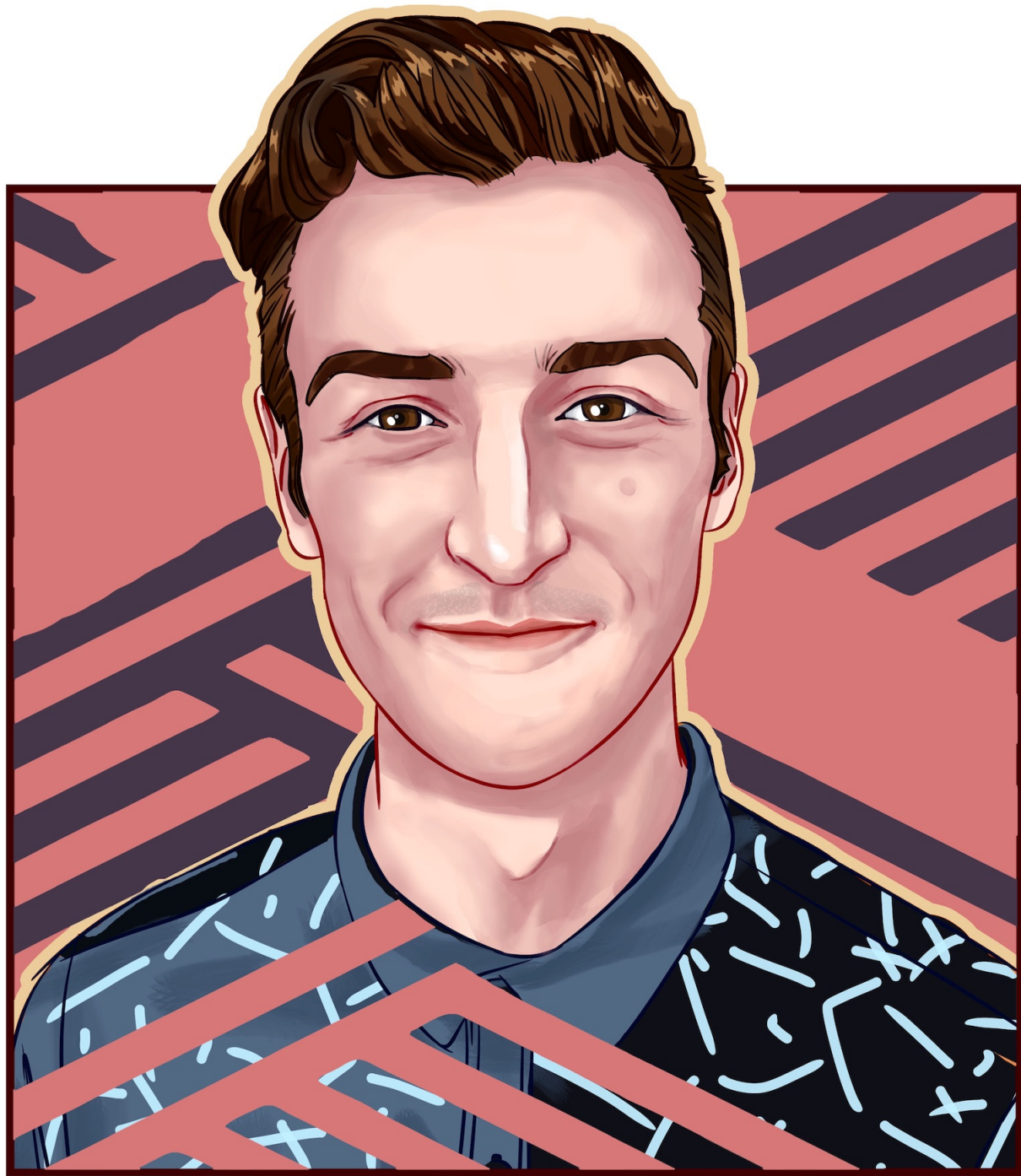


Jeremy's English Tips

Episode #13: Filler words



Culips English Podcast

Transcript

Hello everyone! This is Jeremy and you're listening to Jeremy's English Tips, a series by the Culips English Podcast where I teach you interesting expressions or share language learning tips.

Welcome back everyone to another episode of Jeremy's English tips. Thank you for listening today and I hope you're ready for an interesting episode. We have a study guide available for this episode on our website [Culips.com](https://culips.com). You can head on over there to find out how to download it and study along as you listen.

This episode will be helpful for people who are having conversations in English but want to sound more natural. That means that this episode will be helpful for people who want to sound more like a native English speaker when they're speaking English. And you can do that by utilizing filler words.

So, I'll start by defining filler words. Filler words are words, phrases, or sounds that fill the gaps in speech. So, the most common ones which you probably have heard are: uhh and or umm or hmm. Things like this, these are considered filler words. I know that you probably have these in your native language as well. And if you'd like to let us know you can on social media, what are some filler words in your native language. I know in Spanish they often say eh, eh, eh, instead of umm. And in Korean, they say geu, geu geu. So I assume that most languages have something like this.

Now, **native speakers of any language use filler words all the time without even knowing it.** This means that they are subconscious. These filler words are used subconsciously. That means that the speaker is not aware of what they are doing when they use these words. Therefore, using filler words can make you sound like a native because you are doing what the native speakers are doing. I often hear English learners using the filler words from their native language and this is okay, but it does make you stand out a bit. By that I mean it makes it clear to the other person that you are still learning English. So if you want to sound even more natural, I suggest practicing using filler words and building new habits.

Another good reason to use filler words is that they can help you to buy time. This is an expression we use "buy time" "to buy time", which means to give you extra time to think about the next thing you're going to say. I know from my experience learning Spanish and Korean that filler words can be very helpful in giving you extra time to think, for example, oh, what was that word? What was that word again? Instead of being silent and looking confused, you can say something like, "Umm uhh...." And this will show the other person that you are still thinking and that they need to wait for you.

So, let's talk about a few filler words that you can use. Here are some examples. The first filler word is **uhh** or **umm**. Uhh and umm are useful when you are trying to remember something. So for example, if someone says, "What is the capital of Peru?" And you can't remember right away, you can say "uhh, uhh" and this will signal to them that they need to wait for you.

The second filler word is, **hmm**. It's spelled like h-m-m, and it sounds like hmm hmm. This filler word indicates that you are thinking about something. So, if someone asked me "Hey Jeremy, what do you want for your birthday?" I might say, "Hmm one million dollars." Just kidding. Actually not, but still, OK? So, this hmm indicates that I am thinking.

The third filler word that you can use is **ahh** or **OK**. These two usually indicate that you understood what the other person said. For example, if someone tells me some new information, I can say "ahh ahh OK, OK." These two words are often used interchangeably ahh ahh ahh to indicate that you understand what the other person said.

The fourth filler word is **you know**. Now, this is a phrase because it consists of two words you and no and this filler word is used when you are asking for agreement. Now, this filler word can have two meanings depending on your intonation. So, if you say it like this, you know or like this you know, these two can have a different meaning. When you say it with a downward intonation you know, you know you're asking for agreement. For example, if I say, you know, it's raining today, so we should probably bring an umbrella. When I say this, the filler word you know is calling upon the other person and asking for agreement. As if to say, "Hey, you know, it's raining, and I know it's raining. So, we should bring an umbrella."

Now, when this filler word is used with an upward intonation like, you know, it is used to check for understanding. So, if you are not sure if the other person understood you, you can

say, you know, sometimes this gets extended to, you know what I mean? You know what I mean? You know what I mean? And this phrase is often used at the end, you know what I mean? So, you can use this one when you're checking for understanding.

Now, I should say that **these words are not used in writing, and if possible, they should be avoided in formal speaking.** So if you're giving a speech, then usually people say to try not to use these words. In fact, when I was very young, I remember my teachers telling us not to use umm and uhh we were giving a speech in school. However, I have since heard of studies that indicate that these filler words are actually a very important part of communication. They are actually very valuable communication tools. Because they help the other person, the listener, to clearly understand what is going on inside the head of the speaker. So if I say "uhh" the listener knows that I need more time. They know that it's not their turn to start talking yet. It's still my turn. Or if I say "you know?" then they understand that I am checking to make sure that they are understanding me.

I hope this episode was helpful for you. Please let us know if you are able to utilize these filler words in your daily life by contacting us either through email at contact@culips.com or on social media. That's it for this episode. Thank you for listening to Jeremy's English Tips by Culips and I'll catch you next time!

Key Points

- Filler words are words or sounds that fill the gaps in speech
- Native speakers use filler words all the time without knowing it
- English learners can use filler words to “buy time”
- Some examples of filler words in English include: uhh, umm, ahh, OK, you know
- These words are NOT used in writing and, if possible, should be avoided in formal speaking

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Why do native speakers use filler words in speech?
2. When might using a filler word be helpful?
3. When might using a filler word be bad?
4. How do you use filler words in your native language?
5. Do you think that filler words should or should not be used in daily speech?

Study Challenges

1. Try to use the filler word “umm” next time you can’t remember a word
2. Try using the filler word “you know” the next time you aren’t sure if the other person understood what you said.

Credits

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