



I12 Linguistic Indicators for Psychological Violence Detection in the Language of Domestic Abusers

Victoria Guillén, PhD*, University of Alicante, San Vicente del Raspeig, Alicante 03690, SPAIN

Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will understand language indicators for psychological violence detection in the family unit, as well as linguistic techniques and methods for that purpose.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by showing how to detect psychological violence in cases involving domestic violence and how to gather the necessary evidence in language to demonstrate its presence.

Forensic linguistics-analyzed evidence is examined in this presentation for psychological violence detection in the language of domestic abusers. According to the Istanbul Convention (*The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*) of May 11, 2011, domestic violence is: "... acts of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim." (Chapter I, Art. 3.b) Domestic violence is a surface manifestation of the power and dominance that some men exert over women in the family unit. It is often the case that when the victim tries to empower herself or break up with the offender, he will then try to regain power and control over her by using different strategies, ranging from psychological violence to force, whose purpose is to influence her decision and resume the relationship. Although in theory, the law protects women and children from the different forms of violence related to the social phenomenon of domestic violence, in practice, it is very difficult to prove psychological violence in court, for the very simple reason that, unlike physical and sexual violence, psychological violence leaves no ostensive trace in the target victim. However, its effects and consequences, as psychologists claim, can be even more devastating and destroying for the victim. The personalities of both the aggressor and the victim, as well as the effects of psychological violence on the psyche of the victim, have been studied extensively in the field of psychology. However, to the best of our knowledge, psychological violence has not yet received specifically dedicated scientific study in the field of forensic linguistics.

The goal of this presentation is twofold. On one hand, this presentation analyzes linguistic indicators that can be useful for psychological violence detection in cases involving domestic violence. On the other hand, this work presents the linguistic technique and methods that proved to be fruitful for the detection of psychological violence in such cases. These include semantics, speech act theory, discourse analysis, genre theory, and quantitative analysis. It is hypothesized that the language of the domestic abuser provides the linguist with direct access to different manifestations of psychological violence, (e.g., harassment, stalking, and emotional manipulation.)^{1,3}

This presentation raises two research questions: Can linguistics help us detect indicators of psychological violence? If so, what type of evidence can the linguist collect in the language of the offender to show that there are indicators of psychological violence? The investigation is grounded in the empirical work conducted in a court case. The corpus of questioned documents consists of six letters and the abundant Whatsapp messages the offender sent to the target victim over 270 days.

Findings from this piece of empirical research show that psychological violence is inflicted by the domestic abuser over the target victim through malicious language use. Consequently, language is employed as a weapon against the target victim and "... acts as a precursor to and instigator of forms of conflict, and typically accompanies acts of violence in all its forms" (e.g., obsessional harassment, stalking, emotional manipulation).⁴ Moreover, the offender typically resorts to strategic language use since it is designed to achieve a long-term or overall goal.

Reference(s):

1. Rosenfeld, Barry. Violence Risk Factors in Stalking and Obsessional Harassment. A Review and Preliminary Meta-Analysis. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour* 31, no. 1 (2004): 9-36.
2. Austin, Elizabeth, Farrelly, Daniel, Black, Carolyn, and Moore, Helen. Emotional Intelligence, Machiavellianism and Emotional Manipulation: Does the EI Have a Dark Side? *Personality and Individual Differences* 43, no. 1 (2007): 179-189, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.11.019>.
3. Buss, David M., Shackelford, Todd K., and Mckibbin, William F. The Mate Retention Inventory -Short Form (MRI-SI). *Personality and Individual Differences* 44, no. 1 (2008): 322-334, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2007.08.013>.
4. Stollznow, Karen. *The Language of Discrimination*. Muenchen: Lincom GmbH, 2017.

Forensic Linguistics, Psychological Violence, Emotional Manipulation