

# The Ground and the Archetype: two situations from which to describe the conversion and derivation of interjections

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*This article aims at offering an analysis of interjections and some items called “expletive slot fillers” in terms of word-formation processes. We will offer a semantic description of interjections within a Cognitive Grammar framework. We will make use of the Script-Theory to offer a semantic description of adjectives derived from interjections. We will display some of the operations underlying the derivation and conversion of interjections. We will show that primary interjections are produced by a word-formation process that we call “reshaping” and will show that this word-formation process can be observed at the phonemic, lexical and syntactic level. At the syntactic level, this word formation process serves to produce “expletive slot fillers” (e.g. taboo words like damned and fucking), we call it “Syntactic Adjustment” (SA). Finally, we will compare two different types of adjectival forms: true adjectives derived from interjections (like yucky and yummy) on the one hand, and interjections that undergo the SA process (like damned and fucking), on the other hand. The SA consists in integrating interjections to syntactic structures, generally thanks to the addition of a past or present participle morpheme ([damn] + [-ed] + NOUN).*

**Keywords:** *interjections, word-formation processes, open-class words, inferences*

## 1. Introduction – items that are labelled “interjections”

Interjections seem to resist traditional linguistic descriptions in many respects: they are said to be morphologically unanalyzable, since they do not take inflections (they are called “non-words” by Ameka 1992a, “vocal gestures” by Wierzbicka 1992, “paralinguistic responses cries” by Goffman 1981, and described as “monomorphemic” by Evans 1992), and only rarely take derivational morphemes: they can take transpositional affixes, as we will see in this paper with *yucky* and *yummy*, and can take evaluative affixes like in *whoopsie* (studied by Lockyer 2014, 2015, 2018). Interjections are also said to be syntactically isolated and more generally asyntagmatic<sup>1</sup> (Ameka 1992a; Nübling 2004; Ameka & Wilkins 2006; Chomsky 2008; Stange & Nübling 2014; Stange 2016; Andrason & Dlaki 2020). Semantically, they are said to be empty and non-referential (Cuenca 2000) and their meaning is described as “procedural” (Wharton 2003a, 2003b; Blakemore 2011), “ineffable” (Saussure & Wharton 2019), since they do not “profile” anything “onstage” in the narrow sense of the term (Langacker 2008: 476): “the prominence [expressives] receiv[e] is not that of a focused object of description” (ibid.) and are “maximally subjective expressions” (Verhagen 2007). In a nutshell, interjections are negatively defined: *asyntagmatic, non- or mono-morphemic, meaningless*. Yet, most pragmatic markers, i.e. words, expressions or structures that are distinct from the propositional content but that signal the speaker’s potential communicative intentions (Fraser 1996), also fulfill these negative criteria, and as a consequence, what the label “interjection” designates varies a lot in the literature : some consider that filler words and hesitation markers like *uh*, *er* and *uhm* are interjections (like Clark & Fox Tree 2002), while other do not (O’Connell & Kowal 2005);

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<sup>1</sup> Yet, as pointed out by Andrason (2022: 1), this asyntagmatic characteristic *may hold true for the interjective prototype and its canonical instantiations, [but] need not be universal*.

some regard routines like *hello* as interjections (Lockyer 2018), while others do not (Fraser 1996); some include taboo words used in exclamations like *shit* in the category of secondary interjections, while others do not (Evans 1992; O’Connell & Kowal 2005); Ameka (ibid.) includes in the category of interjections attention getters like *water! fire! help!*, while Langacker (2008: 477) takes them to be similar to vocatives, since they are names and nouns recruited for interactive use and rely “on the conceptual substrate to indicate the desired course of action with respect to the overtly mentioned element”. In other words, even though these attention getters are not used descriptively, they are not interjections because they do profile some element onstage, even in the narrow sense of the term, contrary to interjections. Thus, despite the growing interest for interjections in the literature, there is still a debate as to which items are to be included in this category. In our article, we propose to include yet another type of words, namely “expletive slot fillers” (a term used by Ljung 2011: 22), since, as we hope to show, they are produced by a lexicogenic matrix that is quite similar to the one that produces primary interjections, and which we call here the “reshaping”.

This article aims at offering a description of interjections and expletives in terms of word-formation processes. In the first part, we will study inferences to distinguish interjections that can derive and convert open class words from interjections that cannot, and to understand what makes the recategorization possible. First, we will offer a semantic description of interjections within a Cognitive Grammar framework. We will then make use of the Script-Theory to offer a semantic description of adjectives derived from interjections. Finally, we will display some of the operations underlying the derivation and conversion of interjections. In the second part of this article, we will show that primary interjections are produced by a word-formation process that we call “reshaping” and will show that this word-formation process can be observed at the phonemic, lexical and syntactic level. At the syntactic level, this word formation process serves to produce “expletive slot fillers” (e.g. taboo words like *damned* and *fucking*), we call it “Syntactic Adjustment” (SA, henceforth). Finally, we will use the previous descriptive accounts to compare two different types of adjectival forms: true adjectives derived from interjections (like *yucky* and *yummy*) on the one hand, and interjections that undergo the SA process (like *damned* and *fucking*), on the other hand.

In this article, we will use the term “primary interjections” to refer to words that can only be used on their own in a non-elliptical manner (Wharton 2003a, 2003b), like *yuck*, *yum*, *ouch*, *wow*, *oh*, *ah*. We will use the term “secondary interjections” to refer to words that can be used on their own in an exclamatory manner like primary interjections, but which also have an independent meaning in the lexicon as open-class words or proper names (*damn*, *hell*, *shit*, *fuck*, *Jesus*, *God*...). Ameka (1992a) calls them “interjections at the sentence-level” because these words are only interjections when they are used on their own in a non-elliptical manner, like an independent sentence. What is more, we will only study here “emotive interjections”, as opposed to “conative”, “cognitive” and “phatic” ones (Ameka 1992b; Cuenca 2000), since they are regarded in recent literature as the most representative members of the category (Stange 2016; Andrason 2022).

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Interjections in Cognitive Grammar

In Cognitive Grammar (CG, henceforth), interjections are described as a type of expressions that mostly provide information on the “ground”, i.e., the speech situation, the context: the speaker, the addressee, and their interaction (Verhagen 2007; Langacker 2008). According to Verhagen, while most expressions profile both elements of the ground (the speakers) and elements of the stage (things and events that are referred to in the discourse), interjections are “maximally subjective expressions” (Verhagen 2007: 62), since only elements of the ground are profiled by these items, as opposed to “maximally objective expressions”, which only profile elements of the stage, as the label “bathroom”<sup>2</sup> on a door, for instance (ibid.: 60-61).

To this extent, interjections are peripheral expressions, i.e., their linguistic status is marginal. Langacker (2008: 475) uses the term “expressives” to label a vast number of items, among which interjections. In the category of expressives, one can find routines (*hello, hi, thank you*), vocatives, short answers like *yes, no, maybe*, and primary and secondary interjections. The common point that all “expressives” share is that none of these items can perfectly be described by the canonical “viewing arrangement” that speakers construe when they observe and talk about a situation viewed from a fixed time and space (Langacker 2008: 475):

*Because their essential import resides in facets of the speaker-hearer interaction, these might well be regarded as special kinds of speech acts. What makes them special is their relationship to the situation described—or rather their nondistinctness from that situation. They deviate from the canonical arrangement with stating, questioning, promising, and so on, where the interaction constituting the speech act is separate from the expression’s objective content. Instead, their “content” is a facet of the interaction itself. In this respect they resemble performatives, where the profiled event and the speech event are the same [...]. Unlike performatives, however, they focus on only one aspect of the interaction, whose status as the linguistically coded occurrence is necessary rather than incidental. They are thus nonclausal and cannot serve as descriptions of external occurrences. [emphasis mine]*

Among expressives, interjections are the most abstract items, since they do not profile any concept onstage, in the narrow sense of “profile” (not even a single element, unlike vocatives), which singles them out as exceptions (Langacker, 2008: 476, original emphasis):

*What do expressives profile? Perhaps nothing, at least in a narrow sense of the term. An expression’s profile is the onstage focus of attention, objectively construed by definition. But at least from the standpoint of the speaker, expressives are not about*

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<sup>2</sup> Let us add that Verhagen defines “maximally objective expressions” as “common nouns and verbs considered in isolation”, not in interaction (ibid.: 61):

*Extreme cases at one end are those in which the meaning of the expression does not in any respect involve an element of the ground and which may thus be labeled maximally “objective.” [...] One might think of “common nouns and verbs considered in isolation (for example lamp, tree, ...)” (Langacker 1990b: 9) or a label like “bathroom” on a door.*

*viewing and describing onstage content. In using one, the speaker is either performing a social action or vocally manifesting an experience—rather than **describing** a scenario, he **enacts a role** in it. For the speaker, then, the action or experience is subjectively construed. While an expressive evokes and calls attention to it, the prominence it thus receives is not that of a focused object of description. If we stick to the narrow definition, therefore, expressives are principled exceptions to the generalization that every expression has a profile. [original emphasis]*

Indeed, all grammatical categories correspond to a type of profile (a thing, a process, a relation, etc.), but interjections do not seem to have a clear-cut profile type. Yet, it is usually always possible for the addressee to interpret an interjection, either thanks to the context or thanks to the form of the interjection itself. For example, *ouch* generally signals the speaker's physical pain, not the speaker's hunger or anyone else's pain (even when used empathetically). These two pieces of information (the implicit subject and the implicit argument) make it possible for interjections to contain a semantic theme and a semantic rheme, which might be why they are often described as “sentence equivalents” in the literature (Ameka 1992a; Cuenca 2000; Wharton 2003a, 2003b). For instance, *ouch* can be paraphrased *I feel pain*. Thus, a primary interjection like *ouch* somehow selects the cognitive domain of pain, even if neither the concept of pain nor the participants are objectively construed onstage. The questions that we will address in the next sections are the following ones: how can a cognitive domain be selected if nothing is profiled onstage? And how does it impact the derivation of new words?

## *2.2 Inferences and metonymies, the consequence for the cause*

To understand how interjections select cognitive domains, one needs to take two aspects of their meaning into account: the fact that their meaning is reconstructed via INFERENCES and the fact that their meaning METONYMIC (the consequence for the cause).

As Wharton states in a Relevance Theory perspective, “interjections communicate attitudinal information, relating to the emotional or mental state of the speaker” (Wharton 2003: 82). When combined with a sentence, they encourage the construction of higher-level explicatures, while when used alone, the procedural information on the speaker's attitude and mental state is derived by the hearer via implicatures (ibid. 2003: 83).

Indeed, interjections have no conceptual meaning, but a procedural one (Blakemore 2011), since they are partly natural and partly coded stylized natural reactions<sup>3</sup> (Wharton 2003b). The coded part provides attitudinal information on the speaker and makes it possible for the addressee to INFER a meaning. More specifically, what the addressee infers is the REASON WHY the interjection was uttered, since interjections are interpreted as stylized vocal REACTIONS. Thus, the inferred meaning is metonymic, and corresponds to the consequence (or the effect) for the cause: I say *ouch* (consequence) because I feel pain (cause); I say *oh* (consequence) because I'm surprised (cause).

In this paper, we will offer a description of these metonymic inferences to see how interjections evoke cognitive domains, to better understand how they can derive open-class words.

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<sup>3</sup> The sound symbolic properties of primary interjections have been extensively studied in the literature, especially by Darwin (1965 [1872]), Jakobson and Waugh (2002 [1979]), Ameka (1992a), Wierzbicka (2003 [1991]: 313–315), Kryk-Kastovsky (1997), Wharton (2003), Ward (2006), Benczes (2019), Hinojosa *et al.* (2020), Dinegemanse (2021), among others.

### 2.3 Inferences

To describe the metonymic inferences that interjections encourage the hearer to construct, we will make use of the Script Theory, since it is specifically designed to study inferences, and will then adapt it to Langacker's conceptual framework in a viewing arrangement.

The capacity to make inferences corresponds to a capacity to FILL GAPS, to reconstruct missing pieces of information from a text or from a situation. This cognitive capacity consists in establishing a link between two situations: one in which the speaker is present (the current speech situation, or the "ground", which we call here Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>) and a prototypical situation, called a "script" in the Script Theory (which we call here Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>). A script is a virtual scenario where events take place, where participants interact, and which contains both elements of the speech situation and other elements that are missing from the speech situation, as explained by Wassmann (2001: 2083):

*The information theory approach forces the anthropologist to be explicit. Exactly that has to be made explicit which normally remains implicit. This additional information is called 'script.' It is the tacit knowledge enabling us to also understand incomplete descriptions and suggestions: **we automatically add what is missing by an inference process.** Every situation requires specific knowledge and accordingly there are scripts for 'eating in a restaurant,' 'playing football,' 'attending a birthday party.' But not only our actions are based on scripts, but our language as well, [...] [emphasis mine]*

The cognitive capacity to use a prototypical situation to reconstruct missing elements and thus derive inferences has been studied by Tomkins within the Affect Theory framework (1962), which then became the Script Theory, developed by Schank and Abelson in the late 1970s, and further studied in psychology in the following years by Anderson and colleagues (1976, 1977), Warren, Nicholas and Trabasso (1979), Garnham (1979), Reynolds and colleagues (1982) ; Whitney and Kellas (1984), Graesser and Clark (1985), among others, and later on confirmed by studies in neuropsychology on semantic dementia (Funnell 2001). The memory of events is stored within "scripts" that contain knowledge about prototypical places, objects, roles associated with events. Scripts are also called "Memory Organization Packets" (MOP), since they serve to organize highly abstract pieces of information from scenes belonging to different classes of situations. The scripts structure the storage of information in the memory and are constantly updated with the contact of new information. As explained by Schank and Abelson, they are stylized everyday situations (Schank & Abelson 1977:41):

*A script is a structure that describes appropriate sequences of events in a particular context. A script is made up of slots and requirements about what can fill those slots. The structure is an interconnected whole, and what is in one slot affects what can be in an other. Scripts handle stylized everyday situations. They are not subject to much change, nor do they provide the apparatus for handling totally novel situations. Thus, a script is a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation. Scripts allow for new references to objects within them just as if these objects had been previously mentioned; objects within a script may take "the" without explicit introduction because the script has already implicitly introduced them.*

The most representative and well-known example of script is the succession of typical actions and events that take place at the restaurant, like entering in the restaurant, finding a seat, reading the menu, choosing and then ordering a meal, eating, etc. A script contains several scenes called

MTRANS and PTRANS (for “mental transition” and “physical transition”, respectively), which are themselves composed of simplified actions and events called “primitive acts”, as explained by Wassmann (2001: 2084):

*If the typical characteristics of a situation are grasped, hence the stereotypical, the standard-like is stressed but raised to a higher level of abstraction; we can talk about schemata and cultural models (which partly replace the older term of the folk model). All the knowledge we acquire, remember, and communicate about this world is neither a simple reflection of this world nor does it consist of a series of categories (as ethnoscience assumed), but it is organized into different situation-relevant, **prototypical, simplified sequences of events**. We basically think in simplified worlds: ‘... cultural models are composed of prototypical event sequences set in simplified worlds’ (Quinn & Holland 1987: 32). [emphasis mine]*

Routines and politeness formulae are also part of the primitive acts that compose the scenes of a script, since some of them are expected by speakers as parts of a “conversational contract” (Fraser 1990: 233), which is part of their “metapragmatic awareness” (Verschueren 2000). As far as interjections are concerned, they are also deciphered via inferences, which means that prototypical scripts are necessary for their meaning to be inferred. The aim of the next section is to represent such scripts in a Cognitive Grammar framework.

#### 2.4 The billiard ball model

Let us now offer a simple description of these scripts in Langackerian terms. We will show that this model shines a light on different kinds of conversion and derivation. Let us start with the billiard ball model.

Langacker describes events in terms of “actions chains”<sup>4</sup> involving role archetypes (like agents and patients) in a “canonical event model”. These role archetypes in action chains are pre-linguistic notions, subsequently conceptualized as semantic structures in what Langacker calls the “default coding”, where trajectors and landmarks are the abstract linguistic versions of agent and patients:

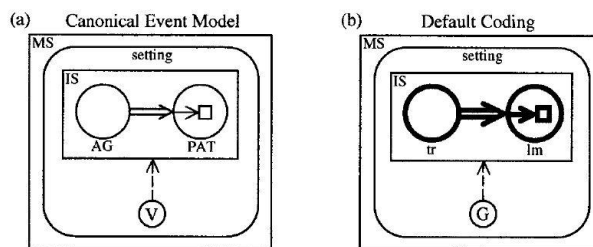


Figure 1: Langacker’s representation of the canonical event model and the default coding (Langacker 2008: 357)

The pre-linguistic notions of the canonical event model are organized in a conceptual archetype called the “billiard-ball model”, which corresponds to our cognitive capacity to conceive our

<sup>4</sup> Langacker’s notion of action chain has also been used by Pelyvás (2006: 141) to distinguish root modality from epistemic modality, as well as by Sweetser (1990), who presents the difference between root and epistemic modality in terms of forces and barriers.

environment as series of action chains, i.e., scenes where participants interact with one another by exchanging energy (Langacker 2008: 103):

*We think of our world as being populated by discrete physical objects. These objects are capable of moving about through space and making contact with one another. Motion is driven by energy, which some objects draw from internal resources and others receive from the exterior. When motion results in forceful physical contact, energy is transmitted from the mover to the impacted object, which may thereby be set in motion to participate in further interactions.*

To describe the scripts containing interjections, we will use the terminology and the symbols present in the billiard-ball model and will include them into a viewing arrangement. Let us start with what we call “rich interjections” (we will define this term later in this article: *yuck* is the LAST EVENT that takes place in the following script:

- 1. A participant (an agent, AG) tastes some food (the patient, PAT)
- 2. The food provokes a feeling of disgust, it becomes a stimulus (ST)
- 3. The participant becomes an experiencer (EXP)
- 4. The experiencer becomes an agent who utters: “*yuck!*”

This script can be schematized in an action chain as follows:

AG⇒PAT/ST⇒ EXP/AG⇒ *yuck!*

The initial object is the one initiating the forceful contact, called the “head” of the action chain: here, the head is the agent (AG) tasting the food. The first rightward arrow represents the action of tasting (the agent tastes the food); the food is both a patient (PAT) and a stimulus (ST). The next arrow represents the effect that the stimulus (the food) produces on the agent, who becomes the experiencer (EXP): the food tastes bad, the experiencer is disgusted; the experience is also an agent (AG), who utters *yuck!* as a reaction to the stimulus. The last arrow represents the last action.

Let us call this script “Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>” for “Archetypal Situation” and add it to what Langacker calls a “viewing arrangement”. A viewing arrangement contains a ground (the speech situation, with the speaker and the addressee, which we call here Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>) and a stage, which is a virtual place where a semantic representation can be formed, as shown in Figure 2:

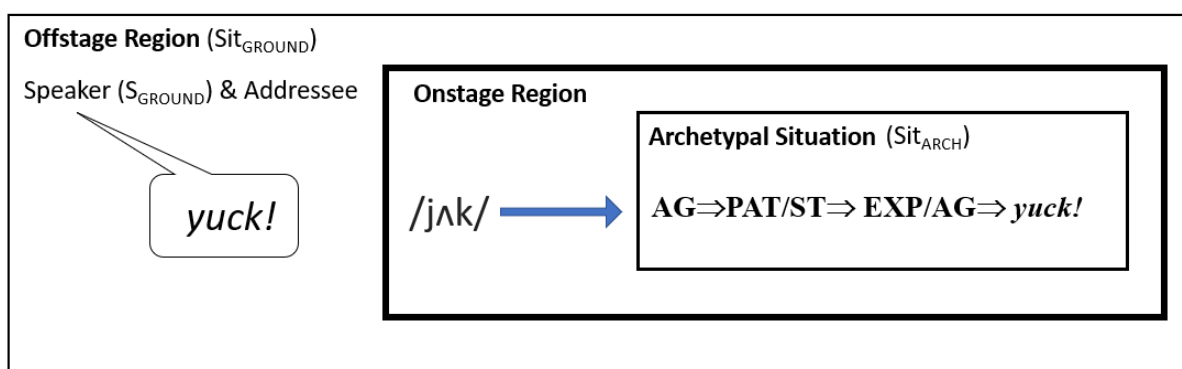


Figure 2: Viewing arrangement of the script with “yuck” in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>

The external frame represents the limits of Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>, also called the “offstage region” in Cognitive Grammar, it corresponds to the situation where the speaker (called here “S<sub>GROUND</sub>”) utters *yuck* (we have placed *yuck* in a speech balloon to distinguish it from the representations of expressions onstage). The first internal frame (in bold) represents the stage, called the “onstage region”. When S<sub>GROUND</sub> (the speaker) utters *yuck*, the interjection is not profiled onstage (“expressives are principled exceptions to the generalization that every expression has a profile” Langacker 2008: 476), which is why we have only placed its phonological form (/jʌk/) onstage. Instead of profiling a thing or a relationship<sup>5</sup>, the interjection POINTS TO A SCRIPT, Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>, as indicated by the blue arrow. Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> is represented in the last internal frame: it contains an action chain with *yuck* as the last element of the script. Let us add that in the script, only a prototypical abstract participant utters the interjection *yuck*: this participant is an “Archetypal Speaker” (S<sub>ARCH</sub>)<sup>6</sup>. We have not included it to the representation of Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> in Figure 2, but let us keep in mind that S<sub>ARCH</sub> is the abstract participant uttering *yuck* in the Archetypal Situation, Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>.

Before we start using these concepts to study the derivation and conversion of interjections, two kinds of interjections must be distinguished: those which have a lexical content that can be understood thanks to the primitive acts in the scripts (we call them “rich interjections”) and those which have a meaning that maximally depends on the speech situation, and which therefore can only be understood thanks to the context<sup>7</sup> (we call them “poor interjections”). “Rich interjections” include items like *yuck*, *yum*, *ouch*, *wow*<sup>8</sup> and “poor

<sup>5</sup> Expressions can profile things or relationships, according to Langacker (2008: 67).

<sup>6</sup> As pointed out by the reviewer, the intersubjective sharing of the feeling might entail the presence of an ARCH addressee. Let us imagine a situation where a speaker is impressed by someone, and lets them know it. The speaker can compliment the addressee (by saying *you are amazing*, for instance), who is in turn expected to say *thank you*. But in a similar situation, if the speaker decides to say *wow*, what is the addressee expected to reply? Neither *thank you* nor any routine would fit in this context, since one cannot offer a formal or standardized reply to an interjection. This might be due to the fact that the addressee of an interjection has no specific, clear-cut, or well-defined role in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>, while the addressee of a routine might have some specific role in the action chain. All the same, the fact that one can utter an interjection when one is alone (which might not be the case of routines, or at least, to a lesser extent) also shows that the addressee plays a different role with interjections. Finally, this is why we claim that the interjection is the last event of a script. Thus, even though the addressee of an interjection might be present in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>, further research is still necessary to provide a precise description of an ARCH addressee.

<sup>7</sup> Concerning the context, as pointed out by the reviewer of this article, *discourse is the space in which construal takes place, and therefore all its factors can affect the way of construal*.

<sup>8</sup> It is true that one can say *ouch* out of empathy, but this does not call into question the previous remarks, because in this specific case, the speaker shares the same feeling as the person who is truly experiencing pain, as pointed out by Langacker (2008: 476, footnote 18, emphasis mine): “This does not prevent me from saying *Ouch!* by way of empathy if I see someone else bump his head. **I then identify with the experiencer** and emulate his likely reaction based on a mental simulation of the experience.”

What is more, an interjection can be used ironically, but again, this does not cast doubt on the previous remarks: the fact that any linguistic expression can be used ironically does not entail that the expression is not based on an archetypal situation. On the contrary, we consider irony as a case of deviation, i.e. when Sit<sub>GROUND</sub> deviates from Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>: if someone says *thank you* after being insulted, one can infer the irony thanks to the mismatch between Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> (the situation when *thank you* is supposed to be uttered) and Sit<sub>GROUND</sub> (the situation when *thank you* is currently uttered). All the same, if interjections can be used ironically and can be interpreted as such, it is precisely because of a mismatch between the expected context of occurrence (Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>) and the actual context of use (Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>).

Finally, we would like to add that interjections can also trigger an abstract interpretation (for instance, when *ouch* expresses an emotional rather than a physical pain), but it does not cast doubt on the previous remarks



interjections” include some primary interjections (like *oh* and *ah*) and all secondary interjections (like *God! Jesus, Hell, fuck!!*).

As one can notice, some rich interjections can derive adjectives and adverbs, and the meaning of the new lexeme directly depends on the meaning of the interjection, which will be considered here as a lexical base:

- *Yuck* > *yucky* (that makes one say *yuck* = which has the property of tasting bad),
  - *Yum* > *yummy* (that makes one say *yum* = which has the property of tasting good).
  - *Ouch* > *ouchy* (that makes one say *ouch* = which has the property of being painful)
- Poor interjections, on the contrary, cannot derive adjectives or adverbs:
- *\*helly*, *\*helling*<sup>9</sup>>> *\*that makes one say hell =?*

What makes it possible for rich interjections to derive adjectives and adverbs seems to be the fact that the form (the interjective sign itself) selects a cognitive domain via a script in which the interjection is a stylized vocal reaction caused by some feeling or sensation. The cause of the reaction (disgust, for *yuck*) being itself part of the script, it can serve as a semantic base for the adjective *yucky*. The reason why poor interjections cannot derive new lexemes seems to be the fact that the form itself does not select a specific cognitive domain: apart from the fact that they correspond to a vocal reaction, the specific cause of this reaction is not part of the script (one does not know what makes people utter *hell*, since it can be a whole range of feelings, like happiness, surprise, disappointment, anger, etc.). The absence of a specific cause in the script

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either, since the emotional interpretation can very well be a case of grammaticalization (e.g. *to break one's heart*), where the abstract meaning derives from the archetypal situation.

<sup>9</sup> As pointed out by the reviewer of this article, one might ask how we can argue for or against whether the noun or the interjection scheme serves as input. Indeed, one may find adjectives like *fucky* and *helly* in some dictionaries, which would refute our hypothesis if they were derived from the interjections *fuck* and *hell* respectively. Yet, there are several reasons to believe that these adjectives are derived from open classes, not from interjections.

First, the interpretation of the resulting adjective must be taken into consideration to answer this question. For *helly* and *fucky*, if the interjections were the inputs, then their meaning would be hard to grasp. What would be the role of the suffix, and what meaning would it add to the base? The same question would hold even if *-y* was just a transpositional suffix (adding no extra meaning to the base, but merely changing its grammatical category).

Second, in the dictionary quoted by the reviewer, *fucky* is defined as “when something is so goddamn **fucked** that no other word can describe it”, where *fucky* is presented as a synonym for *fucked* (past participle, derived from the **verb** *to fuck*, and it would be very risky here to defend that *fucked* was derived from *fuck*-interjection). In another definition of the same dictionary, *fucky* is defined as “One who receives a fuck”; here, *fucky* seems to be derived from *fuck*-noun, as revealed by the definition.

If one compares *fucky* with more frequent adjectival swearwords, like *shitty*, one can see that this adjective is derived from *shit*-noun. Indeed, *shitty* means “Of or resembling shit” (Urban Dictionary). If *shitty* was derived from *shit*-interjection, it would mean that which has the property to make someone utter *shit!*. All the same, one could only defend that “*fuck*”-interjection was the base of the adjective *fucky* if the latter meant “something, a situation, an event, that has a property to make the speaker say *fuck!*”, but there is no such evidence.

If, in the present article, we had defended such a hypothesis, we would be reproached for doing so, since *-y* is a **denominal** morpheme; Consequently, some extra argumentation would be needed to defend that, in this very case, *-y* derives an adjective from an interjection. The derivation of interjections is so exceptional that there is no such thing as a “desinterjectival morpheme”.

Yet, we claim that *yucky* is derived from the interjection *yuck* (*yucky* means “something that makes someone say *yuck!*”), but this is merely because there is no noun in the **general** lexicon (we leave the “outskirts” of the lexicon aside here) from which to derive this adjective (a noun like *a yuck* which would mean “something disgusting”), while there are verbs and nouns in the general lexicon from which to derive *fucky*.

blocks the derivation. Only the context (the way they are pronounced and other elements of the ground) can help the addressee interpret them.

### 3. Interjections that derive adjectives

#### 3.1 *Derivation and conversion*

##### 3.1.1 *Rich interjections deriving adjectives*

*Yuck* is a rich primary interjection, which means that the object initiating the forceful contact (the head of the action chain) between the stimulus and the experiencer in  $Sit_{ARCH}$  is specified. And because the first interaction is specified, it is possible to derive an adjective from *yuck*. Indeed, the resulting adjective refers to a property that corresponds to the first interactions of the action chain: *yucky* = “having the property of provoking a reaction of disgust”.

In CG, adjectives profile atemporal relationships. An adjective only has one focused participant, a trajector, but no focused landmark (Langacker 2008: 115). A degree adjective situates the trajector “vis-a-vis a scale representing the degree to which it exhibits a certain property” (ibid.: 114). Figure 3 represents Langacker’s schematization of a degree adjective (the circle is the trajector, *tr*, the square is the non-focal participant and the arrow represents the atemporal relation):

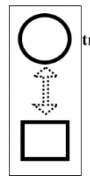


Figure 3: A degree adjective (adapted from Langacker)

We have included it to the schematization of the derivation of *yuck* in Figure 4.  $Sit_{ARCH}$  is the semantic base from which the adjective *yucky* is formed, as indicated by the curly bracket under  $Sit_{ARCH}$  in Figure 4:

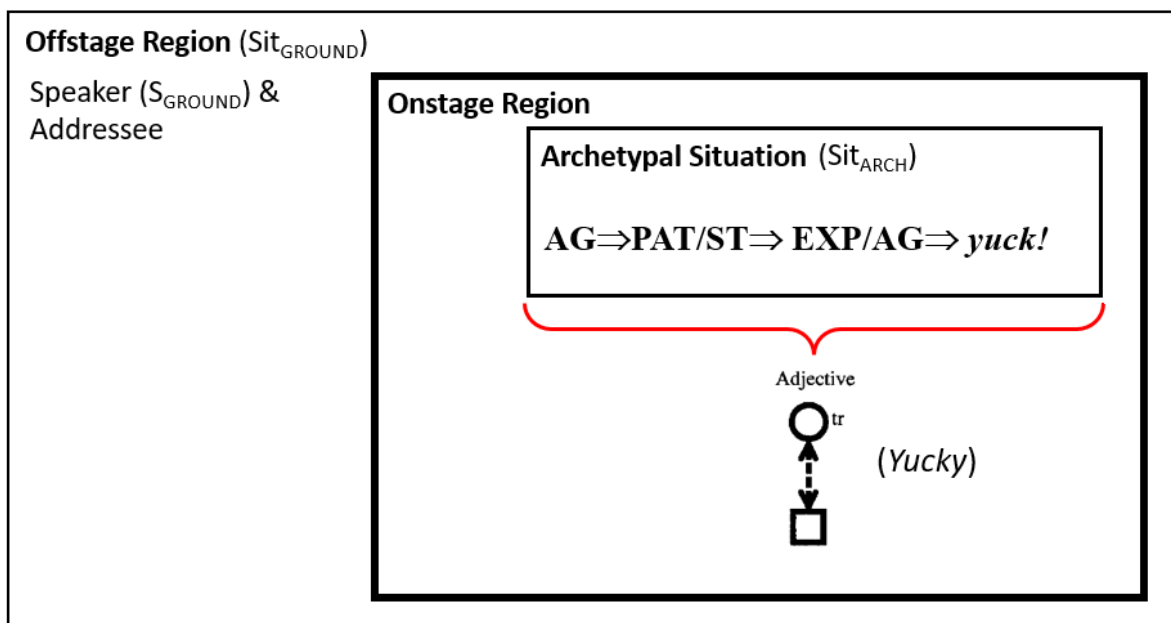


Figure 4: Derivation of “yucky” in a viewing arrangement

### 3.1.2 Poor interjections deriving adjectives and verbs

Poor interjections like *oh* and *God* as well as interjectional locutions like *oh God* are part of scripts where the first interactions are not specified, i.e., the interjective sign itself does not contain any element clearly indicating the kind of stimulus that could have caused the reaction of the speaker. Indeed, there are many reasons why someone can utter these interjections (happiness, surprise, anger, disappointment, etc...). Only the context can provide such information. Consequently, no adjective can be derived from them since no specific property can be inferred from the form of these interjections.

Yet, it is perfectly possible to derive verbs from poor interjections and poor interjectional locutions: for instance, the verb *to Oh God* in the sentence “what is she *Oh Godding* at?”. What is the difference between verbs and adjectives that makes it possible for poor interjections to derive verbs but not adjectives? Our hypothesis is that these verbs are not derived from Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> but from the other situation of utterance, Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>, as we will see in the following section.

### 3.1.3 Rich interjections to verbs - two possibilities: the lexical derivation and the metalinguistic conversion

Let us first consider conversion (zero derivation) and compare two kinds of verbs converted from interjections: *to Oh God* and *to wow*.

*To Oh God* means “to SAY *oh God*”, it is produced via what we call a “metalinguistic conversion”: it contains the verb TO SAY, since the verb refers to the act of uttering an interjection (in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>). Benveniste (1966) calls this kind of verbs “délocutifs” (*delocutive verbs*) or “verbes dire” (*say verbs*). Their meaning is generally based on routines and politeness formulae (which he calls “énoncés formulaires”, since they are fixed discourse sequences that cannot be modified by speakers). Fruyt (1997) defines them as verbs that fulfil two criteria: they are morphologically built on a discourse sequence *x* and they mean “to say *x*”. Brekle (1976), Anscombe (1985), Plank (2005) and Brinton (2014) have extensively studied

delocutive verbs produced by interjections and onomatopoeias. Most of the verbs converted from interjections are delocutive.

*To wow*, on the contrary, means “to impress (somebody)”, it is produced by what we call a “lexical conversion”. It does not contain the verb TO SAY, since its lexical base corresponds to the interactions that take place in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>.

Our hypothesis is that the difference between these two conversions depends on the interjective base, which can either be Sit<sub>GROUND</sub> or Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>. If the base of the verbs is the interjection that was uttered in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub> by S<sub>GROUND</sub> (“S<sub>GROUND</sub>” refers to the speaker uttering the interjection in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>), then the process described by the verb is that of uttering an interjection and the resulting verb is delocutive. If the base of the verb is the interjection uttered in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> by S<sub>ARCH</sub>, then the process described by the verb corresponds to the first interactions of the script (for *wow*, the head of the action chain is something impressive that triggers a reaction of admiration).

- *Wow!* - the first interactions of the action chain in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> are specified: an agent (the head) triggers a reaction of astonishment and admiration; *wow* is the last element of this action chain.
  - ➔ *To wow somebody* = to make somebody (the experiencer) **say *wow* in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>**, from which one can infer “to impress somebody”
- *Oh God!* - the first interactions of the action chain in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> are not specified.
  - ➔ *To Oh God:* = to SAY *Oh God* : as the first interactions in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> are not specified, it is impossible to derive or convert a verb from Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>, since this verb would have no interpretable meaning. The only interpretable version of this verb is a conversion of the interjection that was uttered in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>. In this case, the verb is interpreted as describing the act of saying *Oh God* (in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>).

Some rich primary interjections can be recategorized as verbs with both the metalinguistic and the lexical recategorization. Let us compare the following sentences:

(1) *Don't yuck my yum.*

(2) *Don't yuckify my yum.*

In (1), *to yuck something* means “to say that something is disgusting”. The Urban Dictionary<sup>10</sup> illustrates it with the following example: “don't yuck my yum”. Here, two successive inferences are necessary to interpret the verb: primarily, “don't **say *yuck!*** in front of my food”, and secondarily, “don't say that my food is disgusting”, but the second inference is not part of the metalinguistic conversion itself. Indeed, the verb *to yuck* is produced by a metalinguistic conversion of the interjection: it only describes the act of saying *yuck*, which entails that the speech act itself is converted into the verb *to yuck*. This is the reason why the metalinguistic conversion does not even require the speaker to understand the content of the expression for the conversion to take place (one can very well convert a line of dialogue that was uttered in a foreign language). What is more, the speech act itself does not even have to be eventually uttered in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub> for the conversion to take place : one can very well say *don't yuck my yum*

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<sup>10</sup> [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com)

even before the addressee did utter *yuck*. For this reason, a textual description seemed more effective than a visual representation of the metalinguistic conversion.

In (2), on the contrary, *to yuckify* means “to make something disgusting” (by adding too much salt, for instance); it is produced by a lexical derivation, which means that the verb is semantically based on the first interactions of the script in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>. The meaning of this verb can be inferred thanks to the first interactions of the script. In Figure 5, the red curly bracket indicates that the base of the derivation is Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> (on the right).

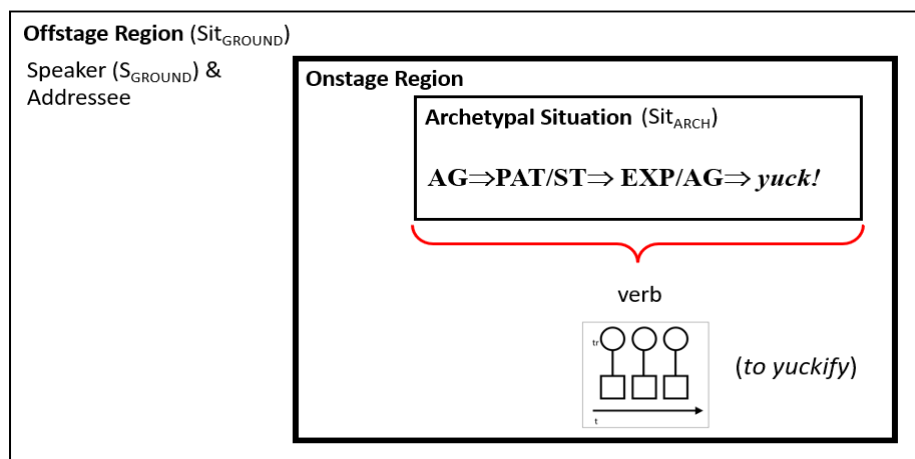


Figure 5: Lexical derivation of the rich interjection *yuck* into the verb *to yuckify*

The morphological difference between these two verbs shows that that the default recategorization is the metalinguistic conversion and that the lexical derivation requires the presence of a derivational morpheme (*yuck-+-ify*). The only exception we can think of is the verb *to wow*, which is converted from an interjection via a lexical conversion.

### 3.1.4 Operations

We can now delineate two operations for the conversion and derivation of interjections:

**Operation n°1**, the Lexical Conversion Operation (LCO): we call LCO the fact that the interactions of the action chain in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> are selected to derive an open class word from an interjection. It entails the presence of a semantic substrate (the cause that provoked the vocal reaction).

**Operation n°2**, the Metalinguistic Conversion Operation (MCO): we call MCO the fact that the pronunciation of the interjection in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub> is selected to convert an open class word from an interjection. It entails the presence of a semantic component, the verb SAY, and no semantic substrate (what provoked the reaction does not have to be known for the conversion to be effective).

### 3.1.5. Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> and Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>, list of constraints for the conversion and derivation

We can now draw up a list of constraints for the conversion and derivation of interjections, as summarized in Table 1. We observe the combination of three parameters, themselves composed of a minimal pair, which makes a total of eight possible combinations ( $2^3=8$ ):

- Parameter 1: type of recategorization (lexical /metalinguistic recategorization)
- Parameter 2: source category (rich primary interjection/secondary interjection)

Parameter 3: target category (verb/adjective/adverb)<sup>11</sup>

We have gathered the results of these combinations in a double-entry table. Yet, as there are three parameters, we have placed parameter 1 in the first line (P1, horizontally) and gathered parameter 2 (source category) with parameter 3 (target category) and in the left column (P2 and P3, vertically). The default conversion is in boldface if there are two possibilities (like *to yuck* and *to yuckify*).

Table 1: Conversion/derivation of interjections

Parameter 1 : Type of conversion/derivation		
Parameters 2 & 3	Metalinguistic conversion	Lexical conversion/derivation
<b>P2 : PI</b> <b>P3 : Adj./Adv.</b>	[Cell 1] IMPOSSIBLE	[Cell 5] POSSIBLE (ex. : <i>yucky</i> )
<b>P2 : SI</b> <b>P3 : Adj./Adv.</b>	[Cell 2] IMPOSSIBLE	[Cell 6] IMPOSSIBLE
<b>P2 : PI</b> <b>P3 : verb</b>	[Cell 3] <b>POSSIBLE + Default</b> (ex : <i>to ouch</i> , <i>to yuck</i> )	[Cell 7] POSSIBLE (ex. : <i>to wow</i> ; <i>to yuckify</i> )
<b>P2 : SI</b> <b>P3 : verb</b>	[Cell 4] POSSIBLE (providing a signal is added, like <i>oh</i> )	[Cell 8] IMPOSSIBLE

SI: Secondary Interjection; PI: Primary Interjection; Adj./Adv.: adjective and adverb

#### Explanation of the constraints

**Cell 1:** the metalinguistic conversion of primary interjections into adjectives and adverbs is not possible (*\*to be yucky* ≠ *\*having the property of saying yuck* or “being in a situation where one says *yuck*”): in other words, the meaning of the resulting adjective cannot contain a “say” component. It may be because uttering an interjection (be it a primary or a secondary one) cannot be conceived as a property of a speaker.

**Cell 2:** the metalinguistic conversion of secondary interjections into adjectives and adverbs is impossible (like primary interjections, as can be seen in cell 1).

**Cell 3:** the conversion of primary interjections into verbs is **by default metalinguistic** (except for “to wow”), which means that the act of pronouncing the interjection in **SitGROUND** is the lexical base of the verb: *to oh* = “to say *oh*”, *to yuck* = “to say *yuck*”.

**Cell 4:** the conversion of secondary interjections as verbs is metalinguistic, which means that the act of pronouncing the interjection in **SitGROUND** is the lexical base of the verb. Yet, as secondary interjections (like *Jesus!*) are themselves derived from open classes or proper names (here, the proper name *Jesus*), a signal is necessary to detect the source category of the

<sup>11</sup> We have not studied nominalization in this article, for the number of possibilities requires a study on its own.

conversion. This signal is generally the primary interjection *oh*, as one can see in 3<sup>12</sup>, with the following dialog between A and B:

- (3) A. My eyes were on stalks. '*Jesus, Mum!*'  
B. '*Call me Elaine*', she said. '*And what are you oh Jesusing about?*'

**Cell 5:** the conversion of primary interjections into adjectives or adverbs is lexical (*yucky* = “possessing property X”, which is to make people utter *yuck* in an archetypal situation). Hence, the derivation takes place in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>.

**Cell 6:** Because interactions in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> are not specified, it is impossible to derive an adjective or an adverb from a secondary interjection via a lexical derivation (an *oh-goddy moment* would be uninterpretable).

**Cell 7 (1<sup>st</sup> possibility:** the metalinguistic conversion is possible): primary interjections that can be converted into verbs via the metalinguistic conversion can also derive verbs via the lexical derivation, in which case a derivational morpheme is necessary (*yuck* > *to yuckify*) because the metalinguistic recategorization is the DEFAULT one, so the lexical one requires a derivational morpheme to distinguish the latter from the former. The base of the lexical derivation is the interjection pronounced in the script, Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>.

**Cell 7 (2<sup>nd</sup> possibility:** the metalinguistic conversion is not possible): primary interjections that cannot be converted into verbs via the metalinguistic conversion can be converted via the lexical conversion without any morpheme (*wow* > *to wow*; ?*to wowify*), but in this case, the participant who utters the interjection in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> is not the subject of the verb resulting from the conversion (*to wow somebody* = *to act in a way as to make someone else say wow*). A delocutive interpretation of the same verb is not possible (“he wowed me” ≠ “\*he said wow to me”).

**Cell 8:** contrary to primary interjections, secondary interjections cannot derive verbs via a lexical derivation, even with a verbal derivational morpheme, because the first interactions of the script in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> are not specified. In other words, a verb like *to oh-goddify something* is uninterpretable.

### 3.2 *The syntactic adjustment – syntactic version of the reshaping*

In this second part of our article, we will use the difference between Sit<sub>GROUND</sub> and Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> to compare adjectives that are truly derived from interjections (*yuck* > *yucky*; *yum* > *yummy*) with what we regard as false adjectives (like *damned* and *fucking*, sometimes called “expletive slot fillers” by Ljung), produced from secondary interjections via a word-formation process that we call “syntactic adjustment”. More specifically, the syntactic adjustment is the syntactic version of a more general word-formation process by which primary and secondary interjections are produced, and which can be observed at the phonemic, lexical, and syntactic level. The label we give to this more general word-formation process is “reshaping”. First, we will describe how the reshaping produces primary and secondary interjections, and second, we will show how its syntactic version (the syntactic adjustment) produces expletive slot fillers like *damned*.

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<sup>12</sup> From *A Dash of Rum and Mum's Tits - Taboo Incest sex stories* - Chapter 158 by DJROM full book limited free (webnovel.com); Available online: [https://www.webnovel.com/book/taboo-incest-sex-stories\\_16367634806819805/a-dash-of-rum-and-mum's-tits\\_44411932794479358](https://www.webnovel.com/book/taboo-incest-sex-stories_16367634806819805/a-dash-of-rum-and-mum's-tits_44411932794479358)

### 3.2.1 Introduction - the reshaping: a word-formation process producing interjections at the phonemic and lexical level

In a previous study (Meinard 2021), we have shown that interjections were better defined when regarded as linguistic TOOLS rather than linguistic SIGNS, since they serve to reshape uncontrolled vocalizations for these vocalizations to sound like linguistic signs. The phonological structure of some primary interjections epitomizes this function: for instance, the primary interjection *ouch* is phonologically structured in such a way that it makes it possible for a speaker to disguise an uncontrolled vocalization by simply adding /tʃ/ to their vocalization. The result of this addition is to give the impression to the addressee that the word *ouch* was pronounced, while only the second part (/tʃ/) was voluntarily pronounced. This phonological practicality allows the speaker to conventionalize a vocalization after the fact.

The structure of rich primary interjections is made of two different elements that we have called the “Reception Structure” (RS, henceforth) and the “Differentiation Structure” (DS, henceforth). The RS is a vowel or a semi-vowel in the initial position (/aʊ/ for *ouch*), and the DS is a phoneme or a phonemic cluster that the speaker adds to their uncontrolled vocalization (the DS of *ouch* is /tʃ/). The function of the DS is to make it possible for the addressee to reinterpret the vocalization as the occurrence of an interjection ([[aɑ:] + [tʃ]] is reinterpreted as an occurrence of *ouch*).

This description reveals that interjections can be observed at three different places : in what Saussure (1971 [1916]) calls “parole”, one can observe an act performed by the speaker, which consists in reshaping an uncontrolled vocalization; in what Saussure calls “langue” (i.e., in the lexicon), interjections are tools that are phonemically structured to make this reshaping possible (they have an RS and a DS); in a third place, which is absent from Saussure’s binary model and that we call “corpus”, one can observe the imprint of the act of reshaping. What is more, because a reshaping took place, the vocalization is interpreted by the addressee after the fact as the occurrence of an interjection. This reinterpretation is what we call “the effect of the imprint”.

The binary structure that makes it possible for speakers to reshape their vocalizations can be observed in the structure of the following interjections:

Table 2: RS and DS

FTool (interjection <i>en langue</i> ) [RS] + [DS]	Reshaping (Interjection <i>en parole</i> )		
Ouch	<i>t1</i> vocalization	+	<i>t2</i> /tʃ/
Oops	<i>t1</i> vocalization		<i>t2</i> /ps/
Wow	<i>t1</i> vocalization		<i>t2</i> /aʊ/
Whoa	<i>t1</i> vocalization		<i>t2</i> /əʊ/
Yuck	<i>t1</i> vocalization		<i>t2</i> /k/
Yum	<i>t1</i> vocalization		<i>t2</i> /m/

We call this bipartite pattern the “indirect reshaping” because two chronologically different moments can be easily observed: in *t1*, the uncontrolled vocalization per se, which is not a linguistic unit, and in *t2*, the addition of a phoneme or phonemic cluster, which makes it possible for the speaker to reshape their uncontrolled vocalization as a linguistic sign. This Differentiation Structure is also the element that provides information on the first interactions of the action chain in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>.



Yet, it is also possible to reshape a vocal reaction by directly pronouncing a phoneme or a lexeme, instead of adding one to a vocalization, as is the case with poor primary interjections (like *oh*, *ah*), and secondary interjections (like *Hell!*, *God!*). We regard them as mere linguistic containers for vocalizations, poor primary interjections being “phonemic containers” and secondary interjections being “lexical containers”<sup>13</sup>, i.e., lexemes that serve as linguistic envelopes for vocalizations, and whose meaning and reference are backgrounded.

### 3.2.2 *The “Syntactic adjustment”: the reshaping at the syntactic level*

This word-formation process, which consists in using a linguistic unit to reinterpret a vocalization, can also be observed at the syntactic level, as is the case with the items that are sometimes called “expletive slot fillers”.

Indeed, some secondary interjections can be syntactically integrated to a sentence thanks to the addition of a morpheme to the interjection, as in 4 and 5, where the same secondary interjection (*damn*) can be interpreted as an adjective and as an adverb thanks to the morpheme *-ed*:

(4) *Open the damned door!*

(5) *She’s damned pretty!*

We do not call it “suffixation”, since the relation between the morpheme and the base is not the creation of a new word or the inflection of a word, but a means that serves to disguise or reshape a secondary interjection as a sentence constituent (i.e., the interjection plus its reshaping are reinterpreted as the occurrence of an adjective or an adverb after the fact).

These items are not identified as interjections in the literature, but as specific kinds of adjectives and adverbs. Yet, as we hope to show, they share more common points with interjections than with adjectives and adverbs, and the reshaping word-formation process described in the previous section can explain their particular semantic, morphological and syntactic properties.

### 3.2.3 *Expletive slot fillers*

In the literature, these items are called “affective adjectives” by Milner (1978) and Marengo (2007), “Speaker Displeasure Markers” by Fraser (1996), “intensive adjectives” by Romero (2001), “expletive slot fillers” by Ljung (2011), “degree words” by Schwizer (2014), “taboo intensifiers” by Cacchiani (2017), “expressive modifiers” by Corver (2021), “expressive adjectives” by Bross (2021). All of the above-mentioned articles classify them as particular types of adjectives and adverbs.

Yet, there are many morphological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic differences with adjectives and adverbs, as we will show in the following section. None of these differences is on its own the evidence that they are not adjectives and adverbs, but no other adjective and adverb seems to possess all these peculiarities.

As often mentioned in the literature, they possess some syntactic peculiarities: they cannot be used as subject complements (*\*the cat is damned*) and cannot be modified by any degree adverb (*\*very damned cat*). According to Marengo (2007: 99), the reason for this is that they express illocutionary acts and do not have enough descriptive content to be used

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<sup>13</sup> To say that interjections are containers for vocal productions is incompatible with the symbolic principle.

attributively. As noted by Bross (2021), when they occur in a complement clause governed by a verb of propositional attitude, they cannot be attributed to the subject of the matrix clause (as we will see below). As noted by Potts (2012), their distribution in the “as AP as AP can be” construction shows that they do not modify the “at-issue content” of the proposition but provide information on the speaker’s attitude in the “expressive dimension” of language.

As far as their morphological structure is concerned, one can notice that sometimes, there is no morpheme at all (*She’s damnØ pretty*), and that this absence seems to be the rule, not the exception. Indeed, Ljung’s study reveals that the three most frequent “expressive slot fillers” in the BNC are *bloody*, *fucking* and *damn*. The latter is more than ten times more frequent than the morphologically correct adjectival form *damned* (Ljung 2011: 145). All the same, the adverbial version of *fucking* should logically be suffixed with the adverbial morpheme *-ly*. Yet, in the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) there are only 2 occurrences of *fuckingly* and almost 7000 occurrences of the query *fucking* (+ adjective).

Semantically, there is a consensus on the fact that they provide information on the speaker’s attitude via inferences. Yet, how precisely they encourage the addressee to construct inferences and what kind of inferences they encourage to construct is not clear. For Potts (2007 2012), they are processed in a dimension called the “expressive dimension of language” and cannot modify the “at-issue content”. Fraser (1996) offers quite a similar analysis, since these “speaker displeasure markers” are a subcategory of “parallel markers”, which signal the speaker’s displeasure in addition to the basic message (ibid.: 338). Yet, as shown by Constant and Potts (2009) in a corpus study on the distribution of *damn*, the polarity of the evaluation is not always negative, as they can very well express positive evaluation; the common points between the different uses of these items being that they always signal a strong emotion (be it positive or negative). Their meaning is “ineffable” (for Saussure and Wharton 2019) and “procedural” for Blakemore (1987 2011). For Cacchiani (2017), when they modify an adjective, these “taboo words” belong to complex adjectival constructions (they are not adverbs). They denote a high degree via the conceptual metaphors A STRONG EMOTION/EMOTIONAL REACTION IS A HIGH DEGREE OF INTENSITY. Consequently, signaling an emotion with a taboo word metaphorically denotes a high degree. Cacchiani offers the following semantic analysis for *fucking* in the sentence *X is fucking amazing* (Cacchiani 2017: §38):

*Collocations such as **fucking amazing** and telic intensification in unbelievably foolish also allow for the ‘so A that V’ paraphrase, whereby a cause is metonymically accessed via its effect (‘X is so amazing that I’m fucked’; ‘X is so foolish that I can’t believe it’). [emphasis mine]*

Concerning their scope as evaluation markers, only the context can specify what, in a given sentence, these taboo words evaluate. For Bross (2021), they can have three modifying scopes: on one interpretation, the referent of the modified DP is negatively evaluated (this scope is called “local interpretation”), on another interpretation, the referent of another DP is negatively evaluated (this scope is called “hopping interpretation”), and on yet another interpretation, the whole situation described in the clause containing the DP is negatively evaluated.

Yet, as noted by Fraser (1996: 338), there is even a fourth interpretation, where the addressee is the target of the “speaker’s displeasure” (or rather, strong evaluation): “the parallel marker signals a message of the speaker expressing annoyance, but it is not usually clear whether the addressee or the situation is the target of the anger.”

Each of the above-mentioned points can be applied to true adjectives: some adjectives are only used attributively (*former, major, sole, utter, daily, chief*, etc.), while others are only used predicatively (*asleep, alive, ill, afloat, afraid, asleep*); some adjectives license an argument hopping reading, like *quick* in *I'm gonna have a quick coffee*, thanks to hypallage or metonymy; some adverbs have no adverbial morpheme and some adjectives look like adverbs (*friendly*). Yet, only “expletive slot fillers” possess all of these criteria. As we will see below, they share more common points with interjections than with adjectives and adverbs.

### 3.2.4 Common points with interjections

Like interjections, they do not contribute to the truth conditions of a sentence (Wharton 2003a 2003b; Potts 2007, 2012), they have a procedural meaning (Saussure and Wharton 2019; Potts 2012; Blakemore 2011), they provide information on the speaker's attitude (Bross 2021; Marengo 2007), “they convey a speaker-oriented meaning” (Bross 2021), their meaning largely depends on the context of utterance, and they can serve as pure emphasis markers (Ljung 2011 : 22). Like secondary interjections, they also have a literal meaning in the lexicon that is totally independent from their use as intensifiers (*damned* can both be an expressive intensifier in *damn pretty* and as the past participle of the verb *to damn*). The only difference with secondary interjections is that they are syntactically integrated, either because of their position in the sentence (epithet) or because of their position and the addition of a linguistic unit, which is, in our view, a pseudo-morpheme (*damn +ed*), since it only serves to integrate a secondary interjection to a constituent.

The hypothesis followed in this article is that these items are rather “reshaped secondary interjections” (Meinard 2021), i.e., secondary interjections that are disguised as adjectives or adverbs via the addition of a linguistic unit, which makes it possible for the speaker to avoid breaking the syntactic structure of the sentence.

This hypothesis highlights a new difference between reshaped secondary interjections (*damned, fucking*) and true adjectives derived from interjections (like *yucky* and *yummy*): the lexical base of a true adjective is a rich interjection (*yuck*, for instance) that is pronounced in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>, and to which a derivational suffix was attached, while syntactically adjusted interjections cannot be decomposed as having a lexical base plus a suffix, since they are in fact secondary interjections (lexical containers, tools) pronounced in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>.

This hypothesis could explain two observations: first, their frequency in the oral modality and second, their status in indirect reported speech and complements clauses in general.

First, it has been observed that these “taboo words” are more frequent in the oral modality than in the written one (Schwizer 2014: 13):

*According to the results taken from the BNC, every intensifier investigated in this paper [very, so, really, damn, bloody, fucking] except very is much more common in spoken language than in its written counterpart. As expected, this is especially noticeable with the taboo words damn, bloody, and fucking.*

More specifically, among the “intensifiers” that can be found in the written modality, these “taboo words” are tremendously less represented than adverbs like *really, very* and *so*: for 1 million words, the BNC has 1,77 occurrences of *damn*, 1,32 occurrences of *bloody*, 0,68 occurrences of *fucking*, while it has 524,43 occurrences of *so*, 87,45 of *really* et 899,23 of *very* (Schwizer 2014: 8). The fact that they are not intensifiers but reshaped secondary interjections could explain why they are more frequent in the spoken modality.

Second, their status in reported speech and complement clauses also supports our hypothesis. As noted by Bross (2021), when they are used in indirect reported speech or when they are embedded under a verb of propositional attitude (like *think*, *believe*, *want*), the attitude that they convey is not attributed to the subject of the matrix clause (here, *John*), but rather to the speaker, as in (6) and (7):

(6) *John told me that I had to take his damned cat to the vet.*

(7) *John wants me to take his damned cat to the vet.*

In both (6) and (7), *damned* expresses a negative attitude that is not attributed to John but to the speaker reporting John's speech. It can be explained by the fact that the expressive meaning of these items "is valid only for the utterer, at the time and place of utterance" ([Cruse 1986: 272], in Bross 2021: 2). This entails that in 6 and 7, *damned* is pronounced in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>, the speech situation of the reporting speaker. In a generative linguistics framework, this is interpreted as evidence that expressive are "located above tense", in the CP-layer, where speech-acts are encoded. However, as noted by Bross himself, this analysis does not explain yet how an expressive item belonging to a structurally higher position communicates with a structurally lower target (Bross 2021: 4):

*One problem, as correctly pointed out by Gutzmann (2019), is that we do need an answer to the question of how it is possible that a structurally higher feature communicates with the structurally lower target of the evaluation and why the lexical item expressing the evaluation can be displaced from its target.*

Our hypothesis is quite simpler, since it consists in regarding these items as reshaped interjections, which entails that if the reported speaker had uttered *damn* and had then reshaped their own interjection to disguise it as an adjective (*damned*), the reporting speaker would not include it to their reporting speech, nor would they include to their reporting speech any of the expressions that specifically signal the speech situation of the reported speaker, like the routines, politeness formulae and polite syntactic constructions, as in (10):

(8) *John: Can you feed this damned cat, please?*

(9) *Robert: John asked me \*if I could feed \*this \*damned cat, \*please.*

(10) *Robert: John asked me to feed the cat.*

### 3.2.5 The effect of the imprint

Yet, as they possess an adjectival or adverbial morpheme and occupy the syntactic position of epithets and adjuncts, the syntactic adjustment still produces a semantic effect, which is to create a link with the constituent that they are supposed to modify. Indeed, the procedural meaning carried by *damned* in *damned cat* is that the speaker does evaluate SOMETHING (which can be one of the four possible interpretations mentioned in §3.2.3., i.e., the noun, the predicative relation, another noun, or the whole the situation, or the addressee). Thus, even though they are reshaped secondary interjections, the reshaping of the secondary interjection *a posteriori* creates the effect of a semantic relation between two elements, which can be analyzed as follows:

- *Damned*: there is an unspecified link between uttering *damn!* in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub> and something else (another constituent, the whole situation, or the addressee)

This a posteriori effect is what we have called the effect of the imprint “en corpus”: the reshaped element is a posteriori reinterpreted as a modifier. We have already mentioned it with primary interjections, where [a:] + /tʃ/ is a posteriori reinterpreted as an occurrence of *ouch*.

This a posteriori effect is thus totally different from the meaning of true adjectives derived from rich interjections, like *yucky*, where the derivational morpheme means “possessing property Y”, Y being the cause that provokes the vocal reaction (*yuck!* or *yum!*) in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>.

#### 4. Conclusion

This article aimed at offering a description of words derived and converted from interjections and at distinguishing two kinds of recategorization of interjections (derivation and conversion per se and “syntactic adjustment”). We have made use of the Script Theory and Cognitive Grammar to delineate some of the operations constraining their recategorization. There are two different virtual places where interjections are uttered: the speech situation, called here Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>, and an archetypical script called here Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>. If the conversion/derivation takes place in Sit<sub>GROUND</sub>, the conversion is metalinguistic (the new word is generally a delocutive verb, i.e. its semantic composition contains the word SAY), while if the conversion takes place in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub>, the recategorization is lexical (the cause of the vocal reaction being the basic meaning of the new word). We have shown a difference between interjections whose interactions were not specified in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> (called “poor interjections”) and interjections whose interactions were all specified in Sit<sub>ARCH</sub> (called “rich interjections”). It is possible to draw precise inferences with rich interjections while it is not possible with poor interjections, which in turn only allows rich interjections to derive adjectives and adverbs. We have also seen two kinds of adjectives formed with interjections: true degree adjectives (like *yucky* and *yummy*) formed with rich interjections, on the one hand, and false adjectives (like *damned* and *fucking*), which we regard as syntactically adjusted secondary interjections (i.e. secondary interjections to which a pseudo-morpheme was added for it to blend in the structure of the sentence), on the other hand. We have seen that this interpretation could explain the common points between these items and interjections, as well as their differences with true intensive adjectives and adverbs like *very*, *really*, *so*.

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