

# Assessing the Awareness of English Foreign Language College Students in ' Vocatives'

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## 1- Introduction

Vocative case is considered as one of the seventh noun cases in modern English besides (nominative , genitive , dative , accusative , locative , and instrumental case). The term 'vocative' is mainly taken from 'voco' which means 'call' in Latin (Huddleston,1981:199 ; Balme,1996:11 ).This case is used ( in some inflected languages) when the referent of the noun is being addressed . The vocative case ( also called the fifth case)\* is the case used for a noun identifying the person ( animal , object , etc.) being addressed and / or occasionally the determiners of the noun. A vocative expression is an expression of direct address, wherein the identity of the party being spoken to is set forth expressly within a sentence ( Wikipedia Encyclopedia:1996,15). The )placed before a vocative case indicated in Arabic by the particle 'ya'(Arabic: noun. In English translations , this is often translated literally as 'O' instead of being omitted (Ibid.) . In this case the two languages , i.e. , Arabic and English , differ in the expression (s) used for a vocative . This element of the English language system is not studied thoroughly at college level. EFL Iraqi college students have no idea about the vocative case in English. Therefore, this study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1-What is the level of Iraqi EFL college students in recognizing the vocative case in English?
- 2-Are Iraqi EFL college students aware of the different types of vocative case in English?

So , this study aims at finding out the level of Iraqi EFL college students in recognizing the types of vocative case in English language . The following null hypothesis is posed:

The level of Iraqi EFL college students in recognizing the types of vocative case is below the theoretical mean .

To the best of the researcher's knowledge , no other study in Iraq has tackled the problem before .Therefore , it is necessary to fill the gap. It is hoped that the results of the present study will shed light on the real problems and difficulties as well as the level of the Iraqi EFL college students in dealing with this topic

## 2- Vocatives :

### 2-1 Definitions of the term:

Hornby (2000:959) defines vocative as " a form of a word used when addressing others".Crystal(1998:413) points out that in languages that express grammatical relations by means of inflexion , this term refers to the case form taken by a noun phrase ( often a single noun or a pronoun) when it is used in the function of address ( including both animate and inanimate entities).A vocative is usually a noun phrase , denoting the one or more persons to whom the sentence is addressed (you are a good  
\*According to the source used , it is considered as a fifth case man, Charlie Brown).(Greenbaum and Quirk , 1990:222).

An optional element whose function is to name the addressee of an utterance in order to attract his / her attention is named 'vocative' ( come off it , Harry?) ( dog, get out of.the house!) (Hasselgard and Johansson, 1999:35) . They ( Ibid.) add that the vocative case is easily distinguished from the nominative case, though , because a noun in the vocative is always set off from the rest of the sentence with commas and is often preceded by the interjection ( hey girls , give roses to the poets ).

## 2-2 Historical perspective :

Historically, the vocative case was an element of the Indo- European system of cases , and existed in Latin , Sanskrit, and Classical Greek . Although it has been lost by many modern Indo-European languages , some languages have retained the vocative case to this day . Examples are Modern Greek and Slavic languages such as Polish , Serbian , Bulgarian , and the modern Celtic languages such as Scottish, Gaelic and Irish . Among the Romance languages the vocative case was preserved in Romanian. It also occur in some non- Indo-European languages , such as Arabic , Chinese and Korean ( Wikipedia Encyclopedia ,1996 :2)

## 2-3 Kinds of vocatives :

Vocatives may occur in various positions in the sentence. Sentences[ 1- 3] show that a vocative may take initial , medial , or final position in the sentence.

- 1- John, are you coming?
- 2- Hello, Susan, how are you?
- 3- Questions are difficult, teacher.

They (vocatives) include names , titles , evaluative labels, the pronoun (you) and certain kinds of clauses : ( It's me, darling) (hello, Jerry, how are you?) ( you daft git, what do you mean? ) (honey, I shrank the kids), ( come in , ladies , and sit down) (Madam Speaker , I will give way). (Moore,2002:19).Greenbaum and Quirk(1990:222) point out that a vocative is either a (call), drawing the attention of the person or persons addressed, singling them out from others in hearing: ( Mark, dinner is ready) , or an ( address) , expressing the speaker's relation or attitude to the person or persons addressed : (my back is aching , doctor) .

Vocatives may be:

- a-Names , perhaps with a title : David, Dr. Turner.
- b-Standard appellatives, usually without modification :
  - i-Terms for family relationships :mother , uncle .
  - ii-Title of respect : madam , sir , my Lord , your Honour .
  - iii -Marker of status : Mr. President , Prime Minister , Father (for priest), professor .
- c- General nouns , often used in more specialized sense : ladies and gentlemen ,man , mate .
- d- The personal pronoun (you) is markedly impolite: (you , why haven't you finished yet?) .An indefinite pronoun: ( get me a knife, somebody) is abrupt.
- e- Nominal clauses ( very occasionally) : ( whoever said that , come out here).

It is possible to expand items (a), ( d) , (e) by the addition of modifiers or appositive elements of various kinds :young David , old man, young man , you boys , you chaps , you over there , my dear Mr. Johnson . Intonationally, the vocative is set off from the rest of the clause either by constituting a separate tone unit or by forming the tail of a tone unit. The most characteristic intonations are :(fall- rise ) for an initial vocative functioning as a call and (rise) for a vocative functioning as an address ( Ibid.).

## 4- Nouns : General observations

Nouns characteristically function as the head of a noun phrase, and these in turn may function as subject, object, predicative complement ( adjunct) (Collins and

Hollo,2000:28). Nouns can be singular or plural in number (cat, cats). Some nouns are one- of- a- kind names: Suez Canal, Elvis Presley, Empire State Building. Also called proper nouns , they are capitalized to set them off from general nouns. Sometimes adjectives are also capitalized . This normally happens when the adjective is made from proper noun, especially a place or person: American literature, English countryside, Elizabethan theater (Balme,1996:15). A proper noun is a word or phrase that is used as if it has a unique referent e.g., Noam Chomsky ( Fromkin et al.,2000:704). Traugott and Pratt (1980:201) add that a proper noun usually used as an addressed person's name is called a 'noun of address'. Common nouns name everything else , things that usually are not capitalized.In fact, proper nouns are basically names by which one understands the designation of specific people, places , and institutions. But as can be seen , names embrace both single- word nouns ( Tokyo) and quite lengthy phrases, often incorporating a definite article as part of the name with or without pre- modifying items( The Hague, The ( New York Times) . The concept of a name extends to some markers of time and to seasons which are also festivals (Easter ,March, Ramadan) (Greenbaum and Quirk,1990:91).Generally , the major difference between proper and common nouns : proper nouns do not follow determiners or occur in the plural ( Thomas and Kintgen ,1974:143) .

#### 4- Noun phrases:

Traugott and Pratt (1980:450) state that a constituent of a sentence consisting of at least a noun or pronoun and often also a determiner is the 'noun phrase' e.g., ( he , the witch, George).The noun phrase is the main construction which can be the (object, subject , or complement ) of a sentence. It must contain a noun or noun- like word that is the main element , and which is called the head( Hasselgard and Johansson ,1999:21).

#### 5 - Procedures of the study :

##### 1- Population and sample selection

The population includes Iraqi EFL college students majoring at the departments of English at the university of Baghdad that includes the following colleges: College of Arts , College of Languages , College of Education / Ibn Rushd , and Women College of Education . The sample is selected randomly from the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage college students at the college of Education / Ibn Rushd for the academic year 2005 /2006 . The total number of the sample is (70) male and female college students.

##### 2- Description of the test

The test includes two questions of the recognition type. Question one contains eight items , each allocates one mark if the response is correct and zero if the answer is incorrect . Question two also contains eight items with the same scoring scheme as followed in question one . The total score is sixteen . the items of both questions are taken from the following references:

- 1- (Greenbaum and Quirk ,1990)
- 2- (Moore,2002)

In order to find out the face validity of the test , the test is exposed to a number of experts\* in language teaching and linguistics who suggested the following :

1-The initial form of the test included one question of one type , but after the experts' recommendations the test is divided into two questions , eight items per question.

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- 1- Prof. Dr. Abdul Wahid Muhammed Muslit , College of languages.
- 2- Asst. Prof Dr. Abdul Hameed Nasser ,, College of languages.
- 3- Asst. Pro. Dr. Dhuha Atallah Al-Qaraghooly, College of Basic Education
- 4- Asst. Prof. Dr. Fatin Khairy Al- Rifaii , College of Education /Ibn Rushd

5- Instructor Dr. Abbas Lutfi , College of Education /Ibn Rushd

2-Some of the items are modified , others are omitted . Some spelling , grammatical and printing mistakes are avoided and corrected in the final form of the test.

After that the final form of the test is exposed to the same jurors who agreed its suitability. This agreement is calculated by the percentage , where it is found out to be 100% agreement.

Then the reliability coefficient is calculated by using the Kuder – Richardson formula 21. The coefficient is found out to be 0.82 which is considered acceptable according to Mehrens and Lehmann (1991:255).

Item analysis of the test is achieved by finding out the item difficulty level which ranged between 0.31- 0.73 , and item discriminating power which ranged between 0.40- 0.71 . The two ranges are considered acceptable according to Ebell (1972:399) .

The average time needed to answer the test is (20 minutes). The final administration of the test was in (May/2006 ) . The researcher supplied each testee with a sheet and then she explained some of the items , after that the testees are asked to answer the test . The sheets are collected by the researcher and then corrected to find out the final results by using one- sample t-test formula .

## 6- Results of the study:

The one sample t- test formula is used to calculate results which states the following :

$$t = \frac{\bar{X} - M}{S / \sqrt{N}} \quad (\text{Minium et al.,1999:235-238})$$

where:

$\bar{X}$ = the mean of the sample

M= the mean of the population

S= standard deviation of the sample

N= the sample size

It is obvious that the mean score of the testees in Q1 is 5.028 with a standard deviation of 1.049 and 69 degrees of freedom and a 0.05 level of significance . The computed t-test is 8.203. While the mean score of the testees in Q2 is 3.585 with a standard deviation of 1.221 and 69 degrees of freedom and a 0.05 level of significance . The computed t-test is found out to be -2.837. When the first computed t-test value compared to the table t-test which is 2, it shows that it is higher than the table one which means that the testees mean score is good and higher than the theoretical mean. But it is the opposite in Q2 for the table t-test value is higher than the computed one which is lower than the theoretical mean. This signifies that the testees level is very poor or weak.

As for the total mean score, it is found out to be 8.657 with a standard deviation of 1.433, and 69 degrees of freedom with 0.05 level of significance. The theoretical mean is found out to be 8. The computed t-test value is 3.836 while the table t-test value is 2 which shows that the value is statistically significant. This means that the testees level in answering the total test (Q1 and Q2 ) is good and acceptable . This result rejects the null hypothesis stated in this study because the level of the EFL college students in recognizing the types of vocative case is acceptable and not below the theoretical mean score (see the table below).

No. of Q	N	Mean	SD	Theoretical Mean	df	t-test		Level of significance
						Computed	table	
Q1	70	5.028	1.049	4	69	8.203	2	0.05
Q2		3.585	1.221	4		-2.837		
Total		8.657	1.433	8		3.836		

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## Appendix 1

**Q1/The underlined words are noun phrases. State whether they are a call or an address:**

- 1- Cat, milk is ready.
- 2- And that, my friends , concludes my speech.
- 3- Mother ,I feel sick and I can't go to school.
- 4- My Lord , I need your blessing.
- 5- People need your prospect , Mr. President.
- 6- Lady Margret , the party is finished.
- 7- You, with the red hair.
- 8- Get me a pen , somebody.

**Q2/Identify the vocative noun phrases whether they are:**

**(names/or with a title, terms for family relation, markers of status, title of respect, , abrupt indefinite pronouns, impolite personal pronouns, nominal clauses, general nouns used in more specialized senses).**

- 1- My back is aching , Dr. Johnson.
- 2- Uncle, I need your help.
- 3- You must forgive me, your Honour.
- 4- Professor, time is over.
- 5- Ladies and gentlemen, we will shortly be landed at the airport.
- 6- You guys, why don't you stop talking?
- 7- Stop this noise , everybody.
- 8- Whoever said that, come out here.