Pauses in Student Group Presentations: UM-SpEAKs

Tia Farahdiba, Yazid Basthomi, Johannes A. Prayogo, Maria Hidayati, Nurenzia Yannuar Suharyadi, Cita Nuary Ishak, Dyah Triajeng P.R.R.

Abstract--- *This study aimed to analyze pauses by male and female students in group presentations. A qualitative study, this project focuses on developing better understanding of pauses by students in classroom group presentation. Two kinds of data were used in this study: (1) UM-SpEAKs (Universitas Negeri Malang Spoken English in Academic Kontexts) corpus and (2) interview data. The analysis was focused on the types and reason(s) for the pauses. The results show that there are different number of silent and filled pauses between male and female students in group presentations. It was found that the most common type of pauses that are made by male and female students is silent pauses. Nervousness or anxiety is the main reason for the occurrence of the pauses in group presentations.*

Keywords--- *Classroom, Interaction, Pauses, Group Presentations, UM-SpEAKs, Indonesia*

Tia Farahdiba, a holder of BA in English Language and Literature from the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
Yazid Basthomi, a faculty member with the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
Johannes A. Prayogo, a faculty member with the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
Maria Hidayati, a faculty member with the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
Nurenzia Yannuar, a faculty member with the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
Suharyadi, a faculty member with the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
Cita Nuary Ishak, a holder of BA in English Language and Literature from the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, and pursuing an MA in ELT at the same institution.
Dyah Triajeng P.R.R., research assistant and support staff, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia..

I. INTRODUCTION

Pause as one of the speech mistakes that are commonly made by speakers in any communication activities is one of the elements determining speaking fluency. The absence or presence of pauses has a great influence on the notions of smoothness and naturalness of speech production [1]. Speaking fluency is related with how easily and smoothly speech is delivered [2]. In speech production, every speaker is expected to have the ability to produce words or sentences smoothly and easily so that the message would be delivered well and accepted well by the listeners. However, some of speakers probably experience pauses in their speech production or in their communication activity. Pause is a type of speech mistake that is related to speaker disfluency in producing words in any communication activities. A pause, to some people, is a speech error that is not easily recognized and predicted. Many speakers do not easily recognize and know when pauses will appear and what type of pauses that will appear. Although a pause is categorized as a speech error, according to Cenoz in 1998 was cited by Al-Ghazali & Alrefaee, in 2019 mentioned that a pause has several functions such as to allow the speaker to breathe, to allow the speaker to plan his speech, and to mark demarcations in the speech [1]. Compared to first language speakers (L1) or native speakers of a certain language, second language learners (L2) have more troubles in practicing or producing or learning the second language. According to Al-Ghazali & Alrefaee in 2019, L2 learners face difficulties while learning and practicing the learned language [1]. Aligned with this situation, the present study focuses on analyzing pauses that are experienced by learners of English language, male and female students.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pause has two types: silent pause and filled pause. This has been shown in a research project done by Asyura in 2017. He found that there are two types of pauses that commonly occur in Stand-Up Comedy, that is, silent pauses and filled pauses [3]. Pauses could happen because the speaker has a problem in finding out what to say. The study of Eisler in 1968 was cited by Krivokapi in 2007 shows that the occurrences of the pauses depend on the words or sentences spoken spontaneously or read [4]. The study of Clark & Clark in 1977 was cited by Putri in 2015, have also since long ago stated that pauses take the form of silent pauses and filled pauses [5]. Silent pauses mean that the pauses do not have any sounds in them. In other words, the speaker who is experiencing a silent pause postpones their speech for a while and does not make any sounds while thinking what they want to say. Meanwhile, filled pauses are filled with several utterances such as "*hmm, uh, ah, eh.*" One of the previous studies that talked about pauses found that certain utterances of filled pauses can demonstrate a certain signal. The study of Fox Tree in 2001 was cited by Kahng in 2017 shows that *uh* signals a short upcoming delay and *um* signals a long upcoming delay [2]. In addition to that, the study of Christenfel in 1995 was cited by Kahng in 2017 stated that filled pauses make speech sound less eloquent while silent pauses make a speaker seem more anxious [2]. Hence, this suggests that silent and filled pauses show a certain signal so that the listeners can easily understand what speakers do. Some previous studies that talked about pauses mostly discussed about the length of the pauses, the signals of pauses, and other aspects such as the usage of pauses. Both silent and filled pauses are used when a student has problems in finding the right word or sentence. The following gleans further some previous studies that have dealt with pauses.

Firstly, a research project that was carried out by Zellner in 1994 entitled "Pauses and the Temporal Structure of Speech." This research talked about the temporal structure of pauses. The points of this research are about classification of pauses such as pauses within clause, the origins of pause, and pauses and the notion of verbal fluency [6]. This research does not talk about the factors or reasons for the pauses proper. Secondly, a study that was conducted by Krivokapi in 2007 entitled "Prosodic Planning: Effects of Phrasal Length and Complexity on Pause Duration." The finding of this research is about factors that play a role in determining the duration of pauses [4]. In other words, this research has focused on factors that influence the duration of pauses between utterances and phrases. This research has also showed a significant post-boundary effect of prosodic branching and significant pre-and post-boundary phrase length effects [4]. There were two experiments that were used in this study: Experiment I (length effects) and Experiment II (Prosodic complexity) [4]. It was found that both length and prosodic structure influence pause duration [4]. Thirdly, a research study that was conducted by Al-Ghazali & Alrefaee in 2019 entitled "Silent Pause in the Speech of Yemeni EFL Learners" focused on analyzing silent pauses phenomena which occurred in Yemeni EFL Learners [1]. This study investigated three aspects related to silent pauses, that is, the frequency, the placement, and the length of the silent pauses. The fourth is a study that was conducted by Kahng in 2017, "The Effect of Pause Location on Perceived Fluency." It is about speech disfluency in first language (L1) and second language (L2) which is not only different in number and length of pause but also in distribution of pauses [2]. Two experiments were used in this study: Experiment 1, silent pause rate within a clause demonstrated the correlation with L2 fluency ratings, and Experiment 2 is about a perceived fluency of L1 and L2 speech that were influenced by pause location. And lastly is a study by Asyura in 2017 entitled "Pause and Slip of the Tongue on Stand-Up Comedy Show in Indonesia." It aimed to analyze the pause and slip of the tongue that happened in stand-up comedy in Indonesia. In this study, it was found that there are two kinds of pauses and several types of slips of the tongue that are made by "comica", a person whose job is to play Stand-Up Comedy [3]. Also, Asyura in 2017 found that speaking hastily, nervousness, and anxiety are the reasons for the pauses and slips of the tongue [3].

Of the previous studies, there has been one study which talked about the reasons attributable to the occurrence of pauses, but not the reasons for the occurrences of the pauses in group presentations. Thus, to fill the gap of research about pauses, this study is conducted. This study focuses on finding reasons for the occurrences of pauses and analyzing types of pauses that are made by male and female students in classroom group presentations. In this study, a corpus data from UM-SpEAKs (Universitas Negeri Malang Spoken English in Academic Kontexts) is used. It is a corpus of local spoken data collected in the first semester of the academic year 2017/2018 and students' classroom interaction. UM-SpEAKs consists of many kinds of oral communication activities such as speech, group presentation, group discussion, and debate. But, in this study, only the data from group presentations were used which consist of recordings of 2 hours 7 minutes (13.020 tokens) to meet the aims of the study. Male and female students of the English Department of Universitas Negeri Malang were chosen. They were foreign language (L2) learners of English language and this meets the aims of this study which of two kinds: analyzing the type of pauses that are made by male and female students and the reasons for the occurrences of the pauses in group presentation. There were no many previous studies that have discussed reasons or factors of pauses; there was one previous study conducted by Asyura in 2017 found that being hesitant, no concentration, and nervousness are three reasons or factors that are attributable to the pauses [3]. However, the previous studies have not shed light on the types and reasons for the occurences of pauses by EFL students. Therefore, the present study is carried out to fill out this gap.

III. METHOD

The method used in this study is a qualitative, focusing on understanding, interpretation, and observation in natural settings and closeness to data [7] since this study tends to deal with subjective assessment of behaviors and opinions of the research subjects [8]. This is in line with the aforementioned aims that this study seeks to analyze the types and reasons of pauses EFL group presentations [9]. Hence, a qualitative approach is the most suitable for the analysis of the data of this study. In addition, this study deals more with words; therefore, qualitative method is suitable in this study.
Several steps were used in this study including selecting the data, transcribing the data and analyzing the data. The first step was done by selecting the data from the group presentation recordings which were collected in UM-SpEAKs corpus data consisting of recordimgs of 2 hours 7 minutes (13.020 tokens). The next step was done by transcribing all group presentation recordings using TranscriberAG designed for assisting the manual annotation of speech signals and supporting a user-friendly graphical user interface known as GUI for segmenting long duration speech recording, transcribing, labeling speech turn, and other stuff [10]. TranscriberAG was chosen because it is a user-friendly application for transcribing any types of audio files. In transcribing the data, certain symbols which indicate silent or filled pauses were added. The use of symbol "( )" indicates a silent pause and a symbol 'h' indicates a filled pause. Since this study only focuses on finding the types of pauses, identification of the length of filled and silent pauses was not carried out.
The next step was analyzing the data using a theory proposed by Clark & Clark in 1977 on types of pauses [11].

This study also used AntConc software and other applications that support data analysis. In this study, manual calculation of the number of pauses was coupled up with the use of AntConc. The calculation included both silent and filled pauses. Hence, all those steps have helped ascertain some degree of validity of the data related to the analysis of types of pauses made by male and female students in group presentations as recorded in UMSpEAKs. Besides, the context of the utterances was also analyzed to know the reasons for the occurrences of the pauses in group presentations.

As aforementioned, interviews were also carried out. The interview data in this study was used to find out the reasons for the pauses made by the male and female students in group presentations. In selecting the respondents, a non-probability approach was used. The respondents of the interviews were five male and female students of the English Department, Universitas Negeri Malang. The respondents were not chosen based on their English competency, age, and class. The students were of academic year 2017/2018 cohorts who attended the classes with groups presentations on which UM-SpEAKs data was collected. The interviews were transformed into the Google Docs. This had some benefits such as saving the researchers' and respondents' time. The interviews were structured, which means that the respondents were asked with a set of questions related to pauses and the reasons for the pauses.

II. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

As noted earlier, there are two kinds of data used in this study: corpus data (UM-SpEAKs) and interview data. The data that has been obtained from UM-SpEAKs is in the form of group presentation recordings which consist of 21 female students and 5 male students which are divided into five group presentations. After transcribing all the group presentation recordings, the results obtained are that 21 female students made 323 silent pauses and 283 filled pauses. Whereas, different results were found in male students data taken from UM-SpEAKs. It was identified that 5 male students made 137 silent pauses and 39 filled pauses. It was found that the female-male ratio of silent pauses and filled pauses is 15.4 : 27.4 and 13.5 : 7.8, respectively. As proposed by Clark & Clark in 1977 was cited by Putri in 2015, a silent pause is one of the types of speech errors which refers to a silent moment or the moment when the speaker keeps silent while thinking what to say [5].

Noted above, the silent moment in this study is represented using this symbol ( ). Lets take a look at the first datum that shows two silent pauses made by a female speaker, "*First of all, I need you to know that Education is an instrument of social change, teachers ( ), as well as parents and administrators are ( ) the agent of social change…*" The excerpt shows that the female speaker made two silent pauses in the middle of her presentation. Analyzing the first data, we understand that the speaker made two silent pauses because she felt nervous or anxious, and the speaker was lost for words she wanted to say. The second data also shows silent pauses that are made by a female speaker, "*And ( ) is available at www.edmodo.com, and ( ) edmodo is a well-known as a facebook because the display of edmodo is looked similar like Facebook but Edmodo( ) more private and safe because it allows the teachers to create and manage accounts and only for their students…*" In the second data, we see that the speaker explained a certain topic to the audiences but she felt nervous or anxious, so that she made silent pauses in the middle of her presentation. To regain herself from nervousness and give her time to find what to say, she made silent pauses. The next two data show silent pauses that are made by male speakers: (1) "*Yeah, all right now for the next section is why ( ) "why do we need the social change awareness while teaching?"* (2) "*…will not make them feel comfortable because ( ) they will not get along with the teachers ( ) they will not have face to face with the teachers and ( ) there is no interaction with others.*" Those two data show that the male speakers were making their presentations to the audiences but then they felt nervous; hence, they made silent pauses in the middle of their presentation. Although there was no significant purpose identified of the silent pauses in the middle of presentations, the context leads us to a conclusion that by making silent pauses, the students could minimize the nervousness and give them time to search for what to say next. Moreover, all those silent pauses are made spontaneously and unpredictable, even the speaker him/herself cannot predict it. According to Christenfeld in 1995 was cited by Kahng in 2017, silent pauses make a speaker seem more anxious [2]. As shown in the data mentioned above, we can see through the context that all the speakers looked nervous or anxious; hence, they made silent pauses to compose themselves.

Besides silent pauses, this study also found another type of pause, that is, filled pause in which the speaker fills the pause with some utterance. Filled pauses include those filled with some utterances such as *uh, hmm, ah,* and *eh*. Transcribing and analyzing the data taken from UM-SpEAKs corpus data, we identified that 21 female students made 283 filled pauses which consist of 27 filled pauses using *hmm* as the filled utterance, 188 filled pauses using *ah* as the filled utterance, 65 filled pauses using *uh* as the filled utterance, and 3 filled pauses using *eh* as the filled utterance. In addition, we also identified that 5 male students made 39 filled pauses which consist of 35 filled pauses using *ah* as the filled utterance, and 4 filled pauses using *uh* as the filled utterance. The difference in the number of filled pauses that were made by male and female students is due to differences in the number of male and female students that participated in the group presentation recordings.

In this study, we found that there are no certain purposes of making filled pauses using several utterances. For example, the first data shows that the speaker made a filled pause using *ah* as the utterance "'*ah' okay, Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Galori Bakti, and I'm going to…*"

It can be said that the filled pause that was made by the speaker shows that the speaker felt nervous or anxious in the middle of her presentation. It can also be seen in other data that shows filled pauses made by female speakers, i.e. "*Discipline means not to scare the students, and 'uh' teachers who are disciplined will be role models for their students,*" "*...to be ridiculed at or sarcasm, it includes as- as the informal section and criticism and disapproval to the teacher to the 'hmm' to the students,*" ""*...the curriculum of 2013 'eh' it makes student learn to work well together and be successful learning.*" All those data show filled pauses using several utterances which were commonly used as the filled utterances. Looking at the context of those data, we may conclude that all the female speakers seemed anxious or nervous; thus, they made filled pauses in the middle of their presentations. Moreover, we also identified that there were no significant purposes of using certain utterances as the fillers in the filled pause; the speakers made them spontaneously. Other examples of the filled pause can also be seen in the data made by male speakers, i.e. "*...people in the world use their social media in that such a rude way without any moral lessons, without any 'ah' humanity concerned and etc*" ""*...so the teachers can be 'uh' good example for students or people around.*" As mentioned above, the data of the filled pauses made by male speakers also shows that all those male speakers seemed anxious or nervous; hence, they made filled pauses in the middle of their presentations. According to Fox Tree in 2002 was cited by Kahng in 2017, when a speaker uses silent/filled pauses, they were thought to have production difficulty and to be less comfortable with the topics at hand [2]. Another similar thing shown is no significant purposes of using or making certain utterances as the fillers. All those filled pauses appear spontaneous and unpredictable.

In addition to analyzing the types and also the number of the silent and filled pauses made by male and female speakers in group presentations, this study also analyzed the reasons potentially underlying the occurrences of the silent and filled pauses. Paying attention to the context of the occuring data taken from UM-SpEAKs corpus data, we identified several possible reasons attributable to the occurrences of the silent and filled pauses. The first reason is the setting of the situation which was group presentation. A situation of group presentation can be classified into a formal situation. So, it could have triggered the speakers to be nervous and consequently make silent/filled pauses in their presentations. In addition, some of the speakers probably felt less comfortable with that situation; hence, it could also make the speakers fall into silent/filled pauses. Other possible reasons identified after analyzing the context of the data taken from UM-SpEAKs corpus are nervousness and spontaneity. Nervousness can make the speakers forget what they want to say; hence, they make silent/filled pauses so that they had enough time to think what they wanted to say. The study of Al-Ghazali & Alrefaee in 2019 found that speakers have used pauses in order to gain time for preparation or for recalling words that they want to say during their performance [1]. After all, in group presentations, the speakers need to think spontaneously for explanation or answer to questions from the audiences; thus, they make silent/filled pause in order to get time to think about what to say.

The interviews with the five male and five female students also show several reasons including: speaking too fast, nervousness or anxiety, lack of vocabulary, lack of understanding, lack of knowledge about word pronunciation, unfamiliarity with words, and loss of words. Out of these reasons, however, most of the students said that nervousness or anxiety is the reason that underlies the occurrence of the pauses. Combining the reasons out of the context analysis of UM-SpEAKs corpus and the interview data, we come to a conclusion that nervousness is the main reason that underlies the occurrence of pauses. It is in line with what Asyura found in his research in 2017 that nervousness is one of the reasons that lies behind the occurrence of pauses [3]. The study of Asyura in 2017 identified that haste in speaking, lack of concentration, nervousness, and spontaneity are reasons why pauses occur [3]. However, in this study, it was found that one reason is similar, that is, nervousness or anxiety.

III. CONCLUSION

In this study, it has been identified that pauses that are made by male and female students during group presentations are different in number. The difference is due to the difference in the number of the male and female students. In general, female students made less silent pauses less than male students do. On the other hand, female students made more filled pauses than male students do. The utterance *ah* is the utterance most often used as the filler in filled pauses. The study also found that nervousness or anxiety is the main reason underlying the occurrence of pauses.

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