

**An Analytical Description of Exclamatory Sentences in English****Samira CHAIBEDDRA**

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**Received:** 02/05/2018**Revised:** 08/01/2019**Accepted:** 21/01/2019**Abstract**

*The present research paper is an analytical description of exclamatory forms in English. Its main objective is to examine the research studies that shed light on these language structures from a grammatical and a pragmatic perspective. Analysing the available literature on these sentences revealed some discrepancies in the views of grammarians with regard to their terminology and classification as a sentence type as well as insufficiency in extensive research that covers their pragmatics. Moreover, it demonstrated that most of these studies targeted wh - exclamatives at the expense of other forms.*

**Key words:** *Exclamatory sentences, analytical description, grammatical, pragmatic.*

**وصف تحليلي للجمل التعجبية في اللغة الانجليزية****ملخص**

هذا المقال هو عبارة عن وصف تحليلي للجمل التعجبية في اللغة الانجليزية يهدف إلى دراسة الأبحاث التي أُلقت الضوء على هذه التراكيب اللغوية من منظور نحوي وتداولي. حيث كشف تحليل المراجع المتاحة حول الجمل التعجبية عن بعض التناقضات في وجهات نظر النحاة فيما يتعلق بالمصطلحات المستعملة للإشارة إلى هذه الجمل وتصنيفهم كنوع من الجمل في اللغة الإنجليزية، كما كشف عن نقص الأبحاث المتعمقة في دراسة هذه التراكيب من منظور تداولي. علاوة على ذلك، معظم هذه الدراسات أكدت تركيزها على صنف واحد من الجمل التعجبية على حساب الأصناف الأخرى.

**كلمات المفاتيح:** *جمل تعجبية، وصف تحليلي، نحوي، تداولي.*

**Une Description Analytique des Phrases Exclamatives en Anglais****Résumé**

*Le présent article est une description analytique des phrases exclamatives en anglais. Son objectif principal est d'examiner les études qui mettent en lumière ces structures linguistiques d'un point de vue grammatical et pragmatique. L'analyse de la littérature disponible qui traite de ces phrases a révélé quelques divergences entre les grammairiens en ce qui concerne leur terminologie et leur classification en tant que type de phrase ; et a également révélé l'insuffisance de recherches approfondies qui couvrent leur pragmatique. Ladite analyse a montré, en outre, que la plupart de ces études ciblent une forme de ces phrases (celles commençant par «what» ou «how») aux dépens des autres formes.*

**Mots - clés:** *Phrases exclamatives, description analytique, grammaticale, pragmatique.*

## **Introduction :**

Exclamativity is represented in English by dint of multifarious forms in spoken or written discourse and albeit the significance of exclamatory sentences in language use, unreasonable little attention was given to studying these forms grammatically or pragmatically in the past. This, however, has changed recently as more syntactic, semantic and pragmatic studies that cast light on these sentences have come to the fore. Debunking the syntactic and semantic view of these sentences by some scholars encouraged others to suggest their pragmatic examination whereby these language forms are scrutinised as context - bound utterances. In fact, increasing numbers of studies conducted on exclamatory sentences encouraged us to question whether they cleared the confusion with regard to the position of these sentences in grammar and pragmatics or raised more issues to blur their image. This paper's primary aim, therefore, is to analyse a number of grammatical and pragmatic studies with respect to exclamatory sentences and answer this very question.

### **1-Exclamatory Sentence, Exclamation or Exclamative?**

By examining exclamatory forms in English, an unsystematic use of the terms exclamatory sentence, exclamation and exclamative throughout the literature on exclamativity is observed. Bolinger<sup>(1)</sup> uses the term exclamation to refer to any form of language that is ended with an exclamation point. Michaelis uses the same term to define them as “grammatical forms which express the speaker's affective response to a situation: exclamations convey surprise. Surprise may be accompanied by positive or negative effect”<sup>(2)</sup>. However, Leech rather employs the term exclamations to refer to forms that commonly “can vary from single exclamatory words such as Oh! (called an interjection) to sentences with a full clause structure, including a verb phrase, as in It's so absurd!”<sup>(3)</sup> Crystal<sup>(4)</sup> distinguishes between exclamations which, he believes, are all the emotive utterances whose structures are most of the time shortened and have distinctive intonational patterns and exclamatory sentences that he restricts to language structures initiated by what or how. In other words, he uses the term exclamatory sentences to refer to wh - exclamatives. To Fowler<sup>(5)</sup>, an exclamation refers to, inter alia, an interjection, a word, or a phrase that functions as an interjection. In their discussion of the formal classification of sentences in English, Quirk et al<sup>(6)</sup> considered exclamatives as sentences that are initiated by wh - exclamative words such as how and what. Despite the entanglement in terms usage with regard to exclamativity in English, it is generally agreed upon the fact that exclamatory forms are employed for expressing strong emotions (Baker<sup>(7)</sup>; Crystal<sup>(8)</sup>; Fasano<sup>(9)</sup>; Leech<sup>(10)</sup>) and are represented in English through various forms and constructions (Hargis<sup>(11)</sup>; Michaelis<sup>(12)</sup>). However, such agreement does not necessarily help in surmounting the problem of the baffling terminology devoted to expressing exclamativity in English. Researchers in the field find themselves under obligation to exactly clarify and justify their adoption of any of these terms throughout their papers. In addition, such perplexity, we assume, hinders the perception of English learners who are exposed to several terms that are not clearly and unmistakably disentangled.

### **2-Is the Exclamatory Sentence a Sentence Type?**

When researching into exclamatory sentences in English, one of the central issues addressed is the substantial disagreement among grammarians on whether to regard these constructions as an independent sentence type equal to the other three major types: the declarative, the interrogative and the imperative or rather as a subtype of these major forms. The attempt to draw a clear distinction between sentence types is not recent. Many scholars have already suggested some systems to classify sentences and even claimed there is no clear - cut distinction between sentence types.

According to Elliot<sup>(13)</sup>, the adequacy of the English grammar is dependent upon recognising exclamatory sentences as a major, independent sentence type. By virtue of a meticulous examination of exclamatory sentences, he sought supporting his viewpoint through identifying the significant differences between exclamatory and interrogative sentences and also between embedded exclamatives and interrogatives. He eventually

concluded that such differences make of the exclamatory sentence a separate type. Basic English grammars side with Elliot's view on such a debate despite the fact that they could be seen as more impressionistic. Quirk et al<sup>(14)</sup> classified English sentences into four independent types encompassing exclaimatives, Huddleston and Pullum<sup>(15)</sup> referred to them as a main clause type, Radford<sup>(16)</sup> claimed they are a type of structure, as opposed to the other three major types and Biber et al<sup>(17)</sup> introduced them as a major type of independent clauses.

On the other side of the debate stand Sadock and Zwicky<sup>(18)</sup> who made mention of exclamatory sentences as a minor type including their different forms in English, König & Siemund<sup>(19)</sup> who argued that these sentences are not major types because exclaimativity is expressed in a myriad of forms in English and, more importantly, because they are the final outcome of joining a declarative or an interrogative sentence to syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features expressing exclaimativity and Crystal who similarly recognised them as a minor type but went further to stress their importance by stating that “minor sentences have an important communicative role, and often perform a more effective job than their major counterparts”<sup>(20)</sup>.

The arguments provided by supporters of the minor type view seem to be feeble and easily refutable. Having multifarious forms in English is what makes us think that exclamatory sentences constitute a broad category which reasonably deserves to be identified as a major sentence type. In addition, confining exclamatory sentences to being the combination of a declarative or an interrogative sentence with some particular features is a fallacy; one should not deny that some exclamatory forms intersect with the other major sentences forms, but there are some exclamatory forms which do not, for example wh - exclaimatives.

The view of Huddleston<sup>(21)</sup> about the sentence classification debate remains more solid in comparison with others. He suggests distinguishing between the classification of sentences into syntactic categories and into semantic ones. Thus, according to him, the declarative, the interrogative, the exclaimative and the imperative are syntactic categories which differ from each other by means of some syntactic structure properties, whereas statements, questions, exclamations and directives are semantic categories. Exclamations are distinct from other semantic categories in that they entail an emotive feature that overlay the latter.

### 3-Exclamatory Forms in English:

Compiling an *exhaustive* list of grammatical forms that convey an exclamatory meaning in English is not possible because of the vagueness of the concept itself. In effect, exclaimativity is not always indicated by means of lexico - grammatical forms but rather sometimes identified by means of prosody. Furthermore, the researcher is restricted to the literature at hand. Ergo what follows is a grammatical examination of some and not all of the common exclamatory constructions in English.

#### 3-1- Declarative Exclamatory Sentences

Of the myriad constructions that embody exclaimativity in English, the declarative - like form of exclamatory sentences occurs less frequently than other structures in the exclamatory sentences research literature and grammar books. Although this type of exclamatory sentences has a verbatim form of the declarative, it takes, as Downing and Locke<sup>(22)</sup> claim, a distinct intonation. Being referred to as absolute exclamations by Elliot<sup>(23)</sup> and as sentence exclamations by Rett<sup>(24)</sup>, this form as in(1a) and(1b) has various functions.

1-a. I can't believe you did it!

b. It's the best book I've ever read!(The researcher's examples)

In addition to the form expressed in(1a) and(1b), there exist in English “so” and “such” exclamations which are regarded as declarative exclamatory sentences. The use of the emphatic degree items “so” and “such” exerts an exclaimative force on the declarative<sup>(25)</sup>. To Swan<sup>(26)</sup> and syntactically speaking, “so” can front the adjective as in(2a), whereas “such” can front a combination of an indefinite article, an adjective and a singular noun as in (2b) and (2c) or can front an uncountable noun (that could be preceded by an adjective) or a plural noun as in(2d) and(2e) respectively.

- (2) a. You're so handsome!  
 b. She's such a kind girl! (Not she's a such kind girl!)  
 c. It was such an amazing experience!  
 d. They were talking such nonsense! (or pure nonsense)  
 e. She has such extraordinary powers! (The researcher's examples)

### 3-2- Exclamatives (Wh - exclamatives):

Exclamatives are a restricted formal class of exclamatory sentences that begin with the wh - elements "what" or "how" (Gelderen<sup>(27)</sup>; Radford<sup>(28)</sup>). Quirk et al<sup>(29)</sup> say that these wh - exclamative words are the counterparts of the emphatic degree items "so" and "such" and can take different positions. They can occur as a subject (3a), an object (3b), a complement (3c), an adverbial (3d), a prepositional complement (3e), a pushdown element of an indirect statement (3f) or as a prepositional phrase (3g).

- (3) a. What a big audience attended!  
 b. What a nice story she wrote!  
 c. How amazing his performance was!  
 d. How beautifully he draws!  
 e. What a dilemma he was in!  
 f. How crazy you must have considered her!  
 g. In what disaster they died! (The researcher's examples)

According to Miro<sup>(30)</sup>, exclamatives in English are said to have the following features:

- The adverbials employed in exclamatives should show extreme degree, hence using slightly, fairly and reasonably is not allowed as in(4).

- (4)\*How fairly typical her reaction was!<sup>1</sup> (The researcher's example)

- Exclamatives do not require an answer. You cannot therefore answer the exclamative in(5) by replying twenty centimetres.

- (5) How very short it is! (The researcher's example)

-Exclamatives cannot precede a question that can be made narrower as in(6).

- (6)\*How very short it is! Twenty centimetres or thirty? (The researcher's example)

-Exclamatives cannot be an answer. Thus, the dialogue in(7) is grammatically unacceptable.

- (7) Q: How long is the course?

A: How very long the course is! (The researcher's example)

Huddleston<sup>(31)</sup> adds another feature of exclamatives and claims it is permitted to use question tags with exclamatives. The stated purpose behind that is to obtain an approval for the exclamative as in (8).

- (8) What a fuss she made of that! Didn't she? (The researcher's example)

Unlike other English structures and exclamatory forms, a distinct feature of exclamatives is not accepting negation<sup>(32)</sup>. Accordingly, uttering the examples in (9a) and (9b) is disallowed in English.

- (9) a. \*How beautiful she does not look!

- b. \*What a fascinating view it is not! (The researcher's examples)

Last but not least, indefiniteness is also a property of wh-exclamatives. A noun phrase in what-exclamatives must be fronted by the indefinite articles "a" or "an", for "indefiniteness in the noun phrase corresponds to degree potential in the adjective phrase"<sup>(33)</sup>. Thus, the exclamative form in (10b), where the noun is preceded by the definite article "the" is grammatically unacceptable in English. Compare it with (10a).

- (10) a. What a gift she had bought for him!

- b. \*What the gift she had bought for him! (The researcher's examples)

### 3-2-1- The Exclusive Use of "What" and "How" in Exclamatives

In English, question words that wh-exclamatives can begin with are limited to merely cover those which express degree: what and how<sup>(34)</sup>. Unsurprisingly, this restriction is due to the fact that these wh-elements denote the highest degree on a scale and consequently are

exclusively used when the sentence permits gradability<sup>(35)</sup>. The following forms thereupon are not allowed in English:

- (11) \*Who she works with!
- (12) \*When he starts working!
- (13) \*Which instrument he bought!
- (14) \*Why he sold that car!
- (15) \*Where she hid the letter! (The researcher's examples)

### 3-2-2- The Difference between What - exclamatives and How - exclamatives

Huddleston & Pullum<sup>(36)</sup> state that "How" is different from "What" in terms of style and distribution. As far as style is concerned, how-exclamatives as in (16a) are said to be considerably more formal than what - exclamatives as in (16b) when they are main clauses.

- (16) a. How intelligent he is!
- b. What an intelligent boy he is! (The researcher's examples)

As far as distribution is concerned, unlike "what" that can solely be a modifier in a noun phrase, "how" can rather modify adjectives, degree determinatives, adverbs and verbs. It also operates as an external modifier in a noun phrase with a countable singular noun. However, it is not allowed to be used with plurals and uncountable nouns as in (17a) and (17b).

- (17) a. \*How beautiful dresses!
- b. \*How nice music! (The researcher's examples)

In an analysis of what and how-exclamatives, Collins<sup>(37)</sup> indicated through corpora that these exclamatives generally appear in personal and informal forms of writing. For this reason, these structures are mostly used in works of fiction and seldom occur in scientific writing. What - exclamatives are employed in speech more than in writing, be it general or scientific, whereas how-exclamatives often occur in writing.

### 3-2-3- A Comparison Between Exclamatives and Wh-interrogatives

In terms of structure, exclamatives are said to be similar to wh-interrogatives with regard to some features and different from them with regard to others. Despite the fact that they both share the beginning with the wh - element, it is, as it has been earlier mentioned, limited to "how" and "what" in exclamatives, but not limited to these two elements in wh-interrogatives. Moreover, the wh-element must front wh - exclamatives and not wh - interrogatives<sup>(38)</sup>. Accordingly, the structures in(19a) and(19b) are allowed in English but(18b) is not.

- (18) a. What an idiot he was!
- b. \*He was what an idiot!
- (19) a. What did he do to her?
- b. He did what to her? (The researcher's examples)

As there are some similarities between exclamatives and interrogatives, it is logical that a kind of ambiguity can emerge. That is to say, sometimes the sentence can be understood as an exclamative or an interrogative depending on the prosody and the context wherein it occurs<sup>(39)</sup>. A simple example is the sentence in(20) which can be perceived as an interrogative or as an exclamative.

- (20) How often your mother has told you not to go to that place (!/?) (The researcher's example)

### 3-3- Elliptical Exclamatives:

Elliptical exclamatives, otherwise known as "reduced exclamatives", are considered minor clauses. This type of exclamatory sentences was discussed in various grammar books (see Ballard<sup>(40)</sup>; Crystal<sup>(41)</sup>, Hargis<sup>(42)</sup>; Thompson<sup>(43)</sup>) and was referred to as "verbless exclamatives" by Huddleston & Pullum<sup>(44)</sup>. This form as Eggins & Salade earlier on state "must retain the wh - element which is the key to their exclamative import. Thus, where the wh-element was attached to either Subject or Complement, typically both Subject and all verbal elements are ellipsed"<sup>(45)</sup>. Compare between the full form of exclamatives in (21) and the reduced forms in(22).

- (21) a. What a lovely trip we had!

- b. What a mess you made!
- c. How nice the party is!(The researcher's examples)
- (22) a. What a lovely trip!
- b. What a mess!
- c. How nice! (The researcher's examples)

An important aspect in the exclamative discussion is polarity of the emotion. Polarity means whether the emotion expressed in the exclamative is positive or negative because "it is typically hard to determine which direction a given exclamative tends to lean. For example, the polarity of conical exclamatives like What a PRED seems to be determined largely by the nature of the lexical items involved"<sup>(46)</sup>. Consider examples in(23) which express positive emotions while examples in(24) express negative ones:

- (23) a. What a great performance!
- b. What a joy!
- (24) a. What a burden!
- b. What a failure! (The researcher's examples)

In these examples, it is noticeable that the emotions expressed by exclamativity are easily deciphered from the lexical content of the sentences. However, Potts & Schwarz<sup>(47)</sup> referred to the ambiguity which occurs when the lexical items do not show the direction of the emotions as in(25) which are interpreted positively in the default case.

- (25) a. What a performance!
- b. What a place!
- c. What a class! (The researcher's examples)

It is in such cases that the interpretation of exclamatory sentences is context-bound and accordingly a pragmatic analysis is required.

### 3-4-Inverted Exclamatives:

Inverted exclamatives, also dubbed "exclamatory questions", have a form that is said to be similar to the form of yes/no questions but function as exclamatives<sup>(48)</sup>. Consider the example in(26).

- (26) a. Is it pretty!
- b. Isn't it pretty! (The researcher's examples)

In his comparison between two forms of inverted exclamatives similar to the earlier mentioned in example(26), Quirk et al<sup>(49)</sup> assert that such forms call the listener to agree on something towards which the speaker has strong feelings. Unlike what they appear to be, the meaning of these sentences is certainly positive. To explain further this meaning Geukens<sup>(50)</sup> claims that these sentences show an extreme degree. For example, (27a) and (27b) demonstrate that the place is nice to the extreme degree, which supports the idea of the high degree property in exclamatives.

- (27) a. Man, isn't this a nice place!
- b. Man, is this a nice place! (The researcher's examples)

He also claims that "even in sentences with predications that are not easily gradable the exclamative conveys there is something intense, extreme or unexpected about the event"<sup>(51)</sup>. Consider the inverted exclamative in(28). This exclamative does not only express that the speaker made a mistake but it was a big one.

- (28) a. Boy, did I make that mistake! (The researcher's example)

### 3-5- Nominal Exclamatives:

Portner & Zanuttini<sup>(52)</sup> state that nominal exclamatives are syntactically constructed as noun phrases. As far as their meaning is concerned, this type of exclamatives is similar to clausal exclamatives. Their form, however, is not elliptical and consequently differs from the generally used noun phrases that retain an exclamatory function. Compare between the exclamative in(29a) and the noun phrase with an exclamatory function as in (29b).

- (29) a. The bad marks he got!
- b. Those bad marks! (The researcher's examples)

Rett<sup>(53)</sup> referred to the fact that this type of exclamatory sentences should be formed with definite determiner phrases and cannot be formed with indefinite ones. Compare between (30a) and (30b).

(30) a. (Oh,) the colour of that dress!

b. \*(Oh,) a colour of that dress! (The researcher's examples)

### 3-6- Elliptical Exclamatory Sentences:

The term elliptical exclamatory sentences is generally used to refer to the exclamatory constructions that consist of a sentence lacking an auxiliary and ended with an exclamation mark as (31a) and (31b); or merely a single word as in (31c) (see Hargis<sup>(54)</sup>)

(31) a. Smith the president! (Smith is the president!)

b. Poor kitten!

c. A party! (The researcher's examples)

### 3-7-Embedded Exclamatory Sentences

This type of exclamatory sentences, also called "indirect exclamatives", was discussed by Onions<sup>(55)</sup> and Elliot<sup>(56)</sup> and defined by Downing & Locke as a sentence that is "introduced by either how (+adjective) or what (+NG)<sup>2</sup> after two types of verbs: verbs of communicating such as say and tell, and mental verbs such as believe and think. Like ordinary exclamatives, it has an emotive quality"<sup>(57)</sup>. The following are embedded exclamatives.

(32) a. I told her how happy I was when receiving the gift.

b. You can't believe what a scary place it was. (The researcher's examples)

To explain the notion of embedding in exclamativity, Onions provides the following example: "It is strange how unjust you are". This sentence is similar to "It is strange: How unjust you are!" and the subordinate clause here is exclamatory and called a "dependent exclamation"<sup>(58)</sup>.

### 3-8- Echo Exclamatory Sentences:

Quirk et al<sup>(59)</sup> referred to another category of exclamatory sentences they called echo exclamations. In echo exclamations, a part of the aforesaid utterance is repeated with particular intonation. The following is an example of an echo exclamation occurring in a dialogue:

(33) A: I am travelling to London.

B: To London! I thought you would travel to New York. (The researcher's examples)

Quirk et al also said that echo exclamations can be done with different levels of completeness. Thus, instead of repeating just "To London!" the repetition could rather be "You are travelling to London!" or "Travelling to London!"

### 3-9- Interjections:

Interjections can be defined according to their forms, semantic value or pragmatic function. Wilkins<sup>(60)</sup> believes that the difficulty in their study lies in the fact that they are a matter of concern to linguistics. They require, he suggests, a semantic and a pragmatic description along with a study of their association with sentences and their morphological status. Their definition provided by Wierzbicka is not exhaustive but is straightforward nevertheless. He states that an interjection is

a linguistic sign expressing the speaker's current mental state (1) which can be used on its own, (2) which expresses a specifiable meaning, (3) which does not include other signs (with specifiable meaning), (4) which is not homophonous with any other lexical item whose meaning would be included in its own meaning (that is, in the meaning of the putative interjection), and (5) which refers to the speaker's current mental state or mental act<sup>(61)</sup>.

The weight of interjections is reflected in their independence from other language forms in the sense that they have their own meaning. As an important part of speech, an interjection can express strong feelings and is usually used by native speakers in instant reactions to different situations.

### 3-9-1- Interjections Properties:

Biber et al consider interjections to be subsumed under what they call inserts that have an exclamatory function. Consequently, interjections share the following characteristics with inserts:

- They may appear on their own, i.e. not as part of a larger grammatical structure.
- On the other hand, they may appear attached (prosodically, or in the transcription, by absence of punctuation) to a larger structure, which maybe a clausal unit or a noun clausal unit.
- They rarely occur medially in a syntactic structure.
- They are morphologically simple.
- They are not homonyms of words in other word classes.
- Semantically, they have no denotative meaning: their use is defined rather by their pragmatic function<sup>(62)</sup>

Crystal states that despite the fact that interjections are commonly informal, there are formal ones. Additionally, these items are changeable within a time span<sup>(63)</sup>. When written, “interjections are separated off from the main clause by means of a comma or an exclamation mark”<sup>(64)</sup>.

### 3-9-2-Types of Interjections:

To provide a clear and insightful account of interjections, it seems useful to shed some light on their classification which can be founded on their form or communicative function. As far as form is concerned, interjections can be primary or secondary. Primary interjections are “little words or non-words which in terms of their distribution can constitute an utterance by themselves and do not normally enter into construction with other word classes, for example, Ouch!, Wow!, Gee!, Oho!, Oops!, etc.”<sup>(65)</sup>. Primary interjections have a distinctive phonological and morphological anomaly that refuses both inflection and derivation. Secondary interjections are independent utterances used to convey feelings. They can be alarm calls, attention-getters or swear and taboo words such as “Help!”, “Fire!” and “Hell!”. They can also be emotive words like “Shame!”<sup>(66)</sup>. Swan classified swearwords into two categories: exclamations of annoyance such as “Damn!” and “Blast!” and exclamations of surprise such as “God!”, “Jesus!”, “Christ!”. Another type of interjections is interjectional phrases that are classified as exclamations; “Dear me!” and “My Goodness!” are two examples of these “multi word expressions”<sup>(67)</sup>.

### 3-9-3-Interjections and Other Forms of Exclamatory Sentences

In addition to their ability to stand alone, interjections can also precede other types of exclamatory sentences, for example “Boy”, “Gee” and “God.” However, they are not randomly employed with other types of exclamatory sentences. The use of interjections differs according to the type of exclamatory sentence; interjections as “boy” and “man” can introduce inverted exclaimatives but not interrogatives, for example<sup>(68)</sup>.

(34) a. Boy, am I stupid!

b. God/Boy, how stupid I was!

c. God/Boy, I was so stupid! (The researcher’s examples)

## 4-The Pragmatics of Exclamatory Sentences:

### 4-1-Exclamatory Sentences as Expressives:

In Speech Act Theory, expressives are about the psychological state of the speaker/writer or, in other words, their attitude towards an explicitly mentioned state of affair. They possess an empty direction of fit, i.e. there is no success or failure of fit, and their purpose is expressing the speaker’s attitude embodied in the propositional content<sup>(69)</sup>. Exclamatory sentences constitute one of various constructions through which strong feelings and emotions can be expressed. According to Vandervenken, <sup>(70)</sup> illocutionary points are manifested by virtue of verb mood or sentence types and expressives are said to be represented by exclamatory sentences in English. This view that exclamatory sentences are expressives is also supported by several studies (Plag et al<sup>(71)</sup>; Miro<sup>(72)</sup>; Rett<sup>(73)</sup>; Vandervenken<sup>(74)</sup>).



As far as the illocutionary force of the expressives is concerned, Vandervenken states that “by definition, the primitive expressive illocutionary force has the expressive point and the neutral mode of achievement, degree of strength and propositional content, preparatory and sincerity conditions. It is realized syntactically in the type of exclamatory sentences”<sup>(75)</sup>. Moreover, he points out that the expressive illocutionary forces are of a complex nature since it is impossible for one to express an attitude towards a state of affairs embodied in a propositional content if they do not associate this propositional content with the world via a given psychological mode.

#### 4-2-On the Pragmatics of Declarative Exclamatory Sentences

Michaelis<sup>(76)</sup> and Moutaouakil<sup>(77)</sup> consider that declarative exclamatory sentences and declaratives represent a propositional content that is true. They also deem this type of exclamatory sentences as assertions (which fall under the category of representatives in Speech Act Theory). However, Sadock & Zwicky<sup>(78)</sup> claim that in contrast to declarative sentences which are said to be informative in nature, declarative exclamatory sentences are expressive. Oomen<sup>(79)</sup> says that the difference between declarative sentences and exclamatory ones is in introducing new information. Declarative sentences tend to introduce new information while exclamatory sentences do not. In essence, exclamatory sentences, including declarative exclamatory sentences, are rather expressives and not assertions (see the previous point). To give a reasonable argument for why exclamatory sentences should be deemed as expressives, Rett carefully compared between assertions and declarative exclamatory sentences to conclude that these sentences are not assertions because they have a different intonation from that of assertions. She stated that “because sentences exclamations [declarative exclamatory sentences] are always uttered with an intonation distinct from matrix assertions I believe they should not be analyzed as assertions”<sup>(80)</sup> Additionally, both declarative exclamatory sentences and exclamatives have the same felicity conditions and therefore should be examined as the same speech act whose illocutionary force is *sui generis*.

In the work of Searle<sup>(81)</sup>, performing speech acts is restricted to obeying some constitutive rules. These constitutive rules determine whether these speech acts are felicitous. Rett argues that the following are the general constitutive rules for declarative exclamatory sentences.

- a. Content rule: The content of a sentence exclamation is the proposition p [proposition] denoted by that sentence.
- b. Preparatory rule: S [speaker] has direct evidence that p is true.
- c. Sincerity rule: 1. S believes p; 2. S considers p not worthy or remarkable.
- d. Essential rule: S's utterance of a sentence exclamation counts as an expression of S's attitude towards p<sup>(82)</sup>.

To her, the content of the declarative exclamatory sentence is a proposition that is true and in order to be sincere, the content of this sentence should be considered as note worthy or remarkable by the speaker. In the case of exclamatory sentences and as they are considered expressives, these sentences are allowed to be uttered insincerely. The last rules show that the utterance is the speaker's attitude towards a propositional content that is either remarkable or note-worthy.

Rett<sup>(83)</sup> suggests an illocutionary force operator of declarative exclamatory sentences. She contends that for one operator with regard to expressiveness, the correctness of an exclamatory utterance which possesses a content p in context is not achieved unless the producer of the utterance considers it surprising. For the other factor, it is entailed in the salience of the proposition in context.

In an example of a comparison between a declarative sentence and a declarative exclamatory sentence provided by Rett, the propositional content of the declarative sentence is “Sue wore orange shoes” and its illocutionary force is an assertion. In this assertion, the speaker believes this propositional content and communicates its truth. However, the declarative exclamatory sentence “Sue wore orange shoes!”<sup>(84)</sup> is a different speech act. It has the same propositional content as the declarative in this example, but in its illocutionary force

the speaker believes the propositional content and communicates that this content is contrary to expectations or surprising.

This analysis of the illocutionary force of declarative exclamatory sentences is not exhaustive for many reasons. First, the notion of surprise here is neutral in the sense that surprise can be positive or negative. Thus, one should be more specific about which emotions are intended to be conveyed by the speaker through the use of exclamatory sentences and whether these emotions are positive or negative. Second, the pragmatic analysis of the exclamatory sentences is out of context despite the fact that the pragmatic analysis should be in the first place based on context. Besides, the speaker in the illocutionary force of the declarative exclamatory sentence does not merely communicate that the content is surprising, as it has been mentioned earlier, this speaker particularly expresses they have strong feelings about this content and these feelings vary from a context to another. Finally, a problem that emerges pertaining to this type of exclamatory sentences is related to the declarative exclamatory sentences with *so* and *such*. These constructions are syntactically considered under the category of declarative sentences; however, they “are pragmatically similar to the constructions with *what* and *how*. The words *so* and *such* in themselves indicate extreme positions on scales, and the utterances are to be regarded as exclamatives”<sup>(85)</sup>. Thus, pragmatics are required to single them out when referring to the pragmatics of declarative exclamatory sentences.

#### 4-3- On the Pragmatics of Exclamatives:

Most of the research studies on the pragmatics of exclamatory sentences are devoted to the pragmatics of *wh*-exclamatives more than any other forms of exclamatory sentences. The only found reason to justify this is that the form of *wh*-exclamatives does not intersect other types of sentences as the declaratives and the interrogatives. Accordingly, they constitute an independent form that represents pure exclamation.

Uttering a sentence in a given context entails an attempt on the part of the language producer to form an illocutionary act that is a part of their meaning and intention to make the language receiver understand in context. The expressive illocutionary act is expressed through the intonational pattern and the construction made up of the *wh*-element with the adjective that follows it. Generally, it is the adjective that designates the type of the emotion expressed. In Vandervenen's example, “How glad I am you have come!” the construction is deployed to show pleasure or joy<sup>(86)</sup>.

Unlike declarative exclamatory sentences, *wh* - exclamatives are not uttered with a proposition *E* - force (*E* - force stands for the illocutionary force of an exclamatory sentence) because they do not denote propositions. Instead they are uttered using a different illocutionary force operator that expresses surprise. In fact, an exclamative utterance is “expressively correct if its content is a degree property which is salient in the discourse, the speaker is surprised that a specific degree holds of that degree property, and that degree exceeds a contextually provided standard *s*”<sup>(87)</sup>.

Saying that *wh* - exclamatives express the speaker's strong feeling towards a state of affairs is opaque as it does not reveal much of these sentences function. It does not show what exclamations do to know that the speaker has feelings towards a fact. For this reason and in order to make such perception more specific, Portner and Zanuttini suggest the possibility to “frame the contribution of exclamatives as conveying a reaction of some sort. Thus, *How cute Shelly is!* can be seen as expressing adoration and *What a vicious dog I met on my bike ride!* as expressing fear”<sup>(88)</sup>. They go further and explain that the emotions in these sentences are known through the adjectives used; *cute* and *vicious* respectively. The cuteness of *Shelly* goes beyond the speaker's expectation and, therefore, is the source of their adoration. Similarly, the dog's viciousness exceeded the speaker's thoughts which caused their fear.

A central question to be raised when pragmatically examining *wh* - exclamatives is what these utterances convey. As a matter of fact, *wh* - exclamatives have two types of content, viz the descriptive content and the expressive content. The descriptive content is about showing

that the amount described by a given exclamative structure is high and represents “a fact about the world” while the expressive content is the speaker’s emotional attitude such as surprise, amazement, etc. towards this descriptive content. As a way of example, the descriptive content of the wh - exclamative “How many people took part in the rally” is “Many people took part in the rally”, whereas the expressive content is that “the speaker is impressed/amazed/ surprised/awed. by the number of people who took part in the rally”<sup>(89)</sup>. On how these contents are communicated, Chernilovskaya et al<sup>(90)</sup> propounded to analyse the relation between the wh-exclamative and the set of utterances that surround it.

The function of wh-exclamatives was addressed in some research studies. Murano states that “the illocutionary function of the exclamative clause is to present a propositional content — or a part of it — as somehow unexpected or noteworthy”<sup>(91)</sup>. Wh - exclamatives cannot be assertions because their descriptive content cannot be asserted and their content is presupposed (Chernilovskaya et al<sup>(92)</sup>; Grimshaw<sup>(93)</sup>; Portner & Zanuttini<sup>(94)</sup>; Rett,<sup>(95)</sup>). Miro made a comparison between the discourse effect of declaratives and that of wh - exclamatives. For example, the sentences “I’m amazed at Pau’s tallness” and “How tall Pau is”, she suggests, “commit the speaker and bias the context towards p”<sup>(96)</sup>. That is to say, the speaker compels the addressee to accept the propositional content of the utterance. The difference between declarative sentences and wh - exclamatives in this case is that in declarative sentences the commitment is towards its content; whereas in the wh - exclamatives it is towards both the descriptive and the expressive content of the utterance. The descriptive content of “How tall Pau is!” is that Pau is as tall as the context determines and the expressive content is the emotional reaction towards Pau’s tallness. Assertions and expressives, Miro<sup>(97)</sup> believes, do differ because the objective of assertions is providing the hearer with information while the objective of expressives is expressing feelings. The studies which restricted the function of exclamatives include that of Grimshaw<sup>(98)</sup> who pointed out to the inability of exclamatives to behave as replies to questions because they do not semantically possess certain content for replying to a question and Gutzmann<sup>(99)</sup> who emphasised that wh-exclamatives considerably differ from assertions and are not acceptable as a reply to a question. However, the claims of both Grimshaw and Gutzmann can be merely perceived as false. In essence, wh - exclamatives can be used as answers to questions in some situations as in the following dialogue:

(35) A: Why don’t we play tennis this afternoon?

B: What a brilliant idea! (The researcher’s example)

#### **4-4-The Pragmatics of Interjections:**

##### **4-4-1-The Pragmatic Classification of Interjections:**

Ameka defines interjections pragmatically “as a subset of items that encode speaker attitudes and communicative intentions and are context-bound. In this approach, interjections are a subclass of pragmatic markers”<sup>(100)</sup>. According to him, pragmatic markers are divided into particles and routines. While routines can stand on their own, particles cannot, and since interjections can be utterances themselves they cannot, then, be particles, but rather routines. Although particles and interjections are different grammatical classes, they share context-dependence, that is to say, their interpretation is bound to the context in which they occur.

Recall from the previous section that interjections are classified by Ameka into primary and secondary interjections on the basis of their form or into expressive, conative and phatic interjections on the basis of their communicative functions. First, expressive interjections are about the speaker’s mental state. More specifically, they constitute the “vocal gestures” that represent this state. This category of interjections comprises the emotive interjections and the cognitive ones. Emotive interjections are used to instantly express the emotions and the feelings of the speakers such as “yuk”, “wow” and “ouch”. Cognitive interjections are used to transmit the speaker’s knowledge at the moment of speaking. Second, conative interjections grab the addressee’s attention or seek a reaction or an answer on the part of the hearer; “sh” and “eh” are a request for silence and an information-seeking interjection respectively. Last

but not least, phatic interjections “are used in the establishment and maintenance of communicative contact. A variety of conventional vocalisations which express a speaker’s mental attitude towards the ongoing discourse, that is backchanneling or feedback signalling vocalisations, may be classified phatic”<sup>(101)</sup>. In this category, “yeah” and “mhm” are typical examples. Under this category, we also find interjections with the function of greeting, farewell and welcoming people. When examining the pragmatic classification of interjections and to clear any confusion that might reign, it is indispensable to bear in mind that their functions may intersect; for this reason, the aforementioned classification was based on the dominating functions.

#### **4-4-2-Interjections as Lexemes and Utterances:**

Wilkins considers interjections as both lexemes and utterances. By analysing interjections, however, one can question whether, as the other utterances, they possess a propositional content in a particular context or not. Wilkins believes that if one wants to consider interjections as utterances, especially that they are different from other normal sentences composed of noun phrases or verb phrases, they need to prove that these interjections can predicate and refer. To argue the fact that interjections have a proposition, he referred to ellipsis and provided examples of one word sentences one may use as answers to questions as the utterance “Black” to respond to the question “What colour is her car?”. The elliptical utterance is based on the complete form of the question and the context. It is clearly understood that the omitted words are “her car” and “is”. “Black” is a reduced form of the full form “Her car is black”. Ellipses are “understood within semantic structure of the elliptical utterance which are not present in the surface structure, but are recoverable from some other linguistic structure in the discourse context”<sup>(102)</sup>. In the same vein, interjections are the shortest form of an utterance and their full form can be retrieved from the context in which they occur.

#### **4-4-3-Interjections and the Theory of Speech Acts:**

It is, in fact, debatable whether interjections are speech acts or not. Wierzbicka, for example, asserts that primary interjections are not speech acts because they are devoid of the illocutionary force, the “I say” component and the illocutionary purpose. This assertion is based on her examination of the behaviour of utterances when reporting direct discourse in the frame “X said in Language L”<sup>(103)</sup>. According to her, primary interjections are not compatible with the frame due to the peculiarity of their semantic content. Also, they do not have an illocutionary force because it is mandatory for the particular use of a given language to separate the content from manner; in other words, what is said from how it is said. For interjections, the manner must not be represented by concrete words, but rather by the illocutionary force of the original utterance. Consequently, she sees, primary interjections lack an illocutionary force that is detached from their original utterance.

Wilkins opposes Wierzbicka’s claim by affirming she said it is not easy to report direct discourse in the aforementioned frame. In addition to that, most of the English interjections, she analysed, can be reported using the verb “say”. Primary interjections are deemed as the most inappropriate language forms to this frame and this is ascribed to the peculiarity of their semantic content. Wilkins disagrees with Wierzbicka’s reasoning as far as the absence of the “I say–component” is concerned. He says that “those interjections that match the typical word phonology of English are indeed regarded by native speakers as words, and thus are regarded as things which are ‘said’”<sup>(104)</sup>. He goes on saying that the ones that do not comply with the frame are considered “vocal gestures” and entail an “I do component” instead. In debunking Wierzbicka’s view pertaining to their lack of the illocutionary force, Wilkins states that the inability of interjections to overly give any indication about their content and the difficulty of separating their content from their manner justifies their bad behaviour in her frame. Wilkins exemplifies with “Ow” and “Ouch” as interjections which are accompanied with the reporting verb “say” in literature. He also stands against Wierzbicka’s claim that interjections have no illocutionary purpose. He explains this particular point by relating it to conventionality. “Ow”

for example is a “conventional form” which does not need an addressee. He poses the question of why a person might use a conventional form such as “Ow” instead of a non-conventional one. Generally speaking, when a person feels pain, for example, they use an instant gesture instead of using a conventional form because the use of the conventional forms, most of the time, requires a moment for an evaluation of context and selection of the suitable form. Wilkins believes that the use of conventional forms indicates that the speaker does have a communicative purpose in mind. By applying this to the interjection “Ow”, the purpose is to demonstrate the pain felt by the speaker in a way that is demonstrated by other English speakers. Conforming to this examination, Wilkins sets the following definition:

“OW!”

I, suddenly feel a pain (in this<sub>I</sub>, part of my<sub>U</sub> body) right now<sub>T</sub> that I<sub>U</sub>, wouldn't have expected to feel. I<sub>U</sub> say “[a !]” because I<sub>U</sub> want to show that I<sub>U</sub> am feeling pain right now<sub>T</sub>[and because I<sub>U</sub> know that this is how speakers of English can show (other speakers of English) that they are in pain (in a situation like the situation here<sub>CP</sub>)]<sup>3(105)</sup>

In effect, another way to prove that “Ow!” has a communicative purpose is through scrutinising how it is used by children. Children often use other non-conventional, on-linguistic signals to show pain such as crying, screaming, etc. Alternatively, children use ‘Ow!’ not to merely express pain but also to call their parent's attention because they know this will put their siblings in a troublesome situation.

Later, Wierzbicka introduced interjections as elements which show the speaker's feelings and wants and which also possess an illocutionary force in the form of I feel something or I want something. Since interjections and other utterances do often co-occur, it is of overriding importance that their illocutionary force shows certain compatibility with that of the utterance with which they are coupled. For example, in uttering: “Ah, my God, are they still in the bus?”<sup>(106)</sup>, Wierzbicka explains, the illocutionary force of the whole is realisation regardless the fact that the utterance used after the interjection is a question, because of the use of “Ah, my God”. Wierzbicka provides the following analysis:

Oh, my God, S!

I think I now know something bad is happening (S)

I wouldn't have thought this would happen

I feel something bad because of this

I say this in this way because of this <sup>(107)</sup>.

In relation to the emotions expressed by interjections and other illocutionary devices, these emotions are specified to include the three forms: “I feel something”, “I feel something bad/good” or “I feel something bad/good towards you”<sup>(108)</sup>.

#### 4.5. The Perlocutionary Effect of Exclamatory Sentences

When studying exclamatory sentences pragmatically, pragmaticians attached much attention to examining these sentences from the speaker's perspective, disregarding the significance of scrutinising them from the addressee's own view. This justifies the present lack of literature about the effect of this type of sentences on hearers or readers. On the effect of exclamatives, for example, Olbertz states that

the perlocutionary effect of the utterance on the addressee is different from that of declaratives: in the case of declaratives the addressee is supposed to add information to his/her knowledge of the world or of the situation, whereas in that of exclamatives, the addressee is expected to take note of the speaker's affective stance towards some piece of information, which may already form part of his/her knowledge<sup>(109)</sup>.

This can be applicable to other forms of exclamatory sentences as discussed earlier in this paper that they are not about giving information to the language receiver; they are more about describing the emotions of the speaker expressed at something.

**Conclusion:**

This paper attempted to shed light on the prominent research works with respect to the description of the grammar and pragmatics of exclamatory sentences. Examining these sentences grammatically is not an easy task. This is because of the inconsistency between the views of scholars with regard to their classification in grammar, how their forms should be dubbed and the lack of literature about these sentences. This lack itself justifies the fact that the present paper showed a somewhat lopsided discussion of some exclamatory forms, the unintended dominance of *wh* - exclamatives for example. Amid this chaotic state of exclamatory sentences in grammar, researchers will continue to find themselves compelled to explain what they mean by any term related to exclamation, they use, and justify their selection of terms in research papers. In addition, such chaos remains a hindrance to English learners' perception of these constructions; these learners will be thrown into total confusion whenever exposed to exclamatory sentences. It is imperative, therefore, that grammarians establish a clear distinction between the terms and designate their meanings to clear such confusion.

By analysing exclamatory sentences grammatically, it was deduced that these sentences require a pragmatic examination as their interpretation is most of the time context - bound. Despite its significance, the pragmatic examination of exclamatory sentences was of interest to a few research studies which cast light on some forms of these sentences while neglecting others. As a matter of fact, from the initial analysis of the literature about the pragmatics of exclamatory sentences, it was noticed that most of the researchers attached much importance to *wh* - exclamatives at the expense of other types without providing any plausible reasons. Accordingly, it is recommended that more research studies should be conducted to analyse the other exclamatory forms pragmatically. In terms of their place in Speech Act Theory, the analysis of exclamatory sentences is insufficient as it does not cover in - depth discussions that are exhaustive in the sense that they enclose all the aspects of this theory. In addition, more importance should be devoted to studying the perlocutionary effect of exclamatory sentences or in other words to studying these sentences from the addressee's point of view.

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### Endnotes

- 1 -Note on page 4: The asterisk (\*) will be used to indicate the ungrammatical structures throughout this paper.
- 2 -Note on page 7: NG means Nominal Group.
- 3 -Note on page 13: U refers to the pronoun you, T refers to time, and P refers to place.