

# The Role of Personal Deictic Expressions in Pragmatic Empathy: An Analysis of Beauty Bloggers' Facial Mask Promotion Videos on Rednote

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**Abstract:** With the rapid growth of self-media, the number of beauty bloggers on Rednote continues to grow. In their product descriptions, bloggers frequently employ various pragmatic empathy techniques to convey communicative intentions, hereby attracting consumer attention and achieving promotional goals for cosmetics. As a linguistic carrier of pragmatic empathy, personal deixis play a crucial role in achieving empathetic effects. This study focuses on videos where Rednote beauty bloggers promote mask products, conducting an in-depth analysis of the pragmatic empathy techniques embodied in personal deixis within these videos and elaborating on their specific functions in communicative contexts.

**Key words:** Pragmatic Empathy; Personal deixis; Rednote; Beauty Bloggers' Advertising Vid

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

With the in-depth development of the Internet, social commerce has reshaped the consumption ecology. As a typical platform in this field, the number of beauty-focused bloggers on Rednote has exceeded one million, and their product promotion content, featuring scenario-based narratives and experiential sharing, has exerted a profound impact on users' purchasing behaviors (Wang, 2024). For instance, Liu Huina (2025) analyzed the presuppositions embedded in beauty bloggers' advertising language and found that these presupposition triggers enable bloggers to more easily attract consumers to purchase products. Such content as "shopping notes" and "video sharing" often closely align with the daily consumption scenarios of female users. By sharing shopping experiences and life details—such as constructing a vivid and authentic life picture for the audience through first-person "I" narrative of personal experiences—they narrow the psychological distance with the audience. According to Levinson (1983) and Ran Yongping (2007), the elimination of such distance is closely related to the practical application of personal deixis and pragmatic empathy strategies.

Inspired by Liu's (2025) research, this paper further focuses on the video content of beauty bloggers. Given that facial masks, as a high-frequency consumer skincare category, rely more on bloggers' personalized expressions, this paper focuses on exploring the specific application of pragmatic empathy strategies therein.

### 1.2 Literature Review

As an important strategy in verbal communication, pragmatic empathy has been extensively explored by scholars from diverse fields and theoretical perspectives.

In the field of political discourse, the application and effects of pragmatic empathy strategies are among the research focuses. Based on adaptation theory, Wu Xingdong and Li Junli (2012) took Obama's presidential election victory speech as the research object, analyzed how he won the emotional recognition of the audience through linguistic strategies, and revealed the realization path of pragmatic empathy in political speeches. Liu Xuelian and Fan Liqun (2017) focused on personal deixis in Trump's weekly radio speeches, and by analyzing the usage characteristics of pronouns such as "I", "you" and "we", they revealed how specific linguistic elements are used to narrow the psychological distance with the audience,

providing empirical evidence for the micro-mechanism of pragmatic empathy in political speeches. With the evolution of media forms, research on pragmatic empathy has gradually expanded from traditional political speeches to the fields of online communication and commercial discourse. In the context of e-commerce, Yang Juan, Ni Wen, and Chen Juan (2023) analyzed the linguistic characteristics of both buyers and sellers in online shopping transactions, pointing that the empathy phenomena arising in online shopping conversations and the pragmatic empathy principles reflected therein. They suggested that online sellers should appropriately use personal deixis, address terms, greetings, and modal particles in conversations with customers to facilitate the smooth completion of online transactions. Meanwhile, Wang Xuejia's (2023) study on live-streaming discourse found that hosts enhance the persuasiveness of their words through pragmatic empathy strategies, ultimately improving marketing effects. Both studies have confirmed the practical value of pragmatic empathy in commercial communication. In the field of advertising discourse, attention has also been paid to the pragmatic empathy function of personal deixis. Gao Yue (2022) analyzed personal deixis in English advertisements and pointed out that the rational use of pronouns such as "I" and "you" can effectively adjust the psychological distance between advertisers and audiences, serving as a key linguistic means to achieve emotional resonance. This research provides theoretical support for the strategic design of pragmatic empathy in commercial advertisements.

To sum up, existing studies have covered multiple fields such as political speeches, e-commerce live streaming, and advertisements, and have initially revealed the connection between personal deixis and pragmatic empathy. However, there are few studies on pragmatic empathy in beauty promotion videos. In view of this, this study intends to deeply analyze the usage characteristics of the first person and the second person in beauty bloggers' mask promotion videos, explore the pragmatic empathy strategies and functions behind them, so as to provide references for the practice of beauty marketing discourse and the contextual application of pragmatic empathy theory.

### 1.3 Research Questions

Drawing on Levinson's (1983) classification of personal deixis and his introduction to pragmatic empathy, this study takes as its corpus 10 mask promotion videos by beauty bloggers with over 200,000 followers. It aims to explore the usage of personal deixis in these videos and reveal the pragmatic empathy embodied therein. This research seeks to answer the following questions:

First, what are the frequencies of first-person and second-person deixis in beauty bloggers' mask promotion videos?

Second, how do different personal deixis realize pragmatic empathy in these videos?

## 2 Theoretical Foundation

The concept of "empathy" was first proposed as an aesthetic term by German aesthetician Robert Vischer in 1873, initially referring to the unconscious projection of one's own emotions onto an object during appreciation. With academic development, the concept has transcended disciplinary boundaries. Japanese linguist Kuno (1987) was the first to introduce it into linguistics, clearly defining empathy in a linguistic context as the degree of closeness between the speaker and the person or thing being described, a definition that laid a theoretical foundation for exploring the connection between linguistic forms and emotional resonance. He (1991) was the first to introduce empathy into pragmatics, proposing the concept of "pragmatic empathy," which refers to the emotional connection between communicators that enables them to envision and understand each other's intentions.

Lyons (1977) termed deixis with pragmatic functions as "empathetic deixis." Levinson (1983) categorized it into five types, among which personal deixis, as the basic type, connects speakers, hearers, or third parties in discourse through explicit or implicit referential expressions. It not only reflects the relationship between personal semantic references and participants' roles but is also deeply bound to context, typically divided into first-person (e.g., "I/we"), second-person (e.g., "you"), and third-person (e.g., "he/she/they"). Since deixis is closely linked to context, speakers choose different deixis to achieve empathy or other pragmatic functions according to varying contexts (Ran, 2007).

## 3 Methodology

This study adopts a combined qualitative and quantitative analysis method. The corpus consists of mask promotion

videos from ten different beauty bloggers on Rednote with over 200,000 followers each. Specifically, relevant video materials were collected first, then transcribed verbatim into textual corpus totaling 6,753 words.

The data analysis process consists of two steps. The first step is the statistical stage of personal deixis. Based on the established classification criteria, the occurrences of various types of personal deixis are identified and counted. The second step is the pragmatic empathy analysis stage. It involves carefully examining the contexts in which personal deixis appear, integrating pragmatic empathy theory, and linking with their semantic and syntactic functions to analyze effects such as how “we” creates a sense of unity and how “you” enhances interactivity.

## 4 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Usage of Personal Deixis in Beauty Bloggers’ Mask Promotion Videos

The frequency of personal deixis, derived from statistical analysis, is presented in Table 1 as follows:

Table1:The frequency of personal deixis

	First Person Pronouns		Second Person Pronouns	
Person Pronouns	我	我们	你	你们
Times	124	29	89	35
Total	153		124	

The first-person singular “我” appears 124 times, and the second-person “你” appears 89 times. Together, they form the core personal deixis in mask promotion discourse. The first-person plural “我们” appears 29 times and the second-person plural “你们” appears 35 times, which serve as supplements and jointly contribute to the establishment of emotional connections.

### 4.2 Pragmatic Effects of Personal Deixis in Beauty Bloggers’ Mask Promotion Videos

When introducing masks in their videos, beauty bloggers achieve the expected pragmatic empathy effect through the selection and use of first-person and second-person deixis in different contexts.

(1) First-person singular “我”: Enhancing authentic experience and narrowing emotional distance

“姐妹们，我现在敷脸敷到一半，我真的等不及了，我就想现在录给你们看。”

(“Sisters, I'm in the middle of applying a facial mask, and I really can't wait—I just want to record this for you right now.”)

“反正我是晒得越热越难受，敷他们这个就是越舒服，最近 618 你们肯定都是要买面膜的，这个我是超级推荐给大家。”

(“Anyway, the hotter I get from the sun, the more uncomfortable I feel, but applying this one makes me feel more and more comfortable. With the 618 shopping festival coming up, you must all be planning to buy facial masks, and this one I highly recommend to everyone.”)

In these two examples, the high-frequency use of the first-person singular “我” serves as a core pragmatic empathy strategy to convey sincerity through authentic experiences and strengthen emotional connections. Firstly, “我” constructs authentic scenarios through the blogger’s personal experiences and first-person perspective. By sharing immediate actions and the eagerness in the process, it anchors the promotion in specific usage contexts, weakens the sense of commercial alienation, and makes the audience feel that the blogger is genuinely using the product—thereby reducing their defensiveness and enhancing trust. Secondly, “我” conveys an understanding of the audience’s needs through details of personal experiences. It uses the blogger’s own feelings to precisely align with scenarios the audience may encounter, implicitly conveying an empathetic signal of “I understand your troubles” and enhancing emotional resonance.

In summary, through real experiences, immediate emotions, and interactions with “你们”，“我” not only strengthens the credibility of information but also conveys attention to the audience’s needs. It is a typical practice in pragmatic empathy that “builds trust through personal experience and shortens distance with sincerity”, promoting the transformation from “information reception” to “emotional identification”.

First-person plural “我们”: Creating a sense of group belonging and shortening psychological distance

“我真心建议大家一定一定要备一些面膜在你的身边，因为短时间之内，面膜确实是可以能够帮我们去急救修

复的。第一时间让我们的皮肤给稳定下来。”

“I sincerely suggest that everyone must have some facial masks on hand, because in a short period of time, facial masks can indeed help us with emergency repair. They can stabilize our skin immediately.”)

“ok 时间到了，我们用清水把脸洗干净就行，哇哦，这不是我吹，你看我敷完这个即刻的效果是真的能明显的感觉到脸白了一圈。”

“Okay, time’s up. We just need to wash our faces clean with water. Wow, I’m not bragging, you can see that the immediate effect after I applied this is really obvious—I can clearly feel my face has become a shade whiter.”)

In these two examples, the use of the first-person plural “我们” serves as a key pragmatic empathy strategy to weaken the identity difference between bloggers and audiences and strengthen emotional resonance. Firstly, “我们” blurs the boundary between the two parties, This expression elevates individual skin care behaviors to a collective action, making the audience feel aligned with the blogger in terms of skin care goals. It creates an atmosphere of joint participation, enhances the affinity of the discourse, and narrows the psychological distance with the audience. Secondly, it makes the audience feel that the blogger is experiencing the product alongside them. By presenting real effects from their own use, enabling the audience to think “the blogger’s real experience is also applicable to us”—thus making them more receptive to the recommendation. This increases the authenticity and credibility of the discourse, embodying the effort to shorten emotional distance in pragmatic empathy and thereby enhancing a sense of group belonging.

In summary, the use of “我们” in these two examples, by constructing group identity and emphasizing common interests, combined with the narrative of “我” based on real experiences, effectively shortens the psychological distance with the audience and enhances the persuasiveness of the discourse. This stands as a typical practice of pragmatic empathy strategies in beauty product promotion.

Second-person “你”: Focusing on audience needs and strengthening interactive resonance

“我现在洗掉给你们看，怎么样？亮不亮嘛你就说，而且它是很透的那种感觉，滑溜溜的，跟你们说就敷完之后，你上底就超级无敌服帖。”

“I’m washing it off to show you. How is it? Tell me, isn’t it bright? And it has this really translucent feel, smooth and slippery. Let me tell you, after using it, your foundation will go on super smoothly and fit perfectly.”)

“真的就如果你是爱熬夜的，然后喜欢喝下奶茶，吃点火锅，这个嘴巴上面也很难去控制的话，这个真的你就闭眼去敷，你们会回来谢我的。”

“Honestly, if you’re someone who stays up late, likes to drink milk tea, or eat hot pot, and just can’t control what you put in your mouth, you can definitely try this without hesitation. You’ll come back to thank me.”

In these two examples, the alternating use of the second-person pronouns “你” serves as a core pragmatic empathy strategy to precisely target audience needs and construct interactive scenarios. Firstly, “你” creates an atmosphere of equal communication through simulated conversational interaction, shortening the psychological distance and making the audience feel they are not passively receiving information but engaging in “one-on-one” real-time dialogue with the blogger. Secondly, it precisely targets specific groups such as those who stay up late or have heavy diets through the use of “你”. This deeply binds product information to the audience’s personalized needs, making viewers feel the blogger is having a tailored conversation with them.

In summary, the use of “你” in these two examples, by precisely targeting needs and constructing interactive scenarios, effectively achieves the pragmatic empathy effect of “focusing on the audience’s perspective—triggering emotional resonance—promoting action recognition”. This serves as a typical practice in beauty product promotion to shorten psychological distance and enhance persuasiveness.

## 5 Conclusion

This study reveals that personal deixis achieves pragmatic empathy in mask promotion videos by beauty bloggers on Rednote. It is found that the first-person pronouns “我/我们” shorten the distance with the audience, enhance the sense of group belonging and information credibility by constructing authentic scenarios, blurring identity boundaries, and building group identity; the second-person pronouns “你/你们” effectively achieve pragmatic empathy effects such as focusing on

the audience's perspective and triggering emotional resonance by simulating conversational interactions and precisely targeting audience needs. This provides references for the practice of beauty marketing discourse.

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