



Hesitation phenomena in the speech of 2022 English education students at Universitas Negeri Padang

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify the types of hesitation phenomena and describe their occurrence in the speech of students enrolled in the English Education Program at Universitas Negeri Padang, cohort 2022. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, supported by quantitative frequency analysis to present the distribution of hesitation phenomena. The data were collected from 24 students who had completed all speaking courses. A speaking test was used as the research instrument, in which students delivered a speech with a minimum duration of five minutes on topics determined by the researcher. The recorded speeches were transcribed and analyzed based on six types of hesitation phenomena: false starts, repetitions, self-corrections, silent pauses, filled pauses, and lengthening. The findings indicate that all types of hesitation phenomena occurred except false starts. Filled pauses were the most frequently produced phenomenon (393 occurrences), consisting of 315 unlexicalized and 78 lexicalized forms. This was followed by repetitions (84 occurrences), self-corrections (40 occurrences), lengthening (28 occurrences), and an average duration of 170 seconds of silent pauses. The quantitative frequencies were used to support qualitative interpretations of students' speech performance. In conclusion, filled pauses and silent pauses were the most dominant hesitation phenomena in students' speech. These findings suggest that limited linguistic knowledge and insufficient fluency may contribute to the frequent occurrence of hesitation during speech production.

Keywords:

Speaking, speech, hesitation phenomena.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Language serves as a crucial tool for communication, facilitating the exchange of information and fostering connections between individuals. Beyond its transactional role, language also functions as a means of building social relationships and expressing identity, as highlighted by Bukat in Hanum (2017). Effective communication therefore requires not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately across different contexts.

According to Keraf, as cited by Sitti (2018), language fulfills various functions,

including self-expression, social adaptation, and social control. These functions emphasize the role of language as a medium for conveying meaning and shaping social interaction. In today's globalized world, English has gained prominence as a global lingua franca, enabling communication across cultures and nations in fields such as culture, science, technology, and education.

In the Indonesian context, English is taught as a foreign language, making it an essential tool for accessing global knowledge and participating in international communication. Consequently, learners are expected not only to understand English theoretically but also to use it effectively in real communicative situations, particularly in spoken interaction.

Students in English Education programs are required to develop proficiency in four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as these skills are interrelated and mutually supportive. Among these skills, speaking plays a crucial role in enabling learners to express ideas and engage in meaningful communication. Saputra (2020) emphasizes that speaking is a fundamental skill in both English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, as it reflects learners' ability to use language communicatively.

Despite its importance, speaking is often considered the most challenging skill for EFL learners. Harmer (2001) notes that learners frequently experience difficulties in speaking due to limited vocabulary, lack of fluency, and anxiety when producing oral language. As a result, students may prioritize receptive skills or written tasks over oral practice, which can negatively affect their speaking fluency.

Fluency in speaking requires mastery of vocabulary and grammatical structures as well as sufficient practice in real communicative contexts. However, students often struggle to apply their linguistic knowledge outside the classroom, limiting their ability to engage in natural conversation. Nunan, as cited by Juniardi et al. (2020), stresses that conversational fluency is a vital indicator of successful language learning, yet limited opportunities for practice may hinder learners' progress.

One common feature of spoken language production is hesitation. Hesitation phenomena, such as pauses, repetitions, and fillers (e.g., "uh" or "mm"), occur when speakers experience difficulty organizing ideas or retrieving lexical items. Informal observations of students who have completed speaking courses indicate that many still struggle with word retrieval and clarity of expression, resulting in frequent pauses and reduced fluency during speech.

Hesitation phenomena are not limited to language learners; they are a universal aspect of communication observed in both everyday interactions and formal contexts. In spontaneous speech, speakers naturally produce pauses or fillers while planning utterances and organizing grammatical structures. According to Clark and Fox Tree (2002), hesitation phenomena function as cognitive markers that signal ongoing speech planning rather than communication failure. However, in second or foreign language contexts, hesitation tends to occur more frequently due to learners' limited linguistic resources and reduced automaticity in language production.

Hesitation reflects the complexities of spoken communication in EFL contexts and becomes particularly visible in speaking tasks that require real-time language processing, such as speeches or presentations. English Education students at Universitas Negeri Padang are expected to demonstrate a high level of speaking proficiency, as they are prepared to become future English teachers. Nevertheless, despite having completed several speaking courses, many students still exhibit noticeable hesitation during speech performances. Investigating

hesitation phenomena in this context is therefore necessary to understand the gap between instructional input and actual spoken performance.

This study, entitled "*Hesitation Phenomena in the Speech of 2022 English Education Students at Universitas Negeri Padang*," aims to contribute to the understanding of speaking fluency by examining how hesitation phenomena occur in students' speech. The findings are expected to provide insights for speaking instructors in designing instructional strategies that promote fluency development and reduce hesitation in students' oral communication.

The purposes of this research are: (1) To identify the types of hesitation phenomena that occur in the speech of students of the English Education Program registered in 2022 at Universitas Negeri Padang. (2) To describe the occurrence of hesitation phenomena in students' speech, supported by frequency data to illustrate their distribution.

2. METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method. A descriptive approach is used to systematically describe the characteristics of hesitation phenomena found in students' speech. The qualitative design allows the researcher to explore spoken language phenomena in natural contexts and to interpret how hesitation occurs during speech production.

Qualitative analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting types of hesitation phenomena and the contexts in which they appear. Although frequency data are presented, they are used only to support descriptive findings rather than to make statistical generalizations. This approach enables a detailed understanding of hesitation phenomena in students' spoken performance.

This combined approach allows the researcher to not only identify and categorize the specific hesitation phenomena but also to explore the broader implications for language learning and communication skills. The insights gained from this study could inform teaching strategies and help improve students' speaking abilities by addressing the root causes of hesitation.

The subjects of this research are students of the English Education Program at Universitas Negeri Padang who were registered in 2022. These students were selected because they had completed core speaking courses, including *Speaking for Informal Interaction*, *Speaking for Formal Interaction*, and *Public Speaking*, which ensured that they had sufficient exposure to spoken English instruction.

A total of 24 students were involved in this study. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, as the research focused on students who actively produced extended spoken discourse suitable for analysing hesitation phenomena. According to Creswell (2014), purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative research when participants are chosen based on their relevance to the research objectives rather than representativeness.

The sample size was considered sufficient to provide rich and detailed spoken data for qualitative analysis. The findings of this study are not intended to be generalized to all English Education students at Universitas Negeri Padang, but rather to provide an in-depth description of hesitation phenomena within this specific research context.

The instrument used in this research is speaking test; The primary instrument for this research is a speaking test, designed to evaluate hesitation phenomena in students' speech. During this test, each participant was asked to deliver a speech lasting between 5 to 10 minutes. The topics for these speeches were carefully selected by the researcher and revolved around the theme of education, ensuring relevance and consistency across participants. To capture the data accurately, each speech was recorded by the researcher. These recordings were then

analysed to identify and categorize instances of hesitation, such as false starts, repetitions, self-correction, silent pause, filled pause and lengthening. This approach allows for a detailed examination of how and when hesitation occurs during the students' spoken performance. The use of a controlled speaking test ensures that the data collected is both structured and comparable across different subjects.

Technique of Data Collection. The techniques of data collection used in this research were as follows. (1) The participants were asked to deliver a speech on a topic determined by the researcher. Each speech lasted between 5 to 10 minutes and was audio-recorded to capture instances of hesitation phenomena during spoken production. (2) The recorded speeches were transcribed verbatim. This transcription process involved converting the audio recordings into written texts to enable close examination of hesitation phenomena. (3) The transcriptions were carefully examined to identify and categorize hesitation phenomena into several types, such as silent pauses, filled pauses, repetitions, false starts, self-corrections, and lengthening. (4) The occurrences of each type of hesitation were counted to provide frequency information. These frequency counts were used to support the qualitative description of hesitation phenomena rather than to conduct statistical analysis.

Technique of Data Analysis. To analyse the data, the researcher employed qualitative analysis procedures, including: (1) Coding and categorization, in which the transcribed data were coded and classified into types of hesitation phenomena based on relevant linguistic theories. (2) Descriptive frequency analysis, where frequency counts were used to illustrate how often each type of hesitation occurred in students' speech. The frequency data functioned as supporting information to strengthen the qualitative findings, not as a basis for statistical generalization.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.

Interpretation

Table 1. Types of Hesitation Phenomena Identified in Students' Speech

Students	Hesitation phenomena						
	Silent Pause (sec)	Repetition (x)	False start	Self-correction (x)	Lengthening (x)	Filled pause (x)	
						Type 1	Type 2
1	127 sec	3x	-	-	12x	15x	-
2	162 sec	1x	-	2x	1x	27x	2x
3	9 sec	21x	-	6x	1x	16x	7x
4	170 sec	1x	-	1x	-	4x	4x
5	142 sec	1x	-	2x	-	18x	3x
6	203 sec	2x	-	1x	3x	3x	1x
7	157 sec	-	-	-	-	9x	2x
8	182 sec	-	-	2x	-	3x	-
9	48 sec	1x	-	4x	-	20x	13x
10	179 sec	1x	-	1x	-	1x	-
11	200 sec	1x	-	1x	-	5x	2x
12	138 sec	10x	-	5x	-	6x	2x
13	229	5x	-	6x	-	29x	3x

	sec						
14	11 sec	5x	-	-	-	16x	2x
15	179 sec	-	-	2x	-	8x	2x
16	11 sec	4x	-	2x	3x	8x	2x
17	179 sec	2x	-	-	1x	10x	3x
18	-	18x	-	-	7x	25x	13x
19	132 sec	-	-	4x	-	16x	1x
20	186 sec	1x	-	-	-	18x	-
21	120 sec	2x	-	1x	-	23x	6x
22	-	3x	-	-	-	25x	4x
23	214 sec	-	-	-	-	1x	5x
24	35 sec	-	-	-	-	9x	2x
Total		84x		40x	28x	315x	78x

Table 1 presents supporting information on the distribution of hesitation phenomena identified through qualitative coding of the students' speech transcripts. Based on the qualitative analysis, five types of hesitation phenomena were found: silent pause, repetition, self-correction, lengthening, and filled pause. No instances of false start were identified in the data.

Among these phenomena, filled pause emerged as the most dominant type of hesitation. Qualitatively, filled pauses were categorized into two forms: unlexicalized filled pauses (such as *uh* and *um*) and lexicalized filled pauses (such as *I mean* and *you know*). These hesitation markers commonly appeared when students attempted to maintain speech flow while planning their utterances.

Silent pauses were also frequently observed, indicating moments when students temporarily stopped speaking to organize ideas or retrieve vocabulary. Other hesitation phenomena, including repetition, self-correction, and lengthening, appeared less frequently and reflected students' efforts to monitor accuracy during speech production.

Extract 1

S1: "Education is necessary for the role of life for everyone. [...]. thank you."
S2: "I want to introduce you the importance of skin [...] a life changing routine, skin- skin care routine that can tackle this problem."
S3: "the fact that [...] just by typing by our finger, we can we can talk to million people, and share our thought and [...] and share our thought and talk to other people in this world."
S4: "Today I would like to talk about something that many university students experienced, anxiety. [...] University can be exciting but can also be stressful."
S5: "The first one is ee.. [...] campus organization help us to ee.. [...] to improve our leadership skills."
S6: "[...] when you ..aa.. [...] do the regular exercise, you can [...] increase your increase your healthier life."
S7: "Another drawback from social media for education is [...]. Kayaknya udah kak. Thank you."

Extract 2

S1: "**we, we** are followed to the first is formal education annnd informal education."
S3: " we know that **many many many** effect that we know can affect us to the bad sides of social media."
S3: " **With-with-with** double cleansing, we give uh.. healthier skin, and more radiant skin."
S3: "Good afternoon ladies and gentleman, today **I want presenting, I want presenting** about how social media **can can** affect to our mental health."

Extract 3

S2: "Oil based to remove your skin - removed your make up layers, dust and oil."
S4: "This planner will help eh.. prevent them to forgetting forgetting the important things."
S9: "In this busy life of college, I mean aa.. in this busy aa.. college life, we often ignore about sleep."
S9: "in summary, to overcome stress, you just have to ... in summary to overcome stress you should follow this three tips."

Extract 4

S1: "If we talk about the importance **o:f** education in daily life, we have **to:** admit that it eee.... improve our personal life."
S16: " Firstly, education is open **the:** opportunities"
S17: ".... **a:nd** weak immunity can make your physical health worse."

Extract 5

S2: *"So, I want to introduce you the importance of skin [] a life changing routine, skin- skin care routine that can tackle this problem."*
S2: *"With-with-with double cleansing, we give uh.. healthier skin, and more radiant skin, and aa.. reducing acne and aa... premature aging."*
S3: *"But beside the [...] online [...] online can be dangerous and can be took the opportunity. aaa... [...] like [pause] like we can stuck in that world and cut out from from.. from.. real world."*
S5: *"Uh.. maybe that's all. Thank you."*
S9: *"Okay, good morning ladies and gentlemen"*
S13: *"So umm.. ee.. many ways to be a confidence but ee.. how to be do that?"*
S15: *"First aa.. don't sleep late at night"*
S18: *"Okay, the next step is LMD."* S14: *"Umm.. college students don't have much money right?"*

Discussion

The findings presented in Table 1 and supported by Extracts 1–5 illustrate the hesitation phenomena identified through qualitative coding of students' speech. According to Rose (1997), hesitation phenomena include silent pause, repetition, self-correction, lengthening, filled pause, and false start. Interestingly, almost all types of hesitation phenomena were identified in this study except false start, with filled pause emerging as the most dominant phenomenon.

This finding is in line with Roza and Rosa (2013), who reported that filled pause is one of the most frequently occurring hesitation phenomena, while false start tends to occur less frequently. The results also support Ilmi HL et al. (2023), who identified several hesitation phenomena in students' speech, including fillers, repetitions, silent pauses, and corrections. However, unlike Ilmi HL et al. (2023), this study did not find instances of stutters or false starts.

Extracts 1–5 provide qualitative examples of the forms of hesitation phenomena identified in students' speech. The most frequent hesitation phenomenon was filled pause, with unlexicalized fillers such as *aa...* and *ee...* appearing most frequently. This finding is consistent with Ilmi HL et al. (2023), although their study found *ee...* to be the most dominant filler. Another hesitation phenomenon that frequently appeared was silent pause, indicating moments of cognitive processing when students experienced difficulty retrieving vocabulary or organizing ideas. This finding aligns with Ajani (2021), who concluded that limited knowledge and vocabulary contribute to hesitation in speaking.

Overall, the findings suggest that students need to improve not only their linguistic knowledge and vocabulary but also their speaking fluency to reduce hesitation during speech production.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that students of the English Education Program at Universitas Negeri Padang, registered in 2022, experienced various hesitation phenomena during their speech performances. The qualitative analysis revealed five types of hesitation phenomena, namely silent pauses, repetitions, self-corrections, lengthening, and filled pauses. No instances of false start were identified in the students' speech.

Qualitative interpretation of the data showed clear patterns in how hesitation phenomena functioned during students' speech production. Filled pauses frequently appeared when students attempted to maintain the flow of speech while planning their utterances, suggesting difficulties in real-time language processing. These filled pauses occurred in both unlexicalized forms, such as *aa...* and *ee...*, and lexicalized forms, reflecting students' strategies to hold their speaking turn while searching for appropriate expressions. Silent pauses were commonly found at moments when students struggled to organize ideas or retrieve vocabulary, indicating cognitive processing during speech. Other hesitation phenomena, including repetition, self-correction, and lengthening, functioned as compensatory strategies that allowed students to monitor accuracy and reformulate their speech without interrupting communication entirely.

Overall, the findings suggest that hesitation phenomena in students' speech are closely related to limitations in linguistic knowledge, vocabulary, and speaking fluency. Rather than indicating communication failure, hesitation phenomena reflect students' efforts to manage speech production in a second language context. This implies that improving fluency requires not only increasing vocabulary and grammatical knowledge but also developing automaticity and confidence in spoken English.

The findings of this study give rise to several pedagogical implications for improving L2 speaking instruction. To enhance students' knowledge and vocabulary, instructors in speaking courses are encouraged to collaborate with reading and writing course instructors through integrated tasks or team teaching. Synchronizing teaching materials across language skills may help students develop richer ideas and stronger lexical resources for speaking. In addition, speaking instructors should design classroom activities that focus on fluency development, such as spontaneous speaking tasks, interactive discussions, and extended speech practice, to promote spontaneity in oral communication. Furthermore, students are encouraged to actively use English outside the classroom, participate in speaking activities, and engage in English-speaking communities or competitions to increase exposure and confidence.

This study offers important insights for speaking instructors and students in understanding speaking fluency through hesitation phenomena. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as this study relied solely on speech data without interview or observational data to further explore the underlying causes of hesitation. Future research is recommended to incorporate interviews and classroom observations to provide more in-depth qualitative insights into students' speaking difficulties. Therefore, further qualitative investigations are needed to offer richer descriptions of students' ability to deliver speech and to deepen understanding of hesitation phenomena in EFL speaking contexts.

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