
Practice and Improve Your Spanish Plus A Complete Listening Program...Your Next Step in Mastering Conversational Spanish

Vital Statistics

Title: *Practice and Improve Your Spanish Plus A Complete Listening Program...Your Next Step in Mastering Conversational Spanish*

Author: Jose Amodia Gomez and John Pride

Publisher: Passport Books, National Textbook Company, 4255 West Touhy Avenue, Lincolnwood, IL 60646

Copyright: 1988

Number of Pages: Handbook: 180 pp.; Listening Guide: 145 pp.

Intended Users: Third or Fourth Year (or Advanced) Guided Self-study Students

Language: Spanish

Overview

This series of four cassettes, a *Handbook* and printed *Listening Guide* differs from *Listen n' Learn* in both form and intent. Designed for "casual listening" while the user is engaged in some other task ("traveling to work, going to school, doing housework and so on", *Handbook*, p. vii), the cassettes consist of a combination of dramatic scenes and practice materials interspersed with music. Consecutive scenes build into an on-going story in the manner of a continuing radio drama. A summary is provided for each scene, followed by language notes on "giros," a word list, and, usually, one or two practice exercises. The practice exercises are taped, but the listener may practice speaking in the pauses provided should he or she wish to do so. The use of both a handbook with summaries,

glossaries and practice lessons, and a listening book providing complete transcripts of the tapes is a helpful approach.

The listener is advised not to rush and not to linger over selections, but merely to "enjoy" them. The authors suggest that the user first read several scene summaries, study the glossary provided in the *Handbook* and then simply relax and listen to several scenes consecutively. The use of realistic sound effects adds to the authenticity, creates atmosphere, and facilitates understanding of the scenes. Background music (as suggested in the Lozanov method?) serves to relax the listener and subliminally aid learning while musical selections between scenes create pleasant and relaxing interludes between listening segments, adding to the authentic "radio drama" tone of the program.

Listening Practice

Practice tasks vary. They may request the listener to role play, taking the part of a character in the dialogue; they may request the listener to repeat or (in an interesting variation) to *anticipate* a response; they may express the same sentence in a variety of inflections: first in a normal tone, then in a tone showing surprise, indignation, curiosity, irritation or disgust, and then, finally, returning to the normal tone.

Occasionally, listening practices are deliberately complicated by the addition of a variety of simulated interference factors: background noises

of the metro, static on the telephone line or in an overseas radio transmission or on a cassette tape recording. This interference is designed to accustom the user to listen for understanding while ignoring noise distractions just as one is often required to do in real life situations. The authors suggest that in such exercises, the listener rewind the tape and listen to the selection with interferences several times before playing the clear version that follows.

Occasionally, also, exercises are provided in which the user is expected to listen for meaning other than that conveyed by the words expressed. Practice in hearing and imitating a variety of oral intonations teaches the necessary art of differentiating among them (as, for example, curious, suspicious, irritated, cajoling, etc.) and capturing the subtleties of inferred meanings.

Cultural Content

Although the scenes tell a continuing story, they also manage skillfully to weave in situations using vocabulary and phrases for every day situations such as asking favors (borrowing a car, asking for a day off), making a telephone call, listening to an overseas radio program, taping a program, consoling a distressed friend, asking for—offering or declining—help, celebrating good news, expressing congratulations—thanks—sympathy—agreement—disagreement, inquiring about or declaring personal feelings, expressing suspicion, apologizing, accepting or declining an invitation, giving a warning, admonishing, sympathizing, inquiring about a possible job, raising money, preparing or responding to a newspaper ad, obtaining a visa or work permit, participating in a radio interview, offering assistance, making social plans, expressing suspicion, expressing hurt feelings, convincing, persuading, making or understanding veiled threats, expressing concern about a possible car or mechanical problem, obtaining a hotel room and key, answering routine police questions, defending one's position, discussing political problems or situations, discussing financial or tax matter, and opening a bank account.

Conclusions

This program closely simulates the experience

of listening to the radio in a Spanish-speaking country. The carefully constructed scenes provide seemingly natural repetitions of important elements such as idioms or grammar points. The accent used in the *Practices* is standard, but accents vary as Merche, the main character, interacts with other characters from various areas of Spain and with Latin American student friends. As in *Listen n' Learn*, the characters speak in varying clarity of diction at different speeds, using different modes, registers and intonation, and common phasic repetitions.

The authors recommend that the listener who is rusty on basic grammar first use *Practice and Improve Your Spanish* (which provides more basic review of grammar) before using *Practice and Improve Your Spanish Plus*.

A pleasant, yet challenging program, *Practice and Improve Your Spanish Plus* is suitable for advanced (third or fourth year) students in independent study courses, as an enrichment program, as an independent study assignment, or, in select, small classes for occasional classroom use. Perhaps, because the variety of exercises is more limited or, perhaps, because the continuity of the story line aids comprehension, this program seems easier to follow than *Listen n' Learn Spanish Plus*. Perhaps, however, it only seems easier. In any case, *Practice and Improve Your Spanish Plus* is a thoughtfully organized, well-presented, and authentically interesting listening program which this reviewer believes would be highly useful in helping students to attain the ability to listen easily and naturally to authentic native discourse.

J.E.T.T. Contributor Profile

Rita Gardiol is Head of the Department of Foreign Languages at Ball State University. Interested readers may write to her at the following address: Department of Foreign Languages, College of Arts and Sciences, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306.