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Commissive Speech Acts of Sellers and Buyers in the Traditional Market of Rumah Tiga Village

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to characterize the commissive speech acts of merchants and customers at the traditional market of Rumah Tiga Village, Teluk Ambon. The method employed in this research is descriptive and qualitative. The research data refers to the words, phrases, and commissive speech acts of sellers and buyers, while the data sources are sellers and buyers consisting of two or more people who are currently involved in buying and selling transactions at the traditional market in Rumah Tiga Teluk Ambon. As for the data collection techniques utilized to gather data, they are observation and recording procedures. The observation technique was carried out by first reviewing the purchasing and selling interactions that occurred in the Rumah Tiga traditional market, while the recording technique was done by recording all the utterances and activities of traders and purchasers during the buying and selling process. The results of this study indicated that the commissive speech acts that regularly occur in transactions between vendors and purchasers at the traditional market in Rumah Tiga are promising, swearing, intending, offering, and vowing.

Keywords: Commissive Speech Act; Rumah Tiga Village; Seller and Buyer; Traditional Market.



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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as the primary tool for human communication, and its usage is significantly influenced by social environment and the connections between speakers (Kerr et al., 2025). The social nature of language interaction creates dynamic contexts where meaning emerges through collaborative processes between interlocutors, particularly in commercial settings where successful communication directly impacts economic outcomes (House & Kádár, 2023). In pragmatic studies, language is understood not only from the form of utterances, but also from the meaning that arises in specific settings (Yule, 1996; Septiana et al., 2019). This contextual approach to language analysis recognizes that communication effectiveness depends heavily on shared understanding between participants and the social infrastructure that supports their interactions (Aspers & Darr, 2022).

The study of speech acts in marketplace contexts has gained significant international attention due to the unique communicative challenges and opportunities present in commercial interactions. Crosscultural research has revealed substantial variations in how commissive speech acts are realized across different cultural and linguistic contexts (Gladkova, 2023). These variations reflect deeper cultural values, social hierarchies, and economic practices that shape buyer-seller relationships in diverse marketplace settings.

One essential notion in pragmatics is speech act, which refers to the activities performed by the speaker throughout words (Rusminto, 2015). According to Searle (1976), speech acts are separated into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Modern speech act theory has evolved to incorporate both rule-based and pragmatic perspectives, recognizing that illocutionary acts function through both conventional procedures and contextual interpretation (Kauffeld & Goodwin, 2022). Of the three categories, illocutionary acts stand out because they contain communicative aim and function, with recent theoretical developments emphasizing their role as performative updates that change the conversational context (Krifka, 2024).

One form is a commissive speech act, which is an utterance that commits the speaker to do something in the future, such as a promise, offer, or intention (Searle, 1976; Krifka, 2024). Commissive speech acts are particularly significant in marketplace discourse because they establish trust, create obligations, and facilitate economic transactions (Ahearne et al., 2021). In traditional markets, these speech acts serve as crucial mechanisms for building buyer-seller relationships and ensuring successful commercial exchanges (Agyekum, 2017).

The theoretical foundation for understanding commissive speech acts originates from Austin's (1962) pioneering work on performative utterances and was subsequently developed by Searle (1976) into a comprehensive taxonomy of illocutionary acts. Searle's classification identifies commissives as utterances that commit the speaker to some future course of action, distinguishing them from other speech act categories through their forward-looking temporal orientation and the speaker's assumption of obligation.

Contemporary developments in speech act theory have refined our understanding of commissive acts through several theoretical lenses. Krifka (2024) proposes a performative update semantics that models commissives as context-changing operations, emphasizing how these acts modify the common ground between interlocutors by introducing future-oriented commitments. This approach is particularly relevant for marketplace interactions where commissives function to establish predictable patterns of behavior between buyers and sellers.

The integration of speech act theory with interactional approaches has further enriched our understanding of commissive acts. House and Kádár (2023) advocate for examining speech acts within their sequential contexts, arguing that the illocutionary force of commissive utterances emerges through the interplay between conventional meanings and situated interaction. This perspective is crucial for analyzing marketplace discourse where commissive acts often occur within complex negotiation sequences.

International research has revealed significant cross-cultural variation in the realization and interpretation of commissive speech acts. Gladkova (2023) distinguishes between linguo-philosophical and sociocultural approaches to cross-cultural pragmatics, noting that commissive acts are particularly sensitive to cultural norms regarding obligation, trust, and interpersonal relationships.

Studies from various cultural contexts have documented distinct patterns in commissive act usage. Rababah (2023) analyzed Jordanian advertising discourse and found that commissives in commercial

contexts frequently combine with assertives to create compound speech acts that both guarantee outcomes and provide evidence for claims. This finding suggests that the boundary between commissive and assertive acts may be more fluid in certain cultural and commercial contexts than Searle's original taxonomy suggests.

Research on Asian contexts has revealed particular attention to politeness and face considerations in commissive act realization. Idemaru et al. (2019) compared Japanese and Korean deferential speech patterns and found that commissive acts in both cultures employ multimodal politeness cues, including voice quality modifications and pitch fluctuations, to signal appropriate levels of commitment and respect. These findings highlight the importance of considering paralinguistic features in commissive act analysis.

The study of marketplace discourse has emerged as a specialized area within pragmatics, focusing on the unique communicative demands of commercial interactions. Ahearne et al. (2021) provide a comprehensive framework for understanding buyer-seller interactions in contemporary contexts, emphasizing how technological changes and shifting power dynamics influence the strategic use of speech acts

Traditional marketplace studies have documented the central role of commissive acts in establishing trust and facilitating transactions. Agyekum (2017) analyzed the language of Akan herbal drug sellers and found that vendors employ a sophisticated repertoire of commissive strategies, including explicit guarantees, implied warranties, and conditional promises, to persuade customers and build credibility. This research demonstrates how commissive acts function as both persuasive tools and trust-building mechanisms in face-to-face commercial interactions.

Comparative research on traditional versus digital marketplaces has revealed important differences in commissive act usage. Aspers and Darr (2022) argue that online marketplaces rely more heavily on institutional mechanisms (reviews, ratings, platform guarantees) to substitute for the interpersonal commissive acts that characterize traditional markets. This shift suggests that the social functions of commissive acts may be partially replaced by technological solutions in digital commercial contexts.

Research on Indonesian marketplace discourse has identified several distinctive features that reflect broader cultural and linguistic patterns. Previous studies by Gustia et al. (2017) and Hariyanti (2018) have documented the prevalence of commissive acts in Indonesian traditional markets, noting the particular importance of religious and cultural references in strengthening commissive utterances.

The multilingual nature of Indonesian marketplace communication adds additional complexity to commissive act analysis. Code-switching between Indonesian, regional languages, and local varieties often occurs within commissive utterances, creating hybrid forms that draw on multiple linguistic resources to enhance persuasive effectiveness (Gustia et al., 2017).

The traditional market of Rumah Tiga Village, Teluk Ambon, provides an ideal setting for investigating commissive speech acts due to its role as a hub for economic contact where Ambon Malay is the primary communication medium. This linguistic environment exhibits diverse behaviors that reflect the complex interplay between language use and commercial practices, making it particularly suitable for detailed pragmatic analysis.

METHODS

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze commissive speech acts in marketplace discourse. The research design follows established protocols for ethnographic research in commercial settings (Harris et al., 2023), incorporating both participant observation and audio recording techniques to capture the full range of communicative behaviors in buyer-seller interactions.

The research data consists of words, phrases, and commissive speech acts of sellers and buyers, while the data sources are sellers and buyers consisting of two or more people currently engaged in buying and selling transactions at the traditional market in Rumah Tiga Teluk Ambon. The selection of participants followed purposive sampling criteria to ensure representation of different vendor types, customer demographics, and transaction categories.

Data collection was conducted from March 2nd to April 1st, 2023, involving 22 buyers and 21 sellers across various product categories including fresh produce, textiles, prepared foods, and household goods. The extended data collection period allowed for observation of recurring patterns and variations in commissive act usage across different market conditions and participant relationships.

The data collection techniques utilized were observation and recording procedures, following established protocols for ethnographic research in marketplace settings (Harris et al., 2023). The observation technique was carried out by first reviewing the purchasing and selling interactions that occurred in the Rumah Tiga traditional market, with particular attention to non-verbal behaviors, contextual factors, and sequential patterns in buyer-seller exchanges. The recording technique involved documenting all utterances and activities of traders and purchasers during the buying and selling process, using high-quality digital audio equipment to ensure accurate transcription of all speech acts.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman paradigm, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analytical framework drew upon Searle's (1976) classification of commissive speech acts while incorporating contemporary perspectives on speech acts and interaction (House & Kádár, 2023; Kauffeld & Goodwin, 2022). The analysis incorporated technique triangulation by comparing results of recordings, observations, and field notes to ensure validity and reliability of findings.

The coding process involved multiple stages: initial identification of commissive utterances, classification according to commissive subtypes, analysis of contextual factors, and examination of sequential patterns. Inter-rater reliability was established through independent coding of a subset of data by two trained research assistants, achieving a Cohen's kappa of 0.87 for commissive act identification and 0.82 for subtype classification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed four primary types of commissive speech acts occurring in the traditional market interactions: promising, swearing, intending, and offering. Each type serves distinct communicative functions within the buyer-seller relationship and contributes to the overall effectiveness of marketplace discourse. The frequency distribution shows promising (34%), offering (28%), swearing (22%), and intending (16%) as the primary commissive categories identified in the corpus.

Commissive Speech Act of Promising

Narrative Context : A buyer inquired about the price of a shirt, and the seller offered a discount with a

promise to maintain the reduced price.

Buyer : *Baju ini barapa?* (How much is this shirt?)

Seller : Lima puluh ribu, tapi kalo kaka ambil dua, beta kasih empat puluh lima ribu satu. (Fifty

thousand, but if you take two, I'll give you forty-five thousand each.)

The seller's utterance constitutes a commissive speech act of promising, characterized by the conditional structure "if you take two, I'll give you forty-five thousand each." This commissive act demonstrates several key features identified in international marketplace research. First, it combines a conditional structure with an explicit commitment, creating what Rababah (2023) terms a "compound commissive" that both specifies conditions and guarantees outcomes.

The temporal structure of this promise is particularly significant. Unlike simple promises that commit to future actions, this marketplace promise creates an immediate conditional commitment that becomes binding upon acceptance. This pattern aligns with findings from cross-cultural studies of commercial commissives, which show that marketplace promises often employ conditional structures to manage risk while maintaining credibility (Agyekum, 2017).

International research provides important comparative context for understanding this promising behavior. Agyekum's (2017) study of Akan herbal sellers documented similar conditional promising strategies, where vendors use "if-then" structures to create flexible commitments that can be honored immediately upon customer compliance. The structural similarity between Indonesian and Ghanaian marketplace promising suggests potential universal patterns in commercial commissive usage.

However, cultural differences emerge in the specific linguistic markers used to signal commitment strength. While Indonesian sellers in this study rely primarily on verb forms and conditional particles, Agyekum (2017) found that Akan sellers frequently incorporate proverbs and cultural references to strengthen their promises. This difference reflects broader patterns in cross-cultural commissive realization

documented by Gladkova (2023).

Research on buyer-seller interactions in other contexts reveals additional comparative insights. Ahearne et al. (2021) note that modern commercial contexts increasingly rely on institutional guarantees rather than individual promises, suggesting that the personal commissive strategies observed in Rumah Tiga market represent a more traditional approach to trust-building in commercial relationships.

This type of commissive speech act serves multiple functions in marketplace discourse. Primarily, it creates a binding commitment from the seller that incentivizes bulk purchases while managing price negotiation. The promise structure demonstrates strategic use of commissive acts to influence buyer behavior while maintaining seller credibility in the marketplace (Saragih, 2024).

The promise also functions as a trust-building mechanism, addressing the fundamental challenge of asymmetric information in marketplace transactions. By making explicit commitments about pricing, sellers reduce buyer uncertainty and create conditions for successful transaction completion. This function aligns with theoretical perspectives on commissives as context-changing operations that modify the common ground between interlocutors (Krifka, 2024).

Commissive Speech Act of Swearing

Narrative Context : A buyer was negotiating the price of jeans, and the seller used a religious oath to

emphasize the fairness of their final offer.

Buyer : Boleh kurang lagi seng? (Can you reduce it more?)

Seller : Wallahi kaka mau cari di tampa mana lai seng ada celana jeans harga bagitu, mentok

sudah dua ratus. (By God, where else will you find jeans at that price? The lowest I

can go is two hundred.)

The seller's utterance represents a commissive speech act of swearing, characterized by the religious invocation "Wallahi" (By God). This type of commissive act combines commitment with religious authentication, creating what Peters (2024) terms a "sociocultural-conceptual communicative act" that draws on shared cultural and religious frameworks to enhance credibility. The structure of this swearing act reveals sophisticated pragmatic strategies. The seller combines the religious oath with a rhetorical question and an explicit price commitment, creating a multi-layered commissive that addresses multiple aspects of the negotiation. The rhetorical question functions to justify the price by implying market comparison, while the oath authenticates the seller's honesty, and the final price statement creates a binding commitment.

Cross-cultural research reveals significant variation in the use of religious and cultural references in commissive acts. Al-Shboul's (2023) comparative study of Jordanian and American threatening commissives found that Jordanian speakers more frequently invoke religious references to strengthen speech acts, suggesting that the pattern observed in Rumah Tiga market reflects broader Middle Eastern and Islamic cultural influences. The use of religious oaths in commercial contexts appears to be particularly prevalent in societies with strong religious traditions. However, the specific functions of these oaths vary across cultures. While Indonesian sellers use religious oaths primarily to authenticate honesty and finalize negotiations, research on other Islamic contexts suggests additional functions including community building and moral positioning (Rababah, 2023).

Comparative research on politeness strategies in Asian versus Western contexts provides additional insight into this swearing behavior. Su (2022) found that East Asian commercial interactions often employ indirect strategies to maintain face, contrasting with the direct oath-taking observed in this Indonesian context. This difference suggests that Indonesian marketplace discourse may incorporate Middle Eastern directness patterns alongside Asian politeness considerations. The swearing mechanism demonstrates how traditional market participants employ religious and cultural references to enhance the persuasive power of their commissive utterances, reflecting the broader social infrastructure that supports marketplace interactions (Aspers & Darr, 2022). This finding contributes to theoretical discussions about the relationship between speech acts and cultural contexts. Peters (2024) argues that threatening and oath-making should be understood as sociocultural-conceptual acts rather than purely linguistic phenomena. The religious swearing observed in this study supports this perspective by showing how commissive acts draw on shared religious frameworks to create binding commitments that extend beyond purely linguistic obligation.

Commissive Speech Act of Intention

Narrative Context : A buyer inquired about young corn availability, and when informed it was sold out,

expressed their intended use for the product.

Buyer : *Ada jagung muda?* (Do you have young corn?)

Seller : Jagung muda seng ada ade su abis dari berapa hari kamareng, kalo mau besok. (Young

corn is not available, it's been sold out for a few days. If you want it, come

tomorrow.)

Buyer : Oh seng ada ka tanta. Padahal beta mau biking sayur capcay. (Oh, you don't have any,

Auntie. I was planning to make capcay vegetables.)

The buyer's final utterance constitutes a commissive speech act of intention, expressing their commitment to a future cooking activity. This type of commissive act differs from promises and oaths in that it commits the speaker to private rather than interpersonal actions. However, its occurrence in marketplace discourse serves important interactional functions that extend beyond simple self-commitment. The temporal structure of this intention statement is particularly interesting. The buyer uses the auxiliary "mau" (want/will) combined with "biking" (make), creating a commitment to future action that explains their current purchase motivation. This structure aligns with theoretical perspectives on commissive acts as future-oriented utterances that create speaker obligations (Searle, 1976).

International research on buyer intention expression in commercial contexts reveals diverse patterns across cultures. Liu and Liu (2023) analyzed interpersonal strategies in international business emails and found that intention statements serve important relationship-building functions in cross-cultural commercial communication. However, their research focused on formal business contexts rather than traditional marketplace interactions.

Research on small talk and rapport building provides relevant comparative context. Saragih (2024) found that genuine small talk, including personal intention sharing, significantly improves negotiation outcomes in business-to-business relationships. The intention statement observed in this study appears to serve similar rapport-building functions in the traditional market context. Cross-cultural studies of politeness strategies suggest that intention sharing may be particularly important in collectivist cultures where personal relationships influence commercial transactions. Culpeper and Pat (2021) found that Hong Kong speakers frequently use personal disclosure as a politeness strategy, suggesting that the Indonesian buyer's intention statement may reflect broader Asian cultural patterns.

This type of commissive speech act serves important relational functions in marketplace discourse by sharing personal information that humanizes the transaction and potentially motivates the seller to provide better service or remember the customer's needs for future visits (Agyekum, 2017). The intention statement also demonstrates how commissive acts can function as rapport-building mechanisms in buyer-seller interactions (Saragih, 2024).

The intention statement creates what House and Kádár (2023) term "interactional alignment" by providing the seller with insight into the buyer's motivations and needs. This alignment can facilitate more effective service provision and contribute to long-term relationship building between market participants.

Commissive Speech Acts of Offering

Narrative Context : A buyer negotiated with a squid vendor, proposing a bulk purchase deal.

Buyer : Cumi satu plastik barapa? (How much is a bag of squid?)

Seller : Sepuluh ribu satu plastik. (Ten thousand per bag.)

Buyer : Dua lima belas sudah supaya beta ambel dua. (Just fifteen thousand for two, so I'll take

two.)

Seller : *Iyo* (Yes.)

The buyer's utterance "Just fifteen thousand for two, so I'll take two" represents a commissive speech act of offering, combining a price proposal with a purchase commitment. This type of commissive act is particularly significant in traditional market negotiations as it simultaneously proposes terms and commits

the speaker to follow through if the terms are accepted (Ahearne et al., 2021). The structure of this offering act reveals sophisticated negotiation strategies. The buyer combines a price counteroffer with an immediate commitment to purchase, creating what can be termed a "conditional commissive offer." This structure reduces seller risk by guaranteeing immediate transaction completion if the proposed terms are accepted.

International research on negotiation and offering behaviors provides important comparative context. He and Xia (2024) analyzed Chinese real estate agents' persuasion strategies on WeChat and found that successful agents frequently combine price proposals with immediate commitment offers, similar to the pattern observed in this Indonesian marketplace interaction. Research on buyer-seller negotiation across cultures reveals significant variation in offering strategies. Kim et al. (2024) used agent-based modeling to study prehistoric market development and found that successful marketplace interactions consistently involve reciprocal commitment mechanisms where offers include immediate fulfillment guarantees.

Cross-cultural studies of business negotiation suggest that the combining of offers with commitments may be particularly effective in high-context cultures where relationship building is crucial for commercial success. The Indonesian buyer's strategy of immediate commitment appears to align with Asian cultural preferences for relationship-based commerce.

The offering structure demonstrates the reciprocal nature of commissive acts in marketplace discourse, where both buyers and sellers use commitments to facilitate successful transactions. This finding contributes to theoretical understanding of how commissive acts function in interactive contexts rather than as isolated speech events. From a practical perspective, the offering behavior observed in this study suggests that successful marketplace negotiation involves strategic use of commissive acts to reduce uncertainty and facilitate rapid transaction completion. This insight has implications for understanding traditional market efficiency and the role of speech acts in economic coordination.

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Implications for Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

These comparative findings contribute to broader theoretical discussions in cross-cultural pragmatics. The variation in commissive act realization across cultures supports ethnopragmatic approaches that emphasize the importance of cultural context in speech act interpretation (Gladkova, 2023). However, the presence of universal structural patterns suggests that certain functional pressures in commercial interactions may constrain cross-cultural variation. The findings also support House and Kádár's (2023) argument for integrating speech act analysis with interactional approaches. The effectiveness of commissive acts in Indonesian marketplace discourse appears to depend not only on their linguistic form but also on their appropriate integration within culturally specific interaction patterns.

CONCLUSION

Research on commissive speech acts of sellers and buyers at the traditional market of Rumah Tiga Village, Ambon Bay, reveals that commissive speech acts, which bind speakers to future actions, are fundamental components of marketplace discourse. The analysis identified four primary types of commissives: promising (34%), offering (28%), swearing (22%), and intending (16%), each serving distinct communicative and relational functions within buyer-seller interactions. The findings demonstrate that commissive speech acts function as crucial mechanisms for establishing trust, facilitating negotiations, and building relationships in traditional market contexts. These speech acts operate within a complex social infrastructure that combines linguistic conventions, cultural practices, and economic necessities (Aspers & Darr, 2022). The study contributes to our understanding of how pragmatic phenomena manifest in specific cultural and economic contexts, extending speech act theory to encompass the dynamic realities of marketplace communication.

Comparative analysis with international research reveals both universal patterns and culture-specific variations in commissive speech act usage. Universal patterns include the prevalence of conditional

structures, trust-building functions, and sequential integration within negotiation processes. Culture-specific patterns include the use of religious authentication, emphasis on rapport building through personal disclosure, and moderate directness levels that reflect Indonesian cultural values. The theoretical implications of this research extend beyond marketplace discourse to broader questions in pragmatics and cross-cultural communication. The findings support ethnopragmatic approaches that emphasize cultural context while also revealing universal functional pressures that constrain variation across cultures. The integration of commissive acts within sequential interaction patterns supports contemporary approaches that combine speech act theory with interactional analysis.

Future research should explore several important directions. First, longitudinal studies could examine how commissive speech act patterns change as traditional markets adapt to digital technologies and changing consumer expectations. Second, comparative studies across different Indonesian regions could reveal the influence of local cultural and linguistic factors on commissive act realization. Third, experimental studies could test the effectiveness of different commissive strategies in achieving commercial outcomes. Finally, research on the acquisition and teaching of marketplace commissive acts could contribute to practical applications in intercultural business communication.

The study's limitations include its focus on a single market location and the relatively short data collection period. Future research would benefit from multi-site comparisons and extended ethnographic engagement to capture seasonal and temporal variations in commissive act usage. Additionally, the inclusion of customer satisfaction and transaction outcome measures could provide insights into the practical effectiveness of different commissive strategies. Despite these limitations, this research provides important insights into the role of commissive speech acts in traditional marketplace discourse and contributes to broader theoretical and practical understanding of pragmatics in commercial contexts. The findings have implications for understanding cultural variation in commercial communication and for developing culturally sensitive approaches to business communication training and intercultural commerce.

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