A Pragmatic Analysis of Hesitation Fillers in Delivering Oral Presentations: The Case of Postgraduate Non-native students of the English Department

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Abstract

Non-native students often face challenges when presenting their research or findings in a foreign language. These challenges can include difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, which can lead to moments of hesitation during their presentations. Hesitation fillers act as linguistic tools that allow speakers to navigate these challenges and maintain a smooth flow of speech. In this paper, the various types of hesitation fillers commonly used by non-native postgraduate students during delivering oral presentations are explored. A descriptive qualitative approach using discourse analysis is used to conduct this study. The researchers accordingly examine how these fillers are employed and discuss their impact on the overall effectiveness of the oral presentations. Additionally, the reasons behind the use of hesitation fillers are analyzed and strategies for minimizing their usage while maintaining clarity and coherence are explored.

Keywords: *Hesitation fillers, non-native, postgraduate students, presentations, qualitative approach.*

1. Introduction

Hesitation fillers are commonly used in spoken language to fill pauses or gaps in speech. They serve as a way for speakers to buy themselves time to think or gather their thoughts before continuing their sentence. In the context of non-native postgraduate presentations, hesitation fillers play a significant role in helping speakers maintain fluency and coherence during the delivery of their presentations.

Understanding hesitation fillers in non-native postgraduate presentations is crucial for both presenters and audience members. Presenters can benefit from recognizing and managing their use of hesitation fillers to enhance the quality of their presentations. On the other hand, audience members can develop patience and understanding towards non-native speakers by recognizing that hesitation fillers are a natural part of second language acquisition.

By delving into this topic, the researchers aim to shed light on the significance of hesitation fillers in non-native postgraduate students' delivery of oral presentations and provide practical insights for both presenters and audience members. The analysis of such presentations can help identify specific linguistic markers or patterns that are unique to oral presentations. One of the significant elements which can affect the overall coherence and structure of a narrative is the hesitation phenomenon. Considering hesitation fillers

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in oral presentation allows researchers to analyse how these linguistic features influence narrative flow and organization. Linguistic phenomena such as "um," "uh," and "like" are commonly used during speech to indicate hesitation (Rose,1998). By analysing these fillers, researchers can gain insights into individuals' communication patterns. There are certain aspects of the professional experience that can be revealed by hesitation fillers, such as the speaker's uncertainty, or their difficulty in expressing certain aspects.

The Significance of the study

Studying hesitation fillers in non-native postgraduate oral presentations is significant for several reasons. By studying hesitation fillers, researchers can identify patterns and provide guidance on how to minimize their usage, leading to more effective communication. In addition, hesitation fillers can be indicative of a speaker's language proficiency level. Analysing the use of hesitation fillers in non-native postgraduate oral presentations can help assess the speaker's command of the language and identify areas for improvement. Understanding how hesitation fillers impact audience perception allows non-native postgraduates to refine their oral presentation skills, enhance their credibility, and increase their chances of success in academic or professional settings.

2. Literature Review

This section provides a review of previous research related to hesitation fillers.

Theoretical Framework

2.1 Hesitation Phenomena

The term 'hesitation' refers to different lengths of pauses that are not usually left unfilled. When the speakers are struggling for words or planning their next expression, they use these phrases. Sound repetitions, fillers, and stretching are methods used by speakers to achieve this. (Rieger, 2003). According to Chafe (1980), hesitation has been attributed to the creation of speech production. Chafe stated that pauses, false starts, afterthoughts, or repeated words do not hinder the speaking process. On the contrary, they are necessary steps in achieving it. More hesitation is used during spontaneous speech than during prepared speech. Clark & Fox Tree (2002) consider spontaneous speech less cohesive. During spontaneous speech, there are likely to be pauses due to the greater level of planning needed. In contrast, prepared speech requires less cognitive planning. The planning of oral presentations is similar to spontaneous speech (Chafe, 1980). People combine ideas into large units that are composed of smaller ones when composing a narrative. As an individual changes his ideas, spontaneous speech moves among several focus clusters. Consequently, the speaker hesitates between focus clusters (Chafe, 1980).

2.2   Hesitation Types

According to Ralph Leon Rose's Taxonomy date, Hesitation is classified as follows:

a. False Start

Starts can occur when a speaker utters or speak the words, then stop in the middle of a sentence (Dewi, 2020). False starts would be like an incomplete sentence or correcting words at the beginning of a sentences. False starts are word repairs, after short pauses the speakers guide the correcting of a mistake words or repetition of one additional word before corrected words. It is typically followed by a pause, which new a language or total break in the communication occurs. The speakers do not finish the initial speech in the cases above, but instead replaced it with another words. Furthermore, the speakers wish to convey that they still in command, and they do not want to be interrupted. Additionally, the speakers feel that the place is not as exciting as she wishes, however is actually that they expect to be.

b. Restart

Sometimes a speaker will utter a few words and then suddenly return to the beginning 15 and it iterate the same words (Maulita, 2016). Restart also define when a speaker says a few words and then immediately returns to the beginning and repeats the words. For example: Nana: Maybe he will agree… he will agree with that (Goodwin, n.d.). The speakers above utter a few phrases before returning to the beginning and repeating the same words. It suggests that the speakers wish to conceal their previous error. Furthermore, the speakers may suggest that they in command and want to explain the statements. Also, the speakers may forget to express what they want to say.

c. Repeat

Repeats are immediate repetition of sequence of one or more words (Boonsuk et al., 2019). This commonly used type of hesitation involves the pause of speech followed by the repeat of previously generated information, whether it is a fraction of a word, a complete word, or many words. For example: I am going to have--- I am going to have birthday party (Levin & Silverman, n.d.). From the example above, it can be seen that the speaker repeats the words or phrases twice in a single conversation. The speakers repeat various parts of the words in the context of repetitions.

d. Pauses

The study of pauses and hesitation phenomena also has teaching implications because second language learners have to learn how to be silent and how to be hesitate as part of their pragmatic and strategic competence. Goldman-Eisler in HKapsoh argue that pauses in the process of producing spontaneous speech are a very changeable phenomena that are indicative of individual variations, sensitive to the demands of social interaction and verbal tasks, and that they get smaller with learning, or with a decrease in the spontaneity of the process (HKapsoh, 2017). When the speaker hesitates while speaking, pauses is one of the types of hesitation. It is also always happening when people communicate with one and another. There are two types of pauses: They are silent pauses and filled pauses. Before lexical words, both silent pause and filled pauses are shown to be more common than before function words. But, silent pause probable to appear before lexical terms.

a) Silent Pause

In speaking, silent pause is unfilled type of hesitation. Silent pause is divided into two main types: grammatical and/or communicative pauses, and non-grammatical pauses. Brown and Yule in HKarismawan argue silent pauses are pauses that often come before an utterance and aid the speaker in organizing their thoughts before speaking (HKarismawan, 2017). In contrast to previous categorization, communicative 18 pause is added because of the crucial role they play in spontaneous speech. The speakers do not make any noises or words to fill pause while the silent interval. For example: When the train was … arrived (AlGhazali & Alrefaee, 2019) This pause shows that people require moment of stillness when speaking for a variety of reasons. People frequently pause when speaking to take a breath, prepare to resume speaking, determine what to say and so on.

b) Filled Pause

Filled pause can be defined as a term used by linguists to refer to non-silent pause that is to say hesitation which has been "filled" by er, emmm, uh or some vocalization (Abbas et al., 2018). Filled pauses are pauses that often come before an utterance and encourage the speaker in organizing their thoughts before speaking. For example: Umm, basically my speaking umm should be improved (Indriyana et al., 2021).

Lengthening

When the speakers say syllables more slowly than normal, this is called lengthening. Lengthening happens when speakers say words for longer than they should be. According

to Betz & Wagner in (Kosmala & Morgenstern, 2017) lengthening is also used as a clue that speaker is still formulating their speech. Though it can happen anywhere inside a word, lengthening often happens near the end of words. For example: You have to go to the hospital: … then turn left (Betz, 2020). The words in normal sound is not created with a lengthy voice, but in this case, speakers attempt to pronounce the following words while they think and attempt to finish their utterance.

According to Clark and Tree Taxonomy (2002), hesitation is classified as follows:

Silent Pause

(unfilled pause) The duration of quiet taken by the speakers throughout their statement is referred to as the silent pause. Unfilled pauses, often known as silent pauses, are pauses that are longer than those in an equal fluent speech (Schleef, 2021). The speakers simply stay quiet in between their utterances. During the quiet interval, the speakers do not make sounds or say anything to fill the silence. Silent pause is symbolized [//]. For example: I went to the [//] beach. The phrase indicates that the speakers pause after uttering the word there. The phenomenon might be cause by the thinking process.

a. Fillers

According to Rajabi in Lina, fillers are instinctive techniques that function as a pause in the middle of sentences as the speaker gathers their thoughts while retaining the listeners' attention (Andriani, 2018). Fillers contribute nothing to converts; they only encourage the speaker in thinking more deeply and organizing their speech. Types of fillers:

a) Unlexicalized Fillers: Unlexicalized filled pauses are non-lexeme (non-word) used by speakers to convey hesitancy when thinking what to say. For instances: such as uhh, err, ee, aah, umm, and ehmm.

b) Lexicalized Fillers: Fillers in the form of words or phrases, such as well, yes, kind of, if you see what I mean, you know, are lexicalized fillers pauses. a speaker will utter a few words and then suddenly return to the beginning and it iterate the same words (Maulita, 2016).

 b. Repeats

Repeats are when the speakers use the same words or phrases or even sentence twice or more while speaking. On the other hand, when the speakers communicate with others, they might repeat the words, phrases, or sentences. Repeats is symbolized [/]. For example those/ those cups. The speakers supposed to say something about else but make a grammatical error, and the speaker are bound to repeat themselves while speaking (Boonsuk et al., 2019). Another commonly used types of hesitation are repeat, which is involves the pause of speech following by the repeat of previously generated information, whether it is a fraction of a word, a complete word, or many words. For example: I am going to have--- I am going to have birthday party (Levin & Silverman, n.d.). From the example above, it can be seen that the speaker repeats the words or phrases twice in a single conversation. The speakers repeat various parts of the words in the context of repetitions.

c. False Starts (Unretraced)

False start (unretraced) is the speaker's verification of an incorrect words that they have said. Nonetheless, the speaker just eventually speaks the next words without repeating the incorrect words (Kafifah & Aini, 2020). False start unretraced is symbolized [\\] as in "I saw a very big \\ a very small boy".

e. Correction

Corrections might happen when the speakers have forgotten something they wanted to refer to; the speakers might be looking for the right words; or the speakers might be deciding one of numerous instances to use. Corrections take the place of earlier, poorly

prepared statements when the speaker has better things to say after which the speaker makes the corrections (Kafifah & Aini, 2020). Correction is symbolized [-] For example, we are from-I mean, we are in front of you will present about speech production. It happens when speakers say words for longer than they should be.

f. Interjections

Speaking is an activity they involve two or more people, so that it is common for the speakers to be interrupted while speaking. The speaker should cease considering what to say next when there is an interjection, or period of indecision (Tampubolon & Lubis, 2021). Interjection might occur during a conversation as a result of the speaker losing attention. The interjection of ah, uh, well, and say are illustrated in the following sentences: Nana would like > oh. carrots…oh: refers to referent selection. Interjection is symbolized [>]. The interjection above indicates the speakers has stopped to pick out as just one of several possibilities that the speakers could mention.

g. Stutters

Stutters refer to the speaker's difficulty say the first letter of a word, requiring them to repeat it in order to finish the following syllable. Stutter is symbolized [----] For example, please, give me my bb-b-book! Stutters are identified by repeating one letter or syllable before the next words. Stutter is preventing a person from speaking clearly in everyday situations, emotions of shame and social anxiety emerge, and this harms a person in many ways, including physically, socially, and psychologically. It also causes despair and poor self-efficacy (Iqbal et al., 2019). Stuttering is when people give speech spontaneously since the speaker have to organize the expressions in words in their heads before delivery.

d. Slip of Tongue

Slips of tongue occur when the speaker's actual utterances differ in some manner from the planned utterance. Clark and Clark in (Anggun 25 Harastasya & Dadang Sudana, 2020) said cognitive difficulties, situational anxiety, and social circumstances are three elements that might cause a speaker to make a slip of the tongue It is the inadvertent movement, addition, detection, bleeding, or substitution of content inside an utterance and can be phonological, morphological, lexical, or syntactic.

Fillers

The study of filler arose in the 1950s by psycholinguistic scholars Maclay & Osgood (1959) and Goldman- Based on different studies, although filler is the most frequently term used among several scholars, there are a wide range of concepts exist in literature as follows:

- Filled pauses, Rose, 1998; Stenström 1990; Kjellmer, 2003; Gilquin 2008.

- Fillers, Clark & Fox Tree, 2002.

- Hesitation disfluencies, Corley & Steward, 2008.

While there is controversy regarding these terms among scholars, several scholars have preferred fillers to other terms in recent years. It is also intended to use the term filler in this study.

Common Classifications of Fillers

Word construction-based classification by Rose (1998)	
Simple word filler	A simple word filler is constructed with only one single word such as but, okay, well, um, yeah, uh, eh, and, see, so and right.
Phrasal Filler	Fillers also can be in form of Phrase. In grammar, a phrasal filler consists of a group of words without a subject or verb, for example, how to say it and by the way.

Clausal Filler	a clausal filler is a group of words that have both subjects and predicates such as I mean, and you know.
Function-based classification by Strenstrom (1994). Fillers serve the following seven purposes: - Filling pause, - mark of hesitating, - holding turn, - empathizing, - interrupting, - mitigating and - editing term	

According to the numerous functions they fulfill, Stenström's (1994) classification of fillers in speech offered a function-based categorization. Stenström's classification offers insight into the many different ways in which fillers are employed in speech and how they contribute to the dynamics of conversation and communication. This method aids in highlighting the subtlety and complexity of fillers in language use as well as their function in promoting efficient and effective communication.

2.3 Hesitation fillers in pedagogical settings

Most Linguistic studies on hesitation phenomena and fillers focus on the production of these phenomena by non-native users of English in pedagogical settings. Karina (2022) utilized a qualitative approach to explore the types of hesitations students experience when speaking English. According to this research, unlexicalized fillers such as uhh, err, ee, aah, umm, and ehmm are the most commonly used hesitations. In terms of hesitations, false starts retraced occur least often. Besides observing all nine types of hesitation, the researcher observed a new type called temporize hesitation (i.e. to delay in order to gain time).

Similarly, Dewi (2020) examined the hesitation phenomenon and its causes. This paper adopts Rose's (2012) taxonomy of hesitation phenomena. Using qualitative approach, it is found that most hesitation phenomena occur during the learners' interaction with one another. Poor communication skills and inability to express the language are the causes of being hesitant. Due to the difficulties of processing language in the brain, they occur spontaneously and naturally. Likewise, Oktamalia, 2018; Jannah, 2016; Shofa, 2008 used descriptive qualitative analysis to study hesitation types among students and to describe the causes of hesitation pauses in English Language learners' utterances.

Hesitation fillers are also investigated in other contexts. Malik (2016), downloaded Miss Universe Show 2015 from YouTube and analyzed the utterances of Steve Harvey qualitatively and not statistically. The researcher used Ralph L. Rose, Clark and Clark, and Clark and Fox Tree theory to analyze the data. Five types of hesitations were observed: false starts, repetitions, restarts, pauses (filled and silent pauses), and word lengthening. There are several reasons for hesitations, including preparing for the next phrase, taking a breath, or apologizing for asking questions. Also, Kharismawan, P. (2017), investigated the types and functions of fillers used by Barack Obama. The researcher used Rose's (1998) theory on the types of fillers along with Stenström's (1994) and Baalen (2001). Two types of fillers found in this study: unlexicalized filled pauses and lexical filled pauses. Fillers also served five functions, including hesitating, empathizing, mitigating, editing terms, and creating time.

2. 4 Fillers and Gender

Some studies examined the effect of sociolinguistic factors such as gender, age, topic, etc. on the use of fillers. Valentino (2020) outlined the types of fillers used by women and men, as well as the causes or reasons for using fillers. The sample of this research was students in micro teaching class. Based on the results of the research, both females and males used sounds fillers, words fillers, phrase fillers, and repetition fillers. Nevertheless, there were different causes for both females and males; nervous control, thinking process, hesitation, and divided attention. Laserna, Seih, & Pennebake (2014) analyzed the five filler words: I mean, you know, like, uh, um, which sampled participants' language use in daily conversations over several days. The corpus was two hundred and sixty-three transcriptions of natural language from transcripts recorded by a device called the Electronically Activated Recorder. Data was analyzed to find that gender and age differences were not evident in the use of pauses. There were, however, more discourse markers among female and young participants.

3. Methodology

 The present section describes the research methodology of this study, which involved a qualitative method of analysis. It is divided into four sub-sections. The first section begins with the contribution of the study. The second section has some operational definitions of the key terms employed in this study. The third section includes research questions in this study. The fourth section refers to the procedure of the data collection along with data analysis followed by a brief note on ethical considerations.

3.1 The Contribution of the Study

 There is considerable literature examining the use of hesitation fillers. However, there has been less research on the pragmatics of hesitation fillers. This gap in the research serves as the motivation for the present study, which aims to examine the use of hesitation fillers by postgraduate students in delivering oral presentations. Practically, this research can also have implications for learners' needs. Identifying specific hesitation fillers used by postgraduate students when discussing their projects can help academics become more attuned to learners' concerns, needs, and uncertainties during the learning process. This knowledge can enhance teacher-student understanding and improve overall communication between the students and their instructors. As such, the study contributes to applied linguists' research by drawing on both linguistics and teaching English as a second language to provide a new technique for comprehending professional interaction.

3.2 Operational Definitions

The definition of the key terms is used to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty in comprehending content of this research.

1. Hesitation: In speech, hesitation is characterized by pauses, either filled or unfilled, of varying length but occurring when the speaker is unsure of what to say (Chafe,1980).

2. Fillers: Fillers are lexically empty items with unclear discourse functions, other than to fill a conversational gap. These fillers are commonly used as a mark of hesitation or as a way to keep control of a conversation while the speaker thinks about what to say next (Stenstrom,1994).

3.3   Research Questions

1. What are the common hesitation fillers used by non-native postgraduate students in presentations?

1.   What is the purpose or function of hesitation fillers used by non-native postgraduate students in delivering oral presentations?

2.   How does gender influence the use of hesitation fillers?

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The study is based on a secondary analysis of authentic corpus of oral presentations collected by the researchers. The presentations were delivered in an educational context were the students were asked to present their projects.

3.4.1 Corpus:

The current study gathered data from academic presentations delivered by students enrolled in the postgraduate program at the faculty of languages and translation during the academic year 2023–2024. The researchers' initial action was to gather data by recording the students' academic presentations Each presentation lasted roughly 35 minutes. An audio recorder (i.e. Blackboard Collaborate) was the data collecting tool that was employed. The researchers created the corpus by transcription of the spoken corpus following the recording of the students' academic presentations using (https://turboscribe.ai/dashboard) This step involved transcribing every word the speaker said. Every transcript was counted as a single corpus.

3.4.2. Analysis of the Data

The researchers used a descriptive qualitative method to analyse the data. First, the fillers in the corpus were extracted, and then they were categorized in a table based on their forms—simple words, phrases, or clauses—into two groups, classifying the uses of the same kind of fillers as well. A qualitative description is used to convey the explanation. Third, a count was made of the occurrences of a filler term. The researcher totalled the fillers of the same kind. Fourth, the table showing the frequency and proportion of fillers was presented.

To address the questions of the study, the analysis of the data involves the classification of hesitation fillers adapted from Rose (1998) and Clark and Tree (2002). A qualitative analysis will be employed i.e., the most common hesitation fillers used by postgraduate students will be identified and categorized semantically (lexical/un lexical) and pragmatically within the identified sociolinguistic factors. The oral presentations are examined through content analysis by identifying the most used types of hesitation fillers and then examine them pragmatically in terms of their functions in the utterance in which they occur.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

The researchers contacted the post graduate students to get permission to use the oral presentations.

4.   Discussion and Findings

The findings derived from the transcription of the recorded corpus by postgraduate non-native students who were delivering presentations were selected as the data resources. The data set included a total of ten students, with three of them being male and seven of them being female. This gender distribution reflects a higher representation of female students in the group. This information could be relevant for analyzing any potential gender-based differences in the data or for considering the diversity of the group. The result from the data analysis showed that there are different fillers used by the male and female students while delivering their presentations, and it seems that there is a clear variation in the use of the hesitation fillers.

. The filler Type	Filler Word/	Filler Phrase	Filler Clause	Occurrence	Frequency	Percentage
False Start					0	0%
Restart				√	4	2%
uh				√	83	43.2%
um				√	13	6.7%
eh				√	4	2%
so				√	25	13%
Repeat	√		√	√	16	8.3%
Silent Pause				√	19	9.8%
Filled pause	and		let's say	√	11	5.7%
lengthening	and , to, so, the , can			√	11	5.7%
Correction	√	√		√	6	3.1%
Stutter					0	0%

Table 1. Hesitation fillers used by male students

The results show that male students used fillers a total of 192 times, with "uh" being the most frequently used filler at 43.2%, followed by "so" at 13%. This indicates that male students tend to use these fillers as a way to pause and gather their thoughts while speaking. It is also interesting to note that "restart" occurred 4 times, indicating that there were instances where the speaker felt the need to start over or correct themselves during their speech. This use of the restart strategy four times with a 2% in male academic presentation resulted in a noticeable improvement in the overall effectiveness of the presentation. The restart strategy, which involves pausing and restarting a sentence or phrase to correct errors or improve clarity, helped to enhance the coherence and fluency of the presentation.

The high frequency of usage of "uh" in this particular context (83 times, 43.2%) suggests that the speakers may have been experiencing frequent pauses in their speech. This could be due to needing time to formulate their thoughts. Similarly, the use of "um" 13 times (6.7%) and "eh" 4 times (2%) also indicates moments of hesitation in the speakers' communication. It is important to note that while these non-lexical fillers can help maintain the flow of conversation, excessive use of them can also detract from the clarity and effectiveness of communication. Therefore, it may be beneficial for the speakers to work on reducing their reliance on these fillers through practice and conscious effort to improve their fluency and confidence in speaking.

Additionally, "silent pause" occurred 19 times, suggesting that there were moments of hesitation or uncertainty in their speech. The results suggest that male students may use fillers as a way to buy time while speaking and may also experience moments of uncertainty or hesitation during their speech. This information can be valuable for understanding communication patterns and potential areas for improvement in public speaking or presentation skills.

In a male academic presentation with a frequency of 11 and a percentage of 5.7%, lengthening hesitation fillers such as "and," "to," "so," "the," and "can" can be beneficial

for several reasons. Firstly, lengthening these hesitation fillers can help the speaker appear more confident and authoritative. By taking the time to articulate each word, the speakers demonstrate that they are thoughtful and deliberate in their speech, which can enhance their credibility in an academic setting. Additionally, lengthening hesitation fillers can also help the speakers to gather their thoughts and organize their ideas more effectively. This can result in a more coherent and structured presentation, which is essential for conveying complex academic concepts to an audience. Furthermore, by elongating these hesitation fillers, the speakers can create a sense of anticipation and draw attention to key points in their presentation. This can help to engage the audience and make the content more memorable.

The use of the hesitation filler "so" 25 times with 13% frequency can be justified in certain contexts. Hesitation fillers such as "so" are often used in speech to give the speaker time to gather their thoughts, signal a transition in conversation, or emphasize a point. In some cases, using hesitation fillers can also help to maintain the flow of speech and make the speaker's message more coherent. However, using "so" as a hesitation filler 25 times within a specific context may indicate that the speaker is relying heavily on this filler and may need to work on improving their fluency and confidence in speaking. The word "and" and the phrase "let's say" are commonly used as hesitation fillers in speech. These fillers serve to give the speaker a moment to gather their thoughts and continue speaking, especially when they are unsure of what to say next. Using these hesitation fillers multiple times within a conversation can be a natural part of speech, as it allows for pauses and breaks in the flow of conversation. It also helps to convey a sense of thoughtfulness and consideration in the speaker's words.

Using the correction strategy as a hesitation filler can be justified in certain situations where the speaker needs a moment to gather their thoughts or formulate their response. In a conversation or presentation, it is natural for individuals to experience moments of hesitation and using the correction strategy can help to fill these pauses without disrupting the flow of speech. It can also demonstrate attentiveness and thoughtfulness on the part of the speaker. It shows that they are actively considering their words and striving for accuracy in their communication, which can enhance their credibility and professionalism.

Female students' total occurrence of fillers is 356 as shown in table 2 below

The filler Type	Filler Word/	Filler Phrase	Filler Clause	Occurrence	Frequency	Percentage
False Start					5	1.4%
Restart				√	11	3%
uh				√	116	32.5%
um				√	56	15%
eh				√	8	2%
so				√	41	11.5%
Repeat	√	√	√	√	31	8.7%
Silent Pause				√	37	10%
Filled pause	And, ok		let's say	√	9	2.5%
lengthening	So, who,			√	29	8.1%

	and , you, this, your, on					
Correction	I mean, sorry, have/has			√	13	3.6%
Stutter					0	0%

Table 2. Hesitation fillers used by female students

It is significant to highlight that just 1.4% of female students making presentations reported utilizing hesitation fillers, like false starts. This result emphasizes even more how important it is to take situational and particular context into account when examining communication patterns. The frequency of hesitation fillers may be affected by the way female students modify their communication style in response to the demands of a presentation.

According to the data, a ratio of 3% of female students used "restart" 11 times. This implies that restarts are still somewhat uncommon when it comes to giving presentations, even though they might be more common among female students. When examining the use of restarts by female students, it is crucial to take into account both the individual speaking style and the presentation's requirements. Word, phrase, or clause repetition occurred 31 times (8.7%). Less than 8% of female students employed fillers (and, well, let's say) 9 times, silent fillers 37 times (10%), correction (I mean, sorry, have/has) 13 times, and lengthening (So, who, and, you, this, your, on) 29 times (8.1%). Interestingly, "uh" was the most frequently restarted word (116 times, or 32.5%), followed by "um" 56 times, or 15%, and "eh" only 8 times, or 2%. This implies that female students tend to use "uh" more frequently as a filler word while they are stopping their discourse.

From the data, it can be observed that both male and female students used fillers in their speech. However, there are some differences in the frequency and type of fillers used. In terms of frequency, male students used fillers 192 times, while female students used fillers 356 times. This indicates that female students used fillers more frequently than male students. In terms of the type of fillers used, both male and female students commonly used "uh" and "um" as fillers. However, female students also frequently used "so" and "silent pause" as fillers, while male students commonly used "repeat" and "silent pause. Additionally, there were differences in the percentage of occurrence for certain types of fillers. For example, female students had a higher percentage of occurrence for "uh" (32.5%) compared to male students (43.2%), while male students had a higher percentage of occurrence for "repeat" (8.3%) compared to female students (8.7%). While both male and female students used fillers in their speech, there were differences in the frequency and type of fillers used between the two groups. Accordingly, this implies that although hesitation fillers might be a topic of interest for comprehending gender disparities in communication, it's crucial to take into account the particulars of particular contexts and situations when evaluating how female students employ them.

In general, when giving oral presentations, non-native postgraduate students utilized hesitation fillers to buy themselves some time to collect their thoughts and organize their ideas before speaking. "Um," "uh," and "you know" are examples of hesitation fillers that can help non-native speakers buy some time and lessen the pressure of speaking in a second language. They also help them keep their speech coherent and fluid, which enables them to give a more polished and well-organized presentation. Furthermore, because hesitation fillers offer a brief pause that can be utilized to recover composure and carry on with their presentation, they can make non-native speakers seem more assured when speaking.

It is evident that there are a number of ways in which gender might affect the usage of linguistic hesitation fillers. When speaking in groups of people of different genders or when they feel that there is an imbalance of power in the discourse, female students are more likely to utilize hesitation fillers. This implies that the usage of hesitation fillers may potentially be influenced by social context and gender dynamics. As such,
gender can affect the usage of hesitation fillers in a conversation through power dynamics, communication styles, and social expectations.

Based on the results of this study, some strategies to reduce the use of these fillers are recommended. First of all, engaging in regular speaking practice and receiving feedback from a language instructor or fluent speaker can help non-native speakers identify patterns in their speech and work on reducing hesitation fillers. Additionally, building a strong vocabulary can help non-native speakers feel more confident in expressing themselves, reducing the need for hesitation fillers as they search for the right words. Engaging in fluency-building exercises, practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques, and seeking targeted interventions from a speech therapist or language coach can also be effective in reducing the overuse of hesitation fillers and improving overall speaking fluency.

5.   Conclusion

Studying hesitation fillers in non-native postgraduate oral presentations provides valuable insights into language proficiency, communication effectiveness, cultural awareness, and professional development opportunities. It is important for speakers to be mindful of their use of hesitation fillers and strive to use them sparingly in order to convey their message with clarity and confidence. This study contributed to sociolinguistics in examining gender since hesitation fillers were explored from a pragmatic and a sociolinguistic perspective, i.e., the effects of gender on hesitation phenomena. Understanding the use of fillers can provide insights into gender differences in communication styles and help individuals improve their public speaking skills. Further research is needed to understand the reasons behind these differences and whether they are influenced by social or cultural factors.

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