

Title: Discourse-semantic network of Czech vowels in onomatopoeia:
Implications for universal size-sound symbolism
Author: Masako Fidler, Brown University

Size-sound symbolism is a topic that has been pursued for decades (Jespersen 1922, Bolinger 1950, Jakobson and Waugh 1979 and others). Biological and phonetic studies of communication also find correlation between size symbolism and sound produced by humans and other species; a vocalizer of higher frequency sounds is perceived as small and non-threatening, and that of lower-frequency sounds as large and threatening (Ohala 1994). There is, however, data that indicates exactly the opposite (Diffloth 1994).

A detailed discourse-cognitive analysis of Czech onomatopoeia might motivate apparent different outcomes in size-frequency association. I argue that the value SMALL is not assigned as absolute labels directly to sound segments of different frequencies; instead, the value is extendable to discourse functions of downgrading and is assigned relative to the size of some other entity, and that this value may “land” on different targets, sometimes resulting in apparent reverse size-sound symbolism. The paper also proposes a modified view of “emergent grammar” from discourse in Hopper 1996: grammar can emerge from sound-meaning association *via discourse*.

Discussions are based on qualitative analysis (using (near-)minimum pairs) of data from the Czech National Corpus and the internet, and more than 400 manually collected tokens.

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