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The speech disfluency in Ellen degeneres talk show: A psycholinguistics study

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#### **KEYWORDS**

psycholinguistics speech Disfluency talk Show ABSTRACT This study aimed: (1) to find out the various types of speech disfluency occurred in Ellen DeGeneres Show conversation and (2) to reveal the dominant types of speech disfluency during the conversation. This research was descriptive qualitative and quantitative research. Population of the research was the whole speakers' utterances on Ellen DeGeneres Show until season 15. There were ten segments from nine episodes in season 13-15 as the samples which were chosen by purposive sampling technique. These data were collected by downloading the video from YouTube. The writers identified and classified the utterances into speech disfluency types based on Yarrus and Reardon's theory, then calculated its frequency and percentage. The results show that not all speech disfluency types which are proposed by Yarrus and Reardon appear in all speaker. The case frequencies and the types that occur are 119 (31,04%) for Interjections, 95 (22,392%) for Repetitions which consists of 36 (8,96%) for Phrase Repetition, 1 (0,23%) for Multisyllabic Whole Word Repetition, 40 (10,212%) for Monosyllabic Whole Word Repetition, 18 (4,53%) for Stuttered Disfluencies, and Revision is at 32 (8,23%). Therefore, from the 246 speech disfluency cases which are uttered by the speaker in the Ellen DeGeneres Show, the most dominant type belongs to Interjections.

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Psycholinguistics is a field of science that is the result of collaboration between Linguistics and Psychology. Linguistics studies the structure of language, while Psychology examines language behaviour or language process, therefore Psycholinguistics discusses the relation between humans and the use of language in their everyday life. Psycholinguistics generally discusses about the topic of language acquisition, but in Psycholinguistics there are other things that are also interesting to be discussed and studied more deeply. One of them is speech disorders. Most people may assume that English native speakers automatically have good ability in using English because it is their mother tongue and they use English for daily communication. Interestingly, though they are categorized as native speakers of English, they also can have a problem in speaking. According to Scovel (1998), speaking is a mental process. This means that it is a psychological process by which a speaker puts a mental concept into some linguistic form, such as word, phrases, and sentences used to convey a message to a listener. So, the speech production is the process by which the speakers turn their mental concept into their spoken utterances to convey a message to their listeners in the communicative interaction.

This speaking problem can be observed through a talk show program because the program is dominated by talking activity or communicating directly between host and guest. Talk Show Program becomes one of the TV programs that tend to increase nowadays as a result of a viewers' de-

mand. One of the most popular and watched Talk Show programs is Ellen DeGeneres Show. It is an American comedy talk show aired since 2003 with fifteen seasons and has reached many awards such as Best Talk Show, Best Host, etc. (Wayne, 2015). Among many interesting things from Ellen Show, giving away special gifts from the show to the audiences and guests that make the show distinguished. As a result, there are many people who want to attend the show directly by watching it in the studio. The creative team of Ellen Show organizes this program through segments. The most frequent segments are celebrity interviews, people with inspiring stories of life interviews, dancing, audience participation in games, and music shows. Related to this research, the interview segment is the most important source of data.

In line with the speech disorders that has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, to successfully convey the meaning in communication, it is better to avoid speech disfluency. "Disfluency is inserting short spacer or filler sounds into a sentence when you can't immediately come up with the next word" (Casselman, 2015). Speech Disfluency can occur to everybody, even the people who work in the area where speaking and conversation become their main part of the job. Ellen herself sometimes experiences speech problems particularly Speech Disfluency, as well as the invited guests. Another example is Caroline Kennedy that happened in 2009. She said many "ums", "ahs", and 139 times "y'know" when she was interviewed by New York Times for declaring that she would run in the election of

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New York Senator. As a consequence, she was mocked with a buzzer 30 times in less than two-and-a-half minutes (Marshall, 2009). It shows how important the disfluency problem is. Someone who experiences disfluency in his/her speech can cause bad effect for his/her performance. It might make them feel unconfident and nervous. Such disfluencies can be a signal that the speaker is in a problem to redeem the suitable words to say (Finlayson & Corley, 2012). Automatically, it will also affect listeners' perception.

Another study has been done previously by several researchers. Bailor et al. (2015) observed common disfluencies and its percentage toward 18 to 20-year-old Indian adults who use spoken English. Mayasari (2015) researched pause and slip tongue speech production in daily life. Aulia (2016) in her thesis "The Problem Faced by English Department Students in Speaking English" focused on two problems. First, the dominant types of disfluency occurred among English Department students of UIN Ar-Raniry when they speak in English and the second their strategy in overcoming disfluency problem.

Speech disfluency does not only happen in English speakers. A communication expert for chemists, Lisa B. Marshall, wrote one of her experience related to speech disfluency. Her husband is a native speaker of Spanish, therefore she learned Spanish from him. However, she often found him using the word "esto" when her husband spoke with his mother. It was a big question for her. Evidently, that was a common disfluency for Spanish speakers. Then she tried to explore it more and found out that in Britain they say "uh," Hebrew speakers say "ehhh," and the Turks say "mmmmm." The Japanese say "eto" (eh-to) and "ano" (ah- no), while Mandarin speakers say "neige" (NEH-guh) and "jiege" (JEHguh). In Dutch and German, it is "uh, um, mmm." In Swedish it is "eh, ah, aah, m, mm, hmm, ooh, a, and oh" (Marshall, 2009). These support her view that people around the world have various styles in filling pauses.

Based on the theories, facts and findings above, the writer implicates some problems that would be analyzed toward "The Speech Disfluency in Ellen DeGeneres Talk Show" namely: (1) Male and female differences on speech disfluency, (2) Types of speech disfluency experienced by the speaker, (3) Frequency of speech disfluency during the talk show, (4) Factors of speech disfluency, (5) Effect of speech disfluency toward the speaker, (6) Influence of speech disfluency to the talk show, (7) Technique to avoid and to overcome speech disfluency, and 8) Different expressions of disfluency uttered by different countries. Due to the problems encountered that have been mentioned above, the research focuses on the types of speech disfluency that arises from the speaker and its frequency during the talk show. For the analysis, the writer formulated the research through the following questions:

- 1. What are the types of speech disfluency by speakers in Ellen DeGeneres Show conversation?
- What is the frequency of speech disfluency types during the conversation?.

To reveal more about the Speech Disfluency, the writer conducted a research on Speech Disfluency cases found in the talk show entitled "The Speech Disfluency in Ellen De-Generes Talk Show (A Psycholinguistics Study)."

This study can benefit three sides, which are English language researchers, university students, and lecturers or practitioners of English language. Firstly, this study can become basic information about the disfluency problem of English native speakers for language researchers. Second, it can be beneficial for university students as additional material from psycholinguistics courses which not only talks about language acquisition, but also this study can be useful for lecturers or practitioners of English language to have more insights related to speaking skill which are needed by students.

# 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Psycholinguistics

Etymologically, the term Psycholinguistics comes from two words namely Psychology and Linguistics. In the beginning, the term used for psycholinguistics is linguistic psychology and some call it psychology of language. As a result of more systematic work, there is a new science which is then called Psycholinguistics.

Psycholinguistics term had defined by some linguists. According to Levelt (1992): "Psycholinguistics is the study of the mental processes and skills underlying the production and comprehension of language, and of the acquisition of these skills." In Scovel (1998), "The use of language and speech as a window to the nature and the structure of the human mind is called psycholinguistics," while Fernandez & Cairns (2011) states, "Psycholinguistics is an interdisciplinary field of study in which the goals are to understand how people acquire language, how people use language to speak and understand one another, and how language is represented and processed in the brain."

Chaer (2003) considers that psychologists have long admitted that the human brain accepts symbols of linguistics so that the immersion of Psycholinguistics is inevitable. Thus, according to Miller, the main task of psycholinguistics is to analyze the psychological processes that occur when people use sentences.

## 2.2 Talk Show

A Talk show is one of television programs that is much preferred by the public. In [13], a talk show is a television show that presents a famous guest to discuss various topics with an informal style. These topics are usually related to career, health, life story, etc. "Topics that were considered relevant and emotionally involved were rated as interesting," Livingstone and Lunt (Penz, 1996).

The show is usually set in a television studio and be broadcast live. Generally, the studio setting is putting the guests sit in front of the audience together with the host. Penz (1996) claims that the setting of the studio is appertaining to sitting arrangement and audience way to influence the situation of the show.

Certainly, every talk show will try to provide an interesting topic, so it will give a good impression on the audience and directly make the program a good rating. One of the things that make a talk show preferred by many audiences is supported by the host of the talk show itself. According to Penz (1996), a host in a talk show has an important role, because the host is the focus of the camera and controls the conversation flow with the guest. The stage or floor is owned by the host at the time. Hosts also typically use certain tricks before the break by making the audiences feel curious, so the television audiences stay tuned.

According to Penz (1996), there are three goals of a talk show. The first, to provide worthwhile information particularly to women referring to interpersonal and psychosocial matters. Second, to entertain, and the last is as commercial means by promoting the product during the show. Talk show is considered spending low production costs than other programs, it can be one reasons why this program is getting much in the recent years.

## 2.3 Language Production

There are several steps of language production raised by Levelt (1992), these are:

- Conceptualizing: usually known as preverbal message as the speaker has an intention to communicate the idea, but it has not been expressed yet into linguistic form.
- Formulating: generating natural language representations for messages that consist of word selection stage and sound selection stage.
- 3. Articulating: pronouncing sounds of a word by articulatory gestures (Traxler & Gernsbacher, 2006).

Fernandez & Cairns (2011) supports Levelt's theory with the Figure 1. This figure summarizes the language production by the speaker ordered from left to right when producing the sentence: The girl pets the dog. Started by the light bulb indicates an idea for a message triggering a process of lexical selection. The capsule-like figures represent lexical items for the words girl, dog, and pet. Next, the tree diagram portrays the sentence's syntactic form. Phonetic transcription shows the sentence's eventual phonological form then sent to the articulatory system, which produces the corresponding speech signal. According to Liberman, et al. (Fernandez & Cairns, 2011), "Speaking is an incredibly complex motor activity, involving over 100 muscles moving in precise synchrony to produce speech at a rate of 10 to 15 phonetic units per second."

## 2.4 Speech Disorder

In communicating, speaking activity does not always run smoothly. A Speaker sometimes has difficulty in expressing what he/she wants to convey, so it can cause ineffectiveness in communication. This is due to various disorders in speaking. Speech therapists or speech language pathologists are people who are in charge of this speech disorder. According to Lanier (2010), speech disorders include fluency disorders, articulation disorders, and voice disorders.

### 2.4.1 Fluency Disorders

Fluency disorder is a disorder that is viewed from the rate of speakers while talking. The disorders can occur in children, adolescents, and adults. One of the disorder forms is stuttering and according to Chaer (2003), stuttering often happens in men than women. Fluency disorder is what then causes speech disfluency.

#### 2.4.2 Articulation Disorders

Articulation disorders are related to interference by speakers in producing sounds. The resulting sound involves speech organs such as tongue, teeth, lips, and palatal. One of the examples is sound removal in pronouncing 'and' for 'hand'. Articulation disorders can be caused by oral and throat cancer, accidents, congenital birth (such as cleft lips), other factors that cause speech organ damage, and neurological factors.

#### 2.4.3 Voice Disorders

Voice disorders include tone disturbances, voice quality disturbances, and loudness disturbances. Voice disorders can usually be monotonous, hoarse, too low or high sound, or the quality of a person's nasal sound. Voice disorders can be caused by accident, damage or disease in the throat.

### 2.5 Speech Disfluency

# 2.5.1 Definition of Speech Disfluency

Disfluency has been defined by the American Speech Language and Hearing Association (ASHA, 1999) Special Interest Division (SID, 1999) 4, as "speech that exhibits deviations in continuity smoothness and ease of rate and effort" (Bailor et al., 2015). Moreover, Logan (2014) defined speech disfluency as "Interruptions in the execution of a speech plan that arise from either (a) errors in the speech planning and execution process or (b) partner-based behaviors such as verbal interruption that impede a speaker's ability to execute an utterance completely" and according to ?, "disfluency is disruption or breakdown in the flow of speech occur."

Based on the definitions above, the writer concludes that speech disfluency is the occurrence of flow disturbance in the process of speaking.

## 2.5.2 Types of Speech Disfluencies

There are several experts who explained some theories on speech disfluency types, such as Levelt, Gregory, Yairi, and Yarrus and Reardon. However, in conducting research and

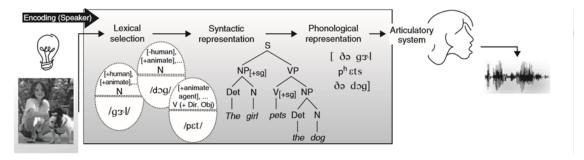


FIGURE 1. Pronunciation Sounds

analyzing the data in this writing, the writer used the theory from Yarrus and Reardon because it is the simplest and easiest to understand theory among others according to the writer. In (Aulia, 2016), Yarrus and Reardon classify 4 types of disfluencies in speaking, these are:

- a. Hesitations (Pause) A speaker might feel uncertain and sometimes pause in his speech. Hesitation is a nonstuttered disfluency and happens not because of the genetic matter and it is not a disease, it is normal.
- b. Interjections (um, Uhm, er) It is common for a speaker to be interrupted in his speech as speaking is an activity involving two or more people. In speech itself, an interjection might happen due to losing focus of the speaker.
- c. Revision (I want—I need that) For such a non-delayed communication, speaking tends to be hard in controlling the utterance. Therefore, sometimes the speaker says another word to revise the wrong word before.
- d. Repetitions (I want- I want that) Repetition is a very common occurrence among all other disfluencies in speaking. Repetition might lead to stutter in a serious case. For the common repetition happens at the phrase level. Here is the developing level of repetition.
  - (1) Repetition of phrase: A repetition occurs in phrase level such as I need-I need that bike.
  - (2) Repetition of multisyllabic whole words: Repetition of multisyllabic whole words is a repetition where a speaker repeats a word (more than two syllables) entirely like mommy mommy mommy lets go! this level occurs more frequently
  - (3) Repetition of monosyllabic whole words: When a single syllable word (I, you, book) repeats, it is called a monosyllabic whole word repetition. An easy example is when someone says I I I-I want to go he repeats the word I 4 times. The reaction of disfluency is increasing at this level.
  - (4) Stuttered disfluencies: This is a serious level of disfluency where a speaker might repeat sounds or syllables, li-li-like this, or prolongations, llllllllike this, or even blocks, l—ike this. The stuttered disfluency happens due to increasing tension or struggle, and the duration of the disfluency. A speaker with this level of disfluency might also blink his eyes and do head movement.

## 2.6 Measuring Disfluency

Bloom and Cooperman 1999 gave several tips to count disfluencies, these are:

- Repetitions of sounds, syllables, or words are counted as one disfluent word regardless of the number of iterations
- b. Prolongations of sounds are counted as one disfluent word.
- Blocks on a word are counted as one disfluent word regardless of the durations of the block.
- d. Unnaturally long pauses are counted as one disfluent word. This is a judgment/the pause should call attention to itself.
- e. Revisions are counted as one disfluent word.
- f. In reading; the omission, modification, or addition of a word or words is counted as one disfluent word.
- g. Fillers and starters are counted as disfluent words. If the client uses several fillers (um, uh, etc.) prior to

saying the next word, these are all counted as one disfluent word.

### 3. METHOD

The study applied library research and field of research as the method of collecting data. Library research is used to find relevant reference to the topic of speech disfluency. By reading some resources like books, theses, journals, and articles from the internet, the writers obtained materials or information closely related to this study. For the field research was done by observing speech disfluency cases from the video on YouTube. In collecting the data, the writers watched the videos of The Ellen DeGeneres Talk Show on YouTube. Then, downloading several videos indicating speech disfluency. After that, making the transcript of the data. In analyzing data, the writers used descriptive qualitative and quantitative methods. The procedures taken were as follows: (1) Listening to the data a number of times to create a better accurate transcript. (2) Identifying and bolding the utterances indicated speech disfluency. (3) Classifying the utterances into types of speech disfluency on a table for each segment. (4) Counting the frequency and percentage of speech disfluency types by using theory from Bailoor, et al. Wayne (2015). (5) Combining data from the ten segments into a table. (6) Calculating the overall frequency and percentage of each speech disfluency type to determine the dominance. (7) Making a conclusion based on the analysis. The population of this research is taken from the Ellen DeGeneres Show on YouTube. Aired since September 10th 2003, this talk show has reached season 15. In one season it usually amounts to 150 to 181 episodes and on March 2, 2018 it has amounted to 2520 episodes. Generally, the duration of each episode is about an hour. Every episode is usually divided into seven segments which advertisement becomes a pause marker between one segment and another. The most frequent segments are celebrity interviews, people with inspiring stories of life interviews, dancing, audience participation in games, and music shows. In choosing the samples, the writer used the purposive sampling technique. From the population, the writers selected ten segments from nine episodes in season 13-15 indicating speech disfluency with various guests' background of life. One segment usually runs for 5 to 10 minutes, but to be more efficient in the analysis, the writers took samples for 2 minutes in each segment

# 4. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The writers present the findings of speech disfluency types based on Yarrus and Reardon's theory and its frequency which are used by the speakers in Ellen DeGeneres show. The data are classified on a table for each segment with explanations for every table. The second part is a discussion which describes the result from research finding in a summary. The percentage in the table as mentioned in the chapter II was taken from the number case of speech disfluency types divided by all words in the conversation times 100. From ten data are then combined as the table 1 below.

The second item from the questionnaire was specifically asked about the familiarity of Indonesian respondents Table 2 consists of the samples sourced from episode 131 season 14 of Ellen DeGeneres Show interview segment between Ellen and Tracey Tong with 432 total number of words.

TABLE 1. The Data on Disfluency

				Data	Freq	uenc	y and	Perc	entag	e			
	Speech disfluency types	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	F	%
1	Hesitations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
2	Interjections	9	9	9	9	16	17	7	18	9	16	119	31,04%
3	Revision	6	4	1	0	3	4	1	5	3	5	32	8,23%
4	Repetitions												
	Phrase	7	8	6	0	3	2	2	5	1	2	36	8,96%
	Multisyllabic whole word	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0,23%
	Monosyllabic whole words	1	6	4	5	3	6	3	5	2	5	40	10,212%
	Stuttered disfluencies	4	5	0	1	2	3	0	2	1	0	18	4,53%
Т	otal											246	63.202%
A	varage												6,32%

TABLE 2. Samples of Utterances Regarding Speech Disfluency

Speech Disfluency Types	Utterances	Frequency	%
1. Interjections	letumI mean first of all	9	2,08%
	I just uhI just-just want to go watch movies with her		
	So, umuhyouI don't know do you know who e-even shot that footage and posted it?		
	So, if there was, umlike an African-American woman wearing either a head scarf or a hijab	f ? 6	
	I didn't reallyyou know, focus on that		
	Um well you know I-I've been bullied foryou know, for a couple of things		
	Um well you know I-I've been bullied foryou know, for a couple of things		
	you are umWhat did the-what did the women say to you after you defended her?		
	Umso, I-I got off a couple stops before her and ironically		
2. Revision	letumI mean first of all	6	1,38%
	what do you, I meanshe's-she's adorable		
	iShe's such a smart little nugget	6	
	So, umuhyouI don't know do you know who e-even shot that footage and posted it?		
	you are umWhat did the-what did the women say to you after you defended her		
	Um well you know I-I've been bullied		
3. Repetions			
Phrase	she's-she's adorable	7	1,62%
	what do you, I meanshe's-she's adorable		
	so, she was-she was basically saying		
	she's-she's adorable what do you, I meanshe's-she's adorable so, she was-she was basically saying she was-she was accusing her of being terrorist?		
so, she was-she was basically saying			
	What did the-what did the women say to you after you defended her?		
Mono-syllabic Whole Words	so, I-I got off a couple stops before her and ironically	1	0,23%
Stuttered Disfluen-cies	I don't know do you know who e-even shot that footage and posted it?	4	0,92%
	Nnnnno, I have zero idea.		
	be-besides you wanted to protect her		
	what do you have in the brief-briefcase		
Total		27	6,23

The Table 2 shows that the types of speech disfluency which are used by speakers in Ellen DeGeneres Show episode 131 season 14 consists of interjections, revision, and repetitions. Repetition is the type that mostly appeared during the conversation in which this type consists of repetition of phrase (1,62%), repetition of monosyllabic whole words (0,23%), and stuttered disfluencies (0,92%). Moreover, interjections type is at 2,08% and revision type is at 1,38%. As for type of hesitations and multisyllabic whole words repetition are not found in the data above.

Based on the findings of the study, the writer analyzed the whole data to answer the research question. From the ten data that have been analyzed, there are 246 speech disfluency cases with three various types of speech disfluency that appear during the conversation. These types consist of Interjections, Revision, and Repetitions.

Interjection is a speech disfluency type that mostly arises from the ten data. With a frequency level of 119, this type has a percentage of 31,04%. Interjections are marked by the use of um..., uh..., and you know, by speakers when they talk. Its rates also vary from speaker to speaker and can occur in the beginning and in the middle part of the sentence. Interjection cases are as in one of the following data, episode 52 season 15:

Ellen: And it's beautiful bottle, too. This is beautiful...

Kim: ...It is um...a healing crystal.

Based on the example above, Kim expresses interjections with um...as she wanted to say a healing crystal. It can be said that Interjections happen when the speaker is thinking about the next word that is going to say.

The next most common type is repetitions. This type consists of repetition of phrases, repetition of multisyllabic whole words, repetition of monosyllabic whole words, and stuttered disfluencies. Repetition of phrase occurs 36 times (8,96%), repetition of multisyllabic whole words 1 time (0,23%), repetition of monosyllabic whole words 40 times (10,212%), and stuttered disfluencies 18 times (4,53%) so that for the whole frequency of repetition type is 95 with percentage 22,932%. Among the four types of repetition types, stuttered disfluencies is a type that is at a serious level. One case of stuttered disfluencies occurred in episode 62 season 15:

Ellen: ...I am outraged that you were no-no-nominated for Album of the Year or Song of the Year.

Based on the example, Ellen had difficulty in saying the word nominated so she repeated the syllable "no" for three times with blinking her eyes. Repetitions allow the tone of the speaker's voice to tend to be unstable which usually increases with repetition.

Revision is the most common type after repetitions type. Revision occurs with a frequency of 32 times with a percentage of 8,23%. Revision is a way of self-correction of something already uttered by a speaker. One revision case was found in the episode 85 season 15:

Rob: ...I just—the sadness, I can't kind of get beyond it, you know.

Ellen: Yeah, yeah I know.

Based on the example above, Rob did a revision of the word he said earlier, I just, became the sadness, so he did not finish his previous word but changed it with a new word.

As for the type, hesitations (Pause) is not found in the 10 data because there is no silent speaker for a while in the

abnormal duration to the conversation that has not been discussed.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there are three types of speech disfluency found in the Ellen DeGeneres Show conversation, these are Interjections, Revision, and Repetitions. Further, the frequency of speech disfluency types during the conversation are distributed into: Interjections is at 119 (31,04%), Repetitions is at 95 (22,392%) which consist of 36 (8,96%) for Phrase Repetition, 1 (0,23%) for Multisyllabic Whole Word Repetition, 40 (10,212%) for Monosyllabic Whole Word Repetition, and 18 (4,53%) for Stuttered Disfluencies, while Revision is at 32 (8,23%). Therefore, interjection is the dominant type of speech disfluency among others.

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