

## Review: Zanola, Annalisa (2023). *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale*. Carocci

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### ABSTRACT

**EN** The text is a review of *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale* by Annalisa Zanola, published in 2023 by Carocci. The book introduces ESPP (English for Scientific and Professional Purposes) as a new research area in English language and linguistics, which aims at exploring the efficiency and effectiveness of native and non-native speakers of English in professional contexts. It is divided into four chapters, each exploring one dimension of ESPP: from an overview of English for scientific popularization and professional communication (chapter 1) to an exposition of the main characteristics of written and oral ESPP (chapters 2 and 3), to an analysis of its possible applications in medicine, economics, law, and engineering (chapter 4). In this volume, professionals, together with their language instructors, will find useful materials to understand, and to master, the main characteristics of English for their own scientific and professional purposes, while scholars in applied linguistics will find interesting insights into theories and practices regarding English for scientific and professional communication.

**Key words:** ENGLISH FOR SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES (ESPP), ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING, ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING, ACADEMIC WRITING

**ES** El texto es una reseña de *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale* de Annalisa Zanola, publicado en 2023 por Carocci. El libro presenta el ESPP (English for Scientific and Professional Purposes) como una nueva área de investigación, cuyo objetivo es explorar la eficiencia y eficacia de los hablantes nativos y no nativos de inglés en contextos profesionales. Se divide en cuatro capítulos, cada uno de los cuales explora una dimensión del ESPP: desde una visión general del inglés para la divulgación científica y la comunicación profesional (capítulo 1) hasta una exposición de las principales características del ESPP escrito y oral (capítulos 2 y 3), pasando por un análisis de sus posibles aplicaciones en medicina, economía, derecho e ingeniería (capítulo 4). En este volumen, los y las profesionales, así como sus docentes, encontrarán materiales útiles para comprender y dominar las principales características del inglés para sus propios fines científicos y profesionales, mientras que los estudiosos de la lingüística aplicada hallarán interesantes perspectivas sobre teorías y prácticas relativas al ESPP.

**Palabras clave:** INGLÉS PARA FINES CIENTÍFICOS Y PROFESIONALES, ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS, APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS, ESCRITURA ACADÉMICA

**IT** Nel testo viene recensito il volume *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale*, scritto da Annalisa Zanola e pubblicato nel 2023 da Carocci. Il volume introduce una nuova area di ricerca nell'ambito della lingua e linguistica inglese, l'ESPP (English for Scientific and Professional Purposes), tesa all'esplorazione dell'efficacia e dell'efficienza con cui i parlanti (nativi e non nativi) si esprimono in lingua inglese all'interno di contesti professionali. Il volume è diviso in quattro capitoli, ciascuno dei quali esplora una dimensione dell'ESPP: partendo da una panoramica dell'inglese per la popolarizzazione scientifica e la comunicazione professionale (capitolo 1) si passa all'esposizione delle caratteristiche principali dell'ESPP scritto e orale (capitoli 2 e 3), per arrivare all'analisi delle sue possibili applicazioni nell'ambito medico, economico, giuridico, e dell'ingegneria (capitolo 4). All'interno di questo volume, professionisti e insegnanti troveranno dei materiali utili per comprendere, e per padroneggiare, le caratteristiche principali dell'inglese per i propri scopi scientifici e professionali; studiosi di linguistica applicata vi troveranno invece spunti interessanti sulle teorie e pratiche dell'inglese per la comunicazione scientifica professionale.

**Parole chiave:** INGLESE PER LA COMUNICAZIONE SCIENTIFICA E PROFESSIONALE, INSEGNAMENTO DELLA LINGUA INGLESE, APPRENDIMENTO DELLA LINGUA INGLESE, SCRITTURA ACCADEMICA

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EAP (English for Academic Purposes), EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes), ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes), ESP (English for Special Purposes), ELF (English as a Lingua Franca) are only some of the numerous acronyms that are well known to scholars of applied linguistics, especially in the case of those focusing on second/foreign language teaching and learning. Yet, professor Annalisa Zanola's latest volume, *La lingua inglese per la comunicazione scientifica e professionale*, edited by Carocci, convincingly argues for the need to adopt ESPP (English for Scientific and Professional Purposes), both in the classroom and as a topic for academic enquiry.

The theorization of ESPP stems from the necessity to help adult learners of English to become linguistically, as well as pragmatically, competent, so as to avoid inadequate or inappropriate language use, especially in light of the increasingly international, multilingual, and multicultural nature of work and professional environments. Indeed, the needs expressed by adult learners of English – be they academics or professionals, in the natural sciences or the humanities – are totally different from those expressed by younger students. In fact, adult learners expressing themselves in English at work may participate in conversations at advanced levels, discuss topics that require sophisticated skills, and be expected to share their knowledge with colleagues, clients and customers, as well as other experts in the field. Therefore, the greatest challenges for these learners lie in the quality of communication, in understanding the communicative context, and in choosing an appropriate register. Furthermore, when trying to make appropriate lexico-grammatical choices, they must also take stock of the communicative purpose, audience type, and communicative context. Often, learners are (painfully) aware that their linguistic abilities can have very real consequences on their professional performance and even their future career options.

Starting from this premise, the author defines ESPP as a new research area in English language and linguistics, which aims at exploring the efficiency and effectiveness of native and non-native speakers of English in professional contexts. She suggests developing this research area both inside and outside academia as a corrective to the European tradition of ESP, in order to reinforce the idea that this long-standing tradition of teaching and researching ESP could be updated and strengthened, so as to facilitate learners' personal as well as professional growth. The demands from professionals in various fields are quite significant, as is the number of academic studies on the subject; however, the specific research questions on written and oral communication required by the world of work in second-language and foreign-language contexts still seem to lack adequate and satisfactory answers.

The four chapters of the volume attempt to provide such answers. Chapter 1 offers an overview of the concept of English for scientific popularization and professional communication. It starts by sketching its history starting from the 1960s-80s, going through the 1990s and the new millennium, to conclude with future perspectives offered by the evolution from ESP to ESPP. It proceeds by exploring the different dimensions of English for scientific and professional communication, highlighting the difference between formal and informal texts and contexts. Indeed, despite the fact that academic English is considered formal by nature, professionals who are expressing themselves in English need to be able to recognize – and adapt to – the different levels of formality required by the various situations and relationships developing in their workplace. Therefore, they need the ability to effectively discriminate between, for example, research articles, press releases, company reports, meeting agendas, minutes (for written communication), as well as between seminars, pitch presentations, job interviews, meetings with customers/clients or with co-workers. They may need to adjust their language and register choices accordingly, paying attention to their lexico-grammatical, argumentative, as well as stylistic choices. These can also be informed by intercultural components: the author specifically delves into the pragmatic concept of politeness and its realization through hedging, which aims at creating the psychological conditions that are conducive to cross-cultural communication by avoiding conflict, minimizing threatening acts and mitigating impositions. The chapter then closes with a discussion of the different genres of scientific and professional popularization, both written and oral. The tables effectively exemplifying formal and informal (academic) texts, which can be of practical use to ESPP learners, are of particular interest to the teacher of ESPP who intends to adopt the volume for classroom teaching.

Chapter 2 and chapter 3 are at the core of the volume, as they are devoted to the description and exposition of the scientific foundations of ESPP. More specifically, chapter 2 deals with written ESPP skills, providing the basics of syntax, semantics, and textual pragmatics, with the goal of examining and developing academic, as well as ESPP, writing skills. The author discusses the numerous factors influencing the production of written texts (such as the recipient, aim, textual organization, and style) and accompanies readers through the process of drafting a written ESPP document, organizing information and revising for fluency and clarity.

This section is rich in diagrams and tables comparing examples of successful vs. unsuccessful language choices; moreover, the author presents and discusses several real-life examples of scientific and popularizing academic texts from a number of disciplines (medicine, economics and finance, law, and engineering) which are valuable for instructors and learners alike. These analyses aim at underscoring the characteristics of written academic texts (such as density, abstraction, objectivity, and rigour) by highlighting the specific ways in which information is arranged and presented, the specialised vocabulary that is used throughout, and the lexicogrammatical features that characterise written academic productions, such as passives and nominalizations. Moreover, the author underscores the competencies and skills needed to first devise and then produce a written academic text, namely the ability to contextualize, to summarize, to assess and discriminate between sources, and to sustain agreement as well as dissent.

Chapter 3 focuses on oral ESPP skills, providing the basics of phonetics and phonology and delving into the question of teaching and learning pronunciation and prosody. The chapter then closes with an overview of public speaking in the academic and professional environment, outlining the intercultural, personal, and contextual factors which are likely to influence the success – or otherwise – of a performance. This chapter in particular appears to be clearly informed by the author's extensive knowledge of and experience in researching and teaching oral communication and public speaking in professional contexts.

Finally, chapter 4 illustrates some possible areas of application, once again showing the peculiar characterization of some contexts in particular, namely economics and finance, law, medicine, as well as theoretical and applied engineering. For each context, the author briefly examines the history of the applied linguistics studies that focussed on that specific context and language, helping to define its specific lexicogrammatical characteristics. She then proceeds to describe the different profiles of contemporary professionals and language experts helping learners to navigate these languages; and describes some possible audio and visual aids, together with some practical cases and descriptions of users and contexts which are supported by updated and annotated bibliographical notes. Of note here is the special attention devoted to new technologies (such as chats, videoconferences, and online shared documents) which have now steadily entered and profoundly influenced professional communication, and which should therefore be integrated into ESPP materials and curricula.

As was stated at the beginning, the text convincingly argues for the introduction of the acronym ESPP (English for Scientific and Professional Purposes) to complete and maybe substitute the more familiar, but also more generic, ESP (English for Special Purposes). Indeed, ESP does not seem to adequately respond to the increasing and increasingly specialised requirements of adult workers who have to use English as a second/foreign language in their everyday scientific and professional (academic) environment. Since the main aim of the volume is to lay the theoretical foundations of ESPP, the section devoted to the main application areas of ESPP is in its nascent stage and awaits further research. Nevertheless, professionals, together with their language instructors, will find useful materials in this volume to understand, and to master, the main characteristics of English for their own scientific and professional purposes, while scholars in applied linguistics will find interesting insights into theories and practices regarding English for scientific and professional communication.

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