

Sound symbolism

The sounds in words are usually arbitrary:

spider araña mbê damhán alla

First let's get some words for:

big

little

Personal sound symbolism: Henryspeak

chum---said when making a forward motion

kwiko kwiko---when about to tickle Erin

Onomatopoeia---words that imitate (or are perceived to imitate) real sounds

Like other sound symbolic words, there may be similarities across languages: *moo*, *meow*, *quack*

However, there are plenty of differences

What do you think these mean in Zapotec?

ko⁷l ko⁷l ko⁷l

mbë`w

akwisa

In Coatlán-Loxicha Zapotec I've found three kinds of onomatopoeia:

- those that conform to CLZ phonology
- those that use CLZ sounds but violate CLZ **phonotactics**
- those that use sounds that are not found in non-onomatopoetic CLZ words

The last type can be difficult to represent orthographically. In English we **have spelling pronunciations** of *tsk-tsk* and *swish*

Selected onomatopoetic words that conform to CLZ phonology.

Many are for animal sounds. Why?:

CLZ	English gloss	comments
chi'kri`	sound of the cicada (insect)	when said singly it is also the name of the cicada
kàtkàtkàtkárét	sound of a hen after laying an egg or seeing a spirit	
ke ⁷ ke ⁷ ke ⁷ kérét	Same as above	

kíkíríkí/^	sound of the rooster	borrowed from Spanish---why?
ko ⁷ l ko ⁷ l ko ⁷ l ko ⁷ l	sound of the male turkey	
mǔ̀	sound of a cow	
myǎw	sound of a cat	higher pitched than normal
ngôtz tzéy	the call of a particular owl	
pí pí pí chàk chàk chàk	the sound a female turkey makes when looking for her lost young	

Non-animal sounds in this group include several *thud*-like sounds that all end in *j* (i.e. [x]). What do these have in common semantically?

châj	sound of splitting solid wood or logs; chopping meat on a butcher block	for effect vowel can be made whispered and raspy or quickly and repeatedly
mbrôj	sound of shutting a big door	
pi7j	sound of a snap(?)	
po7j	sound of knocking on a thick wooden door; sound of walking in high heels	may be said repeatedly
tâj tâj tâj	sound of bird excrement falling on the ground, sound of dry balls of horse excrement falling on the ground; sound of knocking on a door made of thin wood or of chopping meat on a wooden surface	<i>j</i> in this word is often realized as a voiceless trill, however sometimes it occurs as a plain fricative. See variant with /s/ elsewhere and variant with /ch/ above

What does this next group have in common in sound and meaning?

xár	sound of ripping fabric	
xár xár xár xár	sound of pulling bundles on the floor; sound of scratching nails	
xǔrr xǔrr	sound of a saw cutting wood	

Selected onomatopoeic words that violate CLZ phonotactics

akwisa	sound of a sneeze	vowels are voiceless and the first one is reduced
â â	sound of the pain one suffers when s/he is cut	both vowels are long
brônh brônh brônh	sound of the river when it rains a	

	lot	
ch ⁷ ch ⁷ ch ⁷	sound of the rattlesnake	can continue indefinitely
ngor ⁷ see video and add other	sound of stomach growling	
ính	sound of a mosquito	[ŋ] is long
jajajây	sound made by women who are jilted lovers laughing at their exes	
jjjjj see video and transcribe better	sound of a bird flying	very long
jorr jorr jorr jorr jorr	sound of pouring a soft drink in a glass	
jorr	the sound of filling a jug with water	trill is extra long
jwf	sound of the wind	
jj	sound of a strong wind	super long [x]
káã	sound of a big cicada	Long vowel that starts higher than the true rising tone and slowly rises higher. No glottalization.
kri ⁷ kri ⁷ kri ⁷	sound of a tree breaking and about to fall	a short voiceless [u] is inserted between [k] and [r]; cf. JCH bra! ⁷
kros kros kros	sound of (walking with) wet shoes	[o] is voiceless
kwěnhk kwěnhk kwěnhk	sound of people kicking a dog	rising tone is higher than normal, more like the pitch of the glottal tone
kwí	call of the hawk	if actually imitating it L will whistle, but this is the onomatopoeic word in Zapotec that represents this animal's call.
kwrás kwrás kwrás	sound the female donkey makes when mating	found in SMigC as well as SBL
kwri ⁷ s	sound of a snap	cf. pi ⁷ j pi ⁷ j in Figure 6
mbě`w	sound of burping	besides the predictable final[?], the vowel is creaky; cf. JCH au* ⁷ u ⁷
mbras	sound of a bottle breaking	vowel is whispered and raspy
mbrûnh	sound of a landslide or thunder	cf. JCH braa
m̃m̃m̃m̃m̃m̃m̃	sound of a loaded cargo truck	successive falling tones

ndrính	sound of a coin that falls	
ngarrs	sound of teeth chomping	
nzerính	sound of a bottle breaking or a coin hitting the floor	cf. JCH brin
nzherr ⁷ nzherr ⁷ nzherr ⁷ nzherr ⁷	sound of a mouse eating corn	
nzhi ⁷ s nzhi ⁷ s nzhi ⁷ s nzhi ⁷ s	sound of eating tostadas	
nzhi ⁷ rra nzhi ⁷ rra	sound of a chair squeaking against the floor	cf. JCH dxi: ⁷ dxi: ⁷
pôn h	sound of a thick rifle	cf. JCH bam
pppppppp	sound of the drum	
rrrrr	sound of starting a motorcycle	extra-long trill
sôlstô y	sound of the turtledove	first vowel is long
tak tak tak tak	sound of a chicken picking up corn kernels from the floor	voiceless [a] possibly followed by [x]
ta'k ta`k ta'k ta`k ta'k	sound of someone walking with high heels	voiceless or buckle voice
tas tas tas tas tas tas	sound of a slap in the face	[a] lightly voiced
tân h	sound of someone falling backwards	[a] is breathy
tepraka tepraka tepraka tepraka	sound of a galloping horse	
tinh tinh tinh telân h telân h telân h	sound of striking the bell	
tranh	sound of a bucket that falls in a deep well	
tra7s	sound of shoes walking on a wet surface such as in puddles; sound of horse or mule excrement falling	
trr7	pulse sound of telephone when dialing	<rr> is a long voiceless trill
trrrr	sound of an electric mill	trill is long and voiceless
tun h	sound of the turkey dancing	vowel is long
txxxǎ	sound of something cold or uncooked hitting something hot, like an egg in a pan	long rise and short fall in pitch
xxxxxx	sound of the rainstorm	
xxxǎ xxx^	sound of fireworks wrapped in rope	short falling-rising-falling
xxxx ⁷	sound of paper that's torn	
zhrraja zhrraja	sound of grinding corn on a	<zhr> is a merging of

zhrraja	grindstone	retroflex zh and trill rr, like /yy/ in Atepec
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What is the meaning of the prs template?

pras	sound of bird excrement when it falls	a is voiceless.
prás	sound of a fish flipping its fin in the water; sound of something that falls in the water; sound of splashing or throwing water against a wall	a is voiceless, s is long [s:::]
pras pras pras	sound of overweight people walking; sound of walking in wet clothes	
praas	sound of slipping	softly
prâs prâs	sound of the waves crashing	loud but voiceless
prrs	sound of diarrhea	rr is voiceless

Selected onomatopoeic words that use sounds not phonemic in CLZ

bbll ⁷	sound of a child's fart	short voiceless labio-lingual trill cut off by a glottal stop
bbll̃	sound of a thin person's fart	labio-lingual trill with rising tone
bbll̂	sound of a fat person's fart	labio-lingual trill with falling tone
háyhâ	sound of a sigh	spoken softly with last vowel lengthened
hay hay hay	sound of a sick person; sound of the cocoxtle	y is voiceless; por eso creen que el cocoxtle anuncia enfermedad
hn	sound of a pig walking; sound of rejection, e.g. when someone won't kiss you after you eat onion	strong nasal exhalation
hɨ ⁷	sound of a man laughing at a woman with contempt	[hɨʔ]
jj	sound of a person snoring	ingressive and egressive uvular trill (softer than the mad cat one)
jjj	sound of an angry cat	uvular trill, it can be strictly ingressive or it can alternate

		with egressive
jj ⁷ jj ⁷ jj ⁷ jj ⁷	sound of a cat snoring	ingressive uvular trill followed by [ʔ]
ju ju ju	sound of a grassfire	voiceless [ʊ]
kũ	call of the owl	k followed by a very nasalized u. It's like a u-ish nasal aspiration. Said repeatedly
ppfíí	sound of opening a carbonated beverage	voiceless [i]
pl ⁷	sound of eating soup or pigs drinking water	linguolabial click
pl ⁷ pl ⁷ pl ⁷ pl ⁷	sound of a person's mouth while eating	voiceless l forms affricate with p
ppl ⁷	sound of the horse or mule when it farts, about to excrete	voiceless linguolabial trill ending in a glottal stop
pp	sound of a donkey or horse blowing and vibrating its lips while eating	voiceless bilabial trill
purrs	sound of a tomato being squished	bilabial trill followed by [ɾs], consultant says there's a [u]
s ⁷	sound of shivering	ingressive [s: ⁷]
tz ⁷	sound of the gecko	high toned alveolar click