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Foreign Language Proficiency among Undergraduate Business Students: A Pilot Study

Dr. Carol Blaszczynski
Dr. Jose Perez-Carballo

Abstract

Undergraduate business students (n = 155) were surveyed about their knowledge of foreign languages and the value they placed on speaking foreign languages for business purposes. For speaking, reading, and writing proficiency, students reported the following languages in order of frequency: English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese. For listening proficiency, the languages reported were English, Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin. About 85% of the students had learned a second language, with over 75% learning the second language before the age of 10. Almost 95% of the students believed that it was either extremely important or somewhat important to be proficient in more than one language. About 34% of the students have lived outside of the United States for a year or longer. Foreign language proficiency was gained in academic settings by 60% of the students. Students reported a preference for studying Spanish, French, Mandarin, Chinese, and Japanese.

Introduction

The ability to work with different cultures has been identified as one of three vital skills for 21st century managers (Molinsky, 2012). The ability to code switch between cultures is evident in business persons who have developed a "global mind-set," a term coined by Javidan (Molinsky, 2012) that describes employees who have worked internationally and who possess cultural intelligence. Proficiency in more than one language assists in developing a global mindset (Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education, 2004). What level of foreign language preparation do students enrolled in a College of Business and Economics at a university in the Western United States possess?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was threefold: (a) to identify the languages spoken by undergraduate business students at a Western university, (b) to determine the value that business students place on speaking more than one language, and (c) to specify the perceived importance for business students, who are current and future employees, to be proficient in more than one language.

Review of the Literature

Why should business students study foreign languages? Cardon (2007) asserted that

> The primary value for Americans learning foreign languages is that doing so will assist in learning the cultural logic of other societies, which will help Americans understand appropriate business behavior. Also, those who have gained language proficiency will be well positioned as regional economic clusters increase the cross-cultural usage of languages other than English (pp. 14-15).

Similarly, Waldman and Soma (2007) commented that "the importance of knowing the language and culture of the customer in international business situations is well documented" (p. 49).

While English has long been known as the "language of international business," the ability to speak other languages is critical for those who conduct global business (Rentz, Flatley, & Lentz, 2011). The undergraduate business curriculum has recognized the importance of global competencies. In fact, Colby, Ehrlich, Sullivan, and Dolle (2011) reported that, "foreign language courses are another place for integrating intercultural learning" (p. 137). Understanding other languages and cultures has become commonplace (Vawdrey& Saunders, 2007). Likewise, the business community has expressed a desire for employees with foreign language ability (Conference Board, 2006). Additionally, Weisblat and Bresciani (2012) identified 15 skills and competencies in two domains necessary for college graduates. Proficiency in foreign languages was rated highest among the global skills and competencies.

Standard III of the National Business Education Association Standards (NBEA, 2013) for International Business states, "Apply communication strategies necessary and appropriate for effective and mutually-beneficial international business relations" (p. 97). Level one performance expectations for oral and written communication include, "Demonstrate awareness, appreciation, and respect for different languages and culture," and "Identify basic words and phrases in languages used in business throughout the world" (p. 97). Level 2 performance expectations specify, "Discuss challenges that can arise in a multilingual business environment," and "Discuss complications resulting from speaking, writing, or interpreting a language incorrectly" (p. 97). Further, the importance of language proficiency is underscored by the following Level 3 performance standard: "In a given language, use words and phrases important to businesspeople" (p. 97).

The Policies Commission for Business and Economic Education (2004) issued a statement about the importance of preparing business students for the global workforce, which includes knowledge of languages and cultures: "Multicultural contexts encompass values, attitudes, and beliefs; social and business customs, behaviors, and practices; sensitivity to diversity; language; and written, oral, and nonverbal communications. Multicultural perspectives are critical for success in the global business environment" (p. 16).

In its 2013 revised standards, The Association for Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the accrediting body for schools of business around the globe, stipulated in Standard 9 that "diverse and multicultural work environments (able to work effectively in diverse work environments)" be fostered through the undergraduate business curricular content offered by its member institutions (AACSB, 2013, n.p.). Business instructors should develop students so they are able to "cope with, and benefit from, cultural and linguistic diversity" (Ainsworth, 2013, p. 29).

Dulfano (2013) asserted that research "corroborates [a] correlation for those who study [languages] or are bilingual with stronger communication skills, mathematic and language arts capabilities, cultural sensitivity, cooperation, negotiation, and compromise" (p. 16). A study conducted by Foreman-Peck reported that the United Kingdom lost over 3% of GDP because of monolingualism (Pawle, 2013).

Rogers and Arn (1998) reported that 41% of AACSB institutions had a foreign language requirement with only 4% of the institutions requiring a foreign language of all students majoring in business. More recently, Wardrope, Orza, Guild, Karimipour, and Minifie (2009) found that 31% of AACSB institutions offered international business programs that had a foreign language requirements; however, it should be noted that the sample size of this reported study was only 75 institutions of the over 400 AACSB-accredited institutions.

Wickham (2014) recommended that business persons “consider getting at least a basic understanding of the local language or dialect as a facet of your strategic approach” (p. 37). The widespread use of the English language throughout Europe was noted and described by Scott (2006).

King, Carnes, and Zhuang (2013) assessed the interest of students in working or studying abroad. Among the 137 survey respondents, only 13% reported having fluency in more than one language. Which languages do North American business students find most useful? In a study of Canadian business students, Ainsworth (2013) found that the following languages were reported as most useful: English, 36%; French, 36%; Spanish, 21%’ Chinese, 14%, Croatian, 14%; Italian, 7%; and Serbian, 7%. About 20% of the business students reported using their foreign languages.

A thorough review of the business education literature revealed no current studies about perceptions of the usefulness of business languages; this study was conducted to fill a gap in the literature.

Research Questions

For the purposes of the study, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What is the number of languages spoken by business students at very good or higher levels?
2. What are the languages spoken by business students as well as the proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?
3. If students speak more than one language, how and when were the second and subsequent languages learned?
4. What is the perceived importance for business students and employees to be proficient in more than one language?
5. How many business studentshave lived for one year or longer outside of the United States?
6. How many business students completed formal study of a foreign language in an academic setting?
7. If anyone language could be studied, which language would it be and why?

Methods and Procedures Used to Collect Data

Instrumentation. Based upon a review of the literature, a ten-item survey was developed to identify languages spoken by undergraduate students. The survey was piloted and minor modifications were made to the wording of some questions for clarity.

The Participants. A total of 155 students enrolled in six sections of foundational business courses completed the online survey hosted by SurveyMonkey. The students were informed that their responses were anonymous. The gender breakdown of the respondents was 71 or 46% males and 84 or 54% females.

Results and Discussion

Question 1. What is the number of languages spoken by business students at very good or higher levels?

The average number of languages spoken by the respondents at very good or higher levels is 1.7, with a maximum of 5 and a median of 2. Eight percent of the respondents reported speaking three or more languages, while 36% reported speaking less than two languages.

Question 2. What are the languages spoken by business students as well as the proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing?

Table 1 shows the 11 languages spoken by the respondents at very good or better levels, as well as their frequencies. Not surprisingly, English was mentioned by 129 or 83% of the students, and Spanish was the next most frequently mentioned language reported by 59 or 38% of the students. Since the university that the students attended has earned a Hispanic Serving Institution designation, it is not surprising that Spanish is the second most frequently reported language for which students report spoken proficiency.

Table 1

Languages for which Students Report Spoken Proficiency

Language	Frequency
English	129
Spanish	59
Other	28
Mandarin	17
Cantonese	17
Armenian	7
Russian	2
Japanese	2
German	1
French	1
Arabic	1

Table 2 shows the 11 languages for which respondents indicated having a listening proficiency of very good or better. The average number of languages for which students possess listening proficiency is 1.9, with a maximum of 5.0 and a median of 2.0.

Table 2

Languages for which Students Report Listening Proficiency

Language	Frequency
English	134
Spanish	70
Other	30
Cantonese	20
Mandarin	19
Armenian	7
Russian	2
Japanese	2
Arabic	2
Italian	1
French	1

Table 3 shows the 12 languages for which respondents indicated having a reading proficiency of very good or better levels, as well as their frequencies. The average number of languages for which students possess reading proficiency is 1.7, with a maximum of 4.0 and a median of 2.0.

Table 3

Languages for which Students Report Reading Proficiency

Languages	Frequency
English	138
Spanish	58
Other	21
Mandarin	12
Cantonese	7
Armenian	5
French	3
Russian	3
Arabic	1
German	1
Italian	1
Japanese	1

Table 4 shows the 11 languages for which respondents indicated having a writing proficiency of very good or better levels. The average number of languages for which students possess writing proficiency is 1.5, with a maximum of 4.0 and a median of 1.0.

Table 4

Languages for which Students Report Writing Proficiency

Languages	**Frequency**
English	126
Spanish	51
Other	19
Mandarin	11
Cantonese	7
Armenian	5
Russian	2
Arabic	1
French	1
German	1
Japanese	1

Question 3. If students speak more than one language, how and when were the second and subsequent languages learned?

Of 155 participants, 129 (83%) learned at least one second language. Of the ones who learned at least one second language, 99 of 129 (77%) respondents learned the language before the age of 11.

Of the 99 respondents who learned at least one second language before they were 11 years old, 3 of 99 (3%) learned from high school courses, 5 of 99 (5%) learned from private lessons, 40 of 99 (40%) learned when living in country where the language was spoken, and 51 of 99 (52%) learned from family members.

The languages learned before the age of 10(and their frequencies) were English, 58; Spanish, 40; Cantonese, 14; Other, 12; Mandarin, 12; Armenian, 6; Russian, 3; Japanese, 1; Arabic, 1.Of the 129 students who learned at least one second language, 86 of 129 (67%) reported English as one of the additional languages learned. In other words, two thirds of the respondents are not native speakers of English.

A total of 29 respondents learned their first second language at age 11 or later, with 32 total languages learned at that time. In contrast, 98 respondents learned their first second language before age 11, with 186 total languages learned at that age.

The average number of languages learned by the 29 respondents who learned the second language at age 11 or later is 1.1, while the average number of languages learned by those respondents who started before age 11 is 1.9.

A comparison of the methods used by respondents who learned a second language before age 11 or younger and those respondents who learned a second language at age 11 or later is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Comparison of Second Language Learning Methods

Learning method	Before age 11 (n = 98)	At age 11 or later (n = 29)
High school classes	3%	59%
College classes	0%	28%
Private lessons	5%	4%
Living in country where the language is spoken	40%	14%
Family	52%	7%

Question 4.What is the perceived importance for business students and employees to be proficient in more than one language?

A total of 151 of the 155 study participants answered this question, with 92% responding that it is either “extremely important” or “somewhat important” to be proficient in more than one language. Please note that percentages exceeded 100% due to rounding.

Of the respondents, 92% responded that it is either “extremely important” or “somewhat important” for business students and employees to be proficient in more than one language.

Table 6

Perceived Importance of Proficiency in More Than One Language

Importance of Language Proficiency	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely important	105	68%
Somewhat important	37	24%
Of average importance	6	4%
Of little importance	1	1%
Of no importance	2	1%
No response	4	3%

Individuals in the set that responded that it is “extremely important” or “somewhat important" for business students and employees to be proficient in more than one language speak more languages (1.78 vs 1.25) at a good or better level than the set that responded that it is "Of Average Importance" or less, with a $p = 0.01$. In other words, respondents who believe it is important to know languages do speak more languages. Conversely, people who do not believe think it is so important to speak other languages speak fewer languages.

Question 5. How many business students have lived for one year or longer outside of the United States?

One third of the students, 51 (33%) have lived for a year or longer outside of the United States, while 100 out of 151 (65%) have not. Four students (3%) did not answer the question.

Question 6. How many business students completed formal study of a foreign language in an academic setting?

A total of 91 respondents (59%) completed formal study of a foreign language in an Academic setting, while 61 respondents (39%) did not. Three students (2%) did not answer the question.

Question 7. If anyone language could be studied, which language would it be?

As Table 7 indicates, the most popular languages for study included Spanish, French, Mandarin, Chinese, and Japanese.

Conclusions

Before the age of 11, study participants learned a foreign language via informal means such as learning from family members and by living in another country and using the language in everyday life. After age 11, foreign languages were learned primarily through formal classroom instruction. Participants reported that skill in writing a foreign language was weaker than skill in speaking, listening, and reading the foreign language, which is a typical pattern in language skill acquisition development.

The most popular language for study was Spanish. This finding is not surprising since the study participants attended a university that has been recognized as a Hispanic-Serving institution. The study findings may not be generalizable to other institutions that serve students with a different demographic profile but are important as a basis for identifying foreign language knowledge and assisting in focusing appropriate research studies that build on this pilot investigation.

Table 7

Preferred Language to Study

Language	Frequency	Percentage	Language	Frequency	Percentage
Spanish	37	25	Cantonese	2	1
French	22	15	English	2	1
Mandarin	21	14	Italian	2	1
Chinese	20	13	Arabic	1	1
Japanese	14	9	ASL	1	1
Italian	8	5	Latin	1	1
Korean	5	4	None	1	1
Portuguese	4	3	Russian	1	1
German	3	2	Slavonic	1	1
Armenian	2	1	Tagalog	1	1

Recommendations

Based upon the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. This pilot study should be extended to a larger sample size and expand the survey questions to include items related to the perception of the economic value of foreign language proficiency.
2. One limitation of this study was that students provided self-reports of language proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Asking about the grade earned in the course could yield more reliable data.
3. Extending the pilot study to address such aspects as training in cultural specifics and how often the foreign language was spoken for business purposes would provide a better picture of the level of student skills in both foreign language and cultural understanding.
4. To increase the relevance of future studies, global businesses should be surveyed to determine which languages they deem most useful in the conduct of their operations. Identifying the languages most desired by employers will be instructive in guiding students when selecting languages to study.

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The Settlers of Catan® Form a Provincial Government: An Experiential Exercise for the Small Business Classroom

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Abstract

The use of experiential teaching methods has evolved over recent years to better address the needs of the millennial generation of college students. The millennial student has a preference for "doing" as a primary learning mechanism. To facilitate this type of engagement, this paper describes the use of a commercial board game, The Settlers of Catan®, in a small business classroom. The game consists of players growing their colonies through economic exchange of resources with other players. The game is played once with normal rules, followed by a second game where the instructor assumes the role of a government - imposing tax laws, regulations and added rules. The purpose of the exercise is to demonstrate the effects government regulations have on small business. The difference in the outcomes of the two games shows a much less efficient economy of the second game where the fictional government is heavily involved, as paralleled by the real life effects governments have on productivity of small businesses. In addition, students learn that government regulations can also become a source of competitive advantage for those businesses that can construct efficient systems to handle the regulations.

Literature Review

During the mid-1970s, a renewed interest in "experiential learning" prompted educators to explore new teaching methodologies and practices (Certo & Graf, 1979). Research showed that students were learning both from the experiential activity itself and the debriefing that took place afterwards which spurred cognitive reflection and discussion (Certo, 1976).

Since that time, the makeup and constitution of the American college student has evolved into what is generally referred to as the millennial generation (Oblinger, 2003). Characteristics of this new college student include a preference for "doing rather than knowing" and on highly social interaction rather than solitary learning (Mastilak, 2012). The notion of experiential learning that has continued to gain momentum since its modern renewal in the 1970's has dovetailed seamlessly with the learning style of the millennial student. Generally, millennial students find the experiential approach to be both "instructive and enjoyable," and the method gives students a "sense of ownership for the course content" (Mastilak, 2012, p. 51).

Commercial board games are one such experiential genre. For example, *Monopoly®* is used in accounting classrooms to facilitate introductory financial concepts (Shanklin & Ehlen, 2007). Students can draw rich conclusions and glean lessons from the human experience of board games (Ott, 2013). Moreover, board games propel students into a "sophisticated thought process that challenges [students] to think critically" (Harris, 2009, p. 24). To be effective, the games must be both authentic (as opposed to worksheets and dice with construed educational value) and contain an ostensible connection to the course curriculum (Harris, 2009).

The millennial student is both cooperative in spirit and a structured rule follower (Elam, Stratton & Gibson, 2007). These characteristics dispose them to full mental participation and to compliance with all board game rules, which suggests they will refrain from engaging the activity with a "lusory", or apathetic attitude (Suits, 1978). The millennial generation possesses a few characteristics that are considered by some scholars to hinder progress in the classroom. Much, Wagener, Breitkreutz, and Hellenbrand (2014) found that millennial students tend to consider themselves exempt from rules, take a passive approach to problem solving, and depend on others for problem solving.

As it relates specifically to business classes, Gabrielsson, Tell and Politis (2010) argue that experiential learning allows students observe the effects of their behaviors on business outcomes, and "relate the research, theory and management practices in practical settings" (p. 6) Combining the benefits of an experiential learning tool like a board game with the disposition of the millennial student would suggest that this approach is an effective pedagogical method.

Introduction to the Exercise

The experiential exercise reviewed in this paper consists of using the commercial board game *The Settlers of Catan®* to illustrate the role that government plays in small business. Moreover, it illustrates the effects this role has on the management of small business.

First released in 1995, *The Settlers of Catan®* has been translated into 30 languages and by 2009 had sold 15 million copies worldwide (Curry, 2009). The basic premise of the game involves players collecting and trading with each other the natural resources of the game board and building individual settlements with those resources in a competitive environment.

For the in-class exercise, the game is first played with normal rules so the students can get comfortable with gameplay (and to serve as a standard against which to compare the second round where government plays a role). The students play a second game with the instructor serving as the "government," imposing regulations, sanctions and a tax structure. Playing one game uninhibited and one game with regulations allows students to reflect on the effects and experience of government's role in the economic growth of the players' settlements.

Small Business and Government Regulation

Research exploring the effects of government regulation on small business is fairly comprehensive. The Small Business Administration (SBA) recently published a study which concluded that 97% of all small businesses have 500 or fewer employees (McCrudden 2014). Small businesses have fewer resources and fewer employees that specialize in regulatory compliance than do big businesses and corporations (Peterson, Kozmetsky & Ridgway, 1984). This leaves them particularly encumbered by these regulations. Not surprisingly, small business owners tend to have a negative disposition towards these regulations and towards the government itself (Wentworth, 1955).

Consequences of government regulations can be severe – creating financial and productivity burdens on small business (Peterson et al., 1984). Specifically, regulations tend to be complex, create competitive uncertainty, add to administrative costs, and require additional record keeping (Carter, 1990). In some cases, regulatory changes even threaten the existence of small businesses or specific industries (Chilton & Weidenbaum, 1982). The impact can be devastating for whole economies, as government involvement in the private sector limits overall growth and innovation (Fabro & Aixalà, 2012).

Notwithstanding the encumbrances that government regulations can have on small business, some regulations can afford benefits and opportunities. The U.S. government maintains a "vibrant. . . culture of partnership with the small business sector" which fuels new research and development endeavors as well as joint venture business partnerships (Hunt 2004, p. 14). An additional benefit to government regulations is that they create a market for more small businesses to help with compliance (Byrd & Megginson 2013). Government regulations create increased demand for small businesses that focus on accounting, management consulting, and legal advice.

Learning Outcomes

After participating in this exercise and having time to reflect upon, discuss, and internalize the outcomes of their experience, students should gain a better understanding of the following tenets:

1) **Time consuming -** Government regulations are time consuming (Adkins, 2011)
2) **Record keeping -** Government regulations require tedious record keeping to stay in compliance (Carter, 1990)
3) **Effects on Productivity -** Government regulations limit productivity and stifle overall economic growth (Fabro & Aixalà, 2012)
4) **Competitive Advantage** – Small businesses that understand the rules and put systems in place to comply with government regulations create a competitive advantage and significantly reduce their operating costs (Byrd & Megginson 2013).
5)

The Exercise – Part 1

To orientate the students on the exercise, the instructor first must explain the rules of the game. There should be no indication that a second game will be played involving the presence of a government entity. A walkthrough and practice round would be appropriate to getting them acclimated to gameplay. Depending on the size of the class, students can play individually or be put into groups.

The teams will engage in acquisition of resources and have the ability to trade and exchange those resources with competitors in an attempt to build their settlement. The winner of the game is the first team to get to 10 victory points, as measured by the construction of new roads, new towns and new cities. At the conclusion of the first game, the instructor should take note of the following statistics:

- Total number of roads constructed
- Total number of towns constructed
- Total number of cities constructed
- Combination of the total number of resource cards discarded and total number of resource cards remaining in the hands of all players at the conclusion of the game

    Special note: During the gameplay, players should draw resources from a draw pile and as they purchase roads, cities and towns, discard cards into a separate "discard" pile. As the "draw" pile is consumed, recycle the discard pile and start a new draw pile. This will allow the instructor to keep track of the total number of resources consumed during the course of the game.

Keeping track of these statistics will allow the instructor to compare the results to the second game and provide a platform of discussion on why there might be a significant difference in the outcomes of the two rounds.

The Exercise – Part 2

At the conclusion of the first game, the game board is reset to start a second game. Previous victory points and size of the teams' settlements do not impact the gameplay of the second game. The instructor should announce that the citizens of Catan® have joined together to form a provincial government. The government has imposed the following laws:

1) TAXES - Each round teams pay a 25% tax. They submit one fourth of the resources they currently have in their hand on each turn. The count should round down in the case of uneven numbers. For example, if the team has ten resource cards in their hand, the tax liability would be 2.5 resource cards. Rounding down would equate to a two card tax.
2) RECORD KEEPING - Each team must submit a detailed report of all resources they collected during the course of the round. The government will collect these reports at the end of the round and impose a penalty of two cards if any report is inaccurate. The instructor must also keep record to ensure compliance.
3) PENALTIES – A new time rule is in effect. Each player is limited to one minute per turn, including rolling, trading, building. Any player that violates this regulation is subject to a two card fine.
4)

At the end of the second game the instructor should collect the information on the game results exactly as conducted after the first game.

Outcomes

The outcomes of each class will vary, but the trends will remain generally the same. The number of roads, towns and cities constructed in the second game will be less than in the first game. Additionally, total number of resource cards discarded tends to be lower. The following table shows potential results for a single class period.

Table 1
Results for a Single Class Period

		Roads Built	Towns Built	Cities Built	Total Resource Cards Discarded and Left in Hand
Game 1	*No Regulations*	40-50	12-14	8-10	170-220
Game 2	*Government Regulations*	25-35	8-10	5-7	120-150
% difference		**-33%**	**-30%**	**-33%**	**-30%**

Discussion

In the reflection following the exercise, the instructor or facilitator should help the students draw parallels between their experiences with the game and the regulatory environment faced by small business owners:

Government Regulations are Time Consuming

Students will likely express frustration that they spend too much time collecting and recording data, keeping track of their tax liability and trying to avoid any fines. This limits the time they have to actually “play” the game. In a practical sense, they might begin making the connection to actual management frustration. For example, if a small business owner spends two hours a week constructing reports and trying to stay in compliance with applicable regulations, that is two hours they do not have to work on the operation of the business - generating new sales leads, or taking inventory, or developing a marketing plan.

Government Regulations Require Tedious Record Keeping

In the course of a given round, a player might draw between two and ten cards. The time limitation of one minute adds an element of pressure. This turns a normally unchallenging task (keeping track of up to ten cards) into a tedious process. The rounds go quickly, and students know if they forget to record accurately, they could be subject to a fine (which would further limit their ability to compete in the game). Small business owners, for example, have OSHA inspections, taxes to pay, and inventory reporting that are usually subject to deadlines. This added time element increases the diligence required to stay in compliance.

Government Regulations Limit Productivity

The statistics that the instructor keeps on both games provides a base for discussion about the effects on productivity. On average, there is 30-33% less productivity in the regulated game as measured by the difference in the number of roads, towns, cities and resource cards. Part of this is the direct effect of resource cards going to taxes instead of helping the players grows their settlements. The other part is due to players spending less time on the operation of their business and more time trying to stay in compliance. Drawing the connection to the real world business environment, students might cite small business owners bemoaning the lost opportunities tax dollars take from their business and the extra effort they make to stay in compliance draws their attention from profit-making activity.

Compliance with Government Regulations Can Be a Source of Competitive Advantage

After the first two or three rounds of students having to comply with the new regulations put in place by the provincial government, they should start to experience a learning curve on how to comply. For students who diligently record all the necessary information and provide it at the end of the round, it should become clear to all teams that compliance is a sustainable competitive advantage. Strong adherence to compliance prevents fines from the provincial government and more efficient systems to stay in compliance allows the students to focus more on strategy and growth. The parallels to real world entrepreneurs can be drawn from these results.

Limitations

The purpose of this exercise is to educate students on the impact that government regulations have on small businesses. However, there is no intention to offer commentary on the ethical, social, moral or political implications of government involvement in the private business sector. In the context of the board game, students only know that the Catanian® government collects taxes and imposes regulations. Participants are not offered an explanation of how those tax dollars are spent or for what philosophical or practical reasons the regulations are imposed. It is not relevant whether Catan® has a strong educational system, spends a large portion of tax revenue on military, or what infrastructure investment their “politicians” choose to make. Those teaching principles will be relegated to educators of the social sciences.

Furthermore, this exercise is meant only to introduce the concept of government regulations as they affect the management of small business. Students should take away from this exercise that small businesses feel a unique burden from regulations due to the size, scope, and limited resources of their operation that bigger businesses and corporations absorb more easily. That is to say that the laws and regulations, no matter how small, pose some hindrance on small business. This includes those regulations that are generally considered "good" such as those that deal with workplace safety, keeping the market fair for consumers in regards to collusion, or regulations that keep the environment free from toxins. Moreover, students should recognize that businesses that find efficient ways to operate within the regulations can experience cost savings and maintain a competitive advantage.

Further Research

The research field indicates that experiential exercises are beneficial and that millennial students are particularly disposed to learn from them. However, an empirical study which determines *to what degree* students internalize the learning outcomes of this exercise would be appropriate. Such an experiment would allow for a deepened understanding of what pre and post discussions should entail to help students make better connections between the exercise and the practical experiences for small business owners. In addition, such a study would allow instructors to better understand which mental models need better emphasis during the exercise itself.

Three out of the four outcomes imply that government regulations impose hardship on the small business owner. Only one of the positive outcomes has been incorporated into the learning objectives. Further research should be conducted on how to incorporate the two additional positive learning outcomes (government partnerships and increased opportunities for small businesses in accounting, consulting and legal services).

Finally, this exercise addresses the unique impact that government regulations have on small businesses. Adaptations to the game or the relevance to other business disciplines should be explored with further research. Potential disciplines include international business, marketing and various accounting courses.

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The Global Rise of Nomophobia: Present and Future Workplace Considerations

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Abstract

Many people are becoming increasingly dependent on mobile devices such as cell phones, laptops, and tablets. This dependency on cell phones and the need to stay connected with society may have a potentially harmful impact on device users. Nomophobia describes an individual's fear of being without a cell phone. This reliance on cell phones contributes to social phobias and anxiety disorders along with diminished workplace productivity. Differences in nomophobic behaviors between cultures are identified and discussed.

Introduction and Purpose

Nomophobia, a form of cell phone addiction, is a recently documented phenomenon.
Simply put, nomophobia is the fear of being without a cell phone. Bragazzi and Del Puente (2014) explained that "Nomophobia is considered a disorder of the contemporary digital and virtual society and refers to discomfort, anxiety, nervousness or anguish caused by being out of contact with a mobile phone or computer" (p. 156).

Some researchers have linked nomophobia to the fear of missing out (FOMO) (Przyblski, Murayama, Dentaan, & Gladwell, 2013). In fact, the Pew Research Internet Project (2014) found that FOMO caused 44% of cell phone owners to place their phones next to them when sleeping. Further, 29% of cell phone owners have referred to their cell phones as "something they can't imagine living without" (n.p.).

The purpose of this article is to provide background information about nomophobia, the prevalence of nomophobia among cultures, the commonalities and differences in nomophobia among cultures and generations, and the role of nomophobia in workplace interruptions.

Review of the Literature

This section presents information about the background of nomophobia, the influence of interruptions on workplace productivity, gender differences in nomophobia, generational and cultural differences in nomophobia, and counteracting nomophobia.

Background of Nomophobia

Nomophobia is a recently growing phenomenon that may have developed as cell phones became more lightweight and compact. Initially, people used brick-like cellular phones, but gradually the phones shrank in size and increased in capabilities. Over the span of a few years, cell phones have become equipped with additional features that are not necessarily used, such as MusicID, ATT's paid song recognition service, and sponsored chat applications. Some wireless companies such as Virgin Mobile offer plans that focus on data and texting as opposed to talk time (Virgin Mobile, 2014). Statistics from the Pew Foundation (2014) show that, in the United States (U.S.), cell phone usage has grown to 90% of American adults and over 80% use text messaging. These data demonstrate the emergence of the growing popularity of text messaging.

Cultural Differences

Cell phones are called by different names in different countries, perhaps suggesting their cultural role. Residents of the United Kingdom refer to a cell phone as a *mobile*, those in Latin American countries use a *celular*, the Finns and Germans call it a *handy* since the devices may be carried by hand, and Americans use a device referred to as a cell phone but increasingly refer to the device as a mobile (Canton, 2012; "Mobile-phone culture," 2009). While cell phones are called different names by different cultures (Canton, 2012), their use has become more prevalent worldwide. The top 14 global mobile markets, each with mobile phone subscriptions topping one million (mobithinking, 2014), are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Percentage of Mobile Phone Users, Top 14 Cell Phone Using Countries

CountryMobile	Subscriptions in millions	% of Popluation
China	1,246	92%
India	772	63%
United States	345	110%
Indonesia	285	115%
Brazil	273	137%
Russia	237	165%
Japan	138	108%
Nigeria	129	76%
Vietnam	128	144%
Pakistan	126	70%
Bangladesh	116	74%
Germany	114	139%
Philippines	110	113%
Mexico	103	118%

Source: Mobithinking. (2014). Global mobile statistics 2014 Part A: Mobile subscribers: handset market share. Top mobile markets: The 100 million club. Retrieved from http://mobithinking.com/mobile-marketing-tools/lastest-mobile-stats/a#topmobilemarkets
Note. [a] = rounded to the nearest million.

Campbell, a prominent cell phone researcher, predicted that differences in cell phone use among countries will disappear except in poorer regions ("Mobile-phone culture," 2009). Archibald stated that "we see more differences within countries than between them" (as cited in "Mobile-phone culture," 2009, n. p.). Cross-cultural communication expert Hall coined the terms *low context* and *high context* "to describe the communication patterns and preferences of a culture. High context cultures rely on much understood, rather than explicit information. Low-context cultures, by contrast, encompass less understood information and tend to be more explicit and literal" (Reynolds & Valentine, 2011, p. xx). In other words, low-context cultures emphasize verbal communication, while high-context cultures emphasize nonverbal communication. Examples of low context culture are Swiss-German, German, Scandinavian, and the United States and Canada; while high-context cultures include the Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, and Latin American cultures (Schom & Snyder, 2012).

Nomophobia in Asian (high context) cultures. According to Lu, Watanabe, Liu, Uji, Shono, and Kitamura (2011), mobile phone use has emerged as a health issue in Japan. Their study revealed that women are more likely to suffer from text message addiction.

Igarashi, Motoyoshi, Takai, and Yoshida (2008) discovered that text messages were the communication medium of choice for Japanese youth. University-age students placed greater importance on text messages than did precollege students. This level of importance rose due to an increase in loneliness as they began university level schooling. The data from the aforementioned studies prompted research by Hong, Chiu, and Huang (2012), who found that a correlation exists between anxiety and social extraversion in relation to mobile phone addiction among female Taiwanese university students. Specifically, extraversion in social situations and anxieties positively affected mobile phone addiction, while self-esteem had a negative influence on cell phone addiction. The research supports Lu and colleagues' hypothesis that students with mobile phone addiction will make more phone calls and send more text messages than those students who are not addicted to mobile phones.

Hong, Chiu, and Huang (2012) developed a model of cell phone use by female university students in Taiwan that depicted the relationship among selected psychological characteristics, cell phone use, and cell phone dependence or anxiety. Some of the characteristics considered as variables for the study included self-esteem, social extraversion, anxiety, mobile phone addiction and its influence on academics, time management, and reality substitute, number of daily calls, number of daily text messages sent, daily phone use time, and monthly cell phone bill. A strong correlation was found among social extraversion, anxiety, and self-esteem. The variables with the strongest direct correlation are (a) mobile addiction and mobile phone usage, (b) effect of social extraversion on mobile phone addiction, (c) self–esteem, and (d) anxiety. The indirect effects of mobile phone addiction on usage include the number of daily calls made and text messages sent. The study demonstrated how heavily mobile phone addiction contributed to lack of time management, academic problems, and the search for a substitute for reality. The data collected from their study supported their initial hypothesis that the more frequently cell phones are used, the greater likelihood that an individual will display behaviors indicative of cell phone addiction.

Nomophobia in Western (more low context) Cultures. A 2012 study of 374 adults conducted by Park and Jin (2012) among students at a university in the Southwestern United States proposed a voice communication model stemming from the social skills deficit hypothesis. Essentially, poor social skills were hypothesized to be related to less face-to-face and less mobile voice communication, which is also related to greater loneliness. In the United Kingdom a study conducted by SecurEnvoy (2012) revealed that 66% of the population suffered from nomophobia.

In a survey of business communication students in the United States, Chow (2014) found that 49% of respondents only occasionally turned off their phones because they keep their phones on for emergency messages, for urgent phone calls, or for use as alarm clocks. When asked to rank their level of comfort among communicating in person, texting, communicating online and talking on the phone, the students were most comfortable communicating in person, but the comfort level for texting was not too far behind. When asked to compare the level of anxiety caused by no reception and low battery, respondents were more likely to be very anxious due to no reception. Further, the results of this survey are in alignment with the hypothesis of Park and Jin (2012) because 54% of the study participants felt that they take on a different persona when communicating face to face versus online due to the veil of protection provided by the technology and the sense of anonymity when communicating with strangers (Chow, 2014). Participants who responded that they were more comfortable communicating online believed that they were able to fully develop their responses because they can edit before sending a message. Survey respondents preferred texting and communicating online to communicating in person.

Cheever, Rosen, Carrier, and Chavez (2014) investigated the level of anxiety in students whose mobile device use was restricted. Heavy users of mobile devices became more anxious the longer mobile use was restricted as did those moderate users whose devices were physically separated from them.

In summary, the reported studies of Asian cultures and Western cultures indicated that both cultures experience nomophobia—the anxiety encountered when an individual is without a cell phone.

Generational Differences in Nomophobia

This section discusses literature reporting on generational differences on the incidence and extent of nomophobia among Baby Boomers, Generation Xers, and Generation Y and Millennials.

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers are classified as those who are born prior to 1964. In 1998, Tapscott suggested that there would be a digital divide between those born before 1992, and those born after 1992. Older generations including the Baby Boomers may have a more difficult time updating to new formats for mobile technology. A *Wall Street Journal* author asserted that there was a demand for the market of easy to use smartphones (Ripp, 2013). There are consumers who do not use all of the capabilities available in the newest smart phones. Senior citizens may grow frustrated with the need to adapt to every new version of a phone, since new versions are equipped with numerous applications that they may have perceive as having no utility (Ripp, 2013).

Generation Xers

Generation Xers are classified as those who are born between 1965 and 1976. Those classified as Generation Xers do not reflect the same frustration with cell phones as their elders do but actually tend to develop anxieties in relation to their heightened cell phone usage (King, Valenca, Silva, Baczynski, Carvalho, & Nardi (2012). Using newer technologies has resulted in changed behavior for individuals including the development of social phobias. The study was conducted on patients suffering from anxiety disorders, who demonstrated that they have relied on communicating so much through their digital devices that they did not practice socializing in person. King et al. (2012) asserted that although technology may provide an alternate medium for communication among people who are shy; in some cases, the technology does not help that person because the phobia is not addressed.

Generation Y and Millennials

Generation Y is classified as those born between 1977 and 1994, while Millennials are classified as those born after 1994.

In 2009, Pierce conducted a study examining American teenagers' use of social media, cell phones, and instant messaging in relation to social anxieties. To support her research, she cited Pew studies that showed an increasing trend of cell phone use among young adolescents between 2002 and 2005. The percentage of teens who owned a cell phone increased from 10% to 46% (Pierce, 2009). Teenage females tended to use text messaging much more than males perhaps because women tend to be more communicative than men (Pierce, 2009). Additionally, teenagers over 17 years old sent more text messages than younger teenagers (Pierce, 2009). Among teens, texting is preferred over making phone calls because adolescents perceive they have greater control over the communication and are able to better articulate themselves and develop messages (Pierce, 2009).

Mobile devices are so commonplace in households that parents find it entertaining to watch toddlers figure out how to use touch screen tablets and interact with technology. Peterson (2013) reported that there was major concern for young children who constantly used electronic media, including cell phones and tablets. The whole family was focused on the digital screen so frequently that face-to-face family communication diminishes. Further, parents have been observed neglecting their children as the parent focuses on their cell phone instead of listening or watching the child (Browning, 2012).

People born after 1994 have grown up with the technology, while Baby Boomers and Generation X have had to adapt to the changing technology. Generation X and Millennials face pressure from their peers to stay updated with the new trends. They may be more vulnerable to the feeling that they need acceptance from their peers and society.

The literature suggests that differences in nomophobic behaviors exist among generations with the younger generations experiencing a higher level of nomophobia than the Baby Boomer generation, for example. These differences appear to be greater than the differences in nomophobic behaviors between and among cultures.

Influence of Interruptions on Workplace Productivity

When a person is interrupted, it takes approximately 25 minutes for the person to return to the task (Hemp, 2009). Almost 45% of employees are interrupted within 15 minutes of beginning a task (uSamp, 2011). Further, about 60% of the interruptions at work are due to switching windows between applications, email, social networks, and messaging (both instant and text), resulting in lost productivity amounting to millions of dollars annually (uSamp, 2011). If an employee uses a cell phone for both office and home purposes, that employee may be interrupted frequently during the day. The use of smartphones for all aspects of a person's life, both work and personal, has been dubbed "the new open door" (Yun, Kettinger, & Lee, 2012, p. 121).

Being interrupted during a task may increase the likelihood that errors will be made and, in turn, consume additional employee time locating and correcting the errors. Smith (2012) suggested that employees devote a 30-minute segment a few times during the day to responding to email, text messages, and phone calls. Another approach to interruptions is advocated by Davidson (2012), who recommended embracing the tendency of partial attention by using productivity applications that let a person block the Internet and by deliberately dividing attention. Davidson commented, "Research shows that accident, disruption, and difference increase our motivation to learn and to solve problems, both individually and collectively. The key is to embrace and even create positive interruptions" (p. 143). Further, Davidson predicted that being able to pay continuous partial attention will be a coveted skill.

Counteracting Nomophobia

Nomophobia can be considered a disorder that prevents individuals from controlling their cell phone usage; however, there are ways to mitigate the phobia. Winters (2013) provided some strategies for how to cope with anxieties created by nomophobia such as exercise, cognitive behavioral therapy, yoga, meditation, massage, attention modification, drugs, herbs, and sleep. These types of therapies help persons maintain focus on things other than their phones as well as allow individuals to interact with other people to build their full-range of communication skills.

Discussion

The research studies cited in this article reveal that nomophobia is experienced globally by members of cultures that are classified as both high context and low context. Greater differences occurred in nomphobic behaviors between generations than in nomophobic behaviors between cultures. The formal distinctions between high context and low context cultures as they relate to technological devices may be blurring; and, as a result, the incidence of nomophobia among cultures as presented in this article may not display the differences traditionally seen in cross-cultural communication. It is interesting to note that many recent studies have been conducted in high context cultures and investigate text messaging, yet the use of text messages would be classified as low context.

Nomophobia is experienced by both males and females and appears to be associated with younger people, who many times have the highest level of cell phone usage. The blurring or overlapping of work and home or personal lives has encouraged the use of one cell phone for both purposes. This open door referred to by Yun, Kettinger, and Lee (2012) has promoted a dependency on cell phone usage resulting in a high number of interruptions during working hours.

Recommendations for Research

Based upon the research reported about nomophobia, interruptions and productivity, and cultural differences, the following recommendations are made for research:

1. Cultural differences in nomophobia should continue to be explored by investigating the incidence of nomophobia globally. Cross cultural studies would help to provide insight into these nomophobic behaviors. While several studies have been conducted in the United States and Asian countries, expanding nomophobia research to other countries would assist in identifying commonalities and differences among cultures.

2. The role of interruptions on workplace productivity should be investigated from a comparative management perspective. In a multitasking world, would the ability to focus on tasks and complete them with minimal errors be prized and potentially result in savings of time, effort, and cost to both businesses and employees, or would cultivating the skill of continuous partial attention (Davidson, 2012) be a better strategy?

3. The role of interruptions on the productivity of business students should be more closely examined. Conducting such a study may yield insight into how to train students to study and engage in work tasks more efficiently and effectively.

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