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Introduction

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of our volume this year is Borders and Frontiers. Perhaps more than ever, such a title elicits a wide range of intellectual and emotional responses from our authors and readers alike as they ponder the variety of meanings of these simple words.

On November 9 of this year, the world celebrated the twenty-year anniversary of the fall of the wall that had cut through the city of Berlin and divided East and West Germany. Those who died trying to cross over that wall in order to gain freedom in the West were remembered and mourned. Borders and checkpoints have now all but disappeared completely in Europe as it has united into one large economic unit with one currency, the Euro, free trade, and free movement of the workforce. The creation of the European Union was accomplished fairly successfully while retaining the distinct cultural and linguistic aspects of each country.

In the western hemisphere, trade and tariff regulations for Canada, the US, and Latin America have also erased some previous obstacles. Yet much remains to be done. The September 11th attack on our country shocked many Americans out of their complacency. Are borders today effective and can our borders offer us security? The persistent problem of how to handle our illegal immigrants has also caused Americans much concern and perhaps even overreaction with respect to securing our southern borders with walls and fences.

On the seas, border disputes and conflicts continue, most recently between North and South Korea. And, of course, land areas near borders such as the Afghan-Pakistani border are much in the news because the geographically difficult terrain with its sparse population is conducive to harboring terrorists.

Cyberspace, on the other hand, largely erases borders and opens new frontiers for communication with every corner of today's ever more "flat" world. While offering great opportunities to millions more people in the future, this open communication also brings with it some serious challenges.

We hope you will learn from and enjoy the articles in this volume of *Global Business Languages*, and that through them you will gain new insights and deepen your cultural understanding. The articles this year discuss a variety of ways in which the globalization of technology and business have broken through previous geographic and political divisions. The interconnectedness

of financial systems has been all too evident throughout 2009, and global business has similarly become ever more interdependent. Differences in language and culture must be factored into decisions and practices of viable, modern enterprises in order for them to compete successfully across what had been borders or frontiers.

The first article, “Borders and Frontiers in the Information Age” by Jessica Lichy, directly addresses issues of intercultural communication as it is shaped by technology. She examines the usage, and limitations, of English as a global business language, with special reference to France. In addition, the article explores how the Internet has already brought about new forms of communication and created a demand for businesses to maintain accurate and current Web sites. Christine Uber Grosse begins her study entitled “Change, Challenge, and Opportunity in Business Languages” with a review of the numerous ways technology brings the world to our computer screen, often in real time. She then examines the efforts at internationalization of the university curriculum as promoted by accreditation standards in business schools, the US Department of Education with its CIBER program, and individual foreign language departments. It is clear that, as she states, “the need for business languages and cultural understanding is great in the global economy.”

Many challenges face an instructor who wants to present business language content at the introductory level of language instruction, and this is especially true in the case of Chinese. In “A Proposal for Transcending Barriers of Intercultural Communication in Global Business: An Instructional Innovation,” Henrietta Yang describes how task-based instruction (with both target tasks and pedagogical tasks) and the use of a SMART Board can facilitate comprehension and learning. Chinese customs can be more realistically portrayed this way, and students can gain greater respect for a different culture. Student learning is also the focus of the article by Mary Vigier and Michael Bryant. In “The Astonishment Report: A Pedagogical Tool to Assist Students in Learning from Their International Experience,” the authors, from France’s ESC Clermont Graduate School of Management, describe a useful tool for assessing their students’ international education experience. Since learning implies both normative and transformative development, students are required to record those foreign practices that “astonished” them at first, and how they were able to cope with the cultural differences.

Our readers may be somewhat astonished to find an article dealing with Latvian culture, since most articles in *Global Business Languages* refer to the limited corpus of cultures conveyed by the most commonly taught languages.

The article “Maintenance of Latvian Business Language, Culture, and Community through Heritage Tourism and the Internet” by Gundars Kaupins and Nina Ray with Andris Berzins examines the importance of heritage tourism in Latvia, the motivations of the tourists, and the role the Internet provides in informing them about the country and its culture. Heritage tourists cross borders to return to an ancestral home, and the country needs to understand how best to market its heritage sites. Not only tourists but workers also cross linguistic and cultural borders. Charles Calvert, Dean Cleavenger, Sean Barth, and John Salazar explore the needs of Hispanic workers newly arrived at a resort destination in their article “The Need for Culturally Sensitive Curriculum for Spanish-Speaking Students at the University of South Carolina Beaufort.” The authors developed a survey instrument to identify areas of a business curriculum of greatest interest to the new workers. They hope to enhance the quality of life for the workers, as well as encourage more students in the fields of Business and Hospitality Management to learn Spanish.

The final three articles concentrate on the Business German classroom and several successful strategies. While most global stock markets have been newsworthy for their volatility this past year, they do in general provide materials with which most students have some familiarity. In “Using the DAX in the Business German Classroom.” Walter von Reinhart describes several classroom activities tied to the DAX, or Frankfurt Stock Exchange. A stock market investment simulation covers most of the semester, and other activities provide greater understanding of German finances and corporations. The European Union has certainly eliminated or greatly reduced many national borders, and the status of Germany and the new economic realities that the Union has brought are examined in Norbert Hedderich’s article. Many useful resources are provided in “The European Union in German-for-the-Professions Courses” that can help both students and business people. The last article, “Teaching Business German through Projects” by Michael Hager, stresses the importance of practical experience and real-world situations as a means of acquiring knowledge. The Situated Learning and Project Method which he utilized involved students developing a fictive (but realistic) company, business plan, and product that would fit into the German business environment. The students needed to conceptualize across a linguistic and cultural border.

To complete our offering this year, Maida Watson reviews two Business Spanish textbooks. She examines the pertinent materials and useful lessons that each contains. Instructors in Spanish will find resources suitable for

their needs, and instructors in other languages may find some interesting comparative information.

We can be reached at our e-mail addresses: ckeck@purdue.edu or wooda@purdue.edu. For more information you can visit us also at our Web site <<http://www.cla.purdue.edu/fl/GBL>>, and volumes from 1996 to 2007 can be found at <<http://www.krannert.purdue.edu/centers/ciber/gbl/gbl-main.html>>. We hope that this will help facilitate your access to our journal, provide information on subscriptions, and disseminate the call for new articles.

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