The paper is based on the analysis of depictive secondary predicates proposed by Eva Schultze-Berndt & Nikolaus P. Himmelmann in (Himmelmann 2003). In their thorough investigation a cross-linguistically applicable definition of the genuine depictive construction is introduced and criteria of depictiveness are suggested. I would like to consider in this perspective data from Udeghe, a Manchu-Tungusic language, in which secondary predication is widespread. In this connection, one observation in (Himmelmann 2003) attracts special attention:

It is to be expected that uninflecting predicates …in depictive function can also be found outside the Northern Australian area. Potential candidates are some types of those uninflecting elements variously known as ideophones, “expressives” or “sound-symbolic adverbs”, found e.g. in many African languages. (p. 37)

The prediction, made for African languages, might prove to be also for Udeghe, a Manchu-Tungusic language with a striking amount of ideophones. My aim is to provide evidence from Udeghe in support of this hypothesis, and to investigate what properties of ideophones make them typical lexical fillers for depictives.

The examples come from our field materials, recently published (in this case reference is not provided) and from the following sources: (Kormushin 1998), (Simonov et al. 1998), (Kanchuga 2002) and (Kjalundzjuga 1998–1999). Although Udeghe is represented by two main dialects, the divergences between them with respect to the phenomena in question are not significant. The analysis is consistent with the theoretical framework used in A Grammar of Udihe (Nikolaeva 2000).

Ideophones are a large and distinctive, though not uniform class of words, which create a figurative image related to visual, audible or tactile impressions, and not necessarily by sound-poetic means. They form a specific lexical subsystem with phonetic peculiarities such as presence of marginal consonant /r/, expressive lengthening of final /i/ or sonorant or, on the contrary, drop of final vowel. Most of them are not derived from a synchronic point of view, although there are several productive patterns, including reduplication. We are concerned with ideophones ending in -r (like puniar, rendering the impression of the smoke rising over a traditional dwelling, seen from a distance), -li (like lumbulili ‘impression of waving long tail or hair’), -oi (like mogz’oi ‘naked’) and -m (like jolom ‘ajar’), which seem to be used as genuine depictives.

In Udeghe, not only ideophones can function as depictive elements, and, on the other hand, ideophones have also other grammatical tasks besides involvement in depictive constructions, but they share a number of semantic, syntactic and prosodic characteristics with depictives:

1) The two major syntactic functions of Udeghe ideophones are (i) verbal modifiers, and (ii) components of compound adjectives that are mostly used in the predicative position. This allows them to be used as secondary predicates, specifically as depictives, which are assumed to participate in two overlapping independent relationships: (i) between the depictive and the main predicate (adjunction) and (ii) between the depictive and its controller (predication).

2) Ideophones do not have morphological verbal properties, though some of them are probably derived from ideophonic verbs not preserved in the modern language. It makes them candidates for depictive status, since depictives are required not to be marked for tense or mood categories.

3) The common feature of ideophones and depictives is their optionality, that is, both can be omitted without changing the structural relationships, although the text will lose much in expressiveness:

Kasanziga [bombolie] tukia-wasi:-ti.

‘Puppies are running around, [(like) little balls].’ (Simonov, 456)

This delimits them from constructions with “semantically bleached” predicates, such as bagdi- ‘live, grow’, isepte- ‘seem, look’, te:- ‘sit’, which are very close to copulas. In the following example the depictive ideophone ca:m cannot be dropped:
4) Since Udeghe requires preverbal position of the focus element, which is highlighted by a high pitch intonation, preverbal position of this group of ideophones and their failure to adhere to the Udeghe phonotactics clearly mark them as focused elements. Depictives, in their turn, are inherently focused, which is supported by their prosodic characteristics: a separate pitch accent and individual intonational domains (Winkler 1997).

5) Depictives are restricted with respect to semantics and most frequently encode a physical or psychological state or condition, including bodily posture (e.g. ‘upright’, ‘sitting’, ‘barefoot’, ‘with one’s mouth open’). The same range of meanings, especially the states which can leave visual, audible or tactile impressions, is typical for ideophones. A few ideophones form compound idiomatic expressions with the word denoting body parts: dili ‘head’, igi ‘tail’, bugdi ‘legs’, ja: ‘eyes’. These are, e.g. ja: bugdam ‘with goggled eyes’, ja: pam ‘with black eyes’ (from anger), ja: kilum ‘with suspicious eyes’, igi kicom ‘with tail up’, dili gingom ‘with head up’. Such compound depictives can be subject- or object-controlled. The noun, denoting the body part, may be dropped (let us note, this noun is not depictive controller in this construction).

Meiexi kialani [(igi) lumbulilie] sul'ai __ tukia:-ni.
M. near tail waving fox run.PAST-3SG
‘A fox with [a waving tail] ran past Meiexi.’ (Simonov, p.524)

Udeghe formally distinguishes depictives from other semantically depictive constructions, such as adverbials or resultatives, but this requires special investigation. Thus, although depictive ideophones and adverbials are restricted to different syntactic environments (depictive ideophones characterise a subject or object participant and modify a noun phrase, whereas adverbials modify the verb) this distinction is not always clear-cut. This difference is indirectly shown by the fact that depictive ideophones, like depictive adjectives, express Plural agreement with the controller, while adverbs are never morphologically marked for the Plural. The following examples demonstrate different strategies for plural marking, used in depictive adjectives (-ngku) and depictive ideophones (-zig):

Nuati zo:ngku-ngku-zi bagdi:-ti.
they poor-PL-INST live-3PL
‘They live poorly.’

frog-PL bow-legged-PL jump-INH-PAST-3PL
‘The frogs started jumping bow-legged.’ (Simonov p.167)

The subject and the object control number agreement on the depictive adjective, but the controller does not have to be an overtly expressed argument of the main predicate, cf. the controllerless object-oriented depictive in plural bokchom-ziga ‘tied, in crooked position’:

A:na xe:-le-ni wentegi-e-ni o:-ti bokchom-ziga.
boat bottom-LOC-3SG throw-PAST-3SG do.PAST-3PL crooked-PL
‘(The enemies) threw (them) crooked on the bottom of a boat.’

Apart from the accusative direct object, in Udeghe the patient/theme argument may be encoded by the destinative object, marked by the destinative case and the possessive affix. The head noun denotes an object designated for a particular person (benefactive) or purpose. Like a regular direct object, the destinative object can control copredicates. However, this destinative-controlled copredicative construction is semantically ambiguous, since it allows both depictive and resultative readings, which follows from semantics of the main predicate (it is a transitive verb of transition, and creation, such as gada-‘buy’, uli-‘sew’, ule-‘dig’, olokto-‘cook’ and wo:-‘make, build’, in contrast to the genuine depictive predicates). The fact that ideophones almost never occur in sentences with destinative object argues in favour of their resultative reading. Depictive adjectives with instrumental marking are used instead:
I will conclude by arguing that the class of ideophones in question is used almost exclusively as depictives. They may not be used as attributes, but only as predicates, with or without a copula, and their prototypical function is copredicative.

REFERENCES


