

## Review Article

# Filler Words: The Definition and Their Communicative Functions

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**Abstract:** Filler words (I mean, you know, um, uh...) represent linguistic units, that take the form of Relatively short forms, concise expressions used by the speaker during verbal communication for the purpose of segmenting the speech especially in the case of emotional charge and the suspension of the verbal act. The purpose behind using speech fillers is expressive and communicative. The speaker, thus, ensures long-windedness, the continuation of communication along with proper delivery of the semiotic context of the linguistic message. Studies have neglected to address and treat these units. Through this article, we have tried to expose the related definitions given to "speech fillers" and how they were treated in classical and modern criticism, using a descriptive and analytical approach, and we explained that these expressions are not tautology in speech, but rather have several functions in oral discourse based on spontaneity. We conclude that these expressions are used at times of emotion to segment speech and ensure the chronological sequence of thoughts. We have also shown that speech fillers connect discourse parts and grant its proper sequence, homogeneity and expressiveness, it also contributes to changing the interpretation of the text and directing the meaning to other intention, such as punctuation marks in written discourse. We may say that speech fillers are considered a part of the linguistic activity that should not be neglected for language has to be analyzed through all its expressive manifestations.

**Keywords:** Filler Word, Emotional, Pragmatics, Cognitive, Connectors

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## 1. Introduction

Language users, during communication, use a set of phrases and brief expressive that I have considered, based on their characteristics and distinguishing features<sup>1</sup> from other Arabic structures, the terminology of calling them "Speech filler words" or "individual pronunciation phrases". They are small, calcified phrases, requiring a single structural form, and are circulated on the tongues without changing or modifying their structure. They represent part of the linguistic activity, which the speaker resorts to using in his speech and oral conversations, both regular and formal, and "often these small words were presented as characteristic of oral discourse and are the first to be omitted in written forms of dialogue" [14]. Despite denying its role in the language used and considering

them to be meaningless linguistic units in traditional thought, we cannot deny the extensive use of it by members of the linguistic group, especially during cases of emotion that confuse the speaker with his thoughts and push him to cut his speech based on these grammatical forms. Therefore, it was necessary to pay attention to it and give it part of linguistic concerns and not exclude it in the context of the development of linguistic theories and linguistic approaches that seek to be familiar with all linguistic phenomena and provide more advanced and more effective approaches that are in line with the needs of linguistic speakers. We seek, through this article, to study "Speech filler words" and answer the following questions:

1. What is the definition of Speech filler words?
2. How did Arab linguists study it?

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<sup>1</sup> See item (2) what are Speech filler words?

3. Why does the speaker use it? Is it carrying a significance in itself or in its relationship with others?
4. What role do you play in the language of communication?

## 2. Definition of Filler Words

Filler words are linguistic units used by individuals in their daily, religious, political and media discourses... They help the language user cut his speech during oral communication and maintain the discourse's consistency and consistency. Consistency means that strong coherence between the parts forming a discourse, and he is interested in the linguistic means (formal). It connects the elements that make up a part of a discourse or an entire discourse [2]. While the term harmony is applied to the concepts, concepts, and relations that achieve the realization of the text.

These grammatical units represent "light and brief tools" [12], which the speaker uses to cut his speech during oral communication, since oral speeches "are supposed to be presentable pronunciation and pickup" [12], so they are spontaneous and not subject to revision or Revision or prior thinking, unlike written discourse, which does not require the presence of the reader or the recipient on the one hand, and creates a time space for reflection that allows the writer to shape his speech according to the image he deems most appropriate for his informative purposes on the other hand. We mention, for example: So that-did you understand? - Did you understand or not?-I mean - the important - ah- do you hear me?... These expressions are not restricted to users of the Arabic language, as we note that speakers of foreign languages use them in their communicative conversations, such as (Ah oui, ben...).

These units have been termed as individual pronunciations because they are included in individual use during oral communication. Their uses differ from one person to another in the same linguistic group in quantity and quality, being based on "form, spontaneity, and linguistic habit" [12] on the one hand, And because each individual has his own style of expressing his thoughts, his feelings, his emotions, and the order and arrangement of speech on the other hand:

- 1) The speaker may use only one expression during his speech: "I went to buy a special gift...Can you hear me?...I didn't find what I needed."
- 2) He may resort to repetition<sup>2</sup> on several occasions of the same phrase that "has no permanent place" [14], including: "This commodity is cheap, meaning, you can buy it, meaning, it will not burden you..."
- 3) Or the repetition of two or more different phrases "some of them may be combined" [14], as we say: "I felt severe

pains in my stomach, meaning, I could not bear it or continue the lecture... The result, I decided to go to the doctor... I understood No no..."

Accordingly, the emotion and spontaneity that accompany oral speech may disrupt the sequence of the speaker's thoughts, forcing him to break up his speech using some grammatical units generated by the use of need.

Individuals' use of these expressions varies between the formal and the colloquial, according to their different cultural and social levels and communication situations. The ordinary speaker may resort to the adoption of colloquial expressions in his speech, which may undergo several phonetic changes for reasons, the most important of which are: the difference in dialects, the phenomenon of weight and lightness... In contrast to individuals belonging to the educated class that imposes them to communicate in an eloquent language that is subject to the regular standard and the grammatical pattern because All of their dealings are within an official cultural and literary framework on the one hand, and to reflect their high standards and their scientific, linguistic and communicative culture on the other hand.

The difference in style between language users reveals the differences between individuals and their expressive language abilities, and their competencies in terms of their possession of the language, knowledge and training for its proper use. He is ingenious and builds his speech cognitively and ideologically without resorting to cutting his speech to find appropriate expressions. On the other hand, we may find individuals who lack the skill to improvise and evoke sentences expressing their knowledge and feelings, forcing them to rely on the method of slicing and including those grammatical units in the folds of speech, to give themselves time to evoke the appropriate ideas and continue expressing their purposes and intentions to be conveyed to the other.

## 3. How to Study Filler Words in Arabic Linguistic Works

The ancients did not study and analyze these expressive forms in the traditional linguistic study, so we hardly find an independent research, article, or observations broadcast in some works about Speech filler words, their linguistic functions, their uses, and their connotations. The most prominent thing that was said about it is what Al-Jahiz said: "A friend of mine told me: I said to Al-Atabi: What is rhetoric? He said: Everyone whose needs I understand without repetition, aphasia, or assistance, is eloquent. The truth, and the representation of falsehood in the form of the truth.' He said: I said to him: I have known repetition and aphasia, so what is the use of assistance? You don't understand, or you don't understand. All this and what is similar to it is ignorance and corruption" [1].

Al-Jahiz considered these grammatical units as awareness and corruption, that is, they do not refer to a specific signification despite their generation from the grammatical system and the agreement of their structures to the

2 The repetition of single pronunciation expressions in the same structure is of two types:

- 1) Sequential repetition: for the same expression (...meaning, means...) or for two different phrases (...meaning, important...).
- 2) Non-sequential repetition: the same expression (...understood?...understood?... ) or different expressions (...meaning... the important thing... do you hear me...?...what is...).

grammatical rule and integrity, and they have no function in speech because they are a linguistic imperative or a verbal habit that obligates a person to include them in his speech without his will or feeling. Extra units whose dispensation does not affect the process of communication and communication between members of the linguistic group.

Modern studies are not in better condition than the previous ones. Through our review of a number of references, we have obtained some scattered observations in the discourse analysis dictionary of "Patrick Charodo" and "Dominique Mengnau" and in the article "Structural Linguistic Analysis of Oral Discourse" by Professor Abdel Jalil Murtagh. In spite of the fact that these observations were received on a separate basis, and no clear section was assigned to them to facilitate the process of research and understanding for the student, we cannot deny their importance, which reflected on the one hand the awareness of linguists of the importance of these expressive forms as part of the oral linguistic balance on the other hand. To address it and to identify its characteristics and justifications for its existence and its use in oral discourse, especially since modern linguistic thought has gone beyond, with the approaches, theories and methods of work generated from it, the narrow normative linguistic limits to researching abnormal or marginal phenomena and understanding the modalities of its functioning and its communicative functions.

The author of the lexicon indicated that the speaker may use these expressions in an emotional and social context that distorts the speaker's speech, confuses him, and makes him lose "control over the speech system" [14] because communication is a spontaneous and unplanned process. This is what often makes the parties to the communicative process unable to "fully perceive their pronunciations" [14], so those small words are used during speech "as an element included in the sentence that causes a verbal syntactic break" [14] that leads to the dismantling of the discourse and disruption of the discourse.

The lexicon also presented a second conception, through which it showed that the two sides of the speech may resort to the adoption of individual pronunciation phrases during oral exchange as signs to cut speech, such as "ben", "ah oui"... so that these linguistic forms replace the punctuation in the written discourse, thus making an impact. In it "because it changes the interpretation of the texts" [14].

This opinion in principle refutes what was stated by the author of "Al-Bayan wa Al-Tabeen" that these expressions amount to ignorance and corruption. The authors of the lexicon acknowledged that individual vocalizations play a role in marking and severing speech according to the speaker's intentions and dissemination intentions. But we blame the two authors of the lexicon for not highlighting the manner in which these signs contribute to interpreting the discourse and revealing the actual intent, which in most cases transcends the formal literal connotation to an implicit one. Their remarks remained brief and did not amount to a complete understanding of the structure, connotations and linguistic functions of these units.

## 4. Pragmatics Semantic Functions of Filler Words

Individual pronunciation phrases or Speech filler words are still questionable in linguistic thought, and they are a rich linguistic material for a group of linguistic, psychological, and mystical sciences because "their nature... is still exploratory" [14]. The remarkable presence of these expressions in the oral linguistic<sup>3</sup>, as they are part of the linguistic balance and elements that enter into the construction and formation of speech, makes them acquire a form of the legitimacy of existence as a phenomenon and study, a legitimacy that lacks only linguistic methods and linguistic mechanisms that support them and highlight the functions they perform within the language.

The speaker intends, as we explained above, to use these units during oral communication, which is characterized by spontaneity and the absence of prior planning, as it is "a situation of presence and a confrontation between parties that meet them in a place in which their sayings fall, and which link them with needs for which the saying was established" [13].

Accordingly, he may resort to using the cut-off method by including some Speech filler words in the folds of his speech, especially in cases of emotion in which words follow without law or prior regulation, "For every violent emotion escapes anger, love, enthusiasm, and unexpected words are poured out. and images created spontaneously" [8]. A breakdown occurs in the linguistic structure because it is devoid of expressive ideas or vocabulary, and "[that] is attributed to perceptual, conceptual causes" [9], given that the face-to-face communication process is an unplanned mental process because it is based on exchange between two sides of the On the one hand, and on the mechanism of action and reaction on the other hand, "If each speaker had planned in advance any sentence he uttered...the process of social participation in the language of communication would be null and void" [10]. The inclusion of individual pronunciation phrases gives the speaker time to think and modify his "structures according to what he finds of perceptions, and what he notices of the initial reactions he notices" [5], which allows him to crystallize speech in his brain and form his mental representations through linguistic structures and according to Synthetic images that he deems more appropriate for his reporting purposes, in order to ensure the flow of speech and the success of the communicative work. So the basing phrases are "filled with a vocal void (caused by a break in the chain of thoughts, a delay in attention, or other things) waiting for the elements of the later saying to be evoked in the brain and implemented in speech. This phenomenon has a neurocognitive aspect" [7].

<sup>3</sup>Oral communication par excellence represents the actual interaction and exchange between the sender and the receiver in different places and circumstances, and this communication is very diverse linguistically and stylistically. Accordingly, it is the analysis of the actual used pronunciation that reveals the various manifestations of the language and its expressive manifestations in its various forms, and allows its study and analysis to determine the mechanisms of its functioning and its communicative functions.

The use of these linguistic patterns and the repetition of some of them in the same structure is not limited to ensuring the continuity of speech and the continuity of the conversational action, but rather it assumes other functions such as the attentional function based mainly on drawing the listener's attention to what will come of speech and "so that your speech does not break with his words" [4]. (Alo..., hear me, you are with me!...) [3] on the one hand. And confirm the idea or message on the other hand, considering that confirmation is one of the purposes of repetition in addition to drawing attention and exaggerating the emphasis in order to remove doubt and hesitation in order to prove the statement in the same recipient and to ensure its acceptance of it in a manner consistent with the intent of his saying "It is from the Sunnahs of the Arabs: repetition and repetition, the will to report according to care By order... and the will to inform in warning and warning" [6]. Accordingly, the purpose of repetition here is not intended to disrupt the chain of speech, but rather its goal, from a mystical point of view, is to draw attention<sup>4</sup> and direct the mind to a specific direction that becomes the focus of the message and the central intent of communication. The one who receives it" [9], and this intentional intention may be intended first of all according to certain signals from his subconscious that prevent him, for example, from delving into certain topics that are considered prohibited by the humility of the linguistic group belonging to the same social environment and culture because "the possessions are ever present in The background of our awareness colors our thinking and thus affects our linguistic performance" [8]. And secondly, changing the listener's opinion of a situation "because the oral speaker has no deferred time other than the time in which he is to think about specific qualities instead of what he brings spontaneously from them" [12]. He resorts to phrases such as: I mean, ah, but so that...to modify his speech at the moment of actual utterance and communication, as it is not subject to revision and revision like a written speech, by canceling a previous idea to highlight that the dependent sentence is in violation of the aforementioned or previous sentence, and to change it to another appropriate to his informative intentions and what he wants the recipient to perceive and react based on.

Therefore, the individual pronunciation phrases affect the distribution of the components of the discourse and the maintenance of harmony and consistency between its sentences to achieve its textuality, playing the role of connections between the sentences of the text or discourse, and the link "is a hyphenating word (or a group of words) that connects parts of The text is connected to each other, and thus indicates (or clarifies) a logical relationship, which is why it constitutes the paving tool: (the key) in achieving the textual fusion" [11] and other purposes that some punctuation marks serve in the written text. The functions of these links in linguistic discourse vary:

- a. Conjonction adversative: The speaker uses a number of small phrases in the folds of his speech, through which he indicates "that the following contradicts with the above or contradicts it in some way" [11], such as: I mean, ah, but...
- b. Conjonction assévéorative: that is, yes, understood or no?, believe me...
- c. Causal link: It is represented in the expressions that "establish a causal relationship, for example, a cause-and-effect relationship between the parts of the text" [11], including: the important,, the result, the useful...

The Speech filler words in the oral discourse "serve as connectors between parts of the sentence, such as conjunctions and prepositions" [15], so they represent tools "significant in relation to the relationship, such as identification tools and linking tools" [12] not at all significant, although Some of these phrases can take on their own form and significance because they represent a sentence that conveys a complete and independent meaning (Do you hear me?, Do you understand?, You are with me...), but if they are included in a larger discourse, they become a connecting tool that contributes to the harmony of the text. The consistency of its ideas and content and the realization of its textuality.

The user of the language while speaking in an oral communicative framework builds immediate mental spaces that he tries to form, arrange and crystallize in proportion to his expressive purposes and intent of the saying to be communicated, and connects them with "the tools for building mental spaces to lure his listener to build a new mental space. With the multiplicity of domains, the tools of multiplicity and multiplicity of mental space exist.

Links play a key role in establishing the saying, as it ensures the referral transmission between its various parts in a way that achieves its unity of reference. It also ensures the distribution of the news content in an orderly distribution" [7] to achieve the consistency and consistency of the text and the transmission of speech to remove confusion and the success of communication, and the intentionality and acceptability. One of the important aspects that must be available to justify the interruption in the speaker's speech and the interpretation of the text. The reader's familiarity with these small units, as part of the linguistic formation and communicative discourse, contributes to his quick acceptance of them and understanding of their purpose and purpose and their use in a particular text.

## 5. Conclusion

At the end of the article, we point out a number of our results:

1. The Speech filler words are one of the advantages of oral discourse, and they represent small linguistic units that the speaker relies on during oral discourse, which is characterized by spontaneity and is not subject to revision.
2. These expressions are an important part of the linguistic activity that reflects the language of the community and

<sup>4</sup>Attention "is a mental process that requires the focus of a perceptual machine (hearing-sight) on a particular thing at the expense of other elements" (TawfikGrira, Annals of the Tunisian University, 2005, 160).

its development, since the language is correlatively linked to the community that speaks it and circulates its vocabulary, expressive units and linguistic phrases.

3. The speaker resorts, in the context of the oral situation, to the emotions and influences based on it that may lead to the disruption of speech (psychological, rhetorical, intentional, rebuilding the discourse, correcting and retracting a position, further clarification and detail, summarizing the speech down to the most important and intended to say...), to the use of individual pronunciation phrases, as they are brief and functional phrases that help link the elements of the speech and draw the attention of the recipient and attract him to focus with the content of the speech and highlight the upcoming new information.
4. The Speech filler words are linguistic units that play the role of connectors that guarantee the consistency and consistency of oral discourse, such as linking tools (dots, commas...) in written discourse.
5. These expressions achieve pragmatics functions, the most important of which are drawing the attention of the recipient, making sense, cutting speech to recall phrases from the mind and organizing them, given that oral discourse is a communicative discourse based on timidity and spontaneity.
6. The study of these expressions motivates us to research all aspects of expressive language of all kinds, and to try to treat them from different perspectives (phonetic, morphological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, pragmatic...) because the essence of understanding Arabic and its secrets lies in the use of the correlative and close relationship between Language and society.

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