

Interjections in the speech of British royal family members

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The article draws on publicly available interviews to consider the range and functions of interjections used by members of the British royal family as elements of speech behaviour elucidating the corresponding features of their speech portraits in the framework of the lingua-pragmatic and socio-cultural lines of research supported by qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. The authors make inferences concerning the inevitable affinity of interjections, contemplate their role in the natural process of speech formation, highlight the reasons for the lack of conative and phatic interjections as well as the scarcity of emotive interjections and the frequency of their occurrence in the respondents' speech. The results obtained support the arguments of the anthropocentric approach in linguistic studies, proclaiming that emotion, an inseparable part of human activity, can be verbally expressed in the form of interjections.

KEYWORDS: *interjection, emotion, interview, speech portrait, royal family, speech formation, social subsystem*



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1. INTRODUCTION

The anthropocentric orientation of today's scientific paradigm sparks increased interest in the role of the human factor in language production, the issues having to do with the connection between language and thought, language and linguistic identity, language and communication.

Serving as an instrument of human communication, language reflects people's perception of the surrounding reality.

Linguistic study today is increasingly oriented towards the study and analysis of speech practice. The prevailing appeal to pragmatics is only natural as *'there is nothing more theoretically valuable*

than conclusive practice' (Levy-Leboyer, 1988, p. 779). This paper explores speech practice in interviews, which is a genre of two-way communication between an interviewer – less spontaneous due to preparative planning – and an interviewee – often much more unpredictable, spontaneous, situational and emotional.

As it tends to be emotional, the interviewee's speech is of particular interest in terms of studying interjections. Being codified signals of emotions, interjections occur in speech and express a spontaneous feeling or reaction. Despite their relatively low rate of occurrence, interjections have enormous communicative significance,

mostly because they help clarify the speaker's feelings and emotions. Considering their spontaneous occurrence in speech, interjections essentially reveal the psychological state of the interviewee and their stance on whatever is being discussed, which is probably why interviews with members of the royal family attract special attention. The social status of the representatives of the royal family imposes certain restrictions on their personal and speech behaviour. Therefore, constructing the speech portraits of the British royal family will imply manoeuvring between the limitations of social status and the 'boundless' nature of an interview.

The aim of the paper is to identify interjections in speech portraits of members of the British royal family and consider their qualitative and quantitative features.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted within the framework of lingua-pragmatic and socio-cultural lines of research supported by qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. Research material features publicly available interviews with members of the British royal family (Queen Elizabeth II; Prince William, Duke of Cambridge; Catherine (Kate) Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge; Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex; Meghan Markle, Duchess of Sussex), including a recently released documentary, entitled *'The Coronation*

with Her Majesty the Queen' (2018) and the first interview with Prince Harry and Meghan Markle before the 2018 royal wedding.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Interjections

While interjections arguably remain one of the most controversial parts of speech, their semantic and structural features evidently make them unique in terms of their capacity to express an emotion without naming it. The thing is that interjections, unlike notional parts of speech, possess only connotative meaning, which is directly connected with the conditions of and participants in the communication. Connotative meaning incorporates emotional, axiological, expressive and stylistic components. Unlike functional parts of speech, interjections don't express any relations between the words or sentences and can be classified as emotional lexis as they include all of its main typical features, namely lack of syntactic connections with other parts of the sentence and semantic irradiation, which implies that with only a single emotional word present, the entire utterance acquires emotive potential. So, interjections can be described as *'specialised emotives'* (Statsenko, 2017, p. 93).

Interjections play an important role in the process of communication. Acting as lexical means expressing emotion, interjections convey the

subtle atmosphere of the communicative act. In terms of psychological perspective, life is impossible without emotions. One way or another, people repeatedly express their attitude to whatever is taking place in the immediate surrounding reality. This attitude can be revealed in gestures, mimicry or the emotive lexis, which has over the past few decades clearly kindled scholarly interest (Ameka, 1992; Clark & Tree, 2002; Cruz, 2009; Jovanović, 2004; Kharkovskaya & Panina, 2018; Wierzbicka, 1992; Wilkins, 1992, etc.).

Interjections are typically associated with dialogism, informality, spontaneity and the oral form of conversation and have recently become the object of studies in discourse, such as literary, educational, media and other forms of expression.

3.2 Interviews as part of publicist discourse

The current stage in the development of linguistics is characterised by an increased interest in the issues of mass communication and mass speech influence. The language of newspapers, radio, television and electronic media has now become the centre of numerous scientific studies as linguistics is shifting from the static 'language proper' paradigm to the idea of its strong correlation with people as producers of speech, their spiritual and practical expression, which clearly demonstrates the way the subject of linguistics has expanded and continues to expand.

Following Olomskaya (2013), we turn to the classification that divides media discourse into discourse types on account of their communicative functions (public, advertising and PR discourse) and implementation channels (television, radio, computer and Internet discourse).

The publicist in general exploits the special properties of the language as a system of expressive signs which function as instruments of persuasion and manipulation. The orientation of a publicity text towards the communicative process makes it possible to deal with pragmatics underlying the theory of discourse. Recent research represents publicist discourse as a kind of cultural phenomenon.

Publicist discourse is, in the primary instance, recording even the smallest language transformations and defining a new type of discourse characterised by a number of distinctive features. Over time, publicist discourse has become personalised. The author presents the material in an original way to the reader, raising increased interest in the subject matter. There is an expansion of the issues discussed in the articles. Taboo topics have practically disappeared from the publicist sphere. Open criticism by journalists has replaced closed questions. Consequently, the amount of evaluative vocabulary reflecting an ironic, sometimes even sarcastic, attitude to reality

has skyrocketed. Publicist discourse has become more emotional and figurative. The substantial diversity of the material contributes to an increase in the number of words and phraseological combinations of various topical layers used. Dialogism and stylistic dynamism has also increased, reflected in the increasing number of language items expressing the evaluative position of a journalist (Păun, 2014).

Dialogism, dynamism, expressiveness and orientation towards unhindered evaluation are, to a greater extent, manifested in genres of communication such as interviews, live dialogues, public speeches and press conferences.

Any interview, whose genre is of central interest to this paper, implies cooperative interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Malyuga & Orlova, 2016). Although it represents an active speech activity, which differs in the types of communicative interaction, the interviewer's speech is traditionally pre-planned, while the respondent's speech is spontaneous and not prepared in advance. The nature of colloquial communication objectively predetermines the occurrence of verbal signals of emotional state, such as interjections, which are obviously capable of exerting a pragmatic influence on the course of the interaction. Indeed, as an interview begins, the respondent typically tries to restrain their emotions and even deliberately hide them behind a mask of

politeness or restraint. However, as interaction progresses and affects their personal interests and emotions, they may manifest their emotions on both the verbal and non-verbal levels of communication. Thus, when personal issues are concerned, '*oratio naturalis*' is brought to the forefront and is accompanied by extralinguistic factors, such as distinctive tonality, intonation, melody, facial expression, gesticulation, acting as supportive elements in the analysis of the functional load behind the communicative use of interjections. For this reason, respondents' speech portraits are of considerably more interest, compared with the speech portraits of interviewers with their pre-planned questions and reserved demeanour.

3.3 Theoretical insight into the notion of a speech portrait

In modern linguistic studies, the term 'speech portrait' often appears ambiguous and controversial. Some disputed issues concern the understanding of the concept itself, its structure and the essence of its basic and derivative definitions (Gavra, 2011; Nancy et al., 2018). Issers (2000) focuses on the communicative behaviour of the individual – a communicative portrait – since she believes that the concept of a communicative portrait is associated with the analysis of speech behaviour. The indistinct boundary between the two notions persists in a number of publications (Balykina & Netesina,

‘Social class is also relevant in this respect since it identifies a certain social network with a hierarchy of internal and external connections, while social differentiation of speech reflects social differentiation within a society’

2012; Otegen & Rgizbaeva, 2014) which even consider them as synonymous. The original interpretation offered by Issers (2000) suggests that a communicative portrait implies greater analysis of the individual characteristics of speech behaviour, while Yarmahova (2005) considers the concept of a speech portrait in both the personal and the social meaning of its interpretation. As to the collective speech portrait, the author equates it with the concept of ‘type’ (Yarmahova, 2005, p. 34).

From what can be gathered from the scientific literature, the term ‘speech portrait’ is more frequently used in modern research and is more relevant within the scope of this study. Based on a synthesis of descriptions available in the literature, we suggest that a speech portrait can be viewed as a set of personal and communicative linguistic features, presented in the form of an open model that also reflects the collective description of a representative of a particular culture. Social class

is also relevant in this respect since it identifies a certain social network with a hierarchy of internal and external connections, while social differentiation of speech reflects social differentiation within a society.

The way an individual behaves is largely determined by the culture (social norms and rituals) in which they are brought up. Communities of people united within various social formations have not always been socially, culturally or economically homogeneous, which is naturally reflected in the specifics of the use of linguistic expressive ways reflecting a person’s mentality and worldview, their place within the social hierarchy, educational background, etc. On the one hand, a speech portrait is individual and reflects a unique life experience for each person. On the other hand, language is a collective custodian of information about the world, society and its institutional manifestations. From these positions, language acts as a kind of a ‘mirror’ reflecting the activity of the members of a particular society. In any society, there is a number of unique social subsystems, including a specific genre of intragroup speech. These subsystems include two types of social communities.

1. Isolated subsystems are those whose members are physically (legally) detached from the rest of the society, when leaving the subsystem is either impossible or limited by laws and regulations. The

most typical type of such subsystems is a prison camp, which can serve as an example of an isolated subsystem in its purest form. The army, military schools, orphanages and boarding schools are less closed.

2. Open subsystems are those where members are not fenced off from the rest of society physically or legally but their living and working conditions imply their relative isolation. This category includes students, schoolchildren, some professional groups and groups united by a common interest (Dyachok, 1992).

According to this classification, the members of the British royal family can be assigned to the open social subsystem. Each community, including the British royal family members, has its own language peculiarities typical of the corresponding social subsystem and these peculiarities mould a specific speech portrait of a given social group. 'Speech portrait' as a notion implies that some elements characterising speech behaviour are chosen from a number of options to be used or not used in speech depending on the context of communication. There are socially marked ways of choosing and using linguistic means of expression as indicators of individual speech behaviour. While this study considers the typical features of the royal speech in terms of *using* interjections, our drawing on the term *using* as opposed to *choosing* is not incidental, as it more or less

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highlights the spontaneity and the role of subconscious triggers, whereas *choosing* would imply a more rigid and deliberate process of speech production, which is obviously not the case with interjections. Therefore, the study will explore the quantity and quality of interjections used by the representatives of the British royal family, whose speech is to a certain extent restricted by their status and the social subsystem to which they belong.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Within the scope of this paper, interjections are divided into four groups: conative interjections (attracting attention and requiring feedback, e.g. *eh, well*), emotive interjections (expressing emotional state, e.g. *ah, God, oh, wow*), phatic interjections (used to maintain the communicative contact, e.g. *aha, uh-huh*), and interjections expressing hesitation (used to pause, e.g. *er, uh, um, well*). This classification was utilised to systemise the findings shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Qualitative and quantitative indicators of English interjections as per linguistic data retrieved from a series of interviews with the members of the British Royal family

TYPE OF INTERJECTION	OH	UH	UM	WELL	TOTAL
Conative					
Emotive	13%				13%
Expressing hesitation		7%	57%	23%	87%
Phatic					

The group of emotive interjections includes only one interjection – *oh* (13% of the total number).

Interjections expressing hesitation – *uh, um, well* – amount to 87% of the total number of the data obtained, which indicates the unprepared nature of the respondent's speech. They serve as 'assistants' helping overcome the problems in communication (Kharkovskaya & Panina, 2018).

As the table shows, conative and phatic interjections are not registered at all in the material analysed. Regarding the interviews, the lack of conative interjections in respondents' speech is quite obvious. As they are the ones required to provide feedback, their goal is not to encourage the interviewer to respond. The lack of phatic interjections can presumably be explained by the restrictions of the social status of the members of the royal family, as these interjections are

generally conversational.

Turning to the quality of the interjections registered, the ones expressing hesitation are represented not only by the prevailing quantity but also by the most diversified lexical units in comparison with the other groups of interjections. The diversity of interjections identified in the speech of the members of the British royal family is very scarce, which is also predetermined by the royal status of the interviewees.

Having examined the functions of the interjections mentioned it was observed that one and the same interjection can express both positive and negative emotions, depending on the context. The interjections of this kind are described as *ambivalent*. This difference, according to the emotional focus of the statement, is considered

within this paper and can be seen in the following examples.

The example below is an extract from an interview with Queen Elizabeth II, recorded for a documentary film, *The Coronation of Her Majesty the Queen*, to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the coronation (aired on BBC One on January 14th, 2018). At the sight of the crown of King Edward the Confessor, often called King Edward's Crown or St (Saint) Edward's Crown, which the Queen saw for only the second time in her life 65 years after the coronation, she carefully examined the crown, deciding to check whether its weight was five pounds or less and having lifted it, she noticed with surprise that it 'weighed a ton'.

Interviewer: *The crown is incrustated with 440 precious and semi-precious stones and with a frame of solid gold. It weighs five pounds.*

Queen Elizabeth II: *Well...is it, is it still as heavy? ... Yes, it is. Oh, it weighs a ton!*

Obviously, *well* expresses hesitation and occurs at the beginning of the utterance to prompt speech production, whereas the emotive *oh* expresses genuine surprise.

Another excerpt from the same interview calls for the clarification of certain cultural and historical allusions. The situation is that during the coronation ceremony the monarch puts on King

Edward's Crown as a symbol of the accession of a new monarch to the throne. After that, the monarch puts on the smaller crown of the British Empire, which he or she is subsequently obliged to wear to all significant state events. Thus, when the Queen was given the crown during the interview, she was surprised it was much smaller than the previous one.

Interviewer: *The most important items used in the coronation are the monarch's two crowns. If the Queen had only worn St. Edward's Crown once, she's much more familiar with this Imperial State Crown.*

The Queen: *Oh, you see, it's much smaller, isn't it?*

Foreshadowing the third example involving the Royal Charitable Foundation, it should be noted that this organisation was set up in 2009 to enable Prince William and Prince Harry to move forward their charitable ambitions. Kate, as she is always known, and Meghan Markle later joined as patrons of the foundation. In 2018, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle took part in the first annual Royal Foundation Forum, where the future Duchess of Sussex was for the first time introduced as its 4th patron. The patrons discussed why the Royal Foundation was set up, the projects they were working on and their ambitions for the future.

In an extended interview, the interviewer inquired

whether royal family members had disagreements concerning the organisation of the events under the aegis of the Royal Charitable Foundation. The response came from Prince William, who uttered with great significance: 'Oh, yes ...', which meant, that disagreements really arise and the vocal gesture of the interjection *oh*, uttered with a slight lengthening of the vowel and followed by a long pause, pointed to a feeling of sadness and inevitability, yet at the same time with a tinge of self-irony.

Interviewer: *As a family, do you have disagreements about the things?*

Prince William: *Oh, yes...*

In this particular micro-context the ambivalent interjection *oh* expresses sorrow and ironic disposition.

The next example is taken from the BBC interview with Prince Harry and his bride Meghan Markle following the announcement of their engagement (aired on November 27th, 2017).

Replying to the questions concerning the beginning of their relationship, the description of the day of the proposal and their feelings, Prince Harry remarked on the reaction of his bride, citing her words at the sight of the ring. She was confused and happy at the same time, as expressed by her mouthing the interjection *oh*.

Interviewer: *Can we start with the proposal and the actual moment of your engagement? When did it happen? How did it happen?*

Prince Harry: *It happened a few weeks ago, earlier this month, here at our cottage, just a standard typical night for us.*

Interviewer: *Was it an instant yes from you?*

Meghan Markle: *Yes, as a matter of fact, I could barely let you finish proposing. I said, 'Can I say yes now?'*

Prince Harry: *She didn't even let me finish. She said, 'Can I say yes? Can I say yes?' And then there were hugs and I had the ring on my finger and I was like, can I give you the ring? She goes, 'Oh yes, the ring'. So, no, it was a really nice moment, it was just the two of us and I think I managed to catch her by surprise as well.*

Later on the interviewer turned to another burning question referring to the period of time spent together with Prince Harry.

Interviewer: *And this is how long after you first met?*

Meghan Markle: *Oh, it would be a year and a half, a little bit more than that?*

In the response of Meghan Markle, *oh* demonstrates the combination of surprise and confusion as she needed to provide an immediate answer, which at the same time had to be accurate and informative, but ends in a question mark as a

request for confirmation.

Having analysed the pre-wedding interview with Prince Harry and Meghan Markle it was interesting to compare it with with a similar interview of the Duke of Cambridge and his future bride. Thus, the next example is taken from an interview with Prince William and Kate before their wedding in 2011. In the interview (aired on the BBC on November 16th, 2010), Kate Middleton commented on their long-standing relationship with Prince William.

Interviewer: *All of your friends say that this is a very substantial love that has built up over a great period of life.*

Kate Middleton: *Uh, well, I think, uh, um...when you go with someone for quite a long time, um, you do get to know each other very, very well. Um...You go through the good times, you go through the bad times... You know both personally, but also within a relationship as well. And you know I think if you can come out of that stronger and learn, as I said. things about yourself. It certainly, it's been a good how many years?*

Prince William: *Uh, well a lot of time.*

Kate Middleton tried to explain her feelings, noting that having known each other for so many years and sharing both joys and sorrows together, it is practically next to impossible not to build strong and trusting relationships. Answering the question,

the Duchess uses 6 interjections expressing hesitation. This means that her speech was unprepared and using such interjections as *uh*, *um* and *well* she subconsciously set aside time for herself to make a statement. As for Prince William, it seems obvious *uh* and *well* were used mainly as starting points, preventing awkward pauses caused by the Duchess's question about the exact number of years spent together.

According to Chafe (1980), the fundamental reason for hesitation is that speech production is an act of creation, referring to pauses, false starts, afterthoughts and repetitions as steps on the way to achieving the goal. This idea is clearly illustrated in the following examples.

Interviewer: *Kate, just coming to a close, people have, you know, put some, made some criticisms of you about your work and so on. Does that hurt? How do you respond to people who say those things?*

Kate Middleton: *Well, I think I know I've been working very hard for the family business, and sometimes those days are long days [...].*

Interviewer: *You know your family, as you've said that you are very close. Does it hurt about what's said or do you let it run off your collective backs on the grounds that's just what you have to live with?*

Kate Middleton: *Well, again I think, if you ... the people around home are very supportive to us and*

you know those are the people who really matter to us, our close friends and family [...].

(BBC, November 16, 2010).

Prince Harry: *I tried to warn you as much as possible, but I think both of us were totally surprised by the reaction after the first five, six months we had to ourselves. You can have as many conversations as you want and try and prepare as much as possible but we were totally unprepared for what happened after that.*

Interviewer: *The scrutiny?*

Prince Harry: *Well, all sorts (laughs).*

(BBC, November 27, 2017).

Interviewer: *So you lived ... you ended up sort of in the same flat. Was that if you don't mind me asking, was before you were going out or ...?*

Prince William: *No, we moved in together as friends because we were living together, we lived with a couple of others as well, and it just sort of blossomed from there, really. We just saw more of each other and, you know, hung out a bit more and did stuff. So, um yeah.*

Kate Middleton: *You liked the cooking.*

Prince William: *Well, your cooking is alright. (Kate laughs) It's gotten better.*

(BBC, November 16, 2010).

Interviewer: *That has to be a good sign. Speaking of dogs, have you brought yours to the UK?*

Meghan Markle: *Well, I have two dogs that I've*

had for quite a long time, both my rescue pups.

And one is now staying with very close friends and my other little guy is — yes, he's in the UK. He's been here for a while.

(BBC, November 27, 2017).

Interviewer: *It's such a ballet, where everyone knows precisely where to go!*

The Queen: *Well, we jolly well ought to after all the rehearsals we had.*

(BBC, January 14, 2018).

These examples demonstrate the use of interjections expressing hesitation in the speech of British royal family members, which ultimately vividly illustrates that interjections are one of the constituent elements of their speech portraits.

5. CONCLUSION

Human activity is associated with emotions that are verbally expressed in the form of interjections, which tend to occur in the types of discourses characterised by emotional and colloquial features, such as the publicist discourse and the interview as its most common manifestation. In interviews, the communicative behaviour of the interviewee poses a greater scientific challenge due to its spontaneous nature.

With the British royal family members as respondents belonging to a royal subsystem, certain social status restrictions have to be taken

into account. Therefore, the study offered a collective speech portrait of representatives of the British royal family.

Having analysed a series of relevant interviews with some of the members of the British royal family, including Queen Elizabeth II, Prince William, Kate Middleton, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, the study registered the quantity and quality of some of the emotive interjections and interjections expressing hesitation. The group of emotive interjections, represented only by one interjection *oh*, is quite scarce in terms of both their quality and the frequency of occurrence in speech (13%), whereas the number of interjections expressing hesitation is much more frequent. The latter are represented by three interjections – *uh*, *um* and *well* – and amount to 87% of the total number of interjections used in the interviews. This significant difference in the rate of occurrence can be explained by the spontaneity of speech production having a lot to do with the psychological implications of human behaviour. For this reason, a great number of interjections

were used where the person didn't know exactly what to answer and the interjections *uh*, *um* and *well* were used to gently take the initiative or to fill a pause in the conversation. Emotive interjections, on the other hand, were practically left out. From the great diversity of existing emotions and interjections expressing them, only the emotive and ambivalent interjection *oh* was used to express emotions such as sadness, confusion, surprise or happiness. This clearly limited range of expressed emotions illustrates the reserved behaviour of the members of the British royal family that is imposed by their royal status, as well as their socio-cultural background. In defiance of the social status, interjections expressing hesitation are indispensable constituents in the process of speech production. However, the diversity of emotive interjections and the frequency of their occurrence in speech can reflect a person's association with a certain social subsystem and shape their speech portrait. Thus, a wide variety of emotive interjections, conative and phatic interjections are not typical elements of the speech portrait of British royal family members.

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