

How to Cite:

Mulugeta, T., & Yimam, B. (2022). The syntax of Amharic ideophones. *Macrolinguistics and Microlinguistics*, 3(1/2), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.21744/mami.v3n1/2.28>

The Syntax of Amharic Ideophones

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Abstract--- This study is on Amharic ideophones, a subject which has not been described well in the syntax of Amharic. The data used for the study are collected from natural settings of the Amharic-speaking community in Debre Birhan College of Teacher Education. The description shows that Amharic ideophones contradict some earlier generalizations made about the syntax of ideophones in such works which claim that ideophones do not fit in the grammar of other word classes in a language, and which states that ideophones do not enter any phrase structure, nor are they modified by other word classes. The description here shows that ideophones fit well into the grammar of the Amharic language. In contrast to such claims, they project different phrases such as noun phrases, which occur in subject and object positions and they can occur with or without a modifier. Their verb phrases occur with adverbial modifiers. Amharic ideophones can also occur as modifiers of nouns, verbs, and adjectives. They form complex predicates with auxiliaries. Their noun phrases come in dative, ablative and locative case forms. Ideophones occur in all types of sentences, suggesting that their distribution is unrestricted.

Keywords--- complex predicate, distributional restrictions, ideophones, syntax, syntactic function.

1. Introduction

This section presents a short introduction about the people and the language. Amharic is one of the South Semitic Ethiopian languages spoken in the central and northern parts of Ethiopia and in all towns of the country. According to [Jekale \(2017\)](#), it is one of the most widely spoken languages in Ethiopia. [Jekale \(2017\)](#), notes that the language is spoken around the world by the Ethiopian diaspora and by other people like the Bete Israel (Felasha) who now live in Israel after centuries in Ethiopia. The central statistical agency CSA, (2008) report indicates that the total population of Amhara was 17,221,976. However, the Office of Population and Housing Census Commission OPHCC (1998) had reported that more than 21 million people spoke the language as a mother tongue and more than 4 million others as a second language. The former report states the total population of the people and the latter describes the total number of people who speak it as a mother tongue.

Amharic is one of the relatively well-described languages. As can be observed from the literature, there are many descriptive works most of which are on the regular phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Among these, ideophones are the least described. They seem to have been excluded from independent descriptions in their own right as linguistic facts abounding speech acts. In other words, ideophones play a great role in spoken Amharic, which covers almost half of the language use in day-to-day communication ([Reeder et al., 2017](#)). This can be observed from the proportion that almost every regular verb form has two ideophonic forms. One is an attenuative and the other an intensive counterpart both of which use ideophonic verb forms as their base. Thus, ignoring such an important part of the language is denying a good part of our communicative facility. As pointed out above, unlike the prosaic language the phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of the language, ideophones are not studied in depth ([Kwon & Yu, 2018](#)). The present study is an attempt made to describe their syntax. Furthermore, the study may provide facts filling in gaps in the generalizations made by previous attempts on the syntactic properties of ideophones.

2. Review of Literature on Ideophone

This section presents the review of related literature on ideophones in the general and available literature on Amharic grammar. [Arnaiz \(2019\)](#), defines ideophones as a vivid representation of thoughts and sensations in sound. Likewise, [Akita & Dingemans \(2019\)](#), define ideophones as marked word classes that evoke sensory imagery. Many scholars agree on the unique phonological feature which ideophones show and claim this in different ways. [Childs \(1994\)](#), notes that most ideophones have distinctive phonological features that distinguish them from the regular phonology of a language. [Dixon \(2012\)](#), states that ideophones typically have special phonology, which is different from the rest of the word class of a language. Morphologically, such word

classes are attested to have little morphology. Childs (1994), note that ideophones undergo few morphological processes. Some common features of ideophones are that they may undergo processes of compounding, reduplication, and derivation. And according to Dingemans (2012) and Bodomo (2006), ideophones tend not to show inflectional morphology. In many African languages, ideophones resemble long words that describe the repetition or intensity of actions or events.

Moreover, there are some generalizations on the syntax of ideophones. Some suggest that the syntax of ideophone does not help for cross-linguistic studies since its properties are language-specific. Franck (2014), suggests that ideophones vary on the syntactic property they show and do not fit - in the grammar of other words in a language. Childs (1994), also claims that the syntax of ideophones is at large language-specific and does not help to delimit ideophones as a class in cross-linguistic studies. Bodomo (2006) and Moses (2015), states that ideophones do not enter into any phrase structure and that they cannot be modified by other words.

There are some works on Amharic ideophones, which describe the semantics, sound symbolism and the morphological features associated with them. Such works include Wetter (2003), which introduced ideophones of Amharic by providing a very short descriptions just to throw light on their existence in the language based on secondary sources like dictionary entries. Wetter (2003), classifies Amharic ideophones as having three main patterns based on meaning and arbitrary scales. He noted that ideophones appear in a compound form following a pattern **Ideophone + alə** 'he said' and **Ideophone + adərrəgə** 'he did'. Wetter (2003), also classifies ideophones according to the sound meaning arbitrary scale into three groups. These are: (1) **C^wa** as in k^wa 'snap' often imitative of sound symbolism.

- (2) (a) CVCC as in **bikk'** 'appear suddenly,
- (b) CVCVCC as in **bidigg** 'standing up suddenly'
- (c) CVCCVCC as in **billitstj'** 'spark' synthetic sound symbolism.
- (3) (a) CVCC as in **ləbb** 'warm',
- (b) CVCVCC as in **kətəff** 'appear'
- (c) CVCCVCC as in **kəfkəff** 'rising gradually' conventional sound symbolism.

Leyew (2011), is another study on the ideophones of some selected Ethiopian languages considering them as onomatopoeic expressions. In this work, he mentions different theories of language origins and states the contribution of onomatopoeia in this development. He compares some selected Ethiopian languages and foreign languages like Chinese and showed some similarities between them. He mentions two types of ideophones in Amharic. These are lexicalized ideophones that are found in dictionaries and non-lexicalized ones found in discourse. They are compound verbs with a dummy verb **al-** 'say' or **adərräg-** 'do'. Leyew (2011), classifies Amharic onomatopoeia as ideophones imitative of sounds produced by agents that are

[+HUMAN], [+ANIMATE], and [-ANIMATE]. Actions of human beings on natural objects [+HUMAN] > [-ANIMATE] as semantic features. [Shimelis \(2014\)](#), also considers the uses of ideophones in attenuative and intensive verbal constructions in Amharic and Tigrinya. According to him, attenuative and intensive ideophones are compounds with *verbal auxiliaries*. He shows the role of ideophones in nominalization. He also notes that in the **ideophone+auxiliary** forms, the auxiliary undergoes inflection for tense and agreement but the ideophone remains intact.

From the above brief review, the works on Amharic ideophones are restricted to sound symbolism or sound meaning relationships and show some aspects of morphology. As seminal works, they are significant. However, the syntactic properties of ideophones have not been fully investigated or treated adequately. In addition, the generalization on the syntax of ideophones suggested above in the general review of related literature needs to reconsider in the case of Amharic ideophones ([Pustejovsky, 1991](#)). Therefore, this paper fills in such gaps by describing and analyzing the syntax of ideophones of the language ([Cinque, 2004](#); [Arunachalam & Waxman, 2010](#)).

3. Research Methodology

This section presents the research method followed for the study. In this paper, a qualitative research design with a general descriptive approach is used. All the data described come from native speakers of the language at Debre Birhan College of Teacher Education. The resource persons are 15 native speakers of the language who were recorded for one hour each. Their age ranges from 18 to 60. We have used a purposive sampling method to collect data within the limited time. A digital voice recorder and video camera were used during the data collection. Interviews, focus group discussions, video depiction, and picture illustrations have been employed. The data collected through the above methods and tools and instruments used have been transcribed using the IPA Unicode for a free keyboard system. The transcribed data is glossed, described, analyzed, and interpreted. In addition to this, Zotero 5.0.80 version software is used for reference management.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents a description of the syntax of Amharic ideophones. Typologically, Amharic is an SOV word - order language. In Amharic, ideophones constitute the argument and the predicate positions. Nominal (bare) ideophones can occur either as subject or object of a verb. On the other hand, ideophones in the predicate slot can function as a verb, an adverb, or an adjective. The syntactic description delves into these functions.

As [Dixon \(2010a\)](#), notes a clause is the heart of syntax. Therefore, in this study, the syntax of ideophones is treated at the clausal (sentence) level and the perspective is

structural and functional. From the structural perspective, the distribution of ideophones across constructions is examined. From a functional perspective, the syntactic role of ideophones as arguments and predicates in construction is described. This includes the syntactic function of ideophones in a clause (sentence) as a noun, a verb, an adjective, an adverb, and as instrumental, dative, ablative, and locative roles (Hernandez et al., 2007; Lu et al., 2020).

This study also deals with the role of ideophones in complex predicate constructions. It describes the role of ideophones in transitive and intransitive predicate constructions (Branigan et al., 2008). Likewise, the study examines the distribution of ideophones in different sentence types such as declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory structures. Within the general description of the syntax of ideophones, the main thrust will be the following:

1. The syntactic distribution and function of ideophones;
2. Ideophones in complex predicate constructions;
3. Ideophone in transitive and intransitive verbal constructions;
4. The distributions of ideophones in different sentence types.

4.1 The structural distribution and functions of ideophones

As indicated above nominal ideophones of the language occur as subject or object argument in a clausal structure. In a structure of a noun phrase (NP), the noun is an obligatory head of the phrase. An NP can be formed by only the obligatory syntactic head (N), or by the (NP) composed of other elements that modify the head. On the other hand, verbal ideophones with modifiers constitute a predicate with a verbal head. Ideophone verbs occur with dummy (light) verbs to form compounds, where the light verb inflects for tense/aspect and agreement features. Ideophones can occur in an argument, and predicate positions as in the following example.

- (1) [[NP **dudu-te**] [NP wəf] [V nə-tʃtʃ]]
 IDEO.dudu-NMLZ bird be-3SGF
 ‘Dudute is a bird.’

In (1) the bare ideophone **dudu-te** ‘a type of bird’ occurs in the argument position where it functions as the subject of the copular verb, nə-tʃtʃ ‘be-3SGF’ which shows inflection for person and gender in agreement with the subject **dudu-te**, which is in the nominative case which in Amharic is unmarked.

- (2) [[NP Molla [NP wajn-u-n] [V tʃʃillitt' adərrəg-ə-w]]]
 Molla wine-DEF-ACC IDEO.drink make: PFV-3SGM-3SGMO
 ‘Molla drank the wine completely.’

As can be observed in (2), the ideophone verb occurs in the predicate slot. It is formed from the ideophone **tʃillitt** and the auxiliary verb **adərrəg-ə** 'made'. It is a complex transitive predicate that requires a subject and object arguments to construct its VP. The VP can be modified by adverbs that specify the manner of the action. In the above examples, we have considered the distributions of ideophones in argument and predicate slots. The following are examples of ideophones in argument and predicate slots within a clause.

- 3 [[NP **gIRRISA-w**] [NP **maʃilla-w-n** [V **wuddim** **adərrəg** -ə -w]]]
 bird.DEF sorghum-DEF-ACC IDEO:destroy make:PFV-3SGM-3SGMO
 'The bird destroyed the sorghum completely.'

As can be observed from the structure in (3), the definite subject noun phrases **gIRRISA-w** 'a type of bird' occurs in the subject position of the ideophonic complex verb **wuddim adərrəg-ə-w** 'destroyed completely' situated in the predicate slot of the clause. The subject NP is specified by a definite article **-w** suffixed to it. Its reference is to the flock of birds of the type. It is definite and collective and its case is nominative, which is the default or the unmarked form in the language. The object NP on the other hand is marked for accusative case with the suffix **-n** attached to the definite NP **maʃilla-w** 'the sorghum', which is also collective in reference as it denotes the entire sorghum on a farm. The ideophonic stem **wuddimm-** 'destroy' in the predicate slot is a constituent that occurs with the auxiliary (light verb) **adərrəg-ə** 'did' to form the complex predicate. It forms a VP with the definite accusative noun phrase. The verb stem **wuddimm** 'destroy' has a verbal meaning of action and the adverbial function of expressing the manner of destroying the object. As stated before the auxiliary shows inflections for agreement in person with the subject and aspect/tense that specifies the compound predicate as verbal in its category.

In the structure in (4) below, the subject NP is an ideophonic noun specified by a deictic determiner **jih** 'this' occurring preceding it unlike the subject noun in (3) above where the definite marker occurs following it.

- 4 [[NP **jih k'IRAK'IMBO**] [[jə- man] nəw?]]]
 this IDEO:cluttered:stuff GEN-who be-3SGM
 Lit. 'Of who cluttered stuff is this?' / 'Whose is this cluttered stuff?'

In (4) above, the nominative ideophone **[k'IRAK'IMBO]** 'cluttered stuff' is the head of the noun phrase (NP) as well as the subject of the copular clause. The ideophone **k'IRAK'IMBO** looks like a reduplication of a syllabic structure, /civ / > /cic- a- cic/, where the vowel /a/ serves as a linker. Other reduplicated form like /sɪr-a-sɪr/ 'root types' and /tɪl-a-tɪl/ 'types of worms' support this claim. The reference of such reduplicated forms is a cluster of objects of the same type littered around. Such forms as **k'IRAK'IMBO** do not take the plural marker **-oč**, partly because their reference is to

the entire cluster and not to some specific parts of it. In addition to subject ideophones like in (4), there are object forms derived through reduplications of the type shown below.

5. [[NP hizb-u] [[NP **gumgum-ta**] [V dʒəmmər-ə]]]
 people-DEF IDEO.murmur-NMZ start.PFV-3SGM
 ‘The people started grumblings’

Here also the ideophone **gumgumta** ‘murmur’ is a reduplication of /gumm/ ‘murmur’ a single instance of making a disgruntling sound. The reduplicated form /gum-gum/ suggests repeated instances of protest by a crowd, to which the subject noun **hizb** ‘people’ refers. This is a collective noun referring to a large crowd and it does not take the plural marker –oč, because this suffix occurs with nouns, which refer to a few members of the set or crowd. Modifiers like adjectives and quantifiers like **bizu** ‘many’ can occur with the ideophone object argument such as **gumgumta** ‘rumblings’

Reduplicated and relativized verbal ideophones can occur as intensifiers of attributes of nouns. Consider the following example.

6. [[NP Molla] [[**bitʃitʃ** jə-al- ə [k’əjj]] [nə-w]]]
 Molla IDEO.deep red REL-say:PFV-3SGM red be-3SGM
 Lit. ‘Molla is one that is extremely red.’/ ‘Molla is very /deep red’

The ideophone **bitʃitʃ** is a reduplication of **bitʃ** - which is the base for the color noun **bitʃa** ‘yellow’. The verbal form is derived by reduplicating/geminating the coda of the syllable [bitʃ] > [bitʃitʃ]. The derived form serves as an expression of degree of redness. In the complex adjectival phrase, the head is **k’əjj** ‘red’, and the ideophonic word **bitʃitʃ**- ‘heavy red’, occurs with the relativized verb to say, **jə-al-ə**, which modifies the adjective **k’əjj** ‘red’ in degree.

In Amharic, the word class adverb has very few lexical adverbs. Most adverbial functions are expressed in other word classes like reduplicated adjectivals and verbals. As noted above, ideophone verbs constitute complex predicates which are modified by reduplicated forms of adverbial function of the degree of attributes like color. In the following section, the syntax of different complex predicates will be described (Kuroda, 2003; Ogawa, 2022).

4.1.1. Ideophones in a complex predicate construction

Amberber et al. (2010), pointed out the lack of a widely agreed-upon definition of complex predicates and the absence of a standard set of parameters to classify a given structure as a complex predicate or not. However, Rice (2010) and Butt (2010), tried to define complex predicate as a term used to refer to a structure that contains two or more predicational elements, such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, which serve as a

single constituent in a mono clausal syntactic structure. In this sub-section, the syntactic role of ideophones as a complex predicate will be described in light of the definition given.

Amharic ideophonic verbs construct complex predicates. Such predicates consist of a V1 which forms a base and a V2, an auxiliary which carries inflections of agreement and tense/or aspect. Hence a complex predicate is a composite of V1+V2, where V2 is an auxiliary or a light verb. The ideophonic base (V1) can be simple, or reduplicated, or a compound. The V2 (auxiliary) is either the verb to say, **al-** or the verb to do **adərrəg-** ‘did/made’. The ideophonic base carries the main semantic load or action and the auxiliary carries the other grammatical functional elements like tense/aspect and/or agreement. Consider the following examples.

7. [[NP lidʒ-u] [VP **dibbikk'** al -ə]]
 boy-DEF IDEO.hide say:PFV- 3SGM
 ‘The boy hides completely.’

In this structure, the ideophonic **dibbikk'**- ‘hide’ constitutes the base, with which the auxiliary (light verb) [al-] ‘say.’ forms the complex verbal predicate /**dibbikk' al-**/ that projects an intransitive VP. In the syntax of the language, the head of a phrase follows its modifiers or complement when there is one. In the above structure of the verb phrase, the auxiliary (light verb) al- ‘say’ is the head and the ideophonic bound stem **dibbikk'**- ‘hide’ with a geminate consonant functions both as a verb and an adverb of intensity of action, or attribute of the agent/subject of the clause. In other words, **dibbikk' al** is both verbal and adverbial, the latter coming from the gemination of the consonants /bb/ and /k'k'/.

In the above, the complex predicate has one base. There are, however, instances of complex predicates of bases of total reduplications and auxiliaries. The following is an example of such constructions.

8. [[NP birtukan-u] [V **firitt'-firitt'** al-ə]]
 orange-DEF IDEO.burst:apart–break:apart say:PFV-3SGM
 ‘The orange burst completely repeatedly’

As can be observed, the complex predicate consists of the totally reduplicated ideophonic bound stem **firitt'-firitt'**- ‘break apart completely’ and the auxiliary (light verb) al-ə ‘say’. The total reduplication of the base shows the repeated instances of the breaking apart of the subject noun **birtukan-u** ‘the orange’.

9. [[NP je-molla bet] [V **firisrisriss..** ... al -ə]]
 POSS-Molla house IDEO.destroy say:PFV-3SGM
 ‘Molla’s house is completely demolished.’

In structures like (9), the base form of the complex predicate undergoes total reduplication to show intensity or frequency of action. In other structures like the above, the base form of the complex predicate undergoes reduplication of its penult and ultimate consonants of the root. The reduplication can continue indefinitely until the speaker feels that he has said enough of the intensity of the action or attribute of the agent. Syntactically, ideophones also have adverbial functions as the example below where it occurs with the adjective **wəfram** ‘fat’.

10. [[NP degu [[Ad **dibilbill jə al -ə**] [Adj **wəfram**]] [nəw]]
 Degu IDEO.fat REL- say:PFV-3SGM fat be-3SGM
 ‘Degu is extremely fat.’

In (10) the structure **dibilbill jə al-ə** is a relative clause that expresses a round-shaped in reference to the subject **Degu**, which is characterized by the attribute **wəfram** ‘fat’. The ideophonic relative clause describe the adjective that define **Degu**.

As mentioned earlier, ideophones can also occur with nouns of instrumental function as in the following example.

11. [[NP Abebe] [Ad **dinnizz bə al -ə**] [NP **missar**] [NP zaf] [V kʷorrətʰ-ə]]]
 Abebe IDEO.blunt with say:PF-3SGM ax tree cut:PF-3SGM
 ‘Abebe cut a tree with blunt ax.’

As can be observed in (11) the structure **dinnizz bə al-ə missar** ‘with blunt ax’ is a prepositional phrase of instrumental function, where the complex ideophonic predicate occurs as head of a relative clause modifying the instrumental noun. Moreover, ideophones can also in relative clauses of complex predicate occurring with a dative noun phrase as in the following examples.

12. [[Ad **dikkimm lə al -ə -w**] [N lidʒ]] [[NP migib] [V sitʰə-w]]]
 IDEO.tired to say:PF-3SGM-3SGMO boy food give-3SGMO
 ‘Give food to the exhausted boy.’

The relative clause structure **dikkimm lə al-ə-w** ‘to the one who is completely exhausted’ has modifying to the dative noun phrase. From this evidence, we can say that complex ideophones predicates can serve as head of a clause that defines a noun phrase of dative functions. In addition to the role of predication in relative clauses, ideophones can also occur as head of transitive or intransitive verbal constructions. The following section presents such constructions.

4.1.2. Ideophones in transitive and intransitive verbal constructions

In Amharic ideophones serve as input in the construction of intransitive verbs where they combine with the verb to say, **al**. The ideophone base can be simple or

reduplicated. When reduplicated it shows repeated and/or intensive action. Consider the following intransitive structures.

- 13 (a) [[NP *bet-u*] [V *mokk'-mokk'* al -ə]]
 house-DEF IDEO.warm-warm say:PF-3SGM
 Lit. 'The house warm-warm said'
 'The house became lively'
- (b) [[NP *nəgər-u*] [V *kirirr kirirr* al -ə]]
 thing-DEF IDEO. tense-tense say:PF-3SGM
 Lit. 'The thing tense- tense said'
 'The thing/situation became very tense'

In such intransitive structures, the subjects are patients undergoing the states, which the ideophonic complex predicate expresses. In contrast to these are complex ideophonic predicates, derived with the verb 'to do or make.' Such transitive predicates select a complement NP of accusative case and a subject NP that is in an unmarked nominative case.

- 14 (a) [[NP *muse* [NP *məs'haf-u-n*] [V *biddigg* adərrəg-ə]]
 Muse book-DEF-ACC pick make:PF-3SGM
 'Muse picked up the book.'
- (b) [[NP *almaz*] [NP *meaza-n*] [V *innikk'* adərrəg -ət[tʃ -at]]]
 Almaz. meaza-ACC IDEO.catch make:PF-3SGF-3SGFO
 'Almaz grabbed Meaza by the neck tightly.'
- 15 [[NP *babur-u*] [NP *tʃ'is -u -n*] [V *b"ələlələləl... adərrəg-ə -w*]]
 train-DEF smoke-3SG.POSS-ACC IDEO puff make:PFV-3SGM-3SGMO
 'The train emitted its smoke continuously.'

In these structures, the transitive ideophonic predicates which are derived with the light verb *adərrəg-* 'do/make' express an event of intensity caused by the agent subject. The ideophonic base in (15) is atelic. The smoke 'tʃ'is-u-' is made to continue gushing out indefinitely. This is in contrast to the structures in (a) and (b) in which the predicates express a telic and sudden action instantiated by the agent subject. Moreover, there are ideophonic bases that occur without the light verb in structures of proverbs like the following.

16. (a) [[NP *wət'-u*] [V *si- al ji-wətəwət'*] [NP *wəskənbiya-w*] [V *k'it'itt'*]]
 sauce-DEF CONJ- NEG 3SG-cooked:be cover -DEF IDEO.squat
 Lit. 'Before the sauce is sauced the 'injera' cover pops up'
 'Before the sauce is made the injera cover pops up'

In (a) *k'it'itt'* is an ideophone of squatting and it occurs without the verb 'to say' which carries the tense and the agreement elements. With *wəskənbiya-w* 'the cover' occurring as subject, the structure looks like (b) below:

- (b) [NP wəskənbiya-w] [V k'it'itt' al-ə]]
 cover-DEF squat say: PF 3SGM
 Lit. 'The cover said squatted' / 'The cover popped up'

In 16, the absence of the verb to say, **al-**, turns the clause into a reduced structure of idiomatic/proverbial function. When the structure occurs with the complex ideophonic predicate, it looks like the following:

17. [[NP wəskənbiya-w [NP wət'-u [VP si -al -ji- wət'əwwət']] k'it'itt' al- ə]]
 cover -DEF stew-DEF CONJ-NEG-3SGM- stew: IMPF squat say:PF 3SGM
 Lit. 'The cover popped up while the stew not having been cooked yet'
 'The cover popped up while the stew not having been cooked yet.'

As can be observed the complex ideophonic predicate **k'it'itt' al** 'popped up' occurs as a head of the VP of the main clause, which the complex predicate clause modifies. From such structures, one can understand that ideophone can serve as pragmatic (proverbial/idiomatic) functions. For someone who knows the order of things in setting up a dining table, structures like 17 imply disorderliness since it suggests that a lid/cover of a sauce pan cannot come forth before the sauce is made which reminds one of the English sayings putting 'the cart before the horse.'

4.1.3. The distribution of ideophones in different sentence types

One syntactic property of ideophones in general concerns their restricted distribution. It is reported in Childs (1994), that ideophones are excluded from negative and interrogative structures. Contrary to this claim, Amharic ideophones seem to occur in all types of structures as the following examples demonstrate.

18. Ideophones in declarative sentences

- a. [NP s'igerəda-w -a] [Adv zare] [V fikkit al-ətʃtʃ]]
 rose. -3SG- F today IDEO.bright say:PF-3SGF
 Lit. 'The rose today blossomed - brisk.'
 'The rose blossomed-brisk today'
- b. [N s'igerəda -w -a] [Adv zare] [V fikkit al -al -ətʃtʃ -im]]
 rose -DEF -3SGF today IDEO.bright NEG-say:PF-3SGF-CM
 'The rose did not blossom-brisk today.'

These sentences show the occurrence of ideophones in affirmative and negative declarative sentences. In addition to this, ideophones can also occur in interrogative sentences like 19(a) and negative one in(b).

19. (a) [DEM jih-n] [NP dinqaj] [man [kə-izih] [V kiblill adərrəg -ə -w?]]]
 this-ACC stone man from-this IDEO.roll make:PF-3SGM-3SGMO
 'Who moved this stone from here?'

- (b) [jih-n] [NP **dingaj**] [V **kiblill** al- t- adərgə-w-im]]
 this-ACC stone IDEO.roll NEG-2SG- make: IPF-3SGMO-CM
 Lit. 'You do not make roll this stone?'

Consider also the following affirmative imperative in 20(a) and a negative one where the complex ideophonic predicate is used.

- 20 (a) [NP **idʒdʒ-h-n**] [V **kəff** adirg]]
 hand-POSS-ACC IDEO.raise make
 'Your hand up make slightly'
 'Raise your hand slightly'
- (b) [NP **idʒdʒ-h-n**] [V **kəff-zikk'** al-t-adirg]]
 hand-POSS-ACC IDEO.up-down NEG-2SG-make
 'Don't move your hand up and down'.

In general, Amharic ideophones exhibit the following syntactic properties. They have a base which combines with the auxiliary (light) verbs such as *al-* 'say' and *adərrəg-* 'make/do' and become verbal predicate. They come in transitive and intransitive forms in independent and/or in subordinate clauses of adverbial function such as intensity, iterativity, etc. Such clauses leave their base position and occur preceding the main clause, which they modify. As we can see from the description, ideophones do not show variations in their syntactic distributions; they occur in all types of sentences.

4.2. Summary and Conclusion

As the result of the findings show, Amharic ideophones occur both as subject and object arguments in clauses and as simple or complex predicates in clauses. Derived nominal ideophones can occur in subject and object positions. In addition to this, they can occur with all modifiers and form noun phrases. Moreover, syntactically they occur in relative clauses that modify noun phrases various semantic functions such as instrumental, goal, locative, etc. Ideophones can occur as bare head nouns in projecting an NP and the head occurs following its modifiers.

On the other hand, ideophonic verbs occur in a sentence as a simple or complex predicate. As predicates, verbal ideophones have various functions. Syntactically, they function as ideophonic verbs, ideophonic adverbs, and ideophonic adjectives. The simple ideophonic verbs that undergo reduplication to express intensive, attenuative, and iterative manners of actions or states. Ideophonic verbs that undergo reduplication, which is partial or total, occur as simple or complex and function as adverbs of manner, for example.

A reduplicated ideophonic verb can form a compound with the auxiliaries *al-* 'say' and *adərrəg-* 'make/do'. Such compounds occur as a complex predicate in clauses. In the complex predicate construction, the ideophonic words serve as bound stems carrying

the meaning. Therefore, they need to undergo a process of compounding with the light verbs, al- ‘say’ and adərrəg- ‘make’ and become fully verbal in category membership. The light verbs carry the agreement and tense/aspect features that specify the verb and its arguments. In Amharic proverbial expressions ideophonic verbs can stand alone and function as tenseless main verbs.

In Amharic, ideophones occur without any restriction. They occur in affirmative, negative, and imperative clauses. This goes contrary to claims Bodomo (2006) and Moses (2015), that ideophones have restricted distributions. This implies that following, Franck (2014), ideophones do not help in cross-linguistic studies, claimed by Childs (1994). The syntactic properties of Amharic ideophones seem to deviate from such general claims coming from cross-linguistic studies.

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