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CREATIVITY STUDIES

PHATIC EMOJI OF JAVANESE NETIZENS IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A CYBERPRAGMATICS PERSPECTIVE ON A CREATIVE COMMUNICATIVE STRATEGY

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Abstract. The massive shift of communication culture from direct to virtual channels due to the COVID-19 pandemic affected virtual politeness performance. The limitation of physical expression in digital platforms encourages emojis to replace gestures, mimics, and other expressions. This study aims to describe the types of speech acts and the function of the emojis along with the performance of politeness strategies in the *WhatsApp* group of Javanese netizens. Understanding politeness performance through the use of speech acts and emojis in virtual communication provides insights into how universal emojis are specifically used in a particular culture and shows the creativity of emoji use in phatic communication. The virtual textual data were taken from five *WhatsApp* group's with 174 Javanese members by observation method. The emoji that occurred in the conversational texts were classified based on the types of speech acts and their functions. The analysis was conducted within the cyberpragmatics framework. The findings showed that emojis were used in assertive speech acts, directive speech acts, expressive speech acts, and phatic speech acts. The functions were to emphasize meaning, clarify meaning, direct certain actions, express feelings, and establish social rapport. The research contributes to the development of cyberpragmatics as the current approach in pragmatics study. Moreover, the findings depicted the current phenomenon of social media communication on a cultural basis.

Keywords: cyberpragmatics, emoji, Javanese netizens, phatic communication, politeness, social media, *WhatsApp*.

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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic changes the way of life massively. The obvious current phenomenon is the significant increase in virtual communication. Since direct communication and physical contact are restricted to avoid COVID-19 infection, communication by using social media is the best alternative to get connected. Since the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the functioning of humanity, creativity and the ability to adapt to the new situation, to find a solution as quickly as possible are seen as key roles for survival (Baltezarević et al., 2022).

Social media applications such as *WhatsApp*, *Instagram*, and *Facebook* gained more subscribers than before along with the increase in digital literacy. To this extent, social media is used not only for daily communication but also for educational purposes. The previous

research found that teacher's creativity in using social media is encouraged by external factors such as colleague examples and new ideas that are stimulated by internal factors including willingness to take risks, willingness to experiment, openness to innovation, and a desire to solve problems creatively (Šliogerienė & Valūnaitė-Oleškevičienė, 2017). The phenomenon of communication shift via social media contributes to the development of theories in language study such as pragmatics. The abundant research data taken from digital platforms are a lucrative object for the analysis of meaning in cyberpragmatics. The approach in cyberpragmatics is respectively multimodal. To this extent, the analysis is not only in the utterance layer but also in a deeper understanding of particular virtual tokens such as emojis and stickers that occur along with the utterances.

The latest data from the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Indonesia) published by *Antara* (news agency) on the ministry's website in 2019 showed that *WhatsApp* is the most frequently used instant messaging platform in Indonesia. *WhatsApp* users are approximately 83% out of 171 million Internet users in Indonesia. The huge number of *WhatsApp* users is an interesting topic to explore in the field of cyberpragmatics. Regarding this, the study discusses the types of speech acts and the functions of emojis used in each speech act from the cyberpragmatics perspective to get a clear depiction of the creative use of emojis in social media communication.

The previous study on virtual tokens found that different relationship structures correspond to distinct phatic token norms (Aull, 2019). The phenomenon could be seen in Chinese cultural communication where emojis play an important role in fulfilling seven functions, such as attitude/emotion signal, attitude/emotion intensity enhancer, illocutionary force modifier, humor, irony, turn-taking/giving, and backchannel device (Li & Yang, 2018). The other prior study concerning virtual tokens found that stickers are more pragmatically marked for expressivity, intensity, and intimacy whereas emojis are pragmatically unmarked and exhibits signs of conventionalization (Konrad et al., 2020). The use of emojis might have various functions across cultures. Perhaps, the use of emojis in the Javanese context would describe particular functions on a cultural basis. Therefore, the study focuses on the cyberpragmatics analysis concerning the emojis that occurred in *WhatsApp* texts of Javanese netizens. The topic is interesting to explore to get a deeper understanding of digital communication attitude and digital literacy since the Javanese are the majority ethnicity in Indonesia. Regarding the topic, the focus of the study is the analysis of the types of speech acts containing emojis and the functions of the emojis within the texts. Therefore, the analysis aimed to solve the problems formulated in the research questions such as what types of emojis are used by Javanese netizens in *WhatsApp*? What are the functions of emojis in *WhatsApp* communication?

The study on emojis in social media communication among Javanese netizens aims to enrich the insights of the previous research by exploring the types of speech acts containing emojis and their functions. The study contributes insights into the cyberpragmatics analysis of digital texts. Particularly, the result presents the current description of Javanese creativity in utilizing emojis in digital communication as a creative communicative strategy that involves politeness in order to perform phatic communication. Creative communication strategies are

essential for building social rapport as the Javanese consider politeness principles as a normative cultural identity and not just a communicative strategy. Javanese creativity in utilizing emojis in digital phatic communication as a creative communicative strategy plays significant roles such as a camaraderie intensifier, pleasing enhancer, happiness expression, and consoling device (Widiana et al., 2020). Creative communication strategies are essential for building social rapport because Javanese adhere to the principles of *guyub* – "togetherness", *rukun* – "harmony", *semanak* – "warmth"/"friendliness", *grapyak* – "friendliness" (Widiana & Prajoko, 2021). Violation of these principles can lead to a conflict that causes communication breakdown, not only in face-to-face communication but also in virtual communication. The normative values of these principles make small talks or phatic communication among Javanese an important part of *grapyak*. Phatic communication represents the characteristics of *semanak* to create a harmonious state or *rukun*. Living in harmony itself is a reflection of *guyub*. For some reason, emojis play an important role in virtual communication to represent feelings, physical expressions and body language. The competence to use the appropriate emojis in virtual communication is significant to avoid conflicts and misunderstandings. In this way, the goal of phatic communication, namely to establish rapport, can be achieved. The strategies might be varied across cultures. An understanding of differences in communication patterns among people and cultures could avoid unwanted communication obstacles (Baltezarević et al., 2022). Besides that, communication gaps could be avoided by having intercultural communication competence which comprises three levels: linguistics, communication, and cultural competence (Braslauskas, 2021). Perhaps, the research could be implemented as politeness guidance and cultural competence in the use of emojis in digital communication involving Javanese. In this case, emojis are expected to implement Javanese politeness guidance including *kurmat* – "respect", *tepa selira* – "solidarity"/"tolerance", *andhap asor* – "humility", and *empan papan* – "self-awareness". These values are significant to avoid communication breakdowns and violations of politeness, as virtual communication has physical limits of expression. In addition, emojis depict Javanese cultural competence, such as the ability to establish a social rapport based on the principles of *guyub*, *rukun*, *semanak*, and *grapyak*. Therefore, the appropriate use of emojis is crucial to avoid conflicts, communication breakdowns, and misunderstandings. This is an important factor that makes Javanese creative in upholding these values when using emojis that represent their physical expressions in different contexts that have different pragmatic meanings. For instance, the emoji with the folded hands 🙏 can mean praying, saying *thank you*, showing respect, or any other meaning depending on the context. The ability to use the appropriate emoji is an expression of Javanese cultural competence. The result describes the functions of different types of speech acts and certain emojis in relation to politeness performance in establishing phatic talks. This could minimize pragmatic failure in understanding such a conversation, as certain types of emojis used by Javanese might have specific cultural contextual pragmatic meanings. The creativity in the use of appropriate emojis demonstrates the cultural competence of Javanese politeness principles. This is significant because politeness principles represent the normative identity of the Javanese. The failure to adhere to politeness principles could lead to a conflict that excludes someone from the speech community.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Cyberpragmatics

Since the study deals with virtual texts, cyberpragmatics is the appropriate underlying theory to analyze the data. The term cyberpragmatics coined by Yus (2011) focuses on the pragmatic analysis of Internet-mediated communication. The special interest of the cyberpragmatics analysis is the role of sender intentions and the quality of addressee interpretation when Internet-mediated interactions take place. To this extent, cyberpragmatics studies how senders and addressees engage in an act of sense-making in cybermedia on a scale of contextualization ranging from highly context-saturated media (videoconferencing, Internet-enabled phone calls, chat rooms with webcam, *etc.*) to highly cues-filtered text-based media (traditional chat rooms, electronic mail, instant messaging, *etc.*) (Locher, 2013; Yus, 2011). Concerning the theory, the study focuses on the analysis of text-based media data.

The analysis of conversational data within the cyberpragmatics framework requires particular contexts with some external aspects such as smileys, emojis, emoticons, avatars, *Graphics Interchange Format* (*GIF*) images, and stickers. The typographical tokens are employed by netizens to fulfill the need for physical contact when online interactions take place. Moreover, the distinctive characteristics of virtual communication are related to particular contexts as well. The role of context is crucial for speakers in their effort to make interpretations about what is meant in such a conversational encounter (Bauler, 2019). However, there is a possibility of the shift of elements and functions of the context that contributes to the change of meaning in speech intentions in cyberpragmatics (Rahardi, 2020). The study employed the cyberpragmatics context and its external elements to explain the meaning and the functions of emojis in social media communication.

2.2. Speech acts

A speech act is one of the main discussions in pragmatics. Most of the time our utterances are automatically interpreted as speech acts such as assertions, conjectures, testimonies, orders, requests, pleas, threats, offers, and promises (Kissine, 2013). In other words, speech acts are acts that refer to the action performed by produced utterances. Therefore, the speech act focuses on what is done by the addresser and/or the addressee when a certain utterance is delivered in a string of conversations.

Speech act contains some utterances that behave somewhat like actions (Aitchison, 2000). The addresser is trying to achieve some effects with those words he/she produces. The effect has been accomplished by an alternative action in some cases. Thus, a speech act is an utterance that occurs and an act refers to an action. Producing speech acts are communicating acts performed through spoken or written language. Successful communication happens when the hearer gets or does what the speaker intends since speech act is not only utterances but also interactions and the actual use of language.

Kreidler (1998) classified speech acts into phatic, assertive, performative, verdictive, expressive, directive, and commissive according to the general purpose of the speaker. The study analyzes the types of speech acts containing emojis found in *WhatsApp* group online

interactions among Javanese netizens. Regarding the types, speech acts have particular functions in a certain context. The functions are various depending on the contexts and cultural norms where the interactions take place. In the Javanese direct communication context, phatic speech acts have several functions such as initiating a conversation, intensifying camaraderie, pleasing others, expressing happiness, and consoling others (Widiana et al., 2020). Perhaps, speech acts in social media communication have particular functions related to the virtual tokens employed by the netizens. A deeper discussion concerning this topic would be a valuable contribution to the theories of cyberpragmatics.

The research is under the broader scope of pragmatics and the more specific scope of cyberpragmatics. To this extent, context would be taken into consideration in analyzing the data of the research. The elements of context in cyberpragmatics would be crucial in the analysis since there are shifts in the social relation of the participants due to the shift in media of communication from direct to indirect conversations. The current classification of cyberpragmatics contexts is social context, societal context, cultural context, and situational context (Rahardi, 2020). The external virtual elements or the typographical tokens that occurred in social media communication would be considered as the aspects to determine the pragmatics meaning (Yus, 2011). Perhaps, emojis in Javanese virtual communication in *WhatsApp* group are essential aspects to determine the meaning of a string of conversations.

2.3. Politeness maxims

The employment of virtual politeness is a significant focus of the cyberpragmatics approach, as politeness maxims play an important role in virtual communication. Indeed, communication that adheres to politeness maxims can create a social bond between members of a speech community. The effectiveness of emojis in the context of cyberpragmatics in exercising politeness is an interesting object of study because there is no guidance for their utilization. In particular, Javanese politeness maxims are a strategy to please others.

The politeness maxims are different on a cultural basis. Brown and Levinson (1987) gave a breakthrough in politeness study by introducing the negative politeness and the positive politeness theory. Although the theory has similarities to Javanese politeness maxims, it could not accommodate all politeness concepts in Javanese culture. Javanese politeness strategies are closely related to the traditional politeness concepts consisting of *kurmat*, *tepa selira*, *andhap asor*, and *empan papan* (Gunarwan, 2007). The maxim of *kurmat* demands speakers give high respect to the addressees. In so doing, the speaker is supposed to choose the appropriate Javanese speech level and use the appropriate term of address based on the hearer's social status. The *tepa selira* maxim expects speakers to place themselves in the addresses' condition to understand what they feel in such circumstances. *Andhap asor* maxim suggests speakers behave modestly and avoid showing off. The maxim of *empan papan* demands speakers to be aware of the circumstances of the setting and the addressee's social status or position so that they could behave appropriately. Meanwhile, Poedjosoedarmo (2017) proposed the other essential Javanese maxims of *semanak*. The maxim expects Javanese to be friendly and consider his interlocutor as *sanak* "relative"/"family" to establish a close relationship and harmony in such communication, despite the status and power.

The politeness maxims are unwritten guidance for the Javanese to avoid conflict. Concerning Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, the *kurmat* maxim and the *tepa selira* maxim are similar to the concept of negative politeness that suggests the speaker consider the hearer's feelings. *Kurmat* maxim demands the speakers respect the hearers. *Tepa selira* maxim expects the speakers to put themselves in the hearers' circumstances. However, Brown and Levinson's concept could not explain the alternate use of Javanese speech level concerning politeness. The positive politeness of Brown and Levinson that focuses on the condition of the hearers seems like the *andhap asor* maxim and the *empan papan* maxim. In this case, *andhap asor* maxim expects the speakers to praise the hearer more than themselves. The maxim of *empan papan* prompts the speakers to consider the social status of the hearers in order to choose the appropriate manner and speech level. The choice of a suitable manner and speech level is a significant concept in Javanese politeness. Brown and Levinson's positive politeness could not explain this particular concept. The Javanese politeness maxims are considered to determine the pragmatic meaning and functions of emojis in the Javanese netizens' virtual communication on *WhatsApp* group.

3. Methodology

The data for the research is taken from the *WhatsApp* group texts of Javanese netizens aged between 20–50 years. The observation method is applied for data collection (Sudaryanto, 2015). Then, a semi-structured interview is conducted with five of the 174 members of five *WhatsApp* groups. The interview is conducted to describe the perception of using virtual tokens in online interaction. The final step is to classify the data based on the problem statement of the research.

The analytical procedure of the research employed the adaptation of the relevance theory within the cyberpragmatics framework (Sperber & Wilson, 1996; Yus, 2011). Relevance theory investigates how online messages are produced by the senders and interpreted by the addressee through the context and its external elements. The process is illustrated in Figure 1 as follows.
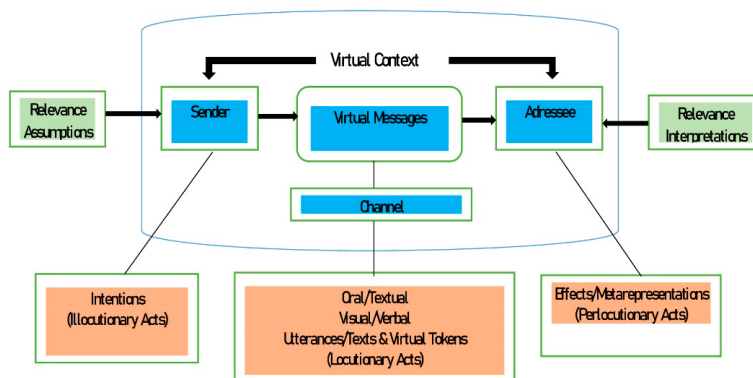

Figure 1. Internet-mediated communication according to cyberpragmatics (source: created by authors, based on Yus, 2011)

The main discussion of cyberpragmatics is the analysis of communicative exchanges that take place among Internet users in cyber media. The diagram illustrates how the sender predicts that their interlocutors will draw relevant conclusions by accessing the necessary contextual information whereas the addressee will search for relevance in the utterances that they process by taking into consideration the occurrence of pictures, videos, and any other virtual tokens in the texts (if available) (Yus, 2011). Consequently, context plays an important role in both processes of production and interpretation of online messages in the same way as direct communication. To this extent, the sender predicts the context of identity while the addressee chooses the most relevant context of identity. Therefore, the sender's illocutionary force contains a prediction of relevance that generates cognitive effects when the addressee search for relevance to processing the mental assumptions from the utterance or locution that has been delivered. The aspects of cyberpragmatics context are sender, addressee, online message, and channel. In general, the higher the number of cognitive effects, the more relevance is achieved (Yus, 2011). In this research, the sender predicts the most relevant emojis to be interpreted by the addressee that will search for relevance depending on the context.

4. Findings

The types of speech acts containing emojis were assertives, directives, expressives, and phatic. Regarding the functions, Javanese netizens employed emojis to emphasize utterances, clarify utterances, express feelings, and maintain social rapport. The function of emphasizing utterances was found in the assertive speech act whereas clarifying utterances occurred in directives. Emojis were also used to express feelings in expressive speech acts. The function of maintaining social rapport occurred in the phatic speech act. The frequency of each type of speech act and the functions were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The frequency of speech act containing virtual tokens and ıts functions (source: created by authors)

Types of speech acts	Functions	Frequency
Assertives	Emphasizing utterances	76
Directives	Clarifying utterances	104
Expressives	Expressing feelings	189
Phatic	Maintaining social rapport	237
Total		606

The result of the analysis showed that smileys were the most used emojis. The other types of emojis such as stickers and GIF images were used as well. However, the old version of typographical emoticons employed punctuations such as :), ;), :(were not used anymore. The most frequently used smileys are those related to feeling expressions such as 😄, 😘, 🤗, 😂. Besides that, certain smiley such as 😇 was also employed to express prayer and any other religious topics. The emojis represented by part of the body were frequently found as well, for instance, 🙏, 💪, 👍, 🙌, ✊. Currently, sticker emojis were widely used since this type of token was capable to represent the meaning more clearly and lively such as

, , and . Stickers were easily customized by using private pictures to represent the sender's identity.

The types of speech acts containing virtual tokens are assertives, directives, expressive, and phatic. The types of speech act referred to particular functions of the emojis. The functions are emphasizing utterances, clarifying utterances, expressing feelings, and maintaining social rapport. A detailed explanation is provided in the next part with related examples.

4.1. Assertive speech act

One of the functions of virtual tokens is to emphasize the messages in online texts. These functions occurred in the assertive speech act. The tokens emphasized the utterances to highlight the main topic. The example is provided as follows (the conversation took place in the *WhatsApp* group of university alumni. R12 asked the members of the *WhatsApp* group to teach her using the video editing application. Then, R13 responded to R12 and taught her how to use the application. Then, R12 stated that she was grateful for being a member of the *WhatsApp* group since she got many benefits from the group):

R12: "Ok sist dicoba dulu 😁😶".
[English: "Okay, sister. I will try it".]

R13: "Sip Mantab".
[English: "Great".]

R12: "Iya ternyata…udh bisa…vidioku ternyata kurang panjang…lagunya belum habis…berhenti…tks a lot sist 🙏🙏".
[English: "Yes. Finally, I could do it. My video is too short so it stopped when the song was still playing. Thanks a lot, sister".]

R13: "Kalo mau potong video or lagu bisa pake cut yang ada tanda guntingnya ✂️"
[English: "If you want to cut the video or the song, you could use the tool with the scissors icon".]

R12: "Alhamdulillah…senang…dpt byk ilmu dr grub ini…trmksh sdh berbagi ilmu, saran/masukan yaa teman2…semangattt 💪💪".
[English: "Thanks God. I'm glad I could get so much knowledge from this group. Thanks for sharing the knowledge, suggestion, and insights friends. Keep up the good work".]

The laughing smiley 😁 and the oops smiley 😶 emphasized the doubt of R12 for her capability to use the application. Besides that, the laughing smiley replaced the physical condition of blushing. The folded hands token 🙏 emphasized the gratefulness of R12 to R13 for teaching her to use the application. Next, the strong hand token 💪 following the statement *semangattt* was the emphasis of enthusiasm to encourage the member of the *WhatsApp* group to share their knowledge in the group.

A similar virtual token might represent a different thing in a different context. The oops smiley 😶 in the previous example represented the doubt but the representation of a similar smiley in the following conversation was different (the conversation was among housewives in the *WhatsApp* group of housing complex inhabitants. They talked about the price of the COVID-19 rapid antigen test. The discussion commenced after one of the *WhatsApp* group members shared the list of antigen tests):

R27: "Murah ini…di Prodia masih 225k 😶".

[English: "It's cheap. In Prodia lab, the price is still 225k".]

R28: "Di Lab Kimia Farma 125k 🙏".

[English: "At Kimia Farma Lab, the price is only 125k".]

The oops smiley 😶 emphasized the amazement of R27 since the price of antigen tests was cheaper than before. Then, R28 stated that the other lab provided a cheaper antigen test. The folded hands token 🙏 emphasized the apology from R28 to R27 for informing the cheaper antigen test since R27 thought that the former price was the cheapest. The token was used by R28 to minimize imposition for the disagreement upon the cheaper price of the COVID-19 rapid antigen test.

4.2. Directive speech act

The other type of speech act containing virtual tokens is directives. The token in this type of speech act is used to clarify the instruction, order, or command. The following example describes the function of virtual tokens in the directive speech act (the interaction was taken from the *WhatsApp* group of university colleagues. R32, the head of the department, shared the instruction from the vice-rector of the university to her colleagues and staff to have a similar work shift as the previous week due to the COVID-19 pandemic condition):

R32: "Selamat pagi Suster dan Bapak/Ibu. Sehubungan dengan WFO, mengingat Kota Madiun masih level 3, maka sambil menunggu SK Rektor, pengaturan masuk kerja bagi pegawai Kampus Kota Madiun masih seperti sebelumnya. Demikian, terima kasih atas kerja samanya".

[English: "Good morning Nun and Ladies/Gentlemen. Due to the condition of the city of Madiun which is still in level 3, the WFO schedule is similar to the former one while we are waiting for the current regulation from the Rector. Thank you very much for your cooperation".]

R32: "Dari WR IV 👇".

[English: "From Vice-Rector IV".]

R32: "Hari ini yang WFO saya, Bu Lia & Mb Rina. Terima kasih 🙏".

[English: "Today, Ms. Lia and Ms. Rina are in charge of the office".]

R33: "Siap Bu Maya 🙏".

[English: "Certainly Ms. Maya".]

R32 used the finger-up token 👇 to instruct the readers to refer to the previous message. The token was used since R32 wrote several messages in sequel layers so it clarified the instruction and made the readers give more focus on the message from vice-rector IV.

4.3. Expressive speech act

The virtual tokens were frequently found in expressive speech acts to show the feelings of the speakers. The following example described the use of expressive tokens (R09 posted a picture of an auction office. Then, R10 commented on the picture to build a humorous situation):

R09: Posted a pawnshop picture.

R10: "Cedhak Pawiro rejo".

[English: "Near Pawiro rejo".]

R09: "Cedhak nggone Lili".

    [English: "Near Lili's residence".]

R10: "Nggon panganan enak 😄".

    [English: "The place of delicious food".]

R10: "Opo tanggale tuwo, 😄😄😄😄".

    [English: "Is it the last week of the month?"]

R09: " 😆 ".

   The laughing virtual token 😄 established a humorous situation in the conversation. The joke started when R10 uttered *Opo tanggale tuwo* "Is it the last week of the month?" to comment on R09's pawnshop picture. The last week of the month referred to the general financial condition of people in Indonesia since their salary is usually paid in the first week of the month. Some people experienced money insufficiency in the last week of the month so they went to a pawn shop to pawn their goods. The R09 responded to the R10's joke by posting another laughing virtual token 😆.

4.4. Phatic speech act

Phatic speech acts utilized virtual tokens to express greetings, congratulations, condolences, and thanks. One of the examples is shown in the following conversation containing birthday greetings (R24 posted birthday greetings including the picture of tumpeng rice for R28 in *WhatsApp* group of university classmate alumni. R25, R26, R27 responded to the greetings by posting similar greetings. R28 thanking the greetings):

R24: Posted a picture of tumpeng rice: 🎂.

R24: "Met ultah ya Haning. Sehat selalu".

[English: "Happy birthday Haning. Stay healthy".]

R25: "Maturnuwun Sastyo kiriman nasi tumpengnya…sehat selalu juga yaa Sast".

[English: "Thank you for sending me Tumpeng Rice, Sastyo….stay safe too".]

R26: "Hbd Haning. 🤗😘 Sehat, berkah dan bahagia selalu 😘".

[English: "Happy birthday Haning. Stay healthy, stay blessed, and be happy always".]

R25: "Terima kasih Ayik…doa yang sama utk Ayik 🙏🙏😘".

[English: "Thank you Ayik. I pray the same things for you too".]

   Birthday greetings are represented by pictures and emojis. The picture functions to emphasize the greetings and create a merrier atmosphere. Emojis such as 🤗 and 😘 usually occur if the interlocutors are female since those tokens symbolize femininity. The functions of feminine tokens are to express camaraderie and solidarity.

5. Discussion

Emojis are essential factors in virtual communication in *WhatsApp* group since they represent a contextual particular meaning integrated with such a conversation. Emojis used by Javanese netizens have more or less similar functions to those used in Chinese cultural communication (Li & Yang, 2018). However, the phatic function to maintain social rapport is stronger than any other function because Javanese is a speech community that adheres to traditional politeness

principles. The Javanese politeness maxims such as *kurmat*, *tepa selira*, *andhap asor*, and *empan papan* govern their attitude in virtual communication, including the use of emojis (Widiana & Prajoko, 2021). The use of emojis thus aims to build harmony and avoid conflict.

The fact that creating harmony in communication and maintaining social rapport is essential among Javanese netizens explains why emojis are mostly used in the phatic speech act. On the contrary, emojis are not frequently used in assertive speech acts because their function is to emphasize utterances. Emphasizing utterances which mean showing power upon others to pay attention, contradicts the *andhap asor* maxim that expects Javanese to be humble.

The function of expressing feelings that are integrated with expressive speech acts is frequently found in Javanese virtual communication. This function adheres to the maxim of *tepa selira*. The emojis in expressive speech act represent daily greetings, greetings on special occasions, good wishes, condolences, sympathy, and congratulations. Emojis in directive speech acts were mostly used to clarify utterances. The function of clarifying utterances is a creative strategy to soften imposition on the readers.

6. Conclusions

The research described the types of speech acts containing emojis in *WhatsApp* group communication such as assertives, directives, expressives, and phatic. Regarding the functions, Javanese netizens employed virtual tokens to emphasize utterances, clarify utterances, express feelings, and maintain social rapport.

The utterances of each type of speech act contain particular emojis such as smileys, stickers, and pictures with particular functions. The functions are emphasizing utterances, clarifying utterances, expressing feelings, and maintaining social rapport. However, the functions of emojis are specific in particular cultural contexts. In the Javanese context, the use of emojis is influenced by Javanese politeness principles comprising *kurmat*, *tepa selira*, *andhap asor*, and *empan papan*.

Emojis are significant tools to replace the physical expression in virtual communication. The creative use of emojis could create more lively communication on a digital platform. Therefore, the ability to use appropriate emojis is necessary to avoid misunderstandings or gaps in communication, as emojis are phatic tokens closely related to the cultural basis. The politeness competence in using emojis is an essential aspect of virtual communication in everyday life.

Research concerning emojis is such an interesting topic to explore since social media users rely on emojis to express their thoughts and feelings. A study on emojis within the semiotic approach and landscape linguistics would be a significant topic for further research, as the use of emojis would evolve from time to time.

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