

## Preface

The age we are living in is marked more than anything else by an unprecedented pace of improvement in various fields of knowledge. Hardly do we start a day when we don't hear of a new significant discovery, an astounding invention or a revolutionizing theory. Keeping abreast of such a large corpus of knowledge, however overwhelming it might seem, is nevertheless indispensable if one wishes to keep pace with and maintain modern standards. Few people would afford to disagree that the English language provides the right means of doing so. Having secured its place as the standard language of international academic communication for more than a century now, English has absorbed millions of hours of concentrated effort by an immense number of theorists, educationists, psychologists and practitioners worldwide, who have shared in a comprehensive attempt to improve the quality and efficiency of its teaching and learning. And given that from among the different components that language is normally presumed to be composed of, it is the written form through which the main bulk of human knowledge is disseminated, the importance of promoting learners' abilities concerning understanding the knowledge presented in this fashion becomes all the more evident.

In view of such a pedagogical objective, the present work was conceived out of a pressing need felt for some instruction that would address some of the commonest sources of trouble encountered by a specific group of students, namely those in the field of 'health care management', in understanding the written mode of English as used within their professional context. These learners, who are expected to have achieved a reasonably good command of English as prospective managers, are provided herein with an array of English texts carefully selected out of the pertinent literature with an eye towards a somewhat wide coverage of relevant topics. In making such a selection, variety in writing styles and dictions employed within the chosen texts was an additional focal point. This, it was presumed, would give the students enough opportunity to maneuver within, and ideally master, a large repertoire of English structures as well as learn a good number of vocabulary items linked to their specific field of study. Mere presentation of such a selection would, however, be far from satisfying the intended outcomes.

Based on clearly defined teaching objectives and taking into consideration areas suspected to include the worst intricacies for the target students, a variety of the most widely used types of exercises were employed for each text. These were designed in such a way as to challenge learners' analytical (and at times productive) abilities, and help them overcome vague and confusing elements found within the sampled text, be it a grammatical point, a vocabulary item, a

new structure, etc. The lessons, which amount to 21, each comprise a main text excerpted from an authoritative book or journal within the field, followed by a series of exercises of different types on both general comprehension and word practice. A supplementary text termed as 'Further Reading' will then supply the student with more reading material on a topic related to the main text, which is in turn succeeded by a series of exercises.

The whole book is intended to fulfill the requirements of a four-credit course of ESP or two separate two-credit courses offered in two successive academic semesters. Those taking the course are required to have passed six to eight credits on general English, and are supposedly capable of reading and understanding English texts termed as higher intermediate. The materials presented have been piloted in real courses for a number of semesters and have undergone several revisions and modifications. Nevertheless, this is by no means to say that the book is free from defects. Readers' advice on any aspect of the whole volume will thus be sincerely appreciated and can be of much significance in dispensing with the shortcomings in future editions.

It goes without saying that the completion of the work would not have been possible without the assistance by many, particularly colleagues at the English Department of Paramedical College at Shiraz Medical University, who generously offered their advice at different stages. The authors would like to thank them as well as all the writers and publishers of the books and journals whose excerpted texts served as both the reading materials employed within the book and the basis for the exercises.

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