An Analysis of the Lexical and Contextual Meaning of Expert Witness Examination Part in Travis Reinking Murder Criminal Trial

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Abstract- This research paper examines the contextual and lexical meaning in the language used by the expert witness during the examination phase of the Travis Reinking murder trial. While legal language has been widely studied, there is limited research on how expert witness testimony influences judicial interpretation and case outcomes. This study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing how linguistic choices impact the perception of credibility and legal reasoning. The trial, which gained national attention in 2018 after Reinking allegedly opened fire at a Waffle House in Tennessee, provides a critical case study for forensic linguistic analysis. Using a descriptive qualitative methodology, this research draws data from Law&Crime Network's coverage of TN v. Travis Reinking Murder Trial Day 1 - Danielle Connor - Crime Scene Investigator on YouTube. The findings highlight the significance of lexical and contextual meaning in witness testimony, emphasizing its role in shaping trial narratives and legal decisions. This study contributes to forensic linguistics and legal discourse analysis by offering new insights into the nuanced role of language in courtroom proceedings.

Keywords: Lexical Meaning, Contextual Meaning, Witness Examination.

I. INTRODUCTION

The language used in legal contexts, particularly during trials, can often be complex and nuanced. Expert witnesses are vital to the criminal justice system because they are frequently asked to offer their specific expertise and perspectives in a range of court situations. Understanding the contextual and lexical meaning of the language used by these experts can be key to determining the outcome of a trial.

This research paper titled "An Analysis of the Lexical and Contextual Meaning of Expert Witness Examination Part in Travis Reinking Murder Criminal Trial" aims to provide a detailed analysis of the use of language by an expert witness in the Travis Reinking murder trial. The trial gained national attention in 2018 after Reinking allegedly

opened fire at a Waffle House in Tennessee, killing four people and injuring several others. The expert witness testimony presented during the trial was crucial in establishing Reinking's mental state at the time of the shooting, which was a key factor in determining his guilt or innocence.

The primary objective of this paper is to analyze the language used by the expert witness during the examination portion of the trial. Specifically, the paper aims to examine the lexical and contextual meaning of the language used, with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of how language is used in legal contexts and its potential impact on the outcome of a trial. The analysis will utilize linguistic tools and techniques to explore the nuances and subtleties of the language used by the expert witness, with the aim of providing insights into the role that language plays in the criminal justice system.

In order to achieve this objective, the paper will begin with an overview of the role of language in the legal system and the importance of expert witness testimony in criminal trials. There were several previous researched that discussed about lexical and contextual meaning such as Nurfithri, N. (2022). N Analysis of Lexical and Contextual Meaning in Elevation Worship's Song Lyrics. JIIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan, 5(7), 2460–2464. https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v5i7.715, Hasanah, R., & Habibullah, M. (2020). Analysis of Lexical and Contextual Meaning in Raef's Song Lyric of the Path Album as the Holy Qur'an Values. PANYONARA: Journal of English Education, 2(1), 49. https://doi.org/10.19105/panyonara.v2i1.3150, Sucihati, T. B. (2021). An Analysis of Lexical and Contextual Meaning on Sport News in Jawa Pos Newspaper (Linguistics Study). Linguistics and Literature, 4(1), 40–47., etc. This paper will also discuss the limitations of other previous researches in the lexical and contextual meaning but specifically for a more detailed analysis of the language used in expert witness examination part since there was no prior research analyzed about a criminal trial.

The theoretical frameworks that will be utilized in this analysis include linguistic analysis and discourse analysis. Linguistic analysis and discourse analysis are complementary approaches to the study of language. While linguistic analysis focuses on the structure of language, discourse analysis examines the social and cultural context in which language is used. Both approaches are useful in gaining a deeper understanding of how language works in a given context. These frameworks will allow for a detailed examination of the lexical and contextual meaning of the language used by the expert witness during the examination portion of the trial. The paper will also draw on previous research in the areas of forensic linguistics and legal discourse to provide a context for the analysis.

The scientific merit of this paper lies in its detailed examination of the language used by an expert witness in a high-profile criminal trial. This analysis has the potential to contribute to a better understanding of how language is used in legal contexts and how it can be interpreted by legal professionals. Additionally, this research can provide valuable insights into the role that language plays in the criminal justice system and how it can impact the outcome of a trial.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

In order to comprehend and evaluate social phenomena, this study employed a qualitative research approach, specifically utilizing discourse analysis to examine lexical and contextual meanings. which analyzes non-numerical data from sources including interviews, observations, and written materials in their original context (John, 2007). Based on the title of the research paper, it is likely that the researchers conducted a qualitative analysis of the language used in the expert witness examination phase of the trial to gain a deeper understanding of the examination's lexical and contextual meaning, which was derived from transcripts, words, images, audio-video recordings, and documents (Sugiyono, 2011). which must be extracted and examined (Donald, 2010). The research methods employed in this study analyze the language used in the expert witness examination phase of the trial. This analysis could have included coding the language used, categorizing it into themes or

categories, and interpreting the meaning of the language based on the lexicon and context in which was used to gain further insight into the meaning and interpretation of the examination. The data source was taken from youtube Law&Crime Network in the episode of TN v. Travis Reinking Murder Trial Day 1 - Danielle Connor - Crime Scene Investigator https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOvkJ3az vqg.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic analysis and discourse analysis are both fields within the broader discipline of linguistics, and they share some similarities while also having distinct differences. Linguistic analysis is a method of analyzing language at the level of its structural components, such as sounds, words, and grammar. It focuses on the form of language and how it is used to convey meaning. Linguistic analysis can include the study of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics, among other areas (Fasold, 2014).

Discourse analysis, on the other hand, is a method of analyzing language in use or in a text (written or spoken), (Uzokova, 2020), with a focus on the larger context in which language occurs. It looks at the way that language is used to construct meaning, convey social relationships, and reflect cultural values and norms. Discourse analysis can include the study of discourse markers, discourse structures, conversational analysis, and narrative analysis, among other areas (McCarthy, 2019). While there are some differences between linguistic analysis and discourse analysis, they are often used together in research studies. Linguistic analysis provides a foundation for understanding the structural aspects of language, while discourse analysis allows for a more nuanced understanding of how language is used in social contexts.

For example, in analyzing the language used by an expert witness in a legal trial, a linguistic analysis might focus on the specific words and grammar used by the witness, while a discourse analysis might consider the larger social and cultural context in which the language was used, including the power dynamics between the witness and other actors in the trial. By combining these approaches, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how language functions in legal contexts.

The alliance between legal context and lexical and contextual meaning is significant because legal language often relies heavily on precise and technical meanings of words and phrases. In legal contexts, the meaning of a word or phrase can have significant legal implications, and therefore it is important to understand the nuances of lexical and contextual meaning. Legal language is often highly specialized and technical, with specific terms and phrases that have precise meanings. Legal documents, such as contracts, statutes, and court opinions, are typically written with a level of formality and precision that is not found in everyday language. Legal language also often incorporates Latin and other foreign language terms, which may have specific meanings within the legal context.

Lawyers, judges, and other legal professionals must comprehend the lexical and contextual meaning of legal terminology. A lexical meaning is a true picture of a concept as the word symbolizes it; in other words, a lexical meaning of a word is the meaning that corresponds to its referent, meaning that is in agreement with the findings of observation of the senses, or meaning that is truly real in our lives. The meaning of a word when it stands alone is known as its lexical meaning, also known as its semantic or external meaning (Mansoer, 2001). Lexical meaning is distinct from other factors like usage and context. Lexical meanings can also be considered as the meaning contained in a dictionary (Chaer, 2012). Chaer describes lexical meaning as a meaning that is owned or existed in lexeme even without any context. Meanwhile, Contextual meaning is a linguistic meaning in context (Longman, 1992). For example, a legal term such as "reasonable doubt" has a specific meaning within the legal context that may differ from its everyday usage. Similarly, the interpretation of a legal document often depends on a careful analysis of the language used, including the precise meanings of individual words and phrases in context. Lexical meaning and contextual meaning are two important aspects of meaning in language, and they

are closely related. Lexical meaning refers to the inherent meaning of a word or expression, independent of context. It is the meaning that is typically found in a dictionary, and it is based on the properties and features of the word itself, such as its morphology, syntax, and semantics. Contextual meaning, on the other hand, refers to a phrase or expression's meaning when it is used in a particular context or circumstance that is difficult to understand directly; in this case, context can be used to gather additional cues to help determine the meaning (Maria, 2007). It takes into account the surrounding words, the tone of voice, the body language, and other factors that can affect the interpretation of the message. People should consider contextual meaning in addition to lexical meaning when interpreting meaning; in this instance, contextual meaning played a significant influence (Dwiki, 2017).

Examining the expert witness examination section's lexical and contextual meaning in the Travis Reinking murder criminal trial is important for several reasons. Firstly, in legal proceedings, the testimony of expert witnesses can have a significant impact on the outcome of a trial. Expert witnesses are called upon to provide specialized knowledge and expertise in their field, and their testimony can be influential in shaping the opinions of judges and juries. Examining the expert witness examination's lexical and contextual meaning can help to clarify the key points of the expert's testimony, and to assess the strength and reliability of their conclusions. Secondly, the language used in expert witness testimony can often be highly technical and specialized, making it difficult for non-experts to fully understand and interpret the meaning of the testimony. Examining the meaning in terms of words and context of the expert witness examination can help to clarify any technical language and ensure that the testimony is accurately understood and interpreted. Thirdly, the meaning in terms of words and context of the expert witness examination can provide insight into the legal strategies and arguments being used by the prosecution and defense teams. By analyzing the language used in the examination, it is possible to identify key themes and arguments being made, and to assess their strength and effectiveness. Finally, analyzing the

lexical and contextual meaning of the expert witness examination can help to ensure that justice is served in the criminal trial. By carefully examining the language used in the examination, it is feasible to see any potential biases or mistakes in the expert's testimony and make sure the decision is supported by accurate and trustworthy data.

The lexical and contextual meaning analysis of the expert witness examination portion of the Travis Reinking murder criminal trial is provided here.

Data 1. State (verb)

Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: Investigator Connor could you please state your full name for the record?

Lexical meaning: to be determined by law or authority.

Contextual meaning: to express in words, say it clearly.

Analysis: The word state in "Investigator Connor could you please state your full name for the record?" is a verb. The contextual meaning is quite different from its lexical meaning. In every witness examination part, the defendant's attorney shall confirm their witness identity before performing the examination. In this section, the defendant's attorney requested the witness to say and spell her name clearly to verify the truth of the speaking person for the record is the concerned witness. In the trial, the expert witness answered with "Danielle Connor first name, d-a-n-i-e-l-l-e, last name c-o-n-n-o-r". Based on her answer, we can see that the witness comprehended the contextual meaning of the request by saying and spelling her full name.

Data 2. Scene (noun)

Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: And can you describe when you got to the scene what you found?

Lexical meaning: one of the subdivisions of a play.

Contextual meaning: the scene of the crime, the place of an occurrence or activity.

Analysis: The word scene in "And can you describe when you got to the scene what you found?" is a noun. The word's lexical meaning in the phrase differs from its contextual meaning. The defendant's attorney aimed to ask about what the expert witness found on the scene. The expert witness answered by

elaborating the situation "when i arrived on scene, patrol officers were already there. The scene had already been put up with crime scene tape around the perimeter of the parking lot. There were multiple different units still responding when i responded when my first initial view of the crime scene itself. I noted that, there were three deceased individuals at the scene. I was also notified that several victims had been transported to hospitals. There were numerous cartridge casings in the parking lot and the interior of the business as well as a firearm and the parking lot contains several vehicles still". According to her elaboration, the word scene was mentioned 5 (five) times which is each of them contextually related to the meaning to be conveyed by the examiner / the defendant's attorney.

Data 3. Step (noun)
Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: I know you've described the scene as it as you found it but what were the first steps that you took?
Lexical meaning: an advance or motion that involves lifting one foot and putting it down in a different place
Contextual meaning: an action, proceeding, or measure often occurring as one in a series
Analysis: The word step in "I know you've described the scene as it as you found it but what were the first steps that you took?" is a noun. While the contextual definition refers to an activity, procedure, or measure that frequently occurs as one in a sequence, the lexical meaning is an advance or movement performed by raising the foot and bringing it down somewhere else. The defendant's attorney asked about the first actions that the expert witness did when she arrived on the crime scene. Then the expert witness explicated that when they first arrived on scene she met with detective Patton and the vice president of the waffle house and it was imperative of to her to view the surveillance video first off to get an accurate description of the suspect as well as an understanding of what took place what the incident was. Based on the explication, we can deduce that the expert witness was capable to describe her first steps that she took as she found the crime scene, so the contextual meaning of the word was conveyed to the receiver.

Data 4. Pharaoh (noun)
Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: And can you describe what a pharaoh scan is generally?
Lexical meaning: a ruler of ancient Egypt
Contextual meaning: an electronic device that uses a laser beam and mirrors to collect millions of data points.
Analysis: The word pharaoh in "And can you describe what a pharaoh scan is generally?" Is a noun. The lexical of pharaoh is well known as a ruler of ancient Egypt according to National Geographic but not in this sentence, the contextual meaning is immensely distinct, that is an electronic device that uses a laser beam and mirrors to collect millions of data points. The contextual meaning is taken from the answer of the expert witness. In the sentence, the word pharaoh modifies the word scan, so it becomes unity or a phrase. The contextual meaning of pharaoh itself only prevails if it's combined with the word scan as how the expert witness defined "so a pharaoh scan is an electronic device it uses a laser beam and mirrors to collect millions of data points, the data points are then put into a point cloud and using associated software that point cloud is then rendered into 3D imaging of the scene we're not talking like a model. It'll be almost like a video it'll allow anybody viewing it to view the scene as i saw it when i was processing it so be almost as though you're there walking through the scene with me when you view it."

Data 5. Wrap (verb)
Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: And is it obviously it's more complicated than this but is it kind of like taking a picture and wrapping it around so that you can move around that picture image?
Lexical meaning: to cover especially by winding or folding
Contextual meaning: to finish
Analysis: The word wrap in "And is it obviously it's more complicated than this but is it kind of like taking a picture and wrapping it around so that you can move around that picture image?" is a verb. The lexical meaning is to cover especially by winding or folding that was retrieved from Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary and the word usually used in present or gift related situation. It is pretty different from its contextual meaning, that is to

finish. The expert witness answered "yes, it's a 360 view so you can rotate with the software you can rotate the image you're looking at to look all around you up at the sky." As we can see that the expert witness acknowledge the contextual meaning by answering the question accordingly. She finished showing the current scene then moved to the next scene.

Data 6. Thumb (noun)

Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: And at this time i would ask that the pharaoh scan which is on a thumb drive that we have just be marked as the next numbered exhibit which i believe will be number four and i will ask to submit it once we are finished publishing it but i would also ask to publish that to the jury.

Lexical meaning: the human hand's short, thick digit that is opposite to the big toe in position and unique from the other fingers in that it has only two phalanges, allowing for more range of motion and opposition to each one
Contextual meaning: small.

Analysis: The word thumb in "And at this time i would ask that the pharaoh scan which is on a thumb drive that we have just be marked as the next numbered exhibit which i believe will be number four and i will ask to submit it once we are finished publishing it but i would also ask to publish that to the jury." is a term. The word's lexical definition is one of the fingers typically used to display a greatness symbol. But, the lexical meaning is quite different from its contextual meaning used in this sentence, which is small. The contextual meaning adheres to the word afterwards so the word thumb modifies the word drive, then it becomes unity or a phrase. Contextually, the meaning of the phrase is a small device for reading or writing on magnetic, optical, or electronic media as they used in the court to save the files.

Data 7. Pan (verb)

Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: And you can you describe what is seen here and i am going to pan towards the south or i'm sorry towards the north of Murfreesboro road.
Lexical meaning: to wash in a pan for the purpose of separating heavy particles

Contextual meaning: to rotate (a camera, such as a motion-picture camera) so as to keep an object in the picture or secure a panoramic effect

Analysis: The word pan in "And you can you describe what is seen here and i am going to pan towards the south or i'm sorry towards the north of Murfreesboro road." Is a verb. The lexical meaning of this word is to wash in a pan for the purpose of separating heavy particles that usually used in a gold mining work. On the other hand, the contextual meaning in this trial is to rotate a motion-picture camera so as to keep an object in the picture or secure a panoramic effect. It is used to move and rotate the camera of the scene shown in the trial.

In the conversation, the expert witness understood the contextual meaning as we can grasp from her explanation "yes, so here we have Murfreesboro road across the street was a shopping complex where media and a lot of people were arriving for the scene this is one of the entrances into the waffle house off Murfreesboro road from the north side. We had brought out our large crime scene truck out to the scene inside there's work benches and all of our processing stuff that we can use to process evidence right inside the truck as well as to keep it safe and secure once it's collected. So here we have you can see two sets of crime scene tape so we have the interior crime scene tape and the exterior. The interior maintains the scene itself that sidewalk in between we used as our area to like liaison with detectives and anybody else arriving to the scene and the exterior disallows anybody not allowed into the scene from coming even onto the sidewalk." In the trial, the expert witness showed the 360o pictures by rotating the camera to the audiences.

Data 8. Magazine (noun)

Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: And those were collected from the actual magazine and removed and packaged separately is that correct?

Lexical meaning: a print periodical publication containing miscellaneous pieces.

Contextual meaning: a feeding mechanism for a repeating firearm, either externally attached (detachable magazine) or integrated within the gun

(internal/fixed magazine). A holder inside or on a gun for cartridges to be fed into the gun chamber.

Analysis: The word magazine in "And those were collected from the actual magazine and removed and packaged separately is that correct?" is a noun. It has the lexical meaning of a print periodical publication containing miscellaneous pieces (such as articles, stories, poems) and often illustrated or colorful. Nevertheless, it has extremely distinctive contextual meaning from its previous meaning that was retrieved from National Rifle Association of America, it is a device that holds cartridges to be fed into a gun chamber or serves as a feeding and storing mechanism for ammunition for a repeating rifle. It can be externally connected (detachable magazine) or integrated within the gun (internal/fixed magazine). The magazine itself works by storing multiple cartridges inside of it and then gradually pushing each one into a position where the movement action of the gun can easily load it into the barrel chamber. Based on the expert witness' answer, she acknowledged the contextual meaning of the question by answering "correct, yes. So, 30 each came from each of the two magazines". She answered that while holding the 60 RP223 Remington cartridges from the magazines then she showed the item (evidence) to the audiences in the trial.

Data 9. Catridge (noun)
Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: And did you collect all of those cartridge casings with the evidence markers two three four five and six?
Lexical meaning: a casing or container—typically used in a printer—that contains a material, gadget, or substance that is hard to handle, uncomfortable, or unpleasant.
Contextual meaning: a metal tube that often contains an initiating device and a full charge for a firearm, A cartridge, also known as a round, is a kind of pre-assembled gun ammunition that contains a projectile, a propellant, and an ignition device in a paper, plastic, or metallic case that is specifically designed to fit inside the barrel chamber of a breechloading gun. This allows for easy handling and transportation during shooting. While the term "bullet" is officially only used to refer to the

projectile, it is sometimes used informally to refer to a whole cartridge.

Analysis: The word cartridge in "And did you collect all of those cartridge casings with the evidence markers two three four five and six?" is a noun. The lexical meaning is a case or container that holds a substance or usually ink and that can be easily changed commonly used in a printer. The contextual meaning is dissimilar with its lexical meaning, which is a metal tube containing a complete charge for a firearm and usually an initiating device (such as a primer), A cartridge, also known as a round, is a kind of pre-assembled gun ammunition that comes in the form of a metallic, paper, or plastic case that is specifically designed to fit inside the barrel chamber of a breechloading gun. It contains a projectile (bulet, shot, or slug), a propellant substance (typically either smokeless powder or black powder), and an ignition device (primer) for easy handling and transportation during shooting. While the term "bullet" is officially only used to refer to the projectile, it is sometimes used informally to refer to a whole cartridge. The expert witness answered with "after all processing was done, yes" that indicated she apprehended the contextual meaning of the word in the question. That means she collected all those cartridge casings after all processing was done.

Data 10. Shell (noun)
Sentence spoken by the defendant's attorney: And with that collected along with the other shell casings that you have testified about up to this point.
Lexical meaning: an animal's hard, stiff, often calcareous coat or support
Contextual meaning: A shell is a projectile that has an explosive, incendiary, or other chemical filler in its payload. In the present day, massive, solid, kinetic projectiles, often known as shots, are occasionally used in place of shells.

Analysis: The word shell in "And with that collected along with the other shell casings that you have testified about up to this point." is a noun. The lexical meaning is usually used to describe a covering or support of an animal that is hard like in a snail, oyster, crab, etc. However, term differs greatly from its military or gun context usage when it refers to a projectile whose payload contains an

explosive, incendiary, or other chemical filler. Large solid kinetic projectiles, more appropriately called shot, are occasionally used in modern usage. Solid shot that has been exposed to a tracer or spotting charge may include pyrotechnic chemical. The contextual meaning analysis of the word "shell" in this sentence is that it refers to the empty casing of a cartridge ejected from a firearm after it is fired, which has been collected as evidence in a legal proceeding.

III. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of lexical and contextual meaning in the expert witness examination of the Travis Reinking murder trial revealed several key linguistic patterns. Notably, shifts in meaning occurred when legal and psychological terminology were interpreted differently by the prosecution and defense, leading to potential ambiguity in testimony. Additionally, certain lexical choices by expert witnesses influenced the jury's perception of Reinking's mental state, highlighting the impact of precise wording in legal discourse. By examining these patterns, this study demonstrates how forensic linguistic analysis can uncover subtle yet crucial nuances in courtroom language, ultimately contributing to a more accurate interpretation of testimony and ensuring that justice is served.

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