

## Analysis of Phatic Functions in the Talk Show “The Tonight Show” Hosted by Jimmy Fallon

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**Abstract:** This study aims to find out the Phatic Communication functions in the talk show “The Tonight Show” hosted by Jimmy Fallon with the framework of Malinowski (1923) elaborated by Jakobson in the context of communication, then further elaborated by Jumanto (2014) for the functions of Phatic Communication. The talk show featured Jenna Ortega about her latest succeed in delivering a self-choreographed danced that went viral in the world. Jenna Ortega starred in the recent TV Series as Wednesday Addams whose first appearance of the character dated back in 1938. The researcher choose this talk show as the data of research because the setting of talk show often use many Phatic Communication types as its way of communicating to show friendliness and to encourage the guest star into talking about the topic fluently. This research found that in the talk show, the function that is found most is breaking the silence as an effort to persuade the guest star to continue speaking.

**Keywords:** *Jimmy Fallon, phatic communication, talk show*

### RESEARCH BACKGROUND

As social beings, developing relationships with others around us is one of our fundamental requirements (Bakhurst, 1995). We can establish as well as maintain social relationships by using communication in our daily lives. Through the correct use of communication using language, we may establish and maintain positive relationships with others. Language is used to express ideas in this world, whether it be through verbal or nonverbal means. Language as cited in Yule (2005) claims that by comprehending the meaning of words, we can have effective communication. In other words, to combine all those ideas stated, we humans need to use the correct form of utterances in language as means of communication with other people. In some situations, the utterances used in people's daily conversation might not always be informational; instead, they might just be "signs" that the speaker desires to establish or preserve positive relationships with other people (Wardhaugh, 2006). This type of verbal communication is hence referred to as *phatic communication*. People utilize *phatic communication* to create or maintain social bonds between listeners and speakers.

Phatic communion is also known as "talking little," which refers to speech that is “aimless, prefatory, obvious, uninteresting, sometimes suspect and even irrelevant, but it includes the part of the process of fulfilling human needs for social cohesiveness and mutual recognition” (Coupland, 2000). In other words, phatic communication does not require the speaker to have any certain point in the utterances but only to make contact with others in order to establish or maintain good social relationships. In many cases, phatic communication is seen to be an unimportant matter and doubt the significance of it (as cited in Mawaddah, S.: 2021; 430). The researcher believes that statement to be incorrect because as elaborated by Jumanto (2014), the phatic communication has proven to have many functions in conversation.

By the background research as stated above, the researcher will choose the conversation in talk show as data because phatic communication can always be found in talk show where the job of the host is to establish good social relationship with the guest star in short duration of time. Moreover, the dialogue in talk shows are seen to be more natural if compared to dialogue from movies that are often scripted as cited in Sutrisno (2019). English native speakers typically create ties of union by using the 12 functions of phatic communication (Jumanto, 2014). The talk show in choice is The Tonight Show by Jimmy Fallon which has been running for over 8 years now in total of 10 seasons. The show chosen will be the one starring Jenna Ortega as the guest star regarding her successful appearance in the Netflix series “Wednesday”. The researcher will prove the functions of phatic communication in this study as elaborated by Jumanto (2014).

In this study, the researcher will also talk about the communicative used to support the phatic communication to reach for the function. The twelve functions of phatic communication elaborated in the talk show use communicative situations. The communicative functions include greeting, parting, mentioning names or titles, commenting on something obvious, interrupting, apologizing to open conversation, avoiding silence when talking, changing topic of conversation, expressing listening noises, agreeing on something, apologizing, expressing wishes, congratulating, thanking, giving compliments, criticizing indirectly, saying bad words, mocking, joking, pacifying, encouraging, and sympathizing (Jumanto, 2014:11-13)

Numerous linguists have taken into consideration the roles of phatic communication. The linguists include Malinowski, Jakobson, Bühler, Leech, Cook, Holmes, Kridalaksana, Coupland, Renkema, Hartley, Schiffrin, Verschueren, Saville-Troike, Mey, O’Sullivan, Montgomery, Saunders, Abercrombie, Fiske, Richard, Platt, and Platt. The ideas of the linguists then account to the division of 12 functions of phatic communication. Referring to Jumanto (2014) who proposes theoretical framework of phatic communication exploring the specific functions of phatic communication.

As elaborated by Jumanto (2014), the functions of phatic communication can be divided as seen below:

- |                            |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Breaking the silence    | 7. Creating harmony       |
| 2. Starting a conversation | 8. Creating comfort       |
| 3. Making small talk       | 9. Expressing empathy     |
| 4. Making gossip           | 10. Expressing friendship |
| 5. Keeping talking         | 11. Expressing respect    |
| 6. Expressing solidarity   | 12. Expressing politeness |

This research is aimed to explore the functions of phatic communication in the data stated before, in hope that the result will show many use of phatic communications to satisfy the twelve functions. The researcher aims to find the use of phatic communications functions to provide the information on how phatic communication is required to build good social rapport as stated by (Coupland, 2000) and (Jumanto, 2014). In other words, this study is aimed to find the functions of phatic communication used in the talk show of Jimmy Fallon starring Jenna Ortega and to explain the importance of the phatic communication functions in the corresponding talk show.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The studies of phatic communication have been done by many researchists before. One of the study is done by Gatri Asti Putri Indarti (2016) who analyzed the phatic communication used by graduate students in Sanata Dharma University. The researcher of the corresponding study finds that the graduate students in Sanata Dharma University used all twelve functions of phatic communication in the daily conversations: breaking the silence, starting a

conversation, making a small talk, making gossips, keeping talking, expressing solidarity, creating harmony, creating comfort, expressing empathy, expressing friendship, expressing respect, and expressing politeness. This study shows that phatic communication has an important role in the conversations made by graduate students in Sanata Dharma University.

Looking on another study, Sakinah Mawadda (2021) analyzed about the phatic communication as portrayed in a comedy-drama movie written by Jack Thorne, Steven Conrad, and Chbosky. The movie itself is directed by Stephen Chbosky. The movie is about August, a boy with facial abnormality, or known as Treacher Collins syndrome, who attends fifth grade in a private school. The result of this study shows that in the “Wonder” movie, the phatic communication found are greeting, making small talk, agreeing on something, and joking. Those types of phatic communication are correlating to three functions that are expressing friendship, creating harmony, and creating comfort. Only a few functions are found in the conversation, 25% out of the twelve functions by Jumanto (2014). The result indicates that in daily conversation by fifth graders made with someone with a face abnormality, the use of phatic communication decrease as they find no use of being polite or to build a good social relationship, this study opens our eyes to have more awareness of becoming polite to people around us regardless what their conditions are.

Looking at another study by Yasa Ayatina Ashidiq, and Dr. Ruminda, M.Hum., about phatic functions by the characters in *Life of Pie* movie, this research uses the theory of Laver (1975) that divides phatic function on language into three main points namely: neutral, self-oriented, and other-oriented. The roles are also divided into three namely: opening phase, medial phase, and closing phase. The result concluded from the study is categorized into two points of analysis, the types of phatic functions and the roles of phatic function. The researcher found 57 data of phatic communication. They are divided into three types of phatic function, 13 data are related to neutral type which focus on circumstance outside of speaker and listener, 16 data are classified into self-oriented type which the speaker as the main focus of the conversation, and 28 data related to other-oriented type, this type refers to the listener. In addition to the findings, the roles of phatic function found are 24 data related to opening phase which has function to breaking the silence, 33 data are medial phase as to role to maintain the conversation, and the last is the closing data which are not found in this movie.

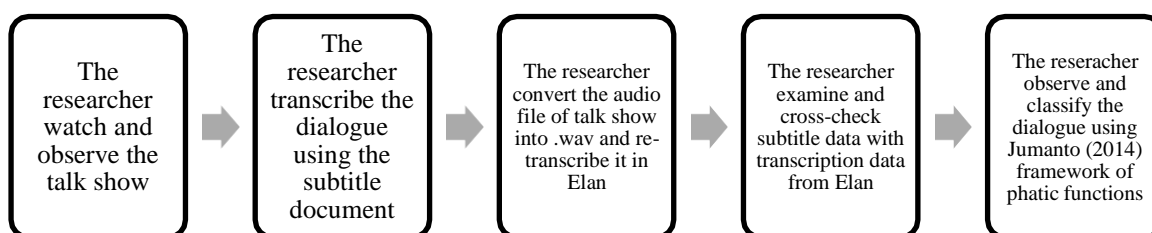
Hypothetically, the goal of this research is to fill gaps in the research correlating to functions of phatic communication. As the author realizes, phatic functions studies are not as often studied as other pragmatics studies. The reason for this, as stated before, is the misconception and the underestimation of the use of phatic communication and its functions in real life. The researcher hopes that this study will enrichen the knowledge of people about phatic communication, and the world of linguistics as well as pragmatics. Good social relationships are extremely important, after all, for human to survive in this world.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The submitted data were analyzed in this study using a qualitative descriptive methodology. This approach was used as a result of what the author saw in the *The Tonight Show* starring Jenna Ortega “Jenna Ortega Spills On How She Came Up with Her Viral Dance in Wednesday” ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA7KI7XWomM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA7KI7XWomM)) transcript document. Inductive analysis of the data is used in qualitative research to find recurring themes, patterns, or concepts. Data are also described and interpreted (Nassaji, 2015). This study examined the dialogue's primary character's utterances in order to find and describe the phatic communication, and the functions of phatic communication used in the dialogue spoken by Jimmy Fallon and Jenna Ortega.

The researcher followed a set of procedures when creating a classification of phatic communication functions on "The Tonight Show." By watching the talk show and paying close attention to the dialogue said by the host and guest star, the author will identify it at first step. Second, the author transcribed all of the talk show's dialogue using the subtitle document, the talk show duration is 6 minutes. The researcher will use a software to help with the transcription, the software namely Elan. Third, the researcher will convert the audio of the talk show into a file in which the extension match the one used in Elan. Fourth, the researcher will examine and cross check the dialogue transcription from the subtitle with the one researcher did in Elan. Fifth, the researcher conducted the analysis by classifying each discussion according to specific phatic communication roles using Jumanto's (2014) framework. Additionally, the data analysis methods were carried out by carefully examining the dialogue's context, ensuring that no errors in observation occurred. 50 utterances were examined in total for the data.

The table below will explain more details about the step of research.



*Table 1. Research Step*

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From the research conducted, the researcher have taken 50 utterances from the talk show's subtitle document and the researcher's transcription. It is found that only 33 utterances contain phatic communication, the functions of them can be seen in the table below,

*Table 2. Classification of Phatic Functions*

No	Phatic Functions	Frequency		Percentage
		Fallon	Ortega	
1	Breaking the silence	10	1	34%
2	Starting a conversation	1		3%
3	Making small talk	2		7%
4	Making gossip			0%
5	Keeping talking	1	3	12%
6	Expressing solidarity	2	2	12%
7	Creating harmony	3		10%
8	Creating comfort			0%
9	Expressing empathy	1		3%
10	Expressing friendship	1		3%
11	Expressing respect	1	2	10%
12	Expressing politeness	1	1	7%
TOTAL		24	9	100%

The function of phatic communication that is most frequently used in the talk show discussion on The Tonight Show, "Jenna Ortega Spills On How She Came Up With Her Viral Dance in Wednesday," is breaking the silence, as can be seen from the data above

(34%). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that Jimmy Fallon or the host frequently uses phatic communication. This outcome might be the result of various factors. First, the outcome demonstrates that the host of a talk show frequently reacts to the guest star's statements by breaking the silence with a variety of phatic communications in an effort to persuade the guest star to continue speaking. The host frequently makes use of this feature by commenting on something obvious.

The following section contains in-depth analysis of the findings.

## Breaking the Silence

### Excerpt 1.

Jimmy Fallon : "Jenna Ortega! 'Wednesday' is streaming now on Netflix."

Audience: \*Applause and cheers\*

Here, the host mentions the name of the guest star after showing the audience a clip of the guest star's acting in her show "Wednesday". This phatic communication is used to break the silence after the audience watch the short clip of Jenna Ortega's acting. The host mentions her name and continues to advertise the show she participates in.

The outcome is after the host broke the silence, the audience continued to applaud for the clip shown which may brought the effect of happiness to Jenna Ortega.

## Starting a Conversation

### Excerpt 2.

Jimmy Fallon : "Jenna Ortega, welcome to the show!"

Here, the host welcomed the guest star, Jenna Ortega, to the show by warmly saying the word 'welcome' her. This sentence is a phatic communication that functions as the beginning of conversation. By saying this sentence, the guest star knows that the show is already starting and she can adjust herself accordingly for the talk show.

The outcome of this is the guest star can respond further to the welcoming from the host and she may also feels comfortable and welcomed by the host's words.

## Making Small Talk

### Excerpt 3.

Jimmy Fallon : "It's good to have -- Before we go into 'Wednesday,' which I can't wait to rave about, right now, you're in a trailer for the new 'Scream' movie."

Here, the host made a small talk regarding Jenna Ortega's other movies which she starred in. The host use only content and closing part of small talk because he already greeted the guest star in previous utterance. The content of this small talk include the discussion about uncontroversial topic which is another movie the guest star acted in. This new movie had only published the trailer and the guest star is seen in it.

The outcome here is the host trying to make a small talk before going to the main topic which is about the guest star's viral dance in the movie "Wednesday". This phatic communication may help the guest star to warm up before going into the main topic of the

<http://publikasi.dinus.ac.id/index.php/uncle>

talk show.

## Keeping Talking

### Excerpt 4.

Jenna Ortega : "I love horror films. I don't know what it is about, you know, having blood thrown on your face and running around screaming bloody murder, but it really is so therapeutic, so much fun. Everyone who works on horror sets loves horror. You know, people do special effects because they grew up loving gore. The best part about the "Scream" films is, it really is such a great community. That cast and crew, they're my family. And we can never take anything seriously. So, Ghostface could literally be in the middle of their monologue, and we're having to restart takes because we're laughing so hard."

Jimmy Fallon : "Oh, really?"

Here, the host use phatic communication as a sign of wanting to keep talking. The host express listening noise in the form of utterance such as underlined above. This phatic communication is used to avoid silence. The host used the question to avoid silence after the guest star is done with what she wanted to talk about.

Here, the outcome is the guest star will be more likely to not feel awkward after her story. If the host star were to stay silent and not use phatic communication, the guest stay may feel awkward to have her story not met with any response.

## Expressing Solidarity

### Excerpt 5.

Jimmy Fallon : "Not only are you stunning, but you can't take your eyes off of you when I see you. I watch 'Wednesday,' and I told you this backstage. I go, 'Oh, my gosh. You're crushing this.' You're phenomenal."

We can see a few phatic communication in this one utterance, but the aim of this phatic communications goes to one communicative function that is giving compliments. In here, the host tried to be very supportive of the guest star's achievement in her movie. This kind of phatic communication express solidarity between the host and the guest star.

The outcome of this phatic communication is the guest star may feel more confident and appreciated, this will add more solidarity between both the host and the guest star to ensure the smoothness of the talk show.

## Creating Harmony

### Excerpt 6.

Jimmy Fallon : "Can we talk about the dance? The Wednesday dance?"

Jenna Ortega : "Yeah, if you want to."

The phatic communication used by the guest star here is an effort to agree on what the host is offering. When the agreement is said, the host will know that as a sign of continuing with what he wanted to talk about. This phatic communication helps to create harmony between the host and the guest star.

The outcome here is the host may feel more ease to talk about the next topic, if the guest star were not to use the phatic communication of agreeing then the talk show won't probably be as harmonious as it is.

## Expressing Empathy

### Excerpt 7.

Jimmy Fallon : "Did you understand that it would go this viral? It's everything on TikTok right now. Right now, if you go on TikTok, it's you dancing."

On this phatic communication said by Jimmy Fallon, he meant to make the guest star understand the feeling of amusement and excitement because the dance Jenna Ortega did that went viral. He wanted to share his feeling so that the guest star also understand and imagine what the host felt.

The outcome of this phatic communication is that the guest star may understand more about what the host felt, in this case amusement and excitement, because of the guest star's achievement.

## Expressing Friendship

### Excerpt 8.

Jenna Ortega : "Yeah. I don't know what it is. People love seeing me scared."

Jimmy Fallon : "No."

Jenna Ortega : "Yeah, I don't know."

The host in this function used phatic communication to give arguments towards Jenna Ortega's statement. He meant to argue to Jenna that people do not like to see her in fear. The argument here shows that the host and the guest star already warmed up and start to express signs of friendship because people who have not warmed up to each other may not be able to freely argue with each other.

The outcome of this phatic communication is the guest star may feel happy because the host argue about something negative said regarding the guest star's assumption.

## Expressing Respect

### Excerpt 9.

Jimmy Fallon : "Thanks for being here. I appreciate this."

In this phatic communication, the host express respect by thanking the guest star for attending the talk show held by the host. This respect shows that they do not know each other well because that utterance is said when the guest star had just arrived. So, the host shows respect by thanking the guest star for her attendance.

The outcome from this is the guest star may feel respected and welcomed in the talk show held by the host.

### Expressing Politeness

#### Excerpt 10.

Jenna Ortega : "Thank you very much, Jimmy Fallon."

In this phatic communication, the guest star shows politeness in her utterances because she thanked the host for welcoming her. The guest star is a guest, which is invited and given benefits for her fame, so the guest star in talk show is expected to be polite towards the host. Jenna Ortega in this talk show shows her politeness by thanking the host for being invited in the talk show.

The outcome of this is the host may feel appreciated because Jenna Ortega is showing politeness in the talk show, she is neither rude nor impolite which ensure the smoothness of the talk show.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the result of analysis, the researcher found that the phatic communications are found in 33 utterances out of 50 utterances in total. The researcher consider the 33 utterances that contain phatic communication as 100%. The function that is found most is breaking the silence which accounted 34% of the total (11 utterances out of 33 utterances) and the utterances mostly come from the host. The reason for this is because the host has an effort to avoid silence in order to make the guest star feel comfortable in the talk show, the host tried his best to respond the guest star's dialogue using communicative functions such as using question, question tag, and minimal response. The functions that are not used are making gossip and creating comfort, this is because making gossip is negative and won't be likely to be used in talk show while creating comfort is not used because there is no context where the host or guest star is using the phatic communication to create comfort.

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