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A PragmaStylistic Analysis of Hesitation and Repair in the Language of Trauma in the Courtroom

Prof. Sarab Khalil Al-Azzawi (PhD)
English Department, College of Arts, University of Baghdad

Hajir Mahmood Ibrahim Alallo
English Department, College of Arts, University of Baghdad

Abstract in English

Abuse survivors might find it difficult to speak about their experience, especially if it must be presented in public. This difficulty is reflected in their language and is at its highest when dealing with severe abuse such as violence, life-threatening incidents, assaults, or defamation. In light of this, post-traumatic speakers produce identifiable linguistic patterns that lead to the intensity of the situation. Thus, the present study aims to explore the pragmastylistic markers of hesitation, ways of repair, and avoidance strategies employed in courtroom testimony. Considering the nature of the study's main objectives, the selected data consists of courtroom testimonies during the direct examination of the well-known televised trial of the Menendez Brothers. The study focuses on the language of the two brothers during their narration of a sequence of events that led to the murder of their parents. In order to achieve these aims, the study analyses key features of spoken language, such as hesitations, pauses, and repetition, adopting Tissi's (2000) framework on pauses and Stenstrom's (2012) model of disfluencies.

Paper Info

Keywords

PragmaStylistics, Trauma, courtroom, pauses, hesitation, and silence.

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1. Introduction

Not everything is speakable; some events are hard to speak about, yet renarrating the truth concerning a terrible incident is required for the healing of individual victims (Herman, 2015). The retelling of a stressor incident is a must inside courtrooms, which makes it even harder for victims to articulate their ideas and surface them in speech. Herman (2015, p.1) argues that those people who have survived atrocities often retell their stories "in a highly emotional, contradictory, fragmented manner". The present

study explores a specific type of traumatised individuals: those who have suffered a stressor incident, such as a life-threatening incident, abuse, or murder.

The current study builds its cornerstone on the definition of trauma as a "crisis of representation of history and truth" in memory (Luckhurst, 2008). According to this definition, an individual who has suffered from a mental trauma may manipulate or displace certain memories, and, in such cases, speakers may look hesitant in their speech, or they may repair their statements in a way that avoids the real truth of the memory being told. This manipulation and so-called crisis can be referred to as the speaker's 'style' in avoiding a troubling memory that is intended to remain unspoken. Furthermore, the fusion of one's style and meaning falls under the field of pragmastylistics.

Pragmastylistics aims to uncover the ways language shapes meaning in context. Thus, it helps to show how linguistic analysis presents and forms social identities. This is achieved through observing the choices made by speakers and how hearers perceive those choices. In this context, Lakoff (1990, p. 257) asserts the benefits of studying the concept of linguistic style and points out that "language is an intrinsic component of personality. Linguistic style is an outgrowth of psychological style, and a diagnostic of it as well".

In light of Lakoff's statement, previously cited, pragmastylistics can serve as a diagnostic tool of trauma in the language of post-traumatised speakers. Thus, the study argues that disturbance and anxiety of the speakers can be best handled through the pragmastilistic investigation. In other words, the present study aims to answer the following questions using pragmstylistic methods of analysis:

1. What are the common markers of hesitation and avoidance in trauma discourse?
2. How do patterns of hesitation and silence contribute to the linguistic representation of trauma in courtroom testimonies?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Trauma as Discourse

Trauma, as a term, was originally used in English in the seventeenth century in the field of medicine when it was defined as physical harm brought on by an outside force (Luckhurst, 2008, p. 2). The word 'trauma' operates on two levels; for those who have experienced it, it is the "conflict between the will to proclaim horrible events aloud and the will to deny them." (Herman, 1992, p. 1); for researchers, it diminishes the audience's expectations of narrative form and structure because it is "the explicit admission of the inadequacy of language that points to the overwhelming, soul-destroying quality of an experience" (Stampfl, 2014, pp. 15, 21).

Concerning the literary theory of trauma, Balaev considers two main literary methods writers use to portray misery. These two methods are "the use of landscape imagery to convey the effects of trauma and remembering, and the use of place as a site that shapes the protagonist's experience and perception of the world" (Balaev, 2012, p. xi).

Building on Herman's account on trauma and the core of the literary theory of trauma, it can be said that trauma is reflected in language in terms of denial 'avoidance', contradictions 'repairs', fragments 'pauses and incomplete words', and imageries. Following the studies of Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992) and the works of Caruth (1995; 1996), there was a surge in scholarly interest in trauma during the 1990s. these works formed the "classical and literary theories of trauma", as Pedersen (2017,

p. 2) states. Accordingly, Trauma studies have become a new area within the humanities as a widespread topic in fiction and life writing.

Similarly, Pedersen (2017, p. 4) describes trauma on a more linguistic level as centring on "unspeakability," "unrepresentability," and "incomprehensibility,". Such a claim is based on the idea that the inability to represent or reflect a stressor incident is the core of the concept of trauma. Simply because the impact of trauma is "exceeding experiential, cognitive, and representational". The concept of "unspeakability" is utilised by many scholars to characterise trauma. For instance, Mandel (2006, p. 39) observes that the language of the victims of a tragic incident renders the 'inhuman' events and hence inaccessible to human understanding, external to the speech community that forms human culture.

As for the criterion of "unrepresentability", Pedersen (2017, p. 5) adopts Rothberg's (2006) identification of two dominant perspectives of trauma. These perspectives are termed as 'unrealist' and 'realist'. The unrealist perspective, as the name suggests, characterises trauma as unknowable and unrepresentable. In contrast, the realist perspective acknowledges that trauma need not remain shrouded in silence. It sees trauma as knowable and representable and, thus, can be translated into the real world and trauma narratives find voice.

This plethora of dichotomies seems never to have an end in the characterisation of trauma. Thus, some critics hold that trauma goes beyond the limits of language and thought, while others believe the opposite and describe it as accessible to language and thought (Pedersen, 2017, p. 5).

Some scholars including Snow, Douglas, and Ponsford (1988), agree that trauma fits into its distinct discourse as a social, verbal interaction. Snow et al. investigate the discourse abilities of brain-injured patients by employing Grice's maxims, cohesion, coherence, reference, turn-taking, and non-verbal behaviour. They located ten (10) parameters that could describe trauma discourse. These parameters include: insufficient information, information redundancy, need for repetition, message inaccuracy, poor topic maintenance, inappropriate speech style, situational inappropriateness, delay before responding (> 5 sec), failure to structure discourse, and turn-taking difficulty (Snow, Douglas, & Ponsford, 1988, p. 921).

The role of narratives and storytelling in such discourse cannot be overshadowed. Thompson highlights the role of narratives in the language of trauma and states that "it is clear that many survivors of trauma have come to engage in oral and written discourses of telling in order to heal their emotional wounds" (Thompson, 2004, p. 653).

2.2 Pragmastylistics

As the term suggests, pragmastylistics is stylistics with a pragmatic component added to it (Hickey, 1993, p. 578). The key concept that brings these two approaches, i.e. stylistics and pragmatics, together is the concept of choice. In other words, both stylistics and pragmatics are interested in the choices made by the speaker. Stylistics is defined as the "linguistic study of style" (Leech and Short, 1981, p. 13), and the term 'style' means a 'choice'. Likewise, pragmatics is also interested in the choices that speakers make and the ways hearers perceive the intended choice. The concept of 'choice' is further illustrated by Hickey (1993, p. 578) who asserts that:

> … pragmastylistics pays special attention to those features which a speaker may choose, or has chosen, from a range of acceptable forms in the same language that would be semantically, or truthconditionally, equivalent, but might perform or achieve different objectives or do so in different ways. In

> other words, the choices are seen as determined by the desired effects (expressive, affective, attitudinal etc.), by the communicative qualities aimed at (clarity, effectiveness etc.) and by the context or situation itself (what is already known and what is new, relationships between speaker and hearer, the physical distances etc.) (Hickey, 1993, p. 578).

Moreover, Davies (2007) acknowledges the potential of pragmastylistics in accomplishing more than stylistics or pragmatics alone, in that it employs the outcome of pragmatic theories to the subjective response to literary texts (Davies, 2007, p. 106). In a nutshell, the integration of pragmatics and stylistics is conceptualised as a scale of interest where the focus of either side decides which field the scale moves to (Hickey, 1989, p.10).

3. Methodology: Crafting the Model of Analysis

The interdisciplinary nature of the study's framework and the type of data to be analysed guide the selection of the major concepts that can best serve and shape the model of analysis. Accordingly, the study aims to design a model that explores the phonological features of trauma as manifested in the language of witnesses. For the stylistic part of the analysis, the study explores the stylistic levels by Leech and Short (2007) and considers the phonological level as relevant to the data analysis. Within this level, a common ground between stylistics and pragmatics is highlighted. Moreover, the study pays attention to avoidance and prominence across the selected features as found in the data.

3.1 Levels of Stylistic Analysis: The Phonological Level

M. A. K. Halliday (1978) in his Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework argues that language operates on different levels, all of which can be investigated through phonology, grammar, semantics, and other levels of analysis. Similarly, Leech and Short (2007) propose a multi-layered approach to stylistics, including phonological, lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic analysis. Additionally, Culpeper argues that stylistic analysis involves a detailed and systemic account of the linguistic properties of language (Culpeper, 2014, p. 11). The different linguistic properties of language are vital to statisticians not because they constitute meaning, but because "an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground a stylistic interpretation and to help explain why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible" (Simpson, 2004, p. 2).

Simpson (2004, p. 5) argues that establishing levels of language analysis can help organise and shape a stylistic analysis. That is to say, analysing language systematically requires the analysts to go through a hierarchy of different levels of linguistic structure. Such a procedure would produce an organised, principled analysis. The following table (1) lists the core levels of stylistic analysis:

Level of language	Branch of language study
The *sound* of spoken language; the way words are pronounced.	phonology; phonetics
The patterns of *written* language; the shape of language on the page.	graphology
The way words are constructed; words and their constituent structures.	morphology
The way words combine with other words to form phrases and sentences.	syntax; grammar
The words we use; the vocabulary of a language.	lexical analysis; lexicology
The *meaning* of words and sentences.	semantics
The way words and sentences are used in everyday situations; the meaning of language in context.	pragmatics; discourse analysis

Table (1): The Basic Levels of Language (Simpson, 2004, p. 5)

3.1.1 Silence

The current study considers the significance of 'silence' pauses and non-lexical onomatopoeia 'fillers' as a linguistic tool for the analysis of the language of trauma in the courtroom. Pauses are "referred to as silence, hesitation and junctures" (Ceco, 2001, p. 65). Those are hesitation pauses that are different from 'fluent pauses. Fluent pauses do not disrupt the fluency of speech, while hesitation pauses disrupt it and normally occur within a clause (Duez, 1982). Many studies have investigated the function of the duration of pauses and their syntactic distribution.

To this end, Duez (1982, p.12) hypothesises that "pauses may have a stylistic function that helps to emphasise an argument or to draw the attention of the listener to what is going to be". He (Duez, 1982, p. 27) concludes that pauses within the phrase are related to hesitation. As for the duration of pauses, Fairbanks and Hoaglin (1941) studied the duration of pauses in utterances in which male actors expressed various emotions and found marked differences between anger, fear and indifference on the one hand, and contempt and grief on the other.

Furthermore, Tissi (2000) categorises pauses into silent pauses and disfluencies, 'filled pauses', which are further classified into consonants and vowel lengthening, and vocalised hesitations. Moreover, disfluencies further include interruptions, which include false starts, repetitions, and restructuring. These disfluencies reflect the speaker's expressive ability in a critical situation or an emotional pressure.

Drawing on Tissi's (2000) proposed theory of disfluency, Stenström (2012) systematically categorises hesitation as a type of disfluency that is further subclassified into unfilled pauses (UPs), filled pauses (FPs), prolongations, and repetition:

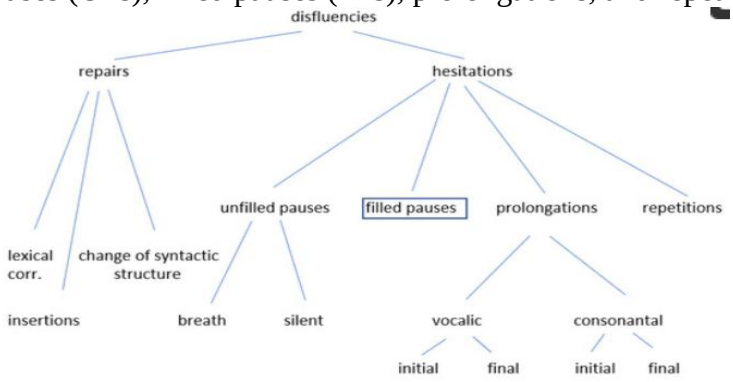

Fig (1): The Taxonomy of Disfluency Following Stenström (2012)

3.1.1 Silent Pauses (UPs)

Silent pauses also referred to as unfilled pauses (Ups)vary in length depending on the conversational situation and are transcripted as seconds or by symbols such as '.' (a brief silence), '-' (a medium pause), and '--/-' (long pauses) (Stenström, 2011, p. 539). Silent pauses function differently according to the context of speaking; they help the speaker hold the turn, plan what to say, process what is heard, mark emphasis, or draw attention to hesitation. As in "Ahm (.) I doubt it "(Levinson 1983, p. 335). However, the present study adopts the square brackets to signal the seconds of silence, for instance, [2] or [16],…etc.

Aside from its demarcating function, i.e. emphasising word, phrase, and sentence boundaries, pauses, both silent and filled, represent a problem in speech planning which is a result of cognitive load used for deception (Benus, Enos, Hirschberg, & Shriberg, 2006). On similar grounds, it can be claimed that pauses represent hesitation due to an increased cognitive load.

As a means for supporting the preceding claim, the study refers to Bernnan and William's (1995) study in which they argue that excessive pauses and fillers indicate a lack of confidence or a wrong answer, and sometimes indicate difficulty retrieving a true memory.

3.1.2 Filled Pauses (FPs)

Crystal (2008, p. 188) states that filled pauses or as some linguists refer to as 'non-silent pauses' are hesitations filled by er, em, etc. or using lengthened consonants or vowels. Davis & Maclagan (2010, p. 194) stress that filled pauses are not mere fillers, rather they are seen as indicating emotional disturbance.

3.1.2.1 Non-lexical Onomatopoeia

In its simplest sense, onomatopoeia refers to the mimetic power of language (Leech, 1969, p. 97). Levinson (1983) highlights the influence of nonverbal cues such as nonlexical sounds as part of the pragmatic meaning. Similarly, Leech and Short refer to the role of the nonlexical sound on style, and regard it as a strong effect if it is related to meaning (Leech & Short, 2007, p. 46). These nonlexical sounds are called 'onomatopoeic expressions' that are 'partly or wholly ICONIC" in language as Crystal states (2008, p. 32). Crystal further argues that onomatopoeic expressions "do reflect properties of the non-linguistic world… such as splash, murmur, mumble" (Ibid.). They are simply a representation of an idea in sound (Ibid. p. 235).

Concerning the weight of onomatopoeic expressions and the sound system in stylistics, Simspon highlights a type which he calls 'nonlexical onomatopoeic expressions' as a noted feature in language:

> The sound system of language offers numerous resources for linguistic creativity in style, with metrical and rhythmic structure on the one hand, and phonetic and phonological patterning on the other…. Nonlexical onomatopoeia is perhaps the most direct form of verbal imitative art insofar as patterns of sound are crafted to represent the real world without the intercession of grammatical or lexical structures…. the use of the phonetic characteristics of the language to imitate a sound without attempting to produce recognisable verbal structures, even those of traditional 'onomatopoeic' words…, however, nonlexical onomatopoeia exposes sharply some important but easily overlooked features of more sophisticated imitative figures. (Simpson, 2004, p. 168-9).

In the above quotation, Simpson emphasises the linguistic creativity of sound systems, particularly the nonlexical onomatopoeic expressions, in linguistic analysis in ways that

bypass traditional grammar or vocabulary. This often underappreciated feature illustrates how sound alone such as "Ffff, Ooo, …etc." can create meaning and carry an emotional load. For instance, a sequence of 'Rrrr" can "be taken as stomach rumbles" as Simpson exemplifies (Simpson, 2004, p. 173).

Leech (1969, p. 96) draws attention to the idea that speakers and listeners tend to look for any "reinforcement" in the discourse, especially those that may pass unnoticed. Leech highlights that onomatopoeia is a type of reinforcement. As for its ability to create a representation of the real world, Leech stresses that onomatopoeic expressions represent "not only the sound of what they describe but the activity as a whole". He further argues that an example such as 'flutter' in "the fluttering of leaves on the tree" does not merely describe the sound of the wind, but helps the reader feel, see, and hear the motion of the wind.

However, to account for the onomatopoeic significance of every sound pattern requires crossing the boundaries of normal procedures of language comprehension. Spencer (2004, p. 171) states that onomatopoeia "requires interpretation as much as any other system of signs does; it is a convention among conventions". This means that recognising onomatopoeia as a stylistic device forces the listeners to go beyond normal interpretation procedures.

Moreover, Leech and Short (1982, p. 95) refer to onomatopoeic effects in verbs and argue that one's style might be marked by an excessive use of "verbs which are intrinsically onomatopoeic such as clanking, thumped, and rapped. Yet, this onomatopoeic is to be considered lexical.

3.1.3 Hesitation

Hesitation occurs when the participant does not know how to express a particular idea while speaking. Hesitation pauses are of various types: either silent pauses or filled pauses. Pauses are considered a way of expressing hesitancy (Stepanova, 2007). Moreover, hesitation is manifested by means of verbal fillers, lengthenings, repetitions, reformations and restarts as presented in the previous figure. Verbal fillers like "you know", "well", "I mean", etc. are words and phrases used to fill gaps, buy time to retrieve memory, or organise painful memories (Schiffrin, 1987).

1. Verbal fillers: verbal fillers are typically realised by expressions such as you know, sort of, like and well (Stenström, 2011, p. 540) .
2. Lengthenings (prolongations): hesitators tend to lengthen conjunctions, as in 'aaand', articles, as in 'thee', and lexical words (Stenström, 2011, p. 541).
3. Repetitions: Repetitions most often affect function words, such as prepositions (to to to), articles (the the the), pronouns (I I I I I) and conjunctions (and and) (Stenström, 2011, p. 541).

It is important to note that repetition occurring at the beginning of the sentence implies 'repair' or what some scholars call 'self-corrections'. For instance, Watanabe & Rose (2013) draw their conception of hesitation on Levelt's (1980) model of monitoring and error repair. According to this model, speakers remedy errors through pauses and fillers, and repair these errors through restarts and repetions (Watanabe & Ralph, 2013, p. 480). Additionally, speakers may replace their message during the process of repair, that is to say, they completely abandon their message during hesitation and replace it with another one in what is referred to as 'message replacement'. Logically, message replacement is considered an avoidance strategy. In light of this, hesitation can be seen more clearly in the following figure:

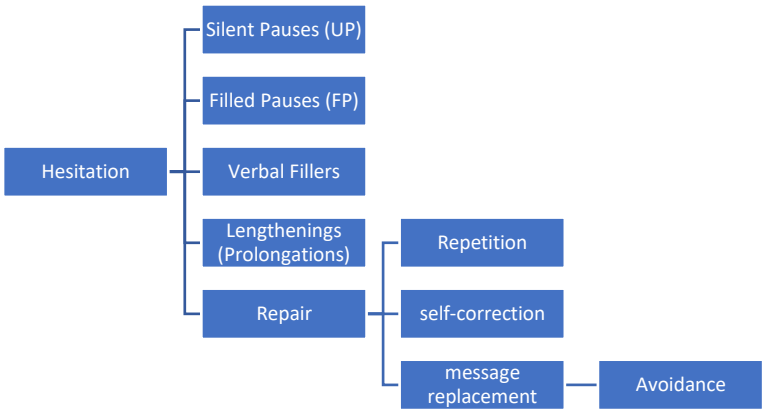

Fig (2): The Adapted Model of Hesitation

3.2 The Pragmatic Component

Pragmatics is a fruitful field in studying how a speaker can persuade, affect or control others via language (Archer et al., 2012, p. 8). The interplay between the sociocultural perspective of pragmatics, the use of language in specific contexts, and its cognitive approach to the motivational intention of language production can be seen as a fertile area of investigation for the language of trauma at this level of analysis.

Pragmatically, the language of trauma in courtroom discourse can be represented by its use of different pragmatic tools. Witnesses may employ certain speech acts, flout cooperative maxims, or subtly navigate communication to convey underlying emotions. However, regarding the study's limitations, it is suitable to include pragmatic markers in the analysis of the selected data.

3.2.1 Pragmatic Markers

Pragmatic markers (PMs), also called discourse markers, are "a class of short, recurrent linguistic items that generally have little lexical import but serve significant pragmatic functions in conversation" (Andersen, 2001:39). Archer, Aijmer and Wichman (2012, Pp, 74-5) define PMs as small words like (well, you know, I mean) that help making speech coherent and establish or maintain relations between interlocutors in conversations.

However, Archer, Aijmer and Wichman (2012, p. 76) state that it is quite impossible to give a comprehensive list of all the PMs, though it is more logical to mention the most common ones. In light of this, PMs can be inserted in a conversation as single words such as (anyway, cos, fine, good, great, like, now, oh, ok, right, well, etc.), or they can be phrasal elements (and things like that, or sort of), or clausal elements such as (I mean, I see).

As for their function, PMs have multiple functions according to the context in which they occur. Generally speaking, PMs' function can either be textual or interpersonal:

1 .Textual Function

- Initiating or closing a discourse
- Serving as a filler or turn-holding device
- Marking a boundary in the discourse, e.g. indicating a topic or topic shift
- Signalling transition between one element and the other in the discourse

• Repairing one's own discourse (Archer, Aijmer and Wichman, 2012, p. 78).

2 .Interpersonal Function

PMs are used to express emotions, reactions and attitudes to the hearer. They also convey shared knowledge, and solidarity, or to hedge what is said in order to express tentativeness or politeness. However, PMs are multifunctional and their meanings heavily depend on the social and cultural context. That is to say, they depend on the speakers' identity and power. Archer, Aijmer and Wichman (2012, p. 81) illustrate the complex nature of the PMs' function in the use of 'well'. For instance, 'well' expresses power and solidarity if it is used by the cross-examiner in the courtroom. On the contrary, it expresses a defensive attitude when used by the witness in the courtroom.

4. Data Description and Analysis

4.1 Data Collection and Description

Considering the nature of the study's main objectives, the selected data consists of courtroom testimonies during the direct examination of the well-known televised trial of the Menendez brothers. The testimonies found in the selected trials are seen as solid ground for the study's analysis since they are regarded as authentic data representing spontaneous, unscripted language. Even though there is a possibility that the witness may be trained to answer expected questions, most of the answers and the stories narrated are spontaneous, unprepared reactions.

The trial is uploaded from the CourtTV platform. The selected trial is first carefully scripted and then the selected data is organised into extracts to be analysed under the eclectic model of the study.

The courtroom trial involves the testimony of Lyle and Erik Menendez, two brothers who faced charges for the killing of their parents, José and Kitty Menendez. The court took place in the Los Angeles County Superior Court. The trial began on July 20th, 1993 and ended with a hung verdict in January 1994, then the retrial verdict of life in prison took place in 1996. In this high-profile trial, the two brothers are assumed to be traumatised according to their claim of being victims of long-term sexual and emotional abuse. The testimony to be analysed is by Lyle Menendez, born in 1968, who claims years of emotional abuse and domestic violence. The second testimony in the Menendez trial is introduced by Erik Menendez, born in 1970, who claims sexual and physical abuse from his father. Due to the huge amount of data from the trial testimonies, the study selects only Lyle's testimony on the murder. The second reason for choosing one witness rather than both brothers, is that both narrate approximately the same incidents, and the results would be similar and redundant. Accordingly, one extract is selected for the analysis and is transcripted in the data analysis.

4.2 Data Analysis

Governed by pragmastylistic investigation, the phonological layer in trauma discourse carries great interpretive value to the current analysis. Especially since the data is spoken and the phonological aspect must have played a significant role in the representation of trauma. Momentarily pauses, hesitation, disfluencies, and filled pauses reflect the speaker's traumatic burden. As suggested by Tissi (2000) and Stenström (2011), such phonological markers do not merely disrupt fluency; rather, they signal hesitation, affective overload, and attempts at cognitive reorganisation. Pauses and disfluencies, if not overlooked, may offer significant insights into the traumatic representation in language and the speaker's emotional state and cognitive

burden during the recall of distressing events. In light of this, this part of the analysis sheds light on the recurrence of phonological anomalies across all the selected extracts of the Menendez Brothers' courtroom.

4.2.1 Lyle Menendez Selected Testimony

Extract 1: The Murder

[00:36:29:09]**Lyle Menendez:** I ran upstairs to tell my brother that it was happening now, and that they were going to. This was it. And they were going to kill us. And I met him at the top of the stairs. He hadn't gone in his room. And I remember sort of being surprised by the fact that he was at the top of the stairs. And I said something to him along those lines that it's happening and they're going to kill us. And he said something about that he wasn't [3] going to wait for dad in his room and that he they we had to, you know, we had to do something. I don't remember exactly who said what, but [5] at some point, I said, I'm going to get my gun. And he said he would get his gun.

[00:37:19:22]**Defendant Attorney:** And how did you feel then؟

[00:37:24:21]**Lyle Menendez:** Just, [4] it's hard to describe how I felt, but I like I had to run as fast as I could, and my life was sort of slipping away and that we were going to die.

[00:37:42:06]**Defendant Attorney:** Did you go get your gun? And was it in the guest house the gun was in ؟

[00:37:49:29]**Lyle Menendez:** Yeah, it was in my guest house and I ran. I got it and I ran. I ran to where the [2] we had the ammunition.

[00:38:07:25]**Defendant Attorney**: Did you load your gun؟

[00:38:20:29]**Lyle Menendez**: I just grabbed a bunch of ammunition out of the box, and I was giving him [3] ammunition, and we were just loading as fast as possible.

[00:38:33:25]**Defendant Attorney:** Do you remember how many shells you loaded؟

[00:38:38:04]**Lyle Menendez:** I don't remember. I remember pulling out all kinds of shells and [6] just loading my gun [3] and having shells on me.

[00:38:52:00]**Defendant Attorney**: What did you do then؟

[00:38:54:29]**Lyle Menendez:** We ran. I guess my brother had, I guess, got outside through the study doors because He ran toward the the study window door, and you had to kind of go over this. I think you had to. We went over the little concrete thing. It was over to the side of the door on the left, and we went through that door and we just sprinted to **theee** room hoping to **uh** get there when they were not expecting us. **Um**, My brother got there first, and just we just burst through the doors and [5] I started firing.

[00:39:45:00]**Defendant Attorney**: Was the room lit؟

[00:39:48:28]**Lyle Menendez:** No, it was dark. The lights were out, and I just I remember seeing.[5] I don't remember too well, but I remember seeing shadow right off to the right and[3] my brother over to the left. He ran off into that direction, and I started firing immediately in the direction of [3] whoever was standing. I remember **um** who I realized was my dad at some point sort of coming forward in my direction. So he was standing and and [5] I remember firing directly at him. I believe he fell back.

[00:41:05:01]**Defendant Attorney:** Was there a lot of firing going on؟

[00:41:07:10]**Lyle Menendez:** Yeah, my brother was. I guess firing. And **uhh** there were, there was things shattering and the noise was phenomenal. And [3] we fired lots of, you know, many, many times. And there were just glass and you could hear things breaking and you could hear the ringing noises from the booms, and there was the smoke from the guns, and it was basically just chaos. And I really didn't know who was firing at

who and what was going on. I just was doing what, you know, firing my gun. And that's really that's I just was trying to think about that and not freezing. I could see sort of behind my dad, really barely, but could see somebody moving. Seemed like moving in the direction of where my brother should be. And **uh** [5] So I reloaded. (started crying)
[00:43:28:27]**Defendant Attorney**: You reloaded? And what did you do after you reloaded؟
[00:43:50:17]**Lyle Menendez:** (on tears) [7] I ran around and shot my mom.
[00:43:55:11]**Defendant Attorney:** Where did you shoot her؟
[00:44:00:18] **Lyle Menendez:** [18] I just reached over and I shot her close.

1. Silent Pauses

Unfilled pauses in Extract (1) by Lyle Menendez are transcripted as square-bracketed numbers indicating the length of the pauses in seconds during the testimony. These UPs are classified into short (2-3 sec), medium (4-6 sec.), and long (7+ sec.). The statistical analysis of Extract 1 shows that short and medium pauses ranked first equally with 43.7% and long pauses occurred with a frequency of 12.5% as the following figure shows:

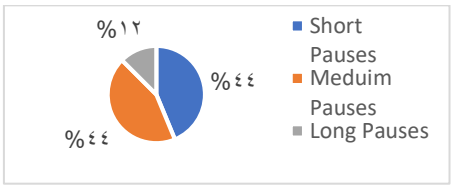

Fig (2): Pauses' length frequencies in Lyle's Speech

The examination of the raw data reveals that the more severe the trauma is, the longer the UP will be, which is obvious in: *"[18] I just reached over and I shot her close*", when Lyle pauses while trying to relive the trauma of killing his mother. It appears that he faces difficulty in articulating the suitable words to describe his actions. In addition to the extract above, Lyle's testimony contained more than 15 minutes of total UPs, and their length gets higher at points of critical events such as his father's abuse, the cruel swimming courses, the murder, etc.

2. Filled Pauses and Lengthenings

In the above extract, the speaker uses different fillers such as "um and uh" in different positions. It is evident that whenever the speaker is hesitant or nervous, a filler is used, whether a filled pause with "um", "uh" or a verbal filler like "well, just, etc.". Interestingly, in the above extract, Lyle uses 5 filled pauses, highlighted in bold, and only one lengthening "theee". In other parts of the trial, however, Lyle uses more lengthenings nd filled pauses, and again these occur in moments of severe difficulty in articulating the right words for narrating a traumatising incident.

3. Pragmatic Markers as Verbal Fillers

The search for verbal fillers, which in turn are pragmatic fillers, the study finds the speaker's heavy reliance on "you know" and "just" specifically. These verbal fillers have multiple functions, most of which are to lessen the intensity of the action as a defence strategy, hesitation, or a cognitive load indicator. Their function depends on their position in the sentence. The following table summarises the uses of verbal fillers as well as the FPs used in the extract above:

Verbal Filler & FPs	Position	Immediate Context	Function
you know	Mid-sentence	Urging the need to act before being attacked	needs to be approved
just	Mid-sentence	Describing the feeling of slipping away	Intensifier: emotional proximity
We had the [2]	Pause mid-sentence	Describing ammunition storage	Cognitive hesitation: reconstructing events
um	Mid-sentence	Describing a sudden entrance into the den	Emotional buffering before recalling traumatic action
theee	Elongated vowel	Describing rushing to the room	Hesitation reflecting emotional stress
uh	Mid-sentence	Entering the room unexpectedly	Hesitation due to emotional overload
and and	Repetition of the conjunction	Describing his father's movement and subsequent firing	Emotional breakdown of coordination
uhh	Mid-sentence	Describing firing sounds and confusion	Cognitive/emotional defending
you know	Mid-sentence	Reflecting on the chaotic shooting scene	Discourse softener to manage chaotic memory
um	Mid-sentence	Recollecting the father’s movement	Emotional hesitation during critical memory
and and	Repetition of conjunction	Continuing to fire at the father	Cognitive spillover due to emotional strain
uhh	Mid-sentence	Recalling a chaotic environment	Emotional buffering
you know	Mid-sentence	Continuing the narrative of confusion	Pragmatic filler to maintain narrative flow under emotional strain
uh	Mid-sentence	Describing the movement behind the father	Cognitive hesitation

(started crying)	Parenthetical non-verbal	After reloading and continuing the attack	Emotional collapse marker
I [18]	Extremely long pause	Before admitting to shooting his mother at close range	Emotional shock and difficulty articulating action

Table (2): Detection of Ups, FPs, and fillers position and function

4. Repair: Repetition, Self-Correction, and Message-Replacement

In the selected extract, Lyle must abide by the rules of the court and answer every question directly. However, there are certain times when he pauses or repeats his words as a means to hide his cognitive stress and emotional overload. For instance, he says, "*And [3] we fired lots of, you know, many, many times*", which obviously shows his neglection of certain words that are hard for him to say and uses instead "you know" in serach for a mutual ground between him and the listeners so that he is no longer oblighed to utter the words. Across the trial, multiple self-corrections and attempts at replacements occur, which portrays the speaker as a person suffering a severe trauma.

5. Conclusion

Based on the data analysis of the selected testimony by Lyle Menendez, the study reached the following conclusions:

1. The high frequency of silent pauses, filled pauses and verbal fillers, all representing hesitation markers, and their coexistence with emotionally intense moments indicate that phonological disfluency is a core marker of trauma.
2. The data analysis indicates that repetition and repair reflect cognitive struggle and emotional stress.
3. Fillers are a distinct marker of trauma and they serve both cognitive and interpersonal functions. In other words, they are either used to soften the intensity of the emotional load or they maintain the flow of the conversation.

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Abstract in Arabic

قد يجد الناجون من سوء المعاملة صعوبة في الحديث عن تجربتهم، خاصة اذا كان من الضروري ان تروى على الملأ. وتنعكس هذه الصعوبة على لغتهم وتبلغ ذروتها عند التعامل مع أنواع شديدة من الإساءة مثل العنف او الحوادث التي تهدد الحياة او الاعتداءات او التشهير. وبناءا على ذلك ينتج المتحدثون اللذين مرو بصدمات نفسية انماطا لغوية تعكس شدة الصدمة لدى المتحدث. ومن هنا، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف المؤشرات البراغماتية الأسلوبية للتردد، وأساليب الإصلاح، واستراتيجيات التجنّب المستخدمة في الشهادات داخل قاعة المحكمة. وبالنظر إلى طبيعة أهداف الدراسة الرئيسة، فإن البيانات المختارة تتضمن الشهادات التي أُدلي بها في المحكمة أثناء الاستجواب المباشر في المحاكمة المتلفزة الشهيرة للأخوين مينينديز. وتركّز الدراسة على اللغة التي استخدمها الأخوان أثناء سردِهما لتسلسل الأحداث التي أدّت إلى قتل والديهما. ولتحقيق هذه الأهداف، تحلل الدراسة الخصائص الرئيسة للغة المنطوقة، مثل التردد، والتوقف، والتكرار، معتمدةً في ذلك على إطار تيسي (2000) الخاص بالتوقفات، ونموذج ستينستروم (2012) المتعلق بالتلعثمات اللغوية.