

# FILLED PAUSES USED BY THE STUDENTS DURING THE DISCUSSIONS IN SPEAKING CLASS OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF STKIP PGRI SUMBAR

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**Abstrak:** *Dalam berkomunikasi, kebanyakan mahasiswa menggunakan filled pauses selama diskusi di kelas berbicara. Filled pauses dapat memfasilitasi komunikasi bila digunakan secara tepat. Namun, mahasiswa memiliki masalah dalam penggunaan filled pauses dan berlebihan dalam penggunaannya, khususnya mahasiswa di kelas Speaking II STKIP PGRI SUMBAR. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada dua jenis filled pauses yang digunakan mahasiswa yaitu unlexicalized and lexicalized. Alasan mahasiswa menggunakan filled pauses yaitu memberi sinyal bahwa kalimatnya belum selesai, memikirkan kata selanjutnya, mengklarifikasi kalimat, mengontrol pembicaraan, serta tanda bahwa mereka sedang membutuhkan bantuan. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa masalah yang dihadapi mahasiswa adalah berlebihan dalam penggunaan filled pauses yang dapat mengganggu dan membuat mereka kurang lancar. Ini akan berpengaruh pada konsentrasi pendengar. Dalam hal ini, mahasiswa sebaiknya mengurangi penggunaan filled pauses dalam diskusi. Artikel ini membahas tentang penggunaan filled pauses selama diskusi di kelas Speaking II dalam hal jenis, alasan, dan permasalahan yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa.*

**Key words:** *Filled pauses, class discussion, speaking class*

## INTRODUCTION

In the process of communication, many people use communication strategies. Communication strategies consider to the ways speakers handle their problems dealing with time pressure. It can be seen in their spoken language. The spoken language is spontaneous and direct because planning time is limited. This condition will be a common problem for many English students.

Goto, masataka, and Satoru (2002:1489) state that “filled pauses are as natural hesitation that indicates a user having trouble thinking of or recalling a subsequent word or phrase”. Sometimes, they know a lot of words but they get a problem to

say that. It can be seen from filled pauses that are used by the students during discussion.

Zellner (1994:44) states that in spoken language, there are two kinds of pauses that can be distinguished called silent and filled pauses. Related to this view, many students during discussion in the classroom tend to make a pause in their sentences. The pauses that are used by the students can be silent and filled pauses. Silent means they do not say anything. They just make a pause for a moment by keeping silent. Next, filled pauses mean students fill their pauses with some words or sounds.

Rose (1998:14) states that speakers use filled pauses when they

want to establish a signal control in a conversation. In this case, when the speakers are doubt about their explanation or the words that are used, filled pauses can help them to control this condition. In other word, speakers tend to use filled pauses when they need extra time in controlling their speaking.

Siegmán (in Mark, Judith, and Terrence, 2012: 353) states that more filled pauses are usually associated with cautious and hesitant speech. Moreover, Christenfeld (in Mark, Judith, and Terrence, 2012: 353) state that too many filled pauses may receive negative evaluations from listeners. In this condition, the listeners can judge that the speakers are not a good speaker in creating a sentence. It is because they cannot give a good package of their speaking. It will not catch the listeners' attention.

Garman (1990: 116) states that filled pauses such as er, um, etc are frequently taken to be associated with finding difficulties in formulation. When speakers are getting problems in formulating a sentence, they will make a pause unconsciously. Then, there is a new problem related to the fluency if speakers cannot control the occurrence of filled pauses well.

There are some problems that were faced by the students during the discussions in speaking 2 classes of the English Department of STKIP PGRI Sumbar. First, the students used filled pauses in high frequency in speaking. Second, filled pauses were used by the students as their habit. Third, the students used filled pauses when they felt nervous. This feeling happened when the students tried to fill their hesitation about the idea that was going to be presented.

Fourth, feeling anxiety could also be the problem for the students in using filled pauses.

## **METHOD**

This research used descriptive qualitative research. This research described filled pauses used by the students during discussion in speaking class. Gravetter and Forzano (2012: 364) state that "descriptive research typically involves measuring a variable or set of variables as they exist naturally". Then, it was said as a qualitative research because it involved the natural setting. Creswell (2003) says that "qualitative research takes place in the natural setting of the language usage; enables researcher to develop a level of detail about the individual, and allows researcher to make interpretation of the data."

The participants of this research were the students at the second semester of STKIP PGRI SUMBAR. They were 9 classes. At this time, the researcher selected three classes those were class F, G, H that were consist of 38, 36 and 37 students with schedule on Monday and Tuesday, especially speaking 2. This research was conducted at the English Department of STKIP PGRI SUMBAR. The instruments of this research were observation checklist, interview, and recording.

The data were collected through fieldwork experiences. In this case, the data were collected by doing observation and field notes, interview, and recording.

There was a technique that was used related to the filled pauses that was used by the students during discussion. Miles and Huberman (1994: 15) state that the techniques in analyzing the data in qualitative

research: data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

In data reduction, the researcher did the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and transforming the data that appear in the field notes. Then, the researcher forced choices about the aspects of collecting the data. It was emphasized and minimized related to the purposes of the research at hand.

In data display, the researcher went to the steps of providing an organized of the information. Next, a display was an extended piece of text that provided a new way of arranging and thinking about the more textually set of the data.

**FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

There were three main points that were explained those are the kinds, the reasons and the problems of filled pauses used by the students in class discussion.

**The Kinds of Filled Pauses Frequently Used by the Students during Discussion in Speaking Class**

The students employed two kinds of filled pauses during discussion in speaking class. Unlexicalized filled pauses was often used by the students. It was the most frequently employed (83%) rather than lexicalized (17%). Those were unlexicalized and lexicalized filled pauses.

Table 1. Kinds of Filled Pauses that were used by the Students:

No.	Kinds of Filled Pauses that were used by the Students	
	Unlexicalized	Lexicalized
1.	Ee	Okay
2.	Um	You know
3.	Hmm	Well
4.	Er	I mean
5.	Erm	-
6.	Oo	-

7.	Yaa	-
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Based on table 1. There were seven expressions of unlexicalized filled pauses that were used by the students during discussions those were **Ee, Um, Hmm, Er, Erm, Oo,** and **Yaa**. Then, there were four expressions of lexicalized filled pauses that were used by the students during discussions those were **Okay, You know, Well,** and **I mean**.

Firstly, the students used the expression of **...Ee...** in high frequency. It also can be seen from the total number of this expression that was used by the students. There were some examples of **...Ee...** that were used by the students during discussion.

- 1) Assalamu'alaikum **...ee...** good afternoon friends!
- 2) Based on our group **...ee...** our topic is about advantages and disadvantages of using facebook.
- 3) Firstly **...ee...** my friend will present ...
- 4) **...ee...** It is about the bad effect of smoking.

Based on these examples, this expression was also used by the students when they gave and answered the questions. Sometimes, students used this expression lengthy. A lot of **...Ee...** were also found in a sentence. The students used this expression when they wanted to start their speaking in presentation. Besides that, this expression was also used in the middle of the student's sentences.

The next expression of unlexicalized filled pauses was **...Um...**. The occurrence of this expression was also in high frequency. Most of the students used

this expression. The frequency of this expression was the second number after the expression of ...**Ee**... . There were some examples of this expression.

- 1) We are from group four ...**um**... I am as moderator ...
- 2) and my friends ...**um**... our group consists of three people...
- 3) Here many advantages of the use of facebook ...**um**...

Based on these examples some students used this expression with long sound. Sometimes, some students use this expression repeatedly in one sentence. It means that in some sentences this expression occurred more than one. It was also found in the middle or in the last sentence.

The next one was the expression of ...**Hmm**... that also used by the students during discussion. This expression was not usually occur in the students' sentence. The frequency of this expression was not as high as the expression of ...**Ee**... There were some examples of this expression.

- 1) Facebook is a social networking site founded by Mark Zuckerberg with his college roommates ...**hmm**... has developed from...
- 2) from the public ...**hmm**... your access to their profiles can help you find people...
- 3) ...**hmm**... My question is what you think...
- 4) Scientists say there are over ...**hmm**... 4,000 compounds in....

Based on the examples and the facts in the field, this expression was often occur in the middle of the students' sentences. Besides that, this

expression also occur with long duration.

The next expression that was also used by the students was **er**. This expression of filled pauses was used in low frequency. Then, this expression was found in the middle of the students' sentences. There were some examples of this expression.

- 1) common causes of corruption have focused on ...**er**... structural factors...
- 2) for longer periods of time are also perceived as ...**er**... less corrupt.
- 3) and influenced by the Indian ...**er**... although European influences...
- 4) Individuals who smoke have up the risk for ...**er**... coronary heart disease and stroke.

Based on the facts that were found in the field, it was not all of the group members used this expression. The frequency of this expression in a sentence was not too high.

The expression of **erm** was also used by the students. The frequency of the students used this expression was almost the same as the expression of ...**Oo**... . Next, this expression was also found in the middle of the students sentences. There were some examples of this expression.

- 1) an impact on corruption ...**erm**... ranging from structural factors...
- 2) In the case of Indonesia ...**erm**... corruption...
- 3) including Hinduism, Buddhism ...**erm**... Confucianism and Islam.

The frequency of this expression was not too high. It was the same as the expression of ...**Erm**... . then, this expression was

usually found in the middle of the students' sentences. There were some examples of this expression.

- 1) Many kinds of media online that used by people nowadays ...oo... but the familiar one is using facebook.
- 2) They cannot stop themselves from reading it and actually ...oo... taking part in the conversation.
- 3) new order regime ...oo... when Suharto...

The last expression that was used by the students was **yaa**. This expression of filled pauses was less used by the students during discussion. It was used by the students when they wanted to make sure about their sentences. There were some examples of this expression.

- 1) ...**yaa**... Keep updating your status regularly about...
- 2) flowers and ....**yaa**... colorful velvet cloth....
- 3) Yaa... it is a human trend that ...
- 4) some businessmen add their own ...Yaa... created...

Based on the examples that were found in the field, only a few of the students used this expression. Besides that, this expression could be found when the students wanted to start their sentences. Furthermore, it could be found in the middle or at the end of the students' sentences.

Second, the first expression of lexicalized filled pauses is **okay**. There were some examples of this expression.

- 1) ...**okay**... There are many ways in which Facebook
- 2) **okay**... I will add...
- 3) **okay**, for Structural factors ...

In this case, the students used this expression while presenting the

materials especially when they want to start their speaking.

The next expression was **you know**. It was used by the students in the middle of their sentences.

- 1) Information ....**you know**... information about the people...
- 2) ...**you know**... at least the good purpose of facebook is not lost.
- 3) **you know**... the basic principles...

Some of the students also used this expression when they want to start their speaking.

The expression of **well** was also used by the students. Here are some examples of this expression.

- 1) ...**well**... ..Ee... now we will tell you all here
- 2) **well**... first of all, the gossip that you have with...
- 3) **well**... your question is about children use facebook and is that disturb concentration at school?

This expression was used in the middle of the students' sentences; however some of the students also used this expression when they want to start their speaking.

Then, the expression of **I mean** was used in low frequency. These are some examples of this expression.

- 1) ...**I mean**... there are millions of fake profiles existing...
- 2) ...**I mean**... Adat law has a binding impact on....

It was used while presenting the materials especially when the students want to clarify their statement.

### **The Reason of Using Filled Pauses during Discussion in Speaking Class**

Students had some reasons in using unlexicalized and lexicalized filled pauses. During discussion in

speaking class, the use of filled pauses by the students was the reflection of cognitive efforts related to the lexical choices and semantic difficulties for generating new information.

The first reason was the students wanted to give a signal that their speaking was not yet finished. It was a way that was done to maintain their speaking. It means that the students wanted to continue their speech. They still had an idea or the information to share to the listeners in class discussion. Thornbury and Slade (2007:56) state that filling a pause is a convenient way of signaling that the speaking turn is not yet finished. In some cases, if the speakers do not fill the pauses, it can be concluded that they are finished the turn.

Related to the classroom activity that was happened, there was a group that presented the materials. In this situation, in presented the materials, the group's members had their own ways in delivering a speaking. They also gave a signal when they still had something to say. In this condition, the sign was the expression of filled pauses. In some condition, it helped the presenters or speakers in signaling the listeners. It made the listeners thought that the speaker had more to speak.

Filled pauses helped students when they still had something to deliver. The students used the expressions of filled pauses to persist their speaking. It was automatically as a sign for the listener that the speaker still wanted to remain their sentences.

The second reason was the students thought what to say next. The students needed time to think about the words or sentences to

convey. It could be seen from the length of time that they employed before speaking. Besides that, through the sentences that were used by the students after they used filled pauses can be the indication they thought their sentences.

Zellner (1994: 46) state that speakers use filled pauses when they think about the next words before providing a well constructed reply. Sometimes, the students got a difficulty to tell their sentences. Someway, when they thought, they made a pause in their speaking. The students thought about what was the words later. Besides that, during discussion, they also thought in formulating a statement that can represent their ideas in speaking.

Furthermore, while thinking, students found the appropriate words for their sentences. If they had more difficulty in the process of discovering their sentences, they made lengthy pauses.

The third reason was the students wanted to clarify their sentences. some students used filled pauses to clarify their sentences or words because they felt doubt through the sentences or words that were used. The students tried to find the solution for this situation. In this case, filled pauses helped them to give a clarification for a while. Moreover, the students also made a pause when they try to create the new idea if they believed that the new one was better. Then, they also made clear of the words and sentences if they thought that those were not suitable to use. That was the way of the students to correct their statement.

Filled pauses also occurred in situations where there was uncertainty or choice. Students used

as signal that there was a delay in speech due to uncertainty. It was correlated with uncertainty about what to utter later. Besides that, the students were more likely to use filled pauses in cases where they were uncertain about their answer to the questions.

A clarification that was made by the students occurred after they said a word if they felt the word was not appropriate. Then, they also gave a clarification when they found the better one. Moreover, this reason also arose when they wanted to give the good explanation during discussion.

The fourth reason was the students wanted to control their speaking. They wanted to make a good speaking by controlling their statement. Students used filled pauses to create a situation so that they could handle their opportunity in upholding their speaking. Sometimes, it runs spontaneously. When the situation forced them to control their utterance, many students employed the expression of filled pauses.

Pauses also can be said as a cognitive activity. Related to this, Eisler (in Zellner, 1994:46) states that a pause is the external reflection of some cognitive processes involved in speech production. Furthermore, Tardy (1988:48) states that filled pauses can be used to slow speech production while cognitive operations are carried out. In this sense, it can be said that pauses can be the process that happens as a cognitive process of the speakers. Some speakers can process quickly. Thus, it can determine the occurrence of filled pauses in creating sentences.

The last reason of the students used filled pauses was they wanted to give a signal for asking help. In telling the idea, some students often forgot the next sentences that would be told. Thus, filled pauses were the reasons as the solution for this common problem. In this case, during presentation, filled pauses were used by the students when they expect a listener to help them when they say incomplete information.

Filled pauses showed the facts that the students were deferring and they filled a silence that gave the other's insensitivity to their signals of inability to go on their speaking. In this case, filled pauses helped the speaker to show the listeners the identification of upcoming words. Then, there was a hope that listeners would help at that time.

To sum up, there were some reasons that were often used by the students during discussion in speaking class. The first one was they wanted to give a signal that speaking was not yet finished. The second reason was students thought what to say next. The third reason was the students wanted to clarify their sentences. After that, the fourth reason was the students wanted to control their speaking. The fifth reason was the cognitive activity before formulating an utterance. The last reason of the students used filled pauses was they wanted to give a signal for asking help.

### **The Problems of Using Filled Pauses**

There were some problems that were found related to the use of filled pauses by the students during discussion. The first problem was many students were disfluent in

presenting the materials. In any condition, it can be said that students at the beginning level especially the students at speaking 2 tend to find a problem in creating a sentences. When the situation made them to do that, it would be difficult for them because the limitation of students' words. In delivering utterance, even a word or sentence they said clumsily.

Brennan and Williams (1995:383) state that filled pauses such as um, uh, and hmm can be the indication of disfluencies. Based on this view, the speakers make a pause by using one of these expressions. If speakers cannot manage themselves in using filled pauses, they will look not fluent in speaking. Besides that, the use one of these expressions will take time in any situation. Related to the class discussion, it was a problem for the presenter that needed to deliver a good presentation. Some students were not fluently because they were still lack of practice. They could not hold their speaking very well.

The second problem was the use of filled pauses as a noise. It was related to the occurrence of filled pauses in the students' sentences. Based on the data from the field, during presentation the speakers used a lot of pauses. Then, most of them filled their pauses with the expressions of filled pauses. Actually that was not a problem. However, it looked as a problem when the students used it frequently. Sometimes, before saying a word some students used a particular sound repeatedly. It shows the high number of filled pauses in the students' sentences. That was a problem. Somehow, it was a noise for the listeners during discussion.

The third problem was trouble in speaking. One of the indication that the students got a trouble was when their sentences were not clear enough. It was happened when they said something unclear or uncertain. Each student showed different condition that they were in a trouble.

Wu (2008:215) states that "uh and um have been viewed as a symptom when trouble is detected in the process of producing speech". Furthermore, Garg and Ward (2006:1) say that filled pauses such as uh, eh, ah and um can indicate that the speaker is having trouble, wants more time, and wants to hold the floor. Actually, these expressions are also often used by the students during discussion.

However, it could be seen from the way the students in conveying their utterances. Sometimes they made many pauses, then they filled their pauses with some expression of filled pauses. Then, they said the unappropriate sentences.

The fourth problem was timing problems in speaking. The limited time in speaking was also a problem for many students. It was because when the students were interrupted by the time, they did not perform their best. This condition disturbed the process in their mind to formulate good sentences. They were forced to say something that unexpected. It was just to cover the materials or their responsibility to their group. It was supported by the interview below.

The last problem was the use of many filled pauses that disturbe the concentration. A lot of filled pauses evoke the perceptions of the speaker as worried or uninterested.



The listener's concentration was also influence of what they hear. If listeners are not comfortable with what they hear, they will not pay attention. It was related to some situations that happened during class discussion. Some speakers did not provide good performance dealing with the way in delivering the materials to the listeners. This situation gave the effect to the classroom atmosphere that bothered the listeners' interest.

### CONCLUSION

Filled pauses play several purposes for the speakers as the reasons of their speaking strategy. Filled pauses in speaking as the end product of a planning process and the amount of length of pausing that reflects the cognitive efforts related to lexical choices and semantic difficulties for producing new information. From research findings in the previous chapter, the researcher can draw some conclusions as stated below.

There were two kinds of filled pauses that were used by the students during discussion in speaking class. Those were unlexicalized and lexicalized filled pauses. Based on the findings of this research, for unlexicalized filled pauses, there were some expressions that were found. Those were **Ee**, **Um**, **Hmm**, **Er**, **Erm**, **Oo**, and **Yaa**. Next, for lexicalized filled pauses, there were some expressions such as **okay**, **you know**, **well**, and **I mean**. Then, it can be concluded that unlexicalized filled pauses was often used by the students. It was the most frequently employed (83%) rather than lexicalized (17%). Then, for unlexicalized filled pauses, the total number of the expression of **...Ee...** dominated the frequency that was

297. Next, the expression of **...Er...** was the lower level of frequency. The total number of this expression was 6. For lexicalized filled pauses, the expression of **...well...** was often used by the students. The total number of well was 36. Then, the expression of **...I mean...** was the lower level of frequency. The total number of this expression was 9.

There were some reasons of the students used filled pauses. The first one was they wanted to give a signal that speaking was not yet finished. Then, the second reason was students thought what to say next. The third reason was the students wanted to clarify their sentences. After that, the fourth reason was the students wanted to control their speaking. The fifth reason was the cognitive activity before formulating an utterance. The last reason of the students used filled pauses was they wanted to give a signal for asking help.

There were some problems that were faced by the students during discussion in speaking class. The first one was many students were disfluent in presenting the materials. The second problem was the use of filled pauses as a noise. It was related to the occurrence of filled pauses in the students' sentences. The third problem was trouble in speaking. The fourth problem was timing problems in speaking. The last problem was the use of many filled pauses that disturb the concentration.

### SUGGESTION

The researcher suggests several points for the students. The students should increase the practice of using English in their speaking. This way can help some students related to the use many filled pauses

in their speaking better. They need to minimize in using filled pauses. As students that are prepared to be a professional teacher, they need to keep in mind that they must be clear and fluently in transferring the idea to the listeners. Therefore, the message can be delivered well.

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