



USMC Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning

Marines' Views on How to Improve Marine Corps Cultural and Language Training and Education Programs

#2: Course Improvements

Language/culture, to teach it right, involves any number of teaching methods . . . immersion training clearly [is] the best method, but no one has the time. All other methods have their place . . . If you don't cut out the time, it won't happen to standard . . . which is why I like classroom time; computer training can enhance/reinforce other training. . . .

- Respondent #1958

Within the Marine Corps, cultural and language training and education programs expanded in 2005 in response to guidance from above and demand from within. The cultural complexities facing Marines and sister service personnel across the range of military operations and throughout the world prompted a response from the Services' supporting establishment to bolster pre-deployment preparation and professional military education with cultural and language learning programs. Each service took a different approach, congruent with their employment and deployment of forces and consistent with their unique organizational cultures. After four years, the Marine Corps, through its Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL), employed an online survey to solicit input from Marines about their satisfaction with cultural and language learning programs, their preferred method of instruction, the training's impact on operational effectiveness, and the need for and importance of such learning. In the survey, CAOCL also sought recommendations from Marines on how to improve these learning programs.

Drawing from the recommendations provided, CAOCL has drafted a series of papers to present these Marines' ideas on how to improve not only these programs, but also overall Marine Corps cultural and language capabilities. This series offers insights into the successes and challenges of current programs in order to guide policy makers and senior Marine Corps leaders as they refine cultural and language learning policies and practices to meet the ever-evolving needs of their warfighters. This paper, the second in the series, provides Marines' recommendations on course improvements. The responding Marines **offer critiques and ideas on methods, content offerings, and capabilities of the instructors and discuss accessibility and availability of course materials, quantity of courses and materials, and the need to assess and track progress.** These Marines have provided actionable ideas for how to shape future course offerings to ensure the Marine Corps is positioned for success in its upcoming operations.

Method

In partnership with the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned, CAOCL sent out a survey to 15% of all Marines with email addresses on the Marine Corps Global Address List during February 2010, excluding general officers. CAOCL received 2406 valid responses from Marines, representing all 42 military

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occupational specialties, all ranks, and all educational levels.¹ Comparisons of the survey demographics to data on the Marine Corps indicate that respondents are representative of the Marine Corps with the exception of the lowest ranks.²

As a final question to survey respondents, CAOCL solicited Marines' ideas for ways to improve Marine Corps cultural and language training and education efforts. Each of the 2406 Marines had the opportunity to answer the open-ended final question,³ which stated "Please provide any comments you may have on ways to improve cultural and language education and training programs throughout the Marine Corps." Five hundred forty-five Marines (22.7%) responded to this question. When compared with those Marines who did not offer comments, this group of Marines is older with more service and deployment experience, uses cultural and language capabilities more, and places higher value on these capabilities (See Appendix A). This becomes important in light of their recommendations, as they have seen and experienced what has worked and what has not, both in the field and in garrison. These recommendations are a valuable resource for policy makers as they continue to refine the Marine Corps cultural and language learning policies and practices.

CAOCL reviewed these Marines' responses, identified themes present in the data, and assigned codes to them, using the inductive method of coding qualitative answers and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Text Analysis for Surveys 3.0 software. Because responses were open-ended, each response could express several themes and therefore require more than one code. The numbers used throughout this paper indicate the frequency that the themes emerged in the data. When all the code frequencies are added together, they surpass the total population of responses. Therefore, each code needs to be considered separately.

Of the 545 respondents, 439 offered direct (408) and inferred (31) recommendations on ways to improve cultural and language training and education programs. Their recommendations fell into four broad categories: who should receive cultural and language training and education; career timing of such training and education; leadership issues; and course improvements. As stated above, this paper will address Marines' course improvement recommendations. Two hundred seventy-eight Marines (51% of those who offered recommendations) offered such recommendations, and the themes that emerged were as follows: Method, Content, Instructor, Accessibility and Availability, Quantity, and Assessment and Tracking (Appendix B breaks down the frequency of these categories).

¹ General officers were intentionally excluded from the population.

² Because Privates (E-1s), Privates First Class (E-2s) and Second Lieutenants (O-1s) do not always have addresses on the Global Address List, these ranks are underrepresented in the data. As young Marines new to the Corps, these ranks are unlikely to have deployed in the past four years.

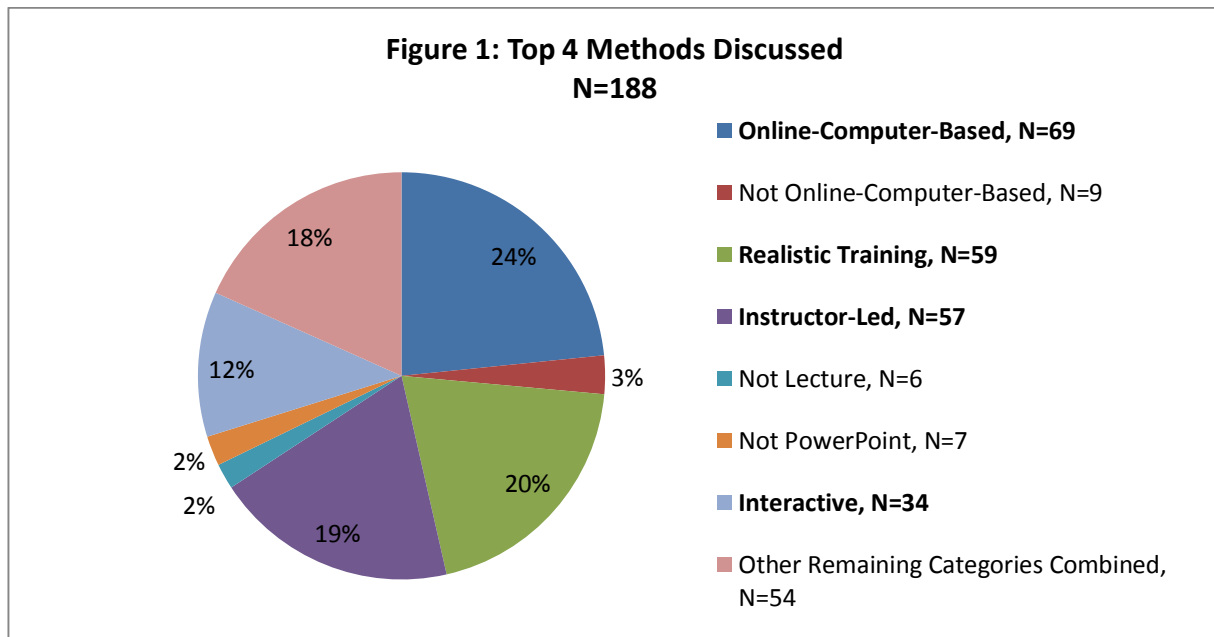
³ Note that some Marines elected to leave the survey early and, therefore, did not reach the final question. However, it was available to them.

Key Themes

Note: The percentages in the following section refer to various subsets of the overall survey sample, as described below.

1. Method

One hundred eighty-eight Marines (67.6%) offered recommendations that addressed both delivery methods and instruction techniques. CAOCL created a cluster of 16 codes that comprised the “Method Cluster” category: Online-Computer-Based, Rosetta Stone, Gaming, Live Instruction, Other, Interactive, Immersion, Realistic or Prac Ap, Small Group, Mojave Viper-Positive, Lecture, Not Online-Computer-Based, Smart Cards, Not PowerPoint, Not Lecture, and Entertaining. The key themes to emerge were: Online-Computer-Based, Realistic Training, Instructor-Led, and Interactive. (See Appendix B, Figure 9.) Appendix C provides data on the total population (N=2406) of survey respondents’ preferred learning methods and the reasons for selecting each method. While a much broader population, these data provide context for the ensuing discussion on methods.



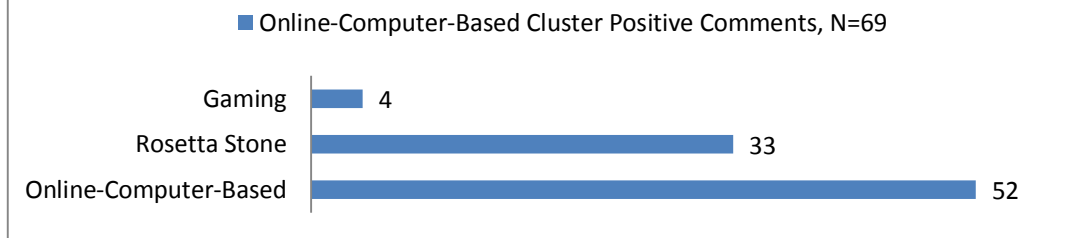
a. Online – Computer–Based

i. Positive Comments

Of this group the most frequently discussed was the delivery method of online or computer-based training (69 responses – 36.7%).⁴ CAOCL created a cluster of three codes that comprised the “Online-Computer-Based Cluster” category: Online-Computer-Based, Rosetta Stone, and Gaming.

⁴ It is important to note that, while online-computer-based methods were most frequently discussed, they were not the most preferred method for receiving cultural and language learning. See Appendix C for additional information.

Figure 2: Online - Computer-Based Cluster



Fifty-two Marines (75.4%) in this cluster category either explicitly endorsed using online or computer-based training or included references to online or computer-based training in their recommendation on improving these educational and training programs. Respondent #1339 stated, *“Computer based training is very effective and gives the opportunity to learn the language at various times when operational tempo precludes all hands gatherings. . . .”*⁵ and Respondent #863 offered, *“Implement the training on MarineNet as an annual training requirement.”* Some respondents felt that computer-based or online training was the most feasible to reach the broadest audience. For example, Respondent #837 explained, *“I have been deployed to Iraq, Japan, Australia, Malaysia, and Thailand. I agree that cultural learning would go a long way in helping Marines understand their area of operation. I believe web-based instruction with annual requirements is the only way I see this program being successful.”* Respondent #1136 noted, *“Cultural and language education should be a requirement for all Marines. Self paced online is the most feasible, and could be tested and scored. . . .”* Some respondents saw computer-based training as a reinforcement or complement to other training, such as Respondents #1008 and #1261 who expressed respectively, *“Make it a mandatory pre-deployment online course along with a subject matter expert that will not just talk about what’s bad and what’s good but how the society which Marines are deploy to are alike and different. . . .”* and *“This training should be offered as a part of the curricula of PME⁶ academies and follow on training available via MarineNet. . . .”* Others, while supporting this delivery method, saw its potential limitations; for example, *“Computer-based training can help, but in the end, it often ends up being a ‘check in the block’ for the commander, who can then say that his/her Marines have done cultural and language training”* (Respondent #1605).

Thirty-three of the Marines’ (47.8%) recommendations in this cluster category involved more use of and/or access to the Rosetta Stone software. While a couple of Marines mentioned other language learning software,⁷ Rosetta Stone was clearly the most frequently discussed. *“Utilize Rosetta Stone more often.”* (Respondent #508), *“A Rosetta Stone guide book used in conjunction with Rosetta Stone that explains each word used would be much more beneficial than just knowing what sentence means what.”* (Respondent #710), and *“I think units should have time set aside to be able to log on to Rosetta Stone.”* (Respondent #1982) are examples of respondents’ ideas on how improve Marines’ experience with the course. Many of the respondents in this subcategory expressed access concerns in relation to the

⁵ Note: Italicized text represents Marine quotations throughout this paper and does not signify emphasis. This method helps the reader distinguish between the Marine quotation and the rest of the paper.

⁶ Professional Military Education.

⁷ Because of the infrequency, those responses were placed into the category: Online-Computer-Based instead of in a separate, software-specific category.

Rosetta Stone software; thus, their recommendations to improve language learning involved ways to make Rosetta Stone more easily accessible, as represented by Respondent #1873, *“Online Rosetta Stone doesn’t really work while deployed. Is there any way to download it to the hard drive of a computer?”*

Four Marines (5.8%) in this cluster category mentioned gaming. Respondent #758 wrote, *“Interactive gaming would be helpful in getting the next generation of Marines interested in the subjects to be learned.”* Respondent #911 recommended blending a virtual classroom with a video game along the lines of Call of Duty. He explained,

I think there are two things that can be developed to assist in cultural and language training that would be effective and allow Marines across the globe to participate without huge difficulties. The first portion is virtual classroom based via the internet set up similar to an online college class. It should be self paced but have due dates for assignments based off of the enrollment date. Required reading can be provided fairly inexpensively by having a PDF of the books available for download in the virtual classroom. The second portion will be integrated with the first version in the form of a video game. Considering that most Marines work on their tactics in games such as Call of Duty, it should be set up similar to that. The scenarios should be based on their level of training in the classroom. For example in the first month SNM should know this level of language and culture, so this scenario should incorporate on that. Integration of the microphone will be key in order to pronounce certain words properly. Also there should be choices that involve the possibility of offending the local population if you make the wrong choice based on the training you've received to date. . . .

ii. Negative Comments

It is important to recognize that there were nine Marines (4.8% of total the 188 respondents in the Method Cluster) who recommended not using online or computer-based training for cultural and language instruction, raising legitimate concerns. Respondent #1408 noted, *“Having small classes of learners per teacher is, in my opinion, better than online instruction or a large class.”* Respondent #1308 continued,

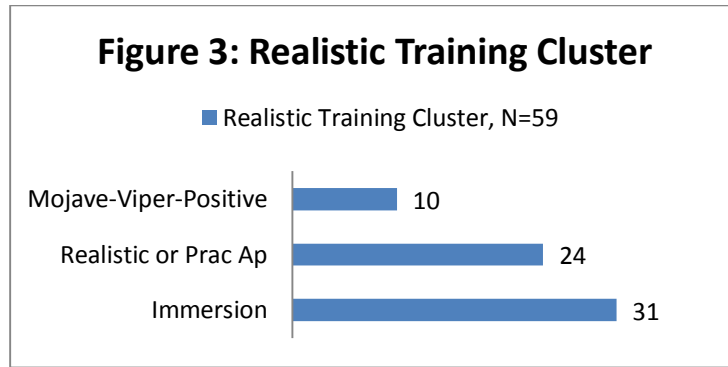
Real life training is the most effective way to conduct operational readiness. Today's Marines seek improvement in this unbalanced society we are living in today. Text books, CDs, and computers programs are a waste of time and money. Effective small unit leadership training will give the Marines something more than just "guesses and clicks." If we are to succeed in foreign relations then we must conduct "real life foreign relations."

Respondent #1390 added, *“During my 29 years in the Marine Corps, I have learned that most Marines do not take information on the computer serious; however, I know that case study is time consuming but it is effective.”*

b. Realistic Training

The second most frequent recommendation was to use realistic training. CAOCL created a cluster of three codes that comprised the “Realistic Training Cluster” category: Immersion, Realistic or Prac Ap, and Mojave Viper-Positive.⁸

⁸ Note that “Gaming” was not included in this cluster, although it could be considered realistic training as well. It was included in the “Online-Computer-Based Cluster”. There were four responses that discussed gaming.



Of the 59 Marines (31.4%) who are part of this cluster category, the majority (52.5% or 31 responses) recommended using immersive experiences to convey this learning.⁹ Respondent #1665 explicitly endorsed immersion, stating *“Immersion is the best way for cultural and language education.”* Respondent #760 agreed, explaining *“Advisor training at Camp Pendleton was very effective and gave my Marines and myself one on one time with our language trainers. I believe that this was the most effective way possible because we had both lecture and immersion. We also had cultural training at the same time.”* Respondent #1204 suggested developing a required immersive program, providing *“I would like to see a mandatory language and cultural immersion program complete with language training. . .”*, and Respondent #595 gave the following idea, *“Provide immersion schools with appropriate lessons/TLOs/ELOs¹⁰ for each rank group. . . Allocate each unit a number of school seats to ensure that small unit leaders can pass on their knowledge as they do after returning from school. . .”*

Others in this cluster (24 responses – 40.2%) called for training that included practical application exercises or scenarios so that the learning reflected what Marines would face in theater. For example, Respondent #77 offered:

In my opinion I think that for Marines to learn and actually retain the information they’ve been taught it has to be fun and interactive and they should be put into scenarios for [exercises]. One of the Marines can dress like an Iraqi and the other Marines would search them and see if they have any weapons or contraband and they can attempt to use the language. That’s how I learned over a year ago and I still remember what I was taught during training.

Respondent #592 concurred, *“Training through interaction with role players, simulating foreign lands, and simulating actual operations forcing Marines to make decisions is the only way to get the job done in my opinion. Everyone learns from actual experience.”* Respondent #2330 thought that adding *“more interactive scenarios . . .”* would improve the course. In particular, Mojave Viper (MV) and MV-type training events were recommended or endorsed by 10 Marines (16.9%).¹¹ *“More training scenarios like Mojave Viper”* (Respondent #1343) and *“I was an instructor of sorts at Mojave Viper for the insurgency. I know firsthand the benefits of such a program and have seen the impact it is able to create on the Marines in training. I believe it to be an extraordinary exercise.”* (Respondent #2191) are examples of the comments in this subcategory.

⁹ It is important to note that the Marines in this study used a broad definition of the word immersion and did not limit it to solely those experiences that involved being within a foreign culture for an extended period of time.

¹⁰ Terminal and enabling learning objectives.

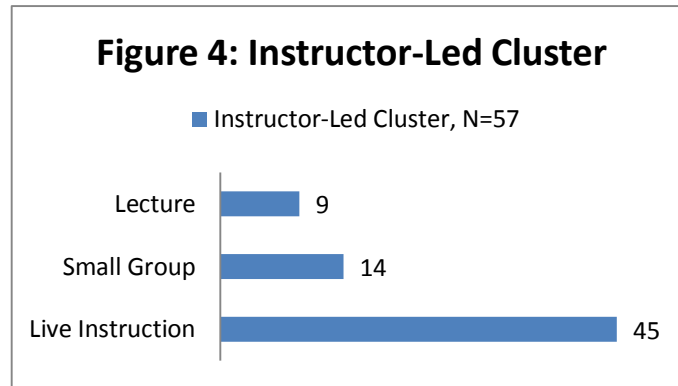
¹¹ Mojave Viper is a 30-day combined arms exercise and security and stability operations training event. For more information, please see the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center’s link:

http://www.militarynewcomers.com/29PALMS/resources/03_mission.html, accessed 1 February 2012.

c. Instructor-led

i. Positive Comments

The third most frequent recommendation was to have the courses instructor-led. Fifty-seven Marines (30.3%) fell into this category. CAOCL created a cluster of three codes that comprised the “Instructor-Led Cluster” category: Live Instruction, Small Group, and Lecture.



Most of the responses (45 responses – 78.9%) recommended live instruction. Respondent #70 explained, “Having an instructor or private instructor will help give a better understanding and cultural awareness for being deployed to foreign countries.” Respondent #657 continued,

I think language training is important. There should be a subject matter expert (i.e. an interpreter or someone who speaks the language) to teach a few of the Marines who are going to be deploying with each unit basic language skills for the A.O. It’s important because it will be easier for the Marine to learn the language to person rather than from some sort of learning material where there isn’t the live interaction and feedback that you get from one on one relationship or a group relationship.

Respondent #1930 recommended a mix of formal and informal instructor-led training:

[Enhanced Mojave Viper] fireside chats were not as valuable as they could have been. Recommend formal, CAOCL/SME-led training classes be made available to EMV participating units to reinforce the unit-led, home-station training. Recommend that fireside chats follow the formal, classroom style classes.

According to Respondent #1837, it is important to have live instruction by locals: “This should be provided as part of each level of normal career progression PME. This should include as much live interaction with local nationals as possible.” Some recommendations were specific to the use of small groups (14 responses – 24.6%), such as “Would suggest have a speaker to speak to 4 to 5 Marines in a group” (Respondent #1266) and “Prefer instruction to be provided by [a] subject matter expert to small groups of students” (Respondent #2313).

Lastly, in this cluster, several Marines recommended lecture-style instruction (9 responses – 15.8%), noting, for example,

Any instructor that can provide information in regards to the culture, language, and history would benefit a Marine greatly. Although Marines don't care for briefs, they assist the commands greatly in mission effectiveness. Short briefs even would be able to provide small dos and don'ts for the local society. This would result in Marines being 'better ambassadors' of the US because they would have a brief knowledge of actions that aren't correct in that particular society." (Respondent #47)

Respondent #1409 agreed, emphasizing that *"Small group/lecture would be most effective with SMART Cards handed out to use in the field."*

ii. Negative Comments

It is important to recognize, however, that there were some Marines who explicitly did not endorse lectures or the PowerPoint lecture-delivery method. Six Marines (3.2% of the total 188 responses in the Method Cluster category) disagreed with using lectures, as represented by Respondent #504 who stated, *"Culture training should be interactive instead of lecture based. Most Marines dump the information after the class or fall asleep during the class because the information is dry."* Seven Marines (3.7%) discouraged the use of PowerPoint as a delivery method, as Respondent #2273 captured, *"Move away from PowerPoint presentations or use them sparingly. There is a reason there is the phrase 'Death by PowerPoint.'" Respondent #1616 added:*

"Fairy dusting" cultural training with laminated cards and outdated, mail-around PowerPoint briefs only solidifies a notion that many Marines already have - that cultural awareness is a nice thing, but maybe not so important as tactical or skill-based training. I would argue that it is, however, equally important - on the modern battlefield, ignorance can endanger a Marine just as much as steel.

d. Interactive

Thirty-four Marines (18.1%) raised the need to ensure the learning programs are interactive and expressed that those courses and methods of instruction that created an interactive environment led to higher learning and greater retention. This category touches on the three previous categories discussed, and many of the respondents (28 responses – 82.4%) in this category also appear in the others. However, it is being presented independently because it was a prominent theme across the categories. While Marines did not necessarily agree on delivery method, they did agree that interactive learning environments and tools fostered better learning. For example, the following two quotations exemplify this: *"The Marines are getting force fed training through MarineNet and not through enough interaction or live training. . . ."* (Respondent #1153) and *"If this becomes a career long program, it should be structured by levels with interactive tools, web-based if possible. . . ."* (Respondent 1305).

In this category, Marines shared what has worked best for them, such as Respondent #347 who explained, *"I would say to have more of interactive environments and instructions that allow for practical application and interaction with real people. Practice and interaction are the best methods in my experience."*, Respondent #1294 who noted that he *"personally [prefers] scenario based interaction with one who knows the language and is able to teach it in scenarios based on real life experiences."*, and Respondent #1316 who reported, *"During my work up for the Mitt¹² team, the interactive portion of the training was more effective. Being able to talk, walk, and become part of the culture prepared you for what you will encounter. . . ."*

¹² Military Transition Team.

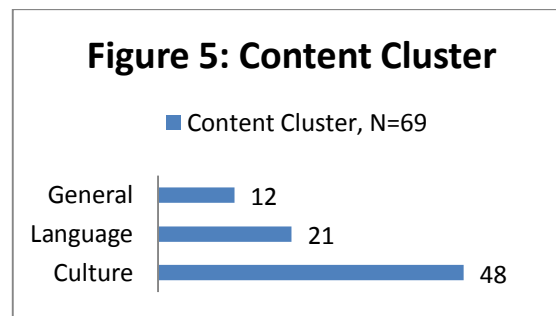
Respondent #2072 spoke frankly to those developing these learning programs about Marines and Marine learning, revealing:

Old fashioned, "professional", lecture, when you have one Marine standing up giving a class on topic. Going through slide shows while everyone else is just sitting down watching or "learning". This is not an effective way to teach Marines anything. If you want Marines to truly learn the material, you must get us involved in the class answering questions, making topic jokes or getting us to interact in some way. Most of us joined the Marine Corps for similar reasons. Most of us didn't do well in School and are more muscle than brains. Not all of us are like that but most of us are. So get us involved in the learning with group discussion or making a game out of it would not only get us to truly learn but to enjoy learning. Rather than mostly focusing on trying to stay awake because if I fall asleep Sgt so and so is tear me a new one. I spoke with many of my peers and a majority of us feel this way. Not all but most of us. The majority is your target.

Respondent#278 pointed out, that “[w]hen teaching these classes, we have to maintain the audience’s attention, whether that is keeping them more involved or having them participate in an exercise like *Mojave Viper*.” Respondent #633 agreed, recommending the training be made “. . . hands on, or interactive, so that they will remember information better than death by PowerPoint.”

2. Content Considerations

The second most prevalent overall theme involved course content – what the courses should cover. Sixty-nine Marines (24.8%) offered recommendations that addressed this issue. CAOCL created a cluster of three codes that comprised the “Content Cluster” category: Culture, Language, and General.



Marines had the most to say about culture content (48 responses – 69.6%) and focused their recommendations on three key themes: Particular topics, general cultural concepts, and area of deployment. Particular topics include such topics as the following:

- “*how to effectively study culture*” (Respondent #1771);
- “. . . *customs and courtesies of the countries. . .*” (Respondent #790);
- “. . . *standard cultural practices. . .*” (Respondent #1627);
- operational culture (Respondents #1538 and 1647);
- “. . . *Cross-Cultural Communication . . .*” (Respondent 1923);
- anthropology (Respondent #178);
- “. . . *current events. . .*” (Respondent #687);
- “. . . *religion and personal beliefs . . .*” (Respondent #1636);
- cultural habits and patterns (Respondents #1818 and #1886);

- “HOW and WHY [cultural] differences develop” (Respondent #781); and
- “. . . how the society which Marines are deploying to [is] alike and different and . . . how and why these societies are the way they are” (Respondent #1008).

The study of history received specific attention. Eight Marines (16.7%) specifically called for greater emphasis on history. “*Researching the history and dynamics of a culture are a must for the planning process [in order to] develop a plan that accounts for situations that exist or may arise during the conduct of operations,*” provided Respondent #1841. Respondent #1885 concurred, emphasizing, “*Studying the history of cultures to understand their background is the most important piece, I believe.*” He recommended that “*CAOCL offer courses that provide history and cultural information organized by each combatant command. . .*” to develop organic regional capabilities.

Many of the recommendations above emphasize the need to teach general cultural concepts. Respondent #729 explained, “*Providing general cultural awareness to Marines through PME starting at the most junior rank will instill an awareness of what culture is, our culture, other cultures in general, and the effects of culture in any combat or humanitarian mission. . .*” Respondent #1607 continued along these same lines, seeking “*Anything that can focus leaders at all levels on the benefit to using cultural paradigms to achieve mission success. By paradigms I mean understanding how we view ourselves and are viewed by others. . .*” Respondent #1770 discussed how an emphasis on general concepts creates a more innovative and adaptive Corps, able to effectively operate in any environment across the range of military operations, stating:

Understanding your operational environment has always been important and commanders that have understood their operating (OP) environment have been the most successful. This concept is nothing new but like any skill set if you don't use it one will suffer from atrophy. Socio-cultural Dynamics, cultural intelligence, cultural understanding or whatever one calls it needs to a constant theme through a Marine's career in PME, training and real world application. The focus should not be on one particular region but on how to recognize and extract the required information from the area assigned. Don't just give the Marine a fish, teach him how to fish so when operating in Afghanistan, Philippines, Central America or Africa he already knows how to fish but only needs to tweak his technique/style (TTPs) for the new area he is operating in. Being innovative and adaptive is a part of our make up as a Corps but we must continue to practice this skill set or we become rusty. Our focus right now is COIN¹³ but we [cannot] forget how to conduct MCO¹⁴. Regardless of the ROMO¹⁵, understanding the environment which includes the human terrain aspect, you are operating in is vital for long term success. . . .

Lastly, several Marines recommended linking regional learning with areas of deployment because, as Respondent #1636 indicated, “*Having an understanding of other cultures and their regions is extremely important before deploying. . .*” Respondent # 1845, for example, recommended ensuring that Marines are provided “. . . *basic familiarity of [the] complex socio-political environment*” when in a “*complex security situation.*”

Language content recommendations (21 responses – 30.4%) emphasized three different themes – level of complexity, particular topics, and area of deployment – and are interrelated. The Marines in this group conveyed that the training should be basic, as represented by “*I suggest the general training*

¹³ Counterinsurgency.

¹⁴ Major combat operations.

¹⁵ Range of military operations.

package stick to the basics. The very basics. . .” (Respondent #1862). This training should cover, for example, *“Introductions, thanks, greetings, and basic phrases. . .”* (Respondent #1676) or *“common words, phrases, and bodily gestures. . .”* (Respondent #1974), and it should be mission-focused, as represented by *“focus the language training towards the needs of the mission (i.e. phrases one would need to control a patrol embedded with foreign nationals, or the phrases needed to create small talk with locals). . .”* (Respondent #1654).

As for the general content category (12 responses – 17.4%), improvement recommendations ranged from *“Keep the training simple”* (Respondent #1070) and *“Provide better language and cultural training . . .”* (Respondent #356) to ensuring the material is current (Respondents #1411 and #2141) and relevant to the area of operations (Respondent #457). Additionally, two Marines pointed out the need to not overspecialize or overemphasize one or two regions, noting:

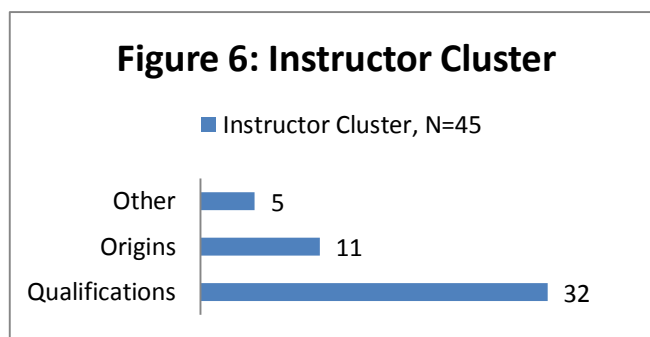
We have a tendency to just to see the immediate problem. And while the bulk of our resources should go to combating the closet threat, there must be significant effort put in developing programs that will allow us, for example, to operate in different regions of China or know the difference between Nigeria and Niger. (Respondent #1758)

Two others recommended adding additional all hands courses about current affairs and current Marine Corps missions. One explained,

I think it's good we get command classes over safety, but I'd like to see more classes over what we're doing in current operations around the Marine Corps. I asked a Marine the other day do they know what Al Qaeda is, and they said they think it's a state in Iraq! We all know how to act during leave and liberty, but not everyone knows who's the current unit detached to Helmand Province, or what Cobra Gold is. This is information we should know. (Respondent #191)

3. Instructor Considerations

Forty-five respondents (16.2%) offered course improvement recommendations that focused on the instructor. CAOCL created a cluster of three codes that comprised the “Instructor Cluster” category: Qualifications, Origins, and Other.



Those that focused on instructor qualifications were the most frequent (32 responses – 71.1%). Several Marines discussed what did not work for them. For example, their instructors were hard to understand (Respondents #787 and #2241), not teachers or poor instructors (Respondents #516 and #1455), biased (Respondents #787, #1627, #1649, and #999), or new to the materials (Respondent #736) or did not have a strong grasp of the studied language (Respondent #516). Respondent #1942 explained, “Key

element missed in the survey is the credibility of the instructor and the course material. In my experience most of the 'cultural experts' that we (USMC) use for pre-deployment training focus on the clichés of culture and not on the reality or the understanding. . . . He, along with the majority of Marines in this category, called for the Marine Corps to have experts - those qualified to teach with current experience - teach Marines. He continued, *"Experience based training and using instructors that have not only been in/around the subject culture but who truly understand it is what is critical and it is ONLY with such instructors that the instruction is beneficial."* Respondent #297, in his simple statement, captured the essence of this group: *"It would be nice to learn it from a real pro."*

Eleven Marines (24.4%) in this cluster category specifically discussed instructor origins and saw the value of learning about the culture and language from people from within the studied population, although they cautioned this was not without concern. For example, Respondent #1437 asked for *"[m]ore SME from the theater of deployment, not someone that is school house trained."* The best part of the training at the Advisor Training Group for Respondent #972 was *"the language training with actual people from Iraq and Afghanistan . . ."*, and thus, Respondent #1693 recommended, *"Bring in more foreign nationals with translators to learn the culture and language together, at the same time. They are inseparable components, and crucial to really understanding the minds of the people we will be training with, helping, and fighting."* Respondent #1649 urged caution, however, as he noted, *"It is important to remember that natives come with their own biases. . . ."* Because of this, he pointed out that, *"For ethnically volatile areas an objective and unbiased instructor not from the region may be best."* Respondent #1786 offered the following idea: *"Tapping into the Middle-Eastern communities here in the U.S. is vital to getting a baseline of the culture and sometimes the specific area [to which] you may be deployed. . . ."* However, he also cautioned to be careful with this, as sometimes these individuals *"too often have been out of touch w/ current events to provide the most relevant picture on the ground. . . ."*

4. Accessibility and Availability

Forty-three Marines (15.5%) provided recommendations that addressed the issues of accessibility and availability of courses and resources. The most consistent recommendation within this category was to make access to cultural and language learning programs easy. The following are representative of the comments seeking easy access to the learning programs: *"Provide online, easy access to cultural and language programs"* (Respondent #1620), *"make the online training more accessible . . ."* (Respondent #1654), *"Make it easy to get involved in a program"* (Respondent #1906), and *"It would be nice to have training that we can use and have easy access to. . . ."* (Respondent #388). Many Marines, furthermore, raised concerns with not being able to access resources and expressed how that challenged their ability to advance their studies. The key complaint was centered on accessing online learning programs, especially when deployed. Marines reported having problems accessing programs from non-government/non-CAC¹⁶-enabled computers, outside of work hours, and when deployed. Respondent #1507 provided a detailed account that captures the problem:

I wanted to learn a second language and I wanted to learn it while deployed. When I went to see if I could get languages on a CD while I was deployed, I was told I would have to do it online (Rosetta Stone). The problem is while [you're] deployed, you do not have everyday access to computers and the connection is really slow. We tried it but it took forever to load and wasn't worth it. The library would not lend their language CDs out for such a long period of time. I was forced to buy my own

¹⁶ Common Access Card. "Smart" ID card for active-duty military personnel, Selected Reserve, DoD civilian employees, and eligible contractor personnel." per the DoD ID Card Reference Center, <http://www.cac.mil/>.

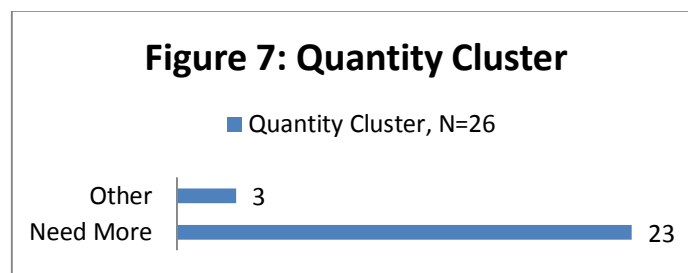
CDs and books to learn the language. I wasn't the only one who has come across this problem. The Marine Corps wants us to learn languages but only when we have great internet connectivity. . . In addition to raising the concern, the Marines provided ideas on how to improve access concerns. Respondent # 1507 continued:

Deployment is a perfect time to learn new languages. I would love to see a program that would allow us to check out CDs and books for a long time (deployment time) or find a way to put the languages on a CD. The Marine [Corps] would just have to supply the CD or CDs and give the person who is downloading the information a few days to do it. Making it easier to access the tools to learn a language while deployed would be very helpful.

Others suggested, for example, making "MarineNet . . . accessible without a CAC Card." (Respondent #788), placing materials at the base library (Respondent #924) and base education centers (Respondent #1541), and making the learning available on personal computers (Respondents #934, #1305, and #1503). To address online access concerns, Respondent #1882 offered one idea, ". . . that language and cultural classes be down loaded from an 'iTunes'-like website that Marines access with a CAC card or password. That way Marines could load their iPod with the course material prior to deployment from a personal computer." Respondent #1262 explained that having a downloadable program worked very well for him while on deployment and offered:

I think ATG, I MEF¹⁷ has a pretty good start in method and media towards the approach to language and cultural training. As with most training requirements, time is the limiting factor in training Marines and developing proficiency. MarineNet is a start in providing this training. I felt Rapid Rote was an excellent program and way to study and develop language skills without being tied to an internet connection. I was able to deploy with the software loaded to my personal laptop and could refresh or continue to develop language skills while deployed.

5. Quantity of Courses and Materials



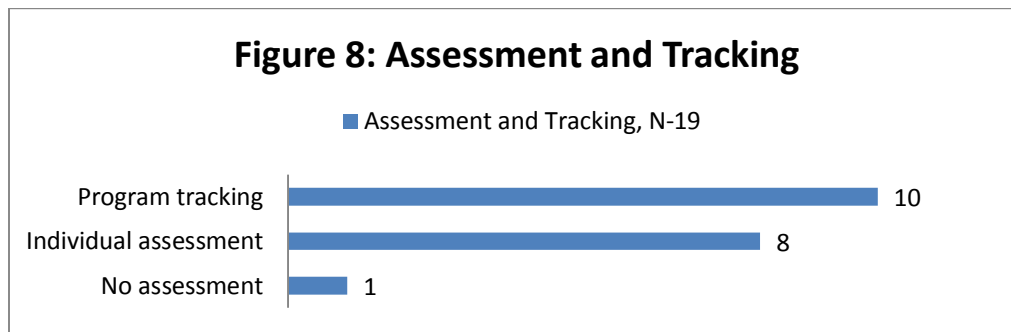
Twenty-six Marines (9.4% out the total population in this data set, N=278) discussed the quantity of courses and course materials, 23 (88.5%) of whom recommended increasing the amount of learning opportunities and materials. When asked how to improve these programs, Respondent #282 responded, "More of it mostly. . . ." as did Respondent #483:

Cultural training and foreign language training has helped immensely during my combat tours. The training is good, but I believe we need more of both. Can we get the mission accomplished without this training? Yes we can. However, it is so much easier to accomplish the mission and exceed the parameters of "mission success" with this training.

¹⁷ Advisor Training Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force.

Marines recommended more time dedicated to this learning, more courses and additional materials. Comments ranged from “Add 8-16 hours of instructor led training to pre-deployment training” (Respondent #806) and “We need to set aside more training time to do these types of activities. . . .” (Respondent #391) to “More Smart Cards and a wider array of phrases on them” (Respondent #151), “more classes” (Respondent #534), and “I would just say to get more PME and hands-on training” (Respondent #2143).

6. Assessment and Tracking



While a small category, the assessment and tracking category (19 responses – 6.8%) raises a legitimate issue – how to ensure the learning happens. It takes both assessment to capture individual ability (8 responses – 42.1%) and tracking to indicate overall compliance and unit readiness (10 responses – 52.6%).¹⁸ “The Marine Corps definitely needs to track the progress of the various language and cultural awareness programs, as well as Marines’ opinion of them and their effectiveness” (Respondent #473). Marines recommended that the learning be based on standards (Respondents #1319 and #1843), that there be examinations (Respondent #1319, #1843, #1136, #1738, #748, #1862, and #1933), and that the education be grade-based (Respondent #49). “. . . [H]ow [cultural and language education is] tracked is the problem,” explained Respondent #1431. Respondent #1547 noted that any online culture and language programs “. . . need to provide the commander the ability to monitor the total hours each student accomplishes as well as provide skill-level progress,” and Respondent #1691 offered that “MarineNet modules would be a great way to track training/certifications provided it always updated MOL and MCTFS¹⁹ systems. . . .” To “[m]ake sure commands are doing it and not saying they are doing it” (Respondent #941), Respondent #1359 recommended “CMC²⁰-directed study times/numbers of hours per week for garrison units, so local command has to put on TEEP²¹ and report completion to higher. . . .”

Conclusions

It is invaluable to receive input from the end users or target audiences of learning programs on how to improve these programs so that they are designed to meet the needs of the student. The Marines in this dataset offer a range of course improvement recommendations to ensure the Marine Corps’ cultural

¹⁸ The 19th respondent in this category, #835, recommended not using assessments out of the concern they would “lessen interest and impede learning”. This was not a representative comment within the category and thus is not included in the discussion but rather noted here.

¹⁹ Marine On-Line and Marine Corps Total Force Structure.

²⁰ Commandant of the Marine Corps.

²¹ Training, Exercise, and Evaluation Plan.

and language training and education programs facilitate the development of capabilities that these Marines view as critical enablers in the 21st Century complex global security environment. They drew from their wealth of experience both with the programs and with the needs of Marines in the field to provide substantive feedback on the following:

- what learning methods and techniques have worked for them or their Marines and which have not;
- what content will best serve Marines to support Marine Corps requirements;
- instructor qualifications to ensure Marines receive the best instruction;
- the challenges Marines have faced with accessing resources;
- the need for more learning opportunities in this area; and
- the need to assess and track progress so that the Marine Corps maintains oversight on these capabilities.

These recommendations serve to inform future generations of courses and materials to ensure the Marine Corps, and specifically CAOCL, is maximizing learning time by developing and delivering impactful learning.

Appendix A: Demographics of the Population Responding to the Final Survey Question

Five hundred forty-five respondents answered the final qualitative question out of a total population of 2406. Within the responding population, males, officers and those who had deployed or stationed overseas were more likely to respond than females, enlisted personnel, and those who had not deployed or been stationed overseas. When compared with those Marines who did not offer comments, the responding group of Marines is older with more service and deployment experience. Furthermore, the responding group used cultural and language capabilities more in their previous deployments and valued these capabilities more. Additional information on use and values is available from CAOCL.

Table 1: Demographics of the Responding Group

Demographic Category	Characteristic	The total population in survey	Provided response to the final question	Sig.*
Gender	Male	2181	513 (23%)	.002*
	Female	225	32 (14%)	
Rank	Officer	580	191 (33%)	.000*
	Enlisted	1826	354 (19%)	
Deployment/Stationed Overseas Status	Deployed/Stationed	1999	494 (25%)	.000*
	Not Deployed/Stationed	407	51 (12.5%)	

* Pearson's Chi Square

Table 2: Demographics of Those Who Answered the Final Question versus Those Who Did Not

Independent Paired Samples T-Tests						
Answered Final Question	Years on Active Duty	Age	Total Years: Stationed/Deployed Overseas	Frequency of Use: Language and Cross Cultural Communication Skills	Frequency of Use: Cultural Knowledge	% Time: Interacting with Locals
Yes	11.38	32.79	3.35	2.31	2.68	38.84
N	544	543	493	412	412	493
No	9.28	29.89	2.82	1.92	2.30	29.40
N	1859	1854	1504	1144	1144	1504
Significance						
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Appendix B: Course Improvement

Population: 278

File: Course Improvement Final Question-2.tas

Data Source File: Rec and Infer Rec ResponsesPII Removed.xlsx; includes both Recommendation (408) and Inferred Recommendation (31) responses from source file: Final Question Value Pull-4.tas, whose data source file is CAOCLSurvey_Recode Scale Oct 26.sav.

Rules:

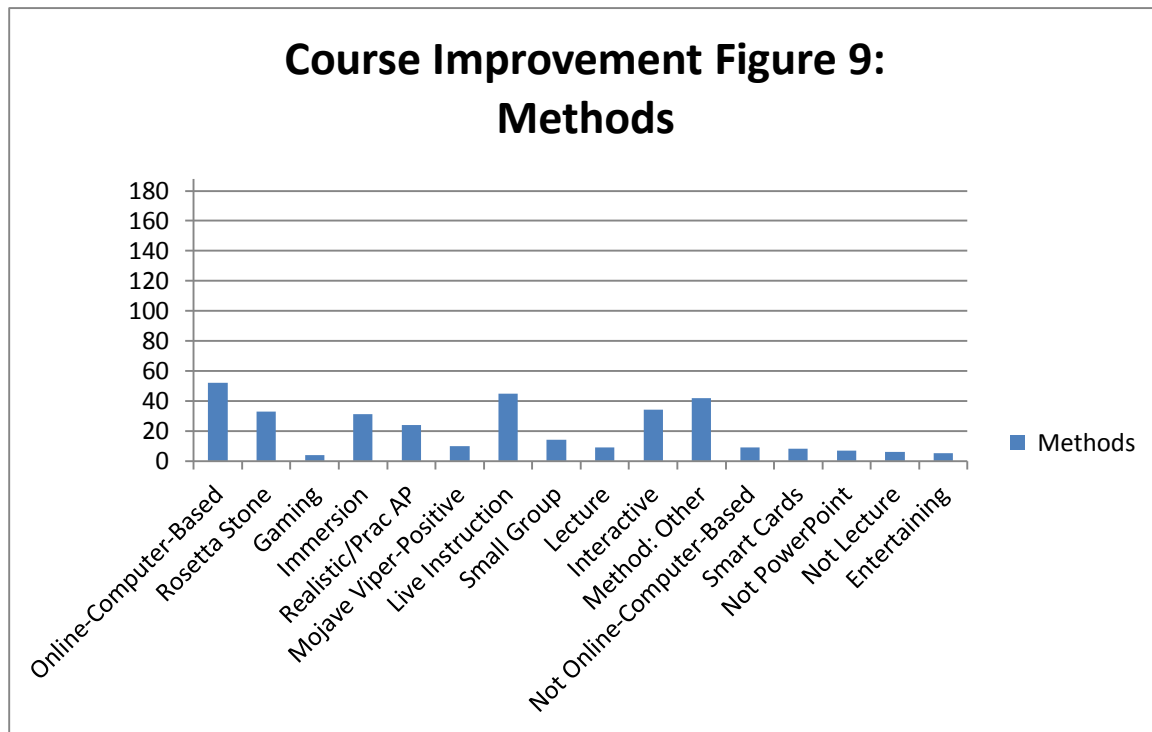
- 1) Rosetta Stone as a method was called out specifically due to high occurrence; other online or computer-based training methods were placed in the category: “Method: Online-Computer-Based”; MCI was not considered online and thus was placed in “Method: Other”.
- 2) “Method: Online-Computer-Based” includes responses that mentioned CDs and iPods.
- 3) “Instructor: Qualifications” includes responses that mention need for SME or duty expert instruction. This is because of the practice in the Marine Corps of having Marines from within the unit provide “hip-pocket” training.
- 4) “Accessibility and Availability” includes responses that discussed accessing resources and resource availability.
- 5) “Method: Immersion” is applied to responses that discuss immersion. It is important to note that Marines – in some cases – use this term more broadly; therefore, some responses discuss, e.g. “immersion schools” or “culturally immerse a willing Marine with an instructor”.
- 6) “Method: Realistic or Prac Ap” includes scenario-based learning but not case method or tactical decision games (placed in “Method: Other”).
- 7) “Method: Smart Cards” includes positive, negative, and neutral comments about smart cards. The category is too small to split.
- 8) Out of the 439 recommendations, there were 161 responses that did not specifically address course improvements. These were coded as “Out of Scope” and are not represented below.

Table 3: Categories and Frequencies of Response

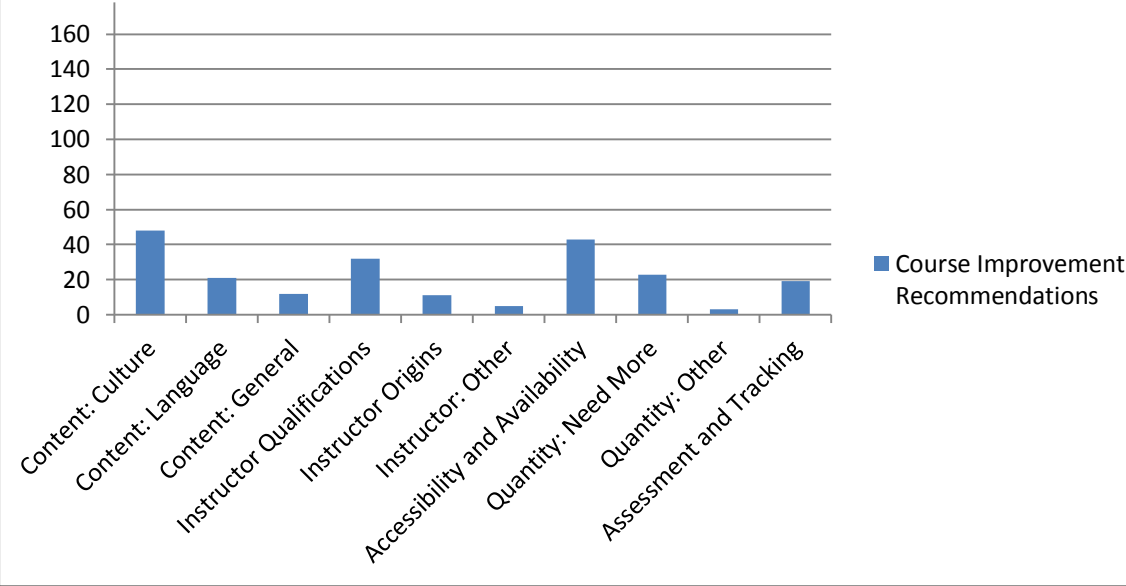
Category	Number of Responses (N=278)
Method Considerations	188
Online-Computer-Based Cluster	69
Method: Online-Computer-Based	52
Method: Rosetta Stone	33
Method: Gaming	4
Method: Not Online-Computer-Based	9
Realistic Training*	59
Method: Immersion	31
Method: Realistic or Prac Ap	24
Method: Mojave Viper-Positive	10
Instructor-Led Cluster	57
Method: Live Instruction	45
Method: Small Group	14
Method: Lecture	9
Method: Not Lecture	6

	Method: Not PowerPoint	7
	Method: Interactive	34
	Method: Other Categories	54
	Method: Other	42
	Method: Smart Cards	8
	Method: Entertaining	5
Content Considerations		69
	Content: Culture	48
	Content: Language	21
	Content: General	12
Instructor Considerations		45
	Instructor: Qualifications	32
	Instructor: Origins	11
	Instructor: Other	5
Accessibility and Availability		43
Quantity of Instruction		26
	Quantity: Need More	23
	Quantity: Other	3
Assessment and Tracking		19

*Note: Gaming was not included in this cluster but rather included in the category “Online-Computer-Based”, although it could be considered as realistic training as well. There are four responses that address gaming.



Course Improvement Figure 10: Other Categories



Appendix C: Quantitative Data from Total Survey Population on Preferred Learning Methods and Reasons Those Methods Are Preferred

In the quantitative portion of the survey, all survey respondents had the opportunity²² to identify their preferred learning methods for language and cultural predeployment training and career long learning and select the reasons they preferred the methods they chose. Their answers provide key insights into how Marines would like to learn and can inform the development of future Marine Corps learning programs.

Table 4: Preferred Language Predeployment Training Method

Preferred language predeployment training method	Percent
1. Formal language instruction with a live instructor	27.4%
2. Web or computer based instruction	20.9%
3. Immersion experience (e.g. Mojave Viper)	19.2%
4. Private language instruction	9.6%
5. Scenario and role play	6.5%
6. Portable technology (iPod, iPhone etc.)	5.5%
7. Gaming materials	4.6%
8. Printed Phrase lists	3.3%
9. Language labs	3.1%
Total	100%

²² N=2406. Note that some Marines elected to leave the survey early and, therefore, would not have reached all of these questions. However, they were available to them.

Table 5: Reasons Selected for the Top Three Preferred Language Predeployment Training Methods

		Top 3 Preferred Language Training Methods		
		Formal Live Instruction	Online/CBT	Immersion
		# of times selected	# of times selected	# of times selected
Reason prefer learning method	It is interactive	441	327	311
	It provides real life practice	433	116	407
	It provides immediate feedback	420	194	257
	I am able to talk to live person	508	16	314
	It is self paced	70	430	80
	It is not time consuming	12	101	14
	I can fit it into my schedule	32	336	29
	It can easily access it	25	299	47
	It is entertaining	68	95	100
	It is portable	3	189	22
	Other	44	19	58

Table 6: Preferred Cultural Predeployment Training Method

Preferred cultural predeployment training method	Percent
1. Small group discussion with a SME	25.4%
2. Lecture from an instructor	23.2%
3. Immersion experience (e.g. Mojave Viper)	21.0%
4. Scenario based seminar (case study, vignettes)	10.9%
5. Computer based training	6.4%
6. Reading materials (smart cards etc.)	5.6%
7. Video instruction	3.1%
8. Gaming materials	2.8%
9. Virtual learning environment (emails, chat)	1.5%
Total	100%

Table 7: Reasons Selected for the Top Three Preferred Cultural Predeployment Training Methods

		Top 3 Preferred Cultural Training Methods		
		Small Group Discussion	Lecture	Immersion
		# of times selected	# of times selected	# of times selected
Reason prefer learning method	It is interactive	464	271	342
	It provides real life practice	275	172	458
	It provides immediate feedback	338	226	310
	I am able to talk to live person	397	333	306
	It is self paced	61	53	25
	It is not time consuming	32	50	11
	I can fit it into my schedule	43	49	21
	It can easily access it	25	19	29
	It is entertaining	106	51	112
	It is portable	9	7	10
	Other	35	28	31

Table 8: Preferred Career Long Education Learning Method

Preferred career long learning method	Percent
1. Small group discussion with a SME	27.0%
2. Lecture from a live instructor	20.4%
3. Immersion experience (e.g. Mojave Viper)	15.2%
4. Computer based training	13.8%
5. Scenario based seminar (case studies, vignettes)	9.5%
6. Virtual learning environment (emails, chat)	4.7%
7. Reading materials (books, articles)	3.4%
8. Gaming materials	3.3%
9. Video instruction	2.6%
Total	100%

Table 9: Preferred Career Long Learning Method

		Top 3 Preferred Career Long Learning Methods		
		Small Group Discussion	Lecture	Immersion
		# of times selected	# of times selected	# of times selected
Reason prefer learning method	It is interactive	484	299	256
	It provides real life practice	329	207	310
	It provides immediate feedback	383	239	228
	I am able to talk to live person	421	292	225
	It is self paced	79	57	24
	It is not time consuming	38	27	11
	I can fit it into my schedule	48	44	18
	It can easily access it	32	30	17
	It is entertaining	120	55	104
	It is portable	13	10	12
	Other	25	17	24