

A Study of Phatic Function Employed by The Characters in Life of Pie Movie

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Abstract.

Human communication has various function such as delivering information, expressing feeling, giving suggestion and even maintaining social relationship. This is called as phatic communication. Phatic communication does not fully present the informative conversation, in the contrary it contains a function for the daily communication. Even though the phatic communication does not concern about the exchange of substantive information to interlocutor, it is focus on the type of communication of keeping the open communication and strengthening the relationship. Therefore, the aims of this research are to find and to analyze the types and the roles of phatic function. While the research significances, first as the theoretically is to contribute knowledge about phatic communication in linguistics studies field, additionally this research is expected as the additional resource for other researchers who interested to conduct the same research topic about phatic communication. This research used the theory from Laver (1975) to answer the research questions, while the ground theory is from Malinowski (1923). This research used qualitative method. Qualitative research involves to discover of the language phenomenon. In addition, the data were taken from *Life of Pi* movie. As the conclusion, the researcher found 57 data. There are divided into three types of phatic function, neutral (13 data), self-oriented (16 data), other-oriented (28 data). In addition, the roles of phatic function, there were opening phase (24 data), medial phase (33 data) and the last was the closing phase data which were not found in this movie.

Keywords: communication, phatic, and movie.

Introduction

As a social creature, human needs language to communicate with others. One of the form of human communication which involve a language is conversation. They make conversation by involving language to communicate in various purposes such as to deliver, obtain and exchange information, or even aimless conversation. This aimless phenomenon of conversation have been discovered by some linguists. This aimless communication is called as phatic communication. This kind of communication uses to create or maintain social relationship toward others. Phatic communication does not fully present the informative conversation, in the contrary it contains a function for the daily communication. Even though the phatic communication does not concern

about the exchange of substantive information to interlocutor, it is focus on the type of communication of keeping the open communication and strengthening the relationship, therefore phatic communication also mention as small talk (Gradinaru, n.d., p. 460). As in line with what Senft (1996, p. 228) stated about Jakobson's concept of the 'phatic function' of verbal communication, phatic communication usually refers to utterances which have the function to establish and maintain a friendly and harmonious atmosphere in interpersonal relations. In addition, phatic communication is necessary because in human language use, they use language not only to deliver the information but also to the essential one is to maintain the relationship between human. The representative of human communication could be found in the movie because movie is the representative of human daily communication.

Therefore, according to the background of the problems above, the researcher tries to discover the research questions; 1) what are the types of phatic function employed by the characters in *Life of Pie* movie? 2) What are the roles of phatic function in *Life of Pie* movie? Based on those research problems the research purposes are to find and to analyze the types and the roles of phatic function. While the research significances, first as the theoretically is to contribute knowledge about phatic communication in linguistics studies field, additionally this research is expected as the additional resource for other researchers who interested to conduct the same research topic about phatic communication. Second as the practically this research can be useful for anyone, especially they can be able to apply phatic communication in daily communication in order to maintain the social relationship.

Literature Review

1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a study of speaker meaning which has a correlation with the listener interpretation. On the one hand, it is not enough to define pragmatics as the study of meaning or language use, it is widely that pragmatics refers to many things in defining it. Moreover, pragmatics developed from time to time. As a result of it, there are many ways in defining pragmatics. Yule (1996, p.3) mentions about pragmatics definition, which is divided into four essential points; those points are:

a. Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning

Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It means that *meaning* will appear after the **speaker** (in spoken interaction) or **writer** (in written interaction) delivers a message through communication. The listener or reader will then interpret the message, or in simple words, that the listener will interpret the speaker's message, the listener gives meaning to the speaker's message.

b. Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning

This type of study necessarily involves interpreting what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said. This contextual meaning is related to whom the speaking is talking to, also where it takes place, and when, and under certain circumstances.

- c. Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said
This third point is about how listeners can make inferences about what is said to arrive at an interpretation of the speaker's intended meaning. This part of pragmatics explores how the unsaid is recognized as part of what is communicated.
- d. Pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance
The word "unsaid" above raises the question of what determines the said and unsaid choice. Then it is tied to the notion of distance. The speaker determines how much needs to be said. In using a language to communicate as a context, it is necessary to know the language function.

2. Language Function

Language is used in human communication, the use of language has many various functions. Generally human use language to convey the information, express their feeling or thought, deliver ideas, give suggestion and etc. Based on some linguists, they stated that the functions of language have a wider. According to Holmes (2013, p. 275) language function divided into six points. It fall into the following:

- a. Expressive, the aim of this function is to express the speaker's feeling, e.g. *I'm feeling unwell today.*
- b. Directive, this utterance is to make someone to do something, e.g. *Close the window!*
- c. Referential, this function provides the information, e.g. *This cream is for face.*
- d. Metalinguistic, utterances comment on language itself, e.g. *'Hegemony' is not a common word.*
- e. Poetic, this feature focus on language focus on the aesthetic language features, e.g. *I saw Susi Sitting in the shoe shine shop.*
- f. Phatic, this utterance express the empathy with others and to maintain social relationship, e.g. *How are you?.*

3. Phatic communion

The term of "phatic communion" was first proposed by the anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski in 1923. He defined the original definition as "A type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words" (Malinowski, Bronislaw, n.d., p. 315). He described that phatic communion as the freely language used, social intercourse and purposeless. Then the function of this speech mere sociabilities. The example of speech phatic was in formulas of greeting and parting. Malinowski gave example like *How are you?* and *Nice day today.* In addition, phatic communication also same as a form of small talk (Coupland et al., 1992, p. 208). Due to consider as the small talk, phatic communication has a function like stating compliment and giving directions. Furthermore it is brought to the social and biological necessity for human beings in living the life with others. For instance when the conversation held in the lounge of a public rest room and a social need when the conversation held at a class reunion or even between people in public space passing each other (Holba, n.d., p. 36). Even though phatic communication consider as a small talk, it could not be said as a meaningless talk because the message in phatic contain the meaningful and imply the recognition, intimacy and sociability.

a. Types of Phatic Function

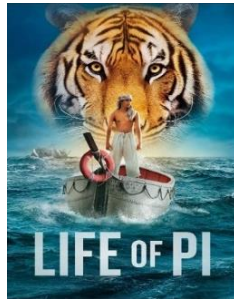
According to Laver (1975, p. 223) the type of phatic function is divided into three types, these describe into the following points:

1. Neutral
This kind of phatic function refers to the condition around the speaker and listener. It does not have any correlation with the condition of speaker and listener. Neutral merely describe the circumstance around the participants. For example: *"It is hot than last week"*. This kind of utterance describe the atmosphere around the participants.
 2. Self-Oriented
This is the second type of phatic function. Self-oriented means that the conversation focus on the speaker itself. So, the speaker gives information to the interlocutor. The conversation that contains self-oriented such as telling job, goals, activity or even self-introducing. For instance, *"Hi, I am Jim"* (to a new roommate). This kind of utterance is including to the self-introduction which oriented to the speaker itself.
 3. Other-Oriented
This type has the opposite to Self-Oriented type. This type requires the interlocutor or the listener to give the turn or the answer to what speaker asks. It seems the listener should become an attractive way to involve in conversation. For example, *"How is your family doing?"* This kind of question need to be answered by the interlocutor.
- b. The roles of Phatic Function
1. Opening Phase
The first role of phatic function is opening phase. This phase has a role to attract the conversation in the first encounter. On one hand, it can be said as start making chit-chat. This role also has a function to make the situation in relax, beside to ease the situation between speaker and listener. This kind of opening phatic role also has a function to defuse the potential hostility of silence. The example of opening phase such as *"How are you doing?"* and *"It's a nice holiday, isn't it?"*. On the other hands, this phase can maintain the social intercourse between the speaker and listener who have been known each other.
 2. Medial Phase
This phase has a function to maintain or to keep flowing the conversation. The medial phase could be indicated by using the filled and verbal marker such as (*"em"* or *"Uhm"*) and (*well, I mean, you know*) (Stenstrom, 1994). To keep flowing the conversation people usually use those markers to shift the conversation topic. This the following example:

A: Happy graduation for you.
B: Thank you so much for coming in my graduation.
*A: **Well...** I like your graduation robe.*

The word *"well"* indicates the topic shifting of conversation and to keep the conversation going.
 3. Closing Phase
This kind of phase intend to finish or to close the conversation. The participant who wants to end the conversation actually without an intention to offend others. For example, *"I want to talk to you, but I am sorry I have to go now"*.
Those phatic functions help the participant in flowing conversation smoothly, not only that but also it can help to maintain or preserve the existence relationship among others. Moreover, phatic communication in the some society sometimes need to be applied because it related to the personal politeness of people.

4. Synopsis of the movie “Life of Pi”



Source: The poster was taken from <https://www.amazon.com/Life-Pi-Framed-Poster-Wallspace/dp/B074QRP6GS>

This movie began with the young author who met Pi Patel to look for the information for his book source. Then Pi Patel started to tell his life story. Pi's family background was Hindu. Pi's father had a big zoo in their city. Pi grew up among the animals, until Pi interested in a tiger named Richard Parker. His father asked him to stay away with this animal, but Pi did not pay attention to it and almost lost his hand because of Richard Parker. Since that time, Pi stayed away from Richard Parker. One day, his father decided to close the zoo and to sell the animal as well as they moved to Canada. They moved to Canada with all of the animals using the ship and it took several days. In the middle way, it was the big storm and the ship tossed. Pi was in a deck and trying to find his family, but he was threw to the sloop and separated with his family. His family was unsaved and only Pi who saved from all among the passengers. After the storm, Pi just realized that he was not alone on the ship, there were Hyena, Zebra, Orangutan and Tiger; Richard Parker. After several days, these animals killed one another until only Richard Parker and Pi on the ship. For several days, they had to survive in the middle of the sea. Pi had an idea that he had to stay away from Richard Parker then he made the self-defense. Pi finally realized that he should be friend with Richard Parker because they lived together in the middle of the sea. Then, Pi was success in it. After getting tired of living in the sea, they stranded in the Mexico sea shore. As long as reached, Richard run to the forest and left Pi. Then, Pi hospitalized for recovering and he started a new life.

Method

This research used qualitative method. Qualitative research involves to discover of the meaning of people's lives. Moreover qualitative research is driven by desire to explain the social behavior and thinking, through existing or emerging concepts. (Yin, 2016, p. 10). Qualitative technique was suitable with the language research because after collecting the data, it would be transformed into some explanation or interpretation. The subject of this research was the movie entitled "*Life of Pi*". The research data obtained through document analysis technique, the steps were watching the movie and noting some note of the utterances which contain phatic communication. Furthermore, the technique of analyzing data in this research used the following steps: 1) identifying the data which contain of phatic communication, 2) categorizing the data, 3) interpreting the data finding based on theory and 4) concluding.

Finding and Discussion

In this research the researcher presents the data analysis according to the types of phatic function in *Life of Pi* movie. The researcher found many types and roles of phatic function employed by the characters in *Life of Pi* movie based on Laver (1975:225–228), he stated that there are three types of phatic function, there are: neutral, self-oriented, other-oriented, while the roles of phatic function are opening phase, medial and closing phase. The following table showed those findings:

No	Type of Phatic Function	Data
1.	Neutral	13
2.	Self-Oriented	16
3.	Other-Oriented	28
TOTAL		57
No	Roles of Phatic Function	Data
1.	Opening Phase	24
2.	Medial Phase	32
3.	Closing Phase	1
TOTAL		57

Table 1. Types and Roles of Phatic Functions In *Life of Pi* movie.

The data findings in this research are based on the movie of *Life of Pi*, which found 57 data finding. Due to the efficiency of this research, the researcher merely presents the representative of the whole data findings.

a. Type of Phatic Function

1. Neutral

Datum 1

PI : *It was four days out of Manila* - above the Mariana Trench, the deepest spot on earth...

The situation of the conversation above shows the situation that Pi is telling about the beginning of his journey in the middle of the sea to the writer. The datum above is including to the type of neutral phatic function. It can be seen in the word “*It was four days out of Manila*”, Pi neither tell about himself nor ask question to the interlocutor. Therefore it includes to the neutral because it describes the around situation.

Datum 2

PI : *Pondicherry is the “French Riviera of India”*. In the streets closest to the ocean, you might think you were in the South of France.

The datum above is still Pi’s utterance who tells the story of his life to the writer. The above utterance is including to the type of neutral phatic function because Pi tell about the place in India. He does not refer the conversation to himself or to the interlocutor. It can be seen from the utterance “*Pondicherry is the “French Riviera of India”*”.

Datum 3

PI : *A few blocks inland, there's a canal*; just beyond that is Indian Pondicherry. And the Muslim Quarter is just to the West.

The utterance above is including to the type of phatic function of neutral. Pi tells about the muslim quarter, the words “*A few blocks inland, there's a canal;*” refer to some place. It describes the circumstance around the speaker. Besides, it does not have any correlation to the condition of speaker or listener.

Datum 4

PI : My father, who was a clever businessman, came up with one. *He ran a hotel, and he got the idea to open a zoo* in the local Botanical Gardens instead.

The data finding above describes about Pi's father which it does not have any correlation to Pi as speaker or interlocutor. It can be seen from the words “*He ran a hotel, and he got the idea to open a zoo*”.

Datum 5

Father : *This lamb is exquisite* - it's best dish on the table. You are all missing out...

The situation in the conversation above is spoken by Pi's Father. The utterance on the datum above describes about the taste of the lamb. He enjoys eating his wife cook. To make the family circumstance around the dining table more intimate, the father uses neutral phatic by saying “*This lamb is exquisite*”. That utterance does not have any correlation with the speaker or interlocutor.

2. Self-Oriented

Datum 6

PI: *Good morning. I am Piscine Molitor Patel, known to all as...* (He writes "PI" on the board.) ... "Pi," the sixteenth letter of the Greek alphabet...

The utterance above is including to the type of phatic function as self-oriented. It can be indicated when Pi introduces himself in front of the students in the class. Pi's utterance is including to the form of greeting while greeting is including to the conversation. The situation above shows when Pi introducing himself as the first meeting of school day.

Datum 7

Taiwanese Sailor: **Hello, I am happy Buddhist**, so I eat rice next to gravy. On ship, gravy is not meat. Is taste. Okay? You try?

The utterance in datum seven is the same as the previous datum. This utterance is the introduction of Taiwanese Sailor. The situation of the conversation above that the Taiwanese sailor tries to offer Pi's family a food, therefore he introduces himself in order to open the conversation. In addition, introduction is including to the self-oriented.

Datum 8

Writer : *I was in a coffee house in Pondicherry one afternoon*, mourning my loss, when this old man at the next table struck up a conversation.

The writer's utterance above is including to the type of self-oriented. It can be seen the he tells the story on how he meets Mamaji. It indicates on the words "***I was in a coffee house in Pondicherry one afternoon***"

Datum 9

PI: ***I met Christ in the mountains when I was 12.*** We were visiting relatives, tea growers in Munnar. It was our third day there; Ravi and I were terribly bored.

The data finding above is Pi's utterance. It is including to the type of self-oriented because Pi tells about himself or the conversation refers to the speaker (Pi). It can be indicated form Pi's utterance "***I met Christ in the mountains when I was 12***". The situation of the conversation is telling about Pi and his brother experience.

Datum 10

PI: ***I came to faith through Hinduism and I found God's love through Christ,*** but God wasn't finished with me yet.

The last data of the above utterance is telling about Pi's faith. He tells the writer about his religion journey. Therefore, the above utterance is including to the type of self-oriented. It can be indicated form the words "***I came to faith through Hinduism and I found God's love through Chris***".

3. Other-Oriented

Datum 11

Writer : ***You were raised in a zoo?***

PI : ***Born and raised in Pondicherry,*** in what was the French part of India. My father owned the zoo, and I was delivered on short notice by a herpetologist who was there to check on the Bengal Monitor Lizard.

The above utterance is the conversation between the writer and Pi. When the writer asks Pi a question "***You were raised in a zoo?***", it can indicate that he wants Pi to answer his question. The finally Pi answers the question by saying "***Born and raised in Pondicherry***". This role of phatic function can make the conversation little bit longer. In other words, it requires the interlocutor or the listener to give the turn or the answer to what speaker asks.

Datum 12

Writer : ***There's a swimming pool named 'Pi?'***

PI : ***You see, my uncle, Francis, was born with too much water in his lungs.*** They say the doctor swung Francis around by the ankles to clear the water out and that's what gave him the huge chest and skinny legs that made him such a great swimmer.

The utterance on the datum above is the conversation which employed by the writer and Pi. The situation of the conversation shows that the writer asks a question to Pi, he does not believe about the origin of Pi's name, then the writer asks by saying "***There's a swimming pool named 'Pi?'***", then to make the conversation flows Pi finally takes the

turn by saying “*You see, my uncle, Francis, was born with too much water in his lungs.*”. This kind of conversation can be indicated as other-oriented of phatic roles in conversation.

Datum 13

PI : I'm sorry... *what are we talking about?*

Ravi : *We are leaving India.*

PI : What??

Mother : We are selling the zoo

The above utterance in datum thirteen is the conversation which employed by Pi, Ravi and mother. The utterance tells about Pi who does not pay attention to what his family talking about. Then Pi needs an explanation by asking “*what are we talking about?*”. Therefore the conversation flow little bit longer. Due to, Ravi and Mother as the listener, finally they answer Pi question by saying “*We are leaving India*” and “*We are selling the zoo*”. As the result, the above utterance is including to the other-oriented type of phatic communication.

Datum 14

PI : *Why give O.J. a tranquilizer?* She's not going to cause any trouble.

Father : *The stress of traveling is not good for the animals.*

The utterance in datum fourteen is including to the type of other-oriented. It can be seen from the situation of the conversation. The conversation is employed by Pi and Father. Pi is wondering about his father activity, then Pi asks him a question “*Why give O.J. a tranquilizer?*”, which this conversation need the further answer. Due to, the father as the interlocutor, then he answers “*The stress of traveling is not good for the animals.*”

Datum 15

Writer : *Carnivorous? Like... a Venus flytrap?*

PI : Yes, the whole island - the plants, the water in those pools, the very ground itself.

The above utterance is the conversation which employed by the writer and Pi. The writer as the speaker and Pi as the interlocutor. The writer asks a question by saying “*Carnivorous? Like... a Venus flytrap?*”, as the interlocutor then Pi answers the question by saying the word “*Yes, the whole island - the plants, the water in those pools, the very ground itself.*” Therefore, this conversation is including to the type other-oriented because the listener should become an attractive way to involve in conversation.

b. The Roles of Phatic Function

The following discussion is about the data finding in *Life of Pi* movie. The researcher found 24 of opening phase and 33 medial phase. While for closing phase is no found in this movie. The discussion below merely present the representative of a few data of each roles.

1. Opening Phase

As a role of phatic function, opening phase has a role to start the conversation and to make the situation better. Opening phase can be started by saying greeting or introducing. This can be found in datum 7:

Taiwanese Sailor: *Hello, I am happy Buddhist*, so I eat rice next to gravy. On ship, gravy is not meat. Is taste. Okay? You try?

The situation of the conversation in the movie starts when Taiwanese Sailor greets Pi's family. The Taiwanese Sailor says "**Hello, I am happy Buddhist**" to Pi's family to offer some food for them. Another datum which contains of opening phase in in datum 6:

PI: **Good morning. I am Piscine Molitor Patel, known to all as...** (He writes "PI" on the board.) ... "Pi," the sixteenth letter of the Greek alphabet...

The above utterance is PI's utterance. The situation of the utterance shows that Pi is introducing himself in front of other students. It can be indicated as the roles of phatic function.

2. Medial Phase

The second roles of phatic function is medial phase. As what have stated that medial phase has the role to maintain or to keep flowing the conversation by using the marker of filled and verbal. The roles of phatic function in this movie that the researcher found is like in datum 12:

Writer : **There's a swimming pool named 'Pi?'**

PI : **You see, my uncle, Francis, was born with too much water in his lungs.**

The utterance in datum above is including to the medial phase because the writer asks the question to Pi. It mean that he gives the turn to Pi to response the question. Then Pi takes the turn by answering to the writer's question. By giving the answer Pi makes the conversation flow smoothly. Another datum finding about medial phase which uses verbal marker can be found in datum below:

Pi : By the way, I enjoyed your first book. The new one, is it set in India?

Writer : No, Portugal, actually. But it's cheaper living in India.

Pi : Ah. **Well**, I look forward to reading it.

Writer : You can't, I threw it.

The situation in datum above shows that Pi is the first speaker and writer is the second speaker. Then Pi always tries to continue and flow the conversation. Then after the writer finishes with the response, Pi asks another question to the writer. To keep the conversation flowing, Pi uses the word marker "**Well**" then the writer comes up with the response to Pi's utterance. This can be concluded to the role of medial phase of phatic function.

3. Closing Phase

The last role of phatic function is closing phase. This role of phatic function is not found in this movie. Dues to the characters in this movie do not employed this roles of phatic function.

Conclusion

After analyzing the data in *Life of Pi* movie, this research can be concluded that the data is categorizing into two points of analysis, there are the types of phatic functions and the roles of phatic function. The researcher found 57 data which related with phatic communication. There are divided into three types of phatic function, 13 data are related to neutral type which explain about

the circumstance and it does not refer to both speaker and listener, 16 data are classified into self-oriented type which the conversations refer to the speaker, speaker focus on telling about themselves and the last one, there are 28 data related to other-oriented type, this type refers to the interlocutor respond. In addition, the roles of phatic function, there are 24 data opening phase which has function to breaking the silence, 33 data are medial phase as to role to maintain the conversation, and the last is the closing data which are not found in this movie.

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