

## Illocutionary Acts in Tetun Language Use during Multicultural Interactions at the Traditional Market of Biboki Anleu

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### Abstract

The multicultural traditional market in Biboki Anleu serves as a socio-economic interaction space where speakers from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds engage using Tetun as a lingua franca, revealing rich pragmatic dynamics. This study aims to identify and analyze the types of Tetun illocutionary acts in marketplace interactions and assess the role of Tetun in fostering multicultural communication and social solidarity. A qualitative approach was employed using participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and discourse analysis. Data were collected from real-time interactions between sellers and buyers in Biboki Anleu Market. Four dominant types of illocutionary acts were identified: directive, representative, expressive, and commissive. Language strategies reflected local politeness norms, pragmatic efficiency, and cultural adaptation. Tetun illocutionary acts function not only as transactional tools but also as mechanisms for reinforcing social identity and cultural integration. The findings contribute theoretically to regional language pragmatics and practically to multicultural market development and Tetun language preservation.

**Keywords:** *illocutionary acts, Tetun language, traditional market, multicultural interaction, pragmatics*

### Introduction

Today's consumer markets are increasingly multicultural due to the growing population of immigrants or newcomers and the cultural diversity of local communities. These changes demand a deeper understanding of multicultural consumer behavior and the development of appropriate marketing strategies to address this dynamic. Markets infused with cultural diversity require marketers to be culturally sensitive. People who grow up with two cultures may respond to an offer differently, depending on the language used and the situation at hand (Noriega, 2012).

Communication is a vital aspect of human life. Through communication, individuals can express thoughts and emotions and build social relationships across various domains of life. The success of communication depends not only on using the right language but also on the ability to understand the intention and purpose behind each utterance. In linguistic studies, particularly pragmatics, speech acts are a key concept in explaining how language is used to perform various actions. Speech acts are not merely about conveying information but also involve influencing, inviting, promising, expressing emotions, and even altering social realities. Understanding speech acts is crucial for analyzing verbal interactions in various social contexts. One of the primary aspects of speech acts is the illocutionary act.

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Illocutionary acts which include representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative acts are essential for understanding communication in any situation (Mabaquiao, 2018).

The execution of illocutionary acts depends on social conventions and the listener's understanding of those conventions. This becomes especially important in multicultural environments, where cultural norms can vary significantly (Chankova, 2019; de Lara, 2024). Cultural background differences can affect how a speech act is interpreted, meaning the success of an illocutionary act is not solely determined by the utterance itself, but also by how much the speaker and listener share an understanding of the social meaning behind it. Therefore, sensitivity to cultural diversity and the ability to adjust language strategies are key to maintaining effective communication in multicultural settings.

In multicultural business environments, the ability to understand and appropriately use illocutionary acts is vital. Each culture has its own standards of politeness, social norms, and communication expectations. By effectively using illocutionary acts, individuals can adapt their speaking style to their interlocutor's culture, avoid misunderstandings, build harmonious relationships, and increase success in negotiation or collaboration (Belamaric, 2023). Common forms of illocutionary acts in business or commercial communication include requests, suggestions, and offers. In multicultural communities, how these acts are delivered must align with cultural sensitivity. For example, a direct request may be seen as rude in certain cultures, whereas in others, assertiveness may indicate professionalism. Therefore, business practitioners must understand their communication partners' cultural backgrounds so that the illocutionary acts they use are not offensive or misinterpreted. Cross-cultural communication training and direct experience in multicultural settings can enhance this skill. Ultimately, the success of business communication in global communities depends heavily on the ability to use language pragmatically, politely, and in accordance with prevailing cultural norms.

Misunderstandings in illocutionary acts can disrupt communication, particularly in workplaces or marketplaces (bargaining situations) with diverse cultures, where employees, sellers, and buyers come from different backgrounds (Cruz & Redondo, 2010; Hofweber & Jaworska, 2022; Sell & Haggerty, 2019). Differences in how intentions are expressed whether giving orders, asking for help, or making offers, can be interpreted differently across cultures. As a result, good intentions may be misread, tasks may be carried out incorrectly, or tensions may arise between colleagues. Therefore, understanding cultural differences in illocutionary use is essential for effective communication.

Effective communication in multicultural markets involves not only linguistic competence but also an understanding of cultural nuances and the ability to perform appropriate illocutionary acts (Angouri, 2010; Silberstein et al., 1991). Without deep cultural understanding, messages may lose their meaning, be misinterpreted, or even be considered impolite. Thus, beyond mastering the language, communicators need to develop cultural sensitivity, understand social context, and adjust their speech style to ensure messages are well-received by all parties in a multicultural environment. Training in speech acts and their cultural variations can improve workplace interaction and foster inclusion, thereby reducing the risk of exclusionary practices.

In business negotiations, job interviews, and political debates, communicative verbs and illocutionary acts play a strategic role in shaping interactions and achieving desired outcomes (Parshutina & Popova, 2018). Verbs like 'suggest,' 'assert,' 'request,' 'offer,' and 'refuse' do more than convey information; they carry specific pragmatic meanings that reflect the speaker's attitude, intent, and communication strategy.

Illocutionary acts are speech acts that convey a specific intention and shape the structure of interactions more deeply. For example, in a business negotiation, a negotiator who gently requests ("I hope we can consider this option") rather than commands ("We must choose this option") will create a more cooperative atmosphere and open the door to agreement.

Likewise, in job interviews, candidates who show politeness, confidence, and responsiveness through appropriate illocutionary acts can leave a more positive impression on interviewers.

In political debates, illocutionary acts are often used to build arguments, strengthen positions, or discredit opponents. Strategies such as countering, partial agreement, or subtly shifting topics demonstrate a politician's pragmatic skill in managing public perception and maintaining debate dominance.

Therefore, mastering communicative verbs and illocutionary acts is not just about fluency in speaking but also about making precise choices of utterances that align with the speaker's goals, audience, and situational context. This understanding is a crucial asset for building persuasive, productive, and strategic communication in various professional interactions.

In multicultural markets, many offers use a variety of speech acts to attract different cultural groups, highlighting the importance of understanding these acts in marketing strategies (Rababah, 2023). In such markets, the success of a product or service offer depends not only on quality or competitive pricing but also on the message creator's ability to use speech acts that align with the target culture's values, norms, and practices. Speech acts like praising, inviting, promising, or even persuading are strategically used to build emotional connection and trust with diverse cultural groups.

Additionally, in multicultural markets, mistakes in using speech acts can have serious consequences. A promotional phrase that is too direct may be seen as aggressive in some cultures, while in others, a too-subtle approach may seem unconvincing. Therefore, understanding speech acts not only helps avoid misunderstandings but also enhances marketing communication effectiveness, expands market reach, and strengthens consumer relationships.

In Biboki Anleu, a district in North Central Timor (Timor Tengah Utara or TTU), East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), the Tetun language holds a crucial position as a common language used in daily communication among residents. Tetun is widely used across various social domains within families, markets, local governance, and traditional ceremonies (Ximenes & Trevisan, 2023). It functions not only as a means of communication but also as a cultural identity marker that fosters social solidarity among ethnic groups. Tetun also serves as a *lingua franca*, facilitating communication among people with different native languages (Boon, 2011; Williams-Van Klinken & Hajek, 2018). As a bridging language, Tetun enables individuals from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds to interact effectively, unhindered by linguistic differences. In regions like Timor, particularly Biboki Anleu rich in local languages such as Tetun and Meto—Tetun's presence as a connector is vital. It is used in trade and socio-cultural activities. Its role helps strengthen intergroup relationships, foster togetherness, and support social integration amid linguistic and cultural diversity.

The use of Tetun in trade or bargaining activities, especially in Biboki Anleu, TTU, is a sociolinguistic phenomenon worth examining. Tetun functions as a practical communication tool bridging interactions among people from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds. In the multilingual society of TTU, Tetun as a *lingua franca* is crucial, especially since many residents have at least passive knowledge of the language.

Historical factors also contribute to the widespread use of Tetun in Biboki Anleu. Community mobility from and to border areas—such as Belu, Malaka, and Timor-Leste has created interaction spaces requiring an effective bridging language. In this context, Tetun has long been used in transactions, bartering, and negotiations because of its ability to reach various communities with different mother tongues.

Tetun also has strong pragmatic appeal in market communication. Common expressions in this language are often perceived as softer, more polite, and persuasive making it suitable for economic negotiations. This situation benefits both traders and buyers in maintaining communication ethics and creating a friendlier, more relaxed transactional atmosphere.

Just as importantly, Tetun use in the marketplace also represents cultural identity and local solidarity. When sellers and buyers use the same language, they not only facilitate

transactions but also build trust and strengthen social bonds. Thus, the market becomes a key arena for maintaining Tetun through its continued informal transmission across generations, even without official regional language status.

Therefore, the presence of Tetun in public spaces such as traditional markets in Biboki Anleu reflects rich social diversity and showcases the language's role as a key support for economic, cultural, and local identity interactions in TTU. The use of Tetun in Biboki Anleu also demonstrates a diglossic situation—where formal domains like government and education are dominated by Indonesian, while informal and community domains like markets continue to rely on Tetun. This proves that Tetun is not only being preserved but also adapting to social change and community mobility.

This study focuses on analyzing illocutionary acts in Tetun during multicultural interactions in the traditional market of Biboki Anleu. It specifically seeks to understand how communication strategies based on illocutionary acts are used in buying and selling among speakers of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The research aims to identify types of illocutionary acts used in Tetun-language market transactions in Biboki Anleu, describe communication strategies applied in multicultural interactions, analyze cultural factors influencing the choice of illocutionary acts, and contribute to the development of pragmatic theories in regional languages and the preservation of Tetun's social function in traditional market interactions.

This study offers novelty by examining illocutionary acts in Tetun as used in real-life transactions in a traditional market within a multicultural setting, particularly in Biboki Anleu. Unlike previous studies that often focus on speech acts in formal contexts such as business meetings, educational institutions, or mass media, this study places traditional market interactions as the central focus. Moreover, this research enriches pragmatic studies by linking the use of illocutionary acts with the unique dynamics of local multiculturalism specifically the presence of Tetun, Meto, and other languages in a shared interaction space. The study emphasizes the importance of cultural adaptation in everyday language practices in informal domains, which are often overlooked in illocutionary act studies involving regional languages. As such, this study contributes to the understanding of pragmatic functions in minority languages within real socio-economic settings and illustrates how illocutionary acts shape patterns of negotiation, agreement, and rejection in cross-cultural interactions.

The theory of speech acts, originally formulated by John L. Austin and later developed by John Searle, emphasizes that language functions not merely as a means of conveying information, but as a form of action. This theory identifies three main types of speech acts: locutionary acts (saying something with specific meaning), illocutionary acts (performing an act in saying something such as asserting, questioning, or commanding), and perlocutionary acts (the effect of the utterance on the listener, such as persuading or discouraging) (Hornsby, 2009; Reiland, 2024). Among these, illocutionary acts are central to Austin's theory, as they reflect the speaker's intention and are characterized by their illocutionary force, which refers to the social-communicative significance of the utterance (Oishi, 2021; Reiland, 2024). John Searle further expanded Austin's framework by refining the classification of illocutionary acts and introducing the concept of intentionality. His taxonomy includes assertives (statements that describe the world, e.g., affirming, claiming), directives (attempts to get the listener to do something, e.g., requesting, ordering), commissives (commitments to future actions, e.g., promising, offering), expressives (expressions of psychological states, e.g., apologizing, congratulating), and declarations (utterances that change the external reality, e.g., resigning, declaring war) (Abuya, 2012; Alarcón, 2008; Ayeomoni & Akinkuolere, 2012). While Austin laid the theoretical foundation, Searle's refinements addressed ambiguities and broadened the scope of application, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how language operates within social interactions (Alarcón, 2008; Gao, 2024).

Speech act theory has since been applied in various fields. In legal studies, normative actions are analyzed as performative utterances (Gortych-Michalak, 2014), while in political discourse, speech act theory is used to examine the pragmatic functions of statements made by political figures (Ayeomoni & Akinkuolere, 2012; Raevskaya & Selivanova, 2024). The theory is also crucial in the study of hate speech, particularly in highlighting the importance of context and the authority of both speaker and audience (Bianchi, 2017).

In multicultural settings such as business communication, education, and public spaces, researchers have explored the use of illocutionary acts. For instance, in international business emails, requests often appear direct due to the need for efficiency, although cultural background and power dynamics influence this directness (Hofweber & Jaworska, 2022). In corporate environments, verbal and nonverbal communication reflects either inclusion or exclusion, emphasizing the importance of fostering inclusive workspaces (Cruz & Redondo, 2010). Multicultural education in the United States has historically played a vital role in promoting inclusivity and diversity since the 1950s (Bakhov, 2013).

Research on multicultural public spaces suggests that design should support social reconnection in an era of isolation, promoting inclusivity (Liu & Kim, 2021). Symbolic and material conflicts in shared urban spaces, such as the 'eruv' in Orthodox Jewish communities, illustrate the limits of multicultural coexistence and the contested nature of symbolic space (Watson, 2005). In multilingual corporate communication, studies stress the role of cultural norms and politeness expectations in enhancing communication practices (Belamaric, 2023). Advertising strategies in multicultural societies also rely on various illocutionary acts directives, assertions, commands along with stylistic tools like metaphor and rhetorical questions to influence consumer behavior (Rababah, 2023).

Altogether, these studies show that effective communication in multicultural contexts demands deep cultural understanding, politeness strategies, and inclusive language use (Cruz & Redondo, 2010; Hofweber & Jaworska, 2022; Kipnis et al., 2021).

Fundamental speech act concepts help explain how speech acts function in the Tetun language. As proposed by Austin and Searle, language is not merely a conduit for information but a social action that can shape realities (Laugier & Lorenzini, 2021; Sbisà, 2023). Speech acts consist of three interrelated components: the locutionary (act of saying), illocutionary (intent or purpose), and perlocutionary (impact on the listener) (Laugier & Lorenzini, 2021; Ying, 2014). These acts reflect the social and cultural norms of their speakers. For instance, the way one makes a request or apology may vary depending on sociocultural context (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2020; Válková, 2014). In Tetun, understanding these norms is essential to interpreting and producing appropriate speech acts. Language teaching, therefore, should include pragmatics, enabling learners to use speech acts appropriately in various communicative contexts (Carrasco & Domínguez, 2022; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2020; Pérez-Hernández, 2020). Since speech acts never occur in isolation, they must be understood within broader social interactions and their relation to surrounding utterances (Yilmaz et al., 2016).

To grasp speech act use in Tetun, it is important to examine the cultural and social context in which the language operates. This includes norms of politeness, social hierarchies, and cultural values that shape communication. Although specific research on Tetun speech acts remains limited, general concepts from speech act theory can still be effectively applied. It is also necessary to include pragmatic awareness in Tetun language teaching, ensuring learners understand not only the linguistic forms but the appropriate sociocultural conditions for their use.

Multicultural interaction entails language adaptation and negotiation. Several key theoretical frameworks are relevant here. The Integrative Adaptation Theory highlights that cross-cultural adaptation is a dynamic and ongoing process, involving psychological, social, and communicative adjustments by individuals within new environments (Guerriche & Grimshaw, 2024; Yu & Stoet, 2020). The Three-Space Model argues that cultural adaptation

unfolds across cultural, institutional, and sociocognitive spaces, fostering empathy and intercultural harmony (Yunxia, 2008). In terms of identity, individuals manage their multicultural identity through either hybrid identity strategies blending cultures or alternating identities, where one's cultural expression shifts depending on the social context (Verbnaya & Lepshokova, 2024).

Language negotiation is also crucial in multicultural settings. Linguistic mediation plays a role in coordinating social interaction and building inclusive narratives for migrants accessing institutional services. This mediation helps reduce marginalization and foster intercultural understanding (Baraldi, 2017, 2022). The Negotiated Reality approach treats cultural conflict as an opportunity for learning, where mutual understanding and adaptation are essential for developing intercultural competence (Friedman & Antal, 2005). Finally, in lingua franca communication, where cultural and linguistic variability is common, the negotiation of cultural frames and identities becomes central (Hua, 2015). These frameworks underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity and communicative flexibility in building successful cross-cultural relationships.

Despite the growing body of research on speech acts and intercultural communication, limited studies have examined the use of illocutionary acts in Tetun-language interactions within multicultural traditional market settings. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the types and functions of illocutionary acts used in the traditional market of Biboki Anleu.

## **Method**

This study employed a qualitative approach aimed at describing illocutionary acts in the Tetun language within market transactions at Biboki Anleu Traditional Market, with a focus on multicultural interactions. Illocutionary acts are part of speech act theory that refer to the speaker's intent or purpose behind an utterance. The qualitative approach used in this research involved several methods of data collection: Observation, which involved directly observing the interactions between sellers and buyers in the market; In-depth interviews, conducted with informants selected purposively to gain deep insights into their communication experiences; and Note-taking and recording, which were used to document and capture conversations for further analysis.

The data analysis technique employed discourse analysis to identify the types of illocutionary acts present in conversations. This analysis involved breaking down discourse elements and categorizing illocutionary types based on their communicative functions (Suleimanova & Borbotko, 2024; Zhu & Zhang, 2006). Illocutionary coding included acts such as commands, requests, offers, and negotiations. This coding helped to understand how sellers and buyers use language to achieve their respective goals (Luntungan et al., 2025). Types of illocutionary acts found in market interactions included: Commands, such as when sellers use directives to instruct buyers or manage transactions; Requests, where buyers frequently use questions to inquire about price or product quality; Offers, where sellers provide deals or proposals to attract buyers; and Negotiations, where both parties engage in dialogue to reach mutually beneficial agreements (Luntungan et al., 2025).

The study was conducted at the Biboki Anleu Traditional Market, located in North Central Timor Regency (TTU), East Nusa Tenggara Province. This market functions as a space for multicultural interaction, where the Tetun language serves as a lingua franca in transactions among speakers from various ethnic backgrounds. The sociolinguistic characteristics of this market allow for unique dynamics of illocutionary acts to emerge within the context of informal buying and selling.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Categories of Illocutionary Acts in Market Transactions**

This study aims to classify and analyze the categories of illocutionary acts found in traditional market transactions at Biboki Anleu, TTU Regency. The dialogue presented below is used as a representative example to illustrate the occurrence of illocutionary acts identified during the analysis. Based on the results of observations and interviews with sellers and buyers at the market, the following data were obtained:

**Table 1. Excerpt of Dialogue between Buyer (PL) and Seller (AN) using the Tetun Language**

| N o. | native speaker | Tetun language utterance              | literal translation                      | free translation   | contextual notes  |
|------|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| 1    | PL             | <i>Tua Mese ne botir ida hira be?</i> | <i>Tua Mese ini botol satu berapa?</i>   | ‘Berapakah harga satu botol sopi <i>Tua Mese</i> ini?’   | PL bertanya harga sopi di kios milik AN dengan bahasa santai dan informal.      |
| 2    | AN             | <i>Rua nulu</i>                       | Dua puluh                                | ‘Dua puluh ribu’   | AN menjawab dengan menggunakan bentuk angka dalam bahasa Tetun.                 |
| 3    | PL             | <i>Rua nulu, owwwww...</i>            | Dua puluh, owwwww...                     | ‘Dua puluh ribu owwwww...’                               | PL menanggapi harga dengan ekspresi keterkejutan ringan dalam interjeksi lokal. |
| 4    | AN             | <i>Ha’u sosa karfaun ida atus ida</i> | Saya beli <i>karfaun</i> satu ratus satu | ‘Saya membeli satu <i>karfaun</i> seharga seratus ribu.’ | AN menjelaskan asal harga, yaitu harga modal pembelian sopi dalam jumlah besar. |

The following is the categorization of the data in Table 1 based on types of illocutionary acts (speech acts) according to the pragmatic approach, particularly speech act theory by Searle (1976), further developed into local speech acts such as requests, statements, negotiations, offers, and expressions of attitude. The dialogue presented below is used as a representative example to illustrate the occurrence of illocutionary acts identified during the analysis.

**Table 2. Classification of Illocutionary Acts from the Dialogue between PL and AN at the Stall using the Tetun Language.**

| N o. | native speaker | Tetun language utterance              | types of illocutions | explanation of illocutionary acts   |
|------|----------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| 1    | PL             | <i>Tua Mese ne botir ida hira be?</i> | Permintaan Informasi | PL meminta informasi harga (ilokusi direktif) dengan gaya informal (RR).    |
| 2    | AN             | <i>Rua nulu</i>                       | Pernyataan/Informasi | AN memberikan informasi harga secara langsung (ilokusi representatif).      |
| 3    | PL             | <i>Rua nulu, owwwww...</i>            | Ekspresi Sikap       | PL menanggapi dengan nada keterkejutan/penolakan halus (ilokusi ekspresif). |

| N o. | native speaker | Tetun language utterance              | types of illocutions  | explanation of illocutionary acts  |
|------|----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 4    | AN             | <i>Ha'u sosa karfaun ida atus ida</i> | Negosiasi/Justifikasi | AN memberikan alasan atas harga (ilokusi komisif + representatif sebagai pembelaan). |

The communication between PL and AN, which uses the low variety of Tetun, reflects speech acts that embody the local social and cultural norms of the Dawan community. The first utterance by PL, *Tua Mese ne botir ida hira be?* is a directive illocutionary act, functioning as a request for information. Pragmatically, this utterance prompts AN to respond with the price, while simultaneously establishing a relaxed and equal social relationship. The use of informal language reflects the social closeness typical of Dawan culture.

AN responds with *Rua nulu*, which is a representative illocutionary act, as it conveys factual information about the price, 'twenty thousand rupiahs'. The answer is brief yet efficient, reflecting the practical and direct communication style typical of traditional market settings.

PL's reaction to the price is shown through the expression *Rua nulu, owwww...*, which constitutes an expressive illocutionary act. The interjection *owwww...* subtly expresses surprise or mild objection to the mentioned price. In Dawan culture, such responses are a form of politeness, with price negotiations typically done indirectly to preserve social harmony.

AN then responds with *Ha'u sosa karfaun ida atus ida*, which combines representative and commissive illocutionary acts. AN states the fact that they bought a bottle of *sopi* for one hundred thousand rupiahs, both as a justification for the price and an indication of their commitment not to lower it without a valid reason. Thus, this interaction not only demonstrates economic communication practices but also reflects politeness norms, social relationships, and embedded local cultural values within the speech acts of Tetun speakers.

The initial utterance by PL, in the form of a question about price, illustrates the crucial role of language in initiating market transactions. The use of an interrogative structure in the low variety of Tetun shows that the speaker is not only seeking information but also fostering a friendly communicative atmosphere. In Dawan culture, this strategy is commonly used to maintain equality and avoid a sense of dominance between buyer and seller. So, although it appears to be a request for information, the social impact of the utterance is broader, functioning as an opener to the interaction and a marker of goodwill.

AN's response, *Rua nulu*, demonstrates the effectiveness of representative speech acts in market communication. The information is concise yet clear and directly addresses the topic of conversation: the price. This reflects a local pragmatic norm in which time is considered valuable, and both sellers and buyers prioritize efficiency during transactions. This speech act also shows that AN holds authority over the goods and is prepared to engage in potential negotiation. Though simple, the meaning conveyed through the number is rich in both functional and cultural significance.

When PL responds with *Rua nulu, owwww...*, they do not immediately bargain or reject the price explicitly. Instead, they use an expressive speech act strategy to subtly convey disagreement. The interjection *owwww...* in Dawan culture is often interpreted as a polite expression of surprise or mild disapproval. This behavior is part of a communication norm that avoids direct confrontation. PL chooses a middle ground through an attitudinal expression that can be interpreted flexibly to preserve the social relationship and avoid offending AN.

This strategy allows AN to respond in a way that maintains the dignity of both parties. The utterance *Ha'u sosa karfaun ida atus ida* from AN not only conveys factual information but also subtly defends the offered price. Here, the commissive illocution emerges: AN expresses their commitment to the price and indicates a rational basis behind it. By linking the price to the cost of goods, AN positions themselves not merely as a seller but as an individual running a business with rational economic considerations.

From a pragmatic perspective, the entire exchange forms a coherent discourse of negotiation imbued with local values. None of the utterances are aggressive or overtly coercive. Instead, all speech acts are delivered politely and subtly, carefully considering the social relationship between speakers. This situation highlights that, in Dawan society, economic communication is not merely a matter of buying and selling but also a means to reinforce social cohesion. Even in bargaining situations, social bonds are preserved through the strategic selection of appropriate utterance forms.

In conclusion, the analysis of speech acts in this conversation reveals that language functions as a negotiation tool rich in social and cultural meaning. The directive, representative, expressive, and commissive illocutionary acts that arise in the dialogue between PL and AN showcase the complexity of interaction in traditional markets. The low variety of Tetun used here is not merely a communication tool but also a symbol of intimacy, solidarity, and persuasive strategy. Through a pragmatic approach, it becomes clear that communication within local communities aims not only to convey messages but also to build and sustain social relationships within a vibrant and dynamic cultural framework.

This study found that illocutionary acts in Tetun-language market transactions at the traditional Biboki Anleu market not only reflect the instrumental function of language but also carry complex social and cultural meanings. Illocutionary acts such as directives, representatives, expressives, and commissives play an important role in shaping the dynamics of communication among speakers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

### **The Social Function of Illocutionary Acts in a Multicultural Market**

Speech acts such as directives or information requests by buyers *Tua Mese ne botir ida hira be?* show that directive illocutions are used in a relaxed, informal manner consistent with local communication norms. This aligns with findings by (Chankova, 2019), which suggest that illocutionary acts in multicultural communities are often adapted to local politeness norms.

Conversely, the seller's direct response *rua nulu*, categorized as a representative illocution, illustrates the linguistic efficiency in market practices. This corresponds with the results of (Belamaric, 2023), who emphasized the importance of direct declarative forms in multilingual business communication to avoid ambiguity.

### **Negotiation and Politeness in Expressive Acts**

The expressive act by the buyer *Rua nulu, owww...* represents an emotional reaction that is not overt but implied through interjection. This act serves as a form of indirect negotiation, yet remains effective, consistent with Brown & Levinson's (1987) concept of face-threatening acts mitigation. In the Biboki Anleu (Dawan) community, maintaining harmony is prioritized over open confrontation in transactional settings.

### **Representing Commissive Strategies in Seller Justifications**

The seller's utterance *Ha'u sosa karfaun ida atus ida* reflects a combination of commissive and representative illocutionary acts. The seller not only states the base price as a fact but also affirms their commitment to maintaining that price. This is a pragmatic strategy that

indicates bargaining position while staying within a cooperative communicative frame (Friedman & Antal, 2005). Rather than rejecting the buyer outright, the seller builds understanding by narrating the cost origin as a form of justification.

### **Tetun as a Lingua Franca in Multicultural Interactions**

The Tetun language, used in these transactions, functions as a lingua franca, enabling communication across ethnic and mother tongue boundaries. This supports the arguments of (Boon, 2011) dan (Williams-Van Klinken & Hajek, 2018) that local languages serve strategic roles in bridging intergroup communication in multilingual regions. Thus, in Biboki Anleu, Tetun is not only a tool for transaction but also a representation of social solidarity and collective identity.

### **Contributions to Pragmatic Theory and Application**

This study contributes theoretically to the expansion of illocutionary act concepts within informal and multicultural interactions, particularly among minority language communities. Unlike conventional pragmatics studies that often focus on formal interactions, these findings demonstrate that traditional markets, as spaces of socio-economic interaction, are rich with meaningful speech act dynamics. The practical implication is that understanding local speech acts, such as those in Tetun, can enhance cross-cultural communication effectiveness in marketing, negotiation, and public service contexts.

### **Conclusion**

This study found that illocutionary acts in Tetun-language buying and selling interactions at the Biboki Anleu Traditional Market reflect the complexity of language as both a pragmatic communication tool and a symbol of cultural identity. The dominant types of illocutionary acts identified include directives (requests for information), representatives (price statements and justifications), expressives (expressions of attitude), and commissives (commitments to maintain prices). These illocutionary acts are performed using linguistic strategies that reflect politeness, effectiveness, and adaptation to local cultural norms. The findings suggest that Tetun contributes to social solidarity and facilitates communication among individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study enrich the field of pragmatics, particularly in relation to the Tetun local language, which is often marginalized in theoretical discussions. The results demonstrate that traditional markets, as spaces of informal interaction, possess significant pragmatic dynamics and deserve to be considered as valid sites of inquiry. By integrating the concept of speech acts in a minority language like Tetun, this study expands the scope of Austin's and Searle's speech act theory within multicultural contexts, and emphasizes the importance of understanding local culture in interpreting illocutionary meaning.

### **Practical Implications**

1. **Development of Multicultural Traditional Markets:** These findings can be utilized by local governments and market administrators to design cross-cultural communication training for both sellers and buyers. Understanding the variation in speech acts can enhance comfort, reduce potential conflicts, and strengthen social cohesion in multiethnic marketplaces.

2. **Preservation of the Tetun Language:** The active use of Tetun in market transactions highlights its potential as a tool for language maintenance. Therefore, language preservation strategies can focus on strengthening the market's role as an intergenerational language learning space—through documenting market utterances, providing language training for newcomers, and organizing cultural campaigns based on the local language.
3. **Education and Training in Local Pragmatics:** These findings support the integration of Tetun language pragmatics into language education curricula, teacher training, and language teaching materials, as part of broader efforts to revitalize the Tetun language and local culture.

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