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Holophrastic use of ideophones in Japanese*

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1. Introduction

Ideophones are defined as "member[s] of an open lexical class of marked words that depict sensory imagery" (Dingemanse 2019: 16). They are attested in numerous languages worldwide (Voeltz and Kilian-Hatz 2001), and Japanese is no exception. In discussions of the morphosyntax of ideophones, scholars often focus on their part-of-speech categories when these items appear in sentences. In Japanese, ideophones typically occur in one of three grammatical categories: adverbs (e.g., *kúrukuru*(-to) 'turning' (1a)), adjectival nominals (e.g., *kurukuru* 'curly' (1b)), and verbs (e.g., *búrabura-suru* 'sway' (1c)) (see Kita 1997; Hamano 1998; Akita 2009; Toratani 2017, among others).[1]

(1) a. *Koma-ga kúrukuru-to mawat-te.iru*. [adverb]
top-NOM IDEO.turning-P turn-GER-exist
'The top is turning round and round.'
b. *Sono-ko-wa kami-ga kurukuru-da*. [adjectival nominal]
that-child-TOP hair-NOM IDEO.curly-COP
'That child's hair is curly.'
c. *Ashi-o búrabura-shi-te-iru*. [verb]
leg-ACC IDEO.swaying-do-GER-exist
'(She) is swaying her legs.'

By contrast, ideophones' use as a holophrase, like those in (2), has received much less attention.

(2) a. *GachaN*.
IDEO.bang

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[1] Abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: ACC=accusative, Ad-P=adverbial phrase, COP=copula, EVID=evidential, GEN=genitive, GER=gerundive, IDEO=ideophone, IF=illocutionary force, LSC=layered structure of the clause, *N*=moraic nasal, NEG=negative, NOM=nominative, NPAST=non-past, NUC=nucleus, P=particle, PASS=passive, PP=pre(/post)positional phrase, PrDP=pre-detached position, PRED=predicate, PROG=progressive, *Q*=moraic obstruent, Q=question, RP=reference phrase, SFP=sentence final particle, TNS=tense and TOP=topic.

‘(Someone) banged (the door shut)’.
(https://nlb.ninjal.ac.jp/headword/OM.00457/#SS11)

b. *ZuruQ.*
IDEO.slip
‘(Someone) slipped (down to the ground).’
(https://nlb.ninjal.ac.jp/headword/OM.02205/#SS56)

c. *Gokuri*
IDEO.gulp
‘(Someone) gulped (down something).
(https://nlb.ninjal.ac.jp/headword/OM.00359/#SS314)

A key distinction between the ideophones in examples (1) and (2) lies in their morphosyntactic behavior. Those in (1)—which appear within a sentence—are either marked by a particle (1a/1b) or combined with a light verb meaning ‘do’ (1c). In contrast, the ideophones in (2) occur, standing alone, without accompanying particles or light verbs. This contrast raises an important question: How is the syntactic structure of holophrastic ideophones represented? Toratani (2017) previously proposed a layered structure of the clause (LSC) within the framework of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) but did not explain why holophrastic ideophones adopt this structure. This paper reexamines the syntactic nature of holophrastic ideophones, drawing on Heine’s (2023) observations, and proposing an alternative to the structure suggested by Toratani (2017).

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 explores the structure of holophrastic ideophones in detail. Section 2.1 outlines the properties of “interactives” as described by Heine (2023), who characterizes holophrastic ideophones as a subtype of “interactives”. The subsection demonstrates how these properties apply to Japanese ideophones. Section 2.2 analyzes the syntactic structure of holophrastic ideophones through the lens of RRG, incorporating Heine’s (2023) observations. Section 3 offers concluding remarks.

2. The structure of holophrastic ideophones

Heine (2023) defines “interactive” as “an invariable deictic form that is in some way set off from the surrounding text semantically, syntactically and prosodically and can neither be negated nor questioned” (2023: 7). His examples of interactives include holophrastic ideophones (English *Thud!*), along with other forms, such as attention signals like *Hey!*, social formulae like *Bye!*, and vocatives like *Mom!*. This section focuses on three of the four defining characteristics outlined by Heine: (a) separation from the immediate linguistic environment (i.e., holophrastic ideophones are “in some way set off from the surrounding text semantically, syntactically and prosodically”), (b) un-negatability, and (c) unquestionability. Section 2.1 demonstrates that these three features (a–c) are indeed applicable to holophrastic ideophones in Japanese. Section 2.2 then explores how these features can be interpreted within the framework of RRG, offering insight into their structure.

2.1. Characteristics of holophrastic ideophones in Japanese

2.1.1. Separation from the immediate linguistic environment

As mentioned above, Heine (2023: 7) notes interactives, including holophrastic ideophones, are “in some way set off from the surrounding text semantically, syntactically and prosodically”. Three examples, (3), (4), and (5), are used to elaborate on this point.

In (3) and (4), the (a)-examples contain a holophrastic ideophone, the (b)-examples, which qualify as the "surrounding text", show the context that clarifies what the ideophones express. In (5), the order of the ideophone and the surrounding text is reversed. In all cases, the (c)-examples indicate the location of a major phonological break when the (a)- and (b)- examples are uttered in sequence at a natural speed.

(3) a. *GachaN!*
IDEO.crash
'(Something) crashed (into the ground).'
b. *Garasu wa ware suingu wa dainashi.*
glass TOP crash.and swing TOP be.ruined
'The glass crashed, and my swing was ruined'
(https://nlb.ninjal.ac.jp/headword/OM.00457/#SS193)
c. *GachaN!* || *Garasu wa ware* | *suingu wa dainashi*. (|= phonological break)

(4) a. *Kurukuru…*
IDEO.turning
'(Something) is turning round and round.'
b. *Atto.iu.ma.ni kami ga mak-are-te-iku.*
in.a.flash hair NOM curl-PASS-GER-go
'In no time, her hair gets curled up.'
(https://nlb.ninjal.ac.jp/headword/OM.00061/#SS35)
c. *Kurukuru*. || *Atto.iu.ma.ni kami ga mak-are-te-iku*. (|= phonological break)

(5) a. *Kuriimu wa orenji-kajuu-iri-rashii-yo ~*
cream TOP orenji-fruit.juice-containment-EVID-SFP
'I hear the cream contains orange juice; I tell you.'
b. *Wakuwaku* ♪
IDEO.excited
'(I) am excited.'
(https://nlb.ninjal.ac.jp/headword/OM.00040/#SS6)
c. *Kuriimu wa orenji-kajuu-iri-rashii-yo.* || *Wakuwaku*.

(3) describes a scene of someone practicing his golf swing. The holophrastic ideophone in (3a), *GachaN!,* depicts the noisy sound emitted when something crashes into a hard object. (4) refers to a scene of a hair-styling contest. The ideophone in (4a), *Kurukuru.* (pronounced as /*kúru kúru*/), depicts the rolling (turning-around/curling) movement of something. (5a) describes something about the food the speaker is about to eat, and the ideophone in (5b), *Wakuwaku* (pronounced as /*wáku wáku*/), depicts how excited she is.

Heine's (2023: 7) point on semantic separation (i.e., holophrastic ideophones are "in some way set off from the surrounding text semantically") seems to mean that what is depicted by the holophrastic ideophone is distinct from what is portrayed by the immediately preceding or following text. This applies to the examples above. The holophrastic ideophone *GachaN!* (3a) depicts an event in which something crashes into a hard object, and this state of affairs itself is distinct from what (3b) denotes. Similarly, *Kurukuru.* in (4a) depicts an on-going action in which something is rolling/ curling/turning around, which is distinct from the description in (4b)'s commentary note.

(5a) is a description about a food item, which is distinct from what the ideophone in (5b) depicts, i.e., the speaker's excitement.

Turning next to the matter of prosody, a distinct and substantial phonological boundary is observed between holophrastic ideophones and the adjacent sentence, whether preceding or following, as represented by the two vertical lines in the (c)-examples. In each instance, the duration of this phonological break between the (a)-example and the (b)-example is major, comparable to the pause typically employed at the end of a regular sentence. This phenomenon indicates that the phonological break simultaneously functions as syntactic disjunction, thereby implying that syntactically, the holophrastic ideophone (e.g., (3a)) is not part of the surrounding text (e.g., (3b)).

Furthermore, it is essential to underscore that holophrastic ideophones, such as those illustrated in (3a), (4a), and (5b), do not sound elliptical. This characteristic distinguishes them from single-word utterances of prosaic words. For example, an utterance of "*Ame*." (meaning 'rain') implies the presence of un-uttered elements. The utterance of *Ame* suggests the speaker has perceived a change in the environment—namely, the onset of rain—and has responded with a truncated expression in lieu of the full sentence, *Ame ga fut-te ki-ta* [rain-NOM fall-GER come-PAST] 'It started to rain.' Similarly, the utterance "*Taberu!*" (meaning 'eat') is interpreted as an expression of intent by the speaker, with the subject 'I' being omitted, consistent with Japanese as a so-called pro-drop language. This type of construal involving 'null elements' does not apply to holophrastic ideophones.

2.1.2. Un-negatability and unquestionability

This section considers whether un-negatability and unquestionability apply to holophrastic ideophones in Japanese.

The negation marker in Japanese is *-nai*. It can be combined with an adjective (which ends in *i*) as in (6a), a verb (which ends in *u*) as in (6b), or a copula as in (6c).

(6) a. *Ooki-i.* → *Ookiku-nai.* ✓[Adjective]
big-NPAST big-NEG
'(It) is big.' '(It) is not big.'
b. *Nom-u.* → *Noma-nai.* ✓[Verb]
drink-NPAST drink-NEG
'(I) will drink.' '(I) will not drink.'
c. *Ame-da.* → *Ame-ja-nai.* ✓[Copula]
rain-COP rain-COP-NEG
'(It's) rain.' '(It's) not rain.'

However, *-nai* 'not' cannot be combined with a holophrastic ideophone as represented by the asterisks in (7). The ideophones are repeated from (2) and (5b).

(7) a. *GachaN.* →|× **GachaN-nai.*
IDEO.bang IDEO.bang-NEG
'(Someone) banged (the door shut)'.
b. *ZuruQ.* →|× **ZuruQ-nai.*
IDEO.slip IDEO.slip-NEG
'(Someone) slipped (down to the ground).'

c. *Gokuri.* →|× **Gokuri-nai.*
IDEO.gulp IDEO.gulp-NEG
'(Someone) gulped (down something).
d. *Wakuwaku.* →|× **Wakuwaku-nai.*
IDEO.excited IDEO.excited-NEG
'(I am) excited.'

A similar point can be said about unquestionability. Questions in Japanese are formed by adding the question particle *ka* at the end of the clause, as in (8a) and (8b).

(8) a. *Oishii-desu.* → *Oishii-desu-ka.* ✓[Clause]
delicious-COP delicious-COP-Q
'(It) is delicious.' 'Is (it) delicious?'
b. *Iki-masu.* → *Iki-masu-ka.* ✓[Clause]
go.POL.NPAST go-POL-Q
'(I) will go.' 'Will you go?'

However, the particle *ka* cannot be added to the holophrastic ideophones as in (9). Examples are repeated from (7).

(9) a. *GachaN.* →|× **GachaN-ka.*
IDEO.bang IDEO.bang-Q
'(Someone) banged (the door shut)'.
b. *ZuruQ.* →|× **ZuruQ-ka.*
IDEO.slip IDEO.slip-Q
'(Someone) slipped (down to the ground).'
c. *Gokuri.* →|× **Gokuri-ka.*
IDEO.gulp IDEO.gulp-Q
'(Someone) gulped (down something).
d. *Wakuwaku.* →|× **Wakuwaku-ka.*
IDEO.excited IDEO.excited-Q
'(I am) excited.'

In short, Heine's observations on interactives can be shown to apply to holophrastic ideophones in Japanese in terms of separation from the immediate linguistic environment, un-negatability, and unquestionability. The next task is to determine what these characteristics signify in RRG terms.

2.2 The structure of the holophrastic ideophones

Toratani (2017) proposes the LSC for a holophrastic ideophone, *Péta Péta*. 'Stick Stick.', as in (10),[2] but without any justification.

[2] The representation of (10) is adapted from Toratani (2017: 51), who represents the LSC of the holophrastic ideophone in a tree format. The term "mimetics" used in that earlier work is replaced by "ideophones" here, to be compatible with the more commonly used term in recent literature. The representation also uses *petapeta* followed by a note */pétapéta/, */pétapeta/*. For simplicity, it is represented as *Péta Péta* in the text.

(10) [SENTENCE [CLAUSE [CORE [NUC [PRED [IDEOPHONE *Péta Péta*.]]]]]]

The representation in (10) leads to two important questions: (i) Why is the holophrastic ideophone represented as "layered"? (Note the ideophone is represented in the innermost layer in (10)); (ii) Why is the highest unit (i.e., the outermost unit in (10)) identified as "sentence"? The next subsections explore these questions, considering the three characteristics observed in Section 2.1. and arguing the structure in (10) cannot be supported.

2.2.1. The relevance of layering

The first task is to consider what the un-negatability and unquestionability of holophrastic ideophones signify in the structural representation. In RRG, negation and question (illocutionary force) are operators (Van Valin 2005: 12, 2023: 33). The inability of holophrastic ideophones to co-occur with these operators hints that they may be unable to co-occur with other operators either. This turns out to be the case, as shown in (11). Three ideophones, from (9a-b) and (9d), are selected and repeated for illustration below.

(11) a. *GachaN.* →|× **GachaN-te.iru.*
IDEO.bang IDEO.bang-PROG
'(Someone) banged (the door shut)'.

b. *ZuruQ.* →|× **ZuruQ-te.iru.*
IDEO.slip IDEO.slip-PROG
'(Someone) slipped (down to the ground).'

c. *Wakuwaku.* →|× **Wakuwaku-te.iru.*
IDEO.excited IDEO.excited-PROG
'(I am) excited.'

d. *GachaN.* →|× **GachaN-ta.*
IDEO.bang IDEO.bang-PAST
'(Someone) banged (the door shut)'.

e. *ZuruQ.* →|× **ZuruQ-ta.*
IDEO.slip IDEO.slip-PAST
'(Someone) slipped (down to the ground).'

f. *Wakuwaku.* →|× **Wakuwaku-ta.*
IDEO.excited IDEO.excited-PAST
'(I am) excited.'

g. *GachaN.* →|× **GachaN-kamoshirenai.*
IDEO.bang IDEO.bang-may
'(Someone) banged (the door shut)'.

h. *ZuruQ.* →|× **ZuruQ-kamoshirenai.*
IDEO.slip IDEO.slip-may
'(Someone) slipped (down to the ground).'

i. *Wakuwaku.* →|× **Wakuwaku-kamoshirenai.*
IDEO.excited IDEO.excited-may
'(I am) excited.'

k. *GachaN.* →|× **GachaN-soo.*
IDEO.bang IDEO.bang-EVID
'(Someone) banged (the door shut)'.

l. *ZuruQ.* →|× **ZuruQ-soo.*
IDEO.slip IDEO.slip-EVID
'(Someone) slipped (down to the ground).'
m. *Wakuwaku.* →|× **Wakuwaku-soo.*
IDEO.excited IDEO.excited-EVID
'(I am) excited.'

As (11) shows, holophrastic ideophones cannot be marked by an aspect marker (a nuclear operator) (*-te.iru* PROG) (11a–c), a tense marker (clause operator) (*-ta* PAST) (11d–f), an epistemic modality marker (core operator) (*-soo* 'hear') (11g–i), or an evidential marker (clause operator) (*-soo* 'hear') (11k–m). This shows holophrastic ideophones cannot be marked by the operators regardless of which layer they modify.

An obvious question is why holophrastic ideophones cannot take operators. One possible answer is the lack of the required morphological shapes for operators to attach to. For example, the negative marker can attach to an adjective, a verb, or a copula of prosaic words, each of which has a specific morphological ending (see (6)). But holophrastic ideophones do not have the same morphological ending as prosaic words (see e.g., (2)). This seems to suggest holophrastic ideophones are formally incompatible with operators. Further, this formal incompatibility seems motivated by semantic incompatibility: i.e., holophrastic ideophones are inherently incompatible with the concepts expressed by the operators. This leads to another question: Why are holophrastic ideophones semantically incompatible with such concepts as past tense, progression, negation, and hearsay? (12) represents a response to this question.[3]

(12) *BatabatabataQ!!!*
IDEO.fluttering
'Fluttering!!!'

The holophrastic ideophone in (12) serves as the sole caption accompanying a moment photograph, depicting a small bird in a nest (enclosed within a cage) vigorously fluttering its wings. This instance illustrates an event occurring directly before the cognizer's eyes. In this context, the ideophone functions as a representation of the scene viewed from a "proximal" (Talmy 2000: 68) perspective point (Toratani 2024), or in Nuckols' terms, the ideophone represents an "image of an action unfolding in time" (Nuckolls, 1996: 14). Due to this immediacy, the utterance of an ideophone such as *BatabatabataQ!!!* implies that the bird is actively fluttering its wings at that precise moment, ceasing the action upon completion of the utterance. Alternatively, the ideophone may serve as an iconic reenactment of the fluttering event. In either case, the holophrastic ideophone encapsulates a *fait accompli*—a completed event. Consequently, the finality of the depicted action cannot be changed by adding operators, such as aspectual and tense markers.

I now review the characteristics of the LSC for a sentence consisting of prosaic words represented in Figure 1 to evaluate whether the LSC's features can be transferred to capture the representation of holophrastic ideophones.

[3] For the original photo, see https://www.hama-midorinokyokai.or.jp/zoo/zoorasia/details/2025/post-558064.php.

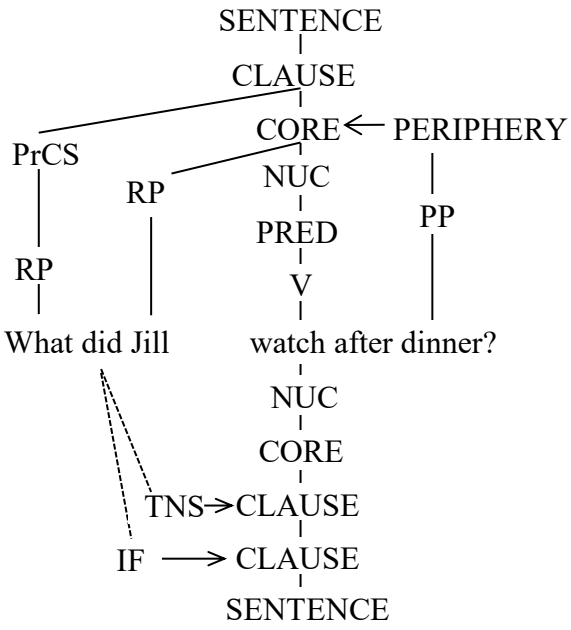

Figure 1: The LSC for *What did Jill watch after dinner?*

Figure 1 illustrates the LSC for the sentence *What did Jill watch after dinner?* The upper portion of the diagram represents the constituent projection, while the lower portion depicts the operator projection (cf. Van Valin 2023). As demonstrated in this representation, the constituent projection must indicate that the referential phrase (RP) is part of the core. Additionally, non-predicating elements—such as prepositional phrases (PPs) located in the periphery—must specify the syntactic unit they modify, which can be the nucleus, the core, and/or the clause. The directional arrow in Figure 1 serves to illustrate such a modificational relationship. Likewise, within the operator projection, each operator must identify the specific layer it modifies—be it the nucleus, the core, or the clause. In Figure 1, both the tense operator and the illocutionary force (IF) are shown to modify the clause. The necessity of indicating which elements participate in modificational relationships or contribute to the formation of syntactic units substantiates the postulation of distinct layers in sentences composed of multiple prosaic words and grammatical morphemes.

By contrast, a unit consisting solely of a holophrastic ideophone diverges fundamentally from a sentence consisting of multiple prosaic words and grammatical morphemes. As discussed in Section 2.2.1, holophrastic ideophones are not subject to modification by any operators. Consequently, the justification for an operator projection in their representation is untenable.

Moreover, the constituent projection, if applied, would encompass only the holophrastic ideophone itself. In the absence of additional syntactic units—such as an RP within the core or a PP modifying a specific layer—the rationale for positing the nucleus, the core, and the clause becomes logically indefensible. In other words, holophrastic expressions function as self-contained utterances, devoid of co-occurring elements that would necessitate a layered syntactic analysis.

Taken collectively, the lack of empirical support for the presence of layered structures in both the operator and constituent projections strongly suggests that holophrastic ideophones should not be represented by the LSC.

If the structure cannot be layered, does this imply that the highest unit of the LSC—namely, the "sentence"—loses its relevance? Put differently, what structural unit accommodates a holophrastic ideophone? To explore this question, I use a diagnostic test based on a sentential juncture.

In RRG, a sentential juncture links multiple sentences within a discourse unit referred to as "TEXT," as illustrated in (13):

(13) Sentential Juncture: [TEXT. . .[SENTENCE. . .]. . . + . . .[SENTENCE. . .] . . .]
(Van Valin 2023: 69)

Example (13) demonstrates that multiple sentences can be combined to form a text. The relationship between these sentences—referred to as the nexus type—may involve coordination, subordination, or cosubordination, although the specific instantiation of these types depends on the language in question.

If a holophrastic ideophone functions as a sentence, it should be capable of participating in a sentential juncture. That is, we should be able to substitute one of the sentences with a holophrastic ideophone, provided it is semantically compatible with the surrounding discourse under the text node. I test this through sentential coordination, a subtype of sentential juncture. Example (14) presents an English instance of sentential coordination that conveys a temporally unordered sequence of events (Van Valin 2005: 207, bold face added).

(14) ***Tyrone talked to Tanisha****, and* ***Yolanda chattered with Karen****.*

(14) consists of two sentences shown in bold, connected by a coordinate conjunction *and*.

(15) gives the translation of (14) in Japanese, showing the translation equivalent is available, though we must separate the sequence into two separate sentences. This, however, does not affect the intention of the diagnostic test because multiple sentences can be housed under the text node whether the sentences are conjoined or independent.

(15) *Tyrone wa Tanisha ni hanashi.kake-ta.*
Tyrone TOP Tanisha to talk.to-PAST
Soshite, Yoranda wa Karen to shabet-ta.
And Yoranda TOP Karen with chatter-PAST
'Tyrone talked to Tanisha. And, Yolanda chattered with Karen.'

Since we have a holophrastic ideophone *pécha pécha* meaning 'chattering', we should be able to put it in place of the second sentence after *soshite* 'and', or since the two sentences are temporally unordered, we should be able to flip the order of the two sentences in (15) and put the ideophone in place of the first sentence. The result is shown in (16) and (17).

(16) *Tyrone wa Tanisha ni hanashi.kake-ta. Soshite, pécha pécha.*
Tyrone TOP Tanisha to talk.to-PAST and IDEO.$_{chattering}$
'(lit.) Tyrone talked to Tanisha. And, chattering.'
/*'Tyrone talked to Tanisha. And, *Yolanda chattered with Karen*.'

(17) *Pécha pécha.* Soshite, *Tyrone wa Tanisha ni hanashi.kake-ta.*
IDEO.$_{chattering}$ and Tyrone TOP Tanisha to talk.to-PAST

‘(lit.) Chattering. And Tyrone talked to Tanisha.’
/*‘Yolanda chattered with Karen. And Tyrone talked to Tanisha.’

Neither example (16) nor (17) yields the intended interpretation, as the ideophone in question functions merely as a reenactment of ambient vocal noise rather than a representation of a specific speech event involving identifiable referents—such as Yolanda conversing with Karen.

The inability of (16) to convey the meaning of (15) underscores that the holophrastic ideophone does not constitute a sentence, in the syntactic sense—that is, a sentence comprised of multiple elements consisting of prosaic words and grammatical components. Consequently, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that holophrastic ideophones take the LSC, whose highest unit is the sentence. If this is the case, how should a holophrastic ideophone be represented structurally?

I propose that holophrastic ideophones are best analyzed under the category of “utterance,” adopting the terminology employed by Dingemanse (2011) and drawing upon Lyons’s (2012) definition of the term.

In his analysis of Siwu ideophones, Dingemanse (2011:144) refers to constructions such as example (18) as instances of the “Utterance construction,” wherein the ideophone *Totoro-↑to:!↑* (‘thick’) appears subsequent to a clause that semantically contextualizes the ideophone.

(18) *kɔ̃rɔ̃, ì-rɔ nɛmɔ̀ sina, so akodzɛ. Totoro-↑to:!↑*
now I-thing.INDEF REL.I-there meat elephant A.PL-skins IDPH.thick-EM
‘Now the meat of that thing, elephant skins. Totoro-↑to: ↑! [thick] Drums

Dingemanse (2011:144) observes that in constructions such as (18), “the ideophone comprises an intonation unit on its own,” thereby reinforcing its status as an independent utterance.

Lyons (2012: 172) writes: “‘utterance’ is more primitive than ‘word’, ‘sentence’, ‘morpheme’, etc., in that its application does not rest upon any technical definitions or postulates of the science of language”, in which “by ‘primitive’ is meant ‘undefined within the theory’, ‘pre-theoretical’.” Given this postulation, (4) might look like Figure 3.

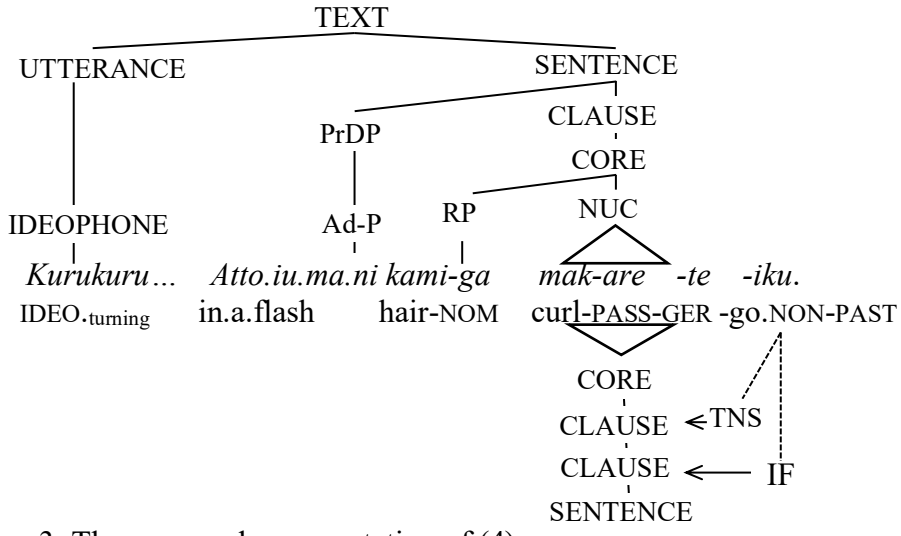

Figure 3: The proposed representation of (4)

Note the regular sentence consisting of prosaic words (the right side of Figure 3) is represented in both the constituent and the operator projection. The representation of the holophrastic ideophone *Kurukuru.* 'turning round and round', contained in the unit UTTERANCE, is preceded. The holophrastic ideophone and the regular sentence are housed under TEXT, showing that the holophrastic ideophone is part of the textual discourse.

3. Concluding remarks

This paper explores the structure of holophrastic ideophones, arguing that they possess an un-layered structure, represented in neither the constituent projection nor the operator projection. It proposes "UTTERANCE" as a more appropriate unit than "sentence" posited in Toratani (2017). Though this paper discusses Japanese data, many languages seem to use ideophones as a holophrase (e.g., Siwu: Dingemanse 2011, Pastaza Quechua: Nuckolls 1996). On the other hand, there is a report that not all languages use holophrastic ideophones: Treis (2024: 152) observes that in Kambaata, a Cushitic language, holophrastic use of ideophones is very rare, describing that it is construed as elliptic and attested only in artistic speech genre. To better understand the crosslinguistic prevalence and characteristics of holophrastic ideophones, especially their resistance to markers of operators as seen in Japanese, it is essential to collect more data—particularly from under-documented languages.

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