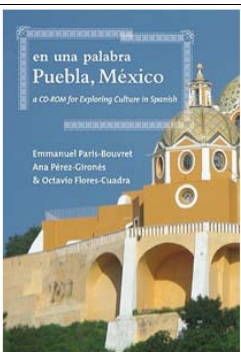


## REVIEW OF *EN UNA PALABRA: SEVILLA, ESPAÑA, CÓRDOBA, ARGENTINA, AND PUEBLA, MÉXICO*

<p><b>En una palabra: Sevilla, España</b> Emmanuel Paris-Bouvret &amp; Ana Pérez-Gironés</p> <p>2006 ISBN: 9781589011366 US \$29.95 (CD-ROM)</p>	
<p><b>En una palabra: Córdoba, Argentina</b> Emmanuel Paris-Bouvret &amp; Ana Pérez-Gironés</p> <p>2007 ISBN: 9781589011861 US \$29.95 (CD-ROM)</p>	
<p><b>En una palabra: Puebla, México</b> Emmanuel Paris-Bouvret, Ana Pérez-Gironés, &amp; Octavio Flores-Cuadra</p> <p>2010 ISBN: 9781589016477 US \$29.95 (CD-ROM)</p>	
<p>Minimum Technical Requirements (for all): Windows: Pentium II or III, 64 MB RAM or higher, QuickTime Macintosh: Power Mac G3 with OS 10.1.5 or higher, 128 MB RAM, QuickTime</p> <p>Georgetown University Press Washington, D.C.</p>	

Review by **Zahir Mumin**, [University at Albany, State University of New York \(SUNY\)](#)

### INTRODUCTION

The video series *En una palabra* provides teachers with an innovative multimedia resource for teaching Spanish culture and language to second language learners. Paris-Bouvret, Pérez-Gironés, and Flores-

Cuadra's main objective is to develop students' cultural competence and linguistic knowledge by exposing them to authentic Spanish language conversations about the following ten general concepts: *ambición* (ambition), *amigos* (friends), *libertad* (freedom), *familia* (family), *felicidad* (happiness), *individualismo* (individualism), *éxito* (success), *orgullo* (pride), *país* (country), and *trabajo* (work). Each CD-ROM includes a diverse group of fifteen native speakers from different educational, socioeconomic, employment, and generational backgrounds who define and interpret the meaning of these concepts according to their personal experiences. The authors demonstrate that these definitions and interpretations facilitate students' acquisition of language use in different contexts—a variety of sociocultural circumstances which influence how speakers use language. All of these CD-ROMs exhibit the same structure of content which constitutes the following: a summary of pedagogical objectives; quick guide instructions; historical information about Seville, Spain, Cordoba, Argentina, and Puebla, Mexico; phonetic speech tendencies; interactive word transcriptions of speech; an interactive glossary of key terms; tab functions for the aforementioned ten concepts; and photo images of the fifteen speakers featured in informal interview conversations. Below is a sample screen shot which shows the structure of content on the main page of the Seville, Spain CD-ROM.



Figure 1. Screen shot of Sevilla, España.

The authors chose these various regions in order to capture semantic and phonetic differences amongst three general dialect varieties of Spanish: Southern Spain Spanish, Southern Mexican Spanish, and Central Argentinian Spanish. The authors support their selection of these different Spanish-speaking populations by implying that in the near future, users should expect more, similar interactive CD-ROMs which depict native Spanish speakers from other regions.

## SUMMARY OF PEDAGOGICAL OBJECTIVES

In the *este programa* (this program) section of the CD-ROMs, the authors provide a brief description of the general objectives for using this interactive language learning resource. They contend that the spontaneous definitions given by the native Spanish speakers from the same and different regions enhance

students' knowledge of cultural connotations. The authors strengthen this argument by offering students a wide variety of explanations of words such as *ambición* (ambition), *individualismo* (individualism), and *trabajo* (work). For example, Omar Coyopol Polis, featured in the Puebla, Mexico CD-ROM, expresses opposing arguments regarding *ambición* (ambition):

...La palabra ambición me suena así como alguien que quiera más. Y puede ser alguien que quiera más para bien o para mal...[...The word ambition sounds to me like someone who wants more. And it can be someone who wants more for better or for worse...]. (En una palabra, Puebla, México, 2010)

On the other hand, María Paz Conde Martín, depicted in the Seville, Spain CD-ROM, contends that *ambición* (ambition) is extremely negative:

...Pienso que es más bien un afán desmesurado, y generalmente no controlado de querer conseguir algo, con lo cual lleva también a sentirse mal, a provocar cierto estado de ánimo de inquietud y descontento [I think that it is rather an immeasurable desire and generally uncontrolled in getting something, which also leads to feeling bad, to provoking a certain restlessness and discontent mood]. (En una palabra, Sevilla, España, 2006)

These examples are effective for students' language acquisition because they allow them to analyze how language is used differently by different people. However, the CD-ROMs could be enhanced by providing students with specific learner objectives such as having students summarize and compare definitions and interpretations of speakers from the three different regions to help make explicit these language use differences.

## QUICK GUIDE INSTRUCTIONS

The *este programa* (this program) section of the CD-ROMs also helps users learn how to use the different functions of this interactive program. The authors employ square-shaped message boxes with arrow pointers to describe how to operate different functions such as returning to the main program menu by pressing *entrar* (to enter), opening the word transcription box by clicking *transcripción* (transcription), and by pressing on images of speakers in order to listen to their definitions. They also provide written instructions that emphasize that the interactive glossary only includes definitions for words such as *apoyo* (support), *juventud* (youth), and *inalcanzable* (unattainable). Adding voice-over instructions spoken in Spanish would enhance students' learning experience because they could easily associate the sounds of basic Spanish words with their corresponding meaning while they manage different program functions.

## HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Easy access to the historical information is obtained by clicking on the city name: Sevilla, Córdoba, or Puebla. Each CD-ROM provides students with solid background information regarding the foundation of these cities, important churches, universities and monuments, and Web links to governmental resources and online newspapers. The authors expose students to this background information in order to stimulate their cultural understanding of the development of Spanish-speaking cultures. For example, they clearly arouse students' interest in this development in their description of the *Reales Alcazáres* (Royal Alcazar) palace which exhibits an architectural design with both Arabic traits from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and Christian traits from the 14<sup>th</sup> century (En una palabra, Sevilla, España, 2006). The authors also include a photo image of this palace, as in other descriptions with historic information, to activate students' internalization of historic facts. Although integral background information is provided in this section of the interactive program, it would be enhanced with the inclusion of footnote translations of vocabulary words such as *afán* (desire), *arroyo* (stream), and *destacado* (notable or prominent) which may be difficult for first and

second year L2 Spanish students to understand. This historic information section is quite useful for beginner, intermediate, and advanced-level L2 Spanish students who might need to learn facts about the general historic development of Spanish-speaking cultures.

### PHONETIC SPEECH TENDENCIES

The authors foster students' language acquisition of Spanish sounds by discussing the most common phonetic characteristics of native speakers from Seville, Spain, Cordoba, Argentina, and Puebla, Mexico and furnishing audio examples of these characteristics: aspiration and deletion of the /s/ at the end of a syllable *está* (is) [eh-tá]<sup>1</sup> [eØ-tá]<sup>2</sup> and at the end of a word *padres* (parents) [pá-ðreh]<sup>3</sup> [pá-ðreØ]<sup>4</sup> in Seville, Spain; deletion of the /d/ in word-final position *felicidad* (happiness) [fe-li-si-ðáØ]<sup>5</sup> in Cordoba, Argentina; and the elongation of vowels in the last syllable at the end of a word *esposo* (husband) [es-pó-so:]<sup>6</sup> in Puebla, Mexico. The authors also employ short audio clips of the actual interview conversations in their explanations of phonetic characteristics to raise students' consciousness about differences and similarities in Spanish-speaking dialects. One suggested improvement to the materials might be to supplement audio examples with detailed phonetic transcriptions, such as those provided above, in order to assist students who have previous experience using such phonetic transcriptions. They would likely be able to more coherently differentiate between allophones (phonetic variants of phonemes), graphemes (letters), and semantics (meanings of words and sentences).

### INTERACTIVE WORD TRANSCRIPTIONS

Clicking on the *transcripción* (transcription) function while listening to the native Spanish speakers enlivens students' interactive experience because they simultaneously view the words spoken while they hear spontaneous conversations. The authors' use of word transcriptions of speech successfully underpins students' listening and reading comprehension skills. Whenever students are unsure of what speakers are saying, they can quickly refer to the word transcriptions that appear directly beside the video clips they watch to facilitate their comprehension skills. These word transcriptions are most useful for beginner- and intermediate-level students because the majority of the speakers talk at a fast rate for students who do not have an advanced or superior level of linguistic competence in L2 Spanish. Whilst most of the word transcriptions are accurate representations of what speakers say, there are some inconsistencies. For example, when discussing *ambición* (ambition), the word transcription of Ramón Pérez Rueda says the following:

...Pero puedes ambicionar el más rico de tu calle o de tu barío, y entonces, es más, en fin, espúreo, que lo veo yo [But you can aspire the richest one of your street or of your barium, and so, it is more, in short, spurious, that is how I see it]. (En una palabra, Sevilla, España, 2006)

However, Ramón Pérez Rueda *actually* says the following, with differences marked in bold:

...Pero puedes ambicionar **ser** el más rico de tu calle o de tu **barrio**, y entonces, **y aquí, un poquito más**, en fin, espúreo, que lo veo yo. (En una palabra, Sevilla, España, 2006)

The clear inconsistencies between the word transcription and the oral speech manifested in this example are the lack of the Spanish verb *ser* (to be), the use of the word *barío* (barium)<sup>7</sup> instead of *barrio* (neighborhood), and the lack of the phrases *y aquí* (and here) and *un poquito más* (a little more). These inconsistencies may negatively affect students' language acquisition process, especially in the case of *barío* (barium), because native English-speaking students often have difficulty with their pronunciation of the multiple vibrant /r/ sound of Spanish (Azevedo, 2009; Hualde, Olarrea, Escobar, & Travis, 2010) which is necessary to correctly pronounce the word *barrio* (neighborhood). On the other hand, this sound may not be problematic for students whose L1s encompass languages such as Italian, Polish, and Czech

because these languages have vibrant /r/ sounds that are similar to those of the Spanish language (Bussmann, 1998; Clark, Yallop, & Fletcher, 2007). Despite the aforementioned inconsistencies, Paris-Bouvret, Pérez-Gironés, and Flores-Cuadra supplement students' interactive experience by including speakers' interjection remarks such as ¡puf! (ugh!) ¡uy! (oops!) and ¡olé! (bravo!). Including these remarks helps solidify the authors' main objective to increase students' levels of cultural competence because they are exposed to authentic conversation tendencies exhibited in spontaneous conversations.

## INTERACTIVE GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The interactive glossary of terms furnishes students with definitions of words that appear in the word transcription box. Pressing on different words in the word transcription box activates the appearance of either definitions of these words or of the sentence *No hay definición disponible para esta palabra* (There is not an available definition for this word). The authors employ this glossary of terms in order to buttress students' listening comprehension when watching the interview conversations. They also provide students with definitions and/or explanations of common Spanish expressions such as *estar a punto de* (to be about to), *al menos* (at least), and *siempre y cuando* (as long as). These additional definitions and explanations enhance the quality of the glossary because they encourage students to think beyond the use of individual words in context. A vivid example of some common expressions related to the word *vez* (time) appear when clicking on this word: *cada día más* (everyday more and more), *cada vez más* (more and more), *una vez que* (once), *En el momento en que* (at the moment in which), and *cada vez* (each time) (En una palabra, Córdoba, Argentina, 2007). Their use of common Spanish expressions in the glossary of terms is effective for students' learning because this use highlights the importance of Spanish terminology in both conversational and written Spanish. The authors' decision to use the *Real Academia Española* online dictionary (<http://www.rae.es>) for the definitions included in the glossary is appropriate for maintaining semantic coherence amongst these definitions. This glossary is suitable for students at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels of L2 Spanish.

## TAB FUNCTIONS AND PHOTO IMAGES

One of the most dynamic aspects of user-friendliness of this interactive program deals with the interplay between the tab functions of the ten general concepts (see "introduction" above) and the photo images that depict the fifteen native speakers. The authors made an effective decision to include an innovative pop-out window feature which tells users to choose a speaker after they choose a concept or vice versa. Users can toggle to different speakers discussing this same topic by clicking on the corresponding image. The flexibility to rapidly switch to different speakers discussing the same concept allows students to receive enough input which will allow them to objectively understand how Spanish words are interpreted by native speakers with different sociocultural backgrounds. The authors' use of tab functions and photo images to gain access to and view different interview conversations develops students' awareness of the relationship between the cultural diversity of Spanish speakers' backgrounds and the pragmatic knowledge necessary to understand their definitions and interpretations of the ten general concepts.

## CONCLUSION

*En una palabra* is an enthralling video series which intrigues students who are simultaneously learning about Spanish language and culture. It also fascinates teachers who would like to expose students to authentic spontaneous conversations which illuminate the variety of cultural connotations exhibited when concepts are interpreted by different speakers. Overall, this is an innovative interactive program suitable for any L2 Spanish language classroom because it comprises important historic facts, examples of common linguistic phenomena, and authentic spontaneous speech. This *En una palabra* series, which exclusively uses the target language to enhance students' acquisition of Spanish, is different from other interactive programs such as the *Fluenz* (2009) Spanish video series which uses both English and Spanish



to enhance students' acquisition of Spanish. *Fluenz* (2009) assists students' learning through direct one-on-one bilingual interactive tutoring as if they were in a classroom setting. *En una palabra* assists students' learning by exposing them to authentic Spanish language used in exclusively Spanish-speaking environments.

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## NOTES

1. The phonetic and phonemic transcriptions of this word are identical. The authors provide a phonemic transcription of this word indicated by the oblique bars: /ehtá/. All syllabifications in these transcriptions are provided by Zahir Mumin to facilitate the understanding of the examples.
2. This demonstrates the difference between deletion and aspiration of the /s/ at the end of a syllable.
3. The authors phonetically transcribe only the /s/ sound in this word: /padreh/.
4. This phonetic transcription shows the difference between deletion and aspiration of the /s/ at the end of a word.
5. The authors do not provide a transcription for this word.
6. The authors do not provide a transcription for this word.
7. *bario* (barium) is a chemical element.

All of the English translations of Spanish words and phrases are provided by Zahir Mumin. All three CD-ROMs exclusively use the Spanish language.

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## ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Zahir Mumin teaches Spanish courses at the University at Albany, SUNY, USA, and conducts research in the fields of linguistics and language teaching. His primary research interests include teaching with technology, sociolinguistics, phonetics, phonology, language acquisition, language contact, bilingualism, multilingualism, and language change.

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