



## Power Relations in Academic Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Lecturer-Student Interrogation During Undergraduate Thesis Defense Sessions

### Relasi Kuasa dalam Wacana Akademik: Studi Wacana Kritis Interogasi Dosen-Mahasiswa pada Ujian Skripsi Program Sarjana

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**Abstract:** Due to the unequal positions of the participants, academic interactions that occur during undergraduate thesis defense sessions in universities are a social arena that allows the emergence of power relations. The role of lecturers who have a dominant position in giving interrogations during thesis defense sessions has not been revealed in previous studies. This study sought to elucidate the forms of interrogation employed by lecturers in academic discourse during undergraduate thesis defense sessions. This study employed a qualitative approach with a critical discourse analysis design. Data were collected through recording, observation, and interviews and then evaluated using a critical discourse analysis framework. The results showed that lecturers used various forms of questions in academic interactions, including closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, and task-oriented questions. These questions reflect the unequal relationship between lecturers and students. Lecturers have the authority to control and dominate academic interactions in undergraduate thesis defenses.

**Keywords:** lecturer-student relationship, power relation, academic discourse, academic interaction, undergraduate thesis defense

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**Abstrak:** Interaksi akademik ujian skripsi program sarjana di perguruan tinggi merupakan arena sosial yang memungkinkan lahirnya relasi kuasa karena ketidaksetaraan posisi antarpartisipan. Peran dosen yang memiliki kedudukan dominan dalam memberikan pertanyaan selama sesi ujian skripsi belum terungkap pada riset sebelumnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengungkap wujud interogasi yang direpresentasikan dosen dalam wacana akademik ujian skripsi program sarjana. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain analisis wacana kritis. Data dikumpulkan melalui perekaman, observasi, serta wawancara dan dianalisis dengan menggunakan kerangka kerja critical discourse analysis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dosen menggunakan beragam wujud pertanyaan dalam interaksi akademik yang diklasifikasikan berdasarkan bentuk closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, dan pertanyaan berorientasi tugas. Wujud interogasi dosen merepresentasikan

ketidaksetaraan partisipan dalam relasi dosen-mahasiswa. Otoritas yang dimiliki dosen dapat mengontrol dan mendominasi interaksi akademik dalam ujian skripsi.

**Kata kunci:** relasi dosen-mahasiswa, relasi kuasa, wacana akademik, interaksi akademik, ujian skripsi

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## 1. Introduction

The current investigation was conducted to examine power relations in academic discourse within the context of lecturer-student interactions. Some previous studies on academic interactional discourse have reported the existence of power relations between participants. Sultan (2010) investigated teacher-student interactions in the Indonesian language learning classroom in secondary schools and discovered that linguistic elements in the form of vocabulary, grammar, and text structure were employed by teachers and had consequences for student dominance. The linguistic features employed by the teachers constrained, discriminated against, and confined the students' roles in the classroom, among other effects. According to Sultan & Jufri (2019), teachers maintain control over students during classroom interactions by utilizing a speech rotation system, formulations, interruptions, and closed-ended questions. Both studies have revealed that academic discourse serves as an area for the participants to have ongoing power relations. Previous research has determined that there is a power relation in interactional discourse. Thus, based on its findings, this investigation was conducted. The current study attempted to depict power in interactional discourse between lecturers and students.

In the framework of interactional discourse, cross-national research has revealed power relations between participants. In their study of academic interactional discourse in Iran, Abdullah & Hosseini (2012) discovered that interactional components such as taking turns, speaking time, and elicitation demonstrated the teacher's dominant role. The research conducted by Brooks (2016) demonstrated that teachers had a predominant role as questioners and regulators, whilst students were only responders. Shei (2019) found that pupils with status and authority in China, such as class presidents, insulted, ordered, and intimidated other students. However, these studies only revealed interactions between participants at the high school level; they do not yet disclose the relationship between lecturers and students in higher education interactional discourse.

Academic interaction in higher education is a social arena that permits the emergence of power relationships due to lecturers' authority. Academic interaction is a setting where communication events involving social actors can occur (Walsh, 2011). Macleod et al., (2012) elaborated on the resources that enable the ownership of power by lecturers, namely (1) coercive power, which is compliance that arises due to persuasion, invitation, or orders that can be coercive, (2) legitimate power, which is compliance sourced from the authority possessed, (3) competent power, which is compliance that originates from the ability, skill, or expertise possessed by the subject, and (4) personal power, which is compliance that originates from personal characteristics possessed by the individual.

According to Werdiningsih (2014), lecturers use a range of conversational structures, techniques, and functions in academic discourse in universities. The conversational structures include transactional structure, speech transfer structure, and conversational movement structure. The conversational techniques are initiation, bargaining, and elicitation, and the conversational functions encompass the functions of stating, asking, commanding, and expressing emotions. However, the scope of this study was limited to determining the conversational structures, functions, and techniques employed by lecturers. Lecturers' use of power when conveying conversational structures, functions, and techniques in their interactions with students is an important feature that has not been exposed by the previous studies. Therefore, research that reveals the lecturer-student relation in this interactional discourse has an important purpose.

Previous studies have examined the feedback provided by lecturers to students during undergraduate thesis consultation (Bjerså et al., 2019), master's thesis consultation (Neupane Bastola, 2021, 2021; Neupane Bastola & Hu, 2021; Saeed et al., 2021; Y. Zhang et al., 2020; Zheng et al., 2020), and dissertation consultation (Basturkmen et al., 2014, 2014; Hemer, 2012). The previous research findings covered a broad field of studies, including (1) linguistic aspects of supervisor feedback, (2) forms of appreciation, suggestions, and recommendations given by the supervisor, (3) directive, referential, and expressive pragmatic forms employed by the supervisor, (4) writing pedagogy, (5) the effect of the supervisor feedback on student motivation, and (6) corpus analysis on the feedback. In contrast to earlier studies, the current research focused on revealing previously unknown information on power relations in undergraduate thesis defense interactions.

This study sought to expose power relations in lecturer-student interactions during undergraduate thesis defenses. An undergraduate thesis defense is a form of academic discourse that represents power relations between lecturers and students. Lin (2017) found the characteristics of interactional discourse in the examiner-promotendus relationship in a dissertation defense session. Vähämäki et al., (2021) discovered a similar unequal relationship between supervisors and students contextualized in their respective roles as leaders and followers. In addition, the findings of (Wang, 2021) revealed unequal power relations in Chinese universities, which placed students in a subordinate position. However, unequal power relations can also benefit students in terms of their academic achievement. In accordance with the findings of Jackson et al., (2021) feedback given by the lecturer during a lecturer-student interaction has an effect on the student's study completion. Research by Zhang & Hyland (2021) also demonstrates that a dynamic interaction between a lecturer and a student in their power relation when the lecturer delivers advice helps the student understand how to do research and how to position him/herself as a researcher.

The thesis defense discourse is a form of academic interaction in which participants occupy two distinct roles: examiner and examinee. The imbalance position of the participants allows the occurrence of unequal relationships. This is consistent with Fairclough (1989) theory that power in discourse derives from a disparity in the participants' positions. Research by Neupane Bastola & Hu (2021) indicates that

evaluative language predominates the examiners' responses during an undergraduate thesis defense. In a thesis defense, lecturers consistently place themselves above students in the context of science, and conversely, students consistently acknowledge that lecturers know more than they do, so they are at ease when told by the lecturers (Symonds, 2021).

The present study aimed to reveal the inequalities of participants' positions in undergraduate thesis defenses through the use of questions. Questions are linguistic elements that mediate lecturer-student interactions in undergraduate thesis defenses. Interrogative clauses can go beyond the scope of seeking information, and can even be used to show power through various illocutions between different participants (Balogun, 2011). The questions asked by lecturers in an undergraduate thesis defense can be in the form of closed-ended questions, open-ended questions, or task-oriented questions (Reinsvold & Cochran, 2012). These questions are used to ask, command, inform, interrupt, doubt, give suggestions, and others (Lee & Kim, 2019).

Specifically, this study aimed to reveal the forms of interrogation represented by lecturers in undergraduate thesis defenses. The results of this study will help critical discourse analysis grow by giving a new way to look at academic discourse.

## **2. Method**

A qualitative approach within the framework of critical discourse analysis was used. The analysis focused on the types of questions posed by lecturers in lecturer-student academic interactions during undergraduate thesis defenses (Hanrahan, 2006). Critical discourse analysis is a qualitative method that describes, interprets, and explains the language used to construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities in discourse (Mullet, 2018; Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This study was based on the academic interaction discourse in universities. The research subjects consisted of sixteen examiners and twenty-three final semester students in undergraduate thesis defenses at the Indonesian Language and Literature Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Makassar. The data was gathered during the odd semester of 2020/2021.

Data collection was accomplished through recording. We documented every interaction or question-and-answer session between lecturers and students participating in the undergraduate thesis defenses. Each recording lasts between 21 and 44 minutes. The focus of the recording was on the lecturers' questions and the students' responses. A mobile device's audio recorder was used for recording the lecturer-student interactions. Each party was aware that their interactions were being recorded. The researchers served as observers during the data collection processes.

The data was analyzed qualitatively from the perspective of critical discourse analysis. Data analysis consisted of transcription, identification, and categorization. Audio recordings were transcribed into written dialogues. Specific aspects, such as interruptions, rising tones, gestures that appeared during the interaction between lecturers and students were recorded and became part of the transcription. Identification was done by repeated reading and marking of dialogue sections that

indicate the existence of power relations between the lecturers and the students. The datasets that had been identified were categorized based on the form of the question by referring to the taxonomic framework of the question (Reinsvold & Cochran, 2012). The data was classified based on its similarity to a specific theme, which was then described and interpreted. The statements of the lecturers and the students were analyzed within the discourse context.

The data of this study consisted of excerpts of the question-and-answer interactions between the participating lecturers and students. The dialogue fragments were interpreted using the AWK model suggested by Hanrahan (2006) which consists of micro analysis (text) and macro analysis (sociocultural). Micro-analysis was centered on linguistic features that revealed the types of questions posed by lecturers and students' responses to the questions. Sociocultural analysis was conducted to interpret the discourse context and the social context underlying the question-and-answer interactions between lecturers and students. Macro analysis was done to explain the situational aspects and social contexts of higher education underlying the discourse production process.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Forms of Lecturer's Questions in Academic Interactions

The data analysis revealed three forms of questions submitted by lecturers in academic interactions, namely closed-ended questions, open questions, and task-oriented questions. Table 1 shows the questions that the lecturers asked during the defenses of undergraduate theses.

**Table 1.** Forms of Questions Posed by Lecturers in Academic Interactions

No	Category	Subcategories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Closed-ended questions	verification	96	19.63
		disjunction	18	3.68
		completion of concept	29	5.93
		specification	154	31.49
		quantification	35	7.16
2	Open-ended questions	definition	18	3.68
		interpretation	28	5.73
		causal antecedent	12	2.45
		causal consequence	7	1.43
		empowering	13	2.66
		hope	3	0.61
		evaluative	14	2.86
3	Task-oriented questions	need clarification	62	12.68
		request/instruct	5	1.02
<b>Total</b>			<b>494</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 demonstrates that lecturers asked students a variety of questions during the undergraduate thesis defense sessions. More than half of the participating lecturers (67.21%) utilized closed-ended questions, followed by open-ended questions (19.23%)

and task-oriented questions (13.51%). Specification is the most prevalent subcategory of questions used by lecturers. Many of the questions were closed-ended, which suggests that the lecturers were looking for definitive answers based on concepts, definitions, or theories. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, let students share their ideas, thoughts, and perspectives.

### **3.2 Power Relations through Closed-Ended Questions**

During the thesis defense academic interactions, lecturers asked distinct types of closed-ended questions. These questions asked for verification, disjunction, completion of concepts, specification, and quantification. The study's findings relating to the question category are explained below.

#### **3.2.1 Verification Questions**

Verification questions ask for "yes" or "no" responses.

Datum (1)

D: So, is it feasible?

M: Yes, Sir and there are still major revisions. so that ...

D: Why "so that"? It is "therefore." Do not make up any new language.

M: Therefore, ...there are some notes, Sir.

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about the feasibility of a textbook's content.*

Datum (1) contains an example of verification question posed by an examiner to a student to verify research findings regarding the feasibility of a textbook. This question required a "yes" or "no" answer from the student concerned. The lecturer used his scientific authority to direct the student to the correct concept of "therefore." The use of the utterance "Why 'so that'? It is 'therefore.' Don't make up any new language." indicates that the lecturer used his authority to direct students to the correct use of, therefore. This interaction was conducted to correct the student's use of language. The response, "Therefore, ...there are some notes, Sir." from the student showed his compliance and acceptance of the lecturer's feedback.

#### **3.2.2 Disjunction Questions**

Verification questions ask someone to choose between two options.

Data (2)

D: Which has a broader scope, language, or culture?

M: Culture. Because culture involves language.

D: What is culture?

M: Culture is things done by society.

D: Who says that? You need to understand who says what. Then, state your opinion on that.

M: Yes, Ma'am, it is just based on my opinion.

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about the difference between language and culture.*

Datum (2) contains an interaction between an examiner and a student, in which the lecturer asked the student to make a choice between language or culture. The lecturer's question required a theoretical explanation from the student. The lecturer, in this case, used her scientific authority to direct the student. The question "*Who says that? You need to understand who says what. Then, state your opinion on that.*" demonstrates that the examiner made use of her authority to guide the student to the appropriate concept. During the question-and-answer session, the lecturer revised the student's explanation. The question "Who says that?" indicates that the lecturer did not want the student's response to be based solely on his own views/opinions. This conforms to the student's response "*Yes, Ma'am, it is just based on my opinion.*" which shows his agreement with the feedback given by the lecturer, who asked him to support his explanations with reliable academic sources. The student's answer also brought out the fact that his previous answers were just his own personal thoughts.

### 3.2.3 Concept Completion Questions

Concept completion questions are similar to fill-in-the-blanks questions and definition questions.

Datum (3)

D : Here in the abstract, what does 0.87 suggest?

M: It's a value.

D: So, what does that mean?

M: very reliable, Sir.

D: How did you get 0.87?

M: I used the Aiken Index, Sir.

D : Meaning that 0.87 is equivalent to...?

M: Hmm very reliable, Sir. (*nervous*)

D: 87 out of 100. Why did it take you so long to think that 0.87 is equivalent to 87 per 100?

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about the equivalence of 0.87 in the abstract section.*

Datum (3) shows a completion question posed by an examiner to a student. The question was designed to assess the student's comprehension of the 0.87 value equation. The lecturer's question required an answer to another form of equation from the student concerned. The lecturer used his authority to dominate the interaction with the student, by asking the same question repeatedly and asking questions that had different directions. The use of the phrase "*Meaning that 0.87 is equivalent to...*" indicates that the lecturer, in fact, anticipated a particular response. In the question-and-answer interaction, the lecturer aimed to test the student's academic ability. The use of the expression, "*Hmm very reliable, Sir. (nervous)*" demonstrates the student's subordinate status in relation to the lecturer's authority.

### 3.2.4 Specification Questions

Specification questions are the questions asked to determine the qualitative attributes of an object or situation.

Datum (4)

D : I see. This is how you did the research. There is no question? Only a few, why?

M: I asked the teacher, He said ... (*interrupted*)

D : This is supposed to be more interesting. not the number, but the characteristics of the learning process. It means that the teacher could not trigger the students' curiosity.

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about the research findings relating to the learning condition of the student who asked a question in the classroom.*

Datum (4) contains a specification question posed by an examiner to a student. The purpose of this question was to ascertain the student's research focus. The statement "*This is supposed to be more interesting. Not the number, but the characteristics of the learning process. It means that the teacher could not trigger the students' curiosity*" indicates that the lecturer used his scientific authority to guide the student to a concept that is consistent with the findings of the research. In the question-and-answer session, the examiner corrected the student's research specifications. The fact that the lecturer cut off the student's explanation shows that he or she had the power to stop or keep going with the question-and-answer session or academic discourse of the thesis examination.

### **3.2.5 Quantification Questions**

Quantification questions are the questions asked to determine the quantitative attributes of an object or situation.

Datum (5)

D: You used documentation, what is the research focus?

M: The Buginese cultural values in the story.

D: How many (values)?

M: Six, Ma'am.

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about the data collection technique used in his study and the research focus.*

Datum (5) contains a quantification question posed by a lecturer to a student to determine the number of values focused on in the student's research. The lecturer's question required quantitative or numerical answers. The lecturer used her authority to ask about the values that are the focus of the research. The use of the question "*How many (values)?*" shows that the lecturer made use of her authority to get the information she needed. The question-and-answer interaction facilitated information extraction.

### **3.3 Power Relations through Open-Ended Questions**

During the thesis defense academic interactions, there are several types of open-ended questions. These questions asked for definition, interpretation, causal



antecedents, and causal consequences, as well as provided empowerment, hope, and judgmental opinions.

### *3.3.1 Definition Questions*

Definition questions are the questions that ask someone to explain or determine the meaning of a concept.

Datum (6)

D : What is character?

M: Character is a deliberate effort to develop good character and based on virtues, both individually and in society.

D: Efforts made?

M: Character is human nature.

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about the definition of character found in the abstract section.*

Datum (6) provides an illustration of a definition question posed by a lecturer to a student regarding the student's research topic. This question required the student to explain the concept of character. The lecturer used his scientific authority to maintain control of the topic and confirm the student's research topic. The use of the phrase "Efforts made?" indicates that the teacher was guiding the student toward a particular concept and affirming the student's statement by elaborating on it. In the question-and-answer session, the lecturer assessed the student's comprehension of the topic being discussed. The student's response, "Character is human nature," indicates that he lost concentration and was unable to provide an adequate explanation. The student's response was unrelated to the lecturer's question, "Efforts made?"

### *3.3.2 Interpretation Questions*

Interpretation questions are the questions asked to find conclusions from a data pattern.

Datum (7)

D: Okay, then what is the contribution of your research results to your position as a pre-service teacher?

M: What does it mean, Ma'am

D: What did you apply here as a prospective teacher who will later become an education graduate? Now, what is the relevance of your research findings to the teaching profession?

M: We must respect others as well as respect ourselves. We need to be careful and honest in our actions and words. We must also be careful in using our intellectual ability. We must think things over carefully before doing them. That is my opinion, Ma'am.

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The student looked nervous. The lecturer asked the student about the relevance of his research findings with the teaching profession.*

In datum (7), a lecturer asked a student an interpretation question to get an explanation regarding the relevance of his research findings to the teaching profession.

The student's response to the lecturer's question must be supported by the findings of his or her research. In the academic interaction, the lecturer used her authority to position herself as the controller of the interaction. The use of the question "Okay, then what is the contribution of your research results to your position as a pre-service teacher?" indicates that the lecturer was attempting to dominate and control the interaction by utilizing her authority. The purpose of the question-and-answer session was to demonstrate the relevance of the research findings to the teaching profession. Unfortunately, the student's response placed him in the position of following the lecturer's instructions.

### 3.3.3 Causal Antecedents Questions

Causal antecedent questions seek to find an explanation of what causes something, according to current conditions.

Datum (8)

D: What is your basis for claiming that learning poetry is not interesting for students?

M: Err... I (*thinking*) is caused by...

D: Not is caused by, but because...

M: Because their learning outcome was less than 75, it is considered as incapable, Sir.

*Context:*A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about the background of his research.

Datum (8) depicts an interaction between an examiner and a student in which the examiner posed a causal antecedent question to the student in order to elicit an explanation for high school students' lack of enthusiasm for learning poetry. The lecturer's question required research-based responses. The use of the phrase "*What is your basis for claiming that learning poetry is not interesting for students?*" indicates that the lecturer was skeptical of the student's research findings. Additionally, the lecturer used his authority to direct the student to the appropriate concepts. The lecturer initiated the question-and-answer session to correct the student's language usage. The student's response demonstrated compliance with the instructions conveyed by the question posed by the lecturer.

### 3.3.4 Causal Consequences Questions

Causal consequences questions are questions that aim to find out the consequences of an event or an occurrence.

Datum (9)

D : So, how did you feel after conducting this research?

M: I learned new values. I mean, new experiences, such as honesty, or other values similar to the six character values that I mentioned earlier.

*Context:*A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about the impacts of his research on him.

Datum (9) illustrates an academic interaction in which a professor asked a student about the impact of his research. The student must provide a personal response to the

lecturer's question. In this interaction, the lecturer used the authority of her position to control the interaction, the topic, and to guide the student to a specific topic that she desired. The use of the phrase "So, how did you feel after conducting this research?" demonstrates that the lecturer utilized her status authority to control the topic in her interaction with the student. The purpose of this question-and-answer session was to describe the effects the research had on the students.

### *3.3.5 Empowering Questions*

Empowering questions are questions that aim to seek an explanation of the process that enables a person to take an action.

Datum (10)

D: How do you know that this is the highest score?

M: Yes

D: Why did you write score?

M: *(silent)*

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The student could not answer the lecturer's question and looked nervous.*

In Datum (10), a lecturer employed an empowering question to determine how a student decided the highest possible score in research. The question from the lecturer required a comprehensive explanation of a procedure. The professor dominated the interaction with his status authority. The use of the phrase "How do you know that this is the highest score?" indicates that the lecturer used his authority to request an explanation from the student concerned. The lecturer initiated the question-and-answer session to confirm the research findings reported by the student. The fact that the student answered "yes" showed that he could not explain how to figure out the highest score in his research.

### *3.3.6 Hope Questions*

Hope questions are questions that aim to find desired or predictive things.

Datum (11)

D: How does your research contribute to the culture of South Sulawesi?

M: the contribution?

D: Your research contribution.

M: The contribution is ... that after reading my research, people are encouraged to conserve, develop, and apply the culture in their daily lives.

D: Is that all?

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about what he expects from his research.*

Datum (11) contains a hope question posed by an examiner to a student to find out the contribution of his research to the culture of South Sulawesi. The lecturer's question demanded a thorough explanation from the student in question. The professor controlled the topic of conversation with the student by making use of his

status authority. The utterance “Is that all?” indicates that the lecturer would like to hear more about the contribution of the student’s research to the South Sulawesi culture. This expression also suggests that student research makes little contribution to the relevant field.

### 3.3.7 Evaluative Questions

Evaluative questions are questions that seek value in ideas, suggestions, or plans.

Datum (12)

D: What made you think that you can associate poem musicalization with listening activity?

M: Because I think that if a student listens to a poem that is delivered through musicalization, s/he can understand the meaning better, s/he can be deeply involved with the poem reader.

D: Is there any theory that suggests music is easier to understand?

M: Lilis (I) thinks that poem musicalization, in Arikbin’s book, can increase student motivation to learn poetry.

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about her research ideas.*

In Datum (12), a lecturer asked a student an evaluative question to evaluate the student’s research report, which involved linking musicalization and listening activities. The student must provide a detailed response to the lecturer’s question. The lecturer’s use of the phrase “Is there any theory that suggests music is easier to understand?” demonstrates her authority in directing the student to have a solid foundation for his research results. The lecturer initiated the question-and-answer session to equip the student with concepts and foundations to support her research topic. The student’s response suggests that she comprehended the research concept she had developed.

### 3.4 Power Relations through Task-Oriented Questions

The task-oriented questions found in academic interactions during undergraduate thesis defenses include questions that ask for clarification and questions that request or instruct.

#### 3.4.1 Questions that ask for clarification

Clarification questions search for confirmations of previously stated statements.

Datum (13)

D : You occasionally write Pangkep district or Pangkajene Regency, which is the right one?

M: Pangkajene is the school’s name, Ma’am.

D : Is it a regency, a village, or a district? Clarify.

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about word use and diction.*

Datum (13) includes an academic interaction between an examiner and a student in which the lecturer asked a question to confirm the location of the research. Through the statement, “You occasionally write Pangkep district or Pangkajene Regency, which

is the right one?" the lecturer showed her authority to direct the student to the correct concept of research location. The lecturer initiated the question-and-answer session to confirm the research location and correct the spelling in the student's undergraduate thesis. The command phrase "clarify" indicates that the lecturer could not comprehend the student's response.

### **3.4.2 Request/Instructional Questions**

Request/instructional questions are questions that ask for a specific action or response.

Datum (14)

D: Try to provide an example of a conceptual question

M: What are the benefits of the news, Ma'am?

D: What are the benefits of the news? or What benefits can you get after reading the news?

M: Yes, Ma'am!

*Context: A lecturer was facing a student in an undergraduate thesis defense. The lecturer asked the student about examples of questions.*

In datum (14), a lecturer gave an order to a student to formulate an example of a conceptual question. The lecturer dominated the academic interaction with her scientific expertise. The lecturer's use of the phrase "Try to provide an example of a conceptual question" demonstrates her authority over the student. In the question-and-answer session, the lecturer sought to determine the academic ability of the student. On the other hand, the student demonstrated his obedience in the interaction by asking, "What are the benefits of the news, Ma'am?" The response "Yes, Ma'am" indicates that the student accepted the lecturer's advice.

## **4. Discussion**

The results of this study revealed that lecturers used various forms of questions in academic interactions in higher education. Closed-ended questions used by the lecturers in this study include verification, disjunction, completion of concepts, specifications, and quantification. Open-ended questions include definitions, interpretations, causal antecedents, causal consequences, empowerment, expectations, and evaluative questions. Task-oriented questions include clarification questions and requests. The lecturer was mostly in a dominant position in interactions with students involving a variety of question types. Based on the percentage of questions asked, academic interactions during undergraduate thesis defenses frequently include closed-ended questions. Because closed-ended questions require yes-or-no, factual, or data- or concept-specific responses, they restrict students' ability to contribute information more freely from an empowerment standpoint. In the academic discourse of undergraduate thesis defenses, interaction control resides with the lecturer, while students have limited opportunities to contribute or respond. This result is consistent with research by (Sultan & Jufri, 2019) indicating that the use of closed-ended questions limits student participation in classroom interactions.

This study found a high percentage of closed-ended questions in lecturer-student academic interactions during undergraduate thesis defenses, indicating that the questions asked by the lecturers served an evaluative instead of a perspective function. Closed-ended questions emphasize more on tracing the level of students' understanding of a particular topic. In contrast, open-ended questions provide students with opportunities to submit hypotheses or do reflections so that they can form their own perspectives. From the perspective of critical discourse, open-ended questions will be more empowering than closed-ended ones. The findings of Lin & Lau (2021) show that in college exam interactions, students frequently put themselves on trial and often feel intimidated while defending their arguments. According to Lin and Lau, closed-ended questions can lead to the emergence of a psychological situation.

The findings of this study indicate that lecturers held a position of dominance and control over students during undergraduate thesis defenses. Through the questions posed, instructors were able to unearth information, direct, question, correct, or even blame students. On the other hand, the students demonstrated obedience to the lecturers' directions, instructions, and statements. These interactions resulted from the unequal relationship between the lecturers and students during exam interactions. Knowledgeable professors hold a position of authority, allowing them to control and direct conversations with students. This finding fits with the findings of Symonds (2021), which was that lecturers always put themselves above students when it comes to science, while students always admit that lecturers know more than them on a given topic, so they do not mind being told what to do.

The results of this study indicate that power relations can be reflected in various question formats. These findings are consistent with those of Macleod et al., (2012) which show that competent power is a source of power. As part of an educated group with social capital, lecturers can generate compliance through their abilities, skills, or expertise. In academic interactions during the defense of undergraduate theses, students' responses to lecturers' questions indicate compliance and acceptance. Similarly, Vähämäki et al., (2021) discovered an unbalanced relationship between a supervisor and his students contextualized as a leader-follower relationship.

The attitude exhibited in the unequal relationship is attributed to the underlying culture. The perspective that students must submit, obey, and follow lecturers' wishes is shaped by the sociocultural environment that places lecturers in a prominent position in Indonesian society. The interaction's power is dominated by consciousness derived from the social system that is believed to exist (Balogun, 2011). The findings of Maulana et al., (2011) indicate that educators in Indonesia tend to keep a physical and psychological distance from their students in order to appear authoritative. The macro perspective of (Zulfikar, 2018) reveals that the Indonesian top-down education culture makes the learning process more teacher-centered. The power dynamic between lecturers and students indicates that the learning process in Indonesia is mostly teacher-centered.

This study's findings can contribute to the growth of academic interactions in universities. It is highly recommended that lecturers develop a more effective interaction with their students so that they can develop their abilities and insights.

Unequal relations between lecturers and students have the potential to produce academic dysfunction, specifically the inhibition of the long-term oriented process of enhancing student learning capacity (Neupane Bastola & Hu, 2021). The lecturer's attitude in the lecturer-student interaction, which shows a lack of appreciation and the dominance of the evaluative function, can demotivate students (Lin & Lau, 2021).

Lecturer-student interactions that contain elements of empowerment will help develop students academically. This result is consistent with the findings of Agricola et al., (2021) who discovered that empowering questions that can improve comprehension in academic interactions must be tailored to the needs of participants. The power-over, power-gaining, and power-maintaining interactions can enhance students' understanding of a lesson, foster student orientation toward assignments, and boost their self-confidence (Y. (Olivia) Zhang & Hyland, 2021). Students can take part in academic interactions, believe lecturers when they say they have authority, and follow some of their academic advice (Zheng et al., 2020).

## **5. Conclusion**

The results of the study indicate that lecturers utilize various forms of questions in academic interactions with students during undergraduate thesis defenses. Among the three categories of questions studied in this research, closed-ended questions showed the highest percentage. The fact that most questions are closed questions shows that academic conversations that happen during defenses of undergraduate theses serve to evaluate.

The results of this study also suggest that lecturers hold a dominant and controlling position in the lecturer-student interaction during undergraduate thesis defenses. Through the questions given, lecturers explore information, direct, doubt, correct, and even blame students for their errors. In contrast, students demonstrate obedience and accept the lecturer's direction, instructions, or statements. The results of this study corroborate the findings of previous research indicating that lecturers' control of academic interactions stems from the unequal relation between lecturers and students, where the lecturers possess the competent power. Academic interactions in undergraduate theses defenses position lecturers as the examiners and thus give the lecturers the authority to direct the conversation. The underlying social and cultural structure of education in Indonesia affects how power is used in school settings.

The findings of this study suggest that lecturers should develop empowering academic interactions during undergraduate thesis defenses. Ideally, lecturers should ask reflective, open-ended, and predictive questions, which can improve students' reasoning and critical thinking skills. It is also advisable for other researchers to investigate academic interactions that may occur in other contexts, such as student mentoring. This study is limited to academic interactions that occur during undergraduate thesis defenses; therefore, studying academic interactions at higher levels of education, such as the master's and doctoral levels, is required to fill in the gaps in critical academic discourse analysis.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interest

There is no conflict of interest related the publication of this paper.

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