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CHANGE, CHALLENGE, AND OPPORTUNITY IN BUSINESS LANGUAGES

Remarkable change has come to the field of business languages since the millennium. Faculty face unprecedented opportunity and daunting challenges as language and cultural training evolves. The change agents of globalization and technology have dramatically altered the playing field for business language. The globalization and interdependency of economies around the world ensure that business language faculty and their skills are in demand. Now more than ever, businesses need to understand other languages and cultures to work efficiently with clients and co-workers. Business language faculty have an unprecedented opportunity to thrive in this environment where they have valuable skills and needed expertise. However, with this opportunity comes the challenge of communicating to foreign language departments, business schools, and business communities about what they can do.

Technology is the other great agent of change revolutionizing business language education. As technology impacts the daily lives of faculty, administrators, and students, it transforms our instruction. It takes the student out of the classroom and into the world of the business language and culture. Conversely, it brings the business language and culture directly into the classroom. As Franz Futterknecht (2008) so aptly put it, “Why do we need textbooks anymore? No text on earth offers students what the Internet does.” And of course Franz is right. With technology, we easily reach the latest information, access archives, communicate with people around the world, hear the latest hit song, watch a popular show, or see breaking news as it happens. We watch a live videocam of a street in Tokyo, visit a national park in Argentina, or ride the virtual subway in Madrid. The Internet and other technologies take us with ease where we could not go before.

But again, the great opportunity of technology to enhance instruction comes with a cost, and it is a great one for some. Learning how to use the technologies in the business language classroom is a challenge for many faculty. As students text, e-mail, surf the Web, check Facebook, call on Skype, get a Second Life, apply online for jobs, shop online, and download songs, faculty are challenged to learn various technologies and incorporate them into their teaching.

To examine the changes in business language education, I conducted an e-mail survey of over 300 foreign language department chairs, and surfed the Web sites of over 300 business schools. I noticed a trend away from the traditional business language classroom, and I found an abundance of study abroad programs and internships in international business and foreign language programs. These programs take students out of the classroom and give them authentic international experience.

Another change was the number of interdisciplinary programs that brought together business, foreign language, and cultural learning. This trend as well takes the student beyond the traditional learning experience into a blended, more authentic learning experience.

This study looks at the field of business language from the perspective of three key players: (1) AACSB-accredited business schools; (2) US Department of Education programs; and (3) foreign language departments. These three entities play essential and interrelated roles in the development of business language and cultural training today.

The first key player in business language change is the AACSB, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Without a doubt, the study of business languages and cultures has been affected by the accreditation requirements of the AACSB, the leading accrediting body for business schools in the US and abroad. The second key player is the US Department of Education. Major support for business languages and related international programs comes from two programs funded by the US Department of Education: BIE (Business and International Education) and CIBER (Centers for International Business Education and Research). Foreign language departments are the third critical player with a major impact on the way business language and cultural training evolves.

AACSB-ACCREDITED BUSINESS SCHOOLS

The AACSB has had a significant influence on business language education. In order to earn and maintain the highly coveted AACSB accreditation, business schools must follow certain standards for the internationalization of their curriculum. Today, 554 business schools hold AACSB accreditation, 460 in the US and 94 abroad. (See <<http://www.aacsb.edu>>.)

Business schools must meet curricular and faculty standards that enhance a school's international content, scope, and expertise. The most important change resulting from the AACSB standards includes the growing popularity of study abroad programs, internships, and interdisciplinary programs. As a

result, business language and cultural studies have shifted emphasis from coursework at the institution to study abroad programs, internships, and interdisciplinary programs. I surfed over 300 AACSB-accredited collegiate Web sites and saw how widespread these programs are.

Jeffrey Arpan and Chuck Kwok (2002) measured trends in internationalizing the business school curriculum at the beginning of the millennium. In 2000, they gathered data from 152 colleges and universities (103 in the US and 49 abroad). Respondents indicated that the most effective way to internationalize business school faculty was by teaching or living abroad, followed by international research, then foreign travel. In hindsight, this finding foreshadows the current proliferation of study abroad programs. Half of the schools surveyed also offered student internships in other countries. Foreign institutions had the greatest responsibility for arranging these internships, followed by university-wide offices, students, IB centers/departments and business school deans' offices. From the time of Arpan and Kwok's 2000 survey (2002), business schools have sought to give students international experience through study abroad opportunities and internships.

According to Open Doors (2007), from 2004 to 2005 study abroad increased by 8.5% to reach a total of 223,534 students in 2005. American students who receive academic credit for their study abroad have increased 150% in number in the past decade, up from under 90,000 in 1995–96. Looking at travel to specific countries, the total number of students going to China rose by 38%, while those going to Argentina increased by 42%. Recently, the four most popular destinations were Great Britain, Italy, Spain, and France. These countries attracted 95,670 of the 223,534 students. Ecuador was another top choice for study abroad (McMurtrie, 2007).

US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The US Department of Education's Title VI program is a major source of funding for business language and cultural education. From its two programs Business and International Education (BIE) and the Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBERs), dozens of universities have received grants to enhance their international education programs. In particular, 14 community colleges and universities received funding from the BIE program for 2004–06, while 31 universities received CIBER grants to support International Business Education and Research projects for the current four-year cycle.

BUSINESS AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION (BIE)

The BIE grants help business language-related programs by providing seed money to develop international elements such as study abroad programs in US business schools. Several BIE grant activities specifically relate to business language training and interdisciplinary programs. These include:

- Developing area studies and interdisciplinary international programs;
- Establishing student and faculty fellowships and internships or other training or research opportunities;
- Establishing internships overseas to enable foreign language students to develop their foreign language skills and knowledge of foreign cultures and societies.

For example, the University of South Florida recently wrote a successful BIE grant proposal that included the following activities:

- develop internships, study abroad, and other opportunities for students to acquire international business experience.
 - a. Offer 10 competitive scholarships per year for summer study abroad programs and internships.
 - b. Provide six hands-on internships per year with international businesses both locally and abroad.
 - c. Support the attendance of 20 students per year at events organized by the CIB and our partners to the agreement.

For more information on BIE, please see <<http://www.ed.gov/programs/iegpsbie/index.html>>.

CENTERS FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (CIBERS)

Business language and cultural training is part of the legislative mandate for the CIBERS. Upon accepting the USDOE funding, the CIBERS agree to carry on six types of projects, one of which commits the institution to providing foreign language and cultural training.

In the federal legislation, that mandate states that each CIBER must: Provide instruction in critical foreign languages and international fields needed to provide an understanding of the cultures and customs of US trading partners (See *CIBER Web* <<http://ciberweb.msu.edu>>).

For over a decade, the CIBER institutions have supported business languages. They have jointly sponsored over ten national Business Language Conferences, rotating its location among CIBERs. This annual conference provides a valuable forum for business language faculty and administrators. In 2008, the University of Florida CIBER hosted the event, and the University of Kansas CIBER held the 2009 conference.

In addition, CIBERs support the development of business language courses and materials, faculty training, research projects, and conference participation. As a result of these activities, the CIBERs continue to have a major impact on business language and cultural education.

CIBER DATA ON BUSINESS LANGUAGES

As government-funded entities, the CIBERs collect data on the business language courses taught at their institutions. The International Resource Information System (IRIS) reports the number of courses taught, level of courses, and enrollment in business language courses at the CIBER institutions for the years 1999 and 2002–06. The IRIS reports are available to the public at <<http://iris.ed.gov/iris/ieps/irishome.cfm>>. Although the IRIS reports provide valuable data on business language course enrollments at CIBER institutions, the data is inconsistent because of the way that business language courses are defined. A number of CIBER institutions define business language enrollment as schoolwide enrollment in all foreign language classes. Most CIBERs count enrollments in courses that are dedicated to business language study. Since the IRIS data does not state which institutions count business language classes and which count general foreign language classes, data analysis is difficult.

Most of the data in Table 1 was collected from individual CIBERs by Sherri M. Davis, Managing Director, CIBER, University of Pennsylvania. Not all CIBERs provided enrollment data for each of the four years; blanks in the table indicate missing data. Information about enrollments at the University of Hawaii, University of Florida, the University of Michigan, and Brigham Young University came from the IRIS reports.

The enrollment figures in Table 1 reflect a total of undergraduate and graduate enrollments. The blanks in the table indicate when data were not reported in the individual reports. “Schoolwide” in the table refers to the presumed use of general foreign language enrollments, when enrollment numbers of one or more years are much greater than a figure reported in another year. As an interesting side note, Columbia University outsourced its business language training to Berlitz. Also the University of Maryland became a CIBER only in this funding cycle, so it could not report data for the earlier years.

Enrollment in business languages at the CIBERs has been fairly stable over the four-year period 2004–07. The average CIBER business language enrollment ranged from a low of 142 in 2007 to a high of 162 in 2005. In each year, between 18 to 22 CIBERs presented data on their business language enrollments. To compare what happened to enrollments from 2004 to 2007, I took the sum of the enrollments each year, and divided it by the number of CIBERs that presented data. This yielded an average CIBER enrollment figure for each year. Overall, enrollment in business languages at the 18 to 22 CIBERs remained fairly consistent over the four years, without fluctuating much in any one year. The CIBER Business Language enrollment data is summarized in Table 1.

BUSINESS LANGUAGES TAUGHT AT THE CIBERs

An analysis of the data reveals that ten languages are most commonly taught at the CIBER institutions. In order of frequency taught, these are: Spanish, French, Chinese, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Arabic, and Korean. The figure in the right-hand column in Table 2 shows the total number of CIBERs teaching a business language over the four-year period.

Over half of the CIBERs that reported business language specific data offer four or more different business languages. Brigham Young University has the highest number of course offerings among the CIBERs, having offered business language courses in all ten languages for all four years. A close second is the University of Pennsylvania CIBER, which has offered all ten business languages for two of the four years, and nine languages for the remaining two years. The University of South Carolina is a close third with its nine languages. Other universities that have offered a wide variety of different business languages include Columbia, Duke, Florida, Florida International University, Georgia Tech, Indiana, Michigan State, Purdue, UCLA, the University of Texas at Austin, Ohio State, Colorado at Denver, Kansas, North Carolina, San Diego State University, Temple, Washington, and Wisconsin.

SURVEY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENTS

To understand business language trends occurring in foreign language departments, I conducted an electronic survey of 305 foreign language department chairs at AACSB-accredited institutions. Earlier national surveys were conducted in the 1980s. I traced the development of business languages in the foreign language curriculum (Grosse, 1982, 1985; Grosse and Voght, 1990). A later survey by Koch (1997) looked at the presence of foreign languages in MBA programs.

TABLE 1

BUSINESS LANGUAGE ENROLLMENT AT CIBER INSTITUTIONS
2004–2007

CIBER INSTITUTIONS	2004	2005	2006	2007
Brigham Young	167	196	243	
Columbia			246	
Duke	33	90	128	107
Florida International	50	97	80	95
George Washington				34
Georgia Tech	212	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide
Indiana U	schoolwide	76	76	42
Michigan State	66	161	161	108
Purdue	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide
San Diego State		319	schoolwide	schoolwide
Temple		96	128	151
Texas A & M	126	107	113	95
The Ohio State U	49	76	76	171
The U of Texas	198	264	181	190
UCLA	92	118	106	92
UC Denver	311	284	341	292
U Connecticut	168	151	143	88
U Florida	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide
U Hawaii Manoa	27	34	29	
U Illinois	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide
U Kansas	228	122	67	40
U Maryland				246
U Memphis	42	72	57	65
U Michigan	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide
U North Carolina		118	152	93
U of Pennsylvania	576	597	447	814
U of Pittsburgh	schoolwide	schoolwide	schoolwide	6
U South Carolina	265	167	253	281
U Southern California	163	115	109	82
U Washington	90	151	170	127
U Wisconsin	schoolwide	schoolwide	130	18
TOTAL	2863	3411	3436	3237
Average	159	162	156	147
# CIBERs in column	18	21	22	22

TABLE 2

NUMBER OF CIBERS TEACHING SPECIFIC BUSINESS LANGUAGES
2004–2007

LANGUAGES	2004	2005	2006	2007	# OF CIBERS
Arabic	2	3	4	3	12
Chinese	10	12	16	16	54
French	13	19	17	16	65
German	10	13	13	14	50
Italian	5	6	5	6	22
Japanese	10	10	11	9	40
Korean	3	3	3	2	11
Portuguese	4	9	9	7	29
Russian	4	3	5	5	17
Spanish	15	19	19	22	75
Total # CIBERS	28	38	35	36	

Source: Data provided by individual CIBERS to Sherri Davis, May 2008.

The present study yielded 82 completed surveys, with an additional three responses from institutions that do not offer business languages. The survey response rate was around 28%. Internet-based, the survey used software provided by Qualtrics, Inc. (<<http://qualtrics.com>>), which provided excellent customer support throughout the research project.

A look at the demographics of the institutions shows that two-thirds of the reports came from public institutions. Most (63%) represented large universities with over 10,000 students, while a third represented medium-sized schools with enrollments of 2,000 to 10,000. Only two were from small institutions with under 2,000 students. Most of the universities (67%) were located in large and mid-sized cities, while 22% were based in small cities, with 11% in small towns.

Business language enrollments at responding institutions basically followed the same trends as general foreign language enrollments that were reported in the MLA's 2006 Enrollment Survey. Spanish was the most commonly offered business language, followed by French, German, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, and Russian. None of the respondents offered business Arabic. Table 3 shows the enrollment in business language courses and number of sections reported by the survey respondents.

TABLE 3

ENROLLMENT IN BUSINESS LANGUAGE COURSES
AND NUMBER OF SECTIONS

	ENROLLMENT	SECTIONS
Spanish	1,773	87
French	778	44
German	456	26
Japanese	226	15
Chinese	155	14
Russian	30	3
Portuguese	25	3

Other results indicate the typical course level, amount of credit, and class size. Institutions most frequently offer business language courses at the advanced level, followed by the intermediate level. Few have beginning level courses in business language. Most business language courses carry three credits, and almost none are offered for no credit. Most respondents report class sizes of 11 to 20 students. The report showed that 12% offer business language classes for fewer than ten students, while 13% have larger classes with 21 to 30 students per class. No respondents have classes with over 30 students.

Concerning other options for language and cultural study, 87% of the respondents have study abroad programs available for their students. The next most common option is internships, which 67% of the respondents offer. Over 50% of the schools offer interdisciplinary programs such as minors in International Business and dual majors in language and business.

Surprisingly, fewer than 25% of language majors take business language classes at 43% of the institutions. Less than a third of the reports show that 25% to 50% of the majors take business language courses. Only 7% of the respondents said that over 75% of their majors take the courses, while another 7% said the percentage of majors was between 51% and 75%.

The courses are usually taught by faculty with tenure (54%), or faculty on a tenure track (36%). Another 36% offer courses taught by non-tenure track faculty. Only 24% use adjunct faculty to teach business language courses.

Two-thirds of the respondents had no plans to change the number of courses being offered. About a fifth indicated plans to add new courses, while just 7% had plans to add more sections. Only one respondent planned to discontinue a course or courses.

Respondents share many of the same challenges. About half said that finding enough students was a challenge, while about a third faced problems finding qualified faculty to teach, had budgetary constraints, and lacked support from the business school. About a fourth cited the challenge of limited space in the curriculum, while 19% mentioned a lack of recognition or reward for teaching.

When asked to identify best practices in their own business language programs, 70% of the chairs said the quality of faculty was outstanding at their schools, and 64% identified the level of student satisfaction and course design as best practices in their programs. Over half recognized their innovative teaching methods, while a third found their collaboration with the business school to be exemplary. Testing was a best practice for 23%. Other best practices recognized by four respondents included: guest speakers, faculty buy-in, collaboration with foreign partner universities, and an instructor with experience in international business.

CONCLUSIONS

Globalization and technology have had the greatest influence on change in business languages. Three key players have also impacted the field: AACSB-accredited business schools that follow accreditation standards, US Department of Education Title VI programs, and foreign language departments. The most striking changes in the field are the proliferation of study abroad programs, internships, interdisciplinary programs, dual majors, business or language minors, and general cross-disciplinarity between language and business in the curriculum. These programs and experiences provide students with the opportunity to interact with a foreign language and culture.

Through technology, business language and cultural studies continue to evolve in the classroom and beyond. The business language classroom will never be the same thanks to the Internet, e-mail, instant messaging, streaming video, social networks, distance learning, Skype, videoconferencing, online newscasts and newspapers, podcasts, and iTunes. Technology brings the world directly into the business language classroom, and takes our classrooms into the world.

But the new technologies bring business language faculty and administrators additional challenges. Learning the technologies and integrating them into the classroom are not simple tasks. Departments need to provide training for their faculty to ease the transition to a technology-rich classroom. Other challenges facing faculty are the need to make global and local connections, work across disciplines, create new courses, develop professionally, and conduct research. Faculty also face the critical challenge to communicate

what they do to the academic and business community, and gain recognition and support.

Clearly, the need for business languages and cultural understanding is great in the global economy. This critical demand for our training skills, and language and cultural understanding means that we have a special opportunity to make a valued, lasting contribution to our students and institutions. These new challenges and opportunities in business language education inspire us, as we continue to evolve with the field.

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