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VOCALIZATION in English : Its Implications in TEFL*

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I. Introduction

1.0 Overview

Language comes into its own when it becomes incisive. It speaks out for what it most genuinely is when it cuts through the set articulations of speakers and listeners, actors and audiences, officers and enlisted men, princes and subjects, teachers and students to achieve access to things as they are presented at the moment. Whether we are speaking or listening, reading or writing, we are partaking of an articulation... (Welch 1973: 126)

Oh, Uh are not mere meaningless particles, as many grammarians have stated, used merely to purchase time in speaking. (Lakoff 1974: 160)

In every language there are conventional ways of responding to the utterances of others and these ease social relations and make continued communication less tiring. Certainly there are ways of agreeing, disagreeing, expressing pleasure, astonishment, surprise, displeasure, or disgust, ways of responding to another person's monologue so that one appears to be participating, and ways of acknowledging replies to one's questions. The following are usual examples:

Uh-huh	Oh!	boy!
Un-huh	Ugh!	oops!

*This is an expanded written version of my paper read at the 16th Annual Language Seminar sponsored by the Language Research Center, Seoul National University on Nov. 12, 1982.

mm	yuck!	yup! (eeyop)	
phew (whew)	gee!	tsk tsk	
huh!		(tut tut)	
Sorry!	Pity!	Tough luck!	OK!
Good Lord!	Look out!	Not bad!	Really!
Wow!	Fantastic!	No!	Right!
No way!	Don't bother!	What a shame!	

1.1 Macro-language Use vs. Micro-language Use

Foreign language teaching should contain exercises of micro-training as well as of macro-language use. According to Rivers and Temperley (1978: 92), the macro-language use is defined as "the ability to use language holistically for normal life purposes." The micro-language use is "the learning of elements of language and their potential combinations." The importance of understanding detailed information at crucial points in some aural tasks cannot be bypassed. However, there is also a need for tackling aural comprehension with considerable success. Functional comprehension in real situations must be the ultimate goal of learning any language. The use of right responses and expressions will guarantee smooth communication.

1.2 VOCALIZATION: Definition and Purpose of the Study

VOCALIZATION in the paper includes not only the expression indicating hesitation, request for repetition, affirmation or denial, disgust or pain and excitement or surprise, but also the so-called interpolations, interjections, expletives and rejoinders.

According to Crystal's dictionary, vocalization and interjection are defined respectively as follows:

Vocalization: A general term used in linguistics and phonetics to refer to an utterance viewed solely as a sequence of sound. A vocalization is any voiced sound (Crystal 1980: 376).

Interjection: A term used in the Traditional Classification of Parts of Speech, referring to a class of words which are unproductive, do not have special syntactic relationships with other classes, and whose function is

purely emotive, e.g. *Yuk!*, *Strewth!*, *Blast!*, *Tut tut!* There is an unclear boundary between these items and other types of Exclamation, where some referential meaning may be involved, and where there may be more than one word, e.g. *Excellent!*, *Lucky devil!*, *Cheers!*, *Very well!*

The paper attempts to arouse some interests in much neglected area of VOCALIZATION, to show the importance of it in relation to communication, to introduce different grammarians' various views on it, to cite examples in literature, and to indicate its implications in TEFL.

II. VOCALIZATION in TEFL

2.0 Overview

The noises one makes in conversation are extremely variable, hard to classify and often seem to be inconsistently spelled. However, one notices a fairly consistent ways of saying and writing them.

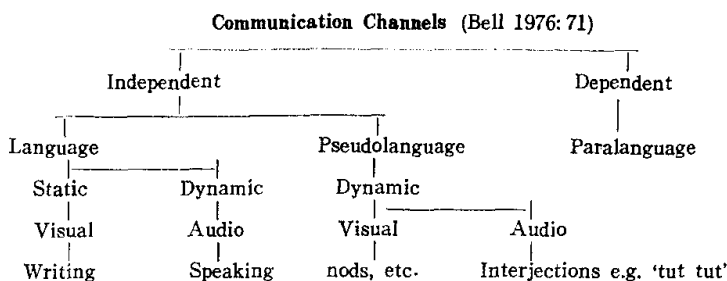
In the macro context, listening can be evaluated only by response. In other words, listeners perform the supportive role by uttering at appropriate intervals, consoling interpolations, exclamations of surprise or denial and the like.

Different grammarians' views on aspects of VOCALIZATION are presented with their examples in literature. Its implications in TEFL are noteworthy.

2.1 VOCALIZATION and Grammarians

There appears to be an extraordinarily heterogeneous bundle of means of communication. In order to introduce some degree of system, the following channels along three parameters are suggested: independent-dependent, static-dynamic, and audio-visual (Bell 1976: 67). The place of interjection in the channel has much significance.

In the figure below, Bell presents the system of channels available to the language user in a schematic form. Besides, "interjection" is represented as Independent, Pseudolanguage, Dynamic and Audio.



Different grammarians handle and explain VOCALIZATION in their respective grammars as follows:

Henry Sweet

According to him, interjections are primary and secondary. Primary interjections are mostly imitations of sounds that accompany emotions: *ah, o, oh, pah pooh, hush*. Secondary interjections include *what!* and *dear me!* (1955: 443)

George L. Trager

Trager envisions three kinds of events that employ the speech apparatus. The first of these is language itself. The second is vocalizations and the third voice qualities. Vocalizations and voice qualities differ from the structural features and content of true language in significant ways.

Vocalizations are those noises that do not have the structure of language but are nevertheless audible and potentially communicative. Vocalizations are in fact easily identifiable as specific vocal noises or aspects of vocal noises. Trager includes such diverse types of vocalizations as laughing, crying, yelling, belching, whispering, yawning, whining, coughing, clearing the throat, sighing and so forth, as well as such vocal segregates as the *uh-uh, uh-huh, uh*, and *tsk tsk* in English for negation, affirmation, pause, and sympathy or sarcasm, respectively.

For example, an injected *uh* signals that the pause is legitimate and that the listener should be prepared to wait momentarily and politely until one recaptures one's train of thought and continues the sentence (1958, 1961).

C.E. Eckersley

According to him, the dividing line between interjections and exclamations is thin. Interjections are reproductions of sounds or special words that we utter involuntarily under the stress of some emotion. In exclamations an ordinary word or group of words are used as interjections (1960: 315-16).

Interjections: *Oh! Ah! Hello! Hey! Alas!*

Exclamations: *Good! Bravo! Shame! Silence! Stop! I say! Well done!*

Expletives: *Oh dear! Goodness! Gracious! Dear me! Oh brother(mild)
Good Lord! (robust) Bless my soul! No fear!*

The interjection is a word or sound used to express some sudden feeling or emotion. It thus belongs to the oldest form of the spoken language and represents the most primitive type of utterance. It does not enter into the grammatical construction of the sentence.

There are some interjections whose written form rather misrepresents their spoken sound, mainly because there are no conventional symbols which would represent it. For example, there is *Tut, tut* which stands for the sound made by clicking the tongue against the front teeth; and there is *Pshaw!* an expression of contempt, but it is difficult to say what exclamation in actual use the spelling is supposed to represent; certainly no one says [pʃo:] or [ʃo:] except when coming across *Pshaw!* in print.

Besides the examples listed above, there are less socially acceptable ones like *Dash! Blast! Damn!* At the same time we also notice ones such as *Fancy that! Well played, sir! Splendid! Right on!*

Martin Joos

In *The Five Clocks*, Joos introduces the label consultative code. Consultative code labels include the standard list of listener's insertions *Yes, Yeah, Unhuh, That's right, Oh, I see, Yes, I know* and a very few others, plus the *Well* that is used to reverse the roles between listener and speaker (1961: 28).

Robert Scholes

He introduces *Dammit! Well!* and *Eeyop!* as interjections (1974: 25-26).

Randolph Quirk

According to him, interjections are purely emotive words which have no

referential content. Some of them have phonological features which lie outside the regular system of the language. Interjections frequently involve the use of sounds that do not otherwise occur in English words. The following are the instances of interjections:

Oh (surprise); *Ah* (satisfaction, recognition, etc.);
Oho (jubilant surprise); *Wow* (great surprise);
Yippee (excitement, delight); *Aha* (jubilant satisfaction, recognition);
Ouch, Ow (pain); *Ugh* (disgust);
Ooh (pleasure, pain); *Tut-tut* (mild regret, disapproval);
Alas (archaic: sorrow); *Uh-huh* (yes); *Mm* (casual 'yes');
Hey (call for attention); *Eh?* (impolite request for repetition) (1972: 414).

Quirk and Greenbaum

Under the abverb and other word classes, reaction signals and initiators are introduced. There are certain items which must be positioned initially. They are important because of their high frequency in spoken English and some are restricted to the spoken language. Reaction signals normally serve only as response utterances. Initiators can serve both as response utterances and as initiators of conversation (1973: 274).

Reaction Signals: *No, Yes* (including variants such as *Yeah* or *Yep*), *M* (including variants such as *Hm, Mhm*)

Initiators: *Well, Oh, Ah*

Thomas L. Crowell

In *Index to Modern English*, VOCALIZATION such as *Eh, Hm* are introduced under the name of a question tag (1964: 204).

I can't go, *eh?*

You like that boy, *hm?*

Leech and Svartvik

According to them, interjections are words whose only function is to express emotion (1975: 309, 884).

The examples are as follows:

Oh (surprise); *Ah* (satisfaction, recognition, etc.);

Aha (jubilant satisfaction, recognition); *Wow* (great surprise); *Yippee*

(excitement, delight); *Ouch, Ow* (pain); *Ugh* (disgust); *Oah* (pleasure, pain).

Oh, what a beautiful present!

Ah, that's just what I wanted!

Aha, these books are exactly what I was looking for.

Wow, what a fantastic goal!

Yippee, this is fun!

Ouch, my foot!

Ugh, what a mess!

Oah, this cream cake's delicious!

Rivers and Temperley

According to them, useful expressions are not taught [in any systematic way to students of English. Consequently students often run into difficulties either by not contributing as they should to an interchange or by contributing too forcefully or pedantically. The following list includes the American and British expressions that Rivers and Temperley cite (1978: 145-6).

Sorry! Pity! Tough luck! Tough break! Right! OK! It's OK.

Good Lord! Look out! Mind out! Not bad! Too bad! Really!

You don't say! Is that so? You're welcome. Wow! Fantastic!

No! Don't bother. What a shame! No way! I'm sorry.

A stock of useful expressions certainly helps the students' conversation. The expressions include clichés of conversation, frequently used expressions, conventional greetings, expletives, and rejoinders. The following is an informal dialogue. The italicized parts of the dialogue are often difficult to supply for EFL students.

Cue: Didn't get the job. Just got there as the boss went off to lunch.

Response: *Tough luck!*

Cue: See you at three at the subway station.

Response: *OK.*

Cue: Thought I'd never see John again. Then I go into this building and there he is waiting for the elevator.

Response: *No kidding.*

2.2 Examples in Literature

The examples are taken from various plays in a collection called *The Modern British and American Plays* (1974). At the same time some are from novels.

“Candida” (1894) by G.B. Shaw

Aha! You’re finding that out at last, are you?

Oh! bother your understanding!

There, there, there. I wasn’t alone.

Hm, I thort you wouldn’t git a piorr’s (peers)...

Well, well, I shan’t press you.

She’s so frank: She can’t contain herself! Poor

Prossy! *Ha! Ha!*

Haven’t you been listening! Mrs. Morell! *Eh?*

O-o-o-h, the chairman. Now I understand.

Ah, dearest—

“The Importance of Being Earnest” (1895) by Oscar Wilde

Oh, pleasure, pleasure!

Eh? Shropshire.

Ah! That is clearly a metaphysical speculation.

For goodness’ sake don’t play that ghastly tune.

Upon my word, if I thought that, I’d shoot myself...

Alas! No. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned.

Ahem! Cecily!

Serious Bunburyist! *Good heavens!*

“Riders to the Sea” (1904) by J.M. Synge

Aha, Nora, isn’t it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north...

Uah. (They crouch down in front of the old woman.)

“Anna Christie” (1921) by Eugene O’Neill

Py golly, dat’s good news...

Oho, hat’s up with you?

Ho-ho!

Think I'd make trouble, *huh?*

Gee, I sure need that rest.

Aw, quit the kiddin'!

Mush!

Ouch!

Sssh! Sssh!

Well, can you talk?

Oh, that is too much! *Ha-ha-ha-!*

"The Circle" (1921) by W. Somerset Maugham

Oh, nonsense!

(with a grunt) *Ugh!*

Ah, well, he's always had the...

Hulloa!

By God!

Fiddle!

(Spluttering) *Well, well, well!*

"The Hairy Ape" (1922) by Eugene O'Neill

Ho, Groggy! Where the devil have you been?

Oh, Whiskey is the life of man!

Hell, Law!

Hairy ape, *huh?* Sure!

Christ! I'll fix her!

Hurrah for de Fort' of July!

Hey, you guy.

"Escape" (1926) by John Galsworth

M'yes! (struck)

Gosh! I'd like to have one.

Phew! One of ours!

Cripes! A cop!

Um! Captain in the War.

Ugh! What a day!

Alas! I did.

My Golly, yes.

Dear me! yes.

Good Lord, Sir!

My! Don't they look nice!

Hallo! He's coming back.

Oh! —er —a gentleman.

Darn!

Hullo!

"Golden Boy" (1937) by Clifford Odets

Ha ha, you make me laugh, *ha ha!*

Hey, Joe,

Whata you say, *heh?*

Oah! Did you see that?

For God's sake.

"Our Town" (1938) by Thornton Wilder

Twins, *eh?*

Hm!...

M-m-m...

Aw, Ma!

Golly, I never got a kiss from such a great lady before.

Gee, it's funny.

Pshaw! Go on with you!

Gracious! You gave me such a turn.

"The Glass Menagerie" (1945) by Tennessee Williams

Have you made a wish on it yet?

Um-hum.

Irish on both sides! *Gracious!* And doesn't drink?

Uh-huh.

Mmm, so warm already!

Gosh! Everybody excels in some one thing.

A unicorn, *huh?*

"Death of a Salesman" (1949) by Arthur Miller

What a simonizing job, *heh!*

I've been wondering why you polish the car so careful. *Ha!*

Gee, how'd you know we wanted a punching bag?

Hey, that's a beautiful job of printing!

Sh! Take it easy.

God! Why didn't I go to Alaska with Ben that time?

Boy, someday I'd like to know how he did it.

It was my ace, *for God's sake*.

Geez, did he catch you?

My God, I was Yelling at him!

Isn't that a remarkable thing? *Jesus!*

"Marty" (1953) by Paddy Chayefsky

Your kid brother got married last Sunday, *eh*, Marty?

Oh, yeah.

Boy, you're getting to be a real drag, you know that?

Ha! Who told you about the Waverly Ballroom?

Eh, I'm no better than my sister Catherine.

Ah, They're always crowded on Sunday night.

Black Boy (1950) by Richard Wright

So you want to work in the mill, *hunh?*

Uclee Tom's Cabin (1966) by Harriet Stowe

"*Pay!*" said Rosa and Jane, with supreme disgust;

"Let her keep out of our way!"

2.3 Implications in TEFL

In addition to the ones introduced in the previous pages, an examination of plays and novels reveals yet other classes of semi-involuntary noise (Taylor 1975: 293-4).

- (1) A set for imposing silence: *Sh! Shuh! Shoosh! sssssh!*
- (2) A set for calling at a distance: *oi! hoy! hi! hey! yoo-hoo!*
- (3) A set for greetings: *hi! hullo! (hello, hallo)*
- (4) Coughing or similar noises: *ahem! humph! mphm!*
- (5) A noise for driving things away: *shoo!*
- (6) Noises for representing physical states: *brrr! brrh! ouch!*
- (7) A noise for indicating anxiety: *whoops, woops, oups, or oops*

In actual spontaneous conversation there exist hesitation phenomena, false starts, and silence fillers. It seems as if these features of speech are sub-consciously filtered out by the native speakers. However, to non-native speakers of English, these features which are clearly irrelevant to the substance of the communication, sometimes pose difficulties. Therefore, at the intermediate and advanced stages a student can be helped to construct this mechanism by being given a lot of practice in listening to spontaneous speech.

III. Conclusion

Whenever a word is spoken there is an at least faint resonance of a possible incision, a possible meaning for the individual and so also for others. The word may fall flat upon closer hearing, but high hopes never fail to arise on each new occasion. In a poem entitled "Vocalism" Whitman also attests to this peculiarity of our linguistic involvement:

O what is it in me that makes me tremble so at voices?
Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her I shall follow,
As the water follows the moon, silently,
with fluid steps, anywhere around the globe (Welch 1973: 129-30).

To articulate consonants and vowels in a right way is important. To put them together with proper supra-segmental phonemes is more important. Speaking English with the right voice and intonation would be admirable.

Again when it comes to using right VOCALIZATION, EFL students face difficulties. The noises people make in conversation are extremely variable, hard to classify, and inconsistently spelled. Besides, VOCALIZATION is not taught systematically to students of EFL.

The general status of interjections, though meaningful, is integrated within neither the grammatical structure nor the lexicon of the language. Therefore, to the students of EFL, it is sometimes puzzling to understand the native speakers' interjections and exclamations. Moreover, when it comes to writing them, it is more puzzling because one cannot rely on the dictionary. Besides, an incoherent spelling of the sounds is often misleading and sometimes confusing.

Students are not always exposed to edited listening comprehension materials. Actually in normal speech, pauses are lengthened by hesitation expression, whereas in edited speech, or careful speech, these extensions of the pauses are missing.

It is important to let students of EFL perform and participate in the natural "speech acts." Some rejoinders will be learned incidentally because the teacher will use them frequently.

VOCALIZATION should be learned in context and in a natural way. If learned artificially, out of context, it will be forgotten easily, and will become distorted and awkward. Students should be encouraged to intersperse them liberally through their communication activities, always being conscious of the level of intimacy at which they are appropriate. English sounds rarely occur in isolation. Therefore, production exercises should not begin with the sound in isolation. One should remember that many expressive rejoinders slip in and out of fashion, while others remain standard features of English speech.

Anyway, a balanced development of all language skill is the goal for all language learners. In other words, students should be exposed not only to phonological, syntactic factors but also to semantic and lexical factors in the language. Besides, many of those features of spontaneous speech discussed above should be taken into account. Hesitation phenomena, false starts, slips of the tongue, silence fillers, interjections and interpolations, expletives and rejoinders should have a place in TEFL. One should get used to its writing and its audio aspect, too.

In order to have an astute perception of the context of a particular stretch of discourse, a learner should understand not only how a native speaker achieves a desired function through careful selection of words, structure, intonation, nonverbal signals, but also how he utilizes VOCALIZATION.

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<국문초록>

영어의 Vocalization 연구— 외국어로서의 영어교육을 중심으로

최 은 경
(덕성여대)

본 논문에서 Vocalization이란 용어는 다음과 같은 포괄적인 의미를 지니고 있음을 우선 밝힌다. 혼회 말하는 감탄사 혹은 간투사는 물론 언어행위시 주저, 반복요청, 긍정 또는 부정, 흥분, 놀람, 간단한 삽입어구, 뜻이 없는 어구 등을 총 지칭한다.

Vocalization에 대한 여러 문법학자의 견해와 그 예를 밝힌 후 실지로 문학 작품에서 접할 수 있는 예를 작품에서 발췌하여 나열하였다.

Vocalization은 의사소통에 일역을 담당하고 있는데도 불구하고 언어의 문법구조, 어휘 연구 등에서 외면을 당해 온 느낌이다. 영어를 외국어로 공부하는 사람은 때로 모국인의 간투사 등 각종 Vocalization을 접할 때 당황하는 경우가 있고 그 잡음 내지 말의 토막에 압도되거나 그것을 확대 해석하는 오류를 범하게 된다. 더욱 답답한 일은 그 소리대로의 잡음, 말의 토막이 사전에 올라 있지도 않은 경우가 있다는 것이다. 뿐만 아니라 때로 무질서 하게 기술 되기도 하는 Vocalization은 혼란을 더 해주는 경우도 있다.

그러나 일상생활에서 우리는 편집이 잘된 대화 보다는 편집이 되지 않은 대화를 접하게 된다. 바로 이것이 언어의 자연스러운 형태이기도 하다.

Uh-huh, oh!, Boy! Huh! Mm, Yuck! Ugh! Oops! Oh, my! Phew! Gee! Tsk tsk! Sorry! Good Lord! Really? Wow! Fantastic! Not bad! Noway! 등은 Vocalization의 예이다.

Vocalization이 영어교육에 시사하는 바를 다음과 같이 요약할 수 있다.

(1) 적기에 사용된 Vocalization은 자연스러운 언어생활을 도와 주고 불필요한 긴장감 오해를 막아 준다. (2) 희곡 작품을 많이 읽히고 그것을 실지 역할로 바꾸어 보며 Vocalization을 소개한다. (3) 의식적인 훈련을 통한 그것의

소개는 위험하다. 자연스러운 모국인의 대화에서 느끼게 하는 것이 좋다. Video-tape의 대화 활용이나, Panel discussion, TV 매체를 통한 소개도 바람직하다. (4) 무질서한 것 같으면서도 그 나름 대로의 체계성을 지니고 있는 Vocalization의 여러가지 표현, 철자법, 특수 형태소의 결합을 알고 있고 필요할 때 사용하는 것은 의사소통에 도움을 준다. (5) 이것의 남용은 언어행위를 저해할 뿐 아니라 대화, 글의 흐름을 중단시키는 위험이 있다.

그러므로 Vocalization은 의사소통을 돕는 범위 내에서 취급되어야 하고 사용되어야 할 범위, 대상이 적절해야 한다는데 어렵고도 큰 함정이 있다. 이 방면의 연구는 계속되고 더욱 모색되어야 하겠다.