
Gender and Native-ness Differences in the Use of Speech Fillers in Political Interviews*Rola Fawwaz Hamad AL-Faragy*rol19h1025@uoanbar.edu.iq*Fuad Jassim Mohammed*ed.fuad.jassim@uoanbar.edu.iq*Department of English, College of Education for Humanities,
University of Anbar***DOI: [10.31973/aj.v2i140.3634](https://doi.org/10.31973/aj.v2i140.3634)****Abstract**

This research aims to find out types and functions of speech fillers used by politician interviewees. It also investigates gender and native-ness differences in the use of SFS among participants. The data of this study come from eight extracted episodes taken from the corpus of conflict zone (CZ) talk show. The data have been analyzed and classified based on the theories proposed by Stenstrom (1994) and Rose (1998). A qualitative analysis has been followed in dealing with functions of SFs. A quantitative analysis is also applied in the course of counting frequencies and percentages of SFs. The results show that time is required for planning, especially when difficult topics are discussed. Results show that all participants used all types of SFs with unlexicalized SFs being used more frequently.

In terms of functions of SFs, Female participants used all functions of SFs based on the theory of Stenstrom. They are breathing, filling pause, hesitation mark, starter, shift marker, empathizing, mitigating, editing term, time creating device, holding the turn and sequencer, while the male groups used all functions except shift marker. Breathing is the dominating function of SFs used by all participants with vast distinction with other functions. In contrast, shift marker has the least used function.

Keywords: Discourse markers; Speech fillers; Political interviews; Male/Female; Native/Non-native.

1. Introduction

Spoken discourse is different from written discourse in that it contains speech fillers (henceforth SFs), discourse markers and many other phenomena that make the speech go natural. Brown & Yule (1983 cited by Navratilova, 2015: 1) claim that speakers might introduce a large number of prefabricated SFs, like *ehm*, *err*, *what I mean*, *I think*, *well*, *you know*, *if you see* and so on in their utterances. Disfluencies and hesitations are unavoidable and indeed, naturally, some speakers prefer to resort SFs or pauses. What speakers want to

express while using SFs might be actually signs indicating that they are in a cognitive process. In other words, how they are thinking (Erten, 2014: 68). SFs are discourse markers a speaker use when s/he thinks and/or hesitates during his/her speech. He also argues that SFs fulfill a communicative function. However, SFs are not the primary message in a conversation. Rather they carry collateral message. In other words, they are only used to help meaning. SFs can be used to carry a range of interpersonal messages, for example, “holding the floor.”

The concept of SFs has become more and more common, and we often don't even notice them. This is because they are something natural and common to all of us and they are an inherent speech component, so they have been widely explored by many researchers, for many cases. Erten (2014) conducted a case study at ESOGU Preparation School in which she aimed to emphasize the importance of teaching SFs to learners in ESL / EFL classrooms, and investigate whether learners use SFs after they have been taught and if so, which SFs they tend to use and for what purpose. In addition, the study aimed to increase the learners' awareness of SFs when they hesitate while using the second language, which is actually a very natural way of speaking. To this end, two speaking sessions of seven students (four men and three women) of an English language preparation class at Osmangazi University in Turkey were analyzed. The age of the students ranged between 19 and 20 years and they came from different places of Turkey. SFs were taught between the sessions, and students' use of SFs was investigated before and after the teaching sessions. The findings revealed that after they were taught, the learners used SFs in the second session and were provided with related activities for practicing SFs. Although what SFs the learners tended to use in the second talking session and what they would use commonly differed at specific points, they generally preferred using the SFs “*ehm/ uhm, well and how can I say/ how to say.*”

In their 2014's study, Duvall *et al* explored the phenomenon of filler words in English language. They explored the filler words in terms of their causes (such as divided attention, infrequent words, and nervousness), their effect on the speaker's credibility, their impact on listener understanding and possible ways for enhancing communication. The findings of this research led to the conclusion that the lack or the excessive use of SFs can affect the speaker's credibility. The SFs are often caused by attention dividing, the use of unusual words and anxiety.

Kharismawan (2017) investigated “types and functions of SFs used in Barack Obama's Speeches.” In this study, he sought to answer two research questions: (1) “what are the types of SFs in Barack

Obama's speeches? And (2) what are the functions of SFs in Barack Obama's speeches?" The aims of this study were to present the types and the functions of SFs and to increase the students' awareness of SFs when they hesitate in the second language. This study adopted a descriptive qualitative approach. In order to answer the problems of this study, the researcher applied Rose's (1998) theory on the types of SFs which combined with same theories on the types and functions of SFs that taken from Stenstrom (1994) and Baalen (2001). The results of this study showed that there were two types of SFs; those were unlexicalized and lexicalized SFs. In addition, the study showed there were five functions of SFs, namely editing term, empathizing, hesitation mark, mitigating, and time-creating devices.

Political interview is treated as a genre whose communicative aim is to convince the audiences. Likewise, it has been argued that political interview is a dialogical genre in which the institutional actors take part to give comments on a certain subject and their speech is managed by the media expert. The findings of the studies on political interviews revealed that interviews are strongly organized speech event governed by "genre-specific discourse rules". It is stated that both interviewer and interviewee follow a number of genre-specific rules, and there is a continual conversation between them to achieve these norms (Blum-Kulka, 1983: 31).

This paper tries to answer the following questions

- 1- What types of SFs do male and female politicians use, and for what purposes?
- 2- Do native English speakers use more or less SFs than non-natives?

The study aims to:

- Identify types and functions of SFs used by politicians and their purposes.
- Determine any gender differences among politicians in the use of SFs; and
- Find out if there is a difference in the use of SFs between native and non-native speakers of the language.

2. Types of SFs

On the one hand, Stenstrom (1994: 1) classified SFs according to their functions into two types; those are **1- pauses (silent& filled) and 2- verbal or lexical speech fillers**. On the other hand, Rose (1998: 7-8) also divides the SFs into two types. The first one being an **unlexicalized SFs, and a lexicalized SFs**.

2.1 Pauses

A pause is a period of silence that typically occurs during an ongoing discussion, and during speakers' turn or at a change of turn (Fors, 2015: 14). A speaker makes pauses for various aims such as

gaining time to design what s/he is going to say, or when a speaker is not able to produce more words or syllables either because s/he needs more air to breathe or s/he has nothing in his/her mind to say.

Szezepek Reed (2010: 162) argues that a pause is a case of speech absence. He also states that empirical studies on pauses indicate that a speaker does not pause haphazardly, but s/he plans where to pause, following specific constraints such as speech rhythm. Stenstrom (1994: 7); Richards & Schmidt (2010: 424) argue that there are silent and filled pauses.

2.1.1 Silent Pauses

Silent pauses (henceforth SPs) mean silent breaks between words (Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 424). SPs are pauses that emerge in strategic places of the utterances (Stenstrom, 1994: 7). Brown and Yule (1983: 163) say that SPs are pauses which normally precede the utterance and help the speakers to plan their next words. They could be either momentary or timed if they're longer than a second. Dramatic emphasis is the most common role of SPs according to Erbaugh (1979: 116). They permeate different rhetorical styles, such as political discourse and storytelling.

Brown and Yule (1983: 163) states that SPs are extended pauses. They often extend between 3.2 to 16 seconds and make the speaker to provide sufficient information for the listener. Hence, SPs are those pauses that are not filled with any sound or word.

Clark and Clark (1977 as cited in Al Khalifawi, 2018: 48) point out that people resort to use SPs because they're so careful in choosing their words, or because they're speaking more slowly to make themselves more understandable. So, what promotes the use of SPs in organizing and assuring comprehensibility is the extent of intelligibility among speakers.

2.1.2 Filled pauses

Filled pauses (henceforth FPs) can define as gaps filled with some expressions such as *er, mm, um*. Speakers who talk quickly often use less pauses than speakers who talk slowly (Richards & Schmidt, 2010: 424). Clark (1977 cited in Kharismawan, 2017: 113) states that FPs are hesitations in natural speech partly or wholly taken up by sounds like *ah, err, uh*, etc. Similarly, Brown and Yule (1983: 129) define FP as a pause that often emerge in the form of sound or word and in some places of the sentences.

According to Rose (1998) there are two types of FPs: an unlexicalized FP and a lexicalized FP. Unlexicalized FPs are pauses could be filled with any of the following phonetic combinations: “*a, am, u, um, e, em, m*” as in the following example.

// so it's HARD to say. // *ERM*. // probably: the: blame lies with many different people// (Rose, 1998: 8).

According to Cenoz (1998 cited in Al-Ghazali & Alrefaee, 2019: 41) points out that pauses may have some functions

- to enable the speakers to breathe.
- to allow the speakers to plan their talk.
- to mark demarcations in the discourse.

2.2 Lexical or Verbal SFs

Rose (1998: 8), argues that lexicalized FPs are SFs in the form of words or short phrases, such as “*like, well, yeah, sort of, you know, if you see what I mean*”, and so on. On the other hand, Baalen (2001) also suggests a similar argument that lexicalized FPs compose of the phrases “*you know*” and “*I mean*” that are often used when speakers are grouping for words but do not want to resign the floor argument. Furthermore, Stenstrom (1994) notes that one kind of SFs, which is identical to the lexical SFs, is verbal filler as “*well, I mean, and sort of.*” FPs can also be lexicalized such as *like* and *you know* as in the following examples:

// . and this bandstand also had *like* a kitchen area underNEATH
// so it was a fairly HIGH bandstand //

// _ when people are very OLD. // ***you KNOW*** // the cars that they LIKE // the cars that they RODE in// that they grew. // the cars that // the people they KNEW // everything starts to d1isapPEAR //.

In the same way, they may be lexicalized with expressions such as “*well, so, okay, and let's see.*” However, even though such words and expressions might fill a pause, not all cases of these expressions are FPs. Researchers distinguished lexicalized FPs (also known as verbal fillers, e.g., Stenstrom, 1994) in terms of that, like unlexicalized FPs, they seem to be short moments during which speakers make decisions about the next word or the organization of speech (Leech and Svartvik, 1994 cited in Rose, 1998). The existence of various types of SFs like “*well, umm, you know, er,*” and others can also regularly co-occur with topic-shift (Brown & Yule, 1983:106).

It is worth mentioning that “silent and FPs are used for partly the same, partly different purposes”. Clearly, only SPs function as breathing pauses; such pauses normally match semantic-syntactic boundaries. Both silent and FPs, usually combined, are used for hesitations and for strategic purposes (e.g taking, holding and yielding the turn), and to mark off units of discourse, e.g topics and subtopics (Stenstrom, 1994: 7).

3. Functions of SFs

Stenstrom (1994) states that there are various functions of SFs. Those functions depend on the situation of the speakers (Schriffin, 1987). They are filling pauses, hesitation marks, holding the turn, empathizing, mitigating, editing terms, time creating devices, shift markers, sequencers, starters and breathing.

3.1 Filling pauses

FPs can usually be taken as an indication that the speaker has no intention to relinquish the turn but s/he is actually preparing what to say next.

A: . . . everyone was. PROMISED their LEAVE# {AND| GOT it# on^ the DAY# and there was no MONKEYING {ABOUT#}# — ə:m — . so WE were RECURRING# (adopted from Stenstrom, 1994: 76).

Without the filled pause ə:m B may easily have got the impression that A had finished the message, that s/he had nothing more to say and was ready to yield his/her turn.

3.2 -Hesitation mark

Stenstrom (1994) states that a hesitation mark is one of the functions of SFs. Hesitations are pauses that increase in a sentence when speakers have a difficult decision in the word using (Foss & Hakes, 1978: 184). Wu (2001) clarifies that these SFs occur when the speakers must stop and think about what they will say next and when they are putting a sentence together. Most of FPs “*ee, em, err, uhm, ah, hm, etc.*” are used as the breathing pauses, normally referring to semantic-syntactic boundaries (Stenstrom, 1994: 7). So, FPs are used for the hesitation ends.

A: and what will it be.

B: *ðm* -- *ð*: an aperitival small whisky about that size
(Adopted from Stenstrom, 1994: 8).

3.3 -Holding the turn

Stenstrom (1994) states that hold the turn means to carry on talking. But since the preparation that the speakers did at the beginning of the turn might not be sufficient for the whole turn, and since it is hard to plan what to say and speak at the same time, they might have to stop talking and begin re-planning half-way through the turn.

- I wasn't talking about - *um* his first book that was – *uh* really just like a start and so – *uh* isn't – doesn't count really.

(Adopted from Yule, 1996: 75)

3.4- Empathizing

The speaker enforces the relationship with the hearer by empathizing. As such Stenstrom (1994: 64, 127) defines these SFs as an invitation for the hearer to be involved in what the speaker is saying. In other words, to participate the listener and make her/him feel that s/he is part of the speech. They often emerge at the beginning and end of a turn, but, also elsewhere, for example when the speaker appeals for feedback: Empathizing, realized by “*you know, if you see, what I mean, you know and you see*” often prompt listener feedback.

A: he's not a RELAXED lecturer# but he's . a DR IVING lecturer# **you KN OW#** — whereas SOME of them here# stand UP poor DEARS# and they haven't the first CLUE# — they're so NERVOUS# **you KNOW#** {PAINFUL} to LISTEN to # (Adopted from Stenstrom, 1994: 64).

3.5 Mitigating

According to Stenstrom (1994) some SFs like “*actually, I think, really, and sort of*” are used as hedges to modify and mitigate the utterance. Baalen (2001) believes that fillers in order not to hurt the emotions of the listener can mitigate utterances. She also emphasizes the SFs as a solidarity marker or device for politeness. SFs like *well, ehm, eer,* and *ok* can serve as mitigation or politeness devices.

- A: and I've got. several FLOWER people#

-B: ooh 3 |dae| that's nice.

-A: oh it ISN'T ACTUALLY# (Stenstrom, 1994: 65).

-A: **well I think probably** you're R^GHT# . probably ((. . .)) əm — that we should pay you on a DAILY basis# (Ibid: 128).

3.6-Editing Term

SFs can be used to correct errors of the speech in the utterances of the speakers. In the other word, the speakers are aware if they want to correct them. “*I mean, um, ehm, uh, huh, ee,* etc.” can denote that the previous words have been miss arranged. Sometimes, the speakers also repeat the speech error directly (Baalen ,2001).

A: well I must ADMI" T# I feel. **I mean** Edward's MOTHER# and his great. and his GRANDFATHER#

B: IV# (Adopted from Stenstrom, 1994: 193).

3.7- Time Creating Device

According to Stenstrom (1994), SFs give some time for the speakers to think about what to say next. She states that the common form of SFs used as the time creating device is the lexical repetition. Furthermore, lexical repetition involves two types. The first being “single words repetition” which means that the speakers repeat a single word in their turn. The second type is “clause partial repetition.” It is the clause repetitions that appear in their utterances. All repetitions in the utterances serve as the SFs to give some time for the speakers to formulate what to utter next (Stenstrom, 1994: 77-78).

A: I mean I mean she's so LITTLE# **I mean you you KNOW# sort of** one can IMAGINE# a sort of middle-aged WOMAN# with a coat that seemed. **you KNOW sort of#** . just slightly exaggerated her FORM# .**you know I mean** she could sort of slip things in inside POCKETS# but (Adopted from Stenstrom, 1994: 35).

The reason behind the intricacy in the above extract is that the speaker has trouble formulating the message and consequently exaggerates the use of verbal fillers (*I mean, you know, sort of*) to

create a moment in order for him/her to think what to utter next (Ibid: 35).

3.8 Shift Marker

According to Stenstrom (1994: 156- 157) shift marker is one function of SFs. Shifting the topic means moving from one topic to a relevant one or from one aspect of the immediate topic to another. The phrase *by the way* is used as a shift marker.

A: . . . I'll keep an EYE open for it#

B: OK# - =AND# *by the WAY*# I forgot to TELL you# last NIGHT# that ∂:m-. Bill POTTERTON# wants us to go round on Sunday| AFTERNOON#. (Adopted from Stenstrom, 1994: 158).

3.9 Sequencer

Another function of SFs is sequencer. So it is used as sequencer as stated by Fraser (1996: 169) the discourse marker *so* signals the following segment is to be interpreted as a conclusion from the aforementioned discourse.)

-Jacob was very tired. *So*, he left early (adopted from Fraser, 1996: 169).

3.10 Starter

Speakers often use an introductory device to initiate the turn and some speakers do so more often than others. The typical starter is realized by *well*. A starter helps a speaker getting started, in other words initiates a speech (Stenstrom, 1994: 70).

-*Well* what does he SAY# — stick an initial label on the BACK# (Adopted from Stenstrom, 1994: 71).

3.11 Breathing

Another function for FSs is breathing and SPs serve as breathing pauses that allow the speaker to breathe (Stenstrom, 1994: 7).

4. Methodology

Since the aim of this study was to investigate the types and functions of SFs used by politicians in political interviews, it was conducted by using qualitative and quantitative approaches. In the qualitative and quantitative approaches, the researcher conducted a discourse analysis to study types and functions of SFs in the speech of politicians in political interviews. The objects of this research were eight interviews with high-profile political figures in the world discussing current global affairs with Tim Sebastian in order to obtain data that is expected to be representative of the use of SFs. The researcher chooses eight interviews with politicians from different countries in CZ in order to obtain data that would be representative enough of the use of SFs. The interview material consists of 200 minutes of speech produced by eight participants, namely Haider al-Abadi, Dima Tahboub, Adel al-Jubeir, Lolwah al- Khater, Neera

Tanden, Diane James, Jim Risch, and Bernard Jenkin. Political speech is apt for the current analysis of SFs, because they can be believed to use the same “dialect,” and as they are used to speak in public and being recorded, which makes their speech quite normal and spontaneous. The environment in conflict zone (CZ) is not strictly formal, which is why the content can be assumed to reflect more informal official political dialogue, even though it is still organized and, to some degree, planned. The interviews cover various subjects limiting the variation of topics, which could affect the use of SFs, while the time frame of many year (the interviews were aired between February 2014 and September 2020). The interviews are all podcast editions available for free online on YouTube. The episodes were downloaded from the online television program provider (Clicker 2021; The Conflict Zone Podcast 2014, 2020). The episodes, which are video clips were converted into audio files through a program called video plus. The analysis is achieved manually and in order to avoid the researcher's impression, PRAAT software has been used. PRAAT is a computer program made and developed by Paul Boersma and David Weenink and available for free online at (www.praat.org). In current study, Version 6140 (2014) of the software has been used. PRAAT program made it easier to be sure of the transcriptions. Analysis of the recordings is carried out to get the number of SPs and the duration of those pauses in millisecond as well.

A purposive sampling method was used in this study because it allows the researcher to select a suitable sample to the research questions. In other words, method is carried out with reference to the research aims, meaning that units of analysis are selected under such criteria that would enable the research questions to be addressed. Eight interviews are intentionally selected according to certain criteria; the criteria are as follows:

- ❖ Native-ness (Native and non-native) and
- ❖ Gender (Males and females) and those all variables the researcher aims to.

The choice of the sample takes into consideration that political interviews are strongly organized speech events governed by genre-specific discourse rules.

The selected sample of data was analyzed by means of two theories; Stenstrom's (1994) and Rose's (1998) theories. The method of analysis used in this study is a mixed mood method i.e. combining qualitative and quantitative procedures.

Consequently, on one hand, the researcher describes the use of SFs of the given sample qualitatively. On the other hand, a quantitative method is used to show the distribution of SFs occurring in each politician's speech in isolation as well as combined in terms of participants' gender and nationality. After analyzing the selected

extracts in each individual speech, the frequencies and percentages are summarized in several tables allocated to types and functions of SFs.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Group Variations in the Use of SFs

We would start by examining the types of SFs used by native/nom-native groups.

5.1.1 Types of SFs According to Gender

Gender differences in producing the types of SFs are presented in the following figure.

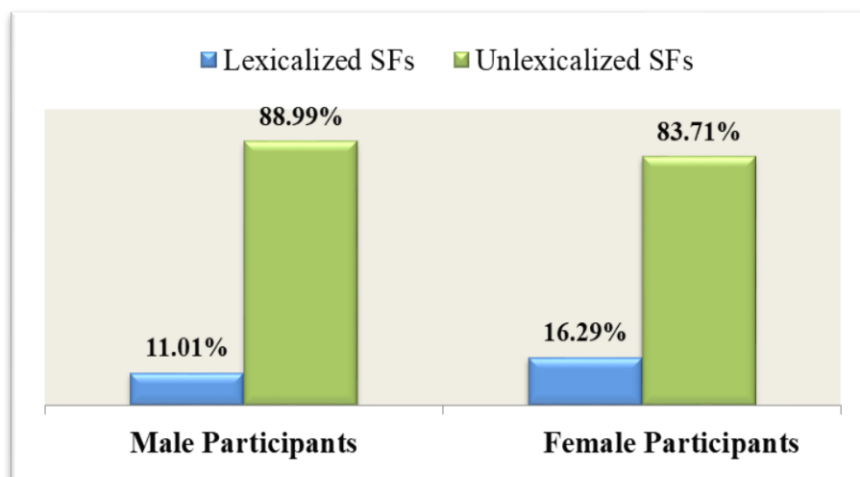


Figure 2: Types of SFs by Male & Female Participants

As shown in the above figure, male participants produce more SFs than their female peers. This goes in line with previous studies, such as Tottie (2001), who has claimed that males used more SFs than females, but contradicts the results of another study by Navratilova (2015), who has stated that females use more SFs than males did. This study points out that male participants tend to use more SFs in their talks than female participants do. While male participants preferred to use unlexicalized SFs (88.99% against 83.71%), female politicians were in the lead in using more lexicalized SFs (16.29% compared to 11.01% by males).

5.1.2 Types of SFs by Native-ness

The analysis of SFs types by native (N) and non-native (NN) participants are shown in Figure 1 below.

It can be clearly observed that the native and non-native participants used SFs almost equally. However, Native English-speaking politicians used unlexicalized SFs more frequently than their non-native peers, with 87.56% compared to 85.65% while non-native participants preferred to use lexicalized SFs relatively more than native participants did with 14,16% against 12.44%. Furthermore, native speakers used more SFs (1535 times) than non-native participants (1310 times). That is because native speakers seem to talk faster than non-natives because of the masterful application and

frequent use of SFs. In contrast, non-natives mostly leave their hesitation pauses unfilled, producing more false starts, and leaving more errors uncorrected. This goes in line with previous studies, such as Rieger (2003), who has claimed that native speakers appear to talk twice as fast as non-natives because of the skillful and frequent use of SFs. While, the non-natives, on the other hand, tend to neglect their hesitation pauses and leave them empty. They also make more false starts, leaving more errors uncorrected in comparing with the native speakers.

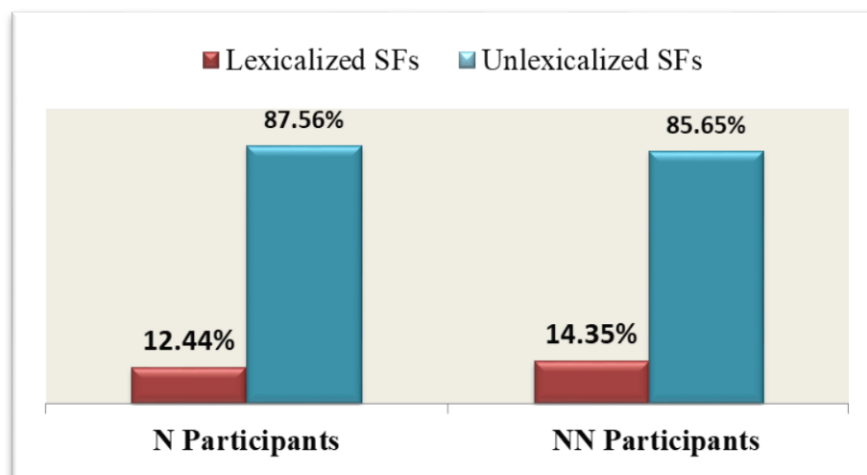


Figure 1. Group use of SF by native-ness

5.2. Functions of SFs

This section deals with the functions of SFs used by participants. The functions of SFs will be discussed according to participants as groups in terms of gender and native-ness.

5.2.1 Functions of SFs by Gender

Male and female groups produced functions of SFs with different rates. The details are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Functions of SFs by Gender

Functions of SFs	Male Participants		Female Participants	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Filling pause	151	8.46%	175	10.86%
Time creating device	180	10.09%	195	12.10%
Holding the turn	23	1.29%	19	1.18%
Hesitation mark	100	5.61%	75	4.66%
Starter	99	5.55%	20	1.24%
Mitigating	46	2.58%	92	5.71%
Shift marker	0	0%	4	0.25%
Sequencer	10	0.56%	37	2.30%
Editing term	25	1.40%	22	1.37%
Empathizing	4	0.22%	100	6.21%
Breathing	1146	64.24%	872	54.13%
Total	1784	100%	1611	100%

Gender groups have different rates in functions used of SFs. Male and female speakers employed SFs as breathing devices most frequently in their speech, while they preferred to use SFs for the function of shift marker the least, which was never used by male speakers and was only used four times by female participants. While male participants used SFs for breathing 1146 times (64.24%), female participants used them for this function 872 times (54.13%). The second highest function for which SFs were used was as a time creating device, which was used by female participants more frequently (195 times, 12.10%) than male participants (180 times, 10.09%). The third highest function that participants used SFs for was a filling pause. Similar to time creating device, this was adopted by female politicians more frequently than male peers with 10.86% and 08.46% by female and male participants, respectively. Moreover, female participants adopted SFs as mitigating, sequencers, and emphasizing tools more frequently than male participants. On the other hand, male participants preferred to use SFs as hesitation marks, starters and editing terms more than their female peers did.

Male and female speakers used editing term approximately with the same rate because they all want to correct themselves when they err.

5.2.2 Functions of SFs by Native-ness

Table 2 includes the functions of SFs as performed by participants in terms of whether they are native or non-native.

Table 2: Functions of SFs by Native-ness

Functions of SFs	N participants		NN participants	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Filling pause	163	9.24%	72	4.91%
Time creating device	216	12.24%	159	10.84%
Holding the turn	30	1.70%	12	0.82%
Hesitation mark	115	6.52%	60	4.09%
Starter	56	3.17%	63	4.29%
Mitigating	94	5.33%	44	3.00%
Shift marker	1	0.06%	3	0.20%
Sequencer	16	0.91%	31	2.11%
Editing term	22	1.25%	25	1.70%
Empathizing	10	0.57%	22	1.50%
Breathing	1042	59.04%	976	66.53%
Total	1765	100 %	1467	100%

As it was the case with gender groups, native-ness groups also have different rates in functions used of SFs. Table 2 shows that both groups native and non-native speakers produce all the eleven functions of SFs proposed by Stenstrom (1994). They are filling pause, time creating device, holding the turn, hesitation mark, starter,

mitigating, and shift marker, sequencer, editing term, empathizing, and breathing. There are similarities in that both native and non-native speakers have breathing as the most frequently used function and shift marker was the function that was used the least. Out of the total number of times SFs used to perform certain function, native speakers tend to be more aware of using SFs for functions than non-native counterparts. They have expressed SFs functionally 1765 times compared to 1467 times by non-native speakers. The differences could be found with other functions with different rates. However, native speakers are more frequent used of some functions other than non-native speakers. The functions include filling pause, time creating device, holding the turn, hesitation mark, and mitigating.

In contrast, there are other functions used by non-native speakers more often than native speakers in their conversation. They are starter, sequencer, and shift marker, editing term and empathizing.

6. Conclusions

This study has attempted to find out the use of SFs by native/non-native, male/ female politicians in political interviews. It has shown that the participants produced both types of SFs proposed by Stenstrom (1994) and Rose (1998). They are lexicalized and unlexicalized SFs. The most frequent types of SFs used by them were unlexicalized SFs.

One of the most important findings of the current study is the frequent presence of the SPs in the production of the political interviewees. They generally overuse SPs. Generally speaking, native and non-native talks contain SPs. Native speakers used more SFs (1535 times) than non-native participants (1310 times). That is because native speakers seem to talk faster than non-natives because of the masterful application and frequent use of SFs. In contrast, non-natives mostly leave their hesitation pauses unfilled, producing more false starts, and leaving more errors uncorrected. Male participants whether they are native or non-native tend to use more SFs whether they are unlexicalized or lexicalized in their talks than female participants do.

In the course of the functions of SFs, female participants used all function of SFs based on the theory of Stenstrom. They are breathing, filling pause, hesitation mark, starter, shift marker, empathizing, mitigating, editing term, time creating devices, holding the turn and sequencer, while the male groups used all functions except shift marker. Breathing is the dominating function used by all participants. In contrast, shift marker has the function used the least. Time creating device is the second highest function used by them. Male and female speakers use editing term approximately with the same rate because they all want to correct themselves when they err.

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