

## ATTENTION-GETTING WORDS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS IN MODERN CHINESE

## ПРИВЛЕКАЮЩИЕ ВНИМАНИЕ СЛОВА И ИХ ФУНКЦИИ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ КИТАЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

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This paper describes one of the subcategories of interjections – attention-getting words in Modern Chinese and investigates the functions of these words. Compared with other subcategories of interjections, the attention-getting words are mainly used to get the hearer's attention in order to initiate interpersonal conversation, to get the hearer's attention on something, and to make the hearer do what the speaker wants him/her to do on purpose. According to the functions of the interjections, we classify the attention-getting words into three subcategories: greetings, demonstrative interjections and words of commands. Every subcategory shows different features and functions, we'll describe these interjections respectively in details.

*Keywords:* interjections; attention-getting words; functions; Modern Chinese; greetings; demonstrative interjections; words of command.

В данной статье описывается одна из подкатегорий междометий – привлекающие внимание слова в современном китайском языке и исследуются функции этих слов. В сравнении с другими подкатегориями междометий, привлекающие внимание слова в основном используются, чтобы привлечь внимание слушателя, чтобы инициировать межличностный разговор, привлечь внимание слушателя к чему-то, и заставить слушателя намеренно делать то, что хочет говорящий. По функциям междометий мы классифицируем привлекающие внимание слова на три подкатегории: приветствия, указательные междометия и слова-команды. Раскрываются различные характеристики и функции, мы подробно опишем эти взаимосвязи.

*Ключевые слова:* междометия; привлекающие внимание слова; функции; современный китайский язык; приветствия; указательные междометия; слова-команды

### **Introduction**

Compared to other parts of speech, there are not many members in interjections. However, interjections commonly exist in different languages of the

world and used frequently in our daily life. Interjections are the universal yet neglected part of speech [1, p. 101-118]. Interjections mainly imitate human voice and express subjective feelings, and present different characteristics in phonetics, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics. There are many definitions of interjections given by Chinese scholars. Most of these definitions are related to human emotions, like “function words that are used to express injustice” [2, p. 23], and “words that independently used to express one’s feelings” [3, p. 63]. The commonly accepted definition of Modern Chinese interjections is that words that are used as exclamation, greeting and response [4, p. 23].

Combined with the characteristics and the existing classifications of interjections, we adopt the view of Functionalist Linguistics to make a new division of Modern Chinese interjections. Taking pragmatic functions and context as standard, we classify interjections as exclamation, attention-getting word, and responding word. If we compare this classification in Modern Chinese with English interjections in terms of their function, we find that there’s a close correspondence between them. Bühler [5, p. 162] and Jakobson [6, p. 350-377] categorize interjections as expressive ones that correspond to exclamations which are used to express injustice or feelings, conative ones that correspond to attention-getting words which is used to attract the hearer’s attention on purpose, and phatic ones that correspond to responding words which are used frequently in interpersonal conversations.

### **Definition and Classification of Attention-getting words**

Among these subcategories, attention-getting words or conative interjections often appear in our daily communication. Speaker usually uses these interjections on communicative purpose. These interjections are directed at the hearers to get their attention or demand an action or response from them. According to their different functions, we classify the attention-getting words as follows: greetings, demonstrative interjections and words of commands.

From the perspective of communication function, there is an intersection between attention-getting word and responding word. Both of them can be used to initiate, maintain conversation and shift from different topics. They can be used to express emotions as well as exclamations. However, there are significant differences in the specific pragmatic functions between the attention-getting word and responding word. Generally speaking, attention-getting word is mainly to bring the attention of the hearer, thereby opening the verbal communication, or for giving things, pointing, or playing the same role as a "command", which is embodied in the intention of letting the hearer do something. If we analyze the semantic structure of the attention-getting word, it usually has affinities with the prototypical structure of speech acts [7, p. 245-271]. By contrast, responding word is to express the attitude towards the other party's words under the stimulation of the speech, or to reflect the re-

ceiving state of the speaker's information to the other party, thereby realizing the interaction.

### Subcategories and Their Functions of Attention-getting words

Attention-getting words are used to get the attention of the hearer and achieve one's aim, which are classified into three subcategories: greetings, demonstrative interjections and words of commands. Every subcategory shows different features and functions, we'll describe these interjections respectively in details.

#### Greetings

Such interjections usually have the function of opening speech communication and establishing conversational relationship, and play the role of establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. We call them "greetings". Interjections like “喂[uei<sup>51</sup>]” “欸[ei<sup>55</sup>]” “嘿[hei<sup>55</sup>]” “喏[uai<sup>51</sup>]” “嗨[hai<sup>55</sup>]” are the common phonetic forms. Here are some examples in Chinese and the corresponding translations in English:

喂，你干什么呀你？(喂[uei<sup>51</sup>], what are you doing?)

欸，你快来！(欸[ei<sup>55</sup>], come here!)

嘿！我说的你听见没有？(嘿[hei<sup>55</sup>], did you hear what I said?)

喏，你住在哪儿？(喏[uai<sup>51</sup>], where do you live?)

嗨，你干嘛呢？(嗨[hai<sup>55</sup>], what are you doing?)

“喂[uei<sup>51</sup>]” has another usage except greeting to others, which is specifically used for answering calls:

喂，请问你是安小姐吗？(喂[uei<sup>51</sup>], is that Ms. Ann speaking?)

For non-native speakers, if you don't know Chinese very well, you may think there is no difference between “喂[uei<sup>51</sup>]” and *hello* though they have different pronunciations, and “嘿[hei<sup>55</sup>]” and *hey* which have totally the same pronunciation. However, there are subtle differences between the two interjections in Chinese and in English. For example, *hello* is most commonly used in anytime and anywhere to people in different classes. But in Chinese, native speakers usually use “喂[uei<sup>51</sup>]” to greet their peers. If you say “喂[uei<sup>51</sup>]” to elders as greetings, it is impolite and disrespectful to the elder. The difference between “嘿[hei<sup>55</sup>]” and *hey* is just as that of “喂[uei<sup>51</sup>]” and *hello*. Their usages are restricted by cultural factors. People use different linguistic styles on different occasions for different communication goals. When speaker make linguistic choices, they will take communicative context and communicative partner into account. Greetings like “喂[uei<sup>51</sup>]” “欸[ei<sup>55</sup>]”

”“嘿[hei<sup>55</sup>]” “喏[uai<sup>51</sup>]” “嗨[hai<sup>55</sup>]” are usually only used in a relatively casual communication situation to handle with intimate relationships.

### **Demonstrative Interjections**

Unlike greetings, the function of the demonstrative interjections is mainly the indication function. With regard to the words with indicative meanings, there are generally three forms in the world: a. nominal, such as "this, that"; b. adverbial, such as *here, there*; c. verbal, such as *Tiens* (French "take") [8, p. 61-112], while Chinese has similar interjections like “哪[na<sup>51</sup>]” and “喏[nɔ<sup>55/53</sup>]”. On the basis of the indicating function, combining interjections in Chinese dialects and in other languages, Lu Jingguang (2005) preliminarily concluded that demonstrative interjections such as “哪[na<sup>51</sup>]” and “喏[nɔ<sup>55/53</sup>]” are primary interjections and are just used as demonstrative interjections, which is a feature of Chinese interjections.

Lu Jingguang [9, p. 88-95] refers to these kinds of interjections commonly used in Chinese dialects as “indicating interjections” and summarizes the two main usages of such words: gesture/site usage, symbolic/off-site usage. The gesture usage of the indicative interjections emphasizes the on-the-spot nature, that is, such interjections must appear in the context of face-to-face communication between the two sides, and the speaker usually use gestures or eyes as supplementary, which usually indicating the physical object. For example:

哪，原稿就在这里。

哪[na<sup>51</sup>], here is the manuscript.

灵佑在地上捡起一粒米，说：“你说没有抛散，哪，这个是什么？”

Lingyou picked up a grain of rice on the ground and said, "You said that there is no dispersal. 哪[na<sup>51</sup>], which is this?"

Example of interjection “喏[nɔ<sup>55/53</sup>]”:

甲：“你找谁啊？”

乙：“哦，我找一个姓李的编辑。”

甲：“喏，那个看着像布哈林的就是。”

A: Who are you looking for?

B: well, I am looking for an editor named Li.

A: 喏[nɔ<sup>55/53</sup>], the one who looks like Bukharin is Editor Li.

In the above cases, “哪[na<sup>51</sup>]” and “喏[nɔ<sup>55/53</sup>]” are used to indicate something and someone. In addition to indicating real things, demonstrative interjections can also indicate things, reason, situation, etc., that is, Liu Dan-

qing [10, p. 147-158] said "discourse directly", indicating what the speaker will say. Such as:

哪，哪，哪，莫怕羞了。

哪[na<sup>51</sup>]，哪[na<sup>51</sup>]，哪[na<sup>51</sup>]，Don't be so shy.

Example of interjection “喏[no<sup>55/53</sup>]”：

喏，你瞧，我就热爱真理，并且尊重那些说实话的人。

喏[no<sup>55/53</sup>]，you see, I love the truth and respect those who tell the truth.

In the above cases, “哪[na<sup>51</sup>]” and “喏[no<sup>55/53</sup>]” are used to indicate what the speaker will say.

### Words of Command

When a speaker uses such an interjection, in addition to bringing the listener's attention, the speaker mainly hopes that the hearer will make corresponding actions or reactions. We call this type of interjection words of "command." According to the different communication partners, these interjections can be roughly divided into two categories: to people and to something. To people, that is, the hearer is the person who has the ability to understand the words and can communicate with others, such as "嘘xū/shī" indicating that others on the spot should not speak loudly; To something means the hearers are animals and babies who have not yet learned languages, such as “叮”[da<sup>51</sup>] (pronounced short) to command the animal to move forward, “吁[y<sup>55</sup>]” to command the animal to stop, and to make a sound “嘘[ey<sup>55</sup>]” to encourage the child to urinate, etc.

Most of the words of command to people contain the meaning of "letting someone (do not) do something", and have the function of speech act. For example:

嘘，少聊会儿，这工作时间。

嘘[ey<sup>55</sup>]，talk less, now is working time.

The interjection “嘘[ey<sup>55</sup>]” is similar to *sh* in English both in semantics and in pronunciation. At this point, there is something in common between interjections of different languages.

### Conclusion

In this paper, it has been described and hopefully argued that one of the subcategories of interjections –the attention-getting words’ definition, classification and the pragmatic functions of every type. Attention-getting words are for a particular hearer. Speakers use these interjections to get the attention of the hearer and achieve his aim. Greetings are to establish interpersonal conversation. Demonstrative interjections are used with deictic functions.

Some of them can be used to extract hearer's information. Words of command always have something to do with speech act, especially the act performed by means of utterance, which means 'make somebody not do something'. In addition, there're special demonstrative interjections in Chinese. By contrast, demonstrative interjections are from other parts of speech in English.

From the context of the emergence of interjections, attention-getting word and responding word usually appear in dialogues: the attention-getting word, especially greetings, usually appears in the triggering turn, and the responding word is usually located in the beginning of answering turn; compared to these two categories, the context of the emergence of the exclamation is basically unlimited. It can appear in the context of non-interpersonal communication and can also appear in the context of speech. The position of exclamation in sentence is relatively flexible when it is used as an independent component.

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