

## ***Business Language in Focus***

### ***You are Invited: Business Language Initiatives Kick-off Event***

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Regular readers of this column are well aware that Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) programs across the U.S. offer support for language teachers -- at all levels -- interested in delving into the field of business language and culture instruction. Being directly associated with the CIBER at the George Washington University, we have featured that program's activities in numerous past articles, and the entire December Business Language in Focus column highlighted the upcoming activities of GW-CIBER over the next four years. And now, this month's column announces and describes the exciting kickoff event for the GW-CIBER Business Language initiatives during the 2014-2018 grant cycle - to which you, dear readers, are invited.

### **Business Language Kick-off Event Goals: Reconnect and Inform**

On May 9, 2015, GW-CIBER will host a professional development seminar open to all language instructors currently teaching or interested in teaching business language and culture. The Business Language Seminar will serve as a kick-off for GW-CIBER Business Languages programming for the new grant cycle.

While it is the first event offered to the public in the business language arena since the new grant cycle began last fall, much of the work slated for the new grant cycle for GW-CIBER is already underway. Thus far, though, that work has been centered on intensive behind-the-scenes activity, such as research and development of short-term study abroad courses with a business language and culture emphasis and the proposal of a Business Language Minor (this year in German and Russian; upcoming years will bring Arabic, Chinese, and Korean into the mix). More details on upcoming GW-CIBER Business Language programs can be found by reading the December [Business Language in Focus](#) column or by attending the upcoming event (registration details are provided below).

A top goal of the event is to (re)connect with colleagues focused on business language teaching. Past experience with the face-to-face seminars has shown that it provides the ideal context to share teaching ideas and strategies for addressing challenges that come in a variety of forms, such as a dearth of good materials or a lack of encouragement for curricular innovation by school administration.

In that spirit of collegial connection, the seminar leaders (Margaret Gonglewski and Anna Helm, also the authors of this article) will present upcoming programming but also solicit feedback and ideas on how to serve and support the business language teaching community both near and far.

Another key goal for the seminar is to officially introduce the new GW-CIBER webinar series: "International Business for Language Teachers: Tools and Terminology." This professional development portion of the event will serve as an introduction to the topics covered in the future

webinars and to whet participants' appetite to take part in them. Those topics are 1) cross-cultural consumer behavior; 2) cross-cultural management; and 3) international market entry.

Just like the webinars, the face-to-face seminar will provide examples relating to these three overarching topics from multiple cultural and language contexts. These cross-cultural comparisons will enrich the discussion and allow for an interesting exchange of ideas between diverse faculty.

### **Introduction to the Webinar Series: “International Business for Language Teachers: Tools and Terminology”**

In the seminar, materials and ideas will be presented that are suitable for language students without deep knowledge of international business theory. The topics have in common that they are not overly quantitative in nature or highly theoretically-oriented. Instead, they compel students to tap into their knowledge of the target culture/s and use it as a lens for interpreting issues that arise when doing business internationally.

Within each of the topic areas, participants will gain a basic understanding of key international business concepts and the appropriate terminology -- all of which can be applied directly into their own business language courses. This will be an excellent opportunity for language faculty to broaden their portfolio of instructional tools and content knowledge without the enormous investment of time and effort needed to go back to school for an MBA.

### **Business Content Topic: Cross-Cultural Consumer Behavior**

Below is an example within the first category, **cross-cultural consumer behavior**, which will demonstrate that this topic is easily accessible to all business language students, especially those with strong cultural insights.

### **Example: The Biking Culture and the Consumer Decision-Making Process**

Those who have traveled in Europe will have noticed that the bicycle is a popular means of transportation there. Northern Europeans, in particular, take their bicycling so seriously that they are considering different solutions to keep commuter bike paths heated in the winter and thus open to traffic year around. In the Netherlands, a country with 18 million bikes on less than 17 million people and 35,000 kilometers of cycle paths, a 2014 proposal suggests the usage of geo-thermal energy to prevent the formation of ice on the country's many bike paths (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20041522>).



To access the notion of cross-cultural consumer behavior, we would need to explore the biking culture elsewhere, e.g., in the U.S. -- something that is possible to do without any business knowledge. In discussing this example, students often converge on the notion that U.S. biking

culture is not as strong, and particularly not commuter biking. Indeed, Americans commonly drive their car, bike in tow, to a park, and then ride there purely for recreational purposes.

Relating this back to the realm of consumer behavior, a difference in what is termed *need* or *problem recognition* quickly emerges: In other words, why does the consumer buy a certain product (in this case a bicycle)? Is it for transportation or recreational purposes?

The problem recognition is only the first phase in the buyer decision-making process, but it invariably leads to interesting considerations that marketers have to grapple with, such as analyzing the competition in the industry. Depending on the problem that the consumer wants to “solve” through their purchase, the competition would be different. For a bicycle purchased to solve the problem of commuting, public transportation might be the main competitor, and for a recreational bicycle, roller blades or skateboards might be the main competitors.

With some simple exposure to basic, but important, business frameworks and terminology, instructors can initiate a compelling and rich discussion about culture while at the same time teaching students business content. In addition, students will practice the kind of analytical thinking processes used within the field of business.

### **Kick-off Event Details and Registration Information**

The seminar will take place on Saturday, May 9, 2015, from 10:00am to 3:00pm at the GW School of Business, Duquès Hall, Room 451 (2201 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20052). Because the event is generously supported by the GW-CIBER, a grant from the Department of Education, there is no registration fee, but everyone must [register online](#) in order to attend. Along with the seminar content and the chance for lively interaction with colleagues, lunch and a coffee break will be provided.