivalent; the first is a predicate "it is silent *kananaa*" (I.S-be.still IDPH) while the second is a noun phrase which could be translated either as "the house is *kananaa*" or "the *kananaa* house".[196] Further, there is a subtle slippage from the first singer's "it's quiet", where "it" could be anything (the I-class subject cross reference marker commonly being used as a default inanimate pronoun) to the later "*kananaa* house"; a slippage which is supported by the fact that *ìyo* could also be coreferential with the subject crossreference marker *i-*. These features make the lines cohere, and one cannot help but admire yet again the tight feel of this genre of verbal art.

[196] As discussed in §5.5, when ideophones modify nouns they usually bear an adjectival marker *–à*. Since *kananaa* ends in the same vowel and the melody obscures the underlying tone pattern, this marker may or may not be present here.

In this dirge, the ideophone *kananaa* 'silent' turns up in every line except the conclusion, which brings matters to a close with a resounding silence evoked by the archaic form *dĩdĩdĩ*. What is interesting structurally about the uses of *kananaa* is that there is a certain degree of freedom which is bounded at the same time by the musical and rhythmical structure of the dirge. In this dirge, it comes either in its canonical form *kananaa* or in a form with two shortened copies of its final syllable *kananaa-nana*. The integration of ideophone and rhythm is such that the base form *kananaa* is not pronounced as ♪♪♩ but rather as a triplet within a basically duple meter[197] (such triple effects are common in the dirges, Agawu 1988b:86n7). For the lengthened form, the last two syllables follow at a slower pace, dividing the beat in two.

Agawu (1988b) has described better than I could how musical and prosodic factors like speech rhythm, tone and intonation interplay in the dirges, so I will not attempt an account of that here. But this case is interesting in that it marks a difference between ideophones and ordinary words. In contrast to ideophones, ordinary words are never reduplicated or repeated to fill the meter in these dirges: one never finds forms like *ìyoyoyo* or *ɔtalɛpopopopo* (built on the template of 'house' and 'nursing mother' respectively).[198]

It will be recalled that in spontaneous speech, too, ideophones have much more freedom than other words (the details are in §6.4). For instance, we saw *kananaa* pronounced as *kanana.nanana* (IDPH.EM3) in one conversation and as *kanana.nanananana* (IDPH.EM5) in another. This freedom makes ideophones perfectly fit for fulfilling a role that is normally taken care of by fillers or 'vocables' — meaningless syllables that fill the meter, serving as structurally

[197] Duple meter is a musical meter that divides the bar into two beats.

[198] One does find lengthening even of ordinary words; for instance *ìyo* may be considerably longer in a song than in normal speech, especially at the end of a line. It is useful to reflect on this asymmetry. We can note first that reduplication is probably semiotically more conspicuous than lengthening. Reduplication, i.e. *redoing* part or whole of a word, is an actual operation on the segmental material, and therefore may be taken (by the listener) to be a more rigorous operation on meaning than simply drawing out a syllable. In ordinary (descriptive) speech, operations on segmental material such as reduplication tend to be morphosyntactic processes with specific meanings (for instance the pluractional reduplication in verbs, §5.3.10); this may be why it is avoided in song. In depictive speech, on the other hand, modification of the material has more gradient and depictive meanings (see §6.4 on expressive morphology), which is probably why ideophones, but not ordinary words, more easily undergo this metre-fulfilling reduplication.

versatile material in songs. But ideophones are not meaningless fillers of course; they are poetically potent words that enrich the content of the dirges. A last thing to note is that the freedom of ideophones is bounded by the metrical and melodic constraints of the song structure. So the genre of the dirge places constraints on ideophones, but it does not eradicate them.

Ideophones also play a central role in the dirge *Kàsò kàla gbìgbìùgbì* "The earth is trembling." The imagery is that of death as a passage from one world to the next (they have arrived, i.e. in the next world).[199] The loss of a dear one is pictured literally as a 'hard hit', leaving the earth physically trembling and the nearest relatives emotionally drained.

Dirge 4 (*Kàsò kàla gbìgbìùgbì* ~ The earth is trembling *gbìgbìùgbì*) **(S)**

CALL/ALL *kàsò kàla* ***gbigbìùgbì***
ɔrò marò ɔ̀bo eee
maɔrò ɔ̀bo eee
kàla ***gbigbìùgbì***
maɔrò ɔ̀bo aaa
kùkpi-sɛri sià ɔ̀kpeseri ɔɔ̀naà
be bo bà kàyi ga ***dzɔ̀lɔ̀lɔ̀*** *boaɖi boɖe?*

The earth keeps on trembling *gbìgbìùgbì*
Arriving, they are arriving
Now they have arrived.
It keeps trembling *gbìgbìùgbì*
Now they have arrived.
There's a way there, but no way back
what have we come for in this *dzɔ̀lɔ̀lɔ̀* [tedious] world, what will we gain?

The song ends on a sad note. There is a way going there, but no way back. If it all just leads to this, what have we come for in this world? Here we see illustrated Agawu's observation that "[q]uestions are often used to frame those profound experiences that mortal man is unable to explain" (1988b:85). The profound experiences and powerful emotions voiced by this dirge are evoked by ideophones:

[199] Note that this is not a travel to some distant other world; it is rather conceived as a transition into the spiritual realm which always surrounds us. This spiritual realm is populated with ancestors and spiritual beings.

gbìgbììgbì evokes the trembling of a great object and *dzɔ̀lɔ̀lɔ̀* 'tediously long' evokes feelings of depression and fatigue.

Now what can we make of the common use of ideophones in these dirges? I referred above to Steven Feld's statement that "lament forms (…) [are] very thick texts indeed" (Feld 1999:263). One methodological conundrum of analysing such thick texts is that we loose the analytical lever that we could use so profitably to analyse everyday interaction: the interactants' next turns, which usually reveal an interpretation of prior turns. No such information is available here, so our analysis will have to rely on somehow getting a handle on the very complex constellation of factors enumerated by Feld. But where to start? I can see two main points of entry. The first is the richly evocative semantics of ideophones, which makes them well-equipped to be used in genres of verbal art such as funeral dirges. The second is what I called before the baseline of ideophone use established in the previous chapter. Let me start with the first.

In Part III we saw the rich perceptual meanings of ideophones. Coupled with their depictive mode of representation, there is an obvious poetic quality to them (Nuckolls 2006; Webster 2007; Dingemanse 2011b). Indeed this is what many authors have noted before, for instance Evans-Pritchard:

> If one had to sum up their character in a short phrase one might say that they are poetry in ordinary language; and one feels that no other sounds would serve the purpose equally well of evoking sensations which compose the meaning, just as one cannot think that any possible line could be substituted for, shall we say, "For ever piping songs for ever new." (Evans-Pritchard 1962:145)

Ideophones are poetically potent for several reasons. Their structural markedness draws attention to them as speech heard in a special way, a feature which, as the Prague school has shown, is central to the poetic use of linguistic material (e.g. Jakobson 1960; Havránek 1964). In a previous chapter (chapter 7), we saw that ideophones are foregrounded moments of performance, and that this opens up the way for iconic mappings between sound and sense.

Ideophones present rich imagery in a highly condensed form, reminding one of Sapir's description of single Algonkin words as "tiny imagist poems" (Sapir 1921:244).[200] The imagery ideophones evoke is multisensory at core. In terms of

[200] Compare also the dictum "Dichten = condensare" of Modernist poet and literary scholar Ezra Pound (1934:36).

Friedrich's "polytropy" framework of poetic analysis, this makes ideophones effective image tropes (Friedrich 1991; Nuckolls 2006:41–3). Fortune summarises it well when he notes, "There is a roundness, a complete shape, not so vividly conveyed by more complex constructions, more formal expressions. [...] Always they try to capture the freshness of an event and express it of themselves with nothing to dull or cloud the evocation." (Fortune 1962:6). All of these factors conspire to make ideophones an effective aesthetic device in the funeral dirge.

I mentioned above a second point of entry into analysing ideophone use in the dirges: social interactional practices. Now, given the dire status of the dirges in Mawu society —Christian hymns having all but replaced the dirges during funeral rites, and young women no longer learning them— it would be somewhat surprising if we could find a real conversational example. As it happens, however, there is an episode in the Siwu corpus of everyday conversation that shows the social interactional significance of the *sìnɔ* genre. I turn to this episode not just because it sheds light on the topic at hand, but also because it contributes to a more empirically grounded understanding of the social interactional functions of dirges — an issue that has rarely been addressed in the broader literature on ritual mourning (Urban 1988; Feld 1999; Agawu 1988b).

12.5 An excursion to conversational interaction

From the heights of verbal artistry we return for a moment to the *bricolage* that is naturally occurring talk. The setting is a compound where two women are talking, a third working in the background and occasionally making herself heard. The topic (as in Extract 11.6 on p. 268) is the death of a close family member of D.

Extract 12.3 Kananaa « 0:12:36 « Palm oil_4 **(S)**

1 C *ǹto lòɣere mà*
1SG-PROG 1SG-tell 3PL.OBJ
So I'm telling them
2 (0.7)
3 *mɛ̀ sɔ kuwɛ̃-kùwɛ̃ i-ɣè ɔ̀nyɛ̃ gɔ ɔànyɛ̃*
1SG.IND QT no.one-REDUP NEG-know illness REL.Ɔ 3SG-FUT-be.sick
I'm saying, no one knew that he was sick
4 *fiɛ ɔ̃̀kpi lo*
before 3SG.TP-die FP.ADV
before he died!

5 (0.5)

6[201] D [*oo ma kagbàmìkù ɔ̀lo ní!*
INTJ 3PL.POSS neighbourhood SCR-PF-be.still FP.URG
Oh their neighbourhood has become still!

7 C [*kuwɛ̃-kuwɛ̃ i-ɣè ɔ̀nyɛ̃ gɔ ɔ̀ànyɛ̃ fiɛ ɔ̃̀kpi*
no.one-REDUP NEG-know illness REL.Ɔ 3SG-FUT-be.sick before 3SG.TP-die
No one knew he was sick before he died!

8 ► D ♫ *ìɔ̀lo:, ìɔ̀lo kananaa:* ♫
it-PF-be.still it-PF-be.still IDPH.still
♫ It's become still, it's become still *kananaa* ♫

9 C *[nɔmɛ aɔnya gɔ́ kagbàmìkù ɔɔ̀-lo*
today 2SG-PF-see how neighbourhood SCR-PF-still
Today you have seen how the neighbourhood's become still.

10 D =*m-hm* ((nods))
m-hm
=m-hm ((nods))

11 ► C *à-ɔ̀-nya gɔ́ ǹto lòfe [mmɔ ìɔlo kananaa*
2SG-PF-see how 1SG-PROG 1SG-pass there it-PF-be.still IDPH.still
You have seen how when I passed through it's become still *kananaa*
[12→

12 D [♫ *ìɔ̀lo:, ìɔlo:, kàgbàmìkù ɔɔlo:, ìɔlo:* ♫
it-PF-be.still it-PF-be.still neighbourhood SCR-PF-be.still it-PF-be.still
♫ It's become still, it's become still, the neighbourhood's still, it's become still... ♫

13 ♫ *kàgbàmìkù [ɔɔ̀lo* ♫
neighbourhood SCR-PF-be.still
The neighbourhood's become still

14 C *[fɔ ɔnyikòsò Rosà gɔngbe nɛ*
2SG.POSS mother.younger PSN REL.Ɔ-here TP
Now as for your younger mother Rosa here

[201] Line 6 and 7 start virtually the same instant (less than 10 milliseconds difference in onset). Their order in this transcript may well be considered arbitrary.

15 D -♫ *ka-ɔ̀-lo,* [*kàgbàmɨ̀kù kaɔlo* (*kàgbà-*) ♫
KA.S-PF-be.still neighbourhood KA.S-PF-be.still (neighb-)
-They've become still, the neighbourhood's become still, the neighb-
16 C [*àɖe- àɖera a-rɛ̃ Kɔdzo to ɔ̀ɖe ni*
foo- A.food A-much PSN PROG 3SG-eat FP.URG
F- And the amount of food Kɔdzo was eating!
17 (0.4)
18 D *sí Kɔ̀dzo ɔba ngbe gɔ to lòtã ũ àɖera.*
if PSN 3SG-come here how 1SG-give 3SG.OBJ food
When Kɔdzo came here, I used to give him food.
19 ((D launches into a personal telling about K))

I encourage the reader to listen to this excerpt in the online supplementary materials (http://thesis.ideophone.org/part-4/unexpected-places/), not only to untangle the overlapping turns and appreciate the quick-paced nature of the conversation (the extract takes less than 20 seconds), but because of a most striking feature: the rather special style that D shifts into at line 8. Marked by ♫, this style is most reminiscent of the melodies of funeral dirges; and so is the formal structure of D's turns. Its interest to the present discussion will be readily apparent — it offers us a rare peek into micro-level social interactional processes in relation to funeral dirges.

But let us start at the beginning. The extract follows a pause and a brief exchange between B (the woman working in the background) and someone else in the compound. D is sitting somewhat slumped on a bench, looking down at the ground. Then C resumes her telling, which picks up a topic that has transpired earlier: an account of her involvement in the events. C's "them" in line 1 appears to refer to people from the neighbourhood. The previous exchange, it will be recalled, construed these people as being responsible for Kɔdzo's demise on account of their inaction. C tells of her own involvement using a formulation that is very similar to the one she used when she first touched on this topic (compare line 3-4 of this excerpt to line 18-19 of Extract 11.6 on page 276). The formulation is hearable as a return to this previous talk. It appears designed as a way to ward off C's own potential culpability by holding the neighbourhood responsible.

After a brief silence, D responds to this with an exclamation about the neighbourhood: they have been silenced (line 6). Her turn too uses a formulation that is very similar to a previous turn (line 23-24 of Extract 11.7 on page 278). It

appears that both participants, by producing turns that are hearable as repetitions of material from an earlier sequence, agree to move towards revisiting territory that was touched on earlier. It may be recalled that when this matter arose earlier, it was in the form of an interruption by C of D's telling, an interruption that was treated as inappropriate by D and sequentially deleted (lines 17-21 of Extract 11.7). This time, the sequence proceeds without such trouble. Indeed revisiting it and seeing to its harmonious unfolding this time may well be a way of "setting right" the earlier trouble. D aligns with C: she gazes toward her and her exclamation is hearable as agreeing with the general project of blaming the neighbourhood.[202]

Meanwhile D has started recasting her exclamation in a style that is midway between speech and song: ♫ *iɔ̀lo:, iɔ̀lo kananaa* "it's become still, still *kananaa*". Her turn takes on numerous structural features of a phrase from a funeral dirge: a relatively slow diction, repetition, prolonged syllables and a characteristic melodic contour. It features the ideophone *kananaa*, which, it may be recalled, was used by her in the earlier exchange too. C joins in with a turn that is part summary and confirmation, part expansion of D's turn (line 9): "Today you have seen how the neighbourhood has become still". It appears that she is referring to something she and D experienced together earlier this day. Her turn displays social affiliation as it draws attention to this shared experience and confirms what D has been singing-saying. D follows up C's affiliative move with an agreement in turn, issuing an agreement token *m̀-hm* together with a pronounced nod (line 10). C elaborates by once again appealing to their shared experience, offering a little more detail ("you have seen how when I passed through it had become still *kananaa*"), while D resumes singing, repeating the words that now have been exchanged between them so often that in a way they might be thought of as a common good.

D continues for another while in the singing-speaking style, employing a process of melodic variation that Agawu has described as occurring commonly in the dirges (Agawu 1988b:94f.), and bringing the melody towards closure by descending gradually to a low pitch.[203] She then effortlessly launches into a

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[202] D's turn (line 6) happens to be in full overlap with a repeat by C (line 7) which may have been occasioned by the relatively long silence that followed C's prior (0.5 seconds). But this overlap is not treated as inappropriate by C, who affiliates with D's stance by confirming her assertion (line 9).

[203] Just like closure of a conversational sequence is often foreshadowed by structural cues (Schegloff and Sacks 1973), a melody can be hearable as moving towards closure. In this case, this is because the

personal telling about Kɔdzo (line 19), occasioned by two turns by C. Indeed, one of the striking things about D's sung utterances is the fact that they are so well integrated into the sequence as a whole. D slips into the style as easily as she gets out again; there are no clear boundaries or changes of body position that might indicate a shift in genre, and C treats D's singing not as an interruption of the sequence but as doing agreement and affiliation (and inviting the same in return).

Extract 12.4 D's lament (lines 8-15 from Extract 12.3 above)

iɔ̀loo, iɔ̀lo kananaa
iɔ̀loo, iɔ̀loo, kàgbàmìkù ɔɔ̀loo, iɔ̀loo
kàgbàmìkù ɔɔ̀loo, ka-ɔ̀-loo, kàgbàmìkù ɔɔ̀loo, kàgbàmì-...

It's become still, still *kananaa*
Still, still, the neighbourhood is still, still
The neighbourhood is still, it is still, the neighbourhood is still, the neighb-...

What can we learn from this lapse into *sìnɔ* (dirge) style midway in an affiliative sequence? The case itself would warrant a separate study as it raises fundamental issues like the boundaries of speech and song, composition in performance and intertextuality (e.g. Feld 1999:241ff. and references therein), but this is not the place for that. On purely local considerations, the lapse into dirge style is treated by C as an appropriate move towards the co-constructed goal of holding the neighbourhood responsible. The mutual expressions of affiliation and agreement (lines 9, 10, 11) interspersed with the sung parts function to emphasise the sharedness of their experiences in this regard. Indeed, the overall sequence has the participants C and D in overwhelming agreement, sharing access and mirroring each other's stance. Their "doing the same thing" may well be understood as "a way of conveying solidarity, mutual involvement, understanding, and agreement" (Brown and Levinson 1987:112–113; cf. Brown 1998), and D's lapse into *sìnɔ* style is treated as entirely fitting in this context.

Now let us return to the funeral dirges proper to see how this excursion may shed light on the use of ideophones in them. In the context of Mawu funeral rites, the dirges are crucial in containing, orienting, and canalizing the feelings of loss and pathos surrounding death (Agawu 1988b). Ideophones, with their evocative

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melody uses the the archetypal descent which has been noted in many writings on (West) African melody (Agawu 1988b:89 and references therein).

semantics and strong ties to direct experience, are perfectly fit to help evoke these powerful feelings. But the point is not just to evoke feelings; it is also to share in them. In the previous chapter we saw that one of the contexts in which ideophones thrive is when participants join in a collaborative interactional style, emphasizing shared experience. Dirges provide just such a context. In the stylised format of the funeral dirge, the usual interactional techniques for displaying alignment and affiliation may not be available, but its performance is of course a pre-eminently *communal* event. The joining of voices is the joining of persons. In summary, the use of ideophones in funeral dirges can be seen to build on two chief pillars: the poetic-evocative semantics of ideophones and their interactional use in everyday episodes of sharing access.

12.6 Conclusions

I started by pointing out some of the intuitions about ideophones that have come to be commonplace in ideophone studies, for example that they are quintessentially spontaneous, dramatic and idiosyncratic. In the context of these intuitions, funeral dirges and greetings may be "unexpected places" for ideophones to occur. I have shown that on closer examination, the use of ideophones in these genres is not so unexpected after all: it is fitted to each genre, but builds on core interactional functions of ideophones in everyday discourse.

One interesting thing about the disparate genres considered in this chapter is that they are close to being structural converses. Funeral dirges have been thought of as essentially monologic and associated with highly emotional expression; greetings are essentially dyadic and have been associated with low-key maintenance of social relations (Urban 1988; Duranti 1997). Both genres have been subsumed under the notion of "ritual communication" (Senft and Basso 2010) but on this broad continuum they represent almost opposite ends: greetings as the most mundane "interaction rituals" of all (Goffman 1981), and funeral dirges as a form of ritual symbolism restricted —mostly, but not always, as we saw— to the socially marked context of funerary rites. The use of ideophones in these disparate ways of speaking points to a common element that underlies them both: an emphasis on the sharing of experience that values communality and being together.

We may relate this common element to what Kofi Agawu has called the "communal ethos". Although Agawu has not written about ideophones per se, he

has argued that the expressive modes of West-African societies are shot through with a deep sense of communality:

> In many traditional African societies, practically every domain of performance is conditioned by a desire on the part of participants to join rather than divide, to bring together rather than set apart, to unify rather than splinter-in short, a communal ethos. (…) The communal ethos does not deny individual agency; rather, it provides a forum for the performance of individuality through the enabling but also critical mechanisms of social interaction. (Agawu 2006:181)

I suggest that this communal ethos manifests itself in the way ideophones are used both in greetings and in funeral dirges, building on their use in social interaction. Similar ideas have sometimes surfaced in the literature on ideophones. For instance, the anthropologist Evans-Pritchard has speculated that "[pervasively ideophonic languages]… are not so much a type of language as a revelation in language of a type of mentality" (Evans-Pritchard 1962:145). Likewise, Daniel Kunene has claimed that "[a] society in which there is a prolific … use of ideophones is ipso facto a communal society" (Kunene 2001:183). Yet such claims, no matter how plausible they sound, have proven difficult to verify. The present approach has allowed us to ground these general ideas in an empirical analysis of social interaction, providing us with an unprecedented view of how ideophones help build and maintain this communal ethos.

The analysis of ideophones in funeral dirges also sheds light on the relation between everyday language and verbal art. While the importance of aesthetics has not been lost on students of language (e.g. Jakobson 1960; Mukarovský 1964[1940]), the focus has often been on genres of verbal art rather than on the aesthetics of everyday language (but see Haviland 2007). Juxtaposing the two helps us to see interrelations between them more clearly. So we saw how the use of ideophones in funeral dirges builds upon their common use in everyday conversations; but also how the funeral dirge itself may in turn be used in an everyday conversational context. It is clear that techniques of verbal artistry must in the final analysis derive from affordances of speech in everyday conversation. This chapter documented one way in which the aesthetics of everyday language, in the form of ideophones, may feed into genres of verbal art.

13 Ideophone creation in a corpus of everyday speech

> If ideophonic neologisms could be documented and if we had better evidence than the statements of informants we would have a striking phenomenon in language.
>
> William J. Samarin (1970a)

13.1 Introduction

So far the corpus of everyday discourse has enabled us to explore how Siwu speakers use ideophones in everyday conversations and in two special ways of speaking. With the corpus in hand, we can also begin to examine some of the claims that have come to be repeated in the ideophone literature but that are in fact based on surprisingly scarce evidence. One such claim concerns the issue of ideophone creation. Some authors have claimed that ideophones can always be created anew, often implying that they are barely conventionalised to begin with, while others have protested that there is no evidence whatsoever for this. At issue is the extent to which creativity and idiosyncrasy play a role in the use of ideophones. The evidence, for or against, can only come from a representative corpus of naturally occurring everyday interaction.

The claim that it is easy and common to coin new ideophones is commonly found in the literature (Westermann 1927a; Ziervogel 1952:160; Fortune 1971:246; Moshi 1993:190, among others). Westermann's statement is typical:

> "Even if I can only support it with a few cases that I have experienced myself, I am sure that ideophones can always be created anew according to need, so that what we have here is an open area of word formation."[204] (Westermann 1927a:319)

Similar statements can be found in many studies of ideophones. All are of the same nature, namely anecdotal reports. None of the authors cited above provide

[204] Original German: "Wenn ich es auch nur für einzelne, selbsterlebte Fälle beweisen kann, bin ich doch überzeugt, daß diese Lautbilder nach Bedarf immer neu gebildet werden, daß es sich hier also um ein nicht abgeschlossenes Gebiet der Wortschöpfung handelt."

actual examples.[205] It is understandable, then, that such claims have drawn scepticism from eminent linguists like Samarin and Welmers, who emphasise the fact that they have "never been supported by any evidence whatsoever" (Samarin 1971:147) and that they "seem to be wild exaggerations" (Welmers 1973:463). Still, these claims do not come from nowhere. What are they based on? Could some of them be attributed to imperfect knowledge on the part of the researcher? Can we capture instances of ideophone creation? What can speakers tell us about this, and how do we evaluate their introspective comments?

For the Gbaya artist Dogobadomo Béloko (as cited in Noss 1999:269), ideophones are always already existing: "We don't make them up. We don't make the pretence of inventing them. The Gbaya left them and we gather them up and put them in order." So far in this thesis I, too, have emphasised the conventionalised nature of Siwu ideophones, based on the simple fact that cross-checking ideophonic forms with different speakers has virtually always led to the conclusion that they are existing and known words, not spontaneous creations. And yet I, too, have occasionally experienced instances in which a consultant could not attribute a meaning to an ideophonic form that I overheard in a conversation the other day. This could be because I misheard the form, or perhaps because it exists but the consultant doesn't happen to know it, or possibly because the form is genuinely new. Clearly, what is needed here is data that can resolve this issue.

The data collected in the framework of this thesis allows us to make some headway here. Two types of information will be especially useful: first, the corpus of everyday conversational discourse; and second, data on the extent to which forms are conventionalised. Two further sources of data, namely field notes and introspective comments by speakers, will be brought in as well, but these are considered informative, not definitive.

13.2 The data

The starting assumption is that *if* speakers create new ideophones, this should be reflected in a corpus of naturally occurring conversational discourse. The Siwu corpus provides a good spot check of the issue, as it forms a cross-section of

[205] The only actual example I have seen is Kunene's report on the coinage of the ideophone *siks* in Sotho, a Southern Bantu language (Kunene 1965:37). Kunene's discussion, however, does not focus on the creation of ideophones but on the gestures accompanying them.

everyday informal talk including settings from family compounds to public spaces and situation types from idle chatter to storytelling to talk during joint activities. So the question is, will we find new coinages in the Siwu corpus or will all ideophones be solidly conventionalised? To answer this question, all ideophones in the corpus have been checked with several Siwu speakers to find out whether they are existing forms or new creations. That Siwu speakers can reliably and consistently judge if a form exists or not was independently established in the folk definitions task (chapter 9), and also in elicitation sessions in which I cross-checked ideophones from the corpus and from my field notes, while occasionally mixing in new forms created by myself.[206] For the great majority of ideophones so checked, speakers confirm that they are existing words and also are able to provide a meaning. Different speakers do so consistently.

First the numbers. There are 219 ideophone tokens in the Siwu corpus representing a total of 105 types. Not all ideophone types are equally common; 7 ideophone types account for 70 tokens while on the other extreme, 67 ideophone types occur only once (we saw some of these numbers in §6.6). The relatively small size of the corpus allows no definitive conclusions from this frequency distribution, although I will note that the position of the ideophone that tops the list, *kpoo* "quiet, tranquil" is not surprising as it occurs as a response to the morning greeting and therefore may well be the most commonly used ideophone in Siwu (see §12.2).

All ideophones in the corpus were checked with at least three speakers of Siwu, and in many cases with up to ten speakers. I regard an ideophone as conventionalised if, when presented in isolation, it is recognised as an existing Siwu word and assigned a meaning that is consistent across speakers. According to this criterion, the great majority of the ideophones in the corpus is solidly conventionalised. The total number of conventionalised ideophone types in the corpus is 94. The number of ideophones that were not recognised as existing words in the corpus is 11. Expressed as a percentage of tokens, 213 out of 219 ideophone tokens in the corpus, or 97%, are existing words. If we allow ourselves to extrapolate from this, we may conclude that most of the time when speakers use ideophones in everyday discourse, they use forms that are conventionalised and known in the speech community. This should suffice to lay to rest the naïve

[206] These new forms conformed to the structural features of Siwu ideophones described in chapter 6.

view that ideophones are merely expressive sounds used in conveying idiosyncratic impressions.

13.3 Some cases of ideophone creation

All the same however there were eleven cases in the corpus that were not recognised as existing words. These are probable cases of ideophone coinage. Let me discuss a number of them in turn.

The first example comes from the gecko argument, familiar from chapter §2.5. In explaining what the gecko does with its tongue, speaker A uses the ideophonic form *bélélélélélé*. Copresent are two people: A's wife (not speaking in this extract) and Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo (speaker C in this extract), who is one of my main consultants.

Extract 13.1 *Bélélélélé* [line 14-18] « 00:01:20 « Geckos **(S)**

14 A (0.5) *ɔ-bra* *i-à-bra* *ɔ̀nyagɛmi* (0.8) *kùngɔ* *èmɛ̀* *sɔ-* *ehhh:*
PFOC-make it-FUT-make tongue way like QT uhm
It'll rather make its tongue (0.8) like that- uuuhm:

15 (0.8) *ǹda-* *ǹda* *lo-rɔ̀* *ìra-ɔ* *nɛ-mɔ̀* (0.5) *kàyuɛsiyuɛ*
how- how 1SG-call thing-INDEF REL.I-that pangolin
how do I call that thing… (0.5) the pangolin.

16 C *mm*
mm
mm

17 ► A *ɔ̀-sɛ* *ɔ̀-ɖi* *ɔ̃* *ɔnyagɛmi* *ɔ-sɛ̀* *↑bélélé.lélélé↑*
3SG-HAB 3SG-take 3SG.POSS tongue 3SG-go IDPH.bélélé.EM3
It takes its tongue and goes *↑bélélélélélé↑*

18 *ɔ̀-bra-ɔ̃̀* *↑tagbaraa:↑*
3SG-make-Ɔ.OBJ IDPH.long.EM
It makes it *↑tagbaraaa↑* [long]!

Our focus is on the form *bélélélélélé* in line 17. The reduplication, expressive morphology, performative foregrounding and clause-final position all suggest that this is a bona fide ideophone. But during cross-checks it became clear that more than ten different Siwu speakers were unable to assign a meaning to this form, or to what would be its canonical form *bélélé*, if presented in isolation. In fact, the only person who was sure about its interpretation was my consultant Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo, who, it will be recalled, was copresent in the interaction. It is likely that

he was able to assign a meaning to the form because he was there, sharing in the common ground and communicative moves that formed the backdrop to this particular stretch of depictive behaviour. Indeed, in the context of the sequence, it is not so difficult to assign an interpretation to A's creative depiction: in the overall project of conveying what the tongue of the gecko is like, A first makes a comparison to the tongue of pangolin (line 14-15), then says, "the gecko takes its tongue and goes *bélélélélé*", and tops it off with the well known ideophone *tagbaraa* "long". Note how the interpretation of *bélélé* is enriched by the surrounding verbal material and how at the same time it enriches the interpretation of that verbal material. In this sense it is quite like the co-occurrence of gesture and speech, which shows the same pattern of mutual enrichment (Enfield 2009; see the next chapter on ideophones and gesture).

Assuming that this is indeed a case of ideophone coinage, we may briefly speculate on where the form comes from. Some of the speakers who did not recognise *bélélé* as an existing word simply drew a blank; others wondered whether I meant *bɛ̀lɛ̀lɛ̀*, an ideophone evoking the image of a long flowing robe. Both C's interpretation of *bélélé* and this existing ideophone involve the notion of length, the main difference being scale. It is conceivable that in the heat of the moment, the speaker attempted to depict the tiny but long tongue of the gecko in sound by creating a variant of an existing ideophone depicting a long, flowing robe. If *bɛ̀lɛ̀lɛ̀* indeed functioned as the template for *bélélé*, it is interesting to note that both the change in tone (from L to H) and the change in vowel (from open to close) are in line with cross-linguistic size-sound symbolism (Westermann 1927a); see also §7.4.2 on p. 170). Regardless of speculations on the source, what is significant about this depictive stretch of speech, is that although it is nonconventional, it did its job of rendering a certain scene perfectly well within the sequential context of the argument.

Another new coinage is found in a story told during the making of gunpowder. The story is about the king of a neighbouring country who likes to take his bath in two stages: first a bucket of cold water, then a warm one. What the king does not know is that on this fateful day, the order of the buckets has been reversed by an ill-disposed servant, and that the water has been heated to near boiling point.

Extract 13.2 *Walayayayaya* « 0:12:41 « Gunpowder **(S)**

1 A *gɔ ɔ-nyà ɔ-sɛ̀ ɔ̃-ã̀-bo, gɔ ɔ-nyà ɔḍi àra,*
when 3SG-see 3SG-HAB 3SG-FUT-reach when 3SG-see 3SG-take things,
"So when he got there, when he undressed,

2 ► *gɔ ɔ-nyà kùgɔ ɔ-nya, ↑↑**walayayayayaya**↑↑*
when 3SG-see how 3SG-see, IDPH.walayayayayaya
just when he's about to — *walayayayayaya*!"

3 (0.4)

4 *oh, ɔ-tsùè pelepelepelepele*
oh, 3SG:PST-burn IDPH.completely
"Oh, he was burned all over."

The form used in line 2 of Extract 13.2, *walayayaya*, bears all the marks of ideophonic speech — it is long, reduplicated, performatively foregrounded and occurs in utterance-final position. However, unlike the majority of ideophones in the corpus, it is not recognised as an existing word in isolation. From the sequential context, the gestures, and the facial expression of the storyteller it appears that *walayayayaya* depicts the dramatic scene of the boiling water pouring down on the protagonists skin, the effect of which is summarised in the following line: scalded all over. In effect, *walayayaya* is an spontaneous vocal gesture that depicts in sound an essential part of the story. It succeeds in doing its depictive work because its depictive status is signalled by the same features that mark conventionalised ideophones as such: utterance-final position, preceded by a brief pause; expressive reduplication; and performative foregrounding.

To gain more insight into how these creative forms are interpreted, let us consider another interaction. This is a conversation during the making of gunpowder. While A, the gunpowder expert, is busy mixing and stirring gunpowder ingredients in his mortar, C tells a tale about the time he went hunting using gunpowder manufactured by A.

Extract 13.3 *Kpaw* « 0:29:41 « Gunpowder **(S)**

1 (7.0)

2 C *oh, gɔ bó-sɛ̀:: (1.0) Kùbe kɔra nɛ*
INTJ when 1PL:PST-go PLN side TP
Oh, when we went to:: (1.0) Kùbe,

3 (0.7)

4 *ìɨɖe fɔ kuɖu bópɛ- bópɛ taim gɔmmɔ̀*
it-NEG-be 2SG.POSS gunpowder 1PL:PST-beat 1PL:PST-beat time REL.ɔ-there
wasn't it your gunpowder that we shot- we shot that time?

5 A (0.5) *m̀-hm*
m̀-hm
(0.5) m̀-hm

6 C *=ì kàbɛnya mmɔ̀*
LOC outskirts there
=at the outskirts of town there

7 A *mm:*
mm:
mm:

8 C *kùɖu gɔmɔ̀ ɔbùà kùba yuayua paa ló*
gunpowder REL-there SCR-be.very KU.S-have IDPH.burn ADV.very FP.ADV
That gunpowder was extremely *yuayua* [igniting]!

9 *kɔ*
INTJ.gee
Gee!

10 (1.5)

11 ► *lopɛ ↑kpáw↑*
1SG-beat IDPH.kpáw
I fired *↑kpaw↑!*

12 A (1.2) *kùɖu leiba inɔ̀.*
gunpowder DEP-NEG-reach nipple
(1.2) The gunpowder didn't reach the nipple.[207]

13 C *kùɖu leiba- (0.2) ↑kɔ̂↑*
gunpowder DEP-NEG-reach- INTJ
The gunpowder didn't reach- (0.2) Gee!

C announces his telling in line 2 with a reference to a past event in Kùbe, the place to go hunting, and then selects A as the recipient with a question (line 4). A does not look up but offers a somewhat delayed response to C's request (line 5),

[207] This is the part of the gun which controls the passage of the ignition impetus. Technically, the issue is probably not of the gunpowder not reaching the nipple, but of the ignition impetus (provided by the lock of the gun) failing to ignite the gunpowder.

after which C expands by providing more detail and A offers a vocal continuer (line 7). A's gunpowder is described as *yuayua*, an ideophone we encountered in earlier chapters (e.g. §10.6 on p. 241) as related to burning and which in this context can be interpreted as 'easily igniting'. Then C produces a form that is structurally an ideophone on all counts (phonotactically deviant, syntactically at the clause edge, performatively foregrounded): *lopɛ kpáw!* "I fired *kpáw*!" (line 11). On checking the form *kpáw* in isolation, no other speakers of Siwu could attribute a meaning to it; in fact, most were quite adamant it was not a proper word at all.

Yet in this interaction, A has no trouble interpreting it, as revealed in his own formulation of his understanding (line 12). He interprets C's improvised ideophone *kpaw* as a depiction of the event in which the gun's trigger is pulled, but the charge fails to ignite due to a technical defect: "The gunpowder didn't reach the nipple." C confirms this interpretation by repeating it (line 13). *Kpaw* thus depicts a feeble plop rather than a resounding bang. That it indeed contrasts with a bang becomes even clearer when C continues his telling (Extract 13.4).

Extract 13.4 *Kpaw*, continued « 0:29:41 « Gunpowder **(S)**

14 C (0.4) *kɔ lonyà lòyora zì ɖèka ↑sharp↑*
soon 1SG-see 1SG-jump.cause time one sharp
(0.4) But as soon as I fired a shot at once ↑*sharp*↑[208]
15 (1.0)
16 ► *↑ták↑ tòw* (0.9) *↑↑gbíîîìm::↑↑*
IDPH.ták IDPH.tòw IDPH.explosion
↑ták↑ tòw (0.9) *↑↑gbíîîìm::↑↑*
17 *nyɔ gɔ kúɖè mɛ ìmɔ̀ità ngbe nɛ*
look how KU.S:PST-eat 1SG.OBJ shoulder here TP
Look how it hit my shoulder here!

[208] *zi ɖeka* is Ewe for "one time" and *sharp* is an English loanword, so this utterance features Siwu, Ewe and English. It would in fact be possible to analyse *sharp* in this context as a derived ideophone — its structural markedness (English phonology), syntactic location, and performative foregrounding certainly make it a likely candidate for a depictive interpretation. The case would be somewhat similar to the ideophonic form *sîks* (derived from English *six*) in the southern Bantu language Sotho, described by Kunene (1965:37). Kunene gives the example sentence *a-re sîks* "he did *siks!*" (he ran away), and considers *sîks* an ideophone based on the fact that it occurs in the ideophone slot (introduced by the marker *re* like most ideophones).

18 *ũ nìtɔ lobùà lotsùè sɔ yes màn ee*
1SG.IND self 1SG-be.very 1SG-know QT yes man INTJ.ee
And then I knew for sure that *yes man, ee,*
19 (1.3)
20 *ɔ̀bi ɔ́bùà ɔ̀ɣe kùɖu ibara*
boy 3SG-be.very 3SG-know gunpowder NOM-make
this boy knows how to make gunpowder.

The continuation of the telling reveals more creative depictions. The second shot *did* result in a bang and a strong recoil (line 16, 17), and from this the teller concluded that "this boy knows how to make gunpowder" after all. (Note that while it first looked as if C was complaining about A's gunpowder, now it transpires that the telling is in fact designed as a compliment to A's gunpowder-making qualities.) Now, there is something special about C's speech in (16). What he says is *↑ták↑ tòw* (0.9) *↑↑gbíîùm::↑↑*. To translate this into English would be beside the point. The whole utterance is in the depictive mode. It remains incomprehensible unless we are prepared to shift into a different way of listening to the speech. It invites us to listen in such a way that we make believe we are experiencing the scene depicted. If we do so, we may experience the cinematic imagery of the pulling of the trigger, the ignition of the charge and a resounding explosion. Once again, the performative foregrounding and the marked word forms —phonotactically anomalous relative to ordinary Siwu words— alert us to the shift in mode of representation.

13.4 "You can form your own ideophone"

We gain some insight into the significance of these cases of ideophone creation from what Siwu speakers themselves have to say on the issue of ideophones and creativity. In a long conversation on ideophones in March 2008, my main consultant Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo (OK) provides some interesting comments.[209] The recording starts at a point where OK just had remarked that when "bringing an ideophone", all present will agree with you about the meaning, even if the form is

[209] Recorded some time into my second field trip to Kawu, this was the first time that I invited Ɔɖimɛ to speculate on how these words are used. The conversation took place in English with some Siwu mixed in. Our work together in many sessions of elicitation and transcription had made clear to him the kinds of words I was interested in. I asked him to reflect on these words using the term 'ideophones'.

new to them. This launched us into a discussion of creating new ideophones. In the first excerpt, Ɔɖimɛ, a little hesitantly, formulates his thoughts on "forming your own ideophone".

Extract 13.5 "Form your own ideophone" [Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo]

OK let me see
you can form your own ideophone
MD yeah
OK *èhɛ*
if you… if you look at a certain type of action, you can form your… any ideophone that comes in your… *èhɛ* anything at all, to describe that action
MD yes
yeah
OK you can bring anything at all that can describe it

Ɔɖimɛ notes that you look at some "type of action" and then "form your own ideophone" in order to "describe that action". What is noteworthy about this is first of all that it nicely brings out the fact that ideophones are more like holistic depictions of scenes — "microscopic sentences", in the words of Gérard Diffloth (1972:444) — than like words picking out abstract properties. More importantly, the process as it is sketched by Ɔɖimɛ is not a matter of seeing something and retrieving the right word for it. "Forming your own ideophone" is more like sculpting some material at hand, in this case speech, to do the job of depiction.

After this initial characterisation of creative ideophone use, the discussion drifts to the use of ideophones in what Ɔɖimɛ calls *àtsuɛ pɛ̃* or 'throwaway talk', a category of talk including such forms as gossip, insults, mockery, and dirty talk, until the topic again comes to the issue of how ideophones are understood, especially if they are newly created. If there is no convention in place, at least not in the sense in which words like *kàɣɛ̃* 'mortar' or *ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* 'soft' are conventionalised, the question is: how do people know what you are doing?

Extract 13.6 "Ideophones are not made to be correct or wrong" [Ɔɖimɛ Kanairo]

OK And moreover if they bring it, or they introduce it, you will by all means understand that this is what they are referring to, or this ideophone is describing this.
MD How do they know?

OK They will by all means know because…
MD How?
OK From the conversation.
MD From the conversation.
OK Yes. They will by all means know that you are referring to this.
MD From the context.
OK Context.
MD But why would they agree with you that your ideophone is a good one? You might be wrong!
OK No. It doesn't matter if you are wrong — so far as they understood what you are referring to. Because ideophones are not made there to be correct or wrong.

The key observation here is that "ideophones are not made to be correct or wrong". It would be wrong to summarise this as "anything goes". Rather, the point that Ɔɖimɛ is trying to get across to his at times obtuse interviewer is that the question of "right" or "wrong" is the wrong question to ask of a depictive stretch of speech.[210] What he says is that in the heat of the moment, when you look at some event, you can sculpt your speech to form a depiction of it; and your fellow interactants will understand you —not because you have chosen the right sequence of speech sounds, for that is the point: the one right depiction does not exist— but because your fellow interactants will have understood that you are launching into a depictive performance and will treat it as such. Specifically, they will treat that stretch of speech in such a way as to make believe they are experiencing the scene depicted.

All of this would of course be little more than speculation were it not for the fact that we actually see it happen in the cases examined. New forms are created, and they are interpreted without a hitch. Let me elaborate this point. Crucially, all cases of ideophone creation in the corpus are marked by performative

[210] Note that much the same holds for spontaneous depictive gestures (and see chapter 14 on the relation between these and ideophones). In general, it makes little sense to think of depictions in terms of right and wrong because they are first and foremost creative renditions that require taking into account the artists' intentions. Of course that does not mean that anything goes; but it does mean that what is possible is bounded by the context and the imagination of those interacting more than by a simple-minded grid of resemblances. Depiction is, after all, a game of make-believe (Gombrich 2002[1960]; Walton 1973).

foregrounding. This brings us back to issues discussed in §2.5 on depiction versus description. As noted there, the performative foregrounding of ideophones serves as a Batesonian "metacommunicative frame": it signals a change in mode of representation and foregrounds the ideophone as speech heard in a special way. The cases of ideophone creation reviewed here rely on this: the shift into higher pitch and the expressive reduplication of the speech are signals that we are launching into a depictive mode of representation. This is what helps the interlocutors to make sense of the new forms. They cannot rely on previous encounters with this form to retrieve its meaning, and the performative foregrounding directs them towards one particular way of solving the coordination problem: treating the speech as a stretch of depictive behaviour, a depiction in sound. Moreover, the existing ideophone inventory of their language supplies them with several tools to map sound and sense, from the principles of imagic, Gestalt and relative iconicity to performance characteristics like loudness, intonation and voice quality (chapter 7). Given this toolkit for depiction in language, they can project into *bélélélélélé* the spatial extent of the gecko's tongue; in *walayayayaya* they can see the violent outpouring of boiling water onto the King's bare skin; in *kpaw* they can hear the feeble plop of the firing mechanism as it fails to deliver the real bang; and in *ták tòw gbû:m̀* they can hear the parts of the gun working together to build a resounding explosion.

13.5 Creativity in language

We are now in a position to appreciate the outlook that the data presented here provides on the broader issue of creativity in language. The first thing to note is that being presented with an unconventionalised form is not at all rare (Schelling 1960; Clark 1996; Keller 1998; Croft 2000). Communicating persons regularly find themselves creatively working with any material at hand to reach their communicative goals and coordinate on a shared understanding. Any linguistic element may be used creatively, and if this use catches on, the effect may be the establishment of a new convention.

Much work on creativity in language has focused on the ways in which speakers may take existing linguistic items and use them in a new sense (Clark and Clark 1979; Carter 2004), relying on their interlocutors' ability to construe their communicative intention with the help of factors like common ground and joint salience (Clark 1996). An example from the domain of grammaticalisation is the

cross-linguistically widespread use of body-part terms to talk about spatial relations, exemplified in such Siwu phrases as *ɔ̀pɔ̃rɔ̃ kayirinɔ̀* 'under the table' (< *kayirinɔ̀* 'belly'). Such common semantic extensions of body-part terms start out as creative metaphors that are naturally grounded in a piece of common ground we all carry with us: the body (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Enfield 2005; Dingemanse 2009a). Another example is the creative use of nouns as verbs described by Clark & Clark (1979). The creative use of language exemplified in such patterns of semantic extensions, and in figurative language in general, rests upon the interlocutors' abilities to build novel phrases using existing material. Novel meanings are constructed based on existing semantic connotations and denotations and relying on common ground.

But the cases analysed in the present chapter point to another source of creativity in language. It relies not on getting the interlocutor to recognise the ways in which a novel phrase builds on existing connotations and denotations, but on presenting the verbal material in such a way that the interlocutor treats it as a creative depiction. This source of creativity builds on another semiotic affordance of speech altogether: the potential of its sensory properties to suggest meaning, investigated in detail in chapter 7 of this thesis. This is *Lautmalerei* —painting in sound— in its purest sense.

It would be tempting to remark that nothing could be more natural than using speech in this way. To say so would be to overlook the fact that the depictive use of speech, too, places requirements on conventions and common ground. The most important requirement is the readiness of interlocutors to be "set" for this kind of appeal to the imagination. If there is not a shared practice in place that makes such shifts into depictive mode both acceptable and expectable, any such attempt will fall flat. There are also conventions with regard to the form that these spontaneous depictions take. For instance, all of the cases in the corpus are built from ordinary Siwu phonemes, though in phonotactically deviant ways just like existing ideophones. Moreover, they use the same form-meaning mappings we saw in chapter 7: imagic iconicity (sound mimicking sound, as in *kpaw*), Gestalt iconicity (word structure resembling spatio-temporal unfolding, as in *walayayaya* and *ták*), and relative iconicity (as when creative depictions are formed on the template of existing forms, of which *bélélélé* is a possible example).

In summary, this creative depictive use of language does not operate in a vacuum. It is nurtured by everyday practices of language use — by a competence

in language that relies not just on the ability to produce sentences but on a sensitivity to the potentialities of speech.

The creative use of the materiality of speech for depiction has not attracted much attention so far, except in two tellingly disparate loci of Western academia. First, it has been hinted at in work on speech play and nursery rhymes (e.g. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1976; Carter 2004 among others), areas which despite some attention in the field of language acquisition still seem to qualify for Samarin's (1975) playful characterisation of them as "marginal linguistics". Second, it has been touched on in studies of poetry, both in the form of "sound poetry" (McCaffery 1978) and in the poet's desire for an idealised language "that is more concrete, more directly in touch with reality" (Erickson 1985:283). Our explorations in this chapter point to a way out of this schizophrenic marginalisation of depiction in speech. We have here a use of language that is quite distinct from either childish muttering or poetic utopia. It is a technique rooted in everyday practices of language use, a skill that forms an integral part of what it means to have achieved communicative competence in Siwu. Illustrative of this is the fact that ample and proper use of ideophones is considered a sign of eloquence among the Mawu.

As to the relation between existing ideophones and the new creations surveyed here, it will be recalled that the great majority of ideophones in the Siwu corpus are in fact solidly conventionalised. At the risk of belabouring the point, let me reiterate that most of the time when people use ideophones in everyday discourse, they use forms that are already known in the speech community. The cases of creative *Lautmalerei* surveyed above are meaningless except in the context of the existing inventory of ideophones and practices of employing them. The relation between existing ideophones and the new creations is a productive one, both in the sense that creative use would not be possible except against the backdrop of the existing practices of ideophone use and in the sense that the existing inventory may be enriched if one-time innovations catch on and propagate in the speech community.

It thus appears that Westermann was right when he suspected that "we have here an area of word formation that is still open" (Westermann 1927a:319). But Westermann attributed the common and creative use of ideophones in West-African languages to the "niedere Entwicklungsstufe" (low level of development) of these languages. This gets us squarely into issues of language ideology. In a linguaculture that values abstract and decontextualised styles of discourse, and

that in effect restricts the study of the playful exploitation of verbal material to the domains of child language, slang and poetics (Nuckolls 2004), it is hard to imagine competent and serious speakers indulging in ideophonic language, and all too easy to attribute it to factors like childishness or primitivity. On the other hand, in a linguaculture where ideophones are part of the warp and weft of everyday language use, it is hard to imagine competent speakers *not* using the potential of speech to the full. The language attitude nurturing this ideophonic use of language has been eloquently characterised by Philip Peek (1994:475) as follows: "Speech among African peoples is not just *about* something, it *is* something."

13.6 A note on ideophones and language evolution

There is a final issue suggested by these cases of ideophone creation. It is the matter of ideophones and the evolution of language. A common assumption is that ideophones represent a holdout, a remnant from some earlier stage of language evolution (e.g. Paul 1880[1880]; Determeyer 1991; Kita 2008; Haiman 2009). In Kita's (2008) view, they are "fossils of protolanguage" and they provide us with a peek into the minds of our protolinguistic ancestors.

Although many have granted such ideas at least some intuitive plausibility, in the absence of evidence I think it is hardly useful to speculate about the matter. The lack of evidence shows itself in the fact that speculation goes both ways. For instance, whereas Kita argues that "sound symbolic words are fossils of protolanguage that have been engulfed and incorporated (albeit not fully) into the system of modern language" (Kita 2008:32), we find Diffloth arguing the opposite: "Expressives [ideophones, MD] are not a sort of 'pre-linguistic' form of speech, somehow half-way between mimicry and fully structured linguistic form. They are, in fact, at the other end of the spectrum, a sort of 'post-linguistic' stage where the structural elements necessary for prosaic language are deliberately re-arranged and exploited for their iconic properties, and used for aesthetic communication" (Diffloth 1980:58).[211] Moreover, what Kita takes to be evidence for the pre-linguistic status of ideophones can in fact be straightforwardly interpreted

[211] Likewise, Aston (1894), in a paper on *Japanese Onomatopes and the Origin of Language*, argued that onomatopoeia are "of late origin, and can throw little light on the genesis of speech". More recently, Nichols has noted: "It is interesting that the widespread areal patterns of phonosymbolism all seem to be recent. (…) This suggests to me that the arbitrary linguistic sign is older and more fundamental than the non-arbitrary one…" (Nichols 2002:10).

otherwise. For instance, the main argument advanced by Kita for the putative proto-language status of ideophones is their lack of integration in the sentence, but, as we saw in §2.5, there is independent reason for the aloofness of ideophones, to do with their different mode of representation. The question of what is *not* encoded in ideophones also plays a part, albeit minor, in Kita's arguments for the worldview of our protolinguistic ancestors. However, as noted in §7.6, a simpler explanation of these limitations is provided by the constraints imposed by the semiotic properties of the medium.

Still, I do not bring up this topic just to air some scepticism and move on. Ideophones are clearly relevant to the evolution of language in at least one important sense. Even if they do not provide us with a peek into the minds of our protolinguistic ancestors, they do show us how aeons of cultural evolution may shape and hone spoken language into a system in which both description and depiction play important roles — a system in which speech is not just *about* something, but *is* something, to use Peek's turn of phrase. I see no need to dispute the possibility that depiction came before description in the evolution of language. What I argue is that it is difficult to tell at this point (see Davidson and Noble 1989 for discussion), and that one need not commit to speculations to still appreciate that ideophones are powerful proof of the fact that the depictive potential of speech may be exploited by evolutionary processes. From this perspective, what is typologically interesting about ideophonic languages is that the depictive use of speech has taken on a life of its own, in the form of a sizable class of words which is primarily depictive. This possibility, which we can think of as just one of the many possible trajectories of the ever-evolving bio-cultural hybrid that is human language (Keller 1998; Croft 2000; Evans and Levinson 2009), has often been overlooked or downplayed by linguists focusing on Standard Average European languages. Ideophone systems offer a useful corrective here, shedding light on another corner of the design space of language.

Depiction, both in its conventionalised form as surveyed in previous chapters and in its creative use as seen in the present one, is an affordance of speech that has long been overlooked or marginalised. Yet its empirical investigation can yield fundamental insights into matters of competence and creativity. As Dell Hymes (1985:15–6) once noted, "[t]he prospect will show how utterly inadequate to the true nature of human competence in language are models of language which build their castles out of only the stone of reference."

14 Ideophones and gesture in everyday speech

> The ideophone is the closest linguistic substitute
> for a non-verbal, physical act.
>
> Daniel P. Kunene (2001)

14.1 Introduction

From early on, students of ideophones have pointed out the importance of gesture to ideophonic performance (e.g. Schlegel 1857; Kunene 1965; Scheub 1977; Zondo 1982; Kita 1993; Klassen 1999, among many others). For example, Kunene notes that "[m]any ideophones are often accompanied by gestures imitating the action or state conveyed by the ideophone" (Kunene 1965:32). Similarly, Zondo notes that gesture "almost always accompanies an ideophone" in Ndebele (Zondo 1982:123). While these claims remained limited to particular languages, Kita (1993), examining data from Japanese and Mandarin, found reason to elevate the tight coupling of ideophone and gesture to universal status: "constant and fairly accurate synchronisation between mimetics [ideophones, MD] and gestures is universal among the languages that have mimetics" (Kita 1993:96). Concluding his discussion of Japanese and Mandarin data, he summarises:

> I conjectured an universal: if a language has mimetics, they synchronize with a gesture stroke in natural speaking situations. What seems to be common among mimetics in different languages is native speaker's intuition that mimetics evoke imagery. If the conjectured universal holds, it assures that the phenomena found in Japanese and Chinese are due to mimetics' inherent imagistic meaning and not due to, say, culture-specific story-telling style. (Kita 1993:98)

Before we see what the Siwu corpus of everyday conversation has to tell us about this issue, it is worth examining some of the previous claims about ideophones and gesture in more detail. One thing that becomes apparent is that these claims have widely diverging empirical bases.

First, the earliest claims are essentially anecdotal. Actual examples are rarely provided and remain limited to one or two ideophones. For instance, Hetherwick (1889:76) describes a Yao ideophone *myu* "with the fingers drawn across the lips".

This description is cited in Werner (1919:187), whose description in turn is cited by Samarin (1971:153) in support of the possibility that "certain ideophones are always accompanied by, for example, a certain gesture". Second, from studies of Bantu languages come a number of broad claims about the common co-occurrence of ideophones and gestures (esp. Kunene 1965; 1978; Zondo 1982). I already mentioned Zondo above, who writes about "the gesture, which almost always accompanies an ideophone" (1982:123). It is not clear what kind of data these claims are based on, but given the Dokean legacy, it is probable that these authors are talking mainly about narrative contexts. Third, the most recent and most empirically grounded studies tend to focus on even narrower contexts. For instance, Klassen (1999) provides a beautifully detailed single case analysis of ideophones and gesture in a performance of the *ngano* story-song genre in Shona. And although Kita specifically mentions "natural speaking situations" in his conjectured universal, his data consists of retellings of short cartoon stories in an experimental setting that is more constrained than most everyday language use (Tsujimura 2001; Kita 2001). Finally, and most surprisingly perhaps, some particularly often-cited statements on this issue actually comment on the common use of gestures in *explanations* of ideophones (e.g. Samarin 1971:153; Diffloth 1972:441). We saw this confirmed in detail in chapter 9 on folk definitions, where I argued that gestures are indispensable in explanations of ideophones because they are good at depicting sensory imagery that may be hard to capture in ordinary words. However, while gesture use in this context is clearly highly significant, it does not necessarily tell us much about the relation between ideophones and gestures in everyday language use, for the simple reason that when explaining an ideophone, speakers are doing something quite different than when using that same ideophone.[212]

In short, most previous claims about the relation between ideophone and gesture are either anecdotal, or based on what speakers do when explaining ideophones, or restricted to quite narrow contexts. There is a need for the

[212] That is not to say that the one case cannot illuminate the other, merely that it should not be assumed identical to the other. For an analogue, consider the case of negation. In the folk definitions task, we find that Siwu speakers can easily define ideophones by negation (see chapter 9). But this does not allow the general conclusion that ideophones are easily negated in Siwu, for in fact there is only one case of a negated ideophone in the whole corpus of everyday conversation.

gesture/ideophone coupling to be validated against everyday language use. The Siwu corpus provides us with an initial way to do so.

The aim of this chapter is very modest: it is just to see whether some specific, commonly repeated claims about ideophone and gesture hold up in a corpus of naturally occurring speech. As a tentative exploration, it paves the way for more fine-grained analyses in the future. Future work would focus on a wider range of issues; it would also pay more attention to timing and kinesics, studying gestures as they work together with higher-order linguistic units to form composite utterances (Kendon 1972; 2004; McNeill 1992; Enfield 2009, among many others).

14.2 Gesture types and their co-occurrence with ideophones

Of the 219 ideophone tokens in the corpus, 174 are uttered by a speaker whose body and face are visible in the frame. These ideophone tokens have been coded for co-occurrence with manual gesture. For the ideophones that did co-occur with gestures, coding distinguished further between four gesture types: deictic gestures, depictive gestures, emblems and beats. This common gesture taxonomy is adopted from McNeill (1992).[213] The coding of these types was done in a rather coarse-grained fashion and only focused on gestural activity co-occurring[214] with ideophones to allow the assessment of claims like Kunene's "ideophones are often accompanied by gestures of mimicry" (Kunene 1965:21), Zondo's "[the gesture] almost always accompanies an ideophone" (Zondo 1982:123) and Kita's "[ideophones] are tightly coupled with spontaneous iconic gestures" (Kita 1997:392). Before discussing the results of the coding, I will exemplify the four gesture types with ideophonic utterances from the corpus.

DEICTIC GESTURES are pointing gestures that indicate either concrete or imaginary objects or people. An example is (99), in which the speaker tells the story of a king who was taking baths with hot and cold water. Two deictic co-speech gestures indicate the location of the imaginary buckets with hot and cold water, the first pointing up and to the speaker's right and the second pointing up

[213] For more detailed discussions of gesture classifications, see McNeill (1992:75–80), Kendon (2004:ch. 6) and Enfield (2009:17–19), among others.

[214] The term "co-occur" can be glossed as "largely temporally coinciding with". The coding excluded cases which show just a small overlap or which show a substantial overlap of the gesture with more than just the ideophone.

and to the speaker's left. The first gesture is aligned with the noun phrase *ndu tɔtɔà* 'hot water', the second with the nominalised adjective *miyululuà* 'cold one'.

(141) *n-du* *tɔtɔ-à* *gu* *mi-yululu-à*
MI-water hot-ADJ with AGR.MI-IDPH.cold-ADJ
| G1 | | G2 |
"hot water and cold [water]"
G1: pointing outwards from the speaker's upper right periphery
G2: pointing outwards from the speaker's upper left periphery

EMBLEMS are highly conventionalised gestures that can be said to have a lexicalised meaning. An example from English is the gesture joining index finger and thumb, with the other fingers outstretched, which means "excellent/OK". An example from Siwu is a quick waving of the hand in front of the body, palm outward, for "no" or "negation". In (142), the speaker concludes a narrative of personal hardship with the assurance that "it wasn't easy!" while doing this "negation" emblem.

(142) *ì-i-se* *pɔkɔsɔɔɔ!*
I-NEG-be IDPH.slow/easy
| G1 |
"it is not easy!"
G1: repeated waving of the hand, palm outward, in front of the body

DEPICTIVE GESTURES depict aspects of the same scene that speech also represents.[215] An example is (143) below, in which the speaker explains what is going to happen when he sets fire to two small amounts of drying gunpowder: it will ignite *shû, shû*. The speaker depicts the ignition of the gunpowder with both hands moving symmetrically in a quick upward motion like flames flaring up. This depictive gesture is time-aligned with the first token of the ideophone, and repeated with the second. In this case, the so-called *speech affiliate* of the gesture is clearly the ideophone.

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[215] Within what I call here "depictive gestures", McNeill (1992:78f.) distinguishes iconic gestures, which depict relatively concrete imagery, from metaphoric gestures, which depict abstract imagery. Following De Ruiter (1998), the distinction between these two types is not adopted here. What is common to both is a depictive mode of signification. Streeck (2008) offers a useful analysis of the different types of depiction in gesture.

(143) *ɔ̀-bra* *ì-a-bra* *shû* *shû!*
PFOC-make I-FUT-make IDPH.ignition IDPH.ignition
| G1 | | G1 |
"It goes *shû, shû*"
G1: both hands moving symmetrically in a quick upward motion like flames flaring up

Finally, BEATS are movements that do not present a discernible meaning. They typically consist of a low energy up and down movement of the hand in resting position. In example (144) below, two beats occur in the form of minimal wrist movements in which the hand (palm upward) goes up and down. An upward movement starts somewhat before *sí* with a high point at *ló*; a downward movement brings the hand to resting position again at *fufu*. Then again an upward movement up to and during *ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* and a downward movement right after, with the hand back at resting position at *ɔ̀-sɛ*. The selected utterance is part of a longer stretch during which this simple biphasic beat pattern is repeated several times. Beats often have no clear speech affiliate; they move with the speech rhythm rather than being linked to specific lexical or conceptual items.

(144) *sí ló-wètè* *fufu,* *ɖɔbɔrɔɔ* *ɔ-bùà* *ɔ̀-sɛ* *ɔ̀-ɖɔɛ…*
if 1SG:PST-pound fufu, IDPH.soft 3SG-be.very 3SG-HAB 3SG-love
| G1 | | G1 |
"when I pounded *fufu*, soft as he very much liked it…"
G1: peak of wrist movement moving the hand (palm upward) up

The following table presents the frequency of the four different gesture types as they co-occur with ideophones in the Siwu corpus. The number of tokens inspected (174) is lower than the total number of ideophone tokens in the corpus (219) because for some of the ideophone tokens the speaker is not visible in the image or there is only audio data.

	Deictic	Depictive	Emblem	Beat	None	Total
Tokens	5	52	2	7	108	174
Percentage	3%	30%	1%	4%	62%	100%

Table 14.1 Frequency of gesture types co-occurring with ideophones

Two things are especially striking. The first is that 62% of the ideophone tokens do not co-occur with any gesture whatsoever. That appears to be a major blow to the common claim that ideophones "almost always" come with gestures. The second point is that of the gestures that *do* co-occur with ideophones in this corpus, the overwhelming majority is depictive. We can thus conclude that ideophones do not always come together with gestures, but *if* an ideophone comes together with a gesture it is likely to be a depictive gesture. (For the three other gesture types, the number of tokens is too small for the difference in percentages to be meaningful.)

However, perhaps gesture-ideophone co-occurrences are more common in some types of talk than in others. In fact, based on Kita's work —which, it may be recalled, is based on elicited narratives— I formulated a more specific hypothesis: gesture-ideophone couplings are especially common in narrative contexts. To test this hypothesis, the data was further coded to distinguish between tellings and other activity types. Tellings are here defined as multi-unit turns in which a speaker produces a longer stretch of talk, usually a report of some experience or event (Goodwin and Heritage 1990:298–300 and references therein).

	Deictic	Depictive	Emblem	Beat	None	Total
Telling	2 (3%)	25 (42%)	0 (0%)	4 (7%)	28 (47%)	59
Other	3 (3%)	27 (23%)	2 (2%)	3 (3%)	80 (70%)	115

Table 14.2 Gesture-ideophone couplings in tellings versus other contexts

Table 14.2 breaks down the gesture-ideophone couplings by type according to whether they occur in a stretch of discourse that can be qualified as a telling or not. Here the distribution is clearly skewed. Whereas in the corpus as a whole, only 38% of all the ideophone tokens co-occur with a gesture of any type (as seen by summing the values in Table 14.1), in tellings this percentage is 53%, as against 30% in other contexts. Moreover, if we compare the two contexts, we see that the increase within tellings is almost entirely due to one type of gesture: depictive gestures. Ideophones coupled with depictive gestures are more prone to occur in the context of tellings (42%) than in other contexts (23%). We saw above that *if* an ideophone comes together with a gesture, the gesture is likely to be a

depictive gesture. What we see here is that this connection is especially strong in the context of tellings.[216]

14.3 Reassessing the ideophone-gesture relation

We are now in a position to reassess the relation between ideophones and gesture. The first conclusion has to be that this relation is not as tight as has been suggested sometimes in the literature, and, more importantly, that it varies with discourse context. So Zondo's claim that gesture "almost always accompanies an ideophone" (1982:123) does not carry over wholesale to the Siwu corpus of everyday discourse, in which ideophones quite often come with no gesture at all. Where does this discrepancy between inference and observation come from? Perhaps one reason is that the work of Zondo and many other Bantuists, embedded as it is in the Dokean tradition, virtually identifies ideophone use with narrative contexts (see the overview of ideophone research in §3.4). Additionally, Kita's (1993; 1997) data, too, consists exclusively of elicited narratives.

Indeed the Siwu data does point to a tighter coupling of ideophone and depictive gesture in narrative contexts than in other contexts. Why would this be so? There are several possible reasons. One is that narratives have as one of their main goals letting the hearer know what it was like to experience the events reported (Cassell and McNeill 1991; Stivers 2008). Such a goal invites the liberal use of depictive devices like ideophones and gestures. This may explain not just the strong association of ideophones and depictive gestures in narratives, but also the often made observation, not directly addressed in this chapter, that ideophones appear to be especially common in narrative contexts. In many non-narrative contexts, the main business may be something else; for example, speakers may be carrying out a conversational routine (like responding to a greeting) that does not

[216] An important remaining question is whether there is something special about the gesture-ideophone coupling, or whether depictive gestures occur just as commonly with another major word class. For instance, we know from Adam Kendon's work (e.g. Kendon 2004:Ch.10) that verbs and verb phrases are also commonly accompanied by depictive gestures. Kita's results have shown that there is a difference between ideophones and verbs in this regard: he did the same co-occurrence analysis for verbs and gestures and found that in his Japanese narratives, only 40% of verbs, as against 94% of ideophones, were accompanied by a gesture stroke. I hope to do this same analysis in a future study of similar data. I suspect, based on a spot check of the Siwu data, that a similar relation holds in Siwu — thus that both verbs and ideophones are likely to come together with gestures, but ideophones more so than verbs.

call for much performative elaboration; or even simpler, they may be engaged in a joint activity in which they may not have their hands free. Such factors would decrease the number of ideophone-gesture co-occurrences. A general lesson therefore is that the common practice in ideophone and gesture research to work with elicited narratives and to exclude natural conversational data may lead to a distorted view of the variety that is out there.

The second conclusion, however, is that there *is* in fact a particularly tight coupling between ideophones and one type of gestures, namely depictive gestures. I take this as support for a modified form of Kita's proposed universal. Recall that Kita phrased his universal in terms of an implicational relation between the existence of ideophones in a language and their synchronisation with gesture strokes. For reference, here is the original proposal:

> **Kita's conjecture**: constant and fairly accurate synchronisation between mimetics and gestures is universal among the languages that have mimetics. (Kita 1993:96)

There are two problems with the proposal as originally phrased: first, although I do not believe Kita intended it as such, it can be read as a blanket claim about all types of gestures; but the Siwu data makes clear that when it is construed in this way, the conjecture is false. (Beats, for example, are not exclusively synchronised with any one word; if anything, their attachment appears to be with higher level discourse units.) The really special relation is between ideophones and depictive gestures, so the conjecture should be modified accordingly. Second, the conjecture does not specify the kind of unit in which the synchronisation plays out. Is it a temporal relation between all gestures and all ideophones in a whole corpus, in a conversation, in one individual's speech, or in individual communicative moves? Clearly the implications are quite different depending on the choice made. I propose that the communicative move is the basic level at which the implicational universal plays out.[217] Taking these two improvements into account, I propose the following modified conjecture:

> If a communicative move features both a depictive gesture and an ideophone, the two will tend to be synchronised.

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[217] The move (Goffman 1981) can be defined as the basic-level unit for social interaction (see Enfield 2009:11f. for a more technical definition and arguments for its primitive or basic-level status).

This is a defendable conjecture, I think, and more importantly perhaps, a falsifiable one. In this chapter, some headway has been made towards supporting it. However, the matter is far from settled. There are well-known problems in deciding what exactly it means for speech and gesture to be synchronised. Summarizing from De Ruiter (2000:297–300), the problems include first of all the fact that it is difficult to decide on the lexical affiliate of a gesture; second, the question of how to define synchronisation (for instance, Butterworth & Hadar (1989) enumerate 13 different ways in which two time intervals can be related); and third, practical difficulties in measuring the time intervals of especially gestures. Only the first of those is mitigated in the case of ideophones because, as I argue below, ideophones are likely lexical-conceptual affiliates for depictive gestures. Further research would be needed to tackle the other two in a satisfying way; this is outside the scope of the present chapter.

Note that unlike some previous claims, the conjecture is not directional. That is, it does not stipulate that gestures come with ideophones or vice versa; it conjectures only that when the two are both present in an utterance, they will tend to be synchronised. It is worth briefly elaborating this. It appears that some authors conceive of the relation between ideophone and gesture as asymmetric; thus when Zondo writes that the gesture "almost always accompanies an ideophone" and is "of vital importance to the overall semantic import of an ideophone" (1982:123), it appears that he takes the gesture to be crucial for interpreting the ideophone, but not vice versa. This overlooks the fact that the interpretation of the gesture in the context of the utterance is also enriched by the ideophone.[218] In semiotic terms, both ideophone and depictive gesture point to a third thing: both are enriched by their co-occurrence, and together they are taken as signs of a single informative (better yet, performative) intention.

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[218] Zondo's phrasing illustrates a common inconsistency in discussions of the meaning of different types of signs in composite utterances. The inconsistency has been described by Nick Enfield as follows: "Linguistic items like words are often described merely in terms of what they conventionally *encode* (as standing for lexical *types*), while gestures are typically described in terms of what they non-conventially *convey* (as standing for utterance-level *tokens* of informative intention)" (Enfield 2009:13–14, emphasis in original). As Enfield points out, the process of comprehending words-in-context does not stop with mere recognition of lexical items; it also involves contextualised interpretation that takes into account the multiple signs of multiple types (including gestures) that make up the composite utterance. Likewise the process of comprehending gesture-in-context takes into account the other types of signs (including ideophones) that are part of that utterance.

14.4 Why ideophones and depictive gestures go well together

The question may now be asked: what is the significance of the fact that ideophones and depictive gestures tend to be synchronised? Kita has suggested that it is "due to [ideophones'] inherent imagistic meaning" and has linked it to "native speakers' intuition that mimetics evoke imagery" (Kita 1993:98; cf. also Kita 1997; 2001). Previous chapters have strengthened this common intuition about the imagistic meanings of ideophones with various types of evidence: semiotic considerations, elicitation tasks, the collection of folk definitions (in which, as we saw, depictive gestures are crucial) and evidence from spontaneous use. On the basis of this work, I think Kita's suggestion can be sharpened and unpacked. In what follows I want to suggest two reasons for the common coupling of ideophones and depictive gesture (shortened to 'gesture'): first, the fact that both ideophone and gesture form part of a single performative act; and second, the fact that both ideophone and gesture are holistic (though selective) depictions of complex states of affairs.[219]

Reasoning about these matters would be ill-guided without some model of gesture and speech production (a model that specifies how to get from a communicative intention to the production of a composite utterance). I assume a processing architecture based on Levelt's *Speaking* model (Levelt 1989) that includes a component which plans gesture and speech together (see de Ruiter 2000; Kita and Özyürek 2003; de Ruiter 2007 and references therein for justification and specification of such architectures). Such an architecture reflects the view, well-grounded in the analysis of face-to-face interaction, that speech and gesture are temporally and semantically coordinated and are most properly seen as "two aspects of the process of utterance" (Kendon 1980; see also McNeill 1992; Kendon 2004; Enfield 2009).

The coupling of ideophone and gesture may be thought of as the synchronous occurrence of depictive signs across modalities. Recall that ideophones have a fundamentally depictive mode of representation, something they share with depictive gestures (Streeck 2008). Now, ideophones are part of the linear, one-way flow of the unfolding speech signal. Therefore, as noted in §2.5, to exploit verbal

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[219] There is an important link between ideophones and Okrent's (2002) modality-free notion of gesture. This matter cannot be fully explored here; suffice it to say that the creative depictions discussed in chapter 13 —more than the conventionalized ideophonic depictions discussed in the other chapters— can be seen as "spoken gesture" in Okrent's sense.

material for depictive purposes it is necessary to signal a shift in mode of signification from descriptive (the dominant mode of signification for ordinary lexico-syntactic speech) to depictive. We saw that the position of ideophones (at clause edges, often set off with an intonational break), their structural markedness, their expressive morphology and their performative foregrounding all conspire to serve this goal. Thus there is usually a clear point at which, in Daniel Kunene's (1965; 2001) insightful turn of phrase, the speaker turns actor. From this point of view, the ideophone-gesture coupling is entirely natural: not a case of signs in disparate modalities being synchronised, but of a speaker-turned-actor using all means at his disposal for a single, richly multimodal act of depiction. Support for this suggestion comes from the fact that the coupling of ideophone and depictive gesture is most common when the ideophone is found at clause edge, showing performative foregrounding and expressive morphology, and that it is weak or even absent for ideophones that are deeply embedded in utterances and burdened by descriptive morphology (as we saw in §6.6). In the latter case, the ideophone is grammaticalised, and being no longer a depictive act, it is no longer accompanied by a depictive gesture.

The second way of thinking about the convergence is that ideophones are likely lexical affiliates for depictive gestures. They are in this respect unlike some other types of words. It has been observed by several authors that it is often difficult to point to a single lexical affiliate for depictive gestures. On the basis of this, De Ruiter has argued that "many iconic gestures reveal properties that can, at best, only be represented by phrases" (de Ruiter 2000:291). Examples are easy to adduce; De Ruiter discusses a pantomimic gesture from the McNeill lab cartoon retellings that "reveals aspects of the bowling ball itself, of holding it, of throwing it, and of throwing it in a downwards direction" (*ibid.*), while in the accompanying speech there is no single lexical affiliate for this complex depiction. Accordingly, De Ruiter suggests that depictive gestures do not have lexical affiliates but rather conceptual affiliates. "All content words have an underlying conceptual representation, but not all conceptual representations have a corresponding content word" (*ibid.*). This would explain that there is often no single lexical affiliate for a depictive gesture, but it does allow for the possibility that occasionally words and gestures will line up.

Here the special nature of ideophones becomes relevant. If, as De Ruiter (2000:291) says, depictive gestures "reveal properties that can, at best, only be represented by phrases", in ideophones they meet their verbal counterpart.

Ideophones too have often been described as evoking scenes that can only be represented with phrases. For example, Diffloth compares ideophones to "microscopic sentences" (Diffloth 1972:444); for Noss, each ideophone "represents a full clause" (Noss 2001:267); and Güldemann notes that ideophones "evoke a whole state of affairs" (Güldemann 2008:280). Both gesture and ideophone are simplex units depicting complex states of affairs. In terms of the current discussion, I propose that lexical and conceptual affiliate are coterminous in ideophones. This is what makes ideophones likely lexical affiliates for depictive gestures. As noted above, though, it is good to avoid directional phrasing; a better way to think about it is to see both ideophone and depictive gesture as pointing to a third thing: the conceptual affiliate, or the sensory imagery depicted by the multi-modal act.

14.5 Conclusion

This chapter has brought much-needed empirical data to bear on the issue of ideophones and gesture. We saw that previous claims turn out to be too strong in quantitive terms: it is not the case that gesture "almost always accompanies an ideophone" (Zondo 1982:123). We also learned that discourse type makes a difference: ideophones are more commonly accompanied with gestures (of any type) in tellings than in other contexts, which partly explains the previous claims since we know that the database of ideophone research has been heavily biased towards narratives. Finally, we saw that across different contexts, there is a particularly tight coupling between ideophones and one type of gesture, namely depictive gestures.

The perspective on ideophones developed in this thesis sheds light on this relation and suggests a coherent reason for the common coupling. Both ideophone and depictive gesture are holistic representations of complex states of affairs; and both form integral parts of a single, richly multimodal performative act. Giving a twist to the title of Adam Kendon's (1980) classic article "Gesticulation and speech: two aspects of the process of utterance", one could say that ideophone and depictive gesture are two aspects of the process of depiction.

v Conclusions

Moyamoya, dorodoro, gochagocha, barabara, fuwafuwa — no other words can describe these expressions. They represent a world of their own … Linguists, who are always described by such orthodox adjectives as *kashikoi* (wise), *tadashii* (right), *erai* (great), or *rippana* (respected), cannot handle them. If they handle them carelessly, they will run into problems.

Taro Gomi (1989)

15 Conclusions

> Dichten = condensare
>
> Ezra Pound (1934)

We have come a long way since the first chapter of this thesis. That chapter was headed by the Siwu proverb *àsi kpooo, ilò kpooo* —if you do nothing, nothing gets done— the bland translation of which is of course a poor substitute for the ideophonic sway of the original. The intervening chapters will have at least partly achieved their goal if the reader at this point does not just understand the meaning of this proverb but also has some *feeling* for it.

There is a mountain of literature pronouncing the ideophone "elusive", "unpredictable", a "dilemma", a "nightmare", a "piece of flotsam on the linguistic seashore", a mere "plaything" and a "stepchild" belonging to the "lunatic fringe" of language.[220] But is the ideophone really beyond our reach? In these pages I hope to have shown that contrary to pessimistic assumptions about semantic indeterminacy, there is logic to the iconic mappings found in ideophones, precision to their sensory meanings, and sense in their conceptual organisation. Contrary to suspicions of unpredictability, a close analysis of their use in social interaction reveals order in the interactional work people do with them, grounds for their occurrence in special ways of speaking, and regularity in their coupling with depictive gestures.

15.1 Summary

Part I of the thesis introduced ideophones and surveyed earlier research. **Chapter 2** captured the cross-linguistically robust features of ideophones by defining them as *marked words that depict sensory imagery*. After explaining the elements of this

[220] "elusive" (Mithun 1982; Noss 1986; Childs 1994b); "unpredictable" (Blench 2010); "a dilemma for translation and translation theory" (Noss 1999); "a lexicographer's worst nightmare" (de Schryver 2009:38); "another piece of flotsam on the linguistic seashore" (Samarin 1998:212); "playthings" (Müller 1899:486); "stepchild" (Noss 1985; Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001a:2); "lunatic fringe" (Frankis 1991).

definition, much of the chapter was devoted to unpacking what can be thought of as its rich point: the claim that ideophones are *depictions*. As depictions, ideophones enable others to experience what it is like to perceive the scene depicted. I justified this claim by showing that ideophones are closely akin to physical demonstrations; that they are flagged as depictions in actual use; that speakers explain them in terms of "seeing as"; and that they show formal characteristics of depictive signs like relative iconicity and expressive morphology.

The depictive nature of ideophones is what underlies their sensory meanings and their uses as appeals to personal experience. It also provides a simple explanation for the markedness and aloofness of ideophones cross-linguistically: this is what signals the switch in mode of representation, helping to literally set apart the depictive ideophone from the surrounding descriptive material in the linear speech signal. Importantly, depiction is not to be equated with simple imitation or physical resemblance. Depictions make use of culture-bound, socially mediated representational conventions. It is this socially mediated nature that gives ideophone systems their language-specific signature.

Chapter 3 surveyed the history of linguistic work on ideophones, tracing the rise of ideophone research as a subtradition in African linguistics, the influence of writers such as Lévy-Bruhl in shaping the public imagination of ideophones as signs of primitive mentality, and the more recent cross-linguistic turn that led to wider recognition of the significance of ideophone systems. It emphasized the need to place ideophones in the context of the broader ecology of linguistic resources, and noted that the most blatant gaps in our knowledge concern their meaning and use in situated social interaction.

Part II described ideophones in the context of the broader linguistic ecology of Siwu, the richly ideophonic Ghanaian language that was the subject of the field research described in the thesis. **Chapters 4 and 5** provided the ethnographic and linguistic backdrop to later chapters, with chapter 5 providing a sketch of the grammar of Siwu and showing how ideophones fit in the broader systems of property-denoting expressions, the language of perception, and quotative devices. If this chapter showed that ideophones are well integrated in the broader linguistic system, the role of **chapter 6** was to demonstrate that they nonetheless form a clearly distinct word class. Findings of this chapter include the fact that ideophones are structurally marked by means of their word length, deviant phonotactic patterns, peculiar word forms and expressive morphology; that expressive morphology is not just random modification but exhibits an orderliness

of its own and underlines the depictive character of the ideophonic sign; and that there is an inverse relation between the syntactic integration of ideophones and their susceptibility to expressive morphology and performative foregrounding. This latter finding illustrated the importance of corpus data in bringing to light possible lexicalisation or normalisation paths for ideophones. The chapter also addressed the common conflation of ideophones and interjections, arguing that despite some superficial similarities, these word classes are fundamentally different in semiotic as well as interactional terms.

Part III examined aspects of the meaning of ideophones. **Chapter 7** showed how different types of iconicity allow ideophones to move beyond the imitation of singular events towards perceptual analogies and generalisations of event structure. It also argued for the importance of the actual performance in establishing mappings between sound and sense, with a breaching experiment confirming that ideophones are produced as performances; and it explained the fact (often underplayed in the literature) that not all ideophones are transparently iconic by arguing that not iconicity, but the depictive mode of representation is fundamental to ideophony. **Chapter 8** probed six perceptual domains using dedicated stimuli, finding that ideophones are the sensory words par excellence. The results of this chapter do not only tell us about the language of perception in Siwu, they are also of wider relevance because they show that stimulus materials can be used to elicit ideophones and can play a key role as a *tertium comparationis* in developing a semantic typology of their meanings.

Chapter 9 used folk definitions to gain insight into the meanings of ideophones. It showed that such definitions specify important aspects of the background knowledge against which ideophones are understood, and that depictive gestures are crucial to illustrating the imagistic meanings of ideophones. Moreover, speakers often employ other ideophones as semantic anchoring points in the definitions, revealing sense relations of similarity and dissimilarity (but not, significantly, hyponymy or hyperonymy). This latter point suggests that all ideophones operate at a similar level of specificity, something that again meshes well with their status as depictions of specific sensory imagery. **Chapter 10** used a sorting task to tap into the conceptual structure of the domain of ideophones. It showed that speakers handle ideophones consistently and that for them, the domain is organised by richly diverse aspects of sensory perception, from SURFACE APPEARANCE to SPATIAL EXTENT and from MOUTH-FEEL to TEXTURE. This represents an important improvement over previous semantic classifications, which hitherto

have been based on analyst's intuitions more than on native speaker judgements. The chapter thus showed that a sorting task can provide a way to explore the semantic fields of ideophones without imposing preconceived categories.

The greatest blank in previous research has no doubt been the lack of studies of the ideophone in actual use, and especially in naturally occurring contexts. This has hampered progress on a number of fronts, and the chapters in **Part IV** addressed some of the questions that can be answered with this kind of data. Most important, in terms of setting the record straight, is the finding that ideophones are far from the erratic stylistic flourishes that they have been made out to be. In **chapter 11** I showed that speakers wield ideophones as communicative precision tools in everyday speech, using them to share in sensory perceptions and to subtly sort out matters of epistemic authority. I was able to explain these uses with reference to work done in earlier parts of the thesis: they build on the depictive nature of ideophones (chapters 2 and 7) and their close connection to sensory imagery (chapters 8-10). The chapter focused on naturally occurring, informal talk-in-interaction because this is the basic stream of verbal behaviour that underlies all other ways of speaking. As we saw, earlier proposals about the use of ideophones run into problems as soon as we leave the familiar territory of narratives: they are either too restricted or too sweeping to account for many observed patterns of use. In contrast, the data-driven analysis of this chapter easily incorporated all earlier proposals while at the same time offering the explanatory power to accommodate the new findings.

Chapter 12 extended the investigation to two special ways of speaking: greetings and funeral dirges. In the context of received views about ideophones as quintessentially spontaneous, dramatic and idiosyncratic, the common use of ideophones in these genres might be thought of as unexpected. As we saw, however, it is not so unexpected after all: the baseline established in the previous chapter allowed us to see that it builds on some of the core interactional functions of ideophones in everyday speech. The use of ideophones in these disparate genres points to a common element that underlies them both: an emphasis on the sharing of experience that values communality and being together. The chapter also drew attention to the way in which the aesthetics of everyday language —in the form of ideophones— may feed into genres of verbal art.

Chapter 13 documented for the first time some clear cases of ideophone creation in a corpus of naturally occurring speech. An analysis of these cases showed that ideophone creation relies on general principles outlined in earlier

chapters, for instance the use of performative foregrounding to signal a switch to the depictive mode of representation, and the use of the regular iconic mappings outlined in chapter 7 to suggest meaning. Ideophones are thus not created out of thin air, but build on the communicative competence —including ideophonic competence— of speakers of Siwu. One implication for the issue of language and creativity is that this form of linguistic creativity is based *not* on generating novel meanings using connotations and denotations of existing words, but instead on presenting new verbal material in such a way that the interlocutor treats it as a creative depiction.

Chapter 14 used corpus data to examine previous claims about the link between ideophones and gestures. It found that these claims are too strong: it is not the case that ideophones are almost always accompanied by gestures. Moreover, discourse type makes a difference: ideophones are more commonly accompanied with gestures in tellings than in other contexts. The chapter also found that there *is* a special affinity between ideophones and depictive gestures. Based on these findings it rephrased a conjecture by Kita to say that "if a communicative move features both a depictive gesture and an ideophone, the two will tend to be synchronised." Finally, it proposed two reasons for the tight coupling of ideophones and depictive gestures: first, the fact that both ideophone and gesture are holistic depictions of complex states; and second, the fact that both form part of a single performative act.

15.2 General discussion

A good deal of the work done in this thesis can be understood within a larger framework of putting the study of language in its proper context. This means not only looking at language in situated everyday interaction, but also taking stock of the ways in which the semiotic affordances of speech are exploited in the world's languages. From this perspective, it is merely a historical accident that the study of language has focused for so long on isolated sentences and monologic texts, foregrounding a view of language as a vehicle for the disembodied and decontextualised transportation of ideas, and backgrounding issues of socially grounded meaning construction, the management of social relations, and the depictive affordances of verbal material. As we saw, ideophones thrive in everyday social interaction. To ignore them is to miss out on a rich cultural meaning system

that forms an integral part of the communicative competence of speakers of ideophonic languages.

One conclusion to be drawn from the material presented in this thesis is that depiction is not a marginal phenomenon, but one of the central affordances of language. This should not surprise us. Whereas a language engineer might do well to take the arbitrariness of the sign as a design principle, natural languages are the result of aeons of cultural evolution in the hands and minds of language users. It would be rather more surprising if this semiotic affordance of verbal material had remained unused in human language. In language as in any cultural tool, "the semiotic and the material constantly cross-cut and convert into each other" (Sutton 2006:92). Repeating an observation made in other chapters, what is typologically interesting about ideophonic languages is that in them, the depictive potential of speech has taken on a life of its own, in the form of a sizable class of words which makes use of it. We can think of this as one of the many possible trajectories of the ever-evolving bio-cultural hybrid that is human language (Keller 1998; Croft 2000; Evans and Levinson 2009). This trajectory has often been overlooked or downplayed by linguists working on languages that lack such word classes. In this thesis I have shown that depictive words can be honed into communicative precision tools that enable speakers to evoke detailed sensory imagery and to manage matters of epistemic authority. So ideophone systems illuminate another corner of the design space of human language, and offer an important corrective to our ideas of what is possible in language.

Some big questions about ideophones have been why-questions: why are ideophones marked, why do they depict sensory imagery, why do languages have them at all? Such questions are notoriously difficult to answer, but in this thesis I have tried to show that reframing them can be rewarding. For instance, few explanations have been put forward for the fact that ideophones tend to be marked, performatively foregrounded and apart from the rest of the utterance (but see Kunene 2001; Nuckolls 1996). In chapter 2 I showed that we can turn the matter around and ask, given a stretch of verbal material, what is the best way to signal a switch in mode of representation? The answer is: by foregrounding some part of it so that it stands out as different and can be interpreted as a depiction. This foregrounding is precisely achieved by the marked forms, expressive morphology, and prosodic conspicuousness of ideophones. Another question is why cross-linguistically, the meanings of depictive words seem to be limited to sensory imagery. In chapter 7 I showed that if we turn the matter around and ask

what can actually be depicted in speech, it becomes clear that there are important similarities between speech and sensory imagery which make it much easier to depict sensory imagery in speech than, say, objects or spatial relations. Similarly, some have wondered about the use of ideophone systems. After all, if they are merely "playthings" (Müller 1895) or "response cries" (Pinker and Jackendoff 2009) it is rather difficult to see the purpose of maintaining such large inventories. Again, reframing the issue helps: by shifting the question from "*why* do languages have ideophones" to "*what* do people do with ideophones?" we were able to see in chapter 11 that far from being mere embellishments or expressive outcries, ideophones are tools used for interactional work.

This reframing reflects a fundamental choice of perspective that underlies the work reported in this thesis. Evans-Pritchard once mused that ideophonic languages are "not so much a type of language as a revelation in language of a type of mentality" (1962:145). Along similar lines, Nuckolls (2004; 2010b) has proposed extralinguistic and cultural factors that may foster (as in the case of animistic cosmologies) or inhibit (as in the case of abstract and logical styles of scientific discourse) the development of ideophone systems. While such factors may be at play, in this thesis I have refrained from hypothesizing at all too abstract levels of causality. Instead I have built my case from the ground up as it were, starting from facts of form and function and from nitty-gritty details of talk-in-interaction. In this way I have been able to show that Siwu speakers use ideophones to share in sensory perceptions and to sort out matters of epistemic authority; and how these uses are grounded in, and fitted to, the nature of ideophones as marked words depictive of sensory imagery. We need a large cross-linguistic database of "micro"-level findings based on rich primary data like this before we will be able to talk more meaningfully about "macro" factors that may be at play in the development and use of ideophone systems.

15.3 Future directions

This thesis makes a case for the relevance of ideophone systems to the science of language. Its findings speak to several issues, from the typology of ideophone systems to sound-symbolism and from brain-imaging studies to the study of verbal art. Here I point to some future research directions.

Ideophones have often simply been characterised as iconic words. In chapter 7 I put forward a more nuanced view, arguing that it is not iconicity (resemblance)

per se but rather the depictive mode of representation that is crucial. From this follow two points that could be fruitful loci for future research. First, if, as I have argued, performance is crucial to the interpretation of depictive material, this has implications for research into sound-symbolism. So far, experimental work on sound-symbolism has given little thought to the factor of how stimulus items are presented. One hypothesis following from the arguments presented here is that the manner of presentation actually matters a lot for how participants interpret the items presented. One prediction is that people should be more prone to form iconic mappings for stimulus items that are presented as performances (§7.5.1) than for items that are presented following standard protocols.

A second issue relates to the typology of ideophone systems. I pointed out that not all ideophones are transparently iconic, and I put forward the hypothesis that ideophones with less transparent form-meaning mappings (which I compared to "artists' renditions" in §7.5.2) can only exist in virtue of depictive signs that show more concrete iconic grounding in reality as apprehended by our senses. The hypothesis can be couched in terms of an implicational hierarchy motivated as follows. If we are going to use speech depictively, the most natural first step would be to depict sound with sound (imagic iconicity). A natural next step would be to tap into the fact that auditory events often come packaged together with movement and perhaps intensity. This is where devices like Gestalt iconicity and relative iconicity come in. From there, a natural next step is to take advantage of the fact that many sensory events can be served by Gestalt and relative iconicity even if they do not involve sound, because they do share suprasensory attributes like aspecto-temporal unfolding and intensity. That state may finally function as a springboard to extend the idea of depiction even to inner feelings, sensations and cognitive states. The important point is that all these states naturally follow from each other, and the latter states are not likely to arise without the former being in place. This, I propose, is why we find ideophone systems that are limited to sound only, or to sound + movement only, or systems spanning the broader spectrum of sensory imagery to various extents, but why we do not find ideophone systems that are limited to inner feelings or cognitive states only.[221] Although I am not

[221] The areal distribution of these different types of ideophone systems is telling, at least judging from the limited evidence we have at this point. For instance, languages from the Americas for which we have reports do not seem to go far beyond sound + movement systems, while most descriptions of African and South-East Asian ideophone systems note a much broader range of sensory domains.

aware of counterexamples, this proposal for an implicational hierarchy is in need of wider cross-linguistic scrutiny.

Another open issue concerns the differential elaboration of sensory modalities in ideophones. We have fragmentary reports —for instance, Japanese has been said to be richer in ideophones evoking cognitive states than African languages (Childs 2001:70)— but the issue awaits structured comparative typological investigation. The evolutionary sequence described above is just one limiting factor in what will no doubt turn out to be a complex interplay of many other factors, including the natural environment, subsistence style, material culture as well as language ideologies (Nuckolls 2004) and cultural and linguistic differences in the relative weighting or elaboration of sensory modalities (Geurts 2002; Majid and Levinson 2011). We don't know much yet about the contribution and interaction of these different factors, but most importantly, we lack the rich primary data that would allow us to at least construe a picture of cross-linguistic variation in ideophone systems. Some of the methods used in this thesis, for instance dedicated stimulus materials, folk definitions and sorting tasks, can help out here.

The need to construe a more complete picture of cross-linguistic diversity naturally extends to the uses made of ideophones. Part IV of this thesis has identified a number of recurring patterns of use for ideophones in Siwu. Do we find similar uses in other ideophonic languages? No doubt there are uses of ideophones not represented in the corpus that informed this thesis. How do these relate to the nature of ideophones as marked words that depict sensory imagery? The only way to find out is to see how speakers of ideophonic languages across the world use ideophones in talk-in-interaction. A world of exploration awaits us.

Since ideophones employ a different mode of representation (depictive rather than descriptive, §2.5), there is reason to expect that this may involve processing differences that can be investigated using psycholinguistic methods. One recent study (Osaka and Osaka 2005) has suggested that Japanese ideophones for laughter, but not nonsense syllables, activate striatal reward areas in the brain. However, since the baseline is with nonce words and not with non-ideophonic words related to laughter, we cannot be sure that this can be attributed to the ideophonic status of the words. The effect may just be an instance of more generally known effects of embodied semantics (Pulvermüller 1999). At the same time, as shown in Pulvermüller's work and in many follow-up studies since, there is clear evidence for the importance of sensory imagery in mental representation,

and for processing differences between different word classes. Foroni & Semin (2009) showed that English verbs for laughing (smile, frown) and corresponding adjectives (happy, angry) induce motor resonance in facial muscles, the verbs more strongly than the adjectives. My hypothesis would be that ideophones for emotional states and facial configurations would rival verbs in the extent to which they cause motor resonance. Clearly, ideophones —with their tight links to sensory imagery and non-arbitrary mappings of sound and meaning— provide an ideal testing ground for questions about the importance of imagery in language and cognition. They have so far escaped comparison, probably simply because cognitive science has until recently been hardly aware of their existence. By supplying linguistic and behavioural evidence for the tight link of ideophones and perceptual knowledge, this thesis has done some of the groundwork needed to begin addressing these issues.

A final matter for future investigation lies in the study of verbal art and its relation to ordinary language. As I argued in chapter 12, many of the literary notions and analytic categories employed in the study of verbal artistry —notions like aesthetic involvement, enactment, foregrounding, multimodality— must in the final analysis have their root in the affordances of speech in everyday social interaction. The analysis of verbal art often proceeds in isolation from the everyday linguistic practices of a community, as if artful language belonged in a glass showcase. Yet to isolate verbal art from everyday talk is to ignore its crucial dependence on the aesthetics of everyday language. The contrastive analysis of mundane talk and a special genre like the funeral dirges discussed in chapters 11 and 12 demonstrated this by showing one way in which the aesthetics of everyday language —in the form of ideophones— feed into verbal art.

Ideophones have variously been reduced to playthings or upheld as highly poetic. Either perspective fails to see the role of mundane everyday social interaction in constructing our social world through linguistic resources. The research reported in this thesis gives new meaning to the words of Evans-Pritchard, who wrote half a century ago that ideophones are "poetry in ordinary language" (1962:145). Throughout this study, we have seen how the threads of the everyday and the aesthetic interweave. With both poetry and ordinary language in mind, the future of ideophone studies holds much promise.

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17 Appendices

17.1 Online supplementary materials

This thesis comes with a website containing online supplementary materials. This site includes audio and video clips of virtually all data extracts as well as photographic material and high-resolution versions of selected figures. It can be found here:

http://thesis.ideophone.org/

Throughout the thesis, material available online is marked "**(S)**". The materials can be located by chapter or by typing in the reference number (e.g. "9.1") in the search bar on the website.

17.2 List of figures

17.3 List of tables

17.4 List of data extracts

17.5 List of ideophones used in the pile-sorting task

The following 58 ideophones were used in the pile-sorting task (chapter 10). They are listed here alphabetically, but were presented to all participants in the same randomised order, recorded in the "random id" column. The "card" form is how they appeared on the cards (i.e. according to the official orthography), the "db form" includes tone marking. The source column records the source of the ideophone: "corpus" for the 38 most frequent ideophones from the corpus of naturally occurring speech, and "LoP" for the 20 most frequent ideophones from the Language of Perception tasks (chapter 8).

Photos of the pile-sort being administered and typical final sorting solutions can be found in the online supplementary materials.

card (db form)	gloss	source	random id
bebrebee	many	corpus	24
belele (bɛlɛlɛ)	broad and extended	corpus	15
buaa (buàà)	tasteless	LoP	41
ɖɔbɔrɔɔ	soft	corpus	14
ɖɛkpɛrɛɛ (ɖɛ̀kpɛ̀rɛ̀ɛ̀)	fine-grained	corpus	31
dzoroo	far	corpus	20
fiɛfiɛ	silky	LoP	40
fũɛ̃fũɛ̃	soft-malleable	LoP	60
fututu	pure white	corpus	53
gbegbe	tough	corpus	13
gbidii	excessive activity	corpus	23
gbiim (gbíìm̀)	sound of explosion	corpus	11
gbogboro (gbògbòrò)	tough	corpus	47
gbugburu (gbùgbùrù)	tough	LoP	46
gɔdɔrɔ	crooked	corpus	22
gelegele	shiny	corpus	30
giligili (gìlìgìlì)	round (circular)	LoP	51
kananaa	silent	corpus	43
kɛkɛi (kɛ̀kɛ́i)	small	corpus	48
kpãũ (kpáa̋ù̋)	big, enormous	corpus	38
kpɔ	sound of impact	corpus	32
kpɔlɔkpɔlɔ	slippery	corpus	45
kpinakpina	black	corpus	49

kpokporo	hard	corpus	52
kpoo	silent	corpus	55
kpu	sound of impact	corpus	57
krɔ̃krɔ̃	pleasantly smelling	LoP	44
kunukunu	completely empty	corpus	33
lelele	full to the brim	corpus	28
mɛlɛmɛlɛ	talkative	corpus	25
mɛ̃rɛ̃mɛ̃rɛ̃	tasty	LoP	06
miɔmiɔ	pointy	LoP	54
minimini	round (spherical)	LoP	10
mlamla (mlàmlà)	quickly	corpus	42
nyagbalaa	pungent/sour	LoP	04
nyanyarĩĩ	dirty	LoP	03
nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃	very sweet	LoP	59
pɔkɔsɔɔ	slow	corpus	09
pɔlɔpɔlɔ	smooth	LoP	26
pɔtɔpɔtɔ	dirty/muddy	corpus	08
pelee	completely	corpus	27
pɛpɛɛpɛ	precisely	corpus	02
saaa	cool sensation	LoP	19
safaraa (sàfàràà)	rough, coarse-grained	LoP	29
sɔdzɔlɔɔ (sɔ̀dzɔ̀lɔ̀ɔ̀)	oblong	LoP	50
shu	sound of ignition	corpus	16
sinisini	closely woven	LoP	01
tagbaraa	long	corpus	12
teteree	loud	corpus	37
tititi	big and wide	corpus	17
tsuru (tsurù)	sound of X	corpus	35
waa	sound of water gushing	corpus	39
wɔ̃rãwɔ̃rã̀ (wɔ̀̃rã̀wɔ̀̃rã̀)	spotted	LoP	05
wosoroo (wòsòròò)	rough	LoP	21
wũrĩwũrĩ (wĩrĩwĩrĩ)	small things dispersed	corpus	34
wurufuu (wùrùfùù)	fluffy	LoP	56
yuayua	burning sensation	corpus	58
yululu	cold	corpus	07

17.6 Glossing conventions

In interlinear examples I adhere to most of the Leipzig Glossing Rules (Comrie, Haspelmath, and Bickel 2004). Here I note a few specific conventions employed in interlinear glosses and translations. (See §1.4 for how data sources are cited.)

I employ a mnemonic system for glossing noun class and agreement markers. Some of these classes are basically singular, others are basically plural, while yet others convey singular or plural depending on the oppositional relationship. Because noun class markers are so ubiquitous and at the same time regular I try to save space by (a) not glossing them unless there is an agreement relation with another element in the utterance or broader context and (b) not glossing number unless needed for disambiguation. Thus *ɔ̀rɛ̃rɛ̃* 'man' may be found glossed simply as "man" as in (145), but in the presence of agreeing elements, its noun class is indicated, as in (146). Number is not represented in the gloss in either case because it is unambiguously singular on several counts (for example ɔ is always singular and the translation is clear enough). When in doubt, the reader is referred to the table below or the discussion of the noun class system in §5.3.6 (p. 109ff.).

(145) *ɔ̀rɛ̃rɛ̃ gbogboro-à*
man IDPH.tough-ADJ
'tough man'

(146) *ɔ̀-rɛ̃rɛ̃ gɔ lò-kpi*
ɔ-man REL.ɔ DEP-die
'the man who died'

PREFIX	AGR. CLASS	SUBJECT (S)	RELATIVE	OBJECT (O)	INDEPENDENT
ì-	I	i-	nɛ-	nɛ̃	nɛ̃
à-	A	a-	wa-	wã	wã
mà-	MA	ma-	ma-	mã	mã
ɔ̀-, Ø-	ɔ	ɔ-	gɔ-	ù̃	ɔ̃
sì-	SI	si-	dzɛ-	sɛ̃	sɛ̃
kà-	KA	ka-	ga-	kã	kã
kù-	KU	ku-	gɔ-	kɔ̃	kɔ̃
N-, mì-	MI	mi-	mɛ-	mɛ̃	mɛ̃

Table 17.1 Noun classes and agreement paradigms

17.7 Abbreviations used in glosses

For the noun class references I, A, MA, Ɔ, SI, KA, KU, MI, refer to Table 17.1 on page 408 (and see the overview of the noun class system in §5.3.6). Cross-references indicate discussions of selected categories in the grammar sketch.

σ	syllable
1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person
ADJ	adjectiviser (*-à*) · §5.3.2
AGR	agreement · §5.3.6
AOR	aorist · §5.3.9
CNT	continuous (*la*) · §5.3.9
CONT	vocal continuer (*mm*)
COP	copula · §5.5
D	demonstrative · §5.3.6
D.DST	distal dem. (*mmɔ*)
D.PRX	proximal dem. (*ǹgbe*)
DEP	dependent cross-reference marker (*lo-*) · §5.3.8
EM	expressive morphology · §6.4
FP	final particle · §5.3.4
FP.ADV	advice (*lo*)
FP.DISJ	disjunctive, realizing there are other options (*ɛbèrɛ̀*)
FP.URG	urgency (*nì*)
FP.WNDR	wondering (*ɣɛ̀ɛ̀*)
FUT	future/potential (*-a-*) · §5.3.9
HAB	habitual (*sɛ*) · §5.3.9
IDPH	ideophone · chapter 6
IMP	imperative
IND	independent pronoun · §5.3.7
INDEF	indefinite suffix (*-ɔ̀*)
ING	ingressive (*ka*) · §5.3.9
INSTR	instrumental (*gu*)
INTJ	interjection · §5.3.5
LOC	locative (*i*)
NEG	negative (*-i-*)
NEG.IMP	negative imperative (*dàà*)
NOM	nominaliser
O	object
PF	perfective (*-ɔ̀-*) · §5.3.9
PL	plural
PLN	place name
PLUR	pluractional · §5.3.10
POSS	possessive
PROG	progressive (*to*) · §5.3.9
PSN	person name
PST	past (´) · §5.3.9
Q	question marker (utterance-final lengthening, flat intonation contour)
QT	quotative (*sɔ*) · §5.7
REFL	reflexive (*so*)
REL	relative · §5.3.8
S	subject
SCR	independent subject cross-reference marker · §5.3.8
SG	singular
SUBJ	subjunctive (*sí*) (often glossed as *if*)
TDBY	the day before yesterday (*igɔ̀*)
TP	topic marker (*nɛ*)

17.8 Transcription conventions

The conversational transcripts in this thesis rely on a simplified form of the transcription conventions used in work in Conversation Analysis (Jefferson 2004).

▸	An arrow before a line highlights the focus of analysis. For instance, lines featuring ideophones are often highlighted like this.
[	A left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset.
]	A right bracket indicates the point at which two overlapping utterances end, or the point at which one of them end while the other continues.
=	An equal sign indicates no break or gap is heard between the speech preceding it and that following it.
(0.0)	Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in tenth of seconds.
-	A dash indicates a cut-off.
:	Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. However, in many of the transcripts here, prolongation of vowels in ideophones is indicated by repetitions of the vowel symbol.
↑↓	Arrows indicate shifts into especially high or low pitch.
°	Degree signs bracketing a stretch of speech indicate that the sounds are softer than the surrounding talk.
( )	Empty parentheses indicate that the transcriber was unable to get what was said.
LOUD	Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
(unclear)	Parenthesised words are dubious.
((comment))	Doubled parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions.
> <	Right/left carats bracketing a stretch of speech indicate that the bracketed material is speeded up compared to the surrounding talk.
< >	Left/right carats bracketing a stretch of speech indicate that the bracketed material is slowed down compared to the surrounding talk.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift is een studie naar de betekenis en het gebruik van ideofonen in het Siwu (spreek uit: "Siwoe"). Het maakt gebruik van inzichten uit de semiotiek, semantische typologie, conversatieanalyse en de etnografie van het spreken om een bijdrage te leveren aan een beter begrip van ideofonen: klankschilderende woorden die wereldwijd in veel talen voorkomen maar die in de moderne taalkunde relatief onderbelicht gebleven zijn. Voorbeelden van Siwu ideofonen en de zintuiglijke waarnemingen die ze verbeelden zijn *dèkpèrèèè* 'fijngemalen', *worawora* 'gevlekt patroon', *saaa* 'fris gevoel in de mond (zoals gember of pepermunt)', *kpatàà* 'plotselinge verschijning', *gbogborogbo* 'stevig' en *hiiii* 'ervaring van oorsuizen'. De opvallende vorm van deze woorden, hun beeldrijke betekenissen en de rol die ze spelen in alledaags taalgebruik zijn onderwerp van onderzoek in dit proefschrift.

Hoofdstuk 1 is een algemene inleiding waarin het doel en de relevantie van het onderzoek geformuleerd worden. Ideofonen zijn niet alleen van belang als onderbelicht taalkundig fenomeen, maar ook omdat ze inzicht geven in hoe zintuiglijke waarneming uitgedrukt kan worden in taal; hoe spraak niet alleen gebruikt kan worden om te beschrijven maar ook om te verbeelden; hoe mensen taal kunnen gebruiken om zaken als ervaring, bewijslast, en recht van spreken te regelen; hoe nieuwe woorden gevormd worden; en hoe woord en gebaar zich tot elkaar verhouden. In de woorden van Ɔɖimɛ, één van mijn informanten: "Zonder ideofonen is spraak *buàà* [smakeloos]. Het moet gepeperd zijn." Dit hoofdstuk geeft ook informatie over het veldonderzoek en de gegevensverzameling. De gebruikte methoden zijn veelvoudig: van traditionele taalkundige analyse tot elicitatie (het ontlokken van informatie met behulp van plaatjes of andere stimuli) en van een collectie video-opnames van alledaagse gesprekken (een corpus) tot de documentatie van speciale genres zoals klaagzangen.

Deel I introduceert ideofonen en geeft een overzicht van eerder onderzoek. **Hoofdstuk 2** definieert ideofonen als "opvallende woorden die zintuiglijke waarnemingen verbeelden." De verschillende onderdelen van de definitie worden verderop in het proefschrift uitgewerkt. Het punt dat met name belicht wordt in dit hoofdstuk is dat ideofonen *verbeelden* in plaats van *beschrijven* (veelgebruikte termen hiervoor zijn "depiction" versus "description"). Het is de verbeeldende

aard van ideofonen die mensen uitnodigt om ze te behandelen als een *voorstelling* of *vertoning* van een zintuiglijke waarneming, en die ten grondslag ligt aan de manieren waarop ze gebruikt worden in zowel gewone gesprekken als in speciale genres. Dit verklaart meteen waarom ideofonen zo anders klinken dan gewone woorden (waarom ze "opvallend" zijn): om aan te geven dat ze anders opgevat moeten worden, niet als gewone woorden waarin klank en betekenis zich goeddeels arbitrair tot elkaar verhouden, maar als verbeeldingen waarin met klank geschilderd wordt. **Hoofdstuk 3** plaatst het proefschrift in het bredere kader van de geschiedenis van het onderzoek naar ideofonen, een geschiedenis die voor de moderne taalkunde slechts anderhalve eeuw geleden begon met de eerste beschrijvingen van ideofoonsystemen in West-Afrikaanse talen.

Deel II introduceert de taal waar het veldonderzoek voor dit proefschrift zich op gericht heeft: het Siwu, gesproken in de bergen ten oosten van Ghana's Voltameer. **Hoofdstuk 4** verschaft een etnografische schets van de sprekers van het Siwu, beschrijft de geografische en taalkundige context, en geeft een historisch overzicht van de publicaties over de taal en cultuur sinds de eerste vermelding van het Siwu minder dan 150 jaar geleden. **Hoofdstuk 5** biedt een beknopt overzicht van de grammatica van het Siwu. Dit is een bijdrage aan de documentatie van deze nog goeddeels onbeschreven taal, maar dient ook twee specifiekere doeleinden: allereerst om de lezer in staat te stellen de voorbeelden verderop in het proefschrift zelf te kunnen beoordelen, en ten tweede om de plaats te schetsen die ideofonen innemen in de bredere ecologie van taalstructuren in het Siwu.

Hoofdstuk 6 is een gedetailleerde beschrijving van de formele eigenschappen van ideofonen in het Siwu. Het laat zien dat factoren zoals fonotactiek (de manier waarop klanken woorden vormen), woordlengte, speciale woordvormen, en expressieve morfologie (verdubbeling en verlenging) allemaal bijdragen aan het herkenbaar maken van ideofonen als opvallende en daarmee verbeeldende woorden. Dit hoofdstuk laat ook de eerste toepassing van het corpus van gesproken Siwu zien. Uit het corpus blijkt dat er een omgekeerde relatie is tussen de mate waarin ideofonen geïntegreerd zijn in de morfosyntaxis van de zin en de mate waarin ze als verbeelding gemarkeerd worden. Meestal zijn ideofonen minimaal geïntegreerd in de zin en maximaal verbeeldend; maar hoe meer ze geïntegreerd zijn, hoe minder expressief ze klinken en hoe minder verbeeldend ze gebruikt worden. Die integratie komt relatief vaker voor bij veelgebruikte ideofonen. Zo brengt het corpus aan het licht hoe ideofonen bij veel gebruik langzaam kunnen afslijten tot gewone woorden. Tenslotte gaat het hoofdstuk in op

de relaties tussen ideofonen en andere woordklassen, met speciale nadruk op het onderscheid tussen tussenwerpsels en ideofonen, twee woordklassen die vaak ten onrechte verward worden.

De vier hoofdstukken in **Deel III** onderzoeken de betekenis van ideofonen. **Hoofdstuk 7** beschrijft drie verschillende semiotische verbanden tussen vorm en betekenis (drie soorten klanksymboliek) die we aantreffen in ideofonen. Het laat ook het belang zien van de eigenlijke uitvoering van de ideofoon: pas in het echte gebruik ervaren we ten volle de verschillende manieren waarop spraak zintuiglijke waarneming kan verbeelden. Tegelijk relativeert het hoofdstuk ook het belang van klanksymboliek door te laten zien dat wat er allereerst toe doet niet per se gelijkenis is, maar de verbeeldende aard van ideofonen. Een analogie met artistieke verbeeldingen maakt dit duidelijk. Een artistieke verbeelding van de structuur van een atoom of van de oerknal vertoont geen gelijkenis met iets dat voor ons waarneembaar is, maar is als verbeelding toch effectiever dan een beschrijving. Zo bezien zijn ideofonen artistieke verbeeldingen van zintuiglijke waarnemingen die moeilijk in gewone woorden te vangen zijn.

Hoofdstuk 8 brengt verslag uit van een aantal elicitatietaken op het gebied van verschillende zintuigen: textuur, smaak, kleur, vorm, geluid, en geur. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien dat zulke taken goed bruikbaar zijn in de studie van ideofonen, en dat ideofonen één van de belangrijkste manieren vormen om in het Siwu over perceptie te praten, vooral op het gebied van textuur, smaak, en vorm. Het gebruik van dezelfde elicitatietaken met veertien verschillende sprekers geeft inzicht in de opmerkelijk gedetailleerde betekenissen die ideofonen hebben en biedt aanknopingspunten voor verder lexicaal-semantisch onderzoek. Een voorbeeld daarvan is te vinden in het smaak-domein, waar de ideofoon *nyɛ̃kɛ̃nyɛ̃kɛ̃* specifiek blijkt te verwijzen naar de extreem zoete smaak van de vruchten van twee alleen in dit deel van West-Afrika voorkomende subtropische planten, bekend in de levensmiddelenindustrie als inspiratie voor kunstmatige zoetstoffen. Ideofonen kunnen dus gebruikt worden om heel specifieke smaaksensaties weer te geven.

Hoofdstuk 9 gaat dieper in op beweringen dat de betekenissen van ideofonen ongrijpbaar en variabel zijn. Als we sprekers van het Siwu de betekenis van ideofonen laten omschrijven wordt duidelijk dat ze dat heel consistent doen, en dat ze allemaal dezelfde technieken gebruiken. Drie van die technieken worden in meer detail besproken: het beschrijven van situaties, het gebruik van gebaren, en het parafraseren met behulp van andere woorden, vaak ook ideofonen. De eerste

techniek geeft inzicht in de culturele achtergrondkennis die van belang is voor een goed begrip van ideofonen. Een nauwlettende studie van de tweede techniek — gebaren— in de verklaringen laat zien dat gebaren soms beter dan gewone woorden uitdrukking kunnen geven aan de beeldrijke betekenissen van ideofonen. De derde techniek, het gebruik van synoniemen en antoniemen, werpt licht op de relaties die kunnen bestaan tussen ideofonen. Uit de verklaringen wordt duidelijk dat ideofonen zich niet hierarchisch tot elkaar verhouden, maar meer in termen van gradaties in verwantschap en verschil in betekenis.

Hoofdstuk 10 bestudeert de onderlinge samenhang van ideofonen aan de hand van een sorteertaak, om uit te vinden hoe sprekers van het Siwu zelf ideofonen groeperen. Dit is een belangrijke verbetering ten opzichte van eerdere classificaties van ideofonen, die altijd uitgingen van de intuïtie van de onderzoeker, meestal een buitenstaander. De resultaten, geanalyseerd met statistische technieken als multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) en een clusteranalyse, tonen de zintuiglijke aard van ideofonen duidelijk aan: Siwu-sprekers groeperen ideofonen aan de hand van zintuiglijke begrippen zoals 'mondgevoel', 'reflectie', 'kneedbaarheid', en 'textuur'. Verklaringen van de sprekers naderhand laten zien dat de betekenisverwantschap tussen de ideofonen ook in woorden uitgedrukt kan worden, wat ons inzicht verschaft in hoe zintuiglijke ervaring geconceptualiseerd wordt in het Siwu.

De vier hoofdstukken in **Deel IV** onderzoeken het gebruik van ideofonen. **Hoofdstuk 11** is de eerste studie ooit van ideofonen in een verzameling video-opnames van informele, natuurlijke gesprekken. Met behulp van de methoden van de conversatieanalyse laat dit hoofdstuk zien dat ideofonen in sommige contexten gebruikt worden om de eigen waarneming (en daarmee het recht van spreken) te benadrukken, en in andere juist om samen ervaringen te delen. Om dit te verklaren komen de resultaten van eerdere hoofdstukken goed van pas: wat eraan ten grondslag ligt is de verbeeldende aard van ideofonen (het feit dat ze vertelde gebeurtenissen tot leven brengen) samen met hun zintuiglijke semantiek (het feit dat hun betekenissen sterk samenhangen met zintuiglijke waarneming).

Een belangrijke bijdrage van dit hoofdstuk ligt in het verbreden van de horizon van het ideofonenonderzoek. Waar voorheen vooral gewerkt werd met voorbeeldzinnen en geschreven verhalen, is hier de keuze gemaakt om te kijken naar het meest veelvoorkomende gebruik van taal: informele alledaagse gesprekken. Deze bredere empirische basis maakt het mogelijk om eerdere voorstellen te beoordelen en te verbeteren. Zo blijkt dat ideofonen soms inderdaad dienen om verhalen levendiger te maken (een bestaand voorstel), maar dat ze

bijvoorbeeld ook gebruikt worden in een impliciete schermutseling over wie er recht van spreken heeft (een nog niet eerder beschreven functie). Het hoofdstuk laat zien dat het lonend is om alledaagse spreektaal te onderzoeken, niet alleen omdat daarin een wereld aan ordelijke feiten te vinden is, maar ook als aanvulling op andere methoden: immers, elke manier van kijken heeft zijn blinde vlekken.

Hoofdstuk 12 kijkt naar ideofonen in twee heel verschillende genres: begroetingen en klaagzangen. Hoewel elk van deze genres zijn eigenheden heeft, is het gebruik van ideofonen in beide uiteindelijk terug te voeren op de functies van ideofonen die aan het licht gekomen zijn in het vorige hoofdstuk. Door een analyse van poëtische klaagzangen te combineren met gegevens uit alledaags taalgebruik verheldert dit hoofdstuk bovendien de relatie tussen woordkunst en het alledaagse. Ideofonen, als verbeeldende en dus poëtische woorden, zijn hierbij een belangrijke verbindende factor.

Hoofdstuk 13 laat nieuw licht schijnen op een oude controverse: de vraag of ideofonen spontaan gevormd kunnen worden door sprekers. Eerdere onderzoekers hebben dit beweerd op grond van anekdotisch bewijs; door anderen is dit weer hevig betwist. Het corpus van gesproken Siwu biedt de mogelijkheid om deze beweringen empirisch te onderzoeken. Het laat zien dat sprekers meestal bestaande ideofonen gebruiken, maar dat ze incidenteel nieuwe vormen creëren. Omdat deze gevallen op video vastgelegd zijn, is het mogelijk om te onderzoeken hoe dit proces werkt. De typische opvallendheid van het ideofonisch gebruik van spraak speelt hierbij een belangrijke rol: zo worden de nieuwe vormen gemarkeerd als spontane verbeeldingen. Het hoofdstuk bespreekt de implicaties hiervan voor ons denken over creativiteit en taal.

Hoofdstuk 14 onderzoekt het verband tussen ideofonen en gebaren in alledaagse gesprekken. Het toont aan dat dit verband numeriek minder sterk is dan gedacht, maar tegelijkertijd dat er een speciale relatie is tussen ideofonen en één bepaald soort gebaren: depictieve of verbeeldende gebaren. Ideofonen en deze gebaren blijken vaak gesynchroniseerd te zijn. De verklaring hiervoor ligt in de verbeeldende aard van beide. Door eerdere claims empirisch te onderzoeken verheldert dit hoofdstuk de relatie tussen visuele en verbale aspecten van taal.

Hoofdstuk 15 besluit het proefschrift. Het biedt een overzicht van de belangrijkste bevindingen —hierboven samengevat— en bespreekt het belang van ideofonen voor de wetenschappelijke studie van taal. Een algemeen methodologisch punt is dat dit proefschrift wil bijdragen aan het in de juiste context plaatsen van de studie van taal. Te lang heeft de taalkunde zich gericht op

de analyse van geïsoleerde voorbeeldzinnen en monologen. Omdat ideofonen moeilijk op traditionele wijze bestudeerd kunnen worden is methodologische veelzijdigheid geboden; en dus nemen nieuwe elicitatiemethoden, analyse van video-opnames van alledaagse gesprekken, en aandacht voor zowel woord als gebaar een belangrijke plaats in in dit proefschrift. De perspectiefverschuiving die dit met zich meebrengt —van taal bestudeerd in een geïdealiseerd individu naar taal bestudeerd in de interactie van mens tot mens, en van taal als vehikel voor de gedecontextualiseerde overdracht van ideeën naar taal als middel voor het onderhouden van sociale relaties— is van fundamenteel belang, niet slechts om een beter zicht te krijgen op ideofonen, maar voor een completer begrip van de werking en betekenis van taal in het algemeen.

Het verbeeldend gebruik van spraak is waarschijnlijk in alle talen belangrijk. Wat typologisch significant is aan ideofonische talen als het Siwu is niet zozeer dat depictie voorkomt, maar dat een belangrijk deel van het lexicon erin gespecialiseerd is. Deze mogelijkheid is vaak over het hoofd gezien in de op Westerse leest geschoeide taalkunde, omdat verbeeldende woorden slechts een klein deel uitmaken van de woordenschat van Indo-Europese talen. De gedetailleerde beschrijving van de betekenis en het gebruik van ideofonen in een taal als het Siwu is daarom van belang voor ons begrip van hoe talen —hybride producten van biologische en culturele evolutie— zich kunnen ontwikkelen.

De bevindingen van dit proefschrift leveren een aantal vruchtbare richtingen op voor toekomstig onderzoek. Er is nog weinig bekend over de typologie van ideofoonsystemen. Een concreet voorstel is gedaan in hoofdstuk 7, namelijk dat ideofoonsystemen varieren van simpel en concreet (als in onomatopeeën, die alleen geluid of geluid samen met beweging verbeelden) tot meer abstract (als in ideofonen die innerlijke ervaringen of mentale toestanden uitdrukken), en dat de meer abstracte ideofonen niet zullen voorkomen zonder de concrete kern. Zo vinden we talen met alleen of vooral onomatopeeën (zoals het Engels), en talen die zowel onomatopeeën als meer abstracte ideofonen hebben (zoals het Siwu of het Japans), maar geen talen met alleen maar abstracte ideofonen. Deze hypothese behoeft toetsing in meer talen. Een gerelateerde kwestie is de typologie van betekenisdomeinen in ideofonen. Tot dusver heeft de semantische classificatie van ideofonen vooral plaatsgevonden op grond van de intuïtie van de onderzoeker, wat vergelijkend onderzoek nagenoeg onmogelijk maakt. De methoden gebruikt in dit proefschrift (met name de elicitatietaken in hoofdstuk 8 en de sorteertaak in hoofdstuk 10) maken het mogelijk om rigoreus typologisch onderzoek te doen.

Ook vergelijkend onderzoek naar het gebruik van ideofonen staat nog in de kinderschoenen. In dit proefschrift is een begin gemaakt met het empirisch onderzoek naar het gebruik van ideofonen in alledaagse gesproken taal. Zoals voor alle wetenschappelijk werk geldt ook hiervoor dat meer gegevens, betere methoden, en toepassing van de methoden in andere talen ongetwijfeld veel nieuws zullen opleveren. In dit opzicht vormt de studie van ideofonen in gesproken taal een uitdagend en lonend nieuw onderzoeksgebied.

Een ander onderzoeksgebied waarin voortgang kan worden geboekt is de neurowetenschappelijke studie van ideofonen. Het fundamentele onderscheid tussen verbeeldend en beschrijvend gebruik van taal is reden om aan te nemen dat er ook verschillen bestaan in taalverwerking tussen ideofonen en gewone woorden. Lichte verschillen in neurale en musculaire activiteit zijn al aangetoond tussen bijvoeglijk naamwoorden en werkwoorden in hetzelfde betekenisveld; grotere activatie voor werkwoorden lijkt verbonden met belichaamde ('embodied') betekenisstructuren (Foroni & Semin 2009). Ideofonen zijn tot dusver niet op deze manier onderzocht omdat er te weinig bekend was over de aard van hun betekenissen. Dit proefschrift levert een belangrijke bijdrage in de vorm van taalkundig en gedragswetenschappelijk bewijs voor het nauwe verband tussen ideofonen en belichaamde perceptuele beelden.

Tot slot is er het verband tussen woordkunst en alledaagse taal. Die twee worden vaak los van elkaar bestudeerd, alsof woordkunst thuishoort in een vitrine en alledaags taalgebruik juist te gewoontjes is om wetenschappelijk te onderzoeken. De studie van ideofonen laat echter zien dat ze onlosmakelijk met elkaar verbonden zijn. Wanneer woordkunst losgezongen wordt van het alledaagse raakt het cruciale verband tussen de twee uit het zicht: het feit dat allerlei technieken die vaak als literair beschreven worden —zoals esthetische betrokkenheid, verbeelding, foregrounding, multimodaliteit— uiteindelijk hun oorsprong hebben in het esthetisch potentieel van alledaags taalgebruik.

Ideofonen zijn nu eens gereduceerd tot speelgoed, dan weer verheven tot poëzie. Beide uitersten zien over het hoofd hoe fundamenteel alledaagse interactie is in het opbouwen van onze sociale wereld met talige middelen. Het onderzoek beschreven in dit proefschrift geeft invulling aan de woorden van de antropoloog Evans-Pritchard (1962), die ideofonen karakteriseerde als "dichtkunst in gewone taal". Door heel het proefschrift heen hebben we gezien hoe het alledaagse en het esthetische met elkaar verweven zijn. Met zowel dichtkunst als gewone taal in het vizier heeft de studie van ideofonen een veelbelovende toekomst.

Intangible and abstruse

the bright silk of the sunlight

Pours down in manifest splendor,

You can neither stroke

the precise word with your hand

Nor shut it down under a box-lid

Ezra Pound
The Unwobbling Pivot
Tsze Sze's Second Thesis, XVI.4

Biographical note

Mark Dingemanse studied African Languages and Linguistics at Leiden University, The Netherlands, receiving his M.A. in 2006. In 2007, he was awarded a PhD scholarship in the Language and Cognition group at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics. During the period 2007-2011 he carried out over nine months of field research in Ghana, working with the Mawu people to document aspects of their linguistic and cultural heritage. Alongside his PhD project on the meaning and use of ideophones in Siwu he contributed to the research projects *Categories across language and cognition* and *Interactional Foundations of Language*. Over the years he also helped realise a number of Digital Humanities projects, including the online oral traditions repository Verba Africana, the L&C Field Manuals and Stimulus Materials website, and the e-journal Semiotix. Currently, he is a research staff member contributing to the ERC-funded project *Human Sociality and Systems of Language Use* based at the MPI for Psycholinguistics. His research interests include the study of meaning as it emerges in situated interaction, the relation between everyday language and verbal art, and the interplay between language, culture and cognition.

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