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Ideophones and Reported Discourse as Depictive Signs*

Kimi Akita

1. Introduction

Ideophones “depict” rather than “describe” sensory imagery. In Japanese, unlike the prosaic verb *hane-* ‘jump’, the ideophone *pyon* ‘hopping’ “acts out” the hopping movement by means of the phonological form /pʰon/. The general definition of ideophones—also known as expressives and mimetics—as depictive signs proposed by Dingemanse (2011: 25) is arguably the most widely accepted characterization of this word class to date. Depictive signs also include pictures, iconic gestures, and reported discourse (henceforth RD), and Dingemanse’s evidence for the depictive nature of ideophones primarily comes from his comprehensive field documentation of Siwu, a Kwa language spoken in Ghana. The present paper adds quantitative evidence to this discussion, focusing on the distributional relationship between ideophones and RDs in spoken Japanese.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 outlines the depiction hypothesis as proposed by Dingemanse. Section 3 describes the method of the present corpus-based study. Section 4 discusses the cooccurrence of depictive signs within three different units of utterances in favor of the depiction hypothesis. Section 5 is the conclusion.

2. The Depiction Hypothesis

The depiction view attempts to replace the traditional intuitive definitions of ideophones, such as the best-known definition by Doke (1935: 118): “[a] vivid representation of an idea in sound.” As Clark and Gerrig (1990) do for “demonstration,” Dingemanse (2011, 2013a, to appear) characterizes “depiction” in contrast with “description,” which is illustrated by prosaic linguistic expressions. For example, the sun that is hidden by clouds may be “depicted” by a picture of the scene or “described” by the sentence *Le soleil est caché par les nuages*. According to Dingemanse, the picture is “imagistic,” “gradient,” and “basically iconic,” and one has to “‘imagine’ to interpret” it. On the other hand, the French sentence is “propositional,” “discrete,” and “basically arbitrary,” and one has to “‘decode’ to interpret” it. (In this relation, Kita 1997 proposes a separate semantic dimension called “the affecto-imagistic dimension” for ideophones, expressive prosody, and iconic gestures. Washida 2011 also discusses the semantic idiosyncrasies of ideophones as “lautmalend” [i.e., sound picture].)

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In the depiction view, quotative marking on ideophones (e.g., *to*-marking in Japanese), which is crosslinguistically prevalent (Güldemann 2008: Chapter 4), is metaphorized as a picture frame that draws a clear boundary between a picture and the rest of the scene (Dingemanse 2011: 39). Other common features of ideophones, such as prosodic prominence (Nuckolls 1996) and expressive morphology (Zwicky and Pullum 1987), are also attributed to their depictive semiosis.

The depictive nature of ideophones manifests itself in their frequent cooccurrence with iconic gestures, another set of depictive signs (Dingemanse 2013b; see also Kunene 1965; Samarin 1971). For example, Kita (1997: 393; 2013) found 78 out of 83 adverbial ideophones (93.98%) and only 17 out of 33 prosaic verbs (51.52%) in his Japanese speech elicitation data to be accompanied by “co-expressive gesture strokes.” Similarly but more cautiously, Dingemanse (2013b: 150–151) reports that 52 out of 174 ideophones in his Siwu data (29.89%) were accompanied by iconic gestures. Kita and Dingemanse agree that the tight coupling of ideophones and iconic gestures indicates that they are two manifestations of the same semiotic mode.

Furthermore, depiction is not merely a semiotic mode but has a pragmatic aspect. In his conversation analysis in Siwu, Dingemanse (2011: 265) argues that, as are RDs (Vincent and Perrin 1999; Holt and Clift 2007), ideophones “are qualitatively different [from prosaic descriptions] in constituting more direct appeals to personal experience, and hence implicitly stronger claims of epistemic authority” (Nuckolls 1996). The argument further goes as follows (see Dingemanse 2011: 270 for particularly relevant conversation data):

Tellers use ideophones to provide more specificity, sometimes in the pursuit of uptake, sometimes to stress their epistemic primacy, and recipients orient [themselves] to these different interactional courses of action. Recipients in turn may also use ideophones, in certain contexts displaying a concern with *independent epistemic access* by supplying their own ideophonic depictions, in others displaying a concern with emphasizing *shared epistemic access* by echoing and even anticipating ideophonic climaxes. We may summarise this by saying that ideophones are the next best thing to having been there. (Dingemanse 2011: 299)

These semantico-pragmatic properties of ideophones may show up as their within- and across-speaker resonance. Tellers may repeat an ideophone or use a series of ideophones to stress specific images or their epistemic authority. Recipients may use the same ideophones to show their shared epistemic access or introduce other ideophones to signal their independent epistemic access.¹

Like the gesture studies cited above, this paper focuses on the cooccurrence of different types

¹ Noburo Saji pointed out that a similar type of ideophonic resonance seems frequent in mother-child interactions.

of depictive signs: ideophones and RDs. However, unlike gestures, both ideophones and RDs are linguistic entities, and their cooccurrence may reveal more than just coexpressiveness. The previous findings about ideophone-gesture synchronization and ideophonic resonance lead us to predict frequent cooccurrence of ideophones and ideophones, RDs and RDs, and ideophones and RDs within and across speakers. Our quantitative observations are also concerned with the order of ideophones and RDs in their cooccurrence, which may suggest the “triggering” function of a particular type of depictive sign in semiotic/pragmatic mode shifts.

3. Method

We observed how ideophones and RDs cooccur with each other in two corpora of spoken Japanese: the Nagoya University Conversation Corpus (NUCC) and the NHK War Interview Archives (NWIA). The two corpora have different characteristics, which allow us to examine different sets of hypotheses.

First, 27 informal conversations between two to four (old) friends mostly in their twenties and thirties (28,777 sentences) were taken from NUCC. 19 of the conversations only involved female participants; seven involved both males and females; and one only involved males. The length of conversations varied from 23 to 120 minutes ($M = 48.63$). This corpus basically has one sentence in each line.

Second, 64 interviews with veterans and victims of World War II (18,906 sentences) were taken from NWIA. These interviews were assumed to be analogous to monologues, with interviewers being mere facilitators. Most interviewees were over 80 years old (46 males, 18 females). The length of interviews varied from 10.63 to 90.20 minutes ($M = 35.66$). This corpus has 1.77 to 10.86 sentences ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.70$) per line depending on the interview.

We coded three types of (quasi-)depictive signs: ideophones, quasi-ideophones, and RDs. Quasi-ideophones are prosaic adverbs for degree or frequency with typical ideophonic morphophonology, such as *dondon* ‘one after another’, *sukkari* ‘completely’, and *zut-to* ‘all the time’ (see Tamori 1980). Assumed to be less iconic than genuine ideophones but more iconic than genuine prosaic words, they were used for comparison. Lines containing one or more quotative indexes, such as quotation marks, *-to/tte iw-* (QUOT say), and *-toka iw-* (etc. say), were coded as “+RD.” This coding scheme identified 582 ideophones, 339 quasi-ideophones, and 933 +RD lines in NUCC and 876 ideophones, 345 quasi-ideophones, and 1,011 +RD lines in NWIA. Note that “lines” in NUCC are essentially equivalent to sentences, whereas those in NWIA may be sequences of sentences (in many cases, turns) ($M = 4.17$). This difference in line size allows us to discuss three different types of cooccurrence domains. We can observe within-sentence cooccurrences in NUCC and within- and across-turn cooccurrences in both NUCC and NWIA.

4. Results

4.1. Cooccurrence of the same types of depictive signs

We start with quantitative examinations of the “resonance” phenomena in both ideophones and RDs. First, Figures 1 and 2 show that ideophones are (almost) significantly more likely than quasi-ideophones to occur with another (quasi-)ideophone in the same sentence (Fisher’s exact test: $p = .09$) and turn ($\chi^2(1) = 28.45, p < .001$), respectively. The rarity of sentences with more than one ideophone appears to come from the one-ideophone-per-clause restriction noted by Kita (1997: 405).

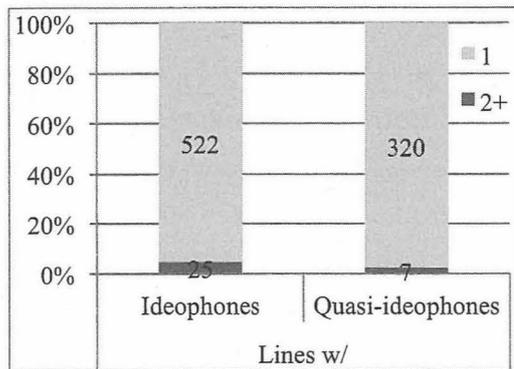


Figure 1. Within-sentence cooccurrence of (quasi-)ideophones (NUCC)

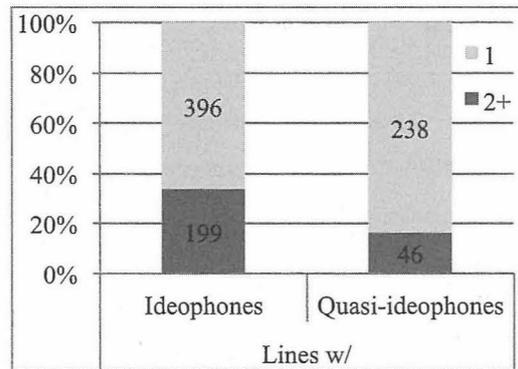


Figure 2. Within-turn cooccurrence of (quasi-)ideophones (NWIA)

The within-turn cooccurrence of ideophones is illustrated in (1). Hereafter, ideophones at issue are highlighted in **boldface**.

- (1) *Kono hanasi si-te i-ru-toki, watasi-no kotti-kara sugu, **suut-te***
 this story do-CONJ be-NPST-when I-GEN over.here-from right IDPH-QUOT
it-ta-wake-yo syoomeidan. Watasi-wa sono toki, un-ga yokat-ta-na-to
 go-PST-FP-FP flare.bomb I-TOP that time luck-NOM good-PST-FP-QUOT
*omot-te i-ta-yo. **Syuut-te** kikoe-ta-wake-yo. Atti-ni sugu*
 think-CONJ be-PST-FP IDPH-QUOT hear-PST-FP-FP over.there-DAT right.away
*oti-te **bon-si-yot-ta.***
 fall-CONJ IDPH-do-ASP-PST
 ‘When [I] was telling this story, a flare bomb went **whistling** from right over here past me. I thought [I] was lucky then. [I] heard **a long swish**. [The bomb] dropped over there right away and went **bang**.’ (NWIA_8)

Likewise, ideophones were found to be more likely than quasi-ideophones to resonate across sentences and turns. Figures 3 and 4 show that lines with ideophones are most likely to be followed by another ideophonic line ($\chi^2(2) = 75.30, p < .001$; adjusted residual = 8.39, $p < .001$), although Fig-

ure 3 involves interpretive ambiguity as to whether a new sentence means a new turn.

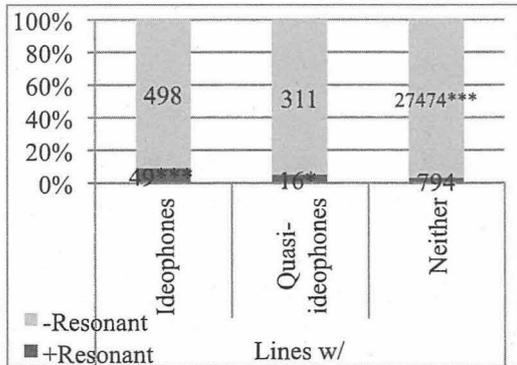


Figure 3. Across-sentence cooccurrence of (quasi-)ideophones (NUCC)

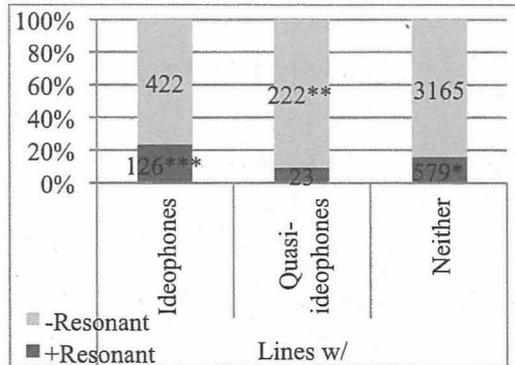


Figure 4. Across-turn cooccurrence of (quasi-)ideophones (NWIA)

Note: Hereafter, asterisks represent significant positive inclinations: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

An across-turn example is cited in (2). In this part of the conversation, M023's use of two ideophones for the appearance of the dish served appears to have motivated F128's use of another ideophone, which is supplemented by still another ideophone in M023's last utterance.

- (2) F128: *Gohan saa tabe-te-ne.*
 meal now eat-CONJ-FP
 'Now, help yourself to the dishes.'
- F023: *Aa, arigato.*
 oh thanks
 'Oh, thanks.'
- F128: *Konnani tabe-ran-na-i.*
 so.much eat-POT-NEG-NPST
 '[I] can't eat so much.'
- M023: *Kore, ore, moo-tyotto imeezi-teki-ni-wa koo kono*
 this I a.little.bit.more image-in.terms.of-DAT-TOP so this
gutugutu-si-tor-u-no-ka-to omot-tara, nanka, nanka, nayot-to-si-ta
 IDPH-do-ASP-NPST-NML-Q-QUOT think-when well well IDPH-QUOT-do-PST
kanzi-de.
 feeling-COP
 'Though I imagined this **simmering** a little bit more **furiously**, [it]'s somewhat **calm**
and unattractive.'
- F128: *Un, aru imi, be, be, betyot-te i-u.*
 yeah one sense IDPH-QUOT say-NPST

‘Yeah, [it]’s **mushy** in a sense.’

M023: *Motto zyuuzyaa it-te de-te ku-ru.*
 more IDPH say-CONJ exit-CONJ come-NPST
 ‘[I imagined it] being served with more **sizzle**.’ (NUCC_87)

These results are consistent with the depiction hypothesis, which accounts for both within- and across-speaker resonance of depictive signs.

Similar results were obtained for RDs. As Figures 5 and 6 show, lines with RDs were found to be more likely than those without to be followed by lines with RDs in both the across-sentence ($\chi^2(1) = 297.75, p < .001$) and across-turn data ($\chi^2(1) = 82.13, p < .001$).

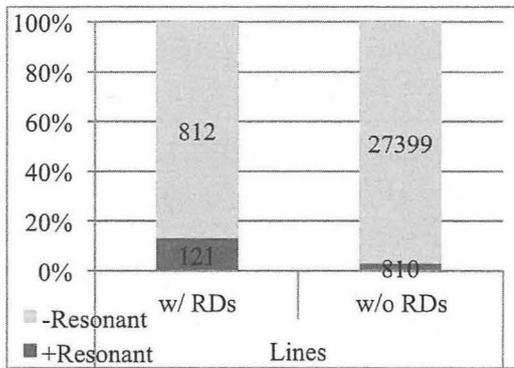


Figure 5. Across-sentence cooccurrence of RDs (NUCC)

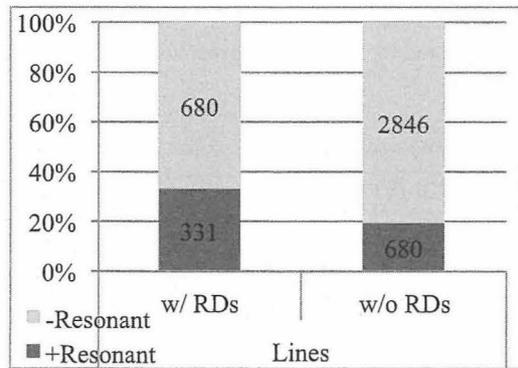


Figure 6. Across-turn cooccurrence of RDs (NWIA)

The following excerpt illustrates the across-turn resonance of RDs. In this example, two women quote their (imaginary) bosses’ orders and their own apologies in their part-time jobs. Hereafter, relevant RDs are underlined.

- (3) F101: *Saisyo-wa soozi-kara.*
 first-TOP cleaning-from
 ‘[We] start with cleaning.’
- F093: *Oi, omae oso-i-zoo-to i-u.*
 hey you slow-NPST-FP-QUOT say-NPST
 ‘[He]’s like, “Hey, you’re slow.”
- F101: *So, so, so, so, sumimaseen-toka.*
 I’m.sorry-etc.
 ‘[I]’m like, “[I]’m so sorry.”
- F093: *Hayaku, motamota-su-n-naa-toka it-te.*
 quick IDPH-do-NPST-NEG.IMP-etc. say-CONJ

‘[He] says, “Be quick. Don’t dilly-dally.”’

F101: *Hai, suimaseen-toka it-te.*

yes I’m.sorry-etc. say-CONJ

‘[I] say, “No, I’m sorry.”’

F093: *Iya, tura-i, sooiu-no.*

I.hate.it painful-NPST suchlike-NML

‘[I] don’t like it. That’s painful.’ (NUCC_80)

All these results confirm both the existence of the pragmatic correlates of depictive semiosis and the similarity between ideophones and RDs.² The domain of resonance was found to range from the sentence to the turn sequence. This finding suggests that mode shifts between depiction and description may take place in both minor and major scales.

4.2. Cooccurrence of different types of depictive signs

Resonance takes place between different types of depictive linguistic signs as well. Both ideophones and quasi-ideophones were found to frequently cooccur with RDs within sentences and turns, as shown in Figures 7 and 8, respectively. Chi-square tests revealed a significant group difference for both the within-sentence data ($\chi^2(2) = 36.76, p < .001$) and the within-turn data ($\chi^2(2) = 213.07, p < .001$), and adjusted residual tests showed that lines with ideophones and quasi-ideophones are significantly more likely than those without to contain RDs (Figure 7: adjusted residuals = 4.53 and 3.96, respectively; Figure 8: adjusted residuals = 13.02 and 5.43, respectively).

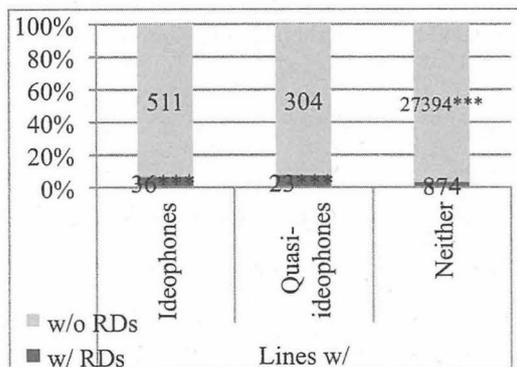


Figure 7. Within-sentence cooccurrence of (quasi-)ideophones and RDs (NUCC)

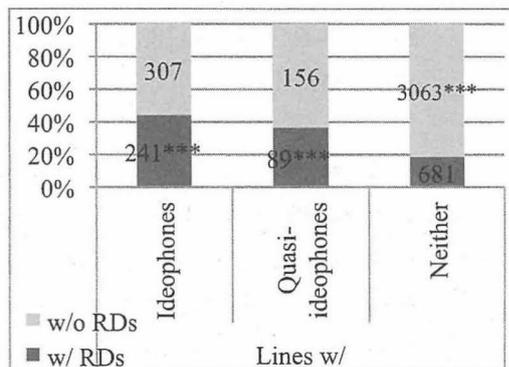


Figure 8. Within-turn cooccurrence of (quasi-)ideophones and RDs (NWIA)

² The similarity between ideophones and RDs was also observed in a few instances in which a holophrastic ideophone, which is otherwise highly marginal in Japanese (pace Tamori and Schourup 1999: 84–88), “belongs” to an RD, as in (i). In this example, the ideophone is treated as if uttered by the quoted speaker.

(i) “*Pinpoon, heya ai-te-mas-u-ka*” *-ttara* ...
 IDPH room be.available-CONJ-POL-NPST-Q -QUOT.said.when
 ‘When [I] said, “Beep, is there any room available?” ...’ (NUCC_1)

Here are two example utterances that contain both ideophones and RDs.

- (4) a. *Untensyu-san-ga sono ba-de wandeiticketto-de-toka i-u-to, ... kore-kurai-no*
 driver-Mr.-NOM that spot-in 1.day-ticket-by-etc. say-NPST-and this-about-GEN
kikai-de katyakatyakatyat-te yat-te, de, piit-te de-te ki-ta
 machine-by IDPH-QUOT do-CONJ then IDPH-QUOT exit-CONJ come-PST
resiito-o birit-to yabut-te, hai-tte kure-ru-zyan-ne.
 receipt-ACC IDPH-QUOT tear-CONJ here.you.are-QUOT give-NPST-FP-FP
 ‘When [I] say, “A one-day pass,” the driver, on the spot, ... **clanks** a machine of this size,
 tears, with a **ripping noise**, the receipt that came out **smoothly**, and gives [it] to me saying
 “Here you are.”’ (NUCC_1, within-sentence)
- b. *Gyuut-to sime-nai-to katui-da-toki-ni darat-to*
 IDPH-QUOT fasten-NEG-and shoulder-PST-when-DAT IDPH-QUOT
nat-tyau-n-desu-yo. Sorede yari-naosi s-ase-rare-ta.
 become-end.up-NML-COP.POL-FP then do-do.again do-CAUS-PASS-PST
“Katui-de zyoo-kanpan ik-kai mawat-te ko-i”-nante iw-are-te,
 shoulder-CONJ upper-deck 1-CL go.around-CONJ come-IMP-even say-PASS-CONJ
minna-de katui-de mawat-tari si-te.
 everyone-in shoulder-CONJ go.around-and do-CONJ
 ‘If [we] don’t fasten the [hammocks] **tightly**, [they] end up in hanging **loosely** when [we]
 shoulder [them]. And [we] were forced to do [it] again. Ordered, “Go around the upper
 deck once shouldering [them],” [we] went around together shouldering [them].’ (NWIA_6,
 within-turn)

Of further interest is the across-line resonance between ideophones and RDs. On the one hand, we obtained no significant tendencies for across-sentence resonance in NUCC ((quasi-)ideophones followed by RDs: $\chi^2(2) = 2.52, p = .28$; RDs followed by (quasi-)ideophones: $\chi^2(2) = 1.40, p = .50$). On the other hand, as shown in Figures 9 and 10, we did find significantly frequent cooccurrence of ideophones and RDs in the across-turn data from NWIA, and it was suggested that ideophones are more likely initiators of this cooccurrence ((quasi-)ideophones followed by RDs: $\chi^2(2) = 14.64, p < .001$; RDs followed by (quasi-)ideophones: $\chi^2(2) = 6.78, p < .05$).

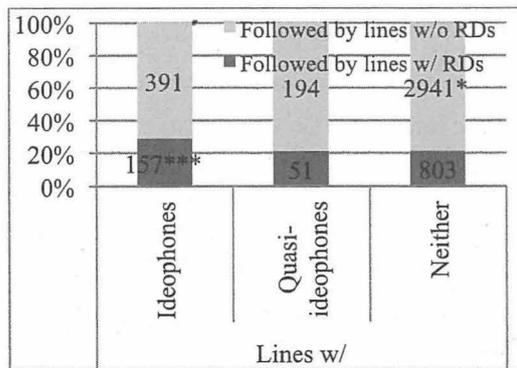


Figure 9. Across-turn cooccurrence of (quasi-)ideophones and RDs (NWIA)

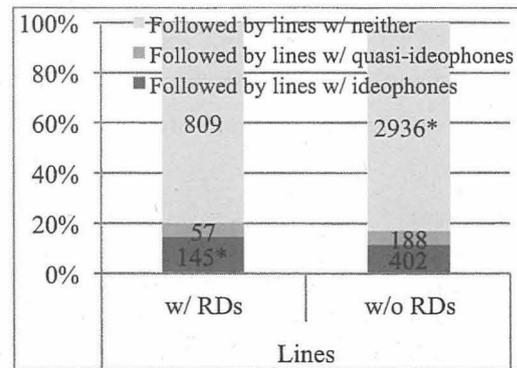


Figure 10. Across-turn cooccurrence of RDs and (quasi-)ideophones (NWIA)

One illustrative conversation is cited in (5). In this example, F107 cannot find appropriate words that follow the ideophone for a knocking sound, and F128 takes over the job of completing the sentence and introduces an RD that copies F107's imaginary utterance in the visiting scene. Put differently, the sensory immediacy of the ideophone invites F128 to F107's personal experience and allows her to perform F107 in the depicted world.

- (5) F128: *Sore-wa soo-na-n-da. Hee, omosiro-ii. I-i-naa.*
 that-TOP so-COP-NML-COP oh interesting-NPST good-NPST-FP
 'Is that so? Oh, it's interesting. [I]'m envious.'
- F107: *Damonde-saa, iti-niti-me-wa yado-o tot-te oi-te morat-te,*
 so-FP 1-day-th-TOP lodging-ACC book-CONJ keep-CONJ give-CONJ
hutu-ka-me-kara konkon-toka-tte, sono.
 2-day-th-from IDPH-etc.-QUOT well
 'So, for the first day, [we] had [my] accommodations booked in advance, and from the second day, with a **knock** [on B&Bs' doors], umm.'
- F128: *Mise-te-toka it-te.*
 show-CONJ-etc. say-CONJ
 '[You] said, "Let [us] have a look [at your rooms]."' (NUCC_2, across-turn)

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented quantitative support for both the semiotic and pragmatic aspects of the depiction account of ideophones. Tellers may switch between the depictive and descriptive modes within the same discourse. They employ more ideophones, RDs, and iconic gestures in the depictive parts of the discourse than in its descriptive parts, inviting recipients to the depicted world. Remaining issues include a closer look at the morphosyntax of resonant ideophones, the prevalence of exact copies (or echoes) among them, and the possible existence of a third

(non-semiotic) factor that may motivate the occurrence of both ideophones and RDs (e.g., informality). Furthermore, the present discussion may benefit from—and hopefully, contribute to—“dialogic syntax,” an emerging theoretical framework for linguistic resonance (Du Bois 2014).

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