

Intrusive Busybody or Benevolent Buddy: Phatic Communication among Javanese Women

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ABSTRACT

Phatic communication is a discourse mechanism used primarily to establish and maintain social bonds. It operates differently across societies as well as genders within the same society. Thus, failure to understand such differences might result in misunderstanding and communication breakdowns. This paper discusses the phatic communication of the Javanese, the largest ethnic group in Indonesia. We focus primarily on the Javanese women who represent the majority of the Javanese population. Understanding the unique characteristics of their phatic communication would certainly play an important role in the cross-cultural network. The sociopragmatic approach is used for the analytical procedure to scrutinize the characteristics of Javanese women's phatic communication and the data are collected by taking field notes, conducting in-depth interviews, and distributing Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT) questionnaire. The findings show that Javanese women use phatic communication for initiating a conversation, intensifying camaraderie, pleasing others, expressing happiness, and consoling others. The main function is to sustain social rapport. Some phatic talk topics that may be regarded in certain cultures as intrusive and humiliating, such as those which concern one's private life, are not considered so among Javanese women. To Javanese women, phatic communication is crucial in maintaining and promoting solidarity. Understanding phatic communication among Javanese women would contribute to successful cross-cultural communication in building social networks and business affairs, definitely.

Keywords: Javanese; women; phatic; communication; politeness

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INTRODUCTION

Early theory about phatic communication was introduced by Malinowski (1923) with his concept of ‘phatic communion’ as a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words. Accordingly, phatic communication is a conversation for its own sake or comments on what is perfectly obvious. In other words, phatic communication is an informal type of discourse that does not cover any functional topics of conversation or any transactions that need to be addressed. Kreidler (1998) supports Malinowski’s opinion by defining phatic communication as a speech act to sustain social relations among members of a speech community by using common phatic utterances such as greetings, farewells, and polite formulas in everyday conversation. Meanwhile, Holmes (2013a) reinforces Kreidler’s definition that phatic communication focuses more on the affective aspect than the referential aspect of communication as its emphasis is on spreading social messages instead of specific informative messages. In the more specific context among friends, phatic communication often supplies a minimum of information, but a maximum of the supportive chat (Aitchison, 1996). Although it is not very obvious, phatic communication plays an important role in establishing social rapport and managing interpersonal distance among members of a community with its various functions. Phatic communication, in general, is used to start a conversation, to break the silence, to gossip, to keep a conversation going, to show hospitality, to create harmony, to build comfort, to express empathy, to express friendship, to show respect, and to express politeness (Jumanto, 2014; Kreidler, 1998; Malinowski, 1923). The various purposes of phatic communication in building social rapport are likely related to politeness principles. In Malaysia, for instance, hospitality, especially towards foreigners is continuously campaigned for by the call for “Budi Bahasa Budaya Kita” (Politeness is our Culture) campaigns (Kuang, David, & Lau, 2013). Phatic communication is supposed to be part of performing hospitality concerning politeness convention in each culture. Therefore, the discussion of phatic communication is related to politeness.

Prior studies discuss politeness from different points of view. Leech (2014) introduced the General Strategy of Politeness (GSP) which focuses on strategies to establish harmony between speakers and hearers. GSP consists of ten politeness maxims which are more applicable to various cultures than the previous politeness theories. Accordingly, the locution (utterances), the illocution (intention), and the perlocution (effect) of phatic communication are observed based on the politeness principles on a cultural basis. The different functions of phatic communication concerning politeness principles determine the performance of phatic communication across culture. Meanwhile, politeness must be evaluated at the level of interaction which includes incrementality and sequentiality (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). The incrementality is conducted when speakers modify their phatic utterances based on the progressive units of talk of the hearers while sequentiality is seen from the understanding of the hearers in subsequent talk. Sequentiality is evaluated based on the response of the hearer to the speaker’s phatic expressions.

Since phatic talk is closely related to culture, Hymes (1972) criticizes Malinowski for not sufficiently acknowledging cultural differences in phatic talk. Jaworski (2000) reinforces Hyme’s opinion by providing abundant examples from other studies to support his claim that different communities use different degrees of prescribed small talk in the same types of sociable events. Hence, the characteristics of phatic communication are peculiar in each culture. The cultural norms and social values of different cultures would influence the phatic communication performance and even they would construct the self-identity of a community. Differences in the practice of phatic communication across culture might be related to topic selection. For instance, personal topics in small talk are common in an American context, but not in countries like the UK (Schneider, 2008). In the British context, comments on the weather

and daily routines commonly occur in the initial part of a conversation whereas topic related to food by asking a phatic question like ‘*dah makan?*’ (have you eaten yet?) is used to initiate a conversation in Malay (Sulaiman & Wilson, 2008). In other cultures such as Norwegian, phatic talk is preferably avoided as politeness is emphasized on the privacy of the interlocutor by not disturbing him/her with unnecessary talk, and when the talk is needed, it must be meaningful, genuine, to the point, and quiet rather than to engage in small talk (Rygg, 2016). Similarly, House (2005) found that Germans are less likely to engage in small talk and to find this polite. This is because politeness in German culture is related to being genuine and avoiding to tell a lie which implies that using a lot of phatic talks is to say things one does not really mean. The implication is phatic talk does not express sincerity which is considered less polite in the German context. Phatic talk in the German context has a different perspective from the concept of phatic communion coined by Malinowski.

Since phatic communication is peculiar in each culture, a sociopragmatic framework in analyzing phatic talk would be the appropriate approach. Sociopragmatics focuses on the study of the underlying norms of speaker and hearer meaning as reflected in the appropriate realization of speech act, the organization of conversation, politeness manifestation, and sociopragmatic variation (Reiter & Placencia, 2005). Phatic communication is considered as a speech act since it is uttered based on a particular purpose by a particular utterance to give a particular effect to the hearer. Since the realization of phatic communication is closely related to cultural background, the sociopragmatics approach is suitable in investigating phatic communication.

Differences in phatic communication can be categorized not only based on cultural aspects but also on gender. In the perspective of gender-based communication, women tend to be more orientated to or sensitive to the social messages conveyed by talk, while men tend to be primarily orientated to the referential or informative content (Holmes, 2013b). In the perspective of psychology, Gray (2017) emphasizes that women and men speak different languages. Their expressions might be similar, but they have different connotations and emotional emphasis. Previous studies on linguistic politeness also found that women and men have different purposes when they talk. Most women enjoy chatting and regard talking as an important means of keeping in touch, especially with friends. Women use language to establish, nurture, and develop personal relationships. On the other hand, men tend to see language more as a tool for obtaining and conveying information (Holmes, 2013b). Hence, if gender-based communication shows differences, it is likely that there are also differences in phatic communication across gender. Tannen (1992) notices the gender differences in small talk in terms of topic selection and characteristics. Topics for small talk among women may cover more personal aspects of their life, their troubles, and their secrets. This self-disclosure generates a closer relationship between them and is a signal of solidarity. For men, the topics relate to activities for exhibiting their skills, displaying their knowledge, and challenging and resisting challenges are more preferable. Moreover, Tannen notices that men tend to interact with the same gender in hierarchical groups. Verbal sparring matches, playful insults, and putdowns are signals of camaraderie without being taken as insults. Men's small talk tends to be more competitive. By contrast, women tend to be more collaborative than men in their social rapport. The different strategies for conducting phatic communication might cause misunderstandings and communication breakdowns between different gender. However, the characteristics of gender-basis communicative strategies from the previous research should not be overgeneralised. The cultural-basis research would shed light on the real communicative characteristics in particular culture.

Phatic communication in the Javanese community has peculiar characteristics in terms of cultural and gender perspectives. Javanese is culturally a collective society whose members are connected by social norms established by history, tradition, and religion (Endraswara,

2005). Therefore, solidarity and connectedness within a community, known as *Guyub* is a crucial aspect to establish a social bond. The Javanese are connected with everyone in the community and willing to share a brotherly bond. In performing phatic communication, Javanese put *rasa* (feeling) as the priority in keeping social relations. Hence, what Geertz (1976) calls ‘dissimulation or pretense’, or what the Javanese themselves call *étok-étok* is used as a politeness strategy to avoid imposition. This cultural norm of concealment, of not telling people any ‘gratuitous truths’ applies to the truth about one’s personal feelings, wishes, and intentions (Wierzbicka, 2003). Javanese politeness principles of *kurmat* (respect), *tepa selira* (tolerance), *andhap asor* (humility), and *empan papan* (self-awareness) (Gunarwan, 2007) are strictly obeyed to mitigate imposition. *Tepa Selira* is a willingness to show empathy in one’s circumstances. *Andhap asor* is a characteristic of modesty since showing off is perceived as unacceptable behavior for Javanese. In a collective society like Javanese, phatic communication is performed as a means to build a rapport to enlarge social network with new people and sustain existing social relations. Therefore, phatic talks are a communicative strategy to build social relations and establish harmony in life since Javanese are enthusiastic about social gatherings (Sutarsih, 2010). Moreover, Javanese uses phatic talk to represent themselves as having a charming personality; this is known as *grapyak* (friendliness) and *semanak* (warmth) (Sutarsih, 2010). *Grapyak* means making friends easily and *semanak* is a jovial characteristic that is shown by a willingness to greet each other in any situation. Phatic communication represents the Javanese identity marker both on a cultural and gender basis.

The construction of gender identity in Javanese society is determined by the role of each gender. Men, typically, do not involve themselves much in households whereas women have important roles as caregivers and hostesses (Smith-Hefner, 1988). Phatic communication in the Javanese speech community might show different characteristics due to different cultural values and societal norms that construct the identity of each gender that might influence the strategy of Javanese women in conducting phatic communication. The act of saving face is the fundamental principle of Javanese politeness especially for Javanese women since they are required to be more polite than men (Smith-Hefner, 1988). Consequently, they have their strategy to perform phatic communication based on Javanese cultural values. Current research about phatic communication in the workplace proves that Javanese working women construct their particular strategies to strengthen social togetherness within an interaction by utilizing phatic utterances such as greetings, invitations, comments, congratulations, and condolences (Masykuroh & Widyastuti, 2019). However, the research focuses only on phatic communication in the opening phase of the conversation and does not discuss the politeness aspect based on Javanese maxims that are significant for analyzing Javanese women’s phatic characteristics. It is interesting to explore more about the characteristics of Javanese women’s phatic communication since the study is not a major interest in this field. Javanese women are chosen as the main focus in this study as Javanese predominantly inhabits Java island, the center of governmental affairs, businesses, tourism, and education in Indonesia. Based on the latest inter-census population survey in 2015 by the Central Agency on Statistics of Indonesia, the population of Javanese women in Central Java Province and East Java Province is more than the men. Nowadays, Javanese women play important roles in many sectors. Comprehending the way Javanese women conducting their phatic communication would contribute to various fields such as business affairs, research collaboration, diplomatic negotiation, and tourism promotion.

Javanese cultural concepts and traditions concerning women, which originally have good intentions, are often used misleadingly by men so that it causes the misconception or even abuse of Javanese women since a lot of social restrictions have been ruled to control women behaviors and activities, in the name of cultural values and norms (Falah, 2009). In other words, Javanese women’s position is ruled by tradition. Previous research has found that women who

have not been married at a certain age, women who have no children and women who cannot cook, are often perceived as the ones who are not able to completely play their roles, and this often causes these women to be a target of critiques, humiliation and belittling comments (Yuarsi, Dzuhayatin, Ruhaini, & Sofiana, 2002). Hence, both unmarried and married women in Javanese society are bearing unfair psychological burden. Meanwhile, the fact that a previous study claimed to prove that gossiping is the custom of Javanese women (Lestari, Djatmika, Sumarlam, & Purnanto, 2019), has perpetuated the stereotype of women being busybodies. The gossip activity starts by opening the conversation with a question or statement before heading to the target person being discussed that directs others to get involved in the conversation (Lestari et al., 2019). Gossiping by Javanese women has a distinctive background, social culture, and tradition. Phatic communication among Javanese women might contain gossip that strengthens the stereotype. An explanation that reveals the genuine purpose of Javanese women in conducting phatic communication is needed. They might conduct phatic communication to interfere with people's personal life or just to make an effort at 'being nice' without any intention of interfering. This paper investigates both the purpose and characteristics. It is hoped that the result would contribute to the cross-cultural communicative strategy in dealing with Javanese women.

METHOD

The respondents for this research were 125 adult Javanese women aged between 18 and 45, living in Madiun, East Java. All respondents were native speakers of Javanese who were raised in a Javanese cultural environment. The data were obtained through three methods:

- (1) Non-participation-observation,
- (2) Semi-structured interviews, and
- (3) Discourse completion task (DCT) questionnaire.

The first step was conducting the non-participation-observation method to obtain conversational data that contained phatic utterances. It was conducted by passively observing and listening to the conversations of the respondents. Field notes and audio recordings of the conversations were taken with the permission of the respondents. These conversations took place in public places such as the university office, classroom, cafés, shopping malls as well as at social events such as reunion and birthday parties. The audio recording was later transcribed for textual analysis. The textual analysis of the primary data was complemented by the data obtained from both the semi-structured interview and the DCT questionnaire. After observation, the semi-structured interview was conducted on 10 selected respondents to elicit further information on their purpose of conducting phatic communication. The respondents were selected randomly since all respondents were of similar criteria. The last step was distributing the DCT questionnaire to 125 respondents to comprehend their perception of phatic communication in maintaining social rapport. The designed DCT consisted of 10 elicited settings to perform phatic talks for initiating a conversation, congratulating, complimenting, gossiping, advising, and the question about the importance of phatic talks.

The textual analysis was conducted within a sociopragmatic framework. The data were analyzed by adopting a means-end method and a heuristic method (Leech, 1983). The analytical procedure is illustrated in Figure 1.

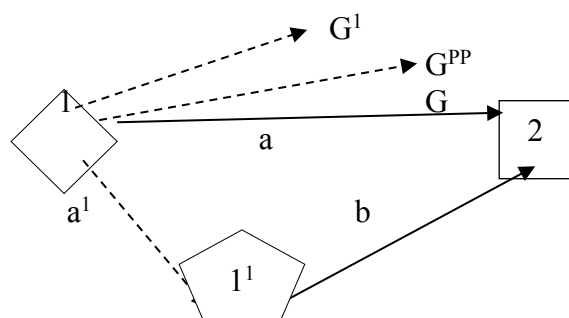


FIGURE 1. Means-ends analytical procedure (Leech, 1983)

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

The means-ends analysis aims to gain a problem solving both from the speaker's point of view (incrementality) and the hearer's point of view (sequentiality). 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). The hearer's point of view refers to the problem solving of the interpretation in the hearer's mental state to comprehend the most likely reason for the speaker's saying certain utterances. The scale describes the length of the means-end chain connecting the speech act to its goal. In addition to the goal, the speaker might perform the act of preserving the politeness principles (G^{PP}) to maintain good social relations. The other optional potential goal is marked with G¹. The process starts at number 1 and ends at number 2. However, the intermediate state that is marked by 1¹ might also occur before the final state at number 2. The perlocutionary act or the effect is analyzed based on the response of the hearer to the speaker's phatic utterances. Then, the politeness aspect in phatic communication among Javanese women was analyzed by employing Javanese philosophy of *Grapyak* (friendliness), *Semanak* (warmth), *Guyub* (Solidarity), *Tepa Selira* (Tolerance), *Andhap Asor* (humility) and adopting Leech's General Strategy of Politeness (GSP) maxims comprising M1 (generosity) 'give a high value to the hearer (O)'s wants', M2 (tact) 'give a low value to the speaker (S)'s wants', M3 (Approbation) 'give a high value to O's qualities', M4 (Modesty) 'give a low value to S's qualities, M5 (Obligation from speaker to hearer) 'give a high value to S's obligation to O', M6 (Obligation from hearer to speaker) 'give a low value to O's obligation to S, M7 (agreement) 'give a high value to O's opinions', M8 (opinion reticence) 'give a low value to S's opinions', M9 (sympathy) 'give a high value to O's feelings, and M10 (feeling reticence) 'give a low value to S's feelings'.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Phatic communication is a communicative strategy in Javanese women's everyday talk. The illocutions refer to particular functions that are performed by particular locutions. The main intended effect (perlocution) is sustaining social rapport. It is illustrated in Figure 2.

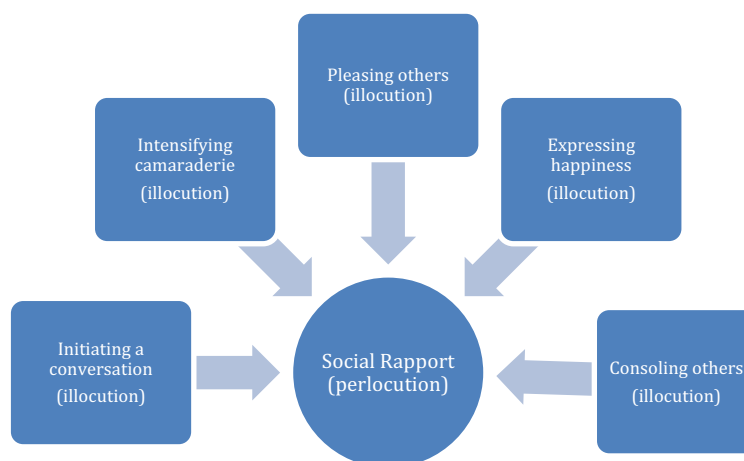


FIGURE 2. The functions of Javanese women phatic communication

The functions of phatic communication are performed by employing particular topics in a conversation. Table 1 provides a description.

TABLE 1. Functions and topics of Javanese women’s phatic communication

No.	Function (Illocutionary act)	Topics (Locutionary act)
1.	Initiating a conversation	Greetings, commenting on the weather
2.	Intensifying camaraderie	Asking about marital status, giving remarks on body-size (fat, thin), gossiping about physical appearances (clothes, makeup)
3.	Pleasing others	Giving compliments on physical appearance
4.	Expressing happiness	Congratulating for success, uttering birthday wishes, uttering good wishes
5.	Consoling others	Giving advice, showing empathy

120 (96%) out of 125 respondents stated in the DCT questionnaire that phatic communication is very important to maintain social rapport. Only 5 (4%) respondents considered phatic communication as unimportant talks as they believed that being benevolent was more about doing actions such as giving something and helping people than just performing friendly talks. The illocutions of phatic communication are classified into five types.

INITIATING A CONVERSATION

Conversations among Javanese women are initiated by greetings or comments about the weather. The following conversation between two female clerks in their 20’s at the mall is an example of how greetings are performed. The translation in English is provided for the convenience of the readers.

R11: *He, piye kabare?*
 ‘Hi, how are you?’

R12: *Apik-apik ae. Piye kabarmu?*
 ‘I’m good. How about you?’

R11: *Aku ya apik. Suwe ya awake dhewe ora ketemu.*
 ‘I’m fine too. It’s been a long time since we last met.’

The speaker initiated the conversation by the conventional form of greetings in Javanese, *Piye kabare?* (How are you?). Then, the hearer responded to the greetings by stating *Apik-apik ae* (I'm good) and continued the greetings by asking *Piye kabarmu?* (How about you?) to the speaker. A similar answer *Aku ya apik* (I'm fine too) was given by the speaker to state that she was fine. In this context, the goal (G) to initiate a conversation as well as the goal to preserve the politeness principles (G^{PP}) was achieved. Likely, the G and the G^{PP} were simultaneously achieved as the main G of phatic communication is achieving a social rapport. The description is as follows.

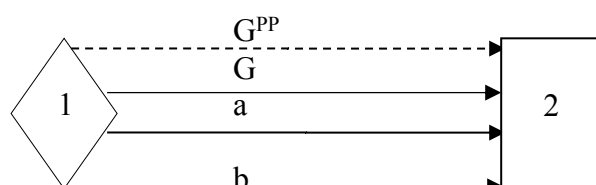


FIGURE 3. The means-end chain of initiating a conversation

G = initiating a conversation G^{PP} = delivering greetings
 1 = greetings is uttered a = uttering greetings b = responding greetings 2 = conversation is initiated

The positive response of the greetings from both speakers which indicated that they were in good condition was the intended perlocutionary act to achieve the goal of initiating a conversation as well as preserving politeness principles. The hearer applied the GSP maxim M6 that demanded the hearer to respond to the greetings. Responding greetings is also the realization of Javanese politeness *grapyak* (friendliness). Previous research has proved that greetings are used to initiate gossiping among Javanese women to attract others to get involved (Lestari et al., 2019) and function to express the closeness in a personal relationship (Masykuroh & Widyastuti, 2019). When interviewed, the respondents stated that both the questions and responses in their exchange of greetings were intended to initiate a conversation without any goal to share a piece of information or to be intrusive. Hence, their responses to such questions were always positive regardless of the actual condition of each interactant. This supports Wierzbicka's argument (2003) that Pollyanna questions in greetings are expected to be answered positively. The following is an excerpt from the interview¹ :

Interviewer: *Jika Anda menyapa teman dengan menanyakan kabar apakah Anda benar-benar bermaksud ingin mengetahui kabar teman Anda?*
 (If you greet your friend by asking about her life, do you really mean to know her real condition?).

Respondent 1: *Tidak. Hanya berbasa-basi saja. Kebiasaannya kan memang seperti itu. Nanya kabar terus dijawab kabar baik.*
 (No, I don't. This is just a small talk. It is like a habit if somebody asks about your life so that you've got to tell them that you are fine).

Initiating a conversation is also conducted by commenting on the weather. This is illustrated in the following conversation between two female university staff during their lunch break.

¹The interview is conducted in Indonesian and the English translation is provided here for the reader's convenience.

R3: *Isuk dhek mau udan ya?*
 ‘It was raining this morning, wasn’t it?’

R4: *Iya udan deres kawit isuk mau sekitar jam limaan.*
 ‘Yes. It was raining hard this morning around five.’

The speaker’s illocution to initiate the conversation (G) was commenced by asking *Isuk dhek mau udan ya?* (It was raining this morning, wasn’t it?) as the act to perform politeness (G^{PP}). The topic of weather in the initial state obtained the intended perlocutionary act in the final state when the hearer responded *Iya udan deres kawit isuk mau sekitar jam limaan* (Yes. It was raining hard this morning around five). The speaker stated something that had already been obvious for both sides. The locution did not contain any specific information as the illocution was to commence a conversation. The G and the G^{PP} were achieved simultaneously when the conversation was initiated.

The agreement in the hearer’s answer was the M7 strategy of GSP that demanded the hearer to show agreement on the speaker’s statement. Uttering agreement reflects the Javanese philosophy of *Guyub* (solidarity). This confirms that Javanese women prefer less conflicts in social interaction than having to argue with others (Lestari et al., 2019). The elicited data from the DCT shows that the respondents consider uttering greetings an effective strategy to initiate a conversation. Furthermore, greeting people is an obligation as it reflects the warm personality of Javanese women (*semanak*).

INTENSIFYING CAMARADERIE

After a conversation is initiated, it might be extended to fulfill another function namely intensifying camaraderie. One of the topics of this function is marital status. The following conversation between two Javanese women in their 20s at the mall shows how the conversation was extended to intensify camaraderie.

R11: *Kowe wis nikah durung?*
 ‘Are you married?’

R12: *Adhuh [paused] durung ki. Lha awakmu piye?*
 ‘Alas [paused] not yet. How about you?’

R11: *Lo kok padha ta. Tak pikir awakmu wis nikah.*
 ‘I am not either. I thought you are married.’

In the initial state, the speaker asked about the hearer’s marital status. Then, the hearer responded to the question by stating her single status and asked about the speaker’s status. Responding to the hearer, the speaker performed further action by stating the same single status. The phatic communication, therefore, achieved the main goal (G) as well as the goal of preserving the politeness (G^{PP}). The description is in Figure 4.

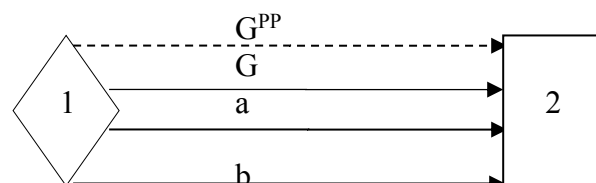


FIGURE 4. The means-end chain of intensifying camaraderie

G = intensifying camaraderie G^{PP} = asking personal topic
 1 = question of marital status a = speaker asks marital status b = hearer states marital status
 2 = camaraderie is intensified

The phatic ritual with a personal topic is peculiar to the informal context and the friendly atmosphere of the speaker and hearer with a similar gender. The findings show that marital status is a common topic for small talk. Although Yuarsi et al. (2002) has noted that Javanese women who have not been married at a certain age are a target of critiques, humiliation and belittling comments, both speakers in the previous dialogue are young women in their 20's, the topic of marital status in this phatic communication was therefore public and could be asked freely without the emerging of Face Threatening Act (FTA). Moreover, asking about marital status is a form of benevolence as Javanese women are expected to be considerate due to their role as a caregiver (Smith-Hefner, 1988). As both interlocutors were still single, the speaker responded to the hearer's answer by stating *Lo kok padha ta* (I am not either). This response that indicated similarity was a signal of solidarity. Phatic communication among Javanese women put similarities and agreements as a strategy to express solidarity as the application of the Javanese politeness philosophy of *Guyub* (solidarity). This was also the realization of Leech's GSP maxim M7 (agreement) that suggested the speaker gave the hearer's statement a high value. The speaker's goal to be benevolent by asking about the hearer's marital status resulted in the intended perlocutionary act in the final state when the hearer gave the required response of her marital status without being insulted. The personal topic occurred without any precedent topic that might initiate the topic of marriage since it merely aimed to build an intimate situation instead of digging for personal information. Therefore, the topic was not continued to a more detailed discussion. The respondent's answer to the in-depth interview supports this argument.

Interviewer: *Mengapa Anda bertanya tentang status pernikahan sewaktu menyapa teman Anda?*
(Why did you ask about your friend's marital status when you greet her?)

Respondent 2: *Supaya akrab aja. Kan kita lama tidak bertemu.*
(It's just to build camaraderie because it's been a long time we hadn't seen each other)

Interviewer: *Apakah Anda punya maksud untuk tahu lebih dalam tentang kehidupan pribadi teman Anda tadi?*
(Did you have any intention to dig more information about your friend's personal life?)

Respondent 2: *Ah, nggak. Itu cuma pertanyaan basa-basi aja. Kan cewek seumurannya kita seharusnya memang sudah menikah.*
(Not at all. It's just chit-chat. I think it's normal if women of our age have already got married.)

Intensifying camaraderie could also be conducted by giving remarks related to body-size. This is illustrated in the following conversation between two Javanese women at a reunion party.

R51: *Mbak, saiki kok malih lemu ta? Makmur ki ketoke.*
'Mbak, you look fat now. I believe you live a prosperous life.'

R52: *Alhamdulillah.*
'Praise is to Allah.'

The initial state started by a remark *Mbak, saiki kok malih lemu ta?* (*Mbak, you look fat now*). Then, the hearer responded to the speaker's remarks by stating *Alhamdulillah* (Praise is to Allah) that implied gratitude. This response indicated the agreement on the speaker's remarks. Thus, the goal of the speaker to intensify camaraderie was achieved since the hearer accepted the remarks positively. The remarks were not a body-shaming insult but the expression to praise the hearer's fortune in life. In the final state, the goal (G) was achieved when the hearer gave a positive response to the remark. Meanwhile, the goal of preserving politeness (G^{PP}) was obtained since the hearer considered the remarks as a compliment instead of an insult.

Remarks on being overweight tend to be considered body-shaming in American and European contexts. However, such remarks are not an insult for Javanese women. An interview respondent claimed that the remark is a praise of a prosperous life since gaining weight is related to prosperity as opposed to losing weight that implies poverty or misery. The related interview is as follows.

Interviewer: *Apakah Anda tersinggung jika teman Anda bilang kalau Anda kelihatan gemuk sewaktu menyapa Anda?*
(Will you be insulted if your friend says that you look fat when she greets you?)

Respondent 2: *Nggak karena itu kan cuma sapaan dan artinya hidup saya makmur makanya gemuk. Kalau kelihatan kurus berarti hidupnya gak bahagia.*
(No, I won't because it is just a friendly remark. If I look fat, it means I live a prosperous life as opposes to looking thin that indicates a miserable life.)

Thus, the speaker's remark did not have anything to do with body-shaming. Besides, it was followed by another remark *Makmur ki ketoke* (I believe you live a prosperous life.). Giving remarks is the realization of GSP maxim M3 to give a high value to somebody's qualities. In Javanese culture, praising others for their prosperity is an effort to show hospitality which is known as *Grapyak* (friendliness).

Intensifying camaraderie might also be conducted by gossiping. Although Lestari et al.'s (2019) study has shown that gossiping is a habit of Javanese women, it has also shown that gossiping is an effort to build a friendly atmosphere. Based on our interview, gossiping in phatic conversation is more of a playful conversation than a competitive gossip to reveal the weaknesses of a third party:

Interviewer: *Apa maksud Anda menggossip tentang penampilan teman Anda tadi?*
(Why did you gossip about your friend's performance??)

Respondent 3: *Soalnya teman Saya itu kelihatan aneh dengan pakaiannya itu.*
(Because my friend looks ridiculous in her outfit.)

Interviewer: *Apakah Anda menggossip tentang teman Anda untuk mempermalukan dia?*
(Did you talk about your friend behind her back to humiliate her?)

Respondent 3: *Nggak sama sekali. Kita cuma ngobrol-ngobrol santai saja tentang dia.*
(Not at all. We just have playful talks about her.)

The following conversation between two female students about their friend's physical appearance serves as an example. The conversation took place in a classroom before a lecture started.

- R14: *Eh, kowe mau ngerti Z gak? Isa nggawe rok*
 ‘Have you noticed what Z is wearing today? Why is she wearing a skirt like that?’ [Laugh]
- R15: *Ndengaren. Malih feminim dheweke.*
 ‘It is unusual [Laugh]. She looks feminine.’
- R14: *Kesambet kuwi. Kayake mengko arep udan. Mergane Z nggawe rok.*
 ‘The devil has got into her. It might rain today because Z is wearing a skirt.’
- R15: *Gek kembang-kembang pisan.*
 ‘And she is wearing a skirt with flower motive.’ [Laugh].
- R14: *La iya.*
 ‘So, she is!’

In the initial state, the speaker started the gossip by commenting *Eh, kowe mau ngerti Z gak? Isa nggawe rok* (Do you notice what Z is wearing today? Why is she wearing a skirt like that?). The locution needed an agreement from the hearer. Then, the hearer stated the agreement *Ndengaren. Malih feminim dheweke* (It is unusual. She looks feminine) indicating that she noticed something unusual in their friend’s appearance that day. In the intermediate state, the conversation was sequenced by the superstition that the weather could be influenced by somebody doing something out of the ordinary. This could be gathered from the speaker’s statement *Kesambet kuwi. Kayake mengko arep udan. Mergane Z nggawe rok* (The devil has got into her. It might rain today because Z is wearing a skirt). The perlocutionary act in the final state resulted in a playful response of the hearer *Gek kembang-kembang pisan* (And she is wearing a skirt with flower motive) and the agreement from the speaker *La iya* (So, she is!). The process is illustrated in Figure 5.

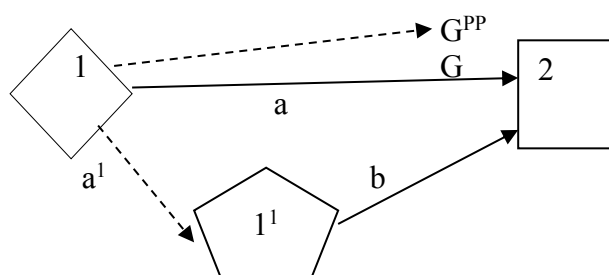


FIGURE 5. The means-end chain of intensifying camaraderie by gossiping

- G = intensifying camaraderie G^{PP} = creating playful talks
 1 = comment on a friend’s clothes a = speaker comments on her friend’s clothes
 1¹ = statement of the superstition a¹ = speaker states a superstition
 b = hearer utters playful response on the speaker’s comment & superstition
 2 = camaraderie is intensified

The gossip became more interesting when the speaker commented on the third party’s clothes. This is in line with previous research that found gossiping becomes interesting when participants bring up evidence related to the person being discussed (Lestari et al., 2019). In our case, the speaker needed an agreement from the hearer. The agreement from the hearer was the application of GSP maxim M7 that recommended one to give a high value to other’s opinions. Yet, the gossip in the phatic conversation is not mere exposure to a third party’s weakness since it is also an effort to intensify camaraderie through creating playful talks or jokes. Our DCT respondents echoed this argument as they stated that intensifying camaraderie is a social norm that must be preserved to reflect the friendly personality of Javanese women (*Grapyak*). Therefore, greetings are extended to sequential small talk to intensify camaraderie.

PLEASING OTHERS

The other function of phatic talk among Javanese women is pleasing others by giving compliments. These are not true compliments but are expressed to please the hearer. Our respondent stated in the interview that compliments are uttered as an effort of being benevolent or as a strategy to express happiness. The following excerpt describes the function of pleasing others.

Interviewer: *Pernahkah Anda memuji karena ada maksud lain jadi tidak sekedar memuji? Kalau pernah apa maksud Anda memuji teman Anda itu?*
(Do you have a particular intention beyond merely praising someone?)

Respondent 3: *Iya. Biasanya supaya orang senang saja meskipun sebenarnya baju yang dipakai atau dandanannya biasa-biasa saja.*
(Yes. Usually, I give a compliment to make my friend happy even though there is nothing special about her clothes or her makeup.)

Interviewer: *Mengapa Anda berbuat begitu?*
(Why did you do that?)

Respondent 3: *Perempuan kan pasti senang kalau dipuji. Jadi hubungan pertemanan bisa terus dijaga.*
(Women like to get compliments. So, we could maintain our friendship)

Interviewer: *Biasanya kalau pujian itu berhubungan dengan penampilan misalnya baju, Anda suka tanya gak di mana belinya? Kalau iya apa maksudnya bertanya begitu?*
(If the compliment is related to physical appearance, let say clothes, have you ever asked where she got the clothes from? If so, why did you ask that?)

Respondent 3: *Iya suka nanya sih. Tapi sebenarnya saya gak benar-benar cari info. Sekedar nanya aja.*
(Yes, I often do that. It isn't really about 'liking' something but it's more to do with a tendency to do something. I'm just asking without any specific intention.)

The example of complimenting to please the hearer in terms of physical appearance is seen in the following morning talk between female university staff in their office. The speaker gave a compliment to the hearer although she did not look unusual in her outfit.

R32: *Klambimu kok apik men ta. Neng endi tukune?*
'Your dress is so pretty. Where did you get it?'

R33: *Alah..Neng Pasar Gedhe. Murah-murah lo neng kana.*
'In the traditional market. Things are cheap there.'

The compliment occurred in the initial state when the speaker said *Klambimu kok apik men ta* (Your dress is so pretty). Then, the speaker asked a more detailed question *Neng endi tukune?* (Where did you get it?) to intensify the compliment. The question contained the assumption that the dress was expensive and only available in exclusive stores. After mentioning where she bought the dress, the hearer emphasized that she bought a cheap one by

stating *Murah-murah lo neng kana* (Things are cheap there). In this context, the question and the answer were not aimed at exchanging information. The graph process is illustrated in Figure 6.

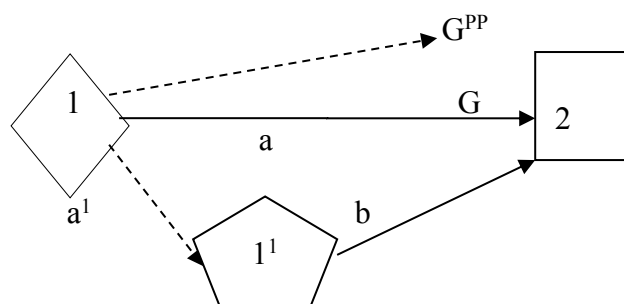


FIGURE 6. The means-end chain of pleasing others

- G = pleasing others G^{PP} = giving compliment
 1 = compliment on a friend's clothes a = speaker gives a compliment on her friend's clothes
 1¹ = question where the hearer get the clothes
 a¹ = speaker asks where the hearer gets the clothes
 b = hearer states where to get the clothes and add the information about the cheap price
 2 = the hearer is pleased

Giving a compliment is a politeness strategy suggested by GSP maxim M3 that recommends giving a high value to one's qualities. Compliments on physical appearance are often found in the opening phase of conversation among Javanese women (Masykuroh & Widyastuti, 2019). However, in phatic conversation, a compliment is not always given based on the felicitous conditions. In the example, the speaker gave an ostensible compliment since there was no evidence that the hearer was showing any quality deserving of a compliment. This suggests that the Javanese cultural norm of *étok-étok* (pretense) (Geertz, 1976; Wierzbicka, 2003) was used in the phatic function of pleasing others. When responding to the speaker's compliment, the hearer applied the GSP maxim M4 that suggests a self-devaluation to self-qualification by stating that her dress was cheap. The perlocutionary act in the final state of the compliment resulted in the hearer showing modesty as a reflection of Javanese politeness philosophy of *Andhap Asor* (humility) to avoid showing off, an unacceptable behavior in the Javanese community (Gunarwan, 2007). The positive response of the hearer indicated that she was grateful for the compliment. In this interaction, the G and the G^{PP} were both attained. Therefore, asking a phatic question like *Neng endi tukune?* (Where did you get it?) was not such an intrusive act. The DCT data that was verified by the interview indicates that the respondents gave compliments to strengthen a social bond instead of to merely appreciate physical appearances. Hence, giving a compliment is an effort to please others and show benevolence.

Another conversation containing an ostensible compliment is illustrated in the following example. The conversation took place in a classroom after the class ended.

- R9: *La nilaimu lo apik dhewe iku. Nek wis apik ngene ki traktiran. Ayo mbak traktiran.*
 'You got the best marks. So, you've got to treat me. Come on, give me a treat.'
- R10: *Traktiran? Wisapalakumestitraktiran.*
 'Treat you? I knew you were going to say that.' [Laugh]
- R9: [Laugh]

In the initial state, the speaker gave a compliment *La nilaimu lo apik dhewe* (You got the best marks) to the hearer. Next, in the intermediate state, the act of complimenting was continued by another goal (G^1) when the speaker requested a treat from the hearer to celebrate her success. In the final state, the hearer responded to the request by stating that she knew what the speaker wanted. It indicates that the hearer accepted the compliment but she did not intend to treat the speaker afterward. In this context, the G of the speaker to please the hearer was achieved. Meanwhile, G^{PP} to share happiness by giving a compliment was also attained but the G^1 to get a treat was not. However, there was no FTA as both understood that the request for a treat did not necessarily have to be fulfilled. The graph is provided in Figure 7.

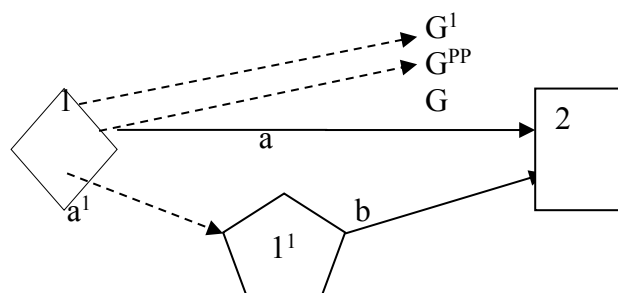


FIGURE 7. The means-end chain of pleasing others with G^1

- G = pleasing others G^{PP} = giving compliment G^1 = Request a treat
 1 = compliment on a friend's good marks a = speaker gives a compliment on friend's marks
 1¹ = request a treat
 a¹ = speaker requests a treat from the hearer
 b = hearer states that she knows what the hearer wants
 2 = the hearer is pleased

Giving a compliment is an effort to show politeness by applying the GSP maxim M3 that suggests a speaker gives a high value to the hearer's qualities. Javanese community tends to share everything with all members as a reflection of the philosophy of *Guyub* (Solidarity). The following interview shows that one's happiness or success is supposed to be celebrated by holding a feast or at least treating friends. So, the request of a treat that is preceded by complementing one's achievement is an expression of happiness. The respondent stated in the interview that requesting a treat is a strategy to show solidarity in terms of physical togetherness and psychological feelings. The interview is as follows:

Interviewer: *Apakah Anda memuji teman Anda yang dapat nilai baik untuk dapat traktiran?*
 (Did you give a compliment for your friend's good marks to get a treat from her?)

Respondent 3: *Iya, sih. Tapi kalau dia gak nraktir juga gak apa-apa. Biasanya kita kalau ada yang sukses suka diminta mentraktir untuk merayakan kesuksesannya. Kan kalau ada kebahagiaan sepatutnya dirasakan sama-sama.*
 (Yes but if she does not want to treat us, it will be fine. Usually, we celebrate success by treating friends just to share happiness.)

Therefore, requesting a treat should not be considered as an intrusive act since the real intention is merely sharing happiness. The Javanese philosophy of *Tepa Selira* is the main reason for the DCT respondents to state that pleasing others is important in conducting social relations. Hence, Javanese women exert efforts to please others by giving compliments

regardless of the actual condition of the hearer. A similar case occurs in the act of expressing happiness as another goal of phatic communication.

EXPRESSING HAPPINESS

The act of expressing happiness also occurs during celebrations (e.g. birthday, graduation). An example is provided in the following conversation.

R25: *Selamat ulang tahunya, Ndes. Aja lali, aja lali traktirane.* [Shaking hands with R26].
 ‘Happy birthday, pal. Don’t forget to treat me.’

R26: *Apa ta?* [smile]
 ‘What is it all about?’

R25: *Wis aja suwi-suwi. Ndang budhal. Ayo.*
 ‘Don’t take it so long. Let’s go.’

R26: *Ning endi sik?*
 ‘Where will we go?’

R25: *Ning café-café apa ning kantin-kantin ya ra papa.*
 ‘To café or the canteen. It doesn’t matter.’

The speaker started the initial state by giving birthday wishes (G^{PP}) *Selamat ulang tahun ya, Ndes* (Happy birthday, pal) to the hearer to express happiness (G). Then, the speaker conducted further action by requesting a treat (G^1) *Aja lali, aja lali traktirane* (Don’t forget to treat me). Responding to the speaker’s request, the hearer pretended to be confused by asking *apa ta?* (What is it all about?) while smiling. In the intermediate state, the speaker asked the hearer to celebrate her birthday. Finally, the speaker asked the hearer to go to the café or canteen to celebrate the hearer’s birthday. However, they did not go anywhere afterward. The answers to the DCT questionnaire show that Javanese women express happiness to show solidarity (*Guyub*), an important aspect to sustain social rapport among them. This is in line with Masykuroh and Widyastuti's (2019) study which has shown that through congratulating, speakers can show a sense of joy over the good condition received by others. The process is illustrated in Figure 8.

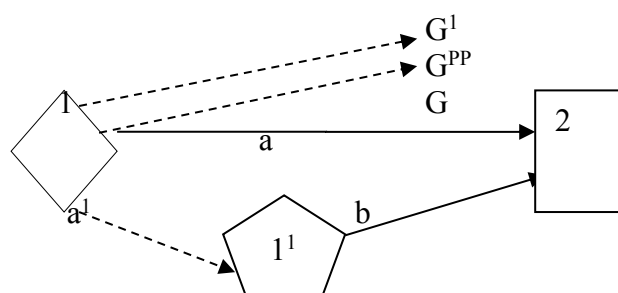


FIGURE 8. The means-end chain of expressing happiness with G^1

G = expressing happiness G^{PP} = giving birthday wishes G^1 = Request a treat
 1 = birthday wishes are uttered a = speaker gives birthday wishes
 1' = request a treat a' = speaker request a treat from the hearer
 b = hearer expresses confusion but she accepts the birthday wishes
 2 = expression of happiness is uttered

The act of expressing happiness is not always sequenced by G¹. Answers to the DCT questionnaire show that Javanese women express happiness to be benevolent and to perform politeness. Being benevolent is likely related to politeness in a certain culture such as in Malaysia that continuously campaigns politeness as part of their culture (Kuang et al., 2013). Phatic communication is supposed to be part of performing hospitality concerning politeness convention in each culture. Meanwhile, the sequenced act of G¹ shows the effort to build solidarity (*Guyub*). The act of expressing happiness is the realization of GSP M5 suggesting the speaker gives a high value to the hearer by congratulating and expressing good wishes.

CONSOLING OTHERS

Phatic communication among Javanese women is also conducted to console others. Giving advice is an effort to console those who are in trouble. However, the advice does not contain any problem-solving. An example is given in the following conversation between Javanese female students in their 20's. The speaker knew that the hearer was still single so she intended to console her.

R41: *He mbak! Weh, saiki kok malih nggawe dress terus. Ana apa ya?*
'Hi, mbak! You are always wearing a dress these days. What's going on?'

R42: *Ya ben mundhak dewasa mundhak feminin ngono lo. Kowe saiki ning kampus ya dandan ae saiki. Ayo, nduwe cowok ye ning kampus?*
'Just want to look more mature and feminine. You also like to dress up now. It seems that you've got a boyfriend, haven't you?'

R41: *Ya iyalah mbak. Mosok ya ora sih. Lek awakmu piye mbak?*
'Of course, I got one. How could I be without one? How about you, mbak?'

R42: *Ya wis ngeneki ae. Wis dandan barang ya isik single ae panggah.*
'I am still the same. I tried many things but I am still single up to now.'

R41: *Wadhuh ketoke kurang dicas mbak. Dicas meneh nek no.*
'I think you should do more effort. Just make more effort.'

R42: *Piye piye carane piye?*
'What am I supposed to do?'

R41: *Wis pokoke ngono kuwi lo mbak. Nggodhane sing jos pokoke.*
'Just do whatever you could. You've got to flirt more.'

R42: *Oh ngono.*
'I see.'

The initial state commenced by the speaker's remarks on the hearer's physical appearances. The speaker gave a remark to the hearer who looked more feminine whereas the hearer also noticed that the speaker looked prettier as she put more makeup. The speaker's remarks *Weh, saiki kok malih nggawe dress terus* (You are always wearing a dress these days) got similar remarks from the hearer *Kowe saiki ning kampus ya dandan ae saiki* (You also like to dress up now). In the intermediate state, the conversation was continued with a question *Ana apa ya?* (What's going on?). The question contained a personal topic about R41's romantic relationship. In the final state, the speaker consoled the hearer by giving advice. The graph is provided in Figure 9.

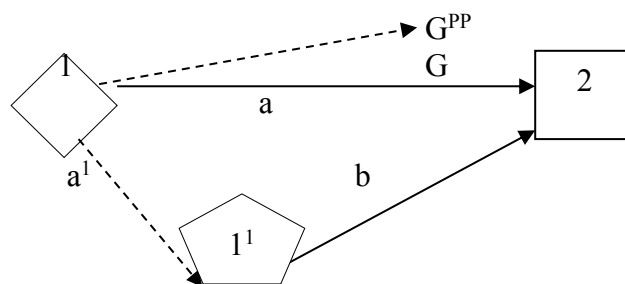


FIGURE 9. The means-end chain of consoling others

G = consoling others G^{PP} = giving advice
 1 = remarks on the hearer's appearance a = speaker gives remarks on the hearer's appearance
 1¹ = consolation on the hearer's problem
 a¹ = speaker gives advice to the hearer
 b = hearer accepts the advice
 2 = the hearer is consoled

The GSP maxim M9 contained suggestions for the speaker to give a high value to the hearer's feelings. The realization of M9 is seen when the speaker sympathized with the hearer's condition of being single for a long time. Then, the speaker consoled the hearer by giving her a bit of advice on how to get a lover. However, the advice did not contain any problem-solving, just a consolation. Hence, it was not counseling advice. Giving phatic advice is also an expression of empathy. It is a reflection of the role of Javanese women as a caregiver that demands them to be considerate in any condition (Smith-Hefner, 1988). The consolation was performed by the advising locution *Wis pokoke ngono kuwi lo mbak. Nggodhane sing jos pokoke* (Just do whatever you could. You've got to flirt more). Although the advice was more likely a consolation than a piece of advice, the hearer performed the intended perlocutionary act in the final state by accepting the advice by saying *Oh, ngono* (I see). Thus, the G and the G^{PP} were attained. The DCT respondents stated that consoling others was an effort to be tolerant. It is the reflection of the Javanese philosophy of *Tepa Selira*. These findings support Aitchison's (1996) theory that phatic talk often supplies a minimum of information, but a maximum of the supportive chat.

In general, the five functions (illocutions) of phatic communication among Javanese women discussed above complemented one another in establishing an entire conversation. Initiating a conversation was followed by intensifying camaraderie to develop the conversation. Then, the phatic communication flowed into more specific functions such as pleasing others, expressing happiness, and consoling others. The functions served to build a social rapport.

Phatic communication among Javanese women employs politeness strategies in an attempt to establish social rapport. Our findings have established that the Javanese politeness maxims were completely employed supporting the idea that Javanese women's attitude is governed by tradition (Falah, 2009). The five functions of phatic communication among Javanese women are the realization of Javanese cultural norms of *grapyak* (friendliness), *semanak* (warmth), *guyub* (solidity), *kurmat* (respect), *tepa selira* (tolerance), *andhap asor* (humility), and *empan papan* (self-awareness) (Gunarwan, 2007). In terms of practical strategy, GSP maxims (Leech, 2014) were employed to a particular extent along with the Javanese politeness maxims.

Our findings have shown that the Javanese politeness was exerted in topic selection. Asking personal topics and marital status is common (Tannen, 1992). Hence, asking those topics in a phatic context is not considered as being intrusive. Meanwhile, the topic related to body-size refers to a quality of life and might be related to compliments for happiness in life

(e.g. fat) or sympathy for miserable life (e.g. thin). Hence, giving remarks on body-size is not a body-shaming act.

Phatic communication among Javanese women is, therefore, a reflection of moral values and an attempt to be benevolent rather than intrusive. The findings have indicated that phatic communication has a variety of functions across cultures and gender. Among Javanese women, phatic communication is not only a communicative strategy that serves to break the silence (Leech, 1983; Malinowski, 1923), to commence or close a conversation but it also enables or facilitates the entire communication as a reflection of moral value.

CONCLUSION

The social rapport among Javanese women is built by conducting phatic communication as part of their everyday talks. The five main illocutions of phatic communication are performed with particular locutions based on the philosophy of Javanese politeness. To this extent, Javanese women apply the Javanese politeness as a moral value. Performing phatic communication is the reflection of the philosophy of *Grapyak* (friendliness) and *Semanak* (warmth) as the required personality of Javanese women. The performance of phatic communication adopted the maxims of the General Strategy of Politeness (GSP). However, the GSP is adjusted to the Javanese politeness principles of *Tepa Selira* ‘tolerance’ (GSP M7 and M9), *Andhap Asor* ‘humility’ (GSP M4), and *Guyub* ‘solidarity’ (GSP M3).

The research offers insight into the various illocutions of phatic communication among Javanese women as the effort to give the perlocutionary effect of sustaining social rapport. What seems like an intrusive act is more about being benevolent in the Javanese women context.

The results, indeed, should be taken into consideration as a strategy to conduct a phatic communication with Javanese women. The main goal of a conversation and the goal of preserving politeness are supposed to be attained simultaneously. Meanwhile, the other potential goal is achieved by performing the precedent acts, namely pleasing others and expressing happiness. The strategy is likely suitable for commencing a business negotiation and any other persuasive talk with Javanese women. The proper phatic communication would contribute to better networking in various fields across cultures. Besides that, the functions and topics of phatic communication would be a contribution to the teaching material of Javanese culture for expatriates. We believe that phatic communication is the key to avoid communication breakdowns. It is even a crucial aspect in the context of communication across cultures.

The study puts forth that phatic communication is not only a communicative strategy but also a reflection of moral values. However, great care is needed in making broad generalizations about all the people in a particular culture since this study only discusses Javanese women in the western part of East Java. Contrastive studies on the characteristics of phatic communication across cultures would be an interesting topic for further research to give insights into the proper cross-cultural communicative strategies for networking.

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