

Book Reviews



Specialized Communication: An International Handbook (Volume 1)

Thorsten Roelcke, Ruth Breeze & Jan Engberg (Eds.)
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The ways in which language, cognition, and society interact in the communication of specialized knowledge are the guiding thread underlining *Specialized Communication: An International Handbook (Volume 1)*, edited by Thorsten Roelcke, Ruth Breeze and Jan Engberg. This first volume establishes the theoretical, functional, and methodological foundations for the study of specialized communication, addressing how disciplinary knowledge is created, transmitted, and transformed across professional, academic, and institutional contexts. The handbook, which features contributions from more than 60 researchers, introduces specialised communication in the fields of applied linguistics, communication studies, and sociology of knowledge.

The volume is organized in four main parts, each addressing a key dimension of the field. Part I introduces relevant general aspects of specialized communication, focusing on key concepts, definitions, classifications and typologies in the first chapters, to then turn to theory-based topics such as specialized communication and cognition or interdisciplinarity. Part II turns to functional aspects of specialized communication, focusing on how verbal and non-verbal textual elements help achieve specific communicative aims. Part III explores the methodological foundations and analytical procedures for investigating specialized communication in practice across genres and disciplines. Lastly, Part IV shifts the focus to the media through which specialized communication is realized and transformed, showing that each type of media makes use of specific linguistic and non-linguistic resources.

This volume integrates a range of theoretical frameworks that underpin its analyses. *The Meta-Model of Specialised Communication* emphasizes that specialized communication is far more than language in domain, but a nexus

between knowledge, professional practises, social relations and semiotic resources. Chapter 1 illustrates how specialized genres, expert-beginner interaction and institutional constraints fit into the model. The handbook also presents two inter-related models: *The Typological Model of LSP* and *The Instrumental Model of LSP*. The former classifies LSP according to various criteria (domain, medium, etc.), allowing us to position LSP instances in different typologies, while the latter views LSP as a tool for specialized knowledge communication. For example, Chapter 2 shows how a technical manual or a legal contract can be seen as a practical tool, where language serves a specific professional purpose. *Cognitive Models* serve to analyse how domain knowledge, expert reasoning, lexical choice or discourse structure are tied to cognitive processes such as memory or schematic patterns. Chapter 4 provides examples of how experts like engineers or scientists use language to express specialized knowledge. *Interdisciplinary Models* examine how multiple disciplines, their different knowledge systems, terminologies and communicative customs intersect and interact. *Sociolinguistic Models* emphasise the social, cultural and linguistic dimensions of specialized discourse, like the way multilingual research teams negotiate terminologies (Chapter 6) or the impact of lingua franca on specialized communication norms (Chapter 8). Lastly, *Multimodal and Semiotic Models* present specialized communication as integrative semiotic events that combine more than just verbal text but also images, diagrams, gestures, etc. In Chapter 12, examples of how domain-specific communications rely on semiotic design or multimodal meaning-making are provided, highlighting that meaning is created through combinations of different modes.

These theoretical frameworks translate into concrete applications across domains of specialized communication, including professional communication, translation studies and education for specific purposes (ESP/CLIL), amongst others. The typological models can serve as a guide for practitioners to shape texts and multimodal materials to audiences with different degrees of expertise; and translators can apply these approaches to improve clarity, coherence and accessibility. Insights regarding cognitive accessibility (Chapter 4) can be helpful in educational and professional training contexts, where understanding cognitive constraints is key for producing comprehensible materials. Also, the methodological section provides researchers and educators with useful tools to integrate corpus, multimodal and ethnographic analyses in applied research and teaching (Chapter 18). The sociolinguistic chapters provide strategies for effective

lingua franca communication and translation of specialized knowledge in globalized workplaces as well as academic settings, fostering multimodal and intercultural communication (Chapter 8). Lastly, the multimodal approach is especially relevant for fields where knowledge is conveyed through different types of media (i.e., interactive, visual and auditory).

The methodological chapters aim to serve as a bridge between theory and application, presenting the principal tools and research traditions that underpin the study of specialized communication. These chapters cover analytical frameworks that go from critical genre analysis and terminology studies to ethnography, conversation analysis, and mixed methods (Chapters 18-27). By integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, these chapters provide scholars and practitioners with strategies to observe, describe, and interpret specialized discourse across academic, professional, and multilingual contexts. They also address pedagogical methodologies such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Chapters 21-22), highlighting the applications of specialized communication research in educational contexts and workplace training. This methodological core emphasizes the field's interdisciplinarity as well as its commitment to study language and communication carefully, paying close attention to the specific social and professional contexts in which they occur.

Several chapters explore social applications, examining specialized communication as a deeply social phenomenon that is rooted in multilingual, intercultural, and mediated contexts where power, identity, and participation are negotiated. They show how professional and domain-specific discourse operates not just as a channel for knowledge but as a social practice that shapes belonging, authority, and legitimacy. Topics such as multilingual and lingua franca communication (Chapters 6-8) reveal how linguistic diversity influences access to specialized knowledge and global collaboration. Meanwhile, chapters 14 to 16 discuss gender, authorship and power, foregrounding issues of representation and voice within expert communities. Chapters on journalism, social media and the press (30-33) portray the way specialized discourse flows around public contexts, reshaping communication and power dynamics between those who produce specialized knowledge (i.e. experts, scientists) and those affected by that knowledge (i.e. citizens, clients). Together, these studies highlight how specialized communication both reflects and reproduces the social structures in which it is embedded.

Chapters dealing with cognitive applications focus on the mental and conceptual dimensions of specialized discourse, exploring how experts and learners construct, process, and represent specialized knowledge. They examine how cognitive models support the creation of specialized texts (Chapter 4), how credibility and coherence are mentally organized (Chapters 11, 13), and how multimodal and figurative strategies shape understanding using multimodal discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) (Chapters 10, 12). Several chapters (2, 34, 35) also address how typologies, language construction, and logical systems structure knowledge representation across different domains. Methodological contributions such as corpus linguistics, critical genre analysis, and conversation analysis (Chapters 18-20, 23-24, 27) further extend this perspective by providing cognitive and linguistic frameworks, such as Critical Genre Analysis (Bhatia, 2017), for analysing meaning-making in context. Together, these chapters show that specialized communication is more than just the use of language, it is a cognitive process that structures knowledge, handles complex information, and helps make expert insights understandable.

The remaining chapters explore ethical and normative applications, highlighting the values, responsibilities, and power relations that govern specialized communication. They question the ethical dimensions of authorship, openness, and epistemic justice, inquiring about who produces knowledge, under what conditions and for whose benefit. Contributions on epistemic and open science (Chapter 17) and on open access publishing (Chapter 36) advocate for equal dissemination of knowledge and criticise academic structures that exclude or disadvantage certain groups. Chapters 5, 14 and 16 discuss interdisciplinarity, gender, and power, framing communication as a space where norms of collaboration, justice, and representation are negotiated. Even theory-focused chapters (1, 9) reveal the underlying values and assumptions built into ideas of efficiency and ways of understanding. This strand of the handbook thus invites readers to view specialized communication as an ethical enterprise shaped by values of transparency, inclusion, and justice.

Interdisciplinarity, a defining feature of the handbook, reflects the realities of multilingual professional contexts where individuals integrate domain expertise, linguistic competence, and technological literacy to communicate effectively. Methodological chapters that combine computational linguistics (Chapter 20), ethnography (Chapter 23) and applied linguistics (Chapter 22), serve to illustrate the field's hybrid nature. Interdisciplinarity is present in

other chapters which explicitly theorise inter- and transdisciplinarity, showing how communication enables collaboration between different domains (Chapter 5), highlighting the usefulness of integrating linguistics, semiotics, cognitive psychology and media studies for the analysis of multimodal artefacts (Chapter 12), and combining perspectives from different disciplines (science, ethics) to explore how making science more open can promote fairness and equality in the creation and sharing of knowledge (Chapter 17).

This handbook successfully maps the theoretical and methodological landscape of specialized communication with remarkable depth and breadth, with an organization that ensures a rational progression from conceptual foundations to empirical applications and research methods. The link between linguistics, cognition and society makes this volume indispensable for researchers, educators and practitioners. Chapters on multimodality, multilingualism, and ethics are particularly valuable as they address the urgent challenges of globalized and digitalized knowledge communication. While the broad scope of the volume might be demanding for beginners to the field, its comprehensive coverage establishes a solid foundation for future volumes focusing on domain-specific applications. This handbook marks an important step in the study of specialized communication, highlighting how the field is both interdisciplinary and responsive to social needs.

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