EXPRESSIVES IN DUHUMBI[1]

By Timotheus Adrianus Bodt

Bern University Switzerland/Tezpur University India

This chapter describes expressives found in Duhumbi, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by a mere 600 speakers in a single valley in West Kameng district in the western part of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, close to the border with Tibet and Bhutan. Together with its sister language Khispi and the languages Sartang and Sherdukpen, Duhumbi forms a coherent sub-group within the 'Kho-Bwa cluster' (van Driem 2001: 473), called the Western Kho-Bwa languages (Bodt 2014; Lieberherr and Bodt 2017). For want of space, this chapter will not discuss much of the existing theory on expressives, and neither compare the Duhumbi expressives with expressives in genetically related languages or contact languages, but rather focus on the description of expressives in Duhumbi.

In Duhumbi, expressives have the following characteristics, which are generally found in expressives in other languages as well.

1. Duhumbi expressives are *words*, in that they are conventionalised items with a specific meaning (e.g. Dingemanse, 2012). Moreover, Duhumbi expressives form a separate word class (e.g. Patent 1998).
2. Duhumbi expressives are *marked*, and stand out from other words in Duhumbi, because they have at least a modified reduplicative structure (e.g. Dingemanse 2012, Osada 2008, Patent 1998).
3. Duhumbi expressives are *iconic*: they do not just describe the action, but depict it (e.g. Dingemanse 2012, Patent 1998), as a performance, including sound, movement, smell etc.
4. Duhumbi expressives depend on *perceptual knowledge* deriving from sensory perception (e.g. Dingemanse 2012).

---

[1] Parts of the content of this chapter I first presented as my inaugural PhD defence at Bern University on 29th September 2017.

5. Duhumbi expressives are extremely *specific*, in that their depiction that they invoke can only be applied to certain situations and not to others.

6. Duhumbi expressives often *preserve conservative phonological features* not preserved in   other parts of speech.

7. Duhumbi expressives cannot be modified by any dependant morphemes.

8. Duhumbi expressives are considered a *hallmark of eloquent speech*, but at the same time   their *use is rapidly declining*.

The following sections will discuss all these characteristics, which finally allows for a limitation as to which Duhumbi linguistic forms are considered expressives, and which are not. As will be shown, the Duhumbi word class of expressives, defined as 'a form class with semantic symbolism and distinct morphosyntactic properties' does not differentiate between 'expressives' in its broadest sense and 'ideophones', a subclass in which the symbolism is phonological, but on the other hand excludes 'onomatopoetics', ideophones in which the reference of the symbolism is purely acoustic (Diffloth 1976:263-264 and Emeneau 1980:7).

1. DUHUMBI EXPRESSIVES ARE WORDS, FORMING A SEPARATE WORD CLASS.

The expressives in Duhumbi are words, conventionalised items that carry a specific meaning. They are not reduplicated morphemes with a grammatical function, which also exist in Duhumbi, and neither are they mere nouns or interjections representing sound. Moreover, although they may be based on a combination of lexical words or roots, they are not simply repetitions of lexical words, such as repeated verbs. Most commonly, the basic unit of the reduplicated element has no meaning, with the exception of the 'elaborate expressions'. Unlike other languages (see, e.g. Diffloth 1980: 55-56), Duhumbi expressives are conventionalised: both their form and their meaning appear fixed, and all Duhumbi speakers will be able to visualise the picture depicted by the expressive. However, it is not clear whether this is because all Duhumbi expressives form an integral part of the lexicon and hence have a fixed meaning, or whether the sound iconicity of their individual phonemes and the combination of these phonemes embodies creates the same image among all speakers.

2

In a clause or sentence, Duhumbi expressives are usually found *in between* a noun or noun phrase and its accompanying verb or verb phrase, which may also be a copula. Most expressives do not only modify the noun (as an adjective) or the verb (as an adverb), but modify the clause or sentence in its entirety. There is one sub-type of Duhumbi expressives, namely the 'elaborate expressions' that function most commonly as nouns (see also Patent 1998: 163 on a same observation from Lai).

Although the absolute number of expressives in Duhumbi may be less than in other languages, and also less than the absolute number of, say, lexical nouns or verbs, this may simply be due to the lack of description, and expressives do seem to constitute a considerable word class within the Duhumbi lexicon.

2. DUHUMBI EXPRESSIVES HAVE A REDUPLICATIVE STRUCTURE

The second characteristic of the Duhumbi expressives is that their syllabic structure is fully or modified reduplicated[2]. The expressives can consist of two, three, or four syllables, and can be further divided in several sub-types, based on whether nothing, a single consonant, the vowels, or entire syllables are modified. The reduplicative patterns can be schematically depicted as in (1), (2), (3a) and (3b), (4) and (5a) and (5b), using C for consonant, V for vowel, subscript numbers to indicate their position in the word, bold font for the modified part in the reduplication, square brackets to divide syllables, brackets to indicate optional consonants, and dashes to divide the reduplicated parts.

Bisyllabic:
(1) $[C_1V_1(C_2)] – [C_1V_1(C_2)]$, e.g. *suŋsuŋ* 'pleasant', said of the smell of, for example, rice, or a flower.

Trisyllabic:
(2) $[C_1V_1] – [\mathbf{C_2}V_1] – [\mathbf{C_2}V_1]$, e.g. *perere* 'loudly', said of a continuous loud and often annoying noise like a chainsaw.

Quadrisyllabic:

---

[2] Reduplicated expressive structures, similar to those found in Duhumbi, can also be found in the contact languages Tawang Monpa (own data), Tshangla (own data), the genetically related language Sherdukpen (Jacquesson 2015 and own data), as well as in Boḍo ('twin words' in Bhatt 1968: 35), and in Lepcha (Dattamajumdar 2009). In the grammar of Tibetan, a reduplicated pattern is called *ldab-tshig* 'repeat word'.

(3a) $[C_1a][C_2a(C_3)]$ – $[C_1\mathbf{o}][C_2\mathbf{o}(C_3)]$, e.g. *dapadopo*, depicting either a person's physical handicap (such as missing or malfunctioning limbs), or a garbled manner of speaking (such as a speech deficiency of deaf-mute person or drunk).

(3b) $[C_1a][C_2a(C_3)]$ – $[C_1\mathbf{i}][C_2\mathbf{i}(C_3)]$, e.g. *tsakatsiki*, depicting things that are 'small and miscellaneous'.

(4) $[C_1V(C_2)][C_3V(C_4)]$ – $[\mathbf{C_5}V(C_2)][C_3V(C_4)]$, e.g. *boloɕolo*, which depicts an excess of something, such as, for example, servings of food and drinks offered to guests.

(5a) $[C_1V_1(C_2)][C_3V_2(C_4)]$ – $[\mathbf{C_5V_3(C_6)}][C_3V_2(C_4)]$, e.g. *ɲakatʰeka,* depicting a lingering manner of repeatedly halting and waiting on this side and on that side during movement towards goal.

(5b) $[C_1V_1(C_2)][C_3V_2(C_4)]$ – $[C_1V_1(C_2)][\mathbf{C_5V_3(C_6)}]$, e.g. *kʰorakʰompʰi*, depicting lame and crippled animate beings.

The various sub-types of Duhumbi expressives and their characteristics are discussed below.

(1) $[C_1V_1C_2]$ – $[C_1V_1C_2]$

These expressives simply reduplicate the same syllable without modification. They always depict what are considered as 'positive' or 'neutral' actions, attributes or mannerisms, and never something that is considered as negative, bad or unwanted. They are often relatively easy to define and have a relatively limited applicability, most commonly functioning as adjectives, modifying a noun, and often occurring in copular clauses or sentences. Examples include *doŋdoŋ*, depicting a person or animal with a strong, well-built physique; *tʰomtʰom ~ tʰumtʰum*, depicting a place or space that is completely dark and lacking any visibility; and *tɕʰiptɕʰip* or *ɕipɕip*, depicting, for example, clothes that are folded in a neat way. There are a few examples where there is phonological alternation between a bilabial plosive and a nasal coda consonant, such as *dopdom* depicting, for example, sugarcane that is succulent; or *tseptsen*, depicting the pointedness of, for example, a knife or a pencil: this coda alternation is non-distinct. These expressives are considered highly iconic, and, for a Duhumbi speaker, immediately paint a vivid image: when someone says the sugarcane is *dopdom*, it invokes an image of the

4

sound, smell, taste and structure of a thick stick of sugarcane, full of sweet juice that splashes, seeps and drips out as soon as the outer cover is peeled off with the teeth and the inner fibres are crushed as they are chewed upon.

The previous examples depict an attribute or an action, but some other examples of these expressives refer more to a certain manner, such as *kʰuskʰus* 'up and down', said of, for example, an affirmative nod with the head; and *poŋpoŋ* 'engaged', said of, for example, a lively talk or discussion. The latter expressives have slowly come to describe the entire action as a noun, with *kʰuskʰus* usually referring to 'an affirmative nod with the head' and *poŋpoŋ* to 'a lively talk or discussion'.

Characteristic of this type of expressives is that they often occur in combination with the verb *le {da}* 'to do', and then describe the action, as in *wat tɕʰiptɕʰip le-da* clothes *tɕʰiptɕʰip* do-ADV 'making the clothes folded up neatly' and *war-bak poŋpoŋ le-da dʑu-ɲi* 3PL-PL *poŋpoŋ* do-ADV stay-PRET 'all of them were having an engaged conversation'. Dingemanse (2012: 657) also noted that 'Ideophones are often introduced using quotative markers or "say" or "do" verbs, emphasizing their depictive-performative nature'. It may be thus be surmised that these expressives started out as pure adjectives, and obtain a more adverbial status through their combination with forms of the verb le {da} 'to do.

An example from a Duhumbi *mani tam* 'riddle', which cryptically describes an item of every day use to test the competitor's cleverness, can be found in (1). The expressive *birbir* depicts a flattening movement, like rolling a ball of dough to make flat pancake, or, in this case, the movement of the *jardʑuŋ*, two sticks connected with a hinge, with one stick held in hand, and the other stick slung in sky and smacked on pile of dry finger millet to thresh it. The expressive is derived from the verb *bir {ta}* 'to flatten'.

(1) *Sala birbir, namla birbir abe insena?*

	sa-la	*birbir*	*namtʰuŋ-la*	*birbir*	*abe*	*in-se=na*
	earth-LOC	flattening	sky-LOC	flattening	what	say-COND=CONF

'What is flattening the earth, flattening the sky?'

(2) [C₁V₁] – [**C₂**V₁] – [**C₂**V₁]

Expressives with the trisyllabic syllable shape have a second and third syllable in which the onset consonant is modified. They depict both the attribute of the object of the noun phrase, and the manner of the action of the verb phrase that they modify in a clause or sentence. These expressives always have a durative or continuous implication, and are hence often encountered with verbal forms with the progressive aspect in *-dʑu* 'stay'. Examples include *jiriri* 'rapidly', which can depict the rapid, continuous and progressive movement of the sun across sky at dusk, of the sunlight over a landscape at dusk, or of a walking person or his shadow against the background of a landscape, and *derere ~ dororo*, which depicts a vehemently occurring involatile movement of an object or person, such as the shiver of a person suffering from fever, trembling of fear, or the shaking of an earthquake.

An example of this type of expressives can be found in (2). The expressive *dololo* creates the image of smoke appearing on a plot of land in big, undulating, billowing clouds, indicating inhabitation at the place. The smoke could, for example, be caused by the burning of a wood fire in the house, by the burning of incense, or by the burning and clearing of shifting cultivation land. The expressive *dololo* depicts the entire scene, and is not just an attribute of the smoke itself, nor the way how it appears.

(2) *Sa udi hinkʰo, bukʰuraŋ dololo ɕetdʑudeʔloʔ.*

      sa   *udi*   *hin-kʰo*   *bukʰu=raŋ*   *dololo*   *ɕet-dʑu-deʔ=oloʔ*

      place   good   one-LOC   smoke=EMPH   *dololo*   exit-stay-PRES=then

'On a good plot of land, even the smoke is appearing in big, billowing clouds.'

(3a) [C$_1$a][C$_2$a(C$_3$)] – [C$_1$**o**][C$_2$**o**(C$_3$)]

In this type of expressives, two syllables are reduplicated, with the vowel /a/ in the first two syllables changing to vowel /o/ in the second two. These expressives depict something disorganised, chaotic, messy, and in general negative. Often, a single expressive can have two distinct, but nonetheless somehow semantically related meanings, as examples (3) and (4) show.

(3) *woj ŋak balabolo hawdeʔ*

      woj   *ŋak*   *balabolo*   *haw-deʔ*

6

3SG   speech   *balabolo*   speak-PRES

'(s)he speaks in an insincere manner.'

(4) *tɕʰura balabolo beʔ*

  tɕʰura *balabolo* *beʔ*

  cheese *balabolo* COP1

'The cheese is over-ripe.'

An example from the corpus includes (5). This is from a prediction text by the last practicing *bonpo* 'local religious practitioner', who passed away early 2016. The expressive *dzakadzoko* is placed in between the subject and the predicate of the sentence, modifying both, and creating a lively image of a contagious disease that causes diarrhoea, pus-containing blisters, boils and wounds, sputum-filled cough, running noses, teary eyes, fever and sweating, and moreover, spreading rapidly from person to person, from house to house, and from village to village.

(5) *Rimtɕʰe, rimtɕʰe dzakadzoko pʰettʰeʔloʔ.*

  rimtɕʰe   *rimtɕʰe*   *zakazoko* *pʰet-tʰeʔ=oloʔ*

  contagious.disease contagious.disease *zakazoko* arrive-SUBJ:NPST=then

'The contagious disease, the messy contagious disease would arrive.'

(3b) $[C_1a][C_2a(C_3)] - [C_1\textbf{i}][C_2\textbf{i}(C_3)]$

In this type of expressives, two syllables are reduplicated, with the vowel /a/ in the first two syllables changing to vowel /i/ in the second two. These expressives depict something diminutive, small, irrelevant or useless. An example is *tsapatsipi* 'in shreds, in bits and pieces', derived from the verb *tsap {da}* 'to chop in pieces'. Another example can be found in (6), depicting the beeswax trade that was conducted occasionally, rather than often or constantly.

(6) *Tʰe brukpabakpʰunɲitʰeʔ tsʰoŋ le, rup lahan man, leda, raparipi ose leda manbale hoʔ.*

  tʰe   *brukpa-bak-pʰun-ɲi=tʰeʔ* *tsʰoŋ* *le,* *rup* *lahan* *man,*

  the.other.side Bhutanese-PL-etc.-   trade do money some obtain

          PAT=ADD

le-da,	*raparipi*	*ose*	*le-da,*	*man-ba=le*	*ho?*
do-ADV	*raparipi*	like.that	do-ADV	obtain-NOM=COP2	now

'Trading (the beeswax) to all the various Bhutanese yonder too, getting some money, doing it, occasionally doing like that, (in the distant past the villagers) obtained (money).'

There are a few attestations of expressives with the syllabic shape $[C_1a][C_2a] – [C_1\mathbf{u}][C_2\mathbf{u}]$, for example *tɕʰaratɕʰuru*, depicting, for example, a small, thin line of smoke rising straight up from a chimney or fire. These expressives are rare, often have good cognates in the contact language Dirang Tshangla, do not seem to have a shared semantic connotation, and are sometimes mentioned as alternatives of expressives of shape $[C_1a][C_2a] – [C_1\mathbf{i}][C_2\mathbf{i}]$. Hence, they may be of a borrowed origin. For example, the expressive *satasiti*, which, for example, depicts a thief stealing small and insignificant things from houses, has also been attested to occur as *satasutu*.

The final three types of expressives are what have also been called as 'elaborate expressions' (e.g. Patent 1998: 163 for Lai, Haas 1964 for Thai, Jaisser 1990: 160 and Mortensen 2003 for Hmong, Gerner 2004, 2005 for the Tai-Kadai language Dong and Vittrant 2014 for Burmese and more recently Lieberherr 2017: 138, 269-272 for Bulu Puroik), and are considered typical of East and Southeast Asian languages. Matisoff (1973: 81) described them as a 'compound containing four (usually monosyllabic) elements, of which either the first and third or the second and fourth are identical (A-B-A-C or A-B-C-B) [and that] characteristically convey a rather formal or elegant impression'. These expressives depict an action in its entirety, painting a vivid picture of what happens.

(4) $[C_1V(C_2)][C_3V(C_4)] – [\mathbf{C_5}V(C_2)][C_3V(C_4)]$

In the first type of elaborate expression, only the onset of the first reduplicated syllable is modified. An example is *murgutɕʰurgu*, which depicts a storm, characterised by strong gales of wind, heavy rainfall or hail. Another example can be found in (7), where *tsʰalaŋnalaŋ* depicts the way in which something is dispersed, scattered and spread out over large area due to the action of some agent, such as, for example, when someone trips and lets a basket of grains fall on floor, or, as in this example, the people of Duhum after a raid by the Miji people.

(7) *Lakʰuŋ, biɕtaŋŋoʔ kʰamtɕʰu handa, gaŋpu turda, tsʰalaŋnalaŋ, baŋba tɕʰotbale.*

	lakʰuŋ	*bistaŋ-oʔ*	*kʰamtɕʰu*	*han-da*	*gaŋpu*	*tur-da*	*tsʰalaŋnalaŋ*
	later	tribal-AGT	raid	bring-ADV	all	pursue-ADV	tsʰalaŋnalaŋ

	baŋ-ba	*tɕʰot-ba=le*
	not.be1-NOM	make-NOM=COP2

'Later, the Miji tribal people, bringing a raid, chasing everyone, made (all) disappear in every direction.

(5a) [C₁V₁(C₂)][C₃V₂(C₄)] – [**C₅V₃(C₆)**][C₃V₂(C₄)]

In the second type of elaborate expressions, the first syllable of the reduplicated part is modified in its entirety. An example is *laɕarluŋɕar,* which depicts the act of making extended journeys by crossing mountains and valleys and is derived from the nouns *la* 'mountain pass', *lungpa* 'valley' and the verb *ɕar {da}* 'to cross over, to pass through'. Another example can be found in (8), in which *biŋtsʰupkejtsʰup* depicts the act of nicknaming, and is derived from the noun *biŋ* 'name', and the verbs *kej {da}* 'to place' and *tsʰup {da}* 'to acquire'. In combination with verb *le {da}* 'to do' this depicts the action of giving nicknames.

(8) *Duhumbi Bowra insena, biŋtsʰupkejtsʰup ledeʔbejloʔʔ Biŋ tsʰupkʰennaʔbak le.*

	duhumbi	*bowra*		*in-se=na*	*biŋtsʰupkejtsʰup*
	Duhumbi	cut.bamboo.stalks	say-COND=CONF	biŋtsʰupkejtsʰup

	le-deʔ=beʔ=aj=oloʔ	*biŋ*	*tsʰup-kʰen-aʔ-bak*	*le*
	do-PRES=COP1=ok=then	name	acquire-AGN-GEN-PL	COP2

'*Duhumbi Bowra* means to say: isn't it that so that (people) give nicknames? It is all those acquired names'.

(5b) [C₁V₁(C₂)][C₃V₂(C₄)] – [C₁V₁(C₂)][**C₅V₃(C₆)**]

The final type of Duhumbi expressives are those in which the second syllable of the reduplicated part is modified in its entirety. An example includes the famous nickname of the Duhumbi people, *bowrabowki*, based on the noun *bowra* 'cut bamboo stalk' and referring to the practice of the Duhumbi people to collect bamboo stalks and make various products from it for barter and sale. Another example is *tɕʰeplatɕʰepli*, which

depicts pieces and patches of cloth of different sizes and is derived from the noun *tɕʰepla* 'patch of cloth'.

3. DUHUMBI EXPRESSIVES ARE ICONIC.

As Diffloth (1980: 50) indicated, expressives are iconic, and every pattern that is found in expressive phonology but not in prosaic phonology will be of iconic value. Till now, the iconicity of the Duhumbi expressives has not yet been fully examined, largely because only a small subset of all Duhumbi expressives has been observed and described. Hence, minimal pairs of expressives with different onset and rhyme combinations could not be analysed in detail. Nonetheless, particularly the basic semantic connotation between the quadri-syllabic expressives of the shape $[C_1a][C_2a] - [C_1\mathbf{i}][C_2\mathbf{i}]$ and those of the shape $[C_1a][C_2a] - [C_1\mathbf{o}][C_2\mathbf{o}]$ clearly indicates the acoustic symbolism represented in them. The open vowel /i/ [i] is realised in the front of mouth, is short in length, and does not rely on opening the mouth much. The open vowel /o/ [ɔː], on the other hand is realised from the back of the throat, opens the mouth and is long. This is reflected in their semantic connotations: there are numerous examples that illustrate how they differ between 'small, insignificant' versus 'chaotic, disorganised', such as (1a) and (1b) or (2a) and (2b).

(1a) *zapazipi*, depicting, for example, instant noodles in a packet that are made into small crumbles by hand.

(1b) *zapazopo*, depicting, for example, the chillies in a winnowing tray being of various sizes   and being dried to various degrees so that they cannot easily be pulverised by hand.

(2a) *malakmilik*, depicting, for example, water that is released into the paddy field and mixed with mud, but the resulting mixture is too thick, in that it contains too little water, it   is then said *kʰow malakmilik beʔ* 'the water is *malakmilik*'.

(2b) *malakmolok*, depicting, for example, a snake that was beaten *daradiri* (cf. example (9)):   the uncoordinated, spasmed, wriggling movements of the snake, that does not die, but   can neither raise itself up or move away, is called as *malakmolok*.

Although Diffloth (1994: 107) also identified exceptions, he noted that 'it is often said that if vowel quality is used for size symbolism, [i] will symbolize smallness, and the lower

vowels, especially [a], will symbolize largeness, with degrees in between'. A similar sound symbolism for the vowel /i/ and /a/ ~ /u/ was observed in other languages (e.g. Osada 2008, Patent 1998: 161 and 194-195), but the sound symbolism of the vowel /o/ as described here for Duhumbi has perhaps not been reported yet.

A larger corpus of conscientiously described and defined Duhumbi expressives, both from natural speech and elicitation, will probably reveal the iconicity of phonological distinctions - for example, between voiced and unvoiced onsets, between open and closed syllables, between plosives, nasal and fricative onsets etc. – in more detail. Further comparison with similarly structured expressives from languages such as Tibetan, Lepcha, Boḍo, Tshangla, Tawang Monpa and Sherdukpen, will undoubtedly shed more light on the deeper connection between sound and meaning in the Tibeto-Burman languages of this region.

4. DUHUMBI EXPRESSIVES RELY ON SENSORY PERCEPTION.

Duhumbi expressives do not simply describe a certain action, but they depict it, in its entirety, as a 'package' of sounds, sights, smells, movements, and other features, providing vivid imagery 'colour' or, as Patent (1998) termed it 'flavour'. The additional sensory imagery may be of a visual (related to appearance), audible (related to sound), olfactory (related to smell), gustatory (related to taste), haptic (related to feeling) or social (related to social behaviour) nature. The, often lengthy, descriptions of expressives attest to this, as do the articulation and gestures of the people who use them. Although this is hard to illustrate without video and sound, example (9) gives an impression. Without any fault or mistake committed by her, the junior queen is given a beating *daradiri* by the senior queen and the king. For a Duhumbi audience, this invokes a scene of a merciless, excruciatingly harsh and painful beating, with the queen crunching up to a small size to avoid getting hurt, protecting her head with her arms, with those beating using all their force and strength to hurt her as much as they can. As repetition is a common Duhumbi stylistic tool for emphasis, the strength of the expressive is further augmented by its repetition. The scene invokes immediate sympathy and compassion with the junior queen, and a negative feeling towards those who administer the beating.

(8) *Dapda daradiri daradiri ɕida, kʰuɕaŋ gaŋpu pʰokda, makda, leloŋbe.*

dap-da		*daradiri*	*daradiri*	*ɕi-da*		*kʰuɕaŋ*	*gaŋpu*	*pʰok-da*
repeat-ADV		*daradiri*	*daradiri*	give-ADV		hair	all	pull.out-ADV

mak-da	*le-loŋ=beʔ*
beat-ADV	do-PRF=COP1

'Again, (the king and senior queen) had done it, giving (the junior queen) (a beating) *daradiri*, pulling out all the hair, beating (her).'

A similar scene could never have been achieved with a general adverb such as *jamʦʰen* 'very much'. The right expressive in the right context adds the 'spice' that makes the audience listen to the narrative in admiration and awe, or adds the 'spice' to an argument to convince the audience of one's point. There may also be intricate relations with grammatical systems of evidentiality and interactional devices like reported speech (Dingemanse 2012: 664-666), not only in personal narratives and stories, but also in everyday conversations.

5. DUHUMBI EXPRESSIVES ARE SPECIFIC.

Another characteristic of Duhumbi expressives is that they are extremely specific. Although they can be used to depict several, usually somehow 'related' things, the semantic nuances between various expressives is often very fine. The specificity of the iconicity embodied in the Duhumbi expressives can best be illustrated with examples.

Duhumbi speakers, when asked to define a given expressive in their own language, often resort to providing lengthy depictions of instances when the expressive can be used, using facial expressions, gestures, or even items at hand to depict the scene, and often provide depictions of scenes where not *this* expressive, but *another* expressive, is more suitable, as also noted by Diffloth (1972: 441).

Example (1) explains the process of making *ʦopi*, a porridge of maize flour, when asked to describe the meaning of the expressive *bekabeka*.

(1) When mixing an amount of water in a pile of maize flour with a spoon and the amount of water is still more and the flour has not yet completely dissolved, this is called as *ʦopiʦopi*, i.e. *mejɕiŋ pʰoj-kʰo kʰow huk-da, koj-da, ʦopiʦopi ɕet-ʣu-le* maize flour-LOC

12

water pour-ADV mix-adv *ʦopiʦopi* exit-stay-COP2 'pouring water in maize flour, mixing it, it will be coming out *ʦopiʦopi*'. If continuing to mix till a smooth paste results, this is called as *bakaboko*, i.e. *mejɕiŋ pʰoj-kʰo kʰow huk-da bakaboko koj-da* maize flour-LOC water pour-ADV *bakaboko* mix-ADV 'pouring water in maize flour and mixing it (till) *bakaboko*'. When water has been brought to a rolling boil over a fire, *boga* 'bubbles' appearing and lots of *ɬaŋpa* 'steam' evaporating, this is described as *bololo*, e.g. *khow bololo chow-deʔ* water *bololo* boil-PRES 'the water boils *bololo*'. When the maize paste is then slowly poured and stirred into the boiling water, and the water is evaporating, changing the consistency to a porridge, with bubbles surfacing and splashing open, releasing puffs of hot air, this is described as *bekabeka*, i.e. *ʦopi bekabeka tɕʰow-deʔ ʦopi bekabeka* boil-PRES 'the *ʦopi* is boiling *bekabeka*'. When then the water is almost completely evaporated, with bubbles from the porridge now forming less and less frequent, less steam evaporating, and the porridge may get burnt to the cooking vessel, this is described as *tɕʰaplaptɕʰoplop*, i.e., *ʦopi doŋ-ma-ba-kʰo tɕʰaplaptɕʰoplop le-deʔ ʦopi* cook-finish-NOM-LOC *tɕʰaplaptɕʰoplop* do-PRES 'when finishing cooking, the *ʦopi* does like *tɕʰaplaptɕʰoplop*'.

Duhumbi speakers may also use an expressive as the antonym of another expressive to illustrate its meaning. For example, to explain the meaning of *raŋkoraŋko* in (10), the speaker said that it is the opposite of *tɕʰiptɕʰip*.

(10) *raŋkaroŋko insena, ɕiŋ jaŋnaʔ mej tɕʰiptɕʰip baleba leda, tʰejta tos tɕʰojta tostaleda, …*

raŋkaroŋko	*in-se=na*	*ɕiŋ*	*jaŋ-na ʔ*	*mej*	*tɕʰiptɕʰip*
raŋkaroŋko	say-COND-CONF	wood	even-GEN	bamboo	*tɕʰiptɕʰip*
ba-le-ba	*le-da*	*tʰej-ta*		*tos*	*tɕʰoj-ta*
NEG-do-NOM	do-ADV	the.other.side-ALL		throw	this.side-ALL
tos-ta-le-da					
throw-keep-do-ADV					

'*raŋkaroŋko* means, not keeping fire wood or bamboo sticks neatly arranged, but keeping them thrown to this side and that side'.

Duhumbi has a rich repertoire of expressives that depict the negative behaviour of people, as examples (1) – (8) illustrate. Why there are no expressives depicting the

positive behaviour of people is not known, and may well be of a socio-linguistic and cultural nature.

(1) *ɲakaɲoko*, depicting a person who refuses to get up in the morning and just stays idle the whole day.

(2) *tsʰamatsʰomo*, depicting a person who behaves in a general disorganised manner.

(3) *jakajoko,* depicting a person who feels and moves in a weak and uncontrolled manner because of a serious, dilapidating illness.

(4) *tɕʰaratɕʰoro*, depicting a person who feels and moves around in a weak and uncontrolled manner, stumbling here and there, because of lack of energy or a hangover.

(5) *ɲasaɲoso*, depicting a person who is (acting like a drunk), with loud and incoherent talking, and picking up fights and quarrels

(6) *jakajiki*, depicting a person who is acting in an agitated or fussy manner, usually about what others consider a trivial issue.

(7) *zakaziki*, depicting a person who sits around idly day after day because he does not know what to do and how to speak properly.

(8) *ɲakaɲiki*, depicting a person who gets hurt or insulted very easily, is complaintive in nature, and is never satisfied with anything (a 'softy')[3].

Finally, the specificity of Duhumbi expressives can be illustrated by the fact that, unlike the Duhumbi adjectives or adverbs, Duhumbi expressives usually occur in combination with only a few combinations of nouns and verbs - oftentimes, just a single one (see also Patent, 1998: 157).

6. DUHUMBI EXPRESSIVES CONSERVATIVELY RETAIN PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES.

As Diffloth (1980: 57) already indicated, expressives do not commonly use phonetic material that does not occur in the prosaic part of the lexicon, and as Dingemanse (2012: 657) also wrote, they just use it in a different way. But perhaps due to their relatively low usage frequency, Duhumbi expressives tend to preserve phonological features that are less well preserved in other parts of speech, which makes expressives interesting from a historical comparative perspective. Examples are primarily the rhotic onset clusters /kr-

---

[3] Also used to describe, for example, clothes that are soft in feeling.

14

, khr-, gr-/ and /pr-, phr-, br-/. Examples include *kʰripkʰrip*, depicting a blink or wink of the eye and related to the noun-verb compound *kʰum kʰrip {da}* 'to blink they eye', and *bratabrutu*, depicting something that is done in bits and pieces. However, comparative evidence from contact languages shows there are clear cognates, such as Tawang Monpa *meloŋ kʰrip* 'to blink the eye' and Dirang Tshangla *bratabrutu*, depicting something that is done in bits and pieces. This, and other evidence of cognates of lexemes with these onset clusters in the contact languages, may indicate that these clusters were borrowed together with the lexemes that contain them.

Other examples of the conservative retention of the rare onset clusters in the expressives can be found in examples (1), (2) and (3).

(1) *kʰrapakʰropo*, depicting part of the vegetables in a curry not being properly cooked, whereas most of them are. This occurs often when cooking 'hard' vegetables like potato or radish together with 'soft' vegetables like eggplant, green leaves or beans by putting them in the boiling water at the same time, instead of first boiling the hard vegetables and then adding the soft ones.

(2) *krapakripi*, said of, for example, small pieces of bark, mosses and wood that remain after clearing the big pieces of fire wood out of the (temporary or permanent) storage place, or after the fire wood brought near the fireplace has been burnt.

(3) *grapagrupu*, said of, for example, chips or something else to eat which was kept in a plastic bag and has become crushed into small pieces due to transportation or storage.

7. DUHUMBI EXPRESSIVES ARE AVERSIVE TO MORPHOLOGICAL MODIFICATION.

Unlike other nominal and nominalised verbal parts of speech in Duhumbi, the expressives cannot be modified by dependant morphemes. The expressives lack any of the criteria that identify Duhumbi adverbs and adjectives, such as the native adjective prefix *u-/o-*, the deverbal adjective suffixes *–ba/-pa* NOM or *–kʰen-naʔ* AGN-GEN, the adverbal suffix *–da/-ta* ADV, or loan affixes such as *–bu* and *-mo.* Expressives cannot be modified by the superlative and comparative degree markers: *-shok* COMP and *-thakpa* SUPERL. Unlike any other part of speech, expressives have not been attested to be modified by discourse

15

clitics such as emphatic *=raŋ* EMPH, contrastive focus clitic *=na* CONF, general focus clitic *=ta* FOC or additive focus clitic *=tʰeʔ* ADD. Whether such modification is possible in theory is ambiguous, and elicitation has hitherto not provided a conclusive answer. In common with expressives in most other languages, Duhumbi expressives have not been attested in negative phrases, clauses and sentences (Diffloth 1972: 444 and fn. 4 on 445). For example, they cannot be modified by the negative prefix *ba-* NEG, and neither do they occur in combination with forms of the negative copular verb *baŋ* 'to be not'.

8. DUHUMBI EXPRESSIVES AS RAPIDLY DECLINING HALLMARK OF ELOQUENT SPEECH.

In Duhumbi, the prolific and correct use of expressives is considered the hallmark of an eloquent speaker. Young, non-mother tongue or inexperienced speakers often make mistakes in their use or avoid their use completely. But due to their very specific form and meaning, the expressives are rapidly replaced by other linguistic forms, making them one of the most threatened grammatical features in the language. Hence, there is an urgent need to document and describe expressives in Duhumbi, and indeed in many other languages. This is, however, not an easy task, as they are notoriously difficult to observe through elicitation (Diffloth 1972: 440 and Diffloth 2001: 267, Patent 1998: 158-159) and mostly occur in engaged natural speech and narratives. Moreover, it is very difficult to correctly, shortly and meaningfully define or describe the minute semantic distinctions of expressives in other languages (Diffloth 1972: 441).

REDUPLICATED STRUCTURES IN DUHUMBI THAT ARE NOT EXPRESSIVES

The previous characteristics allow for the exclusion of several Duhumbi linguistic forms that also have a full or modified reduplicative structure.

The characteristic that Duhumbi expressives are words excludes reduplicated Duhumbi morphemes such as *-sarsar* 'about to' and *-tɕʰoktɕʰok* 'ready to'. This characteristic also excludes onomatopoeic interjections such as *haha* 'sound of someone laughing'; *kawkaw* 'sound of a yelping or barking dog'; *hawhaw* 'threatening sound of a barking dog'; and *hrawhraw* 'deep threatening sound of a big barking dog (mastiff/nomad's guard dog)'. Although being reduplicative in structure, onomatopoeic nouns such as *horhor* 'a snore' or *pʰiwpʰiw* ~ *psiwpsiw* ~ *sisi* 'a whistle' are excluded from the expressives, because they belong to a different part of speech and because they do not depict an entire image but

just mimic a certain sound. An interesting example of this is the bird 'green-backed tit', which has two names, one a rendering of the sound it makes in summer, *pʰipʰin*, and the other a rendering of the sound it makes in winter, *tɕitɕi koŋkoŋ*. However, reduplicated forms that depict a scene that is accompanied by a characteristic sound on which the expressive is largely based, such as *ɕowaɕowa*, depicting the current in a fast flowing, swollen river, or the waves on a large expanse of water, are considered as expressives.

The fact that they belong to another word class and are most commonly onomatopoeic in nature also excludes reduplicative nouns of the syllabic shape $[C_1V_1(C_2)] - [C_1V_1(C_2)] - [pa \sim ba \sim ma]$, with the last syllable being one of the allomorphs of the common Duhumbi nominaliser -*pa* NOM. These reduplicative nouns mainly occur as names of insects that represent the characteristic sound that they make, such as *rereba* 'cicada' or *tektekpa* 'grasshopper'.

Expressives in Duhumbi also exclude unmodified repetitions of lexical words in the form of $[C_1V_1][C_2V_2] - [C_1V_1][C_2V_2]$, even when these are pronounced as a single intonation unit, such as *nakanaka* 'various', said of objects; *hokohoko* 'again and again, repetitively', said of actions; and *taʔdataʔda* 'equal', said of the size or height of people or objects. Repetition is a common Duhumbi stylistic tool for emphasis, and these adverbs and adjectives have as lexical sources Written Tibetan adjective *sna-kha* 'of different types, various', the Duhumbi verb *taʔ {da}* 'to be equal', and the Duhumbi adverb *hoʔko* 'now'. These words lack the iconicity and the sensory basis of expressives.

Finally, excluded from the Duhumbi expressives are motherese nouns, such as *tutu* 'vagina', and *nunu* 'milk; breast'. These nouns, used to talk to small infants about food or taboo items, are most commonly reduplications of the original nouns, i.e. *tʰu* 'vagina' and *nu* 'milk; breast', and even when they are not, such as in the case of *koko* 'egg', they still belong to the word class of nouns, and are not iconic in nature to the same degree as the Duhumbi expressives.

Finally, unlike what has been described for other languages as psycho-collocations (Matisoff 1986, and various examples from Southeast Asia can be found in Vittrant 2014), i.e. polymorphemic expressions that make an explicit reference to body parts or organs

as the locus of emotions or psychological states, are not considered expressives in Duhumbi. Structures such as *buktum le {da}* waist-do 'to palpitate' are analysed as noun-verb compounds. They do not have any special morphophonological shape, and there is no overt 'colour' added to the composite meaning, even though this meaning cannot be directly derived from the individual compounds. In addition, most psycho-collocations in Duhumbi, especially those expressing more complex emotions, feelings and mental states, are of a clear borrowed origin. More basic bodily functions and feelings are described with native lexemes, such as intransitive verbs or noun-verb compounds.

As can be seen, the approach taken to Duhumbi expressives here is more limited than other approaches, such as in Dingemanse (2012: 663), where onomatopoeia (i.e. expressives/ideophones describing sound) are considered the first level in an implicational hierarchy. From this same hierarchy, it becomes apparent that the last level, inner feelings and cognitive states, are also not depicted by expressives in Duhumbi, but all other levels, sound (as a depiction, not a description), movement, visual patterns and others sensory perceptions, are all covered by expressives.

Glossary

gloss	description	gloss	description
ADD	additive focus	FOC	focus
ADV	adverbialiser	GEN	genitive
AGN	agent nominaliser	LOC	locative
AGT	agent	NEG	negative
C	consonant	NOM	nominaliser
COMP	comparative degree	PAT	patient
COND	conditional	PL	plural
CONF	contrastive focus	PRES	present
COP1	copula	SUBJ:NPST	non-past subjunctive
COP2	copula	SUPERL	superlative degree
EMPH	emphatic	V	vowel

References

Bhat, D. N. Shankara. 1968. *Boro Vocabulary.* Poona: Deccan College.

Dattamajumdar, Satarupa. 2009. Reduplicated expressives in Lepcha. *The Buckingham Journal   of Language and Linguistics* Vol. 2: 19-26.

Diffloth, Gérard. 1972. Notes on expressive meaning. *Papers from the Eighth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society.* Chicago: Chicago Linguistics Society, pp. 440-447.

Diffloth, Gérard. 1980. Expressive phonology and prosaic phonology in Mon-Khmer. In Theraphan L. Thongkum (ed.). *Studies in Mon-Khmer and Thai Phonology and Phonetics in Honor of E. Henderson:* 49–59. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

Diffloth, Gérard. 1994. i: big, a: small. In: Leanne Hinton, Johanna Nichols and John Ohala (eds.). *Sound Symbolism*: 107-114. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Diffloth, Gérard. 2001. Les expressifs de Surin et où cela conduit. *Le Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 88: 261-269.

Dingemanse, Mark. 2012. Advances in the Cross-Linguistic Study of Ideophones. *Language   and Linguistics Compass* 6/10: 654–672.

van Driem, George L. 2001. *Languages of the Himalayas - An Ethnolinguistic Handbook of the Greater Himalayan Region.* Vol. 2. Leiden: Brill.

Emeneau, Murray B. 1980. *Language and Linguistic Area*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Gerner, Matthias. 2004. Expressives in Kam (Dong): a study of sign typology (part I). *Cahiers   de Linguistique d'Asie Orientale 33(2)*: 159-202.

Gerner, Matthias. 2005. Expressives in Kam (Dong): a study of sign typology (part II). *Cahiers   de Linguistique d'Asie Orientale 34(1)*: 25-67.

Haas, Mary R. 1964. *Thai-English student's dictionary.* Stanford University Press.

Jaisser, Annie. (1990). Delivering an Introduction to Psycho-Collocations with SIAB in White Hmong. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 13: 159-178.

Matisoff, James A. 1986. Hearts and minds in South-East Asian languages and English: an essay in the comparative lexical semantics of psycho-collocation. *Cahiers de Linguistique d'Asie Orientale 15(1)*: 5-57.

Mortensen, David. 2003. *Hmong elaborate expressions are coordinate compounds.* Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Berkeley.

Osada, Toshiki. 2008. Mundari. In: Anderson, Gregory D.S (ed). *The Munda languages*: 99–164. Routledge Language Family Series 3. New York: Routledge.

Patent, Jason D. 1998. A willy-nilly look at Lai ideophones. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* Vol. 21.1: 155-200.

Vittrant, Alice. 2014. Psycho-collocational expressives in Burmese. In: Jerey P. Williams (ed.). *The Aesthetics of Grammar: Sound and Meaning in the Languages of Mainland Southeast Asia.* Cambridge University Press.