

Please cite as:

Tufvesson, S. (2007). Expressives. In A. Majid (Ed.), *Field Manual Volume 10* (pp. 53-58). Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics. doi:[10.17617/2.492919](https://doi.org/10.17617/2.492919).

REGULATIONS ON USE

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Background

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

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EXPRESSIVES

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Project	Categories and concepts across language and cognition
Task	Linguistic elicitation tool comprising of video and audio clips to elicit expressives.
Goal of task	<p>This elicitation task is based on successful exploratory elicitation of expressives in the Southeast Asian Mon-Khmer language Semai. The goal of performing this task cross-linguistically in regard to expressives is manifold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To establish whether it is possible to capture expressives adequately using elicitation tasks. And if so, to provide a basis for further development of elicitation tools.• To contribute towards data collection for comparative research on linguistic coding of sensory perceptions.• To provide comparative data for research on sound symbolism.• To outline speakers' meta-linguistic knowledge of expressives, and general attitude towards usage, as well as agreement on meaning.• To investigate the relation between expressives and other communicative tools, such as gestures.
Prerequisites	To conduct this task you will need (i) auditory and (ii) video stimuli

Background

Expressives are a distinct class of words which denote sensory perceptions of the speaker; describing visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, haptic, emotional or other types of perceptions in relation to particular phenomena. Based on current documentary work, expressives are found mostly in Asian and African languages, as well as in some South American languages (Diffloth 1972, 1976, Dixon 1977, Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz 2001). As a distinct class of words, they are rare in Indo-European languages.

The term *expressive* has been used in studies of this class in Asian languages (see e.g. Diffloth 1976, Svantesson 1992 and Wayland 1996). However, within African and South American linguistics the term *ideophone* has commonly been used (Doke 1935), while the term *mimetics* is often applied in Japanese linguistics (Kita 1997). To a large extent the three terms *expressive*, *ideophone* and *mimetics* refer to the same type of words. Importantly, the three terms are used when dealing with words that constitute a word class of their own in the grammar of their respective languages.⁸

A main feature of expressives is their sound symbolic character, displaying likeness or other non-arbitrary relations between form and meaning. In expressives one often finds that related semantic forms correspond to systematic phonological changes. Expressives in some languages support theories on universal sound symbolic patterns, others do not (see Hinton et al. 1994, Wescott 1980).

⁷ The author would like to thank Niclas Burenhult, Gérard Diffloth and Nick Enfield for important discussions and feedback on development of elicitation tasks.

⁸ It is important to note that there is an ongoing debate on the word class status of African ideophones in relation to specific languages.

Another characteristic of this group of words is their special phonological and phonotactic patterns, including particular types of rhymes and violation of regular stress rules (Doke 1954, Kabuta 1994). In addition, they often show distinct prosodic characteristics, such as raised pitch, change of loudness, and extra prolongation of vowels (see e.g. Childs 1994, Samarin 2001).

A third important feature of expressives, closely linked to those above, is their detailed semantics conveying a speaker's personal perceptual experience. They contain information on how a situation is perceived as a whole, and are at the same time very specific in meaning (see e.g. Diffloth 1976, Katuba 1994).

Expressives which convey visual perception often capture movement patterns, physical appearance, and different qualities of colour, while expressives conveying acoustic experience account for differences in intensity, pitch and loudness (c.f. Childs 2001, Diffloth 1976, Ameka 2001). Commonly, olfactory expressives encode differences in quality, as well as intensity, of smell, a pattern common also for expressives conveying experiences of a gustatory nature (Diffloth 1976, Watson 2001). Expressives conveying haptic sensory perceptions appear to be more common in Asian languages, capturing various types of pain as well as differences in tactile experiences of surface structure (Watson 2001). Amongst other things, experience shows that it is the close link to specific individual experiences which make expressives hard to elicit.

The following expressives are taken from Semai, a Mon-Khmer language spoken on Peninsular Malaysia. Semai expressives constitute a word class of their own with distinct syntactic and morphological pattern. The examples below exemplify; (a) sound symbolic vowel alternation: *ghoop* 'bad smell from urine' vs. *ghoop* 'bad smell from closed, hot container', and (b) sound symbolic consonant alternation: *krɲɛn* 'make a face, grimace slightly' vs. *krɲɛɲ* 'make an angry face, showing your teeth'.

Expressives have rarely been examined in a cross-linguistic perspective. This field manual entry attempts to create a basis for future comparative work.

Research questions

The research questions stated below focus on a number of areas:

- (a) To what extent are expressives used in elicitation situations? If not used, in which other speech situations *do* they occur?
- (b) Are there cross-linguistic tendencies in the sound symbolic strategies used to separate perceptually related experiences?
- (c) Do speakers generally perceive or refer to expressives as an odd or "salient" category of words? Do people tend to agree on the meaning of expressives?
- (d) If expressives are accompanied by gestures, are there differences in frequency and nature of usage across sensory modalities?

Task

This task is designed to elicit visual and auditory expressives. The visual expressives are expected to appear in descriptions of scenes depicted in short video clips, and the auditory expressives in descriptions of short sound clips.

Consultants

Speakers consulted for this task must be adult native speakers of the language. The task should preferably be run monolingually in the target language. You should aim to have a minimum of 4 different consultants for every task, with an even number of female and male speakers. If you can't manage 4 speakers, data from any number will be welcome.

Stimuli

The stimuli consist of two parts; *visual stimuli* and *auditory stimuli*.

Visual stimuli

The visual stimuli comprise 10 videoclips, each clip 2-5 seconds long. The clips depict a number of funny ways of walking, acted out by a Semai speaker.⁹ The illustrated ways of walking are results of differences in style of motion and body shape. You should play these clips on the full screen on your laptop, using e.g. Windows Media Player. You may have to set your laptop screen to extra bright, as some of these clips are a bit dark.

Auditory stimuli

The auditory stimuli comprise 22 sound clips, each clip 2-6 seconds long. The clips are recordings of "nature" sounds, capturing various sounds of water, mud and thunder. Each group of sounds (i.e. water, mud and thunder) is divided further into sub-groups, within which the clips contrast in pitch and loudness. You should play these clips from your laptop, using e.g. Windows Media Player.

NB: External speakers are preferable when playing the auditory stimuli. If speakers are not available, use headphones and *not* the internal speakers of your laptop.

In the "Categories folder", you will find an "Expressives" sub-folder. In this are two further folders; "Visual stimuli" (10 video clips) and "Auditory stimuli" (22 sound clips).

Procedure

The elicitation should be videotaped in order to capture potential gestures used in association with expressives. Based on earlier experience, the visual and auditory clips should preferably be run on separate occasions in order to allow time for additional spontaneous discussion. For comparative purposes, a consultant should be informed of the intended illustration if (s)he can't identify a sound clip.

4 different procedures should be performed in relation to the stimuli. These are as follows:

Procedure 1: Consultant(s) watch and describe /discuss the clips

- (a) 1 consultant watches all clips and is asked to describe what (s)he sees/hears
- (b) 3 or more consultants watch all clips and are asked together to describe what they see/hear

Estimated time: 30 minutes.

Procedure 2 - Visual: Re-telling of clips to other speakers

1 consultant watches all clips, one by one, and is asked to "re-tell" or describe after every clip, to a second consultant, what (s)he sees.

⁹ This material was created by the author together with consultants during the field season 2006.

Procedure 2 - Auditory: Matching description of sound with an expressive

1 consultant listens to all sound clips. After each clip (s)he is asked to describe the sound to a second consultant, using any type of description, contextual information or sound imitation, but *not* an expressive. The task for the second consultant is to find an appropriate expressive, accepted by the first consultant.

Estimated time: 20 minutes.

Procedure 3: Conceptual domains

This task is freer in its nature. Ask 3 consultants to watch/listen to all clips, describe what they see/hear and then list other visual/auditory expressives they can think of.

Estimated time: 20 minutes.

Procedure 4: Meta-linguistic knowledge and speakers' attitude

A group of about 4 consultants should be asked whether they agree on the meaning of the collected expressives. In addition, they should comment if they recognise the collected expressives as a "special type" of words and when they would use them.

Estimated time: 30-40 minutes.

Analysis

The above procedure will generate data from a number of fields relevant to the study of expressives. The aim is to extract from this data a characterization of:

- The adequacy of elicitation tasks to trigger production of expressives
- Whether sound symbolic patterns are cross-linguistically similar or rather language internal
- Speakers' attitude towards and meta-linguistic knowledge of expressives
- Potential gesture patterns in relation to usage of expressives

Outcome

Collection of the above data will hopefully constitute an initial step towards cross-linguistic comparisons of important areas of research related to expressives.

Optional post-task elicitation

Additional documentation of morphological and syntactic behaviour of the collected expressives may be necessary. If so, this should be done on a later occasion with the relevant consultants in question.

Additional ideas for stimuli

Based on earlier successful elicitation, the researcher is encouraged to use the following stimuli in addition to the ones described above:

Visual stimuli

- (a) Photos of people in the community doing various facial expressions. This can trigger the use of expressives in describing facial features and expressions.
- (b) Video clips of local animals (birds, mammals, snakes and reptiles). This can trigger the use of expressives in describing movement patterns and physical features of the animals. A useful database for bird videos is: www.hbw.com/ibc.

Auditory stimuli

Sounds recorded in the immediate field site environment. These sounds are easily recognizable and often yield good discussions about the cause of a particular sound.

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