FILLERS IN ELON MUSK'S SPONTANEOUS SPEECHES

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Abstract
Fillers are expressions to bridge the gap between thoughts when there is a pause in communication. This paper aims to discover the types and functions of fillers used by Elon Musk in his spontaneous speeches. The study was a descriptive qualitative study that applied discourse analysis. The data were Elon Musk's spontaneous speeches containing fillers collected from the transcripts of two interview videos. Two research questions were formulated, namely, first, what the types of fillers in Elon Musk's spontaneous speeches were and second, what the fillers functioned in the speeches. To answer the questions, the researchers used Rose's (1998) theory on the types of fillers, which incorporated a similar concept on the types and functions retrieved from Baalen (2001). The results showed 932 lexicalized and 430 unlexicalized fillers, and five functions in 13 kinds of fillers. The findings imply that it is vital to introduce the types and functions of fillers to increase learners' awareness of fillers when they hesitate in a foreign language, which is the essence of speaking.

1. Introduction

Speaking confidently, including spontaneous and public speaking, promotes empowerment and employment (Beebe & Beebe, 2019). In other words, the duty for the organization, delivery, and then the flow of communication rests solely with the speaker (Griffin et al., 2021). Furthermore, public speaking is an archaic art form that embodies the human longing to connect with others (Hostetler & Kahl, 2017). Therefore, public speaking skills enhance a person's capability to read and comprehend somebody (Corray, 2019). The use of borrowing words can facilitate communication between different languages and cultures. This can help increase understanding and cooperation between different communities. The use of borrowing words can also give Indonesian variety and richness.

Public speaking is more complex than everyday communication. Speaking is among the numerous feared activities among Americans. Due to difficulties with expressive communication abilities, a person with poor public speaking skills confronts problems when delivering speeches (Grieve, et al., 2021; Al-Tamimi, 2014). They frequently add extra words. According to Baalen (2001), these unnecessary words are classified as filler words.

In contrast, fillers served a significant communicative purpose, even if they lacked a core meaning (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002). Other experts stated that filled pauses such as *uh, um,* and *like* can facilitate speech comprehension, and the words following such delays are identified faster. To illustrate the benefits of natural breaks, such as fillers on the audience's capacity to understand and react to the words that pursue them, they stress that these delays should not be viewed as *signals*.

Based on the word structure, fillers can be categorized into various categories. They may consist of simple words, phrases, and clauses. Fillers that consist of a single word: *like, but, well, um, okay, yeah, uh, eh,* and *so, see, right?* The filler may include phrases such as *how to say* and *by the way*. The following, known as a clausal filler, consists of subject and predicate words such as *I mean* and *you know*. Fillers may also be categorized according to their roles. Castro (2009) mentioned how discourse markers function in a textual context. Although there is no precise explanation of the functions of fillers, the researchers in this study agrees that the process of discourse markers is utilized to define the tasks of fillers since fillers are discourse markers. They can serve as (a) an introductory marker, a filler used by the speaker to initiate the speech. (b) The speaker employs an information indicator, a filler, to emphasize the material's main point. (c) A turn keeper, often a filler, can also maintain the speaker's turn in a conversation. When the speaker wants additional time to consider the next word, he prefers to employ fillers rather than remain silent. The speaker uses a repair marker, also known as a filler, to correct their speech when they mention the wrong term in the first place.

Filler words have been expected to be one of the negative perceptions of speaking. However, they continue to be selected as one of the most effective strategies for avoiding pauses and, sometimes, concealing confusion during speech. This descriptive qualitative study aims to investigate and identify fillers' various types and functions.

2. Literature Review

In previous studies, some researchers have investigated fillers. For example, Iliyas (2014) wrote about high- and low-knowledge learners using fillers and hesitation devices differently. The primary distinction between Mariam's research and mine is that she employs fillers and hesitancy in the same group as this study. On the other hand, fillers and hesitation will be looked at in this study in different areas. Maryam, Peyman, Maryam, Marzieh, and Sara (2016) showed that teaching gap-fillers did not influence Iranian EFL students' peaking performance, and the null hypothesis was retained. Iranian students fill gaps with frequent silence or stutter some fillers like uh or um frequently. They claimed that using fillers is more time-consuming. In contrast to the previous study, which taught gap-fillers in class, mine focuses on how natural Elon Musk's fillers are in spontaneous speech. In conclusion, the meaningful unit of language that cannot be added is known as a morpheme. As was previously stated, a morpheme is the smallest unit of grammatical meaning, as compared to a lexeme, which is constructed up of a group within one or more phonemes. In contrast to "cats," which is composed of two morphemes, "dog" is composed of just one morpheme.

Navarretta (2016) said that "oh", "mm", and "ohm" is the most common fillers. Each filler type has a prominent application. Previous and current research differ in scope. She emphasized gestures and co-occurrence. However, this study examines all fillers. Because they cannot be directly observed, it is difficult to determine why

speakers use fillers. Based on the report on the effects of fillers by Duvall, et al. (2014), three causes can be categorized in a specific manner. There is a lack of focus, infrequent speech, and anxiety. When speakers pay attention to multiple things while speaking, this is known as divided attention. It can occur due to either internal or external factors of the speaker. When the speaker's focus is divided, they employ more fillers. Oomen and Postma (2001) discovered that fillers increased dramatically when they received attention; frequent words can also increase their use. Infrequent words are words speakers rarely employ daily and feel foreign in their mental dictionaries. The combination of divided attention and a small vocabulary, which causes anxiety, is the second cause of filler used. The speakers can be required to make an impromptu presentation. Moreover, according to Rein et al. (2010), cited by Duval, et al., using few words and speaking too quickly can increase the use of fillers.

3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach to describe the frequency and intended meaning of fillers in Elon Musk's speech. Qualitative research aims to achieve a deeper understanding of a particular topic. According to the preceding point, Creswell and Poth (2016) noted, "One of the features of qualitative research is attempting to gain the most comprehensive understanding of specific situations."

The subject of this study was Elon Musk's YouTube-hosted speeches. Two videos were utilized in this investigation. The first is titled ONS 2022 Elon Musk. The second is Elon Musk, who discusses Twitter, Tesla, and how his mind functions. These two films are 24.44 minutes and 54.45 minutes long, respectively. After that, the researcher will use discourse analysis to determine the fillers' types and functions in both videos and transcripts of Elon Musk's public speech.

The researchers decided on three steps for 'he data analysis. One, the researchers watched the two sample videos that contain Elon Musk's Speech Two, the collected data were then identified into some types of fillers. Third, the classification had a more profound analysis to determine the function of each fill in Elon Musk's speech. In the end, the authors drew a conclusion based on the current findings of the research. To ensure data validity and analysis, the researchers always rechecked the findings many times and made some corrections where necessary.

4. Research Results and Discussion

4.1 Types of Fillers

The researchers decided to analyze two interview videos of Elon Musk as the data were collected on November 22-24, 2022. The first video was Elon Musk ONS 2022. The second speaker was Elon Musk, who discussed Twitter, Tesla, and his brain.

No	Unlexicalized Fillers	First Interview	Second Interview	Occurrences in Two Video
1	Uh	72	131	203
2	Um	86	141	227
	Total	158	272	430

Table 1. Unlexicalized Fillers Used by Elon Musk

Table 1 displays the number of fillers which Elon Musk utilized, namely unlexicalized fillers in his two interviews: 158 in the first video and 272 in the second.

In both interviews, he used *um* as a filler more often than any other unlexicalized filler (86 times in the first video and 141 times in the second video).

No	Lexicalized Filler	Video One	Video Two	Both Videos
1	Like	14	89	103
2	You know	36	71	107
3	I mean	10	51	61
4	Yeah	15	46	61
5	Right	3	23	26
6	I think	40	56	96
7	So	84	120	204
8	Just	24	40	64
9	Okay	8	9	17
10	But	37	72	109
11	Well	19	20	39
12	Yes	12	10	22
13	And then	9	14	23
	Total	311	621	932

Table 2. Lexicalized Fillers Used by Elon Musk

Table 2 shows that Musk used 13 distinct lexicalized fillers (311 in the first video and 621 in the second). In his impromptu speeches, he used the fillers *so* and *but* the most (204 and 109 times, respectively).

Elon Musk employed two distinct sorts of fillers, as evidenced by the data extracted from the transcript of his speaking video. One hundred fifty-eight instances of these fillers occurred in the first interview and 272 instances in the second. Three hundred-eleven and 621 lexicalized filler occurrences, respectively, were produced by Elon Musk during the first and second interviews. This suggests that in both the first and second interview videos, those students used fewer non-lexical fillers. Musk frequently utilized lexicalized fillers. Unlexicalized fillers like "like," "you know," "I mean," "yeah," "right," "I guess," "It is like," "so," "just," "but," "okay," "yes," "then," and "well" were typical of his speech. Unlexicalized fillers were also produced by Elon Musk in his impromptu remarks, with 158 occurrences in the first interview video and 272 occurrences in the second. He frequently used filler words like *umm* and *um* that were not in the dictionary.

4.2 Functions of Fillers
1. *Uh* and *Um*
Clark and Fox Tree (2002), nevertheless, observed that "uh" and "um" do not act identically (see also the section that follows for a discussion of the distinctions between "uh" and "um": Smith and Clark (1993), and Clark (1994). "Um" was also associated with longer pauses than "uh." Occupying on these distinctions, they propose that "uh" and "um" are different words used as paralinguistic signals. Fillers *uh* and *um* imply the speaker's apprehension of an imminent lag but differ in duration and severity. All other usages of *uh* and *um* derive from their fundamental objective of lag signalling (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002). Here are examples of *uh* and *um:* "**Uh,** I love Norway…" (V1) and "**Um,** I think we will exceed that ..." (V2). In this context, Elon

Musk produced "uh" and "um" because he got confused about the following upcoming words and filled the silence.

2. *Like*

According to the Cambridge online dictionary, "like" as a preposition implies "similar to." We frequently employ it with sense-related verbs such as appear, hear, feel, and taste. According to the online Oxford dictionary, "like" implies "having the same attributes or qualities as; being similar to; emphasizing the nature of an action or event; describing a person or object that is the same as another." Here are a few examples of filler *like* that the researchers found: "It is more **like** there is um thinking about what set of actions…."(V1) And "It is **like** yeah, a series of log curves so…."(V2). In this instance, the researcher discovered that the subject of the study ut"lized "like" but not "in" to express qualities, emotions, or characteristics. It identifies lexicalized fillers because "like" is inconsequential in some sentences. It indicates Elon's hesitance, as he is uncertain of what he wants to say. Instead of silence, he was searching for the word's synonym.

3. *You know*

The purpose behind the term "you know" was generated by subject 2, which meant checking whether the audience agreed. It cannot be a part of the statement, and even if it were removed, the sentence's meaning would not be altered. Therefore, it falls under the category of lexicalized fillers, which serve the purpose of emphasizing devices. According to the definition offered by Strenstorm in Kharismawan (2017), fillers invite the audience to participate in what the speaker is saying. Here is the filler *you know* produced by Elon Musk: "Uh, **you know,** comparable to the world oil and gas industry …" (V1) and "**You know,** I think this is important for public safety…" (V2)

4. *I mean*

It usually appeared in a study's early part of the first sentences. It was used to provide simplification for the preceding statement. According to Gryc (2014), *I mean* as the speaker uses a filler as a self-corrector. It means the speaker must organize their thoughts and correct what was previously stated" (Gryc, 2014, p. 46). Here are examples: "**I mean** the stakes are very extremely important very fundamental to the future." (V1) and "**I mean** obviously we need to be careful this does not uh become a dystopian situation." (V2). Erten (2014) found that his participant used "I mean " as uttered quickly.

5. *Yeah and Yes*

Based on the Cambridge online dictionary, the word yes is used to communicate willingness or agreement, to indicate that people are listening, or to suggest that the listener is prepared to listen and provide a response or piece of information. Based on Collins online dictionary, it signifies responding positively to a query, accepting an offer or request, or providing approval. Here are examples of the fillers *yes* and *yeah.* "**Yeah** so the interesting thing is that …" (V1) and "**Yes,** I mean obviously we need to be careful …" (V2). In the context, the filler "yes" was lexicalized. The speaker emphasized the word to indicate an attempt to attract the audience's attention.

6. Right

Right implies "right" in English, but English speakers use it for more than just an adjective: it can begin a phrase, shift the subject, or determine agreement. The word right is a Lexicalized filler with meaning but no significant role in the expression. Here are examples. "You are like what the probability of an accident at what point should you exceed that of the average person, **right**?" (V1) and "They can highlight issues **right** um suggest changes in the same way …" (V2). It can be concluded that Elon wanted to invite the listener to receive his messages or e"sure that "is listeners understood.

7. I think

I think is used to let people know what someone thinks. Because the speaker is talking about his product, this phrase can have been a lexicalized filler. They used what they knew to tell anyone who would listen. So, that phrase was not needed, and removing it will not change what the sentence means. It also works as a time-making device. Here are examples of filler *I think* which was used by Elon. "Well, **I think** we will see tremendous change ..." (V1) and "Well, **I think** uh, obviously, uh, Twitter or any forum ..." (V2).

8. So

According to Feldman in Rajabi and Salami (2016), the filler *so* is frequently employed to describe the nature of something, such as in the phrase "he was so late," yet the word is unfinished without an explanation. Avoid using the word so when an explanation is unnecessary or inappropriate. In both instances, such is also appropriate. In this context, the adjective "so" is not employed to characterize the quality of anything. Although the subjects displayed the phenomenon of another *so* utilized, the term so should be used for its purpose. The study sorted them as lexicalized fillers. In addition, it can serve as a time machine, signifying that the subject needs a moment to form the following word and is expected to do so before continuing. Here are examples: "**So**, first of all, my hobby is photography." (V1) and "**So**, my fam, so ehm, my family." (V2).

So, the researchers concluded that "so" is a word that should be used to demonstrate that thought refers to a previous statement. Even though "so" should be used as its function, subjects are shown the phenomenon of another "so" being used in this situation. The researchers classified "so" as a lexicalized filler. It also serves as a time-creating device to fill the pause with a word rather than remaining silent.

9. Just

According to Feldman in Rajabi and Salami (2016), the word just is not needed most of the time; instead, it is typically inserted to give the impression of a form of the word "quiet." In this instance, the word in question is unimportant, and removing it from the sentence will not alter the expression's overall meaning. According to the Cambridge online dictionary, the term relates to other adverbs such as now, very soon, and very recently. The examples are: "I **just** want you to know the people of Norway …" (V1) and "It is **just** really important that people have …" (V2). In the contexts, "just" functioned as a lexicalized filler that served the purpose of developing time-buying instruments. The speaker seemed to have sought to buy some time to consider the following words that would be spoken.

10. Okay

In the Cambridge online dictionary, the term okay is used to indicate that somebody knows something or that they agree to something, to confirm that people understand something or agree to something, and to suggest that someone is pushing to take action or create something new. Okay, also written as okay, is defined as "all right" in the online version of the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Okay, is an abbreviation of all correct or a sarcastic variation of all correct? Therefore, the word that indicates agreement on anything is "okay." Here are some examples of fillers*:* "**Okay,** so then if you say, well, what are the constituents ...."(V1) and "**Okay,** that is core to hear you. This is not about the economics."(V2). The researchers categorized "ok" as a lexicalized filler in spontaneous speech. It is because "ok" did not have any significance in this context.

11. But

But it is an example of a conjunction, a word that connects words found inside the same sentence (Feldman in Rajabi & Salami, 2016). *Bu*t has the same approximately still, which demonstrates contrast or unites opposites, according to Erliana et al. (2014, page 17). It means that the word "but" created by the subject cannot be classified as a conjunction because it was not intended to combine the phrases or cast doubt on something. Since the subject attempted to grab the audience's attention by producing filler, this filler serves as a strategy for emphasizing or drawing attention to itself. So the audience will pay attention to his speech. Here are some examples of filler*:* "...thank you for joining us, **but** I am still going to come back ...." (V1) and "...not people out of work **but** actually still a shortage labor...." (V2)

12. Well

According to the definitions provided by the Cambridge online dictionary, the word "well" might indicate, in a good way, a high or satisfying quality, or it can be used to highlight certain prepositions and adjectives. According to the online version of the Oxford Dictionary, this expression can convey various feelings, including surprise, wrath, resignation, or relief. It also indicates in a manner that is appropriate to the facts or circumstances. The word "well" had significance in this particular instance, but its function inside the sentence was not particularly crucial. Even if the word "well" had been included, it would not have been sufficient to alter the significance of the line. Therefore, the term in question can be placed in the category of linguistic fillers. Here are some examples of filler *well*: "**Well**, the materials that I mentioned ..." (V1) and "**Well, like I said, I think** it is very important that...."(V2). Juliano, Nehe, and Handayani (2022) found that Bill Gates was used to filling the pause as the interviewer was about to conclude his sentence. Mr. Bill Gates responded with this filler to indicate that he understood the interviewer's question.

13. And then

The filler "and then" is used to show progression, but they are unnecessary. The conversation should be able to go in its direction. It means that the words "and then" in this observation could be called "filler" since they were not shown the progression of something, and the speaker created it several times. It wastes time because the speaker has to say those words almost every time, they start a new sentence. The following are examples: "... **and then** you do need to combine that ..." (V1) and "**And then,** at some

point, a human has to look at it." (V2). Stevani, Sudarso, and Supardi (2018) stated that the filler "and then" functioned to give time to the speaker to think about the next word or phrase to utter.

5. Conclusion

This study revealed two distinct types of fillers: those that utilize words (lexicalized fillers) and those that do not (unlexicalized ones). Musk's initial interview tape contained 430 instances of fillers. However, Elon Musk generated some hesitations in his second impromptu speech. He produced 932 fillers. In addition, he used more lexicalized fillers in his first and second spontaneous speech because lexicalized fillers might help the speaker fill his pauses. This study identified five functions of uses for the fillers utilized by Elon Musk in his spontaneous speeches, namely a hesitating mark, an emphasizing device, a mitigating device, a term-editing device, and a time-creating device. The study also discovered that every subject begins every discourse with produced fillers, for example, "now", "today", "well", and "okay". They may apply the pattern from their first language to their second one.

The following are the suggestions. First, it is vital that speakers learn and practice more spontaneous communication. They should master the communication approach that will assist them in controlling their speech fillers. Fillers are not considered a distraction from speaking but can enhance verbal exchanges. It is proposed that future researchers engage more data since this study was limited to Elon Musk's usage of fillers and their functions. It would be better if future researchers explore hesitancy phenomena in speaking in a broader and deeper context.

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