LANGUAGE, REGIONAL EXPERTISE, AND CULTURE IN THE MILITARY

STATE OF THE SCIENCE



EDITED BY:

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Foreword

Dan Henk, PhD, Colonel (Ret.), U.S. Army

Wise men learn when they can; fools learn when they must.

—Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington

Two American military personnel, a major and a lieutenant colonel, are riding in a jeep in North Kivu near the eastern border of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). With them is their Pakistani UN military driver. Both U.S. officers are assigned as observers to the UN military mission (MONUSCO) in the DRC. Among their other duties, they are consulting with local UN military commanders, members of the national army, and local warlords in ongoing efforts to attenuate horrific atrocities perpetrated against local villagers. It is rainy season, and in the misty drizzle the jeep drives slowly along a rutted, muddy track through thick rainforest. Rounding a sharp curve, the party suddenly finds the road ahead completely blocked by upended petrol drums. Behind the drums stand five or six extremely edgy preteen insurgents, clothed in shards and tatters of old camouflage uniforms and armed with automatic rifles and grenade launchers. Sitting in shelters alongside the road are twenty or thirty other men of various age, also dressed in tattered uniforms. These are now reaching for an assortment of weaponry lying nearby. There is no option for a quick exit because a sudden move risks a fusillade of fire. What should they do?

Our two hypothetical Americans have four clear priorities: first, to survive; second, to establish some kind of rapport with the insurgents; third, to take control of the situation; and fourth, to be allowed to continue their mission. But there is another less obvious and equally desirable objective. If our two military brothers ever encounter this group again, they want to be remembered as honored "patrons," to be treated with deference and respect. Like many military circumstances, this is a fraught human relations predicament with substantial risk. But with the right inventory of cross-cultural skills, it is a survivable encounter with potential for future benefit. Will they succeed and prosper? To do so, they will have to rely heavily on their regional familiarity, language skills, and perhaps most important, their ability to wield the conceptual tools of culture.

Few U.S. military personnel will serve as UN observers in central Africa, but many have faced (and will face) human relations dilemmas every bit as challenging. To succeed, they too require access to the same inventory of conceptual tools and skills, the current rubric for which is *LREC*—language, regional expertise, and culture. Since at least 2015, skill in harnessing these fields has been an articulated objective of the U.S. Department of Defense.

For the expeditionary American military in the twenty-first century, few other responsibilities are as important as that of understanding and dealing wisely with the people in the societies they encounter. This almost inevitably poses significant human relations challenges whether the American actors are senior policymakers, intelligence professionals, military planners, or troops on the ground. The capacity to act wisely in foreign circumstances is heavily dependent on access to LREC insights and skills.

In the present security environment, allies and partners come with divergent organizational cultures, discrete national interests, exclusive agendas, and unique perspectives. Adversaries, for their part, often are amorphous, difficult to define, skilled in asymmetric warfare against their technologically superior foes, and competent at exploiting the features of their own cultural environments. A profound understanding of our adversaries—and a significant capacity to operate within their cultural and conceptual environment—has become key to almost any notion of success.

In the early twenty-first century, America's military leaders recognized these challenges and responded with initiatives to acquire new and badly needed language and "intercultural" capabilities. Yet surprisingly, just as those initiatives began to mature, other priorities assumed center stage. By 2020, a significant part of what had just been tediously built lay dismantled and discarded.

Still, in 2024, there was room for optimism. The Department of Defense had undertaken a significant new effort to build foreign language capabilities. This came with a new supervisory infrastructure extending from the Office of the Secretary of Defense down through the Joint Staff, military departments, and intelligence agencies. By now, the American military had a robust language learning institution with expanding capabilities. Regional studies were embedded in military academe and had been supplemented by modest amounts of culture science in service educational curricula. The services continued to build their cadres of carefully selected and intensively educated regional experts. In sum, all these features reflected a hopeful commitment to increased LREC capability.

But there also were causes for concern. No one knew if LREC would survive the vicissitudes of sudden shifts in military priorities, particularly when the nation again found itself engaged at the high end of the spectrum of conflict. Historical precedent was sobering. While existing policy mandates outlined an ambitious set of desired LREC capabilities, they did not offer a path for building and continuously improving the science behind those capabilities. Advancing the Defense LREC science would require a critical mass of scholars to conduct rigorous research in their own disciplines and collaboratively determine how best to fuse the LREC domains for maximum effect, as well as integration of these findings in service education with effective instructional design. The service culture centers had served as primary laboratories for pairing the available science with the education and training needs of military personnel. The success of the centers was dependent on a synergistic fusion of the domains and their academic disciplines—language, regional expertise, and culture. No institution has since picked up the mantle to perform this essential function for the entire Defense establishment.

A key purpose of this volume to advocate for the continued development of a DOD scientific community that can deliver fully what the culture centers could only offer in part. This scientific community—both civilian and military—would advance the science, not only disseminating existing LREC knowledge into education but also developing new frontiers of knowledge through rigorous inquiry and analysis offered by different academic disciplines and through interdisciplinary collaboration.

To illustrate the value of a mature LREC fusion, it is useful to briefly reintroduce the hypothetical introductory scenario featuring the two U.S. military observers in the DRC. Let us assume they were equipped with the LREC "tool kit" appropriate to their mission.

Prior to setting out on their journey, the officers' familiarity with the environment would have alerted them to the identity of the insurgent groups they might encounter on the way (*regional expertise*) along with the historical narratives, grievances, or aspirations that motivated them (*regional expertise and culture*). The choice of language to initiate communication might have meant the difference between warm smiles all around or a bullet between the eyes, particularly in the uncertain first moments of the encounter (*language and culture*). Building rapport and taking control of the situation would hinge

on the ability to recognize cues about group dynamics, including authority, leadership, decision-making, sources of resentment, and things or ideas of value (*language and culture*). Satisfactory leave-taking might have meant willingness to transport an insurgent's pregnant wife to the mission clinic down the road (*culture and compassion—always a good combination*).

With rare exceptions, the U.S. military currently falls well short of this level of cross-cultural competence. But it can get much better with time and effort, offering incalculably beneficial contributions to future mission success. Beyond the specific conceptual tools, it is possible and supremely important to encourage an attitude of cultural relativism within the general purpose forces—a determination to work without prejudice within the cultural paradigms of other societies, which is a critical enabler of productive relations between people of different cultures.

Fully aware of these historical precedents, three members of the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) faculty, each of whom had been an actor in the recent LREC initiatives, observed the slow dissolution of the recent progress with growing alarm. They determined to do what they could to revive Department-wide interest in LREC by collecting in this volume the cumulative experience and aspirations of the most gifted subject matter experts, then offering these as encouragement to (re)build and persevere. With this in mind, the four sections of this book speak sequentially to four critical features of an LREC renewal: the current state of scientific research and teaching in the field, the development of cross-culturally competent service leadership, the case for developing foreign area expertise to improve international relations, and the nature of the cross-cultural skillsets required to develop productive security partnerships. The overall message is simple: We've made a great start; let's not lose sight of the LREC skillsets vital to building effective cross-cultural relationships around the globe.

Abbreviations

3C	Cross-Cultural Competence
ACTFL	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
AFCLC	Air Force Culture and Language Center
APPT	ACTFL Proficiency Placement Test
ATAF	Army Talent Attribute Framework
CBI	Content-Based Instruction
CCBI	Critical Content-Based Instruction
CJCSI	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction
CLA	Critical Language Awareness
CLCRS	Center for Languages, Cultures, and Regional Studies
CULP	Cultural Understanding and Language Program
DIB	Defense Institution Building
DIILS	Defense Institute of International Legal Studies
DLI	Defense Language Institute
DLIFLC	Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center
DLNSEO	Defense Language and National Security Education Office
DLPT	Defense Language Proficiency Test
DLTR	Defense Language Transformation Roadmap
DOD	Department of Defense
DRI	Defense Reform Initiative
DRMI	Defense Resources Management Institute
DSCA	Defense Security Cooperation Agency
DSCS	Defense Security Cooperation Service
DSCU	Defense Security Cooperation University
FAO	Foreign Area Officer
HTS	Human Terrain System
ICB	Institutional Capacity Building
IDI	Intercultural Development Inventory
ILR	Interagency Language Roundtable
IRT	In-Region Training

ISC	Intercultural Security Cooperation
ISG	Intercultural Security Governance
JRTC	Joint Readiness Training Center
KSAS	Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
LEADER	Language Enabled Airman Development Resource
LEAP	Language Enabled Airman Program
LREC	Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture
MIIS	Middlebury Institute of International Studies
NCSSFL	National Council of State Supervisors for Languages
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy
OACD	Open-Architecture Curriculum Design
OPI	Oral Proficiency Interview
PME	Professional Military Education
PN	Partner Nation
RAND	Research and Development
RAO	Regional Area Officer
ROTC	Reserve Officer Training Corps
SAMM	Security Assistance Management Manual
SSCS	School of Security Cooperation Studies
TLLT	Transformative Language Learning and Teaching
USACC	United States Army Cadet Command
USAFA	United States Air Force Academy
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USNA	United States Naval Academy
VSM	Values Survey Module
VUCA	Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous
WL	World Languages

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

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Since the mid-2000s, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) has elevated the importance of knowledge, skills, and attitudes pertaining to foreign language, intercultural, and regional competencies. Initially, the Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) enterprise explored these concepts in their various military contexts. This led to important changes in curricula at the service academies, numerous training initiatives at all levels of the general purpose force, major shifts in how LREC capabilities are tracked and leveraged, and important partnerships between civilian and military stakeholders.

These capabilities underlie many of the key strategies outlined in the current DOD strategy documents. In the 2022 National Defense Strategy, LREC capabilities play an important role in areas pertaining to deterrence and resilience (9), interoperability (14), and force planning (17), i.e., those areas vital to dominating the information domain and to developing the "close collaboration with Allies and partners" (14) that is considered "foundational for U.S. national security interests" (14). Similarly, DOD Instruction 3126.01C from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (2023) further elaborates that LREC capabilities are crucial in all leader/influence operations that "require building alliances and developing collaborative networks, applying influence and negotiation techniques consistent with local social norms, and understanding how joint, coalition, and non-state actors in the regional system interact with one another and change over time" (Chairman of JCS H-1).

This volume brings together scholarship from both civilian and military leaders to discuss the current state of LREC concepts and capabilities in the context of current strategic initiatives.

Background

Language Perspective: Language Transformation Roadmap

After September 11, 2001, it became clear that we had underestimated our opponents in the face of Islamic extremism. These unconventional opponents not only spoke languages in which we lacked institutional depth but also leveraged cultural realities among the sympathetic elements of their publics that were vastly different from our own. Very early on in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), we realized that we faced several initial challenges: first, How do we leverage LREC capabilities to support the objectives of GWOT? As mentioned by President George W. Bush, this was a "new and different war" ("GWOT"). The term GWOT extended beyond kinetic operations to include "diplomatic, financial, and other actions taken to deny financing or safe harbor to terrorists" (GWOT). These actions were significantly informed by LREC capabilities. Second, How do we build in-house expertise in the languages and dialects used in these regional areas? And third, How do we track and leverage this new expertise across the DOD?

These questions were directly addressed in the Language Transformation Roadmap (LTR) of 2005. The LTR (re)established foreign language proficiency and "regional expertise" as strategic warfighting skills, Defense core competencies, "critical to sustaining coalitions, pursuing regional stability, and conducting multi-national missions" (U.S. DOD 3). As expected, this led to dramatic changes across the DOD foreign language training and education enterprise including changes at numerous Professional Military Education (PME) schoolhouses, ROTC programs, and the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) (McGinn et al. 5–8). These changes also led to the establishment of a Defense Language Office (DLO). Changes were focused on strengthening how foreign language proficiency and regional expertise were managed, promoted, taught, defined, measured, managed, and promoted.

The Language Transformation Roadmap also prompted significant changes at the DOD's service academies including the establishment of new or expanded international programs offices. At West Point, the Department of Foreign Languages

began teaching foreign language classes five days a week, established the Center for Languages, Cultures, and Regional Studies, and began offering cutting-edge study abroad opportunities to the Corps of Cadets. The Naval Academy developed an International Programs Office to work with their Languages and Cultures Department to offer high-quality immersion programs in addition to expanding their language and foreign area studies programs. The Air Force Academy also expanded its foreign language offerings and began promoting the principles of foreign language and culture education espoused in the nationwide proficiency-oriented Language Flagship initiative.[1]

Culture Perspective: The Rise of Culture General Models

Although one of the actions required in the LTR included ensuring "incorporation of regional area content in language training, professional military education and development, and pre-deployment training" (U.S. DOD, Language 7), it became clear that the general purpose force still lacked the "ability to collaborate with culturally diverse allies, or to anticipate the behavior of local societies and adversaries" (Mackenzie and Henk 39).

In response, the branches developed Culture Centers to spearhead initiatives focusing specifically on building a broader cultural competence across the general purpose force. In addition to the Army's TRADOC Culture Center at Fort Huachuca, the Air Force established its Culture and Language Center at Maxwell Air Force Base and the Marine Corps its Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning at Marine Corps University. These centers were staffed with experienced cross-cultural leaders and scientists, and numerous culture initiatives were implemented. These initiatives ranged from innovative "technology-centric offerings" such as scenario-driven culture simulations (Fosher and MacKenzie 4) to long-term training programs such as TRADOC's *Culture Matters* series that strove to teach a culture general curriculum.

While recognizing that the Department of Defense's prioritization of cross-cultural training and education is historically cyclical, the scientific debate promoted by this prioritization was impressive. Social scientists from multiple disciplines engaged in healthy discussion of the best way forward. This led to the development of culture models that seemed relevant to the various military contexts and innovative civilian-military collaborations such as the Human Terrain System (Connable 25). Unfortunately, many of these initiatives fell short and the DOD's focus on culture

waned, leading to decreasing budgets and the closure of many of the culture centers.

Regional Perspectives: Human Terrain Mapping/Geography

While the language and culture education and training programs grew in earnest immediately following the Language Transformation Roadmap, the concept of regional expertise took time to define. To bolster and emphasize this concept, the Defense Language Office was expanded into the Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO), which began promoting a holistic LREC focus through programs such as Project GO (Global Officer), the Boren Scholarship and Fellowships Program, and their Foreign Area Officer programs. As mentioned, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) attempted to address regional expertise, or the understanding of regional dynamics, by creating the Human Terrain System (HTS). The controversial Human Terrain System embedded civilian social scientists as part of advisory Human Terrain Teams focused on providing regional and cultural context to military advisors in the field. While the Human Terrain System was controversial on many fronts (Connable 25), the need for cultural and regional knowledge remains, as seen in our ongoing conflicts in Europe and Southwest Asia. More recently, Devermont identified the intersection of cultural and regional knowledge as the core of human geography. He sees human geography as a tool to enable "one to interpret human behaviors and attitudes over space and time. This is also referred to as the "human terrain" in the intelligence and military communities (U.S. Department of Energy). Further, Marr et al. chronicled the use of human terrain mapping in Baghdad to create a database of geographic and ethnographic information on their Area of Operations (AO) and were able to create tribal maps for the region (126–27). These studies begin to show the intersection of LREC characteristics and how those characteristics could be cataloged, conceptualized, and visualized.

One specific regional domain that gained increased attention during the 2010s was the urban domain. In 2014, the Chief of Staff of the Army tasked his Strategic Studies Group to study the challenges the United States would face when operating in a dense urban environment. The challenges of growth for the host government were paramount, especially infrastructure and resource requirements. Along with the resource challenges, the scale and connectedness of modern cities require competence beyond the experiences learned from historical urban operations. Wolfel et al. emphasize that traditional military intelligence concepts, specifically intelligence preparation of the battlefield, are still valid, but must address the complexity of

scale, interconnectedness, dialectical nature of urban characteristics, and societal vulnerability in cities ("It's in There"). All of these complexities sit at the intersection of the LREC domains. Elsewhere, Wolfel and his coauthors show how densely populated cities contain many of the challenges identified in the Multi-Domain Operations literature, specifically layers of analysis and convergence of the layers, a changing and complex definition of victory, and the growth of the battlefield ("Dense Urban Environments" 24–31). The idea of layers of analysis is inherently a human geography concept as cities function at various scales from the hyperlocal to the global scale. This also demonstrates a growth of the battlefield and the Area of Operations from a discrete region to a region with fuzzy boundaries intricately connected to the global scale through political, social, cultural, and economic linkages.

Regional Perspectives: Climate and the Human Domain

Another important regional issue that is often best explored through a regional lens is evaluating the impact of the environment on soldier health and well-being. Humans almost universally respond to their environment in a relative fashion; that is, they respond to what their bodies, culture, infrastructure, and so on are most accustomed to. As one basic example, regional variations in these factors help explain why a 100°F summer day in New York City would be extremely dangerous, likely resulting in elevated levels of human mortality and morbidity, yet similar conditions in Phoenix, Arizona, would be below average and instead viewed as a respite from more typical summer heat.

Despite the relative nature of human-environment associations, many approaches used to provide warning during potentially dangerous conditions are absolute in nature, assuming humans respond similarly to their environment independent of regional variability. For example, a common approach to evaluate the potential for heat-related illness relies on the wet bulb globe temperature (WBGT). Utilized by numerous athletic associations along with the U.S. military, this index takes into account temperature, humidity, wind, and sunlight. However, WBGT-based thresholds used for warnings are often kept constant across the United States, despite increasing evidence that regional climatic differences across the country should warrant the use of varying thresholds (see Grundstein, as well as Vanos and Grundstein).

Building upon this work through research funded by the Department of Defense's Environmental Security Technology Certification Program (ESTCP), scientists at

the United States Military Academy (USMA) have been developing a relative heat warning system to help augment the WBGT-based absolute system currently in place at the three service academies (USMA, USNA, and USAFA). Unlike the present system, this new, relative approach takes into account the varying regional climates experienced at the three service academies and determines human health risk by evaluating how unusual the thermal conditions are for each locale. This new, relative approach will provide decision-makers with essential information currently omitted by absolute warning systems. This can help reduce risk throughout the summer training season and highlights the vital role of regional approaches in evaluating the impact of the environment on military personnel and readiness. Understanding regional dynamics and their effect on the human domain is a key component of regional expertise.

The Importance of LREC Science

This volume is subtitled *State of the Science* because one of our goals is to promote the importance of scientific inquiry, analysis, and collaboration in identifying and developing lasting LREC-related solutions. With that said, scientific approaches to LREC must go hand in hand with suggestions for the practical application of evidence-based research (Abbe 32). To this end, the authors in this volume represent current research, analysis, and application of LREC principles and best practices in the context of current strategic initiatives.

Volume Overview

In Part One (Chapters 2–5) of this volume, researchers discuss innovative language and culture training and education initiatives. Swanson et al. (Chapter 2) report on the Air Force Academy's expanded focus on evidence-based language education. As they point out, the Language Flagship program continues to emphasize proficiency benchmarking and testing to complement communicative language teaching approaches. MacKenzie and Henk (Chapter 3) present analysis of the current state of culture general training in Professional Military Ethic schoolhouses. While budgets for the culture centers of the initial LREC period (2007–2020) have been reduced and/or eliminated, this chapter highlights the continued need for culture training across the DOD's PME training programs and the critical need to build and maintain a foundation of social and behavioral scientists to shepherd these initiatives. In Chapter 4, Oliva presents findings from classroom research pertaining to critical content-based instruction (CCBI), an approach where intermediate and

advanced language and culture learners question existing frameworks of knowledge and "rely on critical agency" to explore the influence of language on society and to effectuate societal change. Mueller et al. (Chapter 5) present several historical studies of the effectiveness of the Air Force's Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP). Established in 2005, the LEAP program as part of the Air Force Culture and Language Center is one of the longest-running (and most successful) LREC programs developing language and cultural competence "concurrently with and scheduled around primary duties." Through "flexible online classes and periodic in-country immersions," the LEAP model has proven highly effective.

In Part Two (Chapters 6–8), authors discuss cross-cultural leadership through the development of cross-cultural competence. Abbe and Sipos from the Army War College discuss the vital issue of assessing and integrating 3C into Army talent assessments. Lemmons and Schell at the Air Force Academy present a case study of foreign area officers working to develop 3C through a specialized course on global leadership. Last in this section, Alanazi and Leaver discuss the importance of teaching the principles of cultural relativism to bilingual/bicultural leaders abroad. Echoing Hofstede's recommendation of teaching "invisible cultural differences" (Hofstede, xv), Alanazi and Leaver discuss how understanding the *transforming* and *conforming* values and beliefs of those we are asked to influence abroad can better equip cross-cultural leaders to be the global change agents we need them to be.

In Part Three (Chapters 9–11), authors offer perspectives to better understand the foreign area through an LREC lens. Wolfel and Watson (Chapter 9) analyze political discourse in Russia over the last twenty-plus years, specifically Vladimir Putin's key speeches, to better understand the linguistic, cultural, and regional dynamics that led to the War in Ukraine. In Chapter 10, David Bradley, a Foreign Area Officer, outlines several innovative top-down and bottom-up solutions for language-enabled officers to bridge the gap between their general language proficiency and the specific LREC skills they need on the job. Last, in Chapter 11, Chevalier from the Naval Academy describes the creation and evaluation of the new Foreign Area Studies capstone course at the Academy.

In Part Four (Chapters 12–13), authors discuss two perspectives on developing more effective interoperability operations and intercultural security cooperation. First, Matthew Hughes (Chapter 12) discusses and evaluates many of the interoperability initiatives carried out by U.S. forces in Latin America and the Caribbean. Then, Avineri and Tomb (Chapter 13) discuss the intercultural dynamics that underlie

many of the defense, influence, and strategy initiatives needed to foster effective intercultural security cooperation among partner nations.

In Chapter 14, the concluding chapter, Watson and Leaver discuss the importance of LREC instruction as a transformative process in developing cross-cultural leaders firmly grounded in the principles of cultural relativism. With a focus on transformative learning and teaching principles, LREC instructors in PME schoolhouses, service academies, and any instructional environment can develop the critical linguistic, cross-cultural, and regional competencies that are vital to success for cross-cultural leaders.

Intended Audience

With this volume, the editors and chapter authors hope to spark renewed dialog about current and future LREC initiatives across the DOD. All LREC stakeholders from civilian academics to military practitioners to those involved in LREC talent management are invited to consider the innovations and best practices described in this volume. Also, since some LREC stakeholders are seeing a reduced focus on LREC issues associated with the closure of military culture centers, it is our desire to reinvigorate this discussion through rigorous scientific inquiry and analysis.

Notes

1. For more about the Language Flagship Program, see Murphy and Evans-Romaine, 2016.

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PART ONE

Innovations in Teaching World Languages and Cultures

CHAPTER 2

Student Proficiency Growth in Spanish

Advancements at the U.S. Air Force Academy's World Language Program

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Abstract

The paradigm of the teaching and learning of world languages has been significantly impacted by Communicative Language Teaching approaches. An increased emphasis on the proficiency testing of language learners is now prioritized where program coordinators and administrators have set proficiency benchmarks for language learners to achieve at all levels of instruction. Established at the turn of the twenty-first century, the Language Flagship program—a national effort to change the way Americans learn languages—calls for institutions of higher education to create a "viable process to assess proficiency learning in high quality, well-established academic language programs" (Swanson et al. 2). Perhaps in line with the national movement, the Secretary of the United States Air Force stated that the Language Enabled Airman Program—a congressionally mandated program—serves to "[I] ncrease the language inventory from within the force … we can't contract this ability out to non-warfighters" (Chesser 3). In 2020, leadership at the United States Air Force Academy directed faculty to create Language Roadmaps to Proficiency, where proficiency benchmarks were developed for each of the eight languages taught at the Academy. Afterward, a comprehensive proficiency testing regime was set into place. In 2021, students enrolled in first- and second-year Spanish took the ACTFL Proficiency Placement Tests in fall 2021 and again in spring 2022 to gauge potential gains in Spanish proficiency. Students showed impressive gains in both reading and listening modalities. Results have implications for instructors, program directors, language learners, and language curricula.

KEYWORDS: communicative language teaching, language assessment, language benchmarks, Language Enabled Airman Program, language flagship program, foreign language proficiency, language proficiency testing, second language acquisition

Introduction

The question regarding reasonable expectations of language proficiency for students to attain after a specific learning sequence of language study has challenged the field of language teaching and learning for decades (Swanson et al. 2). In the 1960s, Carroll reported that educational stakeholders (e.g., instructors, program directors, administrators) have struggled to establish reasonable proficiency benchmarks, communicate them to language learners and faculty, and attain them after various sequences of study (e.g., first year, second year) (Carroll 131–132).

Today in the United States of America, having world language (WL) skills is crucial for America's diplomatic, business, and national security interests (La Corte and Voisine 3). The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) stated that 90% of businesses surveyed reported a need for employees with skills in languages other than English (ACTFL, "Making Languages" 15). Additionally, the ACTFL report indicated that the global economy would continue to grow, further emphasizing the vital importance of language proficiency in the public sphere (15). Unfortunately, despite this specified need in business, "the vast majority of American citizens remain monolingual" (American Academy of Arts and Sciences vii), and unfortunately, there has been a serious decrease in the enrollment of students taking WLs other than English. Prior to 2009, surveys showed sustained growth; however, there was a 29.3% decrease in enrollment between 2009 and 2021 (Lusin et al. 4).

While students studying WLs do so for a variety of reasons (e.g., employment opportunities, travel), it is important to note that not all language learners acquire language at the same rate (McLaughlin 7). Thus, there is a need to set benchmarks for WL proficiency and help learners move along their interlanguage continuum, gaining increasingly higher levels of proficiency as they progress through learning sequences (e.g., first year, second year). Setting proficiency benchmarks allows for the understanding of what can be and is attained after specific sequences of study. Without such data, educational stakeholders (e.g., students, instructors, administrators) "cannot determine individual student and general program success, nor can they know when to intervene to improve programs and when to investigate practices that make some programs more

successful than others" (Swanson et al. 2). Moreover, the lack of such knowledge may cause programs to set benchmarks that are either too ambitious or too low for their language learners. With respect to the current study, the researchers investigated the baseline proficiency of students of Spanish at the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) during the first two days of instruction and again near the end of the two-semester sequence for both first-year and second-year language learners.

Literature Review

The seminal investigation by Carroll marked the first major exploration of student outcomes in contemporary WLs. Despite its more than five-decade vintage, Carroll's study remains noteworthy, delving into the realms of speaking, reading, and listening proficiency across five languages (French, Italian, German, Spanish, and Russian) from various U.S. universities. The study's scope extended beyond mere language assessment, incorporating an analysis of factors influencing student outcomes such as gender, age, prior language study duration, overseas experience, and current university year.

Carroll employed the Modern Language Association test, aligning it with the then-novel Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale, a choice dictated by the scale's recent adoption in government circles. Significantly, the study predated the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, currently ubiquitous in academic and business contexts. Carroll's groundbreaking work not only surveyed language outcomes expansively but also introduced the use of the ILR scale, enabling future research aligning with the subsequently developed ACTFL Guidelines. See Appendix A for a comparison of the ILR and ACTFL scales.

Findings from Carroll's investigation indicated that students majoring in French, German, Italian, Russian, and Spanish achieved an average ILR 2+ proficiency level (141–51), approximately equivalent to ACTFL Advanced-Mid or Advanced-High. Factors correlating with higher proficiency levels included heritage language background, study abroad experiences, elementary school language study, language study at larger institutions, and no discernible difference between genders.

Post-Carroll, comprehensive research on general language proficiency outcomes in higher education was notably limited for nearly half a century, exacerbated by the evolving landscape of WL study in universities. The original languages highlighted in Carroll's study were no longer the only focus of WL study in higher education.

While these languages were still in the top 20 languages in higher education, they were subsequently joined and, in some cases, replaced by enrollments in American Sign Language, Japanese, Chinese, and Arabic (Looney and Lusin 4–5). Carroll's initial study provided essential but increasingly outdated information for decades as research on outcomes in higher education became more specialized (focusing on specific factors) and less general.

Recognizing this gap, the Flagship Initiative in 2014 launched a call for proposals to investigate student outcomes in various languages across three state universities in the United States. The resulting three-year grant period witnessed approximately 9,000 students undergoing language proficiency tests, offering diverse insights across reading, listening, and speaking in languages such as Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), French, German, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish (Winke et al. 94–95). As a result, subsequent studies began to zero in on specific language skills and particular factors affecting proficiency outcomes (such as language learning venue). For example, listening was identified as one of the least-researched or most under-researched aspects of assessment (Harding et al. 326). More specifically, listening fluency and extensive listening have suffered a lack of attention in research studies (Chang et al. 423). Other research suggests that listening skills can be improved by focusing on reading (Jiang et al. 1160), and extensive reading and listening may have a reciprocal positive effect (Renandya and Jacobs 12). Because of its important source of target language input, listening is a primary skill needed to develop language proficiency. But assessments must focus on the learner's ability to comprehend the specific type of oral input/domain being evaluated (Wagner 231).

Isbell and Winke advocated for using the "ACTFL Speaking Assessment: Oral Proficiency Interview—Computer" (ACTFL Speaking Assessment: OPIc) to assess proficiency and monitor language learning progress at the tertiary level. Several studies have delved into specific factors affecting outcomes, particularly in the context of study abroad (see, for instance, DeKeyser; Dewey et al.; Freed; Hernández; and Vande Berg et al.). At times these studies show conflicting results, underscoring the challenges to research in this area: the differences in measurement of quantity and quality of target language use, the target language proficiency level of learners entering study abroad programs, lack of longitudinal accounts of target language spoken while abroad, and the great differentiation/variation among study abroad programs (see, for instance, Di Silvio et al.; Isabelli-García et al.; McManus et al.; and Tullock and Ortega).

Despite these advances, the body of research emerging from the Flagship Initiative, while substantial, represents just a fraction of the comprehensive studies needed. Malone emphasized the necessity of further research that encompasses a wider spectrum of outcomes under varying institutional conditions, highlighting the contrast between Carroll's findings from large institutions and the Flagship-funded research conducted in three large public universities (317). Tschirner added depth to the discourse with a comprehensive report on ACTFL reading and listening tests, incorporating participants from the Flagship study. With a participant pool exceeding 6,000, Tschirner delineated average outcomes after two, three, four, five, and six semesters of study (Tschirner 201–23). Despite this progress, more research is essential to gauge outcomes in diverse learning environments, with Tschirner's data and the Flagship project outcomes serving as valuable benchmarks.

While research studies that assess student language proficiency outcomes are important contributions to the overall second language (L2) acquisition database, a further—and perhaps more germane—step needs to be taken to give meaning to these research results. Greatly missing in the quest to evaluate proficiency and ascertain if benchmarking goals are being met is the delineation of the underlying reason(s) for said progress. If the goal is proficiency, it is necessary not only to assess student progress but also to evaluate program curricula to ascertain that the most effective teaching practices are being integrated into classroom instruction to achieve student progress on the proficiency continuum (Soneson and Tarone 51). In other words, student progress toward proficiency goals can be assessed, but this does not verify the underlying reasons/causes of said progression. One way is to set initial proficiency benchmarks for courses and then assess student progress toward them. The best approach would be to develop and apply a systematic plan of assessment taking into consideration student progress across several semesters using demographic data. Such data could be used to determine students' baseline proficiency and then to ascertain how the students have increased their proficiency ratings over time. The next step, then, is to analyze and observe programmatic components that have contributed in a meaningful way. Proficiency benchmarking is an ongoing process, fluid by nature given the final goal of developing the optimal WL curriculum and teaching practices to promote movement along the WL continuum.

In this context, the present study endeavors to contribute to the expanding body of knowledge by examining outcomes after two or four semesters of Spanish language study at USAFA. The cadets, representing a distinct subset of postsecondary students, have been underrepresented in language outcomes research. Given the broader implications of language proficiency in U.S. life, particularly in areas

like education, business, security, and diplomacy, understanding the language outcomes of future military leaders is paramount. The following research questions guide the present study:

1. What levels of proficiency in listening and in reading did the first-year Spanish participants attain?
2. What levels of proficiency in listening and in reading did the second-year Spanish participants attain?
3. Based on testing results, how accurate are the previously set proficiency benchmarks for first- and second-year Spanish?

Methods

The mission of the Department of Languages and Cultures (DFLC) at USAFA is to produce culturally attuned and linguistically capable Airmen. Its graduates deploy worldwide in support of U.S. strategic interests and engagements. The focus of the program is squarely on oral proficiency by employing Communicative Language Teaching approaches—a signature pedagogy in WL instruction. It is critical for U.S. Airmen to work with partners and allies in their respective languages and to have sufficient cultural knowledge to meaningfully engage and create lasting relationships. To accomplish this critical mission, it is imperative to continuously assess and ensure that USAFA's language programs are meeting the needs of the U.S. Air Force. Faculty in DFLC teach eight languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Starting in Academic Year 2020–2021, the department began to standardize the language used for assessment. The eight DFLC language communities developed their individual Language Roadmaps for Proficiency, which are aligned with the "ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines" and the "NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements." This language is codified in the department's roadmaps, with each language community having its own roadmap and desired proficiency outcomes.

This pedagogical alignment was used to set proficiency benchmarks for students at each level, which allowed faculty to set a foundation for comparison across its eight programs. Respective language communities are able to see how one program might aim for Novice-High after 160 hours of instruction, while another might set its sights on Intermediate-Low. Fundamentally, DFLC's roadmaps were aligned with established national standards while enabling various language programs to compare, gain insight, and collaborate based on a mutually accepted foundation.

Prior to the development of the language roadmaps, the department relied on the Defense Language Proficiency Test "DLPT Relevant Information"—an online listening and reading assessment that examines one's receptive skills in the target language—to assess learners' L2 proficiency. The test was not without its deficiencies. First, The DLPT provided inadequate feedback to both faculty and learners, and it was not aligned with current or past standards. The faculty, rightfully, did not believe that the DLPT could be used as a dependable measure for each of the language community's stated objectives. For example, learners who score a 2 on the ILR scale and feel disheartened do not understand that, given the number of instructional contact hours, a 2 in Japanese is laudable. There is no insight regarding scoring, and no feedback in terms of potential strengths and weakness. The learner gets a proficiency rating with little to no explanation.

Second, and not unique to the DLPT, this assessment only measures ability in the receptive skills. DFLC's gold standard is oral proficiency—the ability to communicate orally with partners and allies. The long-term focus on receptive skills assessment impacted DFLC's pedagogical approach and associated curricula, and consequently, oral assessment was not heavily weighted in course syllabi.

The first step to bridging this gap was adopting the Adaptive Reading Test and Adaptive Listening Test "ACTFL Proficiency Placement Test." These assessments are both clearly tied to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. The use of these tests allowed DFLC to assess all language programs and provide individual language learners with targeted feedback based on their results. Starting with the 2021–2022 academic year, through random sampling, DFLC implemented a regular testing cycle across all levels of the eight language programs to ensure that each language community was meeting its clearly defined goals as articulated in its roadmap. These tests, however, while a marked improvement over the DLPT, shared a similar deficiency: they lacked assessment of the productive skill of speaking.

To address the need for greater emphasis on oral proficiency, the department developed a new policy. Any learner that scored the equivalent of Intermediate in one or both of the reading or listening portion of either the DLPT or Adaptive tests was eligible to take the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), which is "a live, 15- to 30-minute telephone conversation between a certified ACTFL Tester and the candidate," "ACTFL Speaking Assessment: The Oral Proficiency Interview" [OPI] 1. Ideally, the OPI would be administered to each graduating student, but the cost of testing restricts wider dissemination. The administration of the OPI serves as an effective reminder that oral

production is the department's focus while also acting as an incentive among learners who want to qualify to take the OPI.

While USAFA does not offer a language major, it does offer language minors and a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Area Studies. Cadets selecting the major can choose a language, a world region, and a specific academic discipline (e.g., French, Africa or, History). In terms of minors, approximately 240 students graduate annually with a WL minor (Carriedo). All first-year students are required to study a foreign language during their initial year at USAFA—two semesters, or 160 hours. All students take the DFLC language placement test during basic training. They can test out of the language requirement with Advanced Placement exam scores or via the department's placement test. Based on the results, they can validate one semester or the full year; they can also test into a higher level. Students who place into higher levels include those with substantial school-based or heritage language experience. Therefore, these students show a wide range of language backgrounds, not dissimilar to their counterparts at more traditional institutions of higher education.

Study Context

USAFA is a unique institution of higher education. It is a four-year military academy that prepares the next generation of Air Force officers. As part of the core curriculum, cadets must take two semesters of the same language or validate the credit (see above). At the first year or beginning level, cadets take WL classes every day Monday through Friday instead of a typical Monday-Wednesday-Friday or Tuesday-Thursday collegiate offering. First-year cadets studying WLs must attend classes each day in order to complete an 80-day class semester. WL classes at the second-year level and above meet every other day for a total of 40 days per semester. In addition to attending academic classes, the cadets must participate in military and physical training activities and are evaluated on performance each semester. Additionally, cadets are excused from classes for a variety of purposes (e.g., flight physicals). The first six days of class cadets may drop or add classes. At the end of each academic year, cadets are randomly selected to participate in proficiency tests to gauge progress.

USAFA Spanish instructors set proficiency benchmarks in the Spanish Language Roadmap to Proficiency for each level to attain by the end of the academic year. With respect to the present study, the benchmark proficiency level for first-year

Spanish for USAFA is set as a band from Novice-Mid to Novice-High. Similarly, the benchmark proficiency band for second-year Spanish is from Novice-High to Intermediate-Mid.

Procedures

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval for human subjects testing, 58 cadets enrolled in first- and second-year Spanish classes were randomly selected to take two adaptive tests (see below for a detailed description) in the department's language lab the second and third day of classes of Fall 2021. Approximately nine months later, the same 58 cadets took the two adaptive tests at the end of the second semester in late April 2022. The Director of the Language Lab proctored both test administrations and sent the results electronically to the researchers. Data collection ended in early May 2022 and data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 29 (SPSS 29).

Instruments

The ACTFL Proficiency Placement Test (APPTl) consists of two parts: reading and listening. These two inexpensive assessments represent the interpretive mode of communication, as described in the *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* (National Standards Collaborative Board). Both tests assess test takers' proficiency between Novice-Low and Advanced-Low. Each item consists of either a genuine reading text or audio passage and one multiple-choice question with one correct answer associated with the text or passage. Each test can last up to 60 minutes. However, instead of a time limit to take the entire test, a time limit has been set for each test item. Test items targeted at the Intermediate and Advanced levels have a time limit of 75 and 120 seconds, respectively. The test is computer-adaptive, and each skill (i.e., reading and listening) presents 10 to 25 items depending on the ability of the test taker. Both tests are computer adaptive, which means the number of items individual test takers respond to will vary, depending on performance. Test items are drawn from item pools at specified proficiency levels assessing a broad range of topics including everyday life, current events, and education, among others. As test takers begin to fail at a certain proficiency level, the test concludes.

Once a test is completed, a floor rating (the level at which the test taker has demonstrated sustained performance) and a ceiling rating (the level at which the examinee has demonstrated patterns of breakdown) is computed "ACTFL

Proficiency Placement Test." Test takers receive separate ratings for reading and for listening. Results from the APPT can be helpful for a multitude of purposes such as the placement of higher education students in an appropriate course, measuring proficiency at certain points of the curricula, and informing program evaluation. The APPT ratings are from the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines as language subject matter experts and assessment professionals align the texts, passages, and items with the criteria described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines. With respect to the Spanish tests, the Adaptive Reading Test includes 57 items: 24 at the Intermediate level and 33 at the Advanced level. The developers reported a 0.80 Rasch person reliability coefficient, indicating a relatively high level of internal consistency (Clifford and Cox 57, 390). Item reliability is strong (0.98), indicating that the items function at distinctive levels of difficulty (390). Clifford and Cox reported that they conducted an independent samples t-test between the Intermediate and Advanced items and determined that the two groups of items indeed differed in terms of item difficulty. The Adaptive Listening Test includes 74 items: 35 at the Intermediate level and 39 at the Advanced level (390). Like the Reading Proficiency Test, a 0.85 Rasch person reliability coefficient was reported, indicating a relatively high level of internal consistency. Item reliability analysis revealed a strong coefficient (0.97) (390), which signifies that the items function at separate levels of difficulty. Cox and Clifford conducted independent samples t-test between the Intermediate and Advanced items and reported that the two groups of items differed in terms of item difficulty (53).

Participants

As mentioned earlier, a total of 58 participants in the first two years of Spanish offered at USAFA were randomly selected for the present study. All of the participants took the APPT in both modalities (reading and listening) in August 2022 on the second and third day of the academic semester and then again in May 2023 about one week before the semester ended.

With respect to participants in first-year Spanish ($n = 44$), the majority self-reported as males ($n = 33$), white/Caucasian ($n = 30$) with 6 Latino/a, 3 African American, and 5 Asian, and the mean age was 19.5 years at the second administration of the tests. Turning to the 14 participants in second year Spanish, the majority self-reported as males ($n = 9$), white/Caucasian ($n = 10$) with 2 Latinos, and 2 Asian, and the average age was 20.2 years at the second administration of the tests. The sample's demographics are representative of USAFA in general (USAFA).

Viewed collectively, all of the participants reported previous experience in Spanish, obtaining all or most of their language ability through the U.S. educational system (M = 2.40 years of study) prior to matriculating at USAFA. The participants indicated that the last Spanish class they took, on average, was two years prior to enrolling at USAFA. None of the participants reported having dual enrollment (college) credit for Spanish.

Findings

After each of the two administrations of the APPT for both first- and second-year Spanish participants, the first author received the APPT data, which contained both floor and ceiling ratings, and entered them in SPSS 29 for data analysis. The APPT proficiency ratings are categorical variables, sometimes referred to as nominal variables (a variable that has two or more categories). As described in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, the proficiency scale ranges from Novice to Distinguished. The first three levels, Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced, have three sublevels each: low, mid, and high. For example, a person taking the APPT may receive a proficiency rating of Novice-High, Intermediate-Low, and so forth, which are categorical variables. Given that they are not continuous variables (variables that can be assigned a value within a range), and considering the small number of participants in the study, inferential statistics (e.g., correlation, regression) were not calculated. Thus, frequencies of proficiency ratings are reported here for the floor rating only because it is the proficiency level at which the test taker demonstrated sustained performance.

With respect to the first research question about the levels of proficiency attained in the two modalities by the first-year Spanish participants, Table 2.1 reflects the findings at the pretest (start of the academic year) and posttest (end of the academic year) for both listening and reading. Regarding proficiency ratings for listening comprehension at the onset of the academic year, almost three quarters (73%, n = 32) of the participants received proficiency ratings in the Novice range. Twenty-five percent (n = 11) garnered proficiency ratings in the Intermediate range, and one student received a rating of Advanced-Low. However, at the end of the two semesters of Spanish classes in listening comprehension, the number of participants testing at the Novice range decreased by over half to 30% (n = 13), and the number of participants who received a rating in the Intermediate range almost tripled (70%, n = 31). There were not any participants at the Advanced-Low level. The data suggest that participants increased their proficiency in listening comprehension over the academic year.

TABLE 2.1

Pretest and Posttest Proficiency Ratings for First-Year Spanish Cadets in Listening and Reading

	LISTENING		READING	
	Pretest	**Posttest**	**Pretest**	**Posttest**
Novice-Low	4	1	12	3
Novice-Mid	8	1	6	3
Novice-High	20	11	17	18
Intermediate-Low	6	11	4	6
Intermediate-Mid	5	16	2	2
Intermediate-High	0	4	2	8
Advanced-Low	1	0	0	3
Advanced-Mid	0	0	1	1
Advanced-High	0	0	0	0
n	44	44	44	44

Source: U.S. Military Academy, Department of Languages and Culture

With respect to the modality of reading for the first-year Spanish participants at the start of the academic year, Table 2.1 shows that 80% of the participants received a rating in the Novice range (n = 35) while 18% were in the Intermediate range (n = 8). One participant received a rating of Advanced-Mid in reading. At the end of the two semesters of Spanish classes with respect to listening comprehension, 24 participants (55%) tested at the Novice range, 16 participants (36%) received a rating in the Intermediate range, and 4 participants (9%) received a rating at the Advanced levels, indicating that participants moved up the proficiency ladder in reading comprehension over the course of the two semesters.

Next, the researchers examined participants' proficiency growth individually. Inspection of the listening comprehension data revealed that 68% of the participants (n = 30) increased in proficiency by at least one proficiency sublevel or higher during the academic year, while 25% of the participants (n = 11) remained at the same sublevel. Three of the participants (7%) decreased two sublevels. Analysis of the reading comprehension data showed that 64% of the participants (n = 28) increased at least one proficiency level higher during the academic year, 32% (n = 14) remained at the same sublevel, and two participants (5%) decreased one and three sublevels respectively from the Intermediate level to the Novice level, suggesting that one of the participants may not have taken the APPT seriously during the second administration at the end of the academic year.

Turning to the second research question about the levels of proficiency in listening and in reading the second-year Spanish participants attained, Table 2.2 shows that 29% of the participants were in the Novice range (n = 4) and 71% were in the Intermediate range (n = 10) in listening at the start of the academic year. However, at the end of the two semesters of Spanish classes, one participant (7%) tested at the Novice range, 12 participants (86%) received a rating in the Intermediate range, and one participant (7%) received a rating of Advanced-Low.

TABLE 2.2

Pretest and Posttest Proficiency Ratings for Second-Year Spanish Cadets in Listening and Reading

	LISTENING		READING	
	Pretest	**Posttest**	**Pretest**	**Posttest**
Novice-Low	0	0	0	0
Novice-Mid	1	0	1	0
Novice-High	3	1	6	5
Intermediate-Low	6	1	1	0
Intermediate-Mid	3	5	1	1
Intermediate-High	1	6	4	5
Advanced-Low	0	1	1	1
Advanced-Mid	0	0	0	2
Advanced-High	0	0	0	0
n	14	14	14	14

With respect to the modality of reading for the second-year Spanish participants, Table 2.2 shows that exactly half of the participants (50%) were in the Novice range (n = 7), 43% were in the Intermediate range (n = 6), and one participant received a rating of Advanced-Low in reading at the start of the academic year. At the end of the two semesters of Spanish classes, five participants (36%) tested at the Novice range, 6 participants (n = 43%) received a rating in the Intermediate range, and three participants (21%) received a rating of Advanced-Low.

Closer inspection of the listening data indicated that nine participants (64%) increased at least one proficiency sublevel or higher during the academic year, while three participants (21%) remained at the same sublevel and two participants (14%) decreased only one sublevel. Analysis of the reading data indicated that 50% of the participants increased at least one proficiency level or higher during the academic year, 43% (n = 6) remained at the same sublevel, and one first-year participant decreased three sublevels from Intermediate-Low to Novice-Low (see

Table 2.1),, again suggesting that this single participant may not have taken the APPT seriously during the second administration at the end of the academic year.

Finally, with respect to the third research question about accuracy of proficiency benchmarks set by the department, it is important to note that the benchmark proficiency level for first-year Spanish for USAFA was set as a band from Novice-Mid to Novice-High, and the benchmark proficiency band for second-year Spanish was from Novice-High to Intermediate-Mid. With respect to first-year Spanish listening comprehension, only one participant did not reach the lower end of the proficiency benchmark, Novice-Low, at the end of the academic year. Thus, 97% of the cadets met or exceeded the benchmark. Similar findings were found for reading comprehension, where three participants did not reach the Novice-Mid benchmark, yet 41 of the 44 total participants either met or exceeded the benchmark.

Turning to the second-year participants and their proficiency ratings compared to the proficiency benchmark band, Novice-High to Intermediate-Low, 100% of the participants reached at least the lower end of the band, Novice-High, for listening comprehension, and many exceeded the upper end of the band, Intermediate-Low. Seven participants received proficiency ratings of Intermediate-High and Advanced-Low. Analogous findings were found for reading comprehension, where six participants had ratings of Intermediate-High and Advanced-Low.

Discussion

The establishment of both "rigorous and attainable outcomes for WL learning sequences is critical to supporting programs in developing strong curricula and measuring their outcomes" (Swanson et al. 13). While there is a dearth of literature regarding WL learner proficiency in institutions of higher education, the present study aims to provide a much-needed first step in establishing proficiency benchmarks in second and fourth semester Spanish language courses at a military academy. These findings not only serve post-secondary institutions but also play an integral role in providing WL understanding in order to support national security and WL endeavors.

The results of this study are important for several reasons. First and foremost, the data from this study provide valuable evidence of the accuracy of the benchmarks initially set by the language roadmaps in the Spanish curricula at the first- and second-year levels. Determining more precise benchmarks at each language level enables course developers to create effective syllabi that can help learners progress

more efficiently on their language learning continuum. For first-year Spanish, the data show that the benchmarks appear to be too conservative. For second-year Spanish, however, the benchmarks appear to be accurate thus far. Nevertheless, caution dictates that information from additional testing will provide further answers to determine the correctness of these benchmarks. While the data are intriguing, results from more than one year of testing are necessary to provide more reliable information leading to more precise benchmarking.

Second, particularly for the subject population in this study, use of the DLPT to measure language proficiency is a given in the military arena. The DLPT is used by most federal government agencies for testing language ability of Department of Defense personnel worldwide ("DLPT Relevant Information"). Given this reliance on the DLPT to gauge language proficiency, it is advantageous for this study's subjects to understand their personal results from this testing in order to aim for further improvement in their language proficiency. Language proficiency for those serving in the military has both career implications and financial ramifications. In addition, demonstration of progress in language proficiency can provide strong motivation for further study.

Recognizing that the DLPT only assesses receptive skills, a word about receptive skills versus productive skills is in order here. In simplified terms, reading and listening are classified as receptive skills, while speaking and writing are classified as productive skills. In general, most language students express a desire to be able to speak the language they are studying; oral communication is their primary focus. Yet productive skills in an L2 generally lag behind the receptive skills, according to studies by Davies ("Receptive" 441), Van Parreren (251), and Yuzar and Rejeki (101–102).. There is, however, evidence that concentration on the development of the receptive skills in L2 learning lays a foundation for growth in the productive skills. Reading has been shown to improve oral comprehension and production in an L2 (Rodrigo 59). Other research indicates that listening is a primary skill that will transfer to and support speaking ability (Davies, "Receptive" 441; Sreena and Ilankumaran 669). The results from this study directly related to receptive skills can certainly impact the productive skills in the L2 eventually. To that end, the researchers are also engaged in a study that evaluates the benchmarking of oral skills by learners of Spanish, using the OPI, also used by federal government agencies in general and the military in particular (see the study by Swanson and LeLoup). Analyses from studies such as these will offer additional material on which to draw for further benchmarking activity.

The U.S. Department of Defense continues to hold language and culture enabled military personnel in high regard. Findings from this study provide important information regarding expectations for language learners of Spanish and the curricula used to prepare these future military officers. Per U.S. Department of Defense guidelines, cadets graduating from USAFA with language expertise (i.e., a major in Foreign Area Studies or a minor in one of the eight languages taught at USAFA) must take the DLPT. This assessment reports language proficiency using the ILR scale, which assigns a numerical rating (e.g., 1+, 2) instead of using the ACTFL proficiency descriptors (e.g., Novice-High). The latter are more meaningful to language learners for feedback purposes. Thus, results from the APPT are more helpful in terms of feedback to the learner about his or her performance on the reading and listening tests.

Given the importance of the findings, this study is not without its limitations. More participants and more demographic information about them would be helpful. Such information as years of study of Spanish and the primary approach to WL instruction used in those classes prior to attending USAFA would be useful. Additionally, having confirmation of Communicative Language Teaching as the principal approach to teach Spanish at USAFA by instructors would corroborate the aims of the present benchmarking. For example, it would be informative to learn if all instructors are teaching in the target language 90%+ of the class time as recommended by the ACTFL "Facilitate" or if they are teaching in English primarily where participants learn about the language instead of acquiring it (Krashen 2). Finally, as indicated above, the subject pool at USAFA is potentially quite different from that of other institutions of higher education, certainly civilian institutions. It would be interesting to conduct a similar study in a civilian institution of higher education with language minors and majors.

Finally, these results make clear that future research is needed to corroborate such findings, include additional subject variables, and thus broaden the database on proficiency research. For example, information about the prior language learning experiences of the students would be helpful to be able to parse results and perhaps determine cause and effect more clearly. Also, a thorough examination of teaching practices that embrace Communicative Language Teaching as the basis for the curricula needs to be substantiated. It would be informative to know if these positive results are due to the curricular development and instructional methods used at USAFA in Spanish or if there are other variables that might explain some of the variance in outcomes.

Proficiency testing of language learners holds promise for moving language learners along their interlanguage continuum. By prioritizing such assessment, instructors and program coordinators as well as administrators can set achievable proficiency benchmarks for language learners at all levels of instruction. While proficiency testing can be impeded by cost due to WL programs lacking internal funds, educational leaders need to embrace the Language Flagship program call for K-20 programs to create and fund a sustainable process to assess language learner proficiency (Swanson et al. 2). WL skills are critical for America's diplomatic, business, and national security interests (La Corte and Voisine) and are in need today ("ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines").

APPENDIX A

A Comparison of the Proficiency Skill Levels of the ACTFL Scale and the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR)

Novice (Low/Mid/High)	0/0+
Intermediate (Low/Mid/High)	1/1+
Advanced-Low	2
Advanced-Mid	2
Advanced-High	2+
Superior	3/3+/4/4+

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CHAPTER 3

Protecting, Preserving, and Maturing the Culture Component of Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is devoted to a kit of conceptual instruments important to cross-cultural effectiveness in the twenty-first century. These instruments represent mindsets and skillsets that together may best be described as *cross-cultural competence*. Commonly defined as the ability to quickly and accurately comprehend and effectively and appropriately interact in culturally complex environments (Selmeski, "Military" 12), cross-cultural competence (often abbreviated 3C) is the essential and central culture component of the Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) paradigm. The vital aptitude of this component is the ability to mitigate the complex human relations challenges now commonly faced by America's military professionals. The central ingredients are derived primarily from the social and behavioral sciences, which for approximately a decade and a half after September 11, 2001, the United States military made significant efforts to harness. The contention of this chapter is that those skills, recently characterized as the "human weapon system" (Rushing and Hunter 256) are often overlooked and abandoned. The authors offer a plea to persevere in developing and harnessing such cultural skills for the warfighter.

KEYWORDS: cross-cultural competence, cultural environments, cultural skills, culturally complex, cultural effectiveness, cultural mindset, human relations, intercultural competence, LREC paradigm, military readiness, social sciences

Introduction

Despite the hopes of many, the end of the Cold War brought little respite from the world's persistent conflicts. Yet, as the twentieth century ended, the remnants of America's Cold War military seemed adequately prepared for the new century. That was, however, prior to a massive attack on the homeland, perpetrated by a band of religiously inspired terrorists with deep grievances and worldwide connections. The ensuing turmoil demonstrated just how inadequate Cold War thinking—and Cold War weaponry—could be in the new environment. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, it was evident that the world had changed, and with it the definition of military success. New thinking and new tools were needed for new times.

This chapter is devoted to one "kit" of such tools and conceptual instruments important to military success in the twenty-first century: the mindsets and skillsets that together constitute *cross-cultural competence*. Commonly defined as "the ability to quickly and accurately comprehend and effectively and appropriately interact in culturally complex environments" (Selmeski, "Military" 12), cross-cultural competence (often abbreviated 3C) is the essential and central "culture" component of the LREC paradigm. The vital aptitude here is the ability to mitigate the complex human relations challenges now commonly faced by America's military professionals. The central ingredients are derived primarily from the social and behavioral sciences, which for approximately a decade and a half after September 11, 2001, the United States military made strenuous efforts to harness. As this is written in 2024, however, that commitment appears to be on the wane. The contention of this chapter is that those skills, recently characterized as the "human weapon system" (Rushing and Hunter 256) are easily overlooked and readily abandoned. The bottom line is a plea to persevere in developing and harnessing cultural skills.

Background

In the wake of September 11, America's military leaders quickly understood that they were facing unprecedented challenges characterized by amorphous, unconventional adversaries driven by intense anger over obscure but deeply held grievances. These adversaries had membership and supporters in many places and were proficient in concealing themselves amongst hostage populations and moving across state borders. Capable of accessing the features of the developed world such as media and banking, they also were clever at exploiting the traditional strong ties of ethnicity, kinship, affinity, religion, class, generation, historical narrative, and residential proximity. They were willing to perpetrate acts of terror, committing

horrific atrocities to intimidate their enemies and energize their attentive publics. They grew increasingly skilled in asymmetric warfare against their technologically superior foes (Barno 15–21). The last time the United States had confronted anything like this had been in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and early 1970s, a time described by authors like Fitzgerald as a bitter memory, full of lessons long since buried and deliberately forgotten.

But if adversaries in the new environment were culturally complex and unfamiliar, allies and partners were even more so. They ranged widely in military capability and brought distinctive organizational cultures, frequently pursued agendas at variance with coalition agreements, and sometimes scoffed at the Western norms of *ius in bello* ("justice in war"). Culturally based misunderstanding amongst allies was inevitable and endemic at every level from local/tactical to national/strategic (see Barno 15–21 and Connable's article "Marines Are from Mars, Iraqis Are from Venus").

The U.S. military response to the new circumstances was a strategy (articulated in U.S. Army Field Manual 3-0 and analyzed by Wallace) of "Full Spectrum Dominance" (Wallace 52). It assumed that American military personnel typically would work with foreign partners; and the strategy imposed significant new and unanticipated burdens on America's warfighters. In addition to their tactical and technical expertise, they were now obliged to deal with extraordinarily complex human relations problems, fraught with cultural complications, for which they had not been adequately prepared (Abbe and Gouge 10; Greene Sands and Greene-Sands 4).

At first, the fundamental human relations challenge seemed to be a language problem, a need that stimulated a rapid and far-reaching reorganization after 2005 in Department of Defense (DOD) for acquiring and managing language expertise (see the U.S. DOD's Defense *Language Transformation Roadmap*). However, it also soon became clear that language alone was not the answer.

The ability to collaborate with culturally diverse allies, or to anticipate the behavior of local societies and adversaries, required skill in both perspective taking and "perspective getting" (Epley). This involved understanding their motivations, seeing reality as they saw it, and comprehending and working within their norms, values, and expectations. Language could be an essential enabler, but success in this environment demanded cultural savvy and substantial cognitive agility—capabilities found in the broad repertoire of culture scholarship that was then mostly absent in professional military education (PME).

It was no easier for policymakers and military planners focused on the gold ring of "stability." Among other things, they now needed an ability to recognize security as local populations envisioned it, and more specifically, to understand how communities perceived threats to their lives, livelihoods, property, values, and aspirations. Such insights also required a deep appreciation for the grievances, historical animosities, and fear of change that pervaded virtually all traditional societies. These capabilities were more than mere "regional familiarity" or even general knowledge about the "other." They also demanded a sophisticated cultural competence that had not previously been emphasized in American military education (Abbe, "Historical Development" 32).[1]

By about 2005, the services and the higher headquarters had clearly sensed the desperation for the missing capabilities, and this stimulated a spate of national-level conferences looking for answers. By 2007, each of the services had set up service culture centers charged with defining and inculcating the missing capabilities, efforts further bolstered by force development directives from the Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The new DOD rubric was LREC, the acronym for "language, regional expertise, and culture," envisioned as separate but interconnected sets of skills (DODI 5160.41E 16–18; DODI 5160.70 26–30; CJCSI 3126.OIC D-1–G-3).

As Selmeski discusses in "From Concept to Capability" (2021), by 2014, the U.S. military had made undeniable progress in programs to develop the new skills. Culture-related content in pre-deployment training in all the services had improved dramatically. The services had acquired small teams of new culture subject matter experts that now were integrated in PME in one role or another, and the services had modestly increased the culture content in PME (with the largest academic department of culture faculty housed then and now at the Air Force Culture and Language Center, AFCLC). However, there was a troubling undercurrent to this progress.

As early as 2015, the attention of senior policymakers had already begun to shift to other priorities, and the former enthusiasm for LREC capability seemed to be decreasing (Abbe "Evaluating Military"; Henk and Abbe 72). The loss of focus at the top coincided with the dismantling of service culture centers below: the Army TRADOC Culture Center in 2021 and the USMC Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) in 2020. The Army also had embarked on an expensive effort in 2007 to provide combat forces in Iraq and Afghanistan with culture skills by embedding contracted civilian social scientists in deployed units—

the Human Terrain System (HTS). That program remained mired in controversy from the outset, struggled to recruit qualified participants, and produced, at best, very modest results (see discussions in works by Simms and Green and in Connable's "All Our Eggs"). It was quietly discontinued in 2014.

The decline of the culture centers and HTS coincided with a decreasing U.S. commitment to combat overseas. However, the waning interest in culture skills also suggested that some senior service leaders had never been enthusiastic about the culture initiatives. Loss of support was inevitable as the "culture" novelty wore off, the initiatives failed to produce dramatic immediate results, and the profession reverted to an ethos more at ease with the traditional instrumentality of warfare than with the conceptual tools of reconciliation and collaboration. These attitudes were candidly described by former CAOCL director George Dallas:

> We don't go bang . . . something doesn't break. And those kinds of programs don't do well in the military and particularly in places like the Marine Corps. . . . [O]ur effects are hidden from view . . . we're decimal dust, not even decimal dust in the big picture of things, so we had no real advocate to carry the weight forward. . . . [W]e just lacked advocacy. If we had named it the Mattis Center, we may not have had a *substance* advocate, but we would have had a *name* advocate. And no one would walk away from that. The name matters. So, the fact was, we just had zero advocacy. (193–94)

What had been an upward trajectory in educational resourcing, cross-fertilization of ideas and research across the services to improve existing capability, appeared to be static or declining (as chronicled in Fosher and Mackenzie, *Rise and Decline*) by 2020.

There were at least three ominous implications in these developments. First, the culture domain, possibly the most important to many LREC consumers, was the least developed and had the smallest base of subject matter experts for effective advocacy, whether in policy, education, or deployable skills. It now was unlikely to reach its true potential. Second, the service culture centers had served as laboratories that brought together subject matter experts and practitioners[2] to fuse the sciences and "operationalize" them—developing practical LREC applications for service members. With the exception of the AFCLC, no institution had subsequently picked up the mantle to perform this essential role. And finally, historical precedent was disturbing. This was the third time in seventy-five years that virtually the same process had occurred: a brief burst of enthusiasm for culture skills followed by abandonment of promising efforts (Abbe and Gouge 9; Fosher and Mackenzie, *Rise and Decline* 12*)*. Had the cross-cultural education programs initiated in the

mid-twentieth century been continued, it is entirely conceivable that America's military personnel would have been much better prepared for the challenges of the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

Culture as a Leg of the LREC Triad

The main concern in this chapter is the culture component of LREC. This chapter presents an argument for why declining commitment to culture skills should cause concern and offers suggestions for what might be done to reenergize its pursuit. To make that case, however, it may be useful to first distinguish culture skills from language capability and regional expertise. The three domains are distinct for reasons noted below, but they are also conceptually interconnected, even though each domain imparts a unique skillset to its end users. Of course, not all consumers (e.g., military departments, combatant commands, intelligence agencies, and high-level staffs) want the same product with the same skillset. Some agencies, for instance, might be primarily interested in a high level of language capability, but less concerned with regional familiarity and generalizable culture skills. Other consumers might be very interested in regional familiarity, but their personnel rarely interact with foreign counterparts, so language and culture skills may appear less important. Many consumers want a product with as many of the available skills as possible, although time, learning opportunities, and human limitations impose obvious restraints. Thus, the domains differ in terms of consumer demand for the LREC product.

Not surprisingly, the legs of the triad—language, regional expertise, and culture—are also distinct in the skillset of the finished product since the tasks that one is expected to perform in each area are at least somewhat unique. By 2024, that performance had been articulated in mandates from the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff, as noted earlier. The mandates focus on outcomes and wisely avoid academic definition-mongering. They emphasize the different tasks that should be attainable at various skill levels within each domain, and as such, the legs differ in terms of expected outcome. The legs of the LREC triad are further distinguished by the way the skills are produced (or acquired), measured, and managed. A brief overview should make this point evident.

In the LREC sequence, language would seem to be the first among LREC skillsets in terms of management infrastructure and emphasis in DOD mandates. This has perhaps always been the case but became more pronounced following the

promulgation of the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap in early 2005. The domain itself is described in more detail elsewhere in this edited volume. But in sum, as a leg of the LREC triad, language is mature in its oversight and production and offers a "deliverable" that satisfies an unambiguous need for consumers. Its prospects seem very secure in the long term. There is a substantial educational community devoted to language skill development, and an even larger community of individuals officially recognized for their language skills. Language, not surprisingly, has a powerful constituency in the DOD.

Regional expertise is produced somewhat differently. Its most highly qualified military practitioners are the Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) and Regional Area Officers (RAOs) developed in each of the services by intensive education over a period of years. The Defense Language Transformation Roadmap of 2005 specifically addressed the development of FAOs, indicating their status as a critical resource, and FAOs have proven their worth in America's overseas involvements.

It goes without saying that FAOs are not the only military personnel with regional skills. For at least four decades, regional studies have been a feature of PME in intermediate and senior service colleges, taught by robust faculties of qualified educators, typically with terminal degrees and regional experience.[3] Additionally, some of the military special operations communities also devote considerable time to regional familiarization.

Mandates from the Secretary of Defense and Joint Staff, noted earlier, offer a relatively detailed description of regional expertise and the expected capabilities of individuals with different levels of that capability. The DOD appears to know what it wants from its regional experts and has confidence in its ability to produce the needed skills. Between the educational establishment and the personnel with some level of expertise, "regionalists," like their "language" counterparts, have a significant presence and constituency in the DOD.

Distinguishing *Culture* from *Region:* The Value of *Culture General Skills*

Conceptually separating the *culture* skills from the other legs of the LREC triad proved to be an early challenge for the LREC community. Because *culture* is an abstraction (like "power" or "security"), it has been defined in innumerably different ways. Even the service publications by the turn of the century made constant references to the topic, though without much distinction of meaning.

The culture skills of interest here have a much narrower focus, concerned specifically with militarily relevant patterns of human thought and behavior. The skills themselves offer an ability, drawn from self-development and generalizable understandings about people (wherever encountered) that enable a service member to understand diverse social contexts and work effectively within them. In other words, this approach envisions a set of skills that can be used anywhere, regardless of the locally specific cultural circumstances. The process of developing those kinds of generalizable mindsets and capabilities is captured by what Brislin in 1986 termed the *culture general* approach (215). This should be distinguished from an alternative approach that was a somewhat more alluring model to service educators in the past. This approach starts and continues with an examination of the cultural patterns of a particular society or region that can be characterized as the *culture specific* model (See "Select Acronyms and Terms" in Fosher and Mackenzie, *Rise and Decline* 213).

The attractiveness of the culture specific approach in the early years was driven by intense pressures to prepare service personnel for duties in particular places—Iraq and Afghanistan. However, something of a community consensus eventually emerged that endorsed both approaches: culture learning could start with a culture-general focus to lay a foundation then transition eventually to a culture-specific format to usefully apply it in particular places. That approach seems logical enough on the surface, but there are problems with conceptualizing and developing culture skills this way.

A first concern would be the limited scope of any society or group targeted by a culture-specific approach. Even a single country—let alone a region like a combatant command area of operations—exhibits enormous cultural diversity. If the practitioner's cultural expertise is concentrated on one small community, that expertise may not be particularly useful elsewhere. By contrast, if the culture-specific focus is much broader than a small community, it might as well be viewed as a culture-general approach, since the practitioner would be obliged to accommodate widely differing cultural realities anyway.

A second concern is utility of the skillset for an expeditionary military. Since another leg of the LREC triad already produces regional experts, they can be expected to apply their expertise in roles requiring extensive familiarity with a specific region for which their long development has prepared them. But for a military that may send its personnel on short notice to contingency environments on four continents

with minimal time for preparation, the generalizable skills may be more widely useful. And as reported in research findings by those who have examined such skills empirically, the deeper the level of those culture-general skills, the better (Rasmussen and Sieck, "Culture-General Competence" 75).

A final concern is the danger of conflation of the culture-specific approach with the existing PME emphasis on regional studies. Regional studies are intended to familiarize students with U.S. interests and involvements, nation-states and their interests, international organizations, regional and local conflicts, regional histories, politics, societies, natural environments, economies, and like topics. This acquaintance with cultural facts is not cross-cultural competence. Though important to military education, it does not equip a military member to get inside the thought processes and decision cycles of individuals or groups of foreign actors. The two domains—regional expertise and cultural skills—draw from different lines of scholarship and can be expected to produce different educational outcomes. Some regionalists undoubtedly possess substantial cross-cultural expertise and could be expected to draw from it in their educational and operational roles. However, as noted by Fosher, in the absence of culture scientists, it is natural for education programs to default to regional studies in the misleading assumption that these generate *culture* skills ("A Few Things I Know" 151).

A Different Institutional History

The culture leg of the LREC triad is distinct from the other two domains in several ways. The skillset itself differs significantly from the others in terms of what the outcome is expected to be (and what the "product" is expected to do), even though that premise has been contested. But very much unlike the other two legs, this domain has never been overseen and advocated by a core of academically qualified, high-level government sponsors or a significant constituency of educators, administrators, or researchers in the DOD. The skills in this domain are drawn primarily from civilian sector culture scholars—behavioral and social scientists in the main—and these have been (and still are) very sporadically represented in the Defense Department and in PME.[4]

For a brief period after 2005, several of the service culture centers assembled a small critical mass of behavioralists that could draw upon the relevant science and "operationalize" it, connecting it to military needs, but their efforts were very preliminary and largely ended as all but one DOD culture center disappeared and

many of the scientists dispersed. Ironically, it was exactly the culture skillset that appeared to be the missing (and much desired) capability in the early years of the GWOT. Despite the evident need, a fundamental problem still exists with the cultural domain in LREC. It is unambiguously illustrated in the Secretary of Defense and Joint Staff mandates. After 2015, "culture" appeared in those directives as a desired capability, but the expectations described for those holding this capability seemed minimal and quite unfocused compared to the skillsets described for the domains of language and regional expertise. More troubling, the mandates seemed to ignore a substantial amount of yet untapped potential. This leads one to wonder: If the culture skills are so important, why has a community of culture scholars not coalesced to meet the need by delivering a comprehensive and measurable skillset similar to those provided by the language and regionalist communities?[5]

Three primary reasons stand out, and they make up something of a circular problem. First, as noted by Fosher and Mackenzie the DOD has struggled to recruit behavioral scientists, especially the social and cultural anthropologists with the most relevant scientific expertise (*Rise and Decline* 12). There have never consistently been enough of them in the system to flesh out either the vision or the substance of what this domain could produce, or to develop the "product" once the substance is identified.[6] Second, as a related point, the behavioralists have not been represented in the supervisory infrastructure that oversees the entire LREC development process, so administrators could hardly be expected to identify and mandate skills of which they are unaware. And third, the domain itself remains nascent. To date, it has not seen a consistent applied research effort to pull together the relevant scholarship, connect it with the specific needs of practitioners, and produce the conceptual tools of which it is capable.

Having said all this, perhaps the two major differences between the culture leg of the LREC triad and the other two legs are the way the skills are developed and the relative difficulty associated with quantifying the outcomes[7] associated with culture education. This begs the further questions: What, exactly, are the skills, and why do they develop differently?

Culture Skillsets

Answers to these questions lie in what cross-cultural competence enables practitioners to be, know, and do, and such enablement is far more than mere

command of cultural facts. To illustrate this point, it is useful to start by noting what the military practitioners seemed to be missing in the early years of GWOT, and to then suggest how such missing skills might have been provided.

With some exceptions, the American expeditionary military in 2001 lacked the ability to quickly understand and adjust to the cultural environment of new and unfamiliar operational areas. Service members often did not have the cultural agility to set aside their own cognitive biases and work within the patterns of thinking of host nation (or partner) actors. Culture shock was a persistent issue.

These deficiencies call attention to the most foundational set of capabilities in the culture skillset: "knowing oneself"—an objective, rigorous, and comprehensive grasp of one's own inclinations, biases, and cultural filters. Building on this, other foundational culture skills often are described as follows:

- cognitive flexibility
- humility
- openness
- curiosity
- an aptitude for working through culture shock

These capabilities (described in more detail in Fosher and Mackenzie's *Culture General Guidebook*) call attention to an intellectual formation achieved through deliberate education (such as that offered in the AFCLC's Introduction to Culture course), yet one that takes time and practice to achieve. Acquiring the capabilities—even the foundational skills—to any useful degree is a long-term process. In a best-case approach for military consumers, culture skills would be introduced in pre-accession education, then enhanced and reinforced consistently at all levels of PME. Yet without these foundational skills, it is unlikely that any would-be practitioner can progress very far toward the ultimate objective: cross-cultural competence. Achieving a useful level of that competence starts with rigorously empirical self-knowledge before progressing on to an inventory of understandings about how people think and act, and how their choices and behavior might be anticipated and influenced.

Cross-cultural competence is heavily dependent on effective interpersonal communication across cultural barriers, although in a much more fundamental sense than use of spoken or written language alone. America's expeditionary military has

long struggled to achieve that communication in contingency environments, and nowhere more compellingly than in the conflicts of the early twenty-first century (see works by Bradford, Zinni, and Gray, as well as Connable's "Marines Are from Mars"). Here, the circumstances ranged from simple exchanges like coordinating with partners and communicating nonhostile intent, to uncovering sources of local alienation and anger, to attenuating local fear and resentment while soliciting cooperation. More sophisticated challenges might have included building rapport with local actors, influencing local elites, combatting adversary propaganda, and disincentivizing local opposition.

While foreign language skills could have been a significant enabler, the more widely relevant and transferable tools would more likely be found in the intercultural communication and intercultural training scholarship.[8] Drawing from the early work of interculturalists such as Edward Hall and Richard Brislin, these intercultural skills include the ability to:

1. Decode nonverbal cues, including signals of norms and values
2. Manage paralinguistic use and perception[9]
3. Identify diverse communication styles
4. Recognize cultural variation in active listening techniques
5. Practice strategies for rapport building

These skills are not easily acquired, but the earlier in life a student is introduced to them, the more likely the student is to use them well. These, too, could be considered part of the suite of basic and foundational skills necessary for cross-cultural competence (and, as described recently by Thomas and Fujimura, for effective leadership). And again, these are best developed over time with repeated and scaffolded learning experiences.

Since the expeditionary military is unlikely to have enough language speakers to meet its needs, a related category of cross-cultural skills would include at least some facility in working with interpreters. This, too, is not as simple as it sounds. Doing it well requires the intercultural communication skills just noted above. It also requires skills associated with impression and expectation management. It is not uncommon for interpretation to be filtered through three languages. As an example, a U.S. service person whose heart language is English might be speaking to a Peruvian interpreter in Spanish. The Peruvian interpreter, whose heart language is Quechua, then translates the Spanish to an informant in his

native Quechua. The response then travels from the Quechua-speaking informant through the interpreter in Spanish back to the English-speaking U.S. service person. Opportunities for miscommunication are rife.

Thus far, the discussion in this chapter has touched on foundational and transferable culture tools. And, with the exception of occasional electives at the various PME schoolhouses, this is about as far as the culture domain has gone in PME. While it is certainly better than nothing, and significantly ahead of the situation in 2001, this is still very far short of the domain's true potential.

A mature set of culture tools would enable a cross-culturally competent individual to recognize and manipulate the ties that bind people in a social environment and the factors that motivate individual and collective action. These are generalizable skills in the sense that human belief and behavior occur in repeated patterns in different societies around the world (which is of course why they are amenable to scientific inquiry, analysis, and categorization). If a person is familiar with the patterns, has the tools to recognize them in particular circumstances, and has an inventory of options for intercepting them, that individual has a powerful capacity to resolve human relations dilemmas or otherwise leverage circumstances for mission success.

Among the patterns of belief and behavior that a cross-culturally competent person commands are ideologies of legitimacy, authority, and leadership, the processes of individual and collective decision-making, the scope and consistency of information networks, the nature of patron-client relationships, sources of collective identity, and sources of alienation and grievance. There are, of course, many others. The skillset here would be the ability to recognize the pattern, anticipate its implications for mission success, and generate a range of options for avoiding problems or seizing advantage of opportunities.

The advanced cultural tools just described may be the most powerful resources in the LREC kit bag. But regrettably, these also come from academic fields that rarely offer the kinds of practical applications required by military consumers (Abbe, "Historical Development" 39). They also are lines of scholarship poorly represented in the DOD—which explains why they have rarely appeared in military education or educational mandates. The situation draws attention to a danger that can only be ameliorated by a deliberate renewal of emphasis. The danger here is that the advanced culture capabilities ultimately may be deemed so abstract and subjective as to defy a credible empirical assessment (Glazer 465). That conclusion, though refuted by the promising early work of the Air Force and Marine culture centers,

could well prompt the military profession simply to turn away from them, either deliberately or by continued inaction, an unfortunate choice based on faulty assumptions. Given the potential of these skills, this would be a huge mistake.

Synergy Through Fusion

The main concern of this chapter is the preservation and enhancement of militarily relevant culture skills, with an acknowledgment that the culture leg of the LREC triad has not progressed beyond the foundational skills to the point that it can satisfy the demands of consumers as fully as the language and regionalist communities can. However, this is not an argument that the culture component should now warrant exclusive attention or that it should be seen as a stand-alone capability. Far from it.

As previously noted, different consumers of the LREC "product" reflect somewhat different needs. The requirement for the culture skills *per se* hangs on the degree to which a service member interacts with people of other cultures, an interaction that might be minimal for roles such as signals intercept operator or staff planner. Even so, it is difficult to envision any LREC role—even those in which language or regional knowledge are the most relevant skills—that would also not be better equipped if accompanied by an appreciation for cultural nuance and dynamics. Likewise, no matter how profound a practitioner's culture-general skills may be, fluency in a local language and familiarity with regional social, economic, and political factors could be critical to mission success. The point is simple: LREC is most powerful when the legs of the triad are combined and fused into productive synergy.

The benefits of fusing the LREC skills may seem obvious, but that outcome begs some tricky force development questions. As important as LREC skills may be, they will always be subordinate to tactical and technical warfighting expertise. In a best case, they would be subject to astute prioritization of developmental resources (including personnel time) both within the LREC world and stacked against other force development requirements. There simply is not enough time, money, and accessible expertise to do everything.

As a profession, the U.S. military has not established "how much is enough" in LREC-related force development. This is true both for cross-cultural competence alone and for LREC as a whole. A best-case future of prolonged development would probably ensure that all get some and a few get much. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) mandates acknowledge this reality by describing levels of capability.

Still, although it is well beyond the scope of this chapter to venture beyond suggestion, might it be possible to envision the value of a small cadre of military *LREC-general* specialists? These professionals would be able to tie together the realms of language, region, and culture in a way not currently envisioned in U.S. military force development, a fusion that could empower the mature practitioner to tie together the efforts of colleagues working related fields—negotiations, intelligence, security cooperation, and other international partnerships. It is worth observing that a *specialist* of this nature would have abilities simply unmatched by counterparts elsewhere in the U.S. government or—hopefully—by friends and foes abroad. The "LREC Leader" perhaps?

Where Do We Go from Here?

If the culture domain in LREC is ever to realize anything like its full potential, what needs to be fixed? Four problem areas stand out. First, the domain requires sponsorship and oversight by a Department of Defense infrastructure that truly understands the science and has a vision for its potential contribution. Second, the skillsets in the domain must be defined with much more comprehensiveness, granularity, precision, and clarity than currently is the case. Third, the Department must recruit and assemble the required (and still largely missing) expertise to define, develop, and deliver the product. And a fourth (related) point: "culture" needs an enduring constituency in the Department as influential as those of the language and regionalist communities.

Oversight of the Domain

Without casting aspersions on the very real and commendable LREC oversight infrastructure that has emerged in the DOD since 2005, culture may still be significantly overlooked. The new infrastructure features a senior official in the office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD [P&R]) designated as the Senior Language Authority (SLA). This role is supplemented by counterpart SLAs in the military departments, combatant commands, and intelligence agencies, which collectively form a Defense Language Steering Committee (DLSC) under the aegis of the DOD SLA. Since 2015, the roles of the steering committee have included reviewing and providing recommendations to the USD (P&R) on "foreign language, regional expertise, and *cultural capability* training, education, personnel, and financial requirements" (U.S. DOD, *Department of Defense Instruction 5160.70*, Enclosures 2 and 3).

From the outset, this infrastructure has been language-centric. The authors are encouraged by the presence of culture-related faculty positions at several of the service academies (in, for example, applied linguistics at West Point, anthropology at the Naval Academy, and cultural geography at the Air Force Academy), but these are small nodes in a vast educational establishment, and somewhat distant from the center of LREC policy oversight. Given how few culture subject matter experts there are in the DOD as a whole and the nascent condition of the culture domain, the OSD LREC overseers would have to have been almost omniscient to do more for culture. There would seem to be a need "at the top" for a Senior *Culture* Authority (SCA) as a counterpart to the SLA. Given the extreme unlikelihood of that development, a deputy SLA with behavioral science and military background, charged specifically with energizing *culture* in LREC, might be an astute investment.

The Defense Language Transformation Roadmap of 2005 was truly transformative. It established a vision and a strategy, providing a much needed "way ahead" for acquiring and managing a critical capability. A counterpart roadmap is needed for *culture*, but with a difference. While the Language Roadmap could draw on the expertise of a mature Departmental language community, the culture community in DOD is minimal. To devise a truly transformative culture roadmap, the DOD would have to assemble visionary culture scientists and experienced practitioners from a variety of sources. Given the small number of behavioral scientists in the DOD, a high proportion of participants in this process would probably be drawn from civilian academe and from civilian activities, such as selected nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that employ behavioralists. Devising a transformative Culture Roadmap would seem to be a role for a temporary focus group, and its primary role would be to construct a Defense *Cross-Cultural Competence* Transformation Roadmap with a vision and a strategy to realize the vision. Equally important will be participants with expertise in building the processes by which the strategy in the Roadmap is translated into specific planning guidance, provided with long-term funding, and equipped with mechanisms to assure accountability.

Recruiting the Expertise and Refining the Skillsets

The paucity of culture scientists in the DOD has repeatedly been noted. But a related issue is the absence of a clearly defined, robust inventory of culture skills, particularly the advanced skills. Without the expertise, it is impossible to construct the skillsets. And of course, without the culture scientists, it would also be hard to develop the skills in the course of service education, even assuming those skills are clearly identified.

For cultural skills to assume their potential role in service practice, the DOD must pay greater attention to recruitment and placement of culture scientists. Although it isn't easy (as elaborated by Fosher in "Cautionary Tales"), it is necessary. It would likely require some realignment of personnel billets—which is always a contentious process. Assuring that the designated billets are filled by individuals with the correct qualifications requires careful supervision.

A primary role for DOD's culture scientists, particularly at the outset, will be the identification and refinement of culture skillsets, followed by engagement in curriculum development, educational programs, and production of learning exercises and materials. However, these roles are difficult to play if the subject matter experts wind up as individual scholars, widely dispersed in military academe. This situation also would not contribute to content consistency across the DOD. Collaboration of scholars and practitioners was one role of the now disappearing service culture centers. Without the ability to field a similar "critical mass" of scientists and practitioners, it seems unlikely that the culture domain can be adequately developed.

Recruitment of culture scientists—mature and experienced behavioralists—will continue to be a challenge. Academe, particularly scholars in the discipline of Anthropology, has a history of antipathy to the security sector over unwise earlier connections to government programs, exemplified by Project Camelot (1964). For the longer term, it may be wise to consider "growing our own" with programs like those that recruit promising active-duty junior officers for faculty in the service academies.

A Defense Culture Center

From the beginning of the culture initiatives in 2005, the prospect of a joint service Defense Culture Center has been a topic of discussion within the culture community. The conversation was partly driven by the fact that none of the individual service culture centers had the resources to field that "critical mass" of culture scientists described above, a situation that is even more true as this is written. Those scientists, now seeded sparsely throughout PME, have little prospect of doing more. The directors of the service culture centers, even at the peak of their activities, recognized that only a larger national center could marshal the resources, attract the funding, and recruit a sufficient body of subject matter experts to flesh out the advanced culture skills needed by the services.

A national level "culture" institution similar to the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), and probably also best positioned as a center

within the Defense Human Resources Activity, would presumably have the priority, funding, and "reach" to accomplish what the service centers wanted to achieve in developing the domain but could not. This is where science and praxis would finally be brought together and packaged for delivery to consumers. This institution would seek out the best science, marry it to research into service lessons-learned and needs, and create the conceptual tools best suited to the requirements of consumers. Based on the experience of the service culture education efforts in the early twenty-first century, proficiency in these roles would be difficult for existing professional military education in any of the individual services to attain. This is partly a function of available resources and partly a sad commentary on senior leader commitment in PME.

Since the early twenty-first century, a number of U.S. service institutions have added some articulation of "culture skills" or just "culture" to their educational missions.[10] However, these institutions typically have a broad remit in which culture is a small, subordinate element. None has been able to offer a generally accepted vision of advanced culture-general skills or describe a credible pathway to develop them. A culture center, in contrast, would focus on cultural-general skills, would seek mechanisms to embed them coherently in language and regional education, and would assume primacy for defining the domain.

A key responsibility would be to develop, in collaboration with the regionalist and language communities, processes by which military personnel could rapidly focus culture skills, regional expertise, and language capability against any human relations *schwerpunkt* developing from the nation's foreign involvements, producing effects not previously (or at least consistently) achievable.

Over time, a Defense Center would likely assume a variety of roles. It would conduct and commission research, develop assessment methodology for culture skills, and produce educational materials. It would help determine the limits of the possible in culture education and would connect and collaborate with DOD programs that develop language and regional skills, particularly those involved in the development of Foreign Area Officers and intelligence analysts. It might eventually offer on-site education and serve as an instantly accessible "reach-back" resource for deployed military operators needing advice on complex intercultural dilemmas. While an initiative of this magnitude would face a variety of obstacles, none are insurmountable, and the potential gains would be well worth the cost. It is an idea worthy of careful consideration.

Concluding Observation

For the foreseeable future, it is difficult to envision a U.S. military that does not have extensive and continuing connections to foreign actors. Some of these connections will come from countries that have long been close allies, some from temporary "coalitions of the willing," and others from countries with which the United States enjoys only the most peripheral partnerships. The early twenty-first century also exhibited a U.S. military engaged across the spectrum of conflict, interacting with citizens of local communities, and interacting with an almost bewildering variety of civilian, paramilitary, semi-military, and combatant groups. These circumstances all posed difficult human relations problems, and perhaps none more so than in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Whatever the future engagement, however, the cross-cultural challenges will not go away. To quote the late General Colin Powell (2001) in his opening statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "We are attached by a thousand cords to the world at large, to its teeming cities, to its remotest regions, to its oldest civilizations, to its newest cries for freedom. This means we have an interest in every place on this Earth, that we need to lead, to guide, to help in every country that has a desire to be free, open, and prosperous."

This chapter has argued that the U.S. military has a considerable stake in an ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries, understand, anticipate (and influence) the behavior of friend and foe, intercept threats, and build relations for mission success. Cross-cultural competence is not a "magic bullet" by which to fully understand and resolve all human relations dilemmas, and it also is most effectively used in consonance with language skills and regional knowledge. But it is an extremely useful "kit" of conceptual tools for the modern military professional. Its absence can have unfortunate—even dire—consequences. Building significant cross-cultural competence within the U.S. military is not easy—previous efforts have foundered on a lack of perseverance and shifting senior leader priorities—but it is not a pipe dream. The (now interrupted) slow but steady progress in the early twenty-first century demonstrated that it can be done. Given the likely security trajectory of the rest of this century, it is a necessity for competitive advantage throughout the conflict spectrum. This chapter has offered suggestions on how to restart the earlier, promising culture initiatives. It is time to revive those initiatives and strive for a permanent national commitment to a cross-culturally competent military.

Notes

1. Also drawn from the personal experience of the authors.
2. This began with a seminal Air University conference in 2005, then continued for about a decade with the Army's TRADOC Culture Center's annual Culture Summit. Service culture educators typically also gather informally every other year at the biannual conference of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society. Since 2014, service culture educators have been hosted by Air University's annual LREC Symposium (see https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AFCLC/AU-LREC/).
3. This is based on the experience of the authors.
4. These include sociology, cross-cultural psychology, cultural geography, and intercultural communication among others. If a "personality" dimension is added, they would include personality psychology, cross-cultural psychology, and (perhaps) forensic psychology.
5. Civil sector culture skill assessment instruments are available, among them the Intercultural Development Inventory and the Cultural Intelligence Center's assessment measure (https://culturalq.com/products-services/assessments), which has been used by the Defense Language and National Security Education Office to assess culture training (Livermore et al.). However, no culture skill assessment methodology has yet proven equivalent in value for military use to the Defense Language Proficiency Tests overseen by the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC). The absence of a department-wide culture skillset assessment methodology, after twenty years of culture initiatives, is an indication of departmental priorities.
6. An exception to this statement is the Defense Language and National Security Education Office's contract with Louise Rasmussen and Global Cognition whose research informed the Adaptive Readiness for Culture Competency Model and is featured in publications such as *Save Your Ammo* by Louise Rasmussen and Winston Sieck.
7. A recent review by Richter et al. of over 60 cross-cultural competence academic and commercial instruments serves as a reminder that there is no shortage of 3C quantification measures from which to choose.
8. "Intercultural" is used here (in lieu of cross-cultural) to place emphasis on face-to-face and interpersonal interaction, whereas "cross-cultural" research places more emphasis on the comparison of various communication patterns across cultures. Gudykunst offers a more substantive discussion of this distinction (vii).
9. Paralanguage focuses not on what is said but how it is said. It includes such elements as tone of voice, pitch, rate of speech, volume, etc. See Gumperz for examples of the impact of paralanguage on a range of intercultural interactions.
10. These include, inter alia, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) subordinate to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, and the Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO) subordinate to the Defense Human Resources Activity.

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CHAPTER 4

Critical Content-Based Instruction for Human Rights

Preliminary Findings from a University Human Trafficking Class in Spanish

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ABSTRACT

This action research underscores the need to equip military leaders and civilians, especially in law enforcement, with language training and cultural capabilities in today's shifting global security arena. The study aims to describe a critical content-based (CCBI) approach in a university-level Spanish language course for high-intermediate and low-advanced learners. The course endeavored to engage a group of university learners in critical praxis by exposing them to topics related to social justice and eagerness to challenge traditional power structures, building on the insights of Kubota and Miller (14–17). This study highlights learners' perspectives on the implementation and efficacy of critical content-based instruction (CCBI). Data from a needs analysis with learners, a final essay, and the institution's official evaluation were used to analyze the implementation of CCBI. Learners' feedback from the needs assessment highlighted the importance of encouraging inquiry. Data from the course evaluation and final essay also revealed that learners grappled with acquiring content knowledge and honing language skills. Yet, they expressed positive feedback about integrating criticality into curriculum design.

KEYWORDS: critical content-based instruction, high-intermediate language proficiency, global security, language acquisition, language skills, social justice, university learners

Introduction

It is essential to identify the symbiotic relationship between content-based instruction (CBI) and critical content-based instruction (CCBI), as they have a mutually beneficial relationship in the integration of content and language. These two elements—content and language—in both approaches depend on each other to exist. In other words, form negotiation (language) is learned through meaningful content and vice versa (Lightbown and Spada 22). CBI is a curricular approach that emphasizes the "concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills" (Brinton et al. 2), wherein instructors employ the target language for teaching content rather than the immediate study object (Dalton-Puffer 183–184). CBI emerged in the 1970s in Canada as a result of the society's need to learn French in school. Critical content-based instruction (CCBI) develops from CBI in its integration of content and language. The distinctive perspective of "critical" instruction is one of questioning "existing frameworks" and changing them as needed for the benefit of human progress and also their communities (Sato et al. 59). Macris mentions similar curricular development efforts along these lines that can be seen in the "Leading Across Cultures" initiative put forward by the U.S. Naval Academy (73–81). A few authors underline the development of criticality in the L2 classroom by promoting deeper and more critical content discussions and pedagogy to nurture a more profound cultural understanding (Kubota 39–40; Sato et al. 54). Kubota and Miller claimed more than thirty years ago that critical research in second language education is associated with Freire's critical pedagogy (13), which promotes critical consciousness. Learners in CCBI become "active agents who not only strive to acquire the given linguistic and cultural knowledge but can also adopt a critical perspective when analyzing and evaluating that knowledge" (Sato et al. 54). In CCBI, learners develop language skills and rely on critical agency to process the content. Both elements are crucial for training military and civilian personnel in L2 classroom. This article reports on a Spanish CCBI class for learners at a high-intermediate/low-advanced level at a university in California in spring 2022.

Theoretical Framework

Although CBI originated in Canada in the 1970s as a necessity for learning French, integrating content and language has existed for centuries. Prior to this, Latin was taught across European universities to disseminate scientific, theological, medical, and philosophical content (Martínez Adrián 94). Over time, various approaches to

content and language instruction have emerged with varying emphasis on content and language. CBI was later introduced in California through Spanish immersion programs due to an increase in Latin American immigration (Sato et al. 52). In Europe, CBI roots can be traced back to bilingualism efforts and supranational education development promoted in the German-Franco educational programs (Lorenzo et al. 419).

As these examples illustrate, one way to classify differences in CBI is based on program characteristics and implementation contexts. Met classifies CBI on a content-driven to language-driven scale to better understand this variation, according to the criteria for integrating content and language. Programs or courses emphasizing content learning, such as total immersion programs, are placed along the content-driven side of the scale (Met 5). Conversely, programs or courses focusing on language instruction and learning through content, such as traditional courses emphasizing grammatical points or following a prescribed textbook where topics are studied in thematic units, are placed along the language-driven side of the continuum. The course on human trafficking can be situated closer to the content continuum, with the instructor selecting authentic critical content for learners to study while acquiring language proficiency.

Critical Content-Based Instruction

CBI not only enhances language development and content learning (Douglas 201; Socciarelli et al. 23) but also improves learners' classroom participation and engagement, thereby promoting learner motivation and autonomy (Concário 75). Numerous studies show the benefits of CBI for meeting learners' personal, academic, and professional needs (Chevalier; Corrales and Maloof 45); however, Sato et al. propose a critical perspective on CBI to make language education more relevant to society's needs (53). Based on this view, CCBI serves as an ideal platform for exploring the influence of language on society and the way it has been used to create hierarchies and marginalize voices. A parallel approach to language education, whose goal is to empower students by promoting awareness of the language they use and its impact on interactions with others, is critical language awareness (CLA). This metalinguistic approach, which calls for reforms in language curricula by incorporating cultural and political content to study the influence of discourse in societies, has gained prominence in recent years (Britton and Leonard 4; Cammarata et al. 9; Kramsch 390; Taylor et al. 3–4; Wangdi and Savski 445). Both CCBI and CLA have attempted to integrate criticality. In other words,

learning a foreign language should involve more than mastery of grammar and vocabulary; it should also include the development of transcultural and translingual competence so that learners are not only linguistically prepared but also culturally and socially competent (Kunschak 353–55; Sato et al. 64). This cultural and social competence includes a keen awareness of the political, economic, educational, local, and transnational variables, which signify "wealth to be valued, appreciated, and signs of authority to be believed and obeyed" (Bourdieu 502).

Recent publications have emphasized a critical approach that exposes inequalities and critique injustices (Kubota 39; Kubota and Miller 4; Dill and Zambrana 109). For instance, Kubota discussed the CCBI approach implemented at a Canadian university for advanced Japanese language learners, covering topics such as the atomic bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Canada's involvement in the bombing, the Fukushima nuclear disaster, peace and war representation in Japanese history books, and language arts curricula (39). The author also suggested that incorporating challenging content in curriculum design enables learners to analyze historical events in their own and other societies (52–53).

Kubota and Miller later reexamined criticality and critical perspectives and identified four primary trends (2). The first trend is an increase in critical scholarship and positive development. Second, studies on identity, gender, class, and race may not accurately represent criticality. However, it is necessary to analyze deeper constructs such as domination, power, resistance, and inequalities. The third trend concerns the need for a praxis-oriented approach. The fourth trend acknowledges that critical perspectives may have a limited impact on institutional policies and practices. The authors stress the importance of acting to transform the world, and not just to examine and theorize about it. As such, it is up to researchers and practitioners to ensure that their teaching is relevant to their learners' lives and ability to promote social change.

The criticality aspect in teaching culture in Spanish courses can be found in Glynn and Spenader, where they analyze videos and semi-structured interviews of four high and middle school instructors who integrate social justice topics into their Spanish classes (77). These authors report that content-wise, instructors did not employ textbooks but relied on current and authentic texts, such as international news sources, social media, and YouTube. The instructors incorporated topics such as immigration, the impact of gender on family roles and education, green energy, sustainable agriculture, sustainable tourism, and child labor (Glynn and Spenader

84). This criticality aspect of the curriculum increased learners' agency, as students showed a more active role in managing their own learning experiences (Glynn and Spenader 87). The authors discussed the need to extend and investigate the implementation of CCBI in U.S. classrooms.

We propose that the present study, by its nature (a language class that focuses on human trafficking), aligns with the skills reported by Sato et al. (58). In other words, learners not only gain both linguistic and cultural knowledge but are also motivated to advocate for change.

Teaching the CCBI Spanish Course on Human Trafficking: The Present Study

Human trafficking courses are offered at twenty-six universities in the United States (Akins). The course is taught in English in twenty-five schools, and at one university. The Middlebury Institute of International Studies (MIIS) offers the course as an elective for students at a high-intermediate/low-advanced level in Spanish. The language and content learning goals and evaluation criteria for this course were developed using a needs assessment, based on Hutchinson and Waters, with learners and language and content experts. The selected topic of human trafficking reflected the learners' academic and professional interests. To achieve what Sato et al. deem a "critical perspective" (51), learners in the Spanish course question the status quo, systems of power, inequalities, and societal conventions. The authors also address "the instigation of changes needed to emancipate and empower people" (51). Students begin this process by selecting topics, analyzing information, developing critical thinking skills based on the materials (texts) they analyze, and discussing (in a safe learning environment) tasks related to human trafficking. They also have access to the instructor's resources to incorporate diverse perspectives from different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences.

The present study focused on the following research question in the context of this graduate-level Spanish CCBI course: How did the implementation of critical content-based instruction on human trafficking in a graduate-level Spanish class meet program needs and affect students' perception of the course, material, and teaching approach?

Method

Participants

Thirteen adult students (nine female and four male) enrolled in the course during Spring 2022. Their proficiency in Spanish ranged from high-intermediate to advanced based on the proficiency guidelines suggested by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Two students were Spanish heritage language learners. The researcher was also the course instructor; therefore, convenience sampling was used to collect data. All participants were enrolled in master's degree programs such as International Policy Development, Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies, International Education Management, and International Environmental Policy. All participants were in their second semester of Spanish at the university, and none majored in Spanish. Rather, all had selected this particular course (over others) to fulfill a language requirement for their master's degree. Most students opt to take language courses to enhance their linguistic skills through academic and professional content based on their field of study and because language courses are integrated into their degree programs.

Instructional Context

The course was offered at the MIIS, a graduate school that attracts learners who want to use their education to develop practical solutions to make a difference in the world (MIIS website). Most students apply because they can study another language while pursuing their master's degree. The languages taught in the Language Studies department include English for Academic and Professional Purposes, Arabic, French, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, and Spanish. The courses have followed a content-based instructional approach since 1997, as this was found to be the most effective approach for students preparing for careers in security, law enforcement, and international fields. This course, with an emphasis on Latin America, was offered at a high-intermediate/low-advanced proficiency level. Enrollment was open to all graduate students with a suitable proficiency in the target language. The majority of students had completed their first semester at the university. However, a small percentage of the newly admitted learners had received a recommendation to take a Spanish course at this level after taking a placement test.

Instruments

This action research used three instruments to collect learner data: a needs assessment based on Hutchinson and Waters, a reflective essay on the final presentation in the context of experiential learning based on Moon, and student official evaluations recorded by the university. Hutchinson and Waters' needs assessment model places learner needs into three categories: necessities, wants, and lacks. The gathered information allowed the instructor to adjust the material selection and curriculum design to suit the learners' needs. Learners' interests were explored during the first week of class, and they completed a needs assessment that consisted of seven questions at the second meeting. The needs assessment aimed to probe learners' personal and academic interests, considering the different concentrations they were pursuing. As previously mentioned, narratives were also incorporated to collect information about the learners' final presentation in the context of reflective and experiential learning. For the narrative essays, the students were instructed to highlight at least three aspects related to their final presentation as a guide to their writing process. The rationale for incorporating essays is that learners engage in the writing process, which is critical for understanding their experiences. To triangulate the results, official evaluations of the institution were used. They yielded numeric and qualitative data that were also considered when analyzing the results. According to Nunan and Bailey, this "multiple perspectives analysis" (11) of combining data collection and analysis is a rising phenomenon in classroom research.

Results

Needs Analysis

For both the needs assessment survey responses and the narrative essays, the researcher used a meaning condensation technique that consisted of sifting the information, finding patterns, rereading notes, and condensing the information until patterns began to emerge (Nunan and Bailey 418). The findings of the needs assessment revealed learners' perceived need for content and language learning. The instructor utilized this information to modify the syllabus and instructional materials to better suit the learners' preferences. They also invited content experts to address topics suggested by the learners. The assessment showed that all learners had a basic understanding of human trafficking, but only a small percentage were aware of the legislation and nongovernmental organizations working to combat it. They

expressed a desire to learn more about these efforts. The learners' content interests were ranked in the following order: first, the prevention of human trafficking through the study of trafficking networks and crime reduction; second, exploration of the intersection between human trafficking, natural resources, organized crime, drug trafficking networks, cartels' tactics, immigration, and industries such as fishing; and third, learning about solutions focused on identifying trafficking victims and following the United Nations' peace and security agenda.

In terms of language needs, six students expressed a need to improve their speaking skills, three expressed a need to enhance their reading comprehension, two expressed a need to improve their listening comprehension, and a couple of students expressed a need to develop their writing skills and expand their technical vocabulary. Learners also shared their language learning preferences in the needs assessment, ranked in order of importance. First, the learners desired to practice conversational skills in small groups. Second, they sought opportunities to apply new vocabulary, particularly technical vocabulary, in context. Third, they wanted to watch documentaries or movies in the target language. Fourth, they preferred to play educational games. Finally, learners wished to listen to guest lecturers and read technical and current event articles to broaden their knowledge. The instructor utilized information from the needs assessment to focus on the learners' academic and personal interests divided into four significant themes: These themes were used to organize the content used in the course. In the first theme, "And if we tried being more human among ourselves?" students explored the causes of human trafficking and related concepts. The second theme focused on the various forms of human trafficking present in the Latin American region. In the third theme, students engaged in reading, discussion, and analysis of the different stakeholders involved in this issue, including the roles of NGOs, educators, legal professionals, and law enforcement agencies. Finally, in the fourth theme, students learned through case studies about the experiences of human trafficking victims and examined the impact of these crimes on the legal system.

1. "And if we tried being more human among ourselves?"
2. "Societies with internal and external scourges."
3. "Many roads that lead to Rome."
4. "And the finger is pointing at you for criminal behavior."

Following Stoller and Grabe's six-T approach, the different topics that arose from these themes were identified. For example, from the theme "And if we tried being more human among ourselves?" The following three topics were identified.

a. Old slavery tricks and how they manifest in the twenty-first century (1 week)

b. Understanding the human trafficking concept: definition analysis; The Palermo Protocol, 2000 (1 week)

c. Risk factors for human trafficking: lack of opportunities in the region(s), criminal organizations, and climate factors

This passage describes a two-week thematic unit on child labor, highlighting how content and language objectives were used to educate learners about the topic. This example emphasizes the importance of education for local governments, civil servants, teachers, and parents in Latin America, where aspects of the social fabric may perpetuate child labor. Four objectives were proposed for the two-week unit: (1) learners would be able to read and understand critical information about child labor in Latin America; (2) learners would be able to incorporate specialized vocabulary about child labor orally and in writing; (3) learners would be able to meaningfully discuss and write about child labor in Latin America using complex grammatical structures; and (4) learners would be able to improve their academic vocabulary and advanced grammatical structures. The instructor introduced the topic of child labor by eliciting learners' prior knowledge and encouraging critical inquiry through a class discussion about an article by Esther Julia Castaño González titled "La situación de los niños trabajadores en Latinoamérica" (137). To guide the discussion, the instructor posed several tasks for learners to complete in small groups, including identifying the situation of working children based on regions, identifying patterns in working situations, and proposing possible solutions from different stakeholders. The instructor also provided learners with a follow-up activity, which involved watching a documentary directed by Ferguson titled *Invisible Hands* outside of class and comparing it to the article they had read to promote learning transfer, as suggested by Wiggins and McTighe.

The instructor focused on contextualized linguistic forms to close this thematic unit. He revised the use of the counterfactual hypothesis to increase confidence in the presentational mode by presenting learners with examples of the content studied. For example, "Si Mario hubiera tenido un padre presente, él habría

finalizado la escuela secundaria" "If Mario had had a father at home, he would have finished high school." The instructor posed questions based on the texts to draw learners' attention to the target structure, such as, "What do you think would have happened if the children had not jumped on the truck with them?" In this specific case, notice how students work with grammar around content, and the instructor, through questions, tries to elicit answers based on the text (see Liamkina and Ryshina-Pankova 284–85). It also reflected the focus on form approach in teaching grammar, which effectively draws students' attention to linguistic forms in meaningful communication settings, as supported by (Long 41; Nassaji and Fotos 2–3).

Reflective Essays

The students' critical reflective narratives demonstrated that they effectively combined new and prior knowledge in their presentations. In other words, the students wrote about their own experiences, and the narratives helped them to engage in critical thinking. This finding is consistent with the genre-based pedagogy that supports writing development (Allen and Goodspeed 105). For instance, a student who specializes in nonproliferation and terrorism studies emphasized the significance of examining the connection between drug trafficking and terrorist groups. Similarly, another study, with a concentration on organized crime and peace processing, delved deeper into the relationship between human trafficking and organized crime, as well as the impact on women who are victims of trafficking.

Another learner, who focused on international environmental policy studies, researched human trafficking in Ecuador for two reasons: her background in psychology and her current environmental studies. This connection between topics from the course and students' areas of concentration promotes deep learning and enhances their understanding of new vocabulary, resulting in a more enriching learning experience (see works by Nation and Vygotsky). It also facilitates the retention of information for future contexts (Schmitt and Schmitt 135). A few students chose to collaborate with others who shared the same research interests.

The analysis of the essays showed that the oral presentations allowed the students to conduct interdisciplinary research in Spanish class, as shown in the following comment: "For my presentation, I chose child recruitment from narco-trafficking organizations and human trafficking. As a nonproliferation and terrorism student, I wanted to focus on a topic relevant to my master's degree."

Interdisciplinary work is crucial at the university level because it not only deepens students' understanding of the topics they research through inquiry but also enhances their critical thinking abilities as they engage with diverse perspectives on those topics. One student wrote, "Jules [fictitious name] and I chose the topic of the trafficking of women in border cities in Mexico because we wanted to learn more about the complexity of trafficking between the United States and Mexico. I also wanted to find more information about indigenous women in Mexico because there is less information about them even though they are very vulnerable." Working collaboratively with peers and selecting a specific topic gave learners a sense of agency in learning. They had to consider various arguments, brainstorm topics, and form their own conclusions.

Most learners reported that the question-and-answer period following their presentation was challenging because of the sophisticated questions from their peers. This is another example of how oral presentations encourage students to engage in critical thinking and force them to weigh the information they need in real time.

Official Evaluation

The official evaluation of the institution yielded the following information. Of the thirteen learners, six responded to the course evaluation. In response to the question, "Learning is a partnership between professors and students. How much effort did you put into making this class a useful learning experience for yourself?" (Middlebury, Institutional Evaluation), the students reported putting in a significant amount of effort, with a mean score of 4.3 on a 5-point scale. Learners rated the course highly in various aspects, including access to course readings and other materials (4.8), structure and sequencing of topics (4.7), appropriateness of workload (4.5), meeting stated learning objectives (4.8), and value to their career goals (4.7). The mean overall course rating was 4.7. The students also provided qualitative feedback, highlighting the class's comprehensive and integrative aspects, language skills, and deeper understanding of human trafficking issues. Feedback on the content delivered, structure, and the instructor effectiveness was overwhelmingly positive.

Discussion

This study analyzed the development of a CCBI course using data from learners' needs assessments, narrative essays, and course evaluations. The results revealed that learners possessed sufficient content knowledge to analyze the power structures that

stemmed from previous studies or life experiences related to the main topic of the course. In other words, learners had working knowledge of human trafficking and expressed content needs specific to their fields of study. Perhaps not surprisingly, the specialized topics about human trafficking that learners wish to study are closely aligned with their academic and professional goals, a finding that is also supported in the literature (Oliva Parera 30). From a language perspective, it is essential to highlight that this work would require learners to employ their presentational skills effectively and to understand scientific jargon and concepts related to their particular concentration.

In terms of learners' language needs, the students prioritized oral skills over other language skills, which is consistent with the communicative approach that prioritizes speaking and listening to writing and reading skills (Akanbi and Ndidi 61). This is also consistent with the results of the professional needs assessment of 100 students learning business English at Al Ain University, according to Remache and Ibrahim (90), and a needs assessment by Lepetit and Cichocki (390) among 165 health studies students.

The results of the present needs assessment allowed the instructor to employ critical praxis by integrating critical reflexivity into the planning of course materials, activities, and course syllabus. For example, learners read articles or watched documentaries from different Latin American countries and discussed the content in small groups every week for approximately 20 or 25 minutes of class time. Learners worked on technical vocabulary before guest speaker presentations and spent between 35 and 40 minutes in groups discussing the main points after the presentations. These are a few examples of L2 classroom strategies based on Kumaravadivelu's macro-strategies (38–39) aimed at enhancing critical thinking and reflexivity. The analysis of narrative essays, in which learners reflected on their experiences, revealed critical information about language and content growth. Learners expressed confidence in the material they presented and highlighted the importance of creating positive change in the communities they investigated. This is a welcoming finding as it highlights the course's strength in real-world applications and societal impact, with community engagement being essential in language development and also responsible for supporting cultural development as well as regional expertise, three critical competencies sought by the DOD comprehensive programs.

This study has some limitations, including the fact that the composition of learners changes every semester, which can affect the generalizability of the findings to

future groups. Also, the instructor in this course is a language specialist, not a content specialist, as noted in CBI literature, such as those by Baecher et al., Kong, Lo, Met, Shaw, and Troyan et al.

Future studies could investigate how learners move from inquiry-based learning to new knowledge building, as suggested by Levy and Petrulis. It would also be beneficial for prospective studies to focus on the different degrees that make a victim susceptible to recruitment and exploitation. Given these findings, I am interested in investigating the roles of different nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies in raising awareness about the global human trafficking epidemic. To validate these findings further, it would be beneficial to replicate this study with other groups of learners taking courses that follow the CCBI format.

Conclusion

This study focused on implementing critical content-based instruction (CCBI) in a graduate-level Spanish course on human trafficking. The course was designed for students from various disciplines, and its analysis provides insights that can be incorporated into other university courses that follow the CCBI approach and that aim to engage in critical praxis, as Kubota and Miller suggested (22).

The instructor conducted a comprehensive needs assessment with the learners to understand their content and language needs and then adjusted the course organization and activities accordingly. The instructor also created an inclusive classroom environment where students from different concentrations felt valued. The instructor facilitated the class discussions, encouraged participation, and developed learners' language competencies. This study contributes to the current scholarship by describing how CCBI has enabled learners to focus on criticality supported in their final presentations and critical praxis by working on projects where recommendations from different stakeholders, such as local and federal governments, and the importance of victim rehabilitation are addressed in their particular presentations.

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CHAPTER 5

The Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP)

A Proven Alternative to the Just-in-Time Model of Language Training and Sustainment

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors describe the success of the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) in U.S. Air Force and Space Force language development and sustainment. An efficient alternative to just-in-time language training, LEAP offers selected participants continued language development in parallel with their primary careers. Over 3,500 LEAP Scholars were engaged in language development through this career-spanning program as of January 2024. The 2005 Defense Language Transformation Roadmap required Department of Defense (DOD) agencies to address the longstanding dearth of language and culture skills, and LEAP is in direct response to the roadmap goals. The authors delved into a massive database collected over 10 years that showed the program improved and sustained language skills across the Air Force and provided the ability to respond quickly to unforeseen contingencies around the world. The authors discuss implications of the LEAP model for adult language education programs and how the program supports the language and culture needs of Air Force and Space Force warfighters. Moreover, the authors discuss how the program maintains strong

connections with the operational users of the Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) capability. The authors found that technology facilitated the accessibility and distribution of education and information for regional expertise and culture and helped to overcome challenges of scale and velocity to be relevant for operational needs. The authors conclude with implications and the way ahead for the language program and for the LREC enterprise across the DOD.

KEYWORDS: Language, culture, and regional expertise (LREC) education, career-spanning program, Department of Defense, Air Force, talent management.

Introduction

In every national crisis from the Cold War through Vietnam, Desert Storm, Bosnia and Kosovo, our nation has lamented its foreign language shortfalls. But then the crisis goes away, and we return to business as usual. One of the messages of September 11 is that business as usual is no longer an acceptable option.

—Senator Paul Simon, Illinois

Assessing the state of the science in Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) must begin with data. In this chapter, the authors examine the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) from its genesis in response to the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap (DLTR) of 2005 to the beginning of 2024. At the time the DLTR was published, the Air Force and other services across the Department of Defense (DOD) used resident just-in-time language training programs to meet foreign language requirements. However, the DLTR called for a massive increase in the number of DOD personnel with foreign language skills, which traditional programs were not able to produce at a reasonable cost. The Language Enabled Airman Program, which was based on an "autonomous learner" model, provided a viable and cost-effective alternative to in-residence language training programs—commonly employed across the DOD—without the requirement to remove personnel from their primary duties for an extended period of time. Under this model, LEAP offered selected participants the opportunity for continued language development throughout their careers in parallel with their primary duties. As of 2024, over 3,500 LEAP Scholars, representing every rank and career field, were successfully engaged in language development through this career-spanning program. The architects of the program envisioned that LEAP would create an energized and capable corps of language-enabled Airmen ready to respond to contingencies around the world, but the program far exceeded the original expectations. Several studies conducted over the same period confirmed the program's effectiveness and positive impact on the Air Force, and later Space Force, missions. The visionary development of a system to track the progress of

participants in the program created a massive database over ten years that was used in several studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The findings from these studies showed that LEAP was a highly effective model to maintain and improve foreign language skills over a service member's career. An interesting and unexpected finding was that participation in LEAP increased retention of Air Force Airmen and Space Force Guardians when compared with the overall populations. The authors conclude with implications of the program to adult world language education and provide a look ahead for LEAP and more broadly for the LREC enterprise across the DOD.

Literature Review

The importance of developing and sustaining LREC skills across the DOD is well-documented. From a United States Army perspective, Muller's 1981 article highlights historical missteps (strategic and tactical) ranging from host nation interactions to combat effectiveness. He concludes, moreover, that "fluency in a language other than English is a valuable tactical and strategic component of national security" (361).

In 1998, General Henry Viccellio, then commander of Air Force Material Command, made a strong push for proficiency in world languages and area studies in the officer corps to ensure a ready capability to shape events or respond to contingencies around the world (Mueller and Daubach 64). In the same vein, in September 2000, the United States Air Force (USAF) Chief of Staff, General Michael Ryan, endorsed a culture of change to address the continued and growing shortage of language-qualified Airmen. To be viable, Ryan wrote, "the Expeditionary Aerospace Force (EAF) requires people with language and cultural skills in place and ready, just as we need pilots, satellite operators and jet engine mechanics" (13). General Ryan's call for more and better LREC skills was echoed by subsequent USAF leadership.

In August 2002, then USAF Chief of Staff General John Jumper, wrote: "Recent operations underscore our need to establish a cadre of professionals proficient in world languages and area studies—men and women who have the right skill sets to shape events and rapidly respond to world-wide contingencies" (Jumper). Former USAF/CC General Norton Schwartz wrote: "The dynamic global environment has made Cross-Cultural Competence a critical and necessary capability for the Total Force" (Schwartz 2). Similarly, Lieutenant General Gina M. Grosso, former DCS, Manpower, Personnel and Services rightfully linked effective global skills to

successful global operations (Grosso). Former Under Secretary of Defense Stanley Clifford introduced the results of the 2011 DOD Summit on Language and Culture by noting that "Summit participants recognized and agreed that language, regional and culture skills are core warfighting competencies that cut across the full spectrum of operations in a dynamic, interconnected, global world" (Stanley 1). In 2011, General Schwartz further noted: "if we underestimate the significance of language, region and culture in our global endeavors, we do so at our own risk and to the detriment of our effectiveness" (Schwartz 2).

In 1998, based on decades of experience teaching world languages, Mueller and Daubach advocated rejecting the traditional teaching model, which required in-residence training right before it was needed, or "just-in-time," in favor of building a pool of resources across all Air Force specialties in the Total Force (Mueller and Daubach 67). In 2000, Mueller similarly recommended a new paradigm that called for focusing resources on service members who had demonstrated a desire and the ability to learn world languages. Mueller suggested this new paradigm should guide discussions and policies on language skills for the general purpose (non-linguist) communities, foreshadowing many of the concerns expressed in the 2005 DLTR and laying the foundational principles for what would become the Language Enabled Airman Program (Mueller 18).

Despite repeated calls for more and better LREC skills across the force for more than two decades, a report in 2023 once again highlighted the shortfalls that have plagued the DOD (Hicks 1). In 2005, the DOD codified the dearth of foreign language proficiency and proposed specific, targeted solutions with the publication of the DLTR. Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense at that time, directed the important steps needed to develop and maintain foreign language and regional area expertise across the DOD (Wolfowitz 2). The DLTR directed all DOD agencies to work toward four broad goals:

1. Create foundational language and culture expertise across the DOD
2. Create a surge capacity beyond the foundational skills
3. Establish a cadre with 3/3/3 reading/listening/speaking abilities
4. Establish a process to track the accession, separation, and promotion rates of language professionals, including Foreign Area Officers (FAOs)

The initial push implied that more language and more culture to more service members would produce the desired results to support DOD strategies and operations. In

contrast, the 2006 QDR specifically noted pre-commissioning as the only time in which officers could develop LREC skills, without mission degradation (*Quadrennial* 79). Interestingly, the DLTR did not mention sustainment and maintenance of LREC skills in its top four priorities, reflecting the misguided American view of language proficiency as short-term, mechanical skills that do not require maintenance (Muller 361). On the other hand, the DLTR profoundly expanded the discussion of the need for LREC skills beyond the intelligence community, to include requirements in the general purpose forces (GPF). In response to the DLTR, the USAF published the Cultural, Regional and Linguistic Competency Framework (CRLF) and Flight Plan in January 2007. In the introduction to the CRLF, Chief of Staff General Michael Moseley lamented that an insufficient number of Airmen understood and were able to influence events in foreign countries, and the lack of processes to meet current and future requirements (Moseley). In December of the same year, the USAF established the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) and chartered it to define, coordinate, and implement LREC education and training programs across the USAF (Schwartz 2).

In 2008, the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee's (HASC) Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations (O&I) expressed concerns that the services were not meeting the transformational goals of the DLTR, particularly with respect to establishing foundational foreign language expertise (Brecht et al.). With compelling input from AFCLC subject matter experts, the CRLF sought to align resources and requirements to meet GPF tactical and strategic needs by galvanizing discussions around "right skills, right level, and right time" principles. The Culture, Region, and Language (CRL) Flight Plan, published in May 2009, specifically linked National Security and National Defense objectives with Air Force programs to produce "coalition-minded" warriors. The CRL called for the Total Force to be infused with cross-cultural competence (3C), while language training would be tailored to mission needs that required either *language professionals* or *language-enabled* Airmen with the appropriate level of language proficiency (Schwartz 2).

The Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP)

Building on the concepts first presented by Mueller in 2000, the LEAP concept emerged in 2009 from exploring initiatives to identify and track Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and USAF Academy (USAFA) graduating cadets with LREC skills. USAFA conducted a proof-of-concept with 18 newly commissioned second lieutenants who were offered the opportunity to continue language study

in tandem with their Specialty Career Training. The positive feedback from the participants led the AFCLC to build a robust, sustainable alternative language development process, and in 2009, the USAF Senior Language Authority (SLA) approved LEAP as the official *way ahead* to develop language skills for the GPF.

The LEAP *willing and able* principle was simple—identify and select incoming Airmen, and later Space Force Guardians, with a demonstrated ability to learn a world language and a desire to sustain and develop those skills throughout their careers. Concentrating limited resources on willing and able Airmen eliminated the need for otherwise costly and time-consuming just-in-time language training, which normally took Airmen away from their primary career duties for extended periods of time. LEAP also connected existing skills to LREC requirements and programs. For example, the number of LEAP Scholars selected for the FAO program grew steadily from the inception of LEAP and reached 70 percent by 2023.

Unfortunately, as discussed in the literature review section, language skills have not been historically regarded as mission-critical skills. The DLTR recognized foreign language skills as warfighting capabilities for the general purpose force and not just career fields where language proficiency was required. At the time LEAP was established it was virtually impossible to predict how many language-skilled Airmen would be needed in 10 to 15 years, but the USAF recognized that language-proficient, culturally competent Airmen would be powerful force multipliers for future USAF operations.

The LEAP Teaching and Learning Model

In addition to focusing on "willing and able" Airmen, the LEAP model was also founded on the principle of career-spanning development and shared responsibilities. From a career-spanning perspective, the AFCLC provided language immersion opportunities and remotely delivered eMentor language courses, and the LEAP Scholars committed to dedicating two hours, two days per week for tutoring with online eMentors. Combining the undisputed value of in-country immersion programs with follow-on, structured eMentor courses created a mindset of long-term development and shared responsibilities. By 2023, the AFCLC had provided LEAP Scholars with 6,417 Language Intensive Training Events (LITEs), short-term (3–4 week) immersions abroad, and 11,703 eMentor courses.

The obvious advantages of LEAP over just-in-time training provided a well-qualified pool of LREC capabilities, ready and deployable on short notice. This was particularly valuable for unforeseen contingencies such as Operation Allies Refuge,

an evacuation effort by the U.S. during the 2021 Taliban offensive. For this military effort, LEAP provided 22 LEAP Scholars in person in various regions throughout Europe, the Middle East, and CONUS to facilitate the reception of Afghan refugees. Additionally, the products produced by the AFCLC (including Expeditionary Culture Field Guides, Culture Awareness Courses, and relevant subject matter video libraries) were employed by these LEAP Scholars and shared with base leadership, which facilitated the reception by respecting the cultural norms of the individuals stepping off the aircraft. In support of Ukraine in its fight against Russia, LEAP employed 87 Scholars supporting a total of 32 requirements from 2022 to 2023. Twenty-six of those requirements were in-person in neighboring countries, facilitating training and advising. Six were document translation requirements where LEAP Scholars provided support from their home station. Outside these two specific examples, the AFCLC responded to 1,399 requirements for world language capabilities spanning 68 languages from 2017 to 2023.

The "willing and able" principle guided the highly selective process for participation in LEAP. Selection Boards, held annually for cadets and the active duty force, were composed of active duty and senior civilians who identified and selected the best Airmen and Guardians from a cohort of volunteers. The selection boards applied a rigorous rubric to assess the applicants' overall professional record, commitment to language learning, and demonstrated ability to reach higher levels of proficiency. From the 18 newly commissioned second lieutenants in 2009, by 2023 LEAP had grown to 3,500 Scholars in 97 languages and with members from all ranks and AFSCs.

The remarkably low annual program attrition rate of 7.4 percent was a clear indicator of the success of the selection process and of the quality of the overall program. In another external validation of the program, a 2010 U.S. House of Representatives Committee (House Armed Services Committee [HASC]) Armed Services Oversight and Investigations Report specifically cited LEAP as a "model" program in one of its nine findings (U.S. House 43).

The LEADeR System

Starting in 2011, the AFCLC's Jamie Williams led the development of the Language Enabled Airman Development Resource (LEADeR) software program, which became a central nervous system for LEAP to automate tasks for program managers, facilitate full life-cycle management of a career spanning program, and generate data for ongoing learning and financial analysis. The unique database

design facilitated longitudinal data analyses and over time produced a unique data set of how adults learn world languages in a distributed model blending online and immersive learning. Some LEAP Scholars' profiles, for example, consisted of more than ten years of data, including multiple Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) results, academic background, records of eMentor courses, overseas deployments, operational LREC support, and other training or experiences. The LEADeR database was designed with scalability to accommodate the growing, increasingly diverse LEAP population and was used in several empirical studies, both internal and external, to evaluate the effectiveness of the LEAP model.

Six Seminal Studies

Between 2018 and 2022, the AFCLC conducted or commissioned six studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the LEAP model and to assess the need for programmatic changes using the data that had been collected in the LEADeR database for a decade. The initial studies spawned follow-up inquiries as the data revealed some surprising and, in some cases, unexpected results. In this section the authors discuss the data and statistical analysis for each of the studies.

The Cohort Study

In 2018, the AFCLC conducted the first empirical study of the LEAP program using LEADeR data to explore how active LEAP participation affected DLPT scores over time. The DLPT is designed to assess world language proficiency as defined by the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) Skill Level Descriptions. Table 5.1 compares ILR levels with the levels used by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL).

Table 5.1

ILR vs. ACTFL Levels

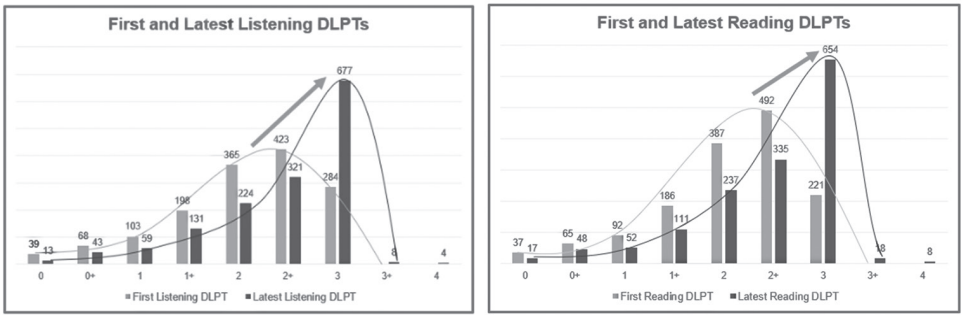
Interagency Language Roundtable Levels	American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Levels
Level 0—No Proficiency	No proficiency
Level 1—Elementary Proficiency	Novice
Level 2—Limited Working Proficiency	Intermediate
Level 3—General Professional Proficiency	Advanced
Level 4—Advanced Professional Proficiency	Superior
Level 5—Functionally Native Proficiency	Distinguished

Source: Interagency Language Roundtable and The National Standards Collaborative Board

An initial look at the data showed LEAP participation had an overall positive impact on the listening and reading modalities of the DLPT (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1

DLPT Score Comparisons (Listening and Reading) from 2018 Cohort Study of LEAP Scholars



To better understand how participation in LITEs and eMentor courses impacted performance, the researchers compared the number of LITEs and eMentor hours of participation with those who improved or decreased their scores by at least half point (as indicated with a + mark) on the Interagency Language Roundtable with the average LITEs and eMentor hours for the cohort. An active participant was defined as someone who participated in either a LITE or eMentor course and had at least two DLPT scores.

Using those criteria the data set contained 1,480 participants, further subdivided into four language categories as defined by the Defense Language Institute (DLI) with 664 participants in Category I (n = 664), and 816 participants in Categories II, III, and IV (n = 816). DLI and the Department of State define Category I languages as those closely related to English (for example Danish, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, etc.); Category II languages are those languages that take additional time to maser (for example German, Indonesian, Malay, etc.); Category III languages have significant linguistic and/or cultural differences from English and are harder to master (for example Albanian, Greek, Tagalog, Russian, etc.); and Category IV languages are exceptionally difficult for native English speakers (for example Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc.) (Foreign Service Institute).

A total of 1,032 active participants (70%) improved scores in listening and reading across all language categories, 67 (4%) maintained, 143 (10%) decreased, and 238 (16%) had mixed results with an increase in one modality but a decrease in the other as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

DLPT Score Changes by Group

Group	*n*	Percentage of Total
Improved	1,032	70%
Maintained	67	4%
Decreased	143	10%
Mixed	238	16%

Source: AFCLC, "Cohort Study" (2018)

The researchers performed a two-sample t-test assuming equal variances to compare the impact of LITEs on DLPT performance between the Improved group and the entire cohort. The mean value of the average number of LITEs of the Improved group (M = 1.1841, SD = 0.7946) was not significantly higher than the Cohort mean; $t(2,510) = 1.598$, $p > 0.05$.

The researchers then performed a two-sample t-test assuming equal variances to compare the impact of hours of eMentor classes on DLPT performance between the Improved group and the entire cohort. As shown in Table 5.3, the mean value of the average number of hours of eMentor classes of the Improved group (M = 67.0565, *SD* = 2525.928287) was not significantly higher than the Cohort mean; $t(2,510) = 1.27647$, $p > 0.05$.

The researchers performed a two-sample t-test assuming equal variances to compare the impact of LITEs on DLPT performance between the Decreased group and the entire cohort. The mean value of the average number of LITEs of the Decreased group (M = 0.8671, SD = 0.5245) was significantly lower than the Cohort mean; $t(1,621) = -3.3710$, $p < 0.001$ as shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3

Comparison of Average Number of LITEs Between Decreased Group and Cohort

Group	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Decreased (n = 143)	0.8671	0.5245	−3.3710	1,621	0.0007	0.2593*
Cohort (N = 1,480)	1.1264	0.7947				

* Statistically significant

Source: AFCLC, "Cohort Study" (2018)

The researchers performed a two-sample t-test assuming equal variances to compare the impact of hours of eMentor classes on DLPT performance between the Decreased group and the entire cohort. The mean value of the average number of hours of eMentor classes of the Decreased group (M = 60.7552, SD = 1679.819955) was not significantly lower than the Cohort mean; $t(1,621) = -0.89832$, $p > 0.05$.

The results for the Improved group suggested participation in LITEs and eMentor classes had an overall positive impact on LEAP Scholar performance on the DLPT. Although the difference in the number of LITEs and eMentor hours was not significantly different, greater participation in these elements of the program had a clear positive impact. The results of the Decreased group, which participated in fewer LITEs and fewer eMentor classes than the overt cohort, support the finding that increased participation LITEs and eMentor courses led to better overall results.

The 2018 Cohort Study also helped assess the impact of the program on participants who entered with elevated levels of foreign language skills. This Advanced subset (n = 772) was defined as participants with starting DLPT scores of at least 3 in both the listening and reading modalities. Of the 772 participants in this subset, 117 (15.16%) improved scores, 436 (56.48%) maintained, 197 (25.52%) decreased, and 22 (2.85%) had mixed results with an increase in one modality but a decrease in the other (see Table 5.4). The results for this subset were consistent with what one would expect for participants entering the program with an elevated level of language proficiency with the majority maintaining their scores.

Table 5.4

DLPT Score Changes by Group for Advanced Subset

Group	*n*	Percentage of Total
Improved	117	15.16%
Maintained	436	56.48%
Decreased	197	25.52%
Mixed	22	2.85%

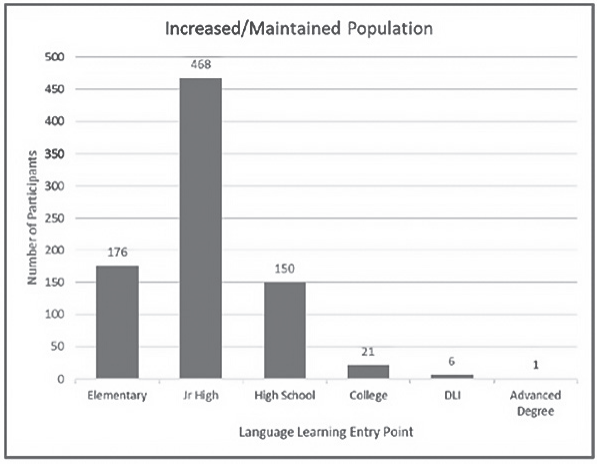
Source: AFCLC, "Cohort Study" (2018)

The 2018 Cohort study also revealed two other interesting and actionable trends for improving program structure. Within the subset of the population (n = 1,099) that maintained or increased their DLPT scores, 75 percent (n = 824) acquired their skills through training and education, while 24 percent (n = 264) were heritage speakers of the target language. Within the academically trained group 57 percent (n = 468) began their language studies in junior high school, while 21 percent (n = 176) began

their studies in elementary school (see Figure 5.2). These findings led to changes in the selection criteria for the program.

Figure 5.2

Beginning Point of Academic Instruction for Those Who Increased and Those Who Maintained from 2018 Cohort Study of LEAP Scholars



The CASL Study

In 2018, the AFCLC commissioned the Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL) at the University of Maryland to conduct a second empirical study to examine five years of historical data on training experiences and proficiency test scores of participants in the program to assess the effectiveness of the LEAP model. The results were overwhelmingly positive and confirmed the 2018 Cohort Study findings that found the LEAP training model maintained or improved the participants' world language skills.

The researchers also evaluated the effectiveness of the LEAP teaching model using eMentor courses and LITEs. For the purposes of this study, eMentor courses were designated Standard Courses (48 hours) for participants in the 0 to 2+ range, and Assessment Courses (variable hours) for those with DLPT proficiency of 3 or higher. Participants who completed the Standard Course did not have measurable proficiency gains, suggesting 48 hours of a Standard course may not provide sufficient time-on-task over a one-year period to produce measurable gains (Linck et al. 22).

Assessment course participation, however, showed positive results in reading and listening scores. Moreover, scholars who had previously tested at level 3 were more

likely to sustain that proficiency level (95%) if they had completed an Assessment course. This suggests that once achieved, the higher level may protect the skills from atrophy over the next year. Another interesting finding was that 40 percent of lower-level (2+) participants, who were placed into the Assessment Course, improved their reading or listening scores within a year, suggesting a learning model that builds upon existing skills can be effective (Linck et al. 22). LEAP Scholars who participated in the traditional LITEs were nearly twice as likely to improve speaking skills relative to their peers who did not complete any LITEs.

Moreover, the observed DLPT success rates, particularly at lower skill levels, were remarkably similar to those of longer study abroad programs (Linck et al. 23). It is important to note that eMentor courses changed over the course of the data collection period based on student feedback and programmatic directives, and participants across the data collection period may not have had identical educational experiences. The CASL researchers also found that LEAP participants had better proficiency improvements when compared to full-time resident programs with less than a third of the contact time (Linck et al. 23)

In summary, CASL researchers also noted that LEAP's innovative training model "effectively maintained and expanded the USAF's foreign language capacity across a wide range of language abilities and skills" (Linck et al. 6). LEAP embraced the twenty-first-century shift toward personalized learning and enabled career-long sustainment and enhancement of foreign language skills (Linck et al. 24). Interestingly, both the Cohort Study and the CASL Study found that 70 percent of LEAP participants either raised or maintained their world language proficiency as measured by the DLPT (AFCLC, "Cohort Study" 23; Linck et al. 14).

The 2020 LEAP Developmental Timeline Phase 2 Study

In 2020, a routine review of DLPT metrics revealed that some LEAP Scholars who attained a score of 3 in any modality for the first time scored lower on their next test. To better understand the factors impacting language retention, the AFCLC conducted the 2020 LEAP Developmental Timeline Phase 2 Study to examine how the following factors impacted language retention: source of language skills (native vs. non-native), participation in LITEs (number of LITEs), and language groupings.

The data showed that of participants with native language skills (n = 156), 80 retained the higher level, while 76 did not. Of participants with non-native language skills (n = 396), 168 retained the higher level, while 228 did not. To assess the impact of LITEs participation on language retention, the researchers

performed a two-sample t-test to compare the impact of LITEs on language retention. The mean value of the average number of LITEs of the *Retained* group (M = 1.27, SD = 0.834) was not significantly higher than the average number of LITEs of the *Non-Retained* group; $t(309) = 1.984$, $p = 0.107$. The results showed LEAP Scholars with native language skills were better able to retain level 3 than their non-native counterparts. The results also revealed that those who retained level 3 had completed more LITEs, suggesting that in-country language programs supported sustaining advanced language proficiency levels.

A closer look at the relationship between language tested and the ability to retain level 3 showed that there was significant association between language tested and the ability to retain level 3, X^2 (45, N = 568) = 61.65, p <.05. Table 5.5 shows the number of scholars who retained level 3 and those who did not by language.

Table 5.5

List of Level 3 Retention by Language

Test Language	Did Not Retain	Retained
Albanian	0	2
Amharic	1	0
Arabic Egyptian	1	1
Arabic Iraqi - Gulf	1	0
Arabic Modern Standard	9	4
Arabic Syrian	1	0
Bulgarian	1	1
Burmese	1	0
Cebuano	1	1
Chinese Mandarin	12	15
Chinese Cantonese	2	0
Danish	1	2
Dutch	2	1
French	56	26
German	14	26
Haitian-Creole	2	0

Hebrew	**3**	**1**
Hindi	**5**	**3**
Hungarian	**1**	**2**
Indonesian	**2**	**3**
Italian	**6**	**6**
Japanese	**13**	**9**
Korean	**7**	**9**
Lao also Laotian	**1**	**0**
Malay	**1**	**0**
Norwegian	**2**	**0**
Persian-Dari (Afghan)	**1**	**0**
Persian-Farsi (Iranian)	**1**	**1**
Polish	**6**	**2**
Portuguese	**7**	**0**
Portuguese Brazilian	**21**	**9**
Portuguese European	**10**	**2**
Punjabi	**1**	**0**
Punjabi-Western	**1**	**0**
Pushto-Afghan	**2**	**0**
Romanian	**3**	**3**
Russian	**12**	**14**
Serbo-Croatian	**0**	**3**
Spanish	**82**	**71**
Swahili	**4**	**1**
Tagalog	**7**	**16**
Thai (includes Siamese)	**1**	**4**
Turkish	**1**	**4**
Ukrainian	**5**	**4**
Urdu	**3**	**3**
Vietnamese Hanoi	**6**	**1**

Source: AFCLC, "LEAP Development Timeline Phase 2 Study" (2020)

These findings led to a programmatic adjustment to maintain a developmental profile for LEAP Scholars that reached level 3 until attainment of the second consecutive test. The AFCLC also developed LITEs to reinforce and broaden the skillset of those who had recently attained or were approaching advanced levels such as the Advanced Special Emphasis (ASE) and Area Studies Immersions, which provided rigorous academic instruction in the target language. In the case of the ASE LITEs, the focus was regional threads linked to strategic competition with China and Russia. The Area Studies Immersion was conducted at a university in the target country where the topics were focused on government, economics, literature, and current events. The AFCLC also maintained members in this score regime in 40-hour eMentor courses versus the 12-hour course to assess currency of skills.

2016 Cohort Cat I/II vs. Cat III/IV Study

The AFCLC also conducted a study to examine the relationship between language difficulty categories, number of LITEs, and DLPT scores. The cohort for this study consisted of 227 LEAP Scholars across the four language difficulty categories (N = 227). To address the relationship, the investigators divided the cohort into two groups with the first group containing those in language categories I and II (n = 126), and the second group with those in language categories III and IV (n = 101). To examine the relationship between number of LITEs completed and language difficulty category, the researchers conducted a two-sample t-test assuming equal variances. Results showed the *Category I/II* group (n = 126) participated in significantly more LITEs than the *Category III/IV* group: $t(225) = 2.228$, $p = 0.027$ (see Table 5.6).

Table 5.6

Comparison of Average Number of LITEs Between Categories I and II and Categories III and IV Language Difficulty Groups

Group	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Cat I/II (n = 126)	1.373	0.846	2.228	225	0.027	0.264*
Cat III/IV (n = 101)	1.109	0.937				

* Statistically significant

Source: AFCLC, "Cohort Cat I/II vs. Cat III/IV Study" (2016)

The researchers used the Pearson correlation coefficient to study the relationship between language categories and performance in speaking and writing modalities. The data in Table 5.7 revealed there was a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between Category I/II languages and speaking scores, $r(106) = .53$, $p < .01$; while the correlation between Category III/IV languages and speaking was also positive but was not as strong and was not statistically significant, $r(73) = .20$, $p = .08$. A similar pattern was observed in the writing modality, with Category I/II language showing a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation, $r(106) = .51$, $p < .001$, while Category III/IV languages had a positive but weaker and statistically significant correlation, $r(73) = .30$, $p < .01$. The results showed the language difficulty category was a factor in the success of learning outcomes and course design.

Table 5.7

Pearson's Correlation on Speaking and Writing Modalities Between Groups

Group	Modality	r-value	R^2-value	p-value
Cat I/II	Speaking	0.53392	0.28507	<.001*
(n = 108)	Writing	0.51411	0.26431	<.001*
Cat III/IV	Speaking	0.20375	0.00415	0.08
(n = 75)	Writing	0.30506	0.00931	0.008*

* Statistically significant

Source: AFCLC, "Cohort Cat I/II vs. Cat III/IV Study" (2016)

The 2022 Follow-Up Study

Based on previous studies, which provided keen insights into the characteristics of successful learners, the AFCLC modified the selection criteria for LEAP in 2019 to consider these factors. These changes included amending the LEAP application form and selection rubrics to extract the common life experiences identified in the Cohort Study to be relevant to success in the program. For example, given that many Scholars who were successful in the program began their language learning as early as junior high school, applicants were required to state how many languages they spoke and the countries they lived in prior to their eighteenth birthday. To evaluate the effectiveness of the modifications, the AFCLC conducted a follow-up study in 2022.

For this study, the researchers grouped the entire LEAP cohort into two groups: *Group I* consisted of LEAP Scholars with DLPT scores in listening and reading between 2010 and 2018; and *Group II* consisted of LEAP Scholars with DLPT

scores in listening and reading in 2019. The researchers then computed a two-sample t-test assuming equal variances to compare the change in DLPT scores for listening and reading between *Group I* and *Group II*. The results in Table 5.8 show that mean score change for reading of *Group II* ($M = 0.215$, $SD = 0.495$) was significantly higher than for *Group I*, $t(2{,}475) = 3.276$, $p = 0.001$. The mean score change for listening for *Group II* ($M = 0.184$, $SD = 0.421$) was also significantly higher than for *Group I*, $t(2{,}532) = 1.985$, $p = 0.047$.

Table 5.8

Comparison of DLPT Score Change for Group I and Group II

Group	Modality	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Group I (n = 2198)	Reading	0.128	0.410	3.276	2475	.001	.087*
Group II (n = 279)	Reading	0.215	0.495				
Group I (n = 2,230)	Listening	0.135	0.406	1.985	2532	.047	.049*
Group II (n = 304)	Listening	0.184	0.421				

* Statistically significant

Source: AFCLC, "Follow Up Study" (2022)

When comparing the year groups by language category, results showed that DLPT increases for language Categories I/II were statistically significant while the increases in scores for language Categories III/IV were not. The results shown in Table 5.9 confirmed that the changes made to the selection criteria in 2019 had an overall positive effect on performance on the DLPT, particularly in language Categories I and II.

Table 5.9

Comparison of DLPT Score Change for Groups by Modality and Language Categories

Language Category	Modality	Group I Mean Score Change (SD)	Group II Mean Score Change (SD)	*p*-value
Cat I/II	Reading	0.124 (n = 1254; SD = 0.393)	0.261 (n = 119; SD = 0.512)	$p < .001$*
	Listening	0.149 (n = 1264; SD = 0.385)	0.258 (n = 132; SD = 0.443	$p = 0.002$*
Cat III/IV	Reading	0.133 (n = 944; SD = 0.431)	0.181 (n = 160; SD = 0.481)	$p = 0.198$
	Listening	0.116 (n = 966; SD = 0.431)	0.128 (n = 172; SD = 0.395)	$p = 0.734$

* Statistically significant

Source: AFCLC, "Follow Up Study" (2022)

The 2023 Retention Study

Another internal study conducted by the AFCLC in 2023 demonstrated LEAP's impact upon operational readiness, particularly through retention in the Air Force. The analysis showed that the overall Air Force retention rate of LEAP participants from calendar year 2018 through calendar year 2023 was 92.6 percent, far exceeding the Air Force aggregate retention rate of 86 percent for FY23 (Seck). Two anecdotal examples provided insights into this phenomenon. Reflecting on his experience with LEAP and his decision to stay in the Air Force, Technical Sergeant Joshiro Nagashima, a LEAP Scholar in Japanese, stated:

> The Language Enabled Airman Program has provided extraordinary experiences and opportunities. I am seeing the bigger picture of bilateral force, which has given me more enjoyment and fulfillment as an Airman. LEAP also made me rethink my career and ultimately re-enlist, as I enjoy being a LEAP Scholar. It has improved my communication skills and communication with family and friends in Japan as well. Overall, LEAP has enhanced my military experience and fostered a deeper sense of pride within me as an Airman.

And at a time when pilot retention was a continuing challenge for the Air Force (Bourgeois), Major Wayne "Astro" Mowery's story of why he chose to stay in the Air

Force was instructive. Major Mowery, an F-16 pilot and an Arabic language LEAP Scholar, identified the combination of aviation and the use of his language skills to contribute strategically as a major factor in his decision to make the Air Force a career (Bourgeois). Excellent retention, however, could also be somewhat of a Damocles sword. The longer LEAP Scholars were retained in the Air Force, the longer it took to realize a return on investment, leading some program participants to disengage with LEAP over time. To address this concern, the AFCLC used data along two lines of effort to ensure that retained talent was active and postured for utilization.

The first line of effort involved analyzing the LEAP student body to determine active versus inactive as defined by whether a student complied with education and testing requirements for their LEAP level. The data showed that, consistently year over year, 91.5 percent of the student body was active. These insights led to changes to the annual selection process that allowed for additional accessions into the program.

The second line of effort involved analyzing the student body to determine if eligibility requirements should be changed. At the time of the study, the maximum time in service for LEAP eligibility was 16 years. As the AFCLC examined the distribution across year groups, the data highlighted a need to change the distribution to drive greater numbers into the ranks where greatest utilization occurred (Captain, Staff Sergeant, and Technical Sergeant). In 2023, the AFCLC lowered the time-in-service requirement to a maximum of ten years, which decreased the average time in service of the student body by two years and postured more LEAP Scholars for utilization.

Another important data point that further validated the value of retaining LEAP Scholars was the savings of money and time required to qualify FAOs. LEAP Scholars possessed the required language skills at the time of selection, thereby reducing the time and cost required for training and education. Additionally, LEAP provided officers with multiple opportunities for practical in-region experience, increasing their probabilities of success as FAOs. Data showed that in FY22, 63 percent of FAOs were selected from the LEAP cohort. In comparing selectees from LEAP with those who were not LEAP Scholars, the LEAP Scholars on average required 195 fewer days of training, saving the Air Force $2.5 million in direct costs.

But the real value of LEAP was measured in utilization. The Air Force invested in this program to increase mission effectiveness, and as the LEAP inventory grew, fill rates for language designated positions and contingency deployments

correspondingly increased. What was not being adequately addressed was a significant volume of shorter-term requirements that did not fit into either the bin of assignment or deployment. To meet this need, the AFCLC began working with organizations across the DOD to coordinate volunteers, with commander approval, to fill requirements such as conference support, exercises, document translation, and many others. During FY21–23, 523 Airmen and Guardians had been utilized in 287 contingencies, exercises, or to fulfill other short-term requirements in 44 countries using 55 languages. The AFCLC's process that matched LEAP Scholars to requirements was ultimately codified in 2023 in DAFI 36-4005, due in large part to the outstanding capabilities provided by the LEADeR system. The process became the approved method to source foreign language capabilities for contingencies that did not meet the threshold of an assignment or deployment, and as of 2024, the AFCLC filled a user requirement on average every 1.19 days.

Implications and Way Ahead

While the DOD-wide LREC improvement initiatives, driven by the 2005 DLTR, elevated and broadened the discussion on language and cultural skills, shortages in LREC-enabled personnel remained. In 2023 a new roadmap for cultivating and managing language skills was published by the DOD that identified similar challenges to those presented by the 2005 DLTR, such as recruiting, developing, utilizing, and maintaining sufficient foreign language talent (Hicks). The challenges documented in both the 2005 and 2023 DOD LREC directives were unlikely to be met by continued reliance on requirements-based, outdated, just-in-time training models. LEAP, developed to meet the recognized need for increased LREC capabilities across the Air Force and Space Force, exceeded expectations and addressed recruiting, developing, utilizing, and maintaining foreign language talent for a select cohort of Airmen.

The results of the studies commissioned or conducted internally by the AFCLC proved the efficacy of the LEAP learning model to deliver foreign language training concurrently with and scheduled around primary duties. This modernized learning model demonstrated that Airmen and Guardians, with existing foreign language skills, could improve and sustain those skills concurrently with their primary jobs rather than through an in-residence model that required time away from their home station. The studies also provided keen insights into the backgrounds and experiences of successful LEAP Scholars with important implications for adult world language education.

Furthermore, LEAP enhanced readiness by developing a pool of personnel prepared to support missions with skills that cannot be just-in-time trained. Contingencies where the USAF effectively used LEAP Airmen, like the withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 with 22 LEAP Scholars, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 with 87 LEAP Scholars, proved the point. As an unexpected benefit of the program, LEAP Scholars also had a higher retention rate than the rest of the force, positively impacting mission readiness. More broadly, the implications for adult world language education from the studies conducted to evaluate LEAP are clear. A language learning model that provides flexible online classes and periodic in-country immersions can sustain and improve foreign language skills over time at a reduced cost when compared to more traditional methods of instruction.

The data collected over almost two decades also showed that LEAP is an excellent model to meet force wide LREC requirements as determined by national strategic documents like the National Defense Strategy. For example, the NDS of 2022 charted the DOD on a path of integrated deterrence where success hinged upon incorporating partners and allies into all phases of planning, force development, and campaigning. At that time, world events were also unfolding at an unprecedented rate, and at times simultaneously in various combatant commands. The demand for LREC skills was greater than ever before, and the demand was not something the intelligence community alone could meet. The LEAP model was the answer to help fill the gap and meet the growing need.

As innovative technologies, like virtual or augmented reality, are adopted in world language education, it is likely that more and better learning tools will be employed to support LEAP training in areas like highly specialized technical vocabularies and tasks. Additionally, the LEAP model could be used for developing multidisciplinary capabilities such as computer languages, negotiations, and others. In 2005, the founders of LEAP recognized that contemporary learning models were unsuitable for the need at hand. The same vision will be required to prepare the most lethal weapon in the U.S. arsenal, the mind of an Airman, Guardian, Soldier, Sailor, or Marine, to meet the challenges of the continuously evolving strategic environment.

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PART TWO

Developing Cross-Cultural Leadership

CHAPTER 6

Assessing Cross-Cultural Competence in Military Leader Development

Integrating 3C into Army Talent Assessments

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ABSTRACT

U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan highlighted the need for effective intercultural engagement and underscored the importance of cross-cultural competence (3C). One of several culture-general approaches, cross-cultural competence is a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that enable military personnel to work and interact effectively across cultures. Operational contexts of counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and stability operations heightened the demand for these capabilities. In response, the U.S. military adopted cultural training and education strategies, with the Army emphasizing cross-cultural competence more than the other services did. Although some instruments were then available to assess cross-cultural competence, few measures had established validity and reliability with military populations, leaving intercultural development programs with few assessment options. In the 15 years since the Army published its culture and foreign language strategy, the landscape for assessing intercultural competence has shifted. First, the Army has incrementally adopted a culture of leader assessments administered throughout an officer's career. These changes have expanded opportunities to assess leader cross-cultural competence, but they pose challenges for deciding which measures to use, at what career stage, and for what purpose. Second, increasing evidence indicates that multiple instruments can assess cross-cultural competence with validity and reliability, but heavy reliance on self-report limits their utility for some purposes. This chapter outlines opportunities and considerations in the assessment of cross-cultural competence within military leader development.

KEYWORDS: assessment instruments, cross-cultural competence, cultural education, cultural training, intercultural competence, leader development, military populations

Introduction

Aiming to better prepare military personnel for intercultural engagement in conflict settings, the Department of Defense (DOD) adopted several culture-general approaches during U.S. conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan to supplement its focus on foreign language skills and regional knowledge. Among the most prevalent of these approaches, cross-cultural competence (3C) is a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that enable individuals to work and interact effectively across cultures. Military 3C builds on both the international management and intercultural communications literature, focusing on the needs of personnel interacting on the ground in foreign settings (Johnson et al. 526; Selmeski 12).

Operational contexts of counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and stability operations created a high demand for these capabilities. In response, the U.S. military services adopted cultural training and education strategies, with the Army emphasizing cross-cultural competence more than the other services did. Although no longer the priority it was during the height of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, 3C retains critical relevance in understanding our diverse array of competitors and adversaries and in advancing our strategic partnerships around the globe. Across presidential administrations from both political parties, the National Defense Strategy has emphasized continued reliance on alliances and partnership for strategic advantage (*2022 National Defense Strategy* 14). Consequently, the armed services must equip military personnel with the skills to advance those partnerships through their own actions and interactions.

More broadly, the human dimension is inherent to conflict. As a contest of wills, war is armed conflict in the service of political ends, necessitating that military personnel understand human aspects of conflict. Land forces have a particular need to navigate the human dimension, as their operational environments immerse them in some of the most complex human conflict dynamics, including distinguishing combatants from noncombatants, minimizing harm to civilians, and managing the stresses of combat for the soldier. Historically, conflicts often arise in places of both geographic and cultural distance where the United States has relatively little cultural similarity. U.S. experiences with security force assistance illustrate this recurring need. Military advising has included the development of

the Philippines' army in the 1930s, to Cold War–era advising in the Republic of Korea and Vietnam, to periodic buildup of special operations forces in El Salvador and Colombia in the 1980s. In each case, military advisors were selected based on criteria that had nothing to do with the intercultural and interpersonal aspects of the advisor role. According to one account, "If someone met the rank and branch-qualification requirements and was eligible for an overseas, then he was suited for advisory duty" (Ramsey 108).

Military advisors likely represent an advanced set of cultural skill requirements, requiring interpersonal and relationship-building skills along with intercultural skills. However, even in roles with less direct intercultural contact, intercultural skills are beneficial in competition and conflict. At a minimum, land forces must understand their counterparts' motives and mindsets to succeed in deterring or defeating the adversary. Consequently, cultural capabilities have ongoing operational and strategic relevance.

Given failures to accurately anticipate the location and timing of conflict, culture-general capabilities are an essential complement to region- and culture-specific knowledge. Moreover, 3C provides a foundational framework for culture-specific learning and builds skills applicable for any region, culture, or population. Because 3C develops over time and often in nonlinear fashion, it has practical implications for the military leader development enterprise. It is not the product of a single training course or an experience; its component skills develop at different rates and are differentially responsive to training and experience. As such, 3C benefits from systematic education and development efforts. This chapter outlines the demand for leader 3C in Army policy and doctrine and a parallel rising demand for talent assessments in the Army, arguing for implementing 3C assessment in professional development. We then review advances in assessing 3C and provide recommendations to address opportunities and challenges for integrating 3C assessment into Army leader development.

3C Integration in Policy and Leadership Doctrine

As the Department of Defense is both the largest employer in the world and one with a global presence, with personnel in over 150 countries, no other organization in the world has a greater need for interculturally competent personnel. Despite this critical need, resources for Defense cultural training and education programs have declined, while requirements for cultural competencies have persisted. Although the Army never fully resourced the Army Culture and Foreign Language

Strategy approved in 2009 (Dept. of the Army, *Army Culture* 24), it has retained culture-related initiatives within its leadership doctrine and policy. For example, Army leadership doctrine emphasizes cultural and geopolitical knowledge as one of four areas that make up military expertise as a profession, alongside moral-ethical, military technical, and leader and human development (*Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 6-22* 1–4). Doctrine also highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and knowledge for leading without formal authority, particularly when working with partner forces and host nation civilians. At the strategic level, leaders are expected to leverage their cultural knowledge to create hybrid organizational cultures capable of achieving strategic effects by drawing on and bridging gaps among multiple contributing nations and organizations (*ADP 6-22* 10-8). Field Manual 6-22 similarly includes cultural awareness and the ability to communicate cross-culturally as contributing elements in the Leader Requirements Model (Dept. of the Army, *Field Manual* 2-9–2-10).

Army Regulation 350-1 includes further granularity on the development of cultural capabilities in leaders. This regulation defines cultural capability as a blend of regional expertise and 3C, characterizing 3C as "a general awareness of the cultural concepts of communication, religion, norms, values, beliefs, behaviors, gestures, attitudes, and regional history" (148). Additionally, 3C includes "self-awareness of one's own culture and the skills to interact effectively with other cultures" (148). This definition reflects 3C as a multifaceted construct consisting of both knowledge and skills. The regulation defines three levels of cultural capability—awareness, understanding, and expertise—noting that regional expertise has more weight at the "expertise" level than at preceding levels (152). The regulation assigns responsibility for evaluating cultural capability to commanders, though it provides limited guidance on the methods for doing so beyond incorporating it into training scenarios.

These requirements extend beyond the Army with elements of 3C also appearing in joint and Defense-wide cultural competency models. *DoD Instruction 5160.70* outlines a set of culture-general competencies intended for "career-long cultural sustainment and enhancement education and training programs across the DOD" (31). Moreover, direction from the Joint Staff explicitly includes leader competencies for culture and region, such as building strategic networks, systems thinking, and cross-cultural influence (Chairman, *Instruction 3126.01C* H-2–H-3). In the Officer Professional Military Education Program, the education continuum includes career-long development in cultural education, progressing from awareness to competence (Chairman, *Instruction 1800.01F* A-15, Figure 1).

Operational requirements for cultural capabilities have driven the demand for leaders' 3C, as reflected in the Army's operations field manual (*FM 3-0*). Cultural and other human dimension considerations appear throughout, concerning both engagement with adversaries and interactions with host nation populations, allies, and partners (for example, see pp. 1-2, 6-23, 6-48, and 7-2). Culturally astute leaders are valued for their ability to employ cultural understanding for operational effect. According to the *FM 3-0* chapter on Leadership During Operations, "Achieving unity of effort requires Army leaders to have a high degree of cultural understanding and social skills. Without such understanding and skills, leaders may fail to collaborate with diverse partners" (8-13).

A Culture of Talent Assessment

Given the continued integration of culture into doctrine and leader competency requirements, the Army and other services should assess 3C at appropriate career points. Historically, the U.S. military conducted more assessments for enlisted personnel than for officers. However, the renewed focus on talent management has led to greater interest in talent assessment to shape an officer's development and inform their career progression. Since 2018, the Army has embraced a culture of assessments throughout an officer's career (Beaty et al. 1). For example, the Army has adopted predictive assessments for selection and assignment as demonstrated by the Command Assessment Program.

The *Army Modernization Strategy* emphasizes the need for a twenty-first-century talent management system, integral to which is the assessment of individual KSAs (11), which should include 3C. The *Army People Strategy* establishes the need for transforming how the Army acquires, develops, employs, and retains people based on the KSAs that define talent. In 2019, the *Army People Strategy* set a goal to revise "the current system of progressive, continuous, and deliberate professional military and civilian education, to include advanced civil schooling. Incorporate a culture of talent assessments into our military and civilian educational and leader development efforts" (7). The *Army Talent Assessment Strategy* brings that vision to life by creating an assessment ecosystem that integrates these practices (11).

Modern talent assessments must include a comprehensive way to systematically assess 3C, particularly when selecting for leadership roles requiring greater and more demanding interactions with allies and partners, such as garrison commanders for installations outside of the continental United States. Predictive assessment for

selection and assignment generally has high standards for validation, and assessment expertise within the program is important to ensure that the instruments meet those standards without disadvantaging some demographic groups.

Whereas predictive assessments guide institutional decisions about individuals, developmental assessments provide individuals information for their own learning and development. For example, the Army's Athena program provides leaders and soldiers at all levels assessment opportunities that inform decisions about coaching, education, and other development. This program could include 3C assessment and should provide individuals with suggested resources or methods to develop aspects of 3C that may be low. Similarly, collective assessment results can inform programmatic decisions and shape curriculum offerings based on cohort strengths and weaknesses.

Beyond these individual benefits, developmental assessments can also inform institutional decisions, but at a different level. Viewed collectively, such assessments can provide education and training programs with valuable information about the strengths or weaknesses of a cohort. The assessment results would not affect individual education opportunities, but schools could use assessment data to determine, for example, whether an incoming class might benefit from new elective offerings, or if lesson material should address specific knowledge or motivation gaps. This kind of collective assessment should be a routine part of evidence-based decision-making to shape curriculum offerings, and assessing 3C would help identify how to enhance this skillset. Integrating 3C assessments within the broader framework of the Army Talent Assessment Strategy would ensure a robust, data-driven approach to leader development. By systematically assessing 3C, the Army can enhance its strategic capabilities and foster a more adaptable and culturally proficient force.

This approach aligns with Army goals for talent management. The Army Talent Attribute Framework (ATAF) is helping to standardize language on KSAs, improving talent management by better identifying and aligning individuals' skillsets with job requirements (Royston et al. 2). In the ATAF, cultural awareness appears as one of 43 talents, further delineated by two lower-tier KSAs: cross-cultural competence and geopolitical awareness (Royston et al. 31). Other KSAs, though not directly defined as cultural in the ATAF, are closely related, such as empathy and openness (see Table 6.1). Capturing these cultural talents and KSAs requires valid and practical assessment tools.

Advances in Assessment of Cross-Cultural Competence

Since previous reviews on assessing 3C in military personnel (see, for instance, Abbe et al.'s *Cross-Cultural*, Brenneman et al., and van Driel and Gabrenya), research has shown both continuity and progress. Although the literature on 3C assessment has focused largely on international business contexts, the DOD directly benefits from this research, as conceptualizing 3C has shown little change. Research has continued to align with one of two dominant approaches, either cross-cultural (intercultural) competence or cultural intelligence (CQ). Global mindset and global competencies are other prevalent concepts that overlap in that they describe the ability to adapt to (or in) other cultures (Yari et al. 212).

Table 6.1

Sample 3C KSAs for Assessment

3C Subdomains for Measurement (Richter et al.)	**Military 3C Components (Abbe et al., *Cross-Cultural*)**		**Army Talent Attribute Framework (Royston et al.)**
Self-awareness	Cultural awareness	Knowledge and Cognition	Cultural awareness[1]
	Cross-cultural schema		Geopolitical awareness[1]
Cultural metacognition	Cognitive complexity		
Open-mindedness/ openness	Need for closure	Affect and Motivation	Openness[2]
Cross-cultural motivation	Attitudes and initiative		Cross-culturally fluent[1]
Multicultural attitude			
Nonjudgmentalness			
Curiosity			Curiosity[2]
Emotional sensitivity/ empathy	Empathy		Empathy[2]
Social/behavioral flexibility	Flexibility	Skills	
Communication ability	Interpersonal skills		Cultural/interpersonal adaptability[1]
Respectfulness			Perspective taking[3]
Emotional resilience	Self-regulation		Stress tolerance and resilience[2]

[1] Talent Domain of Cultural Awareness

[2] Talent Domain of Disposition

[3] Talent Domain of Skills

The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire and Cultural Intelligence Scale have emerged as having solid psychometric properties (Ang et al. 362; Chen and Gabrenya 38; Matsumoto and Hwang 867; Van Oudenhoven and van der Zee 687). A sampling of instruments appears in the Appendix, indicating the component dimensions and intended use of each instrument.

One review examined the constructs reflected in 68 different instruments and identified a set of subdomains or components of 3C (Richter et al. 104). Then experts provided ratings on their perceptions of the most relevant. Their subdomains appear in Table 6.1, along with facets of military 3C that my colleagues and I identified in a previous review (Abbe et al., *Cross-Cultural* 13). Similar constructs and categories appear in 3C models developed empirically from military incidents (McCloskey et al., *Measuring Learning* 12; Rasmussen et al. 13).

In Richter et al.'s 2023 review, self-management subdomains received lower ratings from experts, with the exception of emotional resilience. This subdomain may be an area of contrast for the military compared with international management, as individuals working in conflict and crisis settings may be more likely to have negative intercultural experiences and therefore a greater need for self-management and emotion regulation (Gallus and Klafehn 182; McCloskey et al., *Developmental Model* 20).

Thus, although researchers have noted that approaches to measuring 3C have been atheoretical, the definition of the construct and its components have been relatively stable, with differing levels of emphasis across constructs. However, the lack of conceptual integration across 3C, CQ, and related literature has hindered progress in the field (Bartel-Radic and Giannelloni 633).

Greater advances have emerged in methods for assessing 3C. Although many instruments continue to rely on self-report on Likert scales, scenario-based methods are also gaining support (see, for instance, those discussed by Rockstuhl and Lievens; Piasentin). Situational judgment tests can help predict cross-cultural performance, with careful attention to the test prompt to shape what 3C components the test is measuring. Bartel-Radic and Giannelloni developed a situational judgment test based on the culture assimilator training method. The resulting culture-general assimilator provided a test of cross-cultural knowledge, distinct from other components or domains of 3C (e.g., motivation and metacognition). Assessment centers are another option for behavioral assessment. For example, one study found that performance on a group task in an assessment center predicted cross-cultural training outcomes, although a behavior description interview by an expert did not

(Lievens et al. 482–84). Thus, alternatives to self-report are available but may need further development to support leader development.

Measurement of cultural intelligence has similarly expanded beyond the very popular 20-item self-report Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) (Ang et al. 343). Prominent intelligence researcher Robert Sternberg noted that the CQS and similar methods use a "typical-performance" approach to assessing self-perceptions of the respondents' typical or most likely behavior ("Understanding and Assessing" 2). He proposed an alternative method assessing "maximum performance," in which respondents give their best response to maximize positive outcomes in a hypothetical travel scenario. Results supported the notion that whereas typical-performance assessment (self-report) tends to assess motivation and attitude, maximum performance assesses ability ("Understanding and Assessing" 3–4). The method uses text responses to open-ended questions about the scenarios, which require trained coders. The method has shown concurrent validity; however, it has yet to establish the predictive validity that would likely be necessary to warrant the additional labor of qualitative response coding.

Compared with alternative methods, self-report instruments have accumulated much greater evidence of validity and reliability, in part due to their ease of administration and longer availability. For example, Chen and Gabrenya found over 150 studies that used the CQS, a 20-item self-report measure (51). Chen and Gabrenya also noted that most of the self-report measures performed relatively well for convergent validity, but discriminant validity was less satisfactory (48). Leader development practitioners must determine what level of validity is appropriate for their program, goals, and audience, which the following section addresses in more detail.

Implementing Leader Assessments for Cross-Cultural Competence

Cross-cultural competence reflects an important set of leader competencies identified in doctrine and policy. Assessing 3C would provide the military services with important information about leaders' strengths and weaknesses, benefiting both the individual officer and the organization. As noted above, developmental assessments can shape leader development at the individual level, and they can also inform institutional decisions about developmental programs. Despite these benefits, adopting an appropriate instrument can seem daunting when the literature yields dozens of different measures purporting to measure 3C or related constructs. Overall, the literature offers multiple reviews of 3C assessment instruments. Some

focus on developing and validating assessments, but very few on using assessments for selection or assessing developmental experiences. The actions and considerations described below can help military educators and leader development practitioners to develop a measurement approach that fits the intended purpose. Key decisions about whether to adapt an existing instrument, buy one off-the-shelf, or develop a new instrument will depend on these considerations.

Identify the Purpose and When to Assess

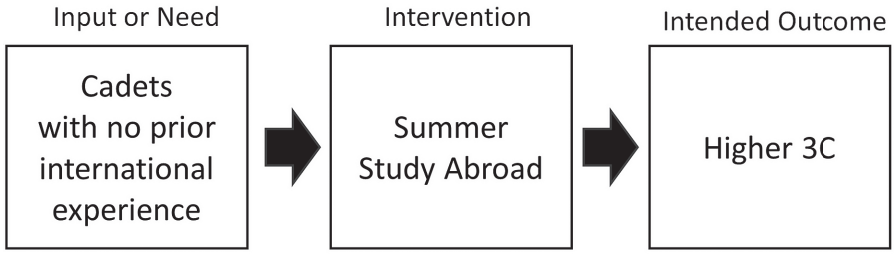
Organizational use of assessments is a form of decision support, rarely pursued purely for knowledge purposes. Thus, the decisions that 3C assessments inform should be the primary consideration. Whether the decision is that of an individual member or the institution, 3C assessment should support decisions about education and development and advance organizational goals.

Institutional use of assessments must recognize and mitigate potential negative impact on individual careers. As noted above, using an instrument for personnel decisions (e.g., selection and assignment) carries specific validity requirements ("Uniform Guidelines" Section 5). Unfortunately, validity and reliability for research purposes does not automatically mean a 3C instrument is valid for talent management and leader development. With lower risk to individuals, institutional use can include collective results from 3C instruments to guide decisions about programs and curricula. These decisions would rely on additional forms of evidence beyond the instrument's validity. For example, an understanding of the malleability of KSAs is important, as well as understanding program offerings that can improve those KSAs.

A clear logic model for the analysis can help ensure shared understanding among stakeholders (Brousselle and Champagne 69). A logic model is simply a depiction of the expected relationships among program activities or other variables leading to change. A logic model provides clarity for putting 3C assessment in context, as 3C can be an input to decisions or, in some cases, may be assessed as an output of an intervention or experience. Collective or group-level assessment is also useful on the outcome side; developmental assessments can inform program evaluation, measuring the extent to which an intervention, course, or program has changed the intended KSAs. For example, one might expect that cadets who have no prior international experience might benefit from a semester or summer of study abroad, which a simple corresponding logic model might depict as shown in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1

Example of a Logic Model for Cross-Cultural Competence Development



This form of assessment requires some expertise in both the 3C instrument(s) and in instructional or program design. In other programmatic considerations, the career stage is also critical in implementing 3C assessment. Knowing the population size and characteristics of target personnel, as well as the likely levels of resources available to assess them, will drive key decisions about whether to invest in developing an instrument or to purchase off-the-shelf instruments, as well as what other supporting resources to offer, discussed in more detail below.

In contrast with institutional purposes, assessment for individual leader development has less direct impact on careers, carrying lower risk of harm, and therefore may be useful at earlier stages of validation than the validity needed for predictive assessments. The instrument still must target meaningful differences in 3C or related KSAs, but their interpretation will not directly impact high-stakes decisions.

For individual purposes, decisions about when to assess are important in conjunction with the theoretical approach adopted. For example, emotional resilience and self-regulation are related to stable personality traits that may show only small changes through adulthood. Assessing this attribute early in an officer's career could provide them guidance on how to improve but also suggest coping methods and how to mitigate any weakness in this area to better respond to stress during deployments or multinational exercises. Assessing it later in a career may not be as effective, as habits may be more stable and harder to overcome. Within an organizational culture of assessments, a leader development program should aim to align with broader doctrine and collaborate with other organizations to determine the best timing and opportunities to assess.

Determine the Measurement Approach

Selecting the most appropriate theoretical constructs to assess is a first step and should proceed with input from key stakeholders. For example, if pursuing a pre- and post-intervention assessment, some 3C instruments may be too broad to align well to interventions that are short in duration. Assessing a narrow set of relevant KSAs may be more appropriate, focusing on specific skillsets targeted in the intervention.

The assessment method is an equally important consideration, as avoiding biased responding is a central aim. For military populations, instruments must be resistant to faking and social desirability bias, especially if members perceive responses will be used for personnel decisions (Stark et al. 153). Thus, instruments with high face validity may be less useful for military organizations than for research purposes. In addition, some applications may require a repeated-measures approach, such as for pre- and post-intervention measurement or other longitudinal use. Alternate forms of 3C instruments may be useful in these circumstances, rather than relying only on the short form of an instrument that may be acceptable for one-time research use. Collaboration between leader development programs and research teams is a fruitful way to adapt existing research instruments for developmental purposes. Educators and program managers may determine that an off-the-shelf solution is appropriate; however, they should use caution in adopting proprietary measures where validity evidence is not readily available.

Assess the Resource Requirements

Resource requirements should feature prominently throughout the decision-making process. For example, some programs may identify a preferred theoretical or measurement approach in the abstract, which then becomes untenable once realistic estimates of resource requirements emerge. Funding for purchasing off-the-shelf instruments or developing a new measure is an obvious one; others are less apparent. For example, how much time does the assessment require of respondents? How much time do experts need to develop meaningful feedback reports? If assessing for individual development, what follow-on resources should be available to guide that development? How much in-house expertise is needed to manage the assessment plan or program effectively? To what extent does assessment rely on external contract support, and with what level of continuity will contract support be available?

Answering these questions will help programs identify and develop supporting resources. When providing assessment feedback, enabling leaders to interpret the results is an important component. Providing participants with scores is feedback, but it is likely insufficient to affect development on its own. Feedback reports should therefore include how to interpret and how to apply the information—e.g., what interventions or education will help leaders improve their 3C. Some guidance for how to act on the feedback within respondents' organizational context on the job will increase the practical utility of 3C assessment.

Determine Access, Usage, and Data Management

In implementing 3C assessments, leader development practitioners should shape governance decisions about management, usage, and access to the data. At the U.S. Army War College, leader assessments are distinguished according to their usage, and respondents are allowed to give or withhold permission for specific uses. An ongoing research project allows respondents the option of participating in a study of 3C and whether to grant (or withhold) access to their responses to other instruments. Data managers provide data to staff and researchers only to the extent that the respondent has agreed. Though not all institutional uses of 3C assessment constitute human subjects research, an institution's human subjects research representative can help guide these decisions. Other considerations include the IT infrastructure needed to make the 3C assessments viable and manpower demands. In planning for assessment, staff sometimes overlook or underestimate the manpower implications, assuming away certain functions, which can be an obstacle in accessing the resources needed.

The research literature focuses on demonstrating the validity and reliability of 3C assessment, but these standards are not sufficient. Practical implementation also requires organizations to evaluate instruments' utility and resource efficiency. For example, assessment centers can maximize predictive validity, but they are also quite resource intensive. Implementing 3C assessments requires weighing the trade-offs between validity and resource demands. In contrast, some self-report tools have low resource demands and high validity for research purposes yet may yield limited utility for leader development without additional investment in supporting resources.

Conclusion

As part of Army doctrine and Defense-wide policy, 3C is an important leader skillset. Therefore, assessing leader 3C aligns with Army talent management goals and an emerging culture of leader development assessments. Assessment of 3C can inform institutional decisions about leader development programs and curricula, such as by identifying skill gaps in an educational cohort, and it can also inform leaders' individual decisions about their own development. The research literature provides multiple instruments to assess intercultural competence as a unitary construct, and advances in assessment methods provide multiple options for developmental interventions and further research. We recommend that leader development programs use a logic model to help identify a theoretical and measurement approach that aligns with their audience, career stage, and goals. Furthermore, leader development practitioners can use the recommendations outlined here to develop an evidence-based 3C assessment approach, tailored to their program's purposes and leaders' needs. The Army and other military services face recurring demand for leaders with intercultural skills, and 3C assessment can help build those skills for a dynamic strategic and operational environment.

Appendix 6.1

Selected Instruments for Cross-Cultural Competence

	Scale		Reference	Domains/Dimensions	Intended Use
1	Attitudinal and Behavioral Openness Scale	ABOS	Caligiuri et al. (2000)	Openness and four behavioral and attitudinal indicators (participation in cultural activities, foreign experiences, openness, and comfort with differences)	Identify cross-cultural training needs, predict expatriate cross-cultural adjustment, and select employees who can work effectively across cultures
2	Business Cultural Intelligence Quotient	BCIQ	Alon et al. (2016)	Affective, behavioral, and knowledge components that influence a person to observe, reflect, and act appropriately in an international business context	Measure and predict cultural intelligence in the business context
3	Cultural Intelligence Scale	CQS	Ang et al. (2007)	Metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral dimensions	Predict performance and adjustment to culturally diverse situations
4	Global Competencies Inventory	GCI	Stevens et al. (2014)	Psychological and behavioral competencies associated with intercultural adaptability (e.g., perception management, relationship management, and self-management)	Assess suitability for intercultural work; identify strengths and developmental needs
5	Global Mindset Inventory	GMI	Javidan et al. (2010)	Attributes required to effectively influence in an international context based on psychological, social, and intellectual dimensions	Measure global adaptability in individuals who work, live, or travel abroad
6	Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale	ICAPS	Matsumoto et al. (2001)	Four culture general traits that contribute to intercultural effectiveness (emotion regulation, openness, flexibility, and creativity/critical thinking)	Predict the degree of difficulty one will have in adjusting to a new culture

Appendix 6.1 (*continued*)

	Scale		Reference	Domains/Dimensions	Intended Use
7	Intercultural Development Inventory	IDI	Hammer et al. (2003)	Five developmental stages (denial/ defense, reversal, minimization, acceptance/ adaptation, and integration)	Measure and develop individual or group cultural competence; evaluate intervention/training effectiveness
8	Intercultural Effectiveness Scale	IES	Mendenhall et al. (2012)	Competencies critical for effective cross-cultural interactions (continuous learning, interpersonal engagement, and hardiness)	Measure and improve intercultural effectiveness in educational settings
9	Intercultural Sensitivity Scale	ISS	Chen and Starosta (2000)	Five dimensions related to intercultural interactions (engagement, respect for cultural differences, self-confidence, enjoyment, and attentiveness)	Assess intercultural sensitivity to help evaluate intercultural training programs
10	Multicultural Personality Questionnaire	MPQ	Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000, 2002)	Five personality traits related to multicultural effectiveness (i.e., cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability, and flexibility)	Assess intercultural effectiveness in international students and expatriates; also used for personnel selection and to identify training needs
11	MPQ Short Form	MPQ-SF	Van der Zee et al. (2013)	Short form of the MPQ adapted from the 91-item instrument (8 items per subscale)	Similar to the MPQ; often used in research settings when time is limited

Source: This table was based on the work of Chen and Gabrenya, Richter et al., and Piasentin.

For a comprehensive review of 68 academic and commercial 3C instruments, see Richter et al.

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CHAPTER 7

Developing Global Leadership

A Case Study of U.S. Air Force Foreign Area Officers

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Abstract

In an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world, U.S. military leadership has stated that a key to success, in any campaign, is an understanding of the human dimension. Paramount to understanding the human dimension in a VUCA world is the ability to think and act interculturally, to develop intercultural competence and a global leadership mindset. However, recent studies suggest that U.S. military efforts to develop global leadership and its concomitant skills have waned due to difficulties in teaching and implementing these skills. This research explores whether global leadership skills can be taught effectively and efficiently to U.S. Air Force Foreign Area Officers (FAOs). FAOs are often used and seen as representatives of the U.S. military internationally, as they serve in leadership positions in embassies or as security operation practitioners around the world. Results suggest that after a two-week asynchronous course on global leadership, FAOs increased dramatically in intercultural competence, and qualitative data suggests that the course prepared FAOs to be the cultural "tip of the spear," having a greater capacity to understand the human dimension in their respective cultural regions.

KEYWORDS: cross-cultural competence, global leadership, foreign area officers, intercultural competence, military leadership.

Introduction

The current global geopolitical and cultural climate has been described as becoming increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA), "surviving and successfully competing in the 'VUCA world' requires the ability to anticipate or respond quickly and effectively to external changes" (Troise et al. 1). General Joseph Dunford, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, addressing issues related to this increasing VUCA climate, stated, "We must further develop leaders capable of thriving at the speed of war—leaders who can adapt to change, drive innovation, and thrive in uncertain, chaotic conditions," and within this climate, "it is the human dimension that ultimately determines the success of any campaign" (Dunford 3). There has been a call for U.S. military and NATO forces to develop leaders that understand the human dimension (Antunez 1). However, despite these calls for increased understanding of the human dimension, Fosher and Mackenzie have documented a precipitous decline and fall of "U.S. Military Culture Programs," which were aimed at increasing U.S. military members' understanding of the human dimension (1). This chapter will first define and describe the importance and need for global leadership in the U.S. military; second, seek to explain why previous "human dimension" programs may have failed; and third, examine the results of a global leadership course taught to U.S. Air Force Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) to determine if courses such as this are an effective means for developing global leadership skills for the U.S. military.

Global Leadership

Global leadership is defined by two measures, first, by one's ability to develop intercultural competence, which can be defined as "knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors" (Byram 34). The second measurement of global leadership is by the

> leadership of individuals who influence and bring about significant positive changes in firms, organizations, and communities by facilitating the appropriate level of trust, organizational structures and processes, and involving multiple stakeholders, resources, cultures under the various conditions of temporal, geographical and cultural complexity. (Jeong et al. 286)

The U.S. military is a "global force"; however, it has been argued that its leadership and culture may lean toward being ethnocentric, driving it to lead solely from American cultural standards, turning a blind eye toward other perspectives, and

thus making it "unsuited to this new terrain" of global military action (Aldrich and Kasuku 1015). Global leadership, as defined above, is essentially the ability to lead with intercultural competence "under the various conditions of temporal, geographical and cultural complexity" (Jeong et al. 286). However, global leadership is often distilled into the pithy aphorism of being able to understand others by "walking a mile in their shoes," which takes away from the complexity of what it is to learn, develop, and retain intercultural competence and global leadership skills. Thomas and Fujimora, in their book *Developing Cross-Cultural Competence for Leaders*, state that intercultural competence is often the "ingredient" that is absent in communication and leadership training (6). Rickley and Stackhouse go even further in emphasizing the importance of intercultural competence and global leadership by stating that leadership cannot devoid itself of situation nor culture (88). To understand the human dimension, one must develop the ability to think and act interculturally (Antunez 1). Cohen stated that U.S. military leaders must develop intercultural competence in order to affect positive change (3). More specifically, Lemmons stated that U.S. military leadership must develop a global leadership mindset (Lemmons, "Call for U.S. Military Global Leadership" 2).

The concept of high and low cultural contexts will help us further understand the meaning and importance of global leadership. Since culture is extremely complex and varies significantly across geography, scholars distill cultures into a binary spectrum where every culture falls on one side of the spectrum (high) or the other (low) to varying degrees. Low context cultures can be described, in general, as direct, individual, object and mission oriented, and seeing themselves as being very efficient and effective in managing people and time. High context cultures, in general, are indirect instead of direct, communal instead of individual, and driven by a sense of community and its needs over self, which also determines the importance of time, or the perceived lack thereof by low context cultures. Contextual cultural attributes can be broken into several general categories, one of which is communication style, which will be used to illustrate this example. Low context cultures tend to communicate in a direct manner, meaning that one will be spoken to directly and specifically about instructions or potential need to change certain behaviors. High context cultures tend to communicate in an indirect manner, and if a behavior needs to be corrected, it might be communicated to the group, not the individual, via a story or a parable. Direct communication, in a high context culture, especially in regard to admonishing one to correct their behavior, is offensive, and can be seen as dehumanizing if done in front of one's peers. American military leadership style stems from American cultural values, which tend to be low context. In the U.S.

military, direct communication is seen as an efficient and effective leadership skill. The U.S. military tends to "export" their leadership style to any region where they might be operating. However, U.S. military "leadership and organizational models . . . applied in the mountains of Afghanistan" do not "translate" (Edmondson 1) because cultures found in Afghanistan tend to be higher context cultures. Direct communication styles that are a staple of effective low context leadership in the U.S. military have the opposite effect in high context societies where indirect communication is the standard. In U.S. military training, especially basic training, it is common to call individuals out in front of their peers to correct their potential missteps. Exporting this same "cultural" practice into a high context culture can have demoralizing effects. Therefore, to facilitate interactions across cultures, one must first develop greater intercultural competence to understand how one might lead differently depending on the temporal, geographical, or cultural context—a vital component of global leadership.

In a small pilot study, scholars examined the effectiveness of teaching intercultural competence and global leadership skills to officer candidates at the U.S. Air Force Academy. The study found that participants' intercultural competence increased dramatically pre-to-post and that overall, participants felt that the training they received made them better prepared for their military careers whether they were stationed abroad or interacting amongst the diverse cultural makeup of personnel in their military units and that the training increased their potential to exercise empathetic leader skills when faced with different cultural perspectives, especially in contentious situations (Lemmons, "Intercultural Competence Training" 172).

The Fall of U.S. Military Culture Programs

It has been argued that U.S. military failures over the last two decades in the Middle East and Central Asia can been attributed to misunderstanding of the respective host cultures (Stavridis). One of the main aspects that led to this failure was the way military leaders were taught and then perpetuated either an understanding or misunderstanding of culture (Connable 58). Culture was essentially operationalized, "which is to say that learning another's culture was taught as a means to gain a military advantage" (Lemmons, "Call for U.S. Military Global Leadership" 1), and not as a means to gain further understanding. This "operationalization" of culture is exemplified by a report published by U.S. Joint Force Command in 2010 titled "Guidelines for Commanders and Staffs: Operationalization of Culture into Military Operations (Best Practices)" (Bados 7). This type of cultural

learning led to shallow and superficial understanding of culture and eventually hindered the development of intercultural competence and global leadership. This type of training de-emphasizes the human dimension of culture, and instead distills culture down to something to be learned merely for a tactical advantage. This narrow understanding of culture eventually led to the demise of broad U.S. military culture-general programs, as the majority of the programs were ineffective due to the nature in which they were taught. Despite the fact that broad-scope culture programs in the military have waned, there are disparate small programs that continue to exist throughout the military (for example: U.S. Air Force Culture and Language Center, Marine Corps Civil-Military Operations School, and U.S. Army Special Operations Forces community) and especially in undergraduate U.S. Military Academies and Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs at respective U.S. civilian universities that focus on cultural immersion. One ROTC example of these cultural immersion programs is the Global Officer (GO) program. The GO program was made to "Improve language skills, regional expertise, and intercultural communication skills of future military officers through domestic language study and domestic and overseas language and cultural immersion" (*Project GO*). Project GO focuses on both language and culture as a means to better understand host cultures and the human condition. Another example is the Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency Program (CULP). CULP is also an ROTC program, but instead of being administered through the host university's curriculum, CULP is managed directly by U.S. Army Cadet Command (USACC). CULP, unlike Project GO, is more immersion-focused, and the cadets are guaranteed to go abroad. In most cases, cadets will train with foreign militaries, gaining an understanding of foreign military training along with intercultural interaction (Blowers 4). U.S. Military Academies also have a strong tradition of sending cadets abroad on cultural immersion programs. The U.S. Air Force Academy provides the opportunity for cadets to participate in four different programs: a one-week Cultural Immersion Program (CIP), typically during spring break; a four-week Culture and Language Immersion Program (CSLIP) during the summer; a four-month Cadet Semester Study Abroad Program at a civilian university (CSSAP); and a four-month Cadet Semester Exchange Abroad Program at a foreign military university (CSEAP). Even though officers in training at undergraduate institutions have the opportunity to participate in cultural immersion programs, access to these programs, by and large, ceases to exist once they are commissioned as officers. The U.S. Military has programs in the respective branches, such as the Air Force Language-Enabled Airmen Program (LEAP) and the Defense Language Institute

(DLI); however, these programs focus on language acquisition and retention, failing to conspicuously develop understanding of one of the most important aspects of the human dimension—culture.

Knowing the human dimension is critical for successful military operations, but current human dimension understanding tends to be focused on language, with a decreasing number of programs focused on culture. As a result, this chapter makes an attempt to establish the importance of intercultural competence and global leadership training for U.S. military leaders to understand the human dimension more fully, which, again, is a key to success in any military campaign.

Foreign Area Officers

Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) provide an ideal population sample upon which to study the effects of global leadership training. FAOs are U.S. military officers who have been selected to train and then operate as regional experts in specific world regions. Typically, those selected already have some language skills and experience in their selected region. In the U.S. Air Force, FAOs receive language training to become proficient in the host region language (if not already proficient) and then proceed to In-Region Training (IRT) for a duration of three to six months in the target region. IRT is designed for FAOs to become more familiar with the host region, giving them a chance to culturally immerse themselves and further develop language skills. Following these training opportunities, FAOs then typically serve as regional experts at Combatant Commands in the U.S. or at embassies around the world. FAOs serve an important function as forward-facing representative of the U.S. military in their respective regions. Depending on their role, FAOs act as the "cultural tip of the spear" (Wyatt and Chere).

Methods

For the study in this chapter, we built on previous research focused on improving FAO training in the Air Force from a global leadership perspective. U.S. Air Force FAOs have a regimented training pipeline where they receive the necessary language and continuing officer training over the course of several months to a year depending on duration of language training.

"Tiger Team" Framework

In 2020, the Secretary of the Air Force International Affairs (SAF/IA) created a "Tiger Team" to review the effectiveness of the FAO career field and training

pipeline. In the U.S. military, a Tiger Team is a selected group of subject matter experts who perform a review and inspection of specific programs and/or practices and recommend changes based on the results to make them more effective and efficient. One of the findings of the Tiger Team program was that FAOs were receiving months of language training but no specific cultural training to prepare them for their IRT. Therefore, SAF/IA launched a pilot study on the effects of incorporating intercultural competence and global leadership training into the pipeline. This led to the development of the two-week asynchronous course discussed in this chapter. Twenty-nine FAOs took this course remotely after they completed their language training but before their IRT. The two-week course is based on the best practices of a semester-long course that was developed to better prepare students for study abroad programs. This framework was chosen because it was shown to be very effective at teaching the skills needed to be effective FAOs (Lemmons, "Study Abroad" 148). During the two weeks, the participants watched nine recorded lectures and completed the accompanying experiential learning assignments, journal activities, and final project.

Assessment

Participants' intercultural competence is measured pre- and post-course with the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). The IDI

> measures intercultural competence on a "cultural continuum." The cultural continuum describes a set of knowledge/attitude/skill sets or orientations toward cultural difference and commonality that are arrayed along a continuum from the more monocultural mindsets of Denial and Polarization through the transitional orientation of Minimization to the intercultural or global mindsets of Acceptance and Adaptation. The capability of deeply shifting cultural perspective and bridging behavior across cultural differences is most fully achieved when one maintains an Adaptation perspective. (Hammer et al. 423)

The IDI is scored on a proprietary scale from 55 to 145, with a standard deviation of 15, that helps define its five orientations. Each orientation spans a standard deviation. Denial is the "lowest" orientation. One would fall in the "Denial" orientation with a score between 55 and 69 and would typically have a more ethnocentric view of the world. The next orientation is Polarization with a score of 70 to 84. Those in this category would typically have an "us versus them" attitude toward cultural differences. The next orientation, Minimization, is broken up into "low minimization" and "high minimization." Low Minimization ranges from 85 to 99 and represents respondents who typically minimize difference by finding

commonalities, but at a superficial level. In High Minimization, (a score from 100 to 114), respondents minimize difference by finding commonalities, but at a more meaningful cultural level. The Acceptance category, from 115 to 129, represents respondents who understand and empathize with the perspectives of others. In the Adaptation range (130 to 145), respondents act in culturally appropriate ways and shift perspectives situationally (Hammer et al. 423).

Many other assessments exist and have been used in academic studies to measure intercultural competence, such as the Cultural Intelligence Assessment (CQ), which has been used in Department of Defense studies (Livermore et al. 4). This chapter uses the IDI because it has been shown to be a reliable tool to measure intercultural competence on a developmental scale, which means that it is effective at measuring increases or decreases in intercultural competence over time, or pre-to-post cultural interventions (Hammer et al. 423).

Course Design

The course in this chapter is multidisciplinary, deriving content from published works within human geography, sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, business management, organizational behavior, and study abroad theory. The course lectures align with the course described by Lemmons (see "Study Abroad Academic Pre-Departure Course") and focus on global leadership in the following seven sections: (1) culture, intercultural competence, and global leadership, (2) cultural resolution and leadership, (3) worldview, (4) journaling and reflexivity, (5) cultural and leadership goal training, (6) applied techniques, and (7) the culminating final project.

Once FAOs completed the course, they were required to take an anonymous exit survey to evaluate the course on a scale of 1 to 5, with an option to provide open-ended feedback. IDI results were analyzed using a paired samples t-test to measure whether the change in pre-to-post scores were significant. Course assessment feedback was analyzed using content analysis to establish themes and understanding across participants' experiences. The IDI and content analysis results provide an effective measure of the impact of the course, providing both quantitative and qualitative data. Due to IRTs being postponed because of COVID-19, the new pipeline training did not begin until the end of 2022. Twenty-nine FAO participants have gone through the global leadership course as of February 2024.

Results

The mean IDI score for the 29 participants before taking the course was 97.72, and the post-course average was 109.92, with an overall average increase of 12.2. Using the paired sample t-test to compare statistical significance from each participant's pre-to-post test results, the p value was < .001. These results will be elaborated on in the discussion section.

The open-ended responses of the exit survey were studied using content analysis. Participants were asked to give feedback about the course and to rank the individual lectures on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly disagree or unsatisfactory and 5 being strongly agree or excellent). Overall, the course received a 4.5 rating across the nine lectures. Eighteen of the 29 participants provided comprehensive written feedback. Three main themes were identified in the participants' feedback.

First, participants reported that the course helped them feel better prepared for their future FAO career. The Air Force FAO career field is different than most military career fields. After being an officer in the Air Force for several years, officers at the rank of Captain or Major can apply to move from their current career field into the FAO career field. FAOs that take this global leadership course are relatively newly selected and can feel somewhat unfamiliar with their position as a FAO. FAO 1 stated, "I really enjoyed the course, I feel better prepared as a FAO, and learned a lot about adapting to a new culture. I found the journal assignments very interesting, particularly the concept of validating one's experiences with a native in that culture. The repeat photography assignment (Lemmons, Brannstrom, and Hurd) was also very interesting in making you think deeply about the changes in a culture."

Second, respondents shared the sentiment that the course made them feel better prepared for their pending IRTs. Many FAOs expressed that they felt some anxiety in knowing how to prepare for months of cultural immersion in their target cultural regions. FAO 7 said,

> This is a well-thought-out course that will return incredible dividends for us aspiring FAOs, [the instructor's] method is conducive to opening the cultural spectrum for individuals with little to no experience with other cultures, as well as introspection from all, even the ones that had several cultural experiences. I very much enjoyed the repeat-photography lecture and assignment. I highly recommend this course before IRTs begin, may they be strategic engagements or language training abroad. . . . I feel better prepared for my IRT.

Third, respondents expressed how well the course made practical applications out of what could have been pedantic theory, translating into what most expressed as an increased understanding of global leadership and the ability to implement the learned skills. Respondents felt that the course not only made them feel better prepared for their IRT, but that its practicality helped them feel like better "global citizens," in the words of FAO 2.

Discussion

The IDI, as described above, is a tool to measure intercultural competence, but it is not a perfect tool. Sometimes the FAO participants felt as if the IDI was an imprecise glimpse into their "intercultural souls." It has, however, been used in hundreds of publications. For example, the U.S. Military Academy uses the IDI to measure intercultural competence changes in cadets that participate in their semester-long study abroad program (Watson et al. 62). The benefit of using such a widely administered instrument is the ability to compare results across different types of experiments and variables. Across publications, the consensus of a meaningful change in IDI score is an increase of 7 points or more, which represents half of a change in orientation (IDI Inventory). In other words, if a participant scores 70 on their pre-assessment and 77 on their post-assessment, this is considered a meaningful change because a score of 70 means that the participant was on the cusp of the Denial orientation and the Polarization orientation. Increasing by 7 points moves the participant into the orientation of Polarization, demonstrating a shift in the participant's perspective, where they might be more likely to recognize cultural differences rather than ignoring them.

FAO participants scored, on average, 97.72 pre-course and 109.92 post-course, a difference of 12.2 points. Not only is this change statistically significant, but it is also significant when contextualized as in the above paragraph. Participants increased by almost an entire orientation (14 points) on their IDI scores, moving from low Minimization to high Minimization, demonstrating a capability not only to find similarities, but to do so at a more meaningful cultural level and progressing very closely to the Acceptance orientation of 115. These results suggest that FAOs, after progressing through this course, are even more capable of operating in culturally appropriate ways, which is paramount to the success of FAOs—the "cultural tip of the spear."

As defined in the beginning sections of this chapter, global leadership is the ability to lead with intercultural competence within temporal, geographical and cultural

complexity. The two-week course described in this chapter is built around increasing participants' intercultural competence and teaching them how they might use their intercultural competence in leadership —in other words, to develop global leadership.

Conclusion

Greater understanding of the human dimension is necessary for future successful campaigns. However, as this chapter has shown, military-wide efforts to understand the human dimension have either been unsuccessfully implemented or not prioritized and have therefore ceased to exist outside of small and sporadic course offerings. This research has sought to understand whether or not a course on the topic of intercultural competence and global leadership, taught in a specific manner, has an effect on participants. Results are statistically significant when measuring the effect of the course on participants' intercultural competence, and qualitative data suggests that participants gained a greater understanding of the human dimension coupled with their increase in global leadership skills. Since this was a small sample pilot study, this research is limited to drawing conclusions about the population that participated in the study. The data suggests that the course has a significant impact; however, those that participated have shown a general inclination to want to know more about culture by applying to the FAO career field. Future research should focus on teaching global leadership to a broader and more general audience within the military to measure its effectiveness.

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CHAPTER 8

Identifying Transforming Values and Conforming Values of Arab and U.S. Leaders

An Exploratory Study in Cultural Relativism

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Abstract

This chapter assesses an important and often overlooked component of cultural relativism as it relates to the cross-cultural differences that define leaders in the Arab world and the United States. Specifically, the authors explore leadership values that (1) are amenable to change upon integration into a cross-cultural leadership role (*transforming* values) and/or (2) are situated so deeply within an individual that they resist change (*conforming* values). These values are identified through exploratory research (a relatively new research design), using a grounded-theory approach (a well-established research method), conducted with experienced bilingual/bicultural leaders (American leaders posted to Arab countries and Arab leaders posted to the United States). To date, most leadership theory is oriented toward a single world culture. The few cross-cultural leadership studies available are, for the most part, oriented toward comparing cultures and not toward intercultural effectiveness. Further, these studies have identified cross-cultural behaviors, but not their underlying values. As such, they have missed the opportunity to determine the malleability (transformability) of values for leaders moving among cultures. Using a newly designed survey and follow-up interviews, this exploratory study identifies and explores six sample leadership values relevant to cultural relativism and cross-cultural leadership development: power, control, compassion, empowerment, transparency and accountability.

KEYWORDS: conforming values, cross-cultural leadership, cultural relativism, intercultural effectiveness, leadership development, leadership values, transforming values

Introduction: Defining the Problem

This chapter explores the ways in which knowledge and understanding of the values component of cultural relativism—the concept that a person's beliefs, values, and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture (meaning that there is no universal standard for right or wrong, good or bad, etc.)—can shape the cultural competency and therefore effectiveness of future leaders who will be operating cross-culturally. Of particular interest are cross-cultural disconnects/failures or successes and how LREC programs, in which the concepts of leadership values are currently often missing, can incorporate this information to better prepare U.S. leaders for success in international assignments. This concept of cross-cultural effectiveness goes beyond the development of essential cosmopolitan communication skills discussed by Whitt and Steen, and beyond the kind of leadership course curricula that aim to improve inclusiveness described by Macris.

The six *values* explored in this study (power, control, compassion, empowerment, transparency, and accountability) were ones that the authors, who have both worked in Middle Eastern and U.S. cross-cultural contexts, frequently encountered as salient to the successes and failures they observed. There are, of course, more values that can be explored, and some may be equally salient. These six, however, are related to several key competencies for leaders, specifically cultural intelligence, adaptability, empathy, and sensitivity (DLNSEO 3).

In this study, the authors distinguish between *values* and *attributes*, which differ significantly in their meanings and applications. *Attributes* are readily seen in observable behavior, whereas *values* may or may not be overtly expressed and may be principally perceived only through authentic interactions. Values might be considered as the "why" behind a leader's actions and the attributes considered as the "how."

Values generally refer to the principles, standards, or qualities considered worthwhile or desirable by a person, group, or society. They represent deep beliefs about what is important in life to the individual holding the values. Values are generally attuned with the values held (and typically promoted) by the society in which the individual lives. Values guide behavior, decisions, and actions. In leadership situations, values are the core beliefs and principles that

guide a leader's decisions and actions (e.g., honesty, integrity, and compassion). They act as an ethical compass, helping leaders navigate challenges and make decisions that align with their moral framework and long-term goals and visions (Thompson 15–16).

Attributes, on the other hand, are characteristics or features that define or describe an entity. These can be physical traits, such as height or color, or more abstract qualities, like intelligence or creativity. Attributes are often used to describe the properties of a person, object, or concept. In leadership situations, attributes are personal traits or characteristics that define how a leader behaves and interacts with others (e.g., confidence, resilience, and communication skills). As Tal and Gordon discuss, they directly affect a leader's ability to execute tasks, motivate teams, and achieve objectives, and they are adaptive in nature, changing in accordance with experiences and situations.

In leadership contexts, separating attributes and behaviors from values aids in understanding workplace motivations. For example, in Arab culture, leadership behaviors related to *wasta* (using personal power/influence to give preference to friends and relatives) can create obstacles for underlying task-relationship preferences among the rank-and-file (Alqhaiwi et al. 614). Such *behavior* would be accepted by an Arab as an extension of a *value*—the importance of personal relationships, including in the workplace (Powell and Koltz 277–79). In contrast, for the U.S. workplace, personal relationships between leaders and employees are generally discouraged, professional relationships are emphasized, and nepotism is discouraged. In the U.S. government workplace, nepotism is prohibited, and appointments are expected to be made based on considerations of merit (U.S. Merit Systems Protections Board 15). These *behaviors* reflect the U.S. leadership *value* of the equal importance of all individuals, as Rogers discusses in the context of the workplace. Teaching cultural behaviors rather than the values that motivate them can produce leaders who mechanically perform in culturally appropriate ways—until a crisis develops (Bussey 2–3). These crises can be triggered by complacency, a deceptive level of comfort resulting in a "dropped guard," social activities that create a false sense of cultural competence, or the Dunning-Kruger effect (characterized by overconfidence and ignorance of one's own ignorance) (Dunning and Kruger 1121). In such situations, leaders can become lost or confused and make mistakes because they have not acquired a true sense of the culture (House et al. 5–7).

Literature Review

This review is broken into two categories: (1) cultural relativism as reflected in trans-cultural/intercultural literature on leadership values and (2) cross-cultural leadership studies that focus on the Arab and U.S. workplaces. Currently, there is a paucity of literature on both of these topics, while at the same time, there is a plethora of literature focused on culture and leadership as independent topics. This reductionist approach ignores the reality of the intersection of culture and leadership that influences cross-cultural decision-making, management choices, and workplace practices.

Cultural Relativism and Cultural Values for Leaders

Cultural relativism asserts that ethical practices across various fields of life differ across cultures and that while a practice in one culture may be inappropriate in another, no one society's ethical practices are superior to another (Bowie, Nickerson). Much literature on cultural relativism notes differences in values (translated into behaviors) among leaders from various cultures (see, for example, works by Goleman et al., Murphy, and Thornton). However, these concepts rarely stretch beyond the basics of leadership styles to extend into the murkier territory of cultural diversity in situations where leaders from one culture are paired with followers from another.

Likewise, nearly none of the current literature on cultural relativism provides a lens for understanding cross-cultural leadership values within the culture of "the other." Much of it is what James Bernhardt has referred to as "gee whiz" cultural differences, meaning observable behavioral differences that do not touch upon deeper psychological and sociological motivations. Two examples are the popular *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands* (2006) by Morrison and Conaway and the more sophisticated *When Cultures Collide* (2018) by Lewis. These and similar publications do not reveal the underlying values that prompt behavioral differences.

From the literature, one can glean a collection of leader values roughly divisible into polar opposites. Whereas in Western cultures, what Greenleaf describes as a *servant leader* orientation can be found, in hierarchical, or autocratic, leadership structures (many non-Western cultures), such an orientation would be considered foreign. Servant leader attributes often include the concepts of *compassion* and *empowerment*, which generally fall on the opposite end of the spectrum from the autocratic leader values of *control* and *power*. These latter values are also found in

Arab cultures in slightly altered fashion, with compassion emanating from a sense of the greater good of the community, differing from the more goal-oriented aspect of the compassion (empathy) practiced in U.S. workplaces (Donnellan).

Studies of Arab Leadership Values

The most extensive "deep dive" into Arab cultural values and behaviors was conducted by the North Carolina Center for World Languages and Culture with assistance from the Human Resources Research Organization (HummRo) and support from the Army Research Institute (see the report by Wise et al.). This award-winning research explored more than 400 cultural *behaviors* and social/personal *values* ranging from potty training to polity in the Levantine culture. Respondents in each case were 100 new immigrants to the United States, who responded first separately to a written survey and then in focus groups. Unfortunately, leadership values were not included in this study, which was conducted before the advent of LREC concepts and instruction.

In 2013, Marneli states that leadership challenges in the Arab region differ from those of the Western world. He goes on to say most leadership models are based on Western theories and therefore often inappropriate in Arab contexts (Marneli 377–79).

For example, the concept of power in Arab culture is deeply intertwined with historical, social, and religious contexts. Power dynamics in the Arab world are influenced by traditional tribal structures, Islamic principles, and contemporary sociopolitical factors. A central aspect of power is its connection to tribalism, with tribal affiliations playing a significant role in determining social hierarchies and power relationships (Salzman 9–18). Tribal leaders, or sheikhs, often hold substantial authority, derived from their ability to command respect and loyalty within their communities. This tribal structure fosters a collectivist approach to power, where decisions are made with the welfare of the tribe in mind. This couches the concept of power with the value of compassion for one's tribe.

Further, Alqhaiwi et al. examined how Islamic principles (e.g., honesty and interpersonal connectedness) and tribal values (e.g., shame and generosity) influenced leadership perceptions and behaviors in Jordan. This can be seen in such traditional behaviors as the offering of tea before meetings (value: generosity) and avoiding actions that could bring embarrassment to family members (value: shame) (613–14).

Perhaps the most significant cross-cultural study, the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) research program, collected data about leadership values, behavior, and practices from 62 countries, including Egypt, Kuwait, Morrocco, and Qatar from the Arab world as well as from the United States (House et al. 3–7). Data, collected through an open-ended survey and a Likert-scale questionnaire, reflected nine values: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, gender egalitarianism, humane orientation, performance orientation, assertiveness, and future orientation. Transparency, accountability, power, control, and compassion were not among the values included in the study. However, some of these values can be inferred from the data: power from power distance, control from uncertainty avoidance, and compassion from humane orientation.

In the GLOBE study, findings for the Arab world varied, as can be expected, by country and region. However, in general, the value of empowerment was found to be subordinate to the values of power (expressed as power distance) and control (expressed as uncertainty avoidance). This is likely due to Arab in-group collectivism. Likewise, the emphasis on hierarchical structures and respect for authority appeared to limit compassion (expressed as humane orientation) in the workplace.

Of significance to LREC programs, the GLOBE study primarily looked at values, behaviors, and practices within a culture, not across cultures. The "cross-cultural" aspect was only addressed in GLOBE as a side-by-side comparison of values. What contributes to the success of Arabs in leadership positions in the United States and vice versa were not a part of the study.

In this study, we also focus on the difference between *transforming* and *conforming* values. Given the GLOBE study's focus on comparing cultures, its data did not look at this difference—neither as terminology nor as a cross-cultural leadership phenomenon. Are values malleable (i.e., do they *transform*[1]) when leaders move from their own culture to a new culture? Or are they more constant across cultures (i.e., do they *conform*[2] to the leader's home culture)? If malleability exists, identifying which values are malleable and why seems important to curricular development in all cross-cultural leadership programs, including those in the LREC enterprise.

Likewise, in his well-respected study, Hofstede implemented a Values Survey Module (VSM) that measured similar dimensions as the GLOBE study (*Culture's Consequences* 154). The goal of Hofstede's research was to identify how social values influence individual behavior, including leadership style. In Hofstede's module, six

dimensions were surveyed: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity (gender roles), long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. Respondents from both the United States and the Arab world—Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, and the UAE—were included in the study. Again, as in the GLOBE study, the results focused more on comparing cultures instead of how best to work cross-culturally. And again, like the GLOBE study, Hofstede was looking at stable values, not those that might be malleable in cross-cultural contexts (*Culture's Consequences* 154–55 and Appendices 1 and 4).

Other studies of leadership in the Arab world address cultural behaviors and practices instead of values. For example, Al Altheeb identifies three extant leadership styles: autocratic, paternalistic, and participative. While implying a values-laden approach, the article does not clarify the relationship between leadership style and any set of values. For the most part, these tangential studies reflect the influence of the West on traditional Arab leadership practices and point out the need for transformational leadership that is flexible, adaptive, and innovative. This could parallel Western works about leadership development, such as those by Khan and Varshney, Zaraket and Halawi, and Al-Rodhan, who considers bilateral influences (i.e., "trans-cultural").

An Exploratory Study

Exploratory research is warranted when a problem is not clearly defined or understood (Stebbins v). Its primary purpose is to explore a phenomenon, gather insights, and identify key variables or issues for further investigation (Hassan). Qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, or literature reviews often serve as the tool to gather preliminary data. This grounded theory approach to exploratory research has been found to be useful in the early stages of a research project when researchers need to clarify their understanding of a topic, develop hypotheses, or establish a foundation for further study (Glaser and Strauss 1–6).

Given the gaps in the literature about cross-cultural leadership values and their malleability and teachability, a need arose to explore more specific information on cross-cultural leadership values with culturally relevant valence. More specifically, this exploration was needed for the purpose of building cross-cultural leadership content into LREC courses for military leaders who would be assuming leadership positions in other cultures.

Research Questions

The primary research questions, based on the above-mentioned six representative leadership values, is a trifurcated exploration of the following:

- In what cross-cultural ways (Focus: similarities and differences between the cultures) or culturally relative ways (Focus: their significance within each culture) do these values differ?
- What role do these values play in addressing cross-cultural disconnects or fostering success in international leadership assignments?
- How can LREC programs incorporate an understanding of these leadership values to better prepare U.S. military leaders for culturally diverse environments?

Population

For this preliminary study, eight leaders with successful cross-cultural experience were identified. The groups included four Americans in leadership positions in Arab countries and four Arabs in leadership positions in the United States. Among these were a former associate provost, department chairs, program directors in government and contracted positions, and senior U.S. military officers. Three of the eight were women.

Research Design

The stages of research included a search for relevant case studies and literature and the collection and analysis of a written survey plus interviews. Qualitative and quantitative analysis was carried out to reveal trends and themes that related directly to cultural relativism and culturally laden leadership values.

For this study, the authors developed an in-house survey that allowed for a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) approach to answering the research questions. Based on the initial survey results, new questions arose to further clarify responses. Thereafter, interviews were conducted with the most experienced (expert) cross-cultural leader in each category: an American in an Arab environment and an Arab in an American environment.

The 29-question survey was administered through Survey Monkey and divided into two parts: (1) cross-cultural leadership experience and (2) demographic

information. Appendix 8.1 contains the questions that were ultimately analyzed for this chapter. (Some questions turned out to be unproductive and were omitted.) The initial survey questions were based on the anecdotal but extensive cross-cultural leadership experience of the authors and included questions about respondents' previous LREC instruction and preparation. (See Watson and Leaver, Chapter 14 in this volume, for a discussion of these findings, along with suggestions for curricular development.)

The survey questions took the form of checklists, making it possible to compare experiences and values of each set of respondents and individuals within each set. This allowed for quantification of some of the data, yielding valuable comparative experiences and opinions, thematic information, and potential trend identification. Open-ended questions were also included to capture those differences as well as any unanticipated considerations. (See Appendix 8.1 for the survey questions and checklists.)

For the follow-up interviews, an Interview Protocol (IP) was prepared and administered to the two expert leaders to clarify ambiguous or incomplete responses, confirm implications, and answer follow-up questions arising from the survey responses. (See Appendix 8.2 for this IP.)

Results of the Study

Part One of the written survey, which covered experience of cross-cultural values, provided high-yield results. This section included checklists and open-ended questions about a broad range of values, experiences with cultural relativism, and introspection into successes and failures in cross-cultural leadership and how preparation fed into them.

Part Two, demographic information, elicited data on the respondents' education, gender, and employment type, place, and dates. This part of the survey provided low-yield results, meaning the differences seen were not discriminatory in any way. The responses showed no meaningful significance regardless of gender (with one exception), the date work commenced in the new culture, and amount or type of preparation. Hence, the demographic results are provided in brief but not further included in the results tables or discussion.

Aggregate Responses to Part One of the Survey

The results from Part One supported the hypothesis that the proposed values—*power*, *control, compassion*, and *empowerment*—were the most culturally salient to these experienced cross-cultural leaders, but the values of *transparency* and *accountability* also played a role. The first four values formed a group of mutable (malleable) values (i.e., *transforming* values). These transforming values were identified from the rank ordering of three sets of values that were either (1) currently personally held, (2) perceived as significant in the respondents' native culture, and (3) perceived as significant in the culture of assignment. Respondents reported that transforming values tended to be situationally influenceable depending on the individual and the individual's capacity for transformation. In contraposition, the values of *transparency* and *accountability* appeared to be more immutable and constant (i.e., *conforming* values). Conforming values were identified when respondents indicated that their own current values and the perceived values of their culture did not match the perceived values of their culture of assignment. For example, as Respondent 5 declared, "My native culture values played a role in shaping my personality, so [they do] reflect in my current management style." Conforming values then appear to be culturally enforceable regardless of the individual's innate capacity for transformation.

The *transforming* values seemed to influence *how* individual leaders and his/their followers might react (successfully/unsuccessfully, positively/negatively) in a cross-cultural environment. Conversely, *conforming* values seemed to influence the resilience of the leader to confront differing values and remain grounded. This finding aligns well with the tenets of cultural relativism in inspiring enduring models of leadership that differ from one culture to another.

On the open-ended questions, respondents were encouraged to provide reflections on any topic they considered relevant. Their responses fell into two categories: (1) cross-cultural challenges and (2) comments on the adequacy of their preparation for cross-cultural leadership positions.

Challenges

Most respondents reported difficulty interpreting unspoken assumptions that differed from their own culture. Determining when *yes* really means *no* in the Arab world was a difficulty for some. Another shared challenge was understanding that some concepts that appear to be the same are not identical in nuance or application. For example,

among the U.S. respondents, power manifested itself as control *of* something and *over* someone because of position. Among the Arab respondents, power appeared at once as a linear phenomenon (hierarchy) and a circular phenomenon (consultive approach, loyalty to representatives within the group).

Related to the value of compassion, U.S. leaders in the Arab world noted that family relationships seem to be more important in Arab countries. While the respondents had read about the importance of family relationships, encountering their "huge multiplier" factor in practice required adjusting their attitudes to avoid conflict.

Additionally, respondents reported a range of ways they successfully overcame these challenges. Encouragement of feedback, open access to leadership, Management by Walking Around (MBWA), and making time for philosophical discussions were practices that helped them develop greater cross-cultural understanding and move toward a successfully blended workplace.

Adequacy of Preparation

Although some of the respondents had at least some preparation for their work abroad, none of the respondents felt that they had been adequately prepared for what they experienced in their assignments. Their recommendations for being better prepared included the following:

- "You need to become enthusiastic about the culture and interactions with the people; you are not there to criticize."
- "Be mission-focused; respect the culture (honestly) and appreciate it regardless of what your view is; if you do not understand what the issues are, you will not be successful."
- "Don't get involved in local problems (e.g., Sunni versus Shia) because both sides will turn on you. Critical cultural knowledge can save lives."
- "You can speak a language, but you can't get your point across if you lack understanding of others' cultures and how you would be perceived."
- "Cultural competency is a huge thing. One of the failures in Afghanistan and Iraq was failing to prepare troops for what they went into. Troops were prepared, to some extent, in the language, but not in the culture. If you talk to someone in their language, they understand you; if you talk to them in their culture, they hear you."

Comments addressing LREC instruction and preparation specifically included:

- "LREC instruction is essential to communication and effective relationships."
- "LREC instruction should help leaders understand others' perspective and become more ethno-relative and less ethnocentric."
- "Cross-cultural studies are a huge confidence builder."
- "Both language and culture studies are necessary; one without the other is incomplete."

American Leaders in the Arab World

Table 8.1 summarizes the results of this cohort (n = 4).

Table 8.1

Responses of American Leaders Working in Arab Countries

Respondents	Transforming Values	Conforming Values
Respondent 1	Strong, nearly complete shift toward perceived Arab values	Understood the cultural differences but chose to reflect own (U.S.) values of transparency and accountability
Respondent 2	Moderate shift (understanding and practice) toward perceived Arab values	Considered transparency and accountability important even if locals did not (no shift)
Respondent 3	Strong shift toward perceived Arab values	Practiced transparency and accountability as personal values (no shift)
Respondent 4	Acceptance, incorporation, and use of Arab values to build a values-blended work environment	Transparency and accountability immutable to self; no shift but understood the conflict intellectually

Transforming Values: Power, Control, Compassion, and Empowerment

Overall, this group of four respondents reflected a shift, in some cases quite strong, toward Arab values of power, control, and compassion, in particular, either by perceived efficacy or by accepting that these values defined the society in which they were working and living. As they attempted to adapt their behaviors, they became more comfortable accepting values that they had not natively held. This adaptation felt appropriate for the environment in which they were working. The difference between these leaders' current values and those they considered dominant in the United States showed at least a modest trend toward transformation. For

example, Respondent 1 explained that power in the Arab world depends on relationships. Respondent 2 observed that one must build trust for tasks to be accepted and accomplished. In the Arab world, it seems that power is inextricably interwoven with relationships. Respondent 3 provided the most in-depth response: "Power is not important; it is all about relationships . . . but show power when needed depending on whom you are working with to not seem weak and leverage relationships. . . . Show competence, and you will be consulted as an expert in your field and given authority to make necessary decisions." Respondent 4 noted that all four of the values that turned out to be transformation-capable are bound together in ways that they are not bound together in the United States.

In the follow-up interview, the American working in the Arab world expanded on the concept of trust. He noted that while the Arab world has been changing and moving toward a Western understanding of power, if a leader wants to build the trust necessary to accomplish necessary tasks, power must be used in ways that locals expect.

In terms of the value of *control*, most of the respondents reported relinquishing control to employees in a servant leadership manner when they served at home in the United States. However, in the Arab world, they found that what was considered a strength in the United States was looked upon as a weakness: "Understanding both cultures is crucial. It is important to know when to play the servant leadership card and when not to."

In the follow-up interview, the American leader posted in the Arab world saw the value of *control* as having two different meanings in their experience. He put the difference succinctly: "In the U.S., control is part of hierarchy. In the Arab world, you have the *wasta* system [the use of personal relationships or influence to gain favors; see Al-Twal et al.]. You might think you have control, but at the end of the day you do not."

In terms of the value of *compassion*, all the respondents reported developing greater *compassion* while working in the Arab world, internalizing it as a personal value. From something as simple and personal as never starting a meeting until everyone has had tea to something as complex as engagement with the broader local community, compassion, they reported, permeates business interactions. Mentoring is prevalent, focus on employees' well-being is expected, colleagues often assist each other financially and otherwise, and harmony in the workplace is actively sought. One respondent noted that compassion was the number one

aspect of how he now works with his Arab employees.

For this cohort, *empowerment* worked in the opposite direction. Empowerment was not common in the Arab firms where participants worked, and they found that their efforts at empowerment were met with confusion, puzzlement, and even resistance. Generally, their employees wanted to be told what to do, looking on their boss as they would look upon a tribal leader: the compassionate decision-maker, wielding power *through a collectivist approach.* For example, Respondent 4 "sold" her personal value of empowerment through building relationships, showing compassion, and seeking collaboration (i.e., building the "tribe" together with the employees). She adapted practices such as servant leadership to fit into the Arab power-control-relationship system of values, which altered the ways she promoted empowerment.

Conforming Values: Transparency and Accountability

All respondents in this cohort agreed that transparency and accountability seemed to be important in U.S. culture but less prevalent (or even understood) in Arab culture. They maintained their American values in their post abroad and did not let go of them. Some argued that they witnessed instances of these values during their time abroad, just unexpressed.

When asked to explain how they represented their value of *transparency* to the local culture, U.S. leaders used terms like *communication* and *efficiency*, stating, "transparency builds trust," and noting, as above, that trust is essential in Arab personal and work relationships.

Likewise, U.S. leaders promoted their value of accountability even though they were aware that their Arab employees were often suspicious of accountability. Respondent 4 reported that when she tried to hold an employee accountable for taking a bribe, he called in a favor from a high-ranking official who told the U.S. leader to stop persecuting the employee. From this, she understood that wasta would be constantly vying for equal consideration with accountability in her decision-making, whether she liked it or not. She realized that clinging to the American sense of accountability could create confusion about her intentions (and trustability). Nonetheless, she consciously maintained this value even if it meant being dismissed as a "foreigner." "Sometimes," she noted, "being a foreigner can give you some latitude—and forgiveness—if you have established good relationships and trust, and work within the culture in general."

Arab Leaders in the United States

Table 8.2 summarizes the responses of this cohort (n = 4).

Table 8.2

Responses of Arabs Working in the United States

Category	Transforming Values	Conforming Values
Respondent 5	Shift toward perceived U.S. values	Considers transparency and accountability less clearly defined and more subjective in Arab (native) culture
Respondent 6	Reflection of perceived U.S. values	Considers that cultural expressions of transparency and accountability differ
Respondent 7	Reflection of perceived U.S. values	Colored by cultural acceptance or avoidance of feedback
Respondent 8	Shift toward perceived U.S. values	Does not matter; people will do as leader leads

Transforming Values

Similar to the American cohort, the Arab leaders working in the United States reported a shift to and an alignment with U.S. values. For example, the concept of *power,* which takes many shapes in U.S. leadership circles, took on an elasticity not always visible in the leadership contexts they found themselves in, particularly in the practice of promoting *empowerment*. In this regard, Respondent 7 noted that she changed her thinking and behavior because of her experience of U.S. values. Respondent 8 explained more specifically, "In this current [U.S.] environment, you must change to a system of earned positions based on accomplishments and hard work. Power is responsibility, tasks must get done to the standard issued, and relationships are professional only."

In the follow-up interview, the selected Arab respondent working in the United States noted,

> Power is fluid. Theories are theories, practice is practice, and good judgment is in between. For example, Arab leaders are serious, with no humor, and want to come across as scary and brutal, as not afraid to make decisions that can destroy lives. In the U.S., leaders can be funny and share jokes with followers and not always the "boss."

He further demonstrated his shift to a U.S. mindset stating, "I adjust, based on what I am dealing with." Although he started out with his home culture values,

over time, through education in the U.S. and interacting with his counterparts, he developed a comfort level in adjusting to U.S. values. Additionally, he described a disorienting dilemma that created a transformative moment for him:

> Among the experiences that helped me transition to a U.S. style of leadership was one that occurred when I was a 2LT in the U.S. Army. I was leading a convoy from San Luis Obispo to Sacramento. We were supposed to make a left. Two trucks went straight, and we lost them. We waited at a rest stop, and eventually they showed up. In Arab boss fashion, I yelled at them. The American NCO counseled me, "Before you lay into them, ask them what happened." They explained the first driver was sleepy and missed the turn, and the second one followed him. I still wanted to yell but did not. Now when confronted, I will ask what happened first; it is instinct, and it is natural now.

In terms of the value of *control*, the interviewee noted that he found the U.S. mindset toward controlling the work environment more efficient. In his home culture, he reported that control would be exercised by counting all the inventory and keeping it within view, whereas the U.S. mindset seemed to be more on supervising the levers of the business and by leaving the bean-counting and inventory management to the employees. He manifests this type of control through discussion, exercising motivation, and leadership training sessions in which employees learn how to conduct the bean-counting effectively.

In terms of the value of *compassion*, most of the respondents easily adapted their version of compassion as a leadership value to the U.S. context. The interviewee noted that while compassion is part of both worlds, it was expressed differently in leadership practices, but expressed his adaptation as "an effortless change, just natural values." The interviewee cited Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah, prime minister of Kuwait, who said that the sheikh is like a tree, a provider, and that birds (the people under the sheikh) come and eat at the tree.

In terms of the value of *empowerment*, most respondents perceived the practice of empowerment as mostly an American value. As Respondent 5 stated, in their home culture, "the leader is the smartest and has all the answers; he is the best, and others follow." Nonetheless, in the United States, the respondents gave several examples of how they adopted U.S. practices for promoting empowerment:

- "You can only be in one place at a time."
- "You can only get things done by empowering people."
- "Leaders shine because they empower their people (e.g., Steve Jobs who hired talent not to tell them what to do but for them to tell Apple what to do)."

In the follow-up interview, the respondent explained his transformation eloquently:

> Everything goes through growing pains. As I grew as a person, I struggled with empowerment. As a 2LT in the Army, I was starving for attention. You cannot have that need and empower others at the same time. It is the opposite of what you are trying to do. It took some time and growth—and was painful in the early days—to learn to trust people to do what they need to do.

Even though this value was less familiar to the Arab leaders, most reported it had become a natural part of their leadership style in the United States. More than one respondent mentioned culture shock upon returning to their own culture where these newly adopted values were different or lacking.

Conforming Values

Based on the survey responses, the value of *transparency* as a concept was not understood consistently by Arab leaders in the United States. Respondent 5, for example, interpreted the U.S. support of transparency as a way of giving a disingenuous impression of honesty. Respondent 6 considered transparency to be situationally fluid, and Respondent 7 pointed out that feedback was discouraged in his native culture. Although they had adopted many of the U.S. ways of executing their mission, these responses demonstrate the staying power of their initial value of transparency (or the lack thereof) as a culturally relevant factor to be considered in cross-cultural leadership contexts.

In the follow-up interview, the interviewee, who had adapted to U.S. values to a larger extent than others, noted that he knew he was an exception. For him, transparency was at first difficult to understand or value but is now part of his reflexes. He noted, however, that his similarly situated colleagues "are still in the Arab mentality; only a few have made the change. Local business owners, for example, continue to use Arab tactics and techniques" (i.e., those not associated with transparency).

Likewise, respondents also noted the difference in the concept of *accountability* between U.S. culture and their native cultures. Respondent 5 wrote, for example, "In my native culture, accountability can be more subjective and less clearly defined. Top management never takes responsibility and there is usually a scapegoat." Similarly, Respondent 6 noted that in his native culture, leaders typically took credit for accomplishments of subordinates. Nonetheless, while being able to articulate the meaning of accountability and its place in the American workplace, most respondents

did not embrace it. Respondent 8 summed up the general attitude succinctly: "[Accountability] does not matter; people will do as the leader leads."

In the follow-up interview, the interviewee compared the perception of this value in both cultures but described his attempts to adopt the U.S. value of accountability:

> In the U.S., people want freedom and democracy; that comes with a great deal of responsibility; accountability is important. In the Arab world, leaders do not want the responsibility that goes with freedom; they want freedom without accountability. How do Arab leaders do accountability? They will do what others are not allowed to do because they are the leader. In the U.S., leaders think they need to model behavior. If you want your followers to be accountable, you need to be accountable.

Clearly, for the interviewee, accountability was likely a transforming value, not a conforming value.

Discussion and Implications

Interpretation of the Study Results

The most significant finding of this study was unexpected: that some values are malleable (*transforming*), and others are more stable and resistant to change (*conforming*). The questions on the survey were not written with this distinction, yet these differences showed up for both groups of participants. When asked about this finding in a follow-up interview, both of the expert leaders confirmed this trend in their own experiences and shared parallel insights.

For example, the U.S. leader working in the Arab context said simply: "Absolutely; those [transforming] values are malleable. To succeed abroad, you have to match the organization's requirements and expectations." He also confirmed the stable nature of the conforming values of *transparency* and *accountability*, which reflected, of course, the American culture in which he was educated, and the fact that he had left one job because these values were lacking. This strength of conforming values has also been corroborated in at least three other studies: a collaboration between Columbia University and The Harris Poll ("Great Resignation Perils"), Polman, and research from the *MIT Sloan Management Review* (Sull et al.).

The Arab interviewee working in the United States was more loquacious about transforming values: "Who I am today [as a leader] is the ability to learn: versatility and flexibility. Not just because it benefits me now, but because that became my

way of life. When you come from another culture, it is easy to fall into the trap of living in that cultural bubble inside the U.S. [émigré communities for whom most values are conforming]. The bubble . . . does not lead to success as a leader." In terms of conforming values, he goes on to suggest a possible reason for their durable nature. At first, he says, it "is a struggle to buy in," but it's the practical application that "makes it work. To change one's mindset takes work, but if they don't want to do this work, they opt to dismiss it." While Papadopoulos asserts in his work that the conforming values of transparency and accountability are deeply embedded in the democratic governing system in the United States, these do not seem to be part of the tribal governing system in the respondents' native Arab culture. The World Bank further notes that while there have been efforts to improve transparency and accountability in the Arab context, the region "still has a long way to go" (McKenzie, par. 21).

Further, the interviews with the experienced leaders confirmed that transformation can take place over time, either as a series of resolutions to disorienting dilemmas (a clash of cultures that challenges one's current perception of reality; see Mezirow 196–227), or it can happen quickly as a response to a crisis. Adaptation can be facilitated where values are similar but not the same. For example, scholars in cross-cultural leadership studies suggest Arab compassion in the workplace focuses on being supportive to the employees' whole family and community (Alqhaiwi et al. 615), whereas in U.S. workplaces, the focus is more on empathy, active listening, and individual support (Hougaard et al.).

Conforming values, however, can have the opposite effect. As noted earlier, one respondent reported that holding onto her native values emphasized her foreignness. This is in line with both Amer and Wilder. Nonetheless, most respondents reported that they simply could not let go of certain ingrained leadership values, such as *transparency* and *accountability*. These values were too core to their understanding of effective leadership to change their approach or expectations.

These findings have implications for leader development and training in the LREC enterprise. Both the literature and the study find *power* and *control* to be more commonly recognized as both a U.S. and an Arab value (with differing presentations). Compassion was considered more of an Arab value and empowerment primarily a U.S. value. These insights support our call for more leadership development efforts within the framework of cultural relativism, in which an understanding of the *leadership of the other* can be explored. In alignment with Hofstede's *Culture's Consequences*, the experiences shared by the participants in the study reveal the

following themes to be important for the development of cross-cultural leaders:

- *Transforming* values, along with decision-making models that accompany them and mechanisms to cope, are malleable; thus, they can be trained (with experiential approaches leading to internalization, or acquisition, of the values).
- *Conforming* values are more stable; they tend not to be acquired and are often rejected; thus, while internalization of these values is more difficult, they can be learned through formal instruction.
- Because Arab cultures have begun moving toward Western leadership models (Hanieh 2–10), this should be taken into consideration when developing curricula for cross-cultural leadership. This westward turn in leadership values and practices poses a challenge for U.S. and Arab leaders, and since it may require another generation to see Western leadership models fully implemented, the kinds of cross-cultural leadership curricula meant to reflect cultural relativism, as discussed by Price in his work *Leadership Ethics* (1–15), will need to incorporate the current and enduring values of these cultures while noting the emerging shift.

Conclusion

This exploratory study revealed an emerging approach to understanding cross-cultural and culturally relative leadership values by proposing the existence of *transforming* and *conforming* values. Much more, however, it addresses the need for cultural relativism in understanding cross-cultural leadership values: (1) the development of a research agenda, (2) the identification of possibilities for generalizations to other cross-cultural environments, and (3) consideration of appropriate cross-cultural leadership development in the LREC enterprise.

The six representative (and culturally salient) leadership values identified in this study suggest the need for a *comprehensive research agenda* based on cultural relativism and oriented toward developing a more comprehensive curricula for developing cross-cultural leaders. This agenda would include the following:

- Replication of this study with similarly composed groups to increase the population size from an exploratory study to a standard research study.
- Expansion of this study to other Arab countries, to other cultures, and to larger sets of leadership values.

- Design of a study that looks at *behaviors* and *attributes* associated with these (and other) leadership values. These studies could include focus groups with successful military leaders with cross-cultural and culturally relative experience to codify (1) how they coped with values-related dilemmas and (2) the relevant reasons for their success.
- Expansion of the organizations represented in the study to include subordinate positions, academic institutions, NGOs, and related international businesses.
- The current study deliberately assessed cultures with highly differentiated leadership values. Based on their combined cross-cultural experiences, this was something the authors accurately anticipated. As a result, *generalizability* of the concepts of transforming and conforming values will require testing in other cultural spaces.

The preliminary findings in this chapter can ultimately inform how the LREC enterprise instructs and develops effective cross-cultural leaders. For one examination of these concepts, see Watson and Leaver in chapter 14 of this volume. The aforementioned research agenda, once accomplished, has the potential to richly inform how the U.S. government develops and leverages effective bilingual/bicultural LREC professionals.

Notes

1. In this study, *transforming* values were seen to be personally held, affectively charged, collectively expected, and culturally promoted. They are shaped by the holders' perceptions, reflect the holders' social and religious beliefs, and orient their behaviors. Most important, they can likely be influenced situationally and thus can change when cultures come into contact.
2. Conforming values are collectively held, socially charged, collectively expected, and intellectually promoted. They are shaped by social norms and cultural indoctrination; they reflect the holders' intellectual beliefs and temper their perceptions. Most important, conforming values generally cannot be influenced situationally. Thus, they remain constant when cultures come into contact and highlight a subtle rigidity within the application of cultural relativism.

Appendix 8.1

Survey for Exploratory Study

(Authors' note: Questions 3, 7, 8, and 9 in the original survey were not used for this chapter and hence are not displayed here.)

ALL ANSWERS AND USE OF THE DATA COLLECTED ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND ANONYMOUS.

This survey is seeking to understand aspects of cross-cultural leadership. As an experienced leader in a culture other than your own, your responses will help us clarify information that may be important to future leaders in cross-culture contexts, particularly those related to native and adopted cultures.

Part One

1. Given the following values, mark the ones you feel are most critical for good management (up to 5).

_____ Accountability (taking responsibility)

_____ Adaptability

_____ Authority

_____ Charisma

_____ Collaboration

_____ Compassion

_____ Competence

_____ Control

_____ Creativity

_____ Cultural sensitivity (including gender, world culture)

_____ Decisiveness

_____ Empathy

_____ Flexibility

_____ Humility

_____ Inclusion

_____ Integrity

_____ Loyalty

_____ Open-mindedness

_____ Resilience

_____ Respect for Followers

_____ Respect for Leaders

_____ Transparency

_____ Vision

_____ Other (list)

2. Given the following values, mark those you feel are insignificant for good management. (up to 5).

_____ Accountability (taking responsibility)
_____ Adaptability
_____ Authority
_____ Charisma
_____ Collaboration
_____ Compassion
_____ Competence
_____ Control
_____ Creativity
_____ Cultural sensitivity (including gender, world culture)
_____ Decisiveness
_____ Empathy
_____ Flexibility
_____ Humility
_____ Inclusion
_____ Integrity
_____ Loyalty
_____ Open-mindedness
_____ Resilience
_____ Respect for Followers
_____ Respect for Leaders
_____ Transparency
_____ Vision
_____ Other (list)

4. In your opinion, what are the most important qualities or traits that define effective leadership in your native culture?

5. How do you perceive the level of transparency and accountability among leaders in your native culture for decision-making processes? How does this compare with your adopted culture concepts of transparency?

6. How do you perceive the level of transparency and accountability among leaders of your native culture in their decision-making processes? How does this compare with your adopted culture of accountability?

10. What were the biggest challenges you experienced in working as a leader in a culture that was not your own? For example, did you change your expectations, behaviors, actions, or understanding?

11. To the best of your knowledge, did those you were leading change their expectations, behaviors, actions, or understanding?

12. How do you balance honoring your native heritage and identity while adapting to the professional expectations and standards set by educational leaders in your adopted culture?

13. What conflicts (if any) did you encounter in philosophy, ethics, principles, and/or sense of loyalty to self, heritage, and adopted culture?

14. If you were to begin the position anew, what would you do differently to prepare?

15. If you were to begin the position anew, what would you do differently in your first few weeks?

16. If you were to begin the position anew, what would you do differently throughout your tenure?

17. Before you began your position, what preparation did you receive? Check all that apply.

_____ foreign language course(s) taught by native speakers

_____ foreign language course(s) taught by speakers from my own culture

_____ foreign language course(s) taught by a combination of natives and non-natives

_____ (cross)culture education taught within a foreign language course

_____ cultural studies courses (independent of language learning)

_____ on-the-job development of cultural expertise

_____ on-the-job development of language proficiency

18. Would you recommend cross-cultural studies as part of a foreign language course? Why or why not?

19. What would be your advice to those tapped for cross-cultural leadership positions? (Answer those for which you have personal experience.)

    In military/government organizations?

    In educational institutions?

    In private industry?

    In NGO, nonprofit organizations?

Part Two

1. My leadership experience falls into the category(ies) I have checked below:

   _____ American leaders in Arab countries

   _____ Arabs leading American organizations

2. Indicate the period during which you emigrated to the USA or, as an American, worked abroad:

   _____ before 2010

   _____ after 2010

3. Indicate your education level:

   _____ higher education (college +) in USA

   _____ higher education combining home country and USA

   _____ higher education (college +) in home country (Arab country, Russia)

   _____ no higher education

4. Indicate gender:

   _____ Male

   _____ Other

   _____ Female

   _____ Do not wish to disclose

5. Have you had formal training in leadership?

   _____ workshops or courses on leadership

   _____ university degree in leadership

   _____ certification

6. Had you had any formal study/education/training related to cross-cultural management? Do not include personal, on-the-job experience.

   _____ yes _____ no

7. How many years of leadership experience have you had?

   _____ less than 5 _____ more than 10

   _____ 5–10

8. What is the largest group of employees (followers) you have supervised?

   _____ less than 10 _____ more than 100

   _____ 10–100

9. What is the type of organization(s) you lead/led? Select all that apply.

   _____ military/government _____ private industry

   _____ education institutions _____ NGO, nonprofit organizations

Please include any comments about cross-cultural leadership that you have experienced that are not mentioned in the questions above.

Appendix 8.2

Interview Protocol

Expansion on the Survey Questions: Clarification and reflection, comparison, and context

This study has collected data on individual leader values, specifically power, control, compassion, empowerment, transparency, and accountability. Let's take them one at a time.

1. **Power**
    a. What role has power played in your personal experience as a leader—does it have a leadership value to you, regardless of which country you are working in, or has the significance and nature of power in leadership changed from when you have been a leader in your native country and when you have been an Arab [American] leader in the United States [Arab world]?
    b. If you have found that power was viewed differently by others in the United States [Arab world], did you also find yourself treating/using power differently at home versus in the United States [Arab world]?
    c. Please clarify when and where you have seen changes (the context).
    d. Please reflect on what you think the motivation for change (or lack of it) might have been.

2. **Control**
    a. What role has the need/value/advantages of control played in your personal experience as a leader—does it have a leadership value to you, regardless of which country you are working in, or has the significance and nature of control in leadership changed from when you have been a leader in your native country and when you have been an Arab [American] leader in the United States [Arab world]?
    b. If you have found that control was viewed differently by others in the United States [Arab world], did you also find yourself treating/using control differently at home versus in the United States [Arab world]?
    c. Please clarify when and where you have seen changes (the context).
    d. Please reflect on what you think the motivation for change (or lack of it) might have been.

3. **Compassion**
    a. What role has compassion played in your personal experience as a leader—does it have a leadership value to you, regardless of which country you are working in, or has the significance and nature of compassion in leadership changed from when you have been a leader in your native country and when you have been an Arab [American] leader in the United States [Arab world]?
    b. If you have found that compassion was viewed differently by others in the United States [Arab world], did you also find yourself treating/using compassion differently at home versus in the United States [Arab world]?
    c. Please clarify when and where you have seen changes (the context).
    d. Please reflect on what you think the motivation for change (or lack of it) might have been.

4. **Empowerment**
    a. What role has empowerment played in your personal experience as a leader—does it have a leadership value to you, regardless of which country you are working in, or has the significance and nature of empowerment in leadership changed from when you have been a leader in your native country and when you have been an Arab [American] leader in the United States [Arab world]?
    b. If you have found that empowerment was viewed differently by others in the United States [Arab world], did you also find yourself treating/using empowerment differently at home versus in the United States [Arab world]?
    c. Please clarify when and where you have seen changes (the context).
    d. Please reflect on what you think the motivation for change (or lack of it) might have been.

5. **Transparency**
    a. What role has transparency played in your personal experience as a leader—does it have a leadership value to you, regardless of which country you are working in, or has the significance and nature of transparency in leadership changed from when you have been a leader

in your native country and when you have been an Arab [American] leader in the United States [Arab world]?

b. If you have found that transparency was viewed differently by others in the United States [Arab world], did you also find yourself treating/using transparency differently at home versus in the United States [Arab world]?

c. Please clarify when and where you have seen changes (the context).

d. Please reflect on what you think the motivation for change (or lack of it) might have been.

6. Accountability

a. What role has accountability played in your personal experience as a leader—does it have a leadership value to you, regardless of which country you are working in, or has the significance and nature of transparency in leadership changed from when you have been a leader in your native country and when you have been an Arab [American] leader in the United States [Arab world]?

b. If you have found that accountability was viewed differently by others in the United States [Arab world], did you also find yourself treating/using transparency differently at home versus in the United States [Arab world]?

c. Please clarify when and where you have seen changes (the context).

d. Please reflect on what you think the motivation for change (or lack of it) might have been.

Response to preliminary conclusions (trends in the data)

1. Our data indicates a trend that has led us to a preliminary conclusion that in the case of Arab leaders in the United States and American leaders in the Arab world, some values are malleable; we are calling those transforming values. By that, we mean that leaders from one culture adapt or modify these values to the needs, expectations, and behaviors of the other culture. Transforming values appear to be power, control, compassion, and empowerment.

   a. How does this compare with your personal experience? Can you give examples?

   b. How does this differ from your personal experience (if it does)? Again, can you provide examples?
   c. Overall, would you say that your experience (personal and observed) confirms or refutes this conclusion? Why?

2. Our data indicates a trend that has led us to a preliminary conclusion that in the case of Arab leaders in the United States and American leaders in the Arab world, some values are not malleable; we are calling those conforming values. By that, we mean that leaders from one culture stay true (conformed) to their native culture values when they find themselves in cultures that do not share those values. Conforming values appear to be transparency and accountability.
   a. How does this compare with your personal experience? Can you give examples?
   b. How does this differ from your personal experience (if it does)? Again, can you provide examples?
   c. Overall, would you say that your experience (personal and observed) confirms or refutes this conclusion? Why?

3. Extrapolating from your personal experience as well as your observations and study, what recommendations would you make for LREC programs that are preparing leaders for appointment to cross-cultural/intercultural positions?

4. As a cross-cultural leader, you are likely aware of the dearth of research into cultural relativism, transformative language learning/teaching, and Arab vs. U.S. leadership norms and values.
   a. Based on what you know about the study you are participating in, what recommendations would you make for follow-up or further research—and why?
   b. What significance (if any) do you find in conducting this study?

5. Any other comments, reflections, clarifications, observations? What might we have forgotten?

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PART THREE

Understanding the Foreign Area

CHAPTER 9

Putin's Road to War from a Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture Perspective

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Abstract

The war in Ukraine represents Russia's most recent attempt to reorient geopolitics in Eastern Europe. President Vladimir Putin's motives, however, are influenced by historical, cultural, and geographical assumptions. In this sense, Putin is not different from the long line of Russian and Soviet leaders looking to establish Russia's legacy of superiority on both the regional and global stage. To understand these motives more completely, one needs a deeper dive into Putin's political thought and how it has developed over time. According to Fetzer, analysis of political discourse has an "interdisciplinary orientation" that requires understanding of its linguistic, sociocultural, historical, and ideological dimensions (2). With an understanding that these dimensions are interconnected, this chapter analyzes the various contextual aspects of Putin's political discourse in a corpus of seven of his influential speeches from 1999 to 2022. To further put these speeches into context, this paper uses Bach and Harnish's speech act taxonomy to investigate the pragmatics that underlie his speeches. This multidimensional context helps illuminate the illocutionary forces at work in Putin's discourse as well as their perlocutionary effects on his regional and global audience. This analysis shines a light on the evolution of Putin's cultural-historical vision for Russia and the justifications for his "geopolitical struggle" with Ukraine (Putin, "Address" Feb. 21, 2022).

KEYWORDS: cross-cultural understanding, discourse analysis, LREC, illocutionary force, political discourse, Russian language, speech acts

Introduction

The war in Ukraine represents Russia's most recent attempt to reorient geopolitics in Eastern Europe. While some have attempted to simplify Russian President Vladimir Putin's motives as an attempt to "recreate the Soviet Union," Putin's thinking is in reality far more complex than this implies, and full of historical, cultural and geographical assumptions long developed in Russian history. In his discourse, Putin has followed the patterns long used by Russian and Soviet leaders looking to establish Russia's legacy of superiority on both the regional and global stage. Along his road to war, Putin seems to have taken a "conservative turn" (Makarychev and Yatsyk 2) and an ideological shift (March 404; Matthews).

Viewing Putin's motives through a lens of language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC), we can begin to understand the nuances and complexities of Putin's road to war, especially when we interpret Putin's actions at the intersection of those LREC competencies. Putin's language about Ukrainian sovereignty is well situated in Russian history, culture, and the geography of the region, as is his cultural vision for the Russian nation, and his speeches and political rhetoric provide a strong sense of political motives and aspirations and are often influenced by LREC considerations. Understanding the nuances of a political speech often requires an understanding of the complexities of language, history, and cultural and regional aspects of a location and a cultural group. Such explanations are rare, yet when LREC considerations are not employed, analyses can be misguided or misunderstood.

This chapter deconstructs various speeches and articles delivered by Vladimir Putin leading up to the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine in February 2022 with a specific focus on speech act analysis of his speeches prior to the annexation of Crimea and those after it leading to the beginning of what Russian-language media called his "special military operation" in Ukraine in 2022. By formally analyzing his speeches in their various linguistic, cultural, and regional contexts, one can better understand the narrative that ties Putin's justifications for military action in Ukraine to a long-standing Russian cultural-historical view of Ukraine and the Russian nation. This holistic analysis of LREC concepts can shed light on the motivations of the Russian leader, the challenges Russia faced in Ukraine, and some of Russia's initial missteps. The goal of this chapter is to provide a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of LREC concepts and how various interpretations of LREC concepts can be employed to justify and evaluate military actions.

Background

Political Development and Discourse

Throughout history, speeches by leaders have been an important part of the political discourse. Much research has looked at the methods leaders use in political speeches to promote their political agenda. According to Drozdova and Robinson, Putin's rhetoric shows "how he positions himself politically relative to others, how he justifies his policies, and how he exercises power" (806).

In their extensive analysis of Putin's speeches prior to the war, Drozdova and Robinson conclude that Putin's rhetoric aligns well with his 2013 description of himself as a "pragmatist with a conservative perspective" (810). They further point out that while Putin may come across as a nationalist and an authoritarian, his rhetoric suggests that he is more centrist and pragmatic. His vision for Russia, they say, is and has always been one where citizens should accept their "strong, centralized state" as completely compatible with the unique "freedom and democracy" it provides (813). Furthermore, they assert that Putin has consistently envisioned Russia as both European and Eurasian when it suits his pragmatic needs (817).

Despite this consistency in vision, Drozdova and Robinson agree that Putin's rhetoric has shifted to become more openly hostile toward the hegemony of the United States and its influence in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). If we are to accept Putin's pragmatism, this shift must be viewed as instrumental and, as the authors suggest, "should be taken seriously" (819). In terms of LREC principles, these authors also highlight the importance of history, geopolitics, and culture in fully understanding this shift as something that is more than just words but signals a policy that will be followed up with action.

Similarly, Akbaba points out that political discourse also provides an opportunity for a leader to identify themself with the state. Putin's centralization of power over the first few years of his presidency signals how he would use political discourse for a "personalization of politics" (Akbaba 46) in which the leader is equated with the state. Putin accomplishes this goal by moving from a political party–dominated system to a system that is leader-centered. This is accomplished according to Akbaba through visionary and charismatic leadership that must be communicated by a "good rhetorician" (47). In other words, as emphasized by Butler and Spivak (62), "speech acts uttered by a political leader function like the public performance of a national anthem." In this context, the leader is one with the state and the leader's speeches hold a similar sense of reverence as national symbols in a country.

Moreover, Filipescu also suggests that Putin's use of language to centralize and legitimize his influence on the state represents a synthetic personalization of politics. Synthetic personalization, as related to linguist Norman Fairclough, "identifies how aspects of language, which are regarded as commonsensical and normal, have ideological power" (Filipescu 1). Putin effected this synthetic personalization as a method of justifying irredentist actions in Ukraine by comparing the annexation of Crimea to the separation of Kosovo from Serbia (Filipescu 2). This creates a commonsense argument for Putin that allows him to attempt to control public opinion of his actions in the region. This is the type of synthetic personalization that Filipescu says "often appears neutral, but in fact hides ideological power" (442). In Crimea, Putin accomplishes the facade of neutrality by invoking Kosovo as a precedent and by identifying key areas of unity between Russia and Crimea (religious and military) to create solidarity with the consumers of the speech. Because the dialogue is one-sided, Putin controls the direction of the narrative (Filipescu 3). This masking of ideology within oversimplified interpretations of history has been an omnipresent characteristic of Putin's evolution as a leader in his speeches.

Shpadi echoes Filipescu's discussion of unity and nationalism. Although Drozdova and Robinson question the characterization of Putin as a nationalist (807–8), Shpadi analyzes four of Putin's key texts to explore to what extent Putin embodies four traditional types of nationalism: multicultural, religious, ethnocultural, and civic nationalism (10–15). From these texts, Shpadi infers that Putin exhibits more affinity with civic and ethnocultural nationalism than with religious and multicultural nationalism (31).

In a comparative study, Garifullina et al. compare the inaugural speeches of Putin and Trump to demonstrate how political speeches demonstrate their views of political development and national identity in their respective countries. The authors identify their unique subfield of linguistics as "political linguistics" (414) that emphasizes the worldview of the leaders from a political and cultural perspective, along with how they use political communication to promote their vision of political development. They also emphasize that this discourse tends to be place-specific, as "each country has its own language, history, and traditions" (414). In other words, to understand leaders' political discourse, it is essential to place them within the context of the region, understanding its history, culture, geography, and language.

According to Garifullina et al., the creation of a shared identity, an imagined community of sorts (Anderson 6–7), is also viewed as an essential part of political

linguistics (Garifullina et al. 417). In their study, the authors emphasize the importance of the pronouns "we" and "them" as a tool to promote the cohesion of a community of people. In a similar vein, they emphasize Putin's "appeal to the historical past" as a way of emphasizing a "continuity with the past" (417) and a method of uniting people into a coherent community of support. The leader's effort to unite with the population and create a shared community of belonging is essential to the leadership's legitimacy.

Similarly, Tchaparian compares speeches on the annexation of Crimea by Putin and U.S. President Barack Obama to demonstrate how each leader attempts to assert legitimacy and promote his worldview. Tchaparian emphasizes that language is more than communication but represents a tool to shape the world around us (31). Political communication is more than just a method of disseminating information; it is a method of influencing and carrying out geopolitical activities. Tchaparian utilizes the Aristotelian notions of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* to describe both leaders' explanations for Russia's annexation of Crimea. In terms of *ethos*, which promotes moral credibility as a means of persuasion, Putin invokes the protection of Russian citizens in Crimea, who were allegedly being deprived of their rights (Tchaparian 32). Comparatively, Tchaparian says, Obama promotes his moral credibility by asserting the illegality of war in his argument (33). In terms of *pathos*, which is the appeal to emotion as a tool of persuasion, Tchaparian asserts that Putin emphasizes the shared history of Ukraine and Russia, the ancient Rus', and how Russian soldiers are buried in Crimea (34). Obama, on the other hand, emphasizes that the Ukrainians should be able to follow their own path and not have to choose between Russia and the West (34). In terms of *logos*, the use of logic to make a persuasive argument, Obama operationalizes his logic by promoting the defense of Ukraine (37), while Putin promotes the defense of Russians (36). Both leaders seem to believe that Ukraine should determine its own destiny, although they disagree on which Ukrainians should determine that destiny (36). This analytical model aligns well with the LREC principles of explaining geopolitical events from the contextual viewpoints of discourse analysis, culture, and regional history.

LREC Framework for Discourse Analysis

Language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC) competencies must be contextually situated. Language is inherently related to its cultural context, which is inherently related to the region in which it is used and develops. In her edited

volume, Fetzer highlights the "interdisciplinary orientation of political discourse analysis" (2) by viewing it through the lens of pragmatics, the study of context and speech acts in all their multifaceted dimensions. In this regard, political discourse is mediated by linguistic, sociocultural, historical, ideological, and other tools to produce a communicative product geared specifically for its interlocutor (audience/recipients). This communicative product considers (and sometimes dictates) how meaning is negotiated by that interlocutor and how it is (or should be) acted upon.

In his seminal books, Searle discusses the concept of *speech acts* as ways we use language to do things or to get others to do things. In other words, speech acts are utterances intended to say something (*locutionary act*), shape the intended understanding (*illocutionary act*), and/or elicit uptake on the part of the interlocutor (*perlocutionary effect*) ("A Taxonomy" 344–69). An act of illocution involves a type of action intended by the communicative performance of the speaker whereas an act of perlocution involves the effect an illocutionary act has on the interlocutor. Attempting to improve on Searle's initial taxonomy, Bach and Harnish identify four broad types of communicative speech acts: *constatives* (speech that states, asserts, describes, confirms, disputes, or insists), *directives* (speech that orders, commands, requests, prohibits, or dares), *commissives* (speech that commits the speaker to, promises, threatens, or vows a course of action), and *acknowledgments* (speech that describes the mental state of the speaker, for example, thanks, apologizes, congratulates, or welcomes) (39–57). With these speech acts, the relationship between the spoken word and the context in which it is spoken and received becomes more visible. This paradigm is particularly helpful when analyzing the speeches of heads of state, such as Vladimir Putin.

Russian-Ukrainian Relations: Understanding the Historical Context

Before turning to the speeches, it might be helpful to review some of the most salient moments in Russian and Ukrainian history, a long and complex history that influences their current relationship. Most of the citizens and scholars of the region agree that the history of both countries can be traced to Kyivan Rus', a region spanning from the Black Sea northward to Lake Ladoga and present-day Sweden. In the ninth century, the region adopted Eastern Orthodoxy as the state religion of Kyivan Rus', which would set the stage for the later growth of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the twenty-first century, the geopolitical divide between Russia and Ukraine also influenced a growing rift between the

Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches, both of which were recognized as autonomous by the Ecumenical Patriarch of the Eastern Church, Bartholomew I of Constantinople. The Ukrainian Orthodox church formally cut ties with Moscow in May 2022 because of Russian military operations in Ukraine.

In addition to their shared religious history, the countries share a long and at times contentious political history. In 1932, as the Soviet Union began the process of collectivization, a mass famine broke out in Ukraine. Because some Ukrainian regions did not meet their agricultural quotas in 1932, the Soviet authorities introduced extremely repressive policies that subjected the citizens of these regions to harsh grain requisitions, confiscated property, and being forced to remain in regions with no food. The result was mass starvation and death in several regions of Ukraine. While most scholars agree that the famine was human-induced, the motivation behind the famine is widely debated. Some blame Stalin, believing he used the famine as a method of eliminating a potential independence movement (Engerman 894); others attribute the famine to collectivization and industrialization (Marples). Regardless of the cause, the *Holodomor* ("Great Famine") of 1932–1933 had a significant, negative impact on Russian-Ukrainian relations.

Shortly after the famine, Ukraine was overrun by the Germans in World War II. The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), an organization formed after World War I, rose up to help Ukraine gain independence from Poland and the USSR, using violence when necessary. During WWII, the OUN split and a revolutionary faction of the OUN (OUN-B) collaborated with the Nazis, and quickly after the German invasion of the USSR, the OUN-B proclaimed a Ukrainian State in Lviv. This attempt at statehood was crushed by the Nazis and allowed the more mainstream OUN (OUN-M) to gain control of civil administration in Nazi-occupied regions. The OUN-B went underground and conducted more resistance activities. These resistance forces became a formidable fighting force that continued engaging with the Soviets well into the 1950s. This conflict between the OUN and the USSR continues to affect Russian and Ukrainian relations and seems to have had a significant influence on Putin's call to "denazify" Ukraine.

After the collapse of the USSR, Ukraine became independent but found itself again at the geopolitical intersection of Europe and Russia. In late 2004, Ukrainians protested what they perceived as a fraudulent presidential election in what became known as the Orange Revolution. The Orange Revolution showed the world the fractured nature of Ukraine, with strong influences shared between Europe and

Russia. This conflict over geopolitical orientation continued into 2014 when again protests occurred in Ukraine as part of the Euromaidan clashes. This resulted in Russia taking a more active role in Ukraine through the annexation of Crimea and the escalation of the war in the Donbass.

In addition to the historical and religious ties, the two countries have a long history of shared conceptions of national homelands. In 1764, Russia declared the southern mainland region of modern Ukraine as *Novorossiya*, or New Russia. This territory continued to grow throughout the remainder of Catherine the Great's reign and only ceased to be a region with its incorporation into the USSR as part of the Ukrainian SSR in 1922.

Paralleling the establishment of *Novorossiya*, Crimea was also annexed by the Russian empire in the late eighteenth century (1783). The territory remained part of the Russian empire, until 1921 when it was incorporated into the USSR as part of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. In 1954, in an effort to promote unity between Russia and Ukraine and bolster Khrushchev's political support (Kramer), Crimea was transferred to Ukraine. This was seen as a largely symbolic gesture as it was an internal transfer between two Socialist Republics. However, in 1991, the symbolic gesture became more significant as Ukraine declared independence from the USSR.

The separation of Crimea from Moscow's jurisdiction created devolutionary pressure in Crimea throughout the 1990s and into the early twenty-first century. Finally, in 2014, in the aftermath of the Euromaidan protests, Crimea came under Russian control and was annexed into the Russian Federation after a disputed referendum in March 2014.

As with Crimea, the Donbass region also experienced devolutionary pressure during the post-Soviet era due to its historical and cultural connections to the Russian nation. After the annexation of Crimean, the Donetsk and Luhansk regions experienced protests by pro-Russian separatists that escalated into open conflict by April 2014. The open warfare continued until September 2014 when the first Minsk Agreement was signed by Russia, Ukraine, and the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. While the Minsk Agreement did little to slow the fighting over the next several years, it is often cited by all sides in the conflict to justify military action and accuse opponents of violations.

In Russia, it is also salient that since the early 2000s, the Russian government

has begun to systematically limit the freedom of Russia's press. In addition to taking direct control of most traditional media (TV: *Channel One*, *Rossiya*, *and NTV*; press: *ITAR-TASS*, *Ria Novosti*; and radio: *Radio Mayak*, *Radio Rossiya*), the Kremlin has also implemented an internet surveillance program and strong legislation curtailing journalistic freedom and expression online (Ognyanova 62). The Kremlin has also encouraged a culture of distrust of the internet and any content or organization it deems "immoral" or "extremist" (Freedom House). According to legislation in 2006, 2009, and 2012, the label of "foreign agent" must be applied to all nongovernmental organizations, domestic or international, that engage in "political activity" (real or perceived) or receive funding from foreign sources. These organizations must submit to oppressive government oversight (Freedom House). As a result, the Kremlin has established itself as the morality watchdog and a primary source of information for Russian citizens.

LREC Assessment of Putin's Political Discourse

With these historical moments in mind, Putin's road to war can be tracked through an evolution of his geopolitical thinking as seen in seven of his influential speeches since 1999. In these speeches, Putin develops his skills as a master rhetorician and sets himself up as Russia's ideological leader through the use of language that contextualizes his historical interpretations and his cultural vision for Russia. Table 9.1 gives a brief overview of these seven speeches with an important distinction of those given prior to the annexation of Crimea and those given after the annexation.

Table 9.1

Putin's Seven Speeches

	Date/Audience of Speech	Synopsis
Prior to the Annexation of Crimea	**December 31, 1999** (published in Nezavisimaya Gazeta)	• Russia's outlook on the twentieth century • Focuses on the need for a strong government, social unity around traditional Russian values, and an efficient economy
	July 8, 2000 (Address to the Federal Assembly)	• Suggests pragmatic solutions to Russia's problems • Focuses on socioeconomic reforms, consolidating power in the central government, and promoting national unity
	February 10, 2007 (at Munich Security Conference)	• Begins to criticize the West for creating a "unipolar" world and for "a "general disdain for international law" • Begins to separate Russia's geopolitical interests from the West • Signals the beginning of Putin's adversarial relationship with NATO

Table 9.1 (continued)

	Date/Audience of Speech	Synopsis
After the Annexation of Crimea	**March 8, 2014** (Address to the Federal Assembly)	• Lays out his historical justifications for annexing Crimea • Ties Crimean national identity to that of Russia • Directs the Federal Assembly to formalize the annexation
	October 24, 2014 (Address to Valdai Discussion Club)	• Further criticizes the West for developing a "unipolar" world order by vilifying Russia and ignoring international law • Further refines his cultural-historical justifications for annexing Crimea and intervening in the Donbass
	September 28, 2015 (Address to the UN General Assembly)	• Further quotes history to justify his criticism of the West and NATO • Begins labeling Ukrainian leadership as "neo-Nazis" guilty of "genocide" in the Donbass • Further claims the NATO principle of "state sovereignty" allows Crimea and the Donbass to join Russia
	February 21, 2022 (Address to the Russian people)	• Blames early Soviet leaders for separating Ukraine from Russia • Blames the West for pushing Ukraine toward NATO and causing the current rift between Ukraine and Russia • Claims his "special military operation" in Ukraine is to "denazify" Ukraine and protect Russians from "genocide"

As a leader, Vladimir Putin often demonstrates his ideological power through the speech acts he performs in his speeches. He does this through the use of constatives (primarily statements, assertives, and, especially in his post-annexation speeches, allegations) with less of a focus on directives, acknowledgments, and commissives (see Tables 9.2 and 9.3). Speech act analysis was carried out using the original Russian-language texts from the official Kremlin website (kremlin.ru). The speeches were consolidated into two corpora as described above. The speech acts in each corpus were manually annotated using the Computer Assisted Text Markup and Analysis tool (Gius et al.). See Appendix 9.1 for a sample screenshot of these annotations.

Table 9.2

Speech Act Analysis of Three of Putin's Speeches Prior to the Annexation of Crimea

Category	Speech Acts	N	%
Constatives (*n* = 305)	Stating	152	41%
	Alleging	7	2%
	Disputing	0	0%
	Asserting	146	40%
Commissives (*n* = 38)	Committing	38	10%
Directives (*n* = 15)	Declaring	8	2%
	Directing	7	2%
Acknowledgments (*n* = 9)	Thanking	9	3%
	Warning	0	0%
	Total Utterances	367	

Table 9.3

Speech Act Analysis of Four of Putin's Speeches After the Annexation of Crimea

Category	Speech Acts	N	%
Constatives (*n* = 446)	Stating	98	21%
	Alleging	57	12%
	Disputing	9	1.9%
	Asserting	282	60%
Commissives (*n* = 8)	Committing	8	1.7%
Directives (*n* = 7)	Declaring	5	1%
	Directing	2	0.4%
Acknowledgments (*n* = 10)	Thanking	7	1.4%
	Warning	3	0.6%
	Total Utterances	471	

Of interest here is the difference between the number of statements, assertions, allegations, and commissives. A chi-square test showed that this difference is statistically significant (see Table 9.4).

Table 9.4

Chi-Square Analysis of Putin's Statements, Allegations, Assertions, and Commissives

Speech Acts	Chi-Squared (x^2)	df	p-value	Observed Frequencies	
				Pre-Annexation (out of 367 total speech acts)	Post-Annexation (out of 471 total speech acts)
Statements	40.88	1	p < .001	152	98
Assertions	32.52	1	p < .001	146	282
Allegations	28.96	1	p < .001	7	57
Commissives	28.14	1	p < .001	38	8

These data suggest that Putin's speeches exhibit a shift in his rhetorical strategy in conjunction with his changing pragmatic needs in Ukraine. Prior to annexation, Putin uses significantly more statements and commissives. Following the annexation, as his rhetoric becomes more pointed, he tends to use more assertives and allegations.

Although assertives, allegations, and statements fall into Bach and Harnish's category of constatives, one possible inference from these data suggests that Putin's assertives and allegations involve a stronger illocutionary force than do his statements and commissives. For example, in contrast to his statements, Putin's assertives are often marked in ways that emphasize his conviction. This can be seen in phrases like надо признать ("one must admit"), надо отметить ("one must note"), думаю ("I think"), считаю ("I consider"), and не ошибусь/не ошибаюсь ("If I'm not mistaken") to emphasize his assertions. Other emphasis markers include words like неужели ("Surely . . . not") and the word вот . . . ("Here/This . . .") as in вот почему . . . ("This is why . . ."). Putin's use of allegations also increased significantly in his latter four speeches leading up to the invasion of Ukraine. Thematically, Putin's allegations were directed toward the United States, NATO expansion in Western Europe, former Russian leaders, and Ukraine. Additionally, Putin's allegations go beyond mere speculation (less illocutionary force) and imply more of a formal accusation (more illocutionary force). This rhetorical shift to the use of speech acts with stronger illocutionary

force (assertives and allegations) seems to accompany the thematic shift noted by Drozdova and Robinson as well as March.

To further analyze specific language use in Putin's speeches, a complete textual corpus of all seven speeches mentioned in Table 9.1 was compiled and analyzed using the linguistic corpus analysis program Sketch Engine, chosen for its multilingual concordance capability. The corpus was made up of 42,236 words, 2,917 sentences, and 838 utterances. Analysis of this corpus finds several interesting points. First, President Putin often encourages an "us versus them" mindset in his audience by using the pronouns "we" (мы, either directly or as the first-person plural inflected verb form) or "us" numerous times when representing his (and Russia's) perspective. The "we" or "us" pronoun was counted over 660 times throughout the corpus. Putin's intended illocutionary effect of this usage seems to be a simulated unity of purpose and patriotism. As mentioned above, corpus analysis showed that Putin used first-person utterances such as "I consider," "I think," "I suggest" or "I want (to say, to underline, to repeat, to share)" over 85 times in this corpus. Lastly of note here is Putin's use of interrogatives (rhetorical and non-rhetorical questions), which he used 215 times in the corpus. While most of these questions are used procedurally (non-rhetorical questions, more similar to statements), allowing Putin to provide the answer, a handful (n = 9) of rhetorical questions (those with more illocutionary force, implying a spoken or unspoken assertion) were also observed.

Putin's Cultural-Historical Perspective

On the eve of the new millennium, December 30, 1999, Putin's first essay to the Russian people was published in *Izvestia*, one of Russia's main national newspapers. In what has been called his "Millenium Manifesto," Putin makes clear that he intends to look at Russia's past and present through a cultural-historical lens: "The answer to these questions, equal to that of our very future, is inextricably connected with the lessons we pull from our past and present." While the intention behind this statement seems very pragmatic considering the numerous problems Russia faced at the dawn of the millennium, in hindsight, it seems clear that the intended illocutionary effect of this utterance was to set this cultural-historical perspective as a template for future speeches.

In his speech from February 2007 at the Munich Security Conference, Putin applies this cultural-historical template again when discussing the problems of a "unipolar" world in the following assertive utterance:

> Incidentally, Russia—we—are constantly being taught about democracy. But for some reason those who teach us do not want to learn themselves. . . . I consider that the unipolar model is not only unacceptable but also impossible in today's world.

A similar utterance asserting a Russia-centric interpretation of history is also made later in the same speech:

> I think it is obvious that NATO expansion does not have any relation . . . with ensuring security in Europe. On the contrary, it represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust. And we have the right to ask: against whom is this expansion intended? And what happened to the assurances our western partners made after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact?

Putin's opinion of NATO is not something new. It is just the latest manifestation of long-held geopolitical beliefs by Russian leaders. First, Russians, going back to the time of Kyivan Rus', were always wary of neighbors. Russia has a long history of invasions and attempted encirclements. Putin refers to this several times. Starting with his speech in Munich in 2007 ("Munich Conference"), Putin publicly labels NATO as a threat to Russian security. He further discusses the theme of threats to Russia through the 2014 Crimean campaign and his subsequent speech at the Valdai meeting ("Valdai Discussion Club") Additionally, most of his speech on February 24, 2022, announcing his "special military operation" couches the conflict in Ukraine in the wider context of NATO expansion ("Address," February 24, 2022). These statements define a significant aspect of Russia's large-scale geopolitical vision.

Beginning in his speech from March 2014 shortly following the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine and Russia's annexation of Crimea, Putin begins to weaponize his cultural-historical perspective to justify Russia's geopolitical aggression. In the case of Ukraine, in his speech announcing the annexation of Crimea, he states, "Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride" ("Valdai Discussion Club"). However, Putin's goal does not represent a simple yearning to reestablish the Soviet Union or its position as a world power. Instead, Putin reaches further back into Russia's history. At the beginning of this speech, Putin refers to the baptism of Prince Vladimir (988 CE) and the "graves of Russian soldiers who valiantly captured Crimea" in 1783. Again, Putin's selective historical memory in this excerpt seems to exhibit the illocutionary effect of encouraging his audience to adopt his perspective. Following this historical overview, Putin moves on to discuss the main justification of Russia's actions in Crimea, the plea for help issued from the Russian-language population. Here, Putin asserts, "Naturally, we could

not leave this plea unheeded; we could not abandon Crimea and its residents in distress. This would have been betrayal on our part." In addition to again unifying his audience with the use of the "we" pronoun, Putin's desired illocutionary effect seems to be that his audience accept this assertion as an authoritative justification for and interpretation of Russia's actions.

Later in this same speech, Putin further asserts: "However, what do we hear from our colleagues in Western Europe and North America? They say we are violating norms of international law. Firstly, it's a good thing that they at least remember that there exists such a thing as international law—better late than never." Here, Putin's desired illocutionary effect is not only to unify his audience to accept his interpretation of the facts but also to reject those of the West. As with the "we" or "us" pronouns in his speeches, corpus analysis showed Putin referred to the "West," the "United States," or "Europe" in opposition to the "we" of Russia over 110 times.

In his October 2014 speech to the Russian Valdai think tank, Putin continues his campaign against the West and its influence: "As we analyze today's situation, let us not forget history's lessons. . . . The very notion of 'national sovereignty' has become a relative value for most countries. In essence, what was being proposed was the formula: the greater the loyalty towards the world's sole power center, the greater this or that ruling regime's legitimacy." With the phrase "the world's sole power center," Putin is clearly referring to the United States, which he mentions 27 times throughout the speech. The illocutionary effect of this portion of the speech is clearly to promote Russia's anti-U.S. position. Later in the speech, however, Putin changes his focus to Russia's continuing intervention in Ukraine. He does this by likening the Crimean referendum to an act of self-determination and by likening Russia's intervention to NATO's intervention in the Kosovo War: "I don't understand why the people living in Crimea don't have that right just like the people living, say, in Kosovo. . . . Why in one case is white considered white but in a second one white is announced to be black?" This analogy is further evidence of Putin's attempt to weaponize history to justify Russia's actions in the minds of his audience.

In 2015 at the seventieth annual meeting of the United Nations, Putin further promotes his cultural-historical perspective in terms of issues relevant to the General Assembly. He signals his adherence to the tried-and-true template with the phrase "It would be good for all of us to consider our experiences of the past," after which he begins a lengthy denouncement of the historical failures of the world's

"exportation of 'democratic' revolutions" including a Russia-centric assertion that NATO expansion following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was ill-advised and is why Russia needed to intervene in the conflict between Kiev and the separatist Donbass regions ("70th Session"):

> We are convinced that the only way out of this dead end lies through comprehensive and diligent implementation of the Minsk Agreements of February 12th, 2015. Ukraine's territorial integrity . . . must be secured. The people of Donbass should have their rights and interests genuinely considered, and their choice respected.

The illocutionary effect of including the Donbass conflict in this list of historical failures on the part of Western countries seems to be to further justify his intervention in Ukraine in light of Ukraine's failure to adhere to the Minsk Agreements.

In his post-annexation speeches, Putin's use of more assertives and allegations seems to align well with the aforementioned "pragmatic shift" (Drozdova and Robinson) of a head of state needing to influence the perceptions of both his domestic and global audiences. As head of the Russian state, Putin also embraces his role as a primary source of orthodox information and historical interpretation. Putin's use of assertive allegations is also stronger because of his strongman leadership style. This is in contrast, for example, to speeches by Donald Trump, who also used many assertives in his speeches but whose allegations carry less illocutionary force due to America's confrontational media environment (Ashfira and Harjanto 29–36). Barack Obama also leaned heavily on assertives to be persuasive but included more commissives and acknowledgments than Putin and Trump did (Altikriti 61–63).

Furthermore, according to Putin in his post-annexation speeches, Ukraine has no historical precedent as a country. In 2021, Putin published a long essay (not included in the above analysis) on "The Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians." In this article, he refers to Russia and Ukraine as sharing "the same historical and spiritual space" (1), bound together by one language, one political system, and one religion (2). He goes on to reference the old, historical meaning of Ukraine as the "periphery" (4), attempting to demonstrate that Ukraine is at the frontier of the Russian realm. This aligns with the corpus analysis, which shows that Putin used the phrase на украине (literally "on Ukraine") 41 times as compared to the phrase preferred by many Russian-speaking Ukrainians, в украине (literally "in Ukraine"). The use of the preposition "on" in Russian instead of "in" reflects the understanding of the Slavic root of the word "Ukraine" meaning "along the edge" (у края). Many Russian-speaking Ukrainians prefer to use the preposition "in" because it is the most commonly used preposition with independent nations (e.g.,

в японии, в германии—"in Japan," "in Germany"), a truth disputed by Putin in both his rhetoric and his grammar.

LREC Considerations in Putin's Road to War

With all of the above arguments made, Putin's road to war is now complete, which leads us to his first speech at the beginning of his "special military operation" in Ukraine ("Address," February 21, 2022). In this speech, Putin's weaponization of history is replete with imagery from both the Soviet past and the Russian Orthodox religion. He begins with his signature template: "Once more I underline that Ukraine for us is not simply a neighboring country. It is an inextricable part of our own history, culture, and spiritual space." By now, the Russian audience is aware that a historical overview is to follow. Putin continues: "I will start with the fact that Ukraine as a whole was completely created by Russia, to be more exact, by Bolshevik, Communist Russia." While the perlocutionary effect of such Soviet imagery might be seen as Putin's desire to glorify the Soviet Union, on the contrary, his intent was to condemn (and thereby weaponize) specific moments in Soviet history. This includes Lenin's appeasement of the Russian nationalists in the Soviet republics after the civil war and the growing corruption of the "regional elites," which in his interpretation has led to the neo-Nazi nationalists, who, he claims, have taken root in Kiev and now threaten the Russian-language population in the Donbass, a region, he asserts, that Lenin arbitrarily (and wrongly) "squeezed into the makeup of Ukraine." Along with this assault on the Leninist mistakes of distant history, Putin also condemns aspects of modern Ukrainian culture, orthodoxy, and language and again the historical actions of NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the United States.

In this same speech, Putin continues this line of thinking, announcing the political recognition of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions. Once again, he repeats his claim that Ukraine never had a tradition of genuine statehood: "From the very first steps they (Ukraine) began to build their statehood on the denial of everything that unites us. They tried to distort the consciousness, the historical memory of millions of people, entire generations living in Ukraine." To him, there is one history that is shared between Russia and Ukraine; they are one cultural region, and Ukraine is trying to destroy this unity.

This argument is furthered when considering religion, another critical cultural influence on Putin's road to war, one that is intimately tied to Russian cultural and national identity. The origins of the Russian Orthodox Church are tied to the

conversion of Vladimir and Kyivan Rus'. However, over time, the Russian Orthodox Church moved away from the rest of Eastern Orthodoxy. This left Ukraine in the middle of the conflict between Moscow and Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul). Since 1991, Ukraine has moved toward an independent church, and in 2018, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church was established. The move was supported by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew, while Kirill, the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church declared the new church as "illegitimate" (Elie). This argument over the Ukrainian Orthodox Church fits into Putin's vision of history in which modern Ukraine is attempting to destroy the historical connection between Russia and Ukraine. While the validity of the argument can be debated, the influence on Putin cannot. This historical and religious connection is at the core of his cultural vision of the region.

In addition to history and religion, language is also a key element of identity for Putin in his vision of the cultural identity of the region. In 2014, Mankoff identified many explanations for Putin's 2014 Russian military operations in Crimea and the Donbass to include defending the Russian-speaking population in the Donbass. Putin would go on to refer to Ukrainian actions in the Donbass as "genocide" ("Address," February 24, 2022). In all these comments, "Russian speakers" are the common source of identity. Putin, like several before him, builds a category of cultural identity based on language use (Laitin and Watkins 24–29; Cheskin and Kachuyevski 1–23).

It seems clear that the desired illocutionary effect of Putin's speeches is to reinterpret history to justify Russia's geopolitical vision. This shared cultural identity is a key aspect of Putin's justification for the 2022 invasion and his belief that the operation would be quick and easy. While Putin focuses primarily on the commonalities that he believed united Russians and Ukrainians into one cultural identity, he also does his best to villainize the growing Ukrainian cultural and national identity by labeling them as neo-Nazi. By doing so, he underestimated these sentiments that have led to a stronger than expected resistance to Russia's aggression.

Finally, it seems relevant to also include three quotes from the latest amendments to the Russian Constitution, announced by Putin in 2020, which clearly serve as illocutionary acts intended to unite the Russian people behind Putin's cultural-historical perspective. First is paragraph two from Article 67: "The Russian Federation, united by a thousand years of history, preserving the memory of ancestors who handed us ideals and faith in God, . . . recognizes the historically established state unity." Next is paragraph three from the same article: "The Russian

Federation respects the memory of the defenders of the Fatherland and protects the historical truth." And last is the new culture-oriented wording of the Language Law (Article 68): "The Russian language shall be a state language on the whole territory of the Russian Federation as . . . part of the multinational union of equal peoples of the Russian Federation." The article goes on to say, "Culture in the Russian Federation is the unique heritage of its multinational people. Culture is supported and protected by the State." Of interest in these excerpts is the illocutionary force inherent in the imagery invoked. Not only does this imagery mirror the cultural-historical perspective in his speeches but it is imagery that is highly "community-recognisable" (Sadowski 730). This is imagery of the Soviet past that imagines the unified geopolitical bloc of "the Fatherland." It seems clear that the desired illocutionary effect of these amendments is quite possibly to justify future acts of Russia to restore the former land of the Rus' in its entirety.

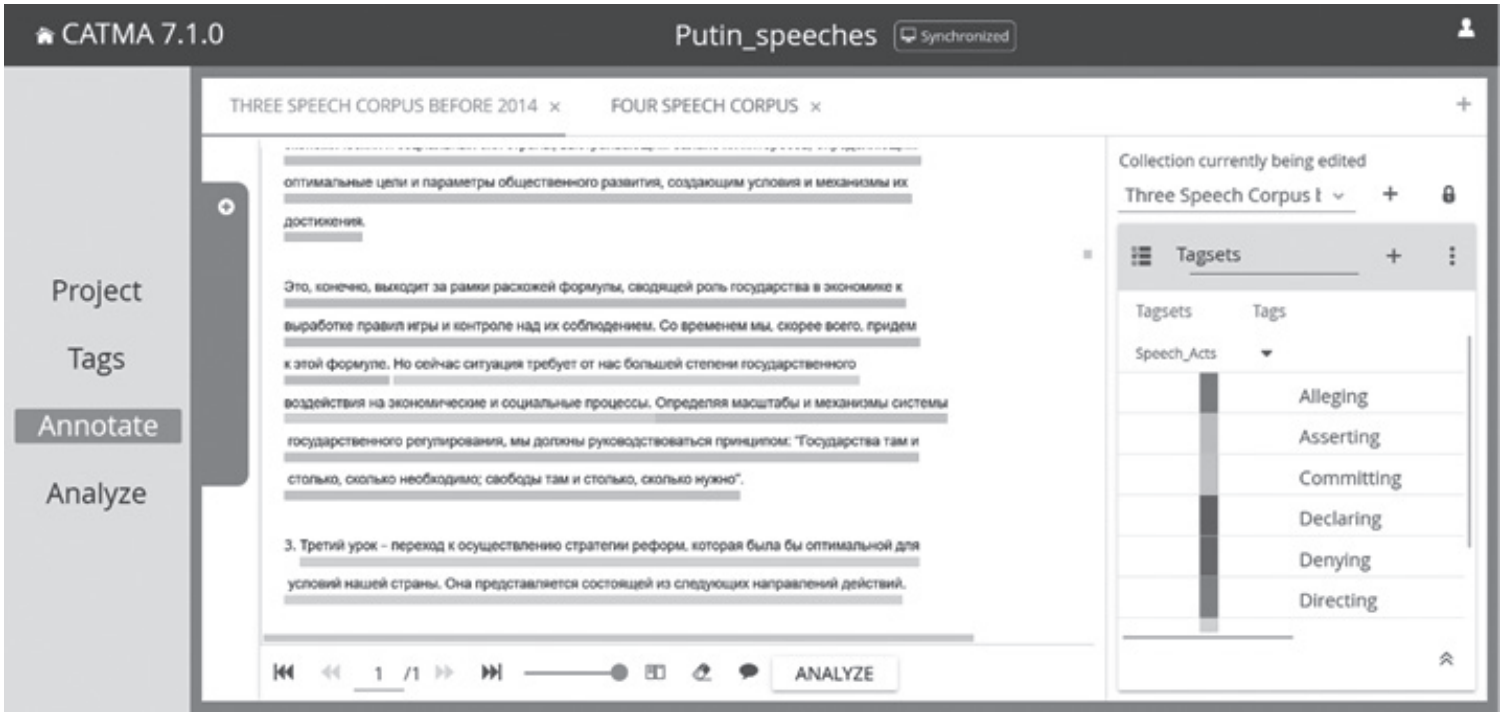
Conclusion

In conclusion, Putin's speeches demonstrate his desire to use political communication to evoke a response from his audience. Putin's selection of specific words and themes is not a haphazard process but strongly informed by several critical LREC themes that influence his geopolitical vision of Eastern Europe. Putin's motivations are not new; they are part of a long history of Russian national, geographical, and geopolitical themes, going back to the beginning of Rus'. These underlying LREC themes are not only significant in his efforts to convince audiences of the validity of his actions but have also influenced his belief that the "special military operation" would be completed quickly and with minimal effort, which demonstrates a misunderstanding of the evolution of national identity in modern Ukraine. This, along with many operational miscalculations, has been a major influence on the failure of Russia's initial military plans in Ukraine.

Understanding LREC concepts in a region is an important tool to understand political discourse. Speeches provide a strong sense of political motives and aspirations. Often, these motives and aspirations are motivated by LREC considerations that are grounded in a specific geopolitical vision in a region. Understanding how a leader views national territory, national identity, the link between language and culture, and geopolitics provides a context for the motives of a country's decision-making. The road to war is rarely a haphazard process. While the results may not be as expected, there is a rationality to the process. This rationality is often strongly informed by LREC components.

Appendix 9.1

Sample Screenshot of Annotation Work in CATMA 7.1.0



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CHAPTER 10

Bridging the Gap Between General Ability and Discrete Skills to Fully Leverage Foreign Area Officer Language Capabilities

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Abstract

One problem inhibiting U.S. military Foreign Area Officers (FAO) from leveraging their foreign language skills is the gap between general language ability and specific target language skills unique to a particular job. DOD policy emphasizes the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) and Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), both of which measure general proficiency in a target language to a professional level. The language instruction for these tests, however, does not always prepare service members for the specific skills that different jobs or billets require. DOD policy for language-coded billets must leverage foreign language capability toward mission accomplishment to improve the link between skills and their strategic impact at both institutional and individual levels. This chapter reviews academic scholarship on second language acquisition (SLA) to discern ways to bridge this gap. It considers best practices for self-directed language learning and language needs analysis at institutional and individual levels to help units identify what core target language skills are required for each billet and to help FAOs tailor their individual self-directed training beyond DLPT and OPI preparation to best leverage their language training to accomplish the mission. Based on the literature review, this chapter recommends further policy action and academic research, while also offering practical advice to the individual FAO.

KEYWORDS: Defense Language Proficiency Test, Oral Proficiency Interview, second language acquisition, language needs analysis, self-directed language learning, DOD LREC policy, target language skills

Introduction

Foreign language training and skills have long been a hallmark of U.S. military Foreign Area Officers (FAOs) across all armed services ("Air Force Foreign Area Officer," "USMC Foreign Area Officer," "U.S. Navy Foreign Area Officer," and Department of the Army). However, in academia, declining enrollment and emerging technology pressure foreign language programs and cause administrators to question the relevance of their language education programs (Holman 2). Within the FAO profession, some officers posit that foreign language capability is less important than security cooperation skill or global strategic acumen as a core competency (Dominguez and Kertis 93; Bump). Dominguez and Kertis assert the Army should prioritize leadership in complex joint and interagency settings and security cooperation "as FAO core competencies over the enabling skills" of foreign language and cross-cultural communication (Dominguez and Kertis 93). Moreover, growing constraints on time and money along with senior leader desires for FAOs to emphasize skills in strategy and planning will further pressure FAO language programs. These critiques seek to optimize resources and improve how FAOs advance U.S. interests abroad. However, taken too far, these plans could leave the DOD without effective cross-cultural communicators when they are needed. This chapter argues that improving DOD policy for language-coded billets will help FAOs leverage foreign language capability for more relevance and real-world efficacy. This means better understanding the link between foreign language skills and their strategic impact at both institutional and individual levels.

One problem inhibiting FAOs from leveraging language skills is the gap between general language ability and specific target language skills unique to a particular billet. Current Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) policy stipulates that Military Departments must "maintain a foreign area officer (FAO) corps . . . with the goal of attaining Interagency Roundtable Level (IRL) 3 in listening, reading, and speaking modalities" (Department of Defense). This policy emphasizes the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) and Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), both of which measure general proficiency in a target language to a professional level. These policies ensure general linguistic preparedness in the specified language, but do not prepare service members for the specific skills different billets require. For example, a FAO serving as country desk officer on a major staff may need to be highly skilled at orally arranging logistics and meeting agendas in a foreign language, while a FAO serving as an intelligence analyst may need to comprehend target language military planning information. Currently,

FAO billets do not list the specific target language skills associated with them, although services have offered some specificity related to desired language ability. For example, the Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) for FAOs states that FAO language proficiency should enable "deeper understanding of foreign government national will, capabilities (including military), operational plans, and requirements" (Department of the Army). Moreover, it is the individual duty of the FAO to maintain and enhance language proficiency, and all FAOs "are encouraged to use their language daily in order to maintain proficiency" (Department of the Army). In summary, DOD LREC policy, as implemented by the services, stresses and incentivizes general language ability but lacks helpful guidance to FAOs on the specific tasks they need in their roles, especially since they are often solely responsible for directing their own language sustainment.

Academic research can help the DOD and the services address this problem. To that end, this chapter reviews academic literature on second language acquisition scholarship to discern ways to bridge this gap. It considers best practices for self-directed language learning and language needs analysis at the institutional and individual level both to help units identify what core target language skills are required for each billet and to help FAOs tailor their individual training beyond DLPT and OPI preparation to best leverage their language training to accomplish their missions. The chapter also looks at related DOD policy and language curricular efforts for FAOs to discern what is already being done in this area.

Based on the following literature review, two complementary recommendations can bridge the gap between general language preparedness and discrete skills. First, at the institutional level for top-down changes, the Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) (USD P&R) should commission a *needs analysis* for joint FAOs to inform FAO-focused foreign *language for specific purposes* (LSP) curricula and policy, taking as baseline the results of the CJCSI 3126.01C-directed capabilities-based identification process. Short of a full language needs analysis, USD P&R could require military departments to identify specific target language skills for language-coded billets. USD P&R should offer grants to study the intersection of *learner autonomy* and *language for specific purposes* in a military context to improve best practices in this area. For its part, the Joint Staff should ensure the services, Combatant Commands (CCMD), and Defense Agencies have the results identified by the CJCSI-directed LREC capabilities identification process, to include making the results available for individual FAOs. These results can help services guide FAOs on continuing language study during in-region

training (IRT) or graduate school. Second, at the individual level for bottom-up changes, FAOs must learn how to conduct their own *language needs analysis* to enhance their self-development and prepare for specific jobs beyond the DLPT and OPI. FAOs must develop *learner autonomy* strategies such as meta-learning to improve self-directed study—especially when interacting with individual language tutors. FAOs can also foster an identity as *bilingual military professionals* who work daily to sustain their language abilities. Along with this, FAOs should consider the tension between training for the DLPT and preparing the specific skills that will enhance their ability to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of their present job. This means a FAO might accept a lower DLPT score to enhance a discrete skill. Taken together, these top-down and bottom-up measures can help FAOs leverage LREC skills to strategic effect.

Literature Review

The academic field of second language acquisition (SLA) ranges widely over every aspect of how people learn a second language. Considered part of applied linguistics, the field integrates perspectives from neuroscience and cognitive science, linguistics, cultural studies, sociology, pedagogy, and education. The scope of this literature review centers on those elements of SLA most relevant to military members who must maintain a working proficiency in a foreign language, and largely on their own in self-directed capacity, such as FAOs or service members in Special Operations Forces. In the professional military context, foreign language use is an individual skill that enables mission accomplishment; each service member must maintain basic general language proficiency, but the military unit must identify the language-related skills that help the unit do its job. As a result, this literature review accounts for both individual and institutional perspectives. The review will first sketch broad theories underlying SLA and consider bilingual identity before turning to specific SLA fields directly related to military foreign language requirements. These relevant fields include the following: language for specific purposes, needs analysis, and autonomous learning. The literature review will then survey pragmatic views of SLA that are outside traditional academic circles but no less earnest and disciplined in their approach. These practical approaches stem from self-taught enthusiasts that may or may not participate in formal language learning pedagogy, but their insights nonetheless have value for military professionals seeking to define how they can contribute their unique experience learning a foreign language to mission requirements on the job. The review concludes with a look at relevant DOD and service policies that address the identified gap.

SLA Theory and Bilingual Identity

Two broad theories underpin how people acquire the ability to use a second, non-native language. The cognitive approach emphasizes the mental processes occurring within the learner's mind—the ability to process, memorize, and reproduce the language accurately. In contrast, the social approach emphasizes the inherently interpersonal and cultural nature of language and the context within which a particular language is used and develops. This method stresses the identity of the language learner and what drives the learner's choices and needs to use the new language (Lafford 738). As summarized by Barbara Lafford, in 1997 the scholars Firth and Wagner argued that SLA overemphasized the cognitive approach and advocated SLA scholarship better integrate the sociocultural context (Lafford 736). This broad distinction between the cognitive and social is important for military professionals approaching foreign language learning with a "mission-focused" mindset. Given that their duties occur mainly in a military unit rather than a target language community, military professionals tend to approach second language learning from an outsider perspective, thereby gravitating toward a cognitive emphasis in their learning because they do not habitually participate in communities using the desired language. Devising ways to regularly converse and relate to people who speak the target language in a learning or natural lifestyle context rather than a mission-focused environment is a challenge for military professionals seeking to adopt a more sociocultural approach. Some insight into bridging this gap comes from the work of François Grosjean, an established expert on bilingualism. His work spans decades and is born of both professional expertise and personal experience as a bilingual.

Grosjean's core insight for military professionals learning or maintaining a foreign language is to embrace a *bilingual identity*, even if one does not come from the cultural background of the second language. For Grosjean, bilinguals are simply "those who use two or more languages in their everyday lives," emphasizing "regular language use" over fluency (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 4). This definition counters conventional thinking that a bilingual must be at the same cultural and social level of two or more distinct linguistic communities—a view he calls "two monolinguals in one person" (Grosjean, *A Journey* 111). This monolinguistic view stresses that so-called "real" bilinguals are equally and fully proficient in two (or more) languages, which often causes bilinguals to criticize and downplay their own second language competence. A monolinguistic view also mistakenly asserts that bilinguals "are born translators" (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 36). Instead, Grosjean observes that the great majority of bilinguals have distinct needs in their

respective language use: "Bilinguals usually acquire and use their languages for different purposes, in different domains in life, with different people." (Grosjean, *Bilingual* 29; Grosjean, *A Journey* 112). Military foreign language learners will never escape monolinguistic norms over their foreign language journey (e.g., the interagency language roundtable scale and DLPT). But embracing a practical bilingual identity per Grosjean can lead FAOs to deliberately consider the context and tasks for which they must use their assigned language. They can jettison the conventional ideal of what is considered target language fluency and social acceptance by that language's community, which for most individuals is so unrealistic that it dampens motivation. FAOs who adopt a vision of the self as a *bilingual military professional* will help them deduce key tasks in the target language that enable mission accomplishment and take daily effort to practice these. Taken together, the two broad theories of SLA along with Grosjean's insight into bilingual identity provide a philosophical context for the following review of more academic and empirical components of SLA. Moreover, Grosjean's insight that bilinguals use different languages for discrete reasons is the premise for language for specific purposes, a subset of SLA.

Language for Specific Purposes (LSP)

LSP promises utility for autonomous learning military professionals, but the focus this field holds on classroom instruction and pedagogy limits its applicability once service members move on from the schoolhouse. LSP is foreign language instruction and teaching on specific target language uses based on an identified set of specialized needs. The needs of learners—often professionals—drive the curriculum rather than educational theory or general language needs (Trace et al. 2). An overview of LSP at the United States Military Academy at West Point found that embedding LSP instruction into foreign language curriculum motivated students to learn the language by integrating post-graduation language use cases (military related) and involving students in shaping language learning activities (Miller et al. 231). The same study found similar conclusions regarding LSP programs at the U.S. Air Force Academy and the Army of Spain (Miller et al. 223). As a relatively nascent field, LSP is presently an approach to curriculum development by teachers for teachers. It can certainly help in the institutional environment but offers little to language professionals "in the field." At the heart of LSP is needs analysis: the curriculum must reflect the "needs of the learners, the community, the language program itself, the university, international trends, or any number of factors or combination thereof" (Trace et al. 7). Complementary to LSP, the area of needs analysis provides the foundation upon which any solid LSP programs rests.

Needs Analysis (NA)

NA[1] is an important process within SLA for curriculum and course design. Emerging from a perceived need for SLA educational programs to be relevant, NA helps educators reconcile uniquely specific language learning requirements found across diverse populations with appropriate pedagogical course design and instruction (Long, "Overview: A Rationale" 1–2; Long, "Methodological Issues" 19). NA can also inform policy. A survey of NA in a military context found it "provided an essential foundation for language policy in the U.S. military" (Lett 122). Methodology is crucial to achieve a useful NA. An effective NA centers on language tasks as the primary unit of analysis (Long, "Methodological Issues" 22). "Tasks" represent the various activities learners want to or must do with the target language, which often correspond to classroom activities (van Avermaet and Gysen 144). Also, tasks are compatible with both cognitive and sociocultural language learning approaches identified previously (Serafini and Torres 448). Compiling the right tasks to inform effective SLA curriculum or policy is complex. As a result, NA methodology must pay attention to the sources for tasks, which include language learners themselves, domain experts, curricula writers, and SLA educators, along with amassing a variety of source products (e.g., target language media or literature). Given the diversity of sources, skill in research methodology in gathering tasks is crucial to avoid skewed or inaccurate results (Long, "Methodological Issues" 62–64). For example, Lett found that some DOD NAs were marred by poor methodology, such as taking task samples of convenience (Lett 123). Long's and Lett's emphasis on methodology illustrates the importance NA has for curriculum development at the institutional level—which is why learners typically cannot do their own NA. As a result, the field of NA is mainly relevant to the institutional level. Even so, DOD must complete adequate NA not just to shape policy and curricula, but to directly inform the FAO corps. FAO branch managers or service proponents should both participate in NA and publish the results to their FAO populations because the NA informs them what skills and vocabulary to prioritize when maintaining a second language. A new DOD-led NA for FAOs will also reveal how advanced language technologies using artificial intelligence are changing how FAOs use their foreign language skills in the field. Additionally, individual FAOs can use these NA results to shape their own self-directed learning.

Learner Autonomy or Self-Directed Learning

Learner autonomy in SLA emphasizes the task of helping students acquire the skillset of learning a second language on their own. It places this on equal footing

with teaching the language (see Little et al., Leaver, Wenden, and Pawlak et al.). According to Little, language learner autonomy arose in Europe from a desire to make language learning "more democratic." Henri Holec saw the need to move from "directed teaching" to "self-directed learning" (Little et al. 4). Experts in the field discuss two core autonomous learning strategies: cognitive and self-management (or metacognitive). In essence, cognitive strategy is how the learner approaches memorizing and retrieving desired material, while self-management strategy—no less important—is how learners plan, monitor, and evaluate their progress toward their learning goals (Wenden 29–31). One pedagogical approach has teachers and learners cooperating to plan language learning, executing the plan together, evaluating execution, and then creating a new plan (Little et al. 16). Mindset is also important, especially a willingness to take responsibility for self-learning and self-confidence as a learner, and this includes the *bilingual identity* encouraged by Grosjean. Fostering these desirable attributes should lead teachers to seek to mitigate ways the learning environment develops dependence on teachers and institutions as the sole source of knowledge and authority for learning (Wenden 59). More recent scholars of language learner autonomy underscore that even the metacognitive language learning tasks should be done in the target language—maximizing output in the target language is the core "third principle" of learner autonomy. Failure to do this risks that proficiency remains superficial (Little et al. 14–15). Learner autonomy approaches nonetheless tend to cater toward educators rather than directly to students.

Another approach in this field that centers the learner is the "Strategic Self-Regulation Model" (S2R), where "learners actively and constructively use strategies to manage their own learning" (Oxford 7). The S2R strategies are holistic and span the cognitive and sociocultural approaches outlined previously. These strategies include cognitive strategies (e.g., remembering and processing the target language, conceptualizing broadly and with details and reasoning), affective strategies (e.g., maintaining motivation, activating supporting attitudes and emotions), and sociocultural-interactive strategies (e.g., dealing with one's sociocultural identity and dealing with issues of context, communication, and culture) (Oxford 16). Like learner autonomy, S2R emphasizes "meta-strategies" that direct and prioritize the various strategies in the cognitive, affective, and sociocultural areas, much like a conductor synchronizes the various instruments (strategies) of the orchestra. Insights on autonomous learning and S2R are directly applicable to FAOs because each FAO is largely responsible for their own language sustainment. While some FAOs naturally figure out how to manage their own learning, at the joint or service level, FAOs could benefit from

learning these strategies prior to graduating from the Defense Language Institute or as a unit during the Joint FAO Orientation Course (JFAOC). An even more effective approach would be to introduce these principles to FAOs conducting in-region training (IRT), e.g., Army and Marine Corps FAOs during their year-long focused orientation to the FAO's assigned region involving further language study, travel, and mission-set familiarization, and to Navy and Air Force FAOs embarking on travel to refresh their language skills (Mikkelsen).

Pragmatic Approaches

While the academic field of SLA is of significant relevance to military professionals who learn and use a foreign language, little is of direct applicability to FAOs because there are no firsthand academic studies of this specific cohort of autonomous learners who use the target language for their specific purposes. The insights for FAOs must be inferred rather than deduced. As a result, this chapter also considers more practical approaches outside of traditional academia from, for example, the "ultralearning" community. As described by author Scott Young, "ultralearning" is a "self-directed and intense strategy" to learning and mastering difficult knowledge or skill, where "intense" denotes methodical deep work and deliberate, dedicated practice (25). While the ultralearning process can be applied to any skill, knowledge set, or hobby, second language acquisition is a common goal for ultralearners. Of the nine principles of ultralearning mentioned by Young, the following are most salient to military foreign language professionals: retrieval, retention, and experimentation.[2] Ultralearning leans toward the cognitive approach in SLA because it emphasizes the individual learner's reliance on best practices from psychology and neuroscience to memorize, retrieve, and self-evaluate progress. In contrast, another practical approach to autonomous foreign language learning aligns with the sociocultural approach, which can complement ultralearning techniques.

Written to help new missionaries quickly learn a target second language while living in a foreign country, linguist Greg Thomson's sociocultural approach emphasizes learning in a social context. His three interdependent principles for "language learning in the real world for non-beginners" are as follows: (1) expose yourself to massive comprehensible input, (2) engage in extensive extemporaneous speaking (and possibly writing), and (3) learn to know the people whose language you are learning (2). Thomson also recommends a simple adaptation of NA for the individual: make a list of purposes for which you would like to use the language

and rate them by frequency and urgency (21). This will give you a prioritized list of what to work on by yourself or with a tutor. There are two key insights here for an autonomously learning military professional: first, gravitate toward material that is aligned with your proficiency level rather than material that is less comprehensible. Second, get to know the people whose language you are learning—this provides a rich cultural context that enables deeper understanding of the language. Much like ultralearning stresses individual effort, the likely drawback to Thomson's real-world approach is that outside of in-region training, it may not be feasible for FAOs to deeply immerse themselves in a foreign context as Thomson's method presumes.

DOD Policy and Curricula Review

This literature review concludes with a summary of relevant DOD and service policies and curricula that address the general-specific skill gap. For policy, a recent Instruction from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCSI) requires units to identify specific priority language skills. CJCS Instruction 3126.01C of March 2023 requires CCMDs to ensure "LREC capability requirements are identified in all plans . . . and security cooperation, as well as day-to-day staffing needs" (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff A-2).[3] The CJCSI outlines a methodology for CCMDs and Defense Agencies to use in identifying these specific requirements. This CJCS Instruction is an excellent start to bridge this gap at the institutional level. However, its drawback is that it outlines a staffing process rather than a holistic academia-informed language NA. Insights from the literature review above suggest that the result will be suboptimal unless it attends to diverse sources and NA methods. Specifically, the CJCSI assigns the Senior Language Authority as primary lead for conducting the assessment, but the senior language authority on the Joint Staff is the J-1, whereas in CCMDs, the primary subject matter experts for LREC will be in the J-2 and J-5 directorates. In addition, the CJCSI requires the services only to comment on equipment needs, not to provide any input on tasks or requirements (Chairman B-4). However, it is the services who determine the training required to meet these requirements (and the unique military challenges in respective warfighting domains—land, sea, air, space, etc.), particularly FAO proponents or other LREC experts at professional military education institutions. Finally, according to the CJCSI, the results should be recorded in a database, but do not automatically transfer to the end user (Chairman D-1). In summary, the CJCSI is a much-needed kickstart to bridge the identified gap between proficiency and skill, but it lacks key provisions to solve the real-world problem.

In the area of language learning curricula and resources for the joint FAO corps, the Defense Language Institute (DLI) manages the FAO language program with FAO-specific online course content and online person-to-person tutors available. This language program is intended for FAOs to develop unique FAO-related skills in contrast to the DLI primary course which emphasizes a general proficiency and DLPT preparation. In general, the DLI FAO program develops online courses for high demand strategic languages such as Chinese, Arabic, and Korean, while relying on tutors for low density, less commonly spoken languages (Mikkelsen). The Joint Knowledge Online Learning Management System (JKO) currently hosts FAO-tailored Advanced Language Enhancement Courses (ALEC) for 10 languages, with 18 courses total offered (Thorp 3). A survey of available modules demonstrates the challenge of finding relevant specific skills for FAOs. The ALEC Courses for Chinese collectively have the following modules: Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response, Border Security and National Sovereignty Issues, Peacekeeping, Energy, Piracy and Maritime Security, Health Issues, Trafficking in Persons, Proliferation Issues, Crime and the Black Market, Terrorism, Corruption, and Strategy and Policy Engagement (Joint Knowledge Online). The challenge here is that these modules are still too general: only a few of them apply to FAOs interacting in Chinese with Chinese-speaking interlocutors or reading source language intelligence, while other modules only apply to FAOs working with allies and partners who face these problems. No module offers a primer on U.S. DOD and foreign policy offices and matters—something FAOs often need to translate to foreign partners. Taken together, this highlights the need for a comprehensive NA for FAOs, and for the Defense Language Institute (DLI) to be involved in it. (DLI is not mentioned once in the CJCSI.) That said, the ALEC modules nonetheless provide a good resource for FAOs looking to improve their security-related vocabulary at an intermediate and advanced level. FAOs whose language does not have an ALEC on JKO can use a DLI tutor. Developing skills in S2R and Thomson's principles could help FAOs maximize the benefit an online tutor provides.

Implications

The results of this literature review show that the academic literature on second language acquisition is focused on teaching and teachers. Military professionals responsible for independently maintaining a foreign language capability are a niche group and little studied in this field. Not much of the SLA literature speaks directly to the FAO population in terms of best practices for self-directed, autonomous language learning. The review in this chapter also showed that DOD policy—while making strides—remains inadequate to bridge this gap. Nonetheless, the

review still uncovered ways the LREC enterprise can assist FAOs as the FAO corps and the services assess the FAO training pipeline and core competencies. From an academic perspective, further studies examining the overlap of *learner autonomy*, *needs analysis*, and *language for specific purposes* can inform language policy at the DOD and service level, and help FAOs sustain the right language skills more efficiently. Academic research should focus on independent adult learners outside of a formal curricular program of study, such as how a FAO population (or proxy adult learner population) has benefitted (or not) from strategic self-regulation. From a policy perspective, commissioning a joint FAO community *needs analysis* would provide critical inputs to update the FAO-focused curriculum at DLI and shape joint FAO career-long language sustainment norms and meta-learning skills. These studies should incorporate how advanced foreign language technologies are changing what tasks FAOs must accomplish with their target language skills. This would start at the JFAOC but extend into FAO IRT as a key program of instruction (FAOs not conducting IRT could integrate this at the Naval Post Graduate School or during the Air Force's Language Enabled Airman Program). The CJCSI on LREC capability requirements is a noble effort, but it should be shaped by *needs analysis* to achieve an optimal outcome. From the service perspective, *needs analysis* and *language for specific purposes* can enhance language training and generate ideas for how the language "core competency" supports the roles in discrete FAO billets by requiring a basic, Thomson-style *needs analysis* as part of the IRT program of instruction. Finally, from an individual FAO perspective, this literature review found several best practices that can help FAOs leverage their language skill to achieve strategic impact wherever they are posted.

If the opportunity costs of over-prioritizing language training impair mission accomplishment, the critics are right to advocate for readjusting priorities. Bridging the gap between general ability and discrete skills—tailored for each FAO role—can enhance how FAOs leverage their language ability to strategic effect. A relatively small investment in needs analyses and emphasis on language for specific FAO purposes can enhance the self-learning that FAOs are expected to carry out and will focus them on the mission impact their costly LREC skills ought to provide.

Notes

1. Also referred to as "needs-based assessment" or "needs assessment." This chapter uses "needs analysis" per Long.
2. The nine principles are meta-learning, focus, directness, drill, retrieval, feedback, retention, overlearning, and experimentation.
3. The CJCSI calls this the "LREC Capabilities Based Requirements Identification Process (CBRIP)."

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CHAPTER 11

LREC Curriculum Design—a Case Study

Designing the Foreign Area Studies Capstone Course at the U.S. Naval Academy

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Abstract

There has been a longstanding awareness within the Armed Forces of the United States of the importance of language, regional expertise, and cultural training for American troops. The Air Force Academy and the U.S. Military Academy addressed these needs by creating Foreign Area Studies majors, in 1996 and in 1985 respectively, that enable students to pair foreign language study with coursework across disciplines related to a particular region. The United States Naval Academy added a Foreign Area Studies major in 2021. This chapter details the design and implementation of the first capstone course for the first class of Foreign Area Studies majors at the United States Naval Academy. The chapter explains the process of curriculum development from conception to deployment, describing the successes and challenges encountered. The graduation of the first cohort of Foreign Area Studies midshipmen at the Naval Academy marks a major milestone in ensuring that future generations of naval officers will have the language, regional, and cultural expertise needed to carry out their assignments successfully.

KEYWORDS: capstone course, curriculum development, cultural training, foreign area studies, Naval Academy, regional expertise, second language acquisition, Russian language.

Introduction

During the campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq, military leadership came to understand the critical importance of expertise in local culture and language for success in counterterrorism operations. In response, Department of Defense budgets for Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) training rose sharply, and dozens of innovative LREC training programs were launched across a wide array of Department of Defense–funded organizations, including the service academies. During this period, the Air Force and the United States Military Academies reaffirmed their commitment to LREC with their enduring support for their Foreign Area Studies (FAS) majors, founded in 1996 and 1985 respectively. The United States Naval Academy (USNA) was late in addressing curricular shortcomings in LREC, not adding the FAS major to the curriculum until 2021. This author details the design and implementation of the first capstone seminar for FAS majors at the Naval Academy, describing course design and the successes and challenges faced during its rollout. The process of design included consulting with other faculty who teach capstone courses in the humanities, borrowing best practices from them, and applying them to the needs and structure of our FAS major. The curriculum design had to build on courses required for the FAS major, while taking into account the rigorous STEM-focused core curriculum that all midshipmen must complete regardless of major. This chapter describes how the course was augmented as it was taught in response both to the needs of the midshipmen and to the realities on the ground. The chapter concludes with an overview of the course results and observations about future improvements that should be made to the course.

Background

While there is an abundance of scholarly works documenting the history and development of service academies in the United States (see, for instance, works by Ambrose, Cheevers, Crackle, and Meilinger), there is a dearth of research examining the process of curriculum development at these institutions (Forest 79). Two prominent exceptions are Forest's top-down analysis of curriculum development at the U.S. Military Academy (79) and Aiman's examination of implicit curriculum at the Air Force Academy (2–3). This chapter takes a small step in filling this gap by examining the development of the first capstone course for Foreign Area Studies at the United States Naval Academy.

Curriculum theorists have long debated how to define curriculum (Fraser and Bosanquet 278–82). For the purposes of this analysis, curriculum is defined as

a journey of "coming to know" (Ingersoll et al. 4–5) that encompasses "what is taught and learned, by whom, and when." Curriculum development in civilian colleges and universities is typically driven by a complex set of interacting factors including student needs, faculty expertise, and institutional and economic resources. The service academies are unique in that they are mandated to serve the needs of the Armed Forces. The central question that curriculum designers at service academies must address is, What do future military officers need to be able to do? At present, the curriculum at the service academies aims to provide graduates with skills they need to succeed as military officers in the Armed Forces of the United States. Curriculum designers at these academies must respond to the changing needs of the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. The introduction of a Foreign Area Studies major at USNA was a response to shifting priorities in the military.

The challenges that the U.S. service members encountered during the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq brought about a fundamental shift in understanding about what knowledge and skills are required for military personnel in conflict zones. Central to this shift was an awareness that regional and area expertise is essential for successful operation in zones of conflict and in working with foreign partners (Flynn et al. 13; Joint Chiefs of Staff 4, 31, 33; Munch and Worret 1). Colonel Henk, former director of the Air Force Language and Culture Center, summed up the rationale for the enduring need for LREC training in the military in this way:

> Though the priorities of senior military leaders inevitably change over time, the pressing need for American service personnel to accommodate the human dimension for success in their ongoing military operations has not diminished. That capability now may be even more important than ever. (qtd. in Fosher and Mackenzie xi)

On March 8, 2023, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued an instruction affirming the vital necessity of LREC expertise in the military:

> Ensuring we have robust LREC capabilities is essential to DOD's professional military education. . . . LREC directly enables mutually beneficial alliances and partnerships, which are an enduring strength for the United States, and are critical to achieving national security objectives; LREC capabilities are enduring warfighter competencies critical to global mission readiness and integral to Combined operations. (Chairman A-1)

Although funding for LREC programs across the military branches has diminished (Fosher and Mackenzie 10–12), LREC training has remained firmly rooted in place in the service academies in the form of Foreign Area Studies majors. As

Clementine Fujimura, long-time faculty member in the Languages and Cultures Department at USNA noted in 2014, efforts to implement LREC expertise at USNA initially led to policies that did not lead to curriculum innovation, but rather seemed ad hoc, simply "checking off the box" (32). This was despite the fact that point six of the Naval Academy's strategic plan states that the aim of the Academy is to produce graduates that are "adaptable individuals who understand and appreciate global and cross-cultural dynamics" (USNA, "Strategic Plan"). As Fujimura notes, a new epoch began in 2012 when the Naval Academy's foreign language department was renamed the Department of Languages and Cultures. The new name marked the beginning of a more sustained effort to expand LREC education at USNA, culminating in the creation of a Foreign Area Studies major launched in 2021 (Fujimura 33–36).

In preliminary discussions leading up to the creation of the FAS major at USNA, the intention was to create an interdisciplinary major that would enable midshipmen to combine foreign language proficiency with regional expertise. FAS majors would learn about a geographical region of specialization, taking courses in the humanities and the social sciences related to that region. Due in part to staffing concerns, the major was initially launched for only three regions—Asia, Eurasia, and the Middle East—with plans to gradually expand the major to include Africa, Europe, and Latin America. For an FAS major with a concentration on Asia, midshipmen take courses in Chinese or Japanese. Midshipmen who focus on Eurasia take courses in the Russian language. Those with a focus on the Middle East take courses in Arabic and/or French. Study abroad is an essential component of the major with every effort made to send midshipmen to in-country language immersion programs for at least a month, as part of the Language Study Abroad Program (LSAP), or for a full semester. The mission statement of the FAS major stresses the importance of providing midshipmen with an opportunity to take courses across a wide array of disciplines, allowing them to combine language proficiency with a deeper understanding of foreign cultures and societies. The FAS mission statement, quoted below, also emphasizes the broader applications of regional and cross-cultural competency.

> The Foreign Area Studies major is designed to give insight into the study of global society while focusing on selected regions. Special emphasis is placed on the study of particular areas, enriched through social scientific research (including theories and methods surrounding cultural studies) and the investigation of humanistic endeavors, i.e., how the knowledge of a given culture, with its particular language, economy, literature, art, political structure and history, constitutes the basis for a better understanding of the societies of the world, including one's own. The goal

> is to go beyond American and Eurocentric points of view in order to understand the world from a more native perspective, to uncover the internal logic that is reflected in various expressions of deep-rooted cultural values. The assumptions, meanings, social structures and dynamics of another society and culture are thus made more comprehensible, creating opportunities for self-reflection that may expand and even challenge assumptions about one's own society and culture (USNA, "Foreign Area Studies").

The aim of the FAS curriculum is to produce future naval leaders who have a deeper understanding of other cultures based on knowledge of foreign regions across academic disciplines and who are effective cross-cultural communicators. These broad goals are encapsulated in the learning outcomes for FAS that majors will:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the field of Area Studies: its interdisciplinary nature and application to a naval officer's career.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the most common social scientific methods and how they are applied to Area Studies (both quantitative and qualitative methods to include for example cluster analysis, item response theory, survey methodology and survey sampling and ethnographic methods, interview and narrative analysis).
3. Demonstrate knowledge about the current discussion around the value of knowledge of languages and cultures (including their belief and value systems, economies, geography, governments, histories, literature and art) as the basis of Area Studies.
4. Demonstrate an ability to, independently and critically, analyze relevant examples of Area Studies with a special focus on empirical studies that deal with societal developments in selected regions of the world.
5. Communicate substantial knowledge on one area/region of the world by utilizing methods learned in the major via oral and written presentation. (USNA, *Foreign Area Studies* 2)

The core of the FAS curriculum consists of a minimum of six world language courses, some of which may be taken in an immersion setting, either in summer language study (LSAP) or in a full semester of immersion. In addition, all midshipmen are required to take Foundations in Area Studies, an introductory anthropology course that teaches them "how to analyze, understand and interpret foreign cultures through an interdisciplinary lens" (USNA, "Languages and Cultures Course Information").

The FAS major is subdivided into three tracks: culture, history, and political science. FAS majors in the history and political science tracks complete their capstones under the auspices of those two departments. This chapter details the design and execution of the first FAC capstone with a specialization in culture. The core curriculum of all tracks of the FAS major includes one political science course—either Introduction to International Relations or Introduction to Comparative Politics; two required courses in Economics—Introduction to Economics and International Trade and Policy; and two History courses. In addition, FAS majors must take three major electives in political science, history, economics, or languages and cultures at the advanced level that are related to their region of expertise. In their first academic year, midshipmen complete their FAS major with the capstone course that is the subject of this chapter. Due to the complex administrative requirements for overseeing an interdisciplinary major, the department made the decision in the first phase of the rollout to restrict the major to midshipmen taking Chinese and Japanese language, who would focus on Asia; Russian language with a focus on Eurasia; and Arabic or French for midshipmen focusing on Arab culture. In the second phase of the rollout of the major, the timeframe for which has not been established, midshipmen will be able to select a European focus while studying either German, Spanish, or French.

It must be pointed out that the number of courses available for the FAS major is constrained by the demands of the rigorous, STEM-focused core curriculum at the Naval Academy. All midshipmen are required to take three semesters of calculus, two semesters of chemistry, two semesters of physics, two semesters in cyber security, six engineering courses, and four seamanship and navigation courses in order to graduate. All midshipmen receive a Bachelor of Science degree upon graduation irrespective of their selected major.

Foreign Area Capstone Course Design

Since the FAS major includes diverse courses taught across the humanities and social sciences, the design of a summative assessment for the major posed a challenge. Curriculum designers felt that a capstone course taught in the majors' final semester focused on a term-long research project was the most appropriate culmination of the major. The purpose of the capstone is to give midshipmen the opportunity to apply and demonstrate the knowledge they have gained in their coursework about their selected region. Since midshipmen majors develop expertise in a number of different world cultures and languages, any summative assessment of the major had

to be able to accommodate midshipmen with diverse language backgrounds and interests. The advantage of the research-focused capstone is that it is individualized and therefore flexible and can provide midshipmen with a framework to apply and demonstrate the skills they have gained. Each midshipman is encouraged to select projects that are aligned with their own skills, expertise, and interests. The incorporation of a capstone course into the FAS major was a logical step given that capstones are incorporated into most of the majors at USNA including STEM disciplines and majors in the humanities and social sciences.

The FAS capstone design is grounded in the core features of the major described above. First and foremost, the course designers agreed from the outset that the capstone course content needed to be interdisciplinary in scope and that the main goal of the course would be to enable midshipmen to broaden their expertise in culture and in their selected region. The course would also require midshipmen to apply and demonstrate their cultural and regional understanding in a final research project by synthesizing academic research on their topic across several disciplines. At the end of the course all participants would participate in a campus-wide Capstone Day, presenting the results of their research in a public forum.

The first phase of course design consisted of a fact-finding mission. The designers, Associate Professor Catherine O'Neil and the author of this chapter, talked with faculty in the humanities and the social sciences who had designed and taught capstones for their departments. We also had extensive discussions with faculty from the History and the Political Science Departments at the Naval Academy, both of which had integrated the capstone requirement into their curriculum years ago and had accrued many years of experience in teaching capstones. What emerged from those discussions was an understanding that the FAS capstone course would primarily be a methods course, providing midshipmen with advanced skills for engaging in academic research, and that the design would be structured around a series of benchmarks or deadlines for submission of each section of the research project.

Faculty teaching the FAS capstone confronted challenges unique to the major and so not shared by instructors of capstones in other disciplines. The capstone would be taught by faculty from the Languages and Cultures Department who would have expertise in at least one of the languages studied by the FAS majors. Since no faculty member in our department is proficient in all of the languages spoken by this first group of FAS majors—Arabic, French, Russian, Japanese, and

Chinese—whoever taught the capstone would by necessity have to function in many cases more as a "guide on the side." As will be detailed below, this kind of course structure encouraged cooperative learning.

The second phase of curriculum planning entailed selecting a course topic. The topic would be introduced at the beginning of the course and used as the conceptual frame for course content. This design assumes that the topic would be selected by each instructor individually according to their expertise and experience with the stipulation that it would have to be interdisciplinary in scope and relevant across all of the languages and cultures offered as part of FAS. This second phase of the planning stage was carried out by the author of this chapter, Associate Professor Joan Chevalier, who also taught the course. In selecting the focus of this first semester, "Memory, Place, and Culture," I was guided in part by my own research interests and in part by the curriculum of the core course of the major, Introduction to Foreign Area Studies. Trained as a Slavic linguist, my research focuses on linguistic aspects of media discourse in state-run Russian media. My recent work examines linguistic tools used in Russian media to shape Russia's national memory. For all modern nation-states' national memory, what is remembered, how, and by whom plays a critical role in national identity. In many nations, representations of national memory and identity are often situated in places, in memorials, in buildings, or in territories. Often, such as in the United States and in post-Soviet nations, disputes about national memory are also localized in these sites of commemoration. The course topic provided rich cross-cultural material for exploration and was readily applicable to all the target languages and cultures.

The course was designed as a seminar with an enrollment cap of 15 midshipmen. Class time was used primarily for student discussion and pair work. Seminar-type discussion-based classes fostered a sense of community within the group of midshipmen taking the course. This sense of community encouraged effective cooperative learning at critical junctures during the semester. Midshipmen were given the space and the encouragement to listen, respond, and learn from each other. Peer feedback was integrated into the course and became particularly important as midshipmen got more involved with their capstone projects.

The 16-week course culminated in a capstone project: a 15-page research paper building on key aspects of the coursework completed in the FAS major. The research was to be humanities-based and interdisciplinary, requiring midshipmen to synthesize academic research across several disciplines, applying the expertise acquired in FAS courses to investigate aspects of culture related to each midshipman's area of

regional expertise. Each midshipman selected topics aligned with their interests and experience. The course culminated in a campus-wide "Capstone Day," where the first class of midshipmen across departments presented the results of their capstone research projects. All FAS majors were required to present the results of their research in a public forum in the form of 10-to-15-minute oral presentations on Capstone Day, which was held on May 1, 2024, on the last day of classes.

Foreign Area Capstone Course: From Design to Execution

Class sessions during the first month of the course featured case studies engaging midshipmen with issues related to the course topic, "Memory, Place, and Culture." The course began with several case studies exploring the connections between memory and place. In the first case study, midshipmen conducted ethnographic interviews with subjects ranging in age from peers to parents and grandparents about "light bulb memories." Light bulb memories are enduring vivid memories of an unexpected, traumatic, or personally significant event. Typically, these types of memories are firmly rooted in place, and they exemplify the organic link between memory and place in the human psyche. The second through fourth weeks of the course were devoted to a series of case studies that showcased contestation of memory and place in different cultures. The goal of this part of the course was (1) to demonstrate how an interdisciplinary approach can be applied to achieve a deeper and more nuanced understanding of culture and (2) to provide models of the kind of interdisciplinary research that would be expected in the capstone research project. All of the case studies presented featured cultural heritage sites across the globe that have generated conflict and contestation both locally and, in some cases, internationally, with most of the sites reflecting cultural and historical controversies rooted in a sense of national identity. Our explorations began with a review of the controversy over Civil War commemoration in the United States and continued with case studies from the Middle East, focusing on the reconstruction of Mosul, Iraq. We also discussed the link between national memory and culture on display at the Yasukuni Shrine in Japan, where World War II veterans who were found guilty of war crimes are entombed. Recent visits to the shrine by high-ranking Japanese politicians generated a great deal of controversy in Japanese society. We wrapped up this part of the course with an introduction to contested World War II Soviet-era war memorials in post-Soviet Baltic republics.

In the third and fourth weeks the focus of the course shifted to the research project, covering all aspects of conducting, writing, and presenting interdisciplinary

research in the humanities. This phase of the course was structured around a set of benchmarks requiring midshipmen to complete and draft specific components of the paper. Each benchmark consisted of guidelines and rubrics for a specific part of the paper draft with firm due dates. Midshipmen received extensive editorial comments on drafts submitted for evaluation as well as a written evaluation and a grade on each component of the paper. In the initial phase of their projects, midshipmen were required to select researchable topics relating to their regional areas of expertise that were interdisciplinary in scope and explored at least two of three subtopics of the seminar: memory, place, and culture. Arriving at a researchable topic, one that was not too broad, was interdisciplinary, and involved researching a foreign culture, was critical for project success. Several midshipmen who had participated in overseas language immersion programs drew from these experiences in selecting a topic. One midshipman elected to expand a research paper that she had written about the revitalization of the Amazigh language in Morocco while in an immersion language program. Midshipmen were also encouraged to meet one-on-one with USNA faculty to receive guidance in selecting a topic. One FAS Arabic major elected to research the cultural challenges American military forces faced during the Iraq War and how they sought to overcome them. Another FAS major, who studied Arabic in Algeria, wrote a paper exploring Raï music as an expression of Algerian identity. An FAS Arabic student who studied in Cairo wrote a paper about the role of bread as a symbol of resistance in Egyptian society.

Next, midshipmen were asked to formulate a central research question. Formulating the topic as a question helped ensure that each research project would be inquiry-based and analytical rather than descriptive. Each midshipman had to present their topics and research questions for peer review. These sessions were particularly helpful for students who were struggling to narrow down their topic to a researchable question. In at least two cases, peer review helped steer midshipmen to their final topic selection.

The next phase entailed compiling a bibliography of relevant academic sources. Midshipmen worked closely with Dr. Amanda Click, head of the Research and Instruction Department of the Nimitz Library at USNA. Dr. Click gave a general presentation providing information and strategies for performing bibliographic research. She also met with midshipmen individually, in many cases more than once, to help them locate the sources they needed for their projects. In weeks six and seven midshipmen wrote summaries of two academic research articles from their bibliographies. Class periods during week six were devoted to discussions about

strategies for reading and extracting information from academic articles. I distributed a template for the summaries, specifying the length and content of the summary.

In preparation for the submission of an outline for the research paper, midshipmen developed a concept map for their papers. Using this kind of graphic tool can help researchers organize information and clarify relationships between concepts as well as generate new ideas about how the parts should be structured. Midshipmen presented their concept maps for peer review. These peer review sessions gave students valuable feedback about the proposed structure of their arguments, which they could apply to their paper outlines.

Once midshipmen produced outlines of their projects, the actual writing process began. Midshipmen were encouraged to submit drafts to the Writing Center for assistance with editing and revising their drafts. The USNA Writing Center provides one-on-one professional and peer tutors who work with midshipmen engaging in academic research helping them with all aspects of the writing process. All the capstone students worked with Writing Center staff, consulting them throughout the writing phase. First, midshipmen were required to submit a thesis statement, which included the research question and a summary of the approach to be adopted in the paper, explaining the goals of the paper and a short description of the methods to be used, and a short overview of each part of the paper. Then, at the beginning of week eleven, right after spring break, midshipmen submitted rough drafts of their papers.

As midshipmen were working on their first drafts, they were asked to compose a 70-word abstract providing a brief overview of the paper's content, methodology, and results. These abstracts were presented for a round of peer review and comments. The abstracts were published as part of a campus-wide schedule of Capstone Day presentations that was made public during the last week of classes. A week after the first drafts were submitted, the instructor provided midshipmen with extensive comments with edits and suggestions about how to improve their drafts. Writing Center staff visited class leading a session on strategies for paper revision. Midshipmen had two weeks to revise and edit their drafts. All midshipmen were expected to consult with Writing Center staff during the write-up of the final draft.

The final two weeks of the course were devoted to preparing for Capstone Day, composing PowerPoint slides and practicing oral presentations. Dr. Robin Taub, a Communication Specialist working in the Writing Center, provided the class with helpful tips about how to present and deliver their research. Each midshipman

was required to do a practice presentation and receive feedback from their peers. Midshipmen took this process very seriously, providing insightful comments and suggestions to each other about how to improve content and delivery. The morning of Capstone Day, FAS majors assembled for a final class meeting, paused for a quick group photo on the steps of Carter Hall, the home of the Languages and Cultures Department at the Naval Academy, and then proceeded to an auditorium, where midshipmen presented their research.

Successes and Lessons Learned

Designing the first FAS capstone presented pedagogical challenges. Would it be possible to design a semester-long course that would require midshipmen to extend their expertise in FAS, building on their coursework across a number of disciplines, and apply their skills in a meaningful way to substantial research project? What would prove to be the key components to the success of such a course? Given the positive feedback provided by midshipmen in the course, and by faculty and midshipmen attending Capstone Day presentations, the answer to the first question is a resounding yes. There were a number of factors that contributed to the course's success:

- **Midshipmen selected researchable topics aligned with the course guidelines, their area of expertise, and their interests.** The fact that midshipmen were encouraged to pursue their own interests, which in many cases were directly related to their experiences studying language overseas, ensured that midshipmen were invested and motivated to do their best work in completing the project. Another key component in achieving student buy-in to the capstone project was the realization that they all had to present the results of their work in a public forum at the end of the semester.
- **Midshipmen were invested in the success of their peers as well as their own success.** Class sessions were designed to encourage midshipmen to listen to and support one another, engaging in cooperative learning. This fostered a positive group work ethic with midshipmen providing insightful comments on their peers' work. When weaker students were feeling challenged, they knew they could rely on their peers to help them.
- **The course was structured around a series of benchmarks with enforceable deadlines.** The capstone project was divided into sections that comprised distinct parts of the research project. Deadlines and targets were provided at the beginning of the course for submission of each component of

the paper, including topic, research question, bibliography, thesis statement, literature review, and full drafts. The tightly organized structure provided midshipmen with guidelines and schedules for successful completion of each component of the project.

- **The instructor remained flexible, willing to make structural changes in the course to meet midshipmen's needs.** Since this was the first time the course was taught, student feedback was critical to making needed improvements to the course as the semester progressed. For example, midshipmen early on requested more guidance with course requirements. The instructor responded by augmenting individual assignments with templates and more detailed instructions about the aims, expectations, and content of each assignment. Although initially rubrics were provided for major benchmarks only, more rubrics were developed in response to student requests in order to provide full transparency about how assignments would be assessed.
- **The instructor scheduled frequent, repeated one-on-one meetings with midshipmen to discuss their progress and help them overcome challenges.** The individual attention provided was key to giving midshipmen the help they needed to successfully complete the project. Midshipmen brought varying levels of writing skills and regional expertise to the course, so in many cases, the only way to address individual needs was through one-on-one meetings.

From the instructor's perspective, designing and teaching the FAS capstone course was a very positive experience. The group bonded well and worked hard to ensure that every member successfully completed their capstone. Even midshipmen with weaker research and writing skills produced quality research because they were invested in their success and interested in their topics. By remaining flexible and receptive to student needs, the instructor was able to make important changes in the type of scaffolding provided for individual assignments. Increased scaffolding in the form of templates, rubrics, and outlines ensured student success. One disadvantage of the course structure was that there was not sufficient time to introduce and explore the course topic in the kind of depth it required because most of the semester was devoted to work on the research paper. On semester-end evaluations, some midshipmen felt that the topic-based course model should be taught as a two-semester sequence, with the first semester exploring the topic and the second semester entirely devoted to selecting related paper topics and writing

a research paper. Other midshipmen felt that the topic should be dropped entirely and the paper topics should be finalized earlier in the semester, providing students with more time to complete the capstone project. Both recommendations need to be seriously considered by FAS faculty teaching the course in future years. Ideally, the addition of a second semester of instruction would allow for a more in-depth exploration of the course topic and would give midshipmen an entire semester to devote to capstone research. If that proves impossible, faculty should consider dropping the theme focus, allowing midshipmen more time to complete their projects. Finally, every attempt should be made to work with FAS majors prior to their participation in immersion language study abroad experiences to help them think about a research project they can pursue during their immersion experience and hopefully expand into a capstone project.

Conclusion

With the creation of the Foreign Area Studies major, the Naval Academy has taken a major step forward in ensuring that more graduates will have LREC expertise. While the FAS major is currently still in the rollout phase, the implementation of this first capstone seminar for FAS majors marks a significant milestone in the Naval Academy's efforts to strengthen LREC education. As the major expands, there are a number of important issues that will need to be addressed. First, there needs to be a larger discussion at the institutional level about the ways that FAS coursework, including the capstone, can build on majors' study abroad experiences. Ideally, FAS faculty advisors would work with majors to help them develop a long-range research plan, which would enable them to develop potential capstone topics early so that they can begin their research while they are overseas. Second, as the major expands and enrolls more midshipmen, it is likely that humanities or social science faculty from outside the Languages and Cultures Department will be called on to assist with teaching the capstone course. This interdepartmental cooperation will both enrich the major and enhance cross-discipline dialogue among faculty.

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PART FOUR

Intercultural Security Cooperation and Interoperability

CHAPTER 12

Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture Toward Interoperability

U.S. Policy, Doctrine, and Practice Among Land Forces in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Abstract

Language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC) directly affect U.S. and partner nation interoperability, or the ability to act together to achieve objectives. This chapter explores the relationship between LREC and interoperability first in theory through examination of policy, doctrine, and investigative studies. Primary samples include Army Regulation 34-1 Interoperability and an algorithm developed by RAND to determine the propensity for successful U.S. security cooperation with other countries based on 66 measures, 8 of which are LREC-related. Next, the chapter considers the relationship between LREC and interoperability in practice through an illustrative case study of U.S. Army security cooperation with land forces in Latin America and the Caribbean. U.S. Army South, the Army Service Component Command for U.S. Southern Command, operationalized higher-level guidance and policy to strengthen partnerships and improve interoperability with select partner nations between 2022 and 2024. Examples range from utilization of a partner nation billet for a Deputy Commanding General for Interoperability at the U.S. Army South Headquarters to multinational exercises addressing common threats. Ultimately, the capacity to account for LREC factors and incorporate them into planning and execution of activities enables effective resource management and progress toward greater interoperability.

KEYWORDS: cross-cultural operations, interoperability, LREC factors, multinational exercises, partner nation, security cooperation.

Introduction

In August 2022, the Brazilian Army's 3rd Company, 5th Light Infantry Battalion, 12th Light Infantry Brigade (Airmobile) joined the U.S. Army's 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division in a training rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) at Fort Polk, Louisiana. These units conducted combined air assault operations and several tasks throughout the month that culminated in a successful live fire exercise with a combined arms breach involving a Brazilian assault force and U.S. breach force. Interoperability contributed to this rotational training unit achieving the highest battle damage assessment statistics against the opposing forces in years, best exemplified when a Brazilian soldier killed "Geronimo 6" (Battalion Commander of the opposition forces)—the first time that happened in over one year, or at least 10 training rotations.

Despite language barriers, distinct regional dynamics, and differences in culture, the U.S. Army and partner nation (PN) security forces can develop strong relationships and achieve results, as demonstrated in that rotation at JRTC. Such variables, however, can hinder progress and cooperation when overlooked in planning or disregarded during operations. The degree to which planners and leaders in each force account for such aspects of interactions impacts their ability to develop interoperability, or "the ability to act together coherently, effectively, and efficiently to achieve tactical, operational, and strategic objectives" (Department of the Army, *Interoperability*). Language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC) are key factors that influence U.S. and PN interoperability across human, procedural, and technical domains.

This chapter explores the relationship between LREC factors and interoperability. First, a literature review investigates U.S. Army policy and doctrine, after action reviews (AARs), academic articles, and other material to highlight trends and identify gaps. Next, research and analysis explore the relationship between LREC and interoperability in practice through an illustrative case study of U.S. Army security cooperation activities with land forces in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) between 2022 and 2024. Then, a study of implications for the future of LREC highlights possibilities for U.S. adversaries, returns on investment, coalition operations, and other considerations. Finally, a conclusion draws together main arguments and lists areas for further research.

Literature Review

Literature concerning LREC and interoperability includes policy and doctrine, handbooks and AARs, academic articles, and think tank studies. This material addresses tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfare in varying degrees and proposes some solutions to remedy challenges. There are several gaps in the literature on these topics, however, that merit further study to optimize strategic plans toward achieving greater interoperability with partners.

A foundational document concerning LREC was the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap (DLTR), a strategic plan developed by the Department of Defense (DOD) in 2004 to address shortfalls in language and regional area expertise. Services completed most tasks assigned to them within four years as they established a body of language professionals within the force and further incentivized proficiency in foreign languages, but encountered challenges of limited funding, qualified personnel, and effective technologies (Kruzel). Since then, doctrine and policy changes have built upon the DLTR's successes and sought to remedy its challenges and other conditions, such as retention of qualified personnel.

Contemporary prescriptive documents involving LREC and interoperability include governmental policy documents that codify and regulate activities and Army regulations that set forth how the Army should operate in terms of ends, ways, and means. The Department of Defense's 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) mentions interoperability mainly in the context of deepening ties with partners to achieve "integrated deterrence," defined as "using every tool at the Department's disposal, in close collaboration with our counterparts across the U.S. Government and with Allies and partners, to ensure that potential foes understand the folly of aggression" (U.S. Department of Defense, *2022 National Defense Strategy* IV).

Although the NDS, like other national and strategic policy, may not expressly mention LREC factors, their importance is implied in emphasis placed on collaboration with Allies and partners. It states, "to strengthen and sustain deterrence, the Department will prioritize interoperability and enable coalitions with enhanced capabilities, new operating concepts, and combined, collaborative force planning" (14). One strategic document that is more specific regarding LREC is the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3126.01C, *Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture Capability Identification, Planning, and Sourcing*. This document "provides guidance and procedures for operational planners to identify LREC capability requirements in security cooperation and

joint adaptive (contingency and crisis action) planning and execution processes" by establishing a methodology whereby Combatant Commands host workshops where planners identify LREC capability requirements for universal joint tasks (CJCSI 3126.01C A-2 and D-1). The Army Campaign Order has provided general guidance on improving interoperability with select partners. Other strategic- and operational-level documents, such as Combatant Command Campaign Plan Orders and Service Component Campaign Support Plans, include activities to operationalize interoperability guidance from higher commands, but do not mention LREC factors due to their scale and scope.

Army doctrine also sets forth standards and ways to evaluate interoperability with limited references to LREC. Army Regulation (AR) 34-1 *Interoperability* divides interoperability into human, procedural, and technical domains. Explanations of each fail to mention LREC, but these factors are implied through descriptions, such as "mutual understanding and respect" related to language and culture in the human domain, and "harmony in policies and doctrine" needed for procedural interoperability (Department of the Army, *Interoperability* 2). Field Manuals, drafted and revised based on experience to establish standard tactics, techniques, and procedures, recognize the importance of LREC. For instance, Field Manual 3-0 *Operations* acknowledges that difficulties associated with multinational operations include "culture and language issues, unresolved policy issues, technical and procedural interoperability challenges, national caveats on the use of respective forces, the authorities required for sharing of information and intelligence, and rules of engagement" (Department of the Army, *Operations*). It also states that "each partner in an operation has a distinct cultural identity. Although nations with similar cultures face fewer obstacles to interoperability than nations with divergent cultural outlooks, differences still exist" (Department of the Army, *Multinational Operations* 1–3).

Organizations like the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) compile handbooks based on AARs. While not considered doctrine, these bottom-up documents, written by or in collaboration with soldiers or others with firsthand knowledge of the topics, include empirical data and vignettes highlighting LREC factors and real-world consequences for interoperability. Content is often limited to tactical-level interactions, but they identify LREC challenges and possible remedies. CALL's *Multinational Interoperability Reference Guide* discusses gaps with partners such as language, technical radio network, and radio operating procedures. It also describes how embedding U.S. radio operators in partner units can help to

bridge those gaps, considering language abilities of those radio operators (Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Multinational Interoperability* 19–20). This document explains how language barriers complicate voice and digital communications, and recommends use of standardized formats (e.g., call-for-fire) and analog tracking systems to mitigate risk (52). It also describes the utility of liaison officers (LNOs) to generate regional expertise and enhance interoperability where the PN may lack understanding of U.S. doctrine or procedures (37). Although not to the same degree, CALL's *Commander and Staff Guide to Multinational Interoperability* also provides examples of LREC challenges and solutions. For instance, it lists automated language translation as one way to overcome technical challenges associated with language barriers (Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Commander and Staff Guide* 79).

Monographs and research papers written by students at U.S. Army professional military education (PME) institutions provide additional vignettes illustrating LREC applications in interoperability. These practitioners provide insights at the tactical level of warfare comparable to those captured in best practice documents. However, they are quite narrow in scope and scale of analysis and recommendations. One anecdote on interoperability explained how language barriers between U.S. and Polish forces in Afghanistan caused delays in counterfire missions. Findings suggested that "language differences that included military terminology," lack of cultural empathy, and "misunderstandings of national caveats" contributed to that delay (Fellinger 12–13).

Finally, think tanks have provided unique research with a wider array of experts and a combination of empirical and theoretical knowledge. Papers include recommendations that are often scalable in implementation and grounded in findings from thorough analysis. RAND produced a tool that incorporates LREC factors in a quantitative research method to evaluate security cooperation where 8 of the 66 measurements directly involve LREC.[1] Another RAND study recognizes the intrinsic role of LREC in interoperability, specifically in the human or "individual" domain, which it defined as when "members of the force possess respect, rapport, knowledge of partners, mission focus, trust, and confidence in multinational partners, built upon the foundation of language skills, regional expertise, and cultural understanding" (Pernin et al. 46). It describes how topics such as "task organization, equipment allocation, logistics infrastructure, and planning priorities vary country to country and must be addressed early in the collaboration" for combined training and operations (29). These facets of military

operations are "not things easily detailed in doctrine ahead of time," so regional expertise and cultural awareness directly gained through prior interactions contribute to achieving interoperability (29).

In terms of gaps across available literature, much of the analysis is prescriptive and theoretical without evaluation of U.S. Army applications and real-world examples or case studies beyond the tactical level. The newness of the term *interoperability* in this context, along with quantifiable metrics for evaluation and planning, is likely a contributing factor. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2017 also drew attention to the lack of assessments in security cooperation, which includes interoperability, so Theater Armies and Combatant Commands are in early phases of assessing interoperability with partners and using longitudinal studies to determine returns on different operations, activities, and investments (OAIs) and optimize long-term planning and trajectories. Lessons learned are largely at the tactical level, so this chapter provides insights at the operational level and includes some examples in available literature at the tactical level from training and exercises that reinforce or build upon observations. Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs) evaluate interoperability with partners, but these assessments are generally classified, limiting accessibility to empirical data and analysis. This chapter aims to address some of these gaps mainly through a review of illustrative case studies involving U.S. Army South, focused on how the unit operationalized higher-level guidance and policy to strengthen partnerships and improve interoperability with select partners between 2022 and 2024. This incorporates interviews with key leaders, AARs and lessons learned publications, and detailed analysis to offer unique insights regarding associations between LREC factors and interoperability.

Research and Analysis

As set forth in analysis of U.S. Army policy, the Army incorporates LREC into strategic planning to advance interoperability with Allies and partners. The exchange of personnel or liaison officers between the U.S. and other countries, including personnel exchanges between service academies, the Military Personnel Exchange Program, attendance in PME courses, and other programs rely on cultivating LREC factors to promote human, procedural, and technical interoperability. Combined training, or exercises and training events involving the U.S. Army and foreign forces, are another way to enhance interoperability. Methods may vary across U.S. Army units and geographic areas of responsibility, but an illustrative case study of U.S. Army South's consideration and incorporation of LREC factors into security

cooperation activities helps to demonstrate how LREC influences interoperability.

U.S. Army South (ARSOUTH), located at Joint Base San Antonio–Fort Sam Houston, Texas, is the ASCC under U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). According to its mission statement, ARSOUTH "conducts unified land operations, sets and maintains the theater, and conducts security cooperation operations and activities in the USSOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility in order to counter malign influences and threats in support of a networked defense of the U.S. homeland. On order, [it] provides a JTF-capable headquarters to respond to emergent requirements and tasked contingency plans" (U.S. Army South, "Sixth Army"). Interoperability constitutes one of ARSOUTH's lines of effort, or "a line that links multiple tasks using the logic of purpose rather than geographical reference to focus efforts toward establishing a desired end state" (Department of the Army, *Operations* 2–8). Like other geographic ASCCs (U.S. Army North, U.S. Army Pacific, U.S. Army Central, and U.S. Army Europe and Africa), ARSOUTH has sought to operationalize higher-level guidance and policy through several OAIs aimed at improving interoperability with partners.

Illustrative case studies explore several such OAIs and how leaders accounted for LREC factors in their planning and execution. Analysis, largely based on the Interoperability Concept Framework in Figure 12.1, highlights successes and failures that help to determine returns on investment and aspects that merit repetition or further attention. Although ASCCs, on account of their echelon, generally engage at the operational level, OAIs span the range of engagement levels and domains of interoperability depicted in the Interoperability Concept Framework.[2] This analysis is not all-inclusive of ARSOUTH OAIs affecting interoperability but reviews some key OAIs that show how this ASCC has operationalized guidance and managed to effect change across the engagement levels and interoperability domains.

Figure 12.1

Interoperability Concept Framework

Engagement Levels↓ Domains→	**Human** ▪ *Desired Conditions (tasks)*	**Technical**	**Procedural**
Strategic **Integrators: HQDA, ARSOUTH, SCO, TRADOC, USMA, USAWC** **Focus OAIs: WHINSEC, Senior Leader KLEs, SONs, MPEP, CAA**	▪ PN and U.S. leaders exposed to each other's values, institutions, norms (democracy, sovereignty, human rights, the rule of law, civil-military relations) ▪ PN leaders attend U.S. schools; U.S. personnel attend PN PME ▪ PN leaders career opportunities within U.S. Army	▪ PNs exposed to U.S./ NATO equipment tech approaches (trade shows, AUSA) ▪ U.S. leaders exposed to PN capabilities and limitations ▪ Equipment and logistics standardization conditions set (acquisition and technology transfer agreements; NATO Global Partner)	▪ Mission Partner Environment (MPE) fundamentals developed ▪ PN and U.S. leaders trained on each other's doctrine and exposed to each other's policies including: ULO, Law of War, Rules of Engagement) ▪ U.S. leaders understand caveats and key issues (*combined scenarios*)
Operational **Integrators: ARSOUTH, TRADOC** **Focus OAIs: SMEEs, PANAMAX, CAP, Staff Talks**	▪ Trust and confidence developed w/ PNs (Develop and implement long-term SV-CTC plan around combined scenarios (SV; CTC OPTs, Integrate EX Defender) (Advance ARSOUTH DCG-I and PNLOs)	▪ Technical standardization agreements integrated w/ PNs (Collaborative services, network operations, intelligence/ information sharing, logistics)	▪ Processes integrated w/ stakeholders (Develop and integrate Country Support Plans with county teams) (Develop a theater-level Multinational Interoperability Training and Academic Program Plan. *Doctrine to SOP Bridge*)
	⇦ **War Fighting Functions: *C2 - Movement and Maneuver - Fires - Sustainment - Intelligence - Protection*** ⇨		
Tactical **Integrators: SFAB, SPP, CTCs** **Focus OAIs: Southern Vanguard (SV), Combined Training Center (CTC), SMEEs**	▪ Interoperability (human domain) to shape behaviors, actions, and pursuits is developed and integrated (Understand capabilities, national caveats; cultural sensitivities; leader-focused training; utilization of liaison officers; After Action Report method; collaborative means; and common terms)	▪ Interoperability (technical domain) to establish/maintain C2 network, hardware, and applications are developed/integrated (Leverage synthetic training environment; establish information sharing; knowledge management technical solutions; establish network services, and secure tactical voice)	▪ Interoperability (procedural domain) is developed and integrated to reduce confusion/misunderstandings (Standardize operating TTPs; leverage common doctrine; leader education of standard agreements: classification guides & safeguarding information; utilization of coalition network)
	⇨ **Assess Objectives through SV-CTC Training Iterations** ⇦		

AUSA: Association of the U.S. Army
C2: Command and Control
CAP: Colombia Action Plan
CTC: Combat Training Center
HQDA: Headquarters, Department of the Army
KLE: Key Leader Engagement
OAI: Operations, Activities, and Investments
OPT: Operations Planning Team
PNLO: Partner Nation Liaison Officer
SMEE: Subject Matter Expert Exchange
SOP: Standard Operating Procedures
TRADOC: Training and Doctrine Command
ULO: Unified Land Operations
USAWC: U.S. Army War College
USMA: U.S. Military Academy

Source: Angel J. Rios-Pelati, *ARSOUTH Interoperability Updates*, 22 Feb. 2022, and in discussion with the author at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, 11 Feb. 2022.

Army-to-Army Staff Talks and the Conference of American Armies

On behalf of the Chief of Staff of the Army, the ARSOUTH Commanding General "serve[s] as the action agent for Army-to-Army Staff Talks with Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru, El Salvador, and the Conference of American Armies" (Department of the Army, *Interoperability* 13). In Staff Talks, both Armies develop and approve several agreed-to-actions (ATAs), or activities they will conduct in coming years, in a non-binding agreement. Between 2022 and 2024, ARSOUTH and partners approved hundreds of ATAs spanning strategic, operational, and tactical levels of engagement with multiyear plans to help ensure the perpetuity of activities and justify requested budgets in advance. Since U.S. planners and their counterparts require regional expertise to develop bilateral plans that are feasible, acceptable, and mutually beneficial, Foreign Area Officers within the ASCC Security Cooperation Directorate lead the ASCC staff and coordinate with other units to develop multiyear plans and ATAs that nest with USSOUTHCOM objectives. Language fluency played a key role in promoting human interoperability at the strategic and operational levels through ATAs with English language proficiency requirements (see Figure 12.1). Examples included PN officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and Cadets attending PME courses in the United States; PN liaison officers assigned to U.S. Army units; and a PN general officer serving as the Deputy Commanding General for Interoperability at the ARSOUTH Headquarters—a billet that rotates among four PNs to fill.[3] Staff Talks ATAs also included exercises such as PANAMAX and SOUTHERN VANGUARD, activities where interpretation contracts helped units overcome language barriers and technical and procedural interoperability greatly improved as U.S. and PN units trained together.

The Conference of American Armies (CAA) also fosters greater interoperability among Member Armies in the Western Hemisphere. Culture is an important aspect of this organization, as it formed in 1960 and has grown since then to "address common issues" and enable participating nations to "face in a combined and comprehensive manner possible threats against [the] continent" (Conference of American Armies, "Our History"). One CAA objective is to "determine the common aspects existing between the armies and the concrete initiatives to improve interoperability" (Conference of American Armies, "Priorities and Finality"). Army Commanders' remarks during the 2024–2025 CAA cycle's Inaugural Meeting of Commanders in Mexico City, Mexico, highlighted how shared values foster cooperation among Member Armies, as Commanders mentioned themes like democracy, human rights, and transparency as they discussed multinational training

and plans to maintain regional security. At the strategic level of engagement (see Figure 12.1), the CAA promoted human interoperability as Army Commanders met with their counterparts in bilateral sessions to strengthen personal bonds, discuss topics specific to their countries, and learn about one another's priorities.

1st Security Force Assistance Brigade

Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) are a unique U.S. Army resource to promote interoperability. SFABs are "specialized U.S. Army units with the core mission to conduct advise, support, liaise and assess operations with allied and partner nations" (Department of the Army, "Security Force Assistance Brigades"). The 1st SFAB is regionally aligned to the USSOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility and employs advisors forward in persistent and episodic deployments through coordination with ARSOUTH (Feickert). To optimize the force for advising missions, SFABs have no junior enlisted soldiers.

Pre-deployment training for advisors includes a multiday culturally immersive mission readiness exercise with Spanish-speaking role players and an optional language study program with contracted local and virtual tutor sessions (Elmore, "Basic Information"). ARSOUTH also hosts a multiday mission preparation seminar where staff, including Foreign Area Officers, brief key political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time factors of the operational environment (Department of the Army, *Operations Process* 1–12). Through such training events, Security Force Assistance (SFA) advisors acquire foreign language proficiency at the basic level or with key terms and "foundational culture-general skills," such as suspending judgment, cultivating perspective taking, and developing intercultural communication skills, all of which help them build rapport with PN counterparts (Henk and Abbe).

Between 2022 and 2024, activities with PN forces during persistent and episodic deployments generally involved institutional-level partnerships to increase interoperability with a focus on doctrine. For instance, program of instruction development in schoolhouses fostered greater procedural interoperability at the tactical level (see Figure 12.1). Some teams contained bilingual soldiers, but generally, advisors utilized contracted interpreters to achieve mutual understanding despite language barriers, which were common when discussing technical fields like medicine or communications. When beginning new partnerships with foreign units, advisors conducted baseline assessments to understand differences in capabilities,

doctrine, and processes. Through this regional expertise concerning security forces, teams developed advising plans to enhance interoperability, often with strategic impacts. For instance, the 1st SFAB maintained a persistent presence in Colombia where teams conducted institutional advising on doctrine and supported the 1st Field Artillery Battalion's training as it pursued North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) certification (Elmore, "U.S. Army Advisors Strengthen Partnership"). Such activities, as explained by one Battalion Commander, help to ensure our partners are "able to fight in a combined arms environment" and "increase[s] the capability of […] future coalitions" (Elmore, "U.S. Army Advisors Strengthen Partnership").

Combined Exercises

PANAMAX 22

PANAMAX is one of several combined training events involving Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries that rely on LREC to build interoperability. PANAMAX is a USSOUTHCOM-sponsored, biannual, multinational exercise focused on defense of the Panama Canal. The exercise scenario requires a multinational training force to execute stability operations under the auspices of a United Nations Security Council Resolution to secure the Panama Canal. Most forces are notional, as exercise participants comprise the command and staff of higher echelon units, namely, Multinational Forces-South (MNFS)—a Combined Joint Task Force for contingency operations—and its Combined Commands for Land, Air, Maritime, and Special Operations Components, headquartered at various locations across the United States. Nearly 150 participants from 19 PNs participated in the PANAMAX 22 Command Post Exercise at Joint Base San Antonio, Texas, in August 2022. Major General William L. Thigpen, Commanding General of U.S. Army South and MNFS Commander during PANAMAX 22, stated that the event provided "a great opportunity to train together, build interoperability and really strengthen our partnerships" (Taeckens). LREC influenced degrees of success achieved in human, procedural, and technical interoperability throughout this exercise.

According to Colombian Army Brigadier General Hernando Garzón, the Deputy Commanding General for Interoperability at ARSOUTH and the MNFS Deputy Commanding General for Operations during PANAMAX 22, "The main challenge during PANAMAX was in the human domain, specifically the language barrier and cross-cultural interactions" (Garzon Rey 62). This hindered some collaboration and slowed planning efforts. English was the official language for exercise briefings,

meetings, and documents, but since few PN participants understood English, they relied on contract support for interpretation and translation. Additionally, throughout the MNFS and Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), "leaders from each directorate were foreign officers, [which] motivated them to take a leadership position," despite challenges in communication resulting from limited English proficiency (Garzon Rey 62). Military vernacular further complicated matters, so U.S. soldiers and contracted translators developed a glossary of terms and acronyms. This enabled participants to understand key documents and contribute to working groups and other collaborative efforts.

In anticipation of the command post exercise (CPX), participants discussed standards to improve procedural interoperability at the operational level during three planning conferences and two planning-in-crisis events (see Figure 12.1). These engagements helped to refine a 1,318-page Multinational Force Standard Operating Procedures manual developed throughout the PANAMAX exercise series. Planners constructed a Legal Annex with a matrix outlining coalition countries' national law restrictions. The MNFS also contained two PN judge advocates. The MNFS Staff Judge Advocate explained that their presence in the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate (OSJA) was "vital to understand international caveats and authorities, including interpreting rules of engagement and international treaties from their perspective" (Keeler 50). He also elaborated on how language abilities impacted their mission, as "the Brazilian counterpart, who was proficient in English, was extremely valuable in all aspects of the legal mission, while the OSJA had difficulty communicating with the other PN officer who only spoke and understood Spanish" (Keeler 50).

Senior leaders in PN forces have generally served at the brigade level or below and lack experience and knowledge of operations at the echelon of a joint task force. During the CPX, administrators distributed U.S. personnel to ensure main staff cells in the CFLCC had at least one U.S. officer or NCO. This helped alleviate some of the gaps in knowledge concerning U.S. military terms and processes. Throughout the exercise, however, U.S. personnel accounted for only 17 percent of the CFLCC staff, whereas they constituted 88 percent of the MNFS staff (Hughes, "Partner Nation Relationship Building" 30). As a result, many CFLCC sections struggled with gaps in procedural interoperability. They lacked knowledge on U.S. standardized reports such as personnel status reports and logistical status reports for accountability of personnel and equipment, so this required additional coaching and caused some delays with reporting requirements.

In terms of culture, the role of NCOs and use of mealtimes factored into interoperability. NCOs are professional soldiers who are competent and agile leaders. Underpinning this mantle of responsibility is a deep trust in their judgment in the execution of tasks and orders. NCOs practice disciplined initiative, which is "when subordinates have the discipline to follow their orders and adhere to the plan until they realize their orders and the plan are no longer suitable for the situation in which they find themselves" (Department of the Army, *Mission Command*). Cultures regarding NCOs varied greatly among participating nations, readily apparent in the multinational staffing for PANAMAX 22 as NCOs occupied only 13 of the 88 duty positions in the CFLCC (Hughes, "Partner Nation Relationship Building" 28). Another area for improvement involved utilization of mealtimes to promote dialogue and improve human interoperability based on cultural norms. The ARSOUTH Foreign Policy Advisor, Richard C. Merrin, observed, "Many Latin American cultures place a much higher value on knowing each other, rather than just working on a task," and the U.S. Army can better capitalize on that during exercises (qtd. in CALL, *PANAMAX 22* 58).[4]

JRTC Rotation 22-09

JRTC rotations are another venue where U.S. and foreign units can develop interoperability through combined training, but this largely depends on participants' abilities to incorporate LREC factors. In August 2022, a Brazilian Army Airmobile Company participated in JRTC rotation 22-09 at Fort Polk, Louisiana. This was the Brazilian Army's second JRTC rotation in history, but the first for that unit. Although both sides prepared for the rotation by observing one another's training and conducting planning conferences, gaps in language proficiency and regional expertise (specifically concerning one another's procedures and techniques) impacted their abilities to communicate, plan, and execute missions. U.S. soldiers did not speak Portuguese, and only some Brazilians, mainly officers, had some degree of English abilities. Procedures shared some similarities, but differences influenced synchronization of activities, such as different call-for-fire procedures that delayed indirect fire support.

One method to achieve training objectives and advance interoperability through successfully leveraging LREC involved attaching a U.S. Army Liaison Officer to the Brazilian Army's Exercise Support Group. The LNO was a U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer fluent in Portuguese with a rich knowledge of Brazilian Army capabilities. This background enabled the LNO to promote mutual understanding between

U.S. and Brazilian forces. The LNO attended all the Brazilian Army's Exercise Support Group meetings where leaders discussed administrative challenges that often required the LNO's assistance to resolve and led to observations on interoperability. For instance, one cultural practice was that the U.S. training unit overclassified orders and operations documents vital to the training rotation, which hindered mutual understanding and planning efforts with the Brazilian Army. LNO engagement with JRTC leadership helped to remedy this issue, but U.S. units appointing and training foreign disclosure officers to address releasability of documents would foster information-sharing and overcome cultural practices of overclassification. These efforts helped to address barriers to procedural interoperability at the tactical level (see Figure 12.1).

English-speaking Brazilian officers also helped training units overcome language barriers and accomplish training objectives. The Brazilian officers embedded in U.S. Army Battalion and Brigade Tactical Operations Centers offered a redundant means for Brazilian units to relay information, such as personnel and logistics status reporting. These Brazilian staff officers filled knowledge gaps among U.S. staffs regarding Brazilian Army capabilities to enable proper employment of the Brazilian Company in operations. The U.S. units, however, failed to assign these Brazilians to specific positions in their staffs, likely due to cultural differences in treating these foreign officers more as observers with limited involvement in the training event than participants. All the officers in the Brazilian Company also spoke varying degrees of English, which helped them to understand directions from higher headquarters and disseminate guidance in Portuguese to their own troops. These linguistic abilities enabled the Brazilian Company to conduct complex tasks in conjunction with U.S. forces, including a combined arms breach with a U.S. Army Sapper breach force and a Brazilian Army assault force.

Finally, an SFA advisor team remained attached to the Brazilian Army Company throughout the training event. Although the team did not contain Portuguese speakers, the advisors fostered greater procedural interoperability as they worked closely with the English-speaking Brazilians to overcome some gaps in regional expertise or language. Such gaps included U.S. radio etiquette for proper communication, differences in call-for-fire procedures required for indirect fire missions, and some U.S. Army acronyms or tactical terms impacting accuracy in reporting and the orders process. The SFA team also asked Brazilian Army officers to backbrief them after receiving missions to ensure that the Brazilian leaders understood orders. Separately, the communications plan between U.S. and Brazilian forces lacked redundancy, as it relied on a limited band of frequencies for

Brazilians to communicate with U.S. units, rather than multiple communications platforms in case one failed or was not compatible. The SFA team's presence helped to overcome this shortfall in regional expertise and technical interoperability through its organic communications equipment that was compatible with that of the U.S. training unit.

SOUTHERN VANGUARD 24

Exercise SOUTHERN VANGUARD 24 (ExSV24), conducted from November 1–16, 2024, enhanced interoperability through combined training in the Brazilian cities of Belém and Macapá, as well as the municipality of Oiapoque. There, U.S. and Brazilian forces conducted several training events, including jungle operations academics, air assault planning and operations, combined fires planning, and integration of special operations forces. ExSV24 provided unique opportunities to improve interoperability through technology experimentation to address gaps in LREC. In accordance with USSOUTHCOM guidance, ARSOUTH incorporated testing of new technology into training and exercises, which included software and applications involving language (Richardson 20).[5]

One example of such software is the Radio Interoperability Capability-Universal (RIC-U), a device that allows secure, real-time audio communication between U.S. Army forces and foreign counterparts during multinational operations (Reed-Cox). Although these successful tests bridged communications gaps and enhanced technical interoperability at the tactical level (see Figure 12.1) by linking U.S. Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System (SINGARS) and the Brazilian Army's tactical radios, subject matter experts needed to develop software to overcome language barriers—a limitation to the RIC-U—to render mutual intelligibility between users on both ends. To do so, the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command (DEVCOM) sought to develop translation software. During ExSV24, soldiers tested a beta form of this software, and DEVCOM is continuing to enhance this capability similar to Google Translate to overcome language barriers (Reed-Cox).

Implications for LREC and Interoperability

External State Actor Efforts to Enhance Interoperability in LAC Region

There exists potential for LREC to influence U.S. competition with external state actors, especially China. For instance, the People's Republic of China (PRC) does not have long-standing military cooperation relationships like the United States

has in Latin America and the Caribbean. The PRC has sought inroads through confidence-building measures, including exchanges with military academic institutions. China's PME outreach in the region has steadily increased since the 1990s, largely due to "investments in PME programs and expansion of Spanish-language capabilities," and the topic is a noted intelligence gap as smaller embassies "are not staffed to closely track and evaluate Chinese and other adversary outreach through programs like PME exchanges, so they may not even be aware of the shift in relative participation and influence" (Campbell et al. 45 and 116).[6]

Although China has invested in such outreach to fund foreign students' expenses, China's efforts in LREC seem to have improved relationships with LAC countries in terms of confidence-building but accomplished little regarding interoperability. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) hosts several students from LAC armies, where most courses are in either English or Spanish and have no requirements for Chinese proficiency (Hughes, "Lessons in the Dragon's Lair" 65). This contrasts with English proficiency requirements for U.S. Army schools with few exceptions, such as courses in Spanish at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC). Over time, it is likely that more senior leaders in LAC will have completed courses in China, given China's increasing investment in relationships with LAC countries. Some factors like cultural differences may be counterproductive to China's PME objectives. For instance, Chinese PME curriculums do not contain instruction or discussion on values that are fundamental to U.S. PME, such as democracy, ethics, and human rights (Hughes, "Lessons in the Dragon's Lair" 62). Such principles are shared values among the United States and most LAC countries. In contrast, the PLA utilizes academic institutions for security-related research and potential espionage (Hughes, "Lessons in the Dragon's Lair" 63).

Coalition Operations and Burden Sharing

Another implication related to the future of LREC factors and interoperability involves coalition operations and burden sharing. Regional expertise directly influences expectations of partners and how the United States approaches integrated deterrence in terms of roles and burden sharing, accounting for partners' restrictions and limitations.[7] Several nations' constitutions prohibit deployment of forces to external conflicts, preventing their committal of forces to coalition operations. Others may lack the institutional capacity to deploy forces or the political will to do so. A combination of such factors limited participation from Latin America and the Caribbean in recent U.S. wars.[8] Consideration of these variables may lead nations to contribute to a collective effort in specific ways only,

such as contributing troops or funds to peacekeeping operations, exporting defense training, or supporting regional disaster response efforts.

Accounting for LREC factors contributes to integrated deterrence as set forth in the NDS and leverages partners' comparative advantages. United States Military Groups and Security Cooperation Offices at U.S. embassies play an integral role in this through assessments. They also coordinate foreign military sales to enhance technical interoperability, and historical knowledge can improve these assessments by identifying the foundation for military doctrine (e.g., French, Russian, or U.S.) and reasons behind standing inventory (e.g., mixture of U.S. and Russian stock). The U.S. Army's trajectory for modernization can also influence interoperability. For instance, upgrading communications equipment in platforms may affect foreign military sales as the U.S. divests equipment and sells or donates it to PNs, and may render partners' equipment incompatible in communicating with U.S. equipment, which degrades technical interoperability.

State Partnership Program

Decisions regarding LREC may also affect the State Partnership Program (SPP). In this program, the National Guard of some U.S. states is partnered with the counterpart forces of a foreign nation. Since the SPP began in 1993, it has fostered ties through 89 partnerships with 106 nations. The National Guard considered commonalities in language and culture between U.S. states and foreign countries when forming new partnerships. This influenced Florida's pairing with Guyana, Venezuela, and the Regional Security System due to Florida's population of migrants or descendants from those areas, and Louisiana and Haiti because they "shared a French colonial history" (Boehm et al. 31).[9] To facilitate partnerships, the state generally assigns a Bilateral Affairs Officer (BAO) to the U.S. embassy in its partnered country to oversee and coordinate security cooperation activities, such as combined training events, subject matter expert exchanges, leader visits, and conferences. Language skills are not a requirement for BAOs, however. In most cases, BAOs do not receive language training or a foreign language proficiency bonus. When language barriers exist, this can hinder human interoperability and weaken conditions to develop interoperability among forces. Where possible, National Guard units may identify a candidate with language proficiency and regional or cultural knowledge, but this challenge will likely persist due to budget restrictions, time considerations, and other factors.

International Military Education and Training

Finally, language proficiency may also influence aspects of future PME engagement. Sometimes, prospective students from abroad fail to qualify for U.S. Army PME courses because they lack the necessary degree of English language proficiency. Similarly, foreign countries may extend invitations to the U.S. Army to send soldiers to certain courses taught in their official language, but the U.S. Army may not fill those seats due to a lack of soldiers proficient in that language. There is a chance that external state actors might fill seats left vacant by the United States. Forecasting foreign courses for multiple years can help identify such opportunities with sufficient time to provide candidates with requisite training. Continued funding to establish and support English language labs abroad, which help partners develop proficiency in English, can mitigate the likelihood of partners falling short of proficiency requirements for PME courses.

Conclusion

Language, regional expertise, and culture play a significant role in U.S. and partner nation interoperability across the human, technical, and procedural domains. In combined operations, units must overcome language barriers to ensure mutual understanding, whether that be through organic linguistic abilities, contracted interpretation support, or technical means. Regional expertise helps leaders manage expectations of their partner force and understand restrictions for operations to enhance interoperability, especially in the procedural domain. Finally, cultural awareness fosters greater interoperability in operations. Failures to consider and account for differences in these areas can hinder units' abilities to act together to achieve objectives.

Additional research on the impacts of LREC may help to improve quantitative analysis involving security cooperation. This could enhance the RAND Corporation's Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool by adding measurements to the algorithm or refining weighted values of categories. Assessments on LREC discrepancies among position descriptions, requirements, and incentives for security cooperation stakeholders, such as BAOs, could also improve efficiency and effectiveness. Another area for further study involves external state actors' approaches to LREC and how they exploit conditions. Case studies could include Russia and Russian enclaves in neighboring countries or terrorist groups like Hezbollah raising funds and maintaining support throughout the world among those who migrated during the Lebanese diaspora.

In terms of policy and practice, a meaningful study could consider policy trade-offs involving LREC to explore how U.S. emphasis on interoperability may pressure or influence partners' force design and priorities. This could determine if partners create or designate specific units for interoperability initiatives with the United States at the expense of other units in their formations. Then, the study could determine if the United States is building interoperability with those units only, rather than their entire force, or if partners are dedicating resources to advance the capabilities of only those units. Finally, experimentation with technology may help bridge gaps in combined operations. Continued use of interpretation and translation software can help units overcome language barriers. The U.S. Army can add foreign languages to these platforms and validate them during combined training events. Units may also leverage foreign liaison officers to contribute military terms to the language corpus in use.

Notes

1. In 2013, the RAND Corporation developed the Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool, an algorithm with 66 measurements that combine to determine 27 construct scores to evaluate the propensity for security cooperation success with specific partners. In contrast to qualitative methods used in most studies, this quantitative research approach enables analysis for the degree to which factors influence security cooperation relative to other factors. Of the algorithm's 27 constructs, 8 directly involve LREC, and their relative weights imply that although some are not so influential on security cooperation as non-LREC factors (e.g., historical success with foreign aid), LREC factors heavily influence security cooperation, and therefore, interoperability. Later versions of this algorithm, updated with new information in measurement datasets, have enabled longitudinal studies involving these variables. On this, see Christopher Paul et al., *The RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool* (RAND Corporation, 2013), Table A.1. Constructs involving LREC factors, along with their relative weights in the original 2013 algorithm, include: 3.2 (Partner Nation citizen perception of United States), 0.08; 3.3 (Long-term relationship between United States and Partner Nation), 0.13; 3.4 (Shared interests between United States and Partner Nation), 0.30; 7.1 (Partner Nation democratic), 0.080; 7.5 (Lack of Partner Nation government corruption), 0.030; 7.6 (Partner Nation human rights), 0.010; 8.1 (Partner Nation economy), 0.400; and 10.3 (U.S.–Partner Nation common language), 0.013.
2. Here, engagement levels refer to the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of operations. The domains of interoperability include human, technical, and procedural.
3. Other PN positions specific to interoperability include the Deputy Commanding General for Interoperability at V Corps in Europe and the Deputy Commander for Interoperability at 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii.

4. Mr. Merrin explained, "As a diplomat, I also was troubled to see that we did not make best use of mealtimes to develop friendly working relationships with PN participants. Those staffing some joint warfighting functions pulled together snacks and a coffee machine. But frequently, PN participants took a bus offsite for their meals (perhaps missing a few hours of participation), while U.S. participants went off in search of food or ate their packed lunches at their tables. I do not think a real operation would look like this. Particularly for our area of responsibility, where much can develop over a meal, including understanding and reaching agreement. We missed a good opportunity. Just standing in line and complaining about the food can build rapport that might pay off years down the road" (qtd. in CALL, *PANAMAX 22* 58).

5. General Laura J. Richardson stated the following: "USSOUTHCOM serves as an innovative test bed for [the Department of Defense], interagency, private industry, and academia to develop new technologies to maintain our innovative edge over the [People's Republic of China], Russia, and other adversaries. The Western Hemisphere is a permissive environment with a higher tolerance for technology failure, and a diverse climate, geography, and topology" (20).

6. LREC factors, especially language, are integral to China achieving objectives set forth in Chinese policy papers on LAC published in 2008 and 2016, including the intent to "actively carry out military exchanges and defense dialogue and cooperation" and deepen "professional exchanges in military training, personnel training and peacekeeping." On this, see *China's Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean* dated Apr. 20, 2009, part IV, sec. 4, para. 1–3, and the one dated Nov. 24, 2016, part IV, sec. 6, para. 1.

7. For instance, Argentina's National Defense Law 23.554/88, Decree 571/20 limits Argentinian forces to combatting conventional forces. Hence, the participation of Argentinian forces in exercises or external conflicts would likely be limited to providing instruction and training support, performing humanitarian aid tasks, and logistical support to coalition forces. On this, see Hughes, "Partner Nation Relationship Building" (23).

8. From the USSOUTHCOM area of responsibility, only the Dominican Republic (2003–2004), El Salvador (2003–2009), Honduras (2003–2004), and Nicaragua (2003–2004) sent forces to the War in Iraq. Similarly, only El Salvador (2011–2014) sent forces to the War in Afghanistan.

9. The relationship with Venezuela is dormant. Florida's partnership with the Regional Security System (RSS) is listed as one partnership, but the RSS contains seven countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. See the "National Guard State Partnership Program" map (State Partnership Program, Department of Defense).

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CHAPTER 13

Intercultural Security Cooperation (ISC)

A Distinctive Approach to Building Partnerships and Transforming Conflict

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Abstract

This chapter will focus on Intercultural Security Cooperation (ISC), an integrated approach to international security cooperation that foregrounds intercultural communication for sustainable partnerships. At its core, ISC highlights the role of security cooperation practitioners' questioning intercultural assumptions, probing perceptions, and clarifying interpretations to develop meaningful programs with sustained impact. This intercultural approach centers on the identification of shared interests, enhancement of cooperation, and enabling of successful security cooperation projects—ultimately promoting global peace and security in the process. The chapter will explore knowledge (e.g., of cultural norms, local histories), skills (e.g., critical reflection, observation, ethnographic interviewing), and attitudes (e.g., curiosity, openness, respect for difference, critical empathy) that intercultural security cooperation can foster (Avineri "Dispositions" 37–43; Deardorff "Assessing" 232–33, 238). The chapter will also foreground the role of tension in exploring these intercultural dynamics (Avineri "Paying Attention" 41). Overall, this chapter considers defense, influence, and strategy as fundamentally intercultural endeavors that have the potential to foster interpersonal, institutional, and macro-level relationships around shared security interests now and into the future.

KEYWORDS: critical empathy, cultural norms, defense strategy, global peace, intercultural communication, intercultural security cooperation, security cooperation, sustainable partnerships

Introduction

How is a farmers' market in Monterey, California, connected to a U.S. air logistics hub in West Africa? Among the scents and sounds wafting through the California street is a diverse group of shoppers. Their participation is paid for by U.S. taxpayers and is designed to strengthen defense relationships with partner nations. Their interactions at the local market, a meeting with the city mayor, and trips to nearby cities are part of the U.S. Department of Defense's Field Studies Program. The program complements classroom-based lessons by exposing these international leaders to the American way of life. The program integrates these components because exposure to everyday citizens and American culture is seen to have a profound impact on these senior leaders long after the classroom-based lessons may have been forgotten. The intercultural understanding that is fostered during their time in America is expected to influence their support for a strong and enduring partnership with the United States—such as the survival of the U.S. air logistic hub in their region.

This chapter will focus on Intercultural Security Cooperation (ISC), an integrated approach to international security cooperation that foregrounds intercultural communication for sustainable partnerships. At its core, ISC highlights the role of security cooperation practitioners' questioning intercultural assumptions, probing perceptions, and clarifying interpretations to develop meaningful programs with sustained impact. This intercultural approach centers on the identification of shared interests, enhancement of cooperation, and enabling of successful security cooperation projects—ultimately promoting global peace and security in the process. The chapter will explore knowledge (e.g., of cultural norms, local histories), skills (e.g., critical reflection, observation, ethnographic interviewing), and attitudes (e.g., curiosity, openness, respect for difference, critical empathy) that intercultural security cooperation can foster (Avineri "Dispositions" 37–43; Deardorff "Assessing" 232–33, 238). Furthermore, navigating diverse assumptions, perceptions, and interpretations is central to effective intercultural engagement in security cooperation partnerships. The chapter will also foreground the role of tension (Avineri "Paying Attention" 41) and transforming conflict (Lederach 1) in exploring these intercultural dynamics more broadly. Overall, this chapter considers defense, influence, and strategy as fundamentally intercultural endeavors that have the potential to foster interpersonal, institutional, and macro-level relationships around shared security interests now and into the future.

U.S.security cooperation is a complex endeavor, designed to "encourage and enable ally and partner actions that support mutual security goals consistent with U.S.

national security objectives" (Defense Security Cooperation Agency website) and promote collaboration in support of shared security interests. The term "security cooperation" was first introduced in 1997 by the Defense Reform Initiative (DRI), and the Department of Defense (DOD) published a formal, yet broad, definition of security cooperation in Joint Pub 1-02, as amended 9 June 2004:

> All DOD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation. (Defense Security Cooperation University, *Security Cooperation Management* 1-1)

While the broad goals of security cooperation are fairly clear, the nuances associated with achieving real partnership are anything but. The specific cultural relationship that the United States has with every other nation means that its approach to partners and partnerships can differ greatly. While considerable effort is being made to standardize approaches irrespective of context, the complexity and ambiguity on how to build effective relationships with host governments and individual officials can pose significant barriers. This is particularly true when (understandably) the security cooperation community tries to influence host-country counterparts and institutions to prioritize U.S. interests. Herein lies a great challenge to security cooperation partnerships: a relationship founded on a donor nation providing valuable resources that support the donor's interest—rather than first finding common ground on a mutually beneficial plan that addresses both nations' interests—is unlikely to lead to sustainable partnerships or desired outcomes (Gerspacher 59).

The practice of security cooperation is evolving and maturing, with increasing emphasis on long-term Defense Institution Building (DIB) or Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) efforts. These approaches support "partners in developing the strong institutional foundations needed for legitimate, effective, professional, and sustainable defense sectors that contribute to the overall security and prosperity of the state—and in turn, to regional stability and U.S. national security" (Kerr ix). Often, this requires that partners change how they manage their security sectors by, for example, confronting corruption, enhancing maintenance practices, and sustaining a state of military readiness.

Every relationship is infused with tension, and this is certainly the case when countries partner in the defense of their citizens. Diverse nations with different histories, cultures, and contexts seek partnerships in support of their national interests. Assumptions (about what those interests are and how best to achieve them),

perceptions (about priorities, processes, and responsibilities), and interpretations (about how each side is holding up its end of the bargain) can combine to create intercultural misconceptions that run the risk of undermining the very goals that the partnerships are established to achieve. However, if approached with a conflict transformation lens, these intercultural misconceptions can become productive opportunities for deeper understanding and cooperation.

Navigating Culture and Change

In order to best engage in intercultural security cooperation, it is important to first deepen our understanding of what "culture" is. The notion of culture has several features that are relevant for intercultural security cooperation, including that it is learned, shared, patterned; multi-leveled (surface, middle, deep); performative; influential; relatively stable (but not static); adaptive to human needs; and dependent on the whole or system (Selmeski 16). Change is hard and can threaten an order that benefits partner nation elites who profit in one way or another from the status quo. Thus, many security cooperation efforts result in a situation where the donor country promotes changes to little or no avail, because the power brokers in the recipient country fundamentally do not agree to the donor's vision—or are even threatened financially by the changes being proposed (Gerspacher 60). Change capacities at levels of self, group, and learning organization are one element of leadership in security-related areas (Walker 29), as shown in the Canadian Forces Leader Framework (Figure 13.1).

Figure 13.1

Canadian Forces Leader Framework

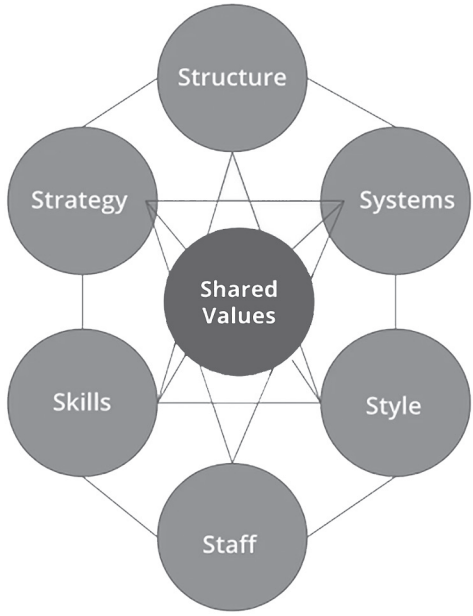


Source: Walker 29, as cited by Selmeski 16

The renowned management consulting group McKinsey & Company focuses on institutional development and helping its clients "create meaningful and lasting change," which we believe provides a relevant framework for sustainable change in intercultural security cooperation. When the firm introduced its 7-S framework on organizational change (Figure 13.2) in the late 1970s, it was heralded as an innovative new way of examining how institutions operate ("Enduring Ideas"). Nearly fifty years later, it continues to be a valuable tool that can help define the complexity of organizations and the goals they aim to achieve, emphasizing that structure alone is not organization. The framework provides seven elements, all of which start with the letter *s*. The first three are considered hard *s*'s and include *strategy*, *structure*, and *systems*. The second three are considered soft *s*'s and include *skills*, *staff,* and *style*. The final *s*, integrated in the center and linked to all others, reflecting its overarching importance, is *shared values*. Organizational "culture" and "values" are sometimes differentiated as the institutional environment in which personnel operate and the guiding principles for institutional decision-making.

Figure 13.2

Teams



Source: McKinsey & Company

The U.S. security cooperation enterprise is made up of many strategies, structures, and systems, and has a workforce of many thousands of skilled staff, each with their own style and approach to their work. From theater campaign plans to congressional appropriation reporting requirements to interagency collaboration, security cooperation comprises complex pursuits of partnership. As highlighted by the McKinsey 7-S framework (Peters and Waterman), shared values at a fundamental level are critical to success in these partnerships. Arguably, many security cooperation programs do not give cultural differences enough consideration and suffer—or even fail—as a result.

As this chapter demonstrates, a careful analysis of culture, digging into values and beliefs, strengthens understanding between partners and supports effective and meaningful change.

Vignette: Cultivating "With" Relationships to Transform Conflict

In this section, we provide a short, fictional vignette about power dynamics and defense resources in an international partnership for security cooperation. We encourage the reader to consider applications of intercultural communication and conflict transformation concepts to the vignette, which we will return to toward the end of the chapter.

> Lieutenant Commander Jones, Chief of the Office of Security Cooperation at the U.S. embassy, looked with disappointment at the two small Defender class patrol boats docked at the naval pier in the partner nation's main harbor. The vessels had been delivered just four years ago, but the gleaming white paint was already peeling in the equatorial sun—revealing rust beneath. Security cooperation planners had envisioned joint patrols that would ensure the safe flow of international shipping and interdict drug traffickers. The package had included a maintenance training program and the periodic delivery of spare parts, but the vessels, now grounded in port due to a limited supply of fuel, seemed unlikely to go out to sea anytime soon. The Chief felt a knot of consternation tighten in her stomach.
>
> A decade ago, a group of international advisors had visited the national capital to provide technical expertise for the development of a National Maritime Security Strategy. The strategy laid out a vision for enhanced maritime security through regional cooperation and naval interoperability. The strategy identified five specific lines of activity to achieve its goals. The partner had courteously accepted the strategy and participated in an elaborate launching ceremony, but the partner country never made any real progress on any of the lines of activity.

> The Defenders had been delivered to help implement the strategy. It seemed perfect on paper: Provide the assets to curb piracy and improve regional stability, while gaining access and building goodwill in the process. The strategy made sense, and if implemented, should help achieve the maritime security goals shared by both countries.
>
> Now the Defenders were in a sore spot between the United States and the partner nation. The partner nation's navy, while enthusiastic, lacked the organization to maintain the vessels, and the complex navigation systems were beyond the technical expertise of many crew members. Cultural misunderstandings further belied progress, as rigid U.S. protocols clashed with the limited capacity, lack of resources, and more specific local approaches. Ultimately, a lack of alignment with the nation's existing capabilities and the absence of strong political will to tackle corruption left the expensive vessels underutilized, failing to secure the nation's waters.

Literature Review: U.S. Security Cooperation, Intercultural Communication, and Conflict Transformation

In order to analyze the potential role of intercultural communication and conflict transformation in U.S. security cooperation, here we provide key literature in each of those areas: official national security documents focused on U.S. security cooperation and works on intercultural communication and conflict transformation.

U.S. Security Cooperation

A survey of U.S. national security documents should start with the 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS). The NSS lays out the president's perception of the state of the world, the security challenges facing the nation, and a vision for the future. Cultural and moral values are fundamental to this vision, which describes a competition of values facing the global community. Early in the text of the 2022 strategy, President Joe Biden states:

> This National Security Strategy lays out our plan to achieve a better future of a free, open, secure, and prosperous world. Our strategy is rooted in our national interests: to protect the security of the American people; to expand economic prosperity and opportunity; and to realize and defend the democratic values at the heart of the American way of life. We can do none of this alone and we do not have to. Most nations around the world define their interests in ways that are compatible with ours. We will build the strongest and broadest possible coalition of nations that seek to cooperate with each other, while competing with those powers that offer a darker vision and thwarting their efforts to threaten our interests. (7)

At its core, the NSS is based on cultural values. It is a guiding document designed to help the U.S. national security community navigate different visions of the future and make decisions in accordance with the moral values articulated by the commander in chief.

Next in the list of U.S. national security documents is the National Defense Strategy (NDS) of the U.S. Department of Defense, which includes a range of elements relevant to ISC. The NDS further emphasizes the important role that partnerships play in promoting stability and security. Fundamental to partnerships are shared values. Thus, the NDS's call for partnership is a moral appeal for diverse nations to band together in support of a specific, culturally oriented global order. The 2022 NDS states:

> Close collaboration with Allies and partners is foundational for U.S. national security interests. . . . We strive to be a trusted defense partner. We respect the sovereignty of all states, and we know that the decisions that our Allies and partners face are rarely binary. We recognize that when it comes to our security relationships, the Department cannot rely on rhetoric. Early and continuous consideration, engagement, and, where possible, collaboration with Allies and partners in planning is essential for advancing our shared interests. The 2022 National Defense Strategy is a call to action for the defense enterprise to incorporate Allies and partners at every stage of defense planning. (U.S. DOD, *2022 National Defense Strategy* 14)

The partnership and collaboration of nations with shared values in support of mutual security interests is encapsulated in the practice of security cooperation. Security cooperation engagements are enabled by the U.S. Congress via an authorization-appropriation process that provides for two separate types of measures—authorization bills and appropriation bills—each of which perform different functions. First, authorization bills establish, continue, or modify agencies or programs and give them the authority to perform their mandates. Second, appropriations bills provide the funds to implement mandates (Congressional Research Service). Appropriations come in the form of Title 10 (Department of Defense) Security Cooperation funds, and Title 22 (Department of State) Security Assistance funds, both of which are provided to engage with partners and allies and strengthen relationships in support of common national security interests.

In practice, the mandate to strengthen these relationships largely falls to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA). DSCA is an agency within the United States Department of Defense that provides financial and technical assistance, transfer of defense materiel, training, and services to allies and partners and promotes military-to-military relations (see the DSCA website www.dsca.mil).

A key guiding document that DSCA uses to administer security cooperation efforts is the *Security Assistance Management Manual*, or the SAMM. The SAMM consists of 16

chapters, covering everything from "Security Cooperation Overview and Relationships" to "Financial Policies and Procedures" to "Case Reconciliation and Closure."

In addition to the SAAM, every year DSCA's Defense Security Cooperation University publishes a textbook covering the full range of security cooperation activities. The book is titled Security Cooperation Management and is often referred to as the "Green Book" as it is bound in a green cover. The 2022 edition is 652 pages long and includes ten references to culture (one of which notes the different institutional cultures between the U.S. Department of Defense and U.S. Department of State). It encourages security cooperation practitioners to take culture into account, noting that "Successful SCO [Security Cooperation Organization] personnel will take a sincere personal interest in the host nation's culture, history, customs, and religion, and will cultivate both personal and professional relationships with local counterparts, which often form the basis of life-long contacts and friendships" (DSCU, Security Cooperation Management 4–10). This is good advice. However, as recommended below, given the critical role that culture plays in successful security cooperation programming, greater emphasis on—and concrete training in—cross-cultural understanding could strengthen the partnerships that the United States seeks to establish.

As noted above, security cooperation is currently undergoing a significant, congressionally mandated revamp. The overhaul of the enterprise is designed to professionalize security cooperation efforts with the goal of making them more effective, sustainable, and ultimately successful.

> To meet the requirements of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the Secretary of Defense directed DSCA to establish the Security Cooperation Workforce Development Program and lead the Department's education, training, and certification program per 10 USC §384. In September 2019, DSCA established the Defense Security Cooperation University (DSCU) and added the School of Security Cooperation Studies (SSCS) as a DSCU component to support the DSCA requirement to train, certify, and provide for the long-term development of the Security Cooperation workforce at home and abroad. DSCU's role was further expanded in April 2021 when the Institute for Security Governance (ISG), Defense Institute of International Legal Studies (DIILS), and other international training and education programs were brought under its umbrella, thus broadening the scope of the University to include program implementation. (DSCU, "About DSCU")

In FY23, in response to the National Defense Strategy Implementation plan, DSCU established the Defense Security Cooperation Service (DSCS); developed the Research, Analysis, and Lessons Learned Institute; and launched Security

Cooperation Certification 2.0 to standardize security cooperation approaches and professionalize the Security Cooperation Workforce. That year it also established the College of Strategic Security Cooperation and welcomed the Defense Resources Management Institute (DRMI) as the fifth DSCU component. Section 1204 of the FY24 NDAA provided critical updates to 10 USC §384, including enshrining DSCU into law with the mandate to ensure that those who represent the DOD to partner nations are a professionalized force with the training and support necessary to advance U.S. national security objectives. In response to this landmark legislation, DSCU is currently enhancing the training and education of the Security Cooperation Workforce. It is transforming the way that Security Cooperation personnel with duties in U.S. embassies worldwide are organized and managed and is building robust scholarship and lessons learned capabilities to inform the theory and practice of Security Cooperation ("About DSCU").

In the fall of 2024, DSCU also established a new Defense SCO Institute (DSI). DSCU's new DSI will serve as the DOD Security Cooperation Organization (SCO) schoolhouse to provide preparation and training essential for SCO personnel to be mission ready for their assignments (DSCU, "Welcome").

What Is "Culture"?

"Culture" has been defined in multiple ways in fields including anthropology, sociology, and history. For the purposes of this chapter's discussion of ISC, culture is "the creation, maintenance, and transformation of semi-shared patterns of meaning, sense-making, affiliation, action, and organization by groups" (Fosher and Mackenzie 13). It is important to highlight here that cultures integrate ideologies, practices, values, beliefs, and behaviors of a range of individuals in ways that are dynamic and constantly changing. As emphasized in Hall's Iceberg Model of Culture as well as the Onion Model of Culture (Hofstede and Hofstede, Cultures 4–12), there are both observable aspects of culture (e.g., symbols, rituals, artifacts, products, dress, gestures, food, language, music, norms, behaviors, traditions, rituals, patterns of behavior) and non-observable aspects of culture (core values, worldviews, beliefs, attitudes) shaped by formative factors (e.g., history, media, educational systems, family, economics, religion). An analysis of culture should therefore emphasize both its surface and deeper manifestations and the fact that culture is learned, performed, influential (but not deterministic), dynamic, and systemic—and that it integrates dimensions of power, roles, and relationships. The interrelationships among the observable and non-observable aspects of culture are clearly demonstrated in Selmeski's *Core Domains of Culture* (28; see Table 13.1).

Table 13.1

Core Domains of Culture

		Core Domains of Culture (examples of select sub-domains)										
		Family & Kinship	Religion & Spirituality	Sex & Gender	Politics	Economics & Resources	Time & Space	Language & Communication	Technology & Material Culture	History & Myth	Aesthetics, Recreation & Sustenance	Learning & Knowledge
		(e.g., marriage, children, family, origins, descent, inheritance, locality)	(e.g., origins, agency, deities, birth/death/ health/ afterlife, law)	(e.g., categories, roles, identities, responsibilities, reproduction, labor)	(e.g., community, ethnic, regional, national, origins, status/ leadership, law, rituals)	(e.g., production, redistribution, accumulation, exchange)	(e.g., orientation, purpose[s], measurement, relations)	(e.g., verbal & nonverbal, direct vs. indirect, high vs. low context)	(e.g., production, adoption, health, functions)	(e.g., creation, origins, ends, events, individuals, agency)	(e.g., art, music, sport, clothing, adornment, rest, leisure, food, drink)	(e.g., experiential, community, professional, formal)
Levels of Culture (potential forms)	Surface – material & behaviors (verbal & nonverbal)											
	Middle – systems & structures (physical, social, symbolic)											
	Deep – beliefs [aware --> taken for granted] (values, emotions, assumptions)											

Source: Adapted from Selmeski, p. 28.

When considering the role of culture in intercultural security cooperation, it is essential to explore both practices (norms, behaviors, actions, customs, artifacts) as well as ideologies (values, belief systems)—and the ways that these mutually inform one another in the service of international partnerships. In addition, ISC highlights not just cultural products but also the role of cultures in processes of partnership building.

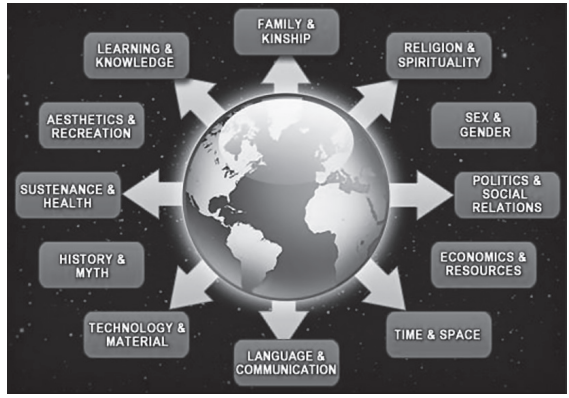
Models of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural security cooperation involves a recognition of culture at multiple scales: macro, meso, micro, and "me-cro" (Avineri and Baquedano-López 10). Intercultural competence, "effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations" (Deardorff, *SAGE Handbook* 33) necessarily integrates a process orientation, including both internal and external outcomes, and can be fostered through a range of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Deardorff, "Assessing" 245; *SAGE Handbook* 268–67). *Knowledge* includes cultural, historical, linguistic, and contextual knowledge; *skills* include observation, listening, evaluation, interpretation, and relating; *attitudes* include openness, respect, curiosity, and discovery. All of these together encompass what some call a "beginner's mind." As Selmeski highlights, intercultural competence is not only about cultural awareness, language training, knowledge of international relations, or information about a particular cultural group (4). Intercultural communicative competence integrates linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and intercultural competencies (Byram 47–48). The interrelatedness of language and culture training is highlighted as well in Watson (95–96). Fostering intercultural development involves mobilizing this range of knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the service of sustainable relationships (Avineri, "'Nested Interculturality'" 37–43; Wolfel 13).

Cultural domains are "categories of human interaction, belief, and meaning that every culture shares. . . . People in all cultures share these broad categories of behaviors, beliefs, and meaning, even though they have different ways of behaving, expressing meaning, and living out their beliefs" (see the Air Force Culture and Language Center and Figure 13.3). In military environments, tools like the ASCOPE-PMESII are frequently used to discern elements of the operating environment, including those related to culture (e.g., politics, economic systems, events, people, and structures).

Figure 13.3

AFCLC Twelve Domains of Culture



Cultural dimensions can frequently come into play as well, including where an individual identifies along these spectra: Independent/Individualism versus Interdependent/Collectivism, Egalitarian/Low Power Distance versus Status-Oriented/Power Distance, Risk-Oriented versus Certainty-Oriented, High Context (implicit) versus Low Context (explicit), Direct versus Indirect, and Task-Oriented versus Relationship-Oriented (as discussed in Hofstede). Though Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been critiqued by some over the years, they can be useful starting places for engagement with different worldviews and ways of being. Engaging with and analyzing these dimensions as a framework can demonstrate that one culture's way of doing things is not the only *right* way and encourages reflection on *taken for granted* aspects of one's own culture (whether organizational, local, regional, and/or national). This can help move individuals and partners from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism (Bennett, "Developmental Approach" 179, "Becoming" 62, "Model" 1, "Ethnorelativism"), through the developmental process of intercultural sensitivity (denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, integration).

When engaging in sustained cooperation and collaboration, it is essential to recognize historical dynamics and analyze present-day relationships before collectively creating a unified vision for the future (see Avineri and Baquedano-López 93–102). These steps involve recognition of one's positionalities, as well as one's commitments relevant to the partnership, in addition to highlighting the contextual practices that may be relevant for that partnership—applying "best practices" to the particulars of that individual, relationship, group, and broader context. In this way, security

cooperation–based change is both relational and aspirational (Avineri and Martinez 1047–50). As Avineri highlights with the "nested interculturality" model, tensions are at the core of productive intercultural communication (37–43). It is essential to "pay attention to the tension to set intention" (Avineri "Cultivating a Language" 41) at multiple scales of partnership building. These tensions can come in the form of assumptions, communication, expectations, histories, norms, perceptions, power dynamics, reasons for engagement, relationships, responsibilities, roles, understandings, and values. Acknowledging, making sense of, and collaboratively working through these tensions can provide meaningful opportunities to deepen one's understanding and build toward sustainable partnerships in the long term. Analyzing intercultural interactions using these lenses can provide key insights to build sustainable partnerships that center accompaniment ("with") relationships—in contrast to empowerment ("for") relationships in the service of meaningful security cooperation (Bucholtz et al. 25–26).

When encountering and engaging with individuals with different cultural backgrounds, one may make inferences based on available data before having a deeper understanding of one's motivations and culturally shaped perspectives. This means that every behavior can be interpreted in diverse ways. A large component of intercultural (mis)understanding comes down to three interconnected components: assumptions, perceptions, and interpretations. An important component of this engagement is identifying generalizations (based on observations and engagement) versus stereotypes to create dynamic, fully informed understandings of individuals and groups. These processes necessarily involve conflict (at individual, interpersonal, and structural scales), which can be harnessed for productive ends.

Conflict Transformation

Conflict transformation is a framework that recognizes that conflict is pervasive across scales and presents productive opportunities for impactful social change (Lederach 2). By acknowledging conflict, analyzing its sources, unearthing diverse perspectives, and imagining meaningful ways forward, conflict transformation approaches provide a meaningful window into new relationships, systems, and structures. This approach also highlights the role of conflict at the macro, meso, micro, and "me-cro" scales already discussed, as well as the interconnectedness across these scales. The key is to approach conflict in both proactive and responsive ways while building meaningful partnerships. Many of these conflicts can stem from intercultural engagement (Fisher-Yoshioda 4, and Ting-Toomey and Oetzel 763).

As highlighted above, it is essential to analyze the role of conflict in both interpersonal and institutional relationship building in the service of national security cooperation, as social conflict is pervasive and presents "opportunities to create change processes to increase justice" (Lederach 2). The first step involves observing, examining, analyzing, and making sense of conflicts at multiple scales (intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, structural, global). By focusing on both solutions and social change, one can end a particular conflict and also build something new. This approach involves the development of creative solutions to conflict-based systems and situations, integrating critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions to address complex social problems—in this case, through international security cooperation. As Lederach emphasizes, there are five core practices for constructive change: seeing issues as a window, integrating multiple time frames, posing conflict energies as dilemmas, making complexity part of the process, and hearing and engaging multiple perspectives (9–11). In the following section, we will consider the roles of intercultural communication and conflict transformation approaches for more meaningful intercultural security cooperation.

Returning to the Vignette

In analyzing the vignette provided earlier in the chapter, there are several potential opportunities to apply intercultural communication and conflict transformation concepts. These applications may be different depending on one's institutional and professional role (e.g., security cooperation professional, headquarter-level policymaker, soldier) and also based on how much intercultural learning one has previously engaged in. We can recognize the role of shared values (as noted in McKinsey, "Enduring Ideas") and proactively building a "with" relationship in the partnership. We can also note the relevance of methods, including the ladder of inference (Argyris 88), LENS model, DIVE model, and notetaking/notemaking (Avineri, *Research Methods* 130–32) for making sense of another culture's values and beliefs. For example, one can recognize the role of gender and power dynamics, mismatched assumptions and expectations, implicit and explicit understandings of how to say "no" and "yes" to collectively created agreements, and the role of tension in building a "with" relationship. One can also recognize the pervasiveness of conflict at multiple scales in the scenario, in terms of mismatched assumptions, perceptions, and interpretations—and the lack of community agreements designed proactively. The international advisors assumed that if they gave the partner a strategy, the partner would use it—without recognizing that because the partner didn't contribute to the strategy development, it didn't address the partner's

perspectives on maritime security threats. The international advisors perceived threats through their own national lens and therefore focused on transnational threats such as drug smuggling rather than local threats such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing—which poses a serious food security challenge to the partner nation. When the partner nation thanked the donor nation for the strategy, the donor incorrectly interpreted this as meaning that the partner was committed to the focus on transnational crime. However, by checking their assumptions, perceptions, and interpretations at the outset, the international advisors would have recognized that goals were misaligned, and that the strategy would not work. If intercultural interactions are primarily dealt with only responsively, this can result in a less stable partnership overall. The international advisors working on the strategy could have taken several cultural considerations into account when designing it: for example, different communication paradigms (e.g., implicit versus explicit), risk versus certainty orientation, and different processes for decision-making connected to power dynamics across cultures. Adopting an intercultural security cooperation approach would have allowed the stakeholders to identify potential challenges down the road and take a proactive (versus responsive) approach to the engagement overall.

Implications for the Future of LREC: Toward an Intercultural Security Cooperation

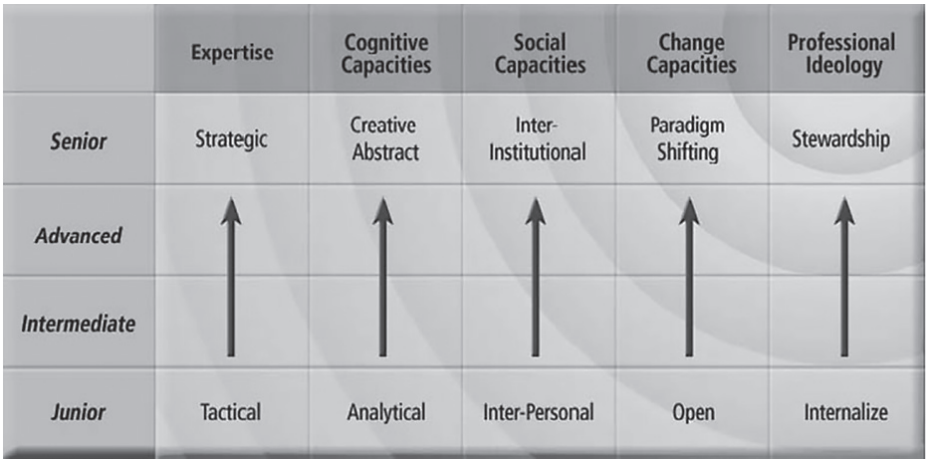
As demonstrated in this chapter, intercultural considerations are paramount in security cooperation efforts, and programs such as LREC should be continued and even expanded. One way to achieve this is for DSCU's new Defense SCO Institute (DSI) to include curriculum on culture and emphasize cross-cultural understanding as a core element of Security Cooperation Workforce training. Previous valuable resources, which could be drawn upon to create materials for ISC in particular, include Fosher and Mackenzie's *Culture General Guidebook for Military Professionals*, Rasmussen and Sieck's *Save Your Ammo: Working Across Cultures for National Security*, and the website CultureReady.mil. Culture can be an entry point for engaging with cultural informants (partners) in genuine ways, becoming more familiar with the cultural nuances in order to build sustainable partnerships and navigate the process overall.

Indeed, it is essential that security cooperation efforts take culture into account. The intentional and explicit integration of intercultural communication and conflict transformation are central to this chapter's opening example of international

military officers visiting the local farmer's market as part of their participation in the Institute for Security Governance's resident course. This cultural exposure that they experience in the field is enhanced by formal education in the classroom with a module of instruction that teaches the participants core elements of cross-cultural communication and understanding. The cultural exchanges that occur in that program will help partners understand each other's core values and beliefs and will enable partnership and cooperation in the future. While security cooperation practitioners will never become authoritative experts in the cultures they are working in, they can use culture (and inquiry about culture), as an entrée to engage with partners in authentic ways. They can use culture as a space to question assumptions, examine perceptions, and ultimately to develop sustainable programs that meet the goals and expectations of both the United States and its international partners. As Walker highlights (31), effective inter-institutional partnership building demonstrates leadership in intercultural security cooperation (see Figure 13.4).

Figure 13.4

Leadership Growth in Intercultural Security Cooperation



Source: Walker (31), as cited by Selmeski (17)

Conclusion

It is often said that the primary responsibility of any government is the defense and security of its citizens—and conflicts around the globe demonstrate what a daunting responsibility this can be. Intercultural understanding and awareness of all partners, while fostering conflict for productive ends, can help to achieve mutually beneficial security relationships and inter-institutional capacity building. These processes foreground the

role of trust necessary for cooperation in national defense. The United States recognizes the importance of intercultural security cooperation and invests in building intercultural relationships with allies and partners around the world in support of shared security interests. With the creation of the new Defense SCO Institute (DSI), the United States has an opportunity to equip its security cooperation workforce with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to explore its defense relationships in a more effective and deliberate way. With an intercultural security cooperation frame, practitioners become better equipped to question assumptions, probe perceptions, and clarify interpretations. They can then achieve successful programs that meet their desired objectives. Ultimately, building sustainable partnerships is first about deeply understanding one another's cultures before moving into influencing and persuasion. Fostering intercultural security cooperation can help to address the complex, ongoing, and pervasive security challenges facing the nation and the world, with deeper sensitivity and meaningful relationship building at the core of these essential endeavors.

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CHAPTER 14

Transformative Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) Instruction

Promoting Cross-Cultural Leadership

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Abstract

This chapter explores the benefits of transformative Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) instruction in developing LREC skills as well as cross-cultural competence and leadership. It emphasizes the paradigm shift toward transformative language learning and teaching (TLLT), an approach that integrates skill development with personal transformation to effectuate societal change. Transformative LREC instruction seeks to develop learners as bilingual/bicultural individuals capable of navigating the complex sociocultural dynamics in whatever cross-cultural environment they find themselves. Based on a foundation of cultural relativism and drawing on insights from civilian and military contexts, the chapter presents a conceptual framework for applying transformative teaching and learning principles to all aspects of LREC development. These principles include best practices related to open-architecture curriculum design, task- and scenario-based learning, experiential learning, and critical content-based instruction.

The chapter also highlights the benefits of transformative LREC instruction in providing disorienting dilemmas that require deep reflection and critical thinking and lead to the perspective shifts essential for understanding cultural difference and practicing effective cross-cultural leadership. It argues that LREC instruction should include curricular elements pertaining to *transforming* (dynamic and situational) and *conforming* (stable and deep) values in LREC curricula, thereby

enabling learners to address the cultural and ethical complexities inherent in cross-cultural leadership positions. By focusing on the transformative potential in LREC instruction, the chapter proposes practical recommendations to advance LREC methodologies, address pedagogical gaps, and develop future cross-cultural leaders who are not only linguistically and culturally adept but also transformative agents of global change.

KEYWORDS: cross-cultural competence, disorienting dilemmas, experiential learning, LREC instruction, open-architecture curriculum, transformative assessments, transformative language learning and teaching

Introduction

In Chapter 8 of the current volume, Alanazi and Leaver highlight the importance of nuanced Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) instruction in the development of cross-cultural leaders. In their exploratory study, a group of eight[1] bilingual/bicultural leaders from the United States and the Arab world felt that they had been inadequately prepared for their cross-cultural leadership positions. As a result, the respondents strongly supported LREC instruction, especially pertaining to cross-cultural communication, as "essential to communication and effective relationships" (150). One respondent pointed out that LREC instruction should help leaders "understand others' perspective and become more ethno-relative and less ethnocentric" (150). Others pointed out that sometimes critical cultural knowledge can save lives: "[Y]ou can speak a language, but you can't get your point across if you lack understanding of others' cultures and how you would be perceived" (149).

Lemmons and Schell in Chapter 7 also highlight the importance of cross-cultural competence as part of LREC-readiness and global leadership, which they define as "the ability to lead with intercultural competence" (134) as leaders navigate the complex "temporal, geographical, and cultural" nuances (Jeong et al. 286–309) in their leadership environments. Further, Cohen asserts that "effective global leadership requires a global mindset" (3), a mindset that requires the intercultural competence to "effect positive change" (Lemmons and Schell 127).

LREC instruction, however, goes beyond the teaching of cross-cultural competence and/or cultural relativism. It is a broad topic, one encompassing approaches to teaching all three of the LREC domains: world language readiness, cross-cultural competence, and regional proficiency. It involves aspects of education (e.g., curriculum development, needs analysis, syllabus development, and the

transferal of knowledge) as well as training (e.g., pre-deployment skill building, intensive language instruction, proficiency testing and maintenance, and on-the-job training). A comprehensive perspective on LREC instruction for leadership development must address as many of these issues as possible.

Additionally, the best practices in LREC instruction are currently undergoing an important shift to the understanding of *transformative language learning and teaching* (Leaver, Davidson, and Campbell 1–3). According to Kumaravadivelu, a transformative teacher helps students strive "not only for academic advancement but also for personal transformation" (14). In this regard, academic advancement is considered not only achieving a set of learning outcomes within the framework of a given curriculum, but also helping students take ownership of the learning processes that take place in and outside of the classroom. Moreover, although student-focused[2] approaches in the language classroom are not new, transformative language learning and teaching views learners as complex individuals with unique backgrounds, education, and psychology as well as perception of themselves in the complex sociohistorical contexts where they live, learn, and develop. Consequently, a transformative teacher views herself as a *change agent*, educating her students to better understand themselves within the power dynamics of their jobs, relationships, and societies. Giroux states it this way: transformative teachers "not only empower students by giving them the knowledge and social skills they will need to be able to function in the larger society as critical agents but also educate them for transformative action"—i.e., actions that create significant change in outlook or character (126).

This chapter will reflect on the literature pertaining to transformative learning and teaching of world languages and cultures as well as cross-cultural leadership. It will further propose a conceptual framework for applying transformative practices to these initiatives with applicability across the LREC community.

Literature Review

Transformative Language Learning and Teaching

Transformative language learning and teaching (TLLT) has been described as a "paradigm shift" in world language education (Leaver 14). Whereas language education has for many decades promoted development of the communicative aspects of learning world languages, transformative language teaching seeks to help learners develop an emerging bilingualism by actuating change in their thinking,

behavior, values, mindset, emotions, and acceptance of the other (Leaver 16). Learning a new language and culture, then, is more than learning to communicate within specific sociocultural contexts. It is instead a developmental and transformative process producing bilingual/bicultural people who are autonomous and self-regulated, able to shift perspectives and attitudes as necessitated by their various sociocultural contexts, and able to navigate the power and social dynamics involved in human interactions and relationships.

Transformative language learning and teaching does not view linguistic and cultural knowledge as the main learning outcomes of world language study. As Garza points out, learning a new language and culture involves not only "mimicking prescribed content" but also later "interacting with the products, practices, and perspectives" of target communities (89). It also involves developing an autonomous mindset that helps learners "self-direct their studies in authentic linguistic and cultural contexts" in order to undergo a "cultural synthesis that occurs from negotiating meaning" within those contexts (Garza 89). Oxford calls this autonomy "strategic self-regulation," a mindset where learners employ effortful and goal-directed learning strategies to deal with specific learning challenges and "manage the self" within their learning environments (Oxford, *Teaching and Researching* 12). Of particular interest in Oxford's updated taxonomy of language learning strategies are the sociocultural-interactive strategies that focus on dealing with sociocultural contexts, identities, and issues of context, communication, and culture learning. LREC instruction must focus on all these outcomes for autonomous transformative learning to take place.

TLLT stresses the importance of providing authentic learning opportunities through language and cultural immersion. Collin specifically addresses this issue in the context of the French War College teaching French in a content-based instruction (CBI) environment to senior military leaders from allied Francophone countries. In this specific context, he identifies two specific obstacles, *sociolinguistic insecurity* and *pedagogical disengagement*, as obstacles that hinder transformative learning and teaching (Collin 129–30). Because these learners are mostly bilingual and bicultural, measures must be taken to cater to their specific learning needs beyond language and cultural competence. For them, sociolinguistic security can be gained by adding sociocultural training to the CBI at the heart of this program. This can involve an analysis of cross-cultural differences in the French vernacular and regionalisms as well as a broad cross-cultural comparison of Francophone institutions in which these learners work and build relationships. As a foundation

for this type of CBI, Collin also discusses the value of open-architecture curriculum design as a flexible pedagogical approach that allows for TLLT to be implemented in meaningful ways (133–36).

Open-architecture curriculum design (OACD) is defined as a systematic yet flexible model "where teachers are empowered to change activities and tasks according to learner needs" (Campbell 45). The learner is envisioned as an active participant in the learning process through teacher-learner negotiation of learning goals and the day-to-day syllabus. While OACD was conceptualized for the CBI environment and the Intermediate-High and above learners at the Defense Language Institute and institutions like Collin's French War College, the usefulness of OACD has been demonstrated in lower-level courses as well. Watson implements OACD principles in beginning and intermediate Russian classes at Bryn Mawr College within a more traditional textbook-based curriculum. He draws a clear connection between OACD principles and the tenets of Vygotskian sociocultural theories of learning, specifically the concept of mediated learning, scaffolding, and collaborative learning within the zone of proximal development (Watson 119–20). In his study, learners are involved in designing the day-to-day learning plan in collaboration with the teacher (Watson 122–25). They are also given a choice in what kinds of learning tasks they perceive as most valuable and are encouraged to engage in what Van Lier calls *triadic interaction*, i.e., learners engaged in collaborative problem-solving while interacting with the various *semiotic* tools in the classroom (textbooks, authentic materials, learning tasks, assessments, and reflection activities) (Van Lier 2). Data from this study demonstrated how this type of learning environment helped learners become active participants in the learning process who better understood themselves and the target language and culture.

When applying TLLT principles to the various LREC skillsets, we must also consider the transformative aspects of developing the knowledge, skills, and attitudes involved in a cross-cultural competence firmly grounded in the value of cultural relativism. Mackenzie and Henk in Chapter 3 highlight this issue when proposing their culture-general toolkit, a set of skills that can be deliberately taught not only to those interested in culture-specific knowledge but especially to any military personnel asked to carry out global operations of any sort (42–50). Their cross-cultural toolkit focuses on the importance of knowing oneself in relation to the other and being able to exercise the cognitive flexibility, humility, openness, curiosity, and tolerance for ambiguity needed to successfully navigate cross-cultural communication without the time- and resource-intensive investment of learning a

foreign language (39–42). This skillset has the potential to transmute pre-ascension and Professional Military Ethic training by educating a set of transferable cross-cultural tools to any military professional serving as an agent of change and leadership in interoperability and security operations abroad.

In their proposal, Mackenzie and Henk discuss the important difference between the regional and culture-general skillsets. As they point out, regional experts are those deeply familiar with "U.S. interests and involvements, nation-states and their interests, international organizations, regional and local conflicts, regional histories, politics, societies, natural environments, economies and like topics" (45). While this type of regional competence is complementary to language and cultural competence, it is inherently different. According to Paletz et al., regional proficiency is "a multidimensional construct created . . . to characterize a person's knowledge of a region's social, economic political, and linguistic features" (528). As such, regional experts incorporate both culture-specific and culture-general knowledge. Similarly, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3126.01c recognizes this synthesis in its delineation of regional competencies that include both the ability to demonstrate "knowledge and understanding of key cultural values, behaviors, beliefs, and norms for a given area" and to apply these competencies "in highly complex and ambiguous situations within and across disciplines" (Chairman G-1). These definitions align well with the transformative principles that equip LREC-enabled leaders to actuate change in their cross-cultural roles.

Transformative Cross-Cultural Leadership Development

Although literature on cross-cultural leadership development is limited, it is important to establish a working definition of the concept. According to Hofstede, "A better understanding of invisible cultural differences is one of the main contributions the social sciences can make to practical policy makers in governments, organizations, and institutions" (Hofstede, *Comparing Values* 7). He also differentiates between *individual*, *collective*, and *universal* cultural dimensions (3). Although this simple taxonomy has been revised and expanded over the years, it implies the importance of both culture-specific knowledge (individual and collective dimensions) as well as culture-general knowledge (universal dimension). This seems to be a fundamental consideration when considering cross-cultural leadership.

In the original iteration of his taxonomy, Hofstede identified five related dimensions of national culture and suggested metrics for measuring them.[3] In the

mid-1990s, to build on these five, the authors of the GLOBE study (House et al.) conducted an even larger review of national cultural dimensions and expanded Hofstede's taxonomy into nine categories.[4] Both works identify important aspects of cultural values and beliefs and how they influence cultural behaviors and practices in international business. While heavily debated over the years, these cultural dimensions remain influential in studies of cross-cultural leadership and management.

To expand these dimensions into an analytical framework that reflects differences between Western (U.S.-based) and non-Western cross-cultural leadership, Alanazi and Leaver in Chapter 8 identify six cross-cultural leadership constructs: *power*, *control*, *compassion*, *empowerment*, *transparency*, and *accountability* (148). In their study, experienced cross-cultural leaders reflected on their own bilingual/bicultural identities and how that insight shaped their behaviors and effectiveness in leadership contexts outside of their home cultures. This aligns well with Goulah's argument that transformative learning involves a reimagining of the self as a multilingual global citizen who embraces inner transformation for the sake of global transformation (38).

At the heart of both Goulah's and Alanazi and Leaver's recommendations lies the importance of cultural relativism, which asserts that "ethical practices across various fields of life differ across cultures and that while a practice in one culture may be inappropriate in another, no one society's ethical practices are superior to another" (Alanazi and Leaver 142). Much literature on cultural relativism notes differences in values (translated into behaviors) among leaders from various cultures (Goleman et al.; Murphy; Thornton). However, these concepts rarely stretch beyond the basics of leadership styles to extend into the murkier territory of cultural diversity in situations where "leaders from one culture are paired with followers from another" (Alanazi and Leaver 142).

Transformative LREC Instruction

When applying transformative learning and teaching principles to LREC instruction for cross-cultural leaders, the fundamental goal is to empower LREC-enabled learners to be change agents in whatever contexts they find themselves. To lead in cross-cultural situations, Alanazi and Leaver identify leadership values that shift based on dynamic situational needs (*transforming* values) and deeper, less malleable values that conform to the sociocultural norms of collectively held

beliefs (*conforming* values) in their own cultures. In terms of Hofstede's dimensions, *transforming* values tend to be individualistic and short-term; *conforming* values tend to be collectivistic and long-term (Alanazi and Leaver 148). Successful cross-cultural leaders in this framework are cross-cultural communicators: they understand both the cross-cultural differences that are more malleable or influenceable in themselves and in others (*transforming* values of individuals) and those that tend to be more entrenched (*conforming* values of a collective). This insight allows them to navigate complex power dynamics to avoid or solve cross-cultural problems and achieve organizational objectives.

Most important, these transformative cross-cultural principles can be taught at all levels of LREC instruction as the foundational principles of cultural relativism. As mentioned above, transformative learning and teaching envisions an immersive learning space that empowers learners to participate in the learning process by reflecting on and transforming their perspectives and by confronting "foreign" situations and information that create cognitive disorientation and challenge their assumptions about their own and other cultures. To accomplish this, transformative teachers

- build experiential lessons with authentic content,
- design learner-negotiated and theme-oriented open-architecture curricula and syllabi,
- craft learning activities that incorporate "disorienting dilemmas"[5] (Corin 52), structured reflection and interaction opportunities (Crane and Sosulski 219–20), and
- develop formative assessment techniques that align learning outcomes with the "shared vision" of the learning process (Clifford 232).

We will discuss each of these areas in the context of both *transforming* and *conforming* values.

Authentic Content

Transforming values can be trained in any LREC learning context where skills are best taught experientially via scenario-based instruction (Corin 51–52) that incorporates disorienting dilemmas as opportunities to change cultural perspective. For world language study, while such instruction can begin at lower levels, more advanced levels of proficiency may be required to cause perspective change because only at the higher levels do nuances and connotations of words preempt denotations (Garza 93–96).

The existence and identification of *conforming* values in both the learner's culture and the culture of the other can be taught in more traditional ways through direct instruction: presentation, explanation, and application, in which examples of cross-cultural challenges are interactively deconstructed.[6] For world language study, deconstructing values can begin at early levels of language proficiency, the intent being to compare conforming values of the other culture with one's own culture-driven conforming values.

Experiential Learning

While direct instruction can teach about conforming values, experiential learning (immersion in the classroom through scenarios, study abroad, internships abroad, service learning, and the like) is generally more successful at creating learner change—essential for taking the first steps toward understanding the transforming values of a target community. Until they are saturated with them, learners may see them but not feel them.

In particular, study abroad experiences can be designed to hasten the transformative process. For example, in a Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center Arabic program conducted at the University of Jordan, learners attended a lecture by a local law professor and then visited a tribal judge for in-depth discussions that created a disorienting dilemma related to competing conceptualizations of power, control, and compassion. These types of scenarios provide enough personalized values-based interactions for students to begin forming a culturally appropriate perspective of the complex tribal law practices in Jordan. Similarly, the NovaMova language school in Kyiv, Ukraine (previously in country; currently online), connects learners of Russian with journalists to better dissect and understand social issues (Leaver and Campbell, "Transformative Power" 136–37); in such meetings, disorienting issues related to the values of compassion and empowerment are inescapable. At West Point, cadets participating in a week-long reflection event following a semester abroad are asked to narrate (in written or audio form) a transformative experience that changed them while they were abroad. In these narratives, cadets regularly describe the kinds of disorienting dilemmas that push them out of their comfort zone, cause them to question their own perspectives, and manage the cognitive dissonance that accompanies these experiences.

Open-Architecture Curriculum and Syllabus Design

As mentioned earlier, open-architecture curriculum design provides a flexible, transformative environment where learners and instructors develop a "shared

vision" of learner needs and desired outcomes (Clifford 232). This environment allows teachers to design lessons and curricula that highlight the cross-cultural comparisons and transformative values–focused discussions at the heart of LREC instruction in all its various forms.

For culture training (culture-specific or culture-general), this approach to instructional design can be used at all levels of military education and training. From the culture-general syllabi urgently needed at PME schoolhouses (Mackenzie and Henk 47), to culture-specific pre-deployment materials like DLI's Countries in Perspective series, transformative learning and teaching principles can help develop what Mackenzie and Henk call a "mature set of culture tools" wielded by an expeditionary force dedicated to building effective cross-cultural alliances and partnerships (49–50).

For world language instruction, content-based instruction (CBI) (Stryker and Leaver 3-4) presents the best opportunity for blending the introduction of transforming and conforming values in a culturally relative language classroom environment. A CBI syllabus is organized by subject matter and easily incorporates culturally relative phenomena. Within a CBI syllabus, conforming and transforming values can both be taught, albeit differentially (as noted above) to make more effective use of classroom time. For example, to generate academic discussions, conforming values associated with the content in the syllabus can be pointed out, contrasted, and deconstructed as externally visible phenomena. Transforming values, however, require the introduction of disorienting dilemmas that lead learners to question and reshape their frames of references to assume the values associated with the "other" culture. In other words, developing an understanding of conforming values can be an overt process of learning, whereas developing an understanding of (or "feel for") transforming values is an internal, often unconscious process of assimilation that more often can be sensed than articulated. In the classroom, the difference might be seen as a discussion of conforming values, based on reading an authentic text and then contrasting U.S. and personal values with the values of the other culture in the text (critical analysis). In contrast, transforming values can be instructed through role-play scenarios where learners act out one or more real-life scenarios, embedded with transforming values of the other culture, that let learners experience and cope with disorienting dilemmas. This approach requires active learning (making decisions and experiencing the consequences of their actions), critical thinking (analyzing situations, considering multiple perspectives, and developing solutions), application of the material to practical situations, and an opportunity for feedback and reflection.

Similarly, Oliva in Chapter 4 highlights the value of *critical* content-based instruction (CCBI), an instructional philosophy focused on delivering content-based learning that promotes critical consciousness of deep cultural constructs (e.g., power/domination, inequality, and conflict) that are "relevant to their learner's lives and ability to promote social change" (64). In his study, upper-level students of Spanish from various disciplines explored the cultural realities of human trafficking in Latin America. Through a needs analysis (to foster the *shared vision* of teacher and learners), group discussions, oral presentations, and written reflection narratives, students examined their own attitudes toward and critically analyzed cultural issues in Latin America related to the problem of child labor.

Learning Activities

According to Kumaravadivelu's macrostrategies, transformative learning activities are those that allow teachers and learners to become "autonomous decision-makers" in how to perceive, collaboratively interact with, and reflect on learned or taught material (40). This type of autonomy can best be promoted through learning activities that are task-based and scenario-based.[7]

Task-based activities, in which learners complete activities that reflect real-life requirements and result in a product, typically form the core of a CBI course. In terms of cross-cultural leadership values, tasks can range from identifying values in various news reportage and deconstructing culturally laden discourse found in movies, speeches, and fictional literature to producing op-eds, making presentations, and conducting interviews, along with an emphasis on the often-forgotten skill of writing. Professional translation practice with culturally saturated oral or written text can also be highly instructive.

In a scenario-based environment, tasks can include carrying out leadership problems similar to those conducted in traditional military officer training, the UN model, or the Arab League model. These do not, as currently taught, incorporate language but could. Scenarios can also introduce high-stakes tasks, such as values-laden negotiations, delivering culturally appropriate remarks, and managing cross-cultural conflicts with others. Such tasks up the possibility for a disorienting dilemma. This is usually only possible if the teacher is a native carrier of the culture, keeping in mind that, just as in the United States, native speakers from differing regions or countries will have different cultural experiences and may speak different dialects.

Transformative Assessment

Transformative learning for adult learners can be viewed "as an adult's progressively enhanced capacity to validate prior learning through reflective discourse and to act upon the resulting insights" (Mezirow 7). Such learning adds an assessable outcome: "a deepened understanding of oneself and others" (Crane and Sosulski 217) to the outcomes traditionally assessed in language and culture classes. Transformative assessment then assesses both the perspective-shifting potential of classroom learning processes and the various learning outcomes shared by both learners and instructors.

As new knowledge accumulates, learners progress through stages of *direct application*, *near transfer,* and *far transfer* (Clifford 228). These stages roughly align with the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of language and cultural proficiency but with an important overarching thread of deep reflection on the cognitive and metacognitive aspects of experiential learning.

For culture learning, *direct application* of knowledge is a foundational level of memorizing the aspects of culture that affect the cross-cultural negotiation of meaning. At the *near-transfer* level, learners can apply that knowledge in limited familiar contexts and reflect on the meaningfulness of the interactions. At the *far-transfer* level, learners can transfer knowledge and "respond spontaneously to new, unknown, or unpredictable situations" (Clifford 229). Assessment techniques in this area should focus on providing scenario-based disorienting dilemmas and assessing how competently the learners apply knowledge in less familiar contexts.

Similarly, for cross-cultural leadership, assessment should focus on how learners negotiate the more dynamic *transforming* values within the context of the more stable *conforming* values. Assessment of this competence at the *direct application* level might focus on a leader's rote memorization of transferable culture-general models. At the *near-transfer* level, leaders can apply those models in specific contexts of cross-cultural communication. And at the *far-transfer* level, assessment should be scenario-driven where leaders are asked to apply knowledge in novel cross-cultural situations where followers are from a different culture than the leaders.

For world language study, these three levels of communicative competence align well with the three traditional assessment tools most often associated with classroom language learning: *achievement* tests, *performance* tests, and *proficiency* tests (Clifford 230–31). Regardless of proficiency level, these three levels of testing allow teachers

to test memorization of learned material from the classroom or curriculum, test learners' ability to apply learned material to familiar contexts, and test a learner's ability to transfer and apply communicative competence in more "spontaneous and unrehearsed" situations (Clifford 231). When applied in a learning context that also promotes a fundamental belief in cultural relativism and deep understanding of self and the "other," these assessments allow teachers innumerable opportunities to be a transformative force in the lives of their students.

Implications for the Future

The intent of this chapter was to highlight literature pertaining to transformative LREC instruction and provide initial recommendations for developing both an understanding (in the case of conforming values) and an internationalization (in the case of transforming values) of cross-cultural leadership values in a culture-relative framework within LREC classrooms. While progress has been made in promoting experiential learning (e.g., critical CBI, study abroad, scenario-based instruction) as a way to develop cross-cultural competence, language and culture training or education programs can do more to enable their students to be transformative cross-cultural change agents in their personal and professional communities. Curricular and syllabus design practices that focus solely on communicative outcomes or culture-general models should be considered the beginning, not the end. More flexible practices like open-architecture curricular design can promote learner autonomy and reflection on the perspective-challenging aspects of learning. Additionally, assessment practices must also be reenvisioned with specific emphasis on how to both teach and assess *transforming* and *conforming* leadership values. Current proficiency tests, for example, can sample knowledge of conforming values but do less well in assessing transforming values.

Overall, the methodologies for teaching world languages and cultures have stagnated, narrowly concentrating on language acquisition within insulated environments. Consequently, graduates often struggle when they encounter authentic cultural contexts. LREC programs focused on teaching culture-general models and the transformative tenets of cultural relativism as an element of PME training have been drastically reduced or eliminated altogether. To develop cross-cultural leaders of the future, these challenges must be addressed. Understanding the differences between competing worldviews, opposing values, and seemingly enigmatic values-influenced behaviors will not only enhance linguistic proficiency but also develop a knowledge of (and feeling for) cultural relativism on a deep

rather than superficial level. We owe it to the next generation of LREC-prepared international leaders to equip them with blended language and cultural skills that promote the acquisition of *transforming* values associated with another culture, enable the full understanding of *conforming* values, and develop the capacity to act successfully on the world stage.

Notes

1. The original study had 12 respondents, including Russian respondents; the published version of the study included 8 respondents, only those working cross-culturally in the Arab-U.S. world. Some of the comments from the Russian respondents, however, are germane to the content of this chapter and hence included here.
2. Here we differentiate between learner-centered approaches, which focus on the learning process itself, i.e., how students learn, student autonomy, and a teacher role that creatives a supportive environment to promote self-directed learning, and student-focused approaches, which focus on learner needs, interests, and experiences, a teacher role that guides learners through the learning process, and an environment that accommodates differing learning styles (and, sometimes, personality types), as well as individualized learning plans (Corin and Entis 98–99).
3. Hofstede's dimensions include Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, Masculinity, and Long-Term Orientation.
4. The GLOBE study's expanded framework includes Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Future Orientation, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Institutional Collectivism, In-Group Collectivism, Performance Orientation and Human Orientation.
5. A term and concept originally proposed by Mezirow (1991), a disorienting dilemma refers to an experience that challenges a person's existing beliefs, perspectives, or assumptions, causing them to feel disoriented or confused, leading to critical reflection and ultimately resulting in a profound change in how they see the world and themselves.
6. While the existence of conforming values can certainly be exposed through scenario-based instruction, a proficiency-based orientation toward instruction is not required, given that an academic understanding of conforming values (which, by definition, *cannot* be changed by any manner of instruction) is generally sufficient.
7. For a more in-depth discussion of task-based and scenario-based instruction, see Ellis, Nunan, and Prabhu (task-based) and Corin and Willis (scenario-based).

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