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# Business Spanish in the United States: Origins and Continuum



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**Abstract:** The scope of this article is twofold: to revisit the foundational importance of Business Spanish to the United States and to track its early formalization in American secondary and higher education. It will focus on the years surrounding American Independence in 1776, followed by the key role played by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish (AATS) and Hispania from 1917 through the mid-1940s. Each period represents a historical starting point for Business Spanish. The focus on these separate but closely related starting points, the second issuing from the first, distinguishes this article from previous research through its emphasis on the initial groundwork laid. The historical record shows that the foundational importance of Spanish for commerce and trade contributed to the ongoing importance of the study of Spanish itself in the United States. These two starting points also contained within them the dialectic between the practical and the cultural reasons for studying Spanish, and the aspirational balance that might be achieved between competing rationales. Quotations of the protagonists themselves will anchor a palimpsest methodology that allows the rhetoric of earlier times to speak for itself and reverberate into the discourse of contemporary curriculum development.

**Keywords:** business Spanish/español de negocios, continuum/continuo, evolution/evolución, origins/orígenes, Spanish in the United States/español en los Estados Unidos

## **Introduction: Spanish for Trade and Commerce in the United States**

Much has been written about the presence and ongoing development of Business Spanish in the foreign language curriculum of the United States since 1952 when the American Graduate School of International Management (Thunderbird), building on the Certificate it inaugurated in 1946, first offered its pioneering Master of Foreign Trade degree (e.g., Branan 1998; Doyle M. S. 1992, 2012a, 2012b; Fryer 2012; Fryer and Guntermann 1998; Grosse 1982, 1985, 1991, 2009; Grosse and Voght 1990, 2012; Lafford 2012; Laursen et al. forthcoming; Long and Uscinski 2012; and Voght and Grosse 1998). This, however, begs its own research questions, such as: did Business Spanish in the United States exist before Thunderbird featured it in its integrated, tripartite curriculum (Branan 1998: 3; Grosse and Voght 1990: 36; Voght and Grosse 1998: 12)? If so, to what extent and in what manner? Was it already part of the nation's foreign language curricula being taught in American secondary and college Spanish programs? Exactly when, why, and how did it become part of our curricular landscape, and how did it evolve? This article addresses these issues, building upon, consolidating, and adding to prior coverage such as Spell's "Spanish Teaching in the United States" (1927), Nichols's "The History of Spanish and Portuguese Teaching in the United States" (1945), Leavitt's "The Teaching of Spanish in the United States" (1961), Siskin's "Of Booms and Gold Bricks" (2012), and Bale's "Spanish Language Education in the United States, 1914–1945" (2018).

Adopting Siskin's methodology of using "the past as an optic" (151) through which to reframe a present situation more honestly, this article seeks to deepen and broaden our understanding of how Business Spanish came to be in the United States *per se*, while acknowledging more fully its earliest pioneers, and opportunities taken and missed in the process. This entails a palimpsest methodology that seeks to make the foundational traces of the past, the precursors, more visible and resistant to the peculiar erasure that often accompanies curricular evolution, whether intentional or not. The "original writing" here is represented by the foundational issues regarding the Spanish language and Business Spanish in the United States to be considered; the "later writing" or "overwriting" comprises the subsequent layering superimposed by the evolution itself of Business Spanish. Without a corresponding acknowledgment of origins (the "first draft"), the layering of curriculum development iterations over time effectively obscures the underlying script of national contextualization that this article seeks to revisit. It will do so largely through the lens of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish (AATS) and its official publication *Hispania*, created in 1917, because they were the recognized official organization and its Association Journal dedicated to the study of Spanish in the United States until 1944, when the AATS expanded to become the AATSP, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese ("History of the AATSP"). But long before the foundational influence of the AATS and *Hispania*, Spanish for Trade and Commerce had already played a central role in the American colonial period and in the birth of the nation.

The origins of today's academic field of Business Spanish in the United States, or the use of the Spanish language for business and international trade, trace back to the arrival of Columbus in 1492, and the Crown of Castile's subsequent creation of the Casa de Contratación de las Indias (House of Trade of the Indies) in the port of Seville in 1503, for the express purpose of providing financial oversight of trade with the Spanish Empire. Doing business with Spain—"the most highly organized business enterprise in the world" at the time, built upon an imperial ideology of "gold, glory, and the Gospel" (Flores 1937: 152)—meant doing business in Spanish, the language of the Crown. After all, in his *Gramática de la lengua castellana* in 1492, Nebrija had reassured the Reina y Señora Natural de España, Queen Isabel of Castile, "que siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio," which presupposed the royal reach of Spanish throughout the Americas (<https://ensayistas.org/antologia/XV/nebrija/>). Accordingly, it follows that in terms of Business Spanish in the United States *per se*, as a nation, and its early dealings with the Reino de España, today's Business Language Studies (BLS) and Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) development can trace their formal origins to the nation's founding in 1776.

The creation in 1775 of the ghost company Roderique Hortalez y Compañía by Spain and France provided key financial backing for the War of Independence waged by the thirteen American colonies (Álvarez 2020; Andrew 2018; Bass 1993; García Mérou 1904; Jones 2008). Simultaneously, Diego María de Gardoqui y Arriquibar, from the Casa José Gardoqui e hijos de Bilbao, contributed large amounts of funding, supplies ("18,000 blankets, 11,000 pairs of shoes, stocking shirts, and medical supplies") and weapons as an investment in the cause (Chávez 2016, minute 27:36; Garteizurrecoa 2010; Saínz and Saínz 2018; Vicente 1977). In fact, Gardoqui, Spain's first ambassador to the United States, was honored for his crucial financial and material support by being seated to the immediate left of George Washington when he took the oath of office as the nation's first president in 1789. The ambassador from France was seated to Washington's immediate right.

The fund-raising success and covert procurement of supplies and weaponry, such as "bronze cannons and warships" from Spain's Conde de Aranda, Ambassador to France, was also essential on the part of Benjamin Franklin, another prominent Founder and member of the Committee of Five that drafted the Declaration of Independence. Such "encounters with Spain led directly to the establishment of the United States," and of further significance, may be considered as "the initial foray of the United States in dealing with the Hispanic world" (Chávez 2016, minute 42:12). At their second meeting, Aranda provided an interpreter to facilitate communication

across the two languages, Spanish and English, indicative of the key role played by translation and interpretation in the birth of the nation (Chávez, minute 16:00). At this point in time, reflecting the importance of Spain in the outcome of the American War of Independence, Franklin was also appointed as Minister to Spain by John Hancock, on behalf of the Continental Congress. These are but a few of the many examples of how Spain's financial support, accompanied by diplomacy (agreements, alliances, and treaties), in both English and Spanish, was foundational for the creation of the new independent nation (Embassy of Spain 2020).

On 6 July 1787, Thomas Jefferson, who would become the third president of the United States in 1801, offered linguistic counsel to his future son-in-law Thomas Mann Randolph regarding the significance that the Spanish language would assume for the new nation, given that "Our connection with Spain is already important and will become daily more so" (*Founders Online*, National Archives). A month later, on 10 August 1787, Jefferson would reemphasize this advice in his well-known missive to his nephew, Peter Carr—"Spanish. Bestow great attention on this, and endeavor to acquire an accurate knowledge of it. Our future connections with Spain and Spanish America will render that language a valuable acquisition"—reconfirming the existential role that he considered Spanish to have regarding future diplomatic and commercial "connections" between the U.S. and the Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America (*Founders Online*, National Archives). In his essay "Thomas Jefferson and Spanish: 'To Every Inhabitant, Who Means to Look Beyond the Limits of His Farm,'" Cox (1972) links Jefferson's economic, political, and educational interest in Spanish to its early inclusion in the national language curriculum: "It is not difficult to assert that Jefferson himself is greatly responsible for the nascent Hispanism in the United States during the nation's very earliest years" (121). Indeed, as Cox explains, "The emphasis placed on the importance of knowing Spanish easily explains Jefferson's insistence on its role later at the University of Virginia [which Jefferson founded in 1819] and his efforts to employ Ticknor there . . . to head the studies of Romance Languages" (117). George Ticknor (1791–1871) would instead pursue his pioneering work as the nation's most distinguished Hispanist at Harvard from 1819–35. As Cox documents, Jefferson championed Spanish both for its crucial importance in commerce and its cultural value. The latter was evidenced by literary holdings in Jefferson's library, among them Ercilla's 16th century epic poem *La araucana*, nine volumes of the *Parnaso español*, García de la Huerta's *Obras poéticas*, and his 1787 edition of *Don Quixote* (Cox 1972: 119–20). Jefferson thus previews a palimpsestic dialectic for the study of Spanish in the United States that has continued ever since: a balancing of the pragmatic and economic with the cultural and literary, which seems not to have been an "either/or" issue for Jefferson. Both were valued on their own merits; the importance of one did not preclude that of the other.

### **Spanish for Trade and Commerce in the United States from 1917 to the Early 1920s: Through the Lens of the AATS and *Hispania***

The importance of Spanish for trade and commerce is indisputable from the very origins of the United States, and, of course, from long before its existence as such. As Spell indicated in 1927, many decades before discoveries in the 1960s verified Norse explorations in North America around the year 1000, "Spanish was the first European language used on the American continent," and in 1800 Spain owned "almost half of the present United States" (141). Nichols reminds us that "Spanish was no 'foreign' language" in these large geographic areas (1927: 100). Despite this, missed opportunities in essential language competency, as well as the obvious potential benefits of the nation's foundational bilingualism in Spanish and English for commerce, continued to be lamented long afterward, as when Noa wrote in 1905 that American manufacturing and commercial firms regularly sent representatives to do business in locations such as Buenos Aires who "have no proper training [and] are wholly ignorant of the Spanish language" (620; see also Siskin 153). Such statements foreshadowed a critical educational role in response

to real-world language needs, with a long-extant but unacknowledged historical platform of bilingualism and monolingual Spanish-speaking Americans to build upon.

Spanish, which pre-dated English in today's geographic United States by many years, was from the beginning a national or co-national language, especially in Florida and lands west of the Mississippi River. St. Augustine, Florida, for example, was the site of the first successful permanent Spanish (and European) settlement in 1565; Florida did not become a state until nearly three centuries later in 1845. San Antonio, Texas was the site of the first successful Spanish-speaking settlement west of the Mississippi in 1731 (Noonan Guerra 1987); Texas did not become a state until well over a century later in 1845. The Presidio of San Diego, California was established by a Spanish expedition in 1769; California did not become a state until nearly a century later in 1850. The failure to recognize and leverage this unique linguistic and cultural opportunity advanced neither broader domestic nor Pan-American business interests; rather, it bespoke the lamentable language-based marginalization, exclusion, and erasure of many Spanish-speaking Americans from the nation's growing trade and prosperity. It was a missed opportunity to develop from the beginning a more inclusive and prosperous national economic and human capital resource—that of the Spanish language itself. This inclusivity would have represented a foundational recognition of the validity of Senator Paul Simon's more recent admonition in *The Tongue-tied American*, a distant echo of Jefferson's advice, regarding the language of business, in words attributed to a Japanese businessman: "Sir, the most useful international language in world trade is not necessarily English, but rather the language of your client" (27). In terms of foundational socioeconomic and business considerations, one imagines for the better how different things might have been had Jefferson included Spanish as a national economic resource provided by its bilingual and monolingual Spanish-speaking citizens. But this did not occur in his Anglo, Americanized version of "language and empire," the damaging effects of which continue to be examined by fields such as Post-colonial Studies and Indigenous Studies. In fairness to Jefferson in 1787, the geographic areas of what would become states such as Florida, Texas, and California at the time fit within the context of "Spain and Spanish America." They were not yet states, although in the zeitgeist of the time Jefferson might have anticipated what was to come as the United States expanded.

It is in this historical context that the formal transition from the pragmatic day-to-day usage of Spanish as a language in which to conduct trade and commerce to the formal teaching of Spanish for this purpose began to occur in a concerted manner with the creation in 1917 of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish (AATS; [www.aatsp.org/page/History](http://www.aatsp.org/page/History) 2020) and the publication of the first issue of *Hispania* in that same year ([www.aatsp.org/page/Hispania](http://www.aatsp.org/page/Hispania)). From its earliest issues, this official publication of the newly formed professional association, whose organizing editors were "teachers and investigators of national and international reputation" (Espinosa 1917: 20), included contributions by prestigious university professors, secondary school teachers, and national leaders regarding the study of the Spanish language at the secondary and college levels in the United States, with an emphasis on the practical value of the language for commerce and other professions (Brainard and Harrington 1932; Coester 1920, 1923; Doyle H. G. 1926; Espinosa 1917, 1921; Fitz-Gerald 1917; Kurz 1921; Luria 1920; Rowe 1920; Warshaw 1919; Wilkins 1917).

Lawrence Wilkins, founding President of the AATS, wrote in "On the Threshold," in the Organization Number of *Hispania*, that "the marked renaissance of interest in Spanish during the past four years" in the United States was "In the first place . . . due to stimulus from the business world," coinciding with the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914, among other trade and economic factors in the national interest (1917: 5). In this very first essay published in *Hispania*, which itself signals a status of primary importance, the leader of the AATS proposed that among the four core values offered by the study of Spanish, to be considered by any teacher of the language, "The first is the commercial or practical value that Spanish has for the North American.

No language from a purely business point of view is so useful today to North Americans as Spanish. This claim probably needs no elucidation, so self-evident is it" (9). This inaugural issue of *Hispania* also includes in its "Bibliography II. School Texts" its first formal listing for business Spanish, "*Spanish Commercial Correspondence* by Professor Arthur F. Whittem of Harvard University and Manuel J. Andrade" (1916). This was followed six months later by Michael Donlan's review of *Correspondencia Comercial* by Max A. Luria:

This book is an unusually thorough treatment of the subject of commercial correspondence. The purpose is to prepare the student for a position in a business house carrying on business with South America . . . It is a good deal more than a textbook of commercial correspondence. It is something of a reader, grammar, and conversation book. In the class room, it cannot fail to be supremely useful. (114–15)

The fact that Luria was also an assisting editor of *Hispania* ("Notes and News" section) shows the ongoing importance that the early leaders of the AATS and its journal attached to the pragmatic value of Spanish for commerce, which they were weaving into a compelling rationale for the study of Spanish in the United States.

The foundational importance of commerce as a main justification for the study of Spanish was continually emphasized. For example, Warshaw, a professor of Spanish at the University of Nebraska, opened his article in the second volume published by *Hispania* in November 1919 as follows:

The progress of Spanish in our schools has been greater than its best friends could have predicted half a dozen years ago. It is becoming popular in the high schools [at the time often referred to as "the people's university"] and is receiving a measure of fair treatment as a subject worthy of acceptance among college entrance requirements. Its commercial importance is recognized and its value in fostering closer relationships among the American republics is favorably regarded. (223)

He went on to underscore that "About the practical value of Spanish, it cannot be stressed too often, we need have no worries," and that there are many "American men and women who are earning their living in Spanish communities and in the United States through their contact with Spanish," among them teachers, nurses, business-men, physicians, engineers, translators, interpreters, bankers, lawyers, and government officials (229). This panoramic list of professions from over a century ago foreshadows the palimpsestic continuum regarding curricular demand for Business Spanish that continues today, as well as other principal content domains in LSP in the United States, such as law, medicine, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), and translation. Many years after Jefferson, however, the contextual inference endured that the "American men and women" alluded to were English-speaking second-language learners of Spanish as a "foreign language," a language of the "other," from another country, a foreign one. This rhetoric continued to exclude those who were Spanish-English bilinguals from birth as "American men and women" and Spanish as an "American" (e.g., national) language alongside English.

Dr. Alfred Coester of Commercial High School in Brooklyn, founding Vice-President of the AATS and one of the founding Associate Editors of *Hispania*, as well as the Secretary-Treasurer of the AATS, reporting in volume 3 of *Hispania* (November 1920 issue) on "The Seventh National Foreign Trade Convention in Its Relation to the Teaching of Spanish," reaffirmed that:

Since we as teachers of Spanish are especially interested in one of the best fields for foreign trade development, we have something to offer to traders in Spanish America in return for items of practical knowledge which will make our teaching of greater value to our students. The practical value of Spanish has always been so obvious. (237)

He went on to issue an educational challenge that was already at hand over a century ago, “It is plain, therefore, that teachers of Spanish have a task before them,” based on the Report of Group I, Education for Foreign Trade, to the convention:

- I. In order adequately to provide for the demands of foreign trade, it is desirable that systematic training be more generally given to prepare for such work.
- II. This [systematic] training should, among other subjects, include: (1) The fundamental principles of economics; (2) the study of history as bearing on economic and commercial problems; (3) commercial geography so treated as to bring it in close touch with local business conditions; (4) training in the effective use of foreign languages. (246)

This curriculum development blueprint, integrative and tripartite—fundamental principles of economics (= business) + history and commercial geography (= area studies and culture) + language (= LSP)—is a clear theoretical precursor, a first writing in the curricular palimpsest, to the pioneering program developed 26 years later at Thunderbird, and to the mandate by Congress 68 years later for the newly authorized, federally-funded Centers for International Business Education Research (CIBERs) to create

interdisciplinary programs which incorporate foreign language and international studies training into business, finance, management, communications systems, and other professional training for foreign language and international studies training into business, finance, management, communications systems, and other professional curricula. (Doyle M. S. 212a, 9)

This blueprint has now stood the test of time for over a century, as it continues to reverberate within today’s growing emphasis on interdisciplinary studies and research. Modern curriculum design, methodology, and theory indeed have deep historical roots.

Justification for the study of Spanish for commercial purposes continued in *Hispania*, as in, for example, McCarthy’s “Spanish: The Language for After-War Business Men,” in which a knowledge of Spanish “will be a stepping-stone for their future progress” in the “professional or business world” (1918, 101); “The Resolution by International Commission” (1918); Morse’s “A Course of Study in Spanish for High Schools,” where “Beginning with the third year (11B) the work is divided into the Literary Course and the Commercial Course,” the latter being “modernistic and practical” and “designed to prepare the student for business connected with Spanish America or wherever Spanish is the native language” (1919: 175, 178); and Yánes’s “Los Estados Unidos y los países de habla española,” in which the Subdirector de la Unión Panamericana emphasized Spanish as a “lengua comercial” in his eloquent “estímulo en la enseñanza del castellano” at the Second Annual Meeting of the AATS (1919). It is worth noting that Morse’s choice of the phrasing “divided into,” when talking about the literary and the commercial, is a telling departure from Jefferson’s non-adversarial position between the two purposes, which may have been conveyed more productively by phrasing such as “alongside one another.” In his insightful book chapter “Spanish as Ersatz: Advocacy for Spanish Language Education in the United States, 1914–1945” (212), Bale provides additional context regarding “framing Spanish in relation to US economic” interests in the years immediately preceding the creation of the AATS and *Hispania*, writing of Spanish professor Luquiens’s 1915 paper, “The National Need for Spanish” published in the *Yale Review*, that “A defter or more direct argument that foreign language educators are on the front lines of realizing the USA’s economic or geopolitical interests has rarely been made” (213).

In parallel, as articles and essays were being published on the practical, real-world value of studying Spanish for business purposes, the publication of manuals and textbooks was also growing: e.g., Harrison (1907, 1914, 1921), Berlitz (1915), Romero (1916), Ainslie (1917), Luria

(1917), McHale (1918), Romera-Navarro (1920), Donoghue (1925), Rodríguez (1925), Alvord (1928), and Thompson and Arán (1939), among others. As Luria indicated in his *Correspondencia comercial*: “The purpose is to prepare the student for a position in a business house carrying on business with South America” (114). This pedagogical objective, focused on the learner’s ability to do business in Spanish, would apply to any manual or textbook on the subject, yesterday and today, with the contemporary variable being the extent to which one or another of the language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening comprehension, translation or interpreting) or content domains (functional areas of business and area studies/culture) may be emphasized in the methodology (Doyle M. S. 2012a, 113 and Appendix D, 120–21).

### **Business Spanish in the U.S. from the 1920s–52: Continuing Evolution Through the Lens of the AATS/AATSP and *Hispania***

After its first issue in November 1917, *Hispania* continued to publish entries in which Spanish for trade and commerce was, to varying degrees, a substantive topic. The journal offers a well-curated online record of its complete publications, organized by decades. In keeping with this clear and convenient organization, the remainder of this article on Business Spanish in the United States will be diachronic and will stop in 1952, with the creation of the integrative, tripartite program at Thunderbird. Leading up to this pioneering moment in formal curriculum development for business languages in the United States, we will also consider the major inflection point represented by the publication of *A Handbook on the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese*, edited by Henry Grattan Doyle (Doyle H. G.) in 1945, under the auspices of the AATSP and The Office of Inter-American Affairs.

In the decade of the 1920s, *Hispania* published at least 29 entries addressing Spanish for trade and commerce, or business Spanish, among them articles and essays, in chronological order by year: de Onís (1920), Doyle H. G. (1920), Harrington (1920), Luria (1920), Rowe (1920), Taylor and Wilkins (1920); Espinosa (1921), Hendrix (1921), Kurz (1921); Cantú et al. (1922), Gregerson (1922); Coester (1923: 219; on methodological emphasis: “I have read criticisms by business men of the way languages are taught. They think too much reading and translation is done and not enough oral use made of the language”), Hills (1923); Shepard (1924); Pitcher (1925); Doyle H. G. (1926a, 1926b), Gallaway (1926), Rowe (1926); Spell (1927; a fascinating history of the teaching of Spanish in the United States, with a special mention of Garrett Noel’s 1751 *A Short Introduction to the Spanish Language*, “with a preface shewing (sic) the usefulness of this language,” which Spell identifies as “the first textbook for the study of the Spanish language published in territory now included in the United States” 147); Davis (1928); Coates (1929), Doyle H. G. (1929), Joyce (1929). There were also reports on the National Foreign Trade Convention, which was of considerable interest in terms of formulating a pragmatic rationale for teaching Spanish in high schools and colleges, by Coester (1920), Hendrix (1921), and Crawford (1922), and the occasional miscellaneous entry such as “Courses in Spanish Language and Literature in Madrid: The Eleventh Summer Session for Foreigners,” which included an elective “Practical Course in Commercial Spanish” (1922). Seybolt, in “Chapter II: The Teaching of Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish in Colonial America,” of his book on American colonial education, writes that throughout this period, “the most popular of the three languages was Spanish,” recalling that in 1749 Franklin had recommended Spanish for “All intended . . . for Merchants” (1925: 32). At the time, of course, French was far and away the most popular language in the colonies. Many of the authors listed above came from leading American institutions of higher learning, evidence of the importance being attached to Spanish for trade and commerce, among them: Boston University, Columbia University, George Washington University, Harvard University, Ohio State University, Stanford University, the University of California, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Texas.



Concurrent with the early theme of commerce as a main justification, a concerted agenda advocating for the ascendancy of Spanish in the national curriculum was marked by combative rhetorical efforts to reposition it on a cultural and literary par with the study of French and German (e.g., Doyle H. G. 1920). The fortunes of the study of German, having been the primary language taught for many years in the United States, were greatly diminished by the negative effects of the First World War (1914–18) on its prestige and place in the national curriculum. The AATS and *Hispania* were created in mid-war 1917. Coates would write later in *Hispania* in 1940, “The teaching of Spanish [was] born throughout much of the land from the curricular ashes of German” (367).

It was around this time, in the 1930s and 1940s, that one can begin tracing the evolution of the rationale for the teaching of Spanish from that of practicality-urgency to practicality-fatigue: the urgency having been dictated by nation-building based on trade and commerce, the fatigue due to the self-evident importance of Spanish for such purposes, despite an unflagging campaign of competitive denigration by defenders of the exceptionalism of German. But there was no longer a need for restating the obvious. H. G. Doyle underscored this in 1930 when he declared somewhat wearily that “Spanish ought to have an important place for cultural, international, and business reasons which have been stressed so often that it is needless to repeat them” (145). This was to be anticipated, as Warshaw had already indicated in *Hispania* in 1919 that “The commercial argument has never been pushed as far with respect to French and German as it has been with respect to Spanish” (224).

In the 1930s, *Hispania* continued with the publication of at least 15 entries addressing Spanish for trade and commerce, among them articles and essays by Doyle H. G. (1930); Doyle H. G. (1931a, 1931b), Pierce (1931); Brainard and Harrington (1932), Paine (1932), Wilkins (1932); Jones (1933), Nichols and Alpern (1933); Symposium Regarding the Importance (1934), Butler, Cutter and Shepherd (1934); Coester (1935); Flores (1937), Brady (1937). Miscellaneous entries, such as Donlan’s New Books short review of *Manual de correspondencia comercial española* (1931), were also published.

In the 1940s, the *Association Journal* included at least 14 entries addressing Spanish for trade and commerce, or business Spanish, among them articles and essays by Roberts (1940) and Tatum (1940); Ungría (1943); Carson (1944); “American High School Students” (1945), “Executive Says” (1945), Padín (1945); “Foreign Trade Has Magical Appeal” (1946), Helman (1946: quoting Jared Sparks from 1825, and echoing Jefferson from 1787, that after English, “Spanish will be likely . . . to become the most important [language] in this country . . . an essential acquisition to our men of business,” 339); and Tatum (1948). Also included were entries such as Snow in “Modern Foreign Languages and International Business Relations” (1940); Donlan’s “New Books” short review of *Correspondencia comercial al día*, a new edition of Luria’s “like-named book” first published in 1917 (1942); and Miller (1944a and 1944b, and his review of Tatum’s *Pan American Business Spanish* in 1945).

Among the articles from the 1940s, the following may be highlighted because they extend well beyond the rhetoric of rationale to address issues such as instructor preparation, content, and methodology. In 1943 and 1948, respectively, *Hispania* published “Some Ideas on the Teaching of Commercial Spanish” by Ungría and “The Teaching of Commercial Spanish—a Challenge and an Opportunity” by Tatum.

Ungría, a professor at Columbia University, opens his article with the confirmation that “Many institutions are beginning to include in their curricula courses in Business Spanish” (51), which could easily have been published 40 or 50 years later, during the CIBER era, and even today, nearly 80 years afterward (e.g., Doyle 1992 and 2012a; Fryer 2012; Grosse 1982; Grosse and Voght 1990; Long and Uscinski 2012). The problem with meeting such curricular demand in 1943 was the dearth of adequate textbooks for the purpose. Because of this, Ungría forewarned, course design would require a “detailed plan” and preparation of “the subjects to be

touched upon in the course,” a task requiring “considerable effort and much time, especially when the instructor has previously devoted himself to grammar and literature and has only a slight knowledge of economics and business” (51). This issue of instructor preparation has persisted to this day and is why the federally funded CIBERs and other professional associations, such as the AATSP, have sponsored many faculty training workshops for Business Spanish.

In terms of content, Ungría proposed that a “complete course in Business Spanish should . . . include the study of the following: (1) grammar review; (2) business vocabulary; (3) technical vocabulary; (4) commercial, consular and shipping documents; (5) the geography of Spanish America; and (6) commercial correspondence” (51). This is once again a variant—a palimpsestic overlay—of the integrative, tripartite design that has been a constant in course and program development for Business Spanish in the United States since Coester in 1920. Ungría’s methodological emphasis, not exclusive of other language skills such as oral communication, was on reading and writing commercial correspondence, based on realia, “the kind written and received by the export department of a North American firm” (51). The learning of business and technical vocabulary included “the quotation and sale of merchandise, trade-marks, banks, transportation, book-keeping, patents, contracts” and a general idea of terminology related “to aviation, the automobile, radio-telephone, etc.” (52). Two texts, published over twenty years earlier, were recommended by Ungría for this purpose, those by McHale (1918) and Romera-Navarro (1920). The geographic and cultural contextualization of the business and technical content was mapped out with careful attention to the diversity (“legislation, commercial customs, and forms of expression”) represented by Spanish America (53). The recommended pedagogical methodology was that of “writing letters directly in Spanish rather than translating them from English into Spanish,” as the latter “inevitably forces us to use artificial circumlocutions” (55), a debunked assumption today, in light of modern translator training aligned with error criteria such as those endorsed by the American Translators Association, which includes “literalness” (“when a translation that follows the source text word for word results in an awkward and/or unidiomatic rendition”) and “usage” (“when conventions of wording or phrasing in the target language are not followed”) (“Explanation of Error Categories”).

After proposing a fully developed curricular plan for the teaching of Business Spanish, covering instructor preparation, content, and methodology, Ungría concluded his 1943 article by situating it as a precursor of today’s pressing discourse on social justice and equity, tying the pragmatic to a broader humanism and ethical concerns:

There is no question of introducing here an apology for either the merchant or commercial studies. Yet we should remember that today more than ever before the social mission of business is to abolish poverty and create (capital, goods, work, ideas and culture). To work for so high a purpose should be an inspiration to anyone. (56)

This re-positioning of Business Spanish in 1943 moved it far beyond the drumbeat of practicality-urgency rationales that prevailed from 1917 through the early 1930s. The social mission of business Spanish foreshadowed by Ungría continues to evolve, as today’s curriculum and methodology (e.g., readings, case studies, group research projects and presentations, etc.) increasingly incorporate major issues such as leadership, business ethics, discrimination in business (gender, race, ethnicity), fair trade, green trade, sustainability, inclusiveness, child labor and other forms of labor exploitation, post-colonial understanding, and deeper cultural and intercultural analyses that deconstruct the bias of stereotyping.

In her 1948 article in *Hispania*, Tatum (Guerry Professor of Spanish at the University of Chattanooga, author of the well-reviewed *Pan American Business Spanish* in 1945) continued Ungría’s aspirational evolutionary tone with a focus on its potential: “Many of us for a number of years have felt that the teaching of Commercial Spanish is a peculiarly fascinating challenge

and opportunity” (43). She quickly distanced her “development of a down-to-earth, functional course” from an emphasis on “the study of a series of letter-forms” to be imitated in the writing and translating of “business letters in Spanish” (43). Not intended as any “egotistical or dogmatic exposition of the last word in the teaching of Commercial Spanish,” her purpose was to share her thoughts on “such a course” in terms of “aims and advantages, together with the subject-matter, materials, some techniques used to achieve its purpose, and accomplishments” (43). Her prerequisites, so that students would be able to focus on the content, were that they should have a minimum of two years of Spanish prior to enrolling in her university-level course as well as a solid foundation in grammar and composition.

The course Tatum described was again a variant (adding another layer to the palimpsest) of the original tripartite and integrative model, covering business practices, language, and area studies “an informative background panorama of Latin America . . . and, in appropriate cases, Spain” (43–44). The background panorama was interdisciplinary and included economics, geography, advertising, and other fields, the details of which would align well with contemporary Business Spanish coverage, such as climate, demographics, history, natural resources, transportation, communications, industry and manufacturing, competitiveness, and cultural norms (“The psychology of the people as reflected in their way of life and general business practices, bringing in points of comparison with and differences from those of those United States” 44).

What a well-designed Business Spanish course covers today overlaps greatly with what was being taught 75 years ago. A major difference would be that today we generally privilege teaching the course content in Spanish rather than in English, unlike Tatum, who was concerned that “the vocabulary load would be so great if it were given in Spanish the students would be lost in the maze” (45). For this reason, she taught the background cultural panorama in English while teaching the business content of the course in Spanish. Tatum’s methodology for the writing of business letters was to base them on realia, “to give the true flavor of the natural and idiomatic language used by natives and to illustrate the general use of vocabulary and style” (45). As with Ungría, she cautioned against a word-for-word translation methodology: “business letters, of all things, cannot be translated literally” (45). With its list of recommended and essential supplementary materials, the course design was indeed comprehensive for the times, connecting in-class coverage to the external needs of the real world.

After two world wars, a main “accomplishment” of such a course was that the students “will be our best ambassadors of goodwill as they go about their varied careers” (48). As with Ungría, the desired learner outcomes extended well beyond the pragmatic aspects and rewards of being able to conduct business in Spanish to include broader humanistic and more humane aspirations. Indeed, the preparation of “our best ambassadors of goodwill” is by and large representative of the uplifting tone of the *Hispania* publications considered in this article. Notwithstanding, the record of US business and political interaction with Latin America has been uneven, often falling far short of the overarching positive intent on the part of educators such as Ungría and Tatum. Well-known examples of “worst practices” in doing business in Latin America would include the building and oversight of the Panama Canal by the United States (McCullough 1977), the United Fruit Company’s creation of exploitative “Banana Republics” in Central America, and Texaco’s toxic dumping and environmental destruction in Ecuador. Had the ideals of educators such as Luria and Tate been more operative at the time, perhaps such “worst practices” would have been avoided or at least mitigated by the checks and balances of ethics in business, and its potential for ambassadorial goodwill.

In 1945, between the dates of the articles by Ungría (1943) and Tatum (1948), H. G. Doyle, editor of *Hispania* and past president of the AATS, published a pioneering volume, *A Handbook on the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese with Special Reference to Latin America*, under the auspices of the AATSP and The Office of Inter-American Affairs. The topic of Spanish for business figured prominently in four of the twelve chapters: “The Value of the Study of Spanish and

Portuguese” (Hutton); “Vocational Opportunities for Students of Spanish and Portuguese” (Roby); “The History of Spanish and Portuguese Teaching in the United States” (Nichols); and “A Look at the Future” (Doyle H. G.). Shortly after, in 1946, Thunderbird was founded as the first program in which courses such as Business Spanish became cornerstones of a tripartite, integrated curriculum. This first graduate-level formalization of Business Spanish in American higher education has left its enduring imprint on undergraduate and graduate programs ever since. But, as we have seen, the tripartite, theoretical blueprint for such eventual curriculum design was already in place in the United States from at least as early as 1920.

### **Conclusion: From Foundations to Enduring Aspirations**

In revisiting the foundational importance of Business Spanish to the United States and its formalization in American secondary and higher education, the focus of this article has been on two key historical starting points for Business Spanish: (1) the years surrounding American Independence in 1776, followed by (2) the key role played by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish (AATS) and *Hispania* in the formalization process, from 1917 through the mid-1940s. The focus on these separate but closely related starting points, the second issuing from the first, distinguishes this article from previous research through its emphasis on the initial groundwork laid.

Beginnings signal founding values and priorities, and these origins shape subsequent evolution. Business Spanish was not added into the national foreign language curriculum after the formalization of the teaching of Spanish per se. It was not an afterthought. It held first-in-line status from the very beginning and was part and parcel of the teaching of Spanish nationwide. The historical record shows that the foundational importance of Spanish for commerce and trade contributed not only to the development of curricula in Business Spanish but also to the general importance of the study of the Spanish language in the United States. In effect, the significance of Spanish in the United States cannot be well understood without understanding the historical importance of Spanish for trade and commerce. These two starting points also contained within them the ongoing dialectic between the practical and/versus the cultural reasons for studying Spanish, and the aspirational balance that might be achieved between competing rationales.

The beginnings explored in this article further signaled several other complex splits. One was the initial consideration of Spanish as a “foreign” versus a “national” language (and resource) in the United States. This of course bears directly on the course and curriculum design and methodology at the time, from 1917–52, which post-Jefferson (and following Jefferson’s lead) focused on teaching Spanish as a foreign language to monolingual English-speaking Americans, preparing them for business interaction with Spanish speakers outside the U.S. This overlooked, or perhaps took for granted, the great importance of also being able to do business in Spanish within the U.S., with bilingual as well as monolingual Spanish-speaking Americans, effectively amounting to an economic and commercial marginalization and exclusion.

Returning to the dialectic of practical vs. cultural, in “A Look at the Future,” the closing chapter to *A Handbook on the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese with Special Reference to Latin America* (1945), H. G. Doyle offered prudent advice to teachers and professors of Spanish. He encouraged them to avoid the danger “that one or the other aspect may be over-emphasized . . . Too much ‘future jobs in Latin America,’ on the one hand, and too much bookishness and stodgy study of literature, on the other” (234). With this, he moved the discourse into a broader, vital curricular consideration beyond the rhetoric of earlier rationales advocating for and defending the study of Spanish, and topics such as instructor preparation, content, and methodology. He encouraged his colleagues to “find and keep the golden mean between practical or vocational and the cultural objectives” (234), what Norman Sacks would later refer to in *Hispania* as “a blend of the *utile* with the *dulci* . . . the useful with the sweet, the practical with the cultural”

(1960: 395, 397). In this regard, both distinguished Hispanists hearkened back to Jefferson, who valued Spanish for its importance in commerce as well as for its literary and cultural merits. As Max Luria cautioned in *Hispania* over a century ago, “to neglect the practical ends of education is foolishness; but to recognize no other is to degrade humanity” (1920: 254).

It is within this overarching context that the present article on the early development of Business Spanish in the U.S. seeks to contribute to a more complete understanding of the evolution of a curricular content domain as a key foundational element in the national curriculum for the study of Spanish. Doing so as a palimpsestic continuum bears with it a corrective intentionality: to acknowledge more fully where Business Spanish in the United States today, and to a large extent the field of Business Language Studies (BLS) and LSP, have come from. In today’s learner-centered Spanish curriculum, there should be no exclusionary choosing of sides between the *utile* and the *dulci*. The practical and the cultural should synergize to anchor the study of Spanish to educational relevance and centrality in the United States. As the pragmatic and the humanistic continue to be combined more productively in today’s Spanish curriculum, there are benefits for all learners. Achieving the “golden mean” contributes to this goal. It continues to be aspirational. However, for the record, at the historical core of the formalization of the teaching of Spanish in American higher education was its importance for trade and commerce.

## NOTE

Interested readers should consult the cited content from earlier *Hispania* issues by accessing the online journal content directly. Each article cited can be identified by the author’s name and year as cited in the body text of this article. Those entries are not included in the references list.

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