

PRIMARY ONOMATOPOEIA OR IMITATIVES

From the semantic point of view it is possible to make a distinction between primary and secondary onomatopoeia. "Its [Primary-onomatopoeia's] primary form is the imitation of sound by sound. Here the sound is truly an 'echo to the sense': the referent itself is an acoustic experience which is more or less closely imitated by the phonetic structure of the word".¹ These are different from the "words which are having no direct relationship with the sound. The sound might have struck a listener at one time or from one feature of that object. But it is not its prominent feature".² Primary onomatopoeia is determined by its imitative nature. Here a note of caution is needed. The sound imitated will not express fully the sound of the thing which it represents. Imitation is not only objective but also subjective. The same sound is heard and expressed differently by different speakers. For example to indicate the ringing of the bell many expressions are found in Tamil: kaṇīr, kiṇṇ, kinīr, kiṇṇ. The barking of the dog is expressed as loḷ or vaḷ. Many examples can be cited to elucidate this point. So it is clear that,

i) The imitative expressions do not represent the natural sound hundred percent.

ii) The imitative expressions vary from person to person and so there are numerous expressions for a single natural

1. Stephen Ullmann: 'An introduction to the science of meaning'. Page: 84.

2. Hardev Bahri; 'Hindi Semantics'. Page: 35,

sound. A reason for the first fact, as Otto Jespersen has suggested, is that our speech organs are not capable of giving a perfect imitation of all unarticulated sounds and therefore the choice of speech sounds is to a certain extent accidental¹

These imitatives have been arranged as per their form like single words, reduplicatives etc. They are 148 in number

There are onomatopoeic words in Tamil relating to all the five senses:

pacapacappu 'To grumble in a suppressed tone'

is related to the tongue,

paḷapaḷappu 'Glittering'

is related to the eye,

curacurappu 'To be rough'

is related to the skin.

kamakamattal 'To be very fragrant'

is related to the nose, and

kaṇakaṇappu 'Ringing [of bells] etc., of the

onomatopoeic words related to the ear will be imitatives.

There are a few sets of expressions which are not exactly imitative. But they have the characteristic sounds which create an atmosphere of the actual sounds. For example there are many words to denote whispering like kucukucuttal, kicukicuttal, pocupocuttal. All the consonants here are voiceless and the sibilant [Phonetically] is invariably found. In actual whispering also there is no voiced sound and the vocal-cords constrict the air passage. Similarly the words denoting murmuring like muṇumuṇuttal, moṇamoṇattal etc. invariably have nasals.

[1] Single words with en

oveṇal 'Sounding'

kaṇireṇal 'Ringing as bell'

kapukkeṇal 'Sounding impetuously'

1, Otto Jespersen: 'Language its nature development and origin'. Page: 398.

kalukkeṇal 'Loud sharp sound when laughing'

kāveṇal 'Crying as crows'

kiṇiṇeṇal 'Ringing sound'

kiṇireṇal —do—

kiṇiḷeṇal —do—

kiṇṇeṇal 'Tinkling, clinking sound'

kiṇicceṇal 'Creaking noise'

kulukkeṇal 'Laughter'

kūveṇal 'Bawling, screaming'

kāveṇal 'Expr. signifying shouting'

kolleṇal 'an out burst of laughter'

kolḷeṇal 'The sound of a drum or other musical instruments'

kōveṇal 'Expr. of making loud music'

caṭāreṇal 'Crackling sound'

caḷakkeṇal 'Splashing sound'

caḷakkeṇal 'Crashing sound'

caḷāreṇal 'Splashing sound'

cukreṇal 'Rustling as of palmyra leaves, spreading fire'

cuṇireṇal —do—

coṭakkeṇal 'Hissing as water when in contact with fire'

coṭukkeṇal 'Cracking noise'

coṭṭeṇal 'Sharp sound as of a stroke with a cane or a smack with a whip'

cotteṇal 'Expression signifying repeated sound as of coconuts falling on the ground one after the other'

cōveṇal —do—

ṭaṇṇeṇal 'Pattering of rain'

ṭapakkeṇal 'The sound of a bell or gong'

ṭapakkeṇal 'The sharp sound as in sudden dropping'

ṭapāreṇal 'The cracking sound'

ṭayireṇal 'Sound produced in firing a gush'

tamāreṇal	'Crashing sound as of the breaking of earthen pots'
tammeṇal	—do—
takkeṇal	'Thumping sound'
tanneṇal	—do—
tapukkeṇal	'Rashness as in falling'
tiṭumeṇai	'Signifying the sound of a drum etc.'
tiṇṇeṇal	'Expr. of vibrating sound of a string musical instrument'
tūtumeṇal	'Jumping sound as into water'
toppeṇal	'Falling with a thumping noise'
nikīyeṇal	'Expr. of the neighing of a horse'
nerukkeṇal	'Expr. signifying shapping sound'
pakkeṇal	'Bursting as with sudden laughter; spitting, cracking'
paṭāreṇal	Expr. signifyig cracking or bursting noise'
paṭīreṇal	—do—
pummeṇal	'Expr. denoting buzzing sound'
poṭukkeṇal	'Expr. signifying breaking suddenly as of cords'
pottenal	'Expr. signifying the falling with a thud as of heavy fruits'
pommeṇal	'Expr. signifying tinkling sound'
maṭakkeṇal	'Gurgling of water in drinking'
maṭareṇal	'Gurgling noise'
maḷareṇal	—do—
maḷarttiyeṇal	—do—
malukkeṇal	—do—
māveṇal	'Expr. signifying calling'
moḷukkeṇal	'Expr. of breaking suddenly as a dry branch'
lapakkeṇal	'Expr. signifying gulping'
loḷḷeṇal	'Expr. of dogs bark'
vaḷḷeṇal	'Expr. of barking sound'
viṭēṇal	'An imitative sound'

viṇṇeṇal	'Tinkling as of a bell'
virreṇal	'Expr. of whirling sound as a stone whirled in the air'
veṭukkeṇal	'Expr. of noise of breaking'
[2] Single words—with auxiliary verbs.	
kiricciṭu	'Creaking sound'
kiṇicciṭu	—do—
paṇāriṭu	'To make a burring sound'
viṇiṭu	'To cry out suddenly, to scream'
viṇiṭu	—do—
[2a] Reduplicatives—with en.	
iccicceṇal	'Expr. of scaring away birds etc.'
kakkakeṇal	'Chuckling as fowls'
kiccukkicceṇal	'Signifying chirping as of lizards'
kiṭukiṇeṇal	'Signifying rumbling sound'
kiṭukkiṭukkeṇal	'Signifying hallow sound'
kiṇukkukkiṇukk- eṇal	'Expr. signifying tinkling sound'
kiyyānkiyyāmeṇal	'Signifying peeping of chickens'
kilkilleṇal	'Signifying clinking sound'
kikkīyeṇal	'Chirping sound; screaming sound as of birds'
kīcukīceṇal	—do—
kīccukīcceṇal	—do—
kīrkīreṇal	'Signifying cracking as that of a saw when cutting the timber'
kīrukīreṇal	—do—
kuṭukkukkuṭukk- eṇal	'Expr. of rattling noise'
kuppukuppetaḷ	'Crackling noise as of flames; signifying jerking'
kumikkumikekal	'Signifying tinkling sound as of anklets'
kuvākkuvāveṇal	'Expr. signifying squalling; crying as of new born infant'

kākkāvenal	'Signifying crowing sound as of a cock'
keṭankeṭamenal	'Palpitation of heart through fear'
kettukkettēnal	'Chirping, crackling sound as of a hen'
keruṭṭukkeruṭṭēnal	'Hoarse sound or rattle as in difficult or hard breathing'
koruṭṭukkoruṭṭēnal	—do—
cakkaṭṭicakkaṭṭiyēnal	'Expr. of repeated thud'
cakkucakkeṇal	'Expr. signifying harsh dull sound'
caṭakkucaṭakkēnal	'Clacking as when walking with wooden sandals'
caḷarcaḷareṇal	'Clinking as of ornaments'
ṭaṭtakeṇal	'Tickling sound of a clock; the clattering noise of boots'
ṭapaṭapaveṇal	'The sound of a drum'
ṭamaṭamaveṇal	—do—
takuntakumeṇal	'Cracking sound of fire beating sound of a drum'
takkuttakkeṇal	'Expr. of repeated thumping sound'
tikkuttikkeṇal	—do—
tiṭukkttiṭukkeṇal	'Expr. throbbing or beating of the heart through fear'
timutimuveṇal	'Expr. of repeated or beating sound'
ṭoṭṭoṭoṇēnal	'Expr. of the sound of drumming'
noṭukkunoṭukkēnal	'Expr. signifying slight tapping or knocking noise'
noṇanoṇaveṇal	'Expr. signifying sound of speaking through nose, teasing'
pakkuppakkeṇal	'Expr. of throbbing rapidly as the heart through fear; bursting laughter'
maṇamaṇēnal	'Expr. of crashing'
moccumocceṇal	Expr. of munching'
loṭukkuloṭukkēnal	'Expr. signifying shakiness as of a running carriage'

[2b] Reduplicatives with—ttal.

kiṇukiṇuttal	To buzz as mosquitoes; to hum as bees'
kuḷakuḷattal	'Gurgling sound'
koḷakoḷattal	—do—
caṭacaṭattal	'Crash; beat of repeated sound'
curucuruttal	'Signifying rapid burning as combustibles'
cuṇucuṇuttal	—do—
taṭataṭattal	'To totter from age, weakness etc.'
taṭataṭattal	'The sound caused by the discharge of watery stools'
tiṭutiṭuttal	'Beating of the heart through fear'
naṇunaṇuttal	'Grinding the teeth'
naṇanaṇattal	—do—
neṇaneṇattal	—do—
neṇuneṇuttal	—do—
poṭupoṭuttal	'To snap as cords'
maḷamaḷattal	'To crash, rattle sound loudly as branches in snapping'
moṭumoṭuttal	'To rustle as dried skin, starched cloth etc.,
	To rumble as bowels'
loṭaloṭa	'To become rickety; to be hollow or empty'

[2c] Reduplicatives— with-pu.

kaṭakaṭappu	'To become loose, clattering, rumbling'
kaṇakaṇappu	'Ringing of the bell'
kaḷakaḷappu	Loud and confused noise'
kaṇakaṇappu	'Reiterative sound, crispness'
kilukiluppu	'Child's rattle'
kuṭukuṭuppu	'Rattle'
koṇakoṇappu	'Rattling in the throat'
caṭacaṭappu	'Sound of falling trees'
caracarappu	'Rustling as of starched cloth'

calacalappu	'To rustle'
caṭacalappu	'Splashing as of rain'
curacurappu	'Roughness as of woolen cloth'
maḷamaḷappu	'Snapping noise'
muṭamuṭappu	'Cracking noise'
muramurappu	'Forming cracking in the mouth'
moṭamoṭappu	'Rattling sound as of dried skin'
moramorappu	'Rustling'
[2d] Reduplicatives with other suffixes	
kiṇkiṇi	'Tinkling ornament for the anklet'
kiḷukili	'Children's rattle box'
kiḷukiluppai	'Child's rattle'
kuṭukuṭukkai	'Ripe cocanut in which the kernal rattles'
kuṭukuṭuppai	'Anything making a rattling sound'
[3] Echo Words complete onomatopoeic	
kapukkupukkeṇal	'Gurgling of water'
kākūveṇal	'Expr. as in wailing'
kokkōveṇal	'Clucking'
ṭākuṭiṭkkeṇal	'The tick tack Sound produced by sabots or slippers while walking'
taṭapaṭeṇal	'Expr. of patting sound'
Consonant + Vowel change.	
kaṭamuṭeṇal	'Rattling, rumbling in the bowels'
kaṭumoṭeṇal	—do—
kiṅcumūcceṇal	'Noisiness as of a house full of children'
caṭapuṭattal	'To make a cracking sound'
carakkuppurakkeṇal	'Creaking sound as of shoes'
calārpilāreṇal	'Signifying clinking as of orna- ments'
calukkuppilukkeṇal	—do—
caḷakkuppulaḷkkeṇal	'Splashing sound'
caḷakkuppulaḷkkeṇal	—do—
ciḷupuḷeṇal	'Bubbling as boiling water'
ciḷipulleṇal	—do—
takkuppukkeṇal	'Expr. of repeated thumping sound'
ṭakkupokkeṇal	—do—