

# **GLOBAL BUSINESS LANGUAGES**

**BRIDGING LANGUAGE AND BUSINESS**

**Volume 13**

**2008**

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INSCRIPTION AND  
EXPERIENTIAL PEDAGOGY IN  
BUSINESS LANGUAGE: THE PANAMA CANAL AND  
GROUND TRANSPORTATION IN  
COSTA RICA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Pedagogy derives from the Greek *paidagōgia*, “the art or science of teaching; education; instructional methods” (RHD). Experiential pedagogy refers to the educational process that is based on lived experience—primary, direct, and first-hand—as contrasted with classroom teaching and metaphors of “book learning,” which are indirect, derivative, and secondary, a cognitive understanding and familiarity always more foreign and remote than having physically “lived” something.<sup>1</sup> There is no substitute that can improve on the pedagogy informed by lived experience, which adds a unique and indelible autobiographical inscription to the content being taught. The argument here is that an educational enterprise is deficient without both forms of education present, blending into an eclectic hybrid (1) what is learned in a “classroom” and via secondary research *with* (2) what is learned outside the classroom through direct experience and primary on-site research. One must complement the other if the fuller potential of the pedagogical undertaking is to be realized. The “life of the mind” alone is insufficient. In this context, theory calls for application and praxis, as what is taught in a business language classroom is done for situations beyond the limitations of the classroom—i.e., for knowledge-informed work in the real world, across the friction inevitably caused by different languages and cultures.<sup>2</sup>

Two essential considerations of experiential pedagogy are (1) student learning and (2) faculty development. For the learner, experiential pedagogy

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<sup>1</sup> Here, of course, I am referring to the average person for whom lived experience (“I was there and did and saw this and that first-hand”) is typically more immediate, memorable, and powerful than non-experienced or imagined experience.

<sup>2</sup> Friedman 204–05, 301. Despite the “flattening” effects of the global economy, which lead to a globalized 24/7 sun-to-sun economy, the different cultures and languages create friction between the protagonists, who must still communicate with one another.

typically takes the form of travel or study abroad, internships, field trips, primary research on site, etc. As students study a language and culture for business purposes, a co-curricular experience beyond the classroom, preferably in a country in which the business language and culture are native, provides an essential value-added dimension to their linguistic, cultural, and professional development. They are able to apply (and confirm or modify) what has been learned in the domestic classroom and are able to learn more about the foreign language(s) and culture(s) in ways that can never really be duplicated within the classroom, even via the best promise of virtual reality. Today, this student-centered aspect of autobiographically inscribed experiential pedagogy is a given in American higher education, as institutions and governments (federal, state, and local) fund considerable travel and study abroad, while many academic programs recommend or require an internship, if not abroad then at least in a community in which the language of study is used.

But experiential pedagogy is also vital for faculty development, which in turn is essential for all who teach languages and cultures, whether for business or other specific purposes. Here, experience-based teaching refers to the preparation and continuous improvement of instructors so that they can perform optimally in teaching the business language content, which of course always includes, in an interdisciplinary manner, cultural as well as geographic literacy. It relates directly to authenticity and credibility in pedagogy, parallel to the way in which we privilege *realia* (authentic business genres and documents used in the target country/community and in real business situations) over other types of documents (simulations which are always counterfeit because they are not the “real thing”). An instructor of business Spanish who has never been to a Spanish-speaking country, or in business situations on-site abroad, undeniably lacks a certain authenticity and credibility, which even the instructor must acknowledge. An adaptation of the travelogue from previous decades (RHD: “a lecture, slide show, or motion picture describing travels”) becomes a very useful tool for autobiographically inscribed experiential pedagogy. Created by the faculty member who has actually conducted on-site research abroad, the travelogue complements off-site (home-constrained) research on the subject being taught. By becoming more experience-based and authentic, the teaching improves—incorporating new visceral, perceptual, emotional, and expressive as well as intellectual and imaginative layers of depth—and is accomplished with much greater confidence because the direct experience (first-hand knowledge) is precisely what was lacking in the acquisition of other research-based knowledge for pedagogical purposes. Having experienced the “real thing” itself, it now

speaks for itself—providing voice to a previous but avoidable silence—via the autobiographically inscribed pedagogical methodology employed.

Autobiographical inscription, then, defines experiential pedagogy. It is the writing (graphy) or weaving of one's own (auto) lived experiences (bio) into the content being studied or taught, a conspicuous marking or engraving of the self onto and within the subject of study, collapsing the distance between the object of study and the protagonists involved in such study. Autobiographical inscription personalizes the pedagogical endeavor, thereby enhancing the immediacy of its relevance for both instructor and learner. It names a participatory space—the inter- or “enter”-textual imprint of lived experience—for the instructor within the pedagogical narrative that is teaching and learning.

An essential research tool for the business language instructor now becomes the digital camera (even more effective if equipped with an audio recorder), which documents with images and “textual” notes (by voice, hand, or computer) the excursions abroad. The photographs that we might have taken in years past, memorabilia of travels or pleasant vacations consigned to unproductive scrapbooks, now become a powerful experiential pedagogical tool that provides face-value authenticity and credibility—a genuineness previously lacking—in the business language classroom. Recent research trips to Panama, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic<sup>3</sup> serve as case examples of autobiographical inscription and experiential pedagogy in business Spanish. One case deals with water transportation, the Panama Canal, while the other focuses on two modes of ground transportation, the shared-transfer “interbus” industry in Costa Rica and the taxi “sindicatos” in the Dominican Republic.

#### I. THE PANAMA CANAL: A DIGITAL VISUAL ACCOUNT

The Panama Canal is a landmark vital to that nation's economy and identity. It is one thing to *read about* the “People's Canal” and to *see pictures* of it; it is quite another experience to actually cross it and visit the Miraflores Visitor Center to explore its unique and excellent museum. It is one thing to *imagine*

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<sup>3</sup> Funded in the summer of 2005 by a US DOE Title VI Grant for “Developing Caribbean Studies and the African Diaspora” at UNC Charlotte. The purpose was to conduct research on various aspects of the respective economies, ranging from tourism itself (a leading economic sector in each of the three countries), agriculture (sugar plantations, “bananales,” the flower and ornamental plant industries, the tobacco industry), to banking in Panama and the Panama Canal itself.

the scope of this massive engineering project,<sup>4</sup> the largest ever undertaken at the time; it is quite another to be physically humbled by the sheer size of the locks and the huge, container-laden ships passing in transit. The following will serve to illustrate the blended hybrid experiential pedagogy that I am advocating, and which I use in my business Spanish classes, enriched by my actually having visited Panama for a week in 2005. While the pictorial examples have been limited to three, one must imagine the PowerPoint montage of archival and personal photographs, documents, and text that I use when teaching the Panama Canal in my Business Spanish class.

It is one thing to *read* in a book how the modern Panama Canal, completed by the United States in 1914, was first envisioned as long ago as 1534 during the reign of Charles V of Spain, and it is quite another thing to stand in Panama City's quiet, elegant Plaza de Francia, surrounded by the thirteen engraved commemorations that narrate under shadowed archways the planning and building of the Canal (see Figure 1).

Although we can *read about and see photos* of Ferdinand de Lesseps, "Le Grand Français,"<sup>5</sup> the same French engineer who had built the Suez Canal (1855–69) prior to embarking on his Panamanian dream, which would be "the death of him" even before he died,<sup>6</sup> and to *read about* stock issues and liquidation notices; it is quite another thing to stand before the solitary monument erected in his honor in the secluded Plaza de Francia in Panama City,

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<sup>4</sup> Enough spoil to build a Great Wall of China from San Francisco to New York; a train of dirt cars carrying the total excavation would circle the world four times at the equator; enough to build 63 pyramids the size of the Great Pyramid of Cheops; if all the material from the Canal were placed in one solid shaft with a base the size of a city block, it would tower nearly 100,000 feet—19 miles—in the air (McCullough 529–30).

<sup>5</sup> Known also as "The Great Undertaker" because of the many workers who died while he pursued his Panama Canal dream, de Lesseps was visionary, egotistic, and stubborn, possessed of "the charm, the pervasive, indomitable, world-famous de Lesseps charm" which allowed him to fashion a "consensus of One" in his pursuit of "le grande entreprise" (McCullough 87).

<sup>6</sup> The once proud, irresistible, national hero and spirit behind the French undertaking of the construction of the Panama Canal, the aged Ferdinand de Lesseps was "removed from the city [Paris] to the seclusion of his country place" during "The Great Bribery Trial" which ensued over the corruption, mismanagement, and loss of huge sums of money involved in the Panama Canal Scandal, as it was popularly referred to:

[He] remained unaware of events unfolding in Paris. Though somewhat improved physically, he passed his day seemingly oblivious of the world at

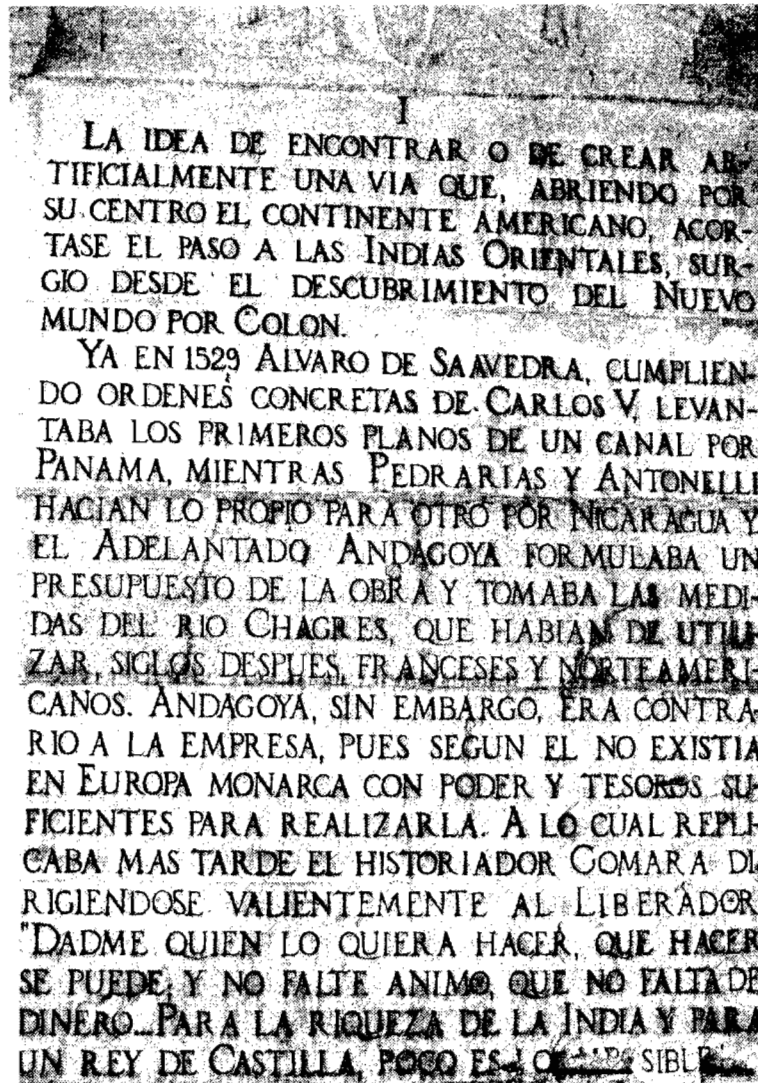


Figure 1. First engraved commemoration narrating the planning and building of the Canal. Photo by MSD Doyle.

large, wanting only peace. . . Bundled into a double-breasted seaman's jacket, a smoking cap on his head and a fur-lined robe over his knees, he spent hours staring into a log fire. . . he lapsed into the slow, silent decline from which he was not to recover" (McCullough 231 and 222).

Ferdinand de Lesseps, once the toast of France and the world, died on 7 Dec. 1894, a broken and vilified man.

and to read the actual wrinkled and yellowed documents in the Panama Canal Museum. It is one thing to *read* in historian David McCullough's wonderfully written, vivid, and informative book, *The Path between the Seas: The Creation of the Panama Canal 1870–1914*, about the five possible sites for a transoceanic canal—one in Tehuantepec, Mexico; one in Nicaragua (via the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua, the leading candidate for a site until the very end, when President Theodore Roosevelt chose his Panamanian crossing because of the perceived threat posed by the volcanoes in Nicaragua); two in the Panamanian isthmus; and one in Colombia (linking the Gulf of Urabá in the Caribbean and Cupica Bay on the Pacific)—and quite another to make the 50-mile-long crossing through the Chagres watershed where the canal was indeed finally constructed.

To be utterly drenched by the tropical rains that pour out of the Panamanian sky, which posed almost insurmountable problems for the construction of the canal—floods, rock slides, mudslides—is in turn complemented by a (non-experiential) re-reading of McCullough's description of the tropical rainfall, which one is able to virtually *feel, hear, and smell* through the historian's words, as these are shared with students in a classroom so distant from the deluge of the rainy season in Panama:

Abruptly, about the first of May, the rains returned (. . .) It did not rain all the time in the wet season, as many supposed (. . .) But it did rain nearly every day and it never *just* rained. At Colón six inches in twenty-four hours or less was not uncommon.

But no statistic conveyed a true picture of Panama rain. It had to be seen, to be felt, smelled; it had to be heard to be appreciated. The effect was much as though the heavens had opened and the air had turned instantly liquid.

There would be an unmistakable rush of wind in the trees, a noticeable drop in temperature, a quick darkening overhead followed by a sound that someone likened to "the trampling of myriad feet" through leaves (. . .) From the hills at Culebra the jungle could be seen to vanish before the onrushing silver cataracts of rain, and howler monkeys would commence their eerie ruckus. If one were to wait out the storm beneath a corrugated iron roof, the sound was like that of a locomotive (. . .) with lightning "so stunning," wrote one American, "it just makes a person feel as though he were drunk."

And then, while the trees still tossed and roared, the rain would be over . . . in an instant. The sun would be out again, fierce as ever. Everything would glisten with rainwater and the air would be filled with the fecund, greenhouse smell of jungle and mud. (132–33)

Although one feels queasy about a mosquito bite while *reading* McCullough's grim words and viewing photos of blood-gorged mosquitoes from the CDC and the Panama Canal Museum, it is quite another thing to worry if the *Anopheles* or *Haemogus* that actually bit you in the Canal Zone might be a carrier of lethal "calentura" or "yellow jack," nonetheless feeling somewhat secure in the knowledge that Gorgas long ago had discovered in Cuba<sup>7</sup> how to control the carriers of the killer fevers that decimated those working on the construction of the Canal:

It would be told later how the French had plunged into Panama blithely disregarding the threat of disease (. . .) Panama was a "hell upon earth," an English traveler on the Panama Railroad once observed.

Historically, malaria was the world's greatest killer, and it was confined to no one geographical area. In the tropics, it was taken as an inevitable fact of life, part of the landscape. The most common of tropical diseases and the one endemic disease at Panama, malaria takes many forms and went by many different names on the Isthmus: *calentura*, miasma, the shakes, the chills, *paludisme*, pernicious fever, putrid fever, intermittent fever, and, in its most virulent form, Chagres fever.

The typical malarial attack began with terrible chills, uncontrollable shivering, and chattering teeth, the spell lasting perhaps fifteen minutes, sometimes more. Often the shivering of patients in a malaria ward would be so violent that the room would actually be felt to tremble; a single bed would move on the floor. The chills would be followed by high fever and a burning thirst. As the fever fell off, the patient would break out in a drenching sweat. For those who survived, the experience was unforgettable. With the passing of the fever, the patient was left feeling totally debilitated, mentally as well as physically. Acute depression usually set in, the "melancholia" that was so well known in Panama.

There was no such thing as an immunity to malaria. And the patient could be stricken again. Malaria could be a lifelong infirmity, and if the first dose did not kill, the second, third, or fourth could (. . .)

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<sup>7</sup> Working at his headquarters at Ancón Hospital in Panama as of 1904, Dr. William Gorgas applied the discoveries made earlier while "in charge of the yellow-fever camp at the village of Siboney" in Cuba, between 1898 and 1901 (McCullough 412). As McCullough writes, "To William Gorgas there was no real problem about what had to be done at Panama. . . a mosquito paradise. . . The techniques developed at Havana were what Gorgas intended to use on the isthmus" (408, 415, and 416). For more on this fascinating aspect of the building of the Panama Canal, refer to McCullough 405–58.



Yellow fever—yellow jack, *fièvre jaune*, *fiebre amarilla*, the “American plague”—had been a terror for seamen for centuries. With yellow fever it was different. A person had yellow fever only once. Either he lived or he died. If he lived he would never get it again.

Yellow fever came and went in vicious waves, suddenly, mysteriously. In those places where it was most common—Panama, Havana, Veracruz—it was the stranger, the newcomer, who suffered worst, while the native often was untouched. It was a far more violent and hideous thing to see [than malaria]; a more gruesome way to die. The mortality rate could range as high as 70 percent.

As with malaria, the patient was seized first by fits of shivering, high fever, and insatiable thirst. But there were savage headaches as well, and severe pains in the back and the legs. The patient would become desperately restless. Then, in another day or so, the trouble would appear to subside and the patient would begin to turn yellow, noticeably in the face and in the eyes.

In the terminal stages the patient would spit up mouthfuls of dark blood—the infamous, terrifying *vómito negro*, black vomit. The end usually came swiftly after that. The body temperature would drop, the pulse fade. The flesh would become cold to the touch—“almost as cold as stone and [the patient] continues in that state with a composed sedate mind.” Then, as a rule, in about eight to ten hours, the patient would die.

So great was the terror the disease generated that its victims were buried with all possible speed. (McCullough 134–35, 139–40)

It is one thing to *read about* the 24 tugboats in the Panama Canal fleet, and it is quite another to watch and hear and smell them laboring to maneuver large ships into position for entry into the precision-controlled lock systems, a lived experience that facilitates conveying this scene to one’s students (see Figure 2).

A theater of continuous activity, the Canal operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with an average vessel time of 24–30 hours in Canal waters (including time waiting at anchorage) and an actual transit time of 8–10 hours (<http://www.pancanal.com/>).

It is one thing to *read about* the canal lock system and why the locks had to be built as they were, and how and by whom, and to *view* archival photos of the early construction (<http://www.pancanal.com/> and <http://www.canalmuseum.com/>); but it is visceral to stand on a ship deck inside the “esclusas” themselves, witness to their steel-bolted strength and the eerily quiet efficiency with which they open and close. It is one thing to *read about* how the lock chambers are gravity filled and emptied of water, raising and lowering the

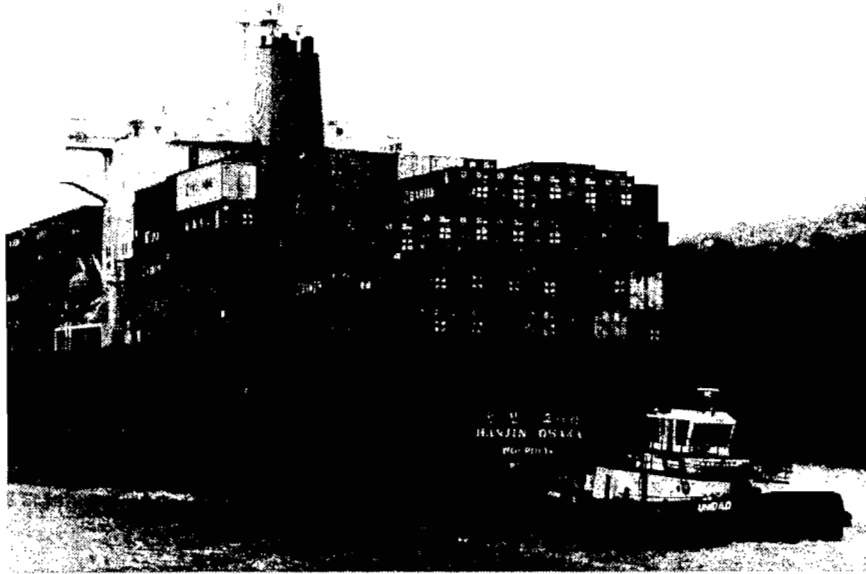


Figure 2. A tugboat in the Panama Canal fleet maneuvers a large container ship. Photo by MSDoyle.

vessels that pass through them by an average height of 26 meters (85 feet), and how different sizes of vessels transit the locks,<sup>8</sup> smaller craft moored to larger ships, and how tight a fit it can be for the huge Panamax ships; and quite another experience to be a part of all this occurring, so close to the reinforced concrete lock walls that you reach out and touch them.

It is one thing to *read* in the Panama Canal Authority's online annual report about the volume and value of cargo that moves incessantly through the Canal, and quite another to observe and physically experience the towering, container-filled ship decks being forever inscribed in one's mind (<http://www.pancanal.com/>).<sup>9</sup> It is one thing to *read* in a book about the 50-ton Mitsubishi locomotive "mules" harnessed to guide the massive ships through

<sup>8</sup> The longest ship to transit the Canal was the San Juan Prospector, 299 meters long with a beam of 32.6 meters.

<sup>9</sup> Since its opening on August 15, 1914, 943,042 vessels had used the waterway. In fiscal year 2003, 13,154 vessels (11,725 oceangoing vessels, an average of 32.1 daily) transited the Canal, paying \$666 million in tolls. On October 7, 2007, *The Norwegian Pearl* set a toll record of US \$313,000.00. The lowest toll, 36 cents, was paid by Richard Halliburton, who swam the Panama Canal in 1928 (<http://www.pancanal.com/>).

the reinforced concrete lock chambers, and quite another to watch these silvery \$2.3 million-per-machine “mulas” glisten and toil electronically in the tropical humidity so that the ship sides are not scraped and damaged by the lock walls (see Figure 3).

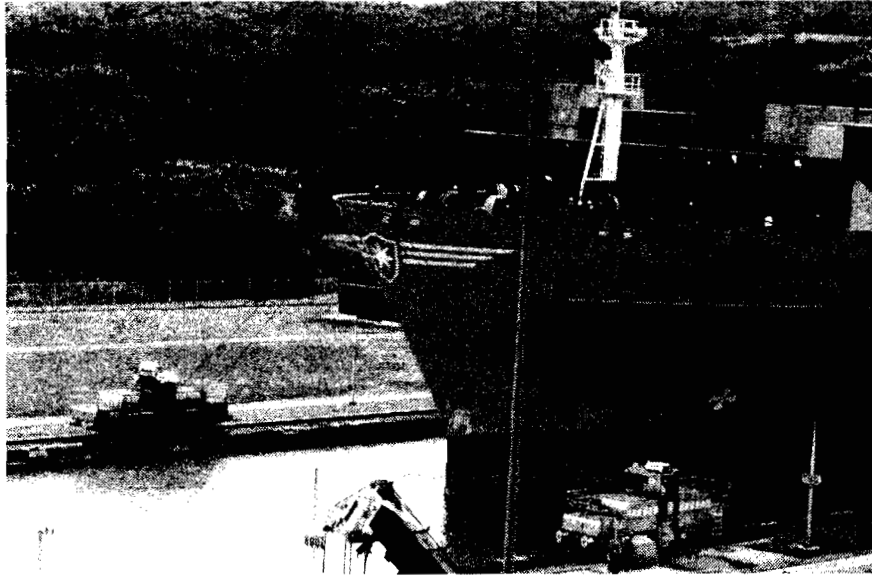


Figure 3. A 50-ton Mitsubishi locomotive “mule” guides a ship through a lock. Photo by MSDoyle.

It is one thing to *read about* the Culebra Cut,<sup>10</sup> even in the excruciating account by McCullough, and altogether a different experience to drift through this once treacherous stretch of excavated mountain range, aware of the engineering difficulties posed and the many lives lost.<sup>11</sup> And, finally, it is one

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<sup>10</sup> Also known as the Gaillard Cut, after Major David du Bose Gaillard of the US Army Corps of Engineers, who oversaw the project but died before its completion, it is a trench about 14 kilometers long carved through a small mountain range of rock and shale (<http://www.canalmuseum.com/>).

<sup>11</sup> It is estimated that nearly 28,000 workers lost their lives during the building of the Panama Canal: 5,609 during the US construction period and 22,000 during the French construction period (<http://www.panacanal.com/eng/general/canal-faqs/index.html>).

thing to have seen and crossed the towering Bridge of the Americas from above, and quite another to experience it from below on a ship's deck, as your vessel completes its crossing of the Panama Canal from the North Sea (the Caribbean) to the South Sea (the Pacific Ocean).

To have made the Panama Canal crossing undoubtedly equips the classroom instructor with a primary, direct, and lived perspective that enriches classroom instruction by infusing it with a genuineness and a related emotional association and foundation from which to draw. What otherwise would be a drier and more detached "book" treatment of one of the world's great engineering achievements—one that today accounts for 6.4 percent of Panama's GDP and is its major source of foreign exchange income—now becomes charged with affect and personal insights, images, sounds, and smells, the instructor's far more *intimate* relation with the subject matter, a pedagogical immediacy and excitement, characteristic of this methodology, that can be shared with students.

## II. GROUND TRANSPORTATION IN COSTA RICA AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The comparative nuances of ground transportation do not constitute content typically covered in business language text books and classrooms, which focus predictably and appropriately, if at all, on macro-logistical considerations such as international maritime, land, and air transportation. In the context of this article, the topic of ground transportation in Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic seems banal in comparison to the Panama Canal. Yet only one country in Latin America has the Panama Canal, while all Latin American countries rely on ground transportation for the movement of goods and people. Although not generally exciting or unique, it is essential. For example, once the cargo containers that have crossed through the Panama Canal are unloaded, they must then be transported by truck or train to their next destination, and then again be redistributed via various modes of ground transportation to factories, intermediaries (e.g., wholesalers and retailers), users, and consumers. Not only is ground transportation of vital importance for domestic and international trade, but it is a topic of interest for business travelers (or business language students or faculty researchers) once they have arrived in a country. Travelers will generally have done some research on how to get around inside a host city or country by (1) consulting with travel agents, native informants, or others who have lived in or traveled to that location; (2) reading travel books or guides, or their online versions or equivalents, of which there are many informative options available; (3) contacting a chamber

of commerce or department or ministry of tourism; etc. Again, this will all be second-hand information. Each country and culture has its own modes and conventions of ground transportation. Even for seasoned travelers<sup>12</sup> these represent learning that can only really be accomplished on site, where idiosyncratic reality will be a different experience from what has been read or heard, and itself will be the best teacher about the different possibilities, advantages, and disadvantages of available ground transportation.

One quintessential American consideration is to rent a car. But driving in a foreign country can be stressful and dangerous when one is unfamiliar with the semiotics of the road, the traffic patterns, and the unfamiliar conduct of foreign nationals who, of course, are in their own element. Signage, such as the accompanying examples, can be problematic, especially when driving at night to unknown locations on very narrow or poorly lit and/or maintained roadways<sup>13</sup> (see Figure 4).

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<sup>12</sup> I have traveled to 29 countries and used many different types of ground transportation over the years, ranging from rented cars to large tour and city buses, taxis, trains, and various other modes. But, having never previously been to Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, I was unaware of the Tico “interbus” system and the Dominican taxi “sindicatos.” During my research trips to each country, I seriously considered renting a car for in-country travel. In the end, I decided against it for the reasons outlined earlier. As a result, I was able to learn about two excellent alternative forms of ground transportation. This case study on ground transportation is based on journal notes I was keeping, a different form of documentation for purposes of autobiographically inscribed experiential pedagogy, which for the Panama Canal had been primarily digital photographs embedded in PowerPoint slides.

<sup>13</sup> The signage examples come from *Éxito comercial: Prácticas administrativas y contextos culturales*, Doyle, Fryer, and Cere 347. Sources: <http://www.dot.gov>; <http://www.seguridadvial.org.ar/senales.htm>; [http://www.pallotti.edu.uy/transito/senales\\_de\\_transito.htm](http://www.pallotti.edu.uy/transito/senales_de_transito.htm); <http://www.montevideo.gub.uy/transito/reglamentaria.htm>; <http://www.sitographics.com/enciclog/trafico/entrada.html>; <http://www.autosdecalle.com.ar/senales.htm>; <http://www.jfaltasescobar.gov.ar/senales.htm>.

**Answer Key:** 1. Stop. 2. Stop. 3. Yield. 4. No Entry. 5. Wrong Way. 6. Parking Allowed. 7. No Parking. 8. End No Parking Zone. 9. No Parking or Stopping. 10. Speed Limit. 11. Speed Limit 60 Kilometers per Hour. 12. Minimum Speed Limit 30 Kilometers per Hour. 13. End of 50 Kilometers per Hour Speed Limit. 14. Keep Right. 15. No Passing. 16. End of No Passing Zone. 17. No Horn. 18. Detour. 19. Bump (Speed Bump): Tope (México), guardia tumbado (España), policía acostado (Colombia) o lomo de burro (Río de la Plata). 20. Railroad Crossing.

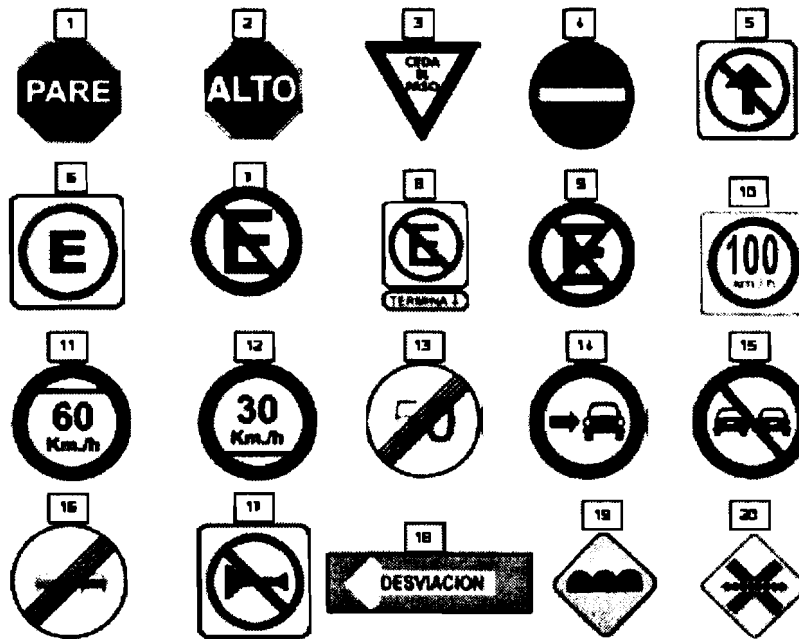


Figure 4. Signage in Spanish-speaking countries. Photo by MSDoyle. © MSDoyle.

Encountering a large pothole in a rented car in Latin America,<sup>14</sup> day or night, can be harrowing. One may not even know what to call it when trying to explain to a mechanic what happened: e.g., *tope* in Mexico, *policia acostado* in Colombia, *lomo de burro* in the River Plate region, or *un muerto* in Costa Rica. In the event of an accident, there will be additional stress in the form of the upset or injured driver and passengers in the other vehicle, police officers, insurance coverage, and the need to find a replacement vehicle, all of which will require knowledge of the type of Spanish that is seldom taught in our American classrooms.

<sup>14</sup> Potholes in Latin America are often large enough to do serious damage to a vehicle and its occupants, and are found even on major roads such as the Pan American Highway. In its section on “Road Conditions,” the *Frommer’s Costa Rica 2005* guidebook that I used during my visit says that “The awful road conditions in San José and throughout the country are legendary, and deservedly so” (51). I could not really fathom the truth of this statement until traveling on the roads and highways there.

A safe and economic alternative to car rental in Costa Rica is the door-to-door “shuttle service system” of *busetas* (mini-buses and large vans), a ground transportation network that makes travel between cities and “distant” locations easy and pleasurable. These vehicles generally accommodate 8–12 passengers, who may be picked up at different locations. Since Costa Rica is a small country, the distance in terms of miles (or kilometers) is never that great. But because of the mountainous terrain, winding roads, and condition of the roadways, what would be a “one-hour trip” of 60–80 miles on a US highway becomes a 3–5 hour drive. Most destinations in Costa Rica can be reached within this time frame from one another. “Interbus,” whose motto is “Easy Going Everywhere,” is one of the main “shared transfer” providers in Costa Rica, “serving 70 daily destinations.”<sup>15</sup> Again, it is one thing to have read about this system of ground transportation, and quite another to have actually traveled by *buse*ta to different locations within Costa Rica. For \$20–\$40 per passenger in 2005, the visitor has access to most in-country destinations. The instructor of business Spanish who has experienced this prevalent mode of Costa Rican ground transportation, which is culturally unlike what is typically used in the US, is in a much better position to add to classroom teaching a micro-logistical module on characteristic ground transportation and related infrastructure in Costa Rica. It also serves as a reminder to students that different countries provide idiosyncratic solutions to common issues such as ground transportation, as the *buse*ta vehicle is designed to negotiate the ubiquitous mountainous terrain, which would be much more challenging for the typically large American-style buses. Different countries use what works best for each of them.

Another global mode of ground transportation, the taxi, also serves as an example of faculty learning (development) via lived experience. During travels to different cities, Americans use taxis without considering the logistics and politics involved. In the Dominican Republic, for example, taxi syndicates play a key role in controlling the movement of people from one location to another. One such syndicate is Sitratuphcampar (Sindicato de Transporte Turístico Unido de Casa de Campo, Altos de Chavón, Aeropuerto Internacional de La Romana y Puertos Hoteles, Bares y Restaurantes de La Romana y Áreas Aledañas). What this means is that this particular company tightly controls taxi cab access to, from, in, and around designated locations or “turf.” It is a monopoly and, once one understands this, it facilitates transportation to given destinations, which have been segmented among the

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<sup>15</sup> <http://centralamerica.com/cr/tran/interbus.htm>

different “sindicatos.” The following, taken from my journal during a trip to the Dominican Republic, explains how the “sindicatos” function, and my initial frustration at seeking suitable ground transportation to Casa de Campo (La Romana) from my arrival at Santo Domingo’s Las América’s International Airport:

My education re. the transportation in the DR begins on the Web, where I can find no information about ground transportation from the Int’l. airport in Santo Domingo to Casa de Campo. I then phoned (from the US) Casa de Campo, where I was transferred from the Recepción (Front Desk) to the Director de Transportes, who immediately wanted to sign me up for an airport pick-up. I told him I thought it was too expensive for a 60-mile trip. He talked to me about “seguridad [safety] y confort.” I then asked him about taking a cab from the airport to Casa de Campo. He told me that it would cost the same \$75 as it would if the cab came to pick me up from Casa de Campo, plus the fact that the airport cab would not be allowed entry into Casa de Campo (the hotel) and that, once I arrived, I would have to transfer to another Casa de Campo cab to be given entry to the hotel property. I was very frustrated and confused by what seemed to be a run-around. In the background I overheard the Director de Transportes thanking somebody at the hotel Recepción “for helping with this matter,” in the sense of “looking after” his fare. I decided to go ahead and book a Campo cab from the airport to Casa de Campo. When I landed I was picked up by cab driver Juan Pablo, who was waving a piece of cardboard with my name on it.

On our ride to Casa de Campo, Juan Pablo explained to me how the system works. The “sindicatos” have divided their territories according to mutual agreement. So either a taxi from Casa de Campo goes to the airport in Santo Domingo to pick me up, and I pay \$75 for this service, or I pay the same \$75 for a taxi at the airport to take me to Casa de Campo because this airport taxi must return to the airport, and it cannot pick up guests at the hotel to take back to the airport, as it is not part of the hotel “sindicato.” So, either way, I am paying for a round-trip cab fare, which explains the \$75.

In the end, the taxi syndicates in the Dominican Republic function according to a very reasonable, for them, system of territorial agreements. What had been frustrating and annoying to me on the phone, now made perfect sense once it was explained, with smiles and chuckles, by Juan Pablo. Without the information provided by this good-natured cab driver, I never would have known how, or why, taxis function the way they do in the Dominican Republic. The knowledge gained through direct contact—the autobiographical inscription—with this “sindicato” employee would forever have been lost



to me. Having been there in that particular circumstance has better equipped me to address the crucial topic of ground transportation in the Dominican Republic, whose tourist industry, “the backbone of the nation’s economy,”<sup>16</sup> depends on the taxi syndicates as a key feature in its movement of visitors.

In conclusion, while experiential learning for students of business language has received considerable and sustained attention over the years, experiential pedagogy, from the perspectives of (1) business language faculty development and (2) instructional authenticity and credibility, has received little scholarly attention, perhaps because it has been “assumed.” It is hoped that these case presentations of experiential pedagogy in business Spanish will serve as useful examples of an adaptable methodology for research-based experiential pedagogy and also as a model for faculty development and student learning in languages for business purposes. Hopefully, it will impact the way business language faculty (as well as other foreign language faculty) travel abroad, encouraging them to do so for purposes of experiential pedagogy—the autobiographically inscribed research travelogue—while also providing a rationale both for this essential kind of faculty development and for a commitment of additional institutional resources to this end, which is money well invested on behalf of the business language learner. In the end, pedagogy is a narrational activity. Not only is it about the *story* being told, the

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<sup>16</sup> A quote from my 2005 interview with Dr. Lic. Iris Pérez, Secretaría de Estado de Turismo. She informed me that tourism represented at least 20 percent of GDP. The country’s investment in tourism began with “turismo de sol y playa” and has since moved on to the development of “turismo de cultura,” which includes “turismo gastronómico” (gastronomy tourism), and “turismo de aventura” (adventure or open-air tourism), and “turismo de golf,” a well developed sub-sector for high-end clients. The winter high season is when US, Canadian, and European tourists arrive in great numbers; the low season has also become a “minor” high season with tourists from Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay in the Southern Cone. Competition comes primarily from Mexico and Cuba, with whom the Dominican Republic attempts to compete in terms of price. In addition to price, another “elemento muy competitivo” is the Dominican people themselves—employees with a friendly, open, helpful attitude. According to Pérez, the Dominican Republic is seeking sustainable development tourism, and globalization has been positive in that it helps to “ampliar mercado.” New tourist clients on the horizon are Brazil and Russia. I am very grateful to Dr. Pérez for meeting with me and for giving me a comprehensive information “packet” of materials from the Secretaría de Estado de Turismo.

content, but it is also about the telling of the story, *how* the *what* is transmitted to learners, as well as the teller of the story, the reliability of the instructor *qua* narrator. Visiting the countries we teach about equips us to tell a better, deeper, more personal and more textured story, to produce a value-added pedagogical narrative. Autobiographically inscribed experiential pedagogy adds a first-person authenticity to our teaching narratives, which too often are confined to the drier, more abstract, and harder-to-relate-to third person perspective of book-based pedagogy. It is where subjectivity productively complements objectivity. In the end, this type of experiential pedagogy, applied to the domestic business language classroom, may well be the closest that many of our students will actually get to “being” in a foreign country. It serves also as a powerful modeling tool and motivator for them to seek their own lived international experiences.

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