

# Interjections as Tools for Sharing Mental States

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## Abstract

Humans are intuitive mindreaders. We use our Theory of Mind to infer other people's mental states based on how they behave. Yet, humans are also motivated to ensure that others can infer their mental states easily and accurately. However, to act on this motivation, we must have tools to help others efficiently understand our minds, particularly when our behavior could be misunderstood. We propose that interjections—simple vocalizations like oh, oops, and ew—are an important set of linguistic devices designed to reveal our mental states quickly and efficiently. We provide initial evidence for this account, showing that people believe that interjections ought to be used as if they were designed to broadcast mental states and that people spontaneously produce these interjections significantly more often in the presence of an observer. Our work sheds light on how humans are not only proficient mindreaders, but may also be adept mindsharers.