

LOST IN TRANSLATION: ONOMATOPOEIC WORDS IN OLD ENGLISH GLOSSES

Onomatopoeic (or imitative) words are words with iconic correlation between form and meaning. Iconicity – as opposed to arbitrariness – is a relationship of resemblance (Peirce, 1940). Onomatopoeic words (in some languages also termed ‘ideophones’), thus, are rough ‘copies’ or imitations of sounds they denote (e.g., English *meow*, *bang*, *buzz*, *plop*). But while onomatopoeia enjoys increasing popularity in research on modern languages (see Akita, 2013; Antilla, 1975; Dingemans, 2012; Hinton et al., 1994; Moreno-Cabrera, 2020; Voelz et al., 2001, etc.) it is rarely in focus of historical-comparative research (Carling et al., 2020; Georgescu, 2018; Koleva-Zlateva, 2008; Liberman, 2010). However, diachronic approach towards lexical iconicity yields significant results: exceptions from regular sound changes and otherwise inexplicable phonetic and/or semantic development are successfully explained through onomatopoeia (Campbell, 2013; Durkin, 2009; Hock, 1991; Lühr, 1988; Malkiel, 1990; Sadowski, 2001). It has also been suggested (Flaksman, 2017) that language change causes general *de-iconization* of imitative lexicons, which triggers new onomatopoeic coinage. Research on onomatopoeic words in ancient and reconstructed languages is rare (e.g., see Kozlova, 2013; Anderson, 1998) although evidence for their presence does appear in etymological dictionaries (e.g., Kroonen, 2013; Lehmann, 1986).

The *aim* of this talk is twofold: (1) to provide evidence for the existence of onomatopoeic words in Old English and (2) to discuss the specific problems related to translation of onomatopoeia.

This *comparative* research is based on the *material* of the two reference lists of onomatopoeic words from both Old English and Latin. The lists were comprised by the *method* of continuous sampling from the etymological dictionaries: de Vaan (2008) and Holthausen (1974) respectively. Words marked ‘onomatopoeic’, ‘expressive’, ‘(sound) imitative’ were selected (for example, L. *cuculus* ‘cuckoo’, *murmurare* ‘to rumble’, *crocire* ‘to croak’, *stridere* ‘to make a shrill sound’; OE *dynnan* ‘to make a noise, din’, *fneósun* ‘a sneezing’, *giellan* ‘to yell’). Words which originated as denotations of sounds were also added.

On the second stage of the research, the corpus of Old English glosses from Meritt (1945) was analysed for the presence of regular translation patterns of imitative words (e.g., *balare/bláetan* ‘to bleat’).

The talk will focus on the following *research questions*: (1) whether Latin onomatopoeic words were translated with Old English onomatopoeic words; (2) whether there were any cognate Latin/Old English pairs of words and (3) whether the Latin/Old English onomatopoeic word pairs are typologically similar (on the typology of onomatopoeic words – see Voronin, 2005).

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