The language of police reports: A forensic linguistic analysis

Marvin Casalan

The language of police reports: A forensic linguistic analysis

Marvin C. Casalan
University of Antique

Abstract

Police reports are crucial supplemental papers that are part of the criminal justice system in the Philippines. When used as evidence and a source of information in prosecution, these narratives should be written clearly, accurately, and y, and factually. Therefore, the process of how police reports should be written is deemed beneficial to some professionals. This paper analyzes, understands, and describes the linguistic features and organizational structure of police reports, specifically the blotter, incident, after-operation, and investigation reports, taken from the pre-selected police stations in the Philippines. In order to attain its objectives, a qualitative content analysis approach is utilized. The general structure of the police reports is analyzed in this research utilizing Swales, J. (2004) framework on moves and Coulthard and Johnson's (2007) idea on forensic linguistics. The results show that legal text has its own convention. This kind of narrative also contains unique linguistic features, and these lexical features have uncommon meanings. In the end, pedagogical implications in the teaching and learning process are presented, and further studies using legal texts are recommended.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The application of language within legal frameworks has a historical presence, yet the systematic examination of forensic linguistics started to take shape during the 1960s and 1970s (Olsson, 2004). Shuy (1998) notes that a significant early advancement in forensic linguistics was the focus on authorship attribution, which began to receive increased attention with the introduction of innovative methods for analyzing linguistic characteristics.

Forensic linguistic casework and research have seen significant expansion, reflected in the growth of language and law studies an increase in published books and articles, and a rise in the number of linguists acting as expert witnesses globally. The studies illustrate the progression of methodologies and the varied applications of forensic linguistics within the legal field, underscoring its importance in improving the precision and dependability of legal proceedings.

Numerous academics have viewed linguistics' contributions to three domains such as spoken legal practices, written legal texts. For instance, Danielewicz-Betz (2012) analyzed the role of forensic linguistics in criminal investigations, judicial processes, and legal conflicts. The study highlights the efficacy of linguistic analysis in the interpretation of legal texts and courtroom dialogue. Meanwhile, Levi and Walker (1990) examine the reflection of power through language in legal contexts, specifically regarding the linguistic practices of legal professionals and defendants.

Another notable discussion regarding forensic linguistics was presented by Leonard, Ford, and Christensen (2017). The study examined the application of linguistic science within legal contexts, focusing on authorship analysis and trademark infringement cases. Their research demonstrates the practical application of linguistic expertise in diverse legal contexts. The studies mentioned illustrate the developing methodologies and varied applications of forensic linguistics within the legal field, emphasizing its importance in improving the exactitude and reliability of legal processes.

Forensic linguistics is a branch of applied linguistics, which involves with language as evidence and use the application of linguistic knowledge, methods, and insights to areas like criminal investigations, court cases, and trials.

One notable work on forensic linguistics was done by Vijayan (2015). His paper highlighted the significance of forensic linguistics in evaluating statements and confessions, particularly for law enforcement and criminal investigation agencies in India. He emphasized that the role of language in efficiently resolving cases should be prioritized.

Forensic linguistics has proven to be valuable in many court cases globally. For example, Shuy's (2014) book The Language of Murder Cases: Intentionality, Predisposition, and Voluntariness explores how analyzing the language used by suspects, defendants, law enforcement, and lawyers can help clarify unclear legal terminology. He looks into smaller language components including syntax, lexicon, and phonology as well as speech events, schemas, agendas, speech actions, and conversational strategies. He emphasizes how these variables can have a big impact on how murder cases turn out. Shuy explores how language functions in each case, drawing on his own testimony in fifteen high-profile murder trials. Ultimately, he concludes by discussing how his analyses were interpreted by juries grappling with the often unclear concept of reasonable doubt.

Considering the above premise, one interesting legal data point worth studying using a forensic linguistics framework is police reports.

A police report is a written account of a crime, incident, or series of events (Harris, 2013). Although a witness may occasionally give an account of the incident, the victim or complainant usually visits the police station to report and explain what happened. After that, police draft a report to start an inquiry. When the lawyer files charges against a suspect, the prosecutor's office may utilize this report as the basis for additional investigation.

Like all other government workers, police officers must fill out a variety of forms and documentation. One example of such a document is the police report, which serves several functions and needs to contain accurate, thorough, and instructive information on a crime or incident.

It is a considerable claim that at the moment, there is a dearth of research and literature on the linguistic features and overall structure of police reports. Conducting research through the lens of forensic linguistics can therefore provide new insights and expand existing knowledge about the structure of police reports. It is from this crucial perspective that the researcher chose to undertake the present study, hoping to contribute to the understanding of how the language of police reports is formulated based on its features, rhetorical moves, and its implications for teaching and learning process.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Police reports are essential and crucial supplementary documents required by those involved in the criminal justice system especially in the Philippines. An accurate and clear police report is important evidence and a source of information in prosecution, if any. Therefore, being aware of the convention of how police reports should be written is essential to those who are concerned for writing them as well as to the pre-service police officers.

The academic community can benefit from this study, particularly the professor covering grammar and technical writing for criminology students. The students will be aware for the students of what suitable language should be used in making police reports. They will also be coached on the organization of the police reports. Furthermore, helping to clarify the nature of police reports and their variations from other forms of technical reports will be this study. Moreover, this work will add to the body of knowledge since, in the field of forensic linguistics, there are a few studies applying law enforcement data as issues.

1.2 Research Questions

The goal of this research paper is to analyze and describe the overall structure of police reports as well as the language features of the written reports from the two police stations in the Province of Antique, Philippines. The following questions are the focus of the paper:

1. How is a police report structured?

2. What linguistic details do police officers typically observe when writing reports?

3. What pedagogical implications can be drawn from the analyzed police reports?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The move structure concept of Swales (2004) is followed in this work. According to Swales, a genre move is a discursive or rhetorical unit that serves a unified communicative purpose in spoken or written communication. The move framework served as foundation of this paper, which is defined by Richard and Schmidt (2002) as a discourse unit that can be smaller than an utterance. The paper is based on the definition of forensic linguistics provided by Coulthard and Johnson (2007), which is the application of linguistic knowledge, techniques, and analysis to legal concerns.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

In this study, a qualitative content design was used. According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative approach involves doing research such case studies, focus groups, and interviews. Schreier (2012), on the other hand, explains content analysis as a qualitative technique for interpreting and analyzing text and its meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Content analysis will help the reader comprehend the linguistic aspects of police reports by coding and classifying information found in the data. It is appropriate to apply the method while examining police report structure because qualitative analysis entails finding themes, patterns, or categories in the material that has been gathered.

2.2   Research Materials

This study used 10 police reports as the corpus of the paper for analysis. These legal texts were obtained from two police stations in the province of Antique, Philippines. The said police offices are located in the central part of the province. One is considered the smallest town having 11 barangays in terms of population and land area. The other one is known for its wider police jurisdiction, having 36 barangays.

The types of reports utilized in this study include blotter, incident, after-operation, and investigation reports. The researcher selected these specific reports based on the documents provided by police officers, considering that some reports contain sensitive information that may be used in legal proceedings. It should be noted that the research was dependent only to the data provided by the police office. To obtain the necessary copies for the study, the researcher engaged with three different police officers over several days. This inclusion criterion was chosen because these police reports are relatively recent, reducing the likelihood of structural discrepancies, particularly since the study does not involve a diachronic analysis. The ten police report adequately offer a thorough understanding of the research topic, provided that the data allows for meaningful analysis of patterns, themes, and relationships (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

2.3 Sample Selection

Before conducting the analysis, the researcher followed a systematic procedure for data collection. First, he secured a permission letter to the Chiefs of Police at the target police stations within the province requesting access to police reports. He also explained what are the police reports for and the purpose of the study. Second, upon securing the permission, he requested copies of police reports from the investigators of the stations that could be used as part of the research corpus. He then selected the cases that met the inclusion criteria for analysis. Finally, he assured the investigators and Chiefs of Police that all files would remain confidential and that any identifying information, such as names and locations, would be anonymized.

2.4   Ethical Consideration

To observe the ethical protocols required to conduct research, the researcher secured approved permission letters from the heads of police stations before obtaining 10 police reports. The study analyzed police reports, particularly their linguistic features and structures, for academic purposes. In analyzing the data, names, organizations, and institutions involved in the incidents were sanitized. Meaning to say, they removed and replaced by codes instead. The original reference numbers of 10 police reports were changed, and the researcher chronologically assigned numbers to each report as a code of reference. Through these procedures, ethical consideration is observed.

2.5   Data Analysis Procedure

The researcher used the following steps to achieve the study's objectives: First, the researcher formulated research questions. Second, a sample for content analysis was chosen from the collected police reports. Third, the data set was used to create content categories. Fourth, the analytical units were decided upon. For this paper, a sentence is considered as one unit. Fifth, to confirm the accuracy of the findings, the researcher employed an intercoder to carry out the coding procedures and results. The researcher's colleague, serving as an intercoder, holds a master's degree in English Language and teaches a technical writing course to Criminology students. The final step in the analysis process involved completing the content analysis procedures. These procedures included: (a) identifying the relevant data from the police reports in alignment with the research questions; (b) analyzing the linguistic elements, rhetorical devices, and structural steps within the reports; (c) summarizing and interpreting the findings; and (d) drawing conclusions based on the findings.

3.   Results and Discussion

3.1   The Structure

Writing police reports has the moves and steps which make up their overall structure. Their rhetorical moves are examined in this study. This section of the paper provides a thorough analysis of the structure of the police reports considered in the study based on the collected data. It should be noted that the "investigation reports," which are utilized in the prosecution process, are the subjects in this part of the analysis of the paper. It is for the reason that this type of police report provides more thorough information than other report types.

Move 1 - *Identifying and establishing the jurisdiction of the Police Report*

This move seeks to identify the police office where the report and related circumstances are archived. This action includes information on the police report's date, subject, source, and recipient. The primary objective of this move is to offer insight into the location of the production of the police report as a genre. The following procedures can be used to identify this move:

Step 1: Determining the location of the institution

> *Republic of the Philippines*
> *NATIONAL POLICE COMMISSION*
> *PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE*
> *ANTIQUE PROVINCIAL POLICE OFFICE*
> ***** MUNICIPAL POLICE STATION**
> *****, Antique*

The example provided above is consistent across all the data used in the study, with the only variation being the police station from which the report originates. The institution, municipality, and province name appear at the top of the police report, as the sample illustrates. The same results can be found in the work of Sumaljag, 2018.

Step 2: Indicating the recipient, source, subject, and date of the written report

> *MEMORANDUM*
> *FOR :   The Provincial Director*
> *   Antique Police Provincial Office*
> *   *****, Antique*
> *FROM :   Officer-in-Charge*
> *SUBJECT : Investigation Report on Direct*
> *   Assault upon an Agent of Person in*
> *   Authority and Slight Physical*
> *   Injuries*
> *DATE :   *****, 2018*
> *   (PR8)*

In the above example, the recipient, sender, subject, and the date of the report are stated. This step of Move 1 indicates who is concerned involved in the process. Specifically, it identifies who sends and who receives the document. This step is present in all of the investigation reports.

Move 2 - *Categorizing the facts and their circumstances*

The police officer who is responsible for doing the reports has to gather the facts and their circumstances from the complainant, victim, or witness. After hearing the details from the complainant/victim/witness, the police officer has to analyze the details of the circumstances and compare them based on the described human behavior found in the criminal code. The said process aims to check if the human behavior performed by the victim matches any one of the behaviors stipulated in the said code. There are two steps in order to achieve this move.

Step 1: Establishing the legal or technical classification

> *AUTHORITY*
> *OIC's Verbal Instruction*
> *Standard Operation Procedure (SOP)*
> *   (PR7)*

The aforementioned statement demonstrates how the reported incident was classified legally according to the station commander's intentions. As previously stated, upon receiving a report, a police officer is required to get from the complainant any pertinent information on the incident. After considering these data, the officer determines whether the act was criminal or not. It is presumed that the facts in the aforementioned case have already been confirmed and identified.

Step 2: Providing circumstances of the reported fact

> *MATTERS TO BE INVESTIGATED*
> *To determine the facts and circumstances*
> *surrounding the case of Direct Assault*
> *upon an Agent of Person in Authority and*
> *Slight Physical Injuries committed by*
> *****.*
>
> *To determine the criminal liabilities of the*
> *abovementioned person and the liabilities*
> *of SPO2 *****. (PR8)*

The steps in Move 2 entail describing the incident's spatiotemporal circumstances, which calls for a precise determination of the event's location and time. Examples of data from the steps in Move 2 of the police reports are shown in the aforementioned extracts. The content of these

structures is generally consistent, albeit they may change based on the type of the investigation.

Move 3 - *Narrating the facts*

This section of police report is considered the primary move of the report as it presents the verified facts. The police officer utilizes the information provided by the complainant, witness, or victim to construct a detailed account of the incident, which is then incorporated into this part of the report. Usually, this move provides a story about the crime or incident, including its causes and effects. The person giving the information could be a witness, victim, or even a suspect in the crime. Both viewpoints must be included in the process because the police report typically includes the victim's and, occasionally, the offender's versions of the facts.

Step 1: Highlighting the presence of the victim or complainant

> *FACTS OF THE CASE*
> *At around 9:30 in the evening of *****, 2017, a trouble transpired at ***** Store situated at *****, Antique when Alias ***** asked the hand of ***** for a blessing as a sign of respect, however ***** who happened to be at the said store and believed to be drunk suddenly punched Alias ***** several times for unknown reason. (PR8)*

> *At about 8:15 in the evening of *****, 2017, Punong Barangay ***** of Bggy. ***** of this municipality informed this station through cell phone call that there was a hacking incident transpired therein. (PR3)*

The above examples clearly demonstrate that the inclusion of the victim or complainant's name is essential in this move. This pattern represents the initial step in narrating the facts of the incident.

Step 2: Substantiating the circumstances SEP

> *Upon seeing the situation, ***** intervened and pacified ***** who in turn vented his ire to ***** and intentionally punched him several times which landed [sic] on his mouth and to other [sic] parts of his body. On that instance, SPO2 *****, PNP member of ***** MPS who co-incidentally [sic] present in the area rendering his duty, instinctively pacified ***** and ordered him to stop punching ***** but instead of heeding, ***** picked up two (2) pieces of stones and*

> *supposed to [sic] struck the said Police Officer. Before he release[d] the stone, the said Police Officer prompted to draw his issued service 9mm Berreta pistol and shot ***** on the left forearm purposely to neutralize/maim him. Spot report was immediately sent to POPB and PIDMB for their information. (PR8)*

> *Investigation conducted disclosed that on said DTPI, the victim was hacked several times by the suspect hitting the victim's head and other parts of the body by a bolo. The suspect was believed to be drunk when the incident happened. He just appeared in front of the victim, who was doing some construction works outside his house, and hacked him with unknown reason and escaped. (PR3)*

The police officer or investigator, in this step, recounts the details of the incident. A detailed description is provided to enable the reader to visualize the sequence of events.

Step 3: Depicting the perpetrator's actions

> *The sworn judicial affidavit of SPO2 ***** revealed how he first ordered ***** to cease from assaulting ***** followed by the introduction of his authority as a POLICE OFFICER. Despite the warning given, the respondent armed with stones, more or less 1.6 and 1.84 kgs each still struck the said Police Officer, which prompted him to draw his issued Pistol and shot the respondent on the arm to repel the attack. (PR8)*

> *The said driver while driving his vehicle towards south direction of this municipality boarded/hauled with five (5) sacks of charcoal without pertinent documents. The subject suspect together with his vehicle hauled with charcoal was brought to ***** Municipal Police Station for further investigation and documentation and will be turned over to CENRO *****. (PR10)*

Police reports' narratives give an overview of previous occurrences and classify them as either criminal or non-criminal incidents. Following that, the police officer records these incidents in

the sequence that the witness or victim/complainant stated them.

Orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and conclusion are the five sections that comprise the Move 3 narrative. Details on the people engaged in the occurrence, the time and place, and the situational background are given in the orientation section. It's necessary to remember, however, that not all four components are present in the orientation part of each type of police report.

The narrative section of the police report is the most crucial part, as it contains the complicating action of the incident. This section focuses on the main issue of the event. Following the complications, the evaluation section signals that the complicating action is nearing its end. It becomes clear that the complications are coming to a close when the narrative begins to offer a resolution, which is the next part of the five components. After the resolution comes the evaluation, where the narrator's attitude towards the issue is revealed, and the final sequence of events in the complicating action is presented. The last part of the narrative section is conclusion, which, as the term implies, marks the end of the narrative.

It is important to understand that police reports vary from one another in terms of the quantity and complexity of structural components, as was mentioned in the descriptions of police reports above. This observation is based on the data used in this study.

Move 4 - *Identifying the participants in the incidents*

The purpose of Move 4 is to identify the roles of individuals involved in the incident, particularly in the narrative of Move 3. These individuals may be categorized as the complainant, victim, suspect, or witness. This move can be broken down into three steps:

Step 1: Identifying the victim and/or complainant.

> *The sworn statements of ***** and SPO2 ***** as well as the pieces of evidence showed that there was indeed an assault on ***** committed by ***** wherein the former suffered a slight physical injury as stated in his Medico Legal Report. (PR8)*

Step 2: Identifying the perpetrator

> *The said warrant of arrest was returned to the court of origin along with the living body of the accused ***** who posted his cash bond thru his bondswoman ***** in the amount of Ten Thousand Pesos (Php10,000.00). (PR7)*

Step 3: Identifying the action done to the incident/circumstance

> *Furthermore, the victim was immediately brought to ***** for immediate medical treatment on board of PNP Patrol but later transferred at *****, Antique on board of Municipal Ambulance for further treatment. However, continues hot and pursuit operation is being conducted by this office for possible arrest of the suspect. (PR3)*

> *At around 8 o'clock in the morning of *****, 2017 accused ***** Alias ***** was arrested at *****, Antique. He was then apprised of his constitutional rights in a local dialect and brought to the Police Station for documentation. A Spot Report was sent to PIDMB & POPB for their information. (PR7)*

Move 5 - *Identifying the personnel responsible for the report*

Step 1: Specifying the police officer who authored the report

> *Prepared:*
> *******
> *Investigator*
> *Police Officer 3*

Step 2: Identifying the police station head.

> *Noted:*
>
> *******
> *Police Senior Inspector*
> *Chief of Police*

The framework developed by Swales (2004) has been utilized as the main theoretical basis for analyzing the moves in the police reports studied in this paper. The findings show variations in the frequency of moves and steps across the corpus. The police reports vary from one another, with certain moves and steps present in some reports but absent in others.

Moves and steps also exhibit overlap, meaning that steps one and two of a particular move are combined into a single paragraph. Based on the findings of this study, it can be inferred that the move does not universally apply across genres. Duenas (2007) supports this, noting that certain moves and steps can vary depending on the specific case or incident.

Additionally, the results suggest that, to some degree, the rhetorical structure of police reports is influenced by the type of case or incident.

In police reports, Move 1 includes two steps: specifying the recipient, source, subject, and date of the report, as well as the address of the police station.

In the report, this information is crucial. The purpose of this maneuver is to tell readers about the incident's time and location.

Move 2, which consists of two steps, deals with the fact and its conditions.

Move 3, in contrast, focuses on narrating the facts or circumstances of the report. This section offers the investigator's interpretation of the facts by outlining the complainant's account, the current situation, and describing the perpetrator's behavior. Narrating the facts involves providing a detailed account of the actions of those involved in the incident.

Move 4 identifies the intended recipient of the police report highlighting that the report is generated according to the nature and location of the reported incident. For instance, a police report related to a murder would be directed to a specialized unit responsible for handling homicide cases.

Finally, Move 5 identifies the personnel responsible for preparing the report highlighting the importance of acknowledging the author of the report for purposes of reference and accountability.

3.2   Linguistic Features

There are two linguistic levels identified in the data. These are lexical and syntactical.

3.2.1   Lexical Features

The usage of jargon is one characteristic found in the corpus at the lexical level. Jargon is technical or specialized jargon that only people in a certain group or who work in a certain trade or profession can understand. For example, there are several terminologies used in the legal profession that are referred to as jargon—words that are frequently used by judges and attorneys but are unknown to others outside the industry.

The following are the jargon found in the police reports used in this paper: *warrant of arrest, medico legal, inquest proceedings, sworn judicial affidavit,* and *probable cause*.

It should be noted, by the way, that the "PR" symbol after each extract means "Police Report,"

and the number thereafter stands for the reference code of the report assigned by the author.

*Upon receipt of the <u>Warrant of Arrest</u>, the undersigned directed the Warrant PNCO PO1 ***** and the station's tracker team composed of ***** to check the whereabouts of *****. (PR7)*

The <u>Medico Legal</u> Report states to wit; hematoma and swelling lateral aspect lower lip, left and swelling mandibular area, left. (PR8)

*The <u>sworn judicial affidavit</u> of SPO2 ***** revealed how he first ordered ***** to cease from assaulting ***** followed by the introduction of his authority as a POLICE OFFICER. (PR8)*

*A case of Direct Assault Upon Agent of Person in Authority and Slight Physical Injury was referred to the Prosecutor for <u>Inquest Proceedings</u> on *****... (PR8)*

*...this Office finds <u>probable cause</u> in charging ***** of Direct Assault Against an Agent of Person in Authority... (PR8)*

Archaism, which is the term for an old word or expression that is no longer used in its original sense or that is exclusively used in particular fields or studies, is another lexical feature that has been found. The style of official papers, including business letters, legal terms, and diplomatic communications, frequently contains archaisms. The following archaic terms are found in the corpus: thereafter, herein, wherefore; hereunder, and whereabouts.

*...and the station's tracker team composed of ***** to check the <u>whereabouts</u> of ***** (PR7)*

*Immediately <u>thereafter</u>, PNP personnel of this office led by PInsp. ***** together with six 6 PNCO proceeded to the area to verify... (PR3)*

... and tried to strike it to the victim prompting the <u>herein</u> reportee to pacify [sic] the suspect who [sic] later escaped and ran towards... (PR1)

*<u>Wherefore</u> premises considered, this Office finds probable cause in charging ***** of Direct Assault ... before the Provincial Prosecutor's Office. (PR8)*

*This is to certify that quoted <u>hereunder</u> is true extract copy from WCPD Blotter Book of ***** Municipal Police Station ... (PR6)*

The next lexical feature is the legal doublet. A legal doublet is a standardized expression composed of two or more words commonly used

in legal English. These phrases typically consist of paired terms that share similar meanings (synonyms). The origin of such doubling is often linked to the historical shift of legal language from Latin to French and then to English.

Doublets as expressions are also considered synonyms. Their groups are composed of words or concepts with related meanings. Their existence could be traced through the evolution of legal language from Latin to French to English. Since these doublets are frequently superfluous and redundant, many modern legal scholars and authors advocate doing away with them. For the purpose of interpretation, it is still important to identify these doublets.

> *Reporting person personally appeared in this station and reported that on the said DPTI, his mother… (RP1)*
>
> *… with six (6) PNCO's proceeded to the area to verify the veracity of said report and to conduct investigation (PR3)*
>
> *…cable wires were [sic] damaged and cut apart which led to… (PR9)*
>
> *…apprehend and arrested a tricycle for hire bearing a Plate Number *****, owned and driven by ***** (PR10)*
>
> *…was brought to ***** Municipal Police Station for further investigation and documentation and will be turned-over to… (PR10)*

Another feature is proformation. In a sentence, a pro-form is a word that can take the place of another word, phrase, or combination of words. Proformation is the process of replacing other words with pro-forms (Quirk et al., 1985). The word "said," which occurs 18 times, is the most common pro-form in the corpus. Here are a few examples:

> *Further stated that he exerted effort to locate the same but found futile. (PR2)*
>
> *…he collected said electronic tools and put them [sic] in the unfinished cabinet before he went [sic] to sleep (PR4)*
>
> *As a result, said cable wires were [sic] damaged and cut apart which led to [sic] a total internet signal interruption in the whole ***** area… and later identified that said cable wires were [sic] owned by ***** (PR9)*

The last one is the frequency of the word "alleged". Among the 10 Police Reports, the word alleged/alleging have six occurrences. Below are the extracts, which show how those words are used:

> *Further alleged that prior to the incident, reportee saw his mother having a conversation to his cousin/suspect in the street but later he noticed that they were shouting… (PR1)*
>
> *Reporting person personally appeared at this station and reported alleging that on said DTPI, while driving his tricycle from ***** Municipal Hall going to ***** of this municipality, he noyiced that his wallet… (PR2)*
>
> ****** (carpenter) further alleged that on said DTPI, he collected said electronic tools and put… (PR4)*

The habitual use of the term "allege" can be attributed to the idea that the contents of police reports are mainly based on the narration of the ones who report the incidents. It is therefore expected that circumstances reported are still allegations unless the perpetrator is proven guilty.

3.2.2 Syntactical Feature

Syntactical feature is another component of police reports. Three key characteristics are evident at the syntactical level: the use of passives, prepositions, and complex sentences.

It is evident that police reports employ the passive voice. This construction is used to emphasize the person or entity undergoing an action, rather than the one performing it. The most important person or object in the incident is highlighted in police reports by using passives, which make them the sentence's subject. The usage of passives throughout the corpus is seen by the following excerpts:

> *…victim was hacked several times by the suspect hitting the victims head and other parts of his body with the used of bolo (PR3)*
>
> *…it was taken by a culprit while he was in deep sleep (PR4)*
>
> *…and another two (2) succeeding cell phone calls were [sic] received by the victim (PR5)*
>
> *…said warrant of arrest was returned to the court of origin along with the living body of the accused ***** who posted his cash bond… (PR7)*

Police reports also make considerable use of prepositions. In these reports, prepositional phrases, consisting of a preposition followed by a noun phrase, are utilized for various purposes.

Examples are presented below:

> ... *in* the evening of January 18, 2017...
>
> ...*upon* receipt of the Warrant of Arrest... (PR7)
>
> ...*around* 9:30 in the evening... (PR 8)
>
> ...and tried *to* strike it to the victim (PR1)
>
> ...*about* 7:00 AM of the same date (PR4)

The corpus of this study contains numerous complex sentences, which consist of one independent clause and at least one dependent clause. Complex sentences are employed in police reports to convey comprehensive details about a situation within a single statement. Examples of this usage are provided in the following excerpts from the police reports:

> ***** (carpenter) further alleged that on said DTPI, he collected said electronic tools and put them [sic] on the unfinished cabinet before he went [sic] to sleep, when he woke up in the morning he discovered that the said electric tools were [sic] already missing, and he (*****) strongly believed that they [sic] were taken by the culprit while he was deeply [sic] sleeping. (PR4)
>
> About 4:35 PM—At this time and date, one ***** alias *****, male, married, 41-year-old (BOD *****), company driver and a resident of ***** personally appeared in [sic] this station and caused into record alleging that on or about 4:15 o'clock in the afternoon of May ***** while traversing ***** Direction of this province driving *****, he accidentally hit the main cable wire (fiber optic cable) across the national highway and attached to the electric post located at *****.
>
> At around 4:30 AM of this date, elements of this Municipal Police Station led by SPO4 *****, deputy COP, together with other PNP Personnel under direct supervision of PSI *****, acting COP, apprehend and arrested a tricycle for hire bearing a Plate Number *****, make/brand *****, Engine *****, Chassis *****owned and driven by

> *****, 41 yo (DOB *****), married and a resident of Brgy *****.

Police reports are vital in resolving cases, as they use language to accurately convey the facts of the incidents. Legal language, particularly in prosecution, possesses unique characteristics and serves various functions in court. Analyzing the language in the police reports examined in this study revealed two key linguistic features: lexical and syntactic. At the lexical level, five features were identified in the corpus: the use of jargon, archaisms, doublets, pro-forms, and the frequent use of the word "allege."

The findings of this paper align with Danet's (1985) assertion that the distinct characteristics of legal texts and documents are defined by their lexical aspects. He also emphasized that the lexical features of legal texts often carry specialized meanings. In the corpus, common jargon or technical terms include warrant of arrest, medico-legal, sworn judicial affidavit, inquest proceedings, and probable cause. These technical terms are inherently legal and often contain Latin and French words. Additionally, Tiersma (1999) noted that Latin remains in use as a legal language, with legal maxims often presented in Latin to convey a sense of dignity and authority.

An additional lexical characteristic of the corpus is the usage of archaic phrases like "thereafter," "herein," "wherefore," "hereunder," and "whereabouts." These terms are used to refer to specific sections of a document or specific people. Despite efforts to make legal language in contracts clear and complete, there are situations when the usage of outdated terminology and other components can make it inflexible and challenging to understand (Madrunio, 2022). The conservative mindset of lawyers who follow traditional legal writing standards could be a basis for the use of archaism in numerous legal publications. It should be noted, however, that the primary reason these keywords are used in legal English is to prevent the use of the same words repeatedly in the text.

The use of doublets in the corpus is another interesting lexical feature. The doublets found in the corpus are: appeared in this station and reported; verified the veracity; damaged and cut apart; apprehended and arrested; and investigation and documentation. Haigh (2015) defined doublets as standard phrases consisting of two or more words that are similar in meaning. Doublets are word pairs, which are frozen expressions that are irreversible. The reason for using a doublet in

the sentence is when you want to emphasize something and when you want the text to be more comprehensible.

Additionally, the corpus includes pro-form formulations like "same" and "said." According to Quirk et al. (1985), a pro-form is a type of function word or expression that substitutes another word, phrase, clause, or sentence while retaining its meaning from the context. These formats are employed for quantification, like when restricting a proposition's variables, or to prevent recurrence. In the police reports, for instance, the word "said" serves as a sentence or context rather than a verb as it does not function as a verb but instead represents a phrase or context.

The word "alleged" appears frequently in the corpus. As previously mentioned, the repeated use of "allege" can be attributed to the fact that police reports are primarily based on the accounts of those reporting the incidents. Consequently, the police officer responsible for writing the report opts to use "alleged" instead of directly accusing the suspect of committing the crime, in order to uphold the principle of due process of law.

Syntactical features are more prominent than lexical ones. The corpus includes complicated sentences, prepositional phrases, and the use of passive constructions as syntactical features.

The use of passive voice serves to depersonalize the information, lending a more professional and objective tone to the statement. The main purpose of the passive voice is to depersonalize the data included in the phrase. As a result, legal documents like police reports often feature passive verb constructions. While active sentence structures are sometimes possible, there are instances where the specific agent is omitted from the sentence. In this case, the use of active voice is not feasible. Passive constructions highlight the action rather than the actor. There are several reasons for using passive voice in police reports. One is to exclude the agent when it is already obvious. You could also use the passive voice to highlight the action rather than the person who carried it out. This technique demonstrates objectivity and authority.

Another notable feature in the corpus of this paper is the use of prepositions in the sentences. Prepositional phrases are often strung together, and frequently, they are misplaced. Prepositions typically precede a noun or pronoun and provide information about how, when, or where an event occurred. He also pointed out that since there are no strict rules for using prepositions, non-native English speakers often encounter difficulties with their proper usage.

Sentence structure takes into account a number of factors, including length and complexity. Coordinate and subordinate clauses are both present in a full sentence in legal English. It is typical to find all kinds of subordinates included in a single statement. Due to this custom, legal papers become extremely formal and sophisticated, with lengthy sentences as a result of these patterns. The paper reveals that short sentences are uncommon in legal English and that this will lead to frequent clausal coordination. Tiersma (1999) noted in his paper that legal language sentences are lengthier than those in other styles. Because of that reason, these sentences are more complicated since they contain numerous clauses.

3.3 Pedagogical Implications

The Technical Writing course is part of the Bachelor of Science in Criminology degree. The objective is to improve students' writing skills, particularly in the application of appropriate vocabulary and the analysis of police report structures. This study acknowledges its importance and practical ramifications for academic institutions providing Bachelor of Science in Criminology degrees. College educators may reference the findings of this study and deduce potential pedagogical applications in the teaching and learning process. Instructing criminology students on the construction of police reports will prepare them for their forthcoming responsibilities.

The linguistic characteristics revealed in this study assist non-experts in comprehending the intended message. Moreover, well produced police reports might function as essential investigation instruments in resolving situations during prosecutions.

The framework established by Swales & Feak, (2004) is essential for the formulation of police reports, since it emphasizes the critical components that must be incorporated. By following this format, the report writer may guarantee that the story remains precise, coherent, and factual. Furthermore, comprehending the rhetorical framework of police reports assists prospective writers in producing thorough and accurate information. This general template functions as a beneficial resource for inexperienced police officers, assisting them in adhering to set norms and aligning their writing with community expectations.

Studying forensic linguistics provides students with specialized abilities that connect language and law, presenting excellent professional prospects while enhancing critical thinking, social awareness, and a profound comprehension of the role of language in the judicial system. Moreover, the examination of language in forensic circumstances necessitates accuracy. Students acquire the ability to identify patterns, discern discrepancies, and draw inferences from linguistic data, hence enhancing their attention to detail.

Teachers of criminal justice courses for students in related programs may necessitate that their students compose police reports critically, effectively, and simply. Consequently, students analyzing these reports acquire the ability to articulate intricate scenarios in a systematic and cohesive manner, which is advantageous in professional environments where accurate communication is essential.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study utilizes content analysis with police reports as the corpus, examining the rhetorical moves based on Swales (2004) paradigm. Report contains five rhetorical moves, although the steps within each move differ, and new steps were identified. Some steps were absent in the corpus, others overlapped between models, and some were embedded within other steps. These variations are anticipated when compared to other genres described by Swales and Feak (2004). The results also revealed two linguistic features in the corpus: lexical and syntactical levels.

The researcher recommends that future studies explore other types of police reports as the corpus for analysis. This approach would allow for the potential identification of additional linguistic features that may emerge in the findings. The results from examining different police reports could be used to further support or highlight the similarities and/or differences in the rhetorical devices and linguistic elements addressed in this study.

References

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Coulthard, M., & Johnson, A. (2007). *An introduction to forensic linguistics: Language in evidence.* Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.)*. Sage Publications.

Danet, B. (1985). Legal Discourse. *Handbook of Discourse Analysis,* 1, 273-291.

Danielewicz-Betz, A. (2012). The Role of forensic linguistics in crime investigation. In A. Littlejohn, & M. S. Rao (Eds.) *Language Studies: Stretching the Boundaries*: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Dueñas P. M. (2007). A cross-cultural analysis of the generic structure of Business Management Research Articles: The Method Section.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 59-82.

Haigh, R. (2015). *Legal English*. United Kingdom: Routledge.

Harris, M. L. (2013). *Criminal Evidence: A Handbook for Courtroom Use (11th ed*.). Cengage Learning.

Levi, J. N. & Walker, A. G. (eds). (1990). *Language in the judicial process*. New York: Plenum Press.

Leonard, R. A., Ford, J. E. R., & Christensen, T. K. (2017). Forensic Linguistics: Applying the Science of Linguistics to Issues of the Law. *Hofstra Law Review, 45*(3), Article 11.

Madrunio, M. R. (2022). Lexical and Grammatical Features of Memoranda of Agreement (MOA)on Academic Partnerships. *Journal of English and Applied Linguistics, 1*(1) Art 5. DOI: https://doi.org/10.59588/2961-3094.100420.

Olsson, J. (2004). Forensic Linguistics and the Law: Some Key Issues and Challenges. *In Forensic Linguistics: Advances in Forensic Stylistics* (pp. 13-32). Routledge.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G. & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London & New York: Longman Group Limited.

Richards, C. J., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching & applied linguistics.* London Pearson Education.

Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative content analysis in practice.* Sage Publications.

Shuy, R. W. (1998). *The Language of Confession, Interrogation, and Deception*. Sage Publications.

Shuy, R. W. (2014). *The Language of Murder Cases: Intentionality, Predisposition, and Voluntariness. eBook.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Sumaljag, M.V. (2018). A Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Police Reports. *OSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science, 23*(1), 80-103.

Swales, J. (2004). *Research genres: Explorations and applications.* Ernst Klett Sprachen.

Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2004). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential tasks and skills (Vol. 1).* University of Michigan Press.

Tiersma, P. (1999). *Legal language.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vijayan, N. (2015). *Legal Processes: A Forensic Linguistic Study.* Unpublished Dissertation. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University.