

Investigating the listening and transcription performance in court: experiences from stenographers in Philippine courtrooms

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Abstract - Stenographers are essential figures in a country's justice system; they are tagged as "silent superheroes" due to their demanding profession of creating official transcripts in legal proceedings by converting "spoken word to text" (Ridoloso, 2023). Stenographers' listening and transcribing accuracy is critical in assuring the dependability and fairness of court processes. Proficiency of the listener does not equate to having a stable listening comprehension all the time, they still encounter challenges in listening. A total of twelve (12) stenographers from different municipal and provincial trial courtrooms within Eastern Visayas were interviewed. Using qualitative research through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the present study examined the key factors that affect the listening and transcription performance of court stenographers, including how they manage these factors. Using thematic analysis, the participants identified the following key factors that affect their listening and transcription performance: linguistic and cognitive barriers, external and clarity barriers, and challenges in the legal context. The participants likewise revealed that they manage the following challenges through (1) effective courtroom communication and practices; (2) enhancing transcription accuracy with technology and collaboration; and (3) optimizing stenography practices in the legal field. By understanding and addressing these factors, stenographers can enhance their overall performance and contribute to a more effective and efficient justice system.

Keywords: barriers; courtroom proceedings; transcription accuracy; listening skills; court stenographers

I. INTRODUCTION

Stenographers play a critical role in the Philippine justice system and are tagged as “silent superheroes” due to their demanding profession of creating official transcripts in legal proceedings by converting “spoken word to text” (Ridoloso, 2023). They are responsible for recording court hearings, trials, and other legal proceedings precisely and accurately. Listening is one of the essential skills that stenographers must possess to carry out their duties effectively. However, the effectiveness of this skill can vary depending on several factors, including memory capacity, unclear pronunciation, unfamiliar speaking patterns, fast-paced listening, and extended exposure to extensive discussions (Chao, 2013).

The listening and transcription accuracy of stenographers is crucial in ensuring the reliability and fairness of legal proceedings. Any mistakes or inaccuracies in the court record can have significant consequences, potentially leading to wrongful convictions, appeals, or retrials. A court stenographer should be able to write fast and accurately, especially when using shorthand, which is the process of transcribing every detail of the hearing using the conventional way of writing – by hand (Padilla et al, 2020) to ensure an accurate and efficient recording of any legal process in the court. Evidence shows that even those efficient listeners continue to meet varying barriers while listening, mainly when comprehending aural signals and decoding them into meanings. The capacity of the human mind to access information in a limited time when listening often necessitates the source to restate their words for effective listening due to lapses of memory (Chao, 2013).

Critical listening skills have been explored by innumerable authors in the field of communication, yet, it is still one of the neglected skills taught in educational institutions (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) due to its complexities and indeterminable output. Consequently, most individuals are not trained to listen intentionally, as it is commonly assumed as an innate skill rather than something that can be developed, resulting in ineffective and poor listening skills. Unsatisfactory listening abilities do not just hinder the process of communication, but it is also one of the factors that may relatively impede an individual’s career success (Moulic, 2012). As a requisite of the stenography profession, listening should not just equate to the minimum, as the accuracy of transcriptions and court records heavily depends on it.

The role of effective listening in the context of high-pressure situations, such as court proceedings, exemplifies the significance of critical listening skills in the legal profession in forming and transcribing precise court transcripts, which is essential in the Philippine justice system. However, listening skills and factors affecting them remain underexplored by most studies, as the complexities and difficulties of looking for ways to assess listening objectively hinder more reliable data (Lynch, 2011). The context of listening skills affecting the accuracy of court reports sticks to be undelved, notwithstanding its importance and vital role in contributing to a fair justice system. Hence, it is crucial to look into the listening skills and transcription accuracy of Philippine courts' stenographers to spot any issues and provide insights on how to mitigate these issues.

Due to the above-mentioned gaps, this current study was conducted in order to investigate the distinct experiences of court stenographers in Philippine courtrooms and how listening factors affect their transcription performance. The current study aims to address gaps in the literature concerning the listening skills and transcription accuracy of court stenographers in the Philippine justice system. While there has been considerable research on critical listening skills, it remains an overlooked aspect of communication skills due to its complexities and scarce definitive assessment tools, which results in a lack of reliable data. Despite the acknowledged importance of listening skills in the stenography profession and their impact on the accuracy of court records, there is a paucity of research on the context of listening skills affecting the accuracy

of court reports. Therefore, this study seeks to provide insights into the critical factors that affect a stenographer's listening skills, which will contribute to a better understanding of the impacts of listening skills in professions that require a high level of accuracy and attention to detail such as stenography. This study specifically tries to examine and answer the following questions: (1) What are the key factors that impact the listening and transcription performance of stenographers in a courtroom setting? (2) How do court stenographers manage these factors to ensure accurate transcription?

1.1 Listening and the Stenography Profession

Listening have been defined by numerous authors in varying fields of science. It is a complex process of communication that differs in various contexts. As described by Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), listening is one of the essential skills in learning the English language. It is also the most neglected area of communication due to the fact that educators are paying more attention to teaching writing, reading, and vocabulary among learners. Despite that, listening remains to play a significant role in the communication process and how humans interact in daily contexts (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). It is also one of the essential skills and competencies required for personal, academic, and professional success (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011; Elmore, 2018; Carnevale et al, 2020)

In the context of learning, several studies supported that listening skills significantly affect students' performance. According to Mestres et al (2019), listening skills enable children to access the information they can process. Students with deficient and ineffective listening aptitude experienced lowered academic performance caused by insufficient exposure to formal instruction in listening (Barr et al, 2002). A study conducted by Canpolat et al (2015) found that university students' academic success and improved social skills are attributable to their listening competence and development. It is crucial in retaining information and comprehending lectures and discussions delivered in various ways of oral communication. Those who practice active listening achieve more productive and more permanent learning. Further, listening also helps in building meaningful relationships and in creating engaging conversations.

Learners are still susceptible to different barriers to developing their listening competence. Raju (2014) pointed out obstacles in the process of listening pertaining to all varieties of contexts and/or situations as a whole. These obstacles include physical barriers, psychological barriers, and ethnic barriers. Parallel to this is the study conducted by Huyen & Lan (2023) which explored the difficulties experienced by students when learning English listening skills, concluding that physical setting such as background noise is one of the external factors that influence the students' listening comprehension. In addition, the study also identified other challenges that students encounter including a lack of vocabulary and background knowledge, incorrect pronunciation, fast-paced interactions, and complex grammar structures. The study by Coskun and Kopru (2021) also indicates that there are a variety of factors that contribute to the listening problems of secondary school students. Family, environment, education, readiness, speaker and listener characteristics, and listening materials are all variables that affect the development of students' listening skills. Similarly, Purwanto (2021) identified listening barriers among college students, including accents, lack of concentration, speed, lack of vocabulary, and unclear speaker statements. The above studies show that there are problems encountered involving this important skill. Identifying the difficulties that one may encounter in acquiring this skill is essential to determine the appropriate course of action to be taken on how these difficulties can be conquered.

In line with the problems encountered, scholars worked on developing this important skill. According to Liubiniene, as cited by Usmonova (2023), developing listening skills is a complex process that is best developed with consistent practice, such as listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The study conducted by Eisenring and Sadilia (2022), Ginanjar and Meisendi (2023), Koncara (2009) concluded that watching English movies is an effective way in developing the listening skills of students. Shintani and Wallace (2014) found that online learning, including online activities and other technological resources, can significantly improve listening comprehension abilities. The results of their conducted study suggest that listening support

improves the effectiveness of listening practice, with linguistic support having a larger effect size than contextual support. Additionally, The study of Palma and Garcon (2023) provided supporting insights into the effectiveness of integrating technology and online activities to enhance listening comprehension skills.

Listening is an essential skill that is fundamental to successful communication and a prosperous professional career. On the other hand, listening skills are also critical for adults in their professional life. A profession that heavily relies on listening skills includes stenography. In the article of Ridoloso (2023), in the Philippines, a stenographer works in the judicial court to make official verbatim transcripts of everything that is said in the court proceedings. The use of shorthand, which is an abbreviated way of writing, and steno type, a typing machine, allows stenographers to take notes rapidly. Listening skills are an essential aspect of the court stenographer profession, as they play a vital role in ensuring the accuracy of legal transcripts. As stated by Drilon (2011) in his message to the Court Stenographers Association of the Philippines (COSTRAPHIL), jointly with speed and accuracy, court stenographers must also possess critical listening to transcribe spoken words during court mediations. Lawyer Monthly (2020), a legal news magazine site online, emphasized "proficient listening and typing" as one of the essential skills that a court stenographer must possess. Transcriptionists must be able to listen very carefully and accurately, even if there are background noises or if someone speaks too fast or quietly. In line with this, it can be drawn that court stenographers rely heavily on their listening skills.

1.2 Court Stenographers and the Accuracy of Court Transcriptions

Maintaining records of court proceedings is a vital function of court reporters. Stenography was first utilized way back in 1887 by Miles Bartholomew. Court reporters used this technique, which was further developed with the help of steno machines (The Brief, 2022). In the Philippines, court stenographers are deemed to be in demand. Inquirer.net reported that the Civil Service Commission (CSC) declared 397 open stenographer vacancies. There are 689,703 active cases, according to the Supreme Court's 2021 Judiciary Annual Report, which will be handled by 5,000 stenographers countrywide (Ridoloso, 2023). Shortage in court stenographers happens not only in the Philippines. It is also evident worldwide. An article by Lerner (2022) explored the perspective of different organizations of court reporters in the United States. The figures provided by the Speech to Text Institute (STTI), the number of court stenographers is continuing to decline. Several students quit studying stenography due to the failure to write 225 words per minute which is the standard for stenographers. In the study of Capistrano et al. (2021), most students performed admirably in manual and machine stenography. However, the respondents were unable to transcribe between 85 to 100 words each minute. The availability of court stenographers varies across nations, according to Dineen Squillante, a court stenographer in Vermont, who disagreed with this statement (Lerner, 2022).

Digital reporting employing audio recording was introduced as a response to the lack of court stenographers. When it comes to court transcriptions, several jurisdictions are converting and relying on audio recordings. The fundamental purpose of doing so is to save money (Clark, 2014). One of the states, Kentucky, has used video recordings of court proceedings for over 30 years. The digital recording, however, had a problem in an incident that occurred in 2010. As a result, the judge had to redo the court hearing (Knell, 2021). Judge Dan Slayton believes that court reporters are significant in every hearing. He further said that, in contrast to recordings, which might occasionally fail, a natural person can make certain clear things that are muttered (Ferguson, 2023).

A study by Jones et al (2019) revealed transcription problems made by Philadelphia court reporters. It displayed a lower degree of accuracy of 95%. There are misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and misheard words due to the various dialects and accents spoken in court. Additionally, they concluded that court reporters mistranslated some of the speaker's words and ideas and were poorly comprehended. Some experts, however, disputed this. They countered that the study's methodology lacked live testimony, which is how courtroom transcription is actually done. Sue Terry stated that court reporters could interrupt to ask for clarifications to

ensure accuracy with the transcriptions done (The Atlantic, 2019). Alternatively, for users of the information to receive the facts, accuracy in the court transcript is crucial. Misconceptions regarding some cases might be avoided by ensuring the dependability and accuracy of the reporting (Musalayah et al, 2014).

Court stenography is a specialized skill that requires extensive studying and takes years to master. Experts believe that court stenography is important during court proceedings since it has benefited numerous cases throughout history. The issue of a global shortage of court stenographers gave rise to the idea of using recordings as a tool for stenographers. Even while digital reporting plays a big part in court stenography nowadays, there are still some situations that show drawbacks, like technical issues with the audio recording. Transcriptions are consequential in court stenography. They are utilized frequently as evidence in court cases and serve as a permanent record of the proceedings. Even a minor transcription error can have a big impact on how a case turns out. Thus, it is crucial that the transcriptions be accurate.

II. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized qualitative research to investigate the lived experiences of humans in society, with the goal of evaluating and observing events through emerging ideas (Yin, 2011). The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research design is utilized in this study. This method thoroughly investigates people and allows the "participants to tell their stories", resulting in "rich" data (Smith et al, 2009). This approach enabled an in-depth examination of the experiences of stenographers with their listening skills during courtroom hearings.

2.2 Settings and Participants

A total of twelve (12) court stenographers from different trial courts in the Philippines participated in the conduct of this study. Specifically, the participants were from various municipal and regional trial courts within the Eastern Visayas region. Purposive-convenience sampling was employed in the conduct of this study since the researchers took into consideration the accessibility and availability of the participants. Furthermore, the researchers set the following criterion in choosing the participants: (1) they must be of legal age; (2) they must be currently working as a court stenographer within the Eastern Visayas region; (3) they must have at least one year experience in the stenography profession; (4) and they voluntarily participate in the conduct of this study. 2.3

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The collection of data was conducted through semi-structured interviews. A semi-Data Collection Analysis. Moreover, the data gathered was analyzed thematically utilizing the thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006). This type of analysis is helpful in investigating the lived experiences of stenographers for exploring the patterns of meaning that exist within complex and diverse data sets provided in the interviews conducted. By identifying and analyzing recurring themes within the data, thematic analysis can provide insight into the experiences, perspectives, and beliefs of the court stenographers under study. Also, the thematic analysis provided a flexible way of examining the data gathered from participants as the study is more focused on phenomenological inquiry. Finally, the six-phase process of reflexive thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed to provide clear steps for the researchers and provide transparency with the data gathered. The six steps are as follows: (1) Familiarization of the data gathered; (2) Identifying initial codes that capture key features of the data that are relevant to certain themes; (3) Searching for patterns and connections between codes; (4) Reviewing themes reflecting the data gathered and provide for alternative interpretations; (5) Defining and naming themes which is relevant to the research question; and (6) Producing the final report. A manual coding process was also employed to refine the codes extracted from the responses of the participants (Saldaña, 2016).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study aims to address the scarcity of literature concerning the investigation of the listening and transcription performance of stenographers in Philippine courtrooms. This particular section discusses the findings drawn based on the research questions that would analyze the key factors that impact the listening and transcription performance of stenographers in a courtroom setting and how stenographers manage these factors to ensure accurate transcription.

3.1 Key factors that affect the Listening and Transcription Skills of stenographers

The researchers in this study identified three themes that affect the Listening Skills and Transcription performance of stenographers during courtroom hearings: (1) linguistic and cognitive barriers, (2) external and clarity barriers, and (3) challenges in the legal context.

3.1.1 Linguistic and Cognitive Barriers

The prevailing theme among the participants' excerpts is demonstrated to be the barriers concerning the linguistic and cognitive of the participant. The lived experience of the court stenographers revealed the hindrances they encounter during court hearings.

Uh, dapat kasi attentive ka man talaga every time as a stenographer. Kay, all drain out talaga ito from your head, down to your feet gawas ito tanan it imo kuan, ngadto.... Pero kay mayda gihapon times liwat nga tungod hin kakapoy, tired ka, exhausted kita inin nakukuanan ba ito, nalalampasan, na ba by-passan. we should really be attentive every time as a stenographer.. (CS1)

Translation: Uh, we should really be attentive every time as a stenographer. You will be drained out, from your head, down to your feet, all your energy will be exhausted from doing the work... But also, there are times that due to tiredness, you are tired, we are exhausted, we don't get to pay full attention and bypass it.

Court stenographers in their job, experience fatigue and illnesses which can impair their ability to listen during court hearings. As shown in the statement of CS1, tiredness would influence comprehension and listening skills. This is consistent with the study of Raju (2018) that stated that the listener's physical well-being influences his or her listening skills. Moreover, several barriers also emerge during court proceedings as shown in the following excerpts:

Ay, kun dire ka familiar it words nga gin. Dire gad nga nakaka disrupt hit amon pag surat, usually, gin lo-longhand ito namon. Dire kami na use han shorthand. Pero gin titigamnan ito namon. Kami la usahay, it amon stroke, nakakabasa. Dire it hiya nasiring nga kinahanglan dire ka maaram, kay ngatanan nga ira gin yayakan imo iton ginsusurat as a court stenographer. (CS6)

Translation: oh, if you're not familiar with the words being said, it doesn't necessarily disrupt our writing. Usually, we write it out in longhand. We don't use shorthand. But we take note of that. Sometimes, we are the only ones who can read our strokes. It's not necessary to know all the words, because as a court stenographer, you have to write everything that they say.

You have to check it in your recorder. That's your basis talaga. You cannot really catch up it imo pag-isteno kay sometimes mapaspas. It will be explained hit pag-eskwela niyo ngan it pagtrabaho niyo. Diri ito nimo masusurat tanan. That's why be sure na it imo device, ma-ready ito hiya diri ito hiya umano, kay ikaw ito it mamomroblema. Makukulot it im buhok, pano mo ito maka-catch up. (CS8)

Translation: You have to rely on your recorder for accuracy. It serves as your basis since you can't write everything down during sessions due to the fast pacing of conversations. This will be explained to you during your training and work. You can't write down everything. That's why you should ensure that your device is ready and functioning properly because you will be the one who will face the problem if it fails. It can be stressful and cause you to become flustered.

Kun sugad an mga counsels nag dudurungan hira pagyakan. Syempre dire mo ito makukuha kay nagdudurungan. Tapos kun gugti it boses hiton counsel ngahin hit witness pinakamakuri kay dire mo nabatian, dire mo ma transcribe. (CS12)

Translation: When the counsels talk over each other, it becomes difficult to understand what they are saying. Of course, you can't capture this because they are talking over each other. And when the counsel or witness speaks in a very low, it is also difficult to hear and you can't transcribe it.

These statements unraveled the difficulty of catching up with the speaker due to the speaker's manner of speaking. Thus, having difficulty with the speed, accent, and weak voice of the speaker. The pace of the speaker in speaking cannot be regulated by the listener and may utter words that are not in the vocabulary of the listener (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). Furthermore, it was discovered that the distance between the speaker and the stenographers was revealed to hinder the transcription performance of the stenographers during court hearings. In some instances, multiple persons will speak at the same time, making it difficult to hear the speaker's remarks. Consequently, affecting the transcription performance of the court stenographers.

3.1.2 External and Clarity Barriers

One of the emerging themes in the participants' responses is the external and clarity barriers. Two examples of these barriers are concerning the people inside the court, nature, and ambiguous words that are shown in the following excerpts.

Actually, challenges la ito, like it courtroom, usually kun nakusog it uran and kun may distractions like an mga people nga part ngani nga part of the hearing or relatives han mga kuan nga aada ha sakob, danay dire naiinform nga that you are not supposed to talk when inside the court room, so nakakadistract iton hira. (CS11)

Translation: Actually, it is challenging in a courtroom when the rain is pouring hard during hearing and if there are distractions like those people that are part of the hearing or relative of those people inside the courtroom and sometimes they are not oriented that they are not supposed to talk inside the courtroom.

Ang mga words lang siguro na diri maupay pagyakan, like diri clear, how they spoke diri klaro, so mao na masayop among kabutang. (CS3)

Translation: Sometimes the words spoken are not clear, so that's why we may have made mistakes in transcription.

Noise coming from nature such as the rain and from those watching the hearing causes distraction to the listener. This becomes an impediment to digesting words and information given by the speaker (Raju, 2018). As well as the clarity of the delivery of the speaker influences the transcription performance of court stenographers.

(3) Challenges in the Legal Context

The participants' experiences highlight a prominent theme that centered around the challenges they encounter with the legal context. The extended duration of court trials exhausts the stenographers' energy and impedes their ability to write steno notes properly. Additionally, the usage of complex legal terminology during court trials affects their listening performance as well. These can be observe in the following excerpts.

Oo kailangan. Sugad hiton danay na almost 2 hours it trial, danay di ka naman hito nakakasurat hin tadong tadong gud nga kuan. Danay nahinay na so kailangan mo hin recorders. (CS12)

Translation: Yes. There are instances when the trial is almost 2 hours, of course, you are not in the best state to write steno notes so the recorder is really necessary.

Labi na kun number one, sensualized cases amo it babantayan. Labi na it mga argumento nga gin ta tackle hit mga abogado. The mere fact nga, dire pa gud kita familiar hito labi na kun mga legal terms ba. Syempre, ma dig ka hito nga kuan, uh, ma dig ka hito nga meaning what's going it hiton ira mga gin a-argumentuhan. (CS1)

Translation: More importantly, number one, the sensualized cases, we need to watch out crucially. The arguments that the lawyers tackle. The mere fact that we are not that familiar with the legal terms, of course, we need to dig into its meaning and what's going on with their arguments.

The above responses emphasized the challenges that the participants encounter in legal context, particularly regarding the terminologies used in their field. The findings above are in parallel to the findings in the study of Huyen & Lan (2023) that identified lack of vocabulary and background knowledge of words spoken as one of the challenges students encounter when

listening to spoken words.

3.2 Strategies Employed by Stenographers When Managing Listening Barriers

The participants were asked how they manage these aforementioned factors during court hearings to ensure accurate transcriptions and stenographic notes. The subsequent interview findings cover three significant themes that aim to address the recurring barriers that stenographers experience during live court proceedings: (1) effective courtroom communication and practices, (2) enhancing transcription accuracy through technology and collaboration, and (3) optimizing stenography practices in the legal field.

3.2.1 Effective Courtroom Communication and Practices

Effective communication is emphasized in most responses as a crucial element in addressing the barriers faced by stenographers. The data collected shows that it plays a vital role in fostering a shared understanding and interpretation of spoken information, facts, and legal concepts within a courtroom. Two prominent instances of this are when stenographers ask speakers to speak louder when voices are too faint to hear and to slow down when the pace of speech becomes too rapid to manage.

Oo, common naman iton mapaspas pero you can call the attention naman of the lawyer to please talk slowly. Allowed man kami hito. (CS7)

Translation: Yes, it is common when they are talking fast but you can call the attention of the lawyer to please talk slowly. We are allowed to do that.

Kun may mga sugad hito na challenges ngani pwede kami magrequest na padakua it imo boses tas ipaklaro it pagyakan. Pwede gihap ipagamit it microphone para mas klaro talaga it kayakan. Mayakan kala hit "microphone attorney please". Usahay dire gud nakakagamit hit maupay hit microphone. (CS10)

Translation: If I encounter those challenges, we can request to make their voices louder. They can also use microphones to make their voice clearer. You will just say, "Microphone attorney please". Sometimes, they can't use the microphone properly.

While effective communication is one of the significant solutions for a more cohesive workflow and accurate transcription by stenographers, certain problems arise due to the cognitive processes of each stenographer. These issues can hinder the precise transcription process. To address these concerns, stenographers explore various methods to stay awake and maintain focus during rigorous and tiring court hearings. These techniques include maintaining intense focus, implementing note-taking strategies, and preparing before the proceedings. The following statements reveal some of the managing techniques applied by stenographers:

I choose to focus on the one who's talking, I choose to... actually may choice man an imo talinga kun hain hiya mamati, so I... every time nadidistract ako, I refocus myself. I try to... bagan gin mumute naton an iba. It's a gift... balitaw imo la iton hiya ginhahasa it imo kalugaringon, but I do that most often... I try hard pagfocus on the kuan... on the words nga ira gin utter kay para if ever man mayda instance nga papabasahon balik mayda ko mababasa. (CS11)

Translation: I choose to focus to the one who's talking, I choose to... actually our ears has the choice to where we want to listen. That's why every time I get distracted I refocus myself, I try to... like mute the others. It's a gift. Kidding aside, it should be practiced to yourself, but I do that most often. Because there are times that the judge tolerates the noise and we cannot stop the rain, so what I do, I refocus, I try to listen, I just make myself to.

Aside from the recording, we use paper and pen. When they are talking inside the court, we write the statement that they are telling in the court so that when we are transcribing, besides using the recorder, if we can't hear what they are talking about, we can refer to what we were writing in the paper. (CS2)

Kuan, make sure la nga mentally stable ka tapos ready ka, kay most likely kasi nalilipasan iton, like I ampas alas dose, danay iton na... nahuhuman... it morning session matatapos 12:30 tapos usahay quarter to 12 na proceed na pagpadayon han hearing. (CS4)

Translation: Just make sure that you are mentally stable and you are ready because most of the time you'll get hungry because the hearing will end after 12 pm., and some of the hearings start at 11:30 for the afternoon session.

Overall, the statements reveal the significance of clear and accessible communication in the courtroom setting. The responses emphasize the need for speakers to adapt their delivery to the audience's needs, which aligns with Usmonova's (2023) study indicating the importance of effective oral communication for language acquisition and overall learning. Adjusting one's speech to the language level of an individual is crucial for ensuring comprehension and engagement. Additionally, utilizing appropriate technology, maintaining focus, and employing alternative methods such as written documentation when necessary are important practices.

These strategies contribute to effective courtroom communication, facilitate the administration of legal processes, and help reduce linguistic and cognitive barriers experienced by court stenographers.

3.2.2 Enhancing Transcription Accuracy with Technology and Collaboration

In the context of courtroom proceedings, effective transcription plays a crucial role in accurately documenting and preserving spoken words. The insights shared in the responses highlight several key aspects of this process. The following responses revealed the techniques used by stenographers to adapt to external and clarity barriers caused by nature, people, and obscure words:

nakusog it uran and kun may distractions like an mga people nga part ngani nga part of the hearing or relatives han mga kuan nga aada ha sakob, danay dire naiinform nga that you are not supposed to talk when inside the court room, so nakakadistract iton hira. Tapos... transcribe kasi an akon pakaintindi dida na iton han part nga after nah an hearing so waray man ako usually... what I do during court proceedings as much as possible, I try to make lanat kun ano an ginyayakan han both parties. (CS11)

Translation: when the rain is pouring hard during the hearing and if there are distractions like those people that are part of the hearing or relatives of those people inside the courtroom and sometimes, they are not oriented that they are not supposed to talk inside the courtroom. The way I understand transcribe is that it is part after the hearing so I don't have any problem with that. What I do during court proceedings as much as possible, I try to keep up to the words that both parties are saying.

In our transcription, we use already the computer after the hearing, for me, I use the high-sensitive recorder... the high-sensitive earphone so that I can hear the record that I have done in the courtroom. (CS2)

The interview responses provide insight into the transcription process as well as the difficulties encountered in effectively documenting courtroom proceedings. The participants emphasize the significance of employing technology, adapting to noisy situations, guaranteeing linguistic accuracy, minimizing distractions, and becoming versed with legal terminology. Stenographers use a variety of instruments and procedures, including high-sensitivity recorders and headphones, to guarantee that the proceedings are accurately recorded. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Usmonova (2023), which states that technology and the use of a tape recorder are effective aids in developing an individual's listening comprehension. They offer a wide range of assistance in enhancing the listening abilities of students who are studying the English language as their second language. Stenographers also navigate difficulties such as noisy venues and use gavels to control interruptions. Linguistic accuracy is prioritized through collaborative efforts in which stenographers discuss and cross-check uncommon words or phrases. Stenographers must keep focus in the courtroom due to distractions, and they rely on common sense and research to appropriately capture legal terms. These procedures help to produce credible and thorough transcripts, which are necessary for legal proceedings and the administration of justice.

3.2.3 Optimizing Stenography Practices in the Legal Field

The participants highlighted the importance of optimizing stenography practices in the legal field to ensure accurate transcriptions. Misheard words or new legal terminologies gives stenographer a hard time transcribing during court hearings that's why they seek help from other in order to have an accurate transcription, this can be observed in the following excerpts:

What we do, mag-aask kami each other like, "Nakadunggog naka ani nga word? Unsa ni nga word?" Like uhm, sakto ba siya na word gamiton ana nga sentence or ana nga question kun mao man gani ang among nadunggog. Kung dili 'mi familiar sa mga word so among i-Google kung sakto bana siya, kun fit bana siya sa question. (CS3)

Translation: What we do is we ask each other, 'Have you heard of this word? What is this word?' We check if the word is appropriate to use in that sentence or in that question if that's what we heard. If we're not familiar with the words, we'll Google them to check if they're correct or if they fit the question.

kun dida dire la gihap clear kay mayda man talaga sentences na dire clear or an mga words na gingagamit, napabulig kami hit amon judge kay syempre nakada man hiya ngan ha amon gihap interpreter. Mayda man talaga words na dire clear dida ngan dire gihap kami maaram. Usahay did nala gihap kami nabase han sentence. (CS9)

Translation: If we can't still hear clearly with our recordings, since there are sentences that aren't clear or those words that were used, we also seek help from our judge since they were also there during the proceedings and also our interpreter. There are some words that aren't clear and we don't know. Sometimes we look into the sentence.

These statements show how court stenographers manage their lack of knowledge of the legal terms used during court hearings. According to Terry as cited in The Atlantic (2019), court reporters could interrupt and ask for clarifications to make sure the accuracy of the transcription. Also, in some cases, they ask their fellow stenographer for an opinion regarding words that are new to their vocabulary.

IV. CONCLUSION

Despite the limitations imposed by the limited number and the geographic stratification of the participants, it is observable that listening is an essential skill needed by stenographers to execute their jobs effectively and barriers may impede the quality of transcriptions that they want to deliver. The findings of this study have significant implications for the field of stenography and transcription in the context of courtroom hearings. Stenographers need to develop strategies and skills to overcome linguistic and cognitive barriers that may hinder their listening and transcription performance. Addressing external and clarity barriers, such as background noise and unclear speech, requires the utilization of technology and collaborative efforts among stenographers and other stakeholders. The unique challenges posed by the legal context highlight the importance of effective courtroom communication and the development of stenography practices tailored to meet the demands of legal proceedings. These implications call for targeted training, technological advancements, and enhanced collaboration to enhance transcription accuracy and optimize performance in the courtroom.

Moreover, studies on the listening skills of court stenographers in the context of Philippine courtrooms remain a new blooming idea in the field and further research should be executed to contribute to the body of knowledge in the stenography profession. Although, listening is just one of those important components to propel an excellent performance in the profession, investigating more about it can contribute to improving the accuracy of work and effectiveness of these stenographers. Various areas can be investigated by performing a study on the listening skills of court stenographers. For example, investigations could look into the cognitive processes involved in hearing and transcribing at the same time, the effect of background noise and distractions on listening accuracy, and the efficacy of training programs aimed at improving listening skills. Furthermore, future studies could look into how technology can help court stenographers, such as the development of speech recognition systems or other supporting technologies.

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