

Editors' Introduction

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2020 has been an extraordinary year in many different ways. One year ago, the world was on the verge of being turned upside down by an as yet largely unknown virus. At the turn of the decade, all the hopes for the New Year were suddenly put on hold as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; travel was virtually banned, visas were suspended, whole countries were on lockdown. We have witnessed an era of world history like no other. COVID-19 had an impact on life, education, and research, and for citizens around the world life changed in unprecedented ways as they had to adjust to new practices, which included moving their otherwise regular face-to-face activities to online, virtual environments. Academics and researchers were not immune to such changes, as most – if not all – teaching activities moved online and conferences were either cancelled or transformed into web conferences and webinars. All these changes demanded a great deal of time and effort; as teaching had to be adjusted, course modules suddenly redesigned, and teachers had to make themselves more readily available to students, indeed many had to re-learn to do their job or rather learn to do a different job.

For researchers, too, the pandemic brought new and further challenges. While, on the one hand, some live conferences have been cancelled and others moved online, on the other researchers have been 'invited' to more meetings, all of them taking place online, often with brief or no intervals in between, and have received more-than-usual invitations to present at other institutions. Of course, virtual environments are not prejudicial by themselves, rather the contrary; they have allowed people in different parts of the world to attend research events that would otherwise have been out of their reach. However, these circumstances also had a strong negative impact on publication because researchers have been left with comparatively little time to conduct research, to publish it and to review their peers' submissions. Additionally, even those who have taken the time to submit manuscripts for publication have found themselves with less free time to respond to reviewer's comments.

Inevitably, therefore, 2020 has also been a difficult year for journals, many of which have struggled to publish a sufficient number of articles, while at the same time meeting quality standards and deadlines. Paradoxically, this is perhaps the moment in time when more articles, of a higher quality, are needed. The fact that conferences and seminars

moved to virtual environments allowed more people across the world to host, attend and present at online events, thus attracting even more attention from researchers and the general public worldwide. However, a significant proportion of online talks and events have not been subject to any type of peer-review, or offered a guarantee of scientific rigour; instead, they contributed to the already identified counterproductive 'CSI effect'. Forensic Linguistics has indeed witnessed an increase in the number of researchers who are interested in the area and who choose to call themselves 'forensic linguists' even when their qualifications in the field are dubious. Such lack of qualifications is evident, for instance, in the scant attention paid to methodological rigour and accuracy.

Unsurprisingly, 2020 has also been a challenging year for *Language and Law/Linguagem e Direito*. The journal has recently been highly rated by Brazilian indexes in the fields of 'language' and 'law', so the journal attracted the interest especially of Brazilian researchers, who would otherwise submit their manuscripts elsewhere. We have therefore received an extraordinarily high volume of manuscripts, and although a significant proportion was sadly not suited to *Language and Law/Linguagem e Direito*, all manuscripts submitted were pre-edited and peer-reviewed. Busy as they are, especially under the current circumstances, peer-reviewers – whom we take this opportunity to thank for their excellent contribution – have not always been able to respond as quickly as we would have wished.

Book reviews have not been immune to the effects of COVID-19. The previous issue (v.6 n.2) included as many as four book reviews. We had hoped to continue this momentum, with many review copies received from publishers, many reviewers identified and many titles sent out for review. For example, reviews of Vogel's (2019) edited collection *Legal Linguistics Beyond Borders: Language and Law in a World of Media, Globalisation and Social Conflicts* and Murphy's (2019) *The Discursive Construction of Blame: The Language of Public Inquiries* are both in progress, nearing completion, but the pandemic has stalled progress. For other titles, reviewers have been identified but the workload of our English reviews editor has created a bottle-neck for Patrick, Schmid and Zwaan's (2019) edited collection *Language Analysis for the Determination of Origin: Current Perspectives and New Directions* and Heydon's (2019) *Researching Forensic Linguistics*. Meanwhile, there are almost a dozen titles literally quarantined in our English reviews editor's office – which he has not been allowed to visit since March – and ready to be sent out. This pile includes Scott's (2019) *Legal Translation Outsourced*, Leung's (2019) *Shallow Equality and Symbolic Jurisprudence in Multilingual Legal Orders* and Kaplan's (2020) *Linguistics and Law*. It is hoped that our books review process and schedule, both in English and in Portuguese, can return to some sort of normality, along with much else, in 2021.

Thus, we, the Editors, decided to publish this volume as a double issue. In addition to regular articles reporting ongoing research in the field and a solitary book review in Portuguese, this volume also features a collection of 'how I got started' articles. In Spring-2020 Roger Shuy wrote to the Editors of *Language and Law/Linguagem e Direito* suggesting that we commissioned a series of short pieces on the topic of 'How I got started as a forensic linguist', which he thought would be interesting to and useful for young intending forensic linguists. We approached a series of leading scholars, including all of the Presidents of the IAFL – sadly, of course, Peter Tiersma and Maite Turell are no longer with us – and we were delighted with the enthusiastic response. The pieces we have received so far are published in this volume, starting, obviously, with Roger Shuy's.

These first-person accounts will doubtless make exciting reading from a narrative point of view, but they also – and mostly – demonstrate how methodological rigour is crucial to the plethora of applications of linguistic analysis in forensic contexts. Newcomers to the field will learn at least two lessons from these accounts: (1) in order to be a good forensic linguist, one first needs to be an excellent linguist; and (2) contrary to some recent accounts stating that forensic linguistics is a great source of income, one can hardly make a living by working exclusively as a forensic linguist. Notwithstanding, as the eight accounts demonstrate, forensic linguistics remains an extraordinary field of research that is worth exploring further, and more and better research into forensic linguistics is encouraged.

We hope that you enjoy reading this double, though sadly not bumper issue as much as we enjoyed preparing it. We look forward to editing and distributing two exciting journal issues in 2021!

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