
Business Languages for Intercultural and International Business Communication: A Canadian Case Study

Business Communication Quarterly
76(1) 28–50
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DOI: 10.1177/1080569912471186
bcq.sagepub.com



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Abstract

Specialists in international education maintain that all undergraduates require contact with and understanding of other nations, languages, and cultures to develop intercultural communication skills. To determine if the business school at a small comprehensive university provides sufficient intercultural communication training, feedback from two surveys and an interview with the international business (IB) coordinator were analysed. Results revealed that the business school has implemented a multicomponent IB concentration, but that business language initiatives were unsustainable because of inadequate administrative commitment. Thus, efforts directed at internationalising the curriculum fail unless they are fully integrated into all programs and engage all stakeholders.

Keywords

communication across the curriculum, curriculum design, intercultural communication, management education

Introduction

Interest in and attention given to internationalisation of higher education has increased dramatically since the 1990s. Higher education is changing due to the development of advanced communication and technological services, increased international labour mobility, emphasis on the market economy, trade liberalisation and free trade agreements, focus on the knowledge society, increased levels of private investment, and decreased public support for education and life-long learning (Knight, 2004).

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Moreover, higher education takes place within an increasingly globalised world economy. Researchers studying internationalisation of higher education agree that all undergraduates require contact with and understanding of other nations, languages, and cultures in order to develop the appropriate level of competence to handle the increasingly complex and ill-structured nature of professional work and to function effectively in the rapidly emerging global environment (Bartell, 2003; Knight & de Wit, 1997; Kreber, 2009; LeBlanc, 2007; Shetty & Rudell, 2002; Teichler, 1999). Knight (1999) confirms that the “preparation of graduates who have a strong knowledge and skill base in intercultural relations and communications is considered by many academics as one of the strongest rationales for internationalising the teaching/learning experience of students in undergraduate and graduate programs” (p. 17).

While there is increasing awareness that organisations with effective communications strategies are usually successful, communication is rarely recognised as a required principal competency and receives less attention and resource allocation (Kalla, 2005). Despite arguments that multinational companies (MNCs) need to take into account the language challenges that individual employees face in globalised operations (Charles, 2007; Marschan, Welch, & Welch, 1997; van den Born & Peltokorpi, 2010) and that language skills should be core management skills for international management education (Vielba & Edelshain, 1997), the importance of linking language policies with international business practices has not been sufficiently emphasised in the business schools.

This case study reports on the efforts to internationalise the languages and management curricula at a Canadian university in order to prepare graduates for the pluricultural, plurilingual, local, national, and international workplace. The study sought to determine the students’ attitudes towards business language courses, the value of having intercultural communication competence in the workplace, whether language skills are perceived to be core management skills for International Business (IB), and what strategies have been implemented in order to integrate international and intercultural dimensions in the IB communication curriculum.

The article contributes to the business communication, intercultural communication, and the internationalisation of higher education literature in several ways. First, by linking intercultural communication with IB research on language, we increase understanding of the consequences of language and ethnic diversity for IB communication. Second, since globalisation does not seem to be reducing the significance of native and other cultures for individual and intergroup communication (Louhiala-Salminen & Charles, 2006), a major priority of preparing students for the globalised economy is to help students cope with, and benefit from, cultural and linguistic diversity. Finally, we tie language and cultural knowledge, where culture takes into account the current business world, to different strategies of an integrated approach to internationalising the curriculum and discuss outcomes of each.

In the following section, internationalisation efforts in Canada and rationales are briefly examined followed by key curriculum activities that contribute to a meaningful strategy for internationalisation. We follow up by reviewing the literature on language

in IB practices and implications for undergraduate education. Next, the study reports on the efforts to internationalise the Business Administration Program at Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU), a small comprehensive university in Waterloo, Ontario. We conclude with implications of the study and provide suggestions for future research.

Internationalisation of Higher Education in Canada

Internationalisation is a term being used more and more within a globalising world to specify strategies designed to add an international dimension to postsecondary education whether at the institution level or the national/sector level. Internationalisation is conceptualised as a “synergistic, transformative process, involving the curriculum and research programs, that influence the role and activities of all stakeholders including faculty, students, administrators and the community-at-large” (Bartell, 2003, pp. 51-52). While the national/sector level has an important influence on the international dimension of higher education through policy, funding, programs, and regulatory frameworks, initiatives are more often instigated at the institutional level (Knight, 2004) or through individual academic staff members’ commitment to internationalisation (Briguglio, 2007).

Although interrelated, it is useful to distinguish globalisation and internationalisation. Knight and de Wit (1997) define globalisation as the “flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas . . . across borders” (p. 6). Internationalisation, on the other hand, emphasises the link between local and global and includes diversity and intercultural communication. Internationalisation is “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2004, p. 11).

In spite of widespread support among postsecondary institutions for the idea of internationalisation and the apparent need in the workforce for people with international skills and perspectives, the data suggest that most universities in Canada do not treat internationalisation as a priority. Two reports (Knight, 2000; Taylor, 2000) released by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) on international education at Canadian universities placed more emphasis on “promise” than “progress” in their assessment of internationalisation efforts at Canadian universities. In 2006, York University held a symposium on *Internationalising Canada’s Universities*, which drew attention to “a widening gap between policy and practice, for change on the ground is happening at a snail’s pace” (Shailer, 2006, p. 1). Canada’s per capita spending on international education lags far behind major competitors: Germany \$5.02, United Kingdom \$3.29, United States \$2.64, Canada \$0.70 (Johnston, 2006). Although 95% of Canadian universities reference the international dimension in their strategic planning documents, only 58% offer, or are in the process of developing, workshops on how to internationalise the curriculum, and only 61% offer academic programs with an international focus (AUCC, 2007).

Social/cultural, academic, political, and economic rationales are the principle forces driving the internationalisation of higher education (Knight, 1997). In this study, we focus on the first two. The social/cultural rationale is based on the view that the standardisation effects of globalisation need to be resisted and the culture as well as the language of nations needs to be respected. Emphasis is placed on understanding foreign languages and cultures, the preservation of national culture and respect for diversity (Kreber, 2009). The academic rationale is linked to the goals of integrating an international dimension in teaching and research.

Of the many institutional strategies adopted, the curriculum is deemed the most important aspect of internationalisation, precisely because the acquisition of knowledge is what a university is all about (Harari, 1989). Curricular reform is integral to any process of internationalisation in higher education if students are to have an international education (Mestenhauser, 1998). Internationalisation at home encompasses students and faculty collectively and “refers to the international and intercultural dimension of the curriculum, the teaching/learning process, research, extracurricular activities, in fact a host of activities which help students develop international understanding and intercultural skills without ever leaving campus” (Knight, 1997, p. 7). Along with Kreber (2009) and Murphy (2007), our definition of curriculum comprises both the narrow definition of the individual courses or programs offered by colleges and universities as well as the broader definition that includes extracurricular activities and learning opportunities, such as offering new majors and/or minors or requiring foreign language study. While extracurricular activities are not part of the formal curriculum, many universities now provide means for students to have these activities validated by creating a record of cocurricular activities that recognises student engagement and student leadership involvement.

Internationalisation of the curriculum also takes place on micro and macro levels. The micro level refers to curricular innovation and change over which faculty members have control, such as focusing on international approaches to subject matter or exploring the economic, social, cultural, and political lives of people and societies within a global framework. This approach is crucial for business graduates for whom a globalised marketplace has resulted in increased opportunities for graduates to be employed by MNCs, and an increased need for foreign language studies (Marschan-Piekkari, Welch, & Welch, 1999), even if the majority of them never leave their home country to work (Charles, 2007; Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002), or work for small businesses that have an international dimension simply by connecting to the Internet (LeBlanc, 2007). In this context, the internationalisation of the business school curriculum becomes an essential component in the success of business school students.

The macro level refers to the creation of programs, special degrees, or graduation requirements, such as foreign language and cultural studies, that require decision making at the program, academic, or institutional levels. A closer look at macro-level decision making reveals an alarming decline in second language proficiency requirements for undergraduate degrees at Canadian universities from 2000 (16%) to 2006 (9%;

AUCC, 2007). This trend is at odds with Canadian linguistic policies that support bilingualism, plurilingualism, and multiculturalism and “directly contradicts a rhetorical commitment to integrate international and intercultural dimensions into curricula” (Vainio-Mattila, 2009, p. 99). Research has identified the “empowerment and unifying potential of language and communication, as well as the impact that informal communication has on staff motivation and perceptions of self-worth and professionalism” (Charles, 2007, p. 278). Intercultural and international business communication (IIBC) skills identified as necessary for business graduates to operate successfully in multinational contexts include participating in meetings, teams, and informal work-related discussions, giving formal presentations, listening to and following instructions (Crosling & Ward, 2002), and using informal communication for networking and creating bridging and bonding relationships between employees, which in turn contribute to knowledge sharing and the accumulation of social capital within the company (Kalla, 2006). Studies also emphasise the need to develop both oral and written communication skills to high levels (Lamarre & Lamarre, 2006; Lehtonen & Karjalainen, 2008), greater tolerance for and accommodation of different varieties and accents (Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005), and the ability to work collaboratively with people from different national, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds (Vallerand, 2008). Among the many benefits highlighted in IIBC are increased awareness of roles and responsibilities in the globalised workplace, greater understanding of oneself and one’s cultural frame of reference, and more effective business practices in a global economy.

Internationalising the curriculum also means providing intercultural training. While the foreign language classroom provides a challenging and enriching environment for a meeting of different cultures, intercultural communication constitutes a distinct yet complementary set of skills in relation to foreign language proficiency. Graduates of typical foreign language courses may not acquire the necessary intercultural communication skills that engage the learner in personal growth, respect, and tolerance for differences, which can then be transferred to the ability to operate successfully in multinational and multicultural contexts (Briguglio, 2007; Leask, 2005). On the other hand, Languages for Specific Purposes courses are designed to meet the specific needs of a particular group of learners. Courses in Business French make use of the underlying methodology and activities of the business discipline and are centred on the language, skills, discourse, and genres appropriate to these activities. As such, Languages for Specific Purposes are “much more of a truly international field than most areas of applied linguistics” (Swales, 2000, p. 68) and therefore respond to the need to teach intercultural communication for the international workplace (Charles, 2007; Kankaanranta & Planken, 2010; Planken, Van Hooft, & Korzilius, 2004; Pullin, 2010). The increased potential for intercultural contact and the ability to react appropriately to the Canadian language-culture context are convincing arguments for considering business languages as core management skills for business and a major strategy for internationalising the business curriculum at Canadian universities.

Another key component of internationalising the curriculum is overseas experience. Institutions may establish intensive one-month study-abroad programs (Murphy, 2007) or organise study exchanges with partner institutions. Wang and Bu (2004) found that employees in Canada who are plurilingual and interculturally competent are more willing to accept international assignments as expatriates. They are increasingly considered corporate assets because they provide organisations with the staffing flexibility necessary to respond promptly to international opportunities. In order to better prepare the next generation of managers, they conclude that Canadian business schools need to incorporate foreign language courses into their core curricula.

Unfortunately, the growth of cultural diversity in student populations has shifted language-learning resources to English. Consequently, the “hidden resource of heritage language is frequently overlooked and almost never leveraged” (Shailer, 2006, p. 4). The assumption that the presence of international students in our classrooms will provide the intercultural and international contact that leads to intercultural learning and competence is not supported by research into interaction and engagement between different cultural groups on campus (Leask, 2001). Intercultural learning does not occur automatically without strategic intervention in the form of experiential learning methods or structured intercultural interaction that enables students to actually experience the culture of business situations (Briguglio, 2007; Planken et al., 2004). Ainsworth (2005, 2012b) and Crosling and Martin (2005) argue that structured interaction methods applied to business language teaching present a great opportunity for students to acquire significant cultural learning from each other while working in multinational teams.

The Study

Our approach is multidisciplinary and adopts different methodologies because of the multifaceted nature of IIBC. Because we were particularly interested in the students’ perceptions of second and foreign language university education, we conducted two online surveys, one targeting Business French students and graduates and the other targeting Business Administration students. The questionnaires were designed to reveal undergraduate Business French students’ and other business students’ attitudes towards the value of foreign language and intercultural communication skills for business studies and careers, and whether language skills are perceived to be core management skills for IB. We also conducted a related interview with the coordinator of the IB program to determine if business languages and intercultural communication studies were integrated into the IB program.

After minor editing, the final version of the questionnaire sent to the Business French students contained 45 questions: 27 questions to be answered by all respondents and the final 18 to be answered by students who had graduated and were now in the workforce. The second survey sent to other business students contained 35 questions. Both surveys consisted primarily of closed-end questions, Likert-type scale ratings, and one open-ended question. Questions were designed to elicit information in

three areas: (a) background, such as academic major, minor, or concentration, and languages spoken; (b) benefits of studying business languages for IB and careers; and (c) strategies implemented in order to internationalise the business and business language curricula.

Students at Wilfrid Laurier University were contacted and asked to reply to the questionnaire. Using Business French class lists from three academic years, the first survey was emailed to 150 students. These students were enrolled in one or more of four Business French courses offered by the languages department. The follow-up email and survey were sent to 138 Business French students about a month later (the number was smaller because of addressing failures). The second survey was sent to business students who had never taken Business French. In order to control for this, the business survey was emailed to students enrolled in a Policy course in the final winter term before graduation. Two hundred and six business policy students were contacted by email, a little more than half of the 397 full-time students enrolled in the fourth year that winter, with a follow-up email sent to 197 students a month later. The return rate was 42.3% for the Business French students and 11% for the Business Policy students.

Forty-six percent of the Business French students surveyed were business administration majors while the remaining 54% represented a variety of disciplines. All Business Administration majors in both surveys were asked to indicate if they had selected an area of concentration. Although 3% of the business majors taking Business French were enrolled in the IB concentration, none of the business majors in the second survey was completing the IB concentration.

The Business French respondents represented 13 different native languages and spoke 18 foreign languages. The business respondents represented nine different native languages and spoke 11 foreign languages. Of the two groups, English was the native tongue of 75% and 67% respectively, and overall Western European languages dominated (67% and 56%, respectively). Of the pooled sample, the most common non-European languages (Chinese, Hindi, Sindhi, and Tamil) accounted for 28% of the total native languages spoken. Detailed data listing native language and foreign languages spoken are reported in Table 1.

Almost half of the Business French respondents had graduated. In addition to the first part of the survey, graduates replied to the final 18 questions that specifically targeted the value of intercultural and linguistic studies for careers and professions. Background data indicating geographical location, industry, and functional area are listed in Table 2.

The surveys were followed up by a semi-structured interview with the coordinator of the IB Concentration, who provided information on the mandatory immersion trip, language and intercultural communication requirements, and possible collaboration with the business language programs. The 45-minute interview was recorded and transcribed. In the remainder of the article, we focus on the findings from the survey data and use the interview data to clarify issues emerging from the surveys.

Table 1. Native and Foreign Languages Spoken

Business French students	<i>n</i>	Business students	<i>n</i>
Native language		Native language	
English	41	English	14
French	3	Afrikaans/English,	1 each
Romanian	2	Cantonese,	
Serbo-Croatian	2	Chinese, Croatian,	
Bosnian, Cantonese, Chinese, Czech, German,	1 each	Italian, Norwegian,	
Hindi, Polish, Swiss German, Tamil		Serbo-Croatian,	
		Sindhi	
Foreign languages		Foreign languages	
French	48	English	7
English	29	French	7
Spanish	13	Spanish	3
German	9	Chinese, Croatian,	1 each
Italian	5	German, Greek,	
Polish	2	Indonesian, Polish,	
Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Gujarati, Kutchi,	1 each	Portuguese, Urdu	
Malay, Serbo-Croatian, Farsi, Hindi, Japanese,			
Romanian, Tamil			

Table 2. Demographics: Business French Graduates

Geographical Area	%	Industry	%	Functional Area	%
Ontario	81	Alimentation	4	Account/relationship management	16
Québec	4	Banking/financial services	26	Sales/sales management	16
Other province (British Columbia)	4	Construction	4	Financial/investment manager	12
United States	4	Consulting	4	Advertising/public relations	8
Europe	7	Consumer products	15	Human resources	8
Latin America	0	Education/eLearning	15	Marketing/brand management	8
Middle East	0	Essential services	4	Operations management	8
Asia	0	Government/non-profit	8	Business development	4
Africa	0	Marketing services	8	Corporate finance	4
Australia/New Zealand	0	Telecommunications	4	Other	16
		Transportation and travel	11		

Findings

The Business French survey asked graduates which foreign languages have been most beneficial in the workplace, how often they use their foreign language skills at work, and how often they use their understanding of other cultures at work. The business survey asked students which foreign languages have helped them the most while working during non-study terms and how often they use their foreign language skills at work. The most beneficial languages for Business French graduates are French (73%), English (15%), Spanish (8%), and German (4%). The most useful languages for the business students are English (36%), French (36%), Spanish (21%), Chinese (14%), Croatian (14%), Italian (7%), and Serbian (7%). Sixty percent of the Business French graduates indicated that they use their foreign language skills very often or quite often at work, and 74% indicated they use their understanding of other cultures very often or quite often at work. One fifth of the business students indicated that they use their foreign language skills sometimes.

Because French language and cultural knowledge are very important in the Canadian language-culture context, the combined sample of Business French undergraduates and graduates was asked if they used their knowledge of French while on co-op work terms and/or during non-study work terms, and how often they used their French language skills during these periods. The co-op program allows students to alternate study terms with work terms organised by their program of study. Fifty-eight percent indicated they used their knowledge of French often or sometimes while on co-op, and 75% often or sometimes at work. The low response for co-op work placements might be expected, as these placements do not usually require language skills.

Business French graduates were asked how knowledge of another culture has helped them at work and business students were asked how cultural knowledge could potentially help them at work. See Figure 1 below for details.

Most important, the Business French students believe that cultural awareness helps one feel comfortable with people and culture, followed by gaining respect and credibility, and reducing chance of misunderstanding. The business students believe that being able to cope with cultural diversity in the workplace is the most important benefit, followed by feeling comfortable with people and culture, working on multinational teams and reducing chances for misunderstanding, which were all rated equally.

Eighty-one percent of the business students strongly agree or agree that studying languages develops an awareness of cultural diversity, which is important for managing today's multicultural workplace, and develops soft skills, such as teamwork, communication skills, and conflict and personnel management skills. Fifty-two percent of the business students felt that knowledge of a foreign language and foreign culture would give job applicants a significant competitive advantage for employability and that language and intercultural communication courses would be an asset to business studies. One monolingual business student offered a revised perspective on the need for business languages and cultural studies after a study-abroad experience:

After studying on exchange in France, I saw that there was a need to learn about other cultures and the way they do business. In this globalized world, we are

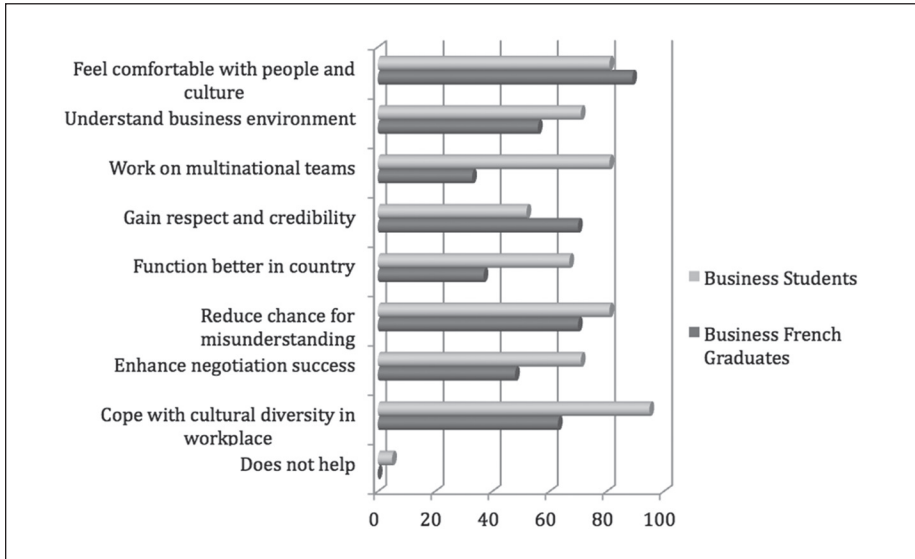


Figure 1. Benefits of cultural knowledge at work

interacting with so many different cultures and must be aware of them to help succeed. I learned so much about the Asian, Italian, Spanish, French, and Russian cultures and I know that it will differentiate me from other job applicants. And all the other students at my school knew about 3 languages. Which gave them an even better competitive advantage over me. I did regret that I was not able to speak more than one language comfortably. So yes I believe it is very important for [the university] to include a language requirement and a course on cultures and the way they do business.

In addition, 63% of the Business French graduates indicated their foreign language skills had given them a significant competitive advantage on the job. Overall, 96% rated the value of intercultural communication and business language skills gained through Business French courses as extremely important or very important, and added further comments.

The Business French program has offered me excellent opportunities with understanding the French language from a more business oriented approach as well as important French language skills that would not otherwise be taught.

I feel I learnt practical French that I will be able to use in my daily business life.

The surveys asked students to rate the importance of including Business French courses in the language and business administration curricula. Of the total sample of Business French students, 94% indicated that Business French courses are extremely

important or very important course offerings for the language curriculum, and 74% agreed they are extremely important or very important for the business curriculum. The majority of business students agreed that Business French courses are extremely important or very important for the language curriculum, while responses were equally divided between extremely important and very important, and neither important nor unimportant, for the business curriculum. After completing the survey, one graduate from the Honours BA in French Language and Literature program emailed further comments about the French program and the need for Business French courses for all students majoring in French. The respondent had taken one course in Business French in his second-last term, but was not able to follow-up because of timetable conflicts and degree requirements.

[. . .] the ability to speak French in a Business environment is paramount in my role. I'm the national Admissions Coordinator for EF International Language Schools—the world's largest private language trainer. Approximately 50% of my day is spent in French, on the phone with clients and prospective clients. [. . .] I think that it's absolutely essential that anyone taking the French option, minor or major ought to study Business French. I feel that more emphasis should be placed on practical applications of the language instead of wasting time in mundane, archaic classes like Quebecois culture and literature [. . .]. Business French gave me the opportunity to write correspondence and present in French. I do consider myself to be bilingual now, but often struggle with proper phrasing, how to start and end an email etc. Most of our correspondence is informal, but I do translate our brochures so more formality is required here, which I do admit is seriously flawed.

When asked if foreign language skills should be core management skills for IB, 90% of the business students were in agreement. Several business students added comments about the value of intercultural communication skills for the global workplace and for their current studies.

Getting a Business Spanish minor was one of the smartest decisions I made in all my four years [. . .]. I think that my knowledge of Latin American and Italian norms helped a lot with the 4th year business policy course especially. We read articles of culture gaps and business mistakes because of people who don't understand how business operates in different cultures, and in knowing how another culture differs from that of Canada's culture really helped me in the course. [. . .] Knowledge of each individual's country will help managers and people alike go very far in the world.

However, there were some who disagreed with the inclusion of language studies as part of management teaching.

Offering language courses is a great idea to those who are interested, however requiring languages to be part of a business program will alienate many bright

students who simply do not have the aptitude for languages; it should be a choice available and students should be informed of the pros/cons of each choice in order to make a sound decision.

In this respect, the coordinator of the IB concentration was in agreement and stated that many business students shy away from language courses because they must maintain certain grades in order to progress in the business program. Language study is not viewed as relevant to business education. Therefore, business students do not enroll in foreign languages because they have the impression that acquiring foreign languages and intercultural communication competence are not necessary for either business studies or future career plans. The IB coordinator did, however, emphasise that it is crucial to make students aware of their options early on, for example in first year:

If students are interested in an international career, even a career within Canada, one of the things they should be thinking about is picking up some language skills. It is important to plan early with the students and emphasise that, if they are serious about an international career of some sort, doing language and intercultural studies along the way would increase the likelihood of success in the international arena.

Consequently, both the IB coordinator and students emphasised the need for better academic advising to raise student awareness of the options available for language training either on a credit or a non-credit basis. In a study of student selection of foreign languages and benefits of foreign language study in the workplace, Ainsworth (2012a) found that both IB academic advisors and language program advisors need to seriously address this issue.

During the interview, the IB coordinator explained that the IB concentration has a mandatory 2-week immersion trip to the Asia-Pacific region for which students do not have any formal language preparation before leaving. Only 1 of the 21 students enrolled the first year the concentration was offered in 2008 had any previous language skills. Although our survey found that the majority of business students did not agree that languages should be learned outside of business schools, the students in the international concentration organised, on their own, noncredit language instruction in Mandarin in preparation for the trip to China. Before going to India, the third year the concentration was offered, the students completed the Intercultural Effectiveness Certificate Program offered by the international office.

Several survey respondents also raised the issue of flexibility, course prerequisites, and scheduling in order to complete the Business French minor. In order to address the issue of course conflicts, the IB coordinator explained that the only possibility for creating an international concentration was to control the business students' time by bundling the courses so that the students enroll in all five courses in the final semester of 4th year. In other words, these students "live" together for the semester while taking courses in International Finance and Accounting, Supply Chain Management, Global

Marketing Management, International Organizational Behaviour and Business Policy. There are roughly eight, 3-hour blocks scheduled for each course, so the students are in class at the same time throughout the term. They do prep work on a major paper related to an IB topic of particular interest to them; then, during the immersion trip, they collect data while visiting firms. When the students return home, they finish up their major paper and have a debriefing session. Although bundling courses in one term may work for the IB concentration, bundling is not sound pedagogical practice for languages. We will return to this in the discussion.

A search of the institutional website revealed that the university values community focus and global engagement, envisions instilling the courage to engage and challenge the world in all its complexity, and one of the guiding principles is learning and advancing knowledge across boundaries (WLU, 2008). The Policy Statement on International Activities (WLU, 2007) states that the

purpose of the policy is to encourage the university to pursue international activities that are complimentary to its academic mission. Specifically, it encourages the development and enhancement of opportunities for international and intercultural competency among students, staff, and faculty. International activities at Laurier will take a variety of forms, including such elements as study abroad programs, the presence of international students on the Laurier campuses, student and faculty exchanges with partner institutions, international development projects, credit and noncredit instructional program delivery, and customized education programs for international clients, delivered either in Canada or abroad.

However, the scope of the policy applies basically to international arrangements that are undertaken in the name of the university and not in terms of activities, such as curriculum and academic programs.

In regard to study-abroad opportunities, the 2006 AUCC survey (AUCC, 2007) indicates that, on average, 2.2% of full-time university students participate in short-term, for-credit international education opportunities. Therefore, the students in our survey were asked if their program requires an overseas study exchange. Only two students in the Business French survey replied yes. On further verification, it was discovered that one student was majoring in languages and minoring in Global Studies and the other was in the IB concentration. Study abroad is a graduation requirement for Global Studies and the 2-week immersion trip is required for the IB concentration. Concerning the number of foreign students enrolled in degree programs, our survey revealed that international students made up 5.5% of the Business French respondents and 9.5% of the Business respondents. By comparison, the office of institutional research calculated that only 1.4% of the total enrolment (13,954) were foreign students in degree programs.

Discussion

To answer our first question, the results found that the students have a very positive attitude towards business language courses. They stated that the courses were useful, taught practical French for daily business life, helped them to better understand business in French, were a huge asset to their business education, and were helpful in their careers. The study revealed that the majority of business French students and business students feel that business language courses contribute significantly to the language program and are important course offerings for the language program. Several business French students added that the skills developed in business language courses have benefited their studies both at home and abroad. According to the Business French graduates, these courses develop intercultural communication skills and business language skills that contribute to a significant competitive advantage on the job.

In answer to the second question, the vast majority of business students and Business French graduates recognise the value of having intercultural communication competence in order to cope with cultural diversity in the workplace, to gain respect and credibility, to feel comfortable with people and other cultures, to reduce the chance of misunderstandings, and to work on multinational teams. Graduates of the Business French program highly value the intercultural communication skills and the business language skills developed in these courses. Furthermore, they indicated that their intercultural communication knowledge is more useful at work than their foreign language knowledge. The business students felt that studying languages would develop awareness of cultural diversity and conflict and personnel management skills in addition to teamwork and communication skills.

Our third question sought to determine whether students perceive language skills to be core management skills for IB. The business students answered that language skills should be core management skills for IB while three quarters of the Business French students indicated that business language courses should be included in the business administration program as well. Some even felt that business language studies should be required for all language majors. Just over half of the business students agreed that knowledge of a foreign language and a foreign culture would give job applicants a significant competitive advantage for employability, and that language and intercultural communication courses would be an asset to business studies. In comparing these findings with the IB coordinator's understanding of the students' belief about language and intercultural competence for business studies, it is interesting to note several inconsistencies. The IB Coordinator felt that "students believe that language is not relevant to business studies," and that "students think that foreign languages and intercultural communicative competence are not necessary for business studies or future career plans." The results of our study seem to indicate just the opposite.

Our final question asked what strategies have been implemented to integrate intercultural and international dimensions in the IB curriculum. The results found that the business school has internationalised the curriculum with the creation of the IB concentration consisting of courses with an international focus in five functional areas:

finance and accounting, supply chain management, global marketing management, organisational behaviour, and business policy. The concentration requires a 2-week immersion trip to an Asia-Pacific region, and students may prepare for this trip by organizing not-for-credit language training or by becoming certified in intercultural effectiveness. The languages department has developed a series of four courses in Business French and Business Spanish in order to equip students with language and intercultural skills to function effectively in the global workplace. Students may also graduate with a minor in business languages and have the further possibility of participating in study exchanges at a number of partner business schools overseas, although neither is a graduation requirement for the business program or the IB concentration.

We discovered that the institutional policy encourages the development and enhancement of opportunities for international and intercultural competency among students, staff, and faculty. While international mobility in the form of study or work opportunities abroad is a very visible feature of the internationalisation strategy at Wilfrid Laurier, few students avail themselves of this opportunity. AUCC laments the fact that one of Canada's two official languages happens to be the international *lingua franca*.

This can be a two-edged sword: while English attracts international students to Canada, the lack of knowledge of other languages (and the lack of a perceived need to learn a language other than English) by many Canadian students limits their own opportunities for study abroad, resulting in an imbalance and one-way partnerships with some countries. (AUCC, 2009, p. 11)

The question is often raised whether study in a foreign country should be essential in preparing graduates for the internationalising labour market. As long as study abroad is not a requirement for graduation, overseas mobility will remain accessible to the few. In any case, student mobility is merely one step in the process of developing an intercultural and international curriculum. It is imperative that universities initiate other types of relevant curricular reforms for the majority of students who are non-mobile as well. In this respect, "internationalisation at the periphery of the system would be substituted by internationalisation of the core of higher education through strengthening the international dimension of the substance of learning" (Teichler, 1999, p. 188). Integrating business languages and intercultural studies into the business curriculum in addition to requiring overseas study exchanges as degree requirements is one approach to transforming the IB curriculum.

Another approach is to create joint or double degree programs in business and business languages. A joint program could also be a step in meeting the criteria for international accreditation. However, it seems these attempts often fail due in part to the impression that languages are not deemed important for business studies and in part to the fact that timetables are already overcrowded (Vielba & Edelshein, 1997). Even though a large majority of business students in our survey thought that language skills should be core management skills for IB, and the IB coordinator agreed that languages

are important for international studies, it seems that course scheduling, and the number, frequency, and variety of course offerings are barriers to creating joint programs. Walls (1992/1993) is adamant that “in an age of intercultural and interlingual communication and cooperation, none of the above objections is sufficient reason to institutionalise monolingual, monocultural education as the only option available to a potential international business major.” The IB concentration was able to solve the timetabling problem by having the students enroll in all five courses during one term. Based on social constructivist theory and interactional sociolinguistics, grouping language courses in one term is not pedagogically valid. Meaning is constructed by means of a shared process of formal and informal exchanges of ongoing social interaction and knowledge creation and can only be understood in the context of interaction, especially in multicultural situations, such as global business (Charles, 2007). A discourse approach to specific language use recognises that intercultural communication is a complex process linked to the sociocultural context in which it is used, and its interpretation relies to a large extent on the contextual constraints of the events in which it is expressed (Gotti, 2004). A dynamic interactive process is created, which can only be grasped as students’ linguistic and discourse skills improve over time. Thus, curricular reform for valid pedagogical reasons requires the development of new courses that take into account research on business discourse and genre, more sections, and more flexibility in scheduling.

In spite of this, the study revealed that the institution’s policy does not apply to internationalisation in terms of a process that integrates an international dimension into teaching, learning, and service functions through the creation of a campus culture that promotes and supports international/intercultural understanding and focuses on campus-based activities, such as curriculum. The field of international education has not been taken seriously since the assumption is that the main focus should be on training a few students in international and area studies as future IB specialists. For all other students, an international education is presumed to be limited knowledge about other countries. A few international or multicultural course requirements, and the complacency of universities in addressing the larger issues, ignore the fact that all our graduates will work in global settings. As the IB coordinator emphasised, there is no job title “international.” Rather, professional people will have to be prepared to practice a multitude of professions in any country in the world. The main involvement in international affairs will not be by “international affairs specialists,” but by scientists, engineers, managers, information experts, and so on (Mestenhauser, 1998).

Looking at the number of native and foreign languages spoken by the respondents in the Business French and Policy courses, our classrooms are already very pluricultural and plurilingual. Thus, with or without international students, the imported component of internationalisation is very visible on Canadian campuses. But are we using these pluricultural and plurilingual resources to promote intercultural communication and understanding in our undergraduate classrooms on campus? Previous research praises experiential methods, structured interaction, and working in multicultural teams for enabling students to experience real-world IIBC situations and to benefit from increased language awareness and tolerance for a wide variety of speech patterns

and accents. Because of the number of pluricultural and plurilingual students in Business French classrooms, we have found that even if the activity takes place in French, it is very likely that the French being spoken by our students will present many variations in the amount and type of vocabulary or in pronunciation and grammar, to name a few. Foreign language learners may sound very different from one another depending on their first language(s), ethnicity, previous schooling, and geographic origin despite the fact that they are all using the same foreign language as a *lingua franca* in the foreign language classroom. While the scope of this study does not extend to a discussion of pedagogical methodologies in the classroom that contribute to the process of intercultural awareness, this is certainly an area for further study.

Since the collegial process and executive authority are both necessary in managing the university, it is critical that administrators support curriculum reform through vision and an overall university strategy that inculcates internationalisation in the campus culture, with plans and adequate resources for implementation (AUCC, 2009). Reform initiated by individual faculty requires change in the collegial culture to enable faculty to closely align curriculum with the institution's objectives and strategies. Bartell (2003) found that organisational culture at Canadian universities can inhibit or facilitate such strategies. Culture is viewed as the values and beliefs of all stakeholders in an organisation. Culture exerts such a strong effect on decision making that "without accompanying culture change, most organisational changes fail or remain temporary" (Cameron & Freeman, 1991, p. 24). This could explain the fact that some of the curricular reforms for business languages were temporary. Despite the fact that the Business French minor remains the second-largest minor in the languages department (Table 3), it was cancelled in 2008 along with the Business German minor. The last course in Business French was offered in the winter 2009. The Business Spanish minor is still available although the course offerings were cut from four to two.

These decisions are somewhat puzzling because business respondents to the surveys added comments, such as "This appears to be a good initiative" and "I think it's a good idea to have Business French & Spanish and push for it." As Bartell (2003) summarises, the

complexity, high degree of differentiation, multiplicity of units and standards, autonomy of professors, control and management philosophies and mechanisms, which increasingly do not operate effectively even in business organisations, are likely to be complicating and inhibiting factors vis-à-vis pressures for institutional change, particularly, for internationalisation of the university as an identified strategic high priority. (p. 53)

Overall, adding international opportunities for students through the diligence of the international office is relatively easy. On the other hand, curriculum change, involving large numbers of faculty, staff, and students, confronts the same constraints as introducing change in any large, complex organisation and must be carefully planned, resourced, and supported by academic staff (Crosling, Edwards, & Schroder, 2008).

Table 3. Graduates Declaring a Language Minor (2012)

Minor	Total 2002-2008	Total 2002-2009	Total 2002-2010	Total 2002-2011
French	88	114	140	170
Business French	85	94	97	104
Spanish	41	53	60	66
Business Spanish	20	22	34	40
German	21	27	37	43
Italian	13	15	18	25
Arabic	2	4	10	13
Business German	8	9	9	9

Source. University Registrar’s Office, Wilfrid Laurier University. Data used reproduced with permission.

Strategies for internationalising the curriculum through foreign language studies and intercultural communication awareness are the simplest and most economical to address internally (Murphy, 2007). They maintain the basic structure of the institution and allow students to gradually integrate intercultural perspectives from a variety of sources. The following are some recommendations for business schools wishing to adopt an integrated approach to internationalising the business and IB curriculum:

- Require languages and intercultural communication for all international programs and studies
- Support the creation of joint programs at the home institute and with partners abroad
- Require a period of study and/or work abroad
- Support faculty/staff mobility for the delivery of courses abroad
- Encourage experiential learning, service learning, and community-based learning
- Support joint faculty research projects with international partners
- Integrate international student and scholar programs into intercultural processes

Conclusion

The goal of internationalising higher education is to prepare students to live, work, and function as citizens of a global society. In order to meet this goal, the business faculty at Wilfrid Laurier University has internationalised its curriculum through the creation of the IB concentration, but does not require intercultural and IB communication studies. Surprisingly, the languages department no longer offers business language courses in French, only in Spanish, which is at odds with the Canadian language-culture context. The intercultural and international communication dimension of business languages is a valuable resource for equipping business students and students of other disciplines with language and intercultural communication skills for the global

workplace. Intercultural and international communication for business purposes presents an exciting opportunity and challenge to engage in professional development and growth. Foreign language skills have become a basic requirement for the demanding plurilingual and pluricultural workplace. Pedagogies such as experiential learning, community-based learning, and service learning that question the relationship between the international, local, and global are instrumental in internationalising the curriculum. Consequently, further research into classroom strategies that promote intercultural and international awareness is necessary for engaging all stakeholders in the process of internationalising higher education. Research and scholarly collaboration in this area should also be encouraged and promoted.

It is clear from this study that internationalising the curriculum is not simply the infusion of international content and resources from other cultures into existing courses. The “add-on” strategy often results in a lack of in-depth study, thereby sending a message that the international dimension is neither part of the core curriculum nor a crucial aspect of curriculum reform policy and process. Without the willingness of students, faculty and administrators to incorporate all forms of internationalisation resources into their principal activities, these initiatives fail. Since the institutional mission statement does not refer to a domestic policy for internationalisation, the amount of commitment by senior leaders and faculty, and the appropriate organisational structures provide little concrete support to truly internationalise the curriculum. Internationalisation initiatives for business and language students should extend across the curriculum to raise student awareness of intercultural and linguistic issues, and provide teaching and learning processes that enhance student capacity to communicate interculturally, particularly in pluricultural contexts. Such changes would be tackled more efficiently at the broader university level through the development of language policies integrated with internationalisation policies, thus providing a more coherent framework for developments across curricula. Attempts at internationalisation will not be truly successful or sustainable unless they become fully integrated into all the activities, policies, goals, and programs of the institution and engage all stakeholders in the process.

Author's Note

The author received Research Ethics Board approval to carry out this study and followed all ethical guidelines when quoting students. Student responses are reproduced by permission. A previous version of this article was presented at the 76th annual meeting of the Association for Business Communication, Montreal, Canada, 2011.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Bio

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