

Hall

English For Careers

The Language of Hotels in English



Eugene J. Hall

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FOREWORD

This book is one of a series of texts called *English for Careers*. The series is intended to introduce students of English as a foreign language to the languages of a number of different professional and vocational fields. The career areas that are covered are those in which English is widely used throughout the world—computer programming, air travel, hospital services, the petroleum industry, and, in the case of this particular book, the hotel industry. None of these books is intended as a detailed training manual, but rather as a broad introduction to the subject.

The books of this series serve several purposes. The first, of course, is to introduce the student to the vocational area in which he or she is interested. The duties of different jobs are described, as are the difficulties that might be encountered at work. In this book, the many kinds of jobs that are found in hotels are discussed, together with the duties, problems, and rewards of hotel work.

From the point of view of teaching English as a foreign language, these books are intended for a student at the high intermediate or advanced level. In other words, the student who uses these books should be acquainted with a majority of the structural patterns of English. His or her principal goals as a learner should be mastering vocabulary, using the various patterns in a normal mixture, and improving his or her ability to communicate in English.

Each unit begins with a glossary of special terms in which words and expressions used in hotel work are defined. The special terms are followed by a vocabulary practice section where the student is asked questions, the answers to which will help him or her to use the special terms. In the reading that follows, these terms are used again within a contextual frame of reference. Each reading, in turn, is followed by discussion questions that give the student the opportunity to use both the special terms and the structural patterns encountered in the reading.

Each unit ends with a review section that serves several purposes. Some of the exercises pose problems that might occur if the student were actually working in the vocational field. In this book, for instance, he or she is asked to make up conversations that might occur with guests when working at different jobs at the front desk of a hotel. In doing such exercises, he or she will also be practicing the specialized vocabulary as well as other vocabulary items and structural patterns that are used with them.

A great deal of successful language learning comes from experiences in which the learning is largely unconscious. In offering these books, it is hoped that the student's interest in his or her chosen field will increase his or her ability to communicate more effectively in English.

EUGENE J. HALL
Washington, D.C.

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UNIT ONE

THE ACCOMMODATIONS INDUSTRY

Special Terms

Accommodations: Shelter, food, drink, and other services for travelers or transients. Because it provides these things, the hotel business is often referred to as the *accommodations industry*.

Caravansary: A place where caravans could stop for the night and obtain food and shelter for people and animals. They were located along the trade routes of the Orient.

Inn: An establishment offering shelter and food for travelers. The term was customary in the days of travel by horse; it has been revived because it conveys an idea of old-fashioned hospitality.

Tavern: In modern usage, a place that serves alcoholic drinks. Formerly, it was an alternate term for an inn.

Motel: A shortened form for *motor hotel*. A motel provides accommodations for the traveler and a parking space for his or her automobile. Both motel and motor hotel are in common use.

Tourist Cabin/Tourist Court: Terms that were used in the early days of the automobile for places where people traveling by car found accommodations. In general, tourist cabins and courts have evolved into the motels of today.

Resort: A place or area to which people travel for recreational purposes. Hotels are of course important features of resort areas.

Convention: A meeting of a business or professional group for the purpose of exchanging information, electing officers, and discussing and frequently voting on proposals for rule changes in the organization. Conventions have become a big business, and

many hotels provide special facilities and services to attract them.

Banquet: A large formal meal, given for a specific purpose, usually including speeches or some kind of ceremony. Many hotels have *banquet rooms* to accommodate functions of this kind.

Deluxe: Of the highest quality. Hotels rated as deluxe offer the greatest possible convenience, comfort, and service to their guests. Such hotels are often called *luxury hotels* and are generally the most expensive.

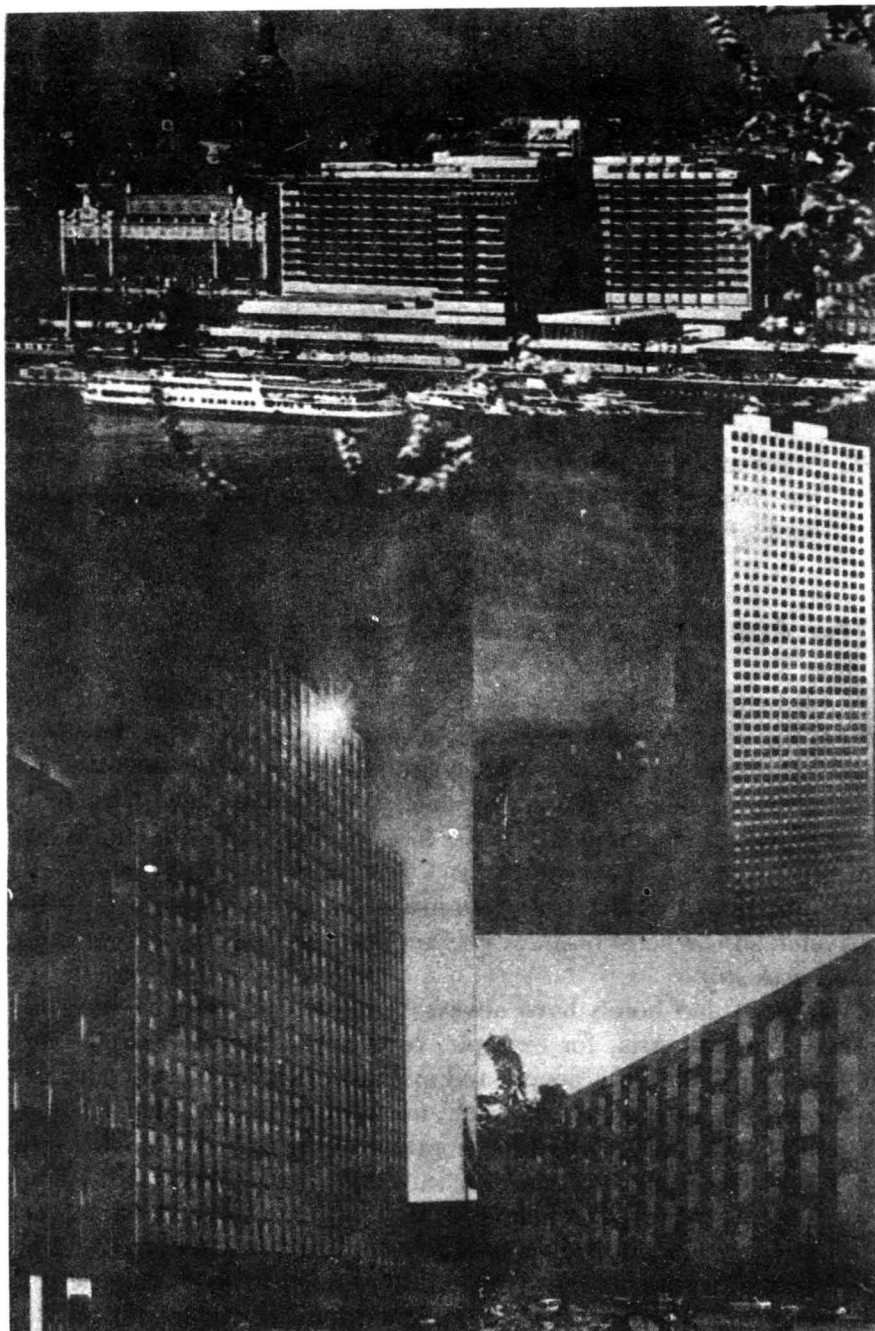
Labor-intensive: Requiring a large number of people for the services that are provided by a business or industry. The accommodations industry is labor-intensive.

Front of the House: Services and functions of a hotel that involve management, the front desk, accounting, baggage handling, and so on.

Back of the House: Services and functions of a hotel that involve housekeeping, engineering, maintenance, food and beverage service, and so on.

Vocabulary Practice

1. Why is the hotel business often called the *accommodations industry*?
2. What was a *caravansary*? Where were they located?
3. What is an *inn*? Why has the term been revived?
4. What does *tavern* mean in modern usage? How was it used formerly?
5. What is a *motel*? What other term is in common use for the same kind of establishment?
6. What are *tourist cabins* and *tourist courts*? In general, what have they become?
7. What is a *resort*? Give some examples.



Clockwise from the top, the Duna Inter-Continental in Budapest, the Keio Plaza Inter-Continental in Tokyo, the Hotel Meridien in Paris, and the Sheraton Copenhagen. (Courtesy American Express Company, Inter-Continental Hotels Corporation, Meridien Hotels, Inc., and the Sheraton Corporation)

8. What is a *convention*? Why do many hotels provide special facilities and services for them?
9. What is a *banquet*? How do hotels accommodate functions of this kind?
10. What do *deluxe hotels* offer? What is another term for them?
11. Why is the accommodations industry considered *labor-intensive*?
12. What are some of the services and functions that are included in the *front of the house*? What are some that are included in the *back of the house*?

The Accommodations Industry

A hotel is a temporary home for people who are traveling. In a hotel the traveler can rest and has access to food and drink, either on the premises or nearby. The hotel may also offer facilities for recreation, such as a swimming pool, a golf course, or a beach. In many cases, the hotel also provides free space for the traveler's means of transportation. In this day and age, that of course means the automobile. All of these services are designed to accommodate the traveler, so the hotel business is often referred to as the *accommodations industry*.

Travel and hotels have always been closely related. Along the trade routes of Asia, for example, *caravansaries* were built a day's march apart. Both the people and animals in the caravans could rest and refresh themselves at each one before continuing on long journeys, which often lasted for months or years rather than mere days or weeks. In Europe and America, *inns* and *taverns* were spaced along the roads at the distance a horse could travel in a day. The inns were primitive by modern standards. The traveler usually had to share his bed with at least one other person, and as many as *four* other persons in some remote areas. The old-fashioned inns, however, did provide food and shelter for both men and horses and therefore became a symbol for hospitality. Indeed, the word *inn* has been used recently by many modern hotels and motels. They have attempted to suggest the

image of people warming themselves in front of a cheerful fire while waiting to be called to a table spread with an abundance of food.

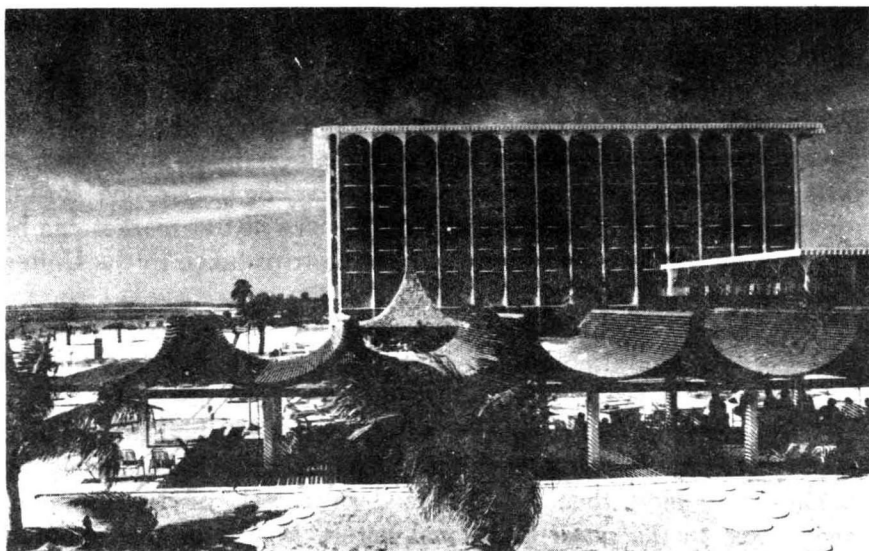
Modern mass transportation, that is, the movement of large numbers of people at relatively low prices, began with the development of the railroads in the nineteenth century. Up to that time, accommodations had been provided by country inns or by family-owned and -operated hotels in the cities. As the railroads carried larger numbers of people further and more rapidly, large hotels were constructed near the train stations. The cluster of hotels around Grand Central terminal in New York is a good surviving example of this stage in the development of the hotel industry.

The automobile and the airplane expanded the potential of mass transportation. Each of these means of transportation has resulted in the growth of corresponding accommodations facilities. In the case of the automobile, motels that serve people traveling by car have sprung up along highways all over the world. The size of this market can be judged from the fact that 85 percent of the trips taken in the United States are by car.

The word *motel* was created by combining *motor* and *hotel*. The term *motor hotel* is also used frequently to designate the same kind of accommodations facility. When automobiles were first used, flimsy and expensive *tourist cabins* were built beside the highways. Then, as people demanded greater comfort, the cabins were replaced by *tourist courts* and then by the modern motel, offering services comparable to the more traditional hotels. Motels or motor hotels providing parking facilities for cars were also constructed in many large cities, where they now compete with the older commercial hotels.

The airplane extended the distances that people could travel in a short period. For the accommodations industry, the most direct result of the increase in tourism that was attributable to the airplane was a boom in the construction of *resort hotels*. A resort is a place to which people travel for recreation. It may offer mountain scenery, the combination of sun and sea, or features that are entirely man-made, like Disneyland in California. Resort hotels did not, however, originate with the airplane. Many communities in Florida, for example, became resorts as the railroad line was extended southward along the East Coast, first to St. Augustine, then to Daytona Beach, and finally on to Palm Beach and Miami at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The airplane made many more places

available for development as resorts, including places that were quite isolated. The entire Caribbean area, for instance, became accessible to American and Canadian tourists, and the shores of the Mediterranean Sea have been overrun by vacationers from northern Europe. A few years ago, Torremolinos was a tiny fishing village not too far from Malaga on the southern coast of Spain. It now has a wall of high-rise motels along its beach that make it one of the largest resort towns in Europe.

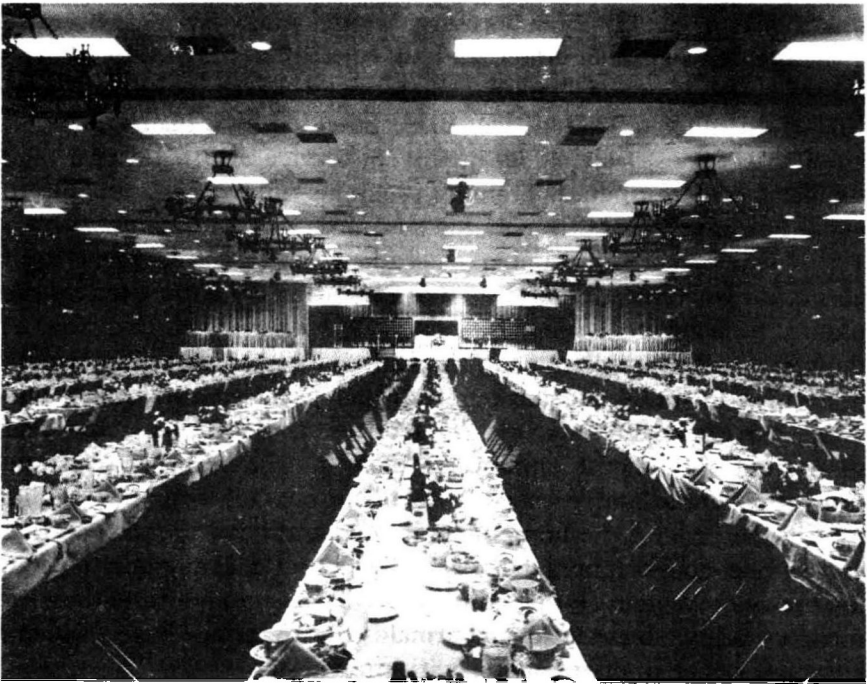


The Aruba Sheraton, a resort hotel. (Courtesy The Sheraton Corporation)

All hotels do not serve the same clientele, that is, the same kind of guests. In fact, it is possible to place hotels in four broad categories. The first is the commercial hotel, which provides services essentially for transients, many of them traveling on business. Many city hotels and diversely located motels fall into this group. The second category is resort hotels. Located in vacation areas, they often provide recreational facilities of their own as well. A third type of hotel aims its services largely at the convention trade. *Conventions* are meetings, usually held yearly, of various business or professional groups. Not so long ago, most conventions were held in large urban centers such as New York or Washington D.C., but the airplane has made it possible for resort hotels to attract this kind of business also. The fourth category is resident hotels. People who do not wish to keep house

themselves can rent accommodations on a seasonal basis or even permanently in many hotels.

No firm distinction exists between the different kinds of hotels. In large cities that are also tourist centers, such as New York, Paris, London, Rome, and Tokyo, one hotel may offer all types of service. And even a small motel may have *banquet rooms* and meeting rooms in addition to its accommodations for transients. Many resort hotels nowadays are also designed with complete convention facilities.



A banquet room in a hotel. (Courtesy Holiday Inns, Inc.)

Another way of categorizing hotels is by the quality of service they offer. At the top are the luxury hotels, which generally offer their guests the greatest comfort and convenience possible. At the bottom are those that provide merely a place to sleep. In between these two extremes are establishments offering a wide range of service and comfort. A system for rating hotels according to quality is widely used in France and a number of other countries. This system puts the top hotels in a special *deluxe* category, with others receiving from five

stars to one star or "A's." The standard features include private bathrooms, room telephones, recreational facilities, and so on.

The difference in quality between hotels is not, however, entirely a matter of equipment or furnishings. The proportion of employees to guests and/or guest rooms is also a matter of prime importance. In general, the accommodations industry is *labor-intensive*; that is, it employs a large number of people to perform its services. In a luxury hotel, there may be three employees for every guest room. In a large commercial hotel in a big city, the ratio is usually closer to one employee per guest room. A small motel, one with ten to twenty rooms, may have only three employees, often a husband and wife who own and manage the motel and in turn hire a maid to do the housekeeping chores. Obviously, the services offered by a small hotel will be far more restricted than those provided by a luxury hotel. A hotel that prides itself on its quality of service also maintains high standards of performance. Training programs run by the hotel help to make sure that the staff meets the standards.

Regardless of the number of workers, hotel employment itself falls into two broad categories that are traditionally designated by the phrases *front of the house* and *back of the house*. Jobs in the front of the house include management, the various jobs behind the front desk (the check-in desk), accounting, sales and promotion, baggage handling, car attendants, and special services. It should be noted that some front-of-the-house employees—those in accounting or sales and promotion, for example—have little or no contact with the public. Jobs in the back of the house include food and beverage preparation and service, housekeeping, laundry and valet service, engineering, and maintenance. Some of the employees in this group—restaurant or room-service waiters and chambermaids, for example—have frequent although rather limited contact with the guests.

The larger and more luxurious the hotel, the greater the variety of jobs that it offers. Nevertheless, the administration and organization of a small hotel is similar to a large one. Engineering and maintenance for a small establishment may be done by contract with local firms, whereas a large hotel will hire its own staff for these functions. In either case, however, the work must be done either in-house or by outside help.

In our discussion of the different vocational opportunities within a hotel, a large commercial or resort hotel offering a wide variety of services will be the standard. Where practices differ from those in



Baggage handlers unloading a bus in front of a hotel.

smaller hotels, special note will be made of those differences. Generally, the problems and opportunities in all hotels are comparable, since all provide shelter, food, and other services for the traveling public.

Discussion

1. What is a hotel? What does it provide for a traveler?
2. How were caravansaries related to travel?
3. In the age of travel by horse, how were inns and taverns related to travel?
4. Why did old-fashioned inns become symbols of hospitality? What kind of image do they bring to mind for many people even at the present time?

5. What is meant by modern mass transportation? When did it begin?
6. What new development in the location of hotels did the railroads bring about? What is a surviving example?
7. What means of transportation has increased the movement of people more recently?
8. What recent development in the hotel industry has been caused by the automobile?
9. Do many people travel by car?
10. From what words was the word *motel* derived? What kind of accommodations were offered when automobiles first came into general use? Are motels or motor hotels ever found in large cities?
11. Why did airplane travel result in a boom in the building of resort hotels?
12. What are some of the attractions that a resort may offer? What are some examples?
13. What are four broad categories in which it is possible to place hotels?
14. Are there always firm distinctions between hotels in the different categories?
15. What is another way of dividing hotels into categories? What kind of hotels are at the top? At the bottom?
16. What system of rating hotels is widely used in France and several other European countries? What standards are used?
17. What other standards can be used to rate quality between hotels?