

Remembering Dr Janet Cotterill (1968–2022)

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It is with great sadness, but many memories, that we write to commemorate the life and work of our colleague Dr Janet Cotterill. Her vigour and drive were illustrated by her significant achievements in her inspirational career, since Janet was instrumental in helping to shape the development of forensic linguistics as we know it. Through her writing and scholarly activities, she helped to define the foci of those who followed and, through her inspiring teaching and planning, she co-founded the first master's level programme in forensic linguistics in the world at Cardiff University. Finally, through her compelling personality, she enthused many students and colleagues to develop their own work and lives in and around the field of language and law.

Janet's academic career in forensic linguistics, whilst sadly cut short, was nonetheless dynamic. Having completed a BSc (hons) in modern languages (1991) at Aston University and then an MA in applied linguistics at Liverpool University (1993), she worked in translation and interpreting in France and Egypt and as an EFL teacher in Tokyo, Japan. She began reading for a PhD under Professor Malcolm Coulthard's supervision at the University of Birmingham in 1998. Even before starting the PhD, Janet had secured a full-time lecturing post at Anglia Polytechnic University (APU, now Anglia-Ruskin University). During her doctoral studies, she would drive the two to three hours to Birmingham from Cambridge on Fridays for supervision sessions and to attend the regular forensic linguistics research group that Malcolm had set up. It was at those sessions that Frances and Chris both met her. The sessions were also attended by Tim Grant (another of Malcolm's PhD students), Krzysztof Kredens and Sonia Russell (visiting the University), Jess Shapero and Alison Johnson (now May) (doctoral contemporaries) and Sue Blackwell (then a member of staff at Birmingham) among others. Often Malcolm would bring a 'live' spoken or written forensic text to analyse and we were always struck by the speed and acuity of Janet's forensic observations.

Unlike most PhD students in the UK, Janet flew through her degree, despite simultaneously holding down the full-time lectureship and undertaking extensive exam board marking in Cambridge. She also assumed a lot of 'voluntary' work. For example, with Chris and Frances, she initiated and organised a PhD conference each summer at Birmingham and served as an integral part of Malcolm's organisation team when he hosted the 4th

Conference of the (then) International Association of Forensic Linguists at the University of Birmingham in 1999. She also contributed to the organisation of the Conference of the International Association of Dialogue Analysis in the same year at Birmingham and ran the British Association of Applied Linguistics' 33rd Annual Conference in 2000 at APU. She co-edited substantial collections arising from the latter two events (Coulthard *et al.*, 2000; Cotterill and Ife, 2001). Janet passed her PhD with flying colours in 2002 and published her thesis on the language of the OJ Simpson criminal trial as her influential *Language and Power in Court: A Linguistic Analysis of the O.J. Simpson Trial* (Cotterill, 2003) in the following year.

By 1999, Janet had secured a post as Lecturer at Cardiff University, and she would rise quickly through the ranks to Senior Lecturer in 2004, then Reader only two years later. In 2002, she had already established the world's first MA in Forensic Linguistics (now in its 20th year) which she taught with Michelle Aldridge who joined Cardiff in 2003. Early students on the course who were inspired by Janet include Nicci MacLeod (now at Aston), Samuel Larner (now at Manchester Metropolitan University), and Mark Griffiths (now at Cardiff University). Several of Janet's ex-MA and PhD students have since gone on to work directly in the legal system, including Marisa Jenkins and Silke Boak (nee Kirschner). Mark recalls Janet's 'insight, vision, creativity and determination' which converted her first MA students into her early doctoral supervisees. These qualities were, Mark recalls, 'a huge influence on the academic, professional and social direction of my life and many others, not least in injecting some self-belief into us and opening a fascinating field of study and work'.

With Malcolm Coulthard, Janet administered and taught on Summer Schools in forensic linguistics at the University of Birmingham (from 2000). In 2004, she organised a conference on Forensic Linguistics/Language and Law at the beautiful Gregynog Hall in mid-Wales and following the success of that 'dry run', she successfully bid for and organised the impressive 7th IAFL Conference at Cardiff University in 2005. She also managed to convince her School to take on another forensic linguist. Both Chris and Frances applied for the post and, such was the enthusiasm that Janet had created around forensic linguistics, that the school was persuaded to take on both of us.

Unfortunately, almost immediately after this expansion, in late 2005, Janet was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The vigour and drive mentioned at the beginning of this piece were illustrated yet again by her response, her consultant noting that he 'had never had a more determined patient'. Whilst Janet remained supportive of forensic linguistics at Cardiff, her presence on campus gradually grew more infrequent as her condition worsened. However, she remained active within the forensic linguistics community for some years more, attending conferences, in Sfax, Tunisia, for example, giving a presentation to colleagues in Cardiff in November 2014 and only formally retiring from Cardiff in November 2017.

Janet was a major influence on the International Association of Forensic Linguists (now IAFL) and was President of the Association in 2007–9. During her tenure she strove to broaden the reach of the Association by increasing involvement from colleagues in mainland Europe. She also guest edited issue 7(1) of the *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law* in 2000 and was an editor of the publication from 2002 to 2006, a crucial time in the journal's history. She was also a member of the editorial board of the *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law*. In 2004, she guest-edited volume

25, issue 4, of *Applied Linguistics*, presenting a collection of papers on forensic linguistics to a wider audience. Janet's editing work extended to books too. In 2002, she edited the discipline-shaping collection *Language in the Legal Process*, whilst 2007 saw the publication of a further timely and influential collection, *The Language of Sexual Crime*. She was on the Editorial Board of the Oxford University Press monograph series *Oxford Studies in Language and Law*.

Janet undertook case work alone and with colleagues at a time when linguistics was still very much finding its way into legal proceedings. This work was broad in its coverage and pioneering in its focus, taking in topics as diverse as terrorism, risk assessment and authorship analysis.

Janet was extremely productive in terms of publications, and she distinguished herself particularly in the areas of trial language (e.g. Cotterill, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007b), rights communication (Cotterill, 2000), language and sexual violence (Cotterill, 2007a) and media representations of crime (Cotterill, 2011). She published several of her PhD chapters while still a university student (e.g. Cotterill, 1998). She was a pioneer in research on trial communication, combining close forensic analysis with a critical approach to discourse analysis. She also drew on, and contributed to, scholarship in corpus linguistics, systemic functional linguistics and language and gender. Her research focused on a wide range of discursive phenomena including metaphor, intertextuality, semantic prosody, collocation, vagueness, representation, resistance, power and persuasion. Even after she had become unwell, she continued to write and her work earned her an entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Applied Linguistics*, written by Perkins (2012). It is telling that her work continues to be widely cited today.

Those who remember Janet personally will likely think of her intense and sometimes complicated presence, charisma, ambition and compelling enthusiasm. Chris recalls her drafting conference papers, articles and chapters with astonishing speed, sometimes in a single sitting, whilst Frances remembers being amazed that she reported doing this in front of her favourite soap opera! She built networks and made powerful connections and her quick mind and sense of humour were memorable. Those who have recalled Janet remarked 'I looked up to Janet and her fierce intellect and sharp mind' and 'she had many very wonderful qualities'. She enjoyed both 'gadding about', as co-editor of the *IJSL*, Peter French, fondly reminisced, and getting things done. She is also remembered for revelling in her multilingualism: she spoke French and her CV also records German, Spanish, and Japanese as at her disposal. Her abilities in darts and knock-about tennis have been fondly recalled. Her great love, however, was her scholarly activities. Writing in 2012, she told colleagues that the thought of resuming her work with them was 'sustaining', concluding, characteristically: 'I will do everything I possibly can to be back with you all'. This promise lives on in her publications and legacy.

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