

**FORENSIC LINGUISTICS LABORATORY
(LABORATORIO DI LINGUISTICA GIUDIZIARIA – LALIGI)**

**LINGUISTICS DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF FLORENCE**

***PRESENTATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF
THE FORENSIC LINGUISTICS LABORATORY
(LABORATORIO DI LINGUISTICA GIUDIZIARIA – LALIGI)***

***OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH AREAS, PARTICIPANTS,
GROUP BIBLIOGRAPHY, UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE THESES,
TEMPORARY AND EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS***

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Sociolinguistics Professor of the School of “*Lettere e Filosofia*”

Member of the Teaching Body of Professors of “*Linguistics*”

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Research Focuses and Objectives

The research, centered on *Italian forensic linguistics (linguistica giudiziaria italiana)*, was founded in 1992. Since then, *this field* has held a constant and privileged position in the scientific activity of professor Patrizia Bellucci, *in particular for the evident relevance of the themes confronted in both the field of linguistic analysis* [special uses of language, asymmetrical interactions, non-literary texts, etc.] *and in the linguistic training and the continuing linguistic education of various professions in diverse sectors*. Throughout the years, her collaboration with current students and ex-students, as well as with her Florentine colleagues (see [List of Participants](#)), has progressively increased. The research also seems to fill a gap in Italian linguistics which, apart from a few brilliant exceptions, has remained behind the rest of the linguistic world with respect to *Forensic Linguistics*, much more practiced and firmly rooted in the international realm. *While the standpoint of the work is evidently linguistic, the objectives which accompany the group are also institutional and social*, held up by the strong conviction that the democratic institutions of the government and the widespread need for legality must be sustained by expert substantiation.

The research, which focuses primarily on the operation of the **Justice System** beginning with the criminal trial, takes into consideration **aspects and problems of a linguistic nature, often with strong applicative consequences** (*which can sometimes be of great importance in the legal world*). The exploration has required *the synergy of diverse methodological viewpoints: from dialectology to variationist sociolinguistics to conversational analysis to ethnography of communication, etc.* All of the research falls under the “*interpretive*” or “*interactionist*” perspective.

¹ The GISCEL [Group for Support and Research in the Field of Linguistic Education - Gruppo di Intervento e di Studio nel Campo dell'Educazione Linguistica] is a body of the Italian Linguistic Society [la Società di Linguistica Italiana (SLI)].

The research is set out in various directions:

- 1) The **preliminary investigation phase**, with particular attention to *wiretaps and bugs in the strict sense*² (that which is obtained through the insertion of electronic listening devices in the private residences of the suspects) and to *various and complex transcribing duties* (of bugs and wiretaps, of summary information, of spontaneous declarations, of interrogations, of information, of hearings, etc.), including the consequences of their use in the penal process.
- 2) The **carrying out of criminal proceedings** (*from the first level to the Court of Cassation*), as analyzed from the trial [seen as an ritualized and codified linguistic event typically of asymmetrical oral interaction] to the Court Ruling and the Appeals process. The analyses focus on “*typical*” trials as well as *trials for organized crime, mass murders*, etc.
- 3) Legal interaction with **sociolinguistically and socioculturally disadvantaged persons**: lower-class citizens, immigrants, women, minors, psychologically disturbed persons, etc. This area of the research is bent on individuating problems of interaction of a linguistic nature and any possible stereotypes evident in the interaction.
- 4) **Forensic dialectology**: dialectology from inside the penal process.
- 5) The **transcription** of the spoken word during the Trial.
- 6) **Civil trials**, taking into consideration the pervasiveness of their impact on the public.
- 7) The **written language of the operators of the law** and the **wording of court orders**.
- 8) **Word processing in legal situations**.
- 9) **Legal language in diachrony**. As in all areas of the Italian language, diachronic analysis is fundamental for the understanding of present-day sociolinguistic dynamics. From a historical perspective, overlap and interferences between judicial language and juridical language must be considered, a facet that tends to orientate this area of the research in a particular way.
- 10) **Radio and television transmissions of legal proceedings and the representation of the Justice System by the mass media**: the research examines the *linguistic mediation of journalists* and the *linguistic characteristics of the various media ‘containers’ (oral and written)*, both in relation to the representation of the Justice System in the general mass media and, more regularly, in law reports. Included are *fiction dramas, talk shows, and other televised transmissions, as well as film and cinematographic productions*. The analysis is also orientated towards the training and the continuing education of media Operators such as journalists, news anchors, etc.
- 11) **Public communication** (*written, broadcast, and computerized*) of State Institutions responsible for the implementation of the Justice System and crime prevention.
- 12) The **linguistic training** and the **continuing linguistic education of members of the legal system**: the mapping of indispensable linguistic competencies, to be introduced homogeneously in the professional training and continuing education of: the Operators of the law (Judges and Lawyers), Investigative Police, Court Reporters, etc.
- 13) The **continuing education of teachers**, with the aim of providing them the ability to educate their students: a) *in democratic legality from a linguistic standpoint*; b) *in the analysis of non-literary texts, asymmetrical interactions, variations of the linguistic repertoire, and special uses of language in juridical and judicial contexts*. At present, students are rarely taught how to read and interpret laws or to understand the legal

² At present, the vast thematic area regarding the identification of the Speaker, be it that of the variationist type (see, for example, the studies of John Trumper and his students), be it that based on the recognition of “vocal imprints” through experimental phonetics, has been excluded from the research due to the notable wealth of interest which that area currently enjoys in Italy in such research organizations as the Experimental Phonetics Group (G.F.S.), presently the **Italian Associazione for the Study of the Voice (AISV)**, and in various Centers with specialized sound Archives.

institution in its mechanisms and its implementation, despite the Justice System being an important part of the public and democratic life of the Country in which all citizens are called to actively and responsibly participate. Instead, students (“citizens in training”) are often completely deprived of the instruments and the critical-thinking skills necessary to evaluate autonomously the information that is readily transmitted to them, for example, by mass media. To summarize, it is a matter of offering students the linguistic instruments indispensable for the realization of their status as “citizen”, with the goal of “*functional literacy*” as is required more and more by the ever-increasing complexity of society.

- 14) The ***linguistic revision*** and the ***simplification of public communication and institutional texts*** (in connection with the numerous experts and scholars that have been working in this area for many years).
- 15) Notification and review of ***pertinent events and publications***.

Research³ Participants⁴

Prof. Patrizia Bellucci [Associate Professor of Sociolinguistics and Research Head]: *Research planning and coordination and firsthand research.*

Dott.ssa Maria Cristina Torchia [Degree in Sociolinguistics, Graduate student in “Linguistics”]: *Analysis of sociolinguistic and sociocultural disadvantages in courts of law, parting from psychological discomforts/disturbances. Analysis of mass media’s representation of criminal trials and the Justice System. Education in democratic legality and the continuing education of teachers of Italian L1.*

Sig.ra Erica Romagnoli [Degree in Sociolinguistics] *Analysis of a civil trial.*

Dott.ssa Alessandra Marilli [Degree in Theory and Technique of Mass Communication, with a Masters in On-line Journalism through the University of Florence’s School of Political Science, Graduate student in “Communication, Media, and the Public Sphere” at the University of Siena’s School of Communications]: *Analysis of journalistic communication and mass media’s representation of criminal trials and the Justice System, beginning with television. The Justice System and television fiction. Analysis of media consumption, above all in children and young adults. In perspective: inquiry into the image of the Justice System held by the citizens, beginning with young adults.*

Dott. Neri Binazzi [Degree in Italian Dialectology, Graduate Student in “Italian Linguistics”, Researcher in Italian Linguistics and teacher of Italian Dialectology]: *Forensic Dialectology: 1. Regional Italian dialects in penal procedures; 2. The dialectic or regional Italian component as a means of linguistic and cultural identity documentable in judicial situations.*

Dott. Marco Biffi [Degree in History of the Italian Language, with specialization in “Historic-Artistic Discipline” c/o Teacher of Secondary Education Training School – Class of “Lettere e Filosofia” at the University of Pisa, Certified to teach “Elements of informatics for linguistics” and “Linguistic informatics” c/o the University of Florence’s School of Arts, Contributor to the *Accademia della Crusca* (Supervisor of informatics activity)]: *1. Linguistic informatics consultant, in particular for the computerized control of legibility and the individuation of syntactic and lexical stereotypes; 2. Forensic linguistics in diachrony.*

Dott.essa Maria Palmerini [Degree in Sociolinguistics, Doctorate in “Linguistics and Italian Linguistics”]: *Analysis of the penal process, with particular attention to the trial. Comparison of audio recordings and judicial transcriptions made by court reporters and relative analysis.*

Dott.ssa Carmen Lucia [Degree in Sociolinguistics, with a Masters in “European Parliamentary Institutions and Constitutional History” (Political Science, “La Sapienza”, Roma); House Aide (responsible primarily for regulatory drafting and the wording of amendments, with particular regard to the proposed constitutional reforms)]: *Analysis of criminal trials, with particular attention given to trials dealing with terrorism (and to relative parliamentary proceedings). First experiences in the field of revision and simplification of institutional texts.*

Sig.ra Caterina Albani [Degree in Sociolinguistics] *Analysis of a trial for organized crime.*

Dott. Paolo Belardinelli [Degree in Sociolinguistics]: *analysis of social deixis: honorific pronouns, appellative pronouns, and pronouns of courtesy used in the Law Courts. Bibliographic research. Content Editor of the website www.patriziabellucci.it.*

Dott.ssa Cristina Aioli [Degree in Languages, Specialization in the Teaching of Italian as a Foreign Language (University for Foreigners of Siena), Teaching Assistant of Italian abroad, Teacher of Italian L2 and Teaching Head of *Eurocenters* until 2003]: *Linguistic Analysis of immigrants’ Italian L2 in*

³ When no other indication is made, attributions are made to the School of “Lettere e Filosofia” or, in any case, to the University of Florence. N.B. Upon request, *Curricula Vitae* and a List of publications of each research Participant are available.

⁴ The Group is subject to future expansion and/or modification.

judicial contexts, relative analysis of errors, mapping of the problems of linguistic and cultural interaction and their ensuing Consequences.

Dott.ssa Angela Cavallaro [Degree in Classics, Specialization in the Teaching of Italian as a Foreign Language (University for Foreigners of Siena), Teacher of Italian L2]: *Linguistic analysis of immigrants' Italian L2 in judicial contexts, mapping of the problems of linguistic and cultural interaction and their ensuing Consequences.*

Dott.ssa Vera Gheno [Degree in Sociolinguistics, Graduate student in “Linguistics”]: *Linguistic analysis of civil and criminal trials. Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) in the judicial and investigative realm. Web Designer of the website www.patriziabellucci.it.*

Dott.ssa Raffaella Setti [Degree in History of the Italian Language, Graduate student in “Italian Linguistics”, Teaching Assistant (Italian Linguistics and Teaching of the Italian Language) in the University of Florence’s School of Educational Science, Designated Researcher of the Department of Italianistics in the University of Florence’s School of Arts, Contributor to the *Accademia della Crusca*]: *Judicial Italian language in Italian cinema.*

Sig.ra Vanda Butera *Organizing secretary.*

Dott.ssa Cecilia Picchi [Degree in Languages]: *Technical director of the Linguistics Department; Content Editor of the Laboratory’s website www.unifi.it/linguistica/laligi.html.*

Bibliography of the Research Group on the topic of “Forensic linguistics”

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- 2) **Bellucci, P. – Carpitelli, E., 1994**, *Trasmettere i processi*, “Italiano & Oltre”, IX, 3, pp. 166-170.
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Undergraduate and graduate theses⁵ in the research field University of Florence

Sabrina Antognoli, *The criminal trial as a 'linguistic event'. Sociolinguistic analysis of a mafia trial in Tuscany*, Four-year degree with thesis, "Political parties and pressure groups", School of Political Science at the University of Florence (Advisor I: Franco Cazzola; Advisor II: Patrizia Bellucci), June 10, 1996 (110).

Joseph Chircop, *The Italian lexis of Malta's justice system. Sociolinguistic analysis*, Four-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Nicoletta Maraschio), June 26, 1997 (110 with honors).

Maria Palmerini, *Sociolinguistic analysis of a criminal trial*, Four-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Nicoletta Maraschio), July 10, 2000 (110 with honors).

Alessandra Marilli, *Hidden consumption: ethnographic analysis of mass media consumption. A survey of three Florentine high schools*, Four-year degree with thesis, "Theory and techniques of mass communication", School of Political Science at the University of Florence (Advisor I: Carlo Sorrentino), October 2, 2002 (110 with honors).

Carmen Lucia, *The criminal trial in Italy. Sociolinguistic analysis of a homicide trial*, Four-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci, Advisor II: Nicoletta Maraschio), November 21, 2002 (110).

Maria Cristina Torchia, *Newspaper layout and phraseology on the first day of the G8 in Genoa. Linguistic-textual analysis of the headlines and front pages of selected Italian newspapers*, Four-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Luciana Brandi), April 29, 2004 (110 with honors).

Vera Beatrice Massaro, *The Corazzini case on "Chi l'ha visto?": the part of the Prosecuting Attorney. Sociolinguistic analysis*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Marco Biffi), December 15, 2004 (108).

Sara Panichi, *The Corazzini case on "Chi l'ha visto?": the part of the TV audience. Sociolinguistic analysis*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi), December 15, 2004 (110 with honors).

Veronica Santini, *The film, "I centi passi" (One-hundred steps) by M.T. Giordana. Sociolinguistic analysis*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi), March 2, 2005 (110 with honors).

Paola Giovine, *Crime reporting in selected newspapers of Southern Italy ("Il Quotidiano di Brindisi" and "La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno")*, Four-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Luciana Brandi), April 26, 2005 (108).

Valentina Surico, *The terrorist attack on Via dei Georgofili. Sociolinguistic analysis of the first-level criminal trial*, Four-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Nicoletta Marschio; Advisor III: Neri Binazzi), June 16, 2005 (110 with honors).

Pamela Megali, *State communication: applied analysis of texts produced by the Commune of Scandicci (FI)*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi), July 12, 2005 (108).

⁵ Only the theses titles have been translated into English. All theses are available only in Italian. Original titles are viewable at <http://patriziabellicci.it/laligi.htm>.

Lucia Niccolini, *State communication: applied analysis of texts produced by the Commune of Poppi (AR)*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi), July 12, 2005 (107).

Giulia Piccardi, *Tuscany: Operating instructions for the electoral offices (Elections for the Consiglio Regionale (Regional Board) and the Giunta Regionale (Regional Council), 2005). A sociolinguistic analysis*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi), July 12, 2005 (108).

Giulia Scarpelli, *Civil sentences of merits. Sociolinguistic analysis*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi), July 12, 2005 (110 with honors).

Erica Romagnoli, *Sociolinguistic analysis of a civil trial*, Four-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Nicoletta Marschio; Advisor III: Marco Biffi).

Veronica Marini, *Online law reports. Sociolinguistic analysis*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi; Advisor III: Maria Cristina Torchia), May 11, 2006 (108).

Elisa Masconni, *A homicide trial broadcast on “Un giorno in Pretura” (A day in Pretura). Sociolinguistic analysis*, With thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi), June 22, 2006 (105).

Caterina Albani, in preparation, *Sociolinguistic analysis of a criminal trial for organized crime*, Four-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi; Advisor III: Maria Cristina Torchia).

David Baldanzi, in preparation, *Sociolinguistic analysis of a criminal trial*, Four-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi; Advisor III: Maria Cristina Torchia).

Martina Giangarè, in preparation, *The languages of Controradio. Sociolinguistic Analysis*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi; Advisor III: Maria Cristina Torchia).

Antonio Palma, in preparation, *Process of simplification of the language of public communication of Florence’s INPS*, With thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Luciana Brandi).

Eleonora Piccini, in preparation, *A made-for-tv movie on Paolo Borsellino. Sociolinguistic analysis*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Luciana Brandi).

Maurizio Sarcoli, in preparation, *The “Network Literacy Centers” of the Commune of Firenze*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi; Advisor III: Maria Cristina Torchia).

Ilaria Sassi, in preparation, *“Police District n° 5”: Sociolinguistic analysis*, Three-year degree with thesis, Sociolinguistics (Advisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Advisor II: Neri Binazzi; Advisor III: Maria Cristina Torchia).

Doctorate theses in “Linguistics and Italian Linguistics”

Linguistics Department of the University of Florence

Maria Palmerini, 2005, *Trial examinations and judicial transcriptions. A sociolinguistic analysis of criminal trials*, Supervisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Supervisor II: Nicoletta Maraschio.

Vera Gheno, 2006, *Sociolinguistic Analysis of an Italian newsgroup corpus*, Supervisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Supervisor II: Nicoletta Maraschio.

Maria Cristina Torchia, in preparation, *“Abnormals” in Court: analysis of the sociolinguistic and sociocultural disadvantages of people with psychic deficits/disturbances in judicial interaction*, Supervisor I: Patrizia Bellucci; Supervisor II: Luciana Brandi.

Other Doctorate Theses

Alessandro Marilli, in preparation, *Young adults and mass media consumption: a journey of symbolic appropriation of indirect information and opinions of public life*, University of Siena, Graduate Degree in “Communications, media, and public life”, Supervisor I: Carlo Sorrentino.

Masters degrees and Schools of specialization or relevant Certification Courses

Alessandra Marilli, *First-Level Masters in “On-line journalism”*, attained through the School of Political Science at the University of Florence; Academic year 2003-2004. Thesis presented: Television report entitled *Mors tua vita mea* (Your death my life) broadcast by *Report*, RAI3, on 03/14/04. Grade awarded: 108/110. *Course on video-journalism and televised communication*, organized by the Vigorelli center for professional education of Milan Province [Director: Paolo Liguori; Coordinator: Milo Infante].

Cristina Aioli, *Training course for evaluators and administrators of CILS (Certificate of Italian as a Foreign Language) examinations* University for Foreigners of Siena, 1996. *Second-Level Certification course in Italian Language and Culture* course of study: Didactic-Linguistic, University for Foreigners of Siena, with treatise entitled *Standard, sub-standard and analysis of the errors of Germanophile students of Italian as a foreign language*, Advisor: Dr. Antonella Benucci, Academic Year 1997-1998. *Specialization in the Teaching of Italian as a Foreign Language*, University for Foreigners of Siena, Thesis: *Sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic components of errors. A study of Germanophile students*. Grade awarded: 70/70 with honors. Advisor: Prof. Antonella Benucci, 2004.

Angela Cavallaro, *Specialization in Teaching Italian as a Foreign Language*, University for Foreigners of Siena, grade awarded: 64/70, 2003. *Teaching qualification* for examination classes 43/A and 50/A, 2001. *Certification course in Informatics for history and the humanities*, University of Florence.

Carmen Lucia, *Second-Level Masters in “European Parliamentary Institutions and Constitutional History”*, attained through the Political Science Degree Program at the University of Rome “La Sapienza”; Academic year 2002-2003. Thesis presented: “The electoral system in Italy and the elections of the European Parliament representatives”, Supervisor: Prof. Oreste Massari, Grade awarded: *Distinta*, Credits received: 60 [The Masters involved a theoretical-practical internship with the House of Deputies – First Commission of Constitutional Affairs].

Temporary Collaborators

Dott. Jeffrey Peter Scialabba: *English translation of the website www.patriziabellucci.it.*

Dott.ssa Valentina Surico: *The criminal trials for the Via dei Georgofili terrorist attack. Sociolinguistic analysis.*

Conferences

In collaboration with the municipal government of Tuscany: *From Law to Legality: a journey also of Words* [Speakers: Leonardo Maria Savoia, Mariella Zoppi, Tullio de Mauro, Silvana Ferreri, Patrizia Bellucci, Massimo Russo], Firenze, villa Montalto, January, 13, 2006. Minutes to be published by the municipal government of Tuscany.

Participation of LaLiGi in other projects and associations

Collaboration with the GISCEL-Tuscany (since 2005): Patrizia Bellucci, Cristina Aiolli, Marco Biffi, Angela Cavallaro, Vera Gheno, Erica Romagnoli, Maria Cristina Torchia.

Collaboration with the Progetto Legalità of Palermo (2005): Patrizia Bellucci, Maria Cristina Torchia.

Collaboration with the Florence Observatory of Civil Justice (since 2006): Patrizia Bellucci, Maria Cristina Torchia, Erica Romagnoli (on the theme: Settlement and orality in civil trials).

External Collaborators

Dott. Leonardo Tamborini [Substitute Public Prosecutor – Massa Tribunale]: *Juridical-judicial guidance.*

Dott.ssa Maria Pina Santoru [Expert Collaborator of the University for Foreigners of Siena, Professor of training courses for teachers of Italian L2 in Italy and abroad, member of the Scientific Commission DITALS (Certification of Competency in the Teaching of Italian as a Foreign Language)]: *Collaboration for: 1. Predisposition and experimentation of teaching courses and didactic materials for the learning of Italian L2 in the juridical-judicial sector; 2. Education of teachers of Italian L2 in the juridical-judicial sector in Italy and abroad.*

Prof. Mirko Grimaldi [Associate professor of the School of Foreign Language and Literature at the University of Lecce, Professor of “General linguistics”, Technical director of the *Interdisciplinary Research Center for Language Analysis – CRIAL* (currently in development); in the past his services have been lent to the State Police (in the office of Florence’s ex *Criminalpol*): *Collaboration on problems related to phonic expertise and voice-print identification.*