

Forensic Linguists as Expert Witnesses

— Examining their Credibility in the Philippine Courtroom

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Abstract

In a jurisdiction where forensic linguistics is still carving out its space and is deemed by some to be “junk science”, questions arise about the discipline’s legitimacy. This paper examines legal professionals’ perspectives on forensic linguists’ credibility as expert witnesses in Philippine courtrooms, positioning this investigation as a pioneering work. Given that forensic linguistics is not yet well known among lawyers and judges in the country, their perspectives on the credibility of forensic linguists as expert witnesses cannot be ignored. Anchored on the four identified credibility factors in the study of Brodsky et al. (2010) as a theoretical lens and employing thematic analysis as its research design, a holistic credibility concept emerged from this study, which can be used as a foundational basis for the establishment of forensic linguists’ professional code of conduct, and a prospective legal framework that regards forensic linguists as expert witnesses.

Keywords

forensic linguists, credibility, expert witnesses, Philippine courtrooms

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1. Introduction

Expert witnesses are invited to enlighten the court by providing specialized knowledge on complex and technical issues. Their opinion may assist judges and juries in arriving at informed decisions. Unlike the *amicus curiae* (friend of the court), who is invited by the appellate courts to advise on a matter of law, an expert witness is typically called by one of the litigating parties to provide opinion evidence on matters of fact. The practice of calling experts as witnesses during hearings dates back more than a century ago in the United States and as far back as 1311 in England. Kovera (2001) emphasized that the role of expert witnesses is to inform fact finders (judges or juries) who are qualified by education, skill, or technical expertise about case-relevant matters beyond their common knowledge. Their conclusions, which carry a respectable level of scientific confidence, are typically formed through modern technology, a comprehensive literature review, expertise, and relevant background information. Most of them are experts from a variety of fields, including archaeologists, doctors, engineers, and scientists.

Like these professionals, forensic linguists also testify and render expert opinions in language-related cases, such as trademark infringement and authorship attribution. They come from a field called Forensic Linguistics (henceforth, FL), a branch of applied linguistics that concentrates on the various ways in which language and the law interact. Despite its decades-long history globally, FL is currently undergoing a period of significant ‘emergence’ in some countries, particularly the Philippines, as local scholars and legal practitioners begin to formalize its application in local courts. Forensic linguists, as expert witnesses, play a crucial role in language-related cases, providing critical analysis and interpretation of language evidence. Their casework is said to have originated in the late 1960s, and most forensic linguistics work examines linguistic evidence (Picornell, 2024). Durant and Leung (2016) explain the fundamental qualities of linguistic evidence that a forensic linguist, as an expert witness, considers. Language data associated with a crime or dispute, such as text messages, letters, product warnings, and trademark signs, all have linguistic evidence. This evidence, akin to footprints, blood samples, or ballistics, in its potential, is interpreted and integrated into a legal argument and eventually submitted to a court of law. Another crucial aspect of linguistic evidence is the expert linguist’s interpretation of the data. This linguistic analysis, presented in a written report or spoken testimony, can significantly influence the outcome of the case.

Over the past 20 years, forensic linguists have been gaining ground alongside other forensic scientists, as courts in several countries, such as Australia, Pakistan, and Indonesia, have increasingly relied on their expertise. While forensic linguistics is a rapidly growing field that provides valuable insights and analysis in courtroom litigation, as

with any other area of expertise, it is not without its critics. Courts have been hesitant to admit linguistic evidence because the forensic community has not sufficiently developed valid and reliable methods (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010; Solan, 2010).

The same situation is observed in other Asian countries, such as the Arab nations (El-Sakran, 2020) and Sindh, Pakistan (Ali, David & Shah, 2022), where lawyers exhibit strong reluctance to admit linguistic evidence in court. This lack of recognition limits linguists' opportunities to provide testimony or analysis in court, and the potential benefits forensic linguistics can bring to the legal system may not be fully realized.

In the Philippine context, a primary hurdle in the local development of FL is the lack of formal recognition for linguists as expert witnesses. In their critical review of the field's origins and directions in the Philippines, Rañosa-Madrurnio and Martin (2023) document how stakeholders unfamiliar with FL often question the legitimacy of forensic linguistic research. Drawing on a synthesis of scholarly literature and professional observations, the authors illustrate a recurring challenge: court personnel often view linguists as experts in grammar and style rather than as forensic specialists. Furthermore, a general lack of awareness regarding FL as a distinct science contributes to a systemic failure to recognize the necessity of language specialists in Philippine judicial proceedings. Thus, this paper argues that unfamiliarity among legal professionals may manifest as a dismissal of FL as "junk science", a term discussed further in the findings section.

The inclusion of forensic linguists as expert witnesses in Philippine courts is unlikely to happen soon. It is then important that FL, as an emerging field, expands and becomes embedded in the legal system. As a discipline, FL must advance so forensic linguists can gain credibility and be permitted to testify in court (Rañosa-Madrurnio & Martin, 2023).

2. Credibility and Admissibility of Expert Witnesses

Based on International and Philippine Rules

Credibility is defined as the persuasiveness a person exhibits when giving testimony (Ivkovic & Hans, 2003; Pope et al., 2006). In the context of expert witnessing, Pope et al. (2006, as cited in Wilcox & Nic Daéid, 2018) associated credibility with the expert's authoritativeness, character, competence, attractiveness, and overall expertness.

Looking into how courts uphold credibility, the requirements for expert witnesses differ across many countries. In British courts, the current situation regarding the duties and responsibilities of UK experts is quite similar to that in Australian courts. These two countries largely have the same stance on expert evidence, although there are slight

variations in the laws among the British jurisdictions of Northern Ireland, Scotland, England, and Wales. Coulthard and Johnson (2007) cite these rules, which are as follows:

1. Expert evidence presented to the court should be, and should be seen to be, the independent product of the expert, uninfluenced as to form or content by the exigencies of litigation;
2. An expert witness should provide independent assistance to the court by way of an objective, unbiased opinion about matters within his expertise and should never assume the role of an advocate;
3. An expert witness should state the facts or assumptions on which his opinion is based. He should not omit material facts that could detract from his concluded opinion.

In *Frye v. United States* (1923), a federal district court decided that polygraph evidence was inadmissible at trial because its scientific integrity had not yet been proven. This decision set a criterion for the admissibility of expert testimony at trial, requiring courts to consider whether the expert's methods were widely accepted within the relevant scientific community. Subsequently, judges received further guidance from a later decision in *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals, Inc.* (1993). Under the Daubert standard, it is the judge's responsibility to determine whether expert testimony is reliable and relevant. Furthermore, the Daubert court provides four rules that a judge may follow, but need not, in determining whether testimony is credible (Narang & Paul, 2017):

1. whether the expert's theory or technique can be (or has been) tested ("falsifiability");
2. whether the theory or technique has been subjected to peer review or publication;
3. the known or potential error rate of the theory; and
4. whether there is general acceptance in the relevant scientific community.

Corollary to this ruling, there are three basic grounds for contesting expert testimony in American courts: (1) the expert's qualifications in terms of education and experience; (2) the usefulness or relevancy of the testimony; and (3) the validity of the expert's findings and methodology (Boyce & Harris, 2017). The rules of procedure and evidence at the state and federal levels differ in what constitutes admissible expert testimony.

The leading Canadian case of *R v Mohan* (1994), which is a significant decision on expert evidence by the Supreme Court, held that expert evidence is admissible only when

four criteria are met: (1) the evidence's relevance; (2) the necessity of the evidence in aiding the trier of fact; (3) the absence of any exclusionary rule preventing the admission of the evidence; and (4) the proper qualifications of the proposed expert.

Meanwhile, in Philippine courts, the general rule is that an opinion of a witness is not admissible (Rule 130, Sec. 48, Revised Rules of Court) except as specified by the Rules (Sec. 49). Admissibility of evidence is defined as "evidence that is admissible when it is relevant to the issue and is not excluded by the law of these rules", based on the Rule 128, Section 3 of the Revised Rules on Evidence of the Philippine Constitution. Material evidence, for instance, directly establishes a fact in issue, but it must be relevant and competent to be admissible. It should be logically connected between the evidence and the issues being tried in court. Furthermore, the rule on admissibility of evidence states that "evidence is relevant if it tends in any reasonable degree to establish the probability or improbability of a fact in issue" (Sec. 4).

Subsequently, a witness is also allowed to testify only about the facts they know based on their perception and senses (Rule 130, Sec. 36, Revised Rules of Court). However, an exception exists for expert witnesses, who may provide opinions on matters that require special knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education, as long as they possess such expertise (Sec. 49). The term "may" indicates that the court has the option to consider the expert witnesses' opinions but is not obligated to do so. The testimony of expert witnesses does not bind the court.

The credibility and admissibility of a witness ultimately lie with the court, and its ruling cannot be reviewed unless an abuse of discretion is evident. In addition, the trial court determines the sufficiency and weight of testimony, considering factors such as a witness's character and ability, actions on the stand, reasoning process, possible bias, whether the witness is paid, opportunities for observation and study, and other relevant issues (Yu, 2013).

In Philippine jurisprudence, the case *People vs. Abriol* (2001), an expert witness is defined as "one who belongs to the profession or calling to which the subject matter of the inquiry relates and who possesses special knowledge on questions on which he proposes to express an opinion". The qualifications or expertise required for a witness to testify as an expert are not explicitly defined. However, the presence of the following factors would generally suffice: (1) adequate training and education; (2) particular, first-hand familiarity with the facts of the case; and (3) the ability to provide references or standards on which their opinion is founded (as mentioned in Yu, 2013). Seemingly, such qualifications in the Philippine legal system conform to international standards for the admission of expert witnesses.

3. Research Objective

This research aims to examine forensic linguists' credibility as expert witnesses in Philippine courtrooms, based on the viewpoints of select lawyers and judges in one region of the Philippines.

While there is a plethora of research on the credibility of expert witnesses, no study has examined forensic linguists serving as expert witnesses in Philippine courtrooms, specifically examining lawyers' and judges' viewpoints on their credibility. Thus, this investigation addresses a theoretical gap and serves as a pioneering work in evaluating the presence of forensic linguists in the country's legal system.

Moreover, beyond addressing issues of scientific legitimacy, this study is warranted by the immediate practical needs of the Philippine legal sector. First, the research identifies a significant knowledge gap among practitioners. Documenting their baseline perceptions may provide a foundation for initiatives that better inform legal professionals about the role of language specialists in court. Second, since the Philippine judiciary lacks established protocols for recognizing linguists as expert witnesses, they are frequently met with doubt regarding their scientific rigor. This study, therefore, investigates the systemic and perceptual barriers that may prevent valid scientific contributions from being recognized within the local legal framework. By exploring the potential integration of forensic linguistic expertise, this study seeks to provide specific knowledge to support more precise evidentiary evaluation, ultimately aiding judges and lawyers in the Philippines in making more informed judicial determinations.

It is hoped that by exploring the legal professionals' perspectives, the study may build a strong theoretical foundation of how forensic linguists may help improve the delivery of justice as expert witnesses by developing a foundational basis for the professional code of conduct for forensic linguists in the Philippines, and a baseline data that would lay a groundwork for the potential inclusion of forensic linguistics expertise into the Philippine legal system, thereby legitimizing their presence and strengthening the legal weight of their role in a country where the field is relatively new but is steadily growing.

4. Theoretical Framework

Drawn from the theoretical perspective and previous studies on expert witnesses' credibility, this paper is inspired by the *Witness Credibility Scale (WCS)* developed by Brodsky et al. (2010). While the original 2010 study required participants to rate witnesses after viewing recorded testimonies, this research deviates from that procedure. Instead of

using the full scale in a simulated setting, this paper adopts the four identified credibility factors, namely, *likeability*, *confidence*, *trustworthiness*, and *knowledge*, strictly as a theoretical lens to guide the analysis of the legal professionals' viewpoints on the credibility of forensic linguists as expert witnesses. These four factors are analytically supported domains across a series of studies on the validation of expert and lay witnesses.

The first factor pertains to any conduct or personal traits the court observes during the testimony, referred to as likeability, which is one of the factors that establish witness credibility (Brodsky & Terrell, 2011). These characteristics include being kind, pleasant, well-mannered, friendly, and respectful. Physical appearance, such as the expert witness's attire and a presentation of proper and respectful courtroom decorum, may also be attributed to likeability. Second, researchers argued that trustworthiness is the most essential among the four factors that characterize witness credibility (Wechsler et al., 2015; Ziemke & Brodsky, 2015; Zipse & Mohla, 2014). Traits related to trustworthiness include honesty, truthfulness, dependability, and reliability. Aside from presenting objective, unbiased testimonies, familiarity with case specifics and court reports may enhance trustworthiness. Greeno et al. (2013) found that, among all factors, confidence significantly influences overall perceptions of witness credibility. This aspect becomes evident through traits like self-assurance, eloquence, composure, and relaxation. Adopting an assertive, decisive verbal style is also essential for building confidence. Additionally, confidence indicators can be reflected in maintaining eye contact, displaying an open demeanor, leaning slightly forward, expressing genuine emotions, and speaking loudly and appropriately. Finally, knowledge involves demonstrating a specialist's expertise in their field and scientific knowledge. A knowledgeable testimony entails presenting objective facts and well-reasoned arguments that have been scientifically verified, considering all relevant facts of the case (Blackwell & Seymour, 2015; Lerm, 2015; Thomas, 2015; Meintjes-Vander Walt, 2003). Indicators of this factor include being logical, informed, wise, educated, and scientific.

Since this study aims to assess forensic linguists' credibility as expert witnesses in criminal and civic investigations, it is important to anchor the study in the Witness Credibility Framework by Brodsky et al. (2010), which employs four dimensions to provide a tool for this assessment. These are deemed significant as they are analytically supported domains across a series of studies on the validation of expert witnesses.

5. Methodology

As this empirical study involved a total of 10 participants, consisting of 5 trial court judges and 5 lawyers as participants, it observed appropriate and ethical standards and procedures subject to the guidelines of the Review Ethics Committee (REC) of one of the leading universities in the Philippines. The researchers also sought permission from the Integrated Bar of the Philippines – Romblon Chapter President before conducting this study as part of the ethical considerations. Upon securing approval, the researchers provided participants with proper orientation regarding the nature of the research. Specifically, the following ethical points were tackled individually: (1) voluntary participation; (2) informed consent; (3) privacy and confidentiality of their responses; (4) discomforts, risks, and inconveniences; and (5) conflict of interest. For the purpose of analysis, no formal distinction was made between the responses of judges and lawyers. This unified approach was adopted because both groups operate within the same adversarial framework and utilize the same criteria, specifically the *Revised Rules on Evidence*, to evaluate the admissibility and weight of expert testimony. Analyzing these ten participants as a singular ‘legal practitioner’ enables the research to gauge a baseline for how the broader Philippine legal community perceives the integration of forensic linguistic expertise.

Subsequently, a semi-structured written interview was conducted to elicit substantive responses from the participants, guided by the four credibility factors identified by Brodsky et al. (2010). The said instrument was further validated by the experts in the field to ensure its clarity and effectiveness. These experts, who hold balanced views on the instrument’s refinement, come from the legal and applied linguistics domains, and the validators were a lawyer pursuing a doctorate in language studies and a forensic linguist who serves as an expert witness in language-related cases. Each question was meticulously reviewed for relevance and ethical soundness, and their comments and suggestions were carefully considered. Additionally, since forensic linguistics is still in its nascent stages in the Philippines, none had prior contact or direct interaction with forensic linguists as expert witnesses during the data-gathering stage. To address this gap and provide a solid foundation for the interviews, a researcher-made primer on forensic linguistics was attached to the research instrument. This document was essential for context-building and was supplemented by an elaborate questionnaire to ensure clarity. The inclusion of this primer was intended to help participants build their responses more comprehensively and provide them with a reference point should they have further questions about the research topic or the specific role of language experts in the legal system.

Purposive sampling was also used to select qualified participants and to manage the high volume of legal professionals in one region of the Philippines. To ensure a manageable and efficient data collection process, specific inclusion criteria were observed: participants were required to be lawyers working exclusively under the *Public Attorney's Office (PAO)* within the region with at least five years of experience, or judges presiding over regional trial courts in one of the provinces in the Philippines. The participants have legal expertise in litigation, special proceedings, criminal law, and commercial law. The decision to exclude private practitioners was a strategic choice driven by the significant logistical effort required for resource allocation and scheduling.

To examine the perspectives of lawyers and judges, a thematic analysis was employed. This qualitative method revealed how participants perceived and evaluated credibility factors for expert witnesses, including potential biases or preferences toward specific professions, such as forensic linguistics. This tool helped the researchers delve deeper into how cultural, legal, and linguistic contexts influence forensic linguists' perceptions of credibility, offering rich qualitative insights beyond mere listing of factors. Braun and Clarke (2006) underscored that thematic analysis, as a descriptive and independent qualitative approach, is primarily used to identify, analyze, and report patterns.

Using a structural analysis or dendrogram as an analytical tool also uncovered the underlying patterns and themes in participants' responses. The field text was then subjected to cool analyses, during which significant statements regarding the credibility of expert witnesses were extracted from the corpus. This process involves formulating codes to establish connections between these meaning units (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017). Additionally, warm analyses were conducted by examining the responses for similarities and differences, from which categories were derived (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). These categories further illustrated the themes that qualitatively described forensic linguists' credibility as expert witnesses. To ensure data reliability, the dendrogram was validated through a member-checking procedure. This step involved the researchers corresponding with another individual included in the data analysis to confirm the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings (de Guzman, 2020). Three experts, including two lawyers and one doctoral degree holder, were invited to serve as inter-coders to analyze participants' viewpoints. Moreover, specific techniques were utilized to maintain openness toward the text. These included the processes of bridling (Dahlberg, 2008), which entails being patient and actively waiting for themes to emerge, and bracketing (Tufford & Newman, 2010), a method for eliminating biases and prejudices while analyzing the corpus.

Generally, the researchers conducted an in-depth examination of participants' statements, looking for patterns, commonalities, and recurring themes that shed light on

how courts and legal professionals assessed the credibility of expert witnesses in determining the admissibility of their evidence. The extracts presented in the succeeding section were unedited to capture participants' natural responses.

6. Findings and Discussion

6.1. Likeability of Forensic Linguists as Expert Witnesses –

The “X” Factor

Brodsky and Terrell (2011) underscore the importance of likeability as a personal trait characterizing an expert witness. This is a credibility factor regarding how expert witnesses present themselves in the courtroom. Interestingly, the analysis of data reveals that, aside from a striking personal appearance and demeanor, likeability also extends to an “X” factor that makes the forensic linguist stand out, making the forensic linguist's presence significant within the legal domain. Lawyers and judges unpack three major themes concerning the likeability of forensic linguists as expert witnesses: *behavioral dimension*, *expert's persuasive power*, and *potential significance to the justice system*.

The conventional perspective on likeability, or the behavioral dimension, encompasses characteristics such as proper demeanor and a dignified appearance. Such aspects may be perceived as typical features that legal professionals consider when evaluating forensic linguists' likeability. As noted by some of the participants:

P2: Their demeanor, professionalism, and ability to remain impartial are also very important. [...] Cultural factors such as accent and dress code can influence perceptions, although in a very minor way. An expert witness who speaks clearly and dresses professionally is often seen as more credible and competent.

P6: Yes. Physical attractiveness, especially light-skinned attributes, expensive-looking attires, fluency in English.

As perceived by lawyers and judges, these behavioral dimensions may enhance forensic linguists' credibility as expert witnesses, though not always. Some legal professionals do not give a premium to cultural factors, as revealed in the following extracts, equating likeability with competence and knowledge.

P4: Cultural factor is not an issue in the perception of an expert witness so long as he/she is a qualified expert witness who passed the appropriate government-sanctioned examinations.

P7: As a judge governed and guided by rules on court procedure and code of ethics, I am not supposed to be influenced by cultural factors in my perception of an expert witness's qualification, competence, and readability [of the expert opinion].

Behavioral traits may then be considered unnecessary in building the expert witnesses' credibility. This finding matches the study of Repke (2021), which found that attire, cosmetic use, and posture do not positively influence female experts' credibility. Even so, this paper argues that forensic linguists may weigh behavioral and cultural factors as an added value on becoming an expert witness.

The second aspect of likeability goes far from personal traits. For lawyers and judges, an expert's persuasive power is deemed appealing during court trials, which comes from the relevance of their testimonies, and credentials as an expert witness. Given that forensic linguistics is in its infancy stage in the country, a linguist's testimony is highly scrutinized and must be persuasive enough. This persuasive power must stem from the probative value of forensic linguists' testimonies, which depend on their credibility. As stated by two participants:

P8: [...] relevance of the testimony of the expert witness to the case, which should be properly introduced or laid down by the proponent.

P3: I think that the main factor for the likeability of forensic linguists as expert witnesses in the courtroom would be the probative value and weight of their testimonies, which will depend on their integrity and credibility.

Moreover, it is not surprising that most legal professionals would consider forensic linguists' credentials, including their scholastic and professional backgrounds, in further assessing their persuasive power. This finding runs contrary to the established sub-indicators from the theoretical framework, proving that the conceptualization of likeability among Filipino legal practitioners extends significantly beyond cultural parameters. Since (forensic) linguists still need to establish their reputation in the field, finding their rightful place in the legal system, they must work harder and obtain impressive qualifications to solidify their credentials and earn the approval of legal professionals. Below are extracts that underscore some prerequisites that the legal practitioners cited:

P7: For me, number 1 qualification is educational/academic qualification. Number 2, length of time the forensic linguist has been involved in forensic linguistics and the nature and scope of his/her involvement, [...] academic qualification, length, nature and scope of involvement, experience/continuing training, reputation in their field or among their peers as an authority/expert

P8: Exposure/sufficient training to qualify as expert witness should be established.

The last facet of likeability is a deeper construct: the expert's potential significance to the justice system. Forensic linguists should serve as legitimate, knowledgeable authorities within the judicial framework. However, their expertise is unknown in the legal domain, so they must demonstrate the need for their expert opinion. One response from a lawyer further shows how likeability transcends mere geniality:

P1: The likeability of forensic linguists stems from their potential capacity to aid the bench and the bar in the administration of justice in providing a different perspective. However, since the linguists' field of expertise is a novel concept in our country, they need to prove that their expert opinion is necessary.

This perspective emphasizes the contributions forensic linguists may make to the legal field. While other countries such as the US, UK, and Indonesia utilize forensic linguists for speaker identification (e.g., forensic phonetics) and other analyses, the discipline's developing status in the country means their contributions as expert witnesses are entailed more heavily. Within the Philippine juridical context, these narratives reveal critical evaluations from lawyers and judges, imposing a high level of requirement for likeability as a constituent factor of credibility.

Indeed, likeability as a construct among Filipino legal practitioners expands beyond interpersonal appeal to emphasize contribution to judicial processes. This unique evaluative context places forensic linguists under scrutiny regarding their disciplinary contributions. Furthermore, the data above indicate a distinct tension between the theoretical potential and the practical implementation of forensic linguistic expertise in the Philippine courtroom, suggesting that establishing forensic linguistics within the Philippine legal system requires attention to both knowledge-based and institutional dimensions of professional legitimacy. An interesting finding in this research is that, while knowledge is a separate credibility factor according to Brodsky et al. (2010), it can also be a trait that legal practitioners consider when evaluating an expert witness's likeability. The fusion of knowledge and likeability represents a noteworthy theoretical contribution, suggesting that having expert knowledge serves not just as a technical requirement but also as an emotional element that creates positive impressions. Forensic linguists must therefore prioritize communicative clarity without sacrificing methodological integrity. Despite challenges from the legal community regarding the role of forensic linguists in judicial proceedings, the outlook for this field appears promising, and there is an undeniable and growing demand for forensic linguistic expertise within the legal system that cannot be ignored (JaziLah, 2016).

6.2. Trustworthiness of Forensic Linguists as Expert Witnesses –

A “Must” Factor

Trustworthiness is an essential element that one should possess when testifying under oath. In its truest sense, it is the ability to be honest and dependable. As trustworthiness is the cornerstone of an expert witness's role, expert testimony must be objective. Data

analysis revealed that lawyers and judges perceive two determinants of trustworthiness: *unquestionable integrity* and *professional image*.

Maintaining an unquestionable integrity is a characteristic rightfully expected of forensic linguists as expert witnesses. Indeed, this element is a ‘must’ factor. They must remain impartial, a requirement made especially important because of their unstable foothold within the Philippine legal system. As such, Filipino legal professionals often challenge the relevance of forensic linguists, noting that many cases have been resolved without their assistance, as shared by lawyers and judges:

P3: In the Philippines, many cases were resolved without the assistance or need for forensic linguist experts.

P1: Forensic linguists must primarily prove the relevance of their expert opinions and establish their move in court proceedings as opposed to the opinions of other experienced or duly tested expert witnesses.

The statements above highlight the challenge forensic linguists face in earning the trust of Filipino lawyers and judges due to their perceived ‘unnecessary’ presence as expert witnesses in Philippine courtrooms. This paper argues that forensic linguists’ professional contributions are particularly applicable to language-related cases, including intellectual property disputes such as trademark infringement, questions of authorship attribution, allegations of plagiarism, and speaker identification methodologies. However, these specialized cases occur frequently in Philippine courts, mostly appearing in high-profile cases rather than everyday legal proceedings. This limited integration creates a paradoxical situation in which forensic linguists must establish field legitimacy despite limited opportunities to demonstrate disciplinary value. Moreover, the lack of standardized methodologies and universally accepted analytical frameworks appears to be the main concern for lawyers and judges. As thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter, forensic linguists’ analytical methods continue to be questioned for their validity, placing them on the periphery of expert testimony. The following responses present the perceptions of legal authorities regarding forensic linguists’ role in formulating expert opinions.

P3: Judges, lawyers or anyone can easily have their own interpretation of a certain text. So, for forensic linguists to be deemed trustworthy, I think that there must be something that should set them apart from laymen – probably a scientific method, standard or basis in arriving at their conclusions.

P5: Lack of universally accepted standards and guidelines in forensic linguistics which could lead to inconsistencies in findings.

One striking statement from these narratives is the tendency of Filipino legal practitioners to perform the specialized analytical work of forensic linguists, trying to perform

linguistic analyses themselves to produce evidence, a disciplinary domain that requires extensive formal educational preparation and rigorous professional training. This kind of attempt to enter a specialized knowledge area in which they lack proper training seems to be their way of mitigating potential biases among forensic linguists serving as expert witnesses. These revelations align with the study by Ali, David and Shah (2022), which found that lawyers were reluctant to engage forensic linguists, perceiving language as within their competence. The propensity of Filipino legal practitioners to take charge of specialized linguistic analytical functions without requisite expertise is further discussed in succeeding sections of this paper.

Building a professional image is another crucial ethical issue. Participants noted that forensic linguists' professional image must be grounded in their proven track record, abilities, and expertise. These aspects are crucial strands for trustworthiness, and while credentials may also enhance likeability, their primary function is to maintain objectivity. Legal professionals noted the key factors that contribute to an expert's trustworthiness:

P2: Trust in forensic linguists, just like any forensic expert is greatly influenced by their qualifications, experience, and previous track record in court cases.

P7: Practical experience in academic and scientific endeavors (like publishing research in scientific journals); joining professional associations; adhering to ethical standards.

P6: Long-standing career in FL field; Decently-long list of works in the field.

Additionally, forensic linguists' occupational roles can solidify their professional image. Wilcox and Nic Daéid (2018) supported this finding when they found out that being part of a government service contributes significantly to an expert's credibility. Legal practitioners in the Philippines find that forensic linguists who are government employees are trustworthy due to the presumption of regularity in the conduct of their duties, as prescribed by the Philippine Constitution. While not a requirement (the criteria for admitting expert witnesses in Philippine courts were discussed in the previous section), being affiliated with a government institution may be an edge for an expert witness. This finding is revealed in one of the narratives of lawyers and judges:

P4: Based on my own experience as a litigation lawyer for seven years as a PAO lawyer, I have full trust [on] the government expert witnesses because they enjoy the presumption of regularity in the exercise of their lawful duties.

The results showed the intersection of likeability and trustworthiness, particularly how unconventional aspects of likeability (e.g., track record and expertise) contribute to forensic linguists' integrity and professional image. Brodsky et al. (2009) also found a correlation between jurors' perceptions of the likeability and trustworthiness of expert witnesses. This empirical evidence may underpin the integration of witness likeability as a

component of trial preparation strategies employed by legal practitioners and trial consultants. Through this procedure, forensic linguists may integrate such protocols into their courtroom demeanor and discursive strategies, augmenting their integrity when presenting linguistic analyses. Moreover, this praxis may also forge collaborative opportunities between forensic linguistic practitioners and legal professionals should the incorporation of witness likeability factors into truthful trial preparation protocols be actualized.

6.3. Confidence of Forensic Linguists as Expert Witnesses – A “Plus” Factor

As intriguing as it may sound, Wilcox & Nic Daéid (2018) found that experts’ confidence is the most significant factor in determining their credibility as witnesses. It is often associated with traits such as speaking with certainty, maintaining eye contact, showing composure, and using good gestures. However, this research found that confidence cuts across conventional communication and transcends intricate qualities that highlight a forensic linguist’s unique courtroom skills. Lawyers and judges in the Philippines believe a forensic linguist’s confidence as an expert is entrenched in their *confirmed reliability as an expert*, *novelty of the profession*, and *courtroom proficiency*.

Judicial standpoints confirm that an expert’s reputation, rooted in their professional credentials, is a crucial element in establishing confidence. As Kuchler (2010) noted, additional qualifications may enhance an expert’s credibility beyond education, training, and experience. For instance, licenses and certificates, professional associations, awards and recognition, publications, research, teaching positions, and prior testimonies are certainly relevant. These qualities also contribute to forensic linguists’ likeability and trustworthiness as expert witnesses in the courtroom (as stated earlier in this section), suggesting a correlation among the three constructs. Such a finding redefines the concept of credibility as defined by Brodsky et al. (2010), expanding its scope to include confidence as a characteristic trait of expert witnesses. Participants believe that forensic linguists must have a strong reputation, grounded in their academic background, awards, level of experience, organizational affiliations, and notable contributions. The following extracts highlight the legal authorities’ perspectives on shaping forensic linguists’ confidence:

P5: The level of experience or reputation of the forensic linguist highly influences judges and lawyers’ perception of their confidence as their utilization in court proceedings will greatly affect the outcome of the case.

P7: For me, the presence of experience (reputation may be dispensable) and academic qualification qualifies a forensic linguist to be an expert. Moreso, if he/she has a reputation.

Legal professionals emphasize that an expert's reputation may influence the outcome of a case, and professional history is invariably advantageous for a confident demeanor in court. However, this idea poses another fundamental paradox in the Philippines: while intensive research and fieldwork may qualify an individual to be a forensic linguist, the legal system requires experts whose credibility is validated by formal qualifications, yet no Philippine university offers a degree program in forensic linguistics. This leads to an important question: How does one build an "impressive professional history" and "confident demeanor" necessary to be accepted and effective as an expert witness in Philippine courts when no institution offers such a program? Furthermore, while confidence is not a criterion for admitting expert witnesses in the Philippine legal system, professional credentials constitute tangible evidence of knowledge, skills, experience, or training – the major requisites for admissibility under the country's rules.

One way to ensure the legitimacy and transparency of forensic linguists as expert witnesses in the Philippines is to establish a professional code of ethics for them. Roberts and Stockdale (2018) firmly believe that such codes would improve the quality of expert witnesses and protect them. It would function as a shield, giving them a certain level of protection against pressures to modify their expert opinion to suit the legal party that hired them, and would serve as a sword by presenting guidance procedures should these norms be violated. Picornell (2024) asserts that it is imperative for forensic linguists to have an overarching profession-specific code of ethics and demonstrate a willingness to uphold them. In this way, forensic linguists as expert witnesses will go a long way towards avoiding unintentional mistakes.

In 2024, the Philippine Association for Forensic and Legal Linguistics (PAFLL), an organization of linguists, language practitioners/researchers, legal professionals, and police investigators, was established by Prof. Marilu Rañosa-Madrurnio, who pioneered forensic linguistics research in the country. It aims to improve the system of delivering justice to people through language, using scientific methods. Since its establishment in 2024, PAFLL may initiate the creation of a professional code of ethics for forensic linguists in the country. This is one of the many steps toward legitimizing forensic linguistics in the Philippines, thereby increasing their confidence as they provide their expert knowledge in court proceedings.

As mentioned earlier, the novelty of the profession signifies the legal community's apprehension about the relevance of forensic linguists to legal proceedings. Lawyers and judges, as triers of fact, assess a linguist's confidence *vis-à-vis* their credentials and methodological prowess. A career breakthrough can only be achieved if forensic lin-

guists successfully overcome the court's uncertainty by proving the value and methodological soundness of their work. The following statements outline the legal professional's climate of skepticism.

P1: If a linguist will establish in a landmark case that the expert opinion is vital in the resolution of the issue in Philippine setting, the lawyers and judges of lower courts will or might recognize their significance.

P6: ... ability to point out specific points in the investigation or trial process that could be enhanced or speeded up or aided by FL concepts or expertise.

Aside from their expertise and contributions, it is only fitting that any expert possesses courtroom proficiency before being admitted to testify. For legal professionals, this aspect is a “plus” factor evident in an expert's articulation of their opinion. While every discipline has technical terms that further explain certain concepts, the court requires expert witnesses to present their opinions in a manner understandable to all court participants. It is said that true expertise is the ability to make the complex simple. The narratives of legal professionals below show how they expect forensic linguists to articulate their opinion in court:

P3: To project confidence in their testimony, forensic linguists must be able to present and explain clearly and confidently the process on how they came up with a certain conclusion.

P5: Effectivity of the forensic linguist to explain and discuss language evidence in a clear and precise manner.

Clearly, the legal community perceives the use of understandable language as a vital component in strengthening forensic linguists' confidence when explaining linguistic analyses. Proficiency in court is not only about mastering a subject, but also about making it known in a way that creates trust and withstands scrutiny. Oppenheimer (2006) indicates that those who use simpler language are often perceived as more intelligent, and when experts fail to communicate clearly, it can be seen as unethical because experts' reports should provide clear information for legal decision-makers. Explaining an intricate concept such as *stylometric analysis*, *idiolectal patterns*, or the *phonetic properties* of a disputed recording in simple terms signals the expert's mastery of the subject, further showing that the expert is secure and well-versed in their findings and not afraid to bare it all. This happens when clarity becomes a direct performance of confidence and a hallmark of integrity. A forensic linguist must not try to deceive the court but should genuinely assist the triers of fact in understanding linguistic evidence. There should be no hiding behind the technical terms.

Another way for forensic linguists to help build their confidence is to possess a good ‘court sense’ – a familiarity with court proceedings. Developing ‘court sense’, as coined in this paper, is a vital form of courtroom proficiency. This kind of preparation of expert

witnesses develops familiarity with case details and the ability to anticipate cross-examinations, without acting as a “hired gun” or in a partisan manner. Several aspects were noted when it comes to being mindful of how court litigation operates:

P2: Primary factors include thorough preparation, familiarity with the case details, and the ability to anticipate and address cross-examination questions effectively. Additionally, experience in courtroom settings contributes significantly to this confidence.

P7: Familiarity with court proceedings [and] preparation before taking the stand (study the case before testifying).

The repeated appearances of experts on the witness stand over time may enhance their courtroom proficiency, honing a deeper, more resilient form of confidence. Experience builds proficiency, proficiency builds confidence, and confidence establishes credibility – this is how forensic linguists solidify their reputation in the field. This virtuous cycle presents another predicament: How does a forensic linguist in the Philippines gain courtroom experience, crucial to building courtroom proficiency, if the field is not legally recognized in the first place? This is where the initial “screening” for an expert witness becomes so critical. Only by successfully passing this initial high-stakes test can a linguist start to obtain the trial experience needed to solidify their credibility.

In the critical environment of a courtroom, it is revealed that forensic linguists’ confidence as expert witnesses hinges on extrinsic demonstration of expertise, built on a solid foundation of case mastery and scientific principles. This credibility factor transcends being composed and having a stable voice. Confidence is a requirement for establishing forensic linguists’ integrity, from their professional track record to courtroom etiquette. However, the path to becoming a confident expert witness is fraught with challenge; although intensive research and fieldwork may establish one’s competence as a forensic linguist, a PhD is typically required to secure the status and credibility of an expert witness in legal cases. Their “career breakthrough” lies in persuading the judicial authorities that their methods are valid and their conclusions relevant. When forensic linguists meet the standards, the legal community will be confident in integrating the discipline in court, and forensic linguistics will become a trusted and indispensable tool in the pursuit of justice in the Philippines.

6.4. Knowledge of Forensic Linguists as Expert Witnesses – A “Deciding” Factor

Among all the credibility factors, knowledge is the most basic and “deciding” factor for an expert witness. It is the reason why they are consulted to provide clarity and assist in

solving cases. Incompetence on the witness stand defeats the purpose of being an “expert”. In this research, knowledge is viewed as an integrative construct, interrelated with forensic linguists’ likeability, trustworthiness, and confidence. From the perspective of Filipino legal professionals, knowledge is scrutinized through three dimensions: *articulation of the subject matter, empirical back-up, and societal impact*.

Lawyers and judges hugely rely on an expert’s ability to articulate their knowledge and educate the court. An expert who can elucidate a complex concept in a clear, logical manner is perceived as being more knowledgeable and in control of their subject matter. As discussed previously, the court also considers simplified language when assessing the confidence of expert witnesses. Freckelton, Reddy and Selby (1999) noted judges’ discontent with expert witnesses who use jargon and fail to establish the foundations of their opinions. Thus, communicativeness is the most central to the expert witness report. As shared by these legal professionals:

P1: To be more accepted, a linguist must present his opinion or ideas in a manner easily recognizable by a lawyer.

P7: In the same way, a forensic linguist expert witness should tailor his/her explanations and presentations to the level of understanding of judges and lawyers, bearing in mind that they are “laymen”.

However, it has to be underscored that there is pressure for expert witnesses to simplify their analyses, and this concern may pose a significant risk, which may be termed “substantive dilution”. The term pertains to an idea that a forensic linguist may be compelled to oversimplify their conclusions as expert witnesses, stripping away the crucial nuances of certainty – a gauge of scientific integrity. For instance, forensic linguistic analyses, particularly in authorship attribution, are essentially probabilistic rather than absolute. Yet, the adversarial nature of the judicial system can tempt a forensic linguist to present their findings with false certainty. This makes the evidence more accessible but, in essence, less accurate, leading to a perilous situation in which the court may act on a distorted understanding of the evidence’s true probative value. Additionally, the relative novelty of their field in the Philippines requires a demanding act of “translation” of linguistic concepts such as syntax, semantics, pragmatics, phonetics, and many more, converting scientific analysis into legally potent testimony that can withstand scrutiny.

Moreover, it is unethical for forensic linguists to take opinions without having the full expertise to do so. Ainsworth (2022) emphasized that it constitutes a betrayal of the loyalty forensic linguists owe to the science of linguistics. Nonetheless, it should be noted that even if an expert’s opinion is based on a methodological framework that is novel and not in question, the expert testimony is not binding on the court, but it cannot also be arbitrarily disregarded (Lacandula-Rodriguez, 2023).

Regarding the comprehensibility of linguistic analysis as forensic evidence, Filipino legal practitioners believe they can easily understand specific linguistic concepts. This perception stems from a mixture of professional familiarity, cognitive biases, and the very nature of language. Below are responses about the areas of linguistic analysis that seem to be most readily understood by lawyers and judges:

P2: Areas such as phonetics, syntax, are generally easier for legal professionals to grasp, especially if with practical examples.

P3: Personally, I think that all areas of linguistic analysis can be equally easily understood by legal professionals with sufficient study.

P6: [Easily understood] authorship attribution of text or social media messages, especially where the alleged author or accused is denying being the person who made the text or message.

Undeniably, lawyers are expert users of language. Their entire profession is built on words with precision – crafting persuasive arguments, interpreting legal texts, and controlling courtroom narratives. According to Heydon (2019), such a degree of practical proficiency can lead to the “illusion of comprehension”, in which lawyers and judges mistakenly equate their proficiency with the specialized, scientific knowledge required for forensic linguistic analysis. This is compounded by what sociolinguists call “language ideologies”, which are the “taken-for-granted assumptions about how language works” that can lead non-experts to dangerously underestimate the discipline’s rigor (Eades, 2012, as cited in Heydon, 2019). As mentioned earlier, this can lead lawyers to perform the analysis themselves, bypassing the hallmark of forensic science: analytical frameworks and systematic, evidence-based methodologies. For instance, a non-linguist might incorrectly give importance to a common turn of phrase or a frequent misspelling, mistaking it for a unique “fingerprint” when it is, in fact, a widespread feature. If lawyers overstep their professional boundaries in this manner, they are not only sidelining a specialist but also introducing methodologically unsound judgments into the judicial process. The “overestimation” of linguistic competence by legal professionals may undermine the integrity of the evidence and can directly impede the fair delivery of justice.

Clarity without substance is insufficient; empirical back-up is a primary indicator of an expert’s knowledge. An opinion’s true probative value depends on the empirical evidence and systematic reasoning that support it (*Tortona v. Gregorio*, 2018). The decree for forensic linguists to provide empirical backing for their testimonies carries significant implications for the discipline’s evolution, credibility, and ultimate survival within a legal system. The following views of lawyers and judges further elaborate on the need to substantiate forensic linguists’ knowledge as expert witnesses:

P2: The application of statistical methods in linguistic analysis can also be difficult for those without a quantitative background.

P8: [...] no standard yet for the method and standards.

It can be implied that for forensic linguistics to be accepted as a legitimate science, it must undergo a crucial transition from what can be perceived as a subjective art to a discipline grounded in objective and verifiable data. The Philippines, as a developing country, often lags in adopting new forensic techniques, as it is usually behind more technologically advanced nations in the use of evidence in court trials. Lacandula-Rodriguez (2023) acknowledged that Philippine courts would not normally be exposed to evidence obtained from “junk science”, an area without any solid scientific underpinnings (e.g., microscopical hair recognition, voice comparisons, bitemark evidence, and testimony based on repressed memory), or simply, “not real science”. This may lead some Filipino legal professionals to view forensic linguistics as a “junk science” because of its perceived legitimacy. Therefore, it is only fitting to examine the role of forensic linguists in the Philippine legal landscape, considering this current situation.

Coulthard et al. (2016) highlighted that data-driven analysis, including statistical frequencies from a corpus or likelihood ratios in authorship attribution, benefits forensic linguists in providing the court with a transparent and verifiable basis for their conclusions. This empirical validation is a powerful mechanism and serves as a direct countermeasure to legal professionals’ tendency toward the “illusion of comprehension”, elevating analysis beyond intuitive judgment. An opinion backed by a validated statistical model is less susceptible to claims of bias than one based solely on the expert’s individual interpretation, ensuring that the discipline’s methods are not seen as merely “intriguing” but as scientifically sound and admissible.

Finally, knowledge must transcend the courtroom and scale up to benefit the whole nation. This is the third aspect that legal authorities would want forensic linguists to demonstrate their intellect as expert witnesses: making an impact on national security, as seen in the extracts below:

P6: Also, they have to be convinced that their legal work can be speeded up with the aid of FL expertise, in terms of expediting the build-up of the proof required, especially in criminal cases.

P10: Presently, it could not be seen as very important unless it affects national security.

The proposition that forensic linguists in the Philippines should impact national security represents a demanding challenge, calling for the field to evolve from a case-specific tool into a proactive and strategic national asset. This implies that the mandate of a forensic linguist expands from an ad hoc expert witness to a potential partner in national intelligence and security. Such an expansion is fundamentally supported by the FL’s significant overlap with criminology and criminal justice, which necessitates close collaboration with police authorities. In countries where forensic linguistics has reached an advanced stage, this interdisciplinary sub-area is already a standard component of the

profession, with linguists working directly alongside police investigators and law enforcers to solve complex cases.

While the traditional role involves analyzing language evidence, such as disputed contracts or threatening documents, in judicial proceedings, the national security context entails much higher stakes. This includes applications such as counter-terrorism, where linguistic analysis is utilized to dissect extremist communications to unpack ideologies, networks, and potential threats (Miller, 1987; Alias Technology, n.d.). It also covers large-scale threat assessment, where computational linguistics can be applied to online data to detect grievance-fueled language and identify potential actors on a pathway to violence (van der Vegt, 2021). These specific examples show how the linguist's work shifts from clarifying past events for a judge to helping prevent future security incidents, a fundamentally different and more consequential responsibility.

The expanded role of forensic linguists in contributing to national security requires methodological rigor and a clear structure for collaboration between academia and the state. This necessitates going beyond case analysis to developing large-scale, data-driven models for language profiling and threat detection. Such an endeavor cannot be undertaken by academics alone. It requires a formal and trusted partnership between the academic institutions where forensic linguistic expertise is currently concentrated in the Philippines and the nation's security and intelligence agencies. The recent establishment of a National Forensics Institute project in the Philippines back in 2025 is a step toward strengthening the country's forensic capacity. However, integrating the 'soft science' of linguistics into the 'hard science' of national security would require a deliberate and significant institutional bridge. In the same year, the Philippine Investigation and Forensic Science Academy (PIFSA), integrated forensic linguistics into its curriculum to enhance investigative competence, focusing on analysing linguistic evidence and language-related issues such as plagiarism. PIFSA's partnership with one of the leading universities in the Philippines also paved a way to conduct a training on ethical investigative interviewing (UST Academia, 2025).

Given forensic linguists' expanded role as expert witnesses, this role carries far-reaching ethical implications, as the use of language analysis for intelligence gathering and threat profiling raises serious questions about privacy, surveillance, and the potential for bias. Linguistic profiling, for instance, which seeks to determine an author's social or demographic characteristics from their language, could lead to the disproportionate targeting of individuals from certain dialectical or socio-economic backgrounds if not governed by strict ethical standards and oversight (Heydon, 2019). The challenge for the Philippine legal and security sectors is to equip forensic linguistics to protect the nation while safeguarding the civil liberties of its citizens. Hence, the 'dare' for forensic linguists to impact national security is not just a technical or academic challenge but a

call to produce a mature and ethically robust framework that serves justice and security on a national scale without compromising the fundamental rights it is meant to protect.

7. Conclusion

While Brodsky et al. (2010) categorize witness credibility into distinct subscales, the findings of this research suggest that in the Philippine adversarial system, these factors are not isolated traits but are interdependent. For the trial court judges and lawyers interviewed, the credibility of a forensic linguist is perceived through a synergistic lens. Rather than mere self-assurance, legal professionals viewed confidence as the ability to articulate complex linguistic knowledge in an accessible manner. In this context, confidence is the vehicle through which expertise is made “useful” to the court. Trustworthiness was identified not just as honesty, but as the ability to ground specialized findings in scientific impartiality. Within the Philippine justice system, trustworthiness serves as a safeguard against the expert being perceived as a “hired gun”. This study also re-frames “likeability” beyond the personal charm noted by Brodsky et al. For Philippine legal practitioners, a forensic linguist’s “likeability” as an expert witness is tied to their utility and relevance or the ability to prove the knowledge’s relevance to the specific legal issue at hand. Lastly, knowledge serves as the foundation upon which the other three pillars are built. This interdependency suggests a new theory, both specific and unique to the Philippine trial court setting: the *Unified Credibility Framework*, in which a deficiency in one factor may directly diminish the forensic linguist’s perceived credibility as an expert witness.

It is also clear that the legitimacy crisis faced by forensic linguists as expert witnesses in the Philippines is rooted in their perceived novelty and a lack of institutional support. Such a concern about heightened scrutiny arises when forensic linguists must not only prove their case-specific findings but also justify their field’s very existence and necessity at every appearance. This “dual burden” is distinct in the Philippine context compared to jurisdictions where the discipline is more established.

Developing a professional code of ethics is a crucial step for advancing forensic linguistics in the Philippines. This research strongly recommends that the Philippine Association for Forensic and Legal Linguistics (PAFLL), in consultation with international organizations such as the International Association for Forensic and Legal Linguistics (IAFLL), should prioritize developing a formal code of ethics. The code may be lifted from the holistic credibility concept developed in this paper, which offers clear guide-

lines on forensic linguists' methodological and analytical transparency, courtroom demeanor, and ethical responsibilities as expert witnesses. Moreover, professional organizations should establish standardized certification pathways to address issues related to forensic linguists' formal qualifications and conduct specialized training programs for aspiring forensic linguists in the Philippines. Training should explicitly include modules on courtroom proficiency, translating complex findings to a lay audience, and understanding the Philippine legal system.

To directly counter the idea of being a “junk science” and align the field with the standards expected of other forensic sciences, researchers and language practitioners must focus on producing and employing robust, data-driven analytical frameworks that can be clearly articulated in court. They should also proactively engage with lawyers, judges, and law students through seminars and workshops and conduct collaborative research to demystify the field, demonstrate its value, and correct the “illusion of comprehension”. Furthermore, presenting successful case studies in which linguistic evidence was pivotal can help cement the necessity of forensic linguistics.

The broader significance of this study lies in its role as a representative case study for other jurisdictions where the integration of forensic linguistics is still in its developmental stages, as FL's legitimacy is not only a local issue. This paper may contribute to the global discourse on the “de-marginalization” of forensic sciences, offering insights into how emerging fields can secure a foothold in established judicial frameworks.

While this paper employed a qualitative approach to analyzing the data and included a small sample of participants, future experimental and quantitative studies could build on this study, for example, by measuring the impact of each credibility factor on mock judges' decisions in a simulated Philippine court setting. Further investigation is also suggested to examine the perceptions and realities of the “hired gun” effect in the Philippines and how a forensic linguist's affiliation (government vs. private) influences case outcomes. Lastly, since lawyers and judges were the only ones included in this research, a study examining the viewpoints of law professors and the content of legal education curricula of the Legal Education Board (LEB) could yield insights on how to raise awareness and increase the understanding of forensic linguistics in the training of future lawyers and judges in the Philippines. Moreover, the Philippine Judicial Academy (PHILJA), the Supreme Court of the Philippines's training arm, may also consider offering forensic linguistics training to its stakeholders.

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