

Gretchen, Bloom, ENGLISH FOR CAREERS: THE LANGUAGE OF HOSPITAL SERVICES IN ENGLISH. (New York: Regents, 1976.)

The Language of Hospital Services in English is one book in an ambitious series titled ENGLISH FOR CAREERS. To date, this series represents the most comprehensive American attempt to meet the growing need for Specialized English around the world. The list of titles in print has reached approximately twenty four and the publisher promises many more, some covering completely new areas for the student of Specialized English.

The Language of Hospital Services in English consists of ten units, ninety-four pages of reading selections, vocabulary explanations, comprehension questions and suggested discussion topics. The reading selections are devoted to the various parts of a hospital, medical and non-medical, which are necessary for the patient's treatment, well-being, comfort and convalescence. A complete trimester or semester of study would be necessary to cover the abundance of material provided in the book.

In the Foreword, the author states the following purpose: "The book is not intended as a training manual, but rather, as a broad introduction both to the occupations and the problems involved in this kind of work". The author has accomplished this purpose admirably, giving us a wealth of interesting material in a very readable style. This type of information and presentation would be of enormous value to a high school guidance counselor in his efforts to orient students to various fields of work.

It is questionable, however, that the foreign medical student would need this type of basic information on the general set-up of hospitals. Most students of medicine have been pursuing an interest in this field many years prior to their internship and often in advance to their entrance to medical school. They can be found working in hospitals as nurses' aids, orderlies, orthopedic technicians and stretcher bearers. They have been reading autobiographies of famous doctors, following TV's contribution to this area; and reading medical articles. Hence, for many, an explanation of how a typical hospital is run would be superfluous. However, it must be pointed out that in spite of the claims made in the Foreword, the author does not describe a typical hospital. She has chosen the highly complex, multi-layered structure of a modern medical center in the United States. Herein lies both a strength and a weakness in the book.

It is quite probable that many students and doctors who are proficient in English would enjoy reading this book and would gain much from it about the complexities of a medical center. But it is equally probable that the medical student doctor trying to learn English from this book would find that he was struggling with words and phrases which only lead him

to descriptions of basic departments, functions, personnel and problems, many of which he already knew about.

Descriptions is emphasized because this approach presents a fundamental problem with this book. If the medical student or doctor is already familiar with the basic hospital set-up then what are his needs in Medical English? He may have one or several or all of these needs: to read medical texts and journals; to converse with English-speaking patients; to talk with English-speaking doctors and paramedical personnel. The reading selections in The Language of Hospital Services in English do not represent the technical type of writing found in medical textbooks or journals, nor are there any exercises other than comprehension questions which would help a student acquire skill in reading. (Though many discussion situations are given as exercises for the student, there are no dialogs in the book, either between doctors and patients or between doctors and medical and paramedical personnel. No explanations are given of the troublesome non-technical words and phrases such as "confined to."; "may give rise to"; and "may be brought about." Rather, the vocabulary explanations are dedicated to hospital departments and functions within these units and to names of the various postions.

Would the book be useful to the student of general English who has arrived at the "high intermediate or advanced level", the level of learning for which the author states the book is appropriate? This is also questionable. It is difficult to imagine the type of student who would feel he was gaining useful vocabulary when it is dedicated to hospitalese such as "prepping the patient", "administering I.V. s", and the fine differences between "malpractice and negligence", LPN's, RN's, and Candy Strippers.

This book, like so many in Specialized English, has been compiled for students of all cultures with no regard for the particular problems individual language groups encounter in learning English. Many of the terms in the book are Spanish-English cognates. Words such as ambulance and dentist will be no problem for the Spanish-speaking student, whereas a Japanese or Finnish student would not be able to recognize them. The roots of the problems in Technical English mostly are not technical terminology or concepts, but non-technical words used in explanations, definitions, and descriptions.

The mixture of general information and technical terms in this text makes it difficult to understand what language learning group would benefit from using this book. Had the author incorporated her interesting material into typical dialogs situated in the various parts of the hospital she describes so well, the text would have filled a real need for hospital and medical personnel.

These comments aside, The Language of Hospital Services in English does provide interesting reading in a specialized field hitherto not touched upon in EFL teaching materials.

Ashby Rocha  
 Instituto de Idiomas  
 University of the Americas, Pue.