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INDEX

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Arctos 53 (2019) 219–246

WORDS OR SOUNDS? ANCIENT GRAMMARIANS ON INTERJECTIONS

Toivo Viljamaa

1. Introduction

Interjections—exclamations, short phrases and little words or "non-words" (sounds) that constitute syntactically independent utterances—appear in all languages. Despite the generality of this linguistic phenomenon, the interjection has gained only marginal attention in linguistic discourse since classical antiquity. Interjections had not gotten the attention they deserve in serious linguistic research until around the end of the last century, thanks to sociolinguistic and pragmatic approaches to language study.[1] One reason for the neglect has been the interjections' independent position in grammatical sentence structure. Additionally, difficulties in analysis are caused by the great formal and semantic variety of interjections: outbursts of passion, exclamations, reactions, interruptions of speech, pauses, anacolutha, etc.[2] But the biggest obstacle has been the word-oriented language theory of Greco-Roman grammatical art (*ars grammatica*) and grammarians' insistence on categorising formal elements (words) of language according to their behaviour in the sentence structure; this falls within the framework of the parts of speech (*partes orationis*) where, despite their syntactical looseness, interjections have also been fitted in with the noun, the verb, the

[1] See the special issues dedicated to the study of interjections in the *Journal of Pragmatics* 18 (1992) and in the *Bulletin of the Henry Sweet Society* 50 (2008).

[2] On the classification of interjections, F. Ameka, "Interjections: The universal yet neglected part of speech", *Journal of Pragmatics* 18 (1992) 101–118, and "Interjections", in K. Brown (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*, Amsterdam 2006, 743–746.

pronoun, etc.[3] In this article this ancient view about how the interjection forms a separate word class (its own part of speech) will first be discussed (Section 2): its definition as a part of speech, problems connected with the definition and the kinds of spoken or written expressions primarily included in that category. The grammatical definition, however, is problematic. It is not a linguistic definition indicating grammatical relationships, but rather a statement about the speaker's emotional state. Emotional expressions of joy, sorrow, fear, etc., were considered primary representatives of the interjection, which constituted a theoretical problem because vocal signs of emotion, according to philosophers, were considered to be confused sounds or unarticulated words, incompatible with the definition of human language and, therefore, theoretically "non-words". These problems will be discussed from three viewpoints: philosophy of language, rhetoric and conventions of language use (Sections 3–5).

2. Interjection as a part of speech

2.1. The Roman grammarians

The Roman grammarians defined the interjection as follows (Donatus, fourth cent. AD):[4]

> *Interiectio est pars orationis significans mentis affectum voce incondita.*
>
> Interjection is a part of speech signifying an emotion by means of an incondite word.

[3] On the status of the interjection within the Western grammatical tradition, see R. Ashdowne, "Interjections and the Parts of Speech in the Ancient Grammarians", *Bulletin of the Henry Sweet Society* 50 (2008) 3–15, and D. Cram, "The Exceptional Interest of the Interjection", *id.* 57–66. For interjections in Greek and Latin grammarians, see I. Sluiter, *Ancient Grammar in Content. Contributions to the Study of Linguistic Thought,* Amsterdam 1990, 173–246.

[4] *Gramm*. IV 366, 13–17. G.A. Padley, *Grammatical Theory in Western Europe, 1500–1700: The Latin Tradition*, Cambridge 1976, 266 translates: "A part of speech signifying an emotion by means of an unformed word (i.e., one not fixed by convention)".

The Greeks did not have a separate word class for interjections; they listed them within the heterogeneous class of adverbs. The interjection as a separate part of speech was then born specifically for the grammatical analysis of Latin language. Latin used no articles, so its grammar had no article class, but rather the interjection was added to the parts of speech, as Quintilian (*inst.* 1,4,19–20) states: *Noster sermo articulos non desiderat … sed accedit superioribus interiectio.* Thus, the new class was a replacement for the Greeks' article class, so the number of eight word classes was established. Quintilian also remarks (*ibid.*) that the Greek grammarian Aristarchus and the Latin grammarian of his own day, Q. Remmius Palaemon, "following good authority, had asserted that there are eight parts of speech" (*ex idoneis dumtaxat auctoribus octo partes secuti sunt*). Obviously, Quintilian presents the views he learned from the *ars grammatica* of his teacher, Palaemon.[5]

However, the wish to have eight parts of speech was not the motive for introducing a new class; some grammarians wanted to separate certain exclamations from the adverb class because they are syntactically independent of verbs and are therefore not true adverbs.[6] Priscian, ca. 500 AD, takes the view that Latin grammarians separated these sorts of words from adverbs because they seem to have the force of verbs and to signify mental affections without using an added verb. Along with Greek exclamations (παπαί, ἰού, φεῦ), for example, he also mentions Latin "exclamatory words" of joy, *euax*, and grief, *ei* (*gramm.* III 90,6–15).[7] As examples of these sorts of words (*voces*), Donatus presents Latin interjections of fear, *ei*, address, ô, sorrow, *heu*, and of joy, *euax* (*gramm.* IV 391,28–30). Similar exclamatory words are already mentioned ca. 40 BC by M. Terentius Varro, who remarks on the exclamation *euax* (*ling.* 7, 93): "*Euax*, 'hurray' is a word that

[5] Cf. W. Ax , "Quintilian's 'Grammar' (*Inst.* 1.4–8) and its Importance for the History of Roman Grammar", in S. Matthaios – F. Montanari – A. Rengakos (eds.), *Ancient Scholarship and Grammar*, De Gruyter: Mouton 2011, 331–346.

[6] See Charisius [Julius Romanus] *de adverbio* (*gramm.* I 190, 14–17): *quam partem orationis* (σχετλιασμούς)*, non ut numerum octo partium articulo, id est* τῷ ἄρθρῳ*, deficiente supplerent, sed quia videbant adverbium esse non posse, segregaverunt.*

[7] Priscian follows Apollonius Dyscolus (*G. G.* II 1,121), who discusses the status of adverbs at length (like οἴμοι and similar complaints), which seem to be independent of verbs; for the grammatical papyrus P.Lit.Lond.182 (ca. 300 AD), where Greek adverbs φεῦ, παπαί and ὤμοι are discussed , see A. Wouters, *The Grammatical Papyri from Graeco–Roman Egypt. Contributions to the Study of the 'Ars Grammatica' in Antiquity,* Brussels 1979, 84–85.

in itself means nothing, but is a natural ejaculation (*nihil significat, sed effutitum naturaliter est*)"; in the same context he mentions three other "natural ejaculations": *hahae, eu* and *heu*,[8] By *effutitum naturaliter*, Varro probably means that these kinds of exclamations do not follow the rules of inflection.[9]

It seems likely that the discussion about the heterogeneous class of adverbs is connected with the period of synthesis and formalisation of the grammatical art at Rome in the first century BC. The eight parts of speech doctrine, developed by Alexandrian scholars during the second and first centuries BC and presented in the *Techne* attributed to Dionysius Thrax, was not yet finished. Grammarians searched for morphological patterns adaptable both to Greek and Latin and separated parts of speech mainly in terms of inflection.[10] The grammarians who turned their interest to philosophy tried to build a rational system and added notional criteria to describe the parts of speech in terms of sentence-structure. It was not until the second century AD that the system got a kind of finished form in the syntactical works of Apollonius Dyscolus, who incorporated the parts of speech in his doctrine of the completed and rationally ordered sentence. Formally defined parts of speech were also used in rhetorical treatises in Rome by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (in the end of the first cent. BC), followed by Quintilian. Among Greek scholars who remarkably contributed to the discussion about the number and status of the *partes orationis* we should mention Varro's contemporary Tryphon of Alexandria, "a grammarian of parts of speech".[11] He is frequently quoted by Apollonius Dyscolus concerning problems of separating parts of speech, participles (Prisc. *gramm.* II 548, 4–8), adverbs or exclamatory particles resulting from the syncretism of two grammatical categories, like οἴμοι and the particle ὦ (Ap. Dysc. *G. G.* I 2,121,19–21 and II 2,62,9); the former may be compared to the Latin exclamation *ei mihi*, the latter to the

[8] Varro explains the etymology of *iurgium* "strife" and picks up some verbal altercations from the archaic Latin (Plautus, Ennius and Pompilius).

[9] Cf. Diomedes (*gramm.* I 419, 5–13): "*Euax* (and the like) … are produced by emotions rather than by grammatical rules (*quae affectus potius quam observationes artis inducant*)".

[10] For Varro's morphology, see D. J. Taylor, *Declinatio. A Study of the Linguistic Theory of Marcus Terentius Varro*, Amsterdam 1974, 111: "The first level of Varro's theory is that of derivational morphology".

[11] S. Matthaios, "Tryphon aus Alexandria: der erste Syntaxtheoretiker vor Apollonios Dyskolos?", in P. Swiggers – A. Wouters (eds.), *Syntax in Antiquity*, Leuven 2003, 129.

interjection of address ô,[12] see, e.g., Cic. *Arch.* 24,4: *'O fortunate', inquit, 'adulescens'* ("Oh, lucky man!").

The ancient Roman scholars practised their studies with three intentions: 1) philosophically to investigate the nature of language, 2) rhetorically to search methods of speaking well, to bridge the gap between grammar and discourse (cf. Quint. *inst.* 1,6,27: *aliud esse Latine, aliud grammatice loqui*), and 3) philologically to explicate old texts. These intentions are seen in the definitions assigned to the part of speech called *interiectio*. The first definition is a fragment from Palaemon's *ars grammatica*, which survived in the mid-fourth century grammar of Charisius:[13]

> *Palaemon ita definit*: *interiectiones sunt quae nihil docibile habent, significant tamen adfectum animi*, *velut heu. eheu, hem, ehem, eho, hoe, pop, papae, at, attatae.*
>
> Palaemon defines as follows: interjections have *no definite meaning*, but they indicate a state of mind, like *heu,* etc. (trans. R. H. Robins)[14]

The definition consists of three elements:

1. *Interiectio* describes *the function* of interjections as causing interruptions in text or discourse. The Latin *interiectio* is a rhetorical term meaning any kind of insertion in the course of language; short interjections aiming to increase emotion are also called *exclamatio* (Quint. *inst.* 9,2,26–27 and 9,3,23; Cic. *or.* 135).

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[12] The address ô is often mentioned by Latin grammarians as one of the most typical interjections, e.g. by Donatus (*gramm.* IV 391, 28–30). Is this why Romans replace the article with the interjection? See Ashdowne (above n. 3), 11 and 13–14.

[13] *Gramm.* I 238, 23–25.

[14] R. H. Robins, *The Byzantine Grammarians. Their Place in History,* Berlin – New York 1993, 98. Ashdowne (above n. 3) 12 translates "Interjections are those which have no referential value but rather signify a state of mind"; for the meaning of *nihil docibile* later in Ch 5.1."Usage and context".

2. The *signification* of an interjection signifies an emotion or a mental state (*affectus animi*), which presupposes a philosophical examination of its logical and psychological content.
3. The *form* of interjections is expressed by the phrase *nihil docibile*, which refers to their anomalous character: interjections do not follow the rules of inflection (cf. [above n. 9] Varro's *effutitum naturaliter*); also, the mere interruption in conversation without any concrete word form may be called *interiectio* Varro, fr. 40):[15] in abrupt conversation, the break between short elliptical phrases "causes affection of the mind (*generat animi passionem*).[16] Palaemon's examples are indeclinable words displaying the particularities of spoken language.

Palaemon's definition of the interjection was still incomplete: it appeared about three centuries later in the grammars of Donatus and Diomedes. Thus, the definitions from the periods after Palaemon and Quintilian reflect the scholarly discussion around the status of the interjection.[17] Three definitions have survived: Iulius Romanus (third cent.), Cominianus (fourth cent.) and Sacerdos (ca. 300); each differs in its signification of interjections. Romanus (*gramm*. I 239, 1–5) defines it as "a mental movement" (*motus animi*) and Cominianus (*gramm.* I 238, 19–22) as "a mental state" (*affectus animi*), but Sacerdos (*gramm.* VI 447, 1–3) more accurately describes "various passions of the mind, which some call emotions" (*animi variae passiones, quas quidam affectus dicunt*). Sacerdos may be referring to philosophers (the Stoics) or philosophical grammarians (Varro, Apollonius Dyscolus). Further variations mainly concern the formal properties of interjections: they are "very similar to the adverb" (Sacerdos) and signify "various emotions" (Cominianus). Formal variations are also presented by stock examples, which are "of joy *aaha*, of sorrow *heu,* or of admiration *papae*" (Cominianus and Julius Romanus). Examples are collected from archaic texts in both the Greek and the Latin.

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[15] Char. *gramm.* I 241, 33–34.

[16] Usually in expressions of anger, cf. Donatus on Ter. *Eun*. 65: *familiaris* ἔλλειψις *irascentibus*, see Sluiter (above n. 3) 175.

[17] By no means was the system of *partes orationis* ready and completed in the time of Palaemon and Quintilian. Many classes—besides adverbs and interjections, particularly nouns and participles—were under constant dispute from antiquity to medieval times (for nouns, cf. Quint. *inst.* 1, 4, 20).

Romanus discusses the formal and semantic characteristics of interjections at length.[18] His main source seems to be Varro's *De lingua Latina*, but he also uses terms and concepts that imply a thorough knowledge of Greek and Latin rhetorical writings. In accordance with the concepts of *pathos* and *ethos*, he takes interjections from the early Latin dramatic writers and divides them into two groups: 'pathetic' and 'ethical', i.e., those occurring in tragedy and comedy:[19]

> Interjection is a part of speech signifying an emotion: of joy (*aaha*), of sorrow (*heu*), or of admiration (*babae, papae*), which, although they convey the status of *pathos* rather than of *ethos* (πάθους στάσιν *nec* ἤθους), we can find also in those [writers] who though being *ethici* often seem to rouse *pathos* in a moderate way (*gramm.* I 239, 1–5).[20]

> *Ethos* (ἦθη), as Varro says in *De lingua Latina* book V, was convenient (*convenit*) to Titinius, Terence and Atta, whereas Trabea, Atilius and Caecilius with ease made an impression of *pathos* (πάθη) (*gramm.* I 241, 27–29).

The distinctions made by Romanus remind us of the classification of public speeches (*orationes*) into different rhetorical styles. Rhetoricians and literary critics of the first century BC (Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Cicero) and later Quintilian distinguished three types (or characters) of style: plain *(subtilis*), grand (*uber*) and intermediate (*mediocris*). The plain style seemed best adapted for instructing (*docere*), the grand for moving (*movere*), and the intermediate for charming (*delectare*) or conciliating the audience (Quint. *inst.*12, 2,11 and 12,10,58–59). The Roman critics used these distinctions also to characterise poetical genres and compare styles of the early Latin poets and the orators (Cic. *de or.* 3, 27–28). In his *Attic Nights*, second-century lexicographer and literary critic Aulus Gellius relates that Varro had already made this distinction and presented,

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[18] On the grammar of Julius Romanus, see D. M. Schenkeveld, *A Rhetorical Grammar: C. Julius Romanus, Introduction to the Liber de Adverbio as incorporated in Charisius' Ars Grammatica II.13*, Leiden 2004.

[19] See Schenkeveld (above n. 18) 34.

[20] On *pathos* and *ethos* in grammatical texts, see Sluiter (above n. 3) 180–187.

"as genuine Latin exemplars of these styles, Pacuvius (tragedian) of the grand style, Lucilius (satirist) of the plain, and Terence (comic writer) of the middle".[21]

Romanus (*gramm.* I 240, 1–2) also presents examples from orators, such as this from an (unknown) speech by Cato Maior: *'Vita deum immortalium', Cato Senex; ubi Statilius Maximus*: 'ἐκφώνησις', *inquit,* 'ἀρχαϊκὴ, ὡς ὦ πόποι'. Romanus' source, Statilius Maximus (contemporary with Gellius), is a known as a lexicographer who collected examples of problematic adverbial forms from works of the early Roman historians.[22] The Greek *ecphonesis* ("exclamation") ὦ πόποι[23], mentioned by him, occurs often in poetry but is also used in prose for rhetorical emphasis, as the Latin *Vita deum immortalium!* (cf. *Di immortales!* often in Cicero). These kinds of exclamations can also characterize the *ethos* of a person's social group, for instance, ὦταν is a hetaeric *ecphonesis* (Ap. Dysc. *G.G.* I 2,159,10). The examples presented by Romanus include also whole phrases, besides *Vita deum immortalium!*, *Pro Jupiter!*, showing his emphasis of the rhetorical meaning of interjections.

The Roman grammarians, as the above presentation shows, took their Latin examples of interjections from lexicographical and etymological writings (Varro being the primary source) and analysed them for grammatical or rhetorical purposes using theories from Greek grammarians (Apollonius Dyscolus?) and distinctions from rhetorical writings (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Cicero and Quintilian).

The interjection developed its authoritative definition in the fourth-century grammars by Donatus and Diomedes: *Interiectio est pars orationis significans mentis affectum voce incondita*. There are three remarkable changes compared to the previous definitions: The main element, *significatio*, becomes a constant *significans mentis affectum* ("signifying an emotion [or a state of mind]"). Secondly, *voce incondita*, referring to the anomalous form of interjections, occurs here for the first time; the theme was a subject of continuous discussion during late antiquity and early medieval times. Thirdly, interjection placement is firmly established among the *partes orationis* as part of the sentence construction: *Interiectio est pars orationis interiecta aliis partibus orationis* (Don. *gramm.* IV 391, 26–27). The definition is then presented (usually verbatim) and discussed by the later

[21] Gell. 6, 14, 7.

[22] Cf. Schenkeveld (above n. 18).

[23] Usually, an exclamation of surprise.

Roman grammarians (*artium scriptores*) Servius, Dositheus, Probus, Consentius, Cledonius , Sergius and Pompeius; and in the early Middle Ages by Isidore of Seville, Audax and Julian of Toledo among others.

2.2. Priscian and after

With Priscian, ca. 500 AD, a new period in Latin grammar history began. Priscian did not follow the Roman grammarians; rather, he based his systematic exposition of Latin (*Institutiones grammaticae*) on the Greek grammar of Apollonius Dyscolus, whose doctrine about the complete and well-ordered sentence (o*ratio est congrua dictionum ordinatio, perfectam sententiam demonstrans*)[24] became his guiding principle in defining the *partes orationis*. The principle is also apparent in Priscian's exposition of the Latin interjection; he does not present the authoritative definition of Roman grammarians as such, but states only why interjections were separated from adverbs:[25] "Roman grammarians (*artium scriptores*) took this part of speech as separate from adverbs because it seems to have in itself *the verbal force* (*affectum habere in se verbi*) and to indicate *the full signification* of mental emotion (*plenam motus animi significationem*) even without an added verb". Almost verbatim, Priscian follows Apollonius' definition of Greek exclamatory adverbs (*schetliastica*, *G. G.* II 1,121,24–26): δυνάμει ἀπὸ διαθέσεως ῥηματικῆς ἀνάγονται ("they are moved/affected by the force of the verbal disposition").[26] Thus, using syntactic and semantic criteria, Priscian defines the interjection as a sort of adverb that is constructed with an emotional verb understood in ellipsis (*verba ei subaudiuntur*), e.g., *Papae <miror>, quid video?* "Wow <I wonder>! What do I see?". However, Priscian's examples of interjectional words, presented after the general introduction, are divided into groups by formal, pragmatic and textual criteria:[27]

1. Pragmatically, as exclamations: *voces quae per exclamationem intericiuntur. habent igitur diversas significationes: gaudii, ut 'euax', doloris, ut 'ei'.*

[24] Prisc. *gramm.* II 53, 28–29.

[25] *Gramm.* III 90, 6–15.

[26] Cf. Prisc. *gramm.* II 373, 10–11 *Significatio vel genus, quod Graeci affectum vocant verbi, in actu est proprie … vel in passione.*

[27] *Gramm.* III 90,12–91,22.

2. Formally, as primitive words: *Proprie tamen voces interiectionum primitivae sunt, ut papae, euax, ei, heu, euhoe, ohe et similia,* that is, as so-called primary interjections (uninflected words) in opposition to secondary interjections (words or phrases formed from other word classes) used *pro interiectione*, e.g., '*pro dolor*', '*pro nefas*' and '*infandum*'.
3. Pragmatically and textually, as conventional imitations of human voices: *Inter has* (*voces passionis*) *ponunt etiam sonituum illitteratorum imitationes, ut risus 'hahahae', et 'phy' et 'euhoe' et 'au'.*

Priscian's and the Roman grammarians' views about the interjection were then transported through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance into the grammars of European languages.[28] Medieval grammarians, principally led by Aristotle, concentrated on the syntactical status of the interjection and, following Priscian, argued whether interjections would be classed as adverbs, verbs, nouns or even sentences. In speculations about word origins (*natura* vs. *conventione*) they emphasised the primitiveness and naturalness of exclamatory voices. Renaissance scholars abandoned Aristotelian explanations of medieval philosophers and, with Plato as their master, restricted the *partes orationis* to three (noun, verb and conjunction). They pushed interjections into the periphery of language studies, to the boundary between language and sounds of nature. "Interjections are nothing but signs of the affected mind (*notae animi affecti*) originating in the nature itself (*ab ipsa natura*), for instance, in fear or pain", states Italian scholar J. C. Scaliger (*De Causis* X 162–164).[29] F. Sanctius (*Minerva* I 2) of Spain writes:[30] "Interjections are neither Greek nor Latin, but signs of emotions: signs of sorrow and joy are common to all (languages), hence natural; if they are natural, they are not *partes orationis*". Sanctius, however, makes us understand that emotional voices, which are common to all by nature (*natura*), can be words by the conventions (*ex instituto*) of the linguistic community. This conclusion presumed knowledge of not only of Greek and Latin but also of Oriental languages and of

[28] See I. Michael, *English Grammatical Categories: and the Tradition to 1800,* Cambridge 1970, 76–81 and 461–465, and M. de Boer, "Talking about Interjections", *Bulletin of the Henry Sweet Society* 50 (2008) 31–37.

[29] *De causis linguae Latinae*, Lyons 1540.

[30] *Minerva, seu de causis linguae Latinae*, Salamanca 1587; reprint with an introduction by M. Breva-Claramonte (*Grammatica universalis* 16), Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 1986.

Latin vernaculars, Spanish, French and Italian (*Minerva* I 7): *Hispana, Gallica, Italica et aliae plures*. Renaissance scholars analysed classical Greek and Latin to find universal principles of grammar for needs of "new" languages. One fruit of these endeavours was the influential Port-Royal Grammar (1660), which succinctly delineates all that remained of the classical definition of interjections:[31]

> Interjections are also words which do not signify anything outside of us. These are only instances of the natural rather than artificial[32] voice, which indicate the emotions of our soul, like 'ah', 'oh', 'ha', 'alas', etc.[33]

The history of the interjection as a *pars orationis* ends here. The definition is still used in grammars of classical languages and interjection words have been researched, named variously according to linguistic approaches as particles, minor sentences, independent utterances or exclamations. In these particles, linguists of the Enlightenment (Leibniz and Herder) saw natural voices as the origins of not only of particular words but also of human speech. In the framework of psychological theories, these particles were interpreted as items of the pre-linguistic systems of primitive people.[34] In last century's structuralism, interjections were treated as particles or minor sentences that are totally outside the logical sentence structure. Finally, in the frameworks of text linguistics and pragmatics at the end of the last century, interjections came into their own as genuine items of linguistic expression.

In modern linguistics interjection is "a term used in the traditional classification of parts of speech, referring to *a class of words* [my emphasis] which are unproductive, do not enter into syntactic relationships with other classes, and whose function is purely emotive".[35] And from the pragmatic approach interjec-

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[31] See De Boer (above n. 28) 31–32.

[32] That is, "rather than by grammatical rules", cf. Diomedes (above n. 9): *quae affectus potius quam observationes artis inducant*

[33] A. Arnauld – C. Lancelot, *General and Rational Grammar: The Port-Royal Grammar*, English translation by J. Rieux and B. E. Rollin, The Hague – Paris 1975, 169.

[34] See De Boer (above n. 28) 32–34, and A. Heinekamp, "Sprache und Wirklichkeit nach Leibniz", in H. Parret (ed.), *History of Linguistic Thought and Contemporary Linguistics*, Berlin 1976, 543–544.

[35] D. Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics & Phonetics*, sixth ed., Oxford 2008, s.v. "interjection".

tion is "*an exclamatory insert* [my emphasis] used in speech to express emotion or attitude".[36] The main difference between the traditional and modern views is that the former sees interjection as a word class and the latter as part of linguistic discourse. In the traditional grammar, interjections were defined using psychological, syntactic and morphological criteria,[37]but modern pragmatics defines them using formal, semantic or pragmatic criteria.[38]

The traditional view lists three explicit problems in its definition 1) *Significans mentis affectum* is not a linguistic definition indicating grammatical relationships but rather a reference to expressions associated with the speaker's emotional state; 2) "interjection" (*interiectio*) is obscure because the supposed meaning of its syntactical independence contradicts the meaning of a *pars orationis* as a member of the logical sentence structure; 3) the formal definition "by means of an unformed word" (*voce incondita*) is obscure and ambiguous, meaning words or sound sequences outside the grammatical description, uncouth and primitive formations, confused sounds or unarticulated words that are incompatible with the definition of human language and, therefore, theoretically "non-words". Greek and Roman language students and grammatical writers tried to solve these problems based on 1) philosophy of language, 2) observations of the rhetorical and communicative structure of texts (rhetoric and stylistics), and 3) observations of spoken or written utterances (*consuetudo*). These bases will be my starting points for the following discussion.

3. Defining interjections: philosophical considerations

According to traditional grammar, the central meaning of an interjection is "to signify an emotion or a mental state" (*significans affectum mentis*), but the only accident of an interjection is to signify: *Interiectioni quid accidit? tantum significatio* (Don. *gramm.* IV 366,13–14).[39] Thus, this definition lacks both the

[36] D. Biber – S. Conrad – G. Leech 2005. *Longman Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English,* Harlow 2005, 457.

[37] Michael (above n. 28) 77.

[38] Ameka 2006 (above n. 2) 743–746.

[39] Latin grammarians used the verbs *significare* and *ostendere* to "indicate" emotions; the former refers to the verbal level of language, the latter to the expressive; see F. Biville. "La syntaxe aux confins

grammatical and semantic content expected in a linguistic definition and fails to notice different uses of interjections in various situations (that is, semiotic and pragmatic explanations are missing). Usually, grammarians only state that interjections have "diverse" or "various meanings", which are then described by examples from written texts. In other words, theoretical deliberation is missing, though ancient grammarians were eager to comply with the philosophers' definitions on other occasions. Next, I discuss the so-called primary class of interjections, which was the main concern of ancient grammarians (Don. *gramm.* IV 366,13–17):

> *Significatio interiectionis in quo est? quia aut laetitiam significamus, ut 'euax', aut dolorem, ut 'heu', aut admirationem, ut 'papae', aut metum, ut 'attat' et siqua sunt similia.*
>
> What is the meaning of an interjection? That we signify joy, e.g., *euax*, sorrow, e.g., *heu*, admiration, e.g., *papae*, or fear, e.g., *attat*, and similar.

What kind of *psycho-physic principles* are behind this traditional definition of prototypical interjections,[40] expressions of joy, sorrow, admiration, fear, etc.?[41]

What is the difference between man and horse? – Man is a laughing animal, the horse a whinnying one. Laughter consists of human voice, but is it part of human language? In fact, ancient philosophers of language made laughter distinctly human, as seen in a scholiast's (seventh cent. AD) comment on *Techne* (*Schol. in Dion. Thr.*, *G.G.* I 3, 357, 20–21): ἴδιον δέ ἐστι … ἀνθρώπῳ τὸ γελαστικόν, ἵππῳ δὲ τὸ χρεμετιστικόν ("Laughing is specific to man, whin-

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de la sémantique et de la phonologie: les interjections vues par les grammairiens latins", in P. Swiggers – A. Wouters (eds.), *Syntax in Antiquity*, Leuven 2003, 228. Cf. Ameka 1992 (above n. 2) 113: "Expressive interjections may be characterised as the vocal gestures that are symptoms of the speaker's mental state. They may be subdivided into two groups: the emotive and the cognitive."

[40] In modern definitions, a prototypical interjection is an indeclinable and syntactically independent word that expresses emotion. On defining different types of emotive interjections, see U. Stange, *Emotive Interjections in British English: A Corpus-Based Study on Variation in Acquisition, Function and Usage*, Amsterdam – Philadelphia 2016, 5–16.

[41] An interjection can be a sign of different emotions; for instance, *hahahae* can express joy, admiration, irony etc., *ei* fear or grief, ô sorrow, desire or address, and *heu* complaint or address.

nying to horse").[42] This shows the peculiarity of ancient grammarians to mix philosophical (ontological and physical) considerations with linguistic analyses. Comparing man's and horse's voices is a well-known topos in ancient grammatical texts,[43] originating in Aristotle's biological treatise, *Parts of Animals*, where Aristotle asserts that "man is the only animal that laughs."[44]

In the scholiast's comment, the question is about defining word classes in terms of Aristotelian categories (presented in late Antiquity by commentators of Aristotle). The scholiast argues that definitions must be based on observations of each being's specific property (*idion*), not on its accidental attributes (τὰ ἴδια δεῖ σκοπεῖν καὶ οὐ τὰ παρεπόμενα). The specific property pertains to only one being: laughing to man, whinnying to horse; accidental attributes might be white or black, fast or slow. Accordingly, the "noun's" *idion* indicates the specific property of a being whose accidental attributes are "proper" and "common". Thus, the scholiast here presents the well-known debate about how to define "noun" and defends the *Techne* against the Stoics, who regarded common and proper nouns two separate parts of speech. This comment also affects the interjection, implying that defining each part of speech (including the interjection) should correspond to the Aristotelian defining principles. But the comment is of great importance when defining interjections as it mentions man's laughter. Laughter is specific to man, but is it part of human language? As mentioned, the ancient philosophers typically explained language phenomena physically, based on the human *physis*.

Within his discussion of the midriff (*φρένες*) in *Parts of Animals*,[45] Aristotle searches for roots of human laughter, asserting "that man alone is affected by tickling …due firstly to the delicacy of his skin, and secondly to his being the only animal that laughs" (trans. W. Ogle). Aristotle's argumentation is somewhat circular[46], but his message is that linguistic phenomena like laughter are both

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[42] For a similar argumentation by later Latin grammarians (Audax and Julian of Toledo) in the context of the noun category, see *gramm.* V 317,23–318,6: *si quaeras a me, quid sit homo, respondebo 'animal rationale mortale risus capax'*, and *'risus capax' … dixit, quod tantum modo homini accidit, non aliis rebus, quia solus homo ridet, non alia res.*

[43] In grammatical texts "man" and "horse" are usually mentioned as examples of common nouns.

[44] *Part. an.* 3,10 (673a7–12).

[45] See previous note.

[46] M. Beard, *Laughter in Ancient Rome,* Oakland 2014, 32.

physical and *conventional.* The human being is *homo sociabilis* by nature because of his ability to speak, which distinguishes him from other animals:

> For nature, as we declare, does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses speech. The mere voice, it is true, can indicate *pain and pleasure*, and therefore is possessed by the other animals as well (for their nature has been developed so far as to have sensations of what is painful and pleasant and to indicate those sensations to one another), but speech is designed to indicate the advantageous and the harmful, and therefore also the right and the wrong.[47] (trans. B. Jowett)

We can make two observations. First, Aristotle's description of the sound of the voice signifying *pain and pleasure* comprises the most typical emotional interjections: positive or negative emotions. Compare Priscian: "The interjection includes expressions which can be exclamatorily interjected by the impulse of any mental experience. Therefore, interjections have many diverse meanings, of joy as *euax* and of grief as *ei*."[48] Secondly, though Aristotle does not expressly state that man is a laughing animal he clearly believes that the *voices* of man and of other animals are connected in how they make themselves understood, i.e., how they communicate.[49]

Aristotle's words give grounds for deliberating the origin and development of natural human sounds and imitations[50], onomatopoeic words, and primitive words, which may also be interjections, as Priscian (*gramm.* III 91, 26–27) maintains: *Proprie tamen voces interiectionum primitivae sunt, ut 'papae', 'euax', 'ei', 'heu', 'euhoe', 'ohe' et similia.* Interestingly, Aristotle bases interjections on the boundary between verbal and non-verbal communication.[51]

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[47] Arist. *Pol.* 1,2; 1253a9–15, see Sluiter (above n. 3) 205

[48] *Gramm.* III 90, 12–15; cf. Sanctius (above n. 30) *Minerva* I 2: "Interjections are neither Greek nor Latin but *signa tristititae aut laetitiae,* similar to voices of brute animals."

[49] On "the language of animals", see Sluiter (above n.3) 205.

[50] See Prisc. *gramm.* III 3, 91, 3–4 *Inter has* (*voces passionis*) *ponunt etiam sonituum illitteratorum imitationes, ut risus 'hahahae', et 'phy' et 'euhoe' et 'au'.* Cf. theories by linguists of the Enlightenment, Leibniz and Herder (above n. 34).

[51] Cf. Ameka 1992 (above n. 2) 12.

From the discussion, we may conclude that laughter and language share many commonalities: senses, mind and behaviour, or in Greek philosophers' terms, λόγος, πάθος and ἦθος. Laughter as a pathetic (psychological or physiological) phenomenon and the laughable, γέλοιον, as an ethical (behavioural) and social phenomenon are associated through our senses because, to me, laughter manifests as an emotional *sensation* caused by some comic effect. These considerations confront us with laughter's phonic and linguistic nature: How do we recognise a laugh? What makes us say someone is laughing? The answer, again, is by sensation, but rather than a feeling, it is an observation or perception acquired through our sense of hearing. We recognise the sound without seeing the laughing person and without knowing what caused the laughter. Obviously, we are used to hearing laughter, and there is a preconceived notion in our minds about its sound, an aspect that may be called *conventional*.

Conventionally, vocal signs of laughter are part of language. That laughter, or the voice perceived through hearing, is part of the sound material used in human communication when transmitting and receiving messages; thus, it is possible that laughter sounds are parts of utterances or uttered speech, which is the concern of language study. Language is understood as a *communicative system* of instruments including voices, sounds, words and sentences. Secondly, language presupposes a *cognitive* competence of its user[52] (that is, intuitive knowledge of human conventions); thirdly, the linguistic system implies reasoning, i.e., *homo rationalis*. For instance, when I suddenly burst into laughing or tears, the voices I produce are not necessarily part of language—provided I am not communicating. But someone who senses my laughter may interpret it as part of language because my sounds are conventional, i.e., familiar. They may ask what my laugh means: Is it somehow connected with the communicative situation? What is the message? And lastly, what is the meaning of the laughing sound? Maybe there is a sensation of pleasure, joy, amusement, humour, bewilderment, admiration, irony, derision, disdain and so on? These considerations of laughter sounds hold true for other emotional voices: wailing or weeping and, correspondingly, for conventional signs of sorrow, fear or pain.

Ancient grammarians used philosophical tools to define interjection words according to their natural meanings, and sometimes they presented views

[52] Cf. Priscian (*gramm.* II 552, 1–2): *quid est enim aliud pars orationis nisi vox indicans mentis conceptum, id est cogitationem.*

supporting their pragmatic interpretation. Since laughter and other expressions of audible or visible feeling—vocal signs of emotion—can form part of continuous speech, conversation, or dialogue, etc., they are given attention in language studies. According to Latin grammarians, these kinds of emotional words frequently occurring in Latin texts are interjections of joy, fear or sorrow: *hahahae, euax*, *ei*, *heu* and *vae*.[53]

4. "Interjected": between grammar and rhetoric

The term "interjection" is misleading and obscure if taken literally to indicate an insertion in the sentence construction, as the classical definition would suggest: "Interjection is a part of speech interjected between the other parts of speech to signify emotions" (Don. *gramm.* IV 391,26–27: *Interiectio est pars orationis interiecta aliis partibus orationis ad exprimendos animi affectus*). The term does not differentiate between the interjection and other parts of the sentence because "every *pars orationis* is actually inserted in the sentence (*nulla enim pars orationis non interponitur*)", as the Renaissance humanist J. C. Scaliger (*De causis* [above n. 29] X 162) notes criticising the term used by the ancients. Secondly, the supposed meaning of the syntactical independence of an interjection contradicts the *pars orationis* as a member of logical sentence structure.[54] The grammarians knew the controversy well, often presenting interjections as independent utterances inserted into text or discourse (*textus, oratio*):

> *Interiectio est pars orationis affectum mentis significans … Haec vel ex consuetudine vel ex sequentibus verbis varium affectum animi ostendit … et fere quidquid motus animi orationi inseruerit, quo detracto textus integer reperitur, numero interiectionis accedet* (Diom. *gramm.* I 1–5; 17–19).

[53] For examples in Latin literature: Terentius *Phorm.* 411 *Hahahae, homo suavis!*; Plautus *Eun.* 497 *Hahahae – Quid rides*? *Truc.* 209 *Hahahae, requievi*, *Cas.* 835 *Euax! nunc pol demum ego sum liber*; *Aul.* 796 *Ei mihi, quod ego facinus ex te audio! – Cur eiulas?, Aul.* 721 *Heu, me miserum, misere perii!*, *Most.* 369 *Vae mihi. quid ego ago?*; Ennius, *ann.* 2.126 *Heu, quam crudeli condebat membra sepulcro*.

[54] See Ashdowne (above n.3) 22.

> Interjection is a part of speech signifying an emotion.… (Interjections) have their meanings *from usage* and *from context*… and almost any insert *in discourse* caused by a mental affection, the removal of which leaves *the text* intact, will be classed as an interjection.

The Latin word *oratio* has two meanings: in grammar, it is a syntactically ordered sentence, in rhetoric a sequence of sentences, discourse or text. Diomedes uses it to mean "sentence" in the introductory phrase *interiectio est pars orationis*, but a "sequence of sentences" in the phrase *quidquid motus animi orationi inseruerit*. This can be concluded from the phrases *textus integer* and *ex sequentibus verbis*, which clearly refer to the continuation of speech or discourse.[55] Thus, Diomedes defines an interjection as either a sentence constituent (interjected into the sentence structure) or as an independent utterance (inserted into discourse or text). The latter meaning of the word *interiectio* comes from the teachings of rhetoricians who collected examples of interjections from written texts for oratorical purposes. *Interiectio* is a rhetorical term, first used in a grammatical text by Varro[56] (meaning an emotional break [breath, suspiration] between short elliptical phrases). According to Quintilian, *inst*. 9,3,23, the *interiectio* (Greek *παρένθεσις*) is a figure of speech which consists of some meaningful element in the interruption of speech by the insertion (*cum continuationi sermonis medius aliqui sensus intervenit*). These kinds of figures were also used for rhetorical emphasis to intensify emotion, (Quint. *inst.* 9.2.26–27): "For we may feign that we are angry, glad, afraid, filled with wonder, grief or indignation, or that we wish something, and so on. To this, some give the name exclamation (*exclamatio*)." Quintilian refers to Cicero, *or.* 135, who discusses the emotional character of speech and mentions, among other excellences of style, the "exclamation of admiration or complaint (*exclamatio vel admirationis vel questionis*)".

Priscian's treatment of interjections is ambivalent. First, he asserts that "any meaningful voice" must be classed as a *pars orationis* (*gramm.* II 552, 1–2 [see above n. 52]); for instance, voices, like *papae, euax* and *ei* were classed by Greek grammarians as adverbs because of their being syntactically *adjuncts to*

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[55] Cf. Ameka 1992 (above n.2) 107: Interjections "are conventional, encode the speaker's attitudes to communicative intentions and are context-bound."

[56] See above n.15.

verbs. On the other hand, the same voices were classed by Latin grammarians as *interjections* because they have the force of emotional verbs and can therefore appear as *independent utterances* without an added verb (see above n. 25). Both assertions are based on the Greek grammar of Apollonius Dyscolus.

In *Institutiones*, Priscian clearly presents a Latin interjection as a *pars orationis*, i.e., as a genuine part of the sentence structure. To demonstrate the ordering of the complete sentence (*oratio perfecta*), he remodels a Greek sentence by Apollonius (*G. G.* II 2,17,4) into a Latin sentence, which, after substituting the Latin interjection *heu* for the Greek article, includes all parts of speech except conjunction (*gramm.* III 116, 5–19):

> ὁ αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπος ὀλισθήσας σήμερον κατέπεσεν
> *idem homo lapsus heu hodie occidit*
>
> The same man slipped. *Alas!* Today fell down

Unfortunately, Priscian fails to explain the syntactic dependency of the interjection *heu*, though he accurately accounts for the syntactic ordering of all parts in the Greek sentence (including the article, which is lacking in Latin). Thus, Priscian's text is an accurate Latin translation from Apollonius, except for the added interjection *heu*, whose meaning Priscian does not care to explain but leaves it to be conjectured. If we try to interpret the "sentence" (i.e., translate it into English), we immediately see that the new Latin version completely differs from the original: there is no statement about the state of affairs but rather the speaker's emotional reaction to the situation that "the man today fell down" (*hodie occidit*). This interpretation also follows Priscian's own definition of the interjection, that it contains an implied emotional verb and is therefore an independent sentence. The independent nature of the interjection can also be demonstrated by replacing *heu* with the phrase *pro dolor*, which is mentioned by Priscian among the so-called secondary interjections (words or phrases formed from other word classes but used in the interjectional meaning, *pro interiectione*):[57]

> *Idem homo lapsus. Heu! <doleo>. Hodie occidit.*
> *Idem homo lapsus. Pro dolor! Hodie occidit.*

[57] See above n. 25.

Consequently, the interjection *heu* is not a *pars orationis* in the sentence structure but rather an independent utterance, that is, an *exclamation* (*Heu!*) expressing the speaker's sorrow or surprise, as Priscian (*gramm.* III 90, 12–15 [see above n. 27]) states that the class of the interjection "also includes words which can be exclamatorily (*per exclamationem*) interjected by the impulse of any mental passion, e.g., *Euax!* or *Ei!*."

The idea that interjections are independent utterances was already present in the fourth- and fifth-century grammars. Diomedes' use of the word *oratio* as continuous text or discourse—which can be interrupted by an interjection—and Priscian's view that interjections are emotional exclamations conflicted with the rules of the *ars grammatica*. Therefore, the grammarians could not directly deny the status of the interjection as a syntactically dependent *pars orationis*. Ps.-Augustine's sixth/seventh-century *Regulae* (*gramm.* V 524, 9–10) is probably the first to expressly say that the interjection is not a *pars orationis*: *Interiectio non pars orationis est, sed affectio erumpentis animi in vocem*.[58] Isidore of Seville, seventh century, in his *Etymologies* (1, 14),[59] simply states that *interiectio* is thus named "because it is interjected between meaningful phrases [*sermonibus*]" without mentioning the status of the interjection as a *pars orationis*.

The interjection is a good example of the non-grammatical use of language (grammar, as noted, concerns only the analysis of sentence constituents). After Priscian, in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, there was much discussion about whether interjections are adverbs, verbs or nouns. It was important to set forth these alternatives, but they did not resolve the interjection question because the grammarians insisted on the parts of speech system. Therefore, the explanatory models found in rhetorical writings may sound more plausible and correspond to modern views about the structure of speech. Surely, the interjection problem arises from the fact that emotions are difficult to clothe in words and insert in the matter-of-fact discourse (*logos* vs. *pathos* and *ethos*).

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[58] V. Law, "St. Augustine's 'De grammatica'. Lost or found", *Recherches Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 19 (1984) 166–170.

[59] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, translated with introduction and notes by A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and O. Berghof, Cambridge 2006, 46–47.

5. Conventions of language use

5.1. Usage and context

The morphological definition of the interjection as a signifier of an emotion "by means of an unformed word" (*voce incondita*) concerns its phonic substance which would somehow correspond to the mental state of the producer of an interjection. It questions the relation between form and meaning: with what kinds of formal elements appealing to our senses (hearing, sight) can we produce expressions of various emotions? Diomedes (*gramm.* I 419, 1–5 and 17–19) answers:

> *Haec* (*significatio*) *vel ex consuetudine vel ex sequentibus verbis varium affectum animi ostendit ... et fere quidquid motus animi orationi inseruerit, quo detracto textus integer reperitur, numero interiectionis accedet.*
>
> It (the signification of an interjection) appears as various mental affections expressed by formal elements (words, sounds) which have their meanings *from usage and from context* … and almost any insert in discourse caused by a mental affection, the removal of which leaves *the text* intact, will be classed as interjection.

In fact, the grammarians start their analyses with the text, with the uttered speech (*oratio*). The approach has two parts: "usage" and "context" (*vel ex consuetudine vel ex sequentibus verbis*). That the term *consuetudo* indeed refers to existing texts is implicitly shown in the examples of interjections cited by grammarians (Diom. *gramm.* I 419, 5–14, and 17–19):

> Interjections express joy *evax*, pleasure *va*, grief *vae*, complaint *heu*, fear *ei, attat*, admiration *babae, papae*, arrission *hahahae*, exhortation *eia, age, age dum*, anger, *nefas, pro nefas*, praise *euge,* indignation *apage*, call *eho*, silence *st*, irony *phy, hui,* admonition *em*, or surprise *attat*, and similar cases that are produced by emotions rather than by grammatical rules.

All examples presented by Diomedes can be found in Latin texts, and they are meant to be taken from existing texts. This can be proved by the evidence of other grammarians who explicitly mention their sources and by ancient grammarians' habit of quoting old texts not only to explicate but also to use them in linguistic analyses. The use of language (*consuetudo*) analysed by grammarians is represented mainly by examples taken from spoken Latin varieties, the early tragic and comic poetry. Therefore, quoted examples often reflect particularities of spoken Latin. For instance, it is typical of spoken language to exhibit short non-linguistic (disobeying the rules of grammar) sound sequences, like *attat, but, hem, mu, mut, pax, pol, pop, prox*, *trit*, etc.[60]

The formal definition of interjections as *voce incondita* is problematic. From late antiquity onwards, there have been different interpretations: words or sound sequences that are outside grammatical description, uncouth and primitive formations and confused sounds or unarticulated words that are incompatible with the definition of human language, and therefore theoretically "non-words". In general, the phrase *voce incondita* refers to words or word-forms that are somehow irregular, either because their meanings are not distinct but vary according to each context or because they are not analysable by the rules of the grammatical art and are, therefore, on the boundary between language and sounds of nature.

Grammarians usually state that interjections can have many various meanings. Obviously, because interjections are connected with the communicative situation, they can have several different meanings (*varium affectum animi ostendit*). For instance, *hahahae* may signify joy, admiration, surprise, mockery or irony according to the context and situation.[61] *Attat* is an interjection of fear or surprise (Diomedes), ô may be an interjection of sorrow, desire or address (Priscian)[62] and *heu* of complaint or address (Probus). The interjections *st, phy* and *hui*, mentioned by Diomedes, are good examples of contextual meaning, for instance, *st* is not a sign of an inner emotion but is an exhortation or a command

[60] The earlier grammarians collected long lists of interjections, the main source of which was the comic poetry. See J. P. Hofmann, *Lateinische Umgangssprache*, 3. ed., Heidelberg 1951, 9–39.

[61] For the meanings of *hahahae* in Roman grammarians: *adridentem significat* (Diomedes), *in comico carmine collocari potest* (Probus), *sonituum illitteratorum imitatio* (Priscian), *laetantis et risus* (Sacerdos), *ridentis* (Maximus Victorinus), *laetitiam animi* (Charisius).

[62] For the interjection of address (*interiectio vocandi*), see above n. 12.

("Silence!", "Be quiet!"), but in a convenient context, it may be an emotional interjection of indignation or annoyance.

Strictly speaking, *voce incondita* (or *voce abscondita* and *voce confusa*, which were also used by grammarians) refers to the formal characteristics of interjections, to the sound material of which words are composed.[63] As said before, grammarians collected examples of interjections from early Latin poetry, and accordingly, their views about the anomalous character of interjections are based on the particularities of spoken Latin:

1. Interjections were defined as "unformed" and "obscure" because they are formations that do not follow the grammatical rules of inflection (Palaemon: *nihil docibile*). The interjections of popular language are short indeclinable words often beginning or ending with rough sounds, explosives, double consonants or aspirates: e.g., *hem, hoe, pop, attat, vah* and *evax*.[64] Priscian (*gramm.* II, 19, 26 – 20, 4), discussing the anomalous pronunciation of the interjections *ah* and *vah*, states that "it is characteristic of the interjection to be uttered as an obscure sound (*voce abscondita*)."
2. In dramatic poetry, the mere break (breath, suspiration) between short elliptical phrases may act as the interjection (Varro, above n. 15). Grammarians, in fact, state that sighing or aspiration in itself is a sign of an affected mind[65] and is therefore an essential formal property of the interjection (see Sluiter [above n. 3] 191). Consequently, emphatic aspiration caused inconsistencies and irregularities in the written forms of interjections (in marking the letter h).
3. In the metrical language of dramatic poetry, there are irregularities that are suggestive of the confused nature of interjections. Laughter words in comical texts could be pronounced either *hăhāhae* or *hăhăhae*, and admiration words either *pāpae* or *păpae*. Roman grammarians sometimes say that the confused nature of interjections is shown by the inconsistency

[63] See Sluiter (above n. 3) 193–199.

[64] According to Scaliger (above n. 29), *De causis* X 162–164, medieval scholars considered interjections as rude formations because they may have extra aspiration, like *ohe*, or obscure endings in -t or -x, like *attat* and *euax*.

[65] Cf. Scaliger, *ibid.*: *Aspiratio explicat suspiria et difficultatis nota est: phui, heu, ah, oh.*

of their accentuation (Prisc. *gramm.* III 91, 20–22, *pro affectus commoti qualitate, confunduntur in eis accentus*).

4. The incondite and confused nature of interjections is often seen in natural speech (Varro: *effutitum naturaliter*), in uncivilized or barbaric pronunciation and in primitive or uncouth word forms, which imitate nature sounds. How to differentiate between confused sounds and meaningful voices was also an object of theoretical deliberation in treatises on the physical nature of words.

Phrases like *voce incondita* and *voce confusa* are technical terms in the ancient grammatical doctrine *de voce,* "on the voice".[66] Grammatical textbooks usually include a chapter termed "*de voce*", which intends to explain how the phonic material—the range of sounds produced by human speech organs and falling within the range of human hearing—becomes a form of language. The grammarians could not avoid including this philosophical issue in their definitions of language, as Priscian maintains (*gramm.* II 5,1–2): *Philosophi definiunt, vocem esse aerem tenuisimum ictum vel suum sensibile aurium, id est quod proprie auribus accidit.* Diomedes argues that the definition of voice is originally Stoic (*ut Stoicis videtur*) and presents a physical theory about two kinds of voice: "articulated" and "confused". The theory is based on the difference between human and animal voices (*gramm.* I 420,8–10):

> *Omnis vox aut articulata est aut confusa. Articulata est rationalis hominum loquellis explanata, eadem et litteralis vel scriptilis appellatur, quia litteris comprehendi potest. Confusa est irrationalis, simplici vocis sono animalium effecta, quae scribi non potest.*

Articulated voices are represented by rational human language (*hominum loquellis explanata*), i.e., sentences and words analysable into minimal sound

[66] To be precise, in the *de voce* chapters, only the term *voce confusa* appears, while *voce incondita* belongs in contexts where interjections are discussed. See Sluiter (above n. 3) 194–199. The terminological difference shows that the doctrines of the parts of speech and of the voice were based on different traditions.

elements (*litteralis vel scriptilis*); confused voices are simple, non-writable animal sounds.

Diomedes' definition of *vox* reflects the most typical view of language represented by Greek philosophers and adopted by grammarians: that it consists of meaningful units (words and sentences), which are made up of sounds, the minimal material of language (letters).[67] Here, we are confronted with a problem: when analysing meaningful formal units, uttered words and sentences into minor elements, we encounter material that is not analysable linguistically but physically: the mass of sound. The linguist, however, wants to analyse it because they know that sound can be analysed by human senses and is therefore the most suited material for human communication. Mixing philosophical speculations on the nature of voice into linguistic definitions, the grammarians concluded that language is constituted of units that are both *meaningful* and *analysable in letters*. Consequently, other sounds or voices are not part of language but are, by definition, "non-words". Thus, the physical explanation as such cannot solve the problem of the interjection since the definition of *vox confusa* also comprises human laughter, weeping, and so on: exactly the group of interjections that seems to be primary or ordinary.

5.2. Convention and imitation

There is, in the ancient grammatical science, another tradition about the *vox* that tries to bridge the gap between physical sounds and meaningful words. To quote Priscian's (*gramm.* II 5,5–6,2) definition,

> Vocis autem differentiae sunt quattuor: articulata, inarticulata, literata, illiterata. Articulata est, quae coartata, hoc est copulata cum aliquo sensu mentis eius qui loquitur, profertur. Inarticulata est contraria, quae a nullo affectu proficiscitur mentis. Literata est, quae scribi potest, illiterata, quae scribi non potest. Inveniuntur igitur quaedam voces articulatae, quae possunt scribi et intellegi, ut 'arma virumque cano', quaedam quae non possunt scribi, intelleguntur tamen, ut sibili hominum et gemitus: hae enim voces, quamvis sensum aliquem significent proferentis eas, scribi tamen

[67] See W. Ax, *Laut, Stimme und Sprache. Studien zu drei Grundbegriffen der antike Sprachtheorie,* Göttingen 1986, 22–27.

> non possunt. aliae autem sunt, quae quamvis scribantur, tamen inarticulatae dicuntur, cum nihil significent, ut 'coax', 'cra'. aliae vero sunt inarticulatae et illiteratae, quae nec scribi possunt nec intellegi, ut crepitus, mugitus et similia.

Priscian defines different *voces* using the following distinctions:

> *vox articulata* vs. *vox inarticulata* = *cum sensu* vs. *sine sensu* (*nullo affectu mentis)*
> *vox literata* vs. *vox illiterata* = *scribi potest* vs. *scribi non potest*

According to these distinctions there are four types of *voces*:

1. Meaningful (intelligible) voices which can be written, e.g., "*arma virumque cano*",
2. Meaningful (intelligible) voices which cannot be written, e.g., *sibili et gemitus hominum*,
3. Meaningless (non-significant) voices which can be written, e.g., "*coax*", "*cra*",
4. Meaningless (non-intelligible) voices which cannot be written, e.g., *crepitus, mugitus.*

Priscian's definition most markedly differs from that of Diomedes in that, for him, *articulata* and *literata* mean different things. "Articulated" does not mean "analysable in letters" but "analysable in meaning units" (*aliquo sensu mentis eius qui loquitur*). In addition, although there are implicit distinctions in Priscian's definition that often occur in philosophical texts (e.g., "rational" [type 1] and "human", or more precisely, voices produced by human speech organs [types 1 and 2]), he does not follow the usual physical theory on voice. On the contrary, his examples are evidence that he was not interested in the physical nature of different *voces*.[68] He only wanted to analyse "conventional" *voces*, i.e., intelligible voices that can appear in human communication[69] and that actually appear as "words" in Latin texts. At this point, however, Priscian's presentation has short-

[68] For similar views of the Renaissance rationalists, see above ns. 29 and 30.

[69] Cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1,2 (above n. 47).

comings, probably caused by his carelessness. He follows his Greek source quite accurately,[70] only adding Latin examples. But in type 2, he fails to mention the imitations of "unwritable" human voices, although, on another occasion, he mentions them as examples of Latin interjections (*gramm.* III 91, 3–4): *Inter has (interiectiones) ponunt etiam sonituum illitteratorum imitationes, ut risus 'hahahae', et 'phy' et 'euhoe' et 'au'*. These kinds of words which *imitate* human emotional voices can be written by the *conventions* of each linguistic community.

We may conclude that, according to Priscian's view, there are four types of conventional words: (1) The first represents rational human speech; the Latin example is the first line of Vergil's *Aeneid*: (2) the second type consists of vocal signs of emotions, which imitate human sounds, *sibili et gemitus hominum*;[71] this type includes also emotional interjections, e.g., *hahahae, phy, euhoe* and *au*; (3) the third type consists of irrational ("non-human") voices that denote the source of the sound, e.g. the frog or the crow: *coax* or *cra* (*coax* is a quotation from Aristophanes' *Frogs*[72]); (4) the fourth type consists of voices without any imitative meaning or reference to some source.[73]

Philosophical speculation about the relation of sound and language, which operated with oppositions such as rational vs. irrational, animated vs. inanimate and human vs. animal was not able to solve the problem, which, in the definition of language, is that it consists of *voces articulatae*. Grammatical study that starts with the text, *oratio*, and with the speech situation, *consuetudo* and *imitatio,* gives a better explanation, even giving meaningful reasons for the birth and evolution of language. For instance, in Latin, we have *eiulare* from the unarticulated sound *ei*. We could also coin a verb like *hahahare*, which is

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[70] Similar definitions can be found in later scholia (*Schol. in Dion. Thr., G. G.* I 3,181, 310 and 478), whose common source is probably Apollonius Dyscolus.

[71] *Sibili* and *gemitus* are probably Priscian's ad hoc translations from the Greek original, e.g., *risus* is missing, but is mentioned by Probus, *gramm.* IV 47,11–13: *est et confusa vox sive sonus hominum, quae litteris comprehendi non potest, ut puta oris risus vel sibilatus, pectoris mugitus et cetera alia.* Probus, however, does not differentiate between meaningful and meaningless voices.

[72] Ar. *Ran.* 209ff.: "*brececex coax coax …*", also quoted by a scholiast (*Schol. in Dion. Thr. , G. G.* I 3,181,20–23) as an example of unarticulated (meaningless) voices that can be written. Note the difference between the second and third type: in vocalising "*hahahae*", I imitate the sound of laughter, but when I say "*coax*" I imitate the frog.

[73] Even these can appear in texts as interjections, but they are only situationally understandable, for instance, Plaut., *Pseud.*1279: *itaque cum enitor – prox – iam paene inquinavi pallium.*

understandable but does not occur in Latin texts. And finally, to take the eternal dispute, whether words are natural or conventional, the study of interjections or of words that are often used to prove the natural origins of words, will prove the opposite: words are conventional.

6. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, I return to Section 3 "Defining interjections", where I observed that expressions of feeling like laughter or wailing can be recognised although you don't know (see or hear) what causes the voice. But from the view of language theory, this kind of sound, although it may be phonetically analysable, is meaningless and accordingly it is no part of language. It is not a part of speech but merely a sound of laughter or wailing. Only if we know the linguistic context where the sound of voice occurs, it becomes language: then there is not only the uncontrolled sound but there is some meaning controlled by the human producer of the sound. It is by *convention* that an emotional voice becomes a word in the grammatical sense. This becomes clear, for instance, in Diomedes' statement that interjections mean by "usage" and "context". The second answer is given by Priscian, who argues that a confused sound becomes an expression of emotion when it "imitates" a natural human voice. The use of a particular vocal expression in the speech situation—the imitation of a particular emotional voice—is naturally prescribed by the habits of the speaking society, that is, by the *consuetudo*, as the Roman grammarians defined it. These views come near the modern definitions of interjections: "From a semantic point of view, prototypical interjections may be defined as conventionalised linguistic signs that express a speaker's current mental state, attitude, or reaction toward a situation."[74] The ancient grammarians had adequate means to explicate language phenomena so that their proper nature as part of linguistic behaviour was understandable, and when analysing interjectional words, they presented views, which have greatly contributed to European linguistics and may be of importance to the study of human communication.

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[74] Ameka 2006 (above n. 2) 743.