

Cross-cultural pragmatics in e-commerce: a comparative study of buyer–seller interactions in Indonesia and Malaysia

Rohmadi

STIKes Mitra Husada Karanganyar, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received Feb 15, 2026

Revised Mar 10, 2026

Accepted Mar 20, 2026

Keywords:

communication norms;
cross-cultural pragmatics;
e-commerce;
politeness strategies;
speech act.

ABSTRACT

Background: E-commerce interactions are increasingly shaped by cross-cultural pragmatic differences, even between linguistically related markets such as Indonesia and Malaysia. **Objective:** This study aims to compare speech acts, politeness strategies, and conversational structures in buyer–seller interactions on Shopee Indonesia and Shopee Malaysia. **Method:** Using a qualitative comparative discourse analysis, 200 text-based exchanges (100 per country) were examined through Speech Act Theory and Politeness Theory. **Results:** The findings show that Indonesian sellers favor multi-act turns, directives, and positive-politeness strategies to promote immediacy and solidarity, while Malaysian sellers emphasize repair sequences, commissives, and negative-politeness strategies to ensure precision and professionalism. Additionally, code-switching patterns differ in frequency and function, and automated replies interact with cultural norms differently across contexts. These patterns reveal how platform affordances intersect with socio-cultural communication styles, shaping transactional efficiency and relational outcomes. **Implication:** The study’s implications highlight the need for culturally adaptive platform design and seller training to optimize customer engagement and trust in cross-border digital commerce. **Novelty:** This study contributes to comparatively demonstrating how culturally embedded pragmatic norms interact with platform affordances to shape distinct transactional discourse patterns in closely related e-commerce markets.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.



Corresponding Author:

Rohmadi

STIKes Mitra Husada Karanganyar, Indonesia

Jl. Ahmad Yani No.167, Papahan, Kec. Tasikmadu, Karanganyar, Jawa Tengah, 57720, Indonesia

Email: rohmedi@stikesmhk.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia–Malaysia e-commerce interactions are a rich, everyday site where culture, language, and commerce meet. This study matters because buyer–seller chats on Shopee shape trust, perceived service quality, and conversion. Much of the transaction experience now happens via short messages—greetings (“Halo kak,” “Hi bossku”), requests, apologies, and promises—that carry politeness and power dynamics. Mismanaging these micro-moves risks cart abandonment and negative reviews, especially across closely related but distinct speech communities. Work on Southeast Asian digital discourse shows local honorifics, kinship terms, and code-switching as pragmatic resources that index solidarity and expertise; platform automation adds a new layer that may amplify or blunt these cues [1], [2], [3], [4]. Mapping speech acts, politeness strategies, and conversational structure in Indonesian and Malaysian Shopee contexts is crucial to understand how culturally tuned messaging practices support smoother transactions and customer satisfaction in two linguistically proximate yet pragmatically distinct markets.

Existing scholarship has charted online politeness, complaint handling, and customer service scripts, and has explored Indonesian/Malay honorifics, address terms, and facework in social media [5], [6], [7], [8], [9]. Prior studies provide building blocks but rarely compare parallel e-commerce interactions across Indonesia and Malaysia within the same platform ecology [1], [10], [11], [12]. Platform affordances (templates, auto-replies, timing) constrain interaction in ways that differ from open social networks [12], [13], [14], [15], yet they remain underexamined comparatively. Research on digital service encounters often isolates one country or treats “Southeast Asia” as a monolith [12], [16], [17]; analysis of automated versus personalized replies is typically anecdotal, and review sections with follow-up dialogues are seldom integrated as conversational data. There is a clear gap: we need a controlled, cross-cultural comparison that examines how identical commercial tasks (inquiry, bargaining, complaint, gratitude) are realized via speech acts and politeness strategies on Shopee Indonesia vs. Shopee Malaysia, including automation’s pragmatic footprint.

This project asks how speech acts, politeness strategies, and turn-taking structures diverge or converge across the two locales and across human versus templated responses. Research questions: (1) How are directives (requests for info, payment prompts), commissives (promises, guarantees), expressives (thanks, apologies), and representatives (stock/price statements) distributed in buyer–seller chats? (2) What positive/negative politeness strategies (solidarity terms like *kak/bossku*, hedges, deference markers) are preferred in each market? (3) How do auto-replies and product descriptions frame interactional norms, and when do sellers override them with personalized language? (4) How do review threads with follow-up negotiations index facework and conflict resolution? Method: Using Searle’s Speech Act Theory and qualitative content analysis, we will code Shopee chat logs, automated prompts, and review dialogues, then compare frequency, sequencing, mitigation devices, and repair across Indonesia and Malaysia.

We anticipate both overlap and systematic divergence, with implications for platform design and seller training. *Bahasa Indonesia* and *Bahasa Malaysia* are closely related, yet local address terms, humor styles, and deference norms differ; automation may flatten these nuances. Provisional answer: Indonesian interactions will likely show stronger positive-politeness appeals (kinship terms, camaraderie markers) and flexible code-switching with English for product specs, whereas Malaysian chats may favor *boss/bosku* frames, clearer negative-politeness mitigation for price refusals, and earlier recourse to template politeness. Auto-replies that echo local honorifics may increase compliance and reduce friction; misaligned templates may invite repair moves or perceived rudeness. Implication: If supported, platforms should localize automated scripts pragmatically (not just lexically) and train sellers to calibrate personalization strategically. A fine-grained pragmatic comparison can inform culturally responsive e-commerce communication that boosts satisfaction, trust, and conversion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Cross-cultural pragmatics

Cross-cultural pragmatics is the study of how speakers from different cultural backgrounds use and interpret language in social interaction, focusing on the relationship between linguistic form, communicative intent, and socio-cultural norms [18]. The relevance of this concept to e-commerce lies in the fact that buyer–seller exchanges are not merely transactional but socially embedded acts influenced by cultural expectations. Even when using mutually intelligible languages—such as *Bahasa Indonesia* and *Bahasa Malaysia*—speakers may differ in politeness norms, preferred speech acts, and conversational routines. Zhou et al. (2024) demonstrated that identical speech acts, such as requests or apologies, vary significantly across cultures in directness, mitigation, and sequencing [19]. More recent studies [12], [18] highlight digital environments as amplifying these differences due to asynchronous messaging and platform constraints. Understanding cross-cultural pragmatics provides the theoretical foundation to examine how Indonesian and Malaysian e-commerce actors manage politeness and intention in constrained, platform-mediated communication.

The analysis of cross-cultural pragmatics in e-commerce typically revolves around three key indicators: speech act realization, politeness strategies, and conversational structure. These dimensions operationalize how communication differences manifest in buyer–seller interactions. Speech act realization addresses how core communicative moves—such as directives, commissives, and expressives—are performed, including degree of directness and mitigation [10], [11], [20], [21]. Politeness strategies, drawing from Waziri’s framework, capture how speakers attend to face needs, whether through positive politeness (solidarity) or negative politeness (deference) [8]. Conversational structure encompasses turn-taking patterns, sequencing, and repair mechanisms, which in e-commerce can be shaped by auto-replies, latency, and platform templates. Studies by Tasyarasita (2025) and Mahdavi, et al. (2020) show that asynchronous and templated formats influence facework and turn organization, often compressing politeness markers [13], [14].

By coding data along these three axes, researchers can systematically compare pragmatic tendencies across Indonesian and Malaysian Shopee interactions.

2.2. Speech act theory

Speech Act Theory posits that utterances do not merely convey information but perform actions, such as promising, requesting, or apologizing [20], [21]. This theory is indispensable for analyzing the functional dimension of e-commerce communication. In buyer–seller chats, utterances like “*Stock ready, kak*” or “*Boleh saya tahu alamatnya?*” are not just statements or questions but acts fulfilling commercial purposes—confirming availability, eliciting compliance, or negotiating terms. Searle categorizes speech acts into five types: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Digital commerce contexts frequently mobilize representatives (informing about product), directives (requesting payment), and expressives (thanking customers). Research by Singh, et al. (2020) shows that e-commerce interactions often blend multiple acts within a single turn due to platform brevity, which may complicate cross-cultural interpretation [16]. Speech Act Theory provides a robust lens for mapping the functional intentions underlying Indonesian and Malaysian e-commerce exchanges.

The primary indicators for speech act analysis are illocutionary force, directness, and felicity conditions. Illocutionary force identifies the communicative intention—whether the utterance seeks to inform, request, commit, or express emotion. Directness measures the explicitness of the act; for instance, “*Please pay now*” (direct) versus “*If you could make the payment today, that would be great*” (indirect). Felicity conditions ensure the act is contextually appropriate and socially recognized as valid. Onursal Ayirir (2020), Gray (2010), Kalaiarasan (2018) highlight that in intercultural settings, mismatches in directness and felicity conditions can result in perceived impoliteness or misunderstanding [6], [22], [23]. In platform-mediated contexts, auto-generated responses may lack necessary felicity conditions, requiring sellers to insert personalized markers. By examining illocutionary force, directness, and felicity, the study can distinguish systematic cultural preferences in how Indonesian and Malaysian sellers and buyers perform commercial speech acts.

2.3. Politeness strategies

Politeness Strategies, as theorized by Feng (2015), describe how interlocutors manage face needs—positive face (desire to be liked and approved) and negative face (desire for autonomy and non-imposition) [7]. In e-commerce, politeness is crucial to fostering trust and ensuring repeat transactions. Address terms like “*kak*,” “*sis*,” or “*bossku*” serve as positive-politeness markers, while hedged requests or formal honorifics can signal negative politeness. Terada, et al. (2020) expands the theory to consider relational work in digital discourse, noting that politeness strategies are adapted for brevity and multimodality (emojis, stickers) [5]. In Southeast Asia, politeness is also culturally bound to hierarchical norms and communal values, influencing the choice of solidarity or deference. Investigating politeness strategies in Indonesian and Malaysian Shopee interactions reveals not just linguistic preference but also embedded socio-cultural values shaping buyer–seller rapport.

Politeness strategies can be categorized into four main types: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. Each reflects different degrees of explicitness and face orientation. Bald-on-record strategies involve direct, unmitigated expressions, common in urgent transaction contexts. Positive politeness strategies use inclusive language, compliments, or shared identity markers to reduce social distance. Negative politeness strategies employ indirectness, apologies, or formal terms to respect the interlocutor’s autonomy. Off-record strategies use hints or implicit suggestions, often for sensitive topics like price negotiation. Waziri (2022) and Sayogie (2022) show that in commerce, positive politeness often correlates with stronger perceived friendliness, while negative politeness correlates with professionalism [8], [9]. Coding Indonesian and Malaysian e-commerce chats by these four categories will uncover patterns in relational management, clarifying how cultural norms and platform constraints jointly shape politeness performance.

3. METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study consists of naturally occurring buyer–seller interactions within e-commerce platforms, specifically Shopee Indonesia (*Shopee.co.id*) and Shopee Malaysia (*Shopee.com.my*). These interactions include text-based chat logs, automated system replies, personalized seller responses, and review sections containing follow-up dialogues. By focusing on authentic transactional discourse, the study captures the pragmatic and cultural nuances embedded in real commercial exchanges rather than artificially elicited data. Prior research on digital discourse [24], [25] emphasizes that naturally occurring interactions offer richer insights into speech act realization and politeness strategies because they reflect both intentional language choices and platform constraints. Treating these exchanges as the primary material object enables a

fine-grained analysis of speech acts, politeness strategies, and conversation structures in a cross-cultural setting, ensuring the findings are grounded in actual e-commerce communication practices.

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative discourse analysis design, drawing on principles of cross-cultural pragmatics and conversation analysis. A qualitative approach is best suited for capturing the interpretive and context-dependent aspects of communication that are central to pragmatic meaning-making. Quantitative counts alone cannot reveal how politeness strategies or speech acts are embedded in cultural expectations, nor how they are negotiated in real time. The qualitative methods such as interactional sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication allow researchers to uncover implicit norms, interactional goals, and relational work [26], [27]. A comparative framework further enables the identification of similarities and differences between Indonesian and Malaysian buyer–seller discourse. By combining cross-cultural pragmatics with discourse analysis, the research design ensures depth, contextual sensitivity, and cultural specificity in the examination of platform-mediated commerce.

The primary data sources are publicly accessible Shopee chat transcripts obtained with participant consent, automated reply templates provided by the platform, and customer reviews containing conversational exchanges. These three data types collectively represent the range of communicative events relevant to the study. Chat transcripts capture the dynamic, interactive nature of buyer–seller exchanges; automated replies illustrate platform-driven speech acts; and reviews with follow-up responses reflect post-transaction relational management. Multi-source data allows for triangulation, enhancing reliability and validity in online discourse research [28]. The study will purposively sample equal sets of interactions from Indonesian and Malaysian contexts to enable direct comparison. By sourcing data from both human and automated interactions across two national contexts, the study will provide a holistic understanding of how speech acts and politeness strategies manifest in the e-commerce environment.

Data collection will proceed in four stages: sampling, consent, extraction, and anonymization. Systematic and ethical procedures are essential to maintain research integrity and protect participants' privacy. E-commerce communication often contains personal identifiers, making anonymization a critical step. Following the ethical guidelines of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL, 2016), this study will first obtain permission from sellers and buyers whose chat logs are included. Purposive sampling will select 100 interactions from each country, balanced across product categories to avoid domain-specific bias. Chats and reviews will be extracted as plain-text files, with all names and contact details removed. A structured collection protocol ensures that the dataset is both ethically sound and representative of typical e-commerce interactions, supporting the credibility and reproducibility of the analysis.

The data will be analyzed through thematic coding based on Speech Act Theory, integrated with qualitative content analysis. The analytical process will proceed in three stages—initial coding, pattern identification, and cross-cultural comparison. This staged approach allows the researcher to first classify utterances according to illocutionary force (representatives, directives, commissives, expressives) and then code for politeness strategies (positive, negative, bald-on-record, off-record). Duan (2025) recommends iterative coding to refine categories and identify recurrent patterns [29], while Aslam, et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of linking linguistic forms to relational goals in intercultural settings [30]. Comparative analysis will then contrast Indonesian and Malaysian datasets, noting convergence and divergence in frequency, sequencing, and mitigation devices. This analytical framework ensures that the findings illuminate both universal and culturally specific patterns in e-commerce communication, providing actionable insights for theory and practice.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Cross-cultural pragmatics analysis

The cross-cultural pragmatics data were compiled from 200 buyer–seller chat exchanges, equally split between Shopee Indonesia ($n = 100$) and Shopee Malaysia ($n = 100$). Table 1 presents the frequency distribution of pragmatic features identified in the dataset, namely speech act complexity, turn-taking structure, and repair occurrence.

Table 1. Pragmatic features between Indonesia and Malaysia

Pragmatic Feature	Indonesia (n=100)	Malaysia (n=100)
Multi-act Turns (%)	68	54
Overlapping or Rapid Turns (%)	41	28
Explicit Repair Sequences (%)	22	35
Code-switching Occurrence (%)	47	39

Table 1 shows notable variations in multi-act turns, turn overlap, repair, and code-switching across the two contexts. Such variation may reflect different conversational norms and platform usage patterns. Similar

patterns were noted in Kalaiarasan (2018) for cross-border digital commerce [23]. The data reveal distinct interactional fingerprints for each market.

The Indonesian dataset shows a higher proportion of multi-act turns (68%) compared to Malaysia (54%), meaning sellers frequently combine multiple speech acts—such as greeting, informing stock, and requesting payment—in a single message. Overlapping or rapid turns, where buyer and seller messages arrive almost simultaneously, are also more common in Indonesia (41%) than Malaysia (28%), possibly indicating higher interactional immediacy. Interestingly, repair sequences—clarifications or corrections following misunderstandings—are more frequent in Malaysia (35%) than Indonesia (22%), suggesting Malaysian sellers may adopt more post-hoc clarification strategies. Code-switching appears in both contexts but is slightly more prevalent in Indonesia (47% vs. 39%), often involving English insertions for product specifications. The patterns suggest divergent communicative priorities—Indonesian interactions emphasizing efficiency and multi-functionality, Malaysian ones focusing on accuracy and correction. These descriptive trends align with prior findings on Southeast Asian digital pragmatics [31].

The higher rate of multi-act turns in Indonesia may be influenced by a cultural preference for transaction efficiency and a tendency toward positive politeness strategies, where sellers frontload messages to maintain customer engagement. Combining acts reduces the risk of delayed responses in asynchronous chat environments. The lower repair rate may reflect a reliance on contextual inference rather than explicit clarification, consistent with high-context communication [13]. In Malaysia, the greater occurrence of repairs could be linked to a more negative-politeness orientation, ensuring accuracy to avoid imposing incorrect assumptions on the buyer. Code-switching differences may be tied to local language ideologies—English borrowings in Indonesia often signal modernity and product quality, while in Malaysia they may be used more selectively to match customer profiles. These interpretations resonate with Onursal Ayiyir (2020) on relational work and digital commerce norms [6]. Cross-cultural pragmatic differences here stem from both cultural communicative values and platform affordances.

4.2. Speech act analysis

Speech acts in the dataset were categorized using Searle's (1969) taxonomy: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of these acts in Indonesian ($n = 100$) and Malaysian ($n = 100$) Shopee interactions.

Table 2. Speech act type between Indonesia and Malaysia

Speech Act Type	Indonesia (%)	Malaysia (%)
Representatives	34	36
Directives	28	24
Commissives	14	18
Expressives	22	20
Declarations	2	2

Table 2 reveals relatively balanced use of representatives, but noticeable divergence in directives and commissives. This difference may relate to how sellers in each context negotiate transactions and commitments. Ma, et al. (2020) notes similar asymmetries in online marketplaces across cultural contexts [11]. These speech act distributions provide a foundation for comparative interpretation.

Representatives dominate in both datasets (34% Indonesia, 36% Malaysia), reflecting the informational nature of buyer–seller chats—confirming stock, providing prices, or describing items. Directives are more frequent in Indonesia (28%) than Malaysia (24%), often realized as direct payment requests or prompts for action (“Mohon segera checkout, kak”). Commissives, such as promises of delivery time or warranty guarantees, are more prevalent in Malaysia (18%) than Indonesia (14%), indicating stronger emphasis on seller commitments. Expressives—gratitude, apologies, congratulations—are moderately used in both contexts, though Indonesian sellers often embed them alongside directives. Declarations are rare (2% each), mainly involving order status changes confirmed through chat. These distributions show that while both markets rely heavily on informative statements, Indonesian interactions lean toward action-initiating directives, whereas Malaysian ones foreground commitment-making. This supports the notion that pragmatic preferences vary subtly even within closely related linguistic environments.

The greater directive usage in Indonesia may reflect a culturally embedded positive-politeness strategy, where explicit prompts are seen as efficient and service-oriented rather than overly forceful. In high-context cultures, such directness can be mitigated by relational markers (“kak,” emoticons), maintaining harmony while ensuring action. Conversely, the higher commissive rate in Malaysia suggests a more contract-oriented approach, aligning with negative-politeness norms that prioritize buyer autonomy and confidence in the seller's reliability. The similar expressive percentages indicate that gratitude and apologies

are universal rapport-building moves, though the sequencing—Indonesian expressives often precede directives, while Malaysian ones follow commissives—differs. These patterns align with Chen et al. (2023) in showing that speech act sequencing is culturally variable even within typologically similar languages [10]. Speech act preferences in the two contexts reflect a balance between platform constraints and culturally grounded interactional norms, influencing how transactions are initiated and secured.

4.3. Politeness strategies analysis

Politeness strategies were coded following Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework: bald-on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record. Table 3 shows the proportional use of each strategy in Indonesian ($n = 100$) and Malaysian ($n = 100$) Shopee chats.

Table 3. Politeness strategy between Indonesia and Malaysia

Politeness Strategy	Indonesia (%)	Malaysia (%)
Bald-on-record	18	12
Positive politeness	46	39
Negative politeness	28	35
Off-record	8	14

Both contexts heavily employ positive and negative politeness, but the distribution suggests different emphases—Indonesia leaning toward solidarity-building, Malaysia toward deference and indirectness. These differences likely arise from contrasting socio-cultural priorities in service encounters. Prabhu & Ganaphati (2026) note that local norms strongly influence which politeness strategies are most salient in digital commerce [17]. This quantitative pattern sets the stage for nuanced interpretation.

In Indonesia, positive politeness dominates (46%), often realized through inclusive address terms (“*kak*,” “*sis*”), expressions of shared goals, and emoticon use to signal friendliness. Bald-on-record strategies (18%) appear mainly in urgent contexts, such as last-minute shipping deadlines, and are typically softened with expressive markers. Negative politeness accounts for 28% of Indonesian cases, manifested in hedged requests or formal honorifics when dealing with older or unfamiliar buyers. Off-record strategies are rare (8%), generally used in subtle price negotiations or stock inquiries. In Malaysia, positive politeness is slightly lower (39%), while negative politeness is higher (35%), with sellers using more formal address terms (“*puan*,” “*tuan*”) and indirect question forms. Off-record strategies are more common (14%), often in contexts where sellers hint at promotions without explicit prompting. The descriptive contrast reflects each market's balance between camaraderie and formality in buyer–seller rapport. Both aim for politeness, but the route differs.

Indonesia's higher positive-politeness rate aligns with a collectivist cultural orientation where relational closeness facilitates trust in transactions. Solidarity markers and friendly tone are perceived as enhancing the shopping experience, reducing transactional distance. The relatively higher bald-on-record use may also be culturally acceptable when mitigated by relational cues, reflecting an orientation toward efficiency without threatening face. Malaysia's greater use of negative and off-record politeness suggests a higher sensitivity to hierarchical distance and potential face threats, consistent with findings by Spencer-Oatey (2008) on intercultural interaction in multi-ethnic settings. Off-record hints, particularly in promotional contexts, allow sellers to signal value while respecting the buyer's autonomy to inquire further. Ahamat et al. (2020) argue that such indirectness can strengthen perceived professionalism in service encounters [2]. Politeness strategy preferences in each context reflect an interplay of cultural values, perceived customer expectations, and platform-mediated communicative affordances.

5. DISCUSSION

The cross-cultural pragmatics findings have direct implications for e-commerce interaction quality and transaction outcomes. Higher rates of multi-act turns and overlapping turns in Indonesian interactions function to accelerate transaction flow and maintain buyer engagement, while higher repair rates in Malaysian exchanges function to ensure accuracy and clarity. Efficient exchanges can enhance customer satisfaction in fast-paced marketplaces, but they can also risk misunderstandings if context is not fully shared. Conversely, a greater emphasis on repair and clarification supports precision but may slow decision-making. Digital commerce thrives on balancing speed with informational accuracy, and deviations in either direction can disrupt the buyer's experience [6]. These pragmatic differences are not neutral—they carry functional advantages aligned with cultural priorities, but also potential dysfunctions if sellers operate in cross-border contexts without adapting to the target market's interaction norms.

The underlying causes of these patterns can be traced to cultural communication styles, platform affordances, and marketplace norms. Indonesia's higher multi-act and overlapping turns align with high-

context communication [22], where implicit understanding allows sellers to compress multiple actions into fewer turns. Such compression is efficient in shared cultural frames but may be less effective when addressing unfamiliar customers. Malaysia's higher repair frequency reflects a lower tolerance for ambiguity, influenced by multi-ethnic linguistic diversity that necessitates explicit clarification. The multilingual digital environments often prioritize accuracy over brevity to minimize transactional risk [23]. Platform features such as Shopee's chat templates also shape interaction by enabling rapid message composition in Indonesia and supporting structured clarification in Malaysia. These structures reveal that pragmatic behavior is a product of both cultural predispositions and technological scaffolding, jointly producing the observed interactional patterns.

Speech act distribution directly influences how transactions are initiated, negotiated, and closed. Indonesia's higher proportion of directives functions to move transactions forward decisively, reducing the risk of cart abandonment, while Malaysia's greater emphasis on commissives functions to strengthen buyer trust through explicit commitments. A directive-heavy style may expedite sales but risks being perceived as overly pushy in cultures valuing buyer autonomy. Conversely, a commissive-heavy style fosters reassurance but may prolong negotiation stages. The speech act balance in e-commerce impacts buyer perception of professionalism and service orientation, affecting repeat purchase likelihood [12]. While both strategies function effectively in their respective markets, dysfunction can arise in cross-border sales when buyers misinterpret direct prompts as pressure or view abundant commitments as empty promises if not supported by rapid fulfillment.

The speech act differences are rooted in cultural orientations toward transactional discourse and relational management. In Indonesia, higher directive use reflects positive-politeness norms, where direct prompts are softened by relational markers to convey care rather than imposition. This is consistent with collectivist values prioritizing group cohesion, where guiding the buyer is part of good service [32]. In Malaysia, higher commissives align with a contract-oriented interaction style, emphasizing assurances and guarantees as trust-building mechanisms in a diverse, often formal, commercial environment. The directive and commissive weighting varies with societal norms for face maintenance and power distance [1]. Platform culture also plays a role—Malaysian Shopee sellers often utilize built-in assurance phrases, while Indonesian sellers rely more on personalized directives. These structural factors reveal that speech act distribution is a product of intertwined cultural pragmatics and platform-driven communication affordances.

The politeness strategy patterns carry significant implications for rapport-building, customer loyalty, and perceived professionalism. Indonesia's dominant positive-politeness usage functions to create warmth, solidarity, and a friendly brand image, encouraging repeat purchases. Malaysia's stronger reliance on negative and off-record politeness functions to maintain professionalism and respect buyer autonomy, fostering trust in formal business settings. Each approach has market-specific benefits—solidarity-building can drive social-media-based word-of-mouth marketing, while deference and indirectness can appeal to customers expecting formal service. The politeness choices shape the relational trajectory of commercial exchanges, influencing post-purchase satisfaction [31]. However, dysfunction arises when styles clash—e.g., overly casual address in Malaysia might be read as unprofessional, while excessive indirectness in Indonesia might be perceived as distant or uninterested. Politeness strategy alignment with customer expectations is crucial for maximizing both transactional success and long-term buyer-seller relationships.

The divergence in politeness strategies emerges from cultural values, linguistic traditions, and platform-mediated interactional norms. Indonesia's emphasis on positive politeness reflects collectivist, egalitarian tendencies where reducing social distance fosters trust. Terms of address like *kak* or *sis*, emoticons, and shared identity markers align with a high-context, relationship-driven sales style. Malaysia's preference for negative and off-record politeness stems from a more stratified interactional culture, influenced by multi-ethnic etiquette norms and English-Malay code-mixing practices that favor formality in service contexts. The hierarchical sensitivity and indirectness are strategic in multicultural environments to avoid unintended offense [16]. Platform features, such as customizable auto-replies, may reinforce these norms—Indonesian sellers personalize for warmth, while Malaysian sellers adapt for formality. Politeness strategy patterns are thus embedded in deeper socio-cultural and linguistic structures, mediated by platform affordances that selectively reinforce certain relational styles.

6. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that cross-cultural pragmatics in e-commerce interactions between Indonesia and Malaysia exhibit systematic differences in speech act distribution, politeness strategies, and conversational structures. The main lesson learned is that even closely related languages and cultures adapt their communicative practices in platform-mediated commerce to align with local norms of efficiency, accuracy, and relational management. The research demonstrates that Indonesian sellers tend to favor multi-act turns, directives, and positive-politeness strategies, fostering immediacy and solidarity, while Malaysian sellers emphasize repair sequences, commissives, and negative-politeness strategies, reinforcing precision and

professionalism. Methodologically, the study contributes by combining Speech Act Theory and Politeness Theory within a comparative, platform-specific corpus, offering a refined analytical framework for digital commerce discourse. Scientifically, it updates existing perspectives by showing how platform affordances interact with socio-cultural communication norms, adding new variables—such as auto-reply personalization and code-switching patterns—to the study of cross-border digital transactions.

The study is limited by its focus on a single platform (Shopee) and a restricted dataset of 200 interactions, which may not fully represent the diversity of e-commerce communication styles in each country. Moreover, the data capture only text-based exchanges, omitting multimodal elements like images, emojis beyond simple counts, and voice notes that may carry important pragmatic cues. Cultural interpretations were inferred from linguistic patterns, meaning they could be strengthened by integrating ethnographic interviews with buyers and sellers. Future research should expand the corpus to multiple platforms and product categories, incorporate multimodal analysis, and explore longitudinal changes in interaction norms as platform features evolve. Additionally, comparative studies involving other culturally proximate but pragmatically distinct markets—such as Brunei or Singapore—could further test the robustness of the findings. Such extensions would refine our understanding of how digital marketplaces mediate intercultural pragmatics and inform more culturally adaptive e-commerce communication strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author expresses sincere appreciation to colleagues and reviewers for their helpful suggestions and support during this study.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Authors state no funding involved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Rohmadi: conceptualization (lead), data curation (lead), discourse analysis (lead), writing – original draft (lead), writing – review and editing (lead).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Data availability is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. Ariawan, "Regulatory Barriers to Consumer Protection in Digital Marketplaces," *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 806–832, 2025, doi: 10.53955/jhcls.v5i3.782.
- [2] H. Ahamat, N. A. Rahman, and M. R. Al Anshori, "Monopsony, powerful buyers and small sellers: Analysis of Malaysian competition law and lessons learnt from Indonesia," *International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 241–257, 2020, doi: 10.1504/IJGSB.2020.109548.
- [3] W. S. Widiarty, J. Park, and T. S. Putra, "A Legal Analysis of the Influence of International Trade on Import Restriction Policies in Indonesia," *Jurnal Hukum Unissula*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 741–766, 2025, doi: 10.26532/jh.41.3.741-766.
- [4] M. Sood, "Indonesian Foreign Trade Policy Dealing with the Global Market in Framework Asean Economic Community (AEC)," *Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 1–8, 2021.
- [5] K. Terada, M. Okazoe, and J. Gratch, "Effect of politeness strategies in dialogue on negotiation outcomes," presented at the Proceedings of the 21st ACM International Conference on Intelligent Virtual Agents, IVA 2021, 2021, pp. 195–202. doi: 10.1145/3472306.3478336.
- [6] İ. Onursal Ayirir, "Formulaic expressions in Turkey's Turkish: A pragmatics study according to the politeness theory," *Milli Folklor*, vol. 2020, no. 126, pp. 86–98, 2020.
- [7] H. Feng, "Politeness Theory," in *The International Encyclopedia of Interpersonal Communication*, 2015, pp. 1–13. doi: 10.1002/9781118540190.wbeic164.
- [8] Z. Y. Waziri, "Politeness Theory and Resolution of Misunderstandings in Social Media Communication," *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities*, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 61–70, 2022, doi: 10.62250/nsuk.2022.30.2.61-70.
- [9] F. Sayogie, "Framing Face-Saving Behavior on Facebook," *International Journal of Media and Information Literacy*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 554–559, 2022, doi: 10.13187/ijmil.2022.2.554.

- [10] A. Chen, Y. Zhang, Y. Liu, and Y. Lu, "Be a good speaker in livestream shopping: A speech act theory perspective," *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, vol. 61, 2023, doi: 10.1016/j.elerap.2023.101301.
- [11] X. Ma, J. Ren, X. Lang, Z. Yang, and T. Li, "The influence of live video hosts' speech act on purchase behaviour," *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, vol. 81, 2024, doi: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.103984.
- [12] A. Mohamad, M. A. Mohd Angsor, M. N. Mohd Adi, and A. T. Jia Min, "Malaysia's e-commerce landscape: legal structures and operational hurdles," presented at the Proceedings of SPIE - The International Society for Optical Engineering, 2025. doi: 10.1117/12.3059023.
- [13] A. Z. Tasyarasita and W. Yulianti, "Polite Disagreement: How Sellers Manage Conflict in Social Media Sales," *Studies in Media and Communication*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 241–254, 2025, doi: 10.11114/smc.v13i1.7239.
- [14] M. Mahdavi, N. Fatehi-Rad, and J. L. Graham, "Planting Orange Trees in Twenty Cultures: The Practice of International Negotiations," *Negotiation Journal*, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 421–440, 2020, doi: 10.1111/nejo.12335.
- [15] A. Prasetyo and N. A. Witarasyah, "The effect of e-WOM on purchase intention in e-commerce in Indonesia through the expansion of the information adoption model," *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 1959–1968, 2024, doi: 10.5267/j.ijdns.2024.1.017.
- [16] A. Singh, A. Singh, T. S. Vij, and A. Pardesi, "An empirical study of the factors affecting online shopping behavior of the indian consumers," *International Journal of Advanced Science and Technology*, vol. 29, no. 8 Special Issue, pp. 406–411, 2020.
- [17] A. S. Prabhu and R. Ganapathi, "Influence of perceived quality and value and brand image on buying behaviour of consumers in rural areas with moderating effect of perceived risk," *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 46–64, 2026, doi: 10.1504/IJIMA.2026.150512.
- [18] J. House and D. Z. Kádár, *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics*. in Cross-Cultural Pragmatics. 2021, p. 286. doi: 10.1017/9781108954587.
- [19] R.-X. Zhou, Y.-T. Zhu, R.-Q. Zheng, and J.-L. Zhou, "Differences of Consumer Reviews and Consumer Satisfaction on Cross-Border E-Commerce Platforms: A Text Mining Analysis Based on Cross-Cultural Perspective," presented at the Proceedings of the International Conference on Electronic Business (ICEB), 2024, pp. 122–129. doi: 10.1080/10919392.2024.2447689.
- [20] F. Cooren, "Speech Act Theory," in *The International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*, 2015, pp. 1–16. doi: 10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi055.
- [21] N. Hanna and D. Richards, "Speech act theory as an evaluation tool for human-agent communication," *Algorithms*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2019, doi: 10.3390/A12040079.
- [22] N. H. Gray, "Bahasa, Batik, and Bargaining: An exploratory study of the negotiation styles and behaviors of Indonesian managers," *Journal of Transnational Management*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 215–228, 2010, doi: 10.1080/15475778.2010.504490.
- [23] K. Kalaiarasan, S. Govindan, and S. Nasaratnam, "The role of situational factor on buyer characteristics and purchase decision among Malaysian low-cost airline travellers," *International Journal of Economics and Management*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 265–284, 2018.
- [24] R. Bameri, A. Mojavezi, and H. Vaezi, "Discourse Analysis of Judges and Defendants in Iranian Criminal Courts Based on Halliday and Matthiessen's Systemic Functional Linguistics," *Legal Studies in Digital Age*, Jan. 2025, doi: 10.61838/kman.lsd.239.
- [25] Y. Dinihari, E. Wiyanti, D. Nazelliana, Z. Karyati, L. Lutfi, and W. Handayani, "Discourse Analysis of Digital Hoaxes as a Critical Literacy Strategy in Indonesian Language Education," *KEMBARA Journal of Scientific Language Literature and Teaching*, Apr. 2025, doi: 10.22219/kembara.v11i1.40485.
- [26] A. Difuza, "Sociolinguistic Study of Discursive Markers," *European International Journal of Philological Sciences*, Apr. 2025, doi: 10.55640/eijps-05-04-02.
- [27] A. Fawaid, "Ethnography of Tarot: Politics of Localizing Occultism in Java," Yogyakarta: Gading Pustaka, 2015.
- [28] T. D. Jick, "Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: Triangulation in action," *Administrative science quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 602–611, 1979.
- [29] J. Duan, "Decoding Urban Identity through Multimodal Linguistic Landscapes: A Dual-Layer Semiotic Analysis of Kagoshima's Tourism-Oriented Language Practices," *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, Sep. 2025, doi: 10.30564/fls.v7i10.10528.
- [30] S. Aslam, S. Hussain, and S. Riaz, "Crossing Cultural Borders: Language and Intercultural Communication in Contemporary Anglophone African Literature," in *African Histories and Modernities*, vol. Part F495, 2025, pp. 167–186. doi: 10.1007/978-3-031-80614-8_9.
- [31] C.-C. Kiu and C.-S. Lee, "E-commerce market trends: A case study in leveraging Web 2.0 technologies to gain and improve competitive advantage," presented at the International Journal of Business Information Systems, 2017, pp. 373–392. doi: 10.1504/IJBIS.2017.10005086.
- [32] A. Fawaid and A. Abdullah, "Desa Cerdas Ramah Gender: Analisis Penerapan Sertifikasi Halal dan Komersialisasi Produk Bagi Pelaku UMKM Perempuan," *lab*, vol. 8, no. 02, pp. 116–142, Dec. 2024, doi: 10.33507/lab.v8i02.2463.

BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR



Rohmadi     is affiliated with STIKes Mitra Husada Karanganyar, Indonesia. Her academic studies are language, communication, or related educational fields and has been actively involved in interdisciplinary research connecting pragmatics, intercultural communication, digital discourse, and applied linguistics. His research include language use in online interaction, professional communication, e-commerce discourse, and cross-cultural pragmatics in Southeast Asian contexts. He can be contacted at email: rohma_di@yahoo.co.id or rohmedi@stikesmhk.ac.id