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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

This special volume of *Global Business Language* is composed of selected papers, since rewritten into article form, from the 2006 CIBER conference, hosted by the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. The organizing theme of the conference, “Matters of Perspective: Culture, Communication and Commerce,” drew over 80 papers and workshop presentations on topics such as the teaching of cross-cultural perspectives; the integration of current issues of international business and trade; the development of interdisciplinary, applied, LSP, and content-based FL courses and curricula; study-abroad and internship program development and assessment; faculty enrichment; and the application of innovative technologies to international business and FL instruction. Indeed, the reader will find nearly all of these topics in this special issue.

Three of the articles of this volume direct attention to the impact of learning experiences abroad for three populations of cultural sojourners—students, faculty, and expatriate professionals—and from three different perspectives: program structure, pre- and post-program classroom implications, and analysis of in-country adaptation processes.

Ann Abbott and Maida Watson focus on a faculty development program in Spanish for Business that includes an experiential learning component in Madrid and Ávila, Spain. Drawing from research on experiential learning theory, particularly the model developed by David Kolb and represented by Kurt Lewin as the “experiential learning circle,” the authors approach faculty development in Business Language as a continuous spiral incorporating the four elements of concrete experience, observation and reflection, formation of abstract concepts, and experimentation in new situations. Based on their concrete experiences with Florida International University’s program in Spain, Abbott and Watson exemplify this learning process and conclude with suggested teaching materials and a sample lesson plan.

Ikuko Kurasawa and Ayumi Nagatomi address internship and study-abroad programs in Japan in terms of pre-program and post-program curriculum development, specifically responding to such questions as: How well do Japanese classes prepare for and follow up on study-abroad experiences? Basing their conclusions on results of a study conducted at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with returning interns and study-abroad students, the authors explore discrepancies between current curricula and the advanced-level needs identified by returnees via language-skills assessment, reframing of language goals, and self-analysis with Language Management theory.

Analysis of returnee interviews reveals strong implications for pedagogy, particularly in recommendations for effective classroom tasks, such as recounting problem episodes, conducting telephone conversations, performing contextualized mechanical drills, recording books on tape, and differentiating written and spoken language, e.g., delivering written summary and oral report of news events.

Hongmei Gao explores the needs of US professional expatriates living and working in China as diplomats, educators, young graduates, employees of nonprofit organizations or representatives of multinationals. Results of 20 interviews provide a qualitative study of the effectiveness of expatriates' intercultural learning and adaptation processes and offer implications for strategies to address three identified categories of obstacles: *cognitive* (insufficient Chinese proficiency and unrealistic preconception of China), *motivational* (lack of flexibility in adaptation and comfort zone syndrome), and *structural* (China's ingroup and outgroup differentiation and the expatriate's role definition).

On the domestic scene, efforts are ongoing to make foreign-language classroom learning as connected, collaborative, contextually authentic, and culturally appropriate as possible. Various authors address curricular and pedagogical innovations that have as a central characteristic the crossing of traditional disciplinary lines and the creation of new types of learning spaces.

Margaret Setje-Eilers provides an example of a virtual learning space that complements the classroom via the textual-graphical on-line environment of the MOO, a two-part acronym for "Multi-User Domain" (meaning that multiple users may access the on-line environment at any time from any location) plus "Object-Oriented" (meaning that users talk by writing and manipulate the virtual world by adding, naming, and describing "objects"). Vanderbilt University's "*bizMOO*" ("Business German MOO"), as presented by the author, is a collaborative space for intermediate students of Business German to practice activities in a German business setting, from preparing job application materials to interacting in a business environment.

Authors Michael Bryant, David Sheehan, and Mary Vigier of the French Groupe ESC Clermont Graduate School of Management pose the question: Is management education equipping students with the necessary skills to meet the challenges of doing business in today's increasingly global environment? Starting from the perspective that language instructors are central to today's imperative to educate global businesspersons and citizens, the authors encourage a collaborative effort to embed language learning

in both the business school curriculum and its mission. From the language instructor's perspective, this effort involves seeking opportunities and strategies to reinforce the role, recognition, and status of language learning in the business school through such initiatives as team teaching and joint conference presentations and the development of innovative and motivating materials, activities, and methods of learning. At the language classroom level, this effort takes the form of content-based course initiatives, whose aim is not to teach business content *per se*, but rather to exploit the *context* as background for linguistic practice and improvement.

As a further example of the blurring of disciplinary lines in today's classroom, Irina Six takes us into the world of advertising to explore Russian culture through language. She notes that Russian advertising, barely 20 years old, makes a useful contribution not only to the foreign language classroom, but to courses in international business, international marketing, ethno-cultural psychology, or communication studies. Providing a multitude of examples and a variety of classroom tasks, Six explores the hidden cultural messages of word choices in Russian ads, the impact of images and strategies, and the pitfalls of US ads exported and translated into Russian.

Scott M. Powers and Sue DeVille provide an expertly conceived and well-developed model of how to use authentic materials from the business world to integrate culture into the Business French classroom while joining diverse vantage points. Motivated by the need to engage both the humanities-oriented student and the business student in the French classroom, the authors propose a simple inversion of terms to create "French Business," a course that looks at how the French do business and implies that students would learn the culture, politics, and economic history that link France's past, present, and future to shape practice and decision making. Using as an example the analysis of a French company's annual report, Powers and DeVille demonstrate how this one document links specialized language to its cultural backdrop and the learnings of the more humanities-based "French civilization" classroom (e.g., concepts of nationalization and privatization) to the basics of French business practice.

The bridging of vantage points between Business and Liberal Arts is not only a challenge for the Language for Business classroom; rather, as Thérèse Saint Paul contends, it is motivation for efforts around the world to reconcile profits-driven initiatives with the cultivation of "humanities" perspectives. In these efforts, the author claims a unique and critical role for the language professional as mediator and for the language, not as an end in itself but as a vehicle for ideas and for peace. Using the multi-dimensional concept of

“sustainability” as the guiding principle, Saint-Paul explores ways in which new “habits of mind” can be taught as part of an integrated intermediate-advanced course in “French for Green Business” that combines language, ethics, and ecological literacy with practical business content to develop in students “the awareness that answers to the big challenges ahead do not rely solely on technology, industry, and unfettered free-market initiatives, but rather require also a careful blend of reason and humanism.”

Finally, in answer to the question of how to pay for all this innovation, Steven J. Sacco presents a valuable contribution to the pursuit of external funding. Highlighting various programs of support for foreign language curriculum development, Sacco summarizes the funding patterns and priorities of each, concluding with an astute set of guidelines for avoiding pitfalls and creating win-win funding situations.

In conclusion, the articles we have selected for inclusion in this special issue present thought-provoking approaches accompanied by concrete examples that illustrate the variety of emerging paths for the teaching of business languages. As globalization erases boundaries between nations and peoples, it is our conviction that the continued partnership of Business and Language, as expressed through future CIBER conferences, will forge new connections and deeper collaborations to blur the traditional demarcations between sets of learning for the benefit of our students and future business leaders.

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