

Ideophones in Hausa

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Hausa is a Chadic language belonging to the Afro-Asiatic phylum. Like most African languages it is rich of ideophones in its lexicon. Ideophones represent a specific class of words in this language very peculiar for their characteristic, because they could assume different aspect of the grammar according to their position, i.e. they could act as nouns, adjectives, adverbs and they also could modify and intensify the meaning of verbs.

In this article 243 ideophones, collected in dictionaries and other sources, are examined and classified.¹ It must be stressed that ideophones are for the first time analysed here according the different aspects. Nevertheless, the existing literature on them is quite exhaustive. Ideophones are classified also according to their phonetics, showing a kind of structure, sometimes against Hausa phonological rules.

1. Introduction

Ideophones in African languages received the attention of Harry Thurston Peck (1856-1914) for the first time in 1886. He apparently had access to some dictionaries of West African languages in the 1880’s and could not, of course, resist the temptation to do something with them. The results were published in *The American Journal of Philology* in 1886.² Later they have been identified in African languages as such by Doke (1935: 118), who says: “A vivid representation of an idea in sound. A word, often onomatopoeic, which describes a predicate, qualificative or adverb in respect to manner, colour, sound, smell, action, state or intensity.”

¹ In this paper the Standard Hausa Writing System is used. High tone is unmarked, low tone is marked; short vowel is unmarked, long vowel is marked by a hyphen.

² The body of Peck’s study is basically a dense list of ideophonic vocabulary from Twi, Fante, and Gã.

Recently some important works, dealing, *inter alia*, with African languages, have been published: one edited by John J. Ohala, Leanne Hinton, Johanna Nichols in 1994 and the other edited by F.K. Erhard Voeltz and Christa Kilian-Hatz in 2001.

Linguists were soon fascinated, overemphasising the extent of their distinctiveness, and tried to categorise them as a unity, but they vary from language to language. Hausa, like most of African languages is very rich in ideophones, and has attracted many scholars, who wrote articles and monographs on this topic (Galadanci 1971; Maduka 1991; Moore 1968; Newman 1968, 1989, 2000, 2001; Pajak 1989; Williams 1970).

Using Cole's semantic characterisation, ideophones are "descriptive of sound, colour, smell, manner, appearance, state, action or intensity ... [that is, they are words that are] vivid vocal images or representations of visual, auditory and other sensory or mental experiences" (Cole 1955: 370).

The following paper is based on a database of 243 ideophones taken from various dictionaries and sources. It should be stressed that generally the use of ideophones in Hausa is very common. They will be analysed morphologically and syntactically, trying also to categorise them according to their phonetics and semantics. As observed by Newman (2000: 242): "Ideophones have a much more significant role in the language than do English onomatopoeic words, with which they should not be compared".

2. *Ideophones in Hausa*

2.1. Morphology

Ideophones in Hausa do not constitute a distinct part of speech, but some of them function to modify verbal actions or adjectives. Others modify nouns, and further constitute nouns. They are a large group of very specialised particles varying widely from each other and, very often, from all other words in the language. "They determine the copiousness of Hausa vocabulary for they allow the speaker to describe certain phenomena and ideas in a very characteristic and precise way" (Pajak 1989: 36).

2.1.1. Ideophones modifying nominals

Each colour term has one or more ideophones³ which may occur with the noun to intensify what is indicated, e.g.

³ Ideophones in this section are underlined.

bakī kirin; bakī sidik; bakī sil ‘jet-black, black as pitch’
farī fat; farī kal; farī sal ‘snow-white’
jā wuř; jā jĩř; jā zuř ‘red as red can be, scarlet, blood-red’
kōrè shař ‘bright green’
shūdĩ shař ‘deep blue’
shūdĩ bàu ‘bright blue’

As observed by Anna Pajak (1989: 37)

“... above-mentioned ideophones emphasize the intensity of colour, but they are not interchangeable, none of them can be put in the other’s place (**jā fat* is unacceptable)”.

Some other ideophones show also an intensifying effect, e.g.

mutānē t̄njim ‘people beyond number, people galore’
sābō ful ‘brand new’
dāya tak ‘one and only one’
kudù sak ‘due south’.

Examples showing the above-described effect are:

kànkāřā *tā* *rufè* *tsaunukā* *farī* *fat*
 snow per:3f covers hills white it.
 ‘snow covered the hills with a white layer’

sai *yāki* *akè* *yî* *jā* *wuř*
 but war per:4 make redwhite it.

‘but bitter war is in progress’

yā *yî* *tsai* *dà* *mutānē*
 per:3m make id. with people
 ‘it is crowded with people’

2.1.2. Verbal phrase modifiers

Ideophones of verbal modifiers are:

tikis ‘emphasises great tiredness’
tsai ‘still, pensive’
fařat ‘at once, suddenly’

This type of verbal modifiers generally occur in final sentence position:

tā *gàji* *tikis*
 per:3f be tired id.
 ‘she is completely exhausted’

yā tsayà tsai yanà kallō-na
 per:3m stand id. imp:3m watching-pos:1s
 ‘he stood still looking at me’

They can however be moved to the front of a sentence for focus:

fařat yā tàfi
 id. per:3m be off
 ‘suddenly he was off’

2.1.3. Ideophones as adjectives

Ideophones which function as adjectives are:

digĩřgiř ‘very short’
dagwas ‘well-formed, symmetrical’
řàmbàsbàs ‘huge and shiny’

They can, like regular adjectives, attributively modify a head noun in postposition, e.g.

kwābìn fulāwàř yā yi digĩřgiř
 balls-gen. link dough that per:3m make id.
 ‘the balls of dough are firm’

yāřinyā cē ’ya-ř dagwas
 noun stabiliser noun+genitival link id.
 ‘she is a small well-built girl’

kān Bālā yā yi řàmbàsbàs
 head-gen. link Bala per:3m make id.
 ‘Bala’ s bare head is huge and shiny’

2.1.4. Ideophones as Noun Phrases

“Some ideophones — typically reduplicates — can, like regular adverbs, function as NPs, typically behaving like dynamic-activity nouns. They can take determiners and have grammatical gender (final *-ā* = feminine, otherwise masculine).” (Jaggar 2001: 696)

cùkù-cukū yā yi yawā à kasař nàn
 id. per:3m make abundance prep. country-gen. link specifier
 ‘there is too much underhand dealing in this country’

2.1.5. Ideophones as adverbs

Examples of ideophones as adverbs are the following:

bàl-bàl ‘flickering or fluttering’

butuk ‘stark naked’
kwasai-kwasai ‘very clean’

Some ideophones stand close in its meaning to adverbs, e.g.

<i>wutā</i>	<i>tā</i>	<i>yi</i>	<i>bàl-bàl</i>
fire	per:3f	make	id.
‘the fire is burning brightly’			
<i>yā</i>	<i>fitō</i>	<i>butuk</i>	
per:3m	come	out id.	
‘he came out naked’			
<i>yā</i>	<i>wàнку</i>	<i>kwasai-kwasai</i>	
per:3m	wash	id.	
‘it is well washed’			

2.2. Phonetic characteristics

Ideophones in Hausa have specific phonological and phonotactic features which distinguish them from other word classes. They do not seem to have particularities in their structure, except as it concerns the word-final consonant. In fact in Hausa, apart from verbs of grade 5, older loanwords from Arabic, some loanwords from English, and few Hausa words end in a consonant⁴.

Hausa is a two tone language with five vowels, that may be long or short. Ideophones do not violate this rule and both their presence may occur in one and the same word: *kwararo* ‘describes round thing being too large or wide’; *balō-bàlō* ‘clearly and distinctly’; *fale-fale* ‘thin and flimsy’; *kulū-kùlū* ‘large and round (of)’; *wukī-wùkī* ‘feeling ashamed’.

Many ideophones are monosyllabic CVC: *cif* ‘fully, exactly’; *dam* ‘squarely, firmly’; *fal* ‘chock-full’; *gam* ‘firmly, tightly’; *kaf* ‘completely’; *sak* ‘straight, erect’; *taf* ‘completely full or filled up’; *tsaf* ‘completely and neatly’; *wuf* ‘sudden, quick movement’; *zau* ‘very hot’.

Monosyllabic ideophones usually have a H tone, but a few possess a L tone: *bàl* ‘flickering or fluttering’; *bîf* ‘thud’; *bùs* ‘extremely unpleasant smell’; *cā* ‘emphasises crowding, thronging’; *cū* ‘sizzling noise’; *dāu* ‘emphasises intense heat or pain’; *dîm* ‘thud’; *fāu* ‘describes sudden bright flash of light’; *řî* ‘describes sound of people or animals moving together as a

⁴ Hausa words are characterized by the tendency to open syllables, especially in final position. If they end with a consonant, it is usually *-l*, *-r*, *-m*, *-n*. Ideophones as well as loan words may have also the other consonants in final position.

group'; *řim* 'describes sound of s.o. or sth. heavy falling'; *sũ* 'slithering, sliding sound'; *sùm* 'bad smelling'; *tik* 'sound of heavy thing falling'; *wùl* 'passing by very quickly'.

They share the normal phonological inventory of the language. Newman (2001: 251) observes that "The only possible exception is *cwbi* 'very sweet' with the labialized /c/, which presumably is a contraction of the coexisting variant *cákwái*".

Disyllabic ideophones usually end in a consonant, occasionally a diphthong, and many have LH tone, and sometimes identical vowels: *bĩris* 'ignoring a person, turning a deaf ear'; *bĩřjik* 'abundantly'; *càncak* 'completely gone'; *cùnkus* 'in profusion, abundance'; *jìngim* 'plentifully, abundantly'; *jùgum* 'despondently'; *kũrmus* 'completely'; *mākil* 'abundantly, chock-full'; *řěřas* 'well arranged'; *sùntum* 'be puffed up, fat'; *tātil* 'describes being full after eating or drinking (too much)'; *tĩnjim* 'in large numbers, in great abundance'; *tĩrmis* 'in abundance'; *tsàmbam* 'in abundance, full up (usu. of money)'; *tsùndum* 'emphasises deep involvement in something'; *zìndĩř* 'stark naked'; *zùndum* 'describes sth. very full of liquid'.

Other attested tone patterns are: (HH = common) *ařas* 'breakable brittleness'; *bulus* 'sth. got cheaply or without effort'; *bulbul* 'excessively fat'; *butuk* 'stark naked'; *dakau* 'hard and dry'; *dandan* 'firmly'; *dařam* 'stable, firm'; *dukus* 'very short'; *digil* 'very short'; *fařat* 'at once, suddenly'; *futuk* 'primitive'; *jagab* 'very wet, damp'; *kacal* 'emphasises contempt and smallness of value'; *kakaf* 'completely, entirely'; *kankan* 'tightly'; *kařaf* 'suddenly'; *kalau* 'very'; *kandas* 'lacking in oil'; *kirin* 'emphasises blackness'; *kiris* 'a little bit'; *kukut* 'shortness, compactness; closeness (of relationship)'; *lilis* 'thoroughly ground or beaten'; *lubus* 'soft (meat, cotton)'; *řakas* 'describes a snapping, cracking sound'; *řamas* 'completely dry'; *řayau* 'emphasises dryness'; *řigif* 'describes completed state of action'; *salab* 'insipid, tasteless'; *samsam* 'completely, absolutely not (used in negative sentences)'; *sayau* 'emphasises lightness of weight'; *shařaf* 'drenched, soaking wet'; *sidik* 'emphasises blackness'; *suduk* 'emphasises blue'; *sulai* 'smooth, slippery'; *sumul* 'smooth, shiny, clean'; *tatas* 'abusing, condemning person'; *tibis* 'emphasises tiredness'; *tikis* 'emphasises great tiredness'; *tilik / tilim* 'emphasises blackness'; *tsidik* 'happening suddenly, unexpectedly'; *tsilum* 'sound of a small object falling into water'; *tsĩřĩřĩ* 'describes protuberant belly of s.o. suffering from malnutrition'; *tsĩřit* 'tiny'; *tsugul* 'very short'; *tumuř* 'firm, filled out'; *wayam* 'complete emptiness'. Ideophones which have a HL tone are: *facàl* 'sound of sth. falling into shallow water'; *kwatsàm* 'suddenly'; *riris* 'describes intensity of crying, weeping'; *zĩzã* 'exceedingly good, fine'; (LL) *bàlàu* 'emphasising gaping hole or opening'; *dàbàs* 'sitting heavily, firmly'; *kĩkàm* 'motionless, silently'; *mãřmãř* 'blinking, flutter-

ing (of eyes, heart)'; *nùkùs* 'indices dampness'; *řùgùm* 'describes sound of sth. falling with a boom, bang, thud'; *tsìndùm* 'sound of medium-size object falling into water'; *tùntùm* 'stuffed full'; *zùkùt* 'loud sound of swallowing sth. whole'; *zùndùm* 'sound of heavy object falling into water'.

In Hausa we also observe the phenomena of reduplication, which occur sometimes,⁵ but are not very frequent as in other languages and in any case there is no triplication as in Ewe or Twi.

If we take a look at these phenomena, we can see that the reduplication could be simple, i.e. the word repeated *sic et simpliciter*: *bàl-bàl* 'flickering or fluttering'; *caka-caka* 'describes pock-marked face'; *faca-faca* 'spattered all over with liquid' or with a different tonal schema: *buguzum-bùgùzùm* 'walking in an ungainly fashion'; *bùndùm-bundum* 'floundering or splashing around noisily while swimming'; *fata-fàtà* 'wide, broad'; *tsamō-tsàmō* 'dripping wet, soaked through and through'. From examples collected this is the only one existing difference, i.e. there is no change affecting the vocal length.

Trisyllabic and polysyllabic ideophones are typically monotonal LLL or HHH, with a final vowel, consonant or diphthong: (LLL) *dàl-là-là* 'indicates sth. very slimy or viscous'; *dùgùzùm* 1. 'thick, unkempt (of hair)' 2. 'ragged'; *kwàngàr-àm* 'emphasises clanging sound made by falling object'; *kèr-èr-è* used in *tā tsayà à gàbansà ~* 'she stood in front of him disrespectfully'; *ràbàj-à* 'describes sth. very spread out, voluminous'; *řàd-à-dà* 'describes sth. very spread out, voluminous'; *řàkwàc-àm* 'disorderly state'; *řàmb-àts-àu* 'disorderly, in a variety of odd colours'; *ri-gi-j-à* 'describes fullness of sth.'; *řùgùzùm* 'used in *fā-dī ~* fall headlong'; *s-àm-àm-à* 'shuffling, rustling movement'; *s-à-r-à-r-à* 'walking aimlessly'; *sh-è-k-è-k-è* 'contemptuous look'; *s-ù-k-ù-k-ù* 'despondently'; *s-ù-l-ù-l-ù* 'moving noiselessly, stealthily'; *s-ù-m-ù-m-ù* 'silently and stealthily'; *ts-ò-l-ò-l-ò* 'very tall and thin'; *y-à-l-ò-l-ò* 'describes long, fine hair'; *z-à-k-à-k-à* 'appearance of sth. very long (snake, stick, etc.)'; *z-ò-ř-ò-ř-ò* 'very long or tall'. Ideophones with a high tone throughout (HHH) are: *ayy-ũ-ũ-ũ-i* 'shrilling done by women to express joy'; *dababa* 'very clear, obvious, noticeable'; *dandabas* 'squatness, dumpiness'; *dig-ĩ-g-ĩ-ř* 'very short'; *fir-gi-git* 'emphasises sudden, startled movement'; *hululu* 'abundantly'; *kwararo* 'describes round thing being too large or wide'; *k-ēm-ēm-ē* 'used to emphasise *ki* or *han-à*'; *m-ĩ-ts-ĩ-ts-ĩ* 'emphasises smallness'; *řatata* 'describes lots of things scattered about'; *řu-tu-tu* 'describes abundance of things'; *sakayau* 'light in

⁵ In my collection I got 57 examples inside a champion of 243 items, i.e. less than one fourth.

weight'; *tangañan* 'seeing clearly, being bright and clear'; *tsīgīgī* 'very small and thin'; *tsūdūdū* 'emphasises narrowness (e.g. of doorway or neck of pot)'; *tsululu* 'overly diluted with water'.

Some ideophones have a different tonal scheme: *innàrìdìdì* 'large and unruly (of crowd)'; *sùkùtum* 'whole, complete'; *tàntàrwai* 'seeing clearly, being glossy or bright'; *tubuñàn* 'complete state of madness'; *tukuru* 'great amount'; *wuñjànjàn* 'doing sth. relentlessly'.

2.3. Syntax

Syntactically, they function primarily as adjectives and adverbs, but one also may find ideophonic nouns (Newman 2000: 242), e.g. adjectives, adverbs as well as nouns. Examples are:

Adjective:

<i>yanà</i>	<i>dà</i>	<i>shâsshāwà</i>	<i>dababa</i>
imp:3m	with	facial markings	id.
'he has very clear facial markings'			

Adverb:

<i>tā</i>	<i>gānē</i>	<i>sañai</i>
per:3f	understand	id.
'she understood completely'		

Noun:

<i>wannàn</i>	<i>zìrgà-zìrgā</i>	<i>tā</i>	<i>dāmē</i>	<i>nì</i>
dem.	to-ing and fro-ing	per:3f	bother	pron.
'this to-ing and fro-ing bothers me'				

3. Classification

3.1. Classificatory sketch: Categories & Subcategories

The ideophones were classified under "Emotions", "Physical," and "Abstracta." "Emotions" is further divided into "Emotional Attitude" (positive or negative), "Joy," "Anger," "Fear," and "Shame." "Physical" is subdivided into "Sounds," "Smells & Flavours," "Colours," and "Peoples & Objects." Under "Abstracta" we deal with "Quality," "Quantity," "Directions," and "Time."

4. Emotion

In this section there are all kinds of emotional attitudes, negative or positive, dealing with joy, anger, fear and shame.

4.1. Emotional attitude

4.1.1. Positive emotions

Among the ideophones collected those related to this section are seven (2,88 % [2,9]) only:⁶

dál-dál ‘palpitating’ in *zūciyārsà tanā* ~ ‘his heart is palpitating’
dāř-dāř ‘beating rapidly, palpitating’
řam ‘describes closeness or tightness of relationship’
shèkèkè ‘contemptuous look’
tsai ‘still, pensive’ in *yā tsayā* ~ *yanā kallōna* ‘he stood still looking at me’
wujigā-wujigā ‘describes action done with great effort and seriousness’
zūciyā-tā tanā bugawa bāl-bāl
 heart of me imp:3f id.
 ‘my heart is thumping’

4.1.2. Negative emotions

Here the ideophones are six (2,46 % [2,5]), i.e. still less, e.g.

jùgum ‘despondently’ in *tanā zaune* ~ ‘she sat dejectedly’
kèrèrè ‘used’ in *tā tsayā à gābansà* ~ ‘she stood in front of him disrespectfully’
kīkām ‘motionless, silently’ in *yā tsayā à kaina* ~ ‘he stood in front of me silently’
sùkùkù ‘despondently’
tubūřàn ‘complete state of madness’ in *mahàukàcī nē* ~ ‘he’s a raving madman’
yā yi bīris dà shī
 per:3m make id. with pron.
 ‘he turned a deaf ear towards him’

⁶ In this section and onwards the total number of items is 243, although their sum is 254: a few ideophones are considered twice for their double valence. The percentages are based on 243 items.

4.2. Joy

Here only two ideophones (0,82 % [0,8]) are found, e.g.

ayyuũũũũ ‘shrilling done by women to express joy’

kwāl ‘very happy’

rki-nā *kwāl*

spirit of me id.

‘I am very happy’

4.3. Anger (and related emotions)

Here seven ideophones (2,88 % [2,91]) are found, e.g.

kēmēmē ‘used to emphasise *ki* or *hanā*’ in *yā ki* ~ ‘he flatly refused’; *ùbantà yā hanā aurensù* ~ ‘her father absolutely refused to consent to their marriage’

kukut ‘shortness, compactness; closeness (of relationship)’ in *Kànde yā’uwātā cē* ~ ‘Kande is my close relation’

lau ‘much’ in *lāfiyā* ~ ‘very well’ (used as greeting in answer to *kanā lāfiyā?* ‘how are you?’)

*tak*⁷ ‘only (one)’ in *bābù kō* ~ ‘there’s not even one’

zurū-zùrù ‘wide-eyed staring (from surprise, fear, hunger, etc.)’

tak dà nā ji ruwā nē yakē zuba à kwānō

id. rel. per:1 hear water stabiliser imp.rel.:3m drip prep. pan

‘the sound that I heard was water dripping into the pan’

4.4. Fear

Here the ideophones are scarce; only two (0,82 % [0,8]) are found, e.g.

tsrū-tsùrù ‘acting in uneasy manner from shame or fear’

tājìn-tājìn ‘feeling agitated, distressed (of a group)’ in *mun yi* ‘we feel at a loss’

àbîn yā yi musù tājìn-tājìn

the thing per:3m make to them id.

‘the affair flummoxed them’

⁷ With *dāya* expressed or understood. It is a different ideophone from *tak* ‘sound of dripping’.

4.5. Shame

Here only one ideophone exists (0,41 % [0,4]), *wukī-wùkī̀*.

yā fā̀r wukī-wùkī̀ per:3m become id. ‘he became feeling ashamed’

5. Physical

5.1. Physical perception

5.1.1. Sounds

Here the ideophones are quite numerous 35 (14,40 % [14,4]), e.g.

- ayyuũrũ̀i* ‘shrilling done by women to express joy’
bàl ‘flickering or fluttering’ in *wutā tā yi* ‘fire burned up’
bàzàr- bázàr ‘flapping or flowing of ragged clothes or of a gown in the wind’
bíf ‘thud’ in *yā kāshē shì* ‘he (wrestler) threw him (opponent) down with a thud’
bùndùm-bundum ‘floundering or splashing around noisily while swimming’
bàlàu ‘emphasising gaping hole or opening’
bam ‘popping sound’
bas ‘snapping sound’ in *yā bārè gyàdā* ‘he shelled the groundnut with a snap’
cù ‘sizzling noise’ in *ruwan kwai yā zubè cikin tàfàsashen m̀ai* ~ ‘the egg
 dripped into the boiling oil with a sizzling noise’
dál-dál ‘palpitating’ in *zūciyarsà tanà* ~ ‘his heart is palpitating’
dař-dar ‘beating rapidly, palpitating’
dĩm ‘thud’
dīs ‘sound of dripping’
facàl ‘sound of sth. falling into shallow water’
fĩr ‘emphasises flapping sound of bird’s wings’
kwàngàřàm ‘emphasises clanging sound made by falling object’
řàdàdà ‘crackling sound of fire’ in *wutā tā kamà* ~ ‘the fire is crackling’
řàf-řàf ‘describes sound of applauding’
řakas ‘describes a snapping, cracking sound’ in *yā karyà yātsunsà* ~ ‘he cracked
 his knuckles’
řau ‘emphasises clarity of perception’ in *inà jĩn* ~ ‘I hear it very clearly’
řĩ ‘describes sound of people or animals moving together as a group’
řĩm ‘describes sound of s.o. or sth. heavy falling’
řìmìs-řìmìs ‘describes sound of eating crunchy food’
řùgùm ‘describes sound of sth. falling with a boom, bang, thud’
sũ ‘slithering, sliding sound’
sùmùmù ‘silently and stealthily’
tak ‘sound of dripping’ in ~ *dà nā ji ruwā nè yakè zuba à kwānò* ‘the sound that
 I heard was water dripping into the pan’
tik ‘sound of heavy thing falling’ in *dũtsè yā fā̀dĩ* ‘the stone fell down with a thud’

- tsilum* ‘sound of small object falling into water’
tsindùm ‘sound of medium-size object falling into water’
zùkùt ‘loud sound of swallowing sth. whole’ in *yā hadiyè àbinçi* ~ ‘he gulped his food down’
zùndùm ‘sound of heavy object falling into water’
wutā tanā ci bāl-bāl
 fire imp:3f consume id.
 ‘the fire is burning brightly’
- agānā tā fitō masà balō-balò*
 smallpox per:3f get out to him id.
 ‘smallpox marks have appeared clearly on his face’
- yanā taunā kaṛàs gāràs-gāràs*
 imp:3m chew carrot(s) id.
 ‘he is munching carrots’

5.1.2. Smells & Flavours

Here the ideophones are (2,46 % [2,5]) not very frequent (six), e.g.

- baje-bàjè* ‘smeared all over (usu. with filth)’
cwai ‘describes sth. very sweet’ in *yanā dà zākī* ‘it is very sweet’
salab ‘insipid, tasteless’
sùm ‘bad smelling’
zau ‘hot (and “tasty”)’
- dà shigōwā sai nā ji būs*
 on entering then per:1 smell id.
 ‘on entering I smelt a terrible odor’

5.1.3. Colours

Here eleven ideophones are (4,52 % [4,5]) found, e.g.

- yā sâ rīgā farī fat*
 per:3m put on gown white id.
 ‘he put on a snow-white gown’
fāu ‘describes sudden bright flash of light’
lābārai sunā nan bakī kirin
 news imp:3pl there black id.
 ‘there is very bad news’
sal ‘emphasises whiteness’ in *farī* ~ ‘snow-white’
shaī ‘very green’
sidik ‘emphasises blackness’ in *bakī* ~ ‘jet black’
suduk ‘emphasises blue’
- Hāmādā bakī tilik (or tilim)*
 Sahara black id.
 ‘the deadly Sahara’

wul ‘emphasises blackness’ in *bakī* ~ ‘jet black’
wuř ‘emphasises redness’ in *jā* ~ ‘bright red’
ziř ‘emphasises redness’ in *jā* ~ ‘scarlet’

5.2. Peoples & Objects

5.2.1. Peoples

This section is the second most frequent concerning the number of occurrences (50, 2,05 % [2]). Examples are:

buguzum-bùgùzùm ‘walking in an ungainly fashion’
bùyǎ-bùyǎ ‘walking sloppily in a long flowing gown’
buzū-bùzū ‘very hairy’
bulbul ‘excessively fat’
butuk ‘stark naked’ in *yā fitō* ~ ‘he came out naked’
cā ‘emphasises crowding, thronging’ in *yi* ~ *dà* ‘crowd, throng around’
caka-caka ‘describes pock-marked face’ in *fuskārtā tā yi* ~ *dà zanzanā* ‘her face is covered with smallpox marks’
cukū-cùkū 1. ‘being tangled’ 2. ‘being ragged’ in *yā yi* ~ *dà tsummōkarā* ‘he was dressed in rags’
dàbàs ‘sitting heavily, firmly’
dam ‘squarely, firmly’ in *yā zaunā* ~ ‘he sat down squarely’
digīrgīř ‘very short’
dùgùzùm 1. ‘thick, unkempt (of hair)’ 2. ‘ragged’
dukus ‘very short’
dagwas ‘well-formed, symmetrical’ in *yāriyā cē ’yāř* ~ ‘she is a small well-built girl’
digil ‘very short’
hulū-hulū ‘swollen, puffed up (of face)’ in *kuncìnsà yā yi* ~ ‘his cheeks are puffed up’
innaāřìdìdì ‘large and unruly (of crowd)’ in *tařon* ~ *gayyāř wōřf* ‘crowd of useless hangers-on’
kut ‘intimate, close’
māřmāř ‘blinking, fluttering (of eyes, heart)’
mīřsīř ‘emphasises smallness’
riř ‘describes intensity of crying, weeping’ in *sunā kūkā* ~ ‘they are weeping bitterly’
sāmāmà ‘shuffling, rustling movement’
sàràrà ‘walking aimlessly’
sayau ‘emphasises lightness of weight’
sulay ‘smooth, slippery’
sùlùlù ‘moving noiselessly, stealthily’
sùntum ‘be puffed up, fat’
tātil ‘describes being full after eating or drinking (too much)’
tibis ‘emphasises tiredness’

- tik* ‘in naked state’
tikis ‘emphasises great tiredness’
tsīgīgī ‘very small and thin’
tsīrīrī ‘describes protuberant belly of s.o. suffering from malnutrition’
tsīrīt ‘tiny’ in *dan yārò nē* ~ ‘he’s a tiny little boy’
tsòlòlò ‘very tall and thin’
tsugul ‘very short’
tubūràn ‘complete state of madness’ in *mahàukàcī nē* ~ ‘he’s a raving madman’
tubūr-tùbùr ‘shaking of large buttocks’
tukuf-tukuf ‘very old (of person)’
tùnkas-tùnkas ‘very slow movement of walking’
wàndàr-wandař ‘zigzagging, swaying from side to side’
yàlòlò ‘describes long, fine hair’
yařo-yàřò ‘ragged or thoroughly soaked appearance’
zagô-zàgò ‘long bushy (of hair), long protruding (of teeth)’
zakó-zàkò ‘sticking out, protruding’
zìndiř ‘stark naked’
zòřòřò ‘very long or tall’ in *gàřū yā yi tsawò* ~ ‘the wall is very high’
- zūciyātā tanā bugāwā bāl-bāl*
 heart-me imp:3f thumping id.
 ‘my heart is thumping’
- kùnāmā tā hāřbē nì dāu*
 scorpion per:3f sting me id.
 ‘the scorpion stung me badly’
- mun gan shì yanā tàfe tikis-tikis*
 per:1pl see him imp:3m go id.
 ‘we saw him dragging along the road’

5.2.2. Objects

In this section the most numerous ideophones occur (53, 21,8 % [22]), e.g.

- ařas* ‘breakable brittleness’ in *kāyan* ~ goods (glass, porcelain)’
daba-daba ‘in large numbers’ in *sun yi* ~ ‘a lot of them (pimples, ants, etc.)’
dakau ‘hard and dry’ in *fàdamāř tā yi* ~ *sabòdà rashìn ruwā* ‘the swamp is hard and dry to lack of rain’
dàlàlà ‘indicates sth. very slimy or viscous’
dandabas ‘squatness, dumpiness’ *dandan* ‘firmly’ in *kōfař tā dānnu* ~ ‘door’s firmly closed’
dařam ‘stable, firm’ in *bangon na nān tsāye* ~ ‘the wall is perfectly stable’
faca-faca ‘spattered all over with liquid’
fal ‘chock-full’
fale-fale ‘thin and flimsy’, cf. Yoruba *fẹlẹ-fẹlẹ*
fata-fàtà ‘wide, broad’ in *kunnuwànsà* ~ ‘he has large ears’
ful used in *sābò* ~ ‘brand new’

- futuk* ‘primitive’ used in *shi bàgidājè nē* ~ ‘he is a complete country bumpkin’
gam ‘firmly, tightly’
gudun-gùdùn ‘very big’ in *nā sàyi dōyà* ~ ‘I bought great big yams’
hàyàm-hàyàm ‘gobbling up food’ in *yanà cîn àbinci* ~ ‘he is gobbling up his food’
hulū-hulū ‘swollen, puffed up (of face)’ in *kuncìnsà yā yi* ~ ‘his cheeks are puffed up’
kankan ‘tightly’ in *yā rikè shi* ~ ‘he held it tightly’
kankas ‘lacking in oil’
kil ‘emphasises smallness’
kulū-kulū ‘large and round (of)’
kwal ‘all alone’ in *sai shī daya* ~ ‘he is completely alone’
kwasai-kwasai ‘very clean’ in *yā wàнку* ~ ‘it is well washed’
lilis ‘thoroughly ground or beaten’
lubus ‘soft (meat, cotton)’
nùkùs ‘indices dampness’ in *dākī yā yi* ~ ‘the room is damp’
ràbàyà ‘describes sth. very spread out, voluminous’
řaf ‘describes quick movement used in snatching sth.’ in *kyānwā tā yi* ~ ‘the cat sprang quickly to catch the rat’
řaga-řaga ‘describes demolished state of sth.’
řamas ‘completely dry’
řàmbàtsàù ‘disorderly, in a variety of odd colors’
řatata ‘describes lots of things scattered about’ in *yā zubà kāyā à dākī* ~ ‘he has scattered his things all around the room’
řayau ‘emphasises dryness’ in *wākensà yā būshè* ~ ‘his beans are completely dry’
řèřas ‘well arranged’ in *an jērà kwānukà* ~ ‘the pans have been well displayed’
řif ‘describes sth. well-closed’ in *kwānò yā rùfu* ~ ‘the bowl is closed tight’
rìgijà ‘describes fullness of sth.’ in *bishiyà tā yi* ~ ‘the tree is full-leaved and shady’
řugu-řugu ‘describes sth. shattered’ in *gilàs yā fashè* ~ ‘the glass broke into splinters’
řugū-řugū ‘describes sth. large and round’ in *gōrò* ~ ‘huge kolanuts’
řùgùzùm used in *fādi* ~ ‘fall headlong’
sābô ful ‘brand-new’
suř ‘be full to the brim’
taf ‘completely full or filled up’ in *nā cikà tankī* ~ *dà fētùř* ‘I filled the tank up with petrol’
tam ‘firmly tied’
tangařan ‘seeing clearly, being bright and clear’ in *yanà nān dà idònsà* ~ ‘he sees very clearly’
tàntāřwai ‘seeing clearly, being glossy or bright’
tsamo-tsàmò ‘dripping wet, soaked through and through’
tsululu ‘overly diluted with water’ in *nōnò yā yi* ~ ‘the milk is too watery’
tùntùm ‘completely full’
zara-zara ‘describes sth. thin, frayed or near breaking point’ in *igiyà tā yi* ~ ‘the rope is about to break’
zùndum ‘describes sth. very full of liquid’

an sàmi bārāwò dumū-dùmù dà kāyan sātā
 per:4 catch thief id. with loads stolen
 ‘the thief was caught red-handed with stolen goods’

zōbèn nân yā yi minì kwararo
 ring this per:3m make to me id.
 ‘this ring is too big for me’

kwānòn nkn yā wàнку sumul
 pan this per:3m wash id.
 ‘this pan has been washed spanking clean’

5.3. Others

Here the ideophones are quite numerous (23, 9,46 % [9,5]), e.g.

càncak ‘completely gone’ in *sun tāshì* ~ ‘they have gone away for good’

dababa ‘very clear, obvious, noticeable’

fata-fata ‘helter-skelter, in disorderly haste’ in *yā kōrè su* ~ ‘he chased them away helter-skelter’

firgigit ‘emphasises sudden, startled movement’

kalau ‘very’ in *ai wannàn shāyì yā yi sanyī* ~ ‘this tea is much too cold’

kūrmus ‘completely’ in *kônè* ~ ‘burn to a cinder’

màkil ‘abundantly, chock-full’

řas ‘describes completeness of action’ in *nāmà yā gàsù* ~ ‘the meat is roasted just right’

řashā-řàshà ‘sprawled out’ in *yā zaunà* ~ ‘he sat all sprawled out’

řigif ‘describes completed state of action’ in *yā dàfu* ~ ‘it is fully cooked’

řudū-řudū ‘swollen from insect bites, boils, beatings, etc.’

sakayau ‘light in weight’

sako-sako ‘loosely’

shařaf ‘drenched, soaking wet’

tsaf ‘completely and neatly’ in *~ dà shī* ‘he’s neatly dressed’

tsidik ‘happening suddenly, unexpectedly’ in *yā fādō* ~ ‘he suddenly came into the room’

tsūdūdū ‘emphasises narrowness (e.g. of doorway or neck of pot)’

wara-wara ‘spaced apart’ in *yā jērà su* ~ ‘he arranged them apart from each other’

wàtsàl-watsal ‘wriggling, squirming movement (of fish, snake, boiling water, etc.)’

wayam ‘complete emptiness’ in *nā tarař dà ajìn* ‘I found the classroom deserted’

ruwā yā dāukē cak
 rain per:3m overcome id.

‘the rain has completely stopped’

yā zubà kāyansà řàkwàcàm

per:3m put clothes-his id.
 ‘he threw his clothes all over the room’

inā tàfiyā sai wani yā yi wuf yā rikē ni
 imp:1s going when someone per:3m make id. per:3m hold me
 ‘I was going along when someone suddenly grabbed me’

6. Abstracta

6.1. Quality

Here the number of ideophones are 16 (6,58 % [6,6]), e.g.

cif ‘fully, exactly’

jagab ‘very wet, damp’

kaca-kaca ‘in a messy or disorderly state’

kam ‘securely’

kalau ‘very’ in *ai wannàn shāyì yā yi sanyī* ~ ‘this tea is much too cold’

řak ‘exactly’

tsan tsan ‘firmly, securely, cautiously’

tsit ‘in complete silence’

tsùndum ‘emphasises deep involvement in something’

wùl ‘passing by very quickly’

wuřjànjàn ‘doing sth. relentlessly’ in *tanā kūkā* ~ ‘she is crying bitterly’

zākākā ‘appearance of s.th. very long (snake, stick, etc.)’

zēzē ‘exceedingly good, fine’ in *àbìn wuyànkì yā yi mikì kyāu* ~ ‘your necklace looks beautiful on you’

kařaf *đaya* *mukà* *tarař* *dà* *sū*
 id. one past.rel.:1pl come with them

‘we came upon them’

yi wà wani tatas

make to someone id.

‘condemn someone’

yā kāwō minì kudīnā tum

per:3m bring to me money of me id.

‘he brought me all my money’

6.2. Quantity

Here the ideophones are quite frequent (26, 10,69 % [10,7]), e.g.

bīřjik ‘abundantly’

bulus ‘sth. got cheaply or without effort’ in *sun sāmì* ~ ‘they got it very cheap’

cīř ‘1. ‘very straight, vertical’ in *sōjā yā mīkē* ~ ‘the soldier stood very still’; 2.

‘very full, complete’ in *kudīnsà yā cika* ~ ‘his money is all here’

cùnkus ‘in profusion, abundance’
hululu ‘abundantly’
kacal ‘emphasises contempt and smallness of value’ in *kwabò* ~ *yā bā ni* ‘he gave me a mere kobo’
kaf ‘completely’ in *nā cīnyē shì* ~ ‘I ate it ball up’
kakaf ‘completely, entirely’
*kwata-kwata*⁸ ‘completely’
ķiris ‘a little bit’
ķis ‘a little bit’
mākil ‘abundantly, chock-full’
řututu ‘describes abundance of things’
samsam ‘completely, absolutely not (used in negative sentences)’
shaf used in *māntā* ~, *shà’afà* ~ ‘forget completely’
sùkùtum ‘whole, complete’
*tak*⁹ ‘only (one)’ in *bābù kō* ~ ‘there’s not even one’
tal ‘only (one)’
tìnjim ‘in large numbers, in great abundance’ in *mutānē sun tārū cikin dākī* ‘people have packed the room’
tīrmis ‘in abundance’ in *yanā dà kudī* ~ ‘he has loads of money’
tsāmbam ‘in abundance, full up (usu. of money)’ in *nā cikà jàkātā dà kudī* ‘I stuffed my bag full of money’
tukūru ‘great amount’ in *sunā kārātū* ~ ‘they are doing a lot of reading’
tumuř ‘firm, filled out’ in *tuwō yā yi* ‘the *tuwo* is firm’

àkwai *kāyā* *jìngim* *à* *kāsuwā*
 there merchandise id. in market
 ‘there is plenty of merchandise in the market’

bà *sù* *bā* *mu* *kō* *ķyas* *ba*
 1st neg. per.:3pl. give us even id. 2nd neg.
 ‘they gave us absolutely nothing’

bàn *san* *shì* *ba* *sam*
 imp.neg.:1s know him 2nd neg. id.
 ‘I don’t know him at all’

⁸ Cf. Yoruba *fele-fele*.

⁹ With *đaya* ‘one’, expressed or understood.

6.3. Directions

Here the ideophones are less numerous (5, 2,05 % [2]), e.g.

caĩ ‘be vertical, very straight’ in *hanyà tã tsayà* ~ ‘the road is very strait’
cik ‘stopped stock-still’ in *sun tsayà* ~ ‘they came to a complete standstill’
sak ‘straight, erect’ in *bi yammã* ~ ‘go straight westward’
tsam ‘sudden movement upward’ in *yã tãshì* ~ ‘he got up suddenly’

<i>yārò</i>	<i>yanà</i>	<i>kòràĩ</i>	<i>kàjì</i>	<i>as-as</i>
boy	imp:3m	chasing	chickens	id.
‘the boy is chasing the chickens away’				

6.4. Time

Here only four ideophones are found (1,64 % [1,6]):

fãrat ‘at once, suddenly’ in ~ *daya* ‘instantly, immediately’
kwatsàm ‘suddenly’
maza-maza ‘very quickly, as quickly as possible’
yã *fitò* *but*
 per:3m come out id.
 ‘he came out suddenly from his hole’

7. Summary

Ideophones represent in Hausa a class of words which is very rich. In fact the number of them, collected for this article, is just a small specimen among the flourishing lexical material existing in the language. Many of them are less commonly used, others are restricted to particular dialects (Newman 2000: 242). In any case, they play an important role in the language.

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