

# An Overview of Forensic Linguistics

## Research in China

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In the 80's and 90's of the twentieth century, many interdisciplinary branches of linguistics emerge as the times require with its rapid development. As a result, the research vision was broadened and the role of linguistics became increasingly prominent. In 1993, Forensic Linguistics was born as a discipline, based on IAFL (The International Association of Forensic Linguists). Ever since, this refreshing interdisciplinary branch has been causing the close attention of Chinese scholars. For more than twenty years, they have made unremitting efforts to develop Forensic Linguistics in China by way of introduction, research, education and foreign exchanges, and achieved fruitful results.

### **1. Macroscopic Introduction and Preliminary Research**

The first scholar to respond positively to Forensic Linguistics is Dr. WU Weiping, who lived abroad for many years. He was actively involved in major international academic activities and research in this field while he paid close attention to the developments of Forensic Linguistics. In 1994, he introduced its establishment and research situation to China for the first time in his paper *Forensic Linguistics: Conference, Organization and Journal*. In 2002, his book *Language and Law: Linguistic Research in the Legal Field* made detailed descriptions of further specific studies of Forensic Linguistics.

Subsequently, other Chinese scholars continued to introduce Forensic Linguistics in different ways, expressed their academic point of views in their papers and books and devoted their talents to the development of Forensic Linguistics in China.

In 1996, in his paper *The Journal of Forensic Linguistics Founded*, LIN Shuwu briefly introduced the journal of IAFL - *Forensic Linguistics - The International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law*. At the same time, Prof. PANG Jixian's paper *Linguistic Applications in Law: Forensic Linguistics* demonstrated the methodology in judicial practice through case analyses.

In 2000, Prof. DU Jinbang explored the scope, theoretical principles and methodology of Forensic Linguistics in his paper *The Construction of the Macrostructure of Forensic Linguistics: An Overview Based on Current Researches*, and made due contributions to the basic theory. In 2004, his book *Forensic Linguistics*, which is by far the most comprehensive and latest in China, put many factors involved in this filed in order and elaborated on the future development of thinking and outlook.

In 2003, the book *Forensic Linguistics Research* written by Prof. LIU Weiming made a comprehensive and macro comparative study of China's domestic legal language studies and international Forensic Linguistics. In the same year, his paper *A Discussion of the Chinese*

*Translated Term of Forensic Linguistics* actually discusses the origins, introduction to China, plight of the Chinese Translated Term and essential attribute of Forensic Linguistics. In 2002, he created his personal website *Forensic Linguistics Research* (www.flrchina.com), timely introduced the research status and development in the countries such as the UK and the US. Meanwhile, HU Zhiqing's paper *Forensic Linguistics and the Four Research Fields* explores the voice, style, discourse structure and meaning, and made a macroscopic description of the characteristics of these four areas. Prof. LIAO Meizhen's *Review of Forensic Linguistics Study Abroad* devoted to the study of Forensic Linguistics of the Anglo American law system.

As can be seen from the above, Chinese scholars started from the general introduction and gradually integrated their views. Some had their own basic theories, and others even had more systematic point of views. These studies laid the necessary foundation for the development of Forensic Linguistics in China.

## **2. Specific Monographic Research**

After the introduction to China in Forensic Linguistics, in addition to the macroscopic introductory papers, many scholars also studied some local problems of Forensic Linguistics and achieved good results. For example, Dr. ZHANG Xinhong's paper *An Analysis of the Speech Acts in Chinese Legislative Discourses* explored the legal speech acts in Chinese Legislative Discourses. Again, Prof. DU Jinbang's *An Overview of the Research of Forensic Psycholinguistics* studied the local branch of forensic linguistics from another angle. In addition, DU also published a series of papers such as *The Features of Legal Language and Its Relationship with Legal Translation*, *The Transition from Uncertainty of Legal Language to Certainty of the Judicial Result* and *Qualification and Illocutionary Act in Legislative Discourses*. Also, Prof. LIAO Meizhen's book *Courtroom Questions Responses and Their Interaction* made a systematic study of courtroom questions responses from the perspective of interaction through the analysis of the trial data.

Over the past ten years, more and more Chinese scholars published many academic papers and books of specific research on Forensic Linguistics. A large number of scholars , such as Du Jinbang, LIAO Meizhen, LIU Weiming, ZHANG Xinhong, YUAN Chuanyou, YU Suqing, ZHANG Liping and CHEN Jinshi, etc, made a more in-depth study of Forensic Linguistics, covering the contents of courtroom interaction, the language of judges, author attribution, linguistic evidence, police language, court interpreting, language analysis in asylum seekers' cases and definition of lies, etc.

## **3. Monograph Translation**

The development of Forensic Linguistics in China is in full swing, thus causing the common concern and desire of scholars from the circles of law and linguistics. Under this background, in 2007, Law Press officially published "*A Collection of Translations for Forensic Linguistics*" schemed and compiled by Prof. LIAO Meizhen, including the following five foreign classics - *Forensic Linguistics: An Introduction* (John Gibbons), *The Language of Judges* (Lawrence M. Solan), *Just Words: Law, Language and Power* (John M. Conley, and, William M. O.Barr), *Legal Discourse: Studies in Linguistics, Rhetoric, and Legal Analysis* (Peter Goodrich) and *Law,*

*Language, and Legal Determinacy* (Brian Bix).

After a lapse of seven years, after careful selection, second series of *A Collection of Translations for Forensic Linguistics* was published by Law Press from December 2014 to January 2015. This series was still schemed and compiled by Prof. LIAO Meizhen, consisting of two authoritative and representative works - one is *The Language of the Law* (David Mellinkoff) and the other is *Legal Language* (Peter M. Tiersma). The former is translated by Professor LIAO Meizhen and the latter is translated by Professor Liu Weiming. These two books are not only important, but also closely linked. *The Language of the Law* is an early classic, authoritative, detailed and systematic study on the legal language. *Legal Language* is a recent classic, authoritative study on the legal language, containing much information which could not be found in *The Language of the Law*, such as discussion on the interpretation and the relation of meanings and the court communication problems, etc. *The Language of the Law* pays more attention to the written language while *Legal Language* focuses more on the spoken communication, and therefore, the latter is a good supplement to the latter.

In the past two years, Prof. SHA Lijin and Prof. CHENG Le have translated *Fighting Over Words: Language and Civil Law Cases* (Roger W. Shuy) and *Working in Language and Law: A German Perspective* (Hannes Kniffka) in their collection.

The publication of all the books above has not only enriched the literature of Forensic Linguistics in China, but also dedicated the spiritual food to Chinese scholars in this field. The Chinese versions provide opportunity for those (1) who understand English but can not read the English original works and (2) who do not understand English but want to know Forensic Linguistics abroad. These “Forensic Linguistics Renditions” will advance the process of the research in China.

#### 4. Foreign Exchanges

IAFL is the only substantive academic organization of Forensic Linguistics internationally with its members all over the world. There are many well-known scholars of linguistics, justice, law and other disciplines and fields in it. Under its influence, related professional education and academic research have been carrying out like a raging fire and producing the most positive international impact. With the vast scale and strong academic atmosphere the Biennial IAFL Conferences on Forensic Linguistics/Language and Law attract Forensic Linguists from around the world.

Time	Conferences	Locations
1992	The First British Seminar on Forensic Linguistics	University of Birmingham
1992	Second British Seminar on FL	Birmingham. UK
1993	1st IAFL Conference	Bonn, Germany
1993	Special Symposium at the AILA Conference	Amsterdam

1995	2nd IAFL Conference	Armidale, Australia
1997	3rd IAFL Conference	North Carolina, USA
1999	4th IAFL Conference	Birmingham, UK
2001	5th IAFL Conference	University of Malta
2003	6th IAFL Conference	Sydney, Australia
2005	7th Biennial Conference	Cardiff, Wales, UK
2007	8th Biennial Conference	Seattle, Washington
2009	9th Biennial IAFL Conference	Amsterdam
2011	10th Biennial IAFL Conference	Birmingham, UK
2013	11th Biennial IAFL Conference	Mexico

After Forensic Linguistics is introduced into China, many scholars are actively engaged in this international family and attend the biennial international conferences organized by IAFL. During the past 20 years, Chinese scholars have attended almost every conference. Forensic Linguists from the four places (Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan) gathered spontaneously in the international conferences. At the Conferences, they delivered their speeches on behalf of Chinese scholars, exchanged ideas with famous international scholars, issued a Chinese-style cry and has become a force that cannot be ignored in this circle. The scholars DU Jinbang, LIAO Meizhen, LIU Weiming, YUAN Chuanyou, YU Suqing, ZHANG Xinhong and CHENG Le, etc. (from Mainland), WU Weiping, LIANG Qianwen and WU Yashan, etc. (from Hong Kong), HU Bichan, QIU Shengxiu and Amy Wang Y-T, etc. (from Taiwan) and LIN Wei (from Macau), they all have paid close attention to Forensic Linguistics, actively participated in the IAFL Conferences and left their academic imprints. Especially the scholars of Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS), they not only formed a delegation to attend the 10th Biennial IAFL Conference, but also attended the International Summer School hosted by Malcolm Coulthard. They have made an example for the Chinese and foreign scholars of Forensic Linguistics.

The most worth mentioning is Prof. YUAN Chuanyou. He is the fastest growing and promising young scholar of Forensic Linguistics in recent years. He not only published his doctoral dissertation abstract in the IAFL Journal, but also has become the youngest doctoral tutor of Forensic Linguistics. Moreover, in order to spread Forensic Linguistics research of China to the world, he used every opportunity to have established a close relationship with the international renowned Forensic Linguists. In this connection, he did research at Cardiff University - the key place of Forensic Linguistics - as a senior visiting scholar. After more than four years of efforts, he not only became the first Chinese scholar of the IAFL Academic Committee, but also successfully obtained the opportunity that the 12th Biennial IAFL Conference will be held in China. GDUFS (Guangdong University of Foreign Studies) will host this Conference.

In addition, a group of Chinese scholars, DU Jinbang, LIAO Meizhen, YUAN Chuanyou, ZHANG Liping and so on, went to the United Kingdom and the United States as visiting scholars

to make an in-depth study of Forensic Linguistics abroad. Some of them also displayed their research results and introduced Forensic Linguistics research of China to foreign counterparts in the form of academic research report. Take Prof. DU Jinbang for example, during the year of 2005 when he was a visiting scholar, he attended the “Chinese and Western Research Report of Forensic Linguistics” at the invitation of Prof. Malcolm Coulthard and made a academic report entitled “Survey of Forensic Linguistics Research in China” in the Art Building of University of Birmingham. The symposium was hosted by internationally renowned Forensic Linguist Prof. Malcolm Coulthard. The participants included the British experts and PhD students of University of Birmingham and Aston University in the field of Forensic Linguistics. DU personally witnessed this academic exchange between Chinese and Western Forensic Linguistics.

Chinese scholars with a positive attitude towards the world have attracted the close attention of famous foreign scholars. In the past twenty years, a number of internationally renowned Forensic Linguists gradually came to China for academic exchanges on invitation. These scholars (John Gibbons, Malcolm Coulthard, Peter Tiersma, Rodger W. Shuy, Janet Cotterill, Janet Ainsworth, Chris Heffer, Lawrence Solan, Michael Walsh and so on) visited the following universities to make academic lectures and academic exchanges respectively: Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS), Henan University, Central China Normal University, East China University of Political Science and Law, Northwest University of Politics and Law, China University of Political Science and Law and Shanghai Jiaotong University. Among these universities, GDUFS - the key place of China Forensic Linguistics - is the most prominent in that it received the most scholars in the aspect of foreign exchanges with outside. This is related with the academic platform and atmosphere of GDUFS.

International Forensic Linguistics is a borderless and friendly family. Many foreign experts and scholars have conducted extensive and diverse forms of academic exchanges through a variety of ways with Chinese scholars. As a result, they have enhanced friendship and understanding, and jointly promoted the development of Forensic Linguistics. It can be said that the current International Forensic Linguistics is incomplete without the involvement of Chinese scholars.

## **5. Forensic Linguistics Education and Research of GDUFS**

Shortly after Forensic Linguistics was created as a discipline in foreign countries , GDUFS made the most direct reaction to it and maintained close ties with the IAFL. With Prof. DU Jinbang as the Leader, the Forensic Linguistics education and research there have made outstanding achievements. In just a few years, GDUFS has gradually established related research directions, built up a research team and on this basis cultivated a group of professional talents of Forensic Linguistics by using their advantages in Master's and Doctoral Programs of Foreign Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. A British Forensic Linguistics website included their Forensic Linguistics Course Directory. GDUFS is the only systematic and specialized training base of Forensic Linguistics talents currently in China.

In 2002, GDUFS took the lead in recruiting the first PhD students of Forensic Linguistics and so far has been training a large number of promising young scholars (YUAN Chuanyou, ZHANG Liping, SUN Li, CHEN Jinshi, ZHONG Caishun, HUANG Yongping, ZHAO Junfeng, LI Yuekai and so on), who are active in the arena of Forensic Linguistics. Their doctoral dissertations have enriched the research perspectives and filled up the contents. These dissertations have been

officially published or are being published as monographs and had a great academic influence. The titles of some of their dissertations are *Avoiding Revictimization: Shifting from Police Interrogations to Police Interviewing in China*, *Lawyer Evaluation in Chinese Courtroom: A Social Semiotic Perspective*, *Forensic Linguistic Study on Criminal Event Reconstruction in Witness Statements*, *The Construction of Prosecution-Defense-Judge Relationship : A Frame Analysis of Judges' Courtroom Discourse Processing*, *On the Information Structure and Its Linguistic Realizations in Legal Discourse: A C-E Contrastive Discourse Analysis*, *The Study of Evidence Challenge Modes: Mapping and Integration of Courtroom Discourse Information*, *Resolution of Conflict of Interest in Chinese Civil Court Hearings: A Perspective of Discourse Information Theory*, etc.

Moreover, the scholars of GDUFS have also established a rare Forensic Linguistics Corpus and Appraisal Center in China and created their own systematic theories, so as to guarantee the Forensic Linguistics research effectively.

## **6. Domestic Legal Language Research in China**

In the late 1980s and the early 1990s of the last century, The term “Legal Language” began to be widely spread and used in China. After more than two decades of exploitation, exploration and development, the legal language research of China has already carved a path of their own and ascended to the humanities of contemporary China. In July 2002, at the “Applied Linguistics: International Symposium on Legal Language and Rhetoric”, CAFL was formally established. Since then, Chinese legal language community has its own national academic organization and specialized position.

All of these have a great role in promoting Chinese legal language research. The role of legal language in the law has been completely realized, more and more scholars are engaged in the study of legal language and academic research team has become perfect. With the deepening of the rule of law in China, the research on legal language is showing a good momentum of development.

Chinese legal language study started from scratch and has already obtained the full development at present. In the pioneering period, through hard work over the past few decades, the scholars, such as NING Zhiyuan, HUA Ergeng, ZHOU Guangran, SUN Yihua, JIANG Jianyun, WANG Jie, PAN Qingyun, LIU Suzhen, CHEN Jiong, PENG Jingyi, LI Zhenyu, YU Zhichun, DING Shijie etc., have laid a solid foundation for the study of legal language in China and made unprecedented achievements.

## **7. CAFL - the Banner of Forensic Linguistics in China**

The Secretariat of CAFL (China Association of Forensic Linguistics) settled in GDUFS. On December 9 to 11 of 2004, the three-day seminar “Future Development Expert Argumentation of China Forensic Linguistics” was held in Guangzhou. The experts shared the results achieved in legal language study, discussed the current challenges and the existing problems, and looked forward to the future development of China Forensic Linguistics. During the period, it was agreed that GDUFS would be helpful to the development of the platform of CAFL and the promotion of the development of China legal language research for the reason of the strong academic

atmosphere, related education and scientific research, especially the effective training work of Master and PhD students and textbook compilation accomplished by Prof. DU Jinbang and other scholars. Just for this reason, they all agreed to set up the Secretariat of CAFL in GDUFS, which would be responsible for the academic exchanges, members communication activities and other matters. The settlement of CAFL Secretariat in GDUFS would not only help promote the development of Forensic Linguistics, but also help the academic exchanges of scholars throughout China. It would have the very vital significance to the reinforcement of academic cooperation, the promotion of the growth and expansion of CAFL and the acceleration of the vigorous development of China Forensic Linguistics research.

In recent ten years of the Secretariat settlement in GDUFS, CAFL has condensed many scholars by holding high the academic banner and promoted the rapid development of China Forensic Linguistics in the aspects of academic study, professional education and construction of CAFL. So far, CAFL has held the five high-quality symposiums, had an important impact at home and abroad in this field and prospered the China Forensic Linguistics research.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Conferences</b>	<b>Locations</b>
2006	4th CAFL Conference	East China University of Political Science and Law, Shanghai
2008	5th CAFL Conference	GDUFS, Guangzhou
2010	6th CAFL Conference	Southwest University of Political Science and Law, Chongqing
2012	7th CAFL Conference	Zhongyuan University of Technology, Zhengzhou
2014	8th CAFL Conference	Northwest University of Political Science and Law, Xian

It is worth mentioning that the 5th CAFL Conference in 2008 imported international factors successfully. This conference was not only a grand national symposium of Chinese Forensic Linguists, but also invited internationally renowned Forensic Linguists, such as Coulthard, Shuy, Ainsworth, Bhatia and so on to deliver their conference keynote speeches. In addition, the conference also attracted scholars from the UK, USA, Italy, Japan, Malaysia and other countries, which has made China Forensic Linguistics be linked with international research and produced a significant impact.

As a national academic institution based on Forensic Linguistics, CAFL aims to unite all the experts of legal language across the country, devote itself to China Forensic Linguistics research, actively organize various academic symposia, provide a big stage for all domestic legal language researchers and actively promote the development of China Forensic Linguistics research. In addition, CAFL will give full play to its own advantages so as to strengthen ties with foreign legal

language research institutes and researchers. At the same time, CAFL will actively introduce research results of China Forensic Linguistics to foreign countries, let the world know about the legal language study of China and let China Forensic Linguistics research go to the world.

At present, GDUFS has obtained the right to host the 12th Biennial IAFL Conference. By then, the International Forensic Linguists will be attracted to this hospitable land. We have reason to believe that the scholars of China Forensic Linguistics are fully capable of making this Conference the most exciting event. China Forensic Linguistics research will surely be worldwide!

LIU Weiming's Website: <http://www.flrchina.com/en/>