

Rethinking Mono-sensory, Implicational Approaches to Ideophones

Janis B. Nuckolls

janis_nuckolls@byu.edu

Professor

Department of Linguistics and English Language,
Brigham Young University

How to approach the semantics of ideophone systems for comparative typological purposes?

Hinton, Nichols and Ohala (1994) divided sound symbolism into 4 types:

1. corporeal – use of intonation, voice quality to express emotional, physical state of speaker: interjections
2. Imitative: onomatopoeic words for environmental sounds
3. Synesthetic: linguistic sounds expressive of non-sonic phenomena: magnitude sound symbolism
4. conventional: a 'haphazard favoritism' between meaning and sound: phonesthemes

Approaching the comparative semantics of ideophones

Ideophones should, in principle, belong to their second category of imitative sound symbolism,

Yet, as Hinton, Nichols and Ohala observe, certain sensory experiences (sound, motion) are “so linked in the human neural system, that they are virtually inseparable”

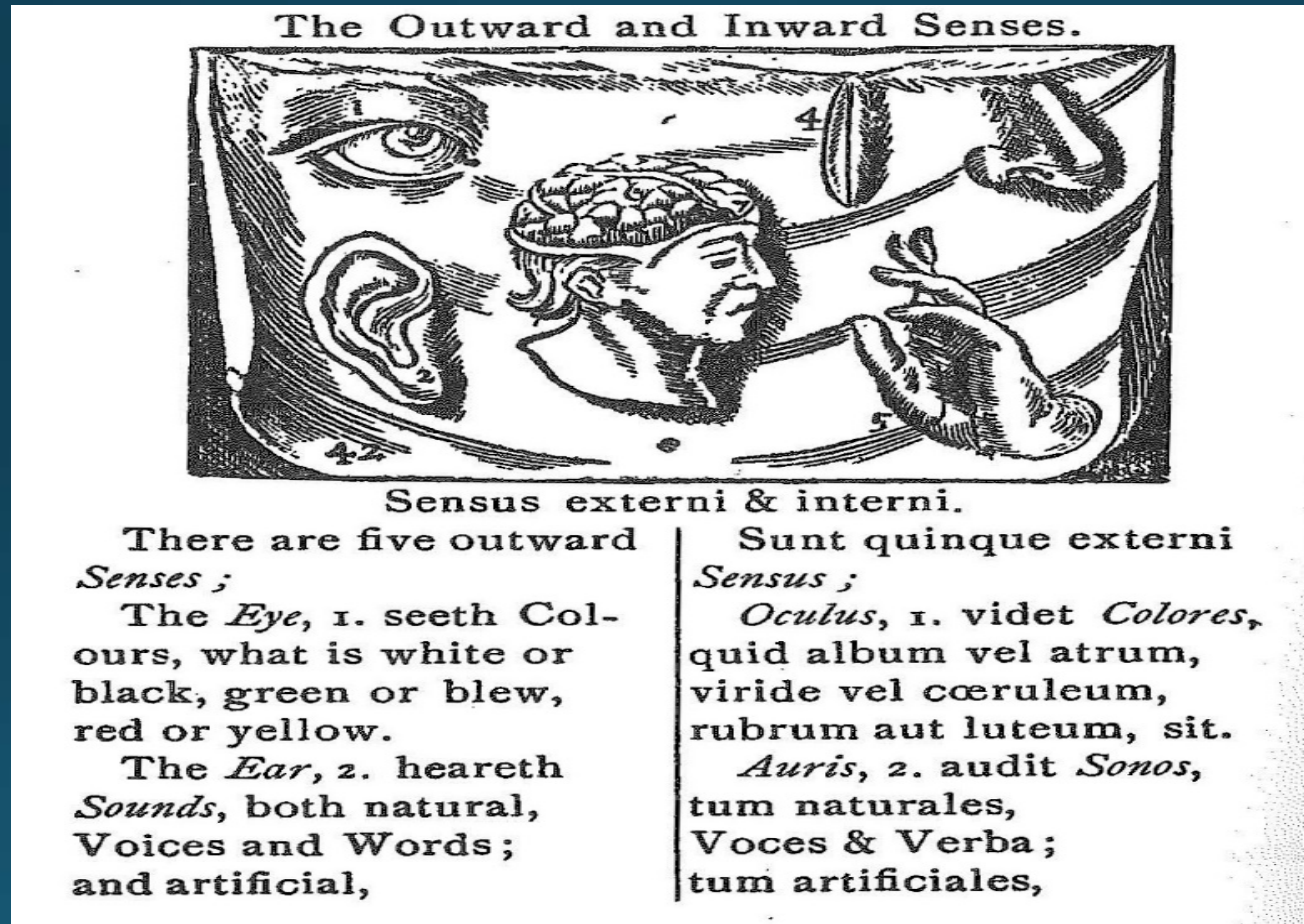
Ideophones in PQ span the range of their 4 categories: emotions, imitation, synesthesia, and conventionalization.

The sensory clustering of ideophones is often overlooked by nonspecialists and even by specialists

Possibly the earliest published example of
the folk model of the senses: J. A. Comenius'
Orbis Pictus

First children's picture book (1658)

Possibly the earliest published example of the folk model of the senses: J. A. Comenius' *Orbis Pictus*, 1658



Comparing ideophone semantics

Need for a sensori-semantics which accounts for the ways in which ideophones are *semantically* distinctive from the non-ideophonic lexicon.

Concept of depiction is an important first step.

Dingemanse (2012:663) has further suggested a possible implicational hierarchy for ideophone systems' semantics:

sound < movement < visual patterns < other sensory < inner feelings/cognitive states

Hierarchy works by predicting which sensory modality will implicate the existence of others in an ideophone system.

Argument of this paper

1. Data from Pastaza Quichua reveals that PQ ideophones span the hierarchy, and they 'cluster' the sensory modalities:

Sound, motion, visual configurations, haptic, cognitive/inner and other.

PQ ideophones *also* include the following 'low sensory' ideophones:

- a) absence ideophones
- b) 'light' ideophones
- c) Suddenness ideophones

Argument of this paper

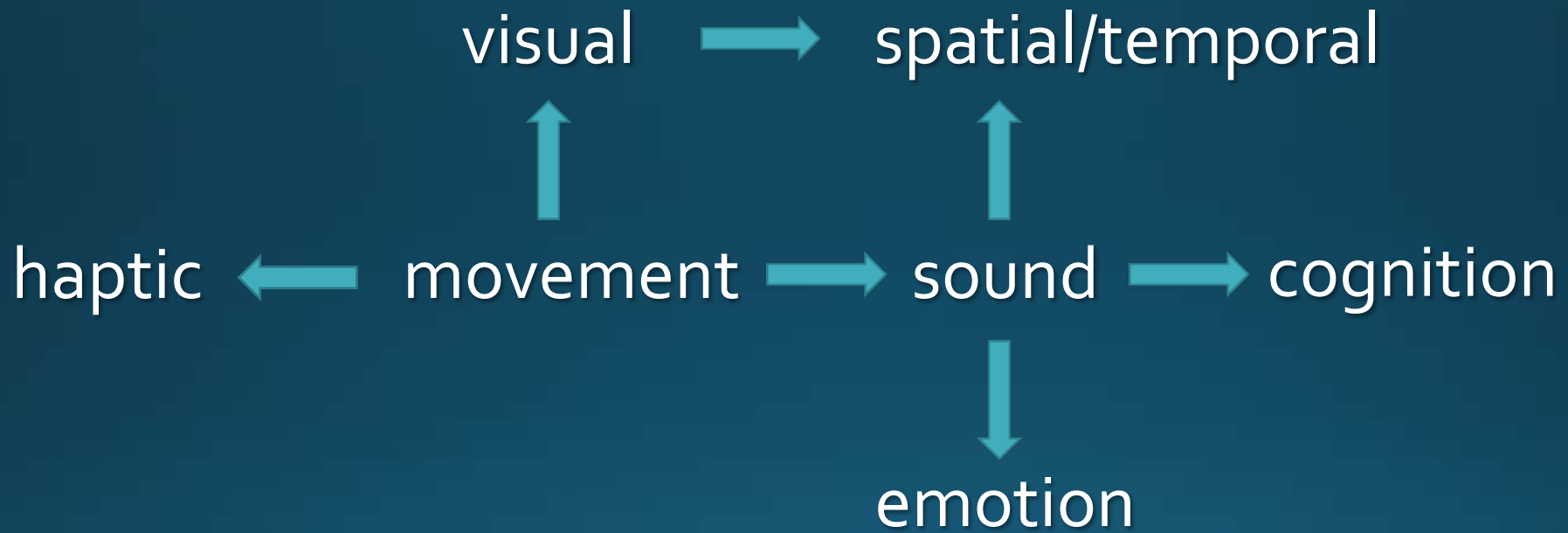
Monosensory characterizations of ideophones problematic for PQ

In terms of token frequency, ideophones communicating in one sensory modality at a time seem to be in the minority.

Most ideophones are simultaneously depicting 'sensory clusters' which feature some combination of: sound, motion, visual configurations; haptic, cognitive, and emotional senses.

The implicational relationships posed by Dingemanse (2012) have some validity however:

sound → movement and movement → visual are implicational for Dingemanse but are found to cluster in the PQ data.



Data for the Arguments

More than 400 ideophone tokens were video-recorded over 3 summers of fieldwork in Ecuador (2011, 2013, 2015).

392 have been isolated into clips lasting from 3-10 seconds

They are currently being organized into an online corpus:

<http://nongrat.us/quechua>

Performative foregroundings (gesture, intonation) of ideophones in use clarify sensory clusters involved in that ideophone's semantics.

Verbs occurring with ideophones also provide evidence for their sensory clustering.

Contextual commentary provides additional evidence for sensory clusters.

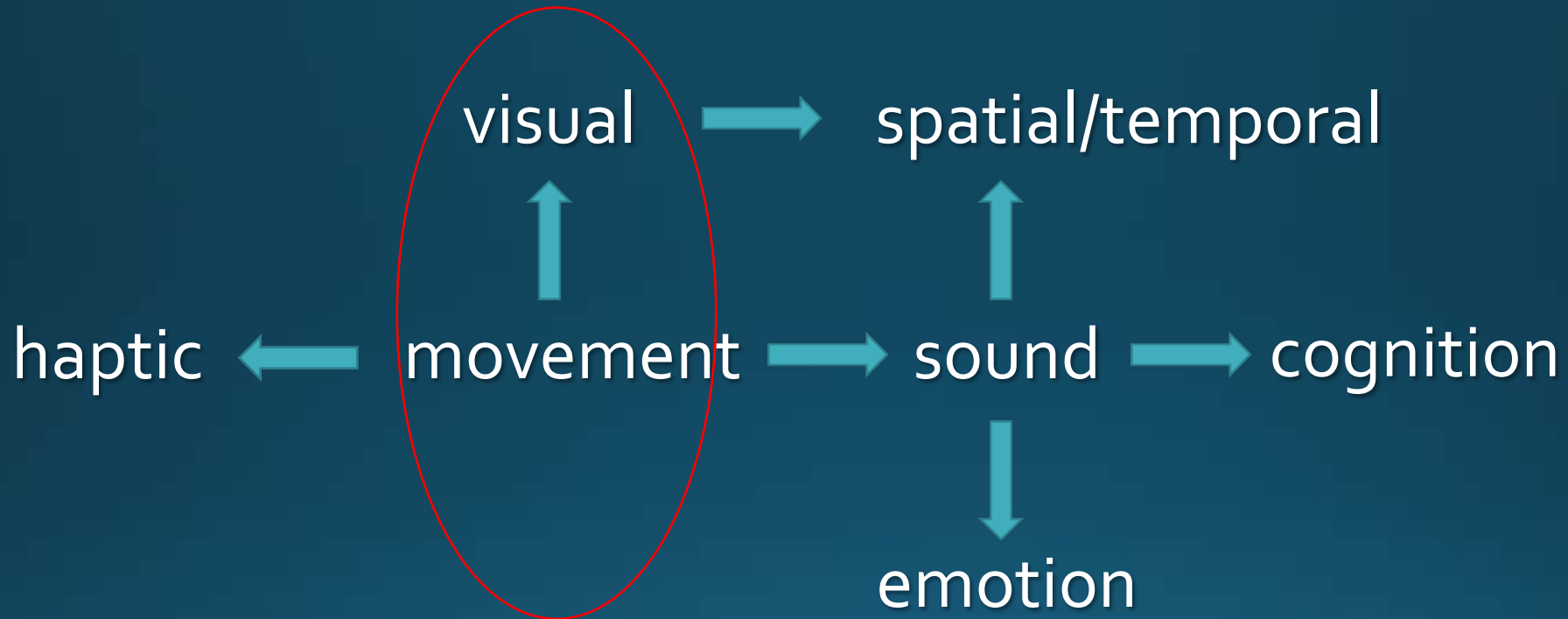
Organization of the Argument

1. Facts about ideophones in Pastaza Quichua
2. Categories of sensory clusters:
 - A Movement/visual configuration
 - B Visual/spatially distributed pattern
 - C Movement/Haptic
 - D Movement/sound
 - E. Sound/emotion/cognition
 - F. Sound/space/time
3. Low sensory ideophones

1. Ideophones in Pastaza Quichua

Sounds, morphosyntax, usage

PQ ideophones



A. Movement/visual configuration ideophones

A large set of ideophones that feature a salient visual pattern **during** movement or **as a result of** movement.

Salience of movement evident in gestures co-occurring with ideophones, and sometimes evident also in a co-occurring verb:

Sa 'expanded or random movement from a center'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CeNeprrre3-Q>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHYfNZ59P3M>

Tyam 'a complete turning, revolving, or rolling movement'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cS9GegY2qm4>

Movement/visual configuration ideophones

Kuki 'unsteady movement that deviates from a central axis'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16gO6yyXVO8>

Tsagling 'movement of sparks of fire'

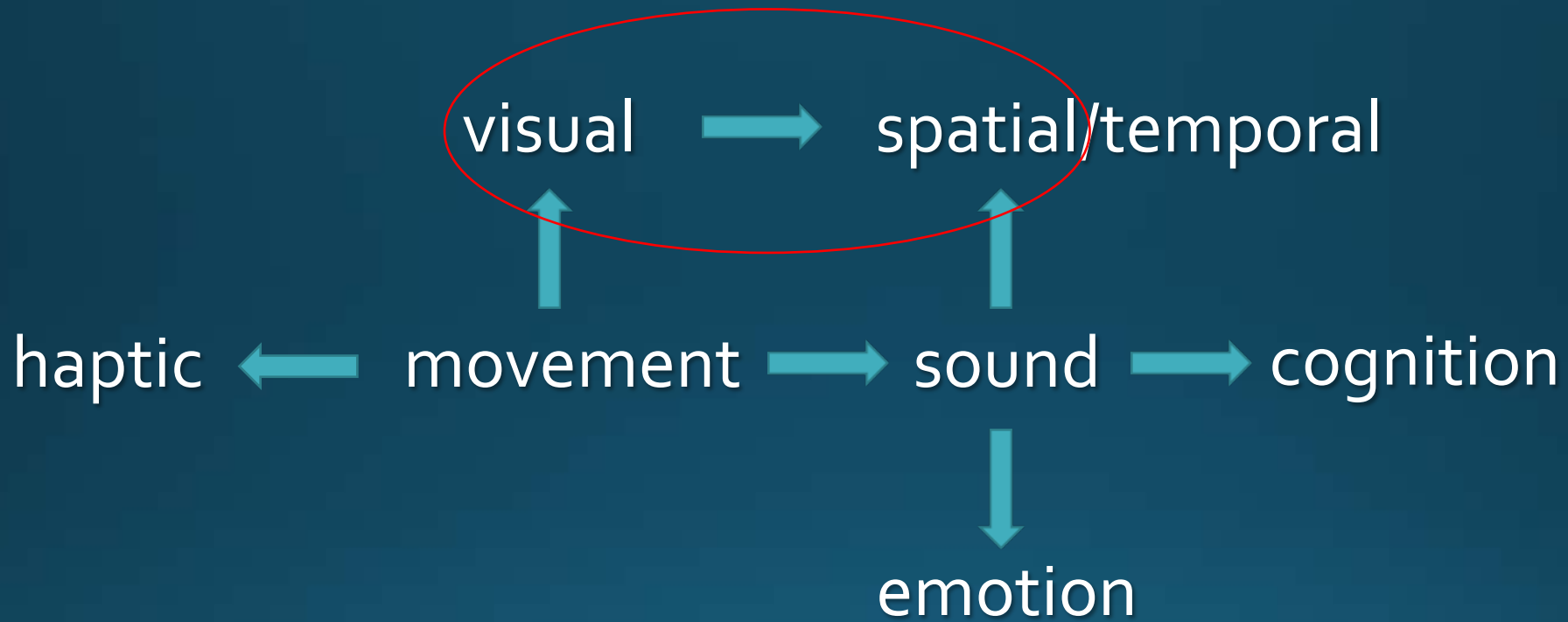
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-OTeNeggNo>

Lapu 'bending over, folding the body'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgupoUCbnKo>

San 'expanded motion anchored to a center'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PzJHU2vdql>



B. Ideophones for visual/spatial configurations

These ideophones depict spatial distribution of a visual pattern.

Gestures accompanying these ideophones use motion metaphorically to depict the spatial expanse or distribution of a pattern:

log 'dried matted vegetation, or bark which loosens from a dead tree'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxHoenu91mc>

wangu 'clusters of fruit or pods distributed throughout a tree'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o_rYRiQdo

Ideophones for visual/spatial configurations

tsik 'tallness and straightness of a tree'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzbnVfJ8P6k>

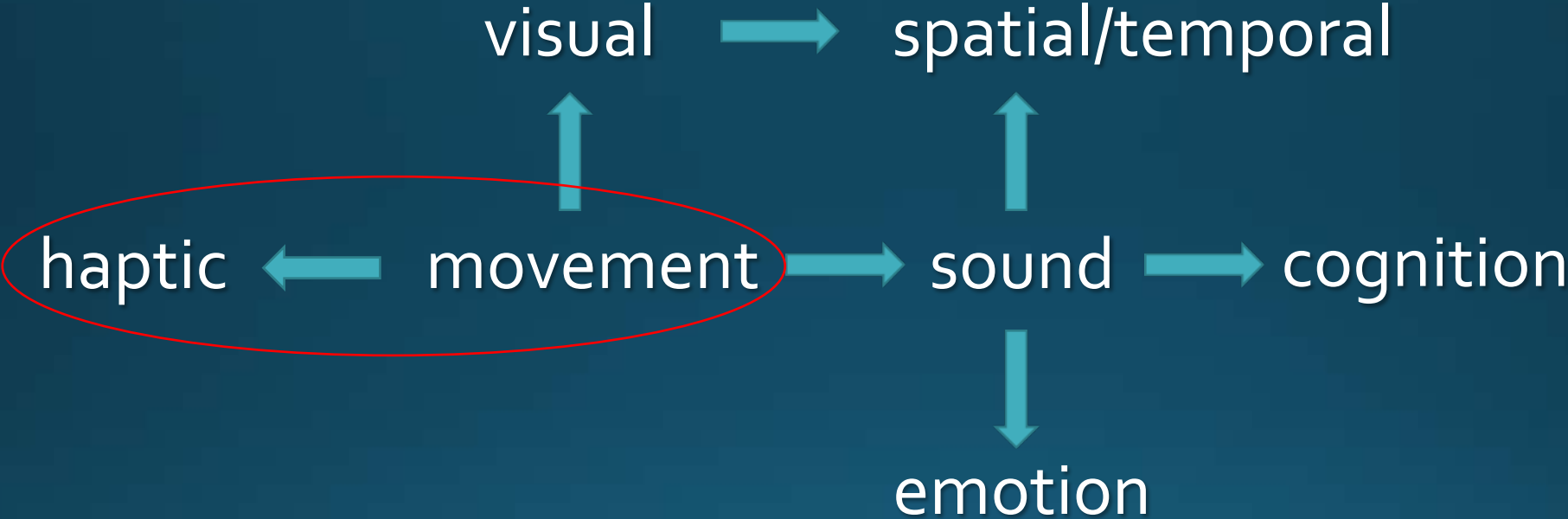
shaka 'to divide a spatial field by scoring a line across it'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XMRboPcJEnk>

shinki 'intensely black'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLwgMyMcDFY>

lyuw 'shiny'



C. Movement/haptic

A small (but frequently used) set of ideophones depicting movement that takes place while in contact with another surface:

1. dzir 'frictional sliding movement'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nphA_QDpQE

2. dzar 'frictional cutting movement'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfmBmK16QKE>

3. tsaka 'the feel of touching a bumpy surface'

4. ba 'spreading something out, or all over a surface'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExJ6FvLqOEk&spfreload=5>

C. Movement/haptic

Or, movement which *results* in contact:

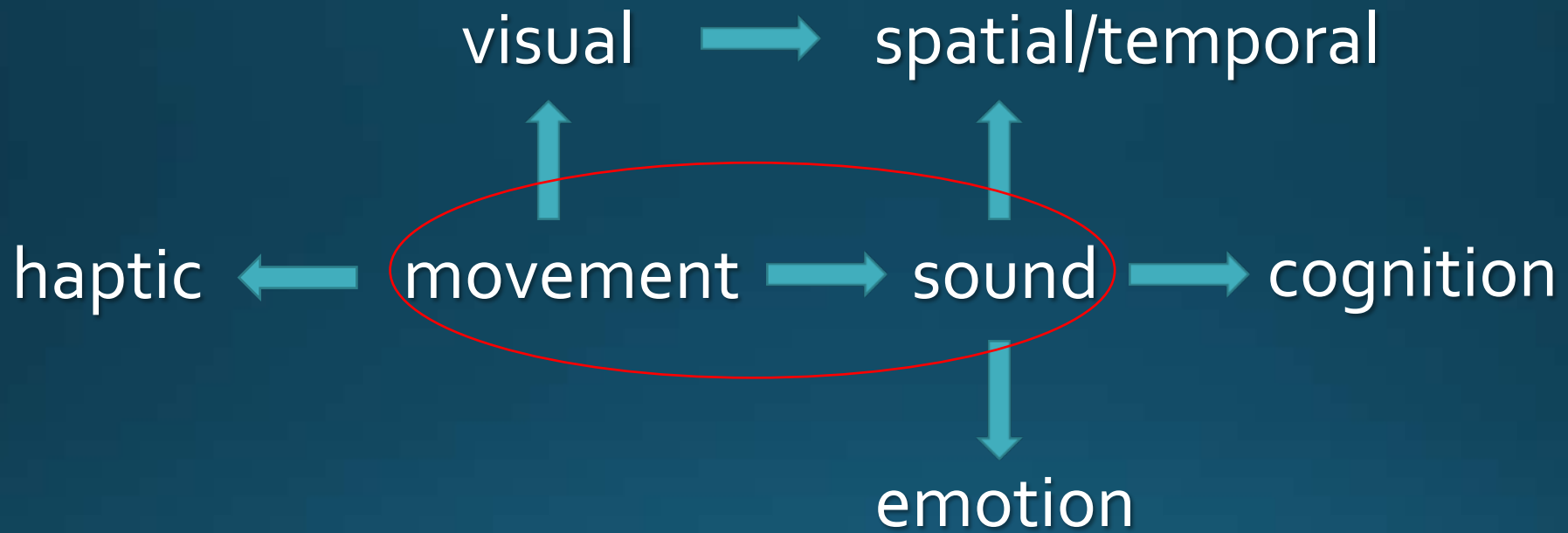
5. tak 'moving toward something and grasping it' (over 60 tokens audio-recorded)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nAxImcVNVoA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=depvyZKplgo>

6. tyapi 'touching something and sticking to it'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-aNiN6GObU>



D. Movement/sound ideophones

Movement/sound ideophones depict **movement which is**

1. soundful:

kaw `sound of stepping on dried leaves, or eating something crunchy`

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpikpUYox1o>

Ta, tay, tsyun `sounds of bullets firing from gun, through air, and through water`

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZrM3hKpmsg>

bhux `sound of bursting out of water`

Movement/sound ideophones

Or

2. which makes sound-ful impact when it stops:

tong 'sound of slapping water's surface'

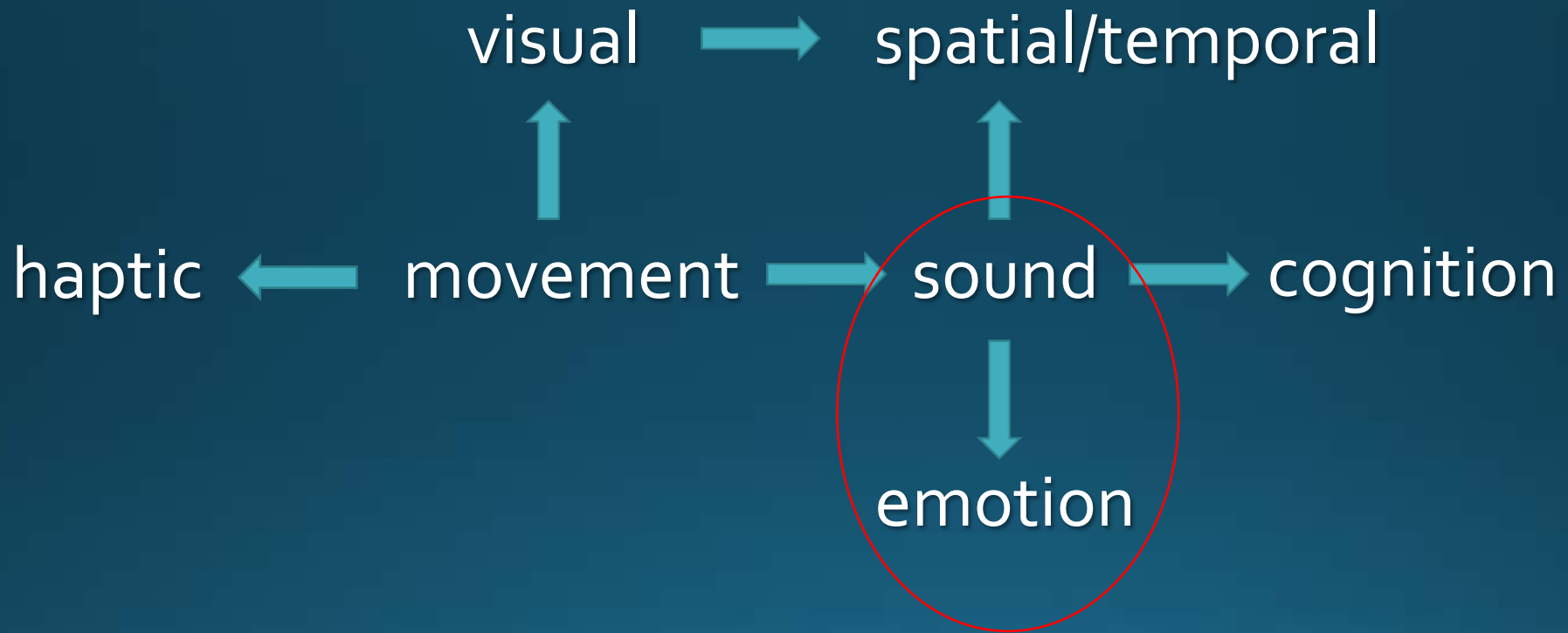
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=md-tQpQY378>

tyang 'sound of striking metal'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5XphmdA2IY>

patak 'sound/movement of fish leaping up and falling down in a canoe'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yyMtSbURJyE>



E. Sound/emotion

This category makes previously articulated assumptions about emotional sound symbolism problematic:

Hinton, Nichols, Ohala (1994:2): the emotional state of a speaker is directly expressed by interjections (corporeal sound symbolism)

Oswalt (1994:293) emotional states and attitudes expressed by exclamatory interjections

Sound/emotion

Cultural significance of sound and its role in expressing perspectives of non-human life within animistic worldview make sound a complex phenomenon.

tsyun 'happy sound of hummingbird'

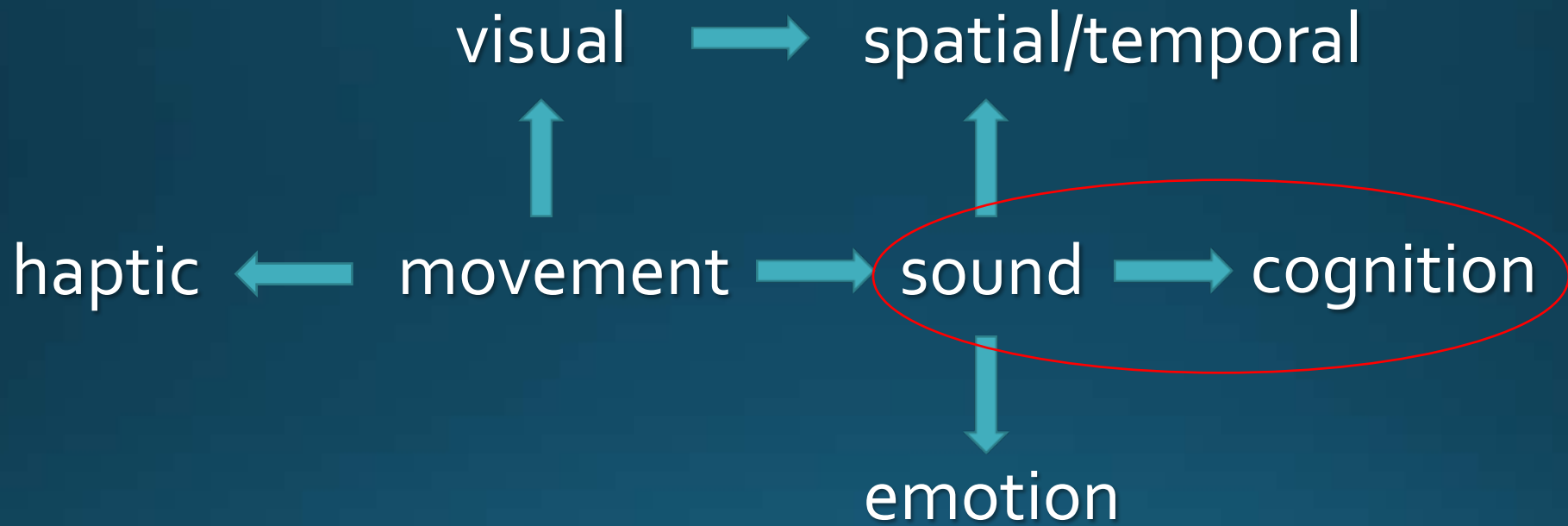
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LzJ75EvGHVA>

gyawng 'sad groaning of a tree falling after being chopped'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvRkeapCNhw>

pis 'angry warning sound of a hummingbird'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3oftgYS66uM>



F. Sound/cognition

hyaw/ 'sound of pit viper trying to deceive a rodent'

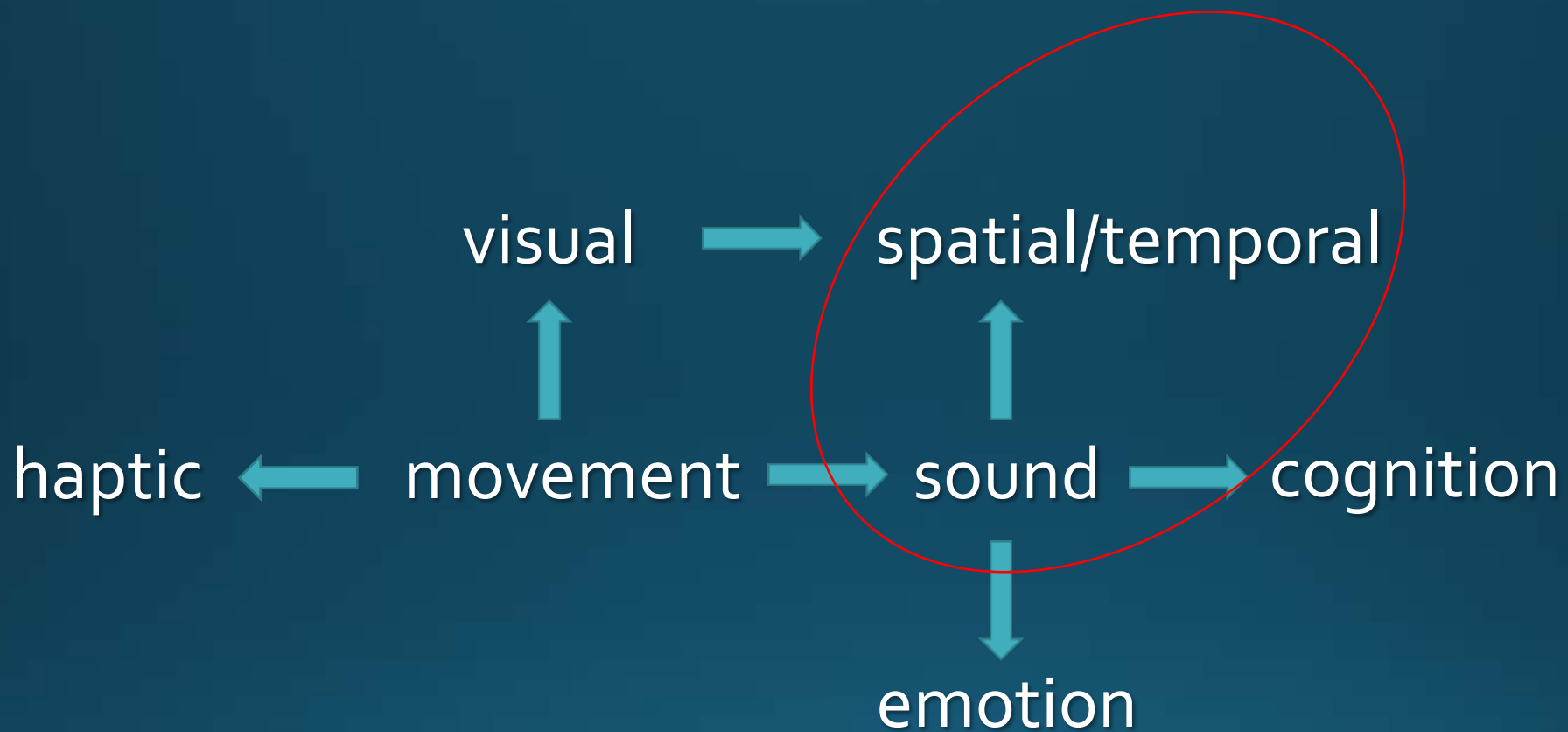
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BaQz1idOstA>

bulyukuku 'sound of the bulyukuku bird communicating with humans'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1O33HBdc8M>

hwa 'sound of spirit of deceased person speaking through the monkey hawk'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JGw6ozsyY2w>



G. Sound/spatial/temporal

Ideophones depictive of sound often include, as well, a perception of that sound's spatial expanse, or temporal, rhythmic qualities.

If co-occurring with a gesture, it will often be a beat gesture, marking the sounds' repeated occurrence, or an expansive gesture, marking sound's spatial extent.

chik 'sound of squirrel cuckoo bird'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSdRfPdF3_8

ting 'explosive sound occurring before a flood'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XsoThWAJQo>

H. Sound

Ideophones classifiable as mono-sensory for sound occur when a source of sound does not result from a salient physical movement, and there is no affective or cognitive significance attached to the sound's production.

Usually unaccompanied by gesture.

tar 'ordinary noncommunicative sound of bird'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=274Rw5ARmkE>

Ta, sya 'sounds of toucan and cotinga birds'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93jjRDPIHjk>

I. Low sensory ideophones

A small but frequently occurring category of about 10 ideophones which are further sub-divided into light ideophones, absence ideophones, and ideophones for suddenness:

1. Light ideophones:

Tas 'the complete accomplishment of any action, state, activity'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bAf4T6_E8hE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Idx81clyBJo>

win 'any group or collection of entities considered as a whole'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJYYZkX3ijg>

Low sensory ideophones

ton 'completely filled'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c3JU973wyVM>

2. Absence ideophones

chun 'absence of sound'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eg1-UrSUHU>

tay 'absence of motion'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l41_RUAr12A

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Li13PfRUqto>

Low sensory ideophones

3. Suddenness ideophones

1. *dzing* 'a sudden jolt of awareness or an unexpected movement' described below as a feeling of an elevator going from floor to floor (at 10:26)

https://youtu.be/6Tp_MJphcPE?t=10m24s

2. *Dzas* 'any action accomplished very quickly'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hA4OzVzd10>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHCu-hkrlgQ>

Concluding Thoughts