

Characteristics of Onomatopoeia

LIN1001 Discovering Linguistics

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9 December 2004

Abstract

Onomatopoeia, the imitative making of words from natural sounds, is a common phenomenon found in all languages of the world. The study of onomatopes is, however, inadequate considering its importance in the development of language. The present study provides a descriptive account of onomatopes from 12 different languages, and based on these data, an analysis of the underlying language universals. The second part of the study looks at the formation of general lexicons from onomatopes, and how these lexicons work from a syntactic perspective.

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of linguistic study, it is commonly accepted that individual sounds do not represent any particular meanings. It is, for instance, meaningless to ask what [p] or [a] mean.¹ The sound for the word of a particular meaning is arbitrary; therefore there is generally no connection between sound and meaning. This, however, is not absolutely correct, as we have neglected the existence of a class of words, namely onomatopes, which do appear in the everyday use of language quite often.

As its Greek root suggests, *onomatopoeia* is the making (*poiein*) of a name or word (*onoma*) from natural sound. Onomatopes are thus imitative words of these natural sounds. Onomatopes are found in all languages of the world, and some linguists in fact believe onomatopes were the first words human spoke when language was developed. Since direct imitation allows the hearer to understand the meaning most easily, it is the most obvious way to describe actions (e.g. *punch*, *boom*) and animals (e.g. *cock*, *dodo*), which constitute the most parts of the conversation between primordial human. Therefore, the hypothesis is indeed reasonable. These primitive sounds have evolved over time, the remnants have become today's onomatopes, and even some words which we do not usually regard as onomatopes. For instance, when animals are mating, they often open their mouths and produce a sound like [ha]. This sound may have evolved into the Taiwanese word *ha*, which later was borrowed by Mandarin and became the word *ha*¹ (哈), which expresses a feeling of love and affection. The word is used to create vocabularies like *ha*¹*ri*⁴ (哈日) “to love Japanese things” and *ha*¹*han*² (哈韓) “to love Korean things” by the younger generation.²

¹ Crystal (2002), pp176-177.

² 哈日的風波 (n.d.).

Despite the importance of onomatopes in the world's languages, the linguistic study of them is pitifully inadequate. Many linguistics regarded onomatopes as "second class citizens among words, since they are often polysemous, while at the same time, paradoxically, applicable to only a narrow semantic range".³ In order to provide a clearer picture on onomatopoeia, it is the objective of this study to find out the characteristics of onomatopes of the world's languages. It is also hoped that from these characteristics, we can reveal some of the underlying language universals. In the second part of this study, the devilment of onomatopes into common lexicons, and the syntactic behaviors of these lexicons are also examined.

PREVIOUS STUDIES OF ONOMATOPOEIA

Anderson (1998) listed four objections of onomatopoeia on linguistic grounds proposed by some linguists. The objections are as follows:

1. Onomatopes are conventional signs, not imitative echoes;
2. Even if onomatopes are imitative, they are not non-arbitrary;
3. Onomatopes exist on the margin of language, not as part of *langue*;
4. Onomatopes do not accurately imitative natural sounds.

In response to these objections, Anderson pointed out that the capacity of human to mimic sounds is limited by the constraints of phonological systems and the structure of the human vocal tract. Therefore, an exact imitation of natural sounds by human is not possible, and hence objection 4 is true but nevertheless cannot be used to prove that onomatopes are merely conventional. Moreover, since onomatopes are constrained by the phonological systems of different languages, onomatopes can only be partial imitation of natural sounds. However, it does not naturally follow that

³ Anderson (1998), p129.

onomatopes are conventional and arbitrary. As a matter of fact, onomatopoeia is a kind of iconism, and iconism only requires a partial resemblance of the referent.

Müller (1891) regarded onomatopes as merely “playthings”, and not as a part of the language system. He argued that onomatopes are rootless, which means they have no etymology, and unproductive, which means they cannot generate new words. This however is in contrary to the fact. Jespersen later pointed out that the word *cuckold* was a derived word from *cuckoo*. Rätsep (1983) also proposed that twenty percent of the vocabulary in Estonian originated from onomatopes.

METHODOLOGY

The first part of the present study aims to compare onomatopes of the world’s languages phonologically. In order to conduct such a cross-linguistic comparison and investigate the universal features, data of 12 languages from different language families were collected. 10 of them were first-hand data from native speakers collected either in person or through the Internet, while the other 2 were second-hand data from Internet web sites and dictionaries. Table 1 shows a list of these languages.

Table 1: Languages investigated in the present study

Family	Subgroup	Language	Data ⁴
Sino-Tibetan	Sinitic	Cantonese	F
		Mandarin	S
Indo-European	Romance	Italian	F
		Spanish	F
	Germanic	German	F
		English	F
Baltic	Lithuanian	F	
Uralic	Finno-Ugric	Finnish	F
Altaic	Turkic	Turkish	F
Niger-Congo	Benue-Congo	Swahili	F
Independent		Korean	F
		Japanese	S

⁴ F: first-hand data; S: second-hand data.

The data of onomatopes collected were divided into four groups, namely:

1. Calls of animals,
2. Sounds of nature,
3. Sounds made by human,
4. Miscellaneous sounds.

Onomatopes of a total of 30 sounds were inquired. The data are listed in Appendix.

Of these 10 languages with first-hand data, those of Swahili are incomplete because of the lost of contact with the informants. For the other languages, data of each language were collected from two informants to check for consistency and agreement. For the empty fields in the data, it is supposed that the languages lack onomatopes to describe the corresponding sounds.

PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ONOMATOPEs

Similarities across Languages

It is easy to find that onomatopes of the same sound in different languages are often similar (please refer to the data in Appendix). This is especially true for the calls of animals. For instance, if we compare the onomatopes for the call of a cock, we see that almost all of them contain an initial velar stop, either a voiceless [k] or a voiced version [g]. In addition, in contrary to the most common two-syllable onomatopes for animal calls, all of them contain three to five syllables to indicate a prolonged call. The similarity is even more striking in the call of a sheep. All of the languages surveyed show the same pattern: An initial bilabial consonant (nasal [m] or stop [b]) plus a final front vowel [e]. Onomatopes for the other animal calls also show a great deal of similarity. A listing of the characteristic phonemes is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Characteristic phonemes of onomatopes of animal calls

Animal call	Characteristic phonemes
dog	[w] + [a] / [u] / [au]
cat	[m] + [ja]
horse	[h] + [i]
cow	[m] + [u]
sheep	[m] / [b] + [e]
cock	[k,g] + [o] / [u] / [i]
duck	[k,g] + [a] / [wa]
frog	[k,g] (+ [r]) + [a] / [wa]
bee	[z] / [ŋ] / [n]
snake	[z]

Onomatopes for the other sounds, although not as prominent, also show similarities across languages. Table 3 shows some examples.

Table 3: Characteristic phonemes of some common onomatopes

Sounds	Characteristic phonemes
blowing wind	[u]
dripping water	[t,d]
laughing	[h]
crying	[w] + [a]
murmuring	[m]
speaking quickly	[p,b] + [l] + [a]
eating	[a] + [m]
drinking	[k,g] (+ [l]) + [u]
glass breaking	[ŋ] / [n]
ringing	[t,d] / [r] + [i] / [a] / [o] + [ŋ] / [n]
car beeping	[p,b]
explosion	[p,b] + [a] / [u] + [ŋ] / [n] / [m]

It is understandable that some of these similarities come from inheritance and word-borrowing, which is especially true for European languages. For instance, the Latin word for the call of a cock is *cucurire*, the word was either inherited or borrowed into many European languages, giving birth to words like *chichirichi* in Italian, *kikeriki* in

German, *kukeliku* in Swedish and *kukorekati* in Russian. However, it is worthy to note that these similarities occur even in distant unrelated languages (e.g. Cantonese *bi¹li¹baa¹laa¹* and Finnish *päläpäläpälä*). This clearly suggests that onomatopes cannot be merely conventional signs, but a partial imitation of the corresponding natural sound, which is in agreement with Anderson's proposal.

Differences between Languages

Despite the above mentioned similarities, differences do exist between languages. The Cantonese call of a frog *gwaa¹gwaa¹*, for instance, is quite different from the English *ribbit*. The English *boom* for the sound of explosion, is also quite unrecognizable to the Swahili *twa*. This raises a difficult question to answer: Why do these onomatopes differ?

Supporters of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis propose that sounds perceived by a hearer are in fact dependent upon the phonological system of his language. "Sound effects are verbalized by means of the phonemes of a language according to how the speakers hear the effects.⁵" The hypothesis, however, has not met with adequate evidences.

Instead of accepting that the sounds we *hear* are altered by our phonological system, it seems more reasonable to argue that the sounds we *speak* are altered by the phonological system. This is because even if we hear and perceive the same sounds, we always imitate these sounds with a closest set of phonemes in our own phonological system when we onomatopoeicize them. Taking the buzzing of bees as an example, in most of the European languages surveyed, the onomatopes involve a voiced fricative [z] to represent the fricative sound made by the vibration of bees. The four Asian languages, however, do not have this sound in their phonological systems.

⁵ Verdi (1994).

They therefore employ nasal consonants [ŋ] and [ɲ] to create an effect of resonance. Another example is the sound of snoring. Snoring is a continuous vibrations of air produced near the site of the uvula. Spanish therefore employs a prolonged alveolar trill [r] to imitate this continuous vibration. On the other hand, most other languages surveyed do not have a trill which produces multiple vibrations, and they do not have a corresponding onomatopoeia for snoring. Syllabic structure also plays a role in determining the “shape” of onomatopoeias. Languages like Cantonese, Mandarin, Japanese and Finnish do not allow double consonant such as [spr] and [bl] in their syllables⁶, therefore what is *blah blah blah* in English or *bla bla bla* in German has become *bi¹li¹baa¹laa¹* in Cantonese, *bera bera* in Japanese and *päläpäläpälä* in Finnish. We see that an additional vowel is inserted between the two consonants to make it consistent with the language’s syllabic structure.

The above examples show us how the phonological system of a language may influence onomatopoeias, yet it may not be able to account for all the differences between onomatopoeias of different languages. There are, indeed, more factors we would have to consider.

For example, some sounds may be actually different in different places. An example is that of a fire engine, in Cantonese the onomatopoeia is *bi¹bu³bi¹bu³*, in German it is *tatiütata*; we may wonder why the sounds do not sound alike, but fail to notice the fact that the fire engines in China and Germany *actually* sound different!

A more important factor has to deal with the development of onomatopoeias over time. In contrary to Müller’s argument, onomatopoeias do evolve. In the course of their evolution, they may be modified due to trends and other reasons. For instance, the onomatopoeia for explosion in Cantonese is *baang⁴* or *bung⁴*, but the younger generation

⁶ There are a few words with double consonants in Finnish, but all of them are foreign words.

sometimes uses the word *ngan⁴ngaa⁴*, which may have been influenced by the sound effects in Japanese animations. Over time, these changes may accumulate to a point that we do not find it similar to the same onomatopoeia in other languages.

Exhibition of Kinesthesia

It is worthwhile to note that a lot of onomatopoeias exhibit an interesting phenomenon of kinesthesia, which relates the meaning of a word and its physical attributes of articulation.⁷ The most obvious examples are those related to human activities, such as eating, drinking, spitting, vomiting, etc. As shown in Table 3, the characteristic phoneme for eating is [am]. When we open our mouth to a full aperture and pronounce [a], and then close it to pronounce the bilabial nasal [m], we are indeed actualizing the action of eating. The bilabial stop [p] of *zep⁶zep⁶* in Cantonese serves the same function. The words *spit* in English, *tu⁴* (吐) in Mandarin and *loe¹* in Cantonese are also good examples of such actualization.

There are some more subtle sound symbolisms. Some qualities of the referents may be associated with certain specific phonemes. For instance, [i] is often associated with the concept of quickness and/or lightness and [a] denotes something which is going on and on.⁸ In Cantonese, both *dik⁶dik⁶* and *duk⁶duk⁶* can be used to describe the dripping of water; however the former refers to quick and light water drops, while the latter usually refers to heavy drops. The word *blah blah blah* in English, and its corresponding words in other languages, also employs [a] to denote an on-going speech.

Association of meaning and phonemes of this kind is relatively well studied in English. Linguists have found that, for instance, an initial [sl] conveys unpleasant

⁷ Anderson (1998), p167.

⁸ Berlin (1992), pp240-241.

associations, and the final consonant [ʃ] represents the sounds of collision. However, it seems that not all of these patterns are universal to languages.

FUNCTIONS OF ONOMATOPESES

Onomatopeses are not merely “playthings” which children learn in kindergarten, even adults do use a lot of onomatopeses, with or without noticing it. As a matter of fact, languages such as Japanese rely a great deal on onomatopeses to describe actions. When onomatopeses are used, there are four main functions:

1. To enrich the contents of the article, by giving more vivid description of the environment;
2. To increase the degree of musicality, since onomatopeses are words that imitate natural sounds;
3. To deepen the impression of readers towards the message, because onomatopeses “audiolize” the picture;
4. To maximize the reality of the situation so that the readers can get a real acoustic sensation of the whole picture.

In the following section, we will discuss how onomatopeses are used as general lexicons and how their behaviors differ from non-onomatopoeic lexicons.

SYNTACTIC BEHAVIORS OF ONOMATOPESES

If we take a look at the following sentence:

砰，子彈向這邊飛來。

The onomatopese *peng*¹ (砰) is used independently like an interjection. In fact, in many cases, onomatopeses are used just like interjections in this way. However, it would be wrong to treat onomatopeses and interjections as in the same category,

because as we will see, onomatopes are different from interjections that interjections can only be used independently, while onomatopes can be used as other parts of speech and be used within a sentence.

Development of Onomatopes

As mentioned above, when “primitive” onomatopes are created, they are often used independently to describe some specific sounds. Over time, generalization and simile of these words expand their uses. Finally, these words incorporate into the *langue* and become general lexicons. In general, onomatopes can develop into four parts of speech, namely nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

Onomatopoeic Nouns

It is safe to claim that, in almost all languages of the world, a vast amount of nouns are indeed of onomatopoeic origin. Some of these nouns seem to be in a more primitive state, linking the onomatopes to the objects which produce these sounds. *joeng⁴me¹* (𦍋^{me¹}) “sheep” and *wou¹wou¹gau²* (*wou¹wou¹* 狗) “dog” in Cantonese are examples of this kind. The name of the Japanese cartoon character *kerokerokeroppi* is also formed with the onomatope for the call of a frog *kerokero*. These nouns are usually considered childish. Some other onomatopoeic nouns are more developed and form regular vocabularies which are not considered childish, such as *zip* and *cock* in English, and *he¹qian⁴* (呵欠) “yawn” and *wa²wa⁰* (娃娃) “baby” in Mandarin.

Berlin and O’Neill (1981) surveyed 206 bird names in the South American language Huambisa, and confirmed that 34% of the names were of onomatopoeic

origin.⁹ Malkiel also pointed out that “an exceptionally high number of names (in European languages) for “frog” contained the sound [r].” Berlin later examined the names for toads and frogs in 33 non-Indo-European languages, and found that “91 percent of them showed the suspected pattern for [r], [l] or both.¹⁰” These all show clearly the significance of onomatopoes in the development of nouns.

Onomatopoeic Verbs

Onomatopoes can also develop into verbs. Examples include *am⁴am⁴cam⁴cam⁴* “murmuring”, *zi⁴zi⁴zam⁴zam⁴* “murmuring” and *bi¹li¹baa¹laa¹* “speaking quickly and loudly” in Cantonese, *nan²nan²* (喃喃) “mumbling”, *ke²* (咳) “coughing” in Mandarin and a large number of them in English, including *lap, clip, rip, crack, creak, click, cluck, flick, crash, crush, cough, lash, murmur, puff, sigh, slash, smash, whack*, etc.

These words can be used in exactly the same way as other non-onomatopoeic verbs:

Cantonese: 唔該你唔好再*am⁴am⁴cam⁴cam⁴*得唔得？

Mandarin: 把這鍋湯再*咕嘟*一會兒。

English: *Zip* up your jacket - it's cold.

Onomatopoeic Adjectives

Onomatopoes are widely used as adjectives. Consider the examples

Cantonese: 果班*嘻嘻哈哈*嘅細路係我啲表弟。

Mandarin: 同學們穿上劃一的傳統中國服奏出*鏗鏘*的樂音。

*淅淅*的雨聲打在窗上。

⁹ Berlin (1992), p241.

¹⁰ Berlin (1992), pp250-251.

These onomatopoeic adjectives are often generalized to describe sounds other than those they were originally onomatopoeicized from. For instance, *keng¹chang¹* (鏗鏘) is originally the sound produced when two pieces of metal collide. Its sharp and clear quality has been generalized to describe comfortable sounds such as music.

Onomatopoeic Adverbs

Usually, when an onomatopoeic adjective can be used as an adjective, it can then also be used as an adverb. In Cantonese, *gam²* (咁) replaces *ge³* (嘅) to make an adjective an adverb; while in Mandarin *de⁰* (地) substitutes *de⁰* (的).

Cantonese: 炮仗辟里啪拉咁響。

Mandarin: 雨點嘩啦嘩啦地落在地上。

In languages such as English, a great variety of words are used to describe the different manners of performing the same action, e.g. *murmur*, *whisper*, *shout*, *blab*, etc. In some other languages, such as Chinese, Korean and Japanese, the vocabulary stock for these actions is rather limited. Instead of using different words to describe the manners, these languages use adverbs, which often are onomatopoes, to modify the verbs. A contrast is shown in the following examples in Cantonese and English:

1a. 佢地 $zi^4 zi^4 zam^4 zam^4$ 咁講緊人地秘密。

1b. They are *whispering* secrets.

2a. 佢地 $bi^1 li^1 baa^1 laa^1$ 咁講緊人地秘密。

2b. They are *blabbing*.

Special Behaviors of Onomatopoeic Adjectives and Adverbs

Even though onomatopoeic can usually be used just like any normal adjectives and

adverbs, they do show some differences in syntactic formation. For instance, unlike normal adjectives and adverbs, onomatopoes cannot be repeated to strengthen its meaning. By repeating an onomatopoe, only the continuity of the sound will be signified. A contrast is shown in the following two Mandarin sentences:

1. 雨點*很重很重地*落在地上。
2. 雨點*嘩啦嘩啦地*落在地上。

The italicized phrases are adverbs. The first one is a normal adverb whereas the second one is an onomatopoeic adverb. By repeating the phrase *hen³zhong⁴* (很重), we can stress on and strengthen the degree of heaviness of the falling rain. However, if we repeat *hua²la¹* (嘩啦), it signifies a continuous fall of rain, but does not specify the heaviness of the rain.

Another major difference between normal adjectives / adverbs and onomatopoeic adjectives / adverbs is that the former can be modified by degree adverbs such as *very* and *a little bit* but not the latter. Compare the following two sentences:

1. 果班好*嘈嘍*細路係我啲表弟。
2. *果班好*嘻嘻哈哈*嘍細路係我啲表弟。

The first one is a normal adjective, it is obvious that it can be modified by the degree adverb *very*. However, since the onomatopoeic adjective *hi¹hi¹haa¹haa¹ge³* (嘻嘻哈哈嘍) merely describes a sound, and it is meaningless to specify the degree of “being a sound”; therefore sentence 2 is ungrammatical.

In summary, we can see that though onomatopoes can sometimes be used as different parts of speech like noun, verb, adjective and adverb, they are not exactly identical. This shows that onomatopoes are a special class of words in its own right.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

There are various limitations in our study of onomatopoeia. Firstly, we have not taken an exhaustive account on the phonetics and etymology of the relevant languages. If further studies of these languages' phonological systems and etymology of the onomatopes could be conducted, comparisons of a deeper layer between these languages could be carried out. Secondly, in our syntactic study of onomatopoeia, we have mainly focused on examples from Cantonese and Mandarin. Although we have reasons to believe that the patterns mentioned are also applicable to other languages, further studies should be conducted to verify this. Lastly, since our study aims to be a bird's-eye view of the characteristics of onomatopoeia, we have neglected many interesting details which could have been further researched¹¹.

CONCLUSION

In summary, we see that onomatopes is a distinct class of words, they are universal to languages. Onomatopes are found in every language and due to their imitative nature, onomatopes for the same sound in different languages often share some universal characteristics. Despite a common origin, onomatopes for the same sound in different language are influenced or restricted by the different phonological systems, leading to discrepancies between them. In addition, onomatopes are as productive as any other words. They can develop into nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, which become part of our everyday vocabulary.

¹¹ For instance, 竺家寧 (1995) has worked on the common existence of [l] in onomatopes.

Appendix – Data of Onomatopes

1. Calls of Animal

	Dog	Cat	Horse
Cantonese	wou1wou1	喵喵 meu1meu1	me2he3he3he3
Mandarin	汪汪 wang1wang1	喵喵 miao1miao1	啾啾 jiu1jiu1
Korean	멍멍 mung-mung	야옹 ya-ong	히히히힝 hi-hi-hi-hing
Japanese	ワンワン wan-wan	ニャニャ nya-nya	ヒヒーン hi-hiin
English	ruff	meow	neigh
German	wau	miau	leeh
Italian	bau bau	miao miao	ih ih ih
Spanish	guau guau	miau miau	ji ji ji
Lithuanian	au au	miau	ihaha
Finnish	hau / vuh	miau / miu	lihahaa
Turkish	hav	miyav	ih-ih-ihaaa
Swahili	-	-	-
	Cow	Sheep	Cock
Cantonese	au2	咩咩 me1me1	guk6guk1guk3guk3
Mandarin	哞 ou2	咩咩 mie1mie1	喔喔 wu1wu1
Korean	음메 um-me	메 me	꼬끼오 ggo-ggi-o
Japanese	もーもー moo-moo	メーメー mee-mee	コケッコ koke-kokko
English	moo	baaa	cock-a-doodledoo
German	muhh	mäh	kikeriki
Italian	muu muu	beeh beeh	chichirichi
Spanish	muuuuu	beee beee	kirikiiii
Lithuanian	muuuuu	meee	kakariekuuuuu
Finnish	ammuu	bää / mää	kukkokiekuu
Turkish	mö	me	kuk-kurri-kuuu
Swahili	-	-	-

	Duck	Frog	Bee
Cantonese	ep3ep3	呱呱 gwaal gwaal	嗡嗡 jung1jung1
Mandarin	啞啞 ya1ya1	呱呱 gual gual	嗡嗡 weng1weng1
Korean	꽹꽹 ggoeg-ggoeg	개굴개굴 gae-gul-gae-gul	윙윙 / 웅웅 wing-wing / oaeng-oaeng
Japanese	ガーガー gaa-gaa	ケロケロ kero-kero	ブンブン bun-bun
English	quack	ribbit	buzzzz
German	quack	quaak	summ
Italian	qua qua	craa craa	zzzz
Spanish	cua cua	croa croa	zzzz
Lithuanian	kre kre	kva	bzzzzzz
Finnish	vaak	-	bzzzz
Turkish	vak	vırak	vız
Swahili	-	-	-
	Snake		
Cantonese	-		
Mandarin	-		
Korean	쉬- / 스스 / 숙쉬익 shi- / seu-seu / seug-sui-ig		
Japanese	-		
English	hissss		
German	zzz		
Italian	sss		
Spanish	ssss		
Lithuanian	zzzz		
Finnish	shhhh		
Turkish	tıs		
Swahili	-		

2. Sounds of Nature

	Thunder	Wind	Rain
Cantonese	轟轟 gwang4gwang4	呼呼 fu4fu4	沙沙 sa4sa4
Mandarin	隆隆 long2long2	嗚嗚 / 沙沙 wu1wu1 / sha1sha1	淅瀝 xi1li4
Korean	우르릉광 u-le-leung kwang	쌩쌩 ssoeng-ssoeng	썩 / 주룩주룩 ssua / ju-lug-ju-lug
Japanese	ズズン zu-zun	ソヨソヨ / ヒューヒュー soyo-soyo / hyuu-hyuu	ザーザー zaa-zaa
English	-	-	pitter patter
German	wrumm	-	tropf
Italian	truum	vuū vuū	iic-iic
Spanish	trrum	szzz	-
Lithuanian	-	-	-
Finnish	-	-	-
Turkish	-	-	-
Swahili	-	-	-
	Dripping water	Waves	
Cantonese	嘀嘀 dik6dik6	-	
Mandarin	-	-	
Korean	똑똑 ddug-ddug	썩 / 출씩출씩 ssua / chul-sseog chul-sseog	
Japanese	タラタラ tara-tara	-	
English	drip	-	
German	-	-	
Italian	plic plic	-	
Spanish	ploc ploc	-	
Lithuanian	kapt	-	
Finnish	tip	liplap	
Turkish	-	-	
Swahili	-	-	

3. Sounds Made by Human

	Laughing	Crying	Breathing
Cantonese	哈哈 / 嘻嘻 / 呵呵 ha1ha1 / he4he4 / ho1ho1	哇哇 / 呀呀 wa1wa1 / aa2aa2	-
Mandarin	哈哈 / 嘻嘻 / 呵呵 ha1ha1 / xi1xi1 / he1he1	哇哇 / 嗚嗚 wa1wa1 / wu1wu1	咻咻 xiu1xiu1
Korean	하하 / 호호 / 후후 / 히히 ha-ha / ho-ho / huhu / hihi	엉엉 ueong-ueong	홀떡홀떡 hhul-ddeug-hhul-ddeug
Japanese	ゲラゲラ / ニコニコ gera gera / niko-niko	アーンアーン aan-aan	-
English	haha	waaaah / sob sob	-
German	haha	wääh	-
Italian	ah ah ah	sgh sgh	-
Spanish	ah ah	va va	nss ns ns
Lithuanian	cha cha cha	-	-
Finnish	haha / hihi / hoho / hehe	nyyh	
Turkish	haha	-	-
Swahili	-	-	-
	Snoring	Murmuring	Speaking quickly
Cantonese	-	am4am4cam4cam4 zi4zi4zam4zam4	gi1li1gwaal1laa1 / bi1li1baa1laa1
Mandarin	-	喃喃 / 咕嚕 nan2nan2 / gu1lu0	噤哩呱啦 ji1li1wa1la1
Korean	드르럼 deu-leu-leum	중얼중얼 jung-eul-jung-eul	죸알죸알 jom-al-jom-al
Japanese	グーグー guu-guu	クシャクシャ kusha-kusha	ベラベラ bera-bera
English	-	murmur	blah blah blah
German	-	murmeln	bla bla bla
Italian	-	mmmhh	bla bla bla
Spanish	rrrrr	mmmhh	bla bla bla
Lithuanian	-	mur mur	-
Finnish	-	-	päläpäläpälä
Turkish	hor	mir mir	-
Swahili	-	-	-

	Eating	Drinking
Cantonese	𠵼𠵼𠵼 zep6zep6	咕嚕咕嚕 gu6lu6gu6lu6
Mandarin	-	咕嘟 gu1lu0
Korean	냠냠 / 얌얌 nyam-nyam / yam-yam	꿀경꿀경 ggul-ggeuk-ggul-ggeuk
Japanese	ムシャムシャ musha-musha	ゴクンゴクン / ガブガブ gokun-gokun / gabu-gabu
English	chomp chomp	gulp gulp
German	-	gluck gluck
Italian	am am	gluc gluc
Spanish	ñam ñam	glu glu glu
Lithuanian	-	-
Finnish	-	glug-glug
Turkish	ham	lıkr
Swahili	-	-

3. Miscellaneous Sounds

	Glass breaking	Bell ringing	Phone ringing
Cantonese	ping1	叮噹 / 鈴鈴 ding1dong3 / ling1ling1	du1du1
Mandarin	迸 beng4	叮噹 / 鈴鈴 ding1dang1 / ling2ling2	-
Korean	쟁그랑 jjaeng-geu-rang	딸랑딸랑 / 뽕 / 덩동 ddal-lang-ddal-lang / pping / ding-dong	따르릉 dda-leu-leung
Japanese	-	カランカラン karan-karan	-
English	-	ding ding	br-r-r-ring
German	-	-	drring / drr
Italian	-	ding dong	drin-drin
Spanish	cataplash	ding dong	ring ring
Lithuanian	tidinksht	trrr	trrrrrrr
Finnish	klink	ring-ring	ring-ring
Turkish	-	-	-
Swahili	-	nkilinkili	-

	Car beeping	Explosion	Collision of metals
Cantonese	砵砵 bup1bup1	baang4 / bung4	ping1
Mandarin	砵砵 bo1bo1	-	鏗鏘 keng1chang1
Korean	뽕뽕 bbang-bbang	광 / 뽕 kwang / ppeong	쌩 / 쿵쿵 / 찱그랑 jjaeng / kung-kung / chaeng-geu-lang
Japanese	-	ガン gan	カーン kaan
English	honk	boom	clang / ping
German	-	-	-
Italian	piiit piiit	bumm	crach
Spanish	piiii piiii	bummmm	clinggggg
Lithuanian	pyp	bum	girgzht
Finnish	tööt	bumm	skriik
Turkish	-	bom	-
Swahili	-	pii-pii	twa
Collision of other objects			
Cantonese	啤嘒 ping4paang4 / bing4baang4		
Mandarin	-		
Korean	궁 / 삐리릭 / 딸랑딸랑 kung / bi-li-lig / ttag-lang-ttag-lang		
Japanese	ドカン dokan		
English	thud / thump		
German	-		
Italian	-		
Spanish	pammm		
Lithuanian	-		
Finnish	-		
Turkish	dan		
Swahili	-		

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