

Directive Speech Acts in Online Buying and Selling on *Shopee*: A Sociopragmatic Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the types, strategies, and sociopragmatic functions of directive speech acts in *online* buying-and-selling interactions on *Shopee*. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design supported by descriptive statistical tabulation and content analysis. A qualitative design was used to interpret the social meaning of utterances, while frequencies and percentages were used to map the distribution of directive categories in the corpus. The data consisted of 156 directive speech acts taken proportionally from three communication channels: seller-buyer *chat* features, product reviews, and live promotions. Data classification was conducted using operational coding criteria for eight directive categories and was strengthened through contextual checks and inter-coder discussions to maintain coding consistency. The analysis shows that the most dominant type is suggesting, with 45 data points (28.85%), followed by requesting 33 (21.15%), commanding 24 (15.38%), inviting 18 (11.54%), advising 14 (8.97%), prohibiting 9 (5.77%), permitting 7 (4.49%), and urging 6 (3.85%). Direct speech acts appear most frequently, with 92 data points (58.97%), followed by literal indirect speech acts, with 39 (25.00%), and non-literal indirect speech acts, with 25 (16.03%). Sociopragmatically, these frequencies serve as an entry point for interpreting power relations, politeness, and persuasion in relation to utterance context, speaker position, and channel characteristics. The use of “kak,” “mohon,” and familiarity markers is interpreted as a relational strategy that may support trust and rapport. However, its direct effect on transaction success requires further empirical testing.

Keywords: *directive speech acts, online buying and selling, Shopee, sociopragmatics, qualitative descriptive, descriptive statistical support*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital commerce has transformed communication patterns between sellers and buyers. In conventional transactions, negotiations take place face-to-face, allowing meaning to be constructed through intonation, gestures, social distance, and personal relationships. In digital transactions on Shopee, much of the meaning must be negotiated through short texts, icons, ratings, reviews, chat features, and promotional messages. This shift means that language functions not only as a means of conveying product information but also as a means of influencing buyer decisions, building trust, managing complaints, and maintaining the store's image.

One form of language that frequently appears in digital transactions is directive speech. Directive speech is speech directed at the interlocutor to perform, consider, accept, stop, or change an action. In the context of Shopee, directives can appear through utterances such as "please check out now," "please wait," "choose this variant only," "do not forget to use the voucher," or "please send according to the order." These forms demonstrate that language actions in online buying and selling have social and economic consequences, as speech can direct the behavior of both buyers and sellers.

The study of directive speech acts in the digital space has developed through various objects, including live shopping, Shopee Live, customer service, and product reviews. Astri, Panggabean, and Nasution (2024) examined directive illocutionary speech acts in interactions between online buyers and sellers on Shopee Live. Sumarlam, Djatmika, Widian, and Budiyo (2024) emphasized the importance of persuasive speech strategies in live e-commerce from a cyberpragmatic perspective. Addina, Kurniawan, and Fuadin (2026) showed that live shopping emerged as a dominant form of directing and requesting. These studies demonstrate that digital transactions constitute a dynamic pragmatic space.

However, research on directive utterances in online buying and selling on Shopee still needs to be developed through a sociopragmatic approach that positions speech as a social practice. This approach is important because the use of directive utterances is determined not only by the speaker's intention but also by the social relations between the seller and the buyer, digital politeness norms, service strategies, and the economic

context surrounding the transaction. This study also treats the frequency of utterances as supporting evidence for reading trends, rather than as a sole measure of sociopragmatic meaning. Therefore, reading the numbers is always linked to the channel context, the speaker's position, the delivery strategy, and the purpose of the transaction. This study aims to answer the following questions: (1) What types of directive utterances appear in online buying and selling on Shopee? (2) How are directive utterance delivery strategies used? (3) What is the sociopragmatic meaning of these directive utterances in the seller-buyer relationship? and (4) How can the consistency of directive utterance classification be maintained when a single utterance has the potential to have more than one pragmatic function?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a sociopragmatic approach and was supported by descriptive statistical tabulation. The qualitative descriptive design was used because the study's primary focus was to describe the forms, strategies, and social meanings of speech acts in the context of online buying and selling. Numbers and percentages were used to strengthen the presentation of data patterns, not to conduct hypothesis testing or statistical generalization. The methodological basis of this study is Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), as the data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This model is appropriate for this study because the data, in the form of written speech acts, were coded into directive categories, presented through frequency tabulation to strengthen the description, and then interpreted in light of the sociopragmatic context of digital transactions.

The research data sources were written utterances from online transactions on Shopee. Data were collected from three interaction channels: the seller-buyer chat feature, product review columns, and direct promotions featuring instructions or invitations to make a transaction. The unit of analysis in this study was a single utterance containing directive power. An utterance is considered data if it contains elements of a request, suggestion, command, invitation, prohibition, permission, advice, or pressure directed at the interlocutor.

To control for differences in communication characteristics across the three channels, data were recorded using channel metadata, speaker position, utterance form, transaction purpose, and response context. Data collection was conducted proportionally to ensure that the results did not solely represent one specific channel. The chat feature was treated as a dialogic channel because it enables direct communication between sellers and buyers. Product reviews were treated as an evaluative channel because they often contain assessments of products or services. Direct promotions were treated as a persuasive channel because they typically included invitations, instructions, and transaction incentives. With this distinction, sociopragmatic interpretation did not mix all data without considering the characteristics of the channels.

The classification of eight types of directive utterances is based on operational criteria. The utterances are categorized as suggesting if the speaker gives a recommendation without direct pressure; requesting if the speaker expects the action of the interlocutor with a marker of need or request; commanding if the speaker directs the action directly and procedurally; inviting if the speaker encourages the interlocutor to take action together or participate in a promotion; advising if the speaker gives direction for the sake of good or risk prevention; prohibiting if the speaker prevents a certain action; permitting if the speaker gives freedom; and urging if the speaker pressures the interlocutor to take action immediately due to time, stock, or promotional opportunities.

The objectivity of coding was maintained through three steps. First, each utterance was read in conjunction with the channel context, speaker position, and transactional purpose. Second, if an utterance had more than one possible function, the final category was determined based on the dominant illocutionary force, that is, the primary action expected from the interlocutor. Third, some of the data were examined through intercoder discussions to compare the appropriateness of the categories. Differences in interpretation were further discussed with reference to the utterance's context, linguistic markers, and transactional function. Thus, classification relied not only on sentence form but also on the underlying sociopragmatic context.

Data collection techniques included documentation, recording, and coding. Store identities, user names, transaction numbers, addresses, and other personal information

were anonymized to maintain research ethics. After the data were collected, the researcher performed data reduction, coding, frequency tabulation, percentage calculation, and sociopragmatic interpretation. The percentage formula used was $P = f/N \times 100\%$, where P is the percentage, f is the category frequency, and N is the total number of data points.

Data analysis followed the flow of data reduction, data presentation, and concluding as proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). In the reduction stage, data lacking directive power were removed from the corpus. In the presentation stage, data were classified into tables by type, strategy, speaker source, channel, and pragmatic function. In the conclusion stage, frequencies were read together with sociopragmatic contexts, such as power relations, politeness, mitigation, persuasion, and economic goals. Therefore, the research results do not stop at numbers, but are interpreted as social practices in digital communication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified 156 directive utterances in the Shopee online sales corpus. The data were classified into eight types: suggesting, requesting, ordering, inviting, advising, prohibiting, permitting, and urging. The data distribution indicates that suggesting is the most dominant category. This finding suggests that online sales communication tends to prioritize persuasive guidance on choice over overly coercive instructions.

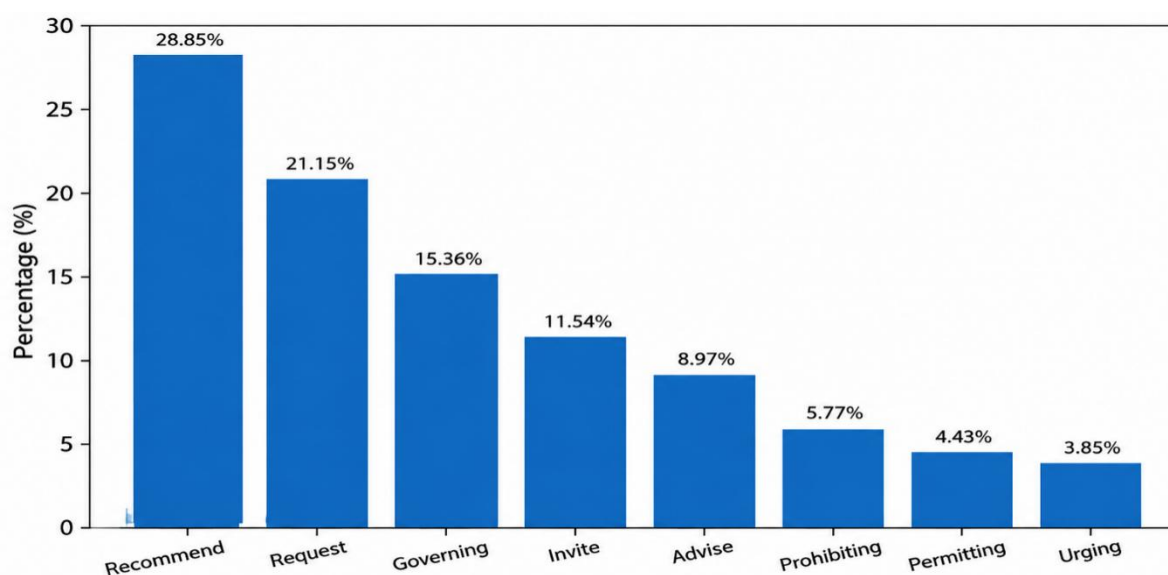
Before interpreting the distribution of speech types, channel characteristics need to be considered, as each channel has a distinct communication pattern. The research data were compiled in proportion from three channels: chat, product reviews, and direct promotions. This channel distinction is important to avoid bias, as chat tends to include requests and clarifications, while product reviews tend to include evaluations or complaints. In contrast, direct promotions tend to contain invitations and purchase suggestions.

Table 1. Data Channel Distribution and Bias Control

No.	Channel	Characteristics of Communication	Frequency	Bias Control
1.	<i>Seller-buyer chat</i>	Dialogic and responsive, with clarification of stock, size, address, and the transaction process.	52	Coded by paying attention to the turn of speech, the position of the speaker, and the purpose of the transaction.
2.	Product reviews	Evaluative, containing buyer experiences, complaints, usage suggestions, and service responses.	52	Coded taking into account the context of the buyer's rating, complaints, and experience.
3.	Direct promotion	Persuasive, containing calls to action, promotional instructions, discount offers, and checkout prompts.	52	Coded with attention to promotional objectives, stock/time limitations, and persuasion strategies.
Jumlah			156	

Table 2. Percentage of Types of Directive Speech

No.	Types of Directive Speech	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Recommend	45	28.85%
2.	Request	33	21.15%
3.	Governing	24	15.38%
4.	Invite	18	11.54%
5.	Advise	14	8.97%
6.	Forbid	9	5.77%
7.	Allow	7	4.49%
8.	Urge	6	3.85%
Amount		156	100.00%

*Diagram 1. Percentage of types of directive speech in online buying and selling on Shopee*

Recommend

The "suggest" category appeared in 45 data points, or 28.85%. This form was most frequently used by sellers when helping buyers determine variants, sizes, colors, purchase quantities, or promotional options. Statements such as "just get the bundled package, Sis" and "it is better to choose this variant" demonstrate that suggestions act as a persuasive strategy. Sociopragmatically, sellers do not always position themselves as commanding parties, but as partners who provide recommendations based on buyers' needs. This strategy allows sellers to influence buyers' decisions without appearing pushy. However, the dominance of "suggest" utterances cannot be directly generalized to characterize all Shopee communications. This dominance should be read as a tendency within the research corpus that promotional channels, product types, store service patterns, and seller marketing strategies can influence.

Request

The request category appeared in 33 data points, or 21.15%. This form is often used by buyers when requesting stock confirmation, fast shipping, authentic product photos, or order adjustments. Sellers also use requesting expressions when asking buyers to complete their address, select a variant, or wait for the packaging process. The use of the markers "please," "beg," "can," and "may" indicates that requests in digital transactions tend to be mitigated to remain polite. The seller-buyer relationship is transactional, but is maintained through friendly, non-confrontational language.

Governing

The command category was found in 24 data points (15.38%). This form is seen in technical instructions, such as "click the voucher first," "select a variation before checkout," or "fill in the address completely." The directive is stronger than a request because it directly directs the action. In the Shopee context, commands do not always reflect social dominance but often arise as procedural requirements for transactions to proceed correctly. However, sellers typically soften instructions with the greeting "Sis" or the particle "ya" to avoid appearing rude.

Invite

The invitation category accounted for 18 data points, or 11.54%. This utterance frequently appears in promotions, such as "check out now," "claim your voucher," or "join live to get a discount." Invitations serve to motivate buyers to take actions that benefit the transaction process. Sociopragmatically, invitations create a sense of togetherness between the seller and buyer, as if the transaction is not a one-sided act, but rather a fun and profitable shared activity.

Advise

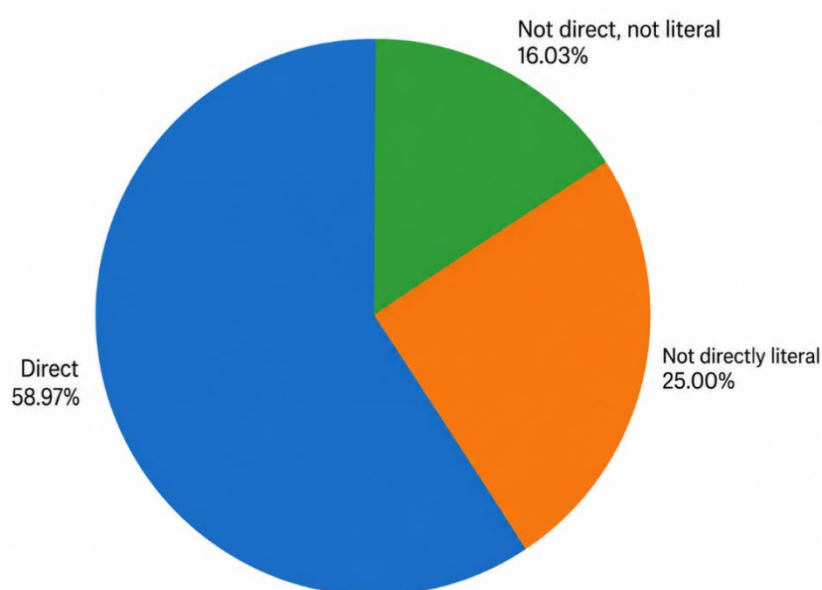
The advice category appeared in 14 data points, or 8.97%. Advice typically related to product use, care, or precautions before purchasing. For example, "It is best to read the measurements first to avoid making the wrong choice" or "Do not forget to do an allergy test before use." These statements demonstrate that the seller is not only seeking a purchase but also attempting to reduce the risk of complaints. In sociopragmatic relationships, advice reinforces the seller's image as someone who cares about the buyer's experience.

Prohibiting, Permitting, and Urging

The prohibition category comprised 9 items (5.77%), the permitting category 7 items (4.49%), and the urging category 6 items (3.85%). Prohibition is used to prevent transaction errors, for example, by prohibiting the cancellation of an order after it has been shipped. Permission occurs when the seller gives the buyer flexibility, for example, by allowing them to change variants before the order has been processed. Urging occurs in the context of limited promotions, such as "check out now before stock runs out." These three categories demonstrate that directive speech in online buying and selling also functions to regulate transaction limits, times, and procedures.

Table 3. Directive Speech Delivery Strategy

No.	Types of Directive Speech	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Direct	92	58.97%
2.	Not directly literal	39	25.00%
3.	Not direct, not literal	25	16.03%
Amount		156	100.00%

*Diagram 2. Distribution of directive speech strategies*

The direct strategy dominated 92% of the data, or 58.97%. This strategy emerged because digital transactions require clear instructions. Sellers and buyers need to convey their intentions concisely to avoid misunderstandings. However, the direct strategy still included politeness markers, such as "sis," "ya," "mohon," "please," and friendly emojis. This demonstrates that clear communication does not eliminate the need to maintain social relationships.

Literal indirect strategies accounted for 39 data points (25.00%). This strategy was evident in questions that actually intended to request action, such as "can it be shipped today?" or "can I change the size?" Meanwhile, non-literal indirect strategies accounted for 25 data points, or 16.03%, such as utterances that took the form of comments but functioned as criticism or requests for improvement. Sociopragmatically, indirect

strategies are used to maintain face with the interlocutor, especially when a buyer complains or when a seller refuses a specific request.

Table 4. Sources of Directive Speakers

No.	Source of the Speaker	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Seller	118	75.64%
2.	Buyer	38	24.36%
Amount		156	100.00%

Based on speaker sources, the data show that sellers produced 118 directive utterances (75.64%), while buyers produced 38 (24.36%). The sellers' dominance is understandable because they play an active role in guiding transactions, explaining procedures, offering products, providing recommendations, and handling complaints. Buyers primarily use directives to request clarification, request service, request order changes, or convey complaints. This relationship demonstrates functional asymmetry: sellers control product information and store procedures, while buyers have the right to choose, evaluate, and provide feedback.

Table 5. Pragmatic Functions of Directive Speech

No.	Pragmatic Function	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Facilitating transactions	55	35.26%
2.	Persuading buyers	43	27.56%
3.	Supporting trust and relationships	31	19.87%
4.	Handling complaints	18	11.54%
5.	Set transaction limits	9	5.77%
Amount		156	100.00%

Discussion

The analysis shows that directive utterances in online buying and selling on Shopee are not merely linguistic forms. They constitute social practices related to trust, service, persuasion, and the regulation of relationships between sellers and buyers. In pragmatic studies, directive utterances are understood as utterances intended to influence the interlocutor to perform a specific action, whether in the form of requesting, ordering, suggesting, inviting, advising, prohibiting, or permitting (Anadhiva et al., 2024; Yulita et al., 2023). However, in this qualitative descriptive study, the frequency of category occurrence is not understood as a full representation of sociopragmatic meaning.

Frequency only indicates patterns of tendencies, while their social meaning is read through the context of the utterance, communication channel, speaker position, transaction purpose, choice of address, mitigation, and accompanying response.

In the context of Shopee customer service, sellers' language serves not only to convey information but also to support interpersonal relationships with buyers through friendly and persuasive language choices (Sitompul & Yani, 2025). The greeting "*kak*" serves as a sign of familiarity that reduces social distance, even though the seller and buyer do not know each other personally. This greeting also serves as a strategy within Indonesian digital communication culture, emphasizing friendliness and closeness. A similar pattern is evident in online buying and selling interactions, showing that sellers' choice of greetings, directions, and responses plays a role in creating a more fluid and communicative transactional atmosphere (Astri et al., 2024). However, this study does not claim that the greeting "*kak*," the mitigating "*mohon*," or familiarity markers directly increase the success of transactions. These elements are interpreted as lingual-contextual evidence of relational strategies. Proving their influence on trust or transaction success requires additional data, such as store ratings, purchase conversions, buyer interviews, or customer responses after receiving the greeting.

Directive speech also demonstrates power negotiations. Sellers have authority over product information, stock, packaging processes, and store policies. Conversely, buyers have evaluative authority through ratings, reviews, and purchasing decisions. In e-commerce interactions, the relationship between sellers and buyers is not one-way but rather mutually influential, as buyers can provide responses, assessments, and reviews of the services they receive (Rahayu et al., 2024). Therefore, both parties tend to use mitigation when conveying requests or prohibitions. Sellers soften commands with "please" or "if possible," while buyers soften requests with "please" or "if possible." This use of mitigation demonstrates that online transactions remain governed by politeness norms, even when conducted through digital media. Pardomuan and Hellystia (2026) explain that politeness strategies help manage interpersonal relationships when speakers deliver potentially oppressive utterances, such as commands, requests, or

refusals. This aligns with the findings of Fitriani et al. (2023), who report that online sellers use directive speech strategically to guide buyers without appearing coercive.

The dominant categories suggest that the communication strategy in the analyzed Shopee corpus shifts from an instructional model to a consultative one. Sellers do not simply encourage buyers to purchase products; instead, they seek to position themselves as solution providers. In the context of digital business, this strategy is crucial because buyer decisions can be influenced by trust in the seller's competence and friendliness. Persuasive strategies in online transactions are also found in live e-commerce, where sellers use persuasive, suggestive, and convincing language to influence buyer interest (Sumarlam et al., 2024). However, the dominant language suggests caution. These findings do not necessarily reflect the general character of Shopee's digital communication, but rather indicate trends across the research corpus. These trends may be influenced by the channel composition, product type, store characteristics, promotional style, and the context of the offerings used in the data. Therefore, generalizations to the entire Shopee platform should be limited.

Channel differences also influence the distribution of utterances. In chat features, directive utterances appear more frequently as requests and commands because interactions occur to address practical needs, such as stock, size, address, or shipping. In product reviews, directives appear more frequently as advice, prohibitions, or suggestions because buyers are assessing their experience using the product. In direct promotions, directives often appear as invitations, suggestions, and urges because sellers aim to prompt buyers to make a quick decision. Thus, controlling the characteristics of the channel is important to avoid biasing the analysis toward one particular type of utterance.

These findings align with trends in digital pragmatics research, which suggests that e-commerce communication combines informative, persuasive, and interpersonal functions. Studies of speech acts in TikTok Shop and live shopping indicate that digital transactions are not solely oriented toward product sales but also toward building closeness, trust, and emotional responses in consumers (Santi et al., 2025; Addina et al., 2026). In online buying and selling, language is used to shorten distances, expedite

transactions, reduce uncertainty, and foster customer loyalty. The growth of internet users and digital activity in Indonesia has also driven changes in online commerce communication patterns, leading to increasingly digital interactions between sellers and buyers (DataReportal, 2025). Thus, directive speech on Shopee can be understood as a social tool that connects economic interests with the communication norms of a digital society.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of qualitative descriptive analysis supported by descriptive statistical tabulation of 156 directive utterances, the most dominant types of utterances in the online buying and selling corpus on Shopee are suggesting 45 data (28.85%), followed by requesting 33 data (21.15%), ordering 24 data (15.38%), inviting 18 data (11.54%), advising 14 data (8.97%), prohibiting 9 data (5.77%), allowing 7 data (4.49%), and urging 6 data (3.85%). The dominance of suggesting indicates a tendency towards a persuasive direction in the research corpus, but is not intended as an absolute generalization to all Shopee communications.

The most dominant delivery strategy was direct, with 92 data points (58.97%). However, the continuity of the utterances was still accompanied by politeness markers such as "sis," "mohon," "please," and "tolong." Sociopragmatically, directive utterances in Shopee function to facilitate transactions, persuade buyers, support trust and relationships in a linguistic-contextual manner, handle complaints, and set transaction limits. This research shows that digital communication in e-commerce remains influenced by interrelated social relations, politeness norms, channel characteristics, and economic goals.

This study has limitations because evidence regarding trust and transaction success is still based on linguistic indicators rather than transaction behavior data. Therefore, further research is recommended using larger empirical datasets across several product categories, comparing chat interactions, product reviews, and Shopee Live in greater detail, and examining the relationship between directive utterance types and buyer responses, store ratings, purchase conversions, or purchase decisions.

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