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# Business Spanish In The Real World: A Task-Based Needs Analysis

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The growing demand for Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP) courses at universities in the United States in the last two decades (Klee, 2015) has brought to light the need for more theoretically driven research in this field, which can inform pedagogical decisions and materials design. The present study conceptually replicates Serafini and Torres (2015), adopting a Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach to instructional design, and it aims to contribute to the under-researched field of SPP by a) performing a needs analysis (NA) of a university business Spanish course at two institutions, and b) creating a semester-long syllabus, which better equips non-expert instructors to teach their business Spanish courses. Results indicated that of the total 40 target tasks cited in the first phase of the NA, 21 were reported to be very commonly performed by at least 30% of the respondents in the second phase. These 21 tasks were regrouped and categorized into five more abstract, super-ordinate target task types that made up the objectives for the semester-long business Spanish syllabus informed by TBLT.

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## INTRODUCTION

Languages are always taught in specific contexts to learners with particular objectives in mind. Learners who study Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) indeed set out to accomplish very specific goals by the end of their courses. Task-based language teaching (TBLT)—supporting the value of learning by doing, or ‘experiential learning’ (Dewey, 1933)—seems the ideal approach for LSP, as students are concerned with learning to ‘do’ specific tasks in the target language within a professional environment (e.g., conduct an interview, write a business report, make a phone call to place an order).

Furthermore, tasks offer learners a reason to participate in communication in the classroom, enable them to see tangible results by achieving the goal of the task (Norris, 2011), and offer a strong motivational component. As suitable as the TBLT approach seems to be for LSP, it is not common to encounter this approach in LSP research (e.g., Long, 2015), and, more relevant for the present study, the same can be said for Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP) (Sánchez-López, 2012, 2013). According to Sánchez-López (2013), modern languages departments (such as Spanish) face increasing pressure to offer courses that meet new societal demands, such as language for occupational purposes. She adds that while the field of

SSP has come a long way in the last two decades, some aspects remain unaddressed, such as the potential to apply a task-based approach to the development of new syllabi and materials. As a result, instructors of SSP working within a task-based framework are faced with an overall shortage of available materials. In a recent study, Serafini and Torres (2015) tried to fill this gap. They identified the most important tasks for business graduates and professionals and then asked business majors to rate the difficulty and frequency of these tasks, in order for the authors to group them in different “task types” for pedagogical purposes.

The present study aims to contribute to this area of research by revisiting and replicating Serafini and Torres (2015). Specifically, the current study added some methodological improvements to Serafini and Torres’ design (i.e., open-ended interviews in Phase 1, larger sample size in Phase 2, and an interaction of sources and methods). This study performed a multi-phase task-based needs analysis (NA) of a business Spanish course at two higher education institutions in order to determine tasks to be taught in future SSP courses. The results of this NA informed the design of a semester-long, 200-level business Spanish course that can be implemented at the two institutions. This curriculum will also be useful for non-expert instructors of advanced business Spanish courses.

## **TBLT EDUCATIONAL ARCHITECTURE**

TBLT is an approach to second or foreign language education that integrates theoretical and empirical foundations for good pedagogy with a focus on tasks as learning outcomes (Norris, 2011). In addition to ‘experiential learning’ (Dewey, 1993), the notion of language learning as a nonlinear phenomenon—with a complex process of form-function mappings instead of a focus on factors in isolation—is also central to TBLT. Tasks have proven to be an effective organizing principle for the implementation of experiential learning (Norris, 2011) and have been researched from both a psycholinguistic and a sociocultural perspective on second language acquisition (SLA).

Different definitions of tasks have been proposed in the literature: tasks as problem-posing activities (Candlin, 1987); tasks as vehicles to raise learners’ awareness of the functional use of a linguistic form (Norris, 2011); tasks as those things that people do in their everyday lives (Long, 1985). Long’s definition, as Serafini and Torres (2015) point out, is construed independently of the language needed to realize it and seems particularly suitable for professional contexts (e.g., a work meeting, job interview, etc.) for this reason. Tasks have also been defined as ‘workplans,’ aimed at developing language use that is similar, directly or indirectly, to the way language is used in the real world (Ellis, 2000). A workplan typically involves a) input and b) instructions relating to the specific outcome students need to achieve (Ellis, 2000). Skehan (1998) defines a task as an activity in which, “meaning is primary; there is some communication problem to solve; there is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities; task completion has some priority; the assessment of the task is in terms of outcome” (p. 95). While these definitions all contribute important nuances, Long’s and Ellis’ views—which relate the task to real world outcomes (Long) and advance a pedagogical and process orientation for the classroom context (Ellis)—appear particularly pertinent in the context of business Spanish language classes.

One way of delimiting relevant tasks for SSP courses is to perform a task-based needs analysis (NA), the first step to creating a TBLT curriculum (Long, 2015). The exploration of

learners' language learning needs is often circumvented. However, a TBLT approach aims at matching the language learning needs of particular learners to the course objectives. Norris (2011) proposes six steps to create a strong TBLT curriculum, which are summarized below:

1. **Needs analysis (NA):** Learners' needs that the L2 program will meet are researched by means of a NA. A sound NA integrates multiple sources of information (students, instructors, researchers, professionals, etc.) from multiple methodological perspectives (questionnaires, surveys, interviews, discourse analysis, observations, etc.).
2. **Task selection and sequencing:** Based on the needs identified in the NA, pertinent *target* tasks are articulated and sequenced to form units and syllabi. Task sequencing can follow a content or complexity rationale. Sequencing decisions, however, should always be informed by intimate knowledge of the target learner population.
3. **Development of materials and instruction:** Once sequenced, tasks are broken down into different *pedagogic* tasks to be implemented in the classroom. Task materials will provide authentic input, focus-on-form (FoF) instruction, and target-task performances.
4. **Teaching:** Instructors are the key link between materials and their use by learners in classrooms.
5. **Assessment:** The performance of target tasks is emphasized in TBLT assessment, as opposed to the demonstration of knowledge about the language.
6. **Program evaluation:** Effectiveness will be evaluated in terms of the relevance of target tasks for learners, the appropriateness of sequencing decisions and L2 acquisition expectations, the efficacy of materials, and the preparedness of instructors.

The present study focuses on the first two steps, which will be described in detail below. Since the aim of this study is to account for the needs expressed by participants and the selection of tasks, steps 3 to 6 are not addressed in the present manuscript. Restrictions on space make it unfeasible to address all 6 steps here.

## MOTIVATION TO ADOPT A TBLT APPROACH FOR LSP COURSES

The adequacy of the TBLT approach for SSP is apparent. Firstly, students who take business Spanish courses are largely task-oriented, with pragmatic outcomes to accomplish. Whether students are business majors or not, they normally want to 'use' Spanish to 'do' things in their future professional lives. In this vein, Robinson (2001) rightly points out that TBLT approaches guarantee a high degree of real-world relevance, since they are based on a NA of target performance objectives. They are most likely to increase student interest and motivation due to increased possibilities for the direct transfer of the abilities developed in the classroom to similar real-world contexts.

In addition, from observing the two business Spanish classes addressed in the present study as well as similar courses at other universities, we note that students' overall proficiency in business language courses is normally advanced; students have typically taken several Spanish language courses (core and upper-level) and some have studied abroad. However, within the two focal classes, there is a mixture of levels. In fact, LSP courses usually have dual goals: an increase in both language competence and content knowledge (Klee, 2015). TBLT approaches the language development part from a FoF perspective, which offers opportunities for mixed abilities of students to learn the linguistic forms they need *during* or

*after* pedagogic tasks, in a reactive fashion.

## **A TASK-BASED APPROACH TO NEEDS ANALYSIS**

Once the adequacy of a 'TBLT' approach to SSP has been highlighted, building the 'TBLT *architecture*' starts with the NA. According to Long (2005), the use of a task-based approach to NA is beneficial for several reasons, including the fact that most job descriptions produced by domain experts in different sectors (including business) are typically formulated in terms of performance standards and tasks. Consequently, expert insiders provide applied linguists with invaluable insights into their respective field. Long adds that task-based analyses reveal more than text-based analyses about the dynamic qualities of target discourse. Traditional linguistic, or *text*-based, programs reflect a static, product orientation. Tasks, on the other hand, emphasize the process rather than the product.

Furthermore, Long (2005) provides some guidelines concerning what constitutes a robust NA. The validity of a NA can be enhanced through careful attention to sources, methods, and source—method interactions. Firstly, a thorough NA whose aim is syllabus design should employ stratified random sampling, in which each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected and thus represents each subgroup of interest, instead of a convenience sample of available participants. In addition, as far as sources are concerned, reliable NAs should involve insiders (that is, domain experts) as well as outsiders (learners, language teachers, or materials writers). Whereas outsiders might be oblivious to major aspects of language learning, insiders might be unfamiliar with the distinctive features of the specific domain. Moreover, pre-service or pre-experience learners are not always fully aware of their real future needs. Van Avermaet and Gysen (2006) distinguish between subjective and objective needs. According to these researchers, learners' objective needs are deduced by other parties, while subjective needs are based on learners' own statements, which do not always coincide with their objective needs.

In addition, as mentioned above, the triangulation of multiple sources and methods should be employed. Triangulation is the process of comparing data from different sources or methods with one another to validate the data and ultimately increase the credibility of its interpretation (Long, 2005). As far as methods are concerned, using multiple methods of data-collection and analysis increases the quality, not just the quantity, of information obtained. It is also important to carefully sequence the methods, from more qualitative, 'open' procedures, like unstructured/semi-structured interviews, to more quantitative, 'closed' ones, like questionnaires. Unstructured or semi-structured interviews are useful in order to gather an initial understanding of relevant issues for the target population. As Long (2005) points out, "Questionnaires are valuable for ascertaining the pervasiveness of existing views [...] but less so for creating new knowledge about an unfamiliar field, which may be preempted by too early a rush to quantification" (p. 64).

## **TASK SEQUENCING AND SYLLABUS DESIGN**

After the NA is completed, target tasks are identified and categorized into more abstract, super-ordinate target task types. Target task types are sequenced in order to build a task-based syllabus, which is prospective and analytic in design.

A syllabus can consist of either a prospective or retrospective decision on the content to



be taught. If a prospective decision is adopted, the syllabus includes the contents of classroom activity (Robinson, 2001). On the other hand, if a retrospective approach is employed, no syllabus will emerge until the end of instruction (Candlin, 1984). Syllabi can also be synthetic or analytic. In contrast to synthetic syllabi, analytic syllabi do not divide up the language into discrete units; instead, they involve holistic use of language to perform communicative activities, in line with the view of language learning as a nonlinear, restructuring, phenomenon. SLA research has shown that learners differ with respect to rate of development through certain syntactic and morphological domains, making it problematic to treat learners homogeneously over time (Ellis, 1994; Skehan, 1989). Task-based approaches also differ from language-based approaches to syllabus design in that achievement during task-based instruction is performance-based instead of system-referenced, informed by whether and to what degree learners can perform the pedagogic and target tasks that are the focus of instruction (Robinson & Ross, 1996; Robinson, Strong, Whittle, & Nobe, 2001).

Task sequencing can refer to sequencing of target tasks or the sequencing of pedagogic tasks, both of which have often been confounded in the task sequencing literature (Prahbu, 1987; Robinson, 2001; Skehan, 1996). Pedagogic tasks are the tasks with which teachers and students work in the classroom. Most literature has focused on pedagogic task sequencing in the past, leaving the area of target task sequencing open to instructors' criteria. In fact, as Serafini and Torres (2015) point out, there is no widely agreed-upon sequencing criterion for target tasks to date.

## **A HISTORY OF SSP IN THE UNITED STATES**

The teaching of LSP originated in the 1960s in the United Kingdom. It is only since the 1980s that SSP has been part of the academy, specifically in Europe and the United States (Sánchez-López, 2010). Looking back at the origins of SSP in the U.S., the development of courses in Spanish for the professions resulted from the desire to attract more students to the study of language, and diversify and internationalize the curriculum (Grosse & Voght, 2012). Moreover, it fulfilled the need to provide services in Spanish to the growing immigrant population from Latin America, and responded to the perceptions of many students that Spanish language skills would give them an edge in the marketplace (Klee, 2015).

The demand for SSP university courses in the U.S. has grown in the past two decades (Klee, 2015; Sánchez-López, 2012, 2013). In fact, this expansion has coincided with the recommendations of the Modern Language Association Ad Hoc Committee report on foreign languages and higher education (2007), which urged language departments to institute courses addressing a broad range of curricular needs in an effort to attract students with interests beyond literary studies. Of the 183 U.S. universities surveyed by Long and Uscinski (2012), 59% offer courses for the professions, 44% of which are business courses. The majority of these business courses center on Spanish (43%), and the increasing interest in the language has resulted in a parallel growth in instructional web sites, professional conferences, workshops, materials, and scholarly papers focusing on SSP.

Another challenge in the field is that non-expert instructors lack training to appropriately implement their SSP courses (Serafini & Torres, 2015). When instructors receive minimal guidance in how to teach LSP courses, the consequences for students, especially those with weaker language skills, can be devastating (Klee & Tedick, 1997; Lynch, Klee, & Tedick, 2001). In addition, a lack of professional preparation has had detrimental effects on research and program quality (Swales, 2000).

Some efforts to remedy this lack of instructor preparedness are worth mentioning. In 1988, the U.S. Department of Education Title VI program began funding the Center for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) program (<http://ciberweb.msu.edu/about/>) at university business schools to strengthen U.S. competitiveness in international business. CIBER aims to advance the study and teaching of international business, and supports applied research in the U.S. Their projects include fostering collaboration between modern language departments and business schools to develop business language courses. Another pioneer and now landmark professional resource is the *Congreso Internacional de Español para Fines Específicos* (CIEFE) [International Conference for Spanish for Specific Purposes], which fosters discussions and the exchange of ideas among international scholars working on SSP, as well as the biannual International Symposium on Languages for Specific Purposes (ISLSP), where a variety of languages are represented. Although SSP professional resources and publications have increased in recent years (see Doyle, 2010; Sánchez-Lopez, 2012, 2013; Zapata & Heras, 2004), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) still holds a privileged position within the research community (see Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Evans, 2010, 2013; Huh, 2006; Hutchison & Waters, 1987; Reed, 2011; St. John, 1996).

As previously mentioned, the advancement of a stronger theoretical framework for LSP in the U.S. would facilitate the development of curricula and pedagogical materials while allowing Spanish for the professions to establish itself as a subfield in graduate programs in applied linguistics, as has been the case in Spain (Klee, 2015). Crucially, Lafford (2013) pointed out the need for research in sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, conversational analysis, and intercultural competence on authentic target language use in the workplace in order to strengthen LSP programs in the U.S. Indeed, incorporating authentic language use into the teaching materials would be ideal from a TBLT point of view, as it would provide models for target tasks—real-world tasks that learners should be prepared to undertake during or after the course outside of the classroom. Conversational analysis of the discourse used in authentic scenarios would allow teachers to scaffold their students' development, guiding them closer to the successful completion of target tasks. In sum, more theoretically grounded SSP research, which would support the creation of sound pedagogical materials, is sorely needed in order to advance this subfield of applied linguistics and improve SSP teaching practices and course quality.

## NEEDS ANALYSIS IN LSP CONTEXTS AND BUSINESS CONTEXTS

Within the field of ESP in general, there have been some examples of task-based NAs (Gilabert, 2005; Jasso-Aguilar, 2005); examples can also be found in the field of business English (Chew, 2005; Evans, 2010, 2013; Grosse, 2004; Huh, 2006). Evans (2010) carried out a NA that included questionnaire responses from over 2,000 Cantonese-speaking business and tourism professionals in Hong Kong. The results showed that “English continues to function as the unmarked medium of written communication, whereas Cantonese remains the unmarked medium of oral communication” (p. 165). Evans (2013) conducted a NA that consisted of four case studies with interviews of business professionals who reported the tasks they performed within their typical workweek. This study identified the four most frequent written and spoken tasks in English and Cantonese performed by business professionals in Hong Kong. Huh (2006) performed a task-based NA in a Korean business context with the goal of designing a business English course. An analysis of previous business

English literature, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaire data of both business professionals and previous and potential students of the course resulted in 26 target tasks, which were then categorized into more general target task types and informed course design.

When focusing on SSP in general, we find examples in disciplines other than business (Lear, 2006; Lepetit & Cichocki, 2002; Mason, 1992), though only a few focus on business Spanish (Buendía Cambronero, 2013; Doyle, 2010; García-Romeu, 2006; Prieto Ramos, 2000), and only one adopts a *task-based* perspective (Serafini & Torres, 2015). However, none of the business Spanish NAs accounted for a genuine source—method interaction, as data from the same source were not triangulated via different methods, nor was the same method used to triangulate data from different sources.

Prieto-Ramos (2006) designed a business Spanish curriculum for international marketing and business majors but did not perform a NA to determine the content of this curriculum, which was largely arranged by the institution. Similarly, Buendía Cambronero (2013) also remarked the need to conduct a NA in order to inform curriculum design, but did not perform one. This study focused specifically on cultural content within business Spanish courses and suggested Munby's (1978) framework of communicative events and situations as the guiding principle for future NA design. A task-based NA (Long, 2005) is different from a traditional NA framework, such as a target situation analysis (Munby, 1978) or a learning-centered approach (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987); whereas the traditional approaches use linguistic categories as the units of analysis for syllabus design, task-based approaches assign this role to tasks. García-Romeu (2006) developed a pedagogical proposal for a business Spanish course at the Cervantes Institute in London, informed by 10 professional students' perceived needs, interests, expectations, and learning styles. The NA only consisted of a questionnaire, and additional sources would have strengthened its methodological validity. Doyle (2010) analyzed the translation, linguistic, and business courses at his university in terms of their adequacy for students' needs as conceived by the Modern Language Association's (2007) report, but the study did not mention whether a true NA was undertaken.

To date, the only task-based NA conducted in the field of SSP has been offered by Serafini and Torres (2015). Their small-scale, multi-phase NA included several sources and methods, but did not include a triangulation of both. Their questionnaire only gathered perceptions of task frequency and difficulty from pre-experience business majors, who, according to the authors, "likely based their responses on their experience carrying out tasks in a classroom rather than a real-world setting" (p. 466). For this reason, it is advisable to gather data from additional sources in order to increase the NA's methodological rigor. Overall, Serafini and Torres's (2015) study constitutes a crucial starting point for other task-based NAs carried out in SSP contexts such as that examined in the present study.

## **SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND MOTIVATION FOR THE CURRENT STUDY**

The current study aims to fill several gaps in the literature. First, it fulfills the need in the SSP field for more research that, guided by theory—in this case, by TBLT principles—informs curriculum design, in order to develop a stronger body of theoretically informed literature (Klee, 2015). As Doyle (2012) has claimed, non-English business language courses have been built on theoretical foundations that have lacked explicit articulation and evolution (Serafini

& Torres, 2015, p. 453).

Furthermore, the task-based NA presented here follows suggestions in previous literature (Serafini, Lake, & Long, 2015; Serafini & Torres, 2015) to improve its methodological design. For instance, this NA included a genuine interaction of sources—methods. This was achieved by triangulating data from the same source via different methods (by having the same business experts and business graduates in both Phase 1 and Phase 2) and by using the same method to triangulate data from different sources (by performing semi-structured interviews with and administering the questionnaire to both business students and professionals). The NA in the present study also widened the sources of previous studies (e.g. García-Romeu, 2006; Serafini & Torres, 2015) by including business professors and alumni of business Spanish courses and by sampling more business insiders during both the qualitative and the quantitative phases of the NA. Overall, this study continues the line of research recommended by Serafini et al. (2015) and Serafini and Torres (2015) that aims at designing robust NAs, which inform curricula that can be used by non-expert instructors teaching business Spanish courses.

The primary purpose of the current study was to identify target tasks for one business Spanish course being taught at two different institutions and to organize the identified tasks into target task types. The final goal was to design a business Spanish syllabus to be implemented at two northeastern private universities. With these purposes in mind, the following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the tasks that business professionals need to perform in their jobs?
2. How frequently is each identified task performed (or expected to be performed) by both business graduates and professionals?
3. How difficult do business graduates and professionals perceive each identified task to be?
4. How can the most frequent tasks be integrated into a coherent semester-long business Spanish curriculum that follows a content rationale?

## METHOD

### Context

This study was conducted in order to implement a task-based syllabus in one business Spanish course offered at two private universities on the East Coast of the U.S. Both courses are electives offered at the 200-level in modern language departments, and they serve a diverse population of students, including Business, Political Economy, International Relations and Spanish majors/minors. 200-level courses at both are taken by students who have completed the introductory, intermediate, and advanced courses. The instructors who conducted the NA and taught the courses were business ‘outsiders,’ but they had expertise in applied linguistics, with background in task-based approaches to language teaching. The same textbook was used in both courses: *Éxito comercial* (Doyle & Fryer, 2014), which consists of a collection of readings about different business topics in Spanish (e.g., companies, marketing, accounting, human resources), practice exercises, and an online component (with audio recordings and video clips). Although the book represents a comprehensible and valuable resource for business Spanish courses, instructors in these two courses felt that, at times,

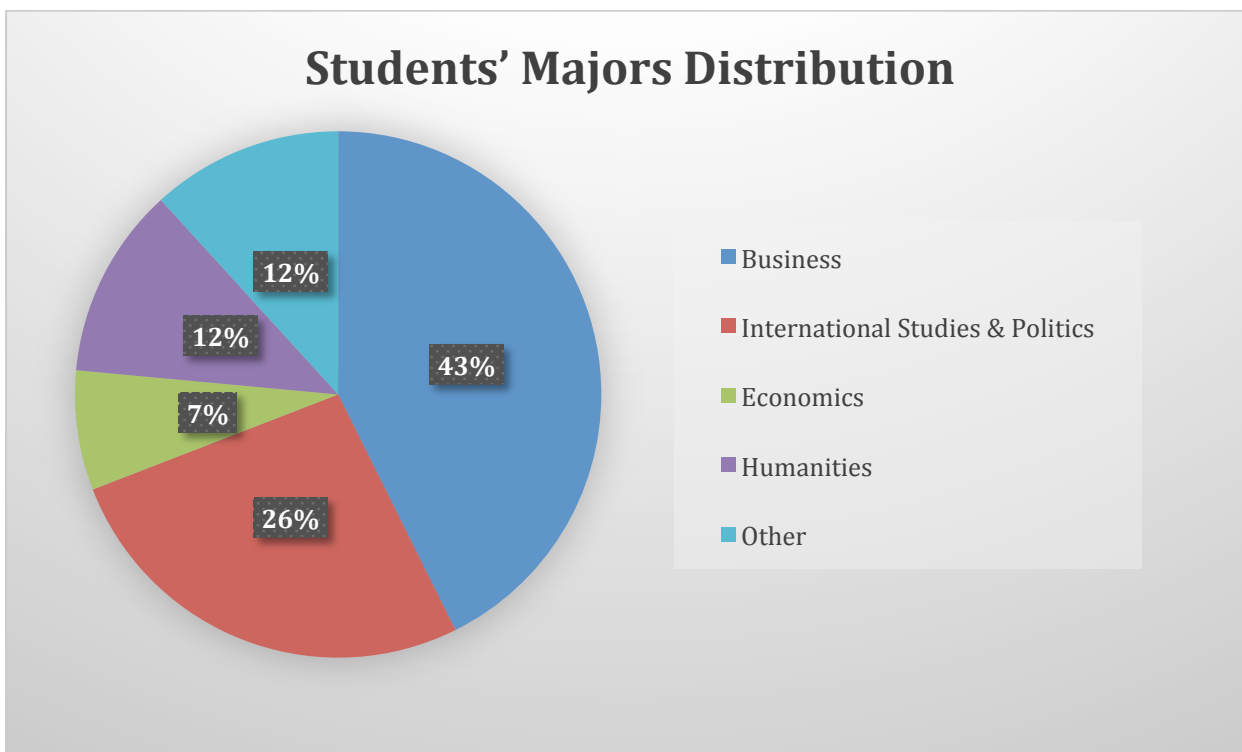
students lacked practical, real-world experiences that reflected current business practices. Comments in previous course evaluations echoed the need for more authentic audio and video samples that mirrored work situations more realistically.

## Participants and Procedures

This multi-phase NA followed a mixed-methods approach going from more ‘open,’ qualitative procedures to more ‘closed,’ quantitative ones (Long, 2005; Serafini et al., 2015). In Phase 1, the NA identified target tasks that were relevant for business graduates, business instructors, and business professionals through semi-structured interviews or open-ended surveys directed at a convenience sample of participants (see Appendix 1). The semi-structured interviews, which were recorded and later transcribed by the researchers, were conducted with three business graduates, one business professor, and two business professionals (a global manager and an auditor). These participants were either students in the researchers’ business Spanish classes majoring in a business-related field or acquaintances working in the business sector. Each interview centered on two to five questions (see Appendix 1 for further details) and lasted an average of 12 minutes. Two open-ended surveys (administered via Google Forms) that included the same set of questions as the interview were conducted with two business professionals (a human resources business consultant and a senior program associate) due to the impossibility of meeting with them in person for an interview. All eight participants were living in the U.S. at the time of the study. The sample included six American participants, one Mexican participant, and one Spanish participant. The transcriptions of the interviews and the responses to the open-ended surveys were consolidated and analyzed for comparison and revision. In Phase 2, target tasks were identified and included in a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire, which was created on Google Forms (see Appendix 2) and distributed via email and social media platforms among current business Spanish students, alumni, and business professionals, including the respondents in Phase 1. During this phase, perceptions of task frequency and difficulty were gathered from not only business majors but also professionals, following suggestions of previous research (Serafini & Torres, 2015). Before it was widely circulated, the questionnaire was pilot tested with four colleagues, a process that led to fine-tuning of several questions to improve clarity. Apart from including all the target tasks mentioned in Phase 1, a final open-ended item on the Google Form allowed respondents to list tasks not mentioned in the questionnaire.

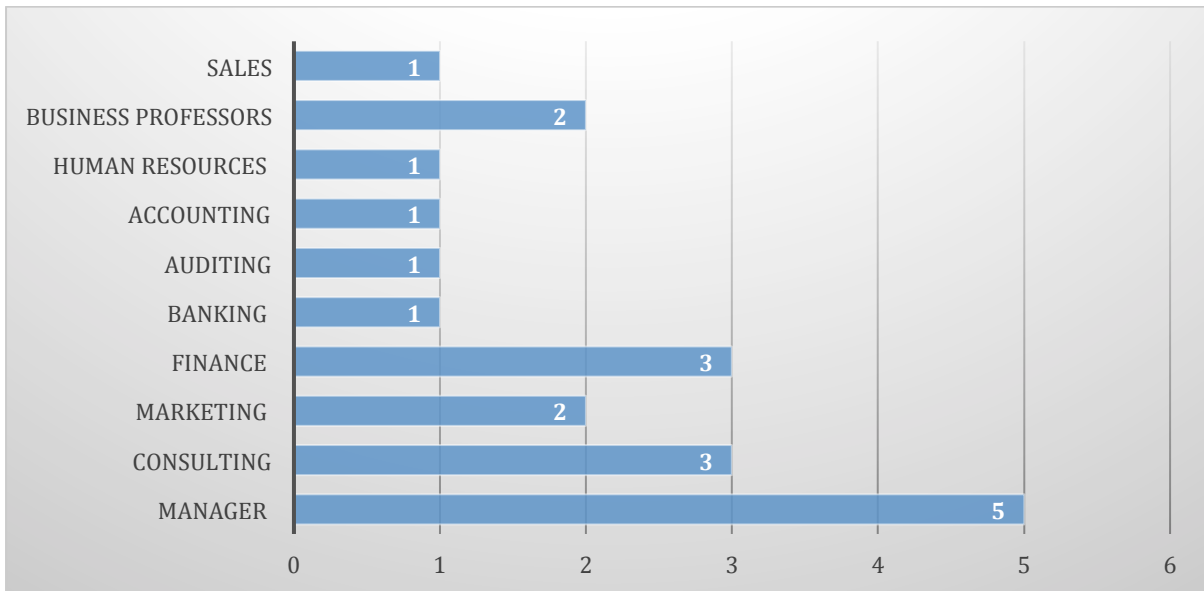
In total, 68 business students (including the three business students from Phase 1) and 37 professionals (including the five business professionals from Phase 1) rated the frequency and difficulty of the target tasks (according to the following scale: not at all, not much, so-so, quite a lot, not applicable). Of the 68 students surveyed, 15 of them (22.05%) had previously held jobs, mainly internships, 44 of them were currently taking a business Spanish course (64.70%), and 21 (30.88%) were alumni of the focal course. Table 1 shows the distribution of participants’ majors.

Table 1

*Students' Majors Distribution*

As Table 1 shows, the majority of students held majors related to business. Professionals in the U.S., Spain and Latin America were reached by translating the questionnaire from English into Spanish. We decided to broaden the sources beyond the U.S. because some students taking the business Spanish courses usually voice their willingness to work in countries in these areas. In total, 18 professionals out of the 37 (48%) were from Spain or Latin America and completed the Spanish version of the questionnaire (see Appendix 2, Part B). Table 2 shows the distribution of all of the business professionals who indicated their source of employment in the questionnaire, a total of 20 (54.05%). Unfortunately, 17 of the 37 (45.94%) professionals left this response blank when answering the questionnaire, as none of the questions were mandatory. Business professionals rated their seniority from 2 months to 21 years.

Table 2

*Job Distribution of Business Professionals*

Next, the perceived frequency and difficulty of each of the target tasks was converted into percentages by dividing the number of responses for each Likert value by the total participants who responded to that item. During this phase, and based on previous literature (Serafini & Torres, 2015), we also organized the identified target tasks by modality in accordance with ACTFL's National World-Readiness Standards (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). ACTFL standards were followed for evaluation and proficiency purposes, considering their wide acceptance in the U.S., and for comparison purposes with Serafini and Torres (2015), to understand the contributions of the present study. All the tasks were first classified according to the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, or listening) and were then further classified as interpretive, interpersonal, or presentational. Interpretive tasks are defined as those that involve understanding and interpreting what is heard, read, or viewed. Interpersonal tasks are those in which participants need to interact with other interlocutors in spoken or written conversations and not just interpret information, but analyze and respond to it. Finally, presentational tasks are those that require learners to present and explain information to an audience, again in the spoken or written mode, but do not involve an exchange of information with the interlocutors.

In a third and final phase, a 200-level business Spanish course was designed based on the task frequency ratings and the content involved in each. Contrary to Serafini and Torres (2015), this study did not use the difficulty ratings as a primary criterion to inform target task sequencing because of the subjectivity involved in this measure. Robinson (2001) argues that only complexity should inform task-sequencing decisions a priori, as perceived difficulty varies according to learners' individual differences and cannot be foreseen for syllabus design. While we agree with Robinson (2001) in this respect, we further argue that complexity should only inform *pedagogic* task sequencing and not *target* task sequencing, as global ratings of complexity largely depend on a multiplicity of contextual factors that need to be specified before those ratings are obtained. Because this NA deals with *target* tasks, and not *pedagogic*

tasks, complexity was not considered as a guiding principle. On the contrary, in the current study, the criterion selected for target task sequencing was frequency (partially following Serafini & Torres, 2015). This means that those target tasks rated as very commonly performed ('quite a lot') by at least 30% of the participants were chosen to be included in the syllabus. Subsequently, a content rationale was used to group and sequence the identified target tasks. Those tasks that belonged to the same topic were grouped into a more general, super-ordinate task type (e.g., the task type 'interview for a job' would include the target tasks 'write a CV,' 'write a cover letter,' and 'interview for a job'). The five target task types formed the objectives for the course.

## RESULTS

### Phase 1: Qualitative Methods

In the interviews and open-ended surveys, the domain experts and business graduates in the first phase of the NA suggested 40 target tasks. All tasks mentioned by interviewees and surveyed participants were taken into consideration in developing the subsequent Likert-scale questionnaire. Following Serafini and Torres (2015), these tasks were grouped according to the four major communicative modes: there were 10 reading tasks, 13 writing tasks, 13 speaking tasks, and 4 listening tasks. These tasks were further regrouped following ACTFL's National World-Readiness Standards: there were 8 interpretive tasks (all of which were reading tasks), 16 interpersonal tasks (12 speaking tasks and 4 listening tasks), and 16 presentational tasks (13 writing tasks, 2 reading tasks, and 1 speaking task).

### Phase 2: Quantitative Methods

The perceived frequency and difficulty of all 40 tasks are reported in Table 3 (Interpretive Tasks), Table 4 (Interpersonal Tasks), and Table 5 (Presentational Tasks).

Table 3

#### *Interpretive Tasks*

Perceived Frequency and Difficulty of Interpretive Tasks (Reported in Percentages)						
Interpretive Tasks (8)	Frequency Difficulty	Not at all	Not much	So-so	Quite a lot	NA
<b>Read business articles and be able to understand the content and specific terminology in them</b>		2.90%	9.50%	30.50%	57.10%	0.00%
		15.50%	40.80%	34.00%	7.80%	1.90%
Understand annual reports and financial statements		15.40%	22.10%	33.70%	26.90%	1.90%
		8.70%	23.10%	34.60%	27.90%	5.80%
Understand the stock market (finding value of assets, compare with past and future value) to be able to trade stocks		26.70%	23.80%	30.50%	18.10%	2.90%
		9.60%	18.30%	28.80%	32.70%	10.60%
Conduct a financial analysis of a firm (through online research)		28.40%	28.60%	22.90%	20.00%	1.90%
		7.60%	23.80%	28.60%	28.60%	11.40%
Capital budgeting (the planning process used to determine an organization's long-term investments)		35.60%	27.90%	22.10%	12.50%	1.90%
		7.70%	13.50%	33.70%	25.00%	20.20%
Analyze the current situation in Latin America with regards to		30.50%	24.80%	20.00%	19.00%	5.70%



human rights and democracy	15.50%	29.10%	27.20%	12.60%	15.50%
Identify challenges, needs, and areas of possible impact in different countries in Latin America	23.10%	23.10%	31.70%	16.30%	5.80%
	15.40%	21.20%	35.60%	12.50%	15.40%
Translate documents to be able to carry out a project (reports, financial documents, invoices, memos, receipts, contracts)	17.10%	25.70%	29.50%	24.80%	2.90%
	6.70%	33.30%	33.30%	17.10%	9.50%

Table 4

*Interpersonal Tasks*

Perceived Frequency and Difficulty of Interpersonal Tasks (Reported in Percentages)						
Interpersonal Tasks (16)	Frequency	Not at all	Not much	So-so	Quite a lot	NA
	Difficulty					
<b>Be able to delegate tasks to team members efficiently and tactfully</b>		2.90%	10.50%	16.20%	68.60%	1.90%
		28.60%	36.20%	21.90%	8.60%	4.80%
Organize a fundraising		25.00%	22.10%	26.00%	17.30%	9.60%
		9.60%	31.70%	26.90%	11.50%	20.20%
<b>Participate and lead different projects: make decisions with the help of your team and communicate them to a higher manager</b>		1.90%	5.70%	28.60%	61.00%	2.90%
		11.40%	44.80%	30.50%	9.50%	3.80%
<b>Meet with managers to discuss the workforce planning strategy (using formal language)</b>		11.50%	14.40%	28.80%	40.40%	4.80%
		15.40%	29.80%	35.60%	6.70%	12.50%
<b>Meet with managers to discuss employees' performance (using formal language)</b>		15.40%	17.30%	31.70%	30.80%	4.80%
		16.30%	29.80%	33.70%	5.80%	14.40%
<b>Solve a business case in a group (with the help of online research), prepare a PowerPoint presentation, and give the presentation to a large audience as a group</b>		19.20%	12.50%	20.20%	44.20%	3.80%
		13.50%	29.80%	31.70%	11.50%	13.50%
<b>Interview for a job</b>		10.60%	13.50%	21.20%	52.90%	1.90%
		5.80%	22.30%	43.70%	22.30%	5.80%
Visit suppliers around the world and communicate with them		31.70%	28.80%	17.30%	14.40%	7.70%
		4.90%	22.30%	34.00%	14.60%	24.30%
<b>Ask a client for information to be able to advise him/her appropriately</b>		7.60%	11.40%	21.90%	54.30%	4.80%
		11.40%	32.40%	40.00%	6.70%	9.50%
<b>Lead a phone conference with several participants</b>		14.30%	11.40%	32.40%	35.20%	6.70%
		13.50%	26.90%	37.50%	8.70%	13.50%
Have a successful conversation over the phone with the team in the country where a specific project is being carried out in order to plan and follow up on the different activities and strategies		19.10%	16.00%	31.90%	29.80%	3.20%
		13.50%	14.40%	41.30%	13.50%	17.30%
Plan the agenda for a visitor to your company (professional events, meetings, press conferences, dinner reservations)		22.10%	21.20%	27.90%	21.20%	7.70%
		14.70%	27.50%	33.30%	5.90%	18.60%
<b>Carry out a negotiation and reach a deal with a client in person</b>		17.10%	17.10%	25.70%	36.20%	3.80%
		8.60%	17.10%	37.10%	22.90%	14.30%
<b>Attend status update meetings within your department and interact with people in the meeting</b>		11.50%	7.70%	19.20%	57.70%	3.80%
		26.00%	39.40%	20.20%	4.80%	9.60%
Participate in the inclusion and diversity initiative of your company		19.20%	16.30%	29.80%	27.90%	6.70%
		27.90%	29.80%	14.40%	9.60%	18.30%
Interpret (translate orally) in another language what someone is saying at a meeting for the interlocutor		21.20%	31.70%	22.10%	16.30%	8.70%
		9.60%	20.20%	22.10%	26.00%	22.10%

Table 5

*Presentational Tasks*

<b>Perceived Frequency and Difficulty of Presentational Tasks (Reported in Percentages)</b>						
Presentational Tasks (16)	Frequency Difficulty	Not at all	Not much	So-so	Quite a lot	NA
Analyze the 4 Ps of marketing (price, product, promotion, place) of a company to design a marketing campaign		22.90%	25.70%	29.50%	18.10%	3.80%
		14.40%	40.40%	21.20%	10.60%	13.50%
<b>Be able to understand and interpret business data (tables, statistics, graphs, etc.) and summarize trends in them for a higher peer/manager</b>		6.70%	19.00%	18.10%	55.20%	1.00%
		10.60%	33.70%	37.50%	13.50%	4.80%
<b>Write a formal email</b>		1.00%	4.80%	7.60%	86.70%	0.00%
		49.50%	36.20%	8.60%	4.80%	1.00%
<b>Write a cover letter</b>		2.90%	18.10%	28.60%	48.60%	1.90%
		18.10%	40.00%	30.50%	8.60%	2.90%
<b>Write a formal letter</b>		5.70%	26.70%	25.70%	41.00%	1.00%
		22.90%	40.00%	30.50%	4.80%	1.90%
<b>Write a curriculum vitae/resume</b>		1.00%	17.30%	25.00%	56.70%	0.00%
		19.20%	41.30%	30.80%	7.70%	1.00%
Prepare annual reports and financial statements		36.20%	28.60%	17.10%	13.30%	4.80%
		7.70%	13.50%	32.70%	25.00%	21.20%
<b>Prepare a budget in Excel</b>		16.30%	20.20%	29.80%	32.70%	1.00%
		14.40%	26.90%	34.60%	13.50%	10.60%
Create an advertisement to sell a product		34.00%	24.30%	21.40%	14.60%	5.80%
		12.50%	21.20%	35.60%	9.60%	21.20%
Design a phone application for your company		65.70%	13.30%	9.50%	1.90%	9.50%
		7.70%	3.80%	12.50%	39.40%	36.50%
<b>Write a report that integrates and summarizes business data</b>		18.40%	15.50%	23.30%	40.80%	1.90%
		10.70%	25.20%	37.90%	15.50%	10.70%
<b>Write a brief memo that supports a decision taken in response to an issue</b>		11.40%	8.60%	33.30%	46.70%	0.00%
		21.90%	31.40%	36.20%	6.70%	3.80%
<b>Draft a general project idea and a strategic plan to implement that project</b>		10.50%	14.30%	31.40%	44.90%	1.00%
		12.40%	28.60%	38.10%	15.20%	5.70%
Draft a contract		40.00%	22.90%	18.10%	14.30%	4.80%
		6.70%	8.70%	27.90%	31.70%	25.00%
Write a blog post about a specific aspect of your current company's project		28.80%	21.20%	26.90%	15.40%	7.70%
		21.20%	28.80%	25.00%	3.80%	21.20%
<b>Give an individual presentation with the support of PowerPoint to your team/a superior</b>		5.80%	9.60%	28.80%	55.80%	0.00%
		20.20%	32.70%	37.50%	5.80%	3.80%

Of the 40 target tasks, 21 (bolded in the tables above) were reportedly performed very frequently ('quite a lot') by at least 30% of respondents. Of these 21 tasks, one was interpretive, 10 were interpersonal, and 10 were presentational. Regarding their difficulty, 13 were rated as moderately difficult ('so-so'), seven as not very difficult ('not much'), and one as not difficult at all ('not at all'). As mentioned earlier, these difficulty ratings are regarded as quite subjective due to the diversity in participants' background (ranging from pre-service learners to highly experienced professionals). Indeed, Serafini and Torres (2015) noted that task difficulty sometimes proved problematic for sequencing purposes due to considerable individual variation in the responses to those items. Task difficulty was assessed to gauge ease of performance in participants' L1. Consequently, difficulty ratings were collected for

informational purposes, not for sequencing purposes, in the present study.

The additional tasks cited by respondents in the open-ended sections of the questionnaire were: to collaborate with individuals who are not cooperative, to respond to challenges, to have difficult conversations with your boss/coworkers about your performance, to use appropriate courtesy when communicating with professionals in Spain and Latin America, to communicate effectively with people of all ages and cultural backgrounds, to communicate with your subordinates, to evaluate your own work, to engage in promoting proper business ethics, to network in business conferences, to create a company schedule, to create a company website, and to look for profitable businesses and/or improve identified businesses.

### Phase 3: Curriculum Design

The last phase of this NA entailed determining the content and frequency of tasks in order to sequence them and design a curriculum for a 200-level business Spanish course. The 21 tasks reported to be most commonly performed in Phase 2 were regrouped into five more abstract, super-ordinate target task types that constituted the task-based objectives for the course (see Table 6). Like Serafini and Torres (2015), we deemed it appropriate to link the course objectives to the five goal areas in ACTFL’s World-Readiness Standards (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015): Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.

Table 6

*Course Objectives, Target Tasks from Phase 2 and ACTFL Standards*

<b>Course Objectives, Target Tasks from Phase 2, and ACTFL Standards:</b>		
<b>Course Objectives</b>	<b>Target Tasks from Phase 2</b>	<b>ACTFL World-Readiness Standards</b>
1. Solve a business case (group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read business articles and be able to understand the content and specific terminology in it</li> <li>• Be able to understand and interpret business data (tables, statistics, graphs...) and summarize trends in them to explain them to a higher manager/peer</li> <li>• Solve a business case in a group (with the help of online research), prepare a PowerPoint presentation and give the presentation to a big audience as a group</li> <li>• Write a report that integrates and summarizes business data</li> <li>• Prepare a budget in Excel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparisons (Cultural Comparisons)</li> <li>• Cultures (Relating Cultural Practices to Perspectives)</li> <li>• Communication (Presentational Communication and Interpersonal Communication)</li> <li>• Connections (Making Connections and Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives)</li> </ul>
2. Write formal correspondence and documents (individual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a formal email</li> <li>• Write a formal letter</li> <li>• Write a brief memo that supports a decision taken in response to an issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication (Presentational Communication)</li> <li>• Connections (Making Connections)</li> <li>• Comparisons (Language Comparisons)</li> </ul>

<p>3. Interview for a job (individual and pairs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a curriculum vitae/ resume</li> <li>• Write a cover letter</li> <li>• Interview for a job</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities (Lifelong Learning)</li> <li>• Communication (Interpersonal Communication)</li> </ul>
<p>4. Direct a project and lead a team (group and individual)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate and lead different projects: make decisions with the help of your team and communicate them to a higher manager</li> <li>• Be able to delegate tasks to team members efficiently and tactfully</li> <li>• Meet with managers to discuss the workforce planning strategy (using formal language)</li> <li>• Meet with manager to discuss employees' performance (using formal language)</li> <li>• Attend status update meetings within your department and interact with people in the meeting</li> <li>• Draft documents with the general idea for a project and with the strategic plan to implement that project</li> <li>• Give an individual presentation with the support of PowerPoint to your team/to a superior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication (Interpersonal Communication and Presentational Communication)</li> <li>• Communities (School and Global Communities)</li> <li>• Connections (Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives)</li> <li>• Comparisons (Language Comparisons)</li> </ul>
<p>5. Advise and interact with a client (group and individual)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask a client for information to be able to advise them appropriately</li> <li>• Lead a phone conference with several people involved</li> <li>• Carry out a negotiation and reach a deal with a client in person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connections (Acquiring Information and Diverse Perspectives)</li> <li>• Cultures (Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives)</li> </ul>

## DISCUSSION

The goal of the present study was to improve the business Spanish curriculum at two higher education institutions by incorporating tasks from the real business world, thus allowing learners to acquire the most relevant skills for their future. To this end, the study first surveyed pre-service learners' and business professionals' needs and then designed a task-based business Spanish curriculum, conceptually replicating Serafini and Torres (2015).

From a theoretical point of view, the present study contributed to the call in the literature for more theoretically grounded SSP research (Doyle, 2012; Klee, 2015). Because previous research on SSP had been mainly praxis-oriented (Klee, 2015), we adopted a TBLT approach to syllabus design. A TBLT approach was selected due to its orientation towards real-life outcomes and its potential to motivate students by presenting them with authentic applications of classroom content.

The TBLT approach to syllabus design recommends a NA as a starting point to curriculum design in order to determine the course objectives. This study performed a comprehensive and methodologically robust multi-phase NA by consulting both business insiders and outsiders. Because of the researchers' status as outsiders, business insiders were interviewed and surveyed to ensure that only tasks actually performed in business settings were included in the Likert-scale questionnaire. The questionnaire was then completed by a larger sample of participants, who rated the frequency and difficulty of performing (in their

L1) the tasks mentioned in the first phase of the analysis. The frequency dimension of the questionnaire helped narrow down target tasks from 40 to 21. The 21 tasks deemed most frequent were regrouped into more general task types, which constituted the five objectives for the course. The difficulty criterion was only collected to obtain a general sense of respondents' perceptions. However, due to its subjectivity and variability, difficulty ratings were not considered in selecting and sequencing tasks. As reported in the results section, the selected tasks ranged from moderately difficult to not at all difficult to perform in participants' L1. It must be acknowledged that when performed in participants' L2, the degree of difficulty associated with tasks would likely increase for L2 learners.

In terms of the order of the five target task types (see Table 6), it should be borne in mind that, as Serafini and Torres (2015) pointed out, there is currently no agreed-upon set of sequencing criteria. Possible criteria include a natural order of appearance, a content rationale, or a language skill motivation (from tasks involving language comprehension to those requiring language production). The current study grouped tasks according to their content, and those target tasks that belonged to the same topic were clustered together into a more general target task type (e.g., 'interview for a job' included 'write a curriculum vitae,' 'write a cover letter,' and 'interview for a job'). Because TBLT aims at authenticity, target task types in this study were created taking the professional outcomes of each specific target task type into account, not the specific language skill they involved (speaking, writing, listening, reading). Moreover, each grouping included tasks of different reported difficulty, since it was assumed that each task would pose a different level of difficulty for individual learners.

The five target task types that comprised the course objectives aligned partially with the five target task types in Serafini and Torres (2015). Two of the five target task types in our study, specifically 'to solve a business case' and 'to write formal correspondence and documents' were similar to target task types identified in their study, namely, 'to summarize and analyze a case study' and 'to write formal correspondence.' The other goals identified by our NA did not coincide with those established by Serafini and Torres: our additional tasks were to 'interview for a job,' 'direct a project and lead a team,' and 'advise and interact with a client,' while theirs were to 'develop and present a marketing strategy,' 'write a report,' and 'present data in a formal setting.' It is important to note that 'write a report' was a course objective in its own right in their study, but it was subsumed under the course objective 'solve a business case' in our study ('write a report that integrates and summarizes business data'). In addition, while 'give formal oral presentations in groups' was included under the objective 'present data in a formal setting' in Serafini and Torres (2015), the similar task 'give an individual presentation with the support of PowerPoint to your team/to a superior' was included under the objective 'direct a project and lead a team' in the present study.

Our study was performed following TBLT principles and ACTFL's National World-Readiness Standards (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015), which include the five 'C' goal areas. In order to integrate both approaches, the course objectives that emerged from the NA were aligned with the national standards, which are familiar to practitioners in K-12 and higher education levels (Serafini & Torres, 2015). In addition, the tasks identified in the NA were classified by modality (interpretive, presentational, and interpersonal) in accordance with ACTFL's National World-Readiness Standards (National Standards Collaborative Board, 2015). On the other hand, the current study makes a practical contribution by providing non-expert instructors with a tool to better approach instruction in language-specific business courses. As previous researchers have pointed out, students can suffer negative consequences if their instructors are not well equipped to teach LSP courses (Klee & Tedick, 1997; Lynch

et al., 2001).

Additionally, the present study aimed at researching the growing, yet under-researched, field of SSP. Because English has traditionally been considered the lingua franca in the business world, research on ESP has enjoyed a privileged position compared to SSP. Although research on the field of SSP, particularly business Spanish has increased in recent years (Buendía Cambroneró, 2013; Doyle, 2010; García-Romeu, 2006; Prieto Ramos, 2000; Sánchez-Lopez, 2012, 2013; Serafini & Torres, 2015), there are still a plethora of aspects to be researched and improved. In terms of course offerings, however, the U.S. has witnessed an increase in SSP courses at the university level (Klee, 2015; Sánchez-López, 2013).

This NA sought to improve previous ones by including a true interaction of methods—sources and by incorporating recommendations task-based NA experts (Long, 2005; Serafini et al., 2015) in a SSP course for the first time. Our study included a genuine source—method interaction, as data from the same source (i.e., business professionals) were triangulated via different methods (i.e., interviews and questionnaires), and the same method (i.e., interviews) was used to triangulate data from different sources (i.e., business professionals and business graduates). It also involved a larger sample of both business professionals (37 participants) and pre-service learners (68 participants) than used previously. The inclusion of experts in Phase 2 of our NA, unlike other NAs in the SSP field (García-Romeu, 2006; Serafini & Torres, 2015), further strengthened the validity of our analysis. Finally, the interviews conducted in Phase 1 provided richer and more detailed information that would not have been obtainable via other methods, and which constituted an improvement for Spanish NAs.

## LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite every effort to carry out a methodologically sound analysis, the current study could not meet all the recommendations for a reliable NA (Long, 2005; Serafini et al., 2015). Firstly, only a convenience sample of participants (informants available and willing to participate, contrary to the recommended stratified random sample of participants; see Long, 2005), could be consulted in Phase 1.

Additionally, as some scholars note (e.g., Lafford, 2013), LSP programs in the U.S. would ideally be strengthened through the incorporation of discourse and conversation analysis of authentic business discourse in the different situations described by the target tasks.

The present study focused on the first two phases (of six) of the architecture proposed by TBLT experts (Norris, 2011). Future research should develop pedagogic tasks that are based on authentic speech samples analyzed from a discourse and conversation analysis point of view. Careful pedagogic sequencing of tasks (see Baralt, Gilabert, & Robinson, 2014 for detailed information on task sequencing) should also be addressed by future research. However, as Serafini and Torres (2015) advocate, the significant time and mental investment involved in conducting and implementing a task-based NA and a task-based program should count on administrative support. Such support facilitates the collection of target discourse samples and promotes instructor training in task-based teaching principles, ultimately improving the curriculum through collaborative efforts and enriching students' learning experiences.

Furthermore, this study did not prove rigorous enough with regard to intercultural aspects of business Spanish. In fact, at the end of the questionnaire, one participant recognized this gap in suggesting tasks 'to effectively communicate with people from different cultures.' This

aspect should be further developed in future NAs and/or subsequent phases of the current NA, by including discourse and conversation analysis of language samples and raising learners' awareness to intercultural communication during instruction.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that a task-based approach to instructional design does not end after conducting a NA and designing a syllabus, or even after implementing it. It is important to assess the program success or lack thereof and, above all, to evaluate its strengths and areas for improvement. The researchers intend to conduct a follow-up evaluation when this class is offered again at their institutions (probably in the fall of 2017). They intend to assess program success by means of interviews with students about the classroom tasks, a careful analysis of student evaluations, and, should the researchers happen to not teach this class, interviews with the instructors in charge to account for their overall impressions of the class structure and task implementation.

## CONCLUSION

The current study contributed to the growing but under-researched field of SSP, specifically in the field of business Spanish in the U.S. Despite the fact that Spanish for the professions has not yet established itself as a subfield in applied linguistics graduate programs in the U.S., there is a growing demand for specialized language courses. Studies have highlighted a lack of preparation among current instructors and the need for additional research to identify what learners and instructors need in order to improve SSP curricula. To this end, this study continued the effort initiated by other researchers (e.g., García-Romeu, 2006; Serafini & Torres, 2015) by performing a multi-phase analysis of learners' needs and articulating those needs into a semester-long business Spanish curriculum.

The adoption of a TBLT-oriented NA made it appropriate to articulate the curriculum around tasks, defined as those things that people actually *do* in their daily lives. In an effort to include those tasks that pre-service learners would perform in their professional future, a large sample of business professionals (37) were consulted. In addition, 15 of the 68 students had held jobs in the past, including summer internships, which, as they mentioned in the questionnaire, informed their judgments about the frequency and difficulty of the different tasks. The interaction of the various sources, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, resulted in a coherent and well-informed curriculum, which will hopefully serve not only the instructors who performed this NA, but many other non-expert instructors who will need to teach and/or design their own business Spanish courses.

Awareness of the types of tasks most commonly performed (or believed to be performed) by participants represents an important takeaway that can inform the L2 Spanish teaching community. Instructors should, for example, be aware of the fact that writing a formal email, preparing a CV, improving one's understanding of business articles and their terminology, practicing job interviews, writing a report, or giving a formal presentation to colleagues using PowerPoint all represent common tasks in the business world that, consequently, need to be addressed in the L2 classroom. Students would undoubtedly benefit from the incorporation of training in such practically oriented activities, as they would enter the real world after graduation with the necessary tools to successfully perform in different business scenarios.

A second takeaway must be considered in light of Serafini and Torres' (2015) findings. The present study strengthened its methodology by conducting interviews in Phase 1 and including a true interaction of methods and sources. Also, the tasks selected were chosen only

on the basis of their frequency (not difficulty). The present findings (e.g., types of tasks, design of a task-based curriculum) clearly build on Serafini and Torres' pool of tasks and observations, thus contributing to the TBLT literature, and, more specifically, to the growing field of SSP.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Semi-Structured Interviews/Open-Ended Surveys

This survey/interview is a first step in gathering information to guide the design of a task-based business Spanish undergraduate course. It will take you up to 15 minutes to complete it.

Thank you so much for your help!

*Definition of Task:* tasks are those things that people do in their jobs

*Example:* Write a business plan to market a new product

#### 1. Business Spanish instructors

-Please list relevant tasks that you as a professor/instructor have assigned to your students. Do not worry if the task is from finance, accounting, or marketing fields? Include as many tasks as you can remember from your classes.

-How did you approach the teaching of this course? Did you have any background on business when you started teaching this course?

-Does your program have dual goals, that is, a focus on language competence as well as content knowledge? If so, how does it try (do you try?) to include both in the course?

#### 2. Current learners (and/or alumni) of Business Spanish

-Why did you enroll in this course?

-What would you like to be able to do in Spanish by the end of your course?

-What type of business settings do you envision yourself working in? What types of things will you be doing in these kinds of jobs?

-Please list relevant tasks that, as a business student, you have completed in your classes. Do not worry if the task is from finance, accounting, or marketing fields. Include as many tasks as you can remember from your classes.

-To what extent do you think the class has prepared you for your professional future? What would you do differently?

#### 3. Business Professionals

-What is your current job? (If not currently working, what was your job in the past?) For how long have you performed/did you perform this job?

-What are the most common tasks you get to perform on a weekly basis?

-Is foreign language competence important in the business world?

-What Spanish skills do you expect your employees/coworkers to be able to have?

#### 4. Business Instructors

-Could you tell me how your business course is generally organized? How do you approach the teaching of your course?

-What should students be able to do in a business job situation? Tell me about concrete tasks that they might encounter on the job, and for which they should be prepared.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Part A: English version of the questionnaire**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd9YfZjNhvS5rJtb8CgmtKWJUHRcGm5r0ts3jwwFCM\\_aeBU3w/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd9YfZjNhvS5rJtb8CgmtKWJUHRcGm5r0ts3jwwFCM_aeBU3w/viewform)

### **Part B: Spanish Translation of the Questionnaire**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe1BY8BU2IBjVwPrFelCcg12Rb-Og7\\_uem7DoSL5oDVba0WNA/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe1BY8BU2IBjVwPrFelCcg12Rb-Og7_uem7DoSL5oDVba0WNA/viewform)