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ABSTRACT

For many years, the modern language enrollment at Butler University included many students with a second major in education, and the language curriculum served this population. As the number of teacher trainees diminished, foreign language majors increasingly indicated second majors in business. To serve this population, the foreign language faculty developed courses in business French, German, and Spanish with an emphasis on culture, appropriate to the liberal arts mission of the institution. The liberal arts and science faculty's principal concern about the plan was the training of faculty to teach such a course. Language faculty have therefore attended conferences and completed coursework in business and economics. One business communication course has been offered in each of the three languages every second year, as planned, since the inception of the program. At first, students worked individually with faculty in a tutorial arrangement. Enrollment in all three courses has increased, and students from other academic disciplines have also successfully completed the curriculum. As a result of this success, an international business major requiring language study has been established. (MSE)

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EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

**LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION
FOR WORLD BUSINESS
AND THE
PROFESSIONS**

TENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

APRIL 3-5, 1991

**INTRODUCING LSP COURSES INTO THE
LIBERAL ARTS CURRICULUM: THE CASE OF
BUTLER UNIVERSITY.**

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Butler University is described in its Bulletin as a school which "enjoys an enrollment of approximately 4000 full and part-time students in day and evening classes". About 2500 are full time students enrolled in its five senior Colleges : Liberal Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education, Fine Arts and Pharmacy.

It was founded in 1855 and is located in Indianapolis, Indiana. Butler, a private, independent University, is strongly committed to the traditional Arts and Sciences and to the values of liberal education.

The Modern Foreign Language Department is a member of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and offers majors in French, German and Spanish. It also offers a two year program in Russian. Most of our Language Majors have also included another Major in some field outside the Modern Foreign Language Department. We usually graduate an average of 15 Majors yearly in all three languages. Most of them have spent at least one semester studying in a country speaking their Major's language.

For many years, the Department shared most of its Majors with the College of Education and prepared them to teach. The Department offerings were reflecting this and were directed toward fulfilling the teaching requirements.

About ten years ago, the Modern Foreign Language Faculty became aware of the fact that the number of students working toward a teaching certificate had drastically diminished. On the other hand, more Foreign Language Majors were declaring secondary Majors in a wide variety of fields : Social Sciences, Biology, English, Journalism, Dance, Business, etc... Soon, Business became important in the number of Foreign Language students majoring in one of the College of Business Administration fields.

The Administration and Board of Trustees at Butler have always encourage the Colleges and the Departments to look into programs which would uphold the tenets of the school and yet would keep up with the needs of the students.

It became apparent to us that it would be beneficial to our students to introduce a course in Business French, German or Spanish. However, it had to be presented in such a way that it was acceptable to the Liberal

Arts and Science Faculty among whom were a few "purists" who objected to anything deviating from the traditional programs.

Keeping this in mind, the Foreign Language faculty met twice a month for at least a year to discuss the planning and to plan. Each member had some research to do to present to the group. We were 6 full time Faculty members, 3 in Spanish, 2 in French and 1 in German.

Where to begin? The first step was to study catalogues from Universities offering Business courses in their Foreign Language Departments. We studied each description carefully, and, finally, by general concensus, wrote one that we felt would be best suited to our students and would be acceptable to the LAS Faculty.

The description, still unchanged in the Butler 1990-1991 Bulletin reads as follows: "French/German/Spanish for Business: Introduction to the French/German/Hispanic Business world, examination of its structure, institutions, procedures and terminology." Moreover, it was decided that it should be a Junior level course with a prerequisite of two years of College French, German or Spanish or placement by test on the Junior level. (The Department demands that all students planning to continue studying the Language taken in High School take a placement test). A syllabus was then written and approved by the Department in 1983. The course was to be offered every other year.

The purpose and main objectives of the course read as follows:

" Since an increasing number of students plan a career in Business, we propose to meet the needs of those who major in a Foreign Language and Business Administration or Economics by creating a course in Business French, German and Spanish.

This course has a place in a Liberal Arts and Sciences curriculum because it places the acquisition of concepts and skills pertaining to commercial activities within the broader cultural framework of Contemporary French, German or Spanish Civilization.

This Business course presents the students with an overview of the French, German or Spanish world and teaches them language skills, both oral and written, which will enable them to function efficiently within the French, German or Spanish Business structures."

With confidence on our side, the Foreign Language Department finally felt that it was time to take its project to the LAS Curriculum Committee of which I was a member. I was ready for a barrage of questions, but, it seemed that we had done our homework well, because of the few questions that were asked, I was able to answer

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them adequately. The only concern of the Committee was about the training of the Faculty to teach such a course. Obviously, it had been a main worry of the Foreign Language Faculty, all of us trained in the traditional ways, that is to say, not including Business courses!

For the next few years, and to this day, with financial help from Butler, members of the Foreign Language Faculty participated and are still participating in all available programs concerning French, German or Spanish Business. Most of us have attended the Eastern Michigan Conferences. We have taken workshops offered by the Chambers of Commerce and Industries of the target countries and have attended Seminars and Meetings to prepare us. Furthermore, Colleagues in the FL Department have even taken courses in Economics to be better prepared. We made it a priority to become as competent as possible in this field.

The LAS Curriculum Committee agreed to accept the French, German and Spanish courses as presented. The Dean of LAS was also receptive to the new courses and signed their adoption as courses in the LAS Curriculum. They became FR., GR., and SP. 361.

At last, it was time to offer our newly created subject. In French, I had a Senior student who was a French and Business Major and who wanted some knowledge of French Business terms and customs. He had lived and gone to school in French speaking Belgium as his father was stationed there with NATO. We decided to try this new Business course as an Independent study and chose a suitable book. We met weekly and studied a chapter at a time. It was as much work for me as it was for him, and we really learned together! Yet, when the Semester was over, he felt and I felt that we had both learned a lot! The following Summer, I repeated the program with another of our Majors who had just graduated the preceding Spring and had just accepted a position in the International branch of one of our local Banks. He had very little background in Business as his Majors were French and Music. I chose a different book from the one I had chosen in my first experience, and, again, we worked together, this time meeting bi-weekly, one chapter at a time. In time, I became more confident in my teaching and was able to extent my knowledge of the subject matter.

Since that time, FR 361, GR 361 and SP 361 have been offered, as planned, every other year. In French, we have used at least two different books for the four times we have offered the course. We are still looking for a format the students can digest. They have to be genuinely interested in Business French and not take the course simply

because they need three hours to fulfill a Language requirement. It is a difficult course for students who are learning a vocabulary they have never encountered before, either in French or English. It is especially difficult for Freshmen, and we thought that we should try to discourage them from taking the course unless they show a great interest in the subject and place high on the placement test.

The following topics are covered during the Semester :

French/German/Spanish Economy since 1945

The Common Market

The Stock Exchange

Banking

Telecommunications

Job Market (Curriculum Vitae, etc..)

Insurance

Transportation

Post Office and its functions

Commercial correspondence

The chain of Command in a Corporation

etc..Anything we feel is needed at the time the course is taught.

The course is taught in the target language although English may be used if need arises.

In French, the course has been taught 4 times now by one of my colleagues or by myself. We have had between 35 to 40 students in all. Of these, six students prepared for the exam given by the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and we are proud to report that all six passed. The last two students passed it this past Winter. The course was last offered the first Semester of the 1990-1991 school year.

In Spanish, our Colleague who introduced Business Spanish and taught the first two classes has now retired. The course has been taught once since by another colleague who trained as part of the original group. He will be teaching the course for a second time in the fall of 1991. His first experience proved to be an interesting one for him. He had an enrollment of 12 students, 6 of them Freshmen. The book he had chosen, he decided later, was probably easier than he had thought. However, he found that the students, as a whole, were more serious and worked more earnestly than the students in his other Junior level traditional courses. To his surprise, his best student turned out to be a Freshman majoring in Business Administration. He took the Spanish Business course merely out of interest. He had taken four years of Spanish in

High School and thought that the course could be used as a useful elective. This was the only language course the student took. (The College of Business Administration does not have a language requirement). In French, we had already observed that the best student in the class, the last time we offered the course, was also a Business Administration Major who had a strong background in French, but had no intention of majoring in it.

So far, Business German has been taught three times. Different books have been used each time to keep up with Business changes in Germany. The course was last taught in the Fall of 1991, and my German Colleague was able to incorporate in his teaching a video made for Business German by the Goethe Institute. He also invited to speak to his class two of our Colleagues from the College of Business Administration. The first one, an Austrian, gave his thoughts on the future of Business in a united Germany. The other had studied German Banking in the US and in Germany and spoke to the students of his conclusion. An exchange student from Germany, studying Business at Butler, was also very helpful in bringing additional knowledge to the class.

In all, about 25 students have taken Business German. Since there is only one full time Professor of German at Butler, only one Junior level course can be taught each semester. This fact certainly presents a problem. German Majors are taking Junior level classes out of need to fulfill a requirement and not because it is a Business class when that class is offered. So, while he is teaching German Business, our professor must remember that he is primarily teaching a language class. He must give Business knowledge, but language must be most important. Another problem facing German Majors is that, because of its degree of difficulty, Freshmen have been discouraged from taking Business German until they have completed at least two other Junior level courses. Freshmen who have place on the Junior level through the placement exam find themselves unable to take a course in their Major the Semester Business German is offered.

In German as it was noted in French and Spanish, students have come from other Colleges including 2 from the College of Pharmacy. And again, as in French and Spanish, the best students have not been Language Majors.

It seems that we have found a new group of students with solid language backgrounds who probably never would have taken a course in the Foreign Language Department if it had not been for the Business course. We certainly had not even thought that such a group existed when we first proposed to offer the course.

From a hesitant beginning, the FL Faculty is gaining confidence. We are learning about "what works" and "what does not". We would guard any

one from trying to incorporate too much material. Because there is only one Business class, it would be easy to do so.

Since the Foreign Language Department was so successful adopting a Business course into its program, the FL Faculty thought that, with a little more work, we could try to have an International Trade Major incorporated into our offerings. The College of Business Administration approved the program and gave us a list of courses (21 hours) from their College that the students must take to fulfill the Major requirement. We made a list of Language courses, added another Business course and a Business Seminar. Unfortunately, the LAS Faculty was not convinced that the Major was needed and tabled it for future discussion. Meanwhile, the College of Business Administration just instituted a program of International Business which was approved this Spring of 1991 by the general Faculty . Students pursuing this Major must take 9 hours of Foreign Languages. We of the FL Faculty are pleased with this new Major and feel that, although 9 hours are a very small amount, it is a decent compromise to our tabled Major.

I hope that our experience will be of value to some of you. It was work, but we feel rewarded with the results. So will you if you try!