Title: Phatic Communication and Emotions in Long Distance Relationship's Communication in Digital Spaces. A Literature Review.

This presentation explores the role of emotional and phatic communication in digital spaces, and long-distance romantic relationships. This work will build the theoretical framework to develop an annotation scheme for natural language communication analysis. This preparatory work will later serve as an analytical framework for posts from Reddit communities such as r/LongDistance, r/AmIOverthinking, r/LDR, and r/relationship_advice, focusing on examples of phatic communication in naturalistic settings (e.g., screenshots of text exchanges). Eventually, I aim to answer the following research questions: (Q1) Is frequent and systematic phatic communication positively correlated with perceived emotional closeness and trust? (Q2) Does emotional synchrony depend more on the ritualistic nature of contact than on the actual content of the messages?

The review of phatic communication will begin with classical concepts introduced by Malinowski (1923) and Jakobson (1980), followed by contemporary research examining this type of communication in digital settings - particularly online and mobile-mediated contexts (e.g., Gradinaru, 2018; Yus, 2019; Toma, 2024). These perspectives point to the fact how brief, ritualized, and affective messages, such as emojis, everyday greetings, short check-ins, photos, or small updates, contribute to relational maintenance, emotional connection, and a sense of everyday sharedness.

Next, I will examine how emotions function and how people perceive them in language. Special attention will be given to Aristotle's concept of *pathos* and to the Model of Interactive Pathos (MIPA; Konat, 2025), which will help to understand emotional appeals, their elicitation between two individuals, and the dynamics of the conversation. I aim to incorporate the phatic function into this model and, in effect, broaden it.

Finally, I will analyze and explain the nature of long-distance relationships and how online communication operates within them. I will seek to determine the role of phatic communication and the emotive function in these relationships. The study's broader aim is to integrate linguistic and psychological perspectives to demonstrate how seemingly minor acts of everyday communication contribute to the experience of emotional intimacy and relational cohesion.

References:

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