

## Indonesian EFL Students' Elastic Language in Discussing Horror Movies

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### Abstract

*To create an exchange of information is the goal of communication. Surprisingly, we rarely express ourselves clearly, precisely, and explicitly when we write or speak. This research is a conversational analysis (CA) that studies eight students from the 5th semester of the English Department of a private university. The 21'23"- conversation about the Indonesian horror movie is analyzed based on the classification of four lexical categories and categories of EL's pragmatic function elastic language proposed by Zhang (2015). This research aims to identify the implied messages conveyed by women and men as they talk about Indonesian horror movies. The study showed that approximate stretchers are the most used kind of elastic language. And, men and women use approximate stretchers at similar rates. The same number of approximate stretchers opposes the claim that women are less assertive. Then, women tend to use more intensifiers, which enhances interaction in communication. The last finding of this study was that women employed more epistemic stretchers than men. Additionally, this research finds that both men and women used elastic language for just-right elastic function mainly. Because approximation is frequently sufficient in this situation, approximate stretchers are usually chosen for just-right elastic terms.*

*Keywords: conversation analysis, elastic language, gender, lexical categories, pragmatic function*

## 1. Introduction

The goal of communication is to create an exchange of information. As part of the communication process, information exchange is becoming more and more vital, particularly when it brings and offers knowledge that matches the needs of a certain person, group, or organization (Dzamtoska-Zdravkovska & Haque, 2023, p. 252). Grice thought interlocutors needed to adhere to the *cooperative maxims* when exchanging information - that is a convention that requires that each person's contribution to the

conversation must conform to the needs of the mutually agreed-upon goal of the exchange (Keiser, 2023, p. 44). Unfortunately, speakers frequently break from these maxims rather than follow them (Zhang, 2015, p. 24).

Surprisingly, when people speak or write, we are rarely very clear, precise, and explicit about what we mean to say. We are indirect and unclear about just what we are committed to. According to this, Stubb (1986) believed that being vague and indirect can have many uses. Words are slingshots with a rubber band, and speakers ‘stretch’ their words to serve communication purposes. EL carries non-specific and stretchable meaning, in that the speaker purposefully makes it less specific or more often is unable to be more specific. ‘Stretch’ is used here as a metaphor, referring to ways by which we change, adapt, and work with words to meet certain discursive needs (Zhang, 2015, pp. 4–5).

Regarding this, scholars had previously studied elastic language. Firstly, in Mandarin Chinese, the particle *ba* (‘a change of the tone of utterance’), may carry at least three pragmatic meanings depending on the context. These meanings are mitigating (which is the most common), boosting, and soothing (Zhang, 2016, p. 265). As the corpus provided for this study is a public discourse on television, the mitigating function primarily serves the need to be polite and not offend TV audiences; as a result, the boosting function is not used very often; however, if this were a fight between strangers, the boosting function might be used more frequently (2016, p. 257). Also, to accommodate the requirements of communication, they are stretched downward (less certain), upward (more certain), or sideways (less abrupt) (2016, p. 265).

Second, Tseng & Zhang (2020) found out that elastic language is considered useful in delivering health information to the public. Elastic language is linked to positive connotations and is perceived to facilitate communication (via the right amount of information, clarity, fluency, and persuasion), lessening the reader's skepticism about the accuracy of the information being provided, bolstering popular understanding, bringing the speaker closer to the average layperson's point of view, and giving the reader more room to act on the advice (Tseng & Zhang, 2020, pp. 21–22).

Third, emails between PhD candidates and possible supervisors are also studied for their use of elastic language. Sabet et al. (2021) showed that there is a significant statistical difference in the five forms of EL distribution between the two types of emails (follow-up and decline). This means that follow-up emails have a higher elasticity than decline emails. The content of the reply, the number of emails exchanged, the likelihood of exchanging more emails, and the degree of rapport built through the emails are the four factors that have been found to influence the frequency of occurrence of EL (Sabet et al., 2021).

Last, the presence of vague language is also studied in a corpus of the eighteenth and nineteenth. The most frequent category found in the corpus is approximate stretchers. Approximate stretchers may be used to hedge propositional content whenever it is contextually implied that Writers do not have to be exact; for example, it is obvious that the writer and reader have some common knowledge. Approximators also improve relationships between writers and readers by designating group membership. Then, the occurrence of general stretchers is the least significant of all categories. In the examples analyzed, vague category markers are functionally like approximators as they serve to build writer-reader relationships by strategically signaling group membership and solidarity. Then, out of all the categories, the prevalence of general stretchers is the least significant (Álvarez-Gil & Quintana-Toledo, 2022, pp. 231–232).

The varied results offer an opportunity for researchers to examine the use of elastic language. Furthermore, none of the above studies addressed how men and women use elastic language in conversation. People have different ways of talking. Speaking from different parts of the country, as well as different racial or socioeconomic backgrounds, enhances the chances that listeners will not fully comprehend what is being said. Additionally, a comparable issue arises during conversations between

individuals of different genders. Individually minor but collective misunderstandings are caused by minute differences in conversational style (Kinasih, 2023, p. 101).

Given the difficulties in understanding implicatures, the writer is interested in carrying out a conversational analysis (CA) among students from the 5<sup>th</sup> semester of the English Department of a private university. In class, the students were divided into groups and instructed to discuss Indonesian horror films. The issue of Indonesian horror films has intrigued the writer's interest as horror is still the most popular of the many genres of film in Indonesia (Tiwahyupriadi & Ayuningtyas, 2020, p. 1).

This research aims to identify the implied messages conveyed by women and men as they talk about Indonesian horror movies. Sofyan et al. stated that to imply means to wrap or hide something using something else. Therefore, the conversational implicature is something that is hidden in a conversation, that is, something that is implicitly contained (2022, p. 68). Thus, the following questions guided the study:

1. What type of elastic language do male and female students use in a conversation about Indonesian horror movies?
2. What is the function of elastic language do male and female students use in a conversation about Indonesian horror movies

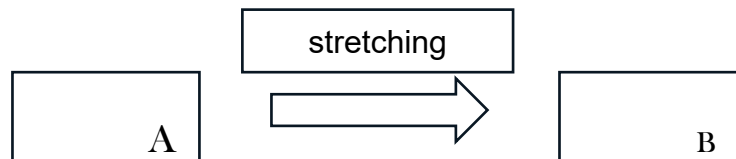
## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Elastic language

Elastic language (EL) refers to Language that deliberately and organically conveys flexibility and stretchability. EL carries non-specific and stretchable meaning, in that the speaker purposefully makes it less specific or more often is unable to be more specific. 'Stretch' is used here as a metaphor, referring to ways by which we change, adapt, and work with words to meet certain discursive needs (Zhang, 2015, pp. 4-5). The example can be seen below:

*John* : What do you think about our new colleague?  
*Mary* : Well, sometimes he is extremely charming, but other times he is a little bit odd.

When Mary brings her impression, she stretches to strengthen a favorable comment by using extremely and hedge an unfavorable comment by using a little bit. Mary can do this because our language is flexible and adaptable: EL is a crucial part of communication. A is therefore an utterance. Stretching it results in utterance B, as shown in Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1:** Stretching operation (Zhang, 2015, p. 5)

Vague Language (hereafter, VL), which has been in use for many years, is the foundation for the definition of EL. Though they are similar linguistic phenomena, EL and VL differ in two ways. First, their meanings are distinct; 'EL' seems to have a more positive connotation, while VL has a more negative one. Second, their focuses are different, VL emphasizes language's uncertainty and under-specification of language, and EL focuses on the fluid and elastic nature (2015, p. 5).

This research takes the middle ground of lexical categories that was proposed by Zhang (2015, p. 35). Zhang thought that too broad of a classification would result in fracture analysis, but too narrow of a classification might limit the richness of vague language (VL). In this study, the term "stretcher" designates an expression with elastic and fluid qualities. The four EL types, each with a distinct focus,

are displayed in Table 1: an approximator stretcher conveys an inexact quantity (numerical or nonnumerical); a general stretcher works on expression with limited semantic specificity; a scalar stretcher concentrates on various scales and continua of stretchers; and an epistemic stretcher stresses a speaker's uncertain attitude and lack of commitment to the information provided.

**Table 1:** Four lexical categories of EL (2015, p. 36)

Type	Sub-type	Example
Approximate stretcher	approximators, elastic (vague) quantifiers	<i>about, many, some, much, a lot, most, a few, few, a little, lots of, majority</i>
General stretcher	general terms, placeholders, elastic (vague) category markers	<i>things, stuff, something, thingy, someone, anything, somebody, anybody, and things like that, or something</i>
Scalar stretcher	intensifiers, softeners	<i>very, a bit, really, so, too, quite, kind of</i>
Epistemic stretcher	epistemic stance markers	<i>possible, maybe, I think, I guess, may, might, could, probably</i>

There are two reasons why the linguistic realization of EL in this study uses the four closed-set categories mentioned above. Firstly, an accurate empirical analysis would be unlikely in open-ended vague categories like vague nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Secondly, vague nouns/verbs/adjectives and the like are often used for non-pragmatic purposes; for example, in 'he is tall and handsome' - *tall and handsome* are used in a descriptive way that has little to do with strategic moves, and therefore has limited relevance to this study of the pragmatic meaning of EL.

## 2.2 Pragmatic Function of Elastic Language

This study used the pragmatic function of elastic language that was proposed by Zhang (2015, pp. 44-45). Table 2 below lists the six functions for different purposes. For instance, when the speaker lacks precise information or believes it is unimportant, the just-right elastic is used to provide the right amount of information. This includes the conventional role of utilizing VL to convey "tentativeness" or "uncertainty," which is the "default" application.

Additionally, Channell (as cited in Zhang, (2015, p. 44) reckoned that "speakers use vague expressions when they are unsure of what they want to say." And, the two situations in which speakers are often uncertain is where they are talking about the past or the future.' This function is known as 'displacement'. Displacement occurs when a speaker lacks precise information and uses Grice's Maxim of Quantity to present the appropriate amount of information (vague information). This is evident in the frequent use of quantifiers to discuss past, present, or hypothetical situations. Mitigating elastic is typically applied in circumstances where there is a strong element of negativity, like a negative assessment or criticism. In situations where the speaker is uncooperative, evasive elastic may be used.

Since EL expresses uncertainty and tentativeness by definition—two fundamental implicatures of elastic expressions—Zhang highlighted that this study does not list "uncertainty" or "tentativeness" as distinct categories. Table 2 's categories are all dependent on EL's capacity for being uncertain and tentative. For example, the speaker employs a sort of an implicature of tentativeness to perform a mitigating function; without it, there will be no mitigation. The speaker can also use the uncertain nature of sorts to evade a question. Presenting the default functions of tentativeness or uncertainty as distinct and independent functions does not seem to be very useful. Considering this, Table 2 below shows the complete categories of EL's pragmatic function.

**Table 2:** Categories of EL's pragmatic function(2015, p. 44)

Name	Definition	Example
1 Just-right elastic	used to provide unspecific and right-amount information when precise information is not needed or unavailable	She has <u>some</u> students.
2 Rapport elastic	used to elicit rapport between speaker and hearer, and to mark in-groupness	Do you want me to buy you a drink <u>or something</u> ?
3 Mitigating elastic	used to soften the claim of an utterance, to convey politeness and the like	She is <u>sort of</u> shy.
4 Intensifying elastic	used to strengthen the claim of an utterance or the intensity of an argument	I'm afraid this is a <u>very</u> serious issue.
5 Self-protection elastic	used to express a cautious and uncommitted attitude to a claim the speaker makes, to shield self from vulnerability and being wrong	<u>I think</u> it is <u>probably</u> okay to do that, but you'd better double check with the boss.
6 Evasive elastic	used to withhold information inappropriately, sometimes bordering on deception	He <u>might or might not</u> know this.

### 2.3 Conversation Analysis

One of the most common ways that people use language is through conversation. All people interact verbally, and conversation is essential to the functioning of human society. People socialize, build, and maintain their relationships with one another through conversation. When people converse, they are engaging in a form of linguistic communication (Liddicoat, 2021, p. 1). Conversation analysis aims to identify and formalize the underlying norms and practices that enable a well-organized interaction. For example, the distribution of opportunities for participation in interaction is a key component of its orderliness, or how a person knows when it is her/his turn to listen or to speak (Sidnell, 2016). Last, people converse in different ways. Collective overwhelming misunderstanding and disappointments are caused by minute differences in conversational style. Consequently, it is likely that when speakers from different regions of the country, and different ethnic or social classes speak. When conversations between people of different genders occur, a similar problem occurs (Tannen, 1990, 1992). In conclusion, male and female conversation analysis is encouraged because it enables researchers to express participants' perspectives and opinions in more natural ways. Through conversation analysis research, it has been demonstrated that identities are not static concepts but rather modes of self-presentation that change from one conversation to the next (Kinasih, 2023).

### 2.4 Men and women talk

Language experts have long studied specific patterns that distinguish men's and women's speech. For example, one of the earliest studies on language and gender found that women tend to use mitigators such as *sort of*, *I think*, and nonessential quantifiers for example *really happy*, *so beautiful* (Lakoff, 1973). Schmid found out that women more frequently use words from domains where women are expected to predominate even from domains where men are expected to predominate. For instance, women tend to use more swear words and words related to cars and traffic than men do. Another example is, gossip even though gossip is seen as having a negative effect, the study found out that gossip can be used by Javanese women to establish power because in Javanese women's power, power is not something that is shown publicly and formally. Yet, for Javanese women, personal is political (Kinasih, 2021). Thus, Schmid highlighted that the actual distinctions between men's and women's speech deviate from the common stereotypes (2003).

Additionally, Indonesian scholars have actively studied male and female language use. Dasopang et al. found out that because male and female employees have different opinions about their status during the conversation, they converse in different ways, in which women are concerned about intimacy thus they express their interest in their partner's conversation to establish the connection of intimacy to their conversation (2019). Hidayat concluded that both the husband and wife could switch roles equally either as a hearer or a speaker. And, surprisingly, the husband produces more response tokens such as mm, hm, than the wife as an expression of awareness (Hidayat, 2019). Kinasih and Puspita (2017) stated that the number of each speaker's words varies depending on the speakers' proximity to one another and how formal the event is. Given the variety of findings, it can be stated that conversational analysis, especially among male and female speakers is still extremely important because conversation varies from culture to culture and evolves over time (Burke, 1993).

### 3. Research Methods

This study applied a mixed-methods approach. In addition, the quantitative research also relied on a very organized observational study (Lichtman, 2014, p. 7). The qualitative data included respondents' behaviors which were elicited through observation, while the quantitative data were collected through the analysis of transcripts of recorded conversations.

#### 3.1 Participants

The data was collected using a video recording of naturally occurring data from a 21'23"-conversation. The eight students were in the same group for a speaking exercise on the topic of Indonesian horror movies. All participants are Indonesian with the age ranges from 19-20 years old. Four participants are female, and four participants are male. They have the same educational level background as they are all currently in the 5<sup>th</sup> semester of the English Department and currently taking the digital communication stream. The participants are (all names are pseudonyms):

**Table 3:** List of participants

No	Name	Sex	Age	Accumulative GPA
1	Theo	M	19	3.85
2	Calvin	M	19	3.70
3	Manuel	M	20	3.70
4	Dante	M	19	3.40
5	Julia	F	19	3.86
6	Vienna	F	19	3.80
7	Lily	F	20	3.75
8	Camila	F	19	3.80

The main goal of this research study was to find out how men and women communicate in informal communicative events, thus both quantitative and qualitative methods are used in analyzing the result. The qualitative data included respondents' behaviors which were elicited through observation, while the quantitative data were collected through the transcript of recorded conversation.

#### 3.2 Instrument

The 21'23"- conversation is analyzed based on the classification of four lexical categories of elastic language proposed by G. Q. Zhang (2015), which are: approximate stretcher, general stretcher, scalar stretcher, and epistemic stretcher. Further explanation of the lexical sub-type and example can be seen in Table 1. Afterward, further discussion is elaborated by using the categories of EL's pragmatic function, which are: just-right elastic, rapport elastic, mitigating elastic, intensifying elastic, self-protection elastic, and evasive elastic. The definition and example are described in Table 2.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data of this research was collected in an English *public-speaking* class. In class, the students were divided into groups and instructed to discuss Indonesian horror films within thirty minutes of discussion time. The issue of Indonesian horror films has intrigued the writer's interest as horror is still the most popular of the many genres of film in Indonesia (Tiwahyupriadi & Ayuningtyas, 2020, p. 1). The conversation is recorded by using a recording app on a mobile phone.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

To analyze the data, the acquired data was classified and analyzed into two theoretical frameworks: type of elastic language and function of elastic language. To calculate the percentage of the frequency of type and function of elastic language (EL), the writer used the following formula by Subana et al(2000).

$$FK_{rel} = \frac{FK}{\Sigma F} \times 100\%$$

$FK_{rel}$  = Frequency of relative cumulative (the result of percentage)

$FK$  = Frequency of cumulative (the number of occurrences of elastic language type)

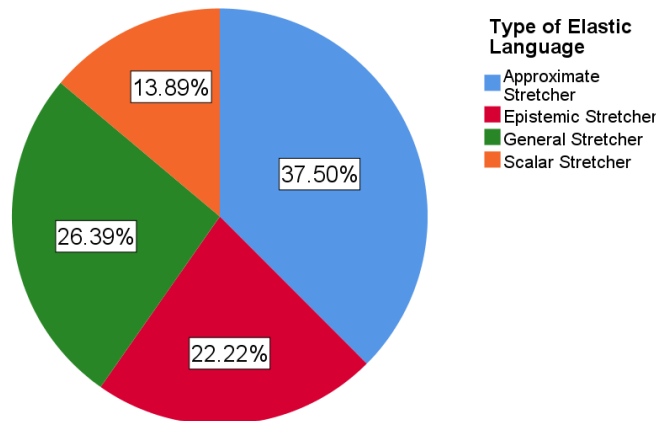
$\Sigma F$  = Frequency of total (the number of the whole occurrences of elastic language type)

The descriptive analysis is analyzed by using SPSS 26.0. Last, the percentage results from male and female speakers were then discussed further by using the function of elastic language theory by Zhang (2015).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Type of Elastic Language

First, from the data, it can be highlighted that from a 21'23"- conversation, it is found that the participants used elastic language (EL) 72 times. Among the 72 times usage of elastic language, the breakdown of the usage of elastic language can be seen in Figure 3 below.



**Figure 3:** Type of Elastic Language used by male and female participants

As for Figure 1 above, the most used elastic language is approximate stretcher with 37,50% usage. Approximate stretchers convey an inexact quantity (numerical or non-numerical) such as about, many, some, much, and a lot. In addition, from Table 4 the most used approximate stretcher is *many* with 20 times. The second most used elastic language is General Stretchers (26,39%), with *something* and *things like that* as the most used general stretchers. The third most used elastic language that is used by the participants is Epistemic Stretcher (22,22%). And the least used elastic language in this study is Scalar Stretchers (13,89%).

**Table 4:** The usage of Elastic Language used by male and female participants

Approximate Stretcher	Freq		General stretcher	Freq		Scalar stretcher	Freq		Epistemic stretcher	Freq	
	F	M		F	M		F	M		F	M
about	-	-	things	2	2	very	-	-	possible	-	-
many	9	11	stuffs	1		a bit	-	-	maybe	8	2
some	4	1	something	3	2	really	6	1	I think	3	-
much	-	-	thingy	-		so	2	1	I guess	-	2
a lot	1		someone	2	1	too	-	-	may	1	
most	-	-	anything	-		quite	-	-	might	-	-
a few	-	-	somebody	-		kind of	-	-	could	-	-
few	-	-	anybody	-					probably	-	-
a little	-	-	things like that	2	4						
lots of	-	-	or something	0							
majority	-	1									
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>13</b>		<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>

In addition to the paragraph before, it can be seen from Table 4 that among the approximate stretchers subtype, the most used word is *many*. Channell as cited in Zhang (2015, pp. 38–39) stated that giving just enough information means providing unspecific information in situations when it is not possible or required to use exact language. From the sample excerpt below, it can be seen how the word *many* is used as the speaker does not have the exact information in the conversation.

### Excerpt 1

22. Calvin : Ya::: but in Indonesia, there are **many** stigmas, that relate to mystical. Just like what you said, like there are **many** regions, tha:::t how do you put it? Indonesia itself often spreads, often boasts that it has **many** kinds of mystical events, things like that, like *Genderuwo*, what else? [00:01:21-00:01:38]

From the excerpt above, Calvin is trying just to give enough information in the conversation. The topic of the conversation was announced in the classroom by the lecturer. And, the participants were not asked to do any research regarding the topic that they were talking about. Consequently, the participants do not have any specific data related to how many stigmas are there in Indonesia, nor the exact number of the region that is related to mystical belief and the exact number of the mystical events themselves.

Next, General terms primarily consist of noun and indefinite pronouns, exemplified by things, something, and stuff. In line with the previous findings, it is also found that among the General Stretchers used in the conversation, the word *something* is used the most with 5 times usage as seen in Table 4.

### Excerpt 2

3. Manuel : Ho::rror [00:00:04]  
 4. Julia : Why does it relate? [00:00:05-00:00:06]  
 5. Theo : I've experienced *disantet*. [00:00:07-00:0:08]

6. Julia : Hmm... [00:00:08]
7. Manuel : [Tell us, tell us. I'm curious. [00:00:08-00:00:11]
8. Theo : [Hahaha::: No. No [00:00:09-00:00:12]
9. Julia : But, but, we're not talking about experience. Ya::: why does **something** about horror always relate to u:::s as Indonesian? [00:00:13-00:00:21]
10. Calvin : Because it's related to the mental culture *ya*. [00:00:21-00:00:22]
11. Julia : [Why:::?? [00:00:24]
12. Manuel : [Ye:::ss [00:00:24]
13. Calvin : relate to culture[00:00:24]

The excerpt above happened at the beginning of the conversation. The group was beginning to establish the primary topic of discussion at the beginning of the conversation. As the above excerpt shows, Julia reminds the group to talk about why something about horror is related to Indonesian culture just as Theo is about to jump straight to the subject of his own spiritual experience. Julia's usage of *something* allows the speaker to refer to an entity or a person without having to think about the precise word to use when using a "name"(2015, p. 32). Another usage of the word *something* can be seen in the excerpt below.

**Excerpt 3**

57. Vienna : If in Indonesia, does it have to be culture? The thing that can pick a lot of people's interest? **Something** that is relatable. [00:00:05-00:00:06]
58. Julia : Ya::: iya si::h, just like me, after I watch the movie I know what to do with people possessed by ghosts. *Kesurupan*. It relates to us, right? Ya, just like KKN movie, we, young people finally know about trivial things, *ya udah*, don't go out after dark. *Ya, dengerin! Don't play-play*. [00:00:05-00:00:06]

It can be conceived from the excerpt above, Vienna was asking an eliciting question namely whether or not Indonesian citizens are culturally connected to horror films. Julia then elaborated on how the culture she saw in movies gave her insight into what to do with people who were possessed in her response to the question. Julia added that she learned to obey rules from the horror movie KKN. Once more, this case demonstrates how Vienna initially has no idea what precisely is being referred to as being in a horror film. The word *something* is elastic and is used to refer to an entity's name"(2015, p. 31).

Next, the writers would like to highlight the usage of scalar stretchers. From Table 4, it can be seen that the most used scalar stretcher *really* with 7 usages. Here, the word *really* functions as an intensifier, enhancing obliquely the degree of a quality expressed by a relative adjective or adverb(2015, p. 32). The example can be seen in the excerpt below.

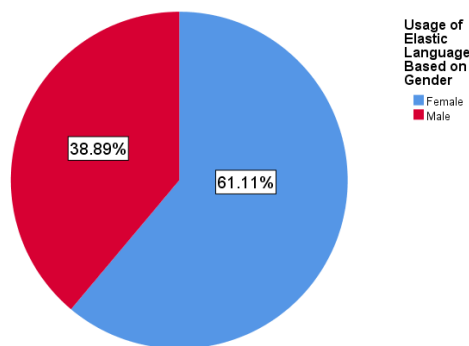
**Excerpt 4**

41. Lily : Uhm, maybe one of the reasons why the horror franchise **really** sells in Indonesia, because the culture in Indonesia is rooted with superstitious things. So, I understand why horror movie sells, one of them is to introduce Indonesian culture. [00:00:05-00:00:06]
42. Theo : [is it] culture?
43. Lily : Ya, **maybe** the producer wants to show, oh this is what happened in Indonesia. [00:00:05-00:00:06]
44. Theo : Many ghosts. [00:00:05]

- 45. Manuel : [hahaha] [00:00:05]
- 46. Lily : Wait, wait. Yeah, on the other side, actually I don't **really** like it. I don't understand why it sells in Indonesia. Ya:: what's the education in watching horror? *Okeelah*, it relates to our culture, *ya*. The positive side is, we know our culture. But, like:: pure horror, what's the message? [00:00:05-00:00:06]

It can be seen from the excerpt above, it can be seen how the word *really* is used twice by Lily. In the conversation above, Lily used the word *really* as an intensifier which strengthen the degree of how horror movies sell in Indonesia. An intensifier is also called a booster, or an emphazier (2015, p. 32)(2015, p. 32)(2015, p. 32). It emphasizes Lilly's claim that horror films are popular in Indonesia. Interestingly, Lilly used the word *really* as she expressed her dislike of watching horror movies. She confessed that she does not really like horror movies. However, in this context, the word *really* serves a different purpose since it helps her to soften her dislike for horror movies from her friends.

The last type of elastic language that the writers want to highlight is the epistemic stretchers. Biber et al. (as cited in Zhang, 2015) stated that epistemic stance markers convey the speaker's assessment of the proposition's certainty, reliability, and limitations. From Table 4, the most used epistemic stretcher by the participants is *maybe* with 10 usages. The preceding excerpt provides an example of the usage of the word *maybe*. Lilly said that maybe the producers of horror films would like to show audiences overseas what is going on in Indonesia. It should be noted that the class discussion is impromptu, which means that the participants do not have time to conduct preliminary research or speak with the producer to learn more about the true goals of the Indonesian horror film industry. Tausczik and Pennebaker Zhang (2016, p. 43) stated that the word "maybe" should be used when a speaker is uncertain of their own words. In this case, Lilly is not certain of the real intention of the producers.



**Figure 4:** The overall usage of Elastic Language by male and female participants

From Figure 4, females use more elastic language (61,11%) compared to male participants (38,89%). In this research, the writer did not count the talking rates. However, the finding is aligned with the study that shows women use more vague expressions than men (Channell as cited in Zhang, 2015, p. 172). However, this study highlights that even though women use more elastic language, it does not portray the stereotypical belief that women's elastic language is a device for the less powerful.

First, from Table 4, men and women use similar rates of approximate stretchers. In addition, men and women use very similar rates of *something*. However, this research is aligned with the study that stated that women use more intensifiers than men. From Table 4, women use the word *really* six times, while men only use it once. This finding is similar to Holmes', as cited in Zhang (2015, p. 172) which found a significant difference in the use of boosters (e.g. *really*) between males and females; and women use more of *so*. Not only that, this research also contradicts the idea that women use more hedges than men. Table 4 shows that both women and men use similar rates of *maybe*. Last, in contrast to Aijmer as

cited in Zhang (2015, p. 172), this research also finds no evidence that the use *I think* is sex-specific. Women use *I think* three times, while men do not use at all.

#### 4.2 Function of Elastic Language

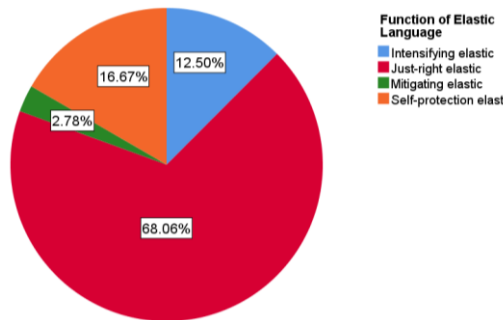


Figure 5: The overall usage of Elastic Language by male and female participants

As Figure 5 shows, it can be seen most of the participants used elastic language for the *just-right elastic* function. This finding is aligned with the data shown in Table 4, which shows the most used elastic language is approximate stretchers. Zhang stated that approximate stretchers are typically picked for just-right elastic terms, as approximation is often good enough in the context (2015, p. 154). That being said, it makes sense that just-right elastic is the most frequently used elastic language function in this study.

Table 5: The function of Elastic Language used by male and female participants

Function	Freq	Gender	
		Female	Male
Just-right elastic	49	28	21
Intensifying elastic	9	3	6
Mitigating elastic	2	2	0
Self-protection elastic	12	8	4

From Table 5, it can be seen that women use elastic language for just-right elastic more than men, with 28 times. Just-right elastic is used to provide unspecific and right-amount information when precise information is not needed or unavailable (2015, p. 44). The function of just-right elastic can be seen in the excerpt below.

#### Excerpt 5

- Calvin : Ya::: but in Indonesia, there are **many** stigmas, that relate to mystical. Just like what you said, like there are **many** regions, tha:::t how do you put it? Indonesia itself often spreads, often boasts that it has **many** kinds of mystical events, things like that, like *Genderuwo*, what else? [00:01:21-00:01:38]
- Julia : Kuntilanak [00:01:38]
- Calvin : Yeah, kuntilanak, then *tuyul*, and **many** more. That's why maybe there **many** movie productions. The producers are thinking, maybe since in Indonesia there are **many** fans, not fans, there are **many** people who relate with, uhm, ghosts or things like that, so **many** horror films are made in Indonesia. [00:01:39-00:02:05]
- Julia : [Bu:::t yes] that's right. That's why, I think, in some, in **many** places, especially like in regions, like really small villages,

sometimes the people are, in a way like more, mysterious in a way. I think, yeah, it's because of our tradition, like washing the *keris*, and **many** more, and we use *air kembang*. Maybe, from some horror film, those that I've watched, yeah, even though I close my eyes more, than open them. [00:02:05-00:02:44]

Manuel : [hahahaha]

Julia : Like, there are **many** elements that yeah, like that. That is also why, horror will always relate to use because, yeah, it's the market. If Indonesia is given horror stuff, it fits. [00:02:45-00:03:02]

From the excerpt above, it can be seen that both female and male participants use *many* as approximate stretchers. In this case, the speakers use the word *many* as they do not have the precise information. First, Calvin said that in Indonesia, there are many stigmas. In addition, Calvin also said that in Indonesia there are many kinds of mystical events. Then, he added that there are different kinds of ghosts such as *kuntilanak*, *tuyul*, and many more. He went on to say that it could be the reason for the high production of [horror] films, as well as the large number of fans and people who relate to the plots of horror films. Julia responded by saying that she believes that in many places, people are more mysterious. She also mentioned that there are traditions associated with mystical beliefs, such as washing the "keris" and many others. When Manuel laughed, Julia emphasized her point that horror films have many [mystical] elements that make them relevant to Indonesians.

Secondly, from Table 5, it can be seen that the participants mostly use elastic language for self-protection elastic with 12 times. Self-protection elastic hedges a speaker's statements to safeguard his/her interest. Women used 8 elastic languages for self-protection, while men used 4. In the third place, the participants use elastic language which functions as intensifying elastic which increases the strength of a claim by scalar words such as *very*, or *really*. Table 5 shows that men performed more intensifying elastic function (6 times) than women (3 times). Last, the participants used elastic language for mitigating elastic - in which, the speakers involve downtoning and politeness. In the conversation, women performed two stretchers that serve as mitigating elastic, whereas men performed none.

## 5. Discussion

This study aims to address two issues: the type of elastic language used by men and women, and the function of elastic language used by men and women in conversation. In the first issue, the writers found out that the most used type of elastic language is approximate stretchers. The writers noticed that men and women use approximate stretchers at similar rates. The most commonly used approximate stretcher among both men and women is *many*. Ruzaitė as cited in Zhang (2015, p. 42) stated that multal quantifiers (e.g.: a lot, many) emphasize large quantities or long periods, and they also emphasize the hugeness of the amount being discussed. So, men and women used the word *many* (e.x: many mystical stigmas, many regions that boast mystical events, many horror movie productions, many people who relate to ghosts, fans of horror movies, and many mysterious places) - they also stressed that these phenomena had been occurring for a long time.

In addition, elasticity theory has three principles, one of which is the Stretchability Principle. This principle allows speakers to achieve their communicative goals; in other words, strategy is the purpose of stretchability (2015, p. 57). The goal of the conversation between the participants in the class is to brainstorm the reason why horror movies sell in Indonesia. The discussion was conducted impromptu, which means that the speakers did not have time to research the exact number of mystical stigmas, regions with mystical events, or mysterious places in Indonesia. As a result, the use of numerous approximate stretchers is vital because precise information is unavailable. Also, the fact that women and

men used the same number of approximate stretchers opposes the claim that women are less assertive (2015, p. 183).

Next, in this research men and women use very similar rates of general stretchers, especially the word *something*, and the difference is insignificant. The meaning of something refers to an undefined entity or notion in a general sense (2015, p. 92). The general stretcher takes a minimalist approach, focusing on providing broad information rather than specific details. In other words, using a general stretcher can be seen as a positive thing as effective interactions maximize cognitive effects with minimal processing effort. Therefore, a general expression such as *something* may be the best choice in response to the demand (2015, pp. 94-95).

This research supports the notion that women are found to use more intensifiers, bringing more interactiveness in communication. Following previous research, men use intensifiers less frequently than women; and women preferred to use single intensifiers to express their emotions toward sentences, such as *really* with 8 usages (Fuchs, 2017; Putri et al., 2020). However, this research contradicts the idea which presumes that male and female speakers could acquire similar communicative styles in same-sex peer groups, too. The fact that the participants in this study are mostly teenagers is consistent with the current study's findings, which show that gender-based differences are greatest for young speakers and tend to diminish as they age (2017, p. 302).

Last, this research found that women used more epistemic stretchers than men. Epistemic stretchers convey the speaker's perspective on the certainty and reliability of the utterance in issue. The most used stretcher in this research *maybe*. A study found out that *maybe* is an informal term that is used to hold back certainty in a negative way and indicates a negative connotation. And, a sentence with *maybe* does not provide the addressee with an adequate amount of information to let him know (Alqurashi, 2019, p. 641). Interestingly, the finding of this research contradicts the finding from Alqurashi. The research participants use the word *maybe* with positive sentences such as: *That's why maybe there many movie productions. The producers are thinking, maybe since in Indonesia there are many fans, not fans, there are many people who relate with, uhm, ghosts or things like that, so many horror films are made in Indonesia*. Here, the word *maybe* has a mitigating role and follows the 'go epistemic' maxim, since a single epistemic maxim can encompass both hypothetical and subjective maxims (2015, p. 218). Since they did not have time to interview the horror film producers, the participants used the *maybe* to make hypothetical statements. The participants had no idea what the actual motivations behind the creation of horror films were. The word *maybe* does not indicate a negative connotation, yet it shows that the addressee did not have an adequate amount of information about the issue.

To answer the second research question, the writers would like to elaborate on the function of elastic language used by men and women in this research. According to the study, participants primarily used elastic language for the just-right elastic function. These findings aligned with the previous research which stated that in situations where it is implied by the context that writers do not need to achieve precision, approximators can be used to hedge propositional content (Álvarez-Gil & Quintana-Toledo, 2022, p. 233). Moreover, Zhang stated that approximate stretchers are typically picked for just-right elastic terms, as approximation is often good enough in the context (2015, p. 154). The context of the conversation in this study did not require the participants to draw accurate conclusions, in addition to their lack of knowledge. Given this, it makes sense that the most often utilized elastic language function in this study is just-right elastic.

The fact that the participants did have accurate data during the conversation also resulted in the high performance of self-protection elastic. Self-protection elastic hedges a speaker's statements to safeguard his or her interests. The data in excerpt 5 reveal that EL is used to shield a speaker from being understood precisely, and so may convey a sense that the speaker lacks full commitment. How the participants used *maybe* and *many* at the same time can be seen in Excerpt 5. In the case of gender-related discussion, if hedges represent uncertainty and an uncommitted attitude, then that attitude is

equally shared by male and female speakers. If hedges are linked with speakers with lower power status, then the assumption that the male speakers have higher power runs into problems. The data shows fluidity between EL and power status; no one-to-one match is presented. The idea that women used more self-protection elastic shows that they are more indirect than males.

## 6. Conclusion

The study concluded that in general, women participants employed more elastic language than men. And, approximate stretchers are the most used kind of elastic language. Interestingly, when the usage of approximate stretchers is broken down, this study found out that men and women use approximate stretchers at similar rates. Thus, the same number of approximate stretchers opposes the claim that women are less assertive. Multal quantifiers, such as "a lot, many," highlight large amounts or extended durations, as well as the enormity of the amount under discussion. Both men and women emphasized that these phenomena had been going on for a long time when they used the word *many*. Since the discussion was impromptu, the participants were unable to investigate the precise number of mystical stigmas, mystical event regions, or mysterious locations in Indonesia.

This study shows that women tend to use more intensifiers, which enhances interaction in communication. The last finding of this study was that women employed more epistemic stretchers than men. Additionally, this research finds that both men and women mainly used elastic language for just-right elastic function. Because approximation is frequently sufficient in this situation, approximate stretchers are usually chosen for just-right elastic terms. This explains why just-right elastic is the most frequently used elastic language function in this study. All in all, the fact that both males and females used similar rates of approximate stretchers and general stretchers contradicts the idea that women use more vague expressions than men and claims that women's language has a 'high degree of unspecificity'.

The authors are fully aware that because the research is being conducted in a casual conversational setting, it may not be able to present a comprehensive picture of how power and gender factors influence the use of EL. Thus, more research is suggested on the use of elastic language in different contexts (such as an academic setting, a political setting, or a business meeting) between men and women.

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