

How does the Idiophonic Language background affect the perception of Ideophones? A Cross-Linguistic comparison of German and Ga

While arbitrariness is generally agreed to be a property of human languages (Hockett 1960), iconicity is also exhibited in a varying degree across languages and across different modes. The prevalence and status of ideophones – an open lexical class of marked words that depict sensory imagery (Dingemanse 2019) – varies greatly across languages. Ideophone languages like Ga exhibit a rich inventory of conventionalized ideophones, contrary to non-ideophone languages like German (Barnes et al. 2022). In this talk we present initial ideas for a cross-linguistic investigation of unknown ideophones perceived by speakers of different language backgrounds, namely German and Ga. Specifically, we propose a possible experimental setup to investigate Ga and German speakers' perception of ideophones in a typologically distant language, and discuss resulting predictions and methodological considerations.