
ANALYSIS OF LEXICO-SEMANTIC FEATURES OF HESITATION AND TURN-TAKING IN SPOKEN DISCOURSE

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Received: 12.12.2025

Revised: 13.12.2025

Accepted: 14.12.2025

KALIT SO'ZLAR:

*hesitation, turn-
taking, spoken
discourse, fillers,
pauses, pragmatics,
conversation analysis,
communication.*

This article analyzes the lexical and semantic features of hesitation and turn-taking in spoken discourse. The study examines how hesitation markers (such as pauses, fillers, repetitions) and turn-taking signals function in natural communication and how they influence interaction between speakers. Special attention is given to the cultural and pragmatic context in which these linguistic features appear, as well as their role in organizing conversation, expressing attitudes, and maintaining interpersonal balance. The work highlights the importance of correctly interpreting hesitation and turn-taking cues for understanding speaker intention and communicative strategy. The analysis demonstrates that these features not only structure speech but also carry semantic, emotional, and social significance.

Spoken discourse is a dynamic system in which speakers constantly negotiate meaning, control the flow of conversation, and manage social relationships. Hesitation and turn-taking are two essential mechanisms that regulate communication. While hesitation may appear to be a sign of uncertainty or lack of fluency, linguistic research shows that it often

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serves important pragmatic functions. In many cases, hesitation allows the speaker to plan their next utterance, emphasize information, or soften directness. Fillers such as uh, um, well do not carry lexical meaning, but they help maintain the conversational flow and prevent interruptions.

Turn-taking, on the other hand, refers to the system that governs how speakers exchange speaking turns. According to conversation analysis, turn-taking follows social rules that allow participants to speak one at a time while still coordinating transitions smoothly. Signals such as intonation, eye contact, pauses, and discourse markers (e.g., you know, actually, so) help speakers indicate when they are finishing or want to continue. If these cues are misunderstood, conversation may become chaotic or impolite. Therefore, the ability to manage turns is closely tied to communicative competence.

Lexically, hesitation uses a limited set of recurring units: fillers (uh, um), elongated sounds (sooo), repetitions, and restarts. These units may seem insignificant, yet they show the speaker's emotional state, level of confidence, and cognitive load. Semantically, hesitation can express doubt, politeness, disagreement, or anticipation. For example, a hesitant pause before responding may signal reluctance or create a softening effect that reduces the face-threatening nature of a response. Turn-taking also has strong semantic implications. Taking the floor too quickly may be interpreted as dominance or impatience, while waiting too long may signal uncertainty or low status. In many cultures, including English-speaking ones, smooth turn transitions require sensitivity to timing and subtle linguistic cues. The phrase "Can I just add..." or a rising intonation at the end of a clause can invite a turn or show readiness to participate. Thus, turn-taking is not only mechanical but socially meaningful.

Cultural context plays a crucial role in how hesitation and turn-taking are interpreted. In English discourse, slight hesitation is considered natural and even helpful for clarity. In contrast, some cultures value fast, uninterrupted speech, while others emphasize longer pauses and reflective speech. Translators and learners must understand these norms to avoid misinterpretations. For example, a long pause in English may appear uncomfortable or signal a lack of engagement, whereas in other languages it can indicate respect or careful thinking. One of the most important challenges in analyzing hesitation and turn-taking is recognizing their dual nature: they function both as linguistic tools and as social signals. Effective communication requires balancing fluency with strategic hesitation, as well as

respecting turn-taking conventions. Mastery of these features allows speakers to participate naturally in conversation, express nuance, and maintain cooperative interaction.

In conclusion, hesitation and turn-taking are vital components of spoken discourse that shape communication at both linguistic and social levels. By examining their lexico-semantic features, researchers can better understand how speakers manage interaction, negotiate meaning, and express subtle attitudes. A deeper awareness of these mechanisms is essential for language learners, translators, and anyone working with spoken communication. Hesitation and turn-taking are fundamental components of spoken discourse that shape both the structure and the meaning of communication. Through the analysis of their lexico-semantic features, it becomes clear that hesitation markers—such as pauses, fillers, and repetitions—are not signs of linguistic weakness but serve important cognitive, emotional, and pragmatic functions. They help speakers plan utterances, soften directness, and express subtle attitudes. Turn-taking mechanisms, in turn, ensure orderly interaction, allowing participants to coordinate speech, negotiate meaning, and maintain social balance. These processes depend heavily on cultural norms, conversational expectations, and context. A deeper understanding of hesitation and turn-taking enhances communicative competence, supports effective translation of spoken discourse, and provides insights into how people manage real-life interaction. Ultimately, these features highlight the complexity of human communication, demonstrating that spoken language is not only about words but also about timing, nuance, and cooperation.

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