



A Study of Linguistic Features of Interjections in Pashto and English



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Abstract: *The study is intended to investigate the morphological and pragmatic aspects of interjections in Pashto and English languages. It is also concerned with the finding of likenesses and contrasts between Pashto and English interjections. In order to reach these objectives, a qualitative method of purposive observation and comparative analysis is carried out. Evaluation shows that Pashto and English languages do share some morphological traits with respect to interjections in spite of the fact that both have distinct morphological patterns. The pragmatic uses of interjections are also looked at in this study by examining the ways in which they are used in both languages for indicating emotions, mindsets, conversational management, courteousness and other pragmatic goals. The use of observation and contrastive analysis helps by offering useful insights into the linguistic characteristics of interjections in Pashto and English languages. Our comprehension of interjections and their functions in language is advanced by this research.*

Key Words: Interjections, Pashto, English, Morphology, Pragmatics

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Introduction

An interjection is a part of speech which is vital and decisive to communication as it helps us to convey emotions and transmit mindsets that are tough to describe with words alone. It is a term for a swift and abrupt pause in speaking, used to demonstrate feelings. They are used to express emotions like rage, disgust, surprise, happiness, excitement, enthusiasm etc. Interjections assist us by offering a rapid and efficient way to convey intricate and detailed emotional

information. Without interjections, language would be complex, detailed and more explanatory because we would have to use elaborate sentences to make our emotions and attitudes explicit.

Keith Alan (2013) argues that interjections boost the fascination and meaning of language as they serve as spices, add flavour to it and make it appealing. Hills (2000) states that interjections have a specific function in communication. They are not conventional words, having their own



existence outside of sentence structure but still being in action for indicating emotions. Cooke (2017) concludes that interjections frost the language with extra information and provide interest in the language. Gina Cooke believes that interjections are crucial as they make the language more appealing and interesting. To Wilkins (1992:119), "interjections have semantic, propositional or conceptual content...", they reflect complex conceptual structures through which communication is achieved. According to him, the meaning conveyed by interjections is in connection with the context in which it is used. They are short utterances that show feelings, emotions or reactions. They are not random but have proper meaning and reflect the speaker's conceptual comprehension of the situation at hand. That's why interjections are essential words in language that convey subtle aspects of meaning beyond the literal content of the words used.

Interjections are commonly used in daily life conversations, literature books, newspapers, and movies to make the language livelier, more expressive and appealing. It is essential to use interjections in conversation as they make it more natural. However, it is challenging to use interjections appropriately in speaking because getting its intended meaning can be difficult. Many scholars, authors and researchers have studied interjections but there is a lack of research on the morphology and pragmatics of interjections in Pashto and English languages. It is tough to use interjections effectively in Pashto and English and there is a need for research on the linguistic features of interjections in both languages. This research will be valuable as it will provide insights into how interjections can be used to enhance communication and make conversations more natural.

Research Questions

The study aims to answer these questions:

1. What are the characteristics of interjections in Pashto and English languages, both in terms of their form and their function in communication?
2. How do interjections in Pashto differ from English in terms of their morphological and pragmatic features?

Literature Review

It has become an important part of language to study interjections and its meaning. The importance of interjections in many languages has been studied by many researchers and many data on interjections have been reported. Interjections are studied in detail, and their phonological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and cultural dimensions are examined.

"Interjections as Pragmatic Markers in English" by Elena Semino 2010; The author focuses on the role of interjections as discourse markers and explores the pragmatic functions of interjections in English discourse. By using corpus data and conversational analysis, the author has examined distinctive features of interjections.

"Interjections in English: A Cognitive-Pragmatic Analysis" by Angela Downing 2010; The meanings of English interjections and their uses in context have been explored in this study by applying cognitive and pragmatic models. The study reports that interjections have multiple functions and serve a range of communicative purposes.

"Interjections Across Englishes: A Multidimensional Analysis " by Joybrato Mukherjee and Anke Schulz 2007; A multidimensional analytical framework is used to investigate the cross-linguistic variation of interjections in six varieties of English. The authors describe several dimensions of distinctions in interjections, such as their degree of iconicity, frequency, intensity, and social and cultural

connotations.

In "Interjections, Thematic Roles, and Thematic Structure" by Yael Greenberg [2006](#); The author claims interjections as not only messengers of emotions but also agents of predicate activeness. "Interjections" by Jan-Olaf Svantesson [2020](#), Anna Tsendina, Anastasia Karlsson, and Vivan Franzén; This book is about the forms, meanings and uses of interjections. The authors analyze interjections from different perspectives and provide a survey of interjections in various languages.

"Interjections, Language, and the 'Show-and-Tell' Nature of Human Communication" by Norbert Schmitt and Ramma El-Hassan [2020](#); This article reports that interjections take part in the "show-and-tell" nature of human interaction. Interjections have been claimed as devices that assist speakers in transmitting their feelings more strongly. The role of interjections in social interaction is described by the authors through the extraction of examples of interjections from English and other languages.

"Interjections: The Universal Yet Neglected Part of Speech" by Paul Tench [2012](#); This paper found interjections a crucial and essential part of speech but still largely neglected. The author argues about interjections from different perspectives.

According to Jane Austin's speech act theory, interjections are brief phrases that are used to express a variety of emotions, including surprise, admiration, delight, disgust, and approval. Interjections are categorized in a number of different ways. On the basis of meaning, there are emotive interjections, discourse markers, response particles and verbal gestures. Simple and complex interjections are classified on the basis of form. Based on functions, interjections are divided into three categories; expressional exclamations, conative interjections and phatic interjections by Ameka (1992).

John Searle has suggested that interjections can be classified as speech acts and their illocutionary impact can be better understood by the context in which they are used (Searle, [1975](#)). Similarly to this, Catherine Emmott has inquired in what manner and for what reason or purpose interjections are used in speech (Emmott, [1997](#)). For an utterance to be deemed successful, felicity conditions are the indispensable parameters. For interjections, felicity conditions are concerned with the social standards and practices around the usage of interjections in speech. According to the notion of appropriateness, language-situational implications must be fit and pertinent for the interaction between the speaker and the listener and for the social setting. Another favourable criterion for interjections is the rule of relevance. Interjections should not impede the conversation's subject and setting and should be apposite.

In accordance with Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, interjections can take part in the negotiation of face needs by showing empathy or appreciation for the hearer, or by minimizing the impact of an utterance. Interjections also have the tendency to mitigate the impact of face-threatening acts, which is a language that has the strength to impair or threaten the face, or social identity. Ochs ([1990](#)) and Locher ([2010](#)), conclude that interjections can be used as politeness strategies in interactions. The impact of a sensitive statement can be softened by interjections. Interjections act as performative verbs because they have a communicational purpose and execute an activity. For instance, the performative verb "I apologize" points to regret or remorse. It has been noted by Deborah Tannen that different cultures have distinctive norms about interrupting and interjecting communication (Tannen, [1990](#)). In some cultures, interrupting is thought to be rude, while in others, it is considered to be a sign

of enthusiasm. The ways in which interjections are used in distinct contexts have been studied by linguists. Certain researchers (Schiffrin, 1987; Heritage and Raymond, 2005), claim that the feelings, emotions, attitudes, and intentions of speakers during dialogue can be indicated by interjections.

Methodology

The study is schemed with a qualitative approach. Purposive sampling was utilized for selecting 40 participants who were proficient in both languages and had knowledge and experience with interjections. For data collection, a purposive observation method has been carried out which helped in observing natural conversations and interactions to capture the spontaneous use of interjections in various contexts. By this method, the target population's experiences, perceptions, and knowledge about interjections in both languages have been gathered. The gathered data was then categorized according to its morphological and pragmatic characteristics. The method of contrastive analysis is utilized to illustrate the parallels and discrepancies between Pashto and English interjections. By using a pragmatic framework, the study evaluates the use of language in a setting and the manner in which it is governed by a number of rules, theories, and approaches. This framework looked into how the interaction between linguistic components and the context-specific and social context of communication results in the construction of meaning.

Table 1

Morphological Features	Pashto Interjections	English Interjections
Reduplicates	Toba toba, ALLAH ALLAH, Ghareeb ghareeb, Bilkol bilkol, Lewane lewane, Wāi wāi Repetition: Ya ALLAH Ya	Yeah-yeah, No-no, Boo-hoo, Yada-yada Repetition: Bye-bye, Yeah yeah, Yay yay, Oh oh, Oh no no, Wow wow,

Analysis and Discussion

The word formation of interjections and their properties are figured out in this section respectively.

Morphological Features of Interjections in Pashto and English

Morphological features are concerned with the distinctive characteristics of a term's form, including its roots, prefixes, suffixes, and inflectional endings. Using these characteristics, words in various contexts or languages can be compared and contrasted. Improved comprehension of the way words are formed and used across different languages can be gained by the linguists through investigating these traits.

Morphological features which have been studied in this research are;

1. Reduplication is a linguistic process where a whole word or its part is repeated to intensify its meaning.
2. Repetition is a common linguistic device that is related to the act of repeating a word, phrase, sound, or other linguistic component.
3. Interjections as Holly Names are concerned with expletives which are phrases or sentiments derived from religious terms and employed to convey powerful feelings.
4. Loan words refer to those terms which are borrowed from one language and added into another language.
5. Onomatopoeia is the use of language whose sound imitates that which it names.

Morphological Features	Pashto Interjections	English Interjections
	ALLAH, Wah wah, Wai wai, Chi chi, Waaa waaa, Toba toba	
Proper names	Ya ALLAH, Ya Rabba, Wae khudaya nu, Ya ALLAH nu, Ya khudaya, Ya ALLAH toba	Jesus Christ, Jesus, goodness gracious, crikey, gosh or jeez
Etymology	Urdu: Ya ALLAH, Ufff, Wah wah, Zabardast, Toba toba English: Wow	South Africa: Whoa French: Lordsy mercy, Bon appétit, Voilà Spanish: Hola, Adios, Hallelujah Hebrew: Shalom Italian: Ciao, Bravo, Mamma mia
Onomatopoeia	Akh akh, Wee wee, hmmm hmmm, Shaghgh shaghgh	Pam pam, hah-hah, shh

Similarities: Distinct forms of interjections in Pashto and English are similar in general. In terms of reduplication, it seems that the entire stem is repeated to intensify the feelings in both languages. As regards the proper names, both Pashto and English use the religious name "God" in varieties to express pity, disagreement, shock or anger. Both of the languages have rich vocabulary but have also borrowed some interjections as loan words from various languages. Pashto borrowed words from Urdu and English while English took advantage of Spanish, Italian, and Hebrew. Onomatopoeia is the contribution to the vocabulary of any language. Pashto and English show some kinds of imitative linguistic codification and represent a referent based on a diagrammatic sound-meaning identification. Hence, most onomatopoeia of interjections in Pashto and English tend to have a similar feature, the meanings of the words are denoted by the sounds.

Differences: Reduplication is used regularly in Pashto with word classes of verbs, nouns and interjections whereas it seldom occurs in English for particularity, intensification, or amusement and is mainly used in words that reflect sounds. Pashtoon

people tend to use the proper name of "ALLAH" by Ya ALLAH, YA ALLAH toba, Ya ALLAH shukar, etc. Conversely, the proper name "Jesus" is replaced by "Jeez" and "God" is combined with another holy name "Holly" to form a moderate religious name of "Golly". These euphemistic alternatives are used by individuals who wish to express themselves while being sensitive to religious beliefs or avoiding potentially offensive language.

Pragmatic Features of Interjections in Pashto and English

Pragmatics refers to the branch of linguistics dealing with the language in use and the context in which it is used. The interjections may give different levels of emotion depending on a variety of accompanying words or expressions as well as the context to show advice, anger, agreement, compliments, disagreement, pain, pleading, sympathy, warnings and so forth under the purposes of the speaker. Although we use similar interjections, they express various intentions of the speaker.

Different purposes for which interjections are pragmatically used are;

1. Advice is guidance.

2. Anger is a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility.
3. Delight refers to great pleasure.
4. A complaint is a statement that a situation is unsatisfactory or unacceptable.
5. Compliments are expressions of praise or admiration.
6. Hesitation is a pause before saying or doing something.
7. Confirmation concerns the correctness or verification that something is true.
8. Surprise is something unexpected.
9. Responses are answers or replies.
10. Refusals refer to denial and rejection.
11. Doubts mean feelings of uncertainty.
12. Sympathy is a feeling of pity or sorrow for the suffering of another.
13. Fears are unpleasant emotions caused by actual or perceived doing or threats.
14. Gratitude is thankfulness.
15. Pleading refers to the action of making an emotional or earnest appeal to someone.
16. Warnings are the indication of possible or impending dangers, problems, or other unpleasant situations.
17. Sarcasm concerns with the use of irony to mock or convey contempt.

Table 2

Pragmatic Features	Pashto Interjections	English Interjections
Expressing advice	Na na, ma kwa, ru ru	Oh, well
Showing anger	Uffff, makh de ruk sha, naaa, da skha makh de	Oh, no, holy Jesus, dawn lunatic, fiddle-dee-dee, christ almighty
Expressing delight	Der kha, der aala, wah wah jiii, ma shaa ALLAH, zabardast	Wow, oh my god, hurrah
Showing complaints	Afsoos de nu, Khudaya ta der lwe ye, akhhh	Oh, fiddle-dee-dee
Showing compliments	Ma shaa ALLHA, der kha zabardast, wakh wakh, thakrha de thakrha, pah zalima	Oh, hey, yeah
Expressing hesitation	Na na, bs bs, um, hmmm	Ah, oh, um, er, uh
Asking for confirmation	Khaaa, na marha, resha waye, gup lagae, da sa waye, wai da de rata sa owe, wai da sa waye	Oh, huh, eh,
Exclaiming surprise	Pah, waaaa, ohhhh, wakh wakh	Wow, oh, whao, sweet Jesus, Jesus christ
Functioned as responses	Kha, nu bya, kha g, nur, kha kha	Yes, yeah, good, huh, oh
Showing refusals	Guru ba nu, na, ao bilkol, wale na wale na, ao ao ta sai wai	Yeah, no, well, oh
Expressing doubts	Sa owaim nu, katal ba ghwarhi	Oh, well
Showing sympathy	We zaaar, goul shm, zaaar, zaar me kai thai, ALLAH de khair uki	Oh
Expressing fears	We duba shum, Ya ALLAH khair, we khadaya, we khudaya da sa ushoo, ALLAH de khair uki	Ah, oh, no, my god
Expressing gratitude	Manana, dera manana, ALLAH	Yes, okay, hey, oh

Pragmatic Features	Pashto Interjections	English Interjections
	de khushala ka, lwe she, bacha she, lwe sarhe she, lweya khaza she, khushala she	
Expressing pleading	Ya ALLAH, Ya ALLAH ta der lwe ye nu	Dear lord, oh, yes
Expressing warnings	Sta hwaha da hu, soch pe oka, ma kawa gware	Oh, not again
Expressing sarcasm	Toba me de shi, us ye khwand oka, da pa ke la paate wo, der ghat khwand ye oka	Brave, oh really

Similarities: In terms of similarities of interjections in Pashto and English, a single interjection could carry out distinct pragmatic functions of surprise, anger, doubt and delight, refusals, compliments and so on. Both Pashto and English interjections are expressed to indicate the expressive and emotive feelings of the speakers to the addressees under the purpose of communication. Speakers of Pashto and English languages may use interjections by employing stance, gesture, and their entire body movement, far more than simply expressing verbal language.

Both Pashto and English interjections that are used in everyday speech present a combination of two or independent interjections.

Differences: As regards differences, it has been noted that the oftenness of English interjections is lower than in Pashto and the learners of English prefer less direct complaints than native speakers. We can see that most of interjections in English employ words such as “baby”, “Pa” or “my dear” as follows:

-Ooh baby, do not you know I suffer? My heart gets suffocated without you.

By contrast, there is only a combination of interjections without any direct addressing words. For example: Toba toba! (Meaning: Ta ba wai che da na da habar). Remarkably, English interjections such as “huh” or “eh” are employed to confirm the speaker’s

assumption. In Pashto however, interjections “khaaa”, “wai”, “zaaaa” combine with other words such as “nu bya”, “bya sa chal oshu”, “us ba sa kigi” to form questions.

Conclusion

An abrupt pause, specially made to express strong feelings and reactions is called an interjection. They often have deficient grammatical associations with other items in a sentence. Morphologically, interjections can take various forms and have different origins. Pashto, an Indo-Iranian language which is largely spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has its own unique collection of interjections. Due to historical and cultural interactions, Urdu has an impact on the formation of Pashto interjections. The borrowing from Urdu brings a distinct flavour to Pashto. In the case of English interjections, most of them are originally English words but borrowed words from other languages also make it more interesting and diverse.

Unlike other parts of speech, explicit propositional contents are not conveyed by interjections because their meaning and comprehension heavily rely on the context in which they are used. The listener would be dependent on procedural information to derive implicatures if an utterance consists solely of an interjection without an explicit proposition.

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