An Analysis of Amber Heard's Statements in the Johnny Depp Defamation Case: A Forensic Linguistics Study

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ABSTRACT

A defamatory act is any act of speech that disparages the reputation of a person. Defamation is committed by conveying speech in the form of a series of words or sentences by accusing a person of certain actions, which are aimed at honor and good name so that it can result in the person's dignity or dignity being humiliated or degraded. This research aims to examine Amber Heard's statements for defaming Johnny Depp. The data analyzed are Amber Heard's several statements that indicates false and defamatory (primary data) and also her testimony during the trial as supporting data (secondary data). The primary data was collected and observed through the articles op-ed which written by Amber Heard in Washington Post and the secondary data was collected through the trial transcript. This study uses a qualitative research method that describes data to determine the elements that can defame a person based on forensic linguistic studies. By using this study, the data that has been selected was analyzed using lexical semantics, pragmatics (speech acts), and linked to legislation based on Virginia Law. The researchers found three statements that proved to be defamatory and acted with obvious malice that have damaged Johnny Depp's reputation. The findings of this study have significant implications, showing that defamatory statements can have a profound and lasting impact on an individual's reputation and public perception, emphasizing the importance of the law in protecting and addressing such acts.

Introduction

A linguistic point of view can be applied to the study of crimes that are generated through language. Derogatory remarks, threats, fraud, and even defamation through damage to someone's reputation are examples of these linguistic crimes. According to Rolph (2008) a reputation can be defended, upheld, created, obtained, deserved (or not), harmed, wounded, diminished, or denigrated. A substantial amount of jurisprudence examining the idea of good name in defamation law may have been expected given the variety and sometimes sensitivity of ways in which a reputation may be defined and utilized (Rolph, 2008). Nevertheless, this important idea has received very little attention. Shuy (2010) stated that it is not always easy to find a solution to a contradiction between the right to free speech and the right to be shielded from unjustified reputational harm brought on by false accusations. Thus, Shuy (2010) concludes that defamation is a cover term for disputes about written language (libel) or spoken language (slander).

There are standards and values inherent in the language that speakers of that language speak. Speaking is not only in public platforms but also in private ones or in verbal or written form in daily interactions. Language is more than just classifying words based on their circumstances; it also takes social norms and values into account when pronouncing words. Bad things can happen when people use words, such as insults, assaults, bluffing, hate speech, and other types of speech. As a matter of fact, not

everything is appropriate for the general public to consume. This affects their ability to acquire unfavorable cognitive values. These kinds of ethical crimes are risky acts that have the potential to hurt others.

Rahmat (2017) stated that in the field of forensic linguistics, language crimes typically involve aspects of criminality since they may inadvertently inflict harm to speakers or interlocutors. According to McMenamin (2002), forensic linguistics is the scientific study of language as applied to forensic purposes and contexts. Dumas stated in McMenamin (2002) that the areas of concentration of forensic linguistics are legal language, pragmatics, courtroom language, plain English, legal language, jury instructions, language used in legal contexts and procedures, and language used in consumer product warnings. Furthermore, it might be argued that forensic linguistics focuses not just on cases that are brought up in court but also on cases or situations that have not been brought up and have violated societal norms including insults, lying, warnings, and fraud (Rahmat, 2017).

The American actress Amber Heard (AH), one of the stars in DC's *Aquaman*, and famous actor Johnny Depp (JD), known for his roles in *Fantastic Beasts* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*, became wife and husband in February 2015 but later ended their marriage in May 2016. After the marriage ended, AH started to accuse JD of physical and domestic abuse. As a result, in April 2018, the British tabloid The Sun released a piece headlined "Gone Potty: How can JK Rowling be 'genuinely happy' casting wife beater Johnny Depp in the new Fantastic Beasts film?" Additionally, in December 2018, AH stated to be a survivor of domestic abuse in an opinion article she penned for the American publication, The Washington Post.

However, she omitted any mention of JD. Following the release of these allegations, JD had a fall from favor in Hollywood and lost his well-known parts as Gellert Grindelwald in the *Fantastic Beasts* film trilogy and Jack Sparrow in the *Pirates of the Caribbean movie*. JD filed a lawsuit for defamation against News Group Newspapers in June 2018, and in November 2020, a British court concluded that the allegations made against JD were considerably reliable. But after JD personally sued AH in a Virginia court in March 2019 for defamation after what she had written in The Washington Post, the jury returned a guilty verdict in June 2022, concluded that JD had been accused of defamation because JD's side managed to build logic and show evidence that was acceptable to the jury.

The analysis of defamation cases was studied by Nasution (2020) focuses on two social media uploads that are purported to include defamatory language in them. From a lexical semantic perspective, the term employed in the uploaded sentence has a negative denotation meaning, according to the analysis. The sentence denigrates a group of people, according to the grammatical semantic analysis. From a pragmatic point of view, the sentence can be interpreted as an expressive illocutionary act expressing disappointment and anger. The statement that was posted to the account is particularly controversial because it provokes others to share the uploader's viewpoint. Halid (2022) examined the meanings of illocutionary speech acts and speech events that included insults, defamation, hate speech, and slander that were being circulated on social media or in cyberspace. The study's findings show that there have been claims of criminal activity involving intentional acts of defaming individuals online and displaying hatred or insulting others in public.

Antara (2023) studied linguistics forensics includes examining lingual data based on defamation case analysis, lexical semantics, grammatical semantics, and analysis

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pragmatics (speech acts). It is clear from the analysis's findings that a statement qualifies as defamatory. This can serve as justification for investigators to set up protocols and make decisions regarding laws that penalize good defamation actors. Susanthi (2021) investigates linguistic information on a defamation derived from statements on YouTube video that fall under the category of insults and defamation. Forensic linguistic studies—specifically, pragmatic and lexical semantic analysis—are the foundation for the data analysis. The information indicates that the speech falls within the category of defamation, and this information can be utilized to help with the planning of an investigation.

While the current research provides significant insights into the defamatory statements made by AH against JD using qualitative methods and Virginia Law, several gaps remain. This research mainly focuses on one high-profile case, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Existing studies by Nasution (2020), Halid (2022), Antara (2023), and Susanthi (2021) have explored defamation in various contexts, such as social media, using different linguistic frameworks. However, the role of digital media and social networks in amplifying defamatory content and their legal implications remains under-researched. Additionally, the long-term effectiveness of defamation laws across various jurisdictions outside of Virginia has not been discussed. Addressing these gaps will enhance the understanding of defamation and its multifaceted impacts, as well as offer a more robust framework for legal and forensic linguistic applications.

There are two problems of this research. The first is, "how can forensic linguistic analysis, employing lexical semantics and pragmatic speech act theory, identify linguistic markers in AH's statements in the Washington Post op-ed that indicate falsehoods and potential defamation against JD?" This problem seeks to understand how specific linguistic features such as lexical choices and speech acts in AH's statements can be analyzed to detect inconsistencies, misleading information, or defamatory implications. By applying forensic linguistic theory by Olsson (2008), the research aims to provide evidence of deception or misrepresentation in AH's communication, particularly in relation to her portrayal of JD in the public sphere.

The second is, "how can the application of relevant articles from Virginia Law in forensic linguistic analysis strengthen the case to determine whether AH's statements in the Washington Post op-ed constitute legally recognized acts of defamation?" This problem focuses on integrating forensic linguistic analysis with the interpretation of Virginia defamation laws as relevant to the case involving JD and AH. By aligning linguistic findings with legal standards and precedents specific to Virginia, the research aims to establish a clear connection between AH's statements and the legal definition of defamation. This approach seeks to provide a framework for the jury to assess whether AH's statements meet the criteria for defamation under Virginia Law, thereby influencing the legal outcome of the case.

The objective of this research is to thoroughly analyze AH's statements that indicate falsehoods and defamation against JD. By closely examining these statements, the study aims to identify and highlight specific elements that qualify as defamatory. Additionally, the research seeks to substantiate these defamatory claims by correlating them with relevant articles in Virginia Law. This legal framework will be used to demonstrate how the jury took these articles into consideration in deciding whether Amber Heard indeed committed an act of defamation. Through this comprehensive analysis, the study intends to provide a clearer understanding of the legal and linguistic aspects of defamation within this high-profile case.

Forensic Linguistics

The application of linguistic knowledge to a specific social setting—the court forum, from which the word "forensic" is derived—is what Olsson (2008) defined as forensic linguistics. Subyantoro (2019) claims that forensic linguistics applies linguistic theories to language events connected to legal proceedings, legal product forms, judicial contacts, and interpersonal interactions that have an impact on the law. Another definition of forensic linguistics is that it applies linguistic theories to linguistic events involved in the legal process, such as legal products, interactions in the judicial system, and individual interactions that have an impact on the law (Coulthard and Johnson in Burhanuddin, 2022). Olsson (2008) stated that, in the broadest sense, forensic linguistics may be defined as the interface between language, crime, and law, where law encompasses judicial proceedings, legislation, law enforcement, disputes or legal proceedings, and even disputes that may only be related to a potential legal violation or the need to seek a remedy.

Olsson (2008) also said that it makes sense if linguists rely on a wide range of linguistic fields for their analysis because the data they receive may need to be explained to a court regarding certain aspects of phrase or sentence structure, how conversations are structured, how speakers and writers move during a conversation, or how the average person remembers language. Hence, Olsson (2008) came to the conclusion that forensic linguists apply linguistic expertise and methods to language involved in (i) court cases or processes or (ii) interpersonal conflicts between parties that could eventually lead to legal action of some type.

Lexical Semantics

The meaning of the word is examined first in a case of defamation and is thereafter linked to the meaning of the phrase. According to Pateda in Nasution (2020), a word can have many meanings based on the sentence's meaning, tone, and purpose. Kearns (2011) stated that semantics is the study of the literal meaning of words as well as the meaning of how they are combined. These two aspects together make up the fundamental meaning of a given speech and serve as its foundation. Furthermore, according to Kearns (2011), the meaning of a complex expression like a phrase is made up of two parts: structural meaning, which is the meaning of the way the words are put together, and lexical meaning, which is the meaning of the individual words.

Linguistic semantics, according to Frawley (1992), is the study of grammatical meaning, or literal, decontextualized meaning that is mirrored in language's syntactic structure. Interpreting words, phrases, and sentences; interpreting texts, such as contracts, insurance policies, communications, restraining orders, statutes, and legal texts; interpreting ambiguity in texts and laws; interpreting oral discourse during the reading of rights; and interpreting jury instructions are all included in semantics, as defined by Halid (2022) as the study of meaning in forensic linguistics research.

Speech Acts

Pragmatics, particularly speech acts, primarily concentrate on the relationship between language and context. It implies that people must be able to use words or utterances that are appropriate for the situation, social environment, and participants when they engage with one another (Simanjuntak, 2022). According to Shuy (2010), disputes about whether the statements made are views or facts are the starting point of many

defamation cases. Speech acts have been used to characterize the functional dimension of language, or how language achieves specific goals or effects, since Austin (1962) and Searle (1968). Three categories of speech acts are identified by Austin in Bachari in Nasution (2020): locution, illocution, and perlocution. A locution is a meaningful statement made with insufficient force to sway listeners. Since locution just consists of informational speech, it is virtually identical to continuous speech.

Searle (1968) stated that serious utterances of the sentence with that literal meaning will have that specific force because the meaning of the sentence dictates the illocutionary force of its utterances. Since the description of the act as a joyfully done locutionary act incorporates the meaning of the sentence, it also describes the illocutionary act, since the meaning of the sentence determines which illocutionary conduct is performed (Searle, 1968). Perlocution is another category of speech act. Nasution (2020) stated that perlocution is the deliberate design of an utterance's effect or consequence by the speaker to influence the hearer, either directly or indirectly. The speaker uses some deliberate effort to target the audience with the information in his speech.

Illocutionary Speech Act

According to Austin's perspective in Pratiwi, et al. (2024), illocution is a speech act that combines the intention and function or power of speech, meaning that the speaker's words have the ability to impact their speech partners. Additionally, speech actions are divided into five categories by Searle (1979), namely:

1) Assertive/Representative

An assertive or representative speech act holds the speaker accountable for the veracity of his/her statements. Another name for this kind of speech act is an assertive speech act. The following speech acts fall under this category: stating, demanding, admitting, demonstrating, reporting, testifying, and guessing.

2) Directive

Speech acts that are meant to direct the speech partner to behave in accordance with the speech's contents are known as directive speech acts. This category of speaking acts includes the following: charging, commanding, urging, ordering, pleading, inviting, forcing, proposing, and sending signals.

3) Expressive

Expressive speech acts include saying "thank you," "complaining," "congratulations," "praising," "blaming," and "criticism." The speaker wants the listener to understand that what they are saying is an assessment of the subject matter.

4) Commissive

A speech act that requires the speaker to do every action listed in the test, such as displaying one's abilities, threatening, swearing, and associating, is known as a commissive speech act.

5) Declarative

A declarative speech act is one in which the speaker aims to establish a new entity (state, situation, etc.). Speech having the intent to make an impression, make a decision, reverse, forbid, grant, permit, categorize, lift, forgive, and so on is included in this category.

Research Method

This research employs a qualitative approach to examine the elements of defamatory statements made by AH against JD in the published article in Washington

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Post. The study is based on forensic linguistic analysis, which focuses on the language used in the statements to determine their defamatory nature. The research aims to describe and interpret the data to identify elements that can defame a person. The primary data for this research consists of several statements made by AH that are alleged to be false and defamatory. These statements were observed and selected from an op-ed article written by AH in The Washington Post. The secondary data includes AH's testimony during the trial. This data serves as supporting evidence and provides context to the primary data. The secondary data was obtained by accessing and reviewing the trial transcripts. The steps for data analysis are first to analyze the lexical semantics which analyze the meaning and connotations of the words used in the selected statements to understand their impact on JD's reputation. Second, examine the statements to determine their illocutionary force (the intended effect on the listener) and perlocutionary effect (the actual effect on the listener). This step involves identifying whether the statements are assertions, accusations, or other forms of speech acts. Last, link the findings from the linguistic analysis to relevant legislation based on Virginia Law to determine if the statements meet the legal criteria for defamation. The data analysis method used in this study is based on Miles & Huberman (1994) model, which divides data analysis into four stages: data collection, data displays, data reduction, and conclusion drawing or verification.

Result and Discussion

The forensic linguistic analysis of AH's statements in the Washington Post op-ed, using lexical semantics and pragmatic speech acts, reveals critical insights into the language that contributed to the jury's decision in the JD defamation case. The jury found AH guilty on three counts of making false and defamatory statements against JD. These statements are:

1. *"I spoke up against sexual violence — and faced our culture's wrath. That has to change."*
2. *"Then two years ago, I became a public figure representing domestic abuse, and I felt the full force of our culture's wrath for women who speak out."*
3. *"I had the rare vantage point of seeing, in real time, how institutions protect men accused of abuse."* (Amber Heard, 2018)

The researchers' findings reveal the specific linguistic elements that contributed to this verdict, providing a comprehensive understanding of how language was used to construct and convey defamatory narratives. The following sections present the detailed discussions of linguistic analysis, demonstrating how these statements were constructed and the implications of their lexical and pragmatic elements in the context of defamation law in this high-profile case.

Data 1

"I spoke up against sexual violence — and faced our culture's wrath. That has to change."

Table 1. Lexical Semantic Analysis Data 1

Statement	Lexical Meaning (Cambridge Dictionary)
I spoke up against sexual violence	**"I"** is first-person singular pronoun referring to AH. "**Spoke up**" is a phrasal verb which means "to give your opinion about something in public, especially on a subject that you have strong feelings about." **"Against"** is a preposition indicating opposition which means "disagreeing with a plan or activity." **"Sexual violence"** is a noun phrase referring to "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work." (World Health Organization, 2022)
and faced our culture's wrath	**"Faced"** is a verb, meaning "to confront or deal with something unpleasant." **"Our culture's wrath"** is a noun phrase. **"Our"** is a possessive pronoun indicating collective ownership or association, referring to AH and the wider community. "**Culture**" is a noun referring to "the attitudes, behavior, opinions, etc. of a particular group of people within society." "**Wrath**" is a noun meaning "extreme anger."
That has to change	**"That"** is a pronoun referring back to the previous clause, specifically the culture's wrath in response to speaking up. "**Has to**" is a modal verb phrase indicating necessity or obligation. "**Change**" is a verb meaning "to make or become different." **"That has to change"** expresses a clear demand for social transformation, indicating urgency and moral imperative.

From the statement above, which is a locution, AH wants to convey and give an opinion in the media that she is strongly opposed to anything related to sexual violence. There are three types of illocutionary acts contained in the statement. The first is assertive illocutionary because she wants to 'stating facts' about her actions and the consequences she faced. The second is expressive illocutionary because AH 'communicates her feelings' about the unfair treatment she received. The last one is directive illocutionary, by stating **"That has to change,"** AH implicitly urges readers to 'take steps' to alter the cultural response. The intent behind the statement also could be interpreted as both sharing a 'personal experience' and advocating for cultural change. The perlocution or effect of AH's statement can impact the jury, the public, and the media, shaping the narrative around the case and influencing the perception of both parties involved.

In this case, her ex-husband (JD) felt offended because the statement did not match what actually happened. Thus, referring to Defamation in Virginia Code § 8.01-45 (1977) which states that *"all words shall be actionable which from their usual construction and common acceptance are construed as insults and tend to violence and breach of the peace,"* the statement was sued to court because it was claimed by JD as a false statement or acted with reckless disregard for the truth. In the context of a defamation case, the court would scrutinize whether there was an additional intent to harm JD's reputation.

This research finding was also supported by other sources taken from the trial transcript of AH's testimony during cross-examination at trial. The context in this situation below was the conversation in the court while Camille Vasquez (CV, JD's Attorney) examined AH. Before this conversation, CV asked about AH's statement that

AH was donated her entire divorce settlement from her ex-husband for charity but the evidence showed that she hasn't donated the money until the day she testified. So, CV asked her to clarify what has happened.

CV: "You wanted praise for donating the money, right?"
AH: "That's incorrect."
CV: "You wanted good press?"
AH: "In general, one does want good press, yes."
CV: "You wanted to seem altruistic publicly?"
AH: "Wasn't my interest. My interest is in my name and clearing my name. And at the time, I was being called a liar, and my motives were being questioned. I did see it as important to clear that up. I wanted to make a statement to make sure that there was not any doubt that I couldn't be labelled these things just because Johnny was a bigger star and had more publicity reach." (*Depp Dive - Transcripts of US Trial Days*, n.d.)

(Transcript of Jury, Trial - Day 17, page 107)

Here, the answer expressed by AH in supported data is a locution. In her answer, AH mentions the word "incorrect" in her statement which semantically lexical means "not correct or not true" (Cambridge Dictionary) when she was asked if she wanted to be praised for donating the money. But then she said "want" which means "to wish for a particular thing or plan of action" after being asked whether she wanted good news. And she explained with words "interest" which lexically means "the feeling of wanting to give your attention to something or of wanting to be involved with and to discover more about something", "motives" means "a reason for doing something" and "questioned" means "doubt or confusion."

Thus, in this context, AH expresses an illocutionary speech act in the form of a representative illocutionary because she stated the truth that she wanted to be praised and wanted to look good by people with making a statement that she was donated her divorce settlement from JD when in fact she had not donated the money. According to Searle (1979), representative class members are trying to tie the speaker down (in different ways) to what actually transpired and to the veracity of the claim they are making. One dimension of judgment that encompasses true and false can be used to evaluate each representative class member.

From what has been conveyed by AH in her testimony, it causes the appearance of perlocution or the effect caused by the utterances which is the objection from JD's side who feels that AH has the intention to only publish good news about her but she states things that are not in accordance with the facts. This is also supported by AH's obvious inconsistency in presenting her testimony, which is her inconsistent use of words where she answered "right" and "wrong" in questions that have the same meaning. Referring to Defamation in Virginia Code § 8.01-46 (1977) which states that *"in any action for defamation, the defendant may justify by alleging and proving that the words spoken or written were true, and, after notice in writing of his intention to do so…"* this shows that AH (the defendant) did not really prove what she said and she also has her own intentions by stating and admitting that she wanted good press about herself in the public while she wants to bring down JD's good name.

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Data 2

"Then two years ago, I became a public figure representing domestic abuse, and I felt the full force of our culture's wrath for women who speak out."

Table 2. Lexical Semantic Analysis Data 2

Statement	Lexical Meaning (Cambridge Dictionary)
Then two years ago	**"Then"** is an adverb that indicates a point in time that has been previously mentioned or implied. **"Two years ago,"** is a specific temporal phrase marking a period in the past relative to the current point in time.
I became a public figure representing domestic abuse	**"I"** is a pronoun referring to AH, the subject of the sentence. **"Became"** is a verb indicating a change of state or role. **"A public figure"** is a noun phrase; **"public figure"** is referring to "a famous person who is often written about in newspapers and magazines or is often on television or the radio," or in another words is someone well-known and recognized by the public, implying a person with a certain level of fame or notoriety. **"Representing"** is a verb referring "to speak, act, or be present officially for another person or people," or indicates acting or standing in for something, in this case, domestic abuse, implying that is seen as a symbol or embodiment of this issue. **"Domestic abuse"** is a noun which means "cruel treatment of a person by someone who lives with them, that could include violence or other types of cruel behavior," or it can be referring to violence or abuse within a household, usually involving intimate partners.
and I felt the full force of our culture's wrath for women who speak out	**"And"** is a coordinating conjunction connecting two independent clauses, indicating that both actions or states occur together or in sequence. "**I felt**" is verb phrase where "**felt**" indicates "experiencing something special or emotional." "**The full force**" is a noun phrase; "**full force**" implies a strong or overwhelming amount of power or intensity. "**Of our culture's wrath**" is a prepositional phrase; **"our"** is a possessive pronoun indicating collective ownership or association, referring to AH and the wider community. **"Culture"** is a noun referring to "the attitudes, behavior, opinions, etc. of a particular group of people within society." **"Wrath"** is a noun meaning "extreme anger." **"For women who speak out"** is a prepositional phrase indicating the target of the wrath. **"Speak out"** is a phrasal verb which means "to say in public what you think about something such as a law or an official plan or action." Thus, in this context, **"women who speak out"** refers to women who publicly share their experiences or opinions, particularly those challenging societal norms.

Based on the data, AH stated a locution which describes a sequence of events: the writer (AH) became a public figure associated with domestic abuse and subsequently experienced negative societal reactions. The locutionary act here involves stating a personal experience and observation. By stating the locution, there are two illocutions or intentions behind the statement. The first is assertive illocutionary because AH is 'making a statement' about past events in a specific time (two years ago, exactly when she was JD's wife), claiming that she became a public figure representing domestic abuse and the negative reaction she encountered as a result.

The second is expressive illocutionary because by stating "*I felt the full force of our culture's wrath for women who speak out*" AH is also 'expressing a personal feeling'

of being subjected to society's wrath. Thus, the perlocution that occurs is that the readers might perceive AH as a victim of domestic abuse who faced cultural punishment for her outspokenness. This can evoke sympathy, support, or skepticism and questioning of the authenticity of her claim. With the release of this statement, JD's reputation was damaged because AH had implicitly revealed that she was someone who represented a victim of domestic violence 'two years ago', right when she was still JD's wife, and the public speculated that the person who had committed domestic violence two years ago in the statement was JD.

Referring to Abusive and Insulting Language in Virginia Code § 18. 2-417 (2020) which states that *"Any person who shall falsely utter and speak, or falsely write and publish, of and concerning any person of chaste character, any words derogatory of such person's character for virtue and chastity, or imputing to such person acts not virtuous and chaste, or who shall falsely utter and speak , or falsely write and publish, of and concerning another person, any words which from their usual construction and common acceptation are construed as insults and tend to violence and breach of the peace or who shall use grossly insulting language to any person of good character or reputation is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanour."* JD claimed that the statement that had been written and published was false, defamatory, and had the intention of bringing down his reputation.

Other sources that were obtained from the trial transcript of AH's testimony during cross-examination at trial support the findings of this research. The context of this utterance is AH's response when she was asked by her lawyer about the photo of AH in court evidence with a "bruise" on her temple.

AH: "Yes. It's a picture of my bruised temple. Johnny had his hand on my -- on part of my face with my face down, and he was punching my head, repeatedly punching my head. That's what caused that bruise on my temple." (*Depp Dive - Transcripts of US Trial Days*, n.d.)

(Transcript of Jury, Trial - Day 17, page 20)

This explanation expressed by AH is a locution. She mentions the words "punching" and "repeatedly punching" which lexically semantic means "a forceful hit with a fist so many times" as if to show that JD is really an abusive person by explaining that the photo showing the bruise on her temple from JD's frequent attacks. By stating the locution "and he was punching my head, repeatedly punching my head," AH wants to convince the court that JD has really done an assault to her (illocutionary). Her locution is representative to report what she believed to be true or a fact. However, her truth needs to be verified by evidences and statements from other sides and witnessed.

The statement is also a real description that JD has done a terrible domestic violence to his ex-wife because she mentioned that the punching is not just once, but many times. The utterance is a representative illocutionary because AH has stated or described what happened in the photo. However, AH cannot really prove that the bruises seen in the photo are the result of JD's repeated punches and there is also no strong evidence showing that JD actually punched her. Meanwhile there is also other evidence shown by JD's side that a few days after AH took the photo, the bruises that have been mentioned were not visible, which means that the bruises were only made up as if they were the result of JD's punches. In this case, the perlocution is that JD was offended and denied the allegations of domestic violence against AH because the statements made by

AH are false, do not match with the evidence in the trial and contain elements of slander which become a form of defamation. AH proved that she gave a statement that was not accurate with the available evidence in the court. Her statement was also highly exaggerated, as if she only wanted to blame JD and ruin his reputation.

Data 3

"I had the rare vantage point of seeing, in real time, how institutions protect men accused of abuse."

Table 3. Lexical Semantic Analysis Data 3

Statement	Lexical Meaning (Cambridge Dictionary)
I had the rare vantage point of seeing	**"I"** in this context, AH emphasizing her personal experience. **"Had"** is a past tense of possession, indicating the speaker's experience or opportunity. **"Rare"** indicates "infrequency or uncommonness," highlighting the uniqueness of AH's experience. **"Vantage point"** is "a particular personal way of thinking or set of opinions," in other words, it can be described as a position or standpoint from which something is viewed or considered, suggesting a unique perspective. **"Seeing"** is a present participle of "see," in this case is indicating observation or witnessing.
in real time	**"In real time"** means as events happen, without delay, emphasizing the immediacy of the observation.
how institutions protect men accused of abuse	**"How"** is a conjunction introducing the manner in which something occurs. **"Institutions"** is "an organization that exists to serve a public purpose such as education or support for people who need help," which in this context is typically referring to legal, governmental, or social entities. **"Protect"** means "to keep someone or something safe from injury, damage, or loss," suggesting actions taken to defend or shield. **"Men accused of abuse"** refers to males who have been charged with abusive behavior, implying a specific social issue.

Based on the data above, the locutionary act involves the writter expressing that she had a unique and immediate perspective on how institutions act in cases involving men accused of abuse. The writter words convey her experience of witnessing the protection offered by institutions to men accused of abuse. The illocutionary type in this sentence could be classified as assertive or descriptive because AH is making a statement about her experience and what she observed regarding how institutions handle accusations of abuse against men. AH is also providing a description of her firsthand observation, shedding light on a specific aspect of the defamation case and societal dynamics related to abuse allegations.

AH's statements in this case are probably intended to provoke a specific response or feeling from the public. The perlocutionary of the statement might evoke sympathy or support for AH by highlighting what she perceives as systemic bias favoring men accused of abuse. It can raise awareness about her viewpoint on the issue. Alternatively, it could provoke skepticism or criticism, particularly from those who support JD or disagree with AH's characterization of institutional behavior. By claiming firsthand experience and real-time observation, the statement can influence public opinion and sway it against perceived institutional biases, potentially impacting how the public views the case and broader social issues related to abuse allegations. The statement also influences public perception significantly, making people believe that JD is part of a larger issue of institutional protection of abusers, this could be seen as harmful to his reputation.

Thus, referring to Abusive and Insulting Language in Virginia Code § 18.2-416 (1975) which states that "*If any person shall, in the presence or hearing of another, curse or abuse such other person, or use any violent abusive language to such person concerning himself or any of his relations, or otherwise use such language, under circumstances reasonably calculated to provoke a breach of the peace, he shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor,*" the statement was sued in court because even though it did not directly mention JD's name, the public was provoked and assumed that the person referred to in the statement was JD and the statement had damaged JD's reputation.

The findings of this research were also supported by additional sources that were taken from the trial transcript of AH's testimony during cross-examination. The context of this conversation, CV (JD's Attorney) examined and asked AH about the evidence at trial in the form of voice recordings shown by JD's side. From the voice recording evidence, the voices of AH and JD were heard arguing and indicated domestic violence committed by AH against JD. Therefore, CV inquired about the veracity of what AH said in the recording.

CV: "You said you hit Mr. Depp."
AH: "Yes. I had to hit his body to get through the door."
CV: "Ms. Heard, my question was 'You said on that recording that you hit Mr. Depp,' right?"
AH: "Yes, I did."
CV: "And you accused him of being a baby for not wanting to be in a physical fight with you, right?"
AH: "Incorrect. I accused him of being a baby for complaining about me hitting him when I was trying to get through the door I was trying to barricade." (*Depp Dive - Transcripts of US Trial Days*, n.d.)

(Transcript of Jury, Trial - Day 18, page 67)

In this conversation, CV asked about the truth that AH had hit JD as heard in the recording and then she answered that she was right to say that. The testimony expressed by AH about the truth of the voice recording is locution. "Hit" lexically semantic means "to move your hand or an object onto the surface of something so that it touches it, usually with force" which means AH admitted that she had actually committed violence against JD. She also explained the reasons why she accused JD of being a baby, which was because JD complained when she hit him to try to get through the door. In this speech, AH states representative illocutionary speech act because she describes the intention of why she hit JD and also tries to explain about what happened at that time.

It also shows that she did not want to appear that she was guilty of hitting JD, therefore she revealed to the online media that she was the victim of domestic violence but then the evidence showed the opposite, that it was actually JD who was the victim of domestic violence. In this case, the perlocution that appears is that JD's side has proven that JD did not commit any domestic violence against AH. She was found guilty of defamation by the jury for defaming her husband which claiming that she was a victim of domestic violence committed by JD, while the fact showed the opposite. She was also found to have insulted JD by accusing him of being "a baby" for complaining when she hit him.

The analysis revealed that AH's statements, as published in the Washington Post and presented during the trial, contained elements that were false and defamatory. By

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employing forensic linguistic techniques such as lexical semantics and pragmatics, three statements were identified that demonstrated clear malice and resulted in damage to JD's reputation. This finding is consistent with previous research on defamation in various contexts. For instance, Nasution (2020) examined defamatory language in social media uploads and found that negative denotation and expressive illocutionary acts can significantly harm an individual's reputation. Similarly, Halid (2022) explored online defamation and highlighted the role of intentional malicious speech in exacerbating public harm. These studies underscore the importance of understanding the linguistic mechanisms behind defamation, as also demonstrated in the current research.

Moreover, the correlation of AH's statements with Virginia Law articles, which the jury used to determine the act of defamation, aligns with Antara's (2023) findings. Antara's study emphasized the need for a robust legal framework to interpret and act upon defamatory statements effectively. The current research supports this view by showing how legal provisions were instrumental in the jury's decision-making process. However, while Susanthi (2021) investigated defamation in YouTube videos using similar forensic linguistic approaches, the amplification of defamatory content through digital media and its implications were more pronounced. This suggests that future research should consider the broader impact of digital and social media networks, as their role in spreading defamatory content was not extensively covered in the present study.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis specific statements made by AH were constructed in a manner that indicated falsehoods and defamation, demonstrating clear malice and resulting in significant harm to JD's reputation. The primary illocutionary force in this case is assertive, with AH stating facts about their experiences and the broader societal implications. There are also expressive and directive illocutionary where AH shares personal emotions and motivate listeners to take action, advocating for cultural and societal changes to support those who speak against sexual violence. This analysis not only identified the defamatory nature of the statements but also linked them to legal standards under Virginia law, giving a comprehensive framework for understanding the strategic use of language in defamation cases.

In her utterances it was found that she gave testimony with evidence that was not strong and doubtful to be declared as true, because AH could not provide strong evidence so that her explanation seemed to make no sense and did not match the existing facts. This is also reinforced by the articles in Virginia which state that she has committed acts of defamation against her husband. The relevant statues are Abusive and Insulting Language in Virginia Code § 18.2-416 (1975), Abusive and Insulting Language in Virginia Code § 18. 2-417 (2020), Defamation in Virginia Code § 8.01-46 (1977), and Defamation in Virginia Code § 8.01-45 (1977).

The findings of this study have profound implications, demonstrating that defamatory statements can have a profound and lasting impact on an individual's reputation and public perception. This underscores the importance of a strict legal framework in protecting individuals from defamation and highlights the important role of forensic linguistic analysis in a legal context. By providing a detailed examination of the language used in defamation cases, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how defamatory speech can be identified and addressed, ultimately supporting a more effective judicial process and protecting personal reputations.

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