

On the topic of “um...”

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Abstract

“Um...”, as a speech disfluency, is a linguistic filler, not nominally purposeful or replete with meaning. [2] It is often used when one is found at a loss for things to say and thus, beyond all rational reason, it is somehow the topic of this paper.

Meta-Abstract

In which the author briefly spirals down a rabbit hole in which he never quite envisioned himself, in which he feels a bit out-of-place, but in which he probably does a half-decent job.

Probably.

1. Introduction

Why, hello there!

1.1. Special thanks

The author wishes to sincerely thank the Organizing Committee of SIGBOVIK 2015 for generously awarding this paper “Best Paper of SIGBOVIK 2016” in their SIGBOVIK 2016 Best Paper Raffle, as shown in Figure 1. Their positive assessment of my academic and pseudo-academic pursuits is greatly appreciated. I am indeed “buzz’n”.

1.2. Special apologies

The author wishes to sincerely apologize to the Organizing Committee of SIGBOVIK 2016 for what the Organizing Committee of SIGBOVIK 2015 did, presumably without their consultation.¹ He didn’t ask for it. (Seriously, they just picked a random number and pointed at him.)

The author humbly points out that this “Best Paper” award need not be to the exclusion of other similarly- or even identically-named awards. In fact, it probably shouldn’t be, since there are undoubtedly better papers in the surrounding proceedings. [1]

*So... I guess, somewhere around Craig Street? Panther Hollow?

¹Unless they were somehow capable of time travel, in which case —
bravo!



Figure 1. The lovely certificate with which the Organizing Committee of SIGBOVIK 2015 simultaneously blessed and cursed me. The parts about “acauality” and “luck” were particularly heartfelt and meaningful.

1.3. Special anxieties

The author, upon receiving this prestigious(?) award — not knowing whether he was capable of being concurrently serious and funny, deliberate yet whimsical, sober and...um...not — responded to the near-immediate inquiries regarding the topic of this paper simply with “um...”.

Perhaps relatedly, the author continues to find himself in an uncomfortable position of expectation. But not really. (This is SIGBOVIK, after all.)

But kinda? (This is SIGBOVIK, after all.)

2. Coming up empty

The author concedes that this paper contains virtually nothing of any real or imaginary value to anyone. The author further concedes that he is enjoying this nevertheless. The author further concedes that the previous concession wasn’t really something worth conceding. The author further concedes that perhaps he has conceded too much, and that, even further, perhaps he should not proceed any further with this particular joke, and thus dispense with laboriously referring to himself in the third person.

2.1. On meeting expectations

After hearing the news, like any Good Academic™, I immediately made note of the deadline, which was then $11\frac{1}{2}$ months away, before promptly putting it out-of-mind and ultimately hastily slapping this together during the four hours immediately preceding the final conference submission deadline. (See Section 1.2.) I have to keep up appearances, right?

In my defense, I have been busy in the interim with “real life”, whatever that may mean on any given day.² I like to think I’ve been doing that pretty well lately, but for better or for worse, it has obviously somewhat hampered my ability to produce Great Academic Literature such as this, leaving me tempted to just fill the whole thing with `\ldots` or `\lipsum` and go to bed. (Although arguably, what I’m doing here isn’t much better. It is more fun, though.)

That said, if you look past the frenetic self-imposed time crunch and instead count a year’s worth of shower thoughts, the occasional friendly conversation, and idle daydreaming, then this could actually be considered my preëminent work of the year.³ Maybe not the most *comprehensive* document of my body of work, but preëminent, sure. (Even if only because it is first.)

Now that’s being a Good Academic™.

2.2. On not being a disappointment

Just over half an hour after my sharing the news on Facebook,⁴ one friend reached out and commented:

I eagerly await your paper.

The pressure thus properly established, he continued to remind me of this looming deadline at irregular intervals, concluding with a remark made no more than six hours before the submission deadline, that yes, the deadline was in fact tonight, and “remember, it’s gotta be the Best Paper!” (The author concedes that this particular incident may just be at the front of his mind because it was literally earlier today.)

A few internalized expletives later, though I knew this already, I undertook the necessary preparations, because even though I’ve surely been a disappointment before, I’m not going to be a disappointment this time.

And then there’s my mother,⁵ who I know will at least *try* to be proud of this, even though she probably won’t quite understand what this is until I’ve explained it to her. She’ll then pause here and ponder this a bit and wonder briefly how much time I spent on this that could have been used

on other endeavors, and I will refer her, of course, to Section 2.1.

Of course, self-esteem plays its part, too. Least of all possible disappointments, I certainly don’t want to be a disappointment to myself. I had a decent number of chuckles while thinking about this paper over the last year. Some of the well-crafted jokes I thought out have been incorporated here. The rest, I either decided weren’t worth the effort, or I forgot about them completely in my mad race to finish this on-deadline, *which I’m sure I won’t be thinking about right after I click “Submit”*.

However, since my tendencies toward perfectionism would otherwise preclude me from submitting this without making this the best “Best Paper” I can, they are nonetheless left as an exercise to the reader.⁶

But really that’s kind of the beauty of the whole thing, since it’s kind of meant to be half-assed anyway. And can I really be proud of that?

(Yes, I can be.)

3. Conclusion

Um... I got nothin’.⁷

References

- [1] *Proceedings of SIGBOVIK 2016*, 1 April 2016. Also known as that thing you’re reading right now.
- [2] Wikipedia. Speech disfluency, accessed 15 March 2016, 22:09 EDT, less than two hours before deadline. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speech_disfluency.

²After all, I am “buzz’n”.

³Yeah, I just used a diaeresis. I happen to like typographical stuff like that, and L^AT_EX just makes it look *so good*...

⁴I got excited, alright?

⁵Hi, Mom!

⁶I’ve always wanted to do that.

⁷Seriously, what did you expect?