

VOICES IN THE INTERROGATION ROOM: HOW LANGUAGE SHAPES POWER AND JUSTICE

Mohd Arsh Shery

Lecturer

Faculty of Shariah and Law, Villa College,
QI Campus, Rah Dhebai Hingun, Male, Republic of Maldives

Nooreen Rahman

Visiting Lecturer

Faculty of Shariah and Law, Villa College,
QI Campus, Rah Dhebai Hingun, Male, Republic of Maldives

Abstract

This paper provides a critical examination of the discourse of police interrogations for information to expose issues of power and how they may contribute to fairness in the justice process. This research draws on approaches from critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis. This study investigated the use of specific vernacular features, namely questioning, turn-taking, and framing strategies to answer questions regarding how police use sense-making, create an institutional authority, and create a restricted version of events. The study explored the way suspects can navigate or resist these challenges using language. This article may exemplify problematic potential harms related to coercion, miscommunication, and marginalisation by thinking through the potentiality of these within the context of these high-stakes interactions and an argument for fairness and transparency during interrogations. Using practical examples from previously recorded interrogations, the paper will examine some of the very subtleties that can manifest in terms of fairness and will also make recommendations to inform policy and training. The objective of this paper is to enhance the understanding of the way language impacts justice and to demonstrate the need to be vigilant in protecting suspects' rights about their rights to communicate.

Key Words: Language and Power Dynamics, Interrogation Justice, Communicative Rights, Discourse and Fairness, Coercion and Resistance in Policing

1. INTRODUCTION

Police interrogations are some of the most important and consequential communicative events of the criminal justice system because they shape the future of the investigation and

therefore the future of the suspect.¹ The police interrogation room is a highly charged language environment, one defined by strongly uneven distributions of authority, legal power, expertise, and knowledge between police officers and suspects.² Police interviews are different from normal conversations because they adhere to a highly enforced set of roles: the interrogator of the investigation has control over the physical space and the agenda, while the suspect's physical freedom and future may rely on the conversation during the interview. This institutional asymmetry is not solely procedural but is achieved through the language by the design and interactional methods employed through police interrogation.³

While the impact and implications of police interviews are important, the field remains relatively under-researched compared to its relevance.⁴ Much of the empirical research has shown that power and control are not static – they are constructed and negotiated through discursive moves, such as questioning, turn-taking, and topic management.⁵ Police, due to their institutional position, exercise an important amount of authority over the suspect, at times, controlling not only what information it receives but also how the circumstances of the apparent offences are framed. Although the suspect is not entirely powerless. The suspect has agency over their responses and can invoke a variety of linguistic operations to push back against, reframe, or challenge the institutional position.⁶

Police interrogations happen in a communicative context that further complicates matters. As you can imagine, the possibility of coercion, tolerance of miscommunication, and the implications for justice and fairness are only a few factors that come into play.⁷ From pragmatic and discourse-analytic perspectives, we know that even finely nuanced features, e.g., indirect speech, equivocation, or planned silence, can denote the powerless or resistance and can have substantial consequences on legal outcomes.⁸ In consideration of the added complexities to interrogation communication, deconstructing interrogation discourse is important for determining how power relations are understood linguistically and how that substantiates notions (or a lack thereof) of justice.

This paper employs critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis to explore the language practices that serve to construct, sustain, or even contest institutional authority within police interrogations. We will present examples from real practice and analyse vernacular features that characterise the interrogation structure, coupled with attention to aspects of questioning patterns, turn-taking and framing to shed light on the complex ways in

¹ GAIL HEYDON, *THE LANGUAGE OF POLICE INTERVIEWING: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS* 1–3 (2019).

² KATE J. HAWORTH, *LEGAL-LAY COMMUNICATION: TEXTUAL TRAVELS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS* 15–17 (2020).

³ F. ROCK, *COMMUNICATING RIGHTS: THE LANGUAGE OF ARREST AND DETENTION* 21–25 (2007).

⁴ DIANA EADES, *SOCIOLINGUISTICS AND THE LEGAL PROCESS* 2–5 (2010).

⁵ LARS JÖNSSON & PER LINELL, Story generations: From dialogical interviews to written reports in police interrogations, 11 *TEXT & TALK* 419, 421–22 (1991).

⁶ ROGER W. SHUY, *THE LANGUAGE OF CONFESSION, INTERROGATION, AND DECEPTION* 67–70 (1998).

⁷ JOHN GIBBONS, *FORENSIC LINGUISTICS: AN INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM* 145–53 (2003).

⁸ MARJOLIJN KOMTER, The construction of records in Dutch police interrogations, 11 *INFO. DESIGN J. + DOC. DESIGN* 201, 205–07 (2003).

which language mediates power and justice in the interrogation setting. We pursue this goal to consider issues related to fairness, transparency and minimal communicative rights afforded to suspects in the criminal justice system.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic interest in police interrogation discourse has grown, especially with respect to the way language can construct, sustain, and work through power relations in the justice process. This literature review synthesises meaningful insights from critical discourse analysis (CDA), conversation analysis (CA), and related approaches to shed light on how institutional authority is performed and challenged in police-suspect contexts.⁹

2.1 *Critical Discourse Analysis and Power in Police Interviews*

Critical discourse analysis has shown how language works as a form of institutional authority in the realm of police interviews. Evidence points consistently to the fact that the police-suspect discourse demonstrates a significant disparity, and officers use questioning practices and discursive control to construct and shape the process of conversation and flow of information. The role of the police is not only to question and gain information but also to construct records representing the orientation of the conversation. It is important to note that records of police interviews (or conversations) likely privilege the institutional perspective over the suspect's voice, which is further compounded by police officers being required to produce critical documents like reports. A report that is poorly constructed could adversely impact both the investigation and an officer's legitimacy as a professional.¹⁰

2.2 *Questioning Strategies and Control of Discourse*

Studies show that the police-suspect interaction is distinctly different from any other typical examples of conversation. Police officers engage with questioning as a strategy, and they ask declarative, choice, or yes/no questions, all of which are associated with different levels of power and control.¹¹ Questioning is a fundamentally different form of interaction because it is not to engage suspects in conversation but to extract information from them while simultaneously limiting their engagement and agency within the conversation. Police use elicitation strategies, and suspects provided informative responses, such as 'knowingly', 'consciously', and 'willingly', to reinforce the nonconversation and imbalance in others. Further, police made use of discourse control strategies: the use of illocutionary force-

⁹JENNIFER EMEFA DOE, *CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS APPROACH TO QUESTIONING STRATEGIES OF POLICE INTERROGATIONS AT THE CENTRAL REGIONAL POLICE COMMAND, CAPE COAST* 1–10 (Univ. of Cape Coast 2021) (M.Phil. thesis), <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/11045>.

¹⁰Id. at 12–30.

¹¹Id. at 12–30; KATE J. HAWORTH, *AN ANALYSIS OF POLICE INTERVIEW DISCOURSE AND ITS ROLE(S) IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS* 45–60 (Univ. of Nottingham 2009) (Ph.D. thesis), https://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/12253/1/KJH_PhD_final.pdf.

indicating devices, meta-discoursal comments, and reformulations was heavily used as means to threaten, coerce, or suggest a suspect provide rather than a particular response.¹²

2.3 Resistance and Negotiation of Power

Despite institutionalised authority, suspects are not completely passive. Resistance literature in the police interview suggests that suspects can also use language as a tool of resistance or a means of negotiating the power dynamic.¹³ Examples included indirect modes of address and strategic pauses, as well as reframing a question which is likely to disrupt the officer's control or question assumptions being made. However, while their resistance is noteworthy, it does not occur outside of institutional contexts that afford minimal agency for negotiation within structured discursive roles.¹⁴

2.4 Mixed Methods in Discourse Analysis

Recent work advocates for a mixed-methods approach that expresses CDA, CA, and speech act theory together to analyse police-citizen interaction on a more comprehensive level.¹⁵ As an example, conversation analysis aims to clarify how turn-taking, interruptions, and topic management are done to sustain institutional authority.¹⁶ Frame analysis further exemplifies how police and suspects use language to make sense of the context of their interaction, especially as they justify or contest actions by framing the situation using language.¹⁷

2.5 Implications for Justice and Policy

The evidence is clear that police interview discourse is central to the legal process, not only as a source of evidence but also as a location where fairness and justice become negotiated.¹⁸ There remain concerns about using interview material as evidence, especially in light of some of the potential for language to be manipulated and misconstrued. There is a consensus from scholars that police officers should be provided with discourse-based training, and there should be requirements to use video-recorded evidence to provide greater transparency and protections for suspects' rights.¹⁹

In conclusion, an overview of the literature shows that the relationships between power, language and justice in the interrogation room are intricate. The contribution of CDA, CA

¹² SANTOSO & S. APRIYANTO, Forensic Linguistics Analysis: Police Interrogation, 10 *INT'L J. ENGLISH LINGUISTICS* 123, 125–27 (2020), <https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijel/article/view/0/43762>.

¹³ A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Language of Resistance by Suspects during Police Interrogation, *INT'L J. ENGLISH LINGUISTICS* (2015).

¹⁴ KATE HAWORTH, The dynamics of power and resistance in police interview discourse, 17 *DISCOURSE & SOC'Y* 739, 744–47 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926506068430>.

¹⁵ Police-Citizen Interactions in Discourse Analysis, *DISCOURSE ANALYZER* (Mar. 4, 2025), <https://discourseanalyzer.com/police-citizen-interactions-in-discourse-analysis/>.

¹⁶ Id.

¹⁷ Id.

¹⁸ HAWORTH, *AN ANALYSIS OF POLICE INTERVIEW DISCOURSE AND ITS ROLE(S) IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS*, supra note 11, at 45–60.

¹⁹ DOE, supra note 9, at 12–30.

and similar studies has allowed academics to expose the processes involved in institutional power and illustrate opportunities for resistance, creating an opening for new research and reform surrounding police/suspect encounters.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, utilising both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Conversation Analysis (CA) to examine the linguistic construction of power and justice in police interrogation rooms. The methodology is designed to uncover not only the overt but also the subtle ways in which language mediates authority and fairness during high-stakes legal interactions.

3.1 Data Collection

We obtained transcripts of real police interrogations from publicly accessible legal archives and previous research to develop the data for this study.²⁰ The interrogations all had to involve adult suspects, were conducted in English, and were investigations into serious crime matters. Whenever possible, we removed and anonymised identifying information in any transcripts to ensure the privacy of those involved and to satisfy ethical research requirements.²¹

3.2 Analytical Framework

The analysis will employ two overarching frameworks:

- Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): CDA is used to examine the performance and perpetuation of institutional authority through language with special attention to questioning strategies, framing devices, and institutional stories.²²
- Conversation Analysis (CA): CA focuses on the micro-level organisation of talk, including turn-taking, interruptions, overlaps, and repairs through which we can investigate the dynamics of conversational control, including suspects' compliance or resistance to police discursive strategies.²³

3.3 Coding and Analysis Procedures

The transcripts were systematically coded for the following linguistic features:

- Types of questions (open-ended, closed, leading ones)
- Turn-taking (interruptions, overlaps, dominance by speaker)

²⁰ HAWORTH, *AN ANALYSIS OF POLICE INTERVIEW DISCOURSE AND ITS ROLE(S) IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS*, supra note 11.

²¹ DOE, supra note 9.

²² *THE DISCOURSE OF POLICE INTERVIEWS* (MARINA H. S. B. EADES & KATE HAWORTH eds., 2020).

²³ HAWORTH, The dynamics of power and resistance in police interview discourse, supra note 14, at 741–44.

- Framing (topic management, narrative construction)
- Resistance (evasion, silence, indirectness)

Each feature was examined in context to assess how it contributed to perceptions of power and the outcome of the interaction.

3.4 Restrictions

This research has limitations that relate to the use of secondary data and the availability of available transcript data (only in English). Also, the data in an interrogation context does not cover all of the language variation you can get with police interrogations, nor does it account for the non-verbal indicators (e.g., tone, gesture, and facial expression) that limit one's ability to analyse aspects of more communicative strategies.²⁴

However, it is still anticipated that the format and processes used will provide a compelling foundation for investigating the complicated nature of language, power, and justice in police interrogation contexts.

4. ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

This section offers a comprehensive analysis of the language features that structure power relations and justice in police interrogation rooms in two separate cases. The analysis has relied on both critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis, and findings are categorised according to four themes: questioning strategies, turn taking and control, framing and sense-making, and suspect resistance.

4.1 Questioning Strategies

Police interrogators apply different types and strategies of questioning to control the flow of information and guide the narrative. The data indicate that interrogators ask a disproportionate number of closed questions and leading questions that constrain the respondent's input and, in some cases, imply guilt.²⁵ For example, an interrogator may ask, "You were at the scene, weren't you?" The inquisitorial process by which the interrogator is framing the question will exert pressure on the suspect to acknowledge the unsaid point that he is confirming the officer's premise. For this reason, it is much rarer for interrogators to use open-ended questions which foster expansive replies. The predominance of close-ended and leading questions supports preceding research, which displayed that the form and structure of these questions produce facts that conform to the exercise of institutional power.²⁶

In addition, questions can often be ordered strategically to lead suspects to self-incrimination or limit their response options. Officers may start with non-accusatory questions but can

²⁴THE DISCOURSE OF POLICE INTERVIEWS, *supra* note 22.

²⁵HEYDON, *supra* note 1, at 48–55.

²⁶DOE, *supra* note 9, at 52–60.

transform their enquiries by getting accusatory or confirmatory quickly while guiding the interaction to a desired place.²⁷

4.2 Turn-Taking and Control

The structure of turn-taking in police interrogations is highly regulated, and although officers might present the style of an equal and open interview process, it seems to always be managed and controlled by officers who interrupt and overlap with suspects to maintain control of the conversation.²⁸ The analysis makes clear that it is often officers who start and conclude on topics, and the suspects need to answer the questions as concisely as possible whilst staying on topic; the narrative of the suspect is never able to expand into new information, as when they do, the officers seem to invariably steer or cut short this new information.²⁹

For example, in one transcript, a suspect was about to provide some context when the officer interrupted;

Suspect: "I was just—"

Officer: "Answer the question, please. Were you there or not?"

Such exchanges illustrate how conversational control is being maintained and also how the suspects' narrative agency is restricted.

4.3 Framing and Sense-Making

Police interrogators often engage in framing strategies to create a specific version of events. By selectively emphasising certain facts and omitting others, officers create an account to support their investigative goals.³⁰ The analysis captures the ways in which meta-discoursal comments (e.g., "Let's keep to the facts") and reformulations (e.g., "So what you are saying is...") are often used to frame a suspect's discourse.

This framing not only shapes how suspects' discourse is documented, but it also shapes how their discourse is interpreted later in criminal justice.³¹ Once the institutional narrative is created, it is difficult for suspects to challenge, especially when what frequently happens is that their contributions to discussions are then either reframed or manipulated in official documents.

4.4 Suspect Resistance and Navigation

²⁷ROCK, *supra* note 3, at 102–10.

²⁸JÖNSSON & LINELL, *supra* note 5, at 421–22.

²⁹KOMTER, *supra* note 8, at 205–07.

³⁰NORMAN FAIRCLOUGH, *CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: THE CRITICAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE* 187–93 (2d ed. 2013).

³¹HAWORTH, *AN ANALYSIS OF POLICE INTERVIEW DISCOURSE AND ITS ROLE(S) IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS*, *supra* note 11, at 150–60.

While the police officers are institutionally powerful, they generally cannot assume that suspects are entirely passive. The data provides numerous examples of linguistic resistance, including indirect responses, strategic silence, and the use of vagueness or ambiguity.³² Some suspects even attempt to reframe questions, answer minimally, or challenge the presuppositions of the officer's questions.

For example, one suspect responded to a leading question with:

Officer: "You knew what was happening, didn't you?"

Suspect: "I'm not sure what you mean by that."

There can be moments in the data where the officer's control is temporarily undermined, but this too is likely constrained by the larger institutional setting. Still, it is difficult to ignore that these acts of resistance demonstrate that there are moments of agency that suspects can exercise even in highly constrained communicative situations.³³

4.5 Possible harms: Coercion, Misunderstanding, and Marginalisation

The analysis identifies the potential harms associated with the linguistic effects of police interrogations: coercive questioning, miscommunication due to power imbalances, and marginalisation of the suspect's voice may all produce unfair outcomes.³⁴ These risks are heightened for individuals with limited language proficiency or experience with laws and legal procedures.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this research underscore the significant role of linguistic strategies in determining the trajectory and distribution of power, as well as the extent to which justice is achieved, in the room of a police inquirer and suspect. The analysis has shown that police officers use the strategies of questioning, turn-taking, and framing to establish and maintain institutional authority and to shape a version of the narrative that is often disadvantageous to the suspect. In this regard, the actions of individual officers are only part of the story; the way police-suspect discourse is organised and the great expectations inherent in the discourse itself have significant consequences.³⁵

5.1 Police Authority and the Construction of Narratives

The heavy use of closed and leading questions, as well as the officers' control over turn-taking, promotes an extremely asymmetrical communication space.³⁶ The police occupy an

³²EADES, *supra* note 4, at 88–94.

³³SHUY, *supra* note 6, at 67–70.

³⁴GIBBONS, *supra* note 7, at 145–53.

³⁵HAWORTH, *AN ANALYSIS OF POLICE INTERVIEW DISCOURSE AND ITS ROLE(S) IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS*, *supra* note 11.

³⁶DOE, *supra* note 9, at 52–60.

establishment that keeps them as not only the main speakers of talk but also the determiners of what is relevant and what gets recorded. The police interview should then, as Haworth (2009) observes, be seen as one part of an array of activities in the justice chain, with the talk produced in the interview room later rendered into evidence which is transformed and reconceptualised by the institution.³⁷ This may further marginalise the suspect's voice, particularly given that the official record provides the suspect's story in favour of the institutional viewpoint.³⁸

5.2 Resistance and the Limits of Agency

Although suspects are using resistance strategies through indirect answers, silences, and reframing their questions, these moves are limited by the institutional context and the officer's ability to redirect or silence resistance. Both the literature and the current findings suggest the asymmetrical relationship between officer and suspect results in predictable discourse patterns, with the officer having the right to open, control, and close exchanges,³⁹ limiting the suspect's agency and introducing the potential for misunderstandings, coercion, and distortion of intent when suspects have little competence with the conventions of legal discourse or rely on a less common language.⁴⁰

5.3 Considerations regarding fairness and justice

These patterns raise serious issues of fairness and the protection of suspect rights. In situations where a suspect's communicative ability is somehow limited by the means of questioning, the turns involved or the restaging of events, the potential for coercion and marginalisation is a concern. The risk lies in less than full or accurate accounts of the suspect's intended meaning when the record made by investigators is noted as evidence in court proceedings.⁴¹

5.4 Reform Recommendations

Academics and practitioners alike have recommended a plethora of reforms to remedy these concerns. This includes establishing discourse-based training for police and mandating the collection of video-recorded evidence.⁴² All of these reforms could improve transparency, provide a better representation of the communicative interaction, and preserve the outcomes of an alleged suspect's communicative rights, and by incorporating forensic linguistics and

³⁷Id.

³⁸Id. at 160–170.

³⁹HAWORTH, The dynamics of power and resistance in police interview discourse, *supra* note 14, at 744–47;

⁴⁰M. T. SADIQ, *A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE LANGUAGE OF INTERROGATION IN POLICE/CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE KANO METROPOLIS* (2011) (Ph.D. thesis, Bayero Univ. Kano),

https://www.academia.edu/4554417/A_Discourse_Analysis_of_the_Language_of_Interrogation_in_Police_Criminal_Investigations_in_the_Kano_Metropolis.

⁴¹*THE DISCOURSE OF POLICE INTERVIEWS* 1–18 (MARINA H. S. B. EADES & KATE HAWORTH eds., 2020).

⁴²The 'preparatory' and 'argumentation' stages of police interrogation, 228 *PROCEDIA SOC. & BEHAV. SCI.* 1, 2–5 (2016), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042816315020>.

critical discourse analysis into police training, as well as the formal review by law, could identify pernicious patterns of coercion or misunderstanding and diminish these.⁴³

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The results from this research highlight a critical need for reform in police interrogation style and practice for the sake of fairness, transparency and communicative rights of suspects. Using linguistic analysis and the best practices found in comparative legal and forensic literature, the following policy implications and recommendations are offered:

6.1 *The introduction of linguistically informed interrogation practices*

Police must utilise the foregone linguistic knowledge which is required to achieve legally sound and ethically appropriate interrogations. Some law enforcement agencies should consider engaging forensic linguists to participate in their interrogation protocol. This process could help to identify the explicit forms of problematic questioning methods, ambiguous language and other potential sources of miscommunication that could lead to false confessions or victimisation of a suspect.⁴⁴ Using clear, unambiguous language and avoiding leading and/or coercive questions would be the standard.

6.2 *Ban on Deceptive and Coercive Tactics*

Interrogators must never be allowed to employ deception or coercive tactics as part of "interrogation". Research and policy guidance indicate that the aim of interrogation is to gather accurate and reliable information, not a confession derived from deception and coercion.⁴⁵ This principle should also be respected with vulnerable populations such as youth and persons with limited language ability.

6.3 *Better Training for Police Personnel*

Police personnel should routinely receive training on language use in interrogations, paying special attention to power differences, how to honour the communicative rights of suspects, the implications surrounding indirect speech, and the potential for cultural difference.⁴⁶ Training should also consider all of the risks around indirect or qualified ways of speaking that may accompany powerless individuals or individuals from marginalised groups.

⁴³ SANTOSO & APRIYANTO, *supra* note 12, at 125–27.

⁴⁴ SANTOSO APRIYANTO, DALMAN & DWI SANTOSO, The Urgency of Forensic Linguistics in a Police Interrogation Process, 10 *INT'L J. ENGLISH LINGUISTICS* 123, 124–27 (2020), <https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijel/article/view/0/43762>.

⁴⁵ FAIR AND JUST PROSECUTION, *Youth Interrogation: Key Principles and Policy Recommendations* (2022), <https://fairandjustprosecution.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/FJP-Youth-Interrogation-Issue-Brief.pdf>; AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, Resolution on Interrogations of Criminal Suspects (2022), <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/interrogations>.

⁴⁶ SANTOSO APRIYANTO, DALMAN & DWI SANTOSO, *supra* note 44; The Pragmatics of Powerlessness in Police Interrogation, 103 *YALE L.J.* 259, 259–322 (1993), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/796983>.

6.4 Statutory requirements to record interrogations

The goal of transparency and accountability is best served by audio- and video-recording police interrogations in full. By using these methods to create an objective record of the interaction, there is less chance of misinterpreting the events that have transpired, and it allows legal counsel and language experts to view the interaction.⁴⁷

6.5 Developmentally and culturally appropriate questioning

Practitioners should practise their questioning in developmentally and culturally appropriate ways. As an example, with youth, practitioners should ensure their language is developmentally appropriate and that developers and interpreters are used to allow full understanding and comprehension to engage their youth.⁴⁸

6.6 Policy Reform and Oversight

Policymakers and legislators should establish simple policies governing police interviewing that include time limits, legal counsel, and breaks to prevent fatigue and coercion.⁴⁹ Oversight agencies should have sufficient authority to ensure rule compliance and fairness in any public complaints related to interviews.

7. CONCLUSION

This research project has focused on the significance of language in power relations and the consequently shaped justice (outcome) in police interrogation rooms. Through the use of critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis, the study has shown that the interrogator's language, particularly in terms of their use of questioning, turn-taking and framing, is fundamental to the construction and reproduction of institutional authority. These linguistic practices are often effective in garnering information from suspects, but they can also act as a force for coercive interaction and misrepresentation, and in the case of suspects that are vulnerable or unfamiliar with legal discourse, the latter relationship can manifest in terms of disempowerment.

These findings strengthen the case for taking the next step in offering forensic linguistic services to assist police investigations. As indicated in a series of international and Indian examples, forensic linguistics endorses effective information extraction and interpretation, as well as safeguards against wrongfully convicting innocent suspects by identifying inconsistencies, authorship concerns, and issues of the questioning process itself. The importance of reforming police interview techniques to respect suspects' rights to lawful and uncoercive questioning as well as to ensure justice is done is reflected in the number of closed and leading questions recorded here and in other studies.

⁴⁷FAIR AND JUST PROSECUTION, *supra* note 45.

⁴⁸*Id.*; SANTOSO APRIYANTO, DALMAN & DWI SANTOSO, *supra* note 44.

⁴⁹FAIR AND JUST PROSECUTION, *supra* note 45.

In conclusion, this study suggests a broader approach to modifying interrogation methods: statutory protections, requiring police to record interrogations and police training on their language use; to the extent that this study emphasises that language constitutes an integral aspect of the legal process, it begins to articulate the potential for justice to be afforded or denied through language. Forensic linguistics may play an important role in the future application and development as a scientific discipline also as part of the ongoing efforts to achieve equity and accountability in criminal investigations.