

## **BOOK REVIEW:**

**Language, Text, and Knowledge:  
Mental Models of Expert Communication**  
Edited by Lita Lundquist & Robert J. Jarvella  
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**Reviewed by:**

Vijay K. Bhatia  
Department of English and Communication  
City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

*Language, Text, and Knowledge* is an interesting attempt to put together a number of insightful studies of mental models of interaction between language and knowledge to construct specialist communication often associated with a number of professional contexts. Although in a number of ways this edited volume may seem to be a typical European response to one of the most important issues in discourse studies, what constitutes specialist expertise as against lay knowledge, and how this expertise is reflected in the interpretation of technical communication; in fact, it is more than one would expect from a typical continuation of text-linguistic tradition in discourse analysis. This edited collection of 12 papers represents some of the interesting investigations of the development of socio-cognitive frameworks for the study of communicative behaviour in typical LSP sites. Underlying the three concepts of Language, Text, and Knowledge is the notion of structure, which is further shown as grounded in LSP contexts, which makes some of these studies truly insightful. By organising papers in an order which gives a sense of historical, and at the same time, analytical development of the field as the volume progresses from word meanings to discourse semantics and to disciplinary and cultural variations in discourse interpretation, the editors have added an interesting dimension to the collection. The book is a good attempt to extend research on the use of mental models to understand specialist texts often associated with professional contexts. The textual range focused on in this excellent

collection of papers may not be wide, but the book gives a good indication of the validity and usefulness of the investigative procedures to understand professional communication in wider contexts. The book contains an interesting range of theoretical approaches to the study of language use, some which include text-linguistics, translation theory, LSP, and psycholinguistic models of discourse comprehension. Missing however in much of this is some of the recent work on critical discourse and genre studies, which in my opinion, has contributed very significantly to our understanding of specialist discourse in disciplinary cultures. Probably this omission can be explained by somewhat heavy and obviously intended emphasis on cognitive models of knowledge construction and use in specific disciplinary contexts.

The papers focus on a range of different levels of linguistic and textual knowledge, from lexicogrammar and textual knowledge, on the one hand, to structures of knowledge, on the other, using a variety of textual frameworks. Pierre-Yves Raccach, in the opening paper to the collection, makes use of the lexico-semantic notion of *topoi* to discuss some of the interesting aspects of differences between ordinary and specialist meanings of words. In the next paper Jan Engberg explores the relationship between ordinary words and their legal meanings. In this excellent paper, rich in the analyses of textual data, Engberg demonstrates how the German word *Beweis* (meaning ‘proof’) derives its special extended interpretation partly from its use in legal genre of judgement, and partly from the setting it is embedded in. To explain such an extension of semantic configuration, Engberg uses representation of memory structures in the form of (static) frames, and representation of (dynamic) discourse structures in the form of mental spaces. As a continuation of research on the use of lexico-grammatical features in professional texts, Henrik Hoeg Muller identifies interesting distinctions between relational and non-relational nominals on the basis of individual conceptualisations of the world one is familiar with or operates in. At a somewhat similar level, Lita Lundquist studies the use of NP anaphors demonstrating how experts and non-experts use different kinds of knowledge to make sense of such structures, which she explains in terms of underlying cognitive structures at a number of levels, including specialist lexico-grammar, textual structures and background knowledge. In this context, Ase Almlund’s very detailed study of semantic roles in expert communication is very interesting. Based on her quite comprehensive analysis of Danish TV judgements, she interestingly enriches her analysis of patient roles by bringing in the use of completive and interrogative clauses, on the one hand, and the knowledge of legal genre, on the other.

With Anne Lise Kjaer’s paper on “The structure of legal knowledge: The importance of knowing legal rules for understanding legal texts”, this book

moves into higher realms of macro-structures in specialist communication. Using a cognitive model of legal reasoning, she makes a good attempt to connect the social reality of law to the real world of facts. Based on her detailed analysis of legal rules, she rightly concludes that knowledge of rules plays an important role in the comprehension and interpretation of a variety of legal genres. Extending Kjaer's concern for the use of legal knowledge in the comprehension of legal judgements, Dorte Madsen attempts to map out the complexities of legal text structures in Danish Judgements in terms of *schema* and *scenario*, integrating static aspects of legal structures with dynamic aspects of legal situations. These two papers together offer interesting insights to the way some of the interesting processes of construction and interpretation are used in every day legal practices.

For those who believe that cross-cultural elements have a relatively minor role in expert communication, Annely Rothkegel approaches this issue from the point of view of translation. Taking data from the dissemination of information on pharmaceutical products to German and American consumers, this paper brings into focus aspects of universal and more localised text structures in healthcare products. The next paper by Lene Palsbro is a very interesting study of inference-making by expert and novice readers, especially focusing on their reasoning. The paper confirms some of the conclusions in earlier papers, especially those making a strong link between mental models of knowledge representations and textual inferences differently drawn by expert and non-expert readers.

In the area of disciplinary knowledge representation, the study by Leo Noordman, Wietske Vonk and Wim Simons adds another dimension to the book's collection. Based on a number of experiments, these authors investigate the structure of disciplinary knowledge in expert economists and relatively non-experts in the discipline. Contributing to this aspect of the book, Robert Jarvella and Suzie Mathieu report experimental results from their study of interaction between general linguistic knowledge and textual knowledge to make sense of specialised texts. These two sets of experimental studies add a necessary and useful dimension to a volume which otherwise is largely based on linguistic and textual analyses of expert texts and their intended and lay readers.

In the final contribution on "Risk portrayal and risk appreciation as a problem in language use", Anthony Sanford and Linda Moxey add another interesting and useful dimension to the construction and comprehension of specialist discourse particularly by lay readers. The use and interpretation of numbers, expressions of probability, certainty, and frequency all have very interesting

implications for those interested in information design in a variety of public domains.

If this is what the whole collection is about, what will be of value in it for those interested in professional communication? It has a large variety of studies focusing on areas of lexico-grammar, textual organisation, cognitive structures, discourse processing, comprehension of specialist communication by expert and lay readers, a range of knowledge domains, and many more. It will be of immense interest to those interested in various forms of legal discourse, where a number of studies in the volume get their data from, especially legal judgements. Other disciplinary concerns, especially economics, and healthcare have interesting contributions to make. Although there is a heavy emphasis of lexico-grammar of specialist communication, discourse organisation and cognitive structures have not been ignored. Knowledge structures form a central theme in the book, but experimental studies do have their due place in it. There seems to something for every one here. But one must not get the impression that it goes in every conceivable direction lacking focus. Far from it, the volume has a strong sense of unity, in that it attempts to relate models of mental representations in the study of specialist communication. However, this unity comes with a cost. Investigation of communication, as we know, is a multifaceted, multidimensional and multidisciplinary activity, and any effort to focus narrowly must necessarily be at the expense of a wider vision.

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