

Trial as a speech event: turn-taking, institutional authority, and the pragmatics of Indonesian courtroom interaction

Imam Masrur

Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Wasil Kediri, Indonesia

Article Info

Article history:

Received Aug 19, 2026

Revised Sep 21, 2026

Accepted Sep 30, 2026

Keywords:

courtroom discourse;
Indonesian legal pragmatics;
institutional authority;
speech event;
turn-taking.

ABSTRACT

Background: Courtroom interaction in Indonesia constitutes an institutionally regulated speech event in which legal authority is enacted through turn allocation, questioning, repair, ratification, and pragmatic control rather than through written procedure alone. **Objective:** This study examines how turn-taking practices, institutional authority, and pragmatic force organize participation in Indonesian courtroom interaction. **Method:** This study applies a qualitative corpus-assisted design combining ethnography of communication, conversation analysis, institutional discourse analysis, and legal pragmatics to coded public courtroom transcripts, audio-visual references, and contextual judicial documents. **Results:** Sequential analysis shows that judicial openings and speaker selection dominate courtroom interaction, indicating that participation is procedurally activated before it becomes legally meaningful. Authority analysis demonstrates that judges exercise power through procedural initiation, floor licensing, participation repair, and institutional ratification rather than only through explicit argumentative control. Pragmatic analysis reveals that directive framing, information elicitation, clarification, minimal confirmation, and record-oriented uptake transform courtroom speech into institutional action. **Implication:** This study clarifies how procedural fairness depends not only on formal rights but also on interactional access, sequencing, and recognition. **Novelty:** This study contributes a turn-level model of Indonesian courtroom discourse that integrates speech-event structure, institutional authority, and pragmatic force within one analytically traceable framework.

This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.



Corresponding Author:

Imam Masrur

Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Wasil Kediri, Indonesia

Jl. Sunan Ampel No. 7, Ngronggo, Kota Kediri, Jawa Timur, 64127, Indonesia

Email: imammasrur@uinkediri.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Courtroom interaction in Indonesia is a socially consequential site where law is not only applied but also spoken, sequenced, and institutionally controlled. Public access to trial records has expanded this issue beyond doctrinal legal analysis: as of 7 July 2026, Mahkamah Konstitusi RI's official Risalah Sidang portal displayed 10,337 hearing records and listed downloadable PDF and audio files for recent proceedings, including constitutional review cases on political parties, elections, criminal law, consumer protection, and health regulation. This public archive demonstrates that Indonesian adjudication now leaves a substantial interactional trace, yet access alone does not explain how authority operates inside spoken procedure. Trials are speech events in which judges allocate participation, lawyers formulate questions, witnesses manage accountability, and defendants speak under institutional constraint. This makes courtroom talk crucial for

linguistic inquiry because procedural fairness depends partly on who may speak, when speech is permitted, how answers are shaped, and how institutional actors ratify or restrict meaning.

Recent scholarship has substantially advanced courtroom discourse studies, but important gaps remain in relation to Indonesian turn-taking and pragmatic authority. Studies have examined questioning force and pragmatic strategies in courtroom interrogation (Anisah & Sari, 2024) [1], verbal attacks in Indonesian courtroom settings (Purnama, 2023) [2], advocates' speaking strategies in criminal defence (Minto et al., 2024) [3], and broader communication types in Indonesian criminal trials (Widodo, 2024, 2025) [4], [5]. Comparative and international works have also mapped courtroom power through impoliteness, legitimation, refusal, footing, and turn-taking in Ghanaian, Nigerian, Saudi, Chinese, and Anglo-American contexts (Mitchell, 2021; Obeng & Campbell, 2023; Uwen, 2023; Alshammari et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2025) [6], [7], [8], [9], [10]. However, much of this literature treats courtroom discourse through rhetorical content, speech acts, or power themes rather than through turn-by-turn organization as a procedural mechanism. What remains underdeveloped is a focused account of how Indonesian courtroom authority is enacted through sequential rights: nomination, interruption, repair, clarification, silence, reformulation, and ratification.

This study examines Indonesian courtroom interaction as an institutionally structured speech event by asking how turn-taking organizes authority, participation, and pragmatic meaning during trial proceedings. More specifically, this study addresses three interrelated questions: first, how are turns allocated, constrained, interrupted, repaired, and closed across different procedural stages; second, how do judges, prosecutors, legal counsel, witnesses, defendants, and other participants display or negotiate institutional authority through sequential practices; and third, what pragmatic strategies are used to manage clarification, resistance, credibility, alignment, and procedural control. These questions require combining ethnography of communication, conversation analysis, institutional discourse, and pragmatics. Chen's (2021) [11] account of courtroom register shows that courtroom language cannot be reduced to ordinary speech or written legal form, while Wright et al. (2022) [12] demonstrate how apparently deferential terms may perform strategic pragmatic work. Within Indonesian legal-linguistic scholarship, Setiyawan (2026) [13], Setiaji (2026) [14], Kadamehang (2026) [15], and Maham (2026) [16] further show that language, power, evidence, and credibility are deeply entangled in judicial settings.

This study argues that Indonesian courtroom authority is not located only in formal legal roles or written procedural rules; it is repeatedly produced through interactional management of speaking rights. Judges' directives, lawyers' question designs, witnesses' response formats, and defendants' restricted opportunities to elaborate form a sequential ecology in which institutional hierarchy becomes audible. This argument does not presume that turn-taking patterns cause legal outcomes, nor does it infer hidden intentions from isolated utterances. Instead, it treats authority as observable in how participants open, hold, transfer, contest, and close turns under procedural conditions. Such an approach contributes to legal pragmatics by moving from thematic accounts of power toward a micro-analytic model of courtroom participation. It also has methodological implications for Indonesian forensic linguistics: public hearing records, especially those containing both transcript and audio, can support more transparent analysis of institutional talk without conflating legal judgment, rhetorical persuasion, and interactional procedure.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Courtroom

Courtroom interaction is best understood as an institutional speech event rather than ordinary conversation transferred into legal space. As a speech event, trial talk is shaped by role distribution, procedural sequencing, admissible forms of address, and unequal rights to initiate, suspend, or close topics. Chen (2021) [11] argues that courtroom discourse moves between oral and literate registers, while Bögelein et al. (2022) [17] show that courtroom ethnography must account for multiple institutional layers. Widodo (2024, 2025) [4], [5] similarly frames Indonesian criminal trials as communicative events with distinctive participant roles and procedural routines. This view shifts analysis from legal content alone to situated communicative order.

A courtroom speech event can be described through several observable indicators: participant framework, setting, genre, communicative purpose, sequential phase, evidentiary orientation, and normative constraint. Trial interaction usually includes judges, prosecutors, advocates, defendants, witnesses, experts, clerks, and audiences, but participation rights are not evenly distributed. P. and Gillings (2025) [18] show that courtroom discourse in electoral conflict depends on institutional framing, while Widodo et al. (2025) [19] demonstrate that virtual Indonesian trials introduce additional inequalities of access, timing, and audibility. These indicators matter because courtroom meaning emerges through the relationship between who speaks, at what stage, under whose authorization, and with what procedural consequence.

2.2. Turn-taking

Turn-taking is central to institutional authority because trials regulate speech through asymmetrical access to the floor. In ordinary conversation, turn exchange may be negotiated locally, but courtroom interaction assigns stronger turn-control rights to judges and institutionally licensed actors. Obeng and Campbell (2023) [7] identify turn-taking as a key feature of judicial discourse, while Uwen (2023) [8] and Anowu et al. (2023) [20] show that courtroom power is reproduced through control, legitimation, and delegitimation. Mitchell (2021) [6] further demonstrates that action misalignment may generate impoliteness when participants orient to incompatible contextual expectations. Turn-taking therefore becomes a practical mechanism through which legal authority is interactionally displayed.

Indicators of institutional turn-taking include turn allocation, interruption, overlap, repair, objection, uptake, reformulation, topic closure, and ratification. Questioning strategies are especially important because they organize what counts as relevant testimony and limit how witnesses or defendants may respond. Anisah and Sari (2024) [1] examine pragmatic force in courtroom interrogation, whereas Aldosari (2023) [21], [22] and Alkabiri (2024) [23] connect courtroom questions to argumentation and rhetorical pressure. Mısır and Akın (2024) [24] show how impoliteness indexes power in criminal court discourse, and Sun et al. (2025) [10] link courtroom dynamics to cognitive-functional patterns of authority. These studies reveal authority as sequentially achieved, not merely formally possessed.

2.3. Courtroom pragmatics

Courtroom pragmatics concerns how speakers perform legal action through utterances that question, deny, clarify, accuse, object, explain, mitigate, or persuade. Unlike broad discourse analysis, pragmatic inquiry attends to speech acts, implicature, politeness, refusal, stance, footing, evaluation, and credibility effects. Wright et al. (2022) [12] show that terms of respect may perform strategic legal functions, while Alshammari et al. (2025) [9] analyse defendants’ refusal strategies as institutionally situated pragmatic choices. Khafaga (2023) [25] and Deuna and Ballesteros-Lintao (2022) [26] demonstrate that lexicalization and evaluation shape courtroom positioning. Indonesian work on verbal attacks and legal evidence further confirms that pragmatic form affects perceived legitimacy (Purnama, 2023; Setiyawan, 2026) [2], [13].

Pragmatic indicators in courtroom interaction include directive force, answer design, hedging, evidentiality, politeness, footing shifts, narrative time, credibility construction, and resistance. Duffy and Blewitt (2026) [27] show how temporal discourse structures courtroom persuasion, while Zaiton (2025) [28] expands analysis toward multimodal features of trial performance. Kadamehang (2026) [15] and Maham (2026) [16] extend this concern to interpreter mediation, procedural inequality, testimony, gendered credibility, and institutional power in Indonesian legal settings. This literature supports a theoretical position in which this study treats Indonesian trials as speech events where turn-taking and pragmatics jointly organize authority. The contribution lies in connecting sequential control with legal-pragmatic meaning.

3. METHOD

This study uses a turn-level corpus of Indonesian courtroom interaction as its material object. Unit of analysis is a speaker turn or transcript excerpt that can be linked to a document code, speaker role, procedural stage, timestamp, and official source. This unit is appropriate because courtroom authority is observable through sequential practices: opening, allocating, interrupting, repairing, ratifying, and closing turns. Corpus composition includes primary hearing transcripts, one visual/video item for multimodal triangulation, and context documents from official judicial repositories. Following Chen (2021) [11], Widodo (2024, 2025) [4], [5], and Obeng and Campbell (2023) [7], courtroom interaction is treated as institutional talk rather than ordinary conversation.

Table 1. Dataset or sample composition

Code	Data Type / Participant	Source	Location	Period	Quantity	Characteristics	Status
DOC-MK-PUU-2026-0707-215219-II	Primary / judge-parties	MKRI Risalah Sidang PDF + YouTube	Jakarta, Indonesia	2026-07-07	1	Petition revision hearing, turn-labelled transcript, audio/video support	Retained
DOC-MK-PUU-2026-0707-086110123-	Primary / judge-expert-state actors	MKRI Risalah Sidang PDF	Jakarta, Indonesia	2026-07-07	1	Expert/witness hearing, participant-role mapping	Retained

VIII							
DOC-MK-PUU-2026-0706-208212-II	Primary / judge-applicants	MKRI Risalah Sidang PDF	Jakarta, Indonesia	2026-07-06	1	Petition revision hearing, short sequential exchange	Retained
DOC-MK-PUU-2026-0706-207211-II	Primary / judge-applicants	MKRI Risalah Sidang PDF	Jakarta, Indonesia	2026-07-06	1	Petition revision hearing, procedural-stage coding	Retained
DOC-MK-PUU-2026-0706-206209213-II	Primary / judge-applicants	MKRI Risalah Sidang PDF	Jakarta, Indonesia	2026-07-06	1	Petition revision hearing, opening sequence available	Retained
DOC-MK-PUU-2026-0624-215219-I	Primary / judge-applicants	MKRI Risalah Sidang PDF + YouTube	Jakarta, Indonesia	2026-06-24	1	Preliminary examination, paired with later revision hearing	Retained
DOC-MK-PUU-2025-1104-199200-I	Primary / judge-applicants	MKRI Risalah Sidang PDF	Jakarta, Indonesia	2025-11-04	1	Preliminary examination, constitutional-review context	Retained
DOC-MK-PUU-2025-1209-225-II	Primary / judge-applicants	MKRI Risalah Sidang PDF	Jakarta, Indonesia	2025-12-09	1	Petition revision hearing, role-based transcript segmentation	Retained
DOC-MK-PUU-2026-0108-262-I	Primary / judge-applicants	MKRI Risalah Sidang PDF	Jakarta, Indonesia	2026-01-08	1	Preliminary examination, formal courtroom opening	Retained
DOC-MK-YT-2026-0707-215219	Primary visual/video	Official MKRI YouTube hearing video	Jakarta, Indonesia	2026-07-07	1	Visual actor, frame, layout, timestamp, transcript support	Retained
DOC-MK-PORTAL-2026-RISALAH-INDEX	Context	MKRI Risalah Sidang portal	Indonesia	2026-07-07	1	Corpus discovery context and official access route	Retained
DOC-MA-REPORT-2025-DIRPUT	Context	Kepaniteraan Mahkamah Agung annual report	Indonesia	2025	1	Repository and judicial transparency context	Retained

This study applies a qualitative corpus-assisted design that combines ethnography of communication, conversation analysis, institutional discourse analysis, and legal pragmatics. This design is suitable because courtroom speech is both sequential and normatively constrained: utterances do not merely convey information but also perform procedural work. Bögelein et al. (2022) [17] justify multi-level courtroom ethnography, while Mitchell (2021) [6], Uwen (2023) [8], and Mısır and Akin (2024) [24] show that power and misalignment are interactionally produced. This study therefore examines how authority is displayed in observable interactional organization, without claiming causal influence on verdicts or judicial outcomes.

Information sources consist of official public courtroom materials rather than media summaries or edited commentary. Primary data are drawn from Mahkamah Konstitusi RI hearing records, especially Risalah Sidang PDFs and associated audio or video files when available. The visual/video item is used only for multimodal support, including actor position, frame, timestamp, layout, and transcript confirmation. Context data include official repository information from Mahkamah Agung and MKRI portal records. Secondary legal documents are not treated as primary turn-taking data unless they preserve interactional sequence. This separation protects analytical validity by distinguishing spoken procedure, institutional documentation, and contextual infrastructure.

Data collection followed five steps. First, official source channels were identified through MKRI hearing records, MKRI supporting-file domains, official MKRI YouTube material, and Mahkamah Agung documentation. Second, search terms were organized around *risalah sidang*, *pemeriksaan pendahuluan*, *perbaikan permohonan*, *keterangan ahli*, *putusan*, and *Mahkamah Konstitusi*. Third, documents were limited to publicly accessible Indonesian judicial materials from 2025–2026, with Jakarta-based MK hearings as primary focus. Fourth, metadata, transcript excerpts, short quotations, speaker labels, timestamps, source links, and procedural contexts were stored in Excel. Fifth, duplicate keys were checked to prevent repeated coding of same proceeding.

Data analysis proceeded through three connected instruments. First, a conversation-analytic turn-taking matrix coded speaker selection, adjacency-pair position, repair, interruption, uptake, and sequence closure. Second, an institutional authority grid coded participation rights, procedural control, directive force, ratification, and role-based access to floor. Third, a pragmatic force and alignment scheme coded speech acts, clarification, compliance, resistance, footing, politeness, and evidential stance. These stages follow recent courtroom discourse work on questioning, rhetoric, refusal, footing, and legal evaluation (Anisah & Sari, 2024; Aldosari, 2023; Alshammari et al., 2025; Wright et al., 2022; Zaiton, 2025) [1], [21], [22], [9], [12], [28]. Interpretation remained anchored to document code, transcript order, and timestamp.

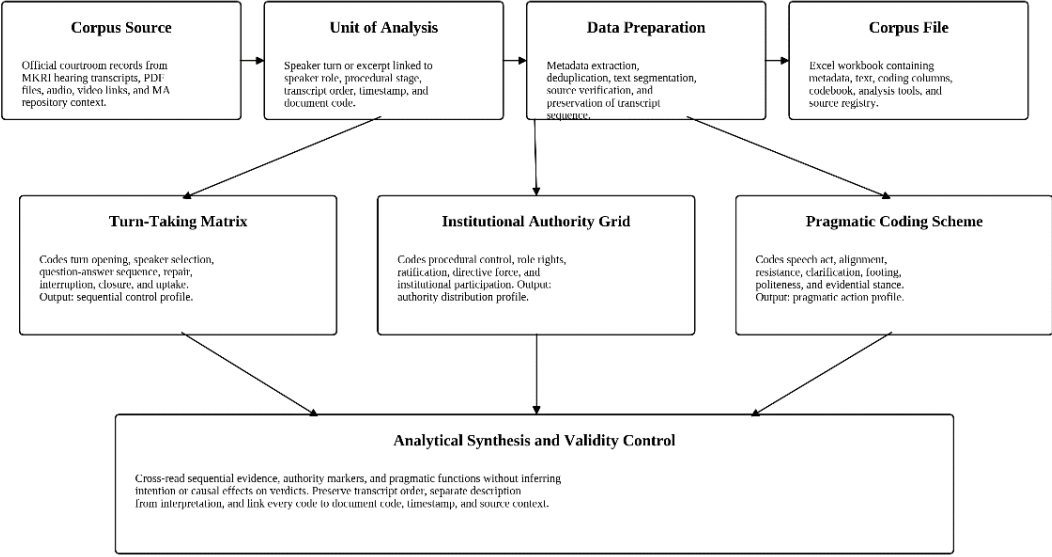


Figure 1. Operational Analysis Matrix for Indonesian Courtroom Interaction

4. RESULTS

4.1. Sequential gatekeeping and turn allocation in courtroom interaction

Courtroom turn-taking appears as a structured gatekeeping system rather than a neutral exchange of speech. The coded material shows that most interactional movement begins with judicially controlled openings, followed by speaker selection and tightly bounded response opportunities. This pattern is consistent with institutional discourse scholarship, which views courtroom talk as role-constrained interaction rather than ordinary conversation (Chen, 2021; Obeng & Campbell, 2023; Widodo, 2024, 2025) [11], [7], [4], [5]. What matters here is not simply that judges speak frequently, but that their turns organize subsequent participation. Opening formulas, identity prompts, repair checks, and sequence closures create a procedural rhythm in which other participants usually speak after being summoned, questioned, or ratified.

Table 2. Sequential turn-taking categories across Indonesian courtroom proceedings

Main Category	Subcategory	Operational Indicator	Procedural-Stage Distribution	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Excerpt	Data Code
Opening allocation	Judge-initialized opening	Judge opens hearing and establishes first speaking frame	Preliminary examination: 2; petition revision: 4; expert/witness hearing: 1	7	38.9%	Formulaic opening, public-hearing declaration, religious or procedural preface	“Kita mulai, ya. Bismillah”; “Sidang ... dibuka”; “Kita Persidangan”	COD-001; COD-004; COD-006; COD-009;

								COD-013; COD-014; COD-016
Speaker selection	Judge-selected next speaker	Judge allocates floor to named party, case number, or participant group	Preliminary examination: 1; petition revision: 3; expert/witness hearing: 0	4	22.2%	Identity prompt, attendance check, permission to present correction	“Siapa lagi yang hadir?”; “Apa saja yang diperbaiki?”; “Silakan”	COD-002; COD-003; COD-011; COD-015
Sequence closure	Procedural closing or forwarding	Judge closes sequence by recording, forwarding, or referring matter institutionally	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 2; expert/witness hearing: 0	2	11.1%	Closure through RPH referral or record-making statement	“Akan kami sampaikan”; “Nanti kita catat itu”	COD-008; COD-017
Repair check	Clarification and participation repair	Judge initiates repair when participation, identity, or presence is unclear	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 2; expert/witness hearing: 0	2	11.1%	Clarification challenge, accelerated identity repair, mediated-presence trouble	“Kenapa enggak bergabung saja?”; “Langsung saja Anda perkenalkan!”	COD-010; COD-012
Contextual participant map	Institutional participant mapping	Transcript front matter identifies multi-party legal actors and role asymmetry	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 0; expert/witness hearing: 1	1	5.6%	DPR, Government, expert, and applicant roles listed as courtroom participants	“Ahli dari Pemerintah”	COD-005
Question-answer pair	Response to judicial confirmation	Participant answer forms second-pair part of judge-led adjacency pair	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 1; expert/witness hearing: 0	1	5.6%	Minimal confirmation aligning with prior judicial question	“Benar, Yang Mulia”	COD-007
Online participation sequence	Mediated participation control	Judge treats virtual or remote presence as courtroom participation	Preliminary examination: 1; petition revision: 0; expert/witness hearing: 0	1	5.6%	Normative reminder that online presence remains part of courtroom order	“Dianggap bagian ruang sidang”	COD-018

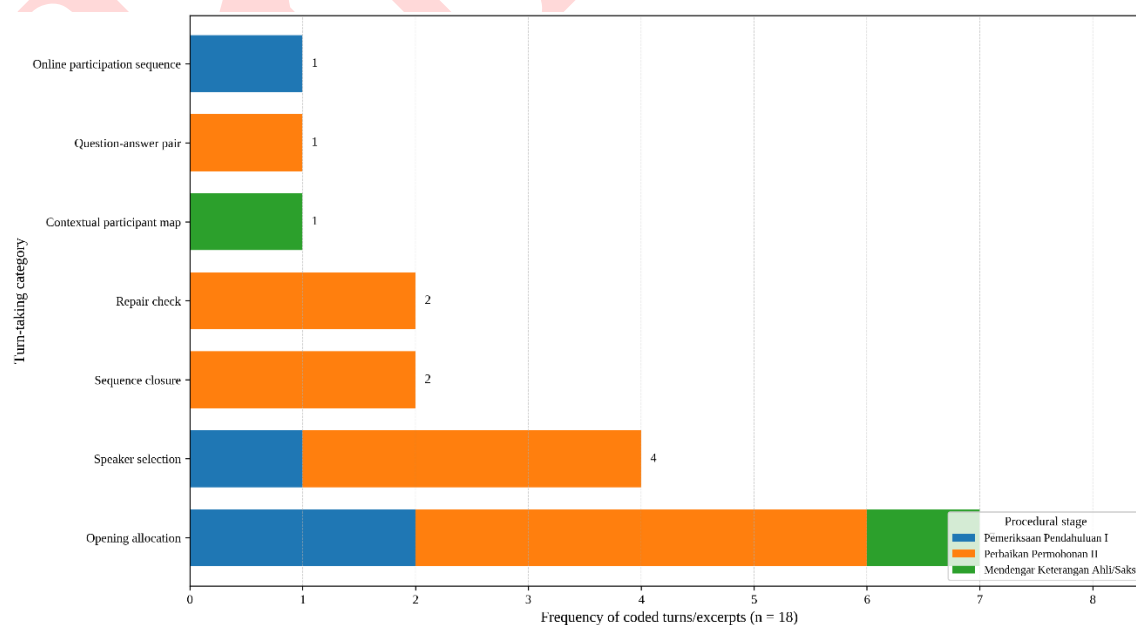


Figure 2. Sequential turn-taking distribution by procedural stage

The dominant pattern is opening allocation, which accounts for 7 of 18 coded turns or excerpts, followed by speaker selection with 4 instances. Petition-revision hearings contain wider sequential variation because they include openings, identity checks, amendment prompts, confirmation responses, repair moves, and closures. Excerpts such as “Kita mulai, ya. Bismillah,” “Siapa lagi yang hadir?,” and “Apa saja yang diperbaiki?” show that judicial turns both open proceedings and define what counts as the next relevant contribution. Less frequent but analytically important patterns include repair checks, as in “Kenapa enggak bergabung saja?,” and procedural closure, as in “Akan kami sampaikan.” These forms show that turn-taking is organized around procedural relevance.

Sequential authority is therefore audible in how speaking rights are distributed, not only in formal courtroom hierarchy. A judge’s opening declaration does more than begin a session; it establishes participation conditions, ratifies publicness, and frames who may speak next. This supports recent work on courtroom power, impoliteness, questioning, and legal pragmatics, which argues that institutional authority is interactionally produced through selection, constraint, ratification, and repair (Anisah & Sari, 2024; Mitchell, 2021; Uwen, 2023; Mısıır & Akın, 2024; Wright et al., 2022) [1], [6], [8], [24], [12]. For this study, turn-taking is not treated as background mechanics but as an analytical site where Indonesian courtroom procedure becomes communicatively visible.

4.2. Institutional authority as interactional control

Authority in Indonesian courtroom interaction is most clearly visible when speaking rights are treated as procedurally distributed resources. The table shows that judicial authority is concentrated in opening control and floor licensing, which together account for 11 of 18 coded excerpts. This does not mean other participants are passive; rather, their participation is usually made recognizable through judicially organized conditions of relevance. This pattern extends prior courtroom discourse studies that view authority as interactionally achieved through questioning, control, legitimation, and procedural asymmetry (Anisah & Sari, 2024; Uwen, 2023; Anowu et al., 2023; Widodo, 2025) [1], [8], [20], [5]. The courtroom therefore operates as an institutional ecology in which turn access, not merely legal status, structures participation

Table 3. Institutional authority mechanisms across coded courtroom turns

Main Category	Subcategory	Operational Indicator	Dominant Speaker Role	Target / Recipient	Procedural-Stage Distribution	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Excerpt	Data Code
Procedural initiation	Opening control	Trial activity begins only after an authorized judicial opening	Judge	All courtroom participants	Preliminary examination: 2; petition revision: 4; expert/witness hearing: 1	7	38.9%	Formal opening, religious preface, public-hearing declaration	“Kita mulai, ya. Bismillah”; “Sidang ... dibuka”; “Kita buka Persidangan”	COD-001; COD-004; COD-006; COD-009; COD-013; COD-014; COD-016
Floor licensing	Authorized participation	Speaker may continue after judge names, invites, or permits contribution	Judge	Applicant, counsel, party representative	Preliminary examination: 1; petition revision: 3; expert/witness hearing: 0	4	22.2%	Attendance prompt, invitation to explain, permission to present correction	“Siapa lagi yang hadir?”; “Apa saja yang diperbaiki?”; “Silakan”	COD-002; COD-003; COD-011; COD-015
Participation repair	Corrective control	Judge repairs unclear identity, presence, or participation format	Judge	Remote or procedurally unclear participant	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 2; expert/witness hearing: 0	2	11.1%	Identity repair, presence correction, participation discipline	“Kenapa enggak bergabung saja?”; “Langsung saja Anda perkenalkan!”	COD-010; COD-012
Institutional ratification	Record-making authority	Judge converts spoken interaction into institutional record or future panel consideration	Judge	Applicant / courtroom record	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 2; expert/witness hearing: 0	2	11.1%	Recording, forwarding, procedural uptake	“Akan kami sampaikan”; “Nanti kita catat itu”	COD-008; COD-017
Response obligation	Constrained confirmation	Participant response is limited by prior judicial question	Applicant / counsel	Judge	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 1; expert/witness hearing: 0	1	5.6%	Minimal answer, confirmation, alignment with judicial frame	“Benar, Yang Mulia”	COD-007
Role mapping	Institutional	Transcript	Transcript /	All participants	Preliminary	1	5.6%	Expert,	“Ahli dari	COD-

	positioning	front matter pre-assigns speakers into legal roles before interaction unfolds	court record		examination: 0; petition revision: 0; expert/witness hearing: 1			Government, DPR, applicant, and legal-role classification	Pemerintah"	005
Mediated-presence control	Online participation authority	Virtual presence is treated as courtroom participation subject to judicial control	Judge	Remote participant	Preliminary examination: 1; petition revision: 0; expert/witness hearing: 0	1	5.6%	Remote attendance, virtual frame, courtroom inclusion	"Dianggap bagian ruang sidang"	COD-018

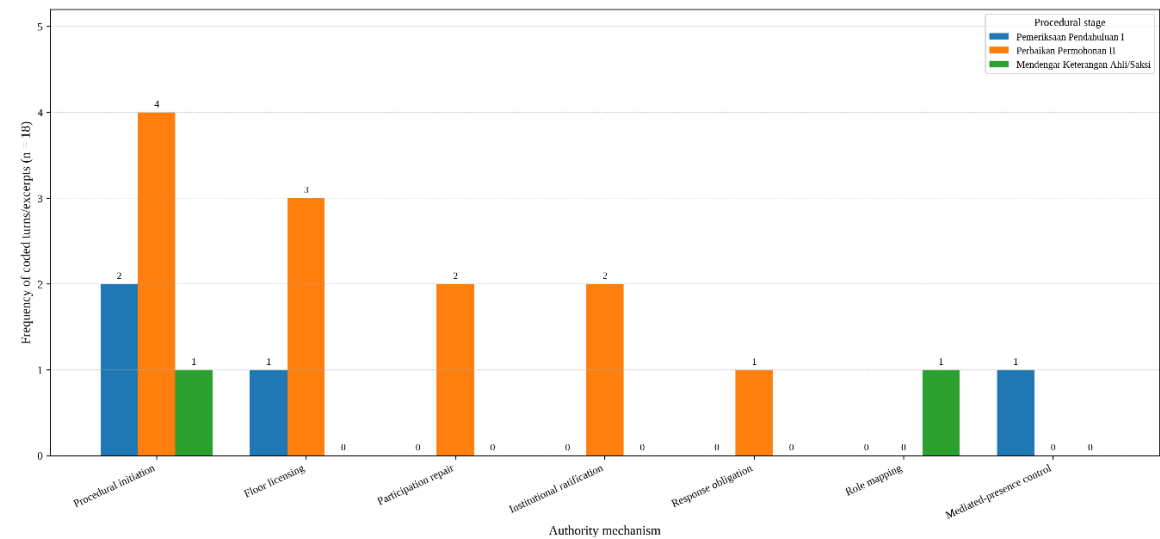


Figure 3. Institutional authority mechanisms across procedural stages

The dominant mechanism is procedural initiation, followed by floor licensing. Excerpts such as “Kita mulai, ya. Bismillah” and “Sidang ... dibuka” show that courtroom speech becomes institutionally valid only after judicial opening. Similarly, prompts such as “Siapa lagi yang hadir?,” “Apa saja yang diperbaiki?,” and “Silakan” do not merely invite speech; they define who may speak, what topic is relevant, and how long participation may continue. Participation repair is less frequent but analytically significant because it reveals the boundary of acceptable courtroom presence. When a judge asks, “Kenapa enggak bergabung saja?” or directs, “Langsung saja Anda perkenalkan!,” authority is exercised through correction rather than extended argument.

Institutional authority is therefore not reducible to formal hierarchy; it is performed through micro-procedural control over access, sequence, and ratification. This finding aligns with Mitchell’s (2021) [6] argument that interactional misalignment can expose courtroom norms, and with Mısır and Akın’s (2024) [24] account of power and impoliteness in criminal court discourse. It also resonates with Wright et al. (2022) [12], who show that pragmatic forms may carry legal force beyond their literal wording. In this study, authority appears as a sequential accomplishment: judges do not only possess procedural power but repeatedly make it audible by opening proceedings, selecting speakers, repairing participation, and converting spoken exchanges into institutional record.

4.3. Pragmatic force, alignment, and procedural meaning

Pragmatic organization in Indonesian courtroom interaction is dominated by utterances that do procedural work rather than by extended argumentative exchange. Directive framing and information elicitation together account for 11 of 18 coded turns/excerpts, showing that courtroom pragmatics is strongly oriented toward making participation procedurally valid. This pattern supports studies that treat courtroom speech acts as institutionally consequential actions, not merely expressions of speaker intention (Aldosari, 2023; Anisah & Sari, 2024; Alshammari et al., 2025) [21], [22], [1], [9]. In this corpus, pragmatic force is located in how speech opens the hearing, licenses participation, asks for accountable information, repairs presence, and converts spoken material into institutional record.

Table 4. Pragmatic functions across coded courtroom turns

Main Category	Pragmatic Function	Operational Indicator	Speaker Orientation	Procedural-Stage	Frequency	Percentage	Data Variation	Example / Excerpt	Data Code
---------------	--------------------	-----------------------	---------------------	------------------	-----------	------------	----------------	-------------------	-----------

Distribution							
Directive framing	Opening and procedural activation	Speaker frames courtroom activity as officially beginning, continuing, or moving into a valid procedural phase	Judge-to-all participants	Preliminary examination: 2; petition revision: 4; expert/witness hearing: 1	7	38.9%	Declarative opening, religious preface, formal public-session activation "Kita mulai, ya. Bismillah"; "Sidang ... dibuka"; "Kita buka Persidangan" COD-001; COD-004; COD-006; COD-009; COD-013; COD-014; COD-016
Information elicitation	Questioning and participation prompt	Speaker requests identity, attendance, amendment explanation, or relevant procedural information	Judge-to-applicant / counsel	Preliminary examination: 1; petition revision: 3; expert/witness hearing: 0	4	22.2%	Identity question, amendment prompt, permission-oriented invitation "Siapa lagi yang hadir?"; "Apa saja yang diperbaiki?"; "Silakan" COD-002; COD-003; COD-011; COD-015
Clarification and repair	Corrective pragmatic action	Speaker repairs unclear identity, participation format, or mediated presence	Judge-to-participant	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 2; expert/witness hearing: 0	2	11.1%	Identity repair, remote-presence correction, procedural discipline "Kenapa enggak bergabung saja?"; "Langsung saja Anda perkenalkan!" COD-010; COD-012
Institutional uptake	Ratification and record orientation	Speaker transforms prior speech into recordable, forwardable, or institutionally processed material	Judge-to-record / applicant	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 2; expert/witness hearing: 0	2	11.1%	Forwarding, noting, recording, uptake into institutional procedure "Akan kami sampaikan"; "Nanti kita catat itu" COD-008; COD-017
Acknowledged compliance	Minimal confirmation	Speaker aligns with prior judicial frame through short confirmation	Applicant / counsel-to-judge	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 1; expert/witness hearing: 0	1	5.6%	Minimal answer, constrained agreement, honorific alignment "Benar, Yang Mulia" COD-007
Evidential role positioning	Participant-role specification	Court record positions speaker according to evidential or institutional relevance	Transcript / court record	Preliminary examination: 0; petition revision: 0; expert/witness hearing: 1	1	5.6%	Expert, Government, DPR, applicant, or institutional party label "Ahli dari Pemerintah" COD-005
Mediated inclusion	Virtual participation framing	Speaker treats online presence as procedurally valid but institutionally controlled participation	Judge-to-remote participant	Preliminary examination: 1; petition revision: 0; expert/witness hearing: 0	1	5.6%	Remote attendance, virtual courtroom inclusion, mediated participation norm "Dianggap bagian ruang sidang" COD-018

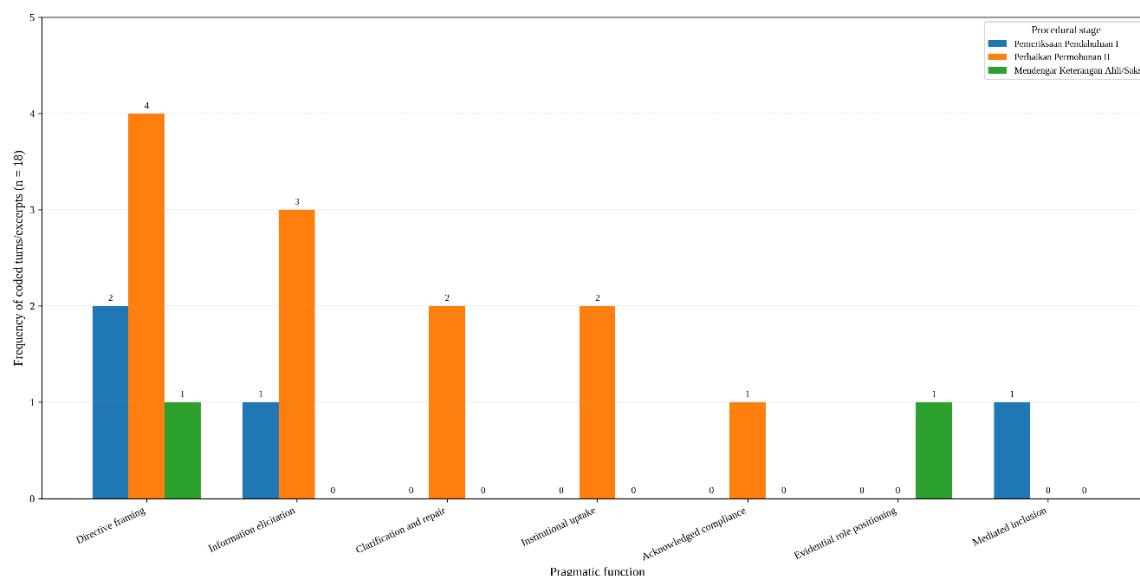


Figure 4. Pragmatic functions across procedural stages

The most visible pattern is the concentration of directive framing in petition-revision hearings, where four coded excerpts perform procedural activation. Excerpts such as “Kita mulai, ya. Bismillah,” “Sidang ... dibuka,” and “Kita buka Persidangan” show that opening turns do more than mark time; they create an authorized speech environment. Information elicitation appears through prompts such as “Siapa lagi yang hadir?” and “Apa saja yang diperbaiki?,” which narrow the next relevant answer. Repair sequences such as “Kenapa enggak bergabung saja?” and “Langsung saja Anda perkenalkan!” reveal how participation must be pragmatically corrected when presence, identity, or format is unclear. Minimal alignment appears in “Benar, Yang Mulia.”

These pragmatic patterns show that courtroom meaning is produced through constrained action formats: opening, questioning, confirming, repairing, and ratifying. This interpretation is consistent with Wright et al. (2022) [12], who show that apparently routine legal expressions may perform strategic pragmatic work, and with Mitchell (2021) [6], who demonstrates that misalignment exposes institutional norms. It also resonates with Purnama’s (2023) [2] account of Indonesian courtroom verbal pragmatics and Widodo’s (2025) [5] analysis of trial communication characteristics. For this study, pragmatic force is not treated as a secondary layer added to legal procedure; it is one way legal procedure becomes interactionally recognizable.

5. DISCUSSION

Sequential gatekeeping carries an important implication for how Indonesian courtroom authority should be understood: authority does not simply precede interaction as a fixed institutional property, but becomes procedurally visible through managed access to speech. Opening allocation and speaker selection show that participation is not equally available to all actors; it is activated, limited, and made relevant through judicial turns. This matters because courtroom fairness is partly interactional: parties may formally possess rights to speak, yet those rights become practically meaningful only when turns are granted, repaired, or ratified within sequence. This finding extends Chen’s (2021) [11] view of courtroom discourse as a hybrid oral–literate register and supports Widodo’s (2024, 2025) [4], [5] argument that Indonesian trials have distinctive communicative characteristics. It also refines Obeng and Campbell’s (2023) [7] focus on judicial turn-taking by showing that sequential control operates not only as conversational order but as procedural gatekeeping.

This sequential pattern appears to emerge from institutional structure rather than from individual speaking style alone. Indonesian courtroom interaction is organized around role asymmetry: judges possess formal responsibility to open proceedings, identify parties, regulate relevance, and move interaction from one procedural stage to another. Consequently, turn-taking is shaped by what conversation analysis would call pre-allocated participation rights, but those rights are intensified by legal procedure. Mitchell (2021) [6] shows that misalignment becomes impolite when participants orient to competing contextual expectations; similarly, this corpus suggests that participation trouble appears when identity, presence, or speaking order is not aligned with courtroom format. Unlike studies that emphasize rhetorical confrontation or adversarial pressure (Aldosari, 2023; Alkabiri, 2024) [21], [22], [23], this evidence foregrounds routine sequential

infrastructure. Authority is therefore not only exercised in argumentative intensity, but also in seemingly ordinary practices such as opening, nominating, confirming, and closing.

Institutional authority mechanisms demonstrate that judicial power functions as interactional coordination, but may also produce participation asymmetry. Procedural initiation and floor licensing create order: without them, multiple parties, legal representatives, experts, or remote participants could not be integrated into a coherent hearing. Yet this same order narrows how other speakers can participate, particularly when their contributions must fit judge-framed questions or institutional uptake. This pattern supports Uwen's (2023) [8] and Anowu et al.'s (2023) [20] claim that courtroom power is reproduced through interactional legitimation, but it complicates accounts that treat power primarily as overt domination. In this corpus, authority is often calm, administrative, and formulaic. Its force lies in making participation count as procedurally valid. This helps explain why courtroom power can remain highly consequential even when no explicit coercion, verbal aggression, or argumentative conflict is present.

The underlying structure behind this authority pattern is a layered relation between legal role, procedural responsibility, and record-making. Judges do not merely speak more often; their turns transform interaction into institutional event, admissible participation, and future procedural record. Ratification phrases such as forwarding, noting, or recording prior speech show that courtroom authority depends on conversion: spoken turns become legally meaningful because institutionally authorized actors recognize them as relevant. This aligns with Wright et al. (2022) [12], who show that apparently conventional courtroom expressions may perform strategic legal work, and with Sun et al. (2025) [10], who connect courtroom dynamics to functional patterns of authority. However, this differs from studies of impoliteness and coercive questioning (Misir & Akın, 2024; Priadi, 2025) [24], [29], where authority is often visible through pressure. Here, institutional power is more strongly embedded in procedural transformation: speech becomes consequential when it is taken up by court record.

Pragmatic force reveals that courtroom meaning is produced through constrained action formats rather than through lexical content alone. Directive framing, information elicitation, clarification, institutional uptake, and minimal compliance show that utterances do procedural work: they open sessions, require answers, repair ambiguity, and mark alignment. This carries a methodological implication for legal pragmatics: courtroom analysis should not isolate speech acts from sequence, role, and procedural stage. A short response such as "Benar, Yang Mulia" has limited propositional content, yet pragmatically it confirms alignment with judicial framing and sustains hearing progression. This supports Anisah and Sari's (2024) [1] analysis of questioning force and Alshammari et al.'s (2025) [9] work on refusal strategies, while also extending Purnama's (2023) [2] Indonesian courtroom pragmatics by shifting attention from verbal attack to procedural action. Pragmatic meaning is therefore inseparable from institutional positioning.

This pragmatic distribution is best explained by courtroom interaction's need to stabilize relevance under asymmetric conditions. Trials must transform diverse voices—judicial officers, applicants, lawyers, witnesses, experts, and sometimes remote participants—into orderly procedural contributions. Directive framing dominates because proceedings require official activation; information elicitation follows because legal relevance must be solicited through institutionally acceptable questions; repair appears when participation threatens clarity of identity, presence, or format. This underlying structure resonates with Kadamehang's (2026) [15] concern with interpreter mediation and procedural inequality, and Maham's (2026) [16] focus on credibility and institutional power in Indonesian judgments. Yet this study does not claim that pragmatic patterns determine judicial belief or legal outcome. Rather, it shows that pragmatic organization conditions how voices become hearable within courtroom procedure. Its central contribution is to connect speech-event structure, turn-taking control, and pragmatic force in one account of Indonesian courtroom interaction.

6. CONCLUSION

This study shows that Indonesian courtroom interaction is best understood as a speech event in which institutional authority is produced through sequential control, not merely through formal legal hierarchy. Its central lesson is that courtroom fairness and procedural order are partly shaped by who opens interaction, who allocates turns, who repairs participation, and whose speech is ratified into institutional record. By linking turn-taking, authority mechanisms, and pragmatic force within one analytical design, this study refreshes courtroom discourse research beyond thematic accounts of power or rhetoric. Its contribution lies in treating speaker turns as analytically precise units through which legal procedure becomes observable, comparable, and methodologically traceable.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. This study relies on a focused corpus of public courtroom records, which means its findings cannot be generalized to all Indonesian courts, case types, or closed proceedings. Transcript-based analysis also limits access to embodied conduct, tone, hesitation, and interactional features that may be clearer in full audio-visual data. Further research should expand across criminal, civil, administrative, constitutional, offline, and virtual hearings, while integrating multimodal

annotation, larger comparative corpora, and participant-role variation. Future studies may also examine interpreter-mediated proceedings, gendered credibility, regional language use, and digital trial infrastructures to understand how courtroom participation changes across institutional settings.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author thanks the reviewers and editorial team for their constructive feedback on this manuscript.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Author states no funding involved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Imam Masrur: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Author states no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The author used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the generation of illustrative figures and with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the author.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible courtroom transcripts, audio-visual references, and institutional judicial documents.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly accessible courtroom transcripts, audio-visual references, and institutional judicial documents, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the author affirms that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the author's institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

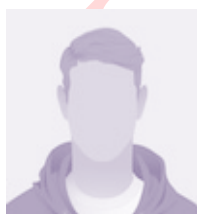
The corpus of publicly accessible courtroom transcripts, audio-visual references, institutional judicial documents, and scholarly materials analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. Anisah and D. Sari, "The force of questioning and pragmatic strategies in courtroom interrogation: A conversation analysis," *Studies in English Language and Education*, 2024, doi: 10.24815/siele.v11i2.35587.
- [2] S. Purnama, "Pragmatic analysis of verbal attacks in Indonesian courtrooms: Exploring prevalence, nature, and cultural influences," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2023, doi: 10.17509/ijal.v13i2.63095.
- [3] D. W. Minto, D. S. Anshori, V. Damaianti, A. Sastromiharjo, and A. Putriani, "Analysis of advocates' speaking strategies in criminal case defense: Its implementation and challenges," *JOALL (Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literature)*, 2024, doi: 10.33369/joall.v9i2.32613.
- [4] A. Widodo, "Communication type in trial: Ethnography communication in Indonesian criminal courtroom process," *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 2024, doi: 10.36923/jicc.v24i3.891.
- [5] A. Widodo, "Courtroom communication: Identification of the communication characteristics of criminal trials in Indonesian courts," *Frontiers in Communication*, 2025, doi: 10.3389/fcomm.2025.1623307.
- [6] N. Mitchell, "Duelling contexts: How action misalignment leads to impoliteness in a courtroom," *Journal of Politeness Research*, vol. 18, pp. 93-120, 2021, doi: 10.1515/pr-2019-0018.
- [7] S. Obeng and A. Campbell, "Turn taking in Ghanaian judicial discourse," *Legon Journal of the Humanities*, 2023, doi: 10.4314/ljh.v34i2.4.
- [8] G. Uwen, "Objection overruled: Language dynamics and power relations in courtroom interactions," *Language Matters*, vol. 54, pp. 21-41, 2023, doi: 10.1080/10228195.2023.2229533.
- [9] B. Alshammari, K. Karam, and M. Eissa, "The pragmatics of defendants' refusal strategies in Saudi courtroom discourse," *Corpus Pragmatics*, vol. 10, 2025, doi: 10.1007/s41701-025-00217-1.

- [10] Y. Sun, X. Zhu, and K. Liu, "Judicial jigsaw and power dynamics: A cognitive-functional analysis of Chinese courtroom discourse," *International Journal of Legal Discourse*, vol. 10, pp. 181-207, 2025, doi: 10.1515/ijld-2025-2009.
- [11] M. Chen, "Is courtroom discourse an 'oral' or 'literate' register? The importance of sub-register," *Discourse Studies*, vol. 23, pp. 249-273, 2021, doi: 10.1177/1461445620982097.
- [12] D. Wright, J. Robson, H. Murray-Edwards, and N. Braber, "The pragmatic functions of 'respect' in lawyers' courtroom discourse: A case study of Brexit hearings," *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2022, doi: 10.1016/j.pragma.2021.10.028.
- [13] W. B. M. Setiawan, "Forensic linguistic evidence in Indonesian courtrooms: A study of language use in criminal verdicts," *Indonesian Journal of Linguistics and Legal Discourse*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 1-12, 2026.
- [14] D. Setiaji, "Legal language and power: A critical discourse analysis of anti-corruption laws in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Linguistics and Legal Discourse*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 13-21, 2026.
- [15] G. Kadamehang, "Lost in legal translation: Language rights, interpreter mediation, and procedural inequality in Indonesia's multilingual courtrooms," *Indonesian Journal of Linguistics and Legal Discourse*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2026.
- [16] G. Maham, "Whose testimony is believed? Linguistic credibility, gendered narratives, and institutional power in Indonesian sexual violence judgments," *Indonesian Journal of Linguistics and Legal Discourse*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2026.
- [17] N. Bögelein, K. Eppert, V. Roth, and A. Schmidt-Kleinert, "Courtroom ethnography in the context of terrorism: A multi-level approach," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, vol. 21, 2022, doi: 10.1177/16094069221090059.
- [18] P. and M. Gillings, "The language of justice: Examining courtroom discourse in an electoral conflict," *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, vol. 38, pp. 2385-2407, 2025, doi: 10.1007/s11196-025-10299-4.
- [19] A. Widodo, W. O. S. Nurhaliza, and M. R. Akbar, "Virtual criminal trials in Indonesia: Communication inequalities, power dynamics, and the challenges of justice," *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 2025, doi: 10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102272.
- [20] A. E. Anowu, T. Ope-Davies, and M. Shodipe, "Strategies for legitimising and delegitimising power in Nigerian courtroom discourse," *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*, vol. 37, pp. 379-398, 2023, doi: 10.1007/s11196-023-10052-9.
- [21] B. Aldosari, "Rhetorical strategies of legal arguments in courtrooms," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2023, doi: 10.17507/tpls.1307.12.
- [22] B. Aldosari, "Questioning strategies in courtrooms," *World Journal of English Language*, 2023, doi: 10.5430/wjel.v14n2p376.
- [23] M. A. Alkabiri, "Argumentation strategies in courtroom discourse," *World Journal of English Language*, 2024, doi: 10.5430/wjel.v14n2p366.
- [24] H. Misir and G. Akin, "Navigating power and impoliteness in criminal court discourse," *International Journal of Legal Discourse*, vol. 9, pp. 289-312, 2024, doi: 10.1515/ijld-2024-2013.
- [25] A. Khafaga, "Strategic lexicalization in courtroom discourse: A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis," *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, vol. 10, 2023, doi: 10.1080/23311983.2023.2217585.
- [26] I. F. G. Deuna and R. Ballesteros-Lintao, "The language of evaluation in a Philippine drug trial: An appraisal framework perspective," *International Journal of Legal Discourse*, vol. 7, pp. 163-193, 2022, doi: 10.1515/ijld-2022-2068.
- [27] S. E. Duffy and K. E. Blewitt, "Time on trial: Narrative time and discourse strategies in criminal courtroom closing statements," *International Journal of Legal Discourse*, 2026, doi: 10.1515/ijld-2026-3001.
- [28] H. Zaiton, "ELAN-based multimodal discourse analysis of the interactive meanings and persuasive methods in criminal trials," *Language and Semiotic Studies*, vol. 11, pp. 610-635, 2025, doi: 10.1515/lass-2025-0053.
- [29] A. Priadi, "Discursive resistance and agency in Indonesian courtrooms: Negotiating power through coercive questioning," *Journal of English Language and Education*, 2025, doi: 10.31004/jele.v10i6.1707.

BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR



Imam Masrur    is affiliated with Universitas Islam Negeri Syekh Wasil Kediri, Indonesia, where his work engages courtroom discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and institutional pragmatics in Indonesian legal settings. His current research examines how turn-taking, institutional authority, and pragmatic force organize participation in courtroom interaction. He can be contacted at email: imammasrur@uinkediri.ac.id.