An Analysis of Speech Fillers Used by Biden

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Abstract

The study aims to identify the speech fillers and their functions in one of Joe Biden's political interviews. To achieve this, data were obtained from YouTube videos and subsequently analyzed and classified based on Stenstrom's (1994) classification of speech fillers. A qualitative analysis was conducted to examine the functions of speech fillers, while a quantitative analysis was applied to calculate the percentages of their classification. Major findings reveal that Biden utilizes all the types and functions of speech fillers according to the adopted model. The types are: pauses and lexical speech fillers. In

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addition, the functions are breathing, hesitation mark, filling pause, starter, empathizing, shift marker, editing term, mitigating, holding the turn, time creating device, and sequencer. Biden uses them at different rates. Therefore, in accordance with the findings, the researchers conclude that speech fillers are not usually viewed as a distractions of speaking. As learners of foreign language, we should understand that filler words are not necessarily seen as a distort in speech but also as a way to enhance our interaction and as part of the natural flow of discourse.

Key Words: hesitation mark; political interviews; speech fillers.

تحليل حشوات الكلام التي يستخدمها بايدن

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الـمستخلـص

تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد حشوات الكلام و وظائفها في واحدة من مقابلات جو بايدن السياسية. لتحقيق ذلك، تم جمع البيانات من مقاطع الفيديو على يوتيوب ثم تم تحليلها و تصنيفها بناءً على تصنيف ستتستروم (1994) لحشوات الكلام. تم إجراء تحليل نوعي لدراسة وظائف الحشوات الكلامية، بينما تم تطبيق تحليل كمي لحساب النسب المئوية لتصنيفها.

تكشف النتائج الرئيسية أن بايدن استخدم جميع الأنواع و الوظائف لحشو الكلام وفقًا للنموذج المعتمد. الأنواع هي: التوقفات و الحشوات المعجمية اللفظية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن الوظائف هي التنفس، وعلامة التردد، و التوقف المؤقت للملء، و البدء، و مشاركة الكلام، و علامة التحول، و تحرير المصطلح، و التلطيف، وإمساك الدور، و وسيلة إنشاء الوقت، و اداة التسلسل. يستخدمها بنسب مختلفة. بناءً على النتائج، يستنتج الباحثون إلى أن حشوات الكلام لا تُعتبر عادةً من

المشتتات أثناء الحديث. كمتعلمي لغة أجنبية، يجب أن نفهم أن الحشوات ليست بالضرورة تشويشًا في الكلام ولكنها أيضًا وسيلة لتعزيز تفاعلنا و كجزء من التدفق الطبيعي للحديث.

الكلمات الدالة: علامات التردد؛ المقابلات السياسية؛ حشوات الكلام.

1. INTRODUCTION

Political discourse is of great interest to linguistics nowadays. It is related to the growing significance of political relations around the world. It is distinguished by its authors or actors, viz ., politicians (Van Dijk, 1997). Political speech is a communicative act through which politicians attempt to provide certain meanings to affect or persuade audiences. Political discourse could involve formal discussions such as speeches and meetings, and informal discussions about politics within the members of the community (Liebes & Ribak, 1991 as cited in Amaglobeli, 2017).

Studies on political speeches have been approached from a wide range of perspectives. Undoubtedly, political discourse has been a major area of language use that has captured the attention of researchers for a long time. This is because political discourse is an intricate human activity that is worth critical study, particularly due to its central role in the organization and society's management.

It is nearly impossible to find native or non-native speakers, who never use filler words in their everyday talks (Erten, 2014). For this reason, the use of speech fillers has recently become the focus of discourse analysis research. The researchers hope that this study will serve as a comprehensive reference for EFL learners helping them in using speech fillers as a strategic technique in spontaneous conversation. By conducting this research, they aim to offer a deeper understanding of the types and functions of speech fillers, challenging the common view of speech fillers as speech defects.

To the best of our knowledge, there are few or no research papers have been conducted on whether speech fillers are signals of fluency or disfluency, particularly in the context of political interviews and specifically in Joe Biden's interviews. For instance, AL-Faragy and Mohammed (2022) investigated the differences in the use of speech fillers on the bases of gender and native-ness within political interviews. The study relied on the theoretical frameworks introduced by Stenstrom (1994) and Rose (1998) for data categorization. A qualitative approach was utilized to examine the functional roles of speech fillers, while a quantitative analysis focused on measuring their frequency and distribution. The findings revealed that participants required additional time for cognitive planning, particularly when addressing complex topics. Furthermore, all participants employed various types of speech fillers, with non-lexical fillers being more prevalent than lexical ones. Regarding their functional usage, breathing was more commonly observed compared to shift markers.

Kharismawan (2017) explored the types and functions of fillers in Obama's speeches. The study sought to address two primary key questions: (1) What are the types of fillers found in Obama's talks? and (2) What roles do these fillers serve? Employing a descriptive qualitative methodology, the researcher relied on Rose's (1998) theory of speech filler types, in combination with the frameworks proposed by Baalen (2001) and Stenstrom (1994) on the types and functions of speech fillers. The findings identified two main types of fillers:

lexicalized and unlexicalized. Additionally, five functions of speech fillers were revealed: marking hesitation, expressing empathy, mitigating, serving as editing terms, and acting as time-creating devices.

In contrast, the current study focuses on Joe Biden's use of speech fillers in political interviews, which are part of interactive spoken discourse where speakers exchange questions and answers, differing from the formal context of speeches. In the current study, the researchers also examine eleven functions of speech fillers, employing a descriptive methodology that combines quantitative and qualitative analyses, with a focus on a broader range of speech fillers.

Aligned with the objectives of this study, the following research question is proposed:
• What types and functions of speech fillers are employed in Biden's interview?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- **Speech Fillers (SFs)**

Even a native speaker usually struggles to find a proper way to express himself and the less proficient the speakers are, the more they are likely to encounter talk problems. As a result, they use communication strategies to fulfill his communicative targets (Kaivanpanah, et al., 2012). Communication strategies are tools a speaker uses to resolve the difficulties he encounters in forming an intended meaning (Tarone, 2005 as cited in Kaivanpanah et al., 2012). One such strategy is the use of filler words that help a speaker to fulfill this goal (Jonsson, 2016). According to Stenstrom (1994) speech fillers (SFs) are "lexically empty items with uncertain discourse functions, except to fill a conversational gap." On the other hand, Gryc (2014) states that SFs play a crucial role in spoken English, assisting speakers in wording their thoughts. He also mentions that SFs are not inherently good or bad, but are "linguistically comparable to other lexical items." Stenstrom (1994) classifies SFs as a type of hesitation phenomenon, including silent and filled pauses as well as verbal speech fillers. Stalling tolls such as filled pauses (m, e:m) or verbal SFs (e.g., well, I mean, you know) are often utilized by speakers when they pick their turn without being adequately prepared. These devices indicate that the speakers have something to say but are struggling to find the right words, requiring extra time to organize their thoughts.

In literature, there are many other terminologies for the term of fillers. Maclay and Osgood (1959), for example, refer to speech fillers as "filled pauses." They are called "hesitation disfluencies" because when a speaker has speaking difficulties, he/she usually pauses and makes pauses in speech (Corley and Stewart, 2008). Further, the term "discourse marker" is introduced as the markers are viewed as semantic connections that demonstrate the connection between preceding and following talks (Fraser, 1996). To extend that they are considered as "vocabulary items or lexical chunks in grammar," McCarten (2007 as cited in Abdulla& Mohammed, 2023) utilizes the term "fragments" to refer to speech fillers.

Speech strategies (SFs) are considered fundamental elements that they "are part of what makes conversation work" (Yule, 2014). Although their forms vary from one language to another, several languages in the world include speech fillers used in oral interaction to make a delay. These SFs allow the speaker to carry on their talks in difficult moments (Jonsson, 2016). Consequently, Clark and Fox Tree (2002) suggest that the words "um" and "uh" serve as "long and short" delay in conversation. As a result, SFs are considered as "linguistic events," in contrast to coughing or laughter in talks, as they indicate speech fluency. The theory of spoken discourse suggests that speakers often use many prefabricated SFs in their conversations (Brown & Yule,

1983). In addition, Baalen (2001) states that these prefabricated SFs are words or phrases that could occur at any position in a sentence and could be omitted without changing the meaning of the text.

It is significance to mention that numerous kinds of speech disfluencies are typical in spoken languages todays, such as "long pauses, false starts, slips of the tongue, and filler words." Scholars have outlined the causes of SFs into three main categories: "divided attention, nervousness, and infrequent words." When speakers try to focus on multiple aspects at once divided attention is occurred. This may happen due to audience distractions or un expected events (Duvall et al ., 2014). Oomen & Postma (2001) emphasize that distractions and divided attention increase the use of filler words and pauses. Their analysis shows that speakers dramatically use SFs when their focus is divided. These disfluencies are seen as "automatic reactions to (temporal) problems in speech planning," and the become more noticeable when many tasks happen. Rare or "Infrequent words" are expressions that we do not use often, making them less familiar in our mental vocabulary. When speakers encounter difficulty in putting a particular word, they hesitate and resort to use fillers like ''um" till they find the appropriate word (Duvall et al ., 2014).

Nervousness is another source of filler words in speech. "Divided attention as well as uncommon use of words cause nervousness." Goldwater et al. (2010 cited in Duvall et al ., 2014) say that speaking too fast and rare words caused much production of filler words. Speaking very quickly and the use of rare words may happen due to nervousness if a speakers are required to utilize unfamiliar items. These items that are not typically used by the speakers may occur through a moment of anxiety when the speaker's mind is preoccupied with the listener's opinion rather than on the message he is conveying   (Garcia-Lopez, Díez-Bedmar,, & Almansa-Moreno, 2013).

3.THE MODEL OF ANALYSIS

This study adopted the Stenstrom 1994 model. According to this model, there are two types of SFs and several functions of SFs which will be explained below in (3.1) and (3.2) respectively.

3-1 Types of Speech Fillers

Stenstrom (1994) classifies SFs "according to their functions into two   types; are

.pauses (silent& filled) and

.verbal or lexical speech fillers."

- Pauses

Filled pauses indicate that the speakers have no intention to give up the turn but are actively planning what to utter next word (Stenstrom,1994).

A pause is a calm period in continuing conversations, and at transitions of turns between speakers (Fors, 2015). speakers often pause for various reasons such as to give themselves time to design what they will say next, or when they find it difficult to utter a greater number of words or syllables as they need more amount of air to breathe or they possess no ideas to share at this moment . Szczepek Reed (2011) states that a case of missing talks is a pause. In addition, he notes that empirical research on pauses show that speakers do not pause randomly, but they plan where to pause according to specific constraints like speech rhythm. Stenstrom (1994); and

Richards& Schmidt (2010) suggest that pauses can be silent or filled. According to Cenoz (1998 cited in Al-Ghazali & Alrefaee, 2019), pauses may have some functions:

- give the speakers some seconds to breathe.

- enable the speaker to re-plan his talks.

- boundaries within the speech.

Meanwhile, both filled pauses and silent pauses have been observed to appear more commonly before lexical words rather than before function words (Maclay & Osgood,1959).

Silent pauses (SPs) refer to silent gabs among words (Richards& Schmidt, 2010). SPs are pauses that appear strategically in the utterance (Stenstrom, 1994). Brown and Yule (1983) argue that SPs typically precede speech and help a speaker in planning his/her next words. They permeate many rhetorical styles like political speech and storytelling.

In a different light, filled pauses (FPs) are hesitations in natural speech completely or partly filled with sounds like ah, uh, err, etc. (Clark,1977 cited in Kharismawan, 2017). In a similar way, Brown and Yule (1983) suggest that FPs are pauses usually appear in a form of sounds or words at many points in speech. Rose (1998) classifies FPs into two types: an "unlexicalized FP and a lexicalized FP." Unlexicalized FP is a pause filled by one of the following vocal combinations: ''a, am, u, um, e, em'' as illustrated in the example below.

''// my cousin's daughter came down and said *er* princess diana was in an ACcident //'' (Rose, 1998. 11)

• **Verbal or Lexical Speech Fillers**

They serve as SFs, expressed through words or short phrases, as ''well, yeah, like, you know, if you see, sort of, what I mean'' and the like (Rose, 1998). Similarly, Baalen (2001) observes that lexicalized FPs are commonly used in such contexts. Stenstrom (1994) also identifies verbal fillers such as ''well,'' ''I mean'' and ''sort o'' as examples of lexicalized speech fillers. Additionally, FPs can take forms as ''like'' and ''you know'' as illustrated in the following example:

''// when people are very OLD . // *you KNOW* // the cars that they LIKE // the cars that they RODE in // that they grew….''   (Rose, 1998. 11)

Similarly, they can be expressed by using phrases like ''well, okay, let's see and so.'' Furthermore, despite this, words and phrases like these could fill pauses, but not all instances of them are FPs. Scholars identified "lexicalized FPs" or verbal fillers noting that, similar to unlexicalized ones, they typically last for brief moments at which point the speaker decides the upcoming word (Leech and Svartvik, 1994 as cited in Rose, 1998). The presence of many types of SFs frequently co-occurs alongside shift topics (Brown & Yule, 1983).

It is important to note that SPs and FPs are utilized for both similar and distinct purposes. Obviously, SPs serve as a breathing pause. Both SPs and FPs, often used together, function for hesitation and strategic purposes (e.g. hold, take, and yield the turn), as well as to mark units of speech, such as topic, and subtopic (Stenstrom, 1994).

3.2 Functions of Speech Fillers

Stenstrom (1994) says that SFs have several functions. They are ''filling pauses, empathizing, mitigating, hesitation marks, time-creating devices, editing terms, sequencers, shift markers, starters, holding the turn, and breathing. These functions rely on the speaker's situation (Schriffin, 1987).

- Filling Pauses

FPs can be typically interpreted as an indication that the speaker does not intend to give up the turn but is actually organizing what next words as in

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

Without the filled pause *ə:m* in (1) B might simply have gained the idea that A had finished the message, that s/he had nothing more to add and was ready to yield his/her turn.

- Hesitation Mark

One type of the functions of SFs is hesitation mark (Stenstrom,1994). Hesitations occur when a speaker has difficulty in choosing the appropriate word to use (Foss & Hakes, 1978).

(2) '' A: so that's the picture''

' 'B: ***3:m*** — now this irons that I that I thought might be . worth looking at if Carol . agreed . . .''   (Stenstrom, 1994. 8).

- Empathizing

The speakers strengthen their connection with the hearers through empathizing. Thus, Stenstrom (1994) argues that these SFs serve an invitation for the hearers to participate with the speakers' message. In other words, make the listener as a part of the speech. Empathizing typically appears at the beginning or end of turns but can also occur elsewhere such as when the speakers seek feedback. Common expressions include phrases like ''what I mean, you see, you know and if you see.''

(3) A: ''he's not a RELAXED lecturer# but he's .a DR IVING lecturer# you KNOW# — whereas SOME of them here# stand UP''(Stenstrom, 1994. 64).

- Holding the Turn

Stenstrom (1994) explains that holding the turn means continuing to talk. However, the initial preparation made by the speakers at the start of the turn may not be enough to carry them through. Since planning and speaking simultaneously is difficult, speakers might need to pause and re-plan midway through their turns.

- Mitigating

As Stenstrom (1994) notes, some SFs such as ''I think, really, actually, and sort of'' serve as hedges to soften or lessen the impact on an utterance. Baalen (2001) suggests that utterances can be mitigated by SFs to avoid hurting the listeners' emotions. She also points out that SFs function as marker of solidarity or politeness strategy. Words like ''ehm, eer, well, and ok'' are often used as mitigation or politeness devices.

(4) ''well *I think* probably you're R^GHT# . Probably ((. . .)) əm — — that we should pay you on a DAILY basis#'' (Stenstrom, 1994. 128).

- Editing Term or Monitoring

By monitoring, the speakers can make correction as needed (Stenstrom, 1994). SFs can serve to correct mistakes of the speech in the speakers' talks. That's to say, speakers may realize the need to clarify their words or to correct errors they have made. For example, ''I mean'' could indicate that the prior words were possibly out of order. At times, the speakers may even repeat the speech errors before correcting them (Baalen,2001).

(5) A: ''have you . tried at all . so far . *I mean* have you *got round to anything*'' (Stenstrom, 1994. 193).

• Sequencer

A sequencer is another function of SFs. As Fraser (1996) argues that the discourse marker ''so'' indicates that the next part of the conversation should be interpreted as a conclusion of the previous discourse as in the following example:

(6) ''Jacob was very tired. *So*, he left early''   (Fraser, 1996. 169).

• Time Creating Device

Stenstrom (1994) notes that SFs help speakers by providing them with time to consider their next words carefully. One common form of SFs used for this purpose is lexical repetition, which comes in three types. The first form is ''single word repetition'' where the speakers repeat a word during their turns as in the example (7) below. The second form is ''clause partial repetition'', where part of a clause is repeated. These repetitions function as SFs allowing the speakers to pause and formulate their next utterances as in the extract (8) below and the third one, is combination as in the example (9) (Stenstrom, 1994).

(7) A: '' I mean it doesn't make any DIFFERENCE# **if if if if if if** you've got five''..

(8) A: ''….you SEE# **it was a it was a . it was it was** an ASIAN child# between the age of .'' (Stenstrom, 1994. 79).

(9)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*'' (Stenstrom, 1994. 35).

The complexity in above extract (9) comes from the speaker's difficulty to formulate the message and, as a result, overuses verbal fillers (e.g., ''*I mean*,'' ''*you know*,'' ''*sort of*'') to create pauses, allowing time to plan next utterance (ibid).

• Shift Marker

Stenstrom (1994) identifies the shift marker as one of the functions of SFs. It involves moving from one topic to another or shifting between different aspects of the same topic. The expression ''by the way'' is a common example of a shift marker.

(10) "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#." (Stenstrom, 1994. 158).

The phrase ''by the way'' in this context serve to add extra information that is relevant but not directly related to the main topic.

• Starter

A speaker frequently uses an initial phrase to start the turns and several speakers using them greater than others. A common example of such a starter is realized by ''well,'' which serves to initiate a speech (Stenstrom, 1994).

(11)- *''**well** we . DO have# . 3m in the . 3 MACRO MARKETING# . 3 part of the COURSE#''* (Ibid. 47).

• Breathing

SFs can also function as breathing. Silent pauses (---) perform as breathing pauses which in turn allow the speakers to take a moment to breathe.

(12) A: ''. . . and ALL this was DONE 3:#**---** by --- kind of letting - 3:**---** {WELL} REALLY by just 3**: ---** sort of 3# — starting from NOTHING#'' (Stenstrom, 1994. 76).

4. METHODOLOGY

The current study aims to identify the types of SFs in political discourse. For this purpose, a mixed method was chosen as the most suitable approach. The study adopts Stenstrom's (1994) model for analysis. This model classifies SFs into two types: pauses (silent and filled) and verbal or lexical fillers. These fillers serve multiple functions such as filling pause, time creating device, mitigating, empathizing, holding the turn, starter, sequencer, shift marker, editing term or monitoring breathing and hesitation mark. The researchers deliberately selected one interview: a 2023 television interview with Joe Biden, conducted by John Harwood. In this interview, President Biden addressed board threats to democracy, ethical concerns about the Supreme Court. The interview was chosen due to its wide- ranging discussion, which provides diverse opportunities to analyze linguistic fillers.

The data was obtained from a reliable transcript, reviewed on You Tube, and downloaded from https://propub.li/3F0kLWi. The choice of this interview focuses on the linguistic aspects in political discourse, so the selection is not political but rather strictly linguistic.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study, divided into two parts: the types of SFs and the functions of their occurrence in Joe Biden's political interviews.

5.1 Types of Speech Fillers in Biden's Speech

In this study, the researchers categorized the types of SFs based on Stenstrom's theory. According to Stenstrom (1994), SFs are classified into two types: pauses and lexical or verbal SFs.
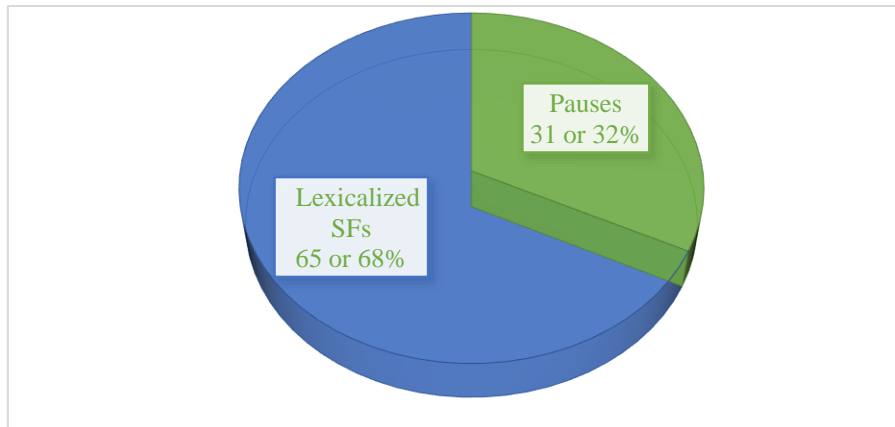
Figur1. *Types of SFs used by Biden*

The figure above implies that the most frequent speech fillers used by Biden were lexical SFs with a number of occurrences of 65 or 68%. Then, followed by pauses with a number of occurrences of 31 or 32%. This because lexical SFs add rhetorical impact to speech, enhancing the strength of the message and making it more persuasive and effective. Biden may be accustomed to using lexical SFs in his speech as part of his personal communication style, which makes him feel more comfortable and confident while speaking. Therefore, Biden's use of lexical SFs more than pauses could be a strategy to improve the quality of communication and interact with the audience more effectively.

Table 1. *Types of SFs Used by Biden*.

Speech fillers	Frequency	Percentage
Well	8	8.33%
Ok	1	1.04%
You know	7	7.29%
You see	1	1.04%
I mean	8	8.33%
Sort of	1	1.04%
So	6	6.25%
By the way	1	1.04%
I think	25	26.04%
Now	4	4.17%
Really	3	3.13%
Uh	25	26.04
Um	6	6.25

Total	96	100%

It is noticeable that Biden relied heavily on the use of *I think* and *uh* in his talks which were used 25 times with a frequency rate of 26.04%. These were used more than a third of the times when other SFs were used. The word *I think* gives the impression to the listener that the speaker is thinking deeply about the topic and expressing his opinion in a thoughtful way which enhances his credibility. The pause *uh* may give him time to think and organize his thoughts better than other SFs improving the flow of his speech. The SFs *well* and *I mean* came in the second position which were used (8 with 8.33%). These phrases can grab the audience's attention and make them feel as if the speaker is speaking naturally, facilitating interaction and engagement.

The lexicalized SF that was used third most frequently was *you know*, which appeared seven times with a 7.29% percentage, Biden wants to engage the audience in the conversation and ensure that they follow the ideas presented by him, which enhances interaction and communication. He also used *so* and *um* with number frequencies 6 (6.25%). Biden utilized *um* to give himself time to think and organize ideas, which would help keep the conversation flowing, while he used *so* to move between ideas or topics smoothly.

Besides, he produced the SFs *now and really* 4 and 3 times with 4.17% and 3.13% respectively. Nevertheless, there were SFs that were used less frequently by Biden. These include *ok, you see*, *by the way*, and *sort of with* a number of occurrences 1 only or 1.04 % each. By using those SFs moderately he wanted to clarify ideas, move between topics, and engage with the audience, enhancing the clarity of his message because excessive use of filler words can lead to decreased listener attention, reduced speaker credibility, and make it difficult for listeners to understand the main points. However, it is necessary to observe that using SFs in a moderate way makes the speech sound more spontaneous and natural to achieve balance so that the use of fillers does not affect the clarity of the message or the flow of the speech. This claim goes in line with the previous study by Seals & Coppock (2002) who claimed that overuse of SFs could diminish the speaker's credibility and affect the audience's comprehension of the speaker's message.

5.2 Functions of Speech Fillers in Biden's Speech

This section discusses the functions of SFs utilized by Biden. The analysis is based on Stenstrom's (1994) model which divides the functions into eleven categories (see 3.2). The details are shown below:

Table 2. *Functions of SFs used by Biden.*

Functions of SFs	Frequency	Percentage
Filling pause	16	13.11 %
Holding the turn	7	5.74%

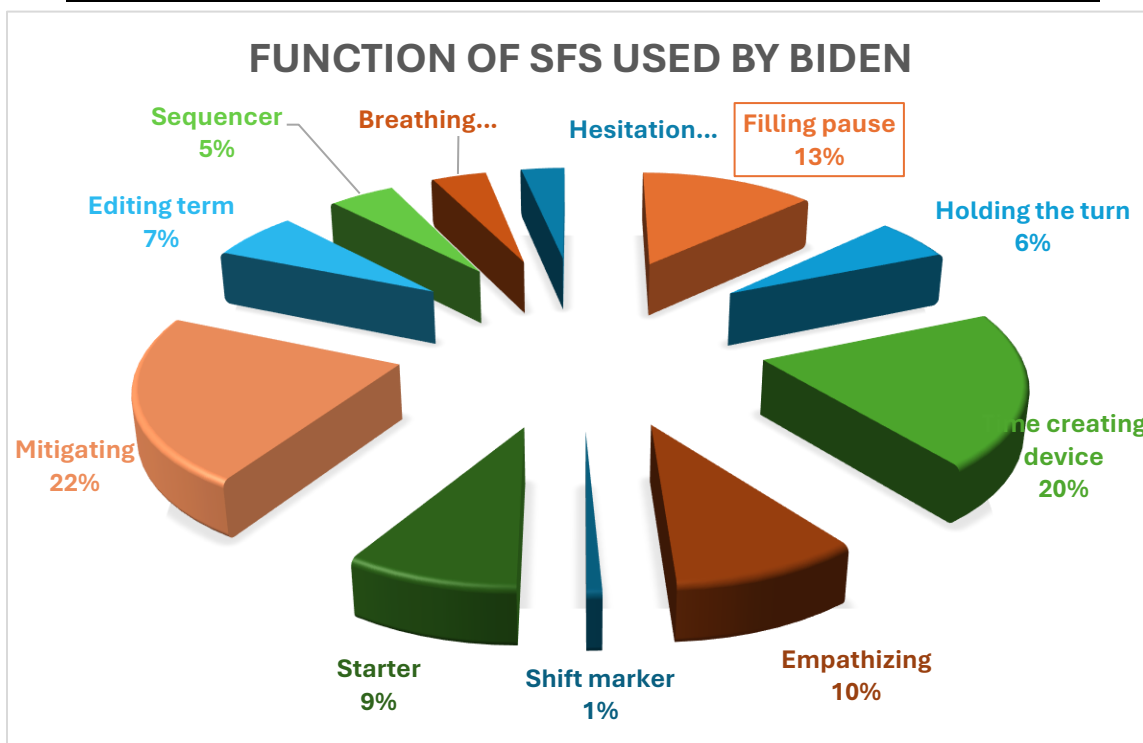| Time creating device	25	20.49 %
Empathizing	12	.984%
Shift marker	1	0.82%
Starter	11	9.02%
Mitigating	27	22.13%
Editing term	8	6.56%
Sequencer	6	4.92%
Breathing	5	4.10%
Hesitation mark	4	3.28%
Total	122	100%

FUNCTION OF SFS USED BY BIDEN

Figure 2. *Functions of SFs used by Biden*

Based on data shown in Figure 2 and Table 2, 'mitigating' seems to be the predominating function for which Biden used SFs because he wanted to appear in a way befitting the president of America. 'Time creating device' came in second place in his speech, this is also because he

wanted to formulate his words before he uttered them. Thirdly, 'filling pause' is apparent with 13.11 %. Then, 'empathizing' and 'starter' were used almost at the same level with (9,84 %) for the former and (9. 02 %) for the latter. 'Editing term or monitoring' is used with 6.56 % rates. It came with this rate because Biden wanted to correct himself when he erred. Then, 'holding the turn' rating 5.74 % and 'sequencer' rates 4.92% of the total percentage of Biden's SF functions. Additionally, SFs were observed in functions as 'breathing' and 'hesitation mark' with a rate of 4.10 % and 3.28% respectively. Finally, Biden used 'shift marker' only once with 0.82% because he wanted to stick to one point until he finished the idea.

6. CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing the selected episode and discussing the results, the following conclusions can be drawn in accordance with the research question outlined in this study:

- The study results indicate the presence of two types of speech fillers in politicians' interviews, reflecting their varied strategies for managing dialogue. Lexical or verbal SFs appeared first, followed by pauses.
- A significant finding of this study is the constant occurrence of the lexical SF 'I think' and the pause 'uh' in the speech of the political interviewee. Biden's use of 'I think' reflects deep thinking and enhances his credibility, while pauses like 'uh' give him time to organize his thoughts, improving the fluency of his speech. Overall, Biden's discourse includes SFs corresponding to the two types identified by Stenstrom (1994).
- As a native speaker, Biden displayed a moderate use of SFs, attributed to his skillful and frequent application of them. This aligns with preceding study by Rieger (2003), which suggested that native speaker tends to speak nearly two times faster than non-native speakers due to their proficient and frequent use of SFs. Consequently, this supports our argument that SFs are a natural element of speech.
- Biden employed all the SFs functions identified in Stenstrom's theory. They are "time creating device, filling pauses, breathing, hesitation mark, shift marker, starter, empathizing, mitigating, holding the turn, sequencer and editing term."
- Mitigating seems to be the most dominant function for which Biden use SFs. This because he wanted to appear in a way befitting the president of America. Time crating device came in second place in his speech، this is also because he wanted to formulate his words before he uttered them.
- Biden used shift marker only once because he wanted to be with the same topic except this time.
- Based on these findings, the researchers argue that SFs are not always regarded as interruptions in speech. For foreign language (FL) learners, it is essential to understand filler words not merely as flawed speech but as tools that can improve verbal communication and enhance interactional skills. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of data, as this study was confined to analyzing Joe Biden's use of SFs and their functions. Exploring hesitation phenomena in speech within a more comprehensive and detailed framework would provide valuable insights for future studies.

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