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# PHONOLOGICAL AND SEMANTIC CHANGES AFFECTING ONOMATOPOEIC FORMATIONS AND THEIR RELEVANCE FOR LINGUISTIC THEORY[1]

This paper represents a radical departure from the generally recognised position of onomatopoeic formations in the theory of the linguistic sign much in the same way as Kleparski and Łęcki (2002) does. As we know, the linguistic sign has two planes, that is **phonemic** and **semantic**. Even though each plane can be studied on its own, the sign cannot be defined by referring to only one plane. It can be said that semantics and phonology lie on the two extremes of the linguistic system because the relation between the signifier (sound-image) and the signified (concept) is arbitrary. This means that the way a word is pronounced in no way reflects the intrinsic properties of the thing, action or notion it designates.

It hardly requires any proof that most of the words in natural languages are arbitrary. The phonetic string of segments /mi:n/ is shared by several different words in English. Additionally, the French word ***mine***, which sounds basically the same as in English, means '(coal) mine', Welsh ***min*** means 'edge', Arabic ***min*** means 'from', Basque ***min*** means 'pain', Polish ***min*** is a plural genitive of 'mine' or 'countenance', Irish ***mīn*** means 'soft', 'smooth'. Notice that there is nothing intrinsic in the form /mi:n/ that it should represent only one of the above meanings and not any of the remaining ones. Ullmann (1962:81) presents three points of argumentation for the arbitrariness of words on the basis of one, by all means arbitrary, word ***meat***.

1) Descriptive: *If there were a necessary connection between name and sense, one would expect the same sounds to mean always the same thing, and conversely, the same thing to be always denoted by the same sounds*. The word

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***meat*** has a number of homonyms, to cite only a few: noun ***mete*** 'boundary', verb ***mete*** 'allot', verb ***meet***. Additionally, ***meat*** has a quasi-synonym ***flesh*** without a single sound in common.

2) Historical: *If the link between name and sense were a necessary one, we would expect both elements to remain unchanged*. Yet ***meat*** before the GVS[2] was pronounced /me:t★/ and its meaning also has changed as it once meant 'food' in general.[3]

3) Comparative: The last argument in favour of the arbitrariness thesis, according to Ullmann (1962), comes from the fact that various languages have different words for one and the same thing. English ***meat*** is French ***viande***, Italian ***carne***, Swedish ***kött***, Hungarian ***hūs***, etc. Conversely, the phonetic image /mi:t/ has different denotations in different languages: German ***miet-*** means 'hire', French ***mite*** is 'cheese-mite, moth'.

These points are central to the following argument regarding language changes and onomatopoeia. A definition of onomatopoeia can be found in almost any book on general linguistics. Here we will quote Bolinger (1992:28) who defines it as *[…] direct imitation of a sound 'in nature', whether it represents the sound itself (bang, whoosh, cough) or something for which the sound stands (a relationship of metonymy, e.g. cuckoo, blast 'party', hum 'be active', knock 'summon to door').* The exceptionality of onomatopoeia lies in the fact that the relationship that exists between sound and sense is generally arbitrary but in the case of onomatopoeic forms the link seems to be dented.

One of the characteristic features of onomatopoeic forms, according to McMahon (1994:85), is their maximal iconicity, which means that *[…] onomatopoeias are not affected by sound change or analogy […]*; he also adds that they also are not affected by semantic change. The typical example of resistance to phonological changes (cited in Bloomfield (1933), McMahon (1994)) is the Middle English forms ***pipen*** 'the sound produced by chickens' in which the stem was pronounced /pi:p/, and ***pipe*** 'an object shaped like a tube', with the same long monophthong; after the GVS the long /i:/ changed into the diphthong /a✋/ in the non-onomatopoeic version of the word, whereas chicks still go ***peep*** /pi:p/ (see Kleparski and Łęcki (2002)).

Bloomfield (1961:390), when discussing dissimilation as a phonetic change and derivation of, as he puts it, 'symbolic words' claims that *[…] this type of change is entirely different from ordinary phonetic change.* This type of change involves a redistribution of phonemes in words that include multiple /r/

[2] The abbreviation GVS will be used throughout this work for the Great Vowel Shift.

[3] The history of ***meat*** is the most frequently quoted example of what has come to be known as a *narrowing of meaning.* Today the original sense of ***meat*** 'food' is echoed in, ***sweetmeats, the meat of the nut, meat and drink*** and the proverbial expression ***one man's meat is another man's poison*** (see Kleparski 1990).

or /■/ or /l/ sounds, for example, Latin ***peregrīnus*** ‘forigner’ occurred in Old French as ***pelerin*** and was borrowed into English as ***pilgrim***. The different character of symbolic words seems to be manifested in such a way that if the symbolic root contains the sound /r/, a syllabic /r̩/ never reappears as a suffix to that stem and if the symbolic root contains the sound /l/, another /l̩/ never occurs word finally, for example, ***brabble*** and ***blabber*** seem to sound grammatical but **brabber*** and **blabble*** are not possible symbolic words. That is why we have ***clatter*** and ***blubber, rattle*** and ***crackle***.

As far as there is a general agreement that onomatopoeic words may sound differently in various languages (to mention only a few: a bee is expected to ***buzz*** in English, ***zuji*** in Croatian, ***mezamzemot*** in Hebrew, ***ronzare*** in Italian, ***surrar*** in Swedish, something else entirely Polish), it is maintained that they somehow resist both semantic and phonological changes. As can be seen, onomatopoeic formations are not in any way irregular with respect to Ullmann’s (1962) third point which explains why words are arbitrary.

In the following we will consider onomatopoeic formations undergoing most of the types of phonological changes presented above. The examples are taken from works of different authors, for example, Groom (1934), Ullmann (1962), and others, additionally their development can be followed in various dictionaries itemised in the appended list of references. The examples selected are undoubtedly onomatopoeic and they would conform to most of the definitions of onomatopoeia found in the literature on the subject. The data presented below, contrary to the Bloomfield’s and McMahon’s view will clearly show that almost every possible type of sound changes affects onomatopoeias. We will go through particular phonological changes and consider the effects they have had on some onomatopoeic formations.

At the very beginning of the Middle English period /h/ was dropped in consonantal clusters /hr, hl, hn/: ***hringan*** ‘to ring’, OA ***hrēman*** > ME ***remunge*** ‘crying, wailing’, PG */hlahjan-/ (OF ***hlakkia***, Goth. ***hlahjan***) > WS ***hliehhan*** ‘laugh’. A horse ***hnægð*** in Old English, now it ‘neighs’, an ox ***hlewð*** then the /h/ was lost and today we have the word ***low*** used alongside ***moo*** in the sense ‘moo’.[4] What is more, the word went out of use altogether. One could ask: Was it already inappropriate because ‘bellowing’, or rather ‘belewunge’ is more ‘onomatopoeic’ or did oxen start to produce different sounds? Simplification of consonantal clusters affected not only the /hC/ cluster, the /kn/, /wr/ and /gn/ clusters also underwent this change, cf. OE ***cnocian*** and ***cnucian*** ‘knock’ and ME ***gnasten*** ‘gnash’.

[4] As pointed out by **Prof. Joseph Voyles** (personal communication), while ***moo*** is a standard word in present day English, ***low*** belongs to literary and/or archaic register; there is a line in an English hymn *The cattle are lowing […]* from ‘Silent Night’.

The assimilatory change in onomatopoeias is not infrequent. The anticipatory type of assimilation may be exemplified (Groom 1934) by the Anglo-Saxon word ***fneosan*** that stood for 'sneeze'. The labio-dental /f/ became the alveolar voiceless fricative to agree with the place of articulation of the alveolar /n/. The change that affected the symbolic word ***simmer*** is a case of progressive assimilation since the original form of this word was ***simper***. The nasal feature (or element in Government Phonology) present in /m/ is responsible for its spreading onto the following consonant /p/. Eventually, in the late Old English period, when the degemination of consonants operated, one of the ***m's*** was lost. In the 15th c. the Polish word for ***grunt*** ('a sound produced by pigs') used to be ***krząkać*** with a voiceless velar stop at the beginning, later the /k/ sound was assimilated with respect to the manner of articulation of the following consonant and changed to a continuant /x/. ***Gdakać*** 'to cackle', on the other hand, developed from Proto-Slavic ****kъdakati*** exemplifying the regressive type of assimilation in onomatopoeic forms in Polish. In this case /k/ became voiced to agree with the following voiced /d/ sound.

The process of dissimilation, though much less frequent than assimilation, also affects onomatopoeic or symbolic words. The changes that affected the following words Ullmann (1962:94) calls a *loss of phonetic motivation.* The Vulgar Latin word ***pīpio, pīponem*** was borrowed into French as ***pigeon*** (English ***pigeon***), in this case, the French were apparently dissatisfied with the reoccurrence of /p/ and decided to drop one. Other instances of dissimilation may be exemplified by the following list of examples (see Ullmann (1962)):

Latin ***cicada*** > French ***cigale*** 'cicada',

Latin ***ciconia*** > French ***cigogne*** 'stork',

Latin ***cycnus*** > French ***cygne*** 'swan'.

The process of palatalisation is not frequent in onomatopoeic words, yet a late Old English variant of the Modern English verb ***call*** may serve as an exemplification of the affection of palatalisation on iconic words. The Old English word ***callian*** meant 'shout, cry out, call'; in texts from the late Old English period one encounters forms like ***ceallian***. At this point an objection can be raised that ***ea*** stands for a diphthongal pronunciation of the former /a/. Even if we accept this thesis that would mean that this word has undergone a phonological change in any case. Yet it is suggested that <e> standing between <c> and <a> is an indication of a palatal pronunciation of ***c*** rather than the separate pronunciation of each letter.[5]

[5] As the process of palatalisation is irreversible, the fact that we now pronounce the verb ***call*** as /ko:l/ is due to the fact that it was borrowed from Old Norse ***kalla***.

The process of epenthesis occurred, though was not limited to, /s-l/ and /n-r/ clusters. Let us consider derivation of a very 'onomatopoeic' word ***thunder*** (after Reszkiewicz (1973)). The Indo-European root of this word has been reconstructed as */tn-ro-/ which, in Proto-Germanic, changed into */ṭunra-/. Old English inherited the form ***ṭunor***, which, in turn, became ***dunnir***.[6] The fact that, at some point in history, English inserted an additional consonant between the two existing ones, clearly corroborates the postulation that onomatopoeic formations can, and do, undergo even some of the less regular sound changes. Another example of epenthesis in an onomatopoeic form is Old English word ***hwistlian*** 'whistle', in which ***t*** was inserted between /s-l/ cluster.[7]

Groom (1934) argues that modification in the phonological structure of onomatopoeias has its own symbolic sense. However, it can be argued, he himself cannot reject the fact that those forms simply change. He provides us with an example of an onomatopoeic word ***scratch*** which has undergone the process of prothesis. In the Middle English period there were words like ***crache, cracchy***. Through the process of addition of the /s/ sound at the beginning, which probably was to have a more imitative effect, the word ***scratch*** was coined. The appendage of an extra sound word initially also happened in such symbolic words as former ***crawl*** and ***crag*** which eventually became ***scrawl*** and ***scrag*** respectively.

Exactly the opposite process to the one described above can also be attested within onomatopoeic formations. The loss of an initial sound by an onomatopoeic form is evidenced by the Old French word ***estoc*** 'blow, slap' which was borrowed into Old English yielding a different form ***stocc,*** which in the Middle English period became ***stoc*** (noun) 'stump'. Here the initial /e/ was lost even though maintaining the vowel would not have disturbed the phonological system of English at that time; ***estoc*** would have been acceptable on a par with Middle English ***estymen*** 'esteem' or ***establishen*** 'establish' – the word borrowed from Old French ***establiss***.

The process of merger as a phonological change affects not only purely non-iconic words but also onomatopoeic ones. Let us consider the Old English word ***reord(e)*** 'noise, roar, clamour'. The vocalic content in the stem is believed to be pronounced with a diphthong /eo/, in the Middle English period however, the descendent of this word is ***rērde*** with a single ***e*** as a clear indication of a monophthongal pronunciation of the stem. The opposite phonological operation to merger is split. Split, as a breaking up of a phonological content of a segment, is attested in a number of onomatopoeic forms, for example, the Old English form ***mān*** /ma:n/ became ***moan*** /m★✞n/ through an intermediate stage /m□:n/. Here we are dealing with two very regular sound changes that took place in the

[6] Cf. Middle High German ***doner*** 'thunder' and Latin ***tonere***.

[7] Cf. Old Icelandic ***vrisla***.

history of the English tongue. One of them is the raising of the long OE monophthong /a:/ to the position of a long open /□:/ which ultimately (around 1500) split into two short vowels /★✞/ in the process known as the GVS.[8]

The vowel /i:/ in an onomatopoeic word was also affected by the GVS. Although it may be that the word ***cry*** originally developed from Old English ***crýe*** 'cry, weep', it is also proposed that it is a loan word from Old French ***crier***, ***cri***, ***crïee*** into Middle English ***crīen, crī(e)*** 'shout, cry, noise, tumult'. Whatever the origins of ***cry*** might be it is unquestionable that before the Great Vowel Shift the vowel in the stem was a long /i:/ which split into the diphthong /a✋/ so that instead of saying /kri:/ we now say /kra✋/. The long vowel /u:/ in the onomatopoeic Middle English word ***gulinge, gogelinge*** 'yowling, wailing' was also "greatly shifted" which means that it regularly developed into /a✞/ (present-day /ja✞l✋☠/).

Groom (1934) provides us with examples of onomatopoeic formations undergoing some sound changes. He claims that the word ***chirp*** coined around (1440) emerged from earlier forms: ***chirk*** and ***chirt***. The development of the Old English word ***rārung*** into Middle English ***rarunge/rōringe*** 'wailing, clamour, lamentation, roaring' is an instance of a regular phonological change that took place in the second half of the thirteen century (depending on the dialect) in which long /a:/ was substituted by long open /□:/. As a regular development /□:/ changed into /★✞/ during the GVS yet ***roar*** still has the same monophthong as before the change. It may seem that this is an example of the resistance of onomatopoeias to being affected by sound changes but, in fact, the development of this vowel followed a very regular change (sometimes resulting in loss); the vowels in the pre /r/ context were not likely to undergo the GVS. By the same token Old English ***duru*** 'door' changed in the Open Syllable Lengthening (around 12th c.) into ***dōru***, the final /r/ prevented the GVS from operating, therefore now we say /d□:/ instead of /d★✞/.

An example of onomatopoeic forms following the rules of regular sound change may be the sound produced by sheep, which in the Old English period would ***blǽtan*** /✂bl✍:tan/, but now they ***bleat*** /bli:t/, in the meantime they would /ble:t/. The development of this form conforms to a regular sound change which is exemplified by the following non-onomatopoeic formations: ***dǽd*** > ***déd*** > ***deed*** 'deed' or ***sǽ*** > ***sé*** > ***sea*** 'sea'. Another regular change affected short /u/ which, around the 15th c., became either /🕘/ or remained /u/, cf. ***put***, ***full***, ***butcher***, ***cushion***, ***sugar*** (all with the vowel /u/) and ***cut***, ***drug***, ***dull***, ***sun***, ***much***, ***fun*** (with the vowel /🕘/ present). Surprisingly, an Old English swine ***gruna-ð***, but in the Modern English it ***grunt-s*** /gr🕘nt/. The vowel in the Modern English

[8] Notice that exactly the same changes can be observed in the development of onomatopoeic words like Old English ***crāwan*** to Middle English ***crowen*** 'sound harshly' or Old English ***blāwan*** 'blow, sound a horn' up to Modern English ***blow***.

word ***puff*** had to go even a "longer way". The Old English version of this word was ***pyffan*** pronounced with the front rounded vowel /ü/, in the Middle English period it was ***puf*** with a back vowel, the final state of the vowel in ***puff*** is /◴/ (so far, at least). We have just seen that an onomatopoeic form with an option of remaining unaffected chose to undergo a phonological change. Onomatopoeic expressions also underwent other phonological changes. An Old English ***hund*** 'dog' ***byrc-ð*** /bürk/ with a high mid vowel while now it ***bark-s*** with a low back vowel /a:(r)/.

Sometimes prosodic changes are included under the heading 'phonological changes'. This is understandable because the shift of word stress is a change in pronunciation. Prosodic changes are also traceable in onomatopoeic forms. Bauer (1994:99) when discussing prosodic changes includes an onomatopoeic word in her examples of forms that underwent stress shift. The word quoted is ***sonorous*** which, according to the *Longman Dictionary* (1995), has only one meaning, that is 'having a pleasantly deep loud sound', e.g. *a sonorous voice*, so it is undoubtedly onomatopoeic on a par with the opposite 'a harsh voice'. According to Bauer (1994), at the beginning of the last century ***sonorous*** was stressed on the second syllable, whereas nowadays it is stressed on the antepenultimate one ***'sonorous.***

Returning to the frequently quoted example of the resistance of onomatopoeias to phonological changes (***peep***) (see Bloomfield (1933), McMahon (1994)), if one looked at the earliest attested version and the present form of the verb ***peep*** it would have to be admitted that the word seems to have stayed the same, or, at least, the stem is the same, i.e. /pi:p/. It has to be said that in fact after the GVS chicks still go ***peep*** /pi:p/, but just before the change they used to ***pēpen*** so the vowel quality in this form did in fact change. Further, the Old English form of this verb was ***pīpian,*** yet if one followed the development of ***peep*** carefully one would see that in Middle English this verb looked much the same as in the Old English period, that is ***pīpen***, but in late Middle English the stem vowel was lowered to ***pēpen***, which in the GVS was again raised to ***pīpe(n)***.

Let us turn our attention to semantic changes. McMahon (1994:177) hypothesises that onomatopoeic expressions are not affected by semantic changes, Ullmann (1962:81) implicitly argues that onomatopoeias should be expected to remain unchanged as far as phonological and semantic changes are concerned. In the following an attempt will be made to prove that the semantic structure of those forms may be altered in identical ways to non-onomatopoeic words.

**Narrowing of meaning** in onomatopoeias can be exemplified by the history of Polish ***gęgać***: in the 16$^{th}$ c. it meant 'of a goose's sound, speak nonsense, or speak through the nose', now only the first meaning is present; ***huczeć*** 'make noise' once referred to people, musical instruments, the sea, thunder and so on,

now it is no longer used with reference to people; English ***bray***, apart from men and donkeys, could refer to any species of animal like horses, oxen, and deer, now only men and donkeys can bray; ***croon*** once meant 'bellow', 'roar' or 'murmur', 'hum softly', but now it means 'to sing sentimentally into a closely held microphone'.

**Broadening of meaning** in onomatopoeic expressions may be clearly traced in such Polish forms as ***pikać***, originally 'of a chick's sound', which in the course of time gained the additional meaning 'beat lightly (of heart)'; ***gruchać*** originally described the sound made by a pigeon, now it is also used in the sense 'wooing, courtship'.

A change that seems least likely to happen to onomatopoeic forms is **meaning shift**,[9] and yet examples are not sparse: ***bawl*** once only meant 'bark, howl' (of a dog), now it means 'cry, shout loudly'; ***chuckle*** in its original sense meant the opposite to what it means today: in the 16th c. it meant 'laugh vehemently, openly', and around 1800 ***chuckle*** acquired its present meaning; ***hip*** – the exclamation used to begin a cheer or to show approval, was used at first to call out to someone or to attract their attention (like the modern 'hey'); the word ***jangle***, 'ring a bell sharply', went through a number of meanings until it reached its present meaning. The original sense of the verb was to 'chatter', 'babble', then it was applied to birds, later it meant 'to speak harshly', 'grumble', and from this usage the meaning 'make a discordant noise' developed and, finally, ***jangle*** began to refer to bells. Nowadays it is hard to imagine that ***jargon*** could have meant anything else other than 'argot', 'a special language used by a group', but in fact the noun, in its original sense was used for the twittering or chattering of birds. Polish ***grzechotać***, 'to rattle', evolved from ***krzekotać*** < ***krik*** (krzyk) 'to cry', 'shout'.

One observes other types of semantic change that have affected onomatopoeic forms. Metaphor, which is defined in Crystal (2000:70) as taking place when *two unlike notions are implicitly related, to suggest an identity between them*, can be exemplified by the history of the word ***zip***. The word was coined around 1875 to describe the sound of a speeding bullet or fabric ripping. However, when a 'Universal Fastener' was invented it needed a name. Among many names suggested (like *C-Curity* for trouser flies) ***zipper***, soon clipped to ***zip***, has survived. There are a lot of metaphorical uses of onomatopoeic formations in language, to mention just two, ***cluck*** and ***grunt*** are undoubtedly onomatopoeic, and these words (***cluck and grunt***) constitute the basis for an American slang for a restaurant dish – ham and eggs. Another example of onomatopoeic metaphor is the word ***zit*** 'spot,

[9] The three categories of semantic change, that is **narrowing of meaning**, **broadening of meaning** and **meaning shift** are the most widely recognised types of meaning change and they go back to Paul's (1880) logico-rhetorical typology of changes in word meaning.

mark on the skin' which is suggested to have originated from the gentle popping sound that occurs when a blackhead is squeezed.

It is rather hard to imagine that an onomatopoeic word could have undergone such types of changes as pejoration and amelioration.[10] Yet even these types of changes can be exemplified by onomatopoeias. The Old English word ***flicorian*** meant 'flutter', the continuation of this word in the Middle English period is ***flikeren*** with the attested meaning 'to trifle'. The change that happened in the semantic structure might fall under the heading *degeneration*. Amelioration, on the other hand, may be illustrated by the development of a Polish word ***głosić*** which nowadays is used in the sense 'to announce, to declare'. In the 15th c. it meant simply 'to speak loudly'. Notice that simultaneously this change may be qualified as a narrowing of meaning, but one has to admit that some kind of ameliorative development can be traced in the history of this word (see Kleparski (1990)).

Surprisingly enough, even place names may originate from onomatopoeic expressions. This change can be illustrated by the name of an area in London called ***Soho***. This name has its beginning in an exclamation used by huntsmen ***Soho!*** (like ***tally-ho!***) when there was still an open area (where Soho is today) and they were still able to hunt there.[11]

Onomatopoeic expressions have undergone semantic changes that can sometimes be hard to classify. If one considers the following examples: Polish ***dukać*** 'to stammer, falter' in the 17th c. meant 'to blow a horn' or 'to croak (of a frog)', in the 18th c. it had a transitional sense 'to repeat one action continuously'. An example from English is the case of Old English ***cracian*** 'resound' that changed into Middle English ***krake(n)***, ***crake*** 'crack, split'. In those examples, as many others, the semantic changes that affected the onomatopoeic forms are not easily classifiable but the fact that onomatopoeic formations do undergo semantic changes is unquestionable.[12]

Yet another type of linguistic change is lexical and grammatical changes. This category comprises of borrowing, loss of words, their "invention" and so on. Onomatopoeias are borrowed into other languages as frequently as non-onomatopoeic formations. To mention just a few, the Latin verb ***quirītarāre*** (originally 'to address the Romans' > 'to cry aloud, scream') was borrowed into Old French ***crier***, which subsequently was borrowed into Middle English ***crīen***.

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[10] For the discussion on the question of evaluative developments, that is amelioration and pejoration see, among others, Schreuder (1929), Dongen (1933), Kleparski (1986) and Kleparski (1990).

[11] On the contrary, the New York ***Soho*** is an acronym of *south of Hudson Street.*

[12] This seems to be a part of a larger issue. Ever since the publication of the most elaborate and detailed classification of semantic changes worked out by Stern (1931), it has become evident that there is nothing like one, single classification of changes of meaning that could accommodate all historical changes of meaning.

Middle English ***tumult(e)*** is a loan word from Old French ***tumulte***. Old French ***crossir*** was borrowed into Middle English ***crushen*** ‘crush, bray, clatter’. Old Norse ***klaka*** formed the basis for the Middle English ***clacken*** ‘chatter’. Examples of the borrowing of onomatopoeias are numerous. Below we list some of onomatopoeic words that were lost in the history of language:

ME ***nurđ*** ‘(unpleasant) noise, disturbance’, related to MLG ***norren*** ‘to grunt, growl’,
ME ***gothely*** ‘rumble, gurgle’,
ME ***harryng*** noun ‘snarling’,
ME ***swoghe, swough*** ‘rustle, murmur’,
OE ****hecel*** [a tool for combing flax] ME ***hechelunge*** ‘gnashing’,
OE ***ge-bćru*** > ME ***(i)bere*** ‘outcry, clamour’,
ME ***steven(e)*** ‘voice, noise, the sound of a horn’,
ON ***rauta*** > ME ***rowte*** ‘roar, howl’,
OE ***drēam*** > ME ***dreme***/***dreim*** noun ‘sound’,
OE ***grćdan*** > ME ***grede(n)*** ‘cry out, shout’, ME ***igrede*** ‘crying’,
ME ***grēte(n)*** ‘weep, cry’,
OE ***crāwan*** > ME ***crowen*** ‘sound harshly’,
OPol ***gogotać*** ‘(of a raven) to produce a sound’, later ‘to produce a mumbling sound’,
OPol ***kląskać*** ‘to smack with one’s tongue’,
OPol ***klukotać*** ‘to bubble, gurgle’,
OPol ***kokerekać*** ‘to crow’.

Notice that onomatopoeias are also created outside morphology proper, i.e. their production is not governed by speaker competence. Groom (1934) cites a number of instances of blending of onomatopoeias. To begin with the famous Lewis Carroll’s ***chortle*** = *chuckle* + *snort*, other cases of blending are as follows: ***galumph*** = *gallop* + *triumph*, ***snarl*** = *snar* + *gnarl*, ***scratch*** = *scrat* + *cratch*, ***flurry*** = *flaw* + *hurry*, ***flounder*** = *founder* + *blunder*.

The examples discussed in the foregoing should make it clear that onomatopoeic expressions are as likely to be affected by phonological, semantic and other linguistic changes as non-onomatopoeic forms and that there is nothing in onomatopoeias that would prohibit or even attenuate the possibility of sound or meaning change. The fact that we do not perceive these changes is due to our synchronic point of view on language and that linguistic changes usually occur over several generations of speakers. We hope that the examples discussed in this paper contribute to recognising the thesis that there is absolutely nothing special, nothing intrinsic in the so-called onomatopoeic forms that could prevent any language change from operating. We are prompted to propose the recognition of **universality and unexceptionality of arbitrariness** of the linguistic sign, which might lead to a greater uniformity in the theory of language. We realise that this

point of view is somewhat difficult to accept, especially by those linguists who try to uncover sound symbolic relationships in language, because then the work on discovering linguistic iconism would turn out fruitless in the terms in which it is currently conducted.

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