

# Cognitive Relevance and Linguistic Suggestion in Questioning Strategies to Enhance Witness Honesty in Indonesian Courtroom Interaction

Arum Priadi<sup>a,1,\*</sup>, Ilham<sup>b,2</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Jl. Kolektor Ringroad Selatan, Bantul, Yogyakarta 55166, Indonesia

<sup>b</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, Jl. KH. Ahmad Dahlan, Pagesangan, Mataram 83133, Indonesia

[arum.priadi@pbi.uad.ac.id](mailto:arum.priadi@pbi.uad.ac.id)\*; [ilhamsila@ummat.ac.id](mailto:ilhamsila@ummat.ac.id)

\* corresponding author

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received:13/10/2025

Revised:29/11/2025

Accepted:15/12/2025

### Keywords:

Witness,  
Questioning,  
Cognitive,  
Relevance,  
Suggestion.

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how integrating Relevance Theory (RT) and Hypnotic Language Patterns can enhance witness honesty and recall through ethically suggestive questioning in Indonesian criminal trials. Courtroom questioning is a linguistically and cognitively complex act that mediates the production and evaluation of witness testimony. Despite its central role in shaping evidentiary narratives, questioning in Indonesian courtrooms remains predominantly procedural, with limited attention to the psychological and inferential dimensions of communication. Adopting a qualitative cognitive-pragmatic approach, the study draws on discourse and thematic analyses of two Indonesian criminal trials to explore how questioning strategies function at the intersection of cognition, inference, and judicial ethics. The analysis identifies nine recurrent questioning techniques, including soft suggestion, presupposition, and commitment framing. Findings indicate that soft suggestion (15.1%) and commitment framing (15.15%) reduce cognitive resistance and foster more detailed, coherent recollection. The results suggest that linguistic suggestion, when aligned with principles of cognitive relevance, can establish psychological safety and interpretive precision without compromising judicial neutrality. By conceptualizing courtroom questioning as guided cognition, this study advances forensic pragmatics through an integrated framework linking linguistic ethics, cognitive accessibility, and evidentiary reliability within a culturally contextualized legal setting.

## I. Introduction

Witness honesty is a fundamental element of the judicial process, serving as a cornerstone in the pursuit of substantive [1]–[3]. In the Indonesian legal system, witnesses play a crucial role as providers of information that can either substantiate or undermine the evidentiary basis of a case [4], [5]. Therefore, ensuring witness transparency and honesty is imperative to guarantee that judicial decisions are grounded in valid and reliable facts. However, in practice, testimony is often shaped by a range of external and internal factors, including psychological pressure, manipulation by interested parties, and even the witness's motivations [6]–[10]. These complexities underscore a critical question: What effective questioning strategies can be employed to elicit truthful testimony within the Indonesian judicial system?

Studies in forensic linguistics and legal psychology have shown that testimony is influenced by psychological pressure, memory reconstruction processes, and interactional dynamics between legal actors and witnesses. However, these strands of research are rarely integrated in analyses of Indonesian courtroom discourse, where questioning practices remain under-theorized in cognitive-pragmatic terms. As a result, it remains unclear how specific linguistic strategies may facilitate truthful and coherent recall without compromising judicial neutrality. This gap raises a central problem: what forms of courtroom questioning can support honest and cognitively accessible testimony within the Indonesian judicial context?

Addressing this challenge requires an understanding of both psychological and procedural barriers that may hinder witness honesty. Psychologically, witnesses may experience anxiety, intimidation, or fear, which can influence the accuracy of their statements [11]–[13]. Legal procedural frameworks in Indonesia tend to adhere to conventional examination methods that prioritize formal legal structures over psychological techniques designed to assess credibility [14]–[16]. This procedural rigidity may limit the ability of legal practitioners to uncover inconsistencies or detect deception effectively [17]–[21]. Given these limitations, the role of questioning strategies becomes increasingly significant in enhancing the reliability of witness testimony [22]–[24]. Judges and legal professionals must employ evidence-based techniques that not only adhere to legal standards but also consider psychological factors that influence witness responses.

Various questioning techniques have been employed in judicial proceedings to assess witness honesty, ranging from open-ended and closed questions to leading questions and those based on psychological pressure [25]. The selection of an appropriate questioning technique depends on several factors, including the context of the case, the characteristics of the witness, and the objectives of the examination. While legal practitioners, including judges and lawyers, often rely on experience and intuition in formulating questions, the effectiveness of these techniques is not always guaranteed. Overly leading questions may introduce bias, potentially distorting a witness's testimony, whereas excessively open-ended questions can lead to vague or convoluted responses. These challenges highlight the need for a systematic and evidence-based approach to questioning strategies that can effectively elicit truthful testimony while upholding the principles of due process of law.

Despite the recognized importance of effective questioning, existing research has predominantly focused on investigative interviewing and interrogation techniques within the fields of forensic psychology and criminal law. Various methodologies have been developed to assess witness credibility, such as cognitive interviewing techniques and linguistic analysis for deception detection. However, studies that specifically examine questioning strategies tailored to courtroom proceedings, particularly within the Indonesian legal context, remain scarce. This gap in research underscores the necessity of exploring approaches that are not only legally sound but also psychologically informed to optimize witness testimony in judicial settings.

To address this gap, this article introduces a novel perspective by proposing a questioning strategy grounded in psychological mechanisms aimed at enhancing witness honesty. This approach emphasizes the use of carefully structured questions that subtly influence cognitive processing and response patterns, encouraging witnesses to provide truthful accounts without feeling coerced or pressured. By integrating insights from both forensic linguistics and psychological research, this strategy seeks to bridge the gap between legal practice and scientific advancements, ultimately contributing to a more reliable and effective judicial process.

In the Indonesian legal system, the implementation of more effective questioning strategies not only enhances the accuracy of witness testimony but also upholds the principles of a fair trial and ensures the protection of witness rights [26]. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers must recognize the extent to which question structure and formulation influence a witness's responses [27]. For instance, questions designed with consideration for a witness's cognitive and emotional state can mitigate confusion or fear, factors that may otherwise impede their ability to provide honest and accurate testimony. By adopting such an approach, legal practitioners can improve not only the effectiveness of witness examinations but also the overall quality and reliability of judicial proceedings.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, the researcher is interested in exploring the elements of hypnosis through structured questioning techniques as a method to obtain more profound and more accurate information from witnesses. This article will discuss how the hypno-questioning technique can be applied in the context of the Indonesian judiciary [28], with a focus on enhancing the effectiveness of witness testimony collection and its potential benefits within the existing judicial system. Therefore, this article contributes to the study of forensic communication and legal psychology, particularly in understanding how questioning techniques can enhance witness honesty in judicial proceedings.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, this study also holds practical significance, as its findings can serve as a reference for developing training programs aimed at legal practitioners, including judges, prosecutors, and lawyers to improve the overall quality of witness examinations. Moreover, the broader implications of this research extend to policy formulation, particularly in designing more

adaptive methods for obtaining witness testimony that address the evolving challenges of Indonesia's judicial system.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how linguistic suggestion and cognitive relevance interact in courtroom questioning to enhance witness honesty and recall. Specifically, it addresses the research questions: (1). How can the principles of Relevance Theory (RT) and the Hypnotic Language Patterns - be integrated into courtroom questioning to enhance witness honesty and recall in the Indonesian judicial context? (2). What types of linguistically suggestive questioning techniques emerge in Indonesian courtroom discourse, and how are they distributed across different types of witnesses? (3). In what ways do relevance-based and suggestive questioning techniques interact cognitively and psychologically to reduce witness resistance and improve testimonial accuracy?

Guided by these research questions, this study seeks to achieve the objectives: (1). to integrate the principles of RT and the HLP - into a unified framework of courtroom questioning that ethically enhances witness honesty and recall, (2) to identify, classify, and quantify the linguistic patterns of suggestive questioning used in Indonesian courtroom discourse, and (3). to develop and validate a Cognitive-Pragmatic Interface Model that explains how relevance-based and suggestive questioning collaboratively reduce cognitive resistance and facilitate accurate testimonial recall.

To achieve these objectives, this article will first outline the concept of witness honesty in legal proceedings, followed by an analysis of various questioning strategies that have been utilized in courtroom settings. It will then introduce a more psychologically informed approach to enhancing witness openness, emphasizing techniques that foster a conducive environment for truthful disclosures. Through a comprehensive analysis, this study aims to identify and develop questioning strategies that effectively elicit truthful testimony. These strategies are expected to enhance the credibility of witness statements, thereby strengthening the Indonesian judicial system's ability to deliver justice based on objective and reliable facts.

## II. Literature Review

Questioning techniques across various disciplines have been extensively studied to understand how the structure and context of questions influence an individual's response, particularly in legal investigations. Research in cognitive psychology suggests that priming effects and narrative-based questioning structures can enhance the accuracy of witness memory. A study by Schacter and Loftus [29] found that witnesses presented with story-based questions demonstrated superior recall of event details, with a 35% increase in information retrieval compared to direct questioning. Kleider-Offutt et al. [30] revealed that non-confrontational questioning approaches improved witness accuracy by up to 45%, reinforcing the notion that subtler and more guided questioning techniques can yield more honest testimonies.

These findings, however, warrant cautious interpretation. Most experimental studies are conducted in laboratory settings with simulated events, limiting their ecological validity in high-stakes courtroom environments. Moreover, while guided or subtle questioning may facilitate recall, it also raises ethical concerns regarding suggestion and potential influence on testimony. The boundary between cognitive scaffolding and unintended manipulation remains insufficiently theorized, particularly within adversarial judicial contexts where neutrality is paramount.

These strands of research have rarely been synthesized within analyses of courtroom discourse, especially in Indonesia. Existing courtroom studies tend to focus on procedural form or power dynamics, without systematically examining how cognitively informed questioning strategies operate in real trial interactions. Consequently, a gap persists between experimental findings on memory facilitation and their ethically calibrated application in courtroom questioning practices.

From a forensic linguistics perspective, word choice and question structure play a crucial role in shaping a witness's perception of an event. Porter and Peace [31] found that open-ended and neutral question structures led to a 32% increase in the amount of detail provided by witnesses. Similarly, research by Ewens et al. [32] demonstrated that employing a reverse temporal questioning structure could enhance information recall by 28%. This technique enables witnesses to retrieve their memories in a more in-depth manner without explicit pressure, thereby reducing the likelihood of automatic or fabricated responses in their testimony.

Building on this, insights from persuasive communication suggest that establishing interpersonal rapport between the interviewer and the witness significantly enhances testimonial openness. Vrij et

al. [33] found that maintaining a calm tone of voice and employing empathetic questioning increased response accuracy by up to 37%, highlighting the importance of fostering trust before posing inquiries. Research by Dando & Bull [34] indicated that adjusting intonation and speech pace to align with a witness's psychological state improved disclosure by 30%.

#### **A. Theoretical Base**

Findings from various disciplines indicate that effective questioning strategies should not rely solely on legal aspects but must also consider psychological, linguistic, and communicative factors. Techniques such as narrative questioning, reverse temporal structuring, relational approaches, and mental imagery have enhanced witness disclosure and accuracy without explicit pressure. By incorporating these approaches into the judicial system, witness examinations can be conducted more strategically and humanely, ultimately reinforcing the principles of substantive justice.

Beyond cognitive aspects, the psychological dimension of legal communication also plays a crucial role in shaping a witness's response to questioning. One relevant approach in this context is the HLP -, rooted in the Milton Model developed by Milton Erickson. The Milton Model emphasizes the precise use of vague words, referring to language that appears ambiguous but exerts a strong suggestive influence on the subconscious mind [35]. This technique includes the use of nominalization (abstract nouns such as clarity or understanding that lack concrete reference), universal quantifiers (such as always or everyone, which create an impression of certainty), and deletion (the omission of specific details in sentence structures, prompting individuals to fill in the gaps with their interpretations).

The Milton Model employs subtle questioning techniques that guide individuals without triggering resistance, such as embedded commands (commands subtly embedded within seemingly neutral sentences) and presuppositions (implicit assumptions that influence how individuals process information) [36]. Richard Bandler and John Grinder later adapted this model in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), which introduced a systematic approach to understanding how language shapes thought patterns and responses.

The Milton Model with NLP in the context of witness examination allows for the formulation of questions that subtly guide witnesses to access more authentic memories without inducing excessive cognitive or emotional resistance. Techniques such as positive presuppositions, open-ended questions with specific linguistic structures, and communication patterns that minimize psychological barriers can help witnesses feel more at ease, increasing the likelihood of providing more honest and accurate testimony.

Applying questioning strategies that combine RT and the Milton Model in NLP creates a complementary mechanism for eliciting witness honesty. While RT ensures that questions maintain an optimal level of relevance relative to the witness's cognitive processing capacity, the Milton Model and NLP adjust the delivery of questions to make them feel more natural and less likely to trigger psychological resistance.

From a cognitive-pragmatic perspective, this approach aligns with how individuals process communication contexts and filter information based on its significance within an interaction. When witnesses do not feel linguistically or psychologically pressured, they are more likely to provide responses that accurately reflect their memories rather than answers crafted to avoid legal consequences. Therefore, the synergy between persuasive linguistic strategies and cognitive-pragmatic principles elicits more accurate information and enhances the credibility of witness testimony within the judicial system.

#### **B. Analytical Framework**

Witness honesty is not solely dependent on individual intent but is also influenced by the communication strategies employed to elicit testimony effectively. This analytical framework integrates RT and the HLP - to design optimal questioning strategies for witness examination in court proceedings.

The process begins with identifying factors influencing testimony, including witness characteristics such as cognitive load, anxiety, and suggestibility, and the examination environment, which encompasses psychological pressure and legal constraints. Based on these factors, questioning strategies are formulated by incorporating key RT principles, such as balancing cognitive effort and cognitive effect, utilizing contextual framing to enhance memory retrieval, and structuring questions to maintain relevance without confusing the witness.

Simultaneously, HLP techniques are applied through presuppositions to reduce resistance, embedded commands to encourage openness, and metaphorical framing to stimulate more truthful responses. Integrating these two approaches aims to produce more accurate testimony, minimize cognitive distortions in responses, and optimize legal communication effectiveness within the judicial system. Thus, this framework provides a systematic and evidence-based approach to uncovering witness honesty more effectively and ethically during legal proceedings.

### III. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to analyze the effectiveness of questioning strategies in eliciting witness honesty during court proceedings. The primary data consists of video recordings of two criminal cases adjudicated in Indonesia, selected based on criteria that consider case complexity, the diversity of questioning strategies used, and variations in witness responses during testimony.

The data consist of video recordings from two Indonesian criminal trials adjudicated at the District Court level. The cases involve (1) a violent assault case and (2) a fraud-related case, selected to represent different evidentiary structures and interactional complexities. Across the two trials, a total of eight witnesses were examined over twelve questioning sessions, with a combined hearing duration of approximately 14 hours. Witnesses included both male and female adults aged between 21 and 54, with varying educational backgrounds. The two cases were selected purposively based on (a) procedural completeness, (b) diversity of questioning styles employed by judges and prosecutors, and (c) observable variation in witness responsiveness.

All video data were transcribed verbatim following conversation-analytic conventions adapted for courtroom discourse, including notation of pauses, overlaps, emphasis, and intonation patterns. The transcription process was conducted in the original Indonesian language to preserve pragmatic nuance.

Data analysis proceeded in four stages. First, questioning segments were identified and segmented into discrete interactional units. Second, an initial coding phase categorized questioning forms based on linguistic structure (e.g., interrogative type, presuppositional framing, modalization). Third, these forms were mapped onto a cognitive-pragmatic framework integrating principles of relevance and suggestive language patterns. Coding criteria were operationalized through a structured coding manual developed from existing forensic pragmatics literature. NVivo software was used to manage and organize coded segments.

In the final stage, thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring questioning strategies and their interactional effects, particularly in relation to witness coherence, elaboration, hesitation, and repair sequences. Analytical interpretation was guided by the study's central research question concerning how ethically calibrated questioning strategies may facilitate honest and cognitively accessible testimony. Triangulation was achieved through repeated viewing of recordings and cross-checking of coded segments to ensure analytical consistency.

A purposive sampling technique is applied to ensure that the selected cases are highly relevant to the research objective, exploring how question structures influence witness disclosure. The data, in the form of verbatim transcripts from the court recordings, will be analyzed to identify interaction patterns among judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and witnesses to understand how RT and the HLP - are practically applied in courtroom questioning.

The analysis employs discourse and thematic analysis to explore how questioning patterns influence witness honesty and disclosure [37]. Discourse analysis examines linguistic structures and communication strategies within courtroom interactions, particularly about the cognitive and psychological dimensions of witness responses. Meanwhile, thematic analysis is applied to identify key themes related to the effectiveness of questioning strategies, such as the impact of relevance-based questions on witness responses and the role of suggestive language patterns in reducing witness resistance.

To ensure the study's validity and reliability, data triangulation is conducted by comparing findings from the two analyzed cases and involving legal and forensic psychology experts in the data interpretation process. The validity of the findings is further reinforced through member checking, in which legal practitioners verify transcripts and analytical results with courtroom experience.

Video recordings are analyzed using an inter-rater reliability approach [38] to minimize subjectivity in data interpretation. The inter-rater reliability analysis yielded an agreement rate of 87%,

indicating a high level of consistency among evaluators in assessing questioning patterns and witness responses. This substantial agreement suggests that the analytical framework applied in the study provides a robust and replicable method for examining questioning strategies in courtroom settings. With a systematic and evidence-based research design [39], this study aims to contribute significantly to understanding and developing more effective questioning strategies that enhance witness honesty in Indonesia's criminal justice system.

#### IV. Results and Discussion

This section integrates quantitative and interpretive findings to examine how courtroom questioning in Indonesian criminal trials manifests a convergence between linguistic relevance and psychological suggestion. Rather than presenting isolated results, the discussion conceptualizes questioning as a cognitive–suggestive interface—a communicative mechanism that balances pragmatic efficiency, cognitive comfort, and ethical persuasion.

The results support the formulation of courtroom questioning as a cognitive–suggestive interface: a communicative mechanism that balances pragmatic efficiency, cognitive accessibility, and ethical persuasion. The inclusion of visual analytic models further illustrates how linguistic form, cognitive processing, and institutional constraints interact within Indonesian criminal proceedings.

##### A. Quantitative Overview of Questioning Techniques

The corpus analysis identified nine primary questioning strategies across lay and fact witnesses. Their frequency and distribution are summarized below.

Table 1. Distribution of Questioning Techniques for Lay Witnesses

No	Category of Questioning Technique	Number of Conversations	Percentage (%)
1	Presupposition	18	12.3%
2	Embedded Command	14	9.6%
3	Mental Imagery	16	11.0%
4	Soft Suggestion	22	15.1%
5	State Elicitation	19	13.0%
6	Commitment Framing	15	10.3%
7	Temporal Framing	14	9.6%
8	Perspective Shift	17	11.6%
9	Double Bind	11	7.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to the data, the most frequently used questioning technique is Soft Suggestion, which appears in 22 conversations, accounting for 15.1% of the total 146 conversations. This is followed by State Elicitation, applied in 19 conversations (13.0%), and Presupposition, used 18 times (12.3%). Next, Perspective Shift occurs in 17 conversations (11.6%), followed by Mental Imagery, which appears in 16 conversations (11.0%). Meanwhile, commitment Molding is employed in 15 conversations (10.3%), while embedded command and temporal Molding share the same frequency, each used in 14 conversations (9.6%). Double Bind is the technique with the lowest frequency, appearing in only 11 conversations (7.5%). These findings indicate that the variety of questioning techniques used in conversations is fairly diverse. Soft Suggestion is the most dominant technique, while Double Bind is the least frequently applied.

Table 2. Distribution of Questioning Techniques for Fact Witnesses

No	Category of Questioning Technique	Number of Conversations	Percentage (%)
1	Presupposition	14	10.4%
2	Embedded Command	17	12.6%
3	Mental Imagery	12	8.9%
4	Soft Suggestion	18	13.3%
5	State Elicitation	16	11.9%
6	Commitment Framing	21	15.6%
7	Temporal Framing	13	9.6%
8	Perspective Shift	11	8.1%
9	Double Bind	13	9.6%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>100%</b>

The data indicates that Commitment Framing is the most frequently used questioning technique, appearing in 21 conversations, which accounts for 15.6% of the total 135 conversations. This is followed by Soft Suggestion, which is applied in 18 conversations (13.3%), and Embedded Command, which appears in 17 conversations (12.6%). Next, State Elicitation is used in 16 conversations (11.9%), while Presupposition occurs 14 times (10.4%). Both Temporal Framing and Double Bind share the same frequency, each employed in 13 conversations (9.6%), followed by Mental Imagery, which appears in 12 conversations (8.9%). Perspective Shift is the least frequently used technique, observed in only 11 conversations (8.1%). These findings suggest that the distribution of questioning techniques is pretty diverse. Commitment Framing is the most frequently applied technique, while Perspective Shift is the least commonly used.

The prevalence of Soft Suggestion (15.1%) and Commitment Framing (15.6%) across both witness types indicates a linguistic tendency toward indirect yet psychologically attuned communication. These results suggest that Indonesian courtroom discourse relies not on coercion, but on relational and cognitive calibration—consistent with a cultural orientation toward indirectness and face-saving communication. Lower frequencies of Double Bind and Perspective Shift imply that techniques demanding higher inferential effort are selectively applied when witnesses exhibit hesitation or ambiguity.

### **B. Cognitive–Pragmatic Analysis of Questioning Techniques**

- **Presupposition: Guiding Attention through Implicit Context**  
Presuppositional questions such as “*When you first saw this incident, what caught your attention?*” anchor the response within an assumed context. Rather than seeking verification, they orient the witness’s recall to a presupposed experiential frame. This technique reduces inferential load and minimizes resistance, guiding the cognitive process toward efficient recall. Within this communicative alignment, presupposition merges conscious reasoning with subtle prompting, illustrating how attention can be linguistically directed without overt control. Presupposition, Embedded Command, and Mental Imagery together form attentional-guidance strategies. They manage the witness’s focus, activating sensory and spatial recall while maintaining autonomy. This pattern represents the pragmatic side of the Cognitive–Suggestive Interface—where linguistic design scaffolds attention to maximize relevance.
- **Embedded Command: Inducing Relaxed Recall**  
Embedded commands, as in “*Tell the story again in a more relaxed manner,*” embed directive intent within declarative structure. The linguistic surface feels permissive, yet cognitively it lowers arousal and strengthens narrative flow. Suggestive tone and soft rhythm synchronize attention and recall—demonstrating that cognitive fluency can emerge from linguistic subtlety rather than force.
- **Mental Imagery: Triggering Experiential Reconstruction**  
Questions like “*Imagine the scene as a film you can rewind—where would you begin?*” activate the witness’s mental simulation of events. Through visualization, the witness reconstructs sensory detail, bridging language and perception. This dual activation shows that relevance is not purely logical but embodied—suggestive imagery provides a mental route to otherwise inaccessible memory traces.
- **Soft Suggestion: Building Cognitive Safety**  
Soft suggestion, the most frequent technique, employs modal verbs and hedging expressions (“*perhaps you noticed...*”). It invites voluntary engagement rather than imposing obligation. Psychologically, it reduces evaluation anxiety and restores self-agency; linguistically, it maintains open-endedness that encourages elaboration. This illustrates a shift from procedural questioning to relational cognition, where testimony becomes a cooperative act of guided memory.
- **State Elicitation: Linking Emotion and Memory**  
In “*Try to feel again the atmosphere at that time—what was happening around you?*”, the linguistic form connects current cognition with past affect. Emotional reactivation deepens sensory recall, grounding statements in embodied memory. This coupling of emotion and language creates a cognitive loop of comfort and clarity, aligning the witness’s psychological state with communicative relevance.

- **Commitment Framing: Reinforcing Credibility and Engagement**  
Commitment framing, as in *“You must have noticed something important, right?”*, positions the witness as reliable. This linguistic confidence primes self-consistency; witnesses feel responsible to uphold their perceived attentiveness. The resulting cognitive engagement transforms testimony from reactive recall into affirmed participation. Soft Suggestion, State Elicitation, and Commitment Framing form affective-regulation strategies. These techniques orchestrate psychological safety and motivational alignment, showing how suggestive tone complements pragmatic goals. The interaction between empathy, memory, and linguistic framing sustains a balance between openness and precision—a hallmark of ethical persuasion.
- **Temporal Framing: Reordering Recall Structure**  
Temporal Framing (*“Tell me what happened from the end to the beginning.”*) reconfigures the narrative timeline. By reversing habitual sequence, the question destabilizes rehearsed scripts, prompting deeper analytical recall. This reorientation refreshes contextual relevance and mitigates memory bias, reflecting how structured linguistic manipulation can enhance testimonial precision.
- **Double Bind: Steering Choice through Controlled Alternatives**  
Double-bind structures (*“Did you see him before or after he ran?”*) guide witnesses by offering two acceptable options, both aligned with the examiner’s communicative aim. The illusion of autonomy maintains cooperation, while cognitive narrowing enhances recall efficiency. Linguistically, this controlled flexibility maintains balance between guidance and neutrality. Temporal Framing, Perspective Shift, and Double Bind compose cognitive-reorientation strategies. These techniques reshape the structure of recall by altering sequence, stance, or choice—demonstrating how cognitive manipulation, when ethically applied, sharpens relevance and preserves agency.

### ***C. Hypno-Questioning in Courtroom Discourse: Linguistic Strategies to Reduce Resistance and Facilitate Witness Recall***

In courtroom discourse, questioning operates as both an evidential procedure and a cognitive-pragmatic act that modulates the inferential environment of the witness. Through the analysis of nine attorney-witness interactions, a consistent pattern emerges in which linguistic forms are strategically designed to activate contextual assumptions, guide relevance, and regulate affective states. These patterns align with communicative mechanisms commonly identified in hypnotic interaction—here conceptualized as hypno-questioning—where language functions as an instrument of attentional control and affective pacing. From the perspective of RT, such questioning structures operate through procedural meaning that steers the witness’s inferential routes toward contextually intended interpretations.

In terms of the HLP, they employ suggestive framing and linguistic pacing to lower resistance and facilitate memory retrieval. Positioned within the domain of forensic pragmatics, this section examines how these interlocking mechanisms transform questioning into a process of guided cognition, evidencing that persuasion in legal interaction can be achieved through the organization of relevance, emotion, and ethical intent. The following excerpts illustrate how such integrated linguistic design elicits truthful, contextually grounded testimony while maintaining psychological equilibrium and procedural fairness.

#### **Excerpt 1: Presupposition to Reduce Resistance**

Pengacara: *“Saat pertama kali Anda melihat kejadian ini, apa detail pertama yang langsung menarik perhatian Anda?”*

Saksi: *“Saya langsung melihat seseorang berlari ke arah mobil dengan tergesa-gesa.”*

Attorney: *“When you first saw this incident, what was the first detail that immediately caught your attention?”*

Witness: *“I immediately noticed someone running hurriedly towards the car.”*

The question *“When you first saw this incident, what was the first detail that immediately caught your attention?”* operates as a finely tuned act of inferential and emotional alignment. Its temporal framing—*“when you first saw”*—does more than situate the event chronologically; it primes the witness’s cognition by establishing a retrieval cue that immediately activates episodic memory. This linguistic anchoring carries a subtle suggestive undertone: it assumes both perception and engagement, drawing the witness into the scene rather than leaving space for denial or detachment. The

presupposition thus works on two intertwined planes. It narrows the field of relevance by which information is worth retrieving—“*the first detail*”—while affectively it softens interrogation into recollection, replacing anxiety with focus. The result is an utterance that arranges thought and emotion concurrently: interpretive effort is reduced, while psychological readiness is heightened. Through this interplay, the question exemplifies how precision of meaning and gentleness of tone can function as complementary forces in eliciting truthful memory.

This mechanism reveals how courtroom questioning, when linguistically crafted, becomes a site of guided cognition rather than procedural control. The presupposition regulates the witness’s attention rhythmically, synchronizing reasoning and affect in the same communicative movement. Its apparent neutrality conceals a sophisticated equilibrium: a balance between inferential clarity and subconscious pacing that restores agency to the witness even as it directs their recall. Within the Indonesian courtroom—where politeness, restraint, and indirectness are not only cultural but moral imperatives—such questioning embodies ethical persuasion. It converts linguistic subtlety into cognitive transparency, allowing memory to surface without resistance. Hence, the exchange demonstrates that truth in testimony arises most reliably not from external pressure but from the internal congruence of relevance and suggestion—language acting simultaneously as a cognitive map and an emotional guide.

### **Excerpt 2: Embedded Command to Enhance Openness**

Pengacara: *"Ceritakan kembali kejadian itu dengan lebih santai, seperti Anda mengingatnya sekarang."*

Saksi: *"Baik... Jadi, saya sedang duduk di depan toko, lalu saya melihat seseorang berbicara dengan nada tinggi sebelum berlari."*

Attorney: *"Tell the story again in a more relaxed manner, just as you remember it now."*

Witness: *"Alright... So, I was sitting in front of the shop, and then I saw someone speaking in a raised tone before running."*

The expression “*Tell the story again in a more relaxed manner, just as you remember it now*” exemplifies how grammatical structure and tonal modulation can intertwine cognitive guidance with psychological suggestion in a single communicative act. The embedded command “*tell the story again*” outwardly appears directive, yet its lexical softening through the qualifier “in a more relaxed manner” transforms obligation into facilitation. This linguistic economy performs a dual task: it narrows inferential focus—specifying the content and mode of response—while simultaneously signaling safety, thereby lowering the cognitive and affective cost of participation. The phrase “*just as you remember it now*” provides an immediate relevance cue, directing the witness toward present-moment recall and anchoring retrieval within the most accessible mental representation. It carries a hypnotic undertone of permissiveness, legitimizing personal memory as adequate evidence. Through this balanced design, cognition is steered without coercion: the question frames a clear interpretive path while evoking a calm mental state in which recall becomes fluid, detailed, and emotionally coherent.

What emerges is a synchronized interaction in which reasoning and reassurance are co-produced by the same linguistic rhythm. The attorney’s voice functions as a pacing mechanism that aligns the temporal flow of thought and affect, encouraging the witness to inhabit the memory rather than defend it. This integrated pattern exemplifies how suggestion enhances relevance by preparing the cognitive environment for efficient inference, and how relevance sustains suggestion by legitimizing the interpretive frame as rational rather than manipulative. Within the Indonesian courtroom—where communicative grace and non-confrontation are culturally esteemed—such phrasing transforms the examination into a cooperative reconstruction of truth. The utterance thus demonstrates that effective legal questioning arises when language performs as both a logical scaffold and an emotional conduit: a single, ethically charged gesture in which meaning, memory, and composure converge.

### **Excerpt 3: Metaphorical Framing to Facilitate Memory Retrieval**

Pengacara: *"Bayangkan kejadian ini adalah potongan film yang bisa Anda putar kembali, di mana Anda akan mulai?"*

Saksi: *"Mungkin dari saat saya mendengar suara gaduh, karena dari sanalah semuanya mulai terasa kacau."*

Attorney: *"Imagine this incident as a film segment that you can rewind—where would you begin?"*

Witness: *"Perhaps from the moment I heard the loud noise, because that's when everything started to feel chaotic."*

The imperative sentence *"Imagine this incident as a film segment that you can rewind—where would you begin?"* illustrates how metaphor serves as both an inferential map and a suggestive pathway into memory. The metaphorical framing—*"as a film segment you can rewind"*—invites the witness to re-enter the event through a vivid mental simulation, transforming abstract recollection into perceptual re-experiencing. The image supplies a structured representational frame that organizes recall sequentially; it defines a clear relevance boundary by instructing the mind where to begin and how to traverse the narrative space. The same metaphor functions as a mild hypnotic induction: it shifts attention from external evaluation to inner visualization, reducing self-consciousness and emotional resistance. The imperative *"imagine"* thus performs a double act—directing inferential focus while eliciting relaxation and immersion. As the witness projects the scene onto an internal *"screen"*, memory retrieval becomes multimodal and affectively balanced, integrating sensory, temporal, and emotional traces into a coherent account.

This interplay of structure and suggestion exhibits how courtroom questioning can regulate cognition through empathy rather than control. The metaphor not only scaffolds reasoning but also softens it, transforming interrogation into guided introspection. It enhances relevance by aligning linguistic cues with the witness's natural modes of recall, and it deepens suggestion by presenting the act of remembering as effortless narrative play. In the Indonesian courtroom context, where decorum and subtlety are communicative virtues, such imaginative framing resonates with cultural expectations of gentleness while achieving evidentiary precision. The utterance demonstrates that truth emerges most effectively when cognitive clarity and emotional resonance converge—when the question itself becomes a bridge between rational reconstruction and affective re-living. Through this integration of metaphor, inference, and psychological pacing, the examination attains both ethical persuasion and epistemic depth, revealing language as a medium through which memory and meaning unfold in synchrony.

#### **Excerpt 4: Contextual Framing for Enhanced Memory Access**

Pengacara: *"Rasakan kembali situasi di tempat itu—suasana, bau, suara—dan ceritakan apa yang terjadi."*

Saksi: *"Saya ingat suasana cukup ramai, ada banyak orang berbicara, dan saya mendengar suara mobil berhenti mendadak."*

Attorney: *"Reimmerse yourself in the scene—recall the atmosphere, the smells, the sounds—and describe what happened."*

Witness: *"I remember the place being quite crowded, with many people talking, and I heard the sound of a car coming to a sudden stop."*

The attorney's instruction *"Reimmerse yourself in the scene—recall the atmosphere, the smells, the sounds—and describe what happened"* exemplifies how sensory contextualization functions as a conduit between cognition and emotion in courtroom recall. The language activates embodied cognition: it shifts the act of testimony from abstract verbal reporting to multisensory re-experiencing. Each sensory prompt—*atmosphere, smells, sounds*—acts as a relevance marker, narrowing attention to concrete stimuli that anchor memory within a specific situational frame. Simultaneously, the phrasing carries a hypnotic softness; the rhythm of the triadic listing mirrors a guided induction that matches breathing, focus, and associative flow. As the witness revisits the sensory environment of the event, inferential reasoning and emotional recall unfold in tandem: the retrieval of factual detail is deepened by affective resonance, and coherence arises not from logical reconstruction alone but from sensory coherence embedded in experience. The utterance therefore functions as both a linguistic guide and a psychological bridge—facilitating optimal relevance through empathetic engagement. What this interaction reveals is that effective courtroom questioning relies on the integration of analytical structure and emotional empathy. Contextual framing does not merely direct attention to evidential specifics; it constructs a mental space in which cognition feels safe enough to access complexity. The attorney's tone replaces interrogation with accompaniment, aligning the witness's mental rhythm with the communicative purpose of truth-seeking. This balanced operation—where inferential cues are inseparable from affective pacing—describes how suggestion can become a vehicle for precision rather than distortion. In the Indonesian legal setting, where calmness and restraint govern communicative ethics, such phrasing exemplifies moral persuasion: it upholds the

dignity of the witness while enhancing testimonial accuracy and demonstrates that the path to reliable evidence lies in synchronizing the cognitive clarity of relevance with the emotional authenticity of re-experienced memory, accepting truth to surface through the gentle interplay of attention, affect, and language.

#### **Excerpt 5: Positive Presupposition to Enhance Witness Confidence**

Pengacara: *"Anda pasti memperhatikan sesuatu yang penting saat kejadian itu berlangsung, bukan?"*

Saksi: *"Ya, saya melihat seseorang berdiri di sudut jalan dengan ekspresi tegang."*

Attorney: *"You must have noticed something important when the incident occurred, didn't you?"*

Witness: *"Yes, I saw someone standing at the corner of the street with a tense expression."*

The utterance *"You must have noticed something important when the incident occurred, didn't you?"* exemplifies how presupposition can operate as a joint act of inferential framing and affective reinforcement. The modal phrase *"must have noticed"* encodes a tacit assumption of competence: it presupposes that observation took place and that the witness possesses knowledge worth articulating. This structure pre-selects relevance—it narrows the interpretive search field to details deemed *"important,"* sparing the witness from the uncertainty of determining what counts as significant. The same presupposition functions as a soft affirmation; it ascribes attentiveness to the witness, subtly appealing to their self-concept as reliable and observant. The question tag *"didn't you?"* completes this rhythmic pattern by transforming assertion into gentle invitation, making agreement to arise without confrontation. Through this interplay of grammatical certainty and tonal deference, the question simultaneously reduces cognitive load and restores confidence, guiding memory retrieval through positive expectation rather than evaluative pressure.

The presupposition constructs a communicative frame in which inference and emotion converge: relevance is achieved not by narrowing interpretation through doubt, but by expanding it through trust. As the witness responds, their recall is both cognitively anchored and affectively validated, producing testimony that is richer in descriptive precision and delivered with greater composure. Within the Indonesian courtroom—where politeness and respect shape the moral fabric of interaction—such phrasing embodies ethical persuasion grounded in empathy. It builds hierarchical questioning into collaborative sense-making. It means admitting cognitive precision and emotional assurance to reinforce one another and revealing confidence itself to function as a channel of relevance. It is when linguistic form acknowledges the witness's capacity to perceive and remember, honesty becomes a natural, self-sustaining act rather than a coerced performance.

#### **Excerpt 6: Leading Question with Soft Framing to Avoid Resistance**

Pengacara: *"Anda sempat melihat wajah orang yang berlari itu, kan?"*

Saksi: *"Ya, saya melihatnya sekilas saat dia melewati saya."*

Attorney: *"You caught a glimpse of the face of the person who was running, didn't you?"*

Witness: *"Yes, I saw them briefly as they passed by me."*

The question tag *"You caught a glimpse of the face of the person who was running, didn't you?"* exemplifies how soft leading can balance inferential control with psychological ease. The lexical choice *"caught a glimpse"* is strategically mild: it presupposes partial perception rather than full certainty, thereby maintaining relevance while avoiding confrontation. The phrasing constrains the inferential domain—it implies that the witness has a perceptual trace sufficient for identification but not exhaustive detail. The mitigated verb *"caught"* and the hedging noun *"glimpse"* function as affective buffers; they acknowledge the limits of memory and thus protect the witness from evaluative anxiety. The appended tag *"didn't you?"* reinforces this equilibrium between assertion and permission: it sustains conversational control while signaling an opening for confirmation, rather than challenge. Through this linguistic architecture, the question orchestrates a subtle synchrony between inferential precision and emotional safety, eliciting information without triggering resistance or defensiveness.

What unfolds here is an interaction in which cognitive framing and emotional tact co-construct cooperation. The question directs the inferential trajectory of the exchange—focusing attention on a specific perceptual episode—while its tonal softness preserves the witness's agency within that frame. Suggestion and relevance thus operate as a single communicative mechanism: suggestion maintains rapport and openness, while relevance structures the interpretive path towards evidentiary coherence. In the Indonesian courtroom context, such phrasing reflects a culturally attuned form of linguistic

diplomacy: it upholds decorum and relational harmony while ensuring that testimony remains substantively grounded. Excerpt 6 therefore shows that the effectiveness of a leading question does not depend on coercive force but on the precision with which it harmonizes reasoning and reassurance. It functions as both a cognitive lens and a humane instrument of truth.

**Excerpt 7: Strategic Silence to Encourage Further Disclosure**

Pengacara: "*Lalu setelah itu...*" (*diam beberapa detik, menunggu saksi melanjutkan*)

Saksi: "*Oh, ya, setelah itu saya melihat dia masuk ke gang kecil di sebelah kanan.*"

Attorney: "*And then after that...*" (*Pauses for a few seconds, waiting for the witness to continue*)

Witness: "*Oh, yes, after that, I saw him enter a small alley on the right.*"

The utterance "*And then after that...*" followed by a deliberate pause exemplifies how silence itself can act as a linguistic resource for cognitive activation and psychological alignment. The unfinished clause establishes a presupposed continuity—it assumes that an event sequence exists and that the witness holds the next relevant piece of information. This suspended structure triggers inferential completion: the witness's mind seeks to fill the gap, retrieving subsequent details to restore narrative coherence. The silence functions as a suggestive cue; its open space operates like a hypnotic pacing moment, inviting reflection rather than imposing pressure. The pause becomes an affective frame within which the witness feels both the weight of expectation and the freedom to choose what to reveal. Thus, even without explicit command, the attorney orchestrates a subtle synchrony of reasoning and emotion, guiding the witness's cognition through anticipation while maintaining a sense of autonomy and calm.

This mechanism illustrates that effective courtroom questioning does not always depend on linguistic density but on the strategic modulation of presence and absence. The silence here is communicatively charged—it signals attentiveness, validates the witness's authority over their own memory, and sustains optimal relevance by focusing inference on what remains unsaid. Suggestion and relevance coalesce as one: the former through the emotional permission embedded in stillness, the latter through the cognitive drive to complete meaning. In the Indonesian courtroom—where politeness, restraint, and non-interruption are cultural indicators of respect—such strategic quietness embodies ethical persuasion. It allows recalling to emerge organically rather than through verbal coercion. The absence of words can be as linguistically potent as their presence: a communicative interval where cognition and empathy meet, and where memory unfolds under the guidance of trust rather than tension.

**Excerpt 8: Anchoring to Focus the Witness's Attention on Key Details**

Pengacara: "*Kapan tepatnya Anda mendengar suara itu pertama kali?*"

Saksi: "*Saat saya sedang berbicara dengan teman saya, kira-kira pukul delapan malam.*"

Attorney: "*At exactly what moment did you first hear that sound?*"

Witness: "*While I was talking to my friend, around eight in the evening.*"

The question "*At exactly what moment did you first hear that sound?*" demonstrates how linguistic anchoring can direct cognition and affect in a single communicative act. The adverbial modifier "exactly" sharpens inferential boundaries, prompting the witness to locate memory within a precise temporal coordinate rather than a vague continuum. This lexical precision acts as a relevance cue: it instructs the cognitive system to narrow its search parameters to a singular perceptual moment. Simultaneously, the phrasing carries an implicit note of confidence and calm; its measured rhythm and neutral tone transform what might otherwise feel like an interrogative demand into an act of focused recollection. The structure "*did you first hear*" presupposes successful perception, implicitly affirming the witness's reliability while guiding their attention toward the initial auditory trigger. Thus, the question performs a dual function—it calibrates cognitive relevance while stabilizing emotional composure, allowing recall to unfold with clarity and assurance.

This practice clarifies how temporal anchoring serves not merely as a procedural tool but as a form of cognitive-emotional regulation. The linguistic precision of the utterance aligns inferential reasoning with sensory focus, while its tonal balance sustains psychological ease. Suggestion operates here not through persuasion but through structure: by embedding certainty within the question, it projects competence onto the witness, reinforcing both confidence and accuracy. Within the Indonesian courtroom—where attentiveness, politeness, and composure signify both respect and credibility—such phrasing exemplifies ethical communicative intelligence. It channels mental energy toward a concrete point of relevance while preserving relational harmony. It demonstrates that

linguistic anchoring, when crafted with sensitivity, unites analytical control and empathetic tact—producing testimony that is not only cognitively coherent but emotionally grounded in the calm assurance of remembered truth.

#### **Excerpt 9: Temporal Structuring to Prevent Memory Distortion**

Pengacara: *"Ceritakan kejadian ini dari belakang ke depan, mulai dari saat Anda melihat mobil meninggalkan tempat kejadian."*

Saksi: *"Mobil itu pergi dengan cepat, sebelumnya orang itu berlari ke arah mobil, dan sebelum itu saya mendengar suara teriakan."*

Attorney: *"Describe this incident in reverse order, starting from the moment you saw the car leaving the scene."*

Witness: *"The car left quickly; before that, the person ran toward the car, and prior to that, I heard someone shouting."*

The attorney's directive *"Describe this incident in reverse order, starting from the moment you saw the car leaving the scene"* exemplifies how temporal manipulation can guide cognition and regulate affect in the same linguistic motion. The utterance introduces a deliberate cognitive dissonance that compels the witness to reorganize memory traces through controlled inferential reconstruction. This structural inversion enhances relevance by filtering out habitual narrative patterns that often accompany rehearsed recall, forcing the mind to reassemble the event through genuine retrieval rather than narrative expectation. The instruction functions as a suggestive pacing mechanism: the unusual temporal frame interrupts automatic recall scripts and refocuses attention on sensory and causal details. The phrase *"starting from the moment you saw"* anchors this inversion within a concrete perceptual cue, providing both a cognitive anchor and an emotional stabilizer that reduces anxiety by offering a clear starting point amid a cognitively demanding task. Through this integrated design, the question engages both hemispheres of the interpretive process—rational sequencing and experiential reconstruction—ensuring that truth is accessed through mindful re-creation rather than rote reproduction.

This structure exemplifies how courtroom questioning can employ linguistic ingenuity to preserve evidentiary authenticity. The temporal reversal works as a cognitive safeguard against contamination and a suggestive rhythm that sustains the witness's engagement without overt control. As the witness navigates the reversed sequence—*"the car left... before that... prior to that"*—each clause becomes a retrieval checkpoint, tightening logical coherence while gently pacing emotional regulation. In this interplay, relevance and suggestion cease to be opposing forces: relevance maintains inferential discipline, while suggestion facilitates mental fluidity within that discipline. In the Indonesian courtroom—where decorum and equilibrium shape communicative ethics—such questioning exemplifies persuasive precision tempered by empathy. It reveals that accuracy in testimony is not merely a product of logical order but of the cognitive harmony between structure and state: when language arranges time as both a reasoning tool and a calming frame, memory becomes clearer, steadier, and ethically attuned to the pursuit of truth.

These findings demonstrate that hypno-questioning techniques applied in courtroom settings not only enhance witness openness but also have the potential to optimize the accuracy of their testimony. Through the use of carefully structured linguistic suggestions, these techniques facilitate smoother memory access, reduce cognitive barriers that may hinder the recall process, and minimize the risk of memory distortions that could emerge during recollection. This approach fosters a more comfortable environment for witnesses, allowing them to provide more precise and more detailed testimony without feeling pressured or threatened. In line with RT, this technique reinforces the idea that information presented within a relevant and cognitively appropriate context is more easily retrieved and articulated, ultimately enhancing the quality of witness testimony.

Furthermore, integrating the HLP - into questioning strategies adds a psychological dimension that refines the recall process in a non-coercive yet structured manner. Subtle suggestions enable witnesses to recall events without undue pressure, allowing them to access details that may have been forgotten or distorted. This approach serves as an effective tool in the judicial system for uncovering the truth while maintaining ethical and legal principles and respecting witness rights. Thus, linguistically suggestive questioning techniques not only enhance the quality of witness testimony but also contribute to a fairer and more fact-based judicial process, ensuring that legal norms and ethical standards are upheld.

**D. Theoretical Integration: The Cognitive–Pragmatic Interface Model**

The empirical findings demonstrate that the effectiveness of courtroom questioning lies not in procedural formality but in the subtle synchrony between cognitive relevance and psychological suggestiveness. Yet, the theoretical traditions that inform these dimensions have long developed in isolation. RT offers an intricate account of how interlocutors derive meaning through inferential reasoning, but it overlooks the affective and emotional dynamics that enable witnesses to access and articulate their memories. Conversely, Hypnotic Language Patterns - illuminate the power of suggestion and its ethical use in communication, though they provide little explanation of how such linguistic cues sustain pragmatic coherence within institutional discourse. The disparity between these frameworks leaves an explanatory gap: how can language simultaneously serve cognitive precision and psychological comfort within the constraints of judicial interaction?

The patterns identified in this study—particularly the recurrent use of soft suggestion, state elicitation, and commitment framing—suggest that courtroom questioning achieves this balance through a process of cognitive–pragmatic convergence. Questions designed along these lines appear to foster interpretive clarity while easing emotional tension, a dual process observable across both lay and fact witnesses. It is from this intersection of inferential logic and affective regulation that the present study derives its Cognitive–Pragmatic Interface Model, a conceptual framework that accounts for how linguistic, cognitive, and emotional mechanisms co-operate to enable ethically grounded persuasion and reliable recall. The model positions courtroom questioning not as a rigid sequence of prompts but as a dynamic act of guided cognition, where meaning is co-constructed through both reasoning and reassurance.

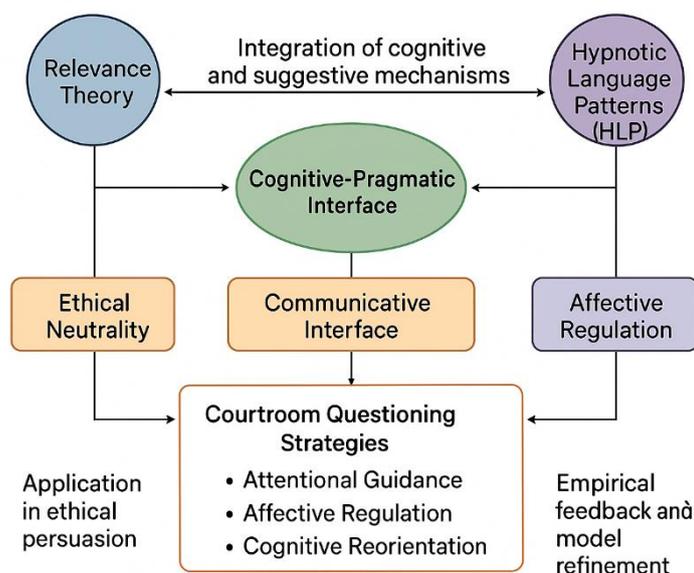


Fig. 1. Cognitive–Pragmatic Interface Model for Legal Questioning

Viewed in this way, the Cognitive–Pragmatic Interface Model clarifies several important dimensions of communicative practice. It anchors the abstraction of relevance within its affective context, showing that pragmatic efficiency depends on the interlocutor’s capacity to maintain cognitive ease. It reframes suggestion as a facilitative rather than manipulative act—an ethically constrained resource that helps witnesses access memory without coercion. More broadly, it redefined courtroom interaction as an adaptive system of reasoning and empathy, one that operates through the interplay of inferential logic and emotional attunement.

The findings indicate that soft suggestion and commitment framing function not merely as structural variations of interrogatives but as cognitively facilitative devices. This pattern partially aligns with experimental findings in cognitive psychology, which suggest that non-confrontational and narrative-oriented prompts improve recall accuracy. However, unlike laboratory-based studies that measure memory performance under controlled conditions, the present analysis demonstrates how such strategies operate within adversarial, high-stakes courtroom discourse. In this institutional setting, the effectiveness of guided questioning appears contingent on maintaining pragmatic relevance and perceived neutrality.

Compared to prior courtroom discourse studies that emphasize power asymmetry and coercive questioning, the present findings reveal a more nuanced interactional dynamic. While earlier research often frames suggestion as inherently manipulative, the data here suggest that ethically calibrated suggestion—when aligned with principles of optimal relevance—can reduce cognitive resistance without compromising judicial authority. This reframing extends existing scholarship by situating questioning practices at the intersection of inferential pragmatics and institutional ethics.

By addressing the theoretical gap between cognitive pragmatics and suggestive linguistics, the model extends pragmatic inquiry into the affective and ethical dimensions of institutional discourse. It provides a framework capable of explaining how questioning can remain legally neutral yet psychologically enabling—a balance crucial to both evidentiary integrity and humane judicial practice. Beyond its immediate domain, the Cognitive–Pragmatic Interface Model offers a transferable analytical lens for exploring communication in other high-stakes settings—investigative interviewing, mediation, clinical consultation, or intercultural negotiation—where persuasion and precision must coexist within an ethical communicative order. In doing so, the model offers a theoretically grounded and empirically informed contribution to applied linguistics, redefining the study of courtroom discourse as a site where cognition, pragmatics, and morality intersect.

## V. Conclusion

This study has redefined courtroom questioning as a communicative act governed by a Cognitive–Suggestive Interface—a dual mechanism integrating pragmatic inference with subconscious responsiveness. By synthesizing RT and the HLP -, the research extends cognitive pragmatics to encompass emotional resonance and ethical intent. The analysis of Indonesian courtroom data revealed nine questioning techniques organized into three macro-functions—attentional guidance, affective regulation, and cognitive reorientation—each illustrating how linguistic design shapes cognitive accessibility and psychological comfort. These findings indicate that communicative efficiency and empathetic suggestion operate as complementary forces in constructing truthful testimony, positioning courtroom discourse as a site of cognitive negotiation rather than procedural control.

The proposed framework expands the theoretical horizon of pragmatics by demonstrating that meaning-making in institutional interaction is both inferential and affective. It invites further inquiry into how implicit suggestion functions across other high-stakes domains—such as investigative interviewing, therapeutic dialogue, or intercultural mediation—where communication must balance precision and empathy. In this sense, the study highlights that the pragmatics of law extends beyond textual interpretation to the architecture of human cognition itself: a communicative space where relevance guides understanding and suggestion sustains sincerity.

## Acknowledgment

The author gratefully acknowledges the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, for supporting this research and facilitating access to courtroom data. Appreciation is extended to the judges, prosecutors, and staff of the Yogyakarta District Courts for granting research permission in accordance with ethical and procedural standards. The author also thanks colleagues from the Pragmatics Research Cluster for their constructive feedback during analysis and manuscript preparation. All interpretations and conclusions presented in this article are solely those of the author.

## References

- [1] F. T. Nitschke, B. M. McKimmie, and E. J. Vanman, “A meta-analysis of the emotional victim effect for female adult rape complainants: Does complainant distress influence credibility?,” *Psychol. Bull.*, vol. 145, no. 10, 2019, doi: 10.1037/bul0000206.
- [2] D. Shehada, C. Y. Yeun, M. Jamal Zemerly, M. Al-Qutayri, Y. Al-Hammadi, and J. Hu, “A new adaptive trust and reputation model for Mobile Agent Systems,” *J. Netw. Comput. Appl.*, vol. 124, 2018, doi: 10.1016/j.jnca.2018.09.011.
- [3] K. Mueller-Johnson, M. P. Togliola, C. D. Sweeney, and S. J. Ceci, “The perceived credibility of older adults as witnesses and its relation to ageism,” *Behav. Sci. Law*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2007, doi: 10.1002/bsl.765.

- [4] M. S. Armia, Z. P. Karim, A. H. Sarong, M. Zuhilmi, and M. S. Bin-Armia, "Criticizing the Verdict of 18/JN/2016/MS.MBO of Mahkamah Syar'iyah Meulaboh Aceh on Sexual Abuse against Children from the Perspective of Restorative Justice," *Al-Ihkam J. Huk. dan Pranata Sos.*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2022, doi: 10.19105/al-lhkam.v17i1.4987.
- [5] R. Saraswati, "Gender Bias in Indonesian Courts: Is Perma No. 3 of 2017 the Solution for Gender-Based Violence Cases?," *Laws*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2021, doi: 10.3390/laws10010002.
- [6] S. M. Kassin, "False Confessions: Causes, Consequences, and Implications for Reform," *Policy Insights from Behav. Brain Sci.*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2014, doi: 10.1177/2372732214548678.
- [7] M. A. Amagnya, "Due process in police-led prosecutions: Views of Ghanaian police prosecutors," *Int. J. Police Sci. Manag.*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2022, doi: 10.1177/14613557221089562.
- [8] M. S. Hershcovis, L. Neville, T. C. Reich, A. M. Christie, L. M. Cortina, and J. V. Shan, "Witnessing wrongdoing: The effects of observer power on incivility intervention in the workplace," *Organ. Behav. Hum. Decis. Process.*, vol. 142, 2017, doi: 10.1016/j.obhdp.2017.07.006.
- [9] H. Fawcett, "The effect of evidence timing and witness motivation upon juror evaluations of alibi witnesses and defendants," *Psychiatry, Psychol. Law*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2016, doi: 10.1080/13218719.2015.1081317.
- [10] S. Stepakoff, G. S. Reynolds, S. Charters, and N. Henry, "Why testify? Witnesses' motivations for giving evidence in a war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone," *Int. J. Transit. Justice*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2014, doi: 10.1093/ijtj/iju019.
- [11] K. Luna and B. Martín-Luengo, "The (Limited) effect of emotional arousal in the regulation of accuracy in eyewitness memory," *Psicologica*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2018, doi: 10.2478/psicolj-2018-0001.
- [12] J. M. Kieckhafer, J. P. Vallano, and N. Schreiber Compo, "Examining the positive effects of rapport building: When and why does rapport building benefit adult eyewitness memory?," *Memory*, vol. 22, no. 8, 2014, doi: 10.1080/09658211.2013.864313.
- [13] A. McKinnon, N. Brewer, K. Cameron, and R. D. V. Nixon, "The relationship between processing style, trauma memory processes, and the development of posttraumatic stress symptoms in children and adolescents," *J. Behav. Ther. Exp. Psychiatry*, vol. 57, 2017, doi: 10.1016/j.jbtep.2017.04.004.
- [14] H. J. Wechsler, A. Kehn, R. A. Wise, and R. J. Cramer, "Attorney beliefs concerning scientific evidence and expert witness credibility," *Int. J. Law Psychiatry*, vol. 41, 2015, doi: 10.1016/j.ijlp.2015.03.008.
- [15] A. Tadei, K. Finnilä, A. Reite, J. Antfolk, and P. Santtila, "Judges' Capacity to Evaluate Psychological and Psychiatric Expert Testimony," *Nord. Psychol.*, vol. 68, no. 3, 2016, doi: 10.1080/19012276.2015.1125303.
- [16] M. B. Kostopoulos, S. Iversen, S. Magnussen, and A. Melinder, "Beliefs About Young Children as Witnesses: a Survey of Experienced Defense Lawyers and Psychological Expert Witnesses in Norway," *Int. J. Child Maltreatment Res. Policy Pract.*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2019, doi: 10.1007/s42448-019-00029-2.
- [17] S. Solà-Sales, C. Alzetta, C. Moret-Tatay, and F. Dell'Orletta, "Analysing Deception in Witness Memory through Linguistic Styles in Spontaneous Language," *Brain Sci.*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2023, doi: 10.3390/brainsci13020317.
- [18] Z. Vernham *et al.*, "Applying the verifiability approach to deception detection in alibi witness situations," *Acta Psychol. (Amst.)*, vol. 204, 2020, doi: 10.1016/j.actpsy.2020.103020.
- [19] C. A. Hudson, A. Vrij, L. Akehurst, and L. Hope, "An examination of the Self-Administered Interview as a verbal veracity assessment tool," *Appl. Cogn. Psychol.*, vol. 34, no. 5, 2020, doi: 10.1002/acp.3696.
- [20] H. L. Price and L. C. Dahl, "Investigator Sensitivity to Alibi Witness Inconsistency after a Long Delay," *Behav. Sci. Law*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2017, doi: 10.1002/bsl.2276.
- [21] J. C. K. Chan, K. D. Manley, and K. Lang, "Retrieval-Enhanced Suggestibility: A Retrospective and a New Investigation," *J. Appl. Res. Mem. Cogn.*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2017, doi: 10.1016/j.jarmac.2017.07.003.
- [22] A. McCarthy Wilcox and N. NicDaeid, "Jurors' perceptions of forensic science expert

- witnesses: Experience, qualifications, testimony style and credibility,” *Forensic Sci. Int.*, vol. 291, 2018, doi: 10.1016/j.forsciint.2018.07.030.
- [23] T. Lavis and N. Brewer, “Effects of a proven error on evaluations of witness testimony,” *Law Hum. Behav.*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, doi: 10.1037/lhb0000217.
- [24] P. K. Yadav, “Ethical issues across different fields of forensic science,” *Egyptian Journal of Forensic Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 1. 2017. doi: 10.1186/s41935-017-0010-1.
- [25] A. Priadi and M. Prasetyo, “Constructing Moral Legitimacy Through Empathic and Inferential Strategies in Political Discourse Toward a Cognitive Pragmatic Model of Diplomatic Persuasion,” *Fast Humanit.*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 20–30, 2025, [Online]. Available: <https://fast-humanities.com/fh/article/view/9/13>
- [26] E. M. Sholecha, A. Saiful, S. Yunika, Hariyanto, and N. Unsil, “Justice Collaborator’s Position and Function on Witness Protection’s Rights as a Suspect from the Perspective of Criminal Law in Indonesia,” *Volksgeist J. Ilmu Huk. dan Konstitusi*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2023, doi: 10.24090/volksgeist.v6i1.7246.
- [27] N. Brewer and A. Burke, “Effects of testimonial inconsistencies and eyewitness confidence on mock-juror judgments,” *Law Hum. Behav.*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2002, doi: 10.1023/A:1015380522722.
- [28] Z. F. Aditya, “Does the Judiciary Support Legal Certainty? An Indonesian Perspective,” *Front. Law*, vol. 2, 2023, doi: 10.6000/2817-2302.2023.02.03.
- [29] D. L. Schacter and E. F. Loftus, “Memory and law: What can cognitive neuroscience contribute?,” *Nature Neuroscience*, vol. 16, no. 2. 2013. doi: 10.1038/nn.3294.
- [30] H. Kleider-Offutt, A. M. Meacham, L. Branum-Martin, and M. Capodanno, “What’s in a face? The role of facial features in ratings of dominance, threat, and stereotypicality,” *Cogn. Res. Princ. Implic.*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2021, doi: 10.1186/s41235-021-00319-9.
- [31] S. Porter and K. A. Peace, “The Scars of Memory of Traumatic and Positive Emotional Memories in Adulthood,” *Psychol. Sci.*, vol. 18, no. 5, 2007.
- [32] S. Ewens *et al.*, “Using the Model Statement to Elicit Information and Cues to Deceit from Native Speakers, Non-native Speakers and Those Talking Through an Interpreter,” *Appl. Cogn. Psychol.*, vol. 30, no. 6, 2016, doi: 10.1002/acp.3270.
- [33] A. Vrij, R. P. Fisher, and H. Blank, “A cognitive approach to lie detection: A meta-analysis,” *Leg. Criminol. Psychol.*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2017, doi: 10.1111/lcrp.12088.
- [34] C. J. Dando and R. Bull, “Maximising opportunities to detect verbal deception: Training police officers to interview tactically,” *J. Investig. Psychol. Offender Profiling*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2011, doi: 10.1002/jip.145.
- [35] F. Zeb and A. Hameed, “An implication of milton model of NLP for ESL learners,” *Asian EFL J.*, vol. 28, no. 12, 2021.
- [36] J. Zeig and K. S. Tanev, “Advancing hypnotic inductions: An Ericksonian perspective,” *Eur. J. Psychother. Couns.*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2022, doi: 10.1080/13642537.2023.2175885.
- [37] A. Alejandro and L. Zhao, “Multi-Method Qualitative Text and Discourse Analysis: A Methodological Framework,” *Qual. Inq.*, vol. 30, no. 6, 2024, doi: 10.1177/10778004231184421.
- [38] A. M. McAlister, D. M. Lee, K. M. Ehlert, R. L. Kajfez, C. J. Faber, and M. S. Kennedy, “Qualitative coding: An approach to assess inter-rater reliability,” in *ASEE Annual Conference and Exposition, Conference Proceedings*, 2017. doi: 10.18260/1-2--28777.
- [39] I. W. A. Yudistira and R. D. Widijowati, “Evidence Using Forensic Laboratory in Revealing the Crime of Murder,” *J. Law, Polit. Humanit.*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2023, doi: 10.38035/jlph.v3i3.225.