

# “Yuck, that is disgusting.” – Emotion Harmony after Interjections

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Interjections are “inserts which have an exclamatory function, expressive of the speaker’s emotion” (Biber et al. 2010, 1083). We want to examine if the expressed emotion is restricted to the interjection itself, or whether the emotion is mirrored by the subsequent parts of the sentence. This can create harmony between the expressed emotions within the sentence, which we named *emotion harmony*. To investigate emotion harmony in a sentence with an interjection, we limited our data research to primary interjections since they serve as interjections only and are easily distinguishable from other sentence parts. Secondary interjections, on the other hand, are “words that happen to share the same form with the words as non-interjections” (Jing 2017, 130) and are therefore less easily identifiable. Furthermore, following Stange’s subdivision into *emotive* and *cognitive* interjections, we reduced our research to those interjections that “express the speaker’s state with respect to the emotions and sensations they have at the time” (Ameka 1992, 113), i.e. we disregard the cognitive interjections (e.g. *Aha!*) as we investigate emotion harmony. The interjections *yuck*, *ugh*, *wow*, *oops*, *shoo*, and *haha* were chosen, which cover the emotions disgust (*yuck*, *ugh*), surprise (*wow*, *oops*), joy (*haha*, *wow*) and anger (*shoo*).

The data was retrieved from *The Movie Corpus* (<https://www.englishcorpora.org/movies/>), an online database providing movie scripts. This database is considered suitable for examining interjections since interjections appear in an environment of spoken and informal language. For this reason, interjections cannot be found in written academic texts. To answer the research question, we examined sentences beginning with the previously selected interjections in *The Movie Corpus*. We analysed the emotion harmony in the sentence by comparing the interjection’s emotional value with that of the words of the sentence found in the NRC-emotion lexicon.

**Table1.** Emotion Harmony Data for *Yuck*

Data for <i>Yuck</i> (emotion value = disgust)			
Data	Terms found in the emotion lexicon (T <sub>1</sub> )	Emotion value of T <sub>1</sub>	Emotion Harmony? (YES/NO/NA)
Yuck, that’s disgusting	disgusting	disgust, anger, fear, sadness	YES

The results showed that the percentage of emotion harmony found varied quite strongly depending on which interjection was examined – in a range from 7% (for *haha*) to 50% (for *ugh*).

While interjections always express the speaker’s emotion directly, the other words in the phrase (T<sub>1</sub>) do not necessarily do so. Therefore, the words from T<sub>1</sub> might also be found in contexts, in which the speaker’s emotion does not mirror the one expressed by the interjection or in contexts in which no speaker emotion is expressed at all. Consequently, we looked up T<sub>1</sub>’s collocates in the NRC-lexicon and checked for emotion harmony between T<sub>1</sub> and its collocates. In a final step, we looked up the collocates of the interjections in the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* and checked for the emotion harmony with the interjections, in order to compare the emotion harmony in sentences with interjections and without.

**Table2.** Emotion Harmony Data of T<sub>1</sub> *disgusting* and its collocates

<i>disgusting</i> and its collocates		
collocate	Emotion value of collocate	Emotion Harmony between T <sub>1</sub> and collocate? (YES/NO/NA)
absolutely	NA	NA
gross	disgust	YES

**Table3.** Emotion Harmony Data of interjection *Yuck* and its collocates in the *COCA*

<i>yuck</i> and its collocates in COCA		
collocate	Emotion value of collocate	Emotion Harmony between interjection and collocate? (YES/NO/NA)
soup	no emotion	NO
awful	anger, disgust, fear, sadness	YES

Our results show that the percentage of emotion harmony between interjections and their collocates as well as in a sentence following an interjection and between the words in T<sub>1</sub> and their respective collocates varied considerably depending on which interjection (*yuck*, *oops*, *ugh*, *haha*, *wow* or *shoo*) was examined. In most of the cases, however, emotion harmony occurred slightly more often in utterances with interjections and between interjections and their collocates than between the T<sub>1</sub> words and their collocates. Nonetheless, emotion harmony is not very prominent in sentence structure.

**References:** • Ameka, Felix. 1992. Interjections: the universal yet neglected part of speech. *Journal of Pragmatics* 18. 101-118. • Biber, Douglas et al. 2010. *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited. • Corpus of Contemporary American English. <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/> • Jing, Yi. 2017. English interjections as a word class: a tri-stratal description. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 7(1). 127-130. • Mohammad, Saif M. & Turney, Peter D. 2010. Emotions Evoked by Common Words and Phrases: Using Mechanical Turk to Create an Emotion Lexicon. *Proceedings of the NAACL HLT 2010 Workshop on Computational Approaches to Analysis and Generation of Emotion in Text*. 26-34. NRC-Emotion-Lexicon-Wordlevel-v0.92. <https://saifmohammad.com/WebPages/NRC-Emotion-Lexicon.htm> • Movie Corpus. <https://www.english-corpora.org/movies/> • Stange, Ulrike. 2009. *The Acquisition of Interjections in Early Childhood*. Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag.