

## CHILDREN'S EPISTEMIC DISCLAIMERS OF KNOWLEDGE IN COLLOQUIAL JAKARTAN INDONESIAN

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### Abstract

The present study explores the interactions of adults and children where the adults question children's disclaim of knowledge in Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian (CJI). It reveals how children display their disclaims and deal with the issues of epistemic responsibility. The source of the data is Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES) corpus. The lexical patterns of various interactions were observed. The data was analyzed based on some theories of epistemics as stated by Heritage (2012). Lexical items to depict adults' disbeliefs of children's disclaims were found in the questions. Such questions appeared because the adults believed the children had epistemic access to the requested knowledge. Some children finally provided relevant knowledge after they were reminded of their epistemic statuses. Disclaims of knowledge were still found even though some questions to elicit the responses had been given. They even ended the discussion on the topic and switched to another topic. They connected their disclaims of knowledge with the state of not remembering. It shows they understood the states of not knowing and not remembering functions to indicate their inability to provide knowledge. Thus, they used the disclaims to manage the talk and show their authority.

**Keywords:** Epistemics, Indonesian, child language, interactions

### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi interaksi antara orang dewasa dan anak-anak. Dalam hal ini orang dewasa mempertanyakan penyangkalan pengetahuan anak-anak dalam bahasa Indonesia dialek Jakarta. Dalam penelitian ini, anak-anak menunjukkan penyangkalan mereka dengan tanggung jawab epistematik. Sumber data adalah korpus Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES). Setiap pola leksikal dalam interaksi diamati. Kata yang menunjukkan ketidakpercayaan orang dewasa terhadap penyangkalan anak-anak ditemukan dalam pertanyaan. Pertanyaan tersebut muncul karena orang dewasa percaya bahwa anak-anak memiliki akses epistematik terhadap pengetahuan yang diminta. Beberapa anak akhirnya memberikan pengetahuan yang relevan setelah mereka diingatkan tentang status epistematik mereka. Penyangkalan pengetahuan masih ditemukan meskipun beberapa pertanyaan untuk mendapatkan respon telah diberikan. Mereka bahkan keluar dari diskusi tentang sebuah topik dan beralih ke topik lain. Mereka menghubungkan penyangkalan pengetahuan mereka dengan respon tidak ingat. Ini menunjukkan bahwa mereka memahami keadaan tidak tahu dan tidak ingat untuk menunjukkan ketidakmampuan mereka dalam memberikan pengetahuan. Dengan demikian, mereka menggunakan penyangkalan untuk mengatur pembicaraan dan menunjukkan otoritas mereka.*

**Kata kunci:** Epistematik, bahasa Indonesia, bahasa anak, interaksi

## INTRODUCTION

The knowledge of participants in interactions cannot be taken for granted. Through language, they share and receive knowledge. Even though speakers do not mention whether they know something or not, hearers may assume what knowledge the speakers have (Sidnell, 2014). In a dyad, a hearer's assumptions may sometimes not align with what the speaker has stated. In such cases, the hearer may question the speaker's claims. They might wonder what the speaker knows or does not know by asking questions about how the other person acquired their knowledge. Additionally, they may request further clarification to verify the validity of the speaker's claims.

Expressing knowledge or admitting a lack of knowledge is a common phenomenon in conversations. When participants assert that they lack knowledge, hearers may question this claim and may not spontaneously believe them. Whether the hearers accept the claims depends on their understanding of the speakers. Hearers interpret what speakers say based on several factors, including the speakers' prior utterances, the speaker-hearer relationship, accent, voice quality, intonation, the identities and expressions of the speakers, and their backgrounds (Du Bois, 2007). Non-verbal cues can also play a significant role in interpreting one's knowledge or lack thereof. For instance, in classroom interactions, teachers often assess students' knowledge through non-verbal signals such as silence, head shakes, smiles, and withdrawal of mutual gaze (Sert, 2013).

The issue of claiming knowledge in interactions is explored through epistemics (Biber et al., 1999). There are some concepts related to epistemics, such as epistemic right, epistemic responsibility, and epistemic status. Rights and responsibilities are attached to participants' statuses and they should be taken into account (Enfield, 2011). The epistemic status encompasses one's right and responsibility (Heritage, 2012). Participants' rights and responsibilities of knowledge deal with their faces. How participants share their rights and responsibilities depends on their knowledge, the means by which they acquire it, their rights to share it, and the implications of that knowledge for the conversation being constructed (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Regardless of how speakers position themselves in relation to their knowledge, hearers may judge whether those positions are appropriate in light of the speakers' claims. Hearers play a significant role in forming beliefs or disbeliefs regarding another's claims and in disclaiming knowledge. Participants position themselves based on their knowledge, which can lead to classifications as either knowledgeable or ignorant (Du Bois, 2007).

Studies on no-knowledge have been carried out by some scholars. For example, a study by Tsui (1991) shows that disclaiming knowledge is used when speakers avoid giving an assessment. Speakers may claim they do not have the knowledge to evaluate something. In agreement contexts, it can function as a preface to a disagreement by initially making a claim of no-knowledge which is then followed by giving an assessment. Additionally, it serves as a dispreferred response to a prior assessment made by another speaker. Since negative assessment can be face threatening, disclaiming knowledge helps to minimize their potential impact. It also functions to display speakers' unwillingness to make a commitment and to show uncertainty. Beach and Metzger (1997) also stated that utterances of not knowing and not remembering are used for managing interactions. Speakers position themselves as neutral parties, and they may lead the talk to change a topic or even end it. In invitations and requests, some speakers may be silent for a while and the interlocutors may interpret this situation as something uncomfortable for the speakers. When a speaker claims no-knowledge by showing forgetfulness, the other participant may give knowledge due to the common ground they share and the relationship

between them (Goodwin, 1987; Muntigl and Choi, 2010). When speakers are unable to provide knowledge because they do not remember, their interlocutors may take part by sharing their knowledge. A similar situation was found in Estonian with *maitea* 'I don't know'. This expression is commonly used when speakers are unwilling to continue a sensitive topic. Additionally, it is also used as a device to begin a new topic (Keevallik, 2016).

Some other studies in different languages also make use of negation as an epistemic disclaimer of knowledge. A study by Laury and Helasvuo (2016) observes the use of the verb *muistaa* (to remember) and *tietää* (to know) in Finnish. Speakers' claims of no-knowledge in that language reveal that they function to show that the speakers lead the talk to the end. Speakers' admissions of forgetfulness aim at interactional resources in which the other participants will give the requested knowledge and the speakers give additional knowledge. The negative structure *je sais pas* (I don't know) is used in French (Pekarek Doehler, 2016), and ('*ani*) *lo yode'a* / *lo yoda'at* (I don't know) in Hebrew is also used as an avoidance strategy (Maschler and Dori-Hacohen, 2018).

Even though research on insufficient knowledge has been conducted in several languages, there is scarce research on the claims of no-knowledge produced by children. Morek (2015) found that children between the ages of 10-12 years old produce two possibilities when they are in the position of an explainer. First, they share their knowledge to create symmetrical positions between them and the hearers. Second, they indicate that they do not have knowledge although they are considered as the topic experts. In this case, they show their authority and intensify their intention to leave the topic as well. Hutchby (2002), moreover, argued that children aged 4-12 years old in counselling sessions use 'do not know' to adult counsellors to escape from answering sequences of questions and refuse to talk about the targeted topic. To handle this situation, the adult counsellors encourage them to use body language such as nodding to respond. They also show they comprehend children's pain and accept the not-knowing statements. Another possible response is directing the children to give the answers they are looking for. In their studies, the researchers were curious about the situations in which the adults encouraged the children to give answers when the children disclaimed knowledge in their prior utterances.

The present study focuses on situations where the children disclaim knowledge and the hearers (in this case, adults) respond to the claims by questioning them. Such responses occur because of the adults' expectations of what the children are supposed to know. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there have not been any studies related to the state of no-knowledge in Indonesian. Research on epistemic studies in Indonesian focuses on how the speakers share and claim their knowledge with discourse markers (Djenar et al., 2018; Hamdani & Barnes, 2018; Mutiara, 2022). The present study tries to fill this gap by scrutinizing the ways children display their claims of no-knowledge.

As stated by Ewing (2005), Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian (CJI) has a different spelling system than that in Standard Indonesian (SI). The verb 'know' is spelled as *tahu* in SI but *tau* in CJI. Speakers can convey no-knowledge with *nggak tau* 'don't know'. The meaning of *tau* in CJI also can carry a negation when it is pronounced with a rising intonation. In this case, *enggak/nggak tau* is reduced to *tau*. To understand that it is a negation, it depends a lot on the context. The extract below shows that an adult named Eva asks a question to a child named Rizka (line 355). Unfortunately, Rizka does not know the answer (line 356). The word *tau* in line 356 can be misinterpreted as a claim of having knowledge if the intonation of the word and the context are ignored. Eva understands the context and has a shared knowledge grasp of the meaning of *tau*

as a claim of no-knowledge. Therefore, her utterance questions Rizka's claim of no-knowledge (line 357).

#### Extract 1

- 355 EVA: *Siapa yang ulang tahun sih?*  
 who which birthday DM  
 Whose birthday did you celebrate?
- 356 RIZ: *t↑A::u.*  
 know.NEG  
 I don't know.
- 357 EVA: *Kok nggak tau?*  
 how.come not know  
 How come you don't know?

This study seeks to answer two research questions: (1) How do children respond to adults' questions of their disclaim of knowledge? and (2) What are the functions of disclaims of knowledge in interactions?

## METHOD

The present study employs a discourse analysis approach grounded in the principles of Interactional Linguistics, aiming to explore how language is constructed through social interaction, with a particular focus on ordinary conversation. Language serves as a means to convey social interactions (Ewing, 2018). Therefore, Interactional Linguistics sheds light on how language is used in a natural setting and how the linguistic form and social actions intertwine in a talk. This approach may also use linguistic forms as a basis for identifying interactional functions (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2017; Lindström, 2009). This principle aligns with the focus of the present study which investigates participants' responses during interactions, particularly the functions of disclaiming knowledge.

The first step involved identifying the phenomena to be examined. In this study, the phenomena of interest were claims of lack of knowledge and the questions posed in response to such claims. The analysis of epistemics relies heavily on the actions performed by speakers (Sidnell, 2014). Within sequences of talk, each turn reveals the speaker's intended action, which is then interpreted by the hearer. In the present study, the primary action under investigation was the act of questioning, analyzed within the context of question-and-answer sequences. Hearers responded based on their interpretation of the preceding utterances. Additionally, several recurring lexical elements were identified and reported (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2017).

### The Data

The data were obtained from Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES) corpus (Gil & Tadmor, 2007) in March 2024. The recordings were originally made between 2000 and 2003. The corpus, which contains only Colloquial Jakartan Indonesian, includes both video recordings and transcriptions. The primary purpose of CHILDES is to document children's language acquisition. For the purpose of this study, the talk was retranscribed using conventions standard in Interactional Linguistics (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2017).

Following established transcription practices (Mondada, 2018), participants' names were abbreviated in the transcripts due to space limitations. In the analysis, children's real names and pseudonyms for adults are used to provide a sense of individuality. Some abbreviations from the original CHILDES corpus were modified for clarity and ease of reading. Pseudonyms for adults are introduced at the beginning of each extract and analysis. No pseudonym is used for the mother to maintain clarity about the relationship between the child and the adult in the data.

The recordings took place in the children's homes. Each session only targeted one child, although in some recordings, other children who were the target child's playmates were also present. For example, in extract 6, a child identified as RIS appeared as a playmate. According to information provided on the CHILDES website, an investigator was responsible for setting up the recordings (Gil & Tadmor, 2007) and also for eliciting language from the target children.

Four adults served as investigators throughout the data collection. However, only three investigators (EVA, YUL, and LAE) appear in the extracts discussed in this paper. The investigator present may vary between recordings. In addition to the investigators, the target child's mother (MOT) may also participate in the interactions. Furthermore, in extract 4, a guest named KAR is present.

During the recordings, the speakers were engaged in various activities such as playing, drawing, coloring, and chatting. The adults interacting with the children included family members, guests, and CHILDES investigators. In most cases, CHILDES provides information about the participants' names and ages. The children's ages ranged from two years and seven months to six years and one month. Within the collection, five children were identified as having disclaimed knowledge in several conversations: Priska, Rizka, Timothy, Risa, and Opi. Of these, Timothy and Opi are male, while Priska, Rizka, and Risa are female. Because the data were collected over a period of three years, the children's ages may vary between recordings. Table 1 provides detailed information about the children's names and age ranges during the interactions.

**Table 1. Children's Range of Ages**

No	Name	Age (Years: Month)
1	Priska	2:07 - 6:00
2	Rizka	3:01 - 6:01
3	Timothy	4:10 - 4:13
4	Risa	4:08 - 5:11
5	Opi	6:00

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

To collect the data, AntConc was utilized. Since this study focused on instances where adult speakers questioned children's claims of no-knowledge, the phrase *nggak tau* was searched in AntConc's query box. Concordance lines in which adults used *nggak tau* as a question were then identified. Each line was carefully examined to determine whether the child had expressed a lack of knowledge in the preceding utterance. If so, it was included in the dataset. The relevant recordings were retranscribed following the guidelines of Couper-Kuhlen and Selting (2017). Subsequently, the children's responses to the adults' questions were observed and categorized as either providing knowledge or maintaining their claims of no-knowledge. In total, 31 instances were identified in which adults questioned children's claims of no-knowledge. The analysis considered both word choice and epistemic concepts, namely the speakers' statuses and positions.

The focus was on how children disclaimed knowledge and how adults challenged the children's disclaims.

## FINDINGS

### Children's Responses to Adults' Questions

According to Dardjowidjojo (2018), Indonesian children normally begin to produce negation at the age of two, although their pronunciation may differ from that of adults at this stage. In this study, children expressed their lack of knowledge using forms such as *enggak tau*, *nggak tau*, *tau*, *mmm*, and through non-verbal responses like shaking their heads. When adults questioned these disclaimers, children sometimes used additional negation forms, such as *nggak inget* 'don't remember'.

For example, in extract 2, an adult named Yuli interacts with a child, Priska. When Yuli challenges Priska's claim of no-knowledge, Priska may respond by providing information, though the relevance of her response can vary. This suggests that the child recognizes an epistemic responsibility and attempts to contribute knowledge related to the topic. The extract demonstrates that after being questioned about her lack of knowledge and her status in the family, Priska, who is six years old, eventually provides relevant information. In this context, the child's use of *tau* functions as a reduced form of *nggak tau* 'don't know', rather than its literal meaning.

#### Extract 2

- 491 YUL: *Pris, mbaknya Priska mana*  
 PN sister.DEF PN where
- 492 *Pris?*  
 PN  
 Pris, where is your household assistant, Pris?
- 493 PRI: *Nggak masuk.*  
 not enter  
 She didn't come.
- 494 YUL: *Hah?*  
 INTJ  
 Uh-huh?
- 495 PRI: *Udah nggak punya pembantu.*  
 already not have household assistant  
 No household assistant anymore.
- 496 YUL: *Kenapa, Pris?*  
 why PN  
 Why, Pris?
- 497 PRI: *Pulang kampung.*  
 go.home village  
 She went back to her hometown.
- 498 YUL: *Hah?*  
 uh-huh  
 Uh-huh?

- 499 PRI: *Pulang kampung.*  
go.home village  
She went back to her hometown.
- 500 YUL: *Pulang kampung?*  
go.home village  
She went back to her hometown?
- 501 PRI: *Heeh.*  
INTJ  
Right.
- 502 YUL: *Kok pembantunya tucker terus*  
how.come assistant.DEF change continuously  
503 *sih, Pris?*  
DM PN  
How come you keep changing your household assistant?
- 504 PRI: *t↑Au.*  
know  
Don't know  
505 *terus↓*  
then  
Then ...
- 506 YUL: *Masa sebagai anak nggak*  
DM as child not  
507 *tau sih?*  
know DM  
How come you don't know as a child in this family?
- 508 ( ) *Pris?*  
unclear PN  
(unclear) Pris?
- 509 PRI: *hah?*  
INTJ  
Huh?
- 510 YUL: *Sebagai anak masa nggak*  
as child DM not  
511 *tau sih?*  
know DM  
How come you do not know as a child in this family?
- 512 PRI: *wei::.*  
INTJ  
Huh.
- 513 *mbaknya (.) °nggak° tau.*  
sister.DEF not know  
I don't know about the household assistant.
- 514 *katanya sih mau menikah.*  
word.DEF DM want get.married  
She said she is going to get married.

Excerpt 2 shows that Yuli, the adult, asks where the household assistant is (lines 491–492), using a shortened form of the child’s name twice to make it clear she is addressing the child directly. Yuli is surprised by the child’s initial answer (line 494), prompting the child to clarify the situation by explaining that there is no household assistant in her home (line 495). Yuli then asks for the reason behind this (line 496). The child provides an explanation (lines 497 and 499), but Yuli continues to question her (lines 498 and 500), leading to a further question (lines 502–503). The child responds by expressing a lack of knowledge (line 504) and appears to want to elaborate, but does not finish her thought (line 505). Yuli’s disbelief in the child’s claim of no-knowledge is evident through her repeated use of the word *masa* ‘how come’ in two follow-up questions (lines 506–507 and 510–511). By doing so, Yuli encourages the child to reflect on her role within the family, emphasizing that her position as a family member grants her access to certain knowledge that Yuli, as a non-family member, does not possess. In this context, the child’s epistemic responsibility is highlighted, compelling her to provide information to the adult.

In extract 3, another adult named Eva asks a child named Rizka a series of questions. Rizka responds, but her answer does not directly address the question—though it is somewhat related. At just four years and three months old, Rizka may not yet have the ability to calculate durations, which is relevant since Eva’s question concerns the length of an illness. Despite this, Rizka recognizes the need to respond and instead provides information about the last day her mother was sick. This allows Eva to deduce the duration herself. In this exchange, Rizka also uses the gesture of shaking her head, a common way in Indonesian culture to indicate ‘I don’t know.’ This gesture appears twice before Rizka finally verbalizes *nggak tau* (line 203).

#### Extract 3

- 198 EVA: *Ica       nggak       sekolah   dong       tadi,       ya?*  
           PN       not       school   DM       just.now   DM  
           Ica didn’t go to school today, right?
- 199 RIZ: (shaking head)
- 200 EVA: *Dah       berapa       hari       nggak       sekolah?*  
           already   how.many   day       not       school  
           How long have you been absent from school?
- 201 RIZ: (shaking head)
- 202 EVA: *Hm?*  
           INTJ  
           hm?
- 203 RIZ: *Nggak   t↑au.*  
           not       know  
           don’t know
- 204 EVA: *Lha,       kok       nggak       tau?*  
           DM       how.come   not       know  
           Well, how come you don’t know?
- 205 RIZ: (silent)
- 206 EVA: *Tiga       hari,   ya?*  
           three   day   DM  
           Three days?



- 207 RIZ: *Ibu sakitnya sampai: Sabtu.*  
 mother ill.DEF until Saturday  
 Mom was sick until Saturday

During playtime, the adult seeks confirmation about Rizka's absence from school, but she remains silent (lines 198–199). The adult then asks about the duration of the absence, but she continues to be silent. Instead, she shakes her head (lines 200–201). Rizka produces an interjection, which can be interpreted as prompting the adult for an answer (line 202). Eventually, she verbally states that she does not know (*nggak tau*, line 203). The adult responds with surprise, using the question particle *kok* and the discourse marker *lha* to intensify her reaction (line 204). She then makes a prediction about the length of the absence and asks the child to confirm it (line 206). Although the child cannot confirm the exact duration, she offers related information by stating that Saturday was the last day. This indicates that she is aware the adult expects her to share relevant information. Recognizing this expectation, she attempts to be as informative as possible. Despite her inability to count the days, she understands that providing the last day of illness will help the adult deduce the information she seeks. The child demonstrates cooperation and fulfills her epistemic responsibility to the best of her ability.

When an adult challenges a child's claim of no-knowledge, the child may sometimes defend her position. In extract 4, three adults (Yuli, Karina, and the child's mother) engage in a conversation with a child named Priska during a drawing activity. Priska is five years and three months old. Karina is a guest and not related to Priska. The transcript begins after Yuli asks Priska about someone present in the room, to which Priska responds by identifying the person as Aunt Karina. A series of no-knowledge was found in lines 276, 278, and 281.

#### Extract 4

- 275 YUL: *Tante Karina itu gurumu, ya?*  
 aunt PN that teacher.POSS DM  
 Is Aunt Karina your teacher?
- 276 PRI: *Nggak t↑Au.*  
 not know  
 Don't know.
- 277 YUL: *Hah↑*  
 INTJ  
 Uh-huh?
- 278 PRI: *Nggak t↑A:u.*  
 not know  
 Don't know.
- 279 KAR: *kok nggak tau?*  
 how.come not know  
 How come you don't know?
- 280 YUL: *Kok nggak tau sih?*  
 how.come not know DM  
 How come you don't know?
- 281 PRI: *Ya, nggak tau aja:.*  
 INTJ not know just  
 Hm, I just don't know.

- 282 MOT: *Yah.*  
INTJ  
Ugh.
- 283 MOT: *Abis sapa?*  
After who  
So, who is she?
- 284 PRI: *Nggak tau.*  
not know  
Don't know.
- 285 MOT: *Baru kenal(.) ya?*  
just.now know DM  
Have you just been introduced to her?
- 286 MOT: *Priska baru kenal ya?*  
PN just.know introduce DM  
Have you just been introduced to her?
- 287 PRI: (silent)

Yuli asks the child for confirmation (line 275), to which the child responds by disclaiming any knowledge (line 276). Yuli appears surprised and her response suggests she is seeking a more detailed explanation of what she has just heard (line 277). The child again asserts her lack of knowledge (line 278). Another question about the child's lack of knowledge follows (line 279), this time posed by Karina, the person being discussed. Yuli also repeats a similar question, using the discourse marker *sih*, which signals a demand for a response from the listener (Mutiara, 2021). The child persistently maintains her claim of no-knowledge (line 281). The mother, expressing disappointment, asks another question (line 283), hoping for a clearer answer regarding Karina's identity, but the child continues to disclaim any knowledge (line 284). After the child's repeated disclaimers, a more general question is posed, still related to Aunt Karina, expecting the child to give a relevant information. However, the child's response remains unchanged, consistently maintaining her lack of knowledge about who Aunt Karina is. In total, the child produces four utterances indicating no-knowledge. It seems that the child does not feel pressured to provide an answer. Subsequently, the mother attempts to support the child by asking for confirmation about whether the child and Aunt Karina have just met (lines 285–286), offering a possible justification for the child's lack of knowledge. The child, however, does not respond to the question.

Three questions posed by two adults challenge the child's claim of no-knowledge (lines 277, 279, and 280). The use of the interjection *hah* and *kok* 'how come' in these questions signals the adults' surprise at the child's response. The first question concerns the child's relationship with Aunt Karina. The adults assume that the child should be able to answer with a simple confirmation or denial, as the question relates directly to her own experiences. Given her familiarity with the context, the adults expect straightforward answers. However, the child's response does not meet these expectations. The question containing the discourse marker *sih* is intended to prompt the child to reconsider her claim of no-knowledge and to encourage her to provide a more definite answer. The child's reply, *ya, nggak tau aja*, reinforces her stance. The use of *ya* at the beginning and *aja* at the end of her response signals that this is her final answer, and she does not wish to elaborate further. Her intention to close the topic becomes even clearer when she continues to assert her lack of knowledge in response to an open-ended question. When

the mother attempts to support her by offering a possible explanation, the child remains silent, further indicating her desire to end the discussion. By withholding a response, the child effectively signals her decision to close the topic.

Extract 5 illustrates a situation in which an adult, Laela, questions a child's claim of no-knowledge regarding his own past experience. Laela asks Timothy, who is four years and ten months old, about a previous activity while they are coloring pictures together. In his response, Timothy associates his lack of knowledge with not remembering.

Extract 5

- 555 LAE: *Diajarin nyanyi?*  
teach.PASS sing  
Were you taught singing?
- 556 TIM: *Heeh.*  
INTJ  
Uh-huh.
- 557 *Dah.*  
already  
Done.
- 558 *()*  
(unclear)
- 559 LAE: *Nyanyi apa?*  
sing what  
What song did you sing?
- 560 TIM: *Hm?*  
INTJ  
Hm?
- 561 LAE: *Lagu apa*  
song what  
What song?
- 562 TIM: *Apa?*  
what?  
What?
- 563 LAE: *Diajarinnnya.*  
taught.PASS.DEF  
The song that has been taught.
- 564 TIM: (silent)
- 565 *Lagu?*  
song  
A song?
- 566 LAE: *Heem.*  
INTJ  
Uh-huh.
- 567 TIM: *Enggak tau.*  
not know  
Don't know.

- 568 LAE: *Lho, kok nggak tau?*  
 DM how.come not know  
 Well, how come you don't know?
- 569 TIM: *Kan belum inget.*  
 DM not.yet remember  
 I don't remember.
- 570 LAE: *Belum inget↓*  
 not.yet remember  
 Don't remember.
- 571 MOT: *Masa belum inget.*  
 DM not.yet remember
- 572 *Sedikit-sedikit pasti inget*  
 a little bit must remember  
 How come could you not remember? You must remember a little bit.

The adult first asks for confirmation, which the child provides (lines 555–556). The adult then continues to develop the topic by asking a related follow-up question (line 559). The child requests clarification, prompting the adult to repeat the question (lines 560–563). When the child asks again for the main point of the question, the adult further clarifies (lines 565–566). At this point, the child simply states that he does not know (line 567). The adult challenges this claim of no-knowledge, expressing surprise with the discourse markers *lho* and *kok* (line 568). In response, the child explains that he cannot remember (line 570). The adult, however, expresses her disbelief with *masa* ‘how come’ and continues that the child should be able to recall (line 571).

The adult's surprise stems from her expectation that the child should be able to provide information about his own personal experience. Although the child confirms that he was taught how to sing, he is unable to recall or share any details about the song itself. Since this is his own experience, the adult assumes he should have access to this knowledge. To support his claim of no-knowledge, the child cites his inability to remember. The combination of claiming no-knowledge and not remembering creates a strong defense. Nevertheless, the adult finds this unconvincing, believing that the child must have at least some recollection. It appears that the child does not attempt to provide even minimal information and instead dismisses the question by saying he does not remember.

Extract 6 presents a situation in which a child uses the word *lupa* ‘forget’ as a strategy when faced with an adult's question about her lack of knowledge. In this case, the child disclaims knowledge by stating *lupa* without using a typical negation structure. An adult named Eva (EXP) poses a question to Risa, who is 5 years and 11 months old. In the extract, Eva introduces a topic about a market the child has visited, specifically mentioning Pasar Lenteng and Pasar Minggu. The conversation then shifts to what items the child purchased. However, when Eva asks for more details about the item, Risa struggles to provide an answer (line 133).

#### Extract 6

- 126 EVA: *Risa tadi ke pasar mana Ris?*  
 PN previously to market which VOC

- 127           *Pasar Lenteng?*  
PN  
Which market did you visit? Pasar Lenteng?
- 128   RIS:   *Pa:sar↑ Minggu↑*  
PN  
Pasar Minggu.
- 129   EVA:   *O:: beli apa?*  
INTJ buy what  
What did you buy?
- 130   RIS:   *M:(.) Beli kasur.*  
INTJ buy mattress  
Uh-huh. I bought a mattress.
- 131   EVA:   *Kasur? Kasur apa?*  
mattress mattress what  
Mattress? What kind of mattress?
- 132   RIS:   *Eh, nggak, nggak, nggak.*  
INTJ not not not  
Uh-huh, no, no, no.
- 133           *Aa: (.) beli::: nggak tau.*  
uh-huh buy not know  
Uh-huh, I bought ... don't know.
- 134   EVA:   *Nggak tau? Kok nggak tau.*  
not know how.come not know  
You don't know? How come you don't know?
- 135   RIS:   *Lupa.*  
forget  
Forget.
- 136   EVA:   *Lupa, ya.*  
forget DM  
You forget, huh.

The adult asks a content question, followed by a polar question which anticipates a likely answer (lines 126-127). However, the child's response (line 128) differs from the adult's prediction. The adult then poses another question (line 129). In her reply, the child hesitates, uttering "umm" before answering, which suggests she needs time to think (line 130). The adult probes further, questioning the child's answer and inquiring about the type of mattress (line 131). The child revises her previous statement, repeating the word *nggak* three times (line 132) to emphasize that what she said earlier was not what she intended. She continues searching for the right words, using "aaa" (line 133), but ultimately admits she does not know (line 133). The adult challenges this claim of ignorance. First, she repeats *nggak tau* 'don't know' with a rising intonation, turning it into a question. Then, she begins her next utterance with *kok*, expressing surprise and further questioning the child's response. The child replies by stating she has forgotten (line 135). The adult then restates the child's claim and smoothly transitions to a new topic, interpreting the child's assertion of not knowing as a desire to end the discussion about the mattress.

In extracts 5 and 6, the children use forgetfulness as a conversational strategy. In extract 5, the adult appears skeptical of the child's claim of not remembering, whereas in extract 6, the adult readily accepts the child's forgetfulness. The final line of extract 5 suggests that the adult believes the child must recall something relevant to the question, even if not in full detail, yet she does not pursue the matter further. In both cases, the adults move the conversation forward by introducing new topics, interpreting the children's expressions of forgetfulness as cues to end the current discussion. By not insisting that the children recall the requested information, the adults acknowledge the children's agency in managing the direction of the interaction.

### **Functions of Disclaiming Knowledge**

When the children disclaim knowledge, they express their dispreference for the topics introduced by the adults. Through these disclaims, they skilfully manage the conversation to prevent further discussion on those subjects. In extracts 3 and 4, for example, the children respond to the adults' attempts to elicit information with silence, signalling their unwillingness to continue the topic. Unlike silence, claims of not remembering (extract 5) and forgetting (extract 6) serve as more explicit strategies to bring the conversation to an end. In this case, the children assert their control that they do not have an epistemic access.

All the topics raised by the adults relate closely to the children's personal experiences and daily lives. This personal connection often leads to adults' dissatisfaction when children respond with claims of not knowing, as it blocks the adults' attempts to gain insight. In extract 2, for instance, after initially answering the adults' questions, the child's subsequent denial of knowledge about the household assistant clearly signals a reluctance to provide further information. Here, disclaiming knowledge becomes a way for the child to exercise authority over what is shared and what remains private. While in extracts 2 and 3 the children eventually provide some information, in extracts 4, 5, and 6 they maintain their claims of no-knowledge, withholding access to the information altogether. This pattern underscores the children's agency in deciding their authority in the interaction.

### **DISCUSSION**

When adults ask questions, they typically adopt one of two epistemic positions. First, they may already know the answer but still pose the question. In such cases, they sometimes provide the correct answer themselves if the children are unable to do so. Second, adults may ask questions because they genuinely lack the knowledge and expect the children to supply the information. In both scenarios, when children claim not to know the answer, adults often challenge these claims. In total, thirty-one questions were identified in which the adults questioned the children's expressions of no-knowledge. Occasionally, two such questions appeared within a single conversation. In several instances, the children asserted their lack of knowledge during the discussion.

Children tend to disclaim knowledge when they are unwilling to continue discussing a particular topic. This finding aligns with previous research by Hutchby (2002). In this study, the adults responded to the children's disclaimers by using recurring lexical elements, such as discourse markers and question words. Some of these lexical items, including *kok*, *masa*, and *lha/lho*, convey a sense of surprise or disbelief, as noted by Ewing (2005), Mutiara (2017), and Sneddon (2006). Ikranagara (1975) also observed that *kok* prompts the listener to provide an

explanation. Additionally, the interjection *hah* at the beginning of a question can signal surprise. In the data, *kok* appeared 16 times, *masa* was used 4 times, and six questions featured the discourse markers *lha* or *lho*. Besides *lha/lho*, the marker *sih* was found in two questions. One question began with *hah*, which indicates a sense of shock.

Obviously, questioning children's claims of no-knowledge establishes an asymmetrical relationship between adults and children. When adults seek clarification of these claims, they implicitly expect children either to elaborate on their lack of knowledge or to revise their statements. Despite children positioning themselves as less knowledgeable, adults continue to treat them as potential sources of information, encouraging them to contribute more than just a denial of knowledge. This supports Sidnell's (2014) argument that epistemic asymmetry is evident in the acts of telling and questioning. Typically, questioners signal their stance through interrogative structures and rising intonation (Heritage, 2012). In response, hearers have two main options: the preferred response, which addresses the topic, or the dispreferred response, which rejects it (Schegloff, 2007). In this study, children's disclaimers of knowledge are considered dispreferred responses. Nevertheless, adults persist in seeking preferred responses by challenging these claims and prompting children to provide the requested information. Furthermore, disclaiming knowledge serves as a strategy for exiting a topic, as discussed by Hutchby (2002) and Morek (2015). This finding also aligns with Lindström et al. (2016), who note that expressing forgetfulness is another way to claim no-knowledge. The present study confirms that children similarly use expressions of forgetfulness to fulfill this function in conversation.

## CONCLUSION

Disclaiming knowledge is closely related to how children position themselves in relation to their hearers. Children are aware that their stance involves sharing knowledge with others, and their cognitive state influences their ability to do so. Even when they cannot provide information exactly as adults expect, they often offer relevant knowledge that helps adults arrive at the answer. This demonstrates the children's willingness to fulfil their epistemic responsibility. They understand that they hold authority over their own knowledge during conversations; it is their right to decide with whom and how much to share. They also recognize that they can choose to end a topic if they do not wish to continue discussing it.

Future research with a larger corpus could further investigate the grammatical patterns children use when claiming no-knowledge, as seen in expressions like *enggak/nggak inget* 'do not remember' and *lupa* 'forget'. Additionally, the study of disclaiming knowledge in Indonesian could be expanded by examining expressions of not understanding, such as *nggak paham* 'do not understand'. Since the current study focuses on interactions within home settings, further research could explore disclaimers of knowledge in other contexts, such as classroom interactions where children engage with teachers. The distinct roles of teachers and students in the classroom may influence how children express their lack of knowledge to both teachers and classmates.

## NOTE

We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for the very helpful comments on the earlier draft of this paper. This work was supported by a grant from Esa Unggul University (011/LPPM/KONTRAK-INT/PNT/XI/2024).

## ABBREVIATIONS

DEF	: Definite
DM	: Discourse Marker
INTJ	: Interjection
NEG	: Negation
PASS	: Passive
PN	: Proper Name
VOC	: Vocative

## TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

.	falling terminal intonation
?	rising intonation
°	syllables or words distinctly quieter than the surrounding speech by the same speaker
(.)	micropause
,	continuing intonation
:	sound prolongation or stretching
↑	shift in pitch up
↓	shift in pitch down

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