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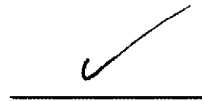https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/8203

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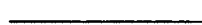
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ASSESSING COMPUTER PROGRAMS FOR THE SECONDARY FOREIGN

LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: TOWARD A COMMON MEASURE

by

Charles P. Byrne

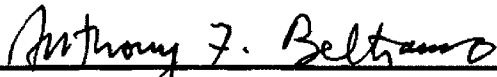B.A. University of Oregon, 1989

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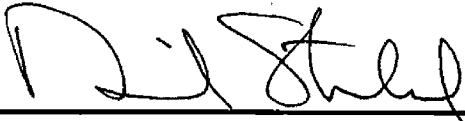
Master of Arts

The University of Montana

May 2003

Approved by:

Anthony J. Beltramo
Chairperson

[signature]
Dean, Graduate School

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Date

Byrne, Charles P. M.A., May 2003   Spanish

Assessing Computer Programs for the Secondary Foreign Language Classroom:
Toward a Common Measure

Director: Anthony Beltramo   /ʎℬ ·

In my thesis I have analyzed three different Spanish CD-ROM language learning programs (*Español Interactivo, The Rosetta Stone* and *Who is Oscar Lake?*) and developed an evaluation tool that secondary education teachers could use for assessing foreign language computer software. The teaching methodology and resources that I employ in my classroom are described in order to establish my frame of reference. I drew descriptive phrasing from the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages guidelines as a means of describing the attained stages of my students' knowledge that I have come to expect through my classroom experience. Use of each program is evaluated for its value in helping to reach given stages.

Various aspects of the three software programs' approach, design and procedure are assessed in order to describe how successful those programs would be in moving the student toward described levels. I also evaluated the programs' presentation of culture in both the overtly "cultural" lessons, as well as the routine activities. I found all three programs to be of educational value, but the utility of them was markedly different. *Español Interactivo* was the most successful in blending real-life situations with an educationally sound approach to grammar and vocabulary, and culture. *The Rosetta Stone* was fairly successful in its methodical approach and abundance of recombinations of vocabulary and grammar, but its complete lack of cultural elements was apparent. *Who is Oscar Lake?* included very little cultural flavor and its approach to language structure seemed to be missing several important steps.

I have developed an evaluation tool at the conclusion of my thesis which combines the different areas of approach, design, procedure and culture. It is designed to be used by the foreign language teacher interested in evaluating software for use in the secondary classroom.

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Introduction

Advanced computer technology has been gradually moving into the secondary education foreign language classroom over the past decade. I believe that this software can be a valuable asset in the classroom. Language teaching is a profession informed by many contributing disciplines such as psychology, linguistics and anthropology. As one experienced in this activity and privileged to be involved for over a decade, I am inclined to use my knowledge of students' attainment at various stages as a descriptive point for developing my thesis.

I will define the software's "value" in terms of its ability to aid the learner in reaching those levels that I am accustomed to seeing. In order to make this discussion easily accessible for other professionals, instead of constructing my own descriptors, I've decided to adapt and use the familiar phrasing of the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) guidelines. I should emphasize that it is not the guidelines that serve as an objective of teaching, rather I find them to be an appropriate means for describing the attained stages of my students' knowledge.

As a high school Spanish teacher, I would like to know how this new technology would fit into my classroom and what its greatest strengths and weaknesses are. I have chosen three different interactive computer software programs to analyze in this thesis. As will be seen in the developing analysis, the programs share many features in common, such as use of engaging visuals, presentation of culture and use of game elements. As we shall see, however, each program will emphasize these features in markedly different ways.

An obstacle foreign language teachers currently face in trying to choose appropriate software is the lack of a systematic means of evaluating software programs. It will also be my goal to develop an evaluation device at the conclusion of this thesis that combines my observations in the analysis of the programs to form a practical tool which teachers could use for programs they are considering for their classroom. This evaluation assessment tool will be based on my personal experience, yet it will be applicable for other teachers and their varied settings and methods.

It is my hope that the type of interactive programs that I will be examining will be able to aid me with the two main problems I face in my classroom: the underachieving student who has trouble paying attention and succeeding in class, and at the other end of the spectrum, the accelerated learner who is unable to move through activities at his/her own speed.

For many of the underachieving students who are not interested or are not able to connect with classroom activities, the problem seems to be that they are unable to learn with the standard "teacher-as-information-dispenser/guide" model. For others, they simply do not have the language skills to do so. I believe that the former group of students contains many children who are the product of a new generation of children who grow up in an interactive technology-rich home and come to expect the same at school. Students with lower language skills may also share some of those characteristics, but their other obstacle is simply learning a foreign language. They are the students for whom a foreign language seems an unnatural process. They are not able to use effectively inductive reasoning in their language learning and they find it difficult to do anything that is not a word for word translation.

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I believe that interactive computer programs could greatly aid both groups of under-achieving students. First, it would help those students who are accustomed to technology-rich activities by presenting them with an image and sound-rich activities and the opportunity to control directly their learning process. They control, to some extent, the choice of activities and also the rate at which they progress. This higher degree of control would be more effective in maintaining their interest and providing the opportunity for a better learning experience.

Second, it would help those "unnatural" language learners by allowing them control over their activities and supplying them with quick reference materials whose immediacy is not currently available in my classroom (pronunciation aids, dictionary, grammar rules, cultural readings). The most important advantage for these learners is that they control the speed at which they move through activities. In a classroom of mine with students of many different levels, the ability to move at a pace slow enough for the slowest of learners is impossible.

The gifted or natural foreign language learner would also benefit from the use of interactive software. S/he faces the opposite dilemma as the one just mentioned above: rarely am I able to progress at a rate that meets both the exact needs of the most accelerated learner as well as that slowest learner.

The programs would allow those accelerated students also to move at their own pace and to concentrate their time and efforts on the most challenging sections of the software. My students rarely have the opportunity to progress with ample support into new verb tenses or grammatical structures which are generally presented in the following year of instruction. They are basically held captive at that specific language level. The

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opportunity to master the level-appropriate material and then move on to more challenging areas would be an effective way to keep that learner motivated. For example, some of these programs offer opportunities to advance into the use of verb tenses normally not readily available to the learner.

Methodology and Resources Employed in the Classroom

In order to establish my professional frame of reference, I will begin by describing my teaching methodology and the resources I employ in classroom instruction. I will then explain how my students progress in first and second-year classes in terms of descriptions adapted from the ACTFL guideline language. As I proceed to evaluate the computer software programs I will be constantly referring to the ACTFL proficiency descriptions in order to indicate how well their individual features aid my students in progressing toward a level which can be described using those standards. The programs which are most effective in achieving this would be the ones most appropriate for use in my classroom.

The methods I use in my classroom would definitely be termed "eclectic". I use that term as defined by Wilga Rivers,

> "Eclectisists try to absorb the best techniques of all the well-known language-teaching methods into their classroom procedures, using them for the purposes for which they are most appropriate. ...[s/he] seeks the balanced development of all four skills at all stages, while retaining the emphasis on an oral presentation first. He adapts his method to the changing objectives of the day and to the types of students who pass through his classes... (Rivers)

The fact that my teaching method is eclectic means that I will be open to the methods employed in the software programs, but will still be discriminating in order to assure that they are compatible with the methods I use. If they prove to be useful in aiding my

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students to progress to an appropriate level which is reflected in the adapted form of the ACTFL guidelines, I would most likely be able to incorporate them into my classroom.

The specific approaches I generally tend to draw from are the Natural Approach and the Communicative Approach, but also, to a small degree, from the Audio Lingual method. My first and second-year classes are centered around a textbook series, *Paso a Paso*, published by Scott Foresman.

I will offer here a descriptive background of the nature of my teaching in order to give the framework of my form of instruction. This will be simply descriptive and not an attempt to provide linkages to technology which will be discussed in due course. The textbook we use provides numerous visual representations of the vocabulary, grammatical explanations, as well as conversations. These representations enable the treatment of them individually and combined. The book features reading activities to reinforce the grammar, vocabulary and cultural concepts. There are also many different textbook ancillaries that I use. They include: a listening activity workbook and accompanying CDs; a video series and accompanying workbook which closely follows the textbook; overhead transparencies of each chapter's vocabulary; situational conversations on blackline masters; and workbooks for practicing specific vocabulary and grammar.

I present the vocabulary and grammar in an inductive manner, relying on close attention and participation on the part of the learner as they learn new concepts. While I frequently employ the ancillaries listed above to reinforce what I have presented, I also create many of my own conversational activities. The students have an average of fifteen

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minutes of homework each night, which generally comes from the workbook, but also includes assignments and projects I have developed myself.

My students currently have no computer software available to aid them in their foreign language learning process.

Descriptive Phrasing Drawn from ACTFL Guidelines

Now I would like to explain how my first and second-year classes progress using the ACTFL proficiency guidelines as definitions. I will include only those parts of the guidelines which I feel are most relevant to my classroom in order to make an efficient evaluation. I plan to describe three of those four areas: listening, speaking and reading. I will explain why I have omitted the writing area later. I will also include culture, another area found in my curriculum and in that of most secondary schools.

By the completion of their first year of Spanish, my students' listening abilities generally range between the following two sub-levels:

a) Novice-High: Able to understand short, learned utterances and some sentence-length utterances, particularly where context strongly supports understanding and speech is clearly audible. Comprehends words and phrases from simple questions, statements...May require repetition, rephrasing and/or a slowed rate of speech for comprehension".

b) Intermediate-Mid: Able to understand sentence-length utterances which consist of recombinations of learned utterances on a variety of topics. Content continues to refer primarily to basic personal background and needs, social conventions and somewhat more complex tasks, such as lodging, transportation, and shopping. Additional content areas include some personal interests and activities, and a greater diversity of instructions and directions. Listening tasks ...[include]...short routine telephone conversations and some deliberate speech, such as simple announcements and reports over media. Understanding continues to be uneven.

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By the completion of their first-year of Spanish, my students' speaking abilities

generally range between the following two sub-levels:

a) Novice-High: [they] ...are able to handle a variety of tasks pertaining to the Intermediate level, but are unable to sustain performance at that level. They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is restricted to a few of the predictable topics necessary for survival in the target language culture, such as basic personal information, basic objects and a limited number of activities, preferences and immediate needs....[they] respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions....[they] are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor. Their utterances, which consist mostly of short and sometimes complete sentences in the present may be hesitant or inaccurate...

b)Intermediate-Mid: ...[they] are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary of survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging. ...they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services. When called on to perform functions or handle topics at the Advanced level, they provide some information but have difficulty linking ideas, manipulating time and aspect, and using communicative strategies...

By the completion of their first-year of Spanish, my students' reading abilities

generally range between the following two sub-levels:

a) Novice-High: ...[they] can interpret written language in areas of practical need. Where vocabulary has been learned, can read for instructional and directional purposes, standardized messages, phrases or expressions, such as some items on menus, schedules, timetables, maps, and signs. At times, but not on a consistent basis, the Novice-High level reader may be able to derive meaning from material at a slightly higher level where context and/or extralinguistic background knowledge are supportive.

b) Intermediate-Mid: Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make minimal suppositions and to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge.

Examples may include short, straightforward descriptions of person, places, and things written for a wide audience.

Upon completion of their first-year of Spanish, my students will also possess a good general background about Hispanic culture. They are able to discuss the most popular Hispanic holidays and celebrations as well as describe unique characteristics of such common topics as family, schools, city layouts, pastimes, clothing, weather, and music.

By completion of their second-year of Spanish, my students' listening abilities generally range between the following two sub-levels:

a) Intermediate-High: Able to sustain understanding over longer stretches of connected discourse on a number of topics pertaining to different times and places; however, understanding is inconsistent due to failure to grasp main ideas and/or details. Thus, while topics do not differ significantly from those of an Advanced level listener, comprehension is less in quantity and poorer in quality.

b) Advanced: Able to understand main ideas and most details of connected discourse on a variety of topics beyond the immediacy of the situations. Comprehension may be uneven due to a variety of linguistic and extralinguistic factors, among which topic familiarity is very prominent. These texts frequently involve description and narrations in different time frames...Texts may include interviews, short lectures on familiar topics and news items and reports primarily dealing with factual information.

By the completion of their second-year of Spanish, my students' speaking abilities generally range between the following two sub-levels identified by ACTFL:

a) Intermediate-Mid: (As described above for the most advanced first year students).

b) Advanced-Low: Speakers...are able to handle a variety of communicative tasks, although somewhat haltingly at times. They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance. ...[they] demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames...in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times. ...Structure of the dominant language is still evident.

By the completion of their second-year of Spanish, my students' reading abilities generally range between the following two sub-levels identified by ACTFL:

a) Intermediate-Mid: (As described above for most advanced first year students).

b) Advanced: Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure. ...Reader gets the main ideas and facts and misses some details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge, but from increasing control of the language. Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, biographical information...[and] personal correspondence.

Upon completion of their second-year of Spanish, my students should be able to discuss most of the cultural topics of first-year Spanish in much greater detail. They should also be able to discuss 20th century Latin American history in general terms and demonstrate a basic understanding of current events in the Hispanic world.

The one area contained in the ACTFL proficiency guidelines which I will not be discussing is writing. Only one of the three CD-ROM programs which I have chosen to evaluate had any writing activities, and those activities were strictly memorization activities in which the learner would look at a photograph and then write down the exact phrase which they had previously seen and heard. The lack of worthwhile writing activities in these otherwise impressive software programs highlights the difficulty in including writing activities and some form of feedback in this type of media. Writing has so many variables and lends itself so much to creativity that it becomes a very serious obstacle for the software designer.

In the discussion above I have carefully described the levels of the ACTFL guidelines to which I expect my first and second-year students to progress. Now I would like to begin my analysis by describing the programs I have chosen.

Exploring Three CD-ROM Programs

I plan to look at the three programs and explain what each one offers to the student and what emerges as the goals of the programs. Foreign language materials often describe themselves as subscribing to a particular method, but then marginally follow that method in the actual practice. Therefore, I plan to approach the programs without reading the manuals and to try to focus on what the program's methodology really is and not on what the manual says it is. Those programs are *Who is Oscar Lake?*, *Español Interactivo* and *The Rosetta Stone*.

Overview of *Who is Oscar Lake?*

The first program I would like to evaluate is *Who is Oscar Lake?*, a creative adventure story in which the student interacts with live-action characters in real-world settings. The software features two different aspects. The first involves a search to uncover the identity of the person who stole la Luz, a world-famous diamond. The second involves various activities in which the student learns new vocabulary and grammatical structures through scenes which are somewhat similar to those s/he has seen in the story-line activities.

In the adventure story, the student enters into various scenarios (hotel, art gallery, kiosk, etc.) and obtains information or articles (key, invitation, money) which will direct her/him to the following clue. As the student enters each site s/he has the option of clicking on a variety of objects to see the word and hear its pronunciation. When the student clicks on a person, that person will ask a question and/or offer information to help

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with the next clue. Two possible replies and/or questions then appear on the screen from which the student may choose. Both responses are correct; they convey the same meaning but with somewhat different grammar. The student always has the option of toggling the transcription to see the English translation. The student chooses a response, hears it spoken, and then continues the conversation or moves on to the next scene.

The other feature of *Who is Oscar Lake?* is a series of activities in a café, hotel, police station, etc. in which the student carries out scored tasks which give her/him the opportunity to practice vocabulary and grammar in functional settings.

The 33 activities can be divided into three different categories. One, "Listen and Choose": a question is asked referring to objects on the screen or information you have been told; two possible text responses appear and the student receives immediate feedback on the correctness of her/his choice. Two, "Listen and Do": the student must do something on the screen such as click on a certain object or drag something to a particular location; the student also receives immediate feedback in this activity. Three, "Listen and Speak": the student is shown a visual cue and responds orally, recording her/his voice if s/he chooses. There are no response choices given, but the student can click on the cue to hear (and read the text if desired) the correct response.

The authors of *Who is Oscar Lake?* have developed a software program which intends to introduce the student into functional settings in which s/he either interacts with characters, gathering clues as s/he goes, or learns vocabulary and grammar, in order to do graded activities. Later on I will discuss how well these three software fare in reaching the goals of my students.

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As we shall see, this program seems to be one that would be more valuable to my highly motivated students in that they would be able to infer grammatical structures in the adventure game and would be able to gain expertise in the other activities which are also inductively based. The under-achieving student, however, would find this program less valuable. Although it is effective in drawing the student in with its real-life activities, its inductive approach would make learning difficult for her/him.

Overview of *The Rosetta Stone*

The second program is *The Rosetta Stone*. This program has no video component and relies exclusively on real-life photographs to create the context for language learning. There are eight main sections and 11 sub-sections within each one. The sections are not divided by theme or content, but instead, by lexical and grammatical difficulty. Each screen in each activity presents a panel of four photographs. The student then learns the textual and oral descriptions for those images through various interactive activities.

The first activity is a preview activity in which the images are automatically matched to text or oral description or both. This is followed by a variety of exercises: listening and reading, listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Upon completing these activities there are tests concerning listening and reading, listening, reading, and writing.

There are multiple options within the exercises for listening and reading, listening, and reading. Some of those combinations include: seeing and hearing the text and matching the correct photograph; matching spoken text to written text; matching spoken text to the image; and matching written text to the image. Within those

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combinations there is also a multitude of other combinations (e.g. presenting four pictures and one sentence or four sentences and one picture).

The speaking activities allow just one exercise in which the student sees a picture, records her/his own voice and compares that to the native speakers'. An interesting feature within the speaking activities is the "Voiceprint" window. This is a sophisticated device which displays the pitch, emphasis and form of the student's utterance. They are then able to compare it with that of a native speaker.

The writing activities also offer just one exercise. The student sees a picture and then writes the corresponding text. There are two sensitivity levels within these activities: "easy" and "strict". "Strict" requires correct capitalization, while "easy" does not. There are six different feedback sounds for both correct and incorrect answers available in all of the activities described.

The goal of the authors of *The Rosetta Stone* is quite an ambitious one. The program's vast amount of linguistic material is presented in 88 units, each unit containing 10 screens with four photographs on each screen. Judging from the construction of this program, the sheer volume and complexity of the material would challenge the learner to move beyond basic survival usage toward a greater mastery of the language. Although this program does include many activities which could be utilized in functional or communicative real-life situations, their approach is definitely not functional or communicative.

As will be seen, this program is much like *Oscar Lake* in its reliance on inductive learning. The advanced student would be much more likely than the under-achieving student in progressing with this program.

Overview of *Español Interactivo*

The final piece of software program is *Español Interactivo*. It contains extended video scenes and still and animated graphic representations in its five tourist-centered modules (the market, hotel, restaurant, etc.) which have four sub-units. Each sub-unit contains from two to five activities within each of these categories: "Communicative Skills", "Grammar" and "Vocabulary".

The one minute video segment of each unit presents people acting out a real-life scenario which reflects and anticipates the grammar and vocabulary used in that unit. The student may choose to view the transcription during the video and is able to access any part of the video for repeated viewing. After viewing the video the student may choose to do an exercise where "*si/no*" questions are asked, both orally and textually, about the content of the video. If the student answers incorrectly, the relevant part of the transcription from the video is highlighted.

The Communicative Skills category presents cartoon-like characters within a specific scene. The student hears a phrase or a dialogue (and the text if s/he chooses) and then matches it to a place on a map, matches it with one of a set of different scenes, selects "*si/no*" to indicate whether the utterances are in agreement with the scene, etc. The student is not asked to do anything other than select the appropriate button.

The Grammar category offers a series of activities which generally revolve around using real-life photos or cartoon-like graphics to present the grammar topic and then to practice it using fill-in-the-blank or multiple choice exercises. A few of these activities, however, deal with simple verb conjugations (present and preterit),

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presentation of a grammar topic followed by no practice, crossword puzzles, and re-ordering the words in a sentence.

The Vocabulary section contains two basic components. One is the vocabulary lists of between 30 and 60 words in which the student matches the new Spanish vocabulary with its English counterpart. The other is a series of cartoon-like graphics which permit the student to do three different tasks. The most common is simply a topical scene (place settings, the grocery store, etc.) in which the student selects the different objects to hear (and see) the new word. There are a few activities which have the student test her/himself on the presented material with a multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank section. The final activities are crossword puzzles based on cartoon-like graphics.

Español Interactivo also provides four different resource areas which the student may access at any time. When in a Grammar activity, the student may use the Grammar button to access an explanation in English for the material on which s/he is currently working. The "Functions" button allows the student to access explanations of different registers and how to complete specific communicational tasks within each unit. The "Dictionary" button presents the student with a window into which s/he may type a word in English or Spanish to find the translation.

The "Culture" feature offers mini-presentations in Spanish on 21 different cultural topics concerning Spain. Topics range from customs and art to geography and their monetary system. The student is presented with a series of real-life photographs and, if the student wishes, the text which describes them. There are no exercises or tools for evaluating the student's understanding in this section.

Español Interactivo's abundant use of real-life settings and situations allows this program to offer a tool which is functionally-based and especially useful to those people wanting to learn Spanish in order to travel in Spanish-speaking countries. They achieve this using a mixture of activities that draw from functional, communicative and structural methods. The authors tend to combine such dated practices as matching vocabulary lists in Spanish-English with more modern tasks like listening to natives in order to find one's way around the city.

Through my discussion of this program, it will become clear that both the advanced and under-achieving student would find this program helpful. The advanced student would find the general activities to be challenging and engaging. This student would have a realistic chance of stretching his abilities in order to complete the video segments of this program because they tend to rely so heavily on inductive learning.

The under-achieving student would also benefit from many of the general activities not only because s/he would be motivated to become engaged, but also because the grammatical explanations would aid them in their progress. This student, however, would find the inductive-driven video activities to be too advanced and very frustrating.

Software Features of Approach, Design and Procedure

Now that I have given an overview of the three software programs, I would like to continue my software evaluation by looking at different aspects in the areas of approach, design and procedure. I have chosen those three aspects as described by Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rogers in *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* as a means of organizing my evaluation of these programs. I plan to discuss those aspects and then

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compare that information to the ACTFL guidelines to determine how well the programs succeed in helping the student reach the certain levels attained in my high school classroom.

Richards and Rogers describe approach as referring to "the nature of language and language learning that serve as the source of practices and principles in language learning." (p.16) Design is described as

> "the level of method analysis in which we consider (a) what the objectives of the method are; (b) how language content is selected and organized within the method, that is, the syllabus model the method incorporates; (c) the types of learning tasks and teaching activities the method advocates; (d) the roles of learners; (e) the roles of teachers; (f) the role of instructional materials." (p. 20)

Procedure, finally, "encompasses the actual moment to moment techniques, practices, and behaviors that operate in teaching a language according to a particular method." (p. 25)

I will examine those certain aspects of approach, design and procedure which will best allow me to look at the most important features in a high school classroom. I will rarely be directly comparing the programs in my overall analysis because they are vastly different in almost all aspects and this fact makes such a comparison difficult. Therefore, in my analysis I will primarily give deep descriptions of the different aspects and draw distinctions to show how successful each program is in helping the student reach the ACTFL guidelines.

Aspects of Approach

The two principal aspects of approach that I will analyze will be structure and function. My analysis will be largely informed by the Natural Approach and inductive

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learning, but I will also be paying special attention to issues concerning grammar. While my advanced student is able to learn grammatical structures inductively, I find that my under-achieving student struggles with this type of approach. I believe this to be the case for two reasons. One, the student is not able to pay attention sufficiently to induce the grammar pattern; and two, the student simply does not possess the language skills necessary to intuit the grammar.

View of Structure in *Español Interactivo*

I would like to begin this evaluation in the area of approach by giving a thorough description of the view of structure in the language sense, including grammar and vocabulary, of the three programs. *Español Interactivo* has the most traditional view of structure of the three. Although it does have many communicative and functional activities, about half of the program's activities are more traditional in their view of structure. Many of the Grammar activities, as the title implies, help the student to learn to analyze the language. There is practice conjugating verbs (all six conjugations of the present indicative tense in order), re-ordering sentences, choosing the correct indirect object pronoun for the sentence, filling in the blank with the correct verb (*ser, estar* or *haber*), etc.

Almost half of the Vocabulary exercises are simple matching of Spanish and English words from a list. Other activities include many substitution exercises, as well as presentation activities of isolated new vocabulary without the context of a sentence. The authors attempt to cloak many of these substitution, drill and presentation exercises in communicative settings. The activities, on the surface, seem to be communicative, but

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the approach from which they are derived is definitely structural. This is evident in the structural emphasis in many of the exercises concerning verb conjugating, substitution, the re-ordering of sentences and fill in the blank.

This traditional view of structure is found to be most appropriate in directing my students to the level of Intermediate-Mid (ACTFL guidelines) in reading, at which they are found in the first year. I have specifically chosen the reading guidelines in this instance because they lend themselves more readily to a comparison with the level of proficiency of my students than do the other guidelines. At this level student can read

> "...simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure....They impart basic information about which the reader has to make minimal suppositions..."

I take this to mean that the student has arrived at this point through activities which are more transparent; they are straight-forward, right or wrong activities in which s/he might access grammatical explanations to make things as simple as possible. It is my experience that this type of activity which provides clear practice with grammar is beneficial for my students, especially those who are under-achieving.

There are areas of *Español Interactivo* which do have a less traditional view of structure. The video segments which accompany each of the 13 units, as explained earlier, offer the student the opportunity to see and hear the video with or without subtitles and to answer yes/no questions about the text afterward. There is no grammatical explanation in this section and the student must rely on the lexical and grammatical material learned previously to complete the activities successfully. Another similar activity is the Culture section which presents 21 different narrated video slides of cultural topics pertinent to Spain with accompanying text.

In the Communicative Skills area of this program, there are also many opportunities for the student to progress in the language by using a view of structure less driven by traditional grammar. There are activities in which the student asks for directions and then uses the answers to select the corresponding area on the map, or hears five different descriptions of a scene and then chooses the one it describes. In activities like these there is little grammatical support and the student is left to learn the grammatical rules independently based on its context in those activities.

This underlying pedagogical attention to structure has been shown to be appropriate in directing my students to the level of Advanced in reading, at which they are found in the second year. The guidelines state that the student should be:

> "Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure... Reader gets the main ideas and facts and misses some of the details."

This description directly applies to the two video sections mentioned above which present "longer prose of several paragraphs in length" while the Communicative activities which are shorter in length, do present its material with a "clear underlying structure." These sections seem very useful in moving students toward the above-mentioned ACTFL guidelines because practice with transparent structures allows them to progress toward more advanced grammar.

View of Structure in *Who is Oscar Lake?*

Who is Oscar Lake? makes very different use of structure. While the student is playing the adventure game, moving in and out of scenes and collecting clues, her/his only task is to select one of the two choices of phrases (both are correct) when a response

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or question is needed from the student. There are no grammatical or lexical explanations given.

The Activities component of this software does provide practice for some of the material the student will encounter while playing the game, but often the lexical or grammatical interconnectedness between the two is not precise. This limits the benefit the student would have in applying the material learned from the Activities in the Game section. The hotel lobby segment of the game and practice activities offer as a good example. In the game, the front desk clerk asks the student practical questions about what it is that he wants, about his reservations and the type of payment method he will be using.

The corresponding Activity section, while dealing with various functions like telling time, understanding the alphabet and learning how to talk about the weather, allows practice for only one of the exchanges experienced in the game hotel scene: learning numbers. Other activities which would aid in that scene, like learning to ask for things (to register oneself) or how to ask, "What is my room number?" or "What is your telephone number?" are not included. It seems that the authors believe the learner can rely heavily on the translation button in the game section with no explanations to aid in learning much of the lexical and grammatical material s/he is using. This is contrary to most materials which offer straightforward explanations in order to make the learner's tasks as easy and efficient as possible.

The Activity component has the student choose between two answers (only one is correct), drag or click on the appropriate item, or respond orally to a cue. Although the Activity section of this program approaches lexical and grammatical material in much the

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same way as in the game component, by observation and not explanation, it does allow

for enough repetitions, recombinations and isolated practice so that the student has a

better opportunity to learn the material inductively. Through its sequencing and gradation

the program is still able to induce the material by focusing on activities that can be

associated with the Natural Approach.

The activities pertain to the train station, the hotel, the gallery, the police station,

the street, and the café. The grammatical and lexical material are standard first-year level.

Lexical topics include numbers, time, weather, food, clothing, colors and colors. The

grammatical structures focus exclusively on the present indicative tense and also include

such topics as singular versus plural nouns, using "there is/there are" with vocabulary,

how to ask and give information about peoples' name, age, origin and profession. As is

also seen in the Game section, the authors of *Who is Oscar Lake?* believe that a totally

inductive approach to language learning is sufficient in aiding the student to learn the

varied language concepts. This approach is seen to be most useful to my highly motivated

students who are able to infer the material effectively.

This inductive-based engagement of structure employed by Oscar Lake is the type

that facilitates the tasks as my students arrive at the Intermediate-Mid level in speaking,

at which they are found in the first year. These students can read

> "...simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such
> texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal
> structure....They impart basic information about which the reader has to make
> minimal suppositions...".

As long as the learner's language skills are sophisticated enough to comprehend

the lexical rules, as is normally the case with my highly motivated student, this program

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should work well in aiding her/his progress toward the ACTFL guidelines. This student is able to intuit the grammar rules although they are not overtly presented. If, however, the student does not have those skills, which is often the case for the under-achieving student in my first year classes, then the ability of this program to move the student toward the ACTFL guidelines will likely be limited. This student struggles more when the grammar rules are not made clear and straight-forward.

View of Structure of *The Rosetta Stone*

The last of the three programs, *The Rosetta Stone*, has a similar view of structure as to that of *Who is Oscar Lake?* Through its use of four photographs on each screen, it guides the student through listening, speaking, reading and writing activities. It is very much like *Who is Oscar Lake?* in that there are no grammatical explanations available. The authors have presented each grammatical and lexical topic in such a way that through the repetition and recombination of their elements they believe the learner will be able to learn them inductively.

The main difference between this program and *Oscar Lake* is its breadth and scope. *The Rosetta Stone* is much more ambitious in its goals. The sheer number of images it provides the learner is astounding. There are 8 units. Each unit contains 11 sub-units. Each sub-unit contains 10 screens, each screen containing four photographs. The total number of images available to the learner is 3,250.

The authors carefully move the learner through their program by beginning with such basic concepts as singular and plural nouns, adjectives, and numbers. They then progress to such topics as the present progressive tense of the indicative, the use of

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prepositions and comparative adjectives. By the end of the program, the student has

worked extensively with the present perfect tense of the indicative, the past imperfect

tense, and direct and indirect object pronouns.

The Rosetta Stone's ambitious and challenging presentation of structure, like

sections of *Español Interactivo*, is the type that facilitates my students' progression to the

Advanced level in reading, at which my students are found in the second year. Students at

this level are,

> "Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly
> if presented with a clear underlying structure. …Reader gets the main ideas and
> facts and misses some details. Comprehension derives not only from situational
> and subject matter knowledge, but from increasing control of the language."

My most advanced students would definitely benefit from *The Rosetta Stone's*

abundant use of "clear underlying structure" and comprehension derived from

"increasing control of the language." What this program does best is give the student

such a wide variety of examples within one grammatical topic that the structures become

extremely clear and the expected outcome after repeated use of these units is that the

learner will develop exceptional control of them.

As was the case with *Who is Oscar Lake?*, such complete dependence on

inductive reasoning within their view of structure leaves the learner who is accustomed to

a traditional approach struggling to make sense of the material s/he is supposed to be

learning. However, because it is so much more thorough than Oscar Lake the opportunity

for it to be more useful in moving my students toward ACTFL guidelines would seem to

be greater.

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Aspects of Function

I would now like to continue my evaluation of aspects of approach by comparing the view of function in each of the programs. Although I have already discussed some of the functional features of the programs, I would now like to continue that discussion more in depth, searching to see how the programs' view of function line up with the ACTFL guidelines.

Function in *Español Interactivo*

Español Interactivo dedicates about a third of its program to Communicative activities. These activities, as will be seen in the following description of three programs, tend to be more complex than those of the other programs and they tend to come much closer to imitating real-life scenarios. I think it would be helpful to describe three examples of these activities in order to highlight the range of functionality contained in the program. I define "functional" as "real-life, interactive activities set in a real-world context."

To facilitate this discussion I would like to divide *Español Interactivo 's* communicative activities into three categories: 1) having the objective of being highly functional; the learner is engaged in interactive activities which simulate those a person would encounter in her/his everyday life; 2) having the objective of being fairly functional; the learner is involved in a partially interactive activity and/or finds her/himself in an activity which is not realistic; 3) having the objective of not being functional; the learner is presented with an activity which is not interactive, in a scenario which is not realistic.

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The first example refers to one which has the objective of being highly functional in that the learner is engaged in a real-life situation that could easily involve a traveler in an Hispanic country. It concerns a tourist (the student) who receives directions to various places in the city. The student listens to the directions (using a transcription if he wants) and then clicks on the landmark on the city map to which s/he has been directed. Immediate feedback is given for the correctness of the response.

An activity which represents the second category, whose objective is to be fairly functional, concerns a scene of a snowball fight. The student first listens to a description of several peoples' physical attributes and clothing. Upon completing that activity, the student then describes each of the people by clicking and dragging into the right order the correct definite article, noun and adjective. This activity would be described as "fairly functional" because the learner is involved in participating in a conversation, but the artificial task of re-ordering the sentences limits it from being a "real-life" activity.

The last category concerns an activity whose objective is not functional concerns a wedding scene in which the student hears two people describe the people in attendance (with the option of using the transcription). The input is the sole component of this "communicative" activity as there are no follow-up activities. It is obviously not functional because the student is not involved "interactively" in the activity.

Español Interactivo's view of function with its abundant use of real-life survival situations is found to be most appropriate in directing my students to the level of Intermediate-Mid in speaking. I have specifically chosen the speaking guidelines in this instance because they best facilitate a comparison to a level of proficiency of my students. In this case I find them at this level in the first year.

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"...[they] are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary of survival in the target culture..."

This program would be successful because my students would be aided by *Español Interactivo 's* communicative tasks that take place in "straightforward social situations" and are geared toward "predictable and concrete exchanges necessary in the target culture." This practice would allow them to do well in similar real-life exchanges in which they find themselves as they progress to the next level of proficiency.

Function in *Who is Oscar Lake?*

A comparison to *Who is Oscar Lake?* is best divided into two parts, the Game section of this program and the Activities section. While both are concerned with functionality as previously defined, they approach that goal in very different ways and with different measures of success.

The role of the student in the game is to interact with people, read invitations, and listen to phone messages in different scenarios, searching for clues and picking up important articles (keys, money, etc.) that will help her/him discover the identity of the diamond thief. Each piece of information that s/he uncovers leads him to the next scene and clue. The student interacts with the people by clicking on one of two possible questions or responses (although they differ grammatically, both are correct).

On one level, the game seems to have the objective of being very functional, the learner has a real-life task to complete within a real-world context. Much like a standard tourist situation, the student must pay special attention to the information s/he is exposed

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to in order to know where to proceed to next. If s/he does not interpret that information correctly, s/he comes to a standstill and will not be able to proceed until s/he is able to do so.

The success of this activity in being functional, however, is greatly undermined by the fact that the two choices the learner is offered in each conversation are correct. The student will see that discriminating between the two is of no consequence and that s/he only needs to focus on what the other person is saying in order to discover clues. The student needs to be involved in a decision-making process if the comprehension of the material is the goal. It is only through this engaged comprehension that student has the potential of progressing in her/his proficiency.

For the average high school student who is less inclined to pursue learning for its intrinsic value and is motivated more by finding the answers to the puzzle and finishing the activity as quickly as possible, this aspect of the Game section would not be of much value.

The Game section of *Oscar Lake*, as does *Español Interactivo,* is found to be most appropriate in directing my students to the Intermediate-Mid level in speaking, at which they are found in the first year. This section would be appropriate because the manner in which the student interacts with the characters and the settings in searching for clues is concerned with, "…uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward situations," and "…concrete exchanges necessary of survival in the target culture…" I find that my students who experience activities which are life-like tend to improve in their speaking skills. My main hesitation in foreseeing success with this program in helping the student progress in the language, however, still lies in the fact that s/he can interact with

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characters without knowing what it is s/he, the student, is actually saying. If s/he is not self-motivated to learn that material, then s/he will definitely not be able to perform at the Intermediate-Mid level.

The activities section of *Who is Oscar Lake?* also has the objective of being functional, but it falls much shorter of that goal than does the Game section. As mentioned earlier, this part of the program is divided into areas titled, Listen and Choose, Listen and Do, and Listen and Speak.

The Listen and Choose area is the most functionally-concerned of these three activities. The student is asked a question and then presented with two answers, only one of which is correct. A good example is a restaurant scene in which the waiter asks the customer a series of questions pertaining to her/his meal. While the student is interacting with the waiter, the only function is that of guessing the right answer and improving her/his score on the 10 question scenario. The Listen and Do area, on the surface, seems to be a likely vehicle for creating functional scenarios. Only seven of *Oscar Lake's* 33 activities, however, fall into this category and three of those are concerned with the numbers one through thirty. The four activities that remain are concerned with such tasks as passing the correct object in a restaurant or moving the correct household objects across a room. While these types of activities are *Oscar Lake's* most functional activities, the fact that there are only four of them (each with 10 commands) severely limits the potential they have for directly involving the student.

The last activity this program offers is called Listen and Speak. This activity is the least functional of the program. The student is presented with such things as objects, personal data or places and responds orally to a question concerning them or creates

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her/his own question. The newspaper stand activity is very representative of these activities. The student sees pictures of different things that would normally be sold there and is then supposed to ask, "How much does the magazine cost?" or "How much does the candy bar cost?" using the same pattern. The learner right clicks on the object to see and hear if the question s/he formed (there is a recording option) is correct.

The student has no real function in this activity because the newspaper stand cashier is seen, but never responds to the student's questions. Even if the student's only goal is to score well, s/he must tabulate her/his own score because these activities do not feature an evaluation tool.

Español Interactivo seems to be much more successful in providing the learner with a functional language-learning tool. Although some of its activities fall short of that goal, a majority of them place the student in a meaningful context in which the student must complete a realistic task by using Spanish. *Who is Oscar Lake?* does feature a few activities which engage the student in believable situations, but the majority of them are not and have the student completing tasks which are artificial and don't serve a real-world purpose.

The Activities section of *Oscar Lake*, like the Game section, would be useful in directing my students to the Intermediate-Mid level in speaking at which I find them in first year. Again, I am not optimistic that these activities would help a majority of a classroom's students reach this level because the functional quality of the activities is so low that real-life scenes are not being approximated and much of the student's learning will rely on her/his ability to take the material and apply it to more life-like situations.

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My under-achieving students, who often lack the ability to transfer these skills, would likely benefit least from these activities.

Function in *The Rosetta Stone*

The Rosetta Stone approaches the objective of being functional in a totally different manner. As mentioned earlier, the activities are all centered around 10 panels which contain four photographs each. They progress in order though the areas of "Listening and Reading," "Listening," "Reading," "Speaking" and "Writing."

The student hears and reads the descriptions for 10 panels concerning a specific lexical and/or grammatical concept and then interacts with the program by choosing the correct photograph based on listening and/or reading, and then by responding with the correct oral and written responses. At no time in *The Rosetta Stone* is the student carrying out a real-life task or actually interacting with a video personage or a cartoon-like character.

There are four sections among the program's 88 in which the student uses interrogatives to ask a question pertaining to a photo and then answers the same question. While this does somewhat simulate a real-life situation, the fact that the student answers her/himself negates that function. As in certain parts of *Who is Oscar Lake?*, the student's only goal becomes to score points by answering correctly in the absence of any meaningful function to complete.

The authors of this program seem to believe two things. First, in spite of any real-life function in these activities, they believe that the student will be self-motivated enough to progress through their program and carry out these activities in the absence of

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any such function. Second, in spite the lack of real-world situations, the authors believe that the student will still be able to apply the learned lexical and grammatical concepts in real-world situations.

It would seem that *The Rosetta Stone* presents a low emphasis on functional-based instruction, however, based on my experience with students who do well with this type of material, their performance does reach a level described as the Advanced-Low for speaking, my second-year level.

> "They participate actively in most informal and a limited number of formal conversations on activities related to school, home, and leisure activities and, to a lesser degree, those related to events of work, current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance. ...[they] demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames...but control of aspect may be lacking at times."

Providing a broad scope of lexical input as this program does, shows that the student will be able to converse on that wide range of topics. Moreover, abundant exposure to "major time frames" allows them to narrate and describe effectively. As might be expected, the "unnatural" language learner is seen to continue losing ground in application skills as is true with the other two programs.

Aspects of Design

I think it would now be helpful to continue this discussion of the different programs' value in helping the student achieve ACTFL guidelines by evaluating an important aspect of design, sequencing and gradation. A look into these programs' design will allow me to evaluate closely the more detailed features and also to see if the programs have favored the introduction of grammar over communication or vice-versa.

In my discussion of these programs' design I will assign special emphasis to sequencing and gradation of grammar. It is my experience that under-achieving students perform best when materials give special attention to this component. My advanced students are able to learn grammar with ungraded and non-sequential presentations like those found in the Natural Approach. The under-achieving students, however, are not able to learn through exposure and instead, need a more transparent presentation of the grammar and the rules it follows. The most effective programs, however, are those that combine the two aspects without favoring one over the other.

Sequencing and Gradation in *Español Interactivo*

Español Interactivo presents the student with activities which try to imitate very closely those a tourist would encounter. Although the program is concerned with creating a realistic and communicative atmosphere, it has still maintained a fairly traditional grammar-based approach to sequence and gradation. This traditional approach is characterized by a gradual introduction of grammar in which the most basic and common structures are presented first and then other more complex structures are slowly added, built on to the previously learned material.

The first of five modules presents such common concepts as the alphabet, introducing oneself and nationalities. The second module, "In the Market," introduces such standard beginner-level topics as indefinite articles, the numbers 1-50, regular present indicative verb conjugations for first and second person singular and plural, and discriminating between *tú* (second person singular) and *ud.* (third person singular).

The program begins each unit with the presentation and practice in the Vocabulary area of much of the material the student will be using in the Grammar and Communicative Skills area. That vocabulary is integrated methodically into the various activities of those two areas so that the learner will be able to learn grammatical and communicative skills while also using the lexical material.

The grammar presentation developed in *Español Interactivo* continues through definite articles, demonstrative adjectives, stem-changing verbs in the present indicative, and ends with "*ser*" and "*estar*" (two verbs meaning "to be"). Although not every grammar topic contained in a standard first year textbook is covered by this program, most are.

Español Interactivo does a thorough job of keeping all of the Communicative Skills activities and many of the Grammar activities so closely in harmony with the communicative goals of the units. The program accomplishes this by consistently employing thematic real-life activities in many of its units. The goals included in the activities include asking the price for goods, paying for a purchase, asking for directions, reserving a hotel room by telephone and inviting someone to a party by telephone.

It seems to me that the authors have worked very hard at developing a program that is traditional in its sequence and gradation of lexical and grammatical points, while at the same time offering activities which closely simulate real-life scenarios. It is not my contention that the two are mutually exclusive, but that an efficient blending of the two is not very common in most foreign language materials.

One area of discussion of *Español Interactivo* upon which I have delayed comment is the Video section. I chose to postpone an analysis of its sequence and

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gradation because the program minus the Video would stand alone quite well. As will be seen, the Video section has a different approach to sequence and gradation.

Each of the five modules has one to two video segments which are between one to two minutes in duration. Like most of the activities in *Español Interactivo* they very closely follow the communicative setting of each unit. Their main drawback is their lack of proper sequence and gradation for a beginning language learner. Almost all dialogue, including that in the initial video segments, is spoken at a normal, native-like colloquial speed. The beginning student does not have enough listening experience or skill to be able to integrate these activities effectively, as they would challenge even the near-fluent speaker.

As one gains familiarity along with the student on content and structure, there develops a sense that the complexity of the material and rate of input moves fixed at a stage that is just beyond the learner's current stage of learning similarly to the hypothesized I+1 construction for comprehensible input. *Español Interactivo* has chosen to disregard this commonly seen progression in developing the video segments.

This program's approach to sequence and gradation leads most naturally to the fact that it would be useful in directing my students to the Intermediate-Mid level in speaking, at which I find them in the second year.

> "...[they] are able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. Conversation is generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary of survival in the target culture; these include personal information covering self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel and lodging. ...they are capable of asking a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services."

Español Interactivo offers abundant practice with real-life tourist scenes concerning "survival in the target language" and within those activities the learner must demonstrate the ability to "obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs such as directions, prices and services". Based on this type of activities, this program seems to have been developed for the prospective tourist and so fits these criteria very well. My students would do well with this program because I find that engagement in real-life scenes would prepare them well to advance toward the next level of proficiency.

Sequencing and Gradation in *Who is Oscar Lake?*

Oscar Lake presents itself as a fun and easy way to learn a foreign language. The program has two components. There is a game in which the student searches for the diamond thief, and there are practice activities which involve real-life settings and believable tasks. The notion is that while enjoying her/himself by playing the game (which has three different outcomes) and completing the activities, the student will also be able to improve her/his language skills.

The sequence and gradation of the game section of this program definitely favors communicative context over grammar presentation. The student finds her/himself in standard tourist settings like those of *Español Interactivo* which include a café, a gallery, a police station, a square, a train station and a hotel. The stages of the student's search, first the train station, then the hotel, then the restaurant, mirror those of the initial activities a tourist would encounter in a foreign country. The authors have thought out these settings very well and the path the learner takes in searching for the thief are

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similar to those of a real-life situation, but they have not considered presenting the grammatical and lexical structures in a systematic way.

By the time the student reaches the third clue s/he will already be experiencing language as complicated as this phone message which says, "You have a message from Velásquez. It says: 'Your invitation and my card are on the desk. Take it and call me later.'" [my translation] Although the authors have accomplished the objective of creating a real-life similar to one a tourist might encounter in a foreign country, the fact that it goes far beyond the beginning learner's level of proficiency limits the value of this type of activity.

The different environments require that the student engage in communication at a very high level for a beginner. The grammatical complexity of the exchanges does not vary as the game progresses; the first exchanges are as complex as those of the final scene. The authors of *Oscar Lake* have definitely succeeded in presenting the student in this game section with a rich communicative setting, but they have failed to tailor the language level to that of a beginning learner.

I would like to point out, however, that the rate of speech in the game activity of *Oscar Lake* is much better adapted to the beginning language learner than the video segments of *Español Interactivo*. The rate of speech is not overly slow, but the authors have taken pains to assure that the input is comprehensible.

The "Activity" section of *Oscar Lake* seems to be more balanced in its sequence and gradation of grammatical structures and communicative objectives. The six different areas, each comprising three to four activities, are the same as those of the game section. The six areas and their activities, however, are not presented in any special order. It

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seems that the learner is encouraged to proceed with any activity that may interest her/him, regardless of its order.

The lack of sequence and gradation in this section of the program is not as big a hindrance as that in the game activity because the majority of the activities are at a fairly rudimentary level (the equivalent of my first semester first-year Spanish students), in which the student can complete the activity with little prior knowledge. In one "At the Café" activity the learner asks for food using the expression, *"Quiero un/a..."* (I want a...). In another activity the learner uses *"Me gusta/No me gusta..."* (I like/don't like...) to describe preferences. These are tasks a beginning student could do the first week of class.

There are, however, many instances in which the program could sequence activities to help the learner develop a more complete mastery of the material. For example, in the "At the Hotel" setting, the student learns the numbers 1-30. However, in the subsequent shopping settings, "On the Street" or "At the Café," where a need for the numbers would arise naturally, the student is never given the opportunity to apply them.

I would assume that the individual settings would at least be set up with some concept of sequence and gradation, but in most of the settings each activity has very little grammar in common. In the "On the Street" sections, the learner chooses one of four activities. They concern: a) asking for directions; b) asking a price; c) asking if a product is sold there; and d) describing the places where the person is going. Although these activities area all functional in their contexts, there is no grammatical connection between them. None of them helps the student in the other activities.

As I mentioned before, the sequencing and gradation in the Activities section of *Oscar Lake* are less problematic than those of the game section because they strive to do less. Perhaps this fact should alert the educator to the pedagogical goals of the section and its lack of interconnectedness.

This program definitely has its shortcomings in reference to sequence and gradation, but as I have stated, the student will still be learning basic and important material, albeit in a less efficient manner.

I find that *Oscar Lake's* use of sequence and gradation in its materials is the type that facilitates my students' progression to the Novice-High level in speaking, at which they are found in the first year.

> "They are able to manage successfully a number of uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations. ...[they] respond to simple, direct questions or requests for information; they are able to ask only a very few formulaic questions....[they] are able to express personal meaning by relying heavily on learned phrases or recombinations of these and what they hear from their interlocutor."

This program's simplistic approach to sequence and gradation exposes the student to only "uncomplicated communicative tasks in straightforward social situations." Questions in the program are "simple" and "direct" and the student is only able to ask questions of a "formulaic" nature. S/he also is "relying heavily on learned phrases and recombinations of these." All my first-year students would benefit from this rudimentary approach because it allows her/him to progress in such formulaic patterns.

Its main drawback, however, is that the student will not be able to progress to a higher level like Advanced-Low in which the student is able to participate actively in

most informal conversations, handle a wider variety of communicative tasks and narrate in all major time frames.

Sequence and Gradation in *The Rosetta Stone*

The Rosetta Stone is by far the clearest and most deliberately organized and clearly sequentially grammatical of the three programs in terms of sequence and gradation. Because the program is not communicative in its approach, it is able to concentrate exclusively on the lexical or grammatical component it chooses to cover.

In the first section of Unit One of this eight-unit program, *The Rosetta Stone* introduces nouns, prepositions, definite, and indefinite articles. The following section combines those nouns with the present progressive tense. Three sections later the student learns to use plural nouns with the present progressive tense.

Another indication of the authors' attention to order in their presentation is the program's sequencing of verb tenses. The present tense is used exclusively in the first unit and in nine of the ten sections in unit two. In the last section of that unit, the student encounters the simple future and the present perfect tenses. The imperfect tense is introduced in the beginning of the sixth unit and the imperfect progressive tense, along with review of the present progressive tense, is presented in middle of that same unit. The preterit tense, the last to be presented, appears at the end of the seventh unit.

Although the order in which the verb tenses are presented seems methodical, the authors' method doesn't line up with the standard progression used in most beginner-level text books. These generally start with the present tense, move into the simple future tense and then include the preterit, followed by the imperfect tense.

Perhaps the most glaring error in the authors' selection of verb tenses is their choice to focus almost entirely on the present progressive tense to describe the different panels, much as is done in English, to the almost complete exclusion of the present tense. Although the present tense forms of the verbs "*ser*," "*estar*," "*poder*" and "*tener*" are encountered frequently, a complete explanation of the conjugation of "regular" present tense verbs is never made. That is a very puzzling choice, considering that the present tense in Spanish is normally the first acquired and most frequently used whether in natural or artificial settings.

The authors' goal of sequence and gradation, as I mentioned above, is very straightforward and methodical in the area of lexical and grammar material which does not concern verb tenses. Although they are less successful in their sequence and gradation of verb tenses, the learner would still be able to make some progress in that area.

This program's approach to sequence and gradation would be useful in directing my students to the Advanced-Low level in speaking, at which I find my students in the second year.

> "...[they] demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames...in paragraph length discourse, but control of aspect may be lacking at times."

The Rosetta Stone's exceptional presentation of lexical material and some verb tenses normally used in "narrating and describing in all major time frames" would make their approach to sequence and gradation in line with the expectations of the ACTFL descriptors. As is evidenced by the discussion above, the program does have limits in its sequence and gradation, but my students would still possess some of the tools necessary to progress toward the ACTFL guidelines.

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Aspects of Procedure

I think it would be beneficial to continue this examination of the validity of software programs by looking at aspects of procedure in order to get a better idea of the moment-to-moment functions of the programs in order to see how successful they are in aiding the student to meet the ACTFL guidelines. I will start by focusing on the programs' presentation of lexical material and continue by looking at their use of feedback features.

In my discussion of presentation I will concentrate exclusively on lexical and not grammatical components because in my discussion of sequence and gradation I looked extensively at the type of grammatical material being presented and the effectiveness of each program's treatment of that material.

Presentation in *Español Interactivo*

Español Interactivo features three principal methods for presenting new lexical material. Those include: sentence-length utterances combined with visuals, in which the student must interact; isolated vocabulary words with matching visuals; and Spanish-English vocabulary lists.

The sentence-length activities, which make up less than a third of the lexical activities, have the benefit of offering the student the word or expression in context and not in an isolated manner as in the other two activities. In a typical activity, Telling Time, the student sets the hands of the clocks and then hears and reads the appropriate time. In "¿Cómo es?" (What is s/he like?) the learner selects different physical characteristics

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such as old, young, red-headed, freckled, and blond, and then the cartoon character immediately takes on those characteristics.

A less interactive method of presenting lexical material, representing over a third of the lexical activities, concerns a visual and the isolated vocabulary word which describes it. In activities like "*Frutas y verduras*" (Fruits and Vegetables), the student simply selects the visual of any of the foods in order to hear and see the word. This sort of activity seems deficient in two ways. First, the use of isolated vocabulary words short-changes the students who would benefit from a more contextualized use of the language as in the previously discussed sentence-length activities. Second, this type of activity is totally lacking in any game play or score-tallying.

The last method of presentation features the antiquated use of Spanish-English vocabulary lists. They are presented in no special order in reference to theme or word class. The learner may select any of the words s/he wants to hear pronounced. In the next activity, the student takes the scrambled list of words and then matches them correctly. The shortfalls of this type of activity are obvious. There are no visuals to engage the student, there is no game element, and the lack of context is lamentable.

I believe that *Español Interactivo* does a very good job of creating communicative and grammatical activities which are fun and motivate the student to participate actively. The authors' overall flat lexical presentation, however, does not complement the goals of that approach.

It would seem that this program's presentation of lexical material is found to be most appropriate in directing my first-year students in reading to the Intermediate-Mid level.

"Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying structure."

I believe that my highly motivated student would be self-motivated enough to learn the vocabulary in the less engaging activities of *"Español Interactivo,"* and so would have a good enough lexical background to read "simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs." My under-achieving students, on the other hand, would struggle with this presentation of vocabulary because it would not motivate them sufficiently to learn the material.

Presentation in *Who is Oscar Lake?*

Who is Oscar Lake? is divided into an Activity section and a Game section. As I explained earlier, the Game section does not attempt to "present" new lexical material to the learner. Instead, s/he becomes immediately involved in quite complex interactions in which a command of the material is expected. Because of this lack of presentation format I will focus on the Activity section which does have as its goal the presentation of new vocabulary in reasonable units.

The Activity section, however, chooses an insufficient method of presenting lexical material. Most programs generally present vocabulary in the traditional manner, allowing students the opportunity to learn the meaning of the word before having to complete tasks based on the word's meaning. This program, however, starts learners with activities in which they perform graded and ungraded tasks without first having been exposed to the lexical material.

A typical Listen and Choose activity, "Look Outside!", has the student view a picture of the weather and then choose the correct phrase from the two possibilities given. The student may select the translation feature to view the English, but the activity, which scores the student's responses, doesn't seem to be designed to be used in that way. Besides, playing precisely the same game over again seems to defeat the purpose of engaging the learner with original material.

"Put It There!", a Listen and Do activity, uses the same approach. The learner hears and reads phrases instructing her/him to move certain desk-oriented objects from the desk to the drawer or vice versa. The student is encountering these words for the first time, but must carry out the task and have her/his performance scored anyway. The toggle button may be used for an English translation, but again, it seems to defeat the motivational strategy of the activity.

The last type of activity belongs to the Listen and Speak category. In "On The Menu," the learner is presented with pictures of different restaurant foods and records his/her voice using the phrase, "*Quiero un/a...*" (I want a...) and then selects the food to see and hear the correct answer. As in the other two activities, this is the first time the student has seen the word and s/he is still supposed to be able to produce the correct phrase.

The authors' presentation of lexical material seems to be missing that logical first step of input. A plausible explanation might be that they expect students to have some background in Spanish so that they do not need the initial input stage. That explanation is doubtful, however, because nowhere in the "Guidebook's" description of the *Oscar Lake* program is it mentioned that prior knowledge is expected or even helpful. It seems to me

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that in an effort to make a single-disc program that is enjoyable and concise, the authors have overlooked the necessity of purely input-focused activities for the presentation of lexical material.

In my experience, students who have experienced lexical material in the way it is presented in *Who is Oscar Lake?*, as was the case with *Español Interactivo*, do reach a level which would be described as Intermediate-Mid level in reading, at which I find them in the first year.

> "Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying structure."

If a highly motivated student relied heavily on the translation feature to help clarify vocabulary in the Activities section, then s/he would be able to comprehend "simple texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs." I would hesitate to recommend *Oscar Lake* to the teacher expecting to expand the student's lexical base because the program's presentation of vocabulary and motivational goals do not seem to be compatible.

Presentation in *The Rosetta Stone*

The Rosetta Stone is by far the most systematic and consistent of the three programs in its presentation of lexical material. It introduces new vocabulary in an isolated context or in combination with other lexical material or grammatical structures which the student has previously mastered.

The first section of the first unit serves as a clear example. The section, titled "Nouns and Prepositions," begins by introducing vocabulary of people and animals with

the appropriate indefinite article: *un hombre, una niña, un gato, un pez*. They then

combine two of those people and/or animals in the same utterance: *un hombre y un gato*.

A prepositional phrase which includes a person and an animal is used in the next step:

una niña encima de un caballo. I think it is quite remarkable and very telling that at this

stage, the authors are still hesitant to introduce a verb into the phrase. They are very

focused on keeping each individual linguistic unit separate at this initial phase so as to

make the students' progression as efficient as possible.

In a section of the sixth unit, "More Descriptions of People; Demonstrative

Adjectives", new lexical material is still being introduced methodically. This section

begins by recycling previously learned material and adding new descriptions: *"El hombre*

es calvo. El hombre tiene barba." The student has learned everything in the sentence

except for the words *"calvo"* and *"barba"*. As the section progresses the learner sees

phrases like *"Esta persona tiene bigote, pero no barba"* or *"El hombre calvo está*

mirando una alfombra". Again, the learner is presented with no new concepts or

vocabulary, s/he is seeing the words *"calvo"* and *"barba"* in new sentences and in a new

syntactical pattern.

The authors' special attention to detail in presentation throughout this program

assures that the learner will be able to progress to the next level without difficulty. It

should be noted that nowhere is a complete translation available for the learner. It seems

that the authors of *The Rosetta Stone* are so confident in their method of presentation that

they do not need to offer one. I believe that my higher-achieving students would, indeed,

be able to make logical assumptions concerning an English translation, but my lower-

achieving students would most certainly struggle.

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The Rosetta Stone's ambitious and successful method of presenting lexical material is found to be most appropriate in directing my second-year students to the level of Advanced in reading. "Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge, but from increasing control of the language." The student using this program has so many opportunities to experience the lexical content in varied contexts that they would surely be well prepared to apply their "control of language" in new situations. Both the levels of highly motivated and struggling students would progress with this style of presentation because I have found that my students do well when they are able to have significant practice with the lexical material and work with it many different contexts.

Feedback Features in *Español Interactivo*

The ACTFL guidelines do not include feedback criteria so I will present my own criteria based on my experience in the classroom and what I feel to be the most important feedback features a computer program should have in order to best aid the student in her/his language learning. The program should: 1) possess some form of score-tabulating from which the student may monitor her/his progress; 2) contain a timely and transparent means of conveying the correctness or incorrectness of an answer; 3) have efficient means of offering the correct answer and supplying resources so that the learner can easily find explanations.

The feedback features I plan to discuss will include the type of score-tabulating mechanism, the method used to indicate a correct or incorrect answer, and how the learner can discover the correct answer and find an explanation for it. I will be focusing

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on how well the program uses feedback to inform the student of her/his progress and how easy it is for the student to encounter resources which support the activities.

The task-oriented activities in *Español Interactivo* do have an efficient scoring system in which the learner selects the scoring button at any point in an activity to see her/his current score, the number of correct and incorrect answers are each represented as a percentage of the total number of guesses.

Español Interactivo generally uses one of several phrases to indicate the student's success, such as "*¡Bravo!*" (Good job!) or "*No, ¡inténtalo otra vez!*" (No, try it again!). In activities which involve longer tasks such as re-ordering a phone conversation or filling in a blank, the delayed feedback is sometimes problematic. Feedback for the phone conversation activity, "*¿A qué hora es?*", only comes when the 10 phrases contained in the dialogue have been put into their correct order.

As the student fills in the blank with the correct indefinite pronoun or adjective in "*Su Ropa*," s/he is allowed to advance to the next blank only when the correct answer is given. Unfortunately, the correct answer is never made available. Only when the final correct answer for the activity is entered does the student receive verbal feedback.

In addition to not providing immediate and helpful feedback, these types of activities with longer tasks do not offer the learner consistent recourse for finding a sufficient grammatical explanation. S/he may use the "Question," "Grammar" or "Communication" features for an explanation, but often the explanation is too general or simply insufficient to help the student answer the problem correctly. I believe the student who does not do well with these types of tasks would become very frustrated. The lack of an opportunity to find the correct answer and continue leaves one feeling trapped.

I have postponed comment on the video section of this program because as with previous discussions, its treatment of the topic is so markedly different from the rest of the program that it is more logical to keep them separate. The video section presents one to two minute scenes which are followed by five "*sí*" or "*no*" questions based on the video. The program offers the learner immediate feedback as to the correctness of the answer as well as an explanation for it by highlighting the appropriate segment of the transcription if the learner answers incorrectly.

The feedback features of *Español Interactivo*, although not ideal, seem to offer the student many of the features s/he needs to be successful in learning a foreign language.

Feedback Features in *Who is Oscar Lake?*

Oscar Lake features a scoring system in part of the Game segments and all of the Listen and Choose, and Listen and Do sections of the Activities area. In the Game section, the learner does receive a score which is recorded as a percentage, based on the number of clues s/he has discovered at each point in the game. However, there is no score-tallying for the individual interactions in the Game area. In each interaction the learner is presented with two possible responses, both of which are correct. The scored Activities segments do present the student with ten questions or tasks and then record the number of correct responses s/he has selected out of ten problems.

The Game section contains only correct responses so fails to give any feedback. The activity section praises correct answers with phrases like "Muy bien" and incorrect responses with phrases like "*No es correcto*" .

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One area where *Oscar Lake's* feedback seems most insufficient is that of lexical or grammatical support. There are no features available to explain questions the student might have concerning an activity. S/he is totally dependent on the translation option to attempt to create her/his own explanation for questions s/he might have.

Oscar Lake's overall lack of effective feedback seems to offer the student little support in improving their foreign language skills.

Feedback Features in *The Rosetta Stone*

This program offers the most varied and extensive forms of feedback among the three programs. After the presentation of the pictures and accompanying phrases, the student does various reading and listening activities in which s/he chooses the correct picture or phrase. The program does contain an going score visible on the screen and the student can choose from a wide array of bell, chime or gong sounds for immediate feedback. *The Rosetta Stone* also features a timer which indicates the time elapsed upon completing the activity.

The writing activities require the student to produce the exact phrase (including accents and tildes) to describe the picture. The program focuses the learner on the error nearest the beginning of the phrase by highlighting it. After each attempt to supply the correct answer is entered, the next error in the phrase is shown until the learner has entered the entire phrase correctly.

Unfortunately, at no point in any of the listening, reading or writing activities is a lexical or grammatical explanation available. The student can go back to the original presentation mode to see and hear the phrases, but there are no explanation features as in

Español Interactivo. The learner may turn to the book form "Student Study Guide," a small book providing explanations, but as mentioned above, I wish to compare these three programs as stand-alone units and not include ancillary materials.

While *The Rosetta Stone* does succeed in providing the student with several successful forms of feedback, its lack of support features seems to inhibit the program's ability to aid the student in this area.

Presentation of Culture

The potential for improved exposure to authentic Hispanic culture in the classroom might be the most exciting aspect of the implementation of computers in the foreign language curriculum. With access to video, sound, photographs and drawings, the authors of these programs are able to bring culture into the classroom as no other media have been able to before. In my discussion of culture I will examine the authenticity and usefulness of the programs' presentation and determine what value the authors give to culture as compared to that given to linguistic points.

Culture is not included in the ACTFL guidelines, so I will include a criterion based on ideas of Robert Lafeyette and my professional experience incorporating culture in the foreign language classroom. Students will be able to address European and non-European target language ethnic groups and : 1) recognize and explain "high" culture elements such as major geographical monuments, historical events and artistic accomplishments; 2) recognize and explain knowledge of everyday culture in patterns dealing with everyday living, as well as such underlying realities such as relationships, social stratification and work; 3) recognize and explain appropriate behavior in everyday

situations as well as use appropriate gestures; 4) recognize and understand accents and colloquial language use from several different Spanish-speaking areas. (adapted from Lafayette, p.49)

Culture in *Español Interactivo*

Español Interactivo is by far the most imaginative and resourceful in incorporating aspects of Hispanic culture. Its video segments successfully incorporate everyday culture through its consistent use of identifiable Spanish settings such as a café, a small store or a bar. The actors effectively employ culturally-specific body language and feature different regional accents and everything, from colloquial phrases to clothing, is very "Spanish" in nature.

The program's Culture feature allows the student the opportunity to learn about 21 different cultural topics ranging from the economy and the monetary system to sports and art. These one to two minute presentations consist of a narrated slide show. The images, as in the video segments, tend to draw successfully from those one connects with "high" culture: castles, cities and art that one who was well-acquainted with Spain would readily associate with the country.

The Activity section of the program is the least successful in its use of cultural information, but still does incorporate it somewhat. The cartoon figures used in this section are notably European and the settings in which they are portrayed are often also somewhat Spanish-looking. As in the video section, the speakers' accents are varied and the language is often quite colloquial.

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I find myself very intrigued and engaged by *Español Interactivo's* presentation of culture. The authors' obvious decision to develop a program which conveys Spanish culture is quite successful in that it imparts many of the basic cultural skills taught in the foreign language classroom.

Culture in *Who is Oscar Lake?*

Oscar Lake has also attempted to introduce Hispanic culture into its format. All actors in its Game activity are Hispanic and clearly speak with a standardized Mexican accent, including accents from no other regions. The settings of the game have a computer-generated appearance and although they appear somewhat Hispanic, their low quality leaves the learner with an incomplete picture of what everyday cultural settings should look like.

The Activity section of this program also relies completely on computer-generated visuals of people, objects and settings. They are vaguely Hispanic, but as with the settings in the Game section, they are not convincing representations and contribute little of cultural value.

It seems obvious that the authors of this program wanted to give it an Hispanic ambiance, but their lack of authentic settings leaves the learner with little useful cultural information.

Culture in *The Rosetta Stone*

The Rosetta Stone has by far the least impressive cultural features. Its photographs are decidedly North American and are the same ones used in its analogous programs

serving other languages. Although they serve their function of very clearly illustrating the accompanying phrase, they are of no cultural value. The accent spoken, standard Mexican, and the standard, non-colloquial usage is very similar to that found in *Who is Oscar Lake?*

The authors of *The Rosetta Stone* have created a program which gives the learner very good tools for improving their language skills. They have, however, overlooked the importance of imbedding the language in a cultural context which aids the learner in understanding its real-world function.

Implications in the Foreign Language Classroom

I began this discussion of foreign language software programs by describing my first and second-year Spanish classes in detail. I think it would be beneficial to return there in order to examine the overall utility of each program in my classroom. In other words, I am concerned with the following two questions;

1) In which level would each program best fit? and

2) Will it assist my students in improving their language skills?

While I am focusing on those main concerns, I would also like to return to a discussion of those students who are unmotivated, "unnatural" language learners or gifted language learners.

Implications for *Español Interactivo*

All of this program's features which were analyzed would facilitate my students' progression as they arrive at the Intermediate-Mid level of the ACTFL guidelines. That

coincides with the skills level of my higher-achieving first-year students. Although this program has some drawbacks in all of its features except that of culture, overall it is engaging, well-conceived, and appropriate for the first-year classroom.

The typical unmotivated student would find this program a welcome change from the normal classroom routine. This program has an abundance of game-like tasks, other creative activities, and a combination of well-developed video and cartoon-figure settings to interest the learner. Although the student might become frustrated in the more challenging activities, I believe that the majority of the program's activities would be within the learner's capacity.

The student who finds foreign language learning difficult would find *Español Interactivo's* reliance on a traditional view of structure to be an obstacle. The majority of "unnatural" language learners in my classroom are students who have trouble learning grammatical principles as well as lexical material. Perhaps their success with the lexical activities would compensate for the difficulty they would have with the other activities.

My gifted student would be the type of learner who would benefit most from this program. The opportunity to move at her/his own pace and to attempt the most challenging video activities would allow the student to be exposed to much more advanced material than is the norm for my first-year students.

Implications for *Who is Oscar Lake?*

The features of this program are found to be most appropriate in directing my students to the levels of Novice-High and Intermediate Mid levels, at which I find them in the first year. I would hesitate to consider using it in my first-year classroom, however,

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because of its inadequate treatment of sequence and gradation. Sequence and gradation are such an integral part of language learning in my classroom that I would not consider using this program except as an ancillary.

The game aspect of *Oscar Lake* would be an excellent vehicle for motivating the disinterested student, but the lack of meaningful tasks in the rest of the program would limit its relevance for that student. Perhaps a solution would be to utilize only the Game activity of this program and to wait until later in the school year to incorporate it into the curriculum.

The "unnatural" learner would find the total lack of grammatical explanation and full reliance on the translation feature to be challenging. This student has difficulty discovering patterns or rules and so although s/he could play the game or activities, s/he probably wouldn't be drawing the greatest benefit in the process.

Oscar Lake would be an appropriate program for the gifted student. This student would be able to infer grammar rules and understand the more complicated text in the Game activity. But upon completion of the entire program, s/he would only have advanced to the lower level of first-year in certain aspects.

Implications for *The Rosetta Stone*

All of this program's features which were analyzed would be most useful in directing my students to the Advanced-Low or Advanced levels, at which they are found in my second-year classroom. Although the program's overall treatment of the features is excellent, its lack of a video component and cultural sophistication would make me hesitate to use it in the classroom. Perhaps if there were a stand-alone video program with

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an excellent portrayal of culture, it would be possible to incorporate *The Rosetta Stone* into the classroom.

This program would be difficult for the unmotivated learner as it has no game features or creative activities with which to draw in the student. The score-tallying and timer might be somewhat motivational, but not enough to keep a disinterested student engaged in the activities.

The Rosetta Stone's detailed attention to sequence and gradation would make it quite useful for "unnatural" language learners. As long as the student had access to the accompanying Student Study Guide for grammatical and lexical explanations, s/he would probably do well with this program.

The gifted student would also do quite well with this program. Although *The Rosetta Stone's* interest level is low, the student's natural interest in language would allow her/him to proceed at a rate beyond that possible in the present curriculum.

Evaluation Tool for CD-ROM Programs

I would now like to combine the insights I have arrived at from the discussion of these three programs by incorporating them into an evaluation tool for foreign language CD-ROM programs. This evaluation tool will be specifically designed for my secondary classroom because I feel that in the process of choosing software programs the instructor must think carefully about her/his own classroom situation to select effectively materials. I have attempted to create an assessment tool which is flexible enough so that it can be used by any teacher regardless of their method or setting.

Scoring Criteria

The software evaluator should select the correct number below as it applies to each feature. The sum of those numbers will give the evaluator an indication of the program's applicability in her/his classroom and how different programs compare to each other.

5 = Excellent

4 = Good

3 = Average

2 = Poor

1 = Deplorable

Approach

_____ Structure: Grammar concepts may be presented in a traditional manner or in a more communicative and inductive fashion. How does the program's view of structure complement that which you use in your classroom?

_____ Function: The tasks of a program may or may not resemble those which are required of a learner in real-life situations. Additionally, the choice the learner is asked to make in the course of a given task may or many not affect its outcome. How compatible are the program's treatment of these elements with your classroom?

Design

_____ Sequence and Gradation: Programs may vary in the extent that they introduce grammatical and lexical material in a methodical and orderly fashion. On a range between communicative approach and grammatical approach, they may show a preference for one over the other in sequence and gradation. Does this program's design complement that which you use in your classroom?

Procedure

_____ Presentation: Programs may introduce lexical material in bilingual lists, words illustrated in some fashion, or words embedded in sentence or discourse-length units. Preferably the student will have the opportunity to learn the word before engaging in graded tasks. Some game element may be involved. The program may have a translation mode available. How would this program's presentation of lexical material complement your method of presentation?

_____ Feedback: There are often score-tabulating devices provided. Also there can be various ways to find the correct answer to a question, as well as extensive explanations. Sometimes the learner can only continue in an activity when s/he has chosen the correct answer. How effective is the program in utilizing types of feedback that are compatible with those in your classroom?

Culture

_____ Culture: Settings may or may not evoke an authentic Hispanic experience. Various types of media are used: video, photographs, computer-generated images. The accent(s) employed may reflect a certain region, multiple regions or some generic variety. Usage may be academic, formal or colloquial. How well does this program supplement the presentation of culture in your classroom?

_____ Total (Divide the total by six to figure the program's average score)

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