Exploring Phatic Communication Functions among Native and Nonnative English Speakers at Saudi Multilingual Context

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Abstract: *English language is the first spoken language around the world, and it is the formal language for communication in my multilingual Saudi context. This paper is to conduct a further investigation to findings of a similar study conducted by Jumanto (2014) exploring the functions of phatic communication among English native speakers. Furthermore, this study aims at exploring phatic communication among native and nonnative English speakers in my workplace to have a healthy distinguished working atmosphere through guiding them to build a solid social relationship at workplace through involving in various communicative situations for the sake of rapport, not to convey information. For instance, to greet or reply to a greeting properly, start or end   conversations with native or nonnative colleagues to avoid any inconvenience or misunderstanding due to the likely distinctions related to their different social or cultural backgrounds which may affect negatively on their relationship. To achieve this, an exploratory mixed study will be conducted in two phases using a questionnaire for quantitatively collected data, and then conducting semi-structured interviews for the same population to qualitatively collect data to have reliable findings. Additionally, the findings of this study reflect a great harmony among the phatic expressions used by native and nonnative speakers, especially native English speakers who try speaking the mother language, Arabic, of the nonnative English speakers for the purpose of greeting or starting interaction with each other. Accordingly, further research investigation could be conducted to explore the impact of phatic communication functions among native and nonnative speakers of any other languages on learning a second or a foreign language.*

Key words: phatic communication, social factors, politeness, relationships, solidarity

INTRODUCTION

Language is mainly used to communicate information or feelings, but it also has another function which is to establish and maintain social relations. In other words, in phatic communication, language

is used to establish social contact among people rather than conveying or seeking information. Phatic communication refers to utterances that are said to have exclusively social bonding functions maintaining friendly and harmonious atmosphere in interpersonal relationships and therefore such utterances may keep the communication channel open**.**

Phatic communication is a new linguistic conception coined and crystallized by the British Polish anthropologist, Malinowski, in 1923 in his paper titled " the problem of meaning in primitive languages" which sheds light on the social function of language. He considers language as the backbone of social relationships, not only to convey and seek information, but also to establish and maintain social contact among people. Following this study, there have been several systematic attempts to further investigate this concept in terms of sociolinguistics and pragma linguistics.

Following this introduction, section 1 introduces the etymology of phatic expressions/communication. Section 2 covers the study aims and research questions, then in section 3, the phatic dimensions including the relevant definitions of phatic communication are outlined according to different researchers' perspectives in the existing literature. In section 4, phatic communication and politeness is discussed. In In section 5, study design, data collection. At the end, data analysis followed by the review which is hoped to reach functional conclusions which confirm that phatic communication is used to fulfil a social function through making the interlocutors feel their way towards the establishment of rapport.

Study Aims & Research Questions

Conversational exchanges can be opened and closed by means of a fixed repertoire of ritual exchanges which are evidently dependent on cultural definition and can be expected to vary quite markedly from society to society. Accordingly, the main objective of this paper is to explore this sociolinguistic phenomenon to highlight the characteristic features and the most important factors that underlie the development of phatic communication in English through the actual phatic expressions used in different situations in people's daily social life in various communities. Accordingly, this study attempts to achieve the following aims:

- showing the general uses, roles, and functions of phatic expressions.
- Exploring ways of native and nonnative English speakers conventionally use to open and close conversations.
- Giving an account of the social factors that determine the linguistic choice of phatic expressions.
- Seeking out sociolinguistic findings throughout investigating the relation between the linguistic choice of phatic expressions and the social status and culture of participants.
- Exploring the impact of phatic communication among English native and nonnative speakers working abroad.
- Finding out the relationship between phatic communication and linguistic politeness among English native and nonnative speakers.

This paper is aimed at answering the following research questions:

1 -How is phatic communication intrinsically connected with culture?

2-To what extent closing and opening conversational phatic devices are similar in native and nonnative English-speaking countries.

3- How does phatic communication differ in its formality, length, and deictic expressions for opening a conversation?

Study Significance

My rationale behind conducting this study is that doing further research exploration of phatic communication functions among native and nonnative English speakers in my Saudi workplace. Being an academic coordinator at Energy Tech College, I must deal with different nationalities everyday including English native speakers from the USA, the UK, Canada, South Africa and Australia, in line with nonnative English speakers coming from different Arab countries, especially, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco and Syria. All of them must communicate in English for everything including formal and informal communications. In this way, we need to be familiar with each other and have a strong relationship through practicing all the functions of phatic communication resulted in the recent research studies, but actually I am interested in finding out how these phatic functions could be practiced in a multilingual workplace where hundreds of people coming from different cultural and social backgrounds, I think this could be the most challenging factor in this study, how we can use the phatic expressions to create strong ties of union among the team to enjoy working together in different departments, but having the goals which is to produce well-trained young Saudi people for working for oil industry companies around the kingdom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following parts in this section will elaborate the main aspects of phatic communication including various interpretations and researchers' perspectives, some main functions, phatic devices, the four main types of phatic talk and theoretical framework of phatic communication.

Phatic Communication Interpretations

As defined by Adnan (2022), phatic communication is a type of communication that has a social function rather than informative function. It is generally used to serve social functions like establishing and maintaining a friendly and harmonious atmosphere between interlocutors. Further, she adds that Phatic communication is a social lubricant that does not convey information, but it only keeps conversation open. Ali (2009) illustrated that phatic communication, or phatic communion was first introduced in 1923 by Malinowski who assumes that it refers to a prevalent social phenomenon in all natural languages.

Also, phatic communication is an aspect of pragmatic character of human language which manifests itself in these utterances, to exemplify but not limited, greetings, farewells, inquiries about health, comments on weather. The main function of these interactions is not to exchange information, but the interlocutors use them to establish conventional social relations, to show their willingness to communicate and create a sense of familiarity between the communicators. As mentioned by Jumanto (2014, P.9) that "*phatic communication is a verbal communication between a speaker and a hearer to maintain the social relationship between them, not to give an emphasis on information content of the communication.*"

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In addition, Ali (2009) shows that Phatic communication has three categories: greetings, farewells, and small talk. The first type, greetings, refers to the expressions people use when they meet to establish social ties, show respect and affection to each other. The second type, farewell utterances used for seeing off someone are considered as a friendly way to maintain a good relationship or sometimes to announce their departure. The third type, small talk which follows the greeting, may lead to longer and more serious conversation among the interlocutors.

Further, Phatic communication involves speech in the service of establishing and maintaining initial social contact among people. According to West and Lynn (2011), phatic communication consists of words and phrases that are used for interpersonal contact only and are not meant to be translated verbatim. Gramley and Patzold (2004) pinpoint the importance of phatic communication which is to avoid silence and therefore the speaker and addressee could feel at ease and enjoy talking together.

According to Clark (2013), phatic communication and politeness are related to each other; they are both concerned with aspects of social relationships and with something that goes beyond meaning. Finally, Cavusgil (2021) concludes that phatic communication is considered as a kind of verbal formulae consisting of choices from a limited set of stereotyped phrases. For example, greetings and small talk help the interlocutors to be at ease and establish connections on a more personal level.

Musolf (2003, cited in Adnan, 2022, P.63) points out that sociolinguists have characterized phatic communication as follows:

- *Making conversation for the sake of it .*
- *Using language for the sake of maintaining rapport.*
- *Talking where speakers' relational goals supersede their commitment to factuality and instrumentality.*

Phatic Devices

Adnan (2022) illustrates that phatic communication can be achieved by four phatic devices that are utilized to indicate differences between the participants as follows:

- **Openings and Closings**

As mentioned by Adnan (2022), the opening and closing phases of a conversation are realized by greetings, warming up talk and farewells. For instance, Hi and Hello are among the conventionalized phatic words. "Good morning/afternoon/evening", "How are you?" and "Nice day" are considered common phatic phrases among people throughout their daily life in different settings.

- **Appeals and Uptakes**

According to González (2016), these devices contribute to establishing and developing the relationship among the interlocutors in communicative contact. The appealer or the speaker may use some expressions, for example, could you pass me the salt, please? This is a polite way of making a request and acknowledging the social norm of politeness. The uptake or the listener's interaction saying, for example, "You're right.", signals agreement with the speaker's statement or the listener has the same perspective. In this way, both appeals and uptakes are important expressions to maintain social

interactions especially showing politeness, understanding, agreement, and support. Accordingly, they contribute to a smooth conversation and establishing rapport between the conversation participants.

- **Connective Linkers**

It is possible to create a friendly atmosphere through the connective linkers, therefore the main purpose of connective linkers is to avoid gaps in the conversation as well as to establish and maintain social connections, rather than being informative. Here are some examples, "anyway", " well, you know", " by the way". As assumed by Jørgensen (2010) that phatic expressions are considered typical connective words as they send a signal to the listener that the communication lines are open which in turn create a sense of ease and rapport between the listener and the speaker.

Verbal Fillers and Hedges

These two devices have two main functions, Firstly, verbal fillers help the speakers to hold the turn by filling the gap in the talk, searching for the right word or thoughts, and thus they keep the speech going on. For instance, the speakers may use these phrases as verbal fillers: *"Um, so, I was thinking "...You know, like, I'm not sure "...Well, um, I guess what I mean is"*. Secondly, the speakers use hedges through some words or phrases that soften the impact of their utterances or statements. Thus, using hedges allows the speakers to express their opinions or viewpoints without being forceful. Also, hedges can be used to mitigate any potential disagreement with the listeners. For instance, the speakers may use these phrases; *"I think, maybe, we could try, it seems like, perhaps, I am not sure, but I believe"*.

To end this part, it is believed that these linguistic/phatic devices are relatively effective in maintaining the social harmony of the conversation through involving yourself in a comfortable and friendly atmosphere to convey effective communication.

The Function of Phatic Communication

According to Adnan (2022, P.63), *"the idea of phatic communication was first introduced by Malysonki (1949) as a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words."* Although trivia is the subject matter of phatic communication, they have a vital function. According to Abercrombie's (1998, cited in Adnan 2022, P.64) assumption*, "this view is derived from a linguistic tradition that highlighted the unimportance of the propositional content of phatic utterances***."** Against this view, Laver (1975, cited in Adnan 2022) argues in his paper titled "Communicative Functions of Phatic Communion" which defends that phatic communication is extremely useful for social communication because it might give some useful information about the interlocutors' social roles which define the nature of the talk.

Additionally, Laver (1975, P.232) assumes that *"the two main functions of phatic communication are the establishment and consolidation of the interpersonal relationship and the 'management of the transition from non-interaction to full interaction, and the transition from interaction back to non-interaction."* which *"occurs primarily in the opening and closing phases of the interaction"*, and this is *"achieved through stereotyped patterns of behavior"*. Furthermore, Laver points out that phatic communication maintains consensus about the interlocutors' identity, attribute, and attitude revealing their conceptions and their relative social status. Also**,** I totally agree with Lyons's formulation that

phatic communion *"serves to   establish and maintain a feeling of social solidarity and well-being"*. Also, Laver (1975, cited in Adnan 2022):

> *divided this interaction into three different phases: the opening phase, the medial phase, and the closing phase. In the opening phase the interlocutors try to lubricate the transition from silence to interaction. They break the ice to move to the medial phase. And the closing phase is also transitional in the sense that serves the transition from full interaction to departure again. (P.64)*

It is believed that the main purpose of phatic communication involves the *process of interaction, not its substance* as mentioned by Adnan (2022). In other words, it may serve to continue communication, to discontinue communication, to check whether the communication channel is open or working, for example, *"hello, can you hear me?",* to attract attention, or to confirm continued attention. For instance*, "are you listening?"*

To conclude, I strongly agree with Adnan's (2022) assumption that phatic communication works when the message is not intended to provide information as there is no communication problem to solve or even purpose to communicate. Thus, it is inferred that the phatic act of communication is not a waste of time or effort, the act ensures that the existing communication channels are open and usable. As concluded by Boxer (2002, cited in Adnan 2022) that phatic communication *reflects important information about the wants and perceptions of the interlocutors".* This kind of information is conveyed indirectly through the speech act. For instance, *'I like your shirt'* is not only a compliment to the addressee, but also "*it is a solidarity marker between the two interlocutors".*

Types of Phatic Communication

Based on Aitchison's (1996) convention, there are four main types of phatic speech. First, **'greetings'** are ritual words that are exchanged when people meet. Second, standard topic of conversation is also a form of phatic talk, for example, talking about weather between two speakers who have never met before. Third, supportive chat is a conversation between speakers expressing empathy and solidarity in certain situations. Fourth, meaningless words or misunderstood words, they can keep speech or conversation going. For instance, thinking sounds *(uh, uh huh, huh, hmm, er, like, right?)* may be collections of sounds with meaningless lexical value, but they pack a pragmatic or social effect.

Theoretical Framework of Phatic Communication

According to Malinowski's (1923, cited in Jumanto, 2014) conception that language is a social phenomenon, based on this theory, he points out that union ties could be built through a mere exchange of words, and he called it "phatic communion". Then, Jakobson (1960) elaborated this concept of communication as a phatic function of language to be one of the six main functions of language which were developed by Malinowski's theory phatic communion and Bühler's (1918) three language functions. After that, Richards (1983) referred to the two theories as social contact in his definition of phatic communication as a means of maintaining and establishing social communication. In its further development, a group of linguists packed all the main uses into twelve functions of phatic communication, the theoretical framework of phatic communication as outlined in figure 1 below.
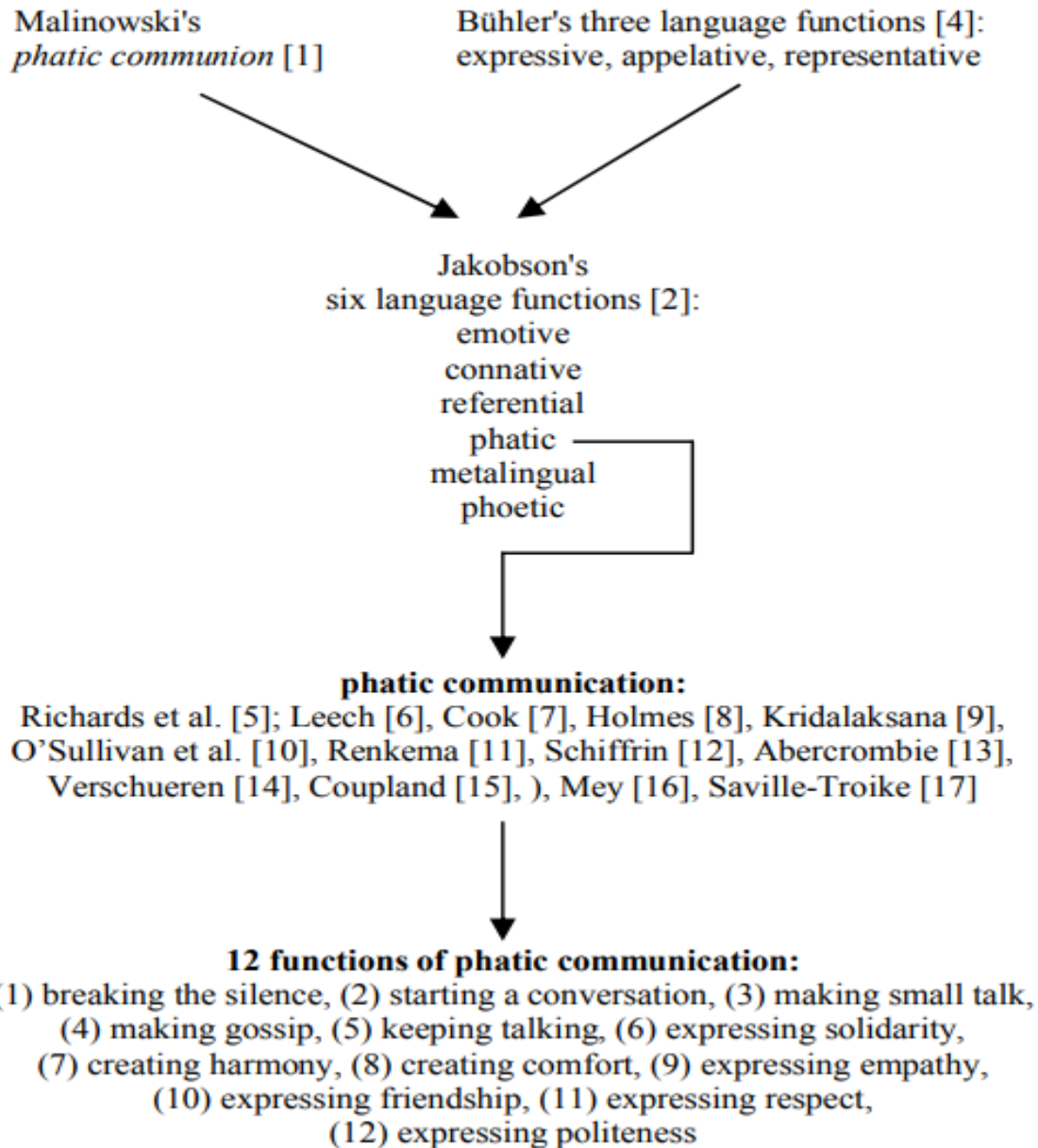
Theoretical Framework of Phatic Communication

Malinowski's
phatic communion [1]

Bühler's three language functions [4]:
expressive, appelative, representative

Jakobson's
six language functions [2]:
emotive
connative
referential
phatic
metalingual
phoetic

phatic communication:
Richards et al. [5]; Leech [6], Cook [7], Holmes [8], Kridalaksana [9],
O'Sullivan et al. [10], Renkema [11], Schiffrin [12], Abercrombie [13],
Verschueren [14], Coupland [15],), Mey [16], Saville-Troike [17]

12 functions of phatic communication:
(1) breaking the silence, (2) starting a conversation, (3) making small talk,
(4) making gossip, (5) keeping talking, (6) expressing solidarity,
(7) creating harmony, (8) creating comfort, (9) expressing empathy,
(10) expressing friendship, (11) expressing respect,
(12) expressing politeness

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Phatic Communication, adapted from Jumanto (2014, P.9)

Phatic Communication and Politeness

According to Adnan (2022), the study of phatic communication and politeness can be seen as going beyond consideration of what is linguistically communicated. Phatic communication serves to enhance social relationships between the interlocutors and depends relatively weakly on the encoded meanings of the used words. Additionally, politeness is based on the notion of "positive, or negative face" which

interlocutors use to modify one's behavior to enhance, protect or attack each other's face. According to Carl (1980, cited in Adnan 2022, P.64), "*both studies of phatic communication and politeness are concerned with aspects of social relationships and with something that goes beyond meanings derived directly from the linguistically encoded meanings of words*".

Furthermore, almost all researchers agree with Carl's (1980, cited in Adnan, 2022) conception that phatic communication is closely related to politeness. First, engaging in phatic communication is the polite thing to do. Second, both phatic and polite utterances are frequently realized using standard forms. However, politeness is not necessarily a feature of phatic communication: communicative behavior can be polite or impolite while being, or not being, phatic. Then, phatic communication is intrinsically connected with culture. Accordingly, phatic communication differs in its formality, length, and subject matter according to the culture. What is appropriate in one culture may not be appropriate in another. For example, in the USA, businesspeople think that to be informal is a form of showing confidence. This is not the case in other countries, however, to be informal and not to use titles might be considered rude or make others feel not at ease as explained by Cavusgil (2021, cited in Adnan 2022). Finally, when Leech (1983, cited in Jørgensen, 2010) talks about politeness maxims, he underlines the close connection between politeness and phatic communion, or "the activity of talking merely to preserve sociability". To conclude, I strongly agree with Adnan's (2022) assumption that it is important to consider the types of phatic expressions that are used to create ties of unions.

The Rules of Politeness (Be Polite)

Lakoff (1973) reduces Paul Grice's maxims to two: be clear and be polite. She thought that these two rules are sufficient for the purpose of measuring a speaker's "*pragmatic competence.*" The clarity requirement is accounted for by Grice's four conversational maxims, so Lakoff concentrates on three rules of politeness:

-*Don't impose on your hearer.*

 -*Give the hearer options.*

 -*Make the hearer feel good: be friendly.*

In a related study to Malinowski's phatic communion, Leech (1983) sheds light upon the same linguistic concept and formulates an additional maxim of politeness called 'metalinguistic' or 'phatic maxim'. He assumes that politeness is not only confined in the content of the conversation, but also by the structure of the conversation managed by its participants. For example, speaking at the wrong time is considered 'interrupting' or being 'silent' at improper time has impolite implications. In other words, Leech thinks that silence has a *contradictory implication*. For example, *the newcomer may feel it is rude to interrupt the conversation, but the participants may feel it is rude not to give the newcomer a chance to join in*. He confirms that there is a close connection between politeness and the activity of talking merely to maintain and preserve sociability. Accordingly, Leech's phatic maxim is of two types or forms; it could be in negative form *'avoid silence'* or in its positive form *'keep talking'***.**

Furthermore**,** Leech argues that 'phatic maxim' is not to be explained in the same way as those of Grice's maxims. For example, *'You've had your hair cut '* clearly violates the maxim of Quantity. However, it is an apparent breach of the CP. In terms of phatic maxim, such a conversation does not

only help in avoiding silence, but also serves to extend the common ground of agreement and experience shared by the interlocutors. Accordingly, Leech (1983, P.122) concludes that *"the type of topics of such conversations tend to be non-c*ontroversial, ... *it focuses on the attitudes of the speakers rather than on factual matters".* Accordingly, Phatic maxim can contribute a great deal in progression of the conversation by giving the hearer an opportunity to elaborate on personal experience in a new direction.

Relevance Theory: Phatic Conversation

In my own perspective, phatic communication is considered as a part of mini-talk or small talk, thus let us consider the relation between relevance theory developed by Paul Grice (1957) as a ground-breaking tool to the subsequent modern pragmatics which are based on two main areas: logic and conversation. Further, Grice's work is based on "meaning" and he developed a distinction between two types of meaning: natural and non-natural. Clark (2013, p. 44) points out that "*Grice's 'natural meaning' is the kind of meaning involved when we are able to infer from something in the world that something else must be the case, often because of a perceived causal relationship."* For example, "smoke means fire". Meanwhile, *"non-natural meaning' involves the existence of a particular kind of intention."* as shown in this example, *"my friend is drawing a picture of my wife being unfaithful.".* The intention behind drawing this picture is to tell him indirectly that your wife is unfaithful, and he should respond accordingly. I agree with Grice's assumption that this unnatural meaning includes evidence to the hearer in order to take an action.

To conclude, as cited by Clark (2013):

 Grice's discussion of meaning was important and influential. The main reason it is important for us here is that the scope of Grice's pragmatics is determined by the definition of meaningNN. In Grice's terms, it is cases of meaningNN which pragmatic theories aim to explain. (p. 47)

Theory of Conversation: Grice and pragmatics

Grice's assumption is based on his proposal suggesting *"an explanation of how we manage to 'mean more than we say'.*as mentioned by Clark (2013). In other words, how exactly we manage to work out the specific, intended meanings of utterances. Grice's ideas are based on inference in conversation. Clark (2013) concludes that the key was a distinction between '*what is said' by an utterance* and what Grice termed its *'implicatures',* in the sense that propositions it communicates indirectly".

The following 2 examples indicate Grice's theory of inference in conversation as written by Clark (2013):

1- *A: I need some paper tissues.*

B: There's a newsagent on the next corner.

 Implicature: The newsagent is likely to be open and to be able to sell you some paper tissues.

2- *A: How do you think my lecture went?*

B: Some of the students enjoyed it.

Implicature: not all of the students enjoyed your lecture. (p. 48)

I totally agree with Grice's assumption as mentioned by Clark (2013, p. 49) that "*we follow rational principles in communicating.*" assuming that "*conversation is a cooperative activity and that it is therefore rational to assume that speakers will be cooperative*" meaning that *"to produce utterances which are informative, truthful, relevant, and formulated in an appropriate manner.*"

The maxims of conversation and Cooperative principles

Cooperative Principle

Clark (2013, p. 57) states that to meet cooperative principles (CP) aspects, "*make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.*"

Maxim of Quality

"Try to make your contribution one that is true: (i) do not say what you believe to be false (ii) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence."

Maxim of Quantity

"(i) make your contribution as informative as required (ii) do not make your contribution more informative than what is required."

Maxim of Relation

Be relevant; your response should meet the speaker's question and to the point.

Maxim of Manner

" (i) avoid obscurity of expression (ii) avoid ambiguity (iii) be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity) (iv) be orderly."

Clark (2013) concludes that:

> *Grice's key insight (for us) is the idea that understanding utterances is a rational activity in which we make inferences about the communicator's intentions. He makes several important distinctions, between saying and implicating, between conventional and conversational implicatures, between generalized and particularized conversational implicatures. (p. 62)*

Critiques of Grice: Not all of the maxims seem to be necessary.

As mentioned by Clark (2013, p.67), *"Wilson and Sperber suggested that all of Grice's maxims could be replaced by one properly defined principle of relevance". And they concluded that* the recent formulation of the *Communicative Principle of Relevance aims to account for the interpretation.*" I totally agree with the assumption developed by Wilson and Sperber (1981, cited in Clark 2013:76) that *"most of the maxims are unnecessary and that the rest can be 'reduced' to 'a principle of relevance'.*"

Presumption of optimal relevance

Clark (2013, p.108) points out that the presumption of optimal relevance has been formulated in different ways over the years as follows:

(a) The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it. This stipulates the minimal degree of relevance required: it says that there will be at least enough positive cognitive effects to justify the effort involved in interpreting the ostensive stimulus.

(b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences. This says that the communicator is expected to go beyond this minimal degree of relevance – increasing the effects achieved and reducing the effort required – to the extent that this is consistent with her abilities and preferences. To illustrate, the contrast between the following two utterances illustrates how the presumption of optimal relevance works:

a. Hi Akram, how are you?

b. Hi Akram, how are you these days?

Linguistically, the difference is the presence of the two words *'these days'*. So, what effect do these extra words have on the interpretation? In most contexts, the hearer of (a) would infer that the speaker wants to know how the addressee is around the present time. However, (b) makes it explicit that the speaker is interested in the hearer's well-being around now. most English speakers report an intuition that the speaker of (b) seems to be more really interested in the hearer's welfare than the speaker of (a). I strongly agree with Clark's conclusion that (a) is *a typical 'phatic' utterance*, which means to be sociable than genuinely to request or pass on information. Accordingly, relevance theory predicts that utterance (b)above will not receive the same interpretation because the speaker has put the hearer to more effort than would have been required to process in utterance (a). Clark thinks that if this extra effort does not lead to extra effects, the speaker has put the hearer to unnecessary effort. Therefore, the utterance will not be optimally relevant. For this reason, the listener must look for something beyond the straightforward phatic interpretation which he thinks the speaker is intending to communicate. The most likely interpretation is that the speaker is really interested in the hearer's well-being.

Conversation Phases

According to Ke (2019), conversations have beginnings, middles, and ends; and the ways in which they are opened, maintained, and eventually terminated are something basic to the understanding of how conversations ever take place and are managed.

A-Openings

Laver (1975, cited in Ke 2019) points out that Pragmatists suggest that openings and closings are negotiated by "ritual" exchanges. This suggestion is reminiscent of a class of verbal formulae which some early sociologists of language identified and named "phatic communion" or "phatic communication" which consists of *"choices from a limited set of stereotyped phrases of greeting, parting, commonplace remarks about the weather, and small talk."* According to Laver (1975), phatic communication is indexical or deictic meaning that it refers to *"factors narrowly specific to the time*

and place of the utterance" and therefore it could involve *either time or place deixis* as shown in these examples:

Time reference is divisible into the present, the past and the future, and so are phatic expressions with time deixis:

Past: Nasty storm last night.

Present: What a beautiful time of year it is!

Future: Do you think we shall get rain tonight?

Place-deixis is two-termed, according to whether the place referred to as "here" or "there"; but of course, "there" will in any case be viewed from the perspective of "here": For instance, *nice hotel this. What a boring play! They served afternoon tea at the other hotel.*

B-Closings

Ke (2019) assures that conversations terminated without phatic communion will not be easy to resume on some future occasion. The function of polite closing is to ensure an easy resumption. Accordingly, Laver (1975) identifies six strategies employed in closings in English:

> **a- Giving one's reasons for terminating the encounter.** These, if indexical, may be either self-oriented or other-oriented as shown in these examples:
> *-Well, I'll really have to get on my way.*
> *-Now, I mustn't keep you any longer.*
> **b- Assessing the quality of the encounter.** Presumably one can make a favorable or a critical assessment:
> *- It's been nice talking to you.*
> *-Well, I don't think all this has got us far.*
> **c- Expressing concern for the other person's welfare** when you will no longer be with him:
> *-Take care now.*
> *-Mind how you go.*
> **d- Referring to future resumption of encounter.** Some languages have fixed forms of farewell that refer to future encounters.
> **e- Referring to a mutual acquaintance,** where that acquaintance is closer to the hearer than to the speaker: i.e. the expression is other-oriented. Thus, one says such things as: *Give my regards to Khaled (Hearer's brother). Say hello to the kids.*
> **f- Using terms of direct address increasingly:** this has the effect of reassuring one's addressee, lest he should interpret one's desire to close the conversation as a rejection.
> These six devices were identified as being conventionally employed in the English language.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the purpose of this study, exploratory mixed-method approach will be applied to explore the social and pragmatic functions of the phatic expressions used by native and nonnative English speakers at a multinational workplace in Suadi Arabia . Further, the data collected in exploratory research is usually descriptive and helps me to identify patterns and trends, generate hypotheses, and develop a

deeper understanding of the research problem. Accordingly, the qualitative results will be used to get a more in-depth understanding to the obtained quantitative findings. The quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed in two sequential phases; the qualitative phase is built on the quantitative through purposeful sampling from the same population for conducting semi-structured interviews.

data collection process should start with completing the questionnaire for the quantitative method followed by the qualitative method as the quantative represents the major feature of my data collection process grounded in the purpose of the study. The mixing of the two methods occurred at two stages: first, while designing the interview protocols and choosing the participants for conducting follow-up interviews to do further exploration to the quantitative results, and second while integrating the final conclusions from both quantitative and qualitative phases at the interpretation and discussion stage of the study.

Data Collection

The exploratory design of this mixed-methods approach is based on the purpose of my study and the first quantative analysis should start with collecting the phatic utterances used by native and nonnative English speakers through a questionaire having the same questions to be completed by all the native and nonnative English participants aged between 25-60 and they come from different social backgrounds majoring in different subjects at the college of Energy Tech in Saudi Arabia. My vocational training college has multinational staff , native and non-native – from different countires around the world, and English is the formal communication langauge as well as the main medium for delivering academic and technical oil industry training programs. The nonnative phatic expressions survey should be conducted by the Arabic-speaking respondents, male and female, from different countries in the Middle East, especially from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Sudan, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia. Meanwhile, the native phatic expressions survey should be conducted by the English-speaking staff, native speakers, from the USA, the UK, Canda, South Africa and Australia. The questionnaire should comprise of some open questions and the participants should mention the phatic expressions they usually use/hear in different communicative situations as follows:

- What do you usually say to start talking with someone or a group of people you know/ don't know?
- What do you usually say when you greet someone or a group of people?
- How do you usually respond to someone who greets you by saying how are you?
- How do you usually respond to someone who greets you by saying peace be upon you?
- What do you usually say when you bid farewell to someone or a group of people?
- What do you usually say to close a talk with someone or a group of people you know?

Participants' Descriptions and Sampling Strategies

The study participants are categorized in two groups: native and nonnative English speakers at Energy Tech college. The same population will be used for the two phases of this study and sampling strategy will be according to these standards: non-probability sample, availability at certain time, easy accessibility, and willingness to volunteer. In the first phase, I will administer the questionaire in English, to the target participants of the two groups having the same number of participants in each group, 100 in two groups. In the second phase (interviews), I will purposefully select knowledgeable

participants from the same population, around 10 from each group, to cover all the countries (1-2 from each country) to reflect their different social backgrounds.

7Validity and Realiabilty

As explained by Holloway (1997), validity is the truth value of a research, which is to measure what should be measured, also validity has two types, internal and external. the internal validity refers to the researcher's

report on realities of the informants' opinions using parts of the interviews as planned in this study. The external validity refers to the generalizability of this research which is applicable to similar other situations. Other elements of validity such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as refered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) are planned to be followed by the researcher to produce valid and realiable findings.

8- Data Analysis and Findings

Based on the study findings, English native and nonnative speakers have a good social relationship by using the 12 functions of phatic communication in different contexts and several situations covering different aspects of power and solidarity, informal and formal talk as shown in table 1.

Functions	Situations
1. Breaking the silence	• By greeting. • By mentioning names, titles, or titles and names, • By saying goodbye in informal or formal situations. • By commenting on something obvious in informal or formal situations.
2. Starting a conversation	• by greeting or by interrupting in informal or formal situations. • by mentioning names, titles, or titles and names • by commenting on something obvious • by apologizing
3. Making a small talk	• Starting and ending the small talk to close superiors and subordinates
4. Making gossip	• With close superiors in informal situations in the absence of someone else within the hearing distance.
5. keeping talking	• by avoiding silence when talking, • by changing the topic of conversation, • by expressing listening noises, • Keeping the conversation going by interrupting
6. Expressing solidarity	• by expressing wishes, • by congratulating, • by agreeing on something, • by apologizing, • by thanking, in informal or formal situations
7. Creating harmony	• by congratulating, • by agreeing on something, • by apologizing, • by thanking, • by joking.
8. Creating comfort	• by agreeing on something, • by apologizing, • by thanking.

Table 1: Phatic Communication Functions and Communicative situations

communicative functions	functions of phatic communication
A- Expressing wishes	• for creating harmony or • for creating comfort
B- Giving compliments	• for expressing solidarity, • for creating harmony, • for creating comfort, • for expressing empathy, • for expressing respect
C- Criticizing indirectly	• for expressing solidarity, • for creating harmony, • for expressing empathy, • or expressing friendship, • for expressing respect
D- Pacifying	• for creating comfort, • for expressing empathy, • for expressing friendship, • for expressing respect
E- Encouraging	• for creating comfort • for expressing respect
F- Expressing sympathy	• for expressing friendship
G- Saying bad words	• for expressing solidarity, • for creating harmony, • for creating comfort, • for expressing empathy, • for expressing friendship
H- Mocking	• for expressing solidarity • for expressing friendship
I- Joking	• for expressing solidarity, • for creating comfort, • for expressing empathy to close superiors

Alongside this, the study findings indicate that particular communicative situations (as shown in table 2) have been there for the purpose of expressing some phatic communication functions with different communicators in various situations.

Table 2: Further Commuincative functions related to phatic communcations

Some Types of Phatic Communcation Expressions

Phatic Communication Functions	Situations	Phatic Expressions
1- Breaking the silence	• By greeting. • By mentioning names, titles, or titles and names, • By saying goodbye in informal or formal situations. • By commenting on something obvious in informal or formal situations.	• *Hi!', 'Hello!', 'Hello. How are you?'* • *Akram!', "Doctor!', 'Mr.* • *'Bye!', 'Goodbye!', 'Excuse me. I must go now.* • *Hi. You're busy!', 'Oh, it's hot today!'*
2- Starting a conversation	• by interrupting • by apologizing	• *Excuse me!', 'Excuse me. Can I borrow your time for a minute?* • *'Hey, I need you to sign. Sorry! or 'I'm sorry for being late…. I must apologize.'*
3- Making a small talk	• Starting the small talk • Making the small talk, • Ending the small talk,	• *by greeting, e.g. 'Morning!' or 'How are you?'* • *by developing the conversations by asking a question 'How is your family?', 'How was your holiday?'* • *by apologizing and giving an excuse, e.g. 'I am sorry. I must go now.'*
4- Making gossip	• With close superiors in informal situations in the absence of someone else within the hearing distance.	• *I met so and so last week, 'Did you hear about …? 'Goodbye. I must get back to work' or 'So, how is school these days?*

5- keeping talking	- by avoiding silence when talking, - by changing the topic of conversation, - by expressing listening noises, - Keeping the conversation going by interrupting	*Ehm', 'Well', 'Let me see.* *'By the way, ...', 'I've been meaning to talk to you about...* *Really?', 'Oh, is that so?', 'I understand'*
6- Expressing solidarity	- by expressing wishes, - by congratulating, - by agreeing on something, - by apologizing, - by thanking, in informal or formal situations	*Good luck!', 'I hope that goes well.'* *'Congratulations!* *I agree with you', 'I understand your point', 'Yes, you are right.'* *'I'm sorry. I'm messed up*

Table 3: phatic expressions used by native and nonative English speakers

Relgion-loaded Communication

السلام عليكمِ" Peace be upon you" could be the most dominant and appropriate greeting for all accasions in nonnative English speakers contexts, muslim people and sometimes non-muslim while talking with their muslin partners) use it when addressing their friends and strangers, in public, political and social gatherings, in face-to-face interactions and indirect phone conversations, in formal interviews and informal discussions. The following more examples of closing and starting conversations including greetings, farewells and small talk which indicate the effective impact of religious background on the phatic utterances. On the other hand, in native English speakers, there are non-religiously oriented

Conversational Closings in native and nonnative **phatic talk**	Conversational Openings in native and nonnative **phatic talk**
- See you - Take care - Cheers - So long - Have a good day - Have a nice day - goodbye	- Peace be upon you - Good morning/evening - How are you? - Welcome back - You are welcome - How do you do?

farewells that are popular and endemic all over the USA rather than saying "goodbye" as mentioned by Ali (2009).

Table 4- Prevalent Phatic opening /closing expressions of native and nonative groups.

On the other hand, native speakers' phatic talk, there are non-religiously oriented farewells that are popular all over the USA rather than saying "goodbye" as mentioned in Ali (2009), especially, *see you, take care, Cheers, so long, have a good day, Have a nice day.*

Non-formulaic Responses

Native English phatic expressions are quite formulaic. For example, when you meet someone for the first time, you should greet them using the formal inquiry "How do you do? However, you should use the customary greeting "How are you?" when meeting/addressing a friend or an acquaintance. The response in the first situation is a mere repetition of the same inquiry and a fine, ok, or not bad in the second situation. these opening conversational expressions, the formal "how do you do?" and the informal "how are you?" are not existent. As mentioned earlier, most nonnative English usually say السلام عليكم (peace be upon you) in all situations for any purposes based on their Islamic background as well as their traditional culture . Further, the response to (how are you?) does not have a specific utterance in a particular situation rather than another,

Extended Responses

Native and nonnative English speakers usually respond to greetings and farewells by repeating the same expressions, repeat the same greetings and farewells, especially to reply to these greetings: good morning, afternoon, evening, and goodbye. However, sometimes slight additions are used by nonnative speakers, as mentioned earlier, may be due to their religion and traditions, especially in the Middle East countries. Most populations Muslims and non-Muslim follow the same way of greetings in public and their workplaces. Similarly, utterances such *as Hi, hello, merry Christmas, happy new year, goodbye, good morning/afternoon, and evening*…are often responded in the same way.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of exploring the phatic expressions used by native and nonnative English speakers in a Saudi multilingual context, it is inferred that phatic communication and politeness are strongly related in the sense that they are both concerned with aspects of social relationships. Accordingly, it is recommended to consider the twelve phatic communication functions outlined in the preceding sections of this paper, especially the expressions uttered for the purpose of a achieving the different functions of phatic communication to create ties of unions among native and nonnative English speakers in my Saudi workplace.

- the most important social factors which effectively affect the choice of linguistic tokens used in phatic communication among native and nonnative are cultural background, social distance, and solidarity status.

-Phatic communication expressions could indicate the cultural principles of politeness

-Phatic communion expressions establish rapport and prevent the occurrence of face-threating acts among native and nonnative workers at a multilingual workplace.

-The cultural background of each interlocutor influences the structure of phatic communion expressions and their repetition within one face-to-face interaction.

-phatic expressions are effective conversational signals for pointing out what the speakers are about to say. They could also be deemed as an indexical message in which the social identity, attributes and social information of the speaker are discerned.

-Phatic communication expressions facilitate the progression from one state of speech to the next. The participants use them to negotiate and orient their social relationships and this creates a positive and motivating working atmosphere.

-The results of this study can be used as a corpus for English language learners in the service of creating and maintaining a good social relationship with English native speakers they meet anywhere to support their spoken skills, especially with English native speakers.

-The results of this research can be applied by English teachers in the teaching and learning process with their English students which in turn enables them to communicate well in English according to the context and situation to avoid the so-called cross-cultural misunderstanding.

-It can be employed by linguistic researchers to conduct research on phatic communication among native speakers of other languages in the world. the findings of this study reflect a great harmony among the phatic expressions used by native and nonnative speakers, especially native English speakers who try speaking the mother language, Arabic, of the nonnative English speakers for the purpose of greeting or starting interaction with each other. For instance, some of native speakers often say 'صباح الخير, instead of saying "good morning", ", السلام عليكم, instead of saying "peace be upon you".

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