PAPER ABSTRACTS

Guest Speakers

Professor Jan Engberg (University of Aarhus ~ Denmark)

Translating in Legal Settings as Knowledge Communication: What Can We Pass On and How?

One of the linguistic challenges in multilingual court room settings is to make the documents in foreign languages available in the language(s) of the court in order to comply with national language restrictions. This is often done under official regulations demanding precise translations leading to target texts apt for securing a fair trial (e.g., Directive 2010/64/EU, Article 3(9)). However, typically there is no general demand for such translations to be literal (Iluk & Iluk 2019: 186). This is well in accordance with the state of the art in translation studies that any act of translation will necessarily contain an aspect of interpretation, as it relies on contextual understanding of a source text based on the linguistic background knowledge taken into consideration by the translator (cf. Engberg 2021). This entails a risk of losing aspects of the source text in the translation. The competence of translators is directed towards avoiding such loss. Whether the importance of interpretation is perceived as an insurmountable problem or as a description of the challenges under which court translators carry out their task and how we can understand their competence, depends in the end on the conceptualisation of language held. A relevant distinction in order to understand the important difference is the distinction suggested by Christensen and Sokolowski (2002) between strong and weak language conceptions:

- Following a strong conceptualisation of language, it is seen as external to language users; thus it governs the way texts are interpreted by language users in a strong way: the process of understanding that forms the basis for the translation process and the reading of the target text is about finding the meaning laid down in the text through its linguistic formulation and the meanings coming from the (national) languages involved. Under this conceptualisation, involving translation in communication not only makes the communicative process more complex, but actually turns it into a very uncertain and therefore dangerous process, as different languages divide the world conceptually in different ways.
- Following a weak conceptualisation, on the other hand, meanings of a language are dependent upon the way language is used by its users. Hence, in a pointed formulation, words mean what people want them to mean in order to describe the world they agree upon. The way agreement in understanding is achieved is through interaction, questioning, adapting to each other. The role of translators, hence, is to produce texts in the target language that will help target language receivers construct a meaning sufficiently similar to the one intended in the source text.

The Knowledge Communication Approach to translation that I have been developing over the last years follows the weak conceptualisation (Engberg 2021). In my talk, I will give reasons for why I think this way of thinking about language best describes the actual situation of translating in court settings and for the consequences for what translators can convey and for ensuing quality standards. The considerations will be supported by concrete examples from court translation.

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Professor Jan Svennevig and Dr. Soren Sandager Sorensen (University of Agder~ Norway)

Securing Understanding of the Suspect's Rights in Police Investigative Interviews

In the beginning of each investigative interview in Norway, police officers are required to inform suspects about their right to silence and to legal counsel. To do so, Norwegian police do not use a scripted formula such as the Miranda warnings in the USA but leave it to the individual investigator to find the most appropriate and efficient formulation relative to the addressee. The officially recommended way of securing understanding is to (1) present the rights in a way that is understandable for a given suspect and (2) ascertain that they have been understood correctly (Bjerknes & Fahsing 2018). There is however no guidance on how to secure and ascertain understanding, which is especially important when the suspect is a second language (L2) speaker.

The upcoming lecture will present empirical analyses of audio and video recordings of 100 authentic police interviews, 70 with L2 suspects and 30 with L1 suspects. Using Conversation Analysis as our method, we examine two issues: First, how the investigators formulate the rights and check the suspects' understanding of them, and second, how they establish whether suspects want to invoke their rights. First, we will describe a set of conversational practices that police officers use in order to make the wording of the rights more accessible to L2 speakers, namely decomposition, simplification, term explanation, and reformulation. Practices used for checking understanding include polar interrogatives, such as "do you understand?" and question types that elicit a more comprehensive account, such as "can you tell me how you understand your rights?" We will also present a quantitative analysis of how often such comprehension strategies are used in L1 vs. L2 interaction. The results show that understanding checks are rare, and while the other strategies are overall equally frequent, their use differs between the right to silence and right to legal counsel. The results also show that the rights are not communicated to L2 speakers with consistently more strategies than to L1 speakers, and that in some contexts, low proficiency L2 speakers are communicated to with fewer strategies than high proficiency L2 speakers. There may be a trade-off between reformulation (incl. explanation) and simplification in the sense that where reformulation is more common with L1 speakers and simplification more common with L2 speakers. Second, we will present our analysis regarding how often suspects are asked explicit questions about whether they want to exercise their right to silence and/or to legal counsel. We also investigate variation in the design of such questions, concentrating specifically on expressions involving a preference for one response option over the other. We identify formulations used while presenting the rights that may legitimise or inhibit a free and independent decision. The results show that suspects are often not asked to take a stance on their rights, and when they are, such questions often involve a bias towards waiving their rights. And although some officers explicitly inform the suspects that they are free to choose whatever option they like, others provide information about the interview that either presupposes willingness to talk or presents the option of waiving one's rights as preferable to invoking them.

Dr. Stina Lindegren (Stockholm University ~ Sweden)

Interviewing Individuals who Have Sexually Offended: Obstacles, Strategies, and Interactional Processes

To improve prevention efforts aimed at individuals who have sexually offended, or are at risk of doing so, it is crucial to know how these individuals experience treatment programs or other kinds of risk-reducing support. In-depth interviews are a suitable method to gain such knowledge. However, recruiting research subjects from this population entails substantial obstacles, primarily due to the exceptional stigma. In addition, the interview situation itself requires specific skills of the interviewer. This includes relational skills to reduce shame and other negative emotions that might affect the research subject's narratives. The researcher also has to manage their own emotional reactions. Research shows that practitioners who meet individuals who have sexually offended often experience adverse effects such as vicarious traumatization and various negative emotions. Researchers are highly likely to encounter similar problems. There is, however, little research into these matters as well as investigations of how researchers can manage the obstacles regarding interviewing those who have sexually offended. Additionally, there is a gap in knowledge concerning the interactional processes in the interview situation and little is known about how individuals convicted of sexual offending experience participating in research interviews. Such knowledge can improve researchers' skills and strategies when interviewing highly stigmatized research subjects and engaging in emotionally challenging research topics. This presentation aims to explore these issues, by drawing on data from interviews with men convicted of sexual offending as well as researcher experiences. Research strategies and suggestions for managing obstacles will be discussed.

Roundtable Presenters (in alphabetical order by surname)

Novella Benedetti (Universitat de Vic/Universitat Central de Catalunya) and Sheila Queralt (Director of the SQ-Forensic Linguists Laboratory)

Cyberstalking and Gender-based Violence: A Speech Act Analysis

This paper is an exploratory study on three cases of gender-based cyberstalking. Literature has confirmed that cyberstalking and traditional stalking are similar (e.g., Maran & Begotti, 2022, p. 2). Stalking was incorporated into the Italian Criminal Code in 2009 (e.g., De Fazio and Galeazzi, 2005, p. 25); the last comprehensive study reports that 16.1 % of women between 16 and 70 years of age suffered from it (Istat, 2014, p. 16). The Dataset comprises three cases with online written messages in Italian; 447 messages and 8,287 words are considered. The analysis aims to describe how emotional abuse is carried out linguistically using forensic linguistics. Previous studies on datasets displaying similar characteristics have dealt mainly with romance fraud (Queralt, 2022; Carter, 2024) and online grooming (Chiang & Grant, 2017 and 2018; Lorenzo-Dus, Evans, & Mullineux-Morgan, 2023). Carter (2024: 7) chooses a qualitative approach based on critical discourse analysis and principles from conversation analytic theory. Lorenzo-Dus, Evans, & Mullineux-Morgan (2023: 15-16) resort to (im)politeness theory and SAT, focusing on the structure of texts (e.g., genre analysis) to identify moves (i.e., discoursal rhetorical units) serving distinct pragmatic functions. The latter approach has been used, while partially adapting it to the peculiarities of the Dataset. Firstly, this is coded according to the SAT, i.e., the kind of speech act and whether it is direct or indirect. An overall view is provided; then this is broken down to consider the speech acts: assertives, commissives (side coding on threats), directives (side coding on interrogatives), and expressives (side coding on insults and slurring). Stalkers show a preference for directives (47.78 %), followed by expressives (28.33 %), assertives (16.75 %), and commissives (7.15 %). Indirect speech acts appear to be more conspicuous (84.88 %) than direct ones (15.12 %). Individual preferences emerge; further studies could help explore if and how a potential correlation between the level of physical violence and verbal violence is to be found, thus strengthening the evidence provided in court. At the same time, highlighting language patterns could be a step forward in assisting the investigative work (Queralt, 2023).

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Sue Blackwell (Utrecht University) and Emma Vissers (University College Utrecht~Netherlands)

"Remember what Amalek has done to you": Incitement to Genocide during the Israeli Assault on Gaza

The 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide does not only outlaw acts of physical destruction of a "national, ethnical, racial or religious group"; Article III of the Convention states that "direct and public incitement to genocide"; is also a punishable act. The lawyers who brought a case against Israel for breaches of the Convention on behalf of South Africa in 2024 cited a number of allegations of such incitement in the form of utterances by Israeli politicians and military leaders; and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) upheld South Africa's application for provisional measures partly on the basis of this evidence. This paper situates incitement to genocide within the framework of "language crimes" (Shuy 1993), and analyses both the evidence presented to the ICJ and the much broader collection of allegedly genocidal utterances in the Law for Palestine database. We restricted our data to some 100 statements - typically short, and often translated from Hebrew – by 46 individual politicians, legislators and military personnel between 7th October 2023 and 15th January 2024. We separated out the 12 statements which were included in South Africa's oral argument, along with three additional statements made by Israeli officials which were We sought to investigate which semantic features characterise the utterances singled out by the South African lawyers and ICJ judges as being particularly persuasive instances of incitement. To do so we made use of the Wmatrix semantic tagging system (Rayson 2009). This has the advantage of not being closely dependent on specific lexical items, and as such is more appropriate than conventional tagging software for analysing translated texts. Tags were sorted by frequency, and concordances were generated for the most frequent tags in order to conduct a qualitative analysis of the discourse. Our findings indicate that there are indeed certain semantic features which are indicative of genocidal intent (the mens rea required for a valid conviction (Tiersma & Solan 2012)), suggesting that this form of analysis may be helpful to lawyers and linguists in preparing future cases of this kind.

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John Blake (University of Aizu~Japan)

An investigation into the Efficacy of Segmental versus Incremental Approaches to Forensic Authorship Analysis

Forensic authorship analysis may be viewed as the classification task of identifying the author of a questioned or disputed text, and providing justification for the decision in lay terms that jurors can understand. A critical aspect of this process is the selection of linguistic markers that can effectively distinguish between or among different authors. Commonly used markers include individual instances, combinations, and permutations of word tokens, lemmas, keywords, and parts of speech. Texts may be compared to each other to establish consistency of authorship, or compared to questioned or disputed texts with a view to identifying authorship of the target text based on the similarities between or among the texts. This study explores the efficacy of two computational approaches—Segmental Consistency Approach (SCA) and Incremental Consistency Approach (ICA)—in detecting similarities of linguistic elements within and between datasets. The SCA compares matches for each independent set of 20 elements (e.g., 1-20, 21-40, 41-60), focusing on consistency within specific segments. In contrast, the ICA compares matches cumulatively (e.g., 1-20, 1-40, 1-60), highlighting how consistency evolves as more elements are considered. This research examines the discriminatory power of these approaches for different linguistic markers on public datasets comprising different genres and sizes. Preliminary results indicate distinct patterns of consistency and comparison that vary depending on the chosen approach, type of markers, and dataset characteristics. The findings provide insights into the benefits and drawbacks of segmental versus incremental methods, contributing to the development of more robust forensic authorship analysis techniques.

Hao Cui (Institute of Computational Linguistics, University of Zurich~ Switzerland)

Efficacy of Pitch Alteration in Voice Disguise: Study on Voice Discrimination Challenges Faced by Listeners

Given the importance of pitch in voice identification and its role in analysing and distinguishing between disguised and original speech (Mathur et al., 2016), this study investigates the effectiveness of a voice disguise strategy involving pitch alterations. Praat (Boersma & Paul, 2001) was used to categorize stimulus groups with raised pitch and lowered pitch, which were recorded in English by 11 students with no voice modification restrictions. Twenty Chinese native speakers (16F, 4M), all laypersons with no specialized voice analysis training, completed a voice discrimination task involving 9 sentence pairs to assess the impact of pitch alteration, lowered and raised pitch, on their ability to discriminate between altered and unaltered voices. Statistical analyses using R (R Core Team, 2023), including the Shapiro-Wilk test and Kruskal-Wallis test with post-hoc analysis, examined the effects of pitch conditions on voice discrimination. Results suggest that both raising and lowering pitch significantly increase the difficulty of distinguishing altered voices from unaltered ones. Although raising pitch appears to be more effective in voice disguise than lowering pitch, the difference did not reach statistical significance. What is more, drastic pitch changes may lead to alterations in voice quality, which requires further study. Overall, pitch alteration strategy demonstrates distinct effectiveness in voice disguise, with raised pitch posing greater challenges for voice discrimination. These findings may have implications for forensic phonetics, voice recognition technology, and voice disguise technique development.

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Meike de Boer, Leonie Cornips, and Vincent van Heuven (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam ~ Netherlands)

Whose 'moo' is it? Using Forensic Phonetics on Non-human Voices

Within forensic phonetics, we search for indexical features that characterize a speaker. This can be useful in comparing a questioned audio sample, such as a recorded bomb threat, to reference material from the suspected caller. Although such applications are less obvious in non-human animals, there are no inherent reasons why the techniques from forensic phonetics could not be used on, for example, cows (cf. Van Heuven, 2023). This study fits the Animal Turn in linguistics, which views the idea that language is unique to humans as outdated and limited (Cornips, 2022). When striving for a linguistics – and society – that is more inclusive, more research focusing on non-human animals is needed. As linguists, we have the appropriate tools to investigate language and speech in other species besides our own. In our study, we measured vowel formants in speech data from 6 cows and 6 humans, with 3 samples per individual. For the cows, we included "moo"s taken from the Jahns et al. (1997) corpus that were classified as calls for food, and for the humans we included several instances of the Dutch word "moe" (/mu/). By using linear discriminant analysis, we found that the cow voices were distinctive, and their classification performance was even higher than for humans. By studying the phenomenon of speaker specificity in non-human animals, we increase our knowledge of the interplay between anatomical, behavioral, and linguistic features, and how our methods perform in uncontrolled settings. In addition, with our knowledge of forensic phonetics, we can aid biologists studying animal behavior and communication to collect sounds and speech in a proper manner. Finally, with this study, we show that non-human animals and their voices may behave quite similarly to human animals, and we emphasize their individuality.

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Meike de Boer (Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement~Netherlands), Willemijn Heeren (Leiden University ~ Netherlands), and Arjan Blokland (Leiden University ~ Netherlands)

The Language of Sharers of Child Sexual Abuse Material

On an average day, there are about 900 active sites dedicated to child sexual abuse material (CSAM) on the darknet, which can have up to 400,000 members each (Gannon et al., 2023). Hence, law enforcement agencies cannot investigate all these anonymous members (see also Gannon et al., 2023). The current study examines how linguistic behavior may aid in differentiating between groups of users on large-scale forums. The majority of members of CSAM forums view and download illegal material (Van der Bruggen et al., 2022), but only a minority take the risk to stand out from the crowd and upload it. In this study, we investigate lexical choices in 6,772 posts written by 462 members on an average-sized darknet CSAM forum. We used Keyness Analysis, a technique from corpus linguistics, to compare different sets of messages to each other. This technique calculates which key terms are significantly more frequent in one set compared to another. Subsequently, we compared each list of 100 key terms based on a thematic categorization by 2 independent coders. The following sets of messages were compared: (1) sharers vs non-sharers; (2) sharers before and after they started sharing CSAM; and (3) sharers before sharing and non-sharers. Initial results show that sharers differ from non-sharers, including their non-sharing former selves, by using numerous words referring to cybersecurity (tor, mirror), law enforcement (justice, police), and society as a whole (government, county). Users who do not share, on the other hand, are more sexually explicit (c*nt, f*ck) and use positive adjectives (beautiful, amazing) and politeness strategies (thank you, please). By this, they may try to compensate for not participating in CSAM sharing (cf. Chiang et al., 2018). The material was taken down by law enforcement and provided to the researchers. We are not allowed to disclose the exact origin of the forum and discuss the participants on the forum anonymously. We want to warn participants that the examples provided in the presentation may be explicit and disturbing. Of course, we will not show any visual content. This project is funded by the European Union's Internal Security Fund - Police. Under Grant Agreement 101084525.

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Karoline Marko (University of Graz ~ Austria)

"Recidivism is the enemy of our cities across America.": The discourse around recidivism and recidivists in the New York Times and the New York Post

Mass incarceration and high rates of recidivism in the United States have long been discussed in the scientific literature. A punitive culture has fostered harsh punishments and incarceration without considerable effects on recidivism rates. At the same time, research has indicated that rehabilitative measures and treatment programs for offenders have positive effects on their reintegration into society and help to reduce recidivism rates. In the present study, the discourse surrounding recidivism in the New York Times (NYT) and the New York Post (NYP) is investigated with a corpus of more than 666,290 words, that includes all articles on this topic in both newspapers (369 articles from the NYT; 308 articles from the NYP). The articles in the corpus span 42 years for the NYT and 24 years for the NYP, and based on the political orientations of the newspapers, it is the aim to find out how recidivism and recidivists are presented in the discourse of the respective newspapers. The analyses (frequency lists, keywords, concordances, collocations) indicate that the New York Times encourages a discussion of rehabilitative measures and adopts a view of recidivism that highlights recidivists' potential for change. The New York Post, on the other hand, takes a more conservative approach and adopts a more dire view of recidivists, considering recidivism as a character trait rather than an indicator for the relative success of rehabilitation programs.

Jennifer Plumb and Mark Visonà (Hofstra University ~ USA)

The Nature of Your Emergency: A Genre Analysis of 9-1-1 Swatting Calls

Scholars have examined how callers and call-takers use linguistic resources to negotiate requests for help in emergency calls for over thirty years (Zimmerman, 1984; Kevoe-Feldman, 2019). Recently, research identifying how callers use deception in such calls (Adams & Harpster, 2008; Harpster et al., 2009) has come under increasing criticism, with more recent studies finding inconsistencies in checklists of deceptive or truthful features (Miller et al., 2021) and no studies have yet analyzed call structures where callers completely fabricate an emergency. The current study thus investigates "swatting" calls, a type of emergency call wherein an individual attempts to provoke an armed police response by providing an address belonging to a targeted person and fabricating a life-threatening situation (Lamb, 2020). As special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams are employed frequently in the United States, with over 50,000 deployments per year as of 2013 (Balko, 2013), it is crucial for law enforcement to improve its understanding of this type of policing. The current study thus examines 15 swatting calls (14 in the United States and one in Canada) where audio was made publicly available on news and audio-sharing websites, with all calls made by male callers and complete calls averaging 3 minutes and 12 seconds in length. Two raters (authors) performed a genre analysis of rhetorical moves and steps (Swales, 1990; Samraj, 2014) to identify how swatting calls compare to typical emergency calls as swatters convince call-takers to send armed police to victims' homes or businesses. Our findings suggest that intertextual moves (e.g., threatening future violence) allow swatting callers to take advantage of police deployment prioritization protocols in escalating fictitious emergencies. Consequently, this study improves scholarly understanding of linguistic features used to request help in dangerous situations and introduces potential avenues for law enforcement to better identify "swatting" calls in the future.

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CiaraThompson (Australian National University ~ Australia)

Can ChatGPT Mimic Individuals' Writing Styles?

The advancement of generative artificial intelligence has made it easier for cybercriminals to craft persuasive texts by imitating the writing styles of trusted individuals. With the availability of low-cost, user-friendly natural language generation systems like ChatGPT and an abundance of publicly accessible personal data, producing deceptive messages through identity impersonation has become significantly simpler, expanding the reach of cybercrime (Mai, Daies, & Griffin 2023). Examples include deepfakes (Sample 2020), personalized phishing emails, fake news, and fraudulent academic work (Stokel-Walker 2023). This study examines ChatGPT's ability to learn and replicate the writing styles of individuals. Using a one-shot training method (Clark, August, Serrano, Haduong, Gururangan, &Smith, 2021), texts written by 50 individuals were used to train ChatGPT to generate new texts mimicking each author's style. Authorship attributes were represented by feature vectors consisting of word grams, part-of-speech grams, and character grams. The study compares human-written and machine-generated texts based on three key questions: 1) To what extent can these texts be classified as human or machine-generated? 2) How differently are the two types of texts distributed? 3) Are there specific words and expressions significantly preferred by humans or machines? To address these questions, various classifiers such as K-nearest neighbour, Random Forest, and Support Vector Machine were employed for classification. For distribution analysis, t-distributed stochastic neighbour embedding and 95% confidence interval ellipses were used, and the Chi-square statistical test was applied to identify word and expression preferences. Additionally, two versions of ChatGPT (3.5 and 4) and two different prompts (simple and complex) were used for text generation. The findings indicate that mimicking writing styles remains a significant challenge for the current model of ChatGPT. The model showed a tendency to select similar preferred words and expressions across different authors, ChatGPT versions, and prompts. The study discusses potential reasons for ChatGPT's limited performance in this area, as well as possible approaches for improving its capabilities.

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