







Phatic Persuasive Speech Act Strategies of Female Online Sellers in Live E-Commerce

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Abstract. This study investigates the phatic persuasive strategies utilized by female online sellers in live e-commerce environments from a cyberpoliteness perspective. By analyzing live-streamed sales interactions, the research delves into how sellers employ phatic communication—speech acts that serve to establish or maintain social relationships—to engage viewers and drive sales. Through the lens of cyberpoliteness, the study explores the nuanced ways in which politeness strategies are adapted to the digital context to create a sense of rapport and trust. The findings highlight the significance of these strategies in enhancing user experience and shaping consumer behavior. This research offers valuable insights into the interplay between politeness, persuasion, and technology in the digital marketplace, contributing to a broader understanding of online communication and e-commerce practices.

Keywords: Persuasive, Speech Acts, Online Seller, Cyberpoliteness.

1 Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies has revolutionized the landscape of commerce, giving rise to novel forms of interaction between sellers and consumers. Among these, live e-commerce has emerged as a dynamic platform where real-time engagement facilitates the buying and selling process. This study discusses the phatic persuasive speech act strategies employed by female online sellers in live e-commerce environments, focusing on the concept of cyberpoliteness. By analyzing live-streamed sales interactions, this research aims to uncover the intricacies of phatic communication—speech acts primarily aimed at establishing or maintaining social relationships—and its role in driving consumer engagement and sales.

Phatic communication, a term introduced by anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski, refers to the use of language for social purposes rather than the transmission of information [1]. In the context of live e-commerce, phatic speech acts are pivotal in creating a sense of connection and rapport between sellers and viewers. These interactions often go beyond mere transactional exchanges, fostering a community-like atmosphere that

can significantly influence consumer behavior. Female online sellers, in particular, employ a range of phatic strategies to engage their audience, build trust, and enhance the overall shopping experience.

A crucial element of successful live e-commerce is the seller's ability to effectively persuade consumers. Persuasive speech acts in e-commerce are verbal actions aimed at influencing customers' attitudes or behaviors to purchase the product being offered. Within live e-commerce, these acts can manifest as providing information, giving recommendations, offering discounts, and building rapport with the audience [2]. Essentially, persuasive speech acts drive others to take certain actions or adopt specific behaviors. Persuasive speech act is a type of motivational speech act. Motivational speech acts are not just linguistic actions but also cognitive tools that can trigger motivation in the recipient [3].

Previous research looks at persuasive speech acts generally without elaborating on the politeness standards that apply to the speech acts sellers engage when conducting online transactions. This study analyzes the persuasive speech act strategies employed by online sellers in live e-commerce using cyberpoliteness theory, which examines language politeness in digital communication contexts. By applying the principles of cyberpoliteness, a deeper understanding of how traditional persuasive techniques are adapted and modified for the online environment is gained.

1.1 Cyberpoliteness

Cyberpoliteness refers to the norms and practices of linguistic politeness adapted to digital communication environments [4,5]. It is an extension of traditional politeness theories applied to online interactions, where the context and medium significantly influence how politeness is conveyed and perceived [6]. The concept of cyberpoliteness is closely related to the term 'interpersonal pragmatics' which is used to designate examinations of the relational aspect of interactions between people that both affect and are affected by their understandings of culture, society, and their own and others' interpretations [7,8]. It encompasses various aspects. One of them is the Contextual aspect - understanding the specific norms and expectations of different online platforms and communities [9]. What might be considered polite in one digital context may not be in another. Interactivity is the other aspect that is crucial in cyberpoliteness since the dynamic and often immediate nature of online interactions requires users to be adept at managing politeness in real time. This includes responding promptly and appropriately to messages and comments. Another significant aspect of online interaction is cultural Variability. Different cultures have different norms and expectations regarding politeness [10]. The general studies in the area of politeness in digital communication refer to works on computer-mediated communication and online politeness strategies. By integrating these aspects, cyberpoliteness aims to facilitate respectful, considerate, and effective communication in the digital age.

Online communication often involves multiple modes, such as text, images, emojis, and multimedia. Nonverbal cues such as emojis, GIF (animated images), virtual stickers are helpful in communication to add clarity or emphasize to what is being said [11]. Cyberpoliteness involves using these modes effectively to convey politeness, such as

using emojis to soften a critical comment or using respectful language in text [12–15]. Cyberpoliteness requires an understanding of these multimodal elements based on cultural differences and the ability to navigate them in digital communication. In line with this statement, similar to traditional face-to-face interactions, maintaining one's own face (self-image) and that of others is crucial in online interactions [16,17]. This involves strategies to show respect, deference, and consideration to others [18]. Along with the rapid development of information technology, the users of the internet have established informal guidelines for acceptable online behavior which is called Netiquette (internet + etiquette) consisting of common sense, common courtesy, and dictates of the computer technology and culture adapted from real-life etiquette and adjusted to the unique features of the online technology and environment [19,20]. Netiquette is employed in all situations and all kind of interactions in the cyber world [4]. Particularly, cyberpoliteness focuses on politeness strategies.

2 Method

The data source in this research is a live broadcast of online shopping or live e-commerce promotions of women's fashion products available on the Shopee Indonesia platform. The data collection is carried out with the observation method [21]. The conversations between fashion sellers and their consumers containing phatic persuasive speech acts (PPSA) were recorded and transcribed into written texts for contextual analysis. The questionnaires were disseminated to take the data of consumers' perceptions toward the politeness strategies performed by online sellers. The technique of structured interviews is also used for verification of questionnaire data. The respondents for the questionnaire and interview were consumers who had been actively participating in the Shopee Live program for at least 3 months. The fashion sellers who were the respondents of the study were only female online sellers who sell fashion apparel for women. The gender criteria of the online sellers are possible to identify since they perform live sessions on camera.

Ten live sessions involving seven fashion online retailers on Shopee Indonesia yielded 149 conversation data. A live session lasts between one and two hours. The data were categorized according to the different PPSA types and the corresponding strategies for each type. Then, the analytical procedure employs the concept of relevance theory [22,23] and and cyberpragmatics [24].

3 Result

The types of phatic persuasive speech acts (PPSA) used by women's fashion vendors on Shopee Indonesia's online shopping media in Shopee Lives are greetings, specific addressing, intimacy builder, and sales motivation. Each type has a specific function according to its purpose. Table 1 shows the type of PPSA strategies utilized by women's fashion product sellers in the Shopee Lives program.

Table 1. Phatic Persuasive Speech Act Strategies.

Speech Act	Strategies	Frequency
Salutation	Commencing & Ending shows	10
Specific Addressings	Creating intimacy	30
Intimacy Builders	Maintaining rapport	41
Sales Motivation	Driving sales	68
Total		149

Salutation indicates hospitality to start and end the show while specific addressings are the embodiment of the seller's chastity strategy to build familiarity with the buyer. Intimacy builders that include compliments, jokes, and friendly speeches are very significant for social relationships. Sales motivation is used to increase consumer confidence in a product so that consumers are interested in buying it. A detailed explanation is provided in the following parts.

3.1 Salutation

Salutation in online shopping sites that are used to start and end live broadcasts are very important because hospitality is one of the important aspects of attracting consumers to join such live streams. The excerpt of the conversation is provided as follows.

(S3 is an adult woman who sells fashion products for adult women through Shopee Live broadcasts. On that occasion, S2 opened the live broadcast by greeting the consumers with an Islamic salutation and a formal greetings in Indonesian. Two consumers, C1 and C2, who had already joined the live broadcast, did not respond to the seller's greeting. Instead, they immediately requested the seller to explain the desired fashion products by typing the types of products in the chat room.)

S2: *Assalamu'alaikum. Selamat pagi kakak Bunda. Kita ketemu lagi di Live. Silakan komen apa- apa yang mau di-spill. Boleh cek dulu etalasenya.*

'*Assalamu'alaikum. Good morning, everyone. We meet again on Live. Please comment on what you want me to show. You can check the display case first.*'

C1: *Etalase 7.*

'Display case number 7'

C2: *Setrok Jeans.*

'Jeans skirt set.'

In this conversation, the seller begins the live broadcast with the Islamic greeting *Assalamu'alaikum*. This Islamic greeting is used by the seller to greet her customers because she is wearing Muslim women's clothing and a hijab. In addition, the seller also utters a polite salutation in Indonesian *Selamat pagi Kakak Bunda* for considering the non-Muslim audience. The greeting serves as an indicator that the live session is

starting, so it does not require a response from the viewers. This is different from a greeting directed at a specific person, which usually expects a reply. The salutation is very effective in attracting customers to join the event. This is evident from the written comments that appeared after the seller started the live broadcast. The comments generally asked the seller to present and demonstrate the products she was offering, such as Atasan Bun and Setrok Jeans.

3.2 Specific Addressings

Familiar forms of address are a type of phatic speech act used to build rapport between the seller and their customers. In live broadcasts on online shopping platforms, female fashion product sellers use special terms of address for their customers, such as *Kak* and *Bunda*. An example of the use of these familiar forms of address can be seen in the following conversation.

(The conversation takes place during a live broadcast on Shopee Live. The seller is an adult woman offering shirts for adult women. The customer responds to the seller's offer by typing a question about the shirt size in the live broadcast chat room.)

S1: *Ada yang mau dress gak, Kak? Ini kualitas impor lho. Bahannya dijamin premium, Armani silk.*

'Does anyone want a dress, *Kak*? This is an imported quality. The material is premium, Armani silk.'

C3: *LD-nya berapa, Bunda?*

'What's the bust size, *Bunda*?'

S1: *LD-nya 105.*

'The bust size is 105.'

The familiar term of address *Kak* is used by the seller to address her customers during live broadcasts on online shopping platforms. *Kak* is directed at all customers because the seller assumes that her customers are young, as the fashion products she sells are suitable for young women. Conversely, customers address the seller as *Bunda* because the fashion product seller appears to be an adult woman in her 30s to 40s. All the terms used in the live broadcast of fashion products refer to women because the products being offered are women's fashion items. Familiar forms of address are a type of phatic speech act used to build rapport between the seller and their customers. In live broadcasts on online shopping platforms, female fashion product sellers use special terms of address for their customers, such as *Kak*, *Bunda*, *Sayang*, *Beb*, *Cinta*, *Bestie*, and *Cantik*. All the endearments refer to woman since the products being offered are woman apparel.

3.3 Intimacy Builders

Strengthening social bonds is a strategy to maintain social relationships during live broadcasts on online shopping platforms. Strengthening social bonds can be achieved through uttering endearments, giving compliments, making jokes, and creating light conversations. These strategies are usually used in conjunction with familiar forms of address. The following conversation snippet illustrates the strategy of strengthening social bonds.

(During a live broadcast on Shopee Live, a customer (C8) asked in the chat room about the payment method to the seller (S2), who is an adult woman around 30-40 years old. The seller answered the question, accompanied by a familiar form of address for women.)

C5: *Boleh CO mandiri gak, Bun?*

‘Can I self check out, Bun?’

S4: *Kalau mau CO mandiri pastinya boleh, cantik.*

‘Sure. You can do self check out, beautiful.’

The conversation is going on between the consumer and the seller. The consumer asks the seller if she can buy the product offered directly without transactions via live broadcast. To strengthen her gratitude, the saleswoman compliments the consumer by saying *cantik* ‘Beautiful’ when she answers the customer's questions. The function of such praise is to maintain the social relationship between the seller and the consumer as well as intensify intimacy.

In addition, compliments also serve to provide comfort to customers during transactions. Compliments are used only for customers of the same gender as the seller because the seller assumes that her customers are women. This assumption arises because the products offered are fashion items for adult women. The use of compliments is appropriate because both the seller and the customers are women. Other forms of strengthening social bonds include jokes and light conversations.

3.4 Sales Motivation

In online transactions, sales motivation is a crucial speech act for attracting consumers to purchase the offered products. The live broadcast program for selling women's fashion products demonstrates specific strategies related to sales motivation employed by the seller in an effort to attract customers to buy her products. Data related to sales motivation is presented in the following conversation.

(C9, a customer who joined the Shopee Live broadcast, requested S5, the seller of women's fashion products, to explain the clothing available in virtual display case number 32. S5 then wore the clothing and described its quality.)

C9: *Kak, review etalase 32.*

'*Kak, review display case 26.*'

S5: *Ini etalase 32 ya (mengenakan baju yang dijelaskan). Barangnya bagus banget, Kak. Cantik banget kalua dipakai. Apalagi kalau kakak yang pakai pasti kelihatan lebih cantik.*

'This is display case 32 (wearing the described clothing). This is really great, *Kak*. It looks very pretty when worn. Especially if you wear it, you'll look even prettier.'

The customer requested the seller to display and explain the product showcased in virtual display case number 32. The seller then wore the clothing. Sale motivation is manifested by emphasizing the quality of the product, as expressed with the statement, *Barangnya bagus banget, Kak* 'This is really great, *Kak*.' However, the emphasis on the product's quality is phatic in nature, as it seems exaggerated as an effort to build consumer trust in the product and trigger them to purchase the clothing being offered.

Another example of sales motivation is presented in the following conversation.

(S2 is a seller of women's fashion products promoting knit culottes during a Shopee Live broadcast. The product offer receives a response from C8, a customer who joined the live broadcast. C8 writes an order for the product in the chat room.)

S2: *Nah, sekarang kita beralih ke kulot. Kulot ini kulot paling murah sedunia. Saya nawarin kulot rajut kualitas tinggi ini seharga 150 ribu aja satuan. Buat yang tertarik sama produk ini, kita punya warna hitam, milo, dan krem.*

'Now let's talk about knit culottes. These are the cheapest knit culottes in the world. I'm offering these top-quality knit culottes at a wholesale price of 150 thousand each. For those who are interested in this product, we have black knit, milo knit, and cream knit.'

C8: *Fix rajut hitam.*

'I confirmed to buy black knit.'

In the conversation, the seller attempts to persuade the customer to purchase the offered clothing by exaggerating that the price of the product is the lowest, stating *Kulot ini kulot paling murah sedunia* 'These are the cheapest knit culottes in the world.' This strategy of exaggeration is a form of sales motivation aimed at convincing customers to gain an advantage, namely purchasing the product at the lowest price compared to the same product in other online stores.

Sales motivation is also used to increase consumer trust in a product. This can be seen in the following conversation data.

(During a Shopee Live broadcast, S2, a seller of women's fashion products, promotes a dress. S2 explains the quality of the product. Then, three customers, C3, C4, and C5, immediately order the dress in different colors by typing their color choices in the chat room according to the seller's instructions.)

S2: *Ini bahannya gak perlu diragukan lagi. Mewah banget. Kita cuma jual barang kualitas bagus ya, say, bukan yang murahan. Ayo buat yang minat, kita punya merah cerah, hitam, kuning cerah, dan hijau terang.*

‘The material is beyond doubt. It’s really luxurious. We sell high-quality items, dear, not cheap knock-offs. For those who want, we have bright red, black, bright yellow, and bright green.’

C3: *Fix merah cerah.*

‘Bright red. Confirmed’

C4: *Fix hitam*

‘Black. Confirmed’

C5: *Fix kuning cerah*

‘Bright Yellow. Confirmed.’

The conversation shows a seller offering a dress using sales motivation, evident in the statement, *Ini bahannya gak perlu diragukan lagi. Mewah banget. Kita cuma jual barang kualitas bagus ya, say, bukan yang murahan* ‘The material is beyond doubt. It’s really luxurious. We sell high-quality items, dear, not cheap knock-offs.’ This sales motivation emphasizes that the offered product is of premium quality, thereby assuring consumers and encouraging them not to hesitate to purchase it. The strategy of offering the product with sales motivation proves successful, as three buyers immediately order the product by writing messages in the live broadcast. The messages correspond with the code and color of the product previously mentioned by the seller.

4 Discussion

The Phatic Persuasive Speech Acts (PPSA) used by sellers of women's fashion products during live broadcasts on Shopee Live consist of salutation, specific addressing, intimacy builders, and sales motivation. The strategy of sales motivation is the most frequently used type of speech act by these fashion sellers. This aligns with the seller's intention to promote their products. The PPSA of sales motivation is realized through strategies of politeness by exaggeration and emphasizing aspects related to product quality and price. This finding is consistent with the previous research which states that consumers highly consider price when deciding to purchase products from online shopping media [25]. This type of persuasive speech act is quite effective because consumers generally respond immediately by ordering the offered product by typing their order according to the seller's instructions in the chat room. In this case, the principle of cooperation, which emphasizes the communication link between the speaker and the discourse partner in online sales transactions, adheres to the principle of relevance. This fact also supports the relevance theory [22,23] used in cyberpragmatics analysis, which focuses on the communication connection between the speaker and the discourse partner.

Familiar forms of address are a type of Phatic Persuasive Speech Act (PPSA) that are also widely used by sellers of fashion products to intensify camaraderie. The result supports the earlier research which found that endearments are used by women in phatic communication in order to sustain social rapport [18]. Terms such as *Kak*, *Bunda*, *Beb*, *Bestie*, *Sayang*, and *Cantik* are used exclusively to refer to adult women, in line with the fashion products being offered. Therefore, the seller assumes that all her customers are women, as the seller does not know the exact gender of her customers. This is because online shopping communication occurs in two ways: the seller communicates directly on camera, while the customers communicate in writing by typing text in the chat room. Meanwhile, customers consistently use similar forms of address since the fashion seller is an adult woman. The term *Kak* is generally used for sellers who appear younger, around 20-30 years old, while *Bunda* refers to an older woman, approximately 30-40 years old. Conversely, the seller uses these forms of address based on the type of clothing offered. If the clothing is suitable for younger women, the seller uses the term *Kak*. If the clothing is more appropriate for older women, the term *Bunda* is used. These familiar forms of address are effective in maintaining rapport between the seller and her customers, thereby avoiding potential friction. This contrasts with previous research on online transactions in the real estate sector, which indicates that friction between sellers and customers is highly likely in the context of price negotiation [26].

5 Conclusion

The research on Phatic Persuasive Speech Acts (PPSA) used by sellers of women's fashion products in online shopping media results in a classification of PPSA consisting of salutation, specific addressing, intimacy builders, and sales motivation. Greetings are used only to open and close live shopping broadcasts, so this type of PPSA is not frequently used by sellers. Next, to build rapport between the seller and her customers, specific addressing are used by both sellers and consumers. Additionally, intimacy builders, such as affectionate terms, jokes, and light conversation or small talk, are also used by sellers along with familiar forms of address to maintain intimacy and social relations. Sales motivation is the dominant PPSA used by sellers to persuade customers to purchase the offered products through live online shopping programs. The strategy of sales motivation is realized by giving compliments and making exaggerated statements about the product's quality and price.

This study contributes to cyberpragmatics research by using hybrid data, which includes both verbal speech and text speech occurring in live broadcast programs on online shopping platforms. By utilizing gender-specific terms of address and endearments, sellers presume that all of their customers are female. This particular medium of engagement has an impact on the civility that is orally stated. This occurs as a result of the sellers' inability to see their customers. Due to the fact that the products being presented are primarily women's fashion, the specific politeness strategies for female customers are also employed.

The use of Phatic Persuasive Speech Acts (PPSA) in live e-commerce represents a strategy of politeness by sellers to demonstrate friendliness to consumers. Friendliness plays an important role in persuading customers to buy products. Therefore, PPSA in live e-commerce media is part of a business strategy for online marketing that can positively impact the success of online businesses or e-commerce.

Acknowledgments. This study was funded by a research grant from Penelitian Unggulan Terapan Universitas Sebelas Maret (PUT-UNS), reference number 194.2/UN27.22/PT.01.03/2024.

Disclosure of Interests. The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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