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### SOUND SYMBOLISM AS A MEANS OF CREATING SYMBOLIC SOUND METAPHOR

O. A. Glivenkova, E. V. Evenko, V. I. Kopelnik

*Tambov State Technical University, Tambov*

*Reviewed by Doctor of Philological Sciences,  
Professor M. N. Makeeva*

**Key words and phrases:** psychological and psycholinguistic experiments; sound symbolism; symbolic sound metaphor.

**Abstract:** Sound symbolism as a means of creating symbolic sound metaphor is considered in the article in order to underline its significance in cognition and comprehension on different levels of analysis: phonemes, phoneme combination and word forms. The purpose of the paper is to show how the meaning of a word is partially affected by its sound (or articulation) due to sound symbolism. An attempt is made to point out processes, approaches, psychological and psycholinguistic experiments that can be applied to examine it. A wide range of examples are given to prove that this phenomenon is a result of a secondary association through synesthetic cross modal abstraction and word sounds can be metaphors of images, colours and tastes. Sound symbolism plays a significant role in the evolution of language, which is treated in the article as sound iconic. Thus it proves the necessity of further research in this field by the majority of psychological and psycholinguistic experiments from the author's point of view.

Sound iconic language system is the subject of phonosemantics, a new independent linguistic science discipline founded by S. V. Voronin. A system of symbolic sound words is less expressed in comparison with the system of onomatopoeic words (sound imitative words). However symbolic sound words are characterized by wider lexical coverage.

Sound symbolism is usually understood as “the relation between sound word shell and its meaning when the link between them is reflexive” [1, p. 123].

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Гливенкова Ольга Анатольевна – кандидат филологических наук, доцент кафедры «Иностранные языки»; Евенко Елена Викторовна – кандидат филологических наук, старший преподаватель кафедры «Иностранные языки», e-mail: nazarova33-1975@mail.ru; Копельник Владислава Игоревна – кандидат филологических наук, доцент кафедры «Иностранные языки», ТамбГТУ, г. Тамбов.

O. A. Akhmanova considers sound symbolism as “an ability of some sounds to correspond directly to any representations” [2, p. 3].

According to the theory of sound symbolism a sound is able to cause soundless representations. A great number of words formed with the help of sound symbolism can be found in any language. Sound structure of such words symbolizes the denotative characteristic which is used as the basis of its nomination (primary sound symbolism). A. P. Zhuravlev and V. V. Levitskiy noted that “sound symbols are highlights which are thrown by the conceptual meaning of the word on its sound form” [1, p. 112; 3].

In any language the formation of symbolic sound words (as well as onomatopoeic or sound imitative words) are determined by two factors – extralinguistic and linguistic factors. The first factor is principal and it determines the essential characteristic features of symbolic sound words as universal [3, p. 19] Nowadays, the existence of sound symbolism is proved experimentally by psychological, psycholinguistic and linguotypological researches [3, p. 18–19].

Sometimes some difficulties arise with classifying lexical units as onomatopes (sound imitatives) and sound symbolisms. For example, English word “splash” means to fall, hit or move noisily in drops, waves, etc. and it has obvious onomatopoeic meaning. In English word “drop” this phenomenon reveals itself more illustratively: “a very small amount of liquid with a round shape” and “to fall in drops”. Marked in dictionaries as “onomatopoeic”, i.e. sound imitative by its origin a number of words are perceived as representations of something big or small at this stage of their development. Their symbols are explained by the fact that big bodies make a low sound and small bodies make a high sound.

A child’s language has figurative or imaginative nature and arises in a gesture and sound form. Experiments on primates prove the similarities of brain abilities of primates with the ability of human right brain [4]. Neurophysiological researches [4] indicate that the structures responsible for concrete and obvious, imaginative and emotional production are ancient. According to the results of researches S. V. Voronin comes to the conclusion that language has imaginative origin. When creating a symbolic sound word in the act of nomination one denotation characteristic which is in the basis of the nomination is chosen. The chosen characteristic must be dominant. Thus, the law of multiplicity of nomination explains the difference of phonetic features of symbolic sound words in different languages in the world, the existence of synonyms and homonyms and the existence of different languages. If in the basis of nomination of symbolic sound words with similar meaning the same characteristic is chosen then similarities in their sound presentation are observed. But native speakers use phonetic means of their language for nomination but phonetic structure of a language has its own specific features.

There are many examples and observations proving the existence of the phenomenon of sound symbolism in different languages with psychological and psycholinguistic experiments: a well-known example of “малюма” and “жаваруга” [5, p. 67]; the “Bouba/kiki effect”, given by S. Ramachandran, who outlined in his research that sound symbolism is often the result of a secondary association in which people experience sounds in terms of colours or tastes. This theory can explain how humans create metaphors and how sounds can be

metaphors of images; they can be “bright” or “dull”. S. Ramachandran proves the relationship of sound symbolism with neuroscience through synesthetic cross modal abstraction. Canary Islands natives called the shape of “star” – “kiki” (sharp) and the shape of “flower” – “bouba” (round) [6].

There is one more vivid example of sound symbolism. Here’s an experiment. You’re in a spaceship approaching a planet. You’ve been told there are two races on it, one beautiful and friendly to humans, the other is unfriendly, ugly and mean-spirited. You also know that one of these groups is called the Limonians; and the other is called the Grataks. Which is which?”[7, p. 12].

In this experiment most people assume that the Limonians are the nice people. It’s all the matter of sound symbolism. Words with soft sounds ‘l’, ‘m’ and ‘n’ and long vowels or diphthongs, reinforced by a gentle polysyllabic rhythm, are interpreted as ‘nicer’ than words with hard sounds such as ‘g’, ‘k’, short vowels and an abrupt rhythm.

The following group of words in English beginning with *fl-*, such as *fly*, *flee*, *flow*, *flimsy*, *flicker* are *fluid* are often suggestive as “lightness” and “brightness”. Also, there are many words in English that begin with *gl-* and refer to “brightness” (such as *glim*, *glisten*, *glow*, *glint*, *glitter* and *glimmer*). Sound symbolism is often the result of secondary association. The words *glow*, *gleam*, *glim*, *glisten*, *glimmer*, *glare*, *glacier* and *glide* suggest that in English the combination of *gl-* conveys the idea of “sheen” and “smoothness”. Against this background *glory*, *glee* and *glib* emanate “brightness” in their very form, *glance* and *glimpse* reinforce our conclusion (because eyesight is inseparable from light and *glib* has no other choice than to denote spacious luster, and, indeed, in the sixteenth century, when it became known in English it meant “smooth” and “slippery”).

Let’s consider the following group “*over the -ump*”: *hump*, *lump*, *mumps*, *rump*, *plump*, *stump*, they all have the rhythm *-ump* and they all refer to a rounded, or at least non-pointy, protuberance. Now consider what *bumps* means. It can refer to contact involving something weighty whether it is hips, bottoms or shoulders or a slow moving vehicle or vessel, but not the contact of a point with a surface, such as a pencil tapping a window pane. The *crump* of an exploding shell fits in here as does *thump*. You might also consider *rumble* and possibly *mumble* and *tumble* though admittedly this is *-umble* rather than *-umpe*. One has to allow there can be words with *-ump* that do not fit the correlation. *Thump* is an example. However, there are enough examples to suggest there is a connection in sound and meaning between a set of words. You might also note that *Humpty-Dumpty* was not slim, and *Forrest Gump* wasn’t too sharp.

Why is it that dints sound smaller than dents? There is presumably some sound symbolism going on here. Think of like words *teeny-weeny*, *itsy-bitsy*, *mini* and *wee*. They all sound small! A chip sounds smaller than a chop. So do slits compared with slots, chinks compared to chunks and dints compared to dents. ‘Many a *mickle* makes a *muckle*’ is an old saying that has virtually disappeared. Even if you haven’t a clue what a *mickle* is, I am sure you agree it has to be smaller than a *muckle*. In fact, historically *mickles* and *muckles* are the same word. Like dints and dents they arose as an alternative pronunciation although I suspect their vowels have always been symbolic of size.

The problem with sound symbolism is that the fundamental thesis underlying the field of sound symbolism has always been controversial, because it appears to be so transparently wrong. The sound symbolic hypothesis is that the meaning of a word is partially affected by its sound (or articulation). If the sound of a word affects its meaning, then you should be able to tell what a word means just by hearing it. There should be only one language. In spite of this, there has always been a fairly substantial group of scientists who do not dismiss the possibility that the form of a word somehow affects its meaning.

Moreover, sound symbolism plays a significant role in the evolution of language. We share many of our sound-symbolic aspects of language with other species; it is quite possible that in sound symbolism we see the precursors of fully formed human language. In fact, it seems quite reasonable to say that in all advanced vocalizers (especially humans, many birds, and many cetaceans) we can see a basic sound-symbolic communication system overlaid by elaborations which could be termed arbitrary in their relationship to meaning [8, p. 34].

It should be said in praise of sound symbolism that a sound symbolic word embodies its meaning within its sound dances somersaults within its sounds. ‘*Shimmer*’ is an example. Other wonderful words include *cringe*, *tinkle*, *grimace*, *farrago*, *thump*, *squirt*, *mumble*, *wisp*. The sound unlocks an imagined scene, the sound puts you in the action, tells you what to be suspicious of and what to believe in. All these words are onomatopoes (onomatopoeia) but they could all be acted out by amateurs and the speaker of Portuguese or Turkish would understand them. They are “sound glimpses in a room that has no fourth wall” [9, p. 355].

Symbolic sound metaphor combines meanings, representing attributes perceived by such human sensory modality as eyesight, taste, olfaction, organic senses, that is, different types of motions, light phenomena, walk, mimics, man and animal’s physiological and emotional state. The problem of sound (the sign) and its meaning is under discussion among vast majority of foreign linguists in many countries because this phenomenon is universal and is likely to be an unbounded field for investigation within different humanitarian sciences.

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### Звуковой символизм как средство создания звукосимволической метафоры

О. А. Гливенкова, Е. В. Евенко, В. И. Копельник

ФГБОУ ВПО «Тамбовский государственный технический университет», г. Тамбов

**Ключевые слова и фразы:** звукосимволизм; звукосимволическая метафора; филологические и лингвистические эксперименты.

**Аннотация:** В данной статье рассматривается звуковой символизм как средство создания звукосимволической метафоры и подчеркивается его значение в когнитивном процессе понимания на разных уровнях: фонемы, их сочетания и словоформы. Цель статьи заключается в том, чтобы продемонстрировать как звучание слова и его артикуляция, благодаря явлению звукового символизма, влияют на значение слова. Сделана попытка выявить те процессы, подходы и психолингвистические эксперименты, которые применимы в исследовании данного явления. Большое количество примеров подтверждают, что рассматриваемое явление возникает в результате вторичных ассоциаций на основе перекрестной синэстетической абстракции, в результате чего звуки слова способны образовывать звукосимволические метафоры. Звуковой символизм играет важную роль в эволюции языка, который рассматривается в статье, будучи звукоизобразительным у его истоков. Таким образом, многочисленные эксперименты подтверждают необходимость дальнейшего исследования звукового символизма с точки зрения автора.

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