

Abax - Review

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Freestanding

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Freestanding is good for many levels of learners. Besides, all skills are integrated with a great variety of topics. Teachers can select only those parts which are appropriate to their students' levels and needs. Moreover, this book emphasizes "Language Pull", which is the situation where learners are "pulling" the language they need from the teacher instead of "Language Push" in which the teacher has to coax students into learning.

To start with, the first 15 chapters will give learners the overall skill practice for basic survival. For intermediate or upper intermediate, the rest of the book will be appropriate because these will be a better chance to activate all four skills with something more than basic everyday use skill. Nevertheless, this book is not designed for advanced learners whose English is relatively "better" of those who would like to concentrate only one skill area like advanced writing.

Besides covering many levels and integrating skills, this book is outstanding because of its "live" or "active" listening. Students will listen "live" from the teacher who is the listening source. The teacher and students will interact - just as what happens in real-life situations. This is an advantage that pre-recording cannot accomplish provided of course that the teachers are fluent and accurate speakers. Looking back from the teacher's viewpoint, this book is great in the way that its presentation and content means there is hardly any teacher preparation needed since it is mostly learner-centered. The longest time the preparation takes is only ten minutes. Most of the time what is needed is only a blank paper.

Another good point is flexibility. For example, some chapters in the first part which seem to be easy and appropriate for elementary level can be quickly made more difficult and then appropriate as well for intermediate levels students by changing from speaking activities to writing ones. Instead of speaking to three friends about his family, students can be assigned to write a paragraph about their family. To tell their friends about who is who in the family is much easier than writing about them in a "grammatically correct" paragraph. Thus, flexibility allows teachers to use each lesson effectively to suit each level, or even each individual in the same group. In other words, students' ability can be catered to individually. And if you are looking for a text which is highly communicative, learner-centered and easy to prepare, this is the one.

Somchoen H. Junior
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