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Book review: Side by Side Plus 1

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Molinsky S. J. and Bliss, B. (2008). Side by Side Plus 1. USA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Side by Side Plus 1 is part of an English program that consists of four volumes focused on adult education. Each of the volumes that make up this collection has similarities as well as differences among them. Some of the similarities without considering themes and complexity, would be the methodology used, the form, the presentation and treatment of information as well as the dynamics to be implemented before, during and after the activity, among others. The difference among them, as expected, is difficulty level, the complexity of the structures, vocabulary, and much more.

Side by Side plus 1 offers the students a variety of supporting material, such as visual aids (flash cards), audio, readings, multi- function activities, (those that cover the same subject but at different difficulty levels); games (mime, games, role play, etc.), support books and picture dictionaries.

These materials help students develop the necessary skills to internalize and process the information the best they can. This book has lessons designed to

develop all of the four skills (speaking, writing, listening and grammar). The students must work together in order to develop their communicative competence of the target language in an appropriate and efficient way avoiding practicing these skills separately which could cause a deficiency in the development of the language in the learner. This factor was taken into consideration by the designers of this English course for adults. They use these activities to encourage teamwork, developing thinking skills and cognitive links between the contents of each unit with the real world vocabulary that the students will face every day. This is achieved by the student with the help of the teacher who provides the material to support them. This material is simple to use, presents information in a clear way, contains a lot of visuals and it's easy to use. For example, the visual dictionary is a valuable support for the student in reading and writing activities included in each lesson.

The reading and writing activities include topics or situations that would usually come out in a real world context outside the classroom. This will improve the student's ability to deal with these situations and know how to actually manage or react in those situations. This will promote development and practice of everyday situations expressions and structures.

This course also has a section in the student book called *Gazette* which supports listening comprehension and includes activities that require persistence, attention and high concentration for the student to be able to answer the activities of this section. They can do these activities with or without the teacher's guidance



because the student's book includes the answers at the end, the CD is also integrated in the student's book.

Side by Side Plus 1 not only provides supporting material for the learners but also material for the teacher. This might be considered one of the main advantages of this English program because the methodology used in the conversation software and sections integrates grammar, vocabulary and issues that could be applied in real life situations. Assessment formats are also incorporated for each unit, they consist of exercises, list of vocabulary, etc in order to reinforce the topics covered in each lesson. These activities allow students to get good results in their assessments.

These evaluations are designed to evaluate learners progressively by identifying the areas where they could be deficient and giving them the chance to correct their mistakes with adequate exercises that don't interfere with the teacher's planning.

The material for teachers offered in this course consists of a package that includes the teacher's guide, a book with photocopiable activities of different levels, the tests for each unit and a format to keep track of both group and individual scores in each unit. This information will form a graph that reflects the performance of the student during the course.

The recommendation is to use all the abovementioned sources to strengthen the grammar of each unit. Teachers will have to use the activities included in the teacher's activity book which have the following formats: open



questions, multiple choice, crossword puzzles, matching exercises, game boards and a variety of exercises which help to avoid monotony and are fun for learners since they promote competition and motivate them.

Lastly, in each section, this course employs visual resources and examples, and promotes the human's innate sense of competition through activities where team building, the need for scores and one winner per event are suggested.