

# Courseware Reviews

Gary Smith  
College of William and Mary

## **EXITO: Survival Spanish**

Kelly Ann Nieves,  
George Mason  
University

**Title of Package:** *EXITO: Survival Spanish Multimedia Program*

**Authors:** Center for the Advancement of Language Learning, Arlington, VA

**Available From:** Analysas Corporation, 962 Wayne Ave., Suite 500, Silver Spring, MD 20910

**Price:** Contact Analysas at (301) 588-2100, ext. 3022.

**Equipment Required:** *EXITO* is available for a Macintosh II family computer, or an IBM PC using Microsoft Windows environment (version 3.0 or 3.1). The minimum equipment specifications for the Macintosh version are: 250MB hard disk with 8MB RAM, Videologic video board, videodisk player, sound input device, and headphones (CD-ROM player required with the release of the CD-ROM version of the course software). A QuickTime version will be available by the end of 1996, which will run simply off of the CD-ROM drive on any computer system; the user will no longer have to make use of the videodisks.

## **Summary of Package**

### **Structure**

*EXITO* is divided into ten chapters called "days". Each chapter begins and ends with a *noticias* (news) segment that highlights the new vocabulary and grammatical points; the rest of the chapter is divided into five or six lessons, which contain skits, games, graphics and pronunciation activities to help students learn the new information.

### **Content**

*EXITO* contains material typically covered in a beginning Spanish course. Main vocabulary units include greetings, family members, time expressions, days of the week, months and seasons of the year, weather expressions, clothes, food, hotels, places around a city, and cars. The computer program covers present and preterit tenses, formal commands, adjective agreement, differences between *ser* and *estar*, future tense expressions using *ir* and an infinitive, and expressions with

tener. These vocabulary and grammar units are reinforced with activities in both the *Survival Spanish* text and the *Resource Manual for Teachers to Accompany EXITO*. There is also a bilingual dictionary which allows students to practice vocabulary and pronunciation skills. The entire package also contains cassette tapes which have listening comprehension exercises. As such, *EXITO* can be used as the main text (computer and written) for a beginning-level Spanish course, and not simply as a supplement to other course material.

**Skills Focused Upon**

*EXITO* focuses on all four language skills. *Noticias* and skits promote listening skills. Students can practice their speaking skills by using a microphone to interact with the program. There are reading passages taken from want-ads and news articles from fictitious newspapers. Students can practice writing by typing responses to questions. Most of the activities focus on communicative skills that students will need to function in an everyday Spanish-speaking situation.

**Level of Language Study**

*EXITO* is primarily designed for a beginning-level class in Spanish (i.e., high school Spanish I or college Spanish 101). However, some of the material (especially activities dealing with the preterit tense and formal commands) goes beyond what is typically covered in a beginning-level class.

**Apparent Methodology or Theoretical Foundation**

*EXITO* follows the main tenets of the Natural Approach developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983). The ten chapters do not have specific grammatical explanations. Rather, "grammatical notes" at the end of each chapter of the *Survival Spanish* textbook contain brief explanations with examples. The main emphasis is on promoting communicative competence in Spanish.

**Evaluation User Interface**

The screen design helps the user go easily from one screen to another and complete the activities for each lesson. Students simply click on icons to indicate which "day" chapter and individual lesson they wish to study. The explanations and graphics help them understand how to complete each activity. The dictionary is extensive and allows for pronunciation practice as well as for vocabulary building. However, it is not available to students when they are working on certain activities. A help feature is present in each activity. However, they receive only the instructions for that activity again; they do not receive any hints or information on the material to help them answer questions from the activity that they are studying.

**Suitable Use of Technology?**

*EXITO* exploits the advantages of multimedia technology for teaching a foreign language. That is, it effectively integrates sound, video, graphics, and text information to immerse students in Spanish. Students watch video skits, and then answer questions based on what they see. They can respond to questions by clicking on an icon and by filling in blanks. When they give a correct response, they get positive feedback (*¡correcto!*); if they give two incorrect responses, the program provides the correct answer. There are games for students to play to make learning fun. Students can use a microphone to practice speaking skills; they record their own voice, and then can play it back and compare it to that of a native Spanish speaker. They can also use these recordings to play a role in a short dialogue from one of the skits.

**Accuracy of Information Provided**

The grammatical explanations contained in the "grammar notes" in the *Survival Spanish* text and teachers' resource manual are accurate and clear. Native Spanish speakers perform all of the skits and news segments, and their representations of the characters accurately portray various aspects of Hispanic culture. The characters and graphic representations are not stereotypical, but provide amusing examples of Hispanic society.

**Curricular Compatibility**

Since *EXITO* contains material typically found in a beginning Spanish class, it can be integrated into a high school or college curriculum without any extensive revisions. The program can be done either in an intensive ten-day format or as a complete 40-hour (college semester) course. It can be used as the front end of advanced courses, as a self-study course, or as a supplement to classroom instruction. *EXITO* can be easily adapted to focus on topics of importance to business people, professionals and tourists. Middle school and high school teachers can also adapt the vocabulary and activities in the course to make it appropriate for younger students.

**Particular Strengths**

The primary strength of the *EXITO* program is that it is a comprehensive course in beginning Spanish. It does not focus only on pronunciation or vocabulary. Rather, the program integrates all of these components of language learning. Since students receive both visual and audio input, they are immersed in the language and are highly motivated to use this exciting learning tool.

**Suggestions for Improvement**

The *EXITO* program itself does not contain grammatical explanations or practice. Instructors must use activities in the accompanying text book and teachers' resource manual to cover grammatical points. Also, it would be helpful if the dictionary were available to students when they are working on a particular activity. The help feature needs to be expanded to give more extensive information to assist students using the program. For example, it would be better if the students could get input about the new material or hints which could help them answer the questions. They could also benefit from more specific explanations as to why their answer is incorrect (wrong spelling, accent mark incorrectly placed, wrong conjugation, etc). ■

**Work Cited**

Krashen, S. D. & T. Terrell. (1983). *The Natural Approach: Language acquisition for the classroom*. Oxford: Pergamon.

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*Kelly Ann Nieves is an Adjunct Professor of Spanish at George Mason University.*