An Analysis of Turkish Interjections in the Context of Reactive Idea Framing*

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Özet

Bu çalışma, Türkçe ünlemlerin farklı edimsel işlevlerini *tepkisel düşünce çerçeveleme* (reactive idea framing) olarak adlandırılan bilişsel bir sürece bağlayarak açıklamaktadır. Bir ünlemin farklı edimsel işlevlere sahip olması konuşmanın geçtiği durumsal bağlamdan çok, bilişsel süreçlerin özelliğinden kaynaklanan bir olgudur. Buna göre, dinleyen, konuşanın iletisine bağlı olarak bilişsel düzlemde bir düşünce çerçevelemekte, çerçevelemenin türüne göre ünleme yüklenen edimsel işlev önce bu düzlemde belirlenmektedir. Her ünlem o kültürü bağlayan edimsel anlamı içinde bir dizi örtük önermeler içerir. Ünlemle birlikte iletilen bu önermeler aynı kültürü paylaşan diğer konuşmacı tarafından yorumlandığında verilen yanıt konuşma bağlamının yönünü kaçınılmaz olarak etkilemektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: ünlem, edimsel işlev, tepkisel düşünce çerçeveleme, önerme, konuşma bağlamı.

Abstract

This study explains different pragmatic functions of Turkish interjections on the basis of a cognitive process called *reactive idea framing*. An interjection's possessing a variety of pragmatic functions is possible not because of the situational context, but because of the cognitive processes in the mind of the utterer. Thus, depending on the speaker's message, the listener develops an idea framing and according to the type of this framing, a certain pragmatic function to be attributed to an interjection is determined first at the mental level. Every interjection poses a number of implicit propositions in its culture-specific pragmatic function. When such propositions transmitted via the interjection are interpreted by the other party as intended, the given response will inevitably affect the direction of the speech context.

Key words: interjection, pragmatic function, reactive idea framing, proposition, speech context.

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1. Introduction:

Interjections, as in many other languages, are widely used also in Turkish and they perform significant functions, particularly in oral communication. Although linguistic studies carried out on other languages have attributed considerable importance to interjections, detailed analyses of these forms have remained rather peripheral to the other concerns of Turkish linguistics. In most books written on Turkish grammar, interjections are explained rather briefly and defined as emotive words or words of sudden remark. They are generally explained on the basis of their morphological and semantic properties (see Lewis, 1967; Underhill, 1976; Ergin, 1981; Gencan, 1983; Banguoğlu, 1986; Koç, 1990; Kornflit, 1997). In various linguistic studies on Turkish, some examples of interjections are referred to while investigating discourse markers, yet they are not treated with a purpose of interjection analysis. Among limited number of detailed studies investigating the properties of Turkish interjections, Akar (1988) focuses on their syntactic functions. She classifies them according to their positions in a sentence as initial interjections and final interjections, and then, regarding the dependency conditions, she distinguishes between dependent and interdependent interjections, also discussing the constraints on their occurences. Külebi (1990) provides a classification of Turkish interjections according to different intentions and emotive functions, emphasizing that the exact meaning of an interjection is hard to gloss unless contextual clues are available. Dağdeviren (2003), on the other hand, examines natural data to find out what different pragmatic functions the same interjections fulfill in different contexts. Nevertheless, a variety of interjections in Turkish, either as a class or as single examples, still pose for research at various levels.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the understanding of Turkish interjections from a different perspective. It aims to mediate the listener's cognitive processes and the pragmatic functions of the interjections used in response to a statement. In particular, the paper discusses why most Turkish interjections are pragmatically multi-faceted and thus why they form a category actually hard to classify semantically.
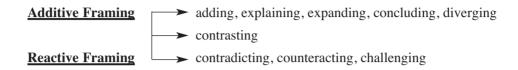
A single interjection may fulfill different pragmatic functions in Turkish. For example, *yaa !* may impart an attitude of surprise, anger, boredom, objection, disbelief, negligence, etc. Such variety of functions is possible not only because of the assigned phonological properties or the context in which communication occurs, but also because of the role of the user's cognition in communication. The hypothesis of the study is that the person who uses an interjection assigns it a certain semantic value due to his "judgement or evaluation or comment on the quality, or truthfulness, or validity of the propositional content" (Bee Tin, 2000: 231) of the previous speaker's utterance. In other

words, the listener's idea generated with reference to the utterance of the speaker determines the meaning of a certain interjection to be used in response. Different pragmatic functions of the same interjection are realized usually by assigning it changing phonological patterns. Where a certain form of interjection has more than a single meaning, the listener's judgement on the earlier proposition has a determining role on with what semantic function that interjection will be used. As communication is an ongoing process, depending on the meaning of the interjection used, the other party responses accordingly. In this paper, referring to the use of a limited number of Turkish interjections as examples, it will be explained how the flow of conversation or the response after the uttered interjection changes. In other words, the listener's judgement also affects the developing discoursal context in conversation.. For this reason, it would not be wrong to treat interjections as context-builders.

Part of the theoretical framework of this paper is based on Tan Bee Tin's study on multi-dimensionality of idea framing (2000). Although her study investigates the patterns of group interaction from an educational point of view, the two major types of idea framing - additive and reactive idea framing- and their sub-categories developed by the writer are applicable to various other issues including the analysis of interjections. For this reason, giving a brief account of her definitions and classification would be helpful before I continue with interjections.

2. Linking and Framing Ideas : Additive and Reactive Framing Patterns

A verbal interaction is a series of ideas or propositions linked to each other. With reference to earlier works such as those of Bakhtin (1986) and Lotman (1988), Bee Tin (2000) mentions that "linking" ideas is an essential component of constructing knowledge in which both reflecting on old ideas and generating new ideas are involved. If there is an idea uttered, this idea not only conveys information, but also generates other ideas, stimulating the thinking process (p. 225). In other words, any utterance has a potential of generating new ideas in the listener's mind, implying the"independence"of the listener's thinking process. While "linking" implies one's backward and forward type of thinking process, according to Bee Tin, a series of links between ideas needs to be called "framing", because the term is more broader than "linking" and indicates a series of both retrospective and prospective associations between ideas. Thus, the term "framing" proposed by the writer involves the flow of ideas in a more expanded context. Bee Tin identifies two major types of idea framing each of which has its sub-categories as shown in the figure below (p.231) :

Additive Framing ———→ adding, explaining, expanding, concluding, diverging

———→ contrasting

Reactive Framing ———→ contradicting, counteracting, challenging

The above classification, first, distinguishes between the additive idea framing, which means "the second idea is an addition to the first idea *without* judgement or evaluation or comment on the quality, or truthfulness, or validity of the propositional content of the first idea"(p.231) and the reactive idea framing, which means "an addition to the first idea *with* the speaker's judgement or evaluation on the truthfulness, validity or value of the first idea"(p.235). Each category, then, is sub-divided into further categories different from each other in various ways.

Among the sub-categories of additive framing, *adding* means a similar idea in additon to the first idea or ideas. Bee Tin mentions that cognitively adding is not a complex process as it follows a similar pattern of thinking also observed in the use of similar patterns of lexical and syntactic devices. For example, when a speaker's utterance such as " You like that politician" is followed by the other's utterance such as "I agree with what he says", the second idea is an "adding" to the preceding one. *Explaining*, on the other hand, paraphrases the first idea generally by the syntactic markers such as 'because', 'I mean...' or 'so', and there is either a causal or a temporal relationship between ideas. For example, when the same utterance of the first speaker above is followed by a remark such as "I do, because he provides radical solutions for inflation", the second idea provides a causal relationship with the first idea by giving a reason. *Expanding*, which is another form of additive idea framing, elaborates the first idea through the addition of specific information, which employs lexical (a general-specific link) or syntactic (a change of tenses) links. For example, one's saying something like " I guess X party will win in the elections" may be followed by an expanding remark such as " Well, a lot many people are getting anti-racist". In such a case, the second idea, which illustrates a change of verb form as well, links between winning the elections and anti-racism by elaborating the preceding proposition. *Concluding* is an addition of a generalised idea to the first one realised by the lexical items such as "so", "then". As a response to an utterance such as "I am afraid of travelling alone", one's saying "Oh, then, you always have a company" is a concluding addition to the first idea. Finally, *diverging* adds a different idea to the first one, still supporting the content of it. My example again here is an utterance such as " It is terribly cold this morning", followed by a diverging, yet still additive type of idea framing observed in a response such as "It was clever of me to wear my coat as I left home". As can be noted in the figure, the writer places *contrasting* between additive framing and

reactive framing, explaining that it may either affect or not affect the validity of the preceding idea (pp. 231, 236).

BeeTin's explanation of the reactive framing (pp. 235-237) involves four sub-categories as mentioned. *Contradicting* is one way of reactive idea framing, explaining that the first idea is neither valid nor true. My example for this is a student's utterance such as "I hope the teacher helps me with the passing grade", followed by a contradicting response such as "You can't rely on the teacher. Can you? You should have studied harder". The lexical or syntactic link betwen the two ideas is of negation or contradiction. *Counteracting* proposes an opposite link and reduces the validity of the first idea mentioning that under certain other conditions the first idea may not be valid at all. For example, again a student's utterance such as " The teachers cannot see how long I studied for the midterms" can be responded by a counteracting utterance such as "Well, but they watch your performance throughout the semester and they read papers carefully". The response counteracts with the first idea, implying its validity does not apply in the mentioned environment. *Challenging,* on the other hand, is usually in the form of a question, which challenges the validity of the first idea. We can think of someone saying " I have put on too much weight since last month", and the listener challenges the remark saying, "Did you have to eat up all that high-calorie stuff at parties ?". The idea framing of the listener here is a reaction, though in the form of a challenging question. *Evaluating* explains a comment that judges or evaluates the first idea from the speaker's point of view (pp.235-237). It can be in the form that expresses the listener's agreement or disagreement. If the listener's idea framing is reactive, then the response will be in the form of a disagreeing evaluation, generally employing one or more adjectives. For example, someone says, " I think from now on I can sit back and relax". A reactive evaluation could be "That 's nonsense". Finally, *contrasting*, which can be both an additive or reactive link to the preceding idea, may or may not affect the validity of it. The listener tries to show both sides of the coin by his response. If the response means to convey a reaction, syntactic links such as "but", "anyway",etc. can be used. For example, a student says, "When you make a presentation before the group, I mean, you can't go back and correct your mistakes; you are not even aware of them as you speak. Once it is over, it is over". Another student can make a reactive link in the form of contrasting and can say something like, "But, I consider presentations as an advantage for displaying our live performance, especially in crowded groups where you can't always get a chance to speak".

3. Analysing Turkish Interjections in the Context of Reactive Idea Framing

When interjections in Turkish are concerned, my long-term observations as a native

speaker have led me to the consideration that Turkish speakers tend to employ limited number of interjections in formal settings, and when they do, the interjections used generally have an additive link to the previous idea. The interjectional response of the speaker in a formal setting usually adds, expands or explains the idea of the first speaker, showing that there is no doubt about the truthfulness or the validity of the idea conveyed. Such a retrospective link is observed in the examples such as *yaa* (okay)*, doğru!* (true)*, kesinlikle!* (certainly)*, mutlaka!* (definitely), *şüphesiz !* (there is no doubt)*,* etc., which display only a single pragmatic function. When the degree of formality is higher and even if the speaker does not agree with the preceding idea, the expression of a change in the direction of thinking employs few or no interjections at all. Instead, speakers mostly prefer using full sentence constructions or phrases such as *sizinle aynı görüşü paylaşmıyorum* (I don't agree with you), *söylediğiniz gerçekten şaşırtıcı* (what you say is really surprising), *söylediğinizin doğruluğu konusunda şüpheliyim* (I have doubts about the validity of your idea). My observation has also been that as the degree of formality decreases from formal to informal or to casual, the frequency of using interjections increases in Turkish conversations. For this reason, I have particularly focused on the interjections used in informal contexts, as they are quite rich in number and they range from the socially appropriate ones to the extreme examples of slang. My next observation has been that the interjections used in informal contexts mostly display ways of reactive idea framing, expressing the speaker's judgement or evaluation and affecting the content of the previous idea.

Table 1 displays the Reactive Idea Framing patterns, possible states or acts, propositional contents and types of interjections for the accompanying examples. It is possible to say that almost all informal Turkish interjections conform with one of these reactive idea patterns. When interjections are classified according to the mental state of the speaker, they can be classified on the basis of the nature of the state or act. Such a classification distinguishes three types : (a) *emotive interjections* (which involve the propositional component ' I feel something') ; (b) *volitive interjections* (which involve the component ' I want something'); and, (c) *cognitive interjections* (which involve the component ' I think something' or ' I know something') (Wierzbicka !992 : 165). The fifth column in Table 1 illustrates that depending on the idea framing of the listener, any of the given examples may fall into one of these three categories. For this reason, I especially avoided drawing delimiting horizontal lines in the third, the fourth, and the fifth columns. Due to the close semantic links between different types of interjections, any classification in Turkish may not be adhered very strictly. In particular cases, a cognitive interjection may have a homophonous emotive one. If different interjections in Turkish were individually analysed and compared , one would certainly come up with changing semantic formulae and pragmatic functions.

Table 1 : Interjections in Reactive Idea Framing

REACTIVE IDEA FRAMING TYPE	FUNCTION	STATE OR ACT	PROPOSITIONAL CONTENT	TYPE OF INTERJECTION	EXAMPLES
contradicting	indicating that the first idea is not true	objection disbelief invalidation putting doubts surprise warning regret dislike disagreement teasing fear impatience etc.	I think... I don't think... I doubt.... I say.... I feel that...	cognitive emotive volitive	-*hadi be !* -*atma!* -*yeme bizi!* -*olmadı!...*
counteracting	reducing the validity of the first idea				-*yok deve !* -*devenin nalı!* -*imkansız !* -*saçmalama!....*
challenging	questioning the validity of the first idea				-*ciddi misin ?* -*ne diyorsun ?* -*yemin et !* -*valla mı? ....*
evaluating	evaluating the quality or the validity of the first idea				- *olacak şey değil* -*müthiş !* -*yazık !* - *inanılmaz!...*
contrasting	adding an opposite or different idea to the first one				- *bilakis !* - *hiç bile !*

Within the limits of this paper, using three different examples of interjections, I will illustrate how different forms of the listener's idea framing assigns an interjection a certain pragmatic function and how the discoursal context is accordingly structured.

4. Analyses of Examples

4.1. Example 1 : *aman/ aman (da) aman !*

This expresion may be glossed either as a positive or negative reaction to an act or an idea. When it is used as an evaluative comment to the first idea as in Dialogue (1)a, the listener's positive judgment upgrades the value of the first idea. In this sense, the proposition involved is something like " *I think, it is great"*. The lengthening of the second vowel and the rising intonation of the expression leads to an act of appreciation. The idea framing is not one of negative reactions, but has an additive function that supports the previous idea.

Dialogue (1)a   A- Bu elbiseyi ben diktim. Herkes çok beğendi. Nasıl olmuş ?
                      (I made this dress. Eveybody loved it. How do you like it ?)
          B- Amaan ! / Aman da aman ! (...Pek güzel olmuş) (It's great!
          A- Teşekkür ederim (Thank you) .

For the interjection used in the dialogue, the following propositional explication can be proposed:

I know this : you made the dress
I feel something good : your dress looks good
I think you feel the same.
I want to show how I feel.

The interpretation of the interjection in this way is due to the given explication, which derives from the listener's additive idea framing to the previous idea. For this reason, speaker A's interpretation of the semantic explication leads him/her to thank in response.

Dialogue (1) b   A- Bu elbiseyi ben diktim. Herkes çok beğendi. Nasıl olmuş ?
                      (I made this dress. Eveybody loved it. How do you like it ?)
                  B- *Amaan !*
                  A- Neden beğenmedin ? (Why don't you like it ?)

In dialogue (1)b, speaker B utters the same interjection upon his reactive idea framing. But the falling intonation pattern and the lengthening of the second vowel assigned to the interjection this time indicates a state of dislike or an uninterested manner.The proposition involved is "*I think it is bad*" or "*I don't damn care for it*".

The response may be phrased as follows :

I know you say something.
I feel something : your dress does not look good.
I don't feel as you feel.
I want to show you how I feel.

Having interpreted this semantic explication correctly, this time the response of A is not a "thank you", but a question asking about the reason for A's dislike.

Dialogue (1) c   A- Bu elbiseyi ben diktim. Herkes çok beğendi. Nasıl olmuş ?
                      (I made this dress. Eveybody loved it. How do you like it ?)
                  B- Aman !
                  A- İnan ki ben diktim ! (Believe me, I made it !)

In the third version of the same dialogue, the way B uses the interjection indicates that the first idea is not true, thus B contradicts the validity of the claim. In this case, the interjection gains a quality of a cognitive type, so the meaning involves something like *"I don't think you made the dress"*. Then, the possible explication is;

I know this : you cannot /did not make this dress.
I don't believe you.
You are not telling the truth.
I want to show how I feel.

Dialogue (2)   A- Anne ! Bak, buradan atlıyorum ! (Mum ! Look, I am jumping
                          down from here !)
                      B- *Aman !*
                      A- Korkma ! (Don't be afraid !)

In dialogue (2), the interjection *aman!* acts both as an imperative and a warning. The reactive idea framing in the mind of the listener contradicts and counteracts to the idea of the first speaker. The mother in the dialogue, while reducing and denying the validity of the first idea, uses the interjection to indicate a proposition to mean "*stop it*" or " *be careful*". The semantic formula involved makes the expression a volitive type of interjection with an imperative or a warning function :

I know something : you are in danger.
For you are in danger, I feel worried.
I warn that you be careful.
I want you to stop that.
I want to show how I feel.

One can easily come up with other situations in which the same expression imparts different propositions. With the given examples, it is possible to say that *aman* is a multi-purpose interjection whose pragmatic function is specified according to the reactive idea framing of the listener and whose semantic function is expressed through the phonological features imposed on the surface structure.

4.2. Example 2 : *hadi be ! (hadi ya !)*

This informal interjection almost always displays a reactive idea framing with an illocutionary force. Selection of slightly different phonological variants of the expression is bound to the situation and the judgment of the listener on the speaker's

utterance. As can be seen in the following examples, the interjection *hadi be!* / *hadi ya!* conveys more than one type of emotion or reactive idea framing.

Dialogue (3)   A- Çantamı da alıp, geliyorum. (I'll get my bag and come
                       down)
               B- *Hadi be !*
               A- Neden acele ediyorsun ? (Why are you in a hurry ?)

It appears that this use of the interjection indicates a feeling of impatience, with a semantic formula meaning :

I know I am waiting.
You know I am waiting.
I say this (*hadi be !*) because I want you to know that...
      we are going to be late / I am bored.
I think you should know about it.

The reactive idea pattern in this example is counteracting. The type of the interjection is both emotive and volitive, because the expression also calls for an imperative, which imparts the proposition *"be quick"*.

Dialogue (4)   A- İşe bak ! Senin yatırmadığın lotoda 5 var. İyi mi ?
                       (Look! The Loto coupon you did not have issued strikes 5.
                       You see ?)
               B- *Hadi be !*

Depending on the mental state of the speaker and the intonation pattern, the same interjection may convey different feelings of surprise, disbelief or regret. When the speaker is in a state of disbelief or surprise, the reactive idea framing is either of a contradictory or a challenging type. If the speaker wants to make sure about the validity of the first idea, the challenging frame imparts an illocutionary force of the following sort :

I don't know if this is true.
I want to know it.
I think you might know.
I say it because I want you to cause me to make sure about it.

28

If the speaker does not believe in the validity of the previous idea, the reactive idea framing is of a contradictory type, which can be semantically paraphrased as ;

You say something.
I don't think what you say is true.
I know you try to fool me.
I want you to know that.

If the speaker feels regret, the reaction involves an evaluative category in which not only the evaluation of the previous idea, but also the evaluation of a past act is involved. The propositional content is ;

You say something .
I know what I did was wrong.
I feel sad about it.
I want to show how I feel.

Dialogue (5)　　　　A- Mustafa'yı duydun mu ? ODTÜ mimarlığı tutturmuş !
　　　　　　　　　B- *Hadi ya !*

In this dialogue, B's reaction may involve (a) an appreciation, which is a form of the evaluative category, (b) a surprise, which conveys disbelief, thus a contradictory type of idea framing, or (c) doubts, which reduces the validity of the claim, thus one of a counteracting type. In each function, the semantic formula changes accordingly :

(a) : I know what you say must be true.
　　　 He has always been so successful.
　　　 I appreciate him.

(b) : I don't think what you say is true.
　　　 I know him. He is not that successful.
　　　 I am surprised.
　　　 I want to show how I feel.

(c) : I doubt if this is true.
　　　 I want to know it.
　　　 I say it because I want you to cause me to know it.

4.3. *Ooo !*

There are various intonations of this interjection, which fit in different idea framings. For this reason, there are a number of semantic formulae available. One of the functions of this interjection is salutation, a type of "phatic communion" , which ties of union especially when welcoming. It shows the pleasure of the speaker when he has noticed the arrival or the presence of the addresee. The lenghtening of the vowels signals the emotive aspect of the expression.This function differs from the other functions of the expression in that it does not act as a reaction to a previous idea, but it conveys the fact that the participants have not been in contact for a long time. With these considerations in mind, the following explication can be proposed :

I know this : you and I have just met.
We haven't seen each other for a long time.
I feel good, because you are now here.
I want to show how I feel.

This form, when used in line with other types of idea framing, fulfills a variety of discourse functions. The following are some pragmatic functions with their corresponding examples. It is of course possible to formulate semantic explications for each :

1. *Ooo! (...beyim, hadi yine iyisin !)*   (evaluating idea framing with a teasing function)
2. *Ooo! (...Pek güzel olmuş !)*   (with a rising intonation : appreciation)
3. *O-oo ! (...Bu da laf mı ?)*   (counteracting : reducing the validity of the first idea)
4. *Ooo! (Aman Allahım !)*   (surprise)
5. *Ooo! (Çok kötü !)*   (worry or regret)
6. *O-oo! (Öyle bir balık yakaladım ki..)*   (exaggeration)
7. *O-oo ! (...ona gelene kadar)*   (hopelessness or expressing a distant possibility)
8. *Ooo! (..ona mı kaldım ?)*   (humiliation)
9. *O-oo! (Kimbilir ne zaman olur !)*   (impatience)

5. Conclusion:

In this paper, I have discussed the characteristics of Turkish interjections within the context of informal reactive responses. From the discussion so far, one can infer that a certain pragmatic function attributed to an interjection is primarily a cognitive process which involves the type of the idea framing realised in the mind of the hearer upon the first speaker's remark. This framing leads that person to apply relevant phonological and semantic properties to the selected form of interjection. On the other hand, it has also

been indicated that informal Turkish interjections have a rich semantic structure and they act as significant pragmatic markers in conversations. They have an illocutionary force in most examples. As the given examples demonstrate, the meaning of interjections may be quite complex. An explicit paraphrase of the meaning of each interjection is highly bound to the vocalization, which may or may not be accompanied by body gestures. The use of an informal Turkish interjection or an interjectional phrase is not arbitrary at all. The semantic formulae invoked by the speaker and their correct interpretation by the listener need shared cultural understandings. In other words, the speaker presupposes that the interjection is appropriate for the communication of his idea framing and it matches with the listener's ability to decompose the semantic features of the expression. This is how the response of the other party after the uttered interjection comes and structures the discoursal context. In other words, according to the pragmatic function of the interjection, discoursal context can be built towards a different direction. This is both a cultural and cognitive process, which needs an understanding of the semantics of each expression.

The fact that Turkish has a good variety of informal interjections can be taken as a sign that in Turkish society spontaneous linguistic show of emotions and expressive behaviour are permitted rather than discouraged. This motivation may be higher among younger population. Through the investigation of interjections, Turkish linguistics can also contribute to the cross-cultural research in the area of emotion concepts and emotion symptoms lexicalised in different languages. Hence, one can hope that Turkish linguistics should accord interjections the attention they deserve.

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