‘Vague Language’ in Spoken Discourse and Its Significance in TESOL

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1. Introduction

There are three main purposes in this study. The first is to give an overview of the literature of ‘vague language’ (hereafter VL). The second is to give examples and analysis of VL transcribed from authentic data. The last is to discuss the significance of VL in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) showing examples of VL found in contemporary course books.

‘Vague language’ is an interesting subject. The Japanese are well known for being vague and ambiguous. A number of researchers have observed and pointed out this characteristic. For example, Lewis (1999) lists as one of the characteristics of the Japanese that Americans “grumble about”, that “The Japanese use vague words and ambiguous expressions so that it is hard to know where they stand” (p. 38). Condon (1984) also remarks that Japanese are often seen to be ambiguous by others. His explanations for that is “Japanese is an ambiguous and vague language.” (P. 411).

However, Cutting (2007) remarks, “VL is a central feature of daily language in use, both spoken and written” (p. 3), and also reminds us of the need of VL for application in language teaching by referring to claims by other researchers such as Channell (1994), Jordan (1997), and Carter (2006).

Recognition of the role of VL has significance in English teaching in Japan. For example, although the students the author teaches at universities in northern Japan already have good basic knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary, most of them feel their communication skills in English are inadequate. It may be due to not only lack of vocabulary or fluency but also due to the difference in conversation strategies between the Japanese language and the English language. Incorporating VL in English teaching may enable learners to produce English that is more natural and to have more confidence in their communication abilities.

2. Literature overview

2.1 Introduction

In this section, an overview of ‘vague language’ is presented including the literature on its history, interpretation and the Cooperative Principle advocated by Grice (1975), which influenced the studies of VL. This section also aims at discussing social functions of VL.

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1 This paper was written as part of the author’s master’s study and was revised to submit to this journal.
2. 2 History of the studies of ‘vague language’
Although Channell (1994) draws attention to the fact that Ullmann (1962) dates the notion of vagueness in language as early as Plato, she considers that Peirce (1902), who defines the notion thus, is the first to characterise it:

A proposition is vague where there are possible states of things concerning which it is intrinsically uncertain whether, had they been contemplated by the speaker, he would have regarded them as excluded or allowed by the proposition... (p. 748)

Cutting (2007) offers another perspective in the history of studies of VL. According to her, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, although theorists were aware of the social dimension of ‘implicitness’, which she differentiates from VL, language itself was not examined in detail for vagueness. She comments it was in the 1990s when researchers started to see VL “as a central aspect of the communicative competence of the native speaker of English” (2007, P. 4).

2. 3 Description of ‘vague language’
Carter & McCarthy (2006) describe VL in the following manner:

Being vague is an important feature of interpersonal meaning and is especially common in everyday conversation... There are times where it is necessary to give accurate and precise information; in many informal contexts, however, speakers prefer to convey information which is softened in some way... Vagueness is motivated and purposeful and is often a mark of the sensitivity and skill of a speaker... (p. 202)

According to Channell (1994), VL has been an interesting aspect of language use in various disciplines such as literacy criticism, linguistics, psychology and philosophy. She points out that there are two contradictory perspectives on VL. One is that VL is a good thing and the other is the opposite. She explains that those who criticise VL claim that the lack of precision of VL creates the “feeling of inadequacy of language to express thought” (1994, P. 5). However, those who support the notion of VL claim that vagueness is an advantage among poets and creative writers and adds special features and effects in their work. Crystal and Davy (1975) in Channell (1994) state, “Lack of precision is one of the most important features of the vocabulary of informal conversation” (p. 8). In the recent corpus-based study of Jucker, Smith and Lüdge (2003), they say vague expressions are “not just a poor substitution for a precise expression. Rather they often convey meaning that is different from, and more relevant than a precise expression would. In their words, VL helps “guide the hearer towards the best interpretation of the speaker’s intention” (p. 1766).

The following table shows the classification and examples of VL given by Channell (1994)
Table 1. ‘Vague language’ classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximating quantities with numbers and ‘approximators’</th>
<th>about ten pages, around twenty people, approximately 2.5 tons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using ‘approximators’</td>
<td>five or six articles, eighty or so pence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using ‘partial specifiers’</td>
<td>at least, more than, over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination of ‘approximators’</td>
<td>It’s about sevenish or a bit later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximating quantities with round numbers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a precise number with a vague meaning</td>
<td>Sam is six feet tall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using ‘round’ numbers as reference point numbers</td>
<td>(No example is given.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using ‘faded’ numbers as approximations</td>
<td>He met her a couple of years ago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exaggeration</td>
<td>A million students came to see me today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a plural number name to approximate a quantity</td>
<td>I’ve told him thousands of times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximating quantities with non-numerical vague quantifiers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For quantity</td>
<td>lots of, bags of, a touch of, some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency adverbs</td>
<td>always, often, sometimes, seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedges</td>
<td>a bit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring vaguely to categories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using or</td>
<td>or something, or stuff like that, or whatever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using and</td>
<td>and so on, and all that, and everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placeholder words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thingy, whatsitsname.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Channell (1994) also mentions the work by Crystal and Davy (1975) and presents their ideas of the use of prefixes and suffixes (e.g. The mountain is rather *table-like*) as part of VL. Although she also notes the use of ‘hedges’, which seem to fall under non-numerical vague quantifiers category (such as a *bit* better), expressions such as *I think…and it seemed that*…, do not seem to fall under any of the categories. It may be due to various definitions of ‘hedges’ among researchers. For example, for Carter and McCarthy (2006), hedging is “*a linguistic strategy used to avoid sounding too authoritative or direct…*” (p. 906). Yule (1996) defines “hedges” as “*cautious notes expressed about how an utterance is to be taken*, e.g. ‘*as far as I know*’ used when giving *some information*” (p. 38). In explaining the function of a ‘hedge’, Jucker, Smith and Lüdge (2003) say, “*A hedge might be used to indicate that the degree of interpretive resemblance is not as close as the hearer might otherwise expect*” (p. 1746). Yule (1996) also explains that this type of language is used as the speaker is conscious of the notion of *quantity* and *quality* maxims, elements of the Cooperative Principle proposed by Grice (1975), which will be explained in the next section.

2. 4 The Cooperative Principle

Grice coined the term ‘Cooperative Principle’ (1975) proposing the idea that interlocutors make cooperative efforts in conversation aiming at common purposes or accepted direction. Below is a table that explains four maxims of his ‘Cooperative Principle’.

**Table 2. Maxims of Grice’ s ‘Cooperative Principle’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maxim</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *Quantity* | 1 Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purpose of exchange).  
2 Do not make your contribution more informative than required. |
| *Quality* | 1 Do not say what you believe to be false.  
2 Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. |
| *Relation* | Be relevant |
| *Manner* | 1 Avoid obscurity  
2 Avoid ambiguity  
3 Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).  
4 Be orderly. |

Channell (1994) explains that in one way, VL is used to follow the maxims. For example, if someone asks what time she is expected to be home from work, and if she genuinely does not know because of traffic conditions or work demands, she would say ‘around six o’clock’ follow-
ing the maxim of quality.

She further explains that VL is also used when one of the maxims is flouted. Here is the example of a quantity violation Channell (1994, p. 33) uses to explain the above notion.

[paper reporting informant work at a linguistics conference]
We’ve got about five or six of them but I’m only going to talk about three of them today.

Channell’s (1994) interpretation of this is “this is not important, what counts is to focus you on the three people I am going to talk about” (p. 33). Channell stipulates that for this linguist, it was possible to give the exact figure of the informants following the maxim of quantity given his position.

2. 5 Functions of ‘vague language’
Channell (1994) lists the following as the communicative purposes and situations of VL.
- Giving the right amount of information
- Deliberately withholding information
- Using language persuasively
- Lexical gaps
- Lacking specific information
- Displacement
- Self-protection
- Power and politeness
- Informality and atmosphere
- Women’ s language

Carter and McCarthy (1997) also point out that vague expressions are common in spoken discourse especially in informal contexts, and are used to avoid sounding too authoritative and assertive. They also explain “vague expressions such as sort of and kind of also serve to allow the speakers not to commit themselves completely to the truth value of a proposition” (p. 19).

3. Transcription and analysis of authentic spoken data
(The full transcription is provided in the appendix.)

3. 1 Introduction
In this section, examples of ‘vague language’ identified from transcribed data are presented along with analysis in the framework introduced in the previous section. The spoken data analysed in this study was chosen from a You Tube video clip.

3. 2 Description of the data
The video clip is a segment of a CNN interview of a famous Japanese pop musician, Hikaru Utada, who was just making a debut in the U.S. Utada is bilingual, having grown up both in the
United States and in Japan.

3.3 Discussion of ‘vague language’ identified in the data

One of the most noticeable features in Utada’s talk is the use of ‘like’. Cameron (1997) observes that the functions of ‘like’ in young American’s English is “complex and multiple, and may include the cooperative, mitigating/face protecting functions that Coates and Janet Holmes (1984) associate with hedging” (p. 450). Jucker, Smith and Lüdge (2003) state, “Similar to ‘kind of’, ‘like’ is often used as a hedge in our corpus, and in many cases the two hedges reinforce each other” (p. 1747). Their corpus-based research also shows that ‘like’ can act as a number approximator such as ‘about’ and ‘around’. Carter and McCarthy (2006) explain several functions of ‘like’ as follows: functions as similar to an adjective, conjunction, function to focus attention, giving and requesting examples and analogy, as a ‘filler’ and as a discourse marker. Here is the analysis of ‘like’ in Utada’s utterances.

Table 3. Analysis of ‘like’ in Utada’s utterances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line no.</th>
<th>Identified ‘vague language’ (underlined)</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I just walk down in like half pyjamas</td>
<td>This is a combination of VL, ‘like’ and ‘half’. Using Channell’s (1994) term, this ‘like’ is ‘referring vaguely to categories’ (p. 18). The use of ‘half’ is discussed in Table 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–12</td>
<td>but I’m really not like a pop sensation kind of person</td>
<td>This ‘like’ seems to have a mitigating effect. She is trying to disagree with the interviewer’s comment in a soft way, especially with the combination of ‘really not’ that follows it, which itself is considered as a hedge according to Carter &amp; McCarthy (2006).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14–15</td>
<td>I’m just like the anti-diva</td>
<td>The first ‘like’ is being used to soften the expression, so as not to offend singers who are considered divas. The second one is being used in a similar manner to the one in line 8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>most of my work is done like behind closed doors and like_bathrobe</td>
<td>These are being used in a similar manner as the one in line 8, ‘referring vaguely to categories’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One noticeable feature in some of the usage of 'like' in this data is hard to classify under a particular category, as it appears to have more than one function. Jucker, Smith and Lüdge (2003) point out the informality of the use of 'like', "which may in itself convey social implications" (p. 1759). Utada’s frequent use of 'like' contributes to her image of being informal and friendly, which may be how she is hoping to be seen by others as ‘anti-diva’.

Other examples of VL identified in the data are analysed according to Channell’s (1994) classification and presented in the table below.

Table 4. Other ‘vague language’ identified in the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line no.</th>
<th>Identified ‘vague language’ (underlined)</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>you are <strong>basically like</strong>, Britney Spears</td>
<td>Carter and McCarthy (2006) classify ‘basically’ as a ‘stance marker’ and does not fall under the VL category. However, the word ‘basically’ here may have a connotation similar to ‘roughly speaking’, or opposite to ‘exactly’. Therefore, this looks very much like a combination of VL, ‘basically’ and ‘like’, which reinforce each other. Utada is yet unknown in the U.S., the interviewer is probably trying to introduce her to the U.S. audience using the well-known figure in the U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>everybody knows who you are</td>
<td>This is used as an exaggeration. The hearer should understand the implied meaning, that is, Utada is very well known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>you have a <strong>million</strong> fans.</td>
<td>This is an example of approximating quantities with round numbers. It can also be said that it is an exaggeration. What is meant here is that Utada is extremely popular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>nobody even knows who you are.</td>
<td>This is the same type of usage as ‘everybody’ in line 5, except it has an opposite meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I just walk down in like half</td>
<td>As noted in Table 3, this is a combination of VL,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pyjamas</td>
<td>‘like’ and ‘half’. Carter &amp; McCarthy (2006) defines the word ‘half’ as one of the indefinite quantifying pronouns. There seems to be an ellipsis of ‘pyjamas or something like that’. The implication is that she wears something very casual.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>No, actually it’s not that different for me</td>
<td>According to Carter and McCarthy (2006), “Actually is often used to hedge statements, making them less direct or less threatening” (p. 29). They also note ‘not’ accompanied by words such as actually, necessary, really or very function as hedging “to soften the force of the negative and to sound more polite or sensitive” (2006, p. 743). Although the expression used here is ‘not that different’, it appears to have a similar discoursal effect to what is explained above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Well presumably you may start to get noticed be noticed here,</td>
<td>Carter and McCarthy (2006) list ‘presumably’ as a hedge. Modality is also part of hedging according to them (ibid.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>for the 17 million albums</td>
<td>This is a use of a ‘round’ number as a reference point number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–22</td>
<td>Well it’s more… I do much more with it now like I’m not singing as the last process in it, and I do it myself</td>
<td>‘It’s more’ is acting to fill in a lexical gap while she is searching for an appropriate expression. ‘I do much more with it now like’ is an interesting combination of several VL, ‘do’, ‘much’ ‘more’, ‘it’, and ‘like’. Utada is trying to stress that she is different from other generic pop singers in the U.S., but at the same time, she is trying to show her humility by being vague. As Gao and Zhu (2005): suggest, “Inexplicitness is one form of demonstrating vagueness. Ellipsis, substitution, deixis, or references are the forms of showing implicitness” (p. 42). In this particular utterance, ‘do’ probably indicates working on music related business. ‘much’ and ‘more’ are approximating quantity. The deixis ‘it’ probably indicates her music work in general. ‘Like’ is acting as filler.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I produce everything and put it in together</td>
<td>‘Everything’ is acting in a similar way as ‘everybody’ in line 5. The phrasal verb ‘put it in’ is referring to her music work in a non-specific way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line</td>
<td>Phrase</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-32</td>
<td>most of my work</td>
<td>This phrase is approximating quantity with non-numerical vague quantifier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>with a laptop, and a few different gears</td>
<td>According to Carter and McCarthy (2006), VL is described as words and phrases ‘which deliberately refer to people and things in non-precise way’ (p. 928). Following this description, I would include ‘gears’ used here in VL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>a lot of young pop stars</td>
<td>As ‘most of’ in line 25, this phrase is also approximating quantity with non-numerical vague quantifier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>the performers and singers don’t [&lt;S02&gt; yeah] do much else</td>
<td>This is also approximating quantity with non-numerical vague quantifier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I don’t really relate to the, the pop pop stars here with this… ’cause</td>
<td>This is the similar use to ‘not that different’ in line 10. It sounds like Utada is trying to both fill in a lexical gap by the use of the deixis ‘this’ as well as by being vague to be polite.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-37</td>
<td>I-I guess they just mean, ....but um mean um that, ....popularity-wise I am as well-known</td>
<td>This whole phrase is acting as a hedge with the use of ‘I guess’ and ‘they just mean’. According to Carter and McCarthy (2006) ‘just’ softens utterances in spoken English. What is meant here is that it is not the style of music, but the level of her popularity compared to that of the American pop stars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>I listen to pop radio, and I don’t really get.</td>
<td>This is the similar use to ‘not that different’ in line 10 and 31.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Conclusion

It was quite surprising to identify as much VL as shown in Table 4 in such a short segment of the spoken data. As some researchers claim, VL is very common in spoken discourse and seems to be used for strategic reasons. Jucker, Smith and Lüdke (2003) assert, “Vague expressions may be more effective than precise ones in conveying the intended meaning of an utterance. That is they may carry more relevant contextual implications than would a precise expression” (p. 1737). For example, if the interviewer had said, “Many people know you”, instead of “Everybody knows you”, it would not have had the same effect to imply Utada’s popularity. Jucker, Smith and Lüdke (2003) also refer to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness strategy, and use of hedges to reduce the force of face threatening speech acts. To the author, Utada’s VL gives the appearance of an attempt to stay humble while making a debut in the U.S., as well as trying to distinguish herself from American pop stars and to show her identity.
4. ‘Vague language’ and TESOL

4.1 Comparison of ‘vague language’ in Touchstone and Utada’s utterances

Some textbooks published recently have started including VL. One factor is as McCarthy (2001) points out, “Discourse analysis has become prominent in language teaching in recent years because teachers feel the need to address certain preoccupations in their professional practice” (p. 53). For example, there is more emphasis than before on teaching spoken English as communicative language teaching (CLT) has gained more recognition in recent years. Although traditional language teaching placed more focus on written language, which is regarded as more formal, it does not necessarily apply in teaching daily spoken English. Another factor concerning this may be the recent trend in using corpora to analyse discourse to be included in English teaching materials. As Tomlinson (2001) reports, “More books are now making use of corpus data reflecting actual language use rather than using idealised input” (p. 69). One example reflecting this phenomenon is the Touchstone series (McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford, 2005). In the book review of Touchstone, Bennett and Bricker (2006) write, “In the past 20 years, corpus linguistics has expanded rapidly in the areas of second language research and teaching... Touchstone is one of the first integrated textbook series to be based on corpus studies”.

The table below shows the examples of ‘vague language’ introduced in the Touchstone series that correspond to expressions identified in Utada’s utterances.

Table 5. Comparison of ‘vague language’ in Touchstone and Utada’s utterances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Introduced ‘vague language’</th>
<th>Explanations given with the language</th>
<th>Corresponding expressions in Utada’s utterances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A: So you’re American? B: Well, actually, I’m from Canada.</td>
<td>“You can also use actually to correct things people say and think.” (p. 7)</td>
<td>No. actually it’s not that different for me (line 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I don’t really have time for hobbies.</td>
<td>“You can use really to make statements stronger and to make negative statements softer. Not really can also be a polite way to answer no” (p. 17).</td>
<td>I don’t really relate to the, the pop pop stars here (line 31)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is a noteworthy that this series contains some VL which corresponds to the expressions uttered by Utada during this short segment of the interview. From this, one can say the series does reflect on the real use of spoken English as Bennett and Bricker (2006) write in their review, “The most notable advantage is that the text is able to focus on grammatical structures used in conversation, something not often presented in other texts...” In teaching spoken English, it is challenging to incorporate explicit grammar. As there are many aspects in language learning, it is common to have various classes and textbooks focussing on selected elements of language learning, such as grammar, vocabulary, listening, writing, speaking and etc. *Touchstone* seems to cover comprehensive areas of language learning.

4.2 Significance of ‘vague language’ in TESOL

As observed in 1.1, VL can help learners produce English that is more natural. Brown in Channell (1994) suggests ‘learning to be imprecise’ as one aspect of acquiring a second language as learners can often sound ‘bookish and pedantic’ (p. 204). This could be improved by being aware of VL use in the target language. Channell (1994) also makes the point that “learners of English need to gain an understanding of how vagueness expresses politeness” (p. 205). In Japanese culture, being polite and respectful is highly valued. If Japanese learners of English are aware that VL is used to be polite, it will be a great motivation for Japanese learners to learn to produce English that sounds more natural and polite. Leech, who expanded and developed Grice’s idea of the ‘Cooperative Principle’ (1975) in his book of *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983), claims in his more recently published journal article (2005) as follows. “…There is no absolute divide between East and West politeness... All polite communication implies that the speaker is taking account of both individual and group values. In the East, the group values are more powerful, whereas in the West, individual values are” (pp. 3–4).

5. Conclusion

VL can be observed and studied across cultures, gender and different social contexts. Cutting (2007) sees its application in various fields such as L1 performance in schools, second language acquisition, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), forensic linguistics, clinical pragmatics, counselling, law and especially in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). The questions she raises are: “What should learners of English as a foreign language be taught to use?” and “What should learners be taught not to use?” (2007, p. 10). These questions are key questions to be always considered in language teaching. Using authentic materials such as the video clip analysed in this study might be interesting. However, one needs to consider whether it is important for...
learners to be able to use, for example, ‘like’ as in Utada’s speech. It may be sufficient to be aware of the pragmatic diversity of the word, and be taught to understand it.

Kasper (1997) suggests that adult learners already have L1 pragmatic knowledge that is universal and transferable into L2 language. In the author’s view, language teachers also need to be aware of cross-cultural pragmatic differences in Japanese and English even in politeness strategy. Gao (2005) refers to March (1996) to remind us of a symbolic episode:

For example, in 1969, President Nixon asked Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku Sato to impose quotas on textile exports in exchange for the return of Okinawa. Sato replied, “Zensho shimatsu”, which can mean “I’ll take a proper step” or “I’ll take a favourable action”, Sato means “no”; but Nixon’s translators heard “yes” (p. 30).

This episode illustrates the difficulty of understanding cultural differences seen in language use, even for competent professional interpreters. Yule (1996) reminds us of “substantial differences that can exist cross-culturally” (p. 88).

VL in TESOL is meaningful as it serves to fulfil various communicative functions in everyday spoken discourse. However, it needs to be taught in consideration of cultural issues, balance between natural spoken discourse and abuse of certain expressions such as ‘like’ in Utada’s speech, which can make learners sound rather informal and unintelligent. Although VL might not become the centre of English education in Japan, it should certainly start gaining more attention as more corpus-based materials get developed and demand for learning more practical English increases.

References


Appendix

CNN Interview—An extract from a ‘You Tube’ video clip
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTJUVFMggg4
Accessed May 28, 2009
Transcription conventions follow Schiffrin’s model (1987).
- falling intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at the end of declarative sentence)
- rising intonation followed by noticeable pause (as at the end of interrogative sentence)
- continuing intonation: maybe slight rise or fall in contour (less than “.” or “?”; maybe followed by a pause (shorter than “.” or “?”))

...noticeable pause or break in rhythm without falling intonation (each half-second pause is marked as measured by stopwatch)
- self interruption with glottal stop
  italics emphatic stress
[ ] overlap
z When speech from B follows speech A without perceptible pause, z links the end of A with the beginning of B.

<S01> Interviewer
<S02> Hikaru Utada

1 <S01> Joining me now Utada, thanks so much for coming on the programme z
2 <S02> Thanks for having me,
3 <S01> So what I love about your story, is that in Japan you are, you’re basically
4 like, Britney Spears [<S02> laughs] when you walk down the street
5 everybody knows who you are you have a million fans, you grew up half in
6 New York and half in Japan [<S02> yeah] and you come here, and you can
7 go for coffee with your friends and nobody even knows who you are.
8 <S02> Yeah, I just walk down in like half pyjamas and, no one cares,
9 <S01> Is that funny for you to have these two completely different lives?
10 <S02> No. actually it’s not that different for me because I don’t-I am really-I saw 11 you earlier saying pop Japanese pop sensations, but I’m really not like a pop 12 sensation kind of person,
13 <S01> [Ah, huh]
14 <S02> [(laughs)] You know look at me, (laugh) I’m not really I’m just like the
15 anti-diva. [<S01> Ah, huh] so even in Tokyo I just go around in
16 like jeans and sneakers, like-and I don’t get noticed that often.
17 <S01> Well presumably you may start to get noticed-be noticed here, even if not in 18 Japan for the 17 million albums because you are having this, debut here, I
19 wanna know how are you changing your music, are you changing your
20 music at all or style..for the US audience?
21 <S02> Well, it’s more. I do much more with it now like. I’m not singing as the last 22 process in it, and I do it myself because I don’t have another singer do it for
23 me, [<S01> mm, hm] to sing in the way I want them to sing it, but..I do the
24 writing and arranging, and I produce everything and put it in together, so it’s
25 more like..most of my work is done, like in my house with the computer

— 22 —
with a laptop, and a few different gears and z
27<S01>  [That’s interesting]
28<S02>  [and wires] z
29<S01>  That’s different from a lot of young pop stars here who are actually are, are
30  the performers and singers don’t [<S02> yeah] do much else z
31<S02>  I can’t-I don’t really relate to the, the pop pop stars here with this... ‘cause 32
33<S01>  What what do you feel then when people I heard you are compared to
34  Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera. [<S02> Well] What’s your reaction 35
to that?
36<S02>  I-I guess they just mean.....but um mean um that.....popularity wise..I am as
37  well-known, as they are in America in Japan z
38<S01>  Mm. hm, but you think [<S02> but] similarities aren’t there z
39<S02>  It’s it’s very different. ‘cause I I listen to pop radio, and I don’t really get.
40  [<S01> right] um anymore..