

Analysis of language instruction in advisor training

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This is the third of five planned “mini-reports” produced by the Center for Advanced Operational Culture’s (CAOCL’s) Translational Research Group (TRG). It is a product of a year-long research project¹ on the “Global Training and Advising Course,” which is offered by the Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group (MCSCG).

Mini-reports are non-conclusive snapshots of the data leading up to the final research report. Because the researcher is in Quantico and the stakeholders at MCSCG are in Ft. Story, these mini-reports also generate discussion that is otherwise difficult to initiate due to the physical distance between the staffs.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS:

Some data and detailed analysis developed for this part of the research project was not included in the following report due to contracting considerations related to the contractor status of some participants and research team members. Consequently, readers may notice ambiguities in presentation style or conclusions. While not ideal, these adjustments were necessary given the context of the research.

This mini-report, which is exclusively about foreign language instruction in security cooperation training, is also limited by the research team's relative lack of experience in the areas of foreign language training and foreign language curriculum design.

Given the importance of language familiarization within the DoD and the Marine Corps, we strongly encourage further study by researchers with appropriate expertise.

Common acronyms in this report: AO (Area of Operations); CAOCL (Center for Advanced Operational Culture); CERTEX (certification exercise); CLATT (Country Liaison Assessment and Training Team); FSF (Foreign Security Forces); JAF (Jordanian Armed Forces); MCSCG (Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group); MEU (Marine Expeditionary Unit); MSA (Modern Standard Arabic); PTP (Pre-deployment Training); TIG (Training Instructor Group); SC (Security Cooperation)

Security cooperation team names in this report: MARCENT 13.2 & MARCENT 14.1 (Marine Central Command, Jordan); USMTM (United States Military Training Mission, Saudi Arabia); UAE (United Arab Emirates); GTT (Georgia Training Team, Georgia); SPMAGTF-Africa (Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force Africa); Cadre (the TIG’s designation for a collection of teams who were trained together, including 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines (2/1); 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines (3/8); and individual augments to the UAE.)

Locations of research interviews or observation: Language and culture classes- Ft. Story, VA; CERTEXs- Ft. Pickett, VA; driving and shooting ranges- Moyock, NC; Post-deployment out-processing - Camp Pendleton, CA.

¹ This research project is conducted under MCCDC Human Subjects Research – Protocol # MCCDC.2013.003-IR-EP7-A/CAOCL STUDY. This joint research project between CAOCL and MCSCG will provide an actionable assessment of how Marines who receive advisor skills training from MCSCG view its impact on how they approach mission planning and interacting with a foreign population. This is a non-conclusive interim report.

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INTRODUCTION:

In 2013, CAOCL and MCSCG initiated a qualitative study with a stated research objective to “find out what cultural knowledge is useful or leads to mission success during deployment.”² As part of this effort, I observed MCSCG’s “Global Training and Advising Course,” conducted semi-structured interviews with Marines (during the advisor course, while on deployment, and upon return from deployment,) and had occasional written communication with Marines while on deployment. During this time, I observed some language classes taught by CAOCL instructors, as well as three CERTEXs, where Marines interacted with role players who spoke a foreign language and some practiced their language skills. One theme that emerged from these observations and interviews was about language acquisition and instruction and the corresponding culture specific instruction. Not every team in this report received language training, most teams received different levels of language training, and more than half did not participate in a CERTEX; but taken as a whole, there is sufficient data from my observations, interviews, and informal emails with Marines to merit a mini-report on language training.³

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

I used participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and email correspondence to collect the data for the longitudinal assessment, some of which is represented in this mini-report. Refer to Table 1 below for a complete list of team names,⁴ their designated deployment areas, and the total number of times language or culture was mentioned in my communications with them. The numbers differ because I did not consistently ask about language training in every interview for three reasons: 1) not every team received language training; 2) I tended to ask about training I observed with the Marines, and I did not observe language training with every team; 3) assessing language training was not a primary research objective. Even if I did not ask about language training, sometimes Marines volunteered their opinions without any prompting. This is why one team, 2/1, which received no language training at MCSCG, is nevertheless represented in this report.

To add to the complexity of the findings, not all teams received the same number of training hours in language (see Table 1).⁵ For instance, the two MARCENT teams are scheduled for 80 hours of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) prior to a six-month deployment training foreign security forces in Jordan, whereas the UAE team received 13 hours of MSA for a year-long deployment working with the UAE Presidential Guard. As for my in-class observations, this varies as well. I did not observe UAE’s language training at all,⁶ and I spent the greatest amount of time (three days) observing language with

² IRB Research Protocol # MCCDC.2013.003, “Longitudinal Assessment of Security Cooperation Training, Culture Training and Mission Effectiveness.”

³ This report focuses on CAOCL instructed language classes (inclusive of culture training within a language class,) and role player interactions in the CERTEX. One “Advisor Skills” lesson which may include culture specific information, “Operational Culture,” is taught by MCSCG instructors and is not included in this report.

⁴ The team names used in this report are the commonly used names within MCSCG. To view full names and descriptions, please see the section at the beginning of the report titled “Security cooperation team names.”

⁵ Why there is such a significant difference in classroom hours and who makes that judgment call are important to understand, and yet outside the scope of what I will cover in this report

⁶ Nor did I observe 3/8. They are the only team in this report to receive CAOCL language instruction in their duty station (Camp Lejeune) rather than in Ft. Story.

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MARCENT 14.1. Since the same instructors taught multiple teams, I observed a total of four hours with Instructor C, eight hours with Instructor A, and fifteen hours with Instructor B.⁷

Finally, my frequency of interaction with each team varied. I interviewed MARCENT 13.2 in person before, during, and after their deployment to Jordan. They are the only team I followed throughout their entire rotation. I conducted interviews with the UAE and USMTM teams during their advisor training (before their deployment) and also received written information from them during their deployments. These three teams (MARCENT 13.2, UAE, and USMTM) provide some insight into how Marines view language and culture specific training while executing their advising mission. I also observed three teams - MARCENT 13.2, MARCENT 14.1, and 3/8 - during their CERTEX, where Marines used some language or cultural knowledge while engaging role players in a simulated SC exercise. I had more frequent interactions with these three teams over the course of their training in the classroom and in the field, and I typically had more time to ask follow-up questions in interviews conducted at the CERTEX. Contrast this to the GTT and 2/1. I observed their classroom training for one week or less, and frequently conducted interviews in between classes and during the lunch hour. I used this opportunistic method of selecting interviewees initially with every team, but as I got to know certain teams over time (especially MARCENT 13.2, MARCENT 14.1, and 3/8), I was able to conduct multiple interviews with the same person, and longer initial interviews with others. Consistent with other qualitative research, the number of subjects is relatively small, and the quality and length of the interactions vary from individual to individual and team to team. Any conclusions drawn from the statements made in this mini-report should not be considered as representative of a larger population. They are nevertheless relevant to MCSCG and CAOCL as part of any review of the language curriculum or when considering potential modifications to the advisor training program.

Table 1: Teams represented in this report							
	MARCENT 13.2	UAE 13-8	USMTM	GTT	3/8	2/1	MARCENT 14.1
<i>Area of operations</i>	Jordan	United Arab Emirates	Saudi Arabia	Georgia	Various countries in Africa (SPMAGTF)	Various countries in the Pacific (MEU)	Jordan
<i>CAOCL-provided language</i>	MSA	MSA	MSA	Georgian	French for SPMAGTF-Africa	N/A	MSA
<i>Hours of scheduled instruction (appx.)⁸</i>	80	13	12	20	Unknown	N/A	80
<i>CAOCL instructor</i>	Instructor A	Instructor A	Instructor B	Instructor C	Instructor D	N/A	Instructor B

⁷ All instructors' names are withheld in accordance with the protection of human subjects research protocol.

⁸ These totals are taken from team schedules provided by MCSCG. In some cases, actual course duration may be inconsistent with the scheduled time.

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Table 1: Teams represented in this report (cont'd from p. 3)

	MARCENT 13.2	UAE 13-8	USMTM	GTT	3/8	2/1	MARCENT 14.1
<i>Dates I observed language class (in 2013)</i>	9 May & 9 July	Did not observe	6 June	12 & 14 August	Did not observe	N/A	10, 11 & 12 December
<i>Dates I observed language use outside of class (in 2013)</i>	29 June- 3 July (CERTEX)	None	None	None	19-21 November (CERTEX)	N/A	12-13 December & 16-20 December (CERTEX)
<i>Interviewed during deployment?</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
<i>Written feedback during deployment?</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
<i>Interviewed after deployment?</i>	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
<i># of mentions of language/culture specific training out of the total # of interviews or written correspondence⁹</i>	1 st – 4/9 2 nd - 4/7 3 rd - 7/10 4 th -9/10	1 st - 15/23 2 nd - 18/18	1 st - 3/5 2 nd -6/6	1 st - 5/7	1 st - 2/6 2 nd - 2/5	1 st - 4/13	1 st - 4/6 2 nd - 2/9

QUESTIONS ON LANGUAGE AND CULTURE SPECIFIC TRAINING:

Why teach language when interpreters are available?

The reality is that interpreters are available to most SC teams most of the time on their deployments. Even when interpreters are not available, which is more likely on a MEU, Marines will typically find a workaround such as using hand and arm signals, learning some vocabulary on the fly, or finding someone in the partner military who speaks English.¹⁰ Between workarounds, interpreter availability, and educated FSF who know English, language acquisition may not appear to be a mission-critical skill. However, even though language skills may not be necessary for passing information, having language skills does assist with communication and has other positive effects related to the mission. As one

⁹ If a team is contacted multiple times, each time is indicated with a number. I interviewed the MARCENT 13.2 team four times, in Ft. Story (1st), Ft. Pickett (2nd), Jordan (3rd), and California (4th). I contacted the UAE and USMTM teams once in Ft. Story or Moyock (1st), and informally via email (2nd). I contacted 3/8 and MARCENT 14.1 at Ft. Story (1st) and Ft. Pickett (2nd). I contacted the GTT and 2/1 only once at Ft. Story (1st).

¹⁰ A Sgt in MARCENT 13.2 said “*you could get by with gestures,*” and a Cpl in 2/1 said his teammates “*started to learn the language*” to work around the language barrier in the Philippines (interviewed Feb. 19, 2014, and Oct. 7, 2013, respectively).

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MARCENT 13.2 Sgt noted after he returned from Jordan, “*We have so many interpreters. So was [language] necessary? No. But [...] the impact on rapport with the Jordanians was huge. If you try and make an attempt, they really do start to connect with you.*”¹¹ Another Marine reinforces this idea of connection through speaking the language, no matter how basic: “*Language is a must. Advisors that know or have learned a few Arabic words can make a difference connecting with the unit being advised.*”¹² A Lt who felt language was critical for building rapport said “*language is going to be the bond that helps us break the ice.*”¹³ In addition to these Marines, who can attest to their ability to build relationships with their counterparts by using acquired language skills, are those who received no language training. A Lt on 2/1 anticipated that “*language will be a point of friction,*”¹⁴ and a GySgt who went to UAE as an individual augment (and did not learn MSA) wrote, “*language is a significant hurdle in the way I communicate.*”¹⁵ Additionally, a Lt from 2/1 who had no language training prior to a MEU to Japan said that he was able to use a Japanese SgtMaj who spoke English and Japanese as an interpreter, but that “*everything had to go through him, which led to some inefficiencies.*”¹⁶ Language may not be critical to mission success, but there is agreement among these Marines that it is critical to making a connection with their foreign counterparts and to overcoming the initial difficulties and ongoing friction of working with foreign counterparts.

How much language training is too little or excessive?

In Table 1, you can see the diversity in length of language instruction. It ranged from 12 to 80 hours, depending on the team. The question, then, becomes how much is enough. Only one MARCENT 13.2 Marine said that 80 hours was too much, and thought that “*twenty hours would have been fine given our level of interpreters.*”¹⁷ Another enlisted Marine on the same team had the opposite viewpoint, saying 80 hours was enough to give him only “*a decent baseline,*”¹⁸ which he built upon by teaching himself more Arabic (with help from his interpreters and military partners) while in Jordan. A few Marines who received 12 hours of language training also had differing opinions after engaging their counterparts in Saudi Arabia. One Capt wrote it was “*just enough to give us a good impression with the Saudis,*” while two other Captains preferred to have more, saying “*the language training provided by MCSCG is insufficient*” and “*we need more language training.*”¹⁹ In fact, the USMTM team was the most consistent, with five of six Marines who sent written feedback reporting that the three days of language training they received was too little. In addition, five of the 18 UAE Marines reported from downrange that they received too little language training. While the data are too few to draw conclusions, these Marines felt that more language instruction supports their work rather than less.

¹¹ Sgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 18, 2014.

¹² SSgt, UAE, written communication, Dec. 2013.

¹³ Lt, GTT, interviewed Aug. 14, 2013.

¹⁴ Lt, 2/1, interviewed Oct 9, 2013.

¹⁵ GySgt, UAE, written communication, Dec. 2013.

¹⁶ Lt, 2/1, interviewed Oct. 9, 2013.

¹⁷ GySgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 18, 2014.

¹⁸ Sgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 18, 2014.

¹⁹ Captains (3), USMTM, written communication, Dec. 2013.

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Beyond number of classroom hours, what affects Marine satisfaction with language training?

While the length of training time was one way Marines assessed their language training, their feedback went beyond that, addressing issues of dialect accuracy, course duration, and course scheduling's impact on language retention.

- *Local dialect differences*

MARCENT 13.2, UAE, and USMTM provided responses from the field, and all three learned MSA while at MCSCG. Two of those teams regularly expressed a preference to learn the local dialect rather than MSA. In Jordan, three of the seven MARCENT 13.2 Marines interviewed said that they preferred to learn more Jordanian Arabic. Of the 18 written responses from the UAE team, seven²⁰ would have preferred Emirati dialect. A GySgt wrote, "*the dialect here is VERY different,*" and a Capt wrote, "*future rotations need instruction in Gulf Arabic.*" The preference for learning local dialect is likely because they were unable to communicate well, as opposed to being unable to communicate at all. A SSgt wrote, "*although the Arabic classes did help familiarize ourselves with the pronunciations and uniqueness of the language, the dialect was not spot-on,*" and a MSgt noted he was able to hold "*brief conversations.*" One Capt wrote he was able to "*navigate initially*" with the MSA. Another Marine, a GySgt from the MARCENT 13.2 team who used MSA daily, compared it to "*Shakespearean English,*"²¹ which led to some amusement from his Jordanian counterparts: "*every day I tried to use Arabic. They would laugh at me, but they got my meaning.*"²² While local dialect is often preferred, it appears that most Marines could "get by" with MSA.

- *Overloaded learning experience and lack of retention*

As noted previously, some Marines on the UAE team and the USMTM teams felt that they did not receive enough hours of language instruction (13 and 12 hours respectively). Some Marines on these teams (and others) described being overwhelmed by the language instruction. A Sgt on the UAE team wrote that language training was "*sink or swim,*" and a SSgt on the same team wrote, "*our language classes weren't too good. They were rushed and a lot was forced down our throats.*"²³ A Capt on USMTM wrote, "*extending the course is a necessity.*"²⁴ These Marines indicate they were being asked to learn too much in three or four days of language instruction. But one Marine who had three months of training also felt "brain overload" in language, saying "*the course is tough. We had classroom lessons with the TIG and then Arabic. That's eight hours of straight classroom time. It's almost a college course. The brain wants to stop.*"²⁵ A Capt on his team concurred, saying that while he greatly enjoyed learning Arabic, he and the rest of the team were spending four hours in class, but only absorbing two hours' worth of instruction.²⁶ Whether Marines have three days or three months, some languages are more challenging than others, as will be discussed below.

²⁰ Unless otherwise noted, Marine comments in this paragraph are taken from written communication with the UAE team received Dec. 2013.

²¹ Three Marines described MSA as "Shakespearean English," in separate interviews: a Capt, USMTM, interviewed June 20, 2013; this GySgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013; and a Capt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013.

²² GySgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013.

²³ Sgt and SSgt, UAE, written communication, Dec. 2013.

²⁴ Capt, USMTM, written communication, Dec. 2013.

²⁵ Sgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 19, 2014.

²⁶ Capt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 19, 2014.

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Marines described other scheduling issues that affected language retention. For instance, a MARCENT 14.1 Maj said his team's training was interrupted a few times and that they had two instructors at two locations, an experience unique to his team. He said, "*you start getting focused on language training, and then have to stop and not practice, you put it out of your mind to focus on the next portion.*"²⁷ In addition, where the course fell within the pre-deployment training (PTP) cycle impacted retention. One Capt on USMTM said prior to his deployment, "*One week of language training is fine, but the retention is non-existent. It would be better to teach on our final week than the first. I won't be able to communicate based on what I got.*"²⁸ When it comes to scheduling language training for optimal retention, the time of day is important for a Col on USMTM. He wrote that his team wasn't as receptive to learning language at the end of the day, saying "*we had it in bits/pieces after long days in training so it was forgotten/wasn't actually learned.*"²⁹ These Marines' insights into the impact of course scheduling on retention offer the Training Instructor Group (TIG) some actionable ideas on how to maximize language training impact through scheduling, although these benefits must be weighed against other scheduling priorities.

- *Challenging languages*

One enlisted Marine compared MSA classes to another course that is famously challenging-- the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) training. He successfully memorized two phrases— "*kayfa naqul, or 'how do you say' in Arabic and 'ma hatha' or 'what is this,'*"—both of which will help him learn more Arabic downrange. Nevertheless, he characterized learning just these phrases as "*SERE level 5*" or extremely tough to master.³⁰ Complex languages like MSA and Georgian are likely to require a greater focus from Marines and more time for absorption. This feedback enhances what has already been said about scheduling and the desire for less language spread over more days. The difficulty of learning languages, especially one like MSA (which is considered within the U.S. defense community to be among the most difficult languages to learn³¹) in combination with a shorter course duration, can frustrate Marines.

What vocabulary is beneficial? (See Appendix B for a list of Marine comments.)

The vocabulary that Marines need is likely to change over the course of the deployment. Here is where the feedback from the MARCENT 13.2 team may offer the greatest insight. One officer on the team - who missed a few weeks of training time, including language instruction - said after arriving in Jordan, "*greetings are essential. Numbers are important.*"³² Meanwhile, another officer on the team who joined the team late and had trained with the UAE team (including the three days rather than three months of language training) said after arriving in Jordan, "*It doesn't have to be highly technical. More usable language. Rapport building. Basic terms and phrases.*"³³ This social vocabulary may be augmented by military vocabulary according to a GySgt at the CERTEX who said, "*we needed more conversation. And*

²⁷ Maj, MARCENT 14.1, interviewed Dec. 11, 2013.

²⁸ Capt, USMTM, interviewed June 20, 2013.

²⁹ Col, USMTM, written communication, Dec. 2013.

³⁰ SSgt, UAE, interviewed June 15, 2013.

³¹ The Defense Language Institute ranks Arabic as a "category IV" language in a scale of I to IV, with category IV languages being more difficult to comprehend and thus requiring courses of longer duration to meet similar levels of mastery as the other language categories.

³² Capt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013.

³³ Capt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013.

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terms that we needed to teach, like “Sergeant of the Guard.”³⁴ By the end of the deployment the preference for tactical language was more pronounced. After his rotation in Jordan, a SSgt said he did not learn as much Arabic as he had wanted, but he was able to run “an entire rifle range without an interpreter.”³⁵ A Capt on that team said, “the simple commands are the highest priority” because “you don’t have time to grab an interpreter, it’s loud [on the range]. The average [Marine] will need a few commands. If there is time for small talk, there is time to get an interpreter.”³⁶ According to this team, especially the enlisted Marines who are instructing the FSF, military vocabulary is likely to be useful. However, greetings and some conversational language are useful for everyone, to include officers, who may use very little language otherwise.³⁷

What culture specific information is beneficial?

While language training was the most important theme, some Marines also addressed issues of culture specific training. Some identified the inaccuracies in the information, while others were satisfied with what they learned, particularly when content addressed cross-cultural training challenges and ways to avoid insulting their counterparts.

- *Accurate local cultural information and military culture*

Marines reported that Instructors A, B, and C (and likely D, though not specifically mentioned) taught culture specific information, most of which was helpful. Some UAE and USMTM Marines found the culture specific information less helpful because it was about Arab culture in general, rather than Emirati or Saudi Arabian culture, which led several Marines to recommend they have an instructor from their Area of Operations (AO). One Capt wrote “having a Saudi instructor would have given us a more realistic idea of what to expect in Saudi Arabia,”³⁸ and a GySgt in UAE wrote he would have preferred an Emirati instructor. The feedback from Marines after they deployed also noted unique aspects of the military sub-culture. One SSgt described how he was led to anticipate that all of the Emirati military were “handsomely” paid, which turned out to not be the case. To counteract this misinformation, he suggests, “it could benefit future rotations to speak with an Emirati [i] who is familiar with this region. He could inform them of common misconceptions and truths [about] the proud people of this country.”³⁹ This would address accuracy concerns as well as the above mentioned issue about the specificity of the cultural information conveyed. A Col on the USMTM team described Saudi military officers as “speaking mostly English” and “Americanized,”⁴⁰ for which he was not prepared by the CAOCL instructor. Interestingly, the two teams who had the shortest time allotted for language had the greatest number of negative comments about cultural misinformation compared to the other teams.

- *Expectations management in the training environment*

³⁴ GySgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed June 30, 2013.

³⁵ SSgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 19, 2014.

³⁶ Capt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 19, 2014.

³⁷ Due to the fact that their counterparts are more likely to want to practice their English, and because officers often receive priority when interpreters are scarce.

³⁸ Capt, USMTM, written communication, Dec. 2013.

³⁹ SSgt, UAE, written communication, Dec. 2013.

⁴⁰ Col, USMTM, written communication, Dec. 2013.

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Beyond wanting to know about what their foreign counterparts were like, Marines on several teams also wanted to know about the training environment. For instance, a Sgt on the GTT was concerned about the classroom behavior among the Georgian military. While he was accustomed to teaching junior Marines, he wasn't sure if Georgians would be quiet and pay attention, or "*are they causing disturbances [in the classroom]?*"⁴¹ A SSgt on MARCENT 13.2 appreciated knowing "*rank structures and about the divisions between the officers and enlisted,*"⁴² because he knew this might impact how they received instruction from an enlisted Marine. Another Marine from MARCENT 13.2 felt he got "*legit*" information from Instructor A, who "*took time out to explain*" the Jordanian military, including what time certain things happened, topics to discuss or avoid, and "*how they will talk*" or "*how people will respond to you.*"⁴³ A Maj about to deploy to Jordan also appreciated understanding the "why" behind the behaviors that he was told to anticipate from the Jordanians:

*You'll have some instructors here, they tell us 'hey, the soldiers there- they don't like to come to work early or stay late. They don't work hard, they don't like to exercise.' You can hear that. But [Instructor B] kind of did a better job of why that is. He went into more details like 'if you want to have a firing range at 5am and shoot at first light, the Jordanians may have to take a bus for two hours before they get to the base, they may not have enough food to have breakfast, and certainly [don't] have enough to stay at the range for 12 hours.'*⁴⁴

Understanding about the transportation options in Jordan helped explain a behavior that might have direct impact on his training. On the other hand, one Marine in Jordan said that the MARCENT 13.2 team initially expected Jordanians to be able to write things down, but "*a lot of the [JAF] don't have notebooks. They show up with a scrap of paper.*" While the team adjusted by using more pictures, he said he would have benefitted from a mini-lesson on "*how to do a PowerPoint for a country that isn't literate.*"⁴⁵ Perhaps this Capt had heard about the lower literacy rate in Jordan, but had not thought of how to apply that information to the training context. Having the instructor provide the context—the "why"—about the literacy rate, like Instructor A did in the previous example, would have also been helpful for this Marine.

- *Avoiding insult*

In addition to expectations management, Marines also seek out information that will help them avoid insulting their counterparts unnecessarily. Marines have come to expect this in the form of "dos and don'ts" lists, like how to shake hands, whether or not to ask about the wife, or "*if you are the person coming into the room, you say the greetings.*"⁴⁶ Without this information, Marines know they can be their own worst enemy. For instance, one Lt from 2/1 used to think he was being helpful by being direct, but that didn't work overseas. He learned on a prior MEU that he had to modify his typical behavior, saying "*you can't walk up to everyone and say 'this is a problem, and this is how you fix it.'*"⁴⁷ A Sgt on the GTT said Instructor C discussed hospitality and etiquette, and he was surprised to learn what he should do if invited to eat at a restaurant with the Georgians. He said, "*[Instructor C] told us at a restaurant, if they*

⁴¹ Sgt, GTT, interviewed Aug. 13, 2013.

⁴² SSgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed June 29, 2013.

⁴³ Sgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013.

⁴⁴ Maj, MARCENT 14.1, interviewed Dec. 11, 2013.

⁴⁵ Capt, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013.

⁴⁶ SSgt, UAE, interviewed June 15, 2013.

⁴⁷ Lt, 2/1, interviewed Oct. 9, 2013.

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*invite us, they pay. I would have said 'F*** you. I [earn] six times more than you...'*⁴⁸ While paying for his own meal would have seemed polite in the United States, it would have ruined relationships in Georgia had this Marine not learned differently. This kind of simple information can make a difference, especially in terms of mission success.

RESEARCHER'S PERSPECTIVE:

Certain requests in this report may seem unrealistic, given shrinking budget dollars. Marines were not asked to limit their answers to what is feasible, they were asked about what is desirable, or what will help them achieve their mission. Therefore, requests for a native-born cultural instructor, or a specific Arabic dialect, both strong themes in the data, should be taken in this context. One reason Marines are learning MSA rather than the local dialect is because MSA is studied throughout the Arab-speaking region, and dialect-specific Arabic does not help Marines if they are suddenly diverted elsewhere in the Middle East. That said, there are some options that could help Marines prepare for the difference between MSA and the local dialect. For instance, more class time could be used to teach “communication recovery” strategies, like those that native Arabic speakers use when they encounter someone from a different Arabic-speaking country. Marines might also benefit from a handout that they can study on their own prior to deploying, and use as a “point and say” tool with their literate counterparts or an interpreter downrange. The handout might have four columns: one for the English word, one for the English transliteration of the local dialect, one for the English transliteration of the MSA, and one for the Arabic spelling of the word. A short list of commonly used words that differ in the local dialect might orient Marines to the fact that they will have to augment their vocabulary, regardless of how well they master MSA in class. Marines also requested an instructor whose nationality is the same as their destination downrange. It is not economically prudent to hire a native-born Emirati for a three-day training, nor is a native-born teacher necessarily a more effective cultural instructor, despite this impression among some Marines. As an alternative, a member of the CLATT could provide both the dialect and the culture-specific information Marines are seeking in one or two lessons.⁴⁹ All of these suggestions could address issues of cultural misinformation and local dialect that the Marines in this report would like to resolve, without adding significant costs.⁵⁰

In Appendix C, you can see that Marines requested printed or electronic materials. I do not include this in the main body of the report because, in my experience,⁵¹ there is an institutional perception that too few Marines will use extra materials, thus the cost is not justified (one Marine admitted he would not use

⁴⁸ Sgt, GTT, interviewed Aug. 13, 2013.

⁴⁹ This is already occurring on a team-by-team basis, but CLATT do not currently offer culture specific briefs to all teams. Furthermore, what is new here is the recommendation to include vocabulary in the local dialect along with culture specific information.

⁵⁰ Another option that may be out of MCSCG's control, but is nevertheless worth noting, is to transfer responsibility of language instruction to the host nation or Marine command forward. For instance, the USMTM team received language training and some mission-related training after arriving in Saudi Arabia, according to one officer. Marines who learn the language downrange will be more likely to retain vocabulary since they will have immediate opportunities to practice with their counterparts. It is also likely that they will also be learning accurate information about the local dialect and culture.

⁵¹ Part of my experience includes a year-long qualitative research project assessing CAOCL's cultural training program from 2011-2012 that included observation of CAOCL language instruction. Those findings were published in an internal report that was completed October 2012.

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electronic materials while deployed, and there are likely others.⁵²) It is true that even though Marines have pointed out the lack of the electronic and printed materials, this is no guarantee of their use. Currently, Marines were not observed with any pre-printed language materials. They took their own notes in class and used these for review or homework later. As a pedagogical technique, writing down vocabulary is helpful to learners who retain information this way. This also allows Marines to transliterate vocal sounds that do not appear in English in a way that works for each individual. However, other students who are poor note-takers, or who want to see “correct” spellings may be frustrated. Pre-printed materials would help these Marines, as well as those who want to study ahead or have a guideline for review. To avoid the time and cost it takes to print materials, one instructor told me his solution is to give the senior enlisted Marine a CD with all of the lesson material at the end of the training. Giving this to the team at the end of training encouraged Marines to do their own work, in this instructor’s opinion. However, this could mean that some Marines do not know about the CD or have time to copy it before the deployment. Providing the CD at the beginning of the class is a cost effective way of providing tools to self-motivated Marines who want to have digital or printed materials during the class or for study afterward.

In addition to CDs, classroom language instruction could also be integrated with online materials which would ideally be accessible overseas as well as during the PTP. Online materials were requested by fewer Marines than printed materials (see Appendix C). However, in contrast to print materials, internet-based tools “travel” well, and they can be cost effective (once produced and uploaded). Like hard copy materials, online tools might also help Marines who feel “overwhelmed” in class (by giving them access to vocabulary they can practice on their own time). CAOCL currently provides access to two online language programs, HeadStart2 and Rapport,⁵³ through the online Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization (RCLF) curriculum on MarineNet.⁵⁴ However, these programs were not designed to augment CAOCL classroom instruction. Furthermore, the MarineNet platform is reportedly challenging to access, especially when Marines are using personal computers or personal electronic devices, which is the case in Ft. Story. Anecdotal evidence suggests that other, possibly more user-friendly language programs are available to Marines,⁵⁵ but my observations indicate that these tools are not publicized to SC teams at MCSCG. Additional research and “pilot tests” could inform stakeholders about what materials Marines would actually use (rather than what they request⁵⁶), but online language tools in particular are likely to require a more coordination and support beyond MCSCG and CAOCL in order to make them more effective than the status quo.

A few Marines made the surprising request for greater accountability in learning language, to include a written test. When they asked for a test, these Marines were pointing out that language is the only skill taught in the advisor course that is neither tested nor observed by a Marine through a practical application

⁵² See Appendix C.

⁵³ These are produced by the Defense Language Institute.

⁵⁴ These programs do not offer all the languages required by SC teams. Georgian is not offered through RCLF, but French, MSA, Spanish, and other languages are.

⁵⁵ Electronic and online language tools for the Marine Corps are in flux, and have been since the drawdown in Iraq and Afghanistan. While I have heard about other language programs that are available for free to the Marine Corps, specifically from Transparent Language, it is not clear who can access what, and by what means.

⁵⁶ An internal review of the CAOCL training curriculum, completed in October 2012, contains a similar suggestion.

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(like SERE skills).⁵⁷ One Marine on each MARCENT team mentioned testing, and it is worth noting that they are the only teams that receive 80 hours of language instruction during their three month PTP. It could be that these Marines see testing as a way of legitimizing the significant amount of time they invested in language. Most Marines in this study did not request testing, and since many received 20 hours or less of language, they might resent a test, given their limited exposure and the difficulty of learning certain languages (as mentioned earlier). Written language tests pose other challenges in that not every team receives language (and therefore some teams would be tested more than others), the course duration varies (requiring multiple tests that reflect the language training that team received), and written tests are more difficult with MSA and Georgian, which do not use the Roman alphabet.⁵⁸ Testing may not be the ideal solution, but some form of accountability might be worth considering, especially for teams who receive 80 hours of language instruction.

If the goal is motivating Marines to participate in language class, observation by Marines in the classroom or in the CERTEX may be better options than written tests. Language observation does not necessarily need to involve verbal feedback to the Marines, though that is useful for the trainees and will be discussed in relation to the CERTEX below. The mere presence of a TIG or CLATT Marine in an occasional language class could encourage greater accountability from the students and the instructor. Currently, language instructors (typically CAOCL employees who stay temporarily in Virginia Beach during the instructional period) rarely interact with the Marines in the TIG or CLATT, especially in the classroom.⁵⁹ A MCSCG observer could provide useful advice to the language instructor, who is frequently a heritage language speaker with no prior SC or Marine experience.⁶⁰ In addition, Marine observers could take note of individuals whose negative attitude or inattentiveness in language class may indicate difficulties downrange. Though most Marines on the SC teams displayed attentive body language, and many participated multiple times in class, the added MCSCG presence could provide added incentive for the Marines and for the instructor as well.

Only three of the seven teams in this report participated in the CERTEX. This multi-day participatory exercise is another opportunity for language observation and feedback. In my observations, Marines did not receive formal feedback from the TIG observers about language use,⁶¹ aside from being reminded to interact with the role players during their lunch breaks (see Appendix A). Either the language instructor or a CLATT member could serve as the language observer at the CERTEX. In fact, during their field

⁵⁷ Though there is no written test, Instructor A was observed providing an “assessment exercise” to MARCENT 13.2 on one of the last days of MSA class (Marines demonstrated grammar, listening, and speaking skills).

⁵⁸ Current language instruction for MSA and Georgian is geared toward oral familiarization, and do not include teaching the written alphabet.

⁵⁹ No interaction was observed. According to one CAOCL instructor, the only personnel they interact with regularly are administrative Marines at MCSCG.

⁶⁰ Even though these instructors do not necessarily have military experience, several do have many years of experience teaching Marines language, to include tactical vocabulary. However, the feedback loop between language instructors and Marines prevents instructors from knowing if their material is relevant downrange. The CLATT or TIG, who may have deployed themselves, or received status reports from deployed teams, are a source for this kind of feedback.

⁶¹ A “cultural advisor” was also present for the two MARCENT CERTEXs. These were retired US military members who had prior experience with the JAF who were hired by the same contracting company that hired the role players. I observed them giving culture specific feedback to Marines, especially the team commanding officer (CO). They were not observed offering feedback or assessment on language use, but I did see one occasion where a Marine wanted to know an Arabic word, and the cultural advisor looked it up on his smart phone.

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exercise, three Marines on the MARCENT 13.2 team requested that their language instructor be present. A Sgt explained, “*that would be rewarding for [Instructor A] to see us. He can critique himself if he sees the end state. Right now he has no idea what we need to know. [...] He could also talk to the role players and assess their language skills.*”⁶² Role players are not hired according to their ability to speak the exact language Marines learned in the classroom. For instance, most of the role players in the MARCENT CERTEXs were Iraqi Arabs and Kurds who were not speaking MSA. Language instructors at the CERTEX could mitigate confusion that arises when role players speak a different dialect. They could also provide verbal feedback to the language learner in the context of their interactions. If needed, they might even add “hip-pocket” classes or other informal instruction during down time. The CERTEX is designed so that Marines can practice their training and advising skills while receiving immediate verbal feedback (and end-of-exercise assessments) on areas of improvement and positive performance. Language retention and use of appropriate vocabulary could improve if Marines also received immediate verbal feedback on their language skills from their language instructor while in this training environment.

While the focus thus far has been on the acquisition and use of a foreign language, it should also be pointed out that language training can assist Marines in mastering other important cross-cultural skills, such as patience, a willingness to take risks, self-confidence, and self-presentation, not to mention enhancing their ability to build relationships and rapport.⁶³ These are among the additional benefits of language classes that I observed, along with building team camaraderie and enhancing individual mental stamina. In the MSA classes I observed with MARCENT 13.2 and 14.1, the instructor often put Marines in pairs or small groups, and sometimes encouraged team competitions. These Reservist teams did not have any prior experience working together as a whole, and most of the Marines did not know each other prior to arriving in Ft. Story. These pairing exercises and competitions helped build familiarity and teamwork. Marines also shared personal information using the target language (where are you from, are you married, do you have children) that they otherwise might not know about one another. Another benefit of language class is that there was more time for discussion than the average advisor skills lesson, and the lesson topics often prompted those who had prior SC experience to share their stories with the rest of the team.⁶⁴ Thus, the by-product of language classes is greater familiarity with each other and the mission, especially in the 80 hour language unit. In addition, there is a possibility that the stress of learning and speaking a language among peers is useful preparation for the stress Marines may feel while performing their duties in front of and along with their foreign partners. As one Capt said, “*the language forces you to speak in front of everyone- so your brain gets used to the stress, and you can actually recall and think on your feet.*”⁶⁵ This officer is describing performance-related stress of recalling vocabulary as well as the stress of public speaking; both of which could be common downrange. Language is a tool Marines will use to build cross-cultural connections with the FSF, while the act of learning language itself creates opportunities for Marines to develop other cross-cultural skills (such as taking risks, self-presentation, and self-confidence) that will also help build those relationships.

⁶² Sgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed June 29, 2013.

⁶³ These are all considered cross-cultural competencies, as defined in Reid, P., Steinke, J, Mokuolu, f, Trejo, B., et al (2012). *A proposed developmental sequence for cross-cultural competence training in the Department of Defense. DEOMI Technical report No. 01-12.* Washington, D.C.

⁶⁴ Hearing other Marines’ prior experience was often cited as the most valuable information SC Marines received. That theme will be explored in the final report of this research project.

⁶⁵ Capt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed June 6, 2013.

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One final note-- the scope of this mini-report is modest, and has focused entirely on the feedback of a few SC teams who trained at MCSCG over the course of eight months. However, language training for SC teams falls under the larger context of the national security strategy, and Marine Corps and DoD doctrine on language training. Though UAE Marines may request more than 13 hours of language instruction, this is not necessarily feasible within this strategic framework. Another strategic question that this report has not addressed is whether or not language aptitude can be or should be used in selecting teams that receive training at MCSCG. Language aptitude varies with individuals, and Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) results confirm this. The military has used the DLAB to select Marines for certain MOSs, to include intelligence personnel and Special Forces. The Marine SC teams in this study were not selected based on their language aptitude test results, or self-professed exposure to the target language. One Marine from the USMTM team would prefer they were, writing "*MCSCG needs to open the conversation with monitors about slating officers with prior Arabic language skills.*"⁶⁶ If Marine SC teams were selected on language aptitude or ability, that could have a profound impact on the language training as it is currently implemented. The recommendations and observations in this report are based on the presumption that SC teams will continue to consist of individuals whose cross-cultural skills, including the ability to learn and speak foreign languages, will fall within a wide spectrum of ability.

CONCLUSION:

Learning languages is difficult, and it takes time. On SC missions, advisors may encounter several different languages and dialects. Most have access to interpreters to support their missions. Furthermore, the PTP schedule rarely allows enough time for Marines to become proficient in language. Also, Marines often value spending their time on hard skills, such as shooting and driving. Given this, should security cooperation teams dedicate valuable training time within the pre-deployment work-up to language and culture specific learning? The Marines in this sample would say yes. They generally felt that even the most basic vocabulary would be "*nothing but helpful, as much as it blows my mind.*"⁶⁷ Even a few memorized words can be useful. According to a SSgt, "*knowing just a few commands in Arabic can make a big impact on their morale and will to train.*"⁶⁸ Some deployed Marines reported that they continued to ask for language help from their foreign counterparts. After one SSgt did this, his JAF counterparts became even friendlier and they enjoyed the "role reversal" of being the instructors instead of the instructed, "*they loved that I knew so much—they loved that they could teach us something.*"⁶⁹ Even Marines who complained about course duration, scheduling, or course content did not suggest getting rid of language training. Rather, they offered suggestions for improvement or requested more instructional time. Similarly, these Marines wanted culture specific training—the more specific, the better. One specific topic is military culture, because otherwise Marines may tend to assume that foreign forces operate similarly to the Marine Corps, resulting in misunderstandings. Cultural understanding is important and can stand alone without language, but Marines have found that speaking in the host country language is an even more demonstrable way to let the foreign security forces that they recognize they are partners and guests, and not just instructors. The experiences and insights these Marines offer can help future teams to maximize training given the constraints on available training time.

⁶⁶ Capt, USMTM, written communication, Dec. 2013.

⁶⁷ SSgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed June 20, 2013.

⁶⁸ SSgt, UAE, written communication, Dec. 2013.

⁶⁹ Sgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 18, 2014.

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APPENDIX A: Language use in the CERTEX: a comparison between MARCENT and SPMAAGTF-Africa training

The CERTEXs are designed by MCSCG to be close approximations of the downrange activities and encounters that are common to the SC mission. Role players are hired to look like, sound like, and behave in ways that closely resemble the foreign forces the Marines will encounter during their deployment.⁷⁰ Role players familiarize Marines with using interpreters, communicating non-verbally, and building rapport through their interactions. Thus, the role players have a function at CERTEX that goes beyond using the language, and the unit's performance is not based on individual language use. Nevertheless, some Marines do use their language skills in certain contexts; a few showed marked improvement, and a few were not observed using more than single vocabulary words. Whether and how Marines used their language skills,⁷¹ and in what context, will be described below.

Most of my observations apply to the two CERTEXs run by the TIG for the MARCENT teams because their schedule and scenarios were almost identical (with some of the same role players) and because I have more interview data from these teams, especially MARCENT 13.2 (see Table 1). In these CERTEXs, role players were instructed to avoid using English with Marines.⁷² This rule encouraged Marines to speak MSA, which is a reasonable expectation, given they received 80 hours of language instruction. Even with this restriction on English on behalf of the role players, in the case of MARCENT 13.2, very few Marines were observed speaking more than one or two words of MSA in the first days of the CERTEX.⁷³ They were also not as likely to engage the role players during downtime, like lunch. Meanwhile, Marines in MARCENT 14.1 (who had equivalent language training) came prepared (sometimes with index cards) with brief speeches in MSA, which they typically gave in the first few days when introducing themselves and/or at the beginning of a training class. There were also a few MARCENT 14.1 Marines (usually four or five total) who chatted with the role players during lunch on the first day and subsequent days (either with an interpreter, or through arm gestures and halting MSA.) The MARCENT 13.2 Marines adjusted their lunch time behavior after receiving feedback from the TIG, and were more consistent engaging the role players in down times after their first day. By the fourth and fifth day of the CERTEX, many Marines on both teams used MSA on a more frequent basis. By the end of the CERTEX, two or three Marines had progressed beyond the rest of the team, displaying a high level of comfort speaking Arabic.

While the CERTEX is an ideal way to observe language use, it is not necessarily an indicator of what Marines learned in class, nor is it a predictor of what Marines will accomplish after they are downrange. Surprisingly, some Marines who could speak multiple phrases in a row in class did not speak MSA with

⁷⁰ Though this is not always the case; as has earlier been mentioned, it is not always feasible to hire role players from the actual country. In the case of MARCENT CERTEXs, role players were Arab, but not necessarily Jordanian.

⁷¹ This mini-report included some observations on culture specific training. The CERTEX is also a place where Marines learned culture specific information. My observations on culture specific training in the CERTEX will appear in an upcoming mini-report.

⁷² There is at least one notable exception I observed with MARCENT 14.1, where the TIG allowed one Lt to speak English to his JAF counterpart during the exercises because there were not enough interpreters to match to every team.

⁷³ Due to the way the CERTEX was organized, each day a different group of Marines might be in charge of training. Thus in the first few days, I did not necessarily observe every Marine on the team in formal interactions.

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the role players.⁷⁴ One MARCENT 13.2 Marine described a “brain freeze” of sorts while in the field, saying “*I have a memory lapse. I know I can [speak Arabic.] But I have to start with the introductions- where I’m from, I don’t have kids. I need that warm up in my head. It’s been harder to use the vocabulary here, but small words are ok*”⁷⁵ Using single words instead of phrases is nevertheless useful in building rapport. In one example, a Corpsman on MARCENT 14.1 made a joke by using the Arabic word for “grandma” and pointing to his Lt, who was passing by with a walking stick he had picked up from the ground. Though “grandma” is not likely to be on any tactical vocabulary lists, knowing this one word was effective in lightening the mood and appeared to have a positive impact on his rapport with the role players behaving as Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF). Any attempts to use the language, no matter how simple, often had a similar type of bonding effect. That the Marines exercised some language skills is an important aspect of the CERTEX. That they did not utilize the full extent of their vocabulary is not necessarily surprising, but could be investigated more closely. One potential training change that might increase Marine’s use of language is if role players use the same dialect that the Marines learned in class. Doing so would increase the positive effects of the role players on language learning, but may introduce a higher cost to MCSCG or lower number of role players, which could potentially negate those gains.

The SPMAGTF-Africa Marines received far less language instruction than the MARCENT teams (see Table 1), which is likely due to the fact that they may end up anywhere on the African continent on any variety of missions, from crisis response, to combined exercises, to humanitarian assistance. The MARCENT teams, in contrast, have an ongoing and explicitly defined mission to train JAF unit(s). As a result, the organizational structure and the scenarios for SPMAGTF-Africa were slightly different from MARCENT’s. In addition, MCSCG’s AFRICOM CLATT ran their CERTEX, as opposed to the TIG, who ran the MARCENT CERTEXs. One practical difference is that the TIG put more emphasis on the role players staying in their role and speaking the target language, while the CLATT encouraged Marines to speak to the African role players in English on the first day of training and throughout the exercise (particularly during lunch or other downtime). That said, English was not used all the time. Officer engagements, and the military-military “training” lessons (e.g. searching for an IED) were translated from English into French, giving Marines the opportunity to employ cross-cultural skills such as use of an interpreter and non-verbal communication.

As a result of this looser policy toward using English, more 3/8 Marines, regardless of rank (or foreign language capabilities) were observed interacting with role players than those on the MARCENT teams.⁷⁶ Their small talk tended to be about families, favorite movies, and sports (and on one occasion, one-armed push-ups.) If the same policy were employed in the MARCENT teams, it is not certain whether casual conversations would increase. However, one possible explanation for the current reality is that the MARCENT Marines are less likely to engage in casual conversation because they are limited by their MSA vocabulary, whereas this is not a concern for Marines and role players speaking in English.

⁷⁴ In one example, a MARCENT 14.1 Sgt was able to conduct a vehicle search in MSA in class on Dec. 12. A week later at the CERTEX on Dec. 19, he did not use this vocabulary during his training demonstration on vehicle searches. Instead, he used his interpreter and spoke in English.

⁷⁵ Sgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed June 30, 2013.

⁷⁶ My observations about more frequent communication between SPMAGTF role players and Marines may be inaccurate due to the fact that I do not know Arabic, and may have failed to observe the informal conversations between Marines and role players; whereas the English conversations stand out in my memory and observation notes because I heard and understood them.

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SPMAGTF Marines did not engage role players in all situations. The lunch hour tended to be just as segregated as with the MARCENT Marines (possibly even moreso), though after eating, some SPMAGTF Marines played soccer together with the role players. The CLATT's encouragement of this kind of cross-cultural communication was reinforced on the last day of the exercise. After Marines had run through their last "training lane" at a simulated airport, they sat down with the role players in a grass field outside the hangar. The CLATT gave some parting words to the entire group of Marines, then opened the floor for the role players, who were invited to give advice to Marines about the cultures in their native countries. A Cameroonian talked to Marines about trying to relate and to be physically at ease, while a Senegalese role player told them to avoid jokes about family members. This general exposure to different role players and their cultures will potentially be useful to SPMAGTF, given the unpredictable nature of where they will deploy and under what circumstances.

MARCENT Marines had more language training, and were asked to use that language throughout the training day, with the exception of a "cultural dinner" where Marines shared a catered Middle Eastern meal with the role players who were allowed to use English. When engaging the role players during the training, MARCENT Marines found that even a single vocabulary word could build rapport. If a Marine did not use MSA, and instead relied entirely on his interpreter, he still used humor and casual conversation to build relationships. On the other hand, SPMAGTF Marines had only minimal language training in French, and it was not the native language of all of the role players. They were encouraged to speak in English throughout the training, but did not have a cultural dinner as with the MARCENT teams. Daily informal conversations, and especially the end-of-training group discussion described earlier, gave Marines opportunities to hear from a wide variety of role players' personal experiences. Each approach was not mutually exclusive; Marines who learned basic language skills were still expected to struggle through conversations without English, and Marines who had more advanced language training were still allowed a specified time to speak English, thus further encouraging cross-cultural understanding.

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APPENDIX B: Marine comments on useful vocabulary

Do security cooperation Marines need specialized vocabulary (in comparison to other kinds of missions)? The comments below reflect the same themes as indicated in the main report: Marines want a mix of both rapport building terms and military terms. No Marine specifically mentioned needing vocabulary related to managing students in a classroom environment. However, my observations of the CERTEX indicate that Marines frequently used encouragement words when working with students, and were in need of vocabulary to organize and move groups of people ("line up single file," "come here," "sit down," "use this," "watch me," etc.), although these actions were often conveyed with hand signals.

Use of vocabulary to seek more information and offer encouragement

- *'How do you say' and 'what is this.'* (SSgt, UAE, interviewed June 15, 2013.)
- *'Kayfa nakul' [means "how do you say"], and point [with a finger], that's my favorite expression.* (Corpsman, MARCENT 14.1, interviewed Dec. 18, 2013.)
- Encouragement words ('excellent,' 'good') (SSgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed June 29, 2013.)

On Arabic writing

- *The biggest difference would have been learning the alphabet in Arabic.* (Sgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 18, 2013)

On rapport building

- *Rapport building type language.* (MSgt, UAE, interviewed June 15, 2013.)
- *Greetings are essential. Numbers are important.* (Capt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013.)
- *It doesn't have to be highly technical. More usable language. Rapport building, basic terms and phrases. They don't need to be able to say 'I want to be able to patrol 500m and fire left.' They need more basic survival type of stuff.* (Capt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013.)
- *We need more conversation.* (GySgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed June 30, 2013.)

On military or task-specific terms

- *Tactical stuff. The entire rifle range without an interpreter. And basic commands- how to move, how to go do whatever.* (SSgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 19, 2014.)
- *I would have liked to have training on basic language on military words. Language is a significant hurdle in the way I communicate.* (GySgt, UAE, written communication, Dec. 2013. As an individual augment, he deployed to the UAE after the main unit without learning any Arabic.)
- *We got phrases, the word for tourniquet. Absolutely we will use this vocabulary.* (Corpsman, MARCENT 14.1, interviewed Dec. 18, 2013.)
- *[Instructor B] is able to teach us to use the language to teach a particular class like patrolling. We're not going to be fluent speakers by the deployment, but with military specific language training, we can use several sentences or paragraphs in a particular class.* (Maj, MARCENT 14.1, interviewed Dec. 11, 2013.)
- *Terms that we needed to teach like 'sergeant of the guard.'* (GySgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed June 30, 2013.)

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Appendix C: Marine comments on sustainment materials

As discussed in the report, Marines frequently ask for sustainment materials. As indicated by the comments below, some Marines seem sincere in their desire to practice or learn on their own time. Additional research and more in depth questioning would be necessary to assess how many Marines would use written or online materials, and which format is preferable.

On MarineNet and electronic materials

- *It would be nice to have resources, like Rosetta Stone, or something on MarineNet. We could use discs so we could practice on our own and so we don't have to rely on our interpreter the whole time.* (Capt, UAE, interviewed June 24, 2013.)
- *That's my beef with the training and CAC access. You can't do it from home when it's on MarineNet.* (Lt. 3/8, interviewed Oct. 7, 2013.)
- *Before I took my guys to Afghanistan, they had these laptops with Pashtu on it. They had the laptop, the charger, the headphones with the program [...] it gave them the ability, for five months before they were deployed, to take [the computer] and use it. If there was some way that interactive computer, or online, so they could be studying right now [while deployed]. Specific Jordanian would be best.* (Capt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Sept. 15, 2013.)
- *I probably wouldn't have used electronic materials. We got thrown in [to a place] where everyone speaks English.* (Sgt, MARCENT 13.2, interviewed Feb. 19, 2014.)

On hard-copy materials

- *We did not get a basic "how to speak Arabic" book, CD's or anything like other teams from other services who are out here [in Saudi Arabia].* (Col, USMTM, written feedback, Dec. 2013.)
- *It would be nice to have money spent on books. [...] Something like here's four books, read these, along with a few Arabic cards.* (Maj, UAE, interviewed June 15, 2013.)
- *CAOCL had print-outs. I remember [before a prior deployment, a CAOCL LNO] would have us make print outs for the students. We had culture books and tactical language books. He pulled those off of the website and passed those on to the teams.* (Maj, UAE, interviewed June 15, 2013.)
- *I was pissed the first day because I was trying to write words how they sound. And [Instructor A] would write something different. So I was wasting time writing things and not practicing how to say them. They should give us language cards with the phrases we're learning.* (Maj, UAE, interviewed June 15, 2013.)
- *We have no materials. We had one packet. But after that, it has been PowerPoints [in class.] There is no ability to study ahead, there is no way to get ahead of the vocabulary and learn, also to review and go back. [I asked if he would use the read-aheads if they were given to him] I probably would not look ahead to the vocabulary, but [Instructor B] could engage us with a little homework for the next day. And he could maybe force us to do that. We need a larger packet that covers his stuff.* (Capt, MARCENT 14.1, interviewed Dec. 13, 2013.)

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