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Book review: Nuevas Estrategias para la Enseñanza de la Ortografía

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Gabarró, D. & Puigarnau, C. (1996). *Nuevas Estrategias para la Enseñanza de la Ortografía*. Barcelona: Editorial Albije.

It is definitely a must-read book that specializes in the teaching of languages. The title describes exactly what we face when we try to teach orthography in the classroom. Authors emphasize on the importance of spelling and of teaching to reorganize processes and mental representations of the student with the help of neurolinguistic programming which through appropriate channels can lead to correct writing.

The first chapters provide us with an overview of the importance of spelling in the language and in teaching to students in paying special attention on relevant information that you can recall when needed. As the chapters start moving, the authors explain that we perceive through the senses fragments of reality, though we can never grasp reality in its entirety and that the best sense for the spelling is the visual sense. For this reason, they suggest strategies for memorizing orthography, from simple steps like memorizing a word with the help of a drawing that encourage us to remember the word and writing to internalize the image in our memory with the help of evocation of a hearing aid.

They also make emphasis on some words in English such as homophones, this means that

the sound of this word is exactly the same as another word but has a different meaning. Other words differ very subtly in how they are pronounced. While these words are not truly homophonic, they still are challenges for second language learners. These similar sounding words are less problematic for ESL students in spoken conversation, but become a source of frustration for them when they construct written sentences. For this situation they suggest to call the attention of some of the most common similar sounding words can help demystify this confusing aspect of the English language.

The authors make a special focus on our educational process, which should not only be effective, it must be a source of personal satisfaction as teachers of students that are satisfied with their profession learn much more easily. In counterpart, it is an important goal of every teacher to find pleasure in his work on behalf of himself and his students. One of their favorite phrases is “Be determined to improve”, because without motivation or desire, there won’t be any improvement to develop in them a spelling consciousness, a self in his writing requirements or how to implement new words into their previous knowledge. In any school situation the student with the highest number of alternatives will obtain better results.

Therefore, this book is for the average reader because its purpose is to promote the improvement of the spelling because it is written in a simple way with many examples and addresses both theoretical and practical aspects that will be useful in some time of our education or profession. The authors say that when our students learn spelling objectives, how to learn them and how to achieve them they will join forces with us and will start working easier and more enjoyably. Most teachers do not know how to teach orthography as a process, and they carry a range of activities that presuppose its usefulness and goodness but reality often belies us. Getting our students to write correctly all the words they use, and have incorporated techniques for the words that will get to know in the future is our primary objective as language teachers.