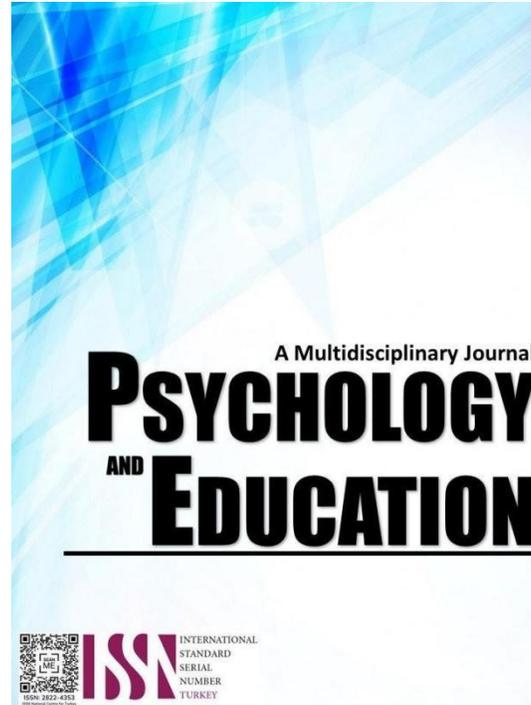


SEMANTICS OF FILLED PAUSES IN IN-SERVICE TRAININGS: THE CONTEXT OF PHILIPPINE PUBLIC TRAINERS' TRANSCRIPTS



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Semantics of Filled Pauses in In-Service Trainings: The Context of Philippine Public Trainers' Transcripts

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the role of discourse in teacher in-service training in Philippine public schools, with a particular emphasis on trainer speeches. The study uses content analysis to identify the message communicated by the filled pauses in these training sessions. The study's participants include public trainers who facilitate teacher training sessions. The sampling technique entails gathering and evaluating transcripts from the Public Trainers' Transcripts (PTTs). The study uncovers the five distinct semantic meanings of Leech Theory linked with filled pauses: conceptual, connotative, social, reflective, and collocational, demonstrating the dynamic character of language in training environments. The study emphasizes the importance of pragmatic analysis in linguistics for understanding speech dynamics in a variety of communicative contexts.

Keywords: *semantics, filled pauses, transcripts, linguistics, Philippines*

Introduction

Venturing into a profession that involves training individuals in the education sector necessitates a strong sense of professionalism. The semantic variations of filled pauses among trainers during in-service teacher training represent a critical research gap that must be addressed. Filled pauses, such as "um" or "uh," frequently convey unspoken associations that may undermine your credibility as a speaker. These pauses may simply indicate hesitations and skepticism in your spoken language. It is crucial to decipher the nuances of communication when these semantic intricacies are not given due attention and focus. Our speeches aim to align with the language used by people, allowing for quick and confident language use with minimal hesitations and false starts leading to speaking with credibility and clear communicative competence.

To be more specific, pragmatics deals with the set of resources for assigning meaning, encompassing knowledge contained in a language's lexicon and patterns for creating more complex meanings in evocative communication, as noted by Fahrurrozi (2015). In other words, pragmatics examines the relationship between usage contexts and semantic information about the outside world. Biased communication is unlikely; individuals need help understanding the phrase's meaning or the discussed topic (Syarifuddin & Hasyim, 2021).

Meanwhile, pragmatics is the study of how utterances have meaning in a given circumstance, according to Fahrurrozi (2015). The research focused on Leech's seven semantic meaning categories. For the speaker and the listener to comprehend each other, Kamanda Sari (2023) argues that meaning is a crucial link in communication. According to Leech's theory, there are seven distinct categories of meaning in semantics: conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflective, collocative, and thematic. Kamanda Sari (2023) argues that the definition of meaning can be broad, and alterations in an individual's understanding of a meaning are infrequent.

Research on pauses, filled pauses, and dysfluencies has increased in recent decades, primarily focusing on the distribution frequency, duration, and quality of vowels of filled pauses (FPs) (Muhlack et al., 2023, as cited in Dime, 2024). FPs and other dysfluencies may constitute a type of speaker characteristic suitable for inclusion in voice comparison analysis. Significant factors to take into account could include the overall distribution frequency of FPs, their type and duration, the context of the pause, the proportion of inflexible voices present during the FPs, and the quality of vowels within FP types like "uh" and "um."

Additionally, it is provided by recent research suggesting that the positioning of filler particles influences the ability to recall sentences. Researchers concluded that filled pauses share similarities with grammatical elements such as suffixes, clitics, or prepositions, given their relatively fixed position within a sentence (Kirjavainen et al., 2022, as cited in Dime, 2024).

As a result, this research offers additional opportunities for linguistic scholars. Additionally, it delves into the meaning of filled pauses within the context of transcripts from Philippine Public Trainers. Correspondingly, the study aims to provide an overview of the discourse employed by trainers during teacher in-service training. The diverse contexts in which speakers use language can challenge teachers in comprehending ideas and subjects. Thus, this study is another breakthrough contributing to Geoffrey Leech's Grand Theory.

Research Questions

This qualitative study, employing content analysis, aimed to identify the different semantics of filled pauses in the in-service training of Public Trainers' Transcripts. It was grounded in the concepts of psycholinguistics. The gathered data were analyzed using the framework of the Grand Theory of Geoffrey Leech: Seven Types of Meaning. Five sets of trainers' transcripts were used, indicating different types of topics. Specifically, this research sought to answer:

1. What semantics of filled pauses are found in the Public Trainers' Transcripts?

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher conducted the qualitative content analysis. Catoto (2023) defines qualitative research as allowing the inquirer to make knowledge claims by recognizing multiple interpretations based on individual experiences. It can be separated from narratives, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, content, and textual analysis. This approach interprets the study's conclusions without using any numerical data. However, it examines the various facets of research in which statistical methods are no longer required to evaluate the results. On the one hand, this study is content analysis because it examines the various semantics of filled pauses in in-service training for Public Trainers' Transcripts (PTTs).

Participants of the study

The participants of the study were the five public trainers during the in-service training for teachers in the Philippines school year 2022-2023.

Research Material

Transcripts served as the study's corpus. The researcher obtained a corpus that contains texts in a single language (monolingual corpus) or text data in numerous languages (multilingual corpus). There were five speech transcripts used in the study from public trainers' transcripts through voice recordings. The corpora underwent linguistic analysis and transcription.

Ethical Considerations

In qualitative research, ethical considerations hold significance as researchers wield influence in interpreting participants' statements (Steffen, 2016). This study adhered to fundamental ethical principles in presenting the corpora. The first principle, respect for persons, entailed valuing all participants' autonomy, decision-making, and dignity, whether external or internal stakeholders. The second principle, beneficence, is aimed at averting risks (physical, psychological, and social) while maximizing benefits for research participants. Justice, the third element, pertained to selecting participants from groups that stand to gain from research. The final principle, community respect, involved safeguarding and honoring the values and interests of the community, along with shielding it from harm, considering the public schools selected for this study. Additionally, all participants willingly participated and consented during their speaking training sessions. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants and their respective schools were rigorously maintained.

Results and Discussion

Semantic of Filled Pauses in In-Service Training: Conceptual Meaning

The first identified semantic of filled pauses is conceptual meaning. Conceptual meaning, also known as cognitive meaning, is thought to be at the heart of linguistic communication. There is a closed-ended character to conceptual meaning, suggesting that the meaning associated with a word is never restored. As stated otherwise, the term's conceptual meaning does not change from its inception to its disappearance (Kamanda Sari, 2023). Subsequently, the following statement conforms to this semantic of filled pauses:

'We should always consider that um education unlocks doors to new worlds.' (PTT1)

The above snippet is taken from Lambunao National High School's In-Service Training for Teachers. Here, the speaker encouraged the audience to believe that education unlocks doors to new worlds.

He continuously added his thoughts,

"It is um the antidote to ignorance." (PTT1)

Also, the added line from the statement of PPT1 implies certain convictions of his ideas about education as he used the word 'antidote.'

Lastly, the excerpt below the context of 'prison' assists in discerning words with multiple meanings and offers supplementary details to enhance comprehension of the speakers' or writers' intended conceptual meaning.

"Such notion that school is um a prison to me." (PTT3)

A statement is considered to have conceptual meaning, delving into the cognitive and communicative aspects of why speakers use pauses. Taking this into consideration is the excerpt from PPT1, which used words such as "unlocks," "doors," and "new worlds," understood literally as both the mental concept associated with a word or phrase and the actual objects or creatures in the world that the term refers to. Such words could mean "unbolt," a hinge that allows entry and exit, and new physical surroundings or nature.

Additionally, "antidote" means a medicine to counteract a particular poison. In PPT3, the word "prison" refers to a facility where individuals convicted of crimes are confined. In this instance, the term "prison" concept offers a fundamental description of a facility

for rehabilitating individuals with criminal convictions.

Kamanda Sari (2023), underscores the importance of context in grasping conceptual meaning. He posits that beyond the inherent characteristics of words or phrases, the utilization of context—both linguistic and nonlinguistic—affects meaning. Context not only offers additional information for understanding the speakers' or writers' intended conceptual meaning but also assists in discerning words with multiple meanings.

Semantic of Filled Pauses in In-Service Training: Connotative Meaning

In Kamanda Sari's (2023) interpretation of Leech's work, connotative meaning pertains to the extra communicative significance a statement acquires based on the subject matter it addresses. Leech defines connotation as the real-world encounters of individuals connected with a phrase when using or hearing it. Connotative meaning emerges from the associations and personal, cultural, or social experiences people associate with words. It encompasses supplementary layers of meaning that can evoke emotions, attitudes, or judgments, extending beyond the word's literal or dictionary definition. The analysis is described in the following sample:

"We should always consider that um education unlocks doors to new worlds." (PTT1)

Noticeably, the trainer used words metaphorically. His interpretation of education does not imply the literal meaning of doors and worlds. The abstraction of his ideas on education means gaining access to new chances or opportunities.

"Um, it is the antidote to ignorance." (PTT1)

The word "antidote" here means a remedy or solution that provides relief or counterbalance to a particular problem or challenge: ignorance.

"Such notion that school is um a prison to me." (PTT3)

The word "prison" in the above excerpt means a situation, condition, or state that feels confining, restrictive, or oppressive based on how he defined it. Based on the trainer's statement, the meaning of prison may mean that he considers school an unhappy and solitary place for him.

Nevertheless, PTT1 and PTT3 could possess more profound or symbolic connotations that may deviate from our conventional understanding. It is essential to remember that the connotative meaning is susceptible to variation depending on the circumstances and the diverse experiences of individuals or cultures.

Semantic of Filled Pauses in In-Service Training: Social Meaning

Another semantic of filled pause present in the Philippine Public Trainers' Transcripts

was the social meaning. This type of filled pause is the most dominant found in the corpora. The analysis and discussion of the data are presented in the subsequent description:

"Um, excuse me, but could you please pass me the answer sheets after the evaluation of this training?" PTT2

The trainer's statement above, which used a filled pause, adds a well-mannered and respectful tone to the request.

"I was thinking that, uh, discussing this with one of my co-trainers I met in training before the pandemic about differentiated instruction by John Dewey and Jean Piaget, and I guess he has an interesting outlook about this instruction." PTT2

The trainer's extract above demonstrates the filled pause, which welcomes people into the conversation and acknowledges a previous exchange.

"I think, um, everyone's opinions on this matter are important." PTT3

"I believe that with the right mindset, um, in learning, we can all embrace the new curriculum of our country." PTT4

In PTT3 and PTT4, the trainer filled pause signals in consideration of the diverse opinions of the attendees in training. This can be explained further when the trainer acknowledges everyone's viewpoints.

"When we talk about the inclusive curriculum, which entails diving into the concept of IP, LGBTQ+, and many more, uh, it is, uh, an emotive subject, so let us address it cautiously. I am, um, not an expert on this since our curriculum is still in the process of integrating it effectively, but I can share with you some helpful tips on how to do so." PTT1

In PTT1, the filled pause acknowledges the matter's sensitivity and suggests a thoughtful approach, as well as the trainer's modesty and humility in dealing with it.

The filled pause signals found in PTT1 below show the active listening and engagement of the trainer and the attendees in the training. This is manifested in the filled pause as the trainer invites collaboration.

"I was, uh, really listening to what you were saying on the inclusivity matter. I was thinking, um, maybe we could work together to enhance our district curriculum for inclusive curriculum? This is in context with the school where we live. That would be promising!"

PTT1

In PTT5 below, the trainer's filled pause signals agreement and alignment with the trainer's viewpoint and sincerity to input and invite ideas from others.

"I agree with your point. This could address the issue of teachers' skills. I am, um, open to suggestions. What do you think is best for everybody?" PTT5

The filled pauses in the samples above contribute to the general tone, manners, and interpersonal dynamics of the discourse, serving social functions and communicating a variety of social cues.

According to Kamanda Sari (2023), language conveys information about the social context in which it operates, denoted as social meaning. A grasp of stylistics and linguistic subtleties is vital for interpreting a piece of communication. Detection of dialectical speech occurs when a sentence or pronunciation discloses details about the speaker's class or regional background. A term's social connotation is linked to its usage, emphasizing the language's social context. Understanding social meaning is crucial for comprehending the nuances and impacts of language within specific social or cultural settings. It facilitates communication, expression of identities, adherence to social norms, and sharing social attitudes and values. It is important to note that social meaning can vary across cultures and societies, and diverse perspectives and experiences can shape how language is interpreted (Tarigan, 2020).

Semantic of Filled Pauses in In-Service Training: Reflective Meaning

Conversely, a filled pause with reflective meaning suggests careful thought, self-examination, or a little break for more contemplation. The following statements in the ensuing excerpts adhere to the reflective meaning.

"When we talk about the inclusive curriculum, which entails diving into the concept of IP, LGBTQ+, and many more, uh, it is, uh, an emotive subject, so let us address it cautiously. I am, um, not an expert on this since our curriculum is still in the process of integrating it effectively, but I can share with you some helpful tips on how to do so." PTT1

In PTT1 above, the trainer mainly addresses and navigates the issue with sensitivity, which bears a sense of reflection on topics.

"I believe it is, uh, legit and true, but we should consider also some things and situations that can affect the process. Remember, in every rule, there is an exemption." PTT3

"It seems likely, but there is still some uncertainty about the new curriculum of the Department of Education." PTT5

In PTT3 and PTT5, it is evident that the trainers are qualifying a statement. Qualifying a statement here was done using a modal verb "but" to make the statement more nuanced or accurate. Additionally, the trainer conveys the complexity of a situation and acknowledges exceptions.

"Oh, that is, um, an interesting idea too. I am, uh, not entirely sure about it. Let me think about it briefly, confirm it, and get back to you." PTT4

In PTT4, the trainer expresses a thoughtful response and uncertainty about the ideas discussed.

The filled pauses ("uh" and "um") in the instances above are intended to imply introspection, suggesting that the trainer is pausing to carefully consider their words, think through the subject, or gather their thoughts before continuing. It gives the message a deeper level of complexity and enables the trainer to deliberate his speech.

Reflective meaning in Leech's Theory has to do with language's metalinguistic element. It entails using language to talk about language itself. When authors or speakers think about words, syntax, communication, or any other language aspect, they use reflective meaning. When employing reflective meaning, individuals can engage in discussions, reflections, and observations regarding their deliberate utilization of language and other linguistic contexts. This involves a more thorough exploration of the characteristics of language (Kamanda Sari, 2023).

Semantic of Filled Pauses in In-Service Training: Collocation Meaning

The following statements show how filled pauses are associated with particular linguistic settings, expressing a range of nuanced meanings, including politeness, uncertainty, hesitation, and discourse navigation.

"Differentiated Instruction as one of the key features in the K to 12 curricula could help address the preferences of every student who needs contextualization. These two approaches, uh, I am uncertain about the details." PTT2

In PTT2, filled pauses like "uh" are often collocated with words expressing something uncertain or that causes one to feel uncertain.

"I guess, uh, based on the K to 12 Curriculum, students must complete the 12 years of basic education, and, um, Matatag Curriculum needs to be studied first." PTT5

"So, uh, what do you think about the new proposal of the Matatag Curriculum of the Department of Education?" PTT5

"We are done with spiral progression integration in our lesson. Now, uh, let us shift our focus to the upcoming curriculum that is

Matatag." PTT5

As mentioned earlier in PTT5, examples show when the topic of discussion is changing, when there are little pauses while the trainer recalls specifics or considers the next section of the story, and how to take turns while keeping the conversation moving.

"There are, uh, some factors to consider why reading become one of the concerns of our country, like lack of training for teachers and family orientation." PPT2

"Yes, it could be, and let us consider the studies on differentiated instruction of some scholars like Pearl Subban, Ma. Rita R. Aranda, and Joel L. Zamora." PTT2

The trainer-filled pauses in PTT2 may be related to the introduction of further details or instances.

"I am, um, not sure if we can integrate all features of K to 12 in one lesson alone." PTT5

"I get what you are talking about. It is, um, something we will have to deal with next training session." PTT1

"This time, the results are, um, somewhat questionable." PTT3

In PTT5, PTT1, and PTT3, filled pauses are linguistic indicators to show the trainer's thought process, reluctance, or contemplation. They facilitate the natural flow of communication by giving time for the trainer to think and compose their ideas in the discourse.

The aforementioned filled pause examples help the trainer manage the flow of the conversation, seamlessly navigate transitions, make points clear, and show how filled pauses are associated with particular linguistic contexts like hesitation, uncertainty, politeness, and maneuvering through discourse.

Kamanda Sari (2023), introduced the concept of collocational meaning, commonly known as collocation meaning, which revolves around the associations and patterns formed by word combinations or collocations. It pertains to the meaning derived from the typical pairings of words in a language. Collocations are words naturally occurring together, creating specific patterns or combinations frequently employed by native speakers. These word pairings' consistency and predictability add to collocational meaning, which is the process by which one word's presence alters or influences another's meaning. Collocation meaning can be examined by analyzing the constraints and preferences in word collocational usage. Strong collocational tendencies show how frequently some words occur in conjunction with other terms.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion indicates that filled pauses in public trainers' transcripts encompass five specific semantic meanings: conceptual, connotative, social, reflective, and collocation. The speeches delivered during training sessions serve as a rich resource for identifying these various semantic nuances of filled pauses. Examining the existence of filled pauses and their meanings in transcripts of in-service trainers enhances our comprehension of how language is employed. By venturing into this work, the communicative competence of both the trainers and the audience and communication discloses.

Moreover, this study provides teachers, students, trainers, and other audiences with significant insight that highlights the refinements and resolutions of linguistic phenomena. Consequently, it is suggested that future scholars undertake similar investigations in diverse contexts.

The examination conducted in the Philippines is a noteworthy opportunity that asks for consideration. In contrast to other fields of study, the semantics of filled pauses may not directly and explicitly impact society and communities. The study of filled pauses may appear to focus on specific linguistic components, but its ramifications extend beyond language to influence how individuals interact, communicate, and interpret one another in a variety of social contexts.

New knowledge and the effects on society and communities:

The study of the meanings and purposes of filled pauses in spoken language, including "uh" and "um," is known as the semantics of filled pauses. The study of filled pauses' semantics entails considering their contextual influences, their contributions to the overall meaning of utterances, and their functional functions in communication. Filled pauses may have little lexical significance, yet they play a crucial pragmatic and semantic role in the dynamics of spoken conversation.

In contrast to other fields of study, the semantics of filled pauses may not directly impact teachers, trainers, societies, and communities but its contributions to determining the nature and meanings of filled pauses cannot be overestimated. Hence, studying filled pauses may appear limited to particular linguistic components, but its implications go beyond language to affect how people interact, communicate, and comprehend one another in various social contexts.

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