

FILLERS - MARCH 30, 2009

Let's sum up what we said over the last few weeks...

- Spoken Language is not inferior to written language
- Meaning is more than words and much of the information transmitted in conversation is actually conveyed through prosodic and proxemic features
- It is very hard to reproduce these features and their value in a written form
- Spoken language has structure
- Structure is needed in order to make the stream of conversation more easily processable
- Conversation is structured by several factors (politeness, negotiation, content, context, etc.)
- Spoken language is characterized by certain structural phenomena which are related to the topic, genre and to the role of the participants in the exchange.
- We experienced what happens when we transcribe oral language (i.e. we 'polish' structure and lexicon)
- We saw that we frequently use vague language
- We saw its major functions (list completers, quantities, placeholders, etc.)
- We then spoke of the common use of narration in conversation
- We saw that narration has a recognizable structure
- We saw that repetition helps us
- We saw what the strategies to make narration more vivid are at the graphological, lexical, syntactic and discourse level
- We talked about the reasons to use narration in conversation (i.e. to make one's point)
- We saw how speakers collaborate to the success of the communicative event

What can you do now?

- You can recognize vague language
- You can recognize what is lost in transcription at different levels of the linguistic structure
- You can recognize the structure and the function of narration in conversation
- You can recognize formulaic expressions in spoken discourse and some of their functions (e.g. opening function, acknowledgement, speaker's collaboration, etc.)

What next?

Today we will start working on **FILLERS** and in particular on

- DISCOURSE MARKERS
- BACKCHANNELS
- VOICED PAUSES

4 main categories of fillers have been identified:

- filled pauses (FP);
- discourse markers (DM);
- explicit editing terms (EET);
- asides/parentheticals (A/P).

1.

End-of-turn fillers

-DM ...and I went to the store /. *you know /-

-FP ...and I went to the store /. *um /-

Fillers at the Start of a Turn

-* See Ø my company has a much stricter policy than yours it sounds like /.

-* Um the * th * the one thing I'm thinking is /, that it might be hard to see the stage from way back here /. (filler + disfluency)

Fillers as Complete Turns

-A: But it's just really bizarre /, if you ask me /.

B: * Um /-

A: The whole criminal justice system /.

B: * Um Ø but I don't think /, the police are the biggest system /.

2.

* Um I do * uh some * uh woodworking myself.

3.

- ah
- eh
- er
- uh
- um

4.

A: I love mowing the lawn /.

B: * Um /-

A: Being outdoors is great /.

5.

"I mean", "sorry", "excuse me", "rather"

6.

-And when he gets free again /, he will have no compunction but to complete that that same kind of lifestyle * *uh *sorry continue that same kind of lifestyle /.

-I think one of the positive things * *or rather one of the things that can come out of it is not just discipline /. I thought /, you might enjoy some meat loaf * *er tofu sandwiches * rather /.

7.

Three hundred fifty-six residents were killed * *er injured rather /.

8.

He has now for about * oh gosh how long has it been ten years /, I guess /.

And I couldn't help thinking when that last question * it was a funny question came up /.

9.

-The head of the United Auto Workers Union responded by call the move * his words nuts /.

10.

We went on vacation to Florida about * oh I don't know exactly how long ago but six or seven years ago /.

11.

And when someone is say out of high school... And if he for example wanted to be a ballerina.... It's because of all the E S and H considerations that people are worrying about I think much more than they should...

12.

That gets on my nerves, too. * Anyway, tell me about your new job.

A: * So how do you make this soup /?

B: First you take a couple of carrots and chop them /. * Okay and then you sauté them in butter /.

13.

-actually

-basically

-anyway

-and yeah

-yeah

-I mean

-let's see

-like

-oh

-now

- okay

- see

- so

- well

- you know

- you see

- you know what I mean

14.

-A: I've lived in Friendship Heights for years /.

B: Okay /@

A: But I'm thinking of moving a little further out /.

15.

-Do you know how many minutes we're supposed to talk for /?

-The situation right now is that we're moving in three weeks /.

16.

-It's not like Boston NYC Philly /. Or * you know /-

--If the stress is really on /, she'll break down /. * you know /-

17.

Like as a preposition meaning "similar to":

-They're like bermuda shorts but a little shorter /.

Like as a preposition meaning "as if":

-It looks like she's wearing bermuda shorts /.

Like used with "to be" as a verb of quotation (instead of *say* or *said*):

-He was like /, I'm wearing bermuda shorts /.

Examples in which *like* functions as a discourse marker:

-She was * like wearing bermuda shorts /.

--But he played the character in it that was very * like gross /.

--* Like when I was * like in high school and junior high school /, I used to hate it /

18.

So is another item with many different uses in discourse that may be difficult to distinguish from one another. The most common uses of *so* apart from its function as a discourse marker are as a(n)...

•...subordinating conjunction:

-We brought out pictures of her grandparents so she'll get to know them /.

•...adverb meaning, roughly, therefore:

-I grew up on a farm so I always had outdoor pets /.

-I'm not sure to be honest with you /. * So your backpacking trip through China seemed to be an exciting adventure /.

A: That was a lot to go through /. * So /-

B: * Wow you must be relieved to be over that /.

19.

Yeah sometimes serves as a direct response to a question, in which case, it can be seen as an independent SU (statement SU), only if the question needs a response, not merely querying feedback.

A: You said /, you had ten cats /?

B: Yeah /. When I moved /, I gave them to my mother /.

A: Did you say /, you're calling from Dallas /?

B: Yeah /.

On occasion, *yeah* functions as a question itself, displaying question intonation (question SU):

-A: I almost got hit by a bus once on my way to work /.

B: Yeah /?

-A: I'm sure /, everybody knows /, everybody is getting high /. You might as well just legalize it then /.

B: Yeah /@

A: It would probably bring down the price a lot /, if it was legalized /.

B: Yeah /@

A: * So the drug dealers wouldn't like it being legalized too much /.

* Yeah Ø it's like /, I'm young /. And I should get started getting into shape /.

A: It's supposed to alleviate some of their pain /.

B: * Yeah Ø why not /? Legalize a hundred percent /.

A: * Yeah Ø I don't see what the big deal is /.

A: Where with teenagers around here /, you gotta drink to be cool /. * So /-

B: * Yeah Ø you got it /. [or is this wrong now and this is a backchannel?]

A: Who knows /? Where are you from /?

20

/ . = statement SU

/ ? = question SU

/ @ = backchannel

° ... = DR

* ... = DM

B: Right now I'm in New Jersey .

A: Yeah

B: Yeah. In a couple of days I'm Aloha bound for -

A: Yeah. Right on.

B: Yeah for the whole winter. So I'm stoked.

A: ...because there's much more kiddie stuff /.

B: Yeah, the boardwalk?

A: Yeah. I per- /-

B: Board walk's great. Board walk is so great.

A: Yeah it is. Do you surf, or something?

B: Yeah.

A: Yeah is that why you're heading out to Hawaii?

B: Yeah.

21.

-A: I'm sorry /?

B: I was going to say /, we're both in agreement /.

A: * Yes It's so expensive too /.

-A: Where with teenagers around here /, you gotta drink to be cool /. * So /-

B: * Yup You got it /.

A: Who knows /? Where are you from /?

-A: I live in Northeast Philly /. But I used to go to Brigantine /, when I was a kid /.

B: Not a bad spot /.

A: * No * No * No It's not /. I like it /.

22.

-A: * You know it's just been really difficult for me /.

B: Uh-huh /@

A: What with everything happening in the course of two weeks /.

-A: If it happens again /, I'm going to have to say something /.

B: Yeah /@ Yeah /@

A: Because it's getting out of hand /.

23.

hm/hmm; huh; mm-hm/mm-hmm/mhm; oh; okay/OK; good; I know; right; sure; yeah/yea/yep/yes/yup; uh-huh; really; that's; true; that's right.

24.

A: And it sounds terrible to hear a little kid signing that sound "Back That Thing Up" /.
They don't even know what they're talking about /.

B: Right /@ Right /@ That's true /@ Mm-hm /@

A: I have little nieces and nephews /.

A: I'm from Pittsburgh /.

B: Pittsburgh /@

A: It's an OK place /.

B: Mhm /@