

## Book Review

### **The Language of Bribery Cases**

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*The Language of Bribery Cases*

Roger W. Shuy (2014)

New York: Oxford University Press

This review focuses on Prof. Roger W. Shuy's book *The Language of Bribery Cases*. Prof. Shuy is an Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at Georgetown University. He is the editor of the series *Oxford Studies in Language and Law*, and he has penned ten previous books on forensic linguistics. As with his previous books, he "wrote *The Language of Bribery Cases* with three audiences in mind – linguists, lawyers and law enforcement officers" (page 9). With a need to cater to such a disparate audience, a fair amount of background information about the linguistics involved, and the legal framework for bribery has been given. The book is written in a style accessible to a non-specialist, and all technical terms are explained.

The book has 15 chapters and is divided into three distinct parts. The first three chapters are devoted to presenting the background information pertaining to the linguistic and legal aspects of bribery needed to fully understand the case descriptions. The book begins by highlighting the importance of the overall context rather than focussing on the immediate context of the utterance, and from there introduces the framework that is used to analyse the language of bribery events. It then moves on to describe the history of bribery followed by an analysis of the legal aspects surrounding bribery events. I found this section of the book to be particularly important, as it lays out the parameters of what does, and what does not constitute a bribe especially when dealing with political lobbying. This section also deals with the somewhat controversial topic of entrapment by law enforcement, as this has linguistic ramifications, and there are difficulties involved in gathering the linguistic evidence needed for prosecution. The third part expands on the framework introduced in Chapter 1. The bribery event is broken

down into its constituent parts of speech events, schemas, agendas, speech acts, conversational strategies, and sentences where each component part is discussed in linguistic terms to show how a bribery event can be identified.

Chapters 4 to 13 describe ten bribery related court cases where Prof. Shuy's linguistic analyses were entered as evidence. The book covers ten cases from the early FBI initiated Abscam cases of the 1980s to the McDonald and McGregor case of 2011/12. Each chapter tends to follow the same pattern starting with the speech event, and then looking at the schemas and agendas of the participants, and how they can be identified through the choice of language used. Usually, there are 'smoking gun' expressions which warrant further scrutiny. A particular strength of this section, apart from the time frame, is that a number of different types of bribery cases are discussed. The book looks at straightforward cases, camouflaged bribery cases, aborted bribery cases, and even an example of entrapment by an IRS agent. In addition, the people involved came from a variety of different backgrounds and professions covering both politics and business. I found it particularly interesting to see how a standard business transaction can morph into a bribery event, and even more worryingly, how a business transaction can appear to be a bribery event if the investigators are not aware of the linguistic nuances.

Chapter 14 provides a summing up of the role of linguistic analysis in the bribery cases that were discussed. Prof. Shuy emphasises the need for linguistic experts in bribery cases, as prosecutors and defence attorneys are often unaware of the synergistic nature of language and may be too focussed on single 'smoking gun' expressions rather than the whole speech event. Chapter 15 examines the legal context of bribery language. In order for a bribe event to be proven, there has to be felicitous speech, i.e. offering, soliciting or accepting the bribe. This chapter examines the cases against that criterion, and looks at whether there is an intention or predisposition to commit bribery. Finally, the chapter deals with the importance of training agents in correct undercover language techniques so as to avoid them utilising unfair practices that may result in injury to an innocent party.

The true value of this book lies in its use of real world examples from actual cases which highlight the similarities and differences of each bribery event. However, if I were to have any criticisms of this book, it is that it focusses solely on the United States. I would have liked to have read about cases from other English speaking countries, and even cases involving second language users of English, especially if they come from different cultures with different attitudes to bribery. This book should be essential reading for all lawyers and law enforcement agents working in the field of bribery and corruption.