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### PHATIC CATEGORY IN ORAL COMMUNICATION MINANGKABAU LANGUAGE

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#### Abstract

This study aims to describe the forms and functions of phatic categories in Minangkabau oral communication. Phatic categories are linguistic elements that play a role in establishing and maintaining social interactions without conveying direct informational meaning. Using a qualitative descriptive method, this research analyzes spoken data from Minangkabau speakers in Padang City, West Sumatra. The findings reveal that Minangkabau phatic expressions include bana, pun, juo, garan, ma/mah, ah, eh, a, ha, do, and lah, each serving specific social functions. For instance, bana expresses intensity, pun indicates addition/decision, eh is used by higher-status individuals toward lower-status ones, and do emphasizes denial. This study contributes to pragmatic and sociolinguistic research on regional languages, particularly in understanding the role of phatic expressions in Minangkabau society, which highly values politeness and social norms in communication.

Key words: Phatic categories, Minangkabau language, social functions, pragmatics, sociolinguistics

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language serves not only as a medium for conveying messages but also as a tool for establishing and maintaining social interaction among its speakers. In the fields of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, this social function of language is referred to as the phatic function. Rather than merely focusing on the transmission of information, the phatic function emphasizes the maintenance of communication continuity and the strengthening of social bonds. Numerous scholars have provided definitions of the phatic category. The concept of the Phatic Category was first introduced by Malinowski (Sumiati 2005) through the notion of Phatic Communion, which refers to utterances intended to create social bonds through the mere exchange of words.

In Indonesia, the phatic category was first proposed by Kridalaksana in 1986. According to (Kridalaksana 1994), the phatic category comprises expressions or components intended to initiate, maintain, or reinforce interaction between speakers and listeners. This class of expressions is inherently communicative, serving to sustain the relationship between interlocutors. (Kridalaksana 1994)

further asserts that the phatic category encompasses expressions aimed at initiating, maintaining, or consolidating conversational exchanges between speakers and their interlocutors. Consequently, the phatic category consists of lexical items that, although lacking specific semantic content, fulfill crucial social functions that enhance communicative interactions. (Kridalaksana 1994) elaborates that the functions of phatic expressions include: (1). initiating communication or conversation, (2) maintaining communication, (3) concluding communication, and (4) reaffirming communication or associated actions.

The phatic category plays a vital role in evaluating and reinforcing interactions between speakers and listeners. It can be identified in dialogues and interviews, both of which are characteristic features of spoken language (Kebudayaan 1993) The use of phatic expressions has been recorded across various regional languages, including Minangkabau. In daily life, the Minangkabau people employ the principles of *langgam katon ampek* (upward, downward, horizontal, and slanting speech styles) in their communication practices (Handayani 2020) These principles are

observed to promote politeness, as they guide speakers on appropriate speech manners according to differences in age and social status. As Navis (as cited in (Sumiati 2005)) notes, the practice of small talk among the Minangkabau community aims to maintain harmonious social relations, with those unable to engage in small talk often perceived as rude (lacking proper manners) and subject to social exclusion.

The Minangkabau language is spoken by an ethnic group originating from the Minangkabau Highlands. The Minangkabau community is well-known for their fondness for engaging in small talk before addressing the main topics of conversation. (Handayani 2020) identifies the Minangkabau as a group that places high importance on politeness in verbal communication. According to (Chaer. Abdul 2010), politeness in language is an effort to prevent conflict between interlocutors during communication. In the cultural context of Minangkabau society, spoken communication holds a significant role in daily life, encompassing interactions within families, communities, and traditional ceremonies. The speaking culture of the Minangkabau is characterized by a high degree of politeness, gentleness,

and an embodiment of social values reflected through word choice, intonation, and speech delivery. One manifestation of these values is the use of particles (such as *lah*, *nyo*, *do*, *ka*, *lai*, *tu*, *ko*, *kan*, *nyeh*, and *ha*), set expressions (such as *gai doh*, *jo nyo*, *tu mah*, *lai ko ha*, *iko se yo*, and *ko, je*), words (*bana*, *liak*, *iyu*, *ciek*, *sadang*, and *beko*), and phrases (*diak kanduang*, *mari singgah*, *takah tu*) (Adisti, Salliyanti, and Sembiring 2024)

Nonetheless, scientific research on the phatic category in Minangkabau spoken communication remains relatively scarce. Despite this, variations of phatic expressions exhibit distinct features closely linked to the social norms, traditions, and value systems of the Minangkabau community. The present study aims to explore the forms and functions of the phatic category within Minangkabau spoken communication. Through the analysis of phatic expressions across different dialogic contexts, it is expected that this research will contribute to the development of pragmatic studies in regional languages, particularly in enhancing the understanding of interpersonal communication within Minangkabau society. Specifically, the objective of

this study is to describe the forms and functions of the phatic category in Minangkabau spoken language.

## **II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Research on the category of phatic expressions has been conducted previously, such as in the study by (Handayani 2020) titled "Phatic Category and Its Context of Use in the Minangkabau Language in Kenegarian Kambang, Pesisir Selatan Regency." This study describes the forms, functions, and contexts of phatic expressions in the daily communication of the Minangkabau language in Kenegarian Kambang, Pesisir Selatan Regency. Based on the data collected by the author, the conclusion reveals that there are three forms of phatics, namely particles and words, phrases, and clauses. The context of phatic usage in this community includes the speaker, the interlocutor, the language used, the topic of the conversation, and the situation in which the conversation takes place. The general function of phatic expressions is to assure and maintain the conversation.

Additionally, another study examining phatics is (Gunawan 2020) titled "Form and Function of the Phatic

Category in Spoken Malay Communication in Alek Sungai Rokan and Its Implications for Education." This research aims to describe the use of expressions in spoken Malay communication in the Sungai Rokan dialect. The linguistic categorization includes Malay, the Sungai Rokan dialect, the district of Hulutiri, consisting of 25 particles, 20 words, and 15 word forms. Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that the Malay language in the Sungai Rokan dialect has 60 forms of phatic categories, with physical particle forms being the most frequently used. In terms of function, the Sungai Rokan Malay dialect has 10 phatic functions, with the dominant ones being affirmatory and mocking functions.

Meanwhile, the study by (Adisti et al. 2024) on the phatic categories spoken by the Minangkabau community in Pasar Sukaramai identifies the forms as defined by Kridalaksana, who outlines the phatic category in three forms: particles, words, and phrases. Furthermore, the functions of each form of phatic expression were analyzed based on the theories proposed by Malinowski, the pioneer of the phatic concept, and Jakobson. This research found that the phatic categories spoken by the

Minangkabau community in Pasar Sukaramai include particles, word combinations, words, and phrases. The phatic functions identified include: emphasizing, reinforcing, stressing, mediating, softening criticism, assuring, creating familiarity, and initiating conversations.

### **III. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopts a qualitative research design utilizing a descriptive method. According to Kirk and Miller (Moleong 2005), qualitative research represents a specific tradition within the social sciences that fundamentally emphasizes the observation of individuals within their natural contexts and interaction with them using their own language and terminologies. The descriptive method is intended to systematically portray ongoing phenomena. It involves efforts to describe, document, analyze, and interpret current situations, providing information that accurately reflects the conditions observed, based on relevant variables (Moleong 2005)

The researcher employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to objectively portray the forms and uses of phatic expressions in

the Minangkabau language as they are genuinely practiced by the local community in Padang City. The research was conducted in Padang City, located in West Sumatra, Indonesia. The data in this study consist of utterances in the Minangkabau language, while the data sources are native Minangkabau speakers residing in Padang City.

### **IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

Phatic expressions are a type of word that function solely within the social dimension and do not convey informational meaning. The forms of phatic expressions typically appear in informal spoken language. Their presence can be found at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence. Although they resemble interjections, phatic expressions are not classified as interjections, as interjections possess an emotional character, whereas phatic expressions are communicative in nature (Gunawan 2020)

The phatic category serves to assess and reaffirm the communication between the speaker and the interlocutor. Phatic expressions are found in dialogues or interviews, which are characteristic features of

spoken language varieties  
(Kebudayaan 1993)

In the Minangkabau language, the forms of phatic expressions identified include *bana* ('very'), *pun* ('also'), *juo* ('also'), *garan* ('perhaps'), *ma/mah*, *ah*, *eh*, *a*, *ha*, *do*, and *lah*. Consider the following data:

### 1. Phatic *bana*: To Express Intensity

The phatic expression *bana* ('very') is used to indicate intensity. The phatic expression *bana* 'very' can be found in the Minangkabau language, as seen in the following data:

- (1) Padusi tu rancak bana.  
*woman-that-beautiful-very*  
'That woman is very beautiful.'
- (2) Iyo bana santiang paja tu.  
*correct-very-smart-child-that*  
'That child is very intelligent.'

In data (1) and (2), the phatic *bana* 'very' belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. In data (1), *bana* appears at the end of the sentence, while in data (2), *bana* is positioned in the middle of the sentence. The function of *bana* 'very' in these instances is to express intensity.

### 2. Phatic *pun* 'pun': To Indicate Addition/Decision

In the Minangkabau language, the

phatic expression *pun* ('also') can be observed in the following data:

- (1) Makan indak minum pun indak  
*eat-not-drink-also-not*  
'Not only eating, but also not drinking.'
- (2) Baco tulih pun inyo indak bisa.  
*read-write-also-he-not-can*  
'He cannot even read or write.'
- (3) Ijan ka datang ka mari, manelpon  
pun inyo indak pernah.  
*even-if-come-here-call-also-he-not-ever*  
'Let alone coming here, he has never even called.'

In data (1), (2), and (3), the phatic *pun* ('also') is categorized as a word form of phatic expression. In all three instances, *pun* appears in the middle of the sentence. The function of *pun* in these contexts is to express addition or decision.

### 3. Phatic *juo* 'jua': To Indicate Accompanying Addition

In the Minangkabau language, the phatic expression *juo* ('also') can be observed in the following data:

- (1) Inyo manangih juo.  
*he-cry-also*  
'He is crying too.'
- (2) Alah ditagah inyo barangkek juo.  
*already-forbidden-he-depart-also*  
'He was already forbidden, yet he still left.'
- (3) Apo juo lai tu.  
*what-also-that-again*  
'Enough, don't study again either.'

In data (1) and (2), the phatic *juo* ('also') belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. In data (1) and (2), *juo* appears at the end of the sentence, while in data (3), *juo* appears in the middle of the sentence. The function of *juo* in these instances is to indicate an accompanying addition.

#### 4. Phatic *garan* 'gerangan': Used in Interrogative Sentences

In Minangkabau, the phatic *garan* ('gerangan') can be observed in the following data:

- (1) Di ma inyo sakolah garan?  
*where-he-school-indeed*  
'Where does he study?'
- (2) Sia garan namo adiak ko?  
*who-indeed-name-sibling-this*  
'What is the name of this sibling?'

In data (1) and (2), *garan* ('gerangan') belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. In data (1), *garan* appears at the end of the sentence, and in data (2), it appears in the middle of the sentence. The function of *garan* is solely used in interrogative sentences.

#### 5. Phatic *ma/mah*: To Emphasize

In Minangkabau, the phatic *ma/mah* can be observed in the following data:

- (1) Inyo anak kapalo desa ma.  
*he-child-head-village*  
'He is the child of the village head.'

- (2) Rancak bana mah bajunyo.  
*good-very-clothes-his*  
'His clothes are very nice.'

In data (1) and (2), *ma/mah* ('to emphasize') belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. In data (1), *ma/mah* appears at the end of the sentence, and in data (2), it appears in the middle of the sentence. The function of *ma/mah* is to emphasize.

#### 6. Phatic *ah*: To Express Annoyance

In Minangkabau, the phatic *ah* can be seen in the following data:

- (1) Sia maambiak sapatu den ah.  
*who-took-shoes-my-ah*  
'Who took my shoes?'
- (2) Ambo ditagah makan nasi nan alah tahidang tu ah.  
*I-forbidden-eat-rice-that-already-served-ah*  
'I was forbidden to eat the rice that has been served.'
- (3) Apo juo ko ah, maleh den.  
*what-also-this-ah-lazy-I*  
'What else, I am lazy.'

In data (1) and (2), *ah* belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. *Ah* appears at the end of the sentence in (1) and (2), while in (3), it appears in the middle of the sentence. The function of *ah* is to express annoyance.

### 7. Phatic *Eh*: Often Used by Higher Status Individuals to Lower Status Individuals

In Minangkabau, the phatic *eh* can be seen in the following data:

- (1) Caliaklah ka mari eh!  
*look-here-eh*  
'Look here!'

- (2) Elok-elok stek eh!  
*careful-a-little-eh*  
'Be a little careful!'

In data (1) and (2), *eh* belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. *Eh* only appears at the end of the sentence. The function of *eh* is to be used by higher status individuals towards lower status individuals.

### 8. Phatic *a*: To Emphasize Interrogative Sentences

Phatic *a* is used to emphasize interrogative sentences in Minangkabau, as shown in the following data:

- (1) Sia ko a?  
*who-this*  
'Who is this?'

- (2) Di ma kini a?  
*where-now-a*  
'Where is it now?'

- (3) A garan nan tabaka?  
*what-indeed-that-burnt?*  
'What is it that's burning?'

In data (1), (2), and (3), *a* belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. *A* appears at the end of the sentence in (1) and (2), and at the beginning of the sentence in (3). The function of *a* is to emphasize the interrogative sentence.

### 9. Phatic *Ha*: To Express Astonishment

Phatic *ha* is used to express astonishment in Minangkabau, as seen in the following data:

- (1) Sapuluah urang anaknyo ha?  
*ten-people-children-his-ha*  
'He has ten children?'
- (2) Lah nikahnyo kironyo ha.  
*already-married-he-thought-ha*  
'I thought he was already married.'

In data (1) and (2), *ha* belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. *Ha* only appears at the end of the sentence. The function of *ha* is to express astonishment.

### 10. Phatic *do*: To Emphasize Rejection

Phatic *do* is used to emphasize rejection in Minangkabau, as seen in the following data:

- (1) Inyo indak ka pai do!  
*he-not-will-go-do*  
'He is not going!'

- (2) Indak ado buku tu do.  
*not-have-book-that-do*  
 'That book does not exist.'

In data (1) and (2), *do* belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. *Do* only appears at the end of the sentence. The function of *do* is to emphasize rejection.

### 11. Phatic Lah: Used in Imperative Sentences to Emphasize

In Minangkabau, the phatic *lah* can be seen in the following data:

- (1) Tasarah dek kau lah!  
*let-go-by-you-lah*  
 'It's up to you!'
- (2) Ambiak se lah pitih tu.  
*take-just-lah-money-that*  
 'Just take that money!'

In data (1) and (2), *lah* belongs to the category of phatic expressions in the form of a word. *Lah* only appears at the end of the sentence. The function of *lah* is to be used in imperative sentences to emphasize.

## V. CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed that the forms of phatic expressions in Minangkabau include the use of words such as *bana*, *pun*, *juo*, *garan*, *ma/mah*, *ah*, *eh*, *a*, *ha*, *do*, and *lah*. Each of these phatic forms has a specific communicative function, including:

1. Indicating intensity (e.g., *bana* 'very')
2. Adding to or reinforcing decision-making (e.g., *pun* 'also')
3. Expressing an accompanying addition (e.g., *juo* 'also')
4. Used in interrogative sentences (e.g., *garan* 'gerangan', *a*)
5. Emphasizing a statement (e.g., *ma/mah*, *do*)
6. Expressing annoyance or astonishment (e.g., *ah*, *ha*)
7. Indicating instruction or agreement (e.g., *lah*)
8. Reflecting social status in conversation (e.g., *eh* used by higher-status individuals)

The use of these various phatic forms demonstrates that communication within the Minangkabau society highly prioritizes ethics, social harmony, and traditional values in language. Additionally, the position of phatic expressions can be at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence, depending on the pragmatic goals that need to be achieved.

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