



Between Law And Literature: Forensic Linguistics As A Method For Literary Interpretation

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Abstract: This article examines the potential of forensic linguistics as a rigorous and innovative method for literary interpretation, situating it within the broader interdisciplinary dialogue between law and literature. While forensic linguistics has traditionally functioned as an analytical tool for legal investigations, addressing authorship attribution, discourse analysis, pragmatic inference, and evidentiary evaluation, its methodological principles offer valuable insights into the structure and meaning of literary texts. The study argues that literary narratives, much like legal testimonies, operate as sites of communicative acts shaped by intention, credibility, deception, and power. By applying forensic linguistic techniques to narrative voice, character interaction, stylistic patterning, and discursive structures, the article demonstrates how linguistic evidence can illuminate concealed motives, latent power hierarchies, and the mechanics of narrative reliability. The methodological framework developed here incorporates authorship analysis, speech act theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, forensic narratology, and corpus-based approaches. The discussion highlights both the strengths of this interdisciplinary synthesis such as enhanced interpretive precision and evidentiary rigor, and its limitations, including risks of overinterpretation and challenges related to literary intentionality. Ultimately, the article positions forensic linguistics as a viable and theoretically rich approach that expands the analytical possibilities for contemporary literary scholarship.

Keywords: Forensic Linguistics, Literary Interpretation, Discourse Analysis, Forensic Narratology, Law and Literature

Introduction

The intersection between law and literature has evolved into a robust interdisciplinary field that interrogates how legal ideas, institutions, and modes of reasoning permeate literary texts and, conversely, how narrative imagination shapes juridical understanding. Originating in the late twentieth century, Law and Literature studies emerged from a recognition that legal texts are not merely repositories of rules but are shaped by rhetoric, narrative structures, and cultural meanings akin to those found in literary works. As the field developed, scholars increasingly acknowledged that the interpretive practices used in literary criticism—close reading, discourse analysis, and contextual hermeneutics—could illuminate the deeper structures and ideological assumptions embedded in legal discourse. In parallel, a complementary shift occurred within legal hermeneutics: linguistic methodologies, including pragmatics, semiotics, and discourse theory, gained prominence as essential tools for understanding statutory interpretation, judicial reasoning, and the communicative dynamics of the courtroom. This convergence has produced fertile ground for exploring how law and literature mutually inform each other through language.

Within this expanding intellectual landscape, forensic linguistics has emerged as a particularly significant nexus between the domains of language and law. Initially developed as an applied linguistic discipline focused on real-world legal contexts such as authorship identification, disputed confessions, courtroom discourse, and the interpretation of legal texts forensic linguistics has traditionally been understood as a tool for evidentiary analysis. However, its methodological rigor and insights extend well beyond forensic casework. The analytical principles that govern forensic linguistic inquiry, attention to linguistic patterning, communicative intention, narrative coherence, and markers of deception or authorship, hold substantial interpretive potential for literary studies. Increasingly, scholars have begun to recognize that these tools can be productively adapted to the analysis of fictional narratives, enabling new approaches to character construction, narrative voice, dialogic interaction, and textual reliability. In this sense, forensic linguistics functions not only as a legal instrument but also as a critical framework capable of uncovering latent structures within literary texts.

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, it seeks to demonstrate how forensic linguistic methodologies can shed light on narrative strategies, character dynamics, and the representation of authority and power within literature. Literary texts often mirror the communicative challenges found in legal settings: characters conceal information, misrepresent motives, negotiate meanings, and deploy language strategically behaviors that closely parallel testimonial, evidentiary, and interrogative practices in legal discourse. By treating literary narrative as a site of linguistic evidence, forensic analysis can expose the textual mechanisms through which authors construct credibility, ambiguity, conflict, and persuasion. Second, this article aims to develop a structured methodological framework for applying forensic linguistic tools to literary interpretation. Such a framework will integrate principles from stylistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, and narratology to offer a systematic approach for examining how language operates within and across fictional texts.

The central thesis advanced here is that forensic linguistics provides a distinctive analytical lens that bridges legal reasoning and literary interpretation. By foregrounding the evidentiary dimensions of language patterns of authorship, markers of intention, indicators of deception, and structures of discursive power, this approach reveals textual features that traditional literary methodologies may overlook. Through its dual grounding in linguistic science and legal hermeneutics, forensic linguistics enables a deeper understanding of how literary texts encode meaning, construct authority, and negotiate the boundaries between truth, fiction, and interpretation.

Theoretical Framework

A. Forensic Linguistics: Core Concepts

Forensic linguistics, as a field of inquiry, is grounded in the systematic study of language within legal and quasi-legal contexts. Its origins are frequently traced to Jan Svartvik's landmark analysis in 1968, which applied linguistic methods to disputed police statements, thereby demonstrating that linguistic features can serve as empirical evidence in legal proceedings. Over subsequent decades, the field expanded significantly, drawing on advances in descriptive linguistics, sociolinguistics, stylistics, and pragmatics to address a wide range of legal and investigative questions. Today, forensic linguistics encompasses both theoretical and applied dimensions, engaging with issues such as authorship attribution, the interpretation of legal language, and linguistic analysis of courtroom discourse.¹

The discipline has developed multiple branches, each offering unique analytical tools relevant to both legal and literary contexts. Authorship attribution employs stylistic markers, lexical patterns, and statistical methods to determine the likely origin of a text, while forensic discourse analysis examines how language constructs meaning, authority, and interactional dynamics in institutional settings. Forensic phonetics contributes through the acoustic and auditory analysis of speech, especially in cases involving speaker identification. Pragmatics, concerned with implicature, presupposition, and speech acts provides insight into communicative intentions, ambiguity, and deception. Stylistics, particularly forensic stylistics, focuses on idiolects, textual signatures, and linguistic regularities that differentiate one author or speaker from another. Together, these subfields form a comprehensive toolkit that extends beyond legal domains into interpretive practices relevant to literary criticism.

¹ Coulthard, Malcolm, Alison Johnson, and David Wright. *An Introduction to Forensic Linguistics: Language in Evidence*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2017, p.76

Key theorists have shaped the conceptual foundation and analytical reach of forensic linguistics. Jan Svartvik's early intervention created the methodological precedent for using linguistic evidence in legal analysis. Malcolm Coulthard and Tim Grant further expanded the field through their work on authorship attribution, forensic stylistics, and the linguistic dynamics of police–suspect interactions. Ronald Butters contributed significantly to the study of trademark disputes and linguistic expertise in litigation, while Gerald McMenamin advanced stylometric and forensic stylistic methodologies, particularly in relation to questioned documents and author identification. Collectively, these scholars established forensic linguistics as a rigorous discipline capable of generating defensible interpretive inferences based on linguistic evidence.²

Central to the forensic linguistic enterprise is the concept of linguistic evidence. Unlike intuitive or impressionistic interpretations, linguistic evidence involves systematic observation of patterns, lexical choices, syntactic structures, discourse markers, and pragmatic cues that can be empirically evaluated. Interpretive inferences derived from such evidence must meet standards of replicability, transparency, and analytical rigor, qualities that align closely with the demands of both legal adjudication and scholarly literary interpretation. The emphasis on verifiable linguistic patterning makes forensic linguistics an especially potent methodology for examining how texts encode intention, identity, credibility, and power.³

B. Law and Literature Studies

The Law and Literature movement has undergone several intellectual phases since its emergence in the twentieth century. Early contributions by jurists such as Benjamin Cardozo highlighted the narrativity inherent in judicial decision-making, while later scholars such as Richard Posner approached the relationship between law and literature from an economic and pragmatic perspective. Martha Nussbaum, through her extensive writings on ethics and emotions, emphasized the role of literature in cultivating moral imagination and reflective judgment, thus shaping the humanistic strand of the movement. These foundational thinkers demonstrated that legal reasoning and literary interpretation share comparable concerns with narrative coherence, rhetorical persuasion, and interpretive judgment.⁴

Within this tradition, literary approaches to legal texts developed along two major directions. The first examines legal documents like judicial opinions, statutes, testimonies—as literary artefacts characterized by genre conventions, narrative structures, and stylistic choices. The second direction investigates representations of law, justice, and authority within literary works, emphasizing how fiction critiques, reimagines, or reinforces legal norms. These parallel approaches underscore the permeability between literary and legal textuality and foreground the interpretive richness generated by linguistic and narrative examination.

Legal hermeneutics, particularly as articulated in narrative theory, has further deepened the interdisciplinary dialogue. Just as literary theorists analyze narrative voice, plot configuration, and character motivation, legal scholars analyze how judicial opinions construct facts, attribute responsibility, and frame legal issues. Both domains rely on interpretive acts that mediate between text, context, and meaning. Narrative theory reveals that legal reasoning often employs storytelling techniques like chronology, causality, focalization to produce persuasive accounts of events, while literary texts frequently incorporate legal metaphors, procedural structures, and evidentiary frameworks.⁵

The convergence of legal textuality and literary textuality becomes fully apparent when examining how both domains use language to structure meaning, assert authority, and negotiate interpretation. Law depends on precision, clarity, and institutional authority, while literature often exploits ambiguity, metaphor, and narrative multiplicity. Yet both are bound by discursive conventions that shape how texts are understood and acted upon. This convergence lays the groundwork for integrating forensic linguistic methodologies into literary studies, enabling analyses that situate literary texts within frameworks of evidentiary reasoning and rhetorical strategy.

² Svartvik, Jan. *The Evans Statements: A Case for Forensic Linguistics*. University of Gothenburg Press, 1968, p.61

³ Shuy, Roger W. *Language Crimes: The Use and Abuse of Language Evidence in the Courtroom*. Blackwell, 1993, p.12

⁴ Posner, Richard A. *Law and Literature*. 3rd ed., Harvard UP, 2009, p.32

⁵ Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Translated by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, Continuum, 2004, p.43

C. Why Forensic Linguistics Fits Literary Interpretation

Literature provides a rich site for forensic linguistic analysis because it is fundamentally a domain of communicative acts. Characters speak, narrators construct versions of events, and authors embed implicit or explicit communicative intentions within textual structures. These interactions mirror many of the communicative practices encountered in legal settings, where utterances must be interpreted for their meaning, reliability, and persuasive force. From this perspective, literary texts can be examined as repositories of linguistic evidence that reveal patterns of intention, deception, identity, and power.

Narratives operate much like forensic case files: they contain testimonies, contradictions, silences, and competing interpretations that require analytical scrutiny. Forensic linguistic tools such as speech act analysis, implicature, and discourse markers can be used to uncover how narrators manage information, how characters perform identity, and how textual dynamics produce or undermine credibility. The narrative voice, in particular, functions similarly to legal testimony: both require evaluative assessment of reliability, coherence, and motivation. Unreliable narrators, shifting perspectives, or ambiguous dialogues in literature present interpretive challenges analogous to those encountered in legal discourse analysis.

Moreover, literary texts frequently depict settings of conflict, deception, and negotiation, making them inherently suited to forensic inquiry. The discursive construction of power whether enacted through political authority, social hierarchy, or covert manipulation mirrors the institutional dynamics that forensic linguists study in legal contexts. Language becomes both evidence and instrument, shaping how events are perceived and how characters assert or resist control. By treating fictional narratives as interpretive scenarios akin to forensic cases, scholars can reveal deeper linguistic structures that govern meaning and representation.

In this manner, forensic linguistics aligns naturally with literary interpretation. Both disciplines are concerned with how language constructs realities, mediates interactions, and encodes subjective and institutional power. Integrating forensic methodologies into literary analysis not only enriches interpretive possibilities but also reinforces the interdisciplinary coherence of the law–literature nexus.⁶

Methodological Framework for Applying Forensic Linguistics to Literature

The application of forensic linguistics to literary interpretation requires a systematic methodological framework that draws on the discipline's core analytical tools while also accommodating the distinct features of fictional discourse. Unlike legal texts, literary works are not bound by procedural constraints or evidentiary rules; however, they are shaped by linguistic structures, narrative strategies, and communicative intentions that can be examined with precision using forensic methods. This section outlines a multi-dimensional approach that incorporates authorship attribution, pragmatics, discourse analysis, forensic narratology, and corpus-based techniques to facilitate a rigorous and replicable mode of literary inquiry.

A. Authorship Attribution and Stylistics

Authorship attribution constitutes one of the foundational practices of forensic linguistics and provides a critical methodological entry point for literary analysis. At its core, authorship analysis seeks to identify distinctive linguistic features—lexical preferences, syntactic patterns, and semantic choices—that function as individual stylistic signatures. These markers include vocabulary richness, collocational habits, recurrent syntactic constructions, use of discourse markers, and characteristic figurative expressions. When applied to literary texts, such patterns help differentiate between narrative voices, characterize stylistic evolution, or assess consistency within a work.⁷

Stylometric approaches, long used in literary studies, gain additional methodological rigor when informed by forensic principles. Stylometry employs quantitative measures to analyze the frequency and distribution of linguistic features such as function words, sentence lengths, and n-grams to identify stylistic distinctiveness. The integration of forensic stylistics enhances these methods by emphasizing the evidentiary

⁶ Gibbons, John. *Forensic Linguistics: An Introduction to Language in the Justice System*. Blackwell, 2003, p.71

⁷ Grant, Tim. "Quantifying Evidence in Forensic Authorship Analysis." *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2007, pp.1–25

threshold required for interpretive claims, ensuring that conclusions regarding authorship or stylistic coherence are grounded in measurable linguistic regularities rather than impressionistic judgment.⁸

Historically contested cases illustrate the relevance of authorship attribution to literary scholarship. The Shakespearean authorship debates, disputes surrounding the works of James Macpherson (particularly the Ossian poems), and controversies involving the writings of the Brontë siblings demonstrate how linguistic markers have been used to verify or challenge authorial claims. These examples show how forensic and literary interests converge around questions of textual legitimacy, stylistic continuity, and interpretive authority.

B. Pragmatics and Speech Act Analysis

Pragmatics provides a crucial framework for understanding how meaning is produced in interactional and narrative contexts. Speech act theory, focusing on illocutionary force, offers tools for classifying utterances not only by what is said but also by what is done through language. In literature, illocutionary acts shape interpersonal dynamics, advance plot trajectories, and reveal underlying character motivations. A character's promise, threat, confession, or refusal, for instance, carries performative weight that exceeds the literal content of the utterance.⁹

Implicatures, presuppositions, and Gricean conversational maxims further enrich interpretive possibilities by highlighting how authors encode indirect meanings or generate narrative tension. Violations of maxims such as relevance, quantity, or manner may indicate deception, emotional distress, or power struggles between characters. Presuppositions embedded within dialogue or narration reveal assumptions that structure relationships, social hierarchies, or ideological positions.¹⁰

Applying pragmatic analysis to literary texts facilitates deeper character interpretation and enhances the study of plot construction. For example, the strategic use of evasive answers, hedges, or shifts in register may signal a character's attempt to conceal information or negotiate authority. Similarly, the pragmatic dynamics of dialogue can expose contradictions in narrative testimony, contributing to assessments of reliability or unreliability.

C. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis extends forensic inquiry into broader textual and sociocultural dimensions, making it especially valuable for interpreting literary narratives. One central focus is the configuration of power relations and the institutional language through which authority is constructed and enacted. Literature frequently portrays legal, political, bureaucratic, or familial institutions, and the linguistic practices associated with these domains formal registers, directive speech acts, or legitimating discourses, shape the narrative environment and the characters' positions within it.¹¹

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly in its socio-cognitive formulations, provides a framework for examining how ideology, cognition, and discourse intersect within narrative settings. CDA enables scholars to trace how characters internalize or resist dominant discourses, how social inequalities are reproduced through language, and how narrative structure reinforces or subverts institutional authority. By applying CDA to literary texts, the analysis foregrounds the embeddedness of literature within broader social and political contexts.¹²

Narrative unreliability offers another area where discourse analysis intersects with forensic methodology. Unreliable narrators exhibit inconsistencies, contradictions, or shifts in narrative stance that can be examined as linguistic evidence. These features function not merely as literary devices but as discursive strategies that require forensic-style interrogation. By treating narrative unreliability as a form of evidentiary ambiguity, scholars can identify patterns of omission, contradiction, or rhetorical manipulation that complicate interpretive certainty.

⁸ McMenamin, Gerald R. *Forensic Linguistics: Advances in Forensic Stylistics*. CRC Press, 2002, p.19

⁹ Levinson, Stephen C. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge UP, 1983, p.56

¹⁰ Grice, H. P. "Logic and Conversation." *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3, edited by Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, Academic Press, 1975, pp.41–58.

¹¹ Gee, James Paul. *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. 4th ed., Routledge, 2014, p.53

¹² Fairclough, Norman. *Language and Power*. 2nd ed., Longman, 2001, p.23

D. Forensic Narratology

Forensic narratology bridges narratology and forensic linguistics by treating narratives as forms of testimony. This perspective emphasizes the evaluative processes by which readers assess the credibility, coherence, and motivations behind narrative representations. When a narrative is read as testimony, the narrator's statements, omissions, and framing devices become subject to scrutiny analogous to cross-examination or evidentiary evaluation. Linguistic indicators of deception, manipulation, or concealment play a central role in this process. Features such as distancing language, hedging, anomalous timelines, or abrupt changes in lexical density may signal attempts to obscure facts or shape reader perception. These cues parallel those examined in forensic linguistic investigations of suspect statements or witness testimonies, thereby reinforcing the methodological overlap between the two domains.¹³

Narrative gaps, silences, and contradictions can be interpreted as "forensic artefacts" elements that demand careful reconstruction to infer underlying motives or truths. By foregrounding these artefacts, forensic narratology reveals how meaning is produced through what is unsaid as much as through what is articulated. This approach enriches literary interpretation by drawing attention to latent structures of ambiguity, conflict, and textual negotiation.

E. Corpus-Based and Computational Approaches

Corpus linguistics provides empirical tools that greatly enhance the objectivity and scalability of forensic literary analysis. The use of corpora allows for comparative stylometric analysis in which a literary text is measured against reference corpora, author-specific corpora, or period corpora to identify distinctive linguistic features. Such comparisons can reveal deviations in stylistic habits, shifts in narrative voice, or anomalies that suggest collaborative authorship or editorial intervention.¹⁴

Keyword analysis, collocation studies, and semantic domain exploration offer additional insights into thematic and stylistic patterns. Keywords highlight lexically significant items that characterize an author's style or a narrative's thematic preoccupation. Collocations and concordances reveal associative patterns that illuminate discourse strategies, while semantic domain analysis maps the conceptual fields that shape a text's imaginative landscape.

The convergence of digital humanities and forensic methodology has further expanded the analytical potential of computational tools. Techniques such as machine learning classification, cluster analysis, and vector-based semantic modelling provide sophisticated means for examining textual similarity, stylistic evolution, and intertextual relationships. When integrated with forensic linguistic principles, these computational methods enable large-scale, replicable studies that maintain the evidentiary rigor foundational to forensic inquiry.¹⁵

Discussion

A. Strengths of Forensic Linguistic Literary Analysis

One of the principal strengths of applying forensic linguistic methods to literary texts is the capacity to deepen the understanding of narrative credibility. Literary narratives, particularly those employing unreliable narrators, fragmented testimony, or conflicting perspectives invite evaluative scrutiny similar to the assessment of witness or suspect statements in legal contexts. Forensic linguistics provides systematic tools for evaluating coherence, consistency, and linguistic markers of truthfulness or deception, thereby enabling a more nuanced appraisal of the credibility constructed within the text. This approach shifts the interpretive focus from subjective intuition toward measurable linguistic indicators, enhancing analytical precision.

Another major strength lies in the ability of forensic linguistics to enrich the reading of character intention and psychological depth. Pragmatic analysis, speech act theory, and discourse profiling illuminate

¹³ Toolan, Michael. *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2001, p.27

¹⁴ McEnery, Tony, and Andrew Hardie. *Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*. Cambridge UP, 2012, p.84

¹⁵ Underwood, Ted. *Distant Horizons: Digital Evidence and Literary Change*. University of Chicago Press, 2019, p.42

how characters use language strategically—whether to conceal motives, assert dominance, negotiate relationships, or express inner conflict. By examining the linguistic structures that encode intention, scholars gain access to dimensions of character identity and psychology not immediately accessible through traditional literary methods. The intricate interplay between overt statements, implied meanings, and withheld information reveals the psychological realism embedded in language use.

Furthermore, forensic linguistic analysis offers unique insights into latent power structures operating within literary narratives. Tools derived from discourse analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis enable the identification of linguistic mechanisms through which authority is asserted, contested, or legitimized. Institutional discourses whether legal, political, bureaucratic, or patriarchal shape narrative interactions and establish hierarchies that influence the trajectories of characters and events. Forensic methods reveal how these power dynamics are produced, maintained, or subverted at the linguistic level, thereby linking micro-level linguistic choices to macro-level sociopolitical structures.¹⁶

Forensic linguistics provides a rigorous, evidence-based interpretive framework that strengthens literary scholarship's methodological transparency. Unlike impressionistic approaches, forensic methods rely on replicable observations, measurable linguistic patterns, and systematic analytical criteria. This enhances scholarly credibility and encourages interdisciplinary dialogue grounded in shared evidentiary standards. By foregrounding linguistic evidence, the framework promotes analytical consistency while still accommodating the interpretive richness of literary texts.

B. Limitations and Methodological Challenges

Despite its strengths, the application of forensic linguistics to literature presents several methodological challenges. One significant risk is the potential for overinterpretation. Because forensic analysis involves the detailed examination of linguistic minutiae, there is a possibility that scholars may attribute excessive significance to features that, within a fictional context, may result from stylistic experimentation, genre conventions, or authorial play rather than intentional communicative strategies. Maintaining methodological restraint is therefore essential.

A second challenge lies in differentiating literary intentionality from legal intentionality. In forensic contexts, analysts seek to infer real-world intentions of speakers or authors whose statements have legal consequences. In literature, however, the concept of intention is layered and mediated: narrators, characters, and authors operate at different levels of fictional construction. The analyst must carefully distinguish between the intentionality embedded within the narrative and the broader interpretive frameworks of authorship and narrative design. Failure to do so may result in misapplication of forensic concepts to fictional discourse.

Textual ambiguity and the autonomy of fiction pose additional challenges. Literary works often thrive on indeterminacy, metaphor, and narrative openness, qualities that contrast sharply with the evidentiary expectations of forensic linguistics, where clarity and interpretive stability are prioritized. The methodological tension between interpretive openness in literature and evidentiary precision in forensic analysis requires scholars to adopt flexible frameworks that accommodate ambiguity without abandoning analytical rigor.¹⁷

The availability of comparative corpora for historical texts can limit the scope of forensic literary analysis. Corpus-based methods rely on access to sufficiently large, representative datasets that allow for reliable comparative evaluation. For periods or genres where such corpora are incomplete, inconsistent, or unavailable, stylometric and lexical analyses may be constrained. This limitation underscores the need for continued corpus development within the digital humanities.

C. The Interdisciplinary Promise

Despite these challenges, the interdisciplinary convergence between forensic linguistics and literary studies offers significant promise for both fields. This convergence exemplifies the broader trend in the humanities toward methodologically diverse and empirically informed research frameworks. By integrating linguistic science with interpretive literary scholarship, this approach redefines the boundaries of textual analysis and opens new avenues for cross-disciplinary innovation. One promising direction involves the

¹⁶ van Dijk, Teun A. *Discourse and Power*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p.118

¹⁷ Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2002, p.38

expanding role of digital literary studies. Computational tools such as stylometric software, corpus linguistic platforms, and machine learning models enhance the reach of forensic methodologies and support large-scale, data-driven literary analysis. The integration of these technologies facilitates more robust studies of authorship, narrative structure, and thematic patterns, enabling scholars to investigate literary phenomena with unprecedented empirical depth.

Additionally, forensic linguistic approaches contribute meaningfully to law-school pedagogy and legal theory. Literary texts provide rich simulated environments for analyzing linguistic evidence, evaluating credibility, and understanding the rhetorical construction of testimony. Conversely, legal hermeneutics offers conceptual frameworks that illuminate how literary narratives negotiate truth, interpretation, and authority. This reciprocal exchange strengthens both disciplines: literature becomes a site for exploring legal reasoning, while law gains insights from narrative theory, stylistics, and discourse analysis. The interdisciplinary synthesis of forensic linguistics and literary interpretation underscores the fertile intellectual terrain that emerges when scientific rigor meets interpretive creativity. It affirms that language whether deployed in a courtroom or a novel remains a powerful medium through which truth, identity, and power are negotiated.¹⁸

Conclusion

The analysis presented in this study demonstrates the significant potential of forensic linguistics as a methodological framework for literary interpretation. By integrating tools from authorship attribution, pragmatics, discourse analysis, forensic narratology, and corpus linguistics, the article has shown how linguistic evidence can illuminate dimensions of narrative structure, character psychology, and textual credibility that often remain obscured in traditional literary methodologies. The application of forensic approaches enables a more systematic understanding of how literary texts operate at the level of linguistic form and communicative function, thereby offering a deepened appreciation of narrative complexity and interpretive nuance.

The findings reaffirm that forensic linguistics is not merely transferable to literary analysis but is, in fact, uniquely suited to interrogating the communicative architecture of fictional narratives. Its emphasis on linguistic patterning, intention, reliability, and evidentiary reasoning dovetails with longstanding concerns in narrative theory, stylistics, and hermeneutics. By treating literary texts as structured communicative acts complete with testimonies, implicit strategies, contradictions, and power negotiations, this approach provides a disciplined and replicable means of interpretation that enriches our understanding of both language and literature. In doing so, forensic linguistics stands as a viable and intellectually rigorous method that expands the interpretive repertoire available to literary scholars.

The implications for future research are extensive. Scholars might further explore how forensic linguistic tools can be applied to specific genres such as detective fiction, legal thrillers, or historical narratives where questions of credibility, deception, and authority are central to narrative progression. Comparative studies across periods and authors could investigate the evolution of narrative testimony, patterns of linguistic manipulation, or stylistic signatures within and across literary traditions. Additionally, advances in digital humanities and computational linguistics offer promising avenues for large-scale, data-driven literary investigations that combine empirical analysis with interpretive insight. Future research may also consider how forensic linguistic insights can inform pedagogy, fostering critical thinking about language, power, and textual interpretation in both literary and legal education.

Situating this methodological approach within broader debates in literary and linguistic scholarship underscores its interdisciplinary significance. Contemporary literary studies increasingly value empirical methods, digital tools, and cross-disciplinary perspectives, while linguistics continues to expand its engagement with cultural, narrative, and interpretive phenomena. Forensic linguistics, situated at the intersection of these movements, exemplifies the productive synthesis of scientific rigor and humanistic analysis. By bridging legal reasoning and literary interpretation, it contributes to ongoing dialogues about the nature of textual evidence, the construction of meaning, and the role of language in mediating human experience. The fusion of forensic linguistics and literary interpretation not only advances the analytical capacities of both fields but also reaffirms the centrality of language as a site of inquiry. It opens new conceptual pathways for understanding how texts encode truth, fiction, intention, and power, thereby enriching the wider intellectual landscape of the humanities and linguistic sciences.

¹⁸ Tiersma, Peter M., and Lawrence M. Solan. *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Law*. Oxford UP, 2012, p.182