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FILLERS USED IN A MOCK JOB INTERVIEW AMONG PURPOSIVE COMMUNICATION STUDENTS: A COGNITIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Fillers are an intrinsic part of daily communication. However, they are often perceived as obstacles in the expression of thoughts, particularly among learners. This study examined the use of fillers in a mock job interview conducted among purposive communication students at the College of Teacher Education, Batangas State University JPLPC-Malvar. Voice recordings of the participants during the interview were analyzed, followed by personal interviews to gain deeper insights into their experiences. Findings revealed that filled pauses such as ahm, uhm, and ehm were the most frequently used fillers. Male participants tended to repeat words more often than females while processing their thoughts to answer interview questions. The study also highlighted Krashen's (1988) Affective Filter Hypothesis, demonstrating how anxiety negatively impacts oral performance. Increased pressure or stress led to a higher tendency to produce fillers, whereas a calm and relaxed demeanor resulted in more organized responses. Furthermore, cognitive and social functions of fillers, as proposed by Garcés-Conejos and Bou-Franch (2002), were identified. Fillers served as transitional, cohesive, and social devices during communication. Additionally, the study uncovered notable findings, such as the frequent use of ano – a Filipino discourse marker in Philippine English – and the role of expressions like I mean.

KEYWORDS: Fillers; Mock Job Interview; Purposive Communication; Affective Filter Hypothesis; Cognitive Processing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Oral communication is an essential skill in various speaking engagements, whether in casual conversations or formal discourse. It is nearly impossible for individuals to engage in spoken interactions without using fillers, especially when they are unprepared, hesitant, or searching for the right words. While fillers are commonly perceived as natural elements of speech, their excessive use in formal settings, such as job interviews, may hinder effective communication.

In professional settings, particularly in job interviews, applicants are expected to articulate their thoughts clearly and confidently. Beyond academic credentials, employers place significant emphasis on an applicant's interpersonal communication skills, as they contribute to a successful interview and overall professional competence. For senior high school students preparing to enter the workforce, developing strong communication skills is crucial. As second-language (L2) learners, they require explicit instruction to enhance their communicative competence—both cognitively and linguistically—so they can effectively express themselves in high-stakes situations like job interviews.

Despite the importance of communicative competence, many students struggle with fluency and coherence in job interviews. Candlin (as cited in Giampaolo, 2013) affirms that communicative competence is both pragmatic and cognitive, encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discursive, and strategic competencies. These competencies enable speakers to manage gaps in their knowledge, improve communication effectiveness, and engage appropriately in professional interactions. Additionally, Bell (as cited in Basurto Santos, Alarcón, & Pablo, 2016) argues that communicative competence involves not only linguistic knowledge but also cultural awareness and interactional skills. However, many students lack the confidence and strategies needed to navigate job interviews successfully, often resorting to frequent use of fillers, which can impact their perceived professionalism.

This study focuses on an often-overlooked yet essential aspect of speaking strategies—fillers. By analyzing the use of fillers among purposive communication students in a mock job interview, this research aims to examine how these linguistic elements function in cognitive processing and oral performance. Understanding the role of fillers can provide insights into how students manage speech hesitation and anxiety, ultimately contributing to more effective communication training. By

addressing this gap, the study seeks to help educators develop targeted interventions that enhance students' fluency and confidence in professional communication contexts.

Specifically, this paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. What fillers did purposive communication students use during mock job interviews across genders?
2. What were the interviewees thinking that led them to produce more fillers?
3. How did these fillers help the interviewees when expressing their thoughts?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Definition And Nature of Fillers*

Fillers are common linguistic elements in spoken discourse, manifesting as utterances such as *ee...*, *err...*, *ehm...*, *well*, *you know*, and *I mean*. According to Baalen (as cited in Pamolango, 2016), fillers are sounds, words, or phrases that can appear anywhere in an utterance and be omitted without altering its content. Yule (2006) defines fillers as breaks in the flow of speech, while Erten (as cited in Basurto Santos, Alarcón, & Pablo, 2016) categorizes them as discourse markers that signal hesitation or cognitive processing during speech.

Basurto Santos, Alarcón, and Pablo (2016) identify two types of pauses related to fillers: silent pauses, which involve brief breaks in speech, and filled pauses, which are marked by expressions such as *um*, *er*, or *mm*. Studies have further distinguished *uh* and *um* from silent pauses, suggesting that they are involuntary markers of speech difficulty (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002). These expressions indicate moments when speakers detect and process linguistic challenges while formulating responses (Levelt, as cited in Clark & Fox Tree, 2002).

2.2. *Functions And Use of Fillers in Communication*

Fillers serve various discourse functions in spontaneous speech. Brinton (1996) asserts that fillers act as discourse markers, helping speakers maintain their turn in conversation and sustain dialogue. Similarly, Basurto Santos, Alarcón, and Pablo (2016) argue that fillers are employed as a delaying strategy while speakers search for the right words or plan their next utterance. Khojastehrad (as cited in Basurto Santos, Alarcón, & Pablo, 2016) highlights that expressions such as *well*, *ehm*, *uhm*, and *how to say* are used to "buy time" and organize thoughts during speech.

Biber *et al.* (as cited in Basurto Santos, Alarcón, &

Pablo, 2016) further support the idea that spontaneous speech is inherently disfluent, requiring speakers to balance real-time planning and execution of utterances. They classify fillers into two categories: (1) "hold-ups in delivery," which are silent pauses where the speaker momentarily stops to think, and (2) "filled pauses," where vowel sounds (uh, um) are used to fill speech gaps. These pauses, commonly transcribed as uh and um in American English and er and erm in British English, help regulate conversational flow and maintain coherence.

2.3. Fillers In Language Acquisition and Cognitive Processing

Krashen's (1988) Affective Filter Hypothesis emphasizes that factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety influence second language acquisition. When students experience high anxiety, their "affective filter" rises, blocking their ability to acquire and process language effectively. In this context, excessive use of fillers may indicate increased cognitive load and communication anxiety, as speakers struggle to organize their thoughts in a second language.

Schourup (as cited in Ok-Sim, 2007) refers to fillers as discourse particles, which allow speakers to signal the significance of their thoughts without fully verbalizing them. This suggests that fillers play a dual role in communication: they act as cognitive markers of thought formulation and as social cues that regulate conversational dynamics.

2.4. Teaching And Managing the Use of Fillers

Research highlights the importance of integrating filler awareness into language instruction. Nakatani (as cited in Erten, n.d.) underscores the need to teach students effective communication strategies to improve their oral proficiency.

Garcés Conejos and Bou Franch (as cited in Basurto Santos, Alarcón, & Pablo, 2016) identify three primary functions of fillers in spoken discourse:

Cognitive Function – Fillers help speakers process and formulate their thoughts before responding.

Social Function – They serve as interjections that signal involvement, interest, or engagement.

Discourse-Regulatory Function – Filler's aid in structuring conversations by managing turn-taking and speaker roles.

Self-efficacy also plays a crucial role in speech performance. Bandura (as cited in Harcher, 2005) defines self-efficacy as an individual's perception of their ability to succeed in stressful situations. Students with low self-efficacy often experience heightened anxiety, leading to frequent use of fillers.

Practicing high-pressure communication scenarios, such as mock interviews, can help students develop confidence and reduce their reliance on fillers as hesitation markers (Al Ghazali, 2006).

2.5. Gender And Age Differences in the Use of Fillers

Linguistic research suggests that filler usage varies based on gender and age. Liberman (as cited in Robinson, 2014) found that women use um 22% more frequently than men, while men use uh 14% more often when speaking with female interlocutors. Additionally, young men and older women exhibit similar patterns of um usage. Further, women tend to use discourse markers such as like, you know, and I mean more frequently than men, possibly due to their function as emphatic or conscientious speech elements.

2.6. Fillers In Spoken Discourse and Their Linguistic Categorization

Stenström (as cited in Pamolango, 2016) describes fillers as lexically empty items that primarily function to hold conversational gaps. Rose (as cited in Pamolango, 2016) categorizes fillers into three main types: Non-Word Fillers – Sounds such as em, hmm, uh, and um that do not carry lexical meaning. Phrase Fillers – Expressions like I mean, well, and sort of, which contribute to discourse structure. Silent Pauses – Momentary breaks in speech that allow speakers to process information. These fillers not only help speakers manage speech hesitations but also contribute to discourse coherence by facilitating topic transitions and conversational repairs (Kim & Suh, as cited in Ok-Sim, 2007).

Thus, fillers play a crucial role in spoken communication, serving cognitive, social, and discourse-regulatory functions. While often dismissed as speech disfluencies, recent research has highlighted their significance in language acquisition, cognitive processing, and conversational dynamics. Understanding the strategic use of fillers can help educators develop effective teaching approaches to improve students' fluency and confidence, particularly in high-pressure speaking situations such as job interviews.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing conversational analysis to examine the use of fillers in a mock job interview. Conversational analysis, as described by Hopper, Koch, and Mandelbaum (as cited in Aceron, 2015), involves recording, transcribing, analyzing, and reporting

spoken discourse. This method enabled an in-depth exploration of how students use fillers and the underlying cognitive processes reflected in their speech production.

3.1. Participants And Sampling

The participants of this study were first-year college students enrolled in Purposive Communication at the College of Teacher Education, Batangas State University JPLPC-Malvar. A total of 35 students were selected through purposive sampling, with five (5) students chosen from each of the seven (7) sections. This ensured a diverse representation of students with varying levels of oral communication skills. Prior to participation, informed consent was secured to ensure ethical compliance and voluntary involvement.

3.2. Data Collection Procedure

Mock job interviews were used as the primary data collection method. The interview questions were adapted from Skillings (2008) to simulate authentic job interview conditions.

The procedure included:

- Conducting the Mock Interviews – The teacher served as the interviewer, while students acted as interviewees. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes, with a total recording time of 150 minutes.
- Recording and Transcription – All interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, with careful identification and numbering of utterances containing fillers.
- Questionnaire Administration – After the interviews, participants completed a structured questionnaire assessing their perceptions of filler use, including reasons for usage and perceived effects on fluency and coherence.

3.3. Instrumentation And Validation

The questionnaire was subjected to expert validation by three (3) faculty members from the same institution. Their evaluation confirmed alignment with the study's objectives and clarity of items. The instrument obtained an overall weighted mean of 4.32, interpreted as Outstanding, indicating high validity and suitability for data collection.

3.4. Analytical Framework

To enhance analytical rigor, this study adopted a functional and cognitive-pragmatic framework in analyzing fillers. Fillers were classified based on their

linguistic form and communicative function, drawing from established discourse analysis and psycholinguistic perspectives.

3.5. Classification Of Fillers

Fillers were categorized into the following types:

1. Unlexicalized Fillers – non-lexical vocalizations such as “um,” “uh,” “ehm”, which signal hesitation or speech planning.
2. Lexicalized Fillers – Words or phrases such as “like,” “you know,” “I mean”, which function as discourse markers.
3. Silent Pauses – Noticeable breaks in speech that indicate cognitive processing without vocalization.

Cognitive-Pragmatic Functions of Fillers

The analysis was guided by a cognitive framework that interprets fillers as indicators of real-time speech processing. Specifically, fillers were analyzed according to the following functions:

- Planning and Processing Function – Fillers used to gain time for lexical retrieval and idea formulation.
- Discourse Management Function – Fillers that organize speech, signal transitions, or maintain conversational flow.
- Repair Function – Fillers used when speakers self-correct or restructure utterances.
- Interactional Function – Fillers that manage listener engagement or signal turn-taking.

This framework allowed for a systematic interpretation of fillers beyond mere frequency counts, linking them to cognitive load and communicative intent.

3.6. Data Details and Analysis Procedure

The study analyzed a corpus of approximately 150 minutes of transcribed interview data. Each transcript was segmented into utterances, and all instances of fillers were coded manually.

The analysis followed these steps:

- a) Identification and Coding – Each filler occurrence was identified and coded according to type (unlexicalized, lexicalized, silent pause) and function (planning, discourse management, repair, interactional).
- b) Frequency Count – The total number of fillers per participant and per category was computed to determine usage patterns.
- c) Comparative Analysis – Data were compared across gender to identify potential differences in filler usage.
- d) Thematic Analysis – Responses from the questionnaire were analyzed thematically to

explain the cognitive and social motivations behind filler use.

- e) Triangulation – Findings from conversational analysis and questionnaire responses were cross-validated to ensure consistency and credibility of results.

To enhance reliability, a second coder

independently reviewed a subset of transcripts, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. *Fillers Used During Mock Job Interviews Across Genders*

Table 1: Fillers Used by Male and Female Participants and Their Frequency Counts.

Fillers (Male)	Type	Frequency (F)	Fillers (Female)	Type	Frequency (F)
ah/ahh	Filled pauses	16	ah/ahh	Filled pauses	12
uhm/ahm/ehm	Filled pauses	23	uhm/ahm/ehm	Filled pauses	20
hmm/mmm	Filled pauses	1	hmm/mmm	Filled pauses	4
ano (Filipino word)	Gap filler	1	I mean	Phrase filler	2
Total		41	Total		38

The results indicate that male interviewees used more fillers (41 instances) compared to female interviewees (38 instances). Among the fillers, "uhm/ahm/ehm" was the most frequently occurring in both male (23) and female (20) responses, reinforcing the assertion by Liberman (as cited in Robinson, 2014) that men use more fillers than women. However, women use specific phrase fillers such as "like," "you know," and "I mean" more frequently. This is supported by the presence of the phrase filler "I mean" in female responses (2 instances), which was absent in male utterances.

The presence of filled pauses ("uhm," "ahm," "ehm") suggests that students experience cognitive processing delays while formulating responses. This finding is consistent with Clark and Fox Tree (2002), who emphasized that filled pauses serve as a symptom of hesitation in speech. Furthermore, the use of "ah/ahh" (16 instances for males and 12 for females) as the second most frequent filler demonstrates its function as an automatic utterance in spontaneous speech, which aligns with the claim of Levelt, Mahl, O'Donnell, and Todd (as cited in Clark and Fox Tree, 2002).

Function Of Fillers in Speech Processing

The presence of fillers during mock interviews highlights the cognitive processing students undergo while constructing their responses.

This can be observed in excerpts from the interview transcripts:

"Because I have the skills uhm you can, you can...you can...you will need. You have ah, I have a skill you will need and for me uhm, I'm...I'm fit for your company because uhm my asset is ano...the way I socialize with other people, the way I endorse some products and the way I talk to other people in front without any hesitations." – *Male*

"Uhm, I see myself five years from now as the...

as a model in this company, in this company that, as a good employee with high uhm. salary with a good background. I'm also seeing myself uhm...ahh...see myself ...I'm seeing myself uhm reaching my parents' dream also." – *Female*

These excerpts demonstrate that fillers are used even in relatively simple responses, indicating that students rely on them to manage hesitations and organize their thoughts, which aligns with the findings of Basurto Santos, Alarcon, and Pablo (2016).

Gender Differences in Filler Usage

One notable gender-based difference is the use of "I mean" by female interviewees, which serves as a repair strategy. This aligns with findings from Kim & Suh (as cited in Ok-Sim, 2007), where phrase fillers aid in clarifying or modifying a previous statement:

"I'm sociable I mean I can mingle with others easily." (Female) "My short term is that I have ahm...decent job that can ahh utilize my skills and I can specialize with the job that I have and my short I mean my long-term goal is that I..I have ahh..I want my family to be proud of me." (Female)

The Role of Repetition in Repair Strategies

Repetition was also noted among participants, particularly among males, as a way of delaying responses while formulating answers. The study recorded 16 instances of word repetition among male interviewees compared to 11 among females. As seen in the excerpts below:

"Uhm, my sh...short term is..I sh...I have a good...I have good nasa, I...I should have a good...good image from... from my officemates and my long term goal is, I..I sh...I should...I should...I should promote...I...I...I would be promoted at that one." (Male)

Repetition serves as an important strategy for

cognitive or verbal planning, which supports the claim of Hoekje (as cited in Dastjerdi & Shahrokhi, 2015) that repetition plays a crucial role in maintaining fluency during speech formulation.

Implications Of the Findings

Linguistic Training and Preparation: The prevalence of fillers suggests a need for additional training in structured responses for job interviews. Mock interview training programs can focus on minimizing the use of fillers through deliberate practice.

Second Language Interference: The presence of the Filipino word "ano" as a gap filler highlights the influence of the first language in English-speaking contexts. Future research could explore the role of Philippine English in professional communication.

Gender-Specific Speech Patterns: The differences in filler usage between male and female interviewees suggest gender-based speech tendencies, which could be further explored to understand how societal and cognitive factors influence spoken language.

The findings suggest that fillers serve various functions, including signaling hesitation, aiding speech processing, and facilitating repair strategies. The prevalence of "uhm/ahm/ehm" highlights their role as cognitive tools for managing pauses, while the presence of "I mean" among female interviewees indicates a tendency toward self-correction. Repetition, particularly among males, functions as a verbal planning tool. These findings underscore the importance of linguistic training in professional communication to minimize reliance on fillers during structured interactions like job interviews.

2. Thinking That Led Them to Produce More Fillers

Consciousness Of Answer Construction Over Fillers

The respondents exhibited a strong awareness of how they should answer interview questions, focusing primarily on content rather than the occurrence of fillers.

When asked about their preparation strategies, Male Respondent 1 stated:

"While I am in the house, I am asking myself a question that is probably the question that will be asked during the interview."

Similarly, Male Respondent 3 reflected on his thought process at the beginning of the interview:

"I'm thinking that I will answer all the questions in the interview, and I will think positively that I will be accepted by the interviewer."

Female Respondent 2 echoed this sentiment:

"I am thinking how I will answer the questions."

These responses suggest that the participants prioritized delivering well-structured responses rather than focusing on their use of fillers.

When explicitly asked whether they were conscious of using fillers, one respondent confidently replied:

"No, those weren't the things I worried about."

The structure and word choice in their responses indicate an emphasis on articulation, as demonstrated by the following excerpt:

"Because I have the skills uhm...you can, you can...you can...you will need. You have ah, I have a skill you will need and for me uhm, I'm...I'm fit for your company because uhm my asset is ano...the way I socialize to other people, the way I endorse some products, and the way I talk to other people in front without any hesitations."

This pattern of response implies that respondents engaged in cognitive planning, attempting to organize their answers in real-time, which inadvertently resulted in the use of fillers.

Pressure And Stress as Catalysts for Fillers

Stress and pressure were also key triggers for the frequent use of fillers. One female respondent, when asked where she sees herself five years from now, provided the following response:

"Uhm I see myself 5 years from now as the...as a model in this company, in this company that, as a good employee with high uhm...salary with a good background. I'm also seeing myself uhm...ahh...see myself...I'm seeing myself...uhm reaching my parents' dream also."

This response suggests that the complexity of the question increased cognitive load, leading to a higher incidence of fillers. Biber et al. (as cited in Basurto Santos, Alarcon & Pablo, 2016) assert that conversation requires spontaneous planning, which can contribute to hesitations and pauses. Another participant shared:

"I should answer them correctly and confidently."

A more structured response was observed in Male Respondent 5's answer to the same question:

"I see myself that I'm still working in your company to prove and improve myself in terms of work."

When asked about his thought process, he stated:

"I just reminded myself to be calm and answer properly."

This highlights that remaining calm and composed helps reduce filler use, supporting Biber et al.'s assertion that real-time speech planning benefits from preparation and relaxation.

Anxiety As a Contributor to Filler Usage

A significant number of respondents admitted that anxiety played a major role in their difficulty answering questions, thereby increasing their use of

fillers.

Male Respondent 1 explicitly stated:

"Because I am nervous that time, and because of that, I can't think fast."

This was evident in his response to a question about his short-term and long-term goals:

"Uhm, my sh...short term is..I sh..I have a good...I have good nasa, I...I should have a good...good image from...from my officemates and my long-term goal is, I...I sh...I should...I should...I should promote...I...I...I would be promoted at that one."

This exemplifies how nervousness disrupts fluency, leading to repetition and the use of fillers as a delaying mechanism. Brinton (1996) supports this claim, explaining that fillers serve as a tactic to sustain discourse and hold the floor, allowing speakers time to process their thoughts.

Another respondent, Male Respondent 4, linked his nervousness to difficulty articulating his answers:

"If I will pass this interview because I am so nervous."

His mock interview responses further demonstrate this challenge:

"Uhm, honestly, I don't have experience yet about so I will continue to teach and uhm...until I find what's for me."

"Ahm, 5 because uhm, I'm still learning. I have lack of experience and grammar. I'm an anxious...person. I'm trying to make my best to step aside."

Krashen's (1988) affective filter hypothesis suggests that high anxiety negatively impacts language acquisition and speech fluency, which aligns with the observed responses.

Lack Of Confidence and Self-Efficacy

All female respondents acknowledged that a lack of confidence made the interview process difficult, which in turn increased their use of fillers.

Female Respondent 1 rated the interview difficulty as:

"3, because of the nervousness. We are having a hard time answering or responding to the interviewer."

Her response to a short-term and long-term goal question reflects this struggle:

"My...short-term goal is...ahm to gain lots...to gain more experiences and my short term is...I'm a newly fresh graduate and I need...I need to prove myself that I can do something."

Female Respondent 5 also rated the difficulty as:

"4, because I lack self-confidence."

When asked why she should be hired, she responded:

"You should hire me 'cause I think...or...I'm very confident enough that ah I fit very well in this ah job 'cause I have experience...ahh, I've had work experiences before and I'm also ahh very...(laughs)..Ah I'm very business-

oriented when it comes to businesses I have experience because I have my online business as well and I think I can share my knowledge to ahh to this."

Bandura (as cited in Harchar, 2005) explains that self-efficacy influences how individuals perceive their achievements. Low self-efficacy results in a pessimistic view of one's abilities, which affects confidence in speech production. Developing confidence through activities like mock interviews can improve self-efficacy and reduce filler usage.

Female respondents 3 and 5 emphasized preparation as a means to reduce anxiety and improve fluency:

"I tried to practice myself in speaking and thinking fast when answering. I looked for decent formal attire and practiced my posture and presence."

"I prepared through analyzing the expected questions."

Krashen's (1988) monitor and affective filter model supports these findings, advocating for the balance between language acquisition and learning. Enhancing students' metacognitive skills through structured preparation and practice can significantly reduce filler usage.

The frequent use of fillers among respondents was primarily triggered by cognitive effort in structuring responses, stress, anxiety, and lack of confidence. Strategies such as maintaining composure, structured preparation, and confidence-building exercises can effectively mitigate filler usage, thereby improving fluency and communicative competence.

3. Fillers Help When Expressing Thoughts

Based on the respondents' answers from the questionnaire, most female participants indicated that fillers assist them in expressing their thoughts more clearly and in an organized manner. Nakatani (as cited in Erten, n.d.) argues that fillers are a useful communication strategy, which aligns with the responses collected in this study.

Fillers As a Transitional Device

The following excerpts illustrate how respondents use fillers as a transitional device. When asked, "How did these thinking fillers help you express your thoughts?" participants responded:

- "It gives me time to think of an answer to that question."
- "By giving time to think about what to say."
- "Because they give me time to further elaborate my answers."
- "It helps me to think for a while about what I should answer."

These responses indicate that fillers serve as a bridge between ideas within a very short span of

time. According to Garcés Conejos & Bou Franch (as cited in Basurto Santos, Alarcon & Pablo, 2016), one of the essential functions of conversation is the cognitive function, where the hearer shows the speaker that they are processing the message. This interaction is crucial in mock job interviews as it affects students' engagement and responses.

Fillers As a Cohesive Device

Since cohesion is necessary for structuring meaningful discourse, fillers serve as tools that help respondents organize their thoughts and create coherence in their speech.

When asked how fillers helped in expressing their thoughts, one participant stated:

- "It helps us construct our sentences and thoughts while we were speaking."

This indicates that fillers contribute to the fluency of speech by allowing respondents to gather and structure their ideas more effectively.

Fillers As a Social Device

Garcés Conejos and Bou Franch (as cited in Basurto Santos, Alarcon & Pablo, 2016) argue that fillers can signal involvement, affect, or interest.

One female participant was asked, "How did these thinking fillers help you express your thoughts?" She responded:

- "It helps me to prove that I'm very eager to answer the question well. Even if I have many fillers, I want to show my teacher (interviewer) that I am not just doing this to pass, but to demonstrate my interest and qualifications for the job, even though it's just a simulation."

During the mock interview, she acknowledged the fillers she used while responding:

- "You should hire me 'cause I think...or...I'm very confident enough that ah I fit very well in this ah job 'cause I have experience...ahh, I've had work experiences before and I'm also ahh very..(laughs)..Ah I'm very business-oriented when it comes to businesses. I have experience because I have my online business as well and I think I can share my knowledge to ahh to this."

Despite the use of fillers, her response demonstrated confidence and enthusiasm for the position, reinforcing that fillers can serve a social function by conveying sincerity and interest.

Additional responses further support the social function of fillers:

- "It helps me to deliver my thoughts comfortably." (The respondent wanted to sound comfortable with her answer.)

- "By creating flowering words, it helps me create sentences with satisfaction." (The respondent wanted to sound more articulate.)

Fillers assist students in structuring their responses by allowing them time to think, ensuring coherence in their answers, and providing a means of expressing enthusiasm or confidence. This supports Schourup's findings (as cited in Ok-Sim, 2007) that fillers enable speakers to articulate their thoughts effectively within a conversation. By being aware of their use of fillers, students can better navigate interviews and improve their overall communicative competence.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that fillers play a significant role in the communication of purposive communication students during mock interviews. The results suggest that fillers serve as transitional, cohesive, and social devices that aid students in structuring their thoughts, maintaining fluency, and demonstrating engagement in conversations. Respondents commonly used fillers as a means to buy time for formulating their responses, allowing them to construct more coherent and well-organized answers. Furthermore, fillers were found to contribute to discourse cohesion by linking ideas and ensuring smoother speech delivery. Additionally, the study highlights that fillers serve a social function, helping students express confidence and enthusiasm despite their occasional struggles with nervousness and anxiety. While excessive use of fillers may be perceived as a communication weakness, their strategic use can enhance verbal interaction by making speech more natural and spontaneous. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the cognitive and pragmatic functions of fillers in spoken discourse. Given these insights, language instructors should focus on developing students' communicative competence by teaching them to minimize unnecessary fillers while harnessing their benefits to enhance clarity and fluency. Ultimately, improving students' awareness of fillers can lead to more effective and confident communication in professional settings.

6. PEDAGOGICAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study hold significant implications for language education, professional communication training, and future research. From a pedagogical perspective, educators and trainers can

design targeted interventions to help students regulate their use of fillers, ensuring they serve as effective discourse strategies rather than barriers to fluency. Integrating mock interviews, public speaking activities, and self-assessment methods into speech and communication courses can enhance students' confidence, articulation, and overall verbal proficiency. Additionally, institutions should place greater emphasis on real-world speaking scenarios, such as job interviews and professional presentations, to better prepare students for workplace communication. On a social level, the study highlights the influence of communication anxiety and self-efficacy on verbal expression, suggesting the need for both psychological and

linguistic support to improve students' speaking skills. Future research could explore the impact of cultural and linguistic backgrounds on filler usage, as well as the effectiveness of structured interventions like cognitive training or mindfulness techniques in reducing communication anxiety. Furthermore, examining how digital communication platforms, including virtual interviews, affect filler production could provide valuable insights into evolving speech patterns. Addressing these areas can lead to more effective communication training, ultimately enhancing students' career readiness and interpersonal skills in professional and social contexts.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this research are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the affiliated institutions or any other organizations.

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