Towards a typology of expressive interjections: a modular approach

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The goal of this talk is to present a possible avenue for exploring the expressive dimension based on the core tenets of the grammar of interactional language (henceforth i-language; Wiltschko 2021; Heine 2023). i-language has all the hallmarks of use-conditional meaning, but it falls into several distinct categories. Specifically, i-language serves to relate the propositional content to the interactant's epistemic state (Speaker's Ground and Addressee's Ground), as well as regulating turn-management (RespP). Individual **U**nits **of L**anguage (UoL) may acquire the functions of these categories by associating with them. Hence, there is no one-to-one correlation between a given UoL and its semantic interpretation. Rather the form-meaning relation is mediated by syntactic structure. As a result, a given UoL, such as an **E**xpressive **I**nterjection (EI), may be **poly-functional** (it can have more than one function, independent of its context of use) and/or **multi-functional** (it can have different functions depending on its context of use). On this view, epistemic and interactional aspects of EIs are regulated (and thus affected) by grammar, whereas emotive meaning is not (Wiltschko 2024). Instead, emotive meaning resides within the lexical content of a given UoL (and its prosodic modifications). This modular view on the dimensions of meaning makes testable predictions regarding the range and limits of variation in EIs: **(i)** Interactional but not emotive meaning is subject to distributional constraints; **(ii)** Interactional, but not emotive meaning may lead to multi-functionality; **(iii)** The range of variation in interactional meaning is constrained by grammatical configuration; emotive meaning is only lexically constrained; **(iv)** UoLs with emotive meaning can associate with interactional categories, thus deriving the potential for poly-functionality in EIs. To test these predictions, we use a mixed methodology consisting of qualitative analyses of interactional corpus data and results of conversation-board elicitation tasks (Burton & Mathewson 2015) applied to expressive forms in American English, Austrian German, and Chilean Spanish. With this work, we aim to shed light on the following matters: the multi- and poly-functionality of understudied expressive forms that play a key role in communication; the universalities in the functions performed by expressive forms; and the language-specific patterns of expressive items of a given system.

References: • Burton, S., & Matthewson, L. (2015). Targeted construction storyboards in semantic fieldwork. *Methodologies in semantic fieldwork*, 135-156. • Heine, B. (2023). The grammar of interactives. Oxford University Press. • Wiltschko,M. (2021). *The grammar of interactional language*. Cambridge University Press. • Wiltschko, M. (2024). Emotions do not enter grammar because they are constructed (by grammar). *Language Under Discussion*, *7*(1), 1-62.