

The English Interjections

A Thesis
Presented to
the English Department
"SANATA DHARMA"
Teachers' Training Institute

In partial Fulfillment
of the requirements of the
Sarjana Degree

by
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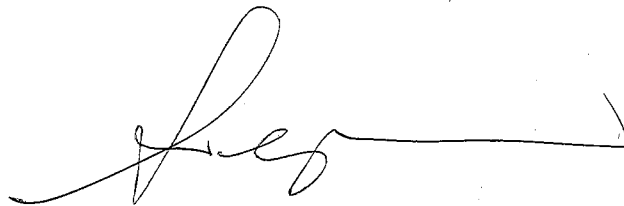
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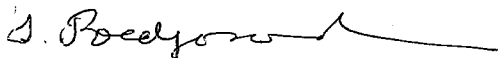
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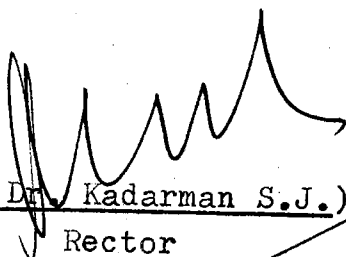
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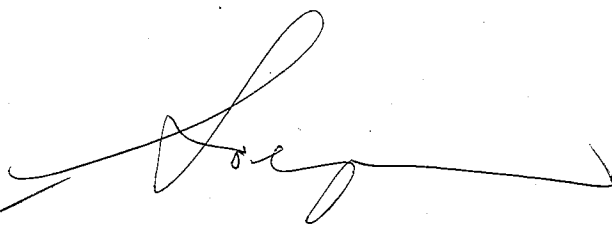
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Dr. Soepomo Poedjosoedarmo, Head of the English Department of IKIP Sanata Dharma, who has helped me determine the choice of the topic and who has given me invaluable suggestions and encouragement. I am really thankful for his time and energy spent to go through the draft of this thesis. It is through his patience and guidance that this thesis has been eventually completed.

I feel deeply indebted to Mary Anna Maloney, lecturer of the English Department, who has sacrificed her time to go through the manuscript and also brought forward invaluable suggestions during the writing of this thesis.

Finally, I am also very grateful to those who have knowingly or unknowingly helped me in one way or another to the final organization of this thesis.

Andrew Budiyanto

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Native speakers of English through their daily conversation consciously or uncounsciously emit elements of language which are called interjections. Semantically speaking, these elements are so vital that English speech lacking these would be less expressive. Being short in form, interjections are powerful indications of various kinds of human feelings ranging from the feeling of pain to the feeling of satisfaction. The impact of interjections is apparently more felt in spoken language than in written language. Nevertheless, communication in novels and short stories would be vivid when interjections used by the characters are quoted in their dialogs; otherwise, the readers might feel as if they were reading reported speech and full descriptions of various kinds of feeling the characters have made.

Being vital in language, particularly in spoken form, English interjections have long been ignored by both grammarians and linguists because they show some characteristics that are considered departures from other common linguistic phenomena, in terms of sound system and syntactical features.

This brief analysis tries to reveal several facts about interjections and why interjections should be included in a complete linguistic discussion.

CHAPTER II

VARIOUS DEFINITIONS OF INTERJECTIONS

An interjection is something which has invited various kinds of linguistical arguments about how it should be treated or classified. Traditionally, an interjection was defined as a true part of speech, yet apparently, despite its earlier clout, the interjection has been largely ignored for many decades.

Grammarians of the twentieth century have different views of how an interjection should be defined. Different books on grammar have given different pictures of an interjection. Seemingly, it would be some time yet before grammarians could possibly come to a universal agreement upon what an interjection really is.

Here are some opinions from various grammarians concerning the definition of an interjection:

J.C. Nesfield (1924) though he wrote Modern English Grammar almost six decades ago, has a rather advanced opinion. He suggested that "an interjection is not a part of speech, since it does not enter into the construction of a sentence." He said further that "an interjection is merely an exclamatory sound, thrown into a sentence to denote some strong feeling or emotion."

Horner C. House (1931), in his book Descriptive Grammar proposes that "an interjection is a word or

or a group or words interject (thrown) into a sentence to denote strong feeling or sudden emotion." However, House refuses to say that it is a part of speech. He said, "the interjection, strictly speaking, is not a true part of speech. It does not enter the construction of the sentence, nor is it grammatically related to the other words in the sentence. Therefore, it must be constructed as an independent element."

Henry Thomas (1954), in Better English Made Easy says " there are a number of words that cannot be classified under any of the seven parts of speech.¹⁾ They bear no grammatical relationship to the rest of the sentence. They are "thrown in", so to speak, in order to express great emotion. These words, classified as the eighth part of speech, are the exclamatory interjection."

R.W. Zandvoort (1957), in his A Handbook of English describes an interjection as " a natural ejaculation viewed as a part of speech."

Porter G. Perrin (1957), in his Index of English regards an interjection as subtype of adverbs in his diagram of English Parts of Speech.

Randolp Quirk (1972), in A Grammar of Contemporary English thinks an interjection as "a purely emotative word which has no referential content."

1) Henry Thomas has 7 parts of speech, namely: nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, and prepositions.

This thesis, through its analysis of interjections and their linguistic aspects, is trying to look for another definition and simultaneously reveal that interjections are so functional in language usage that they should not be ignored any longer.

CHAPTER III

F O R M

A. List of English Interjections

There are number of English Interjections which are not found in this list. Writing down an exhaustive list of standard interjections is not only a matter of patience but involves careful research of regional, ethnic specialities, and differences within English-speaking countries. For the purpose of this discussion the bulk are taken from American English. These interjections are in alphabetical order:

ah
alack
alas
argh
asshole
baloney
bastard
bitch
bless my soul
boo
bosh
bugger
by Jove
Christ Almighty
damn
damn it
damnation
darn
dear me

(the) deuce
devil
(the) devil
dirty bastard
drat it
eh
eureka
fiddlesticks
for heaven's sake
for shame
fuck
fucker
gee
gee whillikers
gee whiz
God
golly
good gracious
good Lord
goodness
goody
gosh
great
ha
ha ha
hallelujah
heavens
heck
hey

hi

hmm

holy cow

holy mackerel

holy shit

holy smoke

hurrah

hurray

hush

jeez

jerk

Jesus

jumping geehezifat

jumping geraniums

leaping lizards

lo

my

no fie

nonsense

new

nuts

oh

oh fuck

oho

oh shit

ouch

poo

poor dog

pshaw
psst
rats
say
scat
shucks
son-of-a-bitch
ta
tsk-tsk
tut-tut
well
now
wowie zowie
yay
yeah
yippy
yuck
zowie

B.1. Classification according to the number of words which are used.

An interjection is usually brief, consisting of one word to four words.

- a. One-word-interjections: A one-word-interjection is an interjection which consists of one word. Some correspond with forms used in other functions, such as Damn! (verb) and Shit! (noun); others are unrelated to the other forms in the language, and indeed may not even be related to its ordinary sound system, for instance tsk-tsk represents an alveolar click (implosive) which is not part of the ordinary English phonemic repertoire; and the forms are conventionally written: Ouch! Ugh!
- b. Compound interjections: A compound interjection consists of more than one word. It is often formed in a phrase. Many of them are artificial creations to avoid the profane use of God, Jesus, or Christ:

Gee Whiz!

Good Lord!

Christ Almighty!

Bless my soul!

Holy smoke!

For heaven's sake!

For shame!

Son-of-a-bitch!

Oh hell!

etc.

B.2. Classification according to the types of speech which are used.

J.C. Nesfield, in Modern English Grammar points out that "there are certain mood of verbs and parts of speech which can be used for interjectional purposes." 1)

When we observe the forms of secondary interjections, there are parts of speech which can be used for interjectional purposes, but their use as interjections are felt to be primary one.

- a. Nouns: Nouns are sometimes used to indicate sudden and strong feeling:

Horrors! Nonsense! Twaddle! Shame! Rubbish!
Rats! Baloney! Shit! Nuts! Asshole!

When nouns are used with this particular purpose they are sometimes modified by adjectives:

Holy smoke! Good Lord! Poor dog!

Nouns can stand alone and be used as warnings. Their interjectional meaning is felt here too:

Rain! Fire!

- b. Adjectives: Like nouns, adjectives are frequently employed to denote sudden and strong feeling of approval and disapproval:

Fine! Horrible! Impossible! Ridiculous!

1) Nouns Infinitive: To think that he should have died!
Subjunctive: Would that I had gained that prize!
Imperative: Hear! Hear! (Appause)
Noun: Dreadful sight! Foolish fellow! Fool! Dunce!
Adjectives (with some noun understood): Strange! Shocking!
Adverb: How very kind of you! How wonderful!
Pronoun: What a sad thing it is!
Conjunction: If I could only see him once again!

Strange! Weird! Great! Super! Steady! Terrific!
Fantastic! Fabulous!

- c. Verbs: When verbs are used they look like the forms of imperative:

Shut up! Fancy that! Fuck off! Stuff it!
Beat it! Forget it! Get lost!

- d. Adverbs: Horner C. House in Descriptive English Grammar says "adverbs may be independent, and stand grammatically alone, not modifying any particular word, phrase, or clause. They may suggest vague modal or illative relation or have the force of a weakened interjection, such as in:"

Well, I wonder what he means.

Well, my boy, what's the news?

Now, that's strange!

I am to do, then, as I please with the funds?

House points out that well, now, and then have here lost not only their primary meaning indicating time or manner, but they have also lost their force as qualifiers. He observes that this use is common in informal speech, especially in direct discourse of the substandard level.

Notice that there are also other kinds of adverbs which are often employed as interjections:

Forward! Away! Exactly! Absolutely! Really!
Definitely!

- e. Vocatives: The name of a person who is called is often spoken alone without other words. Being a single word in connection with the situation and an appropriate accent can convey a thought:
Jesus Christ! God! By Jove!
- f. Exclamations: An exclamation is an utterance that has an unusual energy of emphasis behind it. Such utterances range from a groan, curse, or shout to an order. They represent a response to some unexpected startling. Thus one person meeting another in the midst of a violent storm might say Some weather!, and a person encountering someone he has known at an unexpected place or time might say Hey!

But, how is an exclamation different from an interjection? Probably the following method of classification will help us resolve the confusion. An exclamation always closes with an exclamation mark, which distinguishes it in the written form from the declarative and interrogative sentences. While an interjection does not always need an exclamation mark to terminate it since a mild interjection is followed by a question mark:
eh? oh? yeah? huh?

Exclamations range from simple utterances Oh! or Ouch! to fully developed sentences like: All my jewels have been stolen! or He wants to be president!

H.W. Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage clearly shows how interjections relate to exclamations. Fowler observes that in grammar exclamations are:

1. interjections, as Oh!
2. words or phrases used as interjections, as Heavens! Hell! By Jove! My God! Golly!
3. sentences containing the exclamatory what and how, as What a difference it makes! What I suffered! How I love you! How pretty she is!
4. wishes proper, as Confound you! May we live to see it! God forbid!
5. ellipses and inversions due to emotion, as Not another word! If only I could! Much care you! Pop goes the weasel! A fine friend you have been!
6. apostrophes, as You miserable coward! You little dear!

Now no confusion, accordingly, would arise over how interjections enter the domain of exclamations. Undoubtedly, interjections are parts of exclamations. In other words, interjections are linguistic elements which have sparked the formation of exclamations as they are now. The linguistic forms of (3), (4), (5), and (6) can be regarded as the "sisters" of interjections in the sense that they are more developed and have come into existence after undergoing some syntactical developments.

- g. Compressed sentences: Paul Roberts in his Understanding Grammar (p. 234) says " it is sometimes difficult to

distinguish interjections in general from other parts of speech." He describes, for instance, Great! as an adjective instead of an interjection (That is) great! Baloney may be viewed as noun: (That is) baloney! Roberts also says that "the exclamation scat, when addressed to a cat as a verb is the imperative mood.

Probably some people feel that words like Help! Nonsense! Rubbish! are abbreviated words or compressed sentences (Help me. That is nonsense/ rubbish); but it must be confessed that it is . . . difficult to know where to draw the line. If Nonsense! is not an interjection, is Rats!? Broadly speaking we perhaps may say that if such words are so felt to have their interjectional purposes they should be classified as interjections. By this method of classification, the Rats! would be an interjection, for we do not think of it as meaning That is Rats or May you have rats, anymore than we think of the blasphemous Blimey! as being a corruption of May God blind me!, though actually it is. This leads to the question of compound interjections. Group of words like By Jove! Great Scott! Good Gracious! Heaven's sake! God damn it! have the force of interjections. Many of them are artificial creations or what we have known as euphemisms, to avoid the profane use of the names of God, Jesus, an Christ, and sometimes the devil and hell. We may call them compound interjections. (See III.B.1.b.) But again the line of demarcation between these and

compressed sentences is very indefinite, so that classification will be largely a matter of personal and individual feeling. The average person probably would not be aware that when he says good bye he is using a compressed form of May God be with you, and perhaps not many more will realize that farewell means May you fare well; but with Good Morning and Good Evening we have obviously passed outside the sphere of the interjection into that of compressed sentences (May you have a good morning/evening). It is, however, not a great consequence. So long as we know what is meant by the term interjection and can recognize the obvious interjections when we meet them, that is all that is important.

When we talk about classification according to the types of speech which are used there are two kinds of interjections to be distinguished from one another, namely: primary interjections and secondary interjections.

Primary Interjections: Primary interjections are interjections that contain sounds not used otherwise in speech. Some of these sounds are not used otherwise in English and consequently are difficult to represent in writing: tsk-tsk is an inadequate representation of the cluckling sound made to indicate disapproval. Tsk-tsk is an alveolar click (implosive) which is not a part of the ordinary English phonemic repertoire. Tsk-tsk used here, therefore, should not be read as a sequence of the letters

t, s, and k.

Primary interjections belong to the oldest form of a spoken language and represent the most primitive type of communicated idea.

Ah! Alas! Pooh! Boo! Bah! Ow! Ooh! Wow!
Ha! Alack! Oho! Hurrah! Whew! Pshaw! Sh!
Hist! Stt! Tut-tut! Wahoo! Phew! Huh! Eh?
Hmmm? Yeah?

Secondary Interjections: Secondary interjections are words in common use as other parts of speech employed with the effect of interjections. These can be recognized in oral speech by the tone with which they are uttered. In written speech, the exclamation marks that follow them show them to be ejaculations. (See II.B.2.)

Rats! Great! Fuck off! God! etc.

Pronunciation:

Randolph Quirk in his A Grammar of Contemporary English points out that "some of the interjections have phonological features which lie outside the regular system of the language. Whew!, for instance, contains a bilabial fricative ($[\phi u]$, $[\phi :]$); Tut-tut! consists of a series of alveolar clicks, (11)."

Charles C. Fries in The Structure of English says "some of interjections have conventional spelling:"

Oh! (with both egressive and ingressive air).

Oh oh! Zowie! Goodness! Damn! Damn it! Damnation!
Thunderation! Pshaw! My God! Gosh! Darn! The
devil! The deuce!

Fries says that "those interjections are short and usually heavily stressed and frequently they are uttered without vibration of the vocal cords. The intonation patterns usually end with descending contours, heavy to light stress. Ouch!, for instance, produced with a strong friction from ingressive air between the upper and lower front teeth and rather definitely to situations in which sudden pain is experienced, a prolonged o-h or /m/ is produced when the pain continues for a longer time."

Damn! Damn it! Thunderation! Pshaw! Oh darn!
The devil! usually appear in situations characterized by anger or disgust. A repetition of / a/ with glottal stop preceding each syllable is the laughter that occurs in situations that appear humorous. Ah! is in origin a mere gasp of pain or surprise. Oh! is a resonated outburst of breath, almost like a howl. Pooh! is a violent repulsion from the lips as offensive substance or odor. Hmmm! is a deliberate preparation for speech, much the same as clearing throat. Ha! Ha! is a nervous quacking of the diaphragm. Hush! (Sh!), Hist! (St!), Tut-tut! are made by sucking the breath from the tip of the tongue placed against the upper teeth. The resulting

familiar sound is imperfectly represented by the usual spelling of the interjection. Hurrah! is an imitative word (possibly, with strongly trilled r, of the sound of a drum) conventionalized into an expression of joy. A vocative in connection with the situation and an appropriate accent convey a thought, as in John! spoken in loud tone and prolonged vowel to call him into the house, or John! spoken quickly with a short vowel and angry tone when we scold him.

B.3. Classification according to how interjections are written.

The degrees of strength or weakness of interjections in the written form are shown by how they employ punctuation marks of (!) or (,).

1. An interjection that shows strong feeling is followed by an exclamation point. The next word begins with a capital letter.

Whew! That last one was hard.

Hush! I can't hear the speaker.

Oh! You scared me.

2. An interjection that shows mild feeling is followed by a comma. The next word does not begin with a capital letter (unless it is always capitalized).

Oh, is that the answer?

Well, I'm not surprised.

Oh, I can hardly believe it.

Note: An interjection is not, as a matter of course, followed by an exclamation mark, which should be used only if the word is intended to be uttered in exclamatory tone; and all interjections are not. Sometimes the question mark is required: Eh? Oh? (note the difference of meaning between Oh! and Oh?). Eh? is often, and Oh? is sometimes used interrogatively:

You're joking, eh?

He refused to see me. --- Oh?

There are interjections which express questions in the speaker's mind. Such need question marks to terminate them:

Yeah? Huh? Well? Hmmm? Really?

Confusion sometimes arises between O and Oh. It is a sound rule that O should be used only to introduce a vocative case (archaic):

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet.

O Mary, go and call the cattle home.

O is also used as an introductory word to a sentence, not expressive of any feeling but to draw attention to or to emphasize what follows (also archaic):

O Brignall banks are wild and fair.

O young Lochinvar is come out of the west.

For all other purposes, however, Oh should be used (Oh, that hurts.) Note too that though Oh may take the exclamation mark, O never does; nor is it disjoined by a comma from the word that follows it.

CHAPTER IV
DISTRIBUTION

In terms of their positions in sentences, interjections can be in three different places:

- A.1. Interjections generally initiate sentences ¹⁾:

Ah, that's perfect.

My! That's a beautiful dress.

Oh! I didn't see you there.

2. Interjections may also occur in the middle of sentences:

Jack, oh, may have been delayed.

A large number of men, say, a hundred, are working on the railroad.

3. There are interjections which appear at the end of sentences ²⁾:

Look at that, wow!

You're joking, eh?

We came too late, alas!

- B. To What Structures does an Interjection Belong?

W. Nelson Francis in his grammar book Structures of American English proposes that there are four basic types of syntactic structures; no matter how complicated a structure may be, it can always be analyzed in terms of these four:

1) and 2) are called prefixed and suffixed interjections respectively by R.W. Zandvoort in A Handbook of English Grammar.

1. Structures of Modification; with two component parts, head and modifier.
2. Structures of Predication; with two component parts, subject and predicate.
3. Structures of Complementation; with two components, verbal element and complement.
4. Structures of Coordination; consisting of equivalent grammatical units joined often but not always by a special kind of function word.

The biggest question arising from this thesis is whether interjections can possibly enter one of these classifications (or any other) at all. Many grammarians think that interjections have no grammatical relationship to the rest of the sentence. In a sentence diagram an interjection is placed on a separate line that it is not connected to the diagram because many grammarians consider it an independent element ¹⁾ in a sentence.

Richard D. Mallery in Grammar, Rhetoric and Comparison believes that an interjection lacks syntactical relationship in a sentence diagram.

Oh, is that you?
Interj. V Prn Prn

Oh, I can hardly believe it.

Oh (interjection)

I | can believe (Subject + Predicate)

1) George O. Curme in Syntax tries to define what is meant by an independent element. "An independent element is a word, phrase, or a clause which is not related grammatically to the other parts of the sentence, or which stands alone without sustaining any grammatical relationship to some word understood."

Is it true that an interjection is an independent element which cannot enter syntactical relationship?

Interjections - Structures of Modification

According to W. Nelson Francis in his Structures of American English, the two components of a Structure of Modification are a HEAD and a MODIFIER, where meaning serves to broaden, qualify and describe the head.

If we have a closer look at an interjection which is part of a sentence we would somehow see some syntactical relationship between the interjection itself and the other words in the sentence.

Ouch! I hurt my finger.

Ouch seems like the head, whereas I hurt my finger looks very much like the modifier.

Ouch! I hurt my finger.

Head Modifier

In that sentence, I hurt my finger serves to describe or broaden the emotional expression of Ouch. In fact, an emotional reaction like Ouch also denotes various pains affecting various parts of human body:

Ouch! I hurt my hand.

Ouch! You're pulling too hard.

Ouch! That's hot.

In the example above, I hurt my finger serves to

modify Ouch and simultaneously define the location of the pain.

Other examples are given to see whether this theory is an acceptable one.

Oh, is that you?

Oh here is an expression of surprise. Like Ouch this emotional reaction can refer to a great number of occasions in which one is surprised. In this sentence, is that you? modifies Oh or qualifies the degree of the surprise. The speaker is surprised because he meets a person he knows in an unexpected place or time. And is that you? distinguishes it from other surprises, like:

Oh, I don't believe it.

Oh, is that the answer?

Oh, I forgot my notebook. etc.

It is interesting to note, however, that an interjection occurring at the end of a sentence as in: You're joking, eh? has an opposite function.

You're joking, eh?

Head Modifier

eh in this sentence seems to broaden the intensity of the meaning of You're joking. Without the presence of eh the sentence would be less emphatic. Therefore, You're joking is the head, while eh is the modifier.

Another example: Look at that, wow!

Head Modifier

The interjection wow broadens the degree of the speaker's mind at something unexpected which has just happened.

An internal interjection functions like that of a final interjection:

A large number of man, say, a hundred, are working on the railroad.

say in this sentence qualifies a large number of men as an utterance which does not give any confirmation. The speaker just cannot figure out the exact number of the men who are working on the railroad. Therefore, say serves as a modifier.

Jack, oh, may have been delayed.

Before the speaker says may have been delayed, the listener can, at any rate, predict that the rest of the sentence will be expressing worry, dilemma, etc. Oh, therefore, has some syntactical effect as the modifier.

This phenomena also shows its valid ty to secondary interjections appearing in three positions in sentences.

Jesus! I've left my purse.

Jesus is expressed as a reaction to a dilemma which belongs to the speaker as he has left his purse.

So, I've left my purse serves to modify the interjection Jesus. The utterance I've left my purse is

essential in the sense that it distinguishes it from other emotional reactions. There are obviously a great many problems which can arise, and I've left my purse modifies Jesus, which is an expression of a reaction to a problem. Of course, Jesus can be followed by an unlimited number of utterances expressing various kinds of problems, but in the example above the problem is all clear, namely, the speaker has left his purse.

Thus, from this brief analysis we can deduce that an initial interjection functions as the head to the whole sentence/utterance, whereas a final or internal interjection functions as the modifier to any utterance which precedes or follows.

Yet, more time and more thorough observation should be devoted to look for better ways to treat interjections in their relationship to the English Structures.



CHAPTER V

MEANING

Interjections are elements of language which are capable of denoting various kinds of feeling ranging from feeling of anger to agreement. Being short in form, interjections are often more directly and efficiently expressive than other linguistic forms. All these expressions seem to be spontaneous speech reaction to situations suddenly confronting the speakers. For instance, many English people assume that it is natural to say Ouch! when they are hurt. English interjections, however, in their particular forms, are conventional and limited to the speakers of English. The speakers of another language are often surprised that their own language has different conventions in this matter, even with the primary interjections. And interjections have "meaning" in the sense that they convey a message or mood which are overheard by a listener, and the hearer gains some impression of the kind of the situation to which the speaker is reacting. There are at least fourteen meanings of primary interjections. They are:

1. anger:

boo

poo

2. disagreement:

pshaw

poo or pooh

3. surprise:
 - hey
 - wow
 - oh, ooh
 - ha
4. commands:
 - shoo
 - hush, ssh
5. satisfaction/pleasure/happiness:
 - yay
 - wahoo
 - yippy, yippie, yippee
 - zowie, wowie zowie
 - hip hip hurray
6. disgust:
 - yuck
 - ugh
 - blah
 - phew
7. expressing a question in the speaker's mind:
 - yeah?
 - huh?
 - well?
 - eh?
 - hmm?
8. disappointment:
 - heck
 - alas

- alack
9. pain:
ow
ouch
10. reacting to a problem or dilemma:
hmmm
oh
argh
11. fear/uneasiness/nervous anticipation:
awoh
uh oh
12. disapproval:
tut-tut
tsk-tsk
13. attention/greetings:
hi
hey
hallo/hullo
14. agreement:
yeah
ah

Most of the primary interjections are not real words, but only expressions of sounds.

EEK - a typical sound accredited to a woman reacting to the sight of a mouse or rat.

hist }
 psst } they are made by a person to
 zzsst } inconspicuously attract another person's
 isst } attention.

ah }
 yum } sounds of expressing pleasure.
 umm }

eh? }
 mm? } question noises.
 hmm? }
 huh? }

argh } dismay, dissatisfaction, offensive to the senses.
 ugh }
 blah } disgust (sight, taste, smell).
 phew }
 shsss }

aw } pain noise which is probably a shortened
 form of ouch.

aw oh }
 uh oh } indicate that a problem has risen.

Some of the other primary interjections, though really only sounds, are written and used so frequently that they seem like they should be treated as recognized words. Such words are found in English dictionaries.

ho
 ha
 wow
 ouch
 yeah
 whew
 hey
 pshaw
 tut-tut
 hurray

Another thing to look at is onomatopoeia. A number of words seem to imitate, or have been created to suggest certain sounds for written usage and pronunciation:

Bang! Grrr! Splash! Crack! Quack!

For these words, of course, there is a special relationship between meaning and pronunciation. The English words bow-wow and moo, for example, resemble to some degree the sounds made by dogs and cows respectively. These words are established in the English Vocabulary and will be found in English dictionaries. It is possible to make new ones to fit specific sounds, and they are often necessary, especially in fiction. But sometimes it is better to use the conventional forms even when they are not exact (bang, moo, grrr) rather than make new ones, which may do nothing except puzzle a reader.

To keep up with the progress of time people inevitably need some new interjections which did not exist before. They are just to meet the demand of activities which the primitive people did not perform, as in political and collegiate life. These forms are slogans and college yells.

Slogans: A slogan is a striking and easily remembered phrase used to advertise something or to make clear the aim(s) of a group, organization, campaign, etc.

Down with the Shah!

Nixon out!

Up with the workers! etc.

College yells: A college yell is a particular kind of shout or cheer. A college yell is usually made up of interjections.

Har-vard! Har-vard! Har-vard!

Rah! Rah! Rah!

Rah! Rah! Rah!

Rah! Rah! Rah!

Har-vard! Har-vard! Har-vard!

Meanwhile, people are not satisfied with the primary interjections alone. We have certainly created an enormous number of new interjections in the course of our life. Chapter VIII will talk more about this innovation.

The list of the primary interjections will be written down again to be filled with new interjections which have entered modern usage. These are called secondary interjections. (See III.B.2.)

1. anger:

blast
darn
bugger
son-of-a-bitch
hell
fuck

2. disappointment:

baloney
fiddlesticks
nonsense
my eye/foot/ass
bullshit
bull
the hell
God forbid

3. surprise:

for heaven's sake
heavens
goodness
bless my soul
hallelujah
eureka
say

say now
by Jove
my
my my
fancy that
imagine
gosh
golly
good gracious
good Lord/God
heavens to Betsy

4. commands:

stuff it
forget it
beat it
fuck off
flake off
scat
more
shut up

5. satisfaction/pleasure/happiness:

goodie/goody
neat
great
oh boy
right on

6. disgust:

oh brother
shit

7. expressing a question in the speaker's mind:
really?
8. disappointment:
rats
nuts
shucks
damn/damn it/God damn it
(oh) shit/fuck/hell
9. pain:
damn/damn it/God damn it
(oh) fuck/hell/shit
10. reacting to a problem or dilemma:
gosh
golly
gee whiz
holy smoke/cow/mackerel
dear me
goodness
goodness gracious
jeez
Jesus
Jesus Christ
(oh) God
oh brother
heavens to Betsy
yee gads
11. fear/uneasiness/nervous anticipation:
jeez
Jesus

Jesus Christ

God

holy shit/fuck

(oh) shit/fuck

good gracious

good Lord

Christ Almighty

yee gads

12. disapproval:

for shame

13. agreement:

right

right on

14. reacting to somebody else's problem with whom you have no sympathy:

tough

tough toenails

tough titties

The meanings of interjections of spoken form are also shown in reported speech. However, W. Stannard Allen in his Living English Structure says "the exclamations are not often reported in spoken English, so too much time should not be wasted in hunting for the best expression." He says further that reporting it is usually best achieved by a circumlocution reflecting the spirit

of its original.

Here are some examples taken from Allen's book:

1. "Oh dear! I've torn my frock."
She exclaimed bitterly that she had torn her frock.
2. "Oh! I've cut my finger."
She cried out that she had cut her finger.
3. "Good Gracious! It is impossible."
He exclaimed loudly that it was impossible.
4. "Ugh! How I hate touching sticky things."
She gave an expression of disgust, and said how she hated touching sticky things.
5. "Tut-tut! You're a naughty girl."
He reproved her gently, telling her what a naughty girl she was.
6. "Hooray! We're going to have a holiday tomorrow."
They shouted with delight because they were going to have a holiday the next day.
7. "By Jove! That was a good race."
He exclaimed with admiration at the race.
8. "Good Heavens! Look at the time! I've forgotten all about my cake in the oven."
She gave an exclamation of horror when she saw the time, saying she had forgotten all about her cake in the oven.

Note: For some people the term "uneducated" might be an awkward and unclear category for it can mean a truck driver, or a housewife who never went to college. For this analysis "uneducated" will focus on rude usage.

Some children may use harsher language. So age alone is not a determinant. The social and economic backgrounds are important too. A sociolinguistic study of children's language alone would be a large task. The same is also true of older people, and all the age groups. Usage really depends on many factors, as class in society, education, profession, religion, etc.

	Used by:	Children	Teen/College	Parental age:	men	women	Elderly people:	men	women	Conservative	Uneducated
<u>ANGER:</u>											
blast										✓	
darn		✓	✓		✓					✓	
bugger											✓
son-of-a-bitch			✓		✓	?					
heck			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	
hell			✓		✓	✓					✓
fuck			✓		✓						✓
<u>DISAGREEMENT:</u>											
baloney		✓								✓	
poo or pooh		✓								✓	
fiddlesticks									✓	✓	
nonsense						✓				✓	
pshaw										✓	
my eye/ass 1)/foot			✓		✓	✓				✓	
bullshit			✓		✓	?		✓			✓
bull		✓				✓					?
the hell			✓		✓	✓					✓
god forbid					✓	✓				✓	
<u>SURPRISE:</u>											
(for) heaven's sake					✓	✓					
heavens					✓	✓				✓	
(my) goodness					✓	✓				✓	
bless my soul								✓	✓	✓	
hallelujah								✓	✓	✓	
eureka										✓	
say					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
say now					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
by Jove											✓

1) conservative people will not likely say my ass.

	Used by:		Parental age:		Elderly people		Conservative		Uneducated
	Children	Teen/College	men	women	men	women			
hey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
wow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
oh or ooh	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
my or my my				✓			✓	✓	
fancy that							✓	✓	
imagine				✓			✓	✓	
gosh	✓							✓	
golly								✓	
ha	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	
good gracious				✓			✓	✓	
good Lord				✓			✓	✓	
God		✓						✓	✓
good God				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
heavens to Betsy				✓		✓	✓		✓
eeyow	✓	✓						✓	
<u>SATISFACTION:</u>									
goodie or goody	✓			✓					
yay	✓	✓		✓					
hurrah	✓	✓	✓	✓					
wahoo	✓	✓							
yippy or yippie	✓								
bravo				✓		✓	✓		
more			✓	✓		✓	✓		
zowie	✓	✓							
wowie zowie	✓								
neat	✓	✓	✓	✓					
great	✓	✓	✓	✓					
super	✓	✓	?	?					

	Used by:	Children	Teen/College	Parental age:	men	women	Elderly people:	men	women	Conservative	Uneducated
oh boy		✓	✓								
right on		✓	✓		✓	✓					
far out		✓	✓		?	?					
<u>DISGUST:</u>											
yuck		✓	✓								
ugh		✓	✓		✓	✓					
blah		✓	✓								
phew		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		
oh brother			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		
<u>PAIN:</u>											
ow		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
ouch		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
damn					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
damn it					✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
God damn it					✓	✓		✓	?		✓
(oh) fuck			✓		✓						✓
(oh) shit			✓		✓	?					✓
<u>DISAPPOINTMENT:</u>											
rats		✓	✓		✓	?		✓		✓	
nuts		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	
shucks								✓	✓	✓	
damn			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
damn it			✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
God damn it			✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
(oh) fuck			✓		✓						✓
(oh) shit			✓		✓			✓			✓
(oh) hell			✓		✓	✓		✓			✓
(oh) heck		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓

DILEMMA:

	Used by	Children	Teen/College	Parental age:	men	women	Elderly people:	men	women	Conservative	Uneducated
Gosh	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	
golly	✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	
gee whiz	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
yee gads					✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
gads	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
hmmm	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
oh	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
holy smoke/cow/mackerel	✓					✓			✓	✓	
dear me						✓			✓	✓	
goodness						✓			✓	✓	
goodness gracious						✓			✓	✓	
jeez		✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Jesus		✓			✓	✓		✓			✓
Jesus Christ		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
God		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
oh brother	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
argh	✓	✓								✓	
heavens to Betsy						✓		✓	✓	✓	

FEAR:

jeez/geez		✓			✓	✓		?		✓	
Jesus		✓			✓	✓		✓			✓
Jesus Christ		✓			✓	✓		✓			✓
(oh) God		✓			✓	✓		✓	?		✓
holy shit		✓			✓	?		✓	?		✓
holy fuck		✓			✓			?			✓
(oh) shit		✓			✓	?		✓			✓
(oh) fuck		✓			✓	?		?			✓
good gracious						✓		✓		✓	

	Used by:									
	Children	Teen/College	Parental age:	men	women	Elderly people:	men	women	Conservative	Uneducated
good Lord				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Christ Almighty				✓	✓		✓	✓		
aw oh, eh o	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
yee gads		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
<u>DISAPPROVAL:</u>										
tut-tut							✓	✓	✓	
for shame							?	✓	✓	
tsk-tsk							✓	✓	✓	
<u>COMMANDS:</u>										
stuff it	?	✓		✓						✓
forget it	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		
shoo		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
beat it	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
flake off				✓	✓					
fuck off		✓		✓			?			✓
scat	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
hush					?		✓	✓	✓	
shut up	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		

QUESTIONS:

yeah?

huh?

well?

eh?

hmmm?

really?

These are hard to classify because they are very general usage. They are not group specific.

CHAPTER VII
CHANGES AND INNOVATION

A. Old forms that are no longer used.

J.C. Metcalfe in The right way to improve your English says according to literature of a bygone age, and to pseudo historical novels, his ancestors were in the habit of saying Zounds! and Gadzooks! We notice that today people never hear them any longer. In fact, some more interjections are considered old-fashioned now.

Here are some examples of older interjections which have lost popularity both in speech and contemporary writing:

alas
alack
skidoo
twaddle
lo
damnation
bugger
for shame
by Jove
Great Scott
no fie
botheration
devil
the deuce
pshaw
damnation

Note: lo and behold is still used for story telling. Bugger is still heard among British English speakers. By Jove and devil are probably still used by older British English speakers. We still hear great scott and devil used by older speakers. Interjections which show disapproval like tut-tut and tsk-tsk are also old fashioned. We can only imagine old people using them now. Pshaw is from old literature. We can only hear it used by people who are familiar with old literature. They are using it for fun, not as an everyday occurrence. There are some other interjections that may be already headed out. For instance, right on and far out which are 1960's college age slang terms.

B. Reasons for the loss and innovation of interjections.

Interjections are not restricted by strict syntax or usage within grammatical guidelines. They are, therefore, freer and more subject to change. Particularly, a lot of slang forms are extremely influenced by social attitudes. They reflect that change most quickly of all. Also, much of the popularity or life of these forms is based on who uses them. For instance, interjections with religious roots or connotations, which are great in number, are on the way out. We do not see teenagers or college students using, for instance, Good Lord. Religion at the present moment

does not enter into the mainstream of the younger life, at least in the United States. (Though there has been a return to religion among the young in all kinds of forms in the last ten years). Good Lord is being relegated to the realm of older people whose religion was a more significant force. Perhaps they will take such interjections with them when they die.

Look at the words the deuce and devil. They are no longer commonly heard. One thought that makes sense to us is that those words were used when the idea of the DEVIL had a more potent impact on people's lives. Today, with the religious fervor on the wane, people have less stake; they take less stock in the notion of a DEVIL. The word, therefore, does not carry any weight; it is no longer a threat. It reflects an idea that has become less important.

Certainly the relaxation of social taboos can be seen in the up and coming usage of sexual (fuck) and scatological (shit) references. It is not at all clear, however, whether those are the choices young people will continue to make or use as they grow older with families and positions of importance. But obviously among teen/college group restrictions are falling away. Is that because of the weakening of the family unit or the decreased respect parents have from their children? Perhaps it reflects a

desire among the young users for independence or for less parental authority, or maybe it can be tied to overall weakening of religious teachings and controls. Part of that too can be attributed to young people often choosing to go against parental examples, as a way of establishing their own identity outside of the parents' world, group, or era.

These are a large selection of words that have a relation to religion:

*for heaven's sake
 *heaven's sake
 *bless my soul
 *good Lord
 God
 *good God
 God damn/it/damn/damn it
 (oh) hell
 *holy smoke/*cow/*mackerel/shit
 jeez/Jesus/Jesus Christ
 *Christ Almighty

Though damn, hell, God, and Jesus are still used, all the words listed above with (*) are used less frequently.

As the basic religious foundation crumbles or falls away, so does the popularity of words with religious reference. As a result, they sound old-fashioned today. Damn and hell are more widely

used by parental age people (35 and above) than by younger people. By contrast, in that same group, shit and fuck ... though they express similar feelings ... may be too distasteful for them to feel comfortable using.

Due to the greater abandoning of speech taboos among young people fuck and shit are more widely used, and perhaps represent in the loss interest in religion, or the lost importance of religion in that group of people. Despite the reduction (abolition?) of restraints on speech, however, many young people would agree that shit is a word that can be used with more abandon than fuck, since the last word still has the heaviest public reaction and disapproval. In many situations fuck can still be inappropriate, offensive, and reflect poorly on the person who uses it. Among some college students in London shit is considered so bad that they are obliged to avoid using it. Therefore, everytime they are about to say it they quickly form their mouths and say sugar, (sh --- sugar!). Basically, it becomes an interesting study of sociolinguistics, which words are chosen by which groups of people ... and why.

Now, if we talk about children's language, surely there are children's interjections that we are not aware of. In terms of children, the media has a powerful effect. A popular TV personality, for instance, will have all the kids imitating his/

her expressions, language, and mannerisms. We will hear, for example, the sounds Superman or Batman makes come to life on a playground. For children the media (especially TV) is a powerful force in creating new language styles or fads. But it also induces a fast change in popular styles. What is popular one year will fade away with a new year's TV star.

Evidently cartoons also have a significant, if not lasting, impact on interjections. Printed cartoons as well as movie cartoons depend on short dialogs and actions. They are usually simple enough in their language that they reach a broader audience and wider readership than books. Children naturally enjoy reading cartoons long before they are pouring over some 500 page novels. These children soak up a lot of jargon, slang, and language used in cartoons. Noise expressions like argh, grrr, wham, and blah appear frequently and this helps spread usage among children ... who may affect their parents' vocabulary.

Another thing to look at is alliteration, namely an expression developed from people playing with words and sounds for fun. They would certainly not be widespread in use, or perhaps would normally be limited to writing and literature only. Some of them are:

Leaping lizards! Jumping geraniums! Jumping geehozifat!

There are some expressions which are euphemisms. (See III.B.1.b.) Some words are used instead of the more rude forms, or because taking God's name in vain is considered improper in some groups. So a group of "safe" words are available for people who find harsher words unacceptable language.

Gosh or oh Gosh is a variation of God or oh God, heck would be a polite form of hell, jeez or geez would be less strong form of Jesus. We could probably take that further and say that heavens to Betsy has the intention of oh hell. Some parents told her daughter to say oh heavens instead of oh hell, and God bless us instead of God damn it.

This analysis is far from being complete. A more thorough observation should be made of English language users. A questionnaire would be one way of surveying English native speakers for more detailed information on interjection usage. The questionnaire would be filled by English native speakers who, for instance, stay in Yogya. They could give us their ten favorite interjections (like a hit parade in a radio). Of course, we would need to know their age, profession, economic level, the place where they were raised, ethnic background, what importance religion plays in their lives now, and anything else we could think of that might shed some light on why certain groups use certain interjections. The form of the questionnaire could be like this:



Name:

Male/Female:

Age:

Profession:

Ethnic background:

Religion:

Address/Country:

Your parental bans on certain speech:

What words do you consider taboo now?

If you have any children:

1. What restriction do you place on their speech?
2. What interjections, if any, have you picked up from their vocabulary?

Please write down ten interjections you use most frequently: 1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION AND DEFINITION

A. Some facts about interjections.

Having looked at interjections from various points of view, there are some interesting facts which emerge from this study:

Absence of morphological paradigm:

Both primary and secondary interjections lack paradigmatic aspect:

interjections:

argh

zowie

nuts

rats

fiddlesticks

non-interjections:

argh_s

zowie_s

nut

rat

fiddlestick

Unreplacable by gender distinctions:

Interjections which employ words belonging to certain gender group are not replacable by another sexual group:

interjections:

son-of-a-bitch

oh boy

oh brother

God

non-interjections:

daughter-of-a-bitch

oh girl

oh sister

godess. 1)

1) Mary, Mother of Jesus! is commonly heard among Catholics in Spanish and Italian-American families in particular.

Uninterchangeable with other words:

Interjections are fixed in their forms and will lose their meanings when they are interchanged even with words which have closer meanings:

interjections:

rats
shit
Jesus

non-interjections:

mice
dung
Joshua

B. An interjection is not a part of speech.

Many nineteenth-century linguists designated interjections as the earliest words. They were sure that there was such a thing as the first word, and they even theorized concerning what part of speech that first word must have been.

Was it a noun?

They thought primitive man learned to point to a tree, a woolly mammoth, or a flint and give to each that particular grunt which was the great-great grandfather of our word.

Or is a verb the oldest word?

It is easy to recognize the usefulness of the verb to primitive man in giving commands, transmitting messages, and generally showing action.

Or was it an adjective?

Few if any linguists have favored the adjective

as the earliest sort of word, though a primitive mother might easily say sh-h-h, or its equivalent, meaning quiet to her baby.

But today linguists refuse to dwell along the relative claim to priority of the various parts of speech. We just cannot know what word was first said by men, there is neither television nor teleaudition to the past. It would be a waste of time tracing it back. But one thing is clear: an interjection should not be regarded as a part of speech.

Perhaps in searching for an understanding of interjections it would be useful to examine the cries or calls of animals. A hurt animal will emit a distinctive cry corresponding to the human ouch. Is ouch a part of speech? When someone cries ouch, what he says is, in fact, something like That's painful or It's hot. And obviously every interjection with or without any other utterances following expresses, or implies, a meaningful message.

Consider the warning cluck of a hen to her chicks. Of course it can be interpreted variously as a noun, DANGER, as a verb, BEWARE, as an adjective, UNSAFE, or as preposition, OFF. But we just cannot label it as a part of speech since it is not clearly one part of speech as opposed to any other. Completely formulated, perhaps what the hen is saying is Danger is approaching,

and you had better make yourselves as scarce as you can, as soon as possible. All those twenty words are implicit in the single note. The squawk of the hen is then the great-great grandmother of the sentence, not the word.

We notice that the oldest form of the sentence contained only one word, which, however, was a complete sentence, not a word or a part of speech in its modern sense. A word is a later development in language growth than a sentence. And this oldest type of sentence still survives in the case of interjections.

Thus, human interjections which are like those of animal calls should be regarded as sentences, not words. Clearly, each interjection is short, but being short it still indicates a complete thought though it lacks a formal subject and predicate. Short terse expression was not only characteristic of primitive speech when language was not developed but it is widely used today. People do not always use full sentences. In many situations, conversations bound with Heavens!, Damn!, Hell! and fragments of sentences like Hardly, Can he really? Could be, But John does, True belong to a language just as much as full sentences do, and therefore would have to be included in a complete linguistic discussion; no one should propose to leave them out.

So, what is an interjection?

Definition:

An interjection is short outcry to express pain, surprise, anger, pleasure, or some other emotion which belongs to the oldest form a spoken language and represents the most primitive type of sentence, and though it is often used alone as an independent sentence, it is often embodied in the modern sentence with some syntactical relation to the rest of the sentence.

C. To what extent interjections should be taught at Indonesian secondary schools.

At Indonesian secondary schools the English interjections do not commonly consume a substantial amount of time for discussion, despite the fact that the English interjections are also found in most grammar books. Teachers of English are rather reluctant to provide enormous examples of interjections and elaborate their usage. Apparently, the official syllabus does not give a special section on the English interjections. The fact that many interjections are rude, profane, and often vulgar has probably underlied that reason. Nevertheless, students should be taught, though in a very limited way, some aspects of the English interjections to enable them understand the different meanings contained and recognize them when they appear both in reading

and speech. The English interjections are just an unseperable part of the English language and are widely and continuously used. To totally ban from teaching them would only make the students unaware of the very existence of these essential linguistic elements.

From the list of interjections we find in Chapter III (pp. 5-8) we can select a number of interjections which may be taught at Indonesian secondary schools. Since the English teaching in Indonesia puts the main emphasis on reading, the selection would be strictly limited to interjections which are most frequently found in reading materials, particularly in short stories and plays. Here are some of them:

Ah!

Good gracious!

Ouch!

Ugh!

My God!

Rats!

Christ Almighty!

Damn!

Nonsense!

The primary objective of this teaching is to enable the students understand the various distinct meanings of those interjections. This can be best achieved by giving examples of sentences which contain interjections, as:

Ah, that's perfect.

Ouch! I hurt my finger!

The meaning of each interjection given can be adequately explained. For instance, ah is an expression of pleasure or satisfaction. When a native speaker of English is pleased or satisfied he may, therefore, say Ah! Ouch is an expression which denotes a pain suffered by the speaker. Etc.

A comparative method which compares the English interjections with the Indonesian interjections can also be attempted, though they do not by no means provide exact similarities in meanings. At this stage, however, they students would not discuss the very detailed differences or similarities.

<u>English:</u>	<u>Indonesian:</u>
ah	nah
ouch	aduh
oh	oh
my God	ya Tuhan
wow	amboi
damn	keparat
nonsense	omong kosong

Obviously, not every English interjection can be matched with its possible equivalence in Bahasa

Indonesia, but as we would not likely provide the students with great many interjections, the above match, therefore, would suffice.

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