

# ICONICITY ATLAS

## Project

An interactive multi-lingual comparative dictionary of iconic  
(imitative, onomatopoeic, sound symbolic) words



*Iconicity Atlas*

## Universal vs. Language Specific: Iconicity across Languages



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Iconicity seems to be an inherent quality of any human language existing on this planet.

However....

Iconic words do not show 100% similarity across languages, and this creates reasonable doubts about the universality of sound symbolic and onomatopoeic words.

**Rus.**

*хрум-хрум (hrum-hrum)*

*гав-гав (gav-gav)*

*шуршатъ (shurshati)*

**Viet.** *giòn, cúì chèo,  
tiếng xào xạt*

**Eng.**

*crunch*

*bow-wow*

*rustle*

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The major factors contributing to the seeming dissimilarity of imitative words are:

- 1) the difference in phonemic inventories and phonotactic rules of the languages;
- 2) the multiple-choice motivation and nomination laws;
- 3) different stages of de-iconization of iconic words.

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## The idea of the project

### THE METHOD OF PHONOSEMANTIC ANALYSIS

(S.V. Voronin , 1982)

#### I. Semantics

II. Special iconic traits (excessive  
expressivity, hyper-variability,  
reduplication, iconic ablaut,  
metathesis etc. )

#### III. Etymology

#### IV. Typology

#### V. Search of nomination motif

#### VI Summa summarum



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## Pilot Study 2015

Flaksman, M., Noland, N. (2015): Iconicity Atlas Project: Approaching typological comparison of word's imitative lexicons. In: Proceedings of the XLIV International Linguistic Conference. University of St. Petersburg, March 10-15, 2015. P. 111-112.

**The questionnaire contained 15 concepts:**

SNORT/SNORE

YAWN

SNEEZE

CHOKER

LICK

WHINE

SPIT

HICCUP

SMACK

COUGH

CHAMP/MUNCH

BURP

LAUGH/GAFFAW

GRUMP

LAUGH/GIGGLE

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## Pilot Study 2015

### Example 1

Concept LICK:

Yoruba dialect – *la*

Spanish – *lamer*

Arabic – “عقي ل” (laaka)

Russian – *лизать* (lizati)

Vietnamese *liếm* (lim)

English – *lick*

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## Pilot Study 2015

### Example 2

Concept SNORE:

*Yoruba – hanrun*

*Spanish – roncar*

*Arabic – شخير (shakhir)*

*Russian – хрпанеть (khrapeti)*

*Mongolian – хурхурах*

*Vietnamese – ngáy*

*English - snore*

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## Web-Page structure

www.iconicity-atlas.com

www.iconicity-atlas.com/concepts/pages/neigh.htm

Начальная страница XF Footlight MT Light | X..

### ICONIC CONCEPTS

BANG	BARK	BEEP	BITE	BLEAT	BLOW	BOOM	BUBBLE	BUZZ	CHEW
CHIRP	CHOKER	CHOP	CLAP	CLASH	CLICK	CLUCK	COCK-A-DOODLE	COO	COUGH
CRACK	CRASH	CREAK	CROACK	CUCKOO	DING	DROP	DRUM	FIE	FLOP
FLUSH	GAGGLE	GNAW	GOBBLE	GROAN	GROWL	GURGLE	HICCUP	HISS	HIT
HOOT	HOWL	HUM	HUSH	JABBER	JERK	KISS	KNOCK	LAUGH	LICK
MEW	MOAN	MDO	MURMUR	NEIGH	OINK	PEEP	POP	PURR	QUACK
RATTLE	RIBBIT	RING	RIP	ROAR	RUB	RUMBLE	RUSTLE	SCRATCH	SCREAM
SHOUT	SHUFFLE	SIGH	SIZZLE	SLAP	SNEEZE	SMIFF	SNORE	SNORT	SPIT
SPLASH	STAMMER	STAMP	SUCK	SWALLOW	TAP	THUMP	THUNDER	TICKLE	TOOT
TREMBLE	VOMIT	VROOM	WEEP	WHEEZE	WHISPER	WHISTLE	WHOOSH	YAWN	YELP

www.iconicity-atlas.com..

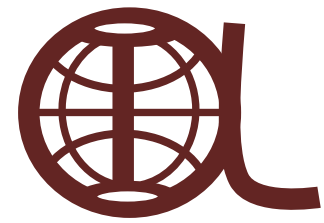
Navigation links in sidebar:  
Iconic Concepts  
Languages  
What is Iconicity  
How to use this Atlas  
Abbreviations  
About us  
Authors' Publications  
Our Interviewees  
Our Consultants  
News  
Contact us  
Useful Links  
Help the Project

Taskbar icons: Calculator, Chrome, File Explorer, Firefox, Paint, VLC, Edge, PDF Reader, Phone, Word, Skype.



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Iconicity Atlas

## Web-Page structure

<http://www.iconicity-atlas.com/concepts/pages/che-w.htm>

ICONIC CONCEPTS

LANGUAGES

WHAT IS ICONICITY

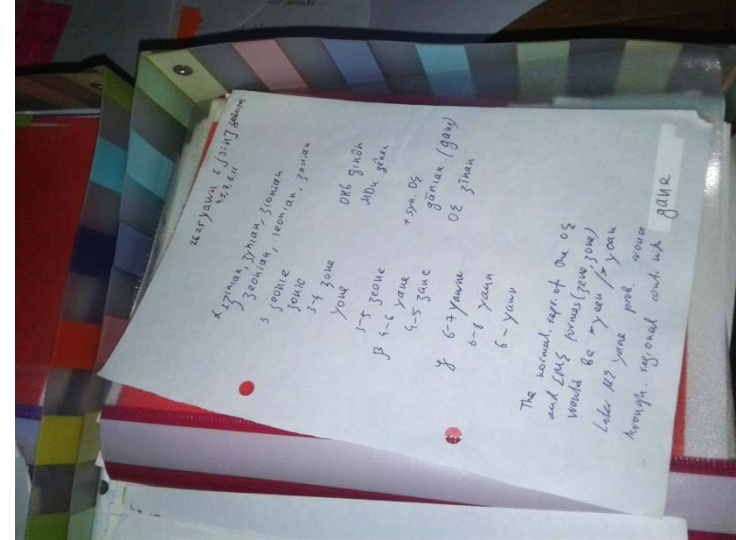
HOW TO USE THIS ATLAS

ABOUT US

NEWS

CONTACT US

HELP THE PROJECT



**Dr Alice Kleeva**

*Web developer and  
designer*

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## Principles of Data Selection and Representation

Swadesh list

Onomatopoeic Words

**Instants** - 6 (TAP)

**Continuants** – 14 (BEEP, HUSH)

**Frequentatives** – 2 (ROAR)

**Instants-Continuants** – 9 (FLOP)

**Frequentatives-Instants-Continuants** – 16 (RUSTLE)

+ animal sounds - 15 (MEW)

Sound Symbolic Words

**Intra-kinesemisms** – 34  
(SNEEZE)

**Extra-kinesemisms** – 4  
(BUBBLE)

(S.V. Voronin , 1982)

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## Iconic Concepts

- |                       |            |            |             |             |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. BANG               | 21. CRACK  | 42. HOWL   | 63. RING    | 84. SUCK    |
| 2. BARK               | 22. CRASH  | 43. HUM    | 64. RIP     | 85. SWALLOW |
| 3. BEEP               | 23. CREAK  | 44. HUSH   | 65. ROAR    | 86. TAP     |
| 4. BITE               | 24. CROACK | 45. JABBER | 66. RUB     | 87. THUMP   |
| 5. BLEAT              | 25. CUCKOO | 46. JERK   | 67. RUMBLE  | 88. THUNDER |
| 6. BLOW               | 26. DING   | 47. KISS   | 68. RUSTLE  | 89. TICKLE  |
| 7. BOOM               | 27. DROP   | 48. KNOCK  | 69. SCRATCH | 90. TOOT    |
| 8. BUBBLE             | 28. DRUM   | 49. LAUGH  | 70. SCREAM  | 91. TREMBLE |
| 9. BUZZ               | 29. FIE    | 50. LICK   | 71. SHOUT   | 92. VOMIT   |
| 10. CHEW              | 30. FLOP   | 51. MEW    | 72. SHUFFLE | 93. VROOM   |
| 11. CHIRP             | 31. FLUSH  | 52. MOAN   | 73. SIGH    | 94. WEEP    |
| 12. CHOKE             | 32. GAGGLE | 53. MOO    | 74. SIZZLE  | 95. WHEEZE  |
| 13. CHOP              | 33. GNAW   | 54. MURMUR | 75. SLAP    | 96. WHISPER |
| 14. CLAP              | 34. GOBBLE | 55. NEIGH  | 76. SNEEZE  | 97. WHISTLE |
| 15. CLASH             | 35. GROAN  | 56. OINK   | 77. SNIFF   | 98. WHOOSH  |
| 16. CLICK             | 36. GROWL  | 57. PEEP   | 78. SNORE   | 99. YAWN    |
| 17. CLUCK             | 37. GURGLE | 58. POP    | 79. SNORT   | 100. YELP   |
| 18. COCK-A-<br>DOODLE | 38. HICCUP | 59. PURL   | 80. SPIT    |             |
| 19. COO               | 39. HISS   | 60. QUACK  | 81. SPLASH  |             |
| 20. COUGH             | 40. HIT    | 61. RATTLE | 82. STAMMER |             |
|                       | 41. HOOT   | 62. RIBBIT | 83. STAMP   |             |

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## Questionnaire

3. BEEP	How do you imitate a short, relatively high-pitched tone produced by a horn, electronic device, or the like as a signal, summons, or warning? How do you name such sound(s)? How do you name the action of producing such sound(s)?	<i>int.</i>	
		<i>n.</i>	
		<i>v.</i>	

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## SAMPLE ENTRY

<http://www.iconicity-atlas.com/concepts/pages/chew.htm>

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## SAMPLE ENTRY


- ✓ part of speech
- ✓ word
- ✓ transcription
- ✓ audio
- ✓ commentary (with dictionary reference and structural model)


iconicity-atlas.com/concepts/pages/chew.htm

Footlight MT Light | X...


### CHEW

Various sounds one produces while chewing, biting upon or grinding smth. (e.g. an apple) [\*]  
Croatian, English, Icelandic, Polish, Russian, Slovak, Spanish


*int* **yak-yak-yak** /jæk/  no dictionary definition  
IPA: C<sup>pal</sup><sub>s/v</sub>VC<sup>vel</sup><sub>pl</sub>os


*int* **yum-yum** /jam/  interjection used to express enjoyment or satisfaction, especially in the taste of food (Dict.com);  
IPA: C<sup>pal</sup><sub>s/v</sub>VC<sup>lab</sup><sub>nas</sub>

#### ICELANDIC

*v.* **tyggja** IPA:  to chew, masticate (orðabók.is)

#### POLISH

*n.* **żucie** IPA:  chewing (PONS)

*n.* **przeżuwanie** IPA:  mastication (PONS)

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## Universal vs. Language Specific

I. The difference in phonemic inventories and phonotactic rules of the languages

- ✓ different inventories
- ✓ allowed sound combinations and syllable structure  
(phonotactics)
- ✓ length of vowels and consonants
- ✓ tone

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## Universal vs. Language Specific

### II. The multiple-choice motivation and nomination laws

*More than one motif (comprising more than one salient feature of one and the same referent) may serve as basis for coining more than one sign naming one and the same referent (Voronin 2005: 73)*

E. *spit*, Sp. *escupir*, Arab. *basq*, Mongol. *nulimah*, Yoruba *tu ito*, Viet. *khạc nhổ*, Russ. *plevat'* [plʲi'vatʲ], *kharcət'* ['xarkətʲ].



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## Concept **CHEW** (4 motifs of nomination)

1. Engl. *om-nom-nom, yum-yum*; Cro. *njam, njiam-njam*; Rus. *ням ням (njam-njam)*; Sp. *ñam ñam*, Viet. *nhai, nhai nhóp nhép, nhấm nháp*
2. Engl. *cham/champ/ chomp, munch*; Sp. *masticar*
3. Engl. *chew/chaw*; Cro. *zvakati*, Slo. *zut',zuvat'*; Rus. *чавкать, жевать*; Pol. *żuć, przeżuwać*, Ice. *Tyggja* (Proto I-E base \*ǵyewh- dorsal palatal voiced \*ǵ, labial w and h<sub>1</sub> neutral laryngeal)
4. Engl. *crunch*, Slovak *chrum, chramst, hrýzt'*, Rus *хрумкать (khrumkati)*

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## III. Different stages of de-iconization of iconic words

*De-iconization* is the gradual loss of iconicity caused by parallel acting of regular sound changes and regular sense development of the word (Flaksman 2015)

### Method of diachronic evaluation of iconic lexicon

(Flaksman 2015)

- establishing the regular sound changes a word has undergone and whether these sound changes were phonosemantically significant;
- establishing semantic shifts the word has undergone and whether it still retains its original (sound-related) meaning;
- establishing the word's degree of phonetic , morphological, and syntactic integration

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## Stages of de-iconization

	SD-1	SD-2	SD-3a	SD-3b	SD-4
integration	-	+	+	+	+
phonosemantically significant regular sound changes	-	-	+	-	+
considerable semantic shifts	-	-	-	+	+

Examples: SD-1 *bzz!* *zzz!* *tlok-tlok*; SD-2 *buzz*, *screech*; SD-3a *laugh*, SD-3b *cliché*; SD-4 *gargoyle*, *butter*

**Only words on the same de-iconization stage  
can be adequately compared!**

Russ. *hohotat'*  
[xəxə'tatʲ] (SD-2)

E. *laugh* [la:f] (SD-3)  
OE *hlehhan* (SD-2).

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## Conclusions

Even though each language is specific, the processes and laws that govern iconic coinage seem universal.



*Iconicity Atlas* shows the underlying universality of iconic coinage despite the difficulties created both on synchronic and diachronic levels of languages' existence.

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## Take part in the project

<http://www.iconicity-atlas.com/menu/help.htm>

## Acknowledgements

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- ✓ Carlos Romero



**THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR ATTENTION!**

