

THE USE OF INTERJECTIONS AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSIONS IN THE NOVEL *ME BEFORE YOU*

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Abstract

Interjection is one of the language elements that represent spontaneous and direct expression of emotion. This research aims to describe the form, meaning, and function of interjections in the novel *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes, and relate them to the category of emotional expression. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with semantic approach. The research data are sentences and dialogs containing interjections in the novel. The data collection technique is done by reading the text thoroughly, recording the interjections that appear, and classifying them into interjection categories based on Wierzbicka's theory. Data analysis includes identifying interjection forms, explaining literal and contextual meanings, determining the function of interjections in the storyline, and mapping emotion categories based on Jovanovic's framework. The results show that emotive interjections in the novel mostly represent the emotions of surprise, anger, fear, contempt, and pity; volitive interjections express impatience, enthusiasm, irritation, and sympathy; while cognitive interjections signify triumph, wonder, approval, confusion, and surprise. Interjections not only function as expressions of emotion, but also support character development, create story atmosphere, and move the plot. This research is expected to enrich the semantic study of interjections in literary texts, as well as to serve as a reference.

Keywords: emotional expression, cognitive interjection, emotive interjection, Me Before You, volitive interjection

Introduction

Language is closely linked to communication, as it serves as a fundamental medium through which individuals interact. According to Dewaele & Pavlenko (2004), languages often consist of sets of words that represent specific sounds, allowing speakers not only to replicate environmental noises but also to express their interpretations and emotional responses to various situations.

The functions of language can be categorized into spoken and written forms. Wahid & Basari (2020) explains that interjections are commonly found in informal communication, such as in novels. This expression, which often lacks substantial linguistic meaning, is primarily used in novels to reflect the emotional state or reactions of the readers (Abrahamyan, 2021; Zulfah & Djohan, 2023). In a literary context, various symbols and expressions, including interjections, contribute to character development. Many novelists incorporate interjections to evoke specific emotions, convey ideas, or enhance reader engagement.

Goddard (2014) state interjections are standalone words or expressions used to convey sudden emotions, issue commands, or indicate awareness. In linguistic studies, interjections are classified as function words that are unique in nature, as they do not have grammatical relationships with other elements in a sentence, yet they carry rich and meaningful content (Ameka, 2006; Bobińska, 2022). This view is in accordance with the statement of Norrick (2009) that interjections are linguistic elements that convey a speaker's immediate psychological state, reaction, or attitude toward a particular event or situation. They serve as self-contained expressions of emotion and feeling within language. Due to their inherently expressive and emotional nature, interjections often function alongside non-verbal cues such as intonation, facial expressions, and gestures (Kolesnikova et al., 2021; Tracy et al., 2015). In spoken discourse, interjections play a crucial role in communicating emotional responses and physical sensations. Therefore, interjections provide individuals with a verbal means to express their emotions and inner states.

Wierzbicka (1992) divides interjections into three main categories: emotive, volitive, and cognitive. First, emotive interjections are interjections that express the speaker's spontaneous emotions, such as pain, joy, surprise, anger, such as *ouch*, *damn*, *wow* (Andrason, 2022; Mulyani & Mulyadi, 2022; Yasin et al., 2022). Second, volitive interjections function to direct, command, or request attention, usually in the form of exclamations, such as *hush*, *hey*, *come on* (Shkapenko, 2017; Wiles, 2020). The third is cognitive interjections that show cognitive reactions or sudden judgments, such as realizing something, being surprised, or remembering something, such as *oh*, *aha*, *shit* (Ma'shumah et al., 2023; Shalika & Mulyadi, 2019; Yin, 2021).

Emotion refers to an individual's response to an event perceived as significant to their present state or situation. In the context of the novel, interjections serve as emotionally expressive elements that convey the character's feelings. When used appropriately, interjections contribute to effective and meaningful communication. In this case, Jovanovic (2016) divides emotional expressions in interjections such as anger, annoyance, approval, contempt, delight, disgust, enthusiasm, fear, impatience, indignation, irritation, joy, pain, pity, pleasure, relief, sorrow, surprise, sympathy, triumph, and wonder. With this theory, Honkanen & Müller (2021) conducted research related to emotional expression through emojis in Nigerian online communication.

The novel *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes is a contemporary novel that is rich in dialog and complex emotional expressions (Pubas & H. Hilman, 2022; Romanna & Rudianto, 2021). The novel, which was published in 2012 in the UK, tells the story of Louisa Clark and Will Traynor's romance wrapped in emotional conflicts, making this novel full of diverse interjections. The interjections in this novel serve to strengthen characterization, build atmosphere, and create emotional depth for the reader. Therefore, *Me Before You* is an interesting source of data to study interjections from a semantic point of view.

Previous research related to interjections was conducted by Azzahro & Wibowo (2023), focusing on analyzing interjections used in WhatsApp group conversations. The

researcher identifies various forms of interjections that appear in everyday communication through instant messaging applications, and describes the function of interjections to express emotions, emphasize intent, or reinforce messages in the realm of informal digital conversations. This research highlights how interjections are used in written contexts that are spontaneous and casual.

Research conducted by Surjadi & Aryanto (2022) which examines interjections uttered by commentators during the e-sport game Identity V tournament. The main focus of this research is on the types of interjections that appear when commentator express excitement, surprise, or tension in narrating live matches. The results show how interjections support the creation of a dramatic atmosphere and audience engagement in the context of competitive gaming broadcasts. In addition, research by Tanjung et al. (2020) examined interjections used in Webtoon digital comics, especially in character dialog. This research identifies types of interjections based on function categories such as emotive and volitive, and describes the role of interjections in strengthening emotions, building tension, and creating humorous effects in picture stories read online.

All three researches have examined interjections in the context of digital communication, spoken broadcast, and illustrated narrative media. All three focus on digital or spoken communication in popular media, emphasizing the types and functions of interjections in short texts, real-time conversations, or digital comics. However this research is different because it focuses on interjections in the literary text of a long novel, specifically the novel *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes, which has the characteristics of deep narrative, complexity of emotional conflict, and continuous character development.

In addition, this research not only describes the form and function of interjections according to Wierzbicka (1992), but also relates them to the category of emotional expression according to Jovanovic (2016), which has never been discussed in the three previous researches. Thus, this research fills the void of interjection studies in contemporary English literary texts full of emotional dialogue, and offers an in-depth analysis of the relationship between interjections and emotional expressions in a

structured way, which has not been done in many interjection studies in the realm of linguistics and literature.

Method

This research design is descriptive qualitative with a semantic approach. According to Oranga & Matere (2023), the qualitative design provides a deeper understanding of the human experience across different situations and within the context of how those situations are perceived. Descriptive research was chosen because it aims to describe systematically, factually, and accurately about the facts, characteristics, and relationships of interjection phenomena in literary texts. Qualitative design is used to explore the literal and contextual meanings of interjections, as well as reveal the emotional expressions contained in them. Qualitative research focuses on elements of a situation that are not quantifiable, emphasizing the understanding and interpretation of the dynamics within social relationships (Tenny et al., 2022).

The data source of this research is the novel *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes. The main data are sentences containing interjections in the dialog between characters. The data collection technique is done by the following steps: reading thoroughly the text of the novel *Me Before You*; marking and recording sentences or dialogues containing interjections; and classifying the interjections found into three categories namely emotive, volitive, and cognitive as well as the type of emotional expression.

In addition, data analysis is done qualitatively with the following steps: describing the forms of interjections found; explaining the literal meaning and contextual meaning of interjections based on the conversational situation in the novel; analyzing the function of interjections in supporting characterization of characters and storyline; and linking the classified interjections with types of emotional expressions. This research uses the researcher as the main instrument (human instrument) who plays a direct role in identifying, classifying, and analyzing interjection data, because qualitative research demands the researcher's sensitivity to meaning in context.

Findings

This section will describe the types of interjections and categories of emotional expressions found in Jojo Moyes' novel *Me Before You*. The analysis focuses on interjections that appear in dialogues between characters, which reflect various spontaneous emotional reactions. Interjections were chosen because they are an important part of verbal and written communication that represent emotions directly, concisely, and intensely.

1. Types of Interjections

Based on an analysis of the data in the novel *Me Before You*, the interjections found can be classified into three types, namely emotive interjections, volitive interjections, and cognitive interjections. This classification is based on the function and purpose of the use of interjections in the context of conversation.

Table 1. Types of Interjections

Types of Interjections	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Emotive interjection	10	47.62
Volitive interjection	6	28.57
Cognitive interjection	5	23.81
Total	21	100

Based on Table 1 above, it can be seen that the most dominant type of interjection in the novel *Me Before You* is emotive interjection, with a frequency of 10 out of 21 data (47.62%). This shows that most interjections are used to express emotions spontaneously, such as surprise, anger, pain, and sadness.

Furthermore, volitive interjections appear 6 times (28.57%), reflecting the use of interjections to give commands, invitations, or prohibitions in conversations between characters. Meanwhile, cognitive interjections are the least common type, appearing 5 times (23.81%), usually to express reactions to sudden understanding or awareness.

These findings indicate that emotional expression is more dominant than other interjection functions, which is in line with the character of the novel, which raises the themes of personal relationships and emotional conflict.

Emotive Interjection

Emotive interjections express direct emotions and also reflect the relationship between characters, psychological development, and scene tension. This is in accordance with opinion of Wierzbicka (1992) that emotive interjections represent universal human experiences expressed spontaneously. The data below shows the use of interjections that are commonly found in the novel *Me Before You*. The data below shows the use of emotive interjections commonly found in the novel *Me Before You*.

Data 1:

“Oh my God! Where did you get these?”

The data above shows emotive interjections that express surprise and joy. In literal meaning, it is a spontaneous exclamation to God as an expression of surprise. Meanwhile, in contextual meaning, Lou's surprise is mixed with joy when she receives a unique gift from Will; this emphasizes the growing intimacy of their relationship. The narrative function of this interjection is to describe the transformation of Lou and Will's relationship from professional to more personal; it emphasizes Lou's sense of happiness.

Data 2:

“Jesus Christ, she’ll look like Max Wall in a beehive,”

The data above shows an emotive interjection that expresses surprise mixed with wonder. In literal meaning, it is an appeal to God to express surprise. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning explains that Lou's father reacts surprised and amused at the striped pants; reinforcing the element of humor in Lou's family. The narrative function of this interjection is to provide comedic relief in the middle of the story, and to show the warmth of Lou's family.

Data 3:

“Oh...I can’t.”

The data above shows an emotive interjection that shows embarrassment or awkwardness. In literal meaning, it is a short exclamation expressing confusion. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning explains that Lou feels embarrassed when asked to sing by Will; emphasizing Lou's modest and insecure personality. The narrative function of this interjection is to help the reader understand Lou's weakness which is a challenge in her development.

Data 4

“Oh Christ...”

The data above shows an emotive interjection that expresses frustration. In its literal meaning, it is an appeal to Christ to express frustration. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning explains that Will gets angry when Lou changes the arrangement of his old photos; this interjection shows the initial tension of their relationship. The narrative function of this interjection is to show Will's sensitive character and his anger at the intrusion of his personal space.

Data 5

“Oh Jesus, what the—? Come here, Clark.”

The data above shows an emotive interjection that expresses panic and worry. In literal meaning, it is an exclamation calling Jesus as a form of shock and anxiety. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning explains that Will panicked when Lou almost fainted in the maze; this interjection shows Will's concern for Lou. The narrative function of this interjection builds an emotional turning point; Will shows his feelings for Lou.

Data 6

“Oh hell, I thought”

The data above shows an emotive interjection that expresses annoyance and tension. In literal meaning, it is a rude exclamation to hell, expressing frustration. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning explains that Lou is anxious during the interview;

reflecting the fear of failure. Lou is anxious during the interview; reflecting the fear of failure. The narrative function of this interjection is to emphasize Lou's anxiety about the future after losing his job.

Data 7

“Shit,” I said, bending over. *“Shit, shit, shit.”*

The data above is an emotive interjection that shows panic and despair. In its literal meaning, this interjection shows a swear word that expresses shock or disappointment. In contextual meaning, this interjection shows that Lou panics when Will is rushed to the hospital; emphasizing the intensity of the emotion. The narrative function of this interjection is to bring an air of urgency that increases the tension of the story.

Data 8

“Fuck,” she said, after a minute.”

The data above shows emotive interjections that express great shock and disbelief. In its literal meaning, this interjection shows a harsh swear word that shows intense emotion. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning explains that Treena is surprised to hear Lou's confession about her feelings; showing how serious the situation is. The narrative function of this interjection is to illustrate the severity of Lou's inner conflict.

Data 9

“Bullshit.”

The data above shows an emotive interjection that expresses disagreement with anger. In the literal meaning, this interjection is a rude exclamation rejecting the truth of other people's words. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning explains that Will opposes Lou's argument about grooming for men; showing Will's assertive and critical personality. The narrative function of this interjection is to underline the conflict of thought between Lou and Will.

Data 10

“Oh, that.”

The data above shows an emotive interjection that expresses surprise or sudden

realization. In the literal meaning, this interjection is a short exclamation that shows the moment of realizing something. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning explains that Lou feels awkward when recalling uncomfortable memories; showing the complexity of his emotions. The narrative function of this interjection is to reinforce the depiction of Lou's character as a person who harbors trauma.

Volitive Interjection

Volitive interjections function to control the actions of the interlocutor, whether in the form of an invitation, prohibition, or greeting. The literal meaning indicates command or persuasion, while the contextual meaning is very diverse: it can indicate urgency, emotional pressure, and intimacy. In narratives, volitive interjections show the dynamics of power relations, tensions, and the development of relationships between characters. The data below shows the use of volitive interjections commonly used in the novel.

Data 11

“Come on, then. I’ve got the car in disabled parking.”

The data above shows a volitive interjection which is an invitation or command. In literal meaning, this interjection is the word *come on*; a call to move immediately. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning shows that Mr. Traynor asks Lou and Will to immediately get into the car parked in the special area, emphasizing the busyness and urgency of the airport situation. The narrative function of this interjection depicts the hurried atmosphere after the trip, while also showing Mr. Traynor's practical side and leadership.

Data 12

“Come on, Louisa. Let’s have a little celebration.”

The data above shows a volitive interjection which is a persuasive invitation. In its literal meaning, this interjection is a *come on*; an inducement to participate. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning shows Mr. Traynor's invitation to Lou to join in celebrating a small success, emphasizing an atmosphere of familiarity but also social pressure for Lou. The

narrative function of this interjection creates a family atmosphere and shows the Traynor family's efforts to approach Lou.

Data 13

“Stop. *Louisa. Please stop.*”

The data above shows a volitive interjection which is a strict command. In literal meaning, this interjection is the word *stop*; a direct call to stop movement. The contextual meaning shows that Camilla Traynor tries to prevent Lou from leaving the airport; emphasizing Camilla's desperation to keep Lou for Will. The narrative function of this interjection shows Camilla's fragile emotions and the importance of Lou to her family.

Data 14

“Look, *we're only telling you because we both care about you.*”

The data above shows a volitive interjection which is a command to pay attention. In its literal meaning, this interjection is the word *look*; a request to focus on the conversation. In contextual meaning, this interjection shows that Rupert is trying to convince Will that the news he is bringing is for the good; emphasizing the seriousness of the situation. The narrative function of this interjection shows the tension of the conversation between Will and Rupert, and Rupert's attempt to reduce Will's anger.

Data 15

“Don't move,” *I said.*

The data above shows a volitive interjection which is a prohibition or command. In its literal meaning, this interjection means *don't move*; an order to stay still. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning of this interjection shows that Lou asks Will to stay put while she fixes his collar; showing Lou's control in an intimate situation. The narrative function of this interjection shows the dynamics of the Lou-Will relationship, where Lou tries to be more confident.

Data 16

“Hey, *Clark,*” *he said. “Tell me something good.”*

The data above is a volitive interjection which is a greeting or a call. In its literal meaning, this interjection means “hi”; a call for attention. Meanwhile, the contextual meaning shows that this interjection states that Will gently calls Lou in Switzerland, signaling intimacy at the end of their time together. The narrative function of this interjection is to show Will's longing for Lou's story and their emotional closeness.

Cognitive Interjection

Cognitive interjections in this novel mark a character's sudden realization, confusion, or emotional reflection. These interjections are important for delving into character psychology and bringing conversations to life, as they create a natural feel while strengthening the mood of the scene. The data below shows the use of cognitive interjections commonly used in the novel.

Data 17

“Oh yes. *No such thing as a free lunch, eh?”*

The data above shows a cognitive interjection with a literal meaning which is a call to realize something, an emphasis on the truth. The contextual meaning of this interjection is that Nathan emphasizes to Lou that a well-paid job would require extra patience with Will. The narrative function of this interjection is to reinforce the cynical but realistic impression in the conversation, illustrating that Will's care is not an easy task.

Data 18

“Aha. *Now this might work.”*

The data above belongs to cognitive interjections with the literal meaning of an exclamation of discovery or sudden realization. The contextual meaning of this interjection is that Syed finds a suitable job opening for Lou, signaling a moment of ‘light’ in Lou's atmosphere of despair. The narrative function of this interjection is to provide a transition from Lou's predicament to a new opportunity, marking a turning point in the storyline.

Data 19

“Oh Christ...”

The data above shows a cognitive interjection with a literal meaning which is an expression of surprise or frustration. The contextual meaning of this interjection shows that Will is upset with Lou for trying to fix his photo without permission; emphasizing Will's emotional tension. The narrative function of this interjection is to culminate a small conflict between Lou and Will, showing the dynamics of their relationship that is not yet harmonious.

Data 20

“Mmmhghh.”

The data above shows a cognitive interjection with the literal meaning of a half-awake murmur, often occurring when people are just waking up. The contextual meaning of this interjection is that Lou is still half asleep when Camilla calls him; emphasizing Lou's emotional turmoil at the crucial moment. The narrative function of this interjection is to give a sense of realism to the sudden wake-up scene, showing Lou's panic in facing Camilla.

Data 21

“Ah.”

The data above shows a cognitive interjection with the literal meaning of an exclamation of sudden recognition or understanding. The contextual meaning of this interjection is Will responding to Lou offering tea, emphasizing his awareness of Lou's role. The narrative function of this interjection is to show Will's cynical and distancing attitude, adding layers to his character.

2. Emotional Expression of Interjection

This research analyzes the use of emotional interjections in the novel *Me Before You* using the emotional classification proposed by Jovanovic (2016). The data analyzed consists of 21 conversation excerpts containing interjections from characters in the novel. These interjections were identified based on lexical forms that indicate spontaneous

emotional reactions to a situation or statement. After identification, the interjections were classified into one of the emotion categories according to Jovanovic.

Table 2. Categories of Emotional Expression Interjections

Interjeksi	Category of Emotion	Brief explanation
Oh my God	Surprise	A surprised reaction to something unexpected or extraordinary.
Jesus Christ	Contempt	Mocking or belittling someone's style.
Oh	Sorrow	Showing sadness or emotional distress.
Oh Christ	Annoyance	An expression of annoyance or frustration with a situation.
Oh Jesus	Surprise	Surprise at an unexpected situation.
Oh hell	Annoyance	Surprise at an unexpected situation.
Shit	Pain	Spontaneous reaction to pain or mistakes.
Fuck	Pain	Used in response to deep negative emotions.
Bullshit	Contempt	Rejection or distrust of something that is considered unreasonable.
Oh	Relief	A calm expression when realizing something is not very important.
Come on	Impatience	Urging or telling someone to move quickly.
Come on	Enthusiasm	Let's celebrate with enthusiasm.
Stop; Please stop	Fear	A request to stop something due to concern.
Look	Sympathy	Convey messages with empathy.
Don't move	Fear	Used in urgent or dangerous situations.
Hey	Enthusiasm	A warm and enthusiastic greeting.
Oh yes	Approval	Expressing agreement with the statement.
Aha	Wonder	An expression of admiration for an idea or solution.
Oh Christ	Annoyance	The previous context review was annoying/frustrating.
Mmmhghh	Pain	Inarticulate sounds indicating discomfort.
Ah	Relief	An expression of relief after something is finished/done.

Based on Table 2 above, interjections in the novel *Me Before You* can be classified into various categories of emotional expression according to Jovanovic's theory (2016). From the 21 interjection data analyzed, it can be seen that the most frequently appearing emotional categories are annoyance, pain, and surprise. This indicates that most interjections are used to express irritation, pain, or surprise in various situations experienced by the characters in the novel.

The appearance of interjections with categories such as fear, sympathy, and relief also reflects the strong emotional dynamics in the relationships between characters. Meanwhile, other categories such as approval, enthusiasm, and wonder appear less frequently, but still play an important role in enriching the nuances of dialogue.

Thus, this analysis shows that interjections in the novel *Me Before You* not only serve to complement the dialogue, but also as an important means of describing the characters' emotional states directly and spontaneously. Interjections help shape the narrative atmosphere and reinforce interpersonal expressions in the text.

Discussion

The findings of this research indicate that interjections play an important role in conveying the characters' emotional expressions and supporting the development of the narrative in literary works. The dominance of emotive interjections (47.62%) indicates that spontaneous emotional expressions are a central element in the novel *Me Before You*. These interjections not only serve to convey feelings such as surprise, anger, sadness, or fear, but also help build atmosphere and deepen the reader's emotional involvement with the characters. These results reinforce Wierzbicka's (1992) opinion that emotive interjections are a universal linguistic tool for expressing spontaneous feelings.

In addition, the presence of volitional (28.57%) and cognitive (23.81%) interjections also shows that interjections function as pragmatic markers in controlling interactions, conveying commands or invitations, and marking sudden awareness or understanding. This finding is consistent with Jovanovic's (2016) theoretical framework, which states that

interjections are closely related to emotional expression and cognitive reactions. These findings are also in line with previous studies (Azzahro & Wibowo, 2023; Surjadi & Aryanto, 2022; Tanjung et al., 2020), but this research contributes further by showing how interjections are used in long and complex literary texts, not only in short digital communications or live broadcasts.

However, there are also differences from previous research findings. While previous studies emphasized volitional and cognitive interjections in rapid communication such as online conversations or live broadcasts, this research shows that emotive interjections are more dominant in written literary narratives. This difference may be due to the characteristics of literary works, which emphasize emotional depth and character development. This shows that the medium of communication greatly influences the type and frequency of interjections used.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to expanding our understanding of the function of interjections as semantic and pragmatic tools in literary texts. This research provides empirical evidence that interjections are not merely fillers in dialogue, but have important emotional and narrative weight.

However, this research has several limitations. First, the data was only taken from one literary work, so it does not necessarily represent the diversity of interjection usage in other genres or cultural contexts. Second, the approach used is qualitative and descriptive, so it does not provide broader quantitative generalizations. Third, the interpretation of emotions in interjections is highly dependent on the reading context, which may differ between researchers.

Based on these limitations, further research is recommended to analyze interjections in various literary works with different genres, languages, and cultural backgrounds in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture. A combined qualitative and quantitative approach, or a corpus-based approach, could also provide more systematic results. In addition, interdisciplinary approaches such as psycholinguistics or

multimodal analysis could enrich our understanding of how interjections shape narratives and reader experiences.

Conclusion

This research shows that interjections play a significant role in shaping emotional expression and narrative dynamics in literary works. The dominance of emotive interjections in the novel *Me Before You* shows that emotional spontaneity is an important part of building character depth and story atmosphere. In addition, the presence of volitional and cognitive interjections reinforces the pragmatic function of interjections as markers of social interaction and emotional awareness of characters.

These findings contribute to linguistic and literary studies by emphasizing that interjections are not merely complements to dialogue, but meaningful elements that enrich literary texts. This research also opens up space for cross-genre, cross-language, and cross-cultural studies of interjections to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of interjections in communication and the representation of emotions.

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