

# Conversational Maxims and Persuasive Communication: Verbal Offer Strategies Among Sellers in Aceh Traditional Markets

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## ABSTRACT

This research explores the use of conversational maxims and verbal offers in traditional market interactions in Pasar Aceh, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, aiming to expand the understanding of communication strategies that enhance seller-customer interactions. Despite extensive studies on Grice's Cooperative Principle in various contexts, limited research has examined how sellers in traditional markets strategically engage with these maxims to persuade customers. The study involved detailed observations, audio recordings, and interviews with eight Acehnese clothing sellers chosen for their active roles in daily market interactions. Using Grice's Cooperative Principle, which includes the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner, the findings reveal that these eight sellers strategically employ these maxims to persuade customers, with occasional variations encouraging smoother and more effective interactions. The analysis identified seven distinct verbal offer types: direct product mentions, polite customer calls, pricing discussions, product origin mentions, customer needs assessment, store entry invitations, and color-based product promotions. These findings provide a grounded theory of seller-customer interactions in traditional markets, presenting persuasive techniques that may enhance market engagement and consumer satisfaction. This study provides communication patterns within traditional market settings, especially in Aceh, and cross-cultural market communication research.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In everyday interactions, implicit meanings often emphasize what is said, shaping how messages are received without explicitly stating the intent. Implicit communication is a critical aspect of human interaction, allowing speakers to convey cues typically used in

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communication, such as nonverbal signals and unintentional behaviors (Ju, 2015). In business settings, this implicit communication becomes even more noticeable as sellers employ persuasive language designed to influence customers perceptively. Their language choices greatly impact how they establish connections with customers, which influences information disclosure and loyalty (Campbell & Davis, 2006). Understanding cultural needs and sellers' strategic use is essential for effective business communication since failing to adjust to these thoughts and behaviors can result in failed business interactions (Beckers & Bsat, 2014).

Verbal offers made by sellers to persuade potential customers are a common example of implicit communication in business, as they incorporate persuasive arguments within language that may not appear explicitly promotional (Kotler & Keller, 2012). These verbal offers are effective tactics used by sellers to try to influence consumers' opinions about necessity, quality, and value without making explicit claims. When used in sales situations, implicit language might make buyers feel as though they are being convinced.

This study investigates how implicit language functions as a persuasive device, particularly in traditional market settings where conversational skills are essential to sellers' success. Traditional markets often reflect local cultural norms and language styles, making them ideal spaces for observing implicit communication strategies in action (Fairclough, 2001). In the context of Indonesian traditional markets, implicit communication is a tool for persuasion and a reflection of local cultural diversities, which can add layers of meaning to each exchange (Syaifuddin, Asi, & Karani, 2021). By analyzing the use of verbal offers in Pasar Aceh, this research aims to better understand how sellers utilize implicit language to foster engagement and connection with customers in ways that encircle both cultural and commercial values.

### **1.1 Pragmatics and the Cooperative Principle in Communication**

The concept of pragmatics, which deals with how context contributes to meaning, is central to understanding implicit communication (Levinson, 1983). In pragmatics, Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1989) offers a framework for analyzing how people cooperate in conversations to communicate effectively. Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle serves as the main theoretical framework of this study, which posits that successful communication is guided by four maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. These maxims help speakers provide appropriate information, maintain truthfulness, stay relevant, and communicate clearly. However, real-world interactions often involve strategic deviations from these maxims to achieve specific communicative goals, such as persuasion or maintaining politeness (Cutting, 2002; Brown & Levinson, 1987). Recent studies have expanded on Grice's framework, highlighting how conversational implicatures function in different sociocultural contexts (Birner, 2012; Huang, 2014). Some scholars also critique the universality of these maxims, arguing that cultural and contextual factors significantly influence conversational norms (Kecskes, 2017).

For instance, sellers might twist these maxims in business settings like markets to create smoother, more persuasive exchanges (Coulthard, 1985; Holmes, 2013). By understanding these unconventionalities, we gain insight into sellers' subtle strategies to convey implicit messages, ensuring that conversations are engaging and potentially persuasive (Prastio et al., 2020). Therefore, several studies have explored the role of pragmatics and verbal offers in traditional market interactions, delivering sellers'

communication strategies across various cultural and geographical contexts. For example, Jonah (2012) investigated the pragmatics of verbal offers by clothing sellers in Jos Metropolis, Nigeria, focusing on how these sellers used language to conform to pragmatic principles while aiming to influence customers skillfully. The study found that sellers often adapted their language to meet pragmatic principles, demonstrating cooperativeness and engaging customers with specific references and implied meanings that drew customers' interest without overtly pushing for sales. Jonah (2012) concluded that the Cooperative Principle could be flexibly applied. This research emphasized that the conversational maxims should be viewed as adaptable guidelines rather than rigid rules.

Similarly, in Indonesia, Lismayanti and Nofrianti (2013) researched verbal offers used by clothing sellers in *Pasar Tradisional Modern* (PTM) or Modern Traditional Market in Bengkulu. Their study also applied Grice's Cooperative Principle, categorizing sellers' language into Grice's maxims of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. The researchers found that sellers frequently flouted these maxims to achieve a more engaging, persuasive communication style that aligned with their goals of attracting customers. By purposely opposing maxims, sellers could make their interactions more compelling, showing that pragmatic flexibility can be beneficial in commercial settings.

Kusumarasdiyati (2005) studied the verbal offers of snack vendors in Malang, Indonesia, examining how these vendors engaged customers through language. This study discovered that while most utterances adhered to Gricean maxims, a few selectively flouted them without violating the absolute Cooperative Principle. Instead, these differences served to enhance the communication, drawing the hearer's attention to the products in indirect ways. Concurrently, the studies on verbal offers are significant because they embody pragmatic strategies that facilitate effective communication (Balman, Lee, & Inoue, 2020). These studies presented how verbal offers and adherence to conversational maxims shape market interactions, with sellers employing pragmatics as a tool for imperceptible persuasion. They emphasize how pragmatic flexibility enables sellers to adapt their communication for effective customer engagement.

## 1.2 The Present Study

While previous studies have contributed noteworthy findings, they focused on different markets across various regions and products. Jonah (2012) studied markets in Nigeria, Lismayanti and Nofrianti (2013) focused on a market in Bengkulu, Indonesia, and Kusumarasdiyati (2005) explored snack vendors' verbal offers in Malang, Indonesia. More recent research has examined conversational maxims in various business interactions, such as written business negotiations. These maxims help identify participants' intentions and sentence meanings (Baghramyan, 2021). Flouting these maxims can also serve specific purposes, such as prompting actions, showing sincerity, and exercising solidarity without necessarily jeopardizing business partnerships (Limthaworn & Keyuravong, 2017). Yet, studies exploring how sellers in traditional, multilingual markets strategically use maxims and verbal offers to persuade customers remain scarce. This study, in contrast, focuses specifically on clothing sellers in Pasar Aceh, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, a region where both Acehnese and Indonesian are actively spoken. By examining how clothes sellers in this cultural and linguistic context employ conversational maxims and verbal offers, this research enhances understanding of how pragmatic strategies adapt in bilingual

traditional markets, an area that has received little scholarly attention. The specific research questions guiding this study are:

1. What conversational maxims do clothes sellers employ while interacting with their customers in Pasar Aceh?
2. What types of verbal offers are used by clothes sellers to engage with customers in Pasar Aceh?

By addressing these questions, this research aims to reveal how verbal offers function as pragmatic tools in traditional market settings to broaden knowledge into the strategies sellers use to carry out successful interactions and increase sales. Analyzing these exchanges in the context of Pasar Aceh allows for a deeper understanding of how local cultural norms shape communication. In Aceh Province, where Acehnese people speak both Acehnese and Indonesian, verbal offers may reflect broader cultural and linguistic patterns. Given Indonesia's diversity, understanding such language use in traditional markets provides a broader understanding of the country's multicultural and multilingual contexts.

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1 Design**

This study is focused on describing the pragmatic analysis of the verbal offer types made by the clothes sellers in Pasar Aceh and their contextual meaning. The qualitative method is applied (Creswell, 2013). Data is obtained through observations, reinforced by audio recordings, and also an interview guide as the instruments in the collection of the data.

### **2.2 Location and Participants**

The location of this research is Pasar Aceh, Banda Aceh, Indonesia. This traditional market is one of the largest markets in the city. Banda Aceh, one of the cities in eastern Indonesia, was transformed by the phases of many events, such as political warfare from 1973 to 2005 (Harun, Yusuf & Karnafi, 2000) and the tsunami disaster in 2004. The complexity of these events and the transformation affected the central market of the city of Pasar Aceh (Qismullah, 2019). Pasar Aceh was a disorganized traditional market made up of wooden shops with tin roofs and narrow, sun-exposed streets with no fixed buildings (Qismullah, 2011). It plays an essential role in meeting the basic and daily needs of the Acehnese.

A total of eight clothes sellers participated in this study, selected through volunteer sampling. They are coded as Seller 1 to Seller 8 in this paper. The choice of clothes sellers was based on their frequent verbal interactions with customers, making them a relevant group for analyzing conversational strategies in sales. While this sample size is suitable for an exploratory qualitative study, it does not claim to represent all sellers in Pasar Aceh. Each seller was observed and audio recorded for an entire workday (8:00 AM to 10:00 PM), totaling 112 hours of recorded interactions over eight days. Additionally, four of these sellers (Seller 1, 4, 5, and 7) consented to in-depth interviews, each lasting approximately 15 minutes, resulting in a total of one hour of interview data. The interviews explored the conversational techniques used to engage and persuade customers.

## 2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The instruments used for data collection were observations, audio recordings, and interviews. Observations were conducted to examine the social phenomena of language use in verbal offers made by clothes sellers, focusing on their behavior and interactions with customers (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). Audio recordings and interviews were included to complement the observational data, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of the sellers' conversational strategies. The transcriptions from the recordings (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) aimed to produce a rich, rigorous description of data (McMullin, 2021), while the interviews provided deeper insights into sellers' perspectives on their communication strategies (Creswell, 2012).

The observations were coded for data analysis based on sellers' utterances and specific behaviors (Heyman et al., 2014). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to identify patterns in the data, ensuring systematic categorization of verbal offers. The transcribed interviews were also examined using thematic analysis to highlight recurring themes and validate findings from the observations. The study's conceptual framework was developed using the Gricean Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1989) to analyze how sellers use verbal offers strategically.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1 The Conversational Maxims Employed by the Clothes Sellers in Pasar Aceh

The study's findings revealed that the clothes vendors used their creativity to produce expressions in promoting their products and attracting customers to buy their merchandise. Certain words and phrases were used to create unique offer expressions. The first research question inquired about the conversational maxims employed by the clothes sellers while interacting with their customers in Pasar Aceh. The samples from data are presented in italics for Indonesian words and italics and underlined for Acehnese words.

#### 3.1.1 Maxim of Quantity

Maxim of quantity occurs when a speaker offers more or less information than the situation requires (Cutting, 2002). This means that the speakers provide as much information as necessary but do not provide any more information than is necessary (Rohbiah, 2020). The data shows the maxim of quantity in the sample (1).

- (1) Seller : *Bajée dèk? Buk? Bajée, Buk!* [Clothes, (younger) sister? Ma'am? Clothes, Ma'am!]  
 Customer : *Laen kali, kak!* [(I will buy) another time, (elder) sister!]

In sample (1), the seller said, "*Bajée dèk?*" ["Clothes, (younger) sister?"]. This utterance implied that the seller tried to offer the clothes she was selling to the customers passing by her store. By saying "*bajée*" (or its variants, such as "*gamis*" [long dress], "*rok*" [skirt], "*siluweu*" [pants], and so on.), they provided the customers with necessary and relevant information about what they sold. This obeyed the maxim of quantity. Hence, the use of kinship terms between strangers (the seller and the buyer/customer), such as "*dèk*" [(younger) sister], "*kak*" [(older) sister], "*Bunda*" [mother], etc., are further discussed in the following sub-section of the maxim of manner.



The maxim of quantity is also found when the sellers offer clothes to the customers by directly mentioning the price of the clothes. The sellers mentioned the cheapest price among the products and said them loudly to attract the customers' attention, as shown in the sample (2).

- (2) Seller : *Sireutôh ribée dèk, murah-murah!* [(It is only) One hundred thousand (rupiahs), (younger) sister, (it is) cheap!]  
 Customer : *Syi kalön, kak!* [Let me see (it), (elder) sister!]

In sample (2), the seller loudly said: "*sireutôh ribée*" [one hundred thousand (rupiahs)] to convey the price of the goods at his store. The seller used the word "*sireutôh ribée*" to clarify that there were clothes at his store that cost only one hundred thousand rupiahs, which obeyed the maxim of quantity. However, sample (2) clearly showed that the seller did not make any explicit statements about what type of clothes he was selling at that price; thereby, it violated the maxim of quantity. The product's name was not mentioned at all in his offer. Furthermore, the utterances were unclear, in which the customer was expected to guess what type of clothes were cheap in that store.

In addition, the maxim of quantity also happened when the sellers and the customers negotiated the prices. Sample (3) displays the occurrence.

- (3) Seller : *Yang ini kena 39.* [This one is 39 (thousand rupiahs)]  
 Customer : *Lemes kita harganya.* [(I get) weak hearing] the price]  
 Seller : *Gimana jadi, karena memang barang bagus, Bunda, kami juga lemes Bunda kasih tau harganya, mau kekmana, tapi memang segitu harganya.* [So, how (should it be), Mother? It is because the quality of the product is very good. We also feel weak of informing you the price. But, it is what it is]  
 Customer : *Lemes tengok harganya.* [(I get) is weak looking at the price]  
 Seller : *Emang kek gitu Bunda. Cantik memang, mewah, karena kalo di butik harganya 800. Karena ini memang baju butik, Bunda. Cuma di dalam pasar aja tempatnya. Karena butiknya lagi proses. Nanti kalo udah di pinggir jalan dia, harganya udah beda lagi.* [That is (the fixed price), Mother. It is beautiful, luxurious, and if it (is sold) at a boutique, the price is 800 (thousand rupiahs). But this is because the boutique is still in progress. Next, it will be (sold at a store next to the) main road. So, the price will also be different (i.e., higher)]  
 Customer : *Iya, nanti ga datang lagi kami, datang orang lain.* [Yeah. It means that we will not come again, the others will come]

In sample (3), it showed that the seller gave the customer much information about the price, which was thirty-nine thousand rupiahs. Moreover, the situation in which the product was currently sold. This utterance obeyed the maxim of quantity in which the seller gave clear information about the price and situation of the product being sold. However, the customer reacted to the seller's statement by saying, "*lemes dengarnya*," which means feeling weak to hear the price or saying it was too expensive for her. This utterance did not mean that the customer felt physically weak because of hearing the price, but more to her disappointment and dissatisfaction toward the price. The utterance meant that the customer did not expect the price to be that high, which was too expensive for her.

Another example where the seller and the customer negotiated the price can also be seen in the sample (4).

- (4) Seller : *Ini? Ini dua ratus dua puluh ribu.*  
 [This one? It is two hundred and twenty thousand rupiahs]  
 Customer : *Kenapa harga baju mahal semua ya?*  
 [Why are all of the clothes so expensive?]  
 Seller : *Ini barang impor. Kalau ini murah lagi, ini harganya seratus enam puluh ribu.* [This is an imported product. But this one is cheaper, one hundred and sixty thousand rupiahs]

In sample (4), the way the seller offered the product was seen by mentioning the price and saying, “*Ini? Ini dua ratus dua puluh ribu*” [This one? It is one hundred and twenty thousand rupiahs]. The seller did not provide other explanations, such as those done by the seller in the sample (3). The customer further showed her dissatisfaction with the price by saying, “*Kenapa harga baju mahal-mahal semua?*” [Why are all the clothes costly?]. It did not mean that all the clothes sold at this store were expensive. She was only referring to the clothes being negotiated with the seller.

From the interview, the seller in (4) explained that in promoting the clothes at her store, she always matched the price with the quality of the clothes she was selling. She said:

- (1) *Harganya tu harus kita punya, punya target harga. Yang pertama kita tentukan dulu, produk ini target harganya berapa. Yang kedua kita tau dulu kualitas ini pantas nya di kasih harga berapa.* [We should have target prices. First, we determine the price for the product. Second, we should know the proper price based on the quality of the product] (Seller 4)

Meanwhile, in another interview with Seller 1, he said that the cheapest price was the best way to attract the customers’ attention. He believed that people were likely to come into his store when they heard that the price was cheaper than what they heard from the other stores nearby. Nevertheless, of course, he would sell the products based on their qualities. Hence, he would shout out the cheapest price of clothing in his stores whenever customers passed by to grab their attention. He said:

- (12) *Biasanya saya suka mangajak atau menarik perhatian pembeli dengan bilang harga. Misalnya, “sireutoh ribee!” Pembeli biasanya datang untuk tanya, mana baju yang harganya yang saya sebutkan. Saya kasih kan. Bajunya tentunya yang kualitasnya seratus ribu. Terus kalo dia nggak suka, baru saya kasih pilihan baju lain dengan kualitas dan harga yang berbeda.* [Usually, I like to attract the attention of the customers by saying the price. For example, “one hundred thousand!” The customer usually will come in and asked for the clothes that I said with that price. I show it to them. The price is in accordance with the quality of the product. If they do not like it, I will give them other clothes which have different prices and qualities]

In addition, the other clothes sellers also invited customers to enter the store by politely guessing the customers’ needs. This is as illustrated in sample (5).

- (5) Seller : *Cari apa dek? Kemeja? Tunik?*  
 [What are you looking for, (younger) sister? A t-shirt, a tunic?]  
 Customer : *Kami lihat-lihat dulu ya?*  
 [We just want to take a look first, okay?]

In sample (5), the seller did not directly invite the customer into her store. However, she tried to guess what the customer wanted by politely asking through hints about the clothes available in her store. This information was delivered to the customer to ascertain what s/he wanted. Accordingly, her utterance obeyed the maxim of quantity. A similar situation is also displayed in the sample (6).

- (6) Seller : *Masuk aja, nggak jagi nggak masalah. Masuk aja, yok lah! Kakak nggak marah kok.*  
 [Come in! If you don't (buy anything), it is okay. Just come in first! I will not be angry]  
 Customer : *Ya kak.* [Yes, (elder) sister]

In sample (6), the clothes seller enthusiastically invited the customer into her store and politely inquired about her intentions. However, the information about what the customer wanted was not revealed enough to the seller, and the customer was also unaware of the various types of clothing available in her store. In this case, the maxim of quantity is violated. In contrast, the customer's response to the seller's solicitation in (6) obeyed the maxim of quantity's principle, which does not contribute more information than required. The customer merely answered the seller's invitation by saying "*ya, kak*" [yes, (elder) sister]. Even though it was pretty short, it was a clear and informative answer as needed by the seller.

### 3.1.2 Maxim of Quality

Maxim of quality happens when the speaker says something false or when there is insufficient evidence (Cutting, 2002). Some speakers like to draw their audience's attention to the fact that they only say what they believe to be accurate and do not have adequate evidence. This principle forbids saying something thought incorrect and less proven true (Rohbiah, 2020).

This type of maxim also occurred when the sellers offered the clothes to the customers by directly mentioning the price of the clothes. The sellers mentioned the cheapest price among the products, and s/he said it loudly to attract the customers' attention, as presented in the earlier sample, that is, sample (2). Here, the seller loudly said, "*sireutôh ribée*" [one hundred thousand rupiahs] to convey the price of the goods at his store. The seller used the word "*sireutôh ribée*" to clarify that there were clothes at his store within that price. Moreover, he further claimed the goods were cheap by saying "*murah-murah*" [cheap]. This obeyed the maxim of quality.

Other sellers also attracted customers by mentioning the origin of the clothes. The aim was to attract the customers' attention to the clothes they sell at their stores. The reason was that some customers preferred to wear imported products over local products. This case is shown in the sample (7).

- (7) Seller : *Baju anak? Impor ada, lokal pun ada. Yang mana dek?*  
 [Kids clothes? There are local and imported clothes (as well). Which one do you prefer, sister?]  
 Customer : *Laen kali kak, beh!* [Next time, (elder) sister!]

In sample (7), the seller promoted her goods by mentioning the origin of the clothes. She said "*import*" [import(ed)] to inform the customer that she was selling clothes made



overseas. Then, she also mentioned “*lokal*” [local] to clarify that some of the clothes sold in her store were also made in Indonesia. The utterance used by the seller in (7) also obeyed the maxim of quality. The seller offered the product by mentioning the quality of the products. It refers to the principle of the maxim of quality to not say what is believed to be false and not to say things lacking adequate evidence. In the context of (7), the seller obeyed the maxim of quality.

The maxim of quality used by the sellers in offering the clothes was also in promoting the colors of the clothes. The seller tried to attract the customer's attention by showing clothes in different colors. This is as shown in (8).

- (8) Seller : *Sama yang kek pink ini tadi kan cantek juga, itu kacanya, ga papa tes aja, biar nampak kan.*  
 [(it is the) same with this pink one, it is also beautiful. There is the mirror. Just try it on so you can see (yourself in it)]

In sample (8), the seller promoted the clothes by showing a pink dress. She insisted that the pink dress was beautiful and asked the customer to try it on. A standing mirror was available at her store, and the seller asked the customer to see herself in the dress so she would be satisfied before buying it. In this context, the utterances used by the seller obeyed the maxim of quality. The seller wanted to show the customer that she was telling the truth and to prove that the pink dress was beautiful by inviting the customer to try it on and see herself in it in front of the mirror.

Furthermore, the interview result also showed that the seller's purpose in mentioning the clothes' origin was to draw the customer's attention because most buyers, based on their opinion, assumed that imported clothes have better quality than local ones. The seller said:

- (13) *Saya menawarkan baju ke pembeli dengan memberi pilihan baju impor dan baju lokal supaya pembeli tertarik. Nantinya pembeli akan masuk dan ingin tau bedanya baju impor dengan baju dalam negeri. Waktu mereka tau, banyak yang tertarik karena rata-rata bahan baju impor itu memang bagus-bagus dan modelnya juga tidak ketinggalan jaman.* [I offered the clothes by asking the customers to choose the imported clothes or local clothes to attract their interests. The customers will then come in (to my store) to find out the difference between the imported clothes and the local ones. When they see the difference, most of the customers prefer the imported products because most of the imported clothes are of good qualities and the models are also up to date] (Seller 5)

### 3.1.3 Maxim of Relevance

The maxim of relevance is a principle that contributes to the conversation situation while remaining on the topic (Cutting, 2002). It states that speakers are assumed to be saying something related to what came before. The key point is that every statement made by the speaker must be relevant to the situation (Rohbiah, 2020). In one of the samples that occurred, the maxim of relevance is presented earlier in sample (4) when the seller promoted clothes by mentioning the origin of the clothes. Sample (4) shows how customers complained about the clothes' price by asking, “*kenapa harga baju segitu semua?*” [why are all the clothes within that price (i.e., expensive)?]. This implies that the customer disagreed

with the price given by the seller. The seller defended by saying, "*Ini barang impor*" [this is an imported good], meaning that imported products have higher prices compared to local ones. In this case, the seller obeyed the maxim of relevance in the customer's response, as presented earlier in the sample (7). In this case, the customer responded to the seller by saying, "*Laen kali kak*" [Next time, (elder) sister]. The utterance did not mean that the customer promised to buy clothes from the seller soon, but here, she politely refused to buy the clothes offered.

In sample (9), the seller invited the customer to come into his shop without mentioning or offering the clothes he was selling to the customers. The seller politely said, in the local language (Acehnese), words such as "*piyoh*," literally meaning 'stop.' In the context of the clothes seller, it means 'Please, stop by.' This word, "*piyoh*," was the most common utterance used by the clothes sellers in Pasar Aceh.

- (9) Seller : *Piyoh, cari apa dek? Masuk aja dulu* [(Please) stop (by), what are you looking for, sister? Just come in first]  
 Customer : *Ini gamis ya?* [Is this the robe (type)?]

The type of verbal offers that occurred in the sample (9) obeyed the maxim of relevance as demonstrated by the relevance of what they said to what they meant and the purpose for which they attempted to measure the customers' intention.

Meanwhile, sample (10) also shows how the seller gave her opinion in promoting the clothes by saying a preferable color to many people.

- (10) Seller : *Dia memang bahannya hitam bunda, saya suka black and white soalnya.* [Its color is only black, Mother, because I prefer black and white]

In sample 10, the seller informed the customer that she only had black color for that certain product. Then, she added the information that she liked black and white clothes, implying that many others did, too. This utterance is out of context because the seller and the customer were discussing the color of the clothes. There was no direct relationship between the product's and the seller's favorite colors. Thus, the above utterance violated the maxim of relevance.

Another similar sample that occurred in the maxim of relevance by promoting the color of the clothes can be seen in the sample (11).

- (11) Seller : *Kotak mau bunda? Ini? Tapi ini hitam juga bunda kek mana?* [Do you prefer this plaid dress, Mother? This one. However, it is also a black one. How (would) you like it, Mother?]  
 Customer : *Iya ndak apa.* [It's okay]

In sample 11, the seller promoted the cloth by showing a black plaid dress to the customer. However, the seller seemed uncertain in this context because the customer preferred other colors. However, the customer gave her a positive response by saying, "*iya ndak apa*," which means that at that time, the black color was possible to be chosen by the customer. The utterance used by the seller obeyed the maxim of relevance, in which the seller said the word "*tapi...*" [but] to show that the seller knew the customer did not prefer black.

Violating the maxim of relevance also happened in some customer utterances or responses when communicating with the sellers. For example, in sample (12), the customer's response is irrelevant to the seller's questions about what they were looking for. The customer did not specify the model, type, or color of the clothes that she was looking for.

- (12) Seller : *Masuk aja nggak apa-apa. Kalo nggak jadi nggak jodoh. Cari apa dulu? Tunik? Kemeja?* [Come in! (There is) no problem if you don't buy it. What are you looking for? A tunic (dress)? A blouse?]  
 Customer : *Mau cuci-cuci mata dulu kak. Nanti kalau cantik kita beli.* [I just want to (do some) window shopping, (elder) sister. If it is nice, then I will buy it.]

In sample (12), the customer just informed the seller that she wanted to do window shopping and would only buy if something was interesting to her by saying, "*Mau cuci-cuci mata dulu kak. Nanti kalau cantik kita beli*" [I just want to (do some) window shopping, (elder) sister. If it is nice and beautiful, then I will buy it.] Her response was not relevant to the seller's question, which inquired about what kind of clothes she wanted to buy.

### 3.1.4 Maxim of Manner

Maxim of manner is when the speakers are assumed to be saying something that avoids obscurity of expression and also avoids ambiguity, which means it needs to be brief and orderly (Cutting, 2002). One of the characteristics of the maxim of manner is being perspicuous. This maxim is a principle that requires the speaker to speak frequently while avoiding ambiguity, incoherence, and overstated expression. The very principle raised in this maxim focuses on the speaker's manner of speaking (Rohbiah, 2020).

Here, some sellers also attracted the customers' attention by calling them politely using kinship terms such as "*bunda*" [mother], "*dek/adek*" [younger sister], "*kak*" [elder sister], etc., and these terms of reference were usually addressed to women and young girls. This is a typical culture of the Acehnese, which addresses strangers with kinship terms in order to get to know a new person and build a social relationship. The emphasis of communication among Asian cultures generally is relationship building and maintenance (Grunig, Grunig & Toth, 2007). In this case, the aim was to build good communication for the first impression between the seller and the customer, as shown in the sample (13).

- (13) Seller : *Bunda, masuk Bunda?* [Mother, come in, Mother?]

The word "*Bunda*" in the sample (13) literally means 'mother,' which a child usually calls his/her biological mother in Indonesian. Here, the seller used "*Bunda*" as a way to call an older woman. The aim was to show the seller's respect to the customer, who was seen to be old enough to be a mother (typically women in their mid-30s in the Acehnese culture). Therefore, this utterance obeyed the maxim of manner.

Another example of the utterance used by the seller to call their customers with kinship terms can also be seen in the sample (14).

- (14) Seller : *Cari apa, dek? Tengok dulu adek. masuk aja tengok-tengok dulu.* [What are you looking for, (younger) sister? Just have a look first. Come in and have a look, (younger) sister]  
 Customer : *Nggak, nggak.* [No, no]

In sample (14), the seller politely invited the customer to have a look at their clothes by using the word “*adek*” [(younger) sister]. Generally, this refers to the types of kinship addresses in Indonesian for a younger sister or a younger brother. However, in this context, it implied that the seller called the customer “*adek*” because the customer was a younger girl than the seller, even though there was no family relationship between them. This utterance obeyed the maxim of manner. The reason the seller invited the customers into the stores using kinship terms was to show respect for the Indonesian culture in general and the Acehnese culture specifically.

Violating the maxim of manner also occurred in another example, as shown in the sample (15).

(15) Seller : *Kemeja! Rok! Lagak-lagak! Murah-murah!* [Shirt! Skirt! Beautiful! Cheap! Cheap!]

In sample (15), the seller shouted “*murah-murah*” [cheap] and “*lagak-lagak*” [beautiful/nice] to attract the customer’s attention. It appeared and violated the maxim of manners slightly by repeating the words “*lagak*” and “*murah*.” These shouting and repetitions are deemed to violate the maxim of manner.

### 3.2 Types of Verbal Offers Employed by the Clothes Sellers in Pasar Aceh

The second research question inquired about the types of verbal offers used by the clothes sellers while interacting with their customers in Pasar Aceh. From the interactions based on Grice’s four conversational maxims, we identified seven types of verbal offers generated by the eight participants. These verbal offers were made based on the customers’ condition and the situation at the location of their stores. All these types were elaborated concerning the maxim theory proposed by Grice (1989).

#### 3.2.1 Direct Product Mentions

The first type is the seller directly mentioning the word “*bajée*” (Acehnese) or “*baju*” (Indonesian) or the product they wanted to sell. These statements adhere to three maxims: quantity, relevance, and quality. They provided customers with the necessary, relevant information about what they sold (maxim of quantity and maxim of relevance) by saying “*bajée*” (or its variants, such as “*gamis*” (long dress), “*rok*” (skirt), “*siluweu*” (pants), etc.). The information was accurate (maxim of quality). This is relevant to the findings of the previous study by Kusumarasdyati (2005), who found that most sellers offer their products by only mentioning the products they sell. This utterance obeys the principle of the maxim of quantity proposed by Grice (1989) that ‘make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange)’ and ‘do not make a contribution more informative than is required.’

#### 3.2.2 Polite Customer Calls

The second type of verbal offers used by the sellers was calling the customers politely by using kinship terms, such as “*Bunda*” [mother], “*Buk*” [ma’am], “*dek/adek*” [(younger) sister], and “*kakak*” [(elder) sister], etc. In the Acehnese context, it seems common for sellers to use kinship terms to be polite (Yusuf, Nasir & Andib, 2019) to address their customers. Nevertheless, Indonesians are generally conscious of the disparities in social

power and spatial relationships. They use a variety of politeness strategies to achieve their objectives in daily interactions with individuals who have higher social standings, lower, and in between than they do (Jeanyfer & Tanto, 2018). This is in line with the finding by Lismayanti and Nofrianti (2013), who found that clothes sellers in Bengkulu, Indonesia, also promoted their clothes by calling their customers with kinship terms such as mom, sister, younger sister, brother, grandmother, while inviting them to buy products at their stores.

### 3.2.3 Pricing Discussions

The third type of verbal offer used by the sellers was mentioning the prices of the clothes. In this research, the sellers used the words “*murah-murah*” [cheap] and “*sireutôh ribée*” [one hundred thousand (*rupiahs*)] to attract the customer's attention to buy their products. These utterances adhered to the maxim of quality because they were true. It obeys the principle of the maxim of quality: 'do not say what you believe to be false' and 'do not say for which you lack adequate evidence.' In addition, it also obeys the maxim of relevance because they are relevant to the context, and the information provided was processable, clear, and expressive.

This finding is supported by the previous finding by Kusumarasdyati (2005) that mentioning price is used by some sellers instead of mentioning the product's name. However, the hearer should be able to interpret these utterances by seeing the product directly.

### 3.2.4 Product Origin Mentions

The fourth type of verbal used by the sellers was mentioning the origin of the clothes. In this research, it was found that the seller promoted the clothes by saying “*impor*” [imported (product)] and “*lokal*” [local (products)] words. It means that the sellers promoted both the clothes made in other countries and those made in Indonesia. These utterances obeyed the maxim of quality because the sellers were informed of the truth that the clothes were imported, and she had adequate evidence for saying so (Grice, 1989). In addition, this finding also obeyed the maxim of relevance, in which the hearer can proceed with the information that imported and local products referred to the clothes in this context.

### 3.2.5 Customer Needs Assessment

The fifth type of verbal offer used by the sellers was guessing the customers' needs. The sellers politely guessed what the customers wanted to buy that day and provided some hints by mentioning the different types of clothing. This information was delivered to the customers so that they became more certain of what they needed and wanted to buy at the clothing stores. Because the sellers mentioned the different types of clothes available in this context, the maxim of quantity is followed (Cutting, 2002; Grice, 1989).

### 3.2.6 Store Entry Invitations

The sixth type of verbal offer used by the seller is politely inviting the customers to enter their stores. In this context, the sellers in Pasar Aceh used some utterances such as “*piyoh*” [(please), stop (by)], and “*masuk*” [come in], and sometimes it was followed by asking about the customer's need. These verbal offers follow the maxim of relevance, as evidenced by the relevance of what they said to what they meant and their purpose and how they attempted to measure the customers' intentions. These occurrences adhered to



the maxim of quality because they did not lie; it was confirmed that they sold clothes, and many people (witnesses) around the stores knew that it was a clothing store. However, in one case, the sellers only asked the customers to enter their stores without mentioning any information about what they were selling. Moreover, this violated the maxim of quantity (Grice, 1989; Kusumarasdyati, 2005).

### 3.2.7 Color-Based Product Promotion

The seventh type of verbal offer used by the seller is promoting the clothes by the colors. The sellers tried to attract the customers' attention by showing the customers the available colors of the clothes. In this case, the utterances obeyed the maxim of quantity and the maxim of quality (Grice, 1989). The sellers told the truth about the available colors of the clothes in their stores. Correlated to the previous study, it is similar to Kusumarasdyati (2005), but the focus differed. This research focused on clothes sellers in Pasar Aceh, while Kusumarasdyati's research focused on snack vendors in Malang. The difference in focus brought about the difference in the sellers' verbal offers and choices of utterances.

In sum, from all the research conducted before, there were differences in terms of locations, the sources of data, and the focus of research. Nevertheless, the results of this research were pinpointed in the same direction, showing that the sellers did not use maxims as an absolute rule that had to be obeyed. Sometimes, they are flouted to make a verbal interaction flow smoothly.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that clothing sellers in Pasar Aceh employ various conversational maxims and verbal offer strategies to persuade customers. The results show that sellers strategically adhere to or flout Grice's maxims, quantity, quality, relevance, and manner to enhance their interactions. The seven identified verbal offer strategies are direct product mentions, polite customer calls, pricing discussions, product origin mentions; customer needs assessments, store entry invitations, and color-based product promotions. They show that sellers use pragmatic flexibility to influence purchasing decisions. These findings align with previous research (e.g., Jonah, 2012; Lismayanti & Nofrianti, 2013), manifesting how sellers adapt their language use to optimize customer engagement.

The study confirms that while Grice's Cooperative Principle provides a valuable framework for analyzing seller-customer communication, real-world market interactions often deviate from strict adherence to the maxims. Sellers intentionally flout the maxims of quantity and relevance to generate curiosity, as seen in cases where they provide minimal information or use indirect offers. This supports previous studies, such as Kusumarasdyati (2005), which found that market vendors use persuasive speech patterns that deviate from traditional pragmatic rules. Similarly, Lismayanti and Nofrianti (2013) reported that sellers in Bengkulu often ignored the maxims of quality and quantity to create more engaging and persuasive interactions. This suggests that pragmatic violations are not merely accidental but serve strategic purposes. This reinforces Cutting's (2002) argument that speakers manipulate maxims to achieve communication goals.

Another key finding of this study is the role of politeness and cultural adaptation in verbal offers. Sellers frequently use kinship terms such as "*Bunda*," "*Kak*," and "*Adek*" to establish rapport with customers. This practice aligns with Yusuf, Nasir, and Andib's (2019) study, which found that Indonesian speakers often incorporate kinship terms to maintain

social harmony and hierarchy. Furthermore, Jeanyfer and Tanto (2018) emphasized that Indonesians use politeness strategies based on social standing, which explains why sellers carefully select address terms to create a welcoming atmosphere. This also reflects Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which suggests that speakers adjust their speech based on power relations and familiarity.

The implications of this study extend beyond linguistic analysis to broader socio-economic and cultural contexts. The use of persuasive language in traditional markets reflects the social behaviors of Acehese society, where verbal interaction plays a crucial role in commerce (Syaifuddin, Asi, & Karani, 2021). Sellers' ability to subtly flout conversational maxims without alienating customers indicates the importance of implicit communication in marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Moreover, the strategic use of verbal offers suggests that linguistic choices in commercial settings are both culturally embedded and economically motivated (Campbell & Davis, 2006). Understanding these pragmatic strategies can inform business communication practices, particularly in contexts where direct advertising is less effective.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the clothes sellers in Pasar Aceh, Banda Aceh, Indonesia, were found to employ all four categories of the Grecian Cooperative Principle, namely the maxim of quality, the maxim of quantity, the maxim of relevance, and maxim of manners were employed by the sellers. However, they sometimes violated those principles to achieve their communicative and persuasive goals. These maxims must be viewed as shared assumptions conducted by the speakers during verbal interaction. Furthermore, the clothes sellers used seven types of verbal offers while interacting with their customers in Pasar Aceh. They directly mention the products, politely call the customers, mention the products' price, mention the products' origin, guess the customers' needs, invite the customers to enter the stores, and promote the products by the colors. They used several utterance models in each type of verbal offer to meet communicative, persuasive ends while interacting with their customers.

The paper has answered the two research questions of the study, but it is also necessary to note the limitations of the current investigation. In this paper, we only focused on one traditional market in Banda Aceh and one type of product being sold (i.e., clothes). To that end, the present study may be replicated by adding data collected from more sellers that sell different types of products at more traditional market locations in the city. In addition, future research may also investigate the similarities and differences of verbal offers employed by sellers from other ethnic groups in Indonesia who speak other mother tongues to gain more information on the language culture of multilingual and multiethnic Indonesia.

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### Authors' Contribution

Cut Nurul Azmar worked on the project, provided the main conceptual ideas, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Kismullah Abdul Muthalib collaborated in providing the main conceptual ideas and data analysis. Yunisrina Qismullah Yusuf collaborated in providing the main conceptual ideas, data analysis, and revising the manuscript. Septhia Irnanda collaborated in checking the final results of data analysis and revising the manuscript. Asma Sohaib Khan proofread the manuscript.

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