

Russian Interjections: Principles of Description

The linguistic status of interjections and the question of their categorisation is one of the burning issues in present day linguistics. The treatment of these units varies in several grammars. Interjections are often referred to as parts of speech, discourse particles, sound gestures, sentences or interactive units. The whole complex of morphologic, syntactic and semantic criteria which is usually used to describe the separate parts of speech is not applicable with respect to interjections. In view of Morphology interjections have no affixes. From the syntactic point of view they commonly form separate utterances and do not convey the category of predicativity. In the view of semantic approach the meaning of interjection can not be described by means of denotation or signification. Speakers use interjections to express the importance of what they have in mind at a particular point in a conversation, without fully displaying their thinking. The above mentioned features show that the functions of interjections are deeply rooted on the pragmatic level of language.

The purpose of this paper is to focus on how to sharpen the definition and description of interjections and contribute to our understanding of what they are doing in discourse. Form and function of interjections are usually very closely connected. From the prosodic properties of interjections, such as tones, tone pitch or reduplication, often derive their pragmatic functions.

The interaction of prosodic and functional characteristics of interjections will be shown by means of phonetic diagrams of selected examples from Russian spoken language. The diagrams confirm the important role of Intonation at the formation of the concrete pragmatic function of interjections.