

Emotional Expression of the Interjection 哎呀 Aiya

Ekspresi Emosional Interjeksi 哎呀 Aiya

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Abstract. Interjection has no concrete meaning like noun, verb, nor adjective. It appears in spoken language to express one's emotion in a certain condition or situation. The interjection 哎呀 aiya is one of the most frequently used interjection in modern Chinese. Concerning 哎呀, Oxford Concise Chinese Dictionary (2010:1) only mentions that 哎呀 is used to express surprise or discontent. We presume that there are more emotions available to be expressed. Based on the lack of types of emotions in the Chinese dictionary, the aim of this research is to examine kinds of emotions by analyzing the spoken language from a Chinese drama. The data is taken from dialogues containing 哎呀. This allows the researchers to observe the types of positive and negative emotions of 哎呀 in detail. This research uses Paolo Santangelo's theory of emotion. He classifies emotions into 5 categories: (1) positive expectation and interaction, (2) satisfactory affects, (3) negative projection, (4) aggressive-opposing emotions, and (5) unsatisfactory affects. The method used to ascertain the type of emotions is done by considering the context where 哎呀 appeared. From the context, it will determine the type of emotions. The result shows that the interjection 哎呀 can express 5 types of emotions, such as hope, empathy, surprise, happiness, satisfy, worry, fear, angry, etc. The novelty of this research is to give types of emotions in detail.

Keywords: Interjection; Santangelo; Type of Emotions; Context

1. INTRODUCTION

An utterance is one of the language units used to express ideas, notions, or concepts about something. As a language unit, an utterance cannot be separated from the intrinsic elements of the speaker. Thus, as a result of expressing ideas, an utterance also has the function as a driving tool that can cause certain emotions in the speaker or addressee. To strengthen emotions or moods such as awe, amazement, surprise, sadness, and anger, speakers express them in the form of interjections.

Interjections are words used to express certain moods or emotions (Kridalaksana, 2007: 120). They are considered as the most special word-class because they are the only one that do



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not join other word classes in a sentence. In short, the syntactic function of interjection is not to have a combination with other words within sentences (Liu, 2011: 147).

叹词 *tàncí* or 感叹词 *gǎntàncí* are the terms for interjection in Mandarin Chinese. There are at least four characteristics of interjection in Mandarin Chinese as explained by Liu, et al (2019:437-438):

1. It does not have definite lexical and grammatical meaning. It is neither a concrete nor an abstract word. In sentence structure, interjection stands independently and does not form a relationship with any component within the sentence. However, each interjection expresses a definite emotive meaning. Thus, in meaning, an interjection is related to the sentence and the context.
2. It generally appears at the beginning of the sentence and is followed by a comma or exclamation mark.
3. It expresses complex emotions or moods. There are plenty of Chinese interjections, and they can express a variety of subtle emotions. The same interjection with different intonations can express different emotions or feelings.
4. The writing of Chinese interjections in the book is uncertain. For example, the syllable ‘o’ can be written as 哦, 噢, or 喔.

One of the most commonly used interjection in Mandarin Chinese speech is 哎呀 *aiya*. Interjection 哎呀 *aiya* in each utterance has different meanings and emotions depending on the context in which the speech is conveyed. Here are the meanings of the interjection 哎呀 *aiya* from two different dictionaries:

1. In the Oxford Concise English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary, interjection 哎呀 *aiya* expresses surprise. For example in the following sentence: 哎呀, 我的笔丢了! [Oh, dear! I’ve lost my pen.]
2. In the 现代汉语词典 [Modern Chinese Dictionary] (2012), 哎呀 *aiya* expresses two different meanings, 1) 表示惊讶 [expressing surprise], 2) 表示埋怨、不耐烦、惋惜等 [expressing grievance, impatience, and regret].

In a journal article, Tan (2018) explains the function of interjection 哎呀 *aiya*: 1) expressing something unexpected, or something surprising. 2) expressing grievance, impatience, and regret. 3) expressing negation.

From those definitions, the interjection 哎呀 *aiya* comes with negative emotions, i.e. surprise, grievance, impatience, regrets, and negation. However, in some utterances, interjection 哎呀 *aiya* appears with different emotive functions and is even being used to express positive feelings. The following dialogue is the examples of an utterance containing the interjection 哎呀 *aiya* with other emotive functions. This speech is taken from Chinese drama 人不彪悍枉少年 *Rén Bù Biāohàn Wǎng Shàonián* [When We Were Young].

哎呀, 这个丧彪还挺细心的! (Chapter 23)

Āiyā, zhè ge Sāng Biāo hái tǐng xìxīn de!

[*Aiya, this Sang Biao is very attentive!*]

The interjection 哎呀 aiya appears as an expression of subtle surprise which is followed by a sense of relief and satisfaction from the speaker, Du Yuemei, for the subject, Sang Biao, for his concern for Yang Xi. Surprise in this example comes up as a positive response that brings positive emotions from the speaker.

By considering the example above, the researchers assume that there are other types of emotions shown by the interjection 哎呀 aiya depending on the context and the situation in which 哎呀 aiya is spoken. For this reason, this research focuses on the types of emotions in the interjection 哎呀 aiya in Chinese utterances. The emotive meanings are analyzed with Santangelo's type of emotion. Santangelo classifies the type of emotion into five types, they are (1) positive expectation and interaction, (2) satisfactory affects, (3) negative projection, (4) aggressive-opposing emotions, and (5) unsatisfactory affects.

This research is aimed to be able to explain the types of emotions shown by the interjection 哎呀 aiya in more details.

2. METHOD

This research examines the interjection 哎呀 aiya in Chinese drama entitled 人不彪悍枉少年 Rén Bù Biāohàn Wǎng Shàonián or also known as 'When We Were Young (2018)'. This study is a descriptive qualitative research. The discussion describes the symptoms related to the emotive meaning of interjection 哎呀 aiya.

This research consists of four steps:

1. Collecting the utterances containing the interjection 哎呀 aiya in the drama 人不彪悍枉少年 'When We Were Young (2018).
2. Adding Hanyu Pinyin and English translation of each utterance.
3. Analyzing the type of emotion expressed by the interjection 哎呀 aiya that has been collected.
4. Grouping the data based on the type of emotion into five types of emotions classified by Santangelo (2001).

3. RESEARCH

3.1 The Classification of Emotion by Paolo Santangelo

According to Santangelo (1995:103), emotions are the result of deeper and unconscious inner choices when the subjects think about it and process it through communication activities that they recognize. Santangelo's research on the concept of emotion in ancient China is based on the teachings of Buddhism and Confucianism. The concept of emotion in Chinese culture is divided into 9 types of emotions, namely happy, angry, worried, happy, sad, afraid, affectionate, hate, and opposed. In his research, Santangelo does not separate emotions from states of mind. However, this does not mean that in all emotions there is a state of mind or vice versa. A state of mind denotes a state in the mind. This shows that thoughts are not expressions of feelings like emotions. Although the states of mind can include emotions, not all emotions can include states of mind. This makes the range of states of mind wider than the range of emotions. Emotions and state of mind can be expressed through actions such as laughing,

crying, hitting, etc. In addition to actions, emotions and states of mind can be manifested in words, namely through parables, proverbs, nicknames, the use of interjections, causative meaning words, and so on.

Santangelo (2001:2) afterward classifies the emotions into five types which are further developed by Sutami (2003). The five types of emotions are:

1. Positive expectation and interaction. In this emotion, there is an interest in something that encourages interaction with an object which results in the emergence of hope to get the object. Examples of these emotions are love, affection, hope, and sympathy.
2. Satisfactory affects. These emotions describe satisfaction and joy with different levels of emotion, ranging from calm to exploding excitement. Examples of these emotions are happy, excited, satisfied, grateful, and relieved.
3. Negative projection. This emotion is a type of unpleasant emotion, which is characterized by the emergence of negative feelings such as the emergence of anxiety or worry because there are certain symptoms. Although these emotions accentuate negative feelings, they do not trigger aggressive actions that harm others. Examples of these emotions are anxiety, fear, anxiety, surprise, and worry.
4. Aggressive-opposing emotions. This emotion is also characterized by the emergence of negative feelings. However, at this level, a person's emotions can trigger aggressive behavior. Examples of these emotions are anger, resentment, hatred, disdain, and disgust.
5. Unsatisfactory affects. These emotions are passive negative emotions. They are in the form of an evaluation of one's shortcomings and is personal. They are indicated in something that has happened or is currently in progress. Examples of these emotions are sadness, hopelessness, depression, jealousy, shame, and regret.

We can say that, emotion type 1 and 2 are positive emotions that appear as pleasant or desirable situational responses. Meanwhile, emotion type 3, 4, and 5 are negative emotions that emerge as an unpleasant or unhappy emotion evoked in individuals to express a negative effect towards an event or person.

The five types of emotions above will be used in this study as a basis for analyzing the emotive function of the interjection 哎呀 *aiya* in the drama “人不彪悍枉少年” (When We Were Young).

3.2 The Emotive Functions of Interjection 哎呀 *Aiya*

Positive Emotions

1. Positive Expectation and Interaction
 - a. Hope
哎呀，通了通了通了！ (Chapter 12)
Āiyā, tōng le tōng le tōng le!
[*Aiya*, it's connected, it's connected!]

Yang Xi and Li Yu are trying to call Li Yu's mother who is in Hongkong. Li Yu tries to remind Yang Xi to speak correctly in Cantonese because if she does wrong even once, the person on the phone would immediately hang up the call. Suddenly, as Yang Xi hears the phone rings, she immediately exclaimed, “哎呀, 通了通了通了!”, expressing both her surprise and hope to be able to talk to Li Yu's mother. The interjection 哎呀 aiya is used to express the emotion of hope.

b. Sympathy

哎呀, 杨夕, 妈妈跟你说啊。你不用太紧张。你平时复习的成果大家都看得到的。更何况这次不是把手给伤了吗? 哎呀, 考成什么样都没有关系。(Chapter 23)

Āiyā, Yáng Xī, māmā gēn nǐ shuō ā. Nǐ bú yòng tài jǐnzhāng. Nǐ píngshí fùxí de chéngguǒ dǎjiā dōu kān dé dào de. Gèng hékuàng zhè cì búshì bǎ shǒu gěi shāng le ma? Āiyā, kǎo chéng shénme yàng dōu méiyǒu guānxì.

[Aiya, Yang Xi, I am telling you. You don't need to be too nervous. Everyone can see the result of your usual study. Besides, didn't your hand hurt this time? Aiya, what grade you get in the exam, it doesn't matter at all.]

The statement above is spoken by Du Yuemei when Yang Xi and Li Yu are about to go to school to take the college entrance exam. Yang Xi, who looks very tense and nervous, makes Du Yuemei feel a little worried about her. She then calmly and sympathetically advises Yang Xi not to worry too much about the test result. The sympathetic emotion is able to be seen in her low tone and the small smile on Du Yuemei's face. Du Yuemei also reassures Yang Xi by saying that her grade doesn't matter. In this speech, the interjection 哎呀 aiya appears twice, at the beginning of the first sentence, and in the last sentence, which both express Du Yuemei's sympathy for Yang Xi.

2. Satisfactory Affects

a. Surprise

哎呀! 这是专门给我安的? 那奶奶以后就方便了。我还以为你拿管子打架呢。(Chapter 2)

Āiyā! Zhè shì zhuān mén gěi wǒ ān de? Nà nǎinai yǐhòu jiù fāngbiàn le. Wǒ hái yǐwéi nǐ ná guǎnzi dǎjià ne.

[Aiya! Is this for me? After getting this, it will be more convenient for me. I thought you were fighting with that pipe.]

When Mr. Kong comes to Hua Biao's house for a homeroom visit, grandmother immediately takes him inside to meet Hua Biao. Unexpectedly, at that time, Hua Biao is installing a bathroom handle made of pipes, for only his grandmother. As grandmother sees Hua Biao's work, she is pleasantly surprised. The feeling of surprise expressed with the interjection 哎呀 aiya in this sentence is a positive emotion that represents grandmother's form of joy.

b. Amazement

哎呀，花彪，你真可以啊！杨夕十八年没吐过西瓜子啦！（Chapter 12）

Āiyā, Huā Biāo, nǐ zhēn kěyǐ ā! Yáng Xī shí bā nián méi tǔ guò xīguā zǐ!

[Aiya, Hua Biao, you don't look half bad! Yang Xi hasn't spit any watermelon seeds in 18 years!]

When Yang Xi eats a watermelon, she never spits its seeds, but swallows them instead. Seeing this behavior, Li Yu reminds her to remove the seeds. However, Yang Xi persists. Then, Hua Biao takes Yang Xi to play a shooting game with the seeds. Anyone who hit the target will win. As a result, Hua Biao succeeds to make Yang Xi spit the seeds. Yang Xiaohemei is amazed with Hua Biao's ingenuity. Her amazement and pride are expressed by the interjection 哎呀 aiya as a form of positive emotion.

Negative Emotions

3. Negative Projection

a. Scared

哎呀！可是有一个变态还会有第二个变态啊！（Chapter 13）

Āiyā! Kěshì yǒu yí gè biàntài hái huì yǒu dì èr gè biàntài ā!

[Aiya, but there was a pervert and there will be a second pervert!]

Previously, Yang Xi has been followed by a perverted man to her house. Then, when she is about to go home and passes through a very dark and quiet street, she recalls the incident with the perverted man. Then, she feels very scared. The fear is expressed by the interjection 哎呀 aiya at the beginning of the speech, which reflected negative emotions.

b. Worry

小丸子，腿怎么坏了？来来来，奶奶看看。哎呀！这是怎么了？（Chapter 3）

Xiǎo wánzi, tuǐ zěnmě huài le? Láiláilái, nǎinai kànkàn. Āiyā! Zhè shì zěnměle?

[Maruko, what's wrong with your leg? Come, come. I want to take a look. Aiya! What happened?]

The dialogue above appears when Yang Xi (in this situation, grandmother called her Maruko) comes to Hua Biao's house to study together. There, she meets Hua Biao's grandmother. As grandmother realizes that Yang Xi's leg is injured, she is shocked and feels worried about Yang Xi. The interjection 哎呀 aiya in this speech is a manifestation of the emotion of accentuating negative emotion in grandmother,

which is marked by the emergence of her concern about the condition of Yang Xi's leg.

4. Aggressive-Opposing Emotions

a. Anger

哎呀，你闭嘴！（Chapter 9）

Āiyā, nǐ bì zuǐ!

[Aiya, shut your mouth!]

When Huang Dengdeng's mother is talking to Mr. Kong, Huang Dengdeng interrupts her by defending Li Yu. However, her mother does not want to hear her daughter's defence. However, after his mother is annoyed enough, she immediately yells at Huang Dengdeng, “哎呀，你闭嘴！”. This utterance begins with the interjection 哎呀 aiya that represents the negative emotion of anger and resentment of Huang Dengdeng's mother towards her daughter.

b. Complaint

哎呀，能不能别在我眼前晃晃晃！这晃什么的。我都头晕了！（Chapter 23）

Āiyā! Néng bu néng bié zài wǒ yǎn qián huàng huàng huàng! Zhè huǎng shénme de. Wǒ dōu tóu yūn le!

[Aiya! Can you stop swinging in front of me! What are you worried about? I feel so dizzy!]

When Yang Xi is having an exam in her school, Du Yuemei and Yang Weiguo are waiting nervously for the results. Yang Weiguo paces back and forth in front of his wife in a huff. This annoys Du Yuemei. She complains about Yang Weiguo's behavior by saying the utterance above. The utterance begins with interjection 哎呀 aiya that expresses negative emotion, the aggressive-opposing emotions in the form of complaining.

5. Unsatisfactory Affects

a. Hopelessness

哎呀，这放眼望去没有一道题会！（Chapter 9）

Āiyā, zhè fàng yǎn wàng qù méiyǒu yí dào tí huì!

[Aiya, just by seeing this slightly, there is no question that I can solve!]

When Yang Xi and her friends are gathering on a duck boat, Yang Xiaohemei reads through a compilation of questions that Hua Biao has brought from Huiying High School. However, before Yang Xiaohemei ever tries to solve the questions, she already feels hopeless, because she thinks that she could not solve any of the questions in that book. The interjection 哎呀 aiya in the sentence above expresses grievance as Yang Xiaohemei's desperate emotion towards herself.

b. Regret

哎呀，太晚了！我妈又该说我了。我得赶紧走！（Chapter 12）

Āiyā, tài wǎn le! Wǒ mā yòu gāi shuō wǒ le. Wǒ děi gǎnjǐn zǒu!

[Aiya, it's too late! My mother will scold me again. I should go right away!]

When Hua Biao's friends are at Hua Biao's house, Yang Xiaohemei glances at her watch and realized that it is late already. She has to leave. The interjection 哎呀 aiya in the speech above expresses regret since she has to go home by that time, so she cannot play any longer with her friends. This feeling of regret is passive negative emotions from within Yang Xiaohemei herself.

4. RESULT

The interjection 哎呀 aiya in Chinese utterance can express all five types of the emotions classified by Santangelo (2001). The emotions of positive expectation and interaction are represented by the emotions of hope and sympathy; the emotion of satisfactory affects is represented by the emotion of surprise and amazement; the negative projection is represented by the emotion of fear and worry; the aggressive-opposing emotions are represented by anger and complaint, and the unsatisfactory affects are represented by hopelessness and regret. These findings showed that interjection 哎呀 aiya can be used to express different emotions according to the situation and context in which the interjection 哎呀 aiya is said. In addition, the interjection 哎呀 aiya also expresses positive and negative emotions depending on the context. Positive emotions are divided into two types, they are positive expectation and interaction and satisfactory affects. The negative emotions are divided into three classes of emotions, they are negative projection, aggressive-opposing emotions, and unsatisfactory affects.

These findings provides a wider scope for understanding interjection, especially the interjection 哎呀 aiya in Mandarin Chinese. However, the amount and type of data in this research is limited. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed with more extensive and adequate data to verify and complete the emotive functions of interjection 哎呀 aiya.

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