

Adamawa Conference

Grammatical Functions of Jenjo Ideophones

By
Peace Benson





Introduction



- Jenjo or Dzə is an Adamawa language with an ISO code jen
- It is spoken in some parts of Adamawa, Gombe and Taraba
- It is one of the small group, less studied languages of Adamawa
- Population about 100,000 according to Ethnologue





Introduction continues



- Ideophone is one of the characteristics of African languages
- But it is now known to appear in European, American and Asian languages
- Most studies on ideophones reckoned with Doke (1935)
- A lot of linguists have studied ideophones such as Newman (1989), Kilian-Hatz (2001), Beck (2008), Dingemanse (2012 etc.





Definition of Ideophone



- Crystal (2008) defines ideophones as a term used in linguistics and phonetics for any vivid (ideophonic) representation of an idea in sound, such as occurs through onomatopoeia.
- Dingemanse (2013) defines ideophones as marked words that depict sensory imagery. That is their meanings are in the domain of sensory imagery, evoking all sorts of perceptions and inner sensation.





Still on Definition



- Rácová (2014) defines it as an onomatopoeic words that evoke the idea of a perception mediated by different senses, the idea of a mental or physical sensation, or the idea of a state or a manner of action.





Aim



- To get a full descriptive grammar of a language, it is important to study every aspect of it. Thus, this study explores the grammatical functions of Jenjo ideophones





Statement of the Problem



- Ideophones in adamawa languages are not give much attention

Theoretical Framework

- This research follows the basic linguistic theory as described by Dixon (2010)
- It simply describe language just the way it is





Methodology



- The data for this study were collected through recorded folktales, and personal observation of daily conversations
- Data were transcribed and the ideophones elicited







Discussion



Phonological properties

- Phonemes that are found in the conventional Jenjo vocabulary are also found in the ideophones except:
 - Voiceless velar fricative /ɱ/,
 - voiceless palatal approximant /ɥ̥/ and
 - voiced palatal approximant /ɥ/.





- 
- 
- The voiceless velar approximant /w/ does not occur alone in the ideophones except in consonant clusters. For example:

bwí dzwàdzwà “ideophone that describe softness”

bwàngbwàng “ideophone that describe tight and small”



- 
- 
- The voiced alveolar trill [r] only occur in ideophones and do not occur in conventional Jenjo vocabulary.
Example:

[hàr]	“sound of coming in a hurry” and
[bìr]	“sound of flying birds”



- 
- 
- /b, t, k/ and their variants are the most common phonemes found in Jenjo ideophones, more than any others

- Vowel harmony. Example

+ATR

-ATR vowels

ò *pwàpû* “sound of fall” tsa *kwàté* “very hard”

nwá *kēkē* “drink down” *tàkpétàkpé* “sound of milling”





Syllable Structure of Jenjo Ideophones



- Four syllable structure types were evident in Jenjo ideophones
- CV /g̃bà/ “mannerless”
- CVC [hàr] “sound of coming in a hurry”
- CCV /ḍzwédzwé/ “describes softness”
- CCVC /bwàṇbwàṇ/ “describes small and tight”





Tone



- There are three level tones in the Jenjo ideophones. These combine to give the following tone melodies in disyllabic ideophones: HH, MM, LL, LH, LR, FM, and LM. But LL and MM are the most common.
- While there is only one tone melody in polysyllabic ideophones, LLL, as against the conventional Jenjo polysyllabic nouns which has HHH, HHM and HHL.





Morphological Properties



- Morphologically, ideophones in Jenjo have no inflection
- Jenjo ideophones are mostly disyllabic with a default shape /CVCV/
- Only one reduplicative pattern which is the full reduplicated ideophones








Full Reduplication



- Full reduplication expresses intensity and emphasis such as:
- /zítî/ “very dirty” /zítî.zítî/ “extremely dirty”
- /jîlî/ “very cool” /jîlî.jîlî/ “extremely cool”
- /gúdú/ “heavy run” /gúdú.gúdú/ “running heavily”



- 
- 
- Vowel shortening or lengthening is not common in Jenjo phonology but these are attested in the ideophones for the purpose of emphasis for example yè tūtū (horrible smell) can be emphasised as yè tūtūūūū (extremely horrible smell)
- 



Syntactic Properties of Ideophones



- Jenjo ideophones may follow nouns, verbs or adjective
- They can function in relative clauses, adverbial clauses
- When ideophone occurs after a genitive noun it does the work of an auxiliary verb and adjective modifying noun e.g.





<Nwa wə bangləŋ >

[Nwà wə bàŋlón]

/nwà wə bàŋlón/

mouth 3sg.poss IDEO

His/her mouth is extremely big and wide.

- It also forms a complete sentence
 - They can occur anywhere in a sentence
- 



Semantic Properties



- Jenjo ideophones is descriptive and intensive
- They express sound, shape, texture, feeling, state, degree and colour
- See page





Ideophones as Other Word Classes



- Verb Intensifying Ideophones
- The ideophones which act as adverbs modifying the verbs.

/é	tètè/
pour	IDEO
<i>Vast land/place</i>	

/kí	ɲwá.kwàɲ	kéléló/
craft	mouth.shout	IDEO
<i>shout very loud</i>		





Adjective Intensifying Ideophones



/bí ɡb̀ìnt̀ìŋ/

dark IDEO

very dark

/j̣ě k̀pàŋ/

red IDEO

very red





Noun Intensifying Ideophones



/ɲìnvì fě́fě́/
morning IDEO
early morning

/̀nìvì fě́fě́/
night IDEO
mid night





Conclusions



- Jenjo ideophones are descriptive and intensive in nature and are an important part of the language
- It also functions as sub-classes of other word classes because of their dependency attributes.
- It is therefore worth noting that the argument of whether ideophones are word classes or subclasses is dependent on the language and the functions ideophones perform in that language

