



Research Paper

Linguistic Chameleon: Syntactic Functions of “Kuan” (Cebuano language filler) in Social Media Conversations

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Abstract

The study explored the syntactic functions of “kuan” in social media conversations and in the logs, reels, and shorts of various Cebuano content creators. Taking into account related studies on fillers, the researchers discovered that there is still no known study of its syntactic functions. Hence, the researchers will analyze the syntactic functions of filler words, specifically the Cebuano filler “kuan” used by content creators. Understanding the syntactic functions of these words contributes to the body of language research by offering some insights into people’s communication patterns on social media. This contributes to our understanding of the versatility of “kuan” within the context of social media use. The researchers will be using content analysis to examine how Cebuano content creators used “kuan” in their logs, shorts or reels and analyze their syntactic functions. The researchers have concluded that “kuan” has various syntactic functions: subject, verb, object, subject complement and object complement.

Keywords: *Syntactic Functions; Fillers; Content Creators; Vlogs; Reels; Shorts*

INTRODUCTION

Language is more than just transmitting thoughts and ideas; it also reflects one’s culture and values, as well as one’s personality (Mooney & Evans, 2018). Having a greater grasp of the intricacies of language and its various functions in society is crucial (Mooney & Evans, 2018). It is necessary for people to communicate regularly. According to Robertson Cooper, people are all about “the conversation”. Conversing is one way that people can convey their thoughts and feelings to one another. However, in some cases when people forget a word that they are trying to say, they use certain words to fill the gap. These words are called “fillers”. The filler serves no purpose other than to allow the speaker some time to think. According to Baalen (2001 as cited in Fatimah, 2017), filler words are utterances that can be removed because they only fill the silence when speaking like “uhm”, “like” and “you know”.

Filipinos also use fillers. However, in Filipino conversations, some fillers not only fill the gaps but also carry meaning depending on its place in a sentence, particularly the Cebuano filler “kuan”. “Kuan” is being used as a filler or a replacement in social media, especially on Facebook, Youtube or Tiktok. It can fill gaps or pauses in conversations, for example, “My heart is very kuan....the best” or “Taga-i kog kuan bi. Pinaskuhan.” “Kuan” is used to give the speaker some extra time to organize his or her thoughts. However, this word not only fills the gaps but also has different functions depending on the sentence structure.

Words have various functions (Australian Government Style Manual, 2024). It can be a noun, verb, adjective and so on and so forth. However, the role they play depends on how it is used in the sentence. Below are some examples from the Style Manual:

1. *You can face penalties for using a still to make alcohol without the proper license.* [‘Still’ is a noun.]
2. *The dinghy was floating in still water.* [‘Still’ is an adjective.]
3. *The people stood still during the national anthem.* [‘Still’ is an adverb.]

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This rule also applies in syntax. Syntactic functions refer to the functional relationships of words within a sentence. It describes the relationship of the words in a sentence if it acts as the subject, verb or object. For example, "Ayesha bakes cookies." *Ayesha* is the one who does the action; therefore, it is the subject, the word *bakes* is the verb, indicating action, and *cookies* is the object that receives the action. Sentence structure, on the other hand, pertains to the arrangement of words to create a clear sentence or content. Therefore, the syntactic function of a word (subject, verb or object) or its meaning depends on its syntactic structure (Nordquist, 2019).

Moreover, the pragmatic function of a word refers to its role in communication, taking into account the context and the intention of the speaker. It explores how words are used to achieve certain goals in a given situation, rather than only their literal meaning (Araneta & Ingilan, 2019). For instance, "It's very hot in this room. Can you *crack* a window?" In this sentence, the word "*crack*" does not literally mean to break the window but to open it so that air can enter the room. Another example is "I kind of... *you know*... like her." The role of the phrase "*you know*" is to fill the silence while the speaker is still groping for the word he wishes to express.

Furthermore, the syntactic roles of fillers such as "*kuan*" vary depending on their position or how they are used in Cebuano conversations. For instance, "Si *kuan* ba kay naglaag napud," "*Kuan*" replaced the doer of the action, making it function as the *subject* in the sentence. Another is "Ang among teacher kay si *kuan*." In this situation, "*kuan*" acts as the *subject complement*. The subject complement describes or identifies the subject in the sentence that is "Teacher". Given these sentences, the researchers therefore believe that just like a chameleon that can camouflage, changing its color to blend with its surroundings, "*kuan*" can disguise as well, blending to any syntactic functions in a sentence.

In previous years, a lot of related studies of language fillers in conversation have already been conducted. Navratilova (2015) conducted a study about the types and functions of fillers used by male and female students of the English Education Program in Argumentative Talks. Later, Kharismawan (2017) examined the types and functions of Fillers in Barack Obama's Speech and Andriani (2018) analyzed the filler types and function in spontaneous speeches by students at the English Education Study. Another study by Araneta and Ingilan entitled "*Exploring the pragmatic functions of Cebuano kuan in conversations*" in 2019 found out that "*kuan*" has several functions such as pause fillers, discourse markers or placeholders as what they have observed in conversations with local disc jockeys in a particular radio program. In 2018, the study *Semiotic Analysis of the Cebuano Particles "a" and "aw"* examined the possible semiotic meaning of the Cebuano discourse particles "a" and "aw". Suhartono (2020) analyzed pragmatic expressions in relation to academic discourse. These expressions serve as fillers for the subject, predicate, information, and politeness. The study of Araneta and Ingilan (2022) examined the formulaic expressions such as "mao," "o/oo," and "lagi," disclosing their functions in conveying agreement or disagreement in conversations. Tanangkingsing (2022) examined the pragmatic functions of versatile *unsa* 'what' in Cebuano: From interrogative pronoun to placeholder to stance marker. This study emphasized the functions of *unsa* 'what' in conversational contexts. Moreover, Nurrahmi et al. (2021) presented a study on the fillers used by students during thesis proposal presentation seminars. Recently, Gandeza (2023) investigated the language fillers used by students in conversations and found that filler words can help improve the overall speaking abilities.

Taking into account the aforementioned studies on fillers, the researchers discovered that there is still no known study of its syntactic functions. Hence, the researchers will analyze the syntactic functions of filler words, specifically the Cebuano filler "*kuan*" used by social media content creators.

Smartphones have become a "fueling shift in the communication landscape" (Lenhart et al., 2015). The engagement of global people continues to grow every day (Perrin, 2015) on social

media platforms such as Facebook, Youtube and Tiktok. Conversations on these platforms often occur through vlogs, shorts, and reels. By studying conversations on social media, we can understand how people communicate with each other and examine how words are being used on these platforms.

According to [INSG.CO](#), the Philippines is the second most active user on social media worldwide. In the 2024 news article released by Rappler, it was reported that half of all the social media users in the Philippines, ranging from 16 to 24 years old, enjoy watching vlogs per week at 50.7%, making it the highest in the world. With this substantial population of Filipino viewers, it is crucial for them to be knowledgeable of the numerous video contents being uploaded on the platform.

This study sheds light on the syntactic functions of *"kuan"* in the vlogs, reels, or shorts of various content creators. Fillers are words used to fill pauses or gaps. Understanding the syntactic functions of these words contributes to the body of language research by offering some insights into people's communication patterns on social media. By analyzing the structure of a sentence, we can bring into light the various syntactic roles that *"kuan"* can assume in social media exchanges. It seeks to identify whether this filler functions as a subject, complement, verb, or object. This contributes to our understanding of the versatility of *"kuan"* within the context of social media use. This study aims to answer the following question: What are the syntactic functions of the Cebuano filler *"kuan"* used by social media content creators in their videos?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Syntactic Functions

The role of syntactic structures in Russian prose is explored by [Martianova \(2022\)](#), especially in the works of modern authors. She emphasizes the influence of spoken language and visual elements on literary norms, as well as the emergence of new syntactic phenomena. According to [Rizzi \(2016\)](#), the notion of syntactic functions has evolved in recent years, with a change toward a greater emphasis on functional elements. This is reflected in the organization of the lexicon in the Functional Discourse Grammar, which is seen as a flexible entity ([Velasco, 2016](#)). The systematicity and functionality of the lexicon in natural languages is also highlighted, with a focus on its competence for communication, learning, and memory ([Richie, 2016](#)). [Culicover \(2021\)](#) further examined the source of grammatical functions, considering that not all languages require them and suggesting a constructional approach to capturing the correspondences between form and meaning. A range of studies have explored the use of language fillers in conversation. [Navratilova \(2015\)](#) and [Andriani \(2018\)](#) both examined the types and functions of fillers in different circumstances, with the former focusing on argumentative talks and the latter on spontaneous speech. [Kharismawan \(2017\)](#) and [Nurrahmi et al. \(2021\)](#) explored the usage of fillers in specific speech contexts, for instance, Barack Obama's speech and academic presentations. These studies collectively highlight the varied functions and contexts of language fillers in conversation. These perspectives highlight the multifaceted nature of the concept of syntactic function.

Verbal Fillers

According to [Armstrong \(2017\)](#), the syntactic structures of nonverbal predicates propose a matrix small clause structure. In addition, [Sidtis \(2018\)](#) addressed formulaic language creation, which may be pertinent to the research on verbal fillers in Cebuano. An overview of Lingua Franca's syntactic patterns is given by [Operstein \(2017\)](#), a contact vernacular that may shed light on Cebuanos' syntactic characteristics. [Kaufman \(2017\)](#) review of Austronesian language lexical category and alignment may be helpful for researching verbal fillers in Cebuano. It is unclear, though, how precisely this research applies to various languages.

Verbal Fillers in Social Media Platforms

The use of fillers in different social media platforms such as Facebook, Youtube and Tiktok has become prevalent over the past few years. Fillers are words that are used to fill silence when speaking (Sadjail, 2021), acting as a means to keep the talk going. While these words are usually used in daily conversations, it cannot be denied that these fillers, particularly the Cebuano filler “*kuan*”, are also gaining some popularity in social media due to the constant use of social media content creators and the impact they add to their videos.

Language reflects one’s culture. According to Aftab et al. (2022), it is what gives us identity and keeps us unique from others. By incorporating Cebuano fillers, content creators show their cultural authenticity or their roots. Moreover, because of its relatability, it can help them build a connection with their viewers.

Synthesis

In linguistics, the arrangement of words in the appropriate order is called syntax. Syntax studies the formation of sentences and the relationships of the words in a sentence. Each word has a certain function, and once eliminated or positioned differently, it changes the meaning of a sentence. Verbal fillers, on the other hand, have always been a part of daily conversations, especially on social media. It fills in speeches while a person is formulating thoughts and “*serve as ingredients as spoken word salads*” (Delaney, 2022). These words are also used by content creators in their vlogs, reels, or shorts. Considering that we are now in the digital era, people tend to express their thoughts on different social media platforms, especially on Facebook, Youtube and Tiktok. According to the recent poll of Statista, the Philippines is ranked 6th among the leading countries that use Facebook with 85.7 million users in 2024.

The study by Fatimah (2017) asserts that fillers are words that only fill pauses in conversation or speeches like the words “*uhm*”, “*like*” and “*you know*”. However, in Cebuano conversations, filler words are not only used to fill the gaps but also have various functions based on their placement in a sentence. In 2023, the word “*kuan*” skyrocketed on social media as it was being debuted in the international scene by a comedian-actress-vlogger during her Acceptance Speech in the Asian Artist Awards with various artists in Asia present in the annual show. It became a hot trend, and even non-Cebuano-speaking people were fond of using the term on social media. “*Kuan*” is a Cebuano word that is used as a filler to fill in gaps in daily exchanges. This word is often uttered to replace information not remembered by the speaker or sometimes as a filler to utilize while thinking of the correct details. While speech tends to be articulated and fluent, daily conversation is meant to have impediments as thoughts come out together with words uttered. This is applicable to both native and non-native speakers as they “buy time” if they are not able to remember, articulate, or express what they want to convey. Aside from filling the gaps, fillers, especially “*kuan*”, can also change their role depending on their position in a sentence. Oftentimes, it functions as a subject, verb or object. From this perspective, this study seeks to answer the following question: (1) What are the syntactic functions of “*kuan*” used by social media content creators in their vlogs, shorts or reels?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The researchers used content analysis to examine the Cebuano filler “*kuan*” that content creators used in their vlogs, shorts, or reels and analyze their syntactic functions. Content analysis is a part of the qualitative study. It is about evaluating the verbal, written, and visual communication texts that could possibly be connected to different types of data, including text, spoken words, and actions observed in studies (Cole, 1988; Stemler, 2001). The researchers believe that this design

helped provide a deeper evaluation and analysis of the syntactic functions of Cebuano fillers.

In their study entitled *“The Content Analysis of the Research Papers on Language Learning Strategies”*, Tahseen and Raewf (2018) used content analysis to explore the recent trends of language learning strategies in the ELT domain. The same research design was used in *“A Content Analysis of the Studies on the Use of Flipped Classrooms in Foreign Language Education”*, a study by Filiz and Benzet (2018). It was used to analyze 50 studies on flipped classroom instruction in foreign language education that were published from 2014 to 2018. Moreover, the study entitled *“Grappling With the COVID-19 Health Crisis: Content Analysis of Communication Strategies and Their Effects on Public Engagement on Social Media”* (Ngai et al., 2018) also used content analysis to examine 608 COVID-19 posts.

Research Instrument

In this study, the researchers used a matrix that analyzed and summarized the data in a table of columns and rows. The table includes two columns. The first column is the list of *“kuan”* sentences gathered from vlogs, reels and shorts of Cebuano content creators, highlighting the syntactic functions of *“kuan”*: subject, verb, object, subject complement or object complement. The second column is the English translation of each statement with the implied meanings of *“kuan”*. The researchers will provide a brief explanation on how the filler was used in the sentences.

Corpus of the Study

The corpus of this study is through the collection of vlogs, shorts and reels of Cebuano content creators. The corpus includes video content on various subjects such as personal experiences, academic rants, and entertainment. Purposive sampling is used in the study, with a technique in which units are selected on purpose because they have the characteristics the researchers need (Nikolopoulou, 2022 ; Brigole et al., 2023). Hence, the researchers used this technique to extract sentences with *“kuan”* in vlogs, shorts, or reels.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers utilized the publicly accessible vlogs, reels and shorts of 10 Cebuano content creators who have 500,000+ subscribers with more than 100,000 views and are active on social media from January 1, 2022 to June 10, 2024 to ensure confidentiality. Using their respective personal accounts, the researchers gathered 15 public vlogs, 12 reels and 10 shorts as their data. After gathering the videos, the data were organized by eliminating outdated and duplicated data to guarantee their suitability for analysis. The collected data will be safely protected to guarantee the confidentiality of the users and to avert infraction.

Data Analysis

After the collection of data, the researchers evaluated and analyzed the data using the Content Analysis method and categorized the *“kuan”* statements gathered according to their syntactic functions. In terms of data validation, the researchers re-read and fastidiously re-evaluated the organization of the functions of *“kuan”* in sentences and its meanings in order. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research results, the researchers sought help from language professors and native Cebuano speakers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Out of 37 videos, the researchers have compiled 52 statements of Cebuano content creators using *“kuan”* in their vlogs, reels, and shorts. The term *kuan* used in the sentences was analyzed according to its syntactic functions: *subject, verb, object, subject complement* and *object complement*.

In addition, the researchers also discovered that 60% of the content creators who often used the term “kuan” were male during the gathering procedure.

Table 1. KUAN as a Subject

SENTENCES	TRANSLATION
1. Nakaya man gani ni <i>kuan</i> , dapat ikaw pud. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Gina) did it, you should too.
2. Si <i>kuan</i> galagot ni Bebeng. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Jen) is mad at Bebeng.
3. Si <i>kuan</i> ning kaon ato. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Robert) ate it.
4. Si <i>kuan</i> man to nanugid nila gud. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Marites) told them.
5. Si <i>kuan</i> ning dako sa farm. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Alice) grew up on a farm.
6. Ninghilak ganiha si <i>kuan</i> . <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Pedro) cried earlier.
7. Si <i>kuan</i> ning adto sa balay sa iyang silingan. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Sally) went to her neighbor's house.
8. Nasakpan ni <i>kuan</i> si Chelsea nga nanuon. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Hans) caught Chelsea cheating.
9. Si <i>kuan</i> ning lag-laag napud sa Gensan. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Flor) strolled around Gensan again.
10. Gi-like ni <i>kuan</i> imong post. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (David) liked your post.
11. Gihuwat ni <i>kuan</i> iyang uyab. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Mark) waited for his girlfriend.
12. Gilaparo ni <i>kuan</i> ang kabit sa iyang bana. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (Tina) slapped her husband's mistress.
13. Si <i>kuan</i> man to ning suwat sa “Palagi”. <small>SUBJECT</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (TJ) wrote the song “Palagi”.
14. Giinom simong <i>kuan</i> imong coke. <small>SUBJECT</small>	Your <i>kuan</i> (brother) drank your coke.

NOTE: *The translation is not a word-by-word translation.*

The subject refers to the person performing the action in the sentence. In this table, it is shown that “*kuan*” is used to replace the subject in each sentence.

Table 2. KUAN as a Verb

SENTENCES	TRANSLATION
1. Kanang nag- <i>kuan</i> ka sa imong accountability ba. <small>VERB</small>	<i>Kuan</i> (take) accountability, you know.
2. I- <i>kuan</i> natin to sa memories. <small>VERB</small>	Let us <i>kuan</i> (keep) this in our memories.
3. Na <i>kuan</i> niyo ako dahil ako naman <small>VERB</small> nahihiya sa inyo.	You <i>kuan</i> (humiliated) me because I'm shy.
4. Pag- <i>kuan</i> na dira kay naa na sila. <small>VERB</small>	Get <i>kuan</i> (dressed). They're here.
5. Ayaw'g <i>kuan</i> kay delgado. <small>VERB</small>	Don't <i>kuan</i> (do) it. It's dangerous.
6. Mag- <i>kuan</i> sa mi ni Melai diri sa QC Circle. <small>VERB</small>	Melai and I will <i>kuan</i> (host) the program here at QC Circle.
7. Gani. Matingala ko nganong ako ilang <i>kuanon</i> . <small>VERB</small>	Right. I really don't know why he <i>kuan</i> (keeps on bothering) me.
8. Kabalo ka, one time, na <i>kuan</i> sila sa <small>VERB</small> akong auntie nga nag-kiss.	You what? One time, my aunt <i>kuan</i> (saw) them kissing.
9. Ma <i>kuan</i> man ko nimo nganong sige <small>VERB</small> paka'g panghilabot ana nila. Sagdi na sila.	I <i>kuan</i> (wonder) why you keep on meddling in their affairs. Ignore them.
10. Siya ang nag <i>kuan</i> ani. <small>VERB</small>	She <i>kuan</i> (started) this.
11. Aysi'g pag <i>kinuan</i> dira. Pagtarong sa <small>VERB</small> imong kinabuhi.	Don't <i>kuan</i> (fool around). Be serious with your life.
12. Nag <i>kuan</i> sila. <small>VERB</small>	They <i>kuan</i> (fought).
13. Nakalitan rapud ko nga nag <i>kuan</i> na <small>VERB</small> diay siya nga wa ko kahibaw.	I was also shocked. He <i>kuan</i> (left) without me knowing.
14. Ning <i>kuan</i> ka sa school? <small>VERB</small>	Did you <i>kuan</i> (go) to school?
15. Adtua siya didto kay nag <i>kuan</i> na to <small>VERB</small> siya sa plaza.	Go to him. He's <i>kuan</i> (waiting) at the plaza.
16. Nag <i>kuan</i> napud ka dira. <small>VERB</small>	You're <i>kuan</i> (sleeping) again.
17. Pag <i>kuan</i> na diha kay mulakaw ta ddto. <small>VERB</small>	Get <i>kuan</i> (dressed). We're going there.
18. Salamat sa pag <i>kuan</i> nako. <small>VERB</small>	Thank you for <i>kuan</i> (supporting) me.
19. Sauna ila rako gina <i>kuan</i> , karon <small>VERB</small> mupalit na sila sakong products.	Back then, they just <i>kuan</i> (criticized) me but now they buy my products.
20. Ga edit ko diri. Ayko'g <i>kuana</i> . <small>VERB</small>	I'm editing. Don't <i>kuan</i> (distract) me.

Verbs are words that convey the action or state of being. In each sentence shown in the table, all the verbs are replaced by “*kuan*”.

Table 3. KUAN as an Object

SENTENCES	TRANSLATION
1. Lagi inii-stress ng mga ‘yan kaya nagdala na ako ng <i>kuan</i> . <small>OBJECT</small>	I’m always stressed because of them so I brought my <i>kuan</i> (credit card).
2. Nanrabaho rapud. Namaligya lang <i>kuan</i> ba. <small>OBJECT</small>	They also work. They sell <i>kuan</i> (motor parts).
3. Basi bungi ‘tong nag-register simong <i>kuan</i> .	Maybe the one who registered your <i>kuan</i> (account) has a cleft lip.
4. Salamat sa imong gihatag nga <i>kuan</i> . Dako <small>OBJECT</small>	Thank you for giving me <i>kuan</i> (money). This is a big help.
5. Luoya ni Ate Precy uy. Naibog ni <i>kuan</i> . <small>OBJECT</small>	I pity Ate Precy. She’s in love with <i>kuan</i> (Badong).
6. Diba crush nimo to si <i>kuan</i> ? <small>OBJECT</small>	You have a crush on <i>kuan</i> (Jungkook), right?
7. ‘Eto name-miss si <i>kuan</i> . <small>OBJECT</small>	I’m right here missing <i>kuan</i> (Daniel).

Objects are nouns or pronouns that receive the action. In the table above, “*kuan*” serves as a substitute of the object in each sentence.

Table 4. KUAN as a Subject Complement

SENTENCES	TRANSLATION
1. Ay! <i>Kuan</i> ‘yan. <small>sc</small>	Oh! That is a <i>kuan</i> (standee).
2. You are evicted <i>kuan</i> . <small>sc</small>	You are evicted <i>kuan</i> (Robi).
3. Pero imong mama ug papa, <i>kuan</i> pud?	Your mother and father are <i>kuan</i> (<i>vendors</i>) also?
4. I’m waiting for Mama. Siya ang <i>kuan</i> . <small>sc</small>	I’m waiting for Mama. She is the <i>kuan</i> (birthday celebrant).
5. But-an kayo nga pagka- <i>kuan</i> iyang boss. <small>sc</small>	Your boss is <i>kuan</i> (a good man).
6. Giingnan bitaw tamo nga siya na ilang <i>kuan</i> . Maong ayaw’g kumpiyansa. <small>sc</small>	I told you. She is their <i>kuan</i> (aunt). Don’t be too confident.
7. Oo kay si Miss Lopez man na ilang <i>kuan</i> sa English gud. <small>sc</small>	Yes, because Miss Lopez is their <i>kuan</i> (English Teacher).

Subject Complements are words that modify the subject. In the table above, these words are replaced by “*kuan*”.

Table 5. KUAN as an Object Complement

SENTENCES	TRANSLATION
1. Ang ning paak niya kay ang iro ni Kaloy nga si <i>kuan</i> . oc	He was bitten by Kaloy's dog <i>kuan</i> (Brownie).
2. Ma <i>kuan</i> gyud ko baya niya ay. oc	She makes me <i>kuan</i> (nervous).
3. Gi abuso siya sa iyang ex nga si <i>kuan</i> . oc	She was abused by her ex <i>kuan</i> (Dodong).
4. Nakit an nako sila nga <i>kuan</i> . oc	I saw them <i>kuan</i> (happy).

Object complements are words that modify or describe the direct object in the sentence. The object complements in the sentences above are replaced by "*kuan*".

Based on the findings above, the researchers extracted 14 sentences in which "*kuan*" was used as a subject, 20 as a verb, 7 as an object, 7 as a subject complement, and 4 as an object complement, from the gathered videos. It is important to highlight that the findings are limited only to Cebuano vlogs, reels and shorts. This may only address certain syntactic functions of "*kuan*". Therefore, when generalizing the results, it is crucial to exercise extreme caution.

The number of content creators is rapidly increasing. It is undeniable that Cebuano vloggers are everywhere on the internet. Not only fellow Cebuanos watch their videos but also other non-Cebuano speaking people. Cebuanos are always fond of using "*kuan*" in conversations. Some use it as a filler, yet sometimes the word has a different function, which is why it is the goal of the researchers to unveil its various syntactic roles. It is essential to know its functions to be able to easily understand Cebuano conversations, particularly in social media.

The study on "*kuan*" was first conducted by Araneta and Ingilan in 2019. In their study, they explored the pragmatic functions of "*kuan*". They discovered that *kuan* can be used as a pause filler, discourse marker, and many more. For better understanding, the table below compares the difference between the syntactic and pragmatic functions of "*kuan*" using some findings of Araneta and Ingilan.

Table 6. Difference between Syntactic and Pragmatic Functions of "*kuan*"

Pragmatic Functions of <i>Kuan</i>	Syntactic Functions of <i>Kuan</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mutaas ang kuan demand unya mugamay ang supply maong mahal (The kuan demand increases but the supply is low, that is why it is expensive.)</i> <p>In this sentence, <i>kuan</i> is used as a <i>pause filler</i> while the speakers look for the word they were attempting to utter, and then provided the intended word.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Si kuan galagot ni Bebeng. (Kuan (Jen) is mad at Bebeng.)</i> <p>In this sentence, <i>kuan</i> is used to replace the <i>subject</i> in the sentence, <i>Jen</i>, who is the one that does the action.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Nagreply siya partner kuan daw bangus ang naa sa punong. (He/she replied partner it's kuan the fish in the pond is Milkfish.)</i> <p>In this sentence, the speaker used <i>kuan</i> as a <i>discourse marker</i> to emphasize the response of the person whom they are referring to about the kind of fish found</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I-kuan natin to sa memories. (Let's (keep) this in our memories.)</i> <p>In this sentence, <i>kuan</i> is used to replace the <i>verb</i> of the sentence that is <i>keep</i>.</p>

Pragmatic Functions of <i>Kuan</i>	Syntactic Functions of <i>Kuan</i>
<p>in her pond, which was “Milkfish”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>SPEAKER 1: Basig nag kuan diay mo dinha unsa gane tawag ana partner kana ganing? (Maybe you use (kuan) there what is the name of that partner?)</i> <i>SPEAKER 2: Crispy Fry?</i> <p>In this sentence, <i>kuan</i> is used as a <i>reference</i>, an expression that elicits information from the listeners or clarifies information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Basi bungi ‘tong nag-register simong kuan. (Maybe the one who registered kuan (account) has a cleft lip.</i> <p>In this sentence, <i>kuan</i> is used to replace <i>account</i>, the <i>object</i> of the sentence.</p>

The study of Araneta and Ingilan sheds light on the wonders behind the word. Therefore it is the aim of the researchers to uphold the versatility of “*kuan*” by looking through another lens—its syntactic functions. With these findings, the researchers concluded that “*kuan*” has various syntactic roles, as shown in the previous tables above. “*Kuan*” can be a subject, verb, object, subject complement, or object complement. Hence, the position of “*kuan*” governs its function in a sentence. This is strengthened by Ramdhani’s study in 2014. Using syntactic theory, he found that Arabic fillers can also function as a subject, verb, or object, with nouns acting as constituents that fill noun clauses. Furthermore, [Benson et al. \(2012\)](#) and [Lomotey \(2021\)](#) highlight the function of fillers in facilitating communication, serving as signals for intonational or syntactic structure and their use in cuing discourse entities and managing interaction. Collectively, these findings accentuate the multifaceted nature of fillers in conversations, extending their roles beyond hesitation or discourse markers.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to determine the syntactic functions of “*kuan*” in vlogs, reels, and shorts of various Cebuano content creators. It seeks to identify whether this filler functions as a subject, verb, subject complement, or object. According to the findings of the study, 52 “*kuan*” statements were collected and analyzed using Content Analysis.

“*Kuan*” contributes to the daily conversation of people through its syntactic functions: subject, verb, object, and subject complement. The versatility of “*kuan*” to camouflage, positively influences the conversation, particularly social media. “*Kuan*” shapes the dynamics of human communication, leading to the significance of further exploration of the role of fillers in the use and comprehension of the language. In this sense, the Cebuano speakers can immensely communicate with others by using “*kuan*”. It serves as an identity and intensifies the conversation, particularly on social media platforms.

“*Kuan*” paves the way for a contextualized manner of communicating with other people. This proves that a communicative approach is better than a prescription approach in terms of casually expressing thoughts and ideas on social media platforms. By using “*kuan*” to function as a subject, verb, object, and subject complement in conversation, it shows the effectiveness of communication rather than rigidly following the grammatical rules. This notion fits perfectly in the linguistic relativity theory, where it emphasizes how the structure of language affects the way the speakers express themselves, understand others, and comprehend society. To thoroughly grasp and explore the complete range of language fillers, such as “*kuan*”, and their syntactic functions, the following recommendations are suggested:

For Students

Students should assess “*kuan*” conversations to better understand their syntactic uses and contextual meanings. Engaging with native Cebuano speakers will help them understand the

subtleties of filler usage and improve language fluency. Additionally, participating in social media conversations will allow students to see real-life examples of “*kuan*” in use, thereby enhancing their comprehension and practical knowledge.

For Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff should integrate the study’s insights on Cebuano fillers into language courses to offer students a deeper understanding of conversational Cebuano. Encouraging students to conduct their own research on Cebuano linguistics, building on the study’s findings, will further deepen their engagement with the language. Organizing workshops that focus on practical language use, particularly the role of fillers like “*kuan*” in maintaining conversational flow, can also be highly beneficial.

For Non-Native Cebuano Speakers

Non-native Cebuano speakers should focus on the contextual usage of “*kuan*” to better understand its multifunctionality and how it is used in conversation. Immersing themselves in Cebuano-speaking environments, both online and offline, will help them observe and practice the natural use of fillers. Using Cebuano fillers in various conversational contexts will further enhance their learning experience.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

It is essential to recognize the limitations that have affected the extent and results of this study. First, the scope of collecting the data, which mainly focuses on publicly available videos of Cebuano content creators only within a particular time frame (January 1, 2022 to June 10, 2024). Second, this study primarily focuses on one language, the Cebuano language. Third, the researchers did not study conversational patterns. This method may result in a limited range of inclusivities and diversity by not including other language fillers and participants who are not Cebuano.

For Language Researchers

Language researchers should explore additional fillers in Cebuano and other Philippine languages to compare their syntactic and pragmatic roles. Conducting cross-linguistic analyses between Cebuano fillers and those in other languages can help identify universal and unique functions. Developing a comprehensive corpus of Cebuano social media conversations will facilitate further research on conversational patterns and filler usage, providing valuable data for future studies.

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