

Introduction to the journal relaunch The new *Global Business Languages* journal: Not just business as usual

Margaret Gonglewski
Mohssen Esseesy
The George Washington University

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INTRODUCTION TO THE JOURNAL RELAUNCH THE NEW *GLOBAL BUSINESS LANGUAGES* JOURNAL: NOT JUST *BUSINESS* AS USUAL

We are delighted to welcome you to the first issue of the newly relaunched *Global Business Languages* (GBL) journal¹. This journal relaunch is the culmination of two years of dreaming followed by 13 months of transforming that dream into reality. As word of the new GBL has reached colleagues across the country, we have been overwhelmed by the positive response, as the relaunch means the resuscitation of a highly valued and respected peer-reviewed journal within the field of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP). Not surprisingly, the cheers were followed by many questions: Will the new journal's mission be the same? Will you change the title? Will there be a print version? In this introduction, we aim to address such questions, with particular attention to explaining the new GBL's aims and scope with a broadened definition of *business*. We begin by describing how the relaunch came about, as it gives us the chance to tell the backstory while acknowledging the many brave souls who jumped aboard this moving bus with us.

To provide context, it is useful to know a bit about the journal's history. The original GBL journal was founded in 1996 with funding from the School of Languages and Cultures at Purdue University, and from the Purdue Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER). CIBERs are four-year grants from the U.S. Department of Education, aimed at increasing U.S. competitiveness in the global marketplace, and one way these grants do that is through improving the foreign language proficiency and cultural competence of U.S. citizens. Like the other CIBERs across the nation, Purdue's CIBER was committed to supporting business language education through the development of curricula, materials, and teaching methods, all grounded in a research base in what Doyle (2012) proposed to call Business Language Studies. Their creation of GBL was direct, tangible evidence of that strong commitment. Recognizing the crucial role of the journal in bolstering Business Language Studies scholarship in both profile and productivity, several other CIBERs provided some additional funding through the years, and as a result, GBL enjoyed nearly twenty years of publication, moving from print into an online platform fully accessible to a wider, international audience. The journal's ongoing success seemed to be inevitable for years to come.

When GBL stopped accepting new submissions in 2014, the field unexpectedly found itself facing the threat of the demise of another refereed journal focused on business language scholarship (in 2005 Thunderbird Graduate School of International Management at Arizona State University ceased publication of *The Journal of Languages for International Business*). Although other journals will publish business language professionals' work, fewer outlets for scholarship within the narrower scope would mean that the field could lose the ground gained over the past several decades and falter in its intent to push forward with the worthy goals laid out in the 2012 special issue of the *Modern Language Journal* focused on LSP. Yet as the familiar adage goes, a threat can also be viewed as an opportunity. Thus, when the new request for proposals for CIBER grants was announced in spring 2018, we hatched the idea of moving GBL to our institution, The George Washington University (GW), assuming that Purdue had no plans to revive it itself, given that it no longer had a CIBER. The first step was to reach out to the

¹ Note: This very first issue of the new *Global Business Languages* has two introductions: The current one serves as the introduction to the relaunching of the journal; the second one is an introduction to this special issue (and the articles it comprises): LSP Vectors: Strengthening Interdisciplinary Connections, guest edited by Mary Risner and Sheri Spaine Long.

GBL editors to see whether this idea was a viable option. Former editor Allen Wood, on the verge of retirement, responded enthusiastically to the idea that journal would continue, and he quickly put us in touch with Joyce Detzner, Production Editor of Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures, who cheerfully answered our countless questions and helped orient us in this new world of journal production. Both Allen and Joyce were invaluable for connecting us to crucial contacts at Purdue University Press, such as Katherine Purple (Editorial, Design, and Production Manager) and Justin Race (Director), who helped steer the move on Purdue's end.

Champagne corks popped when the news came that our university had received the new CIBER grant, and we immediately set to work on determining the necessary steps to rehabilitate GBL here at GW. Not surprisingly, the logistical aspects of the move were far more complicated than any of us had initially suspected. Contracts would need to be drawn up, licensing and copyright issues addressed, International Standard Serial Number transfer to be figured out—enough to make the non-initiated journal editor's head spin! Fortunately, no roadblock turned out to be impassable, particularly due to the strong support of the GW-CIBER, newly headed by International Business faculty Anna Helm, who, as past co-coordinator of the GW-CIBER Business Language Programs (with Margaret Gonglewski, from 2007-2018) utterly understands, values, and supports language-related innovations like this one. We recognize and appreciate our enormous good fortune for her enthusiastic support and for the ongoing assistance from GW-CIBER staff Alexis Gaul, our Administrative Director, and Nevena Yakova, our Program Manager, who willingly put in extra time to support GW-CIBER's extensive business language programming and projects such as this journal re-launch.

When the complicated logistics of the move seemed to stall the venture, we did broach the idea of starting a journal from scratch instead. Although founding a brand new journal would have allowed us to avoid certain challenges, the benefits of reviving GBL were simply too strong to ignore. First and foremost, because GBL is already well known internationally and has been recognized as a valuable player in the field for the past two decades, continuing the journal gives us an advantageous jumpstart, rather than starting from ground zero. As we inherit the legacy built by so many colleagues, we have the privilege and responsibility to build on what these colleagues have already accomplished—those at Purdue but also the many authors, reviewers, and advisory board members over the years. It compels us to maintain the high standards that have been set while inspiring us to push boundaries, heeding the call to go beyond descriptive narrations of successful programs, materials, and courses, and to embrace theory-driven inquiry, as discussed by thought leaders in the field such as Doyle (2012), Fryer (2012), and Sánchez-López, Long & Lafford (2017). At the same time, we knew that reviving an existing journal rather than starting a new one would not be risk free. Most notably, relaunching meant that we would be obliged to keep the journal title, which may be perceived as a limitation, ostensibly keeping the journal content narrowly focused. Instead of shying away from this potential perception problem—viewing the term *business* in the title as both *limited* and *limiting*—we wanted to have GBL's mission embrace a broad definition of business that bespeaks our current 21st century context.

At the time of its founding in the mid-1990s, the journal served well as a medium for sharing teaching ideas and research on various aspects of business languages, providing useful insight into what was going on in the field, as reflected in the mission “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.” The impetus for the focus on business language at the time was the anticipation of global

economic competition to supplant military confrontation in the post Cold War era. The context of global business then was primarily related to (and driven by) multinational corporations, the major force in world economic activities. While economic competitions have not abated and multinational firms remain very important in today's interconnected world economy, other forces are at play that have made Business Language Studies all the more relevant.

Without question, in today's hyper-globalized world, the notion of business has been expanded significantly to reach beyond large for-profit companies and corporations. Indeed, our very conceptualization of "global," when used in conjunction with "business," has transformed over the past quarter century, since GBL was founded, to obtain a greater focus on interactions and relationships from individuals to individuals and communities to communities, rather than primarily from companies/entities to companies/entities. The emerging sharing economy, for example, where individuals monetize their underutilized assets, has proven to be a potent force in opening up participation in economic activities that until recently had been restricted to established corporations. On-demand computer-mediated economic activities, such as those offered in the entertainment and transportation sectors, have increasingly challenged well-established entities in those sectors and are growing in popularity. New and exciting business or business-related areas are constantly emerging across many regions of the world, undeterred by traditional boundaries and limitations. The increased demand and desire to communicate effectively across and among a wide variety of global business partnerships underscores the need for research in that area—and a journal to publish that research.

To align with the continually evolving business domains, forms, purposes, and outcomes, we are adopting a similarly flexible take on *business* within the title—and approach—to the new GBL. One might even argue that the broad definition is reflected in the very etymology of the word itself, stemming from 'busy-ness' to the connotation of *any activity or event of special kind requiring care and persistence in order to achieve a describable outcome in the form of a product, benefit, service, or profit* (a composite definition derived from those in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, 1966, 129). The focus on *benefit* as outcome might suggest alternatives to the *profit-focused* approach to business that has dominated much of the thinking about economic activities in previous decades. Indeed, one might even argue that it encourages attention to the other drivers of sustainable business, commonly referred to as the "triple bottom line," where people and planet are deemed equal to profit [(cite ref)]. This thinking points directly to the strong focus among those teaching business language (and other fields within LSP) on service-learning and community engagement (see e.g., Abbott & Lear, 2010; and Lear, 2012).

In the relaunch of GBL, we are eager to open up the critical discussion of language learning and teaching within this broader business context and to include many domains such as travel, transportation, hospitality, health and sports, entertainment, education, energy, and the arts. The journal will welcome contributions from additional LSP fields, with which we share common goals in teaching and research, such as forging a strong link to other disciplines and highlighting the direct applicability of language skills and cultural competence in the workplace. We will expressly seek not to privilege one language over any other, however prominent that language appears to be (at any given moment) within the U.S. or wider global context. Not being limited by industry, economic sector, world region, or language, GBL can arguably serve most effectively as a platform for researchers, teaching practitioners, and learners, and new ground can be broken that would further expand the scope of inquiry for potential GBL contributors—and the range of learning of its readers.

Without question, at the core of GBL's editorial mission is interdisciplinarity. This is truly evident in the partnership for this first issue of the relaunched GBL, entitled *LSP Vectors: Strengthening Interdisciplinary Connections*. We are indebted to guest editors Mary Risner and Sheri Spaine Long whose hard work on this volume has brought together a fascinating and informative group of articles, which includes articles across many fields subsumed within GBL's broadened scope and thereby clinches the stronger linkage between the new GBL and LSP. We thank them and each of the contributing authors for their work and for their patience during the long process of bringing this first issue to fruition. And we look forward to future collaboration with the International Symposium on Language for Specific Purposes and CIBER Business Language Conference in publishing special issues featuring outstanding papers from the conference.

A large part of our work over the past several months has been on the mundane but necessary logistics of the relaunch extending beyond the legal transfer of the journal from one institution to another, such as coordinating final copyediting and proofreading with the guest editors on this first edition, addressing ADA accessibility compliance on all articles, and developing the new website. We are grateful to the many folks at GW who lent their time and skills to this effort, such as GW-CIBER Assistant Will Bell who designed GBL's header for the new website. We are especially grateful to the fabulous Scholarly Communications Team of GW's Library staff, including Leah Richardson, Special Collections Librarian; Shira Loev Eller, Art and Design Librarian; and Brigette Kamsler, University Archivist. They eagerly jumped on board the GBL project when others were hesitant. An extra special thanks goes to their colleagues Dolsy Smith, Software Development Librarian, for producing the top-notch GBL website, patiently making the approximately 1.2 million changes we requested during the process; and to Barrett Mathews, Compliance Officer in Copyright and Scholarly Communications, who has earned an honorary certificate in language instruction, having successfully taught us the foreign (to us) language of licensing and copyright!

Re-launching GBL gave us the opportunity to engage in a kind of 'soul-searching' process, i.e., sussing out the soul of this journal both in its past iteration and potential future profile. We have determined that a soul is a living thing and can be expected to shift, stretch into previously unexplored directions, and thus the aims and scope should remain open to growth and evolution. Even as the building of literal walls on national borders is being debated in the U.S., disciplinary walls are being actively dismantled, allowing for previously unimagined collaborations and for the shifting of outdated paradigms. We look forward to continuing to push boundaries in this journal. We aim to set the stage for playing out possible scenes for languages and other fields to explore their relationships, improvise, and inspire.

During this relaunch process we have heard from countless colleagues—readers, past and future contributors, academic administrators, and several interested bystanders (such as family members!)—eager to share their thoughts, opinions, ideas on the new GBL. We have tried to address and incorporate all of this input into the GBL that you see on your screen today, and we will continue to welcome the ongoing feedback in the issues and years to come. Now, at the same time that we feel that with the publication of this first issue we have reached the end of a long road, we prefer to view it as the starting point to this (ad)venture. After all, there are exciting potential road trips ahead of us in the coming years, and we are eager to take them with you.

Margaret Gonglewski and Mohssen Esseesy, Co-Editors

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