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MORPHOSYNTACTIC FEATURES OF INTERJECTIONS IN GERMAN COMIC BOOKS

INTRODUCTION

Interjections are units that appear mostly in spoken language (Ehlich 1986: 3; Nübling 2006: 604; Schwitalla 2003: 156). Although they have been discussed by different authors (Schaefer 2000: 310; Wundt 1904: 307–309), only recently have interjections begun to constitute an actual subject within linguistic studies. Many suggestions have been made towards understanding this category. Nevertheless, there still seems to be no agreement among linguists on how to define and classify interjections. The fundamental difficulty is to capture all the aspects that an interjection can reveal in one plausible definition. There is general acceptance that interjections are an uninflected part of speech, and that they represent simple lexical structures which do not relate syntactically to sentences. Questions remain as to whether interjections can compose complex phrases, sentence equivalents or even texts, and whether they have a meaning of their own or depend semantically on other utterances. Another issue concerns the functional aspect of interjections: do they exclusively express emotions, or can they have other pragmatic functions as well? The definition of interjections which includes most aspects of the category, given by Ameka (1992: 106), states that they can be defined as relatively conventionalised linguistic gestures which “express a speaker’s mental state, action or attitude or reaction to a situation”.

It has been claimed (Fries 1988b: 13–14; Schwitalla 2003: 156) that interjections are characteristic of text types whose function is to mimic

speech, such as comic books or drama. The objective of this article is to discuss the morphosyntactic features of interjections in selected German comic books. In contemporary German linguistics various classifications of interjections exist, covering the different properties of this category (Bednarczyk 2014: 83). One of the most comprehensive classifications is described in the *Duden Grammar* (Nübling 2006: 604–606). According to it, there are two main subclasses of interjections: simple and complex. This division is based on lexical characteristics. Sounds or sound combinations that cannot be classified as words are called simple interjections. Such interjections are further divided into prototypical interjections, which are used exclusively to express emotions, and appeal interjections, whose function is to influence a recipient's (re)action. The subclass of complex interjections includes lexical structures that equal words or phrases. Complex interjections are divided into parenthetic interjections and so-called *Inflektive*. Parenthetic interjections describe those units that function independently as parenthesis and yet at the same time have a relatively high level of expression, such as, for example, swearwords. *Inflektive* represent units composed of bare verb stems. The *Duden Grammar* classification includes various criteria, and distinguishes the *Inflektive* category, claimed to be typical for comic books (Nübling 2006: 606). Therefore, it was chosen as the basis for an analysis of the morphological and syntactic features of interjections.

CORPUS

The study is based on three German comic books: *Strand Safari* (2006) [Engl. *Beach safari*], *Die Band* (2008) [Engl. *The band*], and *Wir können ja Freunde bleiben* (2011) [Engl. *We can still be friends*], created by the comic author Markus Witzel, alias Mawil. These comic books have been chosen for the analysis for several reasons. Firstly, they contain numerous interjections of different kinds. Such a course may additionally be seen as characteristic of Mawil's works. Secondly, they were created and published after the year 2000, which means they provide examples of contemporary German. Thirdly, they contain both commonly used interjections and novel forms established for the purposes of a comic book as a text type.

For the purpose of the study 469 examples of interjections have been analysed. Prototypical interjections constituted 61% of the sample, appeal interjections 15%, parenthetical interjections 13%, and Inflektive 11%.

MORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES OF INTERJECTIONS

When it comes to morphological features of interjections, there is a general conviction among linguists that they are uninflected units, although there is no consensus as to whether interjections represent an autonomous, uninflected part of speech or should be classified as a subclass of other uninflected parts of speech such as, for example, particles (Burkhardt 1998: 43–73; Trabant 1983: 69–81). Ameka (1992: 106) observes: “Morphologically, interjections do not normally take inflections or derivations in those languages that make use of such forms”. According to this statement, there may occur interjections that do not interplay with the given characteristic. This especially applies to comic book interjections, which may take novel forms not used in other spoken or written text types. The complexity of grapheme combinations in some prototypical interjections is illustrated by the following examples of the development of their basic structures:

- (1) *argh* → *aargh* / *aaargh* / *aaarghhhh* / *arghl* / *hrrgh* / *huargh* / *huoargh* / *uaargh* / *uääargh* / *buäargh* / *buärghs*
- (2) *hgn* → *hgnh* / *hgnnnh* / *hhggnnh*
- (3) *hm* → *hmmm* / *hmja* / *mmmh* / *mmhnnn* / *gnaaahammmmmh*.

These examples present the ability of prototypical interjections to reduplicate vowels or consonants in different configurations, both progressive and regressive. What may also be observed is a tendency to add extra graphemes that do not occur in the basic structure. Such graphemes are usually placed in front of the developed form. However, there are some examples of extra graphemes following the basic form, as in *ii-iii* → *iiiiiiik*. Moreover, there is a possibility to convert the grapheme order, like, for example, *hmmm* → *mmmh*.

It is claimed (Fries 1988b: 5) that interjections often undergo such morphological changes as lengthening, doubling, and multiplication. The following examples present the ability of interjections to be elongated:

- (4) *aaaaaaaa*
 (5) *aah / aaah / aaaah / aaahhh / aaaaahh / aaaaaahhhh / ahh / ahhh*
 (6) *iiiiii / iik / iik / iiiiiik / iiiih*
 (7) *oooch / oooooch*
 (8) *puhhhh / puuh / puuuuuuh*
 (9) *uaah / uaaaah / uaahh / uahhhhh*

doubled:

- (10) *ksch ksch*
 (11) *oh oh*
 (12) *zack zack;*

and multiplied:

- (13) *aua auu auu*
 (14) *uiuiui.*

In the corpus chosen for the study there were 90 examples of elongated forms, 17 doubled, and 5 multiplied. Furthermore, there was one example of mixed word formation, including simultaneous lengthening and multiplication, i.e. *aaaaauauauauauauuuuu*.

The presented morphological modifications are used in comic books to reflect the aspects of spoken language. They indicate whether a character is speaking quietly or loudly, and how strong the emotional involvement in a situation is.

In terms of word formation some examples of compound forms of interjections can also be provided:

- (15) *hach*
 (16) *hmpf*
 (17) *ouah*
 (18) *ouuh.*

Interjections have a tendency to occur with other representatives of their own category, and not only as compound forms. The most common combination, observed in 19 examples, constitute prototypical and parenthetical interjections linked together in one phrase:

(19) *oh Gott! ach Gottchen!*

(20) *ah Mist!*

(21) *ouuuuh Scheisse! õh Scheisse!*

Another combination, observed in 3 examples, includes two prototypical interjections:

(22) *aaaaah aua aua aua.*

Many combinations, observed in 24 examples, can be derived from the parenthetic interjection *Mann*. In that case the most productive are, just as in the examples above, prototypical interjections:

(23) *oh Mann! ouh Mann! Mann ey!*

However, there are also examples of combinations of some other parenthetic interjections and *Mann*:

(24) *Mann fuck!*

(25) *Mann Scheisse!;*

as well as an utterance formed from both types:

(26) *ouh Mann Scheisse!*

Based on the given examples, prototypical interjections can be characterized as a subclass of the category that is prone to combine with other interjections, constituting new forms and utterances.

Interjections are not only combinable with other representatives of the same category. In the corpus, examples were provided for a combination of the prototypical interjection *ach* with the imperative form of the verb *kommen* in the utterance *ach komm!* Here it can be inferred from the context that the interjection corresponds to an appeal that is expressed by the imperative form of a verb. In this case the prototypical interjection is not the crucial part of the whole utterance, but it is used to alleviate the appeal.

THE INFLEKTIVE CATEGORY

The *Inflektive* constitute a special group among interjections with regard to their morphological and pragmatic features. In written text types

they are mostly, if not exclusively, used in comic books. For this reason the examples of this subclass of interjections are presented and discussed separately from the other representatives of the analysed category.

Similar to the other subclasses of interjections, the *Inflektive* have a tendency to lengthen:

(27) *kreiiiiisch*

(28) *pfeiff;*

and double:

(29) *hust hust*

(30) *kläf kläf*

(31) *kratz kratz*

(32) *räusper räusper.*

In the corpus there were 3 examples of an elongated *Inflektiv* and 9 doubled. An example can also be given of a doubled structure with a changed vowel, like for example *schnipp schnapp*. Other examples in the analysed corpus for the *Inflektive* category are forms such as: *gähm, grummel, klimper, klirr, raschel, schluck, seufz, spühl, sprüh*.

Having analysed these units one may suppose that the *Inflektive* have more in common with the onomatopoeia category, which is often not distinguished from the category of interjections (Schmauks 2004: 113–128). All the examples of the *Inflektive* found in the investigated comic books are used to mimic sounds, which is the essential feature of onomatopoeias and onomatopoeic words.

Also, characteristic of the *Inflektive* is a tendency to use units adapted from the English language, as in the examples:

(33) *crac* [Engl. crack]

(34) *crunch* [Engl. crunch]

(35) *klick* [Engl. click]

(36) *nock* [Engl. knock]

(37) *smack* [Engl. smack]

(38) *snif* [Engl. sniff].

SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF INTERJECTIONS

Several issues on the syntactic features of interjections have been widely discussed among specialists. First and foremost, it has been investigated whether interjections can occur as independent utterances (Ameka 1992: 101; Fries 1988a: 31; Świątkowska 2000: 72–76). It has been demonstrated that they are able to function independently from the verbal context (Grochowski 1988: 88), mostly in the form of one-word utterances (Ameka 1992: 107). However, they cannot build more complex phrases (Fries 1988b: 6). Moreover, many researchers attribute the status of sentence equivalence to interjections (Helbig and Buscha 2001: 424), meaning that these units can be classified at a syntactic level as independent utterances but they cannot be replaced by sentences (Ameka 1992: 101). The status of sentence equivalence is also treated as a distinguishing criterion between the category of interjections and the category of particles (Helbig and Buscha 2001: 424). According to this view, particles may be integrated within a sentence, while sentence equivalents do not provide such a possibility. An interjection and the subsequent sentence are linked together only through a semantic relation, not a syntactic one (Ameka 1992: 105–108).

The analysis of the study data has confirmed that most interjections, i.e. 62%, function independently from the verbal context. This independence is marked by the use of separate speech and thought bubbles which contain mostly one-word utterances. Furthermore, comic book interjections present an ability to define the context of a non-verbal situation. Usually, this applies to such interjections that are conventionalised within the language system, as well as in language usage (Wierzbicka 1991: 285–286), like, for example, *hatschi*, since using new forms could cause difficulties in the readers' comprehension of the illustrated situation. Fries (1988a: 27) takes note of the diversified abilities of interjections when considering their use in written and spoken language: "In *Comics* können Formen wie *la(la)*, *bsss*, *flüster*, *keuch*, *ächz*, *röchel* ebenfalls häufig nur als *Beschreibungen* nicht-verbaler Handlungen bzw. von Empfindungen usw. [z.B. *Singen*, *Summen*, *Angestrengtheit*, *Langeweile*] interpretiert werden". These abilities can differ with regard to both medium and text type (Fries 1988a: 28).

Many of the investigated interjections are sentence associated, which means that they do not constitute parts of such sentences, although they

create new semantic structures. A tendency can be observed whereby prototypical interjections are especially prone to form new relations with other utterances. They mostly precede an utterance. This occurred in 143 examples. In such cases the utterance usually follows after ellipsis, or an exclamation mark. However, there are examples in which the interjection and the following utterance are not separated by any punctuation mark:

(39) *Achja... die erste grosse Liebe...*

(40) *Eyy! Das war meins!*

(41) *Aaah das ist nur gerecht!*

The interjections that can be placed within another utterance structure are, for example, *äh*, *ähm* and *hm*. Such a tendency has been observed in 28 examples. These units function mostly as so-called pause fillers. On the one hand, this concerns situations in which a speaker does not want to relinquish his turn, but needs some time to rethink a new utterance. On the other hand, this concerns situations in which a speaker is searching for an appropriate expression in order not to offend his communication partner. In some examples interjections are placed in brackets. This can indicate either a difference between what a person is saying and thinking, without the necessity of introducing a separate thought bubble:

(42) *Ruhe dahinten – ich kann mich sonst nicht hörn! (Mann ist das grell hier)...;*

or a specification of accompanying circumstances, for example an indication that a speaker has hiccups:

(43) *Naja (schluck)... eine Eingeborene! ... äh... Lebst du auf dieser Insel?*

In 8 examples the interjection followed an utterance:

(44) *Wir können ja... Freunde... äh...*

(45) *Willst du Stress ham? Hä?*

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the morphological and syntactic features of interjections in selected German comic books demonstrates a wide range of

phenomena commented on and illustrated through various examples in the main body of this paper. Morphologically, comic book interjections display a tendency for lengthening, doubling, and multiplication. Such features reflect the aspects of spoken language and the intensity with which one can express oneself. The provided examples also reveal various grapheme combinations as well as compound forms of interjections. Furthermore, certain subclasses of interjections are prone to form novel and independent expressions with other representatives of the analysed class, while other subclasses do not display such a tendency. Based on the examples, it may be assumed that prototypical and parenthetical interjections are especially prone to form such utterances. The reason is that prototypical interjections mostly constitute one-word utterances, which enables them to effectively develop new relations in comparison with complex interjections that mostly do not fit either into the structure or the semantic value of the new utterance. When it comes to parenthetical interjections, the new forms allow one to indicate the subtleties of emotional expressions. In addition to which, parenthetical interjections may often be conjoined with prototypical ones.

Another subclass of interjections, discussed separately in this paper, are the *Inflektive*. In terms of morphology, they display complementary tendencies to the other subclasses of interjections. Beside these word-formation strategies, the *Inflektive* are mostly influenced by the English language. This category occurs almost exclusively in comic books and does not express emotional states, in contrast to the other subclasses of interjections. The *Inflektive* mimic speech similarly to onomatopoeias and onomatopoeic words. Because of the difference in pragmatic function, it may be assumed that the *Inflektive* category might be incorrectly classified as a subclass of interjections. Therefore, it would be highly recommended to analyse more examples of the *Inflektive* in order to verify this assumption.

Syntactically, interjections do not constitute a subordinate class of units, but contribute significantly to both the non-verbal and verbal aspects of a text. They either function as independent one-word utterances or precede an associated sentence. Some prototypical interjections may occur within a new utterance or follow it, although they relate to it only semantically.

In conclusion, it is to be emphasized that comic book interjections reveal a diversity of characteristics. They represent a category that is

morphologically and syntactically open to new forms of expression, as have been illustrated in the above examples.

CORPUS

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Summary

Interjections are units that occur mostly in spoken language. It has been claimed that these parts of speech are characteristic of text types whose function is to mimic speech, such as comic books. Having analysed selected German comic books, I discuss the morphological and syntactic features of interjections in this text type. I examine morphological phenomena: lengthening, doubling, and multiplication, as well as compositions of different subclasses of the investigated part of speech. Special focus in the analysis is placed on the *Inflektive* category, a term used in German linguistics, meaning bare verb stems, typical for comic books. Furthermore, I describe the syntactic features of interjections, considering their ability to function as independent utterances in comic books. In conclusion I demonstrate that certain subclasses of interjections are prone to form novel and independent expressions with other representatives of the analysed class, while other subclasses do not display such a tendency.

Key words: interjection, comic book, German language, *Inflektive*, morphology, syntax

CECHY MORFOSYNTAKTYCZNE NIEMIECKICH INTERIEKCJI KOMIKSOWYCH

Streszczenie

Interiekcje są jednostkami charakterystycznymi dla rodzajów tekstów, których funkcją jest naśladowanie języka mówionego, takich jak komiksy. Przedstawiony artykuł ma na celu dyskusję cech morfosyntaktycznych interiekcji w wybranych komiksach niemieckich. Omówione zostały zabiegi morfologiczne: wydłużenie, podwojenie, multiplikacja, oraz możliwości współwystępowania poszczególnych podklas prezentowanych jednostek. Szczególną uwagę poświęcono zagadnieniu tzw. „*Inflektive*”, czyli rdzeni czasowników pozbawionych końcówek fleksyjnych. Ponadto przedstawione zostały cechy syntaktyczne interiekcji komiksowych, z uwzględnieniem zdolności do funkcjonowania w roli samodzielnych wypowiedzi. Wykazano, że pewne podklasy interiekcji cechuje skłonność do tworzenia nowych, nieskonwencjonalizowanych w języku form, a także do współwystępowania z określonymi jednostkami innych podklas.

Słowa kluczowe: interiekcja, komiks, język niemiecki, *Inflektive*, morfologia, składnia