

Word-catcher. Forensic linguistics in Denmark

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This article introduces the reader to the burgeoning field of forensic linguistics, focusing on analyses of language evidence in criminal cases. On the backdrop of a review of the history and applications of forensic linguistics, a range of Danish cases are presented wherein linguists have been consulted for an expert opinion. A recent case of anonymous threatening letters offers illustrations of possible analytic tools that may prove relevant for investigation and prosecution. Special emphasis is laid on the currently most sought-after application of forensic linguistics, i.e., authorship analysis, which compares one or more incriminating documents with documents known to have been written by a suspect. The purpose is to investigate whether linguistic, orthographic or formatting patterns appear in both sets of documents and thereby lend support to a hypothesis of common authorship.