Software Evaluation: Language Explorer

Publisher: Nordic Software
Content Area: Vocabulary
Grade level(s): Age five and up
Hardware Required:
- Windows 386 or greater, 4 MB RAM, Mouse, SVGA, sound card.
- Macintosh System 6.0.7 or later Color Macintosh
Cost Information: Not available on disc boxes, listed as $29.95 on the publisher’s website.
Software Functions: Language acquisition.
Objectives: The software claims to help children as well as adults to learn basic Spanish, French, German, and English vocabulary.

Appropriateness of Content for Audience  4.5/5
--Richness of Content/Skills Trained
The software has 500 words in 42 topics such as colors, basic verbs and nouns in four languages. Users learn by matching the animate picture to the correct word. The software is not rich in the skills trained, but provides a good collection of words for users at different levels.

--Difficulty Level
The flexible difficulty level is probably the best part of this software. Users can choose to be tested on vocabulary as “beginners”, or “intermediate” and “advanced” learners, or to identify himself as a “linguist”, in which case he will be tested on nuances of animal names and geographical names, etc. At “polyglot” level, a combination of the vocabulary in the four languages will be used.

Presentation; Appeal  4/5
The software has a very straight-forward presentation. Users can choose preferences (of sound and languages) and make changes by using a top menu. The animate pictures have an overall good quality. But due to the small size of each picture and the difficulty of some vocabulary items, it could be exhausting to practice on this software for long.

Feedback/Interaction  2.5/5
This software is not terribly interactive. A different sound will be heard when the user places the correct or wrong item in the slot designated. If a user completes all the vocabulary items in a given time period, the program “awards” the user by giving an applauding and “hooraying” sound. Apart from that, it does not give much feedback.

User friendliness  4/5
The straight-forward presentation, and especially the top menu preference bar, makes the software quite accessible to any users. Due to the lack of interaction, however, it might not be too attractive to young learners.
**Recommended Use**

The software is suitable for children starting to learn spellings of basic vocabulary, and can be helpful for foreign language learners who want to go beyond basic vocabulary items and learn to distinguish different food, objects, small animals, etc.

(Evaluated by Yi Xu, 2005.)