

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PHATIC EXPRESSIONS ACROSS DIFFERENT CULTURES IN ESTABLISHING SOCIAL BONDS AND POLITENESS

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Abstract

The present study means to explore phatic functions and the role of these phatic expressions in establishing social bonds and politeness in Pakistani culture with respect to the perspective of pragmatics. The research aims to analyze the use of phatic expressions in digital conversation especially with respect to maintaining social bonds and intimacy. It also focuses on the pragmatic functions of phatic expressions in maintaining politeness towards hearers' positive face. The study is qualitative in nature. The data for this research is conducted through online platforms such as WhatsApp and then analyzed using Laver's theory of phatic expressions and Scheff's Bond theory in order to put social interaction. The data analyzed in accordance with the theoretical rationale and results show positive and possible answers that these small talk interactions place an important role in the establishment of social interaction and politeness in online conversations among different people with the use of emojis and other small talk words.

Key Terms

Digital conversations, Phatic Expressions, Politeness, Social interaction,

Introduction

The role of phatic tokens is great in human communication especially when it comes to creating social relations and bonds among people and putting a sense of politeness to others' faces. The use of this kind of phatic expressions or phatic tokens seems less noticeable but it holds a considerable position and importance in daily conversation among people in so many digital and online communications and conversations. The language is a means of communication along with it so many other functions, such as communicative, referential, performative in so many others. It is the language that is present with two main functional elements that are information and phatic. In any socio linguistics scenario the phatic function of language is of great importance. The phatic communication (Malinowski, 1923) tells about the social function of our daily life language in order to establish a social bond and rapport along with the vaccines of politeness.

Jacobson (1960) also discusses these small talk exchanges in daily conversations and names the term "phatic function" that helps a central position when it comes to the establishment and maintenance of communication and positive bonds among people. The concept of small talk is basically driven by Schneider (1997). He also talks about the developed concepts of Grammar that are especially related to the particular domains of small talk. The concept of small talk is very much significant and it is analyzed by so many other languages such as Laver and Holmes. Laver's analysis of small talk is basically related to the concept of pragmatic aspects or context of the talk in which it is being uttered. On the other hand, Holme's concept of small talk is a little different from the road. It is because he aims to analyze the face threatening acts in some cultures such as in American people's responses in terms of putting politeness strategies.

The term Phatic expressions or phatic tokens is related to the acts of putting some extra words that are with little formally communicative purposes but they are a part of everyone's daily life conversations. People use these small talk interactions in their daily act of greetings, apologizing, gratitude, thanking turn taking and so many other respects. These phatic tokens are present in almost all the languages of the world with different communicative and interactive purposes and scenarios. NTR diversity of values and belief and their variation differ from one language to another. Some of the important things for the exact function and implication of these small talk interactions are the need of an interlocutor that will include an addressee along with an addresser on a particular or favorable place, time and event. There are some kinds of correlations between the participants of phatic tokens and the communication of phatic expressions that will take place in particular arrangements of participants. The cooperation and special patterns of participants is necessary in order to maintain politeness throughout the act of conversation. The time and space environment is very important for this purpose.

In phatic expressions the act of repetition as suggested by Parent (1967) imply positive politeness strategies towards the hearer and build an emotional agreement by putting stress and focus on the utterances produced by the speaker. Phatic communication is a part of and communicative function of cultures that is present in a diverse range. Every culture involves its particular and unique style of small talk among the individuals and this we can see a diversity among the use of phatic tokens that place an important role in putting positive politeness strategies towards the face of your listener or your addressee and playing an important part in establishing social bonds(Parent, 1967).

Just like other cultures, in Pakistani culture the phatic tokens and small talk play an important role in social interactions. They help maintain rapport, show politeness strategies, and establish a friendly atmosphere. Phatic expressions that are often used as conversation starters or fillers to keep the conversation going. They don't carry much literal or dictionary meaning but serve as social lubricants for the conversation. On the other hand, the act of "Small Talk" involves casual and light-hearted conversation about general topics that may be the weather, hobbies, or some other current events. It helps break the ice, build and maintain connections, and find common ground with others. Small talk is a way with which we can show interest in the other person's talk or conversation and create a comfortable environment for further talk exchange. In various cultures, including Pakistani culture, phatic tokens and small talk are commonly used to initiate conversations, show respect, and establish a friendly tone. They help create a sense of camaraderie and make interactions more enjoyable and interesting. Whether it's asking about someone's well-being, complimenting their appearance, or discussing shared interests, these conversational tools help foster positive social connections.

Statement of the Problem

The use of phatic tokens or we can say the phatic expressions that are also called as small talk conversations in our daily life that we do digitally in online scenarios through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and so many others is increasing day by day. A variety of these phatic tokens is used by social media users everyday. The study shows that there is any role of these tokens in the maintenance of social or societal bonds or especially with respect to the terms of politeness strategies.

Research Objectives

Here are the objectives for these research;

1. To describe the major phatic tokens used in Pakistani culture through digital platforms or in online conversations.
2. To describe the role of these phatic expressions in maintaining social bonds among people of Pakistan and establishing the essence of politeness.

Research Questions

Here are the research questions for the study;

1. What are the main Phatic Tokens or phatic expressions being used in Pakistani culture?
2. How do these Phatic Tokens or small talk expressions maintain social interactions, bonds and politeness strategies among Pakistani culture?

Significance of the Research

The significance of the research is describing the role of phatic tokens in maintaining social bonds and politeness. The study describes small talks as social cues that show respect, interest, and politeness in talks. By using phatic interactions, we can see the presence of others and create a friendly atmosphere. These tokens help establish rapport and build connections with others. They show that we value social interaction and are invested in maintaining a positive relationship.

Delimitation of the Research

The present study only focuses on the phatic tokens or phatic expressions that are being normalized in Pakistani culture and their role in maintaining societal bonds and social interactions among the individuals of Pakistan. The data for this research is only limited to the social media platform such as WhatsApp and it ignores all other cultures and their phatic expressions focusing only on the Pakistani one.

Literature Review

Rahardi (2019) explores phatic functions and language dignity among a culture based society in Indonesia through the use of pragmatic perspective. The study seeks to analyze Indonesian language with all its dialogues and vernaculars. The researcher used to search methods for this study named observation and interview method through basic and advanced techniques. The subject analyzes the data and after classifying and types of phatic tokens through the use of distributional analysis and equivalent analysis method a total number of 7 phatic functions found in this research includes joking apologizing complementing avoiding a farming demand and some others. Khan and Rubab et al. (2019) in their research "Mediating intimacy through the tokens in social media communication" explores the performance of the function in order to avoid conflict in any conversation and maintain harmony along with parents among the top exchanges in any community or society. They analyzed different types of phatic tokens that are being used by youth in online communications. They made Laver's and Scheff's theory as the basis of their research and collected a little corpus data among 10 participants for analysis. The results describe that an understanding of phatic tokens and communication is important in social interactions and maintaining social bonds. It also plays a part in minimizing the damages and politeness strategies avoiding conflict through the use of phatic communications.

Febrianto D, (2019) describes a pragmatic analysis of strategies of politeness in the use of humorous phatic expressions in order to analyze and investigate politeness strategies along with phatic functions in communication. Each of the phatic utterances is analyzed using solidarity and deference politeness strategies as given by Yule (1996). The research was descriptive qualitative

in nature and data was collected from sitcoms. The analysis took place using and analyzing the context or pragmatic aspects and also the analysis of every datum present in phatic expressions.

Alqinai J (2010) in his work about translation of phatic expressions explored various cultures such as English and Arabic and revealed the similarities and differences in the structure and frequency of the phatic expressions used in this culture. The analysis of the data reveal that there are more complimentary phrases along with electrical and non lexical expressions in Arabic language. The research also shows that there is a correlation among the phatic expressions and various abilities such as interlocutor, their background, topic choice and register. Furthermore, the study resulted in the exploration of international patterns, honorifics, patterns, titles and other aspects in the interpretation of phatic communication of languages through mass media too.

Halomoan S, (2022) in his analysis of phatic expressions explores the importance of phatic expressions, their classification and their difference from interjections. The data for this study was collected among greetings that are common to use by English speakers. The study was descriptive in nature and a kind of preliminary survey was conducted without analyzing the depth of data. The results of this study concluded that these expressions or introductions play a vital role in the maintenance and social interactions among the people. These are important and can be used in different places such as beginning, middle or at the end of sentences. Manzo G.F, (2014) conducted research in order to explore the discursive mechanism of Phatic communication in the maintenance of social bonds. The theoretical basis of this research was Scheff's sociological bond theory. The study focuses on the phaticity in conversation such as social media in order to build and balance social bones and interactions. The data collected for this research was secondary in nature that is taken from digital social media platforms. The result of the study shows the formal and structural characters of phatic communications and interactions.

Fadil A.Z, (2022), works on the function of Phatic communication in the English language in order to know whether this communication only informs or builds some kind of social bonds. The research focuses mainly on the communicative situations of phatic tokens and their functions along with education of the relationship between Phatic communication and politeness. The results of the research indicates that generally these phatic expressions are vital to maintain social bonds and humorous environments between the speakers. They are in fact a kind of societal or socially acceptable lubricants and serve not only for information but also make communication interactions more strong.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of "Phatic Communication" by Malinowski and Laver's theory of "Phatic Tokens" are the basis of this research in order to make a better understanding of the discursive mechanisms of discursive communications or talk exchange. The study focuses on the social function of language and how phatic tokens are used to establish and maintain social bonds rather than convey specific information. It emphasizes the importance of small talk in creating and sustaining social relationships. These theories shed light on the significance of phatic tokens and how they contribute to our everyday interactions.

Methods and Materials

The researcher aims to collect data for this research to the secondary sources of Data Collection such as social media platforms. The researcher selected WhatsApp as the main source of Data collection and data from the chats of Total number of 10 people is taken. The data is

analyzed accordingly using the theoretical frame as described above. The research is totally qualitative in nature and uses the descriptive analysis method to analyze the data.

Analysis of the Data

Two female Friends in a conversation use phatic expressions such as;

Friend 1; Jani,,,, Kider hey tu 🙄😏???

Friend 2; Hn Jani.. Mein Class mein hoon free hokar Tumhe reply Karti..❤

In the above conversation, the use of phatic tokens and expressions is clear with the use of emojis and words like ‘Jani’. The expressions used by the first friend Are playing a role and acting as a trigger to cause conflict such as it may Trigger the responses from the second friend in a suspected way. with the second friend choosing his heart as an expression and maintaining a social bond and stability in their conversation. In this type the expression created by the second friend who is actually a source of data collection for the researcher is called self created phatic expression.

The conversation between a student and a teacher in which one person attempt to maintain the social bond such as the responses given by the student are given as;

Student; Assalam Alaikum mam. How are you? mam I want to ask About the implication of models in my research. Can I implement entailment or preposition on this topic?

Teacher; yes

Student; Okie ma’am. Now I have to change the topic and apply the model?

Teacher; yep. In this conversation between an instructor and its student is going on and the student is trying to maintain a bond and social interaction through the use of phatic tokens such as “Assalam Alaikum” along with “ how are you?” and “Okie”. In Pakistani culture these are some of the most frequently used phatic expressions that are noticeable.

A girl approach her video on WhatsApp status and she got responses from different contacts such as given below;

Person 1; MashaAllllaaaahhhhhh along with 5-6 kiss emojis

Person 2; Sabse pyari —

Person 3; An original heart emoji and a red heart emoji

Person 4; A sticker of heart on which an Islamic word “**Mashallah**” is written and on its one side there are three Red Roses.

Person 5; “ Aisi Pyari pics meri bhi click Karne Wale friends mujhe bhi chahiye” log with a sad emoji.

In response to all these comments, The person or the girl who uploaded the video just replies A Red Heart or some kind of emoji saying nothing. In this kind of interaction the words like Mashallah, Pyari, nice, cute, stickers and emojis are the main static expressions and small talk that are maintaining a sense of union and avoiding conflict among the users of digital media platforms. All the types of tokens that are used in the above example are created by the others as a response to your status and thus they are all called as other oriented phatic tokens. These also come under the category of neutral tokens.

Now see another example of a conversation between a teacher and a student in which the teacher messages first to the student such as;

Teacher; Hey (name of the student)... U there?

Student; Assalamu Alaikum mam..

Khairiyat mam?

In this scenario, the reply given by the student starts with greetings such as it is common in Islamic culture to say Assalamu Alaikum which means “Peace be upon you”. Although the teacher is not using such interactive words, the student is trying to use the phatic tokens that are important to build a conversational harmony between the teacher and the student. In this case the student is using phatic expressions by himself so this type of interaction can be named as Self oriented tokens of the student.

Discussions and Findings

The role of phatic expressions and phatic tokens in maintaining social bonds is noteworthy. These little linguistic tools are like the secret ingredients that make our relationships extra special. When we use phatic expressions, such as greetings and small talk, we're not just exchanging pleasantries - we're actually building a connection. By acknowledging someone's presence and showing interest in their day with a simple "Hey, how's it going?" or "What's up?", we create an initial bond that sets the stage for further interaction. It's like a social handshake. They also help us make rapport and create a positive impression such as politeness to others' faces. When we give compliments or use polite phrases, we're showing others that we appreciate and value them.

The polite gestures of kindness and respect go a long way in strengthening our social bonds and making others feel good about themselves. These are able to express empathy and support. When we offer well-wishes or express gratitude, we're showing that we genuinely care about others' well-being and appreciate their actions. These little acts of kindness and gratitude create a sense of warmth and connection, making our relationships even stronger. Do not forget that phatic expressions also play a role in facilitating communication. By using these tokens, we create a friendly and welcoming environment that encourages open and meaningful conversations. It's like setting the stage for a great chat with a friend. When we start with a warm greeting or a kind phrase, it makes it easier for us to express our thoughts and feelings, knowing that we're in a safe and supportive space.

Conclusions

To conclude we can say that the role of phatic expressions in maintaining social introductions among individuals of a society or we can say Pakistani society suggests we have discussed about all the phatic expressions that are commonly used in the communications or conversation between the Pakistani people in an important position. People use these small talk interactions in their daily life in order to put a positive politeness strategy towards the next person's face. As a result the conflict is avoided and the essence of social stability is being established and maintained through the use of these tokens.

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