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Book Review. How to Learn Spanish: A Guide to Powerful Principles and Strategies for Successful Learning and Self-Empowerment by María Blanco (2021).

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Book Review. How to Learn Spanish: A Guide to Powerful Principles and Strategies for Successful Learning and Self-Empowerment by María Blanco (2021).

London, UK: Hikari Press. ISBN 978-1-8384146-0-3. 95 pp.

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This excellent, strategy-loaded little guidebook on learning Spanish is highly applicable for learning any language. It is equally suitable for students, teachers, and language advisors, as students will learn strategies, and teachers and advisors get pointers on how to support students' autonomous learning.

There are 18 chapters and three parts in the book, taking the reader through the journey of becoming a successful language learner while enjoying their studies. The author gives advice based on her more than 20 years of experience of teaching language learning strategies. Chapters 1 to 3, *The starting point*, bring up the concepts of self-motivation, goal setting, as well as the approach to learning by good language learners. The author states that optimal learning situations includes clarity about own motivation, and then using it as a driver to pursue own goals.

The following chapters, 4 to 7, examine some *Powerful principles* behind language learning, for example, that all skills work together to improve proficiency. As communication is the main goal of language learning, the author advises that, to make improvements within this area, learners should target the weakest part which may prevent them from using the language in the way they want and need. She then gives ample suggestions for how to approach this by using all skills together.

In the last part, *Powerful strategies*, chapters 8 to 18, the author presents suggestions for how to improve all four language skills, as well as how to learn more vocabulary and grammar. In chapter 8, the author states that learning normally happens in two ways, by exposure and by focussed study, both of which complement each other. For example, once students meet language items in formal settings in the classroom, they may later come across these in natural settings, thus consolidation of knowledge occurs, which in turn leads to increased proficiency and self-confidence. The remaining chapters provide advice on dealing with grammar, strategies for vocabulary learning, and improvement of the four skills. The

author also presents a helpful toolkit for self-study. The last chapter consolidates the many tips and ideas, and it encourages the learner to take action within the areas of motivation, goal setting, and learning strategies.

At the end of each chapter, the author poses the question, “What about you?” directly to the reader. This provides an opportunity to review the advice in the chapter, reflect, and become more aware of useful strategies, and thereby laying the ground for a higher level of language proficiency. Throughout the book there are plenty of ideas for goal setting and learning strategies which help students to choose, use, and adapt to different learning environments, learner preferences, and lifestyle. The aim of the book is to heighten students’ awareness about their current approach to learning, and to suggest changes to make learning more productive, and more enjoyable.

Even though the book is targeting students, it is equally useful for teachers and advisors, who will recognise the challenges presented in this book. By learning more about the different ideas for learning covered by the book, they will be better equipped for their teaching and facilitation of learning languages. Overall, it is very accessible publication, and I warmly recommend it to anyone who wants to teach languages, learn languages autonomously, and, at the same time, make the learning journey more enjoyable.

Publication Information

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