

IDEOPHONES FROM A SYNTACTIC POINT OF VIEW

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Most studies of ideophones focus almost exclusively on the phonological and semantic features of these words.¹ An exception is William J. Samarin's paper, 'Perspective on African ideophones', which raises important questions about their grammatical function.² In the present paper, I propose to follow up Samarin's work by presenting an alternative syntactic treatment of ideophones which accounts for their grammatical properties while also recognizing their phonological/semantic distinctiveness.

Traditional definitions of the ideophone were intended to be applicable in whatever language these words might be found. The assumption was that ideophones in all (African) languages had sufficient features in common so that they could be characterized independent of reference to any particular language. An example of semantic generalization about ideophones is Cole's characterization of them as 'descriptive of sound, colour, smell, manner, appearance, state, action or intensity. . . [that is] vivid vocal images or representations of visual, auditory and other sensory or mental experiences'.³ Fortune has described phonological characteristics that are equally important in setting ideophones apart from 'normal speech'.⁴ Such features are the use of phonemic segments not found elsewhere in the language, distinct phonotactics, the use of expressive intonation, and the relative freedom of replacement of a segment by some other segment without altering the meaning of the word. Cole's and Fortune's observations can be combined to provide a single succinct definition of 'ideophone' as a phonologically peculiar set of descriptive or qualificative words.⁵ Such a definition is, of course, vague and unformalized, but it gives a common frame of reference in discussing African languages.

Approaching the matter syntactically, Samarin has argued that the question "Exactly what are the ideophones?" . . . must be answered for only one language at a time in the same way that all other morpheme or word classes are investigated.⁶ Samarin's argument is that the term 'ideophone' denotes a morpheme class and thus its characterization must be language specific. Given the trilogy form, function, and content (corresponding to phonology, syntax, and semantics), Samarin insists that the definition of the ideophone must be made on the basis of function within a specific language, disregarding form and content. He does not justify this imperative but it is clear that Samarin thinks that a func-

¹ See, for example, P. Alexandre, 'Préliminaire à une présentation des idéophones bulu', in J. Lukas (ed.), *NEUE AFRIKANISTISCHE STUDIEN* (Hamburg, 1966), pp. 9-28; G. Ansre, *THE TONAL STRUCTURE OF EWE* (Hartford, 1961); D. Fivaz, *SOME ASPECTS OF THE IDEOPHONE IN ZULU* (Hartford, 1963); G. Fortune, *IDEOPHONES IN SHONA* (London, 1962); W. J. Samarin, 'Determining the meanings of ideophones', *J.W.A.L.* vol. IV, no. 2 (1967), pp. 35-41; K. Williamson, *A GRAMMAR OF THE KOLOKUMA DIALECT OF IJO* (Cambridge, 1965).

² *AFRICAN STUDIES*, vol. XXIV (1965), pp. 117-21.

³ D. T. Cole, *AN INTRODUCTION TO TSWANA GRAMMAR* (Capetown, 1955), p. 370.

⁴ Fortune, *IDEOPHONES*. . .

⁵ It should be emphasized that the phonological distinctiveness of ideophones is a property of the set as a whole and not necessarily of each member of that set.

⁶ 'Perspective . . .', p. 117.

tional definition is a logical correlate of his 'principal thesis that ideophones lend themselves to formal [i.e. syntactic and morphological] description like all other [sic] classes of morphemes'.⁷

It is true that ideophones may be described from a syntactic point of view, but it does not automatically follow that, as a class, they must be defined in syntactic terms. Samarin has been guilty of a non sequitur. There is no reason why one could not define a class in phonological or semantic terms and then proceed with an investigation of the syntactic function(s) of that class in different languages. I would suggest that this is the proper approach to the syntactic study of ideophones. The questions 'What are the ideophones?' and 'How do the ideophones function?' must be kept separate. The answer to the first question should be a phono-semantic characterization such as that presented earlier, which is just sufficient to segregate a type of word found widely throughout Africa. This definition should be general and independent of any specific language so as to permit the comparison of a wide range of similar phenomena in different languages. The question, 'How do ideophones function?', must be answered separately for each language.⁸

The notion that ideophones constitute a grammatical class, far from being a necessary condition to syntactic analysis, impedes such analysis. In the first place, the tendency to treat the term 'ideophone' as being parallel to such terms as noun, verb, or adverb conceals the fact that ideophones often constitute a subclass of some major category. For example, Fortune treats ideophones in Shona as a subclass of verb while Hoffmann describes ideophones in Margi under the general category adverb.⁹ Rather than being a term in opposition to the major categories, ideophone generally serves to delimit these categories. That is to say, grammatically there are no ideophones as such, but only ideophonic nouns, ideophonic verbs, ideophonic adverbs, etc.

A second drawback in viewing ideophones as a grammatical class is the forced assumption that all of the ideophones in any particular language belong to the same class. While this may be the case in some languages, we should not on a priori grounds exclude the possibility that in other languages all ideophonic words do not serve the same syntactic function, but rather are subsumed under two or more syntactic groups.

Having discarded the notion that ideophones in themselves constitute a grammatical category, we are now ready to consider the problem of providing a syntactic description of ideophonic words wherever they occur. In what follows, I will present a number of observations regarding the syntactic behaviour of ideophones in Hausa and Tera, two distantly related Northern Nigerian languages of the Chadic language family.¹⁰ I do not propose to provide a definitive analysis of ideophones in these languages; rather, I hope to point out types of syntactic variation which occur within a single language as well as types of differences which occur when comparing ideophones in two languages.

⁷ 'Perspective...', p. 118.

⁸ Comparative work based on detailed descriptive studies may lead to the formulation of empirical generalizations regarding the syntactic behaviour of ideophones.

⁹ Fortune, IDEOPHONES...; C. Hoffmann, A GRAMMAR OF THE MARGI LANGUAGE (London, 1963).

¹⁰ Proof of the unity of the Chadic family and a tentative schema for the internal composition of the family is provided in P. Newman and R. Ma, 'Comparative Chadic: phonology and lexicon', JOURNAL OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES, vol. v (1966), pp. 218-51.

HAUSA

I. ADJECTIVAL INTENSIFIER

Hausa has a number of words (called 'expletive ideophones' by Parsons)¹¹ which serve to strengthen the preceding adjective:¹²

- (1) fari fat snow white
- (2) ja wur blood red
- (3) baḱi ḱirin coal black
- (4) sabo ful brand new
- (5) tsofo kutuf very old

Most works on Hausa have been content to comment on the phonological distinctiveness of these words (Hausa words do not normally end in consonants) and to list the specific adjectives with which they may co-occur (as in the list above). Unfortunately, information on when or how to use these intensifiers is always neglected, although there are a number of important syntactic statements that can be made about them.

(a) adj(ective)+int(ensifier) must follow the head noun whereas an adj without an int may occur either before or after the head noun, before being the normal position.¹³

- (6) rago fari fat a snow white ram
- (7) *fari fat rago
- cf. (8) farin rago a white ram
- (9) rago fari a white ram (with contrastive emphasis on 'white')

(b) adj+int are limited to the right-hand side of equational sentences, i.e. they are not used anywhere in verbal sentences nor may they occur as subjects of equational sentences.

- (10) ragonsa fari fat ne His ram is snow white
- (11) *ya sayi rago fari fat *He bought a snow-white ram
- (12) *rago fari fat ya ci wake *The snow-white ram ate beans
- (13) *rago fari fat nasa ne *The snow-white ram is his

(c) Equational sentences with adj+int may undergo question and negative transformations.

- (14) ragonsa fari fat ne? Is his ram snow white?
- (15) ragonsa ba fari fat ba ne His ram is not snow white

(d) In affirmative declarative sentences, the intensifier and the stabilizer ne/ce are optionally permuted.

- (16) ragonsa fari ne fat His ram is snow white

¹¹ F. W. Parsons, 'Abstract nouns of sensory quality and their derivatives in Hausa', in J. Lukas (ed.), *AFRIKANISTISCHE STUDIEN* (Berlin, 1955), p. 403, n. 181.

¹² Grammatically 'adjectives' in Hausa such as fari 'white' and ja 'red' are really a subclass of noun. To avoid terminological confusion in this paper, however, I will go ahead and 'incorrectly' refer to these words as adjectives.

¹³ Hausa examples are given in standard orthography rather than in phonemic transcription. Tone and vowel length, therefore, are not marked. The symbols ts and ḱ represent an ejective fricative and stop respectively; ɓ and ɗ represent laryngealized stops (i.e. 'implosives'); other symbols approximate the value of standard phonetic symbols. An asterisk * indicates that a clause or phrase is ungrammatical (or at least of doubtful grammaticality).

Example (10) with the word-order *adj + int + ne* is considered acceptable but inferior to example (16) with *int* and *ne* permuted. The basic word-order, however, is required in question sentences (e.g. no. 14) and in the negative (e.g. no. 15).

It should be noted that excluding the permutation described in (d) above, these same syntactic observations are also applicable to reduplicative constructions which weaken the force of adjectives, e.g. *ja-ja* 'reddish', *fari-fari* 'whitish', etc. Whether an adjective in Hausa is strengthened or weakened, the same syntactic descriptions apply regarding word-order in relation to the modified adjective, place in sentence, permissible sentence types, and reaction to question and negative transformations. Therefore, for purposes of syntactic description, it is necessary to recognize a grammatical category 'qualifier' with which an adjective may optionally occur, thereby subjecting the entire adjective phrase to a number of restrictions. Using parentheses () to indicate that the item enclosed is optional and braces { } to indicate that items enclosed are subcategories of the category to the left, we can illustrate the relationships within an adjective phrase as follows:

adjective phrase	→	adj + (qualifier)
qualifier	→	{ intensifier }
		{ weakener }
adj	→	fari, ja, etc.
intensifier	→	fat, wur, etc.
weakener	→	reduplication of adj

It so happens that intensification is marked by separate ideophonic words while weakening is marked by reduplication; but, syntactically speaking, this is irrelevant. What one essentially needs to know in order to account for adjective phrases in Hausa is whether or not a qualifier is present. The form of the qualifier has no bearing on the basic syntactic patterns.

II. IDEOPHONIC WORDS WITH VERBS

In addition to the ideophonic intensifiers which occur with adjectives, Hausa also has ideophonic words which may occur immediately following a verb:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| (17) <i>ya cika pal</i> | He filled it to the brim |
| (18) <i>ya kone kurmus</i> | It burnt to the ground |
| (19) <i>ya tashi farat</i> | He got up in a flash |
| (20) <i>ya fadi sharap</i> | He fell headlong |

Since these words all fall in the same slot following the verb, the first tendency might be to assign them all to the same syntactic class. However, there are cogent structural reasons to support the semantic indication that these ideophones must be separated into two distinct grammatical categories—a class of verbal-intensifiers (examples 17 and 18) and a class of descriptive-adverbs (examples 19 and 20). The distinction is based on the observation that while descriptive-adverbs (such as *farat* and *sharap*) are almost exclusively limited to affirmative, declarative sentences, verbal-intensifiers (such as *pal* and *kurmus*) occur in a wider range of syntactic constructions:

Questions

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (21) <i>ya kone kurmus?</i> | Did it burn to the ground? |
| (22) * <i>ya fadi sharap?</i> | *Did he fall headlong? |

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Imperative

- (23) cika ta pal! Fill it full!
 (24) *tashi farat! *Get up in a flash!

Negative

- (25) bai cika pal ba He didn't fill it up completely
 (26) *bai tashi farat ba *He didn't get up in a flash

While descriptive-adverbs generally connote types of actions and are thus restricted to active sentences, verbal-intensifiers are also found in stative (past participle) constructions. Note especially the following example where the governing verb is understood but is not expressed:

- (27) i, pal ta ke da ruwa Yes, it is full with water

given in answer to the question:

- (28) kwaryar a cike ta ke? Is the pot filled?

There is, however, one type of construction in which descriptive-adverbs are found, but in which verbal-intensifiers may not occur:

- (29) ya yi farat ya tashi He did a sudden movement and got up
 (30) *ya yi pal ya cika

In order to account for the use of *farat* after the verb *yi* 'to do', both major Hausa dictionaries assign the word to the grammatical class 'noun'.¹⁴ This is entirely unnecessary, since the use of *farat* after *yi* can be treated most naturally as the result of an optional transformation from an underlying sentence of the normal form, subject + verb + descriptive-adverb, i.e.

- (31) ya yi farat ya tashi < ya tashi farat

The transformational derivation not only obviates the incorrect labelling of *farat* as a noun, but it also accounts for the fact that the clause *ya yi farat* must necessarily be followed by another clause which contains the governing verb *tashi*.

The above sketch shows that 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. It may prove necessary to subdivide each of these categories into smaller groupings, or conversely one may be able to lump two of these groups together (e.g. adjectival with verbal intensifiers) for certain types of generalizations. What must be kept in mind is that these decisions are to be made on the basis of syntactic requirements internal to the language under study without presumption that all ideophonic words are syntactically closer to one another than to any group of non-ideophonic words.

¹⁴ R. C. Abraham, *DICTIONARY OF THE HAUSA LANGUAGE*, 2nd ed. (London, 1962); G. P. Bargery, *A HAUSA-ENGLISH DICTIONARY AND ENGLISH-HAUSA VOCABULARY* (London, 1934).

TERA

I. IDEOPHONIC-ADJECTIVES

In Tera most adjectives are ideophonic from a phonological point of view, and to a lesser degree semantically as well:¹⁵

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (32) wuḏi-a ndolndol | The milk is cool (fresh) |
| (33) ndogdə-na kwakədak | This stone is hard |
| (34) ndogdə-na lawlaw | This stone is light (in weight) |
| (35) kapar-a gətəpəŋ | The cloth is wide |

Unlike the case in Hausa, where an important feature shared by the various classes of ideophones is their lexical dependence on some particular word or words, Tera ideophonic-adjectives are used as freely as any of the other adjectives. Moreover, sentences containing ideophonic-adjectives have the same range of occurrences syntactically as sentences containing other adjectives.¹⁶ If we compare sentences containing the above ideophonic-adjectives with the non-ideophonic adjectives taḏa 'heavy' and mbarə 'good', we find an identical range of occurrences.

Affirmative equational (cf. 32-35)

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| (36) ndogdə-na taḏa | This stone is heavy |
| (37) wuḏi-a mbarə | The milk is good |

Question

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| (38) ndogd-a kwakədak mu? | Is the stone hard? |
| (39) ndogd-a taḏa mu? | Is the stone heavy? |

Negative

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| (40) wuḏi-a ndolndol ɓa | The milk is not cool |
| (41) wuḏi-a mbar ɓa ¹⁷ | The milk is not good |

Attributive-transformation

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| (42) na ndogdə lawlawndə | This is a light stone |
| (43) na ndogdə taḏakandə ¹⁸ | This is a heavy stone |

Verbal-type sentence

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| (44) wa gwa ndogdə lawlawndə | He found a light stone |
| (45) wa gwa ndogdə taḏakandə | He found a heavy stone |

¹⁵ The distinctive phonological characteristics of Tera adjectives will be described later in this paper. In examples from Tera, the following special symbols are used: ɓ, ɗ, and ɠ are laryngealized stops; the digraphs mb, nd, nj, and ŋg represent unit prenasalized stop phonemes; ɓ and ɗ represent voiced and voiceless lateral fricatives respectively. Tone and vowel length are not indicated.

¹⁶ Most non-ideophonic adjectives in Tera are actually derived from verbs. As a simplifying measure in this paper I will ignore the question of their derivation and just call all such words adjectives.

¹⁷ mbar is a variant of mbarə used in non-final position.

¹⁸ ndə and kandə are phonologically predictable allomorphs of the attributive morpheme. ndə is added to consonant final stems while kandə is added to vowel final stems.

Imperative

- (46) moso kapar gətəpəŋnd-a! Buy the wide cloth!
 (47) moso kapar mbarkand-a! Buy the good cloth!

Syntactically speaking, therefore, there is no such grammatical class in Tera as 'ideophonic-adjective'. Within the class of adjectives, there are some words which can be segregated from the others on the basis of certain phonetic properties (i.e. form) but there are absolutely no functional properties which correspond to this distinctiveness in form.

II. DESCRIPTIVE-ADVERBS OF MANNER

There are a number of ways in Tera in which verbs can be modified as to manner. These various adverb-of-manner phrases can be indicated as follows:

ADV _{manner} →	}	(ndə + N)	'with' + noun
		(kə + N)	'like/as' + noun
		(N + N)	noun + noun
		(des-adv)	descriptive-adverb (ideophonic)
		(gen-adv)	general-adverb (ideophonic)

- (48) wa cə ʔəna ndə xəŋkal He worked carefully [with care]
 (49) wa pata ɓar kə ŋgəbəŋ He exchanged it foolishly [like a fool]
 (50) wa cə piʔə gura gura He spoke loudly [gura = noise]
 (51) wa vi nə dam cacat He went out in a rushing manner
 (52) wa xa ɣa tətək He sat quietly

The ideophonic-adverbs are no more limited in terms of lexical co-occurrence than are the other adverbials of manner, i.e. unlike descriptive-adverbs in Hausa, these des-adv's are not tied to particular words but rather are limited only by the bounds of semantic compatibility. Syntactically, however, descriptive-adverbs are strictly limited to affirmative, declarative sentences. Compare the des-adv's with the other manner adverbs in the following sentence types:

Negative

- (53) nə cə ʔəna ndə xəŋkal ɓa He didn't work carefully
 (54) *nə vi nə dam cacat ɓa

Question

- (55) wa pata ɓar kə ŋgəbəŋ ya? Did he exchange it foolishly?
 (56) *wa vi nə dam cacat ya?

Imperative

- (57) cə piʔə gura gura! Speak loudly!
 (58) *vi nə dam cacat!

A small group of ideophonic manner adverbs, which I have called general-adverbs above, must be syntactically differentiated from the descriptive-adverb class. These general-adverbs (such as tətək 'quietly' and ɗiɗiŋ 'very much') are phonologically and semantically indistinguishable from the other ideophonic-adverbs but, unlike the des-adv's, they are not restricted to affirmative, declarative sentences, e.g.

Negative

- (59) nə xa ɣa tətək ɓa He didn't sit quietly.

Question

(60) *wa ruḅa nda dīdīŋ ya?* Did he injure him very much?

Imperative

(61) *gən nəya dīdīŋ!* Tie it well!

The descriptive-adverbs themselves require further subdivision into adverbs of action and adverbs of state. While this distinction corresponds to a semantic difference, it is strictly motivated by syntactic considerations. The aim is to correctly account for those ideophonic words in Tera which occur immediately following the subject rather than in the adverb slot following the verb, e.g.

- | | |
|--|--|
| (62) <i>sət-a zərət, t-a sərḁa yeyay</i> | The snake <u>zərət</u> and slipped to the ground |
| (63) <i>kəŋiŋ pux, tə ŋgəḁ varan yeyay</i> | The gourd <u>pux</u> and fell to the ground |
| (64) <i>ndib-na cacat, wa vi nə dam</i> | This man <u>cacat</u> , he went out |
| (65) <i>man məḁ yuyup yuyup yuyup, wa ŋgəḁ gannde wara</i> | The ogre <u>yuyup yuyup yuyup</u> , she has started after them |

Except for word order there is no reason to classify these words other than as adverbs. Therefore, it would seem advisable to assume that these words are in fact descriptive-adverbs and to transformationally derive sentences of this particular type from sentences with basic word order, i.e.

subject + des-adv_{action} + tense + verb . . . < subject + tense + verb . . . des-adv_{action}

The following would thus serve as the source for the sentences (62)–(65):

- | | |
|--|--|
| (62a) <i>sət-a t-a sərḁa yeyay zərət</i> | The snake slipped to the ground <u>zərət</u> |
| (63a) <i>kəŋiŋ tə ŋgəḁ yeyay pux</i> | The gourd fell to the ground <u>pux</u> |
| (64a) <i>ndib-na wa vi nə dam cacat</i> | This man went out <u>cacat</u> |
| (65a) <i>man məḁ wa ŋgəḁ gannde wara yuyup yuyup yuyup</i> | The ogre started after them <u>yuyup yuyup yuyup</u> |

The subcategorization of des-adv into action and state is necessary to account for the fact that not all descriptive-adverbs may undergo the transformation which moves the des-adv immediately following the subject, e.g.

(66) *mapulu wa xa ya rəŋgəm_{state}* Hyena sat all spread out

but not

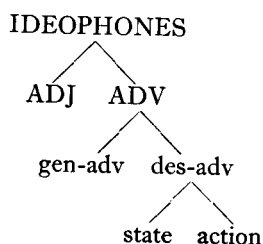
(67) **mapulu rəŋgəm wa xa ya*(68) *shoka tə zəm ɓar(a) shorat_{state}* Squirrel ate it up completely

but not

(69) **shoka shorat tə zəm ɓara*

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In short, a syntactic description of ideophonic words in Tera must at least recognize the distinctions indicated in the following diagram:



COMPARISON BETWEEN HAUSA AND TERA

In Hausa, all ideophones can be handled by a single phonological description. Regardless of the syntactic function, Hausa ideophones share certain characteristics, namely, the existence of normally non-occurring final consonants and the use of expressive tone and stress. In Tera, on the other hand, the major syntactic division of ideophones into ADJ and ADV is accompanied by systematic differences in form. While all ideophonic words in Tera do share certain features in common, the differences between the major classes are sufficient to correctly identify a word as an ideophonic-adjective or an ideophonic-adverb strictly on the basis of phonological shape.

Generally speaking, ideophonic words in Tera are characterized by (i) the absence of glottalized stops and nasal resonants in word initial position, (ii) the use of expressive intonation, (iii) reduplication, and/or (iv) a high incidence of consonants in word final position. Differences between ideophonic adjectives and adverbs are to be found primarily in their canonical forms.

IDEOPHONIC-ADJECTIVES:

(a) Disyllabic totally reduplicated words of the form CVC-CVC.

(70) comcom	sour
(71) gərgər	hot/difficult
(72) lawlaw	light (in weight)
(73) widwid	sharp (point)

(b) Trisyllabic forms ending in k, m, or ŋ with at least the first and third vowels identical.

(74) domkudək	blunt
(75) kwakədək	hard
(76) kutuxum	short
(77) gətəpəŋ	wide

IDEOPHONIC-ADVERBS

(a) Disyllabic words of the form CVCVC where the first CV is reduplicated.

(78) cacat	in a rushing manner
(79) gəgər	sound of heavy thing running
(80) xəxəp	sound of dove alighting
(81) xuxus	movement of waking up

- (b) Disyllabic words of the form CVCVC with identical vowels.
- | | |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| (82) ɟəḅək | start quickly |
| (83) kedeŋ... | slowly and carefully |
| (84) rəŋgəm | describes sitting of hyena |
| (85) ruḍum... | stumbling of blind person |
| (86) ɟərəŋ | motionless |
- (c) Disyllabic words of the form CVCVC without reduplication.
- | | |
|------------|----------------------------|
| (87) bərut | with strength |
| (88) kayum | sound of eating fried food |
| (89) ləḅax | sound of getting stuck |
| (90) ɟəḍaŋ | quickly and purposefully |
- (d) Monosyllabic words of the form CVC (with expressive tone and stress).
- | | |
|------------|-----------------------------|
| (91) cap | bite of snake |
| (92) gəm | sound of spear hitting tree |
| (93) mbaŋ | with much activity |
| (94) rum | silence |
| (95) zhwat | bite of hyena |

In both Hausa and Tera, ideophones are phonologically set apart from the rest of the words in the language, but only in Tera does the phonological shape of the ideophonic word also provide information about its grammatical function. The Hausa *kutuf* and the Tera *cacaɫ* are immediately recognizable as ideophonic, but whereas the Hausa word could just as easily, for example, be an adjectival intensifier as a descriptive-adverb, the Tera word is clearly marked as being adverbial and not adjectival.

Hausa and Tera differ, furthermore, in the matter of lexical co-occurrence. Ideophonic words in Hausa, whatever their function, are lexically tied to particular verbs or adjectives. This is a common feature of ideophones in African languages. Westermann, for example, emphasized the close relationship between ideophones and particular words of the major grammatical categories by describing ideophones in Ewe as 'adverbs which generally are associated with one verb only'.¹⁹ Tera ideophones, by contrast, are not lexical adjuncts of particular nouns or verbs. This is true both in the case of the ideophonic adverbs and in the case of the ideophonic adjectives—ideophonic words may freely co-occur with any word with which they are semantically compatible.

An important syntactic feature of ideophonic descriptive-adverbs shared by Hausa and Tera is the tendency to limit these words to affirmative declarative sentences. I would suggest that the restriction of a subset of ideophones to certain basic sentence types is probably a common syntactic feature of ideophones in all African languages.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have tried to show that although the term 'ideophone' cannot be interpreted as a label for a morpheme class such as noun, verb, or adverb, ideophonic words are amenable to formal syntactic description. That is to say, a definition of 'ideophone' should be a language independent phono-semantic characterization, whereas a syntactic description of ideophones must be language-specific. The following conclusions about ideophones can be drawn from the descriptions provided for Hausa and Tera. (a) It is possible to

¹⁹ D. Westermann, *A STUDY OF THE EWE LANGUAGE* (London, 1930), p. 107.

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isolate comparable phono-semantic classes in different languages which can be called 'ideophones'; (b) languages differ from one another with regard to the syntactic classification and function of ideophonic words; and (c) within a single language equally important syntactic differences can be found among morphologically and phonologically similar ideophones.²⁰

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