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Ideophonic patterns in Kiranti languages and beyond

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Abstract: This article looks at descriptions of ideophones in Kiranti (Sino-Tibetan, Eastern Nepal) languages. It will do so by first providing a description of the ideophones of Thulung, for which four distinct ideophone types are identified, on the basis of a ten-hour narrative corpus. Next, the results of this analysis will be compared to descriptions of ideophonic lexemes in sources on other Kiranti languages. In order to place these topics within an areal perspective, descriptions of the same phenomena in Nepali, the contact language for the linguistic area in question, will also be looked at. The goal of the article is to present data on the ideophonic patterns found in the Kiranti linguistic area and to consider the question of borrowing for ideophones in the Himalayas.

Key words: Ideophones, Thulung, Kiranti, Nepali, areal linguistics

1 Introduction

The Kiranti languages¹ form a sub-group within Sino-Tibetan of approximately 30 languages spoken in Eastern Nepal (see map in Figure 1). They are largely oral, apart from Limbu, although for more and more languages, orthographic systems based on Devanagari are being adopted.

¹ The term Kiranti is generally used by linguists to encompass the Rai languages and Limbu (Michailovsky 2017: 646), whereas anthropologists tend to focus on the Rai as a distinct ethnic subgroup (Schlemmer 2019).

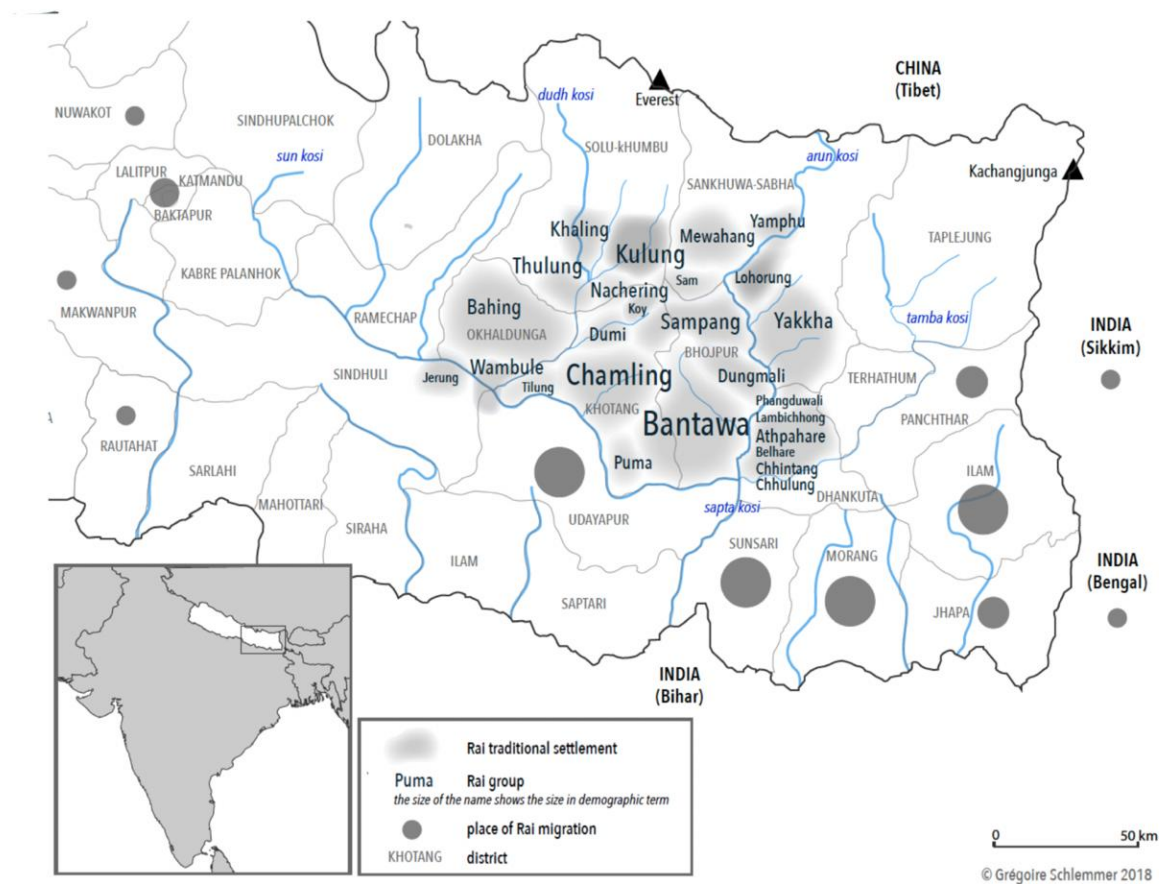


Figure 1: Map of the Kiranti area, from Schlemmer (2019)

The languages are characterized by a number of shared features: ergative case-marking, in some of the languages involving a person-based split; the coding of elevational deixis across several grammatical domains; polypersonal indexation, with two arguments indexed on transitive verbs; a rich set of verbal derivational material for the expression of associated motion, *Aktionsart* and valency changes, showing different degrees of grammaticalization from serial verb constructions based on the category and language. For more on the shared features of the Kiranti languages, see Michailovsky (2017). The languages – contrary to what is initially apparent if one surveys grammatical descriptions – also have ideophonic lexemes that can be categorized according to morphophonological templates. (1) illustrates one such ideophone, *kilili*, with an example from Khaling:

- (1) *tsettθ-hem kilili bhrθs-tenu*
 child-PL **high.pitched.sound** call-3PL>3SG.PST
 ‘The children called with a high-pitched sound.’ (Lahaussais 2017, ex. 5)

The term ‘expressive’ is favored for the South Asian linguistic area, as made clear by the titles of two recent collections (Williams 2021a; Choksi and Badenoch 2021) – according to the editors of one of the volumes, it “more adequately conveys the aesthetic and affective aspects of meaning that have been, in our estimation, crucial to their diffusion throughout the South Asian linguistics Area” (Choksi and Badenoch 2021: 4) – but alternative terms are also found in Kiranti descriptions, such as ‘paralexeme’, ‘phonestheme’, and ‘onomatopoeion’. However, I consider the term ‘ideophone’ a useful means of relating the Thulung and Kiranti data to the wider typological literature (Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001a; Akita and Pardeshi 2019).²

The aim of this article is threefold: (i) to contribute a description of ideophones in Thulung; (ii) to compare the results of the analysis to what is found in descriptions of ideophone-like lexemes in other Kiranti languages and in the contact language Nepali; (iii) to consider what the data thus compiled can tell us about the spread of ideophones in the linguistic area. I will do so by presenting data from my long-term documentation of Thulung, by exploring available descriptions of related and nearby languages, and by grounding my results in research on ideophones and on language contact. The novelty of the approach adopted here is (1) presenting Thulung lexemes which have never before been considered as forming a class, and (2) comparing the morphophonological patterns of ideophones across languages of the Kiranti subgroup (and the contact language) despite their heterogeneous descriptions.

The structure of the article is in line with the goals presented above: Section 2 presents the four subtypes of ideophones found in Thulung. In Section 3, I examine data from other Kiranti languages, which are identified as sharing qualities found to characterize ideophones. In Section 4, I compare the patterns described for ideophonic lexemes in Nepali and those in Kiranti languages, evidence which points to the areal nature of the patterns identified. Section 5 discusses the identified patterns with respect to the question of movement out of the ideophone class (and possibly also into the class), and the areality of the patterns, before concluding in Section 6.

2 Thulung language and data

² For some authors, ‘expressives’ is considered a superordinate category, as is the case for Abbi (2021: 13), who states “the term ‘expressives’ as used in this paper is inclusive of ideophones, onomatopoeics, mimics, imitatives and sound symbolic forms.”

2.1 Language information and data sources

Thulung is one of the approximately 30 Kiranti languages in Eastern Nepal, spoken by several thousand speakers. The data presented here comes from my transcribed corpus of ten hours of narrative audio material collected from eleven speakers,³ supplemented by material from the 1975 sketch grammar by Allen. Not having carried out elicitation on ideophones in Thulung, I base this description exclusively on narrative corpus materials. In this sense, it presents significant methodological differences from work on ideophones in neighboring Khaling (Lahaussais 2017), where much of the material was collected through elicitation.

2.2 Word classes

The ideophonic lexemes of Thulung are best understood when placed within the context of its word classes, which are divided into those that inflect and those that are invariant.

Inflecting classes are verbs, characterized by indexing at least one argument (two, if transitive) and inflecting for *Aktionsart* (Lahaussais 2020), mood, associated motion (Jacques, et al. 2021), valency (Lahaussais 2016; Lahaussais forthcoming), and for which negative polarity is marked prefixally; nouns, which are optionally marked for case (Lahaussais 2003), number and possession; pronouns (including demonstratives), which are obligatorily marked for person and number and optionally for case.

Invariant classes are adjectives, which form a very small lexical class, complemented by active participles for the expression of attributive meaning (e.g. *wak-* ‘burn, shine’ > *wak-pa* ‘shining’), nominalized adverbs (e.g. *make* ‘long ago’ > *make-m* ‘old, of yore’), and nominalized case-marked nouns (e.g. *del-nu-m*, village-LOC-NMLZ, ‘of the village’), adverbs, among which manner adverbs constitute a very small class, complemented by simultaneous converbs (e.g. *khat-* ‘chase’ > *khat-to las-ta* ‘chasing him, she went’), and interjections. There are also the two minor classes of discourse particles and numerals/classifiers.

Also included among the invariant word classes are ideophones: they have an adverbial function insofar as they modify predicates, and show distinctive morphophonological patterns. These patterns, which are grouped into the four types described

³ A good part of the material can be found in the PanGloss archive, <https://pangloss.cnrs.fr/corpus/Thulung%20Rai?lang=en> ; examples presented in this article are labeled for the story in which they occur. The transcriptions and sentence segmentation used here are revised somewhat from the material which was originally deposited in the archive, but the story titles next to each example are the same, and can be used to find the associated audio recordings.

in Section 2.3, make the ideophones stand out from the prosaic lexicon and are coupled with a sometimes transparently iconic use of sound inventory. In terms of their semantics, ideophones are found to express movement, sound, and physical properties such as visual appearance and texture.

2.3 Ideophone types

In considering the ideophones of Thulung, I have taken as a starting point Dingemanse's (2019: 16) definition of ideophone as "a member of an open lexical class of marked words that depict sensory imagery".

A notable feature that makes it possible to assemble a list of ideophones in Thulung, and which contributes to their markedness and is connected with their depictive mode of representation, is a set of morphophonological patterns that they all share. There are four patterns: ideophonic preverbs, which are predominantly single-syllable ideophones; reduplicated ideophones; triplicated ideophones; and 'geminate' ideophones, characterized by their ending in *-CC*ai**, where the C is geminated. The classification proposed is my own – it is similar to that which I used for ideophones in Khaling, a neighboring Kiranti language (Lahaussais 2017) – as is the analysis whereby all four types presented here are ideophones. Previous work on Thulung, by Allen (1975), never uses the term ideophone, nor does it associate the types on the basis of shared characteristics: Allen labels my ideophonic preverbs 'adverbs of abruptness'; my reduplicated ideophones, 'reduplicate adjectives and adverbs'; my triplicated ideophones, 'adverbs with *-maks*i'; he does not mention my geminated ideophones.

One point of uncertainty with respect to Dingemanse's definition is whether this class in Thulung can be qualified as open although this is mostly a methodological issue resulting from an entirely narrative-based corpus; the number of lexemes associated with the class is small (fewer than 100 lexemes), but work on Khaling showed a relatively large class (approximately 400 lexemes), and it seems likely that the class will prove to be much larger in Thulung once further, focused fieldwork is conducted.

2.3.1 Ideophonic preverbs

The first set of ideophones considered here occurs with complete consistency in a preverbal position, generally collocating with a single verb and forming a single prosodic unit with it. The ideophones in this set are further characterized by all sharing the same meaning, which is to impart abruptness to the action. The complete list of ideophonic preverbs in my corpus, together with their collocating verb, is found in Table 1. These ideophones are most often mono-syllabic, showing the following range of morphophonological patterns: CV:; CVŋ; CVp; CVr; CVCV. While my data shows a preference for affricate initials and for open syllables, there is nothing phonotactically unusual about these patterns with respect to the prosaic lexicon. What is interesting is that these words, which are primarily characterized by sharing the same semantics of abrupt movement and collocating with a single verb (or very small set of verbs), should also have the characteristic of sharing a small set of morphophonological patterns.

In his Thulung sketch grammar, Allen calls these “adverbs of abruptness” (Allen 1975: 107) and claims they can all be translated with the Nepali adverb *jhattai*.⁴ His Appendix lists 62 ideophones of this type (1975: 250–251), together with their collocating verbs. Of these, 42 are listed as monosyllabic (only), 15 as bisyllabic (only), and three as having both mono- and bisyllabic variants.⁵ In terms of collocations, Allen’s adverbs of abruptness generally combine with a single verb, but one of them is listed as having as many as four possible verbs it can combine with. Allen’s list is not identical to mine: forms bolded in Table 1 have identical collocations across both corpora; collocations that vary slightly are footnoted.

Table 1: Ideophonic preverbs in my narrative corpus

Ideophone + verb	Gloss	Occurrences in my corpus
<i>dzhoŋ ko:mu</i>	lift abruptly	2
<i>dzər renmu</i>	bring up abruptly	1
<i>hu: bʌ:mu</i> ⁶	get up abruptly	2
<i>khotso jommu</i>	crush abruptly	2
<i>la:</i>⁷ <i>tha:mu</i>	pull out abruptly	2
<i>lep bo:mu</i>	shove down abruptly	2
<i>phali termu</i>	knock over abruptly	1
<i>phe: hemmu</i>	disappear abruptly	1
<i>phlɔ: lu:mu</i>	exit abruptly	1
<i>piri nammu</i>	squeeze abruptly	1

⁴ Turner’s (1931) Nepali dictionary has the lexeme *jhatta* glossed as ‘at once, immediately’.

⁵ These are *lu:/ʌ:tsu;* *la:/ʌtsa;* *pul/puli*.

⁶ Allen (1975) has this ideophone with the transitive version of the verb, i.e. ‘get someone up’.

⁷ Allen (1975) has *ʌtsa* as well with this verb.

<i>puli tsarmu</i>	fall abruptly	1
<i>røp tsummu</i>	catch abruptly	1
<i>røp dzenmu</i>	grab abruptly	2
<i>sep bλ:mu</i>	sweep away abruptly	1
<i>søle hanmu</i>	pour abruptly	1
<i>thoŋ konmu</i>	spray abruptly	2
<i>tsha: ghro:mu</i>	throw abruptly	7
<i>tshi: pro:mu</i>	jump abruptly	1
<i>tsər krwa:mu</i>	stuff abruptly	1
<i>tsoko qømu</i>	pick up abruptly	1

The function of these ideophones is adverbial, qualifying the manner of the action, specifically with reference to its movement. From a syntactic point of view, these words cannot be separated from the verbs they collocate with, hence the choice of ‘ideophonic preverb’ as a label. No morphological or lexical material can be inserted between the ideophonic preverb and the verb, and the ideophonic preverbs cannot be used without their accompanying verb. (2) – (5) below show some of these ideophones in sentential contexts. The dramaturgic element which is often mentioned as being one of the characteristics of ideophones cross-linguistically (Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001b: 3) is present here as well. The ideophones in (2) – (5), and indeed all ideophones of this type in Thulung, occur at a moment of peak narrative tension, to describe a dramatic event which is taking place. (5) includes several ideophonic preverbs (together with their verbs) in the same sentence. Although this leads to a somewhat monotonous translation, the effect in Thulung is the opposite, indeed (5) builds up quite a sense of dramaturgic intensity.

- (2) *po-ku* *qi-ka* *tsha:* *ghrok-tu-lo*
 chicken-GEN egg-INSTR **IDEO.PRVB** **throw-3SG>3SG.PST-TEMP**
dus-ta *retsa* *ʔe*
 become-3SG.PST *nardu* bamboo.grove it.seems HS
 ‘When **he threw** the egg **abruptly**, it became a bamboo grove.’ (Eagle story)

- (3) *u-miksi-ra* *memsaka-ŋa* *suk-tu* *ʔe* *grwappai*
 3SG.POSS-eye-LOC like.that-INT stuck.in-3SG>3SG.PST HS forcefully
suk-tu *ʔe* *ma* *la:* *thas-tu*
 stuck.in-3SG>3SG.PST HS CONJ **IDEO.PRVB** **pull.out-3SG>3SG.PST**
ma *lep-qtu* *retsa* *ʔe*
 CONJ lick-3SG>3SG.PST it.seems HS

‘She stuck them into his eyes, she rammed them in, she **yanked them out** [pulled them out abruptly] and licked them.’ (Eagle story)

- (4) *hunuhombu luk-ta ma gan-da me pul wo*
 other.side exit-3SG.PST CONJ sit-3SG.PST DIST.DEM bridge also
khotso jop-ɬu
 IDEO.PRVB turned-3SG>3SG.PST

‘He came out on the other side of the bridge and sat down, and [the water] **abruptly turned** the bridge.’ (Eagle story)

- (5) *hu: bak-ta tsəŋ-ləŋka las-ta hu:*
 IDEO.PRVB rise-3SG.PST back-ABL go-3SG.PST IDEO.PRVB
bak-ta ma me thə:sa-ku thəŋki dzhoŋ
 rise-3SG.PST CONJ DIST.DEM pine-GEN resin IDEO.PRVB
kos-tu ma thoŋ koŋ-ɬu ʔe
 lift-3SG>3SG.PST CONJ IDEO.PRVB spray-3SG>3SG.PST HS
u-bui-ɬə:la
 3SG.POSS-head-over

‘He **got up abruptly**, he went from her backside and **got up abruptly**, and **abruptly lifted** the pine resin, and **abruptly sprayed it** onto the top of her head.’ (Vulture)

The vast majority of ideophonic preverbs cannot be related to sources in the prosaic lexicon, but for the ideophone *piri*, which collocates with verb *nammu* ‘press’,⁸ the verb *permu* ‘squeeze’⁹ is a likely source, from a semantic as well as phonological point of view.

Thulung has complex predicates made up of N+V or V+V, with the V+V predicates in some cases grammaticalizing into derivational (and sometimes lexicalized) predicates (Lahaussais 2020). This suggests the possibility that some of these ideophonic preverbs were, at some stage, complex predicates involving two semantically related verbs, the first of which eventually lexicalized into a preverb with the limited semantics of this ideophone class.¹⁰

⁸ Verbs are given in their infinitive form, which has a suffixed *-mu*.

⁹ This verb is also the source for the nominal *pepertsə* ‘tongs’ (seen in [7] below).

¹⁰ The combination of two semantically related verbs could be an iconic means of expressing intensification of the action, with the first of the two verbs later bleached to express abruptness.

2.3.2 Reduplicated ideophones

The category labeled ‘reduplicated ideophones’ comprises words with a reduplicated structure, either total or partial. While the term is meant to suggest that these ideophones are characterized as having a repeated (mono- or bi-)syllable, they are not, at least synchronically,¹¹ examples of reduplication insofar as the bases have no independent status.¹² Morphological reduplication does exist in Thulung; it is used to intensify adverbs. This has resulted in occasional difficulties identifying whether a candidate lexeme was a reduplicated adverb or an ideophone; this was resolved as follows: when a lexeme with an adverbial function appears in both single and reduplicated form,¹³ it is considered to be an adverb; when it occurs only in a reduplicated form, it is considered to be a reduplicated ideophone. This of course poses a challenge when, as here, the description is based on corpus materials and cannot be checked through elicitation for the possibility of single usage, which would allow it to be ruled out as an ideophone.

The morphophonological patterns for this ideophone class are given in Table 2, the main division being between those where the resulting ideophone is two or four syllables long. My corpus contains a single occurrence of an ideophone with non-identical syllables, with different vowels in the two otherwise matching elements.

Table 2: Reduplicated ideophones from Thulung corpus

Morphophonological pattern	Ideophone	Gloss [sensory domain]
C ₁ (G ₁)V ₁ (C ₂).C ₁ (G ₁)V ₁ (C ₂)	<i>phwa:kphwa:k</i>	going <i>phwakphwak</i> (sound of carding cotton)
	<i>phwĩphwĩ</i>	moving and/or sounding like the wind
	<i>tʌŋtʌŋ</i>	(lined up) in a row
	<i>lala</i>	red ¹⁴
	<i>ʔomʔom</i>	yellow

¹¹ No evidence is available about the diachrony of the bases.

¹² In this sense, the term ‘frozen reduplication’ seems useful (Guitang 2021).

¹³ One example is *dhawa* ‘quickly’, also found frequently in a reduplicated form, as in *mam-ka dhawa dhawa bu:-ru* (mother-ERG quickly quickly do-3SG>3SG.PST) ‘Mother did it quickly’. To distinguish between ideophones found only in a reduplicated form and those which can also occur as singletons and reduplicates, I write the former as a single word, and the latter as two words. Ideophones, on the other hand, are written as a single word (containing repeated material).

¹⁴ I have elicited other color terms in Thulung, all of which involve full reduplication but only ‘red’ and ‘yellow’ are attested in my Thulung corpus; other colors are given as Nepali loans.

	<i>plaplɑ</i>	smooth in texture
	<i>khrekhre</i>	bumpy in texture
$C_1(G_1)V_1(C_2)C_3V_1(C_4).C_1(G_1)V_1(C_2)C_3V_1(C_4)$	<i>tsɑrjɑktsɑrjɑk</i>	making the sound of hard thread
	<i>khurukhuru</i>	continuously [movement]
	<i>khɑtɑrkhɑtɑr</i>	superficially (e.g. hoeing)
	<i>phujemphujem</i>	fluffy (either in appearance or texture)
	<i>phɑsjɑkphɑsjɑk</i>	loose (in appearance, in texture)
$CV_1CV_1C.CV_2CV_2C$	<i>gɑrɑŋgururŋ</i>	lumpy (in texture)

In clear opposition to the ideophonic preverbs in Section 2.3.1, which all convey the same meaning to the verb, reduplicated ideophones cover a number of sensory domains: some of these are onomatopoeic, describing the sound of the action they are associated with, others concern movement, and yet others aspects of visual appearance, including color and texture. In Allen's (1975) description, a number of different lexemes are presented as 'reduplicate', among them *Doksok Doksok*¹⁵ 'with a waddling gait'; *kheɑnsok kheɑnsok* 'with a lopsided gait, limping'; *greoleop greoleop* 'rolling over and over'; *pleŋkum pleŋkum* 'obstinate'. For some, involving the repetition of a single syllable, Allen lists possible etymologies: *theotheowa* 'belong to oral tradition', cf. *theos-* 'hear'; *kheɑŋkheɑŋya* 'lopsided', cf. *kheɑŋ-* 'put something on its side'; *roŋroŋya* 'reduced to skin and bones', cf. *roŋ-* 'parch'; *ciuciuya* 'pointed', cf. *ciu* 'thorn'. Allen's *pleŋkum pleŋkum* 'obstinate' suggests that these ideophones extend to the 'inner feelings and cognitive states' of Dingemans's hierarchy.

Four different ideophones of this class can be seen in (6) and (7).

(6)	<i>khurukhuru</i>	<i>mi-dzøpa</i>	<i>lapdi</i>	<i>mi-lɑk-tsi</i>	<i>dzøpa lapdi</i>
	continuously	NEG-good	road	NEG-go-2DU	good road
	<i>lɑk-tsi</i>	khrekhre-ja	<i>bepɑ</i>	<i>lapdi</i>	<i>mi-lɑk-tsi, plɑplɑ-ja</i>
	go-2DU	bumpy-ADV	do-ACT.PTCP	road	NEG-go-2DU smooth-ADV
	<i>be-pɑ</i>	<i>lapdi</i>	<i>lɑk-tsi</i>		
	do-ACT.PTCP	road	go-2DU		

¹⁵ Correspondences between Allen's and my transcription are the following: <eo> = <ø>, <ea> = <ja>, <D> = <ɖ>; Allen's examples are found on pages 105–106 for those classified as adjectives, and pages 107–108 for those classified as adverbs.

‘Do not go **continuously** on the bad road, go on the good road, do not go on the **bumpy** road, go on the **smooth** road.’ (Eagle story)

- (7) *pepertsa mari thurmu-ra phum-rɯ ma lala-ja*
 tongs much ember-LOC stick-3SG>3SG.PST CONJ **red**-ADV
be-pa-ŋʌ bʌne bɯ:-rɯ-m ba-ira ʔe
 do-ACT.PTCP-INT make do-3SG>3SG.PST-NMLZ COP-PST HS
 ‘She had stuck the [metal] tongs into the embers and made them **red hot**.’ (Vulture)

We see from (6) and (7) that some of the ideophones occur with suffixal material, in this case the adverbializer *-ja*.¹⁶ This suffix is optional and does not result in a change in category. Allen (1975: 106) points out that the adverbializer (he has *-wa* and *ya* [-*ja*] as variants, but I only find *-ja*) has a different function across different semantic categories: “In colour adjectives, the suffix *-wa*, *-ya*, or *-yam* [*ya* + nominalizer *-m*] adds a definite nuance of vagueness as in *kekeyam* ‘blackish’, *lalayam* ‘reddish’ rendered by AS [one of his consultants] respectively as *kālo kālo* N[epali] and *rāto rāto* N[epali]; this does not seem to be the case in the other examples quoted.”

As with other adverbs, words of this class, when used attributively, take the nominalizer *-m*, as in (8).

- (8) *sokmu-ram me lala-m buɣma-mim-lai wo sisi*
 forest-ABL DEM **red**-NMLZ flower-PLU-DAT also blood
hopmam-ŋa bʌn-ɯ:rɯ
 like.this-INT made-3SG>3SG.PST
 ‘He made the red flowers from the forest like blood [i.e. reddened them further].’
 (Salewatso)

Allen also mentions that lexemes of this type (which he calls ‘reduplicate adjectives and adverbs’) are sometimes found with a “suffix *-ti* or *-te*” (Allen 1975: 106), such as *phunphun̄ti* ‘fat’, *rəŋrəŋ̄ti* ‘empty’. I have not encountered this derivational suffix in my work on Thulung.

¹⁶ Note that the four ideophones for which Allen gives etymologies all have this suffix.

In terms of the syntactic characteristics of reduplicated ideophones, they are usually found in a preverbal position, as in (9).

- (9) *taŋtaŋ-ja dzɜl-saka nemtha-nuŋ nemsom-ka laŋkham*
in.a.row-ADV place-ANT.CVB evening-COM dawn-LOC yeast
dɰ:-ka koŋ-thal-lɰ ʔe
 beer-INSTR spray-HAB-3SG>3SG.PST HS
 ‘He lined them up **in a row**, and sprayed them in the evening and at dawn with special grain beer.’ (Miyakma, by Lakpa Thulung)

But this is not always the case, and they can also be found in different positions, as seen in (10) and (11), each of which is marked by a prosodic break where the comma appears in the transcription.

- (10) *lak-tsi, khurukhuru*
 go-3DU **continuously**
 ‘Go continuously (i.e. don’t stop).’ (Eagle story)

- (11) *phwīphwī, pharbuŋpel dhos-ta-lo*
like.the.wind shadow move-3SG.PST-TEMP
 ‘When (his) shadow moves, like the wind...’ (Miyakma, by Lakpa Thulung)

This syntactic freedom is quite different from what is seen with ideophonic preverbs, which necessarily occur in the preverbal position. Furthermore, again unlike ideophonic preverbs, which are uninterpretable without the following verbs, reduplicated ideophones can occur with the light verbs *bomu* ‘do’ or *dɰmmu* ‘become’. This can be seen in (6) and (7) above, where the light verb *bomu* ‘do’ happens to be in an active participial form, preceded by *-ja-* suffixed ideophones *khrekhre* ‘bumpy’, *plaplɰ* ‘smooth’, and *lala* ‘red’.

2.3.3 Triplicated ideophones

The distinctive pattern that the ideophones of this type share is partial triplication, with the shape $C_1V_1C_2V_1C_2V_1$, which can be extended for emphasis through the repetition of the final

syllable. As with reduplicated ideophones, the term ‘triplication’ here does not imply that the base is found in Thulung; again, the words in this class are defined by the repeated pattern, which relates to no independently found input syllable.¹⁷ We are thus again faced with a class defined by a morphophonological pattern which is not the result of a productive morphological process. Unlike reduplicated ideophones, whose reduplicated pattern is found to be productive elsewhere in the language, triplication is not found in Thulung except in this ideophone type. The list of these words from the corpus is found in Table 3.

Table 3: Triplicated ideophones in Thulung corpus

Ideophone	Gloss
<i>khjarjarjarja</i>	with a scraping sound
<i>latatata</i>	with dripping sound
<i>tsjarjarjarja</i>	with high-pitched sound (made by liquid flowing)
<i>dzhwararararara</i>	with hissing sound
<i>tөлөлөлө</i>	very long
<i>tsiriririri</i>	like small insect bites (numerous, irritating)

Allen lists words which have the partial triplicate pattern (*phuyuyu* ‘lightly (of something flying away)’, *grilili* ‘copiously’ [Allen 1975: 108]), and data from Khaling (Lahaussis 2017) shows partial triplication, but interestingly, none of the examples from my corpus occur in triplicated form. They are found with three or four repetitions of their second syllable (instead of the two we would expect the partial triplicate pattern), the phonological extension being one of the manifestations of expressive morphology (Zwicky and Pullum 1987). This can be seen in (12) – (14), where these ideophones occur in their typical position before the verb.

- (12) *latatata* *tsam-mu-ŋa* *me-tsaps-ʘ* *kwa:-ka*
with.dripping.sound drip-INF-INT NEG-can-3SG>3SG mud-ERG
thjappa *dzhe-thΛ-rʘ*
 firmly hold-DUR-3SG>3SG
 ‘[they wet the thick mud] until it cannot drip **wetly**, until the mud continues to hold it.’ (Krishna Maya childhood)

¹⁷ Note, however, that this partial triplication can have different interpretations; Paudyal (2015: 147) analyzes the same pattern in Chintang as the partial reduplication of a bisyllabic base.

- (13) *metthamma tsjarjarjarja bu:ru ʔe*
 then **with.high.pitched.sound** do-3SG>3SG.PST HS
 ‘He **urinated loudly.**’ (Redukpa)

- (14) *u-sem ne tolololole thus-tu*
 3SG.POSS-hair TOP **so.long** pull-3SG>3SG.PST
 ‘He **pulled and pulled** on his hair.’ (Ghumne Pani)

They can optionally take the suffix *-maksɪ*, found only with this type of ideophone, seen in (15) and (16), where in both cases additional copies of the second syllable also occur. Note that *-maksɪ* does not change the function of these ideophones in any way; in this sense it is not derivational. When *-maksɪ* is suffixed, the ideophone can be reduced to CVCV-*maksi*, whereas without the suffix, it must be at least triplicated.

- (15) *me ne ne tsiririri-maksi u-khwatsep-ra*
 DIST.DEM TOP TOP **made.by.small.insects-ADV** 3SG.POSS-stomach-LOC

khre-saʔ-dʉ retsa ʔe
 bite-APPL-3SG>3SG.PST it.seems HS
 ‘It bit her in the stomach **with irritating small-insect bites.**’ (Jau Khleu)

- (16) *metta saʔ koʔu bokoli-ra tsam-ma dʉm*
 there wood so.much hearth-LOC burn-PASS.PTCP become.3SG

metta dzhwararararara-maksi dʉm
 there **with.hissing.sound-ADV** become.3SG
 ‘And then so much [shown with hand motion] wood is burned in the fire, making a **hissing sound.**’ (Marriage rituals)

Triplicated ideophones cannot be derived with the nominalizer *-m* for attributive use; in this they are different from reduplicated ideophones.

As far as the depictive dimension is concerned, this ideophone type is the only one for which our corpus allows us a glimpse of potential vowel and consonant gradation. From the list in Table 3, we can compare *tsjarjarja* and *tsiriri* which differ in their vowel, the first

referring to a high-pressure flow of liquid, the second to the small size of an insect. Similarly, another phonological minimal pair is to be found in *tsjarjarja* and *khjarjarja*, the latter referring to a scraping sound. While this does not of course constitute any kind of evidence for the existence of these types of gradation correlating with meaning, it is nonetheless suggestive of a path worth exploring through elicitation.

2.3.4 Geminated ideophones

This type of ideophone is characterized by ending in a geminate consonant followed by either *-a* or *-ai*. It is a minor type because it is, with the exception of two native examples, made up of borrowings from Nepali. As with other ideophone types, it is the morphophonological pattern of these words which clusters them into a category, i.e. it is made up of the gemination of the final consonant followed by *-a(i)*. Note that the diphthong has a strong presence in Thulung through one of the most common interjections, namely *hai* – also borrowed from Nepali – used to ask an interlocutor for confirmation/acceptance.¹⁸

The list of geminated ideophones found in my Thulung corpus is presented in Table 4. Allen’s textual corpus in the Appendix to his 1975 grammar contains no words of this type, nor does the glossary in his grammar. This seems to indicate that geminated ideophones are a recent innovation in Thulung through increased contact with Nepali, also indicated by the fact that all but the first two items in Table 4 are also used in Nepali.¹⁹

Table 4: Geminated ideophones from Thulung corpus (including those borrowed from Nepali, which are listed with their sources)

Ideophone	Meaning
<i>brwassai</i>	with burning sound [sound]
<i>grwappai</i>	forcefully [movement]
<i>alakkai(i)</i>	further off, separately; cf. Nepali, <i>alag</i> , separate
<i>tshakkai</i>	in a surprised way; cf. Nepal. <i>tshak</i> , amazement, wonder
<i>latakka</i>	intensely, thoroughly; cf. Nepal <i>latakka</i> , oppressively
<i>pakkai</i>	definitely, surely; cf. Nepali <i>pakkə</i> , permanent, real, substantial
<i>thjappa</i>	tightly; cf. Nepal. <i>thjappa</i> , suddenly
<i>tswattai</i>	abruptly; cf. Nepali <i>tswatta</i> , suddenly, unexpectedly, abruptly
<i>thakkai</i>	exactly < Nep. <i>thak</i> , correct, exact

¹⁸ In Turner’s dictionary, *hai* is defined as “exclamation to draw attention to a command or request”.

¹⁹ For another change due to contact that occurred in the time period between Allen’s fieldwork in the 1960s and my own starting in the early 2000s, see Lahaussais (2003), which describes a shift in the position of the ergative split.

The two native ideophones of this type can be seen in (17) and (18), both taken from the same story narrated by a single speaker. As with the other ideophone types, with the partial exception of reduplicated ideophones, these occur preverbally.

- (17) *miksi-ra* *brwassai* *tša-iqʰ* *ʔe*
 eye-LOC **burning.sound** burn-3SG>3SG.PST HS
 ‘She burned her eye **with a strong burning sound.**’ (Eagle story)

- (18) *u-miksi-ra* *memsaka-ŋa* *suk-tʰ* *ʔe* *grwappai*
 3SG.POSS-eye-LOC like.that-INT stick.in-3SG>3SG.PST HS **forcefully**
suk-tʰ *ʔe*
 stick.in-3SG>3SG.PST HS
 ‘She stuck it into his eye like that, she **forcefully** stuck it in.’ (Eagle story)

Although marginal in number, the two Thulung ideophones of this type are further examples of words tapping into the expressive potential of the language; they should therefore be counted as part of the ideophonic lexicon of Thulung. In the examples containing the two Thulung ideophones of this type, there is clear prosodic marking, with a higher pitch (in addition to insistence on the geminate). With Nepali loans, the prosody appeared to depend on the integration of these words into the prosaic vocabulary: words such as *ʌʌkkʌ(i)* ‘further off, separately’ and *paʌkkʌi* ‘definitely’ were not particularly marked.

2.3.5 Summary of characteristics of different ideophone types

The descriptions and analyses of the ideophone types seen above are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of main characteristics of ideophone types of Thulung

	Monosyllabic ²⁰ ideophonic preverbs	Reduplicated ideophones	Partially triplicated ideophones	Geminated ideophones
Morphophonological pattern ²¹	CV(C) or CVCV	CV(C).CV(C), CVCV(C).CVCV(C ₁ V ₁ .C ₂ V ₁ .C ₂ V ₁ (.C V ₁ ...)	...CCʌi

²⁰ The ideophones of this type are labeled ‘monosyllabic’ here, as it is the dominant pattern, even though bisyllabic ideophonic preverbs also exist, as seen in Section 2.3.1.

²¹ The repeated nature of the consonants, glides and vowels is not represented here for the sake of legibility; readers are referred to the individual sections for more precise morphological patterns.

		C)		
Morphology	No derivation possible	Derivation with nominalizer <i>-m</i> (into adjectives); suffixation with adverbializer <i>-ja</i> (function unchanged)	Suffixation with <i>-maksɨ</i> (function unchanged; possibility for reduced bisyllabic form only with <i>-maksɨ</i>)	No derivation possible
Semantics	Collocate with specific verbs; undifferentiated semantics conveying abruptness of movement	Convey manner qualified by sound, movement texture, color	Convey manner qualified by sound, visual pattern, other sensory domains	Convey manner qualified by sound and movement
Syntax	Always in preverbal position (no intervening material)	Can occur with light verbs; not always preverbal	Can occur with light verbs, mostly preverbal	Preverbal position

The picture presented in Table 5 is very similar to that found in Khaling (Lahaussois 2017), one significant difference being that the article in question did not mention any Khaling ideophones similar to geminated ideophones above, as they were not identified (at the time) as part of the ideophonic spectrum of the language. Given their marginality in Thulung as well, with only two ideophones of this type which are not borrowings from Nepali, these are not core elements in the expressive inventory of Thulung. They are, however, of interest when considering questions pertaining to the areal diffusion of ideophones, which will be treated at greater length in Sections 3 and 4 below.

To conclude this section on the characteristics of ideophones in Thulung, four types of words have been identified, all with an adverbial function and with an iconic dimension. The markedness of these words comes about through the specific morphophonological patterns, which are essentially the association of a (multi-)syllabic template with each different type. For these different ideophones, it is exceedingly rare to find diachronic sources in the prosaic vocabulary of Thulung (such sources are only found for one ideophonic preverb and for some of the bisyllabic reduplicated ideophones given by Allen).

As proved to be the case with Khaling as well (Lahaussois 2017), the different ideophone types of Thulung can be mapped onto Dingemans's (2012) implicational hierarchy, yielding the following figure, revealing which types are used to express the different sensory domains:

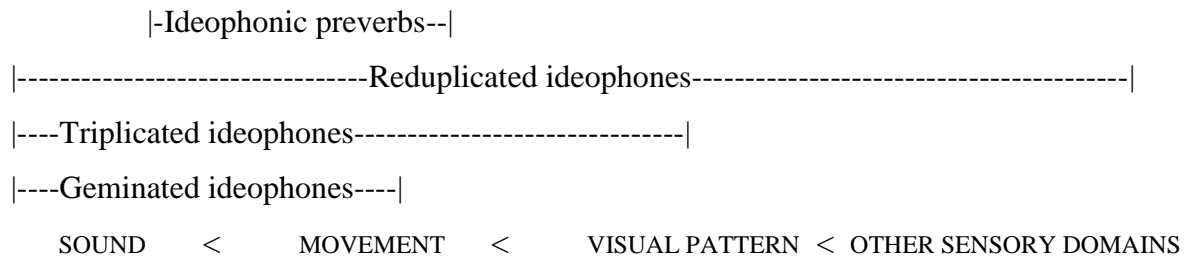


Figure 2. Ideophone types of Thulung mapped onto sensory domains

Figure 2 of course presents a rough picture, based as it is on the ideophones in my (currently closed) narrative corpus; the mapping could change significantly with additional data. The limited ability to question the data is one of the downsides of working exclusively from a narrative corpus. Other problems that have arisen from this methodology are: (i) the difficulty in getting a sense of the number of ideophones in the language (compare the 90 occurrences of ideophones in my corpus, some of which occur several times, see Table 1, with the 400 distinct ideophones found in the available Khaling materials); (ii) the unanswered question about whether Thulung can have the same phonological material occurring in the various morphophonological patterns with related meanings; and (iii) the open questions about the role of the consonant and vowel gradation glimpsed in triplicated ideophones (mentioned in Section 2.3.3.).

3 Ideophonic lexemes in other Kiranti language descriptions

In this section, I look at Western language descriptions of other Kiranti languages in order to identify ideophone patterns found therein. The material explored is from two different types of sources: articles dedicated to ideophones in Kiranti, and grammars (sketches, dissertations, reference grammars).

3.1 Articles dedicated to ideophones

An article by Rai and Winter (1997) concerns the “triplicated verbal adjuncts” of Bantawa, described as having a triplicated CVC-CVC-CVC shape (or very rarely CV-CV-CV), followed by a suffix *-wa*. These are words “specifying properties of verbal actions” (Rai and Winter 1997: 119), derived from verbal roots – considerably more rarely from nouns – and most frequently from elements with no synchronic presence in the lexicon and with sometimes unusual phonotactics, labeled “paralexemes” (Rai and Winter 1997: 130), i.e.

lexemes occurring outside the standard lexical inventory. None of the triplicated forms are glossed, and their semantics are captured through free translations of example sentences. Indicative perhaps of the unclear status of these words, both the input (when it is not in the lexicon) and the resulting triplicated verbal adjuncts are referred to by the authors as paralexemes.²² The article alludes to some other patterns that also show iconicity, such as pairs differing in their initials, like *pwakk-* (associated with breaking) / *bhwakk-* (associated with falling down) or *twakk-* (hitting) / *thwakk-* (breaking), but does not provide a syntactic context that might allow comparison to Thulung ideophonic preverbs.²³ The triplicated paralexemes of Bantawa superficially resemble Thulung triplicated ideophones (see Section 2.3.3) in that they involve triplication, except that Bantawa makes use of full reduplication, with an identical, most often CVC-shaped, syllable repeated three times (and never twice, as specified in Rai and Winter [1997: 132]). The article, which focuses on triplicated verbal adjuncts, does not attempt to provide a full picture of the ideophones of Bantawa, but other materials on the language are found in grammars by Rai (1984) and Doornenbal (2009), to be discussed in Section 3.2 below.

A 2005 article by Rai et al. presents triplication and ideophones in Chintang, touching on material similar to that in Bantawa. The authors consider the triplicated words to be a type of adverb, with ideophones being one type of admissible base for triplication (in addition to nominal and verbal roots). As in Bantawa, the triplicated adverbs have a suffix *-wa*; but unlike Bantawa the same base can occasionally undergo reduplication and triplication in Chintang. In this sense, there is partial overlap between Chintang ideophones and Bantawa paralexemes, the latter having a wider use as the term is applied to both the base and the output of triplication.

My 2017 article on Khaling explicitly refers to ideophones (Lahaussois 2017: 201), and lays out a tripartite system of ideophones on the basis of their morphophonological patterns, which closely match three of those for Thulung in Section 2.3 (the exception is the geminated ideophone). Among them, the three types cover the sensory range presented in Dingemans's (2012) implicational hierarchy, with the different types used with different (albeit overlapping) sensory modalities. This represents a different interpretation of 'ideophone' from Rai et al. (2005): ideophones in Khaling, as in Thulung (as seen in Section 2.3), are defined by their morphophonological patterns, and the term refers to the output

²² This is apparent in a statement like: "In our case, *jhongjhongjhongwa* and so on then have to be identified as paralexemes or as derivatives based on paralexemic nuclei" (Rai and Winter 1997: 130).

²³ I am unable to find these lexemes in the lexicon at the end of Doornenbal's (2009) or in Rai's (1984) grammar.

forms. As in Thulung, there are sources that can be identified in the case of a small number of ideophones, but in the majority of cases, there are none. This means that even though the ideophones are classified according to their patterns, most of the bases that would generate those patterns are synchronically non-existent, while the reduplicated and triplicated structures are not productive.

3.2 Descriptions in grammars

Grammars (including sketches and grammars produced as dissertations) are an obvious source of ideophonic and expressive material in Kiranti languages. These grammars group into those that explicitly mention and/or discuss words of this category using terminology that reveals that they have been identified as having a depictive feature, and those which contain no explicit discussion of words of this category even though they are present in examples, texts, glossaries. Both types of grammar contribute valuable data to the discussion, but the second type is considered separately, in Section 3.3, because it is lacking in discussion. In reality, grammars of the first type and those of the second form a continuum of sorts: some grammars contain analysis and discussion of ideophones, while others, even when the term is used explicitly, provide only cursory mention, sometimes in the form of a list of examples of lexemes. The materials below are presented in chronological order, but keeping together descriptions of the same language when more than one is available.

3.2.1 Thulung

The first grammar to mention what I identify as ideophones is Allen (1975) on Thulung, where the material is associated with the term expressive (“expressive resources”, Allen 1975: 107) found in Allen’s discussion of adverbs; this was discussed in Section 2 above, relating it to the forms I have found in Thulung.

3.2.2 Bantawa

In his grammar of Bantawa, Rai (1984), one of the authors of Rai et al. (2007) discussed in Section 3.1, presents the reduplication (full and partial) and triplication patterns found among Bantawa adverbs, involving stems which can be nominal, verbal or ‘onomatopoetic’.

Bisyllabic onomatopoetic stems can be partially or fully reduplicated to form an adverb, as in: *lumkUk* ‘heavy’ → *lumkUkUk(wa)*, *lumkUklumkUK*; *larip* ‘slim’ → *lariprip(wa)*, *lariplarip* (Rai 1984: 150–152). Semantically, partial reduplication is said to intensify the meaning, and

full reduplication, to de-intensify it. Triplicated forms are also derived from onomatopoeic stems, e.g. *cəkəkəkəkwā* ‘continuously (of rain)’, *sipsipsipwā* ‘very much faint’ (Rai 1984: 154). Additionally, “manners of some actions are realized through imitation” by suffixing adverbializer *-ni* to onomatopoeic stems, of which some examples are: *suiyapni* ‘abruptly’, *cuklapni* ‘immediately’, *bhorakni* ‘very loudly’, *soplakni* ‘very stealthily’ (Rai 1984: 153).

The onomatopoeic adverbs in Bantawa described by Rai (1984) therefore make up a more diverse picture than what is presented in Rai and Winter (1997) (see Section 3.1), which is limited to triplication. In the grammar, we find full and partial reduplication, full triplication, and the additional category with a suffix *-ni*. The latter is not seen in other descriptions of Kiranti language ideophones.

In his (2009) grammar of Bantawa, Doornenbal identifies two syllable shapes in the possible canon, C_oC_aV and $C_oC_aVC_f$,²⁴ which mark words containing them “as paralexemes that often have an ideophonic or onomatopoeic aspect to their meaning” (Doornenbal 2009: 43). Most of Doornenbal’s uses of the term ideophone (or paralexeme) are in the discussion of adverbs which are characterized by reduplication and triplication; although some of these take a nominal or verbal base, some are formed from an ideophonic base. The language is also said to have fully reduplicated adverbs of “mimetic quality” (Doornenbal 2009: 304), such as *c^hyaŋc^hyaŋti* ‘clear’ (with suffix *-ti*) and *c^hyamc^hyami* ‘one stroke’ (with suffix *-mi*). What Doornenbal’s description adds to the picture is a clear identification of certain syllable shapes as conferring ideophonic status.

3.2.3 Hayu

Michailovsky’s (1988) grammar of Hayu discusses the language’s “mots phonesthétiques” as having “la particularité d’exploiter leur nature phonique, souvent (mais pas toujours) aberrante, pour renforcer leur sens” [‘phonesthetic words [having] the peculiarity to exploit their phonetic nature often (but not always) in a deviant way to intensify their meaning’] (Michailovsky 1988: 72). Although some Hayu phonesthemes are nouns, they are mostly adverbial and fully reduplicated (*plom-plom* ‘fade, sans sel’ [bland]; *gram-gram* ‘(manger) à grandes bouchées’ [eat in big bites]) or partially reduplicated (*krap-krup* ‘(manger) gloutonnement’ [eat lustily], *pelum-polum-ha* ‘(manger) un par un, par petites bouchées’ [eat one by one, in small bites]) (Michailovsky 1988: 71–72). Although the texts contain some adverbs ending in geminate + *-ai* that resemble Thulung’s ideophonic preverbs, they are

²⁴ C_o onset consonant, C_a approximant, C_f final consonant

identified by Michailovsky as being loans from Nepali and thus not included in Table 6 below.

3.2.4 Wambule

Opgenort (2004), in his grammar of Wambule, presents a list of 33 “adverbial proclitics of manner” (Opgenort 2004: 243). These are mostly monosyllabic, generally with a CV or CVN shape and emphasize or intensify the action expressed by the verb, occurring in fixed collocations with specific verbs. Although Opgenort does not mention any expressive quality of these proclitics, they are considered relevant to the discussion here, and listed in Table 6, because they closely resemble the ideophonic preverbs of Thulung, also found in Khaling. His Wambule grammar does not discuss material showing reduplicated patterns, but numerous examples of adverbs with a reduplicated pattern are found in the appended glossary.

3.2.5 Puma

Sharma’s (2014) grammar of Puma explicitly mentions “idiophones” [sic] but provides no discussion or examples. The grammar is included here because it constitutes a data point with respect to the use of the term ‘ideophone’ in Kiranti descriptions; it cannot be used, however, to establish the patterns found in the language or what exactly the author means by the term. We are told that Puma ideophones undergo repetition, which can be partial or full. Puma also has ideophones “like *phutta*, *parra*, *swātta*” (Sharma 2014: 99) – showing a similar pattern to Thulung geminated ideophones – but they are said to be borrowed from Nepali.

3.2.6 Yakkha

Full reduplication and partial triplication are found in Yakkha (Schackow 2015: 174). Reduplicated patterns are found in adjectives and adverbs, which can have an ideophonic base (Schackow 2015: 174) across different sensory domains: *ghok-ghok* ‘pig grunts’, *kho?luk-kho?luk* ‘[sound of] coughing’, *yakcik-yakcik* ‘[sound of] squeezing, chewing’, *tanpharaṅ-tanpharaṅ* ‘staggering’, *yanṅaṅ-yanṅaṅ* ‘[manner of] toppling over (humans and objects)’, *thulum-thulum* ‘wobbling’.

TriPLICATION mostly takes an ideophonic base (Schackow 2015: 179), and is only partial, with the initial consonant in the first and other syllables differing, despite a constant vowel, like the triplicated ideophones of Thulung. Schackow’s Table 6.11 (Schackow 2015: 180) gives a long list of these, among which we find the likes of *phelele* ‘[bird flying] up high’, *philili* ‘[butterfly] jittering’, *pololo* ‘[bamboo, construction materials] being too long to

handle’ all featuring CV syllables, and *haŋcaŋcaŋ* ‘dangling’, *silinliŋ* ‘shaking’, *tholoklok* ‘[boiling] vigorously’ featuring CVC syllables.

Yakkha also has a few monosyllabic ‘ideophonic adverbs’, which are minimally exemplified: *ʃhwaŋ nam-ma* (smelling_awfully smell[3]-PRF) ‘smelled awfully’. Of the six listed in Schackow’s Table 6.12, two of the glosses contain the notion of suddenness, while the others are associated with actions such as hitting, slapping, dropping, shooting off. This suggests a similarity with the ideophonic preverbs of Thulung, which confer abruptness to the action. Schackow’s description of these is that “only those that modify punctual events do not occur in reduplicated form” (Schackow 2015: 181), which is not sufficient for a more convincing connection with Thulung’s ideophonic preverbs.

3.2.7 Chintang

Paudyal’s (2015) grammar of Chintang states that the very small number of lexical manner adverbs in Chintang is augmented with ideophones or Nepali borrowings (2015: 144), illustrating this with fully triplicated adverbs: *tok-tok-tok-wa* ‘strongly’, *kuikuikui-wa* ‘chokingly’ (Paudyal 2015: 146-147). Paudyal also discusses partially triplicated adverbial forms, such as *kili-li-wa* ‘continuously’ (Paudyal 2015: 147), which he considers, unlike the analysis used for other languages, to be examples of partial reduplication, as can be seen from the morpheme boundaries.

Although they are not discussed in his grammar, some examples contain lexemes glossed as ideophones which match other patterns. These include full reduplication: *jhullu jhullu* ‘IDEO for lots of jumping’ (Paudyal 2015: 102), *phak-phak-lari* ‘IDEO-REDUP-ADV’ (Paudyal 2015: 219); partial reduplication: *kaplakkupluk* IDEO ‘in a gulp’ (Paudyal 2015: 249); partial triplication: *hururu* ‘smoothly’ (Paudyal 2015: 151), *thururuwa* ‘trembling’ (Paudyal 2015: 264), *ololowa* ‘IDEO for sound’, (Paudyal 2015: 119); as well as those with a geminate + *a/ai* in the final syllable, as in *phocckokka* IDEO (Paudyal 2015: 93), *massakkai* ‘IDEO for suddenly falling asleep’ (Paudyal 2015: 125). Thus, when compared with Rai et al.’s (2005) article on triplication in Chintang (see Section 3.1), Paudyal’s grammar reveals additional patterns associated with ideophonic lexemes, i.e. partial reduplication, partial triplication, and geminate + *ai* lexemes.

3.2.8 Dumi

A recent²⁵ grammar of Dumi (Rai 2016) uses “expressive adverbs” as a cover term for a subcategory of adverbs, derived from verbs, nominals, or onomatopoeia (Rai 2016: 300). The examples (found under his example [19]) are of different types: full reduplication: *d^hed^hēja* ‘smiley’, *gragraja* ‘shiningly’, *sumu-sumu* ‘quietly’, *wajewaje* ‘patiently’ (note that the first two have a suffix *-ja*, which is also found optionally with Thulung ideophones reflecting full reduplication); and partial triplication: *sjakjakja* ‘walking fast in group’, *hinini* ‘growing nicely’, *dhiriri* ‘way of shouting’. As in Thulung, this type can take the suffix *-maks*, which may attach to a reduced base (i.e. C₁V₁.C₂V₁, without the third syllable). Dumi examples are *halamaksi* ‘growing rapidly’, *hunumaksi* ‘way of shooting with arrows’, *rakamaksi* ‘moving actively’. There is no evidence in the grammar of other ideophonic patterns.

3.3 Glosses in examples, texts, glossaries

Apart from the grammars discussed in Section 3.2, other Kiranti language descriptions I have consulted do not include accounts of ideophonic material. They may, however, gloss certain forms in interlinearized examples and texts and in glossaries as ideophones or onomatopoeia. The absence of discussion concords with comments about expressive material often being omitted from grammars because it tends to be associated with specific genres (Williams 2021b; Modi and Post 2021, among others). Grammars presenting no discussion of ideophones but which feature them in examples and glossaries nonetheless provide evidence of similar morphophonological patterns for these forms across the language area, and they are therefore considered here.

The grammar of Limbu (van Driem 1987) contains, in the text of the description, a single example identified as an onomatopoeic expression, showing a fully reduplicated scheme: *pətslək-pətslək* ‘slosh slosh’ (van Driem 1987: 16, fn 14). The only other ideophonic material in the grammar appear in the appended glossary as onomatopoeia and are monosyllabic: *lyɛ.ŋ* ‘slap across the face’, *pyak* ‘slap’, *suk* ‘sob’, *ya.rrrrr* ‘grrr’.

In his book on aspect, mood and time in Belhare, Bickel (1996) provides examples containing words glossed as ‘IDEOPH’, making it the first resource to associate the term ideophone with Kiranti materials. In some cases the glosses are accompanied by parenthetical specifications of their semantics; in other cases there is no such information. On the basis of the lexemes glossed as ideophones, Belhare appears to have both full and partial

²⁵ Van Driem (1993) contains no mention of ideophonic lexemes, but this appears to be a grammaticographical decision, and not a reflection of the ideophonic features of the language (Kelly & Lahaussais 2021).

reduplication, as well as additional patterns featuring the insertion of material. Examples of full reduplication include *khimliṅ khimliṅ* ‘IDEOPH (twilight)’ (Bickel 1996: 179) and *bhutibhuti* ‘IDEOPH (strange)’ (Bickel 1996: 222). Partial reduplication includes *hatta-patta* ‘IDEOPH’ [sentence translation suggests quickly] (Bickel 1996: 111) and *cheṅleṅ* ‘IDEOPH’ [way of breaking leg] (Bickel 1996: 121). In the following examples additional material is inserted: *theṅuṅtheṅ* ‘IDEOPH’ [way of weaving] (Bickel 1996: 121) and *masmase* ‘IDEOPH (quickly)’ (Bickel 1996: 181). The last of these types is not included in the overview in Table 6 below.

The examples and texts in the grammar of Athpare (Ebert 1997a) feature words glossed as ‘IDEO’. In the accompanying free translation, they are either left untranslated (*phood!* + ‘jump’ [Ebert 1997a: 206]; *cubluk!* + ‘enter’ [Ebert 1997a: 206]), reproduced as in Athpare (*swattai!* ‘[he butted my ox] swattai! [down]...’ [Ebert 1997a: 227]; *cyattai!* ‘cyatt! [it played a trick on me]’ [Ebert 1997a: 230]), or translated (*jurukkai!* ‘[He got up] safe and sound, ...’ [Ebert 1997a: 228], *phirikkai* ‘[He] immediately [slipped away again to eat crops]’ [Ebert 1997a: 229]). According to these patterns, Athpare has fully reduplicated ideophonic lexemes (both examples of which co-occur with verbs of utterance) and others with geminate + *a(i)* in the final syllable. Although *jurukkai!* and *swattai!* are identified here as Athpare lexemes, both are found among Nepali expressives as their non-emphatic equivalents *jurukka* (van Driem 2021: 72) and *swattə* ‘unexpectedly, all of a sudden’ (van Driem 2021: 87). It is unclear how to classify ideophonic lexemes such as *phood!* and *cubluk!*. They are potential candidates for ideophonic preverbs, but this mapping is not possible on the basis of single, uncommented occurrences. Interestingly, none of the ideophonic lexemes listed above are found in the glossary accompanying the grammar.

Ebert’s (1997b) grammar of Camling has a single lexeme glossed as an ideophone (*phutai!* ‘phutai!’, Ebert [1997b: 29]) and does not contain accompanying texts, but Ebert’s collection of Camling texts (Ebert 2000) contains lexemes glossed as ideophones. As with the Athpare data, they are often reproduced in a free translation, making their semantics difficult to interpret, but presumably they are sound-depicting. As for patterns, we find ideophonic lexemes that show full (*bao-bao!*, *ghwak-ghwak!*, *thwã-thwã!*) and partial reduplication (*karaṅ-kuruṅ!*), and others with geminate + *ai* in the last syllable (*swattai!*). There are also some unclassifiable ideophonic lexemes, such as *bittikai!* and *hai!* as well as the triplicated *balla balla balla* (in other languages, triplication only involves a single syllable as a base; this usage could therefore be an example of emphatic repetition instead).

In his description of Yamphu, Rutgers (1998) glosses a number of lexemes in the lexicon appended to his grammar as onomatopoeic adverbs. Among these, *cinjinjinjin* ‘adv.onom. chatter-chatter, as when shivering from cold’ (1998: 531), shows a partially triplicated pattern, with an extension of the second syllable. This extension for emphatic purposes is also found in triplicated ideophones for Thulung (see examples [12–16] above). The other lexemes with the same gloss do not match the patterns found in other languages; they feature a final syllable *-doʔ* or *-khoŋ*, as in *cwæ·ŋdoʔ* ‘adv.onom. with a sizzling or hissing noise’ (1998: 533), *sirliŋdoʔ* ‘adv.onom. tinkling’ (1998: 577), *togondoʔ* ‘adv.onom. with a heavy thud, with a slam’ (1998: 583), *tækkhoŋ* ‘adv.onom. tap tap (when hitting, pounding, hammering, chopping)’ (1998: 581), *tukkhoŋ* ‘adv.onom. tap tap’ (1998: 585). In addition to these lexemes which are glossed as onomatopoeic, the glossary lists other lexemes that do match ideophonic patterns seen in Thulung. A large number of mono- and bi-syllabic lexemes (glossed as ‘adj.redup.’ and/or ‘adv. redup.’²⁶), matching the reduplicated patterns found in other languages. Furthermore, a number of lexemes (glossed “adv.”) show partial triplication patterns, such as *khiriri* ‘in a row’ (1998: 550), *phelelele*²⁷ ‘swirling’ (1998: 568), *yerere* ‘giving shelter, giving shade’ (1998: 594), while another resembles the geminate + *a(i)* pattern, *wattai* ‘with a shock’ (1998: 590).

3.4 Summary of patterns in Kiranti languages

The dominant pattern found for ideophonic lexemes is a reduplicated template, found in almost all the grammars/descriptions consulted, with these languages showing fully reduplicated lexemes, and some of them additionally having partial (or echo, or rhyming) reduplicated lexemes.

The second most prevalent pattern is a triplicate template, with languages appearing to favor either full triplication with three manifestations of the same syllable, or partial triplication, for which the dominant pattern appears to be $C_1V.C_2V.C_2V$ (this is an generalized template: the syllables can also be closed, and the initial consonants can be followed by approximants). The languages with full triplication are Chintang and Bantawa; for both, triplication has been the topic of specific articles.

²⁶ Interestingly they are listed in the glossary as input for reduplication, while the accompanying examples show them in reduplicated form.

²⁷ Note that this is a triplicated pattern with an additional syllable extension.

Language	Monosyllabic preverbal	Reduplicated	Triplicated	Geminate + - <i>a(i)</i> ²⁸
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Other minor patterns are the mostly monosyllabic ideophonic preverb lexemes, conveying abruptness; these are found in Thulung and Khaling, but also, it seems, in Wambule (where they are considered ‘adverbial proclitics of manner’), and possibly in Yakkha.

While the pattern equivalent to Thulung’s geminated ideophones (which feature a geminate consonant + *ʌ(i)~a(i)* in the final syllable) appear to be considered mostly a loan phenomenon from Nepali, such as in Hayu, some descriptions suggest that they are part of the native lexicon; this is the case for instance in Athpare and Chintang.

Other patterns have been observed but are limited to a single language description: the onomatopoeic adverbs of Bantawa, various forms found in glossaries (e.g. monosyllabic ideophonic lexemes of Yamphu and Limbu). These may well exist in other languages but have escaped the notice of linguists for whatever number of reasons.

The four ideophone patterns and their occurrence in descriptions of various Kiranti languages are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Presence of ideophonic patterns in Kiranti language descriptions, by type (italicized language names represent grammars where the material is only found in glosses and not discussed)

		Fully	Partially	Fully	Partially	
Thulung	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Bantawa		✓	✓	✓		
<i>Limbu</i>		✓				
Hayu		✓	✓			
<i>Belhare</i>		✓	✓			
<i>Athpare</i>		✓				
<i>Camling</i>		✓	✓			
<i>Yamphu</i>					✓	✓
Wambule	✓	✓ ²⁹	✓ ²⁹			
Puma		✓	✓			
Yakkha	✓?	✓			✓	
Chintang		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dumi		✓			✓	
Khaling	✓	✓			✓	

4 Ideophonic lexemes in Nepali

A few articles in English present ideophonic lexemes in Nepali. Two articles by Nepali scholars (Pokharel 1993; Dahal 1999) focus on the iconic aspects of what they term onomatopoeia and phonesthetic elements, respectively, with discussions focused on vowel and consonant gradation rather than on the morphophonological patterns in the data.

In a recent contribution to a book on expressives in the South Asian linguistic area, van Driem (2021) presents an in-depth discussion of various ideophonic lexemes in Nepali,

²⁸ This transcription is used as a short-hand for how the final vowel/diphthong is transcribed in the languages: *ai*, *ai*.

²⁹ Wambule has reduplicated ideophones, both full and partial, which map onto what we have seen in other Kiranti languages, but they are not described and only identifiable through the appended lexicon, with the category gloss ‘adverb’. The criteria used to add Wambule to Table 6 therefore differ from other languages, where the check mark implies that the description (either in the text of the grammar, or in glosses in texts or a dictionary) explicitly connects the lexeme that fits our patterns with iconicity or sound symbolism. Using the same approach used for Wambule on other materials may yield a different distribution from that given in Table 6 in the form of many more check marks.

with examples from a wide-ranging corpus. Van Driem’s material is organized according to three main types of expressives: “Expressives ending in a geminate [X] sequence” (where X can be one of a number of consonants) (van Driem 2021: 67 ff.); “Reduplicated and rhyming expressives” (ibid: 106); and “Monosyllabic expressives” (ibid: 118). Among these, lexemes ending in a geminate sequence and monosyllabic ones are fairly straightforward categories descriptively speaking, whereas the category of reduplicated and rhyming lexemes cover a number of distinct patterns. Among the latter, fully reduplicated ideophonic lexemes are mostly based on a repeated monosyllable: *plyæt plyæt* ‘on both cheeks’ (i.e. slaps); *phjæt phjæt* ‘activities one after another in quick succession’, *bhyæt bhyæt* ‘image of rustle of flapping wings’, *kupu kupu* ‘eating in tiny mouthfuls and without pause’, *gwãgwã* ‘image of uncontrolled sobbing’, *simsim* ‘image of getting moist’, *bhusbhus* ‘image of fine drizzle in the air’, *grum grum* ‘notion of munching on something crunchy’. However, an example with a bisyllabic input is also given: *gultuŋ gultuŋ* ‘rolling action of a boulder’. In some cases, there is linguistic material between the reduplicated syllables (such as the *-a-* between the two identical syllables in *phətaphət* ‘movement conducted quickly, energetically and without unnecessary delay’ and in *dhəmadhəm* ‘image of activity of work executed quickly, energetically, and without unnecessary delay’; or the *-ki-* in *ɖæŋ ki ɖæŋ* ‘image of beating or striking’) and in others, additional suffixal material (*bhətbhəti* ‘image of intense internal burning’, *sərsərti* ‘image of skimming a document...’).

Partial reduplication is also found, with a change in the vowels in the reduplicated element: *kətcækkutcuk* ‘image of something crumpled up and dented’, *mərjækmuruk* ‘image of massage conducted by pinching and kneading movements’, *phələt phulut* ‘image of something that has been soaked or cooked to such an extent that it is soft or falling apart’. Partial triplication too is one of the patterns although only one example is provided: *gutuŋtu* ‘speed, sound of thud thud thud of running feet hitting the ground’.

Finally, a rhyming pattern is discussed, with a difference in the initial across the two elements of the reduplication (*olte kolte* ‘image of secret whispers at close quarters...’, *ukus mukus* ‘image of being in a stuffy place...’), as is an unclassified pattern (*əlapətrə* ‘image of being in a state of not knowing what to do’).

One particularity of the article is that van Driem distinguishes between expressives and onomatopoeia because he sees significant differences between the two:³⁰ (i) expressives

³⁰ “As parts of speech in their own right, expressives behave differently than onomatopoeia” (van Driem 2021: 76). (See also: “Nepali expressives are often pronounced at a higher pitch than the rest of the sentence in which

are not limited to onomatopoeia, and (ii) the distinct prosody of expressives. Van Driem (2021: 111) mentions, however, that “in the case of reduplicated forms, the transition from expressives to onomatopoeia appears to be a gradual one, separated perhaps by no more than a highly fuzzy and fluid border”, despite the prosodic differences and the fact that onomatopoeia “do not fulfill a function that could be described as adverbial”. Where the distinction between expressives and onomatopoeia becomes an issue with respect to the patterns discussed in Section 3 is when van Driem gives *darararara* (the sound of heavy rain) and *salalala* (the sound of smoothly flowing water) as examples of onomatopoeic and not expressive forms: I would have counted these as convincing examples of extended partially triplicated ideophonic lexemes, on par with *guṭuṭu* (which is treated as an expressive in the article); their being assigned to different word classes by van Driem highlights the terminological and definitional challenges that surround these types of words.

Table 7 lays out the main types of Nepali expressives in the chapter, once again organizing them according to the terminology adopted for the ideophonic patterns in Table 6.

Table 7: Nepali expressives as per van Driem (2021).

Monosyllabic	Reduplicated	Triplicated	Geminate C
‘Monosyllabic expressives’: only 2 listed, <i>ṭap + kasnu</i> ‘bolt off’; <i>ṭvā + parnu</i> ‘gape in puzzlement’	Comprised within ‘reduplicated and rhyming expressives’: fully reduplicated, e.g. <i>bhjæt bhjæt</i> ‘image of rustle of flapping wings’; partially reduplicated, e.g. <i>phəlæt phulut</i> ‘image of something that has been soaked or cooked to such an extent that it is soft or falling apart’	Comprised within ‘reduplicated and rhyming expressives’: partially triplicated, e.g. <i>guṭuṭu</i> ‘speed, sound of running feet hitting the ground’	‘Expressives ending in a geminate sequence’: e.g. <i>sutukkə</i> ‘secretly’ <i>khusukkə</i> ‘deftly’

they are embedded, whereas onomatopoeic forms [...] usually tend to receive the same prosodic intonation as a direct quote”, van Driem [2021: 67]).

A comparison of Tables 6 and 7 shows that the similarities of patterns found among Kiranti language descriptions extend to Nepali as well: Nepali ideophonic lexemes are marked by reduplication, both full and partial, partial triplication (recall that Kiranti languages tended to favor either partial or full triplication), a pattern with a geminate C, and a monosyllabic pattern. Unlike the situation for Kiranti languages, however, van Driem's extensive discussion of the various sequences suggests that the geminate consonant sequence pattern is the dominant pattern in Nepali.

5 Discussion

The data presented above suggests the presence of shared morphophonological patterns in what are assumed, on the basis of their descriptions, to be ideophones in various Kiranti languages and in Nepali. One interesting question is whether any of the patterns can be considered more centrally ideophonic than the others. The most frequently attested pattern in Table 6 is the fully reduplicated type of ideophone, closely followed by the partial reduplicated pattern. The omnipresence of the reduplicated pattern in Kiranti languages makes it a good candidate for a more central ideophone pattern for these languages. The second most frequent ideophone pattern is the one involving triplication although it is found in only half of the languages surveyed.

The monosyllabic pattern and the geminated pattern are considerably less frequent in what appear to be different ways. The geminated final pattern is a very well established pattern in Nepali (van Driem 2021), and a few of the Kiranti descriptions label similarly patterning ideophones as Nepali loans. The monosyllabic/preverbal pattern, on the other hand, which is only described for four languages (and, in the case of Yakkha, it is questionable whether it even qualifies), is only referred to as an ideophone in half of the sample (including in Khaling, where the description, and therefore label, is mine).

As concerns Thulung, reduplicated and triplicated ideophones are the most central members of the ideophone class as suggested by the number of items in each class³¹ as well as by other properties: only these two types host derivational morphology, and they cover more sensory domains than ideophonic preverbs and geminated ideophones. Furthermore, they

³¹ While this is not necessarily the case with my corpus, Allen (1975: 107) notes, "If many adjectives are formed this way [through reduplication], even more adverbs are, if indeed a distinction can be drawn between the two categories". Note that he apparently considers what I label triplicated ideophones as reduplicated adverbs since they are listed in the same section.

show prosodic patterns which often match those of prosaic vocabulary. These properties bring us to the question of movement out of the ideophone class.³²

Dingemanse (2017) and Dingemanse and Akita (2017) present a framework mapping increases in the morphosyntactic integration of ideophones with a concurrent loss of expressivity, also suggesting that frequency of use is a factor leading to de-ideophonization, when ideophones are repurposed as prosaic vocabulary. Thulung reduplicated and triplicated ideophones are defined by an expressive feature, that is their reduplicated and triplicated patterns, but from a prosodic point of view they are closer to prosaic vocabulary than other ideophone types. The fact that they can undergo derivation – with nominalizer *-m* (also used to derive lexemes with an attributive function) and adverbializer *-ja* (with no change in function) for reduplicated ideophones, and with adverbializer *-maks* for triplicated ideophones – results in considerably more morphosyntactic integration than is the case for ideophonic preverbs and geminated ideophones, which cannot combine with any morphology. The nominalization process, in particular, serves to turn reduplicated ideophones into words with a number of functions, from nominals to adjective-like words, and it seems reasonable to speak here of de-ideophonization.

As for ideophonic preverbs, the hypothesized lexical source listed in Section 2.3.1 – the verb ‘press’ – makes it possible to consider that at least some ideophones of this type could have originated from either verbal or nominal material. It seems that the complex predicates found in Thulung (and some other Kiranti languages), which have their source in the grammaticalization of full verbs, could point to a widespread process of ideophonization into ideophonic preverbs, but it could also be that the lexical source listed above is an exceptional situation of a prosaic word having undergone ideophonization. A much more complete list of ideophonic preverbs in Thulung is necessary in order to consider the question of their origin, as is a better sense of the presence of this type of ideophone in other Kiranti languages.

Ideophonic preverbs found in the Thulung corpus used here are mostly borrowed from Nepali (although the first two in Table 4 are only found in Thulung). It is currently unclear how widespread the pattern may be in Thulung and what the input material may be for the pattern which is shared with Nepali.

We now turn to the question of language contact. The similarity in the patterns in Kiranti descriptions and those described for Nepali suggests that we are dealing not with

³² Bonnie McLean, who reviewed the paper, is the one who brought the patterns supporting ideophonization and de-ideophonization to my attention; she is gratefully acknowledged for her insights.

patterns specific to Kiranti but rather with areal patterns extending across language-family boundaries. Work by Emeneau (1969) on onomatopoeics in the Indian linguistic area laid the groundwork for research into areal patterns in the ideophonic lexemes of South Asia. Although he uses the term ‘onomatopoeia’, his description of a word class which “denotes varied types of sensation, the impingement of the material world, outside or within the person, upon the senses – not merely the five conventionally identified senses, but all the feeling, both external and internal” (Emeneau 1969: 284) suggests that he is referring to what are now frequently considered ideophones. Exploring ideophonic lexemes in Dravidian and Indo-Aryan languages, Emeneau proposes a list of characteristics that these words share across the languages of the two families: “reduplicated and non-reduplicated stems; reduplication both in identical form and with some change; verbal derivatives from the onomatopoeic stems; formations with *-k/-ak-* based on the non-reduplicated stem”³³ (Emeneau 1969: 282). He analyzes a number of onomatopoeia found across the two language families as “areal etymologies”, defined as having shared phonetics and semantics (Emeneau 1969: 283) resulting from areal diffusion, which he suggests was borrowed from Dravidian into Indo-Aryan.

Reprising Emeneau’s term in discussing Indo-Aryan languages, Masica (1991) states that onomatopoeia are a feature “of all the languages of region: Dravidian, Munda, Mon-Khmer and Indo-Aryan” (Masica 1991: 78), with a characteristic reduplicated CVC-CVC structure, further claiming that “[i]t was basically the pattern that was borrowed, not the individual items” (Masica 1991: 79). The fact that ideophone patterns in other Kiranti language descriptions and in Nepali map onto those found in Thulung suggests the areal diffusion of patterns across language family boundaries in Nepal.

Connecting these phenomena with the wider literature on pattern and matter borrowing (Matras and Sakel 2007a; 2007b), the morphophonological patterns presented above (in Sections 2.3.5 and 3.4) do not seem like a natural fit with the definitions given: matter borrowing is “the replication of morphological material from the source language”, while pattern borrowing is “the replication of usage patterns (organisation, distribution, and the mapping of grammatical or semantic meaning)” (Matras and Sakel 2007a: 841). The patterns we have identified do not introduce new phonemes as they would if they were pattern-loans in the domain of phonology (Sakel 2007: 17). They do, however, seem to be accounted for in Gardani’s (2020: 270–272) typology of borrowing, who uses the

³³ The latter appears to be the source for the Nepali ideophonic lexemes with geminates in their final syllable.

mattern/pattern dichotomy, in his Type 2.4.1 ‘Phonotactic constraints (e.g. types of syllable structure)’, which is a subset of Type 2.4 ‘Pattern borrowing of distributional and organizational properties’.

It is not a completely straightforward question to determine whether the ideophonic patterns seen above are simply shared morphophonological templates, or whether there is a basis for saying that it is the matter which is shared, but the latter possibility cannot be resolved because ideophones are not well described in the languages in question. With only small lists of ideophonic lexemes, often serving as illustrations of the patterns rather than as extensive documentation of the category, it is sometimes a matter of chance whether a given grammar lists an ideophonic lexeme which is potentially cognate with one documented in another language. This is exacerbated by the different labels used and furthermore, in the case of Thulung ideophonic preverbs, by the fact that they have undifferentiated meanings. For example, Wambule *phlu* (identified as “*adv* emphatic word” (Opgenort 2004: 698)), which collocates with *bwarcam* meaning “drive out, take out, cause to come out, pluck out” (ibid: 575) looks like a convincing cognate to Thulung *phl̥ə*: (‘abruptly’, see Table 1), which collocates with the verb *lu:mu* ‘exit’, not only in terms of the form of the ideophone but also in the semantics of its paired verb. A different situation is found in the data on Bantawa and Chintang, where cognate triplicated adverbs are found but mostly limited to those derived from nominal or verbal bases³⁴ – in other words the ones not considered ideophonic by their authors even though they share the pattern of triplication. One of the issues of course is that specific patterns characterizing different types of ideophones and fairly similar vowel and consonant inventories among Kiranti languages result in overlap in at least some of the ideophones. For example, in Khaling the same bases were sometimes found with different ideophone patterns, sometimes with related meanings, and sometimes with completely different meanings (Lahaussois 2017: 189). Determining whether the semantics are a match involves being confronted with a comparison of sometimes minimal glosses for words that have been described, cross-linguistically, as notoriously difficult to translate (e.g. Msimang and Poulos 2001: 235), as well as with the marginality of the description of ideophones, often with just a few words standing in for the entire class in a given language, with no subcategorization on the basis of patterns.

³⁴ Only one form sharing an ideophonic base is common to both descriptions: Bantawa *dükdükdükwa*, used with a description of a shaman shivering continuously, and Chintang *dikdikdikwa*, used with a sentence describing someone seriously ill; but note that Rai et al.’s (2005) article on the latter language does not cover an extensive number of forms.

The study of shared matter among Kiranti ideophones, using dictionaries where possible as a much more semantically fine-grained source, remains an essential step in understanding the spread of ideophones in the area, but it requires that the material be identifiable as ideophonic, something which may be less obvious when ideophones take derivational morphology and lose distinctive prosody – as with Thulung reduplicated ideophones, many of which could be seen as prosaic as a result of the loss in expressivity which has come about through the process of de-ideophonization in some cases. It is hoped that the present contribution represents some headway towards identifying the patterns – an essential exercise, given the different practices in classifying these words – in order to have access to materials which will also provide a better sense of the interactions between patterns and matter within this word class in Kiranti and beyond.

6 Conclusion

In this article, I have provided a description of the ideophones of Thulung, which I have categorized into four types on the basis of the morphophonological patterns they exhibit, of their semantic functions, and their syntactic behavior.

As the data for this description is based purely on a narrative corpus, it has served as a small case study of the possibilities for an analysis of ideophones without carrying out elicitation,³⁵ especially in contrast with the more in-depth study of the ideophones of Khaling (Lahaussais 2017) based on both corpus materials and elicitation. This study finds the same range of ideophone types (with an additional type which had not been considered in Khaling) even though fewer tokens of ideophones were found for Thulung. In comparison with Khaling, the study of Thulung ideophones was unable to do more than suggest the possibility of vowel and consonant gradations (see the last paragraph of Section 2.3.3), attested in Khaling, which would be much more readily captured through elicitation work on minimal/near minimal pairs. Furthermore, our understanding of the semantics and uses of ideophones – something which Dingemanse has called for (Dingemanse 2012; Dingemanse in press) and which has been convincingly exemplified in work such as McLean (2021) for

³⁵ According to Chelliah (2001: 152), to name but one scholar, “language description based solely on textual data results in patchy and incomplete descriptions”. I agree that the description of ideophones herein is incomplete, but I also feel that it is usable and that if the corpus is sufficiently large, it can reveal the general outlines of a category well enough, especially when the data is placed within the context of that from a closely related language.

Japonic – and specifically the sensory domains covered by the different ideophone types in Thulung is less fine-grained than it is for Khaling, on account of the (for now) closed data set.

I presented the types of ideophones found in descriptions of other Kiranti languages, mapping these onto the four types I found in Thulung, and found that the same mapping could also be done for the Nepali ideophones, labeled expressives, as they are described in van Driem (2021).

The existence of similar morphophonological patterns across Kiranti languages and in Nepali, something already noted generally for the South Asian linguistic area by Emeneau and Masica, suggests that a more widespread identification and documentation of ideophone patterns in other parts of the Tibeto-Burman family will yield interesting insights.

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Non-Leipzig abbreviations

CONJ	conjunction
IDEO	ideophone
INT	intensifier
HAB	habitual
HS	hearsay
COM	comitative
TEMP	temporal marker

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