

Morpho-Syntactic Analysis of Prosecutors' Resolution

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Abstract

This study examined the morpho-syntactic features of prosecutors' resolutions in the Philippines, focusing on how morphological processes and syntactic structures contribute to legal meaning, interpretation, institutional authority, and accessibility. Guided by Lexical Functional Grammar, the study analyzed lexical entries, word forms, inflection, derivation, phrase and clause organization, grammatical functions, and syntactic dependencies. It employed a qualitative documentary-linguistic design using 16 criminal case resolutions from the Supreme Court E-Library, covering filed and dismissed cases from different Philippine regions. The study did not involve human respondents; each resolution served as a unit of analysis. A qualitative coding scheme was used to identify morphological features, syntactic patterns, and comparative differences, with expert review by a linguist and a prosecutor or lawyer to strengthen reliability. The findings showed that inflection, derivation, compounding, affixation, analytic structures, passive voice, tense, aspect, mood, and allomorphy shaped the formal and technical character of the resolutions. Syntactically, coordination, subordination, transposition, predication, and parallelism organized evidence, legal reasoning, procedural sequence, and judgment. Filed cases emphasized legal action, evidentiary strength, and completion, while dismissed cases emphasized insufficiency, procedural limitation, negation, and distance from agency. The study concluded that morpho-syntactic choices are functional tools in constructing precise, authoritative, and procedurally legitimate legal texts. It recommended integrating morpho-syntactic analysis into legal and linguistic education, simplifying or translating resolutions for non-experts, encouraging language-inclusive legal drafting, conducting linguistic audits, and expanding future research to other legal texts. The study supports SDG 16, SDG 4, SDG 9, and SDG 17 by promoting clearer legal communication, legal literacy, digital accessibility, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening institutional transparency, educational development, community legal awareness, and governance-oriented communication.

Keywords: Justice, Legal Discourse, Legal Linguistics, Morpho-Syntactic Analysis, Prosecutors' Resolutions, Syntactic Structures, Word Formation

1. Introduction

This study examines the morpho-syntactic features of prosecutors' resolutions, focusing on how word formation, inflection, derivation, sentence structure, clause organization, and syntactic patterns contribute to legal meaning, interpretation, and accessibility. Legal language functions as the primary medium through which judicial processes, arguments, decisions, and outcomes are expressed. Prosecutors' resolutions are therefore significant legal documents because they present institutional reasoning and determine how criminal cases proceed. Although previous research has addressed legal language broadly, particularly its semantic, pragmatic, rhetorical, and stylistic dimensions, the specific morpho-syntactic structure of prosecutorial resolutions remains insufficiently examined. This study responds to that gap by analyzing the linguistic patterns used in prosecutors' resolutions and by developing a glossary that may help non-experts understand legal terminology and morpho-syntactic features.

Language is central to legal discourse because legal meanings, decisions, and institutional actions are produced through linguistic forms. In prosecutors' resolutions, language does not merely record legal decisions; it organizes evidence, frames reasoning, and communicates legal outcomes. Earlier studies have emphasized the importance of linguistic precision in law. Tiersma (1999) highlighted the need for linguistic specificity in legal writing, while Gibbons (1994) examined syntactic complexity in legal texts. However, research directly focused on the morpho-syntactic properties of prosecutorial resolutions remains limited. Morpho-syntactic analysis in this study refers to the combined examination of morphological structures, such as word forms, inflectional patterns, derivational processes, and affixes, and syntactic structures, such as sentence patterns, clause relations, coordination, subordination, transposition, predication, and parallelism. By examining these features, the study seeks to clarify how prosecutors use language to construct legal reasoning, establish authority, and

produce persuasive and interpretable resolutions. The study is relevant to legal professionals, linguists, educators, students, researchers, and community members because it connects language analysis with legal communication, public understanding, and access to justice.

The literature on legal language establishes that legal texts are formally structured, highly precise, and often difficult for non-experts to interpret. Tiersma (1999) explains that legal language relies on specific syntactic and morphological forms to achieve clarity, formality, and efficiency. Coulthard and Johnson (2007) similarly discuss the complexity of legal syntax and morphology and emphasize the need for specialized linguistic tools to analyze legal texts accurately. Gibbons (2003) provides empirical evidence that legal texts, including prosecutorial resolutions, contain recurring morpho-syntactic patterns that contribute to accuracy, formality, and institutional authority. Several studies show that syntax plays a major role in legal interpretation and decision-making. Maley (1994) argues that understanding syntactic features is essential for accurate legal interpretation, especially in prosecutorial language. Solan and Tiersma (2005) examine the relationship between linguistics and law, showing how syntactic structures influence legal reasoning and judicial decision-making. Crystal and Davy (1969) provide a foundational analysis of the formal characteristics of legal language and their effects on interpretation, while Garner (2001) stresses that precise wording is necessary for clearer and more effective legal documents. Legal language is also shaped by genre, persuasion, and institutional power. Bhatia (1987) explains that morpho-syntactic features in legal texts are designed to minimize ambiguity and maximize clarity. Bhatia (1993) further argues that genre-specific features of legal texts reveal the rhetorical strategies used by legal practitioners. Heffer (2005) examines prosecutorial discourse and identifies morpho-syntactic patterns that contribute to persuasion and authority. Wodak (1989) emphasizes that syntactic and morphological choices may reinforce institutional power in legal settings. Cotterill (2003) adds that linguistic strategies in legal contexts help construct authority and credibility. The literature also identifies plain language, accessibility, and technology as important concerns in legal communication. Kimble (2006) argues that morpho-syntactic clarity is essential in making legal texts understandable and functional. Jurafsky and Martin (2009) discuss how natural language processing can support more systematic analysis of legal texts by revealing morpho-syntactic organization. Together, these studies show that legal language must be examined not only as a technical system but also as a social, institutional, and communicative practice.

Locally, the study benefits the university, students, teachers, and community members by strengthening interdisciplinary research between linguistics and law. It may support classroom discussions, student-led research, curriculum development, and academic collaboration. Community members may also benefit because prosecutors' resolutions affect people involved in criminal cases, and clearer understanding of legal documents may help them navigate legal procedures more effectively. Nationally, the study focuses on prosecutors' resolutions from different regions of the Philippines. It examines 16 criminal case resolutions published in the Supreme Court E-Library within the period 2015–2024. The study includes resolutions from various Philippine regions and considers both successfully filed and dismissed cases. This national scope allows the study to identify common and differing morpho-syntactic patterns in Philippine prosecutorial resolutions while remaining focused on criminal cases and their linguistic features. Globally, the study contributes to the wider field of legal linguistics and forensic linguistics. The concerns raised by Tiersma (1999), Coulthard and Johnson (2007), Gibbons (2003), Maley (1994), Bhatia (1987), Crystal and Davy (1969), Garner (2001), Solan and Tiersma (2005), Heffer (2005), Bhatia (1993), Wodak (1989), Cotterill (2003), Kimble (2006), and Jurafsky and Martin (2009) show that legal language is an international area of inquiry involving clarity, accuracy, authority, accessibility, and interpretation. The Philippine focus of this study adds a specific local and national perspective to that broader scholarly discussion.

The study is guided by Lexical Functional Grammar, which supports the analysis of the relationship between morphology and syntax in legal language. The framework examines lexical entries in prosecutors' resolutions, particularly the morphological features of legal terms, including word forms, inflection, and derivational relations (Dalrymple et al., 1995). It also examines syntactic structures by analyzing phrase and clause organization, grammatical functions, sentence structures, phrase-structure rules, and syntactic dependencies (Bresnan, 1982). The conceptual basis further includes the analysis of morpho-syntactic constraints, particularly how morphology and syntax interact through agreement, word-order constraints, and morphological alignment patterns (Sag et al., 2003). Through this framework, the study maps the morphological profile of legal terms and the syntactic organization of prosecutorial resolutions. It also supports the development of a glossary that explains legal terms and morpho-syntactic features in plain language for non-experts.

The main research gap is the limited direct investigation of the morpho-syntactic features of prosecutors' resolutions. While legal language has been studied in relation to precision, clarity, genre, institutional authority, rhetoric, and interpretation, prosecutorial resolutions as a specific legal genre remain underexplored. This gap is significant because prosecutors' resolutions are important legal documents that help determine case outcomes and communicate institutional decisions. The study is therefore designed to answer four major concerns: the morphological features used by prosecutors in drafting resolutions; the syntactic structures that characterize prosecutors' resolutions, specifically coordination, subordination, transposition, predication, and parallelism; the common and differing morpho-syntactic features between successfully filed

and dismissed cases; and the development of a comprehensive glossary of legal terms and morpho-syntactic features for non-experts. These concerns justify the study's focus on linguistic form, legal function, and public accessibility.

The study aligns most directly with SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions because it focuses on the clarity, transparency, and accessibility of legal communication. By examining how prosecutors' resolutions are linguistically structured, the study contributes to a better understanding of how legal decisions are communicated and how institutional authority is expressed through language. The study also supports SDG 4 – Quality Education because its findings may be used in linguistics, law, forensic communication, legal discourse analysis, and applied language studies. It may help teachers and students understand how linguistic analysis can be applied to real legal documents and how language affects interpretation, reasoning, and communication in legal settings. The development of a hybrid glossary also connects the study with SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, particularly through the use of digital resources to improve access to legal language. The digital component of the glossary supports innovation in legal literacy by making legal and linguistic terms more searchable and accessible to non-experts. The study further relates to SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals because it encourages collaboration among linguists, legal practitioners, educators, students, community organizations, and researchers. Its interdisciplinary nature supports cooperation between academic institutions and legal communities in improving legal communication and public understanding.

The study contributes to institutional sustainability by promoting clearer, more transparent, and more accountable legal communication. Since prosecutors' resolutions are official documents that affect legal rights and case outcomes, understanding their linguistic structure may help legal institutions improve communication practices and strengthen public trust. It contributes to educational sustainability by providing material that can be used in linguistics, law, legal writing, discourse analysis, and forensic communication courses. Teachers may use the findings to deepen students' understanding of morpho-syntactic analysis, while students may gain practical experience in applying linguistic theory to real legal texts. The study also supports community sustainability by helping non-experts better understand legal documents. Through the proposed glossary, community members, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders may gain a clearer understanding of legal terminology and sentence structures used in prosecutorial resolutions. This may support legal literacy, procedural awareness, and more informed participation in legal processes. In terms of innovation and digital sustainability, the hybrid glossary combines printed and digital formats to improve access to legal and linguistic explanations. This approach reflects the relevance of digital tools in legal literacy and complements the broader interest in computational approaches to legal language discussed by Jurafsky and Martin (2009). Finally, the study contributes to policy and governance sustainability by emphasizing the need for clearer legal language, accessible legal documents, and stronger communication between legal institutions and the public. By focusing on the linguistic structure of prosecutors' resolutions, the study supports the broader goal of making legal discourse more understandable, precise, and socially responsive.

The study adopts a qualitative orientation grounded in documentary linguistic analysis. It examines prosecutors' resolutions as legal texts and focuses on their morphological and syntactic features rather than their legal merits or broader socio-political contexts. The analysis is limited to criminal case resolutions published in the Supreme Court E-Library from 2015–2024, written in English or Filipino, and selected from different regions of the Philippines. Criminal cases are emphasized because they contain formal legal arguments, procedural terminology, and language that directly relates to social order and safety (Pizzi, 2021; Reitz, 2020). Each prosecutor's resolution serves as an individual unit of analysis. The study examines word formation, inflectional patterns, sentence construction, clause organization, and selected syntactic structures, following close textual analysis in legal language research (Mellinkoff, 1963). The coding and validation process is supported by qualitative procedures, including expert review by a linguist and a prosecutor or lawyer, to improve reliability and credibility as guided by Creswell and Poth (2018). The study also develops a hybrid glossary of legal terms and morpho-syntactic features in printed and digital formats to improve accessibility for non-experts.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design grounded in documentary linguistics. This design was appropriate because the study examined written legal documents and focused on the detailed description and interpretation of linguistic features in prosecutors' resolutions. Through qualitative analysis, the study aimed to explain the morphological and syntactic structures that characterize prosecutorial resolutions (Mellinkoff, 1963).

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted through the Supreme Court E-Library, which served as the source of the prosecutors' resolutions used in the analysis. The selected resolutions came from different regions of the Philippines to ensure geographical diversity. These regions included the National Capital Region (NCR), Region I (Ilocos Region), Region II (Cagayan

Valley), Region III (Central Luzon), Region IV-A (Calabarzon), Region IV-B, Region V (Bicol Region), Region VI (Western Visayas), Region VII (Central Visayas), Region VIII, Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula), Region X (Northern Mindanao), Region XI (Davao Region), Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN), Region XIII (Caraga), and Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR).

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The study did not involve human respondents because it was based on documentary analysis. The units examined were individual prosecutors' resolutions published in the Supreme Court E-Library. Each resolution was treated as a separate unit of analysis to allow close examination of its morphological and syntactic features, including word formation, inflectional patterns, sentence construction, and clause structure (Mellinkoff, 1963). This approach allowed the study to describe the linguistic features and legal language practices present in the selected documents, following the guidance of Creswell and Poth (2018).

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The sample consisted of 16 prosecutors' resolutions involving criminal cases from 2015–2024. The resolutions were selected from the Supreme Court E-Library or its online platform. The inclusion criteria covered resolutions published within the 2015–2024 period, resolutions connected to criminal cases, resolutions accessible through the Supreme Court E-Library, and resolutions written in English or Filipino. Criminal cases were selected because they are structured, formal, and likely to contain complex legal arguments and procedural terminology suitable for morpho-syntactic analysis (Pizzi, 2021). They were also considered relevant because criminal cases directly affect social order and safety, making their language important in the study of judicial communication (Reitz, 2020). The study excluded resolutions issued before 2015, resolutions involving civil or administrative cases, resolutions unavailable in the Supreme Court E-Library, and resolutions not written in English or Filipino. The dataset was balanced by including both filed and dismissed cases, resulting in 16 cases distributed across the identified Philippine regions.

2.5 Research Instrument

The main research instrument was a qualitative coding scheme developed to identify, classify, and record the morphological and syntactic features found in the selected prosecutors' resolutions. The coding process focused on word formation, inflectional patterns, sentence types, clause patterns, and other morpho-syntactic characteristics. The study was also guided by Lexical Functional Grammar, which supported the analysis of lexical entries, morphological features of legal terms, word forms, inflection, and derivational relations (Dalrymple et al., 1995). It also supported the analysis of phrase and clause hierarchy, grammatical functions, sentence structure, phrase-structure rules, and syntactic dependencies (Bresnan, 1982). The study further considered morpho-syntactic constraints, including agreement, word-order constraints, and morphological alignment patterns (Sag et al., 2003).

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data gathering began by accessing the Supreme Court E-Library and identifying prosecutors' resolutions from official publications or online sources. The resolutions were gathered into a comprehensive dataset limited to criminal cases issued from 2015–2024. The selected documents were screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance, accessibility, language suitability, and regional representation. The final dataset consisted of 16 criminal case resolutions, with attention given to balancing filed and dismissed cases.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed through qualitative textual analysis. The researcher examined the prosecutors' resolutions to identify and document morphological and syntactic characteristics, particularly word formation, inflectional patterns, sentence types, and clause patterns. This close textual analysis followed the recommendation of Mellinkoff (1963). Qualitative coding was used to classify and annotate the linguistic patterns found in the documents, allowing the researcher to systematically record the different morphological and syntactic features. To strengthen the credibility and consistency of the coding process, inter-rater procedures were applied. Two experts, one linguist and one prosecutor or lawyer, reviewed the researcher's analysis. These experts verified the correctness of the coding and helped resolve discrepancies to improve reliability, as emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2018). The study also involved the development of a hybrid glossary of legal terms and morpho-syntactic features found in prosecutors' resolutions. The glossary was prepared in both printed pamphlet and digital format to help non-experts understand legal language. The process began with identifying key terms and features from the analyzed resolutions, followed by the creation of plain-language definitions and examples. The digital version was designed as a searchable resource, while the printed version served as a convenient guide. The glossary was reviewed by specialists in legal language and linguistics to support accuracy and usability.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Morphological Features Observed in Prosecutors' Resolutions

3.1.1 Word Formation Processes

The analysis showed that inflection, derivation, and compounding were the most common word formation processes across the cases. Inflection appeared in past-tense verbs such as arrested, testified, dismissed, charged, executed, convicted, and sentenced, as well as in plural nouns such as witnesses, cases, officers, victims, and authorities. Derivation appeared in legal nominalizations and abstract forms such as conviction, dismissal, reconsideration, documentation, certification, prosecution, inadmissibility, penetration, molestation, and technicality. Compounding was also frequent in legal and procedural expressions such as courtroom, eyewitness, cross-examination, police station, birth certificate, police blotter, buy-bust, poseur-buyer, crime-laboratory, pre-trial, and motion-for-reconsideration. Reduplication was generally absent in the English legal texts, although the discussion recognized that reduplication is more typical of Filipino or other Austronesian linguistic contexts. These findings show that word formation in legal resolutions supports precision, formality, and economy of expression. Inflection helps establish time, number, and agreement, which are necessary for chronological and grammatical clarity in legal narration (Biber et al., 2021). Derivation, especially nominalization, allows legal actions and judgments to be expressed as abstract legal concepts, supporting objectivity and institutional tone (Bhatia, 2014). Compounding condenses technical legal meanings into compact lexical units, reflecting the lexical economy of specialized legal discourse (Carter & McCarthy, 2015). The absence of reduplication reflects the formal and largely English-based register of Philippine legal writing, where colloquial or vernacular morphological patterns are generally avoided (Rubino 2015; Gonzalez, 2016).

3.1.2 Morpheme Types and Affixation

The resolutions used both free and bound morphemes to construct legal meaning. Free morphemes included common legal and procedural words such as court, trial, law, case, crime, witness, appeal, accused, victim, evidence, judgment, and prosecutor. Bound morphemes included inflectional forms such as -ed and -s, as well as derivational forms such as -tion, -ment, -ly, -ity, -ship, -ness, and -al. Prefixes such as un-, re-, pre-, dis-, in-, im-, and pro- were used to express negation, repetition, sequence, opposition, and legal positioning. Suffixes were mainly used to form legal nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Infixes and circumfixes were generally absent because the resolutions were written in formal legal English. The findings indicate that free morphemes carry the core legal content, while bound morphemes encode grammatical relations and legal abstraction. This supports the idea that English legal vocabulary depends on the interaction of independent lexical items and affixes to create procedural, evaluative, and institutional meaning (Plag, 2018). The frequent use of -tion, -ment, and -ity confirms the role of derivational morphology in creating abstract legal nouns such as conviction, judgment, and inadmissibility (Booij, 2015). The absence of infixes and circumfixes reflects the typological structure of English legal writing, even though such forms exist in Philippine languages (Dryer and Haspelmath, 2013). Overall, affixation strengthens the technical and formal character of legal discourse while allowing precise categorization of legal acts and outcomes.

3.1.3 Morphological Typology and Grammatical Categories

The resolutions were predominantly analytic in structure because they relied heavily on word order, auxiliaries, and function words, as seen in phrases such as was found guilty, had testified, was convicted, is sentenced, and was dismissed. However, synthetic or fusional features also appeared in forms such as testified, charged, dismissed, and convicted, where -ed encodes grammatical information such as tense and aspect. The grammatical categories most often encoded were tense, aspect, mood, number, person, gender, and voice. Past tense and perfect aspect were common because the resolutions narrated completed legal events. The indicative mood dominated factual and judicial statements, while imperative and subjunctive forms appeared only in limited legal directives or hypothetical constructions. Third-person references were consistently used, and passive voice was frequent in both filed and dismissed cases. These results show that the morpho-syntactic structure of legal resolutions combines English analytic tendencies with limited synthetic marking. The reliance on word order and auxiliary constructions is consistent with English as an analytic language (Comrie, 2015), while fusional endings such as -ed contribute to compact legal narration (Quirk et al., 2014). The dominance of past tense and perfect aspect supports chronological transparency in legal storytelling, while the indicative mood reinforces the factual and declarative character of resolutions (Huddleston & Pullum, 2021). Passive voice shifts attention from individual actors to legal actions, procedures, and outcomes, which contributes to institutional neutrality and authority (Bhatia, 2014; Gibbons, 2015; Trosborg, 2014). The use of gendered terms such as father, daughter, girl, and victim was case-dependent, while the broader use of third-person and neutral references supported objectivity in legal description (Legal Language Project, 2021).

3.1.4 Allomorphy

The data showed regular allomorphic variation in plural and past-tense morphemes. The plural marker -s appeared as /s/, /z/, and /ɪz/ depending on the final sound of the base word, as in courts, victims, judges, witnesses, and cases. The past-tense marker -ed appeared as /t/, /d/, and /ɪd/ in forms such as asked, claimed, inserted, charged, pleaded, and arrested.

Prefix variation also appeared in forms such as inappropriate, improper, illegible, and inadmissible, where negative prefixes adjusted according to phonological environment. These variations were not tied to legal meaning but followed regular English morphophonemic rules. The findings indicate that allomorphy contributes to grammatical accuracy and phonological fluency rather than to legal semantics. The variation of -s and -ed follows standard English phonological conditioning and supports the formal flow of legal language (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2016; Spencer, 2017). The behavior of negative prefixes such as in- and im- also reflects general English morphology rather than specialized legal patterning. This confirms that while legal discourse uses highly technical vocabulary, its allomorphic behavior remains governed by broader English morphophonemic principles. As noted in the comparison of filed and dismissed cases, allomorphic variation follows phonological conditioning rather than legal function, consistent with the morphophonemic pattern described by Tarigan & Sembiring (2023).

3.2 Syntactic Structures Observed in Prosecutors' Resolutions

3.2.1 Coordination

The resolutions frequently used coordination to connect words, phrases, clauses, evidence, penalties, and procedural actions of equal syntactic rank. Coordinated nouns appeared in lists of witnesses, documents, damages, penalties, complainants, and legal actors. Coordinated verbs appeared in procedural sequences such as arrested, charged, and arraigned or testified, corroborated, and confirmed. Coordinated clauses were also used to show contrast, especially through conjunctions such as but and however. In filed cases, coordination often presented legal sequence and evidentiary accumulation. In dismissed cases, it often highlighted contrast, deficiency, or procedural inconsistency. Coordination supports the compact and orderly presentation of legal information. It allows legal writers to combine several actions or findings without creating unnecessary hierarchy, which is useful in presenting evidence, penalties, and procedural history (Huddleston and Pullum, 2021). In legal discourse, coordination also improves clarity by organizing multiple legal consequences or facts into parallel structures (Tiersma, 2014). In filed cases, coordination strengthens the impression of procedural movement and evidentiary completeness, while in dismissed cases, contrastive coordination marks gaps between legal expectation and procedural outcome. This aligns with the view that coordination helps condense legal texts while preserving the logic of judicial discourse (Coates, 2016; Blühdorn, 2007).

3.2.2 Subordination

Subordination appeared in clauses expressing causality, condition, time, concession, and legal contingency. Causal clauses were introduced by because, while temporal clauses were introduced by when, before, after, and as soon as. Conditional clauses appeared through if constructions, especially in legal hypotheticals or statutory conditions. Concessive clauses using although, even though, despite, and even if were used to contrast facts, legal expectations, or procedural claims. In filed cases, subordination usually explained the sequence and rationale of legal action. In dismissed cases, it often explained procedural defects, evidentiary insufficiency, or jurisdictional failure. The use of subordination shows how legal resolutions create hierarchical relationships among facts, evidence, and conclusions. Subordinate clauses allow legal writers to explain why an action occurred, when it occurred, and under what legal condition it mattered (Coulthard and Johnson, 2017). Conditional subordination is important in legal reasoning because it frames possible legal consequences or exceptions (Bhatia, 2014). Concessive subordination is especially useful in dismissed cases because it allows the text to acknowledge that a complaint or petition existed while still explaining why it failed. This confirms that legal argumentation depends on precise dependency relationships among clauses (Palmer, 2020; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014).

3.2.3 Transposition

The resolutions used transposition by placing adverbials, prepositional phrases, participial phrases, and evaluative expressions at the beginning or middle of sentences for emphasis. Examples included fronted expressions such as Given the foregoing, Evidently, Upon arraignment, Only then, In light of the overwhelming evidence, and Due to lack of due process. Transposed elements were also used to foreground emotional, procedural, or evidentiary context before the main clause. In filed cases, transposition often strengthened claims by foregrounding evidence or legal basis. In dismissed cases, it often functioned as a procedural hedge or explanation for dismissal. These findings show that transposition is a rhetorical and organizational feature of legal language. Fronting helps legal texts signal emphasis, chronology, evaluation, or procedural framing before presenting the main legal claim (Crystal and Davy, 2016). Expressions such as Given the foregoing and In light of the evidence guide the reader toward a conclusion and mark the movement from facts to judgment (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). In dismissed cases, fronted phrases such as Due to lack of due process shift focus away from personal agency and toward procedural context. This supports the view that marked word order facilitates interpretation and argumentation in legal discourse (Nikitina, 2016; Giltrow & Stein, 2017; Cotterill, 2014).

3.2.4 Predication

Predication appeared as a central syntactic feature in the resolutions because legal findings were commonly expressed through clear subject–predicate structures. Filed cases used strong assertive predicates such as found guilty, sentenced to, proved, convicted, affirmed, and imposed. Dismissed cases used weaker, negative, or procedural predicates such as was dismissed, was not proven, failed to establish, lacked merit, and was deemed inadmissible. Passive predication was

common, especially in statements such as The accused was convicted, The appeal was dismissed, and He is sentenced to Reclusion Perpetua. Embedded predication also appeared in statements reporting testimony, medical findings, court observations, or evidentiary conclusions. Predication functions as the grammatical foundation of legal assertion. Through predicates, resolutions declare findings, impose obligations, narrate procedural history, and establish finality (Quirk et al., 2014). Strong predicates in filed cases convey decisiveness and legal closure, while weak or negated predicates in dismissed cases emphasize insufficiency, defect, or procedural failure. Passive predication contributes to the formal and impersonal character of legal discourse by emphasizing the legal act rather than the individual legal actor (Gibbons, 2015). Embedded predication also reflects the layered structure of legal evidence, where testimony, findings, and court reasoning are incorporated within larger judicial statements (Trosborg, 2018; Tiersma, 2015).

3.2.5 Parallelism

Parallelism appeared in repeated grammatical patterns used to present rights, penalties, damages, evidence, legal consequences, and deficiencies. Filed cases used parallel verbs and adjectives such as testified, corroborated, confirmed and consistent, credible, and corroborated to strengthen evidentiary reliability. They also used repeated infinitive phrases and noun phrases when listing penalties or damages. Dismissed cases used negative parallelism, especially through repeated expressions of absence such as no witness, no affidavit, no probable cause. Parallel adverbs such as willfully, unlawfully, and criminally also appeared in criminal-law contexts to emphasize the intentional and unlawful character of acts. The findings show that parallelism improves rhythm, clarity, and persuasive force in legal resolutions. Repeated syntactic forms help organize complex legal information and make enumerations easier to interpret (Hyland, 2016). In filed cases, parallelism reinforces evidentiary strength and coherence, while in dismissed cases it emphasizes absence, insufficiency, or procedural failure. Parallel legal phrases also strengthen the rhetorical and mnemonic value of decisions, especially when presenting penalties, rights, or statutory consequences (Charrow & Charrow, 2015). In criminal case resolutions, parallel adverbs and coordinated penalties support the seriousness, completeness, and formal authority of judicial language (Hyland, 2018; Mellinkoff, 2014).

3.3 Comparative Patterns Between Filed and Dismissed Cases

3.3.1 Morphological Contrasts

Filed and dismissed cases shared the same major morphological resources, but they differed in emphasis and function. Filed cases used inflected verbs and derived nouns to highlight completed legal action, evidentiary movement, conviction, prosecution, and sentencing. Their morphology showed dynamic procedural development through forms such as pleaded, testified, convicted, charged, and has testified. Dismissed cases used morphology associated with rejection, insufficiency, and procedural limitation, including dismissed, denied, inadmissibility, technicality, and lack of merit. Filed cases also showed more complex legal noun phrases and compounding, while dismissed cases tended to rely more on passive and nominalized forms that emphasized procedural distance. These contrasts show that morphology supports different rhetorical functions depending on case outcome. In filed cases, word formation highlights action, legal progress, and procedural completion. In dismissed cases, morphology foregrounds absence, defect, technical insufficiency, or institutional distancing. The frequent use of derivational suffixes such as -tion and -ment confirms that legal English depends on abstract nouns to conceptualize legal processes (Krykoniuk, 2021). Filed cases show more morphological layering in legal noun phrases, while dismissed cases show simpler structures and more isolated morphemes, consistent with English patterns where selected morphological complexity appears in domain-specific noun phrases (Bauer, 2014). The stronger use of passive structures in dismissed cases also reflects the objectivity and agency-obscuring tendency of legal English (Carvalho et al., 2016; Bhattacharya et al., 2019).

3.3.2 Syntactic Contrasts

The syntactic comparison showed that filed cases used coordination, subordination, transposition, predication, and parallelism to express legal action, evidentiary strength, and final judgment. Coordination in filed cases presented sequences of legal acts, subordination explained rationale or chronology, transposition foregrounded evidence, predication declared guilt or liability, and parallelism reinforced credibility and coherence. Dismissed cases used the same syntactic structures differently. Coordination marked contrast, subordination expressed concession or procedural deficiency, transposition framed dismissal through context, predication used weak or negated verbs, and parallelism emphasized absence or insufficiency. These findings indicate that the same syntactic tools serve different legal and rhetorical purposes depending on the result of the case. Filed cases rely on syntax to construct procedural movement and evidential solidity, while dismissed cases use syntax to explain legal failure, procedural irregularity, or lack of proof. Coordination condenses legal sequences and contrastive outcomes (Coates, 2016; Blühdorn, 2007). Transposition strengthens interpretation by foregrounding evidentiary or procedural context (Nikitina, 2016). The overall convergence of these syntactic strategies corresponds to the functional demands of legal storytelling and law-making, consistent with genre-based research on legal discourse (e.g., Bhatia et al., 2004; Nikitina, 2016).

3.4 Integrated Interpretation of Morpho-Syntactic Patterns

The overall findings show that prosecutors' resolutions and related criminal case decisions use morphology and syntax not only to describe legal events but also to construct legal authority. Morphological features produce compact and technical legal meanings, while syntactic structures organize evidence, establish causality, express institutional judgment, and distinguish filed from dismissed cases. Filed cases generally emphasize completion, evidentiary coherence, and legal action. Dismissed cases emphasize insufficiency, procedural limitation, negation, and distance from agency. This interpretation supports the view that legal syntax and morphology are not neutral stylistic choices but functional tools of legal reasoning. The observed patterns help create formal, authoritative, and procedurally legitimate texts. They also show that legal discourse depends on a balance between precision and accessibility. While the linguistic structures strengthen institutional authority, they may also make legal texts difficult for non-experts to understand. Therefore, the morpho-syntactic analysis confirms the importance of clearer legal writing and supports efforts to make legal language more transparent and accessible without reducing legal accuracy (Bhatia, 2014; Tiersma, 1999; Candlin & Gotti, 2017; Breeze, 2021; Gales, 2020).

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that prosecutors' resolutions in the Philippines are shaped by a structured and rule-governed linguistic system in which morphology and syntax help construct authoritative, precise, and understandable legal documents. Morphological processes such as derivation, compounding, inflection, and nominalization allow legal concepts to be expressed in dense and formal ways, while syntactic features such as subordination, coordination, transposition, predication, and parallelism organize legal reasoning, procedural logic, and institutional authority. These findings support the view that legal speech involves intentional linguistic choices designed to reduce ambiguity and strengthen procedural accuracy (Bhatia, 2014), and that tense, aspect, and legal modality are important in judicial narration and interpretation (Coulthard and Johnson, 2017). The formal syntactic structure of the resolutions also reflects the legal system's demand for clarity and neutrality, as legal documents use syntactic choices to communicate legal facts and shape institutional position (Gibbons, 2015). Passive voice, fronted constructions, indicative mood, and declarative forms reinforce objectivity, finality, and procedural authority, consistent with the need for nonbias and neutrality in legal writing (Tiersma & Solan, 2015). Overall, the study contributes to forensic and legal linguistics by showing that the morpho-syntactic structure of legal texts supports legal accuracy, institutional authenticity, and public understanding, while the proposed glossary responds to the need for clearer legal language and improved access to justice, as emphasized by Kimble (2016) and Mattila (2022).

The study recommends that teachers and educational institutions integrate morpho-syntactic analysis of legal texts into linguistics, legal education, applied linguistics, legal discourse analysis, and forensic communication courses to strengthen students' critical, analytical, and practical understanding of legal language. It also recommends that accused persons and other parties involved in criminal cases be given simplified or translated summaries of prosecutorial resolutions, especially through the assistance of public defenders, legal aid providers, or court interpreters for individuals with limited formal education or those who speak regional languages. Legal practitioners and prosecutors are encouraged to use more language-inclusive drafting practices by balancing formality and precision with accessibility, using the hybrid glossary as a reference for clarifying common legal expressions. Policy makers and the judiciary are advised to institutionalize linguistic audits of legal documents, develop standard formats or linguistic guidelines for prosecutors' resolutions, and consider policies that support simplification or translation of legal documents to improve transparency and public trust. Future researchers and legal reform advocates are encouraged to extend the study to other legal texts such as affidavits, judicial opinions, and police reports, conduct larger quantitative corpus studies, and examine sociolinguistic factors such as class, education, and language background in relation to legal text comprehension.

The study was limited to a purposive sample of 16 prosecutors' resolutions involving filed and dismissed criminal cases in the Philippines from 2015 to 2025. Its focus was confined to morpho-syntactic features, particularly morphological processes and sentence-level structures, rather than the full legal merits, broader socio-political context, or other forms of legal documentation. The recommendations for future research indicate that the present study may be extended by examining other legal genres, applying quantitative corpus methods to larger datasets, and exploring sociolinguistic variables that influence how different groups understand legal texts.

Compliance with ethical standards

This study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical standards and responsible research practices. Since the research relied on publicly available prosecutors' resolutions from the Supreme Court E-Library and did not involve human respondents, issues of voluntary participation and informed consent were generally not applicable; however, confidentiality and sensitivity were observed in handling legal documents, especially cases involving private individuals or protected identities. Ethical approval and institutional requirements were complied with as applicable, and all sources, legal texts,

and scholarly works were properly acknowledged. The author declares no conflict of interest, accepts full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the research, acknowledges the contributions of advisers, validators, and other academic support, and recognizes copyright ownership over the final manuscript in accordance with institutional and academic policies.

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