

## **Maxims in Verbal Offers by Fabric Sellers in Pasar Central Medan**

**Yenni Hasnah<sup>1</sup>, Tita Andriani<sup>2</sup>**

*University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara  
Jl. Kapten Mukhtar Basri No 3 Medan – Sumatera Utara, Indonesia  
[yennihasnah@umsu.ac.id](mailto:yennihasnah@umsu.ac.id)*

### **ABSTRACT**

People communicate verbally or and nonverbally to share information. It will be effective to experience communication since the addressers and addressees get shared information to understand. The way how people should communicate to create more effective interaction is referred to maxims. Those involve the principles should be obeyed in performing communication which are well known as cooperative principle proposed by Grice (2004). Thus, this current study deals with maxims in verbal offers realized by fabric sellers in Pasar Central Medan. It was intended to investigate the use of maxims on sellers' offering utterances. Qualitative research was carried out to do the investigation. The data of this research were the sellers' utterances when offering their goods to buyers. Then, those data were analyzed qualitatively through a series of stages as proposed by Ary et.al (2010), including data coding, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion or interpretation. The finding shows that the four types of Grice's maxims were functioned by fabric sellers when delivering verbal offers, namely maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. Those maxims were conducting by flouting and violating processes. Any violation was performed to meet a certain goal, namely getting the buyers' desires or interests to purchase. In conclusion, although it occurred in an informal communication, the cooperative principle was observed into four types of maxims based on any process and certain purpose.

***Keywords: maxim, offers, sellers, cloths, pasar central medan***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language takes a vital contribution on human beings by which they encourage to communicate one to another. They do communication in order to express their ideas, thoughts, emotions, and desires for social relationship establishment. As stated by Wambui, Kibui, & Gathuthi (2012) that communication is a process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions through speech, signals, writing, or behavior. Additionally, Schramm (1993) explains that communication is the mechanism through which human relations exist and develop. These statements imply that to maintain the human relations, they must keep interaction either verbally and or nonverbally. However, people mostly interact by applying verbal communication.

Verbal communication enables people to interact through speaking or writing activities. It refers to the form of communication in which message is transmitted verbally; communication is done by word of mouth and writing (Wambui, Kibui, & Gathuthi, 2012). It means that in oral or written communication, utterances are included. Those utterances are produced by speaker and listener or writer and reader. Unfortunately, not every utterance experiences desired feedback from any side, either addressee or addresser. Their disappointments sometime arise due to confused meaning or even the long duration to respond, particularly in written communication. Thus, people

tend to communicate orally over its advantages. As Wambui, Kibui, & Gathuthi (2012) list that there are several positive points of doing oral communication such as (a) the sender is able to check and see whether if the instruction is clear or has created confusion, (b) the feedback is spontaneous in oral communication, and (c) communication allows for immediate feedback such as the opportunity to ask questions when the meaning is not entirely clear. Out of those advantages, oral communication also owns some disadvantages, namely (a) poor presentation of the message or the instruction can result in misunderstanding and wrong responses, (b) oral communications are not easy to maintain and thus they are unsteady, (c) there may be misunderstandings as the information is not complete and may lack essentials. Because of these weaknesses, in performing spoken communication, it is not free from any misunderstanding among the people involved. Thus, Waget explains that in conversation, an addressee is expected not only to understand the content and intention of the utterance, but is also expected to provide a particular response to addresser's speech act. Of course, by doing so, there is any expectation of decreasing even avoiding misperception of communication.

The addressee and addresser experience failure in understanding the meaning intended in oral communication due to lack of knowledge on the communication rules. Therefore, Grice (2004) posits a general rule called Cooperative Principle. The principle says that make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. Responding this principle, Saeed (2003) calls that Cooperative Principle as a kind of tacit agreement by speakers and listeners to cooperate in communication. In addition, Paltridge (2006) suggests that by following the cooperative principle, it will avoid some misunderstanding of the communication because it consists of some conversational maxims which are used to cooperate and share understanding of the participant in the conversation.

The principle proposed by Grice (2004) consists of four maxims known well as Grice's maxims, namely quality, quantity, relevance and manner. In maxim of quantity, Grice (2004) coins two sub-maxims falling under the category of quantity: "Make your contribution as informative as required and "Do not make your contribution more informative than required". It means that the speakers are enough to respond their interlocutor by providing needed information without adding or omitting unnecessary one. In line with this, Dornerus (2005) elaborates that maxim of quantity is concerned with the amount of information to be provided in a conversation. It makes sense that the information should be neither too little nor too much but sufficient. Then, Grice (2004) postulates two sub-maxims falling under the category of quality: "Do not say what you believe to be false," and "Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence". It refers to something delivered must be true and able to be proven. As Dornerus (2005) says that the maxim of quality deals with the matter of giving the right information. Meanwhile, in maxim of relevance Grice (2004) only places a single sub-maxim, namely "be relevant". It is intended to have mutually dovetailed exchange between the addressee and addresser. In other words, this maxim wants something required matches with provided one. Additionally, Skinner (1948) stresses that the addressee's utterance must have the same content and intention with the addresser's. Finally, Grice (2004) categorizes maxim of manner into four sub-maxims, namely: Avoid obscurity of expression, Avoid ambiguity, Be brief and Be orderly. This maxim emphasizes that speakers are supposed to present clear, concise, univocal, and orderly information. Dornerus (2005) underlines that maxim of manner deals with matter of being clear and orderly when conversing.

Referring to four Grice's maxims above, it seems hard to fully avoid disobedience in doing communication. Thomas (1996) explains that in conversation, people may sometimes fail to observe those maxims occur because of some reasons, such as they are incapable of speaking clearly, or they do it deliberately. Furthermore, Grice in Thomas (1996) states that there are five

ways of failing to observe a maxim, namely: (a) flouting, (b) violating, (c) infringing, (d) opting out, and (e) suspending. He explains that a flout occurs when a speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim at the level of what is said, with the deliberate intention of generating an implicature. Grice uses the term implicature to refer to what a speaker can imply, suggest, or mean, as distinct from what the speaker literally says (Brown and Yule, 1983). Additionally, Fadhly (2012) concludes that the flout of cooperative principle maxims is a daily phenomenon. Then, Grice (cited in Cutting, 2002) says that when the speakers do not fulfill the maxims, the speaker is said to “violate” them. It makes sense that violating maxim refers to break rules in performing communication. Tupan and Natalia (2008) also describe the shared idea about violation that the speakers do not follow of Grice’s maxims are known as violations which is the condition where the speakers do not purposefully fulfill certain maxims. Thirdly, a speaker who with no intention of generating an implicature and with no intention of deceiving, fails to observe a maxim is said to infringe the maxim. Fourthly, a speaker opts out of observing a maxim by indicating unwillingness to cooperate in the way the maxim requires. Lastly, Suspending any maxim means that there are occasions when there is no need to opt out of observing the maxims because there are certain events in which there is no expectation on the part of any participant that they will be fulfilled (hence the no-fulfillment does not generate any implicatures).

According to Grice in Thomas (1996) that people tend to use any maxim in order to be brief, to say thing indirectly to avoid some discomfort things, to insult or deride people indirectly without as much danger of confrontation, and to imply dissatisfaction or anger without putting the speakers in the position where they have to directly defend their views. However, any violation of maxim is definitely reasonable. As Chirstoffersen (2005) identifies that in real life situation, people violate the maxims for different reasons such as hiding the truth, saving face, cheering the hearer, and building someone’s belief. Goffman (2008), in addition, elaborates that in order to save face, speakers tend to employ circumlocutions and deceptions, facing his replies with careful ambiguity so that others’ face is preserved. Then, Khosarvizadeh and Sadehvandi (2011) say that the speakers violate Grice’s maxims in order to cause misunderstandings on their participants’ part to achieve some other purposes, for example to protract answer, to please counterpart, to avoid discussion, to avoid unpleasant condition, and to express feelings. Rahmi, Refnaldi, & Wahyuni (2018) conclude that the dominant reason of violating maxim of quantity is to make clearly information to be understood with clarify and present the strongest information. Meanwhile, Levinson (1983) believes that it is the listeners who ought to interpret what the speakers say as conforming to, flouting or violating the maxims to a certain degree. In brief, someone, however, disobeys any maxim because of certain excuse.

As a matter of fact, violation of Grice’s maxims is also experienced by people, either in formal or informal communication. But, the writers considered that it was interesting enough to investigate the informal one because it involves more variations of language used without any rigid restriction. In other words, in this situation, people conduct more freedom to select their desired language style so they feel more closed relationship. As Wambui Wambui, Kibui, & Gathuthi (2012) state that informal communication helps in building relationships. Such informal communication is easily found in any traditional market. It is one of informal places where people communicate informally to do their interactions. Thus, people in the market often break the rules of communication to achieve a certain intention. It is not rare that the market doers (sellers or buyers) violate the maxim in their transactions, so the buyers get interesting in sellers’ goods or the buyers get cheaper price. These conditions were experienced by the writers themselves and of course others also.

Trading process occurred in any traditional market involves a lot of activities realized by the sellers or buyers. Those activities like offering goods performed by a seller to a consumer. In

offering process, sellers definitely use verbal offers and also supported by nonverbal ones to attract even convince their buyers. Then, in offering, the sellers provide information about their goods as good as possible to buyers. Unfortunately, in getting their buyers' desire to purchase, sellers sometimes cannot control their utterances even telling a lie. Whereas, Cătoi, Gârdan, & Geangu (2012) have elaborated that in the case of business to consumer relationships, the attitude and the emotional response influence up to 75% of the consumers' buying decisions when it comes to the relationships between organizations, the success lies in the partners' efforts to provide correct and adequate information to the other party. It implies that consumers' considerations to purchase are also affected by the ability of sellers to provide needed information that should be true and sufficient. This idea is in line of any maxim as proposed by Grice (2004), in particular maxim of quantity and quality.

One of big traditional market located in Medan is Pasar Central Medan which is available with numerous kinds of goods to sell. The dominant sellers are offering various types of clothes; fabric sellers dominate the market. It is intended for wholesalers or retailers, so most people prefer shopping there to others. The shoppers come from surroundings even out of city. Thus, the current study was intended to investigate the use of maxims by fabric sellers in offering their goods occurred in Pasar Central Medan.

## **METHOD**

This study was carried out through qualitative research to investigate the use of maxims on verbal offers uttered by fabric sellers in Pasar Central Medan. It is located on Jalan Pusat Pasar Medan. The sellers are four people who come from different shops. Two of them were males and others were females. The research data were obtained from the sellers' offering utterances. Those were collected by recording and then transcribed into written form. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively referring to four stages proposed by Ary et.al (2010), namely coding, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion or interpretation. In the first step of data analysis, coding was done by identifying appropriate data with the research, so it is easy to read the data. The next is data reduction which was attempted by reducing the data occurring repeatedly. Reducing the data here means summarizing by choosing the main thing and focusing on the important ones. The third step in analyzing data is data display by presenting data in form of table based on their own categories. The last step of data analysis is drawing conclusion after examining all entries with the same code, merging the categories, and finds the connection among them.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

As stated earlier that the analysis on maxims used by fabric sellers in verbally offering their goods in Pasar Central Medan aims to investigate the types of maxim occurrences. The sellers' utterances in verbal offers include the four types of maxims as proposed by Grice (2004), namely maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner.

### **1. Maxim of Quantity**

In this type of maxim, Grice (2004) stresses two points, namely: (a) Make your contribution as informative as required, and (b) Do not make your contribution more informative than required. It means that the sellers are enough to offer their goods by saying needed information without adding or omitting unnecessary one. In brief, they should deliver an offer informative and not too much. This theory was in line with the following data:

Data 1

*Roknya buk..?* (the skirt mam..?) [ S1.D1.Ut3]

The utterance presented in Data 1 indicates a maxim of quantity. In this case, the seller offered informatively by saying '*Roknya buk..*' whose meaning is the seller wanted to inform that

there was skirt in his shop and he would like to offer it to the buyer and expected the buyer bought it. Additionally, this offer also goes to maxim of quantity because of its simplicity (not too much). It made sense that the seller did offering without using the longer sentence such as ‘*Silakan buk..saya ada jual rok..mau beli roknya buk..*’ (Please mom..I sell skirt..do you want to buy it mom..)’ but it was enough to offer by saying such utterance in Data 1. Since the situation was in the market (informal situation), such simple offer had created good sense between the seller and buyer without any misunderstanding; the seller did not intend to show someone else’s skirt (*Roknya*) to his buyer candidate and vice versa the buyer candidate did not think the seller wanted to point her or another’s skirt out of his shop.

Data 2

*Jilbabnya..?( The hijab..?)* [S4.D2.Ut4]

*Syar’i ..?( The shari’a one..?)* [S4.D2.Ut5]

*Segi empatnya yah..?(the rectangular..?)* [S4.D2.Ut6]

Data 2 also belong to maxim of quantity since the seller offered informatively by uttering less word but directly mentioning the main point of her offers. It was more simple to say ‘*Jilbabnya..?*’ than ‘*Silakan..saya ada jual jilbab..mau beli jilbabnya..*’ (Please..I sell hijab..do you want to buy it..?), ‘*Syar’i ..?*’ than ‘*Silakan..saya ada jual jilbab syar’i..mau beli jilbab syar’inya..*’ (Please..I sell shari’a hijab..do you want to buy it..?), *segi empatnya yah..?* than ‘*Silakan..saya ada jual jilbab segi empat..mau beli jilbab segi empatnya..*’ (Please..I sell rectangular hijab..do you want to buy it..?). Those seller’s simple and informative utterances, however, violated maxim of quantity because she delivered a series of offers beyond her buyer candidate’s need. In this case, she did not only inform that there were hijabs in her shop (*Hijabnya..?*) but also continued to tell the hijabs’ model (*Syar’i..?*) and form (*Segi empatnya..?*) without getting any response previously. In brief, the seller provided too much information before it was really required by her addressees.

## 2. Maxim of Quality

Grice (2004) postulates two sub-maxims falling under the category of quality: (a) Do not say what you believe to be false, and (b) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. It refers to something delivered must be true and able to be proven. So, in this maxim the seller must offer his goods truly and with proof. Such sub-maxims matched with data below:

Data 3

*32, 34, 36 ada bang..(There are 32,34,36 brother..)* [S2.D2.Ut17]

Data 3 includes maxim of quality, because the seller provided the proof for his utterance. In this situation, it is true that the seller had clothes for sizes 32, 34, and 36 as clearly written inside of each cloth. He showed them to his buyer and the buyer was trying to sort it out based on her need.

Data 4

*Bahan wedges ada yang ini 55..(There is wedges material, this one is 55..)* [S1.D1.Ut17]

The utterance presented in Data 4 also refers to maxim of quality since the utterance of the seller was true. He truly sold the cloth with wedges material not other materials and the buyer justified it after looking and touching the offered cloth. However, any part of utterance disobeys the maxim of quality. The words ‘*ada yang ini 55*’ had violated this maxim since the seller firstly fixed the price at fifty five thousands rupiah but it was decreased after bargaining process. It means that the seller conveyed incorrect price at the beginning. In other words, he created a lie about the cloth’s price.

## 3. Maxim of Relevance

For this maxim, Grice (2004) only places a single sub-maxim, namely ‘be relevant’. It is intended to have mutually dovetailed exchange between the addressee and addresser. Thus, the seller must offer his clothes by uttering a series of utterances which related each other. This idea was represented by the data as follow:

#### Data 5

*Gimana bang..?* (How is it, brother..?) [S2.D2.Ut15]

*Nomor berapa bang..?* (What number do you want, brother..?) [S2.D2.Ut16]

*32, 34, 36 ada bang..* (There are 32,34,36 brother..) [S2.D2.Ut17]

*Mau yang paling besar pun ada bang..* (If you want the biggest one, it is available) [S2.D2.Ut18]

A series of utterances in Data 5 belong to maxim of relevance since every utterance there refer to the same talk topic, namely talking about the offered cloth. When the seller asked '*Gimana bang..?*', he definitely want to know his buyer opinion about the cloth offered. Similarly, the seller also certainly referred to his offered cloth when he delivered the next utterances.

#### Data 6

*Belanja bang..?* (Do you want to shop, brother..?) [S2.D2.Ut1]

*Yang mana bang ..?* (Which one is for you, brother..?) [S2.D2.Ut2]

*Bisa kurang bang harganya ..* (The price can be less, brother..) [S2.D2.Ut3]

*Mau bang..?* (Do you want it, brother..?) [S2.D2.Ut4]

*Sayang istri..* (Love your wife, please..) [S2.D2.Ut5]

The utterances in Data 6 also indicate the occurrence of maxim of relevance because the seller uttered them in the same topic, giving his best offer, so his buyer decided to purchase. Unfortunately, the last utterance, '*Sayang istri..*' was the cause of seller to violate this maxim. It was irrelevant sentence to the talk topic although it also intended to persuade the buyer to buy.

#### 4. Maxim of Manner

Grice (2004) categorizes maxim of manner into four sub-maxims, namely: Avoid obscurity of expression, Avoid ambiguity, Be brief and Be orderly. This maxim emphasizes that speakers are supposed to present clear, concise, univocal, and orderly information. This theory was in line with the following data:

#### Data 7

*Bang mari bang..* (Brother, come here, brother..) [S2.D2.Ut11]

*Sini bang..* (Come here, brother..) [S2.D2.Ut12]

*Masuk bang..* (Come in, brother..) [S2.D2.Ut13]

The utterances above show the existence of maxim of manner since those were uttered clearly by the seller. Each of statement has a clear meaning in which his interlocutor understood it by being closer to him and entering his shop. Additionally, those utterances express the real meanings (not ambiguous) as those were stated by seller. Then, every statement was briefly delivered in a short meaningful sentence based on the setting available (informal situation). Finally, the manners of those sentences are indicated on their orderly arrangement to produce. In this case, the seller talked to his buyer candidate by placing systematically which the beginning, next, and last utterances ought to be.

#### Data 8

*Belanja..?* (Do you want to shop..?) [S2.D1.Ut5]

*Apa cari kak..?* (what are you looking for sister..?) [S2.D1.Ut5]

*Celana kedut-kedut..?* (The twitchy pants..?) [S2.D1.Ut5]

*Sempak belampu, beremot pun ada kak..* (the lightning underwear, the remote ones are available here..) [S2.D1.Ut5]

*Mau yang mana..?* (Which one do you want..?) [S2.D1.Ut5]

In Data 8, maxim of manner was experienced by the seller since he uttered them most clearly, concisely, briefly, and orderly. In exception, the fourth utterance [S2.D1.Ut5] indicates the violation of this maxim because the seller showed its ambiguous meaning. In this term, the words

'*sempat belampu, beremot*' are generally inappropriate used for cloth (underwear). However, those words are properly known for electronic terms.

The research findings above refer to the application of Grice's maxims (2004) that four types of maxim realized by the fabric sellers when offering their goods to the buyers located in Pasar Central Medan. The sellers realized the maxims by flouting or violating them. The violation of any maxim was done because of attaining certain purpose.

First, maxim of quantity was showed through the sellers' utterances which were informative. Yet, for some offering utterances, those were delivered more informatively as explained in Data 2 above so the violation of this maxim occurred. However such offers could be done by the sellers in order to give the complete information about their selling goods. They believed that offering their goods by providing much information will attract the buyers' desires to buy.

Second, maxim of quality was also realized by the sellers when offering their goods through telling the truth and supporting it by evidences as elaborated in previous data. But, the realizations of this maxim were sometimes violated as described in the previous data. It was done, however, in trading process happened in traditional market whose price could be bargained until the agreed one. It was believed as a trick that the higher price offered, the bigger profit could be gained by the sellers.

Then, maxim of relevance was performed by the sellers by uttering the utterances which refer to the relevant topic, namely offering. There was also the neglecting of this maxim as presented in the above data due to the certain purpose (persuading the buyer to buy). So, in this study, it was revealed that the seller violated maxim of relevance by switching one topic talk to another one by which a certain goal was attained.

Finally, maxim of manner was conducted by the seller through a series of clear, unambiguous, brief, and orderly utterances. The seller also broke this maxim by providing ambiguous utterances. However, such utterances were produced to create the desires or interests of buyers to purchase. In conclusion, the sellers in offering their goods could apply the Grice's maxim appropriately, but sometimes they also violated them for any reason.

## **CONCLUSION**

Referring to the results of this study, it was concluded that the sellers realized the four types of maxim as proposed by Grice (2004) namely, maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. They performed the maxims by flouting or violating process. The Violation of any maxim was done in order to achieve a certain purpose, getting buyers' interests or desires to purchase. In brief, although it occurred in an informal communication, the cooperative principle was observed into four types of maxims based on any process and certain purpose.

It was suggested for future researchers who get interests on the relevant study to develop this study or explore more about the realization of cooperative principle. The wider and deeper explorations were expected to reveal a rich series of processes and reasons of the maxims existence, either in formal or informal communications.

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