

Weakness of Fluency in Speech Production Made by Iraqi College Students of English

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ABSTRACT

Based on their investigation, the current research examines the disfluency in speech production produced by Iraqi students at the Department of English - Open Educational College- Fallujah Study Center. The aims of this study are to identify the various kinds of disfluency, as well as the prevalent kinds and similarities and differences between the students' disfluencies. This kind of study is qualitative. The research utilizes disfluent utterances from students in the third and fourth stages as its data source. The researcher gathers data by attentively listening to the audio recording, writing the audio scripts, administering a questionnaire, identifying the data, and choosing the data that deals with various kinds of deficiency. The disfluencies are analyzed by the researcher using the theories of Fox Tree, Levelt, Shriberg, and Clark and Wasow. The findings show that students make three different kinds of disfluencies that were produced by students in the English Department at OEC, overt repair, hesitation, and repetition. The duration of study done by third and fourth-year students is used to analyze them. Hesitancy is the most prevalent type of disfluency that students experience most learners have. The overall number of disfluencies produced by learners in the third and fourth stages then makes a difference. First, the researcher identified commonalities between the three forms of disfluencies: overt repair, hesitation, and repetition. Second, student's hesitancy is the most common form of disfluency.

KEYWORDS: Disfluencies, Speech Production, similarities, repetition, OEC

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt, acquiring proficiency in the English language is essential for enhancing college students' performance in recognition and production areas of study. One of the four fundamental skills that Iraqi university students, particularly those in the English department, must develop is speaking. Furthermore, one of the things that the Open Educational College- Fallujah Study Center, Department of English is required to teach is speaking. From the first stage to the fourth stage, speaking was taught to the students. Learners must understand how to speak. Speaking is acknowledged as a challenging language skill that involves several components, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, making it a challenging skill. In order to have proper conversations, students employ grammar.

Even though speaking is a skill that learners must develop, the majority of them produce speech with disfluency. It indicates that there are differences in the way learners organize and execute their talks, which might lead to hesitancy, silent pauses, corrections, etc. For this reason, mastering the skill of speaking might be considered challenging. Students' lack of confidence comes from their admission that they are not native English speakers, which contributes to their disfluency in speech, (Bosker et al., 2019). Additionally, learners find it challenging to investigate ideas in English.

As a result, in their presentations in front of the class, English Department students who were IQ learners displayed disfluency in speech production. They were because the research's informants did not have communication

difficulties but showed certain disfluencies. From throughout the course of their studies, the speech disfluencies of the students were observed. Their disfluency did not decrease with the amount of time they spent studying English. Additionally, earlier research on disfluency has led to the confirmation of this viewpoint. Specifically, the writer used Shriberg's thesis on disfluency as one of the theories for this study. Shriberg's (1994) study looks at disfluencies in adult normal speakers of American English speech output, such as "um," repeated words, and other forms of self-repair. The results indicate that there are consistent patterns in the rates of disfluency based on the length of the sentence, the position of the disfluency, the presence of another disfluency in the same phrase, the type of disfluency, and combinations of these factors. These patterns are observed both across different speakers and within individual speakers. However, the present investigation also identifies certain forms of disfluency, such as hesitations characterized by sounds like "ee, aa, en, and emm," repetitions, and explicit corrections, in the speech products of pupils. However, there is a distinction between Shriberg's work and the present study, because the participants who are taking part in this research are students from the English Department of Indonesia who are learning English as a second language. Additionally, each and every one of the students is an adult member of the population who possesses typical speech abilities and is currently enrolled as a college student at the college or university, according to Brocklehurst (2011).

According to the findings of the second study, which was carried out by Clark and Wasow (1998, page 216), there are a large number of common disfluencies that may be found in speech. These include fillers, silent pauses, repetitions, and hesitations. However, this recent study has only identified repetition and hesitancy. Additionally, the researcher also discovered explicit corrections of students who are in their second and fourth semesters in college presented their speech results. When conducting the study, the researcher additionally utilized Levelt's (1989) framework, which suggests that disfluency analysis is most effectively done by considering three distinct components: an editing phase or stop the corrected information, and the original speech that the speaker seeks to modify are all included in this sentence.

The next earlier study that the author selects is Clark and Tree (2002). The speakers that the researchers observed used the words uh and um to signal that they were going to start what they anticipated to be a little (uh) or substantial (um) speech delay. The data demonstrated that presenters keep an eye on their speech schedules for impending delays that warrant discussion. Upon noticing this kind of delay, they devised strategies for when and how to stop talking, which word to generate (huh or um), whether to add it as a criticism to the word that came before it (like in "and-uh"), and whether or not to proceed with the sentence. The claim was that speakers planned for, created, and produced the words "uh" and "um" in the same way they would any other conventional English word. The findings of this study, when compared to the findings of Clark and Tree's (2002) study, demonstrate that speakers who are hesitant to create a similar disfluency are more likely to be successful. If "uh, and um" are identified by Clark and Tree (2002) as disfluencies, then the author's investigation yields "ee, en, em, and aa." Furthermore, this kind of disfluency takes over as the predominant kind produced by the research object's speakers. Sawyer and Yairi's (2010) work serve as the researcher's fourth antecedent. In order to ascertain whether disfluency clusters in preschoolers happened at rates that were higher than the chance rate, if they changed with time, and

whether they were able to identify children who would either continue to stutter or recover from it, these clusters were examined in this study. Thirty-two children who were recruited close to the onset of stuttering were matched to sixteen typically fluent children based on how they eventually progressed with their stuttering. As a result, clusters are a crucial component of preschoolers' overall disfluent language. This study found disfluencies in adult students' speech output when compared to the current study. They are all proficient who do not stutter in their everyday speaking. Since the students are mature, regular speakers, there is no need to help them overcome their disfluencies, (Bortfeld et al., 2001)

According to the findings of the research that was described earlier, the researcher has reached the conclusion that the position of the current study is the culmination of those studies and includes additional objectives that include (1) The main focus of this study is the occurrence of disfluency in speech production. (2) The goal is to compare the speech fluency of university students who do not have any speech difficulties. (3) The disfluency will be examined in relation to the amount of time the students have been studying. Furthermore, this study employs qualitative research methods, namely utilising observation and recording materials to gather data. The researcher supports the data with the theory and prior investigations. In addition, the credibility of data can be confirmed by utilizing real data obtained through triangulation.

Consequently, this present study has three main objectives:

- 1) To categorize the speech production disfluencies made by OEC's English Department students according to their duration of study.
- 2) To characterize the main speech production disfluency exhibited by OEC's English Department students, based on the duration of their academic programme.
- 3) To Analyze the similarities and distinctions in articulation disfluencies among English Department students at OEC, based on their duration of study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fluency is a subject that elicits a wide range of perspectives. Fillmore (1979, p.93) presents a comprehensive perspective on fluency that encompasses various elements, including: The capacity to communicate for a long time with few pauses, The capacity to speak in words that are understandable, the capacity to have things to say that are acceptable, and the capacity that certain individuals have to be creative are all examples of abilities that may be used to characterise people.

Fluent speech is a crucial aspect of speaking competency for individuals who are not native speakers, based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001), which outlines the language standards. Nevertheless, learners of English continue to have difficulties in achieving fluency in spoken language. According to Cucchiarini et al. (2000), non-native speech is said to have a higher number of disfluencies compared to native speech. There are three main markers of disfluency that have been thoroughly investigated in the scholarly literature on fluency, according to Liyanage and Gardner (2013). These are different types of periods of silence, pauses filled with sounds, and instances of correcting oneself. Primarily, researchers ascertain the frequency at which particular qualities occur as a factor that contributes to disfluency.

The production of disfluency is influenced by a variety of circumstances. It was discovered by Bortfeld et al. (2001) that the conversational role of the speaker and the conversational partner, in addition to the speaker's age and gender, had an effect. Moreover, the formation of disfluencies may happen prior to linguistic material that requires more cognitive effort, based on what Bosker (2014) has mentioned. There is a tendency for disfluencies to arise in spontaneous speech prior to longer utterances, uncertain lexical items, low-frequency colour names, open-class words, names of low-codability imagery, or at key discourse borders. This distribution of disfluencies has been observed in various studies "(Oviatt, 1995; Shriberg, 1996; Beattie & Butterworth, 1979; Levelt, 1983; MacLay & Osgood, 1959; Hartsuiker & Notebaert, 2010; Swerts, 1998)". Furthermore, engaging in a conversation about an unknown subject (Bortfeld et al., 2001; Merlo & Mansur, 2004) or speaking at a faster rate (Oomen & Postma, 2001) enhances the probability of experiencing disfluencies. Context is another crucial aspect in causing disfluency. Engaging in speech rather than monologue, and interacting with humans rather than computers, increases the likelihood of experiencing disfluency (Oviatt, 1995). Furthermore, in situations where there are several possible choices for reference, such as when the contextual likelihood is low (Beattie & Butterworth, 1979), or when there are multiple reference possibilities available (Schnadt & Corley, 2006). Disfluency is a common occurrence in spontaneous talks between individuals (Shriberg, 2001).

2. Research Method

This study employs qualitative methods to investigate disfluency in the speech production of English Department students at ODC. There are a total of 28 students from the English Department who are the subjects of this study. Of these students, 14 have been studying for a period of less than two years, and the remaining 14 have been studying for a period of more than two years altogether. Furthermore, the data consists of voice recordings capturing the participants' pronunciation characterized by disfluency. The data collection methodology employed in this research is derived from Cresswell (2007: 129), who posited that the primary approaches for gathering data in qualitative research, the following should be included: documentation, interviews, audiovisual materials, and observation. The data in this research is confirmed by the triangulation approach proposed by Merriam (1998: 2004: 204-205). This research utilizes the Interactive Model, as delineated by Miles and Huberman (1984, pp. 21-22), for data analysis. The methodology consists of four elements: data collection, data reduction, data visualization, and conclusion verification.

3.FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The present research aims to provide a comprehensive description of the many types of disfluencies in communication. Additionally, it seeks to determine the prevalence of disfluency in utterances and analyse the similarities and differences in disfluency patterns among English Department students of OEC, based on the duration of their study.

3.1.1 Categorization of Speech Production Disfluencies Made by English Department Students of OEC According to Their Duration of Study

The findings from the speech production of second-semester and fourth-semester students in the English Department reveal three types of disfluencies: (1) hesitation, (2) repetition, and (3) overt repair.

3.1.2 The Prevalent Disfluencies in Speech Production by English Department Students of OEC According to Their Duration of Study.

The writer creates a table to examine the many forms of disfluencies generated by second and fourth semester students in the English Department of OEC, in order to determine the most common ones.

Table 1 Disfluency Types Produced in Second and Fourth Semester Students

No	Disfluency Types	Total of Students
1.	Repetitions	16
2.	Overt Repairs	10
3.	Hesitations	23

The author uses a formula for quantifying the prevalence of disfluency demonstrated by the students. The frequency will be quantified as a percentage, Quantified for each category of disfluency present in all utterances. The formula utilised to measure the frequency of disfluency identified in the study is as follows:

$$E = \frac{fx \times 100\%}{n}$$

E = Represents the percentage of disfluency frequency.

fx =represents the number of particular disfluencies

n= represents the total number of disfluencies.

What follows is a table that illustrates the frequency of disfluencies that were committed by students during their second semester:

Table 2: The Most Common Types frequency of Disfluency Committed by Students in the Second Semester

No	Types of disfluencies	Total number of disfluencies	Frequency %
1	Hesitations	30	50.8
2	Repetitions	17	28.8
3	Overt repairs	12	20.3
Total		59	100%

The data indicates that among the 14 students in the second semester, when it comes to their speech habits, the form of disfluency that occurs most frequently is hesitancy, accounting for 50.8%. In this semester, reluctance has resulted in the production of students 28 times. The frequency indicates that approximately 28.8% of students in this

semester's speech outputs exhibit at least one instance of repetition. However, there are certain students who do not engage in any repetition of their speeches. The table indicates that overt repairs occur 13 times and that these repairs are also classified as having a frequency of disfluency of 20.3% among second semester students. Some students make obvious corrections in their utterances.

The following is the outcome of a disfluency frequency measurement conducted by fourth semester students of the English Department at OEC. The frequency of disfluencies among second semester students differs significantly, particularly in terms of the number of disfluencies.

Table 3 Frequency of Disfluency Made by Fourth Semester Students

No	Types of disfluencies	Total number of disfluencies	Frequency %
1	Hesitations	28	75.6
2	Repetitions	7	18.9
3	Overt repairs	2	5
Total		37	100%

The data reveals that hesitation is the most frequent type of disfluency observed in the speech productions of fourth semester students, accounting for 75.6% of occurrences. In this semester, reluctance has resulted in the production of students 29 times. It is evident that about 18.9% of the speakers' exhibited hesitations in their presentations. Furthermore, repetition, which frequently manifests in fourth semester learners, is the second most prevalent kind of disfluency. The frequency indicates that students in this semester tend to create speech repetitions almost once or twice. The table indicates that there were only 2 instances of overt repairs observed. These repairs were only related to fourth semester students and had a frequency of disfluency of 5%. In addition, there are just 2 learners that engage in overt repairs, each doing so once during their speech deliveries.

Furthermore, when the rates of disfluencies created by students in their second semester and those in their fourth semester are combined, the data that is produced has the following characteristics:

Table 4 Frequency of Disfluency Made by Second and Fourth Semester Students

No	Types of disfluencies	2 nd semester students	4 th semester students
1	Hesitations	50.8	75.6
2	Repetitions	28.8	18.9
3	Overt repairs	20.3	5
Total		100%	100%

3.1.3 Comparison of Disfluencies and Their Effects on Speech Production: Differences and Similarities

The author will discuss the outcomes of a study that investigates the ways in which students in the English Department show both similarities and variances in their use of disfluency, specifically between second and fourth semester students. The following is a representation of the disfluency discrepancies and similarities that were observed between the students of both semesters respectively:

The Divergence of Disfluency:

In the English Department, the findings of the study reveal that there is a substantial gap in the frequency of disfluencies that occur between students in the second semester and those during the fourth semester. There were 59 instances of disfluencies created by students in the second semester, while there were 37 instances of disfluencies produced by students in the fourth semester. There is a significant gap in the number of disfluencies that occur between students in the second semester and those in the fourth semester, with approximately 22 disfluencies taking place.

a. The Similarities of Disfluency:

The findings indicate that English Department students of OEC exhibit two similarities in their disfluency patterns based on their duration of study. Firstly, both semester students make the same types of disfluencies, particularly hesitations, repetitions, and overt repairs. Secondly, the dominant type of disfluency observed in both groups is hesitations. As previously mentioned by the researcher, the number of hesitations exhibited by second and fourth semester students is 57. Numerous aspects of disfluency can be addressed by examining the various forms of disfluency in this present investigation. The types of disfluencies observed in the speech products of second to fourth semester students vary. As previously stated, second semester students exhibited a higher frequency of disfluencies compared to fourth semester students.

A minimum of 59 disfluencies are generated in the talks of second semester students. During their fourth semester, the students produced a total of 37 disfluencies. The results also indicate that students in both the second and fourth semesters exhibited several sorts of disfluencies, including hesitations, repeats, and overt repairs. Second semester students exhibited the same categories of disfluency as fourth semester pupils. During both semesters, students came up with three different categories to organize their work. According to Clark and Wasow (1998), these categories are present in normal speakers, and this hypothesis is consistent with their findings. Every semester, students exhibit three distinct types of disfluencies that the researcher investigates.

3.2. DISCUSSION

The writer examines the total number, and the frequency rate of speech disfluency made by second semester and fourth semester students in the English Department of OEC. It is explained that the primary type of speech disfluency made by second semester students is hesitation, while the main type of speech disfluency made by fourth semester students is also hesitation. Thus, the primary form of speech interruption exhibited by English Department students of OEC, as determined by their duration of academic engagement, is hesitancy. Upon reviewing the disfluencies identified in the study, the researcher may conclude that students made disfluencies due to their word creation process.

According to Clark and Wasow (1998, p.205), disfluency occurs when speakers struggle to plan significant parts of their speech, resulting in difficulties initiating such parts. It is highly probable that In the beginning of such units, they will pause before the first word, moderately probable that Shortly after the first word, they will pause, and after that, it is less likely that they will continue it. The upcoming discussion pertains to the prevailing occurrence of disfluency among students in the English Department. Hesitations are the most prevalent form of disfluency. As stated previously, the researcher is comparing the disfluencies of 2nd semester and 4th semester students based on their time of study.

The primary disfluency observed among second semester students was hesitations, and this pattern was also observed among fourth semester participants. The data indicates that second semester participants exhibited 28 instances of hesitation, while fourth semester participants demonstrated 29 instances of hesitation. It would be intriguing because participants from both semesters exhibit a similar prevalence of disfluency. According to Shriberg's view, disfluencies such as "um", repeated words, and the speech output of adult native speakers of American English is characterized by a variety of various forms of self-repair procedures. The paper aims to demonstrate that disfluencies display remarkably consistent patterns across several dimensions (Shriberg, 1994). Nevertheless, this study employs non-American English-speaking adult participants who possess typical language abilities. Based on the aforementioned explanation, it can be inferred that this study's results align with both the theoretical framework and past research regarding the occurrence of hesitations, such as the use of "um," in the speech output of adult individuals without speech disorders.

The following discussion refers to differences and similarities in learner's disfluency in their speech productions. As previously mentioned, English Department students exhibit a variation in disfluency, namely in the frequency of disfluencies during their speech productions. According to the findings, second semester students exhibited a higher number of disfluencies compared to fourth semester students. Specifically, second semester students had 59 disfluencies, whereas fourth semester students had 37 disfluencies .

However, It has been observed that the disfluency patterns displayed by participants from both semesters share two same characteristics. Firstly, there is a consistency in the types of disfluencies observed among second and fourth semester students, including hesitations, repetitions, and overt corrections. The second similarity lies in the fact that both participants exhibit a prevalent disfluency in their conversations. The participants from both semesters had a higher frequency of hesitations compared to other types of disfluencies.

4. CONCLUSION

Students in their second and fourth semesters were found to demonstrate three distinct types of disfluencies, which were discovered by the study. These disfluencies were hesitation, repetition, and overt repair. According to the explanation that was presented earlier, the participants from both semesters in the study displayed three distinct forms of disfluencies in their speech patterns. Furthermore, the findings of the research indicate that the most common kind of disfluency displayed by students in the English Department of OEC throughout their second and

fourth semesters is disfluency that is hesitancy. A total of 57 hesitations are produced by students in their second and fourth semesters. In accordance with the argument made by Clark and Tree (2002), upon encountering a delay, participants choose the appropriate course of action, such as pausing in speech, selecting between "uh" or "um" as a filler, deciding whether to connect it to the preceding word (e.g., "and-uh"), and determining whether to extend it . An argument was made that the words "uh" and "um" were common in the English language, and that individuals had purposefully chosen to use them, constructed, and articulated them in the same manner as any other word. In addition, the participants in the second and fourth semesters had both differences and similarities in their speech disfluency patterns. The difference lies in the quantity of disfluencies they generated .

There is an obvious difference in the total number of disfluencies seen between students in their second semester and those in their fourth semester. The number of disfluencies produced by second semester participants is 59, whereas fourth semester participants produced 37 disfluencies. Furthermore, this investigation also identifies two similarities. The initial resemblance lies in the shared occurrence of similar disfluencies among students from both semesters, namely hesitations, repetitions, and overt repairs. Furthermore, the second similarities lies in the fact that both instances exhibit the same prominent disfluency, such as hesitations. As previously stated by the writer, the number of hesitations exhibited by second and fourth semester participants is 57 .

Additional research on disfluencies is required to precisely determine the correlation between speech production mistakes and the communication effectiveness. The author acknowledges multiple weaknesses in this research. Initially, the samples were not initially gathered for the purpose of analysis, and standardized measurements were not carried out.

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