

## PHATIC SPEECH ACTS OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING INDONESIAN STUDENTS

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### **Abstract**

*Phatic Speech Acts are communication strategy that is a characteristic of a culture. Phatic speech acts have an important role in the communication process in Indonesia as the efforts made to demonstrate social identity and maintain social rapport in society. Therefore, this research discusses the types and function of phatic speech acts found in the daily conversation of English-speaking Indonesian students. The data source for this research is English-speaking Indonesian students at Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University, Madiun Campus. This research data was collected by using the non-participation observation method with the recording, note-taking, and role-play techniques. The findings of this research are a classification of 11 types of phatic speech acts consisting of (1) Addressing, (2) Expressing Empathy, (3) Gossiping, (4) Complimenting, (5) Giving Remarks, (6) Advising, (7) Offering, (8) Requesting, (9) Inviting, (10) Mocking, and (11) Swearing. The functions of phatic speech acts are: (1) Expressing hospitality, (2) Showing attention, (3) Making conversation more interesting, (4) Please others, (5) Showing concern, (6) Expressing empathy (7) Showing politeness, (8) Expressing social attachment, (9) Expressing solidarity, (10) Mocking, and (11) Building intimacy. The phatic speech act of addressing is the type of speech act that is most frequently found. On the contrary, the phatic speech act of complimenting is rarely used. The embodiment of the phatic speech act of addressing is dominantly carried out by students in daily conversations since it reflects the cultural identity of Indonesians that is friendly and warm. The phatic speech act of complimenting is not used frequently because of its conditional in nature. The complimenting requires the speaker to have an advantage that is worthy of praise, even though the praise is not sincere. The benefit of this research is to know that in daily communication, phatic speech acts could be implemented for smooth communication.*

**Keywords:** *Speech acts, phatic, communication, pragmatics*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Humans are social creature. In everyday life, they always need to socialize with one another. In conducting communication, everyone must have their way of maintaining harmonious social relations. They use language to develop and sustain

relationships to keep them positive and warm. Language is the most crucial element that is required for interpersonal connection in a communication process. In communication, there is always an interaction between the speaker and the listener. It is also related to pragmatics. According to Yule (1996), pragmatic is the study of the meaning conveyed by the speaker or writer, and interpreted by the hearer or reader. In pragmatics, some principles are useful for understanding what people hear or read. One of the significant topics is speech acts.

Discussion of speech acts is always related to certain actions carried out by speakers to convey their meaning or objectives to their speech partners. Speech acts play a very important role in efforts to maintain communication between speakers and hearers. Speech acts are utterances as a substitute for actions that are usually performed by someone in interacting with others (Yule, 1996). Speech acts are often used by speakers and/or recipients to convey particular goals. Each type of speech act has a different function. However, the main function is to make communication run smoothly without any misunderstanding. To achieve this, the speaker and recipient must be able to make the best use of communication opportunities by using certain methods such as small talk as a communication opener or keeping communication alive. This is what is called a phatic speech act.

Phatic speech acts are always linked to the concept of phatic communion which was first introduced by (Malinowski, 1923). According to Malinowski (1923), phatic communion is a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words. This means that a phatic speech act is speech delivered by speakers to speech partners in the form of words or phrases that aim not to convey certain information, but only to establish better communication, bind intimacy, and improve relations between the two. An identical definition was also put forward by Senft (2014) who stated that phatic communion is generally used to refer to utterances that are said to have exclusively social bonding functions like establishing and maintaining a friendly and harmonious atmosphere in interpersonal relations, especially during the opening and closing stages of social encounters. Another definition is formulated by Jumanto (2014) who defined phatic communication as verbal communication between a speaker and a hearer to maintain the social relationship between them, not to emphasize the information content of the communication. Phatic speech acts aim to create a relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Without realizing it, phatic speech acts are often used in communication, with certain purposes. Therefore, communication carried out by the speaker does not always convey information but only maintains a harmonious relationship or breaks the silence in a situation (Kreidler, 1998). Even though phatic speech acts do not have a specific function, it does not mean that phatic speech acts are not important.

The way to maintain social relations between members of society is very dependent on and cannot be separated from the cultural diversity that lies behind society. Indonesia has a very diverse culture, as well as Indonesians who come from various regions with different cultures. In an area that has various cultures, maintaining a harmonious social relationship among people is something that must be

done. In a community, harmony can be created if each person can respect and pay attention to each other in certain ways. This is the basis for the emergence of various utterances that support the social relations of people who have different cultures. Therefore, each individual's culture greatly influences phatic communication.

The previous research related to phatic speech acts was conducted by Harahap (2020) discussing phatic communion. This research described the forms and function of phatic communion in the movie entitled "Toba Dreams". The forms of phatic communion that the characters used were ritual words exchanged when people meet, standard topics of conversation, and meaningless words or misunderstood words. The functions of phatic communion were avoiding the silence, breaking the silence, or saying something obligatory. Another previous research was conducted by Purnamasari (2020) discussing phatic utterances in movies. This research described the phatic utterance functions expressed by the characters in the movie. The research showed that there were four functions of phatic utterances found in the movie, those are breaking the silence, having small talk, keeping the conversation going, and expressing solidarity. Further research about phatic talks of Javanese women in internet-mediated communication (IMC) was carried out (Widiana, 2021). This research aims to explore the use of Javanese politeness maxims in a virtual context. The types of phatic talks found in this research are classified into greetings, congratulations, compliments, condolences, support, and jokes. Politeness strategies performed by Javanese women in IMC have specific characteristics based on the traditional Javanese politeness maxims of Kurmat (Respect), Tapa Seliro (Tolerance), Andhap Asor (Humility), Empan Papan (Self-Awareness), and Grapyak (Friendliness).

The previous studies did not discuss the Phatic Speech Acts of English-speaking Indonesian students in particular. This research aims to identify the types and functions of speech acts found in the daily conversation of English-speaking Indonesian students. The data of this research is taken from conversations conducted by English-speaking Indonesian students. The conversation can be in person or the WhatsApp group. The conversations are in English. Therefore, this study also aims to find out whether the Indonesian culture influences the way they speak.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

The methods applied to answer the problem of the research. These parts include research design, data and source of data, data collection technique, and data analysis technique. Creswell (2013) said that research design means the plan for conducting the study. This research used a qualitative descriptive method. This means that the data in this study were words not numbers. The method used to provide this data is the observational method. Then, the techniques of uninvolved conversation observation, recording, note-taking, and role-play techniques are implemented to collect the data. The role-play technique was carried out by asking ten students to conduct conversations based on the topics and contexts provided. Then, the conversation was recorded and transcribed. In this case, the uninvolved conversation observation is carried out by listening to conversations among students without being

directly involved in the conversation. When the uninvolved conversation observation technique was implemented, all conversations containing phatic speech acts and certain important things such as gestures and facial expressions were noted. Then, the data was also taken from WhatsApp group conversations. The data was collected by transcribing all the utterances that contained phatic speech acts.

The data collection method is an important step in conducting the research. The technique of collecting the data in this research consist of observational, recording, and note-taking of the utterance by the speaker, identifying the utterances that contain phatic speech acts, transcribing the conversation of the speaker, and classifying the types of phatic speech acts used by English-speaking Indonesian students.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The phatic speech acts of English-speaking Indonesian students discussed in this study are the types and functions of phatic speech acts. The types of phatic speech acts found in this research are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Types of Phatic Speech Acts**

Types	Frequency	Percentages
Addressing	52	35.37%
Expressing empathy	15	10.20%
Gossiping	5	3.40%
Complimenting	4	2.72%
Giving remarks	10	6.80%
Advising	9	6.12%
Offering	8	5.44%
Requesting	15	10.20%
Inviting	12	8.16%
Mocking	10	6.80%
Swearing	7	4.76%
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the total of 147 data, 52, or 35,37%, of them are classified as addressing. It denotes that this form of data is the most dominant type. The other type uses a total of 15 or 10,20% to express empathy and request. Inviting comes in third place with a total of 12 or 8,16%. Giving remarks and mocking counted 10, or 6.80%. With a total score of 9 or 6,12%, the other category is advising. The offering with a total of 8 or 5,44%, of the other kind. Swearing comes with a total of 7, or 4,76%. With a total score of 5, or 3,40%, gossiping is the other type. The last type is complimenting with a total of 4 or 2,72%. From the eleven types of phatic speech acts found, they were classified into several more specific speech acts for each type.

### 3.1 The types of Phatic Speech Acts

According to Widiana (2020), there are eleven types of Javanese phatic speech acts. Those are addressing, expressing empathy, gossiping, complementing, giving remarks, advising, offering, requesting, inviting, mocking, and swearing.

#### 3.1.1 Addressing

Addressing is a type of phatic speech act that is commonly found in everyday conversation. Addressing is mainly intended to express hospitality or friendliness, one of which is by asking the interlocutor to open a conversation.

**30/AD/GR**

*R38: Hey good morning, dude.*

*R39: Yeah morning*

The conversation is an example of the type of phatic addressing speech act which is manifested in a greeting. R38 and R39 are male students. They are classmates. R38 greeted R39 when they met in the campus parking lot on their way to class. The speech conveyed by R38 to R39 aims to express hospitality by greeting each other.

#### 3.1.2 Expressing Empathy

Expressing empathy is a speech act used to sympathize with various conditions experienced by the interlocutor, both pleasant and unpleasant.

**85/EE/GW**

*R88: Okay guys, I wanna go home right now, because I'm so sleepy. I'll see you tomorrow.*

*R89: Okay see you*

*R90: See you. **Be careful yah.** See you tomorrow.*

R88, R89, and R90 are female students. They are classmates. When the lecture was finished, R88 wanted to go home first and say goodbye to her two classmates. R90 says good wishes to R88. The function of this speech is to show care.

#### 3.1.3 Gossiping

Gossiping is a type of phatic speech act in the form of gossip that is related to someone's weakness and is realized by joking to make the conversation more interesting and build closeness.

**72/GS/PH**

*R74: T, you know the man in there?*

*R75: Yeah. His name is W, why?*

*R74: Why does the hairstyle look like that?*

*R75: I don't know. It's bad for him*

R74 and R75 are female students. They are best friends. When they were at the campus gazebo, they saw a male student who was standing in front of the toilet. The male student was chatting with another friend. R75 does not know the student, and R74 does. Both of them were gossiping about the hairstyle of the male student. They were gossiping intending to make the conversation more interesting for both of them.

### 3.1.4 Complimenting

Complimenting is a type of phatic speech act that is used to praise the speech partner insincerely solely to please other people or speech partner.

#### 32/CP/PH

*R38: Hey, good morning, dude!*

*R39: Yeah morning*

*R38: I see you, you got the new hoodie*

*R39: Yeah, of course. What do you think about this?*

*R38: **It looks good on you**, where did you buy it?*

*R39: oh really? I bought from, yeah just shop from close to my home.*

R38 and R39 are male students who met in front of the class when they finished lectures. Then, they walked together toward the cafeteria. To show friendliness and build friendship, R38 complimented R39's clothes even though the clothes were ordinary ones. R39 responded to R38's compliments happily.

### 3.1.5 Giving Remarks

Giving remarks is utterances that are delivered by speakers to speech partners to provide humorous comments about the physical and psychological condition of the speech partner.

#### 31/GR/PH

*R76: Hey, Man!*

*R77: Yea, Whats up*

*R76: **Why is your hairstyle like that?***

*R77: Yea because I want to like Bruno Mars*

*R76: **Hahaha, I think your hairstyle is not the modern style you know? Why you don't make it like oppa oppa Korea, like that?***

*R77: Okay, maybe my face looks like ping pong, right?*

*R76: hahaha*

R76 and R77 are male students. They are classmates. They met in class when the lecture had not yet started. R76 commented on R77's unusual hairstyle because it looks weird. The comments given are intended to show attention but are used as a joke.

### 3.1.6 Advising

Advising is a type of phatic speech act that is used to give or convey advice that does not contain problem-solving and only aims to calm and entertain the speech partner.

#### 109/AV/SP

*R117: Hi, A. How much score do you have? I mean your activity point?*

*R118: I still got seventy*

*R117: **It is too small***

*R118: **I know, right? How then?***

*R117: **Fill it***

*R118: Yeah, let's go then.*

R117 and R118 are female students, they are classmates. The phatic speech act occurred when R117 asked about the total of points obtained by R118. Then, R118 asked R117 for advice to improve her points. So, R117 encouraged R118 to immediately fulfill her points. The suggestions given do not provide a solution. Therefore, it is a phatic advice.

### 3.1.7 Offering

An offering is a speech delivered to a speech partner that is used to make an insincere offer that is merely to show politeness.

#### 95/OF/HP

*R101: Hi, Jes! Have you done your homework?*

*R102: No, not yet. (shake her head)*

*R101: Why?*

*R102: I'm still struggling, this is so hard for me*

*R101: Okay then, **let me help you (while laughing)***

*R102: thank you so much*

R101 and R102 are female students and classmates. The conversation occurred when the lecture had not yet started. When R102 entered the class, R101, who had arrived first, greeted R102 and asked about her homework. R102 told her that she had not finished her homework. So, R101 volunteered to help her even though she could not help R102. This offer aims to show solidarity towards her classmates.

### 3.1.8 Requesting

Requesting is a type of phatic speech act that is used to convey or express an insincere request without the aims of obtaining something.

#### 81/RQ/TR

*R159: Congratulation (shaking hands)*

*R160: Thank you*

*R159: You got a lot of activity points.*

*R160: Exactly*

*R159: **Let's go to a coffee shop. Treat me haha***

*R160: Haha*

R159 are male students, and R160 are female students. The conversation took place on the campus field, after the Youth Pledge Day ceremony. R159 asked for treat from R160 who received the outstanding student award. In this case, the request for R159 does not require servicing. This was proven when R159 uttered *hahaha*. This request was just a small talk in the form of a joke to show their attachment to each other.

### 3.1.9 Inviting

Inviting is a type of phatic speech act in the form of an invitation that is not serious, just to build togetherness.

#### 138/IV/GSW

*R151: **Let's go to Nelongso (one of restaurant in Madiun)***

*R152: Bills on you?*

*R151: Go ahead*

R151 and R152 are female students. They come from different study programs. They are members of one WhatsApp group. The conversation took place in the WhatsApp group. R151 sent a message to the group intending to invite them to go to Nelongso, one of the restaurants in Madiun. This invitation is a phatic speech act because she does not mean to invite her friends to go to the restaurant. After all, at that time, R151 was in Bandung to carry out an internship program and could not go to that place right away.

**3.1.10 Mocking**

Mocking is a phatic speech act in the form of ridicule which is not intended to criticize the speech partner, but only to joke.

25/MC/DS

*R32: Hey dude, what time is it? Where have you been?*

*R33: Ouch, sorry. I just got flat tires. So, I have to go to the repair shop you know. It's been really difficult for me this morning.*

*R32: Ouch, you got flat tires. Alright, at least your life isn't flat.*

*R33: Hahaha (laughing) I got you.*

R32 and R33 are male students. They are classmates. When R32 arrived late because he got a flat tire, R33 mocked him by uttering *Ouch, you got flat tires. Alright, at least your life isn't flat.* The mocking is intended as a joke so that it does not offend R33's feelings. This was proven by R33 who uttered *Hahaha. I got you.*

**3.1.11 Swearing**

Swearing is a phatic speech act that is delivered not to express anger to annoyance, but rather an expression to create a close relationship.

70/SW/IC

*R72: Hey yo, **Slut!** How you been? (Hit the shoulder)*

*R73: Who you are, **bitch?***

R72 is a male student, while R73 is a female student. They are classmates and best friends. R72 calls R73 with a swear when they meet. The swearing was intended as an intimate call to build closeness, R73 did not feel offended by the call of *Slut* expressed by R72 and vice versa.

**3.2 The Function of Phatic Speech Acts**

According to Widiana (2020), there are eleven functions of phatic speech acts. Those are expressing hospitality, showing attention, making conversation more interesting, please others, showing concern, expressing empathy, showing politeness, expressing social attachment, expressing solidarity, mocking, and building intimacy.

Table 2 Functions of Phatic Speech Acts

Types	Classification	Functions
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Addressing	Greetings	Expressing hospitality by greetings
	Condition	Expressing hospitality by asking about conditions or news
	General topic	Expressing hospitality by asking about the general topic
	Farewell	Expressing hospitality by saying goodbye
Expressing Empathy	Good Wishes	Showing attention with expressions that contain good wishes
	Congratulations	Expressing happiness by congratulating someone on their achievements and happiness
	Expressing Compassion	Showing concern by expressing empathy for the unpleasant thing
Gossiping	Physical	Making conversation more interesting and building intimacy
	Behavior	
Complimenting	Physical	Please others by praising their strengths related to their physical condition
Giving Remarks	Physical	Showing attention by commenting on someone's physical performance
	Behavior	Showing attention by commenting on someone's behavior
Advising	Support	Showing concern by providing advice in the form of support
	Comfort	Showing concern by providing advice in the form of comfort
Offering	Help	Showing politeness by offering help
	Food	Showing politeness by offering food
	Ride	Showing politeness by offering a ride
	Loan	Show politeness by offering a loan
Requesting	Treat	Expressing social attachment

	Souvenir	
	Gift	
Inviting	Going Somewhere	Expressing solidarity
	Doing Activity	
Mocking	Derision	Joking with mockery in the form of derision
Swearing	Intimate Call	Building intimacy by swearing for intimate call
	Amazement	Building intimacy by swearing as an expression of amazement

Based on the eleven types of phatic speech acts found in this research, each of them has a different function. The phatic speech acts functions are expressing hospitality, showing attention, making conversation more interesting, please others, showing concern, expressing empathy, showing politeness, expressing social attachment, expressing solidarity, mocking, and building intimacy.

The phatic speech act that functions as expressing hospitality is addressing. The phatic speech act aims to show attention is expressing empathy. The phatic speech acts that function to make a conversation more interesting is gossiping. The phatic speech act aims to please others is complimenting. The phatic speech acts that function as showing concern is advising. Besides that, the phatic speech act could function to show politeness such as a phatic offering. Moreover, the phatic speech act that functions as an expression of social attachment is requesting. Furthermore, the phatic speech act aims to express solidarity is inviting. Phatic speech acts could be conducted to make a joke by mocking. Then, the phatic speech act of swearing functions to build intimacy.

The type of phatic speech act that is most frequently used and found in this research is addressing. The embodiment of the phatic speech act of addressing is dominantly carried out by students as a conversation of Indonesians who are friendly and happy to greet. So, the phatic of addressing speech acts functions to express hospitality. On the contrary, complimenting is rarely used. The phatic speech act of complimenting is a speech act delivered to give insincere praise solely to please other people. The phatic of complimenting speech act is found the least because of its conditional nature. The phatic speech act of complimenting requires the speaker to have an advantage that is worthy of praise, even if the praise is not sincere.

The function of phatic speech acts that occurred the most is to express hospitality because expressing hospitality has an important role in creating good relations in society and is also useful to avoid conflict. Meanwhile, the function of

phatic speech acts that rarely occurs is to please others because it requires the advantage that worthy of praise.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The research describes the types of phatic speech acts found in English-speaking Indonesian students. There are eleven types of speech acts found in English-speaking Indonesian students. Those are addressing, expressing empathy, gossiping, complimenting, giving remarks, advising, offering, requesting, inviting, mocking, and swearing. The function of phatic speech acts is to express hospitality, show concern, make conversations more interesting, please other people, show attention, show empathy, show politeness, express social attachment, show solidarity, joke, and build intimacy. Addressing is the most dominant, while the least is complimenting.

English-speaking Indonesian students employ the phatic speech act of addressing more frequently in their daily interactions to foster friendliness among them. The purpose of the addressing speech act is to demonstrate hospitality between the hearer and the speaker.

Understanding phatic speech acts means learning more to build a good relationship in society. Phatic speech acts have the potential to enhance our ability to demonstrate hospitality, concern, civility, unity, and foster closeness between the speaker and the hearer

The benefit of this research is to know that in daily communication, phatic speech acts could be implemented for smoother communication. Furthermore, the aim of implementing phatic speech acts is to build good communication between speakers and hearers. In addition, phatic speech acts could also reduce or avoid conflict in the communication process.

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