



Cross-Cultural Insights into Phatic Communication: Indonesian and Australian Student Interactions

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ABSTRACT

Phatic communication, a widespread yet often unnoticed language phenomenon, primarily serves to maintain social interactions rather than convey substantive information. This study investigated the use of phatic expressions among Indonesian and Australian students, examining how cultural backgrounds and social contexts influence their communication styles. Using a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) with both qualitative and quantitative methods, this research revealed significant differences between the two groups. Australian students frequently used phatic speech to initiate conversations, provided comfort, and expressed empathy, emphasizing respect and interpersonal connection. In contrast, Indonesian students tended to use phatic expressions to promote social harmony, engage in casual discourse, and offer interpersonal support, often focusing on group cohesion. Social variables, such as social status and distance, played a critical role in shaping the choice of phatic functions and forms, with both groups adapting their communication strategies based on these factors. The findings highlight the intricate relationship among culture, social dynamics, and language in phatic communication, offering a nuanced understanding that can enhance intercultural interactions, minimize misunderstandings, and improve communication effectiveness in multicultural settings. This research underscores the importance of considering cultural and social contexts when analyzing language use, contributing valuable insights for educators, linguists, and communication professionals aiming to foster more effective and harmonious interactions across diverse cultural landscapes.

Keywords:

*Phatic communication;
Indonesian students;
Australian students; cross-
cultural pragmatics;*

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of human activity, playing a crucial role in the collection and dissemination of information. In most cases, language serves as the primary medium for communication, facilitating interactions ranging from

[150-168]

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requests for assistance to cordial greetings (Hidayah et al., 2023). In this research context, particularly between Indonesian and Australian students, communication patterns tend to reveal an undercurrent of "distraction language" in situations marked by silence, stiffness, or stress. This spontaneous conversation strategy, identified by Oktaviani & Degaf (2023), serves to break tension and fill silences, functioning as a tool to maintain social engagement. This aligns with Malinowski's (1923) concept of phatic communication, which prioritizes social interaction over the exchange of specific information. Such behavior is not merely theoretical but is practically observed in this study, where students use phatic speech to create bonds and ease social dynamics. Coupland (1992: 208) notes that phatic speech is essential in building connections, a finding corroborated through the data, highlighting its role in fostering a sense of belonging and comfort. Additionally, the authors' observations resonate with Cutting (2008) and Nadar's (2009) views that phatic communication maintains conversational flow, serving more to uphold social rituals than to convey substantive content. Examining these interactions shows that phatic speech can occur at any conversational stage, from the beginning to the end, and is often used to smooth transitions or affirm social ties, which are critical in both academic and casual settings. Even when the phatic speech is omitted, the core message remains intact, underscoring its role in social facilitation rather than informational necessity.

Phatic communication assumes a crucial function in augmenting interpersonal exchanges and fostering amicable associations among individuals, as noted by Robah and Anggrisa (2023). This linguistic phenomenon is not limited to informal talks but is also extensively employed in academic contexts, encompassing a range of circumstances. The use of this tool is prevalent in student interactions, effectively enhancing communication and generating a sense of interconnectedness. According to Díez-Palomar et al. (2021), phatic communication is also widespread in student-instructor interactions, playing a role in fostering constructive academic discourse. In professional contexts, it serves as a catalyst for social engagement, fostering a spirit of camaraderie and cooperation among individuals within the scholarly community. Mirzaei and Farnia (2023) highlight those phatic expressions function as advantageous tools, especially in everyday interactions between individuals on campus and vendors. These language expressions seamlessly blend into existing discourse, serving as friendly salutations or effectively mitigating any instances of disagreement that may arise. As Adnan (2021) discusses, phatic communication plays a crucial role in establishing connections between academic and social interactions by facilitating informal conversations before or after lectures, during group work, and in casual campus settings. These interactions promote a feeling of cohesion and camaraderie among students and faculty, helping to build a supportive academic environment and fostering a sense of belonging within the campus community.

The analysis of phatic communication can be undertaken by deconstructing it into its constituent elements, as categorized by Aitchison (2000). These include ceremonial

Ilmi, A. B. I., & Degaf, A.

expressions exchanged during social interactions, such as salutations when recognizing an individual. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the existence of conventional methods for initiating conversations, where individuals often use casual and non-essential topics, such as the weather or general situations, to start a dialogue. Phatic communication serves various purposes, as outlined by Malinowski (1970) and Jakobson (as cited in Jumanto, 2008). These functions cover a wide range of social interactions, including the interruption of conversational gaps, the initiation of conversations, active participation in informal discussions, sharing gossip, expressing solidarity, promoting harmony, providing comfort, demonstrating empathy, creating friendships, displaying respect, and exhibiting politeness.

The study is grounded in the principles of comparative linguistics, as originally posited by Lado in 1957. This approach underscores the need to comprehend meaning through a meticulous analysis of the nuances inherent in language, encompassing both the native tongue and the target language being acquired, while also considering the cultural contexts of the individuals engaged in communication. The study employs the theoretical framework of speech acts to investigate the various expressions of phatic communication among individuals from Indonesia and Australia. The objective is to gain a deeper understanding of the different manifestations of phatic communication within the two cultural contexts under examination. The discrepancies noted are intrinsically linked to the cultural contexts in which they exist, highlighting the complex interplay between language, culture, and communication patterns.

The existing body of academic research on phatic communication includes a variety of studies by scholars such as Prastika (2009), Yulinda (2012), Indarti (2016), Hamdin (2016), and Aull (2019), each of whom has explored different aspects of this phenomenon. Prastika (2009) examined phatic communication within literary compositions, specifically focusing on its role in character interactions in novels. Yulinda (2012) extended this exploration to films and theatrical scripts, analyzing how phatic expressions contribute to narrative development and audience engagement. Indarti (2016) and Hamdin (2016) employed sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic approaches to investigate phatic communication in everyday conversations and formal settings, highlighting how these expressions maintain social harmony and manage conversational flow. Aull (2019) conducted a study on the use of phatic communication in digital contexts, specifically analyzing the role of WhatsApp emojis in facilitating casual and friendly interactions. These studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of phatic communication across different mediums and contexts.

Scholars have also engaged in the examination of cross-cultural pragmatics, including Al-Khawaldeh (2016), Nguyen (2009), and Ying (2017). In a study conducted by Al-Khawaldeh (2016), a comparison is made between how complaints are expressed in Jordan and England. Similarly, Nguyen (2009) examines refusals and requests in the context of interactions

between Vietnamese and Australians. Additionally, Ying (2017) explores instances of cross-cultural pragmatic failures that occur within a university setting in Xi'an. Furthermore, Zubaidi (2013) conducted a prior investigation that explored the manifestation of complaints using the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) as a methodological approach.

This study endeavors to address certain gaps in previous scholarly research, shifting its focus to individuals, namely Indonesian and Australian students, and embarking on a comparative analysis of these two disparate cultural groups. Furthermore, it extends its scope by merging the realms of phatic communication and cross-cultural pragmatics. This interdisciplinary approach distinguishes this study from previous research, which predominantly centered on the theory of phatic communication in isolation or in conjunction with a sociolinguistic perspective. Understanding these differences is important for improving intercultural interactions, reducing misunderstandings, and increasing communication effectiveness. Examining how phatic communication manifests in different cultural contexts provides insights that can enhance mutual understanding and cooperation between individuals from diverse backgrounds (Kulkarni, 2013). This study highlights the necessity of further investigation into the role of cultural influences on phatic communication to promote more effective and harmonious social and academic interactions.

Based on the aforementioned background, two research inquiries have been formulated:

1. What types and functions of phatic communication are employed by Indonesian and Australian students in their daily interactions?
2. To what extent does cultural context influence the manifestation of phatic communication?

In summary, phatic communication emerges as a prominent and distinctive form of verbal expression that holds considerable importance in structuring social interactions. Language remains a fundamental element in a wide array of social exchanges, extending its influence even into academic environments like universities. What sets phatic communication apart are its distinct characteristics, diverse types, and the underlying factors that shape its usage. Undoubtedly, it serves as an indispensable medium of communication, particularly among students, contributing to the rich tapestry of human interaction in both social and academic contexts.

METHOD

The investigation employed a qualitative research methodology, complemented by quantitative elements, primarily through the implementation of a case study that combined descriptive analysis. To facilitate the investigation, the researchers applied a special approach called the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), created by Blum-Kulka in 1982. The application of this method aligned with the research's focus on pragmatics, making it a suitable tool for the study (Birjandi et al., 2010). The study centered on two distinct cultural

Ilmi, A. B. I., & Degaf, A.

cohorts: individuals who are native speakers of Indonesian and those who are native speakers of English. The research was confined to the Javanese ethnic group within the specific environment of Indonesia. This choice was justified by the observation that the Indonesian national language has been significantly influenced by the Javanese language (Poedjosoedarmo, 1982). Given's (2008) research suggested that the criteria for selecting participants among English native speakers were based on their relevance to the study issues rather than being restricted by geographical proximity or convenience for the researchers.

The data collection methods included observation, interviews, and Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT). Observations and interviews were conducted to capture direct interactions between Indonesian and Australian students in everyday situations or specific settings. These methods were utilized to gather and analyze their perceptions of phatic communication. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how phatic communication was used in real-life contexts and the cultural nuances involved.

The analytical technique consisted of two main steps. The researchers began by studying the utterances and categorizing them according to the forms and functions of phatic communication. Additionally, they identified the speech acts most suitable for each utterance. Moreover, a quantitative study was performed to ascertain the prevalence of specific features among each cultural cohort. This specific methodological approach enabled a comprehensive examination of phatic communication across various cultures, offering valuable insights into the patterns and variations in its application.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following section is structured into three analytical components, which align with the objectives of the study. These components include an examination of the different forms of phatic communication, an exploration of the functions served by phatic communication, and an investigation into the identification of cultural background using a cross-cultural pragmatics approach. Notably, the analysis will place a specific emphasis on the analysis of speech actions. The study is divided into two distinct segments, specifically the Australian and Indonesian components, with each point being further subdivided.

Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

Australian Students

The examination of the data demonstrates a wide variety of speech acts that were detected in the phatic utterances generated by Australian students. This study examines various speech actions, namely representatives, instructions, questions, commissives, expressives, and declarations, as originally proposed by Searle (as referenced in Parker et al., 2014). Australian students commonly employ a variety of speech actions, and the subsequent table provides a comprehensive summary of their usage frequency.

Table 1. Forms of Speech Acts in Phatic Communication by Australian Students

Number	S															Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
1 Speech Act	5	1	7	4	3	-	1	1	1	5	3	1	6	3	3	44	37,9%
2 Speech Acts	3	4	1	2	5	2	3	5	5	2	4	5	1	5	4	51	44%
3 Speech Acts	-	3	-	-	-	6	4	1	2	1	-	2	1	-	1	21	18,1%
Total	8	8	8	6	8	8	8	7	8	8	7	8	8	8	8	116	100%

Based on the frequency statistics, it is apparent that Australian students primarily utilize two categories of speech acts in phatic communication, with 51 instances or 44% of the total. The second most prevalent category is individual speech acts, accounting for 44 occurrences or 37.9%. Conversely, three categories of speech acts are employed less frequently, amounting to 21 instances or 18.1%. The phatic communication of Australian students encompasses several types of speech acts, with the exception of declarations. This absence can be attributed to the students' limited autonomy in making significant decisions. Therefore, representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and questions are commonly observed. The use of speech acts in phatic communication among Australian students is closely linked to the felicity conditions of specific contexts and the social factors that influence the application of phatic communication.

Regarding individual speech acts, Australian students typically use three distinct types: representatives, directives, and questions. When two speech acts are combined, five distinct combinations emerge: representative and directive, representative and commissive, question and representative, expressive and directive, and expressive and commissive. These combinations illustrate how different types of speech acts interact, showing elements of expressiveness, representativeness, commissiveness, directiveness, and questioning. Each combination highlights the specific ways that Australian students employ phatic communication, adapting their language use to fit various social contexts. The following examples demonstrate how each combination functions in practice, offering insight into the strategic application of speech acts in everyday interactions.

(1) So, what’s everyone doing on the weekend? (S10.3)

"So, what’s everyone doing on the weekend?" (S10.3) is an example of a single speech act in the form of a question. This type of speech act, specifically questioning, is notably frequent in the discourse of Australians. The analysis of this utterance shows that the felicity conditions for the speech act of questioning are fully satisfied. Firstly, the propositional condition is automatically fulfilled because questions are designed to accommodate a wide range of propositions. In this case, the question seeks information or responses about the weekend activities of the individuals being addressed. Furthermore, the preparatory condition is clearly evident, as the speaker asks the question due to a lack of prior knowledge about the hearer's weekend plans, highlighting the necessity of seeking information. This condition is a crucial aspect of the speech act.

Sincerity is another key component in this interaction. The speaker genuinely seeks an answer and wants to learn about the hearer's weekend activities, demonstrating sincerity in their intent to engage in meaningful communication. Lastly, the essential condition is met, as the speaker actively strives to obtain information from the hearer. This effort aligns with the fundamental nature of the question, which is not merely rhetorical but aimed at obtaining relevant information.

(2) Hi, are you able to take a photo of my friend and I, please? Thank you so much! (S_{15.6})

In the provided utterance, "Hi, are you able to take a photo of my friend and me, please? Thank you so much!" (S_{15.6}), a dual function of speech acts is evident, combining both directive and expressive elements.

The directive aspect of this utterance is manifested through the speaker's request for the hearer to take a photograph. In this context, the felicity conditions for the directive speech act are met. Firstly, the propositional condition is satisfied because the request to take a photograph is both feasible and understandable. Secondly, the preparatory condition is fulfilled because the speaker implicitly trusts the hearer's ability to fulfill the request, assuming they possess the capability to take the photograph. Thirdly, sincerity is evident in the speaker's genuine desire to have the hearer take the picture, reflecting a real intention to capture the moment. Lastly, the essential condition is satisfied as the speaker makes a polite request to ensure the hearer complies, reinforcing the intention behind the directive speech act.

The expressive component of this utterance is conveyed through the expression of gratitude, "Thank you so much!" However, the felicity conditions for this expressive speech act are not fully met in this context. While the propositional condition involves expressing an emotional state, such as gratitude, the timing challenges its fulfillment. For an expressive act, the preparatory condition often requires the speaker to genuinely feel the emotion. In this instance, although the speaker likely does appreciate the help, the expression of gratitude occurs prematurely, before the hearer has actually taken the requested action. Sincerity in expressive acts depends on the speaker truly experiencing the emotion. Here, while the speaker may feel grateful, the gratitude is expressed before the action has been completed. Despite this, the essential condition for expressive acts involves expressing emotion as a communicative act, and in this case, gratitude serves as a form of politeness and acknowledgment, aligning with the essential condition.

In summary, while the directive speech act in this utterance meets all the necessary felicity conditions, the expressive speech act is challenged by the timing of the gratitude expression, which occurs before the hearer has the opportunity to take the photograph. This highlights the intricate interplay between speech acts and their temporal elements in phatic communication, underscoring the importance of maintaining a balanced proportion of speech acts to ensure effective communication.

Indonesian Students

In the context of phatic communication by Indonesian students, a rich array of speech acts is employed, ranging from single speech acts to combinations of different types. The following table presents a comprehensive summary of the amount of speech acts employed by students from Indonesia:

Table 2. Forms of Speech Acts in Phatic Communication by Indonesian Students

Number	S															Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
1 Speech Act	3	2	5	1	3	-	-	4	-	2	1	1	4	-	1	27	23.3%
2 Speech Acts	5	2	2	7	5	4	5	3	4	5	7	3	2	2	5	61	52.6%
3 Speech Acts	-	3	1	-	-	2	3	1	3	1	-	4	2	4	2	26	22.4%
4 Speech Acts	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.72%
Total	8	7	8	8	8	7	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	6	8	116	100%

Based on a study conducted on the frequency of speech acts seen in the collected data, it becomes apparent that Indonesian students primarily employ two separate categories of speech acts. The numbers are got from the addition of the expressions of all situations. Comprising 61 instances of speech acts is accounting for 52.6% of the total within the context of phatic communication. In contrast, there is a little variation observed in the utilization of three distinct types of speech acts, accounting for 26 sets of speech actions (22.4%), as compared to the employment of a single type of speech act, which amounts to 27 sets of speech acts (23.3%). Moreover, the employment of four various sorts of speech acts is exemplified by an individual phrase.

In the realm of phatic communication among Indonesian students, one can observe the presence of various speech acts, with the notable exception of declarations. This phenomenon can be linked to the inherent lack of decision-making authority normally held by students. Therefore, representatives, commands, commissives, expressives, and queries are frequently utilized.

Among the collected data, there are 27 occurrences that pertain to single speaking acts, making it the second most commonly observed category. The primary constituents of these individual speech actions primarily comprise representatives, directions, and interrogatives. On the other hand, it has been observed that Indonesian students engage in 61 distinct sets of two-combination speech acts during phatic communication. The combinations that are most commonly utilized consist of interrogatives paired with representatives, expressives paired with directions, representatives paired with commissives, and commissives paired with directives.

Ilmi, A. B. I., & Degaf, A.

Let us embark on an examination of an utterance that encompasses a confluence of speech acts:

- (3) *Kak kelihatannya kamu seorang fotografer, minta tolong fotoin dong. (Si15.1)* (Two Speech Acts/Directive with expressive)
(*Bro, you seem like a photographer, please take a photo*)

The first form has expressive characteristics and serves as an indirect form of praise. Within this particular situation, the speaker expresses admiration towards the hearer by acknowledging their proficiency in the realm of photography. The felicity requirements are not entirely satisfied. Although the propositional content is satisfied due to the clarity of the complement, the preparatory condition remains incomplete. No empirical proof has been provided pertaining to the photographic proficiency of the individual being addressed. However, the requirement of sincerity is established when the speaker demonstrates true conviction in the photographic abilities of the hearer. Finally, the fundamental requirement is satisfied by the speaker's endeavor to enhance the hearer's self-assurance, so motivating them to meet the speaker's entreaty.

The directive component of this statement pertains to the act of requesting the recipient to capture a photograph. The felicity conditions necessary for the successful execution of the directed speech act have been appropriately satisfied. The fulfillment of the propositional content occurs when the recipient adheres to the request by capturing the photograph. The preparation condition is evidenced by the hearer's ability to fulfill the request. The fulfillment of sincerity in the command is inherent as the speaker possesses a real desire for the hearer to capture an image of the class. Finally, the necessary requirement is fulfilled by the speaker's endeavor to convince the listener to carry out the requested action.

In conclusion, this analysis underscores the intricate interaction among many types of speech acts in the phatic communication of Indonesian students. The third utterance exemplifies a blend of expressive and directive speech acts, each having their own specific requirements for being considered appropriate, hence enhancing the complexity of the communicative interaction.

The Forms of Phatic Communication

Australian Students

A comprehensive analysis was conducted to investigate the various forms of phatic communication utilized by students in Australia. A total of 139 cases of phatic communications were detected during the study. The following table presents a comprehensive overview of the many forms of phatic communication and their corresponding frequency.

Table 3. Forms of Phatic Communication by Australian Students

Forms	Si															Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
RW	8	7	-	2	-	-	6	7	4	-	4	-	4	5	8	55	39.5%
ST	7	-	-	4	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	16	11.5%
SC	2	3	8	-	3	6	2	4	1	5	-	8	4	-	3	49	35.3%
MW	-	5	-	-	4	-	1	-	2	-	2	-	-	5	-	19	13.7%
Total	17	15	8	6	7	6	9	12	7	8	6	8	9	10	11	139	100%

According to the frequency table, it can be observed that Australian students predominantly utilize ritual words in their phatic communication, accounting for 55 sets of phatic communication or 39.5%. Additionally, supportive conversation is also commonly employed, with 49 sets of phatic communication representing 35.3% of the total. Phatic communication encompasses both standard topics and meaningless terms, with a somewhat higher occurrence of meaningless words (19 sets: 13.7%) compared to normal topics (16 sets: 11.5%).

To enhance comprehension, let us analyze illustrative examples of each type of phatic communication:

- (4) "Hi, how's it going?....." (Si13.7)
- (5) "Sorry to bother you....." (Si14.3)
- (6) So, what's everyone doing on the weekend? (Si10.3)
- (7) ...Thank you so much! (Si15.6)
- (8) Hey, just to give you a heads up, there's a puddle just there, just wouldn't want you to slip. (Si14.2)

The examples above represent the data analysis for all forms of phatic communication. Examples (4) and (5) can be categorized as ritualistic language, which is frequently employed by students in Australia. The use of these forms often depends on the social standing and the relationship between the speaker and the listener. In contrast, example (6) illustrates the use of conventional topics in phatic communication, as Australian students commonly start conversations by inquiring about weekend plans to establish rapport.

The expression of gratitude in example (7) serves as an illustration of supportive talk. In Australian academic contexts, it is common for students to use this type of speech to express respect and solidarity. Such utterances are often directed toward a diverse range of individuals, fostering an atmosphere of friendly social engagement. Finally, example (8) falls under the category of meaningless words, which serves as a form of indirect speech. Although this type of speech may seem to convey information, it is actually a strategy used by the speaker to elicit the listener's help in resolving a problem. The potential for misinterpretation highlights the complex nature of phatic communication.

In summary, Australian students employ various modes of phatic communication, each tailored to fulfill specific social functions and maintain interpersonal relationships. Ritual words, such as greetings and apologies, help establish and reinforce social bonds, especially in diverse social settings where maintaining a neutral or positive tone is essential. Supportive conversations, characterized by expressions of gratitude or politeness, serve to create a supportive and respectful atmosphere, which is crucial in fostering a sense of community and belonging in academic and social contexts. Meanwhile, conventional topics and meaningless words are often used to navigate social situations subtly, enabling students to handle interactions without engaging in deep or meaningful conversation. These varied uses of phatic communication show how language is strategically employed to convey messages and manage social relationships effectively. Recognizing these patterns provides insight into the broader social strategies within Australian student culture, where communication functions as both a tool for building social connections and a means of maintaining social harmony. This careful use of phatic communication underscores its importance as a crucial element in daily interactions, strengthening the social framework of student life.

Indonesian Students

In examining the phatic communication patterns of Indonesian students, the research uncovered a total of 135 sets of phatic forms. These findings offer insights into the frequency and types of phatic communication employed by Indonesian students.

Table 4. Forms of Phatic Communication by Indonesian Students

Forms	Si															Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
RW	2	8	2	5	-	-	7	-	2	2	3	3	-	4	4	42	31.1%
ST	1	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	14	10.4%
SC	-	2	6	-	1	6	1	1	6	1	4	8	-	-	4	40	29.6%
MW	6	-	-	-	3	-	2	7	1	4	5	-	8	1	2	39	28.9%
Total	8	10	8	13	4	6	10	8	9	12	12	11	8	5	10	135	100%

The analysis of the frequency table indicates that there was a relatively similar prevalence of three distinct styles of phatic communication among Indonesian students. The predominant kind of phatic communication seen in this study was ritual words, which accounted for 42 instances, representing 31.1% of the total. Subsequently, there were a significant number of supportive talks, amounting to 40 sets (29.6%), and a comparable number of meaningless phrases, comprising 39 sets (28.9%). Conversely, there was a lower frequency of utilization for standard themes of conversation, as evidenced by the observation of just 14 sets (10.4%).

As the example of analysis, the researchers decided to include some examples for each phatic form by Indonesian students.

(9) *Assalamualaikum Pak/Bu, (Si2.2)*

(10) *Hey guys! (Si4.4)*

(11) *Hai apa kabar? (Si1.7) (Hey, How are you?)*

(12) *He, Kamu selamat ya, kamu keren banget bisa menang lomba! (Si12.2)*

(Congratulation for you, You are really cool because you win the competition)

(13) *Untung ya, kamu masih bawa hidungmu! (Si13.7)*

(Luckily, you still bring your nose!)

In order to enhance comprehension of these forms, specific examples were carefully chosen to exemplify each respective group. Utterances (9) and (10) might be classified as ritualistic expressions, denoting customary salutations frequently employed by Indonesian students. The text (9) exemplifies a customary Muslim salutation, "Assalamualaikum Pak/Bu," frequently employed in Indonesia owing to its primarily Muslim populace. On the other hand, a more informal salutation, "Hey guys!", is commonly used by Indonesian students, especially in neutral or lower social settings. Furthermore, (11) illustrates the conventional structure of conversational discourse, in which Indonesian students frequently engage in interpersonal exchanges by inquiring about one another's welfare using the customary greeting "Hai apa kabar?" Greetings, how are you today? This particular mode of salutation exhibits adaptability and can be employed in diverse social settings and interpersonal connections.

Next, the number 12 denotes a type of conversation that is encouraging in nature, often involving statements of congratulations. In this particular instance, the speaker expresses felicitations to the hearer for their triumph in the competition, a customary act sometimes followed with supplementary amicable discourse in the context of Indonesian communication. Finally, (13) exemplifies the utilization of semantically empty terms, which have a satirical function in this particular case. The speaker utilizes the rhetorical device of sarcasm in order to apply satire towards the hearer, so emphasizing that this particular mode of communication is not primarily designed for the purpose of conveying factual information, but rather serves as a means to express irony.

In brief, Indonesian students utilize many forms of phatic communication, which are tailored to distinct social contexts and interpersonal connections. The aforementioned illustrations provide insight into the various methods through which Indonesian students integrate these forms into their daily interactions, thereby highlighting the intricate characteristics of phatic communication within Indonesian society.

The Functions of Phatic Communication

Australian Students

It is imperative to analyze and investigate the various roles of phatic phrases among Australian students in conjunction with the identification of various types of phatic communication. Jumanto (2008) classified these functions into twelve discrete components, encompassing actions such as interrupting silence in conversation, initiating discourse, engaging in casual conversation, discussing rumors, expressing camaraderie, promoting harmony, establishing a sense of ease, demonstrating empathy, cultivating friendships, displaying respect, and conveying politeness. The table below presents the recurrence of certain phatic functions.

Table 5. The Functions of Phatic communication by Indonesian Students

Func-tions	Si															Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
AS	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	14	4.9%
OC	8	7	-	2	-	6	8	7	5	-	5	-	4	4	7	63	22%
MC	-	-	-	6	-	5	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	14	4.9%
MG	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2.1%
KT	8	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	16	5.6%
ES	1	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	1	-	8	-	-	-	16	5.6%
MH	-	-	-	-	4	-	4	3	2	1	-	8	-	1	2	25	8.7%
CC	-	5	-	-	5	-	5	3	2	-	2	-	5	3	2	32	11%
EE	8	5	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	8	4	-	-	29	10.1%
EF	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	2	1	-	5	-	-	13	4.5%
ER	1	5	8	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	8	-	2	4	31	10.8%
EP	-	5	8	-	6	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	2	4	28	9.8%
Total	26	31	16	20	21	11	22	17	15	19	8	32	18	12	19	287	100%

The aforementioned data consists of 287 occurrences of phatic functions utilized by students from Australia. Significantly, the primary function observed is "Opening Contact," which encompasses 63 instances of phatic communication, representing 22% of the overall occurrences. Nevertheless, it is evident that Australian students exhibit competence in utilizing a range of phatic functions, as their communication patterns encompass all the designated functions.

(14) *Hey, how are you feeling? (Si.8)*

(15) *Excuse me, I'm sorry to bother (Si.4)*

Both examples (14) and (15) fall under the dominant function "Opening Contact." This function primarily involves initiating communication, breaking the silence, or starting a conversation. Australian students often utilize questions about the other person's well-being or expressions of apology as means to initiate contact. The difference between these two sentences lies in the context and the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutors. In summary, Australian students exhibit a wide range of phatic functions in

their communication, which reflect their adeptness at initiating conversations and maintaining social interactions. The prevalence of "Opening Contact" demonstrates its significance in Australian social communication.

Indonesian Students

After conducting an evaluation of the various forms of phatic communication utilized by students from Indonesia, we will now proceed to analyze the phatic functions within the same dataset. The table presented below illustrates the frequency of phatic functions demonstrated by students in Indonesia.

Table 6. The Functions of Phatic Communication by Indonesian Students

Func-tions	Si															Total	%
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
AS	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	14	4.9%
OC	8	7	-	2	-	6	8	7	5	-	5	-	4	4	7	63	22%
MC	-	-	-	6	-	5	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	14	4.9%
MG	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2.1%
KT	8	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	16	5.6%
ES	1	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	1	-	8	-	-	-	16	5.6%
MH	-	-	-	-	4	-	4	3	2	1	-	8	-	1	2	25	8.7%
CC	-	5	-	-	5	-	5	3	2	-	2	-	5	3	2	32	11%
EE	8	5	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	8	4	-	-	29	10.1%
EF	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	2	1	-	5	-	-	13	4.5%
ER	1	5	8	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	8	-	2	4	31	10.8%
EP	-	5	8	-	6	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	2	4	28	9.8%
Total	26	31	16	20	21	11	22	17	15	19	8	32	18	12	19	287	100%

Based on the available data, researchers have identified a total of 257 occurrences of phatic functions being utilized by Indonesian students. The phatic function that occurs most frequently is known as "Opening Contact," which involves initiating discussions. This particular function was seen in 51 cases, making up 20% of the total occurrences. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that Indonesian students exhibit competence in employing all the designated phatic functions.

(16) *Assalamuallaikum, permisi bapak/ibu. (Si2.7)*

(Assalamualaikum, Excuse me sir/ma'am)

(17) *Dengar", dokter spesialis paru"mahal ya? (Si8.2)*

(I heard that the pulmonologist is expensive, right?)

The statement labeled as (16) fulfills the communicative purpose of establishing initial contact. Due to the substantial Muslim population in Indonesia, it is customary to employ this salutation as a method of establishing communication or commencing a dialogue. On the other hand, the statement (17) can be categorized as belonging to the "Making Chit-chat" function. It is utilized in circumstances where there is evident discomfort. This particular form of casual conversation is distinguished by the use of sarcasm and satire,

which effectively conveys that the statement (17) is intended for participating in playful and lighthearted exchange. In brief, Indonesian students demonstrate a wide array of phatic functions in their communication, hence exhibiting their proficiency in initiating dialogues and navigating numerous social situations. The students demonstrate proficiency in utilizing various phatic functions as required, with a particular emphasis on the "Opening Contact" function.

DISCUSSION

The primary focus of this discussion is the analysis of phatic communication, based on data findings from various scenarios in a Discourse Completion Task (DCT). These scenarios represent different types of interpersonal interactions commonly observed in college life, including exchanges among peers, students, professors, and university staff. This study examines how cultural backgrounds influence phatic communication, with particular attention to social variables such as social status (SS) and social distance (SD). Social status is categorized into high, neutral, and low, while social distance is defined as proximate, indifferent, or distant. These classifications provide insights into the ways cultural backgrounds affect phatic communication.

The analysis of phatic communication between Indonesian and Australian students reveals distinct patterns shaped by cultural contexts. The study explores the relationship between social variables, identifying six specific combinations of social status and social distance that offer essential insights into cultural differences in phatic communication. In situations where social status is equal and social distance is close, both cultures demonstrate care and consideration through inquiries. However, Indonesians often incorporate humor in their responses. In gossip situations, Indonesians use direct statements, whereas Australians are more likely to initiate conversations with questions. During farewells, Australians tend to use representative and expressive speech acts, such as apologies, while Indonesians prefer directive speech acts over expressive ones.

When examining equal social status and neutral social relations, the study reveals differences in how each culture reacts to uncomfortable situations and attempts to alleviate social discomfort. Both Indonesians and Australians use directives, representatives, and expressives; however, Indonesians tend to prefer direct directives, while Australians lean towards indirect directives. These differences are shaped by cultural norms and communication styles unique to each culture. In Indonesian culture, as noted by de Groot et al. (2021), there is a stronger emphasis on direct communication to express clarity and maintain social harmony, even when addressing potentially uncomfortable topics. In contrast, Lewis (2006) points out that Australian culture often prioritizes indirect communication to avoid imposing on others or to maintain a more relaxed, non-confrontational atmosphere. To ease awkwardness, Australians often use questions, representatives, and expressives, while Indonesians employ a mix of directives,

representatives, questions, and expressives. Additionally, conversation topics differ: Australians typically discuss weekend plans and hobbies, whereas Indonesians are more likely to engage in gossip. As Slatter (2021) discusses, these variations can also be attributed to cultural tendencies; Indonesians use more casual and socially bonding topics like gossip to strengthen interpersonal connections, while Australians focus on neutral topics like weekend activities to maintain a light and non-intrusive conversational tone.

The analysis of equal social status and distant social relations shows that both cultures primarily use directives and expressives when asking for help from strangers. However, Australian students employ various forms of expressives, such as apologizing and thanking, while Indonesian students tend to use thanking exclusively. In scenarios where the speaker has higher social status and distant social distance, both cultures employ similar speech acts, including questions, representatives, and expressives. Similarly, when dealing with individuals of lower social status and distant social distance, both cultures respond similarly in asking for help and providing responses.

When the speaker has higher social status and neutral social relations, both cultures predominantly use questions when providing help. However, when giving opinions, Australians express understanding and appreciation before stating their opinion, while Indonesians offer direct responses or convey their point of view directly. When making requests, both cultures employ representative speech acts, but Indonesians add commissives to their responses.

Regarding phatic functions, Australians demonstrate a broader range, comprising a total of 287 instances, while Indonesians account for 269 instances. Australians more frequently prioritize initiating contact, maintaining conversations, creating a sense of comfort, displaying empathy, demonstrating respect, and adhering to etiquette norms compared to Indonesians. Conversely, Indonesians excel in avoiding silence, starting conversations, engaging in casual dialogue, gossiping, expressing unity, cultivating interpersonal relationships, and establishing harmony.

This research successfully integrates the theoretical frameworks of phatic communication and cross-cultural pragmatics to conduct a thorough comparative investigation of the use of phatic communication among individuals from Indonesia and Australia, taking into account their unique cultural contexts. Findings from this discussion illustrate how cultural backgrounds influence phatic communication. Indonesian and Australian students exhibit distinct communication patterns shaped by their cultural contexts. Unlike previous studies that focused solely on one cultural setting, this comparative research provides valuable insights into the differences and similarities between two cultures. While this study and prior research share similar theoretical foundations in identifying phatic forms and functions, this study stands out due to its comparison of two distinct cultures, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural backgrounds influence phatic

communication. The study's findings, which encompass all twelve phatic functions, align with previous research, notably the work of Hamdin (2016), despite focusing on different cultural contexts. This research contributes to the broader field of linguistics by promoting diverse perspectives on understanding phatic communication across cultures.

CONCLUSIONS

This research identified distinct patterns in the use of phatic expressions among Indonesian and Australian students, highlighting how cultural backgrounds and social contexts shape communication styles. Australian students primarily use phatic functions to initiate and maintain conversations, emphasizing comfort, respect, and empathy. In contrast, Indonesian students prioritize functions that promote social harmony, casual discourse, and interpersonal relationships. Both groups utilize a range of speech acts, including representatives, commissives, directives, expressives, and questions, but rarely use declarations, reflecting the limited authoritative roles students have in their interactions.

The findings indicate that cultural and religious values significantly influence phatic communication, particularly among Indonesian students. Social factors such as status and distance also play crucial roles in determining the choice of phatic functions and forms. While there are some similarities in how Indonesian and Australian students communicate with those perceived as socially distant, their approaches vary according to specific contexts. This research offers valuable insights into the complex interplay between culture, social factors, and language, providing a deeper understanding that can improve intercultural interactions, reduce misunderstandings, and enhance communication effectiveness in diverse settings.

Future research could expand on these findings by exploring phatic communication across a wider range of cultural contexts, thus gaining a more comprehensive understanding of global variations. Investigating diverse social settings beyond academic environments, such as professional or digital spaces, could also offer broader perspectives on the use of phatic expressions in different situations. Moreover, examining age and gender differences might reveal unique patterns in phatic communication not covered in this study. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how phatic communication evolves over time, especially with prolonged exposure to different cultures. Additionally, experimental methods that manipulate social variables like status or distance could help establish clearer causality in the use of phatic expressions.

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