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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

For the second issue of *Global Business Languages* we, the editors, chose as a theme "Cultures and Cross-cultural Awareness in the Professions." When interaction takes place across languages, the cross-cultural aspect plays a leading role. Communicating, whether verbal or non-verbal, whether with or without fluent language capabilities, requires openness and sensitivity to cultures different from one's own.

At the 1996 Business Language Conference, sponsored by the Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) at San Diego State University and the University of California at Los Angeles, an invited panel of executives of international corporations stressed the important role played by cultural awareness in international business activities. While each executive stressed the importance of being able to speak one or more languages in addition to the native language when going abroad for an assignment, none could state categorically that one particular language was more valuable than another. They readily agreed that a working knowledge of one European and one Asian language, along with English would go a long way to making someone an invaluable asset to a global company. But there was strong consensus among these executives that cultural awareness was the single most important characteristic needed to succeed in a global company, and most especially during an overseas assignment. There was also agreement that by studying a foreign language one gains knowledge about the customs and culture of the peoples who speak that language. Furthermore, becoming sensitized to a culture other than one's own also opens the individual to differences that extend far beyond that one other culture studied. New vistas open and even a much greater understanding of one's own culture becomes possible by studying, comparing, and contrasting.

Company personnel recruiters for entry level positions often do not fully comprehend the value of an applicant's cross-cultural understanding, knowledge of a foreign language, and even internship experience or study abroad. The higher up one climbs on a corporate ladder, however, the more obvious this awareness of the importance of cultural understanding in business interactions becomes. Thus Chief Executive Officers definitely notice such assets in their employees and reward them accordingly. Even without going abroad today, there is ample opportunity in the

US to encounter persons from other lands and international backgrounds at the workplace and in our communities. Failing to reach out and to understand other cultures is therefore a serious deterrent wherever one lives and works.

Why then are universities not doing more to teach courses that stress inter-cultural and cross-cultural awareness? Business Schools successfully teach about American corporate culture to both undergraduate and graduate students at universities throughout the country. Executives in the classroom programs and executive masters programs are becoming more common also. Universities are attracting more non-traditional students due to changing demographics. This phenomenon brings new opportunities and challenges to our campuses. As the student body becomes more diverse, the need is ever greater to raise cultural awareness in both faculty and students.

In order to achieve this goal without expenditure of major resources, universities might look at an internal resource, namely the international faculty and graduate students. Largely untapped so far, faculty and students from outside the US can bring great enrichment and international understanding to those who have not yet had the opportunity to study or travel abroad. Experts from other lands can be found in many departments, such as agriculture, science, engineering, business, and the arts. University-wide cultural seminars, highlighting different countries or areas of the world, organized by faculty from these countries and assisted by graduate students also from these lands, can be created. The target audience for such seminars can be undergraduate as well as graduate students, even faculty and the community at large.

At leading universities such as Purdue, equipped with sophisticated technical know-how and a first-rate faculty from all over the world, a series of courses on international topics might well be developed for delivery through television or the internet, and thus reach a very wide audience, while at the same time serving as model courses for other universities. The gain could be tremendous. Not only would we educate our students better, but it would also serve to integrate the international students and faculty into our culture in a way not previously accomplished. If we begin such a program now, the multiplier effect will be far-reaching in the next century. High visibility given to such an endeavor on our campuses, with a clear supportive signal from the top administration in

the nation's universities, will underline the importance of cultural understanding and cross-cultural awareness in every aspect of our society.

The Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBERs) already play a unique role within their universities in this regard. As our readers will recall from our last issue of *Global Business Languages,* one of the mandates of these Centers is to internationalize the curriculum. On our own campus, under the leadership of President Steven Beering, we have made great strides along these lines, including the addition of an international minor option in the curriculum of the Krannert School of Industrial Management. The Engineering Schools, notably Mechanical Engineering and Electrical and Computer Engineering, urge their students to complete a minor program of study in a foreign language, particularly German. The Agricultural School has recently initiated new exchanges with Russia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. A series of Global Studies options under the umbrella of the Dean of International Programs also strengthens international awareness on campus. Our Study Abroad office has added many programs at universities overseas—summer, semester, as well as year-long options—to give maximum flexibility and opportunity to students for study outside the US. And of course the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, together with our CIBER, continues to build its curriculum in languages for business and technology, along with its regular offerings in language, culture, linguistics, film, and literature for both graduate and undergraduate students.

As the international curriculum at our universities expands, research which will lead to better understanding of other cultures remains crucial. It is the hope of the editors and the editorial advisory board that this publication brings to our readers results of research which will give impetus to further study, and awaken interest in cultures other than our own.

The articles in the present volume reveal a rich diversity of approach and content, although all are concerned with cross-cultural issues as they relate to languages for specific purposes. As we might expect, several different cultures are examined in the articles: German, Italian, French, Japanese, and Spanish. Aspects of these foreign cultures are compared to, or contrasted with, corresponding customs or practices in the United States. In addition, articles examining language and the health care needs of the Spanish community within the United States and foreign accented

ads received in Australia analyze multi-cultural issues within one national boundary.

Organizing such diverse articles within this journal is a daunting task. One rather easy and logical organizing principle is to arrange articles based on similarity of language and culture, so that all the German articles would be grouped together, all the articles dealing with French, and so on. We decided, however, not to organize the articles according to such a principle. Such a segregation would continue to stress the limitations of national boundaries at a time of expanding global horizons. And, as you will see, more often than not articles show an affiliation amongst themselves based more upon content or approach rather than upon the language and culture targeted for discussion.

It is our hope that educators, business people, and concerned citizens will read and consider all the articles in this journal, rather than just those relating to the language or culture of their greatest interest. We hope, for instance, that French professors will read articles dealing with German material, and that a business person with dealings in Japan will also read articles centered on Spanish. While the examples in an article are specific to one language or culture, the basic issues, concerns, and principles can be applied to any other language or culture. The following articles should stimulate us all to reexamine our assumptions about the cultures with which we deal, and, although different cultures may lead us to different conclusions than those found in the articles, we will have taken a new look at what we thought was familiar territory and made new discoveries. This is one way in which we, the editors, see the "global" application and usefulness of the articles in this volume.

The first two articles present a general overview to the cognitive processes involved in the encounter with another culture. They also both relate their findings to the classroom. By beginning at this point, we continue the discussions in the first volume of our journal, which focused on pedagogy. Throughout this volume, however, we shall move from the classroom to the world, in anticipation of our next volume, which will have as its focus the relationships established in "Networking with the Business Community."

The first article in the current volume, Armando Maggi's "Translating Cultures: The Importance of 'Historical Memory' in a Class of Business Italian," maintains that mis-translation always occurs between two different languages due to the culturally charged nature of each one. In fact,

language teachers and learners create a third semiotic field in which the two foreign languages (cultures) coexist. In order to move from one language to another, we must be both linguistic translators and cultural historians. Michael Hager, in "The Language Learner and Culture in Doing Business," examines the fact that our perceptual systems are the same from one culture to another, but that how they are used can vary from one cultural group to another. New information tends to be deleted. Bateson's logical levels are applied to the language learner and the acquisition of the target culture, with a resulting conclusion, among others, that the language (and culture) learner is usually not willing to accept a new identity within a new society.

The next five articles can be grouped together due to a focus on a particular cultural element as it relates to the classroom experience. Yumi Adachi's article explores many of the value differences between Americans and Japanese, such as those dealing with nature (control over vs. harmony with), time (short-term future vs. long-term future), and action (being successful vs. being part of an organization). Sixteen ways in which the Japanese avoid actually saying "no," even when that is what they mean, are described. These cultural components need to be integrated into the foreign language classroom. Jutta Bailey examines the contrastive features that separate the German résumé from an American one, and ways in which students can be taught these differences in writing exercises. In addition, the function of the German résumé within the entire employment process does not coincide with American practices. Akihisa Kumayama's study describes several incidents in which students were hindered by culture more than by language in their learning of Japanese. For example, when an American student adopts an American directness in speaking Japanese, it may be perceived as inappropriate or offensive. Cultural competence is urged as a classroom goal as part of language learning. Dagmar Wienroeder-Skinner analyzes differences between the German concept of space, as found in connotations to the German word "Raum" with its various cultural and historical resonances, in contrast with its American analogue. Among various statistics cited, those dealing with contrastive population density and mobility are highly significant for cross-cultural understanding. The final article in this group, that of Barbara D. Wright, Christina E. Cowell, and Elaine M. Geissler, describes a course for health care professionals that combines linguistic immersion with content-based methodology. Addressing the

needs of the Spanish community within the United States for medical professionals with some Spanish language and culture competency, the course they created can serve as a powerful model.

The third group of articles emphasizes cultural issues occurring in the world of experience and practice, with applications in real interactions as well as possible classroom study. Dawn Birch and Janelle McPhail's article examines the debate over the merits of globalization in contrast to international marketing strategies, and focuses on the particular issue of accented oral speech in Australian advertising. The effectiveness and persuasiveness of commercials in which a spokesperson is perceived as being different are explored, and a call for greater study is made. Chin-Sook Pak analyzes the use of attribution in American, Peninsular Spanish, and Mexican newspapers in order to "assess the sources that play decision-making roles in the target culture." Differences between specialists and scientific evidence is contrasted to opinions advanced by social and political leaders. In Thérèse Saint-Paul's article, customs involving food in business and social settings are explored in French and American contexts. Many useful examples indicate differences that should be understood. The next two articles focus on cultural contrasts in the workplace. A contrastive analysis of women's place in the business world in France and the United States is made in Salvatore Federico's and Catherine Moore's article. Whereas the feminist movement has pushed for changes in American corporations, "French women's best ally has often been their government and the public sector." Janet D. Lein provides a status report on the political, social and business ramifications caused by the reunification of Germany. Changes have occurred in privatization, the Stock Market, and job security that will have a major impact on its economy well into the next century.

The fourth and final section of this volume is concerned with the experience of living in a foreign culture. In Norbert Hedderich's article, a small group of American employees who had recently returned from work assignments in Germany were interviewed. They related five major areas of difference: structured environment, social interaction, formality vs. informality, receptiveness toward the non-native speaker, and the language barrier. Gilles Bousquet examines a business internship program in France from the point of view of its relevance in developing cross-cultural skills. Students in such a program acquire both work experience in the foreign workplace in addition to their observations and

analysis of the general culture, and business culture, of the other country. Finally, Yoshimitsu Khan's article provides a number of useful tips that will enable Americans to understand Japanese cultural practices in order to better function in a Japanese business environment. It closes with a wise observation, that we would adopt as a conclusion for the entire journal, that through better cross-cultural awareness, mutual understanding will lead to mutual success.

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