On the 'grammatical integration' of ideophones

Kiyoko Toratani
York University

Dingemanse (2012: 656) states, "Across languages, ideophones tend to show a great measure of syntactic independence: they tend to occur at clause edges rather than deeply embedded within them […]." An elaborated version of this argument uses the phrase "grammatical integration" (Dingemanse and Akita 2017). In their reformulation, Dingemanse and Akita [D&A] claim ideophones tend to display an inverse relation: the more expressive they are (e.g., prosodically highly marked), the less grammatically integrated they are (e.g., appearing at the 'utterance edge'). This paper focuses on the grammatical side of the argument, examining what is meant by "grammatical integration". I argue that D&A's degree of grammatical integration corresponds to the 'distance' between the predicate and various syntactic positions an ideophone can take within the clause structure (see Figure 1). I use Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) (Van Valin 2005, Bentley et al. 2023) to make my case.

According to D&A, "grammatical integration" can be measured by three parameters: (i) linear position, (ii) syntactic optionality, and (iii) embedding in morphosyntactic structure.

The first parameter is annotated, as "peripheral items are less integrated" (D&A 2017: 506). If we assume by "periphery", D&A mean the "left-" or "right-" most position of the sentence/text, this can be interpreted as having three types of realizations in RRG terms: (a) clause-internal, (b) detached, and (c) sentence-external positions. I use the "right-" most positions to illustrate.

An example of a clause-internal position is an adverbial use of ideophones. This can happen if the default position of an adverb in the language is post-verbal, as in (1).

Temne (a Niger-Congo language) (Kanu (2008: 130))
(1) a. ɔ̀   kɔ̀θ   nɔ̀ntʃì
         3SG   walk   slowly [adverb]
         'S/he walks slowly.'
     b. ɔ̀   kɔ̀θ   **ràgbɔ̀**
         3SG   walk   **IDEO**.sluggishly
         'S/he walks *sluggishly*.'

(1a) is an example of an adverb occurring post-verbally and as the right-most element of the sentence. The ideophone in (1b) occupies the same position as the adverb. In RRG terms, the ideophone is contained in a 'periphery' that modifies the core (see Figure 1).

An example of the detached and the sentence-external positions are exemplified in (2), using Japanese.

(2) a. *Ringo-ga   ochi-ta,   **boton-to*** (/**boton*).   [PoDP]
         apple-NOM   fall-PAST   **IDEO.thud-PARTICLE**
         'The apple dropped, *with a thud*.'

b. *Ringo-ga   ochi-ta,   **boton** (/*boton-to).*   [Sentence external]
   apple-NOM   fall-PAST   **IDEO.thud**
   'The apple dropped, *boton*.'

In (2a), the ideophone appears in the right-most position. It is postverbal, set off by a pause, indicating the ideophone occurs clause-externally. Critically, the ideophone is obligatory marked by the particle *to*, which indicates that the ideophone occurs within the sentence. In other words, the ideophone in (2a) occurs in the post-detached position (PoDP)—the clause-external but sentence-internal position. The ideophone in (2b) also appears in the right-most position. It is also postverbal and set off by a pause. This time, however, as the *to* marking is rejected, the ideophone is not part of the preceding sentence; it constitutes a sentence of its own (see Figure 1).

D&A's second and third parameters are annotated respectively as follows: "optional items are less integrated" and "less deeply embedded items are less integrated". Note these two are about the same point. The syntactic optionality is tantamount to saying that if the ideophone is an adjunct, it is "less integrated"; conversely, if the ideophone is a required part of the structure (e.g., predicate), it is "more integrated". Embedding is used in the sense of appearance in a light verb construction: i.e., if an ideophone occurs as part of the predicate, it is more integrated, and otherwise, it is less integrated. One example of an ideophone appearing as part of the predicate is given in (3), in which the ideophone *ʃtay* 'circularly' and the light verb 'go' are analyzed as constituting the predicate of the clause (Toratani 2023: 422).

Tlachichilco Tepehua (Totonacan; Watters (2013: 32))
(3) *ʃtay*   *ʔan-Ø*
    circularly   go-IPFV
    'it rotates'

Taken all together, D&A's sense of "grammatical integration" translates as the different syntactic positions of ideophones. They can form a cline in terms of the 'distance' from the predicate as represented in Figure 1, from the containment in the predicate (3) to an appearance in another sentence (2b) via the position in a periphery (1b) or a detached position (2a). The direction goes both ways, post- or pre-predicate.
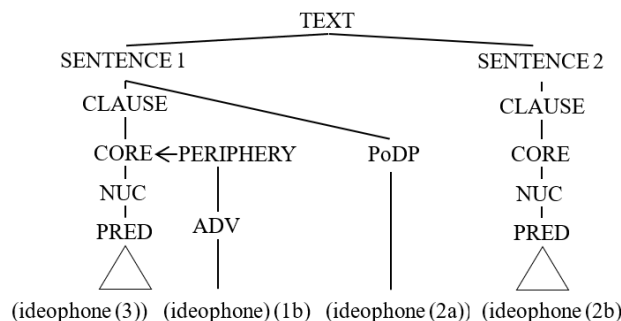

Figure 1: Examples of the syntactic positions of ideophones

The paper demonstrates the syntactic positions which ideophones occupy can be made more precise by using the theoretically informed concepts from RRG than by using descriptive terms such as "edges".

References

Bentley, Delia, Ricardo Mairal Usón, Wataru Nakamura, and Robert D Van Valin Jr. (Eds.). 2023. *The Cambridge Handbook of Role and Reference Grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dingemanse, Mark 2012. Advances in the cross-linguistic study of ideophones. *Language and Linguistics compass*, 6(10), 654–672.

Dingemanse, Mark and Kimi Akita 2017. An inverse relation between expressiveness and grammatical integration: On the morphosyntactic typology of ideophones, with special reference to Japanese. *Journal of Linguistics*, 53(3), 501–532.

Kanu, Sullay Mohamed. 2008. Ideophones in Temne. *Kansas Working Papers in Linguistics*, 30, 120-134.

Toratani, Kiyoko. 2023. Adverbs, mimetics and ideophones. In Delia Bentley, Ricardo Mairal Usón, Wataru Nakamura, and Robert D Van Valin Jr (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Role and Reference Grammar*, pp. 403–427. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van Valin, Robert D., Jr. 2005. *Exploring the Syntax–Semantics Interface. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*

Watters, James K. 2013. Transitivity, constructions, and the projection of argument structure in RRG. In Brian Nolan and Elke Diedrichsen (eds.), *Linking Constructions into Functional Linguistics*, 23–40. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.