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Thomas A. Hanson  
*Butler University*

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Thomas A. Hanson  
Butler University

## Language Requirements in the International Business Curriculum

**Abstract:** Business school graduates, especially international business majors, now begin their careers in a globally linked economy that requires crosslinguistic and cross-cultural communication skills. Related research areas—including studies on the impact of language on multinational businesses, the internationalization of business school (and related) curriculum instruction in Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), and the role of translation and interpreting (T&I) in the language classroom—have developed independently, limiting opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. This current study encourages a transdisciplinary approach that brings scholars from these related research traditions into dialogue. Following an overview and synthesis of these research areas, this study presents a summary of language requirements in 208 international business programs at US undergraduate institutions. Finally, four strategies to incorporate LSP and T&I in business school curriculum are outlined, including recommendations to promote T&I literacy, develop content-aligned language instruction, encourage collaboration between language and business faculty, and engage business school accreditors to spur change. The objective is to promote the mutual development of curriculum between business schools and language programs, specifically by encouraging international business programs to recognize the value of LSP and T&I instruction to promote career readiness.

*Keywords:* business school curriculum, international business, Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), translation and interpreting (T&I)

### Introduction

Global business, by its very nature, is conducted across political, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. Free movement of goods and capital have been significant contributors to economic growth in recent decades. The coronavirus pandemic has led to a heightened awareness of the global nature of business, particularly the international nature of supply chains (Sarkis, 2020). Substantial shifts in spending and production by consumers and businesses resulted in shortages of a broad range of goods, including basic household staples such as toilet paper (Terlep, 2021) and construction goods such as lumber (Grant, 2021). Trade and supply chain problems were further exacerbated by the temporary blockage of the Suez Canal by the *Ever Given* container ship (Xie & Chiu, 2021). These disruptions affected multinational businesses and created the need to better communicate on a global level. These challenges highlight the interconnected nature of the global economy: events occurring in seemingly distant parts of the world may have material impacts locally. For instance, downstream production and delivery may be delayed by problems with economic inputs, resulting in considerable economic impact. A recent example may be seen in the challenges that the lack of necessary computer chips caused for automobile manufacturers (Conerly, 2021). In the face of anti-globalization sentiment stemming from these problems, economists have taken to defending the overall benefits of the global supply chain (“Message in a Bottleneck,” 2021). Regardless of the merits on either side of the argument, these examples underscore the omnipresence of economic globalization.

Globalization is notoriously difficult to define and measure; while many definitions foreground economics and finance, others also encompass considerations of language, culture, technology, politics, and immigration (Castañeda & Shemesh, 2020; Raab et al., 2008; Wolf, 2000). The present article aligns with primarily economic definitions, such as Tilly's (1995) emphasis on the proportion and impact of long-distance economic transactions in comparison to local or regional transactions. This emphasis on long-distance transactions reinforces the importance of the international business (IB) undergraduate major today. Furthermore, a globalized economy requires multilingual interactions both within and among corporations. Expanding globalization, in particular an increase in international economic transactions, creates a situation in which employees are more likely than ever before to be multilingual or require language mediation to perform their job duties. This demand for linguistic knowledge and abilities in modern corporations should be reflected in the educational preparation of business school students (Brannen, Piekkari, & Tietze, 2014).

Anecdotes from recent supply chain disruptions suggest that even a purportedly domestic company can depend on smooth and crosslingual business relationships across geopolitical borders. Multilingual communication plays a particularly acute role in multinational firms, which might experience the need for multilingual communication and accompanying translation and interpreting (T&I) among employees, in the boardroom, with investors and customers, and in business-to-business negotiations and transactions. In short, a global corporation must deal with linguistic diversity in both internal and external relationships (Feely & Harzig, 2003; Janssens et al., 2004). As a consequence demand for bilinguals is high in the business sector, and linguistic skills remain valuable in broad swaths of the job market (Simonsen, 2021). Survey results consistently show that employers value communication skills generally and multilanguage skills in particular (Webb et al., 1999), and that language remains a critical resource for success in international business positions (Tenzer & Schuster, 2017).

The evolution within the private business sector may plausibly be expected to drive undergraduate university curriculum development, including the requirement of world language coursework for IB majors. However, the rhetoric of globalization within business schools has often outpaced the actual curricular reform and implementation (Ghemawat, 2008). A more substantial effect has been the ongoing growth of offerings of LSP coursework, certificates, and degrees (Doyle, 2017; Grosse & Voght, 1991; Long & Uscinski, 2012). While some scholars have called for the integration of LSP with T&I into a new subdiscipline of specialized communication studies (e.g., Schubert, 2011), these two approaches to language have rather different emphases. LSP instruction, which focuses on "language features, discourse practices, and communicative skills of target groups" (Hyland, 2011, p. 201), emphasizes the context-specific use of language, providing learners with applied communication skills and associated cultural awareness (Brown & Thompson, 2018). T&I overlaps with LSP in studying communication and language, but the distinct academic tradition of T&I examines crosslingual and cross-cultural mediation between languages, supporting both written and spoken communication (Baker & Pérez-González, 2011). Conveying meaning across languages through T&I is a related but different task from language instruction to allow direct communication, a primary goal of LSP. In the US context, the expansion of business language coursework in LSP has occurred almost entirely within language departments rather than within business schools or in collaboration between language and business departments, which typically require only general language instruction (Doyle, 2012). Therefore, IB majors rarely enroll in LSP courses,

despite the evident alignment between LSP and the high demand for bilingual employees in the areas of business and healthcare (Simonsen, 2021).

In recognition of the modern multilingual business environment, multinational corporations often seek to manage communication by means of language policy (Feely & Harzing, 2003). One common strategy is to adopt a global lingua franca, often English, in an effort to facilitate communication across the company. However, research has documented a disconnect between official corporate policy and the daily experience of employees, who regularly face the challenge of multilingual communication and employ a range of ad hoc solutions to improve communication (Fredriksson et al., 2006). Furthermore, English as a lingua franca in the workplace is often accompanied by political and career consequences (Sanden, 2018), and global English does not obviate communication challenges (Kankaanranta et al., 2015; Mufwene, 2010). Consequently, Hanson and Mellinger (2021) advocate the development of corporate translation policies that subsume previous language policies and emphasize strategic communication choices to support business goals. The skill that employees often truly need is language mediation, which encompasses all forms of crosslingual communication including translation, interpreting, paraphrasing, summarizing, and technological assistance (Council of Europe, 2001) and combines employers' stated desire for both language training and communication skills (e.g., Webb et al., 1999). Though highly prized by employers, instruction in T&I and general crosslingual communication rarely figures directly into the IB curriculum (Simonsen, 2021).

Thus, students of international business would benefit greatly from the incorporation of T&I as a fifth skill in the language classroom (Colina & Lafford, 2017). Including T&I in the IB curriculum not only allows students to improve their language skills but also helps them be informed and effective users of language mediation services during their career (see, for instance, Mellinger, 2022). The language classroom cannot possibly prepare all business school students as translators or interpreters, but awareness and study of T&I can equip them to better engage with language services in the corporate environment. Without broader exposure to T&I theory and practice, the discourse in the business world may default to a mechanical, transmissionist perspective on language mediation that emphasizes a naïve search for equivalence, rather than a cultural and contextualized process of communication (Janssens et al., 2004).

With this background in mind, business schools should seek collaborative opportunities with the expanded vision of LSP and T&I studies as advocated by Mellinger (2017) and Doyle (2017) to help students function and compete in the globalized economy. To do so, the existence of a globalized, multilingual economy is assumed to be an established fact, which serves as the point of departure for reflection on the incorporation of language and translation studies into the business school curriculum. More than 200 US universities offer degree programs in IB at the undergraduate level, and as discussed below, many of them require at least some instruction in a non-English language. However, the argument here contends that business schools have not capitalized fully on opportunities to engage and collaborate with developments in business research, LSP, and T&I studies.

The next section outlines and synthesizes three relevant strands of academic discourse that suggest opportunities for change and expansion in how languages are incorporated into IB curriculum. First, the literature on the role of language and translation in the global economy is reviewed. A growing body of scholarship on global business explores the importance of language; however, much of this research lacks sufficient engagement with language and

translation studies. The second topic explores business curriculum more specifically, with particular emphasis on the history of internationalization efforts that at times addresses the role and position of language courses in business education. The third subsection describes how LSP and T&I scholars engage with educational standards and best practices to help prepare students to function in the global economy. Much of the research in these three areas has been conducted in parallel without explicit engagement across disciplinary boundaries. Therefore, the present article seeks to contribute to a more transdisciplinary approach to scholarship on business, LSP, and T&I by putting this research into dialogue.

The subsequent section provides a summary of data collected by the author and two research assistants of the world language requirements in the curriculum of IB majors at US universities. Similar reviews and reflections have been published with an emphasis on the LSP curriculum (Doyle, 2017; Grosse & Voght, 1991; Long & Uscinski, 2012), whereas the present study contributes to the existing body of literature by analyzing the issue from the perspective of the business school curriculum. Finally, based on the three strands of research literature and evidence of the current business school curricular requirements, four recommendations are proffered to further incorporate language study in the IB curriculum. Overall, the goal is to continue developing mutual connections between the business school and language instruction by encouraging a shift within business schools to recognize and value LSP and T&I across the curriculum for the IB major.

### **Literature Review**

One challenge of including language and T&I in the curriculum of an IB major is the relative lack of intersection of these areas in the research literature, not to mention the distinct skillsets of the relevant faculty and practitioners. For example, given the specialized nature of accounting and translation, it is perhaps unsurprising that few individuals are conversant in both disciplines. Therefore, interdisciplinary collaboration will be a vital component of the recommendations.

Meanwhile, some scholars do engage both business and translation studies perspectives. For example, Janssens et al. (2004) describe translation as comprising mechanical, cultural, and political strategies in developing recommendations for corporate language policies and strategies. The authors agree that translation cannot be considered solely a search for equivalence and describe the reasons why multilingual interactions will continue to increase within and among corporations. Hanson and Mellinger (2021) also engage both disciplines by considering the role that T&I can play in maintaining or mitigating information asymmetry with communication that is internal or external to the firm. They propose a scheme whereby firms use those two dimensions to formulate strategic translation policies. While these scholars discuss the intersection of language and IB, neither of these works explicitly link the research to university curriculum, which is the goal of this article.

### **Impacts of Language in Global Business**

Scholarship in business disciplines was relatively slow to recognize the importance and value of language learning and T&I, in part because of the dominance of global English in the post-World War II economy. In international business management, the challenge and effects of crosslingual communication were referred to as neglected and forgotten (Marschan et al., 1997;

Reeves & Wright, 1996). Gradually in recent decades the literature on the effects of language and translation on various facets of international business has grown, including studies researching the ramifications of languages and translation on knowledge management (Holden & Michailova, 2014; Tietze, 2021), marketing (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012), leadership and team functioning (Oliverio-Olivieri, 2016; Tenzer et al., 2014), and finance (Cuypers et al., 2015; Jeanjean et al., 2015; Lundholm et al., 2018). Thus, a body of scholarship is developing among business researchers that engages directly with the challenge of language and meaning (Tietze et al., 2003).

An overview of international accounting research illustrates the range of perspectives on translation within a single business discipline. In the introduction to a special issue on language and translation in accounting, Evans and Kamla (2018) trace the history of silence on their intersection, while explicitly promoting multidisciplinary, collaborative research to improve understanding of the role that language plays in accounting. The challenge of translation of accounting terminology arises in part due to the mixing of technical and non-technical usages of language (Norberg & Johansson, 2013). As an example, Nobes and Stadler (2018) examine the translation of the single accounting term *impairment* and illustrate the variation and challenges inherent in contextualized business translation. On the regulatory side, the translation of accounting principles and frameworks such as the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) has historically viewed language as a barrier to be overcome with standardization of terminology and definitions (Baskerville & Evans, 2011; Huerta et al., 2013). By contrast, Laaksonen (2021) problematizes the idea of equivalence and provides a discussion of the underlying assumptions in accounting translation, calling on the field to engage with a more complete understanding of the role of translation. Overall, in the field of accounting familiarity with technical, specialized language can help prevent misunderstandings, and awareness of translation challenges can promote healthy skepticism and consultation with language experts, when necessary.

Corporate language policies represent another body of scholarship that considers T&I needs in the business sector. Feely and Harzing (2003) outline various corporate language policies that may aide communication, with emphasis on interpersonal communication among employees. Historically, interpreting needs were prevalent almost exclusively for senior management, but a global workforce, an increase in global trade networks, and developments in communication technologies have all contributed to a need for multilingual communication at multiple levels within corporations (Brannen et al., 2014). While the research in this area is relatively recent, some work recognizes the importance of T&I studies in providing a deeper understanding of the challenges inherent in context, culture, power, and other factors related to language (e.g., Fredriksson, 2006; Kankaanranta et al., 2015; Mufwene, 2010). Furthermore, the research reinforces the relevance of instruction in foreign languages and T&I in IB programs.

### **Internationalization of the Business School Curriculum**

The call to incorporate non-English language study into the business school curriculum is not new. Dunning (1989) issued a plea for the incorporation of the liberal arts generally—and language study specifically—in the business school curriculum. The report from the President's Commission on Foreign Language (1980) was another early catalyst for change, and one effect of the 9/11 terrorist attack was heightened interest in translation (Apter, 2007). However, much of the curricular innovation and expansion occurred in LSP programs housed in language

departments, independent from the internationalization efforts that took place in business schools (Grosse & Voght, 1990; 1991). Despite significant efforts at some schools, both abroad (Crosling et al., 2008) and in the US (Shetty & Rudell, 2002), the overall pace of change within US business school curriculum regarding languages has been disappointingly slow (Edwards et al., 2003; Ghemawat, 2008).

One challenge for implementation is a history among students of resistance to world language requirements and the related mindset of enrolling in language courses for the sole purpose of satisfying general education requirements (Hagiwara, 1969; Stone & Rubenfeld, 1989; Thomas, 2010). Students sometimes perceive language instruction as separate from more practical, career-oriented coursework, resulting in less interest in language courses (Diao & Liu, 2020). An additional obstacle is the perception that global business is conducted principally in English (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Stone and Rubenfeld (1989) surveyed 304 students at five US universities for their self-assessed second language fluency and attitude toward the importance of language study. The students reported relatively positive attitudes toward the value of language study and an expectation a business manager would benefit from being multilingual and multicultural. Furthermore, 12.5% of the students sampled self-reported that they were “conversationally fluent” in a language other than English. However, only 24% of the sample reported any classroom exposure to non-English world language during their college course of study. When asked for their motivation to take language courses, students often mentioned intrinsic motivation to learn another language and future travel more often than career enhancement (Stone & Rubenfeld, 1989, p. 435). Of the 76% of students who had not taken language classes in college, the most common reasons for that decision were related to grades and time commitment. However, the majority of those students also indicated that they did not expect language skills to be useful in their careers and expressed a belief that language courses do not serve the needs of business students.

This student perception is demonstrably incorrect, and graduates are increasingly likely to encounter a multilingual workplace (Brannen et al., 2014). Further evidence is provided by surveys of employers, such as Webb et al.’s (1999) results that emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary study and a diverse faculty with international experience and perspective. Business schools have largely interpreted these data as a call to cultivate a global mindset through discipline-specific courses (e.g., international accounting, international marketing), rather than deeper engagement with language and culture.

Models of curriculum internationalization often neglect language learning or treat it as distinct from other aspects of building global awareness. For example, Edwards et al. (2003) propose three levels of curriculum (namely, international awareness, international competence, and international expertise), with foreign language emphasized only at the highest level. There is little evident awareness of T&I theory and practice among undergraduate US business schools, based on the results of the present study and a review of the existing literature. This lack of direct engagement with T&I even extends to excellent and thorough reflections on intercultural communication such as Holmes and Zhou (2020), in which the authors extensively discuss intercultural communication and competence. Recognition of cultural differences, intersectionality, and diverse workplaces is a vital component of a modern business education (Holmes & Zhou, 2020). However, the goals of cultivating respect for differences and development of an international attitude (Edwards et al., 2003) cannot and should not be fully divorced from considerations of language or at least acknowledgment of the role T&I play in the

modern workplace. This curricular weakness in business schools represents an opportunity for collaboration with language programs.

A final challenge related to the business school curriculum is a concern that incorporating new coursework related to internationalization may crowd out existing content (Bennett & Kane, 2011). This potential problem is not unique to instruction in language and culture; schools have also struggled with how to incorporate additional instruction in technology and ethics into evolving curricula (Dunfee & Robertson, 1988; Wilder & Ozgur, 2015). Increasingly, business schools are being asked to reconceptualize curriculum to incorporate behavioral, societal, and communicative skills (Hawawini, 2005), which can involve difficult choices and tradeoffs, and internationalization remains a key goal of accreditors and school leaders (Manuel et al., 2001). While many programs seek to infuse considerations of culture and globalization into business courses, this approach too often does not involve faculty from language or humanities departments who could provide valuable expertise in culture (Witte, 2010). Consequently, this practical concern related to the business school curriculum informs the concluding recommendations of this study.

### **Language for Specific Purposes and Translation & Interpreting**

Historically, language instruction, LSP, and T&I studies have been distinct in the curriculum, with elementary language instruction often considered a prerequisite to further study in both LSP and T&I (Carreres, 2014). The need for world language instruction has been a consistent theme of education and government policy in the United States (e.g., American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2017; MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007; President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies, 1980). Responses to these reports and proposals have included criticism and reflection (e.g., Bernhardt, 2010; Lomicka & Lord, 2018), but a demonstrable effect has been the growth in LSP programs, in part because the MLA report (2007) called for language programs to broaden their offerings beyond traditional content such as literature and culture to new areas such as LSP.

The history and growth of LSP has been well documented (Grosse & Voght, 1990; 1991; Doyle, 2017). LSP programs have developed and matured into key components of language curriculum at a considerable number of universities. However, LSP programs have often emphasized certificates and degrees in advanced language proficiency, in many cases independent of the related subject matter. The workplace needs are not solely language proficiency but effective language mediation. While bilinguals are regularly called upon to serve as ad hoc translators or interpreters, advanced language proficiency does not guarantee the ability to serve as an effective cultural broker or language mediator (Colina & Lafford, 2017; Colomer, 2010; Simonsen, 2021). Additionally, expansion of LSP has sometimes led to conflict and battles for resources with general language instruction and literature classes (Bernhardt, 2010). These internecine conflicts arise in part because LSP programs historically attract students majoring in language studies and offer courses for students with advanced language proficiency. This situation creates a scarcity mindset focused on student enrollment, but a more expansive view of direct collaboration with business school curriculum could create new opportunities, which are discussed further in the recommendations section.

The language classroom, for a considerable period, did not include substantial considerations of or instruction in T&I, though calls for their integration have grown in recent years (Colina & Lafford, 2017; Cook, 2010). Mellinger (2017) argues that inclusion of T&I can



provide benefits to the language classroom by improving the effectiveness of crosslingual and crosscultural communication, in addition to its benefits for language development. Similarly, Colina and Lafford (2017) present a nascent but growing view that T&I should be viewed as crosslinguistic mediation and vital for communication and interaction. A monograph by Laviosa (2014) explores how “pedagogical translation” can emphasize language mediation to improve transcultural communication, and Pintado Gutiérrez (2021) provides a historical overview of employing T&I in language teaching. Some work in pedagogical T&I also provides preliminary evidence on language acquisition gains (e.g., Lee, 2014). However, for many students of international business, mastery of the language may be a secondary byproduct to the more important awareness of T&I issues and improvement in cross-cultural communication. Determining how to incorporate these skills in the university curriculum begins with a better understanding of the current business school requirements, as discussed in the next section.

### **Empirical Analysis**

To help understand the current state of language requirements in US business schools, this section describes and summarizes findings based on a dataset of university curricula. The dataset was purpose-built by the author and two research assistants, who collected data by visiting university websites to glean information related to world language requirements, which resulted in a comprehensive and unique summary that differs from previous work based on surveys and self-reported data. The initial list of candidate schools included all 532 undergraduate programs accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)<sup>1</sup>, which is widely viewed as requiring a high standard of excellence in business school programs (MacKenzie et al., 2019). The sample for data collection comprised the 208 schools with international business majors, and data collection occurred throughout the 2020–2021 school year. The author and two student assistants reviewed information on the required curriculum for international business majors as listed on each university’s website. Whenever possible, official course catalogs were consulted to determine the inclusion of a foreign language requirement. When necessary, so-called curriculum road maps, other guides to the major, or general descriptions of requirements listed on the college or department website were utilized as proxies. When more than one version was available due to curriculum changes over time, the most recent version was examined.

The primary variable of interest was whether the program required students to study a world language, regardless of whether that requirement was part of an institution’s general core requirements or specifically required by the international business major. Schools were excluded if language study was only one choice in a general requirement related to international studies or a cultural requirement. For example, some schools allowed study abroad, international business courses, or courses with primarily cultural component to substitute for language study; such programs were considered not to have a world language requirement. To be included, a program needed to have an explicit requirement for some level of non-English language study in a traditional classroom. One allowed exception was that the program could include a test out option for students who could demonstrate adequate facility with a world language in lieu of classroom study. Some variation was observed regarding the number of required semesters of

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<sup>1</sup> The list of all AACSB-accredited schools can be found at this link: <https://www.aacsb.edu/members>

study, but the variable was recorded as binary: either a college required world language study or it did not.<sup>2</sup>

Of the schools with international business majors, a world language requirement was quite common with 170 schools (81.7%) requiring at least some language study. Table 1 further breaks down that total by the four different degree types granted by the various institutions, and there is relatively little observed variation by degree type.

**Table 1**

*Number of Schools with World Language Requirement by IB Degree Program*

Degree	Total programs	Number (percent) with language requirement
BA	6	4 (67%)
BBA	97	83 (86%)
BS	65	52 (80%)
BSBA	40	31 (78%)

*Note.* The four degree types in the table are Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), Bachelor of Science (BS), and Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA).

The high percentage of programs that require language study is encouraging, though two important caveats are in order. First, nearly 1/5 of programs still do not require study of a language other than English, even for a degree in international business. Second, based on a qualitative examination of course titles, programs appear to rely almost entirely on traditional language instruction (e.g., Beginning Spanish I, Introductory French, Italian Conversation and Pronunciation), eschewing full incorporation of language study into the business school and not explicitly recognizing the role of T&I or LSP in the business world. Structural issues within colleges and universities reinforce this distinction; none of the schools included in the study housed a language department within a college of business.

It is impossible to delve inside the instruction method or content of every classroom from course descriptions, but almost every institution's curriculum refers to a particular level of general language instruction (e.g., completion of two years of language coursework) or demonstrated proficiency (e.g., CEFR Level B2 or Advanced Mid on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines)<sup>3</sup>. In many cases, language proficiency requirements allow international students, heritage speakers, and native speakers in the US to satisfy the language requirement without enrolling in language coursework. Additionally, of the 170 IB degree programs that require language study, some waive classroom language study if a student participates in a study abroad experience. Meanwhile, IB programs without a language requirement (38 schools) instead generally appear to require courses that include multicultural perspectives or require internationally oriented courses (e.g., international accounting, international finance). Considered holistically, there is apparently minimal integration between language instruction and business

<sup>2</sup> By focusing on university curriculum, the present study does not consider the possible role of badges, microcredentialing, or other new forms of certification. As higher education evolves, credentials such as Global Seal (<https://theglobalseal.com>) may also begin to play an important complementary role in developing and establishing foreign language competence.

<sup>3</sup> Because data collection emphasized the binary nature of a foreign language requirement, numerical results regarding the minimum number of semesters or required proficiency level at the schools in the sample are unavailable.

coursework, and no program made explicit reference to T&I or LSP coursework as a requirement.

### **Recommendations**

As noted, the literature on the role of language in business, the internationalization of the business curriculum, and the incorporation of T&I in the language classroom have developed in tandem but rarely in dialogue. Additionally, the data drawn from over 200 universities that offer an IB major suggest that the curriculum is not currently aligned with the skills and knowledge required for business leadership in a multilingual and global economy. While the majority of students receive some language instruction, it is segregated from the business context and likely devoid of explicit instruction related to language mediation. The current situation presents a misalignment between the needs of employers and the education provided in the business curriculum. The high degree of globalization of business, finance, and supply chain logistics was only made more evident by the disruptions in those systems during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because international communication and cooperation are vital to success in the global business context, for the foreseeable future, businesses will continue to require abundant crosslingual communication. Therefore, students of international business would benefit from instruction not only in traditional foreign language classrooms but also in LSP and T&I. This section makes four recommendations with a goal of preparing informed users of language mediation services.

#### **Promote T&I Literacy**

The foremost recommendation for increasing the utility of language instruction for IB majors is to promote T&I literacy, defined by Takeda and Yamada (2019) as “foundational knowledge of the practice of translation and interpreting” (p. 53). Therefore, this mindset aims to provide basic knowledge of the role translation and interpreting play in various fields and everyday life. The primary purpose is not mastery of language but rather increased awareness and engagement with the ramifications of T&I for communication. This goal echoes Mellinger’s (2017, 2022) proposal to create informed users of language mediation services. Appreciation of T&I practices would provide applicable knowledge and skills for IB students, thereby helping overcome student hesitancy around language classes and demonstrating value and impact for student outcomes. Instruction related to T&I literacy can serve students with varying degrees of linguistic skills, and units on the topic could be incorporated in the business classroom, the language classroom, or both.

Takeda and Yamada (2019) in their introduction of T&I literacy provide two semester-long schedules for a non-language-specific introduction to T&I. One benefit of those models is that a single course can serve students with heterogeneous language skills. However, not every university will have the resources, expertise, or desire to create a full course on the topic, and alternative treatments can attain similar learning outcomes. For instance, language instruction can embrace translation as a key fifth skill (Colina & Lafford, 2017) alongside the traditional reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills common to language courses, while incorporating examples, information, and assignments related to the practice of T&I.

Courses in business disciplines could also emphasize the role of T&I. For example, related issues in international marketing and advertising merit more substantial treatment in the international business classroom and research (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2012).

Coursework in international marketing represent just one opportunity in the business curriculum to discuss the importance and impact of translation and localization, which is a broader process that includes multiple elements, including translation across languages and cultures to diverse customer audiences (Pym, 2004). Consumer behavior in a post-pandemic economy will likely retain much higher online spending (Columbus, 2020), increasing opportunities for imports, exports, and international transportation and communication. Collaboration between language and business programs requires commitment from both sides, and business faculty should welcome opportunities to improve students' crossdisciplinary connections as part of career preparation (Simonsen, 2021).

### **Encourage Content-Aligned Language Instruction**

The second recommendation is to explore opportunities for content-based language instruction that combines language acquisition with instruction in business topics. Mention of such content-based language instruction is closely related to the LSP classroom, in which language study emphasizes a particular context such as business. One challenge is that most IB programs require only three or four semesters of general language instruction. Language and T&I faculty would likely entice more students to enroll and convince business schools to require coursework if LSP (business-specific) courses could be offered at the elementary or early intermediate level by faculty who could introduce or reinforce business content. The curriculum could be diversified toward practical instruction that integrates language learning with the business disciplines and globalization as mutually reinforcing, rather than separate intellectual activities (Gerndt, 2012). Math departments offer an analogous model with mid-level courses in business calculus or business statistics, providing opportunities for students to engage material in multiple contexts while recognizing the contributions of different disciplinary traditions.

The content of such LSP coursework could incorporate specific business topics. For example, Doyle (2017) discusses how courses in Spanish for Business can incorporate leadership and ethics. Similarly, Derby et al. (2017) describe developing leadership in the LSP classroom, along with general intercultural competence. In a broad view, Lear (2021) describes the process of reverse designing the LSP classroom to provide instruction that is most relevant to the context and student needs. In part, this goal is accomplished through an enhanced awareness of the importance of culture and localized communication. This model could be expanded to parallel offerings of language courses; for example, international finance could be taught in English and supported with an LSP Spanish course during the same semester to reinforce similar content in the second language (cf. Klee, 2014; Klee & Barnes-Karol, 2007).

The recommendations of this section have so far involved adaptation in language departments, but business school curriculum also shares an equal responsibility to adapt. Unfortunately, the complementary perspective that courses in the business school could include considerations of language and translation is largely lacking in the research literature and typical business school curriculum. The few examples that do exist are generally seminars or short programs, rather than traditional university courses. For example, Gaibrois & Piekkari (2020) describe and review a one-week seminar that aimed to transform how graduate students viewed and incorporated multilingualism in the workplace. Ison and Didia (2020) describe a program at Truman State University that involved students in creating brief video tutorials to explain accounting concepts in multiple languages. That program was intended principally for use by international exchange students, though student feedback suggested that learners had greater

mastery of the accounting concepts and improved their language skills. Kaplan (2010) describes a collaborative program called Language and World Business that involves the Department of Modern Foreign Languages and the College of Business Administration at the University of Tennessee; cross-college cooperation provides a bridge for students to understand the applicability of language and business content in their career paths. These case studies and examples suggest that student learning of business topics is only enhanced by exposure to the topic in multiple languages and creative pedagogy.

In addition to anecdotal evidence, business schools should be convinced of the need for change by the reported desire from employers that all business courses should include international content (Webb et al., 1999). Discipline-specific courses such as international finance could incorporate content, assignments, and case studies related to language; this goal would enhance existing efforts at internationalization of the core business curriculum (e.g., Crosling et al., 2008). One challenge noted by Abell (1989) is that in many cases business school faculty lack international diversity and experience, and business faculty cannot be expected to provide content across multiple languages. Therefore, faculty should seek creative and collaborative ways to incorporate non-language-specific translation discussions in their classrooms. One simple strategy to begin might be to consider the intralingual translation of terminology of their discipline (i.e., rephrasing or rewriting within the same language), such as the jargon of international finance (Lanchester, 2014). Additionally, business faculty should seek opportunities to collaborate with language faculty, though widespread implementation of that strategy requires supporting institutional factors, including strong leadership from university administrators, an understanding of and commitment to the goal of internationalization on the part of faculty, and appropriate resources and support to avoid burnout (Crosling et al., 2008).

### **Collaborate to Promote Internationalization**

The third recommendation is to extend collaboration between business and language programs outside the classroom. Internationalization efforts will be strengthened if the business school faculty demonstrate a commitment to an international perspective, whether through language capabilities or study, travel, or cultural experiences (Slonaker & Cannon, 1992). Recognizing that linguistic abilities will vary among business faculty, alternative means may be necessary to increase student exposure to language and culture. Barnes et al. (2017) suggest social media, films, media literacy, and socially conscious assignments as just some of the ways to integrate cultural awareness.

Collaboration outside the classroom should be interpreted broadly, to encompass both in-person and mediated communication. Student clubs and campus organizations often host events such as film festivals, globally themed meals, guest speakers, and other internationally focused cultural activities suggested by Barnes et al. (2017) as ways to engage with language and culture. Business schools also need to attract and retain diverse faculty, engage local community and business leaders, and align language efforts with existing initiatives to build diversity, equity, and inclusion (Foster & Carver, 2018). In some cases, these events have natural overlaps, allowing business and language programs to foster a collaborative and crossdisciplinary space for dialogue.

Finally, study abroad programs, international internships, and other experiential learning can also play a vital role in improving intercultural proficiency, inclusive of language and communication skills (Clarke et al., 2009; Holmes & Zhou, 2020). Time spent studying abroad

may provide gains in vocabulary and language skills (Isabelli-García et al., 2018; Llanes, 2011). Arguably even more important is the impact on willingness to communicate and intercultural competence; these essential business skills are developed through exposure to a multilingual environment as much as the facility with a second language (Kang, 2014; Rosiers, 2018). Business school faculty who demonstrate an engagement with study abroad can help build connections to language and international issues (Slonaker & Cannon, 1992). In addition to formal study abroad experiences, students can similarly benefit from international internships, which allow for direct application of business and language knowledge in the workplace and community. Research has demonstrated the value of internships for both language learning and cultural competence (Lafford, 2013; Paulsell, 1991). Curriculum designed specifically to support students engaged in international internships could also be a valuable linkage between language and business programs (e.g., Redmon et al., 2021).

### **Engage with Accreditors**

Curriculum decisions are shaped by the standards set by accrediting bodies. Therefore, one way to influence how business schools incorporate language, LSP, and T&I content is to lobby for change in national and global standards. The AACSB 2020 Standards include a guiding principle of developing a Global Mindset:

The curriculum imbues the understanding of other cultures and values, and learners are educated on the global nature of business and the importance of understanding global trends. The school fosters sensitivity toward a greater understanding and acceptance of cultural differences and global perspectives. Graduates should be prepared to pursue business careers in a diverse global context. Students should be exposed to cultural practices different than their own. (AACSB International, 2020, p. 16)

Despite this interest in a global mindset, neither the standard nor the accompanying interpretive guidance explicitly mentions foreign language instruction, let alone LSP or T&I. Observed implementation in the curriculum suggests that business schools consider it possible to segregate language from culture and the goal of developing a global mindset.

Scholars in LSP and T&I are well positioned to advocate for the benefits of language instruction for all business students, but particularly IB majors. The strategy should be to demonstrate relevance and value, arguing, for example, that T&I combines valuable communication skills with a global perspective and that language study is necessary for improving understanding of culture. The value of English is already recognized by programs outside the United States, reflecting the language's dominance in international business as a valuable skill in the current era of globalization (Kankaanranta et al., 2015). In some cases, English language instruction is undertaken specifically for the purpose of demonstrating internationalization of the curriculum for accreditation purposes (Akella, 2017). Creative collaboration and advocacy, as advocated by such reports as the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2017), will be needed to promote the value of language study in US business schools, and the effort must be matched with efforts by business faculty to achieve mutual benefits for programs and students.

## Conclusion

The multilingual reality of the global business environment is a widely recognized fact, and attitudes toward globalization and world language skills are generally positive. This situation provides a foundation for dialogue on the role of language and translation in the business school curriculum. Evidence presented here shows that at present a majority of business schools do require traditional classroom language instruction of some kind for students earning a degree in international business, but there is no evidence of requirements of LSP instruction or information on T&I practices. International business students will always be heterogeneous in their language proficiency, and their career preparation would be well served by a focus on cross-cultural communication and language mediation.

The data and recommendations of this study are limited to the US context, in part because facility in multiple languages is a more common expectation among students in other countries. Future research could examine how that expectation is incorporated into the curricula of business schools outside the United States. Another limitation of the present study is a focus on world language instruction to the exclusion of heritage language learners and native speakers. That group of bilinguals represents another opportunity for future studies on how their education and career paths differ from other students.

Curricular change is always met with resistance and a battle for scarce resources. After all, a new language requirement either requires elimination of some other requirement in an already crowded degree plan or further limits student electives. However, the curriculum can and must evolve to reflect important topics and the needs of the modern, global workplace. For example, many programs have adapted or increased their instruction in technology and data analytics in recent years to align with AACSB guidance (Andiola et al., 2020). Another sign of encouragement is that surveys of business school deans regularly suggest strong support for a language requirement, even though implementation does not generally reflect this self-reported support (Rogers & Arn, 1998). The arguments, evidence, and strategies presented in this article can serve as a starting point in establishing the importance of a language requirement and T&I literacy in the business school curriculum. Four recommendations offered here to begin that process are the promotion of T&I literacy, content-aligned language instruction, collaboration between language and business faculty to promote internationalization, and engagement with business school accreditors to promote the importance of language services. Through consistent, creative, and collaborative efforts, business and language faculty can expand the curriculum and help ensure college graduates are ready to participate in the global, multilingual economy.

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