ICONIC NATURE OF PROSODY

Olga Valigura, Zoryana Nasikan
Kyiv National Linguistic University
olha.valihura@gmail.com; znasikan@gmail.com

This contribution discusses the iconic nature of prosody within the framework of linguosemiotic and functional-and-pragmatic approaches. It substantiates a theoretical background for the analysis of phonosemantic complexes as a combination of prosodic qualities that together with lexical means can create iconic relations of a meaning (semantics) and a form (prosody) in English emotional speech.
Key words: *iconicity, phonetic means, phonosemantic complex, prosody, sound symbolism.*

Modern linguistic studies show the great scientific potential of iconicity, i.e. a natural resemblance of a meaning and a form in a language. Moreover, some linguists argue that this is not just a marginal peculiarity but a fundamental feature of a language [7; 10; 11] and it undoubtedly contributes to the general theory of a language origin. That is why researches are increasingly turning to in-depth and comprehensive analysis of linguistic iconicity which is regarded to be an integral feature of a language linking its two properties – the linguistic form and the meaning [2; 7: 8; 10; 13].

Reinterpreting the basic Saussurean principle of the arbitrary nature of a linguistic sign, the latter can have both natures: arbitrary and natural. This idea is developed as a result of a great deal of investigations including phonological, phonetic, semiotic and semantic data that support the idea of linguistic iconicity. Iconicity as the natural resemblance of meaning and form is studied mainly within the framework of a semiotic approach according to which any linguistic sign consists of the signifier (sound or form) and the signified (idea or meaning) as well as within a functional-and-pragmatic approach. Nowadays the most developed remain studies of iconicity of phonetic means at a segmental level that focus on such problems as: (a) sound symbolism of phonemes [11] and phonaesthemes [1]; (b) onomatopoeia [5]; (c) iconic words [13]; (d) the role of sound symbolism in language acquisition [3].

However, it should be stated that there appear studies that take into account prosodic iconicity, i.e. iconicity on the suprasegmental level. These investigations consider pitch melody [7; 8], tempo [9], pausation [2]. Being an integral part of phonetic studies, suprasegmentals are worth being included into the objects of phonosemantic investigations due to their considerable iconic potential [4; 6; 12].

The results of our research of English emotional speech prosody show that under certain circumstances phonetic means of suprasegmental level may interact with lexical means which causes associative-symbolic (iconic) relation between two levels. As a result, it creates a motivated language sign, where the signifier denotes the meaning (semantics) and the signified prosodic form (phonetics). Within such understanding of a phonosemantic complex the primary trigger there lies on a lexical level which a phonetic level tries to mime or imitate. This usually happens in emotional speech for intonation performs both attitudinal and meaningful functions that working together potentially make all components of intonation (melody, loudness, tempo, pausation, rhythm and timbre) iconically relevant.

The experimental research proves that iconicity on the suprasegmental level tends to appear in emotional speech due to intonation's essential ability to perform the emotional function. Iconic potential of suprasegmentals is realized through phonosemantic means that are defined as the use of phonetic means that are built upon particular semantic meaning establishing the iconicity principle. The research assumes that phonosemantic means are combined into phonosemantic complexes that include the means of both segmental and suprasegmental levels with their ability to mime the utterance meaning through their formal characteristics. The classification of phonosemantic complexes is based on the semantic criterion and includes the basic phonosemantic complexes as Movement, Physical Dimensions and Emotional State. The obtained experimental data allow us to determine the prosodic peculiarities of the phonosemantic complexes organization in emotional speech. It proves that neutral speech is absolutely poor on phonosemantic complexes, which underlines the fact that these complexes is a privilege of emotional speech.

So, we may conclude that prosodic iconicity is based on the notion of a prosodic iconic (phonosemantic) complex which is a group of prosodic features that have natural resemblance with the meaning of an utterance where they are realized. As a matter of fact, a prosodic iconic complex as a linguistic unit consists of two sides: a signifier (prosodic realization) and a signified (semantics). The results of the experimental phonetic study outline the prospects for further study of the iconic nature of prosody by involving spectral analysis in the research methods and establishing new patterns of iconic connection of the meaning and form.

References

1. Bergen, B.K. (2004). The Psychological Reality of Phonaesthemes. *Language.* 80(2). 290–311.

2. Ephratt, M. (2018). Iconic silence: A semiotic paradox or a semiotic paragon? Semiotica, 2018 (221), 239–259.

3. Imai, M., & Kita, S. (2014). The sound symbolism bootstrapping hypothesis for language acquisition and language evolution. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London: Biological Sciences, 369* (1651), 1–13.

4. Kalyta, A. (1998). Fonosemantyka u zahalnij systemi fonosemantychnoho znannia [Phonosemantics in general system of phonosemantic realm] *Research bulletin of Volodymyr Hnatyuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University*, 1 (8), 130–135.

5. Laing, C. E. (2014). A phonological analysis of onomatopoeia in early word production. *First Language, 34*, 387–405.

6. Nasikan, Z. (2019). Phonosemantics: Ongoing Issues and Modern Perspectives. Science and Education a New Dimension. Philology, VII (56), Issue: 190, 36–39.

7. Nygaard, L. C., Herold, D. S., & Namy, L. L. (2009). The semantics of prosody: acoustic and perceptual evidence of prosodic correlates to word meaning. *Cognitive Science, 33*(1), 127–146.

8. Perlman, M., Clark, N., & Falck, M. J. (2015). Iconic prosody in story reading. *Cognitive Science, 39*(6), 1348–1368.

9. Perlman, M., Benitez, N. J. (2010). Talking fast: The use of speech rate as iconic gesture. In F. Perrill, V. Tobin, M. Turner (Eds.), *Meaning, form, and body.* Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 245–262.

10. Perniss, P., Thompson, R., & Vigliocco, G. (2010). Iconicity as a general property of language: evidence from spoken and signed languages. *Frontiers in psychology*, 1 (227), 1–15.

11. Schmidtke, D., Conrad, M., & Jacobs, A. M. (2014). Phonological iconicity. *Frontiers in psychology, 5*, 80–84.

12. Valigura, O. Fonosemantychnyi potentsial intonatsii [Phonosemantic potential of intonation]. *Proceedings of the International scientific conference: "Ukraine and the po0-i976tworld: dialogue of languages and cultures"*, 11-13 April 2018. K.: KNLU: Publishing centre, 2018, 51–53.

13. Winter, B., Perlman, M., Perry, L., & Lupyan, G. (2017). Which words are most iconic? Iconicity in English sensory words. *Interaction Studies,* 18, 433–454.