

## Conference Paper

# Linguistic Fillers in English and Javanese: A Contrastive Analysis

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### Abstract

Linguistic fillers are part of Psycholinguistics. Fillers can be found in almost all of our utterances in any language. People assume that fillers are considered being taken for granted by its users. Fillers are one of evidences that human needs complex steps in speech production. Javanese and English also have their own characteristics and uniqueness of fillers. There are problems about fillers itself. It includes how to identify it, also what its forms and functions are. The purposes of this research are (1) to identify and classify the form and function of linguistic fillers in English and Javanese, and (2) to identify the similarities and differences of fillers on those two languages. The data used on this research is linguistic fillers in English and Javanese, which has been taken from some previous studies about fillers, spontaneous fillers occurred in some videos on *Youtube* channels, and personal communications. The result of this research is that there are (1) lexical and non-lexical fillers, (2) cognitive and communicative functions occurred and (3) similarities and differences in English and Javanese fillers. Furthermore, this research is also strongly relatable with translation studies.

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Linguistic fillers are part of Psycholinguistics. Fillers can be found in almost all utterances in any language. People take fillers for granted. Fillers suggests that humans need complex steps in speech production. Javanese and English also have their own characteristics and uniqueness of fillers' use. There are many aspects of fillers that need to be investigated, such as how to identify it, what forms it has as well as their concomitant functions. The purposes of this research are (1) to identify and classify the form and function of linguistic fillers in English and Javanese, and (2) to identify the similarities and differences of fillers in both languages. The data used on this research is linguistic fillers in English and Javanese, taken from previous studies on fillers, spontaneous fillers found in some videos on Youtube channels, and personal communications. The result of this research is that there are (1) lexical and non-lexical fillers, (2) cognitive and communicative functions occurred and (3) similarities and differences in English and Javanese fillers. Furthermore, this research is also strongly relatable with translation studies.

**Keywords:** linguistic fillers, Psycholinguistics, English, Javanese, contrastive analysis

## 1. Introduction

People assume that speech is considered being taken for granted by its users, and also as a genetically and automatically thing occurred to people. On the other hand, Dardjowidjojo (2012) argues that in producing speech, human requires at least three

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steps. Those steps include conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. Fillers occur as one of evidences that human needs complex steps in speech production. These fillers happen when there is a mismatch between the linguistic ability and the communicative intention (Dornyei&Scott, 1997). To compensate for this mismatch, we use different communication strategies and one of these strategies is using linguistic fillers (Rose, 1998).

Based on that, fillers must occur in human's speech in any language, includes English and Javanese. As we know, English is a universal language and globally learned. Rose (1998) argues that English has two subcategories of fillers: lexical and non-lexical fillers. Being lexical means that they are actual words, for example, in this case the lexical fillers would be the two latter ones *like* and *you know*. The other ones, *um*, *erm* and *er* are called non-lexical, and these are simply sounds, often also referred to filled pause (Rose, 1998).

In the same way, Javanese speaker also has certain form of linguistic fillers. Like its name, Javanese is one of thousand of regional languages in Indonesia which is spoken by its speaker in Java island. This language is spoken by 84.3% of Indonesian populations (Indonesia Central Bureau of Statistics on 2000, in Laila, 2016). Based on prior research conducted by Pradana (2017), there are two subcategories of fillers in Javanese, its lexical, like *ngene lho* 'like this', and *dak omongi yo* 'I am telling you', also non-lexical like *em*, *aa*, and *eng*.

From short discussion above, we perceive similarities, both in English and Javanese, they have lexical and non-lexical fillers. In the opposite, those fillers are different in its lexical form. Based on that fact, this research focused on (1) the forms and functions of linguistic fillers in English and Javanese, and (2) their similarities and differences. Furthermore, this research is also strongly relatable with translation studies, particularly in oral translation.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Forms and functions of linguistic fillers in spoken discourse

It was mentioned that linguistic fillers can be divided into two categories which are lexical and non-lexical. The lexical one can be recognized as actual words, for example *like* and *you know*. While the non-lexical one, for example *um*, *erm* and *er* are better described as vocalizations, rather than words (Rose, 1998). Linguistic fillers can also be divided in two different ways, either its definition or its function. In other words, filler is

any sound we make to fill a pause. To explain the function as simply as possible, we need to understand that we use fillers to buy time.

Referring to Pradana (2017), he classifies linguistic fillers' function into two categories, those are communicative and cognitive function. Communicative function means that fillers are used to make a syntax structure in a communication clearer, i.e. as a discourse marker in conversation. This function is clearly described in example (1) below.

1. Partner: “*jare si Budi | sampean seneng karo Yulia yo | Mas?*” ‘Budi said, that you love Yulia, right?’ Speaker: “**dak omongi yo** | *aku saiki pilih seneng Linda | Iha si Yulia ki jebule wes duwe yang | je*” ‘**I am telling you**, I prefer to Linda, Yulia is already has a boyfriend’ (Pradana, 2017).

In example (1), *dak omongi yo* ‘I am telling you’ plays an important role as a discourse marker in order to get speech partner’s attention and indicates that his/her next utterance is meaningful.

Furthermore, cognitive function means that fillers used by speaker as a communication strategy in order to (1) buying the time to plan or/and remember what to say next, like *opo kuwi* ‘what is it’, also (2) find other lexicon to substitute the improper lexicon, like *maksudku* ‘I mean’, and (3) as an affirmation that a conversation is still on progress, like *sik sik* ‘wait’. Based on facts of fillers’ function above, we perceive that linguistic fillers are flexible and also give benefits in human’s utterances. Those functions are simply presented as chart 1 below.

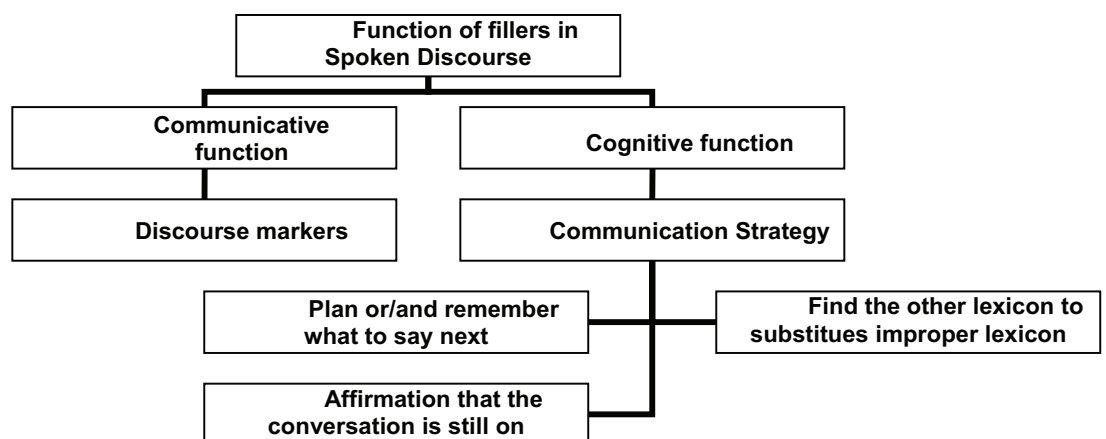


Figure 1: Function of linguistic fillers.

## 2.2. Contrastive analysis

Contrastive analysis is a branch of linguistics which works on similarities and differences between two languages or more (Moeliono, 1988). Similarly, Kridalaksana (2008) describes that contrastive analysis is a synchronic method, used to analyse languages, in order to get similarities and difference between those two or more languages, then it can also be applied in other fields, like language teaching or translating. According to Brown (1980), contrastive analysis requires three steps. Those steps include (1) describing elements of first and second language, (2) selecting elements of language that will be contrasted, and (3) contrasting the selected elements of those two languages. In this research, we have linguistic fillers as a selected element.

## 2.3. Oral translation

It was argued by experts about definition of oral translation. Shuttleworth and Cowie (1997) argue that interpreting is a term used to refer to the oral translation of a spoken message or text. In the same way, Jones (1996) assumes that in oral translation, the speaker needs to listen first then understand and analyse what is being said, and then resynthesize the speech in the appropriate form in a different language. By those theories, it can be identified that oral translation is a process of transferring messages from source language into target language, with standard processes like listening, understanding, analysing, and re-expressing (Jones, 1996).

## 2.4. Previous studies

The research about the existency of fillers has been conducted by researchers before. Most of those prior researchs talked about the function of fillers, like how Navarreta (2015) described the function of linguistic fillers in Danish and Pamolango (2016) which conducted same aspect in some Asian languages. The results of those studies were not so different. Most of them described that fillers played a role as a discourse marker. We also identify how Navarreta argued that the main function of fillers were signaling feedback itself or in connection with other feedback words. More seldom, *mm* marked the start of a phrase. As feedback or discourse marker, *mm* was often accompanied by feedback head movements, especially nods. On the other hand, Pamolango assumed that fillers played role as a turn holder, as a mark of hesitation, empathizers, time-creating devices, and editing term. However, just few of researchers contrasted two languages.

### 3. Methods

Data used in this research is linguistic fillers in English and Javanese. Data has been taken from some prior researchs about fillers itself, videos on *Youtube*, and also researcher's language intuition as a Javanese native and active speaker and as an English learner. Javanese have regional dialects and speech level. On this research, we do not distinguish fillers in Javanese by its dialect, yet in general Javanese. In order to get valid data about linguistics fillers in English, we also do further discussions with partners who have ability in English. They are (1) Nurul Anisa and Nadia Puri (student of Linguistics in Postgraduate programme Gadjah Mada University, also a ToEFL mentor), and (2) Tofan Dwi Hardjanto (lecturer of English Linguistics in Postgraduate programme Gadjah Mada University).

Then, we analyse the data by using *agih* method. *Agih* method is a method which analyzes language as its primary element (Sudaryanto, 1993). Furthermore, we should distinguish between silences and linguistic fillers using *Lesap* technique as a further step. This step deletes certain unit of language (Kesuma, 2007). If an assumed unit can be deleted with no changes on the meaning or message and so it is used by speaker to buy time, then that unit should be classified as linguistic fillers. If there are silences with a wide range length, it is not classified as linguistic fillers. Finally, we serve the data in formal and informal form. Formal form means the data presented in charts, table, etc. Oppositely, by informal the analyzed data is presented in regular lexicons (Kesuma, 2007)

### 4. Results

By using of *agih* method and *lesap* technique, the analyzed data shows that linguistic fillers in English and Javanese have (1) lexical and non-lexical form, (2) cognitive and communicative functions, (3) similarities and differences, also (4) translatable and untranslatable fillers. The following is the corpus data.

### 5. Discussions

Though linguistic fillers have no syntactic role or function in a Javanese or English sentence, it plays an important role in human's speech productivity, closely-related with politeness strategy and also influencing eloquence of human. Based on those facts, we perceive that linguistic fillers are flexible and give benefit to human's speech. As

TABLE 1: Corpus Data.

| English fillers         | Function                       | Translatable | Function                       | Javanese fillers              |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Like this</b>        | Communicative                  | √            | Communicative                  | <b>Ngene lho</b>              |
| <b>So</b>               | Cognitive and/or communicative | √            | Cognitive and/or communicative | <b>Dadi</b>                   |
| <b>I mean</b>           | Cognitive and/or communicative | √            | Cognitive and/or communicative | <b>Maksudku</b>               |
| -                       |                                | -            | Cognitive and/or communicative | <b>Anu</b>                    |
| <b>I am telling you</b> | Cognitive and/or communicative | √            | Communicative                  | <b>Dak omongi yo</b>          |
| <b>Let's say</b>        | Cognitive and/or communicative | -            | -                              | -                             |
| <b>Maybe</b>            | Cognitive and/or communicative | √            | Cognitive and/or communicative | <b>Mbok bilih/mbok menawi</b> |
| <b>You know</b>         | Cognitive and/or communicative | √            | Cognitive and/or communicative | <b>Ngerti ora</b>             |

described in the previous section, the main function of linguistic fillers are cognitive and communicative. Furthermore, a filler is able to have more than one function, depends on its using in an utterance. In its form, linguistic fillers have a lexical and non-lexical. English and Javanese fillers' form are different in lexical, but similar in meaning. On the other hand, some fillers have no equivalent in other language. It also effects to translation studies, especially in oral translation or interpreting.

As discussed in previous section, linguistic fillers are considered being taken for granted by its users. This makes the possibility of translating fillers from source language to target language is almost impossible. This assumption is not entirely true, proved by Pradana (2018) which conducts research on the form of fillers that appears in oral translation activities. In that study obtained results of 8% of the fillers that appear in an event with oral translator or interpreter inside is translated. In this writing, we managed to find the forms of fillers that can be translated, such as *like this* → *ngeten lho*, *so* → *dadi*, *I mean* → *maksudku*, *well* → *oke/yo wis*, *what* → *opo/opo kae*, *this way* → *ngene lho*, *actually* → *sakjane*, *and then* → *terus*, *I think* → *ketoke*, *maybe* → *mbok menawi/mbok bilih*, *what is it* → *opo kae/opo jenenge*, *wait* → *sik sik*, *you know* → *ngerti ora*, *I am telling you* → *dak omongi/dak omongi yo*, *em* → *em*, *e* → *e*, *aa* → *aa*. In the opposite we also find fillers that have no equivalence, such as *anu*, *lha iku*, *sopo yo/sopo kae*, and *yo* in Javanese, also *erm*, *er*, *in other words* and *let's say* in English

From the forms and functions found from fillers in Javanese and English can be seen some similarities and differences. The similarities are (1) existence of lexical and non-lexical form, (2) similar sounds occurred in non-lexical fillers, like *ee*, *em*, and *aa*, then (3)

multifunction nature, either cognitive or communicative. See on how *Like this* can stand communicatively and cognitively, also (4) untranslatable fillers, like in Javanese fillers *anu*, English do not have lexicon to substitute that form, also *er* or *let's say* in English are unusual in Javanese. On the other hand, there is also a difference, like how Javanese have fillers which use particle *yo* 'yes', such as *opo yo* 'what is it' and *piye yo* 'how is it', yet the using of *yo* 'yes' is unacceptable in English

In general, linguistic fillers are part of silence, which is one of aspects in the study of the speech production (Dardjowidjojo, 2012). Study of the speech production not able to be done directly, for example by dissecting human's skull, yet it only be done indirectly through observations on utteranced sentences. About the silence itself, Hieke (1985) proposes three categories of silences, such as stalls, repairs, and parenthetical remarks. Stalls include silent-silence, filled-silence, progressive-repetition and elongation. A silence categorized as silence if there is a duration exceeding a duration of silence in normal conversation. Then, *er*, *em*, and *erm* are categorized as a filled-silence. Then, progressive repetition accommodate, as speaker is searching words, like "*to the... to the city*". As for elongation used to buy time until the words required by the speakers successfully found, as in "*let's saay... tomorrow at five*". On the other side, repairs include false starts and bridging repeat. False starts are referring to the reorganization of the spoken sentence with or without change of meaning. Usually, the spoken sentence is not complete. For example, "*I was in [pause] I have been in Denver before...*". Meanwhile, bridging repeat is an element repetition in order to find the basic constituent that have semantics and/or temporal cohesion. For example, "*the... | pause |... the father; the father vs. Father*". As for the parenthetical remark 'inserted words' played few cohesive functions that are not fully set. This parenthetical remark usually occurs when speaker try to correcting their previous sentence. For example, *well, you know, in other words*, etc.

On this research, this parenthetical remark classed as filled-silence with the cognitive function as a communication strategy. Furthermore, the studies expose that silences in an utterance does not occurs in any place. It is stated by Boomer in Dechert (1980) that silence occurs after the first word in a clause or sentence. Meanwhile, Goldman-Eisler in Dardjowidjojo (2012) states that silence occurs before the important lexical. Addressing these differences, Clark&Clark in Pfänder&Behrens (2015) states that the experts agreed that silence occurs at (1) grammatical pause, (2) the boundaries of the other constituents, and (3) before the main first word in a constituents. Grammatical pause or grammatical juncture is a place of silent in order to plan a framework, include the first constituent of next sentence.

Then, silence in boundaries of the other constituent is used to plan next constituent on a sentences construction. The most occurred silence in this position is filled-silence. As for the silence in before the main first word in a constituent normally uses a silent-silence and it is occurred as a speaker speaks a word in a constituent, yet not the main word of the constituent. In English, this case is normally happened in noun phrase constituent that started with *the*.

On this research, found that linguistic fillers have a flexible nature. It supports research conducted by Garman (1990) which analyses seventy verbal utterances in order to knowing the precise position of these silences. The analysis shows that silence, possible to occurred in eleven positions, such as (1) before the speech; (2) after conjunction in the beginning of speech; (3) before the main word classes, that are adjective or noun in a subject noun phrase or after the determiner; (4) before verb phrase; (5) inside a verb-phrase, especially between auxiliary verb and their followed element; (6) some items in (4) and (5) that precisely-occured before the main verb, and this position is related with the combination itself; (7) between the verb phrase and next phrase, either a complement or an object; (8) before the main lexicon in a word classes on a compliment or an object; (9) before adverbs constituent; (10) between a preposition and noun phrase; and (11) before the main lexical class on a phrase.

## 6. Conclusion

Psycholinguistics explore the relationship between human's mind and its language. Linguistic fillers as one of aspects in the study of psycholinguistics is closely-related with human's daily interaction, especially how human produce speech and face the problems inside. In this research, we perceive that linguistic fillers in English and Javanese have (1) lexical form, such as *like this* and *ngeten lho*, also non-lexical form, like *em*, *er*, *a*, and *erm*, (2) cognitive and communicative functions, (3) similarities, like the existence of lexical and non-lexical form, similar sounds that occurred in non-lexical fillers, like *ee*, *em*, and *aa*, then multifunction nature, either cognitive or communicative also the difference is in Javanese there are fillers which use particle *yo* 'yes', such as *opo yo* 'what is it' and *piye yo* 'how is it', and (4) translatable and untranslatable fillers, like *anu* and *piye yo* in Javanese, also *let's say* in English. Furthermore, we expect further research in psycholinguistics, especially linguistic fillers. We hope the new findings in linguistics fillers can increase and enrich psycholinguistics' treasures.



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