

UTTERANCES by Beverly Bremers

Everyone is familiar with the expression, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Well, in voiceovers, an utterance can be worth a lot, too. A well-placed, spontaneous sigh, laugh, shout, yawn, cough, grunt, gasp, groan, cry, or scream can enhance a performance way beyond the words and raise it to a more individual, exciting and interesting level. So much can be communicated through the little noises we can make because it's what we do in real life. Hmmmõ .yesõ ah-ha!

Most voice actors know the value of utterances in animation. Who hasn't seen scripts written with "Oomph!"; "Huh?"; "W/haaa?"; "Ahh!"; "Hey!"; "Oohh!"; and "Arrg!" peppered throughout? Characters trip, fall, get confused, run, jump, dance, wiggle, squirm, react to jokes & actions, fall in love, and do all sorts of other physical activities that require utterances, generally known as *Walla*. How weird would it be to see a cartoon, game, or other animated project and not hear these vocalizations? Yikes!

But what about all the other kinds of voiceovers we're asked to do? Commercials, infomercials, industrials, documentaries, phone apps, audiobooks, even telephony are filled with "real" people talking - not reading, talking. As if they're speaking off the tops of their heads. Not scripted or planned in advance. Just telling stories, giving explanations, or talking about people, places, or things in their lives. You read and sound like you're reading! Huh? "How do you do that?" you ask. Utterances. Exclamations that are not written on the paper, but are spontaneous feelings and reactions. Simple in concept, but not always easy to do. You must have confidence in yourself and allow these sounds to spew naturally from your mouth. Trust your impulses. Woah! Oh, yeah!

Generally, we live our lives on a day-to-day basis, without planning what we're going to say as we go about our days and nights, and speak and react to events and communications as they occur. Yes, every once in a while, we do plan what we're going to say in an interview, on a date, or to our boss, but we mostly play it by ear. We improvise. And when we do that, we have to think on our feet, put together our thoughts and feelings into words and sentences as we go. The structure and pace is willy-nilly and sporadic. So, the words don't come out smoothly, or even prettily. We pause. We stretch out our words. We throw in short phrases. We make noises. As we ponder what we're going to say and how we're going to say it, our delivery comes out uneven, bursting and flowing in varying rhythms and volumes, and accompanied by exclamations and little noises not defined or classified as official language. Therefore, when you're reading a script, if you allow these utterances to escape spontaneously. voila! It comes out real, natural, and conversational. Just the way the director had requested. And unique to you - special. Doesn't that sound great? Mmmmm - hmmmm! Holy Cow! (Sorry, I couldn't resist)