

Negotiating Value and Social Rapport: A Sociopragmatic Study of Seller–Buyer Interactions in Indonesian Market

Lusi Komala Sari ^{a,1*}, Muhammad Akbar ^{a,2}, Lucy Mgbemgasha Apakama ^{b,2}

^a Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia

^b Alvan Ikoku Vederal University, Indonesia

¹ lusikomalasari@gmail.com*

*korespondensi penulis

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: ABSTRAK

Pasar tradisional tetap menjadi pusat kehidupan ekonomi dan sosial masyarakat Indonesia, namun sedikit yang diketahui tentang bagaimana penjual dan pembeli menggunakan bahasa secara strategis untuk mencapai tujuan transaksi sekaligus menjaga hubungan sosial. Penelitian ini mengisi kekosongan tersebut dengan pertanyaan penelitian: Bagaimana interaksi penjual–pembeli di pasar tradisional Indonesia menggunakan strategi sosiopragmatik untuk menegosiasikan hasil ekonomi dan hubungan sosial? Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan purposive sampling 15 penjual dan 20 pembeli di Pasar Kodim, Pekanbaru, menghasilkan 20 interaksi terekam audio secara alami yang ditranskripsi verbatim dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis wacana sosiopragmatik, dengan kerangka teori tindak tutur Searle dan kesantunan Brown & Levinson. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penjual dan pembeli menggunakan tindak tutur assertive, commissive, directive, dan clarificatory bersama dengan strategi kesantunan positif untuk menyampaikan informasi, membujuk, dan mempertahankan keharmonisan sosial secara bersamaan. Proses negosiasi berlangsung secara berurutan, dimulai dengan tawaran awal, klarifikasi pembeli, dan penyesuaian penjual, menyoroti konstruksi makna secara interaktif. Selain itu, penjual menekankan produk lokal sebagai simbol identitas kolektif, sehingga transaksi ekonomi tertanam dalam narasi budaya.

Keywords:

Sociopragmatic;
Seller–Buyer Interaction;
Traditional Markets;
Speech Acts;
Politeness Strategies.

ABSTRACT

Negotiating Value and Social Rapport: A Sociopragmatic Study of Seller–Buyer Interactions in Indonesian Market. Traditional markets remain central to both the economic and social life of Indonesian communities, yet little is known about how sellers and buyers use language strategically to achieve transactional goals while maintaining social rapport. This study addresses the gap by asking: How do seller–buyer interactions at a traditional Indonesian market employ sociopragmatic strategies to negotiate economic outcomes and social relationships? A qualitative approach was used, involving purposive sampling of 15 sellers and 20 buyers at Pasar Kodim, Pekanbaru, with 20 naturally occurring audio-recorded interactions transcribed verbatim and analyzed using sociopragmatic discourse analysis, informed by Searle’s speech act theory and Brown & Levinson’s politeness framework. Findings reveal that sellers and buyers use assertive, commissive, directive, and clarificatory speech acts in conjunction with positive politeness strategies to simultaneously convey information, persuade, and maintain social harmony. Negotiation unfolds sequentially, with initial offers, buyer clarifications, and seller adjustments, highlighting the interactive construction of meaning. Moreover, sellers frame locally produced products as symbols of collective identity, embedding economic transactions within cultural narratives.

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Introduction

Traditional markets continue to play a vital role in the social and economic life of Indonesian communities, particularly in facilitating the distribution of daily necessities and contributing to local livelihoods. These markets not only support economic activity by providing access to affordable goods and work opportunities but also strengthen social networks and cultural traditions through frequent interpersonal interactions. In traditional market settings, buyers and sellers engage in dynamic verbal and non-verbal communication, where negotiation, bargaining, and language variation serve not only transactional functions but also the construction of social rapport and community belonging. Research shows that such interactions reflect linguistic strategies, including the use of local languages and persuasive negotiation techniques, which help build trust, familiarity, and buyer loyalty in socio-economic contexts (Afrianda & Rasyid, 2024; Fadilah, Wahid, & Hajar, 2023). Moreover, markets act as vibrant social spaces where sellers and buyers negotiate not just prices but also social meanings, align expectations, and maintain harmonious relations that support both economic outcomes and social cohesion (Sihombing, Maharani, & Putri, 2024).

From a linguistic perspective, interactions in traditional markets can be examined through the lens of pragmatics, which focuses on how speakers use language in context to communicate implied meaning and achieve intended effects on their interlocutors, rather than merely producing literal utterances (Nazeeva, Ibriza, Lubis, Azzahra, & Siregar, 2024). Pragmatic analysis demonstrates that linguistic exchanges convey more than surface meaning, encompassing speakers' goals, expectations, and the negotiation of interpersonal outcomes. In market conversations, language use is highly purposeful: sellers employ persuasive expressions, provide detailed information about product quality, and strategically adjust their wording to encourage purchases, while buyers ask questions, seek clarification, and negotiate terms to ensure fairness. These communicative practices reflect core pragmatic principles and illustrate how linguistic choices intersect with participants' rational economic considerations as well as social goals during negotiation (Suktiningsih, Widani, Putri Nila Sudewi, & Supatmiwati, 2024; Nur Fadillah, Wahid, & Hajar, 2023).

Within this pragmatic interaction, politeness strategies function as an essential mechanism that supports economic decision-making rather than merely maintaining social harmony. Sellers and buyers use forms of address, personal inquiries, and small talk to manage interpersonal relations and protect each other's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983). Positive politeness strategies, such as using familiar address terms or expressing concern for the buyer's preferences, foster social closeness and trust, which in turn increases the likelihood of successful transactions. Thus, politeness operates as a strategic resource that shapes pricing, negotiation outcomes, and consumer responses in traditional market interactions.

Despite the centrality of language in market transactions, existing studies have not fully integrated pragmatic analysis, politeness strategies, and economic considerations within a single analytical framework, particularly in the Indonesian context. Previous research has primarily focused on price negotiation or seller strategies in isolation (Putra, 2021; Sari & Hidayat, 2020), often treating language as a descriptive element rather than as a decisive factor in economic decision-making. Consequently, there remains a conceptual and methodological gap in understanding how pragmatic strategies simultaneously influence social interaction and economic outcomes in traditional markets.

To address this gap, the present study analyzes seller–buyer conversations at Pasar Kodim, Pekanbaru, with a specific focus on speech acts, politeness strategies, and negotiation mechanisms as forms of economic-pragmatic interaction. Pasar Kodim was selected as the research site due to its high frequency of face-to-face transactions, strong reliance on verbal negotiation, and the prominence of local products that require persuasive communication strategies. These characteristics make the market a relevant and representative setting for examining the interplay between language use and economic behavior.

This study is expected to contribute theoretically to pragmatic linguistics and economic sociolinguistics by demonstrating how pragmatic and politeness strategies function as integral components of economic interaction. By linking local conversational practices to broader discussions on language and economy, the findings offer insights into how linguistic strategies shape decision-making processes, consumer perceptions, and transactional efficiency. In addition, the study provides practical implications for market participants, policymakers, and communication- and

entrepreneurship-oriented education, particularly in promoting effective and culturally grounded communication practices.

Guided by a pragmatic framework, this article examines how speech acts, politeness strategies, and negotiation patterns are realized in traditional market interactions. The remainder of the article is structured as follows: the next section outlines the research methods and data collection procedures, followed by the presentation of findings and discussion of key pragmatic patterns. The final section concludes by summarizing the main findings and highlighting their theoretical and practical implications.

Metode

This study employed a qualitative approach to analyze seller–buyer interactions at Pasar Kodim, Pekanbaru, focusing on economic-pragmatic strategies in everyday market conversations. A total of 15 sellers and 20 buyers were selected using purposive sampling to represent diverse ages, genders, and market experience. Data were collected through audio recordings of naturally occurring interactions over one week, resulting in 20 interactions with an average duration of 5–15 minutes, supported by field notes documenting market context. The recordings were transcribed verbatim, including notation for pauses, overlaps, intonation, and relevant non-verbal cues. Analysis was conducted using an adaptation of Searle’s (1979) speech act theory and Brown & Levinson’s (1987) politeness framework. Utterances were coded by speech act type and politeness strategies, with inter-coder agreement (Cohen’s kappa = 0.87) to ensure reliability. Supplementary interviews were conducted solely to clarify metapragmatic intentions and were not treated as primary data. Ethical considerations were addressed through written informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality of participants. The researcher also maintained a reflective journal to monitor potential biases arising from prior familiarity with the market and personal assumptions about seller–buyer interactions.

Hasil dan pembahasan

The analysis of seller–buyer interactions at Pasar Kodim illustrates a complex interplay between language, economic reasoning, and social relationships, highlighting the dynamics of economic-pragmatic communication in traditional market contexts. Consistent with prior research on market discourse in diverse cultural settings (Placencia, 2004; Misra, 2019; Acheampong, 2020), sellers did not simply convey price information but strategically employed language to influence buyer decisions and manage interpersonal relations. The data indicate that economic objectives in traditional markets are achieved through communicative practices that integrate transactional efficiency with social rapport (Granovetter, 1985; Heller, 2010). In practice, sellers employed various pragmatic speech acts to achieve these goals, including assertive statements to present product quality, commissive acts to offer discounts or bonuses, directive statements suggesting quantities, and clarificatory questions to ensure transparency and fairness in transactions.

For instance, in one interaction, a seller highlighted the local origin of chili peppers by saying, “Bu, cabai ini dari desa kita sendiri, rasanya lebih pedas dan segar,” which functions simultaneously as an assertive speech act and a positive politeness strategy by emphasizing shared locality. The buyer responded with a price inquiry, “Berapa harganya per kilo?” serving as a clarificatory act that opens space for negotiation. The seller then offered a discount for purchasing two kilos, a commissive act that is both persuasive and relationally sensitive. The buyer’s acceptance concludes the transaction successfully. Another illustrative interaction involves a seller presenting fresh fish: “Ibu, ikan segar ini baru tiba dari nelayan tadi pagi,” followed by the buyer asking, “Kalau beli tiga ekor, ada potongan harganya?” The seller replied, “Boleh, Bu, saya berikan diskon sedikit, supaya ibu puas.” Here, the assertive statement conveys product quality, while the buyer’s clarificatory inquiry and the seller’s commissive offer illustrate a negotiation process that balances economic gain with relational maintenance. Such patterns align with studies in African and Asian market contexts, where buyer

questioning functions as a mechanism for fairness and transparency (Njoroge, 2019; Rahman & Karim, 2020).

The following table (Table 1) summarizes selected extracts, illustrating speech act types, pragmatic functions, and economic-social purposes observed in the interactions:

Table 1. Examples of Economic–Pragmatic Speech Acts in Seller–Buyer Interactions at Pasar Kodim

Extract	Speaker	Utterance	Speech Act Type	Pragmatic Function	Economic-Social Purpose
1	Seller	“Bu, cabai ini dari desa kita sendiri, rasanya lebih pedas dan segar.”	Assertive	Convey product quality	Build trust, highlight local origin
1	Buyer	“Berapa harganya per kilo?”	Clarificatory	Ask for price information	Ensure fairness, open negotiation
1	Seller	“Sepuluh ribu, Bu, tapi kalau Ibu ambil dua kilo, saya kasih diskon sedikit.”	Commissive	Offer discount	Persuade purchase, maintain rapport
1	Buyer	“Oke, saya ambil dua kilo.”	Acceptance	Confirm agreement	Complete transaction
2	Seller	“Ibu, ikan segar ini baru tiba dari nelayan tadi pagi.”	Assertive	Inform about freshness	Increase buyer confidence
2	Buyer	“Kalau beli tiga ekor, ada potongan harganya?”	Clarificatory	Negotiate price	Ensure fairness, explore deal
2	Seller	“Boleh, Bu, saya berikan diskon sedikit, supaya ibu puas.”	Commissive	Offer concession	Persuade, maintain relationship
3	Seller	“Bu, wortel segar ini baru dipetik pagi tadi.”	Assertive	Present product quality	Build buyer confidence
3	Buyer	“Saya mau satu kilo, harganya berapa?”	Clarificatory	Ask price	Open negotiation
3	Seller	“Lima ribu, Bu, tapi kalau ambil dua kilo, saya kasih tambahan gratis.”	Commissive	Offer incentive	Encourage bulk purchase, maintain rapport

Analysis of these interactions suggests that politeness strategies at Pasar Kodim extend beyond simple adherence to social norms, operating as integral tools of economic practice. Sellers frequently used positive politeness strategies, including kinship terms and light personal inquiries, to foster trust and relational closeness. While Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model of politeness offers a useful framework, the findings reveal that in a haggling-based, non-Western market economy, these strategies are dynamically adapted and intertwined with persuasive language. The emphasis on familiarity and cultural cues allows sellers to maintain face and simultaneously encourage buyer engagement, demonstrating that Western politeness frameworks require contextual flexibility to account for interactive norms in traditional informal markets.

Interactions also reveal cultural and identity-related dimensions embedded within economic discourse. Sellers consistently emphasized the local origin of products, framing purchases as symbols of community and regional pride. For example, by stating, “Bu, cabe ini dari desa kita sendiri, rasanya beda dan lebih pedas,” the seller not only persuades but also constructs collective identity, linking economic choice with cultural pride. This aligns with sociolinguistic research suggesting that economic

discourse can simultaneously perform ideological work, situating transactions within broader social and cultural narratives (Heller, 2010; Blommaert, 2015). Unlike market persuasion in high-speed, efficiency-driven environments (Darics, 2015), persuasion in Pasar Kodim is value-laden, embedding economic decisions within shared cultural frameworks.

Sequential analysis further highlights negotiation dynamics. Initial price statements establish a reference point, followed by buyer clarification or quantity-based inquiries. Sellers then adjust offers using persuasive or accommodative language, balancing profit motives with relational considerations. Transactions conclude with confirmation utterances, ensuring mutual agreement. This pattern mirrors findings in Vietnamese and Arabic market discourse, where sequential pragmatic moves structure negotiation, emphasizing interactional competence over direct confrontation (Nguyen, 2017; Al-Ali, 2018). Compared to modern retail environments with fixed prices (Svennevig, 2011), these sequential exchanges underscore the importance of pragmatic competence for successful economic interaction in informal markets.

Overall, the findings indicate a synergistic relationship among speech acts, politeness strategies, negotiation tactics, and economic reasoning. Seller–buyer conversations at Pasar Kodim function as micro-level sites where language, culture, and economy converge, producing transactions that are socially harmonious and economically effective. By integrating turn-by-turn analysis with cultural and relational insights, this study demonstrates that contextually grounded language practices shape real-world economic decision-making, extending existing research in economic pragmatics and market sociolinguistics while offering critical insights into the adaptability of Western theories in non-Western, haggling-based economies.

Simpulan

The findings of this study demonstrate that seller–buyer interactions at Pasar Kodim are shaped by a complex interplay of sociopragmatic speech acts, politeness strategies, negotiation tactics, and economic reasoning. By analyzing naturally occurring market conversations, this research highlights how economic objectives are achieved through contextually grounded language practices that integrate transactional efficiency with social rapport. Theoretically, this study contributes to the field of sociopragmatics by providing empirical evidence from a non-Western, haggling-based market, illustrating how Western politeness frameworks, such as Brown and Levinson’s model, are dynamically adapted to local interactional norms and culturally embedded economic practices. Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. Data were collected from a single traditional market, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other market types or cultural settings. Additionally, while supplementary interviews helped clarify metapragmatic intentions, they cannot capture all nuanced motivations behind utterances. Observational and transcription methods, although rigorously applied, are inherently constrained by the researcher’s presence and interpretive perspective, which may influence participant behavior and coding decisions. Future research could extend these findings by conducting comparative studies across different market types or regions to examine whether similar sociopragmatic and politeness strategies occur in diverse cultural and economic contexts. Furthermore, investigations could explore the impact of digitalization on traditional market discourse, such as the use of mobile applications, social media, or online haggling platforms, to understand how sociopragmatic strategies evolve in technologically mediated interactions. Exploring these areas would allow subsequent research to further refine theoretical models of sociopragmatics and expand understanding of language use in various market environments.

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