

MIT GAMES-TO-TEACH PROJECT

Design Document for:

Photo Periodista

{The Photo Journalist }

“Learn Spanish as You Play!”

A virtual travel game for learning and practicing Spanish language

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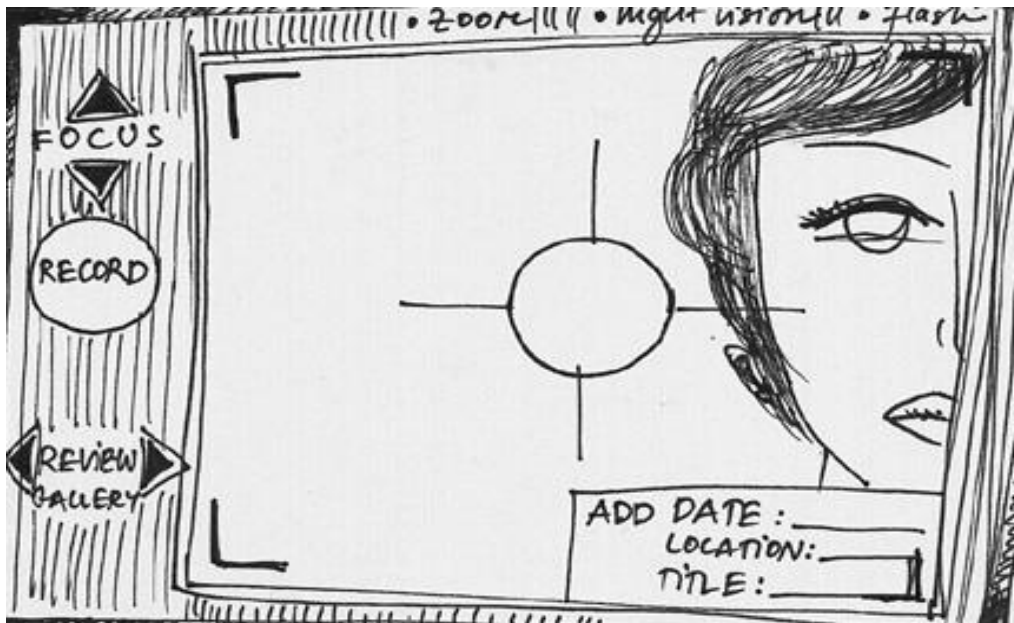


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One page synopsis

What is the game about?

This game challenges the player to take a number of photo missions in the Spanish-speaking world: parts of Latin America, Spain, the Caribbean and Hispanic neighborhoods in the US. In each mission, the player is sent to visit a particular event, and asked to take particular shots representing the key points to this event. She has to travel to each location, interview the local people and ask for directions, and strive to obtain the most sensational footage before the other journalists.

Who are the characters of the game?

The player selects her avatar from the staff members on the photo journalist team: Laura, Tito, Joe and Jennifer. Each character has different skills for dealing with the technical photo equipment and adapting to the new cultures she interacts with. The other prominent characters in the game are the editor Juan, and Maria Teatral, the Director of costumes. The multiplayer mode allows each student to play a character in the studio that competes against the other characters.

What does the player do in the game?

- n **LISTEN to original Spanish speech in a variety of different accents.**
- n **COMMUNICATE IN SPANISH** by trying to choose a grammatically correct and culturally sensitive reply from the menu given to you in each conversation.
- n **SEEK THE SENSATION** interview local people in order to find out the secret location dramatic events and high-profile personas.
- n **TAKE PICTURES** by pointing your camera at the most revealing moments of each story.
- n **COMPETE** with fellow photojournalists: you are trying to publish the most images in each news-session.

The look and feel of the game.

The game uses the works of famous Latin American artists as inspiration for creating its characters and settings. Stylized animation and line drawing are favored over a photo-realistic style.

Educational value

The game acts as a supplement, not a replacement, to the traditional Spanish 1 and Spanish 2 curriculum at the University Level. It helps students master conversational skills and cultural knowledge by providing a context for the practice of these skills.

Game Overview

Background story... it all starts with one line of your resume

You have been hired to work as a photojournalist scouting sensational images of political events, cultural celebrations, pop-idols and artists in Latin America and Spain. You were very eager to get this job—so you wrote in your resume that you speak Spanish, which is only half-true. You managed to get your way around the interviews by speaking in English and saying something is Spanish every once in a while.

Now your editor Juan Martinez is sending you to Argentina—where your Spanish skills are about to pass a trial by fire. Can you do the job and live up to the expectations you have set?

Philosophy / Design Goals

Learning through a goal-oriented, immersive experience

The game simulates a virtual journey into the Spanish-speaking world, which becomes a context for the practice and learning of Spanish. The player is given a set of specific missions: he or she tries to discover and photograph events related to the politics, economics, and culture of a given country. Each scenario invites the player to operate in situations that can happen to him or her when she visits the given country: booking a hotel, asking for directions, learning the local traditions. The game provides a context for developing one's skills in grammar, vocabulary and cultural awareness.

It's important to note that such a project does not try to replace the traditional classroom teaching of Spanish. Instead, it tries to provide a context in which the students can explore the concepts they have learned and solidify their knowledge through repeated practice.

Cultural awareness: from stereotype to complexity

The depiction of the culture of a foreign country is always a difficult task: what criteria should the game use for selecting events to represent each culture and avoiding racial stereotyping?

We aim at creating at least two levels of complexity build into each mission.

- n level one: an introduction to the stereotypes:** in each mission, the editor Juan asks for a list of shots that represent very typical, emblematic views of a given event. In order to complete the minimum requirements for the assignment, the player has to learn the basic historical and cultural background of the event.

- n level two: sophistication.** Ultimately, the player is rewarded for talking to the local people and finding diverse, often conflicting, views on each event. Learning about the complexity behind each event, the photo-journalist is better able to find the rare, arresting images and win the respect of his guild.

Exploration without violence: a new first-person shooter game

The practice of violent behavior in video games is a highly contested. This project treats the topic to a new perspective: the player still “shoots” the other characters, but this time—with a

camera, not with a gun. The mission of a photographer offers a new type of vocabulary to the player: his or her actions are motivated partially by aggression, voyeurism and curiosity; the effects of these actions are rarely if ever lethal to the subjects, and the photographer himself remains vulnerable to the environment she works in.

Gender neutral play: a choice of activities to suit diverse tastes

The game offers a palette of activities that can accommodate the taste of both genders in the classroom. It includes diverse topics: politics, fashion, arts, economics, etc.

Common Questions

What is the game?

The player acts as a photojournalist sent to report on a variety of missions in the Spanish-speaking world: Latin America, Spain, Central America, Hispanic neighborhoods in the USA. She has to talk with the local people in order to obtain access and information about the events she is about to photograph. In each shoot, she is trying to complete the list of shots that her boss has recommended, yet ultimately she gets rewarded when she finds an image that is unusual and striking. The game provides a colorful, exuberant virtual world where the player can practice her knowledge of Spanish language and culture.

Where does the game take place?

The game takes place in several Spanish-speaking locations: Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Hispanic neighborhoods in the USA. These sites were selected because they represent some of the most popular destinations that Americans tend to explore as businessmen or as tourists. Depending on the resources of the game designers, the settings can be expanded to eight countries: Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Chile, Ecuador, Cuba, etc.

The player visits different locations for each mission: cabares, political riots, government buildings, celebrations. The player can wonder around the streets of each city, which are animated with passengers, kiosks, passing cars, etc. The player can enter designated stores and offices, but she has limited access to the interiors of most buildings.

What do I control?

The Photo Camera: The player can control the basic functions of her camera: focusing, zooming, selecting the right location, composing the shot.

The Budget: The player can decide how much to spend on hotel, film, transport, translation, etc.

Conversation Menus: The player leads each conversation by selecting appropriate Spanish phrases from a menu list. Some of the choices are grammatically incorrect, or not appropriate for the given context. The player can test the effects of each phrase on the person she is talking to.

Learning Aids: spy glasses, dictionaries, for-pay translators

How many characters do I control?

The player controls one avatar character.

What's different?

This 3D multi-player game in Spanish and English adds a new dimension to the all-time favorite travel game “Where in the World in Carmen San Diego?” “El Photo Periodista” uses the geographically and culturally diverse quests of Carmen. However, the game does not use the 2d stationary photo shots that characterize the older game—instead, it invites the gamers to a lavishly animated cartoon world with sophisticated characters and more freedom for exploration.

Who is the target audience?

The game is designed as a complementary aid to a traditional foreign language classroom in a College or high-school environment. This is a multi-player game that can also be adapted to as a personal PC game for home use.

What will people learn through playing this game?

The goal of this game is to provide language learning through immersion in a virtual Spanish-speaking world. The game favors the practice of **reading and listening**. However, it can be expanded to include elements of talking and writing, if the game design team can afford to implement voice recognition and writing software.

What platform are you aiming at?

This is a multi-player online game with single-player options.

The look and feel of the game:

The game is driven by great animation and great story-themes. Each mission functions as a short story inhabited by exuberant, multi-dimensional characters and engaging interpersonal dynamics. The narrative world of the game resembles the short stories of former journalist, current mega-star writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The visual world of the game breathes with the voluptuous figures of Diego Rivera’s mural scenes. Ideally, such a game will be created in collaboration with Hispanic artists, using their style and cultural awareness.

A silvery, high-tech interface with discrete buttons would not be appropriate for this game. For the most part, the game should be dominated by sunny colors—using the brick red, orange and golden palette. The user interface should have an organic look inspired by magical realism and retro photo equipment images (film strips, camera controls, grid for focusing, etc).

Tensions

One way of capturing the fundamental issues of a design task is through “tensions” (Wenger, 1998). Tensions are dialectical relationships between opposing (often related) concepts. The idea behind a tension is not that they are either / or trade-offs, but that they interact. Often, the more the importance of one element goes up, the importance of the other does as well.

Tension # 1: Staging Culture Shock?

Culture shock is an essential part of the traveler’s experience. How should the game handle the fact that very often the player will get frustrated by her inability to function in a language that she is still learning?

The game recognizes the fact that the player will experience some frustration. It tries to encourage the player to move through the levels of the game at incremental stages, picking up new tips and vocabulary at every level. The language support system: dictionaries, translators, asking other students for advice is ready to offer advice every time the student needs help.

Tension #2: Realism vs. Fantasy?

How to represent the culture of the Spanish and Latin American World?

The game favors the style of magical realism: it does not attempt to create photo-realistic characters and settings, but rather to create a stylized, fantastic environment.

At the beginning of our research, Professor Morgenstern warned us that it is tricky to use animation for representing a foreign country. In his view, animated characters were likely to create racial stereotypes or other inaccurate representations of the people in the studied culture. Each culture has its own beauty standards, and thus it is easy to offend someone by making characters with inappropriate skins color, eye shape, hair style, etc. Professor Morgenstern had avoided this problem in the past by always using video footage, rather than animation, for the projects that he worked with.

User Scenarios

From the Editor's table to the picture on the front page...

Typical elements of each Photo Mission:

Every game revolves around the list of shots assigned by the editor Juan Martinez. To get to each photograph, the gamer must ask for directions in proper Spanish, solve a series of puzzles and spend enough time talking with the local people who know the locations of unusual and interesting events. The work of the photographer has two levels of sophistication:

1. **Level 1 Photographs: an introduction to the stereotypes:** These are usually stereotypical images of each situation. The list of required shots is prepared by the editor Juan. The AI of the game monitors these shots and the player receives an average sum of money for each hit she get.
2. **Level 2 Photographs: sophistication:** These are usually the more complicated, unexpected photographs. The editor Juan hints that these shots might be possible. He promises bonus fees for the shots that he think might be extraordinary, and difficult to achieve. The player can find additional locations and cool moments that are not listed on Juan's list. In order to do this, she needs to speak with a lot of local people and pay careful attention to the clues that they give her.

Designed with such levels, the game allows the players to grasps the stereotypical elements of each photo situation, as well as to delve into some of the more complicated nuances of life in the Spanish-speaking world. Examples of this two-layer approach will be given in detail in the User Scenario section.

Typical elements of each game level:

1. **The Intro:** Your boss talks to you about your new mission. He gives you the location, some background information and a list of shots needed for the news show.
2. **The Flight:** You are in an airplane traveling towards your destination. You can watch a movie about the country that you are visiting, or speak to the person next to you who can always give you good information or even decide to be your guide once you arrive.
3. **The Hotel:** you go to the reception of a hotel and ask for the room number you have reserved (you have to select the correct word number from a given menu.)
4. **The Fashion Store:** in each mission, you want to wear the clothes that make you "blend-in" the culture you are visiting. People greet you depending on the clothes that you are wearing, so you have to choose your attire carefully.
5. **The Location:** you have to ask for directions and access to the location of each event. You have to protect your camera and film from body-guards and people who get angry when you

take their picture. You seek the shots that your boss recommended, and if you shoot quickly enough, you get extra time to explore the location and find unusual footage.

6. **The Write-up:** At the advanced stages of the game, the player is asked to write a brief paragraph describing his or her experience. The paragraph is then used as the text that comments on the photos of the mission.
7. **The Moment of Truth:** All the characters get back to the office— they laugh at the stories they gathered, at the clothes each of them is wearing. Then read the latest issue of the newspaper and nervously search the pages to see if their work got published....
8. **Victory, Sweet Victory:** Two things drive the photo journalist’s ambition: money and fame. After a few games, the player who has won the most money can visit an auction selling shares of the Newspaper she works for. At the auction, she can bid to become the owner! If, on the other hand, the journalist seeks fame, she will carefully collect a good archive of images she has published in the paper. After a while, she can organize her own photo show at an upscale gallery, and invite her envious friends at the reception!

Game Design Levels Based on Language Skills:

Level:	Missions:	Skills:
Intro	<p>La Tomatina (the tomato fight in Spain, action theme)</p> <p>La Torrida (the bull fight in Spain, action theme)</p>	<p>Exploring the basic functions of the game, easy success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> n practicing motor skills (running, climbing), n learn how to use the camera, find unusual angles n get used to the structure of the game: meeting with the editor, traveling, booking hotel, finding the location, etc. n learning to use the language aids n Short conversations with the other characters, no interviews. n Most assignments can be completed just by following the editor’s notes (in English)
Intermediate	<p>Tango Club (Argentina, arts theme)</p> <p>The Day of the Dead (Mexico, religious theme)</p>	<p>Learning to lead conversations, ask for clues and find unusual photo opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> n Cultural subtleties: wear the appropriate clothes, use polite, respectful speech n Grammar mistakes are punished
Advanced	<p>Beauty Pageant (Venezuela, fashion and social theme)</p> <p>El Presidente (Venezuela, political theme)</p>	<p>Creating written reports to comment on the images that you have taken.</p>

Time schedule of the game

Time	Event	Decisions / Experiences
1 minute	Create Character	Select your avatar from a list of journalists with different clothes, hairstyles, races, gender. Choose the types of missions that you prefer: fashion, politics
2 mins.	Meet with the Editor,	Listen to the background information about your mission and pay attention to the types of shots the editor wants.
5 mins.	Travel to location, book hotel	In the airplane, the player has to decide how to start a conversation with the person seated next to him on the airplane, who can often give him useful advice. The receptionist at the Hotel speaks only broken English, and the player is forced to ask for his room number in Spanish.
15 mins.	Solve 1 st puzzle: finding directions	The journalist has to ask people around him for directions. His success in the game depends on his ability to “network” with the people around him.
25 mins.	Solve 2 nd puzzle:	The journalist has to gain access to the location, get the shots that he is looking for. He is pressed for time: he has to work really quickly in order to come back in time for the final show. If he has completed the previous puzzles quickly, and gathered good information, he has a chance to find some of the rare and striking shots that will help him get famous.
50 min	Show Time!	All the journalist hurry back to the media office. The listen the review the editor gives to each of the. Then they sit down together to the news show which uses their images as a background for a simulated news anchor.
End of class period, end of game		

Game Characters

Main Characters:

El Periodista, Young Journalist

Each student builds her own different avatar. The avatars have different gender, physical appearance, and professional skills (Spanish and photo experience). The possible list of characters includes:



Juan Martinez, Chief Photography Editor, Winner of 2 Pulitzer Prizes

This is the boss in the game. Juan is a young Mexican with a chiseled face and large, probing eyes. After receiving his degrees from Harvard (B.A. in Political Science and Visual Studies) and from Yale School of the Arts (M.F.A. in Photography), he started working as a photo journalist for the New York Times. He quickly became one of the most famous photographers—the public and the critics praised his deep, sophisticated images and dynamic personality. He has been hired to work on missions covering Latin American events for National Geographic, Magnum and the Economist.

Juan's experience and fame make him a very supportive and challenging manager. He has the great quality of being able to give structure to your work. Each time he sends his journalist to cover a mission, he gives them a long historical overview of the given event, a sense of the characters they are likely to encounter, and a detailed list of the shots that are most likely to be needed in the news cast. He is intimately familiar with each region that you will be exploring. The roller coaster life in NY often makes him nostalgic for his home country Mexico; his speeches are full of remarks comparing Mexico and the US, and letting the young photographer know more about the country he loves so dearly.

Juan speaks in English most of the time. However, he uses a lot of Spanish expressions, which he translates for you in order to reinforce your learning process.

Technical Skills: 5
Language Skills in Spanish: 5
Adaptation / culture shock levels: 5



Tito Obscuro, The Smooth Operator

A number of years ago (nobody knows how many years exactly), Tito won the competition Photographer of the Year sponsored by the New York Times. His prestigious award allowed him entry to the glamorous social circles of movie starlets and directors. He has had a hard time coming back to work and “getting his hands dirty” again. His boss threatened to fire him... and he is fighting to preserve his job. Wherever he goes, Tito gets attacked by party-animals who want to steal him away from his project. Ultimately, he can decide to do a mission on the night life in Madrid, and win a new prize for his candid documentary style.

Technical Skills: 4
Language Skills in Spanish: 3
Adaptation / culture shock levels: 5



Laura Silvers, The Princess in the Ivory Tower

Laura is the princess in the group. She holds a liberal arts degree from a prestigious college, and her head is full of ideas on the philosophy and ethics of the “photographic experience.” She is extremely sensitive, and easily hurt by criticism. She helps her colleagues by giving them feedback on the artistic qualities of their work. At the same time, Laura has a hard time adapting to field work, spends too much money on luxury accommodation and has a hard time meeting the standards of the magazine, which she considers “profane.”

Technical Skills: 0

Language Skills in Spanish: 5

Adaptation / culture shock levels: 0



Jennifer Camera, Sugar Babe

Jenn is about thirty years old, but she still looks like a kid: a petite, spunky woman, hilarious and charming. She is the most gregarious member of the group—a real winner when it comes to projects that require extensive interviews.

Technical Skills: 3

Language Skills in Spanish: 4

Adaptation / culture shock levels: 3



Joe Copperwire, The Cool Geek

Joe is the youngest journalist, and the token “geek” of the team. He graduated from MIT with a degree in Ocean Engineering, yet he always liked his hobby, photography, better than working in the lab. He does not speak any Spanish, yet he is fluent in “photo-techno-talk,” a real master at the technical elements of photography. His shyness prevents him from talking with too many people—he wins the missions that require special technical knowledge (shooting underwater and in the dark), and has a hard time dealing with missions that necessitate extensive interviews.

Technical Skills: 5

Language Skills in Spanish: 0

Adaptation / culture shock levels: 3

Secondary Characters:

Esperanza, the bilingual intern, technical assistant and secret fan

Esperanza studies photography at Tisch University. Her family comes from Venezuela and the US, and she speaks fluent Spanish. She is dying to learn more about the work of a photo journalist, and she begged the young photo journalist to hire her as an intern.

In each trip, Esperanza serves as an excellent translator and advisor. However, the photo journalist has mixed feelings about her: her enthusiasm and adoration become intimidating. A possible romance with her can distract the player from the important deadlines of each project.

Maria Teatral, Director of Costumes and Transformations

Maria Teatral is the DIRECTOR OF COSTUMES AND TRANSFORMATIONS. She has the keys to all the make-over rooms and props that the TV network uses. The photographer visit her every time they start a new mission: she can give advice on looks that match your role in the environment (formal, informal, folklore celebration, etc), and give you options on various "looks" that you adopt in order to be more successful.

Angel la Photo, Director of Photography

Angel is the living encyclopedia of photo equipment. He runs a photo store in the TV network, and gives advice on the technical aspects of each project. The players are advised to meet with him before each trip. He is someone to be treated with a lot of respect and courtesy.

Unfortunately, his store has limited supplies: sometimes the players have to compete for his attention for getting the right camera before someone else. A record of polite demeanor (not bribes!) can help the player find the right equipment.

Sonia Zimmerman, a photographer for rival German Media Network

Sonia works for a rival Network Station in Germany. The players meet her in the hotel or at the location of each mission. Sonia is very focused on her work, yet she can give you some hints if you treat her politely.

Additional Characters:

- Dancers (Tango and salsa missions)
- Street vendors
- Street performers
- Receptionist (Hotel)
- Waiters, Taxi Drivers
- Villagers
- Politicians, Body Guards, Secretaries (El Presidente Mission)
- Beauty Queens, Jury (beauty Pageant Mission)
- People in Costumes (the Day of the Dead)
- Bull fighters (La Torrida)
- Etc.

Characters: A chart of who is in the game

Name:	Attributes:	Features / Notes / Motivations:
El Periodista (this character has a different avatar for each player)	Young photo journalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal: obtain striking photographs
Juan Marquez	Chief Editor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice on where and how to shoot
Maria Teatral	Director of Costumes and Transformations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Character make-over
Angel la Photo	Director of photo technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living photo equipment encyclopedia
Esperanza	Your bilingual intern, technical assistant and fan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translator • Comic relief • Distraction from your goal
Sonia Zimmerman	A rival, photographer for a German Media Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition, nasty unprofessional tricks • Can be a source of information, if

		you complement her work and help her missions
Electra and Juanito	Tango Dancers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help in the tango missions
Anna and Bertoldo	Salsa Instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help in the salsa missions
Jose, Ramon, Gustavo	Villagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hints in the documentary on village life
Tobias	Tour Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This character comes up with different names in each mission. He can give you hints about the locations you are visiting.

User Scenario 1:

Single player, first game

Introduction to the game and building a character

The game starts with a birds-eye view of Manhattan-- the busy streets, the sky scrapers, the noise... The camera zooms into the shiny window of one administrative building. This is a most unusual office-- the walls are decorated with collages of photographs, postcards and news clippings, the office desks are covered with travel books and photo cameras, the floors are littered with empty rolls of film. The camera focuses on the face of a man-- a Latino man with a chiseled face and large, probing eyes.

"Ok, I saw your portfolio, it's ok. You need more work, more experience, sharpness-- but that's ok. And you say that you speak Spanish, that's good. You can start tomorrow, I guess."

The boats and the airplanes in the large window behind him start to shake. The screen gets blurry for a second, and, shaking your head, you are trying to regain composure. You walk out of the office, down the busy corridor in a daze. You can hear your own thoughts:

"This is unbelievable... I never imagined it would work. My God I am happy! And how the hell am I going to manage with this..."

You head a voice-- the gritty, husky voice of an edgy, attractive woman in her forties.

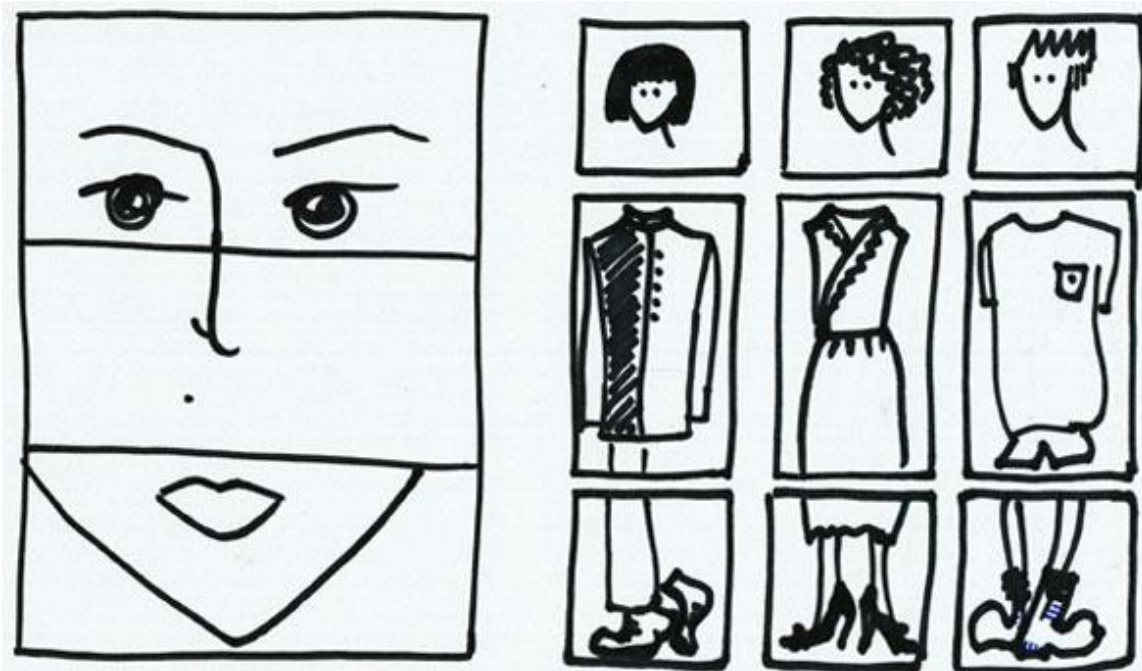
"Buenas Dias. Yo soy Maria, Maria Teatral. Et tu... tu buscas tus personalidad. Vengo com migo..."

"Hello. I am Maria, Maria teatral. And you.. who are you... I can tell you are looking for yourself now. Come with me..."

You can read the introduction to her character on your screen:

Maria Teatral is the DIRECTOR OF COSTUMES AND TRANSFORMATIONS. She has the keys to all the make-over rooms and props that the TV network uses. You visit her every time you start a new mission: she can give advice on the way you are supposed to look like at the event you are visiting (formal, informal, folklore celebration, etc), and give you options on various "looks" that you adopt in order to be more successful.

Creating a Character: The Body Vocabulary Builder
(learning the Spanish words for facial features, body parts and clothing)



The Body Vocabulary Builder: the first exercise of the game allows students to select the faces and clothes they prefer for their avatar. In the process, they learn the Spanish vocabulary and words for comparison: larger/ smaller, thin/fat, dark/fair, etc.

Each the student has to create a character during her first session of playing the game. For students who are taking an introduction to Spanish, the process of character building becomes a game for learning the parts of the body, the basic colors and clothing accessories. Advanced students can use this section as a review, and spend more time on trying different personas.

During this first visit, Teatral will help you with the very basics: choosing the elements of your face and body, and a set of every day clothes. You see the screen with a white human figure on it. Each major part of the body is represented by a box, and you can flip through different versions of the body part as in a flip book.

Maria speaks to you in Spanish:
"All right, let us choose the features of your face."

The player can chose the shape of your eyes, nose and chin by choosing from an interactive menu. She can also enlarge a part or make it smaller. In a similar fashion, she chooses her hairstyle and clothing. Playing with this menu the student creates the avatar that will represent them in the rest of the game. The character can influence the way other people interact with it by changing once clothes. The "Character Creation" menu helps the students learn and review the Spanish names for facial features, body parts, colors, clothes and sizes.

Each student spends about 30 minutes playing with the character design menu. Towards the end of the character design class, the students send their characters to the virtual news room for a group meeting. The student watches her avatar rush towards the meeting room—nobody likes to get there late. Depending on when each of them finished the character building, they enter the room at different times. The avatars look at each other with great curiosity and apprehension (“Who are my new colleagues? Who can I trust in this room? Who likes to have fun?”).

It is time for each character to get introduced. The editor Juan insists that all conversations are conducted in Spanish. The advanced level students write a short paragraph in Spanish that their avatar can reiterate at the meeting. The intro-level students watch a short pre-recorded introductory animation of the editor and the journalists:

(in Spanish)

“Hello, my name is Juan, and I am the photography editor. I would like to welcome you all to our group. Please introduce yourselves.” Juan’s voice is reserved and formal.

“Hello, my name is Laura Silvers. I graduated from Harvard University and studied photography at Yale School of the Arts...,” the fair, beautiful Julia starts her introduction in her tiny, pretentious voice. Her Spanish is grammatically correct and very formal.

“Hello, my name is Jen Camera...”

The students complete their introductions as fictional photo-journalists. The teacher uses the remaining 5 to 10 minutes of the class to ask the students if they enjoyed the game and if they had any difficulties with the new vocabulary.

User Scenario 2 : single player experienced in playing the game *Argentinian Tango Mission*



A film strip with image of the tango mission

Gina sits down at her computer and double clicks on the icon to start ***.

A window pops up with the following choices:

- * New Game
- * Load Game
- * Settings
- * Join Multiplayer Game

Gina loads her saved game, which is on the hard drive of this machine. A list of missions appears. Gina chooses the first one Argentinian Tango, which is a new level for Gina.

The mission brief appears on the screen in a Flash presentation (a la Thief) along with a still shot of her boss, Juan Martinez.

Gina. I've got one here that you're gonna like. Do you like to tango? Good. Because you're going to Argentina. We're sending you and Cynthia to Buenos Aires to do a piece on the Argentinian Tango. Do you know anything about the tango? (pause) Fine... here's some reading for the plane. (Juan throws a glossy book about the tango on your desk).

Now listen, Gina. I'm not sending you down there to sip tropical drinks and lay in the sand, got it? I want a 1200 word feature on the tango. Background on where it all started. Interviews with the hottest dancers. Where you go to find the sexiest dancing. It's not enough for you to go down there and take a few pictures of middle aged tourists. I want the real stuff. The stuff that guys like me aren't gonna see. Otherwise, I'd go there myself (laughing).

Now get out of here.

A brief synopsis of the mission appears.

- * Go to Argentina
- * Uncover History of Tango
- * Interview and photograph up-and-coming dancers
- * Find Hot underground dance clubs

Gina reads the mission. Hrrrm. I have no idea what the Argentinian tango is. Isn't that like what they did in the old movies? Isn't Argentina like in South America? I don't know about any of this. At least it's better than those stupid workbooks, though.

Gina clicks "Begin" and the game starts. Gina find herself walking out of the plane and into a crowded airport rendered in full 3D. People whizz by, speaking in Spanish.

"Where am I? What's going on?" Gina wonders. Gina tries to listen and make out bits of conversation, but this dialect is one she's not familiar with.

A small "I" icon flashes in the bottom of Gina's screen. Gina clicks on it.

An inventory screen appears with several icons.

- * Itinerary,
- * iPaq
- * Mobile phone,
- * Passport,
- * ATM card,
- * Company credit card,
- * Tango Book
- * Novel
- * Gameboy
- * Notebook
- * Spanish / English Dictionary

Gina reads through the list. "Wow. Lots of stuff. Ok... good. an itinerary. Maybe that will tell me where to go next. Cool... a company credit card. What is an iPaq? I'll find out later. First things first." Gina clicks on the itinerary icon. A list of options appears: Hotels, Rental Car, Restaurants,

Nightclubs. Gina clicks on Rental Car. "Cool. this should do it," she thinks. Information on Gina's rental car appears. She has a Hertz car.

As Gina heads across the hallway and down the escalator, she looks up at the signs, all in Spanish. "Hrrrm. I have no idea where I'm going. Maybe I should pull out that dictionary and translate a few of these things." As Gina is about to click on the inventory icon, she realizes that she could just follow the other passengers coming off of the plane. "I bet that they're all going to baggage anyway," she thinks.

Gina follows the other passengers off of the plane and smiles to herself as she rides down the escalator. Looking up at the sign, she discerns that *** is the Spanish word for exit. Gina continues and collects her luggage.

"Excellent. That wasn't so bad. What's next...that's right my rental car." Gina looks up at all of the signs. Ok, Now I'm going to have to use my dictionary."

Gina clicks back on her inventory icon in the bottom corner of her screen and the inventory appears. She clicks on the dictionary and notes that she can click on "ctrl-D" to open her dictionary at any time. She types in "rental car" and the phrase *** returns. "Ahhh... *** ok."

Gina follows the signs for rental cards down the way. There is a short line of three people in front of her. As Gina stands in line, the two men in front of her discuss some business. They discuss their journey, which will be taking them to into the countryside. One of the men is actually a world renowned dancer. If Gina discerns this, then she can follow the men to the countryside and participate in a glorious festival. If not, she must continue on tracking down the leads in her PDA.

If Gina does not follow the men, she must rent her car. As Gina steps up to the counter, the attendant greets her. The game displays the text in a window at the bottom of the screen as the attendant talks to Gina: Yes, can I help you?" Gina automatically responds, "Yes, I would like a car." Next, Gina is given four choices:

Yes, please give me the cheapest car you have.

Yes, please give me a sportscar, red.

Yes, Give me whatever those last people had.

Yes, No, on second thought I'll walk.

Depending on the responses, the attendant will respond to the player. Sample responses include, "How will you be paying for this?" (allowing the player to choose between her credit card and expense account card. If the player chooses to run up too many expenses, she can be cut off).

As the player is handed the keys, the game cuts to a short animation of Gina getting into the car. Gina then has a list of choices of where she wants to go. Initial spots include:

- * Hotel
- * Dance School
- * Dance Club
- * Music Club
- * Town Square
- * Clothing store

Gina decides to start with the dance school. A short animation of Gina pulling up to the school is displayed. She gets out of the car and walks in. Inside, she meets the receptionist, Melissa. Melissa greets Gina in English, "Another tourist, I see. What can I do for you". Gina then has four choices of sentences, all very close to being correct. How well Gina gets it, affects how much

information the receptionist gives. However, the receptionist is always coy, so it is difficult for the player to tell right away his / her success (this is to prevent constant going back to save and try again).

As Gina talks to Melissa, she finds that the premier dancer in the school who knows the history of tango and some of the top dancers in the area and is willing to share information. The instructor tells her that the instructor, Fernando, has not been in the school for weeks because his spirit is crushed and does not have the dance. Will you help him?

Here, Gina can decide if she would like to help Fernando. This would necessitate that she complete a series of puzzles, including finding him a dance partner, dancing shoes, and a new band. If Gina does help Fernando, she gets information for the story: pictures of Fernando and his studio, information about the history of tango and the contact information for other dancers.

Gina might ask around the club, and find out about a nightclub where people go to dance. Here, she can take pictures of young couples, hot new dancers, and the Buenos Aires nightlife.

The levels continue along in a similar fashion. Players must use their understanding of Spanish to find information that will lead them toward capturing key information in photographs that can be turned into the editors. The player has complete freedom of movement within a level small where she can freely move from player to player and learn information to help solve puzzles.

User Scenario 3

Multiple players experienced in playing the game

A double mission in Mexico City

Maria, Andrew and Tatiana have all played the game before.
“Let’s go for a new round together!,” suggests Maria.

They all turn on their computers and start the game they have saved the previous time. The screen menu gives them a choice between single-player vs. multiplayer game. All three of them decide to play in the multiplayer mode.

A new screen menu introduces them to the avatars they used in the previous game, and asks them if they want to offer an alliance to any of these characters.

“Hey, Maria, we did a good job shooting together last time. Do you want to play as a team?”
Andrew sends a chat note to Maria and invites her to join his team. Maria reads and accepts the invitation. Tatiana, who has won all her previous games, rejects all invitations. She decides to compete against Maria and Andrew on her own.

In this game, Tatiana has chosen to play with the avatar of Laura Silvers, the Ivory Princess who has great taste and a very capricious temper. Maria chooses to play with the avatar of Joe Copperwire: she always likes his good photo skills and cute smile. Andrew wants to play the avatar of Tito Oscuro: Andrew secretly enjoys the game through Tito’s quick charm and success with women.

The next shot of the screen shows that all of the avatars have gathered in the editor's room. Juan Martinez, the chief photography editor, is in a good mood—his feet are stretched over his desk, his is singing along the song coming from the radio.

“Hi, guys! Mmm, living la vida loca...” Juan keeps singing to himself...

“Ok, our next issue has to focus on two events that both take place... guess where! Mexico City! The sweetest place on earth... you know I was born there, right?”

“I just learned about a major scandal at Templo Mayor, the largest archeological site and museum at

the center of the city. It looks like some teenagers have come into the museum and painted graffiti all over the ancient stone carvings. What a disaster! ####!!^^&(&^%#### (here he spends some time cursing in Spanish.) I want you to go to the Museum right away, and take pictures of the graffiti disgracing this ancient monument. I know you guy can come up with some pretty striking shots, but make sure you get there before the museum personnel cleans up after the mess! You might want to seek out the teenagers who did this—I bet they are in jail by now. Artists behind bars... he-he, this can be a fun splash for the first page.”

“This is the first project. There is something more: you now how much we, Mexicans, love soccer. There are some major games happening in the city at about the same time you are arriving. Make sure you get tickets for at least one game—we need a few shots of the stadium, and a few shots of the excited people in the audience. You know, people watching soccer can be really fun to watch... I don't know if you can get around to interviewing one of the soccer players: the security around them is tight, but I will double your regular fee per picture if you get some head shots of the major players. Sport photos always sell well—just make sure you find a star player, if you can.”

“This is it. Your tickets and guides are in this envelop. I want to send two teams on this double mission

—to make things fun, and give you some spark! You guys, Joe and Tito, and you Laura, will compete against each other. The first one to send me fresh footage from the site will win... a good vacation and some extra cash. Any questions?”

“Tito, this time make sure you come back, ok?” Jose winks at Tito (Andrew's avatar), reminding him that he has been loosing all games because he got distracted at parties in Madrid and Buenos Aires.

Tatiana, Andrew and Maria all book the first possible flight to Mexico City.

Tatiana opens her help menu, buys a city guide for Mexico City and starts reading to prepare her trip. “Wow, these maps are really good!” exclaims Tatiana as she is going over the interactive map for the country. She browses through the menus with statistical and historical information about Mexico:

Full country name: Estados Unidos Mexicanos

Population: 100,350,000 (growth rate 1.53%)

Area: 1,958,200 sq km (758,866 sq mi)

Capital city: Mexico City (22 million people)

People: Approximately 60% mestizo (mixed European and Amerindian descent) and 30% Amerindian (*indígena* - including Nahua, Maya, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Totonacs, and

Tarascos or Purépecha)

Language: Spanish and 59 indigenous languages

Religion: 90% Roman Catholic, 6% Protestant

Government: Federal republic

Head of state: Vincente Fox Quesada

GDP: US\$915 billion

GDP per head: US\$9100

Annual growth: 7%

Inflation: 9%

Major industries: Food and beverages, tobacco, chemicals, iron and steel, petroleum, mining, textiles, clothing, motor vehicles, consumer durables, tourism

Major trading partners: USA, Canada, Japan, Germany”¹

Tatiana spends extra time reading about the ancient art of Mexico. She is already taking mental notes for the write up she wants to do on the Museum’s Graffiti Disgrace.

Tatiana’s character, Laura, always insists on staying at expensive hotels, so Tatiana books a room at the sophisticated Radisson Hotel at the center of town. Her budget stats blink and shirk.

Meanwhile, Maria sends a note to Andrew: “Hey, let’s remember to stop by the costume shop and get some help from Maria Teatral!” They both send their avatars to Maria’s shop. In her husky, distinct voice, Maria gives them some good advice about what to wear in Mexico City: Laura (Maria’s character) should wear long pants and a plain shirt, no dresses, no frills—unless she wants to get badly “noticed” by the annoying machos. Tito (Andrew’s character) can go for some plain clothes too—especially if he is going to the soccer game. She advises them both to pack some semi-formal clothes, which they will need if they have to show up at the Museum—Mexican people, you see, can be very formal in their dress when they go to cultural places.

Maria and Andrew book a room at a Youth Hostel. They both open their help menu to buy a city guide and some extra rolls of film. Maria remembers to buy extra speed film, which they will need if they are shooting dynamic scenes at the soccer game. They both close the help menu.

The screen changes to a map of North America. They see an animation of a plane that leaves from New York and arrives in Mexico City. Then the players find themselves at the lobbies of their respective hotels.

Each of them gets a menu of sentence choices they can use to address to person at the desk:

Menu:

- a. Hello. I have a reservation for room one hundred and two (102). (This sentence, used in English, makes the Mexican receptionist a little annoyed. Her trust level towards the player goes down two points, but the player is let into her room)
- b. Hola. Yo tengo una reservacia pour numero mil dos. (This sentence uses incorrect grammar and it will get the player a puzzled look from the receptionists. They player is asked to guess again)
- c. The player asks for her room in correct Spanish. She gets the room and increases the trust level of the receptionist.

¹ Statistic gathered at the destination Mexico section of <http://www.LonelyPlanet.com>

All of the players have previous experience with such menu choices, and they choose option C, which is the correct choice. They drop their luggage in their rooms, and rush back to the street: their deadline is coming!

The characters check out their “TO DO” menu on the screen:

To do notes...	
.... reminders from your favorite boss. Call me with questions! 212 617 4333, Jose	
Event 1: Graffiti at Templo Mayor	Event 2: Soccer Game at Estadio Azteca
We need the following shots: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 shots of graffiti on the old stone carvings (Try unconventional angles! Don't you mess this up with blurry images! This is a great visual opportunity for you!) • Bonus 1: find the teenage art criminals and take pictures of them too! • Bonus 2: Do a write up: “New art meets old art” (in Spanish) 	We need the following shots: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 action shots of players at the stadium • 2-3 shots of animated faces in the audience (Look for people with painted faces, funny t-shirt, etc. Shots of people in motion will get blurry if you don't adjust the shutter speed! Do I always have to teach you everything!) • Bonus 1: interview • Bonus 2: Do a write up: “The differences between Mexican soccer and American football.” (in Spanish)
Deadline: 1 day from now (or sooner) Your fees: \$500 per published picture \$1000 per sensational (bonus picture) or write up no fees for late or unpublished work. Good luck.	Deadline: nothing urgent Your fees: \$300 per published picture \$800 per sensational (bonus picture) or write-up No fees for unpublished work. Good luck.

The characters start asking for directions to both locations. Maria decides to go to the football game, and Andrew goes to the Museum. Tatiana, who has to work faster since she is covering two events at the same time, decides to go the Museum, then buy tickets and go to the soccer game (her character is already dreading the idea of going to a some kind of stupid soccer game. What a waste of her brain and Ivy League Education!)

Andrew is the first one to get to the Templo Mayor, the site of the graffiti disaster. He did not have to ask for directions, he just used the interactive map! Andrew makes his avatar, Tito, walk around the ruins, looking for the site with the graffiti. Tito constantly gets distracted by attractive bleached blonds who wink at him as they are walking around with their poodles. He finally finds the site with the graffiti, which is now surrounded by the police. His ambition wakes up: what an amazing slice of reality! Andrew selects the “camera mode” and starts examining the site through his lens, hungry for action. The shutter clicks: he frames a shot of stone-carved warrior figure who has graffiti flowers running out of his helmet. The shutter click again: he frames an ancient battle scene wall covered with screaming graffiti faces. The shutter clicks again. His camera is shaking. Is someone shaking his sleeve? Andrew goes out of camera mode to see what's happening...

Oh, no! His suede shoes look all wet! Oh, no, one of the poodles just peed all over his shoes...
 Oh, yes, the bleached blond is coming to say, “I am sorry!”

“Amigo,” the blond says in a warm Spanish voice, “Oh, I am so sorry for what happened. Oh, how I wish I could buy you a cold drink to cool you off in this hot day and say that I am sorry (in Spanish)”

Tito loses his wit (his “culture shock” level goes up). He gets a menu screen of things he can say in reply:

- a. Oh, no baby, my fiancé is waiting for my in Nueva York. (in English, which she will not understand)
- b. Ok, mamacita, let us go (in impolite Spanish, which will make her run away)
- c. Lady, please do not worry. You are right, can I please invite you and buy you a drink (in extremely polite Spanish, which will win her mercy).

Andrew is really tempted to see what will happen if he follows this beautiful stranger, so he selects choice c. The following screen leads him to a pre-recorded animation strip: the avatar Tito and the bleached blond go to the bar, and they buy drinks. Tito meets her friends, and continues drinking, until he gets so drunk that he no longer he remembers his name, let alone the mission he had when he was sober...

Andrew is watching the animation horrified: Tito is drunk and broke, his culture shock level has exploded, and Andrew can not move him at all. Andrew sends a desperate chat note to Maria, explaining the situation and asking her to come and rescue him!...

In the meantime, Laura (Tatiana’s character) has taken a taxi to the Templo Mayor. She rushes to the site, not even noticing the cute girls walking by with poodles. She is struck by the unusual scene of the ancient monuments covered with fresh graffiti paint. She had just read last night that the Aztec had a real cult of death, and she can now see, under the graffiti, horrific images of war, warriors, religious sacrifices of animals, large Gods with gaping mouths, a dismembered moon, screaming birds. Yet some of the ancient stone scenes look peaceful: women gathering the harvest, lovers embracing each other with large, tender hands, old style jewels and clothes. In her eyes, the graffiti seem to have a conversation with the old cravings. The bright red and green, the golden paint sensuously cover the grey old rocks. The screaming or smiling modern faces come over the old ones in a beautiful collage.

Tatiana remembers to put the screen in “camera mode,” and starts taking pictures. She takes 10 rolls of amazing, layered, bright, beautiful images.

“Oh, if only my Harvard Professors could see me know!” Laura’s avatar shares her glory in a bubble note for Tatiana!

Tatiana glances at the supplies menu: Oh now, not now! Her character is out of film! Tatiana does not despair. She sends Laura to the museum booth and buys some more film. She starts talking to the woman at the counter. In this conversation, she finds out that the town is facing a huge controversy with regards to the graffiti. Some of the people in town are completely horrified at the vandalism that has take place over night, and threatened their cultural heritage. They want to wipe out the graffiti as soon as possible! However, some other citizens have a completely different argument. These other citizens, like Laura herself, find that the graffiti are actually beautiful! They think that the new art has found a way to co-exist together with the old art, and that the graffiti should be preserved as they are... (or at least some of them should be preserved!).

Tatiana gets inspired and sends her avatar in writing mode. She quickly types up a memorable essay on the subject (in Spanish). She uses the spell check to correct a few mistakes. When she finishes the essay, she remembers that she is supposed to go to the soccer game. She rushes her avatar Laura out of the archeological site, gets a taxi, and drives to the Stadium. She finds out that the game is sold out!

Laura's "culture shock and adaptation" levels are becoming dangerously low. Tatiana gets a taxi to the post office and sends the pictures and her essay to Jose. Then she goes to the airport and leaves. Her avatar Laura returns to the office in New York.

In the meantime, Maria has managed to purchase tickets for the game. Before she buys the tickets, she calls Jose to find out what are the best seats for making good pictures. Jose advises her to get front row seats and zoom in on the faces of the soccer players as they are running around the field. This way she can take great personal photos of them without asking them out for an interview! Her camera captures a few extraordinary shots: she takes a close up of the major soccer star at the second after he scores a point for his team; his face is sweating, and he wears an enormous grin! Then she quickly captures the face of the doorman as he reaches to grab the ball and misses it: his arched body expressed effort and pain. She turns around and takes a few shots of the screaming, singing audience: a shot of a whole family holding the Mexican flag; a shot of a young man whose face is painted in the colors of the Mexican flag. Maria notices a sign on her photo album which indicates that she has covered all the major "hot spots," or interesting images, for this location.

She clicks on the map of Mexico City to exit the stadium. She notices that she has a message from Andrew: he is asking for help! Maria gets her avatar in a taxi and finds Tito in the pub. He does not recognize her! She splashes a glass of water on his face, emails her work to Jose and gets a new taxi to the airport.

A new screen takes Maria and Andrew back at their New York office. Their avatars meet their fellow journalists at the water cooler. Tito is staring the floor, and not talking with anybody. Laura has a delirious smile on her face (she just got on email from Jose asking her to sign a book offer on the Graffiti topic!). Maria is stomping around, waiting for someone to bring the new issue of the newspaper.

Jose enters the room, and gives a newspaper issue to each of them. The first page has two big photographs: one taken by Laura (Tatiana's avatar), and one taken by Joe (Maria's character). One of Tito's shots is published at the second pages describing the Graffiti event. Jose makes a few jokes about Tito's appearance, and hands them each a check for their work.

The class period is over and the players exit the game.

The Game World



Diego Rivera, Sueño de una tarde dominical en la Alameda Central, 1947, Fresco sobre tablero transportable
Museo Mural Diego Rivera, Ciudad de México

Dream of a Sunday Afternoon in the Alameda, Fresco over transportable panels, Mexico City, Museo Mural Diego Rivera

The Physical World

Overview

Key Locations

The game takes place in different Spanish-speaking locations: Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Hispanic neighborhoods in the USA. These countries were selected because they represent some of the most popular destinations that Americans tend to explore as businessmen or as tourists. Depending on the resources of the game designers, the settings can be expanded to eight countries: Spain, Mexico, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Chile, Ecuador, Cuba, etc.

The player visits different locations for each mission: cabares, political riots, government buildings, mass celebrations. The player can wonder around the streets of each city, which are animated with passengers, kiosks, passing cars, etc. The player can enter designated stores and offices, but she has limited access to the interiors of most buildings.

The Journey

The player explores the world through walking or driving in a taxi.

Objects

Photo Equipment:

- Inexpensive manual Camera
- Expensive Digital Camera that can be bough after the first few missions
- Flash
- Film rolls (need to be purchased and developed)
- Under water

Language Help:

- Dictionaries
- Flash Cards
- Grammar Notes

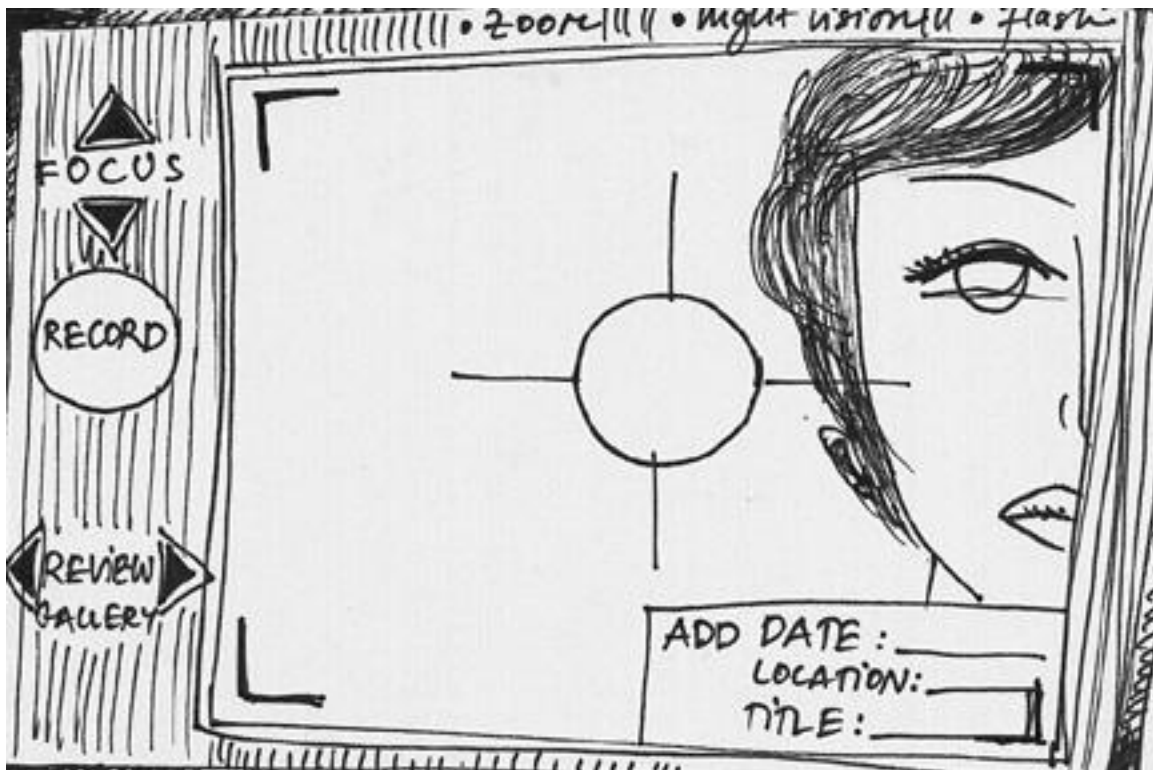
The Book of Style: a collection of short essays that teach you the basic code of polite communication in each country.

Culture notes:

- Travel guides
- Newspapers: illustrated magazines in Spanish which teach the player about the current situation in the country she is visiting
- Local Radio Stations
- Photo books with images made by other gamers or by photographers from each country

Other Object:

- Power ups: fruit, drinks,
- Money: US and local currency



The Photo Camera: The player can control the basic functions of her camera: focusing, zooming, selecting the right location, composing the shot.

Weather

Most of the game takes place in warm, dry climate.

Day and Night

The game has day time and night time missions, yet most of the missions happen in daylight. Night missions require special equipment (a flash adjustment for the camera of the journalist).

Time

Each scene develops in real time. However, the scenes and locations of the game are connected with jump-cuts. For example, the player has a conversation with his editor: the conversation pauses when the player stops giving feedback, and speeds up if the player gives quick feedback. When the conversation ends, a jump cut positions the avatar journalist in his new environment—Buenos Aires or Madrid, etc.

Lighting Models

The lighting models are crucial to the technical success of the photographs. Most of the missions take place outdoors, and require simulated natural light (sun). However, some of the shots, such as interviews with politicians and shooting in dance clubs, take place inside and require the player to learn how to use a simulated camera flash.

Artificial Intelligence:

The A.I. behind the main characters is driven by a need based model similar to the game “Sims”.

Each character starts the game with a set pre-disposition, which determines the challenges and immediate skills she will have. The pre-disposition characteristics appear constantly in the game menu itself:

- **Technical Skills:** This parameter determines the quality of the pictures that character will take: high technical skills help the avatar make pictures that are crisp and in focus, low technical skills cause camera shakes and blurs in the final image (needless to say, the second kind of pictures do not sell in the newspaper).
- **Language Skills in Spanish:** This parameter determines the kind of options the kinds of missions that the avatar undertakes. Characters with little experience in Spanish are sent to missions that involve dynamic action and little dialogue (such as the Tomato fight in Spain). Characters with advanced skills are sent to missions that require more intensive interviews and written reports—they receive much better salaries for their advanced work.
- **Adaptation/ culture shock levels:** This parameter determines the “stamina” of each journalist in the face of an unfamiliar language and culture. When one of the gamers keeps making mistakes and Spanish, his culture shock levels increase. If the avatar has to fight her way through a crowd, or cross a dangerous neighborhood, her culture shock levels increase even further. Bad hotels and poor food also have negative effects. When the character reaches max levels of culture shock, her character has a mental breakdown and demands immediate return to her home country.

During the game, the characters are evaluated along the following criteria:

- **Trust:** each conversation and action the character has either increase or decrease the trust that she generates in the society she visits. For example: a polite, grammatically correct address to a local person will yield an informative reply and + 10 trust points. The “trust level” is different from the “culture shock” level because the first one measures the reactions of the local people to the journalist, and the second: the inner emotional state of the journalist.

- **Budget:** The Budget levels monitor the expenses of each journalist. To increase the budget levels, the journalist has to be frugal and publish good work. The characters that spend more money than they have declare bankruptcy and go looking for another job.
- **Time remaining before the deadline:** Each mission has a certain deadline, determined by the issue data of the newspaper issue where the photographs end up published. Successful photographers manage to finish their mission before their deadline. Those who finish after the deadline receive less money for their work.

There are three possible ways to victory in the game:

- Smart photographers end up RICH: Some of the journalists are attracted by good pay for their work: they pursue the projects that offer more money, and save most of the money they receive for their trips. The person who ends up owning the most money at the end of the game can become the OWNER OF THE NEWSPAPER
- Smart photographers end up FAMOUS: The gamers who produce an archive with the highest number of work published in the newspaper are invited to make a gallery with their work. During the opening of the show, the OWNER of the newspaper announces that the winning photographer is now appointed to be the CO-EDITOR of the magazine.

User Interface

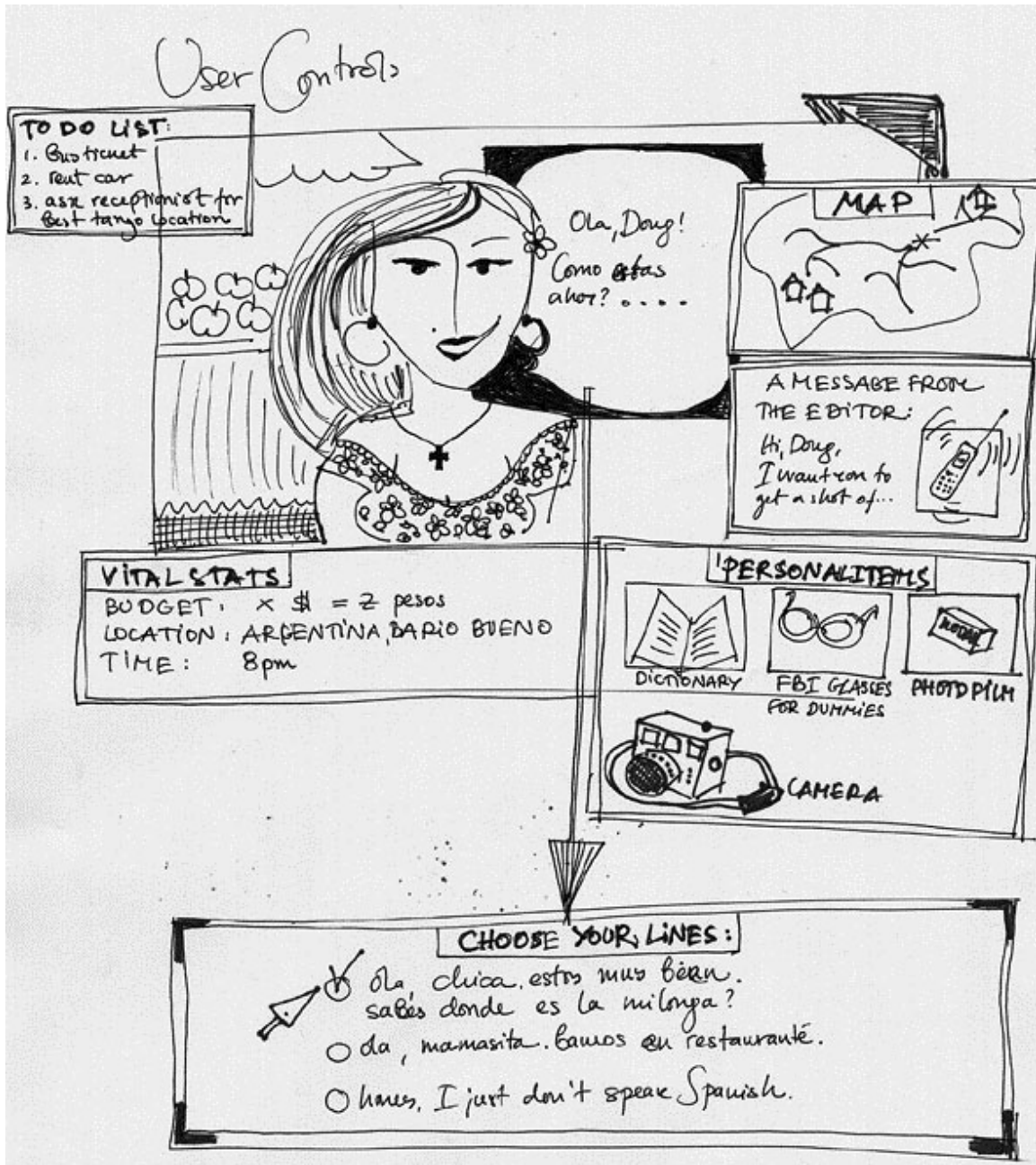


image # --, a sketch of the user interface

Main Features of the User Interface:

- The conversation box
- World map
- Personal items: camera, photo equipment
- Language aids: dictionaries
- To do list of shots

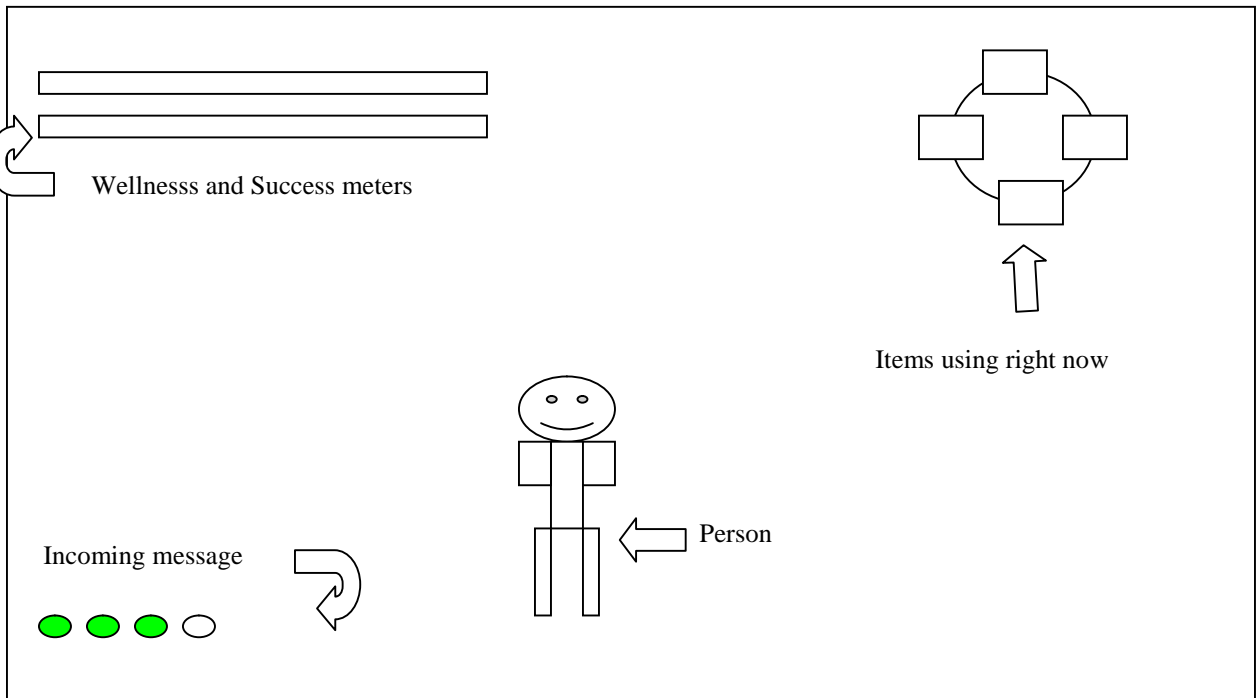
- Photo album with previous missions
- Message box: incoming emails and photo calls from the media office

Camera and Perspective

The game is driven by first person perspective similar to the staging of “Green Fandango.”

- When you are not in camera mode, the game should be in third person perspective such as GTA. The meters are always displayed on the screen. When the wellness meter and success meter go below a certain point, the mission fails.
- Checking the inventory can be done on a pause screen. When the game is paused, one can check your inventory, secret, mission objectives etc...
- While in the third person perspective, the is only able to select a few items to be shown on the screen or the user can select items by rotation like a first person shooter video games among other genres.

Here is simple idea of how the user interface could look.



Musical Scores and Sound Effects

The sounds of a typical Barrio...

Radio GaGa: The player can receive a lot of information about the city through listening to the radio as he walks around. Should the budget allow, the local radio can be designed to amuse the player with funny commercials in Grand Theft Auto style.

Conversation Dialogs: The designers have to record the voices of native Spanish speakers for all the conversations in the story.

Background folk music: salsa, tango, bolero, flamenco, Spanish guitar, and any other character melody that can be used with minimal payments to music artists.

The sound of a Spanish-speaking city: The gamer has to hear all the background conversations and exclamations in Spanish. The designers of the game have to record not only the dialog decision trees, but additional speech of markets, children playing, businessmen chatting, etc.

City sound effects: sirens, cars, busses, uproar

Photo sound effects: The sounds of the camera shutter, the rewinding of the camera preparing a new shot to be exposed.

Single-Player Game

Overview

In the single player mode, each gamer has to build a photo journalist avatar and pursue her mission independently.

Single Player Game Detail: Custom Challenges:

The Professor or teacher of the class can assign personal challenges to each player, which are selected according to strengthen her skills and drill down on the mistakes she makes the most often.

Hours of Gameplay

The game is separated in sections of 45 min, designed to fit the regular class duration.

Victory Conditions

The player wins the game by being the one person in the agency to publish the most pictures in the newspaper and win the most money for their work. However, the biggest reward for the player is the skill set she develops by speaking, reading and living in a Spanish world.

Multiplayer Game

Overview

The locations and missions in the multiplayer mode are similar to the ones in the single player mode. However, when multiple players join the game, they can choose whether to compete against each other, or to collaborate and compete against other teams. Two journalists covering the same mission as rivals will compete for finishing the mission quickly, and for finding the best shots at each scene. The player wins more money if she manages to get to the good locations first and have her materials printed, and wins absolutely no money if her pictures get to the agency late.

If two players collaborate, they can try to cover two or three missions located at the same city in one visit. In this way, they increase their chances of getting a striking photo and making more money from publishing it. At the same time, they continue to compete for information about the locations and premier shooting positions with other players or teams working at the same place.

Max Players

The maximum number of players is about 15 (the number of students expecting to play the game in a given class). Each character assumes the identity of one of the journalists in the office. The game assumes that most students have similar Spanish-speaking skills.

Internet

The current game is designed to be played on a PC or a Mac only. An online version can be provided in future releases.

Persistence

The world of the game is organized by a flow of daily activities and “events.” The daily activities of the citizens and the journalists occur in a persistent way—people walk around the city, chat, sell, etc. However, the “events,” such as the arrival of an important person, a riot, a natural disaster can change the flow of “daily activities” into new patterns. For example: people can migrate away from the location of a natural disaster, and the citizen in a group can appear more agitated after the arrival of a new dictator.

Saving and Loading

The game is saved after each class and it can be resumed in the following class session.

World Editing

Overview

World editing is an option available to the Professor teaching the class and to students at advanced level of Spanish.

Feature 1: Creating New missions in established environments

The players editing the world can use the existing settings of a given city and ask the Editor Character to assign students to a new kind of a mission.

Feature 2: Staging Contests for “the Best Shot”

The world editor can set a competition theme. She can ask the class team to visit a location, bring back their best shots and work together to select the best image taken. By assigning a common mission to the entire class, the teacher controls the kinds of grammar and cultural interaction they are likely to encounter.

Feature 3: Personal Grammar challenges:

The Professor who administers the game can monitor the performance of each student through the data sheet of typical mistakes this person is making. If the Professor chooses, she can change the system so that it offers more grammatical challenges of a certain kind for each student. For example, if the teacher notices that Joe makes mistakes when counting with Spanish numbers larger than 20, she can specify that the next challenge Joe faces should include multiple number related transactions (example: paying large bills, finding street addresses on a long street, etc.)

Pedagogical Approaches: setting the stage for a playful learning experience

Creating a learning context for practicing grammar, vocabulary and cultural awareness

The goal of “Periodista” is to provide a CONTEXT for learning Spanish through an immersion in a virtual Spanish-speaking world. The game does not attempt to replace the traditional Spanish 1 course curriculum, or to act as a stand alone method for learning Spanish.

The game favors the practice of reading and listening. However, it can be expanded to include elements of talking and writing, if the game design team can afford to implement voice recognition and writing software.

Developing language skills set:

Reading Comprehension:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n Menus for choosing actions and responses in conversations (in Spanish); n Reading the Spanish signs of the city landscape; n Reading background information related to the mission;
Listening Comprehension:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n Listening to local people and officials addressing you in Spanish; n Listening to the background: conversations happening around you, typical exclamations, local radio programs and folk music lyrics; n Understanding the meaning of local proverbs and expressions used in appropriate context
Possible Writing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n Creating written reports to explain the images taken at each mission n Using spelling and grammar check to improve each essay n Using peer and teacher evaluation to polish one’s writing style
Possible Speech: (using voice-recognition)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> n Using voice recognition software and a microphone attached to the computer to test and correct the correct Spanish pronunciation of the player

The game favors exercises in reading and listening comprehension, yet it can be expanded to include writing and talking assignments.

The Correspondence between Classroom Curriculum and Game Structure

The purpose of this game is not to substitute the regular Spanish teaching curriculum, but to provide an environment that allows the students to practice what they have learned in their classes. This the game relies on a strong correspondence between the game levels and elements and the traditional elements of a classroom curriculum.

The table below illustrates the relationship between academic experience and game context:

Academic Structure of Spanish 1 (modeled after “Destinos”, a textbook by McgRaw Hill Publishes, used in MIT Spanish 1 clases ²)	Game Practice:
Lecciones 1-2 vocabulario:	The player learns about the names of family members from the Editor Mr. Martinez, who is

² “Destinos”, McGraw Hill Higher Education, A Division of Mc-Graw Hill Companies, Second Edition, 1997

<p>cognates, family members</p> <p>gramatica: hay, etsar, ir; present tense (regular verbs); subject pronouns, interrogatives, adjective agreement</p>	<p>constantly sharing stories about his native land and family.</p> <p>Grammar: short quizzes on the correct forms of present tense verbs, which appear in multiple choice format in the menu of each character.</p>
<p>Lecciones 3-8 vocabulario: numbers (0-21), academic subjects, animals, days of the week, telling time</p> <p>gramatica: saber, conocer; present tense (irregular verbs, stem-changing verbs); reflexive pronouns</p>	<p>The player reviews her knowledge of the days of the week by following the calendar set in the game, and observing the deadlines set by the Editor.</p> <p>In order to advance in the game, the player often has to pick a phrase from a menu of similar expressions. She has to be careful not to choose the ones that use verbs incorrectly, otherwise she will lose the trust of the people she speaks with.</p> <p>Grammar: short quizzes on the present tense of irregular verbs</p>
<p>Lecciones 12-18 vocabulario: numbers (100-1000), food groups; writing and written materials</p> <p>gramatica: preterite tense; object pronouns; more on using adjectives</p>	<p>The player practices her knowledge of numbers in Spanish when she dials for a phone conversation with her Editor in NY, and when she has to buy equipment or pay for services. She learns the basic food groups by reading and ordering from Spanish menus in local restaurants.</p>
<p>Lecciones 19-26 vocabulario: directions; more family members, weather, changes in states and conditions, parts of the house, domestic appliances; more descriptive adjectives</p> <p>gramatica: present and past progressive; imperfect and preterite together; por and para; affirmative and negative words; tener idioms; comparisons; estar + adjectives</p>	<p>The player has to correctly ask for directions and act using the given directions each time she is searching for a location in a new city.</p> <p>Grammar: Short quizzes on affirmative and negative words; idioms.</p>
<p>Lecciones 27-38 vocabulario: parts of the body; medical situations; places in a city; geographical features; professions; social life; giving advice</p> <p>gramatica: future, superlatives, present subjunctives and uses ; commands; present perfect (indicative and subjunctive)</p>	<p>The player learns and reviews the parts of the body when she constructs her own character at the beginning of the game.</p> <p>Grammar: short quizzes on the use of verbs in future tense.</p>
<p>Lecciones 37-52 vocabulario: money, business, renting and buying; tourist needs; travel; restaurants; hotels; sports; relationships; pastimes</p> <p>gramatica: past subjunctive; conditional; if-clause sentences;</p>	<p>Each trip challenges the user to practice her skills in buying photo film, renting a room in a hotel and asking for directions.</p> <p>The past tenses are used in written and oral reports that describe the adventures of each photo mission.</p>

subjunctive with certain conjunction	
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Assessment Opportunities

“*Photo Periodista*” can be used for multiple assessment strategies. Players can assess their own learning through success in conversing in Spanish and finding the needed clues. Further, debriefing and discussing strategy is common in competitive games.

The game also includes mechanisms designed to support more formalized assessments of learning. *Photo Periodista!* captures data that can be used to assess students’ learning. It captures:

- The time spent per puzzle
- Percent puzzles completed and missed.
- Mistake zones: verb tenses, vocabulary themes, direct and indirect object misuse, etc.

Thus, teachers can examine the puzzles to quickly see which language areas give students the most troubles. Further, teachers can construct writing assignments and class discussions based on the game stories.

Extra Miscellaneous Stuff

The Initial Prototypes of the Game

The first round: learning from the weaknesses of our initial game proposals:

We started the design a variety of stories that place the gamer in a Spanish-learning context. One of the games, Pirates, had the player acting as a British pirate captured by the Spanish Armada. The other idea, The Ages of Men, followed one player through his language learning stages of life starting with toddler and ending with retirement.

Discussing these ideas with Professor Morgenstern and Professor Ramons, who teach at the MIT Foreign Languages and Literature department, we realized that we had made a number of mistakes in our initial design. We made the following conclusions about elements that can be improved in the final design scenario:

- **Linguistic Diversity:** The game should include characters from different Spanish-speaking countries, which get the player accustomed to a variety of accents and expressions.
- **Exploration without Antagonism:** The player should be placed in the role of someone who is sincerely curious and open to the culture around him (and not fighting with it)
- **Interactive Characters Instead of Tutorials:** creatures that evoke an emotional response can also help the player in difficult moments and provide comic relief.
- **Geographic Diversity:** A successful plot will invite the player to spend time in a variety of Spanish-speaking locations (Spain, Latin America, Central America, Hispanic neighborhoods in the US)

“Pirates Appendix”

Summary:

Lord Drake, a British sea captain, is captured by the Spanish armada and imprisoned by the King of Spain. Drake’s Lady-Friend in London finally pays a good bribe to her Spanish liaison, and Drake is released. His first day of freedom is miserable: he has no money and speaks no Spanish. Even pirates feel culture shock! His goal is to recruit some sailors and a boat, get revenge from the Spanish armada and go back to Britain... where they all speak sweet familiar English.

His only comfort... his faithful green parrot Jolly lands on his shoulder. Jolly, if properly fed, is fairly intelligent and translates for Drake...

Big Idea and Educational Impact:

To succeed in his quest, Drake has to be not only a skillful fighter and strategist. He has to learn how to speak proper Spanish and address each situation accordingly:

- He has to learn swear word and command phrases to lead the crew
- He has to introduce himself in formal Spanish in front of the Queen when she offers him a deal

- He has to be able to speak with the merchants at the port to buy bread, wine, and weapons...
- He has to be able to give and receive directions, read maps
- He has to be able to make Spanish compliments to ladies...

Learning Experience:

The game has game levels and roles suited for different degrees of Spanish proficiency. The Personal Workout, divided in 25 sessions of 30 min, leads the players through basic grammar and vocabulary. It helps the player learn more game hits and strategies. The player can use the help of his translating parrot, purchase dictionaries, capture people to translate for him, and try to understand the directions himself.

The player is immersed in a Spanish-speaking world, and learns phrases through repetition.

“Ages of Man Appendix”

The Ages of Man

A game for learning a language the way native speakers do— starting at the moment one is born.

Intro:

This is a game where you play the life span of one human being at increased speed—from infancy to old age and back to the form when you are a spirit looking down from the sky. You are born without memory, without language, without skills. And, yes, you are born in a world of big people leaning over your cradle and speaking a language you do not understand. To express and satisfy your needs, you pick up language and skills from your environment. As you grow up, your size, skills, budget and vocabulary increase, and so do your responsibilities and social functions. Thus you learn language in the most natural way—through growing up with it.

Big Idea and Educational Impact:

The process of learning one’s first language, in most cases, comes in a seamless, effortless way; it is learning that grows organically with one’s environment. By contrast, learning a “foreign language” is often associated with structured exercises, dull repetition, forced memorization, fear of speaking up and culture shock. The native language is where you feel at home; the “foreign language” is the space you have to struggle to grasp.

The “The Ages of Man” game allows you to experience the life-cycle of one person in a language and culture you are not familiar with (case study: Spanish). The game leads you through a circle of life stages and learning: birth, childhood, puberty, adult life, old age. Language exercise and learning is not separated from the game play—each game level, represented by a stage of life, contains play situations that immerse the gamer in new vocabulary.

Learning Experience:

Organic learning that feels like game play

The goal of the game is to simulate the natural process through which children learn their first language. The learning element is incorporated as a part of the game play, rather than being isolated in a lessons separate from the main narrative.

Game sessions designed to fit in classroom exercises

Each game level is tailored in order to fit about 35- 45 min, which allows the game to be adapted as a part of a foreign language curriculum.

EVALUATION OF AGES OF MAN AND PIRATES:

According to Professor Morgenstern, who has himself developed the story-boards of a variety of educational videos and games, though that the plot of “*Ages of Man*” is the most intriguing and artistically accomplished. A number of the students and professors admired the creativity of the plot: few games have attempted to illustrate the entire life-span of a human being in game play. However, both Professor Morgenstern was concerned that the idea of starting language-learning as a small child is not appropriate to the lives of students of Spanish as a Second Language: most of the students are already adults, and therefore need content with information and concept adjusted to the understanding of an adult, not a child. One can argue with such point of view: even adults learning a foreign language feel like their expressive ability is at first reduced at the vocabulary of an infant, and then expanded gradually.

However, this linguistic debate was not the factor that convinced us to abandon the game idea. We soon realized that the Artificial Intelligence Engine required to support such a game will be very complicated, and difficult to achieve. The technical challenges of the game proved a serious obstacle in this case.

All graduate and undergraduate students at the Games to Teach group found the story of “*Pirates*” appealing with its semblance to traditional exploration games, the romantic appeal of pirate stories, and the dynamic stories in the game. The game allows the player to act as a real foreigner learning a language (he or she plays a British Pirate trapped in Spain).

However, Professor Morgenstern critiqued a number of elements related to possible cultural faults of the game “*Pirates*”. To beginning with, the player was supposed to play in a world where Spanish people were his or her enemy: a very unfortunate position for someone trying to embrace a foreign culture. Furthermore, the world of pirates was set in the Middle Ages—can we recreate the historical atmosphere of the game and have the characters learn contemporary Spanish at the same time? On the other hand, Spanish is spoken with different grammar and dialects in different countries. How can the game expose the students to these variations (considering that Latin America did not exist on the European maps from the Middle Ages)?

Professor Henry Jenkins objected to the idea of a Tutorial that the players should complete *before* they play the game. “Most gamers dislike tutorials,” said Professor Jenkins, “They find them tutorials are an annoying waste of time.” He tough that the completion of a tutorial section before the game would remind the students of the rigid environment of school lessons—something that we as game designers were trying to avoid. It was more appropriate, Jenkins tough, to offer help when the gamers requested it.

For example, the talking parrot character can serve as a very successful aid. A funny, witty parrot can suggest hints to the game, translate from Spanish to English and add comic relief to the game. Thus the typically annoying, didactic tutorial function becomes a lively part of the game. A similar approach has been used in the story-boarding for the Games to Teach project “*La Jungle de Optica*”: the player is accompanied by his little niece, who adds new elements to the adventure plot.

Design History

Version 1.00

1. The team worked on three possible scenarios:

“Lord of Pirates”

“The Ages of Men”

“Survivor Latin America”

2. We developed the original scenario and characters for each idea, consulted Professor Morgenstern and Professor Ramos, Foreign Languages at Literatures at MIT, on this idea. Their suggestions and critique were incorporated in the fourth, final scenario: “Periodista”

Version 2.00: Developing the idea “Photo Periodista”

Included in the changes are:

1. Choosing the photo journalism as a theme
2. Staging a plot which takes into considerations the mistakes we made in the first ideas developed
3. Creating a list of possible missions, selecting geographic locations to be explored.
4. Story details.
5. World layout and design.

Version 2.10

Version 2.10 has several small changes over that of version 2.00. The key areas are in many of the appendixes.

Included in the changes are:

1. Minor revisions throughout entire document.
2. Added “Design History Appendix”: Pirates and Ages of Man

Added sketches