

TEACHING THE ENGLISH INTERJECTIONS IN CAMEROON SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT: *This paper focuses on evaluating the teaching and learning of the English interjections in Cameroon taking in cognizance the pragmatic approach. Research in second language acquisition (SLA) has to date typically concentrating on the acquisition of systems central to linguistic analysis especially in morphology and syntax. The study of interjections in Cameroon cannot be left out in SLA, since the trend that SLA is adopting, is virtually leaving from the acquisition of linguistic forms, structures and rules to a widespread recognition amongst SLA researchers to study the acquisition of other components of language ability as well especially those interactional and social aspects of the language. The teaching and learning of interjections is fundamentally focused on contexts. This context defines to the interlocutors the interpretation given to the same or different types of interjections. The difficulty of teaching interjections in SLA lies at the level of lesson preparation, lesson delivery and lesson assimilation. Thought has been given to this difficulty and a pragmatic approach has been postulated. This paper therefore enhances and empowers both the teachers and learners in Cameroon with materials and lesson plans in the teaching/learning of the English interjections through a pragmatic approach. Nevertheless, the language socialization theory has been of vital importance in situating the context of this article.*

KEYWORDS: Interjections, Language Teaching, Language Learning, Pragmatics.

INTRODUCTION

Quirk & Greenbaum (1973) defines an interjection as “a term used in the classification of parts of speech, referring to them as a class of words which are unproductive, do not enter into syntactic relationships with other classes, and whose function is purely emotive”. E.g. blast! yuk!, strewth!, tut tut!; Goffman (1981:90) goes ahead to say they are “responses to cries that can be interpreted as bearing on a passing event, an event limited in time”, Quirk et al. (1972:413) says that “they are purely emotive”, Glencoe(2000) affirms with the others that “they are words or phrases that expresses emotions or exclamation ” Crystal (1995) defines interjections as ‘a word or sound thrown into a sentence to express some feeling of the mind’. Generally, interjections are

“uninflected function words and have sometimes being seen as ‘sentence- words’ since they can replace or be replaced by a whole sentence. Linguists consider them as phonemic clusters without any meaning which convey various messages. These messages are no longer ideas or thoughts but rather emotions, feelings or attitudes. Because of their expressiveness and simplicity, they might have been the first utterances and words used by humans”. They are

“still useful because of the need for varied expressions. If they were not useful, they would have been eliminated from the language”

The position of the English interjections often comes at the beginning, middle and less frequently at the end of sentences, always separated by a comma or an exclamation mark; therefore forming a clause on its own. For instance,

1. **At the beginning:** **Hey!** What are you doing in my farm?
2. **At the middle:** I think she is called**errr**.... Kenfack.
3. **At the end:** she told you about the theft **nah?**

Studies on language acquisition have and are been carried at the different levels of the educational system in Cameroon. The secondary school level is experiencing a shift from the objective based approach (OBA) to the competence based approach through real life situation (CBA-RLS). This change motivated this paper while considering the importance of the interjections in our daily conversation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers have identified the many problems that surrounds the teaching and learning of interjections and have gone ahead to suggest solutions to them.

In his work Kurum (2010) stresses the importance of interjections in English and their subsequent interpretations in different contexts. He goes ahead to analyze the three most used and three less used interjections in communications by students who are learning English as a second language. He tried to find out whether the non-native students of the University of Lefke can use the right interjections in the right place and in the right contexts. In his findings, he noticed that the three most used interjections were as a result that they also existed in their national language (mother tongue) and the three less used ones were as a result that they were not in existence in this language. Interestingly, Cheng (2003) brings out the contrastive difference that exists between the male and female usage of interjections both in Cantonese and English plays, films, and television scripts. In his thesis, he emphasizes that interjections are culturally link and contextually interpreted. Mrochen (2009) presented a dissertation investigating the development of exclamations initiated with exclamatory words what, why and how. The tendency of this researcher was to verify these interrogative pronouns functioning as exclamations or interjections. He uses a number of approaches like, pragmatics, semantics, cognitive and diachronic approaches to emotive aspects of language. In his doctoral thesis Pick (2000) elucidates on interjections of silence as were used by radical protestant writers. He demonstrated how interjections were used as codes for transmitting radical messages for Protestantism. We as well considered the doctoral thesis of Nenova (1994). She when ahead to illustrate how the sounds of interjections can bring about regularities in communication as the interjections function differently in different or the same contexts.

Problem

The focus of this paper is the difficulty encountered in teaching and learning of English interjections in Cameroon. This problem can be broken down in two:

Negligence of interjections as a part of speech. Amongst the parts of speech that exist in the English language, rarely are interjections being mentioned. Consequently, rarely are teachers and students aware of its importance in communication.

Shallowness in pedagogic materials on interjections. The textbooks for class instructions are scanty with lessons on interjections and also, syllabus programming by the ministries in charge of education equally places less emphasis on the teaching and learning of interjections.

Approach And Method

The Pragmatic Approach

Pragmatics therefore

“is a systematic way of explaining language in context”. It seeks to explain aspects of meaning which cannot be found in the plain sense of words or structures, as explained by semantics. Pragmatics is another word for sensible or more precisely “logical” analyses”

Therefore what is going to be done in this section is to see whether when solving problems one has certain methods or structured way(s) in dealing with the problem. This approach will facilitate the investigation of our hypothesis on interjections using the following procedure: The pragmatic approach is preferable since it contains elements of contextualizing the English interjections and more practical than the aforementioned approaches.

METHODOLOGY: PRESENTATION OF DATA

The English language has outgrown its national boundaries from being a national language of particular countries to being an international and globally used language. Its importance in global development cannot be denied. Below is a list of some English interjections we gathered from the theoretical and course text books used in this study and their meanings in contexts as expressed in the English language. To be able to analyze data, text books and oral sources furnished a good number of the interjections. The presentation is as viewed below.

List of some of English interjections and their meaning. Sources: Course books, Text books, Articles, and oral sources.

No	Interjections	Meanings (what it expresses)
1	Ah!, bravo!, ahh!, hmph!, okay!, aha!, oh wow !, gosh, !, alas!	Acceptance, agreement, displeasure, relief, trust
2	Aah!, aww!, ouch!, gee!z, uh oh!, ooh,ouf!, oof!, son of a bitch!,	Fear, pain, grief, dismay, pleading, annoyance, anger
3	Oop!s,	Apology
4	Shh!, shiiip!,	Silence,
5	Whew!, wow!, ugh!, aw!,	Amazement, surprise, confidence
6	Yay!, yaay!, mmmm!, eh hm!, yeah!, yo!,	Congratulatory, agreement,
7	Een!, eh!,	Insistence
8	Yippee!, hurray!,	Celebration, victory
9	Uh!, um!,	Pause, skeptical, agreement,
10	Hm!, e!r, em!, emm!, um!,	Confusion, thinking, doubt, disagreement
11	Ah!, mmmhe!, well!,	Pleasure, realization, resignation, surprise
12	Eh!, uh huh!,	Repetition, enquiry, surprise, inviting, agreement

13	Oh dear!, dear me!,	Grief, pity
14	Hello!, hullo!, hi!, hey!,	Greeting, surprise, calling attention, joy,
15	Damn!, daggone!, fuck!, hell no!, shit!, bull shi't,	Unsatisfaction, anger, disgruntleness
16	Bah!, boo!, humph!, hunch!, thah!, dear me!, ah!,	Contempt, sorrow
17	Goodness!, gracious!, hurrah!, hurray!, hubba- hubba!, wahoo!, ach!, goody!, yippee!, boy!, crazy wow!, whiz!	Approval, enthusiasm, joy, delight, pleasure,
18	Aargh!, bah!, pah!, phew!,pish!, ish!, shot!, ugh!, eeeek!, oh no!,	Disgust, fear,
19	Lord!, merde!, hell no!, lordy!, shit!,	Irritation
20	Whaw!, whoof!, hmph!,	Relief
21	Ah!, alack!, boy!, dear me!, the devil!, goodness!, gosh!, gracious!, ha, heigh!, hey!, ho!, hello!, hoo-ha!, huh!, humph!, indeed!, mercy!, oho!, well!	General surprise format
22	Ooh!, ouch!, aah!, eh!, hmph!, ah ha!, oops!, aih!	Pain, disagreement, displeasure, disgust
23	Mm!, wow!, whew!, yes!, sure!, sure!, bingo!, aww!	Acceptance, agreement, victory

The lists of interjections above show some of the English interjections gathered from archives, books and other oral sources. The lists is divided into columns: The first column show a group of interjections that portray the same meaning in particular contexts as shown in column two. For instance, interjections like Mm, wow, whew, yes, sure, sure, bingo, aww will represent a category of emotions in a context like Acceptance, agreement, victory. These lists therefore bring out the pragmatics situation(s) in which interjections are used in the English language. The same analyses hold for the others.

RESULTS

The focus of this article is in two faces. First of all, to provide material on interjections and proposed a teaching methodology by supplying sample lesson delivery plan. We would equally emphasize the changed in approaches from the objective base to the competence based approaches.

Differences between the OBA AND CBA-RLS Approaches

The shift from the objective based approach to the competence based approach is one to reckon with. This implies that sharp contrast do exist in their modes of application. The comparism is presented here in the form of a table as follows:

Differences between OBA and CBA-RLS approaches (Source: Ministry of Secondary Education 2012)

	Skill/content/OBA Approach	CBA-RLS Approach
1	Language is taught just as a subject, with more theory than practice.	Language is taught to prepare the learner for life (social integration and social roles).
2	The learners are taught about the language, to know the language.	The learners are taught the language from real-life situation, for the purpose of proficient communication.
3	The teacher sets lessons objective.	The teacher defines expected outcomes.
4	Instruction is skill-based.	Instruction focuses on solving real life situations.
5	The teacher deals with the classroom as a whole.	The teacher deals with students as individuals.
6	Evaluation is done through exercise.	Evaluation is done through tasks.
7	The teacher prepares the learners for academic performance (examinations) and also to obtain a high academic performance.	The teacher prepares the learners directly to be responsible citizens, placing them in problem solving situations.

CONTRIBUTION

The following contribution was forwarded. This comprises of lesson plans made simple and adaptable in teaching the English interjections in schools. Columns 3, 4, 5 and 6 of charts in lessons 1, 2, 4 and 5 are empty. They are filled accordingly by the teachers.

LESSON PLAN 1

Stages	Subject matter	Teacher's activities	Students' activities	Duration	Observation
Introduction	<p>Good morning class.</p> <p>Look at these sentences. Read them.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hey! What's up? Oops! The information is not available. Wow! The food is good. Aka! What has happened to you again? <p>Now I want you to underline interjections in these sentences. Which characteristics do they display? Good! The interjections are non-words. We are going to start this lesson with an overview of English interjections as a part of speech.</p>				
Presentation	<p>Grammar: English interjections</p> <p>An interjection is a word that expresses a strong feeling or emotions, and ends with an exclamation mark (!). They are</p>				

	<p>‘thrown into’ or ‘between’ sentences (Examples above).</p> <p>We are going to name some English interjections (Asks the students to name some interjections they know).</p> <p>-Interjections are classified under the non-variable part of speech because they cannot be inflected easily.</p> <p>-They contain a subject, verb, object and or complement. E.g:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hey! May mean in different contexts ‘You over there, excuse me please, etc. 2. Oops! May mean in different contexts ‘I’m sorry, we are sorry, forgive me, it’s a mistake etc. 3. Wow! May mean in different contexts ‘that is good, fantastic, it’s beautiful, what a nice day, ‘etc. <p>From the above, it is noticed that one interjection when used, can represent all the other parts of speech. E.g:</p> <p>Wow! When used as ‘that is good’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ‘that’ can be a demonstrative pronoun or adjective, - ‘is’ is the verb ‘to be, used in the present and - ‘good’ is an adjective. <p>Now, give a list of some common interjections. e.g (ah! oh! okay! hmm! eh!, ouch!, ach!, wow!, ha ha ha!, la lala!, shhh!, ssiip!, brrr!, you!, stop!, kick!, pass!, come in!, please!) NB: Ask students for more.</p>				
Practice exercise	<p>Make sentences using the following interjections while using them in concrete contexts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Gosh! b. Hey! c. Ewo! d. Aseihl e. Weih! 				
Evaluation exercise	<p>Which of the following interjections best suit the context?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stop making noise. (shiiip!, tsip!, wow!). 2. I hope you told Mary about the burial (ooh! eh! shit!). 3.! I have succeeded the entrance exams. (hello, hurray, ugh). 				

	<p>4. Did you say that we lost the match? (eh! hey! mmm! errr!).</p> <p>5. You recognized the divisional officer (mmm! nah! oh!).</p>				
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LESSON PLAN 2

Stages	Subject matter	Teacher's activities	Students' activities	Duration	Observation
Introduction	<p>Good morning class.</p> <p>Look at these sentences. Read them.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Hey! What's up? Hello, is there somebody there? Oops! The information is not available. Please! Can I have some water? Wow! The food is good. Aka! What has happened to you again? <p>Now I want you to underline interjections in these sentences. Which characteristics do they display? Good! The interjections are the words which end with an exclamation sign. We are going to start this lesson with an overview of English interjections in two sub categories. The primary and the secondary interjections.</p>				
Presentation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Primary interjections are those that arise from onomatopoeic words and usually have no semantic meaning but carry a pragmatic one. E.g. ouch! oops! em!, eh!, mmm! (Ask students to name others). Secondary interjections are those interjections that arise from the other parts of speech. Examples are stop! come! stand up!, go!, well!, hello! (Ask students to name more). 				
Practice exercise	<p>Make sentences using the following interjections while using them in concrete context:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Go out! Well! Oh la la,! Hi! Certainly! 				
Evaluation exercise	Below is a list of interjections. You are supposed to classify them under categories of interjections and later on				

	<p>classify them under them under sub groups.</p> <p>Ah!, good, lord! allo!, wow!, ugh!, ish!, sit down!, eh!, blablabla!, hi!, oh!, ouf!, courage!, chut!, silence!, ah ha!, bravo!, gracious lord!, enough!,brrr!, patati patata!, hurray!, hullo!, go!, buy!, chao!, ach!, puff!, yippee!, hmph!, well!, bitch!, buulshit!,crazy!, good!, fuck you!, hell no!, wow!, whao!, oh la la!, so!, son of a bitch!, ooh!, etc.</p>				
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LESSON PLAN 3

Presentation: Look at the picture below and describe it.



Practice exercise:

1. Amongst the following interjections, underline the ones that best fit into the pictures: eh, ah, ouch, oops, aha, wow, um, uh huh, er, bingo, wahoo, damn.
2. Make five sentences with any five of the above interjections.

LESSON PLAN 4

Stages	Subject matter	Teacher's activities	Students , activities	Duration	Observation
Introduction	<p>Good day class. I will like you to look at these sentences.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hey! What's up? 2. Oops! The information is not available. 3. Wow! The food is good. 4. Aka! What has happened to you again? <p>What category of interjections are they? Good. They fall under primary interjections. We are going to look at primary interjections and their functions.</p>				
Presentation	<p>Grammar: Structure of an interjection: The subject, verb and object role of interjections) Look at the following interjections and their break down.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oops! May mean 'we are sorry' S=we, V=are, adv= sorry 2. Allo! May mean 'who is on the line' or 'who is calling' S=Who, V=is, prep= on, art.=the, N=line 3. Ouch! May mean 'I'm feeling pains' pro= I, aux V=am, pre. Part. = feeling, N=pains 4. Ooh! May mean 'it's a fiasco' pro. =it, V='s, art. =a, adv=fiasco <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Which of the sentences fit the interjection made? b. Suggest possible phrases that may reflect the context of the following interjection. 				
Practice exercise	<p>Exercise. Which of the interjections are correct and break it down to parts of speech?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Oh! I will never go to a nightclub again. (I'm happy, who's there, I'm regretting) 2. Ouch! That hurts. (it's enjoyable, I cannot bear this any longer, don't disturb me) 3. Well! I need a break. (I'm tired, give me some time, it's unbearable) 4. Wow! What a beautiful dress! (It is wonderful, nothing bad, what type of dress is this) 5. Hey! Call me that boy? (I'm talking to you, stop, attention please) 				

Practice exercise: I want you to use any four of these interjections and form at least two questions with one each: oh!, hey!, wow!, sssip!, silence!, objection!, sit up!

LESSON PLAN 5**Lesson:** Phrasal verbs functioning as interjections

Stages	Subject matter	Teacher's activities	Students , activities	Duration	Observation
Introduction	<p>Good day class, I will like you to look at these phrases, shut up, calm down, switch off, make up, fight back etc. what category does this words fall.</p> <p>Good. They fall under phrasal verbs. Our lesson today is about phrasal verbs which functions as interjections.</p>				
Presentation	<p>Grammar: Phrasal verbs used as interjections</p> <p>Phrasal verbs are verbs that are made of two parts; verb + preposition/adverb. Both words may form a meaning completely different from their initial meaning and may vary also in meaning in a different context.</p> <p>Look at this Examples:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Calm down</u> please! Your blood pressure will rise. (request) 2. <u>Go out!</u> You must be very silly by proposing such nonsense. (command, order) 3. Three of us couldn't <u>stand up against</u> the man. (displeasure) 4. Many say that women should <u>fight for</u> their rights. (disappointment) 5. My father <u>shouted at</u> me because I failed my exams. (anger, frustration) 6. <u>Sleep well!</u> The woman sang to her child. (desire, attitude) <p>All the underlined words are phrasal verbs but they function as interjections in these contexts. Their meanings are in the brackets.</p>				

Practice exercise	Now, ask students to give some phrasal verbs and describe their contextual meaning.				
Evaluation exercise	The instructor is to prepare and exercise for this purpose. Select the correct phrasal verb to complete the sentences (NB. the phrasal verbs may look alike but mean different in their context of usage).				

LESSON PLAN 6

Time: 1 Hour

Topic: Reading Comprehension passages

Objective: Students have been doing reading comprehension but here we will want them to do an orientation reading mainly focused on the usage of interjections and to answer questions that follow.

Read the following dialogue and answer questions that follow.

Marcel: **Hey!** Excuse me! Aren't you John?

Robert: No, but **emm!** I'm his brother.

Marcel: **Oops!** You look just like him. I'm Marcel, his childhood friend.

Robert: **Wow!** You are a man now **eh!**

Marcel: **Errr!** ... where is him now?

Robert: **Hmph!** He ... **emm** ... left us some years ago.

Marcel: To where?

Robert: I mean to say ... **emm!** ... **Eh!** ... He **passed away!**

Marcel: **Sorry!** Accept my sincere condolence. **Obviously!** He was a nice man.

Robert: **Really indeed!**

Marcel: **Ah ha!** Which way are you heading?

Robert: I'm going to the supermarket just down the next street.

Marcel: **Ah great then!** Let me drop you on my way.

Robert: I'm grateful.

Questions

1. The interjection 'hey' means: (a) you over there; (b) excuse me; (c) who are you? (d) Hello.

2. 'Emm!' shows: (a) appreciation; (b) disgust; (c) hesitation; (d) thinking.
3. In your own words what does 'oops' mean
.....
4. How does 'wow' and 'eh' related to each other in the sentence?
.....
.....
5. How does the first 'eh' and second 'eh' differ to each other?
.....
.....
6. 'Hmph!' represents: (a) anger; (b) pain; (c) regrets; (d) appreciation.
7. What type of verb is 'passed away'?
8. What part of speech does 'well', 'really', and 'great' represent?
9. What does Marcel mean when he says 'ah ha'? (a) agreement; (b) disapproval; (c) surprise; (d) dismay.

LESSON PLAN 7

Time: 1 hour

Topic: Listening comprehension text

Listen to the text as the teacher reads and answer the following questions.

Bang! bang! Was the knock that came from the neighbor! No one knew how many they were but screams of **help! Help!** Was all we could gather? **Oh, what a pity!** Even the police couldn't help. I think you know him **nah!** Let me describe him a bit. **Ehmmmm!** Do you know the famous trader who sells ... **mmmmm!** ... Motor-spares parts? **Aha!** The one who is fat and dark in complexion? **Oh my God!** He was such a kind-hearted man **eh!** **Oh dear!** I don't know why thieves always attack good people. **Chiah!** Only God knows why. You could see the blood **ehhh!** **Oh dear!** They mutilated him as if he wasn't human. **Aie!** This world is really unpredictable.

Questions. Choose the right answer

1. Bang! bang! Is the sound of? (a door, heating on someone, a gunshot)
2. Help!,help! Falls under which class of parts of speech? (adjective, verb, noun, adverb)
3. Ehmmmm! and mmmmm! Means? (thinking, happiness, hesitation)
4. What does eh! Mean in the context of usage? (agreeing, OK, regret, frustration)
5. Chiah! Means that.....? (Rejoicing, confusion, complaining, regret)

LESSON PLAN 8

Essay Writing

Objective: We have as our aim to expose students into using their intuition and application of interjections in context. They will be able to develop a vocabulary that surrounds interjections.

Lesson: You are a journalist reporting a live football match between Cameroon and Nigeria. Write down what your report will look like and additional marks will be awarded to candidates who will use as many interjections as possible.

CONCLUSION

The above overview of this article shows a whole lot of information on interjections. From this perspective, it is but normal that interjections can really be taught through a more efficient way using the CBA-RLS. The proposed sample lesson plans will equally open the understanding of both teachers and learners and provide resource and reference material for teaching the English interjections in our Cameroonian context.

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