

## Speech Act Strategies of Customer Service Officers of Internet Provider Company in WhatsApp Group Interactions

Yuli Widiana<sup>1</sup>, Wenny Wijayanti<sup>2</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>English Language Program, Faculty of Communication Science, Universitas Katolik Widya Mandala Surabaya, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Indonesian Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Katolik Widya Mandala Surabaya, Indonesia

### Submission Track:

Received: 30-09-2024, Final Revision: 19-11-2024, Available Online: 01-12-2024

Copyright © 2024 Authors



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the speech act strategies employed by customer service officers (CSO) in an internet provider company while interacting with customers via WhatsApp Group (WAG) chats. The research aims to identify and analyze the types of speech acts used and examine how cultural and digital token factors specific to Javanese communication norms influence these interactions. In 60 days, data was collected from WAG conversations between customer service representatives and clients using the non-participative observation method. Depth interviews were also conducted with the five CSOs. The analysis employed Speech Act Theory and considers the unique context of computer-mediated communication. Results revealed that CSOs frequently utilized commissive speech acts, confirming speech acts, directive speech acts, phatic speech acts, and expressive speech acts with specific purposes. Culturally, the speech acts were employed to maintain harmony and mitigate potential face-threatening situations. The study also highlights how the CSO adapts traditional Javanese communication styles to the digital medium of WhatsApp. Theoretically, these findings contribute to our understanding of cultural pragmatics in professional settings and empirically offer insights for training customer service personnel in culturally diverse contexts. Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of considering cultural nuances in developing effective communication strategies for digital customer service platforms.*

**Keywords:** cyberpragmatics, digital communication, Javanese norms, speech acts, public services

## **INTRODUCTION**

The massive shift from direct to digital communication media due to the development of information technology occurs in various areas of life, including the public service sector. Customers who used to report the problems they experienced directly at customer service counters can now more easily contact the company through digital media or social media applications provided by the company.

One of the social media applications that internet users in Indonesia widely use is WhatsApp (WA). According to data from the Ministry of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia in 2019, there were 171 million internet users in Indonesia, or 64.4 percent using the internet, and 83 percent of the 171 million internet users are WhatsApp users. This has led to many service companies providing WhatsApp to contact customers. One of the service companies that utilizes WhatsApp as a means of contacting customers is Indihome, an Indonesian internet provider company. To reach and serve customers more intensively and optimally, this company created WhatsApp Group (WAG) whose members consist of internet customers in a certain area and Customer Service Officers (CSO). This customer service strategy is quite effective because it can reach customers in a limited way so that the service can be more intensive.

Digital communication at WAG takes place in the form of text sent through a chat room. One of the shortcomings of this text communication is in terms of clarity of information. In addition, the manifestation of speech in relation to the expression of politeness can also experience obstacles. This can be seen from how customer complaints are submitted, which often violate the principle of politeness or unclarity of information the company conveys to customers. These obstacles related to speech acts in a digital context must be overcome immediately so that the customer service process can run more smoothly, effectively, and politely. Studies have examined speech acts' production and perception levels, with politeness and semantic strategies being the most common perspectives (Sharqawi & Anthony, 2019). Recent research has extended speech act theory to social media contexts, exploring its potential for decoding online communication. This includes analyzing content

and function word use to determine the impact of customer reviews, sentiment strength, and contribution quality in social media (Ludwig & de Ruyter, 2016).

Several pragmatics experts have formulated the types of speech acts. Classification of speech acts consists of assertives, directives, commissives, and expressives (Searle & Vanderveken, 2005). An assertive speech act is an utterance that commits the speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition, while a directive speech act is an utterance that attempts to get the hearer to perform some action. In contrast with directives, a commissive speech act commits the speaker to some future action. An expressive speech act expresses the speaker's psychological state or attitude toward a state of affairs. A declarative speech act is an utterance that changes the reality in accordance with the proposition of the declaration.

Furthermore, more diverse classifications add the type of phatic speech acts as an important part of interaction in the internet domain in Indonesia (Kreidler, 2014). Phatic communication focuses more on the affective aspect than the referential aspect because the emphasis is on disseminating social messages and not specific information (Holmes, 2013). Thus, such phatic communication is part of a polite strategy to maintain harmonious social bonds between language community members. Phatic speech act is likely one of the important aspects of customer service through virtual media, especially WAG. Previous research on speech acts in the context of teaching and learning found that teachers and students use types of speech acts such as declarative, representative or assertive, directive, expressive, and commissive to interact in the classroom (Hidayat, 2023). Other research has found that speech acts such as directive, representative, declarative, commissive, and expressive are also used in characters in English movies (Diffani & Kholis, 2023). In the political context, the speech acts of assertives, directives, and commissives are frequently used by politicians (Hamad et al., 2022). This study identifies the types of speech acts used in the interaction of CSOs and customers in WAG and examines the functions of these speech acts specifically in the context of customer service.

Along with the development of information technology, speech acts have become part of the cyberculture that develops, along with the rampant use of social networks carried out

through internet-based communication media. This phenomenon is evidenced by other research findings that phatic speech acts carried out through social networks do not emphasize the content of messages but rather aim to maintain social relationships between fellow social network users which can be done in various ways such as sending messages and sharing chain messages through various social networking applications and electronic mail, upload the latest status, and comment on the upload in the form of statuses, photos, images, or blogs (Miller, 2008; Rahardi, 2022). Thus, the phatic speech acts on social networks focus more on relationships with fellow social network users, so conversations without a specific purpose are very important for making friends and maintaining relationships that have been established. Perhaps this is also important in the context of customer service. Regarding customer service through virtual media, the phatic speech act is also a polite strategy, especially in overcoming customer complaints. This study examines more deeply the phatic speech acts used by CSOs about the realization of politeness in virtual media relationships.

Because this study uses data from WAG media, the theory of cyberpragmatics is used as the basis for analysis. Cyberpragmatics is a study examining language use in internet-based communication and how language functions in the digital context (Locher, 2013; Yus, 2011). It encompasses various forms of digital communication, including web pages, chat rooms, social media, and mobile instant messaging applications (Yus, 2016). The field examines the role of intentions, context, and interfaces in shaping the relevance and interpretation of online messages. Recent research has expanded the scope of cyberpragmatics to include non-propositional aspects of communication, particularly in mobile instant messaging, to better understand user satisfaction and the overall relevance of these interactions. Conversational data analysis based on the perspective of cyberpragmatics requires a certain context with specific features used due to the limitations of physical contact in virtual communication. The context of cyberpragmatics is divided into social context, societal context, cultural context, and situational context (Rahardi, 2020). Elements and functions of the context may change so that the meaning of speech in

cyberpragmatics may also change (Rahardi, 2023). Another important feature in the context of cyberpragmatics is the use of virtual elements such as smileys, emojis, emoticons, avatars, GIFs, and virtual stickers to replace physical contact, express feelings, and clarify meaning (Rahardi et al., 2024; Widiana & Prajoko, 2021).

Previous cyberpragmatics studies have been conducted to research the implications of the internet domain (Widiana, 2015). In its development, cyberpragmatics has also been applied to the study of the use of phatic emojis on WhatsApp (Aull, 2019) and Facebook (Konrad et al., 2020). Furthermore, the theory of cyberpragmatics is also associated with Javanese culture-based communication (Widiana et al., 2020; Widiana & Prajoko, 2021). The study of cyberpragmatics is also applied in education and is associated with implementing student politeness in online learning (Wijayanti & Saputra, 2021). The difference between this study and previous research lies in applying cyberpragmatics theory in the realm of the digital economy in the study of customer service speech acts in WAG media.

Particular studies of cyberpragmatics research on WhatsApp interactions explores how users communicate and interpret messages in digital environments. Studies have examined various aspects, including emoticon usage in WhatsApp interactions (Rahardi, 2022), digital humor in WhatsApp stickers (Karjo & Rahmadhito, 2023), and politeness strategies in lecturer-student conversations on WhatsApp (Risdianto et al., 2023). Previous studies have found that WhatsApp users employ multimodal communication forms, such as emoticons and stickers, to convey emotions and intentions effectively (Karjo & Rahmadhito, 2023; Rahardi, 2022). These digital elements can create humorous effects and implicatures in daily interactions. Additionally, previous studies have shown that users generally adhere to politeness principles in their cyberpragmatic activities, sometimes incorporating religious expressions to enhance politeness (Risdianto et al., 2023).

Politeness in the digital context includes the strategies used by language speakers to maintain positive and friendly interactions with fellow internet users in cyberspace, although virtual communication has the disadvantage of more limited verbal cues (Pratama, 2019; Rabby & Walther, 2003). Another opinion states that online politeness has a special

strategy according to the media such as electronic mail, instant messaging, and other internet-based media (Ge & Herring, 2018; Herring, 2002).

The interactional approach is also used in the study of digital communication in the context of computer-based discourse from a virtual team (Darics, 2010). The findings show that the virtual team members use certain strategies to compensate for the absence of nonverbal behavior, overcome technical obstacles, and at the same time support interaction management (Darics, 2010). This opinion rejects the previous statement that assumes that virtual discourse tends to be free and economical in terms of the embodiment of politeness. These findings prove that speech acts are important in digital communication and social relationships.

Some aspects closely related to cyberpragmatics include the use of appropriate speech acts that do not have the potential to offend the interlocutor or contain insults. Another aspect is the use of emoticons and emojis that can help express feelings and clarify the tone of speech in virtual communication in the form of text (Widiana & Prajoko, 2021). Another thing that is no less important to apply in digital communication is to comply with virtual communication ethics known as internet ethics to maintain positive communication in cyberspace. Another aspect that is no less important in virtual communication is cultural sensitivity so internet users must be aware of cultural differences that may be carried over in virtual communication to avoid misunderstandings and maintain polite interactions in communication in cyberspace globally. Cultural norms play a significant role in shaping ethical behavior in public service. Lewis (2008) identifies six major sources of ethical norms, including cultural/social factors, and proposes a multi-dimensional decision-making framework for ethical conduct. Attempts to implement cultural change in the Australian Public Service aimed to align individual employees with corporate goals through shared norms and values (O'Brien & O'Donnell, 2000). Javanese adhere to the cultural principles of *kurmat* (respect), *tepa selira* (tolerance), *andhap asor* (humility), and *empan papan* (self-awareness) (Gunarwan, 2007). The cultural norms are strictly obeyed to mitigate imposition. *Kurmat* is the norm for giving respect to others. *Tepa Selira* is a willingness to

show empathy in one's circumstances. *Andhap asor* is a characteristic of modesty since showing off is perceived as unacceptable behavior by Javanese. In a collective society like Javanese, phatic communication is performed as a means to build a rapport to enlarge the social network with new people and sustain existing social relations (Widiana et al., 2020). Therefore, adhering to cultural norms is a significant aspect of performing speech acts.

Speech act strategies in public service have been explored from various pragmatic perspectives. Research has examined the development of speech act theories, including categories, characteristics, and strategies (Wijana, 2021). Studies have also investigated directive speech acts in health services, revealing differences in command speech acts based on gender and social variables (Pujati, 2024). The importance of learning strategies for acquiring and performing speech acts in second language contexts has been emphasized, with a proposed taxonomy of strategies to enhance learners' speech act abilities (Cohen, 2005). Additionally, research has analyzed persuasion acts in media, demonstrating how specific speech acts and strategies can lead to effective persuasion, including the use of appropriate speech acts, flouting conversational maxims, and applying persuasive strategies (Soedjarwo, 2020). Specific strategies and conventions are employed in business discourse, characterized by accuracy, objectivity, and conciseness (Yu, 2022). These studies collectively highlight the significance of pragmatic approaches in understanding and improving speech act strategies in various public service contexts.

Digital communication plays an essential role in fostering a digital culture so that internet users can express themselves while maintaining respect with fellow internet users. Understanding cyberpragmatics and digital cultural principles is significant for building harmonious interactions in cyberspace. This theory is applied to examine the meaning of speech acts in the interaction between CSOs and customers in WAG media.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Pragmatic research focuses on production, comprehension, perception, and decision-making processes (Nguyen, 2019). Methods of pragmatics research are categorized into

those collecting naturally occurring data and those eliciting data, with both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Koike, 2020). Research in pragmatics employs various data collection methods, each with its strengths and limitations. Innovative approaches, including technology-based instruments, are being explored to enhance data collection (Nguyen, 2019). The field encompasses introspectional, experimental, observational, and corpus-based methods (Jucker et al., 2018). While existing methods have proven valuable, there is still a need for new techniques to collect more authentic and specific data, particularly in naturally occurring contexts.

Qualitative research methods are applied in this study to describe the types and the functions of speech act strategies of CSOs. The data source for this research is WAG of customer service at Indihome Internet provider. Meanwhile, the data of this study are all conversations between CSOs and internet customers that contain speech acts related to customer service in WAG media. 151 data were collected in 90 days. The WAG has 124 members consisting of 5 CSOs who act as group admins and 119 customers.

Data collection is carried out by employing a non-participatory observation method. The respondents of the observation method are the customers who belong to the WAG and submit their complaints through WAG to CSOs. In addition, In-Depth Interview techniques with five customer service officers who belong to the WAG were also carried out to verify the data from observation. The CSOs interviewed were those who had been serving customers through WAG for approximately a year. Furthermore, the interview was also conducted to get necessary information concerning the company standard and operational procedures for serving customers in WAG. Chart 1 illustrates the stages of data collecting



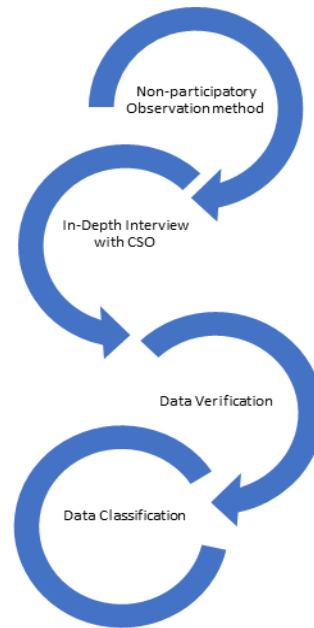


Chart 1. Data Collection Process

The data analysis stage is carried out by applying the theory of cyberpragmatics and speech acts. Speech act theory is applied to identify the types of speech acts used by CSOs in serving customers and the functions of using the speech acts. The concept of cyberpragmatics is used to analyze the meaning of conversations that contain speech acts between CSOs and internet customers in the digital context. Then, the cultural aspects of the speech acts are analyzed based on Javanese cultural norms because the conversation setting is located in Madiun, East Java, which is included in Mataraman Javanese ethnicity. Then, conclusions are drawn based on research findings and discussions.

## **FINDINGS**

The types of speech acts used by CSOs in customer service WAG are commissives, confirming, directives, phatic, and expressives. A directive speech act is one that aims to persuade the hearer to take action, whereas a commissive verbal act, as opposed to a directive speech act, binds the speaker to a future action. An expressive speech act conveys the speaker's attitude or psychological state regarding a situation and phatic speech act

spreads social messages rather than specific facts. Therefore, it emphasizes the emotive component more than the referential component. The other type of speech act found in the WAG interactions between the CSOs and customers of the internet provider company is confirming speech act. This kind of speech act serves a specific purpose of monitoring the outcome of the services rendered by the company to address the technical issues of its clients. The speech acts' purposes are modified to fit the particular customer service contexts. Table 1 is a description of the types of speech acts and their functions in the context of customer service at WAG interactions.

**Table 1.** Types of Speech Acts and Their Functions in Customer Service WAG

No.	Types	Functions	Frequency
1	Commissives	Demonstrate commitment to overcoming technical obstacles	56
2	Confirming	Getting information about the technical problems and the result of the service	44
3	Directives	Asking customers to do certain actions concerning the service	35
4	Phatic	Maintaining social relationships with customers & building camaraderie	10
5	Expressives	Respecting customers and showing gratitude	6
<b>Total</b>			<b>151</b>

The dominant type is commissive speech acts that demonstrate CSOs' commitment to addressing customer constraints. The other type is the confirming speech act, which functions to get information about the technical problems that occur on the customer's internet network and the results after the service. In addition, directive speech acts are also found in the data with functions to ask the customer to perform certain actions such as waiting for the technician to arrive, turning the modem off and on, requesting the customer to check the internet connection, and asking the customer to mention their customer

number. Phatic speech acts have particular functions to maintain social rapport and build intimacy while CSOs use expressive speech acts to show respect and gratitude.

A more detailed analysis of each type of speech act used in the customer service WAG interactions is presented in the next section with related examples of conversations. Then, an in-depth discussion is provided to convey the results of the analysis.

### Commissive Speech Acts

A commissive speech act is the act of the speaker to commit to doing some future actions for the hearer. In the context of customer service WAG, the CSOs commit to taking action to fix the internet technical problems based on customers' reports and complaints. The use of commissive speech acts is illustrated in the following conversation.

(**Context:** RS2 is a customer of an internet provider and CS2 is a CSO. RS2 complained about a technical problem with the internet in WAG. Then, CS2 informs that the technician will take care of the technical problem the next day)

RS2: *Trouble*, mohon dibantu... 🙏  
'Trouble, please help'.

CS2: Kita noted dulu bapak, untuk pengerjaan kita lanjutkan besok pagi nggeh 🙏  
'We noted first, sir, that we will continue the work tomorrow morning.'

RS2: Puasa dulu dong... 😞  
'Fasting first...'

The commitment of the CSO to fix the technical problem is seen in the utterance *Kita noted dulu bapak, untuk pengerjaan kita lanjutkan besok pagi nggeh* 'We noted first, sir, for the work we will continue tomorrow morning'. The emoji 🙏 is used to show an apology since the repair can only be done the next day. The customer responded to the CSO by uttering *Puasa dulu dong* and adding the emoji, which expressed dissatisfaction.

### Confirming Speech Acts

Asking for confirmation is a type of speech act that is frequently used by the CSOs of the internet provider company. A confirming speech act is the act of asking or stating a state of affairs that needs a specific response from the hearer. By conducting this type of speech act, the CSOs get information about the technical problems and the result of the repair service. The following textual conversation explains how the confirming speech act is conducted.

(**Context:** RS18 is a customer of an internet provider and CS3 is a CSO. RS18 complained about a technical problem with the internet in WAG. Then, CS3 confirms whether the customer has already registered the report.)

RS18: Selamat pagi. Saya mau laporan. IndiHome saya tidak bisa digunakan. Nomor sambung 152xxxxxx Alamat jln xxxxxxxx. Mohon segera dibetulkan..Karena sangat kami perlukan.. Terima kasih.

'Good morning. I want to report. My IndiHome cannot be used. Extension number 152xxxxxx Address jln xxxxxxxx. Please fix it immediately. Because we really need it... Thanks.'

CS3: Sudah ada tiket antrian gangguan, nggih.

'There is already a nuisance queue ticket, isn't there?'

RS18: Sudah mas.

'Already, Sir.'

The CSO said *Sudah ada tiket antrian gangguan, nggih* 'There is already a nuisance queue ticket, isn't there?' to confirm whether the customer had already registered the report and got the ticket. Confirmation is needed to proceed with handling the technical problem.

### Directive Speech Acts

Directive speech acts contain attempts to get the hearer to perform some actions. This type of speech act is used when CSOs ask customers to do certain actions such as informing the subscription number, switching on or off the modem, telling the location, and so on. The following textual conversation in WAG describes how CSOs utilize the directive speech act.

(**Context:** RS8 is a customer who reported a slow internet connection via WAG. CS3 responded to the report by checking the internet network. After a while, CS3 asked RS8 to recheck the internet connection. The customer reported that the modem is blinking, which means the connection is unstable).

RS8: Ass...A. N Sujarwati Sirapan.. Indihome no 15260XXXXXXX..mohon di bantu , krg lancar 🙏

'This is from Sujarwati in Sirapan. Indihome no 15260XXXXXXX. Please help because the network is unstable.'

CS3: Cek. 'Check'

CS3: Mohon dicoba kembali internetnya  
'Please, check the internet connection again.'

RS8: Lampu masih mendrip2  
'The light is still blinking.'

CS3 performs a directive speech act by requesting RS8 to recheck the internet connection. It is seen in the utterance *Mohon dicoba kembali internetnya* 'Please, check the internet connection again.'. CSO uses a directive speech act to determine the result of the repair service since neither of them is in the same location.

### **Phatic Speech Acts**

Phatic speech acts emphasize the affective aspect of the message more than the referential aspect since the purpose is to maintain social rapport among the members of the speech community. This type of speech act focuses on uttering social messages and not specific information. The use of phatic speech acts by CSOs in WAG of internet provider company is provided below.

(**Context:** RS2, a customer, confirmed that the internet connection is stable and thanked the CSO for the service in repairing the internet technical problem. CS1 responded to the confirmation by expressing gratitude).

RS2: Sudah aman bosku... Terimakasih atas pelayanannya...

CS1: Siap pak Hery  
'Thank you, Mr. Hery.'

The phatic speech act *Siap Pak Hery* 'Thank you, Mr. Hery' is uttered by CSO to express gratitude that the customer is satisfied with the service. Thus, it does not mean to express readiness. Despite the real meaning, the term *Siap* 'ready' in digital conversation via WAG is commonly used by social media users in Indonesia to refer to some specific actions such as expressing gratitude, showing agreement, and expressing happiness or satisfaction. In this case, CSO utters *Siap* to express gratitude as well as build familiarity with the customer.

### **Expressive Speech Acts**

An expressive speech act is a type of speech act containing the expression of the speaker's psychological state or attitude toward a certain condition. Expressing gratitude and thanking are included in expressive speech acts. The expression of gratitude is illustrated in the following conversation between a CSO and a customer.

(**Context:** RS62, a customer of an internet provider, thanked the CS1, CSO, for handling the internet problem properly. Then, CS1 replied to the text message of RS62 by uttering gratitude to God.)

RS62: Terimakasih Mas Petugas Indihome. Respon penanganan cepat dan internet langsung bisa digunakan kembali. Sekali lagi terima kasih banyak.

'Thank you, Indihome Officer, for the quick handling so the internet can be connected again immediately. Once again, Thank you very much.'

CS1: Alhamdulillah...🙏

'Thanks God.'

The expression *Alhamdulillah* in Arabic is a common expression that people use to express gratitude for God's help. In this context, the CSO expressed his gratitude because customers were satisfied with their service in fixing technical problems in their internet connection.

Another example of an expressive speech act that expresses gratitude can be seen in the following example.

(**Context:** RS69 reported the technical internet problem in the WAG. CS1 replied to RS69 immediately by informing the customer that the technician would visit the location. Then, RS69 thanked CS1 for responding to his complaint.)

RS69: Mas teknisi...apakah laporan saya bisa ditanggapi 🙏🙏🙏  
'Mr. Technician... Can my report be responded to?'

CS1: Siap Pak. Hari ini untuk cek lokasi.  
'Ready, Sir. Today we check the location.'

RS69: Nah gitu kan enak, ada keluhan kemudian ditanggapi...entah nanti beneran datang apa tidak, kan yang penting kita sebagai customer merasa dihargai, ketika kita menyampaikan keluhan kemudian langsung ditanggapi....Maaf sekedar masukan, efek anak tantrum gara2 wifi lemot 🙏🙏🙏

'Well, that's good, there are complaints and then they are responded to... whether the technician will come or not, it does not matter. The important thing is that we as customers feel appreciated. When we submit a complaint, then immediately respond...Sorry just for input, the effect of a tantrum child because of slow wifi.

CS1: Baik Pak. Terima kasih untuk masukannya.  
'Okay, sir. Thanks for the input.'

The gratitude conveyed by the CSO to the customer is a form of appreciation for the customer's input on the quality of customer service at the Internet company. Uttering expressive speech is an effective strategy for respecting customers.

## DISCUSSION

Commissive speech acts are the most dominant type of speech act used by CSOs in WAG interaction because this type of speech act shows a commitment to serving customer complaints as the main task of CSOs. Customers are satisfied if their complaints are immediately responded to at WAG even though the follow-up of their actions takes time and must go through certain procedures. In contrast, expressive speech acts are rarely used because the interactions that take place in WAGs are formal and concise. Therefore, expressions of gratitude are not always used by CSOs since generally customers only write short text messages related to the technical problems they experience and their customer numbers.

Phatic speech acts are also not frequently found in customer service WAGs because generally, short messages sent by customers do not require answers in the form of phatic expressions. However, certain phatic expressions, such as *Siap*, are used by CSOs to respond to customers who show satisfaction with the services. The expression is categorized as phatic because its meaning does not indicate readiness to serve but shows respect and gratitude from the CSO to customers. Phatic speech acts in customer service WAG have limited purposes compared to the ones in friendship WAG which has various purposes and forms such as expressing happiness, showing support, uttering condolences, or performing ice breakings (Widiana et al., 2018; Widiana & Prajoko, 2021). In the context of customer service, phatic speech acts are only used for limited purposes as an effort to show hospitality and not to build friendship.

The cultural aspect is also seen in the use of emojis by both CSOs and customers. The emojis found were 🙏 (conical hands), 😬 (mouths shut), 😭 (crying), 👍 (thumbs up), and 😂 (laughs). The most commonly found emoji is 🙏 (conical hands), which emphasize the meaning of apology, show respect, and express gratitude. The next emoji that is also often found is 👍 (thumbs up), which emphasizes the meaning of thanking and praising good service. The use of emojis is influenced by Javanese culture which often uses the gesture of constricting and raising a thumb to show respect. Other emojis such as 😬 (silence mouth) and 😂 (laughs) are used to soften complaints while the 😭 (crying) emoji is used to show how urgent it is to get an immediate handling of internet technical problems. In Javanese culture, a person is not expected to convey a complaint directly, so the emoji is used to smooth out the submission of complaints that have the potential to generate face-threatening acts. The emoji of conical hands and thumbs up expresses the norm of *Kurmat* 'Respect'. The emojis of silence mouth and laughs adhere to the norms of *Tepa Selira* 'Tolerance' since they soften the complaint so it can mitigate face-threatening acts. Furthermore, linguistic markers such as *Mohon* and *Silakan* 'Please' are used to adhere to



*Kurmat* maxim. The functions of virtual tokens used in WAG interactions between CSOs and customers are different from the ones used in other WAG whose members are friends in which the emojis were mainly used to intensify camaraderie and humorous chats (Rahardi et al., 2024; Widiana et al., 2020).

One type of speech act that was not found in previous research (Diffani & Kholis, 2023; Hamad et al., 2022; Hidayat, 2023) in the context of the interaction between CSOs and customers in WAG is a confirming speech act. This type of speech act is widely used because it is closely related to customer service procedures. Because internet network repair requires a process, CSOs will ask customers about the results of repairs to find out if they are satisfied with the services provided by the internet company. Confirmation from customers is required to follow up on service disruptions and know the service's outcome or quality. This confirming speech act is an important part of customer service because it is related to the company's image and at the same time an effort to promote the services offered by the internet service company. These findings support previous research (Soedjarwo, 2020; Yu, 2022) that states that specific speech acts as persuasive strategies must be implemented in a business context to persuade consumers to use the services offered and retain consumers who have already used the services of the company.

## **CONCLUSION**

The types of speech acts utilized by CSOs of the internet provider company in WAG interactions include commissive speech acts, confirming speech acts, directive speech acts, phatic speech acts, and expressive speech acts. Each of these speech acts has a specific function. Commissive speech acts that function to show commitment to follow up on customer complaints are the most widely used type of speech act by CSOs in internet provider companies. Confirming speech acts function to explore information from customers about service quality and service results, while directive speech acts function to ask customers to take action related to the service process. Other types of speech acts found in

customer service WAGs are phatic speech acts which are used to build familiarity with customers and expressive speech acts to show respect and express gratitude.

These results give insights into cultural pragmatics in the workplace and guide customer service representatives in cultural environments. The study also emphasizes how crucial it is to consider cultural norms when creating successful communication plans for digital customer support systems. Further research related to customer service pragmatic strategies in other cultures still needs to be carried out using sociolinguistics and sociopragmatics approaches. In addition, further studies on the usage of speech acts and virtual tokens in various contexts would be a fascinating area of study in the fields of cultural and media communication.

### **Acknowledgments**

The Universitas Katolik Widya Mandala Surabaya Research Grant for the internal research scheme in 2024 supports the research.

### **REFERENCES**

- Aull, B. (2019). A study of phatic emoji use in WhatsApp communication. *Internet Pragmatics*, 2(2), 206–232. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1075/ip.00029.aul](https://doi.org/10.1075/ip.00029.aul)
- Cohen, A. D. (2005). Strategies for learning and performing L2 speech acts. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 2(3). <https://doi.org/10.1515/iprg.2005.2.3.275>
- Darics, E. (2010). Politeness in computer-mediated discourse of a virtual team. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1515/jplr.2010.007>
- Diffani, H., & Kholis, A. (2023). An Analysis of Speech Act in the Movie “Turning Red.” *Journal of Linguistics, Culture and Communication*, 1(2), 100–115. <https://doi.org/10.61320/jolcc.v1i2.100-115>
- Ge, J., & Herring, S. C. (2018). Communicative functions of emoji sequences on Sina Weibo. *First Monday*, 23(11). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v23i11.9413>
- Gunarwan, A. (2007). *Pragmatik: Teori dan Kajian Nusantara*. Penerbit Universitas Atma Jaya.
- Hamad, S. S., Mohamad Ali, A., Paramasivam, S., & Jabar, M. A. A. (2022). Complex Speech Act as a Performance of Fallacies in Nouri al-Maliki’s Political Speeches. *GEMA Online®*

- Journal of Language Studies*, 22(4), 186–213. <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2022-2204-11>
- Herring, S. C. (2002). Computer-mediated communication on the internet. *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology*, 36(1), 109–168. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aris.1440360104>
- Hidayat, M. N. (2023). Speech acts in learning Indonesian language. *Journal of Linguistics, Culture and Communication*, 1(1), 44–66. <https://doi.org/10.61320/jolcc.v1i1.44-66>
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Jucker, A. H., Schneider, K. P., & Bublitz, W. (Eds.). (2018). *Methods in Pragmatics*. De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110424928>
- Karjo, C. H., & Rahmadhito, A. S. (2023). Cyberpragmatic analysis of digital humor in WhatsApp stickers. *KOLITA*, 21(21), 45–54. <https://doi.org/10.25170/kolita.21.4834>
- Koike, D. A. (2020). Research methods for Spanish pragmatics study. In *The Routledge Handbook of Spanish Pragmatics* (pp. 567–582). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429455643-41>
- Konrad, A., Herring, S. C., & Choi, D. (2020). Sticker and Emoji Use in Facebook Messenger: Implications for Graphicon Change. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 25(3), 217–235. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmaa003>
- Kreidler, C. W. (2014). *Introducing English Semantics* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Lewis, C. W. (2008). Ethical Norms in Public Service: A Framework for Analysis. In *Ethics and Integrity of Governance*. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781848441378.00012>
- Locher, M. A. (2013). Cyberpragmatics: Internet-Mediated Communication in Context. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 47(1), 128–130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2012.12.002>
- Ludwig, S., & de Ruyter, K. (2016). Decoding social media speak: developing a speech act theory research agenda. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 33(2), 124–134. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-04-2015-1405>
- Miller, V. (2008). New Media, Networking and Phatic Culture. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 14(4), 387–400. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856508094659>
- Nguyen, T. T. M. (2019). Data Collection Methods in L2 Pragmatics Research. In *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition and Pragmatics* (pp. 195–211). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351164085-13>
- O'Brien, J., & O'Donnell, M. (2000). Creating a new moral order? Cultural change in the Australian public service. *Labour & Industry: A Journal of the Social and Economic Relations of Work*, 10(3), 57–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10301763.2000.10669224>

- Pratama, H. (2019). *Linguistic Politeness in Online Communication*. LPPM Universitas Negeri Semarang.
- Pujiati, T. (2024). Command speech acts on health services: A sociopragmatics study. *Ummul Qura Jurnal Institut Pesantren Sunan Drajat (INSUD) Lamongan*, 19(1), 9–26. <https://doi.org/10.55352/uq.v19i1.854>
- Rabby, M. K., & Walther, J. B. (2003). Computer-mediated communication effects on relationship formation and maintenance. In D. J. Canary & M. Dainton (Eds.), *Maintaining relationships through communication: Relational, contextual, and cultural variations* (pp. 141–162). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Rahardi, R. K. (2022). Triadicities of Indonesian Phatic Functions. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 12(12), 2641–2650. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1212.22>
- Rahardi, R. K. (2020). Konteks Pragmatik dalam Perspektif Cyberpragmatics. *Linguistik Indonesia*, 38(2), 151–163. <https://doi.org/10.26499/li.v38i2.132>
- Rahardi, R. K. (2022). Investigating the pragmatic meaning of the smiley emoticon on Whatsapp groups: a cyberpragmatics perspective. *BAHASTRA*, 42(1), 34–44. <https://doi.org/10.26555/bs.v42i1.67>
- Rahardi, R. K. (2023). Social–Societal Context Element Changes in Cyberpragmatics Perspective. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 13(11), 2771–2779. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1311.06>
- Rahardi, R. K., Handoko, H., Rahmat, W., & Setyaningsih, Y. (2024). Javanese Silly Gags on Daily Communication on Social Media: Pragmatic Meanings and Functions Approach. *JURNAL ARBITRER*, 11(1), 49–59. <https://doi.org/10.25077/ar.11.1.49-59.2024>
- Risdianto, F., Machfudz, M., Sagimin, E. M., Hanafi, H., & Jumanto, J. (2023). Politeness and impoliteness strategies in lecturer-student communication within cyberpragmatic chats. *Journal of Pragmatics Research*, 5(1), 107–134. <https://doi.org/10.18326/jopr.v5i1.107-134>
- Searle, J. R., & Vanderveken, D. (2005). Speech Acts and Illocutionary Logic. In D. Vanderveken (Ed.), *Logic, Thought and Action* (pp. 109–132). Springer Netherlands. [https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3167-X\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3167-X_5)
- Sharqawi, M. A., & Anthony, E. M. (2019). Speech acts and their underlying strategies by EFL learners and Non-Learners: A systematic literature review. *Amazonia Investiga*, 8(20), 486–502. <https://www.amazoniainvestiga.info/index.php/amazonia/article/view/178>
- Soedjarwo, G. N. (2020). Persuasion act in the Proposal movie. *Journal of Pragmatics Research*, 2(1), 50–67. <https://doi.org/10.18326/jopr.v2i1.50-67>
- Widiana, Y. (2015). A Sociopragmatics Study on Social Criticism in Meme Comics. *Prasasti*, 70–82.

- Widiana, Y., & Prajoko, D. A. (2021). Javanese Virtual Communication and Its Politeness Performance in Cyberpragmatics Perspective. In E. M. Dukut (Ed.), *Arts and Entrepreneurship in Language Studies* (1st ed., pp. 153–168). Unika Soegijapranata.
- Widiana, Y., Sumarlam, Marmanto, S., Purnanto, D., & Sulaiman, M. Z. (2020). Intrusive Busybody or Benevolent Buddy: Phatic Communication among Javanese Women. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*, 20(2), 36–56. <https://doi.org/http://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2020-2002-03>
- Widiana, Y., Sumarlam, S., Marmanto, S., & Purnanto, D. (2018). Phatic Advice Giving of Javanese Youngsters in Friendship Domain as A Politeness Strategy to Tie a Union. *Fourth Prasasti International Seminar on Linguistics*, 449–454.
- Wijana, I. D. P. (2021). On speech acts. *Journal of Pragmatics Research*, 3(1), 14–27. <https://doi.org/10.18326/jopr.v3i1.14-27>
- Wijayanti, W., & Saputra, A. W. (2021). Implementasi Kesantunan Berbahasa Mahasiswa dalam Pembelajaran Daring pada Masa Pandemi. *Jurnal Sastra Indonesia*, 10(3), 248–254. <https://doi.org/10.15294/jsi.v10i3.47207>
- Yu, L. (2022). Representation of speech strategies in English business discourse. *Naukovi Zapiski Nacional'nogo Universitetu «Ostroz'ka Akademiâ». Seriâ «Filologiâ»*, 1(13(81)), 34–36. [https://doi.org/10.25264/2519-2558-2022-13\(81\)-34-36](https://doi.org/10.25264/2519-2558-2022-13(81)-34-36)
- Yus, F. (2011). *Cyberpragmatics: Internet-mediated Communication in Context*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Yus, F. (2016). Towards a Cyberpragmatics of Mobile Instant Messaging. In J. Romero-Trillo (Ed.), *Yearbook of Corpus Linguistics and Pragmatics 2016: Global Implications for Culture and Society in the Networked Age* (pp. 7–26). Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41733-2\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41733-2_2)