

# Discharge Planning Update

An Interdisciplinary  
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Professionals

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## Language Barriers

### The Flip Side of the Coin

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With increasing interest being given to the problem of non-English-speaking persons receiving health care, methods of coping, including professional translators, are being developed and implemented.

Often overlooked is the problem occurring with the English-speaking patient because of halting or broken English spoken not only by some hospital staff and employees, but also by nursing home staffs and employees.

For the discharge planner making a long-term placement, the psychological insecurity or emotional discomfort of such an English-speaking patient can be a critical factor in patient comfort, progress, and satisfaction.

The problem is not limited to housekeeping staffs--long the job for unskilled foreign-born workers--but now includes technicians, nurses, and some physicians. Some health maintenance organizations (HMOs) have encountered resistance of U.S.-born members to assigned physicians who speak limited English. The public is increasingly aware and irritated: 18 states have passed official-English laws (inaccurately termed English-only laws).

Until the problem of the English-speaking patient is recognized, coping mechanisms and/or solutions are not likely to be developed. But, there is the possibility--however remote--that miscommunication among hospital employees or medical staff could result in damage to the patient. The same risk can occur in the long-term care facility to which the patient is being referred.

There appear to be two main causes of this problem, whether it occurs in the hospital or the long-term care facility. First, foreign-born professionals and

technicians are tested here in written English, and most have become proficient with written English as students. Their U.S. accreditation, therefore, implies but does not guarantee, an ability to communicate in spoken English. Second, some individuals who are fluent in English are handicapped by a heavy accent that interferes with communication.

Because most government and foundation funding and most literacy network efforts are directed at basic levels, or fifth-grade completed, little help is available outside community colleges for those at marginal or otherwise unsatisfactory levels. Nationally, about 70 million persons are language handicapped, with 10 percent being served by mainstream literacy programs.

Although discharge planners lack the authority to impose standards of English-speaking competency, they must be alert to this potentially debilitating problem for patients they refer, especially if choices are few.

Over the past several years I have tutored non-English-speaking persons using an English-as-a-second-language program. A number of them are available. The one I have used is *Practical Word Power (PWP)*, developed especially for volunteer tutors. Using this program, I can teach up to 10 students of any language mix at one time.

In eight sessions of two hours each, I have taught adult learners to master the dictionary pronunciation codes, becoming independent in vocabulary development. All future vocabulary is correctly pronounced, and accent-reduction in preexisting vocabulary is a welcome side benefit. Related skills are also taught in the course.

Although time and commitment are required on the part of the tutor and the students, I have found that we all have benefitted from and enjoyed the experience. DPU

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*Editor's Note: Author Morton, who is a retired business and economics librarian, has been teaching English as a second language to Asian and Hispanic students.*

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March 5th, 1990

Will you participate in an important self-help community project? You might be aware of the alarming statistics indicating that on a nation-wide basis, all the literacy courses now operating in the United States are reaching only 10% of the needy population. Although most of our public and ethnic alternative schools are already operating at capacity under limited budgets, the system cannot provide for 90% of our language-handicapped neighbors. There are not enough teachers and schoolrooms, even if there were enough money.

Two things are very clear: first, a good command of English is still the passport to a good job in the mainstream business world. Second, if the Hispanic community wants to progress as a whole, we must take direct action on behalf of the young and old adults who are for any reason stranded at unsatisfactory levels of English competency. There is a further complication. Most of the monies appropriated by the Federal and State governments are dedicated to basic education--that is, through the completion of public school Grade 5; yet the GED classes require a literacy level of Grade 8 for entry. There is no standard mechanism to help people to cross that gap.

So Channel 44 proposes that the Hispanic community create such a mechanism within our community. If a number of the leading organizations cooperate, we can together make a significant contribution to the solution of this problem. When the program is ready to begin, Channel 44 will help launch it with a major public awareness campaign.

The mechanism we propose to use is a new ESL (English as a Second Language) tutor's script and workbook called "Practical Word Power". The book was specifically developed to help adults of intermediate English conversation skills--those people who can "get by" in English but are not progressing. It is low cost and works with volunteer tutors. The author will assist us.

Page two  
3-5-90

Of course, there are many details that need to be discussed and agreed on during an initial executive conference. Assuming you agree to participate, we would then set up an orientation session for your tutors. On a target date set by the group, the last step would be to announce to the public that the programs are ready to function.

If the executive conference can take place in mid March, then the group of tutors can meet early in April to become familiar with the program before creating the necessary capabilities in their individual organizations. Classes could begin in May at multiple locations, with enrollments generated by Channel 44's public service announcements..

We are currently developing a campaign theme (to be announced at the executive conference) that will encourage adult learning without insulting anyone...and also encourage support from mainstream media.

I hope you will be interested in exploring this proposal and will be able to meet at the initial executive conference. We are scheduling the meeting for March 15th, 2:00pm at WSNS-TV. Please allow about 90 minutes to do business. If you cannot attend, please send a representative, preferably from administration.

If your organization now serves as an umbrella agency for government or foundation funding for related groups, your funding recipients are also welcome. This program represents a new area of service, not a competitive one.

So that we can be prepared with adequate space and materials, please return the enclosed registration form no later than March 13th. Our office will be calling you to confirm your assistance.

Sincerely,



Jose F. Lamas  
General Manager



COMMUNITY ESL PROJECT  
INITIAL EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE  
March 15th, 1990

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes! We want to participate in the community ESL project "Practical Word Power" now being organized. At the initial executive conference:

- \_\_\_\_\_ I will attend personally.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Our organization will be presented by an executive member.
- \_\_\_\_\_ No one can attend on that date, but we are interested; keep us informed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Sorry. We're not interested.

\_\_\_\_\_ We function as an umbrella funding agency. Please reserve space for \_\_\_\_\_ persons, including our affiliates.

OPTIONAL INFORMATION

Our organization presently:

- \_\_\_\_\_ does not operate literary/ESL classes
- \_\_\_\_\_ occasionally operates classes
- \_\_\_\_\_ operates classes regularly
- \_\_\_\_\_ oversees classes conducted by affiliates.

The cost of operational cost for classes now in session are covered by:

- \_\_\_\_\_ government or foundation funding
- \_\_\_\_\_ community contributions
- \_\_\_\_\_ service fees paid by students.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_  
ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE RETURN THIS COMPLETED FORM NO LATER THAN MARCH 13th to:

Jose F.Lamas, General Manager  
WSNS-TV, Channel 44  
430 W.Grant Place  
Chicago, IL 60614



WSNS TV CHICAGO

PROYECTO COMUNITARIO E.S.L.  
REUNION EJECUTIVA INICIAL

15 de marzo, 1990

\_\_\_ ¡Si! Queremos participar en el proyecto comunitario para el mejor aprendizaje del idioma inglés, "Practical Word Power".

En la reunión ejecutiva inicial:

\_\_\_ Estare yo personalmente.

\_\_\_ Nuestra organización será representada por un miembro ejecutivo de nuestra oficina.

\_\_\_ No puede asistir ninguna persona en tal fecha, pero nos interesa el proyecto. Por favor, mantenganos informados.

\_\_\_ No tenemos interés.

\_\_\_ Funcionamos como "umbrella" de agencia de fondos. Por favor, reserve espacios para \_\_\_ personas.

INFORMACION OPCIONAL:

Nuestra organización al presente:

\_\_\_ No conduce clases de inglés.

\_\_\_ Ocasionalmente conduce clases.

\_\_\_ Inspecciona clases conducidas por nuestros afiliados.

El costo de conducir las clases que tenemos actualmente es cubierto por:

\_\_\_ Fondos del gobierno o por fundaciones.

\_\_\_ Contribuciones comunitarias.

\_\_\_ Costo del servicio pagado por el estudiante.

NOMBRE: \_\_\_\_\_

POSICION: \_\_\_\_\_ ORGANIZACION: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEFONO: \_\_\_\_\_ DIRECCION: \_\_\_\_\_

ZONA POSTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Por favor, al completar este cuestionario, devuélvalo antes del 13 de marzo a:

JOSE F.LAMAS, Gerente General  
WSNS-TV, Canal 44  
430 W.Grant Place, Chicago, IL 60614