

## Towards a socio- linguistic theory of crime

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The objective of this study was to explore the socio- linguistic aspect of criminal behavior and to explain the relationship between language and crime. This is an area which has not been properly addressed by sociologists cum criminologists. A sample of 100 criminal cases, where verbal abuse was the central problem of interpersonal conflict, was selected for the present study. The Sinhalese language has a special variety of obscene language called Asabbya Bhasha which is exclusively used for scolding others and expressing anger in interpersonal conflicts. Verbal abuse is a common complain made to police stations and was found in this study as a major motivation and provocation factor behind serious crimes against body and property. This particular variety of language produces a particular cultural pattern of verbal abuse followed by provocation and perpetration of serious crime. Accordingly this paper argues that existence of such an obscene language with a functional importance for social interaction and socialization of people to make use of it in socially prescribed situations inevitably produces verbal abuse based crimes.

**Key words:** Socio - linguistics, Criminal behaviour, Crime, Obscene language, Verbal abuse