PA11.2 – Functions of iconicity: A cross-modal and cross-linguistic perspective

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I. The form-meaning mismatch

- Iconicity describes the resemblance based mapping of form and meaning and is cross-linguistically evident. [1]
- Ideophones – marked words depicting sensory imagery [2] – constitute a 1:many mismatch due to their additional depictive meaning contribution [3]. Although attested in many languages [4], the cross-linguistic transparency of ideophones and other iconic forms remain understudied.
- To gain a comprehensive understanding of the scope and robustness of iconic functions, two main questions are examined in various sub projects:
  - **RQ1: How language specific are iconic mappings?** interpreting and transferring elements from ideophonic to non-ideophonic grammars (→ Projects A & B)
  - **RQ2: Does iconicity facilitate lexical processing?** Contrasting processing of iconic/autological structures and iconic/deictic signs (→ Projects C & D)

Cross-linguistic	*Cross-modal*
Project A 🖉👍 integration of Xitsonga ideophones in Mozambican Portuguese (MP)	**Project C** ✿✿🧠 iconic potential of autological structures in the written and spoken domain
Project B ✿✿⤭ L1 effects in the perception of Cantonese ideophones	**Project D** 🗣 facilitating effects of iconic gestures in language acquisition

Project-specific research questions

Robustness of iconic functions in Xitsonga ideophones
i. Are there differences in the expressivity of Xitsonga ideophones based on the language background?
ii. How does Mozambican Portuguese (MP) influence the syntactic integration of Xitsonga ideophones in multilingual speakers?

Cross-linguistic perception of Cantonese ideophones
i. Are Cantonese ideophones understood by non-native (German & Gã) participants?
ii. How does ideophonic language (IL) experience affect the interpretation of Cantonese ideophones?

Iconicity in autological structures
i. Is the iconic potential of autological structures perceivable?
ii. Are there cognitive effects of autological iconicity?

Processing of iconic cues in gestures
i. Do iconic gestures aid in disambiguating between potential referents?
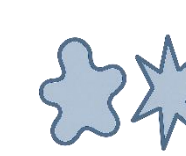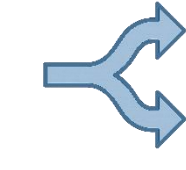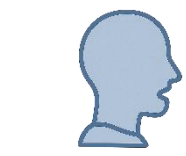
II. Methodology

🖉 Elicitation   ⤭ Forced Choice
👍 Acceptability Rating   🧠 Stroop Task
✿✿ Iconicity Rating   🗣 Picture Naming

III. Expected results and discussion

Project A
- *Expectation*: fewer variation in the elicitation task and lower acceptability ratings for some constructions of Xitsonga/MP speakers
- *Implication*: more syntactic constraints for ideophones in MP due to restricting language influence

Project B
- *Expectation*: higher accuracy scores in Gã speakers compared to German speakers
- *Implication*: language specific, iconic meaning of ideophones is more transparent to speakers of an IL

Project C
- *Expectation:* Autological structures yield significantly higher iconicity ratings than non-iconic words and facilitate the recognition of matching concepts
- *Implication* : autological iconicity has a cognitive function

Project D
- *Expectation*: Generally higher accuracy scores in the deictic condition, but especially for novel words
- *Implication*: no efficient exploitation of iconic cues

IV. Consequences and follow-up questions

Result: rich agenda of methods for the study of 1:many form-meaning mismatches, especially empirical designs for cross-linguistic comparisons.

Based on this background, Cohort 3 will extend the findings of Cohort 1 on the syntax of presentation particles to a cross-linguistic study:

Presentational particles in the languages of the world: Variation and change

- Where do presentational particles come from?
- Are presentational particles *and/or* presentational constructions borrowed in language contact?
- Do presentational particles show the same syntactic behaviour across languages?

References: [1] Winter, B., Woodin, G and Perlman, M. 2023. Defining iconicity for the cognitive sciences. In Olga Fischer, Kimi Akita & Pamela Perniss (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of iconicity in language*. Oxford University Press. [2] Dingemanse, M. (2011). *The meaning and use of ideophones in Siwu* (Doctoral dissertation, Radboud University Nijmegen Nijmegen). [3] Barnes, K. R., Ebert, C., Hörnig, R., & Stender, T., (2022). The at-issue status of ideophones in German: An experimental approach. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics*, 7(1). [4] Dingemanse, M. (2018). Redrawing the margins of language. Lessons from research on ideophones.