

# Reseñas/Book Reviews

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## *English for Telecommunications Engineering*

**María Carbonell Olivares & Hanna Skorczynska Sznajder**, with the collaboration of Debra Westall Pixton & Ramón Chismol Ibáñez.  
Valencia: Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, 2003. 147 pages.  
ISBN: 84-9705-418-0

## *A Self-study Grammar Book for Engineers*

**Sonia Oliver del Olmo & Mónica Soler Lorente**  
Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2003. 185 pages. ISBN: 84-8301-707-5

This book review discusses two recent publications that speak to polytechnic students and their English for Specific Purposes instructors. Neither is an elaborately coiffed finished product destined for the promotional bandstand. But not for that are they any the less appealing to the market niches they address.

In *English for Telecommunications Engineering*, María Carbonell Olivares and Hanna Skorczynska Sznajder, both of the Universidad Politécnica de Valencia, have presented us with a carefully put together course book for students with an intermediate level in English.

Of particular interest to the readers of *Ibérica* is the attention the authors have given to popularised scientific discourse. This they have achieved by including a large number of authentic texts, most of which were published within the last decade. Admittedly, in the ESP field, real texts have lost their original cachet with the dawning of the Internet age. Nevertheless, a course book of this sort today needs not only to present readers with authentic texts related to the field, but also, and this more importantly, it must reflect communicative realities.

As experienced ESP instructors, the authors, with the help of two other denizens of the ESP community, Debra Westall Pixton and Ramón Chismol Ibáñez, have

provided ample examples and a full-spectrum of task activities for lexical, grammatical, functional and generic structure aspects that attend to the communicating realities that are specific to this particular specialism. Much attention is given to pair and small group work activities, in which students are asked to describe diagrams, discuss issues from different points of view, report from information provided in a table, and describe properties or functions of mechanisms, to name but a few.

The danger of students and teachers contracting sleeping sickness in a technical English course is imminent when the communicative realities are down played or ignored. The symptoms are all too familiar: While focusing exclusively on grammar the polytechnic class falls into a state of coma sleep so deep as to preclude any learning whatsoever. *English for Telecommunications Engineering* can help ward off encephalitis lethargica in the classroom; however, it is still up to the instructor to instil something of the verve that comes with discovering what lies between the covers of a well-constituted course book.

There are probably more teachers who have seen UFOs than have read a grammar book for engineering students. This, however, does not preclude the fact that a course book of this sort is a welcome addition to the second language teaching field. I daresay that in the ESP field, Business English textbooks are the indisputable doyens. Nevertheless, the field boasts an ever growing repertoire of course books alighting from polytechnic universities in particular that address the many other areas ESP interest. A recent addition to the bibliography is *A Self-study Grammar Book for Engineers*.

The authors, Sónia Oliver del Olmo and Mónica Soler Lorente, of the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, divided their textbook into three modules, the first of which consists of 31 units containing grammar exercises with accompanying answer keys. Some of the tasks consist of questions in English with possible answers in Spanish and Catalan. In the second and third modules, the authors concentrate exclusively on specific vocabulary. There are, however, no tasks here, but rather glossaries with English language engineering terms and their Spanish and Catalan equivalents, under broad headings such as "Engineering Specialities" and "Materials." The Appendices section, which is longer than the third module, includes masses of verbiage such as irregular verbs and the oft-repeated make-and-do dyad, deemed

important enough to be included in the book, but which for some reason the authors were unable to incorporate into the other sections. Nevertheless, the book, a cogent presentation of specificity, reveals no small amount of preparation and dedication on the part of the authors. Its welcome usefulness will undoubtedly be deployed in various schools of engineering in the months to come.

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