

Sensational Meanings of Ideophones in Anaang

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Abstract

This study sets out to investigate the sensational meaning of ideophones in Anaang south-southern Nigeria. It identifies the types of ideophones, examines the functions of ideophones in the Anaang language, and further investigates the structure of ideophone in the language. Data for this study were sourced through participant observations, interviews and meta-linguistic conversations. The study is rooted in the metrical theory which is basically concerned with organizing segments into groups of relative prominence, syllables and metrical feet. The study found out that ideophones are linguistic components in which meaning are derived from the sound. The study also revealed that lengthening and reduplication constitute the major structural frame through which the sensational meaning of ideophones is established in Anaang. The study further discovered that ideophones are language specific, culturally bound, contextual, and morphologically conditioned. It is therefore recommended that other researchers should consider investigations on the syntactic aspect of ideophone.

Keywords: Ideophone, sensational, Anaang, linguistic, contextual, Language.

1. Background to the Study

The Anaang people are the second largest ethnic group in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, after the Ibibios. The language is named after the speakers, and is spoken in eight Local Government Areas of Akwa- Ibom State as first language (mother tongue), Abak, Etim Ekpo, Essien Udim, Ika, Ikot Ekpene, Obot Akara, Oruk Annam and Ukanafun. Genetically, Anaang is a member of the Lower Cross Language family, a sub- family of the new Benue-Congo which is traceable to the Niger Congo phylum (Faraclash 1983; Connell 1994 and

Urua 2007).

Every language has its peculiar linguistic component which makes the day-to-day interaction at different levels meaningful, interesting, and culturally insightful. Hence, man and language are inseparable, and language makes every human society viable (Eyakndue & Iwuchukwu 2016), because human society must be interactive, and cannot operate in a vacuum. Ideophone is one of the socio-linguistic nuances that bring the phonological forms conspicuously to feature the regular phoneme of a language to be felt sensorially. In Anaang, ideophones are used for emphatic expressions to sustain interaction in discourse and also used in describing shape, size, colour, form, situations, state of being and attitude. The structure of ideophone is dependent on the word structure of the language. However, the humorous effect of ideophone can occur as a result of the phonological environment. Ideophones cannot be adequately discuss without the names and the culture of the people, because it contains an iconicity center on human activities and cultural beliefs, which involve laws, customs and morals that govern the behaviours and practices of the members of the society (Eyakndue & Ogar 2023). Hence, the contextual and functional use of ideophone to appeal to the five senses of human compels people's attention, buttress a fact and intensify contextual incidents directly connected to human activities within the social space.

2. Conceptual discourse

The process in which meanings are derived from sounds is traditionally known as ideophone. According to Dingemanse (2019), ideophones are “marked words that vividly evoke sensory events”. The notion of ideophone is centered on the distinctive structural make-up relative to other classes of words, particularly phonology and prosody. Ekere (1988) viewed ideophone from emotional point of view, example: “brèk” “sudden shock” which are normally made to obey harmony between sounds and sense. It showcases the oral tradition of a given language and the competency of a native speaker in situational conversation. Udoh (2009) viewed the structural pattern of ideophone in Legbo as having a reduplication feature, indicating that they are morphologically conditioned. Routledge (1996, p.216) asserts that ideophone is generally onomatopoeia and a representation of concept which often consist of reduplicated syllables and not adhering to the phonotactic structure of the language. Akpan (1996) asserts that ideophone is just like poetry, is a spoken picture which relates what is seen by only the mind's eye to the other different senses of man.

Therefore the evaluation of ideophones depends on the speaker's sensitivity, his imagination, his mental perception and his cultural background. Ideophones are lexicalization of expressive function in a word category robustly attested throughout Africa (Childs 2003). The sensational meaning expressed is based on the perception involved. For

instance, the sense of smell is felt and express differently from the sense of colour or the sound of a fall. This is why Ameka (2001), Tufvesson (2007), and Childs (2001) assert that ideophones which convey visual perception capture movement pattern, physical appearance and different qualities of colour, while those expressing the acoustic experience portray differences in intensity, pitch and loudness. In African context, ideophones are used to express surface structures of items, either by intensity of hardness, softness or roughness, and all these characteristics describe the physical structure of an object. According to Majid, Senft and Levinson (2007) identify four modes of touch to include surface touch, bulky touch, touching object, filling a space and touching through a transparent film. Drawing from assertion, ideophones can also be felt through touching, to decipher the quality, size, shape and weight of an object.

Dingemmanse (2012) identify the form meaning mapping of ideophone into three categories namely: imagic iconicity where the sound of the word imitate that of the real world, gestalt iconicity, where the structure of the word portrays event structure and thirdly, relative iconicity where related forms map into related meanings. Ideophone are deeply connected to the real life activities of human existence, both in expressive form, structure and in forms. . It is worthy of note that all the definitions above hold two things in common, that is the notion of “sound and sense”, meaning sound and sense are related in decoding ideophonic expressions. Hence, ideophones are “words whose meanings are derived through sound which appeals to all the senses of man, and can as well create a mental image of the state of being”. Based on these assertions, we establish that ideophones have relationship between form and meaning.

Longtau (2015) examined ideophones as a “phono-semantics phenomenon which encode emotive content of size, sensations etc.” One of the distinctive characteristics of ideophone in Anaang is on the process of lengthening which gives the proportion, intensity and the duration of the action (Enang, T.; Nyarks, L.; Utin, D.; Udoka, T. & Udom, E. 2014). Proverbs and ideophones are aspects of “African verbal art” which are often presented in poetic forms (Michael (2014). Put these together, ideophone is dependent on both phonological and morphological elements subsumed in oral literature in a given language.

Empirically, Essegbey (2013) attest that the semantic and the use of texture ideophones in Nyabo shows monovocalic status. Uchechukwu (2007) argue that Igbo ideophones manifest a unique case of reduplication where a high tone base is followed by a low tone reduplicant usually imposed with a semantic change that contrast the meaning of the high tone base which deviate from the linguistic reduplication patterns. However, this implies that tonal processes are the fundamental suprasegmental components that contribute significantly to meaning (Eyakndue 2024), even in ideophonic expression, and these could only be understood by the deep knowledge of the sound pattern of the language by the native speaker (Eyakndue 2024).

Ideophones are integral components of a language; they are part of language structure, a veritable instrument for communication. This is why Obute, Eyakndue & Otun (2019) assert that language is the main instrument for communication, self-expression and declaration of intention. Narrog (2005) argues that language is a possible set of sentences, and grammar of a language is the rules that distinguish between sentences and those that are not sentences. These rules also govern the structure of ideophones in the language. However, language is the vehicle through which people express their ideas, feelings and thought. Eyakndue et.al (2023), assert that language is the fundamental instrument for any linguistic analysis which can as well include ideophones. Crystal (1992) opines that language is a systematic conventional use of symbols, signs or written symbols in a human society for communication and self-expression. Invariably man and language were formed together hence without language man will be extremely limited in speech and linguistic innovations.

Language has been with man, right from creation, and he uses it to communicate, make judgments in a more complex way than the way other living things communicate. Man uses language to express ideas, and opinions, give information, narrate and describe events that are happening now, have happened in the past, or will happen in the future (Anagbogu, Mbah & Eme 2010). These narrations and the description of events and happenings are not without ideophones, and their different functions. Eyakndue (2024) submit that the role of language in our day-to-day interactions bring to the spotlight the phonological rules that govern the different tonal process in a tone language which are also applicable to ideophones.

3. Theoretical Framework.

This study adopts the Metrical Theory which was propounded by (Lieberman and Prince 1977). Their assertion is that "a theory of stress must take on board the fact that prominence is a relational concept" (Katamba, 1989). For these proponents, emphasis is that the stressed syllable is more salient and prominent than its unstressed counterpart and will enable us to ascertain the pitch pattern in a word and further showcases the most prominent syllable in a lexical item. Also, it will enable us to determine the meter or the rhythm in ideophonic words. Hence the theory was developed to handle stress phenomena in a language. In view of this assertion we see that Metrical Theory is basically concerned with organizing segments into groups of relative prominence, segments are organized into syllables, syllables into metrical feet, feet into phonological words and words into larger units. Although Anaang is not a stressed language, we apply this theory on the basis of pitch which is characterized by tone.

4. Methodology

As a qualitative ethnographic study, the field work for data collection was carried out in three geographical locations which included Abak, Oruk Anam and Etim ekpo. The primary sources of data collection were participant observation, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations. These participants were chosen based on their willingness to participate in the study and to provide all the necessary information on the structure and function of ideophones. The study sampled 50 participants who indicated their willingness to participate in the research. Among these are 25 women and 25 men, between the age range of 40-70, who are well vested in the socio-linguistic codes of Anaañ, ideophones, their implications and the cultural significance in social discourse. The researcher adopted participant observation so that she can have some level of closeness with the participants and observed them through intensive participation with their natural environments within a period of time. This approach enabled the researcher to gain access to the participants' details in a greater dimension, and obtain vital information on the research topic.

Semi-structured interviews gave the participants the freedom of self-expression and open questions which attracted a follow-up to other questions. It enables the participants to explain in details the sensational meaning of ideophone in reality. This approach permits the researcher to probe the motivations of ideophones and participants shared opinions and perspectives on the categories and functions of ideophones in communication.

The study also adopted informal conversations with participants. Questions were asked on what the different forms of ideophone would communicate to different people, and of what relevance is ideophone as an important tool for communication in this era of technology in the modern society. Finally, we inquired about the perception and attitude of the youths towards the entire phonological system in relation to the sounds and forms of ideophones in linguistic studies. An audio recorder and a field note were used in recording and documenting data, which were coded into relevant categorial frames, checked for accuracy, themed and transcribed. The conceptual framework limited the scope of the data to only the sensational meaning of ideophones in Anaañ. The descriptive and analytical approach was adopted in data interpretation, analysis and discussion.

5. Discussion and analysis

Ideophone is generally like onomatopoeia in nature (Routledge 1996) and they are marked words that vividly evoke sensory events and thoughts through sounds. Consider the data below:

Word	Phonetic Form	Gloss
i. /Kpáá/	- [kpá:]	sound of a serious slap
ii./Kpóó/	- [Kpó:]	fall of an earthen pot

iii. /Kpɔɔ/	- [Kpɔ:]	sound of a gunshot
iv. /Kɔi/	- [Kɔi]	sound of a knock on the head
v. /Kwái/	- [kwái]	sound of a hard cough
vi. /kring/	- [kriŋ]	the sound of a bell
vii. /kprɔg/	- [kprɔg]	sound of a nut
viii. /gwàm/	- [gwàm]	sound of a great fall
ix. /wààà/	- [wa:]	sound of pouring of water

The data above reveal that the ideas and meanings are derived from the sounds and the high tone equally evoke the mental sense in these words. The structure is rooted in the language structure; the CV is intensified and lengthened to derive the meaning. However, the mental senses in these data indicate that listeners have clearer contextual meanings of what the sounds evoke.

6. Sensational Categorization of Ideophones in Anaang

6.1 Ideophones that Describe Size

According to Longtau (2015), ideophones are “phono-semantic phenomena which encode emotive contents of size sensation which suggests the intensity of the size of an object. Hence, expressions to describe the sizes and forms of objects are better understood ideophonically as shown below.

Ideophone	Phonetic Form	Gloss
i. akpon /á-fāā-fà-bà/	- [á-fāā-fà-bà]	- describes extreme fatness
ii. akpon /ámóó-nó/	- [amɔ:-nɔ]-	big and swollen in form
iii. akpon /áj á-ká/	- [áɖʒá-ká]	- big, but not heavy
iv. asib /akpii-ghé/	- [akpi:-ré]	- very smallish

The data above give the mental view of the size and form of the object, describing the intensity of the fatness and the smallness, which show the vividness of the sizes of the objects. This process is morphologically conditioned as some of the expressions are derived through reduplication. The sensational meaning reflects in the duration, quantity and intensity of the verbal formation in the words. This agrees with the claim of (Udoh 2009) that the structural pattern of ideophone involves reduplication feature.

6.2 Ideophones that Describe Movement

Every action from man and any living thing could be expressed clearly through the use of ideophones. They are deeply connected to the real-life activities of both humans and non-

human existence.

Ideophone	Phonetic Form	Gloss
i. asaña/η-wun-ηwù-nù/	- [η-wunη-ηwun-nu]	- walking in snake-like form
ii. esaña /mbò-kò- mbò-kò/	- [mbò-kò- mbò-kò]	- walking close to each other
iii. esaña /ntā-rà- ntā-rà/	- [ntā-rà- ntā-rà]	- walking separately
iv. asaña /inyiɔn- inyiɔn/	- [ɪniɔn - ɪniɔn]	- walking sluggishly
iv. esaña /-mkpāā-a-mkpà-kà/	- [mkpā:-mkpà-kà]	- walking in interlocked form
v. asña /ntiañ-ntiañ/	- [ntiaŋ-ntiaŋ]	- walking in bow legged form

6.3 Ideophones that Describe Shapes

The shape of any object and even that of humans is one of the characteristics through which something could be identified, if properly described. And the description that is capable of bringing to the vivid sense of these characteristics is in ideophone. The data below attest to this assertion.

Ideophone	Phonetic Form	Gloss
i. /mbóró- mbóró/	- [mbóró- mbóró]	- roundish in shape
ii. /íkrák- íkrák/	- [íkrák- íkrák]	- lanky in nature
iii. /ñkwuaña-ñkwuaña/	- [ŋk ^w uaŋa-ŋk ^w uaŋa]	- not straight
iv. /ñkɔwɔ-ñkɔwɔ/	- [ŋkɔwɔ-ŋkɔwɔ]	- cuff-like in nature
v. /mkpa-mkpa/	- [mkpa-mkpa]	- skin-like inform
vi. /echañ-echañ/	- [eʃaŋ-eʃaŋ]	- is like a staff
vii. /eruɔɔn-eruɔɔn/	- [eruɔ:n-eruɔ:n]	- tall without form
viii. /ikara-ikara/	- [ikara-ikara]	- looks roundish in form
ix. /mbòghò- mbòghò/	- [mbòkò- mbòkò]	- roundish in form

6.4 Ideophones that Suggest Texture.

In African context, including Anaang, ideophones are used to express surface structures of items, either by intensity of hardness, softness or roughness, and all these characteristics describe the physical structure of an object, as well as humans. This study identifies the following examples in Anaang.

Ideophones	Phonetic Form	Gloss
i. atie /nchiád- nchiád/	- [nʃiád- nʃiád]	- to be dry in nature
ii. atie /mkpù-kò- mkpù-kò/	- [mkpù-kò- mkpù-kò]	- to be rough in form
iii. atie /mbudu- mbudu/	- [mbudu- mbudu]	- to be rotten
iv. atie /ñkwuàña- ñkwuàña/	- [ñk ^w uàŋa- ñk ^w uàŋà]	- to be hard in nature
v. atie /mfuwo- mfuwo/	- [mfuwo- mfuwo]	- to be rough
vi. atie /nsóghó- nsoghó/	- [nsóghó- nsoghó]	- to be in pieces

vii. atie /nnuorɔ- nnuorɔ/	-[nnuorɔ- nnuorɔ]	- to be slippery in nature
viii. atie /ukwak-ukwak/	-[uk ^w ak-uk ^w ak]	- to be like iron.
ix. atie /ngwágwàrà-ngwágwàrà/	-[ng ^w ág ^w àrà ng ^w ág ^w àrà]	-to be sandy in form'
x. atie /àkpo- àkpo/	-[àkpo- àkpo]	- to be like rubber in texture
xi. atie /ñkrañ- ñkrañ/	-[ñkrañ- ñkrañ]	- to be like scale in nature

6.5 Ideophone that Evokes the Sense of Attitude

In Anaan, ideophone could be used to qualify peoples' attitude and behaviours. As argued by (Akpan 1996) ideophone is just like poetry, and is a spoken picture which relates what is seen by only the mind's eye to the other different senses of man. However, someone's way of life and physical appearance are described ideophonically as illustrated in the data set below.

Verb	Ideophone	Phonetic Form	Gloss
i. (átán-útán)-	/wá-wà-wá/	- [wá-wà-wá]	- 'talks anyhow'
ii. (ásàṅà)	-/fùm-fùm-fùm/	- [fùm-fùm-fùm]	- 'walks anyhow'
iii. (ànìṅ)-	/trun-trun-trun/	- [trun-trun-trun]	- 'extremely tall'
vi. (ábád)-	/á-gwě-gwè-bé/	- [á-gwě-gwè-bé]	- 'extremely dirty'
v. (ásāṅà)-	/króng- kròng- króng/	- [krónṅ- krònṅ- krónṅ]	- 'walks arrogantly'
vi. ade	/kán-kàn-kán/	- [kán-kàn-kán]	- walks up and down
vii. anam./nyághá- nyághá- nyághá/		-[ɲaʋa-ɲaʋa- ɲaʋa]	- very uncoordinated

The data above indicate the rhythmic and reduplicative nature of ideophone through the tone levels on each syllable [HLH], or [HHH] which give a vivid description of either the attitude or the behaviour of the person. This affirms the claims of (Dingemanse 2019) that ideophones are words with conventional meanings. However, the possible factors for this process is consonant copying and vowel harmony, hence they are adverbs describing the verb.

6.6 Ideophone that Evokes the Sense of Colour in Anaang

Colour	ideophone	Phonetic Form	Gloss
i. (ánwèn)	/chum/	- [tʃum]	- 'extremely black'
ii. (ádàd)	/túén/	- [twén]	- 'extreme ripeness of fruit'
iii. (afia)	/jám̩m/	- [dʒám̩m]	- 'extremely white'

The above data shows that ideophones are depict, implying that they use a mode of signification that highlight iconic association between aspects of form and meaning. In Anaang, these three colours (black, red and white) are better described through ideophone to emphasize the degree and intensity of the colours.

6.7 Ideophone that Suggest the Meaning of a Fall through

The meaning of sound that come from the fall either from man, tree or other objects can be identified or well expressed through ideophone. The ideophonic form of it presents the vivid mental picture and the degree and the intensity of the fall. In this study, the following examples attest to this phenomenon.

Ideophone Phonetic Form Gloss

- i. /jimm/ – [jimm] – sound of the fall of a big tree
- ii. /jikimm/ – [jikimm] – sound of the fall of a mighty object
- iii. /gwamm/ – [gwamm] – Sound of the fall of a fat person
- iv. /bamm/ – [bamm] – sound of the fall of someone into a muddy place.
- v. /sèmm/ – [sèmm] – Sound of dropping heavy object into river.
- vi. /nyagha/ – [ɲaɣa] – sound of the fall of a dry object
- vii. /kprañ/ – [kpraɲ] – sound of the fall of a light iron

From the examples above, it is observed that the feature of voicing in the initial and the final sounds give the sensational insight of the action which indicate the intensity and the effect of the action. However the meanings of these expressions are characterized by the vowel sound at the medial position. Data further revealed that ideophonic meaning lies in the domain of sensory imagery, evoking rich sensory in colourful ways.

6.8 Ideophones Used to Express State of Being

In Anaang, the psychological and the philosophical expression of meaning in state of being is better captured through ideophonic expressions as shown below.

State of being	Phonetic Form	Gloss
i. /mfòhò-mfòhò/ -	[mfòɔ̀- mfòɔ̀]	- 'like a de␣ated tube or tire'
ii. /nkwà-kà-nkwà-kà/ -	[ɲkwà:ɲkwà-kà]	- 'being very strong'
iii. /mbudu-mbudu/ -	[mbudu-mbudu]	- 'very rotten
v. /nsèré-nsèré/ -	[nsèré-nsèré]	- being unkempt
vii. /ntúéké-ntúéké/ -	[ntwéké-ntwéké]	- very ugly
viii. /ńnyáká-ńnyáká/ -	[ńnyáká-ńnyáká]	- very disorderly
ix. /ntóńó- ntóńó/ -	[ntónó- ntónó]	- not properly fastened

The above expressions present vivid picture of the state of being, which qualify the nouns with emphasis of how they are. They highlight the iconic association between aspects of form and meaning as argued by Dingemanse (2019).

7. Function of Ideophone

7.1 Lengthening

Lengthening is one of the functions that ideophone perform in Anaang. Lengthening stands out ideophonic expression in Anaang. It can occur in an open syllable or closed syllable. Whichever form it occurs, it evokes the sense of duration, proportion and intensity of the action. This entails doubling of the vowel either inter-consonantly or at the end of the open syllable. The following examples can attest to this.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| i./siuud/ – [siu:d] | 'penetrating deep gradually' (like an injection needle) |
| ii./tè-è-eb/ - [tè:b] | 'gradual drops of water' |
| iii./wà-à-à/ - [wà-à:] | 'pouring of water carelessly' |
| iv./só-ó-ó/ - [só-ó:] | 'expression indicating intensive purging' |
| v./nw-á-ám/ -[nw-á:m] | 'this indicate something finishing completely.' |

The illustration above agrees with (Essien 1990) that ideophonic lengthening is that in which the duration, or the extent of a verbal quality is intensified. In this case, the length of the vowel depends on what the speaker considers as the duration of the action (Essien 1990). The illustration equally showed that ideophones are words with conventional meanings. Lengthening is a distinctive characteristic of ideophone in Anaang and other African languages. It is the process of lengthening that provides enabling environment for proportion, intensity and the duration of the action, being expressed.

7.2 Emphatic Functions

The bases of emphasis in speech is to clarify issues and bring to the fore the intensity of an action, event and situation. The phono-semantic phenomenon which is encoded in the emotive content of size, shape, colour, state of being, amongst others, to create sensations are basically for emphasis. This is why most ideophones are in reduplicative forms. For instance, expressions such as: *ɲkwà-kà-nkwà-kà*, *mfòhò-mfòhò*, *fùm-fùm-fùm* etc translating as 'being very strong', 'a de□ated tube' and 'walks anyhow', respectively. Drawing from the data here presented, it is obvious that reduplication is the fundamental component that triggers emphatic function in ideophones. And this paves way for humorous effect. Furthermore, ideophones are deeply rooted in the structure of the language. In Anaang, all forms of ideophones are anchored on the root word CV, and further spread to lengthening phenomenon. They occur in monosyllabic forms such as *kpáá*, *kpóó* and *wáá* etc, and these forms are reduplicated to create vivid sensational meanings.

7.3. Minimal pairs

Ideophones in Anaang attest to minimal

pair. i. /kòì/ - [kòì] - 'fall
on a stem'

/fòì/ - [fòì] - 'sudden opening of a container'

ii. /gwáb/ - [gwáb] - 'snatching something forcefully'

/gwɔk/ - [gwɔk] - 'a fall of a loose object'

iii. /bràk-bràk/ - [bràk-bràk] - 'drops of rain on leaves'

/bròk/ - [bròk] - 'breaking of a dead stem (palm tree)'

iv. /átúéké/ - [átwéké] - 'state of extreme dirtiness'

/árúéké/ - [árúéké] - 'state of extreme ripeness' (fruit)

8. The Metrical Theory

The metrical theory lays emphasis on prominence of a syllable in a structure. However, in ideophonic expressions, the prominent feature is the pitch of the voice during articulation or utterance that gives the meaning in the expressions. For instance a word like [átwéké] 'extreme dirtiness' is represented thus in a metrical tree.

1 (a)

	Z	
S		W
túé		ké

The branching node that is dominated by (S), indicates 'strong syllable' and is more prominent in pitch than its counterpart (W) which indicates 'weak syllable'. This is presented in a metrical grid below.

1(b).

	X	
X		
X	X	
X	X	
túé	ké	

Metrical Grid.

2(a)

	Z			X	
	S		W		
				X	x
				X	x
	S	W	S	X	x
	wá	wà	wá	wá	wà

Metrical Grid.

The table above illustrates the metrical feet which show the prominent feature in each syllable. The first syllable is the strongest (S) syllable with a high tone, followed by the weak (W) syllable bearing a low tone, which cause the high tone on the last syllable to be lower in pitch than the normal high tone. This shows the interrelatedness among strong and weak syllables.

Conclusion

As a descriptive study, the concept of sensational meaning of ideophones in Anaang has been examined. The background of the study covers the genetic classification of Anaang language and the speakers. Literature on ideophone and other related areas were reviewed, and this led to the definitions of ideophones by different scholars as well as the researcher's view. The analysis was descriptive in nature. Based on this, we discovered that ideophone in Anaang belongs to certain grammatical classes like adverb, verb, noun and adjective with vivid sound representation. The study also discovered that lengthening, reduplication and diphthongization are the basic linguistic elements that trigger ideophones basically for emphasis, humour, intensity, and clarity. Besides, ideophones differ from culture to culture and is dominant in oral literature which is based on human social activities. However, the field work for this study reveals that much work has not been done on ideophones in Anaang, hence it is recommended that other researchers should consider it a fertile ground for analysis at any level of linguistics.

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