

EVALUATING AUTHENTIC BUSINESS SPANISH TASKS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN DIFFERENT TEACHING MODALITIES

Sergio Adrada-Rafael¹, Gabriela DeRobles²

¹Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, Fairfield University, Fairfield, United States

²Department of Modern Languages, University of Colorado, Denver, United States
sadradarafael@fairfield.edu
gabriela.derobles@ucdenver.edu

Abstract: *The present study delves into the field of Spanish for specific purposes (SSP) by assessing a series of authentic tasks implemented in two Business Spanish courses at distinct institutions in the United States with differing modalities: 1) a small private university on the East coast (n=18) with a face-to-face teaching modality and 2) a large public university in the Midwest (n=9) with an online asynchronous modality. The tasks, previously identified through a Needs analysis (author, 2017), included finding a real job offer in a Spanish-speaking country, preparing a Curriculum Vitae, writing a cover letter, and performing a mock job interview. These tasks required individual and collaborative work throughout the semester. At the end of the term, students completed an anonymous survey consisting of nineteen quantitative and qualitative questions evaluating the tasks' relevance, usefulness, and difficulty. Overall, results revealed that participants from both institutions and modalities valued the usefulness of this task sequence, often rating it as equally or more useful than the rest of the course content, while identifying the job interview as the most challenging task. Furthermore, notable differences between teaching modalities emerged, with online asynchronous students expressing a desire for additional peer interaction compared to the face-to-face counterparts. These findings shed light on the importance of developing, implementing, and adapting SSP authentic tasks to closely resemble real-world job expectations upon graduation while also considering the unique needs of diverse educational settings and modalities. This study provides valuable insights for instructors and program directors in Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) to develop curricula that better prepare students for globalized workplaces.*

Keywords: *Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP); Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT); Business Spanish; Teaching Modality*

1. Introduction

The demand for Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP) courses at universities in the United States (US) has been steadily increasing over the last two decades (Doyle, 2018; Klee, 2015; Sánchez-López, 2012, 2013). Several factors contribute to this growing popularity. The Modern Language Association (MLA), in its 2007 report on higher education in the US, recommended that modern language departments offer more interdisciplinary courses beyond traditional literary or cultural studies to enrich the curriculum and to attract a more diverse pool of students. Additionally, it

was suggested that offering these courses could help counteract the overall decline in language program enrollment in the US. Furthermore, students perceive these courses as providing a professional edge in their language skills, enhancing their CVs and better preparing them for the job market (e.g., Author, 2017; Martinsen, 2015; Thompson & Brown, 2019). This study builds on these insights by incorporating student voices, offering a deeper understanding of how learners perceive and evaluate task-based approaches in SSP courses. By foregrounding student perspectives, this research adds a critical dimension to LSP literature, emphasizing the importance of learner feedback in shaping effective pedagogical practices that align with real-world professional needs.

Another important consideration is the teaching modality. Since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, more courses are being offered in hybrid or online formats (e.g., Kapitanovic, Duvnjak & Crnica, 2021; Sellnow-Richmond & Strawser, 2020; Watson, Templet, Leigh, Broussard & Gillis, 2023). The impact of different teaching modalities on the effectiveness of SSP courses, which inherently include strong practical and hands-on components, remains an area requiring further investigation. This study aims to explore these dimensions, comparing students' assessment of SSP tasks across different teaching formats.

2. Background

Designing and implementing SSP courses is a complex endeavor that requires the pre-identification of the tasks to be included in the course syllabus. The teaching approach underlying this process is Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), a highly influential and widely accepted methodology. TBLT supports the value of learning by doing, also referred to as 'experiential learning' (Dewey, 1933), making it particularly suitable for Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) courses. This approach emphasizes students learning to perform specific tasks in the target language within a professional context (e.g., conducting a job interview, writing a business report, making a phone call to place an order).

Additionally, authentic tasks provide language learners with a clear purpose for participating in classroom communication, enabling them to see tangible results by achieving the task's goal (Long, 2015; Norris, 2011). This approach also offers a strong motivational component (e.g., Brown, 2016; Buendía, 2013; Hayes, 2022, Torres & Serafini, 2016). However, as suitable as the TBLT approach seems to be for LSP, it has not been commonly applied in LSP research (e.g., Brown, 2016; Long, 2015; Author, 2017; Serafini, Lake & Long, 2015), and the same can be said for Spanish for Specific Purposes (SSP) (Sánchez-López, 2012, 2013; Serafini & Torres, 2015).

According to Sánchez-López (2013), Modern language departments, where Spanish can be one of the languages taught, face increasing pressure from the university administrations to offer courses that meet new societal demands, such as language for occupational or professional purposes. She adds that while the field of SSP has made significant advances over the past two decades, some aspects remain unaddressed, particularly the application of a task-based approach to syllabi and material development. As a result, instructors of SSP working within a task-based framework often face a shortage of suitable materials, since traditional Spanish textbooks are not tailored to the specific needs of students. Another challenge in the field is that, in many departments, non-expert instructors

are in charge of teaching these courses, but they lack the training to appropriately implement their SSP courses (e.g., Author, 2017; Serafini & Torres, 2015). This lack of preparation can negatively impact student outcomes (Klee & Tedick, 1997; Lynch, Klee, & Tedick, 2001). In addition, inadequate professional preparation has hindered research and program quality in SSP (Lafford & Ramírez, 2018; Swales, 2000; Tano, 2019).

In recent years, studies such as those by Serafini and Torres (2015) and Author (2017) have sought to address this gap, by conducting Needs Analysis (NA), which is crucial as the first step in developing an SSP course. They identified the most important tasks by triangulating data, surveying business graduates, instructors, and professionals, and then asked business majors to rate the difficulty and frequency of these tasks. This process enabled the authors to categorize tasks into different "task types" for pedagogical purposes. More recently, scholars have emphasized the importance of conducting a NA as a mandatory step to better understand learners' needs to learn in specific contexts and to inform course content. For example, Tano (2017, 2019) designed a NA to understand the linguistic needs of businessmen and CEOs who regularly use Spanish in the workplace, and subsequently designed a task sequence to address these needs. Moreover, Catalá-Hall (2023) provided a thorough review of previous NAs, and pointed out the importance of triangulating data (i.e. collect data from at least three sources) to increase the robustness and reliability of findings. She presented a sample NA that could be presented to hypothetical students pursuing a Master's degree at the University of Barcelona.

The present study aims to build on some of the tasks identified in the NA by Author (2017) and extend the research by evaluating students' perceptions of these tasks regarding their usefulness and difficulty when included in a semester-long Business Spanish curriculum. Additionally, this study seeks to compare the implementation and outcomes of SSP tasks at two different universities in the US and their respective course modalities, face-to-face and online asynchronous, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness and adaptability of these tasks across diverse educational contexts. The northeastern university's face-to-face format allows for immediate interaction, feedback, and peer collaboration, which can significantly enhance the learning experience, especially for language learning. Conversely, the midwestern university's online modality offers flexibility and accessibility, catering to students who may have scheduling constraints or prefer a remote learning environment. The diverse teaching modalities provide a better understanding of how different delivery modes impact the effectiveness and reception of SSP tasks. By evaluating students' perceptions across these variables, the study aims to identify best practices and potential areas for improvement in SSP task design and delivery.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on SSP, highlighting the importance of adaptable and context-specific pedagogical strategies that address the unique linguistic and professional needs of a broad range of students. Importantly, incorporating TBLT and NA into an LSP framework allows for the creation of practical, authentic tasks that provide students with tangible skills applicable to their careers while also ensuring that curricular decisions are informed by both learner needs and real-world professional expectations. Furthermore, comparing student perceptions across different delivery modes (face-to-face and asynchronous online) provides valuable insights into how this variable

influences the reception and effectiveness of task-based approaches and shapes students' learning experiences, engagement, and professional preparedness. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing inclusive, flexible SSP courses that cater to the diverse needs of learners in varying educational environments.

With this in mind, the present study intended to answer the following research question:

How do students in two semester-long Business Spanish courses taught under different modalities perceive the usefulness and difficulty of a sequence of authentic professional tasks integrated in the course design?

3. Method

3.1 University context and course modality

The present study collected data from students at two universities within the United States that differ in a variety of aspects¹. One of them is a private suburban college on the northeast coast with a relatively small student body, about 4900 undergraduate students. The undergraduate Spanish course that students attended was SPAN 3231b: Career-oriented Spanish for Business. It was offered in an in-person format (face-to-face) twice a week. The second university is public and urban and located in the Midwest. Its student body is relatively large, with about 11,000 undergraduate students. The undergraduate course students from the present study were enrolled in SPAN 3782: Spanish for International Business, and it was offered online and asynchronously, that is, without any face-to-face interaction. Other than the different modality type, both courses had a very similar structure and course content, combining the sequence of professional tasks with current news and cultural topics related to Spanish-speaking countries as well as textbook exercises. To prepare students for the sequence of tasks, instructors incorporated various scaffolded activities. For example, writing assignments such as CVs and cover letters included stages of drafting, peer editing, and instructor feedback. For the job interview task, students practiced with mock scenarios and guided prompts. This similarity in course structure and content ensures a comparable evaluation of how different delivery methods impact the learning experience and outcomes.

3.2 Participants

Participants were a total of 27 undergraduate students enrolled in two upper-level business Spanish courses, with ages ranging between 18 and 34 years of age. Students had completed between 3 and 10 courses within the Spanish program, and they self-rated their proficiency level in Spanish as intermediate or intermediate-advanced. If these numbers are broken down by university, of the 27 respondents, 18 were students at the private northeastern university, and the

¹ While this study provides descriptive information about the two institutions where data was collected (e.g., private vs. public, northeastern vs. midwestern), the type of institution was not analyzed as a variable affecting the results. The primary focus of the study remains on comparing the two teaching modalities (face-to-face and online asynchronous) while acknowledging the contextual differences between the two educational settings.

remaining 9 at the public midwestern university. The manuscript authors were instructors of the SSP courses at the said universities.

Of the 18 students at the private northeastern university, 11 of them were female and 7 male, with ages ranging between 18 and 22. 16.7% self-rated their proficiency in Spanish as very advanced, 72.2% as advanced and 11% as intermediate. The majority ($n = 12$) were minoring in Spanish, with majors in other disciplines in the humanities or the business school, and 6 of them were completing a major in Spanish. At the time of the study, participants from this university had completed an average of 6 years of formal instruction in Spanish. They had completed between 3 and 10 Spanish courses, with 12 of respondents having completed between 3 and 5 courses and 6 of them between 5 and 10.

Participants from the public midwestern university included 8 female and 1 male students with ages ranging from 19 to 34. In terms of their overall proficiency level in the target language, all participants self-reported intermediate to very advanced proficiency. Similar to the students at the northeastern university, the majority were minoring in Spanish while only 2 were majoring in Spanish. At the time of the study, participants from this university had completed an average of 5.5 years formal instruction in Spanish, and had taken between 1 to 10 Spanish courses at the university level.

3.3 Instrument

The survey employed in this study was designed by one of the researchers and first piloted with a smaller group of students in a previous offering of the Spanish for Business course in the Fall of 2023. The final version used in the present study consisted of 19 questions including both quantitative (Likert-scale) and qualitative (open-ended) items. These open-ended questions served as a follow-up to previous likert-scale questions so that more detail could be provided in the responses. Of these 19 questions, 7 were personal/background information questions (i.e., gender, age, number of Spanish classes taken), and the remaining 12 were task-specific questions (i.e., how difficult the tasks were, how useful they found them). Once the survey had been finalized, questions were put in a google forms document in order to be distributed to participants at both institutions. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

3.4 Procedure

Both instructors informed students in their classes that they would complete a short survey to assess the sequence of real-world tasks (finding a job offer, completion of CV, cover letter and job interview) that they had completed during the Spring 2024 semester. Surveys were distributed via email using a link that took them to the survey on Google forms and students completed them outside class. Students were instructed that completion of the survey was completely voluntary and that they could withdraw from completing it at any time, that their responses would be anonymous, and that it would not affect their final grade in any way. They did not receive any extra credit or other type of compensation in exchange for participating in the study. Once completed, researchers could access their responses in the Google forms document. IRB approval was obtained to conduct this research with protocol number 4272.

4. Results

A summary of the participant's responses is presented below. The open-ended qualitative responses were also analyzed for recurring themes and patterns regarding their perceived usefulness and difficulty of each task.

When asked to rate how much business Spanish they learned (1 = very little and 5 = a lot) after completing the sequence of tasks, both groups responded favorably. However, as indicated in Table 1, more participants from the northeastern university (face-to-face) (50%) reported that they found the tasks "very useful" over twice as much as those from the university in the Midwest (online) (22.2%). Regarding their perceived overall usefulness (1 = not useful at all; 5 = very useful), participants from both institutions evaluated the sequence of tasks as useful or very useful for their future careers (see Table 2). Similar to the previous item, participants from the northeastern university selected the highest rating (very useful) to a greater extent (77.8%) than those from the midwestern university (55.6%).

For the next item, participants had to assess the usefulness of the 'real-world' tasks in relation to the rest of the course content. While more than half of the participants from the northeastern university (55.6%) reported finding the tasks more useful than the rest of the course content, only 22.2% from the midwestern university supported this statement. Instead, the majority of the participants from the latter institution (77.8%) indicated that the focal tasks were just as useful as the rest of the curriculum material, compared to 44% of participants from the northeastern university. When asked to elaborate on their response by providing a written explanation for this particular item, the qualitative data from the latter institution emphasized the lasting relevance and practical value of the tasks in contrast to the rest of the course content such as the textbook exercises, which were viewed as less pertinent and lacking long-term utility:

"This is the first time I have completed an assignment for a Spanish Class that will continue to be applicable to my professional career after the course ends (i.e. now having a CV and cover letter in Spanish). Textbook exercises just don't resonate with me in the same way, and don't offer the same longevity."

While participants from the midwestern university also highlighted the practical application of the target tasks due to their direct relevance to participants' career aspirations, the majority commented on the equal importance and utility of both the real-world tasks and the rest of the class content as shown in the following example:

"The "real-world" tasks were very important. I do think the cultural lessons about countries and discussions about current news in Spanish speaking countries are just as important, though. Those were useful to learn new vocabulary and new topics to discuss in the Spanish speaking business world."

Participants were also asked if the content covered in the focal courses (including the real-world tasks) was more useful than the material in other Spanish courses they have taken at the university level. An overwhelming majority of participants from the northeastern university responded yes (88%) and only 11.1% rated it as equally useful. In contrast, for the midwestern university, 22.2% of students rated

the content as more useful, 11.1% rated it as less useful, and 66.7% found it as useful as other Spanish courses they have taken. Responses for this item revealed that participants from the former institution valued the relevance and practical application of the material. The majority of participants mentioned that this class provided valuable real-life practice that they could see themselves using in the future, unlike previous courses that felt more like general grammar or history lessons. For instance, one of the participants responded:

"I only really learned general grammar and history in Spanish in other courses instead of real-world skills."

The practical skills gained in this class, such as writing resumes and cover letters in Spanish, were particularly appreciated for their applicability in both personal and professional contexts. Students who had not previously taken business or finance-related courses found the introduction to these concepts particularly helpful. They felt that the skills learned in this class were more likely to be remembered and used, as opposed to content from other courses which they struggled to recall or found redundant. This can be seen in the following response:

"I would say it's more useful because it's real-life practice. I have also never taken a business class before, so I feel like the majority of concepts were very new to me. . . so I found this class to be extremely helpful in understanding those basic concepts. In conclusion, as a beginner in the subject, I found this class really great."

Table 3 presents Likert ratings of perceived usefulness expressed in percentages for each individual task performed. As Table 3 shows, among participants in the northeastern university 55.6% found creating a CV to be the most useful task, followed by the cover letter (38.9%), and the job interview (33.3%). In contrast, only 16.7% considered searching for a job offer as useful. Overall, 50% of these participants found all tasks collectively to be useful. Participants from the midwestern institution also rated the CV highly, with 33.3% finding it useful. The same percentage found the job interview beneficial. Participants in this group found the cover letter (22.2%) and searching for a job offer as the least useful tasks (11.1%). About half of the participants (55.6%) found all tasks collectively useful. This can be seen in the following two responses:

"They are lasting documents that will grow with me as my career develops, they are also something tangible/deliverable. The job interview exercised my previously developed abilities in formal conversation."

"I found all of them useful, because they all go hand in hand - they touched on different topics that went along with getting a job. I think not having gone through one of them, for example what job interviews are like, then that would've missed the point of what this class is about."

In terms of difficulty (see Table 4), both groups gave similar ratings for each task. 55.6% of respondents from each institution found the job interview to be the most difficult task, followed closely by writing a cover letter (50% face-to-face, 44.4% online). Creating a CV was equally difficult for both groups (22.2%), and searching for job offers was the least challenging task (11.1% face-to-face, 12.2% online).

When asked to justify their responses, the majority of participants from both institutions commented that the job interview was particularly difficult due to unfamiliarity, the added pressure of speaking in Spanish, and the anxiety of real-time responses. Additionally, both groups agreed that the cover letter task posed challenges due to limited job experience and the requirement for company-specific customization:

“Cover letters are very difficult to do, even in English. It has to be specific to each company which is hard.”

General difficulties also included time management, coordinating with partners, and maintaining confidence in Spanish-speaking abilities. Notably, participants from the midwestern institution highlighted that the virtual format of the course added complexity to each task, particularly to the job interview, which is reflected on this response:

“The job interview was the most difficult because, in this setting specifically, everything was online. While I realize some job interviews are completely virtual, I had a hard time communicating effectively.”

Finally, the questionnaire included an open-ended question that asked participants to explain what they liked (or disliked) the most about completing the target sequence of tasks. The majority of respondents from both groups highlighted the positive aspects of the course and the tasks, specifically. Overall, participants appreciated the practical application of learning material, the organization of the tasks, noting clear directions and useful examples. Half of the respondents from the midwestern university expressed a preference for in-person classes to enhance speaking practice and peer interaction, as seen below:

“I think I would've liked to take this class in person. I prefer to take Spanish classes in person in general, but this semester I had to go all online. I would suggest if the opportunity arises, that students opt to take this course in person to get more speaking practice and peer interaction.”

Participants noted that they would benefit from direct communication, immediate feedback, and interaction that a face-to-face course can offer. Moreover, participants from this university suggested including more multimedia content, particularly video lessons to enhance listening skills, solidify comprehension of the course content, and foster more interaction with the instructor. On the other hand, participants from the northeastern university emphasized collaboration with classmates and peer comparisons as beneficial for developing understanding and ideas.

Table 1. Perceived assessment of learning from sequence of tasks (Reported in Percentages)

	1	2	3	4	5
Institution					
Face-to-Face (<i>n</i> = 18)	0%	5.6%	5.6%	38.9%	50%
Online (<i>n</i> = 9)	0%	11.1%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%

(1 = very little and 5 = a lot)

Table 2. Perceived usefulness of sequence of tasks (Reported in Percentages)

	1	2	3	4	5
Institution					
Face-to-Face (<i>n</i> = 18)	0%	5.6%	5.6%	16.7%	77.8%
Online (<i>n</i> = 9)	0%	0%	22.2%	22.2%	55.6%

(1 = not useful at all and 5 = very useful)

Table 3. Perceived usefulness of each task (reported in percentages)

Task	Searching for job offer	CV	Cover letter	Job interview	All of them
Institution					
Face-to-Face (<i>n</i> = 18)	16.7%	55.6%	38.9%	33.3%	50%
Online (<i>n</i> = 9)	11.1%	33.3%	22.2%	33.3%	55.6%

(1 = not useful at all and 5 = very useful)

Table 4. Perceived difficulty of each task (reported in percentages)

Task	Searching for job offer	CV	Cover letter	Job interview	All of them
Institution					
Face-to-Face (<i>n</i> = 18)	11.1%	22.2%	50%	55.6%	0%
Online (<i>n</i> = 9)	12.2%	22.2%	44.4%	55.6%	0%

(1 = not difficult at all and 5 = very difficult)

5. Discussion

The present findings reveal that participants, for the most part, value the learning process and the usefulness of the tasks included in the course curriculum. The practical nature and real-world applicability of these tasks seemed to be factors much appreciated by students at both institutions. Specifically, completing a CV and a cover letter in Spanish were viewed as valuable tasks, as these documents are easily adaptable for future job searches in a Spanish-speaking country. Additionally, conducting a job interview provided them with significant experiential learning applicable to future occasions. This finding is in line with the works of Author (2017), and Serafini and Torres (2015), among others, who advocate for the

inclusion of authentic tasks in language courses to enhance learners' practical language use and motivation. (e.g., Baralt & Gómez, 2017).

Notably, at both institutions the preparation of the CV was rated as the most useful task out of the four. This could be explained in light of the importance that a CV conveys in the job search process, since it is the first document employers are going to evaluate. If employers do not perceive the candidate's CV as the right fit for the position, the submission of a cover letter and conducting a job interview might not take place.

In relation to the difficulty of the tasks, it could also be expected to see the job interview rated as the most difficult task. Whereas the completion of a CV or a cover letter are presentational tasks, where students can devote more time to them, a job interview is an interactional type of task, requiring specific responses to questions that might not be known beforehand. This might entail greater stress and nervousness. This suggests the need for further guidance and practice, particularly for tasks that students found difficult, such as job interviews and cover letters. While students do value these practical tasks, they also require sufficient support and scaffolding to perform them effectively and confidently, aligning with observations by Sánchez-López (2013) and Serafini and Torres (2015) regarding the importance of adequate training and support in task-based language courses.

The study also revealed notable differences between the two groups of students in their evaluation of real-world tasks versus other course content. Specifically, more than half of the participants from the northeastern university found the real-world tasks to be more useful than the rest of the course content; in contrast, the majority of the participants from the latter institution indicated that the focal tasks were just as useful as the rest of the curriculum material. In other words, students from the midwestern university notably emphasized the importance of balancing real-world tasks with the broader course content. They valued the practical application of the tasks while also recognizing the cultural and linguistic insights provided by the other components of the curriculum. Previous research has shown that different teaching modalities can significantly affect student engagement and learning outcomes (e.g., Sellnow-Richmond & Strawser, 2020). Thus, the appreciation for cultural and linguistic components in the midwestern university could be attributed to the online format's potential to offer a broader range of content types and learning activities. The flexibility of asynchronous online learning environments allows for the integration of diverse materials that can cater to various learning preferences. On the other hand, the face-to-face format typically supports more interactive and immediate feedback mechanisms, which could have enhanced the perceived effectiveness of practical tasks. In contrast, online asynchronous formats may require students to be more self-directed, potentially leading them to value a broader range of course content equally, as they must integrate various learning resources independently.

The study also revealed differences in how students from the two universities perceived the usefulness of the Spanish for Business course content compared to other Spanish courses they had taken. The data from the northeastern university revealed that when compared to traditional Spanish courses, such as those focused on literature or culture, the business Spanish courses were rated more favorably in terms of their practicality and relevance. Students appreciated the tangible outcomes of their efforts, which were directly applicable to their professional lives, echoing the findings of Catalá-Hall (2023) and Doyle (2018),

who have underscored the necessity for language courses to evolve and meet the specific demands of the professional world. In contrast, students from the midwestern university, who participated in an online asynchronous course, found the course content to be as useful as their other Spanish courses. This perception could be attributed to the widespread implementation of TBLT in other Spanish courses at the midwestern university, an approach that addresses the communicative needs of learners by focusing on tasks that reflect authentic language use (Long, 2005, 2015) As a result, students may perceive all their Spanish courses, not just the business Spanish course, as highly useful and relevant to their career goals.

Overall, a similar pattern was detected in the responses from both institutions in that students valued tasks that had clear practical applications and contributed directly to their professional development. These findings suggest that while TBLT is effective across different teaching modalities, the mode of delivery can significantly impact students' experiences and perceptions. For face-to-face courses, leveraging the immediacy of interaction and feedback is crucial to maximize the benefits of practical tasks. On the other hand, in online asynchronous courses incorporating more interactive and collaborative elements as well as providing opportunities for real-time feedback can help mitigate the drawbacks associated with the lack of peer interaction and immediacy.

Ultimately, by incorporating student voices, this study offers a unique contribution to LSP literature, emphasizing the importance of learner perceptions in assessing and refining task-based approaches. The findings reinforce the value of aligning curriculum design with student needs and professional realities, ensuring that SSP courses remain relevant and impactful.

6. Limitations and future directions

While the present study provides valuable insights into the needs of SSP learners, it is not without limitations. The sample size is relatively small and unequal when comparing both groups, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The sample size was dependent on the course enrollments. Future studies should aim to replicate this research with larger populations to extend the present findings. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking the pedagogical impact of tasked-based curricula for SSP on learner outcomes over more than one semester would provide deeper insights into the long-term efficacy of these programs.

This study only focused on a specific set of real-world tasks—finding a job offer, preparing a CV, writing a cover letter, and performing a mock job interview. While these tasks are undoubtedly relevant and practical, they represent only a subset of possible tasks that could be included in a Spanish for Business curriculum. Future research should evaluate a more comprehensive array of real-world tasks, such as those identified by previous NAs (Author, 2017; Serafini & Torres, 2015) across different teaching modalities and contexts to provide a holistic view of their effectiveness.

Finally, the comparison between face-to-face and online asynchronous modalities highlighted important differences in student perceptions. However, the study did not explore other potential modalities, such as hybrid or synchronous online formats, which might offer different advantages and challenges. Related to course modality, lack of peer interaction in the online asynchronous format was noted as a

drawback by some students suggesting that further research should examine how varying levels of interaction in different teaching modalities impact students' perception of the tasks.

7. Conclusion and implications

The present study contributes to the growing literature in the SSP field by assessing the usefulness and difficulty of a series of authentic tasks, previously identified through a Needs Analysis (Author, 2017), implemented in two Business Spanish courses taught under two different modalities: in person face-to-face vs. online asynchronous. A key finding is the significant value students place on task-based approaches that directly support professional goals. Participants from both institutions recognized the long-term usefulness, relevance, and practicality of the tasks. These findings validate the inclusion of carefully designed, context-specific tasks in SSP courses as a means to address learners' professional needs while maintaining learners' motivation. Assignments such as creating a CV or conducting a job interview in Spanish foster experiential learning and provide tangible outcomes that enhance students' preparedness for real-world scenarios.

Another significant insight is the nuanced impact of teaching modalities on the student learning experience. While students across both modalities seemed to benefit from the task sequence, those in an asynchronous online modality place greater value on the rest of the course content than those in the face-to-face format. Additionally, the face-to-face format offered immediate interaction and feedback, which students found particularly effective in building their confidence and improving performance. Conversely, the online asynchronous format presented unique challenges, such as limited peer interaction, which highlights the importance of integrating collaborative elements and providing robust instructional support in digital learning environments. As online and hybrid learning options continue to expand, understanding how these modalities influence student outcomes is vital for designing effective SSP courses. The varied responses from students in different modalities suggest that SSP courses must be adaptable, leveraging the strengths of the teaching format to maximize student engagement and outcomes.

Ultimately, this research serves as a call to action for institutions to prioritize SSP courses as a means of equipping students with the skills necessary to thrive in globalized professional environments. By addressing the unique needs of diverse student populations and adapting to different educational settings, SSP courses can play a transformative role in preparing students for meaningful engagement with the Spanish-speaking world in their careers.

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Appendix A – Survey questions

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender?

Male	Female	Non-binary	Other
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3. What year are you in?

First	Second	Third	Fourth
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4. Are you completing a major or a minor in Spanish?
5. How many Spanish courses have you taken at the university?
6. How many years have you studied Spanish?
7. How would you rate your overall Spanish proficiency as of today? 1 (beginner) to 5 (very advanced)
8. From 1 (very little) to 5 (a lot), how much business/professional Spanish did you learn by completing the sequence of "real-world" tasks?
9. From 1 (not useful at all) to 5 (very useful), how useful do you think completing the sequence of tasks will be for you in the future if you have to look for a job in a Spanish-speaking country?

10. Did you find completing the sequence of tasks more useful than the rest of the class content covered during the semester?
Yes No As useful as the rest of the class content
11. If you answered "yes" or "no" to the previous question, why did you choose that answer?
12. Which task(s) have you found more useful to complete? You can select more than one option.
Looking for a job offer CV Cover letter Job interview All of them
13. If you selected one or more of the options in the previous question, why did you find it/them more useful?
14. Which task(s) did you find more challenging/difficult to complete? You can select more than one answer
Looking for a job offer CV Cover letter Job interview All of them
15. If you selected one or more of the options in the previous question, why did you find it/them more challenging/difficult?
16. In addition to the preparation of the CV, cover letter and job interview, is there any other "real-world" task (or tasks) that you would like to have completed?
17. If you had to compare the content we have covered in this class (including the real-world tasks), with other Spanish classes you have taken, would you rate this class content as being more useful than your other classes?
18. If you answered "yes" or "no" to the previous question, why did you choose that answer?
19. Overall, what did you like (or dislike) the most about completing this sequence of tasks this semester? Any other comments?