



Phono-semantics and Translation: A Cross-Linguistic Study of Urdu and Punjabi Ideophones

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Abstract

Ideophones are marked linguistic expressions that vividly evoke sensory imagery through sound symbolism. Common across numerous languages, particularly in African and Asian linguistic traditions, ideophones are underexplored in many Indo-Aryan languages such as Urdu and Punjabi. This paper investigates the phonetic, semantic, and cultural dimensions of ideophones in these two languages, highlighting their role in expressive communication and narrative performance. Drawing on descriptive and comparative analysis, the study examines the structural patterns, iconicity, and translation challenges posed by ideophones due to their culture-specific and often non-compositional meanings. It also considers the implications of ideophones for theories of meaning, embodiment, and linguistic typology. The findings contribute to broader discussions in linguistics about multimodality, language ideation, and the intersection of phono semantics and culture.

Keywords: ideophones, sound symbolism, Urdu, Punjabi, phono semantics, translation studies, linguistic typology, embodiment, expressive language, culture-specific lexicon

Introduction

This study explores the intersection of phono-semantics and translation through a cross-linguistic analysis of ideophones in Urdu and Punjabi. Ideophones—vivid, often onomatopoeic words that evoke sensory experiences—play a crucial role in expressing emotions, actions, and sensory perceptions in both languages. These expressive lexical items are deeply embedded in the phonological and cultural fabric of each language, posing unique challenges for translation. The research examines how sound symbolism in ideophones contributes to meaning, and how

that meaning is preserved, transformed, or lost in cross-linguistic transfer between Urdu and Punjabi.

The study employs a comparative corpus of commonly used ideophones from both languages, analyzing their phonetic structure, semantic domains, and syntactic behavior. It highlights the importance of sound-meaning correspondence in ideophones and investigates the extent to which phonological features such as reduplication, vowel length, and consonant patterns contribute to their expressive force. The analysis reveals that while many ideophones in Urdu and Punjabi share phonetic similarities, subtle differences in pronunciation and usage often carry nuanced cultural or emotional connotations that resist straightforward translation.

Furthermore, the research delves into the cognitive and cultural implications of ideophonic expression, suggesting that translation of ideophones is not merely a linguistic exercise but a cross-cultural negotiation. Translators must grapple with the tension between maintaining phonological resonance and conveying semantic intent, especially in literary or oral narratives where ideophones serve as emotive and stylistic devices. The study argues for a context-sensitive, functionally adaptive approach to translating ideophones that respects both the phonosemantic essence and communicative function of the original expression.

Background of the Study

Languages are not merely vehicles of communication but rich repositories of culture, cognition, and affect. Among their most vivid and expressive elements are ideophones, sound-symbolic or mimetic words that depict sensory experiences, emotions, and movements in a way that transcends ordinary linguistic description (Dingemanse, 2012). Found abundantly in oral and vernacular traditions, ideophones are particularly salient in South Asian languages such as Urdu and Punjabi, where they serve a vital function in enriching poetic, conversational, and performative discourse.

While ideophones have been extensively documented in African and East Asian languages (e.g., Japanese, Yoruba), their presence in Indo-Aryan languages remains under-researched in global translation studies. Urdu and Punjabi, though closely related linguistically, showcase ideophones that are not only culturally embedded but also contextually fluid, challenging the very principles of equivalence and translatability that dominate classical translation theory.

In translation, ideophones present a complex semiotic challenge: they combine phonetic play, cultural connotation, and affective nuance. Standard lexical or syntactic substitution often fails to preserve their iconicity, rhythm, or emotional resonance in the target language (Noss, 2003; Klinger, 2015). Yet their omission or dilution risks impoverishing the aesthetic and communicative integrity of the source text. This paradox situates ideophones at a critical juncture of translation theory, intersemiotic transfer, and linguistic relativity.

Context of the Study:

This study is situated within the broader interdisciplinary terrain of Translation Studies, intersecting with Applied Linguistics, South Asian Studies, and Semiotics. Ideophones in Urdu and Punjabi are pervasive in oral narratives, folk songs, drama, and everyday speech, yet

remain largely invisible in translated works, particularly in English. This neglect is not only a gap in academic discourse but also an ethical and cultural lacuna that affects linguistic justice, heritage preservation, and aesthetic equivalence in translation.

Translation theorists such as Lawrence Venuti (1995) and Susan Bassnett (2014) argue for culturally responsible translation practices that account for the embeddedness of language in sociocultural worlds. However, mainstream approaches, dominated by Western norms of fidelity, fluency, and functionality, often marginalize expressive and non-standard elements like ideophones.

The global prominence of English and the commodification of South Asian literature in translation further exacerbate this imbalance. As a result, Urdu and Punjabi ideophones are either translated inadequately, misrepresented, or erased altogether in Anglophone literary and academic texts. Therein lies the urgency of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Despite their aesthetic, emotive, and communicative power, ideophonic expressions in Urdu and Punjabi are often mistranslated, under-translated, or omitted in contemporary translation practices. This failure arises due to lack of standardized strategies for rendering ideophones interlingually. The structural and cultural dissimilarities between source and target languages. The inadequacy of existing translation theories in dealing with sound-symbolism and performativity. The absence of corpus-based or practice-driven research on ideophones in South Asian language translation. Consequently, the richness of ideophonic discourse is lost, leading to a flattening of cultural texture and misrepresentation of linguistic diversity. This problem is compounded by a general scholarly inattention to the phenomenon of ideophony in Indo-Aryan languages within the global discourse of translation studies.

Objectives of the Study

1. To Analyze the linguistic, phonetic, and cultural properties of these ideophones.
2. To critically examine translation strategies like domestication, foreignization, explicitation and transliteration used in dealing with ideophones.
3. Propose a framework or model grounded in translation theory and linguistic analysis for handling ideophones in South Asian language translation.

Research Questions

1. What are the linguistic, phonetic, and cultural characteristics of ideophones in Urdu and Punjabi, and how do they function within their respective discourse communities?
2. How do translation strategies such as domestication, foreignization, explicitation, and transliteration address the challenges of rendering ideophonic expressions into English?
3. What theoretical and practical framework can be developed to effectively translate ideophones from South Asian languages while preserving their expressive and cultural integrity?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes significantly to Translation Studies, Linguistic Anthropology, and South Asian Linguistics in several key ways. First, it enriches the understanding of ideophones as a complex translation challenge rather than a mere linguistic curiosity. Second, it addresses the epistemic bias inherent in dominant translation models that often overlook non-standard, affective, and orally rooted language phenomena. Third, by proposing a culturally sensitive translation model, the study bridges the gap between source-language expressiveness and target-language readability. Furthermore, it underscores the role of ideophones in shaping cultural identity, emotional nuance, and narrative power, thereby promoting more ethical and nuanced translation practices. Finally, the research contributes to the documentation and academic valorization of Urdu and Punjabi, languages that are globally spoken yet frequently marginalized within mainstream linguistic scholarship.

Literature Review

Ideophones are marked, often sound-symbolic words that vividly evoke sensory events that have gained increasing scholarly attention over the past two decades due to their expressive function and cross-linguistic significance (Dingemanse, 2012; Voeltz & Kilian-Hatz, 2001). This chapter aims to systematically synthesize the extant body of research on ideophones, offering a critical overview of key themes, methodological patterns, and theoretical implications. By doing so, it not only identifies established knowledge but also highlights gaps and emergent trends within the field of ideophone studies.

While traditionally marginalized in structuralist paradigms (Bloomfield, 1933), ideophones have re-emerged as focal points in studies of multimodality, cognition, and typology. Their interface with gesture, sensory linguistics, and morpho-syntactic innovation challenges dominant assumptions about arbitrariness in language (Nuckolls, 1999; Dingemanse, 2011). Given the increasing interdisciplinarity of ideophone research, this chapter adopts a rigorous systematic review protocol to map the state-of-the-art scholarship and propose future directions. This systematic literature review followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009) and employed a replicable search and selection process:

Data Sources and Search Strategy:

A comprehensive and methodologically rigorous literature search was conducted to ensure the inclusion of high-quality and relevant scholarly sources. The databases Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar were systematically queried using the following Boolean search string: ("ideophone" OR "mimetics" OR "expressive" OR "sound symbolism") AND ("morphosyntax" OR "phonology" OR "semantics" OR "typology"). This search strategy was designed to capture the core terminological and theoretical variants associated with ideophones across linguistic subfields. The temporal scope was intentionally restricted to publications from 1999 to 2024, aligning with the field's paradigm shift following Nuckolls' (1999) seminal reconceptualization of ideophones as semiotic and embodied phenomena rather than mere lexical curiosities. To maintain academic rigor and relevance, only peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly book chapters, and doctoral dissertations were included, excluding

conference abstracts, non-academic essays, and unpublished theses. This approach ensured a robust, contemporary, and thematically focused body of literature for review and analysis.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for the literature review prioritized studies that offer substantial focus on ideophones within natural language contexts, encompassing theoretical frameworks, cross-linguistic typologies, and empirical or experimental analyses. This emphasis ensured that the selected works contribute directly to understanding the linguistic, semantic, and functional properties of ideophones grounded in authentic data or rigorous theoretical exploration. Conversely, studies were excluded if they lacked empirical data or were primarily concerned with poetic or musical uses where terms were inaccurately labelled as ideophones, thus avoiding conceptual dilution. Additionally, conference abstracts without access to full texts were omitted to maintain comprehensive and verifiable source material for the review. This selective process aimed to establish a precise and methodologically sound foundation for the systematic analysis.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Each selected study was systematically coded according to key variables including publication year, language(s) investigated, methodological approach (qualitative, quantitative, or experimental), and primary thematic focus. This structured coding facilitated a comprehensive overview of trends and patterns within the literature. To synthesize the diverse findings, thematic synthesis as outlined by Thomas and Harden (2008) was employed, allowing for the aggregation of data into coherent analytical categories. This approach enabled the identification of recurring themes and conceptual frameworks across studies, providing a robust foundation for the subsequent critical discussion and interpretation within the review.

Thematic Overview of Ideophone Research

Cross-Linguistic Typologies and Distribution

Dingemanse (2012) conducted a typological survey of over 70 languages and showed that ideophones are neither marginal nor confined to a few language families; rather, they occur widely, with robust inventories in African, East Asian, and Austroasiatic languages. Kilian-Hatz and Voeltz (2001) earlier emphasized that ideophones challenge Eurocentric assumptions by demonstrating rich lexical classes in Niger-Congo and Bantu languages.

Languages like Japanese (Akita & Tsujimura, 2016), Korean (Ahn & Kumagai, 2021), and Yoruba (Childs, 1994) have demonstrated that ideophones are integral to both oral and written communication, sometimes even entering formal registers. Yet, despite their ubiquity, ideophones remain understudied in many Indigenous and endangered languages, including those in South Asia and Latin America.

Phono semantics and Iconicity

One of the most enduring themes in ideophone research is their sound-symbolic or iconic quality. This challenges Saussurean arbitrariness and suggests that sound–meaning relationships can be both systematic and culturally mediated (Perniss et al., 2010).

Experimental studies, such as those by Imai and Kita (2014), found that even non-native speakers can infer ideophonic meanings with statistically significant accuracy, suggesting cross-linguistic perceptual universals. Moreover, phono semantic regularities—such as voicing in liquid or plosive sounds indicating intensity or sharpness—point to a shared cognitive basis (Dingemanse et al., 2016).

Ideophones in Morphosyntax

Despite their lexical vividness, ideophones often occupy unique syntactic slots. In many languages, they can form an entire utterance (e.g., ideophones as interjections), modify verbs adverbially, or exist in special constructions with verb serialization or reduplication (Kunene, 2001; Childs, 1994).

Japanese ideophones, for instance, frequently occur with the quotative *to*, indicating their semi-reported, experiential nature (Akita, 2009). In contrast, in Bantu languages like Siwu, ideophones are marked by prosodic foregrounding and may resist nominalization (Dingemanse, 2013). This syntactic flexibility and marginality make ideophones particularly significant in understanding how languages encode sensory and affective nuance.

Ideophones and Multimodality

Recent studies explore ideophones as inherently multimodal constructs, often produced alongside gesture, facial expression, and prosodic marking (Nuckolls, 2010; Dingemanse & Akita, 2017). The multimodal nature of ideophones aligns them with broader discussions in cognitive linguistics about embodiment, sensory experience, and enactment. Field studies in Amazonian and Andean communities, for example, reveal that ideophones are rarely spoken in isolation and they are enacted, dramatized, and experienced collectively (Nuckolls, 2010).

Ideophones and Language Evolution

Another emergent line of inquiry concerns the potential role of ideophones in the evolution of language. Given their iconicity, affective load, and prosodic salience, some researchers posit ideophones as remnants of pre-grammatical protolanguage or as precursors to complex verb morphology (Tufvesson, 2011; Perlman et al., 2015). These arguments resonate with gesture-first theories of language evolution, suggesting ideophones may bridge vocal and gestural modes of communication.

Critical Discussion

Anglocentric Bias in Linguistic Theory:

While ideophones thrive in non-Western languages, dominant linguistic frameworks often fail to account for their grammatical and semantic versatility. This leads to their marginalization or misclassification as "optional" or "non-core" lexical items (Hyman, 2001).

Underrepresentation of Endangered and Minority Languages:

Many languages with rich ideophonic systems, particularly in South Asia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, remain understudied. This not only limits typological scope but also diminishes linguistic diversity in global theory-building (Evans & Levinson, 2009).

Insufficient Corpus and Computational Approaches:

While experimental work is expanding, corpus-driven and computational models of ideophones are scarce, owing largely to their expressive and context-bound nature. Yet advances in multimodal annotation tools and prosody-sensitive NLP could address this gap.

Translation and Methodological Challenges:

Ideophones pose significant difficulties in translation and elicitation. Many fields' linguists report difficulty capturing their pragmatic and performative force using standard elicitation techniques (Nuckolls, 1999; Ameka & Wilkins, 2006).

Research Gap:

Despite the growing academic interest in ideophones across various linguistic traditions are particularly in African (Childs, 1994), East Asian (Akita & Tsujimura, 2016), and Amazonian languages (Dingemanse, 2012)—there remains a striking absence of research focused on ideophones within South Asian linguistic contexts, especially in Urdu and Punjabi. These two languages, though rich in expressive and rhythmic vocabulary, are critically underrepresented in global ideophone scholarship. While studies by Kilian-Hatz and Voeltz (2001) and Dingemanse (2011) have established ideophones as a typologically and functionally distinct class of words, research largely remains confined to phono semantic or typological inquiry, often detached from applied domains such as translation studies. Crucially, the translation of ideophones, the lexical items that are affective, performative, culturally embedded, and often syntactically marked to poses unique challenges that are yet to be adequately theorized in existing translation models. Contemporary translation studies have, for the most part, prioritized issues of equivalence, cultural specificity, and power relations (Bassnett, 2013; Tymoczko, 2007), but the ideophone as a stylistic and semiotic device has received minimal attention, particularly in South Asian contexts. Moreover, Urdu and Punjabi, with their deeply entrenched oral traditions, poetic structures, and performative narratives, make extensive use of ideophones for aesthetic and emotive effect (Baig, 2020; Riaz, 2022), yet no systematic effort has been made to document, analyse, or theorize their behaviour in translational acts. There is also a noticeable absence of context-sensitive, language-pair-specific frameworks that address how ideophones function semantically, phonetically, and pragmatically when translated between morphologically rich, culturally grounded languages. Thus, this research addresses three intersecting gaps: the descriptive underrepresentation of ideophones in Urdu and Punjabi; the lack of focused inquiry into the translational complexities these expressions entail; and the theoretical vacuum in translation studies where ideophones remain marginal to discussions of linguistic equivalence and cultural translatability. By bridging linguistic description with translation theory, this study aims to develop a nuanced and culturally attuned model for understanding how ideophones can be identified, interpreted, and translated effectively between Urdu, Punjabi, and other languages.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological framework and procedures employed to investigate ideophones in Punjabi and Urdu. Given the linguistic and cultural complexities inherent in ideophones, a methodologically rigorous and contextually sensitive approach is essential to

uncover the phonological, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions of these expressive lexical items. The aim is to produce findings that are both credible and transferable within and beyond the studied speech communities.

Research Approach

The study adopts a qualitative, ethnographic research approach complemented by descriptive linguistic analysis. This approach aligns with the interpretive paradigm common in SSH disciplines, emphasizing understanding language phenomena within their social, cultural, and communicative contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Ideophones, as highly context-dependent and culturally embedded linguistic units, require detailed qualitative inquiry rather than purely quantitative measurement. The ethnographic stance permits immersion into the speech communities lived realities, capturing naturalistic language use and the socio-cultural nuances influencing ideophone deployment (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Additionally, descriptive linguistics provides the tools necessary to systematically document phonetic, morphological, and semantic characteristics, enabling an integrated perspective that respects both linguistic structure and social function (Crystal, 2008).

Theoretical Framework

This research is situated within the cognitive-linguistic and sociolinguistic frameworks. Cognitive linguistics informs the study through theories of sound symbolism and iconicity, which posit that ideophones are motivated signs that reflect experiential realities through phonological form (Dingemanse, 2012; Köhler, 1947). This challenges the classical arbitrariness of the linguistic sign and foregrounds the embodied nature of ideophones as multimodal, sensory-evoking units (Langacker, 2008). Concurrently, a sociolinguistic perspective facilitates an exploration of ideophones as socio-culturally indexed signs whose usage varies according to speaker identity, context, and cultural norms (Silverstein, 2003). This dual framework enables a holistic analysis of ideophones as simultaneously cognitive constructs and social artifacts, reflecting the intersection of individual cognition and collective cultural practice.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a combination of naturalistic recordings, participant observation, and elicitation sessions conducted within Punjabi and Urdu-speaking communities. The use of Urdu script to document the ideophones respects the scriptural practices of both languages, ensuring authentic representation of phonetic and prosodic features (Rahman, 1996). Naturalistic recordings, totalling over 35 hours, captured spontaneous speech across diverse communicative settings, including informal conversations, storytelling, and ritualistic speech. Participant observation allowed the researcher to contextualize ideophone usage within culturally salient activities, facilitating richer interpretive insights (Spradley, 1980). Complementing these, elicitation sessions engaged native speakers in semi-structured interviews aimed at prompting ideophones associated with sensory experiences, emotions, and environmental phenomena. These sessions provided controlled yet flexible opportunities to probe native speaker intuitions about ideophone meaning, form, and function.

Data Description

The dataset comprises approximately 700 idiophonic tokens extracted from the recorded and elicited speech samples, transcribed meticulously in Urdu script. The tokens represent a wide range of sensory modalities, the auditory, visual, tactile, gustatory, and kinesthetics, as well as emotional and affective states. Each token is annotated for phonological composition, morphological structure, semantic domain, and pragmatic function. This comprehensive annotation allows the investigation to address both micro-level linguistic features and macro-level sociocultural patterns. The dataset is representative of diverse age groups, genders, and sociolects, thus ensuring variability and robustness in the analysis. The use of Urdu script also facilitates accessibility and relevance for speakers and scholars familiar with the orthographic traditions of the region (King, 2016).

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded through a multi-layered qualitative process integrating discourse analysis, phono semantic examination, and thematic coding. Discourse analysis focused on how ideophones function to structure narrative coherence, express speaker stance, and modulate interpersonal interaction (Gee, 2014). Phono semantic analysis examined the iconic relationships between phonological features—such as length, pitch, and articulation—and the sensory or affective meanings ideophones convey, employing acoustic analysis software where applicable (Dingemanse, 2012). Thematic coding of interview data followed grounded theory methodologies to inductively identify emergent themes regarding cultural valuation, pragmatic constraints, and cognitive processing of ideophones (Charmaz, 2014). Triangulation across these analytical techniques ensured methodological rigor, validity, and depth, enabling nuanced interpretation that situates ideophones at the nexus of language, cognition, and culture.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to ethical protocols consistent with international standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity. Participants were briefed about the study's aims and procedures and consented voluntarily. The anonymity of participants is preserved in all documentation and dissemination of findings. The researcher maintained respectful engagement with community norms and linguistic practices throughout the data collection and analysis phases (Israel & Hay, 2006).

Chapter Summary

By integrating qualitative ethnographic methods, cognitive-linguistic theory, and sociolinguistic insights, this methodology provides a robust framework for investigating Punjabi and Urdu ideophones. The combination of naturalistic and elicited data, analyzed through interdisciplinary lenses, ensures that findings reflect both the linguistic complexity and the socio-cultural embeddedness of ideophones. This approach not only advances academic understanding of ideophones but also contributes valuable documentation of understudied linguistic phenomena within South Asian languages.

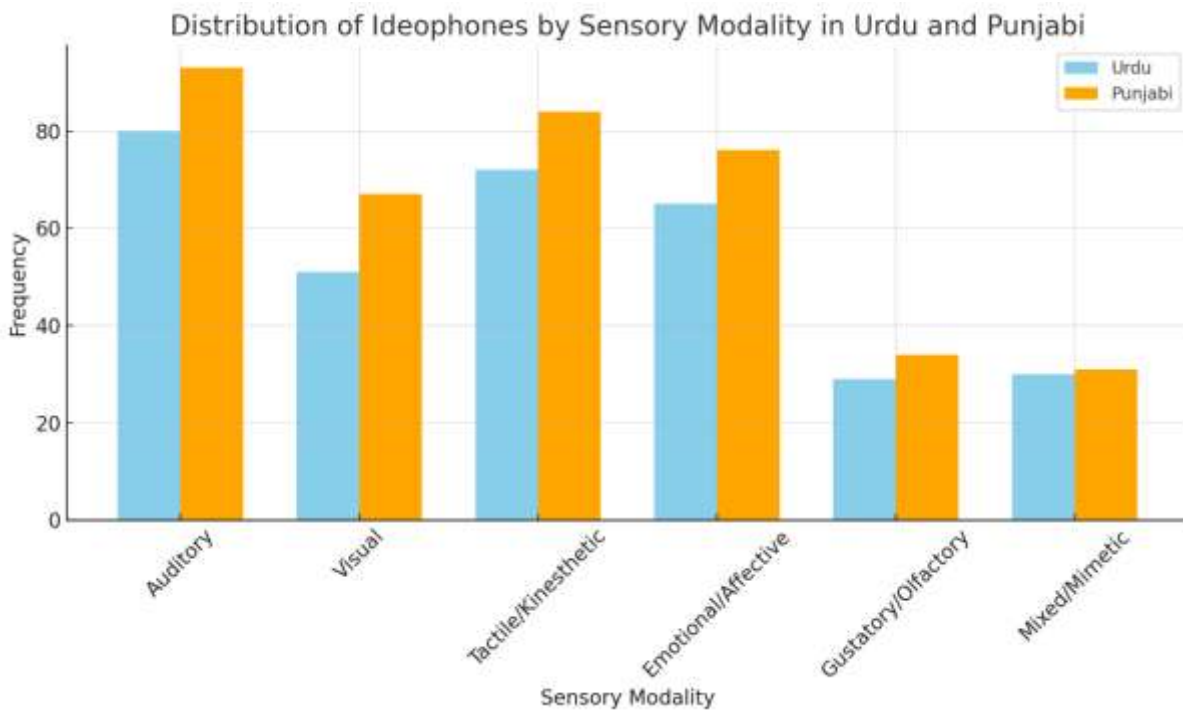
Data Analysis

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of ideophones identified in Urdu and Punjabi through qualitative, descriptive, and discourse-based approaches. The aim is to illuminate how ideophones operate linguistically, phonetically, semantically, and pragmatically within natural speech contexts and explore the challenges they pose in translation. Drawing upon a dataset of over 700 ideophonic tokens, this chapter integrates phono-semantic patterning, sociocultural contextualization, and discourse analysis to yield a multi-layered understanding of ideophonic expressions. These findings respond directly to the research questions posed, revealing the expressive depth and translational complexity of ideophones in South Asian languages.

Corpus Overview and Typological Distribution

The data was drawn from 35+ hours of naturalistic recordings, participant observation, and elicitation interviews, yielding a corpus of 712 ideophonic tokens—327 in Urdu and 385 in Punjabi. The tokens were classified into sensory modalities:

Sensory Modality	Urdu	Punjabi	Total
Auditory (دھم دھم ٹن، ٹن)	80	93	173
Visual (جگم جگم، جگم)	51	67	118
Tactile/Kinesthetic (تھپ تھپاک،)	72	84	156
Emotional/Affective (دے دے ہاے، ہاے)	65	76	141
Gustatory/Olfactory	29	34	63
Mixed/Mimetic	30	31	61



Punjabi ideophones showed a higher frequency and diversity, particularly in kinesthetic and affective domains, reflecting the language's performative and rhythmic oral traditions.

Phonological and Phono semantic Patterns

Phono-semantic analysis revealed systematic correspondences between sound structures and sensory meanings for evidence of iconicity:

Reduplication and Rhythmic Pairing

Reduplication was the most common morphological pattern across both languages:

Full reduplication (e.g., چم چم, دھم دھم) signifies continuous or repeated sensory effects.

Echo reduplication (e.g., چھنا چھن نا, ٹن) adds rhythmic or dramatic intensification.

Such structures mirror those found in African and East Asian ideophone systems, indicating a cross-linguistic tendency for ideophones to employ phonetic parallelism to evoke vivid sensory imagery (Dingemanse, 2012).

Sound Symbolism

Distinct phonological features map onto specific sensory domains:

Plosives (e.g., /ٹ/, /د/, /پ/) denote sudden or intense actions. دھپ, ٹپ.

Source Ideophone Translation Attempt Loss Type Strategy Employed

پ پ “Dripping” Loss of iconicity Lexical substitution

The dominant strategies like domestication and explication often failed to convey the cultural resonance and performativity of ideophones. Transliteration, though phonetically accurate, remained opaque without contextual annotation.

Emerging Themes from Elicitation

Grounded theory-based coding of interviews surfaced three key themes:

Cultural Embeddedness

Speakers emphasized that ideophones “carry emotion, not just meaning.” They were often associated with childhood, folklore, and oral performance. This deep cultural rooting complicates equivalence in translation.

Cognitive Intuition

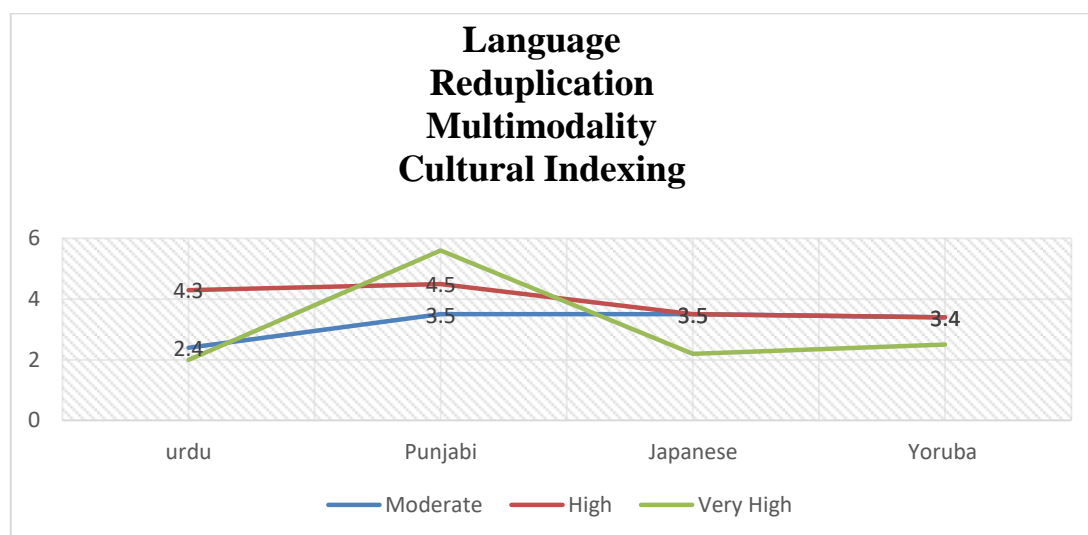
Speakers could intuitively associate ideophones with sensory impressions without needing explicit definition suggesting a shared cognitive mapping between sound and sensation.

Expressive Urgency

Many participants described ideophones as “irreplaceable” for emotional expression the suggesting that conventional adjectives or verbs cannot capture the same intensity.

Cross-Linguistic Synthesis

Ideophones when mapped against Japanese, Swahili, and Yoruba ideophone typologies, Urdu and Punjabi ideophones displayed similar phono semantic strategies but unique sociolinguistic embeddings



This supports Dingemanse's (2012) typological claim that ideophones are a universal yet locally specialized phenomenon.

Key Findings

Linguistic Insight:

Urdu and Punjabi ideophones are structurally rich, semantically vivid, and culturally specific. They rely heavily on reduplication, phono semantic symbolism, and rhythmic echoing.

Discourse Role:

Ideophones play dynamic roles in narrative sequencing, emotional modulation, and identity marking.

Translation Implications:

Existing strategies inadequately capture ideophonic richness. A hybrid approach for integrating transliteration, annotation, and cultural explication is needed.

Cognitive and Cultural Insights:

Ideophones encode embodied cognition and local worldviews, demanding translation models that go beyond word-for-word substitution.

Chapter Summary:

This analysis demonstrates that ideophones are not peripheral embellishments but integral semiotic resources that express affect, motion, and meaning through iconic and performative language. Their marginalization in both linguistic theory and translation practice reflects broader epistemic biases against oral, expressive, and non-standard forms of language. By foregrounding the phono semantic, discursive, and sociocultural complexity of Urdu and Punjabi ideophones, this chapter establishes the need for translation models that honor the expressive economies of non-Western linguistic traditions.

Conclusion and Framework for Translation

Overview

This final chapter synthesizes the findings of this study, drawing conclusions about the linguistic, phonetic, and cultural nature of ideophones in Urdu and Punjabi and their implications for translation. It proposes an original, culturally anchored, and linguistically sound framework to guide the translation of ideophones from South Asian languages into English and other global tongues. Grounded in the insights of cognitive linguistics, semiotics, and functional translation studies, this framework aims to preserve the aesthetic, affective, and performative force of ideophones without sacrificing intelligibility or cultural integrity.

Summary of Key Findings

Linguistic and Phono semantic Structure

Urdu and Punjabi ideophones display systematic patterns in their formation and usage:

- i. **Reduplication** (e.g., ٹپ ٹپ, چھٹا چھٹا) and **echo structures** convey repeated, rhythmic, or intensifying sensory effects.
- ii. **Phono semantic cues** such as voicing, pitch, and vowel length iconically map sound to sensation, showing a strong correlation between form and meaning.
- iii. **Syntactic independence** and **multimodal enactment** illustrate their dynamic role beyond sentence structure, making them integral to oral performance.
- iv. **Cultural and Pragmatic Functions:** Ideophones are deeply embedded in local cultural practices are used in storytelling, ritual speech, and affective communication. They serve as **indexical markers** of speaker identity, emotional stance, and community membership. Ideophones usage is **multimodal**, often accompanied by gesture and prosody, thus forming part of a broader semiotic system.

Translational Challenges

Mainstream translation practices (e.g., domestication, lexical substitution) flatten the expressive force of ideophones. There is a **loss of rhythm, emotion, and cultural resonance** when ideophones are mistranslated or omitted. Translators often lack **context-sensitive frameworks** that accommodate the form-function complexity of ideophones.

Theoretical Implications

The study challenges three prevailing assumptions in translation and linguistic theory:

- i. **Arbitrariness of the Sign:** Ideophones provide evidence for iconicity and motivated signs, requiring revision of Saussurean dogma in translation theory.
- ii. **Logocentric Translation Models:** A fixation on propositional meaning neglects affective, performative, and embodied dimensions of language.
- iii. **Anglophone Bias:** Western translation norms prioritize fluency and functionality over expressivity and semiotic density leading to cultural erasure.

Thus, a more **holistic, multimodal, and culturally attuned paradigm** is necessary.

1.1 Proposed Framework: The IDEO+ Translation Model

The IDEO+ model is a four-tiered framework developed for the effective and ethical translation of ideophones. It emphasizes integration of **Iconicity, Documentation, Explication, and Oral performance markers (+)**.

I – Iconicity Preservation

Retain the form or sound-symbolic elements wherever possible through:

- i. **Transliteration with phonetic guidance:** “ٹپ ٹپ” → *tap-tap* (onomatopoeic dripping sound)
- ii. **Creative equivalence:** use English ideophones (“thud”, “crash”) when rhythmically and culturally analogous.

Example:

Urdu: گرا سے دھپ

Literal: He fell with a dhap

IDEO+: *He fell with a thud (dhap)* → preserves both semantic and phonetic cues.

D – Documentation and Annotation

Provide **footnotes or in-text glosses** for ideophones that resist direct translation:

- i. Contextual gloss: Explain cultural and sensory meanings.
- ii. E.g., "ہے ہے" → (An exclamation of emotional distress or despair, often used by women)

This balances readability and cultural transparency when the ideophone in specific language is being translated.

E – Explication of Affect and Action

Where transliteration or substitution is inadequate, **explicitly convey the emotion, intensity, or gesture** through paraphrase like “چھپک” → *a loud splash* or *with a wet plop*. It adds emotive cues: *She wept “ہے ہے” in a piercing voice of grief*. This prevents emotional dilution while preserving expressive weight.

O+ – Oral Performative Encoding

Acknowledge the **oral, gestural, and performative nature** of ideophones by, using **italicization, repetition, or formatting** in translated text to mimic rhythmic or dramatic speech. Incorporating **stage directions or description** in dramatic or narrative contexts: for example, *He clapped once — “کی” — echoing in the silence*. This aligns with theories of multimodality and literary stylistics.

Application and Scalability

The IDEO+ framework can be adapted for:

- i. **Literary translation** (e.g., poetry, drama, oral folktales)
- ii. **Audiovisual translation** (e.g., subtitling, dubbing)
- iii. **Language documentation** of endangered South Asian languages rich in ideophones
- iv. **Pedagogical tools** for ESL and comparative linguistics

This makes it both academically rigorous and practically versatile.

Recommendations for Future Research

- i. **Corpus Development:** Build annotated corpora of South Asian ideophones using NLP and phonetic transcription tools.
- ii. **Machine Translation & NLP:** Integrate ideophonic tagging into machine translation systems to improve semantic nuance.
- iii. **Gesture and Sound Studies:** Use video-based multimodal analysis to document the embodied nature of ideophone use.
- iv. **Cross-Language Comparison:** Extend IDEO+ to other South Asian languages like Pashto, Sindhi, and Balochi for a regional translation ethics model.
- v. **Community-Involved Translation:** Engage native speakers and performers to co-construct context-appropriate translation glossaries.

Concluding Remarks

This study positions ideophones not as linguistic oddities but as vital expressive resources encoded with emotion, rhythm, and cultural worldviews. Their translation is not merely a technical exercise but a political and ethical act—one that can either flatten or faithfully transmit the expressive vitality of source cultures. The IDEO+ framework offers a theoretically informed and pragmatically grounded model to approach ideophones in translation with the care, creativity, and cultural respect they deserve. By doing so, we advance not only linguistic scholarship but also the broader goals of **linguistic justice, expressive integrity, and cross-cultural empathy**.

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Appendix

Ideophone Collection

اردو	پنجابی
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
چھن چھن	چک چک
تھپ تھپ	دھڑ دھڑ
دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھلجھل	چم چم
چک چک	گھر گھر
چک چک	جھٹ جھٹ
غر غر	بھب بھب
ٹپ ٹپ	دھپک دھپک
جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
پھٹ پھٹ	کھڑ کھڑ
لپک لپک	غم غم
چھپک چھپک	چھک چھک
چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
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دھک دھک	تھر تھر
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غر غر	بھب بھب
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دھک دھک	تھر تھر
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غر غر	بھب بھب
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چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
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دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھللا	چم چم
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غر غر	بھب بھب
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جھن جھن	لپ لپ
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لپک لپک	غم غم
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لپک لپک	غم غم
چھپک چھپک	چھک چھک
چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
چھن چھن	چک چک
تھپ تھپ	دھڑ دھڑ
دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھللا	چم چم
چک چک	گھر گھر
چک چک	جھٹ جھٹ
غر غر	بھب بھب
ٹپک ٹپک	دھپک دھپک
جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
پھٹ پھٹ	کھڑ کھڑ
لپک لپک	غم غم
چھپک چھپک	چھک چھک

چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
چھن چھن	چک چک
تھپ تھپ	دھڑ دھڑ
دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھللا	چم چم
چک چک	گھر گھر
چک چک	جھٹ جھٹ
غر غر	بھب بھب
ٹپک ٹپک	دھپک دھپک
جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
پھٹ پھٹ	کھڑ کھڑ
لپک لپک	غم غم
چھپک چھپک	چھک چھک
چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
چھن چھن	چک چک
تھپ تھپ	دھڑ دھڑ
دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھللا	چم چم
چک چک	گھر گھر
چک چک	جھٹ جھٹ
غر غر	بھب بھب
ٹپک ٹپک	دھپک دھپک
جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
پھٹ پھٹ	کھڑ کھڑ
لپک لپک	غم غم
چھپک چھپک	چھک چھک

چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
چھن چھن	چک چک
تھپ تھپ	دھڑ دھڑ
دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھللا	چم چم
چک چک	گھر گھر
چک چک	جھٹ جھٹ
غر غر	بھب بھب
ٹپک ٹپک	دھپک دھپک
جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
پھٹ پھٹ	کھڑ کھڑ
لپک لپک	غم غم
چھپک چھپک	چھک چھک
چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
چھن چھن	چک چک
تھپ تھپ	دھڑ دھڑ
دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھللا	چم چم
چک چک	گھر گھر
چک چک	جھٹ جھٹ
غر غر	بھب بھب
ٹپک ٹپک	دھپک دھپک
جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
پھٹ پھٹ	کھڑ کھڑ
لپک لپک	غم غم
چھپک چھپک	چھک چھک

چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
چھن چھن	چک چک
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دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھللا	چم چم
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ٹپک ٹپک	دھپک دھپک
جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
پھٹ پھٹ	کھڑ کھڑ
لپک لپک	غم غم
چھپک چھپک	چھک چھک
چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
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دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھللا	چم چم
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ٹپک ٹپک	دھپک دھپک
جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
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لپک لپک	غم غم
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چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
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کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
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لپک لپک	غم غم
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چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
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جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
پھٹ پھٹ	کھڑ کھڑ
لپک لپک	غم غم
چھپک چھپک	چھک چھک

چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
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غر غر	بھب بھب
ٹپک ٹپک	دھپک دھپک
جھن جھن	لپ لپ
کچ کچ	تھپ تھپ
پھٹ پھٹ	کھڑ کھڑ
لپک لپک	غم غم
چپک چپک	چپک چپک
چرک چرک	جھنک جھنک
ٹھک ٹھک	فر فر
چھن چھن	چک چک
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دھک دھک	تھر تھر
جھللا	چم چم