Interjections

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1. Introduction

Interjections, broadly defined here as lexical forms that typically constitute utterances on their own and do not combine syntactically with other parts of speech (Wilkins 1992:124), are most likely a universal feature of human languages (Wierzbicka 1999:276); and they are also remarkably frequent in everyday speech (Kockelman 2003). Despite this prevalence, relatively little is known about the formal, semantic and functional properties of interjections (Wierzbicka 1992; Goddard 2014), and virtually nothing is known about their typology across the world's languages. This chapter presents a semantically oriented preliminary typology of interjections in Australian languages – an endeavor rendered both difficult and relevant by the scarcity of our linguistic knowledge about interjections. On the one hand, 'pioneer' typology is a delicate exercise: venturing into a domain devoid of practically any pre-established classes and types that could guide our quest, we are essentially groping around in the dark. At the same time, in this vacuum, even a very preliminary typology like the one presented here brings many insights into a virtually unexplored field – defining reasonable types, articulating sound questions, and generally laying the ground for more principled research.

1.1 Identifying interjections

This study considers data from 37 Australian languages (see Appendix), extracted from published and unpublished dictionaries, word-lists and grammars (mostly where these had a section listing interjections). The choice of languages combines the need for geographical and genealogical balance with the availability, searchability and extent of documentation. The tables in the Appendix provide a structured overview of the data, as well as a list of sources.[1]

The definition of interjections paraphrased from Wilkins' (1992) above is conceptually useful, yet it does not provide us with operational criteria to decide, in the view of a dictionary entry for instance, what should or should not be treated as an interjection for the purpose of a sound typology (Haspelmath 2011). This question will be better tackled in future research, *a posteriori*, in the light of *some* cross-linguistic empirical observations on interjections (Ponsonnet in prep.). In the interim, for this preliminary study I chose to rely on language descriptors' assignations. Therefore, the items listed in the Appendix are the ones labelled 'interjection' or 'exclamation' by the descriptors, as well as 'particle' when the translation was clearly interjective. Swear words and onomatopoeia were not included (they are treated by Walsh in this volume). Word forms presented as interjective uses of their standard literal sense were also excluded (e.g. imperative forms of 'go', 'look', etc.).[2] Apart from this exclusion mechanism, the present study is not preoccupied with etymologies.

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[1] The phonetic forms were retrieved as often and as accurately as possible. Unfortunately, there remains some uncertainties and gaps (which are reflected in the text by question marks or the absence of a phonetic representation). Many thanks to Owen Salome and André Bosch for collecting the data for this chapter, and to Troy (Gladys) Reynolds for his help with the formatting.

[2] It is possible that such forms were sometimes presented as interjections with no specification of their literal meaning (for instance in lists of interjections in grammars).

1.2 Classifying interjections

Another, even more difficult problem was to classify individual interjections: what counted as the same 'type' of interjection in language a and language b? Given the kind of documentation available, this usually had to be decided on the basis of one or a couple of glosses, at best supplemented by a few examples.[3] This raised questions of interpretation, especially given that written glosses also cancel prosodic clues (e.g. a gloss like 'oh no' is potentially ambiguous between horror, fear, sorrow or anger, and even punctuation does little to remedy this ambiguity).

The semantics of interjections is in itself a particularly thorny question, because it is notoriously versatile. To use a metaphor, interjections could be regarded as 'the vowels of semantics'. Consonants can be be contrasted with each other with relative clarity and ease based on discrete phonetic criteria, namely place and manner of articulation. Likewise, most lexical words contrast with each other on the basis of (some) relatively clear-cut semantic criteria. Contrary to consonants, vowels form a continuuous acoustic field, where in the absence of criterial contrast the phonetic realizations of each phonemic unit bleed into the realizations of the others, making vowels harder to define and identify. This compares with the use of interjections, where the sense of a given interjection can vary to a great extent (often including enantiosemy, i.e. when the same item has opposite/contradictory meanings), and generally overlaps with the uses of other interjections in the same language. As a result, like when we plot vowels, useful characterizations of interjections will often be in terms of the frequency of certain meanings, rather than in terms of semantic features or absolute semantic affordance. The French emotive interjection '*merde*' ('shit'), for instance, can be used in a broad

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[3] A very few descriptions contained extensive discussions of interjections (for instance Wilkins 1989; Evans 1992; 2003).

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range of contexts covering dissatisfaction, exasperation, but also potentially positive surprise, amazement, relief, and more... Nevertheless, '*merde*' is probably better characterized as a dissatisfaction interjection, because this is its most frequent usage. This 'stochastic' nature of the semantics of interjections does not raise major difficulties for thorough semantic descriptions(see Ponsonnet 2014:109–126), but it has greater consequences for cross-linguistic typology. Most dictionary entries or lists in grammars fail to give an idea of the semantic *range* of each interjection, and instead it can only be assumed that they highlight semantic foci. This is hardly sufficient for linguistic comparison, because two interjections with comparable foci do not necessarily have the same range, or conversely, two descriptions may highlight distinct foci for interjections that in fact have similar ranges. Other thorny questions are, for instance, how similar must the semantic range of two interjections be to subsume them under the same cross-linguistic type? If two interjections share essentially the same range, albeit with differences in frequencies across the range, do they belong to the same type?

I handled these difficulties by incrementally improving my typological (cross-linguistic) categories as I progressed through the data. I initially classified the interjections based on finer-grained types than the ones currently featuring in the tables of the Appendix, so as to remain as close as possible to the descriptor's glosses. However, as I added languages, patterns emerged and I was able to collapse some of the types, thus producing more meaningful cross-linguistic categories. For instance, interjections glossed 'what's that', 'what's up', 'is that right', 'really?' were initially treated as different types, but as the data accumulated, it made sense to group them under one type labelled 'seeking information', contrasting with other types such as 'expressing agreement/disagreement'. Some types remained orphans (e.g. a single interjection glossed 'no wonder'), but this may be remedied with more extensive data collection. Naturally, my choices were partly arbitrary: keeping 'seeking information' distinct from 'seeking

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confirmation' would be equally valid as merging them as I did. Yet, when proceeding in a vacuum, arbitrariness grounded in intuition is often a valuable methodological starting point. In many cases, my choices were also informed by my prior knowledge of the interjection systems in other Australian languages (Ponsonnet 2014:109–126; 2016; in prep.) – for instance, identifying 'finished' and 'hesitation place holders' as types because of prior knowledge that these profiles of interjections are common in Australian languages.

1.3   Results

The methodological decisions discussed above encapsulate evident biases, both in the definition of the data and in its treatment. As a matter of fact, the present results probably account for the way linguists document interjections in Australian languages, as much as for the nature and distribution of these interjections themselves. Given the current state of our knowledge about interjections, these unavoidable biases were the condition for any scientific progress. Yet, the results presented below unveil a number of clear properties of interjections across Australian languages – for instance, the high frequency of attention seekers (3.1) or the vast distribution and semantic coherence of the form [jagaji] for pain and negative emotions across the continent (typically spelt *yagayi* or *yakayi* in language-specific orthographies). These strong results suggest that the methodological biases did not entirely overshadow the empirical signal. It is hoped that these first results will inspire some improvements in the documentation of interjections across the world's languages, as well as further typological work (Ponsonnet in prep.).

Throughout the chapters, most of the observations raise the question of whether they are specific to the Australian continent or universal, and as such they highlight a number of relevant questions to be tackled in future typological research about interjections. The three

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classes of interjections identified by Ameka (1992) – conative, phatic and expressive – revealed a useful heuristic tool for classification, however two additional classes were needed. These are constative interjections, whereby the speaker describes a situation they are facing; and social interjections, used to soften interactions. In Australian languages, social interjections are sometimes organized in elaborate ritualized scripts (see 2.2). Conative interjections are the most consistently documented across languages, and attention seekers (which are conative) are the most frequent of all interjections. Phatic interjections are less consistently described, beyond the quasi-universal yes/no pairs. Expressive interjections are also difficult to classify, yet some clear patterns emerge. Interjections for pain, surprise and compassion are the most frequent specific states expressed by interjections across Australian languages. Pain and surprise are regularly encoded by the same interjections, and in particular the form [jagaji], which covers both, is remarkably frequent all across the continent (see 5.3.1). Apart from [jagaji], the two most frequently reported interjections, attention seekers and 'yes', respectively display important formal resemblances throughout the continent – but 'no' interjections do not. There are a number of additional, smaller sets of related forms used in sometimes very distant languages with consistent functions – whether conative, phatic or expressive.

The organization of interjections into classes is discussed in Section 2. The rest of the sections discuss the most frequent types of interjections, and their forms where applicable, proceeding class by class: conative interjections are discussed in Section 3, phatic interjections in Section 4, and expressive interjections in Section 5.

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2. Classes of interjections

2.1 Conventional classes: conative, phatic and expressive interjections

As a starting point and anchorage, I chose to approach the data through the grid of Ameka's (1992:113–114) now relatively conventional three-fold partition of interjections. Ameka distinguishes *conative* interjections, which are 'aimed at an auditor' and 'demand an action or response' (*eh*, *ssshhh*…); *phatic* interjections, 'used in the establishment and maintenance of communicative contact' (*well*, *alright*…); and *expressive* interjections, characterized as 'symptoms of the speaker's mental state' (*ouch*, *wow*…). In spite of some overlaps, undecidable cases, and occasional leaks (see2.2), these classes revealed a useful heuristic tool in the process of organizing interjections into types.

In the corpus, conative interjections are overall the most frequently reported in documentation (about 300 tokens[4]), followed by phatic interjections (about 280 tokens), and then expressive interjections – i.e. emotive interjections and pain interjections[5] (about 250 tokens). Conative interjections were the easiest to classify, with comparable specific glosses recurring in many descriptions (e.g. 'take this', 'do it', 'go away'). Phatic interjections attracted more diverse labels, possibly because they have more subtle and ubiquitous functions that are harder to capture with a short gloss: interjections comparable to *well* and *alright* can do many different things, and glosses are not always informative (especially if limited to an English 'translation'). Expressive interjections were also difficult to classify. This may be because emotional categories are relatively fuzzy by nature (e.g. when does negative surprise turn into dissatisfaction? and dissatisfaction into anger? etc.). Another obstacle was that the

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[4] These figures can only be approximations, since it was sometimes impossible to decide whether forms presenting minor differences where variants of the same interjection.
[5] Interjections expressing mental states such as disagreement or doubt were classified with phatic interjections.

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interpretation of emotive interjections depends largely on prosody, which is mostly lost in written glosses.

2.2 Additional classes: constative and social interjections

Some interjections did not fall within any of these three classes. A number seemed idiosyncratic (whether reflecting idiosyncrasies of the language or of the description), but some grouped naturally into two smaller additional categories, that I labelled 'constative' and 'social' interjections. A constative interjection describes a state of affair, as in 'there it comes', 'got it', 'impossible'. 'Social' interjections smooth interpersonal interactions. This includes interjections such greetings and farewells ('hello', 'good-bye', which may otherwise be regarded as phatic), as well as those expressing gratefulness or apologies ('thank you', 'sorry', which may otherwise be regarded as expressive or conative). Equivalents of these English social interjections are relatively rare in the sample. The most frequent, farewell interjections, occur in just 12 language or 32% of the sample; greeting interjections in only 5 languages (14%); apologetic ones in 4 languages (11%). Interjections revolving around gratefulness are reported for 3 languages, but only one of them received a straightforward 'thank you' gloss.

Instead, several languages in the sample have sets of social interjections that trigger elaborate 'frozen' – or even ritualized – scenarios, along the lines described by Gaby & Bradley (2017) (Fig. 1) and Bradley & Yanyuwa families (2017) for the Yanyuwa interjections *ngalamu* /ŋalamu/ and *warri* /wari/:

> - The particular scenarios involved vary, but contain common elements:
>   - I. A highlights a vulnerability of B, whether by
>   - o making lewd joke / insult directed at B
>   - o witnessing, e.g., B's exposed genitals
>   - o witnessing B not exercising appropriate avoidance
>   - o joking in B's presence, where B is in a sensitive kin category w.r.t. joking partners […]
>   - II. B or bystander (where B is absent / unable) utters the relevant kin-sensitive form
>   - III. A and/or bystander utters *ngalamu!*
>   - IV. (if a bystander at III, A may respond with *warri!*)
> - Steps II and III can be reversed where A draws attention to, e.g., an unzipped fly but uttering *ngalamu!*, to which B—or bystanders—will respond with, e.g.*, jurda!*

Fig. 1. Established scenarios for Yanyuwa interjections ngalamu */ŋalamu/ and* warri */wari/ (Gaby & Bradley 2017).*

Sets of richly scripted social interjections are attested for Yanyuwa and Bininj Gun-wok in my sample. It is not clear whether these languages are exceptions, or whether the phenomenon has been overlooked elsewhere. Comparable scenarios are reported for Warlpiri (Meggitt 1962:170; cited by Nash 2017), albeit not mentioned as such in the Swartz (2012) dictionary that represents Warlpiri in my sample.

As is the case with the above Yanyuwa scenarios, Australian social interjections are often kin-sensitive, even when used in isolation. That is, different interjections are used depending on the kin-relationship of the speaker/hearer. In Kuuk Thaayorre for instance, *cheerr* ?/ce:r/ expresses apology to a taboo relative. In Bininj Gun-wok the equivalent of 'bless you' is clan-specific. Clan affiliations are inherited patrilineally, so that the extensions of clan affiliations compare to that of family names in Western Europe and other Anglo cultures (among others). When someone sneezes, Bininj Gun-wok speakers must choose the interjection they use to respond to their sneezing depending on the sneezer's clan, for instance *nadjalaminj*

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/nacalamiɲ/ for someone of the Badmardi clan, or *nabamgarrk* /napamkark/ for someone of the Mirarr clan (Evans 1992:237). Some conative interjections can be kin-sensitive too.

3. Conative interjections

3.1 Attention seekers

Attention seekers, of the type illustrated in (1) for Arabana, are reported in 29 languages out of 37 in my sample, or more than 78%, which makes them the most frequently reported of all interjections across classes. This incidence is a lot higher than that of the next conative interjection (requests to wait), attested in only 20 languages.

(1)   Arabana (Hercus 1994:246)

         Wayi*! **Wayi***! *Puntyu-na!*
         hey   hey   give-EMP[6]

         'Hey, give me meat!'

Some languages have a set of forms encoding the gender and/or number or person of the addressee. In Tiwi for instance, *aga* /aɣa/ is reported for female addressee, *aya* /aja/ for male addressee, and *awi* /awi/ for plural addressee.

         Attention seekers display some regularities in forms. In 18 languages out of 29, they contain the sequence [aj] or [ja] (and a few languages have [ɛj]). Occasionally, these segments are the complete form (e.g. *ay* /aj/ in Bininj Gun-wok, *ya* /ja/ in Ngankikurungkurr).

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[6] Abbreviations in glosses. BEN: benefactive applicative; EMP: emphatic clitic; NP: non-past; P.PFV: past perfective; PRIV: privative; RR: reflexive/reciprocal marker; TR: transitive verbalizer.

Sometimes, the only addition is an initial consonant (e.g. *way* /waj/ in Djinang). Longer forms including the same segments are also found (e.g. *wartayi* /waʈajɨ/ in Nyangumarta).

3.2 Frequent conative interjections

Following attention seekers comes a set of conative meanings that are all instantiated in about half of the sample or a bit less. The second most reported type of conative interjections is 'request to wait', as illustrated in (2) with *manj* /maɲ/ in Bininj Gun-wok. Such interjections are listed in 20 languages of the sample (54%). However, these interjections are sometimes synonymous with adverbs like 'now' or 'soon', and it can be hard to decide whether the interjective use is distanced enough from the adverbial meaning to be considered an independent interjection rather than an elliptic use of the adverb.

(2)   Bininj Gun-Wok (Kune Dulerayek) (Evans 2003)

      Manj   *ngarr-marne-walkka-rre-n!*
      wait   12m/3-BEN-hide-RR-NP

      'Wait let's hide ourselves from him!'

Warning interjections, illustrated in (3) with *wawa* /wawa/ in Yugambeh, are reported in 18 languages (49% of the sample).

(3)   Yugambeh (Sharpe 1998:159)

      Wawa *banju*

      'Look, a policeman!'

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Interjections glossed as 'here it is', said when giving something to someone as illustrated in (4) with *ma* /ma/ for Alyawarr, are also listed for 17 languages, i.e. 46% of the sample.

(4)   Alyawarr (Green, Blackman & Moore in press)

   Ma, *antheyel atha ngenh. Aker atha ngenh antheyel akely, ma!*

   'Here, I'm giving it to you. I'm giving you a little bit of meat, here!'

In 7 languages out of these 17, the form of 'here it is' conative interjections is [ɲa] (or [ɲa:]). In this case, the languages in question are not distributed across the continent, but cluster around northern Arnhem Land (Bininj Gun-wok, Burarra, Iwaidja, Mawng) in the Top End, and the Kimberley region (Nyangumarta, Nyulnyul, Walmadjarri).

   Interjections inviting the addressee to approach ('come here'), illustrated in (5) with *gawayi* /gawaji/ in Bilinarra, are reported in 16 languages, i.e. 43% of the sample.

(5)   Bilinarra (Meakins 2013:[AN: RN90-002b: 04:34min])

   Gawayi-*lu murlanggurra jarragab-gu.*

   'You mob come here and talk!'

'Come here' interjections display some regularities in form, with 7 languages out of 17 consistently using [g/kVwV] segments, mostly [g/kawa] or [g/kuwa].[7] The languages in question, listed in (6), are scattered all across the continent.

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[7] In most Australian languages the voicing contrast in plosives is not phonemic.

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(6) *kawa* /kawa/ in Ngankikurungkurr and Wangkumara/Galali

    gawayi /gawaji/ in Bilinarra

    kuway /guwaj/in Yugambeh

    guwa /guwa/ in Burarra

    qau or *qauwaa* in Nyungar

    kuwi /kuwi/ in Iwaidja

Finally, conative interjections expressing encouragements to do something are attested in 18 languages, or 48% of the sample. However, this category is broader than the others listed above, encompassing interjections glossed 'come on', 'go ahead', 'keep going' (illustrated in (7) with *pirrila* /pirila/for Tiwi), along with forms of encouragement and permission. It was also sometimes unclear whether these interjections would better qualify as phatic, encouraging someone to speak.

(7)   Tiwi (Lee 2013)

    Nankitawu. Aringampani. **Pirrila***!*

    'Over there. Further on. Keep going!'

3.3 Others

Beyond the above conative meanings attested in about half of the sample, the frequency decreases gradually. Still relatively frequent are forms functionally equivalent to 'ssshh', 'leave it', 'go away', 'give it (to me)', 'let's go', 'hurry up', 'don't do it/stop' etc. In addition, there are

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some isolated ones with specific orders such as 'sit down' or 'blow your nose'; most of these appear to be children oriented.

Interjections specifically oriented to animals (often specifically to dogs) are not uncommon. A few are reported as calls (e.g. *jijiji* /ɟiɟiɟi/ to call a dog in Mawng), and some of them as more specific commands (e.g. *pwerrew* /puru/ encouraging to chase in Kaytetye), but the most common function of dog-specific interjections is to chase them away. Interjections with the latter function are reported in five languages in the sample (13%), with some similarities in form: they are often formed of a single syllable starting with a palatal occlusive (e.g. *che* /ce/ in Wik).

4. Phatic interjections

4.1 'Yes' and 'no'

Interjections glossed 'yes' and 'no' are the most frequently reported among the phatic interjections – albeit a little lower than attention seekers – with 27 and 24 languages respectively, i.e. around 73% and 65% of the sample respectively. The real number of languages that have these interjections is probably higher than reported: as noted by Dixon (2016:55), most languages in the world have them (albeit not all).

While forms for 'no' are relatively diverse, there are resemblances in forms for 'yes' across most languages. Two forms, [juwaji] and [ŋi(:)], occur in several languages each. [juwaji] is found in Ngankikurungkurr, Bilinarra and Gurindji, Walmajarri, Warlpiri – a relatively areal pattern. It is also found in Kriol (not included in the language sample). [ŋi(:)] is more geographically spread, occurring in Mirriwong, Nyulnyul, Paakantji and Djinang. Other than this, 'yes' forms differ but tend to have segments in common: 15 languages have a form that

starts with [ja] or [ju], and 12 languages have one that starts with [ŋa] or [ŋi].[8] In 14 languages, a form has a second (and often last) syllable that *starts* with a bilabial glide [w] (as in [juwaji], but also *kawu* in Wangkumara/Galali, for instance). Comparable forms are reported for other agreement interjections glossed 'OK', 'indeed' – which is not surprising given that some descriptors presumably rightfully avoided drawing a sharp line between 'yes' and these agreement interjections.

4.2   Agreeing and seeking information

The next most frequent phatic type expresses agreement, as illustrated in (8) with *yijani* /jiɟani/ for Bilinarra. This is a mixed category that includes interjections glossed as 'OK', 'indeed', 'true'[9], presumably used for back channel. 20 languages (i.e. 54%) are reported to have at least one such interjection, but of course this may also reflect the fact that the category is relatively broad.

(8)   Bilinarra (Meakins 2013)

   Yijani *bayarni wuyurrun-ma.*

   'True! - it bit the fishing line.'

Interjections aiming to seek information or confirmation – glossed 'what's up', 'what's going on', 'really?' (like Alyawarr *ngay* /ŋɛj/ in (9)), etc. – are reported in 17 languages, i.e. 46% of the sample.

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[8] For many languages, several forms are reported.
[9] Not emphatic confirmations of what one has just said ('true!') but rather milder agreement about what someone else has said.

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(9)   Alyawarr (Green, Blackman & Moore)

      Ngay *innga ntwa man winem-ilek ilkwa?*

      'Did you really win a whole lot of money?'

4.3 Epistemic interjections

      The sample features a number of interjections used to make 'epistemic' comments. Interjections that express disagreement and disbelief are both reported in 11 or 30% of the languages, and interjections that express the speaker's own mistakes ('oops, I was wrong') in 9 or 24%. Disagreement or disbelief is illustrated here with *kayuwa* /kajuwa/ in Gurindji.

(10)   Gurindji (Meakins et al. 2013:[VW: FM10 23 4: 7:44min])

      *Warta **kayuwa** ngawa-rni jilngjilngkarra jiyarnana warlu-ngku-ma.*

      'Hey it can't be true – the fire is making water seep out even.'

11 or 29% have an interjection glossed 'maybe' (or equivalent)[10], and 10 or 27% have one glossed 'I don't know' (or comparable expression of ignorance, see Hercus (1994:240)). In some languages, both these ignorance senses are merged under a single interjection, as suggested for instance by the dual gloss 'maybe, not sure' for Kuuk Thaayorre *ngaii yokon* ?/ŋai: jokon/ (see also Dalabon interjective conjunction *kardu*, for instance (Ponsonnet 2009:134)).

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[10] Sometimes, these may be better qualified as particles with interjective uses.

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4.4 Managing communication

Interjections used to manage the flow of communication seem relatively widespread, but they also tend to be the least clearly identified in descriptions. Phatic interjections that appear to open a sequence (in speech or action), glossed 'alright', well' etc., are reported in 11 or 30% of the languages; those that ask the speaker to continue, in 7 or 19% of them; those that conclude a sequence (or entire narrative), usually translated as 'finished', in 9 or 24% of them. 4 or 10% of the languages are reported to have a place-holder for hesitation, like *nganayirla* /ŋanajiḻa/ in Bilinarra.[11]

(11)   Bilinarra (Meakins 2013)

*Ganya-yina na waruju-rni, ganyjurra-na-rnalu yani, **nganayirla**-nggurra, Jurrjurrarrarlarni.*

'She took them all together and we went down to what's-it-called - the Victoria River Crossing'.

5. Expressive interjections

5.1 Generic exclamations

A generic interjection of exclamation – glossed 'oh', 'wow' and the like, as illustrated in (12) with *tuwa* /tuwa/ for Tiwi – was reported in 22 or nearly 60% of the languages of the sample. However, such glosses could reflect incomplete documentation/description rather than a commonality of functions. There is no formal coherence in forms for this set – we find

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[11] Some tokens may gave been left out in data collection, as they were not necessarily labelled as interjections, exclamations etc., see 1.1.

for instance ah (?/a/) in Arabana or *oo* /o:/ in Wik, but also *bayu* /baju/ in Ngankikurungkurr, *murra* ?/mura/ in Wangkumara, and many more.

(12) Tiwi (Lee 2013)

  "**Tuwa**, *yita mawukwamunga,*" *yimi Putini.*

  '"Tuwa/oh, the water is sour," said Putini.'

5.2 Valence-oriented generic interjections (dissatisfaction and satisfaction)

Interjections expressing dissatisfaction were as frequent as generic exclamations – also reported for 22 languages, i.e. nearly 60% of languages in the sample. Unlike satisfaction (see below), dissatisfaction can be split into two categories, angry and sorrowful dissatisfaction, both of them frequent. The figures for each subcategory should be treated with caution: although it was worth contrasting angry and sorrowful dissatisfaction because the glosses in a sufficient number of descriptions implied a difference, there were also a number of borderline cases.

  The most frequent type of dissatisfaction is tinted with anger or exasperation. This includes interjections glossed as 'shit', 'damn it', 'oh no!' etc., as illustrated with *yekaye* /yəkɛj(ə)/ in Kaytetye in (13). Such interjections were reported in 14 languages, i.e. nearly 38% of the sample.

(13) Kaytetye (Turpin 2011:645)

  Yekaye *rlengkepe nyartepe aynanthe errkwere anenkelke kngwere thepethele errkweremp-errkwerele.*

  'Gee, today it was very hot, we felt hot and sticky.'

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Sorrowful dissatisfaction, on the other hand, includes 'plaintive' interjections related to sadness, regret, disappointment, alas (for instance *ngarragaa* /ŋaraga:/ 'alas' in Gamilaraay). This is illustrated in (14) with *kurda* /guḍa/ for Yanyuwa. In some languages, compassionate interjections (see 5.3.2) can be used in the same contexts (e.g. Kriol, Ponsonnet in prep). Interjections expressing sorrowful dissatisfaction were reported in 13 languages, or 35% of the sample.[12]

(14)   Yanyuwa (Bradley & Kirton 1992:171)

*Li-mangaji li-wankala kalinyamba-mirra wiji **kurda**!*

'All of the old people have died, pity.'

The form [waṭawu] (and other similar forms) is frequent for sorrowful dissatisfaction. It has four occurrences across the sample, including relatively distant languages: Bininj Gun-wok, Gija, Nyangurmarta and Walmajarri. These forms are consistently reported to express sorrowful dissatisfaction and pain at the same time (as well as negative surprise in Walmajarri).

Interjections expressing satisfaction were not as frequent as those for dissatisfaction. The former were reported for 17 languages (nearly 46%) – a figure that may be exaggerated by the broad scope assigned to this category. Satisfaction interjections included tokens glossed as 'hooray', (as in(15) with *ngeeca* /ŋe:ca/ for Kuuk Thaayorre) that I chose to group with

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[12] The totals of angry and sorrowful dissatisfaction do not add up because some of the languages did not have a distinction.

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nuances of satisfaction that were not frequent enough in the sample to form an independent category. These were for instance less intense rejoicing sometimes mixed with relief (e.g. *ngartung* /ŋaʈuŋ/ 'good thing that' in Gurindji), approval (e.g. *malya* /malʎa/ 'well done' in Jiwarli), occasionally admiration, etc.

(15)   Kuuk Thaayorre (Gaby 2017:100)

Ngeeca*!*   *Win-m   rirk-r!*
hooray   win-TR   DO-P.PFV

'Hooray, we won [the football]!'

In spite of the broad definition, satisfaction interjections appear less frequent not only than dissatisfaction interjections, but also than specific interjections targeting pain and surprise; and just as frequent as the ones targeting compassion (see 5.3.2). It is possible that some of the interjections classified as 'generic' also express satisfaction – although most of them are probably better assimilated to surprise (see 5.3.1).

5.3 Specific states

5.3.1   Surprise and pain

Surprise (mostly negative) and pain are the most frequent specific functions of expressive interjections, respectively reported to have a dedicated interjection in 20 (or nearly 55%) and 19 languages (51%). Pain is the only sensation frequently expressed by an interjection (i.e. there are no interjections for being hungry, too hot or too cold, etc.). There is significant overlap in form between interjections for pain and surprise, with forms resembling [jagaji] present in both categories. This is illustrated here for surprise (16) and pain (17) with

yekaye /yəkɛj(ə)/ in Kaytetye, which can also be read as expressing dissatisfaction, as in (13) above.

(16)   Kaytetye (Turpin 2011:645)

   Elpayewe plain-we rtame aynanthe erlwareyayne, **yekaye** *pweleke angkerelke kwere erlwarewene mpele!*

   'We were watching at the side of the creek; 'Wow, look at the big mob of cattle this time!'

(17)   Kaytetye (Turpin 2011:645)

   Yekaye*! Apene nge arlenge ertnwethele arre ntethe alarrerrantye akake.*

   'Hey! Get away from me because you are hitting me with your elbow.'

In some languages, the forms for surprise and pain differ slightly: in Woiwurrung *yakai* /jagaj/ expresses surprise and *yarka* /jaɻga/ expresses pain. In many languages, a comparable form is reported to express either pain or surprise, but it is possible that the interjection expresses both although this is not explicit in the documentation.

The form [jagaji] is the most widespread Australian interjection, with clearly related forms attested in 15 languages in the sample (plus 3 with plausibly related forms).[13] These forms occur in languages as distant as genealogically and geographically Anindilyakwa, Martuthunira and Woiwurrung, i.e. literally at the opposite ends of the Australian continent. While it is easy to imagine that the form [jagaji] may reflect some indexical or iconic motivations, it is also clear that it is largely conventional. This is evident from its length, phonological complexity, and from the fact that it is not known to be particularly frequent as a surprise/fear interjection elsewhere in the world. Therefore, the Australian occurrences of this

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[13] Alyawarr, Anindilyakwa, Arabana, Arrernte, Bilinarra, Djambarrpuyngu, Djinang, Gamilaraay, Kaytetye, Martuthunira, Ngankikurungkurr, Tiwi, Wangkumara/Galali, Wik-Mungkan and Woiwurrung; potentially related forms in Gurindji, Warlpiri and Yanyuwa.

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interjection are unlikely to be independent occurrences, but must instead be related. The relation could be genealogical, i.e. as cognates descending from a common etymon, which would suggest that interjections are particularly stable across time. Alternatively, the [jagaji] forms could have been borrowed, which is much more plausible as the linguistic properties of interjections make them highly transferrable across languages (Matras 2009). This, in turn, suggests widespread contact routes ramifying across language families throughout the entire continent.

The forms in the [jagaji] cluster cover a range of diverse yet clearly related, mostly negative meanings spread across conative, phatic and expressive functions. The most frequent and semantically primary senses are expressive: essentially pain, surprise, dissatisfaction and fear. Conative meanings are less widespread but not infrequent. They include warning, calls for help and attention seekers, all of which derive transparently from the expressive senses of surprise and fear. Finally, there are occasional phatic functions, including disagreement, which presumably relates to the negative valence present elsewhere. Together with [waʈawu] (5.2), [jagaji] and related forms account for practically all the pain interjections reported across my sample.

5.3.2 Compassion

Compassion – 'feeling bad because something bad happens to someone else' – is a complex, social interjection. With specialized interjections reported for 16 languages or nearly 43% of the sample, compassion is the non-primary emotion (Ekman 1992) with the highest interjective representation. It is illustrated here with *japurtu* /capuʈu/ in Nyangumarta.

(18)   Nyangumarta (Sharp 2004)

*Paliny wurru-kurlu   paki-kurlu,   **japurtu**!*
3sg   things-PRIV   fire-PRIV   poor.thing

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'He has nothing, no gear, not even a fire, poor fellow' (cited from McKelson (1989:61))

It is possible that the frequent incidence of compassionate interjections in Australian languages corresponds to a cultural focus. Indeed, Myers (1986:113–117) described compassion as the touch-stone of the emotional moral order among the Pintupi, and Ponsonnet (2014:196–199) corroborated this observation for the Dalabon group and other language groups of the Top End (Ponsonnet in prep). Although not all languages in the world have interjections specialized for compassion (e.g. Enfield pers. com Feb 17 reported that they were absent in Lao, see Enfield (2007)), in several Australian languages (outside of this sample), compassionate interjections are the most frequent interjections, and compassion is a focal category for several interjections (see Ponsonnet 2014:109–126 for Dalabon; Ponsonnet in prep for Kriol). It is thus plausible that the prevalence of compassionate interjections reflects a cultural focus on this emotional category.

5.4 Marginal categories

Beyond the types discussed in previous sections, the distribution of expressive interjections displays a somewhat abrupt drop. The next most frequent types, fear and endearment, are attested in only 7 (19%) and 5 (13%) of the languages respectively. For endearment, related forms are used in several languages with a relatively broad geographical distribution: *njon-njon* /ɲoɲɲoɲ/ in Bininj Gun-wok, *anyan(y)* /aɳ̺an/ɳ̺/[14] in Yanyuwa, and *anyan* /aɲan/ in Bilinarra and Gurindji. The form is also attested in Rembarrnga and in Kriol (Ponsonnet's

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[14] The symbol ɳ̺ represents an alveo-palatal nasal.

personal field notes). The expressive sense 'endearment' is coherent throughout the set, and only two languages have another form for this emotion.

There are also interjections for disapproval (which could also be subsumed under dissatisfaction), gratefulness, sarcasm, amusement, and more. 4 languages have an interjection expressing satisfaction about someone's deserved misfortune, glossed as 'serves you right', as illustrated for *yuku* /juku/ in Walmajarri.

(19)   Walmajarri (Richards & Hudson 2012)

Yuku*! Yangka marnangu jarti marni, panypinya pajanurla.*

'Serves you right! I tried to tell you that (would happen), but you wouldn't take any notice of me.'

5.5   *Primary and secondary emotions*

Most 'primary' emotions are well represented among the functions of Australian interjections: anger is expressed under the 'angry dissatisfaction' category, sadness under 'sorrowful dissatisfaction', joy under 'satisfaction' (5.2), and surprise is also well attested (5.3.1). Interjections for disgust, on the other hand (*yuk* in English) were not identified in the sample. Apart from disgust, fear has the lowest representation among primary emotions (7 languages, 19%).

Among complex (non-primary), social emotions, compassion is well-represented (5.3.2), but endearment is relatively marginal (5 languages, 1%). It is possible that some compassionate interjections also cover endearment (as is the case in Kriol, see Ponsonnet in prep). Interestingly, shame, another social emotion considered crucial among Australian groups (Harkins 1996) is virtually absent. However, it is taken care of by some of the social interjections discussed 2.2.

6. Conclusion

This chapter I have presented a semantically oriented preliminary typology of interjections in a balanced sample of 37 Australian languages. Even with this relatively small scale, the study yielded significant observations and results. With respect to the classification of interjections, I found that the classes identified by Ameka (1992) – conative, phatic and expressive – remained very useful, yet two additional classes were needed: constative and social interjections. Australian social interjections are often kin-specific, and are sometimes organized in elaborate ritualized scripts; both phenomena deserve further attention, in Australia as well as in the rest of the world. Attention seekers are the most frequently reported of all interjections, and phatic interjections (apart from quasi-universal yes/no pairs) are the least consistently described. Phatic interjections, on the other hand, are clearly the ones that require the most effort towards systematic description. With expressive interjections, some clear patterns emerged in spite of the fuzzy nature of internal states. Pain is the only sensation targeted by expressive interjections, which instead cover all 'primary' emotions apart from disgust, as well as a couple of 'non-primary' social emotions. The internal states most frequently expressed by interjections are pain and surprise combined, as well as compassion, which is a key social emotion amongst Australian groups. The form [jagaji], which covers both pain and surprise, is remarkably frequent across the entire Australian continent, suggesting extensive pathways of borrowing. There is also a number of additional, smaller sets of related forms used in sometimes very distant languages with consistent functions.

Most of the observations in this study raise the question of whether they are specific to the Australian continent or universal. As such, they highlight a number of relevant questions to

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be tackled in future typological research about interjections, in Australia and elsewhere. In this purpose, further methodological discussion will also be needed, so as to propose sound definitions and criteria to be applied in both descriptive and typological research.

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