



## IDEOPHONES IN TEE

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**ABSTRACT:** *This work presents a morpho-syntactic and semantic analysis of ideophones in Tee. The work used the descriptive research design to describe aspects of the morphological and syntactic structures of ideophones in the language. Data for the work were gathered from the 5 Tee language consultants (native speakers), during oral interviews on the use of fixed expressions in the language. Reference was also made to library materials where necessary. Findings from this research reveal that ideophones in Tee perform grammatical roles through affixation. Prefixes and suffixes were the types of affixes with ideophonic functions in the language. Syntactically, Ideophones in Tee can be found in inchoative sentences, simple phrases and clauses and can also be used as adverbials, adjectivals and interjections. Semantically, ideophones can be active or stative. On the whole, ideophones perform grammatical, stylistic and semantic roles in Tee.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ideophones, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, Tee.



## INTRODUCTION

Language is meaningfully patterned to serve as a means of expression of thought, ideas and feelings. It is used to impart information in a variety of ways and situations, and may be used to express the user's feelings or to arouse desires and emotions in other people. In a socio-cultural setting, communication is made possible through figurative expressions such as ideophones, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, etc. These expressional devices carry a lot of communicative values in human languages, since they are employed to interpret man's social and daily undertakings with their intended meanings. Language is therefore an important aspect of culture and a vehicle for cultural expression through which the norms, values and traditions of the people are preserved and transmitted from generation to generation (Sapir, 1921; Essien, 2010; Urua, 2010; Ayuwo, 2013).

Based on the foregoing, effective communication of messages is seen as the overall function of language, and it takes intelligent use of stylistic devices to spice up linguistic utterances. Like in any other language, there are many of such stylistic devices in Tee, one of them is the use of ideophones, which is the main focus of this work.

The grammar of a language is usually considered as consisting the morphology and syntax, though sometimes it is used extensively to incorporate phonology and semantics. This study focuses on the area of syntax while reference may be made to other levels, where necessary.

Ideophones constitute an aspect of figurative expressions used in everyday conversations. They are often onomatopoeic and mostly used for describing persons, objects and situations. Trask (1993:131) in Bodomo (2006) defines an ideophone as one of a grammatically distinct class of words, occurring in certain languages, which typically express either distinctive sounds or visually distinctive types of action. To Crystal (2003), ideophone is a term used in linguistics and phonetics for any vivid representation of an idea in sound, such as occurs through onomatopoeia.

Ideophones are found occurring in almost all languages of the world, with prominence in African, Australian, Asian and American languages (Akita, 2009). In Africa, it is mostly prominent in the Bantu languages. Its occurrence in the European languages is quite limited. This is evident in the limited size of ideophonic lexicon in English language. Ideophones are noted for resembling interjections, though they are not classified as such due to their syntactic functions in sentences as well as their special phonological and morphological characteristics, imitating sounds of movement, bodily sounds, animal noises, noises produced by tools or machines, and the like (Sasse, 2015).



## **Statement of the Problem**

As other African languages, the presence of Ideophones in Tee is very prominent. Despite its rich linguistic potentials, researchers in Tee language have not done much in this area.

Furthermore, ideophone is a rich and highly productive class of words able to motivate and beautify verbal communication. Among the Tee people, it is generally observed that the use of ideophones is common among the older generation. The youths are not well versed in the use of this class of words. Their language lacks the linguistic ingredients that can enrich such communications, as expected of a native speaker. This study is therefore necessary, to present the linguistic analysis of ideophones in Tee. This study will serve as a motivation to the Tee people; to encourage them on the use of this rich element of the language, as a means of preserving and transferring this class of words and the language to the future generations.

## **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The study aims to establish the ideophones of Tee, with particular focus on their occurrence and function within sentence structures. The specific objectives are to:

1. explore the morphological patterns of ideophones in Tee.
2. examine the syntactic roles of ideophones in Tee sentences.
3. classify ideophones in Tee based on their semantic features.

## **The Language and its Speaker**

Tee is known as a language spoken by approximately 500,000 people who form part of Tee in Tai Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. Tee is among the five languages spoken in Ogoni land in Rivers State. Others are Gokana, Baan Ogoi, Eleme, Kana. Tee and Kana are related and share some mutual intelligibility, but speakers of both languages regard them as distinct languages owing to some other areas of divergence and unintelligibility.

There are some degrees of resemblance in their customs, civilization and religion. Tai is a corrupt form of Tee [tēē]. The people refer to themselves and their language as Tee. Hearing of Tee for the first time, people take it to be another dialect of Kana language. Tee is therefore a language on its own.

## **Brief History of the People**

There are several accounts and much historical evidence about the origin of the Tee people. This will be understood from the origin of Ogoni by Loolo, as cited by Kpone- Tonwe (1990). He divides the settlement of the Ogoni into two periods. According to him Ogoni first settlers were Ghana main slave raiders who came by ship through the Imo River. Fearing capture by the anti-slavery, they entered Baene and Opuoko creek and settled at Baene, Kono and Opuoko from there they spread inland. He identified them as Coastal people of Southern Ghana (formerly Gold Coast). He points out that Kana is a corruption of the word Ghana.

Second set of the wave of the Ogoni ancestors entered the territory late by canoes through the Bodo and Bomu creeks and settled in the west central part of the territory, that is, Gokana, because they were the first to settle there, they were called 'Go' [gó] (meaning name sake).



Tee oral tradition state that Tee people came from Northern Kana, from part of Lueku and Bangha. There is also similarity in speech between the two areas such as accent, tone, etc. This research reveals that a contrary hypothesis or tradition exists in the Lueku and Bangha areas. It is worthy of note that during the period of expansion from the Kpong watershed, numerous emigrants from Kpong moved west rather than North-West into Tee and settled at Uweke.

This people got increased, from the Kpong into the Tee area; like that, expansion began in Tee. Eventually, the oral tradition corroborates name sources that Gbere Kuapie was the founder of Tee. Uweke was where he settled and is widely held to be the oldest town in Tee. All matters concerning the Tee tradition are done in Uweke and Korokoro. These are two brothers. Other linguistics research also settled that Tee is from Gokana which is a village in Bira and settled in Uweke.

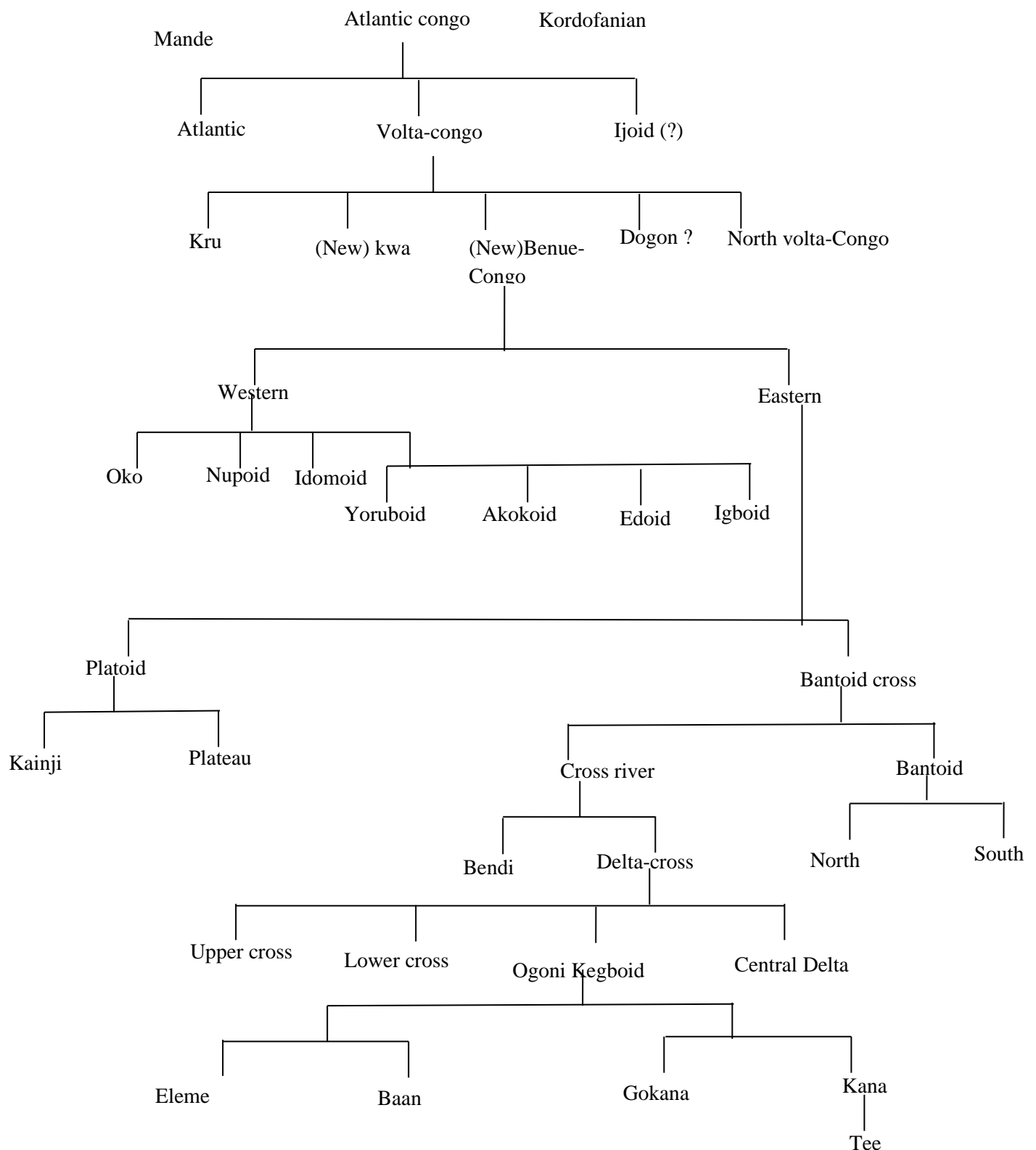
Tee comprises of 22 villages. They are: KoroKoro, Ueken [uweke], Kpite [kpite], Horo [horo], Gbeneue [gbene-uwe], Botem [bo-tem], Koroma [koroma], Bunu [bunu], Nonwa [nonwa], Uedume [uwe dume], Gbam [gbam], Gio [gio], Kporgor [kpogo], Kira [kira], Borobara [borobara], Baan-ogoi [baan-ogoi], Sime [sime], Ledor [ledo], Oloko [oloko], Gbonke [gbanke].

### **Occupation**

Traditionally, all Tee people are farmers. Their major food crops include pumpkin, yams, cassava, plantain and okro which are produced in commercial quantity and supplied to other people. The coastal town and villages also engage in fishing, added to production; another one includes palm wine tapping and hunting.

### **Language Classification**

According to Williamson (1987:18), Ogoni languages have been classified as under the Delta-cross sub-division of the new classification of Benue-Congo languages. They are Gokana, Kana, Eleme and Tee. Tee as a language spoken in Ogoni would be classified under the Delta-cross sub-division.



Bendor-Samuel (ed) 1989. Williamson 1995 & Ikoro 1989 (Simplified)



### Aspects of Tee Phonology

Approximant	Place	Bilabia l	Alveola r	Palata l	Vela r	Labial -velar	Labialize d velar	Glotta l	Labialize d glottal
	Manner								
	Plosive	p b	t d		k g	kp gb	k <sup>w</sup> g <sup>w</sup>	ʔ	
	Nasal	m	n ɲ	ɲ	ŋ		ŋ <sup>w</sup>		
	Trill		r						
	Fricative		s z		ʃ			h	
	Lateral		ɬ ɭ						
	Oral			G j		m w		h	h <sup>w</sup>
	central								
	Nasalize			J		w			h <sup>w</sup>
	d								

### Tee Consonant System

There are 33 Consonants in Tee. These are p, b, g, h, k, m, n, l, w, ʃ, ŋ, ŋ<sup>w</sup>

r, s, y, ɣ, w, n, ɕ, l, h, z, h<sup>w</sup>, i, gb, gw, hi, hn, hy, kw, nw.

#### CONSONANT

#### WORD

#### GLOSS

p	/pee/	goat
b	/ba/	hand
d	/do/	filling
g	/goo/	laziness
h	/hwo/	plant
k	/ke/	place
m	/mani/	urine
n	/nn'loo'/	your's
i	/l/	marriage
w	/werelo/	love
ʃ	/ʃa/	like
ŋ	/ŋkoo/	fowl
ŋ <sup>w</sup>		
r	/bu'ra'/	thank
s	/sa/	select
y	/yaa/	thank
w	/wura/	friendship
n	/n'aa'/	branch
g	/gere/	to allow to burn
L	/l'u/	death
hu	/horo/	a type of fish
z	/zib/	beat
hw	/hwiini/	chimpanzee
j	/job/	smallpox

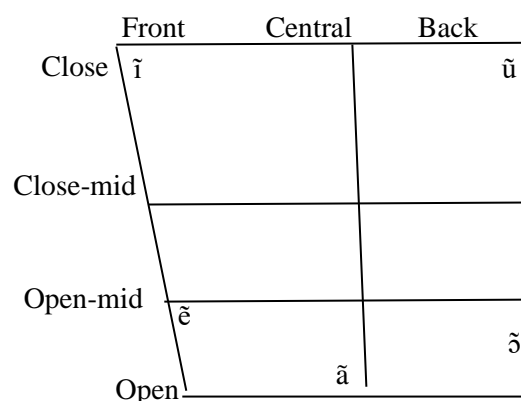
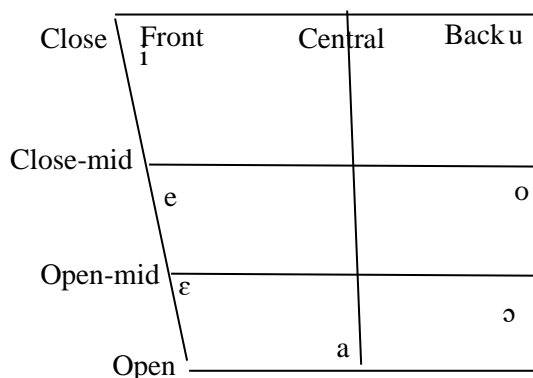


ab	/gbaara/	separate
qw	/gwii/	electric fish
hi	/hia/	bedbulg
hn	/hno/	war
hy	/hyara/	dry
kw	/kwii/	basket
nw	/nwiika/	brother or sister

### Tee Vowel System

There are 7 oral vowel and 5 nasalized vowel chart in Tec. They are:

The oral vowels are i, e, ε, a, u, o while the nasalized are ĩ, ẽ, ã, ũ, õ.



### Vowel Inventory

Vowel	Word	Gloss
a	ba	hand
e	be	fight or war
ε	ke	place
i	bi	faeces
o	boo	rain
B	bo	be fit
u	bu	belly
ã	bã	pot
ẽ	kẽ	egg
ε	kegbĩ	look for
ĩ	ɔ	drink
ũ	bũ	door

### Tee Tonal System

There are three types of tone in Tee which are low tone, mid tone and high tone. Low tone is represented by the sign ( ` ) back sloping, as in bà meaning cat. Mid tone is represented by the sign ( ˘ ) while High tone is represented by ( ´ ) forward sloping. Tone in Tee performs two



functions: lexical and grammatical functions. Lexical function comes in by distinguishing meaning of individual words while in grammatical function, structures change as a result of tonal alteration. Let us consider some examples of tonal differences in Tee.

### High Tone

bí 'faeces'

ló 'salt'

kpá 'book'

té 'tree'

### Mid Tone

bē 'pick'

bā 'eat'

nēē 'person'

### Low Tone

dù 'tail'

bà 'eat'

bèè 'two'

nè 'give'

## METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were elicited from three (3) proficient native speakers of Tee, with the assistance of native field informants. In addition to primary data collection, relevant existing literature on the concept was consulted to provide background and support for the analysis. The research employs a descriptive approach to data analysis. Specifically, a syntactic analysis of ideophones in Tee is undertaken, utilizing interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glossing alongside the X-bar theoretical framework within the Government and Binding model.

### The Concept of Ideophones

The term ideophone was originally coined by Clement Martyn Doke in 1935. He defined ideophones as "a vivid representation of an idea in sound. A word, often onomatopoeic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, actions, state or intensity". (Doke 1935:1188, in Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz, 2001).

Prior to Doke's work in 1935, Westermann had already in 1927 examined the sound symbolism of a special class of onomatopoeic words called 'Lautbilder' (sound pictures) in West African languages, which are able to describe an object or denote an event as a whole (Kilian-Hatz, 2006). In the past (before 1970s), the ideophone was particularly noted as a feature of African languages, due to its scanty occurrence in the European languages. In recent years, owing to the growing interests in the study of ideophones, it has been established that the existence of ideophones is not restricted to African languages, but it is a universal feature of human languages. However, languages defer as to the size of their ideophonic lexicon and their classifications (Franck, 2004).

Many scholars have studied ideophones in African languages from different viewpoints. Such works include Ameka (2001), which studied the phono-semantic features of ideophones in Ewe. Dingemanse (2019) defined ideophones as marked words that vividly evoke sensory





events. The author proposes a combination of structural, semantic and semiotic criteria for the definition of ideophones. Blench (2009) produced a huge data on ideophones in many Nigerian and Cameroonian languages, and asserted that ideophones were a relatively fixed pool and that the correct ideophones would be known to competent speakers. Ekere (1988) in Michael (2014) worked on ideophonic expressions in Ibibio, considering it from an emotional approach, which projects harmony between sound and sense. Udoh (2009) studied the structural patterns of ideophones in Leggbo, and presented reduplication as the main occurring feature besides the sound features.

As it is observed, all the definitions of ideophones presented above are based purely on phono-semantic criteria, except that of Dingemanse (2011) and Udoh (2009). According to Franck (2014), “defining ideophones through their semantics is problematic because it is subjective and extremely broad”. Based on this argument, the author, in search of a definition that is descriptive and inclusive of all kinds of ideophones, but does not completely ignore semantics, adopts Dingemanse (2011), which proposes a combination of structural, semantic and semiotic criteria for the definition of ideophones. It is therefore the view of this present work that ideophones be defined based on both the structural and semantic criteria, and not purely by meaning. Based on this standpoint, this work, as earlier stated, adopts a syntactic analysis of ideophones, making use of the interlinear morpheme-to-morpheme glossing as well as the x-bar model of the Government and Binding theory.

### **General Features/Characteristics of Ideophones**

At this point, there is need to state clearly the properties/characteristics of ideophones. The following are some definable characteristics that make a word qualify as an ideophone:

- i. Generally, ideophones are words that evoke sensory events. They evoke ideas in sound imitation. Onomatopoeic words are good examples of ideophones (Doke, 1935 in Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz, 2001). Their phonological properties are distinct from other words in a particular language.
- ii. Ideophones are usually characterized as iconic words (sound-symbolic words). This means that there can be a resemblance between their form and their meaning (Westermann, 1927 in Kilian-Hatz, 2006).
- iii. Reduplication is a prominent feature of ideophones which expresses a sense of repetition or plurality in the evoked event (Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz, 2001).
- iv. The meaning of ideophones can be easily guessed in any language. This shows its iconicity (Dingemanse, et al., 2016).
- v. Grammatically, ideophones vary by language. In some languages, such as Korean, Semai, Welaytaetc, they form a separate word class. In some others languages, such as Ewe, Hausa, Ibibio, Yoruba, Igbo, etc, they occur across a number of different word classes (Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz, 2001).
- vi. Ideophones generally tend to occur more extensively in spoken language than in written language because of their expressive or dramaturgic function (Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz, 2001).



Ideophone, as a linguistic concept, has been given a wide range of studies by various authors, with some considering it at the semantic or syntactic levels. Others investigated it phonologically or morphologically. It is therefore, our concern in this study to do an appraisal of past works on ideophones.

Lemon (1957) studied Gokana ideophones. He stated that ideosyncratic and other features were inherent in the Gokana ideophones. Emenanjo (1978) studied the Igbo ideophones. According to him, ideophones are primarily predicative in functions and are used to describe, dramatize and confer upon actions, processes and states. He further said that the predicate sounds, movement or gestures refer to colour, taste, smell, temperature and silence.

Kaven Courtenay (1976) identified the ideophone as phonological writ. Alexaudre (1972) described the ideophone as image words impressive or descriptive. He further said that they are bound in African languages existing as a category of vocables. Both Newman (1968) and Samarin (1967) agreed that ideophones are morphemes which are language specific.

Fortune (1962) investigated the Shara ideophones, this was the first detailed study on the ideophone in any language. He based his analysis on the phonology, syntax and morphology. He discovered that the ideophones are a sub-division of a language and syntax of phrases having them as completely distinct from those of normal sentences.

The research of Lantiam (1960) corroborated that of Fortune. In this case, the researcher used the comparative phonology of the Nguric language for the study. He noted that the abnormal phonology of the ideophone should be given a separate consideration from the conventional phonological pattern without a large distortion of the normal functioning of the system. He added that inflectional morphology does not occur in the Nguri language.

Doke (1954) treated the ideophones as a separate part of speech. He classified them under descriptive adverbs, He later said that they perform onomatopoeic, qualitative functions relating to sound, colour, action, state or intensity.

Fortune (1961) asserted that ideophone is somewhat restricted. Ideophones are a general Bantu phenomenon. Ekere (1987) said that ideophone come into investigation with the objective of determining its meaning, describing its form in relation to the forms found. By describing its syntactic distribution and highlighting its use in discourse and in literary expression, Michael (2014) defined ideophone as a linguistic feature which seems to have defined any clear-cut and satisfactory definition so far.

Bryant (1905) examined the ideophones of some African language and described them as verbal particles which are usually onomatopoeic. Colenzo (1871) studied the ideophone of Zulu language as an integral work on Zulu grammar. He observed that ideophones were verbal particles with adverbial roles. By way of appraisal therefore, the various works on the ideophones have been or were carried out on African languages only. It is then relevant to carry out more research on ideophones of Europe, American, Asian and Australian languages. Secondly, most of the studies reveal that ideophones perform adverbial roles.

This is acceptable to an extent but efforts should be geared towards identifying the other roles which can be performed by ideophones generally. Ideophone is defined as a process of transferring a sound to a corresponding meaning. The review shows that most of the studies



supported the idea that ideophones are adverbs or adverbial particles. One can therefore make the following generalizations.

- i) Ideophones can exist at phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactic levels.
- ii) They are predicative in function and tell us about movement, action, taste, colour, temperature, silence and smell.
- iii) They are morphemes and language specific.
- (iv) They are sub-linguistic units with distinct syntactic structures which are different from those of normal sentences.
- v) They are onomatopoeic or adverbial particles.
- (vi) Ideophones came into function through the transformation of a sound into a speech.

### Morphology and Syntax of Tee Ideophones

Apparently, most people are of the view that ideophones, as a grammatical class, have no morphemes or other patterns of syntactic relevance. In the language under discussion, grammatical roles are performed by ideophones through affixations. They play a crucial role in the structure, meaning and word usage in the language. In this section, we shall examine the morphology and syntax of Tai ideophones at a general level.

### Inflectional Morphology

Certain affixes are usually attached to ideophones in Tee.

#### (a) Prefixes

ji-	denotes	emphasis
ki-	denotes	emphasis
ko-	denotes	emphasis
ka-	denotes	emphasis
yep-	denotes	emphasis

For example,

jí gím - sound of a falling heavy object upon reaching the ground.

kí kórōp - sound of water in the throat in the course of swallowing.

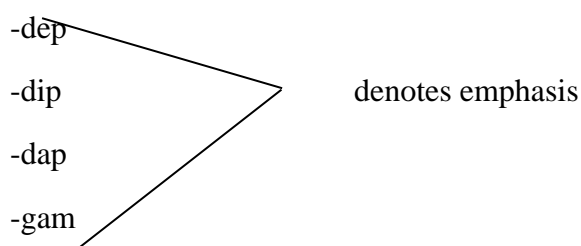
kō gāp - fast movement.

kà wáp - a crispy brittle noise.

yèp kpùì - fall suddenly headwards.

#### (b) suffixes

These suffixes lay emphasis on the word in the utterance. They are:





Examples include,

i) Lō nām ú dōō segérè-dèp.

The animal died unexpectedly.

ii) Pyá lō nyùgũ yii bú kùè doó-dip.

The children disappeared suddenly into the bush.

iii) I zózii dó gbárágá-dàp.

We ran suddenly into each other.

(iv) Egèrè béé hím dòō gbádá-gàm.

The road was quite calm and lonely.

It is imperative to note that while the prefixing ideophones in Tee do follow a particular tone pattern, the suffixes have a consistent low tone pattern. Also, in Tee, the vowel /a/ often occurs and functions as a suffix to ideophones. This is nonetheless alterable owing to tonal modification on the suffixing vowel. For example,

i) Lo nama nama-á

The old ones

(ii) Lo ligi ligi-á

The small ones

(iii) Lo abaaga abaaga-á

The broken ones

(iv) Lo laga laga-á

The wayward one

v) Lo gbene gbene-á

The big one

The position of Udoh (2009) on reduplication as the main occurring feature besides the sound features agrees with the findings in Tee ideophones, especially as exemplified above, amongst others.

### Sentences having Ideophones in Tee

Some scholars have observed that ideophone is a sub-system of a language and that the syntax of sentences containing these ideophones differ from those of normal sentences. In Tee, ideophones perform a number of functions in a sentence, some of which are considered below.

#### (A) Inchoative Ideophones

In Tee, a notable set of ideophones can be classified as inchoative, denoting qualities or conditions that are in the process of becoming or developing. These ideophones function analogously to the English expression "be in the process of", typically following verb phrases marked by perfective aspect. While the initiating action is completed, the ideophonic expression emphasizes the resultant state that remains salient in the present. See below for example,

(i) Bà me lú muú muú ló.

My hands are covered all over with sores.



(ii) Gbára niya lú bam bam ló.

That man is muscular.

(iii) Bá yé lú zía zía ló.

His hand is hairy.

Here, *muú muú* expresses a resultant condition arising from an earlier process. Other instances show bodily and physical transformations, such as *bam bam* (muscular) and *zía zía* (hairy), highlighting the ideophones' role in stative predication.

## B) Simple Ideophone Phrases and Clauses

This category captures copulative constructions wherein ideophones function as part of the predicate, contributing qualitative meanings derived from nominal or adjectival elements. These structures often involve a copula and a descriptive ideophone that produces a semantically rich, predicative clause. Examples:

(i) Yé nuyááló /fāa/ nyagà nyaga.

His shirt /is/ very new

ii) Anii kágàrá /ee/ duo baai.

Today the sky /is/ dazzling white.

iii) Yé nornu /wee ki/ kere kere.

His opinions /are opposed/ to those of others.

(iv) Tambari /we naana/ poro poro alap/ yie gbo.

Tambari /puts up/ some deviant behaviour/ in public.

The ideophones here modify nouns by ascribing qualities such as freshness (*nyaga nyaga*) or brilliance (*duo baai*). This usage brings out ideophones' utility in adjectival and stative constructions, frequently drawing from perceptual features like appearance or texture.

Other sentences having ideophones are:

i) Kà kaana prugu /dé/ bú tem á.

That room /is/ very hot

ii) M̃ /gá muè/ zìgà mii mii nwínam.

I saw a red bird.

iii) Lò neéyíp /kia dou tóitói/ ké zii.

The thief tiptoed in the darkness.

## (C) Adverbial uses of Ideophones

Ideophones in Tee also operate in an adverbial capacity, where they qualify the verb by describing the manner or intensity of an action. These ideophones, positioned typically at the clause's end, mirror conventional adverbs and add clarity to verbal expressions. Examples:

i) Lò nwi téérá dóó yép àà.

The child ran away immediately.

ii) Barinua dé lò ráisì dóó pee pee.

Barinua ate up all the rice.

iii) Pya nyùgũ téérá aa bu pegi pegi.

The children ran away humbly.



iv) Lò nam lú ákpó ákpó.

The piece of meat is bony.

v) Lò méne yii bu to doo kpai kpai.

The King entered the house majestically.

(vi) kpèe weē kià doo sɔɔri sɔɔri.

Snails walk sluggishly

In these constructions, *yép*, *kpai kpai* and *pegí pegí* detail how actions are performed, whether quickly, majestically or humbly. Many adverbial ideophones in Tee derive their intensifying effect from reduplication, a common morphological strategy for heightening expressivity. Examples of such intensifiers include:

- |       |               |   |                |
|-------|---------------|---|----------------|
| i)    | mií mii       | - | red, maron     |
| ii)   | maa maa       | - | watery         |
| iii)  | tɔɔ tɔɔ       | - | wet            |
| iv)   | gbara gbara   | - | quick          |
| v)    | gbara gbara   | - | forcible       |
| vi)   | nɔɔ nɔɔ       | - | yellow         |
| vii)  | kpai kpai dee | - | well spaced    |
| viii) | bii bii       | - | jovial         |
| ix)   | tɔɛ tɔɛ       | - | secret         |
| x)    | nyɔɔ nyɔɔ     | - | tall           |
| xi)   | kere kere     | - | different      |
| xii)  | kip kip       | - | smallish       |
| xiii) | sogor sogor   | - | tiny           |
| xiv)  | kpɔɔ kpɔɔ     | - | huge, robust   |
| xv)   | gberu gberu   | - | gigantic, high |

This use of reduplication serves both semantic and rhythmic functions, which enhances clarity and emotive resonance.

### (E) Adjectival use of Ideophones

Tee ideophones are also deployed in attributive constructions, where they function as adjectival modifiers of nouns. These modifiers often appear postnominally and, like adverbs, commonly occur in reduplicated forms to intensify the descriptive effect.

Examples:

- |       |                   |   |                |
|-------|-------------------|---|----------------|
| i)    | dem dem kè        | - | rocky land     |
| ii)   | kpò kpo kè        | - | holly land     |
| iii)  | wheeló whèeló nee | - | peaceful man   |
| iv)   | tor tor pórò      | - | fresh fish     |
| v)    | pórò pórò alap    | - | bad manners    |
| vi)   | lága lága nýi     | - | careless child |
| vii)  | duu duu ke        | - | dusty area     |
| viii) | bíe bíe nyúgũ     | - | dirty children |
| ix)   | gbór gbor daa     | - | dirty teeth    |



x) gbin gbin nèe - slender people

These examples demonstrate how ideophones enrich the noun phrase by providing clear, sensory-laden descriptions. In effect, they extend the expressive range of adjectives in the language and offer precise features of physical traits or behaviours.

### (F) Use of Ideophones as Interjection

In Tee, a class of ideophones functions as interjections, typically used to express emotions such as shock, sympathy or amazement in response to sudden occurrences or intense experiences. These ideophonic interjections not only encode the speaker's emotional stance but often evoke the manner or intensity of an action or event. In many cases, they modify the tone and interpretation of the entire utterance, rather than a single word or phrase.

The following examples illustrate the use of ideophones as interjections:

i) Bà teerà yii tó doó wop!

What a dangerous entry into the house! (Expresses shock at the nature of someone's entrance, showing danger or recklessness.)

(ii) Lò hia be doo waá!

It was a very wild fire, what a pity! (Reflects sympathy or helplessness toward a destructive event.)

(iii) Bà ló nwi búnà doó baai!

What a poor child with a broken hand! (Expresses pity, with the ideophone emphasizing the severity of the injury.)

(iv) Yé tè mám yé bà sí dọ̀ baai!

What a hot slap on her face! (Conveys the suddenness and intensity of a physical act.)

v) Ló bù maga dee doo gbaam!

It was such a noisy door! (Signals the abrupt, attention-grabbing sound of the door.)

(vi) Beegè mótò kue lii dọ̀ kpuúm!

What a fatal accident between the two cars! (Conveys a tragic or catastrophic collision, with the ideophone imitating the sound or impact.)

(vi) Há be dóó wop!

The fire burnt ferociously! (Emphasizes the intensity and destructive nature of the fire.)

These instances demonstrate that ideophones, when used as interjections, typically occur in exclamatory constructions and often appear at clause-final positions. Importantly, they do not only function as affective markers but also bear syntactic relevance, which influences the interpretation of the entire sentence.





This usage further reveals both the morphological independence and syntactic flexibility of ideophones in Tee. While they are often phonologically marked and prosodically prominent, ideophones retain a high degree of grammatical integration, especially when conveying speaker stance or affective commentary.

### Semantics of Ideophones in Tee

The semantics of ideophones in Tee reflects a rich interplay between language and perception, as these forms vividly encode sensory and experiential meanings. Ideophones in Tee not only depict sounds, colors, textures and movements, but also serve as expressive tools that convey the speaker's interpretation of actions, events and states with remarkable precision and immediacy.

### Properties of Ideophones

Ideophones in Tee exhibit distinctive semantic and referential properties that cut across various sensory and experiential domains. At the level of meaning, these ideophones relate to phenomena such as color, taste, texture, posture, temperature, size and shape. This broad functional spectrum demonstrates that ideophones are not merely expressive elements but also play a descriptive role in characterizing both animate and inanimate referents. Their semantic range enhances communicative precision by allowing speakers to succinctly convey complex perceptual experiences.

### Types of Ideophones

Semantically, ideophones in Tee fall into two major classes: active and stative ideophones. This distinction reflects the functional roles ideophones play in clause structure and meaning.

**a) Active Ideophones:** Active ideophones are those that co-occur with dynamic verbs or action-oriented expressions. They often depict motion, activity or manner of doing something. These ideophones serve to intensify or specify the nature of an event or action and they usually align with verbs in terms of aspect or mood. For example:

- |       |        |   |                             |
|-------|--------|---|-----------------------------|
| (i)   | yep    | - | waking up quickly           |
| (ii)  | káp    | - | blinking of the eye         |
| (iii) | gap    | - | moving fast                 |
| (iv)  | toetóe | - | moving lazily               |
| v)    | oboró  | - | hiding quickly              |
| (vi)  | pegi   | - | doing something haphazardly |

These ideophones heighten the vividness of events and frequently appear in narrative discourse.

**b) Stative Ideophones:** These, on the other hand, describe the inherent state, condition or composition of a subject. They typically reference qualities rather than actions, such as:

- |    |     |   |         |
|----|-----|---|---------|
| i) | lap | - | decayed |
|----|-----|---|---------|





- ii) aga - hard
- iii) dep - wet
- iv) parará - pale
- v) pagarà - broad

Such ideophones are integral in attributive or descriptive constructions, often appearing in copular clauses or as nominal modifiers.

### Ranges of Ideophones

Ideophones in Tee demonstrate extensive functional diversity across different semantic domains. These domains not only reflect human sensory perception but also provide insight into how language encodes experiential reality. The subcategories include:

#### 1. Size/Dimension

These ideophones express various aspects of size, shape and spatial extension. They tell us about weight, form, complexity, etc. Examples:

- i. sógòsogo - smallish
- ii. gboròno - thin
- iii. whóròro - oversized
- iv. kpugurú - round
- v. yifayíra - lofty
- vi. kpobkpob - robust

#### 2. Motion/Movement

This group captures the manner and speed of movement, often imitating physical or visual dynamics. Examples are:

- i. biop - fast movement of thrown object
- ii. wae - fast motion of reptiles
- iii. kaabi kaabi - slow movement
- iv. mem mem - flash of lightning
- v. yep - very fast movement
- vi. wòp - flinging sound of object

#### 3. Colour

Colour ideophones encode the visual appearance of substances or objects. Examples:

- i. mii mii - red
- ii. eeduu - sparkling white
- iii. hiaehiae - greenish
- iv. noo noo - yellow
- v. duuduu - grayish
- vi. kpukpu dee - spotted



## Sound

There ideophones describe the way sounds are produced with reference to tone, pitch and quality. They may be natural or artificial sounds made by man and objects respectively. Examples are as follows:

- i. gbum
- ii. gbam
- iii. kpim
- iv. kpoo
- v. gee
- vi. taa

## 5. Heat/temperature

Ideophones in this category reflect thermal states, from extreme cold to intense heat. Examples are:

- |      |           |   |          |
|------|-----------|---|----------|
| i.   | aoole     | - | lukewarm |
| ii.  | hia hia   | - | hot      |
| iii. | ziriri    | - | ice-cold |
| iv.  | pui pui   | - | boiling  |
| v.   | tootoo    | - | cold     |
| vi.  | gere gere | - | red hot  |

## 6. Silence/gesture

This set conveys states of stillness, quietness or non-verbal cues such as body movement. Examples are given below:

- |      |       |   |                   |
|------|-------|---|-------------------|
| i.   | soom  | - | prolonged silence |
| ii.  | píí   | - | quietness         |
| iii. | kiap  | - | sudden silence    |
| iv.  | mm mm | - | mute              |

## 7. Taste

These ideophones articulate gustatory experiences. That is, they describe the taste of substances. Examples are:

- |      |           |   |           |
|------|-----------|---|-----------|
| i.   | ákpe ákpe | - | sweet     |
| ii.  | lógò lógò | - | sugary    |
| iii. | orò óro   | - | tasteless |
| iv.  | lee lee   | - | bitter    |
| v.   | dap dap   | - | sour      |



## 8. Smell

Ideophones of smell indicate how a smell is perceived. In other words, they represent the quality and strength of odours. Examples include:

- |      |           |   |                  |
|------|-----------|---|------------------|
| i.   | pem pem   | - | irritating smell |
| ii.  | porò poto | - | malodorous       |
| iii. | ábem ábem | - | rotten-egg smell |
| iv.  | ákpe akpe | - | sweet smell      |

## 9. Time

These ideophones are temporally anchored, referring to different times of the day. Examples are:

- |      |           |   |                |
|------|-----------|---|----------------|
| i.   | lóolè     | - | dawn           |
| ii.  | soopie    | - | afternoon      |
| iii. | mmne      | - | night          |
| iv.  | béé loole | - | early morning. |

Each of these ideophonic categories reveals the intricate ways in which Tee speakers index the world around them. They show how ideophones are semantically rich and pragmatically versatile, which contributes to the expressive depth of the language.

## CONCLUSION

Ideophones have been attributed different definitions and by various scholars. Some see the concept of ideophones as phonological, morphological or syntactic. Others say that it exists only at the semantic level. There are still more who examined it at a phono-semantic level. Ideophones are considered by certain researchers as either verbal as adverbial particles which are always onomatopoeic in nature. Other scholars say that they are predicative in function, and attribute qualities or sound, movement, colour, taste, smell, silence and temperature to objects.

Ideophones are language specific and hence need special treatment. They do not undergo inflectional morphology in Tai but are vocal images as representative of visual, mental and auditory expression. Tee ideophones occur at initial, medial and final position in the syllable structure. It has a mono-di-and trisyllabic division. Ideophones also act as clauses/phrases, intensifiers, adjectives, adverbs and interjection in Tee. They are generally classified as active and static in function. On the whole, ideophones perform grammatical, stylistic and semantic roles in Tee.



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