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M GramTime News

Magnus Levin's research on concord (cf article above) is carried out within the research project Grammatical Trends in Modern English (GramTime) at Växjö University College. The project, which started on 1 July 1996, is financed by The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and directed by Hans Lindquist in cooperation with Jan Svartvik (Lund). Its main purpose is to study ongoing changes in English by using computer corpora, i.e. huge language databases, among them The British National Corpus (100 million words, spoken and written), *The Independent*, *The New York Times* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* on CD-ROM, and several others.

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Hans Lindquist

NILS WRANDER

Some English Onomatopoetic Words

Nils Wrander har, vid sidan av en lång lärargärning, ägnat sig åt historisk språkvetenskap och disputerade 1983 på avhandlingen *English Place-Names in the Dative Plural*. Han har även behandlat svenska ortnamn av denna typ. I den här artikeln går han igenom ett antal engelska ljudhärmande ord med besläktade eller motsvarande ord i andra språk.

Onomatopoetic or sound-imitating words are common in English. In some cases they are new words, but often they have a long history. Several of these English words can be traced back to Old English or Middle English, but, as a rule, their forms have changed in the course of time. Rynell (1974:57) gives examples of onomatopoetic words occurring very early. In accordance with their nature they are more or less alike in other Germanic languages, above all in Dutch and Low German. But there are also such English words of Latin origin, which are sometimes less self-explanatory, and not seldom do we find that the same sound has been represented differently from language to language. Thus E *cough* is cognate with Ger *keuchen*, which primarily meant 'to pant'. E *growl* and Sw *groll*, *gräla* do not mean the same thing even if the words have much in common. In the same way, Sw *slöra*, *segla för slör* has got a sense different from E *slur*.

Not all words categorized as onomatopoetic show a direct acoustic resemblance to the sounds they purport to represent. In some cases, the relationship between the word and its referent is best described in terms of the wider concept of sound-symbolism, where certain sounds, or combinations of sounds, have come to represent certain areas of meaning. In many languages, for instance, the vowel /i/ is associated with smallness, and in English, the initial cluster *sl-* occurs in many words with pejorative meaning (*slip*, *slide*, *slime*, *slur*, etc.). It is hard to draw a rigid dividing-line between genuinely onomatopoetic words and sound-symbolic words with a vaguer relationship between sound and meaning. The following list includes some 75 English words which are normally referred to as onomatopoetic, together with cognates and other corresponding expressions in a number of languages.

- babble** Noun and verb. *Babble* is interpreted as a child's *ba+ba+le* to form a word. ME *bablen*. Cf. Lat *balbus* 'stammerer', (O) Fr *babiller*, Du, LGer *babbelen*, Ger *babbeln*, *pappeln* and Sw *babbla*.
- bang** Noun and verb. ON *bang*, *banga*. Cf. Du, LGer *bangen*, Ger *bengel* 'cudgel' and Sw *bängel* 'great lout'. In Sw also *bång* (*in*), *buller och bång*, *bångstyrig*. *Bang* 'fringe across the forehead' was first used in Am.

- blab Noun and verb. ME *blabbe*, *blaberen*. Cf. Ger *plappern*, Scand *blabbra* and Sw *pladdra*, dial. *bladdra*.
- bleat Noun and verb. OE *blātan*. ME *blāten*. Cf. MHGer *blazen*, Ger *blöken* and Du *blaten*. Cf. also Lat *balare*, Sp *blar* and Fr *béler*. The Sw imitative word is *bräka*. Cf. No *brækja*.
- boom Noun and verb. Cognate with OE *bȳme*, *bēme* 'trumpet'. ME *bumben*, *bummen*, *bommen*. Cf. Du *bommen*, Ger *bummen* and also Sw *bomma*, *skjuta bom*. *Boom* is also used about a sudden increase, or period of prosperity, in business (Am).
- brawl Noun and verb. ME *brallen*. Cf. Du, (Ger) *brallen*, Ger *prahlen*, Fr *brailler* and Sw dial. *bralla*. The sense of the Ger and Sw verbs is now 'to brag'. The Sp noun *barullo* has a sense similar to that of E *brawl*. Fr *brailler* is supposed to be of Scand origin. Cf. also Ger *brüllen* 'to roar', etc.
- bubble Noun and verb. Earlier *burble*. ME *burble*, *burblon* and *burbelen*. Cf. Du *bobbelen*, LGer *bubbeln* and Sw *bubbla*. Cf. also Fr *bouillonner* and Sp *burbujejar*, *borboll(e)ar*. Ger has *brodeln* but dial. *bobbel*, *bubbel*, *-en*.
- cackle Noun and verb. ME *cakelen*, *caclen*. Cf. (M)LGer, (M)Du *kakelen*, Ger *gackeln*, (*gacken*, *gackern*, *gacksen*) and Sw *kackla*. Perhaps also cognate with OE *cē(a)ce*, LGer *kāke*, *kēke* and Sw *kāke*. Sp has *cacarear* and Fr *caqueter* with imitative *kakr* as an element.
- chat Noun and verb. *Chatter* is the original word. ME *chatering(e)*, *chateren*. Cf. Sw *tjattr*, *tjafsa*. Sp has *charlar* and Fr *papoter*, but they have only the sense in common with E *chat*. See also Ger *quatschen* and *schwätzen*.
- cheep Noun and verb. From the beginning a Sc word. Cf. E *cheeper* 'young partridge'. The word is not found in other languages. Ger has *schilpen*, which could perhaps remind us of E *cheep*. Sp has *chillar*.
- chirp Noun and verb. (earliest OE *cearcian*). ME *chirpinge*, *chirpen*. Cf. obs. *chirk* and *chirt*. OE *cearcian* > ME *charken*, *cherken*, *chark* with a new sense ('to creak'). Ger has *zwitschern*. Cf. E *twitter* and Sw *kvittra*.
- chuckle Noun and verb. Formed on *chuck* 'the call of a hen'. ME *chucken*, late ME *chokelyng*. Cf. obs. E *checkle* and synonym. ModE *cluck*. Sw has *skrocka* of Scand origin.
- clash Noun and verb. This word is not found in OE. Possibly *clash* goes back to *clang* + *crash*. Cf., however, Du *kletsen*, *klessen*,

- LGer *klatsen*, Ger *klatschen* and Sw *klatscha*. Fr *claquer* and Sp *chasquear* are also imitative verbs.
- clatter Noun and verb. OE *clatruŋ*, **clatrian*. ME *clateren*, *clater*. Cf. (M)Du *klateren*. Ger has dial. *klattern*, but the usual Ger word is *klappern*. A suggested connection with ModE *clack* is not easily proved. More probably **klat-* is the imitative base.
- clink Noun and verb. ME *clinken*. Cf. OHGer *klingan*. (MH)Ger *klingen*, MGer, (M)Du *klinken* and Sw *klinga*, *klinka*, perhaps from ON *klykkja*.
- cough Noun and verb. OE **cohhian*, *cohetan*. ME *cowhe*, *co(u)we*, *co(u)ghen*. Cf. MDu *cuchen*, LGer, Du *kuchen* and Ger *keuchen*, *keichen* 'to pant'. Cf. also LGer *kichen* and Sw *kikna*. Fr has *tousser*, Sp *toser*, Ger *husten* and Sw *hosta* with varying degrees of expressiveness. In fact, OE also had *hwōsta* and *hwōstan*, but no such forms are found in ME or ModE. Cf., however, Sc *hoast*.
- crack Noun and verb. OE *cracian*. ME *crakien*, *craken*. Cf. Fr *craquer*, Sp *craquear*, Du *kraken*, OHGer *krahhon*, Ger *krachen* and Sw *krascha*. E *cracksman* 'burglar' is used in slang.
- creak Noun and verb. From the beginning the cry of crows and geese. ME *creke*, *creken*. Cf. MDu *kreken* and Du *krijzen*. MHGer has *krischen* and Ger *kreischen*, *knirschen*, *knirren* with special senses. Fr *grincer* and Sp *chillar* are corresponding imitative words.
- croak Noun and verb. ME *crouken*, *crowken*. Cf. Lat *coaxare*, Fr *croasser*, Sp *croar*, Ger *krächzen* and Sw *kraxa*. Cf. also ModE *croaker* 'prophet of evil'. Originally *croak* and *creak* were synonyms.
- cuckoo Noun and adjective. Lat *cuculus*. ME *cuccu*. Cf. OFr *cucu*, Fr *coucou*, Sp *cuco*, Du *kockock* and Ger *kuckuck*. The OE word was *gēac*. Cf. ON *gaukr* and Sw *gök*. The E adj. *cuckoo* 'crazy, silly' is found in slang.
- drip Noun and verb. OE (*drēopan*), *dryppan*. ME *drippen* cognate with OE *dropa*, *dropian*. ON *drjúpa*. Cf. MLGer *druppen*, Ger *triefen*, Du *druipan* and Sw *drypa* (*droppa*). Fr has *ruisseler* and Sp *chorrear*. *Chorr-* is a common onomatopoeic element in Sp words.
- drizzle Noun and verb. OE *drēosan*. ME *drese*, *dr(e)osen*, *dresen*. Cf. OLGer *driosan* and Sw dial. *drös*, *drösa*, *dråsa*. Cf. also the E adj. *dreary* < OE *drēorig* from *drēor* and *drēosan*.
- drum Noun and verb. ON *trumba* also 'trumpet'. ME *trumpe*. Cf. OLGer *trumba*, MHGer *trumme*, Ger *trommeln*, Du *trom* and Sw *trumma*. Fr has *trompe*, Sp *trompa* and It *tromba* 'trumpet'.

- fizzle Noun and verb. ME *fis*, ON *fīsa*. Obs. E *fise*. Cf. *fizzle out* also *fizz* meaning 'to fail' (Am). The later recorded word is *fizz*.
- flash Noun and verb. Related to Lat *flagrare* and E *flame*. Cf. E, Fr, Sp, Ger and Sw *flagrant(e)*. *Fl-* may be seen as sound-symbolic of rapid motion and *-sh* as imitative of the sound.
- gargle Noun and verb. ME *gargulie*. Cf. Lat *gurgulio*, (O)Fr *gargouille*, *gargouiller*, Sp *gargarear*, MLGer, Du *gorgelen*, Ger *gurgeln* and Sw *gurgla*. E also has *gurgle* as an obs. form.
- giggle Noun and verb. Cognate with E *gaggle* 'cackle' from ME *gagelinge*, *gagelen*. Cf. Du *giegelen*, *giggelen* and Ger *gichelen*, *gickeln*. Sw has *fuittra*, *fniissa*, also onomatopoeic or sound-symbolic.
- growl Noun and verb. OE *gryllan*. Late ME *groll(e)*, *groul(e)*, *gurl(e)*. Cf. OFr *grouiller*, Fr *quereller*, Sp *querellarse*, Ger, Du *grollen* and Sw *groll*, *gräla*. Thus, *growl* is not an independent formation, which has sometimes been stated.
- grumble Noun and verb. A late ME form *grumme* is postulated. Cf. Fr *grommeler*, LGer *grummeln*, MDu *grommen*, Du MLGer *grommelen* and Ger *grummeln*. Sw onomatopoeic words corresponding to E *grumble* are *knota*, *knorra* and *muttra*.
- grunt Noun and verb. OE *grun(n)ian*, *grunnetan*. ME *grunten*. Cf. OHGer *grunnizon*, MHGer *grunnen*, (MH)Ger *grunzen* and Sw *grymta*. Cf. also Lat *grundire*, *grunnire*. Fr *grogner* and Sp *gruñir*. Sw *grumsa* is an obs. unusual parallel form of *grymta*.
- guffaw Noun and verb. Originally a Sc word. Cf. obs. Sc *gawf* with the same meaning. These words are not found in other languages. See, however, Ger *gaffen* 'to gape' and Sw *gapa*, *gaffla*. The Sp verb *carcajearse* is, no doubt, more expressive than E *guffaw*. The same thing may be said about Fr *s'esclaffer* (*de rire*) and Sw *gapskratta*.
- hiccup Noun and verb. Earlier variants are *hickop*, *hi(c)kup*, *hicket* and *hickock*. Cf. Fr *hiquet*, *hoquet*, *hoqueter*, Sp *hipar*, Du *hikken* 'to sob' and Sw *hicka*. *Hiccough* is wrongly associated with *cough*.
- hiss Noun and verb. ME *hissen*. Lat *sibilare*. Cf. Sp *silbar*, Fr *siffler*, MDu *hissen*, *hischen* and Ger *zischen*. A Sw word corresponding to E *hiss* is *väsa* < ON *hvæsa*. See ModE *wheeze* below.
- hoot Noun and verb. ME *huten*, *hoten*. Originally the cry of an owl. Probably of Scand origin. E has also *hoot out*. Cf. Sw *huta åt*, *veta hut* and *hutulös*. Sc *hoots* is a cry of disapproval.

- howl Noun and verb. ME *houlen*. ON *ýla*. Lat *ululare*. Cf. OFr (*h*)*uller*, *urler*, Fr *hurler*, Sp *aullar*, MDu *hulen*, Du *huilen*, MHGer *hiulen*, *hiuweln*, Ger *heulen* and Sw *yla*.
- hum Noun and verb. ME *hummen*, *homben*. Cf. E *humble-bee*, Ger *hummel*, *hummen*, *hummen* and Sw *humla*. Sw dial. *homra* 'to neigh slowly' is a cognate word.
- jangle Noun and verb. Associated with *jingle* from OE *gingelen*, *gyngelen*. Cf. OFr *jangler*, *gengler* and Fr *jongler*, *jongleur*. Lat *jaculari* 'to dart, to sling' and *joculator* 'jester' could be cognate words.
- jar Noun and verb. OE *cerran*, *cirran*. ME *cherren*. Cf. Sp *chillar*, *chirriar*, OLGer *keran* and OHGer *cherran*. Earlier E variants are *charre*, *gerre*, *chir* and *ier*. Sw has *knarra*, *knirra* from Ger *gnarren* > *knarren*.
- laugh Noun and verb. OE *hlæhhan*, *hliehhan*, *hlihan*. ON *hlæja*. Cf. OHGer (*h*)*lahhan*, (*h*)*lahhen*, Du, Ger *lachen* and Ger *lächeln*. Sw *le* is also a cognate word even if the onomatopoeic quality is not now evident. ON *hlæja* is more expressive.
- mumble Noun and verb. ME *momele*, *momelen*, cognate with ME *momme* 'silence'. Cf. MDu *momelen*, Du *mommelen*, Du, LGer *mummelen*, Ger *mummeln* and Sw *mumla*. Cf. also E *mum* 'silence, silent' from ME *momme*.
- murmur Noun and verb. OE *murc(n)ian*. ME *murken*, *murcnen*. Lat *murmur*, *murmurare*. Cf. (O)Fr *murmure*, *murmurer*, Sp *murmurar*, OHGer *murmulon*, *murmuron*, (MH)Ger *murmeln* and Du *murmelen*. Sw has *mumla* and *knota* as corresponding onomatopoeic words, but also e.g. *sorla* and *porla*.
- neigh Noun and verb. OE *hnægan*. ME *hnezen*. Cf. MHGer *nêgen* and MDu *neyen*. Sw has *gnägga* from ON *gneggja*. Cf. also Fr *hennir* from Lat *hinnire*. Sp *relinchar* and Ger *wiehern* are different interpretations of the same sound.
- pat Noun and verb. ME *batte*, *batten*, *patte*, *pat*. Possibly related to E *bat* from (O)Fr *battre* 'to beat'. Cf. Fr *pat* 'light blow' and *batte* 'mallet'.
- rake Noun and verb. OE *raca*, *racian*. ME *rakien*. ON *raka*, *reka*. Cf. OHGer (*be*)*rehhan*, MLGer, MDu *rake*, Ger *rechen*, Du *raak*, *raken* and Sw *raka*.
- rasp Noun and verb. OE (*ge*)*hrespan*. ME *raspen*, *rospen*. Cf. Lat *rapere*, OFr *raspe(r)*, Fr *râpe(r)*, Sp *rapar*, OHGer *raspon*, MHGer, Du *raspen*, Ger *raspeln* and Sw *raspa*. Cf. also E *rap-pee* from Fr *tabac râpé*.

- rattle Noun and verb. OE *hratian*. ME (*h*)*ratelen*, *ratlen*. Cf. MHGer *razzeln*, (M)LGer, (M)Du *ratelen*, Ger *rasseln* and Sw *rassla*. E has also *rattle off* corresponding to Sw *rabbla upp*. Besides *rassla*, Sw has onomatopoeic *rossla*.
- rip Noun and verb. ME *ripen*. ON *rispa*, *rippa*. Cf. Fris *rippe*, No *rip-pa*, Sw *rispa*, OHGer *rizzen* and Ger *ritzen*. The origin is Scand.
- roar Noun and verb. OE (*ge*)*rār*, *rārian*. ME *rar*, *raren*. Cf. OHGer, MHGer *rerer*, MLGer *raren*, *rerer*. LGer *raren*, Ger *röhren* and (M)Du *reeren*. Sw has *ryta* from ON *hrjóta* and Fr, Sp *rugir* from Lat *rugare*.
- rumble Noun and verb. ME *romblen*, *rummelen*, *rumlen*. Cf. MDu *rummelen*, *rommelen*, Du *rommelen*. (MH)Ger *rummeln* and Sw *rumla (om)* 'to revel'. The origin of the word is supposed to be LGer.
- scrape Noun and verb. OE *scrapian*. ME *scrapien*, *schrapien*. ON *skrapa*. Cf. (M)Du *schrapien*, LGer *schrappen*, MHGer *schrapien*, *schröpfen*, *schrefffen*, Ger *schröpfen* and Sw *skrapa*. Also Sw *skröp* 'garbage'.
- scratch Noun and verb. Perhaps *scratch* is earlier *scrat* + *cratch* < ME *scratte* + *cracche*. ME *cracchen*. Cf. however, MLGer, MDu *kratsen*, Du *krassen*, Ger *kratzen* and Sw *kratsa*, *kratta*. The noun is found in the expression *to start from scratch*. (orig. the line on the ground where the race begins). Fr *gratter* and Sp *ras-car* are other interpretations of the sound.
- screech Noun and verb. (OE *scriccettan*). ME *schrichen*, *scrichen*, *scriken*. Obs. forms are *scream*, *scrike* and *scritch*. Cf. ON *skrákja* and Sw *skrika*. ModE *shriek* is a variant of *screech*.
- scrub Noun and verb. Originally a nautic word. ME *shrubbe*, *scrobbe*, *scrubben*, *scrobben*. Cf. MDu, MLGer *schrubben*, *schrobben*, obs. LGer, Du *schrabben*, Ger *schrubben* and Sw *skrubba*.
- seethe Verb. OE *sēothan*. ON *siótha*. Cf. OHGer *siodan*, (MH)Ger *sieden*, Du *zieden* and Sw *sjuda*. Originally a transitive verb 'to boil'.
- shout Noun and verb. ME *schoute*, *schouten*. Either from ON *skūta* 'to taunt' or from **skut-*, **skeut-* 'to send forth with force'. Perhaps *shout* is cognate with E *shoot* from OE *sceotan* and ON *skjota*. Unrecorded forms are, however, of little value as evidence.
- shrill Verb and adjective. OE **sciellan*, *scyllan*, **sciell*, *scyl*. ME

- schrillen*, *schril(le)*. Cf. Sc *skirl*, Du *schril*, LGer *schrell*, Ger *schrillen*, *schrill (schrellen, schrallen)* and Sw *skrälla*, *skrällig*. Cf. also ON, No *skrella*.
- slam Noun and verb. Of Scand origin. ON *slam(b)ra*. Cf. Sw *slamra* and No *slemba*, *slemma*. The word occurs also in *grand/little slam* at cards. In the same way *storslam*, *lillslam* in Sw and *Großschlemm*, *Kleinschlemm* in Ger. Fr *grand/petit chelem* reminds us of E *slam*.
- slur Noun and verb. Obs. and dial. *stur* 'thin mud'. ME *slori*, *sloried* (adjectives). Cf. ODu *slooren*, MDu *sloren*, Du *sleuren*, LGer *slur(r)en* and Sw *sluring* (a kind of soup), *slöra*, *segla för slör* 'to sail on a broad reach'. The old sense of the verb was 'to trail (in mud)'. The origin of the word is probably Du or LGer.
- smack Noun and verb. OE (*ge*)*smacian*. ME *smaken*. MHGer *smatzen*, MLGer, MDu *smack*, *smacken*, LGer, Du *smak*, *smakken*, Ger *schmatzen* and Sw *smacka*, *inte ett smack*. Ger *schmecken* is a cognate word.
- snarl Noun and verb. Extended from obs. *snar*, a synonym word. Cf. MHGer, (M)LGer *snarren*, Ger *schnarren* and Du *snarren*, *snorren*. The Sw word is *morra*. No doubt, the Sw and Ger words are more expressive than E *snarl*.
- snore Noun and verb. OE *snora* 'a snore' with the imitative base **snor-*. ME *snoren*. Cf. MHGer *snarchen*, (M)LGer, (M)Du *snorken*, LGer *snoren*, *snarken*, Ger *schnarchen* and Sw *snarka*. Cf. also E *snort*, formerly synonym with *snore* and dial. *snork*. Fr *ronfler* and Sp *roncar* show different interpretations of the sound.
- sob Noun and verb. Probably of LGer origin. Cf. Fris *sobje* and Du dial. *sabben* 'to suck' but also ME *sobben*, *sobbing*. *Sob-stuff* is a colloquial word for 'sentimental talk'. Ger and Sw have other onomatopoeic words: *schluchzen* and *snyfta*, respectively. See also Fr *sangloter* and Sp *sollozar* from Lat *singult(i)are*.
- sough Noun and verb. OE *swōgan* (cognate with *swēgan* 'to sound'). ME *swozen*, *swowen*, *swo(u)gh*, *swoghe*, *swow*. Cf. OHGer *su-son*, OLGer *swogan*, MHGer *susen*, Ger *sausen*, Du *suizen* and Sw *susa*.
- spit Noun and verb. Northern OE *spittan*, (*spētan*). ME *spitten*. ON *spýta*. Cf. Ger *spucken* (dial. *spützen*, *spitzen*) and Sw *spotta*. E *spittle* and *spout* are words cognate with *spit*.

- splash Noun and verb. Emphatic alternative of *plash* from OE *plæsc* by initial *s*-. Cf. obs. Du *plasschen*, Du *plas*, *plassen*, LGer *plaschen*, Ger *platschen*, (*plätschern*) and Sw *plaska*, *pladask*. Fr *clapoter* and Sp *chapotear* interpret the sound in a different way. Onomatopoeic *chap* is a common element in Sp words.
- squeak Noun and verb. Perhaps of LGer origin. Cf. Ger *quieken* (with cognate, obs. *quieksen*, *quietschen*) and obs. Sw *skväka*. This Sw word is now out of use, but *kväka* occurs with a specialized meaning 'to croak like a frog'. Cf. also *a narrow squeak* 'a narrow escape'.
- stammer Noun and verb. Late OE *stamerian*. ME *stameren*. ON *stamr*. Cf. OHGer *stam(m)alon*, Ger *stammeln*, Du *stameren* and Sw *stamma*. Cf. also Sw *stum* and Ger *stumm*, which are ultimately cognate with these words. Fr *balbutier*, *bredouiller* and Sp *balbucir*, *balbucear* are different interpretations of the sound.
- stutter Noun and verb. ME *stoten*, late ME *stutten*. Cf. Du *stotteren*, LGer *stotern*, *stöttern*, *stoten* and Ger *stottern*. Cf. also obs. dial. E *stut* with the same sense as *stutter*. Sp has *tartamudear*, *tartajear*.
- tap Noun and verb. ME *teppe*, *tappe*, *tappen*. Perhaps an independent formation. Cf., however, OFr *tapper*, Fr *taper* and (L)Ger *tappen*. E *tip* is a "thinned" form of *tap*. See *pat* above.
- thud Noun and verb. Probably of Sc origin. OE *thōden*, *thyddan*. ME *thode*, *thydde*. Cf. early ModE *thode* 'violent wind'. Sw has *duns*, *dunsa*, LGer *dunsen*, also onomatopoeic. Sp has *golpear* < Lat *colapare*.
- wheeze Noun and verb. OE *hwāsan*. ME *hwesen*, *whesen*. ON *hvæsa*. Cf. Sw *väsa*. Ger *zischen* interprets* the sound in a different way.
- whisper Noun and verb. OE *hwisprian*. ME *whisperen*. ON *hvískra*. Cf. MDu *wispelen*, *wisperen*, Ger *wispeln*, *wispeln* (with special senses) and Sw *viska*. Ger *flüstern* is another interpretation of the sound. Fr *chuchoter* and Sp *cuchichear* are perhaps still more expressive words.
- whistle Noun and verb. This word is cognate with *whisper*. OE (*h*)*wistle*, (*h*)*wistlian*. ME *hwistlen*. Cf. ON *hvísla* (originally 'to whisper') and Sw *vissla*. Other interpretations of the sounds are Ger *pfeifen*, Fr *siffler* and Sp *silbar*.
- yell Noun and verb. OE *gellan*, *giellan*, *gyllan*. ME *gellen*. ON

gjalla. Cf. Du *gillen*, Ger *gellen* and the Sw adj. *gäll*. *Yell* is originally cognate with OE *galan* 'to sing'.

- yelp Noun and verb. Cognate with *yell*. OE *gelpan*, *gilpan*, *gielpan*, *gylpan*. ME *zelpen*. ON *gjálpa*. Cf. LGer *galpen* and MHGer *gel(p)fen*. The original meaning of the verb was 'to boast'. Ger has now *winseln* and Sw *gnälla*, *gläfsa*, all of them imitative. Fr and Sp have *gémir*, *gemir* from Lat *gemere*.

The onomatopoeic words given above form only a comparatively small number of the numerous English words of this kind. A few of these words may be independent formations, but, as a rule, they have cognate equivalents in other languages, sometimes easily discovered and sometimes less so. In some cases the words in Romance languages are onomatopoeically vaguer than those in English and other Germanic languages. See e.g. E *cough* – Fr *tousser*, Sp *toser*; E *hiccup* – Sp *hipar*; E *scratch* – Fr *gratter*; E *squeak* – Sp *chillar*. On the other hand, there are French and Spanish words which are more expressive than the English equivalents. See e.g. Fr *bouillonner*, Sp *borbollar* – E *bubble*; Fr *caqueter*, Sp *cacarear* – E *cackle*; Fr *chuchoter*, Sp *cuchichear* – E *whisper*; Fr *s'esclaffer (de rire)*, Sp *reir(se) a carcajadas* – E *guffaw* and Fr *sangloter*, Sp *sollozar* – E *sob*. A continued comparative study of onomatopoeic words in Germanic, as well as other, languages would be of great value. A thorough investigation of the total number of English onomatopoeic words is a task of hard work and considerable time, but a thesis of that kind would certainly be read with interest. The subject is by no means exhausted.

Abbreviations

adj.	adjective(s)
Am	American
Cf.	confer = compare
dial.	dialect(al)
Du	Dutch
E	English
Fr	French
Fris	Frisian
Ger	German
HGer	High German
It	Italian
Lat	Latin
LGer	Low German
MDu	Middle Dutch
ME	Middle English
MHGer	Middle High German
MLGer	Middle Low German
ModE	Modern English
No	Norwegian

obs.	obsolete
ODu	Old Dutch
OE	Old English
OFr	Old French
OHGer	Old High German
OLGer	Old Low German
ON	Old Norse
Sc	Scottish
Scand	Scandinavian
Sw	Swedish
synon.	synonymous

* unrecorded form

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EGON KARLSSON

An Outline of the Language Acquisition Debate

Debatten om hur språkinläring bäst bör befrämjas är livlig och omfattande. Amerikanen Stephen Krashen är kanske den mest kände, och omstridde, internationelle forskaren inom området (se Egon Karlssons intervju med honom i *Moderna Språk* 1 1995). Men han är långt ifrån ensam, vilket framgår av denna forskningsresumé. Författaren är språklärare från Växjö.

A. ACQUISITIONAL HYPOTHESES

1. The Input-Only Hypothesis

Krashen claims that language acquisition comes from input, not output – from comprehension, not production. The ability to speak is a result, not a cause, of language acquisition. No acquirer of language has been shown to develop high levels of competence without comprehensible input. In *The Power of Reading* from 1993 he even contends that reading is potent enough to do nearly the entire job alone (cf Krashen 1996, Elley 1989). According to Källkvist (1996) there exist hardly any studies for the acquisition of vocabulary. However Zimmerman (1997) reports that interactive vocabulary instruction accompanied by moderate amounts of self-selected and course-related reading led to gains in vocabulary knowledge. Students' perceptions of how best to learn words corroborated these results. Auerbach and Paxton (1997) report about a student who says that knowing all the words in order to understand the reading makes him lose interest. On the other hand L2 reading research suggests that readers' awareness of their reading processes and strategies enhances proficiency. Compare the Swedish STRIMS report (Tornberg et al 1997).

2. The Input-plus-Output Hypothesis

In his comparative study of the input-only hypothesis on one side and the input-plus-output one on the other, Flahive (1996) claims that these two hypotheses do not differ significantly from each other as regards outcome. He explicitly speaks in favour of input-plus-output because it is eclectic and varied. He says nothing, however, of oral as compared to written output, but no doubt his results correspond to those of Elley et al., who claim that the teaching of English grammar, traditional or transformational, has no influence on the language growth of typical secondary students (Swain 1985, Swain & Lapkin 1995).

There are also claims that a learner's communicative output also contributes to the acquisition of implicit L2 knowledge by pushing the learner to