

CORNELL NOTES

KEY POINT	DETAIL
Despite historical and continued stigma against filler words, they are common	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Historically, linguistic fillers (um, er, like, etc) viewed as “disfluencies” which distract from useful speechUsed 2 to 3 times per minute in everyday speechDifferent versions in almost every language
Filled pauses (hesitation phenomenon) carry meaning in conversation	<p>Benefits to speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Signal you're not done speakingGives time for speech to catch up with thoughtsGives time to find right word <p>Benefits to listener:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Signals important word is on the wayPeople more likely to remember a word if it comes after a hesitation
Fillers can function as discourse markers/ direct flow of convo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Give insight into your thought processes & help listeners follow and understand what you saye.g., “I mean” can signal you're about to elaborate
Fillers help us learn language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2011 study—toddlers learned words better when instruction included a filled pause (may cue them to expect novel words/ make connections)Learning second language: use of filled pauses doesn't decrease with mastery of language; using the appropriate hesitation can signal fluency
Filler words/ filled pauses not appropriate for all contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Not useful in formal writing (except dialogue)Can still carry social stigma

SUMMARY

Despite historical and ongoing social stigma against linguistic fillers (um, like, etc), they are commonly used in informal speech across most languages, and they actually serve meaningful functions. Filled pauses (hesitation phenomenon) can benefit the speaker by signaling that they haven't finished speaking and by giving them time to think and come up with the right word for the situation. Filled pauses can benefit the listener by signaling that important information is on the way, and people are more likely to remember a word if it comes after a hesitation. Fillers can also function as discourse markers and can help the listener understand the speaker's thought processes and can help them follow the conversation. In addition, linguistic fillers help us learn new languages—including babies learning new words as well as adults learning a second language.