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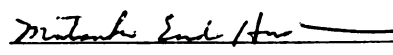
JAPANESE FILLERS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE

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JAPANESE FILLERS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE

By

Yoshiko Yamamoto

A THESIS

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ABSTRACT

JAPANESE FILLERS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTANCE

By

Yoshiko Yamamoto

The present study investigates a relation between psychological distance between speakers and the use of fillers, as well as the functions of the two most commonly used fillers, *nanka* 'like' and *ano* 'well', in Japanese conversation. Based on the data of twelve naturally-occurring conversations, the following conclusions are made: Fillers are categorized into language-production-based type and socially motivated type; some words cannot be categorized either as fillers or words in other categories; and some fillers cannot be clearly categorized into language-production-based type or socially motivated type. Speech styles affect both the frequency and the kind of fillers. More fillers occur in the polite style than in the plain style. The casual sounding filler *nanka* 'like' occurred more frequently in the plain type. Relatively formal sounding fillers, such as *ano* 'well' and *sono* 'well', on the other hand, occurred more frequently in the polite type. This supports the claim that more fillers occur when the speaker feels psychologically distant towards the addressee.

Fillers, especially have not received much attention in the past, since they are simply regarded as something that just fills potential silence. However, the present study shows that they play important roles in structuring discourse coherence in much the same way as other discourse markers.

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To my brother

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables		viii
Chapter 1	Introduction	1
	1.1. Phenomena to be investigated	1
	1.2. Hypothesis	3
	1.3. Framework	4
	1.4. Preliminaries	6
	1.4.1. Demonstratives <i>ano</i> , <i>sono</i> and <i>kono</i>	7
	1.4.2. Other category items	8
	1.4.3. Speech style in Japanese	9
Chapter 2	Review of related literature	10
	2.1. Definitions of ‘discourse markers’ and ‘fillers’	10
	2.2. Previous studies on discourse markers	11
	2.2.1. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson(1974)	11
	2.2.2. Owen (1981)	12
	2.2.3. Shourup (1982)	12
	2.2.4. Stubbs (1983)	14
	2.2.5. Shiffrin (1987)	15
	2.2.6. Holms (1986)	16
	2.2.7. Bloch (1996)	17
	2.3. Previous studies on fillers in Japanese	17
	2.3.1. Maynard (1989)	17
	2.3.2. Saito (1992)	18
	2.3.3. Cook (1993)	19
	2.3.4. Philips (1998)	19
	2.4. Summary	20
Chapter 3	Methods and procedures	22
	3.1. Data	22
	3.2. Participants	23
	3.3. Procedures	23
	3.4. Methods of analysis	24
Chapter 4	Results and analysis	25
	4.1. Total number and the rate	25
	4.2. Fillers and speech styles	27
	4.3. Fillers and questionnaire results	34
	4.3.1. Fillers and relationship between interlocutors	34

	4.3.2. Fillers and impressions of conversation and of interlocutor	35
	4.4. Environments and functions of fillers	37
	4.4.1. Environments of language-production- based fillers	37
	4.4.2. Functions of language-production-based fillers	40
	4.4.3. Environments of socially motivated fillers	40
	4.4.4. Functions of the filler <i>nanka</i> 'like'	40
	4.4.5. Functions of the filler <i>ano</i> 'well'	44
	4.5. Summary	47
Chapter 5	Conclusion	49
Appendix A		51
Appendix B		52
Appendix C		53
Bibliography		54

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Summary of <i>ano</i> , <i>sono</i> and <i>kono</i>	7
Table 2 Summary of other category items	8
Table 3 Summary of <i>-des-</i> and <i>-mas-</i> the polite style	9
Table 4 Participants	23
Table 5 Summary of filler	25
Table 6 Language-production-based type & socially motivated type	28
Table 7 Number of occurrences of each type of filler	29
Table 8 Occurrences of <i>-des-</i> and <i>-mas-</i> in each conversation	31
Table 9 Occurrences of fillers in each speech style	32
Table 10 Summary of kinds of fillers for each speech style	33
Table 11 Fillers and relationship between interlocutors	35
Table 12 Fillers and impressions of conversation and of interlocutor	37
Table 13 Summary of environments of language-production-based fillers	38
Table 14 Summary of <i>nanka</i> 'like' and <i>ano</i> 'well' with position	40
Table 15 Summary of <i>nanka</i> 'like' on Shiffrin's five planes of talk	44
Table 16 Summary of <i>ano</i> 'well' on Shiffrin's five planes of talk	47

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Phenomena to be investigated

The present study investigates a possible relation between psychological distance between speakers and the use of fillers as well as the function of fillers in Japanese dyadic conversation. Fillers have not received much attention in the past, since they are regarded as something that just fills potential silence. However, in the present study they are regarded not linguistically meaningless, rather they play important roles structuring discourse coherence in much the way as other discourse markers do.

Fillers are defined by Maynard (1989:30) as ‘a broad range of utterances that do not carry identifiable or relevant propositional meanings.’ In this study the following expressions are regarded as fillers: *ano(o)* ‘well’, *sono(o)* ‘well’, *kono(o)* ‘well’, *nanka* ‘like’, *aa* ‘uh, well’, *iya(a)* ‘well’, *maa* ‘kind of’, *ee(to)* ‘uh, well’, *uun(to)* ‘uh, well’. Many fillers have characteristics of ‘discourse markers’, which according to Schiffrin (1987:328) ‘bracket units of talk, are syntactically detachable, are used in initial position of utterance, have prosodic contours, and have no or vague meaning.’ She further defines discourse markers as ‘contextual coordinates,’ which index an utterance to the local contexts in which utterances are produced and in which they are to be interpreted.’ (p. 326) Following Philips (1998), fillers are regarded as one type of discourse marker in Japanese in this study along with certain conjunctives (e.g. *sorede* ‘and’) and interactional particles (e.g. *ne* ‘TAG QUESTION’). Detailed definitions of

fillers and discourse markers are provided in section 2.1.

The purpose of this study is to provide analysis to show that fillers have important functions as a content softener showing hesitation and/or uncertainty not to be imposing to the addressee, as an attention getter evoking the addressee's cooperation, and as a softener to reduce an abruptness of the upcoming content of the utterance. Fillers also function to signal a repair and intention to continue. It is interpreted from these functions that the fillers function to help create maximum agreeableness between the speakers as pointed out by Maynard (1989). In this sense, fillers contribute to discourse coherence.

Example (1) illustrates the use of the fillers, *uun* 'uh', *aa* 'oh', *nanka* 'like', *sono* 'well', and *maa* 'kind of' all in one utterance.

(1) R: a. **uun aa** sooyuu imi de u-watashi mo sa chuugaku de **nanka**
F F that meaning I too IP junior high in F

b. **sono maa** shukudai toka o kanarazu kake tte iu fuu ni itteru
F F homework like DO surely write QT tell

c. no ne
NOM IP

'Well, in that sense. In the junior high, I too tell (the students), well, to write down the homework.'

Although there have been a number of studies on discourse markers in both English (e.g. Fraser 1998, Schiffrin 1987, Schourup 1982) and Japanese (e.g. Hudson 1998, Ito 1995, Maynard 1989, Saito 1992, Philips 1998), the functions of Japanese fillers have yet to be thoroughly explored. Only a few studies have been carried out

on the use of English fillers (e.g. Owen 1981, Stubbs 1983) and even fewer in Japanese (Cook 1993). Cook (1993), for example, focuses only on the functions of the filler, *ano* 'well', and there have been no studies on the possible relation between psychological distance and the use of Japanese fillers. The present study examines twelve naturally-occurring dyadic conversations in Japanese both quantitatively and qualitatively. It is hoped that the findings in the present study will, in general, be useful in future research on Japanese fillers and discourse analysis. This study has two goals: (1) to identify the relation between psychological distance and the use of fillers and (2) to identify the functions of each filler in Japanese.

The organization of this thesis is as follows. The remainder of Chapter 1 outlines the hypotheses to be tested and the theoretical framework adopted. Chapter 2 summarizes previous studies on discourse markers with special attention to fillers. Chapter 3 outlines the methods and procedures of the present study. Chapter 4 discusses results and analysis. Chapter 5 offers conclusions.

1.2. Hypothesis

Based on Philips (1998) on Japanese discourse markers and also on my pilot study (Yamamoto 1997), the following hypothesis has been formed:

Hypothesis: There is a relation between psychological distance and the use of fillers; i.e. the more the speaker feels psychologically distant toward the addressee, the more frequently fillers are used.

In Philips's study, the total rate of filler marker use were much higher in formal conversation, in which the *masu* form of verbs (polite verb ending) and the *desu* form (polite form of the copula and polite ending of *i*-type adjective) are used, than in the

informal type in which the plain forms of verbs, adjectives and the copula are used. In the pilot study, the number of occurrences of sentence-final *desu* 'be', *masu* 'do', and *keigo* (polite language) expressions, which are used when the psychological distance between the speakers is distant, was compared with the number of occurrences of the fillers *ano(o)* and *sono(o)* 'well'. The results showed that the number of occurrences of the fillers was greater when the distance greater. The present study employs more fillers than just *ano(o)* and *sono(o)* 'well' with larger data and additional methods to measure psychological distance.

1.3. Framework

The framework adopted in the present study is that of discourse analysis developed by Schiffrin (1987) in which key assumptions in discourse analysis are listed as follows (p. 3):

1. Language always occurs in a context.
2. Language is context sensitive.
3. Language is always communicative.
4. Language is designed for communication.

The properties of discourse are further listed as follows (p. 6):

1. Discourse forms structures.
2. Discourse conveys meanings.
3. Discourse accomplishes actions.

She states that no one of these properties can be understood without attention to the others (p. 13). Thus, all of these properties contribute to the overall sense –to the coherence– of discourse.

Schiffrin's framework analyzing English discourse markers was adopted in this

study of Japanese fillers, which are regarded as a type of discourse marker. Fillers are regarded as discourse markers for the following reasons: First of all, fillers satisfy all the conditions for discourse markers (Schiffrin 1987:328): discourse markers bracket units of talk, are syntactically detachable, are used in initial position of utterance, have prosodic contours, and have no or vague meaning (see Section 2.1 for detailed discussion of these conditions). Secondly, the data indicates that many fillers show speaker's orientation toward both the speaker and the hearer, toward the proposition and discourse context in which the conversation is taking place. Thus, fillers can be regarded as 'contextual coordinates' as defined by Schiffrin which provides coordinates to the contexts (p. 326). Therefore, fillers are regarded as discourse markers in the present study.

Schiffrin analyzes eleven English discourse markers as contextual coordinates which operate on the following five different planes of talk (pp. 24-29):

1. Ideational Structure – deals with propositions themselves, their cohesive relations, topic relations, and functional relations.
2. Action Structure – reflects the sequence of speech acts, such as requesting, warning, and asking.
3. Exchange Structure – deals with turn-taking.
4. Participation Framework – deals with speaker-utterance relationships as well as speaker-hearer relationships.
5. Information State – focuses on cognitive capacities, including the organization and management of knowledge (what a speaker knows, what a hearer knows) and meta-knowledge (what speakers and hearer know about

each other's knowledge).

According to Schiffrin, all the discourse markers are used on more than one plane simultaneously, but on one plane primarily. For example, the primary function of *oh* is to mark information state transitions like recognize, receive, and re-evaluate information. On the other hand, *oh* also works in action structure since it marks certain action like asking for clarifications. *Well* has its primary function in the participation framework because it anchors a speaker into an interaction as a respondent. It also functions in information states, idea structures, and action structures.

Schiffrin's comprehensive approach is appropriate for this study since Japanese fillers cannot be analyzed without considering various elements of talk, such as speech acts, text cohesion, and turn taking, and they seem to indeed function on different discourse planes. By adopting Schiffrin's framework, the multifunctionality of fillers can be accounted for as was pointed out in Philips (1998). This study of Japanese fillers focuses primarily on the participation framework, since it is relevant to psychological distance between speakers.

1.4. Preliminaries

Many fillers are originally lexical items that belong to categories such as demonstrative adjectives (e.g. *ano* 'that') and indefinite noun (e.g. *nanka* 'something'). According to Schourup (1982), a lexical item becomes a filler when it is used routinely, losing its original meaning. In analyzing the functions of Japanese fillers, filler identification is often problematic because the distinction between an adjective, for

example, and a filler is not clear-cut. Shourup (1982:10-13) states: ‘many such items have come to be so closely associated with particular discourse situations that they may be considered conventional responses to these situations... The meaning of items of verbal routine is thought to differ from that of other, nonroutine items in that the literal meaning may be outshown’ (p.10). In the next two subsections words that can be categorized as both fillers and other lexical items are discussed.

1.4.1. Demonstratives *ano*, *sono* and *kono*

Ano, *sono* and *kono* are originally demonstrative adjectives in Japanese prefixed to a noun. *Ano* means ‘that (far away from both the speaker and the hearer)’, *sono* means ‘that (near the hearer)’ and *kono* means ‘this’. As demonstrative adjectives, they may point to an object (in deictic use) or refer to something previously mentioned or implied in the context (in anaphoric use). When these words are used as fillers, the last vowels are often prolonged, as in *anoo*, *sonoo* and *konoo*, respectively, but they are never prolonged in their use as demonstrative adjectives. Table 1 summarizes the differences between the demonstrative adjectives and the fillers *ano*, *sono* and *kono*.

Table 1 Summary of *ano*, *sono* and *kono*

	as demonstratives	as fillers
<i>ano</i>	<i>ano</i> + NP ‘that (far away from the speaker and the hearer)’	<i>ano(o)</i> ‘well’
<i>sono</i>	<i>sono</i> + NP ‘that (near the hearer)’	<i>sono(o)</i> ‘well’
<i>kono</i>	<i>kono</i> + NP ‘this’	<i>kono(o)</i> ‘well’

The data shows some occurrences of *ano* and *sono* which cannot be clearly categorized into either demonstrative adjectives or fillers due to the fact that it is

impossible to ascertain the two speakers' background knowledge. For example, some occurrences of *ano* can be interpreted as meaning 'that which we know in common' or just 'well'. This issue will be discussed in more detail in section 4.2.

1.4.2. Other category items

Nanka is originally an indefinite noun meaning 'something, anything', but as a filler it means 'like'. *Aa*, *iya*, *ee* and *uun* are all originally interjections, but also function as fillers. Table 2 summarizes the meanings of these words.

Table 2 Summary of other category items

	part of speech	as lexical item	as filler
<i>nanka</i>	indefinite noun	something, anything	like, kind of
<i>aa</i>	interjection	yes	uh, well
<i>iya</i>	interjection	no	uh, well
<i>ee</i>	interjection	yes	uh, well
<i>uun</i>	interjection	yes	uh, well

To categorize these words as either fillers or words in other categories, the context (time, place and what was previously discussed, among others), the turns and the accent and intonation of the word must be taken into consideration. In addition, the speaker's current information state and prior experience must be known. In order to categorize these words, the researcher must solicit information from the participants about their experience at the time of recording, which is difficult to achieve, if not impossible. Thus, it is important to recognize that there are some occurrences of words that cannot be categorized as either fillers or words in other categories. This issue will be discussed in more detail in section 4.2.

1.4.3. Speech style in Japanese

In Japanese there is a distinction between polite (or formal) and plain (or informal) speech. In the polite style, *-mas-* (the polite suffix attached to verbs) and *-des-* (the polite suffix attached to the copula and to *i-* type adjective) are used. Makino and Tsutsui (1986:42) state:

the formal style is normally used when one is NOT speaking intimately or personally with someone who belongs to his in-group. The informal style is used when one is speaking with one's own in-group... The formal style is marked by *-mas-* or *-des-* ...

Table 3 summarizes inflections of *-des-* and *-mas-* in the polite style.

Table 3 Summary of *-des-* and *-mas-* in the polite style

copula		(noun & <i>na</i> adjective)
	affirmative	negative
non-past	<i>-desu</i>	<i>-ja arimasen</i> <i>-ja nai desu</i>
past	<i>-deshita</i>	<i>-ja arimasen deshita</i> <i>-ja nakatta desu</i>
polite ending		(<i>i</i> adjective)
non-past	<i>-i-desu</i>	<i>-ku arimasen</i> <i>-ku nai desu</i>
past	<i>-katta desu</i>	<i>-ku arimasen deshita</i> <i>-ku nakatta desu</i>
verb		
non-past	<i>-masu</i>	<i>-masen</i>
past	<i>-mashita</i>	<i>-masen deshita</i>

In section 4.2., the effect of speech style on the use of fillers will be discussed.

Chapter 2

Review of previous studies

In this chapter, the definitions of the terms ‘discourse markers’ and ‘fillers’ are first provided, since fillers are regarded as a type of discourse markers in this study. Second, the properties of the discourse markers in English which are relevant to the present study are identified. Third, major studies on Japanese fillers are reviewed. The last section is a summary.

2.1. Definitions of ‘discourse markers’ and ‘fillers’

Schiffrin (1987) considers discourse markers to be important devices which contribute to discourse coherence. As briefly mentioned earlier, Shiffrin gives an operational definition of discourse markers, ‘sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk’ (p. 31), and specifies the following conditions for a discourse marker (p. 328):

1. Syntactically detachable from a sentence.
2. Commonly used in initial position of an utterance.
3. Has a range of prosodic contours, e.g. tonic stress and followed by a pause, phonological reduction.
4. Operates at both local and global levels of discourse and on different planes of discourse.

The above definition and conditions are adopted in this study as have other researchers, such as Maynard (1989), Onodera (1993), and Philips (1998).

According to Maynard (1989:30), ‘the term “filler” refers to a broad range of utterances (including independently appearing particles) that do not carry identifiable

or relevant propositional meanings. Some fillers are phrases or brief comments, as exemplified by *nanka* “well”; some are mere empty utterables such as *uuuun* “uhh”.

Maynard’s definition of the term ‘filler’ was employed in the present study.

There are several classes of discourse markers other than fillers, including connectives, adverbs and interactional particles (also called final particles), among others. Examples of connectives are *sorede* ‘and’ and *demo* ‘but’; an adverb, *yappari* ‘as I thought’; and interactional particles, *ne* ‘right?’ and *yo* ‘I’m telling you’.

The criteria researchers use to categorize words as fillers varies. For example, Philips (1998) considers certain interjections (e.g. *hora* ‘there!’) and adverbs (e.g. *yappari* ‘as I thought’) as fillers but this study focuses only on the fillers specified in section 1.1.

2.2. Previous studies on discourse markers

2.2.1. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974)

Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) were among the first to explore discourse markers in their research on turn taking. They called discourse markers ‘appositional beginnings’ and state that ‘*well, but, and, and so* are extraordinarily common...

Appositional beginnings do not reveal much about the constructional features of the sentence to follow’ (p. 32). In other words, they do not require that the speaker have a plan in hand as a condition for starting. They further state that ‘appositionals then are turn-entry devices—prestarts, just as the tag questions are exit devices—postcompleters. Appositionals and tag questions are heavily used devices, though the basis for their use is by no means self evident linguistically’ (p. 32). As is apparent in the next subsection, their study is elaborated by Owen (1981).

2.2.2. Owen (1981)

Owen gave additional consideration to Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) work on turn taking and conversational units. She (1981:108-112) analyzes the use of *well* in terms of its distribution and functions. Limiting her work to instances of *well* which preface the second pair-part of an adjacency pair, she found four types of second pair parts: 1) Assessment-disagreement, 2) question-response, 3) request-non-compliance, 4) offer-rejection. She concludes that *well* is used to preface a face-threatening act, as a strategy to signal that a face-threat is about to occur, reducing the subsequent threat. She also emphasizes that the usage of *well* can only be analyzed in terms of the units of real conversation.

As will be shown in section 4.4. Owen's account of *well* that it is used to reduce a face threat can be applied to the use of a certain type of Japanese fillers, especially when the psychological distance between the speakers is great. Her analysis focuses on the pragmatic effects of an utterance, i.e. face-threat, while this study focuses on the speakers' psychological distance. The data shows that fillers occur not only in situations when a face-threat is about to occur, but also in positive situations such as praising and congratulating. This point will be discussed further in section 4.4.

2.2.3. Schourup (1982)

While what has been predominantly discussed in the literature on discourse markers is what is displayed or observable in an utterance, Schourup (1982) paid attention to what is not displayed or observable in an utterance. He analyzed the discourse functions of particles *like*, *well* and *you know* to identify a core use for each

one in relation to indications of what is unsaid. He proposes tripartite worlds in a conversation (p. 7): 'the private world', referring to the covert thinking of the speaker; 'the shared world', referring to what is available to both the speaker and the hearer; and 'the other world' referring to the covert thinking of the other conversants which is inaccessible to the speaker. He claims that unexpressed thinking of the speaker, 'the private world', can be indicated by discourse particles (p. 18). He terms these discourse particles 'envincives', defined as follows:

Envincives: a linguistic item that indicates that at the moment at which it is said, the speaker is engaged in, or has just then been engaged in, thinking; the envincive item indicates that this thinking is now occurring or has just now occurred but does not completely specify its content.

He then states that 'envincives are capable of two functions in conversation: they establish the conversational relevance—but not the details—of undisclosed thinking by the speaker, and they can mark the real time moment of occurrence of that thinking in order to establish the timeliness of a speaker's reaction' (p. 21).

According to Schourup (p.64-66) *well* is an envincive with a particular basic use, and this fact is crucial to understanding the various ways in which *well* is used in conversation. He proposes that the core use of *well*, as the basic envincive use, is to indicate that the present speaker is now examining the contents of the private world. He examines the use of *well* in conversation by attempting to answer two questions: (1) Where in the sequential development of a particular sentence, utterance, exchange, conversation, etc. , does *well* occur? and (2) why does the speaker in that particular context and sequential position choose to draw attention to his/her examination of the

private world? He concludes that the primary use of *well* is an envincive indicating consultation by the speaker of his/her current thoughts (p. 91). A separate secondary function depends on particular discourse environments.

Although Schourup's approach may seem rather mentalistic, his unique analysis of discourse particles as envincives is useful in this analysis of Japanese fillers. Shourup's analysis relates what is covert to what is overt in ongoing conversation and identify each particle has a single core use with a local function in conversation. This is useful in the present study, as there is a relation between the use of fillers and psychological distance between the speakers as represented by the choice of polite or plain endings and such psychological distance maybe interpreted as 'what is unsaid.'

2.2.4. Stubbs (1983)

Stubbs (1983:68-70), building on Sacks, et al (1974), analyzes discourse particles such as *well, now, right, OK, anyway, you know, I see, hello, byebye*. He lists the following characteristics of these particles:

1. They have no propositional meaning or truth value,
2. are essentially interactive and restricted to spoken language, and
3. when used utterance-initially, they relate utterances to each other or to mark a boundary in the discourse.

He then examines *well* to illustrate his point. The functions of *well* as an utterance-initial particle include a general introductory function (*Well, what shall we do?*) and also indicate an indirect answer when it is used after a question, claiming relevance although admitting a shift in topic. He states that, although *well* and related items are not well accounted for, one of their main functions is to act as boundary markers indicating the

boundaries of units larger than clauses or sentences.

Stubbs analyzes *well* from the perspective of discourse analysis, stating that sentence grammars cannot sufficiently account for all the phenomena in discourse. In other words, certain phenomena involving particles, or discourse markers and others can only be explained with reference to the unit at the clause level or above, which is the position taken in the present study.

2.2.5. Schiffrin (1987)

Shiffrin (1987) is an influential work on discourse markers, integrating much of the previous work. Since the outline of her work is presented in Section 1.3, this subsection briefly reviews the functions of three discourse markers, *well*, *y'know* and *I mean*, in order to illustrate her analysis.

According to Schiffrin (1987: 102-127), *well* is a response marker, which is possible wherever the options offered through a prior utterance for the coherence differ from an upcoming response. Thus, its main function is in the participation framework of discourse. At the same time, *well* also operates in the information state and the action structure since conversants can respond to anything in talk which temporarily disrupts their expectations, for example, an unexpected utterance and a request with no comply.

Y'know and *I mean* are characterized by Schiffrin as markers that operate on both the information and the participation planes. While *I mean* focuses on the speaker's own adjustments in the production of his/her talk, *y'know* proposes that a hearer adjusts his/her orientation toward the reception of another's talk. Thus,

y'know works primarily in the information state and secondarily on the participation framework, while the functions of *I mean* are reverse. Shiffrin's method analyzing these discourse markers will be applied to the analysis of Japanese fillers in section 4.4.

2.2.6. Holms (1986)

Holms (1986) examines, from a sociolinguistic perspective, the distribution and functions of the expression *you know* in the speech of men and women. She categorizes *you know* into two distinct functions which are then classified into a number of subcategories (p. 7). In Category I, *you know* expresses speaker's confidence or certainty. It comprises two subcategories: 1) *you know* expresses the speaker's certainty and confidence about the addressee's relevant background knowledge and anticipated response, and 2) it positively reassures the addressee of the validity of the proposition, where its function is emphatic. In Category II, *you know* expresses uncertainty of various kinds. It also comprises two subcategories: 1) it expresses the speaker's uncertainty or lack of confidence concerning the addressee's attitudes and likely response, and 2) it expresses the speaker's uncertainty regarding the linguistic encoding of the proposition.

The distribution and the functions of *you know* as analyzed above are similar to those of fillers like *ano* 'well', *eeto* 'well' and *nanka* 'like' in Japanese as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Holm's Categories I and II are useful in the present study, since it can be assumed that when the speaker's certainty toward the proposition is higher, the psychological distance he/she feels toward the addressee may be shorter, and that when it is lower, the psychological distance may be greater. Holm's notions

of uncertainty and certainty are related to Shiffrin's 'participation structure', since they deal with speaker-utterance and speaker-hearer relationships.

2.2.7. Bloch (1996)

From a sociologist's point of view, Bloch (1996) investigates the ways in which emotions are expressed in narratives and conversations. She analyzes the narratives and conversations for a systematic relationship between 'paralinguistic markers', on one hand, and 'positive and negative self-feelings' on the other. In her analysis, fillers are regarded as markers of 'negative self-feeling', since they normally index uncertainty and block the flow of speech. Bloch's notion of 'negative self-feeling' is relevant to psychological distance in this current study. In other words, when the psychological distance between the speakers is greater, the speaker's negative self-feeling may be greater; however, Bloch's contention that fillers 'normally block the flow of speech' is too simplistic, because Japanese fillers commonly seem to help, not block, the flow of speech. These points will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

2.3. Previous studies on fillers in Japanese

2.3.1. Maynard (1989)

Maynard (1989) presented a pioneering study in the field of Japanese conversation analysis. According to her (p.30), 'the frequent use of fillers marks a noticeable feature of conversational discourse.' She categorizes fillers into two groups: (1) language-production-based fillers, and (2) socially motivated fillers. The first type appears when smooth speech is either cognitively or productively hindered. They are typically accompanied by meta-communicational comments, such as *uunto*, *are*, *hora*

‘Uhh...that’. She further states that ‘fillers also create an atmosphere in which the speaker shows some hesitancy and less certainty about the message content and, therefore, gives an impression of being less imposing’ (p. 31). She points out that fillers, as well as other devices, play an important role in achieving maximum agreeableness to the recipient, ensuring interpersonal rapport. She also states that the frequent use of final particles and fillers makes certain that the interpersonal feelings are intact when the semantic content is conveyed to the other interactant (p. 31).

While Maynard’s (1989) observations on the interactional effects of fillers seem valid, she does not use naturally-occurring data nor does she identify what should be considered as fillers, the environments in which they occur, or their frequency. Thus, there is a need for an empirical study to understand the facts about fillers in Japanese, which is the main purpose of the present study.

2.3.2. Saito (1992)

Saito (1992) analyzes *nanka* ‘like’ as a discourse marker in Japanese conversation. According to her, *nanka* has several functions: (1) utterance softener, (2) a turn initiator, and (3) a filler [language-production-based filler] (p. 58). Although she claims that the occurrence of *nanka* may be sensitive to the degree of how relaxed the speaker feels, among other factors, she does not elaborate on it, much less present quantitative data. In section 4.2, the number of filler occurrences will be compared quantitatively with those of polite expressions, which reflect the psychological distance the speaker feels toward the addressee. Japanese fillers of both language-production and socially motivated types, including *nanka* ‘well’, based on the data will also be

analyzed.

2.3.3. Cook (1993)

Cook (1993) analyzes the use of *ano* 'well' as a filler in terms of how it indexes politeness. Five uses of the filler *ano* based on her data (one family conversation and one Diet interpellation) are listed as follows: (1) conversation starter or turn-initiator, (2) attention getter, (3) proposition highlighter, (4) new topic starter, and (5) disagreement softener (p. 23). Cook concludes that the function of *ano* is to obtain the addressee's cooperation by evoking the feeling that the interlocutors are on the same side, which comes from its deictic meaning as demonstrative adjective, with respect to the subsequent utterance. In this way, *ano* is used as a politeness marker which aligns both the speaker and the addressee (pp. 22-31).

Although Cook (1993) uncovered interesting facts regarding *ano*, its functions need to be further examined. For example, she interprets *ano* as a positive politeness marker, which seems to suggest that she regards it only as what Maynard (1989) calls a 'socially motivated filler'. In the present analysis, however, certain instances of *ano* can actually be regarded as what Maynard calls a 'language-production-based filler'. A more detailed discussion on this matter will be provided in Chapter 4.

2.3.4. Philips (1998)

Philips (1998) presents a comprehensive analysis of discourse markers in Japanese, classifying them into three types including connectives, fillers and interactional particles. Fillers are analyzed in Philips' study in terms of the degree of formality, as well as age, gender and speech genre. She finds that the rates of filler are

much higher in formal speech than in informal speech, and that types of fillers were also influenced by the degree of formality (p. 113). In her study, speech genre (interviews, conversations, and narratives) does not influence the use of the fillers (p. 119). She concludes that Japanese fillers help to create a socially and culturally expected interactional atmosphere by showing hesitation and uncertainty (p. 261).

In the present study, 'formality' is interpreted in terms of the psychological distance between speakers, i.e. formal style is used in conversation when the psychological distance is great. Other means of measuring psychological distance in addition to the ones in Philips' study are employed. In other words, the answers on the questionnaire which the subjects filled out regarding the closeness toward the interlocutor and their impression of the conversation and of the interlocutor, in order to measure psychological distance are employed in the present study.

2.4. Summary

In this chapter definitions of discourse markers and fillers were provided. Previous studies on fillers and discourse markers in both English and Japanese were also reviewed. A summary of previous studies on discourse markers in English is as follows: Sacks, et al (1974) analyzes discourse markers as 'turn-entry devices'; Owen (1981) analyzes *well* as softening device for a face-threatening act; Shourup (1982) analyzes discourse markers as 'envincives'; Stubbs (1983) analyzes *well* as a boundary marker; and Shiffrin (1987) analyzes discourse markers as 'contextual coordinates' which contribute to the discourse coherence. Two studies on discourse markers in English from sociolinguistic and sociological perspectives were also reviewed.

The previous studies on Japanese fillers are summarized as follows: according to Maynard, Japanese fillers are devices to achieve maximum agreeableness to the recipient; Saito (1992) observes that *nanka* 'kind of' occurs when the speaker feels relaxed; Cook (1993) analyzes *ano* 'well' as a politeness marker; and Philips (1998) analyzes Japanese fillers as markers which contribute interactional atmosphere.

While Saito's (1992) and Philips' (1998) studies on Japanese fillers treat fillers in relation to the speaker's psychological state, no study has been conducted on a possible relation between psychological distance between speakers and the use of fillers. It is hoped that the present study will be useful in understanding Japanese fillers.

Chapter 3

Methods and procedures

3.1. Data

The procedures for data collection in the present study are based on those by Maynard (1989:15-18). To examine the actual language use, naturally-occurring conversations are used as the data. Twelve dyadic conversations between native speakers of Japanese were audiotaped for the present study. The participants were aware that they were being audiotaped, but the particular focus of the present study was not revealed. Some participants are close friends with their interlocutors while others are just acquaintances or total strangers. Pairs varying in the degree of closeness were included in order to measure psychological distance. The participants were asked to talk about two topics including their childhood dreams and their views on the differences in education in the U.S. and Japan. The participants were free to choose additional topics. Most of the conversations took place in the participants' houses and at public places, such as coffee shops or their places of work. The participants were asked to refrain from eating or drinking during the taped conversation since it might affect the occurrences of fillers. The researcher was absent during the conversations, each of which lasted about 15-30 minutes. At the end of each conversation the participants completed a questionnaire regarding their backgrounds, the relationship with the interlocutor and their impressions of the interlocutor and of the conversation that had just taken place. The latter two are intended to measure the psychological distance toward the interlocutor and the

participants' comfort level during the conversation (see Appendix B for the questionnaire).

3.2. Participants

Twenty-one women participated in this study, all of whom were native Japanese speakers. The participant were paired up with the conversation partner whom the researcher assigned. Three participants participated in two conversations. The present study does not concern gender differences in the use of fillers. The occupations of the participants varied. Some were students, some were housewives, and others were teachers. They ranged in age from their early twenties to early forties. Out of twelve, one conversation was recorded in Japan while the rest were recorded in the U.S. Table 4 summarizes the participants' profiles.

Table 4 Participants

identification	age	occupation	identification	age	occupation
1-YM	41	student	12-TH	37	housewife
2-IS	35	housewife	13-MR	27	teacher
3-OT	26	student	14-IY1	32	teacher
4-MS1	22	student	15-FY	31	teacher
5-ON	31	student	16-IM	31	teacher
6-JY	39	housewife	17-IT	30	student
7-MS2	35	student	18-AY	29	student
8-OM	37	student	19-IY2	25	student
9-NH	37	housewife	20-OY	23	student
10-TM	41	housewife	21-SS	28	student
11-TS	37	housewife			

3.3. Procedures

After collecting the data, the first ten-minute segment of each conversation was

fully transcribed. Although the first two-to-three-minute segment is commonly excluded by other conversation analysts, it is purposely included in the present study in order to verify discomfort of conversing between pairs of strangers or acquaintances due to psychological distance and which was reflected in the occurrences of fillers. For transcription, Maynard's (1989) conventions were adopted (see Appendix A). In total, 120 minutes of the conversations were transcribed and analyzed.

3.4. Methods of analysis

The number of occurrences of each filler was totaled and the frequency of each filler per 1000 words ('the rate' hereafter) was calculated by dividing the number of occurrences of each filler by the number of words uttered, and then multiplying the result by 1000.

The data was analyzed in terms of the following characteristics:

- (1) The total number and the rate of the occurrence of each filler;
- (2) the relation between the frequency of fillers and the speech styles (polite vs. plain);
- (3) the relation between the frequency of fillers and psychological distance between interlocutors as reflected in the questionnaire results;
- (4) the environments in which fillers occur; and
- (5) the function(s) of fillers.

Chapter 4

Results and analysis

4.1. Total number and the rate

Among all fillers, *nanka* ‘like’ was used most frequently, followed by *ano(o)* ‘well’. Of 608 tokens, 252 (41.4%) were *nanka* ‘like’ and 213 (35.0%) were *ano(o)* ‘well’. These two constituted over 75% of all fillers in the data. The least frequently used filler was *kono* ‘well’. Table 5 summarizes the number and the rate of fillers.

Table 5 Summary of filler

filler	meaning	number of tokens	percentage ¹	rate/1000 words ²
<i>nanka</i>	like	252(16)	41.4%	12.1
<i>ano(o)</i>	well	213(6)	35.0%	10.2
<i>sono(o)</i>	well	35(6)	5.8%	1.7
<i>maa</i>	kind of	33(1)	5.4%	1.6
<i>ee(e)</i>	uh	26(3)	4.2%	1.2
<i>eetto</i> ³	well	19(0)	3.1%	0.9
<i>uun(to)</i>	well	16(3)	2.6%	0.8
<i>iya(a)</i>	well	14(3)	2.3%	0.7
<i>aa</i>	uh	0(13)	0%	0
<i>kono(o)</i>	well	0(1)	0%	0
total		608(52)	100%	29.2

As mentioned in section 1.4., there are quite a few occurrences of words (52 tokens) in the data that cannot be clearly identified as fillers. These ‘fuzzy’ words appear in the parentheses in the ‘number of tokens’ column of Table 5. In order to classify them into fillers or other categories with confidence, it would have been necessary to obtain

¹ do not include fillers in () ² do not include fillers in () ³ includes variants *eto*, *eeto*, and *etto*

additional information from the participants about what they meant at the time of recording, which was impossible. Moreover, a close examination of the context (time, place and what was previously discussed, among others), the turns, the accent and intonation of the word would have also been necessary. Therefore, these words are left uncategorized in the present study.

Example (2) illustrates the occurrence of *ano* ‘well’ that cannot be categorized as either a filler or a demonstrative adjective in its anaphoric use.

- (2) T: a. Demo **ano** juken to wa zenzen chigau ja n.
 but F? entrance exam with Top totally different TAG
- b. juken no jukenbenkyoo ja nai ja n zenzen
 entrance exam GEN study for exam COP NEG TAG totally
- c. **ano** tsumekomu n ja naku te motto minna de...
 F? cram NOM COP NEG and rather everyone with
- d. ...**ano** juken ne **ano** gaa tte tsumekomu tte yuu
 F? entrance exam IP F? QT cram QT
- e. **ano** aa yuu noo no tsukai kata shi nai yo ne.
 F? that way brain GEN use way do NEG IP IP

‘But, it’s totally different from taking an entrance exam in Japan, isn’t it? It’s not like studying for an entrance exam. It’s not cramming, rather, it’s like (thinking) together... Students here use their brain differently from students in Japan’

In (2), all the occurrences of *ano* can be interpreted as fillers, filling pauses, or as demonstrative adjectives, pointing out something in the context (in this particular example, pointing out something in common in interlocutors’ background knowledge).

4.2. Fillers and speech styles

Maynard (1989:30) categorizes fillers into two groups based on the motivation for their use: (1) language-production-based fillers, and (2) socially motivated fillers.

She states:

the first kind appears when smooth speech is either cognitively or productively hindered. They are typically accompanied by meta-communicational comments, such as *uunto*, *are*, *hora* 'Uhh...that'... As frequently used is the second category... These fillers may be employed to fill a potential silence. Uttering mere sounds makes it possible to create the impression that verbal interaction is carried on without cessation, thereby avoiding potential embarrassment.

Both language-production-based fillers and socially motivated fillers were observed in the current data, although some fillers were difficult to classify into one category or the other⁴. The criteria used to categorize fillers as one of the language-production-based types is as follows: (1) when a filler appears with stammering or faltering, including when the speaker corrects him/herself ('self repair' hereafter); and (2) when a filler appears with other phrases that means the speaker is trying to recall the words, *nan da kke* 'what was it?' or *nan te yuu n da kke* 'what do you call it?', etc. All other fillers not categorized as the language-production-based type are categorized as the socially motivated type. Although all fillers can potentially function both as language-production-based types and socially motivated types depending on the context, in the present data, only *nanka* 'kind of', *ano(o)* 'well', and *eeto* 'well' were used as both types. Table 6 summarizes the kinds of fillers for both types.

⁴ Categorization of fillers can be further studied.

Table 6 Language-production-based type & socially motivated type

categories	fillers
language-production-based	<i>ano, nanka, eto</i>
socially motivated	<i>ano(o), sono(o), nanka, iya(a), maa, ee(e), eetto⁵, uun(to)</i>

The examples below illustrate the occurrence of the language-production-based filler *ano* ‘well’, shown in bold. (3) and (4) are the examples of the criteria (1) and (2), respectively.

- (3) T: a. Nde nanka ma **ano** shi- **ano** ronbun.
and F PF PF PF thesis

‘And like, well, uh, the thesis.’

- (4) M: a. Ano saa **ano** ba- **ano** nani butai ka nanka no bakku de
F IP PF PF what stage Q something GEN back at

b. odoru dansaa tte yuu ka saa.
dance dancer QT say Q IP

‘Well, uh, uh, it’s like the dancers who dance behind the singer on the stage.’

A detailed discussion on the environment in which language-production-based fillers occur will be presented in section 4.4.

Example (5) illustrates an occurrence of a socially motivated filler, shown in bold.

- (5) T: a. **Anoo** moo daigaku wa de rarete daigakuin
SF already college TOP graduate HON graduate school

b. ni sugu desu ka
to right after COP Q

‘Uh, did you already graduate from college and go to graduate school right after that?’

⁵ includes variants *eto, etto, eeto*

There are occurrences of fillers that cannot be categorized into either the language-production-based type or the socially motivated type, just like the words that cannot be categorized as fillers or as words in another category. It is impossible to categorize them with confidence unless the researcher asks the participants about what was happening in the speakers mind right at the moment when the filler was uttered, which was impossible to do. Thus, it is apparent that categorizing fillers into one of the two types is not simple and clear-cut.

Of the 608 tokens in the current data, 23 belong to the language-production-based type, 6 to the ‘fuzzy’ type, and the remaining, 579, to the socially motivated type.

Table 7 summarizes the occurrences of all types of fillers.

Table 7 Number of occurrences of each type of filler

type of filler	tokens
socially motivated filler	579(95.2%)
language-production-based filler	23(3.8%)
“fuzzy” filler	6(1.0%)
total	608(100%)

Example (6) illustrates the ‘fuzzy’ filler that cannot be categorized as either types, shown in bold.

(6) S: a. Aa fagotto a soo ka.
oh bassoon oh so Q

b. Are dooyatte oto dasu n desu ka.
that how sound make NOM COP Q

M: c. Are **anoo** are wa ooboe to koko wa kuchi n toko
that PF? that TOP oboe as here TOP mouth GEN part

d. wa onnaji de tada ookii dake da to omou n desu
TOP same and just big only COP QT think NOM COP

e. kedo.

but

‘Oh, bassoon, that’s what it is. How do you make a sound with it?’
‘Its mouth is same as oboe’s. It’s just bigger than that, I think.’

In (6) above, the speaker repeated the word *are* ‘that’ (in line c) and the topic marker *wa* was repeated three times with different phrases (in line c-d), which shows hindering. However, no false start or self repair was observed. In this case, the filler *ano* ‘well’ can be interpreted two ways. The speaker was either physically searching for a word or a phrase in what follows (language-production-based), or the speaker was searching for the appropriate words or phrases in the following part of the sentence not to be imposing to the addressee with a social motivation. It seems that the environment to judge this filler as either a language-production-based type or as a socially motivated type is not strong enough.

The rates of fillers in each speech style are now examined. It is reasonable to assume that the more nervous or uncomfortable the speaker is, the more language-production-based fillers occur, since discomfort hampers smooth speech. Thus, to analyze a relation between psychological distance between the speakers and the use of fillers, it was decided that the number of occurrences of both language-production-based fillers and socially motivated fillers should be used.

Now the relation between the occurrence of fillers and the speech style used is examined. The data from the present study showed that the subjects conversing with a person who they met for the first time talked predominantly in the polite style, as expected. Example (7) illustrates the occurrence of the polite form, shown in bold.

(7) S: a. De okosan wa moo ookikute irassharu n **desu ka.**
and child TOP already big HON NOM COP Q

M: b. Kodomo wa ne ano nanasai desu.
 child TOP IP F seven years old COP

‘Is your child already old enough?’
 ‘She is, well, seven years old.’

In 4 out of 12 conversations the polite style was used predominantly, and in all of these cases the interlocutors were strangers, meeting each other for the first time. The rate of occurrence of the polite form was calculated by dividing the number of occurrences of *-des-* and *-mas-* by the number of sentence final position which *-des-* and *-mas* can possibly occur. Table 8 summarizes the occurrences of the polite forms.

Table 8 Occurrences of *-des-* and *-mas-* in each conversation

relationship	conversation ID	no. of <i>-des-&-mas</i> ⁶	rate of polite form
strangers	7	150	99.8%
strangers	8	130	98.9%
strangers	12	39	98.5%
strangers	3	79	96.2%
best friends	13	3	0.2%
acquaintances	10	2	0.1%
best friends	4	2	0.1%
friends	2	0	0%
close friends	5	0	0%
acquaintances	6	0	0%
friends	9	0	0%
close friends	14	0	0%

As can be seen in Table 8, the pairs in which interlocutors were strangers used polite forms predominantly. These four conversations were classified as the ‘polite type’ and the remaining conversations as the ‘plain type’. Table 9 compares the occurrences of fillers in each speech style.

⁶ *-des-* and *-mas-* in quotation is not included

Table 9 Occurrences of fillers in each speech style

	polite type	plain type
total number of words occurred	7119	13683
number of fillers	263	345
rate of filler / 1000 words	36.9	25.2

Table 9 shows that the rate of fillers is higher in the polite style conversation (37/1000 words) than in the plain type (25/1000 words). Thus, it is concluded that the speech styles do affect the occurrence of fillers. In other words, more fillers occur in the polite style conversation, in which psychological distance towards the addressee is assumed greater than one in the plain style. I speculate this is because the speaker must think more carefully about what to say and how to say it so that fillers occur frequently thus sounding less imposing and avoiding potential embarrassment.

The kinds of fillers that were used also varied in the two speech styles. The casual sounding filler *nanka* 'like' occurred more frequently in the plain type. Relatively formal sounding fillers, such as *ano* 'well' and *sono* 'well', on the other hand, occurred more frequently in the polite type. A similar result was obtained by Saito (1992). In her study, *nanka* 'like' occurred more frequently in same gender group which speakers were more relaxed than mixed gender group. Table 10 summarizes the kinds of fillers used in the polite and plain styles.

Table 10 Summary of kinds of fillers for each speech style

		polite type		plain type	
total no.	of words	7119		13683	
filler	meaning	tokens	rate/1000wrds	tokens	rate/1000wrds
<i>ano(o)</i>	well	118	16.4	95	6.9
<i>sono(o)</i>	well	18	2.5	17	1.2
<i>kono(o)</i>	well	0	0	0	0
<i>nanka</i>	like	57	8.0	195	14.3
<i>iya</i>	well	6	0.8	8	0.6
<i>aa</i>	uh	0	0	0	0
<i>maa</i>	kind of	16	2.1	17	1.2
<i>ee(e)</i>	uh	25	3.4	1	0.1
<i>eetto</i> ⁷	well	16	2.2	3	0.2
<i>uun(to)</i>	well	7	1.0	9	0.7
total		263	36.9	345	25.2

Example (8) and (9) illustrate the use of fillers, shown in bold, in each speech style. (8)

and (9) are the examples of polite and plain style, respectively.

(8) Y: a. **Anoo** kookoo no toki no chiri no jikan ni
F high school GEN time GEN geography GEN class in

b. **ano** suraido suraido no shoo ga atte sore ga
F slide slide GEN show SUB have that SUB

c. nyuujiirando datta n desu.
New Zealand COP NOM COP

‘Well, in geography class when I was in high school, well, they had a slide show and it was about New Zealand.’

(9) S: a. Nichibee no kyooiku no chigai **nanka**
Japan and US GEN education GEN difference F

b. konaida batorukuriiku no hoshuukoo de nee
the other day Battle Creek GEN Japanese School at IP

c. kakaseta no yo **nanka** kookoosee ni.

⁷ includes variants *eto*, *etto*, *eeto*

write-had NOM IP F high school student P

‘Well, the other day, well, I had high school students write about the differences in education between Japan and U.S. at Japanese School of Battle Creek.’

4.3. Fillers and questionnaire results

In this subsection, the relation between the use of fillers and questionnaire results is examined. Immediately after recording the conversations, participants filled out a questionnaire regarding their backgrounds, the relationship with the interlocutor, and the impressions of the conversation and of the interlocutor (see Appendix B). Answers were coded as numbers, and the relationship between interlocutors, the participants’ comfort level during the conversation, and the psychological distance toward the interlocutor were examined.

4.3.1. Fillers and relationship between interlocutors

Two participants were paired up with their best friends, two were with close friends, two were with just friends, two were with acquaintances and four were persons who they met for the first time. Fillers occurred most frequently in the conversation between strangers, which confirmed the hypothesis that the more the speaker feels psychologically distant from the addressee, the more frequently fillers are used. Fillers occurred least frequently in the conversation between acquaintances, however, contrary to the expectation that it would be between best friends. In general, a clear relation between the frequency of fillers and the closeness between the interlocutors was not observed. This may be due to the fact that factors other than the closeness between the interlocutors had a stronger affect on the occurrence of fillers. For

example, the pair in conversation 8, even though the interlocutors met for the first time, seemed to enjoy the conversation very much because they found many things in common in their background. Therefore the answers by both speakers regarding the comfort level were high. Thus, it is not accurate to automatically assume that the relative closeness of people who meet for the first time is always low. Furthermore, the interlocutors' interpretations of the terms 'acquaintance', 'friend', 'best friend' and so forth, which they were asked to use to describe their relationship with the interlocutor in the questionnaire, may have varied among the participants. Table 11 summarizes the relation between the number and the rate of fillers used and the closeness between interlocutors, as described by the participants.

Table 11 Fillers and relationship between interlocutors

conversation ID	relationship	no. of filler	rate/1000 words
7	strangers	78	43.8
13	best friends	56	41.9
3	strangers	80	41.4
14	close friends	64	39.9
10	acquaintances	47	34.8
8	strangers	69	32.9
12	strangers	36	27.48
5	close friends	50	27.46
4	best friends	45	21.1
9	friends	27	16.0
6	acquaintances	31	15.7
2	friends	22	12.9

4.3.2. Fillers and impressions of conversation and of interlocutor

Answers from the participants regarding the impression of the conversation and of the interlocutor were coded as numbers. The numbers in the answers on the questionnaire were added to measure the impressions (12 - most relaxed and 60 - most

nervous). The fillers occurred most frequently in the conversation of the pair who felt relatively relaxed and regarded the conversation pleasant, rather than in the conversations of the pair who were most nervous and regarded the conversation as unpleasant. This was contrary to the expectation. The fillers occurred least frequently in the conversation of the pair whose comfort level was in the middle range among all the participants. Again, a clear relation between the use of fillers and the impression of the conversation and of the interlocutor was not observed. This may be due to the fact that factors other than the impressions of the conversation and of the interlocutor affected the occurrence of fillers. For example, one participant who used *nanka* 'like' most frequently did so no matter what the topic was, talking to her best friend. This participant had a habit of saying *nanka* 'like'. It is also possible that the interlocutors' impression may not have been accurately reflected on the answers in the questionnaire even though 'this information will be kept strictly confidential and please answer honestly' is marked on the questionnaire. First of all, if a participant felt nervous, she may not have revealed it on the questionnaire, and even if she had expressed it, the degree chosen may not have been accurately reflected on the questionnaire. Secondly, interpretations of the terms 'the conversation went smoothly', 'I was relaxed' and 'the conversation was pleasant' and so forth, which the participants described their impressions of the conversation and of the interlocutor in the questionnaire, may have varied among the participants. Table 12 summarizes the relation between fillers and the impressions of the conversation and of the interlocutor in order of decreasing degree of discomfort.

Table 12 Fillers and impressions of conversation and of interlocutor

conversation ID	impression	no. of filler	rate/1000 words
6	43	31	15.7
3	24	80	41.4
14	21	64	39.9
10	20	47	34.8
9	20	27	16.0
2	18	22	12.9
5	17	50	27.46
12	16	36	27.48
7	15	78	43.8
8	13	69	32.9
4	13	45	21.1
13	12	59	41.9

The results show that the hypothesis indicating there is a relation between psychological distance and the use of fillers, more specifically, that the more the speaker feels psychologically distant from the addressee, the more frequently fillers are used is partially supported. Although a relation between the frequency of fillers and speech styles was observed, (i.e. in the polite style, more fillers occurred), between the frequency of fillers and the relationship between the interlocutors was not. Nor was a relation between the frequency of fillers and the impressions of conversation and of interlocutor.

4.4. Environments and functions of fillers

In this subsection, the environments in which fillers of both language-production-based type and socially motivated type occur are first examined. Second, the functions of fillers are examined.

4.4.1. Environments of language-production-based fillers

Of the 608 tokens, 23 were language-production-based fillers (See Section 4.2.).

Ano ‘well’, *nanka* ‘like’, and *eeto* ‘well’ were used as language-production-based fillers. All of them were turn-medial, not turn-initial or final. Categories were divided into self repair and groping for a word, and each category was divided further into several subcategories. Language-production-based fillers occurred with self repair (17 tokens 74%) most frequently, and second most frequently when the speaker was groping for a word (6 tokens 26%). Within the category of self repair, fillers occurred with false starts most frequently (12 tokens 52%), followed by the occurrences with wrong choices of words (3 tokens 13%). Some fillers occurred with the word *nani* ‘what’ when the speaker was groping for a word (6 tokens 26%). Table 13 summarizes the environments in which language-production-based fillers occurred.

Table 13 Summary of environments of language-production-based fillers

category	category	subcategory	tokens
self repair	with false starts	before false starts	7 (30%)
		after false starts	5 (22%)
	after <i>ja nai</i> ‘not’		2 (9%)
	with wrong choices of words	before wrong choices of words	2 (9%)
		after wrong choices	1 (4%)
groping for a word	with <i>nani</i> ‘what’	before <i>nani</i> ‘what’	6 (26%)
		after <i>nani</i> ‘what’	0
total			23 (100%)

Example (10) illustrates the occurrence of a filler (shown in bold) before a false start.

(10) S: a. Kisha ni naritakatta. ***Nanka*** tetsuga- koo porishii tte yuu
writer P become-wanted to PF this policy QT say

b. ka sorenari no tetsugaku ppoi no ga
Q in its own way GEN philosophy like NOM SUB

c. kaitearu janai desu ka.
written TAG COP Q

‘I wanted to become a magazine reporter. Well, you can tell their philoso-

like policy or philosophy is written (in the article), can't you?'

Example (11) illustrates the occurrence of a filler (shown in bold) after a false start.

- (11) Y: a. De **sonnani shi- ano** shinkenni kangaete nai kara
and so much PF seriously think NEG because
- b. kodomo no koro no yume.
child GEN time GEN dream

'And because I didn't take my childhood dream se-, well, seriously.'

Example (12) illustrates the occurrence of a filler (shown in bold) before *nani* 'what'.

- (12) T: a. Demo mishigan de yuki suki toka **anoo** nani koo
but Michigan in snow like QT PF what this
- b. donyorishiteru sora ga suki toka yuu hito imasu kara
gloomy sky SUB like QT say person there is because

'But there are people who like snow and well, what, a gloomy sky.'

Example (13) illustrates the occurrence of fillers (shown in bold) before wrong choice of words.

- (13) Y: a. **nanka** oto **nanka** gakufu gakuten gakufu yomu no.
PF note PF score musical grammar score read NOM

'It's like reading musical notes, well, musical score, musical grammar, musical score.'

Example (14) illustrates the occurrence of a filler (shown in bold) with *ja nai* 'not'.

- (14) S: a. aa aa aa **nanka** kanatteru ja n batoru ja nakute **ano**
ah ah ah F come true TAG Battle COP NEG PF
- b. ringo de.
Ringo at

'Your dream came true at Battle, not, uh, at Ringo School.'

4.4.2. Functions of language-production-based fillers

In the data, language-production-based fillers *ano* ‘well’, *nanka* ‘like’, and *eeto* ‘well’ primarily occur in the following contexts: (1) before and after self repair (14 tokens 61%); (2) while groping for a word (9 tokens 39%). The main function of a language-production-based filler is a floor-holding device, signaling that (1) the speaker is correcting him/herself and/or that (2) the speaker is searching for a word and signaling his/her intention to continue.

4.4.3. Environments of socially motivated fillers

The environments of socially motivated fillers are now reviewed. Of 608 tokens, 579 were socially motivated fillers (see Section 4.2.). *Ano(o)* ‘well’, *sono(o)* ‘well’, *nanka* ‘like’, *iya(a)* ‘well’, *maa* ‘kind of *ee(e)* ‘uh’ *etto* ‘well’ and *uun(to)* ‘well’ were used as socially motivated fillers. In what follows, the environments of *ano(o)* ‘well’ and *nanka* ‘like’ are examined since these two constitute over 75% of all filler usage in the data. *Nanka* ‘like’ occurred turn-initially (12.1%), medially (82.5%) and finally (5.3%), while *ano(o)* ‘well’ occurred only turn initially (9.2%) and medially (90.8%). Table 14 summarizes the occurrences of socially motivated fillers *nanka* ‘well’ and *ano(o)* ‘well’ with respect to the position.

Table 14 Summary of *nanka* ‘like’ and *ano* ‘well’ with position

	turn initial	turn medial	turn final	total
<i>nanka</i> ‘like’	30 (12.1%)	203 (82.5%)	13 (5.3%)	246 (100%)
<i>ano(o)</i> ‘well’	17 (9.2%)	168 (90.8%)	0	185 (100%)

4.4.4. Functions of the filler *nanka* ‘like’

The functions of *nanka* ‘like’ are first examined because it was the most

frequently used filler in the data. *Nanka* ‘like’ is originally an indefinite noun meaning ‘something’ and constituting of *nani* ‘what’ and the question particle *ka*. Even when it is used as a filler, the original meaning plays a role of showing uncertainty. Saito (1992:57) analyzes the functions of *nanka* ‘like’ as an utterance-softener, a turn initiator, and a filler (equivalent to language-production-based filler in this study). Philips (1998:136) analyzes *nanka* ‘like’ as a place holder, prefaces a change in an utterance, to get the addressee’s attention, and a marker of hesitation.

Nanka ‘like’ in the present study primarily occurred in the following contexts: (1) prefacing the main point of utterance; (2) prefacing the contents of an utterance; and (3) initiating a turn. The contexts (2) and (3) confirm Saito’s observation. The contexts (1) and (3) confirm Philips’. The main function of *nanka* ‘like’ thus seems to soften the content, showing hesitation and/or uncertainty, and trying to sound nonimposing to the addressee. Examples below illustrate these three contexts.

First of all, *nanka* ‘like’ is often used to preface the main point of an utterance, 41 tokens (17%), as shown in example (15) in bold.

(15) M: a. Jissai wa sore sore bakkari ja nai n da yo
reality TOP that that only COP NEG NOM COP IP

b. tteyuu no o **nanka** jissaitekini oshienaito saa sore ga
QT NOM ACC SF realistically teach-must IP that SUB

c. gakkoo jan.
school TAG

‘They have to teach (in America) that, well, in reality. You can’t be just that (happy-go-lucky). That’s school’s responsibility, right?’

In (15), the main point of the utterance is that schools in the U.S. must teach reality.

The *nanka* ‘like’ in line b functions as a content softener, toning down a content of strong criticism.

Secondly, *nanka* ‘like’ is often used to preface the contents of an utterance other than the main point, 34 tokens (14%), as shown in example (16) in bold.

- (16) S: a. Aa soo da ne shoogakkoo tsutte mo ne imaichi.
yes do COP IP elementary school QT P IP not sure
- b. Nan datta kana watashi wa **nanka** yoochien no **nanka**
what COP Q I TOP SF kindergarten GEN SF
- c. owari no koro ni shoorai nani ni naritai desu ka
end GEN time at future what P become want to COP Q
- d. toka tte e kaite kudasai nante iwarete oboeteru n
QT picture write please QT say-PASS remember NOM
- e. sore ni **nanka** hanaya ni naritai toka itte **nanka**...
besides SF flower shop P become want to like say SF

‘Yes, it’s hard to remember what my childhood dream was when I was in elementary school. Well, like, at the end of my kindergarten days, they asked me what I wanted to become in the future, and asked me to draw a picture about it. I remember saying that I wanted to be, like, a florist, like...’

In (16), the main point of the utterance is that the speaker desired to become a florist, as indicated in line e. The occurrences of *nanka* ‘like’ other than the one prefacing the main point, (in lines b and e, shown in bold) either show the speaker’s hesitancy to discuss her own personal past experience or are used as content softeners in order to appear uncertain and not seem imposing.

Finally, *nanka* ‘like’ is often used at the beginning of a new speaker’s turn, 30 tokens (12%), shown in example (17), in bold.

- (17) S: a. Iya demo koo yatte **nanka** mitsukete iku n ja nai.

no but this do something find go NOM COP

T: b. **Nanka** yabai yo.
 SF trouble IP

‘I think you will find something along the way.’
‘Like, I’m in trouble.’

In (17), after S’s turn, T begins her turn with *nanka* ‘like’. *Nanka* ‘like’ occurs in turn-initial position not to sound abrupt when initiating a turn. In addition, *nanka* ‘like’ in line b shows the speaker’s hesitancy to discuss her own personal trouble and tone down the content of the strong word *yabai* ‘in trouble’.

Nanka ‘like’ is often accompanied by other softening devices (94 tokens 38%), such as *toka* ‘kind of’, *mitai* ‘like’, *tari* ‘such as’, *kanji* ‘feel like’, and interactional particle *ne* ‘right?’. This also supports my contention that the main function of *nanka* ‘like’ is as a content softener, showing hesitation and/or uncertainty not to be imposing.

In this subsection three contexts were examined in which *nanka* ‘like’ was used: (1) prefacing the main point of an utterance; (2) prefacing the contents of an utterance (other than main point); (3) initiating a turn. The main function of *nanka* ‘like’ is a softener, showing hesitation and/or uncertainty not to be imposing to the addressee. The data in this study confirms Philips’ (1998) observation that *nanka* ‘like’ is a hesitation marker enlisting the addressee’s cooperation.

The following discussion examines how *nanka* ‘like’ operates on the five planes of talk in Shiffrin’s (1987) model (see Section 1.3 for the five planes). *Nanka* ‘like’ separately or simultaneously operates on the participation framework, expressing

the speaker's hesitancy toward the addressee and/or uncertainty towards the content of the utterance. *Nanka* 'like' also operates in the exchange structure and the action structure proposed by Shiffrin since it occurs turn-initial and it prefaces opposition (1 token 0.4%). *Nanka* 'like' also operates in the information state with its function as a language-production-based filler. Table 15 summarizes how *nanka* 'like' operates on Shiffrin's five planes of talk.

Table 15 Summary of *nanka* 'like' on Shiffrin's five planes of talk

five planes	information state	participation framework	ideational structure	action structure	exchange structure
function	secondary	primary		secondary	secondary

4.4.5. Functions of the filler *ano* 'well'

The functions of *ano* 'well', which was the second most frequently used filler in the data are examined in this discussion. *Ano* 'well' is originally a demonstrative adjective meaning 'that (far away from both the speaker and the hearer)'. Cook (1993:23) lists the functions of *ano* 'well' as follows: to start a turn or a conversation; to get an the addressee's attention; to highlight a proposition; to start a new topic; and to preface a disagreement.

Ano 'well' in the present data occurred primarily in the following contexts:

- (1) prefacing the main point of utterance; (2) prefacing a new topic ; (3) initiating a turn.

The main function of *ano* 'well' is an attention getter, soliciting the addressee's cooperation. It has a secondary function as a content softener to avoid abruptness of the upcoming content. Examples (18), (19) and (20) illustrate three contexts *ano* 'well' occurred. First, *ano* 'well' is often used prefacing a main point of utterance, 38 tokens

(21%), as in example (18) in bold.

(18) S: a. **Ee de uchi no syujin jitsu wa anoo** kotoshi no
F and my GEN husband actually TOP SF this year GEN

b. natsu de nihon ni kaeru n desu.
summer at Japan to return NOM POL

‘As a matter of fact, well, my husband will return to Japan this summer.’

In (18), the main point of the utterance is that the speaker’s husband is going back to Japan. *Ano* ‘well’ in line a functions as an attention getter, signaling the importance of upcoming content in the utterance in order to solicit the addressee’s cooperation. At the same time *ano* ‘well’ also functions as a softener in order to reduce embarrassment when the speaker discusses her personal matter.

Secondly, *ano* ‘well’ is often used prefacing a new topic, 21 tokens (13%), as shown in example (19) in bold.

(19) S: a. **Ano** kono mae kara gimon ni omotteta koto ga aru
SF this prior since suspect P think thing SUB have

b. n desu kedo.
NOM COP but

M: c. Hai
yes

‘Well, I have a question I’ve been wanting to ask.’
‘Yes.’

In (19), S starts a new topic prefaced by *ano* ‘well’ in line a. *Ano* ‘well’ functions to get an attention and to signal the importance of upcoming content in the utterance in order to solicit the addressee’s cooperation, as well as to tone down the abruptness of bringing up the new topic.

Finally, *ano* ‘well’ is often used at the beginning of a new speaker’s turn, 17 tokens (9 %). Example (20) illustrates the occurrence of *ano* ‘well’ used as a turn initiator, shown in bold.

(20) Y: a. **Ano** figyasukeeto no senshu ni naritakatta.
SF figure skate GEN player P become want to

T: b. Sonna koto yutta kke.
such thing say P

‘Well, I wanted to become a figure skater.’
‘Did you tell me that before?’

In (20), Y starts her turn with *ano* ‘well’ in line a. *Ano* ‘well’ functions as an attention getter and to signal the importance of upcoming content in the utterance in order to solicit the addressee’s cooperation, as well as a softener to reduce embarrassment when the speaker discusses her past experience.

Ano ‘well’ is often accompanied by other attention getting and emphasizing devices (9 tokens 5%). An attention getting device is any word that has an effect of soliciting an addressee’s attention, such as *hora* ‘look’ and an interactional particle *sa(a)* ‘look’. An emphasizing device is any word that has an effect of emphasizing, such as *sugoi* ‘very’ and *hontoni* ‘really’. *Ano* ‘well’ never occurred in turn-final position (see Table 14), which is probably due to the fact that the speaker has no need to get the addressee’s attention at the end of his/her turn. These facts support the claim that the main function of *ano* ‘well’ is to get the addressee’s attention.

In this subsection three contexts were examined in which *ano* ‘well’ was used: (1) prefacing a main point of utterance; (2) prefacing a new topic ; (3) initiating a turn. The main function of *ano* ‘well’ is as an attention getter, soliciting the addressee’s

cooperation, with a secondary function as a content softener in order to reduce an abruptness of the upcoming content of the utterance.

The following discussion examines how *ano* ‘well’ operates on the five planes of talk in Shiffrin’s (1987) model (see Section 1.3 for the five planes). *Ano* ‘well’ operates in the participation framework, getting attention from the addressee and softening the upcoming content of utterance in order to reduce an abruptness. *Ano* ‘well’ also operates in the exchange structure and the action structure, since it occurs turn-initial and it prefaces request (2 tokens 1%). *Ano* ‘well’ also operates in the information state with its function as a language-production-based filler. Table 16 summarizes how *ano* ‘well’ operates on Shiffrin’s five planes of talk.

Table 16 Summary of *ano* ‘like’ on Shiffrin’s five planes of talk

five planes	information state	participation framework	ideational structure	action structure	exchange structure
function	secondary	primary		secondary	secondary

4.5. Summary

In this chapter, the relation between psychological distance between speakers and the use of fillers, as well as the functions of the two most commonly used fillers, *nanka* ‘like’ and *ano* ‘well’ in Japanese conversation were examined. The findings are as follows: Fillers that function both as language-production-based type and socially motivated type are *ano*, ‘well’, *nanka* ‘like’ *eto* ‘well’; some words cannot be categorized either as fillers or words in other categories; and some fillers cannot be clearly categorized into language-production-based type or socially motivated type. Speech styles affect both the frequency and the kind of fillers. More fillers occur in

the polite style than in the plain style. The casual sounding filler *nanka* 'like' occurred more frequently in the plain type. Relatively formal sounding fillers, such as *ano* 'well' and *sono* 'well', on the other hand, occurred more frequently in the polite type. This shows that more filler occur when the speaker feels psychologically distant towards the addressee.

Fillers have important functions as a content softener, showing hesitation and/or uncertainty not to be imposing to the addressee, as an attention getter, soliciting the addressee's cooperation, and as a softener to reduce an abruptness of the upcoming content of an utterance. Fillers also function as language-production-based filler, signaling a repair and intention to continue. It is interpreted that the fillers function to help to create maximum agreeableness between the speakers.

Fillers *ano* 'well' and *nanka* 'like' operate primarily in the participation framework in Shiffrin's (1987) model. With functions operating on the other three planes of talk, the information state, the action structure, and the exchange structure, fillers contribute to discourse coherence.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The present study investigated a relation between psychological distance between speakers and the use of fillers, as well as the functions of the two most commonly used fillers, *nanka* 'like' and *ano* 'well', in Japanese conversation. Based on the data of twelve naturally-occurring conversations, the following conclusions are made: Fillers are categorized into language-production-based type and socially motivated type; fillers that function as both types are *ano* 'well', *nanka* 'like' and *eto* 'well'; some words cannot be categorized either as fillers or words in other categories; and some fillers cannot be clearly categorized into language-production-based type or socially motivated type. Speech styles affect both the frequency and the kind of fillers. More fillers occur in the polite style than in the plain style. The casual sounding filler *nanka* 'like' occurred more frequently in the plain type. Relatively formal sounding fillers, such as *ano* 'well' and *sono* 'well', on the other hand, occurred more frequently in the polite type. This supports that more fillers occur when the speaker feels psychologically distant towards the addressee.

The filler *nanka* 'like' has function as a content softener, showing hesitation and/or uncertainty not to be imposing to the addressee. The filler *ano* 'well' has functions as an attention getter, soliciting the addressee's cooperation, and as a softener to reduce an abruptness of the upcoming content of an utterance. The fillers *ano*, 'well', *nanka* 'like' and *eto* 'well' function as language-production-based fillers, when a repair occurs in order to show the speaker's intention to continue. It is interpreted

from these functions that the fillers help to create maximum agreeableness between the speakers, as Maynard (1989) optly pointed out.

The fillers *nanka* 'like' and *ano* 'well' operate primarily in the participation framework in Shiffrin's (1987) model. With functions operating on the other three planes of talk, the information state, the action structure, and the exchange structure, fillers contribute to discourse coherence.

Future studies may examine the relation between the use and kinds of fillers and the speaker's age. In the present study younger participants tended to use more fillers, but no claims is made in terms of such a relation. Gender comparisons may also be profitable.

Fillers, especially have not received much attention in the past, since they are simply regarded as something that just fills potential silence. However, the present study shows that they play important roles in structuring discourse coherence in much the same way as other discourse markers.

APPENDIX A

1. Transcription methods

The present study follows the method employed in Maynard's *The Japanese conversation* (1989).

2. List of abbreviations

ACC	accusative
COP	copula
DAT	dative
F	filler (PF: language-production-based filler SF: socially motivated filler)
GEN	genitive
IP	interactional particle (often called 'sentence-final particle')
NEG	negative
NOM	nominalizer
P	particle
PAS	Past
PASS	passive
POL	polite auxiliary verb
Q	question particle
QT	quotation marker
SUB	subject marker
TOP	topic marker

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire (This will be strictly confidential, so please tell the truth.)

Name: _____ Age: _____

1. Where in Japan are you from? _____

2. How long have you been living in US?

___ 1 year or less ___ 2 years or less ___ 3 years or less ___ 4 years or less ___ 5 years or more

3. Are you married? ___ Yes ___ No

If Yes, what language do you speak with your spouse? _____

4. Among all you speak, how much Japanese do you speak a day?

___ 0-20% ___ 20-40% ___ 40-60% ___ 60-80% ___ 80-100%

5. How long have you known your conversation partner?

___ today is the first day ___ 1 year or less (how many months? _____ mo.)

___ 2 years or less ___ 3 years or less ___ 4 years or less ___ 5 years or more

6. How would you describe the relationship with your conversation partner?

___ just met ___ acquaintance ___ friend ___ close friend ___ best friend

7. How did the conversation go? (1- strongly agree \longleftrightarrow 5- strongly disagree)

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| a. The conversation went smoothly. | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 |
| b. I was relaxed to talk. | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 |
| c. I enjoyed talking with my conversation partner. | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 |
| d. I was nervous in the conversation. | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 |
| e. I was uncomfortable in the talk. | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 |
| f. The atmosphere of the conversation was not pleasant. | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 |

8. Is there anything you would like to add to the above with regard to how you felt about the conversation?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Explanation of the project

This is linguistic research on conversation in Japanese. You will be asked to participate in a 10-15 minute conversation with your conversation partner assigned by the researcher. This conversation will take place anywhere convenient for you. Japanese language will be used. The conversation will be recorded on a cassette tape and later may be used as data for my master's thesis. The topic of conversation will be assigned by the researcher. However you are fully entitled to choose what to talk and what not to talk on the topic. No part of the conversation will be personally intrusive in nature. All results will be treated with strict confidence and you will remain anonymous in any report of research findings. On request and within these restrictions results will be made available to you. In accordance with Michigan State University policy on research involving human subjects, the conversation will not be harmful to you in any way. The participation is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you agree to participate in this project, please sign and date on the lines below. If you have any concerns regarding this project, please contact Yoshiko Yamamoto at 1537 B Spartan Village, East Lansing, MI 48823, (517) 355-2957.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

I have read the explanation of the project above and understand its content. I agree to participate in this project.

Name (print)

Signature

Date

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