

ACADEMIA

THE 16TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FORENSIC AND LEGAL LINGUISTICS (IAFL'16)

Oluwole Sanni
Mentor: Joanna Osiejewicz

The 16th Biennial Conference of the International Association for Forensic and Legal Linguistics (IAFL) took place at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, the Philippines from July 4th to 6th, 2023. The theme of the conference was: Forensic Linguistics: Strengthening Foundations, Rethinking Paradigms, and Navigating New Horizons.

The keynote speech was given by Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo Supreme Court of the Philippines which was delivered by Associate Justice Jose Midas P. Marquez (on behalf of the Chief Justice). He talked about the language of jurisprudence being English despite the multilingual practices across Asia. He identified the problems of legal translations, meaning exclusion, and equal and inclusive justice which is militated by the English Language being the language of the court.

There were six plenary speeches. They were: The Role of Explanation in Forensic Linguistic Expert Evidence given by Prof. Tim Grant of the Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics, United Kingdom; Ethics and Professional Conduct Oversight in Forensic Linguistic Expert Evidence by Dr. Isabel Picornell, the President, International Association for Forensic & Legal Linguistics; Enriching understandings of language expertise through work in Forensic Linguistics by Prof. Natalie Schilling, Georgetown University, United States of America; Multilingual Law – is it worth it? some answers (and questions) from Asia by Prof. Richard Powell of Nihon University, Japan, and the Japan Association of Law and Language; Tightening the reigns on expert evidence; judicial gatekeeping in the Canadian context by Dr. Jennifer Glougie, BC Labour Relations Board and BC Employment Standards Tribunal, Canada; Some reflection thoughts from case studies of Forensic Linguistics in Indonesia by Dr. Susanto Saman of the Universitas Bandar Lampung, Indonesia.

There were two themed panel presentations. The first was the transdisciplinary approach to Forensic Linguistics. This was moderated by Moderator Prof. Isabel Pefianco of the Martin Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines. The panelists are Prof. Marilu R. Madrunio, University of Santo Tomas, the Philippines; Atty. Senando Angelo Santiago. University of the Philippines, the Philippines; and Dr. Laura Smith-Khan, University of Technology Sydney, Australia. The second panel was ethics and ethical conduct in Forensic Linguistics. This was moderated by Prof. Tim Grant of the Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics. The panelists were: Dr. Sarah Atkins, Aston Institute for Forensic Linguistics, and Professor Georgina Heydon, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia.

The parallel presentations are on five areas of Forensic Linguistics: Language and the legal process; Online identities and interactive multimodal communication; Linguistic evidence and investigative linguistics; the language of the law; and law on language.

Oluwole Sanni of the Faculty of Applied Linguistics, University of Warsaw, Poland presented the Male Face in African Suicide Texts. He addressed mental health being a huge stigma in Africa that is always swept under the carpet and always greeted with cold treatment. In his presentation, he stated that to be a man in the African setting is defined by how traditional

masculinity is manifested and preserved. This means a man must be able to provide and protect for his family in addition to meeting the sexual needs of his partner, and being the model father to his children. Thus, even if these positive manly actions are realized in an emotionally distressed and unhealthy manner, the man is still excused and still revered as the real man. Men are constantly reminded that their masculine membership in the mainstream hegemonic masculinity community is hinged on ticking all the categories/boxes on the masculine card. Hence, once he cannot realize any of this in an environment that encourages man to repress and suppress his emotions, suicide seems looming. Thus, a man who is physically challenged and faces serious economic misfortune has his masculinity relegated and downgraded to subordinating or failed masculinity. For an African man with so much pride and an inflated ego such a bruise on his masculine identity might not be received in a resilient manner but might find solace in suicide as a form of compensatory masculinity for his failures as a man. There is also the pseudo-masculinity phenomenon, an instance is a man whose sexual needs cannot be fulfilled within the societal defined heteronormative context thus, such a man either hides, lives in fear, or engages in health-threatening acts as he only makes do with the available which might present serious risks to his health and mental stability. Thus, masculinity rehashes the patriarchal realm of our society which constantly tasks and whips man to perform herculean masculine responsibilities hence, he either collapses under this draconian masculine regime by bowing down in shame or survives in any way or means whether conventional or unconventional in much as the roles of masculinity remains steadfast.

This he advised should prioritize an ongoing discussion on issues of mental health and why people need to articulate their innermost feelings without fear. Also, it should move us into reconceptualizing the meaning of success as not necessarily being materialistic but living a value-added life. Furthermore, people must be made aware that being healthy includes mental well-being which is important in living a meaningful and impactful life.

The closing remark was done by Dr. Isabel Picornell, the President of, the International Association for Forensic & Legal Linguistics. Truly, the IAFL16 was able to achieve its aim of engaging the participants in the discussion on the groundwork, current trends and issues, and prospects in Forensic Linguistics.