

# An Overview of Forensic Linguistics

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## Editorial

The application of linguistic knowledge, methodologies, and insights to the forensic setting of law, language, crime investigation, trial, and judicial procedure is known as forensic linguistics, legal linguistics, or language and the law. It belongs to the field of applied linguistics.

The term "forensic linguistics" originally surfaced in 1968 when linguistics professor Jan Svartvik used it in his investigation of comments made by Timothy John Evans, "The Evans Statements: A Case for Forensic Linguistics." Reexamining the statements made to authorities at the Notting Hill police station in England in 1949 in connection with an alleged murder by Evans was the topic at hand. Evans was accused of killing his wife and infant, and after being found guilty, he was hanged. However, Svartvik discovered that various style indicators were present in the allegedly delivered statements by Evans and that, contrary to what was claimed at trial, Evans did not actually give the statements to the police officers. Sparked by this case, early forensic linguistics in the UK was focused on questioning the validity of police interrogations. As seen in numerous famous cases (e.g. the convictions of Derek Bentley, the Guildford Four, the Bridgewater Three), many of the major concerns were of the statements police officers used. Numerous times, the topic of police register came up – the type of stylist language and vocabulary used by officers of the law when transcribing witness statements [1].

The legal defence in many criminal cases questioned the veracity of police testimony in the early days of forensic linguistics in the UK. At the time, the police were required to take statements from suspects in a specified format rather than directly from the subject. Witnesses rarely give clear or organised statements; instead, they frequently ruminate and go back in time aloud. Frequently, the delivery is too quick, leaving out crucial information [2].

## Forensic Text Types

### Emergency call

The successful completion of an emergency call depends on the recipient's or emergency operator's capacity to gather information-primarily linguistic information-under dangerous circumstances and to formulate the necessary answer in a timely manner. Analysis of an emergency call must also pay close attention to intonation, voice pitch, and how cooperative the caller and the recipient are at any given time. Complete cooperation calls for direct and prompt responses.

Because urgency is a factor in emergency calls, hesitations, evasive behaviours, and answers that are either too brief or incomplete suggest that the call may be a hoax or fake report. Genuine calls have recognisable turn overlap and interlocking. The caller has faith that the recipient will only ask

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essential questions, and the recipient has faith that the caller will deliver correct information. The use of a rising pitch by the caller at the conclusion of each round may suggest lack of commitment; the use of a rising pitch by the recipient denotes uncertainty or the need for explanation. The ideal call progresses from the recipient's total ignorance to the greatest amount of knowledge in the shortest amount of time. This triggers a call for help [3].

### Ransom demands or other threat communication

Threat is a crucial component of a ransom demand because it is the antithesis of a promise. In order to differentiate between real and fake threats, ransom demands are also investigated. A ransom note analysis can be seen in the Lindbergh kidnapping case, where the first ransom letter (also known as the Nursery Note) stated: "We caution you for making anything public or for advising the Police the child is in gut care." There have been numerous infamous examples where ransom demands were made in the form of written notes. Forensic linguists look at the writing style employed in a ransom letter to ascertain who wrote it and what the author's genuine intentions were. When examining ransom letters, forensic linguists take into account things like syntactic structures, stylistic trends, punctuation, and even spelling. To identify the author of the Lindbergh ransom note, forensic linguists analysed the writing styles of the message and the suspect. This increased the likelihood of success.

### Suicide letters

A suicide note is usually succinct, very propositional, and evasive to some extent. A convincing suicide letter must make a clear, unequivocal claim in a particular circumstance. The idea of authentic suicide is thematic, addressed to the recipient (or recipients), and pertinent to the interaction between them and the writer. Typically, suicide notes contain references to the act of self-harm or the suicide technique that was used. The contents of a suicide note could be designed to make the addressee suffer or feel remorse. Authentic suicide letters are brief, usually less than 300 words. [2] Extraneous or pointless information is frequently left out of the text [4].

## Forensic transcription

Written documents and video and audio recordings are the two primary categories of transcriptions. Because text is the data that becomes the accessible evidence, accurate and trustworthy text transcription is crucial. The evidence is tampered with if a transcription is inaccurate. Evidence is once again unintentionally changed if the complete text is not accurately transcribed. The text's role as evidence must be emphasised. Never rely entirely on an audio file's transcription to be correct. Every sort of transcribing has unique issues. A handwritten paper could have strange spellings that produce misleading meanings, unreadable handwriting, and confusing pictures. Scanned documents can be challenging since the original document may change during scanning. Repetition, hesitancy, incomprehensible speech, difficult-to-understand language, and muttering speakers are all common in audio and video documents. The audio and video text may also contain non-linguistic sounds, such as crying and laughing that are difficult to translate into written language. Civil libertarians have urged that interrogations in high-profile criminal cases should be taped, with the recordings maintained and the transcripts kept as well [5].

## Conflict of Interest

None.

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