

*Le parole, il diritto e il processo*

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ABSTRACT

This article traces back the etymological and social roots of legal terminology and demonstrates the links between them: for example, *giudice* (judge) comes from *ius dicere*; *verdetto* (verdict) from *verum dictum*; *avvocato* (advocate) from *advocare*. It also elaborates on key concepts and words such as ‘rite’, ‘iter’, ‘pardon’ (for juvenile offenders), ‘to serve time’. The strong links between words and the speech-acts which include them are especially highlighted in criminal trials: the achievement of the latter’s twofold main objectives – to publicly establish the truth about a criminal offence and to provide the indietee with legal guarantees – is made possible by the dialogic style of cross-examinations, governed by legal and grammar-specific rules. The binding force words have in criminal law is acknowledged, for example, in the use of formulae such as ‘in open court’, ‘in the name of the law’, or in the performative value of ‘the judge pronounces sentence’. A judge does indeed ‘do things with words’.