

PHATIC TALKS OF JAVANESE WOMEN IN INTERNET-MEDIATED-COMMUNICATION: A CYBERPRAGMATICS PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Javanese women perform peculiar strategies in conducting phatic talks in internet-mediated communication (IMC). The Javanese cultural norm boundaries influence the strategies of phatic speech act and their politeness strategies in IMC. Therefore, the types of phatic talks and the politeness strategies attached to each type of phatic talk are interesting to explore. The source of data for this qualitative research was the five WhatsApp Group (WAG). The data were 252 phatic talks taken from the IMC virtual texts of Javanese women. The respondents were 66 Javanese women aged between 20-50 who are members of the WAGs. The observation method is applied to collect the data. The virtual texts with the virtual tokens that occurred were transcribed for textual analysis. The Cyberpragmatics approach along with the Javanese politeness maxims was implemented for data analysis. The types of phatic talks found in IMC are classified into greetings, congratulations, compliments, condolences, supports, and jokes. Politeness strategies performed by Javanese women in IMC have specific characteristics based on the traditional Javanese politeness maxims of Kurmat (Respect), Tepa Selira (Tolerance), Andhap Asor (Humility), Empan Papan (Self-Awareness), and Grapyak (Friendliness). The IMC phatic talks among Javanese women are the strategy to maintain a social bond. To this extent, the phatic talks are not only a strategy of ice-breaking but also an expression of personality identification of Javanese women who ought to be friendly and caring in all circumstances. Therefore, the phatic talks in IMC might not only a means for social networking but also a strategy to preserve the cultural identity of Javanese women.

Keywords: *phatic talk, Javanese women, internet-mediated-communication, cyberpragmatics*

INTRODUCTION

Phatic talk is an effort to build a social bond among members of the community. To this extent, greetings, ice-breakings, farewells, and other polite formulas are the common strategies in conducting phatic talk (Kreidler, 1998). The massive change of communication channel due to the rapid development of information technology make Javanese use different strategies in performing phatic talks. The parameter of politeness value is shifted as well. This phenomenon is an interesting topic on cyberpragmatics.

The Cyberpragmatics approach focuses on the role of the speaker's intentions and the quality of the addressee's interpretation when the internet-mediated interactions take place (Yus, 2011). In other words, cyberpragmatics studies how senders and addressees engage in an act of sense-making in cyber-media on a scale of contextualization ranging from highly context-saturated media (videoconferencing, internet-enabled phone calls, chat rooms with webcam, etc.) to highly cues-filtered text-based media (traditional chat rooms, e-mail, instant messaging, etc.) (Locher, 2013; Yus, 2011).

Consequently, the analysis of conversational data with the cyberpragmatics approach requires particular virtual contexts due to the lack of physical contact in virtual communication. The elements and functions of the context might shift and change so that the meaning of speech intentions in cyberpragmatics might also change (Rahardi, 2020). The other significant feature of cyberpragmatics contexts is the use of virtual typographical tokens, e.g. smileys, emoji, emoticon, avatar, GIF, and virtual stickers. The tokens replace physical contact to clarify meaning in virtual communication that also contributes to politeness performance. Therefore, the cyberpragmatics context accommodates the research on virtual politeness.

A previous study on cyberpragmatics discussed the typographic alterations from an informal Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC) to a more formal context. The result shows that variation is less versatile in the formal context than in the informal one (e.g. chats) where other types of variation like capitalization, abbreviations, acronyms, or imitations of a register (e.g. *kinda*) are pervasive

(Maíz-Arévalo, 2015). This prior study applied the cyberpragmatics approach since it included typographic variation –e.g. emoticons, repetitions, and onomatopoeia in the analysis. The next study discussed the compliment response of Balinese women on social media (Sartini, 2019). The result described the strategies of compliment response without explaining much about the importance of virtual elements in the virtual context concerning the response. The current research of cyberpragmatics concerning politeness in virtual public communication shows that positive politeness is the polarity of politeness that is mostly used whereas negative politeness is still outnumbered even with the bald strategy (Zainurrahman & Mintesya, 2020). The more specific study on cyberpragmatics concerning Javanese cultural politeness is interesting to discuss since Javanese is the dominant population in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to explore more about the use of Javanese politeness maxims in a virtual context.

Javanese is a community that always considers harmony as the priority in establishing social rapport. The study presents a discussion of phatic talk in Internet-Mediated-Communication (IMC) on a gender basis since the focus is on Javanese women. Javanese women consider phatic communication is crucial in maintaining and promoting solidarity (Widiana, Sumarlam, Marmanto, Purnanto, & Sulaiman, 2020). Therefore, phatic talk is a means to establish a social bond since it has various functions such as initiating a conversation, intensifying camaraderie, pleasing others, expressing happiness, and consoling others (Widiana et al., 2020). The various functions of phatic talk contribute to the topic selection and characteristics of daily small talks among women. Tannen (1992) notices that the topics for small talk among women are mostly related to personal aspects of their life, their troubles, and their secrets. The previous research was conducted based on the direct communication in which the interlocutors had face-to-face communication. On the contrary, this study focuses on online communication where the phatic talks occur in the form of virtual texts and tokens. The main discussion is describing the types of phatic talk and the politeness strategies in a virtual context of Javanese women. Therefore, the cyberpragmatics approach is suitable for the data analysis of this study.

METHODOLOGY

The observation method was utilized to obtain the data of the virtual conversational text. The screenshots of virtual texts were transcribed for textual analysis. The data were taken from five WhatsApp Group (WAG). The respondents were 66 Javanese female members of the WAGs aged between 30 to 50. 252 virtual texts of phatic talks were collected from the WAGs.

The analytical procedure was conducted within a cyberpragmatics framework by the adaptation of Leech's (1983) means-end method and a heuristic method. The analytical procedure diagram is provided in Figure 1.

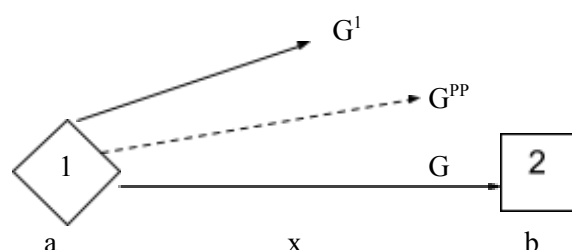


FIGURE 1. Means-ends analytical procedure (Leech, 1983)

1 =	Initial state	G =	goal of attaining
a =	speaker's action	G ^{PP} =	goal of preserving the Politeness Principles
b =	hearer's action	G ^I =	further goal (unspecified)
2 =	Final state		

The means-ends analysis aims to gain a problem solving both from the speaker's point of view and the hearer's point of view. The problem-solving from the speaker's point of view is a plan (illocutionary act) to get the most likely result (perlocutionary act) by producing certain utterances (locutionary act). From the hearer's point of view, problem-solving refers to the interpretation of the

hearer's mental state to comprehend the most likely reason for the speaker's saying certain utterances. The scale describes the means-end chain connecting the speech act to its goal. In addition to the goal of attaining, the speaker could perform the act of preserving the politeness principles (G^{PP}) to maintain good social relations. In phatic talks, the G^{PP} is the main goal. The other probability potential goal is marked with G^1 . The process is started at number 1 and completed at number 2. The perlocutionary act or the effect of the speaker's speech act is analyzed by the heuristic method. To this extent, the response of the hearer to the speaker's phatic utterances is the perlocutionary act. The cyberpragmatics context comprising the social status of the interlocutors, the form of utterances, and the virtual typographical tokens are taken into consideration to analyze the implementation of politeness maxims. Concerning politeness, the traditional maxims utilized by Javanese women in phatic communication were discussed based on the Javanese principles of *Kurmat* (respect), *Tepa Selira* (tolerance), *Andhap Asor* (humility), and *empan papan* (self-awareness), and *Grapyak* (friendliness) (Gunarwan, 2007; Sutarsih, 2010). The previous theory of positive politeness and negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) was implemented as well to compare to the Javanese traditional maxims.

ANALYSIS

The respondents utilized the Javanese politeness maxims in a virtual context of phatic talks. The types of phatic talks found in virtual texts are greetings, congratulations, compliments, condolences, supports, and jokes. The discussion of each type of phatic talks and politeness maxims attached to them is provided in the following parts.

Greetings

Greetings are the most frequent type of phatic talk found in the virtual context of WAG texts. It functions to open the conversation thread. The greetings consist of polite formulas such as *Selamat Pagi* 'Good Morning', *Salam sehat* 'Stay healthy', and good wishes *Semoga kita selalu sehat* 'Wish we are always healthy'. During the pandemic, greetings related to health were frequently found in the texts. The following datum provided the example

R07: *Moga sehat2 semua ya di group ini..(Praying hands token)* 🙏
'Wish everybody in this group always be healthy'

R08: *Aamiin Ya Rahman Ya Rahim (Praying hands token)* 🙏
'Amen'

R09: *Aamiin...Aamiin...(Praying hands and folded hands token)* 🙏 🙏
'Amen...Amen'.

R07 is a member of a female WAG consisting of university acquaintances. She was just added by the group admin to the WAG. R08 greeted R07 by saying *Welcome R07. Piye kabarmu?* 'Welcome R07. How are you?'. R07 responded R08 by saying *Alhamdulillah, fine* 'Thank God, fine'. Then, R07 continued to greet all the WAG members by uttering *Moga sehat2 semua ya di group ini* 'Wish all the members of this group be healthy'. To emphasize the greetings containing a prayer, R07 added the tokens of praying hands. Responding to R07, R08 and R09 uttered 'Amen'. Both 08 and R09 used praying hands and folded hands tokens as a praying symbol. The G^{PP} of this phatic talk is achieved since R08 and R09 gave a response to R07's prayer. In this case, the maxim of *Tepa Selira* was implemented to express solidarity among the members of the WAG. Expressing solidarity is a negative politeness strategy.

Congratulations

The other type of phatic talk is congratulations. The function is to express the positive politeness of the hearer's good conditions or achievement. Congratulations were performed for special moments or achievements such as graduation, getting a newborn baby, and birthday wishes. The example could be seen in the message thread as follows.

- R15: *Masya Allah (Red Love) ❤️ sehat selalu baby, mommy, kalian sekeluarga.*
 ‘My goodness, may the baby, the mommy, and all the family always be healthy.’
- R16: *Amin amin amin Ya Allah... (Eye Heart Smiley) 😍*
 ‘Amen amen amen.’
- R17: *Masya Allah..Tabarakallah ya mbak (in love Smiley) 😍. Lihat bayi imut gini nggarai pingin nambah.*
 ‘My goodness..how lucky you are. Seeing this cute baby makes me want to have another baby.’
- R16: *Nambah Budok (Raised Fist) 🙌 Asikk punya baby, berasa punya boneka.*
 ‘You should have another baby, doc. It’s fun to have a baby, feels like having a doll’.

R15, R16, R17 are members of Muslim women WAG. R16 who just delivered her fourth baby boy posted the picture of her newborn baby at the WAG. R15 and R17 gave comments to the baby. R15 expressed congratulations and sent a prayer to the baby, the mother, and the family. R17 congratulated R16 for the newborn baby and she said that she wanted to have another baby after seeing R16’s baby. The G^{PP} of this phatic speech act was obtained when R16 uttered ‘Amen’ to the prayer. Moreover, R16 supported R17 to have another baby by uttering *Nambah Budok* ‘Get another baby, doc’ *Budok* means Bu Dokter, a call for R17 who is a dentist. The raised fist token 🙌 was used to emphasize the support for R17 to get another baby. Congratulations are the implementation of *Kurmat* since it exposes respect to other’s achievements in life.

Compliments

Compliments were uttered for the members of WAG who gained success and perform good things. The following example explained compliments phatic talk. One of the members of the WAG posted some graduation pictures. R23 and R24 were on the pictures.

- R23: *Satu lagi yang terkerreeen dari @shafiraphotography dan mb @Winda Agusta Foto*
 ‘Another masterpiece from @shafiraphotography and @Winda Agusta Foto
- R24: *(In love Smiley) 😍*
- R25: *(Eye Heart Smiley) 😍 (Lucuuk lucuuk yaahhh. Kece emang Shafira (Thumb Up) 👍*
 ‘So cute. Shafira is cool.’

The love tokens were used in the texts to intensify the compliments since R23, R24, and R25 liked the pictures produced by a photo studio that belongs to one of the members of the WAG. Compliments are the act of positive politeness and the implementation of the Javanese *Kurmat* maxim since compliments would raise one’s self-esteem and respect.

Condolences

One of the common phatic talks found in WAG is condolences. It functions to give sympathy.

- R41: *Innalillahi wa inna ilaihi raji’un. Semoga husnul khatimah, aamiin (Praying Hands) 🙏*
 ‘Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return. May he rest in peace.’
- R42: *Ndherek bela sungkawa. Semoga almarhum husnul khātimah, dilapangkan kuburnya, diampuni dosanya, diterima amal ibadahnya. Keluarga yang ditinggalkan diberi ketabahan. Āmīn...*
 ‘My deepest sympathy. May he rest in peace, God gives him mercy. May my condolences bring you comfort, and may my prayers ease the pain of this loss. Amen.’
- R43: *Aamiin Yaa Mujiibas Saailiin. Teman-teman, terimakasih doanya utk Bapak, jazakillah khair.*
 ‘Amen. My friends, thank you very much for the prayer to my late father.’

R41 and R42 uttered condolences for R43 when her father passed away. The Praying Hands token written by R41 in the text symbolized that she sent a prayer for the one who just passed away. The G^{PP} was achieved since R43 gave a response for the condolences by uttering Amen and thanking her friends for all the condolences. The phatic talk of condolences is the implementation of *Tepa Selira* maxim since it aims to express tolerance and sympathy for bad circumstances.

Supports

Another implementation of the Javanese politeness maxim is the phatic talk of giving supports. The following virtual text contained supports.

R58: *Alhamdulillah, selamat untuk teman2 yang sdh selesai, barakallah untuk semua.*

‘Thank God, congratulations to all friends who had already graduated. May God bless you all.’

R59: *Untuk yang belum lulus semangattt (Strong hand) 🦵 semoga segera selesai studinya. Aamiin Ya Rahman Ya Rahim.*

‘For those who haven’t graduated yet, keep your spirits up. Hope you could finish your study soon. Amen.’

The text was taken from the WAG of the university classmates. R58 congratulated the members who had already graduated whereas R59 gave support to those who have not accomplished their study. The strong hand token intensified the support. The phatic talk of giving supports implemented the maxim of *Tepa Selira* (Tolerance) and it is a negative politeness strategy.

Jokes

Phatic talk in the form of jokes was also found in the message thread of WAG. The example is provided as follows.

R33: *Burung merpati, burung unta....selamat pagi sugeng bekerja gaess..*

‘Pigeon, ostrich....good morning happy working guys.’

R34: *Esuk-esuk wis ngudang manuk 😊*

‘Early morning...you had already played with a bird.’

R33: *Ucul ki mau 😊 😊*

‘The bird was escaped.’

The virtual texts were taken from the WAG of university alumni. R33 opened the conversation in the morning by writing a pun for sending greetings. R34 responded to the greetings by a joke related to the pun. The G^{PP} was obtained since R33 responded to the joke with another joke. Posting a joke in WAG is an effort of being friendly or *Grapyak* that is the expected personality of Javanese women. It was also the implementation of negative politeness.

CONCLUSION

Phatic talks among Javanese women in virtual communication as well as in face-to-face communication aim to establish social rapport. The types are greetings, congratulations, compliments, condolences, supports, and jokes. Greetings were the most frequently found in the data since the function was starting the conversation. On the contrary, condolences were the least because they must be attached to a specific condition, e.g. death.

The implementation of politeness maxims in the phatic talks of Javanese women WAG is an effort in establishing virtual social rapport. The virtual tokens attached to the virtual texts function as an intensifier to emphasize the intention of the message. The tokens are utilized to express the social bond to replace the physical gestures. Indeed, the capability in utilizing virtual tokens such as emojis, smileys,

stickers, and GIF appropriately is part of politeness itself. The improper use of virtual tokens is considered as Face Threatening Act (FTA) that potentially causes a conflict. The effectiveness of the virtual tokens to replace physical contact would be a lucrative object for further research on virtual politeness.

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