Global Business Languages: A Valuable Resource
Margaret Gonglewski

In the last issue, we featured the top themes from the 2013 National Business Languages Conference. That annual conference is a godsend for business language teachers eager for exchanging ideas, commiserating over frustrating challenges, and celebrating successes. The only downside? This empowering *coming together* happens just once a year. Fortunately, it's possible to extend the engagement, support, and conversation beyond that gathering through touchstones like the online journal *Global Business Languages*. This month's NCLRC Business Language column highlights *Global Business Languages* as a valuable professional resource for all language teachers.

Background: 16 Years and Going Strong

Global Business Languages (GBL) was founded in 1996 by Christiane Keck in the School of Languages and Cultures at Purdue University with funding by the Purdue Center for International Business Education and Research, or CIBER (for more information on any of the 33 "CIBERs" in the U.S., see http://ciberweb.msu.edu/). Since 2010 GBL is now published online through the Purdue library system, and all volumes are available through a user-friendly site: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/.

The accessible interface of the *Global Business Languages* website

For the first 13 years, Keck co-edited the journal with colleague Allen G. Wood, who has been the sole editor of GBL since 2009. As Professor of French at Purdue, Wood teaches French literature, French language courses at a variety of levels, and business French. I spoke with Professor Wood recently about GBL, as well as his own background in business language teaching. His experience teaching business French began following a six-week training program in Strasbourg, France, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Although his original area of specialization was 17th Century French literature, Prof. Wood has come to fully embrace teaching business French. He notes that in contrast to some of the topics that arise in literature courses, business language and culture topics are firmly rooted in the here-and-now. This gives Wood and his students the opportunity to become immersed in current issues, using

the Internet as a daily classroom tool, again in a manner much different from how he might put it to use it in a literature course.

Content: Something for Everyone

The journal's main purpose is "to provide interesting and stimulating articles that will guide the reader to a better understanding of various aspects of business languages, to offer practical advice and open up new areas of thought and discussion" (Global Business Languages: Aims & Scope).

Each issue is packed with articles covering business languages both commonly and less commonly taught. According to Wood, every annual issue of GBL has a particular theme meant to stimulate thought about relevant current issues in the field. Recent themes include
- Partnerships and New Alliances (2011)
- Challenges and Critical Junctures (2010)
- Borders and Frontiers (2009)
- Bridging Language and Business (2008)

Submitted articles do not always directly address the proposed theme, and Wood notes the importance of the editor remaining flexible and open to other topics in any given issue. The result is a broader range of subjects and approaches, and everyone is likely to find something of interest and relevance to their own context, whether they are seeking a more theoretical or practical bent. Wood provides an editor's introduction to every issue, elucidating the theme and setting the stage for the issue's contributions while making a place even for those articles addressing tangential topics.

The latest issue serves as a good example of the breadth and depth that GBL has to offer. With the issue theme of "Innovation and Tradition" the journal features articles that address business French, Spanish, Norwegian, German, Chinese and more. Two article examples serve to demonstrate GBL's scope:

- In her article Preparing Business Language Students to Meet Employer Needs, Darcy Lear presents a case for developing students' professional writing skills (e.g., business correspondence email) while maintaining the same level of rigor expected in traditional humanities courses.
- Jinghui Liu's article reports on a longitudinal study which has implications for designing improved international business curricula (Curriculum Development of International Business with Language Concentration: Results of a Seven-Year Study of an American Business Executive in China).

Expanding Readership

According to Wood, GBL's circulation has "truly gone global" and now reaches a much wider audience than the previous print-only publication with about 300-400 copies per year. Since moving to the online forum three years ago, GBL has experienced a total of 80,798 full-load article downloads, with an average of 414 downloads per article/review.

Although it is impossible to know precisely who all readers/users are, it is likely that most GBL readers have an interest in, if not experience with, teaching business languages. Wood notes a keen desire to reach K-12 teachers, or those who may not normally consider business language teaching because of predetermined curricula. An exciting possibility would be to reach those teaching in magnet programs with a foreign language component.

Cover of the journal's print version

The Competition

Articles related to issues in business languages can be found in other peer-reviewed academic journals with at least a partial focus on language pedagogy. A recent example is Michael Scott Doyle's article "Business Language Studies in the United States: On Nomenclature, Context, Theory, and Method," published in a special issue of the *Modern Language Journal*.

But for foreign language teachers interested in business languages, GBL is presently the go-to professional journal, with its higher concentration of relevant articles and concrete advice (curriculum development recommendations, classroom activities, etc.). Until recently, the well-regarded *Journal of Language for International Business* (*JOLIB*), published by the Modern Language faculty at Thunderbird, provided another outlet for business language professionals' articles and reviews, until it ceased in 2006. Wood notes that he would welcome greater activity through other journals, and in fact prefers to see them as potential "partners" than as competition.

Looking to the Future

Since CIBERs are funded by grants through the Department of Education, their very existence, and thus the existence of CIBER initiatives like the *Global Business Languages* journal, is dependent on government money. Yet while the annual threat of federal budget cuts is real, Wood is confident that GBL will continue long into the future because of the strong support from its home institution (Purdue) and the interest of the many readers—a group which this author heartily encourages you to join.

References

CIBER Business Language Conference 2013. Accessed July 16, 2013: http://kelley.iu.edu/cblc/

CIBERweb: About CIBER. Accessed July 10, 2013: http://ciberweb.msu.edu/

Doyle, Michael Scott. (2012). "Business Language Studies in the United States: On Nomenclature, Context, Theory, and Method," *Modern Language Journal*, 96, s1, 158–172.

Global Business Languages. Accessed July 16, 2013: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/

Global Business Languages, volume 17 (2012) Innovation and Tradition. Accessed July 15, 2013: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol17/iss1/

Global Business Languages, volume 16 (2011) Partnerships and New Alliances. Accessed July 15, 2013: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1218&context=gbl

Global Business Languages, volume 15 (2010) Challenges and Critical Junctures. Accessed July 15, 2013: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol15/iss1/

Global Business Languages, volume 14 (2009) Borders and Frontiers. Accessed July 15, 2013: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol14/iss1/

Global Business Languages, volume 13 (2008) Bridging Language and Business. Accessed July 15, 2013: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol13/iss1/

Lear, Darcy (2012) "Preparing Business Language Students to Meet Employer Needs," *Global Business Languages*, 17, 17-31. Accessed July 16, 2013: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol17/iss1/3

Liu, Jinghui (2012) "Curriculum Development of International Business with Language Concentration: Results of a Seven-Year Study of an American Business Executive in China," *Global Business Languages*, 17, 107-121. Accessed July 16, 2013: http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/gbl/vol17/iss1/9