

The Role of Ideophones: Phonological and Morphological Characteristics in Literature

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Abstract : Many Asian languages, such as Korean and Japanese, are well-known for their wide use of sound symbolic words or ideophones. This is a very particular characteristic which enriches its lexicon hugely. Ideophones are a class of sound symbolic words that utilize sound symbolism to express aspects, states, emotions, or conditions that can be experienced through the senses, such as shape, color, smell, action or movement. Ideophones have very particular characteristics in terms of sound symbolism and morphology, which distinguish them from other words. The phonological characteristics of ideophones are vowel ablaut or vowel gradation and consonant mutation. In the case of Korean, there are light vowels and dark vowels. Depending on the type of vowel that is used, the meaning will slightly change. Consonant mutation, also known as consonant ablaut, contributes to the level of intensity, emphasis, and volume of an expression. In addition to these phonological characteristics, there is one main morphological singularity, which is reduplication and it carries the meaning of continuity, repetition, intensity, emphasis, and plurality. All these characteristics play an important role in both linguistics and literature as they enhance the meaning of what is trying to be expressed with incredible semantic detail, expressiveness, and rhythm. The following study will analyze the ideophones used in a single paragraph of a Korean novel, which add incredible yet subtle detail to the meaning of the words, and advance the expressiveness and rhythm of the text. The results from analyzing one paragraph from a novel, after presenting the phonological and morphological characteristics of Korean ideophones, will evidence the important role that ideophones play in literature.

Keywords : ideophones, mimetic words, phonomimes, psychomimes, sound symbolism

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