

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background of the study, research questions, the objectives of the study, the scope of the study, and the methods of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In their communication, people do not always speak fluently (Rose, 1998, p.1). Sometimes it is marked by frequent starts, stops, restarts, stammering, *ers*, and *erms*. Filler is one of the features of spoken language (Rose, 1998, p.1). COBUILD corpus in Rose (1998, p.2) revealed that the most common feature of spoken language is filler.

Filler is when a speaker pause their speech and thinks about the upcoming word to speak by filling it with expressions such as *uh*, *um*, *ah*, and etc. According to Stenstrom (1994, p.222), a filler is an unfilled feature with questionable discourse functions other than to fill in the gap of an utterance. Moreover, Baalen (2001, p.7) defined filler as sounds, words, or phrases that found in the utterance. It can exist anywhere without changing its meaning. Whether the speaker used filler or not, whether the filler is in the beginning, middle, or the last utterances, will not change the speaker's meaning. For example, "you have a...*er*...cream on your cheeks" and "*um*...excuse me...what time is it?". (Rose, 1998, p.2)

This phenomenon indeed occurs in the language of foreign learners (Uwasri, 2018, p.3). For example, English language learners. English language learners

would not speak as fluently as native speakers. It means a disfluency is also found among the speech of the non-native speakers of a language, for example, the use of filler itself. Filler is also found in the English department students at Andalas University. For instance, it occurs when the students present their assignments through videos uploaded to Youtube. According to my preliminary observation of their videos, especially the students of the English Department class of 2020, many students use filler in their video presentations.

The following are two scripts of speech taken from the presentation of two different students:

1. “*So*, what is the physical reality of this sound instead. *Well*, the physical reality of this sound is called phones. *So*, it is like the existence sound as sound waves and it can be individually produced also recognized by the speaker of language while the phoneme itself is just a cognitive reality.” (Retrieved from a student video at 1:12 - 1:32 with the link: <https://youtu.be/gitPojpwr-l>).

2. “It can makes *um* new words, it can make *um* new meaning. *So*, by changing ‘i:’ into ‘i’ it can be distinguished meaning.” (Retrieved from a student video at 1:30 - 1:44 with the link: <https://youtu.be/dM8rjkNt224>).

Both of the students used filler in their presentations. Student in the first script used fillers *well* and *so*. Meanwhile, student in the second script used filler *um* in her presentation.

As seen in the first script, the first student used lexicalized filled pause, which means the filler in the form of short phrases in her statements. There are two filler found, *well* and *so*. Those two words count as filler because they do not

refer to their literal meaning. It means that, in this case, those words are meaningless. Whether the words *well* and *so* are in her statements or not, the meaning of her statements would not change at all. They count as filler because if those words removed from her statements, they will not give any impact on her statements. It is interesting that in this student's case, there are two times the first student says the word *so*. But it is only one time the word *so* count as filler. It is because the *so* in the last sentence of the first student's statements used as its function.

In the second script, the second student used an unlexicalized filled pause. This type of filler is a non-word filler produced during the process of thinking. The filler word found in her statement was *um*. The *um* used in the middle of her speech, it is usually used as a mark of hesitation and a time-creating devices in a speech. The use of filler itself aims to fill a gap and to run the speech smoothly.

This phenomenon is interesting to study further. This study aims to see which short phrase can counts as Filler. Also, as the ELF learners, the students have learned and used English in college for about four years. Therefore, it is expected they can speak English fluently, especially in a formal context. Furthermore, filler might be annoying for the listener if the speaker uses them frequently (Rose, 1998). Besides, if the speaker frequently uses filler, it shows that the speaker cannot communicate well. Moreover, it also indicates that the speakers lack preparation before they speak. Since the thesis proposal presentation is very formal and is prepared for an examination, it is assumed that the students do not produce many filler in their utterances.

1.2 Research Question

The research questions are:

1. What are the forms of filler in the students' thesis proposal presentation?
2. What are the functions of filler in the students' thesis proposal presentation?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are

1. To identify and describe the forms of filler in the students' thesis proposal presentation.
2. To describe the functions of filler in the students' thesis proposal presentation.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This research investigates the forms and functions of filler produced by English department students, class of 2017, in their thesis proposal through the video presentation. This research is limited to observing the filler in the form of sounds and short phrases that produced by the students. Thus, this research will discuss the fillers using a theory proposed by Rose (1998) to analyze the form of fillers and Stenstrom (1994) to analyze the function of fillers.

1.5 Method of the Study

1.5.1 Data and Source of the Data

This is qualitative descriptive research whose data is the selected students' sentences that contain filler. The data are taken from ten videos presentation made

by the 2017 students of the English Department focusing on those who take linguistics field, Faculty of Humanities, Andalas University. The students should have registered for the seminar proposal examination between March and April and made a video presentation about their proposal and upload it to Youtube. It is because the seminar proposal examination is conducted online. This happens due to Covid-19 so that the face to face examination is not allowed. Moreover, the students present their thesis proposal by recording themselves. They explain their thesis proposal by preparing the script before taking a video. From the ten students, none of them used PPT when explaining their thesis proposal.

1.5.2 Data Collection

The data for this research are collected according to the following procedures.

1. Asking the Jurusan regarding the list of the students who have done their seminar examination.
2. Checking the videos of the students on Youtube by using the links from Jurusan.
3. Contacting the students through Whatsapp to ask a permission to use their video presentation as the data sources through.
4. Downloading the videos and watching them several times.
5. Transcribing the videos using True Verbatim Transcription. True verbatim transcription is a method that transcribes the whole utterances in the videos, including pauses and fillers, which is accurate because it detects filler. This method also converts every utterance to text without correcting the mistakes.

1.5.3 Data Analysis

The process of data analysis went through several steps.

1. The researcher identified all utterances that contain filler words and then categorized them based on their forms. The categorization refers to Roses' theory (1998).
2. The researcher analyzed the functions of filler used by students using an approach proposed by Stenstrom (1994).

1.5.4 Data Presentation

The result of the analysis, both about the forms and the functions of filler words, are presented in the form of tables to simplify the data presentation. Then, they are described descriptively to discuss the analysis and the finding. Filler will marked with italic words, and to make the name of the filler forms simpler, the researcher will use abbreviations such as for the types of filler, UFP refers to Unlexicalized Filled Pause, LFP refers to Lexicalized Filled Pause, S1 refers to Student 1, and so forth.

