



Reshaping Perspectives: A Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of Filipino Women's Representations in the 20th- and 21st-Century Philippine Literature

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Abstract

Since the beginning of recorded history, women have experienced oppression from men, contributing to the emergence of feminist movements and feminist literary theory, which examines gender inequality, oppression, and women's agency. Although feminist literary criticism has gained recognition in the Philippines, studies examining Filipino women's representations across historical periods remain limited. Hence, this study examined Filipino women's representations in selected 20th- and 21st-century Philippine literary texts through Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically *Lirio* by Peter Solis Nery and *Sinigang* by Marie Aubrey Villaceran. The findings revealed that all five language registers were evident in both texts and functioned as markers of power relations among characters. Filipino women negotiated power through various linguistic and communicative strategies, including association with nature, shouting, silence, assertive language, submissive language, politeness, sympathetic language, and indirect language. Women in the 20th-century text were represented as religious, excluded, and overdependent, whereas women in the 21st-century text were portrayed as submissive, emotionally complex, and morally empowered. Across both texts, women were commonly represented as performing domestic and caregiving roles, voiceless, oppressed, objectified, and living within patriarchal social structures, while also demonstrating empowerment. Overall, the findings indicate both continuity and change, with the 21st-century text presenting more nuanced forms of female agency and resistance while patriarchal ideologies remain evident in both texts.

1. Introduction

Background of the Study

Looking back at the past, women have been experiencing injustices in the society. Since infancy, women were treated differently and repeatedly told that they were inferior and had no place in a "man's world" (Ajayi-Hackworth, 2017; Crossman, 2018). They were also considered house slaves, weak, submissive, and seen as a tool for making babies (Ali et al., 2021). In the medieval Europe, women were not allowed to own property, receive an education, or participate in public life (Cole & Symes, 2020; Perry et al., 2015). On the other hand, women in Asia were viewed as less valuable, "nothing without men", "inferior", "incidental being", and a "sin" (Jocson, 2020). Hence, they experienced oppression, subordination, and abuse from men (Crossman, 2018; Gordon, 2019).

Given the literatures presented above, it is evident that women have been experiencing difficulties in society. This later led to the emergence of feminism, which aims to promote equal rights for women (Jain, 2020, as cited in Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). Multiple studies in the past were made centering on this concept. However, scholars have criticized the lack of research concentrated on feminist theory refinement (Lay & Daley, 2007; Pearson, 2007). Similarly, there were no studies which focused on the comparison of Filipino women's representations across different centuries.

To address the gap, the study intended to examine Filipino women's representations in the 20th and 21st centuries through the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of selected literary works, including *Lirio* by Peter Solis Nery and *Sinigang* by Marie Aubrey Villaceran. *Lirio* is about a mute girl whose parents are Nanay Rosa and Tatay Manuel. She grew up being isolated because of her condition. Despite this, she found comfort in nature. Later, she met Yasmin, who became her friend in school. Yasmin defended herself and Lirio from others who tried to mock and taunt them. However, Lirio's friend left because Yasmin's father was assigned to a different place. Then, Lirio met Noli, who made her feel valued and loved. Yet, he also left because he needed to go to Japan for a job offer. Later, Lirio married Itik, wherein she experienced sexual and physical abuse. At the end of the story, Lirio tried to escape and prayed to God that she might be turned into a lily. On the other hand, *Sinigang* by Marie Aubrey Villaceran is about the conversation between Liza and Tita Loleng while they were preparing a sinigang dish. Their conversation centered on Liza's experience when she visited her stepbrother's funeral. Sylvia, her father's mistress, approached Liza to ask for forgiveness. Her father apologized to her as well. However, Liza just remained mostly silent. She did not forgive them. At the end of the story, Liza's pain was emphasized, as her relationship with her father would never be the same again.

2. Literature Review

Gender Inequality

According to Panerati et al. (2023), "stereotypes often cast women as nurturing and emotional but less competent than men, which contributes to systemic gender bias and discrimination". This is because the society assigns various roles to men and women based on the values associated with femininity and masculinity (Gordon, 2019). However, these labor divisions became natural, favoring men's domination (Crossman, 2018). Thus, women were seen as the "other", giving men the capacity to define women and their roles (de Beauvoir, 1949). According to Tarar and Pulla (2014), women suffer more in their own families than in society. These factors led Napikoski (2017) to describe patriarchy as "evil".

Feminism

Feminism refers to the "social, economic, and political movements and theories that are concerned with gender inequalities and gaining equal rights for women" (Jain, 2020, as cited in Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). It started even during ancient Greece, wherein Plato's Republic asserted that women had "natural capacities" equal to men, but not everyone agreed with him (Scott, 1996). The term feminism was later coined by Charles Fourier in 1837 for supporting women's suffrage (Goldstein, 1982). Later, feminism also appeared in France in the 1880s, Great Britain in the 1890s, and the United States in the early 1900s (Singh, 1997; Tandon, 2008).

Nevertheless, certain personalities such as Rebecca Walker and Maggie Humm contended that feminism has three waves (Khan, 2014; Lorber, 2005; Tong, 1998). On the other hand, Malinowska (2020) stated that there are four waves of feminism. The first wave focused on women's economic, sexual, and reproductive rights; the second wave highlighted unfairness in laws, cultural inequalities, and women's roles in society; the third wave underscored identity, gender, race, class, nation, social order, and sexual preference; and the fourth wave emphasized

the socio-cultural, historical, and political changes in society (Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022). These waves throughout history brought important developments in attaining gender equality, protection, and justice for women in society (Gordon, 2019; Lorber, 2005; Lumen, n.d.).

Feminist Theory

Certain women personalities such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Virginia Woolf started questioning women's representation in literature and society in the 18th and 19th centuries, leading to feminist movements (Diwan & Thakur, 2021). This later gave birth to feminist theory (Crossman, 2018; Gordon, 2019; Khan, 2014) which aims to understand gender equality by scrutinizing women's social roles and experiences (Stanley & Wise, 1983). It also argues that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities (Crossman, 2018; Gordon, 2019; Jones & Budig, 2007; Khan, 2014; Lorber, 2005). This can be associated with different disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, women's studies, economics, philosophy, art history, and literary criticism (Jones & Budig, 2007; Khan, 2014; Lorber, 2005).

Feminist theory has three primary constructs, which include class, gender, and race (Chafetz, 1997; Tong, 1998). Specifically, it analyzes women's social experiences with gender subordination, oppression, and gender inequality and determines remedies for certain gender-specific discrimination issues (Nkansah, 2023).

Feminism is concerned with women's issues, opinions in texts about women, language used by women, differences between men's and women's writings, the expression of women's thoughts and feelings, motherhood, and women's relationships with their children (Fazli, 2023). Furthermore, it intends to attain and ascertain equality between men and women (Cole & Symes, 2020). On the other hand, feminists refer to people who "act, speak, write, and advocate on behalf of women's issues and rights, and identify injustice against females in the society" (Malinowska, 2020, as cited in Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022).

Indeed, literature has a significant role in representing women in society since it is "a depiction of life" (Arizah, 2019). According to Santos (2021, as cited in Mangarin & Bungabong, 2024), it serves as the "medium for marginalized voices, giving women the platform to share their experiences of discrimination and resistance". It also promotes empathy and awareness, which are necessary in establishing gender equality and confronting sexist ideologies. Authors can portray the complexities of women's lives, evaluate patriarchal norms, and provide alternative narratives for women's empowerment (Mangarin & Bungabong, 2024). Feminist literature confronts women's traditional depiction of being passive or inferior (Roxas, 2020).

Feminism in the Philippines

In the early 20th century, feminist movements in the Philippines were led by women personalities such as Josefa Llanes Escoda, who promoted women's suffrage and social reforms (Labrador, 2015). In recent years, contemporary Filipino feminism has focused on intersectional issues, specifically the various experiences of women in different socioeconomic and cultural contexts (Cruz, 2020). However, gender stereotyping and discrimination against women are still evident in the country since they are expected to assume domestic responsibilities while men are viewed as leaders and breadwinners (Mangarin & Bungabong, 2024). This was also supported by the low score garnered by the country in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Social Institutions and Gender Index, which reflects the high levels of discrimination in various aspects such as family dynamics, economic opportunities, and physical security (OECD, 2024). Another piece of evidence is the lack of writing on women's history since most historians were men (Camagay, 1988). Although Filipino women today have a relatively high status, there are still areas where they are viewed as inferior to men (Dials, 2017). Despite women having higher educational attainments, they are still frequently underrepresented in leadership and experience a gender pay gap in fields such as digital technology (Oxfam Philippines, 2023; Philippine Institute for Development

Studies, 2023). Men continue to hold policy formulation and dominate various fields, making equality between men and women still an illusion (Quindoza-Santiago, 1996).

Critical Discourse Analysis

According to van Dijk (2015), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) refers to “discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” On the other hand, Fairclough (1989) defined CDA as consisting of three interrelated dimensions, including text analysis (description), which focuses on linguistic features; processing analysis (interpretation), which highlights text production and consumption; and social analysis (explanation), which emphasizes the social and cultural contexts of the text. Nonetheless, Cots (2006, as cited in Al-Ghazali, 2017) stated that its goal is to understand the relationship among language register, power, and ideology.

In terms of description, which is the beginning of the analysis, language registers were analyzed. According to Yule (2020, as cited in Shofyanti et al., 2021), language register refers to the “conventional way of using language that is appropriate in a specific context...”. On the other hand, Nordquist (2023) defined it as “how a speaker uses language differently in different circumstances.”

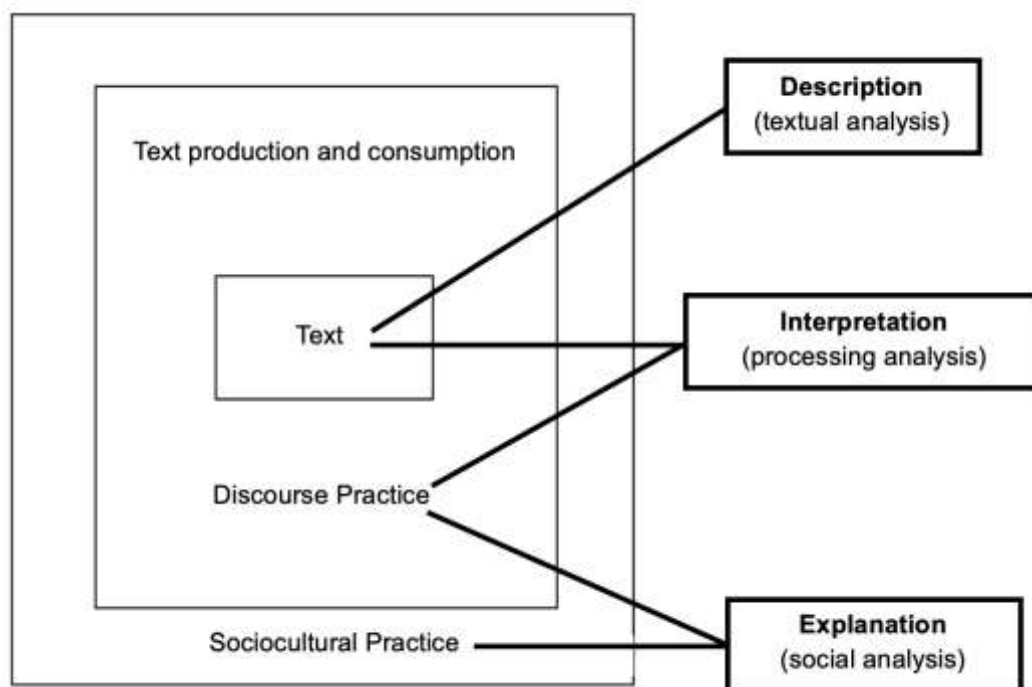
Martin Joos (1967) stated that the four factors influencing a register include the audience, topic, purpose, and location. Language registers include frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate. Frozen register includes fixed language forms. Formal register involves impersonal language. Consultative register refers to the language used when dealing with an expert. Casual register refers to the language utilized when communicating with friends, including slang and colloquial words. Lastly, intimate register denotes language used by people with close relationships.

Table 1. Language Registers by Martin Joos (1967)

Language Register	Description
Frozen	Includes fixed language forms
Formal	Involves impersonal language
Consultative	Used in dealing with experts
Casual	Used in dealing with friends, slang and colloquialisms
Intimate	Used by people with close relationships

Gender inequality is an important area of CDA, particularly in examining how discourse is involved in the reproduction and resistance of social inequality and domination related to gender (van Dijk, 2015). This led to the development of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2005), which has also been employed by different researchers in the field, including Baxter (2005), Cameron (1990, 1992), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), Holmes and Meyerhoff (2003), Kotthoff and Wodak (1997), Macaulay (2004), McIlvenny (2002), and Wodak (1997), as cited in van Dijk (2015).

Figure 1. Critical Discourse Analysis by Norman Fairclough (1989)



Constructs/Variables

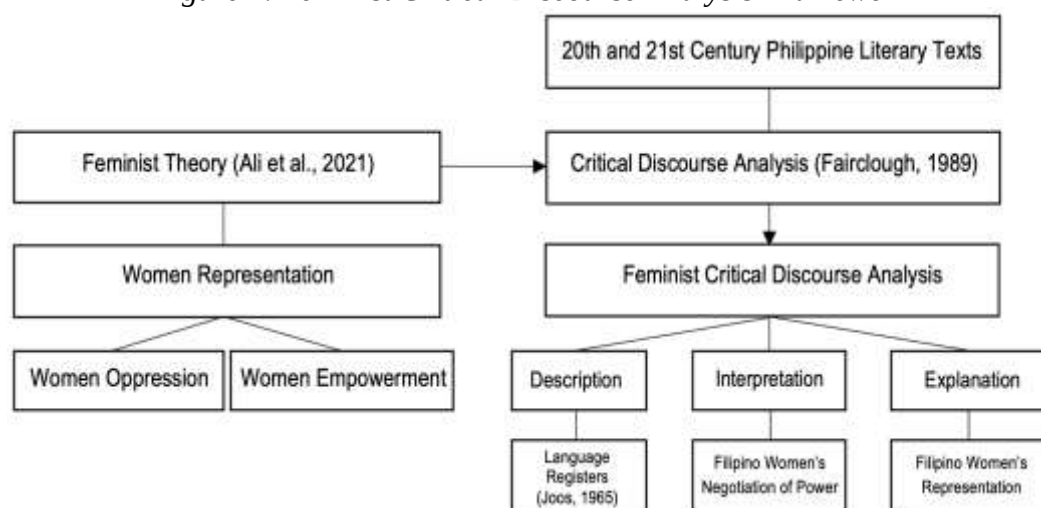
The constructs/variables of the study include the following:

- Filipino Women's Representations- refers to how Filipino women are depicted in literary pieces.
- 20th and 21st Centuries- the 20th century covers the period from 1900 to 1999, while the 21st century covers the period from 2000 to 2100.
- Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis- refers to the combination of Feminist Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis.
- Literary Texts- refer to written or printed materials that aim to provide information to readers.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The integration of Feminist Theory (Ali et al., 2021) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1989) provided the theoretical foundation for the application of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis in this study. The framework was applied to the selected 20th- and 21st-century Philippine literary texts, *Lirio* by Peter Solis Nery and *Sinigang* by Marie Aubrey Villaceran. In terms of description, language registers such as frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate were identified. In terms of interpretation, Filipino women's negotiation of power was highlighted, while explanation focused on Filipino women's representation.

Figure 2. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Framework



Statement of the Problem

General Question:

1. How are Filipino women represented in the 20th and 21st century literature through *Lirio* by Peter Solis Nery and *Sinigang* by Marie Aubrey J. Villaceran?

Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What language registers represent power in the literary texts?
2. How do Filipino women use language to negotiate power in the literary texts?
3. How are Filipino women represented in the 20th and 21st century literature?

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis as its research design to examine the representations of Filipino women in selected Philippine literary texts from the 20th and 21st centuries. Specifically, it analyzed how literary discourse constructs, reinforces, and challenges gender ideologies, power relations, and women's agency.

Selection Criteria and Corpus

The researcher purposefully selected representative Philippine literary pieces from the 20th and 21st centuries. These include *Lirio* by Peter Solis Nery and *Sinigang* by Marie Aubrey Villaceran. The selection of these two literary works was guided by three considerations which include the presence of a female protagonist, linguistic richness, and historical representation. Both texts were selected because women occupy central roles in their respective narratives, making them particularly suitable for examining the discursive construction of Filipino womanhood through Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. *Lirio* was selected as a representative text of the 20th century because of its narrative style, characterization, and thematic engagement with Filipino identity and social realities, which reflect the literary conventions that emerged during the period. Although the work was published in 2000, it received the Carlos Palanca Memorial Award for Literature in 1998. The study therefore treats it as a late-20th-century literary work based on its documented recognition in 1998, while acknowledging its 2000 publication date. For the present analysis, the researcher used the English translation by Prof. Celia F. Parcon, which was published on Peter Solis Nery's official website in 2017. On the other hand, *Sinigang* (2001) was selected as a representative text of

the 21st century because of its modern themes, conversational language, and portrayal of contemporary Filipino experiences, particularly family relationships and social change, which likewise reflect the literary conventions of the period.

However, this study acknowledges an important limitation since the analysis only focused on two literary texts. Its findings cannot be generalized to all representations of Filipino women in Philippine literature across the 20th and 21st centuries. Hence, the conclusions drawn from this study should be interpreted as context-specific insights into the selected literary texts rather than as representative of Philippine literature as a whole during these two periods.

Data Analysis

The selected literary texts were read multiple times to ensure a comprehensive understanding of their content and context. Afterward, the texts were scrutinized using Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. In the description stage, the linguistic features of the texts were identified and examined. In particular, the five language registers identified by Joos (1967), including frozen, formal, consultative, casual, and intimate, were analyzed to determine how they were used by the characters and how these registers reflected power relations within the literary texts.

In the interpretation stage, the researchers examined the ways Filipino women used language and other communicative strategies to negotiate power, including expressions of resistance, deference, and agency. The analysis considered how women's linguistic choices either reinforced, challenged, or negotiated existing power relations.

In the explanation stage, the findings were interpreted in relation to the broader sociocultural contexts of the selected literary texts. The analysis examined how gender roles, patriarchal structures, social expectations, and cultural values shaped the representation and exercise of power among Filipino women. The researchers then identified the distinct representations of Filipino women within each literary text and examined the common representations shared across the two texts.

4. Results and Discussion

Results

Research Question 1: What language registers represent power in the literary texts?

Lirio by Peter Solis Nery

A. Frozen Register

The wedding and baptism in the narrative were officiated by Padre Rafael, a male religious authority. His use of the frozen register in these ceremonial contexts represents the institutional power of the Church over the characters, particularly in matters involving marriage, baptism, and other religious traditions. At the same time, because this authority is exercised by a male figure, the scene also reflects the privileged position of men within religious and social institutions. Thus, power is held by Padre Rafael through his religious position, while the other characters are positioned as participants who follow established religious practices.

B. Formal Register

Tatay Manuel's communication with Lirio's teachers reflects the formal register because the interaction occurs between a parent and individuals occupying professional and institutional positions. In this interaction, the teachers hold the power which grants them authority within the interaction.

C. Consultative Register

Padre Rafael's interaction with Tatay Manuel demonstrates the consultative register when the priest asks about the name of the baby. In this exchange, Padre Rafael holds greater interactional power because of his position as a priest and respected community figure. His ability to initiate and direct the conversation places Tatay Manuel in the position of responding

to him. The interaction therefore reflects how social status and religious authority can influence who controls a communicative exchange.

D. Casual Register

Itik's use of casual language in addressing Tatay Manuel and Nanay Rosa, particularly through the terms "Zombie" and "Zombelina," reflects the familiarity and reduced social distance within their family relationship. His casual manner of addressing them suggests that he is not positioned as subordinate to them despite being their son-in-law. Moreover, his position as a sergeant in the Philippine National Police provides him with additional social authority, reinforcing his relatively strong position within the interaction.

Similarly, Yasmin's response to the classmates who taunted and mocked her and Lirio demonstrates her resistance to their attempts to exercise power over them. By refusing to remain passive and confronting those who ridiculed them, Yasmin challenges the power of her classmates and establishes a more symmetrical relationship in the interaction. Her response illustrates how resistance can disrupt an initially unequal power relationship.

E. Intimate Register

Lirio's relationship with Noli demonstrates the intimate register through the emotional closeness between the two characters. Although Lirio is unable to communicate through speech, her actions and interactions with Noli allow her to express affection and emotional attachment. In this relationship, Lirio and Noli share relatively equal interpersonal power because of their intimate connection.

Lirio's communication with God also reflects an intimate relationship. When she prays and expresses her desire to become a lily, she directly communicates her personal desire to a divine figure. Although God occupies a higher spiritual position, Lirio exercises personal agency by expressing her own desire and making a direct spiritual appeal. Thus, the intimate register provides Lirio with a space in which she can express herself despite her limited ability to communicate verbally.

Sinigang by Marie Aubrey Villaceran

A. Frozen Register

The funeral described in the story represents a formal religious and cultural practice. Liza's comparison of herself to a priest when Sylvia kneels before her also invokes the authority associated with religious figures. In this situation, Liza temporarily occupies a position of power over Sylvia, as Sylvia humbles herself before Liza and seeks her forgiveness. The religious imagery reinforces the reversal of the usual power relationship between the two women. Thus, the frozen register does not merely represent the power of religious tradition; it also demonstrates how religious language and imagery can be used to position one character above another.

B. Formal Register

Liza's father formally greets her and apologizes to her when they meet. Although he previously occupied a position of authority as her father, his formal and apologetic manner indicates a shift in power toward Liza. By apologizing, the father acknowledges Liza's emotional and moral position and recognizes that he has wronged her. Thus, the formal register contributes to a temporary reversal of their traditional parent-child power relationship, with Liza occupying the stronger position in the interaction.

C. Consultative Register

Tita Loleng repeatedly asks Liza questions throughout their interaction. Through this questioning, Tita Loleng exercises conversational control because she initiates and directs much of the exchange. Liza is positioned primarily as the respondent, giving Tita Loleng greater interactional power within the conversation. This demonstrates how the consultative

register can reflect an unequal distribution of conversational control even between characters who share a familial relationship.

D. Casual Register

Tita Loleng and Liza use casual expressions such as “hmm,” “oh,” and “huh” in their conversation. These linguistic features indicate familiarity and reduced social distance between the two characters. In this interaction, neither character consistently dominates the conversation, suggesting a relatively balanced power relationship. The casual register therefore represents interpersonal equality and familiarity, allowing both characters to communicate without the formal constraints associated with hierarchical relationships.

E. Intimate Register

Liza’s internal contemplation of her family demonstrates the intimate register through her private expression of thoughts and emotions. Although she imagines being complimented by her father, she remains silent and presents an inauthentic smile. In this context, Liza exercises internal power by withholding her genuine emotional response. Her silence prevents her father and other family members from accessing her true feelings and allows her to maintain control over her personal response to her father’s actions. This intimate register therefore represents Liza’s resistance through emotional restraint. Although her father previously held greater familial authority, Liza’s refusal to openly affirm or emotionally reconcile with him allows her to reclaim a degree of personal and moral power.

Research Question 2: How do Filipino women use language to negotiate power in the literary texts?

Lirio by Peter Solis Nery

A. Association with Nature

At the beginning of the story, Lirio was portrayed as mute; therefore, she relied on nonverbal forms of communication to express her thoughts and emotions. Her association with nature, particularly with flowers and butterflies, functions as an alternative means through which her identity and desires are communicated. Although she lacks conventional verbal speech, these forms of expression allow her to exercise a degree of agency.

B. Shouting

Toward the end of the story, Lirio’s act of shouting represents a significant shift in her communicative behavior. Her vocal expression allows her to articulate her desire directly and marks a stronger assertion of agency in response to Itik’s abuse. Thus, Lirio’s progression from nonverbal expression to vocal expression reflects an increasing ability to assert herself within an oppressive relationship.

C. Silence

Throughout the story, Itik exploited Lirio’s inability to speak by subjecting her to physical and sexual abuse. In this context, silence reflects Lirio’s limited capacity to resist the oppression imposed upon her, indicating the unequal power relations that characterize the narrative.

Sinigang by Marie Aubrey Villaceran

A. Silence

In contrast to Lirio, silence in Sinigang functions as a deliberate strategy for negotiating power. When Sylvia seeks Liza’s forgiveness, Liza remains silent and does not immediately grant her request. Her refusal to respond favorably allows her to maintain control over the interaction and resist the pressure placed upon her to forgive. Rather than submitting to Sylvia’s expectation of reconciliation, Liza uses silence to establish emotional distance and

communicate her refusal to accept Sylvia's actions. In this context, silence becomes a form of resistance and an expression of personal agency.

B. Assertive Language

Tita Loleng's commanding language toward Liza demonstrates how assertive communication can be used to exercise interpersonal authority. By directing Liza and determining the course of their interaction, Tita Loleng establishes a position of authority over her niece. Her language therefore enables her to negotiate power by asserting control within their relationship.

C. Submissive Language

Liza's mother was portrayed as following her husband's wishes despite his unfaithfulness, reflecting a deferential position within the family. Her compliance demonstrates how language and behavior may reproduce existing power relations when women accommodate male authority rather than directly challenge it.

D. Politeness

Similarly, Liza's polite responses and compliance with Tita Loleng's instructions demonstrate her recognition of her aunt's authority. In these instances, language functions not only as a means of asserting power but also as a means of acknowledging and negotiating existing hierarchies.

E. Sympathetic Language

Tita Loleng's sympathetic statement, "No choice then, huh?", demonstrates how language can negotiate power through empathy and emotional understanding. Rather than imposing authority on Liza, she acknowledges Liza's difficult situation and creates space for her to express herself.

F. Indirect Language

Conversely, Liza's indirect response to Tita Loleng's initial question reflects a cautious approach to communication. Her indirectness allows her to manage what she reveals while maintaining control over her personal feelings. Thus, sympathetic and indirect language function as relational strategies through which the characters negotiate power without relying on direct confrontation.

Research Question 3: How are Filipino women represented in the selected 20th- and 21st-century Philippine literary texts?

Distinct Representations of Filipino Women in 20th-Century Philippine Literature Through *Lirio* by Peter Solis Nery

The first literary text analyzed was *Lirio* by Peter Solis Nery. The story centers on Lirio, a mute girl and the daughter of Nanay Rosa and Tatay Manuel. She is described as having fair skin and being surrounded by butterflies. Unable to complete her education, she devoted herself to weaving and gardening. She later fell in love with Noli, who eventually left for Japan. Thereafter, she married Itik, a police sergeant who subjected her to physical and sexual abuse. At the end of the story, Lirio prayed to God and expressed her desire to be transformed into a lily.

A. Religious

Lirio is portrayed as a deeply religious woman who relies on God throughout the different stages of her life. Her faith remains evident despite the hardships and suffering she experiences. This portrayal suggests that Filipino women are represented as religious and spiritually dependent on their faith as a source of meaning and strength.

B. Excluded

Although Lirio is loved by her parents, she experiences exclusion from her peers because of her muteness. She is mocked and ridiculed, resulting in social isolation. This portrayal reflects the representation of Filipino women as vulnerable to social exclusion when they do not conform to expected forms of communication and social interaction.

C. Overdependent

Lirio relies heavily on Yasmin and later on Noli for companionship and emotional support. After both leave her, she eventually marries Itik because she believes that she cannot face life alone. This portrayal suggests that Filipino women may be represented as emotionally dependent on others, particularly for companionship and security.

Distinct Representations of Filipino Women in 21st-Century Philippine Literature Through Sinigang by Marie Aubrey Villaceran

The second literary text analyzed was Sinigang by Marie Aubrey Villaceran. The story follows Liza as she prepares sinigang with her aunt, Tita Loleng. During their conversation, Tita Loleng asks about the funeral of Liza's half-brother, Lem. At the funeral, Liza encounters Sylvia, her father's mistress, who asks for forgiveness. Later, her father also apologizes for his betrayal. Despite these apologies, Liza remains emotionally distant and refuses to forgive him, demonstrating the lasting effects of her father's actions.

A. Submissive

Women in the story are portrayed as complying with the expectations of male and older authority figures. Liza's mother remains submissive despite her husband's unfaithfulness, while Liza respectfully follows Tita Loleng's instructions. These portrayals suggest that Filipino women continue to be represented as occupying deferential positions within familial and social hierarchies.

B. Emotionally Complex

Liza carefully reflects on her emotions and remains firm in her decision not to forgive her father. Although she smiles when complimented, she internally continues to experience pain and resentment. This contrast between her outward expression and inner emotions indicates that Filipino women are represented as emotionally complex, capable of simultaneously managing social expectations and personal feelings.

C. Morally Empowered

Liza refuses to look at her father or shed tears during their encounter. She recognizes that his actions are unacceptable and asserts her right to remain angry. Her refusal to immediately forgive him demonstrates her capacity to establish moral boundaries and exercise judgment over the actions of others. This portrayal reflects the moral empowerment of Filipino women through their ability to resist expectations of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Common Representations of Filipino Women in 20th- and 21st-Century Philippine Literature Through Lirio by Peter Solis Nery and Sinigang by Marie Aubrey Villaceran

A. Performers of Domestic and Caregiving Roles

In Lirio, Lola Pansay serves as a midwife, while Lirio devotes herself to weaving and gardening. In Sinigang, Liza and Tita Loleng prepare the family meal together. These portrayals associate Filipino women with domestic, caregiving, and household responsibilities, suggesting the persistence of gendered expectations concerning women's roles within the family and community.

B. Voiceless

In Lirio, the protagonist is unable to speak from birth and becomes known as "Lirio, the Silent One." Her inability to communicate verbally contributes to her marginalization and vulnerability. In Sinigang, Liza has moments of silence during her interactions with Tita

Loleng, Sylvia, and her father. However, unlike Lirio's involuntary muteness, Liza's silence can also function as a deliberate form of resistance. Thus, while both texts associate women with silence, they differ in how this communicative strategy functions, wherein it represents constraint in Lirio but can serve as an expression of agency in Sinigang.

C. Portrayed Through Negative Characteristics

In Lirio, Nanay Rosa is portrayed as unconscious after experiencing a difficult childbirth and severe blood loss. In Sinigang, Liza describes herself as lacking the aptitude and interest to remember recipes, while Sylvia is depicted negatively because of her involvement in the family conflict. Collectively, these portrayals indicate that female characters are sometimes constructed through perceived weaknesses, limitations, or negative characteristics.

D. Oppressed

In Lirio, Lirio endures physical and sexual abuse at the hands of Itik. In Sinigang, Liza experiences verbal abuse after being called "Sinverguenza" by her stepbrother. These experiences portray Filipino women as vulnerable to different forms of oppression within familial and social relationships. The texts therefore expose how patriarchal and interpersonal power relations can restrict women's agency.

E. Objectified

In Lirio, the protagonist is regarded as her father's "great pride" and is repeatedly associated with flowers, particularly lilies. These descriptions position Lirio in relation to her perceived beauty and symbolic value. In Sinigang, Liza compares herself to an animal capable of sensing danger. Such representations demonstrate how female characters may be described through comparisons and images that position their identities in relation to external perceptions and expectations.

F. Living Within Patriarchal Social Structures

In Lirio, male authority is consistently emphasized. Tatay Manuel chooses the baby's name, while Itik exercises authority over Lirio's family. Noli is also portrayed as possessing knowledge and competence in repairing the radio. Likewise, in Sinigang, Liza's father exercises authority over his wife and Sylvia. Tita Loleng also follows his preference in preparing sinigang, while Lem receives considerable admiration and recognition within the family. These portrayals indicate that the female characters exist within social and familial structures in which men are usually positioned as authorities and decision-makers.

G. Empowered

Despite their experiences of oppression and marginalization, both literary texts also portray women as capable of exercising agency and resistance. In Lirio, the protagonist ultimately resists Itik's abuse by escaping and crying out, "Lord, I want to be a lily!" before the butterflies protect her. Her final act represents a transformation from vulnerability to resistance. In Sinigang, Liza did not forgive her father and Sylvia. Her refusal to conform to the expectation that she should readily forgive them demonstrates her ability to establish moral boundaries and challenge their authority. These portrayals suggest that Filipino women are not represented solely as passive victims of patriarchal structures; they are also depicted as capable of exercising agency, resisting oppression, and asserting their own moral positions.

Discussion

The findings reveal that although the representations of Filipino women have evolved across the 20th and 21st centuries, negative portrayals appear more frequently. This indicates that while contemporary Philippine literature presents more nuanced forms of female agency and resistance, patriarchal ideologies remain embedded in literary discourse.

In terms of research question 1, all five language registers identified by Joos (1967) were evident in both literary texts, suggesting that language functions as an important marker of

power relations among characters. In *Lirio* by Peter Solis Nery, power was predominantly exercised by Padre Rafael, Lirio's teacher, Itik, and Noli. Conversely, in *Sinigang* by Marie Aubrey Villaceran, authority was primarily manifested through the characters of Liza and Tita Loleng. These findings demonstrate that language is not merely a means of communication but also a mechanism through which social relationships and power structures are established, negotiated, and reinforced within the narratives.

In terms of research question 2, the findings show that Filipino women employed various linguistic and communicative strategies to negotiate power and express agency. In *Lirio*, Lirio negotiated power through her association with nature and her eventual use of shouting, while her silence reflected the constraints imposed by her inability to speak and the oppressive circumstances surrounding her. In contrast, *Sinigang* presents silence and assertive language as ways through which female characters such as Liza and Tita Loleng negotiated power. At the same time, submissive language, politeness, sympathetic language, and indirect language reflected more restrained forms of negotiation within interpersonal relationships. These findings suggest that female power negotiation is expressed through both overt and subtle communicative practices. While *Lirio* portrays resistance through embodied and more direct forms of expression, *Sinigang* illustrates how silence, assertiveness, and emotional restraint can also function as forms of agency. Such representations demonstrate the varied ways through which Filipino women negotiate power within patriarchal social structures in Philippine literature.

In terms of research question 3, the representations of women differed across the two literary periods. Women in the 20th-century literary text were portrayed as religious, excluded, and overdependent. In contrast, women in the 21st-century literary text were represented as submissive, emotionally complex, and morally empowered. Despite these differences, both texts consistently presented women as performers of domestic and caregiving roles, voiceless, portrayed through negative characteristics, oppressed, objectified, living within patriarchal social structures, and to some extent, empowered.

Conclusions

The findings of the study affirm that several feminist perspectives remain relevant in explaining the representation of Filipino women in Philippine literature. Consistent with the works of Ajayi-Hackworth (2017), Crossman (2018), Ali et al. (2021), Jocson (2020), Tarar and Pulla (2014), and de Beauvoir (1949), the selected literary texts portray women as individuals who continue to experience oppression, subordination, objectification, overdependence, and other forms of gender inequality within patriarchal social structures. These representations demonstrate that male authority continues to shape women's identities, roles, and lived experiences in literary discourse.

At the same time, the findings suggest differences in the construction of female identity and agency between the selected 20th- and 21st-century texts. Compared with the 20th-century literary text, the 21st-century text presents women with greater emotional complexity and moral agency, reflecting more nuanced forms of female resistance and empowerment. Nevertheless, these positive portrayals remain limited in comparison with the recurring representations of women as oppressed, voiceless, excluded, and constrained by patriarchal expectations. Subsequently, Philippine literature reflects both continuity and change, demonstrating that while women's representations have become more multidimensional, patriarchal ideologies continue to influence how female characters are constructed.

Overall, the study concludes that Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis is an effective framework for examining how language, power, and ideology shape women's representations in literary texts. Through the comparative analysis of *Lirio* and *Sinigang*, the study contributes to feminist literary criticism by providing insights into the continuities and shifts in the representation of Filipino women across the 20th and 21st centuries.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have important implications for literature and language education. Educators are encouraged to use *Lirio* and *Sinigang* not only as literary texts but also as instructional materials for developing students' critical literacy, gender awareness, and critical thinking. Through guided discussions and comparative analyses, students may examine how language constructs gender identities, reinforces or challenges power relations, and reflects broader social ideologies. Such classroom practices may encourage learners to question whose voices are prioritized or marginalized, recognize how women exercise agency despite structural constraints, and connect literary representations with contemporary gender issues in Philippine society. Hence, literature instruction may contribute not only to literary appreciation but also to the development of social awareness and gender sensitivity.

Future researchers are encouraged to broaden the scope of Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis by examining a wider range of literary texts representing different historical periods, genres, regions, and Philippine languages. Expanding the corpus would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of Filipino women's representations and address the limitations associated with analyzing only two literary texts. Comparative studies may also investigate differences in the portrayal of women across regional Philippine literatures, Southeast Asian literature, and world literature, as well as examine how female and male authors differ in representing women's agency, resistance, oppression, and patriarchy.

In terms of methodology, future studies may complement Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis with frameworks such as Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics or Hymes's SPEAKING Model to examine linguistic choices and communicative contexts more systematically. Moreover, employing mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative discourse analysis with quantitative linguistic evidence may likewise enhance the depth, rigor, and reliability of future investigations into gender representation in literature.

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6. Appendices

Appendix A

Short Stories

20th Century Philippine Literature

Lirio by Peter Solis Nery

First Prize, Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature, 1998; published in 2000. English translation by Prof. Celia F. Parcon (2017), retrieved from Peter Solis Nery's official website.

[The full text of "Lirio" by Peter Solis Nery has been omitted from this formatted version due to copyright restrictions, as it is a complete third-party literary work. Readers may access the original story via the citation below.]

Reference:

Nery, P. S. (2017, June 14). *Lirio*, in English translation (C. F. Parcon, Trans.). Peter Solis Nery. <https://petersolisnery.com/lirio/>

21st Century Philippine Literature

Sinigang by Marie Aubrey Villaceran

[The full text of "Sinigang" by Marie Aubrey Villaceran has been omitted from this formatted version due to copyright restrictions, as it is a complete third-party literary work. Readers may access the original story via the citation below.]

References:

Villaceran, M. A. J. (2001). *Sinigang*. The Best Philippine Short Stories.

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Appendix B

Table

Table 1. Language Registers by Martin Joos (1967)

Language Register	Description
Frozen	Includes fixed language forms
Formal	Involves impersonal language
Consultative	Used in dealing with experts
Casual	Used in dealing with friends, slang and colloquialisms
Intimate	Used by people with close relationships

Appendix C

Figures

Figure 1. Critical Discourse Analysis by Norman Fairclough (1989)

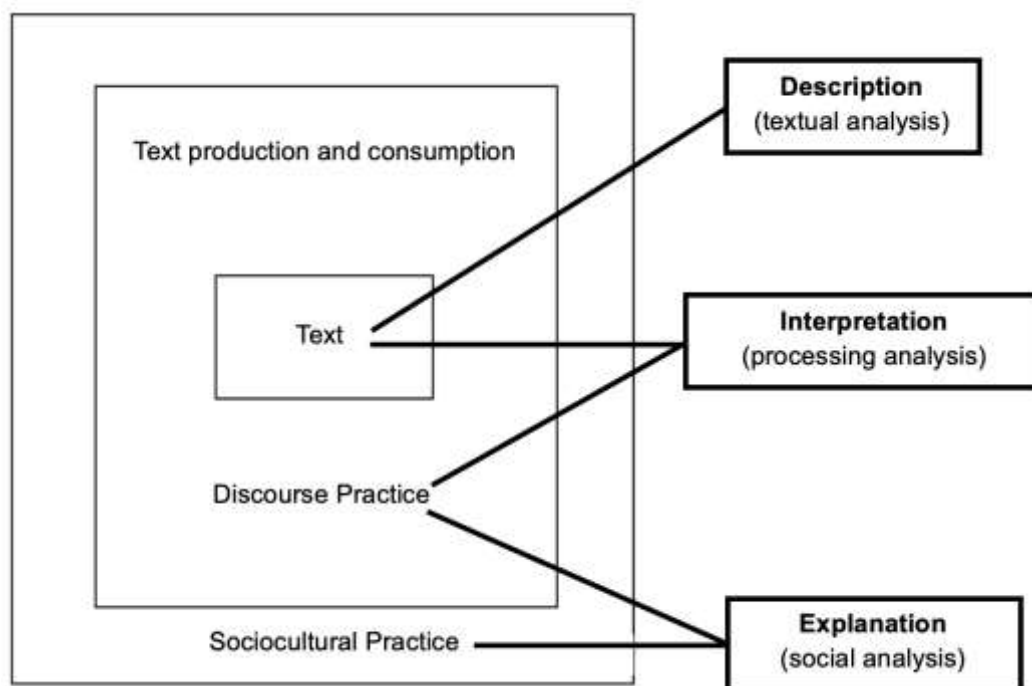
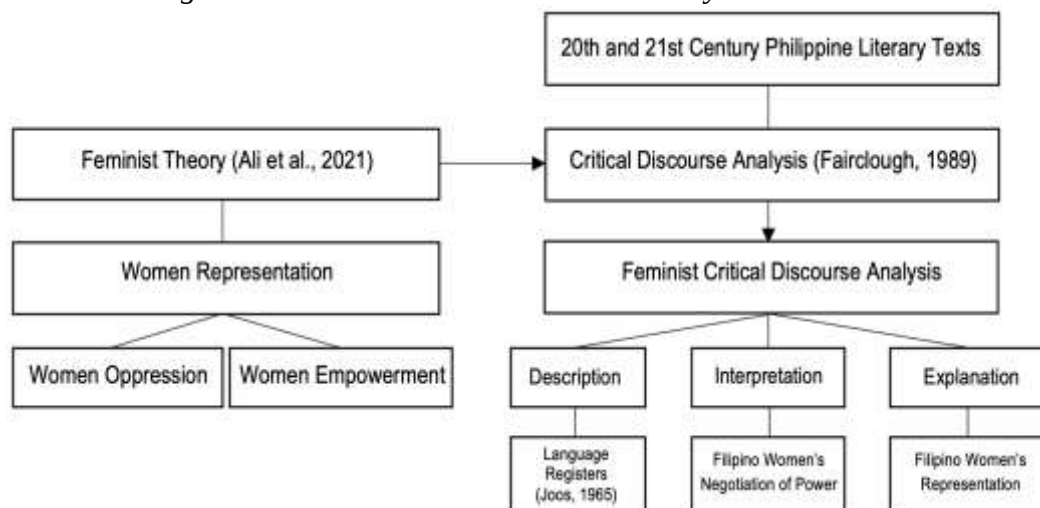


Figure 2. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis Framework



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