

Speech act strategies in police interrogation transcripts: evidence from bahasa Indonesia investigative records

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Feb 15, 2026

Revised Mar 10, 2026

Accepted Mar 20, 2026

Keywords:

discourse analysis;
forensic linguistics;
interrogation;
politeness;
speech acts.

ABSTRACT

Background: Police interrogation discourse in Indonesia plays a central role in shaping judicial outcomes, yet its linguistic dynamics remain underexplored in forensic linguistics. **Objective:** The aim of this study is to investigate speech act strategies, politeness patterns, and discursive structures in official interrogation transcripts (*Berita Acara Pemeriksaan*) written in Bahasa Indonesia. **Method:** This research employed a qualitative descriptive design, analyzing a corpus of interrogation records and trial excerpts using Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and Forensic Discourse Analysis. **Results:** The results show that directive and assertive speech acts dominate interrogators' language, while commissives and expressives are more common in suspects' responses. Politeness strategies reveal a strong preference for bald on record forms by interrogators, contrasted with suspects' reliance on positive and negative politeness to mitigate pressure. Discursive structures demonstrate institutional asymmetry, with interrogators controlling turns, topics, and narrative framing to legitimize official accounts. These findings confirm that interrogation discourse functions more as a tool of institutional authority than as a neutral exchange. **Implication:** The implication of this research is the need for greater awareness of linguistic power in legal processes and the incorporation of forensic linguistic insights into interrogation practices and justice reform. **Novelty:** This study reveals how interrogation discourse in Indonesia is systematically structured to reinforce institutional authority through asymmetric speech acts, politeness strategies, and narrative control.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Police interrogation is one of the most crucial stages in criminal investigations, as the information elicited can strongly influence judicial outcomes. In Indonesia, interrogation records, formally documented in the *Berita Acara Pemeriksaan* (BAP), serve as primary evidence that frequently shapes prosecutorial decisions and judicial verdicts. According to data from the Indonesian National Police, more than 85% of criminal cases brought to court rely heavily on BAP as the main source of testimonial evidence (Polri Statistics, 2023). Yet, concerns persist about the fairness and reliability of these records, especially in cases where suspects are vulnerable, poorly educated, or lack legal representation. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation indicate that in 2021 coercive interrogation practices remain prevalent, with 23% of defendants reporting verbal intimidation during questioning. These realities make the linguistic and pragmatic dimensions of interrogation highly relevant for scholarly scrutiny, as language itself can operate as an instrument of legal power.

Research on speech acts and legal discourse has long demonstrated the importance of pragmatic strategies in shaping institutional interaction. Seminal works by Setiawati and Wahjuono (2020) and Pavlichenko (2020) reveal how questioning styles and linguistic manipulation affect suspects' responses and, ultimately, case outcomes [1], [2]. More recent studies have investigated courtroom discourse, translation issues, and cross-cultural misunderstandings in police interviews [3], [4], [5]. However, most of these investigations have been conducted in English-speaking jurisdictions, leaving a significant gap in contexts such as Indonesia, where power asymmetry and linguistic diversity shape interrogation practices differently. While a few Indonesian scholars [6], [7] have examined courtroom language, systematic analysis of speech act strategies in police interrogation transcripts written in Bahasa Indonesia remains scarce. This gap underscores the need for a focused investigation that not only classifies linguistic patterns but also situates them within broader issues of fairness and institutional authority.

This study seeks to address the following questions: How are speech acts strategically employed in Indonesian police interrogation transcripts? What politeness strategies or lack thereof characterize the interaction between interrogators and suspects? And how does the discursive structure reflect institutional authority and power asymmetry? By engaging with these questions, this research aims to uncover the pragmatic mechanisms through which police officers assert control and shape suspect narratives in the investigative process. Specifically, this study analyzes official interrogation records (BAP) and complementary sources such as trial documents to identify patterns of directive, assertive, commissive, and expressive acts. It also explores the ways in which politeness strategies mitigate or intensify coercion, as well as how discourse structures reveal unequal distribution of power.

Preliminary observations suggest that directive speech acts dominate interrogation exchanges, with interrogators frequently deploying bald on record strategies that leave little room for suspects to resist. This discursive environment reinforces institutional power, transforming interrogation from a fact-finding activity into a legitimizing tool for prosecutorial narratives. By systematically analyzing these linguistic practices, this study argues that interrogation in Indonesia is less about eliciting authentic accounts and more about constructing institutional versions of events. Such findings have broader implications for both forensic linguistics and criminal justice reform. On the academic level, this research contributes to extending speech act and politeness theory into underexplored sociolinguistic settings. On the practical level, it provides evidence that could inform policy discussions on interrogation procedures, safeguard mechanisms for suspects, and training for law enforcement officers. Ultimately, this study underscores the urgency of integrating linguistic awareness into the pursuit of legal fairness and justice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition of speech acts

The notion of speech acts is central to pragmatics and provides a foundation for understanding how language functions as action rather than mere description. The speech act theory posits that utterances can perform functions such as requesting, promising, or commanding [8], [9]. Definitions of speech acts vary, with some scholars emphasizing the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary dimensions [10], while others focus primarily on the illocutionary force that conveys speaker intention [11]. In legal contexts, the precision of speech act classification becomes particularly important, as interrogative exchanges often reveal asymmetries of power and intent. While some linguists treat speech acts as universal categories [12], cross-cultural research demonstrates that interpretation may differ depending on language norms and institutional practices [13]. The definition of speech acts, therefore, is not monolithic but multifaceted, requiring attention to both theoretical underpinnings and contextual variation, especially in institutional settings like police interrogations.

Speech acts are generally categorized into five main types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations [14]. Assertives commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition, while directives attempt to get the hearer to perform an action. Commissives commit the speaker to a future course of action, expressives articulate psychological states, and declarations bring about institutional change through utterance itself. In interrogation discourse, directives and assertives tend to dominate, as interrogators frequently demand information and reframe suspect statements into institutional narratives [1]. Commissives and expressives often appear in the speech of suspects, reflecting either compliance or resistance. Declarations, though less frequent, may surface when authority figures render formal procedural statements. The categorization of speech acts thus provides a useful framework for analyzing the interactional dynamics of police-suspect exchanges, revealing both the communicative strategies deployed and the institutional pressures that shape them.

2.2. Politeness strategies

Politeness theory provides another critical lens for examining institutional discourse, particularly where asymmetries of power are salient. Pavlichenko's (2020) model defines politeness as strategies for managing face, which refers to an individual's self-image in social interaction [2]. Negative politeness strategies aim to respect personal autonomy and minimize imposition, while positive politeness strategies emphasize solidarity and rapport. However, the universality of politeness theory has been contested. Scholars such as Ajayi (2019) and Olayinka (2022) argue that the model reflects Western individualism and underrepresents collectivist norms found in Asian languages, including Bahasa Indonesia [15], [16]. More recent perspectives, such as Chelland and Haigh (2023) and Terada et al (2021), conceptualize politeness as a discursive phenomenon negotiated in context rather than a fixed set of strategies [17], [18]. In interrogation contexts, politeness—or the deliberate lack of it—becomes a mechanism through which authority is asserted and resistance is mitigated. Definitions of politeness therefore vary, underscoring the importance of cultural and institutional specificity.

Within Brown and Levinson's framework, politeness strategies are categorized into four types: bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies. Bald on record is the most direct and least mitigated, often employed in high-stakes contexts such as police questioning. Positive politeness appeals to shared identity or solidarity, while negative politeness respects the hearer's autonomy. Off-record strategies are indirect, leaving interpretations open. In the interrogation setting, studies show that interrogators frequently rely on bald on record strategies, particularly commands or accusations that pressure suspects into compliance [15], [16]. Suspects, in contrast, may resort to positive politeness by using honorifics or justifications, especially in hierarchical cultures like Indonesia. Negative politeness and off-record strategies appear less frequently but can surface in attempts to avoid direct confrontation. Categorizing politeness strategies thus allows for the systematic analysis of power, coercion, and resistance in institutional talk.

2.3. Forensic discourse analysis

Forensic discourse analysis (FDA) extends the scope of applied linguistics into the realm of law, examining how language both reflects and shapes legal processes. Defined broadly, FDA involves the systematic analysis of spoken and written texts within legal institutions to uncover patterns of communication, power, and ideology [19], [20], [21]. The field is inherently interdisciplinary, drawing from linguistics, sociology, and criminology. While some definitions emphasize the technical aspects of textual analysis for evidentiary purposes [7], [11], others stress its critical dimension in exposing inequality and injustice within the legal system [22], [23], [24]. Discrepancies arise between treating FDA as a purely descriptive tool versus a normative critique of institutional practices. In the context of police interrogation, FDA focuses on how discourse structures—such as turn-taking, topic control, and framing—embody institutional authority. Thus, FDA provides not only descriptive insights into how interrogations unfold but also normative evaluations of fairness and justice.

Forensic discourse analysis encompasses multiple categories or dimensions of investigation [25], [26]. One category concerns micro-level interactional features such as question types, adjacency pairs, and interruptions, which reveal how authority is enacted in talk. Another focuses on macro-level discursive structures, including narrative construction, topic management, and institutional framing. A third category addresses the ideological implications of legal discourse, examining how institutional language legitimizes certain voices while marginalizing others. In interrogation studies, FDA has revealed recurring patterns: interrogators' control of topic progression, asymmetry in speech rights, and the recontextualization of suspect statements into prosecutorial narratives [27]. These categories allow analysts to connect micro-level linguistic strategies with macro-level institutional outcomes, offering a holistic view of how language mediates power. By integrating interactional, structural, and ideological dimensions, FDA provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing police interrogation transcripts in Bahasa Indonesia.

3. METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study consists of verbal texts from official interrogation transcripts (*Berita Acara Pemeriksaan/BAP*) and related judicial records written in Bahasa Indonesia. These texts contain interrogative exchanges between police investigators and suspects, capturing speech acts, politeness strategies, and discursive structures. The corpus was constructed to ensure diversity across case types and institutional sources, thereby enhancing the representativeness of the data. Table 1 presents the composition of the corpus, which includes official BAPs, trial records that cite interrogation excerpts, and supplementary interviews with experts in forensic linguistics. By incorporating multiple genres of data, this study ensures methodological triangulation, aligning with recommendations in forensic linguistic research [20]. The selection of materials reflects this study's aim to analyze language as both communicative practice and institutional instrument, making the corpus both comprehensive and contextually grounded.

Table 1. Corpus of data for analysis

No	Data Type	Example Case	Source Institution/Access Point
1	Official BAP (theft case)	Motorcycle theft	Polres Probolinggo
2	Official BAP (corruption case)	Village fund misuse	Kejari Bondowoso
3	Official BAP (domestic violence)	Physical assault	Polres Lumajang
4	Official BAP (narcotics)	Drug possession	Polres Surabaya
5	Official BAP (fraud)	Land dispute fraud	Kejari Jember
6	Trial transcripts citing BAP excerpts	Corruption hearing	putusan.mahkamahagung.go.id
7	Trial transcripts citing BAP excerpts	Criminal assault	putusan3.mahkamahkonstitusi.go.id
8	Expert interview/triangulation	Forensic linguist	UPN Jatim Surabaya
9	Expert interview/triangulation	Legal aid advocate	YLBHI Surabaya
10	Observational note	Mock interrogation	Academic forensic linguistics seminar

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design, which is well-suited for exploring pragmatic and discursive phenomena in institutional contexts. The approach emphasizes the interpretation of meaning, interaction, and power relations rather than statistical generalization. A descriptive design allows this researcher to capture the complexity of interrogation discourse by classifying speech acts, identifying politeness strategies, and mapping discursive structures. Following the tradition of applied linguistics and forensic pragmatics [28], the design foregrounds how language use reflects institutional authority. The multi-layered design integrates micro-level analysis of utterances with macro-level assessment of discourse structures, aligning with triangulated perspectives. Such a design ensures rigor by combining theoretical frameworks—Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and Forensic Discourse Analysis—into a single interpretive process. The chosen design is therefore exploratory, analytical, and context-sensitive, allowing insights into how institutional discourse is shaped and reproduced within Indonesian legal settings.

The data sources for this study come from both primary and secondary materials. Primary sources include BAPs obtained through formal research access requests to police departments (Polres) and prosecutor offices (Kejari). These official documents provide verbatim records of interrogation exchanges. Trial transcripts available through online judicial portals, such as putusan.mahkamahagung.go.id and putusan3.mahkamahkonstitusi.go.id, constitute another primary source, ensuring transparency and accessibility. Secondary sources include interviews with forensic linguists, legal aid practitioners, and court observers, conducted to contextualize the linguistic patterns found in the primary texts. This layered sourcing enables data triangulation, strengthening validity by cross-checking patterns across genres. Ultimately, the diversity of sources ensures that the analysis reflects not only textual evidence but also institutional practices and expert interpretations, enhancing both depth and reliability.

The process of data collection followed ethical and procedural protocols established for forensic linguistic research. First, formal requests were submitted to police and prosecutor offices for access to BAP documents, accompanied by institutional letters of approval. Second, digital trial transcripts were retrieved from the Supreme Court and Constitutional Court's online databases, using search filters for criminal case types. Third, semi-structured interviews with experts were conducted via both in-person sessions and online platforms, recorded with consent, and later transcribed. Additionally, observational data were gathered during academic mock interrogation sessions to supplement the corpus with contemporary practices. All data were anonymized to protect the identity of suspects, officers, and institutions, in accordance with ethical standards recommended in forensic linguistics [29]. The triangulated approach not only ensured representativeness but also mitigated biases by drawing on multiple forms of evidence. This process yielded a robust corpus of interrogation discourse for systematic analysis.

The data analysis proceeded in three interrelated stages. First, a speech act analysis was conducted using typology to classify utterances into directives, assertives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This stage clarified the communicative functions of interrogation discourse. Second, a politeness strategy analysis was applied for identifying bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record strategies in investigator–suspect interactions. Third, a forensic discourse analysis (FDA) was carried out to examine broader structures, including turn-taking, topic control, and the recontextualization of suspect narratives into institutional accounts. NVivo qualitative software was employed to code and organize patterns systematically. Analytical rigor was maintained through double-coding and consultation with experts to ensure inter-rater reliability. This multi-stage analysis integrates micro- and macro-linguistic perspectives, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how speech acts, politeness, and discourse structures function in Indonesian police interrogations.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Typology of speech acts in interrogative exchanges

The corpus analysis revealed distinct distributions of speech acts across police interrogation transcripts in Bahasa Indonesia. Table 2 summarizes the typology of speech acts identified in five representative BAP cases (theft, corruption, narcotics, fraud, and domestic violence). The results indicate that directive speech acts dominate the interactions, reflecting the interrogators' institutional role in eliciting information. Assertive speech acts follow, particularly when officers reformulate or summarize suspect responses. Commissive and expressives are more frequent in suspects' utterances, while declarations are rare but observable when officers formalize procedural steps. This distribution aligns with prior research showing that directive forms are common in coercive institutional settings [1], [10]. The evidence suggests that interrogation in Indonesian legal contexts prioritizes question–answer dynamics designed to establish official narratives.

Table 2. Distribution of speech acts in selected interrogation transcripts

Case Type	Directive (%)	Assertive (%)	Commissive (%)	Expressive (%)	Declaration (%)
Theft (Motorcycle)	52	30	12	6	0
Corruption (Village)	60	28	7	3	2
Narcotics (Possession)	55	25	10	8	2
Fraud (Land Dispute)	49	32	11	6	2
Domestic Violence	46	34	9	9	2

The distribution of speech acts in Table 2 demonstrates a consistent pattern across different case types. Directives constitute nearly half or more of all utterances, underscoring the interrogators' dominance in steering the interaction. Typical examples include commands such as *"Ceritakan dari awal kejadian!"* or *"Jawab sesuai pertanyaan saya!"*. Assertives are also prominent, often appearing in officers' paraphrased confirmations of suspect statements, such as *"Jadi, kamu mengaku berada di lokasi kejadian, benar?"*. Commissives emerge primarily in suspects' pledges of cooperation, such as *"Saya akan jujur, Pak"*, while expressives surface in denials or emotional responses, e.g., *"Saya tidak tahu, Pak"*. Declarations, though marginal, mark institutional moments such as *"Pemeriksaan ini dicatat dalam berita acara"*. This typology confirms that Indonesian police interrogations are linguistically structured to prioritize information extraction, with interrogators employing linguistic tools to maintain procedural authority over suspects.

The dominance of directive and assertive speech acts can be interpreted as a linguistic reflection of institutional asymmetry inherent in police interrogations. Directives function not merely as requests for information but also as tools of control, framing how suspects are allowed to narrate their version of events. Assertives reinforce this dynamic by validating or invalidating suspect responses, thereby shaping the "official truth" recorded in the BAP. Commissives and expressives, though less frequent, highlight the suspects' attempts to either comply or resist, revealing the psychological dimension of interrogation. Declarations, though minimal, symbolize institutional authority, since a single utterance can formalize legal consequences. These findings echo Zeng et al (2020) and Diepeveen (2024), who argue that interrogation discourse is inherently asymmetrical and designed to privilege institutional narratives over individual voices [11], [30]. In the Indonesian context, the typology illustrates how linguistic strategies reinforce hierarchical power while simultaneously constraining suspect agency.

4.2. Politeness and power dynamics in police–suspect interaction

The analysis of politeness strategies in the interrogation corpus shows a strong reliance on direct, unmitigated forms of speech, particularly by interrogators. Table 3 presents the distribution of politeness strategies observed in five BAP cases. The findings indicate that **bald on record** strategies dominate the interrogators' utterances, accounting for more than half of the data. Positive politeness strategies, such as the use of inclusive pronouns or supportive comments, are relatively rare but appear in interactions with suspects of higher social standing. Negative politeness and off-record strategies are minimal, suggesting that interrogations are primarily structured around control rather than rapport. Conversely, suspects frequently adopt positive politeness (e.g., using honorifics like *"Pak"*) and negative politeness (e.g., indirect refusals) as face-saving strategies. These findings mirror Olayinka's (2022) observation that interrogation talk is inherently asymmetrical, with politeness often serving institutional interests rather than mutual respect [16].

Table 3. Distribution of politeness strategies in interrogations

Case Type	Bald on Record (%)	Positive Politeness (%)	Negative Politeness (%)	Off-Record (%)
Theft (Motorcycle)	61	22	12	5
Corruption (Village)	67	18	10	5
Narcotics (Possession)	64	20	11	5
Fraud (Land Dispute)	58	25	12	5
Domestic Violence	55	28	11	6

The distribution in Table 3 highlights a systematic asymmetry in politeness practices. Interrogators overwhelmingly favor bald on record strategies, issuing direct commands and accusations without mitigation. Examples include “*Jawab sesuai pertanyaan!*” or “*Kamu berbohong, ya?*”. Positive politeness strategies from interrogators, though rare, typically emerge in corruption or fraud cases involving elite suspects, where officers use softened tones or collective pronouns such as “*Mari kita jelaskan*”. Negative politeness is scarcely used by interrogators, indicating little regard for respecting suspect autonomy. On the other hand, suspects rely heavily on positive politeness to reduce social distance, employing honorifics, apologies, and self-justifications. Negative politeness is evident when suspects hedge responses, e.g., “*Saya kurang ingat, Pak*”. Off-record strategies are marginal, seen in vague or incomplete answers. Overall, the description suggests that politeness in interrogation is less about cooperation and more about reinforcing or resisting institutional dominance.

The reliance on bald on record strategies by interrogators can be interpreted as a manifestation of institutional power. By minimizing politeness, interrogators establish authority and exert psychological pressure, aligning with Ajayi’s (2019) observation that politeness is often suspended in hierarchical settings [15]. The occasional use of positive politeness toward elite suspects indicates that social hierarchy outside the institution still influences linguistic behavior. Suspects’ reliance on positive and negative politeness reveals attempts to preserve face and mitigate potential repercussions, consistent with Pavlichenko (2020) who notes that vulnerable speakers often over-accommodate in institutional talk [2]. The asymmetry reflects how interrogation is less a cooperative exchange than a controlled performance where politeness is selectively deployed. In the Indonesian context, these findings illustrate the tension between cultural norms of respect (e.g., honorifics) and the coercive demands of the institutional interrogation setting.

4.3. Discursive structures and institutional authority

The corpus also reveals significant structural asymmetry in the way interrogation discourse is organized. Table 4 presents key discursive features coded across five BAP cases, including turn-taking patterns, topic control, and narrative framing. The results show that interrogators dominate the floor, taking nearly 70% of the turns and initiating almost all topic shifts. Suspects, in contrast, contribute primarily through brief responses, with limited control over the direction of the dialogue. Narrative framing—where interrogators recontextualize suspect statements into institutional accounts—is especially pronounced in corruption and narcotics cases. Interruptions by interrogators are also frequent, further curtailing suspects’ opportunities to provide extended accounts. These findings align with Farinde et al (2015) and Osisanwo and Adegboosin (2020), who highlight the institutional tendency to transform dialogic exchanges into monologic control mechanisms that serve prosecutorial agendas [26], [31].

Table 4. Discursive features in interrogation transcripts

Case Type	Interrogator Turn (%)	Suspect Turn (%)	Interrogator Topic Control (%)	Interruptions (per 100 lines)
Theft (Motorcycle)	68	32	85	14
Corruption (Village)	72	28	89	18
Narcotics (Possession)	71	29	87	17
Fraud (Land Dispute)	66	34	82	12
Domestic Violence	65	35	80	11

The distribution of discursive features in Table 4 demonstrates how institutional authority is linguistically constructed during interrogations. Interrogators consistently dominate both the frequency of turns and the sequencing of topics. This dominance is reinforced through frequent interruptions, which truncate suspect narratives and replace them with investigator-led framing. For instance, when suspects attempt to provide elaborate explanations, officers often redirect the response toward specific factual details relevant to legal charges. Narrative framing is particularly striking in corruption cases, where complex

economic activities are simplified into binary judgments of guilt or denial. In contrast, domestic violence cases show slightly more balance, as suspects are allowed longer turns to explain relational contexts. However, even in these cases, officers ultimately reframe the suspect's account to align with institutional categories such as "confession" or "denial." These discursive patterns highlight how interrogation discourse functions less as a dialogic search for truth and more as a controlled institutional narrative-building exercise.

The asymmetry observed in discursive structures can be interpreted as evidence of how interrogation functions as a site of institutional authority. By controlling turn-taking, topic management, and narrative framing, interrogators not only gather information but also actively construct the version of events that will later be institutionalized in the BAP. This aligns with Foucault's (2003) notion of discourse as a tool of power, where language is deployed to discipline subjects and legitimize institutional practices [32]. The high frequency of interruptions reveals a systematic suppression of suspect agency, while narrative reframing demonstrates how institutional objectives supersede individual accounts. In the Indonesian context, where hierarchical respect toward authority figures is deeply embedded, these practices are further normalized. Thus, discursive structures in interrogation are not neutral; they are mechanisms through which the state exerts symbolic power, transforming suspects' voices into institutional evidence that sustains legal authority.

5. DISCUSSION

The dominance of directive and assertive speech acts in Indonesian police interrogations has significant implications for both communicative function and legal outcomes. Functionally, these speech acts serve to extract information quickly and establish an authoritative version of events, reinforcing the investigative mandate of the police. However, from a dysfunction perspective, the overuse of directive and assertive strategies can restrict suspects' ability to provide full narratives, thus limiting the richness of evidence. This dynamic potentially compromises the principle of fair trial and the presumption of innocence, as suspects' voices are linguistically overshadowed by institutional framing. Studies by Zeng et al (2020) and Diepeveen (2024) demonstrate that directive dominance often leads to scripted, one-sided accounts rather than genuine discovery of facts [11], [30]. Hence, the typology of speech acts in the corpus suggests that while interrogations fulfill procedural efficiency, they risk undermining the justice system's normative goals of truth-seeking and fairness.

The structural explanation for this pattern lies in the asymmetry of institutional roles. Police interrogators are endowed with authority to question, while suspects are legally compelled to answer, creating an inherent imbalance. Directive speech acts are therefore not simply linguistic choices but structural imperatives embedded in the interrogation setting. Assertive acts, especially when used to reframe or summarize suspects' responses, further institutionalize this imbalance by transforming dialogic exchanges into monologic affirmations of the interrogators' agenda. This resonates with Setiawati and Wahjuono (2020), who argues that interrogative asymmetry is a systemic feature of legal discourse, not merely an interpersonal dynamic [1]. The structural foundation of these patterns is reinforced by bureaucratic protocols that prioritize efficiency and evidential documentation over conversational equality. Consequently, the typology of speech acts is less a reflection of individual style than of institutional architecture, where discourse functions as a tool for consolidating authority and producing admissible evidence.

The predominance of bald on record politeness strategies also carries important implications for institutional practice and suspect experience [33], [34]. Functionally, these strategies signal authority and urgency, enabling interrogators to maintain strict control over proceedings. Yet, their dysfunction lies in the erosion of cooperative dialogue and the increased likelihood of perceived coercion. When politeness mitigation is absent, suspects may feel pressured, intimidated, or even silenced, which affects the authenticity of their testimony. Olayinka (2022) notes that the minimization of politeness often coincides with a decline in perceived fairness [16], raising concerns about the reliability of confessions. In the Indonesian cultural context, where politeness and respect markers such as honorifics are highly valued, the stark absence of mitigating strategies may exacerbate the psychological burden on suspects. This finding implies that while interrogators achieve procedural dominance, they do so at the cost of undermining relational balance, thereby challenging the legitimacy of interrogation outcomes.

The structural explanation for the dominance of bald on record strategies is linked to the institutional prioritization of control and efficiency over relational harmony [35]. Police interrogations are designed as high-stakes events where time, authority, and evidence are tightly managed. In this context, politeness is often seen as an impediment rather than a facilitator. Pavlichenk's (2020) model suggests that politeness requires cognitive effort and negotiation [2], which may conflict with the interrogator's aim of extracting direct responses. Moreover, the selective use of positive politeness toward socially powerful suspects indicates that broader sociocultural hierarchies influence linguistic choices even within institutional settings. Thus, the minimal presence of politeness strategies reflects not interpersonal rudeness but structural imperatives of control. By reducing mitigation, interrogators assert institutional dominance, but this structural

rationale inadvertently contributes to an atmosphere where suspects' linguistic rights and psychological safety are compromised, reinforcing asymmetrical dynamics of power.

The structural dominance of interrogators in discursive organization has profound implications for the construction of legal narratives. Functionally, controlling turn-taking and topic management ensures that interrogations remain focused and legally relevant. Dysfunctionally, however, this control silences alternative perspectives and restricts suspects from articulating complex or exculpatory narratives. By interrupting suspects and reframing their statements, interrogators effectively produce a state-sanctioned version of events that is later institutionalized in the BAP. Akinrinlola and Lamidi (2024) warn that such narrative control risks transforming interrogations into instruments of legitimization rather than truth-seeking [24]. In the Indonesian context, where hierarchical respect toward authority is deeply ingrained, suspects may accept this imbalance as normal, further obscuring its problematic implications. The findings therefore suggest that interrogation discourse, while operationally efficient, functions less as dialogic inquiry and more as a narrative construction tool that privileges institutional authority over individual accounts.

The underlying cause of discursive asymmetry lies in the institutional architecture of interrogation, which is designed to privilege prosecutorial needs over dialogic equity. Interrogators' control of turn-taking and narrative framing is not accidental but embedded in the bureaucratic function of producing coherent, admissible evidence [36]. Foucault's (2003) theory of discourse as an instrument of power helps explain why interruptions and topic control are systemic rather than incidental [32]. They serve to discipline suspects' speech, transforming fragmented individual accounts into streamlined institutional narratives. The high rates of interruptions observed in the corpus demonstrate how authority is linguistically enacted, ensuring that the "truth" produced aligns with institutional expectations rather than experiential realities. This structural foundation reveals that interrogation discourse is not a neutral arena but a disciplinary mechanism where language both reflects and enacts state power. As such, discursive structures consolidate institutional legitimacy at the expense of suspects' discursive agency.

6. CONCLUSION

This study highlights that Indonesian police interrogations are linguistically dominated by directive and assertive speech acts, supported by bald on record politeness strategies and structurally asymmetrical discursive practices. The main lesson derived is that language in interrogation serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a mechanism of institutional control, shaping narratives that become legally binding in the *Berita Acara Pemeriksaan*. The strength of this research lies in its integration of Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and Forensic Discourse Analysis, offering a multi-layered perspective. It contributes scientifically by updating the understanding of interrogation discourse in a non-Western, Bahasa Indonesia context, thus expanding comparative forensic linguistic scholarship.

Despite its contributions, this study faces several limitations. The corpus was limited to selected BAPs and trial excerpts, which may not fully capture variations across regions, case types, or interrogation styles. Additionally, ethical and legal restrictions constrained access to broader datasets, potentially limiting generalizability. These limitations underscore the need for further research that incorporates larger and more diverse corpora, as well as multimodal data such as audio or video recordings of interrogations. Future studies could also adopt cross-linguistic or cross-cultural comparisons to explore how interrogation discourse varies globally. Such directions would strengthen the empirical foundation and policy implications of this field.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank colleagues and academic peers for their support and meaningful suggestions during this study.

FUNDING INFORMATION

Authors state no funding involved.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

M. Ansori: conceptualization (lead), data analysis (lead), writing – original draft (lead), writing – review and editing (lead).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

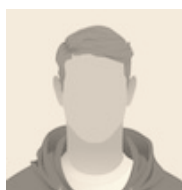
Data availability is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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