

A Note on Setswana Onomatopoeias

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The Setswana language, like other African languages, has a rich word class category of onomatopoeia words that are derived from diverse sound sources in the environment of the speakers. Onomatopoeic words are sound imitations. They subsequently derive ideophones which are the secondary function of imitated sounds. In the Setswana grammars, little or nothing is said about onomatopoeia; however, ideophones are accounted for and given prominence in the linguistic analysis of the language. This preliminary discussion of onomatopoeic words illustrates that this word category needs to be studied in Setswana as a distinct word category. They are the primary source of ideophones. This paper argues that onomatopoeic words are of interesting linguistic value at the level of phonology, morphology, and syntax. Therefore, they cannot be neglected in the study of the Setswana language. The purpose of this paper is to open a discussion on onomatopoeic words and how they relate to other word categories in the language.

Keywords: Setswana; onomatopoeia, ideophones; word derivation; Setswana word categories

1. Introduction

The Setswana language is associated with Botswana, and spoken by Batswana (singular Motswana). However, the language is widely spoken by over 6 million people in southern African countries. It is distributed in these countries as follows: South Africa (4 million), Botswana (2.6 million), Namibia (60 thousand), and Zimbabwe (20 thousand) (Otlogetswe and Chebanne, 2018). It is a Sotho language classified as S30 in the Bantu Zone classification of Guthrie (1967 -71). It is the official language in Botswana and one of the national languages of South Africa (Webb, 2004). It is recognized in Zimbabwe and Namibia as a national language (Otlogetswe and Chebanne, 2018). However, this prominence of Setswana is often just on paper, as it has been shown to be subordinated to English in important functional communication domains (Bagwasi, 2003; Batibo, 1996; Otlogetswe and Chebanne, 2018). The development of the Setswana language is associated with missionary works on the Bible translation and the production of hymnals (Archbell, 1837; Livingstone, 1858). Otlogetswe and Chebanne (2018: 149) provided a modernized summary from Cole (1955: xv-xix) of who the Tswana speakers are and what their geographical distribution is in southern Africa (Batibo, 1999).

This paper argues that Setswana has onomatopoeic words and that these are different from ideophones. The paper begins by describing onomatopoeic words in Setswana from the perspective of the general understanding that linguistics presents them (Bredin, 1996). It will further demonstrate that the Ras (1991) study on Setswana ideophones is actually in part a study of Setswana onomatopoeia. The paper further argues that onomatopoeic words are primary as they are aural imitations of occurring sounds, while ideophones should be construed as derived ideas, manner, or quality of the source of sounds. The paper further shows that in the derivation of other word categories, such as nouns and verbs onomatopoeic words can be shown to be their primary source, and that ideophones are secondary source formations which are derived from onomatopoeic

words (Rhodes, 1994). The argument of the paper is that ideophones and onomatopoeic words cannot be treated separately as they are linguistically related.

The paper is divided into nine sections. Section one provides a general introduction on the Setswana language and its status and usage in countries where it is spoken. Section two presents the position of onomatopoeic words in Setswana, and further argues that onomatopoeic words have been overlooked in research as a grammatical category. Section three describes Setswana onomatopoeic words, and also provides the difference that exists between onomatopoeic words and ideophones. Section four makes a brief presentation of the Setswana phonology as a way of laying the foundation for the discussion of onomatopoeic words. Section five provides a brief description of onomatopoeic words tone, and the discussion establishes that tone is assigned from the aural imitation from the primary source. Section six presents the morphology of Setswana onomatopoeic words. Section seven discusses of the syntax of Setswana onomatopoeic words. Section eight presents the semantics and use of Setswana onomatopoeic words. Section nine is the conclusion.

2. Position of onomatopoeia in Setswana

Early grammars of Setswana in English and other European languages did not deal with the onomatopoeic category (Archbell, 1837; Wookey, 1905). This could have been due to the fact that they were overlooked in the description of European languages grammars during those years. However, interest in the onomatopoeic word category existed in the study African languages (Peck, 1886), and should have guided earlier grammatical descriptions of Setswana. Credit should be given to the author of the first monolingual grammar of Setswana, Mogapi (1984), who coined the Setswana word *maetsisi* (singular (*Leetsisi*), that can be translated into English as *imitators*, or imitating words. He then provided some few examples but did not elaborate much how this word category plays a role in word formation.

- (1) a. Lerweerwee (bird) ‘ground plover’, which makes a *rweerwee* noise
 b. Lehututu (bird), ‘ground hornbill’, which makes a *huhuu* noise

Example (1) is interesting in that it gives a demonstration of the secondary function of onomatopoeia. However, it presents a problem regarding exactly Mogapi (1984) meant. Onomatopoeic words by definition are limited to lexical imitation of sounds, while Ideophones refer to special morphological or lexical peculiarities that convey an idea or impression and suggest an action, manner and quality (Rhodes, 1994; Ras, 1991; Samarin, 1971). Ideophones, therefore, are viewed as subtle imitations that go beyond just sounds. In the analysis and discussion by Bredin (1996), onomatopoeic words are words that look like the sounds they imitate or a word that sounds like the noise it describes. This description is similar to Ras’ (1991) definition of ideophones. However, it should be noted that as these works imply, ideophones provide an idea not just a sound symbolization (Bredin, 1996; Ras (1991).

- (2) a. phùù ‘sound of heavy falling’ (onomatopoeia)
 b. phùù ‘expression of a strong smell’ (ideophone)

From the examples (2 a, & b), the difference lies in the manner in which an onomatopoeic word imitates a sound on the basis of an aural impression, while an ideophone mimics a sensory impression. The onomatopoeia limits itself to sound imitations, but an ideophone provides

perceptions of realities beyond sound perceptions. Therefore, while onomatopoeic words and ideophones are related, they are nonetheless different. However, their relatedness has often led some researchers to prefer one or the other of these two terms, to deal with different types of aural, sensorial, and manner perceptions in the environment of the speaker (Mogapi, 1984; Ras, 1991; Samarin, 1971). The relationship between onomatopoeias and ideophones requires to be disambiguated (Bredin, 1996) so that the current linguistic approach, which is entrenched in the study of ideophones to the exclusion of onomatopoeic words can be rectified (Ras, 1991).

Lack of research on onomatopoeic words in Setswana has compounded the task of defining and analysing them. When Mogapi (1984) coined the Setswana word *maetsisi*, to label ideophones and onomatopoeic expressions, subsequent monolingual dictionaries followed on the coinage without any critical examination of their subtle difference and relationship. The Mareme (2007) Tswana monolingual dictionary provides some sources of some onomatopoeic -based words, but it is neither systematic nor exhaustive about their role in word formation. The more elaborate bilingual dictionary of Tswana and English by Cole, Moncho-Warren (2012) makes a significant contribution in providing the etymology of some Tswana language words that come from onomatopoeic and ideophonic sources. However, whilst it is evident that onomatopoeias are the primary source of some of the words, the label ideophones is the one used for such sound sources.

- (3) a. *kôkôta* ‘to knock on the door’, is indicated to derive from the sound, *kôkôkô*
 b. *pipinya*, ‘to hoot’, is indicated to derive from, *pipiii* sound.

The monolingual dictionaries' etymological information is important as it shows that monolingual dictionary compilers see the need to indicate the sources of some of the words in the Setswana language. The first Setswana monolingual dictionary that takes a systematic approach to word origins and sources was published by Otlogetswe (2012). It provides definitions of words based on the roots or sources of Setswana words.

- (4) a. *lebiibii* (noun, bird), it sings, *biibii*
 b. *tserema* (verb, scotching sun), from *tserr* sound which is produced by a summer insect (cicada)

While Cole (1955) in his *Introduction to Tswana Grammar*, mentioned onomatopoeias and indicated that they have some limited role in grammar, no other elaborate work has undertaken their study as an important grammatical category. No studies make a specific focus on onomatopoeias when they are used in speech sounds imagery as in literary texts usage such as in the novels of Moloto (1994). This therefore creates a sense of informality in the way they are used. However, as the examples below illustrate, common sounds are used in dictionaries to show verbs that are derived from such sounds. These sounds are onomatopoeic before they can be considered ideophonic.

- (5) Onomatopoeic-derived verbs from common sounds:
- a. *tiring-tiring* ‘phone ringing’
 From *tiritirinya* ‘to ring’
- b. *thuu* ‘gun shot’
 From *thunya* ‘shooting sound’

- c. šwa-šwaa ‘drizzle; rain’
From šanya ‘rain gently’
- d. kwaa-kwaa ‘foot step’
➤ From kwakwanya ‘walk with noisy step’

One significant study that also sheds light on the importance of onomatopoeias is the MA thesis by Ras (1991) who researched the Setswana ideophones. Ras (1991) only mentioned ideophones as a word class but he provides no discussion of onomatopoeias as a word category. With regards to sounds, ideophones source their existence from onomatopoeias as they are essentially imitative (Bredin, 1996). Structurally, onomatopoeias and ideophones are also similar as the section on the structure of onomatopoeias will demonstrate later in this paper. This relationship of onomatopoeias and ideophones has resulted in research focusing on ideophones at the expense of onomatopoeias. Onomatopoeias are therefore poor cousins of grammatical categories in the Setswana language (Bredin, 1996; Ras 1991).

3. Description of Setswana onomatopoeias

The Setswana language uses a term coined by Mogapi (1984), *leetsisi* (imitator), to collectively describe onomatopoeias and ideophones. However, Mogapi (1984) did not treat onomatopoeias as words, but rather he treated onomatopoeias as ideophones. The reason could be that there are various sound sources in the speaker’s surroundings which lead to idiosyncratic imitations. This is evident from what Ras (1991) presented. This collective view of dealing with ideophones and onomatopoeias and then emphasizing the ideophones as more significant has been discounted by Meinard (2015).

- (6) Monosyllabic onomatopoeic words?
 - a. ting ‘sound of a piano’
 - b. phaa ‘sound of a clap’
 - c. šhh ‘sound of silencing so as to say a secret’
 - d. bruu ‘sound of a wasp’

However, there is a possibility that the monosyllabic onomatopoeias in (6) can be doubled, and this seems to be the general pattern as in (7).

- (7) Disyllabic or repetitive onomatopoeias
 - a. khooho ‘sound of coughing’
 - b. kokoroo ‘sound of cock’
 - c. tit-te ‘sound of a clock / watch’
 - d. thaathaa ‘sound of thunder’

These monosyllabic and disyllabic onomatopoeias in (6) and (7) resemble ideophones. They can therefore be deemed to be the source of ideophones. Note that the onomatopoeias are introduced by the verb *-re* ‘to say’

- (8) Function of onomatopoeias as ideophones

- a. Ngwana o ne a gotlholo a re, *khooho khooho*.
'The child coughed making the sound, *khooho khooho*'.
- b. Ke utlwa tloloko e re, *tit-te*.
'I hear the clock ticking, *tit te tit-te*'.

This intrinsic relationship of onomatopoeias and ideophones should not in any way favour ideophones (Meinard, 2015), and have onomatopoeia function taken up by ideophones. As research in other languages has shown, onomatopoeias are primary sound imitations, and ideophones are secondary in sound imitation and usage (Rhodes, 1994; Bredin, 1996; Ras, 1991; Samarin, 1971). In Rhodes' (1994) discussion it becomes clear that while ideophones are subtle and versatile in that they can mimic sounds, smell, and manner of doing things; onomatopoeias are limited to sound imitations. This distinction is important in that some researchers ignore onomatopoeias on the view that they are either subsumed under ideophones or that they are not essential in a language as Ras (1991) discusses ideophones with no references to onomatopoeias as a grammatical category.

Some interjections show some close affinity with onomatopoeias as they are both associated with sounds or shouted utterances (Meinard, 2015; Rhodes, 1994). Though research has shown that they are distinguishable from interjections (Meinard, 2015; Samarin, 1971), the Setswana onomatopoeias present structures that indicate that they are the source of some interjections. However, there are some significant functional differences as the examples in (9) illustrate.

(9) Onomatopoeias interjections

- a. fuu 'sound of wind / breeze blowing'
- b. phaa 'sound of hand clap'
- c. ishh 'sound of pain'
- d. bhuuuu 'sound of canon'

In this interjective function, they have some syntactic position variations, where they can be preposed or postposed in a clause (Meinard, 2015). They can also co-occur with some primary interjectives. However, the syntax differs from that of onomatopoeias as examples in (10) illustrate.

(10) Interjectival functions of onomatopoeias

- a. Fuu, phefo ya tsaya bopi. 'Fuu, the wind blew the flour.'
- b. Ishh, ke tlhabilwe ke sengwe. 'Ishh, I was pricked by something.'

The process of coining new words by imitation of sounds is productive in the Setswana language and is integrated in any commutation situation regardless of speech register as it appears in literature texts (Moloto, 1964). In the grammar of Mogapi (1984) and Cole (1955) onomatopoeias are not categorized as words, but just as imitation sounds. They are not categorized as a word class, that is, they do not have any lexical status, but only ideophones are indicated, even where in an evident manner, it is the primary onomatopoeia which is the source of a word (Otlogetswe, 2012; Cole Moncho-Warren, 2012) (see examples, (1), to (4) above).

4. Setswana phonology in brief

It is critically important to present Setswana phonology as it provides the basis upon which the structure of onomatopoeias can be presented. Over the years, starting with the comprehensive grammar of Tswana by Cole (1955), an inventory of sounds has been made by Setswana linguists. Chebanne et al. (1997) provided a comprehensive analysis of the phonological quality of vowels and consonants and their phonological and morphological interactions, and also presented an important study of the tonology of the Setswana language which shed light on the segmental and suprasegmental properties of the language. The DALL (1999) study also contributed a lot in the understanding of the Setswana sound system, and this confirmed the validity of earlier studies.

4.1 Vowel and consonant inventories of Setswana. Recent and earlier linguistic works concur that Setswana has 30 fundamental phonemic consonants (Otlogetswe, 2017). While most Setswana linguistic studies argue that the language has 7 vowels (DALL, 1999), Chebanne et al. (1997) argued that there are 9 vowels in standard Setswana. The difference may be in the phonetic quality of mid vowels which are produced by different speakers of Setswana dialects. Phonological analysts who argue for 7 vowels state that these dialectal differences are not phonemically distinctive (DALL, 1999). Instrumental phonetics and a broader consideration of the application of phonological rules on Setswana words may be required to settle this debate on the number of distinctive Setswana vowels as suggested by Otlogetswe and Chebanne (2018).

4.1.1 Setswana Consonants. There are 30 fundamental consonants and 13 consonants that occur with the velarization sound /w/. Importantly, there is no simple symbol correspondence between the orthography and the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The tables below illustrate.

Table 1. Setswana consonants

Orthographic	b	d	f	g	h	j	k	kg	kh	l	m	n	ng	ng	ny	p	ph
IPA	b	d	f	x	h	dʒ	k	q ^h	k ^h	l	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	ɲ	p	p ^h
Orthographic	r	s	š	t	th	tl	tlh	ts	tsh	tš	tšh	w	y				
IPA	r	s	ʃ	t	t ^h	tɭ	tɭ ^h	ts	ts ^h	tʃ	tʃ ^h	w	j				

Additionally consonant + w occurs with 13 fundamental sounds (Otlogetswe, 2017).

If these are considered independent sounds, as indeed they are phonemic, they bring the consonant count to 48 (Otlogetswe, 2017). The present discussion accepts the C+W presentation as fundamental. The argument made here is that there are no other studies that have shown that other consonant accompaniments, such as aspiration and uvularization, have any extensive phonological role in consonant structure as is the case with C+W (DALL, 1999).

4.1.2 Setswana Vowels. There are 9 vowel segments in Setswana. The Setswana orthography uses diacritic ^ on vowels to show that they are open (ê /ɛ/, ô /ɔ/. Some semi-closed vowels (e /ɪ/ or /i/, o /œ/ or /ʊ/) are left without diacritic indication in the orthography of Setswana.

Table 2. Setswana vowels

Orthographic	i	e	e	ê	a	ô	o	o	u
IPA	i	ɪ	e	ɛ	a	ɔ	o	ʊ	u

In some morpho-phonological contexts, vowel sequences are realized: e-a > ya; u-a > wa; i-o > yo.

4.1.3 The Setswana Syllables. Otlogetswe's (2017) study of Setswana syllables contributed a lot to our understanding of their structure and distribution. The study measured syllable frequency and distribution and contributed towards a better understanding of Setswana phonotactics and syllable preference in Setswana word formation. Otlogetswe (2017:403) stated that measuring syllable frequencies in a language was critical for many areas of linguistics, phonetics, and speech technology. Further, Otlogetswe (2017: 404 - 405) stated that the structure of Setswana syllable was simple and that it could take three forms namely CV, C or V patterns. In an open syllabic structure CV, the slot for the C may be constituted by, digraphs, trigraphs or quadgraphs.

Table 3. Setswana syllables (Otlogetswe, 2017: 405).

Type	Orthographic form	phonetic transcription
Single onset	ba, ga, na, sa, le, fa	ba, ga, na, sa, le, fa
Digraph onset	tsa, tla, kga, pha, nga, nya	tʰsa, tʰla, qha, pha, ŋa, ja
Trigraph onset	tlha, tshe, tšhu, kgwa	tʰhʰa, tsʰe, tʃhu, qhwa
Quadgraph onset	tlhwa, tshwe, tšhwu	tʰhʰwa, tsʰwe, tʃhwu

It should be noted that the seemingly complex orthographic consonants constitute single phonological consonants. Another note is that certain consonants such as nasals, trills, and laterals can be syllabic. However, the second consonant should close, that is, take a vowel.

(11) Syllabic consonants

a.	rra	r-ra	'father, man'
b.	mma	m-ma	'mother; woman'
c.	mollo	mo-l-lo	'fire'
d.	nna	n-na	'me'
e.	nngalela n- ngalela	[ŋ-ŋ a-le-la]	'to sulk against me'
f.	nnyalela n-nya-le-la	[ŋ-ŋa-le-la]	'marry for me'

The orthographic tradition does not present the phonetic quality of some nasals which can also occur syllabically. This is the case of the morpheme /ŋ/ which is written <ng> at the ending of some relative verbs in the relative, nouns with the locative morpheme, and some nouns where the proto ending i> is converted to <ng>.

(12) The syllabic /ŋ/

a.	Kgang	/qhaŋ/	> /qha-ŋ/	'news matter; case'
b.	Nokeng	/nokeŋ/	> /no-ke-ŋ/	'at the river'
c.	yo o buang	/jo-o-buaŋ/	/jo-o-bu-aŋ/	'who is speaking'

In the seminal study of syllables by Otlogetswe (2017: 12) there are 253 syllables in the Setswana language. He generated these syllabic units by pairing each of the 48 consonants to each of the Setswana vowels plus the three syllabic consonants *m*, *n*, *ng* which occur without being attached to

a vowel. The syllabic structure of Setswana as has been indicated earlier is CV. There are two types according to the elements of sound. The first type of onomatopoeias may have CC structure in the presence of a trill. The doubling of C may indicate length.

(13) Type 1 onomatopoeia's structure

- a. tiring / tiring-tiring 'ringing noise like a telephone'
- b. porr porr-porr 'noise of a horn or hooter'

The repetition or reduplication of the onomatopoeias in example (13) is not significant in their production or general use. In word formation as we shall see later, they take vocalic elements as the language only permits open syllables. Some may be produced with CVV or a lengthened C or V.

(14) Type 2 onomatopoeias structure

- a. shwaa / shwaa-shwaa 'rain falling'
- b. haa-haa / haa-haa-haa 'laughing'

The type 2 onomatopoeia structure is constituted by full CV or CV structures as the examples in (14) illustrate. The type 2 forms of onomatopoeias are easily integrated in derived forms (see example (18)). This syllabic re-adjustment means that examples provided further in (16) can also be converted into regular syllabic forms. This formation is not dealt with in the research by Ras (1991), perhaps because the perspective of the study was limited to ideophones. Notwithstanding, it is important not to exclude onomatopoeias from a study of ideophones, especially when the focus is on the study of imitated sounds (Bredin, 1996; Rhodes, 1994).

5. Tone of onomatopoeias

Setswana is a tone language, that is, syllables are moraic in the sense that they can carry high or low pitch, and this pitch contrast is significant in any word class (Chebanne et al., 1997; DALL, 1999). The importance of tone is also reflected in the entry of monolingual Setswana dictionaries (Otlogetswe, 2012). Two tones exist in Setswana, the high (ó) and the low (ò). Stress has no significant role or may be limited to emphasis in which case it is subordinate to tone since it is the tonal effect on syllables that is felt. In view of this limited function of stress in the grammar, it will not be discussed in the realization of onomatopoeias. Tone occurs in all word calluses including the onomatopoeia class. The examples in (15) demonstrate that tone has a contrastive function in all word classes as well as in onomatopoeias.

(15) Tone on word classes

- a. bónà 'to see' (verb)
- b. pùlà 'rain' (noun)
- c. gòrè 'so that' (conjunction)
- d. thátà 'a lot; very hard' (adverbial)
- e. próm-próm 'trumpet sound (onomatopoeia / ideophone)

As is the case in all other word classes, there is a direct association between the production of onomatopoeias and the tonal assignment in their primary source formation. The primary source here refers to their crude aural imitation stage or form. This tonal feature assignment also characterizes

their secondary formations such as in derived lexical units (see examples in (18) and (19)). Onomatopoeias must therefore be produced with tonal melodies. Whichever element is imitated, the tonal assignment comes in automatically or obligatorily. In (16) the L and H represent low and high tones respectively.

- (16) Tone on primary onomatopoeias
- a. brurr-brurr [LL-LL] 'engine sound'
 - b. Trirr-tirr [HH-HH] 'siren sound'
 - c. Brirr-brirr [HH-HH] 'alarm sound'
 - d. Tit-tetit-te [LH-L-H] 'sound of a watch'

This tonal assignment on primary onomatopoeias facilitates their integration into their conversion into ideophones and subsequently into lexical units, and ultimately into the morphology of the language as the next section will illustrate.

6. Morphology of Setswana onomatopoeias

As sound imitators, Setswana primary onomatopoeias are without any inflection, and, as seen earlier, they do not strictly comply with the syllabic types in the language. This is because they are impressionistic and spontaneous. From one individual to the other, there may be some idiosyncrasies that make some of the onomatopoeias unstable to structure. The common structure is duplication or compounding. It could be this morphological characteristic that results in this category being ignored as a word category. However, this position may be overturned by the argument of their primary function and semantic symbolism as it will be demonstrated later.

- (17) Common structure of Setswana onomatopoeias
- a. teng-teng 'sound of small bell ringing'
 - b. šaa-šaaa /xwaa-xwaa/ 'light rain falling'
 - c. pharr-pharr 'sound of a compressor'.
 - d. Thaathaa thathaa 'sound of thunder'

The above sound imitations can convert into secondary onomatopoeias. When this occurs, there is re-syllabification and re-phonologizing which can result in some grammatical morphemes attaching to them. There is no single manner of conversion of an onomatopoeia to another word class. All may depend on the internal phonological rules.

- (18) Re-syllabification and re-phonologization in secondary onomatopoeias

Primary	Secondary	
a. ting-tiring	> tirinya/titinya	'to ring'
b. šhaa-šhaaa	> šanyašanya	'to drizzle'
c. phacha-pacha	> phatšha	'to sprinkle, to throw water'.
d. tserr-tserr	> tserema	'to sound like a cicada insect'

The issue that creates some confusion is that in Setswana when primary onomatopoeia can derive secondary onomatopoeia forms, they are simply treated as ideophones. In their primary form, onomatopoeic forms are not considered words or a word class. As imitations of sounds from different elements (animals, objects, or natural phenomena), their derivation favours verbalisation than nominalisation.

(19) Nominalised onomatopoeias

- | | | | |
|----|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| a. | prom-prom | > porompeta | ‘trumpet’ |
| b. | koo-koo | > koko | ‘hen’ |
| c. | hoo-hoo | > phefo | ‘wind’ |
| d. | shaa-xhaa | > šaga | ‘saw’ |

7. Syntax of Setswana onomatopoeias

Onomatopoeias are productively used in the language as examples (20) show their use. They have a special syntax in which they are introduced by a clause, ‘... says / makes... and therefore function as subject complements in sentences.

(20) Syntax of Setswana Onomatopoeias

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| a. | Ke utlwule toloko e re, tiring-tiring’. | ‘I heard the bell making a <i>trr-trr</i> . sound’ |
| b. | Pula e ne ya re šhaa-šhaaa | ‘The light rain fell like <i>šhaa-šhaaa</i> .’ |
| c. | Mmu wa thaba wa re khurr-khurr | ‘The sliding soil of the hill makes the sound khurr-khurr.’ |
| d. | Porompeta e a re, prom-prom. | ‘The trumpet sounded prom-prom.2825 |

This syntax has been described in various school grammars as belonging to that of ideophones (Samarin, 1971). However, as it can be observed, ideophones come as secondary to onomatopoeias when sounds are considered. Therefore, while Ras (1991) and Mogapi (1983) are right in their analysis of ideophones, it should be stated that with regards to sound ideophones are primary forms of onomatopoeias. This was clearly demonstrated by Meinard (2015), who attempts a fair disambiguation between onomatopoeias and other categories such as interjectives and ideophones.

8. Semantics of Setswana onomatopoeias

The important thing in Setswana onomatopoeias is that their production occurs in a communication context with direct imitation of the source of sound and they provide meaning by linking the sound and its source or action. In this manner, in Setswana, onomatopoeias are not abstract entities of meaning; they identify and provide a physical meaning of what is spoken about. This meaning relationship is what makes onomatopoeias in Setswana real-world and functional elements in a real situation of communication.

From the appendix which represents the data file, certain sounds are symbolic, that is, certain types of sounds characterize certain types of objects.

(21) Symbolic sounds

- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | Thuu; thuu; (guns and rifles sounds) |
| b. | Trirr; trirrr; brirr (clocks, alarms, sirens) |

- c. Bruu; broo; bruum; bruum (engines of cars, trucks aeroplanes }
- d. Tintin; tring-tring; ding-ding (string musical instruments)
- e. Prom-prom; porr-porr (wind musical instruments)
- f. Khurr-khurr (rocks falling)

From the examples, it can be observed that the first syllable of the onomatopoeias suggests a type of sound and intonation. However, it is rare that such symbolic sounds derive secondary onomatopoeias, except perhaps (20 a & f) which can derive *porompeta* / *torompeta* (trumpet); *mokoko* / *koko* (cock; chicken). While the symbolization of the sounds at syllabic level may be taken as polyvalent for the types of sound sources, they do not create synonymous or polysemic relations. The case of *phaa* which imitates various types of sound of impact or collision of *broo*, *bruu* for engines or *thuu* for all kinds of explosions, are not polysemous but symbolic. Full words present clearer synonymy and polysemy status: *bala* (read, count); *kwala* (write and draw); *tshwara* (hold, grasp; obtain; attain; possess); *bona* (see, obtain, find, understand). Antonyms in Setswana are formed by different lexical items, except perhaps a reversive verbal derivative: *dira* / *dirolola* (do / undo). There are important morpho-phonological changes when onomatopoeias derive new words. These adjustments are important for the derived word to be properly syllabified and phonologized.

(22) Rephonologization of onomatopoeias in derivation

- a. prom-prom (sound of trumpet) > porompeta ‘trumpet’
- b. thuu-thuu (sound of explosion) > thunya ‘explode’.
thuntsha; ‘make to explode’
- c. šaašaa (sound of drizzling) > šanya / šanyašanya ‘to rain slightly’
- d. kokoroo (sound of a cock) > mokoko ‘cock’

Earlier on, it was hinted that onomatopoeias are the primary source of ideophones, which gives them their secondary function. However, since they are primarily a source of imitations of various and diverse sounds in the environment of speakers, their meaning is to give sense to sounds that cannot be described or given a lexical representation. The contrast between primary and secondary onomatopoeias is important in Setswana in that primary onomatopoeias are proper sounds in imitations which give them real meaning. They therefore do not always need lexicalization.

(23) Non-lexicalizable primary onomatopoeias

- a. Monang wa re *nwii-nwi*- fa tsebeng.
‘The mosquito goes *nwii-nwii* by the ear.’
- b. Ke utlule nku e re, *beeh-bee* mo nageng.’
‘I heard the sheep crying, beeh-bee in the bush.’

At this point it will be worthwhile to critically examine the label that the onomatopoeias are given in Setswana. The word *leetsisi/maetsisi* (imitator/imitators) that was coined by Mogapi (1994) to speak of sounds from different sources is a good label. However, when it is used to talk about ideophones, it becomes a misleading term. It is therefore important to suggest here another word, *letswantshi/matshwantshi* (imager/imagers). This distinction between onomatopoeias and ideophones is important in the grammatical analysis of the language. The reason is that primary

onomatopoeias are the source of secondary onomatopoeias that dictionaries readily use in the name of ideophones.

(24) Onomatopoeias as the source of ideophones

Table 4. Relationship of onomatopoeias and ideophones in grammar

Stage 1:	Stage 2:	Stage 3:
Primary onomatopoeias <i>Leetsisi</i> (imitator)	Secondary onomatopoeias <i>Letshwantshi</i> (imager / ideophone)	Derivation
thuu-thuu	thuu	thuntsha 'shoot'
šaa-šaa (šwaa-šwaa)	šaa (šwaa)	šanya 'drizzle; rain'
tsirr-tsirr	tsiri	tsirinya 'ring'
kwa-kwa	kwakwa	kwakwanya 'walk noisily'
promprom	porom	porompeta 'trumpet'
phaa-phaa	phaa	phanya 'clap'

This approach in handling onomatopoeias in relation to ideophones and the lexical derivation that they present is not just logical, but it is the only manner in which onomatopoeias will get a proper treatment in the grammar of the language. A final point is that whilst onomatopoeias in their primary form have a syllabic structure that may be deemed deviant to that of lexical units that have closed moras, they are the source of tones and use sounds from the language's phonological inventory. Given their rich variety and morphology, Setswana onomatopoeias show that they play an important linguistic function in the language. They are not just imitators of sounds, but the foundation of an important part of the Setswana lexicon.

9. Conclusion

The paper has shown that there is a relationship between onomatopoeias and ideophones in that they both imitate. Ideophones mimic a broader spectrum of realities (sound, smells, manners), while onomatopoeias imitate mainly sounds. Past research has focused on ideophones because of their versatile imitations which cover non-sound realities; this has led to onomatopoeias being subsumed under ideophones. The paucity of research on onomatopoeias in Setswana gives the impression that they are peripheral in the language grammar and that they do not form a word class of their own. However, from the discussion in this paper, and indeed from research on both related and unrelated

languages onomatopoeias contribute a lot in word formation processes. This process of word formation brings in a lot in terms of morphological and phonological rules that make them not only language-specific by their phonetics, but also by their phonology, and word structure. Setswana, therefore, is like other African languages in terms of how speakers interact with their environment, and how sound experiences impact their daily lives. In this sense, onomatopoeias may be the source of the first human words, and therefore merit to be assigned a grammatical word class of their own. Further analysis and discussion of this word category in Setswana linguistics is necessary.

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