

THE ART OF COMPLAINT SPEECH ACTS IN INTERACTIONS AT TRADITIONAL MARKETS

Anak Agung Ayu Dian Andriyani¹⁾, Ida Ayu Putri Gita Ardiantari²⁾, Elly Triasih Rahayu³⁾

Faculty of Foreign Languages Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Denpasar^{1),2)}

Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Purwakarta³⁾

Indonesia^{1),2),3)}

agungdianjepang@unmas.ac.id 1), idaayupugitaa@unmas.ac.id 2)

Abstract

This qualitative research aims to discover the art of complaint speech acts between sellers and buyers in interactions at traditional markets using a sociopragmatic perspective. The role of traditional markets is very important as a medium and space of communication that is very complex with various communication strategies not only based on context but also informative. This research focuses on the function of speech acts and politeness strategies used in delivering complaints. The research location was carried out at each traditional market located in Denpasar municipality and Badung regency considering these two locations have market visitors who are very heterogeneous, coming from various regions in Bali as well as outside Bali. This descriptive qualitative approach collected data through direct observation using recording, note-taking techniques and supported by interview techniques with participants in interactions at traditional markets. The data obtained were analyzed using the pragmatic equivalent method whose determinant tools are outside language, namely how utterances are understood and used in social interaction. In addition, the data after being analyzed were described using ordinary words so that they are easy to understand by readers. The results of the research show that complaint speech acts in traditional markets have various functions of expressive, directive, commissive, and assertive speech acts which are packaged functionally both directly and indirectly through inserting humor, by applying positive and negative politeness strategies to avoid conflict between both parties and maintain harmony in transactional interactions. Complaint speech acts not only serve as an expression of dissatisfaction from sellers and buyers, but also as a tool of price negotiation, building solidarity, creating interpersonal closeness, as well as maintaining the continuity of social relations. These findings show that complaint speech acts in the context of situations occurring in traditional markets have an art of communication value that is strongly tied to social situational context, as well as a communication purpose so that harmony is established. This research is expected to enrich scientific treasures in sociopragmatic studies, in the traditional economic domain of buying and selling in traditional markets.

Keywords –*sociopragmatics, complaint speech acts, politeness strategies, social interaction*

Introduction

Human communication tools are language. Either spoken orally or delivered through written words (Mailani; Nuraeni; Syakila & Lazuardi, 2022; Siregar, Silvi, Hasibuan & Rambe, 2023). In its function as a communication tool, language is not only used as a medium to deliver information, but also becomes a medium of emotional expression in social life. One of them is

in daily interaction, such as in traditional markets. Speech acts that appear are very varied depending on the context of the situation and the purpose of the speaker in expressing meaning, feelings, and interests. One form of speech act that often appears in social interaction is complaint speech acts. Complaint speech acts, in general, will appear when the speaker feels dissatisfied with certain situations, such as the price of goods, market conditions, service, or economic conditions. In the context of traditional markets, complaints become an important part of communication strategies between sellers and buyers because they are closely related to the process of negotiation and social relations among market participants.

Traditional markets are markets built and managed by government, private, cooperatives or local community self-help with business places in the form of stalls, shops (Aliyah, 2017). Markets are not only places of economic transactions, but also spaces of cultural and social interaction of society. Verbal interaction in traditional markets shows the dynamics of language use that is unique, spontaneous, and full of pragmatic meaning. Sellers and buyers often use complaint utterances to gain sympathy, lower prices, maintain social relations, or show certain cultural identity. This phenomenon shows that complaint speech acts have unique artistic value because inside them there are expressive elements, language strategies, intonation, and local cultural context that influence the meaning of utterances.

Speech acts are actions carried out through utterances. Austin divided speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (Austin, 1962). In traditional market interactions, complaint speech acts are often realized in the form of complaints about expensive prices, few goods, economic conditions, or buyer and seller behavior. Each utterance contains certain actions called illocutionary acts (Austin, 1962). Illocutionary speech acts can be classified into five main categories, namely assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative (Searle, 1979). In this classification, complaint speech acts basically belong to the expressive category because they function to express the psychological state of the speaker in the form of dissatisfaction, disappointment, difficulty, or suffering towards a situation. Based on the phenomenon that occurs in traditional market interactions, complaint utterances do not have a single function, but have indirect illocutionary force. So besides functioning originally to express feelings as a form of expressive function implementation, they can also carry out other functions adjusted to the context of the situation. Context is an interpretation of what the speaker means in a particular context and how that context influences what is spoken (Yule, 1996). Sociopragmatic studies see that the meaning of utterances is not only understood from language structure, but also based on social and cultural context behind them. Complaint speech acts in traditional market interactions cannot be separated from context of situation, social relations, age, social status, or local culture of the speakers (Yule, 1996). And politeness becomes an important guideline to maintain harmony in business interaction (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Andriyani, 2022).

This qualitative research aims to find the existence of the art of complaint speech acts between sellers and buyers in traditional market interactions using a sociopragmatic perspective. This research focuses on the function of speech acts and politeness strategies used in delivering complaints. The research location was carried out in each traditional market located in Denpasar municipality and Badung regency considering that these two locations have very heterogeneous market visitors, coming from various regions in Bali and outside Bali. The method and data collection techniques used are descriptive qualitative approach by collecting data through direct observation using recording, note-taking and supported by interview techniques with participants in traditional market interactions. The data obtained were analyzed using the pragmatic equivalent method where the determinant lies outside the language, namely how utterances are understood and used in social interaction. In addition, the data after being analyzed were described using ordinary words so that they are easy to understand by readers.

Research on speech acts in traditional markets has been widely conducted, among them the most dominant speech act found in buying and selling interactions in Pulung traditional market is directive speech acts (Sari & Cahyono, 2022). Various functions of speech acts were found in supporting interactions in traditional markets, namely the implementation of expressive speech acts in supporting buying and selling transactions and politeness in language also becomes a support in the success of buying and selling transactions (Saputri; Setyorini & Irma 2022; Damayanti, Suryaningsih & Kasmawati, 2023). Various interactions in markets also found various functions of speech acts depending on the context of the utterances among participants. However, most still focus on the form of speech acts in general, negotiation strategies, and politeness in language. Research on the art of complaint speech acts as expressive form in traditional market interactions is still relatively limited. Some previous studies show that interactions in traditional markets are dominated by illocutionary and expressive speech acts in bargaining process. In addition, language strategies and politeness become important elements in building social relations between sellers and buyers in traditional markets. The phenomenon of complaint speech acts is interesting to study because it reflects creativity and art of speech of society in expressing dissatisfaction without damaging social relations. In Indonesian society culture, especially in traditional markets, complaints are often delivered politely, humorously, or with persuasive expressions so that they create communicative and friendly interaction. Therefore, research focusing on the function of complaint speech acts is important to reveal the functions of complaint speech acts that occur in buying and selling interactions in traditional markets. This research is expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic studies, especially expressive speech acts in local cultural context. In addition, this research can also be linguistic documentation of the richness of art of speech of society in traditional markets that are increasingly pressured by modernization of communication and development of modern markets

Methodology

This study applied a qualitative descriptive design with a sociopragmatic approach to explore the art of complaint speech acts in traditional market interactions. The subjects of the research were sellers and buyers in traditional markets located in Denpasar municipality and Badung regency, chosen because these areas represent heterogeneous visitors from various regions in Bali and outside Bali. Data were collected through direct observation in the market setting, using recording to capture spontaneous interactions, note-taking to document contextual details such as time, location, and participant characteristics, and interviews with sellers and buyers to clarify meanings, intentions, and strategies behind their utterances. The instruments used included audio recorders, field notes, and interview guidelines, which ensured that both verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication were comprehensively documented.

The data were analyzed using the pragmatic equivalent method, in which the determinant lies outside the language, focusing on how utterances are understood and used in social interaction. The analysis involved reducing data to select utterances relevant to complaint speech acts, classifying them into expressive, directive, commissive, and assertive categories, interpreting their functions and politeness strategies, and describing the findings in ordinary words to make them accessible to readers. The research procedure consisted of preparation, including identifying the research focus, selecting markets, and preparing instruments; data collection through observation, recording, and interviews; data analysis using the pragmatic equivalent method; and reporting the results and discussion in accordance with academic standards. This methodological framework ensured that the study captured the natural dynamics of complaint speech acts in traditional market interactions and provided valid sociopragmatic insights.

Finding and Discussion

The results of the research show that complaint speech acts in traditional markets besides being expressive, in the phenomenon of interaction that occurs, complaint speech acts can also function to express (expressive), complain to ask the hearer to do or respond (directive), commissive and assertive packaged functionally both directly and indirectly through inserting humor, applying positive or negative politeness strategies to avoid conflict between both parties and maintain harmony in transactional interaction. Complaint speech acts not only play a role as expressions of dissatisfaction from sellers or buyers, but also as tools of price negotiation, building solidarity, creating interpersonal closeness, and maintaining continuity of social relations. These findings show that complaint speech acts in the context of situations occurring in traditional markets have artistic communication value that is very tied to social context, and there is a communication purpose so that harmony is established. This research is expected to enrich scientific knowledge in sociopragmatic studies, in the traditional economic domain of buying and selling in traditional markets.

Data (1):

Context situation (1):

Speaker : Fruit seller (female, around 55 years old)
 Partner : Buyer (female, around 40 years old)
 Location : Badung Market
 Time : 09.30 AM

Context situation: Seller offers the price of apples and oranges, because the price offered is cheap the seller directly complains about the current condition.

Utterance data (1):

Seller : *ngiring bu, metumbasan (come on ma'am, shopping), wenten jeruk ponkam, salak gula pasir, semangka, mari mari pake hari raya*
 Buyer : (buyer passes through fruit stall and approaches one seller who greets). *Jeruk ponkamnya berapa bu?* (How much is the ponkam orange ma'am?)
 Seller : *1 kilo nya Rp. 65.000 aja* (1 kilo is only Rp. 65,000)
 Buyer : *nda bisa kurang bu?* (Can't it be less ma'am?)
 Seller : *harganya sudah murah sekali bu cantik, jangan nae di tawar lagi. Mau hari raya semua pada naik harga buahnya lho.* (The price is already very cheap pretty ma'am, don't bargain again. Because of the holiday all fruit prices go up you know.)
 Buyer : (buyer sees the oranges are very fresh so interested). *1 kilo aja buk* (Just 1 kilo ma'am)

Analysis: The interaction in data (1) is communication between seller and buyer in daily activity, happening naturally in traditional market. In the initial interaction, the seller as speaker functions to greet and offer products so buyers become interested. In her activity, the seller greets as if understanding buyer's needs for holiday use, supported with utterances offering various fresh fruits and reducing distance according to positive politeness strategy. However, when the buyer bargains, the seller directly asks the buyer not to bargain again because the price offered is already very cheap. The seller's utterance is a complaint speech act accompanied by supporting utterance that the price is already appropriate because of the holiday causing all prices to rise. The directive complaint speech act spoken by the seller to the buyer is a speech act expressing complaint, dissatisfaction, or difficulty while aiming to influence the buyer in her role as hearer to do certain action. The seller's complaint to the buyer

containing request, hope, or encouragement to the hearer can be categorized as directive complaint speech act. Directive complaint speech acts are not only expressing dissatisfaction but used to influence or push the buyer (hearer) not to bargain. This utterance is done directly. Complaint speech acts are used during bargaining or negotiation process between seller and buyer. Although complaint utterances are often spoken, buying and selling interaction can continue or not depending very much on the context of the speech situation.

Data (2):

Context situation (2):

Speaker : Seller of offering facilities (female, around 60 years old)
 Partner : Buyer (female, around 45 years old)
 Location : Mengwi Market
 Time : 07.30 AM

Context situation: Seller states a promise that if the price goes down, she will give a cheaper price.

Utterance data (2):

Seller: *Mriki bugek, numbas napi? Niki wenten bunga sandat cempaka Sibang seger-seger, Mitir, wenten bunga pacah. Wawu ngalap niki. Anggen rahinan Sugihan Jawa.* (Come here bugek, what do you want to buy? Here are sandat flowers, cempaka from Sibang fresh, mitir flowers, pacar flowers, just picked. Can be used for Sugihan Jawa ceremony.)

Buyer : *1 Kilo aji kude bu, bunga pacah?* (How much is 1 Kg of pacar flowers?)
 Seller : Rp. 45,000 only for 1 Kilogram.
 Buyer : *Dados Mahal? Ten dados kirang?* (Why expensive? Can't it be less?)
 Seller : *Mih dewa ratu.... Nggih kayang sampun wusan rerainan icen tiang murah. Niki jeg kari tinggi hargane. Pokok manten Rp. 43,000. Tiang nunas bati Rp. 2000 manten.* (Oh God.... Yes, after the ceremony I will give cheaper price. Now the price is still high. The base price is Rp. 43,000. I only ask Rp. 2000 profit.)
 Buyer : (without saying anything, still takes the flowers)
 Seller : *Kanggiang nggih* (Please understand nggih).

Analysis: The interaction in data (2) happened naturally between seller and buyer during buying and selling communication in traditional market. The seller began warmly to attract buyer's interest and attention, aiming to get closer to the buyer. She also gave a promise to the hearer, which indirectly implemented positive politeness strategy according to Brown and Levinson (1978). The buyer was interested in the seller's offer because she needed flowers for the ceremony. But when the price was mentioned, the buyer asked for a reduction. The seller quickly responded in the form of a complaint but also gave a promise or commitment that the price would go down after the ceremony. In commissive function, the complaint was stated explicitly so the meaning was easy to understand and contained a promise to the hearer. Besides commissive, assertive function was also found, used to state facts about the high price due to the ceremony. The seller asked for understanding to maintain harmony so the buyer would accept the condition and hopefully return again. The complaint contained commitment or promise to be fulfilled in the future when the ceremony was over and prices became cheaper. This commissive complaint is tied to context because with context, participants can understand the message, purpose, and expectation of the interaction.

Conclusions

Complaint speech acts are one form of communication strategy that has an important role in building and maintaining social relations between sellers and buyers. Complaint speech acts not only function as a means of expressing feelings of disappointment, discomfort, difficulty, or dissatisfaction, but can also be used to achieve various communicative goals among participants with certain purposes in the process of buying and selling interaction. Based on the phenomenon that occurs in traditional markets, complaint speech acts function as expressive speech acts, namely to state the psychological condition of the speaker in the form of disappointment, annoyance, concern, or dissatisfaction towards a situation that is usually spoken by sellers to buyers or vice versa. However, in practice of traditional market interaction it is found that complaint utterances also have wider pragmatic functions. Complaint speech acts can function as directive when used to ask for help, obtain response, influence decisions, or negotiate with the hearer. In addition, complaint speech acts can function as commissive when the speaker states commitment, promise, or plan of action as a response to the condition that is complained. Meanwhile, complaint speech acts can also function as assertive when complaints are delivered based on facts, experiences, or real conditions experienced by the speaker. Positive politeness strategies that appear also become appropriate strategies in getting closer to buyers and giving comfort. Complaint speech acts are not merely emotional expressions, but also are forms of sociopragmatic competence as a medium to maintain harmony of social relations as well as achieve communication goals in economic activities of traditional market society.

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