

# Hispania

Volume 93 ■ Number 1 ■ March 2010

**A journal devoted to the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese  
Published by the American Association of Teachers of  
Spanish and Portuguese, Inc. Founded 1917**

**AATSP**  
The American Association of  
Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese



## A Responsive, Integrative Spanish Curriculum at UNC Charlotte

Michael S. Doyle

*The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA*

**Keywords:** applied Spanish, business Spanish, curriculum design, integrative curriculum, translation

Key documents in recent decades have been pointing the way toward a significant re-engineering of the national foreign language curriculum in the United States. Considered in concert, they suggest a renewed relevance and centrality—an evolving toponymic identity—for the study of foreign languages and cultures. This reconceptualization has been increasingly evidenced via the learner-centered forging of nontraditional, interdisciplinary partnerships in which content and methodology have been evolving distinctive architectures for what an undergraduate or graduate program in foreign languages, in this case, Spanish, might be today and in the future. In addition to language acquisition and the traditional study of literature, civilization and culture, and linguistics, how do we enhance our preparation of today's students of Spanish for fuller participation in the global village and economy into which they will graduate? How might they become better prepared to put their study of other languages and cultures to use, which increasingly factors in *their* real-world needs and inclinations, once they begin to seek gainful employment? Two recent reports and a recruitment brochure issued by the Modern Language Association of America (MLA), the 2008–2009 edition of the U.S. Department of Labor's *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, and the 1988 U.S. congressional legislation for the creation of federally funded centers for international business education and research (CIBERs; see *CIBERWEB*) provide us with examples of a roadmap for responsive curricular development, the ongoing paradigm shift in language for specific purposes (LSP, which has always subsumed all forms of curricular design, including literary studies) that is more fully accountable to the needs of both the learner and society.

Such curricular development, of course, does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, it responds to external pressures that influence change. For example, in his 1980 book, *The Tongue-Tied American*, Congressman Paul Simon had exhorted the institution of American higher education to engage in a broad self-analysis: "Each college should examine its own program to see if it is meeting today's and tomorrow's needs, or if it is still focused on yesterday's needs" (180) because "[u]nless complemented by academic training in the history, culture, economics and politics of a given society, the knowledge of its language alone becomes a dull instrument" (59). In 1990, Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, wrote in *Universities and the Future of America* that "[s]o long as universities depend on society for their existence and so long as society requires the education and experience that these institutions can uniquely supply, the academy has no choice but to do its part to meet the nation's legitimate needs" (104), a prescription echoed by another educational leader, J. Wade Gilley (former president of the University of Tennessee), in *Thinking about American Higher Education: The 1990s and Beyond*: "College and university leaders must work to include societal needs on the agenda as they go about developing their institutions" (106). And in 1994, Judith Melton (then head

of foreign languages at Clemson University) issued a challenge to foreign language educators in the *ADFL Bulletin* (MLA Association of Departments of Foreign Languages): "While we certainly want to and should preserve the engaging and challenging study of literature, we also need to expand our offerings and redefine what a language degree, undergraduate and graduate, means in the changing environment of the twenty-first century" (23).

In its 2007 report titled "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World," the MLA finds that "the two-tiered configuration [language versus literature] has outlived its usefulness and needs to evolve. The critical moment in which language departments find themselves is therefore also an opportunity." The report says that "the language major should be structured to produce a specific outcome: educated speakers who have deep *translingual* and *transcultural* competence" (emphasis added), which "places value on the ability to operate between languages." Such a transformation, which will serve to "counter the isolation and marginalization that language and literature departments often experience on American campuses," should be premised on an understanding of "cultural narratives" and "cultural subsystems" that move beyond the traditional [language and literature] curriculum to include, among others, "the legal system, the political system, the educational system, the economic system." Further, "[t]he changes we foresee in the undergraduate curriculum call for changes in the way graduate studies are structured as well." A priority recommendation of the report is to "[d]evelop programs in translation and interpretation" because "[t]here is a great unmet demand for educated translators and interpreters, and translation is an ideal context for developing translingual and transcultural abilities as an organizing principle of the language curriculum."

In its 2008–2009 edition of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, the U.S. Department of Labor published the following forecast, consistent with its favorable estimates in preceding years:

Employment of interpreters and translators is projected to increase 24 percent over the 2006–16 decade, much faster than the average for all occupations. . . . [H]igher demand for interpreters and translators results directly from the broadening of international ties and the increase in the number of foreign language speakers in the United States. Both of these trends are expected to continue.

It adds that for those who seek employment in the field, "many agencies or companies use only the services of people who have worked in the field for 3 to 5 years or *who have a degree in translation studies or both*" (emphasis added).

In 1988, when Congress authorized substantial funding for the creation of Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) "to increase and promote the nation's capacity for international understanding and competitiveness," the first of the six "mandatory activities" featured a tripartite structure: "interdisciplinary programs which incorporate *foreign language* and *international studies* training into *business*." (emphasis added)

In 2000, the MLA issued its own form of support for the development of the business language curriculum, which had already been maturing in American higher education for numerous decades (Fryer and Guntermann; Grosse "Spanish for Business," "A Survey," "Research Priorities;" Grosse and Voght "Foreign Languages," "Evolution;" Schorr). In an MLA brochure now titled *Knowing Other Languages Brings Opportunities*, students are recruited to language study because it represents a "Job Advantage in a Global Economy":

- "More and more businesses work closely with companies in other countries."
- "No matter what career you choose, if you've learned a second language, you'll have a real advantage."
- You "may look much better at promotion time than one who knows only English."
- "An employer will see you as a bridge to new clients or customers if you know a second language."

And in its 2009 "Report to the Teagle Foundation on the Undergraduate Major in Language and Literature," the MLA emphasizes that

Revised historical understandings, *new fields of scholarly inquiry*, the *effects of globalization*, the proliferation of new media, *vocational pressures on undergraduates*, and professional pressures on faculty members and graduate students bring new challenges to the existing structures of higher education. (6, emphasis added)

The report advocates consideration of a structured, flexible, integrative, and synergetic model for the major in foreign languages, emphasizing that "the formulation of a major program should be a collaborative educational project that first and foremost addresses the needs of the students" (3, 6).

The undergraduate and graduate programs in Spanish at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte provide an example of curricular responsiveness to the evolving context outlined above, which emphasizes the addition of translation and business Spanish. These programs also "sustain points of articulation with other fields of study" (MLA "Undergraduate Major" 3), for example, Latin American studies, international studies, and international business. The Department of Languages and Culture Studies (LCS) currently offers the following options (<http://www.provost.uncc.edu/Catalogs/2009-2010/COLAS-languages.htm>):

- B.A. in Spanish with two tracks: literature/culture or applied language (translating, business Spanish, or linguistics; <http://languages.uncc.edu/undergrad-programs/spanish.html>)
- Minor in Spanish (undergraduate)
- Certificate in translating (CT, English↔Spanish, undergraduate, created in 1979; <http://languages.uncc.edu/undergrad-programs/undergraduate-certificate-programs.html>)
- Certificate in business Spanish (CBS, undergraduate and graduate, created in 1999; <http://languages.uncc.edu/undergrad-programs/undergraduate-certificate-programs.html>)
- M.A. in Spanish with two tracks (created in 2001): language, literature, and culture (LLC) or translating and translation studies (TTS, English↔Spanish; <http://languages.uncc.edu/graduate-programs/63-masters-in-spanish.html>)
- Graduate certificate in translating and translation studies (GCTTS, English↔Spanish, created in 2001; <http://languages.uncc.edu/graduate-translation-certificate.html>)

Each track of the B.A. in Spanish consists of thirty hours of course work in upper-division Spanish, plus a one-hour senior seminar (<http://www.provost.uncc.edu/Catalogs/2009-2010/SPAN.htm>). They share five foundational courses that draw from the traditional Spanish curriculum, which provides cohesiveness to the two-track major:

- Required core: (1) advanced grammar and composition, (2) advanced conversation and composition *or* advanced writing and rhetoric for native speakers, and (3) introduction to literary analysis, and
- Spanish civilization and culture or Spanish American civilization and culture *and* either introduction to Spanish peninsular literature or introduction to Spanish American literature.

The literature/culture emphasis then requires a second introduction to literature class (such that both Spanish peninsular literature *and* Spanish American literature are covered) plus twelve credit hours (four courses) of Spanish at the 4000 level, at least three courses of which must be in literature/culture. One of the courses may come from the applied track, which may serve as the point of departure for students adding one or both of the certificates, the CT and/or the CBS, to their traditional major in Spanish, broadening in an integrative manner the benefits offered by the Spanish curriculum. The applied language emphasis, on the other hand, substitutes Spanish for business and international trade for the second literature class above plus twelve additional credit hours (four courses), at least three courses of which must be in applied

Spanish (business Spanish or English↔Spanish translation courses) or linguistics. One of the courses may in turn come from the literature/culture track, thereby strengthening the reading and critical analysis skills that practitioners of business and translation will need for their work in both their applied Spanish classes and beyond, again broadening in an integrative manner the benefits offered by the two-track Spanish curriculum. The students in applied language may select from the following menu: Advanced Business Spanish I, Advanced Business Spanish II, and Studies in Advanced Business Spanish; Practicum in Translating I, Practicum in Translating II, and Practicum in Translating III; and Spanish Phonetics, Spanish Linguistics, and History of the Spanish Language (<http://www.provost.uncc.edu/Catalogs/2009-2010/TRAN.htm>). Faculty advising and course prerequisites play a key role in providing students with a coherent program of studies within the applied language track.

Undergraduate students of Spanish at UNC Charlotte may also add one or both certificates to their studies: Certificate in Business Spanish (fifteen credit hours, five courses) and the Certificate in Translating (twelve credit hours, four courses). In order to count toward either certificate, each course taken must be completed with a minimum grade of B. Seventy-two CBSs have been awarded since 2001, and thirty CTs since 2003. A growing number of students are graduating with a major in Spanish plus one or both of the certificates, providing these individuals with (1) a broader education within their Spanish studies than they would have had with only the traditional major, and (2) a targeted job market preparation for business and/or translation. The LCS department also offers intermediate-level course work in Spanish for criminal justice professionals and Spanish for health care professionals, which provides the foundation for creating additional, well-subscribed certificates in Spanish for criminal justice professionals and Spanish for health care professionals. Graduate students may also add the CBS or the graduate certificate in translating and translation studies (GCTTS, eighteen credit hours, six courses).

The thirty-six-hour master of arts in Spanish builds on the success of the undergraduate programs and also offers two tracks: LLC and TTS. It serves individuals who seek (1) a greater understanding of Spanish language, literatures, and cultures, (2) career and professional advancement opportunities in education, translation, and applied language (business Spanish), and (3) pursuit of a Ph.D. in fields such as Hispanic literature, linguistics, translating and translation studies, intercultural communication, and international studies. For both track options, the M.A. in Spanish requires a common set of four graduate core courses distributed as follows: one course each in Spanish literature, Spanish American literature, Spanish or Spanish American civilization and culture (broadly considered), and Spanish linguistics. Since its inception in 2001, the program has awarded forty-nine degrees (twenty-five in LLC and twenty-four in TTS) and six GCTTSs (note: the graduate certificate is also used to recruit students into the M.A. program).

On April 30, 2008, the UNC Charlotte office of academic affairs submitted a request for authorization to plan a Ph.D. in translation studies: Spanish. Based on the structures and documented success of its undergraduate and M.A.-level programs in Spanish, the request explains that

The proposed Ph.D. responds to a paradigm shift in discipline from a traditional focus on language-literature (the 20th-century higher education model in Spanish and other foreign language programs in the United States) to a broader translational and transcultural architecture, which defines the space and centrality of translating and translation studies, both in theory and practice, within a re-engineered curriculum and research agenda for an increasingly globalized, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic 21st century. (3)

This proposal for a new doctoral degree program, currently under consideration by the UNC general administration, is the latest development in ongoing efforts to create and maintain a timely, responsive, and integrative Spanish curriculum at UNC Charlotte.

The Spanish program at UNC Charlotte is timely and responsive because it is designed to meet documented societal (job market) needs in today's and tomorrow's global village and economy by providing graduates with strong specialties in English↔Spanish translating and in business Spanish. It is integrative in that it does so while maintaining its abiding commitment to and leveraging the benefits of the traditional curriculum in literature and culture such that, although students may choose between track emphases, each track allows for the inclusion of course work from its companion track. It has not been designed based on a philosophical question of an exclusive curricular "this" or "that"; rather, on an inclusive one of both "this" and "that," to better serve today's student of Spanish through a curriculum that provides or blends options. The successful program at UNC Charlotte is but one example of the possible curricular outcomes in response to the widespread exhortations provided earlier, driven by the admonition that an academic program should always be engaged in the examination "to see if it is meeting today's and tomorrow's needs, or if it is still focused on yesterday's need." Curricular vision and implementation must always keep a finger on the pulse of the times in order to best prepare students for the world they will encounter upon graduation and in order for academic programs to retain and strengthen their relevance and centrality. This can be achieved while maintaining a commitment to the traditional curriculum in Spanish.

#### WORKS CITED

- Bok, Dereck. *Universities and the Future of America*. Durham: Duke UP, 1990. Print.
- Fryer, T. Bruce, and Gail Guntermann, eds. *Spanish and Portuguese for Business and the Professions*. Lincolnwood: National Textbook, 1998. Print.
- Gilley, J. Wade. *Thinking about American Higher Education: The 1990s and Beyond*. New York: ACE, 1991. Print.
- Grosse, Christine Uber. "Research Priorities in Languages for Specific Purposes." *Global Business Languages: Communication and Commerce* (2002): 3–34. Print.
- . "A Survey of Foreign Languages for Business and the Professions at US Colleges and Universities." *The Modern Language Journal* 69 (1985): 221–26. Print.
- . "A Survey of Spanish for Business at AACSB Colleges and Universities in the United States." *The Modern Language Journal* 66 (1982): 383–90. Print.
- Grosse, Christine Uber, and Geoffrey M. Voght. "The Evolution of Languages for Specific Purposes in the United States." *The Modern Language Journal* 75 (1991): 181–95. Print.
- . "Foreign Languages for Business and the Professions at U.S. Colleges and Universities." *The Modern Language Journal* 74 (1990): 36–47. Print.
- Melton, Judith. "Foreign Language Interdisciplinary Programs and Alliances: Some Observations." *ADFL Bulletin* 26.1 (Fall 1994): 19–24. Print.
- Michigan State University. *CIBERWEB*. Web. 13 June 2009. <<http://ciberweb.msu.edu/about.asp>>.
- Modern Language Association. "Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World." *Modern Language Association*. MLA, May 2007. Web. 13 June 2009.
- . "Knowing Other Languages Brings Opportunities." *Modern Language Association*. Web. 13 June 2009.
- . "Report to the Teagle Foundation on the Undergraduate Major in Language and Literature." *Modern Language Association*. MLA, Feb. 2009. Web. 13 June 2009.
- United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Outlook Handbook 2008–2009*. New York: McGraw, 2008. Print.
- University of North Carolina–Charlotte. "Request for Authorization to Plan a Ph.D. Program in Translation Studies: Spanish." *University of North Carolina–Charlotte*. Web. 13 June 2009. <<http://www.provost.uncc.edu/planning/plandegrees.htm>>.
- Schorr, James L. "A Generation of Business Foreign Languages." *Global Business Languages* (2000): 3–15. Print.
- Simon, Paul. *The Tongue-Tied American: Confronting the Foreign Language Crisis*. New York: Continuum, 1980. Print.