PROJECT
(Professional Journal of English Education)
Volume 9, No. 4, July 2026
p–ISSN 2614-6320
e–ISSN 2614-6258

Exploring The Types and Pragmatic Functions of Fillers in University Podcast Discourse

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Abstract

This study explores the role of fillers used by international students in a spontaneous communication setting through a podcast interview at *Universitas Negeri Semarang.* The study aims to classify the types as well as to analyze the pragmatic functions of fillers as used by the students during the podcast, utilizing Rose's (1998) filler classification and Stenström's (1994) filler function theories as the framework. A descriptive qualitative single case study approach was employed for the study, collecting extensive transcription data from the entirety of the podcast which consisted of six Denish students as the key participants. The collected data was then analyzed thoroughly using content analysis method, focusing on each student's utterances in order to identify the fillers and their meaning in the context of the podcast. The findings show that lexicalized filler is the more dominant type used by the students, occurring 197 times from an accumulation of 274 fillers throughout the podcast. In addition, the most used pragmatic function of filler is the hesitation device. The findings highlight that international students strongly rely on lexicalized fillers to manage spontaneous communication and maintain the flow of conversation during a podcast interview.

Keywords: Fillers; Podcast; Pragmatic; Spoken Discourse; Spontaneous Communication

INTRODUCTION

As social creatures, humans naturally require to socialize, and consequentially, communicate with others. One of the many ways that people can use to communicate with one another is through speaking. Speaking is the process of creating and exchanging ideas in a variety of context (Nematov, Tillaev, & Abduramanova, 2022). It is the process of interaction between two or more speakers in a specific situation, which also means that it can change depending on the context (Guebba, 2021). That is to say, people are more likely to interact, or speak, in a different manner because the situation or the context is also different. Regardless, speaking is a crucial part of interaction as it is one of the most direct ways for a clear communication.

However, there may be several difficulties encountered when speaking. Through speaking, communication becomes instantaneous. Interaction happens in real-time that some individuals may find it challenging to find the correct words quickly while speaking with others due to time constraint (Devi, 2022). This processing demand can result in speaking disfluencies, such as repetitions, pauses (Levelt, 1989) as well as stutters in their speech, or feel anxious as speaking anxiety is a common occurrence (Maharyadin, Sunggingwati, & Rusmawaty, 2022). In addition, there is another coping mechanism when it comes to speaking which is through the use of fillers. Nevertheless, these signs of speech production problems are recognized as functional and integral parts of natural spoken interaction (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002).

Fillers can be defined literally as fillers. They are markers in spoken discourse with the purpose of filling empty pauses to allow speakers in organizing their thoughts (Cahyo, Fatsah, & Tanipu, 2025). Fillers can take form in multiple ways, such as a word, a phrase, or even words that do not carry significant meaning whatsoever other than being discourse markers. According to Schiffrin (1987), discourse marker is an element of linguistic that groups units of talk as well as contributes to the pragmatic meaning and coherence of discourse. In their classification, fillers are classified into two types, unlexicalized and lexicalized fillers (Rose, 1998). Furthermore, fillers have various functions in spoken interaction, such as hesitation and editing-term devices (Stenström, 1994).

Generally speaking, fillers are commonly used by any language speakers that they may not even notice. They are naturally used in order to help forming ideas, buying time as well as maintaining the flow of communication. These advantages of using fillers are also supported through the lens of Conversation Analysis (CA) which emphasizes how speakers organize their speeches and manage spoken interactions (Schegloff, 2007). However, the use of fillers in high frequency can also means disfluency in speaking, making speech difficult to understand or giving discomfort in listening them (Yulpia, 2025). As such, there are both upsides and downsides when it comes to the use of fillers that speakers need to pay attention to.

There are multiple studies of fillers in various areas in recent years. In the area of education, Abdulla and Mohammed (2023) investigated the use of fillers by Kurdish EFL university students, correlating it with speaking fluency. Their study revealed that participants used lexicalized fillers more frequently than unlexicalized fillers, and it was found that participants with higher level of fluency used less fillers. In the same scope of fluency, Le and Nguyen (2025) discovered that both positions and forms of fillers have effects on participants' perception of fluency, suggesting the awareness needed for students when using fillers. Meanwhile, Anggrarini, Efendi, and Dahlia (2024) focused their study in the topic of students' speaking presentation, revealing the dominant use of unlexicalized fillers. Yulpia (2025) also found similar results in the use of fillers, especially unlexicalized ones, implying that the overreliance in using fillers could create the impression of disfluency.

Another area of study is centered in the topic of native public speakers' speeches. Tabitha and Bram (2024) analyzed the speeches of Elon Musk. Their study revealed that Musk, in his two spontaneous speeches, frequently used lexicalized fillers. They explained that lexicalized fillers might provide assistance for the speaker to fill in pauses. On the other hand, Hammad Al-Faragy, Suleiman Al Khalifawi, and Hasan Alqaisi (2025) analyzed the utterances of Joe Biden in a television interview. Their study found that Biden used fillers as not only a strategy to manage his speech, but also to uphold his character as the president of the US. In addition, they suggested that fillers should be used by language learners as a tool to improve their spoken communication skills.

The use of fillers has been studied in the context of debates as well. Muchsani (2023) examined the use of fillers in the presidential debate of native English speakers, Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump. The study revealed that unlexicalized fillers were notably used more compared to lexicalized ones, especially by Clinton. Furthermore, the study found that fillers could influence how listeners interpret the messages of the speakers. In contrast, Rahmawati and Farida (2025) analyzed a debate championship of 11^{th} and 12^{th} graders, highlighting non-native students' use of fillers. Their study showed that participants predominantly used lexicalized fillers, in the form of word repetition, during the debate. Additionally, the study implied that fillers should be taught to students in order to improve their spoken communication skills.

Similar to the context of this study, there are other researchers who have explored the use of fillers in a podcast setting. Alkhelaiwi (2023) compared the use of filled pauses (FPs), such as *"um"* and *"uh,"* between non-native and native English speakers in an English-language podcast. The findings of the study revealed that both non-native and native speakers generally used FPs. In fact, the native speakers had slightly longer duration of FPs in average. Furthermore, male speakers used FPs more frequently than female speakers, regardless of being a native or otherwise. Conversely, Setyowati and Setyawan (2023) focused their study in a podcast with non-native English speakers only. They discovered that lexicalized fillers were dominant, and concluded that during spontaneous conversation, the use of fillers was a common occurrence. In addition to these studies, Suhesty and Sriyono (2023) investigated women's language features, which also included fillers, in a podcast with Najwa Zebian. Meanwhile, Abdessamed, Rezapour, and Wilson (2024) took a unique topic in which they identified the narrative content in podcast transcripts, admittedly, their research study was not directly related to the use of fillers.

Podcast as a digital media that can be consumed with relative ease because of its portability has received good reputation over the years. It is also used as a tool to learn new knowledge alongside its primary entertainment purposes (Aulia, Pujastra, Sarmento, Tandjung, & Ramli, 2025). A study conducted by (Kiernan, Mitchell, & Russo, 2023) showed the many potentials of podcast, such as a media for education as well as information sharing. With that being said, they found that podcast does have its drawbacks, for example the lack of live conversation and interaction.

Despite the extensive studies on the use of fillers in spoken discourse, there is a notable gap to be explored further in the area of podcast discourse, especially with the involvement of international students. This setting provides a good opportunity for a spontaneous communication, an ideal site where fillers are commonly used (Setyowati & Setyawan, 2023). In addition, international students as participants are valuable data sources because they mostly communicate in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contexts of which they are simultaneously managing second language (L2) fluency pressures, intercultural communication demands, and multilingual repertoires (House, 2013; Taguchi & Ishihara, 2018). Moreover, unlike the locals, international students may use unique filler strategies while understanding meaning across cultural boundaries (Cui, 2025). Thus, exploring the types and pragmatic functions of fillers as used by the students during the podcast can contribute to a deeper comprehension of fillers in L2 spoken discourse as well as global academic communication.

In this study, there are two primary problems which need to be addressed. The aforementioned problems are related to the types and pragmatic functions of fillers that the international students may use throughout the university podcast. Therefore, the study aims to classify the types and analyze the pragmatic functions of fillers as used by the students, utilizing Rose's (1998) filler classification and Stenström's (1994) filler function theories.

In spoken language, an individual may be fluent. Fluency itself is the ability to speak in a continuous manner without encountering any difficulties, and it is related to the acquisition of language (Didirková, 2024). It implies that speaking is akin to an innate skill for a fluent individual that they do not need much effort or thought to perform. In addition, the level of language acquisition is also connected to fluency. It is only natural that language speakers want to be fluent in spoken language. In a sense, fluency is a plus to have. Likewise, there is also a minus in the opposite spectrum.

Disfluency, on the other hand, can happen in a typical speech even when the individual has no specific disorders as it is usually a signal of difficulty in processing language (Didirková, 2024). While disfluency does not have a concrete definition as it can differ according to context, to keep it simple in this case, it can be defined as any form of speech of which it is characterized by abnormal patterns, such as repetition, replacement, and irregular pauses (Lian & Anumanchipalli, 2024).

Filler itself is similar to disfluency. This is especially apparent when fillers are excessively used which can create discomfort to listeners, and disrupt their understanding to the speaker's speech (Yulpia, 2025). It needs to be inserted appropriately into speech (Seals & Coppock, 2022), using it as a tool to organize ideas and maintain conversation flow (Cahyo et al., 2025). As such, filler should be used as a strategy in spoken interaction by using it moderately to minimize disfluency.

According to Rose (1998), fillers are classified into two distinct types which are unlexicalized and lexicalized. Unlexicalized fillers are, as they are itself called, non-word sounds (e.g., *uh, um*) of which they do not carry any lexical meaning on their own, hence unlexicalized. In contrast, lexicalized fillers are words or phrases (e.g., *yeah, like, I think*) that carry more meaning in themselves. Rose's (1998) theory is one of the primary frameworks of this research. The research aims to classify the types of fillers used by the international students. As such, the theory is utilized in order to identify the types of fillers used by the students during the duration of the podcast.

Numerous studies have applied Rose's (1998) filler classification theory. For example, Abdulla and Mohammed (2023) investigated the use of fillers by Kurdish EFL university students in regards to speaking fluency. They found that lexicalized fillers were used more often, and in terms of unlexicalized fillers, *"uh"* and *"um"* were the most frequent examples. Moreover, Le and Nguyen (2025) provided comprehensive study in terms of the effect of fillers in spontaneous speech on the perception of fluency. They discovered that the forms as well as positions of filler in spontaneous speech did have effects on fluency perception. In addition, Yulpia (2025) affirmed that fillers were integral to spoken language. Although the overreliance on fillers showed language disfluency, it still played an important role as being able to manage the use of fillers would allow speaker to communicate better. In sum, these studies show the reliability of the theory as it is still being utilized even in recent years.

In the production of utterances, fillers are not uncommon to occur. These occurrences can also have some functions that will benefit the speaker. According to Stenström (1994), there are five functions of fillers which are hesitation, mitigation, time-creating, empathizing, and editing-term devices. Hesitation device functions as a pause so the speaker can think for a moment on what to say afterward. Mitigation device functions as a softener as in it softens statements so that it is less harsh or direct, in other words, it is a politeness device. Time-creating device functions as a pause but it does not stop the flow of communication as it is usually in the form of repeated words or phrases. Empathizing device functions as a check as in to check the attention of the listeners. Lastly, editing-term device functions as a corrector in case the speaker makes a mistake while speaking.

Some examples of recent studies that employed Stenström's (1994) filler function theory are Muchsani (2023), Rahmawati and Farida (2025), Yulpia (2025). Although Muchsani (2023) had an identical area of research with Rahmawati and Farida (2025) which was the use of fillers in debate setting, the former was a presidential debate and the latter was a student debate championship. In contrast, Yulpia (2025) investigated the use of fillers in education setting,

consisting of university students. Nevertheless, the findings of the three studies were correlated in terms of filler functions, such as hesitation and mitigation devices.

Similar to Rose's (1998) filler classification theory, Stenström's (1994) filler function theory is a core framework of this study as well. Aside from classifying the types of fillers, the study also aims to identify each filler to understand its pragmatic function in the given context. After the process of identification is completed, further analysis, description and interpretation of the collected data is conducted.

The present study focuses on the use of fillers, specifically classifying their types and understanding their pragmatic functions in spoken interaction through the context of a university podcast of which it is centered around international students during an interview. This area of research is yet to be explored thoroughly, leaving a notable gap. As such, this study aims to enrich the research of fillers in L2 spoken discourse and global academic communication, as well as to be of use for further research by future researchers.

METHOD

This study investigated the use of fillers in spoken interaction in regards to their types and functions through the qualitative research approach of single case study. This specific type of research approach focuses on a single phenomenon of which intensive analysis and description is used (Hancock, Algozzine, & Lim, 2021). Additionally, this approach emphasizes in-depth understanding of a specific, contextual, and bounded phenomenon (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024). In the case of the present study, a university podcast was the phenomenon as it was the primary source of data. Furthermore, the qualitative descriptive design was employed as well. A qualitative descriptive design aims to interpret or describe acquired data from a phenomenon in a meaningful way (Turale, 2020). The chosen design allowed for a detailed interpretation and description related to the acquired data of the use of fillers by the participants who were international students. There were two theories utilized in this research which were filler classification theory by (Rose, 1998) and filler function theory by (Stenström, 1994). The former classifies fillers into two types which are unlexicalized and lexicalized fillers. Meanwhile, the latter states that fillers have five functions which are hesitation, mitigation, time-creating, empathizing, and editing-term devices. These theories are the theoretical frameworks to achieve the objectives of the study.

As previously mentioned, the primary source of data was a podcast video with the title "UNNES TV - First Impressions of Indonesia: VIA Denmark Students' Confessions at UNNES". The video, with a duration of 28 minutes, was published on the UNNES TV channel on November 30th, 2025. In the video, a female host interviewed six international students from Denmark. Excluding the host, these six students were the focus participants, or units of analysis, of this study. Their utterances were collected and analyzed in regards to Rose (1998) and Stenström's (1994) respective filler theories. The data were collected using transcription method through observing and listening to the participants in the video. According to Shelton and Flint (2021), transcription is not simply a technical process of transforming audio into written text, but also an interpretive, researcher-driven act which help the process of analysis. In the present study, this method emphasizes careful attention to fillers and contextual features from the students' spoken interaction throughout the podcast. The utterances of the undergraduates were manually transcribed in a Microsoft Excel file, and organized through a series of tables which contained the timestamps of which the utterances were spoken in the video, the respective speakers, and

lastly, the utterances themselves. In this way, it allowed for an accurate collection for the data transcription as well as relative ease of navigation through the data. Content analysis was utilized as the data analysis method. This method of analysis aims to analyze acquired data through the means of categorization (Kuckartz, 2019). The utterances were analyzed for their fillers, and then marked with bold to differentiate them from the other non-filler words. These fillers were then categorized based on the two filler theories for their types and functions respectively. Lastly, the final result of the data was put into a table adapted from (Rahmawati & Farida, 2025) to be interpreted and described in accordance to the objectives of the present study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Types of fillers produced by the international students in the podcast

The first section is focused on the types of fillers which were produced in the podcast. It aims to address the first problem of the study regarding types of fillers that the students used. According to Rose (1998), fillers are classified into a simple group of two which are unlexicalized and lexicalized fillers. As previously discussed, unlexicalized fillers are non-word sound (e.g., *uh, um*), while lexicalized fillers are in the form of words or phrases (e.g., *like, I think, so*). This theory provides a solid foundation in the process of analysis. Table 1 below shows the accumulation of both types of fillers produced in the podcast.

Table 1. Types of Fillers Produced in the Podcast

Types of Fillers	Frequency	Percentage
Unlexicalized	77	28.1%
Lexicalized	197	71.9%
Total	274	100.0%

From the table above, the types of fillers which were produced in the podcast were consisting of both types which are unlexicalized and lexicalized as stated by Rose's (1998) filler classification theory. Unlexicalized fillers, which have 77 occurrences, are shown to have less frequency than lexicalized fillers, which have a total of 197 occurrences, by more than two times. As a whole, 274 fillers were produced in the podcast by the six international students, and on average, each student produced roughly 45 fillers.

Table 2. Unlexicalized Fillers

Unlexicalized	Frequency	Percentage
uh	61	79.2%
um	15	19.5%
oh	1	1.3%
Total	77	100.0%

Table 2 shows that there are a total of three distinct non-word fillers which were produced in the podcast by the students. The first and most prominent filler being *"uh"* with an occurrence of 61 times, in the second place there is *"um"* in 15 occurrences, and lastly *"oh"* in a single occurrence throughout the entirety of the podcast. As a whole, 77 non-word fillers were produced in the podcast by the six students, and on average, each of them produced roughly 12

non-word fillers. Below are some examples on how the non-word fillers were used by the students during the podcast:

Student 1: "… I'm from Denmark, and I've been here in, *uh,* Indonesia in four weeks."
Student 2: "But it was a fun experience and, *uh,* really like the food. It was good."
Student 4: "*Oh,* I thought, I think it'll be, *like,* the kindness. …"
Student 6: "*Um,* I'll be going back next Thursday. I'm looking forward to that."
Student 5: "*Uh,* a little bit, but it was okay. I could manage."

From the examples above, the non-word fillers are simply sound producer without any real lexical meaning. Hence, unlexicalized fillers. The use of *"uh," "oh," "um"* from the examples show the speakers' hesitation as well as their way of buying some time to think about what to say next. While the non-word fillers seem simple and insignificant, they are still useful tool in spoken interaction.

As seen in Table 3 below, lexicalized fillers consist of actual words or phrases in contrast to the non-word of unlexicalized fillers. There were some instances of repeated words or phrases in the podcast, accumulating a total of 22 times. Yet, the highest frequency is held by *"like"* with 66 occurrences or 33.5% of the total amount which is 197 lexicalized fillers.

Table 3. Lexicalized Fillers

Lexicalized	Frequency	Percentage
Repeated words/phrases	22	11.2%
I also think	3	1.5%
like	66	33.5%
so	29	14.7%
I think	40	20.3%
yeah	33	16.8%
also	2	1.0%
well	1	0.5%
or something	1	0.5%
Total	197	100.0%

The higher number count in comparison to unlexicalized fillers implies that lexicalized fillers are easier to spontaneously use during spoken interaction. On average, each student produced roughly 32 lexicalized fillers. Below are some examples on how lexicalized fillers were used by the undergraduates during the podcast:

Student 2: "*Also,* the teacher had a microphone and speaker. They just, uh, speak louder than the children."
Student 3: "*I think* spice, it's too much for me."
Student 5: "*So,* he was just very kind and helpful like everyone else."
Student 1: "*Like,* when we here, down here, we miss, uh, white bread a lot."
Student 6: "*Yeah,* we, often, most often we are only one teacher in the class."
Student 4: "*So, it was, it was* really a warm welcome."

These other examples of which they consist of actual words or phrases show a contrast in regards to the previous non-word fillers. *"Also," "I think," "so," "like,"* and *"yeah"* are considered lexicalized fillers as they do not simply represent sound, but also has lexical

meaning. In addition, *repeated words* or *phrases* appears as lexicalized filler as well, such as *"it was, it was."* With that being said, in essence, they function just the same as non-word fillers which is to buy time for the speaker to construct ideas or thoughts.

2. Pragmatic Functions of fillers produced by the international students in the podcast

The second section is focused on the functions of fillers which were produced in the podcast. It aims to address the second problem of the study regarding the pragmatic functions of fillers that the international students used. According to Stenström (1994), there are five functions when it comes to fillers. These functions are hesitation, mitigation, time-creating, empathizing, and lastly, editing-term devices. The five devices function differently according to each context of the utterances, yet essentially, they provide the same benefit to the speaker which is to provide opportunity to create complete ideas during spoken interaction. This filler function theory provides another strong analytical framework to this study alongside Rose's (1998) filler classification theory. Table 4 below shows the accumulation of all five functions of fillers produced in the podcast.

Table 4. Functions of Fillers

Functions of Fillers	Frequency	Percentage
Hesitation	109	39.8%
Mitigation	44	16.1%
Time-creating	23	8.4%
Empathizing	72	26.3%
Editing-term	26	9.5%
Total	197	100.0%

As seen in Table 4, the functions of fillers which were produced in the podcast were consisting of all functions, such as hesitation, mitigation, time-creating, empathizing, as well as editing-term. These functions are exactly as stated by Stenström's (1994) filler function theory. The highest frequency is held by hesitation as it seems to be the most used function in the podcast with a total occurrence of 109 times. In contrast to its name, time-creating is the least used function. It is simply because all five functions inherently do the same thing which is buying time for the speaker. Thus, it all depends on the situation or the context during spoken interaction.

Filler as a Hesitation Device

Fillers that functions as hesitation devices are commonly used as a way to pause and think about what is needed to be said next. Below are some examples on how fillers were used as hesitation devices by the students during the podcast:

Student 1: "*Um,* I think a big difference also is, *like,* class management. The way you manage the class is different, …"
Student 2: "… I'm 27 years old, and *uh,* I've been to Indonesia for almost a month."
Student 3: "Hello, my name is, *uh,* … I'm 24 years old, and *uh,* I've been here in Indonesia for a little over three weeks."

From the examples, there are a variety of fillers that functions as hesitation devices, such as *"um," "like,"* and *"uh"* with multiple occurrences. It implies that the fillers themselves are not the sole reason for them to have a certain function. The context of when the utterance where

spoken is also playing a good part regarding the function of a filler. However, *"uh"* is still the one filler which is the most prominent in this function.

The students in the podcast used fillers in order to essentially buy just enough time to form an idea during speaking. Using *"uh," "um,"* or *"like"* allowed them to create a brief moment of pause while also avoid complete silence with the use of fillers. In addition, as shown in Table 4, hesitation is the most frequent function of fillers used by the students.

Filler as a Mitigation Device

Mitigation functions as a politeness device, or in other words, it softens the speaker's statement to be less harsh or direct. It allows the speaker to avoid unintended offense or rudeness to the other party. Below are some examples on how fillers were used as mitigation devices by the students during the podcast:

Student 4: "Yeah, *I think* the first one will be nasi goreng. I was looking forward to that because …"
Student 5: "Yeah, I was just thinking about what I got. I can't remember. Maybe it was a soup, *or something.*"
Student 6: "*I also think* that you have a lot of focus on special need kids. In Denmark, we have, like, what we call …"

From the examples, it shows that there two instances of *"I think"* and *"I also think"* which both function as mitigation devices. There is also *"or something"* which was used in the podcast. This particular phrase is commonly used when the speaker is unsure, thus it functioned as a mitigation device in this context. The phrases were used with the intention of reducing the probability of offending the other party. In addition, keeping politeness in check allowed for a smoother communication.

Filler as a Time-creating Device

In this case of filler function, *repeated words* or *phrases* are commonly used. Such fillers are utilized to create some time to think. Below are some examples on how fillers were used as time-creating devices by the students during the podcast:

Student 1: "And I think that's, uh, for Danish people *that are, that are* really structured, …"
Student 2: "… if an elder went to a bus, or need help in any ways, the younger one will be pleasant to, *to give, to give* the help."
Student 3: "Even, uh, *when, when, when* we went to the office, if we had a question, it would not be like, …"

All three examples above show lexicalized fillers as they are *repeated words* or *phrases.* In the repetition of these fillers, the speaker is able to get extra time to collect their ideas or thoughts, then decide on what to say next to the other party. Furthermore, it also allows the speaker to maintain the speech flow. While it is a viable strategy to employ, overusing *repeated words* or *phrases* will undeniably show a lack of fluency in spoken interaction.

Filler as an Empathizing Device

This function acts as a device to check or get the attention from the other party. Below are some examples on how fillers were used as empathizing devices by the students during the podcast:

Student 4: "*So,* there was so many motorcycles all around and we're not used to that, …"
Student 5: "*Yeah,* I, I was travelling alone down here, and I was very nervous, and …"
Student 6: "*Yeah,* we, often, most often we are only one teacher in the class."

Fillers such as *"so"* and *"yeah"* as seen from the examples above are typically used to check or get the attention of the other party. In addition, this filler function can arouse listener's attention to the speaker as well as serve as interactive devices. The examples were produced when the speakers were starting their utterances. As such, it was important for them to get the attention of the other party through the use of filler that functioned as an empathizing device.

Filler as an Editing-term Device

Fillers function as devices to redo the speaker mistakes or misspeaks. Admittedly, international students are also normal humans who are not free from errors, including errors in spoken interaction. Below are some examples on how fillers were used as editing-term devices by the students during the podcast:

Student 1: "But I think a lot of, *like,* that its taste of more down here. Like, Danish food is kind of boring, …"
Student 2: "If we, *uh,* what we call street food is still in there a big hall where we, …"
Student 3: "… and some soup, and our main focus was, took *like,* say zero spice because my tolerance …"

In the podcast, the speakers realized an error from their utterances, then attempted to fix them using fillers. From the three examples above, it is interesting how there are both unlexicalized and lexicalized fillers. The *"uh"* shows a clear change in intention regarding the speaker's utterance. Whereas the two instances of *"like"* seem to show smaller changes, or in this function of filler case, smaller editing-term. In any case, the purpose of this function is fundamentally the same like the other functions, which is getting some time for creating ideas or forming thoughts.

Discussion

This study reveals that lexicalized fillers are frequently used than unlexicalized ones by the Danish students, accumulating 197 occurrences of a total 274 fillers throughout the podcast. Some common fillers are *"like," "yeah," "so,"* and *"I think."* The appearance of these specific fillers may be due to a sense of familiarity, or speech habits. Being foreigners in another country, the students naturally use English to communicate with other people.

Other than a sense familiarity, the podcast setting also influence the dominance of lexicalized fillers. Unlike a more formal academic setting, podcasts allow for a more relaxed and informal conversational style of interaction. In this kind of spontaneous interaction, fillers naturally have more opportunity to occur (Setyowati & Setyawan, 2023). Additionally, the podcast setting encourages the students to insert fillers which have lexical meanings as favorable tools with pragmatic functions, such as hesitation and mitigation, that can maintain the flow of conversation as well as preserving interactivity during the podcast interview (Seals & Coppock, 2022; Cahyo et al., 2025).

The present findings show some similarities with previous studies while also having differences. This study found that lexicalized fillers were used more often, aligning with the findings of Abdulla and Mohammed (2023) and Rahmawati and Farida (2025). Although the

three studies vary in the context of the participants as well as the focus area, their findings are similar regarding the use of fillers. This further reinforces that fillers are functional and integral parts of natural spoken interaction (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002). Conversely, Yulpia (2025) discovered that unlexicalized fillers were more prominent among intermediate-level English learners. This difference suggests that filler use is influenced by language proficiency and fluency, as well as cognitive demands of spoken interaction. In light of this suggestion, the international students of the present study had shown their strategy in maintaining conversational flow by using fillers, particularly lexicalized ones, in an ELF context during the podcast interview.

The novelty of this study is centered in its focus on international students, specifically Danish students, in a university podcast setting, specifically an Indonesian university podcast. By analyzing filler use in this podcast discourse of which spontaneous interaction happens naturally, the study offers new insights into how L2 speakers use fillers as helpful tools in order to manage the flow of conversation in real-time ELF situations. Furhermore, this particular context has yet to be explored thoroughly as previous filler studies have given limited attention to it. As such, this study also provides a new perspective on the role of fillers in global academic communication.

The present study highlights the importance of understanding the use of filler in natural and informal academic settings, such as podcasts. Fillers are not completely speaking disfluencies, but they are also functional and integral part of spoken interaction which can be utilized as strategic devices to maintain conversation and construct ideas or thoughts. Pedagogically, fillers should be taught to English learners so that they can use them strategically in various spoken interaction instead of avoiding them entirely.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the use of fillers used by six Danish students in a podcast interview at *Universitas Negeri Semarang.* The objectives of the study are to classify the types and analyze the pragmatic functions of fillers as used by the students during the entirety of the podcast. Utilizing single case study approach, the university podcast is the phenomenon, while the students are the units of analysis. Transcription method is used to collect the data, turning spoken interaction into written text. The collected data is then analyzed using content analysis. In order to classify the types of fillers, Rose's (1998) filler classification theory is employed. The findings show that there are two types of fillers which are unlexicalized and lexicalized fillers of which lexicalized is used more frequently. Additionally, the pragmatic functions of fillers consist of all five functions as stated by Stenström's (1994) filler function theory. They are hesitation, mitigation, time-creating, empathizing, and editing-term devices.

According to the findings, the main conclusion of this study is that fillers have an important role as strategic resources for multilingual speakers. The fillers, especially lexicalized ones in this case, are utilized by the students to maintain conversational flow and construct ideas during the podcast. This conclusion emphasizes that fillers are not simply disfluencies in spoken interaction, but they also serve as functional devices if appropriately used. With that being said, the use of fillers is highly contextual, and the speaker's proficiency can influence filler use as well. The results of this study convey some implications. In the field of pedagogy, English language educators are encouraged to proactively rise learners' awareness of filler use. It has its own classification as well as pragmatic functions. It is not merely a speaking disfluency, but an integral and functional part of spoken interaction. Thus, learners should not be afraid of using

fillers, and educators should support learners so that they are able to use fillers strategically, improving their communication skills. Meanwhile, in the field of linguistics, the present study contributes to the enrichment of research on the topic of filler use, specifically how L2 English speakers utilize fillers in spontaneous academic discourse through a podcast interview which currently receives minimal attention in previous filler studies.

Future researchers, who are interested to enrich this specific area of fillers in spoken interaction, are suggested to improve upon the present research model. The source of data could be expanded to be able to achieve more in-depth findings. Additionally, providing the collected data for each individual participant's use of fillers may provide useful, creating more thorough findings. Furthermore, participants could be from different countries instead of Denmark, allowing for a comparison between a variety of English speakers. It is recommended that both learners and educators alike to not overlook the use of fillers, but instead utilize fillers strategically as functional devices to help in spoken interaction.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study does not receive any fundings from any agencies or institutions.

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