

PRESUPPOSITIONS IN POLICE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CASES: A FORENSIC LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

Ekfindar Diliiana¹, Dina Mariana Br Tarigan², Nova Lina Sari Habeahan³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Musamus Merauke

Email: ekfindardiliiana@unmus.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study examines presuppositions embedded in investigators' questions in a police interview concerning a child sexual abuse case. Using a qualitative descriptive approach within forensic linguistics, the study analyzed one official police interview report (*Berita Acara Pemeriksaan* [BAP]), comprising 19 investigator questions and 19 corresponding witness responses. Data were analyzed using Yule's (1996) presupposition theory by identifying and classifying presupposition triggers. The findings identified four types: existential, structural, lexical, and factive. Structural presupposition was dominant, accounting for 9 of 19 occurrences (47.37%), followed by existential (26.32%), lexical (15.79%), and factive (10.53%). Investigators predominantly used WH-question constructions that presented aspects of the alleged event, participants, chronology, and circumstances as given. Non-factive and counterfactual presuppositions were not identified based on Yule's (1996) criteria. The findings demonstrate that presupposition analysis reveals how linguistic structures organize and frame information in police interview questions and contribute to legal narrative construction. The study highlights the importance of neutral question formulation to minimize unnecessary linguistic assumptions and support fair and reliable investigations involving vulnerable witnesses.

Keywords: *Forensic Linguistics, Presupposition, Police Interview Questions, Child Sexual Abuse, Witness Testimony*

Introduction

Child sexual abuse, including child molestation and rape, remains a serious concern for criminal justice systems because victims and witnesses may constitute important sources of evidence in the investigation of alleged offenses. In such cases, forensic interviews play a central role in obtaining information about events that may have occurred in private and for which independent evidence is often limited. The formulation of investigators' questions is therefore particularly important because questioning practices can influence the quantity, quality, and direction of children's disclosures (Lavoie et al., 2021; Fernandes et al., 2024; Korkman et al., 2025). Research on forensic interviewing has consistently emphasized the value of open-ended and non-suggestive questioning, while also demonstrating that interviewer practices can influence how children understand and respond to investigative questions (Lavoie et al., 2021; Macleod et al., 2022; Powell et al., 2022).

The relationship between questioning

practices and children's testimony has been examined from several complementary perspectives. Lavoie et al. (2021), in a meta-analysis of 35 studies, demonstrated that both rapport practices and question type are associated with children's disclosure of sensitive information. Their findings support the use of questioning practices that allow children to provide information in their own words. Macleod et al. (2022) further showed that repeated questions in child abuse assessment interviews may contain implicit assumptions, particularly when questions concern abuse-related information. These findings suggest that the linguistic form of an investigative question is not merely a technical feature of an interview but can influence the informational environment in which testimony is produced. Research on interviewer training has similarly emphasized the importance of developing interviewers' skills through structured practice and feedback, including the use of mock interviews as a training tool (Powell et al., 2022).

Recent research has also demonstrated that

investigative questioning is affected by the interactional conditions under which interviews take place. Magnusson et al. (2021), for example, examined police interviewers' goals, tactics, and emotions in child sexual abuse investigations and demonstrated that investigators' approaches to questioning are connected to broader interactional and emotional processes. Segal et al. (2023) subsequently examined the relationship between interviewers' emotional and psychophysiological states, confirmation bias, and question formulation in simulated child sexual abuse interviews, highlighting the possibility that interviewer-related factors may influence the construction of questions. Danby and Sharman (2024) likewise found that questions became proportionally more specific and less open-ended after interview breaks, although access to best-practice advice from interview monitors was associated with greater use of open-ended questions. Together, these studies indicate that the wording and structure of investigative questions can be shaped by interviewer behavior, cognitive processes, and interview circumstances (Magnusson et al., 2021; Segal et al., 2023; Danby & Sharman, 2024).

Evidence-based forensic interviewing research has consequently emphasized the need for systematic interview protocols. Fernandes et al. (2024), in a scoping review of forensic interview techniques in child sexual abuse cases, identified 30 different interview procedures and found substantial convergence around a general sequence involving introduction, rapport building, free recall, focused questioning, and closure. Their review emphasizes the importance of open-ended and non-suggestive questioning. Similar recommendations are provided in the White Paper on Forensic Child Interviewing prepared by the European Association of Psychology and Law, which emphasizes evidence-based interviewing, hypothesis testing, interviewer training, feedback, and the avoidance of leading and suggestive questions (Korkman et al., 2025). Gerryts et al. (2025) further demonstrated the complexity of forensic interviews with adolescents who are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse, emphasizing the importance of expert interviewers' ability to navigate reluctance and adapt their interviewing approach. These findings collectively demonstrate that effective forensic interviewing requires not only appropriate interview protocols but also careful attention to how questions are formulated and interpreted.

The interpretation of particular linguistic forms has received increasing attention in

research on child forensic interviewing. Henderson et al. (2023) demonstrated that suppositional *wh*-questions concerning perceptions, conversations, and actions can be more productive than paired yes-no questions when questioning maltreated children. Importantly, their study draws attention to the fact that *wh*-questions may contain suppositional content while still functioning as information-seeking questions. This observation is highly relevant to forensic interviewing because a question may simultaneously request information and establish an assumption concerning what the child has experienced. Szojka et al. (2023) similarly examined children's responses to yes-no questions containing *any/some* constructions and showed that the linguistic formulation of questions can affect the nature of children's elaborations and denials. Thus, examining question formulation requires attention not only to whether a question is open or closed but also to the assumptions encoded in its linguistic structure.

Children's interpretation of temporal and other apparently ordinary expressions provides further evidence that linguistic formulation may influence the way investigative questions are understood. Friend et al. (2022) found that children could misinterpret invitations referring to "the time" as requests for conventional temporal information, while McWilliams et al. (2023) examined similar difficulties with pseudotemporal invitations among maltreated children. These findings demonstrate that apparently simple linguistic forms may not always be interpreted by children in the manner intended by interviewers. Such findings are important for forensic linguistic research because they indicate that the relationship between question form and response cannot be understood solely through broad categories such as open-ended, closed, or leading questions.

The linguistic dimension of investigative questioning is particularly relevant to forensic linguistics, which examines the relationship between language and legal processes, including police interviews, witness statements, legal documents, and courtroom discourse (Coulthard et al., 2017). From this perspective, police interviews are not simply communicative encounters but institutional interactions in which language contributes to the construction, organization, and representation of legal facts. Sholihatin et al. (2024), for example, demonstrated the relevance of forensic linguistic analysis to police investigation interviews and highlighted linguistic issues associated with the

formulation of investigative discourse and its transformation into formal examination reports. Such research indicates that linguistic analysis can reveal aspects of investigative discourse that may not be visible when police interviews are examined only from a legal or procedural perspective.

The Indonesian context provides an especially important setting for examining these linguistic processes. Sumampouw et al. (2020) investigated the quality of forensic child interviewing in Indonesian child sexual abuse cases and found important differences between recommended forensic interviewing practices and the questioning practices documented in police files. Their study provides significant evidence concerning the implementation of forensic interviewing principles in Indonesia. Earlier, Hadiyani (2014) examined question types, responses, and presuppositions in police investigative interviews using data from BAP documents involving fraud, embezzlement, and robbery cases. The study demonstrated that presupposition was already present as an important linguistic phenomenon in police investigative questioning. However, its research context and analytical focus differed from the present study because it did not specifically examine presupposition in child sexual abuse investigations. These studies establish an important Indonesian foundation for the present research while also revealing the need for further investigation of the linguistic mechanisms operating in different types of criminal cases.

Presupposition provides a particularly useful framework for investigating such mechanisms. In pragmatics, presupposition concerns information that a speaker assumes or takes for granted when producing an utterance (Yule, 1996). Presupposed information may not be explicitly asserted, yet it can remain available as part of the interpretation of an utterance. Research in contemporary pragmatics has further examined the behavior of presupposition triggers and the distinction between information that is presupposed and information that is at issue in discourse (Chen et al., 2022). Such work demonstrates that presupposition is not simply a semantic property of isolated expressions but interacts with discourse interpretation and the informational status of propositions.

The structure of *wh*-questions is particularly relevant to this issue. Elliott et al. (2022) examined the semantic and pragmatic behavior of *who* and *what* questions cross-linguistically, demonstrating the importance of understanding how interrogative expressions

establish domains over which answers are sought. In forensic interviews, this becomes particularly important because an interrogative may request a missing piece of information while simultaneously presenting another proposition as already established. For example, “Where did the incident occur?” asks for the location but treats the occurrence of an incident as given. Similarly, “Who committed the offense?” asks for an identity while presupposing that an offense was committed and that an identifiable perpetrator exists. Henderson et al. (2023) provide empirical support for the relevance of this issue in child forensic interviewing by demonstrating the productivity of suppositional *wh*-questions.

Presupposition has also been examined directly in forensic and legal discourse. Liang (2020), for example, analyzed police interrogation from a presuppositional perspective and demonstrated how presupposed information can contribute to the construction of investigative questions. More recently, Al Anshory and Septiani (2025) applied Yule’s presupposition framework to forensic discourse in the documentary *Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso*. Their findings identified existential, factive, lexical, non-factive, counterfactual, and structural presuppositions and demonstrated how presuppositional patterns may contribute to narrative framing and perceptions of guilt and innocence. These studies demonstrate that presupposition can be a productive analytical tool for forensic linguistic research, particularly when the objective is to identify implicit assumptions embedded in legal or quasi-legal discourse.

The relevance of presupposition also extends to the analysis of evidence discourse. Tuzet (2021) emphasizes the pragmatic dimension of evidence discourse and the ways in which linguistic practices participate in the presentation and interpretation of evidential claims. From this perspective, examining presupposition in investigative questions is important because questions do not merely obtain information; they can also establish an informational framework within which evidence is elicited and subsequently represented. In an institutional setting such as police investigation, this distinction becomes particularly important because assumptions embedded in questions may become part of the documented narrative of an alleged offense.

Although these studies have significantly advanced knowledge of forensic interviewing, child testimony, investigative discourse, and presupposition, an important gap remains.

Existing forensic interviewing research has extensively examined question types, disclosure, suggestibility, interviewer behavior, training, and interview protocols (Lavoie et al., 2021; Macleod et al., 2022; Fernandes et al., 2024; Korkman et al., 2025). Other research has demonstrated that children may interpret particular linguistic constructions differently from what interviewers intend (Friend et al., 2022; McWilliams et al., 2023), while studies of *wh*-questions have highlighted the role of suppositional content in forensic questioning (Henderson et al., 2023). Forensic linguistic research has also begun to investigate investigator assumptions and presupposition in legal discourse (Hadiyani, 2014; Liang, 2020; Al Anshory & Septiani, 2025; Vidhiyasi, 2025). Nevertheless, limited research has systematically examined the specific presuppositional structures embedded in investigators' questions within authentic police examination reports concerning child sexual abuse.

This distinction is theoretically and methodologically important. Classifying a question as leading, directive, or suggestive primarily describes its interviewing function, whereas presupposition analysis identifies the information that the linguistic structure of the question treats as given or already established. Thus, a question may appear grammatically ordinary while simultaneously presupposing the existence of an event, an offender, a victim, an action, a cause, or a consequence. Examining presupposition therefore offers a more fine-grained forensic-pragmatic perspective on how assumptions are encoded in investigative language.

The present study addresses this gap by analyzing authentic *Berita Acara Pemeriksaan* (BAP) data from child molestation and child rape investigations conducted by the Merauke Regional Police in South Papua, Indonesia. Unlike studies based primarily on experimental interviews, simulated investigations, or general interview protocols, the present study examines naturally occurring investigative questions documented in official police records. The study applies Yule's (1996) six-category framework—existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counterfactual presupposition—to identify the presuppositional mechanisms embedded in investigators' questions. The analysis further considers how these linguistic assumptions contribute to the construction of legal narratives and the organization of witness testimony.

Accordingly, this study aims to identify the

types of presuppositions employed in investigators' questions and to examine how these presuppositions contribute to the construction of legal narratives in child sexual abuse investigations. The study contributes to forensic linguistics and forensic pragmatics in three ways. First, it applies a systematic presupposition framework to authentic police examination data, extending forensic analysis beyond general classifications of leading or suggestive questions. Second, it provides empirical evidence from South Papua, Indonesia, a geographical and institutional context that remains underrepresented in international forensic linguistic scholarship. Third, it demonstrates how grammatical and lexical choices in investigative questions may establish implicit informational premises through which witnesses are invited to construct their responses. By making these assumptions linguistically visible, the study contributes to a more precise understanding of how language participates in the construction of legal narratives and highlights the importance of neutral, objective, and carefully formulated questioning in investigations involving vulnerable witnesses.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design within a forensic linguistics framework to identify and interpret presuppositions embedded in investigators' questions. The data were drawn from one official *Berita Acara Pemeriksaan* (BAP) concerning a child sexual abuse case handled by the Merauke Regional Police, South Papua, Indonesia. The BAP contains 19 investigator questions and 19 corresponding witness responses, covering the alleged incident, the persons involved, the circumstances of the event, supporting evidence, and confirmation of the witness's statement. The document was selected purposively based on three criteria: (1) it concerned a child sexual abuse case; (2) it was an officially processed police BAP; and (3) it contained a complete sequence of investigator questions and witness responses. The individual investigator question served as the unit of analysis, while the corresponding witness response was used as contextual information.

The BAP data were obtained with institutional permission for research purposes. The document was originally requested in connection with a 2025 research project entitled "Pola-Pola Bahasa oleh Pelaku Kekerasan Seksual terhadap Anak", funded through the DIPA Universitas Musamus 2025, under Assignment Letter No. 048.3/UN52.8/LT/2025. The data were subsequently analyzed in the

present study from a different linguistic perspective, focusing specifically on presupposition in investigators' questions. Data were analyzed using document analysis and Yule's (1996) six categories of presupposition: existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counterfactual. A structured coding sheet recorded the question number, original Indonesian utterance, English translation, presupposition trigger, presupposed proposition, presupposition type, and corresponding witness response.

Two researchers independently coded the data, compared their classifications, and resolved discrepancies through discussion based on the original Indonesian wording and Yule's framework. Inter-coder agreement was assessed from the initial coding decisions before

consensus. For ethical protection, the BAP was treated as confidential research material, all personal identities were anonymized, and only relevant linguistic excerpts were presented. Particular attention was given to confidentiality because the case involved a child.

Findings and Discussion

Overall Distribution of Presupposition Types

The analysis of the 19 investigator questions identified four types of presupposition based on Yule's (1996) framework: existential, structural, lexical, and factive presupposition. Structural presupposition was the most frequently identified type, followed by existential, lexical, and factive presuppositions. Non-factive and counterfactual presuppositions were not identified based on the operational criteria applied in this study.

Table 1
Distribution of Presupposition Types in Investigator Questions

No.	Type of Presupposition	Frequency	Percentage
1	Structural	9	47.37%
2	Existential	5	26.32%
3	Lexical	3	15.79%
4	Factive	2	10.53%
5	Non-factive	0	0%
6	Counterfactual	0	0%
Total		19	100%

The distribution of presupposition types shows that structural presupposition was the most dominant type, with 9 occurrences (47.37%) out of 19 presuppositional occurrences. It was followed by existential presupposition, which occurred 5 times (26.32%), lexical presupposition with 3 occurrences (15.79%), and factive presupposition with 2 occurrences (10.53%). These findings indicate that the investigators' questions frequently used grammatical structures that treated certain information as already established and directed the witness to provide specific details about the alleged event, its participants, circumstances, and consequences.

Meanwhile, non-factive and counterfactual presuppositions were not identified based on the operational application of Yule's (1996) framework. Data 19, which asks whether the witness felt pressured or forced during the examination, was initially considered as a possible non-factive case. However, the verb

merasa ("feel") is not regarded as a prototypical non-factive presupposition trigger in Yule's framework. Therefore, Data 19 is treated as a procedural question concerning the voluntariness of the witness's statement, rather than as a non-factive presupposition. It is also important to note that the 19 presuppositional occurrences were found across 18 investigator questions, because Data 9 contains two distinct presuppositional triggers and is therefore included in both the structural and lexical categories.

According to Yule (1996), existential presupposition arises from definite noun phrases, possessive constructions, and proper names that presuppose the existence of the entities referred to.

Table 2
Existential Presupposition in the Police Interrogation Report

Data	Original Data (Bahasa Indonesia)	English Translation	Presupposition Trigger	Presupposed Meaning
D1	Apakah saudara saat ini dalam keadaan sehat jasmani dan rohani dan bersedia diperiksa serta akan memberikan keterangan dengan sebenar-benarnya?	<i>Are you currently in good physical and mental condition and willing to be examined and provide truthful testimony?</i>	sehat	The witness exists, is present, and the official interview is taking place.

D5	Apakah saudara kenal dengan pelaku saudara TMS dan korban saudara SIS alias CC? Selain saudara yang mengetahui perbuatan persetubuhan tersebut, apakah ada orang lain yang mengetahui...? Ditunjukkan kepada saudara satu buah pisau... apakah saudara mengenali tersebut? Ditunjukkan kepada saudara satu buah foto berjenis kelamin laki-laki...	<i>Do you know the offender Tms and the victim SIS a.k.a Cici?</i> SIS <i>Besides you, did anyone else know about the sexual intercourse?</i> <i>You are shown a knife. Do you recognize this photograph?</i> <i>You are shown a photograph of a male. Do you recognize him?</i>	pelaku, korban, TMS, SIS selain satu buah pisau foto, laki-laki	The offender and the victim already exist as identifiable individuals. At least one person (the witness) already knows about the incident. The knife exists as physical evidence. The man in the photograph exists and is related to the case.
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Table 2 presents the existential presuppositions identified in the investigators' questions. According to Yule (1996), existential presupposition is associated with definite noun phrases, possessive constructions, and proper names that presuppose the existence of the entities being referred to. In the present data, investigators consistently employed lexical items that implicitly established the existence of participants, evidence, and procedural circumstances before witnesses confirmed them.

In Data 1, the investigator asks, "*Apakah saudara saat ini dalam keadaan sehat jasmani dan rohani dan bersedia diperiksa serta akan memberikan keterangan dengan sebenar-benarnya?*" ("Are you currently in good physical and mental condition and willing to be examined and provide truthful testimony?"). Although the question appears to verify the witness's condition and willingness, it presupposes that the witness is physically present and that an official investigative interview is already underway. The expressions *keadaan sehat* ("physical and mental condition") and *diperiksa* ("to be examined") establish the institutional context of the interrogation as an accepted fact rather than introducing it as new information.

A similar pattern appears in Data 5, where the investigator asks whether the witness knows *pelaku* ("the offender") Thomas and *korban* ("the victim") SIS Cunewu alias Cici. The use of the definite noun phrases *pelaku* and *korban*, together with the proper names, presupposes not only the existence of these individuals but also their institutional roles within the criminal investigation. Before the witness provides any information, Thomas has already been linguistically identified as *the offender* and SIS as *the victim*. Consequently, the question frames these identities as established referents rather than

neutral participants whose legal status remains to be determined. This finding illustrates how existential presupposition contributes to the linguistic construction of legal identities during police interviews.

Data 13 contains another example of existential presupposition through the lexical item *selain* ("besides"). By asking, "*Selain saudara yang mengetahui perbuatan persetubuhan tersebut, apakah ada orang lain yang mengetahui?*" ("Besides you, did anyone else know about the sexual intercourse?"), the investigator presupposes that the witness already possesses knowledge of the incident. The question therefore does not seek to determine whether the witness knows about the event; instead, it assumes such knowledge and merely asks whether additional witnesses exist. This presupposition narrows the scope of possible responses and positions the witness as an established source of information.

Existential presuppositions are also evident in the presentation of physical evidence. In Data 15, the investigator introduces *satu buah pisau* ("a knife") and asks whether the witness recognizes it. Similarly, Data 16 presents *satu buah foto berjenis kelamin laki-laki* ("a photograph of a male") for identification. In both cases, the definite noun phrases presuppose the existence and evidential relevance of these objects. Rather than questioning whether the knife or photograph is connected to the case, the investigator assumes their evidential status and asks the witness only to confirm recognition. Such linguistic choices reinforce the evidentiary framework of the investigation by treating physical objects as established components of the criminal event.

Overall, the findings indicate that existential presuppositions function to establish the existence of participants, evidence, and investigative procedures before these elements

are explicitly confirmed by witness testimony. From a forensic linguistic perspective, this demonstrates that investigators' questions are not entirely neutral but are linguistically structured around assumptions regarding the existence of offenders, victims, witnesses, and material evidence. While such assumptions may reflect procedural realities in criminal investigations,

they also contribute to constructing the legal narrative recorded in the police interrogation report. The findings support Yule's (1996) argument that existential presuppositions arise through reference expressions and further demonstrate their significant role in shaping institutional discourse within police investigations of child sexual abuse.

Table 3
Factive Presupposition

Data	Original Data	English Translation	Trigger	Presupposed Meaning
D2	Mengertikah saudara saat ini diperiksa...	<i>Do you understand why you are being questioned?</i>	mengerti	The witness is being questioned in relation to a legal case.
D18	Sudah benarkah semua keterangan yang telah saudara berikan?	<i>Are all the statements you have given true?</i>	benar	The witness has already provided statements.

Table 3 presents the instances of factive presupposition identified in the police interrogation report. According to Yule (1996), factive presuppositions are triggered by lexical items that presuppose the truth of the proposition that follows them. Common factive triggers include verbs such as *know*, *realize*, *regret*, and *be aware*, as well as adjectives expressing certainty or truth. These expressions signal that the embedded proposition is treated as factual rather than hypothetical or uncertain. In legal discourse, such presuppositions are particularly important because they may implicitly establish facts before they are independently verified through evidence or testimony.

In Data 2, the investigator asks, "*Mengertikah saudara saat ini diperiksa dan dimintai keterangannya oleh pemeriksa sehubungan dengan perkara apa?*" ("Do you understand why you are being questioned?"). The verb *mengerti* ("understand") functions as the factive trigger because it presupposes that the witness is indeed undergoing an official police examination concerning a specific criminal case. The question does not seek to determine whether the witness is being questioned; rather, it assumes that the questioning is already taking place and merely asks whether the witness understands its purpose. Consequently, the institutional context of the interrogation is presented as an established fact shared by both the investigator and the witness. This finding is consistent with Yule's (1996) assertion that factive predicates present embedded propositions as accepted realities within the discourse.

A similar pattern is found in Data 18, where the investigator asks, "*Sudah benarkah semua*

keterangan yang telah saudara berikan?" ("Are all the statements you have given true?"). The adjective *benar* ("true") serves as the factive trigger because it presupposes that the witness has already provided statements during the interview. Instead of questioning whether any testimony has been given, the investigator requests confirmation of its truthfulness. This type of question functions as a procedural verification commonly found at the conclusion of police interviews, where witnesses are asked to affirm the accuracy of their recorded testimony. Linguistically, however, the question also presupposes the existence of a complete body of statements that are considered suitable for confirmation.

From a forensic linguistic perspective, the factive presuppositions identified in these data primarily function to reinforce the procedural legitimacy of the interrogation rather than to establish substantive facts about the alleged crime. Unlike structural presuppositions, which frequently presuppose the occurrence of the criminal act itself, the factive presuppositions in Table 2 focus on the investigative process by assuming that the witness is participating in a lawful examination and has already provided testimony. These presuppositions contribute to the institutional discourse of criminal investigations by emphasizing procedural certainty and the reliability of witness statements.

Overall, the findings suggest that factive presuppositions play a supportive role in organizing the interaction between investigators and witnesses. They establish shared procedural knowledge that facilitates the interview process while simultaneously framing witness testimony as an official legal record. Although only two

instances of factive presupposition were identified in the present data, their use demonstrates how investigators employ linguistic expressions to reinforce the authenticity and procedural validity of police interrogation reports.

This finding extends Yule's (1996) theory by illustrating the function of factive presuppositions within institutional legal discourse, particularly in investigations involving child sexual abuse cases.

Table 4
Structural Presupposition

Data	Original Data	English Translation	Trigger	Presupposed Meaning
D3	Kapan dan dimanakah terjadinya peristiwa persetubuhan...?	<i>When and where did the sexual intercourse occur?</i>	kapan, di mana	The sexual assault has already occurred.
D4	Siapakah pelaku yang melakukan persetubuhan...?	<i>Who committed the sexual assault?</i>	siapa	There is already an offender.
D6	Berapa kalikah pelaku melakukan persetubuhan...?	<i>How many times did the offender commit the sexual assault?</i>	berapa kali	The assault occurred at least once.
D7	Dari manakah saudara mengetahui...	<i>How did you know...?</i>	dari mana	The offense has already occurred.
D8	Bagaimana kronologis peristiwa persetubuhan...?	<i>How did the incident occur?</i>	bagaimana	The incident occurred and has a chronology.
D9	Apa yang menyebabkan korban mau disetubuhi...?	<i>What caused the victim to willingly engage in sexual intercourse?</i>	apa yang menyebabkan	There is already a cause.
D10	Apa maksud dan tujuan pelaku...?	<i>What was the offender's intention?</i>	apa	The offender committed the offense.
D12	Berapa usia korban saat persetubuhan terjadi?	<i>How old was the victim when the assault occurred?</i>	saat terjadi	The assault occurred.
D14	Akibat apa yang dialami korban...?	<i>What consequences did the victim suffer?</i>	akibat apa	The victim suffered consequences.

Table 4 presents the structural presuppositions identified in the investigators' questions. According to Yule (1996), structural presupposition occurs when particular syntactic structures, especially WH-interrogatives, lead speakers to assume that the information requested already exists. Unlike existential presupposition, which arises from reference expressions, structural presupposition is embedded in the grammatical form of the sentence. Consequently, questions beginning with *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *how*, and *how many* generally presuppose that the event or entity being questioned is already established. In the present study, structural presupposition is the most dominant category, accounting for nearly half of all presuppositions identified in the police interrogation report.

The clearest examples appear in Data 3 and Data 4. In Data 3, the investigator asks, "*Kapan dan dimanakah terjadinya peristiwa persetubuhan terhadap anak di bawah umur?*" ("When and where did the sexual intercourse with the minor occur?"). The WH-expressions *kapan* ("when") and *di mana* ("where") presuppose that the alleged sexual assault has already taken place. Rather than establishing whether the incident occurred, the investigator seeks only its temporal and spatial details. Similarly, in Data 4, the

question "*Siapakah pelaku yang melakukan persetubuhan terhadap anak di bawah umur tersebut?*" ("Who committed the sexual assault against the minor?") presupposes the existence of an offender. The grammatical structure does not allow for the possibility that no offense occurred; instead, it directs the witness toward identifying the person responsible.

A similar pattern is observed in Data 6, Data 7, and Data 8. The question "*Berapa kalikah pelaku melakukan persetubuhan?*" ("How many times did the offender commit the sexual assault?") presupposes that the offense occurred at least once and merely seeks to determine its frequency. Likewise, "*Dari manakah saudara mengetahui...*" ("How did you know...?") assumes that the witness already possesses knowledge of the offense, while "*Bagaimana kronologis peristiwa persetubuhan...?*" ("How did the incident occur?") presupposes that the incident has an established sequence of events. In each case, the investigators' questions are designed not to verify the occurrence of the alleged crime but to elaborate on details that are linguistically presented as already existing.

The most linguistically significant example appears in Data 9, where the investigator asks, "*Apa yang menyebabkan korban mau disetubuhi*

oleh pelaku?" ("What caused the victim to willingly engage in sexual intercourse with the offender?"). The interrogative expression *apa yang menyebabkan* ("what caused") presupposes that a specific cause exists. More importantly, the question assumes that the child victim *mau* ("was willing") to engage in sexual intercourse. Although the lexical item *mau* may also trigger lexical presupposition, the grammatical structure of the question first establishes the existence of a causal relationship that the witness is expected to explain. From a forensic linguistic perspective, this formulation is problematic because it may implicitly attribute agency or consent to an eleven-year-old child, despite the legal principle that children cannot provide valid consent to sexual activity. Thus, the structural presupposition embedded in the question has the potential to influence the interpretation of the victim's role within the legal narrative.

Similar constructions occur in Data 10, Data 12, and Data 14. The question concerning the offender's purpose presupposes that the offense has already been committed, while asking the victim's age *when the sexual intercourse occurred* presupposes the occurrence of the criminal act itself. Likewise, asking *"Akibat apa yang dialami korban?"* ("What consequences did the victim suffer?") presupposes that the victim experienced consequences resulting from the offense. These questions demonstrate that investigators consistently employ WH-structures to obtain supplementary information while treating the central event as an accepted fact within the discourse.

From a forensic linguistic perspective, the predominance of structural presupposition indicates that investigators' questions are

organized around confirming and elaborating an already presupposed criminal event rather than establishing whether the event occurred. This finding supports Yule's (1996) claim that syntactic structures can encode implicit assumptions independently of lexical meaning. In institutional discourse such as police interrogation, these assumptions function as powerful linguistic mechanisms that guide witnesses toward particular informational responses. Consequently, the interview becomes a process of filling informational gaps within an already constructed narrative instead of exploring alternative possibilities.

The findings also demonstrate that structural presuppositions contribute significantly to the linguistic construction of legal facts recorded in the police interrogation report (*Berita Acara Pemeriksaan*). By presupposing the existence of the offense, the offender, the victim's suffering, and the chronology of events, investigators' questions shape the framework within which witnesses provide their testimony. This does not necessarily imply investigative bias, as many of these questions are asked after preliminary evidence has been collected. Nevertheless, from the perspective of forensic pragmatics, the linguistic structure of the questions reveals how presupposition functions as a subtle yet influential mechanism in constructing legal narratives. Therefore, the present findings extend Yule's theory beyond everyday communication by demonstrating its applicability to institutional legal discourse and highlighting the importance of linguistically neutral questioning in investigations involving child sexual abuse cases.

Table 5
Lexical Presupposition

Data	Original Data	English Translation	Trigger	Presupposed Meaning
D9	korban mau disetubuhi	<i>the victim willingly engaged in sexual intercourse</i>	mau	The victim is assumed to have been willing.
D11	sebelum melakukan persetubuhan	<i>before committing sexual intercourse</i>	sebelum	The sexual assault occurred after the preceding event.
D17	Apakah masih ada keterangan lain...?	<i>Is there still additional information?</i>	masih	Previous information has already been provided.

Table 5 presents the lexical presuppositions identified in the investigators' questions. According to Yule (1996), lexical presupposition occurs when the use of a particular lexical item conventionally implies another unstated meaning. Unlike structural presupposition, which is triggered by syntactic forms, lexical

presupposition arises from the semantic properties of specific words. Typical lexical triggers include expressions such as *stop*, *continue*, *again*, *return*, and *still*, all of which presuppose the existence of a previous event or state. In the present study, lexical presuppositions are relatively infrequent compared with structural

presuppositions; however, they reveal important pragmatic implications within the context of police investigations involving child sexual abuse.

One notable example is found in Data 9, where the investigator asks about "*apa yang menyebabkan korban mau disetubuhi*" ("what caused the victim to willingly engage in sexual intercourse"). The lexical item *mau* ("willing" or "willingly") introduces an implicit assumption that the child victim possessed a degree of willingness or consent. Although *mau* is not one of the prototypical lexical presupposition triggers identified by Yule (1996), its semantic meaning contributes an additional layer of presupposed information beyond the literal content of the question. From a forensic linguistic perspective, this lexical choice is highly significant because it may inadvertently attribute agency to the victim. Considering that the victim was only eleven years old, such wording is inconsistent with the legal principle that a child cannot provide legally valid consent to sexual activity. Consequently, the lexical choice has the potential to influence both the witness's interpretation and the linguistic construction of the victim's role within the investigative narrative.

A clearer example of lexical presupposition appears in Data 11, where the investigator asks whether the offender used violence, threats, or persuasion "*sebelum melakukan persetubuhan*" ("before committing sexual intercourse"). The lexical trigger *sebelum* ("before") presupposes that the subsequent event—namely, the sexual assault—actually occurred. Rather than questioning whether the assault took place, the investigator assumes its occurrence and seeks information about events preceding it. The lexical meaning of *before* therefore establishes a temporal sequence in which the criminal act is treated as an accepted reference point. This finding is consistent with Yule's (1996) explanation that certain lexical expressions presuppose the occurrence of another event.

Another instance is found in Data 17, where the investigator asks, "*Apakah masih ada keterangan lain yang ingin saudara tambahkan?*" ("Is there still any additional information you would like to provide?"). The lexical trigger *masih* ("still") presupposes that the witness has already provided information during the interview. The investigator does not ask whether the witness has given any testimony; instead, the question assumes that previous statements exist and merely inquires whether additional information remains to be added. As noted by Yule (1996), the lexical item *still* conventionally presupposes the continuation of an existing state or activity. In this context, it signals that the investigative interview has reached its concluding stage, where the witness is offered an opportunity to supplement earlier testimony.

Overall, lexical presuppositions in the present data primarily function to enrich the informational framework of the interview by introducing implicit assumptions through individual lexical choices. While only three instances were identified, they demonstrate that seemingly ordinary words may carry substantial pragmatic implications in legal discourse. Among these examples, the use of *mau* ("willing") is particularly noteworthy because it illustrates how lexical choices may unintentionally shape the representation of child victims within police interrogation reports. This finding suggests that lexical selection is not merely a stylistic matter but also a linguistic mechanism capable of influencing the construction of legal narratives. Therefore, investigators should exercise caution in selecting lexical items during interviews, particularly in cases involving vulnerable child victims, to ensure that questions remain linguistically neutral and do not unintentionally imply assumptions that could affect witness testimony or subsequent legal interpretation.

Procedural Question and the Absence of Non-Factive Presupposition

Table 6
Procedural Question

Data	Original Data	English Translation	Trigger	Presupposed Meaning
D19	Apakah saudara merasa ditekan atau dipaksa...?	<i>Did you feel pressured or forced...?</i>	merasa	The possibility of coercion is being considered but is not assumed to be true.

Data 19 represents a procedural question concerning the voluntariness of the witness's statement. The investigator asks, "*Apakah saudara merasa di tekan atau di paksa oleh pemeriksa dalam memberikan keterangan?*" ("Did you feel pressured or forced by the investigator while giving your statement?"). The witness responds that she did not feel pressured or forced during the examination. Although this question was initially considered as a possible example of non-factive presupposition because it introduces an unestablished possibility of pressure or coercion, a closer application of Yule's (1996) framework indicates that *merasa* ("feel") is not a prototypical non-factive presupposition trigger. The question does not presuppose that coercion actually occurred; rather, it asks the witness to evaluate whether such an experience occurred. Therefore, Data 19 is excluded from the non-factive category and is treated as a procedural question without a Yule-type presupposition classification.

Conclusion

This study identified four types of presupposition in investigators' questions in a police interview concerning a child sexual abuse case: existential, structural, lexical, and factive presupposition. Structural presupposition was the most dominant, accounting for 9 of 19 presuppositional occurrences (47.37%), followed by existential presupposition with 5 occurrences (26.32%), lexical presupposition with 3 occurrences (15.79%), and factive presupposition with 2 occurrences (10.53%). Non-factive and counterfactual presuppositions were not identified based on the operational criteria derived from Yule's (1996) framework. These findings indicate that the grammatical formulation of investigators' questions frequently presents particular aspects of the alleged event as given and organizes the informational context within which witnesses are asked to provide their accounts. Thus, presupposition analysis provides a useful pragmatic perspective for examining how investigative questions linguistically structure information in forensic interviews.

The findings are consistent with and extend previous research on investigative interviewing and forensic discourse. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of

interview strategies, interviewer training, question formulation, and evidence-based interviewing procedures in obtaining reliable accounts from children and other vulnerable witnesses (Magnusson et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2022; Sumampouw et al., 2020). Research on investigative discourse has also demonstrated the relevance of linguistic and pragmatic analysis in understanding how questions and legal narratives are constructed (Hadiyani, 2014; Liang, 2020; Al Anshory & Septiani, 2025). The present study extends these lines of research by focusing specifically on presuppositional meanings embedded in investigators' questions and by showing that structural presupposition constitutes the most frequent pattern in the analyzed BAP. This contribution demonstrates that forensic linguistic analysis can examine not only the overt content or functional type of an investigative question but also the implicit information that its linguistic structure presents as given.

The study also has practical implications for investigative interviewing. The predominance of structural presupposition suggests the importance of carefully formulating questions so that unnecessary assumptions are not embedded in the questioning process, particularly when interviewing vulnerable witnesses. However, this study has several limitations. The analysis was based on one BAP document from one case and focused specifically on investigators' questions; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to police interviews more broadly. Furthermore, the study analyzed the linguistic presuppositions contained in the questions rather than experimentally measuring their effects on witness responses. Therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as direct evidence that presuppositions caused or determined the witness's responses. Future research should examine larger corpora of BAP documents from different cases and jurisdictions and compare presupposition patterns across interviews involving investigators, victims, witnesses, and suspects. Future studies could also investigate empirically how different presuppositional formulations are interpreted and responded to by interview participants.

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