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Interjections in Kambaata

25. AFRIKANIST*INNENTAG „IM/MATERIELLES ERBE NEU KALIBRIERT“
LEIPZIG, 4-6 MAY, 2023

1. Introduction into interjections

DEFINITION, CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES, SEMANTIC TYPOLOGY

Seminal definition of interjection

- Wilkins (1992: 124):

“A conventional lexical form which (commonly and) conventionally constitutes an utterance on its own, (typically) does not enter into constructions with other word classes, is (usually) monomorphemic, and (generally) does not host inflectional or derivational morphemes.”

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- “conventional”, i.e. fixed (known/shared by the speaker community)
 - Largely arbitrary phonological/phonetic shape
 - However: Interjections are also frequently discussed in connection with phonosymbolism, e.g. English *shush/hush!*, French *chut*, German *psst / ssssch*, Kambaata *sá* (‘be quiet’)
 - Also often noted: Their phonological marginality, i.e. unusual phonemes, unusual phonotactic patterns, e.g. German *pst!* ‘Hey you!’

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- Syntactic autonomy
 - (Non-elliptic) utterances on their own, extracausal, separate intonation unit, syntactically peripheral
 - Often also means: do not have arguments or other dependents (but see Höder 2019 on interjections in Scandinavian languages and Kambaata further below)

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- Morphological invariance
 - At least from a synchronic perspective
 - Interjections may, of course, have developed from inflected elements; see, e.g., French *tiens!* (expression of surprise)

Indexicality

- Context-boundedness, situational relevance, indexicality
 - “[T]hey must be tied to the actual speech moment (...) before their complete interpretation (...) can be made. When I say “**Yippee!**” I am indexing *myself* and something (...) *here* which just *now* made me aware of some proposition which has made me feel excited and more happy (here and now), and so *I* say ‘[jipi:]’ in order to show how *I*’m feeling *right now*.” (Wilkins 1992: 132)

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- without hedges: primary interjections
- with hedges: secondary interjections

Primary vs. secondary interjections

- Interjections vs. interjectional phrases vs. formulae/routines
 - Ameka's (1992) = distinction between primary and secondary interjections; secondary interjections = forms belonging to other word classes, but conventionally occurring by themselves as one-word utterances expressing a mental attitude/state, e.g. *Heavens! Damn!*
 - Ameka's "interjectional phrases" = multi-word, e.g. *Dear me! My Goodness!*
 - Ameka's "formulae/routines" = conventionalized prepatterned utterances in standard communication situations, e.g. *thank you* [not clearly distinguishable from interjectional phrases]

Semantic typology

- Ameka (1992)'s semantic typology of interjections: classification based on communicative function
 - Expressive (symptoms of the speaker's mental, emotional state)
 - Emotive, e.g. *Yuk!* (Disgust), *Wow!* (Surprise), *Ouch!* (Pain)
 - Cognitive, e.g. *aha!* (Understanding)
 - Conative (directed at the listener, expression of a speaker's wish),
 - Getting s.o.'s attention, e.g. German *Pst!*
 - Demanding action or response, e.g. *sh!* 'Be quiet!'
 - Phatic (establishment and maintenance of contact), e.g. *uh-huh* (backchanneling)

Semantic typology: Revisions and additions

- Ponsonnet (forthc.) adds 2 new categories with relevance in Australian languages
 - Constative (speaker describing a situation that they face), e.g. ‘there it comes’
 - Social (softening of interactions), e.g. for greetings, thanks, apologies
- Levisen (2019) adds the category of laughter interjections
- Heine (2023) in his *Grammar of Interactives* reshuffles the typology of interjections a bit
 - e.g. He takes “attention signals” (*hey!*) and “response signals” (*yes, no*) out of interjections.

Interjections in grammars

- Interjections have long been marginal words:

“It has been common to treat interjections as peripheral to the ‘real’ concerns of linguistics. Indeed, it has even been common to treat interjections as though they were outside of the concerns of linguistics altogether: placed, so to speak, into the wastebasket labelled ‘paralinguistic phenomena’.” (Wilkins 1992: 119f.)

- See also the summary on interjections in the history of linguistics in Ameka (1992) and Ashdown (2008) on the emergence of the category of interjections in ancient theories of grammar
- But: steep increase of works on interjections crosslinguistically and in individual lgs. in the past years, see,
 - esp. Dingemanse et al. 2013 on *Huh?* as a universal word, Dingemanse forthc. etc.
 - e.g. Andrason 2019-2023 on interjections in Hadza, Polish, Xhosa, Tjwao (Khoe), Maasai, New Testament Greek, Biblical Aramaic, Biblical Hebrew, Ugaritic, ...
 - ...

Interjections in grammars

- Interjections are hardly ever treated in grammatical descriptions; see, e.g., the grammaticographical study by Lahaussais (2016) on Kiranti languages, ‘Where have all the interjections gone?’
 - 2/12 grammars have a dedicated interjection section
 - 1/12 grammar mentions interjections but no in a separate section
 - 6/12 grammars mention interjections only in their list of abbreviations
 - 3/12 grammars do not mention interjections at all

Interjections in grammars

- cursory overview of interjections in Highland East Cushitic grammars (8 languages, 7 with grammars or grammar sketches)
 - Dedicated section: K'abeena (Crass 2005)
 - Brief dedicated section:
 - Sidaama [but: interjections in DIC]
 - Gedeo [but: interjections in DIC]
 - Kambaata
 - No info at all (no hit for INTJ, interjection, expressive, etc.):
 - Hadiyya, Alaaba, Burji
- Most recently published, comprehensive grammar of an East Cushitic language, Gawwada (Tosco 2021), no mention of interjections

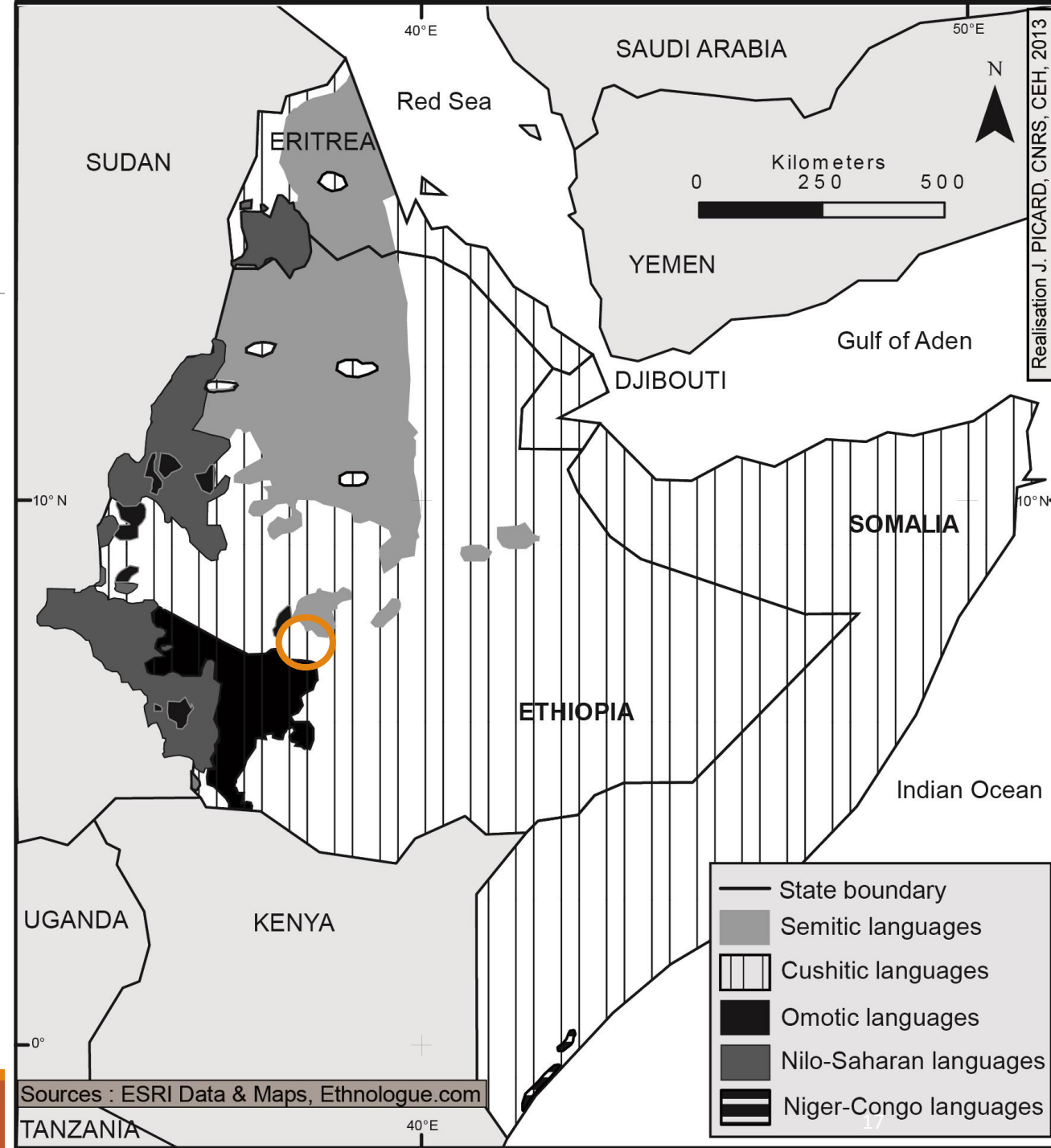
2. Case study: Kambaata

2.1. Introduction Kambaata

INFLECTING VS. NON-INFLECTING WORD CLASSES

Speaker area

- Classification:
Cushitic > East Cushitic ... >
Highland East Cushitic
- Number of speakers: > 600,000
(acc. to 2007 census)



Sources : ESRI Data & Maps, Ethnologue.com

TANZANIA

40°E

40°E

50°E

10°N

10°N

0°

Inflecting word classes

- Kambaata is (almost) exclusively suffixing, rich in nominal and verbal inflectional and derivational morphology, morphological stress
 - Nouns: 2 genders, 9 cases, ~20 inflection classes (declensions)
 - Adjectives: 2 genders, 3 cases, agreeing with the head noun
 - Pronouns: person, number, gender, honorificity, case
 - Verbs: subject-indexing, aspect, mood, polarity, dependency status (main verb vs. converb vs. relative verb), etc.

Uninflecting word classes

- Some discourse particles
- 2 conjunctions: *té* ‘or’ and *bagáan* ‘but’
- A handful of adverbs: *léelan* ‘carefully, slowly’, *dángo* ‘unexpectedly’ ...
- Large word class of ideophones

Uninflecting word classes

- Ideophones (~ 850 entries in Alemu 2016):
 - morphologically invariant + must be combined with the light verb *y-* ‘say’ (intransitive clauses) and *a’-* ‘do’ (transitive clauses) to be inflected

mikk.mill=*y-itu’nmáachch* *címm*=*y-ít*
budge.IDEO=say-3F.NEG4.CVB shrink.IDEO=say-3F.PFV.CVB

afuu’ll-ít, *ill-í-se* *al-í,* *muggeem-á,*
sit_down-3F.PFV.CVB eye-F.ACC-3F.POSS up-M.ACC down-M.ACC

gur-áta, *makk-íta* *bolóng~bolóng*=*at-táa’*,
left-F.ACC right-F.ACC RED~move_one’s_eyes.IDEO=DO-3F.IPFV

tah-íchch-u *waal-anó=g-a* *zug-gán.*
flies-SGV-M.NOM come-3F.IPFV.REL=SIM-M.ACC lie_in_ambush-3F.PFV.CVB

(Speaking about a chameleon:) ‘It (lit. she) sat (there) stock-still, shrunk, (and only) moved its eyes up, down, to the left, to the right, (while) lying in ambush for a fly.’ (TD2016-02-11_001)

Uninflecting word classes

- Some discourse particles
- 2 conjunctions: *té* ‘or’ and *bagáan* ‘but’
- A handful of adverbs: *léelan* ‘carefully, slowly’, *dángo* ‘unexpectedly’ ...
- Ideophones
- **Interjections**

Uninflecting word classes

- Interjections, e.g. *hashshú* ‘I am happy for you/I am happy because of you.’

Hashshú, *góon-ch-u-ta*,

abb-íshsh

galaxx-áan-ke.

yay.INTJ males-SGV-F.PRED-F.COP2 exceed-CAUS1.1SG.PFV.CVB thank-1SG.IPFV-2SG.OBJ

‘Yay, you are a hero! I thank you very much.’ (SMS exchange 2019, BN)

2.2. Interjections as a word class

DEFINING CRITERIA, CATEGORIZATION DIFFICULTIES

Interjections as a word class

- Morphosyntactic criteria
 - Morphologically invariant, can constitute a non-elliptic utterance on their own (unlike discourse particles), do not occur with light verbs (unlike ideophones)
 - Non-morphological/lexically determined stress (like other morphologically invariant word classes, esp. ideophones)

áayye [grief], *hoogé* [sorrow, grief, anger],
hóola [appreciation for achievement], *allaasá* [acknowledgement of baby's burp]

Difficulties of categorization

- Difficulties of categorization not very frequent, but:
 - Where can the fine line between interjections and ideophones be drawn? Boundary is slightly permeable.
 - Where do interjections end and where do verbs begin? (See imperative-only verbs and conative interjections.)

Interjections vs. ideophones

- At first sight, ideophones and interjections are easily distinguishable
- Ideophones differ from interjections in that they (generally) require a light verb – except sometimes in artistic speech: riddles, poetry (known for their brevity)

(4) *Cuph-á* *dúbb,* *can-á* *wiqq*
pestle-M.ACC pound.IDEO leather_bag-M.ACC tie_tightly.IDEO

(Riddle) ‘A pestle – to pound, a leather bag (filled with air) – to tie up.’ (Desalegn 2020: 111; transcription, glossing and translation adapted; solution of the riddle unknown)

However: considered elliptic by native speakers

Interjections > ideophones

- Interjections seem to be able to turn into ideophones
- Boundary between quoted interjections and ideophones is slightly permeable
 - *hánda* ‘(I/we/someone/it are/is well,) thanks to God’ (no other addressee possible)
 - In exchanges about one’s (physical, psychological, economical) well-being, *hánda* constitutes an utterance of its own

[A:] *Wées-it* *iill-ítee-ndo?*
enset-F.NOM reach-3F.PRF-Q

[B:] ***Hánda*** (*isí*) *iill-ítee’u*
thanks_to_God.INTJ 3M.IDAT reach-3F.PRF

[A:] ‘Are the enset (plants) ready (to be harvested)?’ – [B:] ‘Thanks to God, they are ready.’

(Field notes 2023, DWD)

Interjections > ideophones

- Interjection: *hánda* + *y-* ‘say’ = ‘say “Thanks to God”’
- Ideophone: *hánda=y-* ‘say’ = light verb construction, semantic broadening, ‘be thankful, be grateful; be content; be gratifying’

(2) *Hánda=y-í* *gáll-ee-haa*
be_grateful.IDEO = say-3M.PFV.CVB pass_the_night-3M.PRF.REL-M.COP2
(Speaking about someone’s attitude/character) ‘He is (someone) who is content (with his life, with what he has)/he is a positive person.’ (Field notes 2023, DWD)

(3) *Habank-á* *ichchí-i* *hánda=y-áano-ba’a*
how_much-M.ACC eat.3M.PFV.CVB-ADD be_grateful.IDEO = say-3M.IPFV-NEG1
(Speaking about a cow with a bad feed conversion ratio) ‘No matter how much it eats, it is not gratifying.’ (Field notes 2022, DWD)

Imperativa tantum vs. interjections

- From all verbal roots an imperative form can be formed
- 5 “special” imperatives only inflected for 2SG and 2PL
 - immediate situational relevance (recall interjections!)
 - can govern DO but cannot combine with anything else, e.g. not together with temporal adverbials
- *ám*-[ⁱ] (s) – *ammé* (p), often *kabá ám*-[ⁱ] (s) – *ammé* (p) ‘Come here (for an instant)!’
- *ī* (s) – *iyyé* (p) ‘Take (what I have in my hands)!’
- *mée* (s) – *meeyé* (p) ‘Give (to me what you have in your hands, with you)!’
- *ashshám*-[ⁱ] (s) – *ashshammé* (p) (Greeting to people working) ‘Keep up the spirit!’ (French: Bon courage!)
- *kárag*-[ⁱ] (s) – *káragge* (p) ‘Listen up, pay attention!’

Animal-directed communication

- Animal-directed communication: morphologically invariant forms (incomplete list)

‘come’

- *lúk-lúk-lúk* (for hens)
- *hurrú / húrr / azúrr* (for cats)
- *tí-tí-tí* (for dogs)
- *chí-chí-chí* (for sheep and goats)
- *síbu-síbu* (for small goats)
- *kulúl-kulúl* (for donkeys)
- *émba-émba* (for calves)
- *mác* (for mule)
- *hóq* (for horse, mule)
- *múu* (for wild animal e.g. hyena, leopard)

other animal directed imperatives

- *sú* ‘catch’ (for dog)
- *háa* ‘stay calm’ (for cattle)
- *ushshá* ‘stop’ (for donkey)

‘go’

- *hág* (for donkeys)
- *ár ~ síb* (for sheep, goats)
- *síf ~ sík* (for small goat)
- *chif* (for cats)
- *kút* (for chicken)
- *tá* (for cows)
- *bórt* (for bulls)
- *tích* (for calves)
- *bót* (for young bulls)
- *ách* (for big cattle)
- *tulum* (for heifer)
- *hirká* ‘go into the cattle pen’ (for cattle)
- *fúl* (for dogs, out of the house), *píy* (away)
- *púy* (for wild animal)
- *zúr* (for horse, mule)
- *chái* (for mule)

2.3. Syntax of interjections

Syntax of interjections

- Some interjections can govern dative, accusative, vocative arguments
- Some interjections take pronominal objects (e.g. 2SG.OBJ) that are otherwise found on verbs

	Case of “argument”	
<i>áayye ~ aayyé</i>	+ VOC or DAT + <i>áayye áte</i> (2sVOC) ‘Poor you’	Pain, regret, sorrow, grief
<i>hashshú</i>	+ VOC <i>hashshú áne</i> (1sVOC) ‘I am happy (for you, for someone else)’	Congratulation
<i>háy</i>	+ VOC <i>háy áne</i> (1sVOC) ‘Poor me’	Regret
<i>hayyá</i>	+ ACC <i>hayyá baajaamita</i> (fACC) ‘Bravo (to) the girl!’	Blessing, praise
<i>hechchó</i>	+ DAT <i>hechchó kesáa</i> (2sDAT) ~ <i>heechchó-he</i> (-2sO) ‘(I) bow to you’	Submission
<i>hoogé</i>	+ VOC <i>hoogé áne</i> (1sVOC) ‘I am sorry (for a loss of s.th/s.o.)’	Sorrow
<i>hóola</i>	+ DAT <i>hóola kesáa</i> (2sDAT) ~ <i>hóola-he</i> (-2sO) ‘You surprise me!’ <i>hóola Maganii</i> (mDAT) ‘God surprises me!’	Surprise
<i>shiinch</i>	ACC + <i>baxará</i> (mACC) <i>shiinsh!</i> ‘Let the smallpox stay away!’	Defense

Syntax of interjections

- Interjection with an accusative complement

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yay.INTJ males-SGV-F.PRED-F.COP2 exceed-CAUS1.1SG.PFV.CVB thank-1SG.IPFV-2SG.OBJ

Y-itoontí=r-a *gu'mm-ánka* *ekkú!*
say-2SG.PFV.REL=NMZ4-M.ACC all-M.ACC<EMP> okay.INTJ

‘Yay, you are a hero! I thank you very much. Okay to all what you said.’ (SMS exchange 2019, BN)

2.4. Summary

Summary

- Kambaata interjections
 - are conventional lexical forms
 - conventionally constitute non-elliptical utterances on their own
 - are monomorphemic
 - have lexically determined stress
 - are usually morphologically invariant
 - [noteworthy:] some can host object morphemes and govern arguments

Research context

- Opération du LabEx Empirical Foundations of Grammar 2020-2024 *Ideophones and Interjections* (YT & Aimée Lahaussais)



- In preparation: Special issue on ideophones (*Linguistic Typology at the Crossroads*)
- Work in progress: Workshop and special issue on the semantic typology of interjections (dir. Maïa Ponsonnet, with Aimée Lahaussais & YT)

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative	NOM	nominative
ADD	additive	OBJ	object
CAUS	causative	PFV	perfective
COP	copula	POSS	possessive
CVB	converb	PRED	predicative
DAT	dative	PRF	perfect
EMP	emphatic	Q	question
F	feminine	RED	reduplication
IDEO	ideophone	REL	relative
INTJ	interjection	SG	singular
IPFV	imperfective	SGV	singulative
M	masculine	SIM	similative
NEG	negator	VOC	vocative
NMZ	nominalizer		

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