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Abstract

Sound symbolic words, also known as ideophones, represent that part of language that attempts to imitate real-life senses through the vocal tract. Sound symbolism as a discipline has often been overlooked and considered as relegated to child-like media and playful linguistic exchanges. In recent years, more and more research has been dedicated to these forms, which are often characterised by uncommon linguistic elements and tend to drift away from canonical grammatical and phonetic rules; for this reason, their analysis can reveal new perspectives on language creation and linguistic iconicity. The current study aims to align itself with those enquiries that have defined sound symbolic forms as 'linguistic rebels' and does this through the preliminary analysis of a bilingual corpus of ideophones taken from Italian Disney comics and created through extensive, doctoral archival work. The results will help clarify the role of ideophones in the comic book and will focus on identifying the morphophonological stratagems that make sound symbolic words expressive and iconic.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'sound symbolism' is used to refer to 'those marked words depictive of sensory images noted for their special sound patterns, distinct grammatical properties and sensory meanings' (Dingemanse 2012, 654). These are commonly known as 'onomatopoeias' and represent the human speech's effort to imitate sensorial experiences through the vocal tract. The term 'sound symbolism' is used to refer to the sub-discipline of linguistics that studies these synesthetic depictions, which tend to eschew the canonical grammatical rules of a given language (Armoaskaite & Koskinen 2017, 149) and involve unusual morphological and phonetic patterns, to the point that they have been described as 'linguistic rebels' (Kunene 2001, 183). Despite the term 'onomatopoeia' being acceptable, this does not include all of the sensorial depictions but, instead, only focuses on the sonic ones. Indeed, sound symbolism does not only represent sound but can often attempt to iconically imitate other senses, such as touch and smell, and kinaesthetic (ie. related to motion) experiences. For the purpose of this study, the term 'ideophone' will be used to refer to any forms that attempt to represent sensorial experiences in an iconic way, whilst 'sound symbolism' will be used to refer to the linguistic sub-discipline as a whole. As such, the concept of 'onomatopoeia' will be included within the term 'ideophone'.

The present paper aims to provide a brief summary of the linguistic findings that emerged during the analysis of a corpus of Italian and English sound symbolic forms taken from 210 Italian Disney stories. The stories were published in Italy between December 1932 and January 2013, mostly in the *Topolino* ('Mickey Mouse') magazine. The corpus, comprising 4681 ideophonic forms, aims to support a preliminary historical and linguistic analysis of the use of sound symbolic forms in Italian Disney stories. *Topolino* and its stories were indeed published in Italy and aimed towards an Italian audience although, considering that the sound symbolic forms used in them are both of Italian and English origin, the resulting corpus can be considered a bilingual one.

The choice to analyse this particular magazine was motivated by various factors. Most imoportantly, *Topolino* magazine has been published in Italy, almost without interruption, for eighty-four years hence its pages have witnessed important changes in language in use, particularly when considering ideophones. This peculiarity

Figure 1. First issue of *Topolino* magazine published in December 1932 (*Topolino giornale, issue 1*, Dec. 1932).

makes it a very revealing medium, as it allows scholars to gain access to historical data on the diachronic evolution of the language featured in its pages. As Verda (1990, 58) comments, *Topolino* is an important 'graphical and linguistic vehicle that faithfully follows the course of time' (translation mine) and perfectly embodies the interchange of terminology typical of those mass media that were propagated in the decades around the two wars, media that served as

tools readily available to experiment with language in ways that other more established means of communication (newspapers and radio above all) might not have allowed at the time.

The following section will be dedicated to a theoretical introduction of sound symbolic words to investigate where this iconicity comes from and how it is expressed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Anderson (1998, 99) suggests that expressive sound symbolic words have both external and internal bases. The external basis is the 'sonic, physical, psychological or affective stimuli that are imitated or represented by means of partial resemblance' (Anderson 1998, 99)–in simpler terms, that which they are trying to depict, and this can be expressed through morphological, lexical or phonological strategies. The internal bases for iconism, on the other hand, are the actual cues that trigger iconic values, what Dogana calls 'mediators of iconic phono-symbolism' (1990, 116). The following mediators are based on Anderson (1998, 99) and Dogana (1990, 116-18) and refer to general symbolic features of language that can be experienced by speakers of all languages:

- *Kinaesthetic*: related to the 'physiology of articulation' (Anderson 1998, 100), the way human beings practically articulate sounds and use their phonatory organs to do so. It is generally accepted and has also been proven by several studies (Dogana 1990, 117) that, for instance, high front vowels are often associated with smallness and back vowels with largeness. The position of the tongue and the size of the oral cavity is, in these cases, the main origin of iconicity (Anderson 1998, 100).

- *Acoustic*: related to auditory aspects of sounds, or, in other words, how the sound waves are perceived by our ears and elaborated in our brain. The specific variations and the main acoustic parameters are often the starting point of a series of 'synaesthetic experiences'

(Dogana 1990, 116; translation mine). This is very much due to the so-called sonority hierarchy, according to which more sonorous phonemes, such as vowels, liquids or nasals are perceived as continuous and soft, while the least sonorous ones (i.e. unvoiced fricatives, affricates and stops) are linked to hardness and rigidity (Anderson 1998, 103; Jawad 2010, 47).

- *Structural*: related to morphological or syntactical structures. Examples are the iconicity resulting from the position of consonants and vowels within a word or the iteration and interaction of some of its constituents. As noted by Reid (1967, 47) 'words ending in consonant, have an inherent confining and limiting effect which words ending with a vowel sound do not possess', and the higher the number of consonants before a vowel the stronger that word will be (Reid 1967, 16). Compare, for instance, the alternative version of ideophones that add a 'prosthetic s' (Marchand 1969, 427) in front of the word, which automatically becomes stronger: *grunt* and its stronger version *sgrunt* or *squack*, the modified form of *quack.* While kinaesthetic and acoustic factors are generally considered valid across multiple languages, structural iconicity might be language specific.

- *Graphemic*: due to the close relationship between phoneme and grapheme, the graphical features of the latter can sometimes contribute to the general phonetic symbolism (Dogana 1990, 117), what Anderson calls 'zigzag factor' (1998, 175). The expressive value of graphemes is in this case almost re-discovered by emphasising the native 'pictographic value' (Dogana 1990, 117; translation mine) of the written sign. The stratagem is often used in comics—see the use of trembling font for an onomatopoeia representing an earthquake, for example.

- *Socio-psychological*: another factor that can influence the perception of certain types of linguistic iconicity is the psychological or sociological background of the receiver. Certain values attributed to words, graphemes and phonemes can in fact be explained by historical

and cultural factors that exclude any kind of linguistic, visual or articulatory factor. An example in Italian is the derogatory and ironic values associated with the grapheme <k> (not present in the official Italian alphabet), the so-called *kappa politico* ('political k'), which was used in post-war Italy to express discontent towards certain politicians ('Kossiga' rather than Cossiga) or ideals ('Amerikano') (Petrucci 1977, 114).

These mediators of iconism were used as a basis for the current study, as it will be described in the next section, where the methodological rationale for the inquiry is offered.

METHODOLOGY

The corpus under analysis was created through extensive archival work in several Italian comic book libraries in 2014 and 2015. The corpus was manually compiled by the author of this paper throughout a twelve-month period. During the initial visit to the libraries, pictures of all the relevant stories were taken and digitally stored. The pictures were then analysed and the sound symbolic data were manually included in the aforementioned corpus. Each form has been categorised according to different parameters, each aimed at assisting the author in several linguistic analyses. These included information in relation to the colour of the strips, their position within the page/frame and the grammatical and semantic nature of each of the forms. The different categories used in the corpus roughly match the different 'mediators of iconism' mentioned in the previous section and were created in an effort to cover all of those aspects during the inquiry. As far as this paper in concerned, the focus will be on a specific aspect of these forms (ie. their rebellious nature) hence not all the information gathered will be mentioned and/or brought forward.

The stories were selected according to archival availability before visiting the archives and an effort had been made to select an even number of stories for each of the eight decades under analysis, with roughly 30 stories for each. Not all stories were original Italian ones. Out of the 210 selected stories 84 were Italian translations of the corresponding English versions whilst the remaining 126 were original Italian creations.

In order to look into the rebellious nature of these forms, I have decided to focus on a few specific classifications directly taken from the corpus. These were expected to provide more details on certain linguistic features that are symptomatic of a certain degree of 'rebelliousness' and are hereby listed:

(1) Syntactical and semantic variability: this focuses on how and if ideophonic forms are showing variability both in terms of a single form having multiple meanings and a single event having multiple ideophonic representations;

(2) Neology: how and if new forms are created from scratch;

(3) Iterativity: this category attempts to detect any forms that included phonological and morphological reduplication of sounds and letters, characteristic that has been described as having a 'high sound symbolic value' (Anderson, 1998, 110);

(4) Phonotactics: ideophones are usually expected to break certain phonotactic rules of the language, which refer to the different combinations of vowels and consonants allowed within a syllable. Breaking these rules would, again, confirm that these forms are attempting to drift away from canonical language in use;

(5) Monosyllabicity: finally, ideophonic words have proven to often include monosyllabic words, due to their brevity and quick expressiveness.

The previous points will all be discussed in the following section, which tries to bring together all of the information in regards to the rebellious nature of ideophones found in the corpus under scrutiny.

RESULTS - OBSERVED LINGUISTIC FEATURES

The following sections aim to catalogue a few of the most noticeable linguistic phenomena—mainly dealing with syntax and semantics—that emerged during the close analysis of the corpus. Sound symbolic forms share the features of phenomena that are not useful or particularly fruitful in normal language, a property defined by Anderson as the 'grammatical diseconomy of iconic language' (1998, 108). This includes, for instance, the use of repeated forms (see *click click, bang bang*) or words that go against the phonotactic rules of languages. These structures should not be seen as an evidence of the primitiveness of sound symbolism but rather as 'sophisticated linguistic playfulness in a concentrated form' (Ibid.). Iconic words deviate from the conventions of normal speech and do so to reach the audience in more memorable and expressive ways. They tend to be 'expressive or affective markers' (Anderson 1998, 116) of iconism. Of particular interest, in this case, are the so-called 'affective markers of iconism' (Anderson 1998, 108), specific phenomena that are particularly fruitful in sound symbolic forms. This is to engage with studies (Kunene 2001; Newman 2001; Dingemanse 2012, 2016; Smoll 2012; Knoeferle et al 2016; Armoskaite & Koskinen 2017; Akita 2017) claiming that the ideophone tends to employ the most uncommon phonological and syntactical structures of languages, and is thus notorious for being a 'linguistic rebel' (Kunene 2001, 183).

Internal Variability

Occasionally the basic form of an ideophone, which may be a commonly used and thus well-known form, undergoes phonic and graphical modifications that produce alternative secondary creations, defined by Akita as 'superexpressive forms' (2009, 23). The following are only some of the variants detected, listed according to their intended meaning (the first form shown is considered to be the basic one):

Astonishment and surprise: GULP/glub/ulp/glab/guap(p)/ulb;

Fear: URGH/(g)urgl(e)/urg(h)/urk/urp/urf/unk/argh/erk;

Disapproval: GRUNT/sgrunt/sgrulf/grumf/sgrutt/grunf.

Animal cry: ROAR/broar/proar/pror;

Noise caused by explosion: BANG/sbrang/sbreng/beng/sbarabang;

Noise caused by hitting object: BAM/sbram/sbam/sbem/sblem;

These secondary forms are semantically identical to but graphemically divergent from the original. This shows, once again, the great degree of linguistic flexibility offered by ideophones, a flexibility that is possibly unobtainable by any other class within a language (Kunene 2001, 183).

Productive Neology

Another typical characteristic of iconic words is their tendency to welcome neologisms and non-lexicalised forms in a more open fashion than in conventional language. Neology therefore plays a big part in the creation of ideophones, as it fulfills the need to depict the myriad of sensorial experiences that are shown in comics. From a linguistic point of view,

ideophonic neologisms are deeply linked to the sensory values attached to certain phonemes and clusters of phonemes, a sub-area of sound symbolism called 'phonaesthesia'.

When speakers/writers feel that the language does not already provide a successful term to describe a specific situation, one of the available linguistic strategies is to coin new forms that cover the requested iconicity. In this respect, the device certainly promotes linguistic imagination by forcing both the creators of comics and their readers to experience the more unexplored edges of the language system. Moreover, it keeps languages alive and vibrant by forcing their users to reflect upon the language system itself and to subvert established linguistic conventions.

Examples of neologisms found in the corpus include many non-lexicalised forms that have been created from scratch by cartoonists and translators. See, for instance, vowelless paraverbals, consonant-only forms often used to depict mechanical sounds and that cannot usually be found in dictionaries. These include, among the rest: (1) *zzzz,* used for sleeping characters, (2) *rrrr,* employed for engine sounds, (3) *bzzz* used for the sound of bees flying and, finally, (4) *fzzzz* often found next to the image of spraying liquids. These are just some of the most common examples found in the corpus. A good percentage of them are only used once but others keep reappearing throughout the decades and end up becoming crystallised within the language of comics. More examples of these will be offered later in the analysis.

Polysemy

Linked to the flexibility already discussed, polysemy refers to those instances in which a single ideophone is used to describe different and/or opposite situations or it has more than one meaning in a single context. It is not rare to witness one single form being employed in two different contexts or, alternatively, to observe the same event, act or emotion being expressed with divergent ideophones, sometimes even in the same story or panel.

Examples include the use of the Italian ideophone *ciuf ciuf* (equivalent to the English *choo choo*) not only for trains but also for rockets and the form *zzzzz*, widely used to describe a character sleeping, being employed for the sound of boiling potions. In the case of Italian comics, this polysemy is taken one step further, as both the Italian and English forms normally linked to a single phenomenon are sometimes employed adjacently creating an interesting multilingual sensorial experience. For instance, in an original Italian story published in 1975 the pain felt by a character is expressed by inserting both the Italian and the English forms in two adjacent balloons, respectively *ahi* (this being an Italian interjection and not an ideophone) and *ouch*, which is an English interjection. Similarly, in another panel from May 2000, *arf*, *bau* and *growl* are inserted in the same comic to describe a dog barking. The Italian ideophone *cra cra*, which depicts the croaking of frogs (see the English *ribbet ribbet*), is also used to describe a flock of crows. Other examples include the appropriation of English-borrowed forms and the consequent departure from their original intended meaning. So the ideophone *sniff* may be used not only to refer to the action of sniffing but also to a character crying and *(g)ulp* may represent surprise and also fear. This shows once more the intrinsic polysemous nature of ideophones and the versatility of the device and its linguistic and semantic ambiguity. According to Akita the polysemy of ideophones has 'long been one of the unexplored fields of their study' as there have been 'few attempts to analyse its mechanism in detail' (2009, 57). It follows that even a small-scale examination of the use of this particular stylistic feature in comics could make a significant contribution to this particular research field.

Iterativity

This phenomenon refers to the tendency of ideophones to feature repetition, characteristic shared by many iconic forms around the world (Anderson 1998, 110). This characteristic of

ideophones is considered one of their most productive features (Akita 2009, 36). It enhances the mimetic and expressive power of these forms by representing 'temporally extended processes' (Wartenberg 2012, 100) through lexical length and by conferring visual and iconic effectiveness. There are three different linguistic phenomena that use iterativity as a form of iconism (cf. chart 1 below for information regarding their percentage of occurrence):
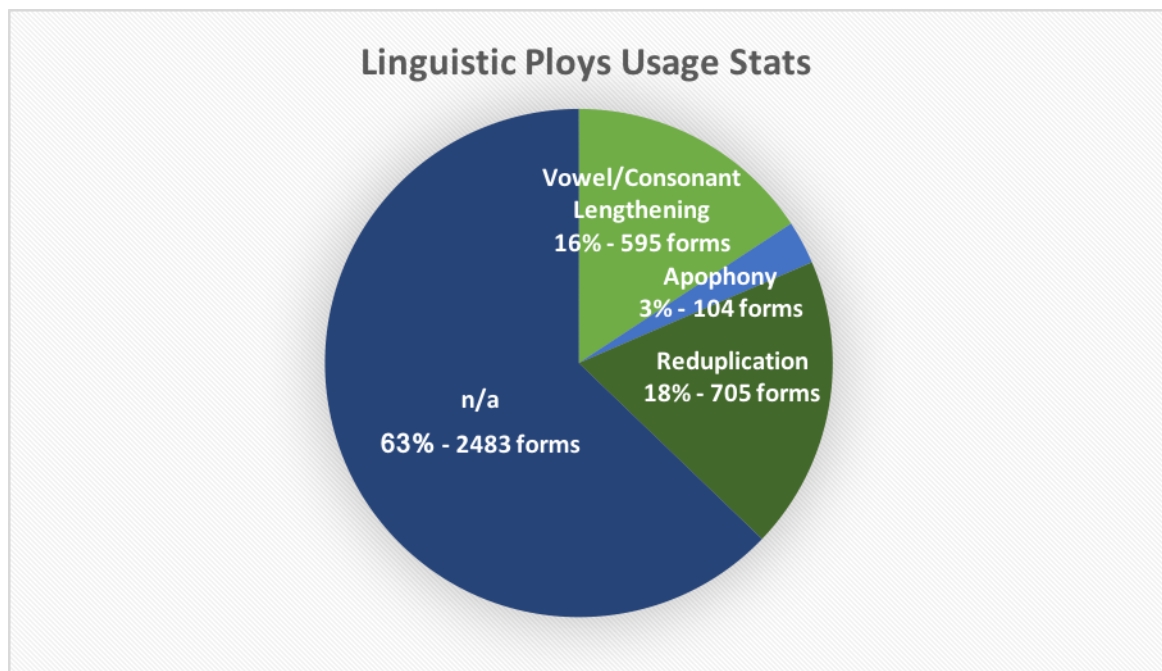

Chart 1. Linguistic ploys usage statistics for the whole corpus. 'N/a' refers to those forms that did not involve any linguistic ploys.

- *Vocalic and consonantal lengthening*, also called phonological reduplication, is seen in forms such as *skreeeeek*, *bruuuuum*, and *gnammm*. This feature is, together with morphological reduplication, the most used in the corpus with 595 forms out of 3887 (16%);

- *Morphological reduplication*, which can be total (i.e. *sniff sniff*, *tut tut*, *crasc crasc*) or partial (i.e. *pepereppe*). This is a high marker of iconism (Anderson 1998, 113) and it is in fact the most consistent ploy throughout the whole corpus, being featured in 705 forms out of 3887 (18%);

- *Apophony*, which refers to vocalic or consonantal alternation (i.e. *pim pum pam*, *dlin dlon*, *tonk bonk*), has been considered as being of particular benefit by Italian users, as it tends to stage a polar opposition that has been employed in some idiomatic expressions that are particularly effective in oral language (i.e. *di riffe e di raffe*, *senza dire né ahi né bai*, *senza arte né parte*, *tric e trac*, *così o cosà, tra ninnere e nannere*) (Beccaria 2010, 97-8). It is indeed 'widespread in Indo-European languages and it often involves the /i/-/a/ opposition' (Marchand 1969, 429) (*pim pam, bim bam*, etc.) as the higher vowel tends to precede the lower one. The symbolism behind apophony is mainly due to the polarity that in this case assumes 'various semantic aspects' (Marchand 1969, 429) involving humour and heightened expressivity. Again, the main aim is to give a sense of playfulness through unconventional polar structures that are not necessarily semantically justifiable. The first lexeme in these forms is usually the one carrying an iconic function, the second one is there mainly to bring playfulness. This ploy is not particularly widespread in the corpus, with 104 forms out of 3887 (only 3% of the total).

Phonotactic Deviation

Ideophones commonly 'exhibit special features and […] idiosyncrasies in terms of their syllable structure' (Smoll 2012, 5), tending to violate specific phonotactic constraints. In an attempt to convey expressivity through linguistic means, ideophones often contain adjunction and combination of phonemes and graphemes that would not usually be allowed according to canonical language rules but that become a vehicle of playfulness when transposed to the ideophonic world. A straightforward example of this practice involves the creation of the so-called 'vowelless paraverbals' (Anderson 1998, 110), strings of consonants that do not include vowels and are often used to represent loud noises. The vowelless structure is not contemplated in Italian as it goes against many language rules. Vowelless paraverbals are

often used for ideophones expressing mechanical sounds or strong emotions. The latter include the well-known *grrr* (anger), *tsk tsk* (disapproval) and *brrrr* (feeling cold) and the one-off example *ghf ghf* (fear). Omitting vowels is in these cases a fruitful stratagem, since forms without vowels are less sonorous, and are able to convey a harsh, rigid iconicity as a result.

Another common deviation involves combinations of phonemes that break Italian phonotactic rules in syllabic onsets. The cases detected in the corpus are:

/t/, /d/, /v/ + lateral /l/—in forms such as:

- *tlac, tloc, tlin, tlip, tlop, stlok, tloing;*

- *dlen(g), dlin(g), dlon(g)*—often used for the sound of church and door bells;

- *vlac, svlam, svlac, svlek, vloosh, vlamf, vlap*;

/p/ and /s/ + postalveolar affricate /ʧ/: in forms such as *pciù* (/pʧu/), *used* to represent two characters kissing, or *sciaff* (/sʧaf/), *sciac(k)* (/sʧak/) and *sciapp* (/sʧap/) used for punches. These forms are sometimes used in spoken Italian and they not only break a phonotactic rule but also a graphemic one as the cluster 'sci', which would usually be executed with a voiceless sibilant /ʃi/, in this case has to be read as /sʧ/;

/z/ + palatal nasal /ɲ/: sgnap (/zɲap/) and sgnac (/zɲak/; although this one comes from the verb 'sgnaccare' (meaning 'to press' or 'to push something'), which is actually lexicalised (present in De Mauro dictionary, 2000), thus being the only word in Italian starting with this combination of sounds. These forms are often used to depict characters biting and chewing;

/v/ + /r/: see *vrrr, vr(o)om(p), vruum* and *vritch vritch* (found only once in the corpus and employed to describe the action of tying a knot) most of them used to depict the noise of cars and other means of transport;

/p/ + /f/: see forms such as *pfui, pfing, pfuff, grumpf, pfiu, umpf, pfsh, crpff.*

Monosyllabicity

The use of monosyllabic forms is a common characteristic of iconic words (Anderson 1998, 116). Despite not being a prominent feature—indeed not all monosyllabic words are ideophonic and not all ideophones are monosyllabic—monosyllabicity is still considered a marker for iconism, even if a latent one (Anderson 1998, 116). Its presence does not necessarily make the word ideophonic—or, at least, is not as evocative as when phonotactic deviation or phonological/morphological reduplication are used. When the ideophone does contain a vowel it tends to be included in a (C)CVC(C)[1] structure, which is indeed the most common syllable structure in both original (36.5%—1023 forms out of 2799) and translated (36%—330 forms out of 916) stories in the corpus. Examples include *whir*, *crash*, *smack*, *sciac*, *crach* from a 1933 translated story and *sbem*, *swiss*, *gnaf* and *svisc* from one of the first Italian original stories published in October 1948 with the title *Topolino e il cobra bianco* ('Mickey Mouse and the White Cobra'). The results in this case do not change cross-linguistically. The most common phonotactic structure among Italian- and English-derived ideophones (and also interjections) if considered separately is indeed CVC(C) for both (CVC for Italian and CVCC for English)—so still a monosyllabic word.

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[1] In this case 'C' refers to a 'consonant' while 'V' refers to a 'vowel', showing a typical monosyllabic structure with a vowel in the syllabic nucleus and consonants in both syllabic onset and coda.

Brevity does indeed go hand in hand with expressivity as it perfectly meets the need for ideophones to be readily iconic. This is true particularly for onomatopoeias, as the inherent nature of sonic events is perceived as being quick and fleeting, a feature that thus pairs well with short monosyllabic forms.

Semantic Shift

Borrowing words directly from the lexicon of other languages has inevitably triggered some changes in sound symbolic forms over time and a certain degree of ambiguity in the interpretation of the meaning conveyed by certain lexemes, to the point that some of them have completely lost their original intended meaning. This shift can happen both with English and Italian words, although it does tend to happen for Anglophonic importations more often. The most-cited examples are probably the ideophones *mumble* and *smack.* The original meaning of 'to mumble', to 'say quietly in an unclear way that makes it difficult for people to know what you said' (definition from 'Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary' 2016) has been extended through the last 80 years of its use in Italian Disney comics (Eco 2008). Indeed, the 'De Mauro dictionary of Italian language in use' (2000) indicated 1964 as the year of its first appearance in written sources and listed it as an interjection with the following entry: 'English expression specific of comics language used to depict the act of reflecting, overthinking and it is sometimes accompanied by a whispered gabble'. 'Mumble' can now be found in panels that describe a character whispering, feeling angry and confused or, more frequently, lost in thought, full of doubts or sometimes even sick, thus plainly extending the initial English meaning. 'Mumble' appears in the corpus 20 times, for the first time in a translated story from October 1951 and constantly reappears throughout the decades (1953, 1960, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1972, 1979, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009) with its newly-acquired meaning. The lexeme 'smack' (first attested use in 1964 as recorded in 'De Mauro' 2000), for example, is used to refer to a kiss and only rarely to the action of kicking (only one occurrence

in the corpus). It should be noted that to refer to kissing other Italian forms are often employed, such as *(p)cium, p(t)ciù, sptciuah* or the Italianised *smec* and *smuack.* Other significant examples include (number of occurrences in brackets): the use of 'slap' (54) and 'slash' (1) to describe a dog licking, 'zowie' (1) to indicate a character running, 'pat pat' (8) to describe an on-going fight (so not just a mere patting of shoulders) and 'flush' (1) used to depict the emerging of a boat from the sea, rather than submerging as one would expect.

CONCLUSIONS

This brief semantic and morphological analysis of the use of ideophones in Italian Disney comics has provided more data that confirms the highly rebellious nature of sound symbolic words. Their semantic behavior is often erratic as their intended meaning is inherently flexible and, as expressive words, they foster multiple interpretations from the reader. The fact that most of these words are not even included in dictionaries further perpetuates this semantic ambiguity, which indeed is not seen as an obstacle but, rather, as a chance for the ideophone to freely express different meanings depending on the situation depicted. If these semantic peculiarities have not showed this enough, the status of the ideophones as linguistic rebels was again confirmed by several morphological and phonological processes detected: firstly, the fact that these forms are not often characterized by a set spelling, showing their highly malleable nature, but also the fact that they often break the long-established phonotactic rules of a language providing further evidence of their unusual linguistic behaviour.

Studies such as the present one can help understand why humans have felt the need to create an array of iconic forms that, in an attempt to be as expressive as possible, are prone to drift away from canonical language use, almost creating a sub-language of their own characterised by totally different phonomorphological rules. These peculiarities clearly show the creative potential of human speech and the never-ending effort to perform real-life events

through our vocal tract. The limitations of these processes are evident as our phonatory capabilities are limited to a set number of phonetic renditions but, nevertheless, sound symbolism proves that linguistic rules are, in certain contexts, easily breakable and this does not necessarily confuse the user/reader but rather fosters imagination and creativity. It thus does not surprise at all that these forms are often used in literature and media aimed at a younger audience, particularly when we consider the fact that children, as newcomers to their mother tongue, 'have an intense awareness of and sensual relationship with language' (Lathey 2010, 204).

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