

Thursday, January 31, 2008

Book Review

Book Title: Side-By-Side Spanish & English Grammar

Author: Farrell, Edith R. and Farrell, C. Fredrick

ISBN: 0071419322 Format: Hardcover/ Soft cover/ eBook Pub. Date: 2003, Second Edition Publisher: McGraw-Hill

Pages: 152 Cost: \$8.95 (List)

Available: Amazon at as low as \$ (new) \$4.98 (used) - \$4.98 at eBay #8482; \$3.92
The Books' Topics: This book describes the following: Short history of English

Short history of Spanish

Summary of the Parts of Speech

Exploration of the Use of Each Part of Speech in English and Spanish

Exercises in question Pronouns and Adjectives

Exercises with "Por vs. Para" and "Ser vs. Estar" The book is systematic, and compares and contrasts the use of each Part of Speech for both languages. The central themes of this book are: Learning Spanish or English Grammar is easier if you build upon the similarities of the target language with your native language.

In addition, the authors focus upon Grammar essentials, i.e., those usually covered in high school Spanish, or during the first year of college Spanish

Quick access to information for use as a study reference

Quick review for study

Providing alternative ways of explaining both English and Spanish
Keywords: Native Language Grammar

Target Language Grammar

Parts of Speech

Explanations in "Standard English" and "Standard Spanish"

English Language Timeline

Spanish Language Timeline

Germanic, French, Latin Roots

Old English, Modern English

Quick Check Charts
Main Idea: Grammar consists of a complex set of rules and conventions. These rules and conventions take dedicated study.

But, you may not want to bother because the study of grammar is boring.

Besides, it is possible for native speakers of a language to internalize the structure of the language's grammar without knowing how to describe the rules in academic terms.

In this way, building a repertoire of usable grammar skills is similar to riding a bicycle. In riding the bicycle, you do not need to know complicated scientific terms for what you do when you steer, pedal, balance and apply the brakes.

However, if you were to want to build a better bicycle, you would need to know these things (engineering, physics, anatomy, kinesiology, etc.).

But, teachers need to build complex lessons that facilitate student learning. This is when a reference book like Side-By-Side Spanish & English Grammar becomes valuable.

In addition, Side-By-Side Spanish & English Grammar is valuable if you are studying or teaching Spanish.

The strategy of Side-By-Side Spanish & English Grammar is to build new learning by connecting that learning to what you already know.

With the native English speaker learning Spanish, the bottleneck to the learning process may be that the language learner doesn't know much English grammar. This is where Side-By-Side Spanish & English Grammar comes in. This reference outlines the grammar for both English and Spanish.
Issues Addressed by the Book: Grammar has changed a bit since most "Baby Boomers" last studied it.

Gone are the strict labeling of parts of speech or the strategy of simply memorizing a list of prepositions.

In vogue now is a structural and functional interpretation of grammar, i.e., what is the way that the words and phrases are used instead of arbitrary labeling; learning rules that are "made to be broken." The Book's Shortcomings: The book cannot offer redress to the fact that grammar is boring and almost entirely "Left Brain" learning material.

Aside from the histories of English and Spanish (about four pages), grammar topics are those that only a language trivia buff could love.

However, the authors' precise treatment of a boring topic (about 140 pages) lessens the pain of learning two sets of grammar (English and Spanish).

The book might also have addressed Punctuation because punctuation is so intimately associated with grammar.

The fact that language differences between English and Spanish are "findable" based upon only a marginal knowledge

of the Parts of Speech is a weakness that is turned into a strength for this book. Comments: Teachers need a book like this if they are going to study another language or if they are going to teach their own native language.

And, teachers need a book like this to brush up on new insights into their own language, even if they are not English or Spanish Teachers or Language Arts specialists.

Even seasoned veteran English teachers could find information and explanations that they once knew, but long forgot (or is that "forgot long ago"?) in this book.

And for the rest of us, we might discover things about our native language that we didn't know...even though we correctly use those language principles each day. Summary: Side-By-Side Spanish & English Grammar is useful, but probably not a "must have" reference for many teachers.

The book rates high because the book is so useful. Writing the book so that it was fun, amusing, exciting, attention-riveting might have been counter productive. Teachers and students of a foreign language want to find information quickly for lesson planning, lesson content and study purposes.

This book is a great resource if you need lesson plan background material, examples of more grammar points than you will ever need in ordinary writing and grammar trivia questions.

Purchase this book as a reference. Use it. Build grammar lesson plans from it. Use the book for its "talking points" approach to language instruction.

Keep the book handy with other reference resources that you use daily such as your dictionary and thesaurus. Rating (Four Point scale): Useful - 4

Applicable - 4

Relevant - 4

Innovative - 2

Original - 2

Interesting - 3

Overall Rating - 3.2

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Book Review at 04:00