REVIEW OF *LIVE ACTION SPANISH INTERACTIVE*

Title	Live Action Spanish Interactive: TPR on a Computer (2004)
Platforms	PC Win95/98/NT/200/ME/XP Mac OS 7.5+, OS 9
System requirements	150+ Mhz, 10 MB of RAM, QuickTime 3.0+, thousands of colors, no hard drive space required
Publisher	Command Performance Language Institute 1755 Hopkins Street Berkeley, CA 94707-2714 Phone and Fax: 510-524-1191 E-mail: consee@aol.com http://www.cpli.net
Support offered	510-524-1191and http://www.cpli.net
Target language	Spanish
Target audience	beginning and intermediate Spanish learners
Price	n/a
ISBN	0-929724-67-4

Review by Robert Blake, University of California, Davis

OVERVIEW

Live Action Spanish Interactive: TPR on a Computer (*LASI*) is a stand-alone PC/MAC (OS 9 or before) software program that allows the learner to practice linking voice-overs (listening stimuli) to video clips. The creators describe *LASI* as based on TPR (Total Physical Response) principles because of the program's reliance on imperative structures (e.g., *eat breakfast, put on your sweater, say "goodbye"*) and the video clips where these commands are acted out. Each of the 12 thematic units revolves around a series of video clips that narrate a series of actions. The exercises require the learner to match the linguistic stimuli with the action or the reverse. A limited amount of reading and writing practice is available as well.

DESCRIPTION

LASI interface is easy to use (see Figure 1). First, the user selects one of 12 units, then one of seven modes or sections. The MIRA mode (see Figure 2) plays back a series of thematically connected video clips with their appropriate voice-overs. For instance, in Unit 1 (*Good Morning*), the video clips show a woman waking up, exercising, performing her toilette, dressing, eating breakfast, reading the newspaper, saying goodbye to her family, and going off to her hard-hat job. Leaving aside the issue of whether or not this scene is culturally probable for a woman in the Spanish-speaking world (even if it is politically correct in the United States), the MIRA section asks the learner to listen to the imperatives associated with each action (e.g., *get up, do your exercises, brush your teeth)*. Then, the ESCUCHA section requires the learner to listen to the commands, once again, but out of order forcing student to choose the correct video clip. The INTERACTÚA section (see Figure 3) is a drag-and-drop exercise in which the main character appears to reach out to grab an object appropriate to the desired action. The student drags the correct object (e.g., a spoon, a toothbrush, a newspaper) over to the video window and drops it. Dropping

the correct object causes the video to continue and the video character completes that action using the proper object. The MIRA Y LEE mode is a repeat of the MIRA section but with numbered subtitles listed on the right-hand portion of the screen. The ORDENA section mixes up the proper ordering given in the MIRA Y LEE section and asks the learner to drag the subtitles into their respective slots. The VERBOS section retells the action sequence first in the present tense and then in the past. It includes fill-in-the-blank exercises as well. The ESCRIBE section is a short-answer exercise based on the imperatives originally given in the MIRA section. For each question, the program anticipates a discrete answer with a specific set of words. Consequently, it uses feedback routines to edit and guide the student to the correct result. The program has a scorecard feature (called *marcador,* although this reviewer would have preferred the term *seguimiento*) that records the number of correct and incorrect answers.
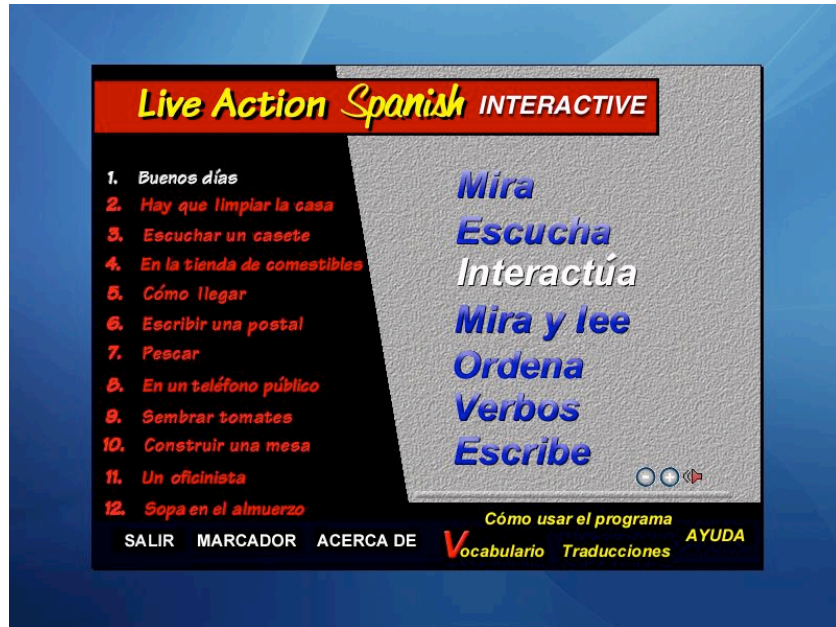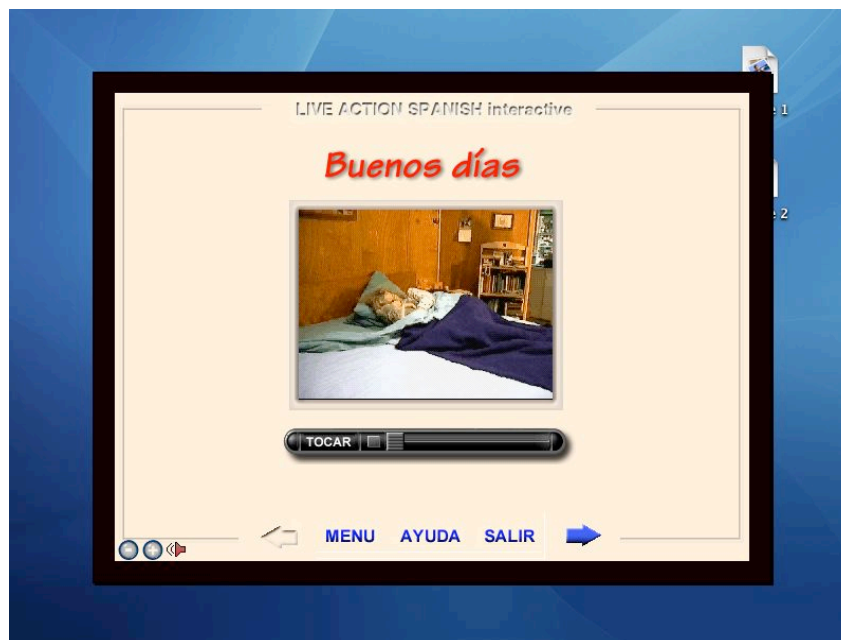

Figure 1. The *LASI* interface

Figure 2. The MIRA mode

Figure 3. The *INTERACTÚA* section

The interface exclusively uses Spanish but also offers the learner a glossary of all terms. The program credits are available by clicking *acerca de*, which is a calque from English (*about*); *créditos* would have been a better term.

EVALUATION

LASI is an entertaining program for what it does: listening comprehension practice by linking spoken voice-over commands to the appropriate video clips that mirror the desired/commanded action. Claims of interactivity are frequently exaggerated in the CALL industry and this particular software program presents no exception. The user is not really interacting with people, especially since all of the feedback given consists of repetitive *right* or *wrong* responses. Because commands form the bulk of the aural input, the creators have dubbed this program *TPR software.* Whether or not clicking and/or dragging and dropping yields the same linguistic results as the more physical actions demanded by the classroom TPR method cannot be determined at present.

The contents of the 12 units have no apparent cultural motivation with respect to the Spanish speaking world (e.g., time to clean house, planting tomato seeds; making a table). The voice-overs only expose the learner to Andean accents; no recordings were done with Argentine, Caribbean, Mexican, or Peninsular voices. Many of the video clips appear to be reused from the English version because they feature Asian or American rather than Latino or Spanish personalities. *LASI* 's strongest suit centers on vocabulary development (especially with respect to imperative constructions) and listening comprehension. The writing module (ESCRIBE) demands little of the learner because of its simple short-answer format. Given the highly restricted semantic domain for each question, the editing feedback can successfully detect mechanical as well as spelling problems.

SUMMARY

Both beginning and intermediate students form the stated audience for this program. Advanced beginners could certainly use *LASI* to advantage, but true beginners would have a difficult time of it. *LASI* is not a complete Spanish course or even a tutorial program. It concentrates exclusively on listening

comprehension of imperative phrases that are then acted out in the video clips. Issues of cultural competence are not addressed.

LASI would be best used as an individual study supplement for a more fully articulated curriculum with real cultural content. That said, *LASI* does well what the creators set out to do within an interface that is easy, if not fun, to use.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Robert J. Blake (PhD, University of Texas, Austin) is Professor of Spanish at UC Davis and founding Director of the UC Consortium for Language Learning & Teaching. He has published widely in the fields of Spanish linguistics, second language acquisition, and computer-assisted language learning. He was the academic consultant for *Nuevos Destinos* (Annenberg/CPB Project, WGBH, and McGraw-Hill Companies) and co-author for *Tesoros* (BeM, McGraw-Hill Companies), a five-disk multimedia CD-ROM program for introductory Spanish. He has co-authored with María Victoria González Pagani both *Al corriente: Curso intermedio de español,* 4th Edition (McGraw-Hill) and "Spanish Without Walls," a distance-learning course offered through the UC Davis Extension. In May of 2004, Prof. Blake was inducted into the North American Academy for the Spanish Language, making him a corresponding member of the Royal Spanish Academy as well.

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