

Nefarious language use online: Cybercrime viewed through the lens of forensic linguistics

Tanya Karoli Christensen, Associate professor, University of Copenhagen

Robert Leonard, Professor, Hofstra University

Many cybercriminals manipulate targets through the use of language, e.g. fraud attempts, phishing, extortion, hate crimes, grooming, and threatening, and use language to advertise, negotiate, and finalize criminal interactions like sales of drugs and human trafficking. Here, language itself serves as evidence to substantiate that a crime has been committed or planned. The burgeoning field of forensic linguistics offers a variety of analytic tools and methods to extract maximum intelligence from language evidence. In this report, we present examples of cybercrime case types in which linguistic analysis has proven useful. The main focus is on a recent dark web drug trafficking case in which Authorship Analysis (AA) was pivotal in obtaining an arrest order.