






Semantic potential of interjections in a literary text (based on the material of Russian, English and Chinese languages)

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Abstract

The semantic distinction of interjections from content words is still the subject of scientific disputes: this class of words has no nominative function, many of them cannot be interpreted outside the context, which makes them speech marks for expressing emotions, feelings, and expression of will. The article focuses on the categorical status and semantic potential of interjections, as well as their use in oral, written speech and in literary texts (on the materials of Ostrovsky's play "The Storm"). The article contains a review of the literature on the status of interjections in Russian philology and the results of studies by foreign linguists substantiating the existence of equivalent interjections in languages with different systems. Contrastive analysis aids in showing cases of convergence/ lack of convergence of formal and semantic signs of interjections in languages with different systems, as a result the semantic potential of interjections of Russian, English and Chinese languages is revealed in the literary text, as well as the conditions for its implementation.

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1. Introduction

The semantic distinction of interjections from content words is still the subject of scientific disputes: this class of words has no nominative function, many of them cannot be interpreted outside the context, which makes them speech marks for expressing emotions, feelings and expression of will. Modern research is devoted to the identification and description of the gradual semantics of interjections (Kireeva, 2010; Kolesnikova, 2012; Rivera & Bernardo, 2018). For a long time, this part of the speech was not investigated, as the subject of the description were linguistic phenomena presented in written sources, and interjections were traditionally attributed to oral speech, where they exist quite organically and where they are represented in great numbers. However, interjections are

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widely used in written speech, especially in fiction, where this part of speech often is an auxiliary mark in the transmission of sensory and emotional experience from the author to the reader. Emotionality and expressiveness are the main functions of interjections, which allow us to equate them with such nonlinguistic means as intonation, facial expressions, gestures, etc. In oral speech all these means constitute a single mechanism for expressing emotions and sensations, while in written speech only “vocal gestures” remain, as Lev Shcherba calls them: “Interjections are an obscure and vague category, the meaning of which comes down to “emotionality” and “lack of cognitive elements” and the formal sign comes down to complete syntactic isolation and the lack of any connections with the previous and following elements in the flow of speech” (Shcherba, 1974).

Nevertheless, this category of words, which is referred to as part of speech traditionally, has a connection with the theories of language generation: the theory of interjections advanced by the Epicureans suggests that primitive people used emotional exclamations as a tool of communication, and other words derive from this. Supporters of this theory noted that the main function of the language is an expressive function, and it was also the reason for criticizing this theory. The Max Planck Institute Group (Netherlands), led by Max Dingemans, proves that there is a “Huh?” interjection in different languages used in order to ask to repeat (RNC – National corpus..., 2020). This fact lets us speak about the reproduction of sound, occurring in nature, which was convenient for the communication process and existed for many thousands of years.

You can also consider interjections in conjunction with the child's speech: these cries, “words” enter our life from birth, they are means of the child's communication showing his attitude to the world around and his feelings. We need to mention the animated film “Mole” (Krték), created by Czech artist Zdeněk Miler: a remarkable feature of this animated series is that the main character in action, a mole-rat, practically does not speak, the exception is only the first cartoon series shown in Prague in 1957; all other episodes were sounded only by interjections with one goal – so that the cartoon was understandable to children from different countries. This allows us to talk about the interlingual nature of interjections, as well as equivalent and nonequivalent forms of their transmission in different languages. In this article, we will cover theoretical and practical issues related to interjections in Russian, English and Chinese.

2. Methods

The establishment of interjections in the Russian language as a separate class of words was carried out by various scientists of the past and present: F.F. Fortunatov (2010) in his work “Comparative Linguistics: presented his classification of words – complete words, partial words and interjections as a separate class of words, which includes linguistic signs reflecting emotions, but not ideas: “...interjections exist either outside sentences, or in certain cases represent whole sentences. <...> are signs of language that belong to speech not as an expression of ideas, but as an expression of feelings of the speaker”; A.A. Shakhmatov (2001) distinguishes content words, function words, auxiliary part of speech and separately – interjections, emphasizing that interjections can be similar in meaning to verbs and replace whole sentences: “<...> the meaning of some interjections makes them related to verbs (which serve for will expression in form of imperative or optative mood); but the difference between them is that the verb denotes state/actions in their processes, and the will is a concomitant denotation, while interjections in their verbal form do not express ideas about the state/actions in general, causing the representation only of the action associated with volition and inseparable from it”; V.A. Bogoroditsky, LV Shcherba (1974) assigned interjection an independent role in the system of parts of speech, pointing to their linguistic and paralinguistic functions; V.V. Vinogradov (2001) expanded the classification of Shakhmatov up to ten categories of interjections, combining them into three semantic groups: 1) Interjection as exclamation or onomatopoeia (*t'fu, ehj, stop*); 2) interjections,

similar in form to the imperative mood of verbs (*brys', nu-ka, ajda*); 3) content words as an expression of feelings (*batyushki, gospodi, bozhe*); the use of interjections in various styles of Russian fiction was considered by A.I. Germanovich (1966), and others.

Interjections are words with no stability of meanings; the same interjection can convey different emotions depending on the linguistic or extralinguistic context. Often, the semantic potential of interjections is realized with the help of additional linguistic means, for example: “*V pis'me k N. Strahovu on pishet: "Ah, kaby nam vmeste: uvidim Neapol', projdyomsya po Rimu, chego dobrogo, prilaskaem moloduyu venecianku v gondola"*” // interjection *ah* emphasizes the author's desire to see, regret for absence of the possibility, which in the language plan is underscored by the subjunctive inclination – *kaby*; “*Ah, o chyom vy sporite! – vozmutilas' Feya Kolokol'chikov*» // the indignation and dissatisfaction is underlined “*Ah, kak chudno i pronzitel'no zvuchali ehti slova pod potolkami shkol'nyh aktovyh zalov, kak zamirali deti i drozhal sam Kolyunya, ne vidya nich'ih lic, i tak li uzh vazhno bylo, chto ves'ma putanym chelovekom byl poeht, ih sochivshij, i chto-to osuzhdayushchee, vorchlivoe govorila pro nego upryamaya, vsyo proshchavshaya i nichego ne zabyvavshaya babushka*” (Kolesnikova, 2012) – an expression of admiration, joy, satisfaction, where the amplifying particle *как* is used as an additional aspect of the gradual evaluation.

The emotional interjections (*ah, oj, oh, uh, ehkh, ehj, gospodi, bozhe moj, batyushki* etc.) act as a language tool that strengthens a positive or negative characterization of reality (Ostrovsky, 1860), cf. the interjection *batyushki*, as well as many other multivalent emotional interjections, have the variability of meanings, cf.: 1. The expression of surprise with the chunk of language *da ved' ehto zhe: «Batyushki, da ved' ehto zhe gorod Stejnbeke!»*; 2. Expression of fright, where emotional interjections *o, oj* are also involved as the corroboration of fear: «*Zakolotilsya, zarevel lihomatno: — O, batyushki, gde ya? Oj, dyaden'ka!*»; 3. The expression of mistrust, where the interrogative particle *li* is used in the direct question with the negation *ne*: «*YA nazvalsya. – Batyushki! ehto ne Nikolaya li Egorycha synok?»* (Kolesnikova, 2015). The word *batyushki* in these examples strengthen the emotional coloring of the sentence, but there is no specific semantics behind them, although the variability of their use is still limited. There is a problem of interpreting emotions that are behind some impulsive interjection in the absence of additional ways of expressing them. The interjections under consideration give the reader different images during inner pronouncing, which creates different interpretations of the written text as a subjective factor in the perception.

3. Results and Discussion

Chinese spoken language is also characterized by its idiomatic nature, interjections and onomatopoeia are widely represented. Usually, they are presented at the beginning or at the end of the sentence; interjections in the middle of the sentence can form verbal forms, cf.: 哈哈 – sound-imitation of laughter, 打哈哈 – to laugh, to joke, 哈哈大笑 – to laugh; 吾 吾 – interjection of dissatisfaction, 支支吾吾 – to evade; 叱叱 – an interjection expressing anger (*Hey!*), can act as a verb (to be angry) or the name of the adjective (angry). In such cases, the distinction of the Chinese language appears: POS belonging is determined by the context and the place in the sentence. At the same time, there is a layer of words in the Chinese language that can be attributed only to the class of interjections, and it is these words that are used in colloquial speech, in Internet correspondence, and also serve as a supplement in the transmission of emotions in literary texts.

At the present time, a contrastive analysis of literary texts is relevant for the presence/absence of verbal ways of expressing emotions. In relation with the linguistics appealing to the semantic component of the language, these analyses will help to identify the equivalence and identity of the expression of emotions with the help of interjections in art texts in three languages with different

systems: Russian, English and Chinese. We will solve this scientific problem by revealing the semantic functions of interjections in Ostrovsky's play "The Storm" (1859) and its translations. The use of interjections in the plays is conditioned by the need for expression of the heroes' emotions in the dialogs, but in some cases interjections and interjectional combinations are used only to create a colloquial form with neutral semantics. In the following, we analyse the replicas of the first action of the original text (Dingemanse et al., 2013), as well as his translations into English (Ostrovsky, 1860) and Chinese (亚·奥斯特洛夫斯基 2014).

An interjectional combination *oj li!* performs a provocative function, expressing distrust; the English version *oh* has a similar function, and in the Chinese translation, a particle 呸 is used instead of an interjection, expressing doubt, although the entire Chinese sentence sounds quite definite (Table 1):

Table 1. Translation of an interjectional combination *oj li!*

Russian	English	Chinese
Shapkin. Oj li!	SHAPKIN. Oh, I daresay!	沙普金: 不见得吧!

Interjection *T'fu ty* in conjunction with the expression *proklyatyj* in the English translation is indicated by abusive words *Damn you*, it has the meaning of dissatisfaction; there is an interjection 呸 in the Chinese translation – an analogue of the Russian version of *тьфу ты*, and the word, *proklyatyj* is replaced by the abusive expression 你这该死的东西 (“sleaze bag”) (Table 2).

Table 2. Translation of an interjectional combination *T'fu ty*

Russian	English	Chinese
Dikoj. Najdesh' delo, kak zahochesh'. Raz tebe skazal, dva tebe skazal: «Ne smej mne navstrechu popadat'sya»; tebe vse nejmetsya! Malo tebe mesta-to? Kuda ni podi, tut ty i est'! T'fu ty, proklyatyj!	DIKOY. You'd find work to do if you wanted to. I've said it once, and I've said it twice, "don't dare to let me come across you"; you're incorrigible! Isn't there room enough for you? Go where one will, there you are! Damn you!	季科伊: 想找活干还能找不着? 我再三跟你说: “可别让我碰到你”: 你就是不听! 你待的地方还嫌少吗? 不管上哪儿, 都要碰到你! 呸, 你这该死的东西! 你干吗像电线杆子似的站着! 我跟你说话, 你倒是听见了没有?

Interjections *Ehkh – Oh – 唉* express annoyance, they are equivalents, in the Chinese translation with particle 唉 (Table 3).

Table 3. Translation of an interjectional combination *Ehkh*

Russian	English	Chinese
Boris. Ehkh, Kuligin, bol'no trudno mne zdes' bez privychki-to! Vse na menya kak-to diko smotryat, tochno ya zdes' lishnij, tochno meshayu im.	BORIS. Oh, Kuligin, it's awfully hard here for me who've not been used to it. Everyone seems to look with unfriendly eyes at me, as though I were not wanted here, as though I were in their way.	鲍里斯: 唉, 库利金, 我在这儿过不惯, 这日子太难熬啦! 大家都对我冷眼相看, 好像我在这儿是个多余的人, 似乎我妨碍了他们。

The *Oh -Ah* interjections are equivalents, and the Chinese version 哎呀 is usually used to express admiration, surprise or annoyance, but in the following case the context 上帝保佑 (*Lord have mercy!*)

realizes the meaning of regret, grief. *Oh, grekh tyazhkij!* – *Ah, sin is a heavy burden!* (full equivalent) – 哎呀, 上帝保佑 (the equivalent of *God, have mercy*) (Table 4).

Table 4. Translation of an interjectional combination *Oh -Ah*

Russian	English	Chinese
Kabanova. Ne slyhala, moj drug, ne slyhala, l'gat' ne hochu. Uzh kaby ya slyshala, ya by s toboj, moj milyj, togda ne tak zagovorila. (Vzdyaet.) Oh, grekh tyazhkij!	KABANOVA. I haven't heard so, my son, I haven't; I don't want to tell a lie about it. If I had, indeed, I shouldn't be talking to you like this, my dear. (Sighs) Ah, sin is a heavy burden!	卡巴诺娃:要知道,做父母的有时对你们严厉,是出于爱子之心,就是骂你们,也是出于爱,总想教你们学好。唉,可是如今不喜欢这样。做儿女的逢人便说他妈唠叨个没完,说什么他妈跟他们过不去,恨不得把他们逼死才好。哎呀,上帝保佑。

Exclamation *Da net* is a simple denial in the Russian language, in the English translation is represented by the interjection *oh no* with the sense of regret (Altay & Karaazmak, 2018). Chinese translation 不会的 is a combination *cannot be*, just like *pomilujte* is represented by the sentence 您别这么想 (*Do not think so*); there is *really* in English with similar semantics, intensified with *how can you* (Table 5).

Table 5. Translation of an interjectional combination *Da net*

Russian	English	Chinese
Kabanov. Da net, mamen'ka! chto vy, pomilujte!	KABANOV. Oh no, mamma! how can you say so, really?	卡巴诺夫:不会的,妈!您别这么想!

In the play “Thunderstorm” a large number of interjections and interjectional combinations with the words «*Gospodi*», «*Bozhe*», «*Bog*», «*matushki*», «*batyushki*», which lost their lexical meaning in the process of desemantization and led to the formation of vocative forms of interjections. It was revealed during the analysis that not all of them have equivalent forms of transmission in English and Chinese, but semantically similar constructions are represented in these languages, for example, the form of the word *batyushka* of the nominative plural as vocative is a phenomenon of the Russian language, which does not have direct equivalents in the languages under consideration, but it is represented in semantically similar constructions: Bless my soul! – 天哪! (Oh my God!). These forms are related to religion (Table 6).

Table 6. Translation of an interjectional combination *batyushka*

Russian	English	Chinese
Kudryash. Batyushki! Chto smekhu-to bylo! Kak-to ego na Volge, na perevoze, gusar obrugal. Vot chudesa-to tvoril!	KUDRIASH. Bless my soul! That was a joke though. Didn't that hussar let him have it on the Volga, at the ferry! Oh, a lovely shindy he kicked up afterwards, too.	库德里亚什:天哪!笑死人了!有一回,在伏尔加河的渡口上,一个骠骑兵把他臭骂了一顿。可干了件少有的新鲜事儿!

The vocative form *gospodi* is represented in the languages by the words *Heavens* and 主 (a multivalent word, like *gospodin*, *gospodi*, *hozyain*, *glava* etc.). Exclamation *Ah ty, gospodi!* in English and Chinese translations – *Oh, merciful Heavens!* – 唉,主啊! We established that the

Chinese version is strengthened by two interjections 唉 and 啊, expressing the appeal to the heavens. In all cases, the vocative is not strengthened by verbs in the form of imperative mood (Table 7).

Table 7. Translation of an interjectional combination *gospodi*

Russian	English	Chinese
Kabanov (vzdыхaya v storonu). Ah ty, gospodi! (Materi.) Da smeem li my, mamen'ka, podumat'!	KABANOV (sighs, aside). Oh, merciful Heavens! (To his mother) We should never dare think such a thing for a moment, mamma!	卡巴诺夫: (叹息, 旁白) 唉, 主啊! (对母亲) 妈, 我们哪儿敢这样想呢!

The interjectional combination *sohrani gospodi* has full equivalents in the presented translations: *Lord save us* – 上帝保佑, the Chinese translation is strengthened by the interjection 哎呀; a similar expression occurs in the translation of the phrase All of them can be considered as vocative (the hero flies to God, to heaven for support) and as an element of the sentence that enhances the emotional coloring with the expression of the undesirable action (Table 8).

Table 8. Translation of an interjectional combination *sohrani gospodi*

Russian	English	Chinese
Kabanova. Ved' ot lyubvi roditeli i strogi-to k vam byvayut, ot lyubvi vas i branyat-to, vse dumayut dobru nauchit'. Nu, a ehto nynche ne nravitsya. I pojdut detki-to po lyudyam slavit', chto mat' vorchun'ya, chto mat' prohodu ne daet, so svetu szhivaet. A, sohrani gospodi, kakim-nibud' slovom snohe ne ugodit', nu i poshel razgovor, chto svekrov' zaela sovsem.	KABANOVA. It's out of love that parents are severe with you, out of love they scold even — they're always thinking how to train you in the right way. To be sure, that's not in favour nowadays. And children go about among folks proclaiming that their mother's a scold, that their mother won't let them stir, that she's the plague of their life. And if — Lord save us — some word of hers doesn't please her daughter-in-law, then it's the talk all over the place, that the mother-in-law worries her to death.	卡巴诺娃要知道, 做父母的有时对你们严厉, 是出于爱子之心, 就是骂你们, 也是出于爱, 总想教你们学好。唉, 可是如今不喜欢这样。做儿女的逢人便说他妈唠叨个没完, 说什么他妈跟他们过不去, 恨不得把他们逼死才好。哎呀, 上帝保佑, 只要一句话没有讨得儿媳妇的喜欢, 就会有人说长道短, 说什么婆婆差点没把她给吃了。

The interjection *ej-bogu* does not have full formal equivalents in English and Chinese languages due to its structure, but it is semantically represented in the form of *mercy on us*; in the sentence 我对上帝起誓 ("I give an oath to God"), which is semantically closer to the Russian version and expresses an oath (Table 9).

Table 9. Translation of an interjectional combination *ej-bogu*

Russian	English	Chinese
Kabanov. Da, ej-bogu, mamen'ka...	KABANOV. But, mercy on us, mamma....	卡巴诺夫可是, 妈, 我对上帝起誓.....

Polysemy of interjections is a phenomenon involved not only in the Russian language. For example, in the English language the expression *come on* is interpreted as an interjection and implements various semantic functions in the sentences, cf.: *Come on, take a deep breath in. Come on, let's go! Oh, come on!* The simple interjection *eh* expresses: 1. Surprise (*Eh, seriously?*); 2. Question

(*Let's go together, eh?*). Interjections are practically not represented in the textbooks for foreign students because the textbook language is based on written variants of speech, where interjections are not involved.

4. Conclusions

Consequently, interjections in literary texts realize a rich semantic potential and serve as indicators of the varying degree of emotional expression; emotional interjections often have equivalents in other languages, and their meanings are determined by context, intonation and other linguistic and non-linguistic means. In addition, due to linguistic differences, interjections or interjectional combinations are differently "reflected" in languages, although their semantic functions are largely similar: interjections serve as emotional amplification, enhancing positive or negative characterization.

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Edebi bir metindeki ünlemlerin anlamsal potansiyeli (Rusça, İngilizce ve Çince dillerinin materyallerine göre)

Özet

Ünlemler ve anlamlı kelimeler arasındaki anlamsal fark hala bilimsel tartışmanın konusudur: bu kelime sınıfının aday işlevi yoktur, çoğu bağlam dışında yorumlanamaz, bu da onları duyguları, hisleri ve iradeyi ifade etmek için konuşma işaretleri haline getirir. Makale, ünlemlerin kategorik durumu ve anlamsal potansiyelinin yanı sıra sözlü, yazılı konuşma ve edebi metinlerdeki kullanımlarını (Ostrovsky'nin "Fırtına" adlı oyunundan materyallere dayanarak) incelemektedir. Makale, Rus filolojisindeki ünlemlerin durumuna ilişkin literatürün bir incelemesini ve farklı sistemlere sahip dillerde eşdeğer ünlemlerin varlığını doğrulayan yabancı dilbilimcilerin çalışmalarının sonuçlarını içermektedir. Kontrast analizi, farklı sistemlere sahip dillerde biçimsel ve anlamsal ünlem işaretlerinin yakınsama / çakışmama durumlarını belirlemeye yardımcı olur; bunun sonucunda, Rusça, İngilizce ve Çince dillerinin yanı sıra uygulama koşulları edebi metinde ortaya çıkar.

Anahtar sözcükler: anlambilim; duygular; ünlemlerin belirsizliği; biçimsel işaretler.

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