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PHATIC COMMUNICATION AND THE ROLE OF LIE IN IT

The role of language in our life is immeasurable. Generally, linguists and language philosophers discuss language as means of sending and receiving factual information. Sociologists and sociolinguists focus on the usage of language for making social relationships. With the help of communication we establish human relationships, share our points of views, express our feelings, gain our goals, make impressions on others and build our private authority.

Linguists distinguish the following kinds of communication: Factual, evaluative, gut-level, peak and phatic.

Factual communication: Using events, making observations, offering knowledge to others in a manner which can be called chit chat or small talk. At business parties, we rely upon factual communication to network, to schmooze, and to work the room. Factual communication includes reporting what you've read in a textbook, what you've studied for a test, showing pictures of your children, and exchanging biographical information about yourself. Factual communication is relatively safe and most do this well.

Examples: *I'm majoring in business administration.*

I'm married with three children, two sons and one daughter.

Did you watch the basketball game last night?

What did we do in class last Friday?

Evaluative communication: Offering opinions, ideas and judgments to others. This is risky business because the odds are that others will reciprocate with their own evaluations, which may be different from yours. When using evaluative communication, consider carefully the importance of descriptive, provisional, and responsible expressions. Strive to avoid cautionary language, sarcasm, and nonverbal put-downs (e.g., rolling your eyes in response to another's comments).

Examples: *Of all my children, my daughter is the better athlete.*

I thought that movie was excellent, particularly with the surprising ending.

I'm not convinced that your argument is well supported.

I agree with you!

Gut-level communication involves sharing our emotions and feelings with another. We are sharing our very essence when we allow others to know our heart. This is risky business! Societies place constraints upon the specific emotions which can be conveyed (e.g., *It's good to express love; it's bad to express hatred*). We also have rules about when and how feelings can be expressed ("*That was the wrong time and place for arguing with your spouse.*") Emotional intelligence involves interpersonal competencies including self-awareness, self control, flexibility and empathy.

Examples: *I deeply appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity in helping me earlier.*

I'm so frustrated with you!

I'm wish that I hadn't called you that name. I hope that you'll forgive me.

He called me! I'm so excited to see him again!

Peak communication: Coming together with another in an extraordinary way. Two individuals who are gut leveling experience a transformation when they are sharing the exact same emotion with the same level of intensity. It's as if, for the moment, two souls merge into one. Peak communication is rare, even among close friends and family members.

Examples: *I love you. I love you too.*

I'm so angry with you. I'm so angry with you as well.

I'm glad that we were able to fight long enough to get this resolved. Yes, I feel exactly the same way, glad that we communicated collaboratively.

I'm scared. I'm scared too.

Phatic Communication: Using conventional messages to establish rapport, to break the ice, and/or to end a conversation. You might hug, kiss, shake hands, bow, smile, make eye contact, and face one another. We exchange pleasantries by using clichés. Clichés are overused expressions that have lost their original (content) meanings and have taken on new relational meanings. We expect phatic communication at the beginning and end of every conversation, regardless of our feelings about a person.

The most common example of phatic expressions are:

Hello. How are you?

I'm fine. How are you?

Thanks for coming. Have a nice day.

You're welcome.

The scientific research of phatic communication is connected to polish scientist Bronislaw Malinowski. The term "phatic" comes from Greek language (phatos— conversational; phanai—conversation). Malinowski defines phatic communication as a type of speech in which ties of union are created by a mere exchange of words" [5, p. 478].

Among its most frequent manifestations, the author mentioned a plethora of formulaic expressions of greeting, questions about the interlocutors' health, well-being, family, etc., narrations about apparently irrelevant facts or comments about topics that may seem obvious or trivial, such as the weather [5, p. 476-479). Their *raison d'être* is to avoid silence which can originate from an unpleasant tension that may, in turn, have negative consequences for social interaction, since taciturnity is regarded in some cultures as an evident sign of hostility or bad mood. Phatic discourse also permits inconsistent, tautological, dogmatic, and other illogical devices to operate. "Tone of voice,

length of utterance and pauses, exchange of speaker/hearer roles are likely to be more significant than either syntactic or semantic features” (Pateman p. 40).

Phatic discourse is also “alienated” in the sense that it is not under the control of the speaker or hearer; both are obeying rules which, in principle, may be accepted by neither of them (Pateman p. 41).

Peculiarities of phatic communication have not had undergone a systemic analysis in linguistics yet. Traditionally it is acknowledged that phatic utterances do not convey any important information. But the results of investigation prove that phatic utterances may serve as markers of interlocutors’ education, age, and social status. Sometimes the way one person greets the other one may serve as an indication of whether the language of communication is native or foreign, whether the speaker is educated or not, whether he/she is a northerner or southerner, etc. The author’s discourse can be defined as a pattern of verbal behaviour but, at the same time, it can be viewed as a verbal form of social behaviour, an instance of communicative language use, and the process of unfolding an idea into a text.

Phatic function is a communicative language function that serves for making and supporting and finishing contact.

Here are examples:

1. Making a contact: *Good-morning; Hello; Hi.*
2. Supporting a contact: *Oh, I beg your pardon; I feel sorry.*
3. Finishing a contact: *Good-bye; See you soon*

N. Arutinova considers the topic of phatic communication to be everything that is important and new information. To his mind the aim of phatic communication is to entertain a listener and tell him/her about his dispositions, impressions, feelings, tastes and plans. But he also considers that even boring speakers try to speak about something unusual and exaggerate the story, as routine doesn’t evoke the interest and curiosity (29). I. Demetradze doesn’t agree with Arutinova because according to the linguistic research phatic communication covers everyday, trivial topics. The dialogues like: “What’s news?” Nothing special.” is considered to be the classical samples of phatic communication. [2, p. 13].

People learn rules of phatic communication gradually like the norms of behaviours. Children at their early age can’t communicate with phatic expressions. They develop this skill step by step. There are two levels in phatic communication: formal and informal each having clear-cut regulatory. Native speakers switch automatically from one register to another one automatically.

Phatic communication is mainly dialogical with the exceptions of public reports, official and ceremonial speeches of politicians and civil servants.

Phatic communication is probably the only form of communication which doesn’t always aim to tell the truth. For example, when a person is certain to pass away he/she is encouraged by his relatives and friends by the following phatic expressions: Don’t worry, you will get over soon. The speaker knows that the listener won’t recover, but he has to tell lie in order to condole and encourage the ill person. Telling the truth in such cases is not tactful. So a good interlocutor must follow the norms of social interaction even if these norms require unfaithful conversation from his side.

As Glisson says, telling lies is equally possible in all languages, but lies are different in the view of extra linguistic conditions and the frequency of its use and its eligibility is controlled by social norms. [2, p. 10].

Coleman and Cay mention three main factors for defining lies:

- a) The speaker believes that his utterance isn’t true.
- b) The speaker intends to lie the listener with the given utterance.
- c) The speaker’s statement is false.

When all these factors act, the sentence is real lie. When one or two factors operate, the speaker tries to encourage or praise the listener and not lie him/her. During the phatic communication only a and b factors act. Such lies are called “white lies” and stress that in such cases encouraging the listener and keeping social norms is more important than telling him true information. They name 3 spheres where lie is not only acceptable but desirable. They are: politeness, entertainment (e.g. jokes) and fiction (16).

Below we will discuss the situations in which the speaker is obliged to say insincere sentences in order to make a good impression on the listener and make a positive emotional and psychological influence on him.

Greetings: To the question “*How are you?*” people always say “*Fine, thank you.*” This answer is often false as there are few people who are always happy and satisfied with their lives. We keep the maxim of generosity (Leech) and give insincere, but polite answer.

When one wants to make acquaintance with someone, the following phatic expressions are used: “*Excuse me, haven’t we met before?*” These sentences don’t carry factual information. Though they aren’t true, they don’t irritate the listener as beyond lie there is sincere intention of making communication with an unknown person.

Gratitude: One of the most common examples of phatic communication is expressing gratitude. If a person receives a gift on his/her birthday, he/she must say thank you, even if the gift is absolutely useless for him/her. The norms of phatic communication require him to act insincerely. With the aim of pleasing the guest, we say: “*How wonderful!*”; “*How did you know that I wanted it?*”; “*I have dreamed about this very book.*”

Apology: When one person troubles another without intention, he apologises him for it by the following phatic expressions: “*Sorry!*”; “*I feel really sorry*” etc. The answer to these apologies is fake, but polite: “*It’s all right!*”; “*Don’t worry!*”; “*No problem*”.

Invitations: We invite people either sincerely or insincerely (phatic discourse). The last one is spontaneous and doesn’t mean concrete time and date. “*You must come over for a drink sometime*”; “*Why don’t you come and have a cup of tea some day?*” Such invitations are usually responded with answers expressing great pleasure, no matter whether the listener is going to visit the speaker or not.

It is noteworthy to mention that in case Georgian guest is offered meal he/she is certain to refuse the offer for the first time though he/she may be hungry. It's because we keep Georgian etiquette, with which the guest express his willing not to disturb the host. He only agrees to eat if host insists on it.

Compliments: One of the most important and integral part of phatic discourse is compliment. People from all over the world are pleased with compliments about their appearance and characters, their works. So, when we don't have any factual information to share, the most effective way to please the listener is telling him/her compliments. We may praise the interlocutor's wit, appearance, family, car, taste and so on. The number of compliments is huge and the use of them depends on this or that extra linguistic situation. But in most cases compliments aren't sincere. Common phatic compliments are: *"You look excellent"*; *"It's very kind of you to help me"*; *"You have a very nice room"*; *"The food is delicious"*; *"You are such a good cook"*; *"You have such a good baby"*; *"That's a great idea"*; *"How clever of you."* These fake compliments aim to please the listeners and encourage them to do better.

So, the role of lies which harms the factual communication is very important and sometimes necessary. It creates warm and friendly atmosphere. In addition to this, lying the listener with the aim of harming him doesn't have any connection with phatic communication. Vice versa, fake phatic utterances aim to encourage, praise and entertain the listener.

The speaker gets used to fake phatic speech like speech etiquette and thus he often utters them spontaneously, without intention. As for foreign learners, they should learn all this particularly as they play no the less important role in speech.

Apart from this knowing suitable phatic expressions avoid us existing shock and the air of indifference and unfriendliness.

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