Introduction

Allen G. Wood
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At the end of 2013, the global economies are in a state of cautious optimism. Recovery has been slow over the past several years, but improvements have come, even though some sectors and markets still struggle. We continue to need to maximize our efforts, and part of this involves a high level of reliable communication and understanding among the various partners of the global community. The theme for the 2013 issue of Global Business Languages is “Goals, Results, and Success,” reflecting the need to plan effectively for future growth and to establish innovative techniques, with an emphasis on the use and instruction of business languages.

The very real and measurable importance of multicultural and multilingual competence is explored in Isabel Dulfano’s study “Assessing the Economic Value of the Spanish Language.” In very real terms she shows the economic advantages of bilingualism, as well as the significant cost of lost business due to a lack of language skills.

One way to improve significantly students’ abilities in another language and culture is through an in-country experience. Articles dealing with study abroad and internship programs are of great interest and importance to business language professionals, not only for the advice they offer on best handling of such programs, but also for news of the results. Students return with improved language and culture skills, and they are more motivated to continue their studies and become proficient. Their lives have been changed, and they are more likely to use the linguistic/cultural knowledge in their future profession.

The roles that Business Language Studies can play in the language curriculum, and also in a study abroad context, are explored in Deb Reisinger’s article “Business Language Studies and Study Abroad in ‘A Changed World.’” She indicates how students can be attracted to institutions that offer a combination of a second language with business, based on a summer program in Montreal that Duke University established entitled “Made in Quebec.” A one-week program in Quebec during the middle of a semester is described in “Experiential Pedagogy in a Course on International Business in French” by Marie-Pascale Pieretti. She offers details of the preparation prior to the trip, with an emphasis placed upon differences between research on businesses done at the home institution compared with the on-site experience, as well as an observation of cultural complexities and ambiguities that arose during
the interactions abroad. Lars O. Erickson examines strategies for all phases of in-country opportunities in his “Developing Engineering Internships in France.” The requirements are rigorous for students, and the challenges are ever-changing for the director, yet the success of the program is clear, with almost a total job placement rate six months after graduation.

While an on-site experience can rapidly increase linguistic and cultural competencies, much can be done at a student’s home institution. Per Urlaub’s article “Critical Literacy and Intercultural Awareness through the Reading Comprehension Strategy of Questioning in Business Language Education” draws upon theories of interaction between reader, text, and context with materials in the field of international communication. Students need to formulate pertinent questions and lead classroom discussion in order to foster greater critical skills, intercultural awareness, and language abilities. Jungyin (Janice) Kim analyzes classroom interaction in her article “Oral Communication Needs of New Korean Students in a US Business Communication Classroom.” Cultural and social differences sometimes act as barriers that keep Korean students from expressing themselves as American students do in a classroom setting, problems which are revealed in interviews and observations.

The need for students to learn the different genres of business communication is shown in “Differences between Academic and Business Writing.” Félix S. Vásquez discusses activities that promote a greater awareness of issues such as formatting, tone, and level of formality that students writing in business Spanish should know.

Steven J. Sacco and Dakota E. Senne present a unique and innovative project for the classroom in “The Global Case Studies Textbook Project.” Students prepare in groups a case study in one of three world areas (France, Quebec, or French Africa) after researching real business issues in the area. The project is collaborative and student centered, and the cases were later published.

Mary E. Risner and Linda Markley provide insights into how business language can be incorporated into a state foreign language association conference intended primarily for K–12 instructors. In “The Business of Languages in the Classroom Today” they show how local needs and resources can be highlighted for an audience that does not always have the opportunity to learn about business languages and cultures. In the final article, “Attaining Sustainable Growth of a Business Chinese Program through Utilization-Focused Evaluation,” Haidan Wang provides a framework for determining the results and strengths of a Chinese-language program. It features four major phases
(planning, data-collecting, analysis, and reporting) in a model that can be applied to measure the success of other programs as well.

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