

Local Voices, Global Encounters: Sociopragmatic Perspectives on Market Conversations at Pasar Klewer Solo

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how local and global identities are negotiated through everyday market interactions at Pasar Klewer Solo, a traditional textile market known as the heart of Javanese commerce. Adopting a sociopragmatic perspective, the research examines three types of buyer-seller conversations: (1) exchanges conducted in Javanese between local speakers, (2) interactions in Indonesian between sellers and domestic visitors, and (3) mixed English-gesture encounters between local sellers and foreign tourists. The study aims to uncover how language choice, politeness strategies, and nonverbal cues reflect social relationships, identity positioning, and communicative adaptation in multilingual settings. Using a qualitative descriptive method, natural conversations were audio-recorded and transcribed, followed by pragmatic and contextual analysis. The findings reveal that Javanese speech levels (krama, madya, and ngoko) are pragmatically employed to maintain harmony and solidarity, Indonesian serves as a neutral linguistic bridge, while simplified English mixed with gestures functions as a creative intercultural negotiation tool. These linguistic strategies illustrate how traditional market talk embodies both cultural continuity and transformation in response to global contact. The study contributes to understanding how local communicative norms sustain social cohesion while adapting to tourism-driven multilingual interactions.

Keywords: sociopragmatics, market discourse, multilingual interaction, Javanese politeness, Pasar Klewer Solo

INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a medium of communication but a social practice that reflects cultural values, identity, and power relations in everyday interaction (Fairclough, 2013;

Holmes, 2013). In multilingual societies such as Indonesia, language use is highly context-dependent, shaped by social hierarchy, situational demands, and cultural expectations (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). Traditional markets, as microcosms of society, serve as vibrant linguistic spaces where diverse forms of language use, negotiation, and politeness occur (Hidayat, 2018). Among these, Pasar Klewer Solo stands out as a cultural and linguistic hub, where traders, local buyers, and international visitors engage in bargaining interactions that are both economic and sociocultural in nature.

This study emerges from the observation that communication in Pasar Klewer involves complex sociopragmatic choices. Sellers and buyers constantly shift between Javanese, Indonesian, and English—each carrying distinct social meanings and pragmatic functions. Javanese, with its intricate speech levels (*krama*, *madya*, and *ngoko*), reflects deep-rooted norms of respect and social hierarchy (Errington, 1998; Poedjosoedarmo, 2017). Indonesian functions as a neutral lingua franca for inter-ethnic transactions (Sneddon et al., 2010), while English, often mixed with gestures or simplified expressions, represents an effort to bridge cross-cultural communication with foreign tourists (Dewi & Wijayanti, 2022). Yet, despite this linguistic richness, little scholarly attention has been given to how these multilingual exchanges construct social relationships and index local-global identities in traditional market contexts.

Previous studies on market discourse have largely focused on transactional talk, politeness, or negotiation strategies in single-language or institutional settings (Myers-Scotton, 2006; Placencia, 2004). For instance, Susanto (2020) examined Javanese market bargaining to explore the reflection of social distance and status through *undha-usuk basa*, while Farida and Yuliana (2019) highlighted how politeness in Indonesian marketplace talk maintains solidarity among speakers. In contrast, studies on English-based market interactions emphasize intercultural negotiation and pragmatic accommodation (Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Trosborg, 2010). However, few have addressed the dynamic intersection between local linguistic politeness systems and emerging intercultural encounters shaped by tourism and globalization. This gap calls for an investigation that integrates sociopragmatics—the study of how language use is socially and culturally patterned (Leech,

2014; Culpeper, 2011)—with the realities of multilingual communication in grassroots economic settings.

The present research, therefore, aims to analyze how sellers and buyers in Pasar Klewer employ linguistic and non-linguistic strategies to manage interpersonal relations and negotiate meaning across three communicative modes: Javanese–Javanese, Indonesian–Indonesian, and English–gesture interactions. It seeks to identify how politeness, identity, and adaptation are realized in these exchanges, and how local communicative norms evolve in response to broader sociocultural transformations (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of work linking sociopragmatics with intercultural and multilingual communication in non-institutional settings (Taguchi, 2019; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). By situating market talk within the framework of language and social transformation, it highlights how traditional communicative practices remain resilient while adapting to the forces of globalization and tourism. The findings are expected to enrich sociolinguistic and pragmatic understanding of language choice and politeness in multilingual societies, while also offering pedagogical implications for language education that values local wisdom and communicative diversity (Shalihah & Winarsih, 2023).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed a qualitative descriptive design within the framework of sociopragmatics, aiming to uncover how local sellers and diverse buyers at Pasar Klewer construct meaning, manage interpersonal relations, and negotiate identities through multilingual communication. The qualitative orientation allowed an in-depth exploration of natural linguistic practices in their real social contexts without imposing experimental controls (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The sociopragmatic approach, as defined by Leech (2014) and Culpeper (2011), focuses on the relationship between language use, social norms, and contextual meaning, making it particularly suitable for analyzing marketplace interactions where politeness, solidarity, and hierarchy are negotiated in real time.

Research Setting

The study was conducted at Pasar Klewer, located near the Kraton Kasunanan Surakarta, Central Java. Known as the largest traditional textile market in the region, it attracts both local customers and international visitors. This market provides an ideal site to observe the coexistence of local communication practices and global encounters in one social space. The research was carried out over a three-month period (April–June 2025), covering morning and afternoon trading sessions when interactional intensity was highest.

Participants and Data Sources

The participants consisted of 15 sellers and 18 buyers, representing different linguistic and cultural backgrounds:

1. Local interactions – between Javanese sellers and local buyers using Javanese speech levels (*krama*, *madya*, *ngoko*).
2. National interactions – between sellers and domestic visitors from outside Central Java communicating in Indonesian.
3. Intercultural interactions – between sellers and foreign tourists involving simplified English, gestures, and local expressions.

All participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on speakers actively engaged in transactional and social exchanges. Each participant was informed of the research purpose and gave verbal consent prior to observation and recording.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were obtained through naturalistic observation, audio recording, and field note documentation. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer, allowing natural communicative behavior to unfold without interference. Approximately 30 conversational episodes (2–8 minutes each) were recorded, covering bargaining, greeting, and closing interactions.

Additionally, brief follow-up interviews were conducted with ten selected sellers to understand their pragmatic reasoning behind language choice and politeness expressions. These interviews complemented the naturally occurring data, ensuring triangulation between discourse evidence and participants' own interpretations.

Data Transcription and Coding

All recorded conversations were transcribed verbatim, retaining relevant features such as pauses, laughter, and nonverbal gestures. Multilingual utterances were translated when necessary while maintaining contextual accuracy. Data were coded according to three key dimensions:

1. Language choice (Javanese, Indonesian, English/mixed);
2. Politeness and rapport strategies (based on Brown & Levinson, 1987; Spencer-Oatey, 2008);
3. Identity negotiation and adaptation (linguistic and non-linguistic).

Coding was conducted manually with iterative reading to identify recurrent pragmatic patterns, supported by memo writing to capture emerging themes.

Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model consisting of:

1. Data condensation – selecting meaningful interactional excerpts related to politeness, identity, and adaptation;
2. Data display – organizing them in thematic tables that highlight linguistic forms and corresponding social meanings;
3. Conclusion drawing and verification – interpreting how communicative strategies embody local norms and respond to global contact.

The analysis also incorporated contextual interpretation following Hymes' (1974) *SPEAKING* framework (Setting, Participants, Ends, Act sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, Genre) to ensure sociocultural depth in describing the interactions.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources (recordings, observations, and interviews) and member checking, where selected participants reviewed interpretations for accuracy. Transferability was ensured by providing detailed contextual descriptions of Pasar Klewer as a cultural site. Ethical clearance was granted by the Research

Ethics Committee of Universitas Surakarta, ensuring that all participants' identities remained confidential. Pseudonyms were used in transcripts to protect privacy.

Research Systematics

This article is structured into five main sections. The Introduction provides theoretical grounding and research gap identification. The Literature Review discusses relevant sociopragmatic and intercultural theories. The Research Method details the research design, data, and analysis. The Results and Discussion present findings on how politeness and identity are negotiated in multilingual exchanges. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes theoretical implications and potential applications for language, culture, and tourism studies.

DISCUSSION

The analysis of market conversations at Pasar Klewer Solo reveals how multilingual interactions operate as both linguistic and social negotiations. The discussion is structured into three major interactional patterns observed in the data: (1) *Javanese-Javanese conversations* among local participants, (2) *Indonesian-Indonesian exchanges* between sellers and domestic visitors, and (3) *English-gesture encounters* involving foreign tourists. Each mode reflects unique pragmatic orientations and identity constructions within the broader sociocultural context of market life in Central Java.

1. Javanese-Javanese Interactions: Politeness, Hierarchy, and Solidarity

In Javanese-Javanese conversations, politeness is deeply embedded within speech level choice (*undha-usuk basa*), which encodes respect, social distance, and familiarity. Sellers and buyers employ *krama inggil* and *krama madya* when addressing elders or higher-status interlocutors, whereas *ngoko* is reserved for peers or younger interlocutors. These pragmatic choices exemplify Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of *negative politeness*, which emphasizes deference and avoidance of imposition, while also aligning with Leech's (2014) *Politeness Principle* that values harmony and modesty in social exchanges.

For example, when an elderly buyer greets a younger seller with "*Nggih, kulo badhé tumbas kain batik niki*," the seller responds with "*Nggih, mangga Bu, punika motif parang Solo ingkang alus*," signaling deference through *krama* usage and honorific markers. Such

exchanges sustain the moral order of respect (*ajining diri*) and reinforce community cohesion. However, a pragmatic shift often occurs when the interaction moves toward bargaining, where the seller may subtly switch to *madya* or *ngoko alus* forms to express familiarity and foster solidarity, illustrating the fluidity of politeness across interactional stages (Poedjosoedarmo, 2017; Shalihah & Winarsih, 2023).

The Javanese mode thus exemplifies a *relational politeness system* (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), where interpersonal meanings are co-constructed through linguistic politeness, tone, and nonverbal alignment. Market talk in this context serves not only as an economic exchange but as a ritualized act of maintaining *rukun* (social harmony).

2. Indonesian–Indonesian Interactions: Neutrality and Pragmatic Accommodation

Interactions conducted in Indonesian reveal a pragmatic orientation toward *neutrality* and *mutual intelligibility*. As the national lingua franca, Indonesian enables inter-ethnic communication and transactional clarity, functioning as a *communicative compromise* between local and supra-local identities (Sneddon et al., 2010; Holmes, 2013).

The sellers' pragmatic strategies in this mode center on *positive politeness*—building solidarity through friendly tone, inclusive pronouns (*kita, ya*), and pragmatic softeners such as “*boleh ditawarkan sedikit ya, Bu?*” These forms signal warmth and openness, which align with Trosborg's (2010) observation that Indonesian speakers prefer relational harmony over direct confrontation in negotiation contexts.

At the same time, the market context allows for pragmatic creativity: code-mixing with regional terms (*mbak, mas, murah kok*) injects local flavor into an otherwise neutral interaction, reaffirming local identity while engaging non-local visitors. Compared with Javanese talk, Indonesian exchanges are less hierarchical and more transactional, yet they retain a cultural undertone of *tepa slira* (empathic awareness). This demonstrates how Indonesian operates as a flexible bridge language that balances politeness with communicative efficiency in diverse market encounters.

3. English–Gesture Interactions: Creativity and Intercultural Pragmatics

The English–gesture interactions observed at Pasar Klewer illustrate a form of *emergent multilingualism* driven by tourism and global exposure. Local sellers, though not

formally trained in English, employ *simplified English*, mixed lexical borrowing, and extensive nonverbal resources (smiles, hand gestures, body orientation) to facilitate understanding. This aligns with Gumperz's (1982) concept of *contextualization cues*—signals that frame meaning in cross-cultural communication.

For instance, a seller might say, "*Cheap, cheap, for you good price Mister!*" while using hand gestures to indicate size or quality. Although linguistically limited, these utterances perform pragmatic functions of persuasion, friendliness, and empathy, resonating with Culpeper's (2011) *sociopragmatic approach* to impoliteness and accommodation. Rather than viewing these utterances as deficient, they represent *strategic improvisation*—a pragmatic adaptation to multilingual demands (Taguchi, 2019; Dewi & Wijayanti, 2022).

These interactions also reveal an intercultural dynamic of *face negotiation* (Ting-Toomey, 1999), where sellers maintain positive face through humor and generosity ("special price for you, my friend") while avoiding direct refusals or confrontations. Such strategies underscore how local communicative norms of hospitality (*ramah tamah*) persist even in globalized exchanges, reinforcing a Javanese ethos of respect and friendliness while transforming it into a cosmopolitan market style.

4. Integrative Interpretation: Local Resilience in Global Contact

Across the three communicative modes, a key finding emerges: linguistic and non-linguistic adaptations at Pasar Klewer embody a dual orientation—preserving traditional politeness while embracing global communicative practices. The coexistence of *krama* hierarchy, Indonesian neutrality, and English creativity exemplifies a *layered sociopragmatic repertoire* that reflects both continuity and change.

This hybridity supports Blommaert's (2010) notion of *superdiversity*, where local speakers navigate multiple linguistic resources to negotiate identity and meaning. The market becomes not merely a site of economic exchange but a living laboratory of sociopragmatic negotiation—linking local voices to global encounters. In doing so, the study extends previous works on market discourse (Placencia, 2004; Susanto, 2020) by showing how multilingualism operates as a resource for intercultural connection rather than a source of miscommunication.

Ultimately, Pasar Klewer exemplifies how local communicative norms rooted in Javanese politeness continue to shape interactional behavior amid global influences, demonstrating that globalization in language use does not erase local identities but rather recontextualizes them in new communicative ecologies.

To provide a concise yet comprehensive comparison of the observed communicative tendencies, the following table summarizes the key sociopragmatic features identified across the three types of face-to-face service interactions. It outlines the patterns of formality, politeness, language alternation, indirectness, and emotional tone, each interpreted through the lens of Javanese sociocultural norms and pragmatic theory. By integrating these dimensions, the table highlights how local communicative values shape rapport management, face-saving behavior, and customer satisfaction in everyday encounters within Central Java’s service settings.

Table 1. Summary of Sociopragmatic Features across Interaction Types

Sociopragmatic Features	Typical Patterns in Face-to-Face Service Encounters	Illustrative Examples from the Data	Pragmatic Implication
Formality Level	Speakers adjust between <i>krama madya</i> and <i>krama inggil</i> when addressing older or higher-status customers, and use <i>ngoko alus</i> to build closeness with peers or regular visitors.	“Monggo pinarak, Bu” (high formality) vs. “Silakan, Pak, ini motifnya” (neutral polite).	Reflects dynamic <i>social deixis</i> and awareness of local hierarchy; enhances <i>positive face</i> while maintaining respect.
Politeness Strategies	Frequent use of <i>positive politeness</i> (solidarity, attentiveness) combined with <i>negative politeness</i> (avoiding imposition). Indirect mitigation appears in offers and refusals.	“Kalau berkenan, saya bantu carikan, ya, Pak.”	Balances <i>solidarity</i> and <i>deference</i> ; preserves interpersonal harmony (<i>rukun</i>) and minimizes face threat.
Language Switching	Alternation between Javanese and Indonesian; Javanese marks respect and cultural belonging, while Indonesian signals	“Niki regine sekawan ewu, Bu—empat ribu rupiah, ya.”	Indexes <i>identity negotiation</i> and <i>contextual accommodation</i> ;

Sociopragmatic Features	Typical Patterns in Face-to-Face Service Encounters	Illustrative Examples from the Data	Pragmatic Implication
Indirectness	neutrality or inclusivity toward non-locals.		supports cross-cultural rapport.
	Indirect requests and refusals maintain politeness and avoid confrontation; directness occurs mainly in brief transactional contexts.	“Mungkin bisa dicoba yang ini dulu, Pak.”	Enhances <i>rapport management</i> through avoidance of imposition; aligns with Javanese indirect communicative norms.
Emotional Tone	Speech is warm, gentle, and often humorous; emotional control is valued even in complaint situations.	“Hehe, tenang, Bu, nanti kami ganti yang baru, nggih.”	Reinforces <i>affective politeness</i> and maintains positive service image; mitigates potential conflict.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the sociopragmatic dimensions of multilingual interactions in the traditional marketplace of Pasar Klewer, revealing how language use functions not only as a means of transaction but as a medium of social negotiation and identity expression. Through the analysis of three dominant interaction types—Javanese–Javanese, Indonesian–Indonesian, and English–gesture—it becomes evident that speakers employ varying degrees of formality, politeness, and language switching to manage interpersonal relationships and adapt to shifting communicative contexts.

In Javanese–Javanese interactions, politeness is deeply rooted in speech levels and respect markers that reflect social hierarchy and kinship proximity. Indonesian–Indonesian exchanges exhibit more egalitarian norms emphasizing transactional clarity and mutual understanding, whereas English–gesture encounters demonstrate adaptive creativity and cultural sensitivity in bridging linguistic gaps with foreign customers. These patterns collectively show that the speakers’ pragmatic choices are shaped by both local traditions and global communicative demands, producing hybrid norms of interaction that sustain rapport and social harmony.

Theoretically, this research contributes to sociopragmatics by illuminating how multilingual speakers in grassroots economic settings manage *face*, politeness, and identity in spontaneous, real-world encounters. It reinforces the view that politeness is not a static construct but a dynamic practice negotiated within evolving sociocultural and economic landscapes. Practically, the findings offer valuable implications for intercultural communication training, ESP (English for Specific Purposes) pedagogy, and the preservation of local communicative wisdom in the context of tourism and globalization.

Future research may extend this inquiry by examining gendered patterns of speech, the influence of digital market interactions, or comparative studies across different Javanese marketplaces. Such investigations would further enrich our understanding of how traditional values and pragmatic strategies co-exist, transform, and continue to define the communicative identity of multilingual societies like Indonesia.

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