

Gizey onomatopoeia

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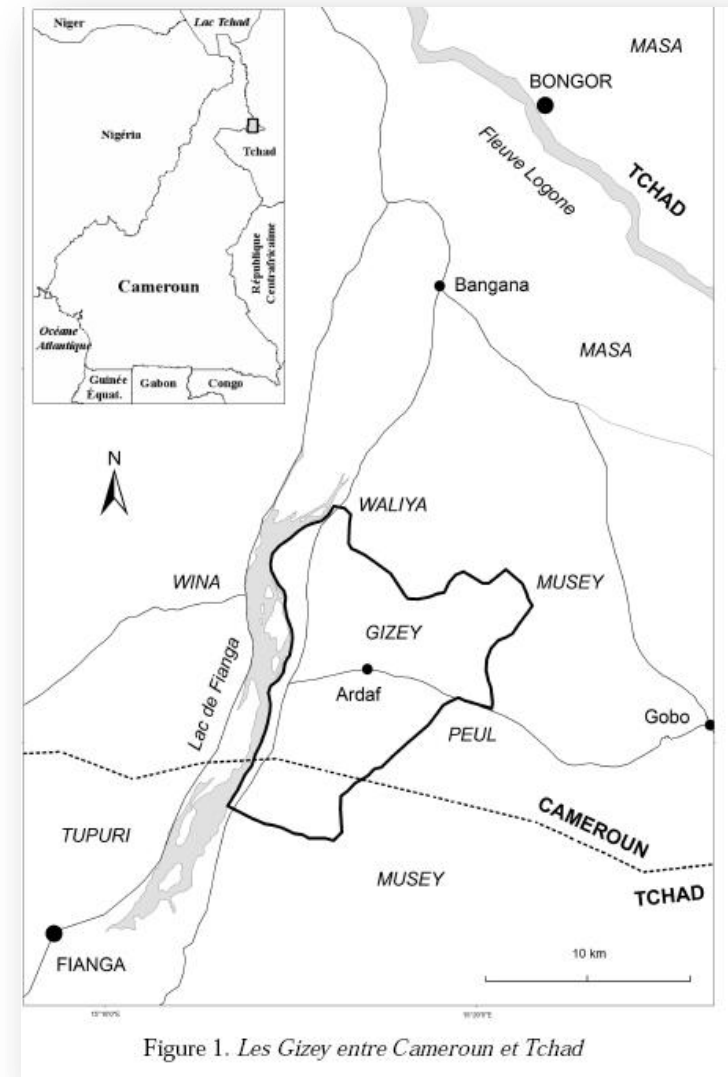
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Workshop: Sound symbolism and onomatopoeia

Gizey

- Masa language (Chadic < Afroasiatic)
- Spoken in Cameroon & Chad
- 12 000 -19 000 speakers



Gaffuri, Luigi & Melis, Antonino & Petrarca, Valerio. 2014. Les Gizey du Cameroun et du Tchad: identité, dynamismes, échanges culturels. In Baldi, Sergio & Magrin, Gérard (eds.), *Les échanges et la communication dans le bassin du lac Tchad : actes du colloque de Naples du réseau Méga-Tchad, Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale", Naples 13-15 septembre 2012*, vol. 6, 515–546. Italy: Mega-Chad Research Network / Réseau Méga-Tchad.

Guitang, Guillaume. 2021. Gizey (Cameroon and Chad) - Language snapshot. *Language documentation and description* 20. 236–243. (doi:<https://doi.org/10.25894/ldd52>)

Seignobos, Christian & Iyebi-Mandjek, Olivier. 2000. *Atlas de la province de l'Extrême-Nord Cameroun*. Yaounde: IRD Editions - MINREST/INC.

Gizey: literature on expressives

- “Ideophones in the Gizey grammar” (under review)
 - ↳ Discusses **onomatopoeic nouns**
 - *méé* ‘goat’ (< *méé* ‘baa’);
 - *bùtùtúk* ‘Senegal Coucal’ (< *bùdùdù* ‘call of the Senegal coucal’)

Gizey: phonology

- 26 consonants: p, b, t, d, k, g, ʔ, ɸ, ɸ', tʃ, dʒ, f, v, ɬ, ɮ, s, z, h, ɦ, m, n, ŋ, l, r, w, j
- 5 vowels: i, u, ε, ɔ, a (with long counterparts iː, uː, εː, ɔː, aː)
- 2 tones: H, L

Gizey: phonology

Open syllables	CV (bó 'gloom')	CVV (hàà 'until')
Closed syllables	CVC (dʒàb 'tie')	CVVC (kààm 'yesterday')

- Onsetless syllables disallowed (glottal closure)
 - ↳ **ʒt** > **?ʒt** 'cough'
- Consonant clusters disallowed (occur when a vowel is deleted)
 - ↳ **bálák** > **blák** 'spoil'

Gizey: morphology

- Limited inflectional morphology
 - ↳ Nominal plurality (only a limited set of count nouns)
e.g., bàk 'leather': b̀k-éj 'leathers'
 - ↳ viewpoint aspect (imperfective/perfective)
e.g., Class 1 verbs: kál(à) 'leave' # k̀l(á) 'left'
- No overt derivational morphology

Data sources

- Gizey-French dictionary (2008)
- Folktales (2019)
- Elicitation (via WhatsApp, 2023)

Ajello, Roberto & Melis, Antonino. 2008. *Dictionnaire gizey-français, suivi d'une liste lexicale français-gizey*. Pisa Edizioni ETS. Pisa.

Körtvélyessy, Lívia. 2020. Onomatopoeia – A Unique Species? *Studia linguistica* 74(2). 506–551.

Data sources

- 104 items
- 4 categories of sound sources: elements, **animals**, human, artifacts

Onomatopoeia: phonology

- Sound inventory and distribution is mostly like the prosaic system
- Attestation of two **marginal** (onomatopoeia and elsewhere) consonants: /ɲ/ and /r/ and vowel /œ/

↘ *ɲìgí* ‘Guinea fowl_call’

↘ *prék prék* ‘lightning_sound’

↘ *ʔœ:k* ‘frog_call’

Onomatopoeia: phonology

- **br, bl, pr, kr** consonant sequences tend to be allowed in onomatopoeia

↳ ***blúk*** 'sound of thrown stone'

↳ ***brít*** 'pooing_sound'

↳ ***kréw kréw*** 'sparrowhawk_call'

↳ ***prék prék*** 'lightning_sound'

Onomatopoeia: root structure

- Dominant root structure: **CVC** (like in the rest of the lexicon)
- Disyllabic constraint: “roots never exceed two syllables” (same in the prosaic system)
- **C*i*C** is the dominant model (morphological niche) for the creation of new onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia: root structure

- **CiC** is the dominant model (morphological niche) for the creation of new onomatopoeia

↘ **dìm** ‘sound of heavy object thrown in water’

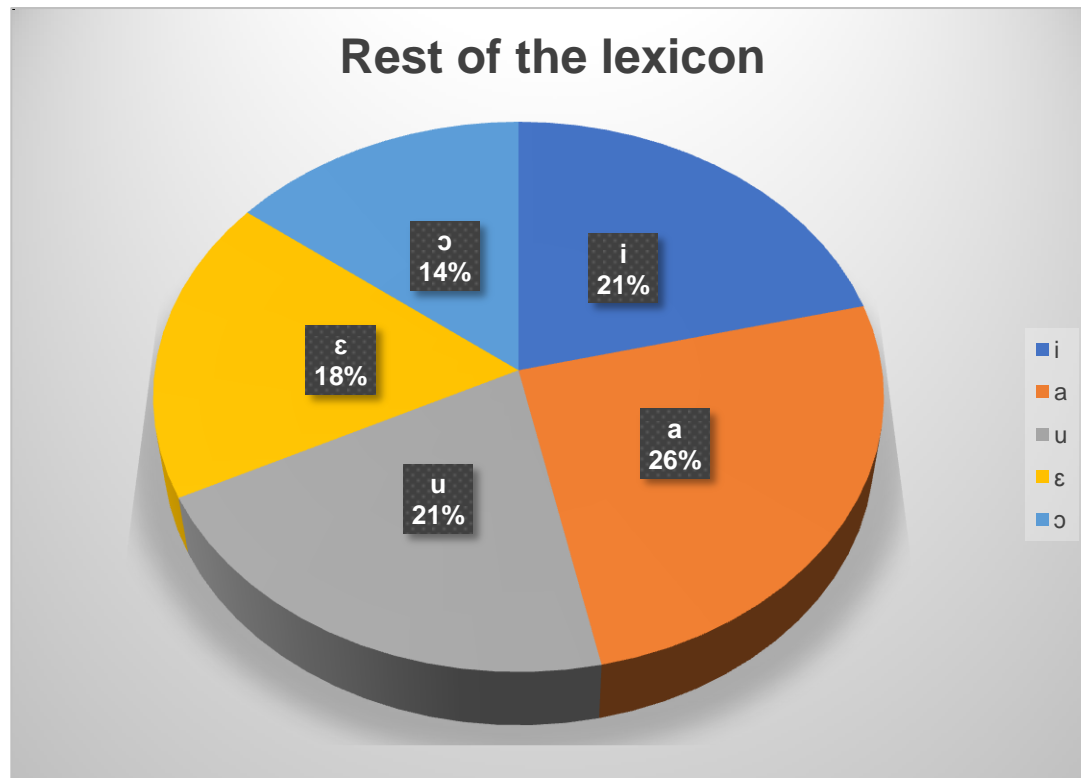
↘ **dít** ‘sound of violent hit’

↘ **dìt** ‘final sound of noisy process’

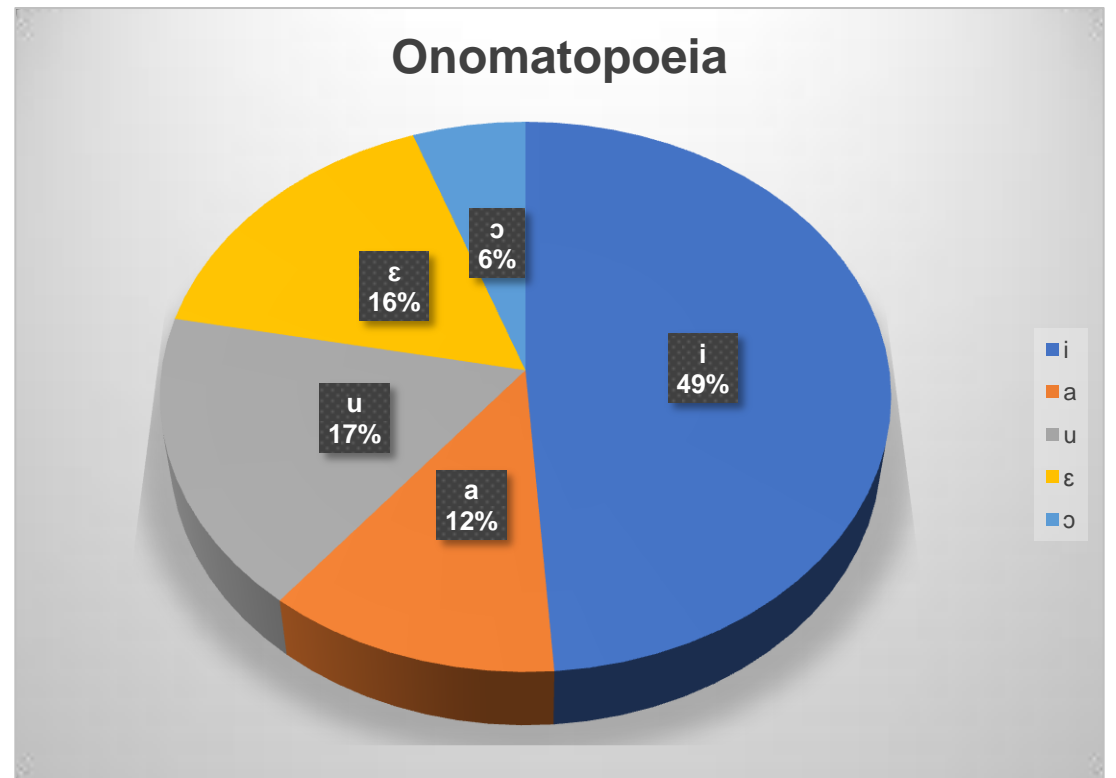
- No transparent **CiC**-meaning association

Onomatopoeia: root structure

/i/ is amongst the most utilized vowel



/i/ is overrepresented in onomatopoeia



Onomatopoeia: root structure

- **CiC** is the dominant model (morphological niche) for the creation of new onomatopoeia
 - ↳ **dìm** 'sound of heavy object thrown in water'
 - ↳ **dít** 'sound of violent hit'
 - ↳ **dìt** 'final sound of noisy process'
- **CiC** was probably first associated with NOISE before turning to a regular morphological niche from which new forms are modelled (under analogy)

Onomatopoeia: sound symbolism?

- Very limited obvious sound symbolism
- Examples include: dominance of **/w/** for FLYING or air connection
 - ↳ **vìw** ‘sound of fire in windy situation’
 - ↳ **wíí wíí** ‘sound of flying mosquito or wasp’
 - ↳ **wì wì wì** ‘sound of flying fly’
 - ↳ **kíwíwwíw** ‘sound of a thrown knife’
- but also in:
 - ↳ **néw néw néw** ‘sound of white-faced whistling duck’
 - ↳ **kírìw** ‘sound when sharpening a knife’

Onomatopoeia: sound symbolism?

- Very limited obvious sound symbolism
- Potential meaningful tonal contrast?
 - H: *wíí wíí* ‘sound of flying mosquito or wasp’
 - L: *wì wì wì* ‘sound of flying fly’
- Also *búm* ‘gunshot sound’ # *bùm* ‘sound when burning a wet object’
- Limited examples (minimal pairs) to draw any conclusion

Onomatopoeia: sound symbolism?

- coda trill usually describes extended or prolonged sound-events
 - ↳ *dʒèr* 'sound of oil while frying'
 - ↳ *tʃér* 'call of yellow-billed oxpecker'
- But *tír* 'hard_hit'

Onomatopoeia: sound symbolism?

- Final /m/ = LOUD SOUND?

- ↳ **dìm** 'sound of something heavy thrown in water or of someone diving in water'
- ↳ **brùm** 'sound of something big and heavy thrown in water'
- ↳ **dzùm** 'sound of someone diving in water'
- ↳ **búm** 'sound of gun'
- ↳ **gùrùm** 'sound of the *gurlum*' (kind of gun)

Onomatopoeia: morphology

- Onomatopoeia do not show any inflectional or derivational morphology
- They do not host any agreement morpheme
- “expressive morphology” (iconic, showing depictive properties)
 - ↳ Final /r/ lengthening e.g., *tʃérrr* ‘call of yellow-billed oxpecker’
 - ↳ Final syllable doubling (frozen form): *bìgìm-gìm* ‘loud water sound’
- Sounds produced by animals often come repeated e.g., *kèkèrék kèkèrék* ‘Guinea fowl call’ (imitation)

Onomatopoeia: note on reduplication

- Reduplication is not a productive process in Gizey
- Only a few frozen reduplicatives are attested, including final syllable doubling: *bìgìm-gìm* ‘loud water sound’
- -**CVC** reduplicative pattern indexes length, straightness and large quantity

dùmúl-múl	‘snake <i>sp</i> ’
d̥zúkúl-kúl	‘hoopoe’
t̥íkíl-kíl	‘ <i>Elapsoidea guntheri</i> ’
tùgùl-gúl	‘variable cat snake’
dùwér-wér	‘part of the intestine’



Onomatopoeia: morphology

- Animal onomatopoeic forms can have nominal counterparts
- The nominal counterparts can include part, or all, of the material found in the onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia	Related noun
méé ‘baa’	méé ‘goat’ (also hù méé ‘caprine baa’)
bùdùdù ‘call of the Senegal coucal’	bùtùktúk ‘Senegal Coucal’
tjér ‘call of the yellow-billed oxpecker’	tjér ‘yellow-billed oxpecker’
kóógùlók ‘cock-a-doodle-do’	gùlók ‘cock’

Onomatopoeia: morphology

- The onomatopoeic nouns show properties associated with nouns, e.g.,
 - plural marking: **μέέ-γέ** ‘goat-PL’,
 - hosting of the definiteness clitic: **βùτùκτúk=ηà** ‘Senegal Coucal=DEF.SM’,
 - subject role, etc.

Onomatopoeia	Related noun
μέέ ‘baa’	μέέ ‘goat’ (also ηù μέέ ‘caprine baa’)
βùδùδù ‘call of the Senegal coucal’	βùτùκτúk ‘Senegal Coucal’
τjέρ ‘call of the yellow-billed oxpecker’	τjέρ ‘yellow-billed oxpecker’
κóγóγùλόκ ‘cock-a-doodle-do’	γùλόκ ‘cock’

Onomatopoeia: syntax

- Onomatopoeia can occupy two slots
 - ↳ **predicate modifier**

∅	kā	hùn gùn	gù	k=ǝm	bát
<i>PRO</i>	cut.PFV	branch	REV	with=3SM	ONOM

‘(He) broke a branch ***bát***’

Onomatopoeia: syntax

- Onomatopoeia can occupy two slots
 - ↳ “**Demonstration**” (quotational construction)

ηàk=η	ʔáj	wān	là	ηàgí	ηàgí
crane=DEF.SM	exist.PST	there.lying	QUOT	ONOM	ONOM

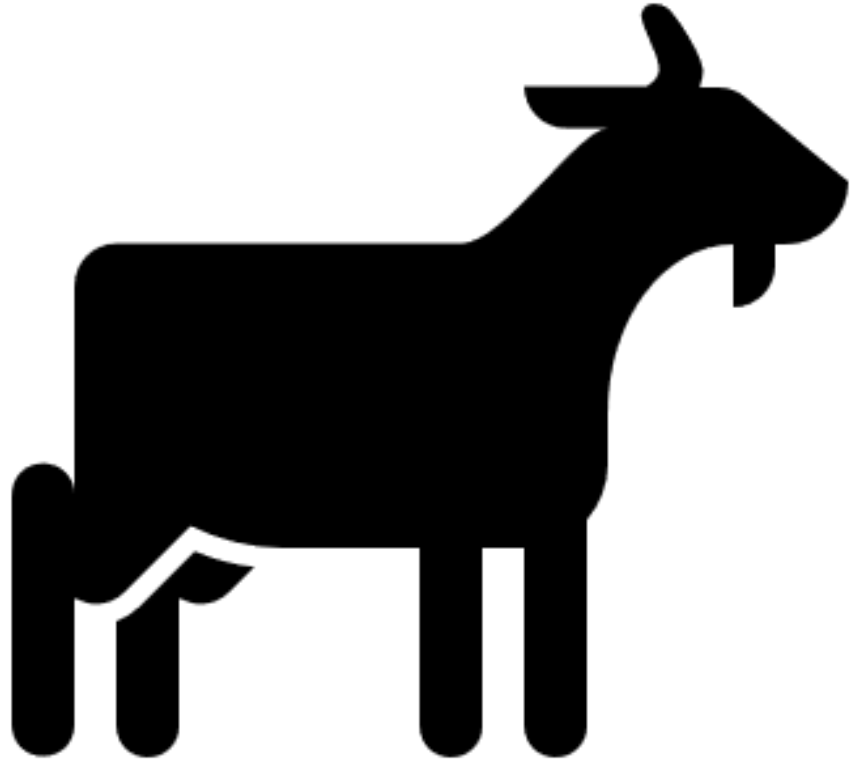
‘Crane was lying there crying: **ηàgí ηàgí.**’

Onomatopoeia: semantic relations

- insufficient evidence to illustrate clear semantic relationships between onomatopoeia
- possibility to use more than one form for a sound from a single source
 - ↳ **dìm** ‘sound of *something heavy thrown in water* or of *someone diving in water*’
 - ↳ **brùm** ‘sound of *something big and heavy thrown in water*’
 - ↳ **ɔ̃zùm** ‘sound of *someone diving in water*’

Onomatopoeia: conclusion

- Sparse data at this stage
- Few discrepancies between onomatopoeia and the rest of the system
- Only limited (and probably disputable) cases of sound symbolism



Thank you!



méé 'baa'



(hù) méé 'goat'