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EFFECTS OF GLOBALLY MINDED BUSINESS CURRICULA ON THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF BUSINESS STUDENTS TAUGHT BY ACCENTED INSTRUCTORS: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

The learning experience of business and nonbusiness majors who took one or more classes taught by foreign-accented instructors in face-to-face and/or virtual platforms was compared to see if they perceived their learning experience to have been affected by the accent of the instructor. The study was considered important in addressing the concern of students taking courses taught by non-native instructors, accreditation agencies, employers, and government oversight boards about student learning experience since students often complain to their peers, administrators, and indicate in course surveys that their learning experience, including their ability to earn good grades, are affected by the accent of their instructors. Due to the intentional emphasis placed on international/global concepts in undergraduate and graduate business degree curricula, courses, accreditation standards, mission statements, vision statements, and core values, business majors were expected to be more globally aware and to have more favorable experience in classes taught by foreign-accented instructors than their nonbusiness counterparts in the same classes. Data was collected using a Likert-type instrument because the study involved ordinal psychometric measurement of attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of respondents. Four non-parametric techniques were used to analyze the data because they provided more clarity regarding the threshold for agreement by respondents. The surveyed business majors in total had more favorable and positive mean, median, 1st quartile, and cumulative percentage rating scores in related Likert type statements when compared to the same rating scores of surveyed nonbusiness majors.

KEY WORDS: Learning experience, foreign-accent, non-native, accreditation, higher education industry, business majors, online, virtual, face-to-face, nonbusiness majors, COVID-19

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies have demonstrated that the non-native accent of an instructor affects the learning experience of students enrolled in classes taught by that instructor (Sawir, 2005; Sanchez and Khan, 2016; Rubin, 1992). The accent of an instructor has even caught the attention of legislators in states like Louisiana, where elected officials have passed legislation to ensure that students are getting English proficiency certified instructors in their classrooms. For example, “Act 754 of the 1991 Louisiana Legislature led to the creation of Regents’ Academic Affairs Policy 2.20 Assessment and Certification of Faculty English Proficiency, which requires all state institutions to verify English fluency of instructors before they are permitted to teach [Act 754] requires all institutions to “assess and certify faculty English proficiency” of instructional faculty members prior to employment, with reports of certifications due to the systems annually...” (Louisiana Board of Regents Academic Affairs Policy 2.20). It is, therefore, not the intention of this paper to dispute previous findings that the accent of an instructor affects student learning experience. Rather, this study accepts these findings. This study, instead, intends to do a deeper dive into the learning experience of subsets of students who took one or more classes taught by foreign-accented instructors to see if there are differences between the effects of foreign-accent on their learning experience. Foreign-accent speech is defined as the “non-pathological speech produced by second language users that sound noticeably different than the speech of native speakers” (Kavas and Kavas, 2008). An accent could be classified as “foreign” when it obscures the meaning of what the speaker intends to convey to native speakers (Marvasti, 2005). This study focused on the difference in learning experience between business and nonbusiness majors. We defined learning experience as the

student's perception of (a) the clarity of instructor's spoken word; (b) feeling of acceptance in class; (c) instructor's ability to maintain student interest and attention; and (d) reputation of instructor's qualification and knowledge.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

College students taking courses taught by non-native or foreign-accented instructors often complain to their peers, administrators, and in course surveys that their learning experience, including their ability to earn good grades, are affected by the non-native accent of their instructors (Rao, 1995). Surveyed students pointed to foreign accent of their instructors, especially non-native instructors, as a major inconvenience to their learning experience (Kavas and Kavas, 2008; Jensen, et al, 2013). While some studies of foreign-accented instructors found no significant difference between the experience of students in classes taught by native-speaking and foreign-accented professors (Jacobs and Friedman, 1988 and Flesher, et al, 2002), other studies found the opposite (Borjas, 2000; Marvasti, 2005). Even when students performed better in terms of retention and final grades in classes taught by foreign-accented professors, the student satisfaction survey scores for such classes were lower for the foreign-accented professor than they were for classes taught by native speakers (Flesher, et al, 2002). Fact or fiction, students clearly have some concern or apprehension about the foreign accent of their instructors. In one study of student perception of foreign-accented faculty, 82.4% of the participants indicated that the instructor's knowledge of the subject was very important or extremely important to their learning (Kavas and Kavas, 2008). In contrast, the same survey found that only 29.7% of the surveyed students considered the accent of the instructor irrelevant to their learning, while a whopping 71.3% of the respondents indicated that the accent of foreign-born faculty was either neutral or negatively affected their ability to learn. The same study found that 41.7% of the surveyed students agreed that they focused more on the accent than the material being presented when they were taking a class with a foreign-accented instructor (Kavas and Kavas, 2008).

2.1 The Growing Role of Non-Native Faculty in a Growing Global Higher Education Industry

Transportation and technological innovations have made higher education into a multibillion-dollar industry. Like some sectors of the economy, higher education has gone global and virtual. Most aspects of life in the modern society, including commerce, education, healthcare, law enforcement, religion, and governance have evolved an online version since the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020. Migration to virtual learning was accelerated in 2020 when it became the only safe instruction delivery mode at every level of education. Before then, once local or regional colleges and universities had been opening branch campuses in far-flung parts of the world (Lane, 2011; Altbach and Knight, 2007; Wilkins and Huisman, 2011), while some educational institutions had adopted fully online platforms to make their services available to any student in any part of the world who could afford the fees and the technology to access the learning materials (Morey, 2004). To keep pace with this global trend, regional and national accreditation agencies have been extending their accountability and quality assurance services to parts of the world once thought to be out of reach to these agencies (Noori and Anderson, 2013; Almsafir and Bourini, 2011; Porterfield and Clark, 2011).

One evidence of these globally minded accreditation "land rush" is the growing emphasis on globally attuned curricular, new core course requirements, virtual instruction guidelines, and the norming of learning outcomes within disciplines (Rust and Kim, 2015; Hou, 2011; and Travis, 2013). Another evidence is the employment of faculty members from diverse culture, nationality, formal academic preparation, and professional experiences (Mitchell and Nielsen, 2012). Recent instructional technology innovations, COVID-19 and related travel restrictions, and a growing worldwide appetite for learning signal interests to an emerging higher education industry that continue to evolve to be more diverse and more inclusive (Mitchell and Nielsen, 2012). Organizations that will survive in this emerging higher education marketplace must meet the needs of a very diverse student body that is instructed using multiple course delivery platforms by a very diverse faculty, many of whom will speak with non-native accents. These organizations must also meet the quality assurance benchmarks of their accreditation agencies.

A growing global higher education industry can only maintain its momentum if guardrails are in place to guarantee learning outcomes accountability, especially in teaching, learning, evaluation, and regulatory benchmarks adopted for assessing teaching-learning effectiveness (Harris and Clayton, 2019). One factor in ensuring learning outcomes accountability is for schools to closely examine their processes and content delivery workforce (faculty), regardless of the course delivery mode (Lin, Pearce, and Wang, 2009; Webber, 2012). Outcomes-based accountability

expectations have been making their way into assessment standards adopted by various regulatory/accreditation agencies and institutions (Shaftel and Shaftel, 2007). This is definitely true in the field of business and management education where several agencies (AACSB, ACBSP, IACBE, EFMD/EQUIS, and AMBA) have emerged over the past few decades to provide guidelines for quality management education. According to Eisenberg, et.al (2013) “The acute necessity of having cross-cultural management competencies in the workplace is vividly reflected in the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation process, the AACSB explicitly expects that as part of an accredited business university program, these challenges [differences in organizational and cultural values and cultural diversity among employees and customers] should be addressed through programmatic elements in undergraduate and graduate business degree programs.”

According to Bisoux (2013), the 2003 AACSB accreditation standards “were developed to be more inclusive of global models for business education and placed greater emphasis on a business school’s mission and assurance of learning practices...”, while the 2013 AACSB accreditation standards were intended to address the dramatic changes that emerged as business schools “tackled the assurance of learning challenge and adopted massive open online courses and opened globally distributed campuses.” These standards were designed to achieve three outcomes: quality, continuous improvement, and better stakeholder management (Miles et al., 2004). Each AACSB accredited business program must demonstrate how it is ensuring that students are, in fact, learning what is outlined in the program curricula and course syllabi – an AACSB International accreditation pillar formally known as assurance of learning. AACSB also requires member schools to demonstrate that (a) instructors are adequately prepared to teach while employing the modalities and pedagogies of degree programs; (b) instructors are adequately prepared to teach diverse students and perspectives in an inclusive environment; and that school emphasizes diversity and inclusion of students, faculty, staff, and administration in the learning community (2013 Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation, pp. 26-30). Each requirement represents a guardrail to ensure quality education and effective learning experience for students and instructors in an industry trending towards open online courses and globally distributed campuses.

A recent study by the National Center for Education Statistics, a unit of the U.S. Department of Education, reported that 22.1% of faculty members in U.S. colleges and universities was foreign born and potentially foreign-accented (Lin, Pearce, and Wang, 2009; Webber, 2012). Quddus, et al (2008) stated that foreign-born students (who may eventually become foreign-accented faculty members) earn around 30% of the doctoral degrees in the United States and account for at least 20% of the newly hired professors in some disciplines. Hsu (2012) postulated that the number of non-native English-speaking instructors in United States colleges and universities continues to increase. Additionally, Crose (2011) asserted that international students continue to enroll in colleges and universities in record numbers not only in the United States but across the globe. The increase in international student enrollment worldwide feeds a dynamic pipeline for future foreign-accented college instructors. According to the Institute of International Education, while the number of international scholars in the United States increased from 115,098 in 2010 to 124,861 in 2015, roughly 75% of the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) instructors in the United States were foreign-born (Herget, 2016). Therefore, since the chances of a career as a college professor improves with advanced college degrees, the need to better understand the characteristics of those who could potentially pass through the supply chain of a critical sector of the higher education workforce becomes readily apparent. Between 2000 and 2014, the percentage of college-educated immigrant population increased by 78%, while the percentage of native-born college-educated population only increased by 39% during the same period (Zong and Batalova, 2016). In 2014, 29% of foreign-born U.S. residents older than 25 had a college degree (Zong and Batalova, 2016), and 12.8% of the same population had earned at least one postgraduate degree (Krogstad and Radford, 2018). Colleges and universities will continue to employ foreign-accented instructors to meet the learning needs of their students and the mandates of their sponsors and accreditation agencies, given the shortage of native-born instructors with requisite academic credentials for employment in critical academic disciplines.

2.2 Foreign-Accented Instructor Challenges

Language Proficiency - The employment of foreign-accented faculty member in an institution, like other employment-related issues, comes with several opportunities and challenges. Two unique challenges tend to stand out more so than others - language proficiency and cultural acuity gaps (Kavas and Kavas, 2008). The language proficiency challenge could be described as the consistent mispronunciation of words, terms or expressions that

erodes the credibility of the instructor and interferes with learning (Jensen, et al, 2013). Bashir et al (2011) described “language” as “a system of arbitrary vocal symbols, which permit people in a given culture, or other people who have learnt the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact. According to the same source, speaking involves more than words spoken with the mouth. Instead, language is seen as a formal system of signs that is governed by grammatical rules which combine to convey a specific meaning to the audience. Each community has its own unique system of arbitrary communication symbols which facilitate their daily interaction. Any outsider that joins a particular community tends to attempt to incorporate elements of their native tongue into what they perceive as the arbitrary symbols and grammatical rules that govern the language of their new location (Bashir et al., 2011). Fluency in a particular language requires the outsider to master the (a) mechanics (pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary); (b) functions (transaction and interaction); and (c) social and cultural rules and norms (turn-taking, rate of speech, length of pauses between speakers, relative roles of participants) (Bashir, et al., 2011). What is known as “foreign accent” is, therefore, evidence of the inability of the outsider to reproduce the distinctive, localized twang or lilt overheard in others in the outsider’s speech (Kiestler, 2001). Accent is thus the tangible evidence of the extent to which an outsider or any other speaker is unable to master the mechanics, functions, social and cultural rules, and norms associated with the oral expression of a non-native language.

Cultural Acuity - Aside from language proficiency, the other challenge associated with the employment of a foreign-accented faculty member is cultural acuity. Culture is a collection of beliefs, expectations, and values shared by members of a group that has been passed down from generation to generation (Wheelen and Hunger, 2008). Culture plays an important role in any organization or society including conveying a sense of identity for the members, reinforcing the need for excellence, ensuring organizational stability, and providing meaning to organizational life (Smircich, 1983). These roles may not be readily understood by those raised outside the culture. As an outsider, a foreign-accented faculty member may not fully appreciate the cultural context or orientation of their students to the extent that there is a difference between the way students understand who they are and what they stand for and the way the foreign-accented faculty member understands the same concepts. Communication challenges could be manifested in the form of word economy in the sense that what the natives could say with a simple slang may require a long explanation by those raised outside that culture. The spoken word is better understood with a better insight into the cultural context in which the word is uttered (Light, 2017).

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Eisenberg, et.al (2013) in their study “Can Business Schools Make Students Culturally Competent? Effects of Cross-Cultural Management Courses on Cultural Intelligence” concluded that academic training through cross-cultural management (CCM) courses is effective in increasing students’ overall cultural intelligence (CQ), where CQ refers to individual’s abilities and skills to effectively manage interactions in cross-cultural situations. That study further found that management courses had pronounced effects on cognitive and metacognitive aspects of CQ and that international experience positively affects CQ (Eisenberg, et.al, 2013). Mikhaylov (2014) in her study “International Business Students’ Cross-Cultural Competence Development: The Influence of the Educational Environment”, explored the role of educational programs in promoting students’ cross-cultural competence development in business education and concluded that business curriculum has some effect on business students’ global mindset. Based on these conclusions, this study asserted that the frequent emphasis of international concepts in business curricula, class activities, and AACSB accreditation standards (Eisenberg, et.al, 2013) better expose business majors to globalism and should, therefore, make them more accepting of multiculturalism, including being more attentive to the spoken words of non-native instructors in business courses. It is, therefore, expected that business majors will have more favorable rating scores when compared to nonbusiness majors in a survey of student learning experience in on-ground or virtual classes taught by foreign-accented instructors. The study utilized a set of Likert-type items to survey the learning experience of college students. Data collected from student groups in face-to-face and virtual learning environments were analyzed using the non-parametric methods proposed by Rubaish, Wosornu, and Dwivedi (2011) - mean, median, first quartile, and cumulative percentage.

The Glossary of Education Reform (2013) defined learning experience as “any interaction, course, program, or other experience in which learning takes place, whether it occurs in traditional academic settings (schools, classrooms) or nontraditional settings (outside-of-school locations, outdoor environments), or whether it includes traditional educational interactions (students learning from teachers and professors) or nontraditional interactions (students learning through games and interactive software applications)”. Sensing the multiple approaches used by researchers in addressing learning experience-related issues, Chambers (2020) asked “Does the lack of agreement signal a

deeper unease about the definition of a "learning experience"? In fact, the proliferation of the term "learning experience" is so significant that Chambers (2020) went on to claim that "Google searches for the term "learning experience" and its definition have increased steadily over the last decade and a half...". The fluidity in the definition of learning experience creates an opportunity for researchers to approach the topic from various perspectives using most preferred terms and variables. Based on these premises, "learning experience" was defined in this study as the degree to which students agree or disagree with statements about (a) difficulty understanding the spoken words of foreign-accented instructors in virtual or face-to-face classes; (b) positivity of their student learning experience in virtual or face-to-face classes taught by foreign-accented instructors; (c) the ability of foreign-accented instructors to maintain the interest and attention of students during virtual or face-to-face class time and; (d) the perception of instructor's knowledge of the subject taught during virtual or face-to-face class time. This definition is consistent with elements identifies in *The Glossary of Education Reform's* (2013) definition of learning experience, which includes any interaction, course, program, or other experience in which learning takes place, whether it occurs in traditional academic settings (schools, classrooms) or nontraditional settings.

We analyzed the learning experience of two groups of students: business majors and nonbusiness majors (Table 1). Based on the academic offerings of the institution used for this study, we defined business majors as those who indicated that their major was Business Administration or Computer Information Systems in the survey. Students who indicated any major outside these two disciplines were classified as nonbusiness majors. Business majors were expected to be more globally aware and to have more favorable experience in classes taught by non-native foreign-accented instructors than their nonbusiness counterparts in the same classes, due to the intentional emphasis placed on international awareness concepts in undergraduate and graduate business degree curricular, courses, accreditation standards, mission statements, vision statements, and core values. We expected business majors in total to have more 3.5 to 5 mean scores, more 4 and 5 median scores, more 4 and 5 1st quartile scores, and more 4+5 cumulative percentage score of 75% or higher when compared to nonbusiness majors in each of the twelve Likert type statements used to assess learning experience. We expected findings from this study to demonstrate that foreign accent may be a nuisance for students but that the surveyed business majors were more adaptive to the faculty accent in classes taught by foreign-accented instructors when compared to their nonbusiness counterparts (Kavas and Kavas, 2008; Erwin, 2016; and McFarland-McDaniels, 2008).

The course delivery mode (face-to-face or virtual) was also considered important in this study because of the accelerated shift from face-to-face to virtual learning at every level of education due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This trend was already in vogue pre-COVID-19 as many academic programs offered more online courses and opened globally distributed campuses (Bisoux, 2013). Given the considerable investment made by elementary, secondary, post-secondary, and professional education managers in virtual learning assets (technology, personnel, and buildings), teaching and learning models may never fully return to the pre-COVID-19 formats. Hence, the focus of this study on course delivery mode became even more important because previous research on the effects of instructor accent on student learning experience were based on interaction in the traditional on-ground learning environment (Kavas and Kavas, 2008, Quddus et al, 2008). This study allowed us to investigate if learning experience is different in face-to-face versus virtual learning environment.

4. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was done using a Likert-type instrument with 12 statements and five rating points. A Likert data collection approach was considered appropriate for this study because it involves ordinal psychometric measurement of attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of respondents. Respondent were required to indicate a degree of agreement, disagreement, or neutrality in a multiple-choice type of questionnaire. This data collection technique is easily understood and quantifiable, and subject to mathematical computation and analysis. It is also very quick, efficient, easy to code, inexpensive, and allows data collection through mail, over the internet, or in person (Bishop and Herron, 2015; LaMarca, 2011, and Cleave, 2015). Each statement inquired about student perception of their learning experience in on-ground and virtual classes taught by foreign-accented instructors. Each point on the Likert scale indicated the degree to which a student disagrees, agrees, or was neutral about a specific statement. Data was collected using convenience sampling as the surveys were administered to willing students by instructors who were willing to allow their classes to participate in the project (Kavas and Kavas, 2008). The twelve (12) Likert-type statements below were used for the assessment:

- Q5. I love taking most of my business classes face-to-face in a classroom.
- Q6. I love taking most of my business classes online or through video meetings.
- Q7. I have had at least one foreign-accented professor in my face-to-face business classes.
- Q8. I have had at least one foreign-accented professor in my online or video meeting business classes.
- Q9. I did not have any difficulty understanding the words of my foreign-accented instructors in my face-to-face business classes.
- Q10. I did not have any difficulty understanding the words of my foreign-accented instructors in my online or video meeting business classes.
- Q11. My experience in the face-to-face business classes taught by foreign-accented instructors was positive.
- Q12. My experience in the online or video meeting business classes taught by foreign-accented instructors were positive.
- Q13. The foreign-accented instructors in my face-to-face business classes maintained my interest and attention during class time.
- Q14. The foreign-accented instructors in my online or video meeting business classes maintained my interest and attention during class time.
- Q15. Despite the accent, the foreign-accented instructors in my face-to-face business classes were knowledgeable about the subject.
- Q16. Despite the accent, the foreign-accented instructors in my online or video meeting business classes were knowledgeable about the subject.

This research was conducted in a small urban university in the United States. Most of the students are racial minorities and many are first generation college students. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the students enrolled in the university is Black or African American and less than 3% of the student body is foreign-born. The university offers mostly undergraduate degree programs with a handful of graduate programs. Of the sixteen instructors who were requested to assist in data collection, 13 were foreign-born and foreign-accented and hailed from 9 different countries. Foreign-accented instructors represented 81.0% of the instructional staff in the surveyed academic unit but taught 89.3% of the business-related courses. Also, foreign-born, and foreign-accented instructors represent a significant percentage of the university's overall instructional staff.

Three hundred and fifty (350) business and non-business majors taking various business-related courses were targeted for the survey. Some attempt was made to ensure that the surveyed population included students from various nonbusiness disciplines on campus. However, at the core of it, this preliminary study was in response to learning-related issues raised by business students and as such the selected courses were mostly business-related. Nevertheless, the surveyed courses were tagged business-related, some of them, including Economics and Computer Information Systems, that are part of the general education curriculum that every student in the university must complete. Other management, statistics, public administration, and computer information courses used in the survey are required in business and several nonbusiness degree programs. In fact, some of the participating "business-related" courses were cross listed with equivalent nonbusiness courses where they are taught either by a business faculty or a qualified nonbusiness faculty in the participating academic programs.

An electronic copy of the survey was provided to 16 instructors teaching various face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses in business administration, public administration, and information systems to administer to students in their respective classes. The anonymous survey was to be completed online by students who attended the selected class on a particular day and returned to their instructors within a specified time frame. Students were instructed to complete the survey once and to inform subsequent instructors who asked them to complete them again that they had already completed the survey. Students were also informed that participation in the survey was voluntary. Instructors were requested to remove any information linking a student to a completed survey before sending them to the research team.

There were two parts to the content of the survey instrument. The first part (Q1 to Q4) consisted of demographic information about the respondents such as major, classification, gender, and age. The second part (Q5 to Q16) consisted of twelve Likert-scale statements. While Q5 and Q6 sought to ascertain the attitude of the respondent towards the two course delivery platforms (face-to-face versus virtual), Q7 and Q8 were intended to determine if the respondent had taken one or more classes with foreign-accented instructors in a face-to-face class only; online/virtual class only; or both. The last eight statements (Q9 to Q16) were aimed at better understanding the

perceived effect of foreign accent on the learning experience of students, as defined in this study, in virtual or face-to-face business classes.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Five (5) of the 16 instructors that were requested to assist with the data collection did not participate in the project. Since foreign-accented instructors represented 81.0% of the instructional staff in the surveyed academic unit but taught 89.3% of the business-related courses, the lack of participation by the five faculty members, four of whom were foreign-accented, did not skew the demographics of the study participants. The remaining 11 faculty members returned 184 completed surveys, yielding a 52.29% return rate. One survey was discarded for multiple selection, leaving 183 usable surveys. Each survey response was coded using Google Forms. The responses were initially tabulated and reported as a percentage of the aggregate number of students agreeing, disagreeing, or neutral for each 12 statements or sub-dimensions. However, a more detailed analysis was done for the eight statements aimed at better understanding the perceived effect of foreign accent on the learning experience of students in virtual or face-to-face business classes.

The analysis of the demographic information from the survey (Q1 to Q4) is presented in Table 1. While 5.5% were respondents classified themselves as freshmen, 26.2% classified themselves as sophomores, 20.1% were juniors, 34.5% were seniors, and 12.8% were graduate student. In terms of field of study, 53.9% indicated that they were Business Administration majors; 24.8% were Computer Information Systems major; 4.8% were Social Work majors; 3.6% were Public Administration majors; 3.0% 3.6% were Psychology majors, while Biology, Mechanical Engineering, Mathematics, Criminal Justice, Health Information Management Systems, Forensic Science, General Studies, and the undecided accounted for the remaining 9% of the respondents. Females accounted for 59.6% while males accounted for remaining 40.4%. Finally, while 45.6% of the students identified themselves as belonging to the traditional college age of between 18 and 25, 54.4% identified themselves as nontraditional students which we defined as 26 years or older.

Q1. Classification	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate	Other
	5.5%	26.2%	20.1%	34.5%	12.8%	0.0%
Q2. Major	Business Admin	Computer Info. Systm.	Social Work	Public Admin	Psychology	Other majors
	53.9%	24.8%	4.8%	3.6%	3.0%	9.9%
Q3. Gender	Male			Female		
	40.4%			59.6%		
Q4. Age Range	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56 or older	
	45.6%	33.7%	14.2%	4.1%	2.4%	

We used three non-parametric approaches (median, 1st quartile, and cumulative percentage) to analyze the data collected from Q5 to Q16 because they provide more clarity regarding the threshold for agreement by the respondents (Rubaish et al., 2011) and we added the mean rating scores for comparison. These non-parametric approaches are better suited for this type of applied research which is intended to inform decision-making by novices or those too busy to master findings from more sophisticated analytical methods. Analytical methods such as median, first quartile, and cumulative percentage are easy to understand and provide distortion-free clues for new initiatives and resource optimization (Rubaish et al., 2011).

The Q5 to Q16 data was tabulated using Excel spreadsheet. The response to each Likert item was reported by values and arranged or sorted in a single line from the largest to the smallest. Starting from the top of the line (largest value) and going down to the smallest value, the summative *median* score was the number that fell at the middle of the column. That number indicated that at least 50% of the respondents selected that rating score or a higher rating score for that Likert item. Again, starting from the top of the line (largest value) and going down to the smallest value, the summative *first quartile* score was the number at the 75% marker on the column. This indicated that at least 75% of the respondents selected that rating score or a higher rating score for that Likert item. The 4+5 *cumulative percentage* was a calculation of the percentage of all the respondents that indicated that they either agreed (rating of 4) or strongly agreed (rating of 5) with each Likert item (Rubaish et al. 2011). Table 2 is a

presentation of mean, median, first quartile, and cumulative percentage rating scores for business and nonbusiness majors. We expected business majors in total to have more 3.5 to 5 mean rating scores, more 4 and 5 median rating scores, more 4 and 5 1st quartile rating scores, and more 4+5 cumulative percentage rating score of 75% or higher when compared to nonbusiness majors in the same twelve Likert type statements. We expected findings from this study to demonstrate that foreign accent may be a nuisance for students but that the surveyed business majors were more adaptive to the faculty accent in classes taught by foreign-accented instructors as compared to their nonbusiness counterparts.

Table 2: Scores for Business and Nonbusiness Majors

	Survey Statement	Business Majors (Q2A)				Non-Business Majors (Q2B)			
		Mean	Median	1 st Quartile	Cum % of 4+5	Mean	Median	1 st Quartile	Cum % of 4+5
Q5	I love taking most of my business classes face-to-face in a classroom.	3.6	4	2	65.6%	3.8	4	3	67.5%
Q6	I love taking most of my business classes online or through video meetings.	3.5	4	2	61.7%	2.9	3	2	45.0%
Q7	I have had at least one foreign-accented professor in my face-to-face business classes.	4.3	5	4	87.5%	3.7	4	3	67.5%
Q8	I have had at least one foreign-accented professor in my online or video meeting business classes.	4.4	5	4	91.4%	3.8	4	3	70.0%
Q9	I did not have any difficulty understanding the words of my foreign-accented instructors in my face-to-face business classes.	3.2	4	2	52.3%	3.05	3	2	45.0%
Q10	I did not have any difficulty understanding the words of my foreign-accented instructors in my online or video meeting business classes.	3.1	3	2	47.7%	3.2	4	2	55.0%
Q11	My experience in the face-to-face business classes taught by foreign-accented instructors was positive.	4.0	4	4	78.1%	3.6	4	3	60.0%
Q12	My experience in the online or video meeting business classes taught by foreign-accented instructors was positive.	3.9	4	4	75.0%	3.7	4	3	67.5%
Q13	The foreign-accented instructors in my face-to-face business classes maintained my interest and attention during class time.	3.9	4	4	75.8%	3.6	4	3	60.0%
Q14	The foreign-accented instructors in my online or video meeting business	3.7	4	3	68.8%	3.4	4	3	55.0%

	classes maintained my interest and attention during class time.								
Q15	Despite the accent, the foreign-accented instructors in my face-to-face business classes were knowledgeable about the subject.	4.4	5	4	88.3%	4.1	4	4	75.0%
Q16	Despite the accent, the foreign-accented instructors in my online or video meeting business classes were knowledgeable about the subject.	4.4	5	4	89.8%	4.1	4	4	77.5%

5.1 Overall Findings

The findings in Table 2 indicate that for Q5 to Q16, business majors gave 83.33% of the 12 related Likert statements a mean rating score of 3.5 to 5 as compared to nonbusiness majors who gave 58.33% of the same Likert statements a mean rating score of 3.5 to 5. Furthermore, business majors gave 91.67% of the Likert statements a median rating score of 4 or 5 as compared to nonbusiness majors who gave 83.33% of the same Likert statements a median rating score of 4 or 5. Business majors gave 58.33% of the Likert statements a 1st quartile rating score of 4 or 5 as compared to nonbusiness majors who gave 16.67% of the same Likert statements a 1st quartile rating score of 4 or 5. Finally, business majors gave 58.33% of the Likert statements a 4+5 cumulative percentage rating score of 75% or higher as compared to nonbusiness majors who gave 16.67% of the same Likert statements a 4+5 cumulative percentage rating score of 75% or higher. The percentage point spread between business and nonbusiness majors ranged from a low of 8.37% for the median rating score to a high of 41.66% for 1st quartile and cumulative percentage rating scores.

When we focus specifically on statements directly related to the assessment of learning experience, regardless of course delivery mode (Q9 to Q16), our assumption that business majors in total will have the same or more favorable and positive mean, median, 1st quartile, and 4+5 cumulative percentage rating scores in the eight (8) related Likert type statements when compared to the rating scores of nonbusiness majors was also supported. The surveyed business majors gave 75% of the 8 Likert statements a mean rating score of 3.5 to 5 as compared to nonbusiness majors who gave 62.50% of the same statements a mean rating score of 3.5 to 5. Business majors gave 87.50% of the 8 Likert statements a median rating score of 4 or 5 as compared to nonbusiness majors who gave 87.50% of the same statements a median rating score of 4 or 5. Business majors gave 75% of the 8 Likert statements a 1st quartile rating score of 4 or 5 as compared to nonbusiness majors who gave 25% of the same statements a 1st quartile rating score of 4 or 5. Finally, business majors gave 62.50% of the 8 Likert statements a 4+5 cumulative percentage rating score of 75% or higher as compared to nonbusiness majors who gave 25% of the same statements a 4+5 cumulative percentage rating score of 75% or higher. The point spread between business and nonbusiness majors ranged from a low of 0.0% for the median score to a high of 50.0% for 1st quartile scores. The range of positive learning experience scores of between 16.67% and 91.67% for all 12 survey statements for business and nonbusiness majors clearly shows that the learning experience of the surveyed students, regardless of major or delivery mode, were affected by the non-native accent of their instructors because none of the scores showed that 100% of the surveyed students were satisfied with any of the sub-dimensions.

5.2 Cumulative Percentage Findings by Course Delivery Mode: Face-to-Face Vs Virtual Platform

When we isolate the findings in Table 2 by course delivery mode (virtual or face-to-face) focusing specifically on cumulative percentage scores, row Q5 showed that surveyed nonbusiness majors by a slight margin preferred taking their classes face-to-face (67.5%) than business majors (65.5%). However, Q6 results indicated that 61.7% of the surveyed business majors preferred taking their classes online or virtually compared to only 45% of the surveyed nonbusiness majors. The 16.7% spread between these two groups of students tend to point to a gap in the level of comfort with learning management system (LMS) and tech-savviness between business majors coming from a curriculum that requires several IT courses and the nonbusiness majors drawn mostly from arts and behavioral

science disciplines where fewer IT courses are required. While 87.5% of the surveyed business majors reported have at least one foreign-accented professor in face-to-face business classes in Q7, only 67.5% of the surveyed nonbusiness majors reported the same exposure. In fact, the exposure gap to classes taught by foreign-accented professors (Q8) was much wider between business and nonbusiness majors (91.4% versus 70%, respectively) in virtual classes. The business faculty at the institution was so diverse in terms of country of origin that nine out of ten surveyed business majors reported having taken at least one virtual class with a foreign-accented instructor. No matter the course delivery platform, surveyed business majors were more likely to have taken a class with a foreign-accented instructor than their nonbusiness peers.

Q9 showed that business majors had less difficulty understanding the words instructional delivery of foreign-accented instructors in face-to-face business classes (52.3%) than their nonbusiness counterparts (45%). However, surveyed nonbusiness majors in Q10 reported having less difficulty understanding the instructional delivery of foreign-accented instructors in virtual business classes (55%) than business majors (47.7%). The finding for the surveyed nonbusiness majors in Q10 is substantially different from what we found in Q11 to Q16 where surveyed business majors ascribed more favorable ratings to classes taught by foreign-accented instructors than their nonbusiness cohorts. Survey business majors, for example, ascribed a favorable rating of 78.1% for Q11 and 75% for Q12, compared to 60% and 67.5%, respectively, for nonbusiness majors, indicating that surveyed business majors had more positive experience in face-to-face business and virtual classes taught by foreign-accented instructors. The finding was similar for Q13 and Q14 where more surveyed business majors (75.8% and 68.8%, respectively) agreed or strongly agreed that foreign-accented instructors in their face-to-face or virtual business classes maintained their interest and attention during class time than their nonbusiness counterparts (60% and 55%, respectively). When asked if they thought the foreign-accented instructors in their face-to-face or virtual business classes were knowledgeable of about the subject (q15 and Q16), a higher percentage of the surveyed business majors who had taken face-to-face or virtual classes taught by foreign-accented instructors agreed with the statement (88.3% (face-to-face) and 89.8% (virtual)) than their nonbusiness peers (75% (face-to-face) and 77.5% (virtual)). Overall, the surveyed business majors tended to express more favorable opinion about on-ground and online classes taken with foreign-accented instructors than their nonbusiness counterpart.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study supports the findings of Eisenberg, et.al (2013) and Mikhaylov (2014) that academic training through management courses is effective in increasing students' overall cultural intelligence including their abilities and skills to effectively manage interactions in cross-cultural situations. This study should give some reassurance to stakeholders and policymakers who are concerned about the effectiveness of business schools that employ foreign-accented instructors to meet the learning needs of their students and the mandates of their sponsors and accreditation agencies. Based on the results of this study, the surveyed business students are, in fact, much more suited to learn in a multicultural global environment than their counterparts. Given the shortage of native-born instructors with requisite academic credentials for employment in critical business disciplines, business schools will continue to depend on international, foreign-accented instructors to supplement their instructional staff.

Finally, while the accent of an instructor is indeed an important factor in the learning experience of a student, studies have also shown that learning experience tends to improve in a learning environment where instructors are approachable and engaged; where a strong linkage exists between the instructor and the student; and where the subject matter and course organization are aligned, regardless of the accent of the instructor (Lichtenstein, 2005). In fact, the study by Kavas and Kavas, (2008), claimed that accent is by no means the most important factor in the learning experience of students. Other factors, including instructor addressing student needs, creating a sense of order in the classroom, addressing students by name, getting to know students' background, avoiding the use of rewards to control, not judging the students, employing class-building games and activities, celebrating individual student and group successes, and providing a glimpse of the instructor's background to students were also considered important in creating and sustaining positive learning experience, regardless of the accent of the instructor (Erwin, 2016).

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