CRIMINAL LINGUISTICS AND LEGAL TERMINOLOGY

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Article history:		Abstract:
		Criminal linguistics is a rapidly developing area of linguistics, which deals with the analysis of texts and the determination of their legal significance within the framework of a criminal case. This article analyzes the theoretical foundations of criminological research, its connection with legal terminology and its application in real life. In particular, the linguistic features of court documents, contracts, investigation reports and criminal correspondence are studied. The study highlights the importance of the integration of legal analysis and linguistic methods, revealing the role of language in the investigation of crimes.

Criminal terminology is essential for understanding the intricacies of the criminal justice system. These terms provide a standardized language that facilitates clear communication between professionals in the field, including law enforcement officers, lawyers, and researchers. (Gina Portuguese Gawon 2016). The importance of these terms cannot be overstated, as they help to accurately describe criminal acts, legal processes, and court decisions, thereby reducing misunderstandings. In addition, it is essential for those new to the legal system, such as defendants and their families, to become familiar with criminological terminology. This allows them to navigate court proceedings with greater confidence and understanding. This standardized terminology also plays an important role in academic research and ensures that criminological research and discussions are grounded in a common language.

A key aspect of criminological research involves understanding commonly used terms and their meanings. For example, "actus reus" refers to the physical act of committing a crime, as opposed to the mental intent, while "mens rea" is Latin for "guilty mind"—the mental state of the defendant accused of committing the crime. In common law jurisdictions, most crimes require evidence of both mens rea and actus reus ("guilty act") before a defendant can be found guilty. (Montoya, Brixx L., Jennifer De Jesus, Camile Joy Nisperos, Patricia Mae Alcazar 2021). Another key term is "justify," which refers to a jury's decision that a defendant is not guilty due to insufficient evidence. Understanding these terms is essential for anyone involved in the criminal justice system, as they form the basis of legal arguments and defenses. Additionally, terms such as "defendant" and "defense attorney" are used to describe the parties involved in a legal proceeding, the former referring to the person accused of a crime and the latter to the attorney representing them (Criminal Justice System Commonly Used Terms & Definitions). Familiarity with such terms can help those involved in a legal proceeding understand the legal process. The role of criminological terminology in the criminal justice system is multifaceted, serving as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical application. It ensures that all parties involved in a legal matter are on the same page, which is essential for a fair trial. For example, terms such as "criminal procedure" include the laws and regulations that govern the administration of justice, guiding how cases proceed within the legal system (Montoya, Brixx L., Jennifer De Jesus, Camile Joy Nisperos, Patricia Mae Alcazar2021). Such consistency in terminology not only contributes to legal clarity, but also supports effective communication and coordination between different departments in the justice system. It also allows for the comprehensive training and education of future professionals, ensuring that they are well equipped to navigate the complexities of criminal law. The use of standardized criminological terms also facilitates international cooperation, as lawyers from different jurisdictions can communicate effectively using a common vocabulary.

How can linguists help identify fake news?
The question may arise: what can we do to determine whether the news we see is fake or not? Exaggerated, sensational headlines; flashy, tabloid-style text; the use

of terms correctly or incorrectly; fake URLs that mimic real websites; expressive images, often featuring famous people; and the use of all capital letters, excessive punctuation, and spelling errors can all raise suspicion (Veszelszki 2017).

Fake news can be easily filtered out, according to Agnes Veszelszki, who recommends the following ways to get rid of potential fake news (Veszelszki 2017, 28):

– Look closely at the URL.

– Is the source reliable?

– Be skeptical of headlines. (Extremely detailed sensational headlines should be critically reviewed.

– Watch for unusual formatting.

– Check the images. (If the images are not clearly authentic, for example, in the case of missing persons, Google Image Search can be useful).

- Check the author.

- Check the date.

- Check the evidence.

- Look at other reports.

- Overcome your own misconceptions.

- Check the linguistic quality and stylistic features of the text.

- Is this a joke? (Jokes sites can be misleading).

- Some stories are deliberately false.

- Ask experts.

Let's see through the example of a fake text:

"I confirm that all the conditions of this contract have been fully met. Payment will be made by November 25, 2024. (Signed: A. Kholniyozov)"

Forminalinguistic analysis:

• Lexical features: Formal style expressions such as "I confirm" and "all conditions" are used incorrectly.

• Grammar: The text has a tense mismatch between "done" and "will be done."

• Stylometric analysis: This text is different from other documents in its style.

Legal terminology is essential to legal practice because it ensures clarity and consistency in communication across legal contexts. Understanding these terms allows legal professionals to navigate complex legal documents, claims, and litigation with clarity and precision. For example, high-level criminal defense attorneys use standard legal terminology, which is described as the official language of legal documents, to maintain uniformity and prevent misinterpretation (Mike Brennan 2023). This specialized language not only facilitates effective communication among lawyers, but also helps maintain the integrity of legal processes. Therefore, a thorough understanding of legal terminology is essential for anyone involved in the legal field, whether drafting contracts, arguing in court, or advising clients.

The interpretation and application of legal terms in court proceedings is crucial to ensuring fairness and justice. Court interpreters play a vital role in this process by accurately translating legal terms for non-native speakers, thereby overcoming language barriers and facilitating understanding of court proceedings (Mariana Orozco-Jutorán 2023). Accuracy in interpreting legal terminology is essential, as even minor misinterpretations can have a significant impact on the outcome of a case. Legal terms often have specific meanings, and their correct application is essential to ensure the rule of law. Thus, courts rely heavily on interpreters to ensure that all parties involved in a legal proceeding fully understand the terms and implications of the case, and to ensure transparency and fairness in the justice system.

Despite its importance, legal terminology can cause problems and lead to misinterpretations in legal systems. Misunderstanding legal terms can lead to legal disputes, illegal judgments, or even invalid contracts, which highlights the need for clarity in their use.

These challenges often arise from the complexity and specialization of legal language, which can be daunting for those without a legal background. In addition, legal terminology can vary significantly across jurisdictions, adding another layer of complexity to international legal issues. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing education and training for legal professionals, as well as the development of comprehensive dictionaries and resources to assist in the correct interpretation and application of legal terms.

The following tips and practices are offered for interpreting legal terms correctly:

1. Understand basic terminology - Start by familiarizing yourself with fundamental criminological and legal terms. This basic knowledge is essential for unlocking more complex concepts. Legal dictionaries and glossaries are excellent resources for this. For example, terms such as "actus reus" and "mens rea" are essential in understanding criminal liability. Knowing their definitions - "culpable act" and "culpable mind" respectively - will help you understand the basics of criminal law.

2. Use contextual learning - Contextualize the terms by studying their use in real-life situations or legal documents. This will help you understand how they work in the legal system. For example, analyze how "probable cause" is used in search and seizure cases. Reviewing court decisions where probable cause was a key factor can provide practical insight into its application.

3. Stay informed about evolving terminology - Legal and criminological terms can evolve over time. Stay

informed about changes in the law, new legal precedents, and emerging criminological theories. Subscribing to legal journals, attending seminars, and participating in webinars will help you stay current. For example, the term "cybercrime" has expanded to encompass a variety of online offenses, reflecting the growing complexity of digital crimes.

4. Use technology to learn - Use technology-based tools and resources to improve your understanding of forensic and legal terminology. Online courses, legal databases, and apps can offer interactive learning experiences. Platforms like LexisNexis and Westlaw provide a wealth of legal information and are invaluable for learning and understanding complex terms and their applications.

5. Connect with experts - Connecting with legal professionals and criminologists can provide deeper insights and practical perspectives on terminology usage. Attend conferences, join professional associations, and participate in discussion forums to share knowledge and experiences. Engaging in conversations with experts can clarify ambiguities and provide firsthand information about how terms are used in practice. For example, discussing the concept of "reasonable doubt" with an experienced lawyer can shed light on its important role in criminal trials. Criminological and legal terminology plays a crucial role in ensuring clear communication and standardization in the legal field, contributing to more efficient and effective legal processes. However, the complexity and specialization of such terminology can create difficulties for non-professionals and newcomers to the field, which can lead to misunderstandings or barriers to entry. By implementing educational initiatives, promoting the use of plain language, and providing resources such as dictionaries and professional assistance, these limitations can be mitigated, making legal systems more inclusive and understandable. Considering the pros and cons, the benefits of clarity and efficiency must be weighed against the potential for complexity and exclusion, in order to achieve a balance that effectively serves both professionals and the public.

In conclusion, a thorough understanding of criminological and legal terminology is essential for effective communication in the criminal justice system and the legal profession. The key concepts and definitions in criminological terminology not only provide clarity and precision, but also enable practitioners, law enforcement agencies, and the judiciary to more clearly consider complex cases. Similarly, legal terminology serves as the foundation of legal practice, guiding the interpretation and application of laws in court proceedings. However, the problems of misinterpretation highlight the need for ongoing education and awareness among legal professionals to prevent misunderstandings that can affect the administration of justice. Ultimately, a thorough understanding of these terms will not only improve the efficiency of legal processes, but also contribute to the administration of justice, emphasizing their importance in the life of our society.

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