Electronic Voice Phenomena

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1. What is EVP?

☐ **Definition**

Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) are anomalous, intelligible speech produced in electronic devices.

☐ **History**

☼ Thomas Edison experimented in EVP, and was reported to have been working on a "Telephone to the Dead" shortly before his death.

☼ Attila von Szalay began recording EVP on phonograph records in 1936.

☼ In 1959 Friedrich Jürgenson, a Russian born Swedish film producer, after recording birdsong on his tape recorder, heard on playback what appeared to be a human voice. Subsequent recordings contained a message which seemed to be coming from his dead mother.

2. Types of EVP

☐ **Transform EVP:** Traditionally EVP formation has involved the transformation of available audio-frequency energy into voice, which is thought to occur in the electronic equipment. Current Best Practices involve the use of unmodulated noise, such as supplied by a fan, but most EVP are recorded today using a digital voice recorder, and the device tends to provide ample noise for voice formation during normal operation.

☐ **Random Selection:** This depends on a random process which is thought to be influenced by the communicating entity. In the application known as EVPMaker. A pre-recorded sound file containing voice is stored in a buffer, and then a random process selects segments of the stored file from the buffer to produce a new audio file.

☐ **Environmental control of speech synthesis:** A new approach to EVP has been the use of environmental energy sensors to control the operation of a speech synthesis process. In the Paranormal Puck, this is accomplished by sensing environmental electromagnetic, temperature, magnetism or electrical changes around the device. The device connects to a computer via a USB cable and the computer has a supplied program that uses the sensor information to control a micro-chip in the peripheral device to produce voice.

☐ **What is probably not EVP:** The technology that comes up most often is radio sweep, and in one case study authored by Tom Butler of AA-EVP, he reports that it probably does not produce EVP as it is reported. There are clearly instances in which the noise produced by rapidly sweeping radio stations is used to produce transform EVP when the sweep output is recorded. The radio sweep process may be beneficial as an aid to the operator's intuitive understanding of the question.

3. Theories

☐ **Radio signals:** Probably the most obvious explanation is that the voices are recordings of stray radio signals. Inexpensive electronic equipment designed to handle audio signals are designed with "unbalanced" input and output ports, poorly shielded circuitry and what amounts to a "floating ground" in portable equipment.

☐ **Unnoticed conversations:** Simple content analysis is usually sufficient to establish that the utterance in question is unlikely to be cross-talk or unnoticed voices from people in the room.

☐ **Imagination of the experiencer:** This is an important possible explanation for any form of phenomena involving unexpected sounds, images or events. Modern technology is capable of producing such a wide variety of unexpected results, often referred to as mundane artifacts, and a person can easily mistake an artifact as phenomenal unless the experiencer is an expert in the use of that technology.

☐ **Thoughts of the experimenter:** Once the possible explanations that would prove the voices to be mundane have been dispensed with, there remains the possibility that the voices are phenomenal, etheric-to-physical influences, but that they are caused by a physical person. It is here that the argument changes from if EVP is real to who is talking.

☐ **EVP are "echoes of the past" or residual energy:** The Quantum-Holographic hypothesis has been proposed to explain the origin of consciousness, meaning that the personality has a biological origin and the information being accessed via EVP and the other forms of apparent etheric-to-physical influences are either caused by the experimenter or some other physical agent, or a form of residual energy described by physicist David Bohm and neurophysiologist Karl Pribram as a field of energy that underlies all of reality.

☐ **Cultural Influence:** A theory that is gaining in acceptance is that the voices are phenomenally formed, and may be initiated by a discarnate entity, but that the utterances may also be considerably influenced by the practitioner or an interested observer. This theory is based on the hypothesis that the message is formed via a mind-to-mind exchange of information via the etheric aspect of the practitioner and the etheric entity.

☐ **EVP are imitated by etheric entities:** The primary hypothesis for this is the Survival Hypothesis, in which the personality is thought to have evolved from "outside" of the physical aspect of reality. In this theory, the personality becomes entangled with the physical body at the time of the birth of the physical body. When the physical body is no longer able to support "life" the personality is released to once again associate itself with the greater reality.

4. Recording

☐ **Recording Equipment**—Any device capable of recording voice frequency sound. A computer is recommended and a way to transfer audio from the recording device to the computer. The computer can also be used as the initial recorder. Also, the computer should be equipped with an audio management program, such as the open source, Audacity. It is possible to use just the audio recorder, as experimenters have always done before the advent of personal computing, but again, this set of instructions is designed to offer the best chance of success.

☐ **Analog Voice Recorders**
Analog voice recorders (cassette or microcassette) have largely been replaced by digital voice recorders, but are still used by some investigators. Analog recorders will require a patch cable to transfer audio to a computer. It is recommended that an external microphone be used with an analog recorder to reduce the effect of internal mechanical noise.

☐ **Digital Voice Recorders**
Digital voice recorders are recommended for EVP experiments. Today, all sound tracks—digital or analog—should be listened to in a computer and with a headset. Unlike tape recorders, the built-in microphone is usually satisfactory for EVP. A DVR that does not have a computer interface will require a patch cable to transfer audio to a computer.

☐ **Video Recorders**
Video recorders are also capable of producing EVP on their sound track. The same techniques discussed for analog recorders generally apply to video recorders.

☐ **Computer Recording**
A computer instead of a digital recorder can be used for recording EVP. It should have an audio input jack, speakers, headphone jack and sound recorder/player application such as Audacity. Most experimenters use the computer to analyze and store examples. If the recorder does not have a USB interface, it is possible to play the recording into the computer while recording with a recorder program. The Earphone jack of the recorder can be connected to the Microphone or Line 1 jack via a patch cable. The sound source should be set to the correct jack via the pull-down menu in Audacity. Recording with a sample rate of 11025, mono and 16 bit resolution is sufficient for EVP. Files should be edited as *.wav format, but shared as *.mp3. Make a couple of trial passes first to set levels correctly.

☐ **Technique**
Recording devices should not be held in the hand if at all possible. Involuntary contractions of the hand and fingers can introduce other mechanical noises into the microphone. Neither should the recorder be placed on a surface that is subject to vibrations from nearby appliances or other potential sources of anomalous noises. Some researches have constructed tripod-mounted padded recorder mounts using blocks of foam. The microphone should have as clear a "view" of the area of the session as possible. It is usually best to position the recorder so the microphone is pointing upwards towards the ceiling, if possible, for best omnidirectional response.

☼ Automatic Voice Recording, otherwise known as VOX, is an increasingly common feature on DVRs, computer software, and some analog recorders. It should be used with caution; although it can dramatically reduce the length of a recording, in a quiet environment it may not be sensitive enough to capture faint EVP events.

☐ **Background Sound Source**—Research has shown that for transform EVP, the entities use sounds in the environment to help form the words. Most recording situations have some background sounds, but it may be necessary to add noise with something like a fan or running water. Some people use foreign language radio, crowd babble or audio tapes, but the use of radio static or live voice of any form is discouraged by some experts.

☼ **Frank's Box/Ghost Box**
A new trend in EVP is the "Frank's Box", created by Frank Sumption. The box uses a scanning AM or FM broadcast radio assembled into a unit with batteries, microphone, speaker, and some support circuitry. The random sounds and pieces of words produced by this device are thought to produce the raw acoustic material that enables the spirits to produce intelligible voice. As well as it's use in EVP recording, it is touted as a real-time communications device similar in purpose to Edison's "Telephone to the Dead". Recently, several models of inexpensive portable scanning digital radios have been discovered to be easily modified to emulate the scanning function of the original Frank's Box. The subject is still highly controversial, and although worthy of investigation, should not be relied upon as the only source of EVP material. Some reports seem to indicate that results obtained are more dependent on who is operating the box than the box itself, indicating a Mediumistic relationship between the operator and the spirits.

5. Analyzing the Recording for EVP

☐ **Playback**—In transform EVP, the voice is usually not heard until playback. Experimenters report that the voices tend to become stronger and clearer as the entities gain in experience, but at first the voices may speak in whispers. Voices may not be recorded in every session and it may take several sessions to discover the first voice. Hearing the voices is a learned ability. It might take thirty minutes to examine a three or four minute recording.

☐ **Classes of Voices**—**Class A** voice can be heard and understood over a speaker by most people. **Class B** voice can be heard over a speaker, but not everyone will agree as to what is said. **Class C** can only be heard with headphones and is difficult to understand. Class B or C voices may have one or two clearly understood words. Loud does not equal Class A.

☐ Always use headphones when listening to the recording in a computer. The earmuff style that completely covers the ear is best, but also good are the soft rubber ear buds that are inserted in the channel of the ear.

☐ Assuming a digital recorder is used, the voice is digitized right after it is limited to the required signal strength coming from the input amplifier. If it is necessary to record the sound file into the computer via an audio cable, the signal is turned back into analog, and then digitized again by the computer. There is little or no evidence that an EVP will be changed while in a digital format, but it is possible for change or even new utterance while transferring in the analog phase.

☐ It is possible to reasonably reproduce the average human voice with a sample rate of 8,000 KHz, so it is recommended that the audio file be saved into the computer as a 11025 KHz sample rate, 16 bit word file. Mono or stereo is a personal choice. Once the audio file is in the computer, it should be saved as a *.wav file for storage and editing.

☐ Current best practice for sharing an EVP example on the Internet is to convert the file to mono, *.mp3 format, but using editing tools on mp3 is discouraged.

☐ It is also best practice to provide a raw clip of the EVP, along with a bit of your voice for reference, if possible, followed by a short silence and then the whole clip again with any editing you may have done. Explain what you have done so that your listener will know what to expect.

☐ Ten decibels or so of amplification, perhaps a little noise reduction and high-end filtering is about all that should be done to a sound track to make the utterance more easily understood.

It is possible to change the meaning of an EVP with over processing, and the rule of thumb is to discard the EVP if it cannot be understood with only slight enhancement, and certainly discard nonsensical utterances. A listening technique is to select a few syllables of a possible utterance and then play it over and over to allow your mind to look for familiar sounds. People are trained to recognize common arrangements of sound as words, but EVP are often formed from odd arrangements of sound, depending on what is supplied, and the usual cues are often missing. A very loud, well-spoken phrase could still be difficult to make out for a person not accustomed to hearing EVP.

6. Storage and sharing

☐ Set up a method of saving your recordings in your computer that will allow you to easily locate examples. A good practice is to save the raw recording session in a dated folder and then also save clips containing the EVP in the same folder or a sub-folder. Field recordings are saved under the name of the location and the date. It is helpful to keep a separate folder for your Class A examples for easy retrieval for demonstration to friends. The AA-EVP follows the labeling practice of: ©owner_of_evp2008-what_evp_says.mp3. The © symbol indicates the intention to protect rights to the example. (**NOTE:** Not all computer file systems may support the use of the © symbol in a filename; the word "Copyright" or the abbreviation "Copr." May be used in it's place). Using first and last name helps sort many examples in the folder for easy retrieval. The underline and dash symbol with no use of capitals helps assure that computer systems and the Internet accept the name. A 200 kb audio file can be reduced to around 15 Kb when converted from a *.wav file to an *.mp3 file. This makes it easy for sharing files via the Internet.

� You may not want to use what you think the EVP says as part of the filename if you are sharing the file with someone else for evaluation purposes. It is good practice not to reveal what you think the EVP says so as not to influence the listener. Something along the lines of "Clip_1", "Clip_2", etc., may be used instead.

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7. Acknowledgments

☐ Much of the technical information in this report was obtained from AA-EVP, at http://www.aaevp.com/articles/articles_about_evp11.htm . This information is included in this report under Fair Use Copyright provisions.

☐ Further information was obtained from http://www.hauntedvoices.com. Information on the DVR Tripod can be found at http://www.hauntedvoices.com/pdf/dvr-tripod.pdf .

☐ Information on Frank's Box was obtained from Rosemary Ellen Guiley and her web site, http://www.visionaryliving.com.