

THE ROLE OF PHATIC COMMUNICATION IN SHAPING SOCIAL COHESION IN PROFESSIONAL AND INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION

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Summary

The aim of the study is to identify the functional and interactional characteristics of phatic communication that contribute to the formation and maintenance of social cohesion in professional and interpersonal interaction. The article examines the linguistic and pragmatic realization of phatic utterances in various communicative contexts, focusing on their role in establishing, sustaining, and regulating social contact. Within an interactional framework, such structural phases as openings, transitions, and closings are identified and analyzed as key domains of phatic communication. The scientific novelty of the study lies in its integrative approach, which for the first time systematically connects phatic communication with interaction design and social cohesion. The results of the study demonstrate that phatic communication is not a marginal or auxiliary phenomenon but a core interactional mechanism that supports communicative alignment and cooperative relations. At the same time, the use and interpretation of phatic forms are influenced by sociocultural norms, leading to variation in their pragmatic value across professional and interpersonal contexts.

Key words: phatic communication; social cohesion; professional interaction; interpersonal discourse; communicative alignment.

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1. Introduction

The relevance of this study lies in the growing importance of social cohesion in professional and interpersonal communication. Phatic communication plays a key role in maintaining interaction, yet it remains insufficiently studied in relation to interaction design.

The research material includes examples of phatic communication discussed in linguistic literature, professional discourse studies, and English-language literary texts. These examples illustrate how phatic utterances function in openings, transitions, and closings of interaction. The theoretical basis of the study draws on works in pragmatics, discourse analysis, and interactional linguistics. Key concepts include the phatic function of language, politeness theory, and interaction design in communication. The practical significance of the study lies in its application to professional, educational, and intercultural communication contexts. The findings can be used to improve communicative competence and interaction design in workplaces and learning environments. Phatic communication is considered a special form of interpersonal communication, not determined by the quality of information transfer, aimed at regulating interpersonal relationships. Using a set of specialized speech tools, phatic communication realizes specific communication motives, in particular, the management of communication structure. Phatic cues ensure the successful implementation of the informational function of communication in the future. The normativity of communicative culture is associated with the systematization of

forms and rules of communication in their relation to the various communicative functions of language, in particular the phatic function, and the national and cultural specifics of their embodiment in speech activity. The phatic (contact-establishing, etiquette, ritual) function is an important aspect of communication and is studied in various fields – sociology, psychology, anthropology, pedagogy, and others. It is of great importance in interpersonal communication and helps establish and maintain contact between people in various situations and cultural contexts.

There is a trend toward an increase in the number of phatic genres – casual dialogues about nothing, speech etiquette, comic genres (jokes, anecdotes, puns, etc.), and conflict genres (quarrels, insults, etc.).

The phatic function has become more widely used in nonverbal communication – non-verbal signals, gestures, etc. Despite its importance for communication, phatic speech behavior undergoes changes not only of a positive but also destructive nature.

In any process of verbal communication, the degree of verbal informativeness of the communicants varies throughout the communicative interaction. Accordingly, it is common to distinguish between informative and non-informative speech acts. The concept of non-informative speech acts is closely linked to the concept of phatic communication, which began to attract the attention of scholars in the early days of communicative research.

Representatives of a single communicative culture share common rules that regulate their verbal behavior and dictate the necessity or lack thereof of engaging in communication. Interpersonal communication is built on the norms of a communicative culture, which can be defined as loose rules for constructing communication, correlated with speech forms and guiding people's behavior. It occurs in an ethnocultural environment familiar to communicants and presupposes knowledge of phatic communication norms. Phatic communication requires separate consideration, since the success and effectiveness of interpersonal interaction is determined not only by language proficiency but also by knowledge of sociocultural norms and the national-cultural characteristics of communication.

Current trends of discourse-oriented and interactional research indicate the following: social cohesion in a professional environment seems no longer a purely macrosocial phenomenon and occurs rather through the constant construction and formatting of a microsocial level of daily communication. Based on the above perspective and following the outline of the topic description above, phatic communication appears as a major interactive resource for the construction of a cooperative communicative environment. However, even though there are numerous papers focusing either on the topic of small talk or politeness strategies and relational work respectively, there seems to be a gap regarding the systematic connection of phatic communication and the topic of interactive design.

Interaction design, defined as the deliberate structuring of communicative acts in an interaction, has never been investigated from the perspective of phatic communication before. Phatic communication is typically considered in relation to turn-taking, speech acts, or task-driven trajectories of communication, which do not address the integration of phatic communication in the designing of professional interactions. Even though interaction design is a very significant aspect of society, which structures interactions on a massive scale in major organizations, there is definitely a gap in the literature that demands an in-depth analysis of phatic communication in relation to interaction design, which is at present considered a marginal phenomenon of linguistics, adding to the building of cohesion in society.

2. Background of the study

The term “phatic communication” was first introduced by B.Malinowski, who introduced the term phatic communion to describe forms of speech that serve to create bonds of fellowship and social connection rather than to exchange information (*Malinowski, 1972, p. 146*). Since then, phatic communication received considerable attention from pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis studies in understanding how it functions in terms of achieving a sense of communication and connection between communication participants.

R.Jacobson also described the phatic function. According to R.Jacobson's classification of the language functions, the phatic function achieves a focus on contact. R.Jacobson also mentions: it is effected via messages, “the main purpose of which is to establish, continue, or interrupt communication, to check whether the communication channel is functioning, to call the attention of the interlocutor, or to insure that he is listening attentively” (*Jakobson, 1975, pp. 197-198*). The researcher illustrates by example: “Hello, can you hear me?” or the confirming response “Yes, yes,” produced by the interlocutor at the other end of the line. To illustrate this point, he refers to a literary dialogue in which two characters repeatedly exchange seemingly meaningless phrases such as “all right” or “so it seems,” varying them slightly without introducing new information. In such cases, the communicative value lies not in meaning transmission but in sustaining interactional continuity. R.Jacobson's structural–functional analysis of speech was developed as an extension of Karl Bühler's well-known model of language, which distinguishes emotive, conative, and referential functions. R.Jacobson adopts this triadic framework but reinterprets it within a broader communicative system. He agrees that the emotive (or expressive) function reflects the speaker's intention and subjective orientation (the domain of the first person), that the conative (or appellative) function is directed toward a specific addressee (the domain of the second person), and that the referential (or communicative) function concerns the content of the message, referring to objects, events, or states of affairs (the domain of the third person) (*Bühler, 1933, p. 19*).

Approximately during the same period as that of B.Malinowski, E.Sapir was engaged with the subject matter of phatic communication. In the definition set out by Sapir's classification, “one can talk about language as a tool of socialization. It is this function of language to serve as an instrument of socialization that can be described by the “phatic function.” However, this concept is not used in the article by E.Sapir. He writes, “without language, there cannot be social interaction,” so language becomes an instrument of establishing contact among members in a temporarily created group, for instance, at the reception. He emphasizes that “what is important is not what is said, but that the conversation is taking place at all” (*Sapir, 1993, p. 232*).

The phatic function is also a part of the dominant principle of communication, the Principle of Politeness, explained by Geoffrey Leech in his paper “Principles Of Pragmatics.” Together with other communicative maxims, G.Leech points out the phatic maxim (*Leech, 1983, p. 141*). The phatic maxim is additional to the basic maxims of the Principle of Politeness, including tact, generosity, approval, agreement, modesty, and sympathy G.Leech formulates the phatic maxim in negative terms as “avoid silence” and in positive terms as “keep the conversation going.” However, phatic communication should not be interpreted merely as a strategy for filling conversational gaps or preventing silence. G.Leech argues that the principle of “avoiding silence” can be understood as a specific manifestation of the maxims of agreement and sympathy. From this perspective, the central focus of a phatic utterance is not the informational content it conveys, but rather the speaker's attitudinal stance toward the interlocutor and the interaction itself (*Leech, 1983, pp. 131-132, pp. 141-142*).

From the point of view of interaction design, the study of phatic communication gains added relevance in organizational, digital, and educational contexts. Interaction design increasingly considers communication as a structured and sequential process in which meaning and social relations are co-constructed over time. In organizational meetings, online professional platforms, and educational interactions, phatic elements play a decisive role in opening interactions, transitioning between activities, and closing encounters in a socially acceptable manner. However, most interaction design frameworks are biased toward task-oriented moves and user efficiency, leaving the relational and phatic components analytically underrepresented (*Dourish, 2001, p. 56*). Addressing phatic communication within interaction design enables a more human-centered understanding of communicative processes in face-to-face and mediated environments.

The originality in this study can be found in two aspects: one lies in applying an integrative model analyzing phatic communication with an emphasis on its link with social cohesion, particularly in relating phatic communication to professional social contexts, as most previous studies on phatic communication concentrate on marking politeness in conversation peripherally. The proposed model blends different theories and angles from pragmatics and discourse analysis in respect to interactions in a manner illustrating that phatic forms, functions, and factors are interlocking planes in professional communication (*Locher, Watts, 2005, p. 11*). Second, the theme of the research develops an emphasis on interaction sequences in a way that is an additional innovative feature of the research. As opposed to previous research on phatic communication that concentrated on examining the individual phatic messages in isolation, the research focuses on exploring how phatic communication is sequentially organized in interaction sequences such as openings, transitions, and closings that remained largely unexplored in previous research on phatic communication.

3. Research focus and objectives

The article aims to analyze the phenomenon of phatic communication in its function as a deep mechanism of communication that is instrumental in creating and sustaining the social solidarity in professional and social communication. Instead of regarding phatic utterances as an auxiliary phenomenon, as fillers in communication, the article aims to approach them as deeply embedded communication processes, instrumental in achieving communication alignment and continuity. The article will specifically consider professional communication, wherein a successful communication process is based not only on the realization of the communication function but also on sustaining cooperative relations.

The article relies on an interactional perspective on communication, seeing communication as a sequentially organized procedure, in which phatic communication is especially important in points such as the opening, transition, and closing phases. Special emphasis is placed on the importance of phatic communication in relation to interaction design, defined as a patterned organization of communicative actions, based on the specific way in which individuals make sense of it. In doing so, a new approach is pursued in relation to the meeting point of pragmatics, discourse analysis, and interaction design, which to date has attracted limited systematic study.

Research objectives:

For this focus, the paper aims at the following:

- to identify the dominant types of phatic communication employed in professional and interpersonal interaction, while focusing on pragmatic and discourse-related features.
- to analyze the social-cohesive functions of phatic communication, such as establishing rapport, managing interpersonal relations, and sustaining interactional alignment.

- to explore the ways in which phatic communication is located within the interaction design of both professional and interpersonal sequencing and organization.

This focus and set of objectives put the article in its place within the literature, as a contribution to contemporary debates in pragmatics and discourse analysis, with a refined understanding of social cohesion achieved by means of phatic communication. The concept of phatic communication was introduced into linguistic theory by B. Malinowski, who described “phatic communion” as speech that has a purpose of creating bonds of association rather than any connection to conveying meaningful information. The author argued that these utterances have the purpose of creating an ambiance of togetherness rather than focusing on the communicative function of language. Phatic communication is important because it emphasizes that even seemingly irrelevant conversations contain an element of functionality (*Malinowski, 1923, p. 296*). An important further step in integrating phatic communication into a wide model for linguistics was made by the linguist R. Jakobson, who established the phatic function as one of the function categories in his analysis of the universality and diversity of language (*Jakobson, 1981, pp. 18–51*).

In R. Jakobson’s view, phatic communication is tied to the function of establishing, checking, and maintaining contact with the other participants in communication. Although this has theoretically incorporated phaticity into the function profile, the analysis has tended to restrict itself in English linguistics studies to examples and examples only. As a result, phatic communication has long remained at the periphery of linguistic analysis, frequently treated as auxiliary to “meaningful” or informational discourse. This marginalization has had lasting implications for how phatic communication is conceptualized, especially in professional and institutional contexts where efficiency and task-oriented communication dominate analytical attention.

Within pragmatic studies, phatic communication has been commonly mentioned within the context of politeness and interpersonal harmony. For example, G. Leech’s common way to explain phatic communication within a politeness context would be to see it through a social maxim like agreement or sympathy. Even though this shows that it’s important to place emphasis on the relationship aspect inherent in phatic communication, it equally incorporates phatic communication within a general meaning of politeness. The implication herein would be that it leads to the understudy of the roles of phatic communication within an interactional context (*Leech, 1983, p. 131*). More contemporary research, however, has begun to focus on the phatic functions of communication in a professional/Institutional context. Research on communication in the business environment has indicated that phatic talk is an interactional phenomenon that is peripheral in terms of communication principles, though integral to interaction experiences. Janet Holmes, in conversations analysis research, for example, has indicated that phatic talk in a business setting is a means of promoting cooperation between interactants in a highly task-centered environment that experiences tension in their relationships. However, very few of these studies actually highlight the impact of phatic communication in relation to an interactional framework. Studies of meetings and institutional talk show that small talk and ritualized expressions support rapport, cooperation, and interactional stability (*Holmes, 2005, pp. 344–371*).

Despite these insights, phatic communication in professional contexts is often described as supplementary rather than structural. Many studies focus on specific genres or communicative events, without examining how phatic elements are systematically embedded in interactional sequences such as openings, transitions, and closings. As a result, phatic communication is acknowledged as useful but remains analytically peripheral to models of professional interaction.

Moreover, intercultural research highlights that phatic norms vary significantly across professional cultures, affecting perceptions of appropriateness and competence. Yet these studies tend to emphasize pragmatic failure rather than exploring how phatic communication contributes positively to social cohesion when successfully integrated into interactional design.

Such an opposition has been extended to critiques of academic and media discourse, where phaticity is sometimes equated with imitation, banality, or lack of originality. This critical attitude, however, has been countered by those scholars who, while admitting that phatic communication may not be informative in the classical sense-propositional content-it is informative in its own right, in that it conveys relational meaning. In other words, from this perspective, the establishment of mutual orientation, goodwill, or interpersonal contact is a meaningful communicative outcome. The persistence of these diverging interpretations is a sign of a deeper theoretical problem-a focus merely on the informational content of a message, which simultaneously overlooks the social and interactional dimensions of communication. Despite the popularity of phatic communication as an area of research, phatic communication still occurs on the margins, either as a phenomenon of politeness or as a weak semantic discourse. Studies on communication do not connect phatic communication with social cohesion or its use in the design of interactions. This article will, therefore, highlight phatic communication as an interaction mechanism influencing social cohesion in both professional and social interactions.

4. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative, theory-driven research design with an interpretative orientation. It is primarily theoretical and analytical, supported by qualitative discourse-based observation. The article does not aim at statistical generalization; instead, it seeks to develop a conceptual and interactional understanding of how phatic communication contributes to social cohesion in professional and interpersonal interaction. This design is appropriate for examining interactional phenomena whose significance lies in function, sequence, and context rather than frequency.

It uses secondary and illustrative material available mainly in English-language sources, such as:

- examples discussed in previous studies on professional discourse and interaction,
- extracts from communication occurring in the work environment, such as meetings or service encounters, that have been discussed in the literature,
- publicly available examples of professional or institutional interaction (e.g., media interview, professional talk).

The material presented in these tables and figures is not intended to be used as quantitative corpus material, nor as a means to test hypotheses, although it may be used to support certain theoretical claims.

The analytical framework draws together insights from pragmatics, discourse analysis, and interactional studies. With regards to pragmatics, the study engages functional interpretations for phatic communication, particularly the concept of the phatic function and contact maintenance and relational signaling. Discourse-analytic approaches are also used for the study. This approach is used for the analysis and understanding of the phatic elements and their connection to professional and interpersonal discourse and coherence constructs. Moreover, interaction analysis is used for the analysis and understanding of the phatic components in interaction and sequencing, particularly the phatic elements in openings, transitions, and closure. This

dual platform enables a consideration not just of phatic expressions, but rather the structural elements in the design of interaction to facilitate social cohesion.

Considering that it is based on theoretical analysis and literature previously published or obtainable in public domain, no direct involvement of human subjects was needed. All instances and references are appropriately stated, and no secret information that could directly identify individuals or groups are used. The ethical consideration in any study demands commitment to honesty, transparency, and intellectual integrity.

5. Discussion: Phatic Communication as a Mechanism of Social Cohesion

Detailed samples of English-language interaction have shown that, far from being used for the transmission of new information, phatic communication plays an essential role as a social cohesive force within both professional and social relationships. Research into discourse patterns in the workplace has demonstrated phatics are utilized to structure discourse at relationship boundary points such as openings or transitions. For example, in professional-type meetings, short discourses on trivial topics, such as weather, travel, or workload, are deployed to establish relationships prior to task-related discourse (Holmes, 2005, pp. 344-371).

For example, Holmes documents instances where meeting participants open interaction with remarks such as “*Did you have trouble finding the place?*” or “*It’s been a busy week, hasn’t it?*”, which serve to align participants socially and reduce potential tension prior to decision-making. These utterances do not advance the agenda directly but create the interpersonal conditions necessary for effective collaboration. Similarly, workplace interaction studies show that phatic talk contributes to maintaining professional relationships over time, particularly in hierarchical contexts where direct personal engagement may otherwise be constrained (Holmes, 2015, p. 21).

Phatic Communication in Interpersonal and Everyday Interaction

English-language literary dialogue provides valuable evidence of how phatic communication operates in everyday interpersonal interaction. In “Rebecca”, social encounters are frequently structured around neutral, phatic topics such as weather or travel discomfort. These exchanges function to maintain polite interaction among characters who are socially connected but emotionally distant (du Maurier, 2006, p. 318).

For instance, repeated references to heat, climate, and physical discomfort allow characters to remain engaged in conversation without addressing potentially sensitive personal issues. The phatic nature of these exchanges supports social cohesion by preserving a conflict-free communicative environment.

Illustrative examples from English-language fiction confirm the centrality of phatic communication in shaping social cohesion. In “Rebecca”, casual exchanges about weather and everyday discomfort function as interactional fillers that sustain polite conversation among participants of formal meetings, without advancing propositional content (du Maurier, 2006, p. 318). Similarly, in “Almost a Crime” book, restaurant conversations centered on menus and wine serve as phatic devices that create a relaxed and socially aligned atmosphere rather than informational exchange (Vincenzi, 1999, pp. 570-571).

Typical phatic themes include references to current events, weather conditions, everyday routines, cultural activities, and other topics associated with lightness, emotional neutrality, and positive interpersonal orientation. Such topics are selected not for their informational value, but for their ability to sustain interaction and maintain a cooperative communicative atmosphere.

An illustrative example of this can be found in a fictional depiction of a formal social gathering, where the participants engage in weather-related small talk:

"It's unusually warm for this time of year," one of the guests remarked.

"Yes, it's been quite stifling lately," another replied.

"Much worse than last summer, I'd say," added a third voice.

"Indeed, especially for those who have no chance to leave the city."

In this exchange, the speakers do not seek to exchange new or practically relevant information. Instead, the references to temperature and seasonal discomfort function as phatic devices that allow participants to remain socially engaged while avoiding personal, evaluative, or potentially conflictual topics. The repetition of similar observations and the absence of argumentative development underscore the contact-maintaining function of the interaction. Such exchanges exemplify the phatic use of language as a means of sustaining social contact rather than conveying propositional content. The communicative value of these utterances lies in their ability to reinforce social cohesion, signal mutual attentiveness, and preserve a polite interactional frame in situations characterized by formal or semi-formal interpersonal relations.

Phatic Communication and Cultural Orientation. Phatic communication becomes most visible when analysed at the level of actual utterances, where communicative value is determined not by informational content but by interactional function. In English-language interaction, such utterances typically rely on neutral, socially "safe" themes and formulaic expressions that enable interlocutors to sustain interpersonal alignment and social cohesion.

1. **Phatic Talk in Formal Social Interaction: Weather as a Safe Topic.** A classic illustration of phatic communication occurs in *Rebecca*, where participants in an organised social gathering engage in weather-related conversation: *"I see in The Times they had it well over eighty in London yesterday."* (du Maurier, 2006, p. 318).

This utterance does not convey new or interactionally necessary information. Its primary function is to initiate and maintain social contact. The topic of weather serves as a neutral conversational bridge, allowing participants to remain engaged while avoiding personal or potentially contentious issues. The minimal follow-up responses (*"Really?"*, *"Yes, frightful"*) demonstrate how low-informational utterances are sufficient to sustain polite interaction and social equilibrium. Such exchanges exemplify the phatic function of language as contact maintenance rather than message transmission, reinforcing cohesion in a formal interpersonal setting.

2. **Phatic Communication in Everyday Interaction: Shared Situational Context**

Phaticity is equally evident in everyday interpersonal encounters. In *Almost a Crime*, restaurant conversation centres on menus and wine: *"Now this menu is wonderful, a perfect blend of Caribbean and smart London."* (Vincenzi, 1999, p. 570). The evaluative nature of the utterance does not serve an informational goal; instead, it orients speakers toward a shared immediate context, facilitating relaxed interaction. The interlocutor's response — *"I'm not actually very familiar with smart London menus."* (Vincenzi, 1999, p. 571) — maintains the conversational flow without developing the topic or challenging the speaker.

3. **Ritualized Openings in Small Talk: Etiquette-Driven Phatic Scripts**

Etiquette plays a decisive role in shaping phatic interaction. In *Pygmalion*, the ritual of entering social interaction is realised through a sequence of formulaic utterances:

Mrs. Higgins: "Colonel Pickering, you're just in time for tea."

Pickering: "Thank you, Mrs. Higgins. May I introduce Miss Eliza Doolittle?"

Mrs. Higgins: "My dear Miss Doolittle."

Eliza: "How kind of you to let me come."

Mrs. Higgins: "Delighted, my dear." (Shaw, 2003, p. 41).

These utterances introduce no new information. Their function is purely phatic: they establish contact, confirm social roles, and align participants within a shared communicative frame. Such formulae are characteristic of the small talk genre and form part of its conventionalized interactional script.

4. Topic Regulation and Phatic Repair

Phatic communication also serves as a mechanism for interactional repair. When conversational norms risk being violated, phatic utterances redirect discourse toward neutral territory. In *Pygmalion*, this function is realised through a question about the weather: *Mrs. Higgins: "Will it rain, do you think?" (Shaw, 2003, p. 42).*

Here, the weather functions as a phatic reset, steering interaction away from potential impropriety and restoring ritual balance. This illustrates how phatic talk regulates interaction without explicit metacommunicative instruction.

5. Phatic Expansion from Situational to Personal Topics

Phatic interaction may gradually extend beyond situational topics through associative links. In *Rebecca*, a conversation initially focused on place and arrival shifts toward mild personal evaluation:

"You're looking better, old man ..." (du Maurier, 2006, p. 102).

Although evaluative in form, the utterance remains phatic in function. It does not invite serious discussion of health or personal circumstances but instead reinforces social bonding through informal reassurance. The absence of elaboration preserves interactional harmony.

6. Extended Phatic Closings and Genre Variability

Phatic genres exhibit internal variability, particularly in closing sequences. As Kate Fox observes, English farewells after pleasant social visits often take the form of prolonged ritual exchanges:

"Well, see you soon, then ..." / "Oh yes, we must ..."

"Lovely time ..." / "Goodbye ..." (Fox, 2005, pp. 58–59).

These repetitive formulas are not redundant. Instead, they signal reluctance to terminate interaction and reaffirm social bonds. Variation in wording and tone is permitted within the genre, while its phatic core remains intact.

7. Phatic Utterances in Professional Interaction

Phatic communication is also well documented in professional discourse. In English-speaking workplaces, meetings frequently open with utterances such as:

"Did you manage to find the place all right?" (Holmes, 2005, p. 352).

This question does not seek detailed logistical information. Its function is to ease participants into interaction, reduce interpersonal tension, and establish rapport prior to task-oriented communication. Such phatic openings contribute directly to cooperative professional interaction.

Phatic communication plays a structuring and regulatory role in pedagogical discourse, where interaction is framed not only by instructional goals but also by communicative and etiquette norms. Classroom interaction represents a hybrid form of professional and interpersonal communication, in which social cohesion is constructed and maintained through ritualized contact-establishing and contact-closing moves.

At the initiating stage of a lesson, the primary communicative task of the teacher is the establishment of contact with students and the creation of a cooperative working atmosphere. This task is achieved predominantly through phatic communication, which functions as a communicative "bridge" between teacher and learners. Sentence-level phatic utterances at this stage typically take the form of greetings and formulaic expressions, such as:

“Good morning!” / Good afternoon! Sit down, please.”/

“Nice to see you, everyone.”

These utterances do not transmit subject-related information. Their function is relational: they exchange emotional states, express goodwill, and signal readiness for joint activity. Through such ritualized openings, participants are aligned within a shared interactional frame, which is essential for establishing social cohesion in the classroom. Phatic openings are frequently combined with brief orienting statements that introduce the lesson topic or outline planned activities:

“Today we’ll speak about ...” / “First, we’ll ..., then ..., and finally...”

Although informational in form, these utterances retain a phatic function at the initiating stage, as they address the group collectively and reinforce the sense of shared participation. Similarly, directive utterances such as *“Open your books on page...”* serve a dual role: while managing activity, they also confirm the established communicative order.

The absence or distortion of phatic communication at the initiating stage often leads to communicative tension and weakened social cohesion. For example, beginning a lesson with purely task-oriented commands: *“Let’s start.”*

The use of directive utterances such as *“Open your books, please”* in the absence of an initial greeting is widely regarded as a breach of phatic etiquette norms. Such openings signal an instruction-centered and potentially authoritarian communicative style, limiting opportunities for interpersonal alignment. Even more disruptive are cases in which the teacher first addresses an individual student with corrective remarks: *“Ann, why are you sitting on the desk?”* – before addressing the group as a whole. These moves introduce asymmetry and anxiety into interaction and undermine the collective communicative frame.

Negative or disciplinary utterances at the initiating stage, such as *“Silence, please!”* or *“Keep silent!”*, further disrupt social cohesion. Such remarks violate politeness principles and may transform greeting formulas into purely formal signals, generating communicative tension rather than cooperation. The combination of greetings with prohibitions or negative imperatives creates an unfavorable emotional atmosphere and distances interlocutors.

Phatic communication is also crucial at the closing stage of a lesson, although it is less ritualized than the opening. The closing stage performs the function of exiting contact and shaping expectations for future interaction. Typical sentence-level phatic utterances include:

“Bye.” / “Goodbye.”

More interactionally significant are farewell formulas that project future contact:

“We’ll meet on Monday.” / “I’ll be waiting for you tomorrow.”

Such utterances extend social cohesion beyond the immediate interaction and establish continuity in the teacher–student relationship. Especially effective are farewells combined with expressions of appreciation:

“Thank you for your work.” / “You did great today.”

These utterances simultaneously perform a phatic and evaluative function, reinforcing both interpersonal alignment and the positive outcome of collective activity. When the closing stage is omitted or replaced solely by informational content (e.g., homework instructions without farewell), the communicative frame of the lesson remains incomplete. This often results in phatic failure, as interaction is terminated without symbolic closure. The widespread assumption that lesson closure consists only of assessment and instruction overlooks the role of phatic communication in maintaining long-term social cohesion.

Overall, interaction demonstrates that phatic communication is not a peripheral or decorative feature of discourse but a core interactional mechanism. Through greetings, ritualized directives, repair strategies, and farewells, phatic utterances regulate emotional distance,

support stable status – role relations, and sustain social cohesion. These findings reinforce the broader argument of the present article: across professional and interpersonal domains, phatic communication functions as a foundational resource for the construction and maintenance of social cohesion.

6. Conclusions

This article has examined phatic communication as a central interactional mechanism in the construction and maintenance of social cohesion across professional and interpersonal contexts. Moving beyond the traditional view of phatic utterances as marginal, auxiliary, or merely polite fillers, the study has demonstrated that phatic communication performs structurally significant functions within interactional sequences and communicative design.

Communication with others – whether friends, relatives, colleagues, neighbors, or acquaintances – is necessary not only for establishing or maintaining social relations within a micro-community, but also for the individual’s self-affirmation and realization as a social actor. In this sense, communication performs a dual function: it sustains social structures while simultaneously supporting personal identity construction. The space of communicative culture encompasses a wide range of recurring interactional situations in which the communicative function of language is realized. Within these situations, individuals do not merely perform a fixed social role by applying specific communicative skills associated with their professional or social status (e.g., teacher, researcher, student, employee), but also continuously adopt and negotiate different social “masks” Each social role or interactional identity is associated with a particular set of linguistic resources that operate within the shared norms of interpersonal communication.

By synthesizing insights from pragmatics, discourse analysis, and interactional studies, the article has shown that phatic communication operates at critical junctures of interaction – openings, transitions, and closings – where social relations are negotiated, aligned, and stabilized. In professional environments, such as workplace meetings and pedagogical discourse, phatic utterances create the interpersonal conditions necessary for cooperation, mitigate hierarchical tension, and facilitate the smooth progression of task-oriented communication. In interpersonal interaction, phatic communication enables participants to sustain contact, manage emotional distance, and avoid potential conflict through the use of socially “safe” topics and ritualized expressions.

The analysis of English-language interaction, supported by literary dialogue and documented professional discourse, has highlighted that the communicative value of phatic utterances lies not in their propositional content but in their relational and regulatory function. Weather talk, situational remarks, formulaic greetings, and extended farewells all contribute to communicative alignment by reinforcing shared norms and expectations. These patterns are particularly salient in low-context communicative cultures, where explicit verbal form, politeness, and interactional predictability are central to maintaining social harmon. An important contribution of this article lies in its emphasis on interaction design. Rather than examining isolated phatic expressions, the study has argued for understanding phatic communication as sequentially organized and embedded within patterned interactional frameworks. This perspective reveals how phatic communication shapes interaction over time and underscores its role in sustaining social cohesion at the microsocial level of everyday professional and interpersonal encounters.

In conclusion, phatic communication should be recognized as a foundational component of communicative practice rather than a peripheral phenomenon. Its systematic integration into interactional design highlights its capacity to regulate relationships, ensure interactional continuity, and support social cohesion. Future research may extend this approach by examining phatic communication in digitally mediated environments or by exploring cross-cultural differences in phatic interaction design, thereby further enriching our understanding of communication as a socially embedded and relational process.

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