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## The Use of Interjections in English Song\*

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### Abstract

The grammarian divided words into different types to be useful for studying of grammatical system. It seems interjections is not much mentioned like other aspects. The research "Interjections; yet neglected parts of speech." of Ameka (1992) found issue that most people ignore the importance of interjections and confuse about the use. Then, there are the study about function of interjections, such as Daniel (2007) studied interjections in literary readings and artistic performance. In order to provide students of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University to gain knowledge about the function and benefit of interjections in another side on the music. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine type of interjections and analyze the function of interjections. By using 100 English songs which were ranked by Billboard music charts from 2008 to 2017. The results showed that primary interjections were taken more than secondary interjections and each word had different functions. Mostly used to enhance the songs is more interesting and melodious.

**Keywords :** Interjections, English song, function

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### บทคัดย่อ

เนื่องจากนักไวยากรณ์ได้แบ่งคำออกเป็นชนิดต่างๆ เพื่อประโยชน์ต่อการศึกษาระบบไวยากรณ์ของภาษา ซึ่งคำอุทานมักจะนำมากล่าวถึงน้อยกว่าคำอื่นๆ จากงานวิจัย เรื่อง “Interjection; yet neglected parts of speech.” ของ Ameka (1992) พบปัญหาว่าคนส่วนใหญ่ละเลยเกี่ยวกับความสำคัญของคำอุทาน และสับสนเกี่ยวกับการใช้งาน จึงมีการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับการใช้คำอุทาน ได้แก่ คำอุทานในงานวรรณกรรมและบทการแสดง (Daniel, 2007) เป็นต้น เพื่อให้ให้นักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏสวนสุนันทาได้รับความรู้เกี่ยวกับหน้าที่และประโยชน์ของคำอุทานอีกมุมหนึ่งในบทบาทบนเพลงภาษาอังกฤษ ดังนั้น จุดมุ่งหมายของงานวิจัยนี้คือ การศึกษาประเภทของคำอุทานที่ใช้ในเพลงภาษาอังกฤษ และการวิเคราะห์หน้าที่ของคำอุทานแต่ละประเภทในเพลงภาษาอังกฤษ โดยรวบรวมข้อมูลจาก 100 เพลงที่ได้รับการจัดอันดับเพลงโดยบิลบอร์ดชาร์ต จากปี 2008 ถึง 2017 ผลจากการวิจัยพบว่า คำอุทานปฐมภูมิได้นำมาใช้มากกว่าคำอุทานทุติยภูมิ ซึ่งแต่ละคำอุทานมีหน้าที่แตกต่างกันโดยส่วนใหญ่ นำมาใช้เพื่อเสริมให้เพลงมีความน่าสนใจและไพเราะ

**คำสำคัญ :** คำอุทาน, เพลงสากล, หน้าที่



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## Introduction

Communication is an essential part of human interaction. Weekley (1967, p.338) mentioned that communication is etymologically related to both communion and community comes from the Latin word *communicare*, which means to make common or to share. DeVito (1986) described on this, that communication is the process of act of transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver. The message can be encoded in speech, written text, pictures, gestures or signals which serve the recipients to understand an intention of the senders. Different types of communications have different types of purpose.

Speech has been believed that is the most effective communication tool of human because it is used to give an account of their own such as knowledge, thoughts and attitude with each other. It can also be used for persuasion and intimidation. With the aims of people which need to communicate, they have to create several words sufficiently for using.

Interjections are an utterance in communication of languages Many academics and authors had presented exquisite pieces of research concerning about interjections. They have different points of view on interjections. According one of the ideas, Cuenca (2006, p.20) mentioned that interjections are generally defined as a peculiar word class, apparently peripheral to language and similar to non-linguistic items such as gestures and vocal paralinguistic devices. Moreover, Baker (2005, p.63) defined interjections as idiomatic since they are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and, in the case of idioms, often carry meaning which cannot be deduced from their individual components. Anyway, Jovanović (2004, p.18) compiled lexicographers' definition of interjections as in reference to grammar, a natural ejaculation expressive of some feeling or emotion that is used or viewed as a part of speech. Previous studies regarded interjections as a separate class in that they can stand alone to constitute a complete utterance. For example, 'Oh' when people listened this word, they would be able to interpret it in several meanings, such as delight, surprise, pain, etc. Observing situation context is crucial to specify function and meaning of interjections. The interjections are able to apply in several way. It can be found in everyday conversation and on a lot of types' media such as television plays and literary works including, novels and comics. Moreover, people can hear these words in music.

Although the interjection is found in many situations of daily life, in the grammatical language mentioned about interjection not much and considered as less important role than other words. It is also a very complex term that can be defined in many ways as mentioned above. This is why most people are confused in the use of interjections until being neglected



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their values. Daniel (2007) has studied interjection in literature, found that they was used to convey the emotions of the story. Therefore, in order to expand the understanding about the use of interjections in other forms. The researcher chose to study interjections in the song. The assumption is that, interjections might have different functions in different purposes with their special characters.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to study interjections in English songs by using data from 100 songs which has ranked on Billboard annual chat from 2008 to 2017. For examining the types and functions of interjections that were contained in the lyrics. The advantage of this study will be increased the potential of the knowledge's learners such as word, meaning, and type related interjection and to apply in a conversation of a day. In addition, the observing interjection in the songs can help understanding about linguistics. However, it is still worth recognizing the use of interjections in order to help students and others who are interested, can use it effectively.

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the performance of interjections that were contain in music by collecting 100 English songs from Billboard Year-End charts. In order to classify type and function of interjections that ware written on the lyrics for helping Business English student and others to more understand how the interjections perform a useful function in music apart from the literary readings, and realize the importance of interjections as well.

### Methodology

#### 1. Data

Data of this study were 100 English songs which were ranked in list of Hot 100 Songs on Billboard Year-End Charts from 2008 to 2017.

#### 2. Instrument

The research instrument was AntConc which is a program for analyzing electronic texts (that is, corpus linguistics) in order to find and reveal patterns in language. It was created by Laurence Anthony of Waseda University. This program is one of the most well designed and easy to use corpus tools out there. There are 7 functions including:

- 1) **Concordance:** This will show you what's known as a Keyword in Context view (abbreviated KWIC, more on this in a minute), using the search bar below it.



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- 2) **Concordance Plot:** This will show you a very simple visualization of your KWIC search, where each instance will be represented as a little black line from beginning to end of each file containing the search term.
- 3) **File View:** This will show you a full file view for larger context of a result.
- 4) **Clusters:** This view shows you words which very frequently appear together.
- 5) **Collocates:** Clusters show us words which definitely appear together in a corpus; collocates show words which are statistically likely to appear together.
- 6) **Word list:** All the words in your corpus.
- 7) **Keyword List:** This will show comparisons between two corpora.

#### Note:

- \* Antconc works only with plain-text files with the file appendix .txt (eg., Hamlet.txt).
- \* Antconc will not read .doc, .docx, .pdf, files. You will need to convert these into .txt files.
- \* It will read XML files that are saved as .txt files (it's OK if you don't know what an XML file is).

In order to examine interjections in music, the researcher used Word list to see all lexical words and observe words' position with Concordance for separation of interjections.

Due to the different definitions of interjections, the author exploited the definition given by Ameka (1992) to collect the data.

#### Primary and Secondary Interjections

Generally, in agreement with Ameka (1992), he also primarily divided interjections into two separate groups including primary and secondary interjections. The following is definitions and descriptions he given on primary interjections.

Primary interjections are little words or non-words which in terms of their distribution can constitute an utterance by themselves and do not normally enter into construction with other word classes, for example, Ouch!, Wow!, Gee!, Oho!, Oops!, etc. (p.105).

Respecting another type of interjections, he defined meaning of secondary interjection as follow. Secondary interjections are those words which have an independent semantic value but which can be used conventionally as utterances by themselves to express a mental attitude or state. 3 They thus refer to mental acts too. Under secondary interjections fall such alarm calls and attention getters as help, fire, careful and swear and taboo words such as



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damn, hell, heavens, Christ!, and other emotively used words such as shame, bother, drats, etc. (p.111).

The words were classified into group of interjection by using following criteria:

- 1) Don't have a grammatical.
- 2) Don't have to have a relation to the other parts of the sentence.
- 3) Be single words or short phrases. (not sentence)
- 4) Written with exclamation marks (!), commas (,) or question marks (?).
- 5) Can be introductory expressions, sound, adjectives, and nouns.
- 6) Can appear at the beginning, in the middle, at the end of a sentence, or anyplace else where the subject wants to interject a feeling and emotion.

Interjections were considered by defining their meaning followed these website:

- <https://www.vidarholen.net/contents/interjections/>
- <http://www.yourdictionary.com/>
- <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/>
- <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/>

### 3. Data Collection

The data were collected from the list of Hot 100 Songs, based on Billboard annual chart from 2008 to 2017. They were selected 10 songs which were the top of each year in this list by billboard website ( <https://www.billboard.com/> ).

The author searched the lyrics with the title of each songs for writing down them in the format of text files based on AZLyrics.com ( <https://www.azlyrics.com/> ).

### 4. Data Analysis

In order to examine the use of interjections in English songs, the data were processed following:

- 3.1 The collected data were analyzed by AntConc 3.5.7 (2018). To click a file button and open text file which had already contained English song lyrics in each year. It was done one by one.
- 3.2 The program would count the tokens and types of words and showed rank, frequency, and word of that file on display by choosing word list function and clicking start.
- 3.3 The data were classified from all of words into term of primary interjections and secondary interjections by the interjections' definition of Amake (1992) and website



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pediaa.com. To ensure that a word is interjections, the author had to select a concordance. The display showed the position of that word and other words in the same line for helping decision.

3.4 The separated data were put in 3 tables following: Table 1 was to exploring the frequency of the interjections, Table 2 was to investigate word and function in term of primary interjections, and Table 3 was to investigate word and function in term of secondary interjections. In table 2 and 3 the data were considered by the criterion Amake (1992).

## Results

According to observe interjections in 100 English songs which the researcher collected from Billboard annual chart (2008-2017), interjections were divided into 2 types following the definition of Ameka (1992). It have been shown the frequency usage in the table 1.

Table 1: The types of interjections contained in English songs

Year	Primary interjections	Secondary interjections	All interjections
2008	92	58	150
2009	221	34	255
2010	327	50	377
2011	97	132	229
2012	66	25	91
2013	280	58	338
2014	75	47	122
2015	266	108	374
2016	90	69	159
2017	192	126	318
Total	1706	707	2413

From the table 1, it found that almost composers took primary interjections more than secondary interjections to write as a part of their songs. Its different frequency was 997 tokens. The cause that primary interjections were highly used in the songs, is probably because the songwriters used them to express their emotions and make feelings of the songs to be stronger for encouraging audiences' feeling. In addition, the writers used primary interjections in another



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function that was to enhance a euphony of the songs. With sound is very important component to produce a song and this interjections are speech from sound constituted by human imagination and supposition. Therefore the writers can create new interjections, which able to fill any part, to complete their songs perfectly.

After categorizing the primary interjections which were taken from 100 English songs on Billboard music chart, it was found that there are 85 interjections. The results were shown in the table 2.

Table 2: Primary interjections found in 100 English songs (2008-2017)

Primary Interjections	Frequency
oh	730
ooh	85
doh	83
uh	80
doo	68
ya	56
na	48
ah	46
mum	39
la	35
whoa, badoom	28
nae	24
yep	19
woah	17
huh	14
mah, aye	13
whoa-oh, rah, roma-roma-mamaa, ay, ey, shoo-wop-wop, ayy	12
ayo	11
nananananana, yah	10
ohh, yo, mmmm	8
woohoo, wuh, lalalalalalalalalalalalala	7



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Primary Interjections	Frequency
hoo, hah, mmmmm	
ooh-la-la, hallelujah	6
hm, mmm, blaow, glah	5
yea, duh, e, bada, whaa, aah, yuh, skrt, grrah	4
rey, wa, woo, wooooh	3
ow, jerp, wow, ough, pum, badadada, oooooh, aha, ta, ye, boo, aaaaaaow, mm, brr, rrrah	2
woahooo, uuuh, ooooh, oooh, aaay, hahaa oprah-doe, hee, aw, brah, piiisssssss, yup, brrah, dab	1

As the result, it can observe that there were some interjections which are slightly different writing, *oh - ooh -oooh -ooooh -oooooh -ohh, ay - ayy -aayy, mm -mmm -mmmm -mmmmm, uh - -uuhh, rah - rrah*, nevertheless, the author still stipulate them as separate word. With the reason that these interjections having add repeatedly letters, it would be different utterance or showed more excessive feeling. The most frequently used words were *oh*, 730 tokens which its figures was very distant from the second word *ooh*, 85 tokens and other words.

Subsequently, the primary interjections were considered their performance. It found that the functions of the interjections can divide into 2 ways including, to express people's emotion, and to use as tone color or timbre in music. The examples were explained in form of text referring title and year of the songs.

#### Expressive emotions - Primary interjections

##### Example 1

It's just the way you like it, huh?

You're so good, he's just wishing he could bite it, huh?

Never turn down nothing,

Slaying these hoes, gold trigger on the gun like ... (*Fancy – Iggy Azalea, 2014*)

##### Example 2

I throw my hands up in the air sometimes,

Saying AYO! Gotta let go!

I wanna celebrate and live my life,

Saying AYO! Baby, let's go! ... (*Dynamite – Taio Cruz, 2010*)



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**Euphonic word or Tone Color - Primary interjections**

Example 3

Don't be mad once you see that he want it  
 If you like it then you should've put a ring on it  
Wuh uh oh uh uh oh oh uh oh uh uh oh  
Wuh uh oh uh uh oh oh uh oh uh uh oh ... (Single ladies – Beyonce, 2009)

Example 4

Welcome to the new age, to the new age  
Whoa, oh, oh, oh, oh, whoa, oh, oh, oh,  
 I'm radioactive, radioactive  
Whoa, oh, oh, oh, oh, whoa, oh, oh, oh,  
 I'm radioactive, radioactive ... (Radioactive – Imagine Dragons, 2013)

From example 1, huh used to express doubtfulness which means like as 'What' and example 2, ayo used to convey as a greeting. Following example 3, wuh, uh, oh had no meaning in language, and likewise example 4, whoa, oh did not use to convey. It can observe that the words were written in the same line. When the singer sang those lines, its voice seemed melodies. All examples in term of primary, it implied that their meaning depend on situations and purposes that user want to communicate.

Table 3: Secondary interjections found in 100 English songs (2008-2017)

Secondary Interjections	Frequency
yeah	187
baby, hey	112
girl	44
no	38
well	32
shit	17
man, boy	16
hello, pain, savage	13
okay	11



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Secondary Interjections	Frequency
hot damn	9
ok, oh my gosh	8
dale, nah	6
hot, ooh my gosh, what	5
babe	4
oh my god	3
damn	2
dammit, clap, stop, dry	1

According to table 3, it found that there are 28 secondary interjections in English songs. The most frequently used words are *yeah* 187 tokens followed by *baby* and *hey* 112 tokens. The character of secondary interjections can be guessed their meaning, because they have meaning already. It can be realized that, the words in table 3 were normal used in communication and it can also be considered as informal words that might make the listener be able to feel into the songs.

In the part of the secondary interjections were considered their performance with the same criterion that had referred in primary interjection. The examples were explained in form of text referring title and year of the songs.

### Expressive emotions - Secondary interjections

#### Example 5

Magic, madness, heaven, sin  
Saw you there and I thought  
Oh my God, look at that face  
You look like my next mistake  
Love's a game, wanna play? ... (*Blank Space* - Taylor Swift, 2015)



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#### Example 6

I'm too hot (hot damn)  
Call the police and the fireman  
I'm too hot (hot damn)  
Make a dragon wanna retire, man ... (Uptown Funk - Mark Ronson, 2015)

#### Tone Color sound- Secondary interjections

#### Example 7

People hatin', said we changing look we made it (yah, uh)  
Yeah, we made it (ayy)  
Hey, hey, hey, hey  
Hey, hey, hey, hey  
Hey, hey, hey, hey... (Congratulations - Post Malone, 2017)

#### Example 8

Take me by the tongue  
And I'll know you (Take me by the tongue)  
Kiss me 'til you're drunk  
And I'll show you (Yeah yeah yeah!) ... (Moves like Jagger –Maroon5, 2011)

From example 5, *Oh my God* used to express surprise when he saw someone and example 6, hot damn used in this case, it means very much (-he is very excellent). Example 7, *hey* did not mean to greet anybody. They were just a voice in that song. Also, example 8 showed that *yeah* did not use to convey in this context. All examples in term of secondary, it indicated that the words have ability to perform like as primary interjection.

#### Discussions

As the results were discussed that, interjections have been written continuously as part of the lyrics for the past 10 years. It may be because the interjections are produced by human vocalization. Interjections are cable stand alone and have no grammatical relation to other



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parts of the sentence (see, eg., [partofspeech.org](http://partofspeech.org), [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org) and Ameka,1992). As a song was compiled of lyric, melody, rhythm, sound and others into together to be melodiousness and to entertain the audience (see, Cameron, 2014). By presenting in audio format, sound is a very important part, with combination of each sound from music of instrument, human voice and synthesized sounds. At the same time, the exclamation is related to the pronunciation of human which can utter a variety of interesting voice. It also does not involve grammatical sentences, can place as the beginning, in the middle of sentence and at the end. In addition, the songwriters are able to express emotions and convey the story of their songs with interjections effectively and the words have an extra function as euphotic words to enhance rhythm the song more beautiful and attractive. Pronouncing short-long, low-high, it might supported the song to be very interested.

In the part of lexical interjections which were reported following table 2 and 3, most words in term of interjection can be found in general communication. The researchers considered that it might have many reasons, why composers added those words in their songs. First, the composer used to language because they were among the society having use the words normally in communication (see, e.g., Steven Pinker, 2007). Also, the words were that people in the society recognize well hence listeners will be able to understand easily. For next reason was probably those words had a several way to apply in different situations and one word can convey many emotions with the voice tone and the contents. Finally, it maybe depend on desire of the composers or some necessary.

There are also novelty word occurred in English songs, it was probably caused by the songwriters wanted to express something inside out or transmit some meaning in phonological form, which can not to explain in the sentence. It was either meaning word or non-meaning word. Another cause was the language change (see, e.g., [www.linguisticsociety.org](http://www.linguisticsociety.org)), which is always changing, evolving, and adapting. It will continue to respond to the needs of the people who use it.

Regarding to the function of interjections in the songs, it was separated into 2 groups including, to express emotions, and supplement tone color voice (see, e.g., [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timbre](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timbre)). As mentioned above, one word can be used both functions depending on the purpose. It was probably because interjections are complex lexical in language. Therefore, observing context, situation, voice tone, and other might help to define functions and interpret meanings of the lexical.



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### Conclusions

The purpose of this research is to study interjections performing in English songs by using data from 100 songs which has ranked on Billboard annual chart from 2008 to 2017. The summary of this paper is most interjections which appeared in the songs, are the common words in ordinary communication. According to hypothesis of the research, it found that the function of interjections will vary depending on the purpose. The different functions of the words in the songs is to use as extra words for enhancing texture and euphony of music to be more attractive, which interjections have no meaning in this term. Also, using the lexical express emotions that have not many as in literatures that main function is use to convey the feelings of the player. Although, interjections are used less than other words in part of speech, they are still used in communication and media with cannot deny them. The use of interjection seems likely to continue to be special feature in the English songs. Therefore, students of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University and others should realize the benefits of interjections and use them effectively. This study will assist learners to develop the knowledge of interjection to apply in daily life for communication and others. It also guide students and people who are interested in learning language to adapt to the topics which they want to study in the next time. For the recommendations, since interjections occur in all languages, the interesting content is study the interjections in other language (e.g., Thai, Japanese) to compare their meanings.

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