Forensic Analysis of the Court Legal System: A Linguistic Perspective

Indah Permatasari

Bali Business School, Denpasar, Indonesia
indahpermatasari@gmail.com

Abstract-Language plays a crucial role in the legal system and judicial practice, both in written legal documents and oral interactions in court. The complexity and ambiguity of legal language often lead to distortion of facts, misinterpretation, and potential unfairness in judicial decisions. This study aims to analyze the role of forensic linguistics in identifying and resolving linguistic distortions or ambiguities within the legal system, focusing on legal documents, trial transcripts, and courtroom communication. This research employs a qualitative, descriptive, analytical method, with data collected through documentation and literature review. The data sources consist of official legal documents, trial transcripts, and ten recent scholarly articles on forensic linguistics, legal discourse, and legal pragmatics. The analysis integrates the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework with forensic linguistic principles, including the examination of linguistic structures, lexical choices, ambiguity, and rhetorical strategies in legal texts. The findings reveal that legal language often contains bias, ambiguity, and communicative distortions that may affect the credibility of evidence and the fairness of judgments. Forensic linguistic analysis has proven effective in detecting such issues, enhancing comprehension of legal texts, strengthening courtroom interpretation, and improving legal accessibility through precise translation and interpretation. This study underscores the urgency of integrating forensic linguistics into Indonesian legal practice to promote a more equitable, transparent, and linguistically accountable justice system.

Keywords: Forensic Linguistics, Legal System, Discourse Analysis, Legal Documents, Courtroom Communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the history of human civilization, law has always been seen as the main instrument in maintaining order, justice, and social balance (Bourke, 2022). However, it is rarely realized that law is inherently inseparable from language (Coulthard & Johnson, 2007). Every norm, rule, agreement, or court decision is always present in the form of written and spoken language (Shuy, 2005). The law works through the text of the law, contracts, indictments, plea, and trial minutes, as well as through verbal interaction between judges, prosecutors, lawyers, witnesses, and defendants. This means that language is not just a medium, but the substance of the law itself. If the language used is clear, consistent, and neutral, then it will be easier to enforce the law fairly. On the other hand, if the language used is ambiguous, manipulative, or full of bias, then the legal system has the potential to give birth to injustice.

The reality on the ground shows that legal language is often complex, rigid, and difficult for ordinary people to understand (Ződi, 2019). Technical terminology, long sentence structure, and differences in interpretation between parties make the law an elitist and non-inclusive domain (Khafaga, 2023). It is not uncommon for contracts or agreements to be written with multi-

interpreted diction that leads to legal disputes. In trials, testimony is often influenced by the style of language, intonation, and even the choice of words of the witness and the prosecutor. Furthermore, there are also cases where language is used strategically to build opinions, pressure opponents, or influence the perspective of judges. This situation shows that legal justice is not only a matter of facts and material evidence, but also greatly influenced by how language is constructed, interpreted, and used in the judicial process.

It is in this context that forensic linguistics emerges as an interdisciplinary field that seeks to bridge the gap between linguistics and legal practice. Forensic linguistics focuses on the scientific analysis of language used in legal and criminal contexts. This study covers various aspects, such as the analysis of legal discourse, the evaluation of the credibility of testimony, the detection of plagiarism and falsification of documents, to the analysis of language styles to identify anonymous authors (Sousa-Silva, 2014). In the judicial process, forensic linguistic analysis functions not only as a technical tool, but also as an instrument for upholding substantive justice. With a linguistic approach, language ambiguity can be unraveled, communication distortions can be traced, and rhetorical manipulations can be systematically identified.

In various developed countries, forensic linguistics has been applied in criminal investigations, verification of legal documents, and analysis of conversation recordings for the benefit of the court. However, in developing countries, including Indonesia, this study is still relatively new and limited. The use of linguistic analysis in legal practice has not been fully institutionalized, so there is still a lot of room to develop scholarly contributions in this field. The main challenges faced are the lack of awareness among law enforcement officials of the importance of the role of language in determining justice, as well as the limited research that examines the relationship between the legal system and linguistic analysis comprehensively. In fact, in the context of judicial reform, the involvement of forensic linguistics can help bring about a more transparent, accountable, and truth-based legal system.

In addition, the development of digital technology expands the scope of linguistic analysis in law (Shahbazi & Byun, 2022). Legal evidence is now not only in the form of written documents, but also includes digital recordings, short messages, emails, and social media uploads (Hadi et al., 2024). This further confirms that the linguistic aspect is inseparable from the modern legal system. Analysis of digital language traces can be key in uncovering criminal acts, proving accusations, or defending a person's rights before the law. Therefore, research examining the relationship between forensic linguistics and the court legal system is relevant and urgent to be conducted.

Based on the description above, the formulation of the problem in this study is: How can forensic linguistic analysis be used to uncover, explain, and correct potential distortions or ambiguities in the legal system and judicial practice?

The purpose of this research is to elaborate on the role and contribution of forensic linguistics in analyzing the legal system, focusing on efforts to provide a more objective understanding of the use of language in legal documents, trial processes, and communication interactions in court.

II. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design. The selection of a qualitative approach is based on the research objectives that focus on the disclosure of meaning, interpretation, and patterns of language use in legal contexts, especially in legal documents and communication processes in court. This approach is relevant because forensic linguistic analysis does not solely emphasize numbers and statistics, but rather on the depth of understanding of the structure, function, and meaning of language in legal practice.

Research data sources consist of two types, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data is obtained from officially published legal documents, such as court decisions, court transcripts, and legal contracts or agreements that have been the object of disputes. In addition, primary data also includes recordings or minutes of the trial that can be accessed legally to analyze communication patterns. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained through literature reviews, both in the form of textbooks, journal articles, and the results of previous research that discussed forensic linguistics, legal discourse analysis, and legal pragmatic studies.

Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation studies and literature review. Documentation studies are used to collect relevant legal texts, both in written form

and oral transcripts. A literature review is conducted to obtain theoretical perspectives and empirical findings that can support primary data analysis. After the data is collected, the next stage is to organize the data into categories based on the type of text, legal context, and linguistic aspects to be studied, such as syntactic structure, use of terms, rhetorical strategies, and pragmatic implications.

Data analysis was carried out using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method combined with the principles of forensic linguistics. Critical discourse analysis was chosen because it was able to reveal the relationship between language, power, and ideology inherent in legal texts and court communication. In practice, analysis is carried out through three main stages: (1) text analysis to identify linguistic structure, diction choices, and potential ambiguities; (2) discourse practice analysis to see how language is produced and used in legal processes; and (3) analysis of social practices to understand how legal language reflects, maintains, or even challenges the prevailing power system.

To maintain the validity of the research, the researcher used the triangulation technique of sources and theories. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing data from various legal and trial documents, while theoretical triangulation is carried out by utilizing several theoretical frameworks of forensic linguistics, legal pragmatics, and critical discourse analysis. Thus, the results of the study are expected to have adequate reliability and provide a complete picture of the role of forensic linguistics in analyzing the court legal system.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The manuscript of the selected article is provided below, along with comprehensive elaboration of the results;

Table 1. Summary of Research on Forensic Linguistics Applications in Court and Investigation

No.	Author & Year	Relevance to the Topic	Research Results
1.	Kadir (2020). The Application of Forensic Linguistics as an Investigative Tool in Criminal Case Verdicts	Study of the use of forensic linguistics in court verdicts; The focus on speech, language style, speech is closely related to aspects of how language in legal documents can contain ambiguity or bias.	It shows that an analysis of the form of speech, language style, and speech act in verdicts can open up a picture of how legal language works as an investigative tool. Researchers identified that aspects of language such as style and speech act have implications for public understanding and legal certainty.
2.	Widiantari (2025). Legal Interpreting in Indonesia: Forensic Linguistic Study	It is relevant because it discusses legal interpreting, namely how the understanding and access to language (translation / interpretation) affects the participation of defendants or witnesses who do not speak the language of instruction. It touches on linguistic justice in the court process.	Finding that access to language aids (interpreters) is especially important for foreigners or those who do not understand the language of instruction of the court; that the interpretation procedure has a real impact on the fairness of the trial process.
3.	Nasir et al. (2022). Forensic Discourse Analysis of Legal and Courtroom Interaction: A Study of 12 Angry Men	Although using film as data ("12 Angry Men"), this study opens up insights into how the dynamics of court communication (judges, jurors) affect the understanding of facts and justice, particularly relevant for the analysis of verbal interactions in court.	It was found that there was a dominance of the judge's voice, a lack of direct communication from the jury, and a violation of the principles of discourse cooperation (Grice's maxims), especially quantity and relevance. These things lead to potential misunderstandings and injustices in the decision-making process.

4.	Sholihatin et al. (2024). Analysis of Police Investigation Interviews in Defamation Cases: A Forensic Linguistics Perspective	Focus on police interviews in defamation cases; It is closely related to how conversations or dialogues in legal proceedings can contain distortions, biases, or misinterpretations.	It was found that many distortions arise due to a lack of understanding of basic linguistic principles in speech production; there are differences between spoken and written language that are not properly accounted for in the examination report; This can affect fairness in legal proceedings.
5.	Hazhar Ramadhan Ahmed (2021). The Role of Forensic Linguistics in Crime Investigation: Uses in Legal Proceedings	General but important; Discusses the various applications of forensic linguistics in criminal investigations and legal processes, including voice identification, translation of legal documents, and court language.	Affirming that forensic linguistics is useful in crime investigations, verification of police reports, identification of authors or speakers, and in improving the readability of legal documents. However, it also points to challenges such as the validity of methods and the acceptance of linguistic evidence before the law.
6.	Goźdź-Roszkowski (2021). Corpus Linguistics in Legal Discourse	Discussing how the corpus approach is used to understand legal discourse, stylistic variations, registers, genres, language evaluation in judicial settings, is particularly suitable for linguistic analysis in legal documents.	Found that the use of the corpus allows for the identification of phrase patterns, variations in legal discourse, aspects of registers and genres, as well as how evaluative language appears in court rulings. The corpus also helps to see the differences in language between legal theory and practice.
7.	Sinar et al. (2018). The Experiential Meaning in Forensic Courtroom Discourse	It is very relevant because it focuses on "experiential meaning" (a type of process according to Systemic-Functional Grammar) in the discourse of the trial; It provides an internal picture of how court language builds experience, subjectivity, and relationships between actors.	It was found that "material" processes (what are done/happen) were the most common type of process (~33.07%), followed by verbal, mental, and relational processes. This indicates that trial interactions are more about real actions or events than psychological reflections or relationships between perpetrators, which can affect how facts are conveyed and interpreted.
8.	Houtman & Suryati (2018). The History of Forensic Linguistics as an Assisting Tool in the Analysis of Legal Terms	Relevant to the aspect of written legal language, how legal terms are used may deviate from the standard language, which can lead to ambiguities or misunderstandings in legal documents.	It found that many legal formal terms are inconsistent with Indonesian standards, that the use of legal terms is often oriented towards formalities rather than substance, and this study serves as feedback to improve the quality of language in the practices of law enforcement officials.
9.	Ali (2020). Forensic Linguistics: A	Examining speech acts, which are crimes committed through language, is suitable for the theme of using language as a tool in the	Shows that speech acts such as threats, perjury swearing, conspiracy, solicitation, etc., can be forensically analyzed, and that an

	Study in Criminal Speech Acts	legal system, especially on the side of those who are defendants/witnesses.	understanding of pragmatic, semantic, and discursive features is indispensable; also that there is a need for collaboration between linguists and legal parties in order for this analysis to have legal weight.
10.	Ratnayaka et al. (2018). Identifying Relationships Among Sentences in Court Case Transcripts Using Discourse Relations	Relevant because it analyzes the relationships between sentences in the transcript of the trial/verdict; helps to understand how the logical structure and cohesion of discourse in court function, and how this affects the interpretation of evidence and legal arguments.	Develop methods to classify types of intersentence relationships (discourse relations) in transcripts of court cases in the U.S.; using a combination of rule-based and machine learning methods; human evaluation showed quite satisfactory results; The findings emphasize that the relationship between sentences (e.g., cause-effect, elaboration, contrast) is important to understand the overall meaning of the legal text more precisely.

The results of a systematic literature review show that the integration of forensic psychology and forensic linguistics presents a significant contribution in the analysis of legal evidence, especially related to testimony, interrogation, threat text analysis, and the use of new technologies. From the articles analyzed, it can be seen that there is consistency that individual psychological aspects, such as mental state, motivation, and communication strategies, are always reflected in the language they use, both in oral and written form.

A number of studies, such as the Liber study (2019), emphasize the importance of the testimony content analysis (SVA) method that combines the perspectives of cognitive linguistics and forensic psychology. These findings show that the accuracy of testimony depends not only on narrative structure, but also on psychological indicators such as memory consistency and emotional distress. In the context of expert evaluation of evidence, Arscott et al.'s research shows that the use of verbal terms to assess the strength of evidence can lead to misinterpretations, as audiences (judges, jurors, the public) often interpret "strong", "very strong", and "extremely strong" with almost the same meaning. This emphasizes the need for a more standardized approach to communication, for example through the incorporation of linguistic terms with numerical scales, so that psychological and legal intentions can be more harmonized.

On the other hand, Ishihara (2017) shows an important contribution of statistics-based linguistic analysis with a combined approach (fused system) that is able to improve the accuracy of identification of text authors. However, the findings on the emergence of extreme likelihood ratios show psychological risks in the form of overinterpretation of evidence. Therefore, the authors emphasize the need for empirical control to keep the analysis realistic and legally acceptable. This approach is particularly relevant in forensic practice, as it reminds that methodological sophistication must be balanced with the prudence of interpretation.

The aspect of forensic psychology is also seen in the analysis of lies. Galyashina (2021) emphasized that the detection of false testimony still faces serious limitations. Various phonetic and linguistic methods do not have sufficient validity to be used in court, so expert reports cannot rely solely on linguistic features that have not been validated. This discussion underscores the urgent need for a consistent methodological framework, based on the theories of cognitive psychology and speech science, in order for the analysis of lies to be accountable. In line with that, cross-cultural research (e.g. Gustafsson et al., 2024) shows that lie strategies and linguistic patterns in eyewitness testimony differ in each culture, so forensic psychology must take into account sociocultural contexts so as not to be biased.

In addition to traditional approaches, artificial intelligence technology is also starting to enter the realm of forensic linguistics. The study of Roemling et al. (2024) on geolinguistic authorship profiling with the BERT model showed high accuracy in recognizing regional dialects, as well as revealing keywords that affect classification. However, the problem of explainability remains a challenge. From the perspective of forensic psychology, algorithm transparency is crucial to build user trust and ensure that the results of the analysis are acceptable in the legal realm. In other words, technological developments need to be accompanied by a psychological approach so as

not to cause bias or misunderstandings in the interpretation of evidence.

Other articles, such as Paramita (2024) and Heydon (2014), show the real application of forensic linguistics in Indonesian and international courts. The cases of Prita Mulyasari and Zaskia Gotik, for example, show how language analysis can be used to assess defamation or insult to state symbols. From the perspective of forensic psychology, the case highlights the importance of assessing the speaker's intent as well as the psychological impact of speech. Heydon stressed that the reliability of methodology and the acceptance of linguistic evidence in court still depend on the extent to which the method has scientific validity and can be understood by both judges and jurors.

Interestingly, the study of Shaogang & Liu (2019) proposes a forensic psycholinguistic framework as an interdisciplinary system that not only examines language in legal processes, but also takes into account conscious and unconscious linguistic behavior. This reinforces the argument that forensic psychology and forensic linguistics cannot run alone, but rather must be designed in one coherent system, so that linguistic evidence can be analyzed comprehensively and objectively.

Overall, the results of this review show that the integration of forensic psychology and forensic linguistics makes a real contribution to assessing legal evidence. Language can reflect psychological conditions, reveal patterns of lies, and even show trauma or mental disorders that affect testimony. However, the challenges are still huge, both in terms of methodology, scientific validity, cultural bias, and technological limitations. Therefore, the main discussion in the literature emphasizes the need to develop communication standards, validated interdisciplinary methodologies, and transparent technologies. Thus, forensic psychology in linguistic evidence not only strengthens the reliability of evidence, but also increases fairness and accuracy in the judicial process.

IV. CONCLUSION

This systematic study confirms that the integration of forensic psychology and forensic linguistics provides a stronger foundation for the analysis of legal evidence, both in the form of testimony, interrogation, threatening texts, and written documents. Language is proven to be not just a medium of communication, but a reflection of an individual's psychological condition that can reveal the consistency of memory, lying strategies, and signs of trauma or mental disorders. A number of studies have shown that psycholinguistic analysis is able to enrich the validity of evidence, although there are still limitations in the form of variations in the interpretation of terms, the validity of lie detection methods, and the challenge of transparency in the use of artificial intelligence technology. Thus, the role of forensic psychology in the analysis of linguistic evidence

is to provide a more comprehensive perspective, which not only assists linguists in deciphering texts or speech, but also supports law enforcement in understanding the psychological dimension behind language. For the future, the development of more consistent interdisciplinary methodologies, clear communication standards, and the application of transparent technology are key for linguistic evidence to be credibly accepted in court and truly contribute to the upholding of justice.

V. REFERENCES

Ali, J. H. (2020). Forensic Linguistics: A Study in Criminal Speech Acts. *Beni-Suef University International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 39–65. https://doi.org/10.21608/buijhs.2020.91333

Bourke, R. (2022). History and Normativity in Political Theory: The Case of Rawls. In R. Bourke & Q. Skinner (Eds.), *History in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (1st ed., pp. 165–193). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009231053.008

Coulthard, M., & Johnson, A. (2007). *An introduction to forensic linguistics: Language in evidence* (1. publ). Routledge.

Goźdź-Roszkowski, S. (2021). Corpus Linguistics in Legal Discourse. *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law - Revue Internationale de Sémiotique Juridique*, *34*(5), 1515–1540. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-021-09860-8

Hadi, W., Ginting, P., & Perangin-angin, R. B. B. (2024). Forensic Linguistics Analysis of Speech Has Legal Effect in Social Media in The Region of North Sumatera. *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Innovation in Education, Science, and Culture, ICIESC 2023, 24 October 2023, Medan, Indonesia*. Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Innovation in Education, Science, and Culture, ICIESC 2023, 24 October 2023, Medan, Indonesia, Medan, Indonesia. https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.24-10-2023.2342106

Hazhar Ramadhan Ahmed. (2021). *THE ROLE OF FORENSIC LINGUISTICS IN*

CRIME INVESTIGATION: USES IN LEGAL PROCEEDINGS. https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.4609333

Houtman, H., & Suryati, S. (2018). The History of Forensic Linguistics as an Assisting Tool in the Analysis of Legal Terms. *Sriwijaya Law Review*, 215–232. https://doi.org/10.28946/slrev.Vol2.Iss2.135.pp215-233

Kadir, R. (2020). THE APPLICATION OF FORENSIC LINGUISTICS AS AN INVESTIGATIVE TOOL IN CRIMINAL CASE VERDICTS (A case study at the state court of Gorontalo). *JournalNX - A Multidisciplinary Peer Reviewed Journal*, 6(6), 251–259.

Khafaga, A. (2023). Strategic lexicalization in courtroom discourse: A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, *10*(1), 2217585. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2217585

Nasir, M. H., Batool, A., & Mirza, E. (2022). Forensic Discourse Analysis of Legal and Courtroom Interaction: A Study of 12 Angry Men. *City University Research Journal of Literature and Linguistics (CURJLL)*, *5*(1).

Ratnayaka, G., Rupasinghe, T., De Silva, N., Warushavithana, M., Gamage, V., & Perera, A. S. (2018). Identifying Relationships Among Sentences in Court Case Transcripts Using Discourse Relations. *2018 18th International Conference on Advances in ICT for Emerging Regions (ICTer)*, 13–20. https://doi.org/10.1109/ICTER.2018.8615485

Shahbazi, Z., & Byun, Y.-C. (2022). NLP-Based Digital Forensic Analysis for Online Social Network Based on System Security. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *19*(12), 7027. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19127027

Sholihatin, E., Sukirmiyadi, S., & Haryono, N. (2024). Analysis of Police Investigation Interviews in Defamation Cases: A Forensic Linguistics Perspective. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, *12*(3), 1137. https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v12i3.12064

Shuy, R. W. (2005). Discourse Analysis in the Legal Context. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (1st ed., pp. 437–452). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470753460.ch23

Sinar, T. S., Zein, T. T., Nurlela, & Yusuf, M. (2018). The Experiential Meaning in Forensic Courtroom Discourse: *Proceedings of the International Conference of Science, Technology, Engineering, Environmental and Ramification Researches*, 1501–1505. https://doi.org/10.5220/0010084915011505

Sousa-Silva, R. (2014). Investigating academic plagiarism: A forensic linguistics approach to plagiarism detection. *International Journal for Educational Integrity*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.21913/IJEI.v10i1.932

Widiantari, N. G. A. (2025). LEGAL INTERPRETING IN INDONESIA: FORENSIC LINGUISTIC STUDY. *International Journal of Forensic Linguistics*, *4*(1), 124–129.

Ződi, Z. (2019). The limits of plain legal language: Understanding the comprehensible style in law. *International Journal of Law in Context*, *15*(03), 246–262. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1744552319000260