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14. ABSTRACT This report provides an initial, broad evaluation of the current state of immersion training in the Special Operations Forces (SOF) community. Prior research in educational settings (e.g., universities) has documented the effectiveness of immersion training as a method of language learning; however it is unclear how immersion training is perceived in the SOF community. This report describes the perceived effectiveness of immersion training and provides insight on how immersion training can be more effective in the future. Results from this study indicated only about one in ten SOF operators receive immersion training, which is typically conducted outside of the United States and lasts four weeks or longer. SOF operators and leaders suggested that immersion training be conducted more frequently, that participants be required to meet a minimum proficiency score to participate, and that immersion would be most effective immediately prior to deployment.			
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Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project: Immersion Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The vision of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is to have, "Special Operations Forces (SOF) [that] are culturally attuned warriors with basic through native language and culture capability, able to blend into the operational environment and build relations across diverse cultures" (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009, p. 6). In order to achieve this vision, the SOF community needs effective methods for developing language and culture capability. Immersion—the method of foreign language training where instruction and learning interactions are conducted primarily in the target language (Cummins, 1998) —has been demonstrated as an effective method of language learning in educational settings (e.g., universities). Immersion can be conducted in a country where the language is spoken, in the United States where the language is spoken in an isolated community, or in a simulated environment with native speakers. Previous research in academic settings has demonstrated that immersion training increased: (1) foreign language fluency (e.g., Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Lennon, 1990); (2) the opportunity and amount of target language use resulting in higher proficiency levels (e.g., Freed et al., 2004); and (3) participants' cultural awareness (Rugasken & Harris, 2009). This study provides an initial, broad evaluation of the current state of immersion training in the SOF community. Specifically, this report describes the characteristics and perceived effectiveness of immersion training experienced by members of the SOF community in general and does not focus on a specific immersion event. Furthermore, it provides insight on how immersion training could be more effective for the SOF community. This information can be used to adjust current training methods to better achieve USSOCOM's vision as well as guide future research to determine the best practices and recommendations to improve immersion training in the SOF community.

Despite the importance of language and culture capability on missions and the research demonstrating immersion training's effectiveness in other settings (i.e., education), survey results suggest this training method is not widely used within the SOF community. Most SOF operators (88%) reported they have not participated in any type of immersion training. Similarly, surveyed SOF leaders reported that operators in their units seldom participated in immersion training programs. This lack of participation in immersion training may be attributed to the following:

- Logistical issues, such as the lack of time or funding. USSOCOM's Manual on SOF language programs depicts language instruction as time consuming and expensive, and describes how Command Language Program Managers (CLPMs) have to balance time and funding across multiple languages and other training requirements (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009). Therefore, units may not have the means to provide immersion to all interested and eligible SOF operators.
- Eligibility to participate in immersion programs. Immersion programs may require a minimum proficiency level that SOF operators may not meet. The USSOCOM Manual on SOF language programs requires a 1/1 (listening and reading) rating on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Scale as measured by the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) or a Level 1 ILR rating on an oral proficiency interview (OPI) to qualify for immersion training outside of the continental United States (OCONUS) also referred to as Live Environment Training (LET; USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009).
- Negative perceptions of immersion training. Some members of the SOF community perceive immersion as a waste of time or money (i.e., "*it is a free vacation*").

- The need to only have one or two members of the team above the basic training standard of an ILR 1/1/1 (listening, speaking, reading) rating. Admiral Olson's memo regarding *Special Operations Language Policy* (2009) states goals for deployment team composition of one 2/2/2 level and one 3/3/3 level individual according to the ILR Scale. Therefore, given the cost and time of immersion, it may be provided to only a few members who are capable of meeting those goals.
- There are no studies of immersion training effectiveness and best practices in the SOF community to support its effective use.

Regardless of the specific reasons, immersion training is not highly used in the SOF community in relationship to its perceived effectiveness by SOF personnel. Most SOF operators who reported participating in immersion training rated it as an effective and useful method of language training. Moreover, these SOF operators receive language-related benefits from the training, including increased confidence in their language ability and increased proficiency as a result of their immersion experiences. Compared to SOF operators who reported *never* receiving immersion training, those who reported receiving immersion training were: (1) more likely to have language capability on their inside area of responsibility (AOR) deployments; (2) more language capable compared to others on their team; and (3) more confident in their ability to perform language-related mission tasks. Therefore, it may be useful for USSOCOM to examine the current and future use of these immersion training programs. This study provides an initial starting point for this examination.

Current immersion training in the SOF community includes both outside of the continental United States (OCONUS) and inside the continental United States (CONUS) programs. OCONUS, also referred to as Live Environment Training (LET), takes place in a country where the target language is the primary language, while CONUS immersion, also referred to as iso-immersion, is conducted in an isolated environment in the United States where there is a dense subpopulation of the targeted native speaker, or in a simulated environment with role players who speak the target language. These differences in immersion training type impacted the language-rated benefits of the program. In comparison to SOF operators who reported receiving CONUS immersion training, SOF operators who reported receiving OCONUS immersion indicated: (1) higher listening, speaking, and reading proficiency; (2) higher likelihood of having language on deployments; and (3) higher confidence in their ability to perform certain language-dependent tasks.

Given the aforementioned evidence, immersion training can be used as an effective tool for the SOF community to achieve its vision of having language capable and culturally attuned warriors, if the immersion training is structured correctly. In addition to suggesting immersion training be conducted OCONUS, SOF operators and leaders commonly recommended other immersion training program characteristics for effective learning that are supported by research findings (SOF operator and leader suggestions are provided in *italics*):[1]

- *Immersion training should be conducted more frequently*. Research suggests that although classroom study helps, language learners require frequent and constant exposure to native

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[1] Please note these suggestions were provided by the SOF community and because of practical other logistical constraints, these may not be the most appropriate recommendations for the entire SOF community. The *Tier II* reports: *Current State of Language Training, Language Training Guidance,* and *Culture Training Guidance,* will more fully examine this issue.

speakers in the native environment to motivate students to communicate in their target language (Constantino, 1994). If training is irregular, students may perceive language skills as less important and other priorities will take precedence. Additionally, research suggests that the frequency of using the target language leads to greater gains in proficiency (Freed et al., 2004; Kinginger, 2008).

- *Immersion would be most effective immediately prior to deployment.* Loss of language proficiency occurs after language instruction ends (Bardovi-Harlig & Stringer, 2010). Thus, SOF operators will maximize their language capability on deployments if they receive immersion shortly before deploying.

- *SOF operators should meet a required minimum proficiency score to participate.* Those with higher proficiency before immersion gain more proficiency during immersion than those with lower proficiency levels (Davidson, 2007). USSOCOM M 350-8 prescribes that SOF operators must have scored at least a Level 1 ILR rating on the OPI or a 1/1 ILR rating on the DLPT in order to participate in OCONUS immersion.

Overall, this study presents perceptions of immersion training from both operators and leaders in the SOF community, and emphasizes both the benefits of immersion training (e.g., increased proficiency, increased confidence, motivation to learn, and others) and suggestions for improvement. This study focused on the general immersion experiences of SOF operators and leaders and did not focus on a specific immersion event. Despite limitations, this research provides an important first step in terms of optimizing the effectiveness of immersion training for the larger SOF community. Future research should focus on investigating the impact of specific immersion training events on other important language outcomes to help determine best practices and recommendations for immersion training in the SOF community.

This report is part of a larger project titled, *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment (LCNA) Project*. See Appendix A of this report for additional details about the SOF LCNA Project. For questions or more information about the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) and this project, please contact Mr. Jack Donnelly (john.donnelly@socom.mil). For specific questions related to data collection or reports associated with this project, please contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Reanna Poncheri Harman (rpharman@swa-consulting.com) with SWA Consulting Inc.

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SECTION I: REPORT AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

Immersion Report Purpose

The United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) requires language capable and culturally attuned operators for missions around the globe. To achieve this goal, operators must have access to effective methods of language training. Immersion training is a method of foreign language training where instruction and social-learning interactions are conducted primarily in the target language (Cummins, 1998). Immersion training can take place in two different settings: (1) outside the continental United States (OCONUS), also called Live Environment Training (LET), in a country where the target language is the primary language, and (2) inside the continental United States (CONUS), also called iso-immersion, where training is conducted in an isolated environment in the United States with dense subpopulation of the targeted native speakers or in a simulated environment with native speakers hired as role players. Both CONUS and OCONUS immersion training, in comparison to other training methods, have been shown to enhance fluency (e.g., Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Lennon, 1990) and increase cultural awareness (Rugasken & Harris, 2009). While research has shown immersion to be effective, the perceived effectiveness of immersion training within the SOF community has not been investigated recently. This report investigates the current state of immersion training activities in the SOF community in order to determine if immersion training opportunities are appropriate for achieving USSOCOM's goals.

This report compares suggestions and opinions provided by SOF operators and unit leaders with research-based recommendations. For example, SOF community members recommended that operators should achieve a certain proficiency level before attending immersion training. Research supports this suggestion and has shown that those with higher pre-immersion proficiency levels gain more language proficiency during training than those with lower proficiency levels (Davidson, 2007). Further, USSOCOM's Manual on SOF language programs (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009) prescribes that SOF operators who participate in immersion training outside of the continental United States (OCONUS) must have a current oral proficiency interview (OPI) score of at least 1 in speaking on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Scale or a current Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) score of a 1/1 in listening and reading on the ILR Scale.

The report structure includes the current state information, perceptions of effectiveness, and suggestions for improving immersion training. Section II provides findings related to reported immersion program characteristics including the frequency, length of program, and percentage of time using the target language in daily interactions. Section III presents perceptions about the effectiveness and usefulness of immersion programs from SOF operator and leader perspectives. Section IV examines how differences in immersion training (e.g., duration of training) alter the effectiveness of immersion training. Section V describes SOF operators' and leaders' suggestions for improving immersion programs and, in contrast, SOF leaders' reasons for not providing immersion. Finally, Section VI provides recommendations and conclusions based on the findings presented in Sections II through V of the report. Appendix A provides information about the 2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment (LCNA) project. Appendix B includes the methodology, participation, and description of analyses for this report. Appendices C

through E present detailed responses from respondents in table format. Appendices F and G provide comment themes and sample comments from respondents.

LCNA Project Purpose

The Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) commissioned the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment (LCNA) Project* to gain insights on language and culture capability and issues across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). The goal of this organizational-level needs assessment is to inform strategy and policy to ensure SOF personnel have the language and culture skills needed to conduct their missions effectively. Data were collected between March and November, 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including operators and leaders. Findings, gathered via focus groups and a web-based survey, will be presented in a series of reports divided into three tiers. The specific reports in each of these tiers will be determined and contracted by the SOFLO. *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*). *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment*), while including additional data and analysis on the topic. One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project. The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations (e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command [AFSOC], Special Forces [SF] Command). Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project. Report topics are determined by the SOFLO and are subject to change.

Relationship of *Immersion Training* to the LCNA Project

Immersion Training is a *Tier I* Report. Findings from this report will be integrated with the following *Tier I* reports: *Training Emphasis: Language and Culture, Initial Acquisition Training, Sustainment/Enhancement Training, Culture Training,* and *Language Resources, Technology, and Self Study* into three *Tier II* reports: *Current State of Language Training, Language Training Guidance,* and *Culture Training Guidance* (see Appendix A for the project structure). However, the final reports produced will be determined by the SOFLO and are subject to change.

SECTION II: IMMERSION TRAINING DESCRIPTIONS

This section describes immersion training in which the SOF community[2] participated, including information about the frequency, length, and percentage of time using the target language during daily interactions for both outside of the continental United States (OCONUS) and inside the continental United States (CONUS) immersion programs.

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:
- How many SOF operator respondents reported participating in immersion programs?
- In what types of immersion programs did SOF operators report participation?
- What are the characteristics (e.g., length) of these immersion programs? How do these characteristics differ between CONUS and OCONUS types of immersion programs?

Main Findings

Most SOF operators (88%) reported never having participated in immersion training. SOF leaders also indicated infrequent availability of immersion opportunities for SOF operators in their units. SOF operators who participated in immersion indicated that OCONUS was the most frequently provided type of immersion training. OCONUS, or Live Environment Training (LET), takes place in a country where the target language is the primary language, while CONUS immersion, or iso-immersion, is conducted in an isolated environment in the United States. SOF operators reported that their OCONUS immersion programs were four weeks or longer, while typical CONUS immersion training lasted a week or less. The descriptions of OCONUS immersion programs are consistent with current USSOCOM policy on this type of immersion, as training is recommended to last a minimum of 28 training days (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009). USSOCOM's Manual on SOF language programs does not recommend a certain length of training for CONUS immersion programs.

The percentage of time using the target language in daily interactions was significantly and positively related to language proficiency (Freed et al., 2004) and, therefore, is an important factor to investigate. Percentage of time using the target language in the OCONUS environment was significantly longer than that reported in the CONUS training environment, with most OCONUS participants reporting target language usage 70% of the time. Most CONUS immersion participants described less use (around 50% of the time).

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[2] When referring to the SOF community, this report focuses only on the SOF operators and unit leaders who participated in the survey and responded to these specific items. Please see Appendix B (Methodology) and the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003) for more information about survey respondents.

Detailed Findings

Participation in Immersion

Overall, only a small number of SOF operators (12%, *n* = 140) reported having participated in immersion training (Table 1, p. 9). Similarly, only 15% (*n* = 131) of SOF leaders reported their units provide immersion training and were able to comment on it (Table 2, p. 9). Both SOF operators and leaders reported a similar percentage of participation in CONUS and OCONUS immersion types (Tables 3-4, p. 10).

Table 1. SOF operators who received immersion training

	Received Immersion Training		
Group	***n***	**Yes**	**No**
All Operators	1,145	12%	88%
USASOC	825	12%	88%
CA	163	9%	91%
PSYOP	135	21%	79%
SF	517	11%	89%
Other SOF Organizations	320	13%	87%
MI Linguists	66	30%	70%

Note. The subcategories under the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) represent the different Army SOF types: CA = Civil Affairs, PSYOP = Psychological Operations and SF = Special Forces.
Other SOF Organizations = Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), USSOCOM Head Quarters (HQ), Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM or WARCOM), Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), Joint Special Operations Command/Theater Special Operations Command (JSOC/TSOC), Deployed Special Operations Unit, and those that specified "other" when asked about their current assignment. Other SOF Organizations were combined due to small sample sizes.

Table 2. SOF leaders whose units received immersion training

	Unit Received Immersion Training				
Group	***n***	**Yes, can comment**	**Yes, cannot comment**	**No**	**Do not know or N/A**
Overall Unit Leaders	864	15%	34%	29%	23%
USASOC	523	19%	37%	24%	20%
CA	70	23%	43%	20%	14%
PSYOP	103	42%	53%	2%	3%
SF	271	11%	32%	31%	26%
Other SOF Organizations	341	10%	29%	33%	28%
CLPM/Lang. Office	29	45%	31%	10%	14%

Note. CLPM = Command Language Program Manager and Lang. Office = Language Office Personnel; these categories were combined because of small sample sizes (see Appendix B: Methodology). Other SOF Organizations = AFSOC, MARSOC, WARCOM, JSOC/TSOC, Deployed Special Operations Unit, and those that specified "other" when asked about their current assignment. Other SOF Organizations were combined due to small sample sizes.

Table 3. SOF operator immersion training type

		Immersion Training Received		
Immersion type	**n**	**Yes**		**No**
CONUS	64	46%		54%
OCONUS	76	54%		46%

Table 4. SOF leader immersion type availability

		Type of Immersion Training		
Group	**n**	**OCONUS**	**CONUS**	**Both**
Overall Unit Leaders	131	43%	5%	53%
USASOC	98	42%	3%	55%
CA	16	69%	0%	31%
PSYOP	43	21%	2%	77%
SF	30	53%	7%	40%
Other SOF Organizations	33	45%	9%	45%
CLPM/Lang. Office	13	54%	0%	46%

Note. Other SOF Organizations = AFSOC, MARSOC, WARCOM, JSOC/TSOC, Deployed Special Operations Unit, and those who specified "other" when asked about their current assignment. Other SOF Organizations were combined due to small sample sizes.

Frequency of Immersion

SOF leaders reported how often operators in their unit received immersion training. Both CONUS and OCONUS immersion opportunities occurred infrequently (Figure 1, p. 11). More specific CONUS findings include:

- Most SOF leaders reported that operators in their unit were *seldom* (43%, *n* = 32) or *sometimes* (38%, *n* = 28) sent on CONUS immersion training.
- Only a small number of SOF leaders reported that operators are sent on CONUS immersion training *often* (8%, *n* = 6), and no SOF leaders reported that operators participate in CONUS immersion *very often*.

Findings were similar for OCONUS immersion training:

- Most SOF leaders reported that operators in their unit *seldom* (54%, *n* = 40) or *sometimes* (34%, *n* = 68) had OCONUS immersion opportunities.
- Only a small proportion of SOF leaders said that operators are sent on OCONUS immersion *often* (6%, *n* = 8), and no SOF leaders indicated that operators have OCONUS immersion *very often*.

Despite the low frequency of immersion participation, most SOF leaders said that some type of immersion opportunity was available. Only 11% (*n* = 8) reported that SOF operators *never* have CONUS immersion opportunities and a similarly low percentage (6%; *n* = 8) indicated that SOF operators *never* have OCONUS immersion opportunities.

Figure 1. Frequency of immersion by immersion type
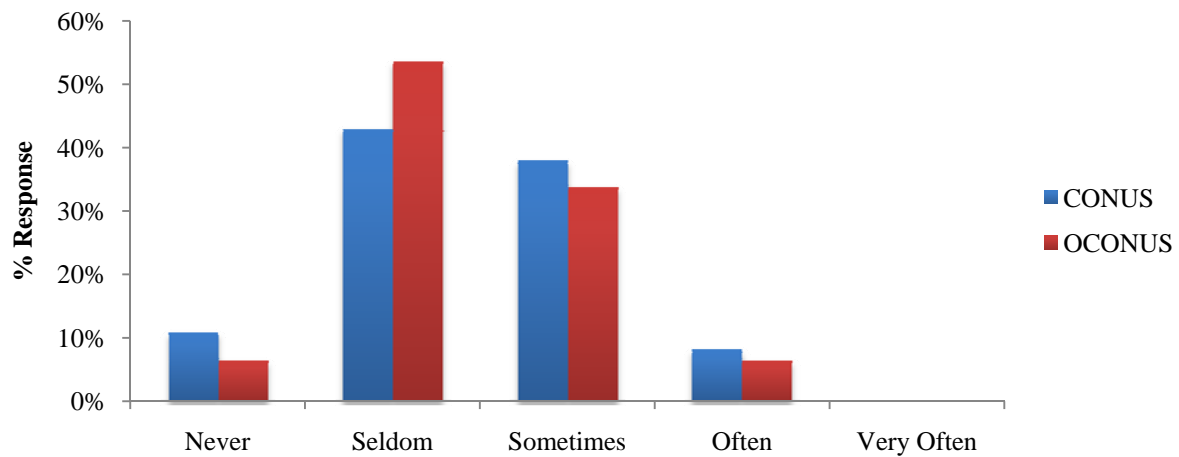
Note. See Appendix C for means and frequencies.

Length of Immersion Programs

Generally, OCONUS programs lasted significantly longer than CONUS programs (Figure 2, p. 11). Most SOF operators who participated in CONUS programs indicated that their training lasted for one week or less (48%, $n = 31$). In contrast, most SOF operators who had OCONUS immersion said that their training lasted for more than four weeks (41%, $n = 31$). This is consistent with USSOCOM language policy that states OCONUS immersion training should be a minimum of 28 days long (USSOCOM M 350-8, 2009). USSOCOM's Manual on SOF language programs does not recommend a certain length of training for CONUS immersion programs, therefore, programs may be dependent on a number of factors including location, language, and current SOF unit.

Figure 2. Duration of immersion by immersion type
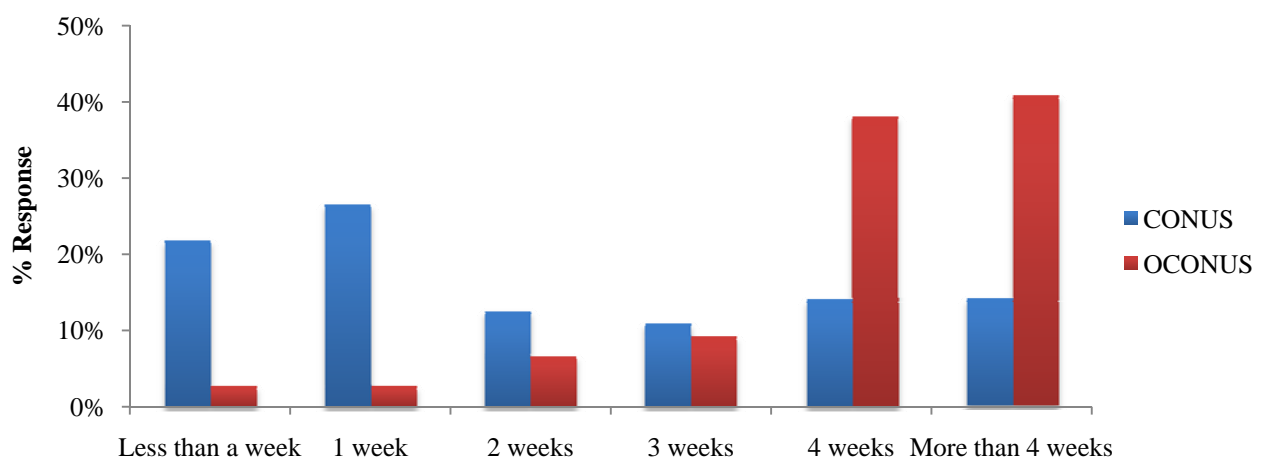
Note. See Appendix C for means and frequencies.

When considering Army SOF type, PSYOP operators reported longer immersions than CA (Table 5, p. 12). No differences were found between SOF operators in SF compared to CA or PSYOP.

Table 5. SOF operator duration of immersion by Army SOF type and Other SOF Organizations

			Length of Immersion Training					
Group	**n**	Mean	Less than 1 week	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	More than 4 weeks
All Operators	140	4.14	11%	14%	9%	10%	27%	29%
USASOC	100	4.09	14%	15%	6%	7%	29%	29%
CA	15	3.47[a]	20%	27%	7%	0%	27%	20%
PSYOP	28	4.93[b]	7%	0%	4%	11%	39%	39%
SF	57	3.94[ab]	16%	19%	7%	7%	25%	26%
Other SOF Organizations	40	4.25	5%	10%	18%	18%	22%	28%
MI Linguists	19	4.00	5%	21%	16%	11%	21%	26%

Note. Army SOF types (i.e., CA, PSYOP, SF) sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different lengths of immersion training. Army SOF types NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different lengths of immersion training. Please refer to the mean to determine which Army SOF type provided longer or shorter immersion training length. Other SOF Organizations = AFSOC, MARSOC, WARCOM, JSOC/TSOC, Deployed Special Operations Unit, and those that specified "other" when asked about their current assignment. Other SOF Organizations were combined due to small sample sizes. When interpreting means scale ranged from 1-6: 1= *Less than a week*, 2 = *one week*, 3 = *two weeks*, 4 = *three weeks*, 5 = *four weeks*, 6 = *more than four weeks*.

Location and Language Used in Immersion Programs

SOF operators were asked where their OCONUS or CONUS immersion took place. Most responses were cities, countries, or universities. From OCONUS responses, the dominate language of the area was inferred and used to provide an idea of the different languages that are studied during immersion experiences (e.g., response of "Germany" would be coded as "German"). According to results, SOF operator immersion experiences primarily took place in Arabic (*n* = 21) and Spanish speaking (*n* = 13) countries (Table 6, p. 12 and Figure 3, p. 13).

Table 6. Language used in immersion program

Language	**n**
OCONUS	62
Arabic	21
Spanish	13
French	8
Russian	5
Korean	4
Thai	4
Ukrainian	3
German	2
Chinese-Mandarin	1
Malay (Bahasa Melayu)	1
CONUS	44

Note. OCONUS language categories were determined via the country where SOF operators reported their immersion experience occurred (e.g., response of "France" would be coded as "French").

Figure 3. Locations of OCONUS training
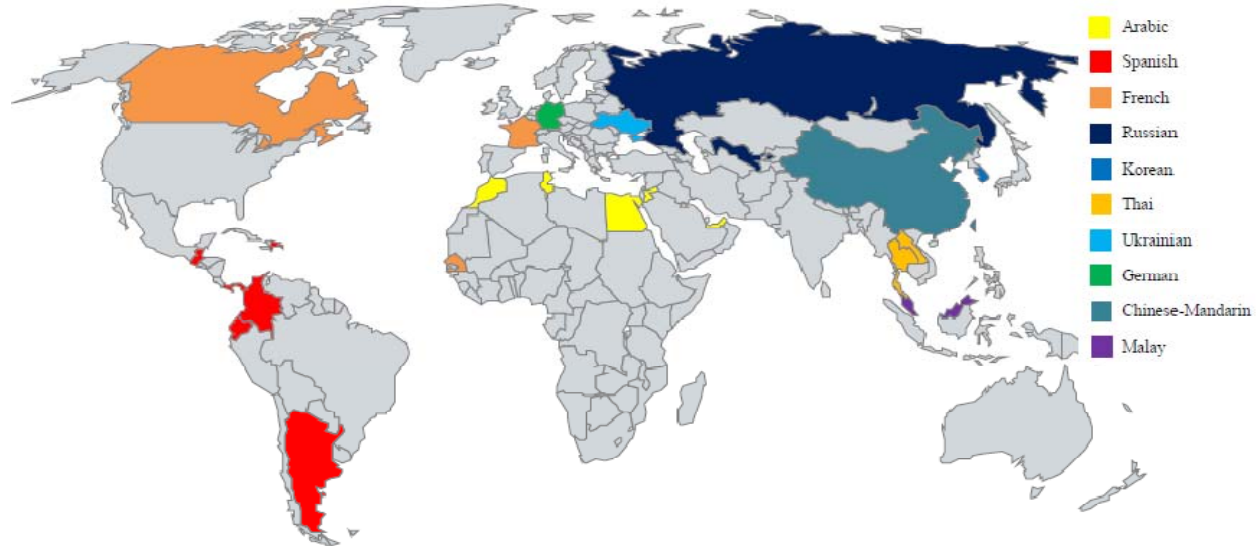
Interaction Time Using the Target Language during Immersion

Most SOF operators reported interacting in the target language more than 50% of the time during immersion training (Figure 4, p. 13). Research shows that the more time spent using the target language relates to increased proficiency (Freed et al., 2004). A focus group member related:

> "*the more interaction you have and spent every day out walking around, finding people, making friends, shopping, going to the markets, trying to get into a mosque…the next thing you know you have picked up on everything…but until you sit there and do it you're not going to learn it, no matter how many times you sit in DLI.*"

> SOF Operator, WARCOM

Figure 4. Interaction time in the target language
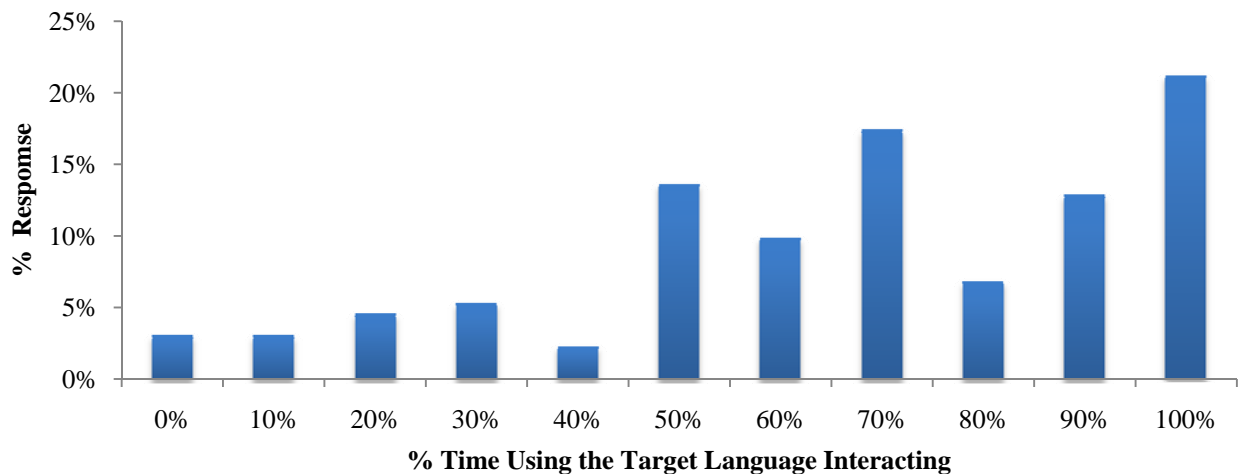
Differences in language use interaction times were also found between the following groups:

- OCONUS immersion participants reported more interaction time than those who participated in CONUS immersion programs (Figure 5, p. 14).
- Those immersed in Spanish-speaking countries reported more interaction time in the target language than those immersed in Arabic-speaking countries (Figure 6, p. 14).[3]
- Interaction time differed by Army SOF type, with CA reporting less interaction time than SF (Figure 7, p. 14). PSYOP was not found to be different than CA or SF groups.

Figure 5. Average interaction time in the target language by immersion type
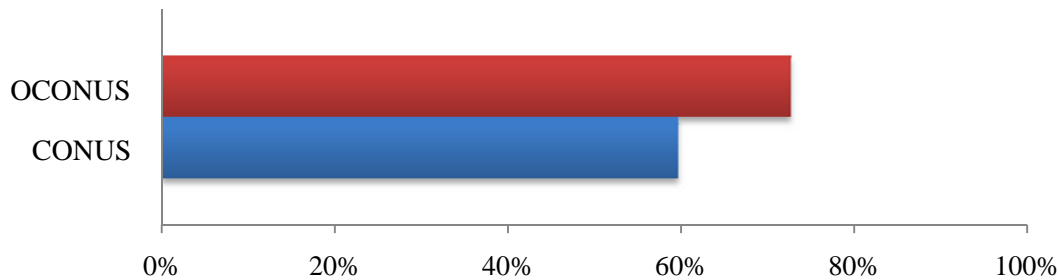
Note. Sample sizes, means, and frequencies are presented in Appendix C.

Figure 6. Average interaction time in the target language by OCONUS language
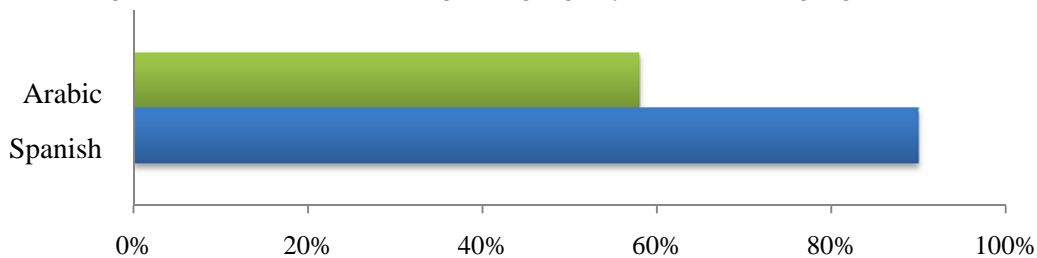
Note. Arabic and Spanish-speaking country participants were statistically different. Other languages, sample sizes, means, and frequencies are presented in Appendix C.

Figure 7. Average interaction time in the target language by Army SOF type
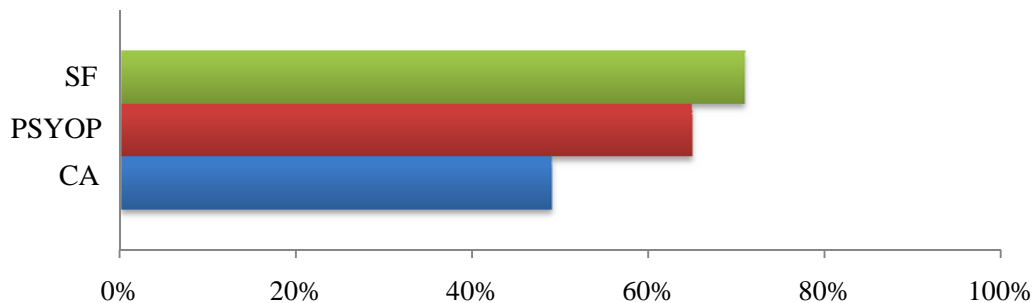
Note. Sample sizes, means, and frequencies are presented in Appendix C.

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[3] Other languages were compared, however, only Arabic and Spanish-speaking countries were found to be statistically different. The means, frequencies, and sample sizes of the other languages are presented in Appendix C.

SECTION III: EFFECTIVENESS OF IMMERSION TRAINING

This section examines the effectiveness of immersion training in the SOF community using two methods: 1) directly asking SOF operators and leaders about immersion training effectiveness, and 2) comparing the language-related outcomes of those who reported participating in immersion training to those who reported never having participated in immersion training. The various language-related outcomes analyzed include perceived foreign language capability compared to others on the team, motivation to continue learning language, and perceived confidence in language skills. This section also provides the SOF leader perspective on whether or not immersion training should be provided to their units. A comparison with the *2004 Special Operations Forces Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* (2004 Language Needs Assessment or LNA; Technical Report #20040605) results are provided as well.

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:
- Do SOF operators and leaders perceive immersion as an effective option for language training?
- Is immersion training considered useful?
- Do SOF operators and leaders perceive proficiency changed as a result of immersion?
- Do SOF leaders consider immersion training effective enough to be provided to their units?
- Are SOF operators who received immersion training more language capable (i.e., higher levels of proficiency, motivation, and confidence) than those who did not?

Main Findings

SOF operators and leaders agreed that immersion training is an effective and useful method of language learning. Specifically, SOF operators' perceived their language proficiency to increase after the receipt of immersion training. Compared to SOF operators who did not receive immersion training, those who did receive immersion training rated themselves as having higher language proficiency, more motivation to learn the language, and higher confidence in their ability to use the language on missions.

SOF leaders were also asked about whether or not immersion should be provided to their unit. Consistent with their beliefs about immersion training being an effective language learning method, almost all SOF leaders suggested units should be provided immersion opportunities.

Detailed Findings

Immersion Effectiveness

SOF operators who reported receiving immersion training described it as an effective method for learning language (Figure 8, p. 16). SOF leaders described immersion training for their unit as less effective than these operators, with a higher proportion of SOF operators (34%, $n = 139$) than SOF leaders (18%, $n =$

35) describing immersion as *very effective*. When given the opportunity to provide feedback, both SOF operators and leaders described immersion training as effective.

> *"…the most effective type of training available*"
> SOF Operator, USSOCOM HQ

> "*Immersion training is one of the best tools to really learning a language.*"
> SOF Leader, TSOC

Figure 8. SOF operator and unit leader perceptions of immersion effectiveness
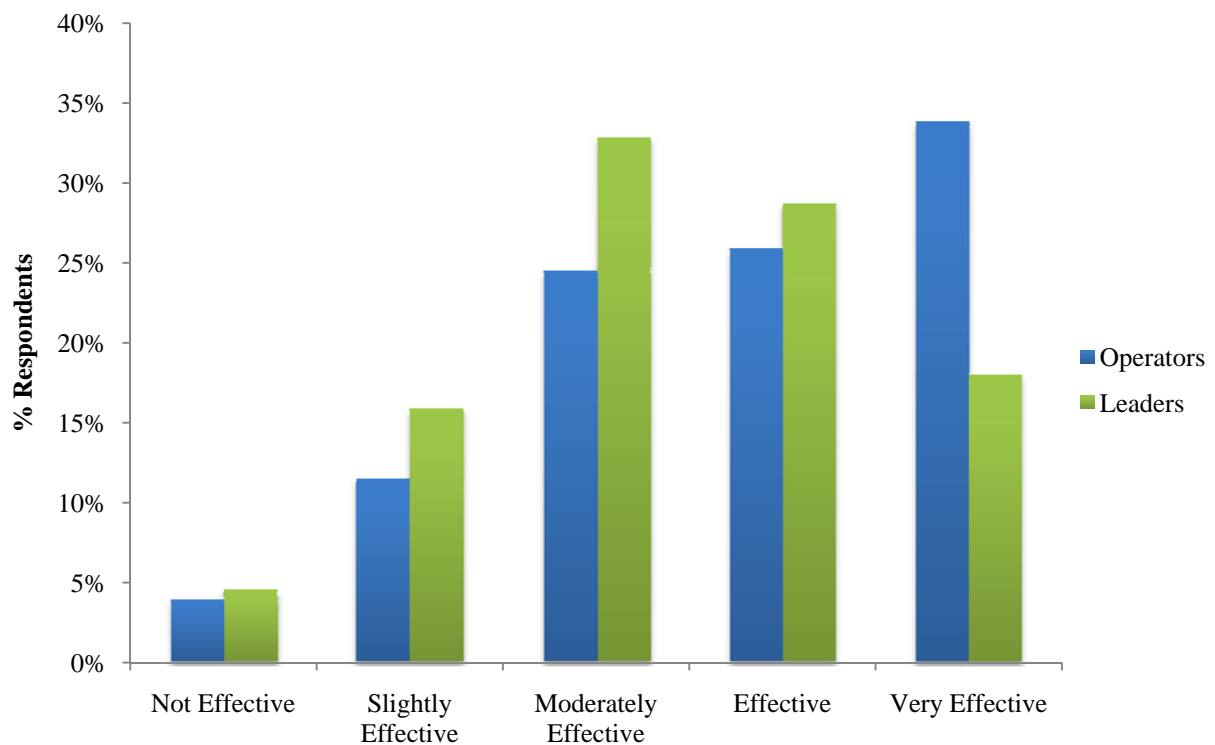
Note. This figure presents only SOF operators and leaders who reported that they (or their unit) received immersion training. See Appendix D for means, sample sizes and frequencies.

Focus group participants frequently mentioned immersion training effectiveness.

> "*If you're going to learn the language, immersion training is the best. If you could just be surrounded by the language, I think you'll pick it up. I mean, I've traveled to many countries…and just being around locals, going to local markets, you pick up things and you learn the basics.*"

> SOF Operator, AFSOC

Other comments from SOF operators in the focus groups related to effective immersion experiences, including suggestions for using immersion following classroom training. One SOF operator compared his classroom training and immersion experience.

> "*I went through DLI for Arabic and within a year I got the unheard-of opportunity to go live...in Yemen for six weeks. I learned more in six weeks than I learned in 15 months at DLI*"

> SOF Operator, 10th SFG

Immersion Usefulness

SOF operators were asked whether or not they perceived immersion training to be useful. Results indicated that most SOF operators (74%, $n = 101$) rated immersion training between *moderately useful* and *very useful* for their missions (Figure 9, p. 17).

Figure 9. SOF operators' perceived usefulness of immersion training
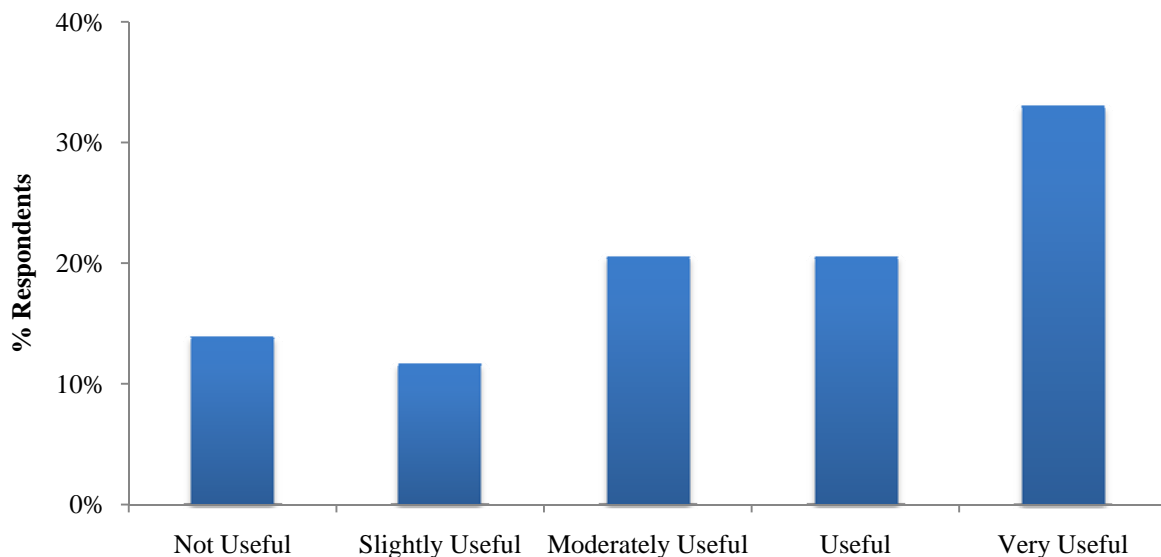
Note. This figure presents only SOF operators who reported that they received immersion training. See Appendix D for means, sample sizes and frequencies.

Perceived Increase in Proficiency

SOF operators and leaders were asked whether or not they perceived their (or their unit's) proficiency to increase as a result to their immersion training. Both SOF operators and leaders perceived a language proficiency increase (Figure 10, p. 18).

Figure 10. Perceived increase in proficiency for SOF operators and leaders
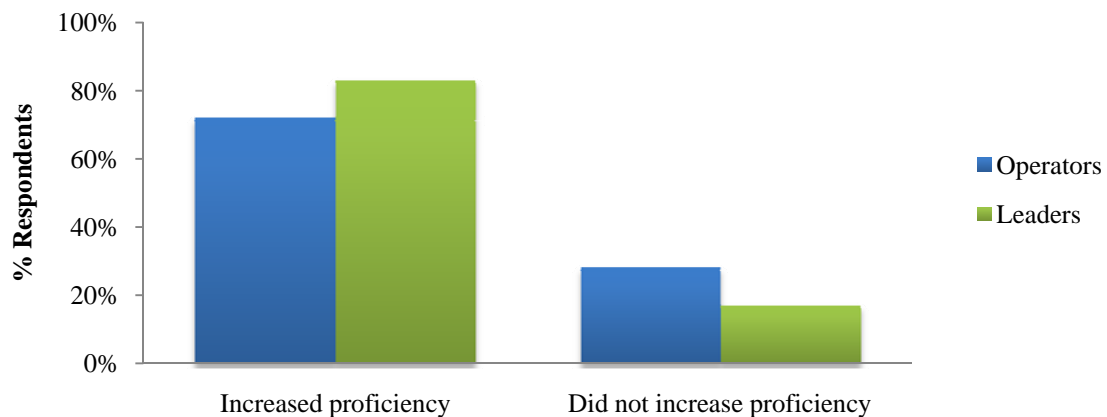
Note. This figure presents only SOF operators and leaders who reported that they (or their unit) received immersion training. See Appendix D for means, sample sizes and frequencies.

SOF Leader Perceptions on Whether or Not to Provide Immersion

Consistent with their beliefs about immersion effectiveness, almost all SOF leaders suggested units *should* be provided with immersion opportunities, with most suggesting both OCONUS and CONUS (66%; Figure 11, p. 18). An additional 21% preferred OCONUS and 7% preferred CONUS, while the remaining 6% indicated immersion should *not* be provided to their unit's personnel. SOF leaders who responded they did not believe immersion should be provided to their units were asked a follow up open-ended item regarding why immersion should not be provided. These responses are addressed in Section V (p. 31) with the other open-ended items.

Figure 11. Providing immersion opportunities for units
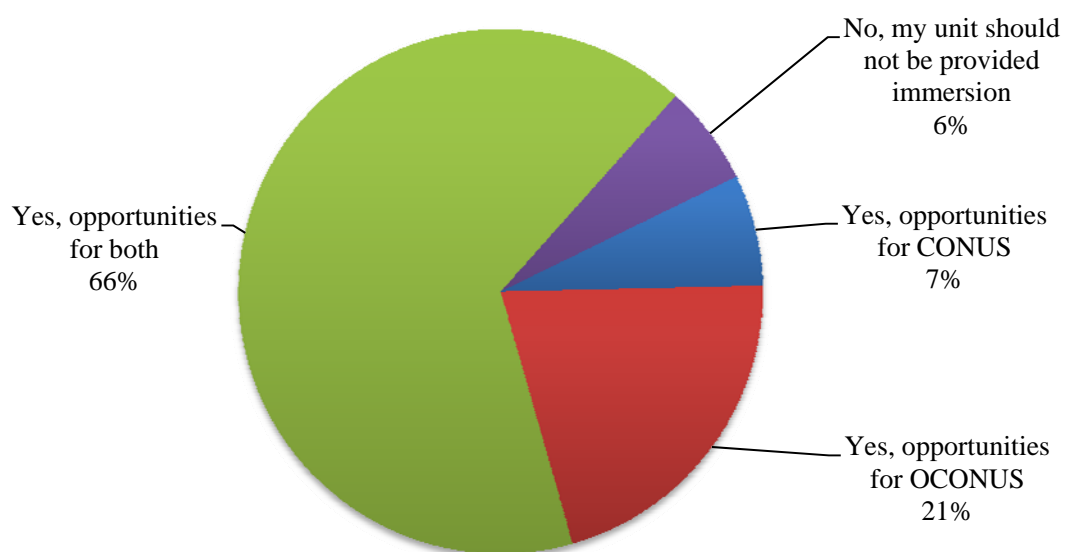
SOF Operators Who Received versus Did Not Receive Immersion Training

To investigate the impact of immersion training, SOF operators who reported receiving immersion training were compared to SOF operators who reported not receiving immersion training on a variety of language outcomes, including proficiency, motivation to learn the language, and confidence in using the language (Figure 12, p. 19, Figure 13, p. 20, and Appendix D for statistics). Those who reported receiving immersion training had higher:

- Proficiency compared to other members of the team.
- Motivation to continue to develop language skills and learn more about the culture.
- Confidence in using language skills on mission tasks (i.e., using language to build rapport with local personnel, conduct business negotiations, train others, use language to control hostile situations, use language to persuade people to provide information, and use language for greetings).
- Confidence in their ability to speak, read, or listen in the target language.

Differences in self-rated reading, listening, and speaking proficiency were also evaluated. While proficiency was rated slightly higher for SOF operators who reported receiving immersion training, there were no statistically significant differences (See Appendix D for mean values).

Figure 12. SOF operator motivation, proficiency, and usefulness perceptions by immersion training
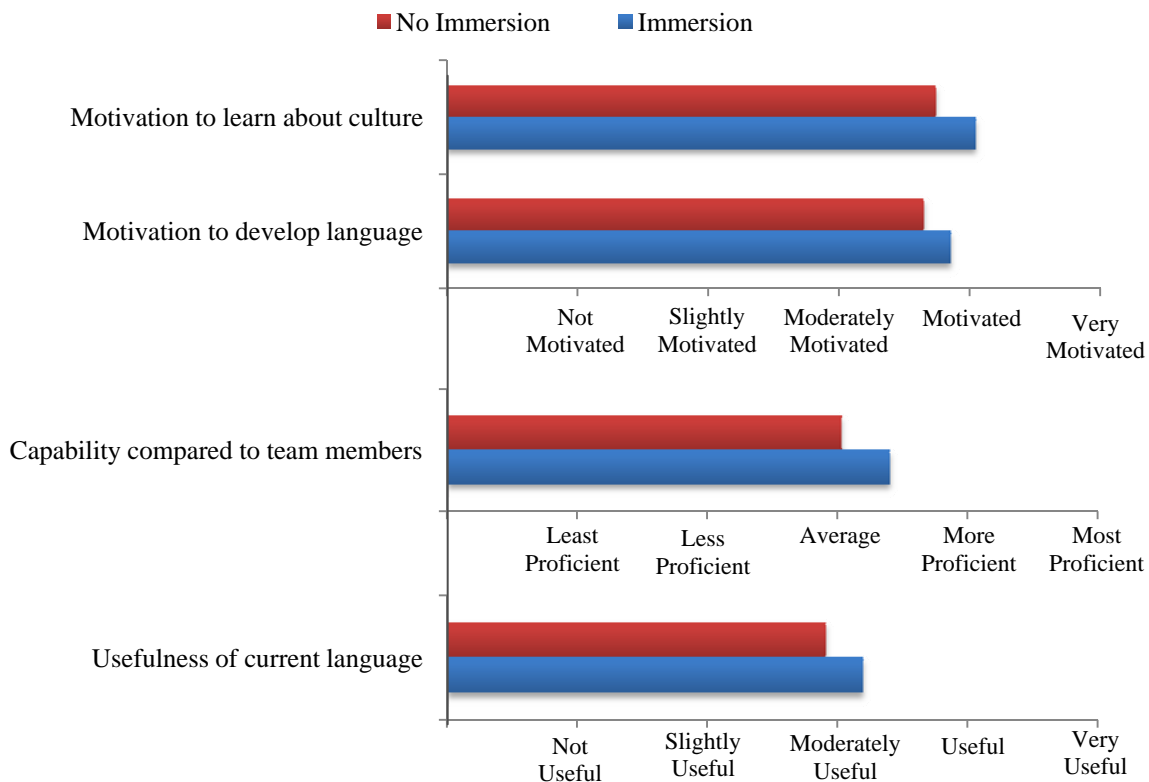
Note. Means presented are based on scales from 1 to 5. All means presented are statistically different, with SOF operators who received immersion indicating higher ratings. For statistical values, see Appendix D.

Figure 13. Confidence in using target language (TL) by immersion training
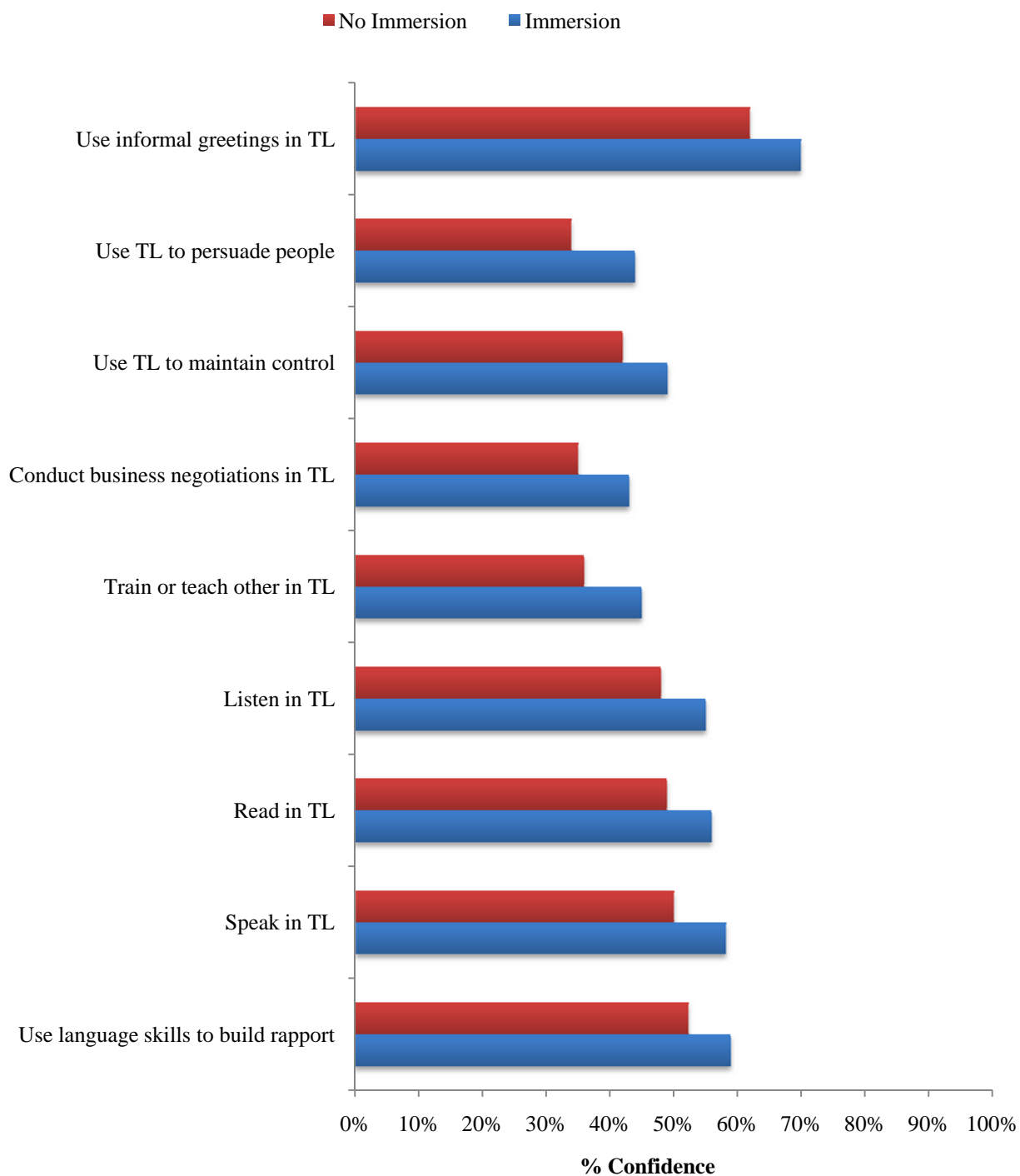
Note. Means presented are based on scales that range from *1 = 0%* to *11 = 100%*. All means presented are statistically different, with SOF operators who received immersion indicating higher confidence. For mean values, see Appendix D.

Comparison to 2004 Survey Results

Differences in the effectiveness of CONUS and OCONUS immersion found in this study were similar to those found in *2004 Special Operations Forces Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* (2004 Language Needs Assessment or LNA; Technical Report #20040605). SOF operators from the 2004 survey who received OCONUS immersion training indicated a more significant language proficiency increase as a result of the immersion experience than SOF operators who reported receiving CONUS immersion training. SOF leaders from the 2004 survey also showed a similar preference for OCONUS immersion training, disagreeing that CONUS immersion was equally as effective as OCONUS immersion.

SECTION IV: DIFFERENCES IN IMMERSION PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

This section examines two immersion training design choices that potentially impact program effectiveness: the location of the immersion program (OCONUS v. CONUS) and the length of immersion training. Both of these factors can influence the percentage of time spent interacting in the target language and, therefore, are important to language outcomes such as language proficiency. For example, research demonstrates that a greater amount of interaction in the target language results in higher language proficiency (Freed et al., 2004).

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:
- How is the effectiveness of immersion training affected by location?
- How is the effectiveness of immersion training affected by the duration of the immersion?

Main Findings

Both the location (i.e., CONUS vs. OCONUS) and duration of experienced immersion training were found to impact the program's perceived effectiveness and other language-related outcomes. Those SOF operators and leaders who indicated participation (or their unit's participation) in OCONUS immersion training experienced more favorable language-related outcomes than those that participated in CONUS immersion training. Several significant differences were found among other language-related outcomes:
- OCONUS participants rated immersion training as more effective than CONUS participants.
- OCONUS participants rated as more useful than CONUS participants.
- OCONUS participants indicated more time interacting in the target language than CONUS participants, which research has demonstrated to be linked to greater proficiency (Freed et al. 2004).
- OCONUS participants indicated higher confidence in general language ability and specific language-related mission tasks than CONUS participants.
- OCONUS participants indicated more interest and motivation to continue language training than CONUS participants.
- OCONUS participants indicated higher self-rated proficiency in listening, reading and speaking than CONUS participants.
- OCONUS participants indicated less interpreter use than CONUS participants.

The duration of immersion training was also found to influence the effectiveness and usefulness for OCONUS immersion participants. Specifically, SOF operators who reported receiving longer OCONUS immersion training indicated greater effectiveness and usefulness of the training than SOF operators who reported shorter OCONUS immersion experiences.

Detailed Findings

Location of training

SOF operators and leaders both indicated that OCONUS immersion was more effective than CONUS immersion (Figure 14 and Figure 15, p. 23). CONUS immersion training was most often rated as

moderately effective by both SOF operators and leaders, while OCONUS immersion training was most often rated *very effective* by SOF operators and *effective* by SOF leaders. SOF operators perceived greater effectiveness of OCONUS (53% = *very effective*) than leaders (27% = *very effective*).

Figure 14. Perceived effectiveness by immersion type – SOF Operators
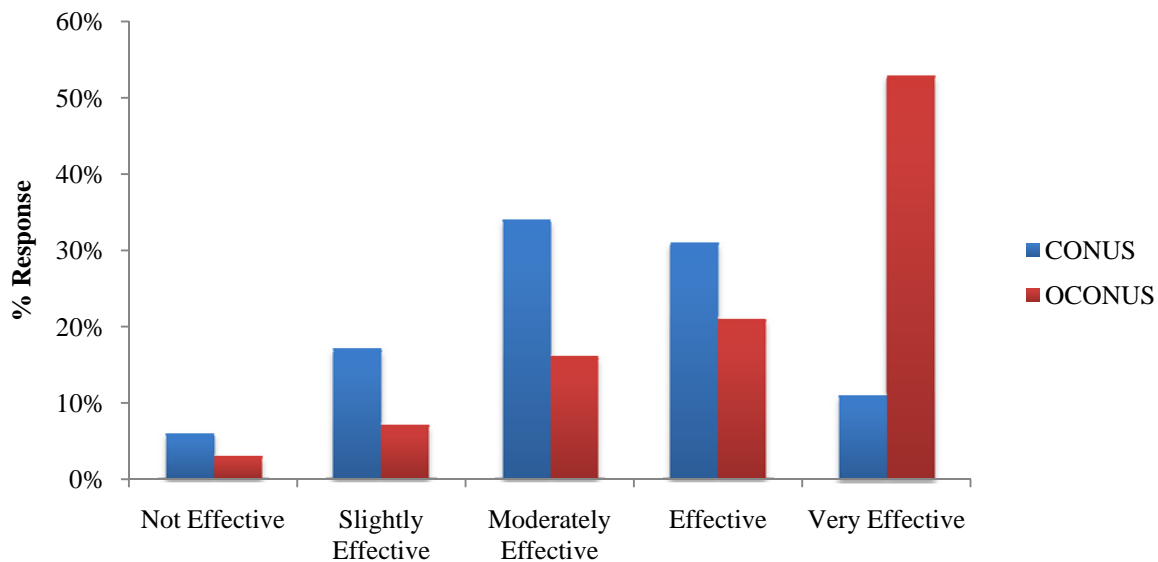
Figure 15. Perceived effectiveness by immersion type – SOF Leaders
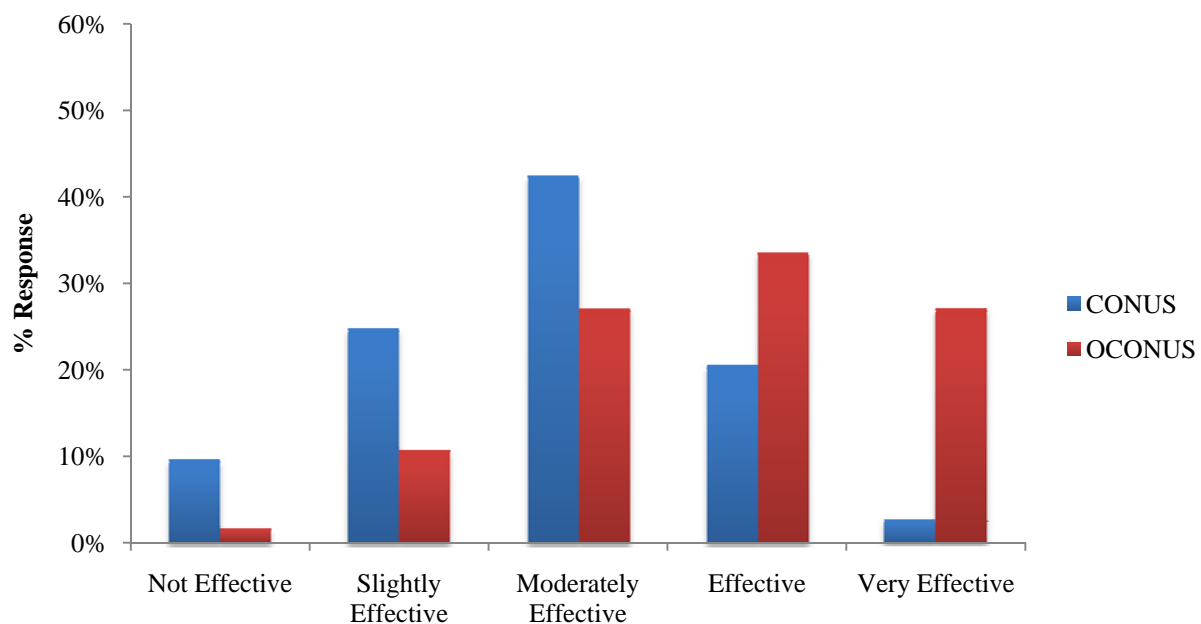
OCONUS training had higher ratings of usefulness than CONUS immersion training when rated by SOF operators (Figure 16, p. 24), with 48% of OCONUS participants indicating training was *very useful* and only 15% of CONUS participants indicating training was *very useful*.

Figure 16. Perceived usefulness of immersion by immersion type – SOF Operators
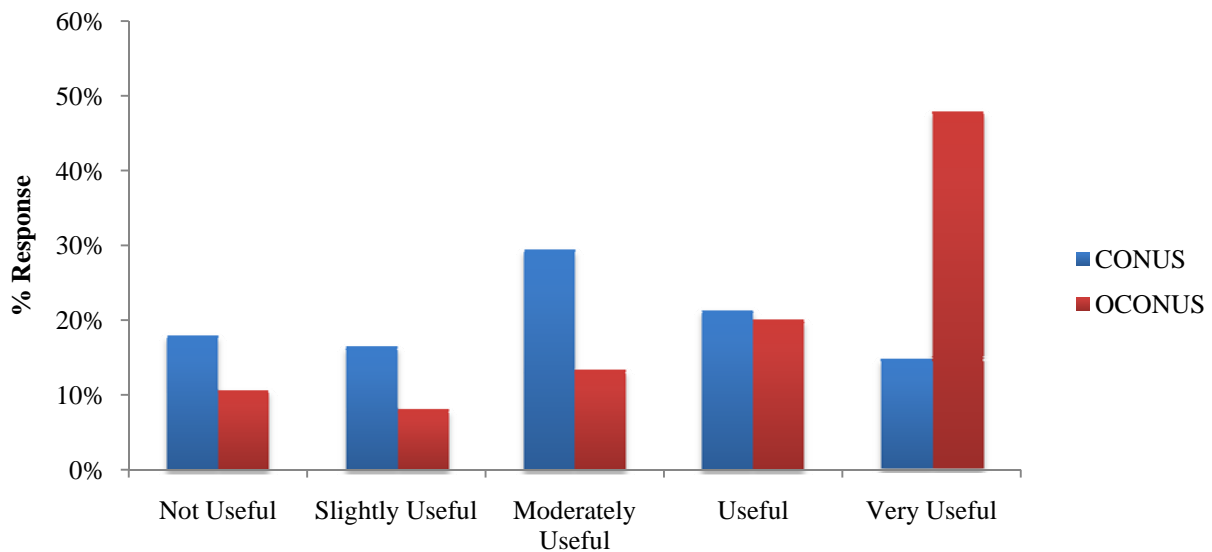
Research shows that a greater amount of interaction time results in higher proficiency (Freed et al., 2004). Most SOF operators who participated in OCONUS immersion training reported using their target language 90– 100% of the time. CONUS immersion participants indicated using the target language less (Figure 17, p. 24).

Figure 17. Interaction time in target language by immersion type – SOF Operators
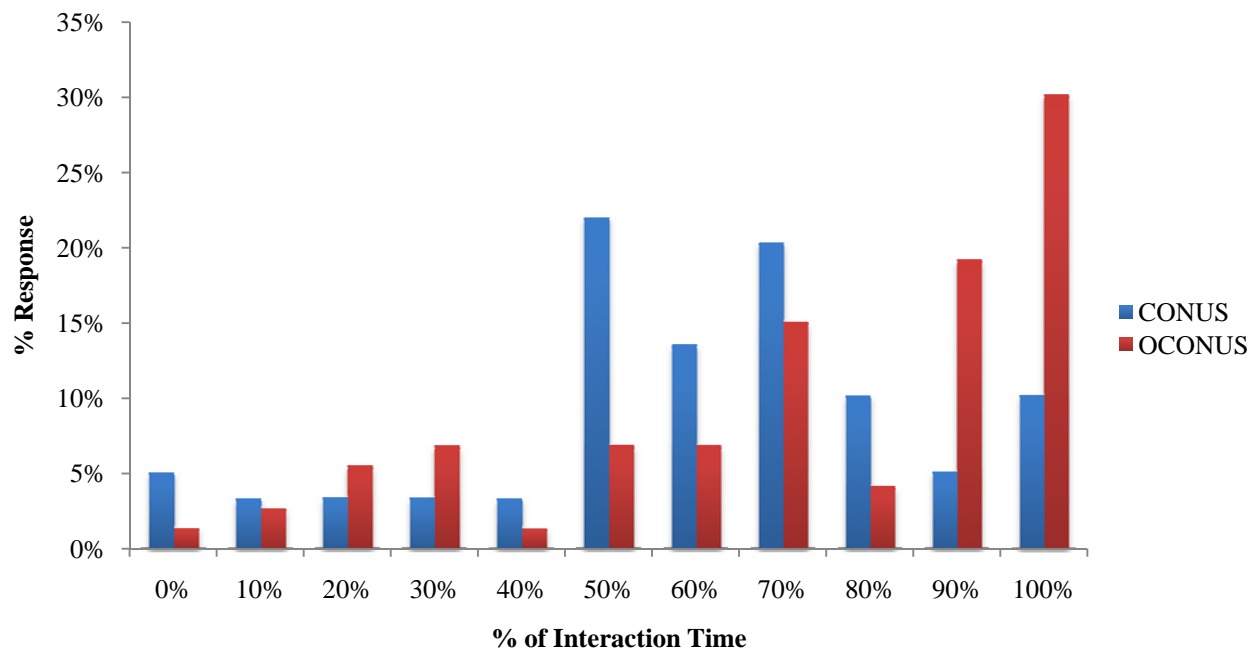
Most SOF operators were at least 50% confident in their ability to use the target language after immersion training (Figure 18, p. 25). Those experiencing OCONUS were more confident in their language capability than SOF operators experiencing CONUS, with 24% of OCONUS participants indicating 100% confidence and none of the CONUS participants indicating 100% confidence. During focus group discussion, one SOF operator described how confidence can be impacted by an immersion experience.

> *"It was realistic, it was confidence-building or confidence-shattering, depending on where you actually were, as opposed to where the teacher said that you were."*

SOF Operator, 1st SFG

*Figure 18. C*onfidence in language ability – SOF Operators
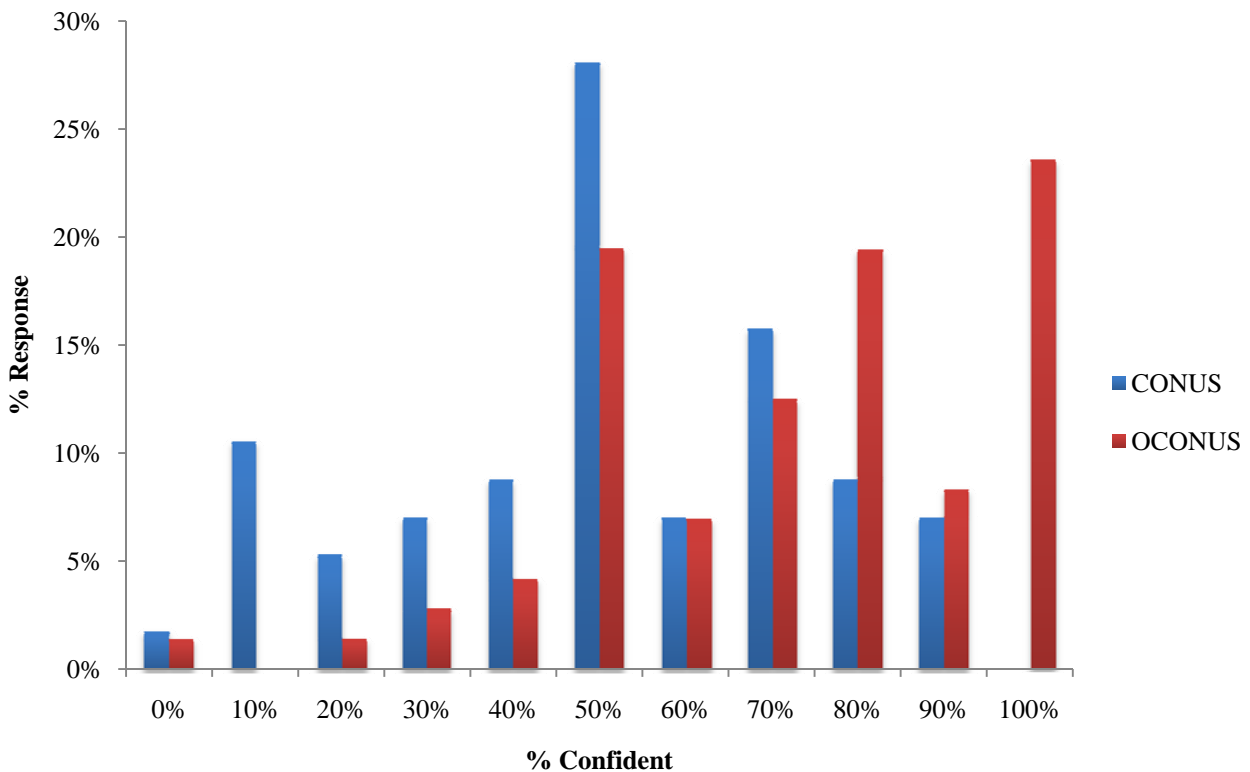
OCONUS and CONUS immersion participants indicated varying degrees of confidence in accomplishing language-related mission tasks (Figure 19, p. 26). Specifically, in comparison to CONUS participants, OCONUS participants reported significantly higher confidence in using the target language to give commands, build rapport, make initial greetings, and speak (in general) in the target language.

Figure 19. Confidence in language specific mission tasks
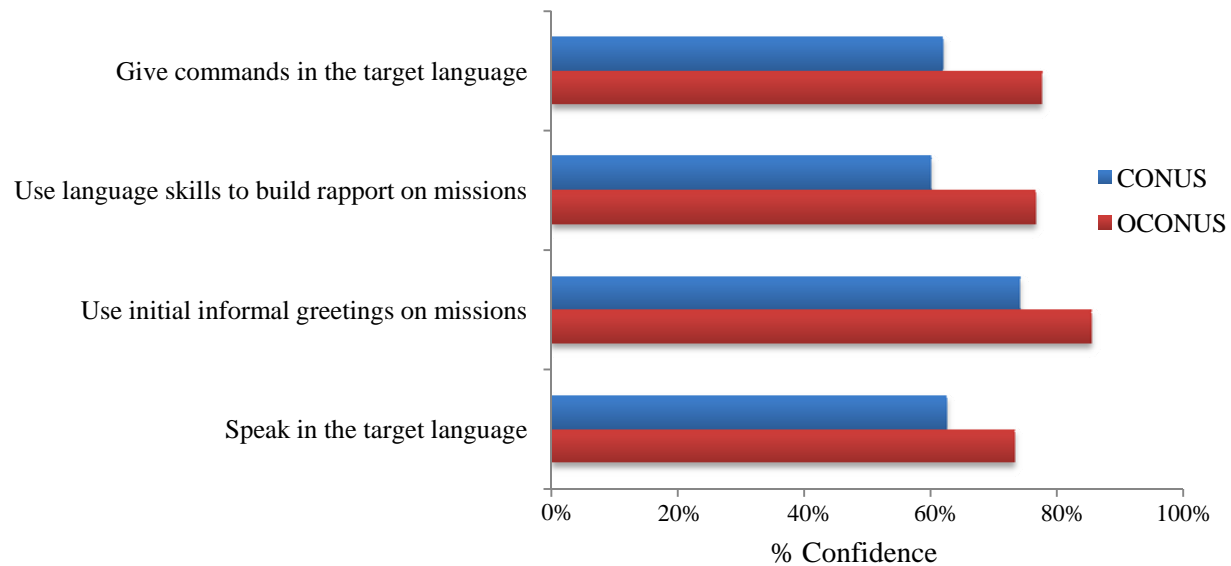
Note. The confidence scale ranged from 1 = *0%* to 11 = *100%*. All mean differences presented are statistically significant, with SOF operators who received OCONUS immersion reporting higher confidence. For mean values, see Appendix E.

The motivation and interest in language training were also rated higher by SOF operators who received OCONUS training than those that received CONUS training (Figure 20, p. 26).

Figure 20. Interest and motivation benefits of OCONUS immersion
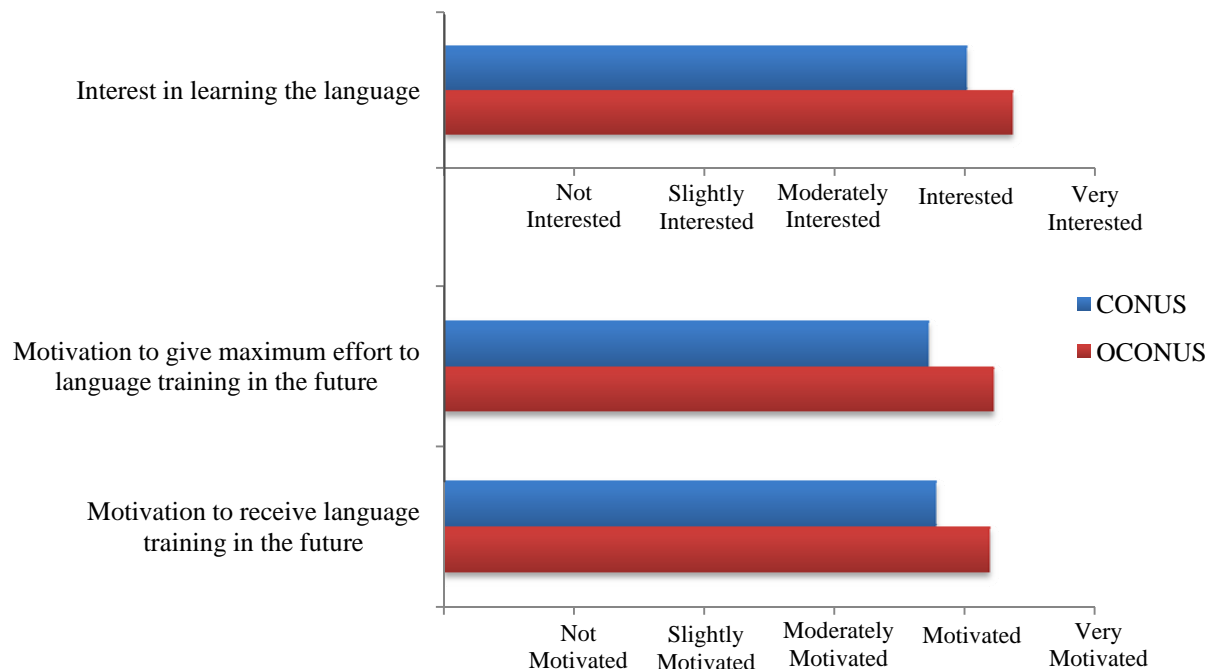
Note. This figure presents the means of each item. The scales ranged from 1 = *Not interested/motivated* to 5 = *Very interested/motivated*. All mean differences presented are statistically significant, with SOF operators who received OCONUS immersion reporting higher interest and motivation. For mean values, see Appendix E.

SOF operators who participated in training OCONUS were significantly *more* likely than SOF operators who participated in CONUS immersion training to report that they had proficiency in the target language when deployed inside their AOR. SOF operators participating in OCONUS immersion were also significantly *less* likely to report using interpreters (Figure 21, p. 27).

Figure 21. Proficiency on deployment and use of interpreters
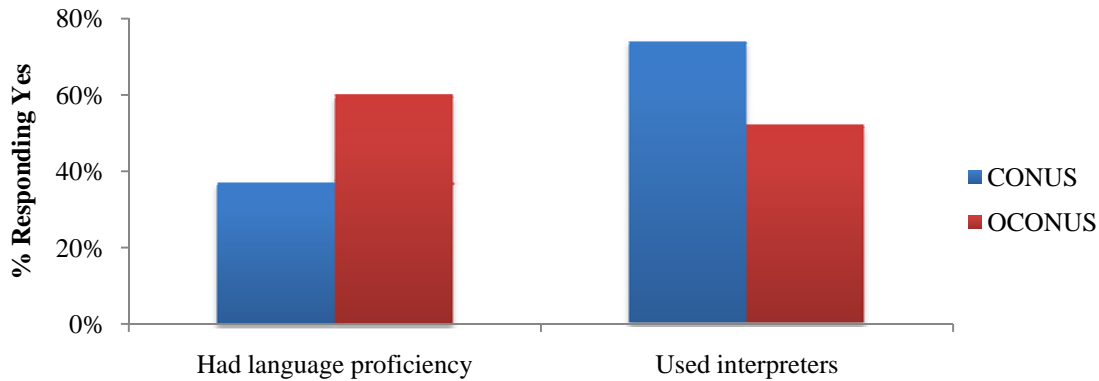
Note. The values presented are for SOF operators who indicated they had language proficiency in the region they were deployed. Differences between CONUS and OCONUS were significantly different.

SOF operators who participated in OCONUS immersion were more likely to indicate a positive proficiency change than those who participated in CONUS immersion (Figure 22, p. 27). SOF leaders similarly perceived a positive change in both CONUS and OCONUS programs.

Figure 22. Perceived change in proficiency
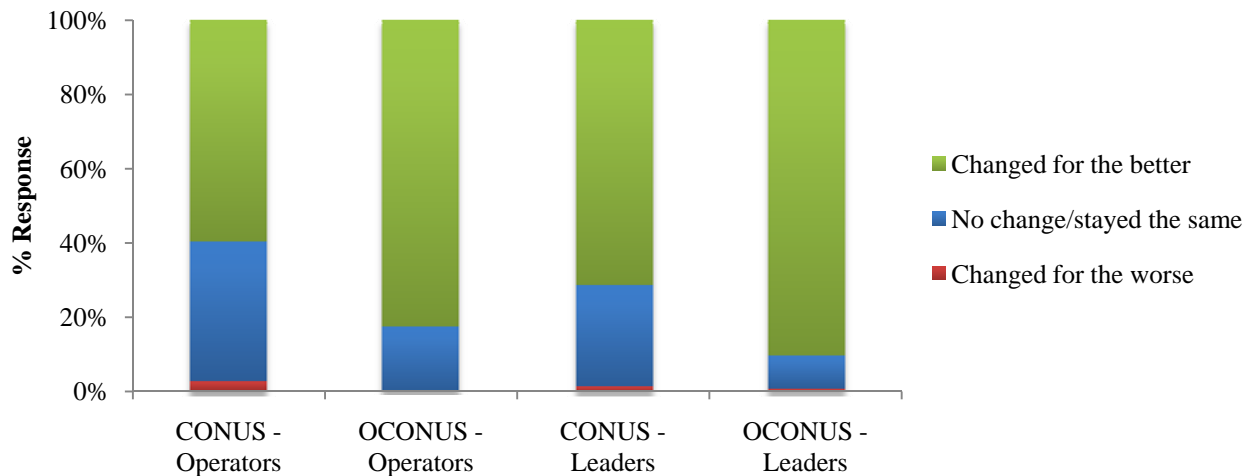
Further, using the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale, SOF operators who participated in this survey rated their language proficiency in listening, reading, and speaking. SOF operators who participated in OCONUS immersion training rated themselves significantly higher in proficiency across all modalities compared to SOF operators who participated in CONUS immersion training (Figure 23, p. 28).

Figure 23. Self-rated proficiency by immersion type
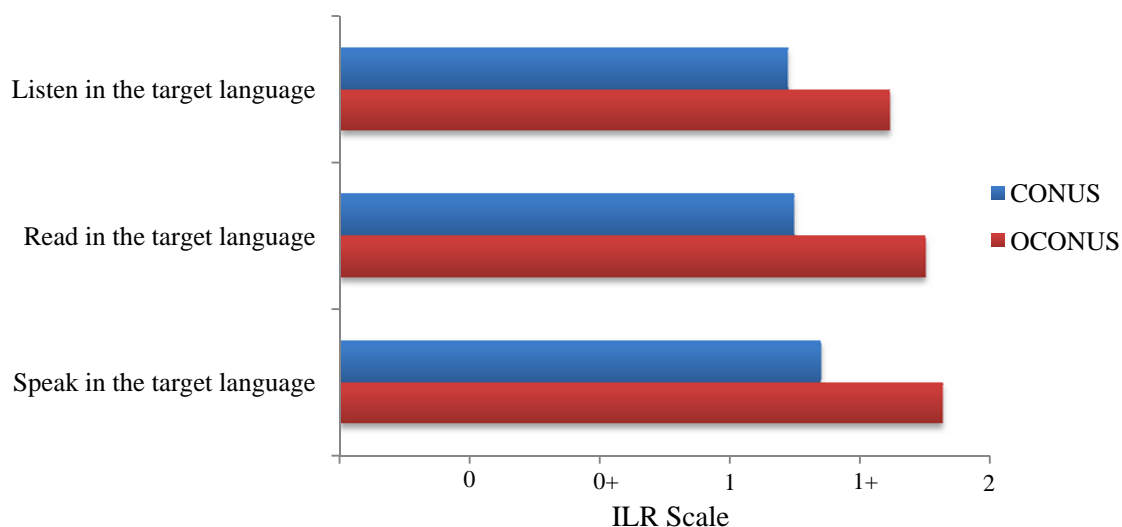
Note. This figure presents the means of each item. All mean differences presented are statistically significant, with SOF operators who received OCONUS immersion reporting higher proficiency. For statistical values see Appendix E.

Duration

Research suggests that the duration of an immersion program can contribute to its effectiveness (Davidson, 2007). The "perfect length" for an immersion program depends on both student individual differences and program characteristics (e.g., Davidson, 2007; Freed et al., 2004). In general, longer immersion programs allow for more opportunities to interact in the target language. In this study, SOF operators who experienced longer OCONUS immersions considered immersion to be slightly more useful (Table 7, p. 28). SOF operators who reported participating in CONUS immersion training, however, did not perceive as much of a difference in usefulness as duration increased (Table 8, p. 29).

Table 7. OCONUS perceived usefulness and duration of training

		Duration of OCONUS Training					
		Less than 1 week	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	More than 4 weeks
Usefulness of Training	Not Useful	0%	50%	25%	14%	7%	10%
	Slightly Useful	0%	0%	0%	0%	17%	3%
	Moderately Useful	50%	50%	0%	29%	14%	6%
	Useful	50%	0%	25%	29%	17%	19%
	Very Useful	0%	0%	50%	29%	45%	61%

Note. The total number (*n*) of SOF operator respondents = 75. The highlighted values are the highest percentages of usefulness within a duration category (e.g., 50% is the highest percentage in the *1 week* training duration category).

Table 8. CONUS perceived usefulness and duration of training

		Duration of CONUS Training					
		Less than 1 week	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	More than 4 weeks
Usefulness of Training	Not Useful	33%	13%	11%	0%	33%	11%
	Slightly Useful	17%	19%	11%	14%	22%	11%
	Moderately Useful	25%	38%	33%	43%	11%	22%
	Useful	17%	25%	33%	14%	11%	33%
	Very Useful	8%	6%	11%	29%	22%	22%

Note. The total number (*n*) of SOF operator respondents = 62. The highlighted values are the highest percentages of usefulness within a duration category (e.g., 38% is the highest percentage in the *1 week* training duration category).

Similarly, SOF operators who reported receiving longer OCONUS immersion training perceived their program to be more effective than SOF operators who reported receiving shorter OCONUS immersion training (Table 9, p. 29). SOF operators who reported participating in CONUS immersion training, however, did not perceive as much of a difference in effectiveness as duration increased (Table 10, p. 30).

Table 9. OCONUS perceived effectiveness and duration of training

		Duration of OCONUS Training					
		Less than 1 week	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	More than 4 weeks
Effectiveness of Training	Not Effective	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Slightly Effective	0%	0%	0%	29%	7%	3%
	Moderately Effective	0%	0%	50%	14%	21%	10%
	Effective	50%	50%	0%	29%	17%	23%
	Very Effective	0%	0%	50%	29%	55%	65%

Note. The total number (*n*) of SOF operator respondents =65. The highlighted values are the highest percentages of effectiveness within a duration category (e.g., 50% is the highest percentage in the *1 week* training duration category).

Table 10. CONUS perceived effectiveness and duration of training

		Duration of CONUS Training					
		Less than 1 week	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	More than 4 weeks
Effectiveness of Training	Not Effective	21%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Slightly Effective	29%	6%	0%	14%	44%	11%
	Moderately Effective	29%	18%	33%	71%	44%	33%
	Effective	14%	59%	44%	14%	11%	33%
	Very Effective	7%	12%	22%	0%	0%	22%

Note. The total number (*n*) of SOF operator respondents =65. The highlighted values are the highest percentages of effectiveness within a duration category (e.g., 59% is the highest percentage in the *1 week* training duration category).

SECTION V: SUGGESTIONS FOR IMMERSION TRAINING

SOF operators provided suggestions regarding how to improve immersion training both on the survey and in focus groups. SOF leaders were also asked to provide feedback on the survey; however, they were first asked whether or not they thought immersion training should be provided in their unit. Those who reported that immersion training should be provided were asked to describe the recommended characteristics for future effective immersion training programs. SOF leaders who reported immersion training should not be offered were asked to explain their reasoning for not endorsing immersion training. Based on comments, themes were developed according to the methodology described in Appendix B. Comment theme definitions and example comments are included in Appendices F and G.

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:
- What recommendations do SOF leaders and operators have regarding immersion programs?
- Why do some SOF leaders think immersion should *not* be provided?

Main Findings

While immersion training was generally described as effective (Section III), many SOF operators and leaders offered suggestions for improvement. The most common suggestion was to have immersion training occur more regularly (i.e., every year, twice a year, etc.). Empirical research suggests that regular language exposure is essential to gaining and maintaining proficiency levels (Davidson, 2007). Other program recommendations from both SOF operators and leaders included: (1) making the duration of the program from one and two months, (2) having minimum selection criteria for participants, (3) having participants complete formal classroom work during immersion, (4) conducting immersion training before deployment, and (5) utilizing OCONUS immersion training.

SOF leaders who said immersion should not be provided most frequently indicated that missions performed by their unit do not require language. High operation tempo (OPTEMPO) and the lack of time for training were also commonly mentioned by SOF leaders as reasons that immersion training should not be provided.

Detailed Findings

SOF Operator Feedback

SOF operators provided different types of recommendations that were organized into the following categories: (1) content/structure changes, (2) preferences, (3) selection criteria, (4) command emphasis, and (5) no changes to the current programs (Figure 25, p. 32). Specific SOF operator suggestions, examples, and frequency tables are provided for each category.

Figure 25. Overall comment theme category frequency – SOF Operators (*n* = 91)
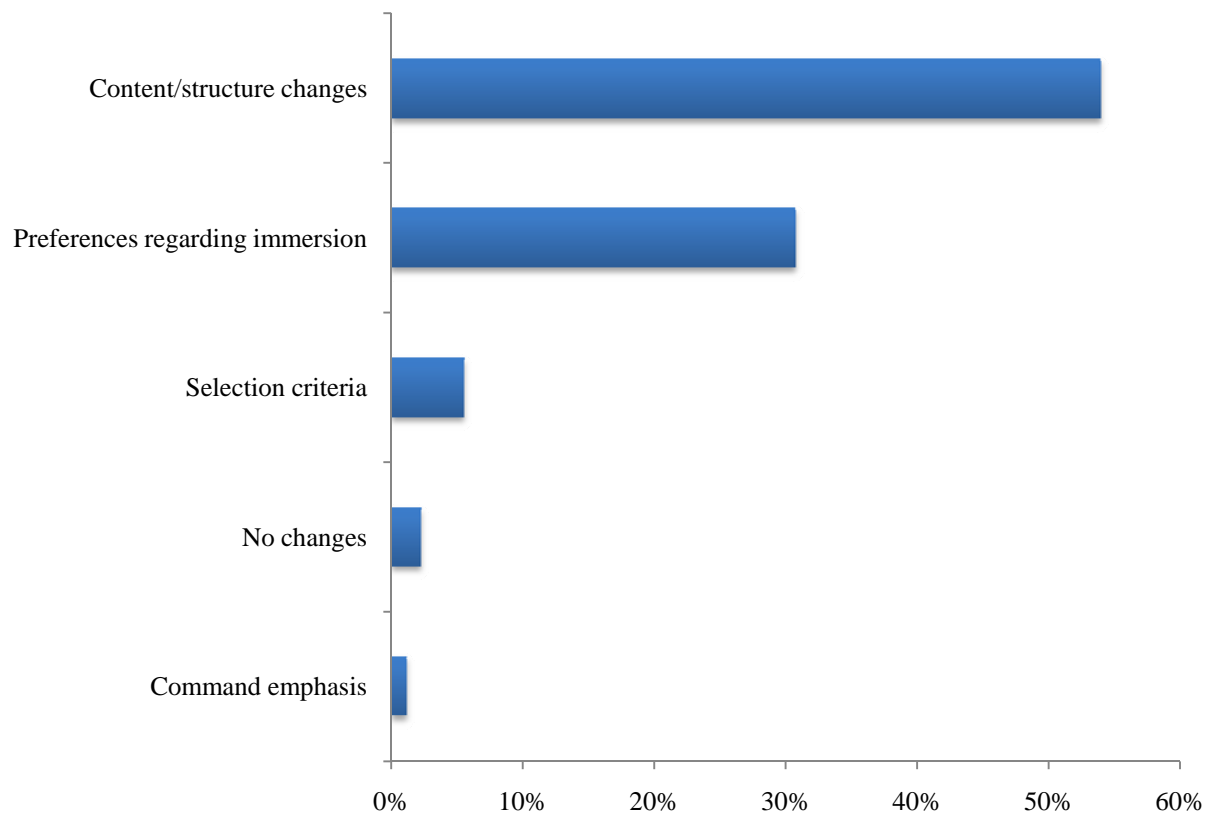
Note. The total number (*n*) of comment themes = 91. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF operators who responded.

The most frequently provided suggestions related to changes in the content or structure of the immersion programs. Table 11 (p. 33) provides specific suggestions within this category. Of the content/structure changes, SOF operators most often indicated immersion programs should be longer. These suggestions are supported by training research, which shows longer immersion programs are more effective than those shorter in duration (Davidson, 2007).

> *"…schedule the training to make it as long as possible (6-8 weeks, possibly 12)"*
> SOF Operator, 4th POG

Similarly, SOF operators indicated immersion training should be conducted more often. Previous research also supports this idea, suggesting that immersion should be incorporated into regular training (Owens, 2010).

> *"Training is too infrequent. Language proficiency is perhaps the most perishable SOF skill, but is given very little or no emphasis/focus"*
> SOF Operator, 1st SFG

Results in Section IV (p. 22) demonstrate that OCONUS immersion experiences received higher effectiveness ratings and allowed for more language interaction time. Research supports these findings and indicates that interaction time in the target language is what improves proficiency (Kinginger, 2008). To capitalize on the opportunities to interact in the target language, SOF operators suggested that immersion should be conducted in-country (OCONUS).

> *"State-side immersion is pointless, all of the people we interacted with spoke English, immersions need to be overseas in order to be effective. Students need to be put into situations where they HAVE to use the language in order to achieve anything."*

SOF Operator, 1st SFG

Table 11. Content and selection suggestion frequency – SOF Operators

Content Themes	SOF Operators
Changes to content and structure of immersion programs	
Make program longer or more regular	9
Conduct in country or on deployment	7
Should be aligned with AOR language	6
More interaction with natives	5
Provide more structure to class	5
Language specific suggestions	4
Provide more culture emphasis	3
Less English should be spoken	3
Provide more freedom or less structure	3
Should be more mission specific	1
Provide more conversation practice	1
Other changes to the content of the immersion program	2
Selection/inclusion criteria	
Provide to higher proficiency levels or after basics are learned	3
Provide to all SOF operators	2

Note. Content themes presented in this table are only SOF operator suggestion themes related to content/structure changes and selection criteria. Other content themes are provided in Table 12, p. 34. The total number (*n*) of comment themes provided by SOF operators = 91. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF operators who responded. Highlighted values are the most frequent responses.

The second most common suggestion involved preferences regarding immersion. SOF operators commonly provided positive comments about their immersion training experience (Table 12, p. 34).

> *"Although I am a 3+/3+...It was an enormous advantage the next time I deployed..."*
SOF Operator, AFSOC

SOF operators also provided other suggestions about immersion, including:

- Deployments serving as a form of immersion training.

> *"My definition of immersion training is OIF. If you don't take advantage of the deployment and talk to your Iraqi counterpart in their language and practice with them then you are a sorry SF soldier. Every deployment I learn more and get better. Deploying is more effective than any language training"*
>
> SOF Operator, 5th SFG

- Preference for immersion over other forms of training.

> *"It was too bad when 5th group stopped doing language immersions; it was by far the best tool that I have used to learn a language"*
>
> SOF Operator, 5th SFG

Table 12. Command and other suggestion frequency – SOF Operators

Content Themes	SOF Operators
More command emphasis or support for immersion	
More command emphasis or support for immersion	1
No changes to the immersion program	
No changes to program	2
Preferences regarding immersion	
Positive comments about immersion training	16
Negative comments about immersion training	4
Preference of immersion over regular training	6
Descriptive or other comments about immersion	2
Non-relevant	
Non-relevant	6

Note. Content themes presented in this table are only SOF operator suggestion themes related to command emphasis, no change, preferences and non-relevant comments. Other content themes are provided in Table 11, p. 33. The total number (*n*) of comment themes = 91. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF operators who responded. Highlighted values are the most frequent responses.

During the focus group discussions, suggestions emerged for the placement of immersion training in the training pipeline or career lifecycle. The most frequent suggestion was that immersion training should occur after initial acquisition training (IAT).

> *"If you look at the training pipeline as most effective and we use the DoD wide you brief what you're going to do, teach what you're going to do, you do a practical exercise where they're integrating, the person's integrating what you just taught them in a classroom environment, then they go out and demonstrate and then do it for real. An example would be, I want to learn a language, send me to DLI, let me learn a language,*

take me away from my work so I can effectively apply myself, 24/7 for whatever given time length it is. Once that language is complete and you graduate from DLI, send them to an immersion in the country."

<div align="right">

SOF Operator, WARCOM
</div>

Another commonly suggested placement option for immersion training that emerged during the focus groups was for immersion to take place prior to deployment.

"A lot of these guys, especially on our team, they have no clue on how to act or react to things that they see….We really need this immersion [before deployment] because, you know, when I got there"—and this is them talking—"when I got there I didn't know the first thing on what to do and what to say and how to say it to these guys. I got the language training, but"—it was just a shock to them"

<div align="right">

SOF Operator, 95th CAB
</div>

SOF Leader Feedback—Immersion Characteristics

SOF leader suggestions for immersion programs are organized into the following categories: (1) specification requirements for the program (i.e., length, duration, instructor suggestions, funding, etc.), (2) selection and inclusion, (3) content, (4) placement, and (5) command emphasis (Figure 26, p. 35). Specific SOF leader suggestions, examples, and frequency tables are provided for each category.

Figure 26. SOF leader comment theme frequency (*n* = 1,279)
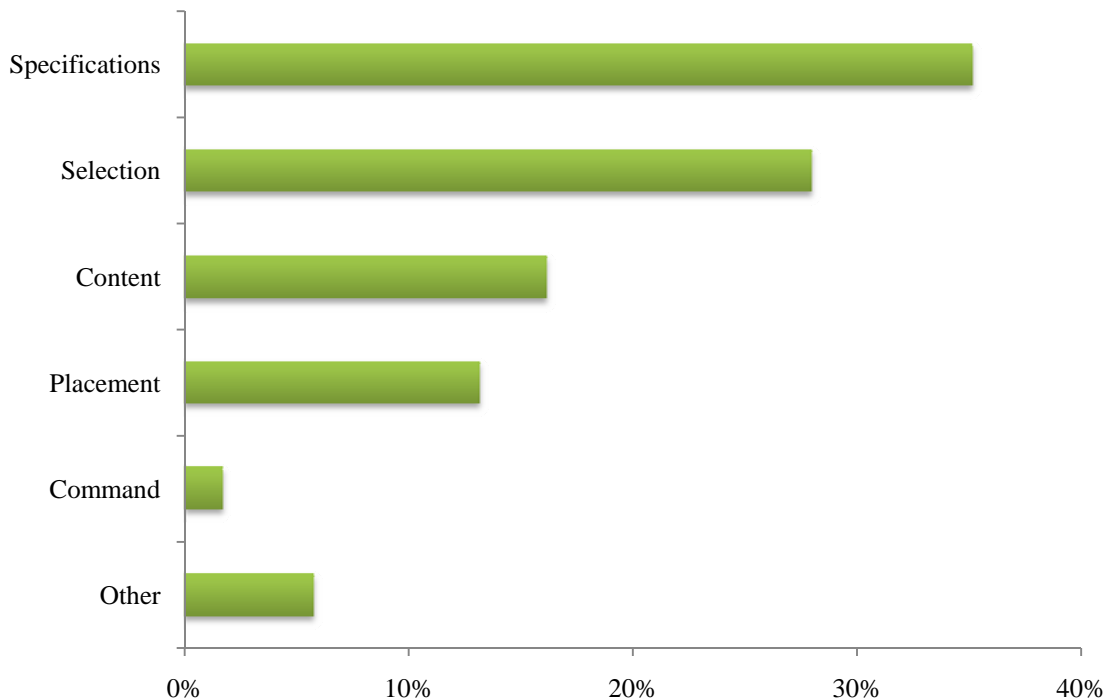
Note. This figure presents SOF leader recommendation theme categories of suggestions. Specific suggestions are provided in subsequent tables. The total number (*n*) of comment themes = 1,279. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF leaders who responded. Highlighted values are the most frequent responses.

Specifications. SOF leaders most frequently made recommendations about program specifications (e.g., length, group size, funding, etc.). Specific suggestion frequencies are presented in Table 13 (p. 37), including how frequently immersion training should occur and how long the program should be for optimal effectiveness. Suggestions for conducting regular training occurred more often than any other suggestion.

> *"Immersion training should be a yearly event"*
> SOF Leader, 4th Psychological Operations Group (POG)

Other specification recommendations included:

- Immersion training should be more than a month in length.

> *"Total immersion for 6-8 weeks if possible"*
> SOF Leader, 4th POG

- Immersion training language should be aligned with the SOF operator's AOR language.

> *"Immersion training program located in AOR"*
> SOF Leader, 10th SFG

- Immersion training should be conducted in small groups or individually.

> *"Small groups of 10 or less. Some 1-1 instruction."*
> SOF Leader, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (CAB)

- Immersion training should be conducted where English is not spoken to force SOF operators to use their target language skills.

> *"The individuals in language training should be put into an environment where they cannot speak English and are forced to speak the target language. There are programs out there that do this for most countries."*
> SOF Leader, 1st SFG

Table 13. Program specification theme frequency

Program Specification Themes	SOF Unit Leader	CLPM/Lang. Office
Language should align with AOR language	47	1
Group size	24	-
Funding	18	2
English should not be spoken	20	-
Instructor suggestions	5	-
Length descriptions		
- Less than a month	29	1
- 1-2 months	53	1
- Longer than 2 months	32	1
Frequency descriptions		
- Immersion should be conducted regularly	164	4
- Immersion should be more frequent	16	2
Other program specifications	42	-

Note. Content themes presented in this table are only SOF leader suggestion themes related to program specifications. Other content themes are provided in subsequent tables. The total number (*n*) of suggestion comment themes from all categories= 1,279. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF leaders who responded. Highlighted values are the most frequent responses.

Selection. Selection/inclusion criteria were the second most commonly mentioned suggestions for immersion programs (Table 14, p. 38). In particular, SOF leaders frequently suggested a minimum proficiency requirement for immersion participation.

> *"[Immersion training] should be offered to those linguists possessing DLPT scores of 2+/2+/2+. My past military experience has shown that anyone having less than this score does not benefit that much because they do not have a strong enough baseline language knowledge to function properly"*
>
> SOF Leader, USSOCOM HQ

Research supporting this suggestion, indicates that those with higher pre-immersion proficiency gain more proficiency during immersion than those with lower proficiency levels before immersion (Davidson, 2007). SOF leaders also commonly suggested two other types of selection criteria:

- SOF operators with higher aptitude and/or motivation should be selected to participate.

> *"Immersion training should be provided for operators that have shown an ability to quickly grasp the language"*
>
> SOF Leader, MARSOC

- All SOF operators should participate or have the opportunity to participate.

> *"ALL Operators would be required to participate"*
> SOF Leader, 4th POG

Table 14. Selection criteria theme frequency

Selection Criteria Themes	SOF Unit Leader	CLPM/Lang. Office
Minimum proficiency requirements/DLPT scores	104	5
Higher aptitude/motivation should participate	71	-
All SOF operators should participate/Expand the program	57	3
Mission requirement	24	-
Test scores will need to increase/Results measured	18	1
Lower proficiency scores should participate	14	1
Younger soldiers/Those likely to be with the unit for a long time	12	-
Use volunteers	11	-
Command chosen/or chosen at the unit level	8	1
Select mature individuals	9	-
Other selection criteria	30	2

Note. Content themes presented in this table are only SOF leader suggestion themes related to selection criteria. Other content themes are provided in subsequent tables. The total number (*n*) of suggestion comment themes from all categories= 1,279. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF leaders who responded. Highlighted values are the most frequent responses.

Content. Suggestions regarding the content of the immersion programs varied more widely (Table 15, p. 39). The most common content suggestion was a need for classroom work during immersion training.

> "*Provide initial classroom training followed by 30 day immersion*"
> SOF Leader, TSOC

Another common content suggestions described the need for interaction with native speakers during immersion training.

> "*I would recommend complete immersion where a soldier lives with only native speakers and has to interact 100% of the time in that language*"
> SOF Leader, 20th SFG

SOF leaders also frequently indicated that immersion training should include cultural emphasis. This idea is consistent with previous research (Owens, 2010), suggesting that cultural training should be conducted during immersion.

> "*…work at an Embassy temporarily to really understand the culture. Because it is not just the language it is the culture we must understand*".
> SOF Leader, 3rd SFG

Table 15. Content of immersion program theme frequency

Content of Program Theme	SOF Unit Leader	CLPM/Lang. Office
Classroom work required	37	3
Interaction with locals/living with locals	32	2
Cultural elements	31	2
Training prior to immersion	26	-
Job specific	17	-
Historical or diplomatic elements	8	-
Technical vocabulary	7	-
Dialect training	4	1
Requires self study	4	-
Speaking focus	13	-
Other modality focus	3	-
Other content for the program	25	1

Note. Content themes presented in this table are only SOF leader suggestion themes related to the content of immersion programs. Other content themes are provided in subsequent tables. The total number (*n*) of suggestion comment themes from all categories= 1,279. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF leaders who responded. Highlighted values are the most frequent responses.

Placement. SOF leaders provided suggestions regarding the placement of immersion training (Table 16, p. 40). These included where in training cycles immersion should take place (i.e., IAT, before deployment, etc.), and the location preference (i.e., OCONUS and CONUS) of training. Integrating immersion training with pre-mission training was the most commonly suggested placement description.

> "*Immersion training should be conducted prior to each deployment and tailored to the location (i.e. if deploying to Panama, immerse in Panama; if deploying to Chile, immerse in Chile)*"
>
> SOF Leader, USSOCOM HQ

The preference for OCONUS immersion was also provided frequently by SOF leaders.

> "*Training should be conducted OCONUS so that soldiers not only experience the language but also the culture*"
>
> SOF Leader, USSOCOM HQ

Table 16. Placement suggestion theme frequency

Placement Suggestion Themes	SOF Unit Leader	CLPM/Lang. Office
Integration with pre-mission training	44	1
Integration with other training	10	1
Immersion during SET	8	1
Immersion during IAT	8	-
Immersion prior to testing	4	-
OCONUS preference	42	1
CONUS preference	26	-
Other placement descriptions	27	-

Note. Content themes presented in this table are only SOF leader suggestion themes related to placement suggestions. Other content themes are provided in subsequent tables. The total number (*n*) of suggestion comment themes from all categories = 1,279. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF leaders who responded. Highlighted values are the most frequent responses.

Command support, Time Barriers, and Other Suggestions. Suggestions were also made about the role command should play in implementing immersion (Table 17, p. 41). SOF leaders responding to the survey indicated command emphasis is needed for language training to occur.

> "*Language training should be a continuous process that is enforced by the chain of command*"
>
> SOF Leader, TSOC

Further suggestions for command to implement from SOF leader survey respondents included:

- Using immersion as an incentive.

> "*OCONUS immersion may be a good incentive*"
> SOF Leader, USASOC HQ

- Making immersion training a required part of the career progression.
> "*Believe immersion training should be part of career progression for all SF officers, warrants and NCOs. Will not achieve true language proficiency across the force unless this is the case.*"
>
> SOF Leader, 10th SFG

While providing suggestions for improvements and recognizing the value of immersion programs, SOF leaders also provided comments about time barriers for implementation.

> "*I feel that this program [LET] could be expanded to allow more participants, however, our current op tempo restricts the number of operators that can participate in this training.*"
>
> SOF Leaders, 95th CAB

Table 17. Additional immersion theme frequency

Additional Immersion Themes	SOF Unit Leader	CLPM/Lang. Office
Command Support		
Emphasis is needed for immersion programs	9	-
Incentive program to participate	8	-
Make part of career progression	4	-
Time Barriers		
OPTEMPO makes immersion difficult	32	-
General Comments		
Positive immersion comments	12	2
Negative immersion comments	9	-
Not relevant	21	1

Note. Content themes presented in this table are SOF leader suggestion themes related to command support and general comments. The total number (*n*) of suggestion comment themes from all categories= 1,279. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF leaders who responded.

SOF Leader Feedback—Reasons for Not Providing Immersion

As reported in Section III, 6% (*n* = 53) of SOF leaders felt that immersion training should not be provided to their unit. In a follow up question to this response, SOF leaders were asked why they felt immersion training should not be provided. These SOF leaders reported several reasons for not providing immersion training (Figure 27 and Table 18 on p. 42). The most common reason for immersion not being provided to units was because their specific units do not require language skills for missions.

> *"Not required on Air Staff due to lack of interaction with Host Nation personnel"*
> SOF Leader, HQ USAF

Because of high OPTEMPO and many other pre-deployment training requirements, SOF leaders also cited a lack of time for immersion training as an issue.

> *"Too many deployment to take more time away from families"*
>
> SOF Leader, 7th SFG

> *"…there are only so many days or months in a train-up rotation. To take a team out of cycle for a month would impact on the train-up and Pre-Mission Training time that we have."*
> SOF Leader, 4th POG

Figure 27. Reasons for not providing immersion theme frequency (*n* = 55)
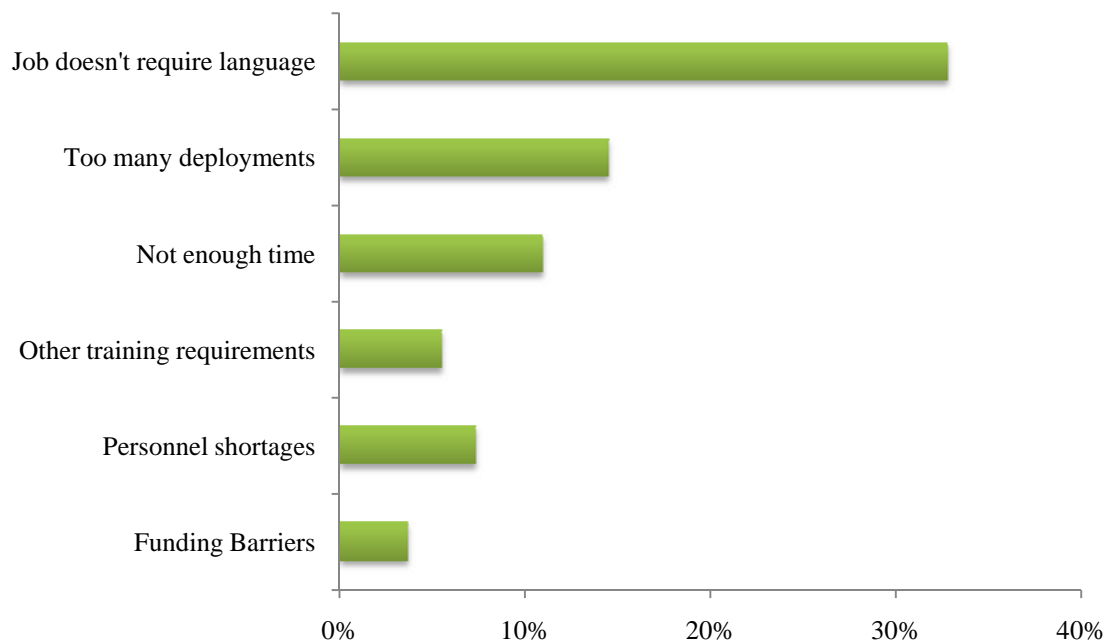
Note. The total number (*n*) of comment themes = 55. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF leaders who responded. Highlighted values are the most frequent responses.

Table 18. Reasons for not providing immersion theme frequency

Content Code	SOF Unit Leader	CLPM/Lang. Office
Barriers to immersion		
OPTEMPO/Too many deployment areas	8	2
Not enough time	6	2
Other training requirements	3	1
Personnel shortage	4	-
Funding barriers	2	1
Training reasons		
Job does not require language: Support Battalion, HQ, not SOF or no language assignment	18	-
Local places provide training and are effective	1	-
Other comments		
Other reasons immersion training should not be provided	5	3
Agrees with immersion	6	1
Not relevant comment	2	-

Note. The total number (*n*) of comment themes = 55. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of SOF leaders who responded. Highlighted values are the most frequent responses.

SOF Leaders further described barriers to immersion as follows:

- Other training requirements.

  "USAJFKSWCS is responsible for training many other tasks in addition to language. If I were forced to deploy my cadre to conduct immersion training I would not be able to meet my primary mission of educating Warrant Officers in advanced SF skills."

  SOF Leader, USAJFKSWCS - Staff

- Personnel shortages.

  "We do not have enough personnel to meet our current mission, let alone to have guys deploy for language training"

  SOF Leader, USAJFKSWCS - Staff

- Funding barriers.

  "It is expensive and too many people just think it is a free vacation."

  SOF Leader, WARCOM

Some SOF leaders had positive comments regarding immersion but felt like immersion was not necessary for their unit.

"Though beneficial to the overall SOF mission, and to the development of effective personnel resources, language training is not essential for the performance of duties at my unit..."

SOF Leader, USSOCOM HQ

SECTION VI: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the USSOCOM's vision to have language capable and culturally attuned warriors on every deployment, and immersion training's proven effectiveness in other environments (e.g., university settings) as a quick and efficient method for language learning, immersion training effectiveness in the SOF context was examined. This study investigated the current state of immersion training activities in the SOF community in order to determine if immersion training opportunities are appropriate for achieving USSOCOM's vision. This report presents SOF operator and leader perceptions of the current immersion training, including its perceived effectiveness and suggestions for improvement.

According to survey responses, most SOF operators and leaders reported that they (or their units) have *not* participated in immersion training. More specifically, opportunities for immersion training seldom occur, as less than 25% of all SOF operators who responded to the LCNA survey participated in immersion training. Descriptions of these immersion programs, including the duration and amount of time interacting in the target language, were gathered from SOF operators who responded to the survey and reported receiving immersion training. SOF operators described a wide range of programs with reported durations lasting less than a week to lasting longer than a month. Differences in duration were also found between immersion types, with OCONUS programs described as longer than CONUS programs. The amount of time interacting in the target language also varied based on the type of immersion program (OCONUS v. CONUS) such that the amount of time interacting in the target language in OCONUS programs was significantly greater than the amount of time interacting in CONUS training environments.

Despite differences in program characteristics, immersion programs were overwhelmingly described as effective and useful for language learning. Compared to SOF operators who reported never receiving immersion training, those who reported receiving immersion training rated themselves as having more language proficiency than other team members, more confidence in their ability to complete language tasks on their missions, and more motivation to continue to learn the language. Additionally, differences in the type of immersion program (i.e., CONUS v. OCONUS) were examined. SOF operators who reported receiving OCONUS immersion training were more confident in their ability to complete mission tasks, more likely to have proficiency when deployed inside their AOR, and less likely to need interpreters to be successful compared to SOF operators who reported receiving CONUS immersion training.

Overall, the demonstrated benefits (i.e., increased proficiency, increased confidence, etc.) of immersion training suggests that this type of training can be an effective tool for the SOF community to achieve its vision of having language capable and culturally attuned warriors, <u>if</u> the immersion training is structured correctly. OCONUS programs, those longer in duration, and those with a higher percentage of time interacting in the target language are perceived to be the most effective. Further, SOF operators and leaders described other ways for immersion programs to be structured for maximum effectiveness. The most common suggestion provided by both SOF operators and leaders was for immersion training to be conducted more frequently. More frequent immersion training would allow SOF operators more time to spend using the target language. Research suggests that greater and more frequent use and time using the target language leads to greater gains in proficiency (Freed et al., 2004). Additionally, research suggests

that although classroom study helps, language learners require frequent and constant exposure to native speakers in the native environment to motivate students to communicate in their target language (Constantino, 1994). More frequently conducted immersion training, especially OCONUS, would provide more opportunity for SOF operators to gain and maintain their proficiency in a naturalistic environment.

SOF operators and leaders also suggested other improvements that were consistent with past immersion research (SOF operator and leader suggestions are presented in *italics*):

- *Require a minimum proficiency level to participate in immersion training.* Those with higher proficiency prior to immersion gain more proficiency during immersion than those with lower proficiency levels (Davidson, 2007).
- *Immersion would be most effective immediately prior to deployment for a mission in that AOR.* Loss of language proficiency occurs after language instruction ends (Bardovi-Harlig & Stringer, 2010). Thus, SOF operators will maximize their language capability on deployments if they receive immersion shortly before deploying.

This study focused on the perceptions of SOF operators and leaders about their personal experience with immersion. Although this research has value and allowed for greater coverage of the SOF community, future research in SOF needs to focus on investigating the impact of specific immersion events on important language outcomes. A program of research across immersion events will help determine which design factors are important and guide recommendations for best practice.

Given all these suggested immersion training improvements, the effectiveness of immersion training for SOF operators in the community to acquire and maintain foreign language proficiency can likely be improved. Keeping in mind the practical and other logistical constraints, not all these suggestions may be appropriate or feasible for the entire SOF community. As suggested, more research focused on specific immersion events and language outcomes in the SOF community is needed for more definitive recommendations. These findings and suggestions from SOF operators and leaders for effective language training will be integrated with the following *Tier I* reports: *Training Emphasis: Language and Culture, Initial Acquisition Training, Sustainment/Enhancement Training, Culture Training,* and *Language Resources, Technology, and Self Study* into three *Tier II* reports: *Current State of Language Training, Language Training Guidance,* and *Culture Training Guidance,* which will present more comprehensive recommendations related to achieving SOF language-related goals.

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ABOUT SWA CONSULTING INC.

SWA Consulting Inc. (formerly Surface, Ward, and Associates) provides analytics and evidence-based solutions for clients using the principles and methods of industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology. Since 1997, SWA has advised and assisted corporate, non-profit and governmental clients on:

- Training and development
- Performance measurement and management
- Organizational effectiveness
- Test development and validation
- Program/training evaluation
- Work/job analysis
- Needs assessment
- Selection system design
- Study and analysis related to human capital issues
- Metric development and data collection
- Advanced data analysis

One specific practice area is analytics, research, and consulting on foreign language and culture in work contexts. In this area, SWA has conducted numerous projects, including language assessment validation and psychometric research; evaluations of language training, training tools, and job aids; language and culture focused needs assessments and job analysis; and advanced analysis of language research data.

Based in Raleigh, NC, and led by Drs. Eric A. Surface and Stephen J. Ward, SWA now employs close to twenty I/O professionals at the masters and PhD levels. SWA professionals are committed to providing clients the best data and analysis upon which to make evidence-based decisions. Taking a scientist-practitioner perspective, SWA professionals conduct model-based, evidence-driven research and consulting to provide the best answers and solutions to enhance our clients' mission and business objectives. SWA has competencies in measurement, data collection, analytics, data modeling, systematic reviews, validation, and evaluation.

For more information about SWA, our projects, and our capabilities, please visit our website (www.swa-consulting.com) or contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Stephen J. Ward (sward@swa-consulting.com).

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APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE LCNA PROJECT

In 2003-2004, the Special Operations Forces Language In 2003-2004, the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) sponsored the *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* to inform the development of a language transformation strategy in response to a GAO report (2003). This *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* collected current-state information about language usage, proficiency, training, and policy issues (e.g., Foreign Language Proficiency Pay, FLPP) from SOF personnel, SOF unit leaders, and other personnel involved in SOF language. The project used multiple data collection methods and provided the SOFLO with valid data to develop a comprehensive language transformation strategy and advocate for the SOF perspective on language issues within the DoD community.

In a continuing effort to update knowledge of language and culture needs while informing strategic plan development, the SOFLO commissioned the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (LCNA) to reassess the language and culture landscape across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and develop a strategy for the next five years. Data were collected between March and November, 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including operators and leaders. Twenty-three focus groups were conducted between March and June, 2009. A comprehensive, web-based survey for SOF operators and leaders was launched on 26 October and closed on 24 November, 2009.

This project's findings will be disseminated through reports and briefings (see Appendix A, Figure 1). Two foundational reports document the methodology and participants associated with this project. The remaining reports are organized in three tiers. Twenty-five *Tier I* reports focus on specific, limited issues (e.g., *Inside AOR Use of Language*). *Tier II* reports integrate and present the most important findings across related *Tier I* reports (e.g., *Use of Language and Culture on Deployment)* while including additional data and analysis on the topic. Most, but not all, *Tier I* reports will roll into *Tier II* reports. One *Tier III* report presents the most important findings, implications, and recommendations across all topics explored in this project. The remaining *Tier III* reports present findings for specific SOF organizations [e.g., Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Special Forces (SF) Command]. All Tier III reports are associated with a briefing. Report topics are determined by the SOFLO and subject to change.

In June, 2009, the GAO reported that the Department of Defense is making progress toward transforming language and regional proficiency capabilities but still does not have a strategic plan in place to continue development that includes actionable goals and objectives. The findings from this study can be used by the SOFLO and leaders at USSOCOM to continue strategic planning and development in this area.

This project design, logistics, data collection, initial analysis and first eight reports of this project were conducted by SWA Consulting Inc. (SWA) under a subcontract with SRC (SR20080668 (K142); Prime # N65236-08-D-6805). The additional reports are funded under a separate contracting vehicle with Gemini Industries Inc. [GEM02-ALMBOS-0018 (10210SWA-1); Prime # USZA22-02-D-0015]. For questions or more information about the SOFLO and this project, please contact Mr. Jack Donnelly (john.donnelly@socom.mil). For specific questions related to data collection or reports associated with this project, please contact Dr. Eric A. Surface (esurface@swa-consulting.com) or Dr. Reanna Poncheri Harman (rpharman@swa-consulting.com) with SWA Consulting Inc.

Appendix A, Figure 1. Report Overview

Foundation Reports → **Tier I Reports First Contract** → **Tier II Reports Second Contract**

Foundation Reports
1. Methodology Report
2. Participation Report

Tier I Reports First Contract
3. Admiral Olson's Memo
4. Training Emphasis: Language and Culture
5. Command Support: Grade Chain of Command
6. SOFLO Support
7. Inside/Outside AOR Use of Cultural Knowledge
8. Team Composition

Tier 1 Reports Second Contract
9. Inside AOR Use of Language
10. Outside AOR Use of Language
11. Mission-Specific Use of Interpreters
12. General Use of Interpreters
13. 09L
14. DLPT
15. OPI
16. DLAB: Perspectives from the Field
17. Initial Acquisition Training
18. Sustainment/Enhancement Training
19. Culture Training
20. Immersion
21. Language Resources, Technology & Self-Study
22. Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus
23. Non-monetary Incentives
24. Command Support: Other Barriers/Organizational Support
25. Force Motivation for Language
26. Leader Perspectives on Language Issues
27. CLPM Perspectives

Tier II Reports Second Contract
28. Use of Language and Culture on Deployment
29. Use of Interpreters
30. Team Composition and Capability
31. Testing/Metrics
32. Current State of Language Training
33. Language Training Guidance
34. Culture Training Guidance
35. Incentives/Barriers

Tier III Reports Second Contract
36. Overall Picture: Conclusions and Recommendations
37. AFSOC
38. MARSOC
39. WARCOM
40. SF Command
41. CA
42. PSYOP
43. Seminar Briefing(s)

Note: Foundation reports are referenced by every other report. Colors represent Tier I reports that roll (integrate) into an associated Tier II report. Reports in black are final reports on the topic but may be cited by other reports. Tier II reports roll into the Tier III reports. All Tier III reports include an associated briefing.

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

Participants

Focus Group Participants

Twenty-three focus groups were conducted with 126 SOF personnel across the SOF community. Focus groups were conducted with Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), Naval Special Warfare Command (NAVSPECWARCOM or WARCOM), and the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC). See *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003) for participant details. Verbatim comments and the frequencies of comment themes from these groups are integrated throughout the report. See *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002) for the focus group interview guide.

Survey Participants

Respondents received the SOF LCNA survey immersion training items if they indicated one of the following roles in the SOF community:[4]
- SOF Operator (e.g., SEAL team member, SF team member, etc.)
- SOF Operator assigned to other duty
- MI Linguist or 09L assigned or attached to a SOF unit[5]
- SOF Unit Commanders and Unit Leadership of O3 Commands or higher, including Staff, Support, and Specialists
- Command Language Program Manager or Component Language Program Manager (CLPMs), or
- Language Office Personnel

Before SOF operators and MI linguists were presented with the immersion training items, they were asked whether or not they have received immersion training. There were 123 SOF operators (i.e., SOF operators and SOF operators assigned to other duties), and 20 MI linguists (assigned or attached to SOF unit) who reported participating in immersion training and answered the subsequent survey items. Most SOF operator respondents were affiliated with the Army; however, the Marines, Air Force, and Navy were also represented in a collapsed category called "Other Components."

SOF unit leaders, CLPMs, and language office personnel were asked, "Does your unit provide opportunities for operators to participate in immersion training? If yes, are you in a position to comment on it?" There were 131 SOF unit leaders and 13 CLPMs/language office personnel who reported their unit provided immersion training and were able to describe the training and its effectiveness. Regardless of unit immersion participation, unit leaders, CLPMs and language office personnel were all asked whether units *should* be provided with immersion training. There were 860 unit leaders and 28

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[4] The primary focus of the report was on SOF operators (including SOF operators assigned to other duty) and unit leaders. MI Linguists, CLPMs and language office personnel were included in report tables for comparison.
[5] MI Linguists and 09L not assigned or attached to SOF were not included.

CLPM/Language office personnel who responded. For more information on the participation and attrition rates, please refer to the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003).

Measures

Branching

An overview of the branching logic for the immersion training survey sections can be found in Appendix B, Figures 1 (operators) and 2 (leaders). Respondents who completed the operator version of the survey were asked if they had participated in structured immersion training paid for and/or sponsored by the military or government. If respondents marked 'yes,' then they were branched to the immersion training questions. To distinguish between CONUS and OCONUS participation, operators were first asked which type they had participated in, CONUS, OCONUS, or both. If operators responded CONUS, they were branched to the CONUS questions. Likewise, if the respondent marked OCONUS, they were branched to the OCONUS questions. If the respondent marked both CONUS and OCONUS, they were then asked which type of immersion training was conducted most recently. Operators only reported on their most recent immersion type. Regardless of whether they responded to CONUS or OCONUS immersion questions, all operators who received training were given the opportunity to respond to the open-ended item to provide feedback on how immersion training could be improved.

The SOF leader version of the survey had more involved question branching. CLPMs, Unit leaders and language office personnel were first asked if their unit provided opportunities for operators to participate in immersion training. Respondents who marked 'yes' and were in a position to comment on their unit's immersion training were asked to classify their unit's immersion training opportunities. Response options included: CONUS (or iso-immersion) only, OCONUS [or Live Environment Training (LET)] only, or both CONUS and OCONUS immersion training. Respondents who answered CONUS only were branched to the CONUS immersion training items. Those who answered OCONUS only were branched to the OCONUS immersion training items. Respondents who answered 'both CONUS and OCONUS immersion training' answered both the CONUS and OCONUS immersion training items. The open-ended SOF leader items were presented to all leaders, regardless of whether or not immersion training was provided at their units. To decide which open-ended item leaders responded to, they were asked whether or not their units *should* be provided immersion training. Those that marked 'yes' were then asked to describe their ideal training. If leaders replied 'no,' then they were asked to describe why training should not be provided to their unit.

Items

SOF operators were asked the following about their immersion training experience:
- Duration of the program
- Location of the program
- Amount of interaction time in the language
- Effectiveness of the training
- Usefulness of the training

- Change of confidence in their language ability
- Change in proficiency level
- Suggestions for improving immersion training

SOF leaders were asked the following survey questions about their unit's immersion training experience:
- Frequency that operators are sent to immersion training
- Effectiveness of training
- Change in proficiency level
- Whether immersion training should be provided to their unit
- Characteristics recommended for training <u>or</u> why training should not be provided[6]

Analyses

Closed-Ended Items

All closed-ended items were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. For each item, the frequencies for each response option are presented. The average (i.e., mean) response for each item is also presented. To compare responses across groups of participants, inferential statistics (e.g., analysis of variance, t-tests) were used to determine if any observed differences are likely to exist in the broader population of interest.

Open-Ended Items

To analyze the focus group data and open-ended items (survey comments), two coders created a content code (i.e., theme) list based on available responses. One coder coded all responses to the items, and the second coder coded a series of four sections equaling 30% of the total number of responses. Any disagreements between coders were discussed to agreement. The frequency of occurrence for each theme is presented in Section IV of this report. For further details on these methods, please refer to the *Methodology Report (*Technical Report #2010011002*)*.

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[6] SOF leaders were only provided the opportunity to comment on one of these items based on whether or not they believed immersion should be provided to their units. Those that said it should were asked to provide characteristics; those that said it should not were asked to explain why immersion should not be provided.

Appendix B, Figure 1. SOF operator survey branching for immersion questions[7]
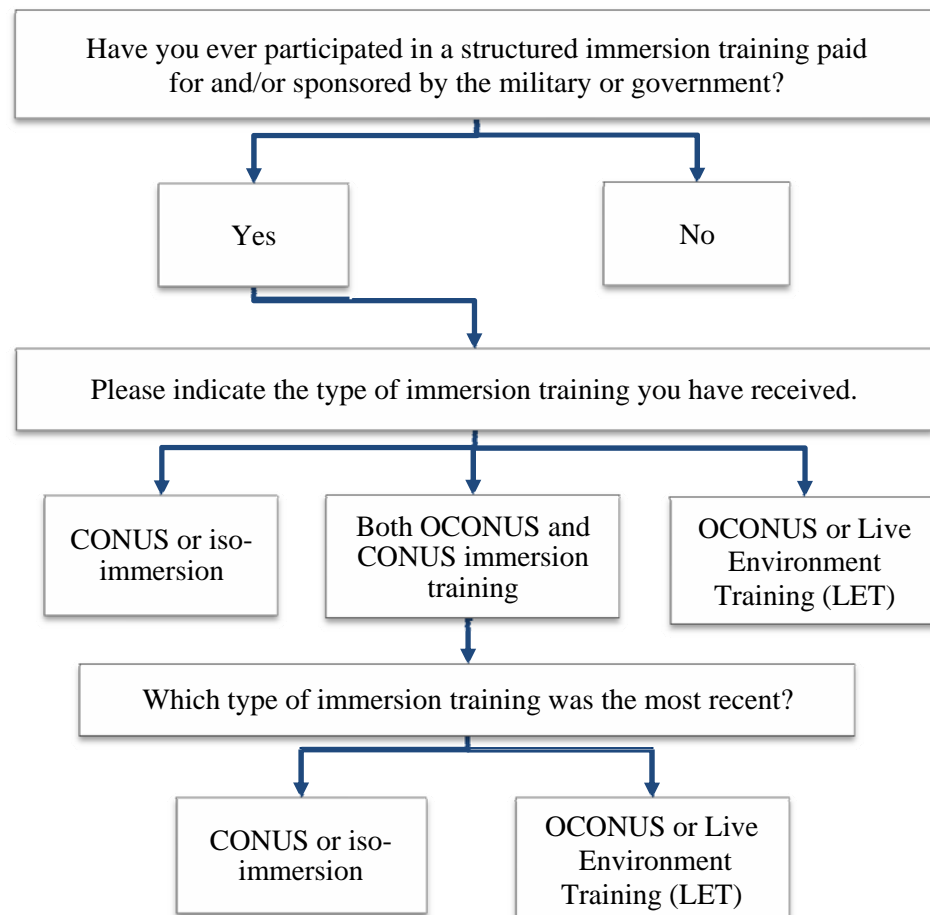
Appendix B, Figure 2. SOF leader survey branching

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Does your unit provide opportunities for operators to            │
│  participate in immersion training?  If yes, are you in a          │
│  position to comment on it?                                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

| Yes, and I am in a position to comment on my unit's immersion training | Yes, but I am NOT in a position to comment on my unit's immersion training | No, there are no opportunities for immersion training at my unit | I do not know/not applicable |

What type of immersion training opportunities are provided by your unit?

| CONUS or iso-immersion only | Both OCONUS and CONUS immersion training | OCONUS or Live Environment Training (LET) only |

CONUS Description and Effectiveness

OCONUS Description and Effectiveness

Should immersion training be provided in your unit?

| Yes | No |

What characteristics would you recommend for an immersion training program in your unit?

Why should immersion training not be provided at your unit?

APPENDIX C. IMMERSION TRAINING DESCRIPTION TABLES

Appendix C, Table 1. SOF leader perception of CONUS immersion frequency

Frequency of CONUS Immersion Training

Group	*n*	Mean	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Overall Unit Leaders	74	2.43	11%	43%	38%	8%	0%
USASOC	56	2.41	9%	46%	39%	5%	0%
CA	5	1.80	40%	40%	20%	0%	0%
PSYOP	33	2.64	0%	42%	52%	6%	0%
SF	14	2.00	21%	57%	21%	0%	0%
Other SOF Organizations	18	2.50	17%	33%	33%	17%	0%
CLPM/Lang. Office	6	2.67	0%	50%	33%	17%	0%

Note. No significant differences between Army SOF types. Other SOF Organizations = AFSOC, USSOCOM HQ, WARCOM, MARSOC, JSOC/TSOC, Deployed SO Unit, and those that specified "other" when asked about their current assignment. Other SOF Organizations were combined due to small sample sizes. 1= *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very Often*.

Appendix C, Table 2. SOF leader perception of OCONUS immersion frequency

Frequency of OCONUS Immersion Training

Group	*n*	Mean	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
Overall Unit Leaders	125	2.40	6%	54%	34%	6%	0%
USASOC	95	2.41	6%	52%	37%	5%	0%
CA	16	2.25	13%	50%	37%	0%	0%
PSYOP	42	2.50	5%	48%	40%	7%	0%
SF	28	2.29	7%	61%	29%	4%	0%
Other SOF Organizations	30	2.37	7%	60%	23%	10%	0%
CLPM/Lang. Office	13	2.46	8%	46%	38%	8%	0%

Note. No significant differences between Army SOF types. Other SOF Organizations = AFSOC, USSOCOM HQ, WARCOM, MARSOC, JSOC/TSOC, Deployed SO Unit, and those that specified "other" when asked about their current assignment. Other SOF Organizations were combined due to small sample sizes. 1= *Never*, 2 = *Seldom*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very Often*.

Appendix C, Table 3. SOF operator descriptions about the length of training

			Length of Immersion Training					
Immersion type	*n*	**Mean**	**Less than 1 week**	**1 week**	**2 weeks**	**3 weeks**	**4 weeks**	**More than 4 weeks**
CONUS	64	3.11	22%	27%	13%	11%	14%	14%
OCONUS	76	5.00*	3%	3%	7%	9%	38%	41%

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher-length descriptions.
1 = *Less than 1 week*, 2 = *1 week*, 3 = *2 weeks*, 4 = *3 weeks*, 5 = *More than 4 weeks.*

Appendix C, Table 4. SOF operator interaction time in the target language by immersion type

			Interaction Time				
Immersion type	*n*	**Mean**	**0%**	**10-30%**	**40-60%**	**70-90%**	**100%**
CONUS	59	6.97	5%	9%	39%	35%	10%
OCONUS	73	8.27*	1%	15%	15%	38%	30%

Note. The mean with an asterisk (*) indicates that OCONUS participants reported significantly higher percentage of interaction time.
Scale ranged from 1 = *0%* to 11 = *100% interaction time.* This table collapsed percentage levels to display trends in a condensed manner.

Appendix C, Table 5. SOF operator interaction time in the target language by language

Group	n	Mean	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
OCONUS	73	8.27	1%	3%	5%	7%	1%	7%	7%	15%	4%	19%	30%
Arabic	21	6.81[a]	0%	5%	10%	19%	5%	5%	10%	14%	5%	24%	5%
Spanish	13	10.00[b]	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	15%	0%	23%	54%
French	8	8.88[ab]	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	38%	25%
Russian	5	10.20[ab]	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	20%	60%
Korean	4	8.00[ab]	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	25%	0%	25%	25%	0%
Thai	4	9.75[ab]	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	75%
Ukrainian	3	8.33[ab]	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	67%	33%	0%	0%
German	2	7.00[ab]	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%
Chinese-Mandarin	1	11.00[ab]	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Malay (Bahaza Melayu)	1	3.00[ab]	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
CONUS	59	6.97	5%	3%	3%	3%	3%	22%	14%	20%	10%	5%	10%
Not Applicable	43	2.33	33%	33%	0%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note. OCONUS language subgroups sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different interaction time. Subgroups NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different interaction time. Please refer to the mean to determine which group provided higher or lower interaction time. Scale ranged from 1 = *0%* to 11 = *100% Interaction Time*.

Appendix C, Table 6. SOF operator interaction time in the target language by component and Army SOF type

Group	n	Mean	0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
All Operators	132	7.69	3%	3%	5%	5%	2%	14%	10%	17%	7%	13%	21%
USASOC	94	7.61	4%	3%	4%	4%	1%	15%	11%	18%	7%	12%	20%
CA	14	5.93[a]	7%	21%	7%	0%	0%	21%	0%	21%	7%	0%	14%
PSYOP	27	7.48[ab]	4%	0%	4%	11%	4%	11%	11%	19%	7%	15%	15%
SF	53	8.11[b]	4%	0%	4%	2%	0%	15%	13%	17%	8%	13%	25%
Other SOF Organizations	38	7.90	0%	3%	5%	8%	5%	11%	8%	16%	5%	16%	24%
MI Linguists	19	8.47	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	16%	0%	21%	26%	21%	11%

Note. Army SOF types sharing the same letter (e.g., a or b) did not report significantly different interaction time. Army SOF types NOT sharing the same letter did report significantly different interaction time. Please refer to the mean to determine which group provided higher or lower interaction time. Other SOF Organizations = AFSOC, MARSOC, and WARCOM AFSOC, USSOCOM HQ, WARCOM, MARSOC, JSOC/TSOC, Deployed SO Unit, and those that specified "other" when asked about their current assignment. Other SOF Organizations were combined due to small sample sizes. Scale ranged from 1 = *0%* to 11 = *100% Interaction Time*.

APPENDIX D. EFFECTIVENESS TABLES

Appendix D, Table 1. SOF operator and leader perceptions of immersion training effectiveness

Effectiveness of Immersion Training

Immersion type	Group	*n*	Mean	Not Effective	Slightly Effective	Moderately Effective	Effective	Very Effective
CONUS	**Operators**	64	3.23	6%	17%	34%	31%	11%
	Leaders	73	2.82	10%	25%	42%	21%	3%
OCONUS	**Operators**	75	4.16	3%	7%	16%	21%	53%
	Leaders	122	3.74	2%	11%	27%	34%	27%

Note. 1= *Not Effective*, 2 = *Slightly Effective*, 3 = *Moderately Effective*, 4 = *Effective*, 5 = *Very Effective*.

Appendix D, Table 2. SOF operator perceptions of usefulness of immersion training

Usefulness of Immersion Training

Group	*n*	Mean	Not Useful	Slightly Useful	Moderately Useful	Useful	Very Useful
All Operators	136	3.47	14%	12%	21%	21%	33%
USASOC	99	3.42	14%	14%	17%	24%	30%
CA	14	3.00	21%	14%	29%	14%	21%
PSYOP	28	3.46	11%	18%	14%	29%	29%
SF	57	3.51	14%	12%	16%	25%	33%
Other SOF Organizations	37	3.60	14%	5%	30%	11%	41%
MI Linguists	19	3.42	5%	16%	32%	26%	21%

Note. No significant differences between Army SOF types. Other SOF Organizations = AFSOC, USSOCOM HQ, WARCOM, MARSOC, JSOC/TSOC, Deployed SO Unit, and those that specified "other" when asked about their current assignment. Other SOF Organizations were combined due to small sample sizes. 1= *Not Useful*, 2 = *Slightly Useful*, 3 = *Moderately Useful*, 4 = *Useful*, 5 = *Very Useful*.

Appendix D, Table 3. SOF operator and leader perceptions of proficiency changes post immersion training

Perceived Change in Proficiency						
Immersion type	Group	*n*	Mean	Changed for the Worse	No change	Changed for the Better
CONUS	Operators	64	2.56	3%	38%	59%
	Leaders	70	2.70	1%	27%	71%
OCONUS	Operators	75	2.83	0%	17%	83%
	Leaders	121	2.89	1%	9%	90%

Note. 1= Changed for the Worse, 2 = No Change, 3 = Changed for the Better.

Appendix D, Table 4. SOF operator language proficiency by receipt of immersion

Proficiency			
Item	Immersion	*n*	Mean
Proficiency compared to the other members of team (not including interpreters)	Received	83	3.39*
	Did not receive	493	3.02

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher proficiency ratings.
1 = Least Proficient, 2 = Less Proficient, 3 = Average, 4 = More Proficient, 5 = Most Proficient.

Appendix D, Table 5. SOF operator self rated proficiency by receipt of immersion

Self-rated Proficiency			
Item	Immersion	*n*	Mean
Speak in the target language	Received	123	4.20
	Did not receive	854	3.81
Read in the target language	Received	129	4.05
	Did not receive	913	3.80
Listen in the target language	Received	131	3.87
	Did not receive	914	3.61

Note. Means were not statistically different. Scale ranged Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR scale) from 1 = 0 (No proficiency) to 11 = 5 (Functionally Native Proficiency).

Appendix D, Table 6. SOF operator motivation to continue language by receipt of immersion

Motivation			
Item	Immersion	*n*	Mean
Continue to develop the language skills you have acquired	Received	125	3.86*
	Did not receive	881	3.65
Learn more about the culture associated with your language	Received	125	4.05*
	Did not receive	876	3.74

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher motivation ratings.
1 = Not Motivated, 2 = Slightly Motivated, 3 = Moderately Motivated, 4 = Motivated, 5 = Very Motivated.

Appendix D, Table 7. SOF operator confidence in language skills by receipt of immersion

Confidence

Item	Immersion	n	Mean
Use your language skills to build rapport with local militia leaders, soldiers, and/or indigenous	Received	123	6.92*
	Did not receive	861	6.24
Speak in the target language	Received	123	6.83*
	Did not receive	861	6.01
Read in the target language	Received	123	6.60*
	Did not receive	861	5.86
Listen in the target language	Received	123	6.47*
	Did not receive	861	5.78
Train or teach others in the target language	Received	120	5.54*
	Did not receive	846	4.64
Conduct business negotiations with officials in the target language	Received	120	5.33*
	Did not receive	845	4.48
Use the target language for maintaining control in hostile situations	Received	120	5.93*
	Did not receive	846	5.19
Use the target language for persuading people to provide sensitive information	Received	120	5.44*
	Did not receive	844	4.44
Use initial informal greetings when introduced to individuals in the target language	Received	120	8.05*
	Did not receive	846	7.25

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher confidence ratings.
Scale ranges from 1 = *0% Confident* to 11 = *100% Confident.*

Appendix D, Table 8. SOF operator likelihood to volunteer for language tasks by receipt of immersion

Likelihood

Item	Immersion	n	Mean
Volunteer for mission tasks that require language	Received	123	8.43*
	Did not receive	863	7.72

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher likelihood ratings.
Scale ranges from 1 = 0% *Likely* to 11= *100% Likely*.

Appendix D, Table 9. SOF operator perceived usefulness of required language by receipt of immersion

Usefulness of Required Language

Item	Immersion	n	Mean
How useful is your current official or required AOR or your primary/control language for your missions?	Received	129	3.19*
	Did not receive	913	2.90

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher usefulness ratings.
1 = *Not Useful*, 2 = *Slightly Useful*, 3 = *Moderately Useful*, 4 = *Useful*, 5 = *Very Useful*.

APPENDIX E. CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAM TABLES

Appendix E, Table 1. SOF operator self-rated proficiency by immersion type

Self-rated Proficiency

Item	Immersion	*n*	Mean
Speak in the target language	OCONUS	66	4.64*
	CONUS	57	3.70
Read in the target language	OCONUS	71	4.51*
	CONUS	58	3.50
Listen in the target language	OCONUS	72	4.22*
	CONUS	59	3.44

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher proficiency ratings. Scale ranged Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR scale) from 1 = *0 (No proficiency)* to 11 = *5 (Functionally Native Proficiency)*

Appendix E, Table 2. SOF operator motivation to training by immersion type

Motivation

Item	Immersion	*n*	Mean
Receive language training in the future	OCONUS	69	4.20*
	CONUS	56	3.79
Give maximum effort to language training in the future	OCONUS	69	4.23*
	CONUS	55	3.73

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher motivation ratings. 1 = *Not Motivated*, 2 = *Slightly Motivated*, 3 = *Moderately Motivated*, 4 = *Motivated*, 5 = *Very Motivated*.

Appendix E, Table 3. SOF operator interest in learning by immersion type

Interest

Item	Immersion	*n*	Mean
Interest in learning a foreign language	OCONUS	73	4.37*
	CONUS	61	4.02

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher interest ratings. 1 = *Not Interested*, 2 = *Slightly Interested*, 3 = *Moderately Interested*, 4 = *Interested*, 5 = *Very Interested*.

Appendix E, Table 4. SOF operator confidence in skills and tasks by immersion type

Confidence

Item	Immersion	*n*	Mean
Speak in the target language	OCONUS	68	7.31*
	CONUS	55	6.24
Use initial informal greetings on missions	OCONUS	67	8.55*
	CONUS	53	7.42
Use language skills to build rapport on missions	OCONUS	68	7.66*
	CONUS	55	6.00
Give commands in the target language	OCONUS	68	7.75*
	CONUS	55	6.18

Note. Means with an asterisk (*) indicate that the group gave significantly higher confidence ratings. Scale ranges from 1 = *0% Confident* to 11 = *100% Confident*.

APPENDIX F. SOF OPERATOR COMMENT THEMES AND DEFINITIONS

SOF operators were given the opportunity to provide comments in response to the following prompt:

- *Please provide any specific feedback you have related to how your immersion training could have been improved to better prepare you for your job?*

All comments were content analyzed and common themes extracted. The resulting themes are provided below, with a definition of each theme and verbatim exemplar comments that illustrate the theme. For more information about this study's content analysis process, please refer to the LCNA *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

Note: Exemplar comments are presented verbatim and are uncorrected for spelling and other mistakes.

Changes to Content of Immersion Programs
- Less English should be spoken
  - Definition: English should not be spoken by the individual or in the community that the immersion is taking place
    - "People speak too much English in Tunisia and Jordan. We need to find remote areas where people don't speak English. We should be able to find villages in Oman that don't speak English but are safe enough to send our folks."
- Training should be aligned with AOR language or deployments
  - Definition: Immersion training should conducted in the language that is used in the AOR or while on deployments
    - "Operators should learn in an environment that provides the cultural, language, and political challenge that the operator will face on the job."
- Make program longer or more regular
  - Definition: Longer or more regular immersion training should take place
    - "….schedule the training to make it as long as possible (6-8 weeks, possibly 12)"
- More interaction with natives
  - Definition: More interaction with the local populace or native speakers during immersion training
    - "Living w/ natives would do an even better job"
- Should be more mission specific
  - Definition: Immersion training should contain more tasks that are relevant to the mission
    - "Work with military units in target language. By training with them in their target language we can build our military vocabulary."
- Provide more structure to class
  - Definition: Need more structure during immersion training
    - "More structure"
- Provide more freedom or less structure
  - Definition: Need less structure and more free time during immersion training
    - "Immersion training was the best opportunity after the SFQC to study the language free of distractions. As a result, my communication ability and cultural awareness and knowledge base is much higher than the DLPT reflects. My DLPT Class could have integrated more hands on filed trips related to more lessons. Once per week would

have been better than once every two weeks. The experienced gained by immediately employing vocabulary and grammar is extermemly valuable. Also, building in several free days (not just another day off) could have proved beneficial. My classes ran 6 days a weeks. very little exploring or venturing out took place. I believe that in permissive countries like Korea it is beneficial to allow students to have a minimal amount of time to learn about what interests them."

- Provide more conversation practice
  - o Definition: More practice conversations and conversational training during immersion training
    - ▪ "Our teacher spent too much time playing games with us instead of having us converse with one another. She was trying to use modern techniques which failed in my case."
- Conduct in country or on deployment
  - o Definition: Immersion training should be conducted in another country (OCONUS) or on deployment before the mission starts
    - ▪ "State-side immersion is pointless, all of the people we interacted with spoke english, immersions need to be overseas in order to be effective. Students need to be put into situations where they HAVE to use the language in order to achieve anything."
- Provide more culture emphasis
  - o Definition: Cultural training needs to occur while conducting immersion training
    - ▪ "More culture training"
- Language specific suggestions
  - o Definition: Specific changes regarding language, including dialect specific training and Modern Standard Arabic learning concerns
    - ▪ "MSA is the tested language, as well as the language used in products. MSA should be the focus of the training, with local dialect for proficiency during the course of the stay only. Therefore, local dialect could be limited to an hour per day for the first two weeks. Following that period, all time could be devoted to MSA."
- Other changes to the content of the immersion program
  - o Definition: Changes to the program not otherwise specified in the previous codes
    - ▪ "I recommend that we have a similar immersion program, or piggyback off of DLI's program that is already in place. There is no reason why junior/IET soldiers are capable of traveling and living abroad for a one to three month immersion trip and green berets do not have the similar freedoms to expanding thier language. Total immersion in the environment, with no other duty than getting out and about in social settings."

Selection/Inclusion Criteria
- Provide to higher proficiency levels or after basics are learned
  - o Definition: Basic or higher proficiency levels of the language should be achieved before immersion training
    - ▪ "Once the basics in vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammatical fundamentals are achieved emersion, realistic conversation, and problem solving applications should be pursued."
- Provide to all SOF operators
  - o Definition: All SOF operators should have the opportunity to experience immersion training
    - ▪ "Would also recommend strongly it be offered for ALL SOF operators…"

More Command Emphasis or Support for Immersion

- More emphasis or command support for immersion
  - o Definition: Need more command emphasis or support for immersion training
    - ▪ "Training is too infrequent. Language proficiency is perhaps the most perishable SOF skill, but is given very little or no emphasis/focus."

No Changes to the Immersion Program

- No changes to program
  - o Definition: Immersion program does not need any changes
    - ▪ "No comments. The immersion training was very effective"

Comments about Immersion (No Suggestion for Improvement)

- Positive comments about immersion training
  - o Definition: Immersion training is positive or effective
    - ▪ "Immersion was superb."
- Negative comments about immersion training
  - o Definition: Immersion training is negative or ineffective
    - ▪ "My emersion training was for Persian Farsi. I had no prior training in that language so it was kind of backwards. If I had been a school trained 2/2/2 then I would have gained from the experience."
- Preference of immersion over other types of training
  - o Definition: Immersion training is more effective or a better experience than other language training
    - ▪ "It was too bad when 5th group stopped doing language immersions, it was by far the best tool that I have used to learn a language"
- Descriptive or other comments about immersion
  - o Definition: Descriptions of immersion training, without suggestions for change or indications of positive or negative impressions
    - ▪ "I constructed a hospital in that language.....no one spoke English"

Non-relevant

- Non-relevant
  - o Definition: Comments not related to immersion training
    - ▪ "none"

APPENDIX G. SOF LEADER COMMENT THEMES AND DEFINITIONS

SOF unit leaders were given the opportunity to provide comments in response to one of the following prompts:

- *What characteristics would you recommend for an immersion training program in your unit?*
- *Why should immersion training <u>not</u> be provided at your unit?*

All comments were content analyzed and common themes extracted. Separate comment themes were created for each question. The resulting themes are provided below, with a definition of each theme and verbatim exemplar comments that illustrate the theme. For more information about this study's content analysis process, please refer to the LCNA *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

Note: Exemplar comments are presented verbatim and are uncorrected for spelling and other mistakes.

Question: What characteristics would you recommend for an immersion training program in your unit?

Content for the Program
- Technical vocabulary (medical, military, security)
    - Definition: More vocabulary needs to be covered during immersion training
        - "Small groups of 10 or less. Some 1-1 instruction. All focused on civilian engagements with some technical vocab/discussion centered on basic construction, medical and security topics."
- Job specific (or similar tasks/environment to those on the job)
    - Definition: Job-related tasks and environment should be a part of immersion training
        - "Military focused immersion as opposed to college/pattern of life style immersion."
- Modality practice specified
    - Speaking - Conversational
        - Definition: More conversational or speaking tasks should be required during immersion training
            - "Talkign and working withing the target language AO. Day-to-day converstional skills can be developed with personal face-to-face communication on non sensitive topics."
    - Other modality
        - Definition: More reading, writing, or listening tasks should be required during immersion training
            - "I think a month of speaking, listening, and reading the lanuage would be suffucient."
- Classroom work required/Tied to Classroom work (DLI or otherwise)
    - Definition: Immersion training should require classroom work, or be tied to a formal language training program like DLI
        - "Semi-annual immersion training should be available - but it is more important to be tied to the schoolhouse"
- Requires self-study
    - Definition: Immersion training requires self-study

- ▪ "IT SHOULD BE SET UP FOR THE RIGHT PERSONNEL. THESE PEOPLE NEED TO BE CAPABLE OF STUDYING ON THEIR OWN."
- Cultural elements
  - o Definition: Cultural elements should be a part of immersion training
    - ▪ "…work at an Embassy temporally to really understand the culture. Because it is not just the language it is the culture we must understand. That is the way it was done ten years ago but we have forgotten out roots."
- Interaction with populace is required
  - o Definition: Interaction/living with the local/natives should occur during immersion training
    - ▪ "Temporary embassy positions requiring integration with populace."
- Historical or Diplomatic elements
  - o Definition: Immersion training should include historical or diplomatic (e.g., embassy) elements
    - ▪ "Combine language immersion training with host nation internal and external/ foreign affairs systems and processes"
- Dialect training
  - o Definition: Immersion training needs to consider dialects
    - ▪ "Focus on regional dialects. Needs to be colloquial."
- Need for formal training prior to immersion
  - o Definition: SOF operators should receive formal language training (e.g., classroom instruction) before participating in immersion
    - ▪ "Immersion training is the best follow on training after classroom training. It forces the Soldier to use the training received in order to communicate and allows for focused use of the language."
- Other content for the program
  - o Definition: Changes to program content not otherwise specified in the previous codes
    - ▪ "I think we need to throw all aspects of technology towards it (podcasts, mp3, downloadable videos, well known american movies spoken in the target language, etc)."

Specification Requirements of the Program
- Funding
  - o Definition: More funding is needed for immersion training programs
    - ▪ "Being a National Guard unit, our biggest challenge to participating in immersion training is limited funds for pay and allowances in order for soldiers to attend"
- Group size
  - o Definition: Immersion training should have a particular group size or should be conducted individually.
    - ▪ "Immersion training should be done individually, not as a unit (I speak from experience). This will ensure that the individual is actually immersed in the language and cultural, not relying on his budies for support (i.e. speaking english together). Success at this training could also be tied into some kind of criteria for boards (tied into the NCOER/OER, or instructions to promotion boards)."
- Instructor suggestions
  - o Definition: Suggestions regarding instructors

- ▪ "vet the instructors for quality assurance."
- • Language suggestions
  - o No English is spoken (only target language)
    - ▪ Definition: No English and only the target language should be spoken during immersion training
      - o "Arabic needs be done outside of Bahrain. All the ARabs there know English way better than we know ARabic and won't speak to us in Arabic. Places like Saudi, Oman, Egypt, Morocc and tunisia need to be explored…"
  - o Should be aligned with AOR language
    - ▪ Definition: Language used in immersion training should be aligned with the AOR language
      - o "Conduct annually, in a target country the operator will be deploying to that year."
- • Length descriptions
  - o Less than a month
    - ▪ Definition: Duration of immersion training should be less than one month
      - o "Total immersion 2- 4 weeks. A operator who has not been in a country using the target language should go through the training prior to deployment"
  - o 1 to 2 months
    - ▪ Definition: Duration of immersion training should be between one and two months
      - o "total immersion for 6-8 weeks if possible"
  - o Longer than 2 months
    - • Definition: Duration of immersion training should be greater than two months
    - o "I think the LET program is sufficient, if not a little short. While one month in country is slightly effective, a longer duration would prove to be much more effective. I think a switch to 3 months of LET is in order."
- • Frequency descriptions
  - o Immersion should be more frequent
    - ▪ Definition: Immersion training should be conducted more frequently
      - o "I learned English as a result of living 24/7 in an English speaking environment. Hence, regardless one's DLPT score, all unit members should be in receipt of immersion training as frequently as possible between deployment. Such training should obviously be in legitimate balance with other training priorities. To do otherwise is to cheat that or those persons excepted."
  - o Immersion should be conducted at regular intervals
    - ▪ Definition: Immersion training should be conducted at regular intervals
      - o "Immersion training should be offered twice per year for those eligible"
- • Other specifications of the program
  - o Definition: Changes to program specifications not otherwise specified in the previous codes
    - • "Immersion training needs to be less restrictive. The goal is to develop language skills. Often, the restriction on which program must be used, when an individual can attend immersion training, etc, prevent the greatest return on investment and maximizing the use of this program."

Placement Description
- Integration with other training
    - o Definition: Immersion training should be integrated with other training
        - ▪ "Use immersion in support of other training events like TSP/Broken Axel"
- Integration with pre-mission training
    - o Definition: Immersion training should be integrated with pre-mission training
        - ▪ "Should be treated as a PMT type event for specific missions. Scheduled well in advance of the detachment's deployment. So, detachment's earmarked for a specific mission would conduct immersion training at some point and time prior to mission deployment. The mission would have to be scrutinized and meet certain criteria. Not all deployments would require an immersion trainup."
- CONUS preference
    - o Definition: Preference for CONUS immersion training
        - ▪ "Can be done at CONUS, can be done without requiring people to deploy"
- OCONUS preference
    - o Definition: Preference for OCONUS immersion training
        - ▪ "Immersion, OCONUS, is absolutely critical to establish and to maintain/sustain LREC."
- Immersion prior to testing
    - o Definition: Immersion training should be conducted prior to language proficiency testing
        - ▪ "Immersion training should last at least 90 days, followed by scheduled DLPT. This cycle should be required every five years for sustainment."
- Immersion during IAT
    - o Definition: Immersion training should be conducted during initial acquisition training
        - ▪ "During intitial training, operators with moderate to high capability in the language should be urged to conduct immersion training prior to reporting to the unit (Between the QC and Group)."
- Immersion during SET
    - o Definition: Immersion training should be a part of sustainment acquisition training
        - ▪ "begin with 60 days of local sustainment training followed by 60 days of CONUS or OCONUS immersion training."
- Other placement descriptions
    - o Definition: Placement description not otherwise specified in the previous codes
        - ▪ "I would recommend ensuring that the training is conducted off cycle and stagered so that not all the team members are attending training at once."

Selection/Inclusion Criteria
- Minimum proficiency requirements (e.g., DLPT scores) to get to participate
    - o Definition: SOF operators should meet minimum proficiency requirements in order to participate in immersion training
        - ▪ "Operators should have held a 2/2/2 rating in the past and hold at least a 1/1/1 rating at the time of the immersion training."

- Those with lower proficiency scores should participate
  - o Definition: SOF operators with lower proficiency scores should be allowed to participate in immersion training
    - "Presently most units will not send someone to immersion without a 2/2 proficiency. Recommend lowering that standard to 1/1 as it is training and will increase proficiency. If units are forced to meet the standards or commanders will not be successful then we can exceed the standard."
- Those with higher aptitude/motivation should participate
  - o Definition: SOF operators with higher language aptitude or higher motivation should participate in immersion training
    - "Immersion training should be offered to operators with high language aptitude to prepare them for return to operational units."
- All operators should participate
  - o Definition: All SOF operators or an increased number of SOF operators should be allowed to participate in immersion training
    - "Immersioin training program should not only be limited to branch-qualified personnel but should include all qualified linguists within the unit in order to enhance the overall language capability in conducting the SOF mission."
- Test scores will need to increase/results measured
  - o Definition: Language proficiency should be measured to determine proficiency gains after completing immersion training
    - "The training is as good as the stuent makes it. But-the students performance needs to made a greater issue. We do physical training everyday, because we are tested and can lose our job if we fail and gain extra promotion point sfor our achievements on the physical fitmess test. Same standard should be applied to a key skill such as language"
- Mission requirements should decide who participates
  - o Definition: SOF operators with the greatest need for language skills on missions should participate in immersion training
    - "operators should be selected based on mission requirement"
- Younger operators should participate
  - o Definition: Younger SOF operators, or those who will be with the unit longest, should participate in immersion training
    - "send new operators who volunteer so the unit can get a lot out of them over time"
- Use volunteers
  - o Definition: Participation in immersion training should be based on volunteers
    - "it should be voluntary"
- Command should choose who participates
  - o Definition: SOF unit leaders or commanders should decide who participates in immersion training
    - "Directors would recommend which of their staff attend"
- Only mature individuals should participate
  - o Definition: Mature individuals should be chosen to participate in immersion training
    - "The biggest characteristics I would consider would be …their maturity level so that they don't do stupid stuff while representing the unit at another location"

- Other selection preferences
  - o Definition: Selection criteria not otherwise specified in the previous codes
    - ▪ "I think the top rated Soldier for each class should attend immersion training. I would make it a ratio that is equal to the requirement of the ODA scores. So, if you require 1 of 12 on an ODA to have a 2/2/2 then I would send one of 12 from language school to immersion training. I know it is not that simple but something along that line of thinking if the money is available for it."

Command Emphasis
- Emphasis is needed for Immersion programs
  - o Definition: Command should provide support and emphasis for immersion training
    - ▪ "Immersion training is one of the best tools to really learning a language. If the command really wants to reach its language proficiency goals, it needs to increase the amount of immersion training available."
- Incentive program to participate
  - o Definition: Immersion training should have or serve as an incentive program
    - ▪ "We used to do both CONUS and OCONUS based immersion training for our "old" primary AOR, that died after 911. Reinstate with sufficient funding and importance to encourage participation (learning any language, even the easy ones, requires considerable expenditure of time & energy -there has to be some incentive - not necessarily financial, but that also helps!)"
- Make part of career progression
  - o Definition: Immersion training should be a part of career progression
    - ▪ "Believe immersion training should be part of career progression for all SF officers, warrants and NCOs. Will not achieve true language proficiency across the force unless this is the case."

General Comments
- OPTEMPO makes immersion difficult
  - o Definition: OPTEMPO serves as a barrier to immersion training
    - ▪ "Time and resources to conduct the training. / Current OPTEMPO and competing requirements do not allow effective training"
- Positive immersion comments
  - o Definition: Immersion training is positive or effective
    - ▪ "Immersion training is one of the best tools to really learning a language. If the command really wants to reach its language proficiency goals, it needs to increase the amount of immersion training available."
- Negative immersion comments
  - o Definition: Immersion training is negative or ineffective
    - ▪ "Due to the considerable time spent away from families I would not recommend this COA very highly"
- Not relevant
  - o Definition: Comments not related to immersion training
    - ▪ "I am not in a position to comment."

Question: Why should immersion training <u>not</u> be provided at your unit?

Barriers to Immersion
- Not enough time
  - Definition: Not enough time to conduct immersion training
    - "not enough time for another training requirement when guys are going to be "immersed" in Afghanistan every other 6 to 8 months for the rest of their career."
- OPTEMPO/Too many deployment areas
  - Definition: OPTEMPO limits immersion training opportunities, or there are too many deployment areas for immersion to be effective
    - "I don't think that my unit has time for immersion training because of our deployment cycle."
- Other training requirements
  - Definition: Other training requirements limit opportunities for immersion
    - "My soldiers are already overwhelmed keeping up with the technical requirements of their jobs while staying afloat while not deployed. Immersion is time that could be better spent elsewhere."
- Funding barriers
  - Definition: Lack of funding limits opportunities for immersion
    - "The random scheduling and overall running of the "program" has been lack luster at best. This could be due to funds being allocated at the last possible mission with the guidance being "make it happen" which leads to poorly planned and executed training. Of course those participating like it because it is TDY away from the flag pole."
- Personnel shortage (cannot spare personnel away for training)
  - Definition: Not enough personnel to spare for immersion training
    - "My current unit is the 1st SWTG which primary mission is to instruct the SFQC and advance skills. We do not have enough personnel to meet our current mission, let alone to have guys deploy for language training."

Training Reasons
- Local places provide training and are effective
  - Definition: OCONUS immersion is not needed, because immersion can be conducted effectively in local areas
    - "Local area provides ample opportunities to conduct training"
- Job doesn't require language: Support Battalion, HQ, or no language assignment
  - Definition: Immersion training is not needed, because the job does not require language proficiency
    - "While I am assigned to HQ USASOC w/duty at Fort Leavenworth, my primary mission is overseeing ARSOF training at CGSC and BCTP which does not require foreign language skills."

Other Comments

- Other reasons immersion training should not be provided
  - o Definition: Reasons immersion training should not be provided not otherwise specified in the previous codes
    - "I am hesitant to comment on the challenges that immersion may present. Our unit is not resourced to manage such an initiative."
- Agrees with immersion
  - o Definition: Immersion training is positive or effective
    - "If people were sent [to immersion training] prior to getting on a team then I think it should happen."
- Not relevant
  - o Definition: Comments not related to immersion training
    - "N/A"