# Social Relations Reflected in the Use of Phatic Communication Viewed from Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Studying social relations embedded in the use of phatic expression plays an important role to detect the position of each participant in the communication events. This research was aimed at investigating how the lecturers of the English Department STKIP PGRI Jombang enacted phatic communication as part of a power and solidarity strategy in maintaining good social relations through dialogues with their students. It employed qualitative research by adopting the theory of critical classroom discourse analysis to investigate how the lecturer enacted phatic communication as power and solidarity strategies to the students in the classroom. It related the examination of phatic communication and social analysis to get true data analysis of the research. The findings showed the lecturers enacted phatic communication as a powerful strategy for their students by addressing the students in terms of the learning process and controlling the preparation of the group discussion. Furthermore, the lecturers also enacted phatic communication as a solidarity strategy with their students by exercising personal experiences and expressing sad feelings to the student whose father passed away. Thus, it could be concluded that when the lecturers exercised power over the students indicated that their social relations are unequal. On the contrary, the solidarity exposed by the lecturers to their students indicated that their social relations are equal.

**Keywords:** *critical classroom discourse analysis, power and solidarity, phatic communication, social relations*

## INTRODUCTION

Communication choice by the participants in social relations plays important role in the communication events, especially in terms of the learning and teaching process both in and out of the classroom. It can be observed that their interactions were performed differently in any situations and different participants that possibly caused by their problematic behaviors and equal or unequal status. Guided by the theory of critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA), it can be investigated that the symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships that were occurring in and out of the classroom during the interactions were part of power and solidarity relations. According to the appendix of the Minister of Research, Technology and Higher Education No. 3, 2020 about National Standard of Higher Education, states that learners must be the central part of the educational process, must be able to work together and have social sensitivity in social life and appreciate diversity of religion, culture and opinions.

In life, humans can't be separated from social interaction. Social interaction is a relationship between two individuals or more, where individual behavior one affects, changes or correct other individual behavior or vice versa. While social interaction is the process by which people act against

or respond to other people's reciprocity. The ability to interact socially maximum is one of the goals of the learning process that students live in their place of study. Fernanda, Sano and Nurfarhanah (2012) state that if students interact well, especially in learning then they will be easier to accept in school environment, especially in the environment class.

Several studies have examined phatic communication as one of the communication choices enacted by the participants in negotiating their social relations viewed from linguistics and discourse contexts, such as phatic utterances and the communication of social information (Cruz, 2007), phatic expression in daily conversation at PT. SOME Indonesia (Situmorang, 2017), negotiating the meaning of phatic communication "How Are You?" (Robinson & Coupland, 1992) and discourse functions of phatic interjections in the English, Russian and Japanese Languages: with special focus on English **(**Petrishcheva, 2007). The previous studies showed the varieties of phatic expression and meanings in workplaces and informal situations. Unlike the previous studies, this study tries to uncover the social relations embedded in the use of phatic communication in the education environmental setting among the lecturers and students at higher education institutions. Thus, this study was aimed at investigating how social relations reflected in the use of phatic communication as power and solidarity strategies when the lecturers interacted with their students both in and out of the classroom.

## CRITICAL CLASSROOM DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Kumaravadivelu (1999) states that CCDA is a development of CDA by looking at the perspectives of post-structural and postcolonial discourse and trying to bring discourse analysis into the classroom because the participants in the class can be called mini-communities because the participants come from different families. CCDA is based on several views that class discourse is a discourse study that analyzes class situations that are like situations in real society so that there must be a social problem that is constructed, political motivation from each participant, and of course, there is a cultural background that is shaped and shapes it. Thus, CCDA is also supported how the cultural capital that exists in the classroom situation can shape and be shaped in the relationship between lecturers and students in learning situations.

The classroom situation is a mini-community situation, of course, what is in real society will be found in the learning community in the classroom. If in real society there are racial differences, social stratification, and gender differences, then in-class situations like this must also exist. The existence of these differences has motivated CCDA experts to bring the discipline of CDA into the classroom in the context of how the class is organized which is not only in accordance with learning motivation but there are several things that can be found regarding the linguistic environment. The linguistic environment shows how the dialogue inside the classroom or outside the classroom shows the communication events between participants between lecturers and students. These communication events are formed, of course, influenced by economic, social, political, and historical factors as the background of the society in general.

## POWER AND SOLIDARITY

Communication events in the classroom certainly show the existence of social relations between participants. This social relationship can show a relationship of power or solidarity between participants which can be analyzed from their choice of language which will determine whether one participant seems more powerful to other participants or whether the participants have an equal relationship. Power and solidarity are like two sides of a coin. There will be ambiguity in determining the strength or solidarity used by one participant to

another in conveying utterances. It is the utterances of the participants in an event in the classroom that are of course included in the CCDA study as the development of CDA. In determining social relations between participants in communication events, it is rather difficult to determine because power and solidarity are like two sides of a coin, thus it needed a deep understanding of the social context in determining this relationship. Holmes (2013) states, "there are four factors that influence the particular context that exists in communication events". The four factors are participants, setting, topic, and function. Participants are people who use language in communication events. Their use of language can reflect their background or identity which explains who is speaking to whom. While the setting shows the social context of the communication event. The topic explains what was discussed and the reason why the communication occurred. Function reflects the reasons why the participants discussed the problem.

These four factors will greatly assist the researchers in analyzing how the social relationships between participants are whether their relationships are equal (equal/solidarity) or unequal (unequal/power) which is reflected in their choice of communication language when the lecturer delivers the lecture material where the communication message is directed by the speaker. to his listeners as has been conveyed by Ng and Bradac (1993). By analyzing the language choice of the participants, the identity of the participants will be known which influences their choice of language to show whether the participants are equal or not in line with other participants.

## PHATIC COMMUNICATION

Communication choices are reflected in the linguistic choices of each participant in the communication event. Linguistic choice certainly differs between participants in the sense that each participant has his own way of determining his language choice as a strategy to negotiate goals when interacting with other participants. For example, the choice of greeting someone will vary in communication events, using the words '*hi', 'assalamualaikum', good morning*; or other options. Of course, when participants are negotiated in determining a particular greeting choice, they will be aware of the implications of that choice. That is what is called a communication strategy in interacting in front of other people. Many strategies that can be applied in a communication event are included in the language choice strategy in learning. One strategy that can be applied is the choice of language in phatic communication. Phatic communication is indeed a mild choice of language but it will be more impactful when it is examined about the implications for smooth communication events as stated by Malinowski (1999, in Robinson and Coupland, 1992).

## METHOD

Phatic communication in communication events in the learning environment both inside and in the classroom between lecturers and students of the English Education Study Program STKIP PGRI Jombang will have an impact on the success of the learning objectives. This is very much in accordance with the research objectives, namely knowing and describing what is the meaning behind the use of phatic communication strategies by lecturers to their students so that this research uses qualitative methods.

Referring to the characteristics of qualitative research, the data in this study are the results of lecturer observations in communication events carried out by lecturers and students of the English education study program STKIP PGRI Jombang. The research data collection adopted Litosseliti's model (2010) which provides an explanation or stages in collecting qualitative data. There were two lecturers were observed in this research. The utterances

contained in communication events that contain elements of phatic communication reflected in the interactions of lecturers and students were recorded by attending the class and observing the dialogues between the lectures and students both in and out of the classroom. The recordings, then, were transcribed and classified according to the rules of qualitative data collection by providing research data codes that assist the researchers in recognizing and interpreting data properly.

The next stage after data collection is data analysis by referring to research problems (Litosseliti, 2010). The data analysis stage is to find the true meaning of the phatic communication conveyed by the lecturer in his interaction with the students related to the lecturer's communication choice strategy, whether the strategy is to choose a power or solidarity strategy. The analysis at this stage must be adjusted to the context of the use of language choices to determine the type of communication strategy that is closely related to the lecturer's ideology.

After the stages of collecting and coding research data, the next step is to analyze research data to dissect or elaborate on the meaning of the use of phatic communication by lecturers to students by referring to the lecturer's ideology in the communication event aiming at assisting the researchers in determining whether the phatic communication carried out by the lecturers showed the power or the solidarity. This can be seen in how lecturers manipulate their language choices to maintain a harmonious relationship with their students so that learning objectives can be achieved. Power means that the social relations between the lecturers and students are unequal. But solidarity means that the social relations between the lecturers and students are equal.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA) to investigate social relations embedded in the use of phatic communication. There are two grand theories applied in this research. They are critical classroom discourse analysis and phatic communication. This part presents the results of the research question exploring the social relations among the participants whether equal or unequal by employing the theories of CCDA and phatic communications. There are two sections of presenting the findings to answer the question. The first section presents the table showing generally the various phatic expressions uttered by the lecturers and students that were calculated in percentages. The next section presents the analysis of each data as the stage to determine their social relations whether equal and equal by paying attention the power and solidarity strategies acted by the lecturers and students.

The table below showed phatic communication found between the lecturers and students in discourse class:

Table 1. Expression of Phatic Communication

| Expressions | Lecturers | Students | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assalamu'alaikum | 1 | | 5,8 |
| Salam Sejahtera | 1 | | 5,8 |
| How are you | 3 | | 17,6 |
| Fine | | 3 | 17,6 |
| Yes, sir | | 3 | 17,6 |
| I like | 1 | | 5,8 |
| Thank you | 1 | 2 | 11,7 |
| What's wrong with you | 1 | | 5,8 |
| I am very sorry to hear | 1 | | 5,8 |
| Total | 9 | 8 | 100 |

Table 1 describes the various expression of phatic communication uttered by the lecturers and students in their interaction both in and out of the classroom in terms of the learning process in the class and the thesis's writing guidance. There are three expressions were found in the highest frequencies. They are "*how are you, fine , yes sir*" (17,6%). The second highest frequency is the expression "*thank you*" (11,7%), and there are 5 expressions were found in the lowest frequencies (5,8%). They are "*Assalamua'alaikum, salam sejahtera, I like, what's wrong with you and I am very sorry to hear*".

The choice of phatic communication used by lecturers to students reflected in the research data shows that the lecturers have manipulated or informed the choice of what language is appropriate to apply in their communication with students. As explained in the study of the theory of power and solidarity, to determine which research data can be classified into the realm of power or solidarity, an in-depth study is required by referring to the ideology of the lecturer and the social context of communication events. This implies that research data containing phatic communication cannot be studied independently but must be linked to other disciplines such as ideology and critical classroom discourse analysis (CCDA).

Data 1: Conversation between a lecturer and students in class

1. Lecturer : 'assalamualaikum, and salam sejahtera,  how are you today?'
2. Students : ' fine, thanks, sir'.
3. Lecturer : 'all of you, ok today?'
4. Students : 'yes, Sir'
5. One of the students    interrupted : 'I haven't breakfast, sir'….
6. Lecturer : 'Ok, after the lecture, you can go to the canteen!'….
7. Lecturer : 'I like this class…
8. Students : 'Thank you, sir'
9. Lecturer : 'hey, you…why do you keep silent? What's wrong with you? Do you miss your boyfriend or you are brokenhearted?   ',
10. Student  : 'no, sir, I do not have any money.
11. Lecturer : 'ehmm…you can take it….
    (Students        gave applause…….)
12. Lecturer : 'Do you like cooking? What food you like much? 'Bakso?', 'ayam geprek?' or others?
13. Students : 'we like all, sir'
14. Lecturer : 'Ohhh….'
15. Lecturer :'Ok, let's start our lecture, today'

From the conversation above, the lecturer uses Indonesian as well as the Muslim greeting '*Assalamualaikum*' because he knows that the majority of students are Muslim. The occurrence of fairly fair Indonesian in his speech shows that he is trying to win the hearts of his students. The conversation also shows that in the beginning the lecturer used phatic communication to attract students' enthusiasm. Analyzing lecturers' greetings to their students from a phatic communication perspective is very different from other perspectives. Therefore, the researchers must be careful in determining their analysis of the lecturer's choice of strategy in their interactions with students whether it is shown as a strategy of power or solidarity.

When the lecturer employed phatic communication, of course, he has negotiated a choice of words that correspond to the students by addressing them with greetings, "*Asslamua'laikum, salam sejahtera and how are you*". Then the lecturer also asked about the

students' hobbies to make the relation be closer. It was the lecturer's style to employ phatic communication in front of the students, seemed very close to them and they often gave warm welcome to the lecturer when he delivered his greeting in accordance with the values and beliefs the students have. This fact impressed students that he had a close relationship with them. This can be understood because the lecturers have known well that the students mostly are the Muslim as also the students' life and culture. Consequently, when he addressed them, he is so humble, he talked with his students like talking to his friends.

The lecturer expressed some utterances in his lecture in the classroom regarding as power can be found when he said gratitude to the students in two languages, Indonesian and English. He expressed '*Assalamualaikum dan how are you?* (datum 1) in Indonesian as well as ' *I like this class*' (datum 7) in English, the greetings show gratitude to the students. He expressed these different expressions, to give the warm welcome to the students. The students looked very happy about his attendance in the classroom. The expression '*Assalamualaikum dan how are you, today*?' can be called as phatic communication. The main function of phatic communion is that of maintaining social contact between the participants in communication events as suggested by Malinowski (1999, in Robinson and Coupland, 1992).

Thus, the lecturer uttered those to show the atmosphere of togetherness. Those are the ways the lecturer applied in his lecture in the classroom because he knew that he delivered a lecture in front of the students and he knew also the majority of students are Muslims, to attract them, he used the familiar greetings in Indonesia.

The use of greeting *assalamualaikum* will have a different meaning when it is employed in a different situation. The greeting he used in his lecture will have another effect on the students. The expression used by Lecturer will have some effects on his interests in the students. This can mean that the lecturer wants his students will accept him as a friend, to show that there is no distance between the lecturer and Students. Moreover, he applied this expression to secure the process of learning and teaching in the class and the lecturer also used this expression to have an overt topic-priority relevance that he provided a formal early opportunity to the students to make some current state of being a matter of joint priority concern. Thus, the phenomenon of closeness, in this sense, cannot be meant only that the lecturer was familiar and close with the students, but he has another agenda in order that his interests in the class will be accepted by the students. Thus, what and how he spoke affected the students' thinking process which can be called the lecturer's hegemony toward the students. The hegemony, in this sense, can be meant that the lecturer would like to gain support from students in considering 'the interests and tendencies of groups over which hegemony is to be examined' (Gramsci, 2000).

Furthermore, the lecturer has an ideology that he should do this in order to teach morals, ideas, and values to the students. On the contrary, he expressed some utterances in his lecture regarding solidarity when asked his students 'all of you, ok today?' as seen in datum 3. In this macro unit, the lecturer applied phatic communication to refer to informality in terms of an informal register of idiomatic expressions, and popular words as an 'invitation to intimacy'. It means that he wanted his interpersonal involvement signals of 'high involvement style'. And when he greeted the students by giving jokes '*hey, you…why do you keep silent? What's wrong with you? Do you miss your boyfriend or you are brokenhearted?* ', also his expressions like '*What food you like much? 'Bakso?', 'ayam geprek?' or others?* that mean he found interruptions to be more acceptable in an environment where the participants hold a close relationship to be an indicator that he is a person who wants to know each other well.

## SOCIAL RELATIONS: EQUAL

This part highlighted how the lecturer, both in and out of the classroom, enacted solidarity with the students could be constructed by employing CDA's model as suggested by Fairclough (1992). There are three meanings of showing the lecturer's solidarity to students, they are personal experiences, evoking empathy for the students' feelings, and raising the students' spirit of following the lecture.

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

The construction of the lecturer as an individual having much knowledge of the local culture as well as Indonesian culture can be found in his utterances when he tried to greet the students '*assalamu'alaikum dan salam sejahtera, how are you, today?*'. He used these greetings to make sense of the initial meeting of the lecture and also give the impression to the students that he wanted to maintain his communication in an open channel as a solidarity strategy in starting a conversation as suggested by Jumanto (2014).

Then, he constructed himself as an individual who had much experience because he has lived in Jombang for years. This identity cannot be substituted by others (Bramley, 2001). It means that his individual experience of living together and harmony with his friends, neighbors, and collogues could make him feel at class. This could be an example to show the students that they can live in harmony without regarding their different faith and belief because they think that faith and belief are their business to God. It can also be explained that he wanted to activate the students' emotions by doing a personal approach. The use of positive phatic communication appropriately can help him succeed in showing his solidarity. Thus, the lecturer strongly realized this so he chose words to respect the students by demonstrating close relationships or intimacy and solidarity as suggested by Jumanto (2014). His strategies of using positive phatic communication to get in touch with the students. The utterances are so effective to influence and control the students' minds about the warming up the situation before the process of learning and teaching in the classroom. He activated the students' emotions that his lecture will be fruitful and passionate.

Moreover, he could do this by attending to the students' interests and beliefs, such as students are tolerant in living together although they have different beliefs and faith. The students are happy when he appreciated them as partners in learning. There are several ways that have been made by the lecturer for what he wanted in his lecture can be achieved by showing a positive face either he is the lecturer or as their partner. The first is when he presented a positive phatic communication of what he would like to be accepted by the students. Furthermore, he also wanted to be accepted as a friend of the students and also wanted to increase partnerships in various situations.

### EVOKING EMPATHY FOR THE STUDENTS' BAD FEELING

It is interesting to examine the lecturer's lectures in the classroom that did not directly express the message of his lectures, but, there are strategies that he applied to engage the emotions of the students. He tried to get into the emotion of students who experienced bad situation as his father passed away as seen in the conversation:

16. Lecturer     : 'is there anyone absent, today?
17. Students     : 'yes, sir'
18. Lecturer     : 'who is he?'
19. Students     :'Rifqi, sir'
20. Lecturer     : 'why is he absent?
21. Students     : 'his father passed away, sir'

22. Lecturer      : 'I am very sorry to hear'. 'you can go to his house to say 'you're sorry'

23. Students      :'yes, sir'

From the utterances, it demonstrated that he turned out to have expertise in influencing students by utilizing the touch of the students' hearts in terms of applying some current bad situation experienced by one of the students. It gives an impression to the students that he showed his sadness in the situation. The style he applied in this lecture is very special because in general, the approach that directly led to the heart or the emotional side of this truly be very impressive, alluring, and stir their emotion. Thus, the lecturer has the quality to exercise his style in convincing the students. The application of using phatic communication demonstrated that he and the students have the same emotion about the situation. The expression showed that he is an individual of high sensitivity when he talked about bad situations experienced by his students. It has been acknowledged that the use of positive phatic communication appropriately could help the lecturer succeed in his goal of communication.

## SOCIAL RELATIONS: UNEQUAL

This section described how the lecturer showed power by examining the use of phatic communication. The result of the data analysis showed that the lecturer tried to maintain control over certain situations depending on his interests with regard to specific issues. For instance, it was observed that the lecturer chose a dominant role when he identified his student did not meet him for a long time not to consult his undergraduate thesis and when he asked about his students' preparation for group discussion. There are three meanings of showing the lecturer's power to the students.

### ADDRESSING THE STUDENT WHO IS WRITING SKRIPSI

The construction of power could be described in this conversation when the student met the lecturer to consult his undergraduate thesis. A conversation about undergraduate thesis consultation could be seen in this situation:

24. Lecturer    : 'hi, you're very busy!!!'
25. Student    : ' I am very sorry, sir. I can't meet you for a long time'
26. Lecturer    :'Ok, but you must remember about your study time…'
27. Student    :'yes, sir..'

From the conversation, the lecturer uttered phatic communication 'hi, you're very busy!!!'. It means that the lecturer showed his authority to the student to ask him to finish writing his undergraduate thesis soon. He kept his distance from the student because of their different position. Datum 24 indicated that the lecturer wanted to comment on the time schedule of the undergraduate thesis consultation. Thus, it could be described that their social relations are unequal because of their different position. The lecturer looked dominant in maintaining his power in the conversation.

### ADDRESSING THE STUDENTS ABOUT THE PREPARATION FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

The construction of power could be described in this conversation when the lecturer asked the students about the preparation group discussion. The conversation could be seen in this situation:

| 28. | Lecturer | : 'how are you, today?' |
|---|---|---|
| 29. | Students | : 'fine, sir.' |
| 30. | Lecturer | : 'what's group will present paper?' |
| 31. | Students | : 'group 3, sir' |
| 32. | Lecturer | : 'who are the presenters?' ' |
| 33. | Students | :'Rifqi, Mayrosa and Primada, sir' |
| 34. | Lecturer | : 'are you ready?' |
| 35. | Students | :'yes, sir'.. |
| 36. | Lecturer | :'Ok…' |

From the conversation, it could be described the different positions between the lecturer and his students. The excerpt illustrates the way how the lecturer exercised his power towards his students to gain control with regard to the activity. The lecturer asked the students to work in groups to present a paper that was obliged to do and present in front of the class. When the lecturer uttered 'are you ready?' indicated that he has the authority to ask the students to as what he wanted. This situation could describe that their position in social relations is unequal.

## CONCLUSION

The lecturers enacted phatic communication as one of the communication choices linguistically to negotiate their social relations to uncover how their social relations by examining power and solidarity through the use of phatic communication could be explored by constructing the strategies of expressing power and solidarity among them as a core of this research. There were three stages of uncovering their social relations. In the first stage, this research employed the lecturers' dominant role to determine the construction of power for their students. It could be described in the analysis of the conversation related to the thesis consultation and the preparation of the group discussion. In the second stage, the research explored the solidarity expressed by the lecturer to his students by employing his personal experiences and his expression of his sorry to hear when there was a student's father passed away. Those two stages played important roles in exposing their relationship as both equal and unequal. The lecturer exercised their power and indicated that their social relations are unequal. On the contrary, the solidarity exposed by the lecturers to their students indicated that their social relations are equal.

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