Lexical Typology: Sounds

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SOUNDS

It is well known that animal sounds are applied metaphorically to people

MY QUESTION:

What "human" sounds are conceptualized as those of animals, birds or insects?

A SIMPLE ANSWER:

INARTICULATE

INARTICULATE SOUNDS

◆ I.

NON-SPEECH:

◆ I.1.
UNCONTROLLED

◆ I.2.
CONTROLLED

◆ II.

SPEECH

I.1. NON-SPEECH, UNCONTROLLED

◆ **A.**

PHYSIOLOGICAL

To groan,

to sneeze,

to wheeze,

to snore…

◆ **B.**

SPONTANIOUS REACTIONS

◆ **Negative**

(= «crying»)

◆ **Positive**

(= «laughing»)

I.1.A. PHYSIOLOGICAL

◆ Russ.: *урчать* (stomach rumbles)

= Engl. *growl* (dogs & bears, *wolves)

◆ Czech: *hrochtat* - pigs

→ groan (raising something heavy)

= "to hippopotamus": *hroch* – hippopotamus

NB! Frogs & ducks in Czech and Norwegian

Arm.: *'grunt'* = to wheeze before dying

Kalmyk.: *'grunt'* = to snore [=to purr (about cats)]

◆ **ONOMATOPOEIA**

I.1.B. «CRYING» & «LAUGHING»

◆ **«Crying»**

Rus.: bear, dog, wolf, chicken / mice*;* Arm. *cow*

◆ **«Laughing»**

Rus.: horse*,* goose **[Engl. *honk* – about cars]**

Arm.: cicada → to laugh; sheep → + abrupt

Engl.: *hoot* (owl) → to laugh loudly *that was a real hoot*

◆ **BOTH**

Rus.: *визжать* (pain, happiness)

  NB! Engl.: *to squeal on smb.* – to inform against smb.

Engl.: *howl* (wolf) → to cry / laugh very loudly

    roar (only lion) → a lot of pain / laugh;

cf. Rus. *реветь* (subject: adult or group of people)

I. NON-SPEECH

◆ **I.1. Uncontrolled**

◆ Physiological

◆ Spontaneous reactions

(«crying» & «laughing»)

◆ **I.2. Controlled:**

singing without words

Rus.: мурлыкать

without music

talking to oneself

(cf. Rus. бормотать

Engl. mutter)

I.2. MURMURING & MUTTERING

◆ Norw.: a special verb (*nynne*) 'to sing for himself'
Engl.: *hum* (mosquito, fly, *bee) → the way Winnie-the-Pooh sang (the mouth being closed) + hummingbird
French: *bourdonner* (+ fly, bug);
similarly in German

◆ **+ words only**
Engl.: *cluck* (hen) → 'mutter'
Norw.: *klukke* (hen) → 'to laugh silently, to chuckle'
Germ.: (bear) → 'mutter'

◆ **+ without music** (Rus.: '*to draw the cat by its tail* ')
Arm. 'meow' → bad singing (high-pitched voice)
Engl.: *squeak* (mice, doors, brakes) → a bad violin

II. SPEECH

- ◈ Inarticulate speech

   (babies or adults) – **II.1**
- ◈ Approving / disapproving – **II.2**
- ◈ "Speaking groups" – **II.3**
- ◈ Special meaning **II.4**

II. 1. Inarticulate speech

◆ **Babies** (cf. Rus. *гулить*):
Engl.: *coo* (pigeons) → 'гулить'
◆ **Adults:** incomprehensible confused speech

(1) Slowly / interrupted / disconnectedly
Rus.: *sheep, goat, cow*
　Nor. *breke* (sheep) →　unpleasant masculine voice

(2) Quickly and disconnectedly
　(*jabber* – about women)
Rus.: *стрекотать* '*chirr*' (cicada + sewing machine / typewriter)
Engl.: *yap* → much, quickly, disconnectedly:
　　　they were just yapping away the whole night
Crimean Tatar:
'Knock / acute sound (zurna) / counting frame' → 'jabber'

II.2. Disapproval

◆ **Very weak resistance**:

(1) Rus.: *фыркать~ snort* (dogs, horses), *верещать* (pigs)

Engl.: *grunt* (only with the sound)

(2) Rus.: *шипеть ~ hiss* (being in a fume);

Czech: *syčet* (snake)

Norw.: *frese* (lemming ~mouse; without tail, yellow, angry, does not bite, migrates) →

≈ angry, but cannot do nothing

Arm.: 'whirr' (cat) → mutter, being angry

'to overcome [over-whirr] our melancholy'

II.2. Dog-like reactions

Rus.: *вякать, огрызаться, рычать*

Engl.: *growl & snarl*

I told him we need to leave and he just <u>growled</u> at me

If they <u>snarl</u> at each other they are really fighting

Nor.:   *knurre* (dog, wolf, *bear)

     snerre more aggressively:

if I propose and the interlocutor *knurre,* we'll do it (though he's not willing), but if the interlocutor *snerre,* it's impossible

II.2. Reactions

approval = Rus.: *крякать* (ducks)

Speech reactions:

- We don't know the content, but we know how it was said (and can guess the content)
- Not only the sound is important but also the animal
- → it's not simply ONOMATOPOEIA

II.3. Multiple subject

- **lovers and enemies: Rus.** *ворковать VS. лаяться*

- **mindless women**

Rus.: *щебетать,* Engl.: *tweet* → women's talk and giggling

Norw.: kakle 'cackle' →

loud, meaningless talk or laugh of women

- **crowd**

Rus.: *галдеть, реветь, гудеть*

Engl.: *buzz* (bee, mosquitos) → people discuss ideas

- **collective disapproval**

Engl.: *hiss* шипеть → a big group of people express their indignation – e.g. in the theater or on the stands, cf. Rus.: *шикать*

II.4. Semiotically relevant speech

Rus.: *зудеть* (mosquito), **Hindi:** ('fly') → bother

Rus.: *брехать* 'bark' → tell a lie

Rus.: *каркать (crow),* Arm. 'frog' → put a whammy on

Hindi: *'crow'* → repeat the same things

Hindi: 'horse' → affected pathos (cf. *declaim, perorate*)

Hindi: 'sheep' → to ask plaintively, to cajole

Engl.: *cackle* → take care of

Germ.: 'turkey' → to speak angrily

Engl.: *bark → to bark commands*

+ *you are barking up the wrong tree*

NB! **Rus.:** *рявкать, not * лаять*

Sound quantum

◆ Food quantum: *не съел ни крошки* (a crumb;
cf. not a scarp – 'ни обрывка = ни объедка')

◆ Liquid quantum: *не пролил ни капли* – lit.: didn't spill a drop (cf. a bit)

◆ [emotions = liquids]: 'drops' – *не боялся / не любил ни капли*

◆ *Didn't make a sound* – **which sound?**

Rus.: *Не пикнул* (chicken)

Engl.: *she didn't make a peep* (chicken)

Norw.: *han sa ikke et kvekk* (quack = duck) did not say a word

LINGUISTICALLY IMPORTANT

- sounds can be structured differently (iteratives VS. singulatives)
- different languages cluster sounds («human», «animal» and «inanimate») differently
- languages tend to lexicalize similar "sound situations" or their parameters – with the help of «animal» sounds, or in some other way
- such situations / parameters are relevant for speakers of any languages and cultures ~**universal**

– a new argument for lexical typology