

**THE USE OF INDIRECTNESS AND TAG
QUESTIONS BY POWERFUL AND FOWERLESS MEN
AND WOMEN ON TRIALS: EVIDENCE FROM
INDONESIA**

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Abstract

This study was aimed at investigating the use of indirectness and question tags in some Indonesian trials. The data were chosen randomly from YouTube's videos. The subjects were twenty people consisting of judges, witnesses, and defendants (the accused). To analyze the data, the conversations of the videos were firstly transcribed verbatim. Then, they were analyzed using the framework of Thomas (1995) and Holmes (1984). The data showed that indirect speech style and question tags were more attached to powerful women.

Keywords: *courts, gender, indirectness, language, politeness, power, tag questions*

INTRODUCTION

A speaker's speech style is affected by many factors such as social relationship, power, and gender of speakers and interlocutors. The selection of words, phrases, and sentence structures are dependence on to whom a speaker is speaking to (Wilkin, 1972). Power relation, especially the difference in power between the speaker and the interlocutor, is one of the most tangible aspects affecting a speaker's speech style (Fairclough, 1989). In addition to power relation, gender is also one of the notable aspects of different use of speech style. Many studies have showed that men and women speak differently (Wardhaugh, 1997). This is because cultures have norms of linguistic or verbal behavior for their communities (Satyanath, 2015).

Understanding language use with regard to speakers' gender and power are certainly interesting since language is used by people around the world in everyday lives. However, studies relating to it, especially in Indonesia, are rarely found. Therefore, there is a need to do studies on it. To fill this gap, this research is aimed at investigating whether language style is used differently by people of different gender and power in court contexts. This study was inspired by Cameron et al.'s (1988) research about the use of question tags by powerful women, powerless women, powerful men and powerless men. Power can be expressed through language (Locher 2004) and social power relations are manifested in interactions (Van Dijk, 1989). Social power is the property of relations between groups, classes, or other social formations, or between people as members of a social group. This power source usually consists of attributes or ownership of something valuable in the eyes of society such as wealth, position, knowledge, expertise, etc. (Van Dijk, 1989). Power in a discourse relates to participants who are powerful in controlling, limiting and forcing contributions from participants who are not/less powerful (Fairclough, 1989). Different power is shown by the linguistic strategies used by each participant in interacting (Harris, 1995). The types of power are very clearly visible in hierarchical settings, such as in the courts, military, workplace, etc. (Fairclough, 1989).

In the use of everyday language, power can be seen in the interactions such as: (1) medical staff and patients greet doctors with formal greetings (LoCastro, 2012); (2) The judge examines the witness or defendant in the trial, the judge asks questions and the witness or defendant must answer (Coulthard and Johnson, 2007; Harris, 1995); and (3) the police interrogate witnesses of a case (Fairclough, 1989).

Another study relating to language and power was carried out by Mulyani and Lukmana (2019) regarding style shifting of employees in a company in West Java, Indonesia, which showed that the power or superiority of the speaker and the person being spoken to affects a person's speech style. The style of speech used by employees when talking to their superiors is different from when talking to their subordinates. When talking to their superiors, they tend to be more formal, more indirect, have longer sentences, have more apologetic words, and have more respectful greetings.

In terms of language and power and gender, Cameron et al. (1988) examined the use of question tags by powerful women, powerless women, powerful men and powerless men. The results showed that the speakers who were powerful, both male and female, were the ones who used the question tag the most. They found that the use of tags by powerful men and women was associated with more powerful rights and obligations of the interlocutor to invite conversation, and to keep the conversation going, as well as to force the other person to speak.

In terms of Language and gender, the difference of speech style used by men and women is a reflection of sub-cultural differences between men and women (Penycook, 2001; Cameron, 2005; Wardhaugh, 2006; Freeman and McElhinny, 2009; LoCastro, 2012). Among the stereotypes of women's conversations are that women speak more (1) indirect and polite and (2) use intonation patterns that resemble questions (tag questions) that indicate disbelief or a desire for approval (Lakoff, 1975; Freeman and McElhinny, 2009; Wardhaugh, 2006). In addition, based on LoCastro (2012), one of the differences of language use by women and men is that Japanese women add a prefix of respect, namely the prefix *o-*. For example, the word *sushi* becomes *osushi*, *tomodachi* becomes *otomodachi*, *benkyo* becomes *obenkyoo*, etc. The practice of adding a salute particle is found only in the language of women.

However, other studies showed different findings. For example, Bucholtz (2005) stated that in Malagasy-speaking community, in Madagascar, women are associated with direct language styles while men are associated with indirect language styles. Likewise, Cameron (2005) maintained that women's language does not always associated with polite language. He found that in a village in Gapun in Papua New Guinea, namely in Tok Pisin, there is a language genre called *Kros*, in which anger, cursing, and swearing that are conveyed by means of monologues are mainly performed by the women of the village and are considered as female gender. In short, women and men speak differently in accordance with their own culture.

People often speak indirectly in conveying their meaning. Speaking indirectly means expressing something without directly saying to the point, or what is expressed does not match the intended meaning. Leech (1983) proposed the *Politeness Principle* (PP) consisting of the maxims of tack, generosity, modesty, approval and sympathy. Meanwhile, Brown & Levinson's (1978) core concept of politeness is the concept of 'face' as proposed by Goffman in 1967 (Thomas, 1995). Saving face is saying something to reduce the possibility of a threat to others, to save others' self-image, reputation, or good name (Yule, 1996).

A speaker tends to use a higher level of indirectness to communicate with interlocutors who have higher power or authority. There are several reasons for using indirectness: (1) Desire to make one's language more/less attractive, (2) To increase the force (strength) of one's message, (3) Competing goals (competing goals), (4) For politeness or considering 'face' (Thomas, 1995).

In English language, question tags are sentences that consist of a declarative or positive sentence followed by a negative questioning tag; or a negative question followed by a positive question tag. For instance,

It's a beautiful voice, isn't it? or

She doesn't take the course, does she?

Their meanings are dependence on how they are expressed. If the speaker's voice goes down, it means that s/he is not giving a real question, only expecting approval from the listener. In contrast, if the speaker's voice increases, it means that it is a genuine question (Murphy, 2019). Further, according to Holmes (1984; cf. LoCastro, 2012) the function of question tags can be categorized into three. The first is modal tags, namely question tags that are used to express disbelief and require confirmation or information from the interlocutor. Second, facilitative tagging, which is to encourage the other person to participate in the conversation. Third, the mitigator, which is to soften or for the purpose of politeness which if not used will threaten the face of the other person.

In Indonesian language, the question tag contains words such as ... *ya?*, ... *kan?* For example: *Kamu sakit, ya?* or *kamu sakit, kan?* 'You are sick, aren't you?' It is to ask for confirmation, express hospitality, accuse, deny, and praise (Lindawati, 2012).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative analysis strategies. Quantitative strategy is used to see the frequency of the occurrence of data. While the qualitative dimension is an extension or further analysis of quantitative analysis. The instrument is a document study. In this study, the documents are transcripts of conversations at the trial derived from eleven video trials which were downloaded from the YouTube site between February and March 2014. The sample was selected using purposeful sampling (Cresswell, 2012). The selection of trial videos was intended to examine 10 powerful persons (men or women who had power in trials) such as judges and 10 powerless persons (men and women who did not have much power in trials) such as witnesses and defendants. In analyzing the data, the analytical framework is based on Thomas' (1995) concept of indirect speech and Holmes' (1984) function of question tags. The participants were 5 powerful women, 5 powerful men, 5 powerless women, and 5 powerless men. Powerful persons are men and women who had higher power than their interlocutors, for example judges who spoke to witnesses, defendants, prosecutors or lawyers. On the other hand, powerless persons are men and women who had lower power than their interlocutors. For example, a defendant spoke to a judge.

DATA FINDING AND ANALYSIS

The results of the analysis of the trial transcript document in relation to the use of directness can be seen in the table below.

Speech style	Women										men										
	Powerful					powerless					powerful					powerless					
	P	P	P	P	P	p	p	p	p	p	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
	f	f	f	f	f	l	l	l	l	l	f	f	f	f	f	l	l	l	l	l	
	w	w	w	w	w	w	w	w	w	w	m	m	m	m	w	m	m	m	m	m	
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
<i>indirectness</i>	-	7	-	1	-	1	-	1	3	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	3	3	-	1
number	8					5					2					7					
	13										9										

Notes:

Pfw : powerful women

Plw: powerless women

Pfm: powerful men

Plm: powerless men

Table 1. The use of indirectness by powerful men, powerful women, powerless men, and powerless women

Based on the table above, the data shows that in the trial the indirect speech style was used. This style of speech is carried out by the four types of speakers: powerless women, powerful women, powerless men, and powerful men. If it is calculated, the number of indirectness utterances spoken by women is more than that of men. Of the four groups of speakers, the most frequent indirectness utterances appear in powerful women, which appears 9 times. While the second order is on the powerless men, which appears 7 times. Overall, indirectness utterances by women occurred thirteen times (13), while the appearance of indirectness speech styles by men was nine times (9). This finding supports Lakoff's (1975) statement that women tend to use indirectness more than men do.

The function of using indirectness in speech used by the four types of speakers in court is presented in the following table.

Fungsi penggunaan indirectness	Jumlah Penggunaan <i>indirectness</i> oleh:			
	Powerful women	Powerless women	Powerful men	Powerless men
Politeness	7	1	1	-
Sharpening messages	1	4	1	5
Competing goals	-	-	-	2
Increasing or decreasing the utterance's attractiveness	-	-	-	-
Number	8	5	2	7
	13		9	

Table 2. Functions of using indirectness performed by powerful women, powerless women, powerful men, and powerless men

Based on the data, it was found that 8 out of 13 uses of indirectness by women function as a sign of politeness. While the rest (5 times) is to strengthen the message conveyed by the speaker. While the function of indirectness speech style by men, 6 of the 9 utterances serve to sharpen the message; 1 out of 9 is to signify politeness; and 2 out of 9 are for competing goals. This finding also supports Lakoff's statement that one of the characteristics of women's language is the use of indirectness and politeness.

When viewed in terms of power and gender, the use of indirectness utterances is most often spoken by powerful women. This is evidenced by data that of the 4 functions of using indirectness speech style spoken by 4 types of speakers (5 pfw, 5 plw, 5 pfm, 5 plm), the use of directness for politeness is carried out by powerful women. From the data obtained, this occurred when a powerful woman refused the interlocutor's request to perform a speech act. The realization of rejection with this indirectness style is in accordance with Aziz (2012) which showed that the realization of rejection by the Indonesian people is often carried out in an indirect way. This was done to keep the interlocutor's face from losing his face, or to be polite in order to maintain a harmonious relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor. One example is in the conversation below.

Female witness: *no. I used it in the end of that year. Your Majesty, please allow me uh may I, I thought in ha euh in my mind to keep reminding*

Female Judge: *[interrupt] oh witness, you are here as a witness to answer the panel's question, aren't you*

From the conversation above, it can be seen that the witness intended to ask permission to say something. But then the judge interrupted him and rejected him indirectly by saying that the status of his interlocutor was as a witness. And witnesses are obliged to answer the judge's questions, not to ask questions or convey something without being asked by the trial panel.

The use of question tags

Data regarding the use of question tags or intonations that resemble questions are shown in the table below.

Utterance	Women										Men									
	Powerful					powerless					powerful					powerless				
	<i>p fw</i>	<i>Pf w</i>	<i>Pf w</i>	<i>pf w</i>	<i>pf w</i>	<i>pl w</i>	<i>P l</i>	<i>P l</i>	<i>pl w</i>	<i>pl w</i>	<i>pf m</i>	<i>Pf m</i>	<i>Pf m</i>	<i>pf m</i>	<i>pf m</i>	<i>pl m</i>	<i>Pl m</i>	<i>Pl m</i>	<i>pl m</i>	<i>pl m</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Q t</i>	3	9	1	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	6	5	5	-	-	-	-	-
	29					-					21					-				

Num ber	29	21
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Table 3. The use of Question tags

Based on the data in table 3, it is revealed that the use of question tags is only carried out by powerful women and powerful men, not by powerless women or powerless men. This is because in the trial, those who have the right to ask questions are people who have been given the authority to ask questions or examine witnesses or defendants. In this case, those who are powerful in the trial are the panel of judges, then lawyers and advisors. Meanwhile, the defendant and the witness were to answer questions (KUHAP, no. 8 of 1981).

In terms of language and gender, the data shows that the frequency of occurrence of question tags is spoken more by women (29 times) than men (21 times). This fact supports Lakoff's statement that question tags or utterances that are similar to questions are more often done by women than by men.

Data regarding the function of the use of question tags, both by men and by women, which occur in general courts are listed in the table below.

Functions of question tags	Speakers	
	Powerful women	Powerful men
To confirm	17	18
To soften language / politeness	8	1
To gain agreement from the <i>addressee</i>	2	2
To greet the addressee (in the beginning of the conversation)	1	-
To force listener to participate in the conversation	1	-
Number	29	21

Tabel 4. The functions of question tags uttered by powerful women and men

Based on the table above, the data shows that the majority of the use of question tags were intended to confirm or obtain information. Question tags to confirm and obtain information were carried out by women in power 17 times, while by men 18 times. For the purpose of politeness, the use of this speech style occurs 8 times by women, and 1 time by men. The rest is to force or get approval from the other person, to greet listener at the beginning of a conversation, and to encourage the other person to participate in the conversation. More detailed data can be seen in the data analysis appendix. Again, this data supports Lakoff's (1975) statement that women are more attached to question tags and more polite than men. This is evidenced by the appearance of the frequency question tag which functions for politeness reason which was done 8 times by women and once by men.

CONCLUSION

This article has revealed the use of indirectness speech styles and question tags in courts in Indonesia which are related to the speaker's power and gender. Based on the findings and analysis of the data above, the conclusion is that the use indirectness and question tags were used for politeness reason and it is more attached to powerful women.

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