

Interjections in Tjwao¹

Alexander Andrason

Stellenbosch University
andrason@sun.ac.za

Anne-Maria Fehn

CIBIO-InBIO, Research Centre in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources in Vairão
afehn@cibio.up.pt

Admire Phiri

Stellenbosch University
phiriadmire1@gmail.com

Abstract

The present paper provides a systematic description of interjections in a moribund Eastern Kalahari Khoe language – Tjwao. After analysing original evidence within a prototype-driven approach, the authors conclude the following: (a) in Tjwao, the interjectional lexical class constitutes an internally diverse category confined between the canonical centre and a non-prototypical periphery; and (b) primary emotive interjections exhibit the highest degree of canonicity and extra-systematicity, while the canonicity and extra-systematicity of secondary phatic interjections is lowest.

Keywords: Khoe-Kwadi, Tjwao, Interjections, Prototype, Radial categories

1. Introduction

Tjwao is a severely endangered and highly under-researched language spoken in the western part of Zimbabwe, near the Botswanan border. Tjwao belongs to the Eastern Kalahari subgroup of the Khoe-Kwadi language family (cf. Güldemann and Vossen 2000: 103; Phiri 2015)² and, although absent in previous phylogenetic models (see e.g. Westphal 1971 and Vossen 1997), it is most likely closely

- 1 The present paper has been developed within the research project “The other grammar of Eastern Kalahari Khoe – the documentation and analysis of interjections, onomatopoeias, and ideophones in Tjwao” (2019–2021) funded by the Khoisan Fund of the Department of African Languages at Stellenbosch University. Anne-Maria Fehn was funded through the contract CEECIND/02765/2017; her work on Tjwao was supported by FEDER funds through the Operational Programme for Competitiveness Factors (COMPETE) and by Portuguese National Funds through FCT (Foundation for Science and Technology) under PTDC/BIA-EVF/2907/2012, FCOMP-01-0124-FEDER-028341, and PTDC/BIA-GEN/29273/2017. We would like to dedicate this article to the memory of the late Msindo Best Moyo, one of our most dedicated informants. His recent passing is an irreparable loss for the Tjwa community and language.
- 2 Regarding the classification of Khoe-Kwadi, Khoe, Eastern Kalahari, and Tshwa, consult Vossen (1997, 1998), Güldemann and Vossen (2000), and Güldemann (2014: 27).

related to the northern varieties of the “Tshwa” dialect cluster spoken in eastern Botswana, such as Hiechware (Dorman 1917), Glabak’e (Westphal 1971), and Tcire-Tcire (Chebanne 2009).

Scholarly literature published on Tjwao remains sparse. However, research activities conducted by the authors of this paper have recently yielded an analysis of the Tjwao nominal system (Fehn and Phiri 2017) and an examination of the tense-aspect-mood (TAM) of two verbal constructions – the *hĩ* and the *ha* grams (Andrason and Phiri 2018). Current interest in the description and analysis of Tjwao takes place, paradoxically, at a moment when the future of the language is heavily threatened. Being used sporadically by no more than eight elderly speakers and lacking any sign of robust intergenerational transmission (Phiri 2015), Tjwao finds itself on the verge of imminent extinction.³

The present paper aims to contribute to the documentation and analysis of the Tjwao language system, by examining one of the least understood aspects of Khoe-Kwadi grammar – interjections. Following Andrason and Dlali (forthcoming), our research will be conducted within a prototype-driven approach to interjections. To construct our model, we draw eclectically on works presented by Felix Ameka, Damaris Nübling, and Ulrike Stange which, in our view, constitute the most compelling accounts of the interjectional category currently available in scholarship (see Ameka 1992a, 2006; Nübling 2001, 2004; Ameka and Wilkins 2006; Stange and Nübling 2014; Stange 2016).

The article is organized as follows: in Section 2, we will contextualize our study by familiarizing the reader with the available literature on interjections in the Khoe-Kwadi language family, and by presenting the main tenets of the framework underlying the research. In Section 3, we will introduce the original evidence related to the meaning (pragmatic and semantic) and the form (syntax, morphology, and phonology) of interjections in Tjwao. In Section 4, this evidence will be evaluated within the adopted framework. Lastly, in Section 5, we will draw conclusions and propose avenues for further research.

2. Background

2.1. Interjections in Khoe-Kwadi

To date, the available literature on interjections in languages of the Khoe-Kwadi family remains sparse. Reasons for this dearth may be seen in the dire sociolinguistic situation affecting Kalahari Khoe-Kwadi languages: since all varieties of this subgroup have comparatively small numbers of speakers and, for the most part, can be considered endangered (Brenzinger 2013), linguists may have felt it more pressing to document phoneme inventories, lexicon, and morpho-syntax rather than focusing on less well-understood aspects of grammar (Widlok 2016). Furthermore, as canonical interjections (see Section 2.2 below) are highly context-dependent, the declining use of many Khoe-Kwadi languages in everyday conversation poses an obstacle to the successful documentation of larger

3 Younger members of the Tjwa community have only a passive knowledge of Tjwao, if any knowledge at all.

corpora of naturally produced language, which are fundamental for the study of interjections.

The entire scholarly treatment of interjections in Khoe-Kwadi is limited to a short section in Kilian-Hatz's (2008) grammar of Khwe and Widlok's (2016) brief discussion of selected interjections in †Akhoe Hailom. In Khwe, the class of interjections is large and highly diversified with regard to their meaning and form. This diversity is related to the varied origin of interjections and, in particular, their ability to draw from verbs and nouns (Kilian-Hatz 2008: 246). The most important semantic types attested include emotions and insults, greetings, rules of conduct, routines of politeness, as well as conversations directed at animals (Kilian-Hatz 2008: 247–8). Syntactically, interjections are complex utterances; cannot be negated; and occupy clause-initial and less frequently clause-final positions (Kilian-Hatz 2008: 246). Morphologically, interjections are “invariable *simplicia*” (ibid.). Phonologically, interjections may violate rules governing the sound system of Khwe by allowing consonant clusters. They also “form their own intonation unit[s]” (ibid.). Although drawing on a large corpus, thus lending itself to a comprehensive linguistic analysis, Widlok's (2016) study of interjections in †Akhoe Hailom is almost exclusively anthropological.⁴ Nevertheless, in light of the examples provided, one may infer certain conclusions regarding the linguistic characteristics of the interjectional category. As far as their meaning is concerned, interjections are context-dependent: their semantic interpretation draws heavily on “the situational context in which they are uttered” (Widlok 2016: 140). As far as their form is concerned, the majority of interjectional lexemes attested are secondary interjections (cf. Nübling 2001; Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 4, see Section 2.2 below). This means that interjections tend to be derived from other lexical classes, specifically full lexical verbs (e.g. *am* ‘right, correct’) or vocative pronouns (e.g. *e-tse* ‘hey you’) (Widlok 2016: 141). The exceptions are replies to yes/no questions, which are primary interjections. Interjections may also be borrowed, being thus “multilingual” (ibid. 142). Syntactically, interjections are both “words” and “utterances” (ibid.). Phonologically, they may contain “aberrant features”, e.g. the cluster *mb* (ibid. 141). Lastly, interjections are typically accompanied, or even replaced, by facial expressions or bodily gestures that provide clues for relevant interpretations (ibid. 142).

Information concerning interjections in other Khoe-Kwadi languages – in particular, Standard Namibian Khoekhoe (Hagman 1977; Haacke and Eiseb 2002), Ts'ixa (Fehn 2016), and Naro (Visser 2001) – can only be inferred from dictionary entries and sentences exemplifying other grammatical phenomena. Interjections also feature abundantly in the many Khwe texts assembled by Köhler (1989, 1991, 1997, 2018), without receiving a systematic linguistic analysis thus far.⁵

- 4 To be exact, Widlok (2016) conducts his research within an anthropological framework of “embodied experience”.
- 5 The documentation and analysis of ideophones, another “marginal” word class often considered in tandem with interjections (Dingemanse 2017), has received more attention in the study of languages belonging to the Kalahari Basin Area (Güldemann and Fehn 2017). Studies dedicated to ideophones in Kalahari Khoe include Kilian-Hatz (2001)

2.2. Framework⁶

Our study is developed within a prototype-driven approach to interjections (Andrason and Dlali *forthcoming*). We understand the category of interjections as a (radial) network that is organized around a prototype and contains members characterized by a distinct membership status (Janda 2015). We define the prototype cumulatively through a set of properties related to meaning and form. In our definition, we inclusively draw on the key typological studies of interjections presented by Ameka (1992a, 2006), Nübling (2001, 2004), Stange and Nübling (2014), and Stange (2016), who view the interjectional word class through the lens of prototypes. The adoption of prototype theory to categorization ensures that the interjectional category is both internally diversified (“flexible”) and coherent (“firm”) (cf. Janda 2015: 137). It also has two important consequences. First, although the prototype constitutes a central concept in our approach to interjectionality, it cannot be equated with the interjectional category itself. Second, no single prototypical trait constitutes a necessary and/or sufficient condition allowing for an item to be included in the category of interjections (for details see Janda 2015).

As far as its meaning is concerned, a prototypical interjection is emotive or sensorial – it communicates the current emotional states of speakers or their sensations, exhibiting “an ‘I feel’ component” (Stange and Nübling 2014: 1983; see also Nübling 2004: 20 and Stange 2016: 18–20). It constitutes a semi-automatic instinctive response to experienced stimuli (Ameka 1992a: 108–9; Nübling 2004: 19–20; Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 16; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1982–3; Stange 2016: 10, 19–20). It is non-referential and monologic – with no addressees or third parties involved (Ameka 1992a: 109; Nübling 2004: 19; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1982–3; Stange 2016: 10–11, 13, 42). It is polysemous and multi-functional, being thus context-dependent to a considerable extent (Ameka 1992a: 114; 2006: 743; Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 2; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1985; Stange 2016: 12, 41). It is accompanied by physical gestures – interjections being viewed as vocal gestures (Ameka 1992a: 112, 2006: 743; Nübling 2004; Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 3; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1982, 1986; Stange 2016: 45).

on Khwe, Nakagawa (2011, 2012) on G|ui, and Brenzinger and Fehn (2013) on Khwe and Ts'ixa. The results of these studies reveal shared phonotactic and grammatical features of ideophones across Kalahari Khoe and suggest that ideophones constitute a distinct word class in this particular subgroup (cf. Nakagawa 2011; Fehn 2016: 45). Even though interjections and ideophones may exhibit formal similarities (e.g. phonological, morphological, and even syntactic aberrance), they constitute two distinct lexical classes that are characterized by different semantic and pragmatic properties. A prototypical interjection expresses the emotional state of a speaker and is non-referential (see Section 2.2 for detail), while an ideophone is primarily used to depict and entertain a referential function (Meinard 2015: 157; Dingemans 2017).

- 6 A similar framework was used by A. Andrason and his colleagues in their previous studies on interjections (e.g. Andrason and Matutu 2019; Andrason and Dlali *forthcoming*; Andrason and Hutchison 2020). Without being identical or reproduced verbatim, the theoretical section of the present study overlaps, to an extent, with the theoretical sections of those other papers.

As far as its form is concerned, a prototypical interjection is holophrastic. It constitutes a complete and non-elliptical utterance (Ameka 1992a: 107–8, 2006: 743–5; Nübling 2004: 20; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1982–3; Stange 2016: 20, 48).⁷ When used in a sentence,⁸ it is not integrated into that sentence structure. It does not constitute a structural element projected by the predicate, nor does it modify any of the arguments and adjuncts. It also fails to be a component in constructions (Ameka 1992a: 112, 118; 2006: 743–5; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1985; Stange 2016: 20, 48). This lack of structural integration is visible in the isolation from the remaining parts of a sentence (Ameka 1992a: 108; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1982) – interjections occupying an initial or a final position (Drescher 1997; Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 4; Nordgren 2015: 44) and constituting independent prosodic units marked by pause, intonation, and/or contouring (Ameka 1992a: 108, 2006: 745; Nübling 2004: 30; Nordgren 2015: 38, 45; see, however, O’Connell and Kowal (2008: 137, 139) who argue against the “articulatory isolation” of interjections).⁹ The interjectional prototype is mono-morphemic, which implies its indivisibility into more fragmentary units (Ameka 1992a: 111, 2006: 743–4; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1985), and its incompatibility with inflections, derivations, and compounding (Ameka 1992a, 2006: 743; Nübling 2004: 29; Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 5; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1985; Stange 2016: 36). It contains sounds and sound-combinations that are foreign or peripheral to the inventory of the language in which it is used (Ameka 1992a: 112, 2006: 744–5; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1982, 1985).¹⁰ It is pronounced with greater energy and volume (Nübling 2004: 22; Stange 2016: 20), and exhibits a mono-syllabic (typically vocalic) structure (Nübling 2004: 24–5).¹¹

The interjectional prototype described above is an ideal constructed in light of cross-linguistic tendencies and cognitive saliency. Interjections attested in a language may comply with that ideal to a greater or lesser degree, depending on how many prototypical features are fulfilled. The more features that are instantiated, the more canonical an interjection is – and the more central its representation in the categorial radial network. Inversely, with fewer features being met, the status of an attested interjection becomes less canonical and its place in the network more peripheral. Overall, canonical interjections are more extra-systematic, sometimes being regarded as para-linguistic or para-grammatical (Ameka 1992a: 112, 2006: 745; Stange 2016: 6; *contra* Norrick 2009: 888).

- 7 The non-elliptic character of a prototypical interjection is important. It distinguishes interjections from many other lexemes and word classes that can also be used as utterances, although only if used elliptically (Ameka 1992a: 105, 113).
- 8 This means that a prototypical interjection is both a word and an utterance (Ameka 2006: 745).
- 9 O’Connell and Kowal (2008: 138–40) propose another characteristic of interjections, namely their “initializing function”. That is, interjections mark distinct turns of speech, and/or separate reported speech from direct speech.
- 10 This includes non-speech sounds (Stange and Nübling 2014: 1985).
- 11 For a comprehensive presentation of the prototype of an interjection, consult Andrason and Dlali (*forthcoming*). For a succinct presentation of the history of research on interjections see O’Connell and Kowal (2008: 133–6).

In contrast, non-canonical interjections exhibit a more systematic, and hence more genuinely linguistic or grammatical profile.

Within the radial network of the interjectional category, emotive interjections (i.e. those expressing feelings and sensations) and primary interjections (i.e. items that are exclusively used as interjections) generally occupy a central position. They tend to be the most canonical and extra-systematic (Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 3–4; Nübling 2004: 17; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1983; Stange 2016: 6, 10–13, 18–9; Borchmann 2019). Inversely, a greater number of non-canonical interjections located at the category's peripheries are found among non-emotive interjections (i.e. cognitive, conative, and phatic)¹² and secondary interjections (i.e. interjections derived from other lexical classes or expressions; Nübling 2001; Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 4). Conative and phatic interjections violate several meaning-related properties. For instance, they tend to be deliberate and dialogical. They are produced purposefully and involve addressees.¹³ In turn, secondary interjections violate various formal features. They are plurimorphemic, exhibit inflections and derivations, consist of several syllables, and do not contain aberrant sounds or sound combinations. Overall, secondary phatic interjections are viewed as the least canonical (Stange 2016: 18).¹⁴

3. Evidence

The evidence presented in this paper draws on fieldwork conducted in Tsholotsho (Zimbabwe) in November 2018. The data collected reflects the language use of ten informants – the only competent and fluent native speakers of Tjwao (Phiri 2015, Andrason and Phiri 2018: 270).¹⁵ The larger part of the collected interjections was elicited. The elicitation involved one of the following three methods: (a) speakers linguistically expressed emotions and sensations that could be easily identified on images presented to them; (b) speakers constructed or completed sentences the use of which constituted a necessary part of an improvised situation; (c) speakers translated Ndebele sentences containing interjections in prototypical contexts of use. Additionally, a number of tokens

12 Conative interjections draw attention and express commands. Phatic interjections establish, sustain, or interrupt communication. Cognitive interjections – which together with emotive interjections form an expressive type – communicate states of knowledge and thought processes (Wierzbicka 1991: 291–326; 1992; Ameka 1992a: 113–4, 2006: 744; Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 9–10; Stange and Nübling 2014: 1983; Stange 2016: 12–13).

13 Sometimes, even emotive interjections exhibit some degree of referentiality. That is, while they primarily express the emotional state of the speaker, they may also provide information about third parties (Stange 2016: 10–11; see also Borchmann 2019).

14 Indeed, emotive and sensorial interjections are regarded as “interjections proper” (Stange 2016: 18–19). Cognitive, conative, and phatic types are regarded as “interjections formally speaking” (ibid.), decreasing their extent of interjectionality or the ability to act as a prototypical interjection in that order (ibid. 18). In some models, phatic interjections (cf. Wierzbicka 1991, 1992) – especially those expressing apologies, thanks, greetings, and leave-taking (cf. Ameka 1992b) – are not included in the interjectional category. The conative type may also be excluded from the category of interjections, although this is less common (cf. Meinard 2015: 154).

15 This includes three informants who passed away during 2018 and 2019.

were extracted from spontaneous discourses and oral narratives. In total, 42 different interjections were collected, and their usage thoroughly documented through a variety of contextualized examples.

3.1. The meaning of interjections in Tjwao

Tjwao exhibits the four main classes of interjections: emotive, cognitive, conative, and phatic. The largest number of interjections collected in our fieldwork (20) belong to the emotive type: *a-a*, *ãã-ã*, *ã-ã*, *a-nla*, *ccc*, *e-e*, *ehe*, *eyi*, *hll*, *i-ii*, *mm*, *oo*, *ppf*, *ss*, *xuu*, *wu-wu-wu*, *yaa*, *yee*, *yeyi*, and *yii*.¹⁶ Emotive interjections communicate the emotional states of speakers, in particular their feelings or sensations. These two sub-types of emotive interjections are attested in the Tjwao language. The feelings conveyed by emotive interjections can be positive or negative. Examples of positive feelings encoded by interjections are: happiness and excitement (e.g. *yee* in 1a), admiration (*yeyi* in 1b), relief (*xuu*), and approval (*ehe*).

- (1) a. **Yee** tire mari wana.
INTJ 1SG money have
'Yee, I have money!'
- b. **Yeyi** yii tcuri ?e.be tsao-ha.
INTJ DEM year 3SG.M fat:J-PRF
'Yeyi, this year, he is fat.'

A wide range of emotive interjections express negative feelings, such as: annoyance or irritation (e.g. *ãã-ã* in 2a), repugnance (*oo* and *wu-wu-wu* in 2b), fear or anxiety (*yii* in 2c), anger (*a-nla* and *e-e* in 2d), contempt (*ã-ã* and *a-nla*), sadness (*mm* and *yee* in 2e), and disapproval (*ã-ã*).

- (2) a. **Ãã-ã** tire kaa-ta.
INTJ 1SG like-NEG
'*Ãã-ã*, I don't like [this].'
- b. **Wu-wu-wu** lx'an-kue.
INTJ ugly-PROG
'*Wu-wu-wu*, [this dress] is ugly.'
- c. **Yii** yii xu ?ao-kaxu.
INTJ DEM thing fear-CAU
'*Yii*, this scares [me].'
- d. **E-e** tcii-xa¹⁷-ta.
INTJ call?-NEG

16 In this paper, we use the standard Tjwao orthography, which corresponds to the modified Khwe orthography (Schladt 2000) implemented by Fehn (2016) for Ts'ixa. The most significant difference from the IPA are the graphemes <ç> and <ç> that represent the sounds [ʃ] and [tʃ] respectively.

17 At this stage of research, we are unable to determine the function of the morpheme *-xa-* in examples like (2d). However, this has no bearing on our study. The intended meaning was 'don't call me!' as the speaker was asked to provide an equivalent to the Ndebele expression *ungangibizi*.

'E-e, don't call [me].'

- e. **Yee** ti ʔaba kwa tcii, ʔi.tcee ʔe kua.nya lʔoo-ha.
 INTJ 1SG dog IPFV sick maybe 3SG.C FUT die:J-PRF
 'Yee, my dog is sick, maybe it will die.'

The interjection *a-a* expresses surprise that, depending on context, may constitute a negative, positive, or emotionally neutral experience:

- (3) **A-a** nao.ta yii xu e?
 INTJ what DEM thing Q
 'A-a, what is this?'

Emotive interjections may also refer to sensations experienced by speakers. Typical sensations encoded by interjections in Tjwao are the experiences of tiredness (*xuu* in 4a), physical pain (*ss* and *i-ii* in 4b), bad odour (*pff* in 4c), and heat (*eyi* in 4d), as well as those of cold (*ccc*) and good taste or smell (*hll*).

- (4) a. **Xuu** kari,se tsxãã-ha.
 INTJ INTENS be.tired:J-PRF
 'Xuu, I am very tired.'
- b. **I-ii** ti maa kua kara.
 INTJ 1SG head IPFV hurt
 'I-ii, my head is aching.'
- c. **Pff** ʔe kua xũũ-se hum.
 INTJ 3SG.C IPFV bad-ADVZ smell
 'Pff, it is smelling bad.'
- d. **Eyi** dzini kua kari.se tsãã.
 INTJ sun IPFV INTENS shine
 'Eyi, the sun is very hot.'

Cognitive interjections found in Tjwao concern mental states. The most common cognitive processes encoded by interjections involve knowing (*yaa* in 5a) or inversely not knowing (*hii-i* in 5b), understanding (*woo* in 5c), remembering (*aha* in 5d), and doubting (*eh*).

- (5) a. **Yaa** yii xu tire ʔãna-ha.
 INTJ DEM thing 1SG know:J-PRF
 'Yaa, I know this.'
- b. **Hii-i** tire ʔãã-ta.
 INTJ 1SG know-NEG
 'Hii-i, I do not know.'
- c. **Woo** tca kua mii-xu ti kua lam.
 INTJ 2SG.MIPFV say-thing 1SG IPFV feel
 'Woo, I understand what you are saying.'

- d. **Aha** ti kua ?ini.
 INTJ 1SG IPFV remember
 ‘Aha, I remember.’

Conative interjections are another prolific class of interjections in Tjwao, and are represented by ten lexemes: *kip-kip-kip*, *kiti-kiti-kiti*, *mbh-mbh-mbh*, *psi-psi-psi*, *c*, *tee*, *tsua(-tsua)*, *yii*, *!-!-!*, *|-|-|*, and a whistle. Three sub-types of conative interjections may be distinguished. First, conative interjections are employed to draw the attention of other persons. The most typical attention getters in Tjwao are *yii* and *yeyi*:

- (6) **Yii** dana.tco!
 INTJ girl
 ‘Yii, girl!’

Second, conative interjections are used as commands. They are directed to other persons with the aim of prompting a specific reaction on their part. For instance, the interjection *c* in (7a) is employed to request silence, whereas *yeyi* in (7b) is employed to urge a person passing by to come closer.

- (7) a. **C** kx’ui ti!
 INTJ speak NEG.IMP
 ‘C, don’t talk!’
- b. **Yeyi** yii nuu ka haa!
 INTJ DEM land to come
 ‘Yeyi, come here!’

Third, conative interjections are directed to animals to incite them to perform a specific action. For instance, by means of the interjection *tsua* (typically uttered in sequences of two *tsua-tsua*), the speaker urges cattle and donkeys to start moving forward or to continue going further (8). In contrast, the interjection *tee* is used to stop the motion of larger animals. Usually, different types of animals necessitate the use of different interjections. For example, *mbh-mbh-mbh* is employed with cattle and donkeys; *!-!-!* and *kip-kip-kip* with chickens, *psi-psi-psi* and *kiti-kiti-kiti* with cats, and *|-|-|* with puppies. Adult dogs are usually called by a characteristic whistle.

- (8) **Tsua-tsua** kũũ!
 INTJ go
 ‘Tsua-tsua, go!’

The last semantic class of interjections found, the phatic type, is also well represented in Tjwao, containing the following lexemes: *ã-ã*, *ehe*, *hm*, *kaa-ta*, *ti kua tcaru*, *ti kua ?abu*, *toa/tca/ca dzee-ha e*, *toa/tca/ca tan-a-ha e*, *yaa*, and *?am*. However, as will be explained in Section 3.2, only four of these items are primary interjections (i.e. *ã-ã*, *ehe*, *hm*, and *yaa*). The remaining phatic interjections are secondary, being derived from other word classes or complex constructions. As is true across languages, phatic interjections are used in Tjwao to express the speaker’s attitude “towards the on-going discourse”

(Ameka 1992a: 114, 1992b, 2006: 744) by establishing, maintaining, and interrupting communication, or by deciding what information enters and what information does not enter into the conversation. The two most common interjections used to open and terminate the communicative channel are grammaticalized routines employed in greetings (i.e. *toa dzee-ha e?* ‘good day’) and leave-taking (i.e. *kāi-se kau* ‘goodbye’) respectively. Similar interjectional routines are employed for the purpose of thanking (*ti kua ?abu / ?am* ‘thanks’) and apologizing (*ti kua tearu* ‘sorry’). The maintenance of the communicative channel is achieved by means of *hm*, functionally equivalent to ‘yes, I am listening’. The interjections filtering information determining its inclusion or exclusion from the conversation are *ehe*, *yaa*, and *?am* expressing agreement (9a), and *ã-ã* and *kaa-ta* expressing disagreement (9b). The same interjections are also used as response forms equivalent to ‘yes’ (*ehe*, *yaa*, *?am*) and ‘no’ (*ã-ã*, *kaa-ta*) (9c).

- (9) a. **Ehe** tire kua ?am.
INTJ 1SG IPFV agree
‘Ehe, I agree.’
- b. **Ã-ã** xa.ta yii bee.
INTJ like.that DEM NEG
‘Ã-ã, it’s not like that.’
- c. A: Kx’ai ti kua xa xu ka tire kua lam-a-hî?
once 1SG IPFV DEM thing about 1SG IPFV hear-J-PST
‘Have I ever heard about this thing before?’
B: **Yaa!**
INTJ
‘Yaa (=Yes).’

Emotive interjections, whether expressing feelings or sensations, tend to constitute semi-automatic, spontaneous, and unplanned verbal reflexes. They are often produced as immediate reactions to linguistic and/or extra-linguistic stimuli. These types of interjections are not intended to induce verbal or non-verbal responses from the other participants as they are in principle monologic and lack addressees. For instance, in (10a), a man touches a hot kettle. In reaction to the sudden experience of a pain burning his hand, he produces a non-deliberate reflex-like cry. In (10b), the speaker experiences the biting cold passing through his body. Immediately and with no intention to engage in a conversation with someone else, he produces the interjection *ccc*. Indeed, no other persons participate in the event, the interjection being employed reflexively. Example (10c) is produced during a meeting. Unexpectedly, a person arrives. To express his surprise, one of the attendees spontaneously utters the interjection *a-a*. Even though other persons are involved in the event, as they participate in the meeting, the interjection is not addressed to them, but rather is used as an outlet for the amazement experienced subjectively by the speaker. In any case, no response was prompted by its use.

- (10) a. **I-ii!**
 INTJ
 ‘I-ii’
- b. **Ccc** tire kua kx’ui ta. Ti kua lxuru.
 INTJ 1SG IPFV speak. NEG 1SG IPFV be.cold
 ‘Ccc, I can’t speak, I am cold.’
- c. **A-a**, yii xu lʔooro-xu.
 INTJ DEM thing surprise-thing
 ‘A-a, this is a surprise.’

In contrast to emotive interjections, conative and phatic interjections are often intentional. In (11a), the speaker utters the interjection *yii* to draw the attention of a boy that stands further away. Its use is fully deliberate. In a similar vein, in (11b), the speaker wants a cat to come closer. For that reason, he purposefully uses the interjection *psi-psi-psi*.

- (11) a. **Yii** be!
 INTJ EMPH
 ‘Yii!’
- b. **Psi-psi-psi** yii nuu ka haa.
 INTJ DEM land to come
 ‘Psi-psi-psi, come here!’

Generally, interjections in Tjwao are non-referential. That is, they disallow discourses about third parties. They cannot be used to describe properties of the other participants in the situation (i.e. participants different from the speaker her/himself) or the activities in which those participants are engaged. For example, in (12), the interjection *xuu* expresses the speaker’s experience of tiredness and cannot be used to denote similar emotions or sensations experienced by others. Therefore, the use of the 1st person pronoun, referring explicitly to the speaker himself, is not necessary. The inherent reflexivity of the interjection makes it clear that the person that is tired is the speaker. Similarly, the interjections *oo* and *a-nla* express the feelings of repugnance and anger as experienced subjectively by the speaker. Both interjections cannot be employed to describe what the other persons involved in the event may feel.

- (12) **Xuu** kari.se tsxãã-ha.
 INTJ INTENS be.tired:J-PRF
 ‘Xuu, [I am] very tired.’

However, interjections – even the emotive ones – may have a minor referential component in Tjwao. That is, they can refer to the properties of objects, creatures, or events that cause the determined feelings and sensations as experienced by the speaker (compare with the same observation made by Stange 2016). For example, in (13), the interjection *hll* is used by the speaker to express his positive experience when savouring food. However, the same lexeme also indicates that the food is tasty and good. As a result, *hll* refers to both the speaker’s

experience and the properties of the object by which that experience is prompted.

- (13) **Hll** ti ʔyũ-a-ha tika.
 INTJ 1SG eat-j-PRF if
 ‘*Hll*, I wish I could eat [the food].’

The meaning of various interjections, especially emotive and cognitive ones, relies heavily on their context of use, in particular the extralinguistic situation in which they occur, and the conversational inferences drawn. Given this context-dependency, some interjections are highly polysemous and exhibit a wide range of semantic potential. For example, the interjection *yee* is able to express positive emotions such as happiness (14a) or excitement (see (1a) above), as well as negative emotions such as sadness (14b; see also (2e)).¹⁸ Similarly, *ss* connotes pain on the one hand (15a), and spiciness and bad taste on the other (15b); *xuu* expresses not only tiredness (see 12 above), but also dissatisfaction, disappointment, and relief.

- (14) a. **Yee** ʔe.be t’ũ-xu.
 INTJ 3SG.M good-thing
 ‘*Yee*, it’s a good thing.’
- b. **Yee** ti dzãã lʔoo-ha.
 INTJ 1SG relative die:J-PRF
 ‘*Yee*, my relative died.’
- (15) a. **Ss** tca kua ti.a thũ-kaxu.
 INTJ 2SG.M IPFV 1SG.O injure-CAU
 ‘*Ss*, you are hurting me.’
- b. **Ss** ʔe kx’au.
 INTJ 3SG.C taste.badly
 ‘*Ss*, it is tasteless.’

In contrast to emotive and cognitive interjections, the semantic potential of phatic and conative interjections is much more constrained. Several interjective routines exclusively serve a single function, i.e. welcoming (*toa dzee-ha e*), leave-taking (*kã-se kau*), thanking (*ti kua ʔabu*), or apologizing (*ti kua tcaru*). Similarly, conative interjections are typically used to request a specific type of activity, being moreover directed to a well-determined type of addressee, e.g. cattle (*mbh-mbh-mbh*), cat (*kiti-kiti-kiti*), or fowl (!-!-!). Hardly, if ever, may the use of such interjections be extended to other contexts and semantic domains.

In some cases, the broad semantic potential of an interjection allows it to be included in more than one major interjectional type. For instance, *yii* may function as an emotive interjection communicating fear and anxiety, as well as a

18 Tone and/or gestures often play a decisive role when determining the particular type of meaning activated in case of highly polysemous interjections.

conative interjection used to draw attention, or to request a person to come closer.

Interjections in Tjwao are related to gestures. First, interjections tend to be accompanied by expressive body movements, typically hand gestures and facial expressions. For instance, the interjection of doubt *eh* (16a) is often complemented by raising one's eyebrows. The interjection *ccc* (16b) is complemented by the speaker embracing himself and performing a shaking movement. The interjectional routine *ti kua tcaru* (16c) is complemented by a clap of hands. The response words *ehe*, *yaa*, and *?am* 'yes' as well as *kaa-ta* and *ã-ã* 'no' are regularly accompanied by vertical or horizontal head movements, respectively.

- (16) a. **Eh** nare ?ana-ha?
 INTJ who know:J-PST
 'Eh, who knows?'
 b. **Ccc** ti kua |xuru.
 INTJ 1SG IPFV be.cold
 'Ccc, I am cold.'
 c. **Ti kua tcaru.** Tcoa ka ?ii.ye kx'oo.xo ?yũũ.
 1SG IPFV be.sorry person ANT all meat eat
 'Ti kua tcaru (= Sorry), someone ate all the meat.'

Second, being equivalent to physical gestures, interjections may be entirely replaced by body movements. For example, in (16a) and (16b), the two gestures explained above may substitute the interjections *eh* and *ccc*, respectively, without any substantial loss of information. Nevertheless, the use of interjections without gestures is also widely attested.

3.2. The form of interjections in Tjwao

All interjections collected in our fieldwork, irrespective of their meaning and form, can function holophrastically. That is, they may constitute complete self-contained utterances and therefore be used in a conversation instead of fully-fledged canonical sentences. This will be illustrated below by several situations witnessed during data collection activities.

When listening to a person repeating the same story, a Tjwao speaker utters the emotive interjection *ãã-ã* to give an outlet to his feeling of annoyance. This interjection is employed independently as a self-standing utterance – it is not accompanied by any other word or sentence. Another example concerns the emotive interjection *hll*. This interjection is regularly used without complementary clausal or sentential elements to communicate satisfaction with the taste of good food. With conative lexemes, the holophrasticity of interjections and their independence are even more common. For instance, *c* is virtually always produced on its own, with no additional elements. In such cases, it is fully equivalent to a canonical imperative *ngoo* 'be quiet!'.¹⁹ In a similar vein, all conative

19 *Ngoo* is a regular verb in Tjwao, which derives from the Proto-Khoe form **ŋ!uo* 'be silent, quiet'.

interjections addressed to animals – e.g. *!-!-* used with fowl and *|-|-* used with dogs – function as self-standing utterances. They tend to be employed without any additional words or clauses accompanying them. The phatic filler *hm* typically appears on its own indicating ‘yes, I am still listening’. The interjectional response words conveying affirmation (*ehe*, *yaa*, and *?am*) and negation (*ã-ã* and *kaa-ta*) are also mostly used holophrastically. Lastly, routines featuring in greetings, leave-taking, thanking, and apologizing are small clauses or small sentences themselves, their utterance-like function being therefore evident and, in fact, tautological.²⁰

The most evident cases of the holophrastic use of interjections are found in dialogues in which each turn is composed exclusively of an interjection, as in (17) below. The conversation begins with person A seeing person B. A calls B, using the attention getter *yii*. Hearing this, B expresses his surprise by means of the emotive interjection *a-a*. Subsequently, A produces the interjection *yee* to make his excitement and happiness clear. Speaker B experiences the same feeling and expresses this by means of *ehe*.

- (17) A: **Yii!**
 B: **A-a!**
 A: **Yee!**
 B: **Ehe!**

All emotive, cognitive, and conative interjections collected in our fieldwork are non-elliptical. That is, they are not shortened versions of longer utterances or more elaborated constructions. For instance, in (18a), the interjection *mm* expressing sadness experienced by the speaker due to the loss of a relative does not constitute an abbreviated variant of a more complex expression. Similarly, the interjection *ehe* expressing approval and excitement in (18b) is not a modification of a more elaborate structure.

- (18) a. **Mm** ti dzãã l?oo-ha.
 INTJ ISG relative die:J-PRF
 ‘*Mm*, my relative died.’
- b. **Ehe** tci tcãã.
 INTJ 2SG.Menter
 ‘*Ehe*, you can come in.’

The non-elliptical character of phatic interjections requires a more nuanced discussion. To begin with, all phatic routines such as *ti kua tcaru*, *ti kua ?abu*, *toa dzee-ha e*, and *toa tan-a-ha e* are complete clauses. They are thus not abbreviated by definition. However, it is likely that as their grammaticalization continues, some parts will be eliminated due to phonological and morphological

20 The holophrasticity of Tjwao interjections means that in all the examples introduced thus far, the respective clauses complementing the interjection may be omitted. For instance, in (2b), when presented with a piece of clothing, the speaker may use the interjection *wu-wu-wu* alone, without the following clause *lx'an-kue* ‘is ugly’. The presence of *wu-wu-wu* is sufficient to express the feeling of dislike and to connote that the dress is ugly.

reductions concomitant to grammaticalization (Nübling 2001; Hopper and Traugott 2003).²¹ Consequently, at later stages, the above-mentioned routines may indeed become shortened versions of complex constructions. More grammaticalized versions of input clause-like expressions may already be observed in the interjections *kaa-ta* and *?am*. *Kaa-ta* is derived from the verbal base *kaa* ‘want’ negated by means of the imperfective negator *ta*. *?am* is derived from the base *?am* ‘agree’. Due to the various processes involved in grammaticalization, these two input constructions have likely shrunk to their present forms, eliminating pronouns and other types of markings.

Although interjections in Tjwao may always be used independently as self-standing non-elliptical utterances, they may also form parts of larger sentences. This is evident in most examples introduced in Section 3.1 above, in which interjections indeed feature as components of complex utterances. In such cases, however, interjections tend to maintain their syntactic independence. First, interjections fail to be integrated into a clausal structure. They are not governed by the verb and do not constitute an “integral part” of the clause and its formative segments (cf. Stange and Nübling 2014: 1985). They cannot be used as arguments or adjuncts, nor do they modify the arguments and adjuncts already employed. Furthermore, although interjections may appear in declarative affirmative (19a) and negative (19b) sentences, as well as in imperative (19b) and interrogative (19c) sentences, they preserve their own illocutionary status and are not negated, questioned, or turned into imperatives. Overall, interjections are unaffected by syntactic operations of negation and interrogation.

- (19) a. **Ā-ā** xa xu e |?oro e.
 INTJ DEM thing 3SG.C be.bad COP
 ‘Ā-ā, this (thing) is wrong.’
- b. **A-nla** ti.a hĩ-ta.
 INTJ 1SG.O do-NEG
 ‘A-nla, don’t do this to me!’
- c. **Eh** nare ?ana-ha?
 INTJ who know:J-PST
 ‘Eh, who knows?’

Second, interjections do not enter into constructions with other grammatical elements, in particular other lexical classes. They do not govern complements nor are they parts of more complex phrases in which they would be governed by other entities. The only potential exceptions are cases in which interjections form coherent units with vocative nouns (20).

21 See for instance the emotive interjection *Sakrament* > *Sa(c)k* and *oh mein Jesus* > *oje* in German (Nübling 2001: 20, 35) or various phatic interjections in Polish: *cześć* > *cze*, *na razie* > *nara*, *dzień dobry* > *dobry*, *na zdrowie* > *zdrowie*. For a detailed discussion of the process of interjectionalization consult Nübling (2001); see also O’Connell and Kowal 2008.

- (20) **Yeyi** Balisi tcaa ti.a maa.
 INTJ PN water 1SG.O give
 ‘Yeyi Balisi, give me water!’

In Tjwao, interjections tend to appear at the boundaries of speech. In nearly all examples where interjections are used as parts of larger sentences, they occupy a sentence-initial position. For instance, in (21a), the interjection *ãã-ã* constitutes the first element in the sentence, itself placed at the beginning of a turn. In (21b), the interjection *oo* is found within a longer monologue. Even though it does not open a turn, but rather constitutes a subsequent slot in it, this interjection occupies a sentence-initial position. Interjections may also appear at the end of a turn or in a sentence-final position (21c). This is, however, uncommon. The extremely sporadic cases in which interjections appear sentence-internally emerge when vocative phrases are used at the end of a sentence. In such instances, the interjection is placed between the core clause and the vocative noun (21d). The use of interjections in other types of sentence-internal position seems to be ungrammatical in Tjwao.

- (21) a. **Ãã-ã** yii xu tire kaa-ta.
 INTJ DEM thing 1SG like-NEG
 ‘*Ãã-ã*, I don’t like this thing.’
- b. **Oo** ?e.be kua ti.a tcira-kaxu.
 INTJ 3SG.MIPFV 1SG.O vomit-CAU
 ‘*Oo*, he makes me want to vomit.’
- c. Ha xu |?oro e **a-a**
 DEM thing bad COP INTJ
 ‘This thing is bad, *a-a*.’
- d. Kx’ui ti **yeyi** Balisi
 speak NEG INTJ PN
 ‘Don’t talk, *yeyi* Balisi!’

Irrespective of their sentential position, interjections are typically pronounced in isolation from the other parts of the sentence. They tend to constitute independent intonation units, separated from all the other sentential components by pause or comma intonation (22a-b). Again, the common exceptions are vocatives, which often resist phonological separation from interjections. Instead, the whole vocative phrase composed of the interjection and the vocative is separated from the rest of the sentence by an audible pause (22c).

- (22) a. **A-a** [pause] nao.ta yii xu e?
 INTJ what DEM thing COP
 ‘*A-a*, what is this?’
- b. **A-n|a** [pause] ?e.be kua nao hĩĩ?
 INTJ 3SG.M IPFV what do
 ‘*A-n|a*, what is he doing?’

- c. \tilde{A} - \tilde{a} Vundla [pause] tire kaa-ta.
 INTJ PN 1SG want-NEG
 ‘ \tilde{A} - \tilde{a} Vundla, I do not want.’

As far as their morphology is concerned, the majority of Tjwao interjections exhibit a simple, mono-morphemic structure. That is, interjections such as *a-a*, *ãã-ã*, *ã-ã*, *aha*, *a-nlla*, *c*, *ccc*, *e-e*, *eh*, *ehe*, *eyi*, *hii-i*, *hll*, *hm*, *i-ii*, *mm*, *oo*, *ppf*, *ss*, *xuu*, *woo*, *yaa*, *yee*, *yeyi*, and *yii* cannot be fragmented into smaller meaningful components. Some interjections – all of them belonging to a conative type – apparently exhibit a more complex structure. The interjections *kip-kip-kip*, *kiti-kiti-kiti*, *mbh-mbh-mbh*, *psi-psi-psi*, *!-!-!*, and *|-|-|* are regularly produced as multiplicative patterns composed of three identical segments. However, as they cannot be realized as mono-segmental units (i.e. as *kip*, *kiti*, *mbh*, *psi*, *!*, and *|-*), their morphological complexity seems to be precluded. That is, in each case, the multiplication would be phonetic rather than morphological (derivative) as is typical of interjections across languages (Nübling 2004). It should, however, be noted that speakers do have access to the elementary segments of those interjections since each triplet may be expanded to four, five, six or any larger number of segments. Nevertheless, as was the case for tri-segmental uses, multiplication found in sequences composed of more than three segments has no morphological (derivative) function. Lastly, the interjections *tsua(-tsua)*, *tee*, and *?am* that are homophonous with verbal bases – either native or borrowed from Bantu – meaning ‘come’, ‘stand, stay, stop’, and ‘agree’, respectively, are also mono-morphemic.²²

Crucially, none of the above-mentioned interjections carry any type of inflectional or derivational affixes available in Tjwao, nor do they exploit mechanisms of compounding, thus containing non-interjectional elements donated by other lexical classes. For instance, whether addressed to one person, two persons, or a group of persons, conative interjections *c* and *yii* are not inflected in singular, dual or plural, as is possible for pronouns, nouns (including vocatives), and verbs (e.g. in imperative) in Tjwao.

Contrary to the interjections analysed above, which typically belong to the emotive, cognitive, and conative types, several phatic interjectional lexemes or constructions exhibit a complex internal structure. They are composed of a number of inflectional and derivational morphemes, as well as verbal bases, pronouns, and adverbs. However, this internal complexity is not the property of the interjections themselves, but rather stems from their diachronic foundation. That is, although grammaticalized into interjectional routines, they derive from small clauses that contain(ed) separate words marked by inflections and derivations. For example, the interjection *toa/tca/ca dzee-ha e* used as a welcoming routine originates from a small clause built around a number of elements: the 2nd person pronoun, either formal *toa* or informal *tca/ca*; the verbal base *dzee* ‘pass the day’ inflected in the so-called *ha* gram, which is marked by the suffix

22 Note the donor form of *tsua* found in Sotho-Tswana (spelled *tswa* in Sesotho and Tswana) consists of two morphemes: the verbal base *tsu-* ‘go, come’ and the verbalizer *-a*, used in imperatives, infinitives, and various TAM grams (see further below in this section). In Tjwao, however, *tsua* is treated mono-morphemically and is indivisible.

-*ha* (Andrason and Phiri 2018); and the question marker *e*. A similar structure is exhibited by the interjection *toa/tca/ca tan-a-ha e* employed in greetings before noon. The only difference is that the base *tan-* ‘get up’ is used and that the juncture exhibits the form *a*. Similarly, the interjection of leave-taking *kāĩ-se kau* contains the adverbial morpheme *-se* (*kāĩ-se* ‘well’ from *kāĩ* ‘good’), while the interjections of apologizing *ti kua tcaru* and thanking *ti kua ?abu / ?am* exhibit the imperfective morpheme *kua*. These last two interjections also contain the personal pronoun of the 1st person singular *ti*.

The above discussion demonstrates that although some interjections have emerged as reflexes and have thus functioned as primary interjections from the beginning of their grammatical life, others are secondary interjections, having evolved from non-interjectional lexical classes and/or constructions. The vast majority of interjections attested in our fieldwork are reflex-like primary interjections: *a-a*, *āā-ā*, *ā-ā*, *aha*, *a-nla*, *c*, *ccc*, *e-e*, *eh*, *ehe*, *eyi*, *hii-i*, *hll*, *hm*, *i-ii*, *oo*, *pff*, *ss*, *xuu*, *woo*, *yaa*, *yee*, *yeyi*, *yii*, *wu-wu-wu*, *kip-kip-kip*, *kiti-kiti-kiti*, *mbh-mbh-mbh*, *psi-psi-psi*, *!-!-!*, and *|-|-|*. In contrast, the number of (more or less grammaticalized) interjections that are derived from non-interjectional lexical classes or more complex constructions is lower. This non-interjectional origin is patent in various phatic routines which, as explained above, still preserve their clausal structure: *toa/tca/ca dzee-ha e* lit. ‘have you spent the day (well)?’, *toa/tca/ca tan-a-ha e* lit. ‘have you gotten up (well)?’, *kāĩ-se kau* lit. ‘stay well!’, *ti kua ?abu / ?am* lit. ‘I thank you’, and *ti kua tcaru* lit. ‘I am sorry / I apologize’. The interjection *tee* most likely derives from the base *tee* ‘to stand, stay, stop’ used as an imperative. In this case too, no morphological or phonological reduction processes seem to have operated and the link between the interjection and its lexical source is easily recoverable. In contrast, in case of the interjections *kaa-ta* and *?am*, access to the original structures is no longer available due to the highly advanced extent of their interjectionalization and grammaticalization. As stated above *kaa-ta* consists of the verbal base *kaa* ‘want’ and the negative imperfective suffix *-ta*. It most likely derives from a small clause signifying ‘I don’t want’. During the evolution of this initial expression into the lexeme ‘no’, the 1st person pronoun has been lost. The morphological reduction experienced by *?am* is even greater. This interjection arguably derives from an expression ‘I agree’, ‘I’ve agreed’, or similar. In this case, both the pronoun and the TAM marker have been eliminated, the form being reduced to the verbal base ‘agree’.

Additionally, at least one interjection, *tsua(-tsua)* constitutes an uncontested case of borrowing, being adapted from the Southern Bantu imperative *tswa* ‘go, come (from)’ present in Tswana and Sesotho (see also Sepedi *tšwa* ‘go (out), come (out)’). It is possible to find more similarities between interjections in Tjwao and Southern Bantu, especially as far as the primary (usually emotive) type is concerned. The interjection *ehe*, expressing approval and agreement, is almost identical to *éhêê* which is used in Tswana with the same function (Cole 1955: 394). It is also similar to the interjections of approval and agreement *ee* and *heéi* in (Western) Shona (Fortune 1955: 431; Fivaz 1970: 166; Wentzel 1961: 254) and *e* in Kalanga (Louw 1915: 98). The Tjwao interjection of surprise *a-a* coincides with an analogous lexeme in Western Shona (Wentzel 1961: 254; see also Tswana *a*; Cole 1955: 395). The interjections *yaa*, *yee*,

yeyi, and *yii* are comparable to Tswana (*i*)*ja* (Cole 1955: 395) as well as, albeit to a lesser extent, to *ayi* and *ai* in Western Shona and Kalanga (Louw 1915: 98; Wentzel 1961: 254) – all of which, like their Tjwao counterparts, express distress, sympathy, excitement, admiration, and/or surprise. Further, more or less accurate, correspondences are interjections communicating repugnance and contempt (Tjwao *oo* vs. Tswana *ô* and *ôii*), pain (Tjwao *ss* vs. Tswana *ušš* and *išš* (Cole 1955: 395)) and Kalanga *shu* (Louw 1915: 99),²³ and cold (Tjwao *ccc* vs. Tswana *tshi* (Cole 1955: 395)) and Kalanga *isha* (Marconnès 1931: 231). The conative interjection used to call fowl is also relatively similar in Tjwao (*!-!-!*) and Tswana (*q-q-q-q*) (ibid. 396). In most cases of such Tjwao-Bantu co-occurrence, it is difficult to demonstrate clearly that a transfer from Bantu to Tjwao has taken place. Given the reflex-like nature of interjections, their biological foundation, and psychological primacy (O’Connell et al. 2005: 153), interjections may not only be culture-specific but also universal (Jensen et al. 2019: 3).²⁴ Therefore, the similarities between Tjwao and Bantu interjections need not be attributed to areal spread. They may equally be due to spontaneous separate developments. Tjwao interjections also reveal some similarity with interjections in Khwe. To be exact, Khwe *èhé* used in replies to greetings as well as to express acknowledgement (Kilian-Hatz 2003: 44; 2008: 247) approximates *ehe* in Tjwao; *yé*, which expresses a wide range of emotions (Kilian-Hatz 2008: 247) approximates *yee*, *yeyi*, and *yii*; *à é* approximates *a-a*, both interjections expressing surprise (ibid.); and *ã ã* used to communicate disapproval and disagreement is almost identical to *ã-ã* employed in the same function (ibid. 246). Again, the similarities may be genetic, areal, or merely coincidental.

The majority of the interjections collected in our fieldwork do not involve sounds that are absent from the phonological or phonetic inventory of the Tjwao language. The few – noticeable – exceptions are the interjections *hm*, *ss*, *!-!-!*, *hll*, and *mbh-mbh-mbh*. The interjection *hm* makes use of a low sound pronounced with the mouth closed and the airstream being released through the nose, possibly transcribed as [hᵐᵐ̥] or [ᵐᵐ̥]. It approximates the pronunciation of functionally equivalent lexemes signalling the maintenance of the communicative channel, found in Indo-European languages, e.g. *hm* in English, Spanish, or Polish. The consonants [s] and [ʔ] found in the interjections *ss* and *hll* contravene the rules of the Tjwao sound system by being pronounced ingressively, i.e. as [s:↓] and [ʔ:↓] respectively. The interjections *!-!-!* and *mbh-mbh-mbh* are built around click sounds that otherwise do not belong to the standard phonemic inventory of Tjwao, namely the alveolar click [!] and the bilabial click [O].²⁵ The conative whistle used to call dogs is perhaps the most extra-systematic from a phonological perspective.

23 See also the interjection of disgust *see* in Shona (Fortune 1955: 433).

24 See the use of *aha* as a cognitive interjection in Tjwao, Polish, and English.

25 The click [O], similar to a lip-smacking sound produced in English when mimicking a fish, is in general rare cross-linguistically, being only found in the Tuu and Kx’a (ʔAmkoe) families of the “Khoisan” Sprachbund. Ideophones in Ts’ixa exhibit a similar behaviour. They draw from a larger click inventory than what is available for other word classes. For instance, they may contain clicks and accompaniments (e.g. alveolar affricated ejective: *!x’ua* ‘sound made by a large stone falling into the water’) which are otherwise absent in the language.

The sound combinations, e.g. consonant clusters and syllable structures, found in interjections often respect the phonotactic principles operating in Tjwao. Again, certain important anomalies can be observed. First, contrary to the lexical classes of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, interjections are the only fully-fledged words that tolerate vowel-less structures. Eight interjections exhibit consonantal nuclei: either a lateral (*hll*), a fricative (*pf*, *ss*, *c*, *ccc*), a nasal (*mm*), or a click (*!-!-!*, *|-|-|*). Second, consonants used in interjections may be long and extra-long (see *hll*, *pf*, *ss*, *ccc*) – a rare phenomenon in Tjwao. Third, in interjections, vowels are not only short (*eh*, *ã-ã*, *yeyi*, *eyi*) and long (*oo*, *ã-ã-ã*, *xuu*, *yee*, *yii*)²⁶ – which is typical of all the remaining lexical classes – but may additionally be lengthened to an exaggerated duration of three or more morae. For instance, the interjection expressing repugnance *oo* [o:] is often extended to a three-moraic, or even four-moraic, pronunciation [o::(:)].

Vowels play, in general, a significant role in interjections in Tjwao. First, although not asystematic *per se*, interjections exhibit a remarkable tendency to use vowels in a word-initial position. That is, most interjections begin with a vowel (*a-a*, *ã-ã-ã*, *ã-ã*, *aha*, *a-n||a*, *e-e*, *eh*, *ehe*, *eyi*, *i-ii*, *oo*) or a semi-vowel (*woo*, *wu-wu-wu*, *yaa*, *yee*, *yeyi*, *yii*). Second, some interjections are composed only of vowels, or vowels and semi-vowels (*a-a*, *ã-ã-ã*, *ã-ã*, *e-e*, *eyi*, *i-ii*, *oo*, *woo*, *wu-wu-wu*, *yaa*, *yee*, *yeyi*, *yii*). This vocalic nature is especially patent in emotive interjections of which only five (*pf*, *ss*, *ccc*, *hll*, *xuu*) have a genuine consonant as their first (and typically only) phonetic element. The remaining fourteen emotive interjections start with a vowel or a semi-vowel. In contrast, conative interjections tend to begin with a consonant.

Primary interjections tend to be monosyllabic and bisyllabic. The bisyllabic interjections usually exhibit harmonious patterns. These may involve: the reduplication of a vowel (*a-a*, *ã-ã-ã*, *ã-ã*, *e-e*, *i-ii*)²⁷, vocalic harmony in the first and second syllable (*aha*, *a-n||a*, *ehe*), the multiplication of a syllable whether vocalic or non-vocalic (*mbh-mbh-mbh*, *wu-wu-wu*, *kip-kip-kip*, *!-!-!*, *|-|-|*, *kiti-kiti-kiti*), as well as the repetition of a glide or, alternatively, the imprecise reduplication of a syllable (*yeyi*). Primary interjections consisting of more than two syllables that would not result from multiplication are absent in Tjwao.

All the anomalies described above only characterize primary interjections. Secondary interjections such as *toa dzee-ha e*, *toa/tca/ca tan-a-ha e*, *kã-ã-se kau*, *ti kua ?abu / ?am*, and *ti kua tcaru* exhibit fully regular phonological profiles. This is also true of those secondary interjections that have been profoundly interjectionalized and grammaticalized, e.g. *kaa-ta*, *?am*, *tee*, as well as the interjection *tsua(-tsua)*²⁸ adapted from a Southern Bantu (Tswana) imperative.

Interjections – whether primary or secondary – invariably bear accent. Some of them tend to be uttered with greater energy and louder volume. This is typical of emotive interjections, the attention getter *yii*, and conative interjections requesting motion (*tsua(-tsua)*) or its cessation (*tee*). By contrast, a more

26 The use of long vowels is more common than that of short vowels, although both types are well represented.

27 In all these cases, the vowels of the two respective syllables are separated by the glottal stop [ʔ], e.g. *a-a* [aʔa].

28 As explained above, *tsua* tends to occur in reduplicated sequences such as *tsua-tsua*.

expressive and louder pronunciation is unusual with the other conative interjections used to attract animals (*kip-kip-kip*, *kiti-kiti-kiti*, *mbh-mbh-mbh*, *psi-psi-psi*, *!-!-!*, *|-|-|*) and with the majority of phatic interjections (e.g. *hm*).

4. Results and discussion

The evidence presented in the previous section reveals a considerable internal diversity in the category of interjections in Tjwao.

As far as their meaning is concerned – in the realm of both semantics and pragmatics – Tjwao interjections may, although need not, comply with the typological prototype. From a semantic perspective, as expected, interjections can express emotional and sensorial states. However, their semantic interjectionality may also be lower, interjections being used to indicate the state of knowledge, draw attention, express wishes, establish, maintain or interrupt communication, and perform various routines. For each main interjectional type – emotive, cognitive, conative, and phatic – the various sub-types common across languages are also attested. From a pragmatic perspective, interjections are often semi-automatic, spontaneous, and unplanned, constituting immediate reflexes to linguistic and extra-linguistic stimuli. Some may, however, be produced deliberately. A number of interjections are monologic, thus lacking addressees. Nonetheless, some are dialogical, being produced to respond to other participants' utterances or trigger determined responses on the part of interlocutors. Interjections are most frequently used in a non-referential manner, even though some can exhibit a minor referential component. The meaning of various interjections relies heavily upon context, which renders them highly polysemous. Contrary to this tendency, several interjections can be monosemous and characterized by restricted contexts of use. Lastly, interjections are often accompanied by gestures, and can even be replaced by body movements. However, this is not universal and gesture-free interjections are also widely attested.

Similarly, as far as their form is concerned – whether in the realm of syntax, morphology, or phonetics – interjections oscillate between compliance with the typological prototype and the violation thereof. From a syntactic perspective, interjections can function holophrastically, forming complete self-contained utterances. Such utterance-interjections are not usually elliptical. However, in the cases of a few interjections that derive from complex constructions, certain components present in original sequences have been eliminated due to the process of a phonological, morphological, and syntactic erosion typical of grammaticalization. While holophrasticity is always grammatical, interjections may also form parts of larger sentences. In such cases, they generally maintain their syntactic independence. They are not governed by the predicate, cannot function as arguments or adjuncts, and do not modify other elements in the sentence. They do not participate in syntactic operations and have no bearing on the illocutionary force of the adjacent part of the sentence. Furthermore, interjections do not enter into constructions, with the exception of vocatives. Interjections appear at the boundaries of speech, occupying a sentence-initial position or, significantly less often, a sentence-final position. Their sentence-internal usage is infrequent, being confined to uses with vocatives. Interjections tend to be phonetically isolated from the rest of the sentence, thus constituting a separated intonation unit

regularly marked by a pause. Vocatives are, again, a noticeable exception, as they often form conjunctive intonational units with interjections. From a morphological perspective, most interjections exhibit a simple mono-morphemic structure, although more complex, i.e. multiplicated, structures, are also possible. Nevertheless, in multiplicated interjections, multiplication only plays a phonetic function rather than a morphological one. Interjections do not carry inflectional or derivational affixes, nor do they exploit mechanisms of compounding. The only interjections that exhibit a complex internal structure, being composed of inflectional and derivational morphemes, as well as lexically transparent bases, are those derived from constructions and small clauses. In such cases, morphology is not the property of an interjection itself but rather reflects the morphology of the components that built up the original construction or clause. From a phonetic perspective, interjections may involve extra-systematic sounds, specifically: the ingressive sounds [s:↓] and [ʔ:↓], the click sounds [!] and [⊙], the sound [hm]/[ɪmm], and the whistle. However, many other interjections are fully systematic as far as their vowels and consonants are concerned. Various phonotactic properties of interjections are systematic with a few important anomalies, in particular the presence of vowel-less structures, long consonants, and exaggeratedly long vowels. Overall, vocalic elements play a prominent role in interjections, with a general tendency for vowels to appear word-initially. A number of interjections are mono- or bisyllabic. However, longer interjections are also attested. Bisyllabic interjections often exhibit harmonious patterns. Interjections invariably bear stress. They are often accompanied by greater energy and louder volume although this is, again, not universal.

In our view, the category of interjections in Tjwao described in this article can only be comprehended and explained in its entirety by the radial model, which stands in agreement with the prototype-driven proposals formulated by Ameka (1992a; 2006), Nübling (2001, 2004), Stange and Nübling (2014) and Stange (2016). The use of this model ensures the maintenance of the internal diversity of the category on the one hand, and the recognition of its coherence on the other. In the centre of the interjectional category in Tjwao one finds canonical interjections that comply with the typological prototype fully, both in terms of their meaning and form (e.g. *hll* [ʔ:↓], *ss* [s:↓] and *oo* when pronounced with an exaggerated length, i.e. [o::]). In contrast, the peripheral zone of the category is occupied by non-canonical interjections that comply with the prototype minimally (e.g. *toa dzee-ha e*, *toa tan-a-ha e*, and *kāi-se kau*). Many other interjections are located in the intermediate areas of the categorial network, that is between the canonical centre and the non-canonical periphery. Overall, in Tjwao, belonging to the category of interjections is not a binary question of either/or but rather a matter of degree – some members being more interjectional than others. The most canonical and thus central members of the interjectional category in Tjwao are emotive primary interjections. They are also the most extra-systematic, distinguishing themselves most clearly from other lexical classes found in the Tjwao language. The least canonical and thus the most peripheral are secondary phatic interjections. They are the least extra-systematic and approximate other lexical classes more closely.

The results of our study enable us to compare the category of interjections in Tjwao with similar categories in other Khoe-Kwadi languages for which at least basic descriptions exist, i.e. Khwe (Kilian-Hatz 2003, 2008) and †Akhoe Hailom (Widlok 2016). In the three languages, the interjectional categories are highly diversified as far as their meaning and form are concerned, and the semantic interpretations of their members are heavily context-dependent. Syntactically, Khoe-Kwadi interjections may function as complete utterances; cannot be negated; and usually occupy a clause-initial position. Morphologically, they are invariable and simple. Phonologically, they may exhibit aberrant sounds and sound combinations. They are also strongly correlated with gestures. However, contrary to †Akhoe Hailom (Widlok 2016), the number of primary interjections in Tjwao is larger than that of secondary interjections derived from non-interjectional lexical classes/constructions through interjectionalization.

Our research not only confirms several propositions related to the synchronic structure of an interjectional category in Tjwao and in related languages – it also corroborates certain typological diachronic hypotheses. Most importantly, in agreement with observations made by typologists (Ameka 1992a, 2006; Nübling 2001, 2004; Stange and Nübling 2014; Stange 2016), interjections in Tjwao derive from three types of sources: (a) reflexes that yield primary interjections directly; (b) constructions that draw on other lexical classes and that through interjectionalization initially yield secondary interjections and, if the process continues, primary interjections; and (c) lexemes borrowed from other languages. These manners of the formation of interjections in Tjwao fully concord with the developmental processes identified in two other members of the Khoe-Kwadi linguistic family, i.e. Khwe (Kilian-Hatz 2003, 2008) and †Akhoe Hailom (Widlok 2016). Moreover, as far as the process of interjectionalization is concerned, in the three languages, secondary interjection typically draws on verbs, nouns, and pronouns. Overall, productive access to all the possible sources of interjections in Tjwao and Khoe-Kwadi validates the view that the category of interjections is open and relatively easily renewable (Ameka and Wilkins 2006: 2, 7; Norrick 2009: 889).

Lastly, our study provides further evidence for trends exhibited by interjections in other languages that have recently been noticed in scholarly literature. In particular, in Tjwao, the initial syllables of primary emotive interjections tend to either be onsetless or exhibit semi-vocalic onsets. That is, primary emotive interjections usually start with a vowel or a semi-vowel rather than with a genuine consonant. In this regard, Tjwao attests to a behaviour previously observed in Xhosa (Andrason and Dlali forthcoming) and Biblical Hebrew (Andrason et al. 2020). This behaviour is most likely related to the general vocalic nature of interjections (Nübling 2004: 24–5).

5. Conclusion

The present paper provided a systematic description of interjections in Tjwao, the first in scholarship thus far. The analysis of the original evidence within a prototype-driven approach demonstrates that in Tjwao: (a) the interjectional lexical class constitutes an internally diverse category confined between the canonical centre and a non-prototypical periphery; and (b) emotive primary interjections

exhibit the highest degree of canonicity and extra-systematicity, while the canonicity and extra-systematicity of secondary phatic interjections is the lowest. Overall, the research validates the utility of the prototype-driven model in studies on interjections, corroborating its synchronic and diachronic propositions.

Abbreviations

ADVZ – adverbializer; ANT – anterior; C – common gender; CAU – causative; COP – copula; DEM – demonstrative; EMPH – emphatic; F – feminine; FUT – future; IMP – imperative; INTENS – intensification/intensifier; INTJ – interjection; IPFV – imperfective; J – juncture; M – masculine; NEG – negator/negation; O – object; PN – proper noun; PRF – perfect; PROG – progressive; PST – past; Q – question marker; SG – singular, 1 – 1st person; 2 – 2nd person; 3 – 3rd person.

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