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FORENSIC LINGUISTICS: The application of the principles and methods of linguistics to the language of legal proceedings and documents.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE:

Forensic Semantics: Analysis of and expert opinion on the meaning of words, phrases, clauses, paragraphs, etc., in legal, personal, and commercial communication (e.g., contracts, wills, cases of copyright infringement).

Forensic Stylistics: Analysis of the syntax, style, word choice, spelling, punctuation, rhetorical strategies, and other features of anonymous, disputed, or forged documents; expert opinion on (i) authorship and/or characteristics of author; (ii) evidence for/against plagiarism.

OVERVIEW OF EXPERIENCE; STATUS AS COURT-CERTIFIED LAY

WITNESS: I am a court-certified lay witness under Rule 701 of the Federal Rules for Evidence. I have an unusual if not unique combination of academic credentials (AB in linguistics, Brown University; MA and PhD in linguistics, University of Chicago) and real-world experience in the effective use of language.

After 13 years of academic research, teaching, and publishing, I used my linguistics training to become, in just four years, one of the country's leading corporate speechwriters, writing for the CEO and other executives of Burroughs Corporation,¹ General Motors, Philip Morris, and Kraft Foods, largely because of my ability to use style analysis to write in the voice of each individual speaker. I ghost-wrote or edited many other works and published four books of my own.

While writing speeches and doing forensic work, I developed original knowledge and shared my expertise in various venues. My sociolinguistic and pragmatic analysis of buzzwords was published in *The Journal of Employee Communication Management*² and excerpted by *The Harvard Business Review*.³

In 1997 I published my first book on speechwriting, *Writing Great Speeches: Professional Techniques You Can Use* (Allyn & Bacon). The book, part of the publisher's "Essence of Public Speaking" series, applies principles of stylistic, syntactic, and content analysis to create a linguistics-based, step-by-step process for composing, editing, and presenting a successful speech. The section on ceremonial speeches is completely original and was the first account

¹ Became part of Unisys via merger in 1986.

² Nov.-Dec. 2001

³ *Harvard Management Communication Letter (Tools, Techniques and Ideas for the Articulate Executive)*, Vol, 5, No. 3, March 2002

of its kind. It was an application of the linguistic concept of “register” (roughly, context-appropriate speech). One reviewer wrote that “[the] chapter on ceremonial speeches is worth the price of the book.”

In 2006, my second book, *Perfect Phrases for Executive Presentations* (McGraw-Hill), included original advice, developed from linguistic principles plus real-world experience, on what to say in dozens of kinds of speeches. The book also tells readers how to speak to employees, avoid gender issues, address audiences who are non-native speakers of English, and vary writing/speaking style to suit the occasion, audience, and context. I also provide a chapter on “the most persuasive words in the language.”

I have published numerous articles in professional publications and given many talks on effective communication.

For decades, I have studied language variation and style, in many roles and contexts, and I have composed, edited, analyzed, and taught others to compose thousands of documents of every kind. I have applied linguistic concepts to the understanding of a wide range of written and spoken data and even to jazz improvisation.⁴

The following sections elaborate on the above (items relevant to style analysis are highlighted):

ACADEMIC/PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS: A professional lifetime devoted to the analysis of language and the understanding of language variation and stylistic nuance (experience relevant to authorship identification is highlighted):

- ❑ **Doctoral dissertation (University of Chicago, 1973):** an analysis of code-switching (i.e., variation in the speaking style of an individual). *Relevant to authorship/plagiarism cases.*
- ❑ **Sociolinguistics and stylistics:** Much of my education was in sociolinguistics (language in its social context) and one of its investigatory methods, stylistics -- the qualitative, comparative, and contrastive study of texts, at every level of language, to uncover information on authorship (and, in some cases, to gain knowledge of the assumed author). *Relevant to authorship, plagiarism/copyright, and contract interpretation cases.*
- ❑ **Twelve years of teaching English linguistics and composition, devising and teaching graduate seminars in stylistics and in the structure and process of written language, plus my prior coursework in grammar and semantics,** have given me extensive and intensive experience in identifying the particular linguistic features and variation patterns favored by individual writers and in analyzing and interpreting ambiguous, ungrammatical, or otherwise obscure words, sentences, and larger units. *Relevant to authorship/plagiarism and contract interpretation cases.*

4 (With Daniel Greenblatt) “Noam Chomsky Meets Miles Davis: Observations on Jazz Improvisation and Language Structure,” in *The Sign in Music and Literature*, ed. Wendy Steiner (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press), 1981. The article now generates over 70,000 Google hits.

- ❑ **Twenty years as a corporate speechwriter/ghostwriter have provided a deep theoretical and practical understanding of the nature and variation of individual style. *Relevant to authorship/plagiarism cases.***
- ❑ Examination/analysis/editing of thousands of student papers, corporate publications, and countless other written documents *is relevant to plagiarism cases and to interpretation of contracts, wills, laws, regulations.*
- ❑ Extended practice in transcription (in my basic linguistics courses, doctoral thesis, and ghost/speechwriting) qualifies me to evaluate the accuracy of transcriptions (from handwriting to typing and from audio to writing).

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

1991-2002: Director, Executive Communications (reporting to Sr. VP, Corporate Communications), Kraft Foods, Northfield, IL 60093.

1984-91: Speechwriter, Public Relations Staff, General Motors Corporation, Detroit MI 48202.

1981-83: Manager, Speechwriting, Burroughs Corporation, Detroit MI 48232.

1979-81: Staff Supervisor, Marketing Communications, Michigan Bell, Detroit and Southfield MI.

1965-79: Assistant Professor of English (most recent position: Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, 1974-79); taught English linguistics and composition at the college/university level; published scholarly articles; organized a composition program and helped establish a graduate program in the theory and structure of writing.

ACADEMIC COURSES TAUGHT: (partial list) History of the English Language; Language and Dialect; Introduction to English Dialects; the Structure of Modern English; **English Stylistics**; Structure and Process of Written Language; English Composition; Introduction to Linguistics; Phonetics and Phonology.

FORENSIC EXPERIENCE, 1979-present (examples)⁵:

- Expert opinion on status of compound words (trademark infringement litigation).
- Expert opinion on plagiarism of song lyrics (copyright litigation involving musical group The Who).
- Authorship analysis of e-mails in Florida internal union dispute.
- Expert opinion on plagiarism of online home-study course.
- Preliminary analysis of authorship issues in malpractice litigation.
- Expert opinion on authorship issues in business partnership dispute involving anonymous writings.
- Authorship analysis of anonymous letters of complaint to a corporation's Board of Directors.
- Expert opinion on the semantics of trademark infringement in litigation by an apparel firm.
- Authorship analysis of anonymous letters (possibly written by disgruntled employees) for major Midwestern corporation.
- Authorship analysis of emails to website of a "cult deprogrammer."
- Expert opinion on linguistic similarities between plaintiff's and defendant's trademarks.
- Authorship analysis of defamatory emails written to an individual in a corporation.
- Support Plaintiff's trademark claim that Defendant was using, as a brand a noun that was generic in another country; I validated evidence that it was already in branded use in this country.
- Authorship advice on a possibly forged stock transfer document.
- Authorship analysis of letters involved in the Son of Sam case.
- Analysis to support allegations of plagiarism of online course material.

⁵ List of court cases, including docket number and contact attorney, available on request

- Analysis to refute charges of plagiarism in various academic settings; defendants range from high school students to university professors.
- Application of the “attachment ambiguity” to the language of a prenuptial agreement.
- Interpretation of contract language regarding the disposition of acquired corporate entities.
- Assessment of the complexity of equipment rental contract language.
- Defense against charges of academic and student plagiarism (many cases).
- Analysis of chat transcripts to determine whether defendant engaged in enticement or seduction.
- Authorship analysis of emails in divorce and custody disputes (numerous cases).
- Expert opinion on whether parts of Dan Brown’s novel *The DaVinci Code* were plagiarized from the client’s writing.
- Expert opinion on the meaning of “Ecstasy” in a criminal indictment.
- Interpretation of contract language definition of “family member.”
- Expert opinion on authorship of legal documents.
- Analysis of the linguistic difficulties presented by the Miranda warning to second-language speakers.
- Authorship analysis of text messages to support Defendant’s alibi.
- Semantic interpretation of “entice” and related words in an internet hookup sting.
- Analysis of video in child-molestation interview.
- Authorship analysis of verbatim duplication in two police reports to determine who copied from whom.
- Interpretation of the phrase “first refusal” in lease provision.

EDUCATION

B.A. (1964), Brown University, Providence RI, 1964; linguistics (summa cum laude, High Honors, Phi Beta Kappa).

M.A. (1967), PhD (1973), University of Chicago, Chicago IL; linguistics. Dissertation topic:
Grammatical Structure and Style Shift in Hawaiian Pidgin and Creole.

Linguistic Institute, Indiana University, summer, 1964.

Research Assistantships (computer applications to language analysis), University of Chicago, summers, 1966-68.

Russian language (Harvard University; University of Michigan), summers, 1962, 1963.

PRSA/NYU seminars: "The Speech as an Effective PR/PA Tool" (1981); "PR/PA Writing Workshop" (1982).

SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS/PRESENTATIONS

"When a Lawyer Needs a Linguist," Association of Forensic Document Examiners, Milwaukee, WI, Nov. 8, 2009.

Conducted 35 other workshops, courses, seminars, and presentations on speech writing, stylistic analysis, semantics, rhetoric, word usage, and related subjects (list available at <http://www.language-expert.net/seminars-workshops-presentations/>).

ARTICLES: Numerous articles on forensic linguistics, language, speechwriting, and related topics (list, including academic publications, available at <http://www.language-expert.net/articles/> ; also see Blog section of www.language-expert.net for original articles and Internet publications on language and forensic linguistics.

Recent publications:

"Malicious obfuscation" <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/malicious-obfuscation-alan-perlman>

"Plagiarism: What it is and what it is not" <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/plagiarism-what-alan-perlman>

Review of Tom Wolfe's *The Kingdom of Speech*
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/review-tom-wolfes-kingdom-speech-alan-perlman>

"Another groundless plagiarism charge" <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/another-groundless-plagiarism-charge-alan-perlman>

"The most overrated mind of the 20th century" <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/most-overrated-mind-20th-century-alan-perlman>

"How not to use PowerPoint"
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20141117182153-169090-how-not-to-use-powerpoint>

Other articles at <http://www.language-expert.net/pages/notes.html> and
<http://www.experts.com/Articles/By/Dr.%20Alan%20Perlman>

BOOKS

- ❑ *Write Choices: New Options for Effective Communication*, Charles C Thomas, 1989.
 - ❑ *"It Gives Me Great Pleasure..." -- A Guide to Writing Ceremonial Speeches*, Ragan Communications, 1992.
 - ❑ *Writing Great Speeches: Professional Techniques You Can Use*, Allyn & Bacon, 1997.
 - ❑ *Perfect Phrases for Executive Presentations*, McGraw-Hill, 2006.
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