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**Title:** SIDE by SIDE / 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition / Book 3 of 4  
**Author:** Steven Molinsky & Bill Bliss  
**Publisher:** Pearson Longman  
**Also Available:** Teacher Guides, Activity Workbooks, Audio cassettes/ CDs, Videos, Flashcards, Assessments

**The reason I have selected this book:**

I have had the opportunity to volunteer at several different Adult ESL programs throughout the years. Several of the institutions that I have volunteered at implemented this book within their course curriculum. Therefore, I would like to evaluate the book for myself, as well as for potential encounters with it in my future career as an ESL instructor.

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**Target:** This textbook addresses all language skills, with a communicative focus (in the form of conversations) with aims to strengthen accuracy. It is intended for Intermediate Adult ESL learners.

**Textbook Organization:** The organization is by grammar structures, and sub-organized by either functions (asking a favor, discussing feelings, etc...) or by topics (habits, job interviews, etc... ).

**Textbook Sequencing:** Textbook sequencing is based on grammar complexity, and grammar structures are built on each other in a spiral manner. Within each individual chapter, lessons are sequenced so skills build off of each other in a logical natural order. Instead of focusing on one skill in its entirety though (as if in a solid block of work), each skill is worked on through an activity and then worked on again later on in the chapter in another type of activity. Essentially – the skills take their turn being practiced creating a chapter of full skill integration. (Also of note: The first few chapters review important grammar from the previous book that will be needed in this current book)

**Practiced Skills:** The textbook focuses on the following skills: Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, and Grammar. It also focuses on the secondary skills of Pronunciation and Vocabulary.

**Visual Presentation:**

- The textbook is very easy-to-use, friendly, multi-colored and with plenty of pictures. Lesson sections are clearly identified with the relevant skill in practice and clearly distinguished from one another. Special callout sections are clearly marked.
- Visual support (pictures) is provided for each exercise / section / vocabulary item. The majority of visuals are presented in a cartoon format. Whereas this may sound childish, it has sophistication for adult acceptance.

The book presents the material in an un-intimidating manner so students are encouraged to relax, have fun, and take risks with their language learning.

- Content is appropriately and cleanly laid out. It is neither intimidating nor overwhelming, and shows a definite hierarchy in importance (hierarchy is established with the use of bold typefaces, point sizes, italics, multiple colors, varying typefaces, etc..)

### **Textbook Components:**

- **Chapter Introduction:** Includes a listing of chapter objectives so students know what to expect.
- **Vocabulary sections:** Includes an introduction of new / key vocabulary items (with pictures).
- **Grammar:** Includes the introduction of new grammar structures. (Segmented and introduced one at a time in a spiral approach) As the student moves through the lesson, more dimensions are added/revised/built on.
- **Grammar exercises:** Based off of a target grammar structure diagram, the grammar is practiced using multiple exercises. (These exercises follow every new grammar introduction)
- **Pronunciation:** Sections focus on pronunciation, stress, and intonation.
- **Communication strategy sections:** Focus on highlighting communication strategies such as complimenting, hesitating, apologizing, meeting & greeting people, etc... with multiple responses/reactions to each.
- **Writing:** The journal & other writing sections provide the students an opportunity to relate the lesson themes to their own lives and personal experiences.
- **Reading:** Includes adapted sample readings, followed by Check-Ups (These focus on comprehension, creation of similar dialogues, fill in the blank exercises, etc...)
- **Gazette:** Resembles a magazine. Includes articles on interesting and current global topics, interesting facts about the world presented in different graphic organizers, new vocabulary, global picture section with cross-cultural topics, models for communication with keypals, listening tasks integrated with real-world experiences, interviews, cartoon features, idiom explanations, and a letter from the authors explaining the use of the grammar structure they have just learned and/or the differences between other similar ones.
- **Role Plays / Interviews:** Based on a sample conversations/materials recently read.
- **Listening:** Students listen to passages and then do exercises (comprehension checks, T/F statements, etc...)
- **Speaking:** Includes all the communicative conversation pieces and discussion sessions.
- **Chapter summary:** Includes a summary of the new grammar structure and key vocabulary items
- **Index:** Includes listening scripts, an index of grammar, a listing of vocabulary organized under topics (not with a definition, but a referring page #), and a listing of irregular verbs with conjugations in present/past/participle.
- **Bias:** This is written from a somewhat neutral American perspective. Content/characters are mostly middle class Caucasians. But there are some instances of ethnically diverse backgrounds speckled through, too.

### Considerations for Implementation:

- **Reading:** Chapter readings are adapted readings written in a way to integrate the target grammar structure, which unfortunately makes for very unrealistic text. Instructors should supplement with authentic choices that naturally integrate the target grammar structure. The Gazette readings (presented at the end of the lesson as supplements) aren't so much adapted but rather, are "simplified" texts. These resemble authentic texts especially with their current and interesting topics, although, authentic text would still be preferable.
- **Writing:** The journal is a nice activity where students can personally relate to the topic at hand. One problem is that the book offers up far too much structure for how / what the student should write about – inhibiting their creativity and thoughts. The instructor should give out the topic, and let the students write what comes naturally to mind. Also, no writing strategies or samples are given. Instructor should provide / read some samples, and even though is a "simple" writing task, should offer help in writing strategies.
- **Listening:** Listening passages are adapted text. It would be more beneficial if the instructor could play authentic texts that naturally integrated the target structure (if possible) or at least covered similar topics.
- **Speaking:** The book offers a lot of practice in speaking / conversing. The unfortunate part though, is that the majority of it is based off of a rigidly structured dialogue that hardwires in the target grammar structure. This is fine if it is considered "exercise work" and "getting comfortable" with the structure, but for practicing speaking, it's very unrealistic. The student can't have the structure forced onto them, instead, as their comfort level increases with the structure, they need to gradually adapt it within their own linguistic knowledge and then produce it when they are comfortable with it. It's more ideal if the instructor provide activities where students can naturally produce speech, using activities that would foster usage of the grammar structure (i.e. instead of requiring the grammar – they should just promote or encourage usage)
- **Conversation Patterns:** Natural conversations are unpredictable and have thousands of variations, although this book only provides 1 or 2 variations to draw from, therefore limiting conversation patterns for the student. The instructor should offer up variations and/or possible expressions/responses so students can choose their own preferred approach.
- **Grammar Exercises:** Exercise answer keys are not provided for the student. Keys would be a nice way for students to receive feedback on their performance if they don't have the teacher / assistant available for feedback/correction. In addition to this, one of the best features within the exercises is the last question which asks students to come up with a scenario (on their own) that might incorporate the target grammar structure. This could be a very nice activity to expand on - as it would have much more impact than do scripted drills.
- **Pronunciation:** Current lessons are very brief. Instructor should supplement with additional pronunciation practice if problems surface in student speaking or if they're needed.
- **Vocabulary:** The book utilizes the first page for vocabulary introduction, but doesn't always capture all of the important vocabulary words that are used throughout the chapter. Instructor should review each lesson and make sure there won't be key vocabulary questions/confusion.

- **Skill Integration:** The textbook attempts to integrate skills where it is appropriate. The balance of the four skills is not even, though. If this is a goal for the instructor, they should supplement with more writing and pronunciation – two areas which aren't covered as frequently as the others.
- **Pre / Post Lessons / Learning Strategies:** The topics/content in each chapter are grouped/sequenced together mostly because they utilize a common grammar structure, not always relating directly to each other. (this could have benefited the student as background build-up) The book does not provide any pre / post lessons to help the students ease into the lesson/topic/situation with the proper background info and necessary input, nor do they provide much when it comes to learning strategies. The instructor needs to build these critical frameworks into the lessons, so students can successfully work with and master the content.
- **Role Plays & Interviews:** These are great activities to include but the textbook provides fully scripted dialogues for the activity. It would be better if the students studied sample models, were supplied with possible linguistic support for production, and then created versions of their own.
- **Topics Used:** The book provides good topics for the students, but introduces them in a brief manner. Instead of always moving on to new topics, the instructor could elaborate on them with supplementary activities where they deem appropriate and have the time/desire to do so.
- **Use as a Study Tool:** Using this book as a study tool is a little challenging. Some ESL programs do not allow students to take books home, nor do they allow students to write in them. The majority of content in the books are prompts for conversation or out-of-book activities so if the student can't record answers, they don't have much of a study tool besides the visual vocabulary and the grammar structures listed in their easy-to-understand diagrams. For study guides, it's best if the students have notebooks to take notes in or the teacher makes copies of important pages which could aid the student when it comes time for testing.
- **Support:** With the book's heavy focus on conversation material, the instructor needs to make sure the class has the necessary support set up. For instance, each of the conversation dialogs should ideally be practiced in groups (2-4 people) so that the students can actually practice the conversing. Therefore, it's important that teachers/volunteers/aids be present so they can monitor the groups to ensure the groups are finding the correct answers and aren't confused or incorrect in answering. Or another solution, would be to provide an answer key so students could check their answers once they've attempted the exercise.

**Final Thoughts:** I think this textbook makes a nice communicatively conversation-focused textbook for use in the ESL classroom. I feel the students would enjoy using it with its ease-of-use, variety and interactivity, but I definitely feel it needs to be supplemented with additional materials and slightly modified for best results in English learning. (see "Considerations for Implementation") The book provides a nice framework to use as a syllabus or nucleus to the class, and offers several interesting topics where the teacher can build on.