

Original Article

Syntactic Patterns in 2023 Local Government Executive Orders: A Philippine English Perspective

Marcwani Pal-ing^{1,*}

Received: 14 August 2026; Revised: 23 September 2026;
Accepted: 26 September 2026; Published: 29 September 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.66074/H3F8Q2T9M>

Abstract

This study examines the syntactic structures in selected Local Government Unit (LGU) Executive Orders issued in 2023 and explores how these structures reflect Philippine English in local government documents. Anchored in Koopman's framework of syntactic analysis, the study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to examine five digitally archived LGU Executive Orders. The analysis focuses on the syntactic structures present in the documents, particularly declarative clauses, modal verbs, passive constructions, extended determiner phrases, and other constituent structures. The findings show that the selected Executive Orders commonly use declarative structures, modal verbs such as 'shall' and 'must', passive constructions, and extended noun phrases. These structures contribute to the documents' formal and authoritative nature by articulating administrative requirements, obligations, and actions. The analysis also shows that some of the observed syntactic patterns are consistent with previously documented features of Philippine English, particularly in the use of formal and structurally conservative forms. However, the findings are limited to the five selected Executive Orders and therefore do not represent Philippine English as a whole. Instead, the study provides a descriptive account of the syntactic patterns found in the selected local government documents and shows how these structures function within formal bureaucratic discourse. Overall, the study highlights the role of syntax in constructing authority and obligation in LGU Executive Orders while providing an initial examination of Philippine English in local government documents.

¹ Mindanao State
University-Iligan
Institute of
Technology, Iligan
City, Philippines
* marcwani.pal-
ing@g.msuiit.edu.ph

Keywords: executive orders; institutional discourse; local government; Philippine English; syntax; World Englishes

1. Introduction

English plays a central role in governance in the Philippines, serving as the primary language of official communication in national and local government institutions. As Article XIV, Section 7 confirms, English and Filipino are recognized as the official languages of the Philippines for purposes of instruction and communication. Moreover, reinforcing this is Executive Order No. 335, issued in 1988 by President Aquino, which encourages all government sectors to use the Philippines' official languages in transacting, as accordingly, "will hasten greater understanding and appreciation among the people of government programs." Building from this, Executive Orders, especially those written in English, become texts that carry the weight of official authority as they are intended to be clear, precise, and enforceable. Given the historical role of English in government, law, and education, the Philippines continues to use English to draft and circulate such documents. Beyond administrative clarity, the use of English in a multilingual country such as the Philippines has paved the way for non-native speakers of English to indigenize the language, now known as Philippine English. Accordingly, Philippine English was recognized as a distinct, nativized variety (Llamzon, 1969). While much research on Philippine English has focused on phonology, lexis, or morphology, less attention has been paid to syntactic patterns in formal institutional discourse, particularly in local government documents such as Executive Orders. Although new studies continue to emerge, there remains a strong focus on the phonological features of Philippine English, with little attention to grammar, including syntactic features. This claim is supported by the overview of Teodoro Llamzon's account (1969) by Ma. Lourdes Bautista in the year 2008. In this regard, examining the syntax of LGU Executive Orders offers an opportunity to examine how Philippine English is used in formal, institutional settings, particularly in documents that communicate policies, administrative actions, and obligations.

According to Koopman et al. (2013), in their book 'An Introduction to Syntactic Analysis and Theory', syntactic analysis examines linguistic input through internal grammatical representations inferred from systematic observation of linguistic behavior. In context, fully understanding the language of Executive Orders requires a syntactic approach, as it looks closely at sentence structure, clause relations, and the grammatical organization of a text. Not just dependent on vocabulary, syntax explains how meaning and institutional power are encoded through grammatical patterns. In this study, Koopman's framework is used specifically as a syntactic approach for examining how sentences are organized into hierarchically structured units and identifiable constituents. This allows the study to examine the grammatical

organization of the selected Executive Orders without treating the framework as an explanation of Philippine English itself.

In the Philippine context, the English used in government documents may also reflect features of Philippine English (PhE), a recognized variety within the framework of World Englishes. Previous scholarship on Philippine English has examined grammatical and syntactic features observed across different forms of English use in the Philippines. These studies provide a basis for examining whether syntactic patterns found in formal government documents correspond with previously documented features of Philippine English. However, these features of Philippine English uncovered in previous studies remain in question when contextualized within LGU Executive Orders. Thus, there is a need to examine how such syntactic structures appear in local government documents and how they function within formal bureaucratic discourse.

Anchored in Koopman et al.'s framework of syntactic analysis, this paper examines the syntactic structures of selected and digitally recorded LGU Executive Orders issued in 2023. From a syntactic approach, sentences are not linear, but they comprise hierarchically and purposefully organized units composed of identifiable constituents. Through this approach, the study identifies recurring syntactic patterns in the selected Executive Orders and examines how these structures function in expressing authority and obligation. The identified patterns are also examined in relation to documented features of Philippine English. However, the five selected Executive Orders are treated as a limited corpus and are not taken to represent Philippine English as a whole. Rather, the study provides a descriptive examination of how syntactic structures are used in the selected LGU documents and how these structures contribute to the formal and authoritative nature of local government communication.

Anchored in the syntactic approach of Koopman et al. (2013), this study aims to identify the syntactic structures used in selected LGU Executive Orders issued in 2023, examine how these structures function in expressing authority and obligation, and determine how the identified syntactic patterns relate to previously documented features of Philippine English.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 English in Institutional and Bureaucratic Texts

Studies on institutional and bureaucratic discourse have consistently shown that official documents rely on distinctive syntactic patterns to convey authority, impersonality, and formality. In a study by Livnat (2010) that examines how scientists often deploy specific linguistic tools to create an "objective" tone in scientific writing, the study investigated the rhetorical roles of impersonal constructions and grammatical metaphors. Although the study focuses on scientific discourse rather than legal documents, its discussion of impersonality provides a point of comparison in

understanding how formal institutional texts minimize personal involvement and foreground the information or action being presented. Narrowing this discussion to legal and institutional documents, Madrunio (2022) examined the lexical and grammatical features of Memoranda of Agreement and found the presence of modality, sentence length and complexity, legal archaisms, negators, and specialized legal lexis. These features were particularly evident in local agreements, showing how institutional documents employ specific linguistic structures to state provisions and responsibilities. This is relevant to the present study because Executive Orders, like Memoranda of Agreement, are institutional texts that contain provisions, requirements, and administrative responsibilities. The presence of modality and syntactic complexity, therefore, provides a basis for examining how similar structures operate in local government documents.

In addition, forensic linguistics is another area in which the language of legal and official documents can be examined. Rañosa-Madrunio and Martin (2023) explain that forensic linguistics in the Philippines includes the analysis of legal writings and other language-related practices within the legal domain. Their review shows that language and law can be examined through linguistic structures and their social and institutional functions. Drawing on this, the analysis of Executive Orders can be situated within the broader study of language in formal Philippine legal and administrative contexts. The issue of modality is also important in legal discourse because modal verbs can express necessity, requirement, permission, and authority. Catoto (2022), in a forensic linguistic analysis of prosecutors' resolutions in the Philippines, found the use of modal forms such as "shall" and "must" in expressing necessity, requirement, prescription, and other legal functions. This supports the present study's examination of modal verbs, particularly in determining how "shall" and "must" function to express administrative obligation in Executive Orders. Moreover, legal texts must communicate provisions in a manner that limits possible ambiguity. Bernardo and Albaña-Garrido (2023), in their analysis of Republic Act No. 10913, identified various forms of ambiguity in Philippine legal writing and showed that problems with references, grammar, structure, and vocabulary can affect the interpretation of legal provisions. This provides a basis for considering how expanded Determiner Phrases, complements, modifiers, and other syntactic structures in Executive Orders contribute to the specification and clarity of administrative provisions.

In the Philippine context, the English used in formal government documents may also be examined in relation to Philippine English. Dita, Rentillo, and Lee (2022) discuss the grammatical features of Philippine English and provide an updated account of its grammatical and syntactic development. More recently, Dita (2025) reviewed developments in the grammar of Philippine English using major corpora such as ICE-PHI and Phil-Brown, with a particular focus on verbs and adverbials. These studies show that Philippine English grammar can be examined through actual language use rather than only through comparisons with British or American English. Similarly, Dimaculangan and Sarmiento (2025) examined a 300,000-word corpus of unpublished master's theses and identified recurring grammatical features of Philippine English.

Their findings demonstrate that grammatical patterns in Philippine English can be identified through corpus-based examination of actual texts. Although their corpus differs from that of the present study, their work supports the need to examine Philippine English in specific textual contexts. In this study, the textual context comprises the formal, bureaucratic language of LGU Executive Orders.

Overall, the literature suggests that legal and bureaucratic texts employ grammatical structures closely associated with authority, obligation, formality, and clarity. These include modality, passive constructions, sentence complexity, expanded nominal structures, and formulaic expressions. However, while these structures are also found in broader legal and administrative English, their continued use in Philippine institutional documents provides a basis for examining how English operates within the Philippine context. This study, therefore, focuses on the syntactic organization of selected LGU Executive Orders. It relates the identified patterns to previously documented features of Philippine English without treating the selected documents as representative of the entire variety.

2.2 Syntactic Analysis and Constituency

Syntactic analysis, as outlined in Koopman's introduction to syntactic theory, treats sentences as hierarchically structured entities composed of constituents. In a book provided by Robert Valin Jr. published in 2001 called *An Introduction to Syntax*, Valin (2001) argues against viewing sentences as "strings of words" but rather as hierarchical structures. One of the concepts raised in the book is "Constituency," which is a single unit within a hierarchical structure comprising a word or a group of words that contributes to the overall meaning.

To strengthen this concept, Valin (2001) proposed a diagnostic test for identifying the aforementioned hierarchical units that make up a sentence. One of those is the Substitution or Pro-form Test, wherein if a string of words can be substituted with a single pro-form, such as a pronoun, without sacrificing its meaning, then it can be deduced as a single constituent. Another tool in identifying constituency is the Movement or Displacement Test, one of which is showcased through clefting or topicalization, where a certain word or group of words can be moved as a single block to different positions in a sentence, whether in the initial or non-initial environment. The last two kits for identifying constituency are the Coordination and the Stand-alone or Fragment Test. The first one, the coordination test, rules that only constituents of the same category, such as two noun phrases or verb phrases, can be joined by coordinating conjunctions like *and* or *or* and hence be classified as a single constituency. On the other hand, a stand-alone or fragment test identifies a constituent by its ability to serve as a complete, meaningful answer to a question. Overall, the defined approach provides a basis for identifying the syntactic units that make up the sentences found in the selected LGU Executive Orders.

2.3 Philippine English and Syntax

Philippine English has been recognized as a legitimate variety of English with distinct grammatical and syntactic features. A study done by Collins, Yao, and Borlongan (2014) explored how the use of relative clauses in Philippine English (PhIE) has evolved over the years, and this was conducted by comparing Philippine English (PhE) to those considered as “super-varieties,” or British English and American English, trying to see any alignment between global trends. Narrowing the study, Collins, Yao, and Borlongan (2014) focused on the purposive choice between *wh*-relatives (using *who*, *whom*, *whose*, and *which*) and *that*-relatives. As part of their key findings, there was a steady decline in the use of *wh*-relative pronouns and a significant increase in the use of the relative pronoun *that*.

This observation is relevant to the present study because relative clauses can occur within expanded noun phrases that specify persons, offices, duties, and administrative conditions in Executive Orders. From a syntactic perspective, examining these structures enables the study to determine how additional information is attached to noun phrases in local government documents. However, the present study does not assume that the occurrence of such structures in five Executive Orders automatically represents Philippine English as a whole. Instead, the documented observations from previous studies are used as a point of comparison for the selected corpus.

Similarly, Borlongan (2013) examines the verbal structures of Philippine English (PhE) through a comprehensive review, highlighting the verb phrase as one of the most indispensable parts of the clause and a central area where PhIE exhibits unique structural features. In one area of the study, Borlongan (2013) found that the use of the subjunctive in Philippine English is highly influenced by its colonial history and approximates closely with American English patterns while maintaining local nuances. Another noteworthy point concerns tense, aspect, and modality, where the study argues that, due to interference from the underlying structure characteristic of languages spoken in the Philippines, users of Philippine English mark tense and aspect differently.

In addition to these verbal structures, Collins et al. (2014) examined modality in Philippine English and found that high-modality verbs remain prominent, in contrast to the decline observed in American and British English. This observation is particularly relevant to the present study because Executive Orders commonly use modal verbs such as “*shall*” and “*must*” to express necessity, authority, and obligation. In this sense, the documented use of modality in Philippine English provides a basis for examining the presence and function of these modal verbs in the selected LGU Executive Orders.

Overall, the previous studies provide a basis for understanding the anticipated syntax of local government documents. Studies on impersonality and nominalization show how formal institutional writing may foreground actions, policies, and

requirements while reducing the prominence of individual agency. The syntactic approach of Koopman (2013) and Valin (2001) provides the basis for identifying the hierarchical structures and constituents that make up these documents. Meanwhile, studies on Philippine English, particularly those concerning relative clauses, verbal structures, and modality, provide documented features that can be compared with the syntactic patterns found in the selected LGU Executive Orders. Accordingly, this study examines these patterns within the limited corpus of five Executive Orders issued in 2023 and relates the findings to previously documented features of Philippine English without treating the selected documents as representative of the entire national variety.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design grounded in syntactic theory. According to Sandelowski (2000), qualitative descriptive designs are typically an eclectic but reasonable and well-considered combination of sampling, data collection, analysis, and representational techniques. Tethered to this design is the guiding framework provided by Koopman (2013), which posits viewing sentences not in a linear manner but as hierarchically organized structures comprising various constituents that contribute to meaning-making. In this study, the qualitative descriptive design is used to identify and describe the syntactic structures found in the selected LGU Executive Orders rather than to establish generalizations about Philippine English as a whole.

3.2 Corpus and Selection of Documents

For this paper, Executive Orders were chosen as sample documents due to their authoritative, formal nature, which makes them amenable to syntactic analysis. The scope is limited to five (5) Executive Orders issued in 2023. The selection of these documents is based on the availability of Executive Orders that were digitally archived and recorded, as the data were acquired through an online procedure. The five selected Executive Orders were treated as documentary linguistic data rather than as representations of all LGU documents in the Philippines. This limitation is important because the study does not attempt to establish that every local government document follows exactly the same syntactic pattern. Instead, the analysis identifies recurring structures in the selected documents and interprets them in relation to the formal and authoritative nature of LGU communication.

Table 1. Documentary corpus of selected executive orders.

Corpus Code	Executive Order	Title	Issuing Authority	Year	No. of Sentences
EO1	Executive Order No. 1, Series of 2023	An Order Amending Executive Order No. 52 Entitled “Creating and Constituting the Public-Private Partnership Selection Sub-Committee (PPP-SSS), Providing their Duties and Functions, and other Purposes”	Office of the City Mayor, Iligan City	2023	17 sentences
EO2	Executive Order No. 11, Series of 2023	An Executive Order Creating the Local Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee (PTC) in Iligan City	Office of the City Mayor, Iligan City	2023	34 sentences
EO3	Executive Order No. 27, Series of 2023	An Order Reconstituting the City Peace and Order Council	Office of the City Mayor, Iligan City	2023	18 sentences
EO4	Executive Order No. 39, Series of 2023	An Order Creating the Executive Management Board for the Agricultural	Office of the City Mayor, Iligan City	2023	17 sentences
EO5	Executive Order No. 41, Series of 2023	An Order Creating the Bayug Island Agro-Tourism Development Zone and Constituting the Bayug Island Agro-Tourism Project Development and Management Committee	Office of the City Mayor, Iligan City	2023	22 sentences

The selection of five documents also sets a clear boundary for the study's claims. The documents are examined as a limited corpus that can provide an initial description of syntactic patterns in selected LGU Executive Orders issued in 2023. The findings are therefore not taken as evidence that the identified structures represent Philippine English as a whole. Rather, the selected documents provide a specific context for examining how syntactic structures are organized and used in local government discourse.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis of the selected Executive Orders followed a syntactic approach based on Koopman’s (2013) framework. The analysis began by reading the five Executive Orders and identifying sentences and clauses containing syntactic structures relevant to the study's objectives. These structures were then examined according to

their constituent organization, sentence structure, verb phrase construction, voice, agent realization, and complement types.

In identifying constituents, the study used constituency tests discussed in syntactic analysis, particularly the substitution or pro-form test, movement or displacement test, coordination test, and stand-alone or fragment test. The substitution test was used by determining whether a word or string of words could be replaced by a pro-form, such as a pronoun, while retaining its grammatical function and general meaning. The movement or displacement test was used by examining whether a word or group of words could be moved as a unit to another position in the sentence through constructions such as topicalization or clefting. The coordination test was used by determining whether two strings belonging to the same syntactic category could be joined by coordinating conjunctions such as *and* or *or*. Lastly, the stand-alone or fragment test was used by examining whether a word or group of words could function as a meaningful answer to a question and therefore stand as an independent constituent.

After the constituents were identified, the sentences were examined according to their hierarchical organization. The analysis focused on how constituents were arranged within noun phrases, verb phrases, prepositional phrases, and clauses. Particular attention was given to modal verbs, passive auxiliaries, extended determiner phrases, complement structures, and other syntactic patterns that appeared in the selected Executive Orders. The structures were then interpreted according to their grammatical and institutional functions, particularly in expressing authority, obligation, administrative action, and formality.

3.4 Analytical Instrument

The analytical instrument used in this study was developed based on the syntactic categories and constituency principles outlined by Koopman (2013). The instrument was used as a guide in organizing the analysis of the selected Executive Orders and was not treated as a standardized measurement instrument. The categories included sentence type, major constituents, constituency, voice, agent realization, verb phrase structure, complement type, modifier or adjunct, grammatical function, and discourse function.

The use of the instrument allowed the analysis to proceed systematically across the selected documents. Each identified structure was first examined for its syntactic form and constituent organization, then considered for its function within the Executive Order. This procedure was applied consistently to the selected examples to maintain uniformity in the analysis. Since the study is a qualitative syntactic analysis conducted by a single researcher, no claim is made that the instrument provides statistical measurement or represents a standardized, validated instrument. Instead, methodological rigor was maintained by grounding the analytical categories in Koopman's (2013) syntactic framework, applying the same constituency procedures across the selected documents, and relating the interpretation of the findings directly to the study's stated objectives.

Table 2. Syntactic analysis instrument for LGU executive orders (Koopman-Based).

Analytical Category	Data Entry
Data Source	
Sentence Excerpt	
Sentence Type	
Major Constituents	
Constituency Test	
Voice	
Agent Realization	
Verb Phrase Structure	
Complement Type	
Grammatical Function	
Discourse Function	
Link to PhE	

3.5 Data Interpretation

The identified syntactic structures were interpreted in relation to the study's three objectives. First, the analysis described the recurring syntactic structures observed in the selected LGU Executive Orders. Second, the structures were examined in terms of how they function in expressing authority and administrative obligation. Third, the identified patterns were considered in relation to previously documented features of Philippine English. The analysis did not treat the presence of a particular syntactic structure as automatically distinct from Philippine English. Instead, the structures were first established through syntactic analysis and were then compared with documented discussions of Philippine English and formal institutional discourse. This distinction was observed to avoid equating commonly used features of legal or bureaucratic English with features that are necessarily localized to Philippine English.

Overall, the methodology provides a descriptive and systematic procedure for examining the syntactic organization of the selected LGU Executive Orders while recognizing the limited scope of the five-document corpus.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Syntactic Structures in LGU Executive Orders

This part of the paper examines the syntactic structures observed in the five (5) Executive Orders issued in 2023. Rather than treating the declarative structure alone as the main syntactic finding, the analysis further looks into the internal organization of the clauses, particularly the Verb Phrases (VPs), Determiner Phrases (DPs), complements, and adjuncts. From a syntactic approach, the declarative form provides the basic clause structure, while the expansion of its constituents shows how administrative requirements and legal provisions are grammatically organized.

The sentence “meetings must be conducted,” for example, follows a declarative clause structure, but its syntactic organization goes beyond simply identifying it as declarative. The subject “meetings” functions as the Noun Phrase (NP), while the predicate “must be conducted” forms the Verb Phrase (VP). Within the VP, “must” functions as the modal auxiliary, “be” functions as the passive auxiliary, and “conducted” functions as the past participle or lexical verb. The structure may therefore be represented as:

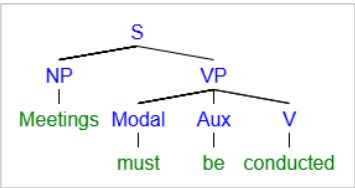


Figure 1. Syntactic tree structure of the declarative clause "Meetings must be conducted".

This breakdown shows that the declarative clause is only the starting point of the analysis. The internal constituents of the clause demonstrate how modality and passive voice are combined within the same VP. The modal “must” establishes necessity, while the passive construction places the action “conducted” in the predicate without directly identifying the agent. Accordingly, the syntactic structure contributes to the way an administrative requirement is presented as an institutional rule. In this sense, the analysis of the selected Executive Orders does not only identify whether the sentences are declarative. It examines how the constituents inside the declarative clauses are expanded to carry administrative meaning. The combination of modal auxiliaries, passive auxiliaries, past participles, complements, and extended nominal constructions provides a more detailed view of the syntactic organization of the documents.

4.1.1 Verb Phrase Complexity and Voice

Notably, across the five (5) documents examined, there exists a pattern marked by the presence of complex Verb Phrases (VPs). Branded as complex, for it follows a manner that integrates modal or auxiliary verbs followed by past participles, adverbial modifiers, and complements. In a broader sense, such a structure is more syntactically complex than simple Verb Phrases that rely only on a single lexical verb. Other than this, the passive voice was also present in the Executive Orders, allowing the documents to employ the linguistic strategies of foregrounding and backgrounding. Three patterns are particularly evident in the data. The first involves an auxiliary, an adverb, and coordinated past participles, as illustrated by the construction “are hereby repealed, amended, and modified” (EO1). The structure can be broken down as:

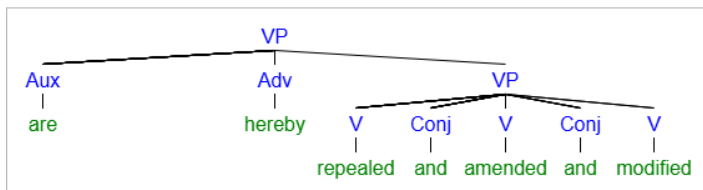


Figure 2. Syntactic tree structure of coordinated passive verb phrase "are hereby repealed, amended, and modified".

The auxiliary “are” establishes the passive construction, while the adverb “hereby” functions as an adverbial modifier of the predicate. The past participles “repealed,” “amended,” and “modified” are coordinated verbal elements that refer to the administrative actions carried out under the Executive Order. To be specific, the structure does not consist only of a passive verb. It contains an auxiliary, an adverbial element, and a coordinated series of past participles within the same predicate. This demonstrates how the VP is expanded to accommodate several institutional actions in one clause. The second pattern involves modal verbs followed by passive auxiliaries and past participles, as in “must be conducted” and “shall be charged.” These constructions may be broken down as:

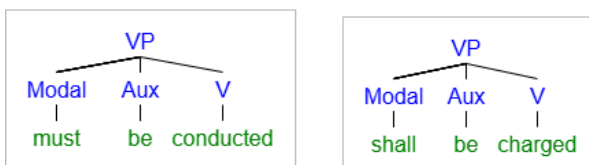


Figure 3. Syntactic Tree Structures of Modal-Passive Auxiliaries "must be conducted" and "shall be charged"

In “must be conducted”(EO2), the modal “must” occurs as the first element of the VP and expresses necessity or obligation. The auxiliary “be” marks the passive construction, while “conducted” functions as the past participle of the lexical verb. Similarly, in “shall be charged,” (EO3, EO5) “shall” functions as the modal auxiliary, “be” establishes the passive construction, and “charged” functions as the past participle. The internal structure therefore shows that the VP is formed through a sequence of modal + passive auxiliary + past participle. This syntactic layering is important because each element performs a different grammatical function. The modal establishes the force of obligation, while the passive auxiliary changes the voice of the clause and the past participle expresses the administrative action. The combination therefore allows the Executive Order to state an obligation without directly placing the individual agent in the subject position. Accordingly, the syntactic structure and the institutional function work together in expressing administrative requirements.

A third pattern involves an auxiliary, a past participle, and an infinitival complement, as in “are required to personally attend” (EO5) . The structure may be represented as:

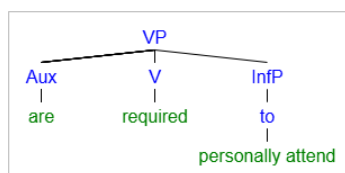


Figure 4. Syntactic tree structure of passive verb phrase with infinitival complement "are required to personally attend".

The auxiliary “are” marks the passive construction, while “required” functions as the past participle. The infinitival phrase “to personally attend” then functions as a complement, identifying the specific action associated with the requirement. Within the infinitival phrase, “to” introduces the infinitive, “personally” functions as an adverbial modifier, and “attend” functions as the lexical verb. The construction therefore, contains more than a simple passive structure. It contains a main passive VP followed by an infinitival complement that provides the action required from the relevant participant. Instead of simply stating that an individual is required, the infinitival complement identifies the action that constitutes compliance with the requirement. This allows the Executive Order to provide a more specific description of the administrative duty.

Overall, the analysis of the VPs shows that the complexity of the selected Executive Orders is not only based on the presence of passive voice. The complexity also comes from the layering of modal auxiliaries, passive auxiliaries, past participles, adverbs, coordinated verbal elements, and infinitival complements. These structures

allow the documents to foreground requirements and administrative actions while placing individual agency in the background.

4.1.2 Extended Determiner Phrases (DPs)

Extended Determiner Phrases are another syntactic structure found in the five Executive Orders. The subject position of several sentences contains long nominal constructions consisting of determiners, nouns, coordinated nouns, modifiers, prepositional phrases, and technical institutional names. These structures demonstrate how syntactic complexity is used to accommodate the precise identification of legal and administrative entities. Rather than using short or generalized subjects, Executive Orders specify the full range of documents, institutions, costs, or organizational units affected by an administrative action. The extended subject consequently contributes to legal precision because the grammatical subject itself contains information defining the scope of the provision.

This concern for specificity is also relevant to legal clarity. Bernardo and Albaña-Garrido (2023), in their analysis of a Philippine Republic Act, found that ambiguity may arise from problems involving references, grammar, structure, and vocabulary. In the present study, the extended Determiner Phrases do not necessarily indicate ambiguity; instead, their length and internal structure allow the document to specify the entities covered by the provision. However, when several modifiers and embedded phrases are placed within one constituent, careful syntactic organization becomes important to ensure that the intended scope of the provision remains clear.

For example, the expression “All costs pertaining to the operation of the EMB” (EO4) may be broken down as:

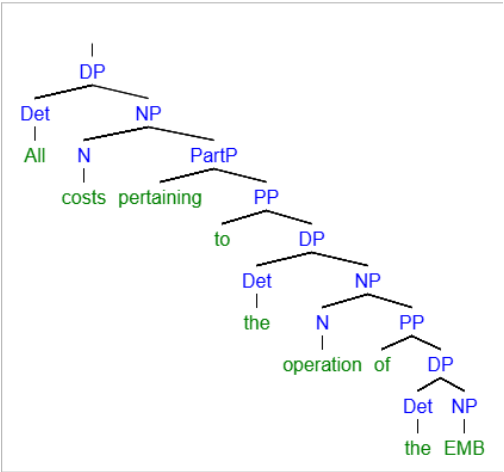


Figure 5. Syntactic tree structure of extended determiner phrase with participial and prepositional modifiers "All costs pertaining to the operation of the EMB".

In a simpler constituent representation, the structure may be read as:

All + costs + pertaining to + the operation + of the EMB

The determiner “all” specifies the scope of the noun “costs.” The participial element “pertaining to the operation of the EMB” then provides additional information about the costs being referred to. Within this phrase, “to the operation of the EMB” functions as a prepositional phrase, while “the operation of the EMB” forms another nominal constituent. The determiner “the” introduces “operation,” and the prepositional phrase “of the EMB” further specifies the operation being referred to. Similarly, the expression “All executive orders, proclamations, rules, regulations, previous issuances, or parts thereof” (EO3) contains a determiner followed by a coordinated series of nominal constituents. It may be represented as:

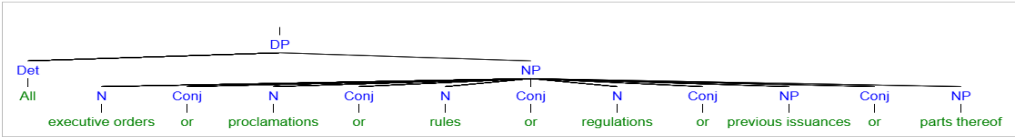
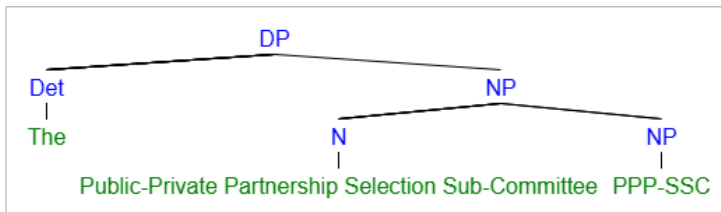


Figure 6. Syntactic tree structure of extended determiner phrase with coordinated nominal constituents "All executive orders, proclamations, rules, regulations, previous issuances, or parts thereof".

The use of coordination allows several categories of documents and related materials to be included under one larger nominal constituent. The determiner “all” then gives the entire coordinated phrase a broad scope. The expression therefore, functions as one subject constituent even though it contains several nouns and modifiers.

Another example is “The Public-Private Partnership Selection Sub-Committee (PPP-SSC)” (EO1). This construction contains a determiner followed by a sequence



of nouns functioning together as an institutional name:

Figure 7. Syntactic tree structure of complex proper noun determiner phrase "The Public-Private Partnership Selection Sub-Committee (PPP-SSC)".

The entire phrase functions as a single nominal constituent, referring to a specific administrative unit. The internal expansion of the noun phrase allows the Executive Order to identify the institution more precisely rather than simply using a general noun such as “committee.” From the perspective of constituency, these examples demonstrate that long nominal constructions can function as unified syntactic units. The substitution test supports this interpretation because “All costs pertaining to the operation of the EMB,” for instance, can be replaced by “they” or “these costs” depending on the context, while “The Public-Private Partnership Selection Sub-Committee” can be replaced by “it.” The ability of these extended expressions to occupy the same syntactic position as a pronoun supports their treatment as constituents.

To expound, the significance of these Extended Determiner Phrases is not simply their length. Their internal constituents provide information about the scope of the administrative provision. The determiner identifies the scope, the head noun identifies the entity, and the modifiers or prepositional phrases provide additional specification. This allows the Executive Orders to identify precisely who, what, or which documents fall within the provision. Accordingly, the Extended Determiner Phrases perform both a grammatical and an institutional function. Grammatically, they occupy the subject position as unified constituents. Institutionally, they allow the Executive Orders to

specify the full range of documents, institutions, costs, or organizational units affected by an administrative action. The length and internal complexity of these constituents consequently contribute to the documents' formal and legalistic character.

4.1.3 Complement and Adjunct Types

The Verb Phrases in the five Executive Orders are also expanded through different types of complements and adjuncts. Prepositional Phrases provide information concerning time, purpose, responsibility, and institutional location. For example, expressions such as “in a year” and “to the City Tourism Office” add information that specifies when an action occurs or which institutional unit is associated with a particular responsibility. Infinitival complements are particularly important because they allow the Executive Orders to identify specific actions associated with an administrative requirement. The construction “to personally attend the meeting,” for instance, contains the infinitival marker “to,” the adverb “personally,” the lexical verb “attend,” and the noun phrase “the meeting” (EO3). It may be represented as:

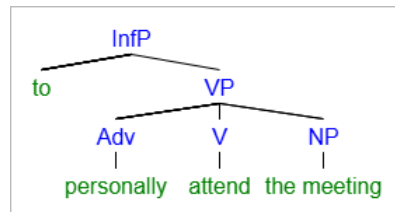


Figure 8. Syntactic tree structure of infinitival complement "to personally attend the meeting".

The infinitival phrase therefore operates as a complement that expands the main Verb Phrase. Instead of simply stating that an individual is required, the infinitival complement identifies the action that constitutes compliance with the requirement. These complements therefore contribute to the legal precision of the document. The main Verb Phrase establishes the action or requirement, while the complement provides the additional information necessary to define how, where, or for what purpose the action is to be carried out. This syntactic expansion is consistent with the need for Executive Orders to communicate administrative provisions with limited ambiguity.

4.2 Syntactic Expression of Authority and Obligation

This subsection examines how the identified syntactic structures function in expressing authority and obligation in Executive Orders. The patterns that emerged in the data fill in specific grammatical roles in understanding the operation of institutional power and governmental authority. The method of passivization, which is common across the five (5) Executive Orders, allows the document to foreground the required action while placing the individual actor into the background. This structure is not unique to Philippine English because passive constructions are also widely used in legal and administrative writing. Madrunio (2022), for instance, identified grammatical features such as modality, sentence length and complexity, and other legal linguistic features in local Memoranda of Agreement. From this, passivization in the present study is better understood as part of the broader grammatical resources of legal and bureaucratic discourse. Its importance in the selected Executive Orders is seen in how it is combined with modal verbs and other constituents to present administrative requirements in an institutional form.

In this sense, the passive construction allows the Executive Order to emphasize what is required rather than who acts. This allows the document to maintain a formal and institutional tone while presenting the action as an administrative requirement. Rañosa-Madrunio and Martin (2023) likewise situate the analysis of legal writings within forensic linguistics, where linguistic structures are examined in relation to the legal and institutional functions of texts. Accordingly, the use of passive constructions in the selected Executive Orders can be examined not as an isolated feature of Philippine English but as part of the language practices used in Philippine legal and administrative contexts.

For example, in “meetings must be conducted”, (EO2), the passive construction places “meetings” in the subject position, while the agent responsible for conducting the meetings is not explicitly stated. In contrast, “the members must conduct the meetings” places “the members” in the subject position and directly identifies the agent. The difference may be represented as:

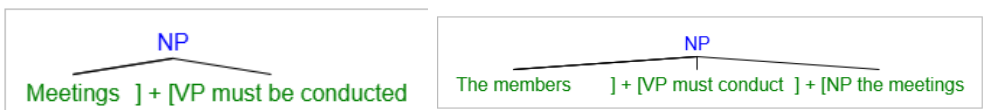


Figure 9. Comparative syntactic structures of passive and active clause configurations.

The passive construction therefore, backgrounds the agent and foregrounds the administrative action. This is not in itself a localized Philippine English feature. Rather, it is a standard grammatical resource that becomes meaningful in the context of Executive Orders because these documents concern establishing requirements, duties, and administrative actions. Moreover, modal verbs also play an added role in expressing obligation and authorization. In the selected documents, “shall” and “must”

are used to express administrative obligation. When used outside local governance, these modal verbs convey the sense of enforceability and high necessity. In the present data, “must” is used to impose administrative requirements, while “shall” is used to assign duties and responsibilities. Used in combination with the passive voice, these modal verbs enhance institutional regulation, moving from mere declarative statements to binding directives.

In addition to expressing authority and obligation, the presence of performative adverbs like “hereby” enhances the sentences’ meaning and their illocutionary force. “Hereby” in itself signals the readers that the issuance of the statement constitutes the official administrative action. This is most explicit in Executive Orders that center on “authoritative enactments,” for example, when a committee “is hereby reconstituted.” Grounding on a syntactic lens, the use of “hereby” and the clauses that come with it work together to formally introduce a sense of authority through formal “Bureaucratic English” templates. However, these templates should be understood as part of the wider legal and bureaucratic register of English rather than automatically as a feature unique to Philippine English. What becomes relevant to Philippine English is the continued use of these formal and structurally conservative patterns within the local government context.

All in all, through systematic syntactic choices that foreground institutional formality and clarity, a sense of authority and obligation is clearly communicated and modeled. The data, therefore, show the interaction among standard grammatical resources, legal-bureaucratic conventions, and local institutional writing practices.

4.3 Philippine English Features in LGU Executive Orders

Lastly, this section examines how the identified syntactic patterns may be related to previously documented features of Philippine English. Since the corpus consists only of five (5) Executive Orders issued in 2023, the findings are not treated as representative of Philippine English as a whole. Instead, the observed structures are compared with previously documented descriptions of Philippine English to identify areas of alignment and potential local preferences. As the language primarily studied in this paper, Philippine English in the formal register is observed to align with previously documented studies on Philippine English features. From this, it can be solicited that the selected Executive Orders show the continued use of formal and structurally conservative patterns. These patterns, however, should also be understood alongside standard legal and bureaucratic English conventions, as the passive voice, modal verbs, and formulaic legal expressions are not exclusive to Philippine English.

4.3.1 Bureaucratic Passive and High Modality

One characteristic observed in the selected Executive Orders is their tendency to use the passive voice to reinforce or establish an objective legal standard. The use of

passive voice in administrative and professional contexts is not unique to Philippine English. Rather, it is a common grammatical resource in formal and legal writing because it allows the action, requirement, or affected entity to be brought into focus while the individual actor may remain in the background. In the present data, this structure becomes particularly visible when passive voice is combined with high-modality verbs such as “shall” and “must.” The construction “must be conducted,” for example, combines the modal “must” with the passive auxiliary “be” and the past participle “conducted.” This structure expresses a requirement while placing the activity itself in the foreground.

In addition, the high modality verbs such as “shall” and “must” remain present in the Executive Orders analyzed. These modal verbs are used to express authority, necessity, and administrative obligation. Catoto (2022), in examining prosecutors’ resolutions in the Philippine legal context, similarly found that modal forms such as “shall” and “must” perform functions related to necessity, requirement, and prescription. This supports the present observation that modality serves an important role in expressing administrative requirements in Executive Orders. However, the use of “shall” and “must” should not be treated as uniquely Philippine English because these modal forms are also established features of legal and bureaucratic English. Their relevance in the present study lies in their continued use in Philippine government documents and in how they function alongside passive constructions and other syntactic structures. To expound on this, data from the International Corpus of English (ICE-PH) suggest that Philippine English retains the use of structural conservatism in administrative and regulatory texts. This provides a useful point of comparison for the present corpus because the Executive Orders also show a preference for formal linguistic markers, particularly in the use of modality and passive constructions. Accordingly, the findings may indicate continuity in the formal register of Philippine English, while still recognizing that the structures themselves belong to the wider resources of English legal and administrative discourse.

5.3.2 Formulaic Legal Templates

The selected Executive Orders also contain syntactic templates associated with “Bureaucratic English.” Munalim (2019) approaches Philippine English in terms of function and, drawing on the International Corpus of English (ICE-PH), suggests that written administrative and “learned” texts remain structurally conservative even as other forms of professional discourse exhibit linguistic innovations. One example found in the data is the “Repealing Clause”:

“All executive orders inconsistent with the provisions of this Order are hereby repealed.”

The excerpt provided above follows a standard legal drafting pattern in which previous issuances inconsistent with the present Order are formally repealed. The

structure should therefore not be treated as a legal template unique to Philippine English. Rather, its presence in the selected Executive Orders demonstrates how local government documents continue to use established forms of legal and bureaucratic writing.

Madrunio (2022) similarly found legal archaisms, modality, sentence length and complexity, and specialized legal lexis in local Memoranda of Agreement. From this, the formulaic expressions found in the present corpus can be understood as part of the wider language of institutional and legal writing. Their relevance to Philippine English lies not in the structure being exclusively Filipino, but in the fact that such established legal forms continue to be used in Philippine government documents.

In addition, the combination of the passive voice and legalistic adverbs such as “hereby” contributes to the provision's formal and performative character. The structure “are hereby repealed” (EO3) presents the repeal as an official administrative act. Accordingly, the syntactic pattern functions to establish the legal effect of the provision while maintaining the formal register expected of an Executive Order.

From a syntactic perspective, the clause may be broken down as:

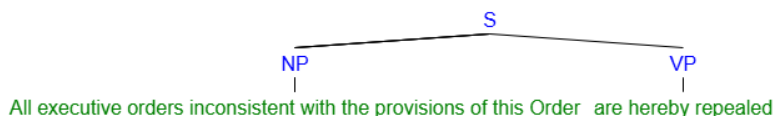


Figure 10. Syntactic tree structure of a standardized repealing clause "All executive orders inconsistent with the provisions of this Order are hereby repealed".

The subject NP contains the determiner “all,” the head noun “executive orders,” and the post-modifying phrase “inconsistent with the provisions of this Order.” The VP then consists of the passive auxiliary “are,” the adverb “hereby,” and the past participle “repealed.” The structure therefore, combines an expanded nominal constituent with a passive construction and a legalistic adverb. This syntactic pattern is important not because the repealing clause itself is uniquely Philippine English, but because it shows how standard legal drafting conventions are maintained in the local government context. Accordingly, the relevance of Philippine English lies more in the continued preference for these formal and formulaic structures in Philippine institutional writing.

5.3.3 Modality and Authority

The patterned, consistent use of “shall” and “must” becomes an important marker of authority in local executive drafting practices. Compared with other Englishes, the continued use of high-modality verbs in the selected documents may be discussed in

relation to the documented structural conservatism of Philippine English. However, these modal verbs are not exclusive to Philippine English. Their function as markers of obligation is also established in standard legal and administrative English. What is relevant to the present study is their continued use in selected Philippine government documents and their combination with other formal syntactic structures, such as the passive voice and expanded noun phrases.

5.3.4 Syntactic Complexity for Official Duties

Infinitival complements with passive verbs, such as “are required to personally attend” (EO3), are another notable structure in the Executive Orders analyzed. This construction contains a passive VP followed by an infinitival complement:

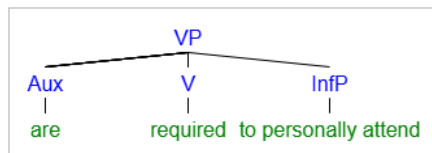


Figure 11. Syntactic tree structure of passive verb phrase with infinitival complement "are required to personally attend".

The passive construction establishes the institutional requirement, while the infinitival complement identifies the specific action expected from the relevant participant. This kind of syntactic expansion allows the document to explicitly state official duties while maintaining the high level of formality expected in “Bureaucratic English.” Additionally, the presence of “subject to” conditionals in the Executive Orders serves to delimit legal parameters, ensuring that the order in question is not treated as absolute but operates within defined legal, fiscal, and non-fiscal boundaries. These structures may be related to the structural conservatism of Philippine English described by Munalim (2019) and Borlongan (2013). However, the presence of such constructions should not automatically be interpreted as a unique feature of Philippine English. Rather, their relevance to the present study is in how these established grammatical and legal structures are maintained and used within Philippine local government writing.

Overall, the analysis shows that the syntactic patterns found in the five Executive Orders involve an interaction between standard English grammar, legal-bureaucratic conventions, and features previously documented in Philippine English. The passive voice, modal verbs, expanded Determiner Phrases, infinitival complements, and formulaic legal structures are not individually unique to Philippine English. However, their continued use and combination in the selected LGU documents provide a basis for examining how Philippine English operates in a formal institutional register.

5. Conclusion

In this study, the syntactic structures in the selected Local Government Unit (LGU) Executive Orders show how language is used not only to construct grammatically complete statements but also to establish authority, impose obligations, and set administrative requirements. From a syntactic approach, the use of declarative clauses, complex Verb Phrases, expanded Determiner Phrases, passive constructions, modal verbs, infinitival complements, and formulaic legal structures allows the Executive Orders to present administrative actions formally and authoritatively. These structures demonstrate that syntax in institutional texts is closely related to the function of the document, particularly in expressing what must be done, what is required, and which provisions must be followed. Drawing on this, the syntactic choices found in the selected Executive Orders have implications for public administration and legal clarity. The use of modal verbs such as *shall* and *must* makes obligations and requirements explicit, while passive constructions place greater emphasis on the required action rather than on the individual performing it. This allows the documents to foreground administrative requirements and institutional decisions. At the same time, the use of expanded nominal structures and formulaic legal expressions provides specificity in referring to offices, persons, procedures, and previous issuances. Accordingly, these syntactic choices contribute to the formal and regulatory function of Executive Orders. However, lengthy structures and repeated legal formulations may also require careful reading, particularly when several modifiers and embedded phrases occur within a single constituent. This suggests that syntactic clarity is important in public administrative writing because the way a provision is structured may affect how easily its intended requirement or responsibility is understood.

The findings also show that the identified syntactic structures should not be treated as features unique to Philippine English. Passive constructions, modal verbs, expanded noun phrases, and formulaic legal expressions are also present in standard English and legal-bureaucratic writing. Their relevance to Philippine English in this study lies in their continued use and combination within Philippine local government documents. Overall, the selected Executive Orders show an interaction between standard English grammar, legal-bureaucratic conventions, and previously documented features of Philippine English in a formal institutional context. However, the study is limited by its corpus of five Executive Orders issued in 2023. The small number of documents limits the extent to which the identified syntactic patterns can be generalized to LGU Executive Orders in the Philippines as a whole. The findings should therefore be understood as observations from the selected documents rather than as a representation of all Philippine local government writing. In addition, the limited corpus does not provide a sufficient basis for determining whether a particular syntactic structure is the most frequently used across LGU Executive Orders.

For future research, the corpus may be expanded by examining more Executive Orders from different LGUs and regions in the Philippines. Future studies may include Executive Orders issued across several years to determine whether these syntactic patterns remain consistent or change over time. A larger corpus may also allow researchers to provide frequency counts and compare the occurrence of declarative clauses, passive constructions, modal verbs, expanded Determiner Phrases, and other syntactic structures. In addition, future research may compare Executive Orders from different levels of government or compare Philippine LGU documents with similar administrative and legal documents from other English-speaking contexts. This allows further examination of which syntactic patterns are shared with broader legal-bureaucratic English and which may reflect the particular use of English in Philippine administrative writing. Overall, the study demonstrates that the analysis of syntax provides a way of understanding how language functions within public administration. The syntactic structures identified in the selected Executive Orders do not merely organize words and phrases; they also help construct authority, obligation, and administrative meaning. Strengthening this concept with a larger, more diverse corpus may provide a clearer understanding of how Philippine English is used and developed in formal government and legal-administrative texts.

Acknowledgment

The authors sincerely thank the peer reviewers for their valuable comments and constructive feedback, which greatly helped improve the quality and clarity of this manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Bodhi, B. (Trans.). (2012). *The numerical discourses of the Buddha: A translation of the Aṅguttara*
- Bautista, M. L. S. (2008). Investigating the grammatical features of Philippine English. In M. L. S. Bautista & K. Bolton (Eds.), *Philippine English: Linguistic and literary perspectives* (pp. 201–218). Hong Kong University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789888052639-015>
- Bernardo, A. S., & Albaña-Garrido, A. P. (2023). Disambiguating Philippine Republic Acts: The case of RA 10913. *International Journal of Legal Discourse*, 8(1), 121–152. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijld-2023-2006>
- Borlongan, A. M. (2013). Corpus-based works on the Philippine English verb system. *Asian English Studies*, 15, 69–90. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323724994_Corpus-based_works_on_the_Philippine_English_verb_system

- Catoto, J. S. (2022). A forensic linguistic analysis of modality on prosecutors' resolutions. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 4(2), 112–138. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v4i2.933>
- Collins, P., Borlongan, A. M., & Yao, X. (2014). Modality in Philippine English: A diachronic study. *Journal of English Linguistics*, 42(1), 68–88. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424213511462>
- Collins, P., Yao, X., & Borlongan, A. M. (2014). Relative clauses in Philippine English: A diachronic perspective. *Language and Computers*, 78, 125–146. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789401211130_008
- Dimaculangan, N., & Sarmiento, M. (2025). A corpus-based review of Philippine English grammatical constructions in ESL master's theses from 2019–2025. *International Journal on Culture, History, and Religion*, 7, 836–861. <https://doi.org/10.63931/ijchr.v7iSI2.239>
- Dita, S. N. (2025). The grammar of Philippine English: An update. In S. Rüdiger, T. Neumaier, S. Leuckert, & S. Buschfeld (Eds.), *World Englishes in the 21st century: New perspectives and challenges to the Dynamic Model* (pp. 103–121). Edinburgh University Press. <https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9781399527842.003.0006>
- Dita, S. N., Rentillo, P., & Lee, A. P. (2022). Grammar. In A. M. Borlongan (Ed.), *Philippine English: Development, structure, and sociology of English in the Philippines* (pp. 87–99). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429427824>
- Executive Order No. 335, s. 1988. (1988). *Prescribing the use of the Filipino language in official transactions, communications, and correspondence*. The Lawphil Project. https://lawphil.net/executive/execord/eo1988/eo_335_1988.html
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Lesho, M. (2018). Philippine English (Metro Manila acrolect). *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, 48(3), 357–370. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100317000548>
- Li, Q. (2017). Functions of nominalization in scientific news discourse. In *Proceedings of the 2017 4th International Conference on Education, Management and Computing Technology (ICEMCT 2017)* (pp. 59–63). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/icemct-17.2017.13>
- Livnat, Z. (2010). Impersonality and grammatical metaphors in scientific discourse: The rhetorical perspective. *Lidil*, 41, 103–119. <https://doi.org/10.4000/lidil.3015>
- Llamzon, T. A. (1969). *Standard Filipino English*. Ateneo University Press. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED047315>
- Madrunio, M. R. (2022). Lexical and grammatical features of memoranda of agreement (MOA) on academic partnerships. *Journal of English and Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 56–78. <https://doi.org/10.59588/2961-3094.1004>
- Munalim, L. O. (2019). Subject-auxiliary inversion in embedded questions in spoken professional discourses: A comparison of Philippine English between 1999 and 2016–2019. *Journal of English as an International Language*, 14(1), 40–57. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1244513.pdf>

Rañosa-Madrurnio, M., & Martin, I. P. (2023). *Forensic linguistics in the Philippines: Origins, developments, and directions*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009106078>

Sandelowski, M. (2000). Whatever happened to qualitative description? *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23(4), 334–340. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240X\(200008\)23:4%3C334::AID-NUR9%3E3.0.CO;2-G](https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240X(200008)23:4%3C334::AID-NUR9%3E3.0.CO;2-G)

The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines. (1987). Art. XIV, § 7. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/1987-constitution/>

Author Contributions: Pal-ing, M.; Conceptualization, development of the research objectives and questions, data collection and selection of the LGU Executive Orders, syntactic analysis, literature review, interpretation and contextualization of the findings, and manuscript preparation, revision, and finalization. The author has read and approved the final manuscript and takes full responsibility for the integrity and scholarly content of the work.