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# Mapping the Development of Forensic Linguistics in the Philippines: A Scoping Review

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**Abstract.** The field of forensic linguistics has become progressively relevant, especially in multilingual societies like in the Philippines. However, the literature remains insufficient and disintegrated. There is a need for a systematic synthesis of these existing studies in the Philippines and see what the current landscape of research looks like for future opportunities and directions. This scoping review intends to map the available literature on forensic linguistics in the Philippines and assess whether the existing literature and studies can suffice the identification of gaps for the proposed study on local courtroom discourse. This review adheres to Arksey & O'Malley's (2005) framework and the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR). It reveals that forensic linguistics in the Philippines is a growing yet still underexplored field, with a significant surge in research occurring only within the last decade. The findings also emphasize that the current English-centric judicial system creates a formidable barrier to justice for the country's multilingual population, often leading to structural inequalities and a lack of legal internalization among ordinary citizens. These implications are significant insights for future directions of language planning and management in the country. More studies are needed in forwarding the advocacy for a more inclusive judicial system, one that does not put people at a disadvantage only because they cannot speak English. This scoping review calls for inclusive legal reforms and more situated research to ensure that the Philippine justice system becomes accessible and equitable for all, regardless of their linguistic background.

***Keywords:*** Court Interpretation; Courtroom Discourse; Forensic Linguistics; Investigative Linguistics; Legal Language

## Introduction

Language studies are pivotal in the administration of justice. Language itself is foundational for prudence. It becomes largely contributive in the resolution and analysis of legal issues. In the field of law, justifications often depend on the interpretation of available facts or information through language. As such, it is crucial to navigate this aspect through a systematic discipline. Forensic linguistics provides a systematic approach to studying these concerns. As defined by Correa (2013), forensic linguistics is a new subfield within applied linguistics that studies the relationship between language and the legal field, including policies and laws. The role of a forensic linguist is to act as a consultant of lawyers, police forces, plaintiffs, organizations, and others (Olsson & Luchjenbroers, 2013). Therefore, this subfield is contributive in understanding the role of language in legal processes and how linguistic practices influence justice.

The field of forensic linguistics has become progressively relevant, especially in multilingual societies like in the Philippines. Apart from its archipelagic and diverse contexts, postcolonial attributions also contribute to the proliferation of language-related issues in the legal field. The country's legal system is linguistically stratified. English is the dominant language of law. To cite one, we are under the colonial enactment of Act No. 2239 in 1913, *the official language of all courts and their records shall be the English language*. This raises important questions about access to justice that can be compromised by linguistic challenges. The dominance of English in forensic investigations in the country is a primary predicament for people who are not privileged enough to understand and speak the language. Forensic linguistics provides a systematic means to expose this in the legal aspects it examines.

Existing studies and literature on forensic linguistics in the Philippines have largely progressed for the past decades. It has become interdisciplinary, extending its scope to other social sciences to address fundamental issues that affect people from different sectors. However, it is worth noting that this growth

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does not suffice the aspirations of linguistic justice. The literature remains insufficient and disintegrated. There is a need for a systematic synthesis of these existing studies in the Philippines and see what the current landscape of research looks like for future opportunities and directions. A scoping review can significantly detail the necessary reports needed to chart such literature. This scoping review serves as a call for more research to substantiate the need to begin our trials for linguistically-inclusive legal reforms to cater to the needs of people to access justice through the languages they can speak.

### Research Questions

This review generally intends to map the available literature on forensic linguistics in the Philippines and assess whether the existing literature and studies can suffice the identification of gaps for the proposed study on local courtroom discourse. Specifically, this scoping review aimed to discuss the details to the following questions;

1. What aspects of forensic linguistics in the Philippines have been studied?
2. What linguistic theories, frameworks, and paradigms have been used in studies on the following:
    1.1. investigative linguistics
    1.2. legal language
    1.3. court interpretation
    1.4. courtroom discourse
    1.5. legal language policies
3. What are the recurring themes, strengths, and limitations of the existing literature and studies?
4. What do existing studies identify as the implications of English-centric policies in the judicial system?
5. What are the identified thematic, methodological, and contextual gaps in the existing literature on Philippine forensic linguistics, particularly regarding courtroom discourse and legal language policies?

## Methodology

### Research Design

This scoping review follows Arksey & O'Malley's (2005) framework, which comprises five stages in the process. It includes identification of research questions, identification of relevant studies, study selection, data charting, and reporting of results. This framework particularly allows the methodology of this review to explore and identify the intended variables and characteristics of the existing literature. It is the most appropriate for this scoping review to address the research questions, especially those that involve identification and frequency determination. This review also adheres to the 2018 Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses guidelines for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR).

### Research Locale

The location and context of the study is the Philippines, focusing on forensic linguistics, legal language, court interpretation, courtroom discourse, and legal language policies. The dates of publication were limited to the past 50 years (1975–2025) to ensure coverage of the development of the field in the country.

### Research Participants

The sources of evidence include relevant literature from Google Scholar, Research Gate, ERIC, and JSTOR. Additional resources were also obtained from the reference lists of the included articles.

### Research Instrument

In the process, sets of eligibility and exclusion criteria were strictly considered. These criteria include literature type, publication type [journal articles, books, book chapters, reports (Research, Descriptive, Evaluative), dissertations, thesis, or digests), location and context (Philippines), theoretical and conceptual focus (forensic linguistics, legal language, court interpretation, courtroom discourse, and legal language policies), and timeframe (within the past 50 years). The exclusion criteria include duplicate publications, non-Philippine context, non-scholarly publications (e.g., opinion pieces, blog posts, editorials, or news articles), and deviated topic scope (e.g., general sociolinguistics with no forensic linguistics-related content).

### Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher conducted a comprehensive search of relevant literature from Google Scholar, Research Gate, ERIC, and JSTOR. However, Google manual search and reference list-search were also conducted as additional strategies. To ensure comprehensive coverage, boolean operators were used along with the use of keywords, such as Philippines AND ("courtroom discourse" OR "court interpretation" OR "cross-

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examination"); "forensic linguistics" AND Philippines AND "language policy"; and Philippines AND ("legal language" OR "legal English" OR "statutory interpretation"). Some keywords, such as “court interrogation in the Philippines”, “cross-examination discourse in the Philippines”, and “discourse analysis in the Philippine legal field”, were also used. In the selection of sources of evidence, search results were saved altogether in a library folder in Google Scholar. Other results from Research Gate, ERIC, and JSTOR were bookmarked through the bookmark feature of Google Chrome. The search terms were in English.

## Results and Discussions

### Study Selection and PRISMA Flow Diagram

Study selection and inclusion were primarily conducted according to the prescribed stages of the PRISMA-ScR: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The diagram below illustrates the PRISMA-ScR Flow for Mapping the Development of Forensic Linguistics in the Philippines.

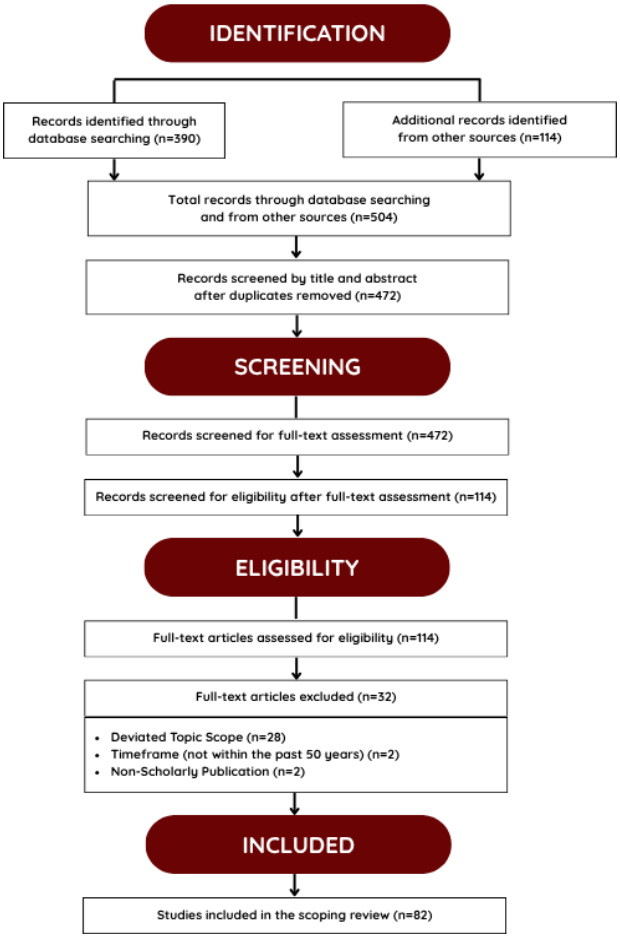



***Figure 1:*** *PRISMA Flow Diagram*

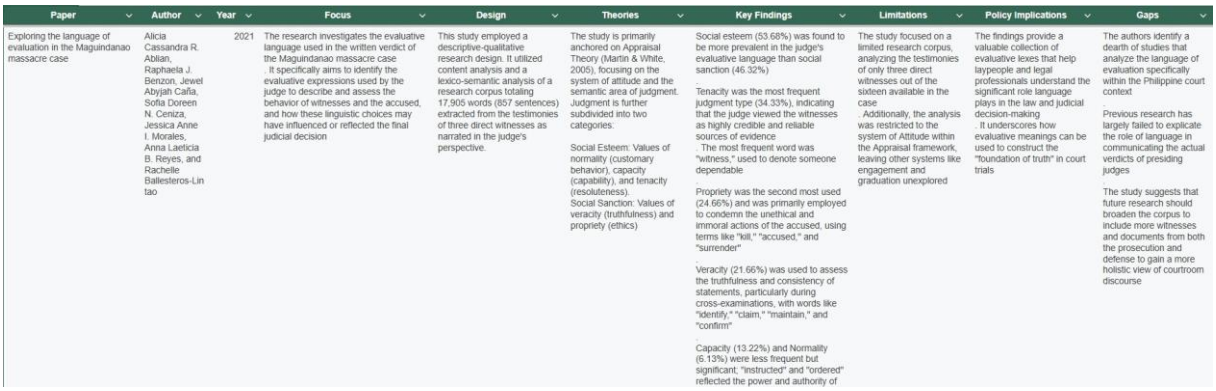
The search results identified 390 records through database searching while 114 additional records were identified from other sources through other search strategies. There are 504 records identified. The number of records screened by title and abstract after duplicates were removed became 472. This number serves as the basis for the screening phase and full-text assessment. Following the eligibility criteria, there were 114 records screened for eligibility after the full-text assessment. There are 32 full-text articles excluded from the number since 28 of the records deviated from the topic scope. Most of these articles discuss general sociolinguistics and language policies in the Philippines. There are 2 records found that were published before 1975. There are also 2 resources that are editorial/column reports, which are considered non-scholarly. Finally, there are 82 studies included in the final scoping review.

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## Data Charting Process

In the data charting process, the researcher systematically extracted and organized relevant information using Google Sheets. The application was used as a management tool. Its use enabled the researcher to apply sorting and filtering functions to identify recurring themes and trends among the reviewed studies. The extracted data was organized according to the paper's title, author, publication year, focus, research design, linguistic theories or paradigms used, key findings, limitations, policy implications, and gaps (see Figure 2.). These data items are in view of the intended discussions based on the research questions and objectives of this scoping review. Subsequently, the researcher organized the data through tables (see Section 6.).



| Paper | Author | Year | Focus | Design | Theories | Key Findings | Limitations | Policy Implications | Gaps |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Exploring the language of evaluation in the Maguindanao massacre case | Alicia Cassandra R. Ablian, Raphaela J. Benzon, Jewel Abyjah Caña, Sofia Doreen N. Ceniza, Jessica Anne I. Morales, Anna Laeticia B. Reyes, and Rachelle Ballesteros-Lintao | 2021 | The research investigates the evaluative language used in the written verdict of the Maguindanao massacre case<br>. It specifically aims to identify the evaluative expressions used by the judge to describe and assess the behavior of witnesses and the accused, and how these linguistic choices may have influenced or reflected the final judicial decision | This study employed a descriptive-qualitative research design. It utilized content analysis and a lexico-semantic analysis of a research corpus totaling 17,905 words (857 sentences) extracted from the testimonies of three direct witnesses as narrated in the judge's perspective. | The study is primarily anchored on Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), focusing on the system of attitude and the semantic area of judgment. Judgment is further subdivided into two categories.<br><br>Social Esteem: Values of normality (customary behavior), capacity (capability), and tenacity (resoluteness).<br>Social Sanction: Values of veracity (truthfulness) and propriety (ethics) | Social esteem (53.68%) was found to be more prevalent in the judge's evaluative language than social sanction (46.32%)<br><br>Tenacity was the most frequent judgment type (34.33%), indicating that the judge viewed the witnesses as highly credible and reliable sources of evidence<br>. The most frequent word was "witness," used to denote someone dependable<br><br>Propriety was the second most used (24.66%) and was primarily employed to condemn the unethical and immoral actions of the accused, using terms like "kill," "accused," and "surrender"<br><br>Veracity (21.66%) was used to assess the truthfulness and consistency of statements, particularly during cross-examinations, with words like "identify," "claim," "maintain," and "confirm"<br><br>Capacity (13.22%) and Normality (6.13%) were less frequent but significant; "instructed" and "ordered" reflected the power and authority of | The study focused on a limited research corpus, analyzing the testimonies of only three direct witnesses out of the sixteen available in the case<br>. Additionally, the analysis was restricted to the system of Attitude within the Appraisal framework, leaving other systems like engagement and graduation unexplored | The findings provide a valuable collection of evaluative lexes that help laypeople and legal professionals understand the significant role language plays in the law and judicial decision-making<br>. It underscores how evaluative meanings can be used to construct the "foundation of truth" in court trials | The authors identify a dearth of studies that analyze the language of evaluation specifically within the Philippine court context<br><br>Previous research has largely failed to explicate the role of language in communicating the actual verdicts of presiding judges<br><br>The study suggests that future research should broaden the corpus to include more witnesses and documents from both the prosecution and defense to gain a more holistic view of courtroom discourse |

***Figure 2:*** *Excerpt from the Data Chart*

## Critical Appraisal

In this review, no quality and validity assessments in the studies have been conducted. The nature of this scoping review is only to map the development of the field in the Philippines. The included studies in this review did not necessarily undergo any evaluation and validity to allow a more comprehensive identification of existing literatures based on the data items.

## Characteristics of Included Studies

This section details the characteristics of the included studies in mapping the development of forensic linguistics in the Philippines.

**Table 1.** Development of Relevant Publications according to Publication Years

| | Publication Year | No. of Literature Published |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | 2025 | 13 |
| 2. | 2024 | 9 |
| 3. | 2023 | 10 |
| 4. | 2022 | 9 |
| 5. | 2021 | 6 |
| 6. | 2020 | 2 |
| 7. | 2019 | 3 |
| 8. | 2018 | 4 |
| 9. | 2017 | 4 |
| 10. | 2016 | 3 |
| 11. | 2015 | 6 |
| 12. | 2014 | 3 |
| 13. | 2013 | 2 |
| 14. | 2012 | 1 |
| 15. | 2011 | 2 |
| 16. | 2008 | 1 |
| 17. | 1996 | 1 |
| 18. | 1995 | 1 |
| 19. | 1993 | 1 |
| 20. | 1975 | 1 |
| | | **82** |

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**Table 2.** Development of Relevant Publications Published by Decade

| Publication Year | No. of Literature Published |
|---|---|
| 1. 1975-1985 | 1 |
| 2. 1986-1995 | 2 |
| 3. 1996-2005 | 1 |
| 4. 2006-2015 | 15 |
| 5. 2016-2025 | 63 |
| | **82** |

Tables 1 and 2 show the development of relevant research publications in the last 50 years. Most of the included literature, accounting to 64 records, were published in the most recent decade (2015-2025). There were 15 records that were published in the preceding decade (2005-2015). Only three (3) records were published in the three remaining decades, distributing (1) relevant literature per decade. This data explains the recency of the studies on forensic linguistics and that the surge of publications in the most recent years indicates that, until recently, the field has not much available data and discussions. This implication further suggests the significant need to explore the field to provide more established discussions for future research.

**Table 3.** Geographical and Contextual Scope of the Included Studies

| Area | Region/Province/City | No. of Relevant Studies |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Luzon | Metro Manila | 3 |
| | Malolos, Bulacan | 1 |
| | Sadanga, Mountain Province | 1 |
| 2. Visayas | Antique | 1 |
| | Western Visayas | 1 |
| | Visayas-General | 1 |
| 3. Mindanao | Tagum City | 1 |
| | Sultan Kudarat | 1 |
| | Davao del Norte | 1 |
| | Maguindanao | 1 |
| | Mindanao-General | 2 |
| 4. Philippine Context (General) | | 68 |
| | | **82** |

Regarding the geographical and contextual scope of the included studies, Table 2 indicates the distribution of the studies in different areas of the country. There is an imbalance in the geographical focus of research within Philippine forensic linguistics. An overwhelming concentration of studies is categorized into the Philippine Context (General). This particular categorization is grounded on the macro-level perspectives, oftentimes discussing national legal structures and policies. Some of which also include generalized linguistic practices. Analyses that are situated within local or regional contexts remain scarce. There is relatively little availability of data that are language and culture-specific in different regions. This limited representation indicates how underexplored the field is. This imbalance implies the need for more researchers for the field as it develops further.

**Table 4.** Research Designs of the Included Studies

| Research Design | No. of Studies from the Data |
|---|---|
| 1. Qualitative Content Analysis/Content Design | 9 |
| 2. Descriptive-Qualitative /Descriptive Analytical Design | 5 |
| 3. Contrastive or Comparative Analysis | 5 |
| 4. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) | 6 |
| 5. Qualitative Genre Analysis | 4 |
| 6. Legal Research, Archival, or Historical Analysis | 4 |
| 7. Forensic Discourse Analysis | 3 |
| 8. Forensic Linguistic Analysis | 7 |
| 9. Qualitative Thematic Analysis | 3 |
| 10. Qualitative Case Study or Structured Interviews | 2 |
| 11. Stylistic Analysis or Stylistic Parsing | 2 |
| 12. Conversational Analysis | 1 |
| 13. Qualitative-Pragmatic Approach | 1 |
| 14. Qualitative Sentiment Analysis | 1 |
| 15. Participant-Observer Approach | 1 |
| 16. Linguistic Landscaping | 1 |
| 17. Invitational Rhetoric | 1 |
| 18. Framing Analysis | 1 |
| 19. Norm-Based Analysis | 1 |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 20. | Feminist Critique of Language | 1 |
| 21. | Mixed-Methods | 7 |
| 22. | Computational NLP, Machine Learning, or Experimental Development | 6 |
| 23. | Corpus-Based Linguistic Study or Corpus Analysis | 2 |
| 24. | Quantitative Descriptive-Evaluative | 1 |
| 25. | Qualitative-Quantitative Descriptive Study | 1 |
| 26. | Critical Review or Bibliometric Review | 6 |
| | | **82** |

Table 4 shows the research designs used in the included studies in relation to forensic linguistics. Dominance of qualitative approaches is evident in the methodological landscape of forensic linguistics in the Philippines. The field is also prominent for its discourse and genre specialization. There is an emergence of computational methods such as the use of Computational NLP and Machine Learning. Mixed and bibliometric review methods are also used for some literature. Data further shows that there is a diversity of qualitative tools used as researchers use a wide range of thematic, stylistic, and pragmatic approaches to analyze legal texts. However, corpus-based studies and observational research are limited.

## Discussion

This section of the scoping review expounds several key areas as the researcher mapped the development of forensic linguistics in the Philippines.

### Research Question 1: What aspects of forensic linguistics in the Philippines have been studied?

**Table 5.** Studied Aspects of Forensic Linguistics in the Philippines

| Aspect | Sub-aspect | No. of Relevant Studies |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Investigative Linguistics | Investigative Artifacts Police Documentation Field Reviews Computational Forensics Police Lingo Fake News Detection | 22 |
| 2. Legal Language | Contracts and Agreements Judicial Decisions Statutes and Ordinances Legal Discourse in Media/Public Policy Human Rights-related Documents | 34 |
| 3. Court Interpretation | Norm-based Interpretation Interpreting for Filipino in International Spaces | 3 |
| 4. Courtroom Discourse | Discourse in Trial Proceedings Courtroom Interrogation Power and Control Dynamics Illocutionary Acts Conversational Maxims Appraisal and Evaluative Language | 7 |
| 5. Legal Language Policies | Policy Theory and Evaluation Social Justice and Access Legal/Procedural Policies Public Space and Perception Foundational Surveys | 16 |
| | | **82** |

Table 5 shows an overview of the studied aspects of Forensic Linguistics in the Philippines and the distribution of research across the subaspects along their maturity. Certain areas have substantially more research focus than others. This exposes the research priorities within the field.

Among these identified aspects, legal language has been most extensively studied with a total of 34 relevant studies from the records included. This explains that language researchers are more likely to study the structural and textual features of legal discourse, especially the written forms such as contracts, agreements, judicial decisions, statutes, ordinances, legal documents, and media. These corpora are relatively accessible, hence, its prominence as source of data for forensic linguistics analyses. The diversity of subaspects is an indication of growth in the field as it recognizes the extent to which legal language plays a role.

The second most researched aspect is investigative linguistics, which has 22 identified studies from the records. The subaspects include investigative artifacts, field reviews, police lingo, police documentation, fake news detection, and computational forensics. These records reflect a more applied orientation of the field. An interesting point to note in this subaspect is the integration of technological tools and methods in systematically analyzing the corpora to capture linguistic data. This integration is pivotal in advancing the procedures of conducting linguistic examinations.

On another note, legal language policies account for 16 studies from the records. Significantly, the subaspects involve policy-making and evaluation, access and social justice, legal/procedural policies, public space and perception, and foundational surveys. There is an inclination toward examining the crucial part of language use in the legal system, particularly in view of issues of equity. In this aspect, studies often challenge

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the dominance of the English language in the legal field. Through the identified studies involving legal language policies, legal institutions can get a grasp of its contributions in shaping their institutional practices.
Moreover, courtroom discourse has also been explored by researchers, with 7 identified studies in the record. The identified sub-aspects include discourse in trial proceedings. Courtroom interrogation, power and control dynamics, illocutionary acts, conversational maxims, and appraisal/evaluative language. Emphasis on interactional and pragmatic dimensions of legal communication is fundamental to the growth of forensic linguistics in the Philippines. These studies provide insights into how meaning and justice are negotiated in real-time. These also reveal how linguistic strategies are used to impose authority and navigate outcomes in courtrooms. Studies on courtroom discourse are important data and should have been given considerable attention in research. However, as shown, this aspect remains underexamined, limiting the capturing of dynamics of legal discourse in practice.

Lastly, the least studied aspect is court interpretation with only 3 studies identified from the records. It is worth noting that with the Philippines being multilingual, legal systems need to be considerate and perceptive in facilitating communication during courtroom discourses. At this point, the limited number of studies on this aspect entails a significant gap in the literature, suggesting that existing research is still in its early stages. There is a crucial necessity to explore court interpretation to address complexities in legal communication in the Philippines, especially in the courtrooms.

**Research Question 2: What linguistic theories, frameworks, and paradigms have been used in studies on the following; investigative linguistics; legal language; court interpretation; courtroom discourse; legal language policies?**

**Table 6.** Linguistic Theories, Frameworks, and Paradigms Used in Reviewed Studies on Investigative Linguistics, Legal Language, Court Interpretation, Courtroom Discourse, and Legal Language Policies

| Aspects | Specific Theories, Frameworks, and Paradigms Used | No. of Studies |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Investigative Linguistics | Melinkoff's Characteristics of the Language of the Law | 2 |
| | Coulthard and Johnson's (2007) Forensic Linguistics Concepts | 2 |
| | Shapero's (2011) Linguistic Oddness Framework | 1 |
| | Shapero's (2011) Meta-Categories Framework | 1 |
| | Forensic Stylistics | 1 |
| 2. Legal Language | Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) or Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) | 4 |
| | Genre Analysis (Bhatia's model) | 2 |
| | Genre Analysis (Swales' move structure) | 2 |
| | Appraisal Theory (Martin & White) | 3 |
| | Hyland's Model of Stance and Metadiscourse | 3 |
| | Deontic Modality (Matulewska, Stark, or Quirk) | 3 |
| | Cognitive Readability Theory | 1 |
| | Barth-Weingarten's Interactional Model of Concession | 1 |
| | Finegan's Language Structure or Halliday & Hasan's Text Connectedness | 2 |
| 3. Court Interpretation | Translation Norms (Hermans/Toury) | 1 |
| | NAJIT/AUSIT canons | 1 |
| | Skopos Theory and Frame Semantics | 1 |
| 4. Courtroom Discourse | Speech Act Theory (Austin & Searle) | 5 |
| | Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) | 6 |
| | Politeness Theory / Face Threatening Acts (FTA) | 4 |
| | Feminist Critique of Language | 2 |
| | Grice's Cooperative Principle and Conversational Maxims | 2 |
| | Conversational Analysis (CA | 1 |
| 5. Legal Language Policies | Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy | 1 |
| | Language Justice Framework | 1 |
| | Critical Legal Studies (CLS) or Legal Realism | 2 |
| | Sally Engle Merry's Theory of Vernacularization | 1 |
| | Popular Constitutionalism and Judicial Review theory | 1 |
| 6. General Forensic Linguistics Aspects | Discussions, Synthesis, and Review | 25 |
| | | **82** |

Table 6 illustrates the mapping of theories and frameworks across the identified studies as categorized by the five major aspects. This also highlights both the strengths and uneven development of forensic linguistics research in the Philippines.Among the studies, the most dominant frameworks are Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with 6 studies, Politeness Theory with 4 studies, and Speech Act Theory (Austin & Searle) with 5 studies. These are mainly employed to study courtroom discourse. This is inclined with the

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concepts of power, ideology, and meaning-making processes during interactive legal proceedings.

Following these are the structural and functional analyses. In terms of legal language, it shows a diverse reliance on functional linguistics, especially Systemic Functional Linguistics/Grammar (SFL/SFG) with 4 identified studies from the record. Alongside this theory is the application of Appraisal Theory, Stance and Metadiscourse, and Deontic Modality with 3 identified studies each. These analyses describe a focus on legal texts as constructed to impose authority and obligation to some extent in the legal language examination. Moreover, genre, text connectedness, and language structure analyses are also being given importance in research on legal language. Additionally, since this scoping review included other types of published literature that are not necessarily studies, there are 25 records

Generally, theoretical grounds on investigative linguistics, court interpretation, and legal language policies are still an emerging niche among the studies. These aspects are under-researched, hence, the lack of employment of the theories.

**Research Question 3: What are the recurring themes, strengths, and limitations of the existing literature and studies?**

**Table 7.** Identified Themes, Strengths, Limitations, and Gaps

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Recurring Themes | Power Asymmetry and Institutional Control<br>Inaccessibility of Legal English<br>Linguistic Hybridity<br>Victim Representation and Re-victimization |
| 2. Strengths | Interdisciplinary Reach Theoretical Diversity<br>Technological Innovation |
| 3. Limitations | Restricted Data Access Small Sample Size<br>Lack of Multimodality<br>Geographic and Genre Narrowness |
| 4. Gaps<br>5. Thematic Gaps | Language as Evidence<br>Statutory and Evaluative Language<br>Constituting Verbal Abuse |
| 6. Methodological Gaps | Lack of Multimodality Database Constraints<br>Fragmented Data Access Theoretical Progression<br>Appraisal Framework Integration |
| 7. Contextual Gaps | Narrow Crime Scope Geographic Bias<br>Training vs. Practice Public Accessibility<br>Policy vs. Attitude |

Table 7 indicates a synthesis of the state of forensic linguistics in the Philippines as it categorizes the reviewed literature into recurring themes, strengths, limitations, and gaps.

Among the included literature, power asymmetry and institutional control within the Philippine legal and justice system have been the recurring themes. Alongside these themes are emphasis on inaccessibility of legal English, hybridity in language, and victim-revictimization. Studies point out the technical nature of legal English, which creates barriers for ordinary citizens and disconnects them from the legal matters. Studies also explore how multilingualism influences legal proceedings in the Philippines. It often results in English remaining dominant and the language of record. Researchers have also discussed how courtroom interrogation techniques in which language can inadvertently re-traumatize vulnerable witnesses and victims, especially in cases that involve rape or domestic violence.

The included literature are interdisciplinary, diverse in terms of theoretical underpinnings, and have integrated technological innovation. Studies are in line with the researchers' integrity to collaborate with legal professionals to ensure validity and ethical foundations in their conduct. They often involve analyses on interactions between judges, lawyers, and witnesses. This method is necessary to merge linguistic theories with legal practice. Forensic linguistics in the Philippines has also moved beyond structural analysis and put forward sociological integration to address social issues like power dynamics, gender sensitivity, and speaking up for the rights of marginalized communities in the country. It also has educational impact through active efforts to use forensic linguistic findings to teach law students and law enforcement professionals about the importance of language in their respective fields. Another important note is the frequent use of SFL and Genre Analysis to allow researchers examine the complexities of contracts and statutory language. With Speech Act Theory and Politeness Theory, studies explain the underlying intent of the discourse in court on the participants. Importantly, the application of technological innovations is considerably a promising strength in the field as it shifts toward solving large-scale data analysis through automated analysis, such as Natural Language Processing (NLP), to predict Supreme Court outcomes and build word embeddings from Philippine jurisprudence. The development of court case summarizers using Latent Semantic Analysis is a practical

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application of technology to make the legal procedures more efficient.

The limitations identified include restricted data access, small sample size, lack of multimodality, genre and geographic narrowness. Researchers frequently encounter institutional gatekeeping when attempting to obtain authentic materials such as judicial records, case files, and police blotters. This is due to confidentiality protocols that legal institutions adhere to. Studies only rely on limited datasets, which restricts them from making broader discussions about the Philippine legal system. This is further challenged with inconsistencies that make the conduct of large-scale analyses difficult to conduct. Another key point is the narrowness of geographic scope of the existing research. Regional locales are underrepresented, which restricts the researchers to account for linguistic diversity across the Philippines. Moreover, as discussed in the previous portion of this scoping review, there is an imbalance in the types of legal texts that have been analyzed by researchers. Focuses are more on institutional frameworks, which is considered a limitation because public attitudes are not included in the discussions.

**Research Question 4: What do existing studies identify as the implications of English-centric policies in the judicial system?**

**Implications of English-centric Policies in the Judicial System**

The development of forensic linguistics studies in the Philippines in the past 50 years has established a solid insight into the persisting realities of how language is viewed in this area. The Philippine judicial system is patently English-centric in spite of the majority of citizens being multilingual. This system has become a barrier for effectively rendering justice among ordinary Filipinos. The dominance of English reaches government, education, and jurisprudence. In an environment where a foreign language is being given more importance, the mechanisms for institutional control also become foreign for the people. Existing studies come down to advocating for a linguistically inclusive legal system. This linguistic divide that persists in the judicial system has led to fostering communities that have not internalized legal standards because the law, policies, and legal discourses are in a language that is not totally comprehensible for the general population (Martin, 2012).

English-centric policies in the judicial system creates structural inequality. They contribute to the proliferation of elitist ideologies. Rañosa-Madrunio (2014) emphasizes that English-centric policies create a "beleaguering" effect of the lay people who do not speak the language of the court. This affects and prevents the narration of one's own experiences and stories during legal proceedings. Furthermore, these language policies are shown to affect accuracy and fairness, especially in courtroom interactions. Court interpretation has become a critical mechanism since studies indicate inconsistencies in interpretations. According to Jimenez & Ballesteros-Lintao (2020), the aftermath of these inconsistencies may result in the loss of nuance, misrepresentation, and shifts in meanings. These issues also contribute to serious consequences for the case outcomes where precise language is crucial.

Overall, these implications are significant insights for future directions of language planning and management in the country. More studies are needed in forwarding the advocacy for a more inclusive judicial system, one that does not put people at a disadvantage only because they cannot speak English. Since the number of studies are limited and the field of forensic linguistics is underexplored within the Philippines, the gap is still wide. Language researchers are encouraged to shape this knowledge in hopes for inclusive reforms.

**Research Question 5: What are the identified thematic, methodological, and contextual gaps in the existing literature on Philippine forensic linguistics, particularly regarding courtroom discourse and legal language policies?**

**Thematic, Methodological, and Contextual Gaps**

At the thematic level, there is a lack of research on language as evidence such as text messages, ransom notes, and social media threats. Studies on forensic phonetics and voice identification are also scarce in recent decades. Existing studies emphasize the lack of systematic approaches to addressing ambiguity in statutory language. Another gap is evident in the study of legal definitions and judicial communication, especially those that constitute verbal abuse and insufficient exploration of how judges linguistically construct and deliver verdicts.

At a methodological level, there is a lack of multimodal approaches in courtroom discourse. Most studies only focus on Transcripts of Stenographic Notes (TSNs), which limits the researchers from exploring other key areas of discourse analysis, especially the non-verbal aspects (gestures, facial expressions, and tone). With this, it is a recurring recommendation to incorporate audio and video recordings to understand courtroom interaction more so long as the data gathering procedures adhere to ethical standards of the court.

At the contextual level, gaps in the literature emphasize issues related to scope, accessibility, and real-

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world application. Research on courtroom discourse is focused more on specific case types, like rape and drug-related trials. This means that there is still a need to study on other case types, may they be criminal, civil, or other judiciary cases to ensure broader coverage of judicial contexts. Furthermore, the current landscape of forensic linguistics in the Philippines does not inclusively discuss the entire Philippines. Regional concentration of the studies should be minimized in future research. Most findings are based on only a few locales in the Philippines, which may not be generalizable to the linguistic practices of other areas in the country. Another gap to highlight is the professional preparation. There needs to be sufficient research on the current legal education to describe the current state of the practitioners as they prepare for their real-world profession in view of their mastery in the nuances of forensic linguistics application. Alongside this gap is the pressing need for research that lessens the divide between the legal system and the people it serves. As ordinary citizens struggle to interpret the law as intended, there should be inclusive measures to make legal justice accessible to the masses. Lastly, since existing literature on language policies are centralized on management and planning, data regarding actual linguistic practice and attitude of citizens toward these policies should be collected more to understand the effectiveness of the policies.

## Ethical Considerations

This scoping review adhered to the ethical standards prescribed by Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework and general academic research. All records included in this scoping review were legally published and can be publicly accessible. Hence, the author had the right to include these records in this particular scoping review without violating any provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012, provided that such records were properly cited and included in the reference list. Ethical research and academic principles were sustained throughout the writing process.

## Conclusion

This scoping review maps the available literature on forensic linguistics in the Philippines and assesses whether the existing literature and studies suffice to identify gaps for future research. It follows Arksey & O'Malley's (2005) framework and uses PRISMA-ScR for reporting and transparency. It reveals that forensic linguistics in the Philippines is a growing yet still underexplored field, with a significant surge in research occurring only within the last decade. There is an uneven distribution of research in Philippine forensic linguistics, with legal language and investigative linguistics being most frequently examined, while courtroom discourse and court interpretation remain underexplored. Moreover, the adoption of technology-driven research methodologies and data analysis procedures is becoming prominent. The findings also emphasize that the current English-centric judicial system creates a formidable barrier to justice for the country's multilingual population, often leading to structural inequalities and a lack of legal internalization among ordinary citizens. This scoping review calls for inclusive legal reforms and more situated research to ensure that the Philippine justice system becomes accessible and equitable for all, regardless of their linguistic background.

## Recommendations

In light of the findings and discussions, further research on forensic linguistics should be conducted, particularly courtroom discourse and court interpretation to address existing gaps in the literature. Language researchers are also recommended to consider adopting technology-driven methodologies, such as Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA), Computational Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning as part of data analysis to enhance forensic linguistics examination on legal documents and texts. Generally, policymakers and legal institutions should consider providing more inclusive legal language policies to address the limitations of the English-centric judicial system in the Philippines.

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