




Urdu fillers used by English teachers in ESL classrooms



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ABSTRACT

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Pakistan is a bilingual country with nine major and 68 minor languages. It is quite common for English language teachers to use their first language (L1) in their second language (L2) classrooms which is called code switching. This predominant practice of code switching can serve as a filler to ensure the continuity of an interaction or fill a communication gap. Hence, this paper aims to describe the different kinds and purposes of Urdu fillers that three English as a second language (ESL) teachers from Pakistan use when teaching students in ESL courses at the university level. The data consists of four classroom recordings of each teacher's lectures which have been transcribed for qualitative analysis. The overall findings showed that ESL teachers produced more lexicalized filled pauses than non-lexicalized filled ones in Urdu. The lexicalized filled pauses served as an editing tool, a response marker, an opening frame marker, an empathizer, a time-creating device or a positive reaction. On the other hand, the non-lexicalized filled pauses were used as reaction marker, hesitation marker, device for keeping the floor, device while searching for a word or breathing pause. Hence, this study suggests the importance of fillers as a language teaching and learning tool.

Contribution/ Originality: This research intends to make a significant contribution to the broader debate on language teaching and learning by exploring the kinds and functions of Urdu fillers used in the context of code switching in ESL classrooms in Pakistan.

1. INTRODUCTION

Multilingual fluency has become essential in a modern multilingual setting. However, many people find it difficult to become proficient in a second language (L2) especially when they want to be able to speak spontaneously. Furthermore, code switching often known as language switching has become a common multilingual occurrence in numerous countries. Pakistan is an example of a multilingual culture where this tendency is widespread and can be seen in both informal and official contexts such as educational settings. Therefore, code switching or speaking the first language (L1) in an L2 classroom is a popular multilingual strategy. L1 sounds, words or phrases that L2 teachers use in their L2 classrooms can be classified as lexically empty or filler elements in their discourse.

Stenström (1994) defined fillers as “lexically empty items with uncertain discourse functions except to fill a conversational gap”. On the other hand, Rieger (2003) refers to fillers as “hesitation pauses” in the form of the speakers’ lengthened or stretched sounds or repetition of one or several words. They would enable “the current speaker to hold the turn, thus keeping the conversation going by filling a space” using “filled pauses” to avoid silence (Stenström and Jörgensen, 2008). Furthermore, many multilingual people use fillers to fill in gaps and utter certain sounds in addition to words when they need to engage in ordinary conversation with others since it can be challenging to speak a second or foreign language (Erten, 2014).

During the last two decades, the popularity of fillers has increased. Many researchers have different names for this phenomenon. For example, Maclay and Osgood (1959) and Goldman-Eisler (1961) referred to fillers as “filled pauses”, Schourup (1985) as “discourse particles”, Erman (1992) as “pragmatic expressions”, Knott and Dale (1994) as “cue phrases”, Rouchota (1996) as “discourse connectives”, Sáez (2003) as “discourse markers” and Frăţilă (2010) as “interactional signals”. Researchers who referred to “uh” and “um” as fillers in their studies were Clark and Fox (2002). According to Rose (1998), expressions like “er”, “erm”, “and”, “well”, “you know”, “and so” and “but” in spoken interaction are examples of fillers. He further suggested fillers used for “stalling and filling acts during which the subjects prepared their following utterance whether it was merely the next word, the following tone unit or an entire span of discourse” (Rose, 1998). According to Brown and Yule (1983) speakers may employ a variety of prefabricated fillers, such as “erm”, “well”, “I think”, “you know”, “if you see what I mean”, and “and so on” in his or her utterances. Rajabi and Salami (2016) mentioned that fillers can be unconscious devices that act as a break in the middle of sentences when speakers gather their thoughts but want to retain the attention of listeners. They do not add anything to the conversations but just help talkers think more and coordinate their voices. Yule (2006) also suggested fillers as a split in the flow or a movement in a discourse. Pamolango (2016) further suggested that fillers are beneficial as they lead to a more comfortable and smooth running of conversation.

Few researchers have specifically examined Urdu fillers in the context of L2 classes in Pakistan despite the fact that the number of researchers studying fillers is increasing (Azi, 2018; Castro, 2009; Clark & Fox, 2002; Firiady & Mahendra, 2019; Pamolango, 2016; Rajabi & Salami, 2016; Rose, 1998; Siswoyo, 2022). Therefore, this quantitative study's first emphasis was on the kinds and purposes of Urdu fillers used by three Pakistani English teachers who were teaching ESL programmes at the tertiary level in Pakistan keeping this research gap in mind.

The second was to investigate Urdu fillers that have meaning and make sense to the students rather than just unlexicalized fillers that are only meant to fill the gaps. Thus, the study is expected to give more insights into the types of Urdu fillers and the functions of Urdu fillers that maintain the conversation flow during L2 classes.

1.1. Research Questions

This study poses the following questions:

1. What are the types of Urdu fillers used by English teachers in ESL classes?
2. What are the functions of Urdu fillers used by English teachers in ESL classes?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Stenström (1994) there are two categories of fillers namely filled pauses and silent pauses. Filled pauses indicate the pauses that occur between a speaker’s anticipated words and their ideas about what to say (Carter, Goddard, Reah, Sanger, & Bowring, 1997). Furthermore, Rose (1998) distinguished filled pauses into two different types, lexicalized fillers and non-lexicalized or unlexicalized fillers. Examples of lexicalized fillers are “well”, “so”, “okay” and “let’s see”, and non-lexicalized fillers are “er” and “erm”.

According to Brown and Yule (1983) a silent pause is a pause that typically comes before an utterance and allows the speaker to plan to insert the word. Silent pauses are also defined “as extended pauses because they usually take 3.2 to 16 seconds to offer the speaker adequate information” (Brown & Yule, 1983). Therefore, a silent

pause is a pause without utterance or sound. Matthei and Roeper (1983) concluded that there is a tendency for silent pauses to occur in phrases.

Stenström (1994) who defined fillers as “hesitant devices” suggested that filled pauses such as “*ee*”, “*em*”, “*err*”, “*uhm*”, “*ah*” and “*hm*” are used as breathing pauses. Pauses like this typically correspond to somaticized syntactic limits. Hence, fillers can be used for hesitation or breathing purposes. Furthermore, they can be used as time-creating tools, empathizers or editors (Stenström, 1994). Clark and Fox (2002) proposed several other functions of fillers which include searching for a word, keeping the floor or receding the floor. Castro (2009) opined that fillers are useful as response markers, reaction markers, opening frame markers or for providing positive responses or feedback.

Pamolango (2016) investigated types of fillers developed by Asian students in the 2016-2017 academic year in Busan, South Korea and their functions. It was found that all of the Asian students used both unlexicalized and lexicalized fillers to answer the English questions. The maximum number of fillers was produced by the Filipino students with 58 occurrences. Vietnamese students were in the second position with 53 occurrences. Indian students took third place with a total of 51 occurrences. Subsequently, Laos’s students came in with 49 occurrences. Next, South Korean students came in with 48 occurrences. Furthermore, students from China were number six with 47 occurrences. There were 43 fillers provided by students from Japan. The smallest number of fillers was produced by Indonesian students with 42 occurrences. The data revealed that all the Asian students used more unlexicalized fillers (332) than lexicalized fillers (80) and examples of unlexicalized fillers they used were “*ya*”, “*ee*” and “*ok*”. He also discovered five functions of fillers which are: empathizers, marks of hesitation, holders of the turn, editing terms and time creating devices.

Azi (2018) conducted a qualitative case study on fillers. His goal was to uncover the intricate patterns of disfluency that Saudi English speakers exhibit with a particular focus on the functions of fillers, repairs and repetitions. The researcher adopted a purposive sampling technique. The participants were classified into two distinctive fluency levels: low and high. The low fluency level is represented by undergraduate students with limited exposure to the L2 setting and the high fluency level comprises master’s degree holders who have lived in the United States for varying durations. Azi (2018) investigated the nuanced application of disfluency patterns in everyday communication by transcribing and analyzing one-hour recordings from these two groups.

The study challenges the conventional notion that disfluency uniformly indicates linguistic disabilities in second-language speakers. The findings revealed the filler “*uh*” emerged as a significant marker of disfluency among Saudi English speakers, particularly when accompanied by longer pauses. The researcher identified differences in the use of fillers between the low and high-fluency groups, with “*uh*” appearing more frequently among low-fluency speakers. Repetitions and self-repairs are noted as prevalent disfluency patterns showcasing their equal occurrence in both fluency groups. However, the preference for self-repairs over repairs initiated by others suggests a unique conversational style influenced by sociopragmatic factors and L1 transfer. It is a widespread belief that disfluency patterns in second-language speakers always indicate linguistic impairments. The research underscores the multifaceted nature of disfluency among Saudi English speakers with certain patterns serving as conversational devices rather than clear markers of proficiency or impairment.

In another study, Firiady and Mahendra (2019) undertook a qualitative investigation to explore the types and functions of fillers in English public speaking. The researchers adopted a descriptive qualitative approach, employing field notes, interviews, observation and documentation as instruments of analysis. The study focused on twenty Technology, Entertainment, Design (TED) Talk videos, randomly selected with speakers from English-speaking countries, each delivering speeches lasting between three and six minutes. The main tools used by the researchers included viewing the videos, recording filler-filled discourses and visualizing lists of filler frequencies for analysis. The data analysis involved discourse analysis based on utterances containing fillers produced by the speakers. The findings revealed two primary types of fillers: sound and phrase fillers. Phrase fillers such as “*so*”,

“and” and “you know” were more frequent with “so” being the most common. Sound fillers, including “err” and “umm” occurred less frequently. The functions of these fillers varied with “so” used for idea introduction, “err” assisting in word retrieval, and “umm” indicating readiness to open new sentences or topics. Other fillers, like “and”, “you know”, “I think”, and “and then”, served functions such as emphasis, audience engagement or idea sequencing. Less frequent fillers like “look” and “alright” performed unique functions such as grabbing attention or giving instructions. The findings highlighted the natural occurrence of fillers in public speaking even among proficient English speakers. Fillers played crucial roles in connecting ideas emphasizing points and providing speakers with time to formulate thoughts. The findings suggested the importance of addressing fillers in public speaking courses, introducing students to the advantages and disadvantages of using fillers and teaching communication strategies for effective public discourse.

Siswoyo (2022) revealed many manifestations and contributing elements that impact a speaker's hesitancy when speaking English as well as the consequences that result from it. The study used a qualitative methodology and involved ninety-three students who hesitated when speaking English. Results indicated the use of non-lexicalized fillers, repetition and silent pauses as common hesitation forms, arising primarily from limited vocabulary and psychological factors. Participants were university students purposefully selected from different proficiency levels. The study delved into three primary aspects: forms of hesitation, factors affecting hesitation and implications of hesitation in English language use. Numerous ways that speakers struggle with language retrieval were demonstrated by the forms of delay which included silent pauses, repetition and non-lexicalized fillers. The inability to learn English words and syntax, uncertainty and anxiety, the fear of making mistakes and a lack of vocabulary and grammar proficiency were the variables that contributed to hesitation. Limited vocabulary emerged as a critical factor affecting hesitation, emphasizing the need for regular vocabulary practice. Concerning the implications of hesitation, the study revealed that speakers often responded by practicing English more with around 77% attempting to enhance their language skills. However, a notable 11.1% chose to avoid English conversation altogether highlighting the impact of hesitation on language confidence. The study emphasized the crucial role of motivation both intrinsic and extrinsic in overcoming hesitation and fostering successful language learning. The results of this research shed light on the complex relationship between hesitation, vocabulary mastery and language confidence among English language learners.

A review of earlier research on fillers reveals that only a few of them focus on the varieties and purposes of Urdu fillers. Furthermore, previous research focuses mostly on language learners' use of fillers as opposed to language teachers or instructors. Hence, this study aims to categorize and analyze the types of Urdu fillers used by Pakistani ESL teachers in their classrooms using Stenström (1994) and Rose's (1998) classification of types of fillers followed by deriving their functions.

3. METHODOLOGY

Three female English language teachers who teach at three distinct class levels such as foundation, certificate and diploma were selected to respond to the research questions as the goal of the study was to investigate the forms and purposes of Urdu fillers. The teachers' ages were between 30 and 45 and they were from different parts of Pakistan. All the teachers were native speakers of Pakistan. They were selected for the study due to their good performances in English language teaching. This study was carried out primarily with a qualitative approach emphasizing the types of Urdu fillers and functions used by teachers in the three different levels of classes.

The data was obtained using audio recordings made by the three English language teachers' lectures over four weeks of lectures for thirty-five minutes each during the short semester using an MP3 recorder. The researcher recorded a total of 12 classroom meetings consisting of four lectures for each of the three level classes. The audio recordings of four classroom lectures for each teacher were then transcribed and analyzed qualitatively to identify

specifically the types of Urdu fillers and functions of Urdu fillers used by the English teachers in three different levels of ESL classes.

The data for this research has been collected from a total of 12 lectures conducted by three female English language teachers (four lectures per teacher) teaching in three different levels of ESL classes. The lectures were coded in the following sequence: the level of the class, the numbering of the teacher, the lecture and the week. An example of the lecture code is 'FT1L1W1'. The letter 'F' represents the level "foundation" followed by "T1" which represents the first teacher teaching the foundation class. Next is "L1" which refers to the first lecture followed by "W1" which indicates the lecture was conducted on week one. The codes are presented below in Table 1.

Table 1. List of lecture codes.

Code	Foundation (F) Teacher (T) 1	Certificate (C) Teacher (T) 2	Diploma (D) Teacher (T) 3
Lecture (L) 1 Week (W) 1	FT1L1W1	CT2L1W1	DT3L1W1
Lecture (L) 2 Week (W) 2	FT1L2W2	CT2L2W2	DT3L2W2
Lecture (L) 3 Week (W) 3	FT1L3W3	CT2L3W3	DT3L3W3
Lecture (L) 4 Week (W) 4	FT1L4W4	CT2L4W4	DT3L4W4

The audio recording of the three female teacher statements was done in their natural environment. A purposive sampling technique was applied to collect the data which contained Urdu fillers used by the three ESL female teachers in their classroom interactions. The recordings were attentively listened to, transcribed and then examined using qualitative descriptive approaches. The researchers produced the transcripts over the course of one month. There were two steps to the data examination in order to answer the study questions. Lexicalized filled pauses and non-lexicalized filled pauses in the lecturers' lectures were the two types of fillers that were defined for the first phase. The types and frequencies of fillers used by the ESL teachers were determined and tallied in order to address the first study question.

The second study question was addressed in the analysis of the second phase by deriving the roles of the fillers used by the ESL teachers. The researchers have included tables 2, 3 and 4 that list the different types and purposes of Urdu fillers to provide more information on the data. Then, the findings were analyzed and classified according to the types and functions of Urdu fillers. The findings of the types and functions of Urdu fillers were presented by explaining the possible reasons why English teachers used those Urdu fillers in their classroom lectures. This procedure was used only to answer the research questions in this study. Finally, the researchers drew a conclusion based on the findings given below in this research.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results section is divided into two parts to answer the research questions. The first part deals with the types of Urdu fillers used by the three female English language teachers. The second part deals with the functions of Urdu fillers used by teachers.

4.1. Types of Fillers used by Pakistani ESL Teachers

The results of this study on the types of Urdu fillers used by three Pakistani female English language teachers are summarized in the following Tables 2, 3, and 4. Table 2 shows that the three female Pakistani ESL teachers used two types of fillers which are lexicalized filled pauses and non-lexicalized filled pauses. The type of filler used

most frequently by the three female language teachers was lexicalized filled pauses with 149 instances out of 170 fillers. On the other hand, there were only 21 occurrences of non-lexicalized filled pauses.

Table 2. Types of Urdu fillers used by ESL teachers.

Type of filler	N
Lexicalized filled pauses	149
Non-lexicalized filled pauses	21
Total	170

Table 3 demonstrates that out of 149 lexicalized filled pauses, 103 were used by female ESL teachers at the foundation level, 29 at the certificate level and 17 at the diploma level. In terms of non-lexicalized filled pauses, there were 21 instances of them. Female ESL teachers used 14 of them in foundational level sessions, five in certificate level classes and just two in diploma level classes. Thus, it is revealed that the extent of Urdu fillers used by three ESL teachers increases when the students' proficiency level decreases. ESL teachers employed more code switching of Urdu fillers at foundation than in certificate and diploma level sessions because of the students' limited vocabulary and poor English proficiency and competency level.

Table 3. Types of Urdu fillers used by ESL teachers according to level of classes.

Type of filler	Level	N	Number of occurrences	Total number of occurrences
Lexicalized filled pauses	Foundation	103	149	170
	Certificate	29		
	Diploma	17		
Non-lexicalized filled pauses	Foundation	14	21	
	Certificate	5		
	Diploma	2		

Table 4 shows that out of all the 149 lexicalized filled pauses, the most common filler was "tw" {so} occurring 99 times. It was followed by "theekh" {okay} occurring 16 times and the filler "acha" {fine} occurring 11 times. Subsequently, there are ten instances of the filler word "jee" {yes}, seven instances of "sahee" {alright or good}, and six instances of "Ahan" {no}. On the other hand, out of 21 non-lexicalized filled pauses, "aha" was the most commonly used filler occurring eight times. "Un" followed with five occurrences followed by "han" and "mmmh" with just three occurrences each and "ooh" with only two occurrences.

Table 4. Frequency of an example of Urdu filler.

Type of filler	Example	N	Total
Lexicalized filled pauses	Tw {So}	99	149
	Theekh {Okay}	16	
	Acha {Fine}	11	
	Jee {Yes}	10	
	Sahee {Alright or good}	7	
	Ahan {No}	6	
Non-lexicalized filled pauses	Aha	8	21
	Un	5	
	Han	3	
	Mmmh	3	
	Ooh	2	

Thus, it was found that the teachers produced more lexicalized fillers than non-lexicalized fillers. It is probably because lexicalized fillers give some meaning to understand the sense whereas non-lexicalized fillers are just sounds. Furthermore, the results of this research study corroborate the previous study by Firiady and Mahendra

(2019) in which their participants also produced more lexicalized fillers than non-lexicalized ones. This could be due to the fact that the participants in both studies are proficient speakers of the English language and therefore were able to mostly fill gaps in their conversations using words rather than sounds. However, Pamolango (2016) discovered that his participants created more instances of non-lexicalized fillers than lexicalized fillers in contrast to this study.

A plausible reason is that the participants of this study are English language teachers who focus more on using Urdu fillers that have meaning and make sense to their listeners who are their students. On the other hand, the participants in Pamolango (2016) are students or English language learners who are still not fluent in the target language and require the use of unlexicalized fillers when they hesitate to discover the right choice of words to use when speaking in English. Azi (2018) also found less proficient students in his study to produce more non-lexicalized fillers than the more proficient students.

4.2. The Function of Urdu Fillers Used by English Teachers

The functions proposed by Stenström (1994); Castro (2009), Clark and Fox (2002) and other researchers were the primary basis for the researchers' discovery and reflection on various functions of both lexicalized filled pauses and non-lexicalized filled pauses in the interactions of three female English language teachers. The lexicalized filled pauses serve as a marker for the beginning of the frame, an editing tool or device, an empathizer, a response marker, a positive reaction, and a time-creating device. However, the following are some uses for non-lexicalized filled pauses: response marker, hesitation marker, floor marker, word search marker and breathing pause.

Stenström (1994) defined fillers as time taking or time creating devices. He gave many examples of fillers used as time creating devices which are “well”, “you know”, “right”, and “hey”. The investigation showed that fillers as time creating devices appeared the most in teachers' lectures:

- If it is like this “tw” {so}, I am going to call the next participant (CT2L1W1).
- “Tw” {So}, you should discuss in groups and later I will call them one by one (FT1L2W2).
- “Tw” {So}, first of all, speak about my hobby. That is painting (FT1L1W1).

The above three examples indicate that the teacher took some time to plan and reflect on the next thing she wanted to say. In other words, she wants to gain some time to think and then speak.

Stenström (1994) also suggested that filler can also be used as an empathizer. Here is an example of the filler taken from teachers' talk in the classroom:

- *Main isko bhi likh deti hoon* {I will write this also} “theekhi” {okay} *hai* {is}, it's for your clarity and understanding (CT2L2W2).

In the above example, the reason for this is probably that the teacher was trying to help the students and created a feeling of intimacy by using the filler “theekhi” {okay}.

Fillers can be used for editing purposes as suggested by Stenström (1994). He gave examples like, “um”, “ehm”, “uh”, and “ee”. In this study, the researchers gave an example of filler used as an editing device in a Pakistani female teacher's lecture below.

- “Ahan” {no}, you have to do it again and speak the correct form of tense (DT3L4W4).

Furthermore, Stenström (1994) proposed that fillers can be applied as breathing pauses or hesitation markers. In the following example, the filler “oooh” was used as a mark of breathing pause whereas the filler “un” was used to indicate hesitation by the teacher while the student thought about what to say next.

- So, we all have different habits some are good some are bad and some are general like some people are always late. That is not weird okay that is something “oooh” is a bad habit but it is not weird (DT3L2W2).

Student: Giving gifts is more important.

Teacher: “Un”

Student: Receiving in our lives. (FT1L3W3)

(hesitation marker)

Castro (2009) highlighted fillers as a response marker or an indication of response. It meant that fillers were used to indicate that the listener was giving a response to what the speaker had said in the speech. Here is an example of a dominant filler as an indication of response or response marker used by a Pakistani female teacher in the ESL classroom.

- Teacher: What does it mean? Who will answer?
Student: We had a workshop and lunch together yesterday.
Teacher: “*Acha*” {fine}. It means that enjoying two different opportunities at the same time is a great thing. (FT1L4W4)

Castro (2009) also suggested the use of fillers as opening frame markers, positive response and reaction markers. The following are some samples of those fillers found in three ESL teachers’ lectures:

- “*Jee*” {yes}, girls! The topic for today's speech is giving and receiving gifts (FT1L3W3).
(opening frame marker)
- All of your work is good. “*Sahee*” {good oralright}, hai {is}. Good job! Now you will do better in the final presentation (CT2L4W4).
(positive response)
- Teacher: “*Aha*” I am so glad that many of the students from my class participated in the speech competition and got some prizes.
Student: Yes, we are also very excited Miss (CT2L2W2).
(reaction marker)

According to Clark and Fox (2002), fillers sometimes function as a device for keeping the floor to enable the speaker to continue with the speech or as a device for searching for a word to say. Below are some examples:

- Teacher: If I give you an example using lots of perfumes these days are noxious for the environment, “*mmmh*”, for the ozone layer, or something dangerous like air pollution (DT3L3W3).
(keeping the floor)
Teacher: For tomorrow everyone has to prepare for the questions from the listeners.... “*han*” audience or spectators (FT1L3W3).
(searching for a word)

A summary of the functions of both lexicalized filled pauses and non-lexicalized filled pauses for this research is shown in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. Functions of lexicalized filled pauses.

Lexicalized filled pauses		
Filler	Function	Description of function
Tw {So}	Time creating device	The teacher took time to plan and think about what to say next (Stenström, 1994).
Theekh {Okay}	Empathizer	The teacher tried to help the students and created a feeling of intimacy (Stenström, 1994).
Acha {Fine}	Response marker	The teacher was aware that the audience was responding to what they had said (Castro, 2009).
Jee {Yes}	Opening frame marker	The teacher desired to start a conversation and get the hearer's attention (Castro, 2009).
Sahee {Right and good}	Positive response	The teacher tried to give positive remarks and motivated the students to prepare well for the final presentation (Castro, 2009).
Ahan {No}	Editing device	The teacher used to correct the students’ mistakes in their speech utterances (Stenström, 1994).

Table 6. Functions of non-lexicalized filled pauses.

Non-lexicalized filled pauses		
Filler	Function	Description of function
Aha	Reaction marker	The teacher used it to express sudden happiness over what had been performed by the students (Castro, 2009).
Un	Hesitation marker	The teacher might demonstrate hesitation while the speaker deliberates what to say next (Stenström, 1994).
Mmmh	Keeping the floor	The teacher used it to indicate that he or she wanted to keep the floor or maintain his or her turn in the conversation (Clark & Fox, 2002).
Han	Searching for a word	The teacher used to search memory for a word (Clark & Fox, 2002).
Oooh	Breathing pause	In the flow of natural speech, the teacher used to take a pause for some rest or take a breath to continue (Stenström, 1994).

5. CONCLUSION

Lexicalized filled pauses and non-lexicalized filled pauses are the two types of Urdu fillers that were created by three female English language instructors in Pakistan for this study in order to meet its aims. The data shows English language teachers produced more lexicalized filled pauses which were 149 than non-lexicalized filled pauses which were 21. It is probably because the teacher is mostly trying to use Urdu fillers that have meaning and make sense to the students rather than just unlexicalized fillers that are only meant to fill the gaps since it is just a sound.

In addition, this study showed six functions of lexicalized filled pauses used by three female English language teachers in Pakistan namely, time creating device, empathizer, response marker, opening frame marker, positive response, and editing device. It also revealed five functions of non-lexicalized filled pauses that were used as well. The functions of non-lexicalized filled pauses were as reaction markers, hesitation markers, keeping the floor, searching for a word, and breathing pauses.

Thus, the study's findings showed that teachers generated a greater number of lexicalized than non-lexicalized Urdu fillers with their unique purposes. In other words, teachers used more Urdu fillers that are filled pauses in the form of words or short phrases as opposed to those that are non-lexemes (non-words) filled pauses for the smooth running of the teaching process and language learning. It is expected that the findings of this study will significantly add to the body of knowledge already available on the kinds and purposes of fillers, particularly with regard to their application in Pakistani ESL classes.

This study also provides a platform for future researchers to explore new dimensions of fillers as an important language tool to achieve the highest goal in the academic arena. The forms and purposes of Urdu fillers employed by just three English teachers as second language teachers in Pakistan are the only objective of this research. Thus, more studies using qualitative or mixed methodologies in another language would be beneficial to provide a more thorough explanation of fillers.

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