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## A Psychological and Linguistic Portrait of Criminals Introduction to the Discussion

**Abstract:** The article concerns one of the aspects of forensic linguistics, i.e. establishing authorship of challenged statements. This is done in collaboration with a linguist – who creates a linguistic profile of an author of texts – and a psychologist – who creates a psychological profile. The cooperation of specialists can be used at the level of assessment, which is used for investigation and judicial purposes. Expert opinions in the field of forensic linguistics (German: Forensische Linguistik) include: establishing authorship of a statement based on spoken or written content (e.g. farewell letters, threatening letters, ransom demands); the possibility of establishing authorship of anonymous texts on the Internet, establishing the linguistic characteristics of stalkers and cyberstalkers, which can identify the sender of the message due to country of origin, constructing a linguistic profile of an anonymous text's author, a linguistic profile of a well-known text's author. It should be added that the analysis of content-linguistic content of documents contains an emotional component, which is related to our knowledge about the determinants of language to express emotions, both negative and positive. An important element of the text is the matter of the psychological portrait of the sender (author and/or performer) of the text based on the identified linguistic features.

**Key words:** psychology, forensic linguistics, criminal, idiolect, emotions.

### Introduction

The article focuses on one of the aspects of forensic linguistics concerning the establishment of authorship of challenged statements, taking into account the co-

operation of a linguist, who creates a linguistic profile of an author of texts, with a psychologist, who creates a psychological profile. The cooperation of a linguist with a psychologist can be used at the level of assessment, which is used for investigation and judicial purposes. The co-author of the article, Jadwiga Stawnicka is the first expert forensic linguist in Poland, providing expert opinions for investigation and judicial purposes. Expert opinions in the field of forensic linguistics (judicial linguistics, German: *forensische Linguistik*)<sup>1</sup> include: establishing authorship of a statement based on spoken or written content (e.g. farewell letters, threatening letters, ransom demands); the possibility of establishing authorship of anonymous texts on the Internet, establishing the linguistic characteristics of stalkers and cyberstalkers, which can identify the sender of the message, identification of the sender due to country of origin, constructing a linguistic profile of an anonymous text's author, a linguistic profile of a well-known text's author. They are also expert opinions in the field of determining the probability of committing plagiarism, assessment of the authenticity of texts, cases of punishable threat, cases of libel or insult, establishing the intentions of the sender. Forensic linguistics can also assess the method of oral explanation during a hearing of a witness or suspect, the method of oral explanation during crisis or police negotiations, the linguistic aspects of operational measures in criminal environments on the Internet, issues related to logging the testimonies of witnesses, as well as provide an analysis of the testimonies of witnesses in terms of their credibility. It should be added that the analysis of content-linguistic content of documents contains an emotional component, which is related to our knowledge about the determinants of language to express emotions, both negative and positive. It also raises the matter of the psychological portrait of the sender (author and/or performer) of the text based on the identified linguistic features.

## Forensic Linguistics in Great Britain, the United States and Germany<sup>2</sup>

Forensic Linguistics is developing in Great Britain, the United States and Germany. Among the many English publications in this area the following may be mentioned: books *Forensic Linguistics: Advances in Forensic Stylistics* (McMenamin 2002), *Forensic Linguistic* (Olsson 2004), *An Introduction to Forensic Linguistics: Language in Evidence* (Coulthard, Alison 2007), *Author Identification in the Forensic*

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, we use the term forensic linguistics, providing in detail which area remains in the circle of interests.

<sup>2</sup> In this article we cite only a few remarks on the development of forensic linguistics in England, the United States, Germany and Poland. More information on this topic can be found in the book publication.

*Setting* (Chaski 2012). At the University of Aston, linguistic expert opinions are performed, and the leader in this regard is K. Kredens, an English expert, graduate of the University of Łódź. Among many of his other publications, these should be listed: *Towards a corpus-based methodology of forensic authorship attribution: a comparative study of two idiolects* (2002), *Korpusy językowe w językoznawstwie sądowym* (2005), *On the Status of Linguistic Evidence in Litigation* (2006), *Corpus Linguistics in Authorship Identification* (2012).

In Germany, the researchers propose a broad view of forensic linguistics as a part of linguistics, specifically the usefulness of linguistic analysis for the purpose of exercising the law, including in terms of suitability for judicial discourse in the courtroom. E. Fobbe (2011) in the book *Forensische Linguistik. Eine Einführung* concluded the theoretical basis of forensic linguistics and analyzed selected texts, noting the possibility of creating a profile of the sender through language errors. The condition and developmental possibilities of forensic linguistics are written about by H. Kniffka (2008) in the article *Stand und Entwicklung der „Forensischen Linguistik“*. R.H. Drommel – author of studies of over a thousand cases and more than 300 expert opinions, a “linguistic profiler”, “linguistic detective”, for 25 years studying forensic linguistic traces left by perpetrators – presented the results of his research in two books: *Der Code des Bsen. Die spektakulären Fälle des Sprachprofilers* (2011) and *Sprachwissenschaftliche Kriminalistik und Sprachprofiling. Anfänge, Kontroversen, Meilensteine, Fallbeispiele* (2011).

## Forensic linguistics in Poland

The development of forensic linguistics in Poland is related primarily to the scientific activities of Prof. Bruno Hołyst (1997, p. 28–45, 2011, p. 1325–1332). In numerous works in the field of forensic psychology he devotes attention to the problem of stalking: *Stalking – terror psychiczny i fizyczny* (2003, p. 27–42) and *Stalking – terror emocjonalny, moralny i fizyczny* (2009, p. 732–750). Antoni Feluś is the author of *Identyfikacja kryminalistyczna na podstawie języka pisanego* (2000) and the articles *Zagadnienia roli języka w ekspertyzie pisma* (Feluś 1975, p. 273–276), *Aspekt jednostkowy i grupowy języka* (Feluś 1976, p. 769–773) and *O potrzebie badania języka na użytek kryminalistyki* (Feluś 1979), *Granice interpretacji kryminalistycznej śladu języka pisanego* (Feluś, Pabian 1983). The researcher believes that the linguistic aspect is a natural source of information in the expert opinion, and should be obligatorily taken into account in comparative studies of writing, and the synchronization of graphic and linguistic studies “should become a universally applicable principle” (Feluś 2011, p. 125). Forensic linguistics in Poland is performed by Jadwiga Stawnicka, author of the articles *Językoznawstwo w służbie wymiaru sprawiedliwości* (2015a, p. 40–42) and *Lingwistyka w służbie kryminalistyki. Diagnozy i prognozy* (2015b, p. 9–28).

## Linguistic profiling of a criminal

In the era of such enormous development of communication via the Internet, the possibility of linguistic profiling of an author's/performer's (sender's) text is of extreme importance. A stalker, aside from an "electronic footprint", also leaves a "linguistic print" behind. With reference material one can attempt to determine whether the author of two texts could be the same person. When the reference material comes from several senders, determining the linguistic characteristics may be helpful in indicating which sender(s) should be considered as the author of the evidence. G.E. Wattendorf recommends that victims of stalkers collect evidence: records and recordings, e-mails, letters, and other (Wattendorf 2000, p. 10–14 source: Hołyst 2009, p. 748). Each of us represents one's own personal style (idiolect), and based on the characteristics of the style, it can be more or less likely determined whether the perpetrator (author/performer) of the evidence texts has same qualities.

Idiolect is a "unique seal" marking the way someone speaks, and therefore also writes. Usually one looks at idiolect from two points of view – linguistic or literary. Henryk Markiewicz proposed to combine the two study perspectives – the direction of analysis would then lead from the grammatical-lexical characteristics to the stylistic characteristics of the text, taking into account the broad literary-linguistic-genre background. The functional analysis he proposed contains the advantage of semantics. Idiolect is the language of a single language user in a given period of their development. The language of the members of a given community is differentiated in terms of phonetic and lexical features but to a lesser extent the syntactic and semantic characteristics (Urbańczyk 1994, p. 119; Polanski 1999, p. 243). The concept idiolect played a great role in dialectology. It is important here to distinguish between two terms: idiolect and idiostyle. The idiolect of an individual (personal language) can be recognized in texts produced by that person. Features of idiolect manifested by the degree of knowledge of vocabulary and grammar of the general language as well as by individual inclinations to use certain words in a given situation and to combine them in a characteristic way (Urbańczyk 1994, p. 206). The concept of idiolect should take into account the temporal and social factor as well as the situational context, and so changes in the life of a person, social and situational differentiation (e.g. administrative, specialist, colloquial discourse). On the other hand, idiostyle is the style of the text itself and includes the use of certain linguistic resources, their organization, determining the intentions of the sender and the purpose of communication (Kudra 2011, p. 29–30). The concept of Andrzej Kudra should be mentioned here, who proposes the use of the term "idiolectostyle" which is a contamination of the terms "idiolect" and "idiostyle".

In forensic activities, a linguist seeks to determine the characteristics of the text's author (linguistic profiling of the sender), to establish authorship of evidence in the existence of the body of evidence, to establish authorship of the body of evidence in the existence of several bodies of evidence. A linguist may characterize compositional elements, consistency of the text or lack thereof in terms of cohesion and coherence (the use of derivatives, synonyms, antonyms), pragmatically conventionalized linguistic expressions and/or their modifications. The author of the text can use characteristic vocabulary (colloquialism, specialized language, expressivisms, profanity, metaphors, paraphrases, metonymies, etc.). Linguistic analysis should include not only lexical items but also an analysis of errors, grammatical and syntactical features.

On the other hand, in the study of corpus linguistics, on the basis of the two corpora – evidence and comparative – there are two frequency lists of words generated. The corpus of evidence is a body whose authorship is to be determined, while the comparative corpus contains the statements of the suspect/accused. After generating the two frequency lists of words, words are isolated from the bodies, whose number clearly differs among the bodies or is clearly similar. Then the appropriate lexical categories and lexical-syntactic categories are identified in order to determine the degree of difference or similarity within a given category (Kredens 2005, p. 270–279). On this basis, it is possible to determine the characteristic determinants of the style. These include, for example: the average length of words, the words occurring most frequently, the words occurring only once, the ratio of individual words to their total number. On this basis, it is possible to extract the determinants of hesitation, the use of abbreviated forms, emphasis, i.e. an exaggerated emotionality of expression, emphasis on certain phrases, words or syllables enhancing their relevance, and the use of relative sentences, the use of adjectives and adverbs (Kredens 2005, p. 275 ). After determining the indicated characteristics, the characteristics obtained are compared with the corpus of general language.

To establish or exclude the authorship of the text a statistical estimation test is applied when comparing the different stylistic features in the body of evidence and comparative body (Kredens 2003, p. 405–445). The researcher highlights the value of appropriate analytical tools when using corpus methodology. One of them is *Vocalyse Toolkit*, software enabling to analyze short texts, the second program is *CopyCatch*, enabling to analyze texts to determine whether there was a misappropriation of authorship.

By examining forensic linguistic trace, the linguistic-researcher may examine the contents of anonymous letters against neurolinguistic and linguistic theories. Based on the analysis of the content and form, the linguistic features of the sender can be determined, including the characteristics of the lexical, grammatical, syntactical level, spelling errors of various levels, the characteristics of a personal style, as well as ways of expressing emotions through the means of language. For an expert opinion to be correct, it is important to link texts with

external factors, circumstances of creation and other considerations. By characterizing stylistic means, the presence of synonyms, hypernyms (words with a broader meaning scope), hyponyms (words with a narrower meaning scope), repetitions, periphrases, borrowed words, syntactic stylistic means (e.g. an epithet, gradation, ellipse), figures of thought (e.g. understatement, irony, rhetorical question) should be taken into account. The unconsciously left linguistic traces should be studied in anonymous letters. The perpetrator can certainly leave linguistic traces intentionally, in order not to disclose his identity or to direct suspicion onto someone else (Hołyst 1997, p. 40). To determine with a high probability that the suspect is the author of the evidence text, an expert compares the linguistic features of the body of evidence and comparative body. Identification of a specific person as the author of the text would mean the exclusion of any other person as a suspect.

Linguistic expert opinions should be based not only on lexical, spelling and phonetic features but must also include grammar, including syntax issues. The use of dialect by the perpetrator, which would make it possible to determine the region where the perpetrator is from, is important.

An element influencing identification is the emotional track which is left by the perpetrator.

## Emotions as a factor in identifying the perpetrator

Emotions are an important factor, which, along biological, forensic and linguistic traces can help the process of identifying the perpetrator. It is a complex matter and the very definition of emotions are is a difficult task and causes discussions in the scientific community of psychologists, physiologists, and philosophers. Definitional problems are the result of the relationship between the quantitative advantage of the multitude of shades of emotion over a limited number of words required for their determination.

The term “emotion” is derived from the Latin verb “movere”, which means “to move” and suggests a tendency to act comprised in every emotion. Widely, emotions are considered to be important elements of motivation (Grzywa 1995, p. 49). In other words, they are more or less a fixed “readiness for actions”. One can talk about a dual sense of emotions, i.e. a momentary experience or persistent disposition. At the phenomenological level, emotions are defined as a stimulator of all action.

## Definitions of emotions

The multiplicity of definitions in the area of determining what emotions is due to the ambiguous definition of this term. Research conducted on emotions have

indicated a new face of this issue. N. Frijda, a Dutch researcher, described three working definitions of emotions, which are complementary to each other. Each of them focuses on a slightly different presentation of the phenomenon of emotion. (Frijda 1986, 1998, p. 56–63). The first assumes that “emotion is usually the result of the conscious or unconscious evaluation of an event as significantly affecting the goals or interests of the subject. Emotion is perceived as positive if the event is consistent with those objectives and interests of the individual, and negative if it is incompatible with them” (Frijda 1986). The second definition assumes that “the essence of emotion is launching a readiness to implement the program of action. Emotion launches the priority to a particular action (or several actions) which provide the urgent status. Thus, such a program may interfere with the implementation of other, currently implemented programs by the subject of a cognitive and behavioral nature. Different emotions activate the different programs of action (Frijda 1986). The last is a definition saying that emotion “is usually experienced as a special kind of mental state. It is often accompanied or followed by somatic changes, facial and pantomime expressions, and behavioral responses” (Frijda 1986).

The universal definition connecting all these areas seems to be suggested by Dariusz Doliński, who claims that “Emotion is a subjective mental state launching priority for the related program of action. Feelings of it are usually accompanied by somatic changes, facial and pantomime expressions as well as behaviors (Doliński 2000, p. 322).

## Formation of emotions

All mental processes, like emotions and feelings, are a function of the body and especially the nervous system. The condition of the body will have an impact on the course of emotions. According to Bolesław Hornowski, “emotional experiences of a human being are contingent upon the functioning of the autonomic nervous system. Different emotional processes appear with the development of the individual’s needs” (Hornowski 1985, p. 122). At the core of human activity are biological and social needs, which are accompanied by emotional experiences having a positive or negative vector. Emotional processes can also be motivators for making decisions in different situations. This is related to cognitive processes which are subject to control.

Human activity may be the result of strong emotions with the minimal activity of cognitive processes and vice versa. The Yerkes-Dodson law relates to this, assuming that the strength of emotional motivation affects human activity. If an action seems to be simple for the individual, then his activity takes place at a low emotional-energy level. In literature, it is assumed that the most effective is motivation of a moderate strength of emotional process, which stimulates

human action. Too strong emotions with minimal activity of cognitive processes, such as perception, attention, and imagination, can lead to a distorted perception of reality and action that is inadequate to the reality. This often happens when acting in passion, where the offender has a distorted perception of the situation.

## **The mechanism of cognitive assessment**

In analyzing emotions, we refer to them in the past, what happened in a given situation, in the present what we feel now, and what awaits us and what emotions we feel in relation to this. Such thinking is accompanied by an assessment of events we perceive as positive or negative, good or bad, reprehensible or morally correct, and those that threaten us and enrich us. Therefore, we can say that emotion is a consequence of a person's attitude to the changes occurring in his environment and his orientation in this environment. According to Lazarus, this process is divided into three parts, two of which form the original assessment, and the third relates to the assessment of the secondary. The original assessment is a process implying whether the emotion appears, and if so, what will be its valence (Lazarus 1991). An individual analyzes whether the event is or is not related to their interests and characteristics. Emotions occur only when this relationship exists. These can be specific interests or be very general, which are not obvious to the environment. If an individual determines that an event is related to their objectives, they ask themselves whether it increases or decreases the chances of their realization. In the first case, positive emotions appear, in the second – negative (Doliński 2000, p. 322). Then the individual goes on to analyze the possibility of coping with the situation by assessing their own personal and environmental resources which would be helpful. At this stage, the individual also evaluates how to deal with negative emotions that appear. Then the process moves to the second phase, i.e. secondary evaluation, in which the individual assesses how to deal with the problem as well as feelings and emotional consequences of the problem. The result of the secondary evaluation will affect what emotion appears. Both evaluations are two aspects of the same process that takes place.

Specific patterns of evaluation determine the cause of the corresponding emotions. The individual is happy if they feel the goal was attained; they have hope when the event creates an opportunity for its achievement, but it is conditioned by other factors; they are sad when they do not see the possibility of achieving the goal, they feel fear, if they sense no potential enabling to deal with the situation; then anger appears when they find that the occurrence of the negative situation is caused by someone else, on the other hand, guilt when the analysis of the situation leads to the conclusion that they are the cause of an unfavorable situation. Only a few emotions are cited, although literature on the subject pre-



sents various numbers of emotions, depending on the type of data considered by the researcher (Tomkins, McCarter 1964, p. 119–158, Izard 1971).

## The strength of emotion

According to Janusz Reykowski, the strength of emotional process can be defined as the intensity of the tendency to carry out reactions corresponding to a given emotion. The strength is the greater, the bigger the internal or external obstacles that must appear to prevent the occurrence of an emotional reaction. Strong emotions selectively reduce perception and impair other cognitive processes, e.g. free and logical thinking. The period of maintaining an emotion, that is its duration, varies (Reykowski 1974, p. 14). In terms of strength and durability, emotions can be divided into: **moods**, that is emotional states of slight intensity and long duration, **emotion**, understood as conditions characterized by the sudden onset and short duration, and **affects**, that is strong emotions, physiological conditions, characterized by a sudden onset, considerable intensity, distinct autonomic symptoms, short duration and fatigue after the withdrawal of affect (Bilikiewicz 1998, p. 80).

Adam Bilikiewicz draws attention to the differences of the motivational force expressing the trait called the depth of emotion. Deep emotions lead to long-term activities in a specific direction. A typical example is emotions associated with overvalued ideas (Bilikiewicz 1998, p. 80).

The characteristics of emotions also include expression and the subject of the emotion. The expression of emotions (*encoding*) is the outward expression of an emotional state, and it is manifested in facial expressions, gestures, and physiological manifestations. Given that emotion expresses an attitude towards someone or something, indicating the subject of the emotion is usually not a difficult task.

## Expressing emotions in texts by the sender

The psychological definition concerns emotions experienced by a person but does not indicate the emotions expressed. It should be noted that the expression of emotions is not necessarily identical with experiencing them, and one can show emotions in many ways; however, we are interested in expressing emotions through verbal signs. Emotions can be expressed explicitly by naming them, implicitly through elements of style, e.g. use of characteristic vocabulary or pragmatically, i.e. through rhetorical figures and implicatures. In linguistic statements we can talk about a threefold share of emotion: in the description (communication) of emotions with regard to the sender or other people, in the intended expression of emotions by the sender, but implicitly (evaluation expressed by the sender

is in the deep structure), and in the unintended expression of feelings by the sender (Mikołajczuk 2006, p. 86; Grabias 1981, p. 26–28, 1994, p. 258). When communicating emotions we use their names (*mad, unhappy, upset*), conventionalized phrases describing emotions (I'm rubbing my hands with satisfaction at the thought of...) or metaphors (*I'm being flooded by a wave of anger*). In the implicit expression of feelings, expressive formulations are used by means of syntax, proper formulation of utterances. Therefore, in the studied texts there are direct emotive exponents and implied emotiveness. Emotions are communicated directly by the names of emotions and their symptoms, the names of features and states, they are also implied through lexical, morphological, and syntactic means. When there are evidence and comparative material, the more personal features used to express emotions that can be extracted, the greater the likelihood of determining the sender of the text.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it should be noted that the following questions can be answered in the affirmative:

Can linguistics be used in the criminal profiling of unknown perpetrators?

Can language provide evidential material allowing to influence important aspects of social reality?

Can the analysis of the individual use of language means at the lexical and grammatical-syntactical level in any way identify the sender?

Can linguistic evidence concerning the written language be used to declare the defendant guilty?

Cooperation of a linguist with a psychologist can bring measurable results in achieving investigation and judicial objectives.

## Abstract: A psychological and linguistic portrait of criminals

### Introduction to the discussion

The article concerns one of the aspects of forensic linguistics, i.e. establishing authorship of challenged statements. This is done in collaboration with a linguist – who creates a linguistic profile of an author of texts – and a psychologist – who creates a psychological profile. The cooperation of specialists can be used at the level of assessment, which is used for investigation and judicial purposes. Expert opinions in the field of forensic linguistics (German: Forensische Linguistik) include: establishing authorship of a statement based on spoken or written content (e.g. farewell letters, threatening letters, ransom demands); the possibility of establishing authorship of anonymous texts on the Internet, establishing the linguistic characteristics of stalkers and cyberstalkers, which can identify the sender of the message due to country of origin, constructing a linguistic profile of an anonymous text's author, a linguistic profile of a well-known text's author. It should be added that the analysis of content-linguistic

content of documents contains an emotional component, which is related to our knowledge about the determinants of language to express emotions, both negative and positive. An important element of the text is the matter of the psychological portrait of the sender (author and/or performer) of the text based on the identified linguistic features.

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