



Forensic linguistics - Lexical struggle in court

Kay Nöthen

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Seminar paper from the year 2007 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Linguistics, grade: 2,0, University of Duisburg-Essen, course: Intercultural Pragmatics, 8 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: „A few years ago, an Aboriginal English-speaking man in north Queensland was the uninvolved witness in a traffic accident. He was called to give evidence in court, and was asked something like ‘Can you tell us in your own words what happened?’ To which the Aboriginal witness replied: ‘I plead guilty, eh?’ “(Eades 1994:248). What we see here is one of the main problems Aboriginal speakers have with called Standard English by not transferring the wanted answers. They somehow feel like being an observer in a process of law. In this paper, I will show the major problems of Aboriginal speakers with Standard English, with a closer look at courtroom English. This is a part of forensic linguistics. The language of law is very interesting for applied linguistics, because law is an important institution of a countrie’s constitution with a lot of influence on people’s every day lief and it is packed with a lot of language problems, because even normal people have problems by reading law texts. After showing the major aspects of Aboriginal problems by understanding Standard English in courtrooms I then will go on by showing a case which is called the Pinkenba-case, where we can see, how lawyers use these Aboriginal problems with Standard English to change the situation completely. This is what Diana Eades, author of the article on the Pinkenba case and many more articles about this topic, calls lexical perversion. (Eades 2006:153). By explaining how lawyers use language, we will see how easy it is to change words or meanings. [...]

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