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Nanette R. Pascal and Maria P. Rojas, Relaciones Comerciales

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Vicki Galloway, Angela Labarca, and Elmer A. Rodríguez. *Saldo a favor. Intermediate Spanish for the World of Business*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998. 271 pp.

One of the main goals of *Saldo a favor* is to provide intermediate-level students a tool to learn business Spanish from a cultural perspective. The flexibility of this book lies in the fact that it presents a variety of materials related to specific contexts; this provides the opportunity to use it in different courses such as: International Business, Conversation and Composition, Hispanic Culture, and any course geared to Spanish for Special Purposes.

The structure of *Saldo a favor* is designed to offer a logical sequence of activities that challenges students yet permit them to learn at their own pace. Each of the five units is dedicated to a business topic in connection to a Hispanic country or region: *Mexico: job seeking*, *Spain: the company*, *The Southern Cone: banking and finance*, *The Caribbean Basin, Colombia and Venezuela: marketing and advertising*, and *Central America: import/export and international commerce*. It also presents a glossary and five appendices with valuable information on weights and measures, abbreviations, useful terms, and conjugations of verbs. Of special interest are the statistics and economic profiles of Latin America, Spain and the United States (with an increasing Hispanic population) provided in a special section entitled *El mundo hispano*.

Each unit is divided into three sections: *Contactos y vocabulario*, *Contextos y estructuras*, and *Panoramas y redacción*. From cross-cultural information to business concepts, the authors provide a core of exercises to improve the four skills. I find the most interesting to be analysis of texts, preparation of curriculum vitae, commercial letters, and different business projects. The perfect frame for each unit is achieved through a description of objectives at the beginning and a list of Spanish/English vocabulary at the end. The authentic documents pertaining to each country are invaluable since they create a more realistic environment from a Hispanic perspective. Thus students confront another dimension of the language which opens up the door to multiple opportunities in career choices.

The key features of the text are found in the review of main grammar structures, the selection of exercises created to motivate critical thinking, updated data on Latin America and Spain, and cultural authenticity. The flexibility of *Saldo a favor* allowed me to use the text at the undergraduate level and select readings and exercises for the graduate courses. The students worked in pairs or groups and prepared case studies, marketing

campaigns, conducted mock interviews, created business strategies, and discussed international trade while perfecting their skills in the language. The *Workbook* and *Lab Manual* that accompany the text complement and reinforce concepts and constitute an excellent source for additional practice.

Saldo a favor is a solid book with a global approach which integrates language, business concepts and culture in an effective manner. This result comes—no doubt—from the vast experience of the authors in the classroom, their extensive first hand knowledge of the Hispanic culture, and foremost their true love and devotion to teaching. This book is a *must* for any professor willing to transform the class space into a microcosm of the Hispanic business world.

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Nanette R. Pascal and Maria P. Rojas. *Relaciones Comerciales*. Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1996. 0-669-32579-1. 279 Pp.

This textbook is one of the best intermediate-level Business Spanish in today's market. It emphasizes real communication in a business context through authentic documents, cultural readings, interactive role-playing, and problem solving activities.

The book consists of twelve chapters (suitable for a course of one semester) organized around general business and economic topics. The theme of each chapter is first presented as a situation likely to be encountered by a person conducting a particular business activity in the Hispanic world. The vocabulary, grammatical structure, and cultural information relate to that topic and provide the student with the language skills needed to be able to function within that particular situation.

Each chapter presents the topic first in its social context through a dialogue or vignette illustrating the oral tone of the chapter, then in its written context with cultural and business readings, as well as authentic samples of business-related written communications (letters, memos, invoices, etc.), and finally it engages the student in using the language of the chapter creatively through simulations and communication strategies, like role-playing and problem-solving in hypothetical cases.

All chapters are divided into four distinctive parts called: *Funciones*, *Comercio y Cultura*, *Aclaraciones Gramaticales*, and *Por Escrito*, which correspond to the cultural and linguistic contexts discussed above. All of them have a variety of oral and written activities to choose from that test student understanding of the topic.

Funciones opens the topic with an oral vignette in dialogue form. Unfortunately this is scripted dialogue, and no tape or video is provided for this “oral situation.” Although the script is unmistakably oral discourse and it can be reenacted in the classroom, it provides no oral feel for the language. This is a common shortcoming of Spanish Business textbooks. I do not know of any that provide audio cassettes or videos to illustrate the oral context of business, and yet the oral aspect of business is the one businesspeople need the most in their professional transactions.

Comercio and Cultura focuses on cross-cultural understanding. It introduces the topic first with a guided question and answer discussion on the different ways of approaching this particular business activity and the corresponding attitudes these approaches elicit. This is followed by an essay exploring current business trends on the topic in the Hispanic world, and ends with an open-ended discussion on the different approaches that can be taken to this topic, and the cultural misunderstandings they can bring about.

In *Aclaraciones Gramaticales* a key grammatical point is reviewed, and authentic readings are provided to practice this point, and to further illustrate the business or economic concepts presented in the essay. The grammatical points are chosen to relate to the situation presented in the chapter, and illustrate the key linguistic structure and expressions in the authentic readings. For example, the use of the subjunctive to comment on the way somebody else does something is introduced when learning about ways and means to increase production and still maintain quality control of the product.

Por Escrito ends each chapter by introducing first the format, style, and protocol of the most commonly used types of business correspondence for particular contexts, and then offers a recapitulation of the whole chapter in the form of a series of role-playing realistic scenarios to allow the students to practice what they have learned in the chapter.

Relaciones Comerciales introduces the communicative approach to Business Spanish, and in so doing provides the profession with a much needed tool for improving the quality of business language instruction at the intermediate level.

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Princeton Training Press. *Doing Business Internationally. The Resource Book to Business and Social Etiquette*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Training P, 1997. ISBN 1-882390-12-1 500 Pp.

Given corporate America’s demand for cross-cultural communication skills, business language teachers may soon be devoting more attention to cross-cultural training. This neglected area in the business language

curriculum could stand more classroom attention, based on intense learner interest and need. To remedy the situation, business language teachers should consider using *Doing Business Internationally. The Resource Book to Business and Social Etiquette*. This book targets the business executive who travels overseas, and needs to understand the culture of international clients and employees.

The resource book examines protocol, social and business practices for 85 countries. It provides thumbnail sketches of the individual country's history, social tips and conventions, customary business practices, business entertaining, dining out, and public customs. Organized according to region (Africa and the Middle East, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe), the text gives language teachers access to country specific information. The sketches give insight into cultural differences among nations speaking the same language. Additionally, the text contains information on the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, gift-giving guidelines, suggestions for working with interpreters, strategies for communicating with non-native English speakers abroad, and business card exchange practices.

The business language teacher can find a number of uses for this book, keeping in mind its limitations. The introduction warns against stereotyping or making sweeping cultural generalizations. It also states that the information provided serves merely as a point of departure for learning more about the target culture. The authors encourage discussion of the contents with citizens from the countries to promote deeper understanding, and to reveal the wide range of beliefs held by individual members of a culture. In sum, the text provides a useful introduction to a country's culture, without pretending to be a definitive source of information.

The business language teacher can use this text in a variety of ways. For example, the instructor can select a cultural item each class for discussion or role play. Alternatively, the class could study a country each week. Students can study the culture of a particular country in depth, supplemented with interviews of people from the country. The class might invite guest speakers to comment in more depth on some of the customs described.

For its contribution to this neglected area in business language courses, this book merits a place in our professional and institutional libraries. It bears many similarities to the earlier, and equally interesting, publication *Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands. How to Do Business in Sixty Countries* (Morrison, Conaway & Borden).

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of International Management*