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Speech Acts in Minangkabau Language during Commercial Transactions in Mentawai's Traditional Market: A Case Study in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut

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Abstract

This descriptive-qualitative research aims to analyze the forms of speech acts that use the Minangkabau language for commercial transactions in Mentawai's traditional market. The data were extracted from natural communication in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut, Mentawai Islands. This research focuses on identifying the five types of illocutionary acts: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarations. The result shows that assertive and commissive are the most dominant types, reflecting the transactional nature of the interactions. The other forms, expressive, are used to maintain harmony, while directives appear less frequently but serve specific purposes in agreement and decision-making. In addition, the declaration speech acts were not found during the transaction. This study highlights how cultural values and local norms shape the pragmatic use of language in the traditional market, especially in using the Minangkabau language.

INTRODUCTION

The use of speech acts in communication is a universal phenomenon found across all languages, including the Minangkabau language. Minangkabau language is a traditional language of the Minangkabau people who mainly reside in the mainland of West Sumatra Province, Indonesia, and various regions where the Minangkabau diaspora live, in neighboring provinces (Reniwati et al., [2016](#)) and neighboring countries, e.g., in Malaysia (Bungo & Hussin, [2011](#); Reniwati et al., [2016](#)). Minangkabau language is also spreading to the indigenous islands of Mentawai people (Al Ghifari & Susilowati, [2024](#); Muhammad, [2021](#)) for numerous Minangkabau diaspora live in Mentawai islands and because the islands are one of the authorized regencies of West Sumatra Province, the Mentawai regency.

The language of the Mentawai people is the Mentawai language. It is considered a stable indigenous language with many active speakers, approximately 64.000 people (ethnologue.com, [2025](#)), and is regarded as one of Indonesia's critical regional languages and deserves close attention (Budiono & Novita, [2021](#)). The Minangkabau diaspora predominantly uses the Minangkabau language in the Mentawai islands, and it is mainly used for transactional purposes, particularly during market activities.

Several research regarding the use of speech acts in commercial transactions by using traditional language in traditional markets have been conducted by numerous researchers. The

result of declarative speech acts analysis of the Minangkabau language during the commercial transactions of street vendors in Pasar Raya Padang (Erlian et al., [2013](#)) shows that there are four types of declarative speech acts, i.e., decision, canceled, forbid, and permission. In addition, three strategies are used in the transaction: direct speech acts without politeness, direct speech acts with positive politeness, and direct speech acts with negative politeness. The result of speech acts analysis of *Pasambahan Manati Marapulai* at the Minangkabau wedding reception in Saniangbaka, Solok Regency, identified Searle's five types of speech acts (Basri, [2020](#)). Another related analysis of speech acts in Bahasa Minangkabau used by Minang Community in Tangerang (Adrallisman & Iwan, [2022](#)) finds the dominant type of speech acts used by the members of Minangkabau Diaspora Community in Tangerang which reveals that the dominant speech acts used is expressive, followed by commissive, representative, directive, and declarative.

In numerous previous research studies mentioned above, the speech acts analysis of the Minangkabau language in Mentawai has yet to be done. The existence of the Minangkabau language in Mentawai is an interesting phenomenon, for the Minangkabau language is not the mother tongue of the Mentawai people. People in Mentawai mostly use the Minangkabau language for transactional purposes in the traditional market. This linguistic phenomenon arises due to the presence of traders from the mainland on the market days, on certain days of the week when the ships docked bringing traders and goods from the mainland for its geographical separation from the mainland of Sumatra and the regional heavy needs on external traders for daily necessities.

This research analyzes five types of illocutionary acts proposed by Searle ([1969](#)) in the Minangkabau language for commercial transactions. The study was conducted in one of the traditional markets in the Mentawai islands, Pasar Raya Muara Siberut. Consequently, the Minangkabau language serves as a lingua franca for market interactions between locals and traders. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the use of speech acts of the Minangkabau language during commercial transactions in the Mentawai Islands. Among numerous markets in the Mentawai Islands, this study focuses on Pasar Raya Muara Siberut in the Siberut Selatan District as the primary site of analysis.

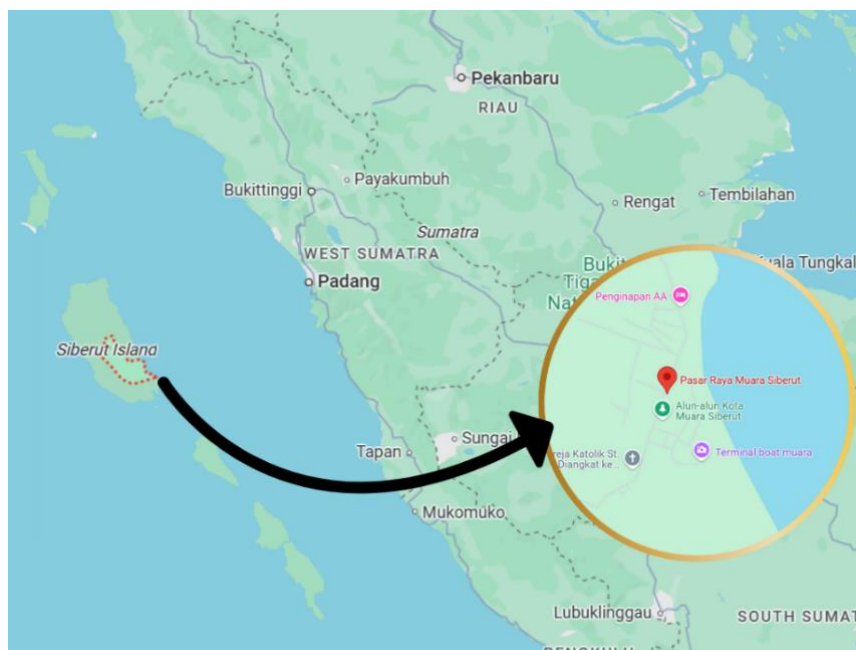


Figure 1. The Map West Sumatra Province and the position of Pasar Raya Muara Siberut

Pasar Raya Muara Siberut is a central market in Muara Siberut, the capital town of Siberut Selatan District. It is on the southeast coast of Siberut Island, the largest island in the Mentawai Islands group. Pasar Raya Muara Siberut is one of the most strategic markets in Siberut island for its closeness to the ferry port to the island, Terminal Boat Muara, where the boats from Padang, the capital of West Sumatra Province, docked twice a week.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Language is a system of symbols community members use to cooperate, interact, and identify themselves (Kridalaksana, [2008](#)). It is a sophisticated communication tool in many ways (Genetti, [2014](#)). As an essential part of communication, language connects individuals across different contexts, cultures, and experiences. People can convey messages and share emotions, intentions, and ideas, which shape social relationships through language. Language influences how people think, perceive the world, and interact with others, making it a central force in shaping human experience. By enabling collaboration, fostering empathy, and bridging cultural and social divides, language becomes essential for communication and understanding the complexity of human life.

A branch of linguistics that studies the phenomenon of human communication is called pragmatics, the study of language use in communication, specifically relating the relationships between sentences, context, and the situation in which the sentences are used (Richards et al., [1985](#)) in the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener (Yule, [1996](#)). Pragmatics is considered a somewhat broad branch of linguistics studies. Pragmatic analysis involves the function of language not only for conveying information but also for performing acts. One of the subjects of pragmatic studies, speech acts, treats language phenomena as communicative acts with specific functions like making requests, giving commands, and/or offering apologies.

Speech acts refer to a speaker's utterances in conveying the meaning, which makes listeners do specific things (Austin et al., [1975](#)). In his theory, Austin categorized speech acts into three types: 1) locutionary act, the basic act of utterance in the form of meaningful linguistic expressions; 2) illocutionary act, a speech act that contains a specific intended action within the utterance; and 3) perlocutionary act, a speech act that has an effect or impact on the interlocutor. Furthermore, the illocutionary acts were divided into several parts according to the communicative needs of language users: assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration (Searle, [1969](#)).

METHOD

This descriptive-qualitative study emphasizes its analysis of pragmatics. A qualitative approach explores and interprets the meanings individuals or groups assigned to a social or human problem (Creswell & Creswell, [2017](#); Creswell & Poth, [2016](#)), which emphasizes collecting data in natural settings where the participants experience the phenomenon being studied. Researchers play a central role in gathering and interpreting the data, often using various sources such as interviews, observations, and documents. Qualitative research is intended to understand phenomena in a natural context by prioritizing the depth of meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, [2017](#)) to describe, analyze, and interpret social phenomena based on the perspectives of the research subjects. According to Sugiyono ([2017](#)), the research design should remain open and adaptive, enabling the researcher to follow the dynamics of the field and the development of the data.

The initial stage of this research involved data collection through participant observation. Here, the researcher actively engaged in the environment by interacting with speakers and hearers during commercial transactions at Pasar Raya of Muara Siberut, Mentawai Islands, to gain deeper insights into the contextual use of language in real-time interactions. Data were collected utilizing direct participation, audio recording, and systematic note-taking from 11 to 20 August 2024. Sixty data items were gathered, transcribed, and classified into each form of speech act. This active involvement allowed for a more nuanced understanding of speech acts as they occurred naturally in the marketplace setting. The data collected was validated through a library and experts' triangulation process. The library triangulation was conducted based on the theory of illocutionary acts proposed by Searle (1969) in identifying speech acts. The expert triangulation process was conducted through a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving two experts on pragmatics and Minangkabau language from Universitas Andalas and Universitas Jambi. The FGD was held on 11 December 2024.

Following the data collection, the following stages included data classification and analysis. Data analysis was presented through an inductive approach, which entailed analyzing, grouping, and reducing the data to identify emerging patterns and draw conclusions. The final stage consisted of presenting the findings derived from the analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of speech acts using the Minangkabau language for commercial transactions in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut, Mentawai Islands, is focused on analyzing the illocutionary act proposed by Searle (1969). The analysis determines five types of speech acts: 1) assertive, 2) directive, 3) commissive, 4) expressive, and 5) declaration. From 60 data cases collected, the most dominant form found is assertive with 30 cases (50%), followed by commissive 15 cases (25%), expressive 9 cases (15%), directive 6 cases (10%) and no case (0%) of declaration type of speech act found in the analysis (table 1).

Table 1. Speech Acts in Commercial Transactions Using Minangkabau Language in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut, Mentawai Islands

No.	Types	Cases	Percentage
1.	Assertive	30	50%
2.	Directives	6	10%
3.	Commissive	15	25%
4.	Expressive	9	15%
5.	Declaration	0	0%
Total		60	100%

a. Assertive

Speakers use assertive speech acts to express their belief about the truth of a proposition (Labinaz & Sbisà, 2014; Searle, 1969). In the context of market interactions in Muara Siberut, the assertive type is often presented as statements or reports regarding product availability, prices, or quality. These utterances convey information and are generally accepted as contributions to mutual understanding between traders and buyers. In this research, assertiveness is the most dominant form of commercial transaction in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut. The sellers use this form of speech acts to explain the details of the products to the buyers. In addition, assertive speech acts in the transaction are also used to inform the products' quality, price, and quantity.

Datum 1

- Buyer : Bara harago cumi ko sakilo kak?
(How much does this squid cost per kilogram?)
Seller : Sakilo tigo puluah?
(It's thirty thousand rupiah per kilogram)

Datum 5

- Seller : Iko ka dibaok ke Padang, baa caronyo kak?
(This will be taken to Padang; how can I do that?)
Buyer : Di kasih es, masuk kotak, agiah plastik, tahannyo beko tu
(Add some ice, put them in the box, and wrap them in a plastic bag; it will keep them fresh)

Datum 11

- Buyer : Bara barek cuminyo ko uni?
(How much does this squid weigh)
Seller : ado nan saikua tu limo kilo, ada nan tiga kilo
(There are five kilograms per each, and there are three kilograms)

Datum 24

- Buyer : Ikan asin ndak ado yo, ni?
(Do you have salted fish?)
Seller : Ikan asin ado ikan tamban, iko nyo buk
(The only salted fish available is just this one, ma'am, ikan tamban)

Datum 35

- Buyer : Ado ikan yang lain lai?
(Is there any other fish to sell?)
Seller : indak ado do buk, ikan kini lagi kosong, musim badai
(No, ma'am. We have no more fish available, and it's stormy)

Datum 42

- Buyer : Dari ma baju-baju bekas ko uni baok ini?
(Where do these secondhand clothes come from?)
Seller : Awak dari padang Buk, jo ambu-ambu tibo tadi pagi
(I brought it from Padang, ma'am, and just arrived with ambu-ambu ship this morning)

Datum 51

- Buyer : Iko keladi dari ladang, uni?
(Is this taro beet from the farm, sist?)
Seller : Iyo, tapi bajak awak yang ke ladang
(Yes, but my husband planted it)

Datum 53

- Buyer : Patang kami lewat Bapak ndak ado nampak jualan, lai bukak, Pak?
(We passed by yesterday, but we didn't see you, did you open yesterday, Sir?)
Seller : Kalau sore lah tutuik, dari satangah enam pagi awak bukak
(We closed in the afternoon; We are open from 5:30 in the morning)

Datum 59

- Buyer : Iko karupuaknyo pakai kuah apo se ko, Uni?
(*What kind of dressings do these crisps have, sist?*)
- Seller : Duo macam ma Bu, ado kuah sate jo lado
(*There are two, satay sauce and spicy one*)

b. Directives

Directive speech acts are employed when the speaker intends to get the hearer to do something (Dorschel, [1989](#); Searle, [1969](#)). This is one of the most frequently observed types of speech acts in market settings. Traders and buyers use directives to request, command or suggest specific actions. The following are directive speech acts in commercial transactions in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut, Mentawai Islands.

Datum 4

- Buyer : Awak nio bali cumi ko, tapi baa cari baoknyo, sampai Padang malam.
(*We want to buy these squids, but how do we bring them? We arrive at night in Padang*)
- Seller : Bali se pilobox tu buk, masuak an dalam polibox agiah es
(*Just buy the cooler box, put them in, and add some ice*)

Datum 8

- Buyer : Lai manih salaknyo ko Pak?
(*Are these snakefruits sweet?*)
- Seller : lai Buk, cubolah ciek, manih ma Buk
(*Sure, Ma'am. Try one; they are sweet indeed, ma'am*)

Datum 15

- Buyer : Iko baa caro masaknyo ko?
(*How to cook this?*)
- Seller : Iko tanggaan kulik yang merahnyo ko, kok tidak merah gulai beko
(*Peel of the red scales, or else your curry will turn red*)

Datum 23

- Buyer : Bisuak jam bara apak bukak?
(*What time will you be open tomorrow?*)
- Seller : Tibolah ibuk pagi bisuak, lah ado ambo jualan tu
(*come in the morning tomorrow, I'm here already*)

Datum 39

- Buyer : Lai ado ukuran kami baju jo celana ko, Buk?
(*Do you have shirts and pants in our size, ma'am?*)
- Seller : Piliahlah Buk, cuboan ciek-ciek
(*choose and try, ma'am*)

c. Commissive

Commissive speech acts involve a commitment from the speaker to perform a future action (Pambudi, [2017](#); Searle, [1969](#)). In the observed interactions, commissives appear in the form of promises or offers made by traders to encourage future transactions or maintain customer trust. The following are commissive speech acts in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut commercial transactions.

Datum 2

- Seller : Bara kantong ibuk ambiak, beko ditolongan masuak an ka polibox
(*How many bags do you want, ma'am? We help you to put them into the cooler box*)
- Buyer : Duo kantonglah, pisahan yo, uni.
(*two bags, and separate them into different packages, please*)

Datum 29

- Buyer : Iko yang jua kapitang tidak bukak, kak?
(*The crab seller here is not open today, sist?*)
- Seller : Bisa, kok ditelpon bisa, ambo ado nomornyo.
(*They are. We can help you call the shop assistant if you want, we have the number.*)

Datum 27

- Buyer : Yang dagiang-dagiang se yo Ini
(*We only want the meaty one, please*)
- Seller : Kok dagiang sadonyo ma Buk, picayolah ibuk ka awak
(*These all are meaty, ma'am, trust me.*)

d. Expressive

Expressive speech conveys the speaker's psychological or emotional response to a situation (Gilbert, 1998; Searle, 1969). These are commonly found in greetings, gratitude, apologies, or complaints. In the market context, expressive establishes rapport and reflects social norms. The following are expressive speech acts in commercial transactions in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut, Mentawai Islands.

Datum 19

- Seller : Masuaklah Buk, apo cari tu?
(*Come in, Ma'am, what are you looking for?*)
- Buyer : Kami ka mancari makanan ringan
(*We are looking for some snacks*)

Datum 34

- Seller : Makasi uni, lah kanyang kami, lamak-lamak jajanan uni
(*Thank you, sist, we are full, and your snacks are delicious*)
- Buyer : Samo-samo Buk, bisuak kasiko liak yo Buk
(*You are welcome, Ma'am. Please come back here tomorrow*)

Datum 44

- Seller : Iko yang bakantong-kantong ko se tambahan untuk kami
(*Add those bags for us, please*)
- Buyer : Ndeh, maaf Buk. Lah punyo urang. Kok tidak kami agiah ma Buk
(*We are sorry, Ma'am. Someone has paid for this. If it is available we'll be giving them to you, Ma'am*)

Datum 59

- Buyer : Baa jua bali makanan di siko, uni? Lai rami?
(*How is the food selling here, sist? Are there many buyers?*)

Seller : Alhamdulillah, Buk. Kok lai rami anak-anak mangaji, lai balanjo saketek-sakatek.
(*Alhamdulillah, Ma'am. If many children attend the Quran class, they shop here a bit.*)

DISCUSSIONS

The commercial transactions in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut, Mentawai islands, involve the economic aspects and show the richness of social interaction in verbal communication. The use of various types of speech acts during the transaction reflects the local culture and wisdom of the community. Although the Minangkabau language is dominantly used for transactions in the traditional market, the use of this language also indicates the understanding of the Mentawai people of the Minangkabau language as their second language.

Through in-depth analysis, this research identifies four dominant illocutionary speech acts: assertive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Each type is essential in building effective communication, regulating the bargaining process, and creating harmonious social relationships among economic actors. The findings show that the use of language in this context functions not only as a communication tool but also as a means to build trust and strengthen social networks within the community.

Based on the analysis that has been conducted, there are only four types of Searle's illocutionary speech acts found during the transactional communication of Minangkabau Language in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut, Mentawai Islands: assertive, directive, commissive, and expressive with assertive as the dominant type; 30 cases out of 60 cases analyzed. This result differs from the speech acts analysis of the Minangkabau Community in Tangerang, where all five types are found, with the dominant type being the expressive speech act (Adrallisman & Iwan, [2022](#)). In comparison to other speech analyses of the Minangkabau language, the result of speech act analysis of *Pasambahan Mananti Marapulai* at Minangkabau wedding reception in Saniangbaka, Solok Regency, also differed which stated that the types of speech acts identified in the study are: assertive, directive, expressive, and declarative.

The different results of the analysis conducted on various communities of practices indicated different aspects of interaction in each community. While the study conducted in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut focused on commercial transactions in the traditional market, the other two researches concentrate on different aspects of communication (on a conventional wedding and Minangkabau diaspora community). Aside from that, sociolinguistic and geographical elements may influence the result of the analyses. This research and one conducted in Tangerang studied the Minangkabau language in the diaspora region where the Minangkabau language is not the mother tongue in the area, which is different from the analysis in Saniangbaka where Minangkabau language is the language of the people. Thus, other external factors might also have influenced the result of the study, which has not yet been identified in this article.

CONCLUSION

Upon the analysis of speech acts of the Minangkabau language as the transactional communication in Pasar Raya Muara Siberut, Mentawai islands, it can be concluded that there are four of five types of Searle's illocutionary acts found: assertive, directive, commissive, and expressive. The analysis was extracted from 60 data cases, with the dominant type found to be assertive in 30 cases or 50% of the total data analyzed, which indicated that most conversational

topics brought at the traditional market of Mentawai islands are circled the statements or reports regarding product availability, prices, or the quality of the products.

The second to fourth types of speech acts found are directive, with 15 cases (25%), commissive 10 cases (15%), and expressive 6 cases (10%). The only speech act type that was not conveyed from the data is a declaration, which indicates that this kind of conversation is unpopular in traditional market transactional communication in the Mentawai islands. Thus, future analyses were suggested to convey a more detailed study on the declaration type of speech act in Mentawai's traditional market, supposedly with boarder data and analysis. It is also suggested to broaden the future analysis in pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

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