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# Courtroom Communication: Identification of the Communication Characteristics of Criminal Trials in Indonesian Courts

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## Abstract

A criminal trial is a complex communication context involving judges, prosecutors, lawyers, witnesses, and others with different goals and strategies. This qualitative study analyzes courtroom communication and its flow in achieving justice for victims and defendants. Data were collected through interviews with nine informants, observations of three trials, and document analysis. The study identifies two types of communication flow: one-way (e.g., verdict delivery) and multi-directional (e.g., questioning). Six communication characteristics were found: professional, confrontational, hierarchical, investigative, opposing, and supportive. Understanding these helps trial participants improve communication strategies to support an effective and fair judicial process.

## Introduction

The courtroom is a place to examine a case. Officially, the courtroom is a room for the examination of legal proceedings for all parties involved in the judicial process, the parties interact in an orderly and structured environment. Parties involved in legal cases include judges, prosecutors, lawyers, witnesses, and defendants who interact to achieve justice for both defendants and victims (Aronsson et al., 1987; Grossman, 2019, 2019; Walenta, 2020; Widodo, 2019)

The courtroom consists of several elements, namely the physical layout, norms and values that are set. The physical layout refers to the trial facilities, among others, portraits of the judge's desk, prosecutor's desk, lawyer's desk, witness bench, and seating for the defendant as well as the audience or visitors to the trial. Meanwhile, norms and values are elements that support the principle of conducting open, transparent and fair trials, including the provisions and communication processes carried out in achieving the objectives of the trial. Every element in the courtroom, from the physical layout to the various rules including the rules of communication, aims to support a fair and impartial judicial process. In this environment, communication plays an important role, in determining the outcome of the judicial process. Through communication, the actors in the trial share information, in order to achieve the set goals, . (Bandes & Feigenson, 2020; Gordon & Druckman, 2018; Gottfried et al., 2014, 2014; Hawilo et al., 2022; LeVan, 1984; M. Scheb II & Sharma, 2015; Otu, 2015; Rossner & Tait, 2023, 2023; Turner & Hughes, 2022; Widodo, 2020)

The form of communication that occurs in the courtroom is part of what is known as Courtroom Communication (Denault & Dunbar, 2017; Gottfried et al., 2014; McCaul, 2016; Rossner et al., 2021; Sommers & Ellsworth, 1997; Walenta, 2020). Neubauer and Meinhold (2016) define courtroom

39 communication as a concept that includes communication events or specific aspects of interactions that  
40 take place in the law enforcement process. Various terms are used to describe the dynamics of  
41 communication in a trial, depending on the role, participation, and form of interaction between  
42 participants. Bowen and Carney (2013) use the term forensic communication to emphasize the content  
43 and substance of the message conveyed (Howes, 2015). Carter (2003) prefers the term judicial  
44 communication which highlights the legal dimension of communication that occurs during the trial  
45 (Leung, 2012; Roach Anleu & Mack, 2015). Meanwhile, Lubert (2004) uses the term trial  
46 communication which refers to communication based on stages or processes in the trial (Philips, 1985).  
47 Although using different terms—courtroom communication, judicial communication, forensic  
48 communication, and trial communication—all refer to the context of communication in the courtroom  
49 involving certain actors, messages with specific goals, and the role of each party involved in the trial  
50 process. Some of these things show different characteristics from other communication contexts.

51 Communication in the courtroom has a very important role in determining justice for both defendants  
52 and victims in the Indonesian justice system. In the courtroom, interactions between various legal  
53 actors such as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, defendants, witnesses, and other related parties have an  
54 influence on the process of formation and decision-making, including through perception, dramaturgy,  
55 and nonverbal communication. The dynamics of communication that occur in the trial affect the way  
56 the evidence is presented, the arguments submitted, and the conclusions drawn by the judge and  
57 accepted by the legal actors. In general, Widodo (2019) describes this communication through the law  
58 enforcement communication model, the examination communication model, and the communication  
59 model between law enforcement. Law enforcement communication model with witnesses or  
60 defendants in Court. (Aronsson et al., 1987; Fielding, 2013; Gordon & Druckman, 2018; Philp, 2022;  
61 Roach Anleu & Mack, 2015; Robertson et al., 2016; Rossner & Tait, 2023; Taggart, 2023; Walenta,  
62 2020; Widodo, 2019, 2019, 2020, 2020, 2022; Widodo et al., 2018)

63 At the Bekasi Regional District Court, communication in the courtroom occurred in the law  
64 enforcement process. Based on the results of the researcher's observations, law enforcers interact and  
65 communicate in the courtroom, not only between law enforcement law enforcers and witnesses and  
66 defendants, but also with the jurors and court officers. Communication between the parties is one of  
67 the keys to the implementation of the trial and the success of the law enforcement process in the  
68 courtroom. Communication depends on the special characteristics of the conference. The Bekasi city  
69 district court trial is one of the courts that carries out communication in the trial as an interaction  
70 process that occurs in a trial process with different characteristics.

71 This research focuses on how the characteristics of communication in court trials. This research is  
72 important to be carried out in order to understand the communication process in criminal trials.  
73 Communication is done by ensuring that each party involved in the judicial process has an equal  
74 opportunity to present their arguments and evidence. In addition, effective communication can also  
75 help in creating an environment conducive to creating public trust in the justice system. In a broader  
76 context, this research can also contribute to the development of more effective communication methods  
77 and strategies in criminal justice. With an understanding of how communication affects the judicial  
78 process, relevant parties, including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and legal counsel, can develop a better  
79 communication approach to achieving desired legal goals.

80 It is important to map and understand the communication between the parties who are the subject of  
81 the research, as communication can affect how the evidence is presented, the arguments presented, and  
82 the final decision taken by the judge (Johnson, 2018). For example, research by Smith and Bryant  
83 (2015) highlights the importance of adapting to the different communication styles of the parties

84 involved in the trial. Compare this with a study by Brown et al. (2017), which emphasized the  
85 importance of using body language and facial expressions in assessing the trust and honesty of trial  
86 actors.

87 Various studies highlight the importance of understanding how communication affects the outcome of  
88 a criminal trial. However, there is a lack of literature on the analysis of various aspects of  
89 communication that occur in trials related to the characteristics of communication, especially in  
90 criminal courts. In carrying out the functions of criminal courts, effective communication is not only a  
91 means of presenting legal arguments, but is also a key element in ensuring that the legal process runs  
92 in accordance with the principles of justice and truth. Any interaction between legal actors, whether  
93 verbal or written, can affect the direction and outcome of a trial, so it is important to map.

## 942 **Research Methods**

95

### 96 **2.1 Research Design**

97 The research approach used is qualitative research. The researcher uses a qualitative approach  
98 to understand the communication between various parties in a criminal trial in the district court. The  
99 researcher conducted interviews with 9 informants and observations at 3 trials in the district court.  
100 Research informants are determined based on criteria that meet the needs of the research. In  
101 determining informants, the researcher began by determining the law enforcement informants  
102 consisting of 3 judges, prosecutors, legal advisors, 1 defendant, 1 witness, 1 visitor, 1 court officer  
103 (clerk), 1 security/prisoner. The following is a table of research informants:

No	Informant	Classification	Description of Determination
1	A	Judge	Based on Criteria
2	B	Prosecutor	Based on Criteria
3	C	Lawyer	Based on Criteria
4	D	Defendant	Accidental
5	E	Witness	Accidental
6	F	Visitors (Visitor's family)	Accidental
7	G	Court Officer	Accidental
8	H	Prison Guard Officer	Accidental
9	I	Committee	Accidental

104 (Source: Research Results, 2023)

105 The determination of informants in the table is based on purposive sampling criteria and the need for  
106 research data, specifically for law enforcement (prosecutors, lawyers, and judges), while for other  
107 informants it is determined incidentally, the researcher at the time of direct observation, confirms the  
108 prospective informants according to the data needs. Some informants are willing, and others are willing  
109 but need to obtain consent, including witnesses and defendants need approval from legal counsel when  
110 willing to be interviewed.

111

### 112 **2.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis Techniques**

113 The researcher used interview data collection techniques and observations, the researcher  
114 conducted interviews with the informants who had been determined. In addition to interviews,

115 researchers made observations at criminal trials in court. Observations were focused on 3 trials in court,  
116 in order to describe the stages and processes of communication in court. The data obtained by the  
117 researcher is then analyzed by data analysis techniques, qualitative analysis with stages of reduction,  
118 description, verification and conclusion. As for the ethical steps taken in ensuring the validity and  
119 validity of the data, in addition to triangulation, the researcher also takes steps to obtain permission  
120 from complying with the ethical principles of research, including obtaining permission from the  
121 authorized authority, maintaining the confidentiality of the data, and ensuring that the trial participants  
122 provide appropriate information consent before observation is made.

## 123 **2.3 Data Collection Process**

### 124 **2.3.1 Preparation and Obtaining of research permits**

125 Communication research in the courtroom at the Jakarta District Court begins with the research  
126 preparation stage. At this stage, the researcher prepares a research proposal that includes the research  
127 background, the goals to be achieved, the research methods to be used, and the data collection plan.

128 The next step is to take care of the research permit. The researcher must obtain a cover letter from the  
129 relevant university or institution, which explains the purpose and importance of the research. After  
130 that, the researcher contacted the administration or Public Relations of the District Court to get  
131 information about the procedure for applying for research permits. The researcher then submits a  
132 research proposal, a cover letter, and an official permit application letter to the court. After obtaining  
133 approval, the researcher coordinates with the court to determine the observation and interview  
134 schedule, so as not to interfere with the course of the trial.

### 135 **2.3.2 Data Collection**

136 The data collection stage involves several methods. Observation is carried out in a participatory manner  
137 by being present in person in the courtroom to observe the communication interaction between the  
138 judge, prosecutor, lawyer, and the defendant, and in a non-participatory manner from a distance that  
139 does not interfere with the course of the trial. Interviews are conducted with judges, prosecutors,  
140 lawyers, defendants, and witnesses to gain their views and experiences about communication in the  
141 courtroom. Documentation such as court transcripts, court rulings, and audio/video recordings were  
142 also collected for further analysis. In addition, questionnaires were distributed to relevant parties to  
143 obtain quantitative data on communication perceptions in the courtroom.

### 144 **2.3.3 Data Analysis**

145 After the data is collected, the data processing and analysis stage is carried out. Interview and  
146 observation data were transcribed into text. The data is then coded and categorized based on the theme  
147 or topic that appears. The analysis was carried out using content analysis for qualitative data and  
148 statistical analysis for quantitative data. Conclusions are made from the results of the analysis that are  
149 relevant to the research objectives.

### 150 **2.2.4 Data validity**

151 The wetness of the research data uses Member Checking. Member checking is the process by which  
152 data or analysis results are returned to participants to ensure that the researcher has understood and  
153 represented their views correctly. In the context of this study, after interviews or observations were

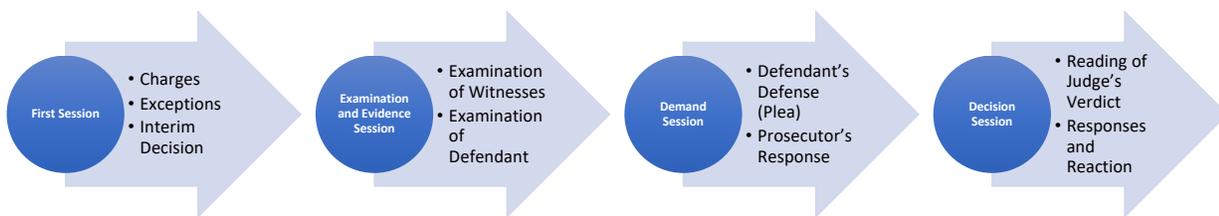
154 conducted, the researcher returned to the judge, prosecutor, lawyer, and defendant to confirm that the  
155 results recorded were in accordance with their intended results.

### 156 3 Result

#### 157 3.1 Trial in Court

158 The trial and trial process are a series of trial stages in accordance with the provisions of the  
159 Criminal Code in Indonesia. In simple terms, the trial stages consist of the first hearing/indictment  
160 hearing, examination hearing, prosecution hearing and verdict hearing. Furthermore, in each of these  
161 processes, there can be a trial with a recurring agenda, for example, the examination of witnesses can  
162 be carried out many times until the truth is found. The stages of the trial depend on the decision of the  
163 panel judge.

164 The criminal trial process is marked by the decision of the panel of judges regarding the first hearing.  
165 The first hearing was an indictment hearing, there was a reading of the indictment by the public  
166 prosecutor and a response to the indictment read. The second is the examination of witnesses and the  
167 examination of the defendant and the responses of each party, the third is the demand by the public  
168 prosecutor and the response, as well as the verdict by the Chief Judge and other panels that examine  
169 the case through trial. Here are some of the processes that the author refers to are classified in the  
170 following chart:



171

172

Figure 1.1 Criminal Trial Process.

173

Source: Classification of Criminal Code Results

174 The chart above illustrates the stages of the criminal trial process in court which consists of four main  
175 stages, namely the First Hearing, the Examination and Evidentiary Hearing, the Prosecution Hearing,  
176 and the Verdict Hearing

#### 177 1. First Session

178 This stage is the beginning of the trial process where the public prosecutor reads out an  
179 indictment containing the accusations against the defendant. At this stage, the defendant or his  
180 legal counsel can file an exception, which is an objection to the indictment filed, both formally  
181 and materially. If there is an exception, the judge will consider it and issue an interlocutory  
182 judgment. If the interlocutory ruling states that the indictment is valid and can be continued,  
183 then the trial will proceed to the next stage. On the other hand, if the judge accepts an exception,  
184 then the case can be stopped or the prosecutor needs to redraft the indictment.

185 2. Examination and Evidence Hearing

186 This stage is the core of the trial process, where evidence is submitted and tested before  
187 a panel of judges. This process begins with the examination of witnesses, both submitted by  
188 the public prosecutor and by the defendant (if there are mitigating witnesses). Witnesses give  
189 their testimony under oath and can be questioned by judges, prosecutors, and legal counsel of  
190 the defendant. After the examination of witnesses is completed, the trial continues with the  
191 examination of the defendant, where the defendant is given the opportunity to explain or  
192 respond to the facts that arise in the trial. At this stage, other evidence such as letters, recordings,  
193 or other evidence that supports the evidentiary process can also be submitted.

194 3. Trial of Claims

195 After the evidentiary process is completed, the public prosecutor will submit criminal  
196 charges against the defendant, which is referred to as a *requisitoir*. These charges include a  
197 legal analysis of the facts revealed at the trial as well as the sentencing recommendations  
198 submitted by the prosecutor. After that, the defendant or his legal counsel is given the  
199 opportunity to submit a plea (defense), which can be in the form of a rebuttal to the prosecutor's  
200 indictments and demands, a request for leniency, or any other defense deemed relevant. After  
201 the defense is submitted, the prosecutor is given the right to provide a replica, which is a  
202 response to the defendant's defense. Then, the defendant or his legal advisor can again provide  
203 a duplicate, which is a response to the prosecutor's replica.

204 4. Verdict Hearing

205 This stage is the culmination of the entire series of trials, where the judge reads out the  
206 court decision based on the results of the examination and legal considerations carried out. This  
207 verdict can be in the form of a free verdict, free from all lawsuits, or a conviction with certain  
208 penalties in accordance with applicable regulations. After the verdict is read, the prosecutor and  
209 the defendant have the right to express their stance on the verdict. If either party does not accept  
210 the verdict, they can file legal remedies such as an appeal to the high court or cassation to the  
211 Supreme Court. However, if both parties accept the verdict, then the case is considered  
212 complete and the verdict becomes permanent legal force (*inkracht*).

213  
214 Every hearing, the trial process always involves the communication process of the parties  
215 involved in the courtroom. The implementation of the trial was carried out in accordance with the trial  
216 agenda set by the judge through the clerk. Initially, the Presiding Judge and the panel determined the  
217 trial schedule, which began with the determination of the indictment hearing. Furthermore, the trial  
218 schedule is carried out according to the decision of the Panel of Judges that has been agreed upon by  
219 the Public Prosecutor and Legal Counsel. The Registrar's informant revealed that usually, the next  
220 hearing schedule is one week at most after the previous hearing. "... *The schedule of the trial depends,*  
221 *is determined and agreed upon by His Holiness.*" That is why

222 The trial at the Central Jakarta District Court will run if attended by all parties, namely the Panel of  
223 Judges including the Registrar, Public Prosecutor, Legal Counsel, and Defendants. The first party to  
224 enter the courtroom is the Defendant or the Public Prosecutor, followed by the clerk who coordinates  
225 to start the trial. After the trial was ready, the clerk allowed the Panel of Judges to enter the courtroom  
226 and occupy the prepared sitting position.

227 The officer will announce, "Your Majesty enters the room, the audience is requested to stand" or "The  
228 Panel of Judges enters the courtroom, the audience is requested to stand." The Panel of Judges then  
229 entered the room with several files, usually in the form of a personal memorandum. After the Panel of  
230 Judges was seated in their seats, the officer invited the audience consisting of the Public Prosecutor,

231 Legal Counsel, and visitors to sit, and the judge opened the trial by saying, "Audiences are welcome  
232 to sit."

233 Respecting the Panel of Judges by standing when they enter the courtroom is a mandatory thing to do,  
234 as stated in the Criminal Procedure Code (Criminal Procedure Code). According to Informant 4, this  
235 was done as a form of respect for the Court, the law, and the judges. However, based on the researchers'  
236 observations, this respect was only done in the main courtroom. In smaller courtrooms, this is often  
237 not done, especially when there is no officer to guide you.

238 After the Panel of Judges sat and the parties were present in the courtroom, the presiding judge opened  
239 the trial with expressions and hammer beats. The presiding judge then mentioned the trial agenda and  
240 started the process according to the agreed agenda, whether it was an examination hearing, an  
241 indictment hearing or a verdict hearing.

242 Specifically, the trial in the courtroom involves a variety of participants as support for the trial in the  
243 courtroom, based on the observation of the participant participant involving the main participant and  
244 the supporting insertion. The main participants refer to the trial implementation group, namely judges,  
245 prosecutors, lawyers, defendants and witnesses, while supporting participants involved in the trial  
246 process include the visiting parties, court officers who are envious of the cobrban family and the  
247 defendant's family.

## 248 **4 Discussion**

### 249 **4.1 Communication in the Courtroom**

250 Each stage of the trial has a distinctive communication potential that involves law enforcement  
251 as the main actor in communication. Communication in the courtroom describes communication  
252 between various parties in the trial and trial process, communication takes place between the Panel of  
253 Judges, the Public Prosecutor, Legal Counsel, the Defendant, Witnesses, Registrars, and Visitors. The  
254 Panel of Judges plays a central role by officially opening the trial and leading the trial. The Presiding  
255 Judge, assisted by the Member Judge, hears arguments, evidence, and testimony from the Public  
256 Prosecutor and Legal Counsel. The Public Prosecutor is in charge of submitting the indictment and  
257 presenting evidence and witnesses that support the indictment. On the other hand, Legal Counsel,  
258 presented the defense and submitted evidence and witnesses to support the defendant. The defendant  
259 himself can give statements and answer questions from the Panel of Judges and the Public Prosecutor  
260 as well as Legal Counsel, while witnesses give testimony and answer questions from law enforcers.  
261 Witnesses play an important role by providing testimony that can support or weaken the arguments of  
262 both sides. Court officers, although their role is more administrative, also play a role in ensuring smooth  
263 communication between all parties during the trial process. Overall, successful communication in the  
264 courtroom relies heavily on clarity, accuracy, and interaction between all parties involved.

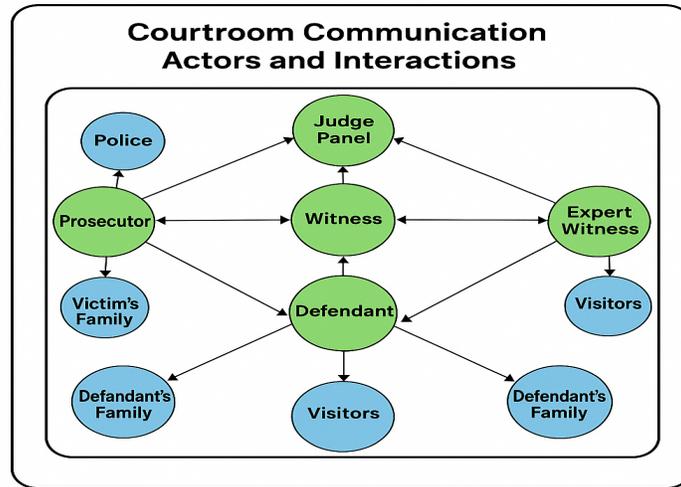
265 At the Bekasi Regional District Court, communication in the courtroom involves similar dynamics to  
266 the judicial system in other countries, but there are some distinctive differences and nuances. Judges  
267 in the Indonesian District Court have a very active role in directing the trial process, including asking  
268 direct questions to defendants and witnesses. Judges here often have to double down on the role of law  
269 enforcer and communication/dialogue facilitator, ensuring that all parties have a fair opportunity to  
270 present their arguments. According to Informant A, Judge., a judge explained, "*As a judge, I have to*  
271 *make sure that all parties get a fair opportunity to speak. The questions I ask should help clarify the*  
272 *facts without showing partiality. Clear and firm communication is essential to maintain the integrity*  
273 *of the trial process.*"That is why

274 Meanwhile, Informant B, the Public Prosecutor (JPU), is tasked with representing the state in  
275 prosecuting the defendant, and they must present evidence and witnesses who can support the charges.  
276 In many cases, the prosecutor's communication with witnesses and experts is the key to corroborating  
277 the cases they file. The Prosecutor's informant, the prosecutor in the Court explained, "*As a prosecutor,*  
278 *my main task is to present strong evidence and arguments. Communication with witnesses and experts*  
279 *is very important, as their testimony can strengthen or weaken our case. I have to be able to present*  
280 *my arguments in a way that can be understood by all parties, including the judge and the defendant.*"  
281 Informant C, as the defense lawyer, explained that he often had to work hard to overcome the evidence  
282 set by the JPU. Defendant and Attorney used various communication strategies to challenge the  
283 evidence presented, question the validity of the testimony, and defend the rights of the defendant.  
284 Informant C, a defense lawyer in the Jakarta trial, stated, "*My role is to ensure that my client's rights*  
285 *are protected. This includes presenting arguments clearly and effectively and challenging the evidence*  
286 *presented by the prosecutor. Good communication with the defendant is also very important to ensure*  
287 *that the defense strategy can run well.*"

288 Defendants, especially in cases that attract public attention, are often under immense pressure. Their  
289 communication, whether directly in the form of statements in court or through their lawyers, can have  
290 an impact on the perception of judges and the general public. One defendant who did not want to be  
291 named said, "*It was very nerve-wracking to be in the courtroom. I had to make sure that my story was*  
292 *heard and understood by the judges. My lawyer helped me make my arguments clearly and supported*  
293 *me throughout the process.*" Witnesses, including expert witnesses, give testimony that can be highly  
294 technical and require further clarification through questions from judges or lawyers. Informant E, a  
295 witness in a narcotics criminal case, said, "*Giving testimony in court is a stressful experience. I have*  
296 *to make sure that what I say is true and clear. Judges and lawyers often ask questions that help me*  
297 *explain in more detail.*"

298 Court officers, too, play an important role in supporting effective communication, managing the  
299 administration of the trial, and ensuring all documents and evidence are available in a timely manner.  
300 Informant G, said, "*His role is to ensure that all documents and evidence are ready on time and the*  
301 *trial runs smoothly. We also have to communicate frequently with various parties to coordinate*  
302 *schedules and needs during the trial, so that it is orderly.* Likewise, the prison guards and security  
303 officers ensure that the trial runs safely and orderly.

304 Overall, communication in the Indonesian District Court courtroom is a complex process that requires  
305 the active involvement of all parties to ensure that the objectives of the trial are achieved and justice  
306 can be upheld. This communication is influenced by the skills of legal professionals in presenting their  
307 arguments clearly and persuasively, as well as by the judge's ability to manage the trial process wisely  
308 and impartially. Communication in the trial through a series of participation of the parties to support  
309 the main objectives of the trial. Based on observations and information from informants, the researcher  
310 emphasized the connection of communication between the parties in supporting the communication  
311 process in the courtroom. As illustrated in chart 1.



312

313 **Chart 1 Communication in the Courtroom**

314 Communication in court involves many factors that affect how information is conveyed, received, and  
 315 interpreted in legal proceedings. In courtroom communication, each element of communication plays  
 316 an important role in shaping the dynamics of interaction in the courtroom. Communicators in the  
 317 trial consist of various parties who have specific legal roles, such as the judge who gives  
 318 instructions, the prosecutor who reads the indictment, the lawyer who submits the defense, and the  
 319 witness who gives testimony. The communicator, as the recipient of the message, includes the  
 320 defendant who receives the indictment, the judge who assesses the arguments of both sides, and  
 321 the witness who responds to questions asked by the prosecutor or lawyer.

322 The message communicated in the trial can be statements, instructions, questions, or evidence  
 323 presented during the judicial process. The communication channels used are generally verbal, such  
 324 as delivering arguments or interrogations, as well as nonverbal, such as legal documents, evidence  
 325 recordings, or the judge's facial expressions in giving signals. In courtroom communication,  
 326 feedback occurs when the recipient of the message responds to the information received, for  
 327 example when the defendant answers questions from the judge or the witness provides clarification  
 328 on the prosecutor's statement.

329 The context in courtroom communication includes legal, social, and psychological factors that  
 330 affect the course of communication. The legal context includes the judicial rules that must be  
 331 followed, while the social context can be in the form of public expectations of trial transparency.  
 332 On the other hand, psychological distress can affect the effectiveness of communication, for  
 333 example when a witness feels intimidated while giving testimony. In addition, communication  
 334 disorders (noise) can also appear in various forms, such as physical disorders (noise from court  
 335 visitors), psychological disorders (witness anxiety that hinders fluent speech), and semantic  
 336 disorders (the use of legal terms that are difficult for witnesses or defendants to understand). The  
 337 communication process is through at least two communication streams, namely one-way and multi-  
 338 directional communication streams,

339 In real practice in the courtroom, a one-way flow usually occurs when the judge gives instructions  
 340 or leads the course of the trial. For example, when the trial begins, the judge will instruct the  
 341 prosecutor and lawyers about the order of the proceedings, such as who first presents arguments or  
 342 when witnesses are called. Judges also often make final decisions, such as interlocutory rulings or  
 343 decisions related to the evidence received. These decisions were delivered without any direct

344 feedback from the parties involved at the time, although they could appeal or protest through other  
 345 legal channels. For example, when a judge decides to accept or reject evidence, this decision is  
 346 presented to lawyers and prosecutors, who can then accept the decision or make other appeals, but  
 347 no direct interaction occurs at the time of the reading of the decision.

348 Multi-directional flow is more reflective of the active dynamics that occur during the trial process.  
 349 One obvious example is during the interrogation of witnesses, where prosecutors and lawyers take  
 350 turns asking each other questions and giving arguments. In this process, the witness gives an  
 351 answer, which can then be further questioned or refuted by another lawyer or prosecutor.  
 352 Communication here flows back and forth, with each party responding to what the other party says.  
 353 Another example is when the defendant gives a statement or a lawyer defends his client. The lawyer  
 354 will provide convincing arguments to the judge or jury, while the prosecutor will also present a  
 355 rebuttal or clarification. During this process, there is a dynamic exchange of information, either  
 356 through direct dialogue or through reactions to the arguments put forward. One of the real forms  
 357 of this multi-directional communication flow is seen when the judge decides to give the lawyer the  
 358 opportunity to ask questions of the witness, which then becomes a question and answer process  
 359 that requires the judge, prosecutor, lawyer, and witness to interact with each other. In this context,  
 360 the flow of communication can be very flexible, depending on who is providing the information  
 361 and how the other party responds to the information.

362 In the courtroom, there are two forms of communication flows that dominate the judicial process,  
 363 namely the one-way flow and the multi-directional flow, each of which has an important role in the  
 364 course of the trial. One-way flow occurs when information flows from one party to another without  
 365 any immediate feedback at the time. An example is when the judge gives instructions or decisions,  
 366 such as reading the verdict or directing the course of the trial. In this stream, other parties, such as  
 367 prosecutors or lawyers, simply receive information without being able to provide an immediate  
 368 response at that time. In contrast, a multi-directional flow occurs when several parties engage in  
 369 interactive communication, such as in the question and answer process between prosecutors,  
 370 lawyers, witnesses, and defendants. In interrogation, each party gives a response that affects the  
 371 course of the conversation, creating a dynamic dialogue and interacting with each other. Although  
 372 these two streams differ in terms of interaction and communication structure, they have the same  
 373 goal, which is to ensure that the trial process runs fairly and transparently. The one-way flow serves  
 374 to provide clear and firm instructions, while the multi-way flow deepens the understanding of the  
 375 facts revealed during the trial. Both are important in supporting the achievement of legitimate and  
 376 fair legal decisions. The following table is meant:

Aspects	One-Way Flow	Multi-Directional Flow
Communication Direction	Information flows from one party to another without direct feedback.,	Information flows in two or more directions, with interaction and feedback.
Interaction.	There is no direct interaction between the parties involved.,	There is direct interaction and an exchange of arguments or responses
Speed and Flexibility,	More rigid and structured, information is delivered directly.,	More flexible, depending on the response of the other parties involved.
Purpose	Provide instructions or decisions that do not require a direct response.,	Dig into the facts, provide arguments, and clarify the position of the relevant parties.

Parties Involved,	Only one party dominates the communication, such as the judge giving instructions.	All parties are actively involved in communication, such as prosecutors, lawyers, and witnesses.
Example	The judge reads the verdict or gives instructions.,	The prosecutor interrogated witnesses or lawyers defending the defendant.

377 Table 3 Explanation of Communication Flow

378 In the context of communication in the courtroom, the flow of communication refers to the direction  
379 and pattern of interaction that occurs between various participants during the law enforcement process.  
380 These streams of communication can be categorized into two main types:

- 381 1. One-Way Communication Flow: Occurs when information or messages are conveyed from one  
382 party to another without any immediate response. An example is when the judge reads the  
383 verdict or the prosecutor submits an indictment. In this situation, communication is linear and  
384 does not require immediate feedback from the recipient of the message.
- 385 2. Multi-Directional Communication Flow: Involves a reciprocal interaction between two or more  
386 participants, where there is a dynamic exchange of information. For example, during the  
387 examination of witnesses, there is a dialogue between judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and  
388 witnesses. This flow of communication allows for further clarification, affirmation, and  
389 exploration of information through questions and answers.

390 Each of these communication streams has characteristics that affect the dynamics of the trial. One-way  
391 communication flows tend to be formal and hierarchical, emphasizing authority and structure in the  
392 judicial process. In contrast, multi-directional communication flows are more interactive and  
393 participatory, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the facts of the case through direct interaction  
394 between the various parties involved. Understanding the flow of communication in a trial is important  
395 for participants to optimize their communication strategies. By adapting the communication approach  
396 according to the flow that occurs, the effectiveness of the judicial process can be improved, ensuring  
397 that each party can convey their information and arguments efficiently and on point.

## 398 4.2 Characteristics of Communication in the Courtroom

399 Overall, based on the information of the informants, communication in the trial does have  
400 distinctive characteristics and is different in other communication contexts. The informants explained  
401 several characteristics that occurred, that communication in the courtroom is a combination of various  
402 characteristics that reflect the complexity of the interaction between the participants involved in the  
403 trial. This characteristic arises because communication in the trial is influenced by various roles, goals,  
404 and goals. Communication that occurs between participants has various characteristics, including  
405 procedural, confrontational, hierarchical, invertigious, opposite, and mutually supportive. The  
406 following is a description of each of the characteristics:

- 407 1) Professional.  
408 Communication in the courtroom is carried out formally and in accordance with the rule of  
409 law. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers use language that is polite, unemotional, and should be  
410 based on facts. For example, the judge must speak neutrally and objectively, while the

411 prosecutor drafts the indictment based on evidence, not assumptions. This professional  
412 attitude is important so that the trial runs fairly and according to the rules. Communication in  
413 the trial is professional, where judges, prosecutors, and lawyers use formal legal language  
414 and follow established procedures. Professionals are depicted in the presentation of  
415 arguments, examination of witnesses, and the decision-making process. Informant A and  
416 Informant C, explained that the professional in the trial is that communication that is carried  
417 out with a formal, rules-based attitude, and follows legal ethics without involving emotions  
418 or personal interests, is a must "... *The judge must maintain a balance between justice and*  
419 *law. Every word spoken must be neutral, objective, and based on the facts revealed in the*  
420 *trial*" Meanwhile, informant C, revealed "*We cannot be careless in drafting indictments.*  
421 *Any statement must be based on legal evidence and facts, not personal assumptions or*  
422 *opinions.*" Referring to this information, professional is defined as an objective attitude and  
423 responsibility carried out through formal communication.

424 2) Contradictory.

425 Communication in the courtroom is often conflicting, especially between prosecutors and  
426 lawyers who have conflicting interests. The prosecutor is tasked with proving the defendant's  
427 guilt, while the lawyer tries to defend his client by refuting the accusations made. Informant  
428 D, a lawyer interviewed revealed that, "*sometimes, lawyers do, often face fierce arguments*  
429 *with prosecutors, but that is part of the legal system. We must maintain ethics, even in the*  
430 *face of conflicting arguments.*" This confrontation is seen in witness examination sessions,  
431 such as in cases where the prosecutor asks, "*Are you sure you didn't see the defendant at the*  
432 *scene? CCTV evidence shows that the defendant was at the location at 22.00 WIB.*" The  
433 lawyer then denied with an interruption, "*The presence of the defendant at the location does*  
434 *not necessarily prove that he committed a criminal act. How can you be sure that the*  
435 *defendant is the real perpetrator?*" In a situation like this, the judge plays the role of  
436 controlling the course of the trial so that the debate does not go beyond the limits of legal  
437 ethics.

438 3) Investigative

439 Another characteristic found is investigative communication, judges, prosecutors, and  
440 lawyers to dig up facts and test the validity of information from witnesses or defendants. The  
441 judge often asks clarifying questions to ensure consistency in the testimony given, as in the  
442 case where the judge asks, "*Brother witness, in the BAP you mentioned that the incident*  
443 *occurred at 9:00 p.m., but the police report said it was 10:00 p.m. Can you explain the*  
444 *difference?*". The interviewed judge explained, "*Our job is not only to hear, but also to clarify*  
445 *and ensure that there is no contradictory information. We have to find the truth based on the*  
446 *evidence.*" Based on this information, investigative is evidenced by the process of digging or  
447 searching for more detailed and in-depth information.

448 4) Counter-intuitive

449 In addition to investigations, communication in the courtroom is also opposite, where the  
450 legal system allows for resistance through communication. Resistance is characterized by  
451 presenting rebuttal arguments. This interaction is still carried out within ethical limits. One  
452 prosecutor explained that, "*We are not looking for enemies in court, but our job is to prove*  
453 *the truth based on evidence.*" In a trial, communication resistance was seen in the debate  
454 between the prosecutor and the lawyer. The prosecutor stated, "*The defendant has a clear*  
455 *motive, namely financial gain from the criminal act committed.*" Meanwhile, the lawyer  
456 countered, "*There is no direct evidence to suggest that my client benefited financially from*  
457 *this incident.*"

458 5) Hierarchical in nature

459 Communication in trials also shows a hierarchical and formal structure, where judges have  
 460 the highest authority in controlling the course of the trial, while prosecutors, lawyers,  
 461 defendants, and witnesses have a predetermined role in the legal system. One witness  
 462 interviewed revealed that, *"I felt pressure when giving testimony because the communication*  
 463 *in the courtroom was very formal and strict. Every answer I give must be in accordance with*  
 464 *the facts and must not be mispronounced."* This hierarchical structure ensures that the trial  
 465 runs in accordance with established legal procedures and prevents disruption during the  
 466 process. An example of formal communication can be seen in the judge's order, "I open this  
 467 trial and I declare it open to the public. Prosecutor, please read the indictment." This formality  
 468 ensures that the trial takes place according to procedure and that there are no errors in the  
 469 course of the trial

470 6) Supportive

471 Communication in the courtroom can also be mutually supportive, especially in the  
 472 interaction between the judge and the witness or between the lawyer and his client. In some  
 473 cases, judges show empathy for witnesses who testify in emotional cases. A traumatized  
 474 witness stated that, *"The judge gave me time to calm down before continuing to testify. It*  
 475 *really helped me to speak more clearly."* In addition, it can also be seen in the lawyer's  
 476 interaction with his client. Lawyers often provide moral and technical support to their clients  
 477 before the trial begins in order to better deal with the legal process.

478 In a nutshell, the following is a classification in the form of a table

Yes	Characteristics	Description
1	Professional	Communication that is carried out with a formal, rules-based attitude, and follows legal ethics without involving emotions or personal interests
2	Conflicting	Communications that are challenging or contradictory, where the parties to the hearing attempt to refute or test the truth of a statement
3	Investigation	Communication that aims to dig up facts, seek truth, and uncover evidence through questioning and investigation.
4	opposite	A communication that is competitive between two opposing parties, such as between a prosecutor and a lawyer, each of whom is trying to prove his or her argument in front of a judge.
5	Hierarchies	Communication that follows a power structure or authority, where decisions and instructions flow from higher parties to lower parties
6	Supportive	Communication that is supportive and provides assistance, usually comes from parties who want to provide morals or support to certain individuals.

479 Table 4: Characteristics of Communication in the Courtroom

480 Communication in the courtroom is not just an exchange of information, but a key interaction in  
 481 running the legal system effectively. The combination of the various communication characteristics of  
 482 professionalism, confrontation, investigation, and hierarchical structure creates a communication  
 483 mechanism that serves to ensure justice for all parties involved. However, the main challenge in trial  
 484 communication is maintaining a balance between critical debate and legal ethics, as well as ensuring  
 485 that all participants can participate without intrusive pressure.

486 **5 Conclusion**

487 Communication in the courtroom involves various trial participants with various objectives, with  
488 complex processes. The communication process in the trial occurs in several characteristics. Among  
489 others, the profession. Investigative, supportive, contradictory and hierarchical. By understanding the  
490 characteristics of communication in the courtroom, communication actors in the courtroom can  
491 optimize their communication strategies to increase the effectiveness of the judicial process. Judges  
492 must remain firm in controlling communication at trials, prosecutors and lawyers must prioritize  
493 professionalism in arguing, while witnesses and defendants need to be given enough space to convey  
494 information clearly and accurately. Therefore, this study confirms that good communication in the  
495 courtroom is not only a technical aspect, but also a major factor in creating more transparent and  
496 accountable justice.

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No	Perihal	Tanggal
2	Bukti konfirmasi review pertama dan hasil review pertama dari Reviewer 1	14 Agustus 2025

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## Independent review report submitted (ID 1623307)

1 message

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Thu, Aug 14, 2025 at

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6:04 PM

Reply-To: Frontiers in Communication Editorial Office <communication.editorial.office@frontiersin.org>

To: aan.widodo@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id

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## **Review: “Courtroom Communication: Identification of the Communication Characteristics of Criminal Trials in Indonesian Courts”**

### **General comment:**

Overall, this paper addresses a relevant and interesting topic — the identification of communication characteristics in Indonesian criminal trials — and the study design has the potential to contribute meaningfully to courtroom communication research. However, in its current form, the manuscript requires major revisions before it can be considered for publication. The main issues lie in the weak alignment between methodology and results, redundancy and lack of variety in examples, and the absence of a clear derivation process from data to findings. The Introduction does not sufficiently establish a specific research gap or clearly formulate the research questions, the Methods section needs restructuring for clarity and consistency, and the Results section contains background information that should be distinguished from original findings. In the Discussion subsections, analysis is sometimes repetitive and over-reliant on interview data without adequate integration of observation evidence. The Conclusion summarises findings but does not fully synthesise them, lacks explicit linkage to research questions, and omits discussion of limitations and future research directions.

In addition to these structural and logical issues, there are numerous language problems throughout the manuscript — including sentence fragments, incorrect punctuation, tense inconsistencies, and redundancy in terminology — which hinder clarity and academic tone. I strongly recommend that, after making the necessary substantive revisions based on the detailed feedback below, the authors seek thorough language editing by a native speaker or professional academic editor to ensure fluency, coherence, and conformity to scholarly standards. Without such major revision, the paper is not ready for acceptance.

### **Keywords:**

Your current keywords contain clear repetition and overlap, which reduces their effectiveness for indexing and discoverability. “Trial Communication” and “Courtroom” both refer to communication that happens in court trials, making them conceptually similar. “Communication” is a very broad term and already implied within both “Trial Communication” and “Communication Characteristics,” the latter being a narrower, more specific form of the former. Because “Communication” serves as a hypernym here, its inclusion alongside more specific terms does not add indexing value and instead wastes a keyword slot. Effective keywords in academic writing should be distinct, non-redundant, and represent different conceptual or methodological dimensions of the study.

### **1 Introduction**

#### **Language Minors:**

Line 20: Missing comma between clauses. You should replace it with a period or a semicolon to avoid joining two independent clauses with only a comma.

Line 23: “Grossman, 2019, 2019” contains the publication year twice. It should appear only once, e.g., “Grossman, 2019.”

In the end of the sentence, you should add a period.

Lines 33-35: Incorrect punctuation before the citation.

Line 57: Incorrect comma after “the legal actors”.

Line 63: Why did you use the past tense of “occur”?

Line 71: Your sentence is missing a main verb after “focuses on”.

Lines 84-86: In many academic papers, authors use *This finding can be compared with...* to make it less imperative.

Lines 88-90: “However, there is a lack of literature on the analysis of various aspects of communication that occur in trials related to the characteristics of communication, especially in criminal courts.” Avoid overstating the absence of literature.

### Suggestions:

1) Strengthen the research gap: Currently, the statement “there is a lack of literature on the analysis of various aspects of communication that occur in trials related to the characteristics of communication, especially in criminal courts” is too general.

You should specify which aspects are lacking in the literature (e.g., nonverbal features, multimodal interaction, hierarchical power dynamics, cultural influences).

Demonstrate this gap by first summarizing what existing studies have covered and then pointing out what they have not addressed.

2) Clearly formulate research questions:

At the end of the Introduction, explicitly state 1–2 research questions in a numbered list.

Example: What are the main characteristics of communication in Indonesian criminal court trials? How do these characteristics influence the flow and outcome of courtroom interaction?

3) Expand and organize the literature review: The current review focuses mainly on defining related terms (courtroom communication, forensic communication, judicial communication, trial communication) but lacks a thematic synthesis of empirical findings. Organize the literature by thematic areas, such as: Verbal communication in court; Nonverbal and multimodal aspects; Interactional patterns between legal actors; Communication’s influence on trial outcomes. For each theme, highlight key studies, their methods, findings, and limitations.

4) Create a logical bridge to your study: Ensure the literature review flows from general concepts → existing empirical work → identified gaps → how your study will address them. This bridge will make the research gap convincing and naturally lead into your research questions.

## **2 Research Methods**

### **Language Minors:**

Lines 102-103: Mismatch problems in the text and the table. For example, the text states “3 judges, prosecutors, legal advisors,” but the table shows only 1 judge, 1 prosecutor, and lawyer.

And you should number this table instead of writing “the following is a table”.

Lines 113-114: Not fluent and academic for journal publications. Comma splice – two independent clauses joined only by a comma. Repetition of “the researcher” – unnecessary and makes the sentence less smooth.

Lines 128-134: The tense in this paragraph is not consistent. Pay attention to the use of past tense. For example: “contacted”.

Line 150: 2.3.4 is correct in order instead of 2.2.4

### **Suggestions:**

I looked at your Research Methods structure, and overall the subheadings do follow a logical sequence, but there are a few naming, hierarchy, and consistency issues that could be improved.

For example: Overlap between 2.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis Techniques and 2.3.3 Data Analysis. Hierarchy — If 2.3.3 is “Data Analysis” and you already have “Data Collection and Data Analysis Techniques” at 2.2, it’s not clear which one is the main description and which one is the procedural detail. Subheadings should follow the same grammatical form (e.g., all noun phrases or all verb phrases): 2.3.1 Preparation and Research Permits instead of “Preparation and Obtaining of research permits”.

Suggested one:

## **2 Research Methods**

2.1 Research Design - Approach (qualitative)- Participants and sampling

2.2 Data Collection- Techniques (interviews, observations, documents)- Instruments/tools

2.3 Data Analysis - Coding and categorization - Analytical framework

2.4 Research Procedure- 2.4.1 Preparation and Research Permits-2.4.2 Fieldwork and Data Collection Steps

2.5 Data Validity and Reliability- Triangulation, member checking, etc.

### 3 Result

#### Language Minors:

Line 167: Incorrect use of comma after”of each party”.

Line 172: Check the number of Figure 1.1.

Line 174: Give the number of the chart. We do not use “the chart above” in academic paper.

Line 177: Check the format and use of the number “1. 2. 3. 4.” in the subsection of “3.1”.

Line 221: There is something missing after “That is why”.

#### Suggestions:

In the current *Results* section, several issues reduce its clarity and impact. **First**, 3.1 *Trial in Court* mainly provides a general description of the four trial stages—indictment hearing, examination hearing, prosecution hearing, and verdict hearing—which reads more like background knowledge of Indonesian criminal procedure. This section does not include direct evidence from the study, such as quotations from interviewees, excerpts from observation notes, or document analysis results. **Second**, there is a disconnection between the *Results* and the *Methods* sections. While 2 *Research Methods* explains that data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis involving nine informants and three trials, 3.1 does not make it clear which information is based on the researcher’s data and which is drawn from general legal sources. **Third**, the structure is incomplete, as there is only a 3.1 subsection and no additional subsections (3.2, 3.3, etc.) that break down findings according to research objectives or questions. **Finally**, the content remains descriptive rather than analytical, offering procedural information without explicitly linking it to the study’s focus on communication characteristics in criminal trials.

To address these issues, several improvements are recommended. First, integrate data evidence throughout the *Results* by including observational details from fieldwork and direct quotations from participants such as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and witnesses. For example, rather than simply stating that “the examination hearing involves questioning witnesses,” add an observation excerpt showing how the questioning took place, along with an informant’s comment on communication challenges. Second, organize the *Results* around the research questions or thematic findings—for instance, professional communication, confrontational exchanges, and hierarchical interactions—rather than solely by trial stages. Third, distinguish clearly between background context and original findings. 3.1 can remain as a concise “Trial process background” subsection, but it should be followed by new subsections presenting empirical findings drawn directly from the collected data. Finally, ensure a direct linkage to the *Methods* by explicitly referencing the source of each finding (e.g., “Based on observation of Trial A...” or “According to Informant C, a defense lawyer...”). This will create a clear chain between the methodology

and the results, strengthen the study's credibility, and make the section more aligned with international academic standards.

## **4 Discussion**

### **4.1 “Communication in the Courtroom”**

#### **Language Minors:**

Line 273: There is something missing after “That is why”.

Line 313: The name of Chart 1 “communication in the courtroom” is too general. Why not use the name “Courtroom communication actors and interactions” in the chart?

Line 377: Where are the Table 1 and Table 2?

#### **Suggestions:**

In the subsection 4.1, first 6 paragraphs of 4.1 (pp. 8–9) work well in that they analyze different Indonesian courtroom actors (judges, prosecutors, lawyers, defendants, witnesses, court officers) and integrate quotes from the 2.1 Research Design's 9 informants. That section is supported by Chart 1, which visually summarizes the interactions.

Pages 9–10–11 shift to explaining the two communication flows: one-way and multi-directional. However:

The table is redundant – the distinctions between the two flows are already explained extensively in the text, so presenting them again in a table without adding new information feels repetitive.

Too many summaries – the same definitions and contrasts are repeated in prose before the table, inside the table, and again after the table.

Language repetition – phrases like “information flows from one party to another without immediate feedback” and “multi-directional flow involves reciprocal interaction” occur multiple times with minimal variation.

Lack of variety in examples – examples are mainly judge instructions for one-way, and witness questioning for multi-directional. More diverse, context-rich examples from your data (e.g., defendant-lawyer consultations, sidebar discussions, evidence presentation disputes) could make the analysis more engaging and better grounded in the fieldwork.

### **4.2 “Characteristics of Communication in the Courtroom”**

#### **Language Minors:**

Line 407 and Line 424 have periods, while lines 438, 448, 458, 470 do not have.

### Suggestions:

In the current 4.2 Characteristics of Communication in the Courtroom section, there is a partial alignment with the methods described in 2 Research Methods, but also a noticeable disconnect between methodology and findings. While 4.2 clearly addresses the paper's aim of identifying communication characteristics in criminal trials and uses quotes from all nine informants, it does not show the analytical process that led from raw data to the six identified characteristics. The section moves directly from introducing the six themes to illustrating each with quotes, without explaining how these themes were generated, refined, or validated. This absence of a visible derivation process makes it difficult for readers to see how the interview and observation data described in the methods were systematically analyzed to produce the findings. Furthermore, although observation was listed as a data collection method, 4.2 relies almost exclusively on interview excerpts, with little or no direct evidence from trial observations or document analysis, creating the impression that parts of the stated methodology were underutilized.

To resolve this, 4.2 should begin with a short methodological bridge paragraph explaining how the six characteristics were derived from the collected data. This could briefly outline the coding process (e.g., open coding of interview transcripts and observation notes, grouping similar codes, refining into six themes) and note that both interviews and observations contributed to the thematic framework. Each characteristic should then be supported by evidence from multiple sources — not only interview quotes but also concrete examples from trial observations and, if available, relevant documents. Additionally, each quote should be traceable to its data source, using identifiers that link back to the methods section (e.g., “Informant A, Judge, Trial 2 observation”). This approach will create a visible link between the methods and results, demonstrate the integration of multiple data types, and strengthen the credibility and transparency of the findings.

### “5 Conclusion”

#### Language Minors:

Lines 488-489: Sentence fragmentation – “Among others, the profession.” is incomplete and not grammatically correct. Corrected version: “The communication process in the trial exhibits several characteristics, including professional, investigative, supportive, contradictory, and hierarchical.”

#### Suggestions:

It should also include limitation and future research. “While the scope was limited to one district court and criminal proceedings, the study offers a foundation for future comparative research across legal contexts and jurisdictions.”

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No	Perihal	Tanggal
3	Bukti konfirmasi review pertama dan hasil review pertama dari Reviewer 2	24 Agustus 2025

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Universitas  
Bhayangkara  
Jakarta Raya

Aan Widodo <aan.widodo@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id>

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## Independent review report submitted (ID 1623307)

1 message

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Frontiers in Communication Editorial Office

Sun, Aug 24, 2025 at

<communication.editorial.office@frontiersin.org>

5:48 AM

Reply-To: Frontiers in Communication Editorial Office <communication.editorial.office@frontiersin.org>

To: aan.widodo@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id

Dear Dr Widodo,

A new report has been submitted by Reviewer 2.

As soon as all reviewers have submitted their comments, you will be able to access the reports in the review forum, enabling you to start your revisions.

If you have any questions, you can contact the editorial office directly by replying to this message.

You can track the progress of your manuscript using this link: <http://review.frontiersin.org/review/1623307/0/0>

Best regards,

Best regards,  
Your Frontiers in Communication Team,

Frontiers | Editorial Office - Collaborative Peer Review Team

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-----MANUSCRIPT DETAILS-----

Manuscript title: Courtroom Communication: Identification of the Communication Characteristics of Criminal Trials in Indonesian Courts

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Authors: Aan Widodo

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Article type: Original Research

Submitted on: 05 May 2025

If you encounter any technical issue, contact [support@frontiersin.org](mailto:support@frontiersin.org), with dOcTv2q8vyMBI9K as reference.

▼ EVALUATION

**Q 1** Please list your revision requests for the authors and provide your detailed comments, including highlighting limitations and strengths of the study and evaluating the validity of the methods, results, and data interpretation. If you have additional comments based on Q2 and Q3 you can add them as well.

 Reviewer 2 | 23 Aug 2025 | 22:48

#1

The abstract is defective for the following reasons: the background is not contextualised. The context is not highlighted. The theoretical framework is not mentioned and this was reflected in the main work itself. In the methodology, only the data gathering was mentioned but the sources of data, method of data gathering and method of data analysis was not stated. The findings should be more elaborate.

Impression

The paper is quite informative: it addresses the issue of communication in the courtroom. This is a common place topic for scholars of legal discourse. The structure of the courtroom and the participants as well as how they interact in this discourse event are clearly spelt out. The author seems to have written more from a communication plank rather a discourse analytical framework. The main bane of the work therefore is the lack of theoretical framework that should underpin the analysis. Communication in the courtroom has been examined from different theoretical basis such as Goffman's concept of gathering. But other theoretical concepts abound upon which any analysis on this issue can be anchored. This should be explored by the author.

Besides, there are a host infelicities in the paper:

Line 33- use of double full stops.

Line 33-35- the in-text citation should be checked.

Line 65-What is "law enforcement law enforcers"

Wobbly sentences- lines 69-70; 72; 92-93; 214-215;

The author closed two sentences with the statements: That is why? (lines. 220-221/273)

Line 71 has a dangling sentence- removal 'how' will make more meaningful.

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No	Perihal	Tanggal
4	Bukti konfirmasi submit revisi pertama, respon kepada Reviewer 1, dan artikel yang diresubmit	3 September 2025

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## **RESPON TO REVIEWER 1**

**Manuscript ID** : 1623307  
**Title** : *Courtroom Communication: Identification of the Communication Characteristics of Criminal Trials in Indonesian Courts*

**Dear Reviewer,**

I sincerely thank you for the valuable and constructive comments provided on this manuscript. I truly appreciate the time and effort you devoted to offering such a thorough and thoughtful review. Each point raised has been carefully considered, and revisions have been made in line with your suggestions.

In the following, I provide a point-by-point response accompanied by explanations of the revisions implemented. As an attachment, I include a summary table of the reviewer's comments and the author's corresponding responses/revisions. All changes have been clearly marked in the revised manuscript.

### **Reviewer Comments and Author Responses**

1. **Comment** : Manuscript requires major revisions (weak methodology, lack of alignment, redundancy, unclear questions, structural issues).  
**Response** : We comprehensively reorganized the manuscript: clarified the framework, formulated explicit research questions, strengthened methodology, grouped findings systematically, rewrote discussion and conclusion with synthesis, implications, and limitations.  
**Revision** : Entire manuscript (Introduction–Conclusion).
2. **Comment** : Keywords overlap.  
**Response** : Revised with five distinct keywords (Courtroom, Trial Communication, Criminal Trial, Judicial Authority, Indonesia).  
**Revision** : Keywords section, line 7–8.
3. **Comment** : Missing comma, punctuation errors, duplicate citation.  
**Response** : Language edited, punctuation corrected, duplicates removed.  
**Revision** : Introduction, lines 30–34.
4. **Comment** : Wrong tense “occur” (line 63).  
**Response** : Corrected to present tense.  
**Revision** : Introduction, line 63.
5. **Comment** : Sentence missing verb (line 71).  
**Response** : Revised into complete academic sentence.  
**Revision** : Introduction, line 71.
6. **Comment** : Strengthen research gap.

- Response** : Added two paragraphs elaborating the research gap and importance of this study.
- Revision** : Introduction paragraphs 5–6, lines 101–127.
7. **Comment** : Research questions missing.
- Response** : Added explicit research questions:  
 (1) What are the main characteristics of communication in Indonesian criminal court trials?  
 (2) How do these characteristics influence the flow and outcomes of courtroom interactions?
- Revision** : End of Introduction.
8. **Comment** : Expand & organize literature review thematically.
- Response** : Literature grouped into verbal, nonverbal, interactional patterns, and outcomes, with additional references.
- Revision** : Introduction paragraphs 3–6, lines 46–91.
9. **Comment** : Create logical bridge to study.
- Response** : Added transition paragraph linking conceptual review to empirical research.
- Revision** : Introduction closing.
10. **Comment** : Mismatch text vs. table (informants).
- Response** : Table revised; informants consistently described.
- Revision** : Methods 2.1–2.2, lines 137–144.
11. **Comment** : Sentence fluency issues.
- Response** : Sentences reworded for clarity and fluency.
- Revision** : Methods 2.1–2.2, lines 148–152.
12. **Comment** : Inconsistent term “constructed.”
- Response** : Replaced with accurate academic term.
- Revision** : Methods 2.4, line 204.
13. **Comment** : Wrong numbering (2.2.4).
- Response** : Corrected numbering according to journal guidelines.
- Revision** : Methods section.
14. **Comment** : Methods structure unclear.
- Response** : Divided into subsections: 2.1 Research Design, 2.2 Data Collection, 2.3 Data Analysis, 2.4 Research Procedure, 2.5 Data Validity.
- Revision** : Methods section.
15. **Comment** : Section too descriptive, not data-based.
- Response** : Results rewritten with evidence from interviews, observations, and documents.
- Revision** : Results 3.1–3.3, lines 190, 302, 311.
16. **Comment** : Missing data linkage.
- Response** : Each finding explicitly linked to its source (interview, observation, or document).
- Revision** : Results 3.1–3.3, lines 297–565.
17. **Comment** : Numbering/formatting errors.
- Response** : Corrected all figure, table, and subsection formatting.
- Revision** : Results and Discussion.
18. **Comment** : Missing phrase “That is why.”

- Response** : Completed sentence with proper causal statement.  
**Revision** : Discussion 4.1.
19. **Comment** : Chart name too general.  
**Response** : Revised chart title to “Chart 1. Courtroom Communication Actors and Interactions.”  
**Revision** : Chart 1, line 348.
20. **Comment** : Table 1 and 2 missing linkage.  
**Response** : Tables revised with explanatory notes and citations.  
**Revision:** Results 3.1–3.3, lines 333, 468.
21. **Comment** : Repetition in defining flows.  
**Response** : Consolidated repetitive definitions; discussion more varied and concise.  
**Revision** : Discussion, lines 600–637.
22. **Comment** : Weak integration of observation data.  
**Response** : Observation findings incorporated into results.  
**Revision** : Results 3.1–3.3, lines 326, 392, 412, 453, 472.
23. **Comment** : No methodological bridge for data characteristics.  
**Response** : Added explanation linking methodology to findings.  
**Revision** : Discussion, line 600.
24. **Comment** : Quotes lack source identifiers.  
**Response** : Revised quotes with identifiers (role, informant code, date).  
**Revision** : Results 3.1–3.3, line 502.
25. **Comment** : Sentence fragmentation.  
**Response** : Revised into complete sentence: “Among others, the profession that most frequently interacts in trials is that of judges and lawyers.”  
**Revision** : Discussion, lines 488–498.
26. **Comment** : Lacks synthesis, limitations, and future research.  
**Response** : Conclusion rewritten with synthesis of findings, limitations, and future research.  
**Revision** : Conclusion, paragraphs 1–2.

I believe these revisions have enhanced the clarity, rigor, and both the theoretical and practical contributions of this study. I hope that the revised version now meets the expectations of the reviewers and the editorial board.

Respectfully,  
Aan Widodo

**Tabel Respons to Reviewer 1**

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Notes / Explanation
<b>General Comment</b>				
A	Manuscript requires major revisions (weak methodology– results alignment, redundancy, lack of derivation, missing gap, unclear questions, structural issues).	Reorganized Introduction (gap + questions), Methods (clear structure), Results (separated background vs. findings), Discussion (reduced redundancy, integrated data), Conclusion (synthesis, limitations, future research).	Entire manuscript (Intro– Conclusion).	The author made major revisions: (1) clarifying the framework used, (2) explaining the research questions clearly, (3) aligning the research questions with the methodology, (4) improving the research methods, from design to analysis stage, (5) grouping results based on classifications of communication data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, (6) rewriting the discussion section based on findings, integrating them with empirical data, (7) synthesizing the framework used, describing implications and limitations, and improving the conclusion.
<b>Keywords</b>				

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Notes / Explanation
1	Keywords overlap (“Trial Communication”, “Courtroom”, “Communication”).	Replaced with distinct terms: Courtroom Communication, Criminal Trials, Judicial Communication, Forensic Communication, Indonesia.	Keywords section. Line 7 - 8	Revised according to the reviewer’s suggestion.
<b>1. Introduction</b>				
2	Missing comma, punctuation errors, duplicate citation.	Corrected grammar, removed duplicate “Grossman, 2019, 2019”, fixed punctuation.	Introduction, paragraph 1, lines 31-34	Language issues corrected: author fixed commas and duplicate citations.
3	Line 63: Wrong tense “occur”.	Changed to present tense “occurs”.	Introduction line 65	Author corrected language consistency.
4	Line 71: Sentence missing verb.	Revised to include proper verb.	Introduction line 71.	Author revised into an academic sentence.
5	Strengthen research gap.	Gap specified: lack of research on nonverbal features, multimodal interaction, hierarchical dynamics, cultural factors in Indonesian courts.	Introduction paragraph 8-9. line 101 - 127	Author elaborated paragraphs and explained the necessary research gap.

<b>No</b>	<b>Reviewer Comment</b>	<b>Author Response</b>	<b>Revision Location</b>	<b>Notes / Explanation</b>
6	Research questions missing.	Added numbered research questions (1–2).	End of Introduction.	Author added data and research questions: “What are the main characteristics of communication in Indonesian criminal court trials?” and “How do these characteristics influence the flow and outcomes of courtroom interaction?”

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Notes / Explanation
7	Expand & organize literature review thematically.	Literature grouped into themes: verbal, nonverbal, interactional patterns, outcomes.	Introduction para 3–6, line 46- 91	<p>Author added paragraphs grouping classification of communication types: Existing studies on courtroom communication can be grouped thematically into several streams. Research on verbal communication has shown how arguments are framed, how examinations are structured, and how advocates adjust their language to audiences, such as judges and juries (Fox, 2014). Non-verbal cues, Valdes (2015), are also critical, and studies have emphasized nonverbal and multimodal aspects, underlining the importance of tone, posture, and gesture in conveying meaning (Gordon and Drozdenko, 2018; Lyle, 2019; Andrist, 2021). Socio-legal research has also highlighted how judges negotiate impressions, demonstrate authority, and manage legitimacy through communicative acts in trials, or appeal processes (Dumont, 2017). In addition, socio-legal research has linked courtroom interaction to the judicial process as a site of persuasion and legitimation, where equal treatment and respectful treatment of participants are crucial in building public trust in the judicial process (Bands and Ferguson, 2020; Watan, 2020).”</p>

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Notes / Explanation
8	Create logical bridge to study.	Clear transition: concepts → empirical studies → gap → this study.	Introduction closing.	Author clarified this section in the closing part.
<b>2. Research Methods</b>				
9	Mismatch text vs. table (informants).	Table removed; informants described narratively (9 people, detailed roles).	Methods 2.1. line 137-144	Discussed and table revised.
10	Sentence fluency issues.	Rephrased sentences, removed redundant “the researcher”.	Methods 2.1–2.2. line 148, 152.	Author corrected in the methods section.
11	Inconsistent tense (“contacted”).	Revised to past tense consistently.	Methods 2.4.	Correct
12	Wrong numbering (2.2.4).	Corrected to 2.3.4.	Methods. 2.1	Corrected Method
13	Methods structure unclear.	Restructured into: 2.1 Research Design, 2.2 Data Collection, 2.3 Data Analysis, 2.4 Research Procedure, 2.5 Data Validity.	Methods section.	Revised according to order: 2.1 Research Design, 2.2 Data Collection, 2.3 Data Analysis, 2.4 Research Procedure, 2.5 Data Validity.
<b>3. Results</b>				

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Notes / Explanation
14	Section too descriptive, not data-driven.	Split into subsections: 3.1 Trial Process Background, 3.2 Communication Flows, 3.3 Communication Characteristics. Each supported by quotes & observation notes.	Results 3.1–3.3. line 190, 302, 511	Author has revised the section according to reviewer’s suggestion.
15	Missing data linkage.	Each finding now tied to source: observation, interview, or document.	Results 3.1–3.3. line 217, 229, 247, 260, 270, 278, 281, 289, 300, 318, 325, 336, 351, 361, 460, 467, 485, 529, 541, 555, 565, 575, 587,	Author reorganized interview, observation, and documentation data to support explanation.
16	Numbering/formatting errors (figures, subsections).	Corrected figure numbers, subsection format (1, 2, 3, 4).	Results and Discussion	Formatting corrected.
<b>4. Discussion</b>				
17	Missing after “That is why”.	Sentence completed with analytical conclusion.	Discussion 4.1.	Sentence fragments revised.
18	Chart name too general.	Changed to “Courtroom Communication Actors and Interactions”.	Chart 1. line 348	Made more specific, revised to Chart 1: Courtroom Communication Actors and Interactions.

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Notes / Explanation
19	Table 1 and Table 2 missing.	Removed redundant tables; emphasized text + examples.	Result 3.1 - 3.3 line, 448	Revised accordingly.
20	Repetition in defining flows.	Consolidated explanation; added varied examples (lawyer–defendant, sidebar, evidence disputes).	Discussion. line 600-637	Discussion now more varied and data-rich.
21	Weak integration of observation evidence.	Integrated observation examples alongside interviews for each theme.	Resul, 3.1 - 3.3 line 216, 230,229, 260, 288, 325, 336, 378, 447, 460, 463,484, 488,	Observation results added into findings.
22	No methodological bridge for six characteristics.	Added explanation of coding process → six themes.	Discussion line 600	Author clarified accordingly.
23	Quotes lack source identifiers.	Revised with identifiers (e.g., “Informant A, Judge, Trial 2 observation”).	Resul 3.1 - 3.3	Transparency improved.
<b>5. Conclusion</b>				

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Notes / Explanation
24	Sentence fragmentation (“Among others, the profession”).	Revised to complete sentence: “The communication process in the trial exhibits several characteristics...”	Conclusion line 488–489.	Author revised according to suggestion.
25	Lacks synthesis, limitations, and future research.	Added: integration of frameworks (theoretical), implications for practice (practical), limitations (one district court, criminal only), future research (comparative).	Conclusion paragraph 1–2.	Author added implications, limitations, and future research.



# Courtroom Communication: Identification of the Communication Characteristics of Criminal Trials in Indonesian Courts

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**Keywords: Courtroom communication, Criminal trials, Interactional dynamics, Judicial authority, Indonesia**

## Abstract

The courtroom in Indonesia operates not only as a legal setting but also as a socio-communicative arena where judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, witnesses, and defendants interact under strict procedures and cultural norms. Communication in this space shapes justice, transparency, and public trust. This study analyzes courtroom communication in Indonesian criminal trials by examining the flows and characteristics of interaction. Drawing on Goffman's concept of gatherings, Judicial Communication, and Forensic Communication, it conceptualizes the courtroom as a communicative practice where actors perform authority, contest facts, and negotiate fairness. The research employed a qualitative case study design and collected data through interviews with nine informants (judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, a witness, and a defendant), observations of three trials at the Bekasi District Court, and analysis of related documents. Thematic analysis, supported by coding, triangulation, and member checking. The findings show two dominant communication flows: one way communication, such as judicial instructions and verdict delivery, and multi directional communication, such as examinations and cross examinations. The study further identifies six communication characteristics: professional, hierarchical, confrontational, investigative, adversarial, and supportive. Empirical examples include judges' clarifying questions, prosecutorial challenges, and empathetic accommodations for vulnerable witnesses. Theoretically, the study advances socio-legal communication research by integrating authority, contestation, and fairness in courtroom interaction. Practically, it provides insights for legal practitioners to strengthen communication strategies that enhance effectiveness, fairness, and legitimacy in judicial processes.

## 1 Introduction

The courtroom is the formal arena for adjudication. It is a designated space in which legal proceedings are examined by all parties to the judicial process, and where interaction occurs in an orderly and structured environment. Parties involved in legal cases include judges, prosecutors, lawyers, witnesses, and defendants who interact to achieve justice for both defendants and victims (Aronsson et al., 1987; Grossman, 2019; Walenta, 2020; Widodo, 2019).

Courtrooms comprise interrelated elements of physical layout, institutional norms, and communicative practices (Bandes and Feigensohn, 2020; LeVan, 1984; Rossner et al., 2021). The physical layout refers to the trial facilities, among others, the judge's bench, prosecutor's desk, lawyer's desk, witness bench, and seating for the defendant as well as the audience or visitors to the trial (Hawilo et al., 2022).

39 Meanwhile, norms and values are elements that support the principle of conducting open, transparent  
40 and fair trials, including the provisions and communication processes carried out in achieving the  
41 objectives of the trial. Every element in the courtroom, from the physical layout to the various rules  
42 including the rules of communication, aims to support a fair and impartial judicial process (Gordon  
43 and Druckman, 2018). In this environment, communication plays an important role, in determining the  
44 outcome of the judicial process (Otu, 2015; Turner and Hughes, 2022). Through communication, trial  
45 actors share information, in order to achieve the intended goals (Widodo, 2022; Widodo et al., 2018)

46 The form of communication that occurs in the courtroom is part of what is known as Courtroom  
47 Communication (Cowles and Cowles, 2011; Farley et al., 2014a; Hans, Valerie P., & Sweigart, 1993).  
48 Neubauer and Meinhold (2016) define courtroom communication as a concept that includes  
49 communication events or specific aspects of interactions that take place in the law enforcement process.  
50 Various terms are used to describe the dynamics of communication in a trial, depending on the role,  
51 participation, and form of interaction between participants. Bowen and Carney (2013) use the term  
52 forensic communication to emphasize the content and substance of the message conveyed (Howes,  
53 2015). Carter (2003) prefers the term judicial communication which highlights the legal dimension of  
54 communication that occurs during the trial (Leung, 2012; Roach Anleu and Mack, 2015a). Meanwhile,  
55 Lubert (2004) uses the term trial communication which refers to communication based on stages or  
56 processes in the trial (Philp, 2022). Although scholars using different terms (courtroom  
57 communication, judicial communication, forensic communication, and trial communication), they all  
58 refer to the context of communication in the courtroom involving actors, messages with legal purposes,  
59 and structured interactions.

60 Communication in the courtroom has a very important role in determining justice for both defendants  
61 and victims in the Indonesian justice system (Donoghue, 2017). In the courtroom, interactions between  
62 various legal actors such as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, defendants, witnesses, and other related  
63 parties have an influence on the process of formation and decision-making, including through  
64 perception, dramaturgy, and nonverbal communication (Aceron, 2015; Elbers et al., 2012a, 2012b;  
65 Suffet, 1966; Wodak, 1980). The dynamics of communication that occurs in the trial affect the way the  
66 evidence is presented, the arguments submitted, and the conclusions drawn by the judge and accepted  
67 by the legal actors. In general, Widodo (2019) describes this communication through the law  
68 enforcement communication model, the examination communication model, and the communication  
69 model between law enforcement and defendant or witnesses in Court. (Widodo, 2024a, 2024b, 2020,  
70 2019).

71 Existing studies on courtroom communication can be grouped thematically into several streams.  
72 Research on verbal communication has shown how arguments are framed, how examinations are  
73 structured, and how advocates adapt their language to audiences such as judges and jurors (Farley et  
74 al., 2014b; Hans, Valerie P., & Sweigart, 1993). Other studies have emphasized nonverbal and  
75 multimodal aspects, demonstrating the importance of gaze, posture, and vocal delivery as well as the  
76 influence of documents, recordings, and screen-based exhibits in shaping courtroom interaction  
77 (Gordon and Druckman, 2018; LeVan, 1984; Otu, 2015) Scholars have also examined interactional  
78 patterns among legal actors, highlighting how judges regulate presence, participation, and turn  
79 allocation, including in virtual or hybrid courts (Donoghue, 2017; Rossner and Tait, 2023). In addition,  
80 socio-legal research has linked courtroom communication to broader outcomes of procedural justice  
81 and legitimacy, showing that clarity of expression, equal opportunities to speak, and respectful  
82 treatment of participants are crucial in building public trust in the judicial process (Bandes and  
83 Feigenson, 2020; Walenta, 2020)

84 At the Bekasi Regional District Court, communication in the courtroom occurred in the law  
85 enforcement process. Based on the results of the researcher's observations, law enforcers interact and  
86 communicate in the courtroom, not only between law enforcement officials and witnesses and  
87 defendants, but also with court officers. Communication between the parties is one of the keys to the  
88 implementation of the trial and the success of the law enforcement process in the courtroom.  
89 Communication depends on the special characteristics of the conference. The Bekasi city district court  
90 trial is one of the courts that carries out communication in the trial as an interaction process that occurs  
91 in a trial process with different characteristics.

92 This research focuses on the characteristics of communication in court trials. This research is important  
93 to be carried out in order to understand the communication process in criminal trials. Communication  
94 is done by ensuring that each party involved in the judicial process has an equal opportunity to present  
95 their arguments and evidence. In addition, effective communication can also help in creating an  
96 environment conducive to creating public trust in the justice system. In a broader context, this research  
97 can also contribute to the development of more effective communication methods and strategies in  
98 criminal justice. With an understanding of how communication affects the judicial process, relevant  
99 parties, including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and legal counsel, can develop a better communication  
100 approach to achieving desired legal goals.

101 To address this, the present study employs an explicit theoretical framework that integrates three  
102 complementary perspectives. First, Goffman's concept of *gatherings* (1963) views the courtroom as a  
103 socially organized event in which roles, authority, and norms are performed and negotiated. This  
104 perspective highlights the professional and hierarchical dimensions of courtroom communication,  
105 where authority is enacted symbolically through verbal and nonverbal practices. Second, the  
106 framework of *judicial communication* (Roach Anleu and Mack, 2015b), emphasizes how judges  
107 display authority, neutrality, and legitimacy through both verbal and nonverbal interactions. This  
108 perspective is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where judges actively direct proceedings, regulate  
109 turn-taking, and ensure fairness while at times providing supportive communication for vulnerable  
110 participants such as witnesses or defendants. Third, Bowen and Carney's (2013) concept of forensic  
111 communication, further elaborated by Howes (2015), Matoesian (2017), and Maynard et al. (2014)  
112 underscores the adversarial and investigative nature of courtroom exchanges, especially in the  
113 presentation and testing of evidence through questioning and cross-examination (Howes, 2015;  
114 Matoesian, 2017; Maynard et al., 2014). By integrating these three perspectives, the study provides a  
115 robust conceptual foundation to interpret courtroom communication not merely as procedural conduct,  
116 but as a communicative practice that shapes justice through authority, negotiation, and contestation.

117 Despite these contributions, several important aspects remain underexplored in the literature. Studies  
118 have rarely examined how nonverbal features such as gaze or gesture intersect with verbal strategies  
119 in determining courtroom dynamics. Similarly, the multimodal interaction between spoken exchanges,  
120 written documents, and technological media is seldom analyzed in depth, leaving a gap in  
121 understanding how these layers shape meaning and authority in trials. Furthermore, although power  
122 relations are widely acknowledged, the specific ways in which hierarchical structures and role  
123 asymmetries influence communication practices in Indonesian criminal courts are not yet sufficiently  
124 documented. Cultural influences, including local norms of respect, deference, and emotional restraint,  
125 have also received limited scholarly attention, despite their clear relevance to courtroom practice. By  
126 addressing these gaps, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive account of the communicative  
127 characteristics of Indonesian criminal trials.

128 Building on these gaps, the present study is guided by two central research questions: What are the  
129 main characteristics of communication in Indonesian criminal court trials? and How do these  
130 characteristics influence the flow and outcomes of courtroom interaction? These questions direct the  
131 analysis toward identifying the distinctive features of courtroom communication and clarifying their  
132 implications for both justice and legitimacy in the Indonesian legal system. Mapping courtroom  
133 communication is essential, as every verbal and nonverbal interaction among legal actors (judges,  
134 prosecutors, lawyers, defendants, and witnesses) shapes the presentation of evidence, the arguments  
135 advanced, and ultimately the judicial decision.

## 136 2 Research Methods

### 137 2.1 Research Design

138 The research approach used is qualitative research. The researcher uses a qualitative approach  
139 to understand the communication between various parties in a criminal trial in the district court. The  
140 researcher conducted interviews with 9 informants and observations at 3 trials in the district court.  
141 Research informants are determined based on criteria that meet the needs of the research. In  
142 determining informants, the researcher began by determining the law enforcement informants  
143 consisting of 3 judges, prosecutors, legal advisors, 1 defendant, 1 witness, 1 visitor, 1 court officer  
144 (clerk), 1 security/prisoner.

145 The determination of informants in the table is based on purposive sampling criteria and the  
146 need for research data, specifically for law enforcement (prosecutors, lawyers, and judges), while for  
147 other informants it is determined incidentally, the researcher at the time of direct observation, confirms  
148 the prospective informants according to the data needs. Some informants are willing, and others are  
149 willing but need to obtain consent, including witnesses and defendants need approval from legal  
150 counsel when willing to be interviewed.

### 151 2.2 Data Collection

152 Data collection combined multiple techniques to ensure triangulation:

- 153 1. **In-depth interviews** were conducted with nine informants to capture their perspectives,  
154 experiences, and strategies in courtroom communication.
- 155 2. **Trial observations** were carried out in three criminal trials at the Bekasi District Court.  
156 Observations included both participatory presence inside the courtroom and non-participatory  
157 observations from designated areas that did not interfere with proceedings.
- 158 3. **Document analysis** involved reviewing court transcripts, trial rulings, and audio/video  
159 recordings relevant to the observed cases.

### 160 2.3. Data Analysis

161 After the data is collected, the data processing and analysis stage is carried out. Interview and  
162 observation data were transcribed into text. The data is then coded and categorized based on the theme  
163 or topic that appears. The analysis was carried out using content analysis for qualitative data. The  
164 analysis was carried out using thematic analysis with stages of coding, categorization, interpretation,  
165 and conclusion. Conclusions are made from the results of the analysis that are relevant to the research  
166 objectives. The coding and categorization process generated six core themes (professional,  
167 confrontational, investigative, adversarial, hierarchical, and supportive) which structured the  
168 presentation of results in this study.

## 169 2.4 Research Procedure

### 170 1. Preparation and Research Permits

171 The research began with the preparation of a detailed proposal outlining the background, objectives,  
172 methods, and data collection plan. Following institutional requirements, the researcher obtained a  
173 formal research permit supported by a cover letter from the affiliated university. The proposal and  
174 official request letter were submitted to the Bekasi District Court, after which approval was granted.  
175 Coordination with court administrators ensured that interviews and observations did not interfere with  
176 trial proceedings.

### 177 2. Fieldwork and Data Collection Steps

178 After obtaining permission, the researcher conducted fieldwork by observing trial proceedings,  
179 conducting interviews with selected informants, and collecting relevant documents. Fieldwork was  
180 conducted in phases to match the court's trial schedule and to secure participants' availability and  
181 consent.

## 182 2.5 Data validity

183 The trustworthiness of the research data was ensured using member checking. Member checking is the  
184 process by which data or analysis results are returned to participants to ensure that the researcher has  
185 understood and represented their views correctly. In the context of this study, after interviews or  
186 observations were conducted, the researcher returned to the judge, prosecutor, lawyer, and defendant  
187 to confirm that the results recorded were in accordance with their intended results.

## 188 3 Results.

### 189 3.1 Trial Process Background

190 The trial and trial process are a series of trial stages in accordance with the provisions of the  
191 Criminal Code in Indonesia. In simple terms, the trial stages consist of the first hearing/indictment  
192 hearing, examination hearing, prosecution hearing and verdict hearing. Furthermore, in each of these  
193 processes, there can be a trial with a recurring agenda, for example, the examination of witnesses can  
194 be carried out many times until the truth is found. The stages are reported here situate where and how  
195 communication flows are produced during proceedings (one-way vs multi-directional).

196 The criminal trial process is marked by the decision of the panel of judges regarding the first hearing.  
197 The first hearing was an indictment hearing, there was a reading of the indictment by the public  
198 prosecutor and a response to the indictment read. The second is the examination of witnesses and the  
199 examination of the defendant and the responses of each party, the third is the demand by the public  
200 prosecutor and the response, as well as the verdict by the Chief Judge and other panels that examine  
201 the case through trial. Here are some of the processes that the author refers to are classified in the  
202 following chart:

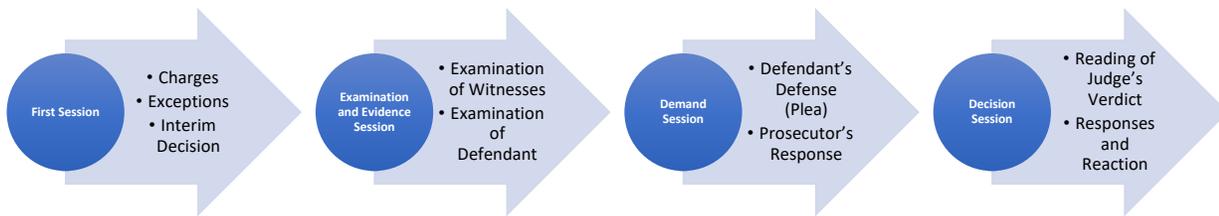


Figure 1.1 Criminal Trial Process.

Source: Classification of Criminal Code Results

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206 The figure 1.1 above illustrates the stages of the criminal trial process in court which consists of four  
 207 main stages, namely the First Hearing, the Examination and Evidentiary Hearing, the Prosecution  
 208 Hearing, and the Verdict Hearing

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1. First Session

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This stage is the beginning of the trial process where the public prosecutor reads out an indictment containing the accusations against the defendant. At this stage, the defendant or his legal counsel can file an exception, which is an objection to the indictment filed, both formally and materially. If there is an exception, the judge will consider it and issue an interlocutory judgment. If the interlocutory ruling states that the indictment is valid and can be continued, then the trial will proceed to the next stage. On the other hand, if the judge accepts an exception, then the case can be stopped or the prosecutor needs to redraft the indictment. **Observation Note (Trial 1):** Prior to the indictment reading, the presiding judge stated, “*We proceed according to the agenda: indictment, then defense response,*” establishing a one-way instructional frame.

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2. Examination and Evidence Hearing

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This stage is the core of the trial process, where evidence is submitted and tested before a panel of judges. This process begins with the examination of witnesses, both submitted by the public prosecutor and by the defendant (if there are mitigating witnesses). Witnesses give their testimony under oath and can be questioned by judges, prosecutors, and legal counsel of the defendant. After the examination of witnesses is completed, the trial continues with the examination of the defendant, where the defendant is given the opportunity to explain or respond to the facts that arise in the trial. At this stage, other evidence such as letters, recordings, or other evidence that supports the evidentiary process can also be submitted. **Observation Note (Trial 2):** During cross-examination, the defense interrupted the prosecutor; the judge intervened, “*Counsel, one question at a time,*” which reopened orderly turn-taking. This alternation from one-way instruction to multi-directional exchange exemplifies Goffman’s gatherings (ordered roles/rituals) and Judicial Communication (authority through turn allocation), while adversarial exchanges operationalize Forensic Communication (testing evidence).

237

3. Trial of Claims

238 After the evidentiary process is completed, the public prosecutor will submit criminal  
239 charges against the defendant, which is referred to as a requisitoir. These charges include a  
240 legal analysis of the facts revealed at the trial as well as the sentencing recommendations  
241 submitted by the prosecutor. After that, the defendant or his legal counsel is given the  
242 opportunity to submit a plea (defense), which can be in the form of a rebuttal to the prosecutor's  
243 indictments and demands, a request for leniency, or any other defense deemed relevant. After  
244 the defense is submitted, the prosecutor is given the right to provide a replica, which is a  
245 response to the defendant's defense. Then, the defendant or his legal advisor can again provide  
246 a duplicate, which is a response to the prosecutor's replica. Prosecutor B explain "*We structure*  
247 *the demand to walk the court through the facts; the defense will test our inferences point by*  
248 *point.*". This sequenced claim-rebuttal-replica-duplika is a textbook instance of Forensic  
249 Communication (claim testing in adversarial settings).  
250

#### 251 4. Verdict Hearing

252 This stage is the culmination of the entire series of trials, where the judge reads out the  
253 court decision based on the results of the examination and legal considerations carried out. This  
254 verdict can be in the form of a free verdict, free from all lawsuits, or a conviction with certain  
255 penalties in accordance with applicable regulations. After the verdict is read, the prosecutor and  
256 the defendant have the right to express their stance on the verdict. If either party does not accept  
257 the verdict, they can file legal remedies such as an appeal to the high court or cassation to the  
258 Supreme Court. However, if both parties accept the verdict, then the case is considered  
259 complete and the verdict becomes permanent legal force (inkracht). Observation note (Trial  
260 3): The verdict reading proceeded without interruption; responses (accept/appeal) were  
261 recorded afterward—typical one-way communication during verdict delivery. Verdict readings  
262 enact Judicial Communication of authority and neutrality; the ritualized format reflects  
263 Goffman's gatherings.  
264

265 Every hearing, the trial process always involves the communication process of the parties  
266 involved in the courtroom. The implementation of the trial was carried out in accordance with the trial  
267 agenda set by the judge through the clerk. Initially, the Presiding Judge and the panel determined the  
268 trial schedule, which began with the determination of the indictment hearing. Furthermore, the trial  
269 schedule is carried out according to the decision of the Panel of Judges that has been agreed upon by  
270 the Public Prosecutor and Legal Counsel. The Registrar's informant revealed that usually, the next  
271 hearing schedule is one week at most after the previous hearing. "... *The schedule of the trial depends,*  
272 *is determined and agreed upon by His Holiness*".

273 The trial at the Bekasi District Court will run if attended by all parties, namely the Panel of Judges  
274 including the Registrar, Public Prosecutor, Legal Counsel, and Defendants. The first party to enter the  
275 courtroom is the Defendant or the Public Prosecutor, followed by the clerk who coordinates to start the  
276 trial. After the trial was ready, the clerk allowed the Panel of Judges to enter the courtroom and occupy  
277 the prepared sitting position.

278 The officer will announce, "*Your Majesty enters the room, the audience is requested to stand*" or "*The*  
279 *Panel of Judges enters the courtroom, the audience is requested to stand.*" The Panel of Judges then  
280 entered the room with several files, usually in the form of a personal memorandum. After the Panel of  
281 Judges was seated in their seats, the officer invited the audience consisting of the Public Prosecutor,  
282 Legal Counsel, and visitors to sit, and the judge opened the trial by saying, "*Audiences are welcome*  
283 *to sit*". These rituals display ordered deference and role separation consistent with Goffman's  
284 gatherings and the performance of judicial authority.

285 Respecting the Panel of Judges by standing when they enter the courtroom is a mandatory thing to do,  
286 as stated in the Criminal Procedure Code (Criminal Procedure Code). According to Informant 4, this  
287 was done as a form of respect for the Court, the law, and the judges. However, based on the researchers'  
288 observations, this respect was only done in the main courtroom. In smaller courtrooms, this is often  
289 not done, especially when there is no officer to guide you. **Witness E explain "in the smaller room no**  
290 **one prompted us stand; it felt less formal."**

291 After the Panel of Judges sat and the parties were present in the courtroom, the presiding judge opened  
292 the trial with expressions and hammer beats. The presiding judge then mentioned the trial agenda and  
293 started the process according to the agreed agenda, whether it was an examination hearing, an  
294 indictment hearing or a verdict hearing.

295 Specifically, the trial in the courtroom involves a variety of participants as support for the trial in the  
296 courtroom, based on the observation of the participant participant involving the main participant and  
297 the supporting insertion. The main participants refer to the trial implementation group, namely judges,  
298 prosecutors, lawyers, defendants and witnesses, while supporting participants involved in the trial  
299 process include the visiting parties, court officers who are envious of the cobrban family and the  
300 defendant's family. **Supporting participants included court officers, security/prison officers, and**  
301 **visitors/family members who sometimes affected the communicative environment (e.g., noise, timing).**

### 302 3.2 Communication Flow the Courtroom

303 Each stage of the trial has a distinctive communication potential that involves law enforcement  
304 as the main actor in communication. Communication in the courtroom describes communication  
305 between various parties in the trial and trial process, communication takes place between the Panel of  
306 Judges, the Public Prosecutor, Legal Counsel, the Defendant, Witnesses, Registrars, and Visitors. The  
307 Panel of Judges plays a central role by officially opening the trial and leading the trial. The Presiding  
308 Judge, assisted by the Member Judge, hears arguments, evidence, and testimony from the Public  
309 Prosecutor and Legal Counsel. The Public Prosecutor is in charge of submitting the indictment and  
310 presenting evidence and witnesses that support the indictment. On the other hand, Legal Counsel,  
311 presented the defense and submitted evidence and witnesses to support the defendant. The defendant  
312 himself can give statements and answer questions from the Panel of Judges and the Public Prosecutor  
313 as well as Legal Counsel, while witnesses give testimony and answer questions from law enforcers.  
314 Witnesses play an important role by providing testimony that can support or weaken the arguments of  
315 both sides. Court officers, although their role is more administrative, also play a role in ensuring smooth  
316 communication between all parties during the trial process. Overall, successful communication in the  
317 courtroom relies heavily on clarity, accuracy, and interaction between all parties involved. **Role**  
318 **performance, ritual entry, and turn allocation instantiate Goffman's gatherings (ordered interaction)**  
319 **and Judicial Communication (authority and neutrality).**

320 At the **Bekasi District Court**, communication in the courtroom involves similar dynamics to the judicial  
321 system in other countries, but there are some distinctive differences and nuances. Judges in the  
322 Indonesian District Court have a very active role in directing the trial process, including asking direct  
323 questions to defendants and witnesses. Judges here often have to double down on the role of law  
324 enforcer and communication/dialogue facilitator, ensuring that all parties have a fair opportunity to  
325 present their arguments. Observation Note Trial, **During the indictment hearing, the presiding judge**  
326 **instructed the prosecutor to "read slowly and clearly so that the defendant can understand."** The  
327 defendant listened silently and nodded occasionally without any immediate feedback, illustrating a  
328 one-way communication flow. **According to Informant A, Judge., a judge explained, "As a judge, I**

329 *have to make sure that all parties get a fair opportunity to speak. The questions I ask should help clarify*  
330 *the facts without showing partiality. Clear and firm communication is essential to maintain the*  
331 *integrity of the trial process'. This reflects Judicial Communication as performative neutrality and*  
332 *clarity; the judge's interventions also preserve the ordered "gathering" (Goffman).*

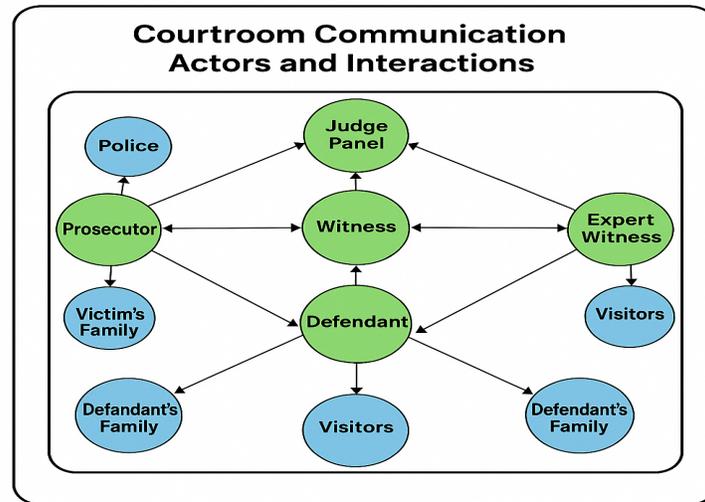
333 Meanwhile, Informant B, the Public Prosecutor (JPU), is tasked with representing the state in  
334 prosecuting the defendant, and they must present evidence and witnesses who can support the charges.  
335 In many cases, the prosecutor's communication with witnesses and experts is the key to corroborating  
336 the cases they file. *Observation note trial, During cross-examination of a witness in a narcotics case,*  
337 *the prosecutor asked, "Did you see the defendant at the scene?" The witness hesitated, and the defense*  
338 *counsel immediately interjected: "Objection, the question is leading." The judge sustained the*  
339 *objection and instructed the prosecutor to rephrase. This exchange demonstrates a multi-directional*  
340 *communication flow involving judge, prosecutor, defense, and witness.*

341 The Prosecutor's informant, explained, *"As a prosecutor, my main task is to present strong evidence*  
342 *and arguments. Communication with witnesses and experts is very important, as their testimony can*  
343 *strengthen or weaken our case. I have to be able to present my arguments in a way that can be*  
344 *understood by all parties, including the judge and the defendant."* Informant C, as the defense lawyer,  
345 explained that he often had to work hard to overcome the evidence set by the JPU. Defendant and  
346 Attorney used various communication strategies to challenge the evidence presented, question the  
347 validity of the testimony, and defend the rights of the defendant. Informant C, a defense lawyer in the  
348 Bekasi trial, stated, *"My role is to ensure that my client's rights are protected. This includes presenting*  
349 *arguments clearly and effectively and challenging the evidence presented by the prosecutor. Good*  
350 *communication with the defendant is also very important to ensure that the defense strategy can run*  
351 *well."* *At the verdict hearing, the presiding judge read the decision in full without interruption. The*  
352 *atmosphere was silent; the defense and prosecutor only responded after the reading was completed by*  
353 *declaring whether they accepted or appealed. This clearly illustrates a one-way communication flow,*  
354 *where information is delivered without immediate feedback.*

355 Defendants, especially in cases that attract public attention, are often under immense pressure. Their  
356 communication, whether directly in the form of statements in court or through their lawyers, can have  
357 an impact on the perception of judges and the general public. One defendant who did not want to be  
358 named said, *"It was very nerve-wracking to be in the courtroom. I had to make sure that my story was*  
359 *heard and understood by the judges. My lawyer helped me make my arguments clearly and supported*  
360 *me throughout the process."* Witnesses, including expert witnesses, give testimony that can be highly  
361 technical and require further clarification through questions from judges or lawyers. *Informant E, a*  
362 *witness in a narcotics criminal case, said, "Giving testimony in court is a stressful experience. I have*  
363 *to make sure that what I say is true and clear. Judges and lawyers often ask questions that help me*  
364 *explain in more detail."* In another instance, the judge rephrased a complex legal term into simpler  
365 language so that the witness could respond accurately. *This indicates a supportive communication*  
366 *practice embedded in the flow.*

367 Court officers, too, play an important role in supporting effective communication, managing the  
368 administration of the trial, and ensuring all documents and evidence are available in a timely manner.  
369 Informant G, said, *"His role is to ensure that all documents and evidence are ready on time and the*  
370 *trial runs smoothly. We also have to communicate frequently with various parties to coordinate*  
371 *schedules and needs during the trial, so that it is orderly.* Likewise, the prison guards and security  
372 officers ensure that the trial runs safely and orderly.

373 Overall, communication in the Indonesian District Court courtroom is a complex process that requires  
 374 the active involvement of all parties to ensure that the objectives of the trial are achieved and justice  
 375 can be upheld. This communication is influenced by the skills of legal professionals in presenting their  
 376 arguments clearly and persuasively, as well as by the judge's ability to manage the trial process wisely  
 377 and impartially. Communication in the trial through a series of participation of the parties to support  
 378 the main objectives of the trial. Based on observations and information from informants, the researcher  
 379 emphasized the connection of communication between the parties in supporting the communication  
 380 process in the courtroom. As illustrated in chart 1. The interplay of one-way (authority-performing)  
 381 and multi-directional (adversarial testing) flows shows how hierarchy and contestation are balanced—  
 382 central to perceived fairness (Judicial/Forensic Communication within Goffman's ordered event).



383

384 **Chart 1 Courtroom Communication Actors and Interactions**

385 Communication in court involves many factors that affect how information is conveyed, received, and  
 386 interpreted in legal proceedings. In courtroom communication, each element of communication plays  
 387 an important role in shaping the dynamics of interaction in the courtroom. Communicators in the  
 388 trial consist of various parties who have specific legal roles, such as the judge who gives  
 389 instructions, the prosecutor who reads the indictment, the lawyer who submits the defense, and the  
 390 witness who gives testimony. The communicator, as the recipient of the message, includes the  
 391 defendant who receives the indictment, the judge who assesses the arguments of both sides, and  
 392 the witness who responds to questions asked by the prosecutor or lawyer.

393 The message communicated in the trial can be statements, instructions, questions, or evidence  
 394 presented during the judicial process. The communication channels used are generally verbal, such  
 395 as delivering arguments or interrogations, as well as nonverbal, such as legal documents, evidence  
 396 recordings, or the judge's facial expressions in giving signals. In courtroom communication,  
 397 feedback occurs when the recipient of the message responds to the information received, for  
 398 example when the defendant answers questions from the judge or the witness provides clarification  
 399 on the prosecutor's statement.

400 The context in courtroom communication includes legal, social, and psychological factors that  
 401 affect the course of communication. The legal context includes the judicial rules that must be  
 402 followed, while the social context can be in the form of public expectations of trial transparency.  
 403 On the other hand, psychological distress can affect the effectiveness of communication, for

404 example when a witness feels intimidated while giving testimony. In addition, communication  
405 disorders (noise) can also appear in various forms, such as physical disorders (noise from court  
406 visitors), psychological disorders (witness anxiety that hinders fluent speech), and semantic  
407 disorders (the use of legal terms that are difficult for witnesses or defendants to understand). The  
408 communication process is through at least two communication streams, namely one-way and multi-  
409 directional communication streams,

410 In real practice in the courtroom, a one-way flow usually occurs when the judge gives instructions  
411 or leads the course of the trial. For example, when the trial begins, the judge will instruct the  
412 prosecutor and lawyers about the order of the proceedings, such as who first presents arguments or  
413 when witnesses are called. Judges also often make final decisions, such as interlocutory rulings or  
414 decisions related to the evidence received. These decisions were delivered without any direct  
415 feedback from the parties involved at the time, although they could appeal or protest through other  
416 legal channels. For example, when a judge decides to accept or reject evidence, this decision is  
417 presented to lawyers and prosecutors, who can then accept the decision or make other appeals, but  
418 no direct interaction occurs at the time of the reading of the decision.

419 Multi-directional flow is more reflective of the active dynamics that occur during the trial process.  
420 One obvious example is during the interrogation of witnesses, where prosecutors and lawyers take  
421 turns asking each other questions and giving arguments. In this process, the witness gives an  
422 answer, which can then be further questioned or refuted by another lawyer or prosecutor.  
423 Communication here flows back and forth, with each party responding to what the other party says.  
424 Another example is when the defendant gives a statement or a lawyer defends his client. The lawyer  
425 will provide convincing arguments to the judge or jury, while the prosecutor will also present a  
426 rebuttal or clarification. During this process, there is a dynamic exchange of information, either  
427 through direct dialogue or through reactions to the arguments put forward. One of the real forms  
428 of this multi-directional communication flow is seen when the judge decides to give the lawyer the  
429 opportunity to ask questions of the witness, which then becomes a question and answer process  
430 that requires the judge, prosecutor, lawyer, and witness to interact with each other. In this context,  
431 the flow of communication can be very flexible, depending on who is providing the information  
432 and how the other party responds to the information.

433 In the courtroom, there are two forms of communication flows that dominate the judicial process,  
434 namely the one-way flow and the multi-directional flow, each of which has an important role in the  
435 course of the trial. One-way flow occurs when information flows from one party to another without  
436 any immediate feedback at the time. An example is when the judge gives instructions or decisions,  
437 such as reading the verdict or directing the course of the trial. In this stream, other parties, such as  
438 prosecutors or lawyers, simply receive information without being able to provide an immediate  
439 response at that time. In contrast, a multi-directional flow occurs when several parties engage in  
440 interactive communication, such as in the question and answer process between prosecutors,  
441 lawyers, witnesses, and defendants. In interrogation, each party gives a response that affects the  
442 course of the conversation, creating a dynamic dialogue and interacting with each other. Although  
443 these two streams differ in terms of interaction and communication structure, they have the same  
444 goal, which is to ensure that the trial process runs fairly and transparently. The one-way flow serves  
445 to provide clear and firm instructions, while the multi-way flow deepens the understanding of the  
446 facts revealed during the trial. Both are important in supporting the achievement of legitimate and  
447 fair legal decisions. The following table is meant:

Aspects	One-Way Flow	Multi-Directional Flow
---------	--------------	------------------------

<b>Direction</b>	Information flows from one party to another without direct feedback.	Information flows in two or more directions, with interaction and feedback.
<b>Interaction.</b>	There is no direct interaction between the parties involved.	There is direct interaction and an exchange of arguments or responses
<b>Speed and Flexibility.</b>	More rigid and structured, information is delivered directly.	More flexible, depending on the response of the other parties involved.
<b>Purpose</b>	Provide instructions or decisions that do not require a direct response.	Dig into the facts, provide arguments, and clarify the position of the relevant parties.
<b>Parties Involved.</b>	Only one party dominates the communication, such as the judge giving instructions.	All parties are actively involved in communication, such as prosecutors, lawyers, and witnesses.
<b>Example (Observation)</b>	<p>a. Judge instructed prosecutor to read indictment slowly so defendant could understand—no direct feedback given.</p> <p>b. Verdict reading delivered by presiding judge; defense/prosecutor responded only after completion with appeal statement.</p>	<p>a. Prosecutor questioned witness; defense objected (“leading question”), judge intervened and rephrased → dynamic dialogue among all parties.</p> <p>b. Judge simplified complex legal terms for witness, enabling accurate response—interactional adjustment across roles.</p>

448 Table 1 Explanation of Communication Flow

449 In the context of communication in the courtroom, the flow of communication refers to the direction  
450 and pattern of interaction that occurs between various participants during the law enforcement process.  
451 These streams of communication can be categorized into two main types:

452 **1. One-Way Communication Flow:** Occurs when information or messages are conveyed from one  
453 party to another without any immediate response. An example is when the judge reads the  
454 verdict or the prosecutor submits an indictment. In this situation, communication is linear and  
455 does not require immediate feedback from the recipient of the message.

456 One-way communication occurs when information is delivered from one actor to others without  
457 immediate feedback. This flow typically appears during formal openings, the delivery of  
458 instructions, interlocutory rulings, and the reading of verdicts. In these moments, judges speak  
459 with institutional authority, and other parties listen in silence.

460 Observation, Trial 1, Before the indictment was read, the presiding judge announced, “*We*  
461 *proceed according to the agenda: indictment, then defense response.*” The statement framed  
462 the trial in a top-down manner, establishing authority and structure. The defendant and legal

463 counsel listened quietly without comment, illustrating linear communication. Observation,  
464 Trial 3, The verdict was read in its entirety without interruption. The courtroom atmosphere  
465 was silent, and only after the reading did the prosecutor and defense state whether they would  
466 accept or appeal. This ritualized silence underscored the symbolic authority of the bench.  
467 Informant A (Judge) emphasized this performative neutrality: *“As a judge, I have to make  
468 sure that all parties get a fair opportunity to speak. The questions I ask should help clarify the  
469 facts without showing partiality. Clear and firm communication is essential to maintain the  
470 integrity of the trial process.”*

471  
472 These practices reflect judicial communication, where authority and impartiality are enacted  
473 through one-way, scripted formats, consistent with Goffman’s notion of gatherings (1963).  
474 One-way communication thus serves as a performative act of legitimacy, ensuring order and  
475 neutrality in the courtroom.

476 2. Multi-Directional Communication Flow: Involves a reciprocal interaction between two or more  
477 participants, where there is a dynamic exchange of information. For example, during the  
478 examination of witnesses, there is a dialogue between judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and  
479 witnesses. This flow of communication allows for further clarification, affirmation, and  
480 exploration of information through questions and answers.

481 In contrast, multi-directional communication arises during evidentiary stages, especially in  
482 witness examinations and cross-examinations. Here, communication shifts dynamically among  
483 judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, and witnesses, producing interactional feedback and  
484 negotiation. Observation, Trial 2, In a narcotics case, the prosecutor asked a witness, *“Did you  
485 see the defendant at the scene?”* The witness hesitated. Defense counsel immediately objected:  
486 *“Objection, leading question.”* The judge sustained the objection and instructed the prosecutor  
487 to rephrase. This exchange demonstrated a multi-actor flow in which turn-taking, feedback, and  
488 regulation unfolded interactively. Observation, Trial 2 (Judge’s Intervention): When a witness  
489 struggled with a complex legal term, the judge rephrased the question in simpler language. This  
490 adjustment allowed the witness to answer accurately, reflecting supportive communication  
491 embedded within adversarial exchanges. Informant B (Prosecutor) highlighted the importance  
492 of this interactive process: *“As a prosecutor, my main task is to present strong evidence and  
493 arguments. Communication with witnesses and experts is very important, as their testimony  
494 can strengthen or weaken our case.”* Informant C described the balance between adversarial  
495 advocacy and fairness: *“My role is to ensure that my client’s rights are protected. This includes  
496 presenting arguments clearly and effectively and challenging the evidence presented by the  
497 prosecutor. Good communication with the defendant is also very important to ensure that the  
498 defense strategy can run well.”*

499 These exchanges operationalize forensic communication (Bowen & Carney, 2013), where  
500 competing narratives are tested in front of the bench. At the same time, judicial interventions  
501 regulate these adversarial dynamics, ensuring that the process remains both rigorous and  
502 procedurally fair

503 Each of these communication streams has characteristics that affect the dynamics of the trial. One-way  
504 communication flows tend to be formal and hierarchical, emphasizing authority and structure in the  
505 judicial process. In contrast, multi-directional communication flows are more interactive and  
506 participatory, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the facts of the case through direct interaction  
507 between the various parties involved. Understanding the flow of communication in a trial is important

508 for participants to optimize their communication strategies. By adapting the communication approach  
509 according to the flow that occurs, the effectiveness of the judicial process can be improved, ensuring  
510 that each party can convey their information and arguments efficiently and on point.

### 511 3.3 Communication Characteristics in the Courtroom

512 Overall, based on the information of the informants, communication in the trial does have  
513 distinctive characteristics and is different in other communication contexts. The informants explained  
514 several characteristics that occurred, that communication in the courtroom is a combination of various  
515 characteristics that reflect the complexity of the interaction between the participants involved in the  
516 trial. This characteristic arises because communication in the trial is influenced by various roles, goals,  
517 and goals. Communication that occurs between participants has various characteristics, including  
518 procedural, confrontational, hierarchical, investigative, opposite, and mutually supportive. The  
519 following is a description of each of the characteristics:

#### 520 1) Professional.

521 Communication in the courtroom is carried out formally and in accordance with the rule of  
522 law. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers use language that is polite, unemotional, and should be  
523 based on facts. For example, the judge must speak neutrally and objectively, while the  
524 prosecutor drafts the indictment based on evidence, not assumptions. This professional  
525 attitude is important so that the trial runs fairly and according to the rules. Communication in  
526 the trial is professional, where judges, prosecutors, and lawyers use formal legal language  
527 and follow established procedures. Professionals are depicted in the presentation of  
528 arguments, examination of witnesses, and the decision-making process. Informant A and  
529 Informant C, explained that the professional in the trial is that communication that is carried  
530 out with a formal, rules-based attitude, and follows legal ethics without involving emotions  
531 or personal interests, is a must "... *The judge must maintain a balance between justice and*  
532 *law. Every word spoken must be neutral, objective, and based on the facts revealed in the*  
533 *trial*" Meanwhile, informant C, revealed "*We cannot be careless in drafting indictments.*  
534 *Any statement must be based on legal evidence and facts, not personal assumptions or*  
535 *opinions.*" Referring to this information, professional is defined as an objective attitude and  
536 responsibility carried out through formal communication.

#### 537 2) Confrontational

538 Communication in the courtroom is often conflicting, especially between prosecutors and  
539 lawyers who have conflicting interests. The prosecutor is tasked with proving the defendant's  
540 guilt, while the lawyer tries to defend his client by refuting the accusations made. Informant  
541 D, a lawyer interviewed revealed that, "*sometimes, lawyers do, often face fierce arguments*  
542 *with prosecutors, but that is part of the legal system. We must maintain ethics, even in the*  
543 *face of conflicting arguments.*" This confrontation is seen in witness examination sessions,  
544 such as in cases where the prosecutor asks, "*Are you sure you didn't see the defendant at the*  
545 *scene? CCTV evidence shows that the defendant was at the location at 22.00 WIB.*" The  
546 lawyer then denied with an interruption, "*The presence of the defendant at the location does*  
547 *not necessarily prove that he committed a criminal act. How can you be sure that the*  
548 *defendant is the real perpetrator?*" In a situation like this, the judge plays the role of  
549 controlling the course of the trial so that the debate does not go beyond the limits of legal  
550 ethics.

#### 551 3) Investigative

552 Another characteristic found is investigative communication, judges, prosecutors, and  
553 lawyers to dig up facts and test the validity of information from witnesses or defendants. The

554 judge often asks clarifying questions to ensure consistency in the testimony given, as in the  
 555 case where the judge asks, "Brother witness, in the BAP you mentioned that the incident  
 556 occurred at 9:00 p.m., but the police report said it was 10:00 p.m. Can you explain the  
 557 difference?". The interviewed judge explained, "Our job is not only to hear, but also to clarify  
 558 and ensure that there is no contradictory information. We have to find the truth based on the  
 559 evidence." Based on this information, investigative is evidenced by the process of digging or  
 560 searching for more detailed and in-depth information.

561 4) Counter-intuitive

562 In addition to investigations, communication in the courtroom is also opposite, where the  
 563 legal system allows for resistance through communication. Resistance is characterized by  
 564 presenting rebuttal arguments. This interaction is still carried out within ethical limits. One  
 565 prosecutor explained that, "We are not looking for enemies in court, but our job is to prove  
 566 the truth based on evidence." In a trial, communication resistance was seen in the debate  
 567 between the prosecutor and the lawyer. The prosecutor stated, "The defendant has a clear  
 568 motive, namely financial gain from the criminal act committed." Meanwhile, the lawyer  
 569 countered, "There is no direct evidence to suggest that my client benefited financially from  
 570 this incident."

571 5) Hierarchical

572 Communication in trials also shows a hierarchical and formal structure, where judges have  
 573 the highest authority in controlling the course of the trial, while prosecutors, lawyers,  
 574 defendants, and witnesses have a predetermined role in the legal system. One witness  
 575 interviewed revealed that, "I felt pressure when giving testimony because the communication  
 576 in the courtroom was very formal and strict. Every answer I give must be in accordance with  
 577 the facts and must not be mispronounced." This hierarchical structure ensures that the trial  
 578 runs in accordance with established legal procedures and prevents disruption during the  
 579 process. An example of formal communication can be seen in the judge's order, "I open this  
 580 trial and I declare it open to the public. Prosecutor, please read the indictment." This formality  
 581 ensures that the trial takes place according to procedure and that there are no errors in the  
 582 course of the trial

583 6) Supportive

584 Communication in the courtroom can also be mutually supportive, especially in the  
 585 interaction between the judge and the witness or between the lawyer and his client. In some  
 586 cases, judges show empathy for witnesses who testify in emotional cases. A traumatized  
 587 witness stated that, "The judge gave me time to calm down before continuing to testify. It  
 588 really helped me to speak more clearly." In addition, it can also be seen in the lawyer's  
 589 interaction with his client. Lawyers often provide moral and technical support to their clients  
 590 before the trial begins in order to better deal with the legal process.

591 In a nutshell, the following is a classification in the form of a table 4:

NO	Characteristics	Description
1	Professional	Communication that is carried out with a formal, rules-based attitude, and follows legal ethics without involving emotions or personal interests
2	Confrontational	Communications that are challenging or contradictory, where the parties to the hearing attempt to refute or test the truth of a statement
3	Investigation	Communication that aims to dig up facts, seek truth, and uncover evidence through questioning and investigation.

4	Counter-intuitive	A communication that is competitive between two opposing parties, such as between a prosecutor and a lawyer, each of whom is trying to prove his or her argument in front of a judge.
5	Hierarchical	Communication that follows a power structure or authority, where decisions and instructions flow from higher parties to lower parties
6	Supportive	Communication that is supportive and provides assistance, usually comes from parties who want to provide morals or support to certain individuals.

592 Table 2: Characteristics of Communication in the Courtroom

593 Communication in the courtroom is not just an exchange of information, but a key interaction in  
594 running the legal system effectively. The combination of the various communication characteristics of  
595 professionalism, confrontation, investigation, and hierarchical structure creates a communication  
596 mechanism that serves to ensure justice for all parties involved. However, the main challenge in trial  
597 communication is maintaining a balance between critical debate and legal ethics, as well as ensuring  
598 that all participants can participate without intrusive pressure.

#### 599 4 Discussion

600 This study interprets the six observed characteristics through an explicit framework integrating  
601 Goffman's concept of gatherings (1963), Judicial Communication (Roach Anleu and Mack, 2015a)  
602 and Forensic Communication (Howes, 2015), positioning the Indonesian criminal courtroom as a  
603 communicative space in which authority is performed, facts are contested, and participants' "faces"  
604 are managed.

605 Authority and order are enacted through ritual openings such as standing for the bench, the judge's  
606 control of turn-taking, and scripted agenda shifts from indictment to evidence, claims, and verdict.  
607 These practices, which Goffman describes as a gathering, materialize judicial authority and neutrality,  
608 framing one-way communication during instructions and verdict delivery. The professional and  
609 hierarchical features observed are therefore not mere stylistic preferences but institutional  
610 performances of legitimacy that display impartiality while keeping proceedings orderly and  
611 intelligible.

612 Contestation and truth-testing emerge most visibly during witness examination and cross-  
613 examination, when communication shifts to a multi-directional mode in which prosecutors and defense  
614 counsel challenge claims, probe inconsistencies, and present counter-narratives. The confrontational  
615 and adversarial characteristics identified in this study constitute the core of forensic testing, where  
616 claims are advanced, scrutinized, and either stabilized or weakened. Judges' clarifying questions  
617 extend this scrutiny, blending judicial and forensic communication to ensure that fact-finding remains  
618 rigorous yet procedurally fair, which is captured in the investigative dimension.

619 Care and procedural fairness are also embedded in supportive practices such as allowing pauses,  
620 rephrasing complex questions, and acknowledging stress, which protect participants' "face" (Goffman)  
621 and promote perceived fairness (Judicial Communication). In the Indonesian context, where judges  
622 actively steer proceedings, such micro-accommodations help sustain participation without diluting  
623 neutrality.

624 International scholarship shows parallel dynamics, such as linguistic accommodation (Aronsson et  
625 al., 1987), presence and participation in virtual courts (Rossner and Tait, 2023), and the emotional  
626 dimension of legal communication (Bandes and Feigenson, 2020; Ellsworth and Dougherty, 2016),  
627 while Indonesian studies (Widodo, 2019; 2020; 2022) have mapped legal communication models and  
628 the dramaturgy of defendants. This study contributes by empirically characterizing courtroom  
629 communication into six interlocking features and systematically linking them to socio-legal  
630 communication theory.

631 In particular, the dual flow—one-way authority-performing communication versus multi-  
632 directional adversarial testing—explains how Indonesian trials balance order and contestation to  
633 sustain legitimacy. By treating the courtroom as a gathering where judicial authority is performed and  
634 forensic testing unfolds, the findings clarify why professionalism and hierarchy must coexist with  
635 confrontation and investigation, and this integrated view further explains how specific communicative  
636 practices such as controlled turn-taking, targeted clarification, and ethical rebuttal translate into fairer  
637 and more effective adjudication

## 638 5 Conclusion

639 Communication in the courtroom involves multiple participants including judges, prosecutors, defense  
640 lawyers, witnesses, and defendants, each with distinct objectives, and unfolds through complex  
641 interactional processes. This study identifies six interrelated characteristics of courtroom  
642 communication: professional, investigative, supportive, confrontational, adversarial, and hierarchical.  
643 **Theoretically**, the study advances courtroom communication research by integrating socio-legal  
644 frameworks such as Goffman's gatherings, Judicial Communication, and Forensic Communication to  
645 demonstrate how authority, contestation, and fairness are simultaneously enacted in Indonesian  
646 criminal trials. This conceptual integration enriches the literature by showing that courtroom  
647 interaction is not merely procedural but constitutes a communicative practice that produces legitimacy  
648 and justice.

649 **Practically**, the findings offer important implications for Indonesian legal practice. Judges must remain  
650 **firm in controlling** communication while providing supportive space for vulnerable participants;  
651 prosecutors and defense lawyers should prioritize professionalism and clarity in argumentation; and  
652 witnesses and defendants must be enabled to present information without undue pressure.  
653 Strengthening these communicative practices can enhance transparency, fairness, and public trust in  
654 the judicial system. Therefore, this study confirms that courtroom communication is not simply a  
655 technical aspect of trial procedure but a decisive factor in shaping justice that is more accountable,  
656 effective, and legitimate.

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No	Perihal	Tanggal
5	Bukti konfirmasi submit revisi pertama, respon kepada Reviewer 2, dan artikel yang diresubmit	3 September 2025

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## **RESPON TO REVIEWER 2**

**Manuscript ID** : 1623307  
**Title** : *Courtroom Communication: Identification of the Communication Characteristics of Criminal Trials in Indonesian Courts*

**Dear Reviewer,**

I sincerely thank you for the valuable and constructive comments provided on this manuscript. I truly appreciate the time and effort you devoted to offering such a thorough and thoughtful review. Each point raised has been carefully considered, and revisions have been made in line with your suggestions.

In the following, I provide a point-by-point response accompanied by explanations of the revisions implemented. As an attachment, I include a summary table of the reviewer's comments and the author's corresponding responses/revisions. All changes have been clearly marked in the revised manuscript.

### **Reviewer Comments and Author Responses:**

#### **A. Abstract & Introduction**

1. **Comment:** Add a contextualized background (importance of courtroom communication in Indonesian socio-legal setting).

**Response:** We added sentences highlighting Indonesian courts as socio-communicative arenas where communication shapes justice, transparency, and public trust.

**Revision:** Abstract (lines 9–12), Introduction paragraph 1, lines 30–37.

2. **Comment:** Emphasise the specific research context (criminal trials in Indonesian district courts).

**Response:** We clarified the study's focus on criminal trials in the Bekasi District Court.

**Revision:** Abstract (lines 16–20), Introduction paragraphs 6–7, lines 84–100.

3. **Comment:** Include theoretical framework (Goffman's gatherings, Judicial Communication, Forensic Communication).

**Response:** We explicitly integrated these three frameworks in the abstract, introduction, and discussion.

**Revision:** Abstract (lines 14–16), Introduction paragraphs 8–9, Discussion lines 600–637.

4. **Comment:** Expand methodology (data sources, collection methods, analysis).  
**Response:** We specified nine informants, three observed trials, and explained interviews, observations, documents, coding, thematic analysis, triangulation, and member checking.  
**Revision:** Abstract (lines 16–20), Methods 2.1–2.5, lines 136–187.
5. **Comment:** Elaborate findings (flows and six characteristics with examples).  
**Response:** We reorganized the findings into three sections (trial process, communication flows, and communication characteristics), enriched with empirical quotes and observation notes.  
**Revision:** Abstract (lines 16–20), Methods 2.1–2.5, lines 136–187; Results 3.1–3.3, lines 189–598.

## **B. Theoretical Framework**

6. **Comment:** Add explicit framework in introduction/literature.  
**Response:** We fully explained and integrated theoretical perspectives into the introduction.  
**Revision:** Introduction paragraphs 3, 5, 8, 9.
7. **Comment:** Link analysis & findings clearly to framework.  
**Response:** Findings are explicitly tied to frameworks (authority/order = Goffman/Judicial; contestation/testing = Forensic; supportive/fairness = Judicial/Goffman).  
**Revision:** Results 3.1–3.2; Discussion lines 600–637.

## **C. Methodology**

8. **Comment:** Clarify sources of data (who & how many informants).  
**Response:** We provided a detailed list of nine informants (3 judges, 1 prosecutor, 1 defense lawyer, 1 defendant, 1 witness, 1 clerk, 1 security/prison officer, 1 visitor).  
**Revision:** Methods 2.1.
9. **Comment:** Specify methods of data gathering.  
**Response:** We described three techniques: in-depth interviews, trial observations, and document analysis.  
**Revision:** Methods 2.2.
10. **Comment:** Describe methods of data analysis.  
**Response:** We detailed thematic analysis with coding, categorization, triangulation, and

member checking.

**Revision:** Methods 2.3 & 2.5.

#### **D. Findings/Results**

11. **Comment:** Provide more elaborated findings with empirical examples.

**Response:** We expanded results with observation notes and quotes from judges, prosecutors, lawyers, witnesses, and defendants.

**Revision:** Results 3.1–3.3.

12. **Comment:** Discuss findings in relation to framework.

**Response:** We explicitly integrated findings with Goffman, Judicial, and Forensic Communication.

**Revision:** Discussion paragraphs 1–6, lines 600–637.

#### **E. Language & Technical Issues**

13. Removed double full stops (line 33).

14. Corrected APA citation errors (line 35).

15. Revised “law enforcement law enforcers” to “law enforcement officers” (line 65).

16. Rephrased unclear sentences (lines 69–70, 72–93, 214–215).

17. Replaced vague phrase “That is why” with descriptive statements (lines 220–221 & 273).

18. Revised dangling sentence “how” (line 71).

#### **F. Conclusion**

19. **Comment:** Strengthen theoretical and practical contributions.

**Response:** We highlighted the integration of theoretical frameworks and elaborated practical implications for legal practitioners.

**Revision:** Conclusion paragraphs 1–2, lines 643 (theory) and 649 (practice).

I believe these revisions have enhanced the clarity, rigor, and both the theoretical and practical contributions of this study. I hope that the revised version now meets the expectations of the reviewers and the editorial board.

Respectfully,

The Author.

**Tabel Respon to Reviewer 2**

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Note
<b>A. Abstract &amp; Introduction</b>				
1	Add a contextualised background (importance of courtroom communication in Indonesian socio-legal setting).	Added sentences emphasizing that Indonesian courts are socio-communicative arenas where communication affects justice, transparency, and trust.	Abstract (lines 9–12), Introduction Paragraf 1 , Line 30 - 37.	In this section the author added context.
2	Emphasise the specific research context (criminal trials in Indonesian district courts).	Clarified focus on criminal trials in Bekasi District Court.	Abstract (lines 16–20), Introduction Paragraf 6 - 7 Line 84-100	In this section the author added concept and focus.
3	Include theoretical framework (Goffman’s gatherings, judicial communication, forensic communication).	Explicitly included three frameworks and their integration.	Abstract (lines 14–16), Introduction, Paragraf 8 - 9, Diskusi 600 - 637	In this section the author added concepts, namely Goffman’s gatherings, judicial communication, and forensic communication, and connected them with the research findings and discussion.

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Note
4	Expand methodology (data sources, collection methods, analysis).	Specified 9 informants, 3 observed trials, interviews, observations, documents, coding, thematic analysis, triangulation, member checking.	Abstract (lines 16–20), Methods part 2.1–2.5. Line 136 - 187.	In this section the author reorganized and explained the methodology in detail, adding data sources, collection techniques, and explanation of informants and triangulation.
5	Elaborate findings (flows & six characteristics with examples).	Added empirical quotes and observation notes to illustrate findings.	Abstract (lines 16–20), Methods part 2.1–2.5. Line 136 - 187. Result part 3.1 - 3.3 line 189 - 598	In this section the author reorganized the research findings, adding interview and observation data. The results were grouped into three parts: trial process, communication flows, and communication characteristics, referring to the research questions and making the discussion more focused on the research objectives.
<b>B. Theoretical Framework</b>				

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Note
6	Add explicit framework in intro/literature.	Theoretical perspectives fully explained and integrated.	Introduction, paragraf 3, 5, 8, 9.	In this section the author explained the relevant concepts, and these concepts were integrated with the research findings.
7	Link analysis & findings clearly to framework.	Findings tied to frameworks (authority/order = Goffman/Judicial; contestation/testing = Forensic; supportive/fairness = Judicial/Goffman).	Results 3.1–3.2; Discussion 4. line 600-637	In this section the author integrated the frameworks (authority/order = Goffman/Judicial; contestation/testing = Forensic; supportive/fairness = Judicial/Goffman) and analyzed them in the discussion (lines 600–637).
<b>C. Methodology</b>				
8	Clarify sources of data (who & how many informants).	Detailed list of 9 informants (3 judges, 1 prosecutor, 1 defense lawyer, 1 defendant, 1 witness, 1 clerk, 1 security/prison officer, 1 visitor).	Methods 2.1.	The author explained details of the informants and criteria.

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Note
9	Specify methods of data gathering.	Explained 3 techniques: in-depth interviews, trial observations, document analysis.	Methods 2.2.	The author detailed the data collection techniques.
10	Describe methods of data analysis.	Thematic analysis with coding, categorization, triangulation, member checking.	Methods 2.3 & 2.5.	In this section the author explained the stages of data analysis and data validity.
<b>D. Findings/Results</b>				
11	Provide more elaborated findings with empirical examples.	Observation notes and quotes from judges, prosecutors, lawyers, witnesses, defendants included.	Results 3.1–3.3.	In this section the author regrouped the findings into three parts. Each part was completed with interview and observation results, and marked in the manuscript (lines 189–598).
12	Discuss findings in relation to framework.	Discussion explicitly integrates findings with Goffman, Judicial, and Forensic Communication.	Discussion, paragraf 1 - 6 line 600 - 637	The author explained the linkage between research findings and the concepts used.
<b>E. Language &amp; Technical Issues</b>				
13	Line 33: remove double full stops.	Corrected.	Introduction paragraf 1	Corrected.
14	Line 35: correct APA citation.	Duplicates removed, APA corrected.	Introduction pada paragraf 1	Corrected.

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response	Revision Location	Note
15	Line 65: replace “law enforcement law enforcers” with “law enforcement officers.”	Revised.	Introduction pada paragraf 6	Corrected.
16	Revise wobbly sentences (lines 69–70, 72–93, 214–215).	Sentences rephrased for clarity.	Title, Introduction opening, Results 3.1–3.2.	Corrected.
17	Line 220–221 & 273: replace “That is why.”	Replaced with descriptive statement.	Results 3.1 & 3.2.	Corrected.
18	Line 71: remove dangling “how.”	Sentence revised.	Introduction last para.	Completed.
<b>F. Conclusion</b>				
19	Strengthen theoretical & practical contributions.	Highlighted integration of frameworks (theoretical) and implications for legal practitioners (practical).	Conclusion, paragraf 1 dan 2, line 643 untuk teori, dan 649 untuk praktik.	In this section the author elaborated theoretical and practical implications.

# Courtroom Communication: Identification of the Communication Characteristics of Criminal Trials in Indonesian Courts

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## Abstract

The courtroom in Indonesia operates not only as a legal setting but also as a socio-communicative arena where judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, witnesses, and defendants interact under strict procedures and cultural norms. Communication in this space shapes justice, transparency, and public trust. This study analyzes courtroom communication in Indonesian criminal trials by examining the flows and characteristics of interaction. Drawing on Goffman's concept of gatherings, Judicial Communication, and Forensic Communication, it conceptualizes the courtroom as a communicative practice where actors perform authority, contest facts, and negotiate fairness. The research employed a qualitative case study design and collected data through interviews with nine informants (judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, a witness, and a defendant), observations of three trials at the Bekasi District Court, and analysis of related documents. Thematic analysis, supported by coding, triangulation, and member checking. The findings show two dominant communication flows: one way communication, such as judicial instructions and verdict delivery, and multi directional communication, such as examinations and cross examinations. The study further identifies six communication characteristics: professional, hierarchical, confrontational, investigative, adversarial, and supportive. Empirical examples include judges' clarifying questions, prosecutorial challenges, and empathetic accommodations for vulnerable witnesses. Theoretically, the study advances socio-legal communication research by integrating authority, contestation, and fairness in courtroom interaction. Practically, it provides insights for legal practitioners to strengthen communication strategies that enhance effectiveness, fairness, and legitimacy in judicial processes.

## 1 Introduction

The courtroom is the formal arena for adjudication. It is a designated space in which legal proceedings are examined by all parties to the judicial process, and where interaction occurs in an orderly and structured environment. Parties involved in legal cases include judges, prosecutors, lawyers, witnesses, and defendants who interact to achieve justice for both defendants and victims (Aronsson et al., 1987; Grossman, 2019; Walenta, 2020; Widodo, 2019).

Courtrooms comprise interrelated elements of physical layout, institutional norms, and communicative practices (Bandes & Feigenson, 2020; LeVan, 1984; Rossner et al., 2021). The physical

37 layout refers to the trial facilities, among others, the judge's bench, prosecutor's desk, lawyer's desk,  
38 witness bench, and seating for the defendant as well as the audience or visitors to the trial (Hawilo et  
39 al., 2022). Meanwhile, norms and values are elements that support the principle of conducting open,  
40 transparent and fair trials, including the provisions and communication processes carried out in  
41 achieving the objectives of the trial. Every element in the courtroom, from the physical layout to the  
42 various rules including the rules of communication, aims to support a fair and impartial judicial  
43 process (Gordon & Druckman, 2018). In this environment, communication plays an important role, in  
44 determining the outcome of the judicial process (Otu, 2015; Turner & Hughes, 2022). Through  
45 communication, trial actors share information, in order to achieve the intended goals (Widodo, 2022;  
46 Widodo et al., 2018)

47 The form of communication that occurs in the courtroom is part of what is known as Courtroom  
48 Communication (Cowles & Cowles, 2011; Farley et al., 2014a; Hans, Valerie P., & Sweigart, 1993).  
49 Neubauer and Meinhold (2016) define courtroom communication as a concept that includes  
50 communication events or specific aspects of interactions that take place in the law enforcement  
51 process. Various terms are used to describe the dynamics of communication in a trial, depending on  
52 the role, participation, and form of interaction between participants. Bowen and Carney (2013) use  
53 the term forensic communication to emphasize the content and substance of the message conveyed  
54 (Howes, 2015). Carter (2003) prefers the term judicial communication which highlights the legal  
55 dimension of communication that occurs during the trial (Leung, 2012; Roach Anleu & Mack, 2015a).  
56 Meanwhile, Lubert (2004) uses the term trial communication which refers to communication based  
57 on stages or processes in the trial (Philp, 2022). Although scholars using different terms (courtroom  
58 communication, judicial communication, forensic communication, and trial communication), they all  
59 refer to the context of communication in the courtroom involving actors, messages with legal  
60 purposes, and structured interactions.

61 Communication in the courtroom has a very important role in determining justice for both defendants  
62 and victims in the Indonesian justice system (Donoghue, 2017). In the courtroom, interactions  
63 between various legal actors such as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, defendants, witnesses, and other  
64 related parties have an influence on the process of formation and decision-making, including through  
65 perception, dramaturgy, and nonverbal communication (Aceron, 2015; Elbers et al., 2012a, 2012b;  
66 Suffet, 1966; Wodak, 1980). The dynamics of communication that occur in the trial affect the way the  
67 evidence is presented, the arguments submitted, and the conclusions drawn by the judge and  
68 accepted by the legal actors. In general, Widodo (2019) describes this communication through the  
69 law enforcement communication model, the examination communication model, and the  
70 communication model between law enforcement and defendant or witnesses in Court. (Widodo,  
71 2019, 2020, 2024b, 2024a).

72 Existing studies on courtroom communication can be grouped thematically into several streams.  
73 Research on verbal communication has shown how arguments are framed, how examinations are  
74 structured, and how advocates adapt their language to audiences such as judges and jurors (Farley et

75 al., 2014b; Hans, Valerie P., & Sweigart, 1993). Other studies have emphasized nonverbal and  
76 multimodal aspects, demonstrating the importance of gaze, posture, and vocal delivery as well as the  
77 influence of documents, recordings, and screen-based exhibits in shaping courtroom interaction  
78 (Gordon & Druckman, 2018; LeVan, 1984; Otu, 2015). Scholars have also examined interactional  
79 patterns among legal actors, highlighting how judges regulate presence, participation, and turn  
80 allocation, including in virtual or hybrid courts (Donoghue, 2017; Rossner & Tait, 2023). In addition,  
81 socio-legal research has linked courtroom communication to broader outcomes of procedural justice  
82 and legitimacy, showing that clarity of expression, equal opportunities to speak, and respectful  
83 treatment of participants are crucial in building public trust in the judicial process (Bandes &  
84 Feigenson, 2020; Walenta, 2020)

85 At the Bekasi Regional District Court, communication in the courtroom occurred in the law  
86 enforcement process. Based on the results of the researcher's observations, law enforcers interact and  
87 communicate in the courtroom, not only between law enforcement officials and witnesses and  
88 defendants, but also with court officers. Communication between the parties is one of the keys to the  
89 implementation of the trial and the success of the law enforcement process in the courtroom.  
90 Communication depends on the special characteristics of the conference. The Bekasi city district court  
91 trial is one of the courts that carries out communication in the trial as an interaction process that occurs  
92 in a trial process with different characteristics.

93 This research focuses on the characteristics of communication in court trials. This research is  
94 important to be carried out in order to understand the communication process in criminal trials.  
95 Communication is done by ensuring that each party involved in the judicial process has an equal  
96 opportunity to present their arguments and evidence. In addition, effective communication can also  
97 help in creating an environment conducive to creating public trust in the justice system. In a broader  
98 context, this research can also contribute to the development of more effective communication  
99 methods and strategies in criminal justice. With an understanding of how communication affects the  
100 judicial process, relevant parties, including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and legal counsel, can  
101 develop a better communication approach to achieving desired legal goals.

102 To address this, the present study employs an explicit theoretical framework that integrates three  
103 complementary perspectives. First, Goffman's concept of *gatherings* (1963) views the courtroom as a  
104 socially organized event in which roles, authority, and norms are performed and negotiated. This  
105 perspective highlights the professional and hierarchical dimensions of courtroom communication,  
106 where authority is enacted symbolically through verbal and nonverbal practices. Second, the  
107 framework of *judicial communication* (Roach Anleu & Mack, 2015b), emphasizes how judges display  
108 authority, neutrality, and legitimacy through both verbal and nonverbal interactions. This perspective  
109 is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where judges actively direct proceedings, regulate turn-taking,  
110 and ensure fairness while at times providing supportive communication for vulnerable participants  
111 such as witnesses or defendants. Third, Bowen and Carney's (2013) concept of forensic  
112 communication, further elaborated by Howes (2015), Matoesian (2017), and Maynard et al. (2014)  
113 underscores the adversarial and investigative nature of courtroom exchanges, especially in the  
114 presentation and testing of evidence through questioning and cross-examination (Howes, 2015;  
115 Matoesian, 2017; Maynard et al., 2014). By integrating these three perspectives, the study provides a

116 robust conceptual foundation to interpret courtroom communication not merely as procedural  
117 conduct, but as a communicative practice that shapes justice through authority, negotiation, and  
118 contestation.

119 Despite these contributions, several important aspects remain underexplored in the literature.  
120 Studies have rarely examined how nonverbal features such as gaze or gesture intersect with verbal  
121 strategies in determining courtroom dynamics. Similarly, the multimodal interaction between spoken  
122 exchanges, written documents, and technological media is seldom analyzed in depth, leaving a gap in  
123 understanding how these layers shape meaning and authority in trials. Furthermore, although power  
124 relations are widely acknowledged, the specific ways in which hierarchical structures and role  
125 asymmetries influence communication practices in Indonesian criminal courts are not yet sufficiently  
126 documented. Cultural influences, including local norms of respect, deference, and emotional  
127 restraint, have also received limited scholarly attention, despite their clear relevance to courtroom  
128 practice. By addressing these gaps, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive account of the  
129 communicative characteristics of Indonesian criminal trials.

130 Building on these gaps, the present study is guided by two central research questions: What are the  
131 main characteristics of communication in Indonesian criminal court trials? and How do these  
132 characteristics influence the flow and outcomes of courtroom interaction? These questions direct  
133 the analysis toward identifying the distinctive features of courtroom communication and clarifying  
134 their implications for both justice and legitimacy in the Indonesian legal system. Mapping courtroom  
135 communication is essential, as every verbal and nonverbal interaction among legal actors (judges,  
136 prosecutors, lawyers, defendants, and witnesses) shapes the presentation of evidence, the  
137 arguments advanced, and ultimately the judicial decision.

## 138 **2 Research Methods**

### 139 **2.1 Research Design**

140 The research approach used is qualitative research. The researcher uses a qualitative approach  
141 to understand the communication between various parties in a criminal trial in the district court. The  
142 researcher conducted interviews with 9 informants and observations at 3 trials in the district court.  
143 Research informants are determined based on criteria that meet the needs of the research. In  
144 determining informants, the researcher began by determining the law enforcement informants  
145 consisting of 3 judges, prosecutors, legal advisors, 1 defendant, 1 witness, 1 visitor, 1 court officer  
146 (clerk), 1 security/prisoner.

147 The determination of informants in the table is based on purposive sampling criteria and the  
148 need for research data, specifically for law enforcement (prosecutors, lawyers, and judges), while for  
149 other informants it is determined incidentally, the researcher at the time of direct observation,  
150 confirms the prospective informants according to the data needs. Some informants are willing, and  
151 others are willing but need to obtain consent, including witnesses and defendants need approval from  
152 legal counsel when willing to be interviewed.

## 153 2.2 Data Collection

154 Data collection combined multiple techniques to ensure triangulation:

- 155 1. **In-depth interviews** were conducted with nine informants to capture their perspectives,  
156 experiences, and strategies in courtroom communication.
- 157 2. **Trial observations** were carried out in three criminal trials at the Bekasi District Court.  
158 Observations included both participatory presence inside the courtroom and non-participatory  
159 observations from designated areas that did not interfere with proceedings.
- 160 3. **Document analysis** involved reviewing court transcripts, trial rulings, and audio/video  
161 recordings relevant to the observed cases.

## 162 2.3. Data Analysis

163 After the data is collected, the data processing and analysis stage is carried out. Interview and  
164 observation data were transcribed into text. The data is then coded and categorized based on the theme  
165 or topic that appears. The analysis was carried out using content analysis for qualitative data. The  
166 analysis was carried out using thematic analysis with stages of coding, categorization, interpretation,  
167 and conclusion. Conclusions are made from the results of the analysis that are relevant to the research  
168 objectives. The coding and categorization process generated six core themes (professional,  
169 confrontational, investigative, adversarial, hierarchical, and supportive) which structured the  
170 presentation of results in this study.

## 171 2.4 Research Procedure

### 172 1. Preparation and Research Permits

173 The research began with the preparation of a detailed proposal outlining the background, objectives,  
174 methods, and data collection plan. Following institutional requirements, the researcher obtained a  
175 formal research permit supported by a cover letter from the affiliated university. The proposal and  
176 official request letter were submitted to the Bekasi District Court, after which approval was granted.  
177 Coordination with court administrators ensured that interviews and observations did not interfere with  
178 trial proceedings.

### 179 2. Fieldwork and Data Collection Steps

180 After obtaining permission, the researcher conducted fieldwork by observing trial proceedings,  
181 conducting interviews with selected informants, and collecting relevant documents. Fieldwork was  
182 conducted in phases to match the court's trial schedule and to secure participants' availability and  
183 consent.

## 184 2.5 Data validity

185 The trustworthiness of the research data was ensured using member checking. Member checking is  
186 the process by which data or analysis results are returned to participants to ensure that the researcher  
187 has understood and represented their views correctly. In the context of this study, after interviews or  
188 observations were conducted, the researcher returned to the judge, prosecutor, lawyer, and  
189 defendant to confirm that the results recorded were in accordance with their intended results.

## 3 Results.

### 3.1 Trial Process Background

The trial and trial process are a series of trial stages in accordance with the provisions of the Criminal Code in Indonesia. In simple terms, the trial stages consist of the first hearing/indictment hearing, examination hearing, prosecution hearing and verdict hearing. Furthermore, in each of these processes, there can be a trial with a recurring agenda, for example, the examination of witnesses can be carried out many times until the truth is found. **The stages are reported here situate where and how communication flows are produced during proceedings (one-way vs multi-directional).**

The criminal trial process is marked by the decision of the panel of judges regarding the first hearing. The first hearing was an indictment hearing, there was a reading of the indictment by the public prosecutor and a response to the indictment read. The second is the examination of witnesses and the examination of the defendant and the responses of each party, the third is the demand by the public prosecutor and the response, as well as the verdict by the Chief Judge and other panels that examine the case through trial. Here are some of the processes that the author refers to are classified in the following chart:

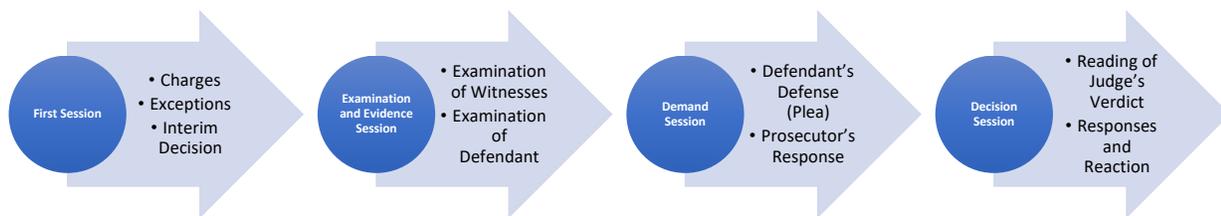


Figure 1.1 Criminal Trial Process.

Source: Classification of Criminal Code Results

The figure 1.1 above illustrates the stages of the criminal trial process in court which consists of four main stages, namely the First Hearing, the Examination and Evidentiary Hearing, the Prosecution Hearing, and the Verdict Hearing

#### 1. First Session

This stage is the beginning of the trial process where the public prosecutor reads out an indictment containing the accusations against the defendant. At this stage, the defendant or his legal counsel can file an exception, which is an objection to the indictment filed, both formally and materially. If there is an exception, the judge will consider it and issue an interlocutory judgment. If the interlocutory ruling states that the indictment is valid and can be continued, then the trial will proceed to the next stage. On the other hand, if the judge accepts an exception, then the case can be stopped or the prosecutor needs to redraft the indictment. **Observation**

219 Note (Trial 1): Prior to the indictment reading, the presiding judge stated, “*We proceed*  
220 *according to the agenda: indictment, then defense response,*” establishing a one-way  
221 instructional frame.

## 222 223 2. Examination and Evidence Hearing

224 This stage is the core of the trial process, where evidence is submitted and tested before  
225 a panel of judges. This process begins with the examination of witnesses, both submitted by  
226 the public prosecutor and by the defendant (if there are mitigating witnesses). Witnesses give  
227 their testimony under oath and can be questioned by judges, prosecutors, and legal counsel of  
228 the defendant. After the examination of witnesses is completed, the trial continues with the  
229 examination of the defendant, where the defendant is given the opportunity to explain or  
230 respond to the facts that arise in the trial. At this stage, other evidence such as letters, recordings,  
231 or other evidence that supports the evidentiary process can also be submitted. Observation Note  
232 (Trial 2): During cross-examination, the defense interrupted the prosecutor; the judge  
233 intervened, “*Counsel, one question at a time,*” which reopened orderly turn-taking. This  
234 alternation from one-way instruction to multi-directional exchange exemplifies Goffman’s  
235 gatherings (ordered roles/rituals) and Judicial Communication (authority through turn  
236 allocation), while adversarial exchanges operationalize Forensic Communication (testing  
237 evidence).

## 238 239 3. Trial of Claims

240 After the evidentiary process is completed, the public prosecutor will submit criminal  
241 charges against the defendant, which is referred to as a requisitoir. These charges include a  
242 legal analysis of the facts revealed at the trial as well as the sentencing recommendations  
243 submitted by the prosecutor. After that, the defendant or his legal counsel is given the  
244 opportunity to submit a plea (defense), which can be in the form of a rebuttal to the prosecutor's  
245 indictments and demands, a request for leniency, or any other defense deemed relevant. After  
246 the defense is submitted, the prosecutor is given the right to provide a replica, which is a  
247 response to the defendant's defense. Then, the defendant or his legal advisor can again provide  
248 a duplicate, which is a response to the prosecutor's replica. Prosecutor B explain “*We structure*  
249 *the demand to walk the court through the facts; the defense will test our inferences point by*  
250 *point.*”. This sequenced claim-rebuttal-replica-duplika is a textbook instance of Forensic  
251 Communication (claim testing in adversarial settings).

## 252 253 4. Verdict Hearing

254 This stage is the culmination of the entire series of trials, where the judge reads out the  
255 court decision based on the results of the examination and legal considerations carried out. This  
256 verdict can be in the form of a free verdict, free from all lawsuits, or a conviction with certain  
257 penalties in accordance with applicable regulations. After the verdict is read, the prosecutor and  
258 the defendant have the right to express their stance on the verdict. If either party does not accept  
259 the verdict, they can file legal remedies such as an appeal to the high court or cassation to the  
260 Supreme Court. However, if both parties accept the verdict, then the case is considered  
261 complete and the verdict becomes permanent legal force (inkracht). Observation note (Trial  
262 3): The verdict reading proceeded without interruption; responses (accept/appeal) were  
263 recorded afterward—typical one-way communication during verdict delivery. Verdict readings  
264 enact Judicial Communication of authority and neutrality; the ritualized format reflects  
265 Goffman’s gatherings.

267 Every hearing, the trial process always involves the communication process of the parties  
268 involved in the courtroom. The implementation of the trial was carried out in accordance with the trial  
269 agenda set by the judge through the clerk. Initially, the Presiding Judge and the panel determined the  
270 trial schedule, which began with the determination of the indictment hearing. Furthermore, the trial  
271 schedule is carried out according to the decision of the Panel of Judges that has been agreed upon by  
272 the Public Prosecutor and Legal Counsel. The Registrar's informant revealed that usually, the next  
273 hearing schedule is one week at most after the previous hearing. "... *The schedule of the trial depends,*  
274 *is determined and agreed upon by His Holiness*".  
275 The trial at the Bekasi District Court will run if attended by all parties, namely the Panel of Judges  
276 including the Registrar, Public Prosecutor, Legal Counsel, and Defendants. The first party to enter the  
277 courtroom is the Defendant or the Public Prosecutor, followed by the clerk who coordinates to start  
278 the trial. After the trial was ready, the clerk allowed the Panel of Judges to enter the courtroom and  
279 occupy the prepared sitting position.

280 The officer will announce, "*Your Majesty enters the room, the audience is requested to stand*" or "*The*  
281 *Panel of Judges enters the courtroom, the audience is requested to stand.*" The Panel of Judges then  
282 entered the room with several files, usually in the form of a personal memorandum. After the Panel  
283 of Judges was seated in their seats, the officer invited the audience consisting of the Public Prosecutor,  
284 Legal Counsel, and visitors to sit, and the judge opened the trial by saying, "*Audiences are welcome to*  
285 *sit*". These rituals display ordered deference and role separation consistent with Goffman's gatherings  
286 and the performance of judicial authority.

287 Respecting the Panel of Judges by standing when they enter the courtroom is a mandatory thing to  
288 do, as stated in the Criminal Procedure Code (Criminal Procedure Code). According to Informant 4,  
289 this was done as a form of respect for the Court, the law, and the judges. However, based on the  
290 researchers' observations, this respect was only done in the main courtroom. In smaller courtrooms,  
291 this is often not done, especially when there is no officer to guide you. Witness E explain "*in the*  
292 *smaller room no one prompted us stand; it felt less formal.*"

293 After the Panel of Judges sat and the parties were present in the courtroom, the presiding judge  
294 opened the trial with expressions and hammer beats. The presiding judge then mentioned the trial  
295 agenda and started the process according to the agreed agenda, whether it was an examination  
296 hearing, an indictment hearing or a verdict hearing.

297 Specifically, the trial in the courtroom involves a variety of participants as support for the trial in the  
298 courtroom, based on the observation of the participant participant involving the main participant and  
299 the supporting insertion. The main participants refer to the trial implementation group, namely judges,  
300 prosecutors, lawyers, defendants and witnesses, while supporting participants involved in the trial  
301 process include the visiting parties, court officers who are envious of the cobrban family and the  
302 defendant's family. Supporting participants included court officers, security/prison officers, and  
303 visitors/family members who sometimes affected the communicative environment (e.g., noise, timing).

### 304 3.2 Communication Flow the Courtroom

305 Each stage of the trial has a distinctive communication potential that involves law enforcement  
306 as the main actor in communication. Communication in the courtroom describes communication  
307 between various parties in the trial and trial process, communication takes place between the Panel of  
308 Judges, the Public Prosecutor, Legal Counsel, the Defendant, Witnesses, Registrars, and Visitors. The  
309 Panel of Judges plays a central role by officially opening the trial and leading the trial. The Presiding  
310 Judge, assisted by the Member Judge, hears arguments, evidence, and testimony from the Public  
311 Prosecutor and Legal Counsel. The Public Prosecutor is in charge of submitting the indictment and  
312 presenting evidence and witnesses that support the indictment. On the other hand, Legal Counsel,  
313 presented the defense and submitted evidence and witnesses to support the defendant. The defendant  
314 himself can give statements and answer questions from the Panel of Judges and the Public Prosecutor  
315 as well as Legal Counsel, while witnesses give testimony and answer questions from law enforcers.  
316 Witnesses play an important role by providing testimony that can support or weaken the arguments of  
317 both sides. Court officers, although their role is more administrative, also play a role in ensuring smooth  
318 communication between all parties during the trial process. Overall, successful communication in the  
319 courtroom relies heavily on clarity, accuracy, and interaction between all parties involved. Role  
320 performance, ritual entry, and turn allocation instantiate Goffman's gatherings (ordered interaction)  
321 and Judicial Communication (authority and neutrality).

322 At the Bekasi District Court, communication in the courtroom involves similar dynamics to the judicial  
323 system in other countries, but there are some distinctive differences and nuances. Judges in the  
324 Indonesian District Court have a very active role in directing the trial process, including asking direct  
325 questions to defendants and witnesses. Judges here often have to double down on the role of law  
326 enforcer and communication/dialogue facilitator, ensuring that all parties have a fair opportunity to  
327 present their arguments. Observation Note Trial, During the indictment hearing, the presiding judge  
328 instructed the prosecutor to "read slowly and clearly so that the defendant can understand." The  
329 defendant listened silently and nodded occasionally without any immediate feedback, illustrating a  
330 one-way communication flow. According to Informant A, Judge., a judge explained, "As a judge, I  
331 have to make sure that all parties get a fair opportunity to speak. The questions I ask should help clarify  
332 the facts without showing partiality. Clear and firm communication is essential to maintain the  
333 integrity of the trial process'. This reflects Judicial Communication as performative neutrality and  
334 clarity; the judge's interventions also preserve the ordered "gathering" (Goffman).

335 Meanwhile, Informant B, the Public Prosecutor (JPU), is tasked with representing the state in  
336 prosecuting the defendant, and they must present evidence and witnesses who can support the charges.  
337 In many cases, the prosecutor's communication with witnesses and experts is the key to corroborating  
338 the cases they file. Observation note trial, During cross-examination of a witness in a narcotics case,  
339 the prosecutor asked, "Did you see the defendant at the scene?" The witness hesitated, and the defense  
340 counsel immediately interjected: "Objection, the question is leading." The judge sustained the  
341 objection and instructed the prosecutor to rephrase. This exchange demonstrates a multi-directional  
342 communication flow involving judge, prosecutor, defense, and witness.

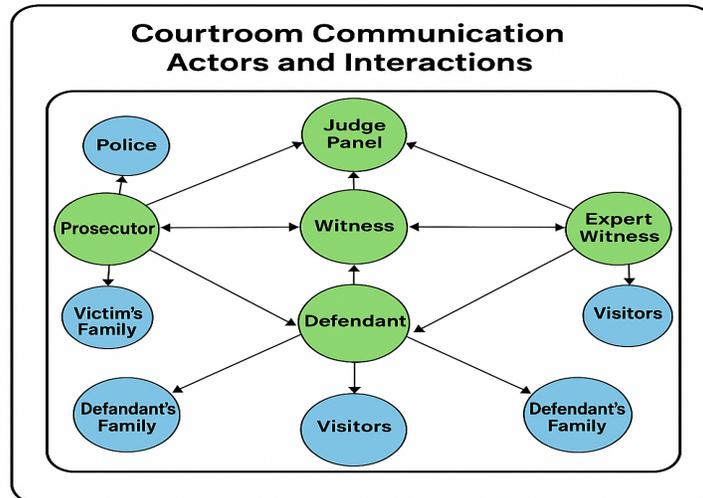
343 The Prosecutor's informant, explained, "As a prosecutor, my main task is to present strong evidence  
344 and arguments. Communication with witnesses and experts is very important, as their testimony can  
345 strengthen or weaken our case. I have to be able to present my arguments in a way that can be  
346 understood by all parties, including the judge and the defendant." Informant C, as the defense lawyer,  
347 explained that he often had to work hard to overcome the evidence set by the JPU. Defendant and  
348 Attorney used various communication strategies to challenge the evidence presented, question the  
349 validity of the testimony, and defend the rights of the defendant. Informan C, a defense lawyer in the  
350 Bekasi trial, stated, "My role is to ensure that my client's rights are protected. This includes presenting

351 *arguments clearly and effectively and challenging the evidence presented by the prosecutor. Good*  
352 *communication with the defendant is also very important to ensure that the defense strategy can run*  
353 *well.”. At the verdict hearing, the presiding judge read the decision in full without interruption. The*  
354 *atmosphere was silent; the defense and prosecutor only responded after the reading was completed by*  
355 *declaring whether they accepted or appealed. This clearly illustrates a one-way communication flow,*  
356 *where information is delivered without immediate feedback.*

357 Defendants, especially in cases that attract public attention, are often under immense pressure. Their  
358 communication, whether directly in the form of statements in court or through their lawyers, can have  
359 an impact on the perception of judges and the general public. One defendant who did not want to be  
360 named said, *"It was very nerve-wracking to be in the courtroom. I had to make sure that my story was*  
361 *heard and understood by the judges. My lawyer helped me make my arguments clearly and supported*  
362 *me throughout the process."* Witnesses, including expert witnesses, give testimony that can be highly  
363 technical and require further clarification through questions from judges or lawyers. Informant E, a  
364 witness in a narcotics criminal case, said, *"Giving testimony in court is a stressful experience. I have*  
365 *to make sure that what I say is true and clear. Judges and lawyers often ask questions that help me*  
366 *explain in more detail."* In another instance, the judge rephrased a complex legal term into simpler  
367 language so that the witness could respond accurately. This indicates a supportive communication  
368 practice embedded in the flow.

369 Court officers, too, play an important role in supporting effective communication, managing the  
370 administration of the trial, and ensuring all documents and evidence are available in a timely manner.  
371 Informant G, said, *"His role is to ensure that all documents and evidence are ready on time and the*  
372 *trial runs smoothly. We also have to communicate frequently with various parties to coordinate*  
373 *schedules and needs during the trial, so that it is orderly.* Likewise, the prison guards and security  
374 officers ensure that the trial runs safely and orderly.

375 Overall, communication in the Indonesian District Court courtroom is a complex process that requires  
376 the active involvement of all parties to ensure that the objectives of the trial are achieved and justice  
377 can be upheld. This communication is influenced by the skills of legal professionals in presenting their  
378 arguments clearly and persuasively, as well as by the judge's ability to manage the trial process wisely  
379 and impartially. Communication in the trial through a series of participation of the parties to support  
380 the main objectives of the trial. Based on observations and information from informants, the researcher  
381 emphasized the connection of communication between the parties in supporting the communication  
382 process in the courtroom. As illustrated in chart 1. The interplay of one-way (authority-performing)  
383 and multi-directional (adversarial testing) flows shows how hierarchy and contestation are balanced—  
384 central to perceived fairness (Judicial/Forensic Communication within Goffman's ordered event).



385

386 **Chart 1 Courtroom Communication Actors and Interactions**

387 Communication in court involves many factors that affect how information is conveyed, received, and  
 388 interpreted in legal proceedings. In courtroom communication, each element of communication  
 389 plays an important role in shaping the dynamics of interaction in the courtroom. Communicators  
 390 in the trial consist of various parties who have specific legal roles, such as the judge who gives  
 391 instructions, the prosecutor who reads the indictment, the lawyer who submits the defense, and  
 392 the witness who gives testimony. The communicator, as the recipient of the message, includes the  
 393 defendant who receives the indictment, the judge who assesses the arguments of both sides, and  
 394 the witness who responds to questions asked by the prosecutor or lawyer.

395 The message communicated in the trial can be statements, instructions, questions, or evidence  
 396 presented during the judicial process. The communication channels used are generally verbal,  
 397 such as delivering arguments or interrogations, as well as nonverbal, such as legal documents,  
 398 evidence recordings, or the judge's facial expressions in giving signals. In courtroom  
 399 communication, feedback occurs when the recipient of the message responds to the information  
 400 received, for example when the defendant answers questions from the judge or the witness  
 401 provides clarification on the prosecutor's statement.

402 The context in courtroom communication includes legal, social, and psychological factors that  
 403 affect the course of communication. The legal context includes the judicial rules that must be  
 404 followed, while the social context can be in the form of public expectations of trial transparency.  
 405 On the other hand, psychological distress can affect the effectiveness of communication, for  
 406 example when a witness feels intimidated while giving testimony. In addition, communication  
 407 disorders (noise) can also appear in various forms, such as physical disorders (noise from court  
 408 visitors), psychological disorders (witness anxiety that hinders fluent speech), and semantic  
 409 disorders (the use of legal terms that are difficult for witnesses or defendants to understand). The  
 410 communication process is through at least two communication streams, namely one-way and multi-  
 411 directional communication streams,

412 In real practice in the courtroom, a one-way flow usually occurs when the judge gives instructions  
413 or leads the course of the trial. For example, when the trial begins, the judge will instruct the  
414 prosecutor and lawyers about the order of the proceedings, such as who first presents arguments  
415 or when witnesses are called. Judges also often make final decisions, such as interlocutory rulings  
416 or decisions related to the evidence received. These decisions were delivered without any direct  
417 feedback from the parties involved at the time, although they could appeal or protest through  
418 other legal channels. For example, when a judge decides to accept or reject evidence, this decision  
419 is presented to lawyers and prosecutors, who can then accept the decision or make other appeals,  
420 but no direct interaction occurs at the time of the reading of the decision.

421 Multi-directional flow is more reflective of the active dynamics that occur during the trial process.  
422 One obvious example is during the interrogation of witnesses, where prosecutors and lawyers take  
423 turns asking each other questions and giving arguments. In this process, the witness gives an  
424 answer, which can then be further questioned or refuted by another lawyer or prosecutor.  
425 Communication here flows back and forth, with each party responding to what the other party  
426 says. Another example is when the defendant gives a statement or a lawyer defends his client. The  
427 lawyer will provide convincing arguments to the judge or jury, while the prosecutor will also  
428 present a rebuttal or clarification. During this process, there is a dynamic exchange of information,  
429 either through direct dialogue or through reactions to the arguments put forward. One of the real  
430 forms of this multi-directional communication flow is seen when the judge decides to give the  
431 lawyer the opportunity to ask questions of the witness, which then becomes a question and  
432 answer process that requires the judge, prosecutor, lawyer, and witness to interact with each  
433 other. In this context, the flow of communication can be very flexible, depending on who is  
434 providing the information and how the other party responds to the information.

435 In the courtroom, there are two forms of communication flows that dominate the judicial process,  
436 namely the one-way flow and the multi-directional flow, each of which has an important role in  
437 the course of the trial. One-way flow occurs when information flows from one party to another  
438 without any immediate feedback at the time. An example is when the judge gives instructions or  
439 decisions, such as reading the verdict or directing the course of the trial. In this stream, other  
440 parties, such as prosecutors or lawyers, simply receive information without being able to provide  
441 an immediate response at that time. In contrast, a multi-directional flow occurs when several  
442 parties engage in interactive communication, such as in the question and answer process between  
443 prosecutors, lawyers, witnesses, and defendants. In interrogation, each party gives a response  
444 that affects the course of the conversation, creating a dynamic dialogue and interacting with each  
445 other. Although these two streams differ in terms of interaction and communication structure,  
446 they have the same goal, which is to ensure that the trial process runs fairly and transparently.  
447 The one-way flow serves to provide clear and firm instructions, while the multi-way flow deepens  
448 the understanding of the facts revealed during the trial. Both are important in supporting the  
449 achievement of legitimate and fair legal decisions. The following table is meant:

Aspects	One-Way Flow	Multi-Directional Flow
Direction	Information flows from one party to another without direct feedback.	Information flows in two or more directions, with interaction and feedback.
Interaction.	There is no direct interaction between the parties involved.	There is direct interaction and an exchange of arguments or responses
Speed and Flexibility,	More rigid and structured, information is delivered directly.	More flexible, depending on the response of the other parties involved.
Purpose	Provide instructions or decisions that do not require a direct response.	Dig into the facts, provide arguments, and clarify the position of the relevant parties.
Parties involved,	Only one party dominates the communication, such as the judge giving instructions.	All parties are actively involved in communication, such as prosecutors, lawyers, and witnesses.
Example (Observation)	<p>a. Judge instructed prosecutor to read indictment slowly so defendant could understand—no direct feedback given.</p> <p>b. Verdict reading delivered by presiding judge; defense/prosecutor responded only after completion with appeal statement.</p>	<p>a. Prosecutor questioned witness; defense objected (“leading question”), judge intervened and rephrased → dynamic dialogue among all parties.</p> <p>b. Judge simplified complex legal terms for witness, enabling accurate response—interactional adjustment across roles.</p>

450 Table 1 Explanation of Communication Flow

451 In the context of communication in the courtroom, the flow of communication refers to the direction  
452 and pattern of interaction that occurs between various participants during the law enforcement process.  
453 These streams of communication can be categorized into two main types:

454 1. One-Way Communication Flow: Occurs when information or messages are conveyed from one  
455 party to another without any immediate response. An example is when the judge reads the  
456 verdict or the prosecutor submits an indictment. In this situation, communication is linear and  
457 does not require immediate feedback from the recipient of the message.

458 One-way communication occurs when information is delivered from one actor to others without  
459 immediate feedback. This flow typically appears during formal openings, the delivery of

460 instructions, interlocutory rulings, and the reading of verdicts. In these moments, judges speak  
461 with institutional authority, and other parties listen in silence.

462 Observation, Trial 1, Before the indictment was read, the presiding judge announced, “We  
463 proceed according to the agenda: indictment, then defense response.” The statement framed  
464 the trial in a top-down manner, establishing authority and structure. The defendant and legal  
465 counsel listened quietly without comment, illustrating linear communication. Observation,  
466 Trial 3, The verdict was read in its entirety without interruption. The courtroom atmosphere  
467 was silent, and only after the reading did the prosecutor and defense state whether they  
468 would accept or appeal. This ritualized silence underscored the symbolic authority of the  
469 bench. Informant A (Judge) emphasized this performative neutrality: “As a judge, I have to  
470 make sure that all parties get a fair opportunity to speak. The questions I ask should help  
471 clarify the facts without showing partiality. Clear and firm communication is essential to  
472 maintain the integrity of the trial process.”

473  
474 These practices reflect judicial communication, where authority and impartiality are enacted  
475 through one-way, scripted formats, consistent with Goffman’s notion of gatherings (1963).  
476 One-way communication thus serves as a performative act of legitimacy, ensuring order and  
477 neutrality in the courtroom.

478 2. Multi-Directional Communication Flow: Involves a reciprocal interaction between two or more  
479 participants, where there is a dynamic exchange of information. For example, during the  
480 examination of witnesses, there is a dialogue between judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and  
481 witnesses. This flow of communication allows for further clarification, affirmation, and  
482 exploration of information through questions and answers.

483 In contrast, multi-directional communication arises during evidentiary stages, especially in  
484 witness examinations and cross-examinations. Here, communication shifts dynamically among  
485 judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, and witnesses, producing interactional feedback and  
486 negotiation. Observation, Trial 2, In a narcotics case, the prosecutor asked a witness, “Did you  
487 see the defendant at the scene?” The witness hesitated. Defense counsel immediately objected:  
488 “Objection, leading question.” The judge sustained the objection and instructed the prosecutor  
489 to rephrase. This exchange demonstrated a multi-actor flow in which turn-taking, feedback, and  
490 regulation unfolded interactively. Observation, Trial 2 (Judge’s Intervention): When a witness  
491 struggled with a complex legal term, the judge rephrased the question in simpler language. This  
492 adjustment allowed the witness to answer accurately, reflecting supportive communication  
493 embedded within adversarial exchanges. Informant B (Prosecutor) highlighted the importance  
494 of this interactive process: “As a prosecutor, my main task is to present strong evidence and  
495 arguments. Communication with witnesses and experts is very important, as their testimony  
496 can strengthen or weaken our case.”. Informant C described the balance between adversarial  
497 advocacy and fairness: “My role is to ensure that my client’s rights are protected. This includes  
498 presenting arguments clearly and effectively and challenging the evidence presented by the  
499 prosecutor. Good communication with the defendant is also very important to ensure that the  
500 defense strategy can run well.”

501 These exchanges operationalize forensic communication (Bowen & Carney, 2013), where  
502 competing narratives are tested in front of the bench. At the same time, judicial interventions  
503 regulate these adversarial dynamics, ensuring that the process remains both rigorous and  
504 procedurally fair

505 Each of these communication streams has characteristics that affect the dynamics of the trial. One-way  
506 communication flows tend to be formal and hierarchical, emphasizing authority and structure in the  
507 judicial process. In contrast, multi-directional communication flows are more interactive and  
508 participatory, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the facts of the case through direct interaction  
509 between the various parties involved. Understanding the flow of communication in a trial is important  
510 for participants to optimize their communication strategies. By adapting the communication approach  
511 according to the flow that occurs, the effectiveness of the judicial process can be improved, ensuring  
512 that each party can convey their information and arguments efficiently and on point.

### 513 3.3 Communication Characteristics in the Courtroom

514 Overall, based on the information of the informants, communication in the trial does have  
515 distinctive characteristics and is different in other communication contexts. The informants explained  
516 several characteristics that occurred, that communication in the courtroom is a combination of  
517 various characteristics that reflect the complexity of the interaction between the participants involved  
518 in the trial. This characteristic arises because communication in the trial is influenced by various roles,  
519 goals, and goals. Communication that occurs between participants has various characteristics,  
520 including procedural, confrontational, hierarchical, investigativehierari, opposite, and mutually  
521 supportive. The following is a description of each of the characteristics:

#### 522 1) Professional.

523 Communication in the courtroom is carried out formally and in accordance with the rule of  
524 law. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers use language that is polite, unemotional, and should  
525 be based on facts. For example, the judge must speak neutrally and objectively, while the  
526 prosecutor drafts the indictment based on evidence, not assumptions. This professional  
527 attitude is important so that the trial runs fairly and according to the rules. Communication  
528 in the trial is professional, where judges, prosecutors, and lawyers use formal legal language  
529 and follow established procedures. Professionals are depicted in the presentation of  
530 arguments, examination of witnesses, and the decision-making process. Informant A and  
531 Informant C, explained that the professional in the trial is that communication that is carried  
532 out with a formal, rules-based attitude, and follows legal ethics without involving emotions  
533 or personal interests, is a must "... *The judge must maintain a balance between justice and*  
534 *law. Every word spoken must be neutral, objective, and based on the facts revealed in the*  
535 *trial"* Meanwhile, informant C, revealed "*We cannot be careless in drafting indictments.*  
536 *Any statement must be based on legal evidence and facts, not personal assumptions or*  
537 *opinions."* Referring to this information, professional is defined as an objective attitude and  
538 responsibility carried out through formal communication.

#### 539 2) Confrontational

540 Communication in the courtroom is often conflicting, especially between prosecutors and  
541 lawyers who have conflicting interests. The prosecutor is tasked with proving the  
542 defendant's guilt, while the lawyer tries to defend his client by refuting the accusations  
543 made. Informant D, a lawyer interviewed revealed that, *"sometimes, lawyers do, often face*  
544 *fierce arguments with prosecutors, but that is part of the legal system. We must maintain*  
545 *ethics, even in the face of conflicting arguments."* This confrontation is seen in witness  
546 examination sessions, such as in cases where the prosecutor asks, *"Are you sure you didn't*  
547 *see the defendant at the scene? CCTV evidence shows that the defendant was at the location*  
548 *at 22.00 WIB."* The lawyer then denied with an interruption, *"The presence of the defendant*  
549 *at the location does not necessarily prove that he committed a criminal act. How can you be*  
550 *sure that the defendant is the real perpetrator?"* In a situation like this, the judge plays the  
551 role of controlling the course of the trial so that the debate does not go beyond the limits of  
552 legal ethics.

### 553 3) Investigative

554 Another characteristic found is investigative communication, judges, prosecutors, and  
555 lawyers to dig up facts and test the validity of information from witnesses or defendants.  
556 The judge often asks clarifying questions to ensure consistency in the testimony given, as in  
557 the case where the judge asks, *"Brother witness, in the BAP you mentioned that the incident*  
558 *occurred at 9:00 p.m., but the police report said it was 10:00 p.m. Can you explain the*  
559 *difference?"*. The interviewed judge explained, *"Our job is not only to hear, but also to clarify*  
560 *and ensure that there is no contradictory information. We have to find the truth based on*  
561 *the evidence."* Based on this information, investigative is evidenced by the process of digging  
562 or searching for more detailed and in-depth information.

### 563 4) Counter-intuitive

564 In addition to investigations, communication in the courtroom is also opposite, where the  
565 legal system allows for resistance through communication. Resistance is characterized by  
566 presenting rebuttal arguments. This interaction is still carried out within ethical limits. One  
567 prosecutor explained that, *"We are not looking for enemies in court, but our job is to prove*  
568 *the truth based on evidence."* In a trial, communication resistance was seen in the debate  
569 between the prosecutor and the lawyer. The prosecutor stated, *"The defendant has a clear*  
570  *motive, namely financial gain from the criminal act committed."* Meanwhile, the lawyer  
571 countered, *"There is no direct evidence to suggest that my client benefited financially from*  
572 *this incident."*

### 573 5) Hierarchical

574 Communication in trials also shows a hierarchical and formal structure, where judges have  
575 the highest authority in controlling the course of the trial, while prosecutors, lawyers,  
576 defendants, and witnesses have a predetermined role in the legal system. One witness  
577 interviewed revealed that, *"I felt pressure when giving testimony because the*  
578 *communication in the courtroom was very formal and strict. Every answer I give must be in*  
579 *accordance with the facts and must not be mispronounced."* This hierarchical structure

580 ensures that the trial runs in accordance with established legal procedures and prevents  
 581 disruption during the process. An example of formal communication can be seen in the  
 582 judge's order, "I open this trial and I declare it open to the public. Prosecutor, please read  
 583 the indictment." This formality ensures that the trial takes place according to procedure and  
 584 that there are no errors in the course of the trial

585 6) Supportive

586 Communication in the courtroom can also be mutually supportive, especially in the  
 587 interaction between the judge and the witness or between the lawyer and his client. In some  
 588 cases, judges show empathy for witnesses who testify in emotional cases. A traumatized  
 589 witness stated that, "The judge gave me time to calm down before continuing to testify. It  
 590 really helped me to speak more clearly." In addition, it can also be seen in the lawyer's  
 591 interaction with his client. Lawyers often provide moral and technical support to their clients  
 592 before the trial begins in order to better deal with the legal process.

593 In a nutshell, the following is a classification in the form of a table 4:

NO	Characteristics	Description
1	Professional	Communication that is carried out with a formal, rules-based attitude, and follows legal ethics without involving emotions or personal interests
2	Confrontational	Communications that are challenging or contradictory, where the parties to the hearing attempt to refute or test the truth of a statement
3	Investigation	Communication that aims to dig up facts, seek truth, and uncover evidence through questioning and investigation.
4	Counter-intuitive	A communication that is competitive between two opposing parties, such as between a prosecutor and a lawyer, each of whom is trying to prove his or her argument in front of a judge.
5	Hierarchical	Communication that follows a power structure or authority, where decisions and instructions flow from higher parties to lower parties
6	Supportive	Communication that is supportive and provides assistance, usually comes from parties who want to provide morals or support to certain individuals.

594 Table 2: Characteristics of Communication in the Courtroom

595 Communication in the courtroom is not just an exchange of information, but a key interaction in  
 596 running the legal system effectively. The combination of the various communication characteristics of  
 597 professionalism, confrontation, investigation, and hierarchical structure creates a communication  
 598 mechanism that serves to ensure justice for all parties involved. However, the main challenge in trial  
 599 communication is maintaining a balance between critical debate and legal ethics, as well as ensuring  
 600 that all participants can participate without intrusive pressure.

## 601 4 Discussion

602 This study interprets the six observed characteristics through an explicit framework integrating  
603 Goffman's concept of gatherings (1963), Judicial Communication (Roach Anleu & Mack, 2015a) and  
604 Forensic Communication (Howes, 2015), positioning the Indonesian criminal courtroom as a  
605 communicative space in which authority is performed, facts are contested, and participants' "faces"  
606 are managed.

607 Authority and order are enacted through ritual openings such as standing for the bench, the judge's  
608 control of turn-taking, and scripted agenda shifts from indictment to evidence, claims, and verdict.  
609 These practices, which Goffman describes as a gathering, materialize judicial authority and neutrality,  
610 framing one-way communication during instructions and verdict delivery. The professional and  
611 hierarchical features observed are therefore not mere stylistic preferences but institutional  
612 performances of legitimacy that display impartiality while keeping proceedings orderly and  
613 intelligible.

614 Contestation and truth-testing emerge most visibly during witness examination and cross-  
615 examination, when communication shifts to a multi-directional mode in which prosecutors and defense  
616 counsel challenge claims, probe inconsistencies, and present counter-narratives. The confrontational  
617 and adversarial characteristics identified in this study constitute the core of forensic testing, where  
618 claims are advanced, scrutinized, and either stabilized or weakened. Judges' clarifying questions  
619 extend this scrutiny, blending judicial and forensic communication to ensure that fact-finding remains  
620 rigorous yet procedurally fair, which is captured in the investigative dimension.

621 Care and procedural fairness are also embedded in supportive practices such as allowing pauses,  
622 rephrasing complex questions, and acknowledging stress, which protect participants' "face" (Goffman)  
623 and promote perceived fairness (Judicial Communication). In the Indonesian context, where judges  
624 actively steer proceedings, such micro-accommodations help sustain participation without diluting  
625 neutrality.

626 International scholarship shows parallel dynamics, such as linguistic accommodation (Aronsson et  
627 al., 1987), presence and participation in virtual courts (Rossner & Tait, 2023), and the emotional  
628 dimension of legal communication (Bandes & Feigenson, 2020; Ellsworth & Dougherty, 2016), while  
629 Indonesian studies (Widodo, 2019; 2020; 2022) have mapped legal communication models and the  
630 dramaturgy of defendants. This study contributes by empirically characterizing courtroom  
631 communication into six interlocking features and systematically linking them to socio-legal  
632 communication theory.

633 In particular, the dual flow—one-way authority-performing communication versus multi-  
634 directional adversarial testing—explains how Indonesian trials balance order and contestation to  
635 sustain legitimacy. By treating the courtroom as a gathering where judicial authority is performed and  
636 forensic testing unfolds, the findings clarify why professionalism and hierarchy must coexist with  
637 confrontation and investigation, and this integrated view further explains how specific communicative  
638 practices such as controlled turn-taking, targeted clarification, and ethical rebuttal translate into fairer  
639 and more effective adjudication.

## 640 5 Conclusion

641 Communication in the courtroom involves multiple participants including judges, prosecutors, defense  
642 lawyers, witnesses, and defendants, each with distinct objectives, and unfolds through complex  
643 interactional processes. This study identifies six interrelated characteristics of courtroom  
644 communication: professional, investigative, supportive, confrontational, adversarial, and hierarchical.  
645 **Theoretically**, the study advances courtroom communication research by integrating socio-legal  
646 frameworks such as Goffman's gatherings, Judicial Communication, and Forensic Communication to  
647 demonstrate how authority, contestation, and fairness are simultaneously enacted in Indonesian  
648 criminal trials. This conceptual integration enriches the literature by showing that courtroom  
649 interaction is not merely procedural but constitutes a communicative practice that produces legitimacy  
650 and justice.

651 **Practically, the findings offer important implications for Indonesian legal practice. Judges must remain**  
652 **firm in controlling** communication while providing supportive space for vulnerable participants;  
653 prosecutors and defense lawyers should prioritize professionalism and clarity in argumentation; and  
654 witnesses and defendants must be enabled to present information without undue pressure.  
655 Strengthening these communicative practices can enhance transparency, fairness, and public trust in  
656 the judicial system. Therefore, this study confirms that courtroom communication is not simply a  
657 technical aspect of trial procedure but a decisive factor in shaping justice that is more accountable,  
658 effective, and legitimate.

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6	Bukti konfirmasi review kedua dan hasil review kedua dari Reviewer 1	24 September 2025

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## New Comments in the Interactive Review Forum - 1623307

1 message

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Wed, Sep 24, 2025 at

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11:47 AM

Reply-To: Frontiers in Communication Editorial Office <communication.editorial.office@frontiersin.org>

To: aan.widodo@dsn.ubharajaya.ac.id

Dear Dr Widodo,

**New comments were posted by the reviewer 1.**

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Remember that there can be more than one iteration between authors and reviewers, and only when all comments by the reviewers are addressed successfully can the review be finalized.

We wish you a successful interactive review, and remain at your disposal for any questions.

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8 Reviewer 1 | 24 sep 2025 | 04:47

#5

I have reviewed the paper in detail and found several obvious errors that require immediate attention:

Error 1 : Lines 19-20 of the abstract - "Thematic analysis, supported by coding, triangulation, and member checking" - contains a grammatical error.

Error 2: Line 45 - The phrase "in the table" is used, but no table is provided. Where is the table?

Error 3: Line 202 - It is unconventional to simply write "in the following chart"; the specific chart number must be indicated.

Error 4: Line 204 - The label "Figure 1.1" appears inconsistent. What is the logic behind this numbering?

Error 5: Line 384 - Similarly, "Chart 1" lacks clear numbering rationale. Explain the sequence.

Error 6: Line 447 - The phrase "the following table" is used without specifying which table.

Error 7: Lines 591-592 - There is inconsistency in table references: "a table 4" is mentioned, while "table 2" appears immediately after.

Error 8: The heading "Results." contains an unnecessary period. Headings should be phrases, not sentences.

Additional issue: Inconsistent numbering format - Line 209 uses "1 while Line 520 uses "1 These must be unified throughout.

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No	Perihal	Tanggal
7	Bukti konfirmasi submit revisi kedua dan respon kedua kepada Reviewer 1	24 September 2025

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**Dear Reviewer.**

Thank you for your careful review and constructive feedback on our manuscript. I has revised the paper thoroughly in response to all comments. Below is a point-by-point explanation of the revisions made:

No	Reviewer Comment	Author Response
1	<b>Error 1:</b> Lines 19–20 of the abstract – " <i>Thematic analysis, supported by coding, triangulation, and member checking</i> "– contains a grammatical error.	The sentence on lines 19–20 has been revised to correct the grammatical error.
2	<b>Error 2:</b> Line 45 – The phrase " <i>in the table</i> " is used, but no table is provided. Where is the table?	The sentence on lines 144–148 has been revised, and the phrase " <i>in the table</i> " has been removed.
3	<b>Error 3:</b> Line 202 – It is unconventional to simply write " <i>in the following chart</i> "; the specific chart number must be indicated.	The sentence on lines 200–203 has been revised to specify <i>Chart 1</i> . The previous label <i>Figure 1.1</i> has been changed to <i>Chart 1</i> for consistency.
4	<b>Error 4:</b> Line 204 – The label " <i>Figure 1.1</i> " appears inconsistent. What is the logic behind this numbering?	The label on line 203 has been changed from <i>Figure 1.1</i> to <i>Chart 1</i> to maintain consistent numbering.
5	<b>Error 5:</b> Line 384 – Similarly, " <i>Chart 1</i> " lacks clear numbering rationale. Explain the sequence.	The reference on line 383 has been revised to <i>Chart 2</i> and clarified in the paragraph for sequential consistency.
6	<b>Error 6:</b> Line 447 – The phrase " <i>the following table</i> " is used without specifying which table.	The sentence on lines 445–447 has been revised to specify <i>Table 1</i> .
7	<b>Error 7:</b> Lines 591–592 – There is inconsistency in table references: " <i>a table 4</i> " is mentioned, while " <i>table 2</i> " appears immediately after.	The reference on lines 590–591 has been corrected to <i>Table 2</i> for consistency.
8	<b>Error 8:</b> The heading " <i>Results.</i> " contains an unnecessary period. Headings should be phrases, not sentences.	The period after the heading <i>Results</i> has been removed.
9	<b>Additional issue:</b> Inconsistent numbering format – Line 209 uses " <i>I.</i> " while Line 520 uses " <i>I</i> ". These must be unified throughout.	All numbering formats have been standardized to use " <i>I.</i> " throughout the manuscript (see lines 518, 535, 549, 559, 569, 581).

I believe these revisions have improved the clarity, consistency, and professionalism of the manuscript. We sincerely appreciate the reviewers' insightful comments and suggestions, which have strengthened the overall quality of our work.

**Thanyou**

# Courtroom Communication: Identification of the Communication Characteristics of Criminal Trials in Indonesian Courts

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**Keywords: Courtroom communication, Criminal trials, Interactional dynamics, Judicial authority, Indonesia**

## Abstract

The courtroom in Indonesia operates not only as a legal setting but also as a socio-communicative arena where judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, witnesses, and defendants interact under strict procedures and cultural norms. Communication in this space shapes justice, transparency, and public trust. This study analyzes courtroom communication in Indonesian criminal trials by examining the flows and characteristics of interaction. Drawing on Goffman's concept of gatherings, Judicial Communication, and Forensic Communication, it conceptualizes the courtroom as a communicative practice where actors perform authority, contest facts, and negotiate fairness. The research employed a qualitative case study design and collected data through interviews with nine informants (judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, a witness, and a defendant), observations of three trials at the Bekasi District Court, and analysis data was carried out using thematic analysis with stages of coding, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion. The findings show two dominant communication flows: one way communication, such as judicial instructions and verdict delivery, and multi directional communication, such as examinations and cross examinations. The study further identifies six communication characteristics: professional, hierarchical, confrontational, investigative, adversarial, and supportive. Empirical examples include judges' clarifying questions, prosecutorial challenges, and empathetic accommodations for vulnerable witnesses. Theoretically, the study advances socio-legal communication research by integrating authority, contestation, and fairness in courtroom interaction. Practically, it provides insights for legal practitioners to strengthen communication strategies that enhance effectiveness, fairness, and legitimacy in judicial processes.

## 1 Introduction

The courtroom is the formal arena for adjudication. It is a designated space in which legal proceedings are examined by all parties to the judicial process, and where interaction occurs in an orderly and structured environment. Parties involved in legal cases include judges, prosecutors, lawyers, witnesses, and defendants who interact to achieve justice for both defendants and victims (Aronsson et al., 1987; Grossman, 2019; Walenta, 2020; Widodo, 2019).

Courtrooms comprise interrelated elements of physical layout, institutional norms, and communicative practices (Bandes and Feigensohn, 2020; LeVan, 1984; Rossner et al., 2021). The physical layout refers to the trial facilities, among others, the judge's bench, prosecutor's desk, lawyer's desk, witness bench, and seating for the defendant as well as the audience or visitors to the trial (Hawilo et al., 2022).

39 Meanwhile, norms and values are elements that support the principle of conducting open, transparent  
40 and fair trials, including the provisions and communication processes carried out in achieving the  
41 objectives of the trial. Every element in the courtroom, from the physical layout to the various rules  
42 including the rules of communication, aims to support a fair and impartial judicial process (Gordon  
43 and Druckman, 2018). In this environment, communication plays an important role, in determining the  
44 outcome of the judicial process (Otu, 2015; Turner and Hughes, 2022). Through communication, trial  
45 actors share information, in order to achieve the intended goals (Widodo, 2022; Widodo et al., 2018)

46 The form of communication that occurs in the courtroom is part of what is known as Courtroom  
47 Communication (Cowles and Cowles, 2011; Farley et al., 2014a; Hans, Valerie P., & Sweigart, 1993).  
48 Neubauer and Meinhold (2016) define courtroom communication as a concept that includes  
49 communication events or specific aspects of interactions that take place in the law enforcement process.  
50 Various terms are used to describe the dynamics of communication in a trial, depending on the role,  
51 participation, and form of interaction between participants. Bowen and Carney (2013) use the term  
52 forensic communication to emphasize the content and substance of the message conveyed (Howes,  
53 2015). Carter (2003) prefers the term judicial communication which highlights the legal dimension of  
54 communication that occurs during the trial (Leung, 2012; Roach Anleu and Mack, 2015a). Meanwhile,  
55 Lubert (2004) uses the term trial communication which refers to communication based on stages or  
56 processes in the trial (Philp, 2022). Although scholars using different terms (courtroom  
57 communication, judicial communication, forensic communication, and trial communication), they all  
58 refer to the context of communication in the courtroom involving actors, messages with legal purposes,  
59 and structured interactions.

60 Communication in the courtroom has a very important role in determining justice for both defendants  
61 and victims in the Indonesian justice system (Donoghue, 2017). In the courtroom, interactions between  
62 various legal actors such as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, defendants, witnesses, and other related  
63 parties have an influence on the process of formation and decision-making, including through  
64 perception, dramaturgy, and nonverbal communication (Aceron, 2015; Elbers et al., 2012a, 2012b;  
65 Suffet, 1966; Wodak, 1980). The dynamic of Communication that occurs in the trial affect way the  
66 evidence, the arguments submitted, and the conclusions drawn by the judge and accepted by the legal  
67 actors. In general. Widodo (2019) describes this communication through the law enforcement  
68 communication model, the examination communication model, and the communication model between  
69 law enforcement and defendant or witnesses in Court. (Widodo, 2024a, 2024b, 2020, 2019).

70 Existing studies on courtroom communication can be grouped thematically into several streams.  
71 Research on verbal communication has shown how arguments are framed, how examinations are  
72 structured, and how advocates adapt their language to audiences such as judges and jurors (Farley et  
73 al., 2014b; Hans, Valerie P., & Sweigart, 1993). Other studies have emphasized nonverbal and  
74 multimodal aspects, demonstrating the importance of gaze, posture, and vocal delivery as well as the  
75 influence of documents, recordings, and screen-based exhibits in shaping courtroom interaction  
76 (Gordon and Druckman, 2018; LeVan, 1984; Otu, 2015) Scholars have also examined interactional  
77 patterns among legal actors, highlighting how judges regulate presence, participation, and turn  
78 allocation, including in virtual or hybrid courts (Donoghue, 2017; Rossner and Tait, 2023). In addition,  
79 socio-legal research has linked courtroom communication to broader outcomes of procedural justice  
80 and legitimacy, showing that clarity of expression, equal opportunities to speak, and respectful  
81 treatment of participants are crucial in building public trust in the judicial process (Bandes and  
82 Feigenson, 2020; Walenta, 2020)

83 At the Bekasi Regional District Court, communication in the courtroom occurred in the law  
84 enforcement process. Based on the results of the researcher's observations, law enforcers interact and  
85 communicate in the courtroom, not only between law enforcement officials and witnesses and  
86 defendants, but also with court officers. Communication between the parties is one of the keys to the  
87 implementation of the trial and the success of the law enforcement process in the courtroom.  
88 Communication depends on the special characteristics of the conference. The Bekasi city district court  
89 trial is one of the courts that carries out communication in the trial as an interaction process that occurs  
90 in a trial process with different characteristics.

91 This research focuses on the characteristics of communication in court trials. This research is important  
92 to be carried out in order to understand the communication process in criminal trials. Communication  
93 is done by ensuring that each party involved in the judicial process has an equal opportunity to present  
94 their arguments and evidence. In addition, effective communication can also help in creating an  
95 environment conducive to creating public trust in the justice system. In a broader context, this research  
96 can also contribute to the development of more effective communication methods and strategies in  
97 criminal justice. With an understanding of how communication affects the judicial process, relevant  
98 parties, including judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and legal counsel, can develop a better communication  
99 approach to achieving desired legal goals.

100 To address this, the present study employs an explicit theoretical framework that integrates three  
101 complementary perspectives. First, Goffman's concept of *gatherings* (1963) views the courtroom as a  
102 socially organized event in which roles, authority, and norms are performed and negotiated. This  
103 perspective highlights the professional and hierarchical dimensions of courtroom communication,  
104 where authority is enacted symbolically through verbal and nonverbal practices. Second, the  
105 framework of *judicial communication* (Roach Anleu and Mack, 2015b), emphasizes how judges  
106 display authority, neutrality, and legitimacy through both verbal and nonverbal interactions. This  
107 perspective is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where judges actively direct proceedings, regulate  
108 turn-taking, and ensure fairness while at times providing supportive communication for vulnerable  
109 participants such as witnesses or defendants. Third, Bowen and Carney's (2013) concept of forensic  
110 communication, further elaborated by Howes (2015), Matoesian (2017), and Maynard et al. (2014)  
111 underscores the adversarial and investigative nature of courtroom exchanges, especially in the  
112 presentation and testing of evidence through questioning and cross-examination (Howes, 2015;  
113 Matoesian, 2017; Maynard et al., 2014). By integrating these three perspectives, the study provides a  
114 robust conceptual foundation to interpret courtroom communication not merely as procedural conduct,  
115 but as a communicative practice that shapes justice through authority, negotiation, and contestation.

116 Despite these contributions, several important aspects remain underexplored in the literature. Studies  
117 have rarely examined how nonverbal features such as gaze or gesture intersect with verbal strategies  
118 in determining courtroom dynamics. Similarly, the multimodal interaction between spoken exchanges,  
119 written documents, and technological media is seldom analyzed in depth, leaving a gap in  
120 understanding how these layers shape meaning and authority in trials. Furthermore, although power  
121 relations are widely acknowledged, the specific ways in which hierarchical structures and role  
122 asymmetries influence communication practices in Indonesian criminal courts are not yet sufficiently  
123 documented. Cultural influences, including local norms of respect, deference, and emotional restraint,  
124 have also received limited scholarly attention, despite their clear relevance to courtroom practice. By  
125 addressing these gaps, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive account of the communicative  
126 characteristics of Indonesian criminal trials.

127 Building on these gaps, the present study is guided by two central research questions: What are the  
128 main characteristics of communication in Indonesian criminal court trials? and How do these  
129 characteristics influence the flow and outcomes of courtroom interaction? These questions direct the  
130 analysis toward identifying the distinctive features of courtroom communication and clarifying their  
131 implications for both justice and legitimacy in the Indonesian legal system. Mapping courtroom  
132 communication is essential, as every verbal and nonverbal interaction among legal actors (judges,  
133 prosecutors, lawyers, defendants, and witnesses) shapes the presentation of evidence, the arguments  
134 advanced, and ultimately the judicial decision.

## 135 **2 Research Methods**

### 136 **2.1 Research Design**

137 The research approach used is qualitative research. The researcher uses a qualitative approach  
138 to understand the communication between various parties in a criminal trial in the district court. The  
139 researcher conducted interviews with 9 informants and observations at 3 trials in the district court.  
140 Research informants are determined based on criteria that meet the needs of the research. In  
141 determining informants, the researcher began by determining the law enforcement informants  
142 consisting of 3 judges, prosecutors, legal advisors, 1 defendant, 1 witness, 1 visitor, 1 court officer  
143 (clerk), 1 security/prisoner.

144 The researcher selected informants using purposive sampling based on the research objectives,  
145 particularly for law enforcement officers (prosecutors, lawyers, and judges). Other informants were  
146 chosen incidentally during direct observation, and their eligibility was confirmed according to the data  
147 requirements. Some informants agreed to participate, while others required prior consent, such as  
148 witnesses and defendants, who needed approval from their legal counsel before being interviewed.

### 149 **2.2 Data Collection**

150 Data collection combined multiple techniques to ensure triangulation:

- 151 1. **In-depth interviews** were conducted with nine informants to capture their perspectives,  
152 experiences, and strategies in courtroom communication.
- 153 2. **Trial observations** were carried out in three criminal trials at the Bekasi District Court.  
154 Observations included both participatory presence inside the courtroom and non-participatory  
155 observations from designated areas that did not interfere with proceedings.
- 156 3. **Document analysis** involved reviewing court transcripts, trial rulings, and audio/video  
157 recordings relevant to the observed cases.

### 158 **2.3. Data Analysis**

159 After the data is collected, the data processing and analysis stage is carried out. Interview and  
160 observation data were transcribed into text. The data is then coded and categorized based on the theme  
161 or topic that appears. The analysis was carried out using content analysis for qualitative data. The  
162 analysis was carried out using thematic analysis with stages of coding, categorization, interpretation,  
163 and conclusion. Conclusions are made from the results of the analysis that are relevant to the research  
164 objectives. The coding and categorization process generated six core themes (professional,  
165 confrontational, investigative, adversarial, hierarchical, and supportive) which structured the  
166 presentation of results in this study.

### 167 **2.4 Research Procedure**

## 168 1. Preparation and Research Permits

169 The research began with the preparation of a detailed proposal outlining the background, objectives,  
170 methods, and data collection plan. Following institutional requirements, the researcher obtained a  
171 formal research permit supported by a cover letter from the affiliated university. The proposal and  
172 official request letter were submitted to the Bekasi District Court, after which approval was granted.  
173 Coordination with court administrators ensured that interviews and observations did not interfere with  
174 trial proceedings.

## 175 2. Fieldwork and Data Collection Steps

176 After obtaining permission, the researcher conducted fieldwork by observing trial proceedings,  
177 conducting interviews with selected informants, and collecting relevant documents. Fieldwork was  
178 conducted in phases to match the court's trial schedule and to secure participants' availability and  
179 consent.

## 180 2.5 Data validity

181 The trustworthiness of the research data was ensured using member checking. Member checking is the  
182 process by which data or analysis results are returned to participants to ensure that the researcher has  
183 understood and represented their views correctly. In the context of this study, after interviews or  
184 observations were conducted, the researcher returned to the judge, prosecutor, lawyer, and defendant  
185 to confirm that the results recorded were in accordance with their intended results.

## 186 3 Result

### 187 3.1 Trial Process Background

188 The trial and trial process are a series of trial stages in accordance with the provisions of the  
189 Criminal Code in Indonesia. In simple terms, the trial stages consist of the first hearing/indictment  
190 hearing, examination hearing, prosecution hearing and verdict hearing. Furthermore, in each of these  
191 processes, there can be a trial with a recurring agenda, for example, the examination of witnesses can  
192 be carried out many times until the truth is found. The stages are reported here situate where and how  
193 communication flows are produced during proceedings (one-way vs multi-directional).

194 The criminal trial process is marked by the decision of the panel of judges regarding the first hearing.  
195 The first hearing was an indictment hearing, there was a reading of the indictment by the public  
196 prosecutor and a response to the indictment read. The second is the examination of witnesses and the  
197 examination of the defendant and the responses of each party, the third is the demand by the public  
198 prosecutor and the response, as well as the verdict by the Chief Judge and other panels that examine  
199 the case through trial. Here are some of the processes that the author refers to **are classified in the**  
200 **following chart 1:**

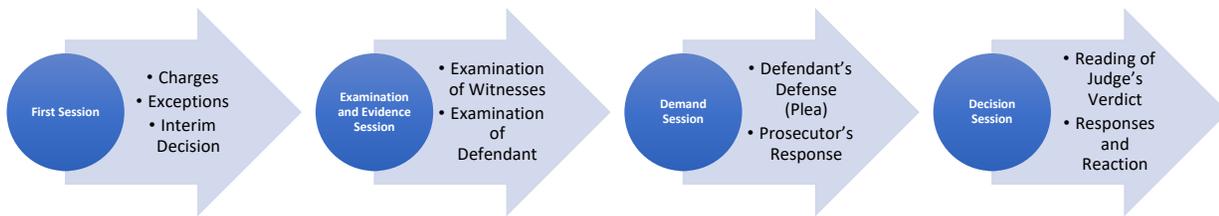


Chart 1. Criminal Trial Process.

Source: Classification of Criminal Code Results

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204 The figure 1.1 above illustrates the stages of the criminal trial process in court which consists of four  
 205 main stages, namely the First Hearing, the Examination and Evidentiary Hearing, the Prosecution  
 206 Hearing, and the Verdict Hearing

### 1. First Session

This stage is the beginning of the trial process where the public prosecutor reads out an indictment containing the accusations against the defendant. At this stage, the defendant or his legal counsel can file an exception, which is an objection to the indictment filed, both formally and materially. If there is an exception, the judge will consider it and issue an interlocutory judgment. If the interlocutory ruling states that the indictment is valid and can be continued, then the trial will proceed to the next stage. On the other hand, if the judge accepts an exception, then the case can be stopped or the prosecutor needs to redraft the indictment. Observation Note (Trial 1): Prior to the indictment reading, the presiding judge stated, “*We proceed according to the agenda: indictment, then defense response,*” establishing a one-way instructional frame.

### 2. Examination and Evidence Hearing

This stage is the core of the trial process, where evidence is submitted and tested before a panel of judges. This process begins with the examination of witnesses, both submitted by the public prosecutor and by the defendant (if there are mitigating witnesses). Witnesses give their testimony under oath and can be questioned by judges, prosecutors, and legal counsel of the defendant. After the examination of witnesses is completed, the trial continues with the examination of the defendant, where the defendant is given the opportunity to explain or respond to the facts that arise in the trial. At this stage, other evidence such as letters, recordings, or other evidence that supports the evidentiary process can also be submitted. Observation Note (Trial 2): During cross-examination, the defense interrupted the prosecutor; the judge intervened, “*Counsel, one question at a time,*” which reopened orderly turn-taking. This alternation from one-way instruction to multi-directional exchange exemplifies Goffman’s gatherings (ordered roles/rituals) and Judicial Communication (authority through turn allocation), while adversarial exchanges operationalize Forensic Communication (testing evidence).

### 3. Trial of Claims

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236 After the evidentiary process is completed, the public prosecutor will submit criminal  
237 charges against the defendant, which is referred to as a requisitoir. These charges include a  
238 legal analysis of the facts revealed at the trial as well as the sentencing recommendations  
239 submitted by the prosecutor. After that, the defendant or his legal counsel is given the  
240 opportunity to submit a plea (defense), which can be in the form of a rebuttal to the prosecutor's  
241 indictments and demands, a request for leniency, or any other defense deemed relevant. After  
242 the defense is submitted, the prosecutor is given the right to provide a replica, which is a  
243 response to the defendant's defense. Then, the defendant or his legal advisor can again provide  
244 a duplicate, which is a response to the prosecutor's replica. Prosecutor B explain "*We structure*  
245 *the demand to walk the court through the facts; the defense will test our inferences point by*  
246 *point.*". This sequenced claim-rebuttal-replica-duplika is a textbook instance of Forensic  
247 Communication (claim testing in adversarial settings).  
248

#### 249 4. Verdict Hearing

250 This stage is the culmination of the entire series of trials, where the judge reads out the  
251 court decision based on the results of the examination and legal considerations carried out. This  
252 verdict can be in the form of a free verdict, free from all lawsuits, or a conviction with certain  
253 penalties in accordance with applicable regulations. After the verdict is read, the prosecutor and  
254 the defendant have the right to express their stance on the verdict. If either party does not accept  
255 the verdict, they can file legal remedies such as an appeal to the high court or cassation to the  
256 Supreme Court. However, if both parties accept the verdict, then the case is considered  
257 complete and the verdict becomes permanent legal force (inkracht). Observation note (Trial  
258 3): The verdict reading proceeded without interruption; responses (accept/appeal) were  
259 recorded afterward—typical one-way communication during verdict delivery. Verdict readings  
260 enact Judicial Communication of authority and neutrality; the ritualized format reflects  
261 Goffman's gatherings.  
262

263 Every hearing, the trial process always involves the communication process of the parties  
264 involved in the courtroom. The implementation of the trial was carried out in accordance with the trial  
265 agenda set by the judge through the clerk. Initially, the Presiding Judge and the panel determined the  
266 trial schedule, which began with the determination of the indictment hearing. Furthermore, the trial  
267 schedule is carried out according to the decision of the Panel of Judges that has been agreed upon by  
268 the Public Prosecutor and Legal Counsel. The Registrar's informant revealed that usually, the next  
269 hearing schedule is one week at most after the previous hearing. "... *The schedule of the trial depends,*  
270 *is determined and agreed upon by His Holiness*".

271 The trial at the Bekasi District Court will run if attended by all parties, namely the Panel of Judges  
272 including the Registrar, Public Prosecutor, Legal Counsel, and Defendants. The first party to enter the  
273 courtroom is the Defendant or the Public Prosecutor, followed by the clerk who coordinates to start the  
274 trial. After the trial was ready, the clerk allowed the Panel of Judges to enter the courtroom and occupy  
275 the prepared sitting position.

276 The officer will announce, "*Your Majesty enters the room, the audience is requested to stand*" or "*The*  
277 *Panel of Judges enters the courtroom, the audience is requested to stand.*" The Panel of Judges then  
278 entered the room with several files, usually in the form of a personal memorandum. After the Panel of  
279 Judges was seated in their seats, the officer invited the audience consisting of the Public Prosecutor,  
280 Legal Counsel, and visitors to sit, and the judge opened the trial by saying, "*Audiences are welcome*  
281 *to sit*". These rituals display ordered deference and role separation consistent with Goffman's  
282 gatherings and the performance of judicial authority.

283 Respecting the Panel of Judges by standing when they enter the courtroom is a mandatory thing to do,  
284 as stated in the Criminal Procedure Code (Criminal Procedure Code). According to Informant 4, this  
285 was done as a form of respect for the Court, the law, and the judges. However, based on the researchers'  
286 observations, this respect was only done in the main courtroom. In smaller courtrooms, this is often  
287 not done, especially when there is no officer to guide you. Witness E explain "*in the smaller room no*  
288 *one prompted us stand; it felt les formal.*"

289 After the Panel of Judges sat and the parties were present in the courtroom, the presiding judge opened  
290 the trial with expressions and hammer beats. The presiding judge then mentioned the trial agenda and  
291 started the process according to the agreed agenda, whether it was an examination hearing, an  
292 indictment hearing or a verdict hearing.

293 Specifically, the trial in the courtroom involves a variety of participants as support for the trial in the  
294 courtroom, based on the observation of the participant participant involving the main participant and  
295 the supporting insertion. The main participants refer to the trial implementation group, namely judges,  
296 prosecutors, lawyers, defendants and witnesses, while supporting participants involved in the trial  
297 process include the visiting parties, court officers who are envious of the cobrban family and the  
298 defendant's family. Supporting participants included court officers, security/prison officers, and  
299 visitors/family members who sometimes affected the communicative environment (e.g., noise, timing).

### 300 3.2 Communication Flow the Courtroom

301 Each stage of the trial has a distinctive communication potential that involves law enforcement  
302 as the main actor in communication. Communication in the courtroom describes communication  
303 between various parties in the trial and trial process, communication takes place between the Panel of  
304 Judges, the Public Prosecutor, Legal Counsel, the Defendant, Witnesses, Registrars, and Visitors. The  
305 Panel of Judges plays a central role by officially opening the trial and leading the trial. The Presiding  
306 Judge, assisted by the Member Judge, hears arguments, evidence, and testimony from the Public  
307 Prosecutor and Legal Counsel. The Public Prosecutor is in charge of submitting the indictment and  
308 presenting evidence and witnesses that support the indictment. On the other hand, Legal Counsel,  
309 presented the defense and submitted evidence and witnesses to support the defendant. The defendant  
310 himself can give statements and answer questions from the Panel of Judges and the Public Prosecutor  
311 as well as Legal Counsel, while witnesses give testimony and answer questions from law enforcers.  
312 Witnesses play an important role by providing testimony that can support or weaken the arguments of  
313 both sides. Court officers, although their role is more administrative, also play a role in ensuring smooth  
314 communication between all parties during the trial process. Overall, successful communication in the  
315 courtroom relies heavily on clarity, accuracy, and interaction between all parties involved. Role  
316 performance, ritual entry, and turn allocation instantiate Goffman's gatherings (ordered interaction)  
317 and Judicial Communication (authority and neutrality).

318 At the Bekasi District Court, communication in the courtroom involves similar dynamics to the judicial  
319 system in other countries, but there are some distinctive differences and nuances. Judges in the  
320 Indonesian District Court have a very active role in directing the trial process, including asking direct  
321 questions to defendants and witnesses. Judges here often have to double down on the role of law  
322 enforcer and communication/dialogue facilitator, ensuring that all parties have a fair opportunity to  
323 present their arguments. Observation Note Trial, During the indictment hearing, the presiding judge  
324 instructed the prosecutor to "*read slowly and clearly so that the defendant can understand.*" The  
325 defendant listened silently and nodded occasionally without any immediate feedback, illustrating a  
326 one-way communication flow. According to Informant A, Judge., a judge explained, "*As a judge, I*

327 *have to make sure that all parties get a fair opportunity to speak. The questions I ask should help clarify*  
328 *the facts without showing partiality. Clear and firm communication is essential to maintain the*  
329 *integrity of the trial process*’. This reflects Judicial Communication as performative neutrality and  
330 clarity; the judge’s interventions also preserve the ordered “gathering” (Goffman).

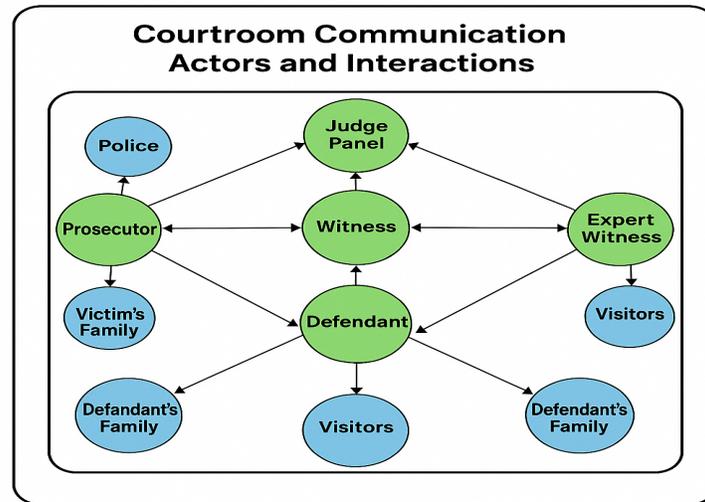
331 Meanwhile, Informant B, the Public Prosecutor (JPU), is tasked with representing the state in  
332 prosecuting the defendant, and they must present evidence and witnesses who can support the charges.  
333 In many cases, the prosecutor's communication with witnesses and experts is the key to corroborating  
334 the cases they file. Observation note trial, During cross-examination of a witness in a narcotics case,  
335 the prosecutor asked, “*Did you see the defendant at the scene?*” The witness hesitated, and the defense  
336 counsel immediately interjected: “*Objection, the question is leading.*” The judge sustained the  
337 objection and instructed the prosecutor to rephrase. This exchange demonstrates a multi-directional  
338 communication flow involving judge, prosecutor, defense, and witness.

339 The Prosecutor's informant, explained, “*As a prosecutor, my main task is to present strong evidence*  
340 *and arguments. Communication with witnesses and experts is very important, as their testimony can*  
341 *strengthen or weaken our case. I have to be able to present my arguments in a way that can be*  
342 *understood by all parties, including the judge and the defendant.*” Informant C, as the defense lawyer,  
343 explained that he often had to work hard to overcome the evidence set by the JPU. Defendant and  
344 Attorney used various communication strategies to challenge the evidence presented, question the  
345 validity of the testimony, and defend the rights of the defendant. Informant C, a defense lawyer in the  
346 Bekasi trial, stated, “*My role is to ensure that my client's rights are protected. This includes presenting*  
347 *arguments clearly and effectively and challenging the evidence presented by the prosecutor. Good*  
348 *communication with the defendant is also very important to ensure that the defense strategy can run*  
349 *well.*”. At the verdict hearing, the presiding judge read the decision in full without interruption. The  
350 atmosphere was silent; the defense and prosecutor only responded after the reading was completed by  
351 declaring whether they accepted or appealed. This clearly illustrates a one-way communication flow,  
352 where information is delivered without immediate feedback.

353 Defendants, especially in cases that attract public attention, are often under immense pressure. Their  
354 communication, whether directly in the form of statements in court or through their lawyers, can have  
355 an impact on the perception of judges and the general public. One defendant who did not want to be  
356 named said, “*It was very nerve-wracking to be in the courtroom. I had to make sure that my story was*  
357 *heard and understood by the judges. My lawyer helped me make my arguments clearly and supported*  
358 *me throughout the process.*” Witnesses, including expert witnesses, give testimony that can be highly  
359 technical and require further clarification through questions from judges or lawyers. Informant E, a  
360 witness in a narcotics criminal case, said, “*Giving testimony in court is a stressful experience. I have*  
361 *to make sure that what I say is true and clear. Judges and lawyers often ask questions that help me*  
362 *explain in more detail.*” In another instance, the judge rephrased a complex legal term into simpler  
363 language so that the witness could respond accurately. This indicates a supportive communication  
364 practice embedded in the flow.

365 Court officers, too, play an important role in supporting effective communication, managing the  
366 administration of the trial, and ensuring all documents and evidence are available in a timely manner.  
367 Informant G, said, “*His role is to ensure that all documents and evidence are ready on time and the*  
368 *trial runs smoothly. We also have to communicate frequently with various parties to coordinate*  
369 *schedules and needs during the trial, so that it is orderly.* Likewise, the prison guards and security  
370 officers ensure that the trial runs safely and orderly.

371 Overall, communication in the Indonesian District Court courtroom is a complex process that requires  
372 the active involvement of all parties to ensure that the objectives of the trial are achieved and justice  
373 can be upheld. This communication is influenced by the skills of legal professionals in presenting their  
374 arguments clearly and persuasively, as well as by the judge's ability to manage the trial process wisely  
375 and impartially. Communication in the trial through a series of participation of the parties to support  
376 the main objectives of the trial. Based on observations and information from informants, the researcher  
377 emphasized the connection of communication between the parties in supporting the communication  
378 process in the courtroom. As illustrated in chart 2. The interplay of one-way (authority-performing)  
379 and multi-directional (adversarial testing) flows shows how hierarchy and contestation are balanced—  
380 central to perceived fairness (Judicial/Forensic Communication within Goffman's ordered event).



381

382 **Chart 2 Courtroom Communication Actors and Interactions**

383 Communication in court involves many factors that affect how information is conveyed, received, and  
384 interpreted in legal proceedings. In courtroom communication, each element of communication plays  
385 an important role in shaping the dynamics of interaction in the courtroom. Communicators in the  
386 trial consist of various parties who have specific legal roles, such as the judge who gives  
387 instructions, the prosecutor who reads the indictment, the lawyer who submits the defense, and the  
388 witness who gives testimony. The communicator, as the recipient of the message, includes the  
389 defendant who receives the indictment, the judge who assesses the arguments of both sides, and  
390 the witness who responds to questions asked by the prosecutor or lawyer.

391 The message communicated in the trial can be statements, instructions, questions, or evidence  
392 presented during the judicial process. The communication channels used are generally verbal, such  
393 as delivering arguments or interrogations, as well as nonverbal, such as legal documents, evidence  
394 recordings, or the judge's facial expressions in giving signals. In courtroom communication,  
395 feedback occurs when the recipient of the message responds to the information received, for  
396 example when the defendant answers questions from the judge or the witness provides clarification  
397 on the prosecutor's statement.

398 The context in courtroom communication includes legal, social, and psychological factors that  
399 affect the course of communication. The legal context includes the judicial rules that must be  
400 followed, while the social context can be in the form of public expectations of trial transparency.  
401 On the other hand, psychological distress can affect the effectiveness of communication, for

402 example when a witness feels intimidated while giving testimony. In addition, communication  
403 disorders (noise) can also appear in various forms, such as physical disorders (noise from court  
404 visitors), psychological disorders (witness anxiety that hinders fluent speech), and semantic  
405 disorders (the use of legal terms that are difficult for witnesses or defendants to understand). The  
406 communication process is through at least two communication streams, namely one-way and multi-  
407 directional communication streams,

408 In real practice in the courtroom, a one-way flow usually occurs when the judge gives instructions  
409 or leads the course of the trial. For example, when the trial begins, the judge will instruct the  
410 prosecutor and lawyers about the order of the proceedings, such as who first presents arguments or  
411 when witnesses are called. Judges also often make final decisions, such as interlocutory rulings or  
412 decisions related to the evidence received. These decisions were delivered without any direct  
413 feedback from the parties involved at the time, although they could appeal or protest through other  
414 legal channels. For example, when a judge decides to accept or reject evidence, this decision is  
415 presented to lawyers and prosecutors, who can then accept the decision or make other appeals, but  
416 no direct interaction occurs at the time of the reading of the decision.

417 Multi-directional flow is more reflective of the active dynamics that occur during the trial process.  
418 One obvious example is during the interrogation of witnesses, where prosecutors and lawyers take  
419 turns asking each other questions and giving arguments. In this process, the witness gives an  
420 answer, which can then be further questioned or refuted by another lawyer or prosecutor.  
421 Communication here flows back and forth, with each party responding to what the other party says.  
422 Another example is when the defendant gives a statement or a lawyer defends his client. The lawyer  
423 will provide convincing arguments to the judge or jury, while the prosecutor will also present a  
424 rebuttal or clarification. During this process, there is a dynamic exchange of information, either  
425 through direct dialogue or through reactions to the arguments put forward. One of the real forms  
426 of this multi-directional communication flow is seen when the judge decides to give the lawyer the  
427 opportunity to ask questions of the witness, which then becomes a question and answer process  
428 that requires the judge, prosecutor, lawyer, and witness to interact with each other. In this context,  
429 the flow of communication can be very flexible, depending on who is providing the information  
430 and how the other party responds to the information.

431 In the courtroom, there are two forms of communication flows that dominate the judicial process,  
432 namely the one-way flow and the multi-directional flow, each of which has an important role in the  
433 course of the trial. One-way flow occurs when information flows from one party to another without  
434 any immediate feedback at the time. An example is when the judge gives instructions or decisions,  
435 such as reading the verdict or directing the course of the trial. In this stream, other parties, such as  
436 prosecutors or lawyers, simply receive information without being able to provide an immediate  
437 response at that time. In contrast, a multi-directional flow occurs when several parties engage in  
438 interactive communication, such as in the question and answer process between prosecutors,  
439 lawyers, witnesses, and defendants. In interrogation, each party gives a response that affects the  
440 course of the conversation, creating a dynamic dialogue and interacting with each other. Although  
441 these two streams differ in terms of interaction and communication structure, they have the same  
442 goal, which is to ensure that the trial process runs fairly and transparently. The one-way flow serves  
443 to provide clear and firm instructions, while the multi-way flow deepens the understanding of the  
444 facts revealed during the trial. Both are important in supporting the achievement of legitimate and  
445 fair legal decisions. **The following table 1 is meant:**

Aspects	One-Way Flow	Multi-Directional Flow
---------	--------------	------------------------

Direction	Information flows from one party to another without direct feedback.,	Information flows in two or more directions, with interaction and feedback.
Interaction.	There is no direct interaction between the parties involved.,	There is direct interaction and an exchange of arguments or responses
Speed and Flexibility,	More rigid and structured, information is delivered directly.,	More flexible, depending on the response of the other parties involved.
Purpose	Provide instructions or decisions that do not require a direct response.,	Dig into the facts, provide arguments, and clarify the position of the relevant parties.
Parties Involved,	Only one party dominates the communication, such as the judge giving instructions.	All parties are actively involved in communication, such as prosecutors, lawyers, and witnesses.
Example (Observation)	<p>a. Judge instructed prosecutor to read indictment slowly so defendant could understand—no direct feedback given.</p> <p>b. Verdict reading delivered by presiding judge; defense/prosecutor responded only after completion with appeal statement.</p>	<p>a. Prosecutor questioned witness; defense objected (“leading question”), judge intervened and rephrased → dynamic dialogue among all parties.</p> <p>b. Judge simplified complex legal terms for witness, enabling accurate response—interactional adjustment across roles.</p>

446 **Table 1 Explanation of Communication Flow**

447 In the context of communication in the courtroom, the flow of communication refers to the direction  
448 and pattern of interaction that occurs between various participants during the law enforcement process.  
449 These streams of communication can be categorized into two main types:

450 1. One-Way Communication Flow: Occurs when information or messages are conveyed from one  
451 party to another without any immediate response. An example is when the judge reads the  
452 verdict or the prosecutor submits an indictment. In this situation, communication is linear and  
453 does not require immediate feedback from the recipient of the message.

454 One-way communication occurs when information is delivered from one actor to others without  
455 immediate feedback. This flow typically appears during formal openings, the delivery of  
456 instructions, interlocutory rulings, and the reading of verdicts. In these moments, judges speak  
457 with institutional authority, and other parties listen in silence.

458 Observation, Trial 1, Before the indictment was read, the presiding judge announced, “*We*  
459 *proceed according to the agenda: indictment, then defense response.*” The statement framed  
460 the trial in a top-down manner, establishing authority and structure. The defendant and legal

461 counsel listened quietly without comment, illustrating linear communication. Observation,  
462 Trial 3, The verdict was read in its entirety without interruption. The courtroom atmosphere  
463 was silent, and only after the reading did the prosecutor and defense state whether they would  
464 accept or appeal. This ritualized silence underscored the symbolic authority of the bench.  
465 Informant A (Judge) emphasized this performative neutrality: *“As a judge, I have to make*  
466 *sure that all parties get a fair opportunity to speak. The questions I ask should help clarify the*  
467 *facts without showing partiality. Clear and firm communication is essential to maintain the*  
468 *integrity of the trial process.”*

469  
470 These practices reflect judicial communication, where authority and impartiality are enacted  
471 through one-way, scripted formats, consistent with Goffman’s notion of gatherings (1963).  
472 One-way communication thus serves as a performative act of legitimacy, ensuring order and  
473 neutrality in the courtroom.

474 2. Multi-Directional Communication Flow: Involves a reciprocal interaction between two or more  
475 participants, where there is a dynamic exchange of information. For example, during the  
476 examination of witnesses, there is a dialogue between judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and  
477 witnesses. This flow of communication allows for further clarification, affirmation, and  
478 exploration of information through questions and answers.

479 In contrast, multi-directional communication arises during evidentiary stages, especially in  
480 witness examinations and cross-examinations. Here, communication shifts dynamically among  
481 judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, and witnesses, producing interactional feedback and  
482 negotiation. Observation, Trial 2, In a narcotics case, the prosecutor asked a witness, *“Did you*  
483 *see the defendant at the scene?”* *The witness hesitated. Defense counsel immediately objected:*  
484 *“Objection, leading question.”* The judge sustained the objection and instructed the prosecutor  
485 to rephrase. This exchange demonstrated a multi-actor flow in which turn-taking, feedback, and  
486 regulation unfolded interactively. Observation, Trial 2 (Judge’s Intervention): When a witness  
487 struggled with a complex legal term, the judge rephrased the question in simpler language. This  
488 adjustment allowed the witness to answer accurately, reflecting supportive communication  
489 embedded within adversarial exchanges. Informant B (Prosecutor) highlighted the importance  
490 of this interactive process: *“As a prosecutor, my main task is to present strong evidence and*  
491 *arguments. Communication with witnesses and experts is very important, as their testimony*  
492 *can strengthen or weaken our case.”* Informant C described the balance between adversarial  
493 advocacy and fairness: *“My role is to ensure that my client’s rights are protected. This includes*  
494 *presenting arguments clearly and effectively and challenging the evidence presented by the*  
495 *prosecutor. Good communication with the defendant is also very important to ensure that the*  
496 *defense strategy can run well.*

497 These exchanges operationalize forensic communication (Bowen & Carney, 2013), where  
498 competing narratives are tested in front of the bench. At the same time, judicial interventions  
499 regulate these adversarial dynamics, ensuring that the process remains both rigorous and  
500 procedurally fair

501 Each of these communication streams has characteristics that affect the dynamics of the trial. One-way  
502 communication flows tend to be formal and hierarchical, emphasizing authority and structure in the  
503 judicial process. In contrast, multi-directional communication flows are more interactive and  
504 participatory, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the facts of the case through direct interaction  
505 between the various parties involved. Understanding the flow of communication in a trial is important

506 for participants to optimize their communication strategies. By adapting the communication approach  
507 according to the flow that occurs, the effectiveness of the judicial process can be improved, ensuring  
508 that each party can convey their information and arguments efficiently and on point.

### 509 3.3 Communication Characteristics in the Courtroom

510 Overall, based on the information of the informants, communication in the trial does have  
511 distinctive characteristics and is different in other communication contexts. The informants explained  
512 several characteristics that occurred, that communication in the courtroom is a combination of various  
513 characteristics that reflect the complexity of the interaction between the participants involved in the  
514 trial. This characteristic arises because communication in the trial is influenced by various roles, goals,  
515 and goals. Communication that occurs between participants has various characteristics, including  
516 procedural, confrontational, hierarchical, investigativehierari, opposite, and mutually supportive. The  
517 following is a description of each of the characteristics:

#### 518 1. Professional.

519 Communication in the courtroom is carried out formally and in accordance with the rule of  
520 law. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers use language that is polite, unemotional, and should be  
521 based on facts. For example, the judge must speak neutrally and objectively, while the  
522 prosecutor drafts the indictment based on evidence, not assumptions. This professional  
523 attitude is important so that the trial runs fairly and according to the rules. Communication in  
524 the trial is professional, where judges, prosecutors, and lawyers use formal legal language  
525 and follow established procedures. Professionals are depicted in the presentation of  
526 arguments, examination of witnesses, and the decision-making process. Informant A and  
527 Informant C, explained that the professional in the trial is that communication that is carried  
528 out with a formal, rules-based attitude, and follows legal ethics without involving emotions  
529 or personal interests, is a must "... *The judge must maintain a balance between justice and*  
530 *law. Every word spoken must be neutral, objective, and based on the facts revealed in the*  
531 *trial*" Meanwhile, informant C, revealed "*We cannot be careless in drafting indictments.*  
532 *Any statement must be based on legal evidence and facts, not personal assumptions or*  
533 *opinions.*" Referring to this information, professional is defined as an objective attitude and  
534 responsibility carried out through formal communication.

#### 535 2. Confrontational

536 Communication in the courtroom is often conflicting, especially between prosecutors and  
537 lawyers who have conflicting interests. The prosecutor is tasked with proving the defendant's  
538 guilt, while the lawyer tries to defend his client by refuting the accusations made. Informant  
539 D, a lawyer interviewed revealed that, "*sometimes, lawyers do, often face fierce arguments*  
540 *with prosecutors, but that is part of the legal system. We must maintain ethics, even in the*  
541 *face of conflicting arguments.*" This confrontation is seen in witness examination sessions,  
542 such as in cases where the prosecutor asks, "*Are you sure you didn't see the defendant at the*  
543 *scene? CCTV evidence shows that the defendant was at the location at 22.00 WIB.*" The  
544 lawyer then denied with an interruption, "*The presence of the defendant at the location does*  
545 *not necessarily prove that he committed a criminal act. How can you be sure that the*  
546 *defendant is the real perpetrator?*" In a situation like this, the judge plays the role of  
547 controlling the course of the trial so that the debate does not go beyond the limits of legal  
548 ethics.

#### 549 3. Investigative

550 Another characteristic found is investigative communication, judges, prosecutors, and  
551 lawyers to dig up facts and test the validity of information from witnesses or defendants. The

552 judge often asks clarifying questions to ensure consistency in the testimony given, as in the  
 553 case where the judge asks, *"Brother witness, in the BAP you mentioned that the incident*  
 554 *occurred at 9:00 p.m., but the police report said it was 10:00 p.m. Can you explain the*  
 555 *difference?"*. The interviewed judge explained, *"Our job is not only to hear, but also to clarify*  
 556 *and ensure that there is no contradictory information. We have to find the truth based on the*  
 557 *evidence."* Based on this information, investigative is evidenced by the process of digging or  
 558 searching for more detailed and in-depth information.

559 4. Counter-intuitive

560 In addition to investigations, communication in the courtroom is also opposite, where the  
 561 legal system allows for resistance through communication. Resistance is characterized by  
 562 presenting rebuttal arguments. This interaction is still carried out within ethical limits. One  
 563 prosecutor explained that, *"We are not looking for enemies in court, but our job is to prove*  
 564 *the truth based on evidence."* In a trial, communication resistance was seen in the debate  
 565 between the prosecutor and the lawyer. The prosecutor stated, *"The defendant has a clear*  
 566 *motive, namely financial gain from the criminal act committed."* Meanwhile, the lawyer  
 567 countered, *"There is no direct evidence to suggest that my client benefited financially from*  
 568 *this incident."*

569 5. Hierarchical

570 Communication in trials also shows a hierarchical and formal structure, where judges have  
 571 the highest authority in controlling the course of the trial, while prosecutors, lawyers,  
 572 defendants, and witnesses have a predetermined role in the legal system. One witness  
 573 interviewed revealed that, *"I felt pressure when giving testimony because the communication*  
 574 *in the courtroom was very formal and strict. Every answer I give must be in accordance with*  
 575 *the facts and must not be mispronounced."* This hierarchical structure ensures that the trial  
 576 runs in accordance with established legal procedures and prevents disruption during the  
 577 process. An example of formal communication can be seen in the judge's order, *"I open this*  
 578 *trial and I declare it open to the public. Prosecutor, please read the indictment."* This formality  
 579 ensures that the trial takes place according to procedure and that there are no errors in the  
 580 course of the trial

581 6. Supportive

582 Communication in the courtroom can also be mutually supportive, especially in the  
 583 interaction between the judge and the witness or between the lawyer and his client. In some  
 584 cases, judges show empathy for witnesses who testify in emotional cases. A traumatized  
 585 witness stated that, *"The judge gave me time to calm down before continuing to testify. It*  
 586 *really helped me to speak more clearly."* In addition, it can also be seen in the lawyer's  
 587 interaction with his client. Lawyers often provide moral and technical support to their clients  
 588 before the trial begins in order to better deal with the legal process.

589 In a nutshell, the following is a classification in the form of a table 2:

NO	Characteristics	Description
1	Professional	Communication that is carried out with a formal, rules-based attitude, and follows legal ethics without involving emotions or personal interests
2	Confrontational	Communications that are challenging or contradictory, where the parties to the hearing attempt to refute or test the truth of a statement
3	Investigation	Communication that aims to dig up facts, seek truth, and uncover evidence through questioning and investigation.

4	Counter-intuitive	A communication that is competitive between two opposing parties, such as between a prosecutor and a lawyer, each of whom is trying to prove his or her argument in front of a judge.
5	Hierarchical	Communication that follows a power structure or authority, where decisions and instructions flow from higher parties to lower parties
6	Supportive	Communication that is supportive and provides assistance, usually comes from parties who want to provide morals or support to certain individuals.

Table 2: Characteristics of Communication in the Courtroom

Communication in the courtroom is not just an exchange of information, but a key interaction in running the legal system effectively. The combination of the various communication characteristics of professionalism, confrontation, investigation, and hierarchical structure creates a communication mechanism that serves to ensure justice for all parties involved. However, the main challenge in trial communication is maintaining a balance between critical debate and legal ethics, as well as ensuring that all participants can participate without intrusive pressure.

#### 4 Discussion

This study interprets the six observed characteristics through an explicit framework integrating Goffman's concept of gatherings (1963), Judicial Communication (Roach Anleu and Mack, 2015a) and Forensic Communication (Howes, 2015), positioning the Indonesian criminal courtroom as a communicative space in which authority is performed, facts are contested, and participants' "faces" are managed.

Authority and order are enacted through ritual openings such as standing for the bench, the judge's control of turn-taking, and scripted agenda shifts from indictment to evidence, claims, and verdict. These practices, which Goffman describes as a gathering, materialize judicial authority and neutrality, framing one-way communication during instructions and verdict delivery. The professional and hierarchical features observed are therefore not mere stylistic preferences but institutional performances of legitimacy that display impartiality while keeping proceedings orderly and intelligible.

Contestation and truth-testing emerge most visibly during witness examination and cross-examination, when communication shifts to a multi-directional mode in which prosecutors and defense counsel challenge claims, probe inconsistencies, and present counter-narratives. The confrontational and adversarial characteristics identified in this study constitute the core of forensic testing, where claims are advanced, scrutinized, and either stabilized or weakened. Judges' clarifying questions extend this scrutiny, blending judicial and forensic communication to ensure that fact-finding remains rigorous yet procedurally fair, which is captured in the investigative dimension.

Care and procedural fairness are also embedded in supportive practices such as allowing pauses, rephrasing complex questions, and acknowledging stress, which protect participants' "face" (Goffman) and promote perceived fairness (Judicial Communication). In the Indonesian context, where judges actively steer proceedings, such micro-accommodations help sustain participation without diluting neutrality.

622 International scholarship shows parallel dynamics, such as linguistic accommodation (Aronsson et  
623 al., 1987), presence and participation in virtual courts (Rossner and Tait, 2023), and the emotional  
624 dimension of legal communication (Bandes and Feigenson, 2020; Ellsworth and Dougherty, 2016),  
625 while Indonesian studies (Widodo, 2019; 2020; 2022) have mapped legal communication models and  
626 the dramaturgy of defendants. This study contributes by empirically characterizing courtroom  
627 communication into six interlocking features and systematically linking them to socio-legal  
628 communication theory.

629 In particular, the dual flow—one-way authority-performing communication versus multi-  
630 directional adversarial testing—explains how Indonesian trials balance order and contestation to  
631 sustain legitimacy. By treating the courtroom as a gathering where judicial authority is performed and  
632 forensic testing unfolds, the findings clarify why professionalism and hierarchy must coexist with  
633 confrontation and investigation, and this integrated view further explains how specific communicative  
634 practices such as controlled turn-taking, targeted clarification, and ethical rebuttal translate into fairer  
635 and more effective adjudication

## 636 **5 Conclusion**

637 Communication in the courtroom involves multiple participants including judges, prosecutors, defense  
638 lawyers, witnesses, and defendants, each with distinct objectives, and unfolds through complex  
639 interactional processes. This study identifies six interrelated characteristics of courtroom  
640 communication: professional, investigative, supportive, confrontational, adversarial, and hierarchical.  
641 Theoretically, the study advances courtroom communication research by integrating socio-legal  
642 frameworks such as Goffman's gatherings, Judicial Communication, and Forensic Communication to  
643 demonstrate how authority, contestation, and fairness are simultaneously enacted in Indonesian  
644 criminal trials. This conceptual integration enriches the literature by showing that courtroom  
645 interaction is not merely procedural but constitutes a communicative practice that produces legitimacy  
646 and justice.

647 Practically, the findings offer important implications for Indonesian legal practice. Judges must remain  
648 firm in controlling communication while providing supportive space for vulnerable participants;  
649 prosecutors and defense lawyers should prioritize professionalism and clarity in argumentation; and  
650 witnesses and defendants must be enabled to present information without undue pressure.  
651 Strengthening these communicative practices can enhance transparency, fairness, and public trust in  
652 the judicial system. Therefore, this study confirms that courtroom communication is not simply a  
653 technical aspect of trial procedure but a decisive factor in shaping justice that is more accountable,  
654 effective, and legitimate.

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