USMC Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning

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

#1: Leadership Issues

[Cultural and language learning] will be accepted with as much effort as the Marine Corps wants to put into it.

- Respondent #1917

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 first in the series, presents the recommendations that involve matters for Marine Corps leadership consideration. These include **policy, manpower, and programmatic recommendations**, **ideas on growing capacity within the Corps**, **the need for leadership commitment for success**, **the challenges that American and Marine Corps culture may present**, and **a thought on the current state of affairs**. These Marines present actionable ideas for leadership consideration on how to enhance existing programs and capabilities and create new ones 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 these Marines 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.
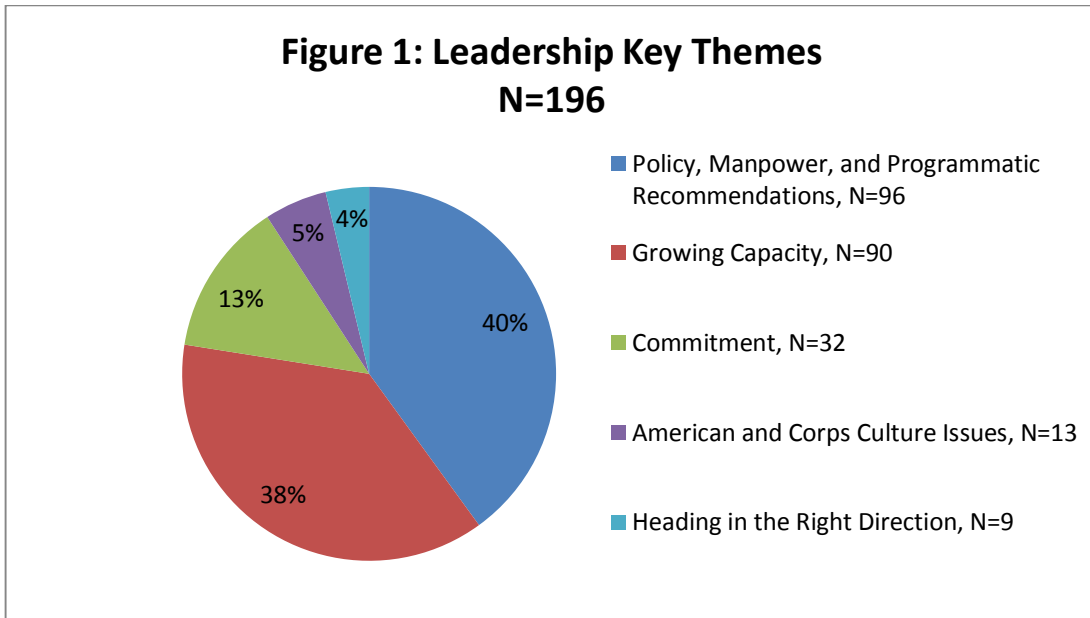
CAOCL reviewed these Marines' responses, identified themes present in the data, and assigned codes to them, using the inductive method of coding qualitative answers and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Text Analysis for Surveys 3.0 software. Because responses were open-ended, each response 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 education and training 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' recommendations for senior leadership. One hundred ninety-six Marines (44.6% of those who offered recommendations) offered such recommendations, and the themes that emerged were as follows: Policy, Manpower, and Programmatic Recommendations; Growing Capacity; Commitment; American or Corps Culture; and Heading in the Right Direction (Appendix B breaks down the frequency of responses for each category).

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[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.

**Figure 1: Leadership Key Themes
N=196**

- Policy, Manpower, and Programmatic Recommendations, N=96
- Growing Capacity, N=90
- Commitment, N=32
- American and Corps Culture Issues, N=13
- Heading in the Right Direction, N=9

Pie chart values: 40%, 38%, 13%, 5%, 4%

Key Themes

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

1. Policy, Manpower, and Programmatic Recommendations

Ninety-six Marines (49% of those who responded about leadership) provided recommendations that addressed policy, manpower, or programmatic issues. CAOCL created a cluster of three codes that comprised the "Policy, Manpower, and Programmatic Issues Cluster" category: Policy Recommendations, Manpower Recommendations, and Programmatic Recommendations.

Figure 2: Policy, Manpower, and Programmatic Recommendations

■ Policy, Manpower, and Programmatic Recommendations, N=96

Category	Value
Manpower Recommendations	37
Programmatic Recommendations	31
Policy Recommendations	48
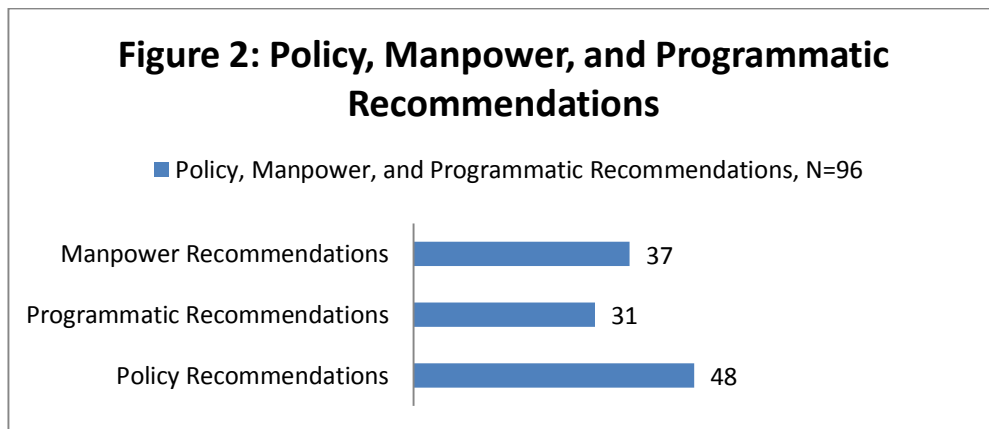
It is important to note that each of these categories offers a wealth and diversity of insight into possible ways the Marine Corps could improve cultural and language learning. The following analysis will provide

a glimpse into the depth and breadth of the recommendations; however, reading through each recommendation would be a valuable exercise for those responsible for such programs and policies and for ensuring needed capabilities are available to the force. Furthermore, some of the recommendations offer extensive comments that cover numerous themes; therefore, when using the quotations within the text, only the pieces relevant to the theme under discussion will be included unless it changes the overall meaning.

  a. **Policy Recommendations**

Within the policy, manpower, and programmatic issues cluster category, Marines offered with most frequency recommendations that have policy implications (48 responses – 50%). Marines addressed the need to change doctrine and task lists. Respondent #1798 explained, "*There needs to be institutional change in the Marine Corps regarding how to build the capability for 'soft skills.' 'Soft skills' should be better defined and woven into our doctrine. . . .*"[4] Respondent #1886 recommended formalizing the link between cultural and language capabilities and Marine Corps tasks and mission sets:

> *Ensure culture and language training is tied to specific Marine Corps Tasks/mission sets. Culture and language is an 'enabler' to mission accomplishment, not an end in and of itself. Current training and education efforts fail to make this distinct connection, and therefore it is often considered not operationally relevant to successful accomplishment of the core mission sets.*

Some Marines focused their recommendations on training time, seeking changes in current policies.[5] Several respondents were concerned with the training burden and called on Marine Corps leadership to "*. . . balance the education with all other competing priorities. . .*" (Respondent #1966). This respondent continued, "*Training is like manpower, it is a zero sum gain world. If we want to include more language and culture training we need to identify what required training will be suspended? Without a compensatory reduction Marines are having to choose which Marine Corps order to disobey.*" Respondent #1901 agreed, stating:

> *Obviously, the issue is time . . . and balancing it against ALL the other requirements that the Marine Corps has levied on the unit Commander and his/her Marines. I think TECOM[6] would be helpful to review all 'required' training [in order to] lessen the burden--it's truly gotten out of the box. Every year, it gets worse. So while I support this effort, I think something else needs to come off the table.*

Respondent #1964 recommended that leaders "*. . . prioritize what is important. . .*" because the Marine Corps leadership "*[m]ust recognize there is a 'zero sum gain' for training. Adding something to the plate – means we must take something off. . . .*" Others pleaded, if the Marine Corps is going to ask Marines to do this learning, to "*please incorporate the opportunities to learn into the schedules of MOS[7] duties. Especially for the MOS that works 14 hours a day. We have no time for anything except work, at least by setting up time within the work hours, we are able to gain this knowledge*" (Respondent #2161). Respondent #1948 echoed these sentiments, when stating:

> *Cultural awareness and basic language skills are very important to win the hearts and minds of those we are sent forward to help. The more education provided to the Marine enhances their professional*

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[4] 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.

[5] In a separate pull of the total population of respondents, 36 Marines out of the 545 total respondents identified Time as a Problem.

[6] Training and Education Command.

[7] Military occupational specialty.

skills. Providing these skill sets MUST be built into the Marine's daily schedule and not an add-on to the end of their hard day of existing training! Relying on the Marine to study an online course without building it into his/her [schedule] is useless. The Marine has very little personal time as is without additional after-hours requirements.

Others called for an expansion of efforts, whether it be through programs, capacity or participation, that would require a change in policy. For example, Respondent #1827 explained:

My previous assignment was resident ILS[8] at [a sister service school]. All courseware and written/oral examinations were conducted exclusively in Spanish. As a native speaker with a 3/3 DLAB[9]; an undergraduate degree in Spanish; and a 3-year assignment which required the frequent and sustained use of Spanish, I found this ILS course to be a significant contribution to my language skills. I would suggest significantly increasing the number of foreign CLS and ILS courses which are accredited as equivalent USMC CLS[10]/ILS courses. Foreign schools that do not meet academic requirements may be simply supplemented by requiring the completion of the appropriate non-resident courseware for candidate consideration. . . .

Respondent #1952 added:

FAO/RAO[11] program needs to be expanded to include SNCOs and have a set career track that does not hurt their promotion and advancement. DLI[12] needs to be expanded with regional facilities or increased capacity in order to meet the new demands on qualified cultural and language qualified experts.[13]

Respondent #1706 recommended expanding DLI resources for each Marine Expeditionary Force as well as expanding the International Affairs Officers Program to "*. . . include operators who are cultural experts. . .*" able to deploy in theater for longer periods of time.

Other responses specifically offered recommendations about the language efforts within the Marine Corps. Several Marines raised concerns about the difficulty of the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT), recommending that the Marine Corps "[r]*elax standards on the DLPT-5. Passing rates pre- and post- DLPT 5 should be proof enough*" (Respondent #2097) and opining that "*Marines want extra pay, but success on the DLPT is too difficult an investment for most . . .*" (Respondent #1843). To affirm that, Respondent #2139 requested, "*Make it easier for Marines to learn foreign languages.*" Others were concerned about the languages that rated foreign language proficiency pay (FLPP). Respondent #2355 recommended, "*Make FLPP more available to Marines. Spanish should be deemed a critical language in which Marines would be eligible for FLPP.*" Respondent #403 agreed, stating that "*Marines that speak Spanish should be recognized more even though it is a common language.*"

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[8] Intermediate level school.
[9] Defense Language Aptitude Battery.
[10] Career level school.
[11] Foreign Area Officer and Regional Affairs Officer.
[12] Defense Language Institute.
[13] The Marine Corps initiated in 2011 an enlisted pilot program modeled after the International Affairs Officer Program, the program that produces FAOs and RAOs.

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b. Manpower Recommendations

Thirty-seven Marines (38.5%) in the policy, manpower and programmatic issues cluster category offered recommendations that addressed manpower and other personnel issues.[14] Some respondents addressed Marine Corps assignment policies. For example, when assigning Marines regions for career-long study, Respondent #1874, while liking the idea, recommended, "*don't restrict them to where they can serve/be stationed based on their region/language.*" Another recommended "*. . . [sending] the same people to the same places over and over again so that they develop a familiarity with the culture, people, and pattern of life, as well as having language instruction within that unit*" (Respondent #1668). Some Marines noted the value of having such cultural and language capabilities within their units, such as Respondents #1520 who stated, "*Having several subject matters experts in a given unit would be beneficial. . .*" and #526 who agreed, "*Having the personnel in every small unit element is important to all operations because it gives each element the knowledge of the local environment. . . .*" Other respondents raised concerns with how Marine Corps assignment practices do not always match capabilities with unit needs. Respondent #1877 stated, "*Sending Korean linguists to Iraq is a waste of time, but that is what was done in my unit in 2004. . . .*" Respondent #418 pointed out that in 2010 during the Haiti earthquake, "*. . . there [were] many Haitian Marines aboard Camp Pendleton, CA who speak Haitian Creole and French who could have been a lot of help out in country translating for the US and UN troops. However, the Marine Corps never used them.*" Possible ways to avoid this would be to "[*i]dentify Marines who speak and are fluent in different languages and dialects that are not otherwise identified within DoD[, to] utilize them in AORs[15] that benefit the Marine Corps*" (Respondent # 867), and to modify "*our personnel management system . . . to embrace those specialists that have the 'soft skills' to use in planning, training/teaching and advising, and not penalize them*" (Respondent #1798). Furthermore, the Marine Corps could "*. . . even [create] specific PMOSs[16]*" (Respondent #1767) to professionalize language skills and cultural understanding or "*[give Marines] a secondary MOS as 'translator' for example and actually deploy them when needed*" (Respondent #418).

A couple of Marines recommended embedding this capability within the Reserve force. Respondent #1796 offered:

> *Consider basing regional expertise in the reserve force instead of the active force. (i.e. 23rd Marines associated with PACOM, NORTHCOM, and SOUTHCOM; 24th Marines associated with CENTCOM; and 25th Marines associated with EUCOM and AFRICOM.[17]) The continuity of reserve manpower along with posting in relationship to customary immigrant populations within CONUS may reinforce education and training programs. Active duty manpower considerations and force deployment requirements seem subject to more variables making it less practical to retain regional unit expertise. We may be more successful at developing a regional expertise associated with a particular unit in reserves and then augment/support the active force.*

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[14] Note that these recommendations are not limited to ways to improve cultural and language learning programs but rather offer ways to improve the overall cultural and language capability of the Marine Corps.

[15] Areas of responsibility.

[16] Primary military occupational specialties.

[17] Names of some of the Department of Defense's regional combatant commands: U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Southern Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Africa Command.

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Respondent #1210 recommended that the Marine Corps "*utilize the SMCR[18] personnel assets. Beyond MOS, assess civilian professional experience and skills. Facilitate DLPT training and testing for both the active and reserve components.*"

Lastly, six respondents offered recommendations about managing interpreters and other individual augments. Respondent #1678 noted the importance of using local assets, "*Having the services of a local interpreter is invaluable in interacting with locals. Interpreters can understand more than U.S. Service members what is actually being said, cultural nuances, and exactly what locals are trying to convey based on their cultural understanding.*" Respondent #1693 continued, "*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.*" Several respondents explained that to most effectively leverage these capabilities, the Marine Corps should "*embed interpreters into the platoon prior to deployment. Have them become a part of the team instead of an addition at the last minute. . .*" (Respondent #714). Respondent #1934 agreed:

> *The best way for Marines to learn language and culture is to embed the same interpreters they will deploy within the unit at the outset of PTP[19]. In preparation for my Iraq MTT[20] deployment, Global Language Solutions (GLS) or L3 (whoever it was at that time) assigned three Iraqi interpreters to my team approximately four months prior to deployment. They went through all training with us, and I had them give language and culture classes to my team at every opportunity during down time. This was the most effective learning tool we had. I believe that this model would be the most effective way for the Marine Corps to seed its ranks with linguistically and culturally competent personnel prior to deployment.*

However, Respondent #520 cautioned not to put all capabilities external to Marine assets, "*I feel that Marine translators should be used alongside the regular translators. We put a lot of trust in one man doing a job and having a back-up around would be beneficial.*"

c. Programmatic Recommendations

Within the policy, manpower and programmatic issues cluster category, 31 Marines (32.3%) offered recommendations that involved programs or program ideas. Several respondents discussed increasing the use of education centers on base or deepening relationships with local colleges. Respondent #1541 offered:

> *Most Marine bases have some sort of education center on base, and most units have at least one education officer. If the education centers began to have language and culture classes available it would be another tool to help Marines learn a language. The online Rosetta stone is awesome, but having classes with a live instructor would help. I used to study Chinese, however, I haven't had an opportunity to speak the language due to my current location. Languages are a skill that if you don't use it you lose it. Many Marines and their spouses speak foreign languages. If the education center started asking for volunteers to teach classes, or if money was available, paid instructors, it would help out the Marine Corps and create more jobs for families. I used to be the education officer [on a Marine base] and had great communication passing information between the Marines in my*

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[18] Selected Marine Corps Reserve.
[19] Pre-deployment training program.
[20] Military transition team.

squadron and the education center. I could see language classes becoming something that could easily get started at low cost.

Respondent #381 agreed that the education centers could do more, noting "*. . .there isn't nearly enough foreign language training offered via relationships with colleges at the Education Centers on base. I gained great Japanese skills/very basic Tagalog in Okinawa/Philippines; however, since my return to Camp Lejeune I have had zero opportunity to maintain what I had*." The training received through these relationships with local colleges proved very effective for Respondent #790, who explained:

The training I received pre-MEU[21] on Camp Lejeune at the community college was very effective and has assisted me on countless missions since. If we can develop that kind of training for the Marines preparing for deployment, and on a larger scale than just select squad leaders, I believe it would be a large improvement over just the flash cards that Marines are given and can greatly increase mission accomplishment. Mainly about the customs and courtesies of the countries to prevent Marines from accidently doing something inappropriate by the other culture's standards.

In Respondent #1624's opinion, "*The process in which a local college turns out college students in say the language of Arabic is faster than DLI and more cost effective by far. . . .*"

Others recommended growing relationships with joint and foreign military institutions and non-military universities. For example, Respondent #1752 asserted:

The USMC[22] needs to allow (maybe even require) its Officer Corps to seek education at resident non-military universities in order to develop a better picture of the world they operate in and to be more capable during multi-agency operations like COIN and SASO[23]. . . . Military schools can accomplish this, but my opinion is that free thinking and learning resources are not as abundant.

Because he felt his experience was beneficial, Respondent #1827 endorsed expanding foreign educational opportunities:

I would suggest significantly increasing the number of foreign CLS and ILS courses which are accredited as equivalent USMC CLS/ILS courses. Foreign schools that do not meet academic requirements may be simply supplemented by requiring the completion of the appropriate non-resident courseware for candidate consideration. . . .

The Marines in this group had many different program ideas for improving cultural and language learning. Recommendations included, for example:

- implementing designated learning days or times (Respondents #1359 and #1053);
- expanding the Commandant's Reading List or requiring additional reading materials prior to deployment (Respondents #1786, #242, and #2035);
- creating a "*. . . real life exposure trip to a like minded place [for] our senior leaders . . . [to] bring back real world experience to our learning*" (Respondent #651);
- "*[providing] immersion schools with appropriate lessons/TLOs/ELOs[24] for each rank group. . .*" (Respondent #595); and
- using web-based or portable learning mechanisms (Respondents #1882 and #1691).

Some Marines went into significant detail in describing their program recommendations, including Respondents #1740 and #1845 who discussed how to improve the FAO and RAO Program and

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[21] Marine Expeditionary Unit.
[22] United States Marine Corps.
[23] Counterinsurgency and Stability and Support Operations.
[24] Terminal and enabling learning objectives.

Respondent #1843 who talked about how to increase low level language proficiency throughout the Corps. Respondent #1843 explained his "bare bones" language concept:

1. Marines want extra pay, but success on the DLPT[25] is too difficult an investment for most. Standardize basic investment language classes (Levels 1-3) in the USMC with a simple ASCOPE[26] type culture component tagged on. Develop a simple diagnostic to follow each level and call it the OLPT (Operational Lang Pro Test). It should be bare bones and its OLPP[27] should be modest, but the Marines would be all over it. It could build proficiency and serve as a springboard to the DLPT/FLPP[28]. Level I - 4 weeks OLPT I = $10 OLPP, Level II - 6 weeks OLPT II = $20 OLPP, Level III - 8 weeks OLPT III =$30 OLPP. Unlike FLPP, no annual retest required. 3. We need a USMC culture where language scores become common discussion. We must do this WITHOUT obtrusively linking language or cultural proficiency to promotion. Accessible incentive pay is the short-term answer. In the long run, language and culture proficiency will become a promotion consideration without programs being snuffed by ignorant leaders or corrupted by Congress.

Respondent #748 believes that this learning should start at the beginning of a Marine's career and continue throughout, and offered this idea:

[This type of learning] should be incorporated into training for young Marines as soon as they graduate Basic Training. Design a two week program before/after MCT[29] to use Rosetta Stone format settings to learn KEY languages which are pertinent to current situations (i.e. currently focusing on Pashto/Persian/Dari languages). This would be a continuance course teaching basics and constantly changing with world tempo. Upon check in to first base and yearly, have refresher classes/tests and add it into a Marine's quarterly training plan.

2. Growing Capacity

The second most prevalent theme identified was a group of recommendations that discussed how to grow capacity within the Marine Corps. This category touches on all aspects of the policy, programs, and manpower cluster category; however, all recommendations here relate to capacity development so are handled separately. Ninety Marines (45.9% of those who responded about leadership) offered such recommendations. CAOCL created a cluster of seven codes that comprised the "Growing Capacity Cluster" category: Requirement, Specialists, Incentive, Screening, Advertise, Voluntary, and Selection.
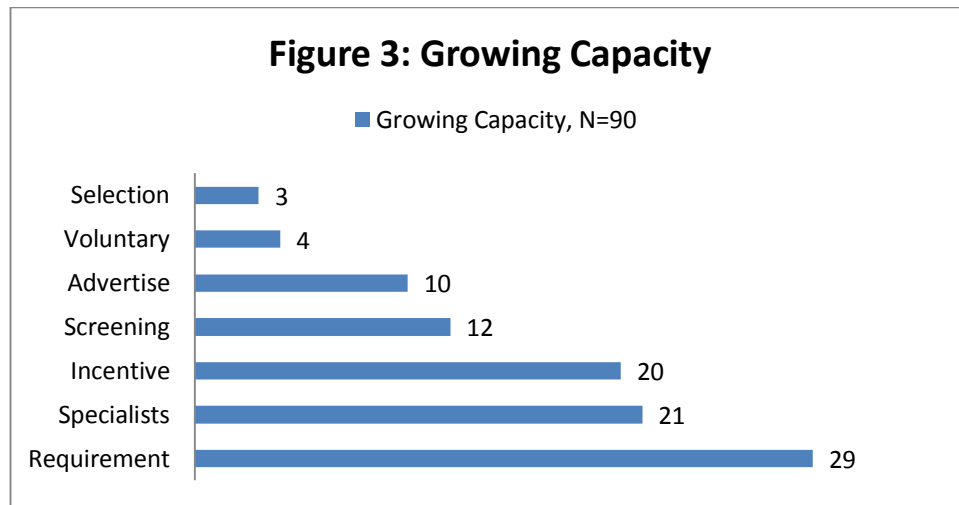
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[25] Defense Language Proficiency Test.

[26] Per Appendix B of the U.S. Army Field Manual, Mission Command (FM-6.0), ASCOPE is "a memory aid for the characteristics considered under civil considerations: areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people, and events." https://rdl.train.army.mil/soldierPortal/atia/adlsc/view/public/6725-1/fm/6-0/fm6_0.pdf, accessed on 14 February 2012.

[27] Operational language proficiency pay.

[28] Foreign language proficiency pay.

[29] Marine Combat Training.

Figure 3: Growing Capacity

■ Growing Capacity, N=90

Category	Value
Selection	3
Voluntary	4
Advertise	10
Screening	12
Incentive	20
Specialists	21
Requirement	29

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a. Requirement

Within the growing capacity cluster, the most frequent recommendation was to make cultural and language learning a requirement (29 responses – 32.2%).

> *We will always chase the bulls-eye on culture and language training as long as it is not REQUIRED or REWARDED. I don't mean required like a swim qual or pistol qual is required. I mean required like "you don't get paid unless you do this". If most Marines wanted to continue their academic careers, they'd have gone to college. We will always have problems getting Marines to actively participate in anything academic as long as it's tied to no badge, money, promotion or special assignment.* (Respondent #1267)

Some respondents recommended that this type of learning receive equal treatment to other required foundational Marine Corps training. For example, Respondent #1749 explained, "*Cultural and language training needs to be treated just like PT, weapons training, NBC, etc. As 'America's Force in Readiness,' MAGTFs need to be able to operate without relying on outside (of the MAGTF) SMEs on language and [culture].*" Respondent # 1801 agreed, stating "*A useful way to frame the requirement is to compare it to PT. Every Marine understands that you have to accept personal responsibility to be physically fit. Likewise, they should understand that you also need to study your culture area to be relevant.*" There were those who thought this learning should be a requirement for promotion, including Respondent #777 who stated, "*[Culture]/language should be a requisite for promotion boards. There should be certain levels of cultural/language education required to be competitive in the USMC.*"

Some recommendations within the "requirement" subcategory emphasized only one learning area. Some focused solely on language learning, e.g. "*I think learning a second language should be mandatory in the Marine Corps*" (Respondent #660). Some focused solely on cultural learning, e.g. "*More cultural training in Pre-deployment packages. Also yearly requirement for all Marines in basic cultural awareness and sensitivity*" (Respondent #1488). Others did not specify at all, as captured by Respondent # 1303, who stated, "*Make it required PME[30] for advancement and reenlistment.*" There were four respondents, however, who cautioned about making it mandatory and recommended that such programs be voluntary, raising concerns that requiring it would backfire. For example, Respondent #731 urged the

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[30] Professional military education.

Marine Corps to "*[e]ncourage Marines to attend language schools or online programs. Don't force them to do it. It will just make them not want to do it. . . .*" Respondent #1513 agreed, adding:

> *Having cultural knowledge is important to mission accomplishment. However, forcing progression of cultural awareness on all Marines, as opposed to those more interested and willing, will only deter Marines from participation. It should be voluntary, with heavier emphasis on creating regional experts, rather than blanket training to produce only a handful of semi-educated personnel.*

b. Specialists

The second most prevalent theme within the growing capacity cluster is for the Marine Corps to develop and use specialists (21 responses – 23.3%). For example, Respondent #687 recommended that the Marine Corps "*[require] and train a type of organic Subject Matter Expert (SME) down to the squad level at a minimum. . . .*" Respondent #1558 agreed, stating "*A percentage across the Marine Corps needs to be identified and groomed as a cultural expert in a specific region around the world. This expert could then hone the skills of his fellow Marines in the unit. This expert should be given time and resources to further his study in the region.*" Drawing on his experience as an exchange officer, Respondent #1797 believes the only way to truly increase Marine Corps competency in this realm is to focus on the key individuals; he explained:

> *Having spent almost three years as an exchange officer in a foreign military unit, I found that cultural learning is indispensable to understand both our allies and our enemies. Unfortunately the knowledge that is provided in media (books, software, presentations) does not compare to actually participating in a foreign culture. There is no easy way to overcome this. Adding additional annual training requirements or PTP requirements will only make incremental improvements. Emplacing fluent, regional experts with significant amounts of time in a foreign country or region into a unit is really the only way to accomplish the mission. Additional requirements also become time-consuming and burdensome for predeployment training. Rather than giving a token amount of training to everybody, please consider focusing training on a few key individuals with the aptitude, training, and experience to be successful and make a difference when interacting with the local population.*

c. Incentives

A close third in the growing capacity cluster category were those respondents who recommended incentivizing Marines to encourage this type of learning (20 responses – 22.2%). Marines recognize that "*[i]ncentives and rewards are high motivators. . .*" (Respondent #1712) and thus recommend employing them to increase cultural and language capabilities throughout the force. For example, Respondent #1122 recommended "*[creating] an education program for Marines interested in getting the qual with special perks for those Marines.*" Several mentioned providing promotion points or linking it to competitiveness at promotion time as a way to encourage participation, as represented by Respondent #809's comment:

> *We must first make it structured and regimental. Then make this an incentive based program; we will encourage a lot more participation and desire to learn. If we tell young Marines that they will get promotion points, or that they are more competitive for promotion (SNCOS), for completing a language and cultural course, they will jump on that opportunity in seconds. If it is for a certain operation, they will limit interest to their perceived possibility of contact and in most cases, that is not likely.*

Others focused on incentives for language learning; for example, "*Provide more foreign language proficiency bonuses to attract more Marines into learning new languages and therefore make deployed units more mission capable*" (Respondent #2034).

d. Screening and Selecting

Respondents also recommended that the Marine Corps do a better job at screening (12 responses or 13.3%) and selecting candidates (3 responses or 3.3%) so that the Marine Corps can leverage and expand upon existing individual capabilities to enhance overall Marine Corps competency in culture and language. For example, Respondent #705 stated:

> *The Marine Corps needs to do a better job screening out possible applicants at the accession level to possibly find people of more diverse backgrounds who are already familiar with these different cultures from all over the world. Instead of having them sit in a supply warehouse, they can actually impact the operational readiness of their battalion or company.*

Respondent #1771's call for "*. . . a comprehensive screening and selection process for Marines that display a proclivity for language . . .*" would help the Marine Corps "*. . . leverage the talent you get when you get it. . .*" (Respondent #1877), which is important because "*[u]tilizing personnel that are immersed via nationality/up-bringing that speak foreign languages is crucial to winning the long war. . .*" (Respondent #1554).

e. Advertising

Ten respondents (11.1%) within the growing capacity cluster category also recommended a more concerted advertising or awareness campaign to help Marines become more familiar with the cultural and language learning opportunities available to them. Four Marines in this group were unaware of these learning programs. For example, Respondents #332 and #2065 explained respectively, "*I wasn't even aware of any sort of cultural and language training opportunities. . .*" and "*Advertise them. I never hear about them being offered.*" To solve this, this group of respondents' recommendation is to advertise. Respondent #1235 captures this when he said, "*The culture and language education and training are very important because of what we do as Marines. My comments to improve this aspect are: 1) get the word out via MARADMIN[31] and 2) have easy access to these programs by Marines and possibly their family (spouses/children) via online.*"

3. Commitment

Another prevalent theme in the data is the respondents' recognition that the success of cultural and language programs depends on the level of commitment from leadership. Thirty-two respondents (16.3%) addressed this issue. Responses range from those who discuss priority, to those who call for the Marine Corps or its components to participate in or endorse such efforts, to those who link success with level of commitment. Respondent #139 explained:

> *In our current conflicts, understanding, respecting, and exploiting the culture of the target nation or area is the single most important factor determining our success, next to our determination to succeed. We must be prepared to make sacrifices in resources, money, time, and blood in order to*

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[31] Marine administrative message.

best exploit the target culture and language. If we are not, we will pay the price in a conflict that drags on unendingly and ends in bitter failure.

Respondent #1887 emphasized, "*I strongly believe that language is underemphasized by leadership and resisted by Marine Corps culture. Whichever approach is selected, it will have to be a priority from the Commandant and enforced.*" Others offered ways to get commands, components, or Marines on board:

- "*. . . direct commands. . .*" (Respondent #627);
- enforce training (Respondent #983);
- "*make more of an effort to teach about the local culture and language of the area*" (Respondent #638);
- emphasize the importance to all units (Respondents #360 and #781);
- "*Make sure commands are doing it and not saying they are doing it!*" (Respondent #941); and
- "*Make it more of a priority. . .*" (Respondent #1654).

4. American or Corps Culture

Thirteen respondents (6.6%) noted that it was not necessarily the training and education programs that need to be improved but rather that there was a more foundational issue - American and Marine Corps culture – that may need attention. "*For Americans, 'attitude is everything,' for many older cultures, 'relationship is everything.'*" In his preceding comment, Respondent #1798 emphasized differences that abound and calls upon the Marine Corps to change:

There needs to be [an] institutional change in the Marine Corps regarding how to build capability for 'soft skills.' . . . We still need to maintain a lethal and ruthless force but we and our nation can no longer afford to break and kill everyone who poses a threat to us. We must have the capacity to empathize and understand our foes and others caught in the middle of troubled regions and help reconcile those who are not really our enemy. We need to have a better sense of history and maintain better continuity of the issues and relationships. . . .

Others pointed out some challenges that American culture presents. Respondent #729 believes that "*Americans are inherently oblivious to cultures outside our borders. . . .*", and Respondent #1804 explained:

I believe the trick is to instill an outward-looking, internationally aware culture into every level of the Marine Corps. Language is an important part, but only a part of this. This will be a challenge because our American culture is very self-centric and inward-looking and most new Marines will not be used to thinking internationally and will not initially comprehend the importance of understanding culture in the rest of the world until we instill this into them as part of their daily thought process.

Respondent #1621 also raised concerns about the Marine Corps' own culture and its willingness to adapt:

I have a degree in Intercultural Communications. I like this stuff. Training is needed; however, we have a very conservative organization. We need training from civilian SME experts. Also, this needs to be reinforced by Marine officers . . . officers who really know and believe in this stuff and/or have sufficient experience in it. For example, a Human Intelligence Officer/Marine, RAO, FAO, degree based education. Simply put, you need a liberal and open mind. Our organization is not known for cultural openness. We are like the Catholic Church. The world/America may change, but not the Marine Corps. Your average officer may believe in this stuff, but they lack the cultural attributes/skills to make the real leap from awareness to understanding, knowledge, and field application. The program and command has to be willing to train and allow the Marine to operate like (as near to) the culture we operate with. That does not always occur in the field.

Respondent #1762 called on the organization to change:

> *We as an organization need to understand and accept the fact that the U.S. is not the only country in the world. There are many other cultures and norms that may be inconsistent with ours and we need to have an appreciation of such. Incorporating a type of cultural based training for all operations in needed.*

5. Heading in the Right Direction

Nine Marines (4.6%) indicated that the Marine Corps is heading in the right direction with its efforts. "*The initiatives we have are great under the circumstances. . .*" (Respondent #1867). Respondent #1236 agreed, stating "*I believe the programs in place are relatively good since it is hard to truly predict everywhere we may be called to serve. . . .*" Respondent #1269 endorsed Marine Corps efforts, "*The Marine Corps is doing an outstanding job incorporating cultural and language education PTP training. . . .*" Others endorsed a particular methodology that could serve as a model, such as "*I think ATG, I MEF[32] has a pretty good start in method and media towards the approach to language and cultural training. . .*" (Respondent #1262). With regard to the Marine Corps Regional, Culture and Language Familiarization Program, Respondent #1506 called on the Corps to not stop now, but to keep pushing forward with this initiative, urging:

> *Institute it! I understand the process will narrow in scopes as it progresses (similar to the advent of MCMAP[33]), and this is a good step in that direction. But following through and progressing quickly are key to implementing what SHOULD be a major push within the Marine Corps, at least within the SNCO[34] and officer ranks*.

Conclusions

The respondents in this dataset have presented Marine Corps leadership with a myriad of recommendations and ideas on how to improve not only the cultural and language learning programs but also the Marine Corps' overall effectiveness by growing the cultural and language capabilities they believe the Corps needs for mission success. From policy to programs to manpower, these Marines have drawn from their wealth of experience to provide a comprehensive set of organization-wide recommendations that not only offer creative solutions for leadership consideration but also seek leadership attention and action. They note that it will take commitment "*[f]rom the Headquarters down to the units down to the teams . . .*" (Respondent #781) to succeed and that it will not be easy as leaders confront ingrained cultural norms that may challenge progress. However, these seasoned Marines believe it is important, and some see efforts underway as heading in the right direction. Respondent #1958,[35] while not part of the "Leadership Issues" dataset, offered these words, "*Good luck on developing the 'right' answer as to how to best prepare the Corps in language and culture. Keep pedaling. [T]hanks*."

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[32] Advisor Training Group, I Marine Expeditionary Force.
[33] Marine Corps Martial Arts Program.
[34] Staff non-commissioned officers.
[35] Respondent #1958 is one of the 439 respondents who offered recommendations but did not address leadership issues. His comments primarily focused on teaching methods.

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: Leadership Issues

Population: 196
File: Leadership and Career Timing – Final Question.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) "LS: Manpower Recommendations" refers to all personnel recommendations and is not confined to Marine Corps understanding of manpower; however, those responsibilities that currently fall under M&RA have been included.
2) "LS: Programmatic Recommendations" refers to those responses that offer different program ideas. "LS: Policy Recommendations" includes policy recommendations for existing programs.
3) "LS: Commitment" includes those responses that discuss priority, call the Marine Corps or its components to participate in/endorse efforts, and link success with level of commitment.
4) This dataset is a joint dataset.
   a. Dataset includes categories related to learning timing, which involve 92 of the responses. These are not included below.
   b. Out of the 439 recommendations, 191 did not address learning timing or leadership issues and were placed in the "out of scope" category. They are not represented below.

Table 3: Categories and Frequencies of Response

Category	Total Responses (N=196)
Policy, Manpower, and Programmatic Issues	**96**
LS: Policy Recommendations	48
LS: Manpower Recommendations	37
LS: Programmatic Recommendations	31
Growing Capacity	**90**
LS: Requirement	29
LS: Specialists	21
LS: Incentive	20
LS: Screening	12
LS: Advertise	10
LS: Voluntary	4
LS: Selection	3
LS: Commitment	**32**
LS: American and Corps Culture Issues	**13**
LS: Heading in Right Direction	**9**

Figure 4: Leadership Issues Categories from the Final Survey Question

Leadership Issues

Categories (left to right): Policy Recommendations, Manpower Recommendations, Programmatic Recommendations, Requirement, Specialists, Incentive, Screening, Advertise, Voluntary, Selection, Commitment, American and Corps Culture, Heading in the Right Direction

Legend: ■ Leadership Issues

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