

Focus conference on forensic linguistics

When lies do not count as false statements: The linguistically curious world of common-law defamation

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Abstract

In a world in which disseminated harmful false statements, including those by world leaders, has become a feature of modern discourse, legal remedies are needed both for accountability by liars and redress by those harmed through those lies. Common-law defamation has traditionally been one vehicle for policing harm caused by lies, but defamation doctrines derived from its complex legal history have blunted its effectiveness, as a brief discussion of caselaw demonstrates. A linguistically-informed analysis of defamation law can reveal how defamation law might be reformed to better serve the interests of justice.

Keywords: defamation; pragmatics; implicature

Biodata

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