ABSTRACT

GERBER, M. LYNNE. Taking the Plunge: Experiences of In-country Language Immersion by Working Professionals. (Under the direction of Dr. Carol Kasworm.)

Situated in the social constructivist view of learning that an individual learns from social action and interaction, this qualitative study explores ways in which twelve working professionals were influenced by their experiences with in-country language immersion programs. Through semi-structured interviews and a constant comparative interpretation of data, the author delineates a broader understanding of the figural aspects of in-country immersions utilized for the specific purpose of enhancing personal effectiveness in professional careers.

The experiences of the 12 working professionals in this study demonstrate that in-country language immersion can facilitate language and cross-cultural learning among motivated, focused adult learners. The effectiveness of such programs rests on several factors. First, the learners are lifted from their daily lives and immersed in an environment where they are forced to communicate and are given the opportunity to concentrate on their learning objectives. Second, they learn not only from formal teachers in the immersion schools, but also from myriad others in the surrounding community and from the setting itself. Third, the authentic setting provides a “living laboratory” in which participants can both improve language ability through relevant practice and also gain valuable insights into the culture through which the language is shaped. Fourth, the progress each individual makes depends on personal and emotional factors and purposeful efforts of the individual learner. Fifth, experiences and encounters provide ongoing motivation to learn and produce changes in the way working professionals interact and see themselves and others.

Finally, participants learn more than simply the mechanics of language; the learning during in-country immersion affects the whole person and occurs in three interrelated and recurring phases of isolation, interaction, and integration.

The author urges prospective program designers and participants to utilize in-country language immersion as contextual learning that derives its primary benefits from intensity, focus, and environment. A list of guidelines is provided for practitioners and participants to explore the potential of in-country immersions as language and cross-cultural vehicles for working professionals.

TAKING THE PLUNGE:
EXPERIENCES OF IN-COUNTRY LANGUAGE IMMERSION
BY WORKING PROFESSIONALS

By

MARJORIE LYNNE GERBER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

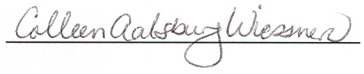
ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION

Raleigh

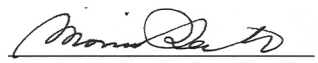
September, 2006

Approved by:

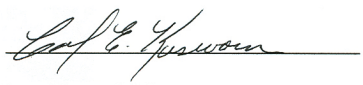
Dr. Kathryn Moore



Dr. Colleen Wiessner



Dr. Monica Rector



Dr. Carol Kasworm
Chair of Advisory Committee

Learning a language without going on an immersion is like learning to swim without going in the water.

— Anonymous

BIOGRAPHY

M. Lynne Gerber has dedicated the last seventeen years to helping organizations and individuals function effectively in the global environment. When MBA Program Director at UNC-Chapel Hill Business School, Ms. Gerber developed MBA international exchange programs and initiated an International Issues Lunch series. Gerber co-founded and managed the MBA Enterprise Corps, a “peace corps for business” which placed MBA graduates from the top 40 US business schools into locally managed companies in transforming and emerging markets.

Ms. Gerber has overseen the development and the publication of *Working Languages*, multi-media programs that utilize interactive technology, in-person workshops and in-country immersions to teach managers and business students how to better communicate with foreign colleagues, customers and employees. *Working Languages* includes Spanish, Portuguese, and Mandarin for business students and working professionals as well as a *Working Spanish for Educators*, especially aimed at K-12 educators and administrators.

Ms. Gerber has an undergraduate degree in biology from Goucher College and an MBA from UNC-Chapel Hill. She earned her Ed.D in adult and community college education with a specialty in training and development from North Carolina State University. Her research interests focus on ways adults learn and incorporate their learning into the global workplace. Her dissertation is on *Experiences of In-Country Language Immersion by Working Professionals.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It has been said that life is a journey. Along the way, as one learns, works, and lives, parts of the journey stand out as particularly important, particularly memorable. Doing this dissertation was certainly one of those. The entire process was one in which I learned so much, not only about my topic, but also about the qualitative research process itself, and how enlightening and inspiring it can be. I was enlightened by theorists and researchers of complementary studies and inspired by those who participated in the study and those who steered me through it. It is those who inspired me and kept me on track throughout this important sojourn that I would like to acknowledge and thank here.

At the top of the list is Dr. Carol Kasworm, my dissertation chair. She has been my mentor and my teacher from the day I began her class in advanced qualitative research five years ago. She has helped me understand what it means to do qualitative research and how to reason inductively and insightfully. Most importantly, throughout the long phase of writing, she has been patient, but also demanding. She has challenged me to my best work - to think deeply, pull out the meaning from the reams of data, and write succinctly.

I would like to thank the other members of my committee--Kay Moore, Monica Rector, and Colleen Wiessner--for their encouragement and faith in me. Not only did they help me refine my proposal in such a way that the project had reasonable expectations and bounds, they also helped me stay the course, find my voice, and finish!

A number of colleagues in the field of adult education or related fields provided various forms of encouragement and assistance. Drs. Tamra Willis and Paula Crawford shared their dissertations with me and guided me through the process of coding and writing. Dr. Sven De Weerdt compared notes with me concerning the learning process among working professionals. Jack Walker helped me produce the graphic representation of the 3-phased learning model that emerged from my findings. Several people read transcripts and helped me look for key patterns. Two colleagues read drafts of my dissertation and made suggestions for improvement. To Marlo Goldstein, Jean Elia, Lee May, and Leigh Shamblin, (especially Leigh!), I owe many thanks, and probably a hundred lunches.

My mother, Dr. Marjorie Hoachlander, like me, completed her doctorate in her fifties. She not only spent hours listening to my ideas and following my progress, she also reminded me when I became frustrated that it was all worth it, and that I and my life would be enriched by both process and outcome. Other members of my family recognized the value of my doctoral pursuits and encouraged me and cheered me on over the years of coursework and writing. My daughter Renée discussed social constructivism with me and my daughter Dina sent me oodles of inspirational cards and put sticky notes with words of encouragement all over my work area. My husband Roger supported me in endless ways, not the least of which by threatening to earn his own doctorate from a "prestigious, non-accredited institution" over the Internet if I didn't get my own act together and finish. So finish I have, but, not really, since I am sure that this portion of the journey is simply leading to something else.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures……x

List of Tables……xi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION 1

Background 1

Purpose of Study 9

Research Questions 10

Conceptual Framework 10

Significance of Study for Research and Practice 16

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW 18

Second Language Learning Among Adults 18

Social Constructivist Theory and Language Learning 26

Contextual Learning and In-country Immersion 33

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY 39

Introduction 39

Research Genre 39

Participant Selection 43

The Case Pool 44

Data Collection 48

The Interview 48

Collected Mementos 51

Time Commitment of Participants 51

Data Analysis 52

Validity and Reliability of Research Design 57

Limitations of the Study 61

Researcher Perspectives and Beliefs 63

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS 65

Description of Study's Participants and Their Goals for Language Learning. 66

Profile of Study Sample 66

Reasons for Wanting to Learn Languages and Articulated Goals 70

Descriptions of Participants' In-country Immersion Programs 72

Effect of In-country Immersion on Goals and Achievement 74

Aspects that Influenced Language Learning and Goal Achievement 74

Exclusive Focus on Language Learning 76
Pressure to Speak the Target Language 77
Authentic Language and Culture 82
Low Cost of Program 86
Summary of Aspects of Immersion that Influenced Language Learning, Goals, and Achievement 88
Factors that Influenced Progress and Goal Attainment 89
Personal Factors the Influenced Progress towards Goals 91
Fear. 91
Self-doubt 95
Familiarity 98
Comfort 102
Summary of Personal Factors Influencing Progress towards Goals 104
Social/Cultural Factors that Influenced Progress 108
Summary of Social/Cultural Factors that Influenced Progress 116
Summary of Effect of Immersion Experience on Goals and Achievement 120
Influence of Immersion Experience on Perception of Self and Others 123
Perception of Change in Self 123
Increased confidence 124
Altered long-term goals 126
Changes in Cultural Perspectives 129

Change in Perceptions of Effectiveness at Work 134

Summary of Influence on Perception of Self, Others, and Work 139

Learning Phases of In-Country Language Immersion 140

Isolation Phase 142

Interaction Phase 146

Integration Phase 148

Summary of Learning Phases of In-Country Language Immersion 151

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS 155

Conclusions from Key Findings 156

Learning is Influenced by Others 156

Setting and Context are Important 158

Progress is Influenced by Individual/Emotional Factors 162

Experience Fosters Motivation and Enhances Learning 165

Learning is Holistic and Occurs in Three Phases 167

Intensity and Focus are Crucial 174

Implications for Practice 175

Considerations for Immersion School Administrators and Teachers 178

Considerations for Human Resources and Senior Management 183

Considerations for Individuals Contemplating In-country Immersion 187

Implications for Future Research 188

REFERENCES 191

APPENDICES 204

Appendix A: Description of AmeriSpan 205

Appendix B1: Email of inquiry 206

Appendix B 2: Data Form 207

Appendix B 3: Reply Email to Those Not Fitting Profile 208

Appendix B 4: Reply Email to Those Fitting Profile for Study 209

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form 210

Appendix D 1: Interview Introduction 213

Appendix D 2: Structured Survey Questions 214

Appendix D 3: Probing Questions 215

Appendix E: Coding Terms 217

Appendix F: Narrative Profiles of Participants 218

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Effects of Inherent Conditions of In-country Immersion on Adult 89

Figure 2 Model of Learning Phases of Working Professionals during..... 141

Figure 3 Learning Phases in In-country Language Immersion..... 171

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Participant Profiles 68

Table 2 Personal/Emotional Factors of In-country Language Immersion..... 106

Table 3 Social/Cultural Factors of In-country Language Immersion..... 118

Table 4 Characteristics of Learner during Learning Phases of Immersion..... 154

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

The societal trend toward globalization is accelerating. Creation of multinational alliances such as the European Union and Mercosur (an economic alliance among Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay) and the establishment of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have done much to open trade and immigration borders and forge international alliances. Ongoing work on other international trade policies involving additional Latin American countries as well as China and other parts of Asia promise even more international collaboration and interaction among nations in the near future. The resulting pace and scale of cross-border mergers, increased exportation, international acquisitions and collaborative projects are making special demands on corporate communication skills (Hancock, 1999). It is becoming increasingly acknowledged that knowing the language of competitors, prospective clients, and partners can mean the difference between success and failure in this increasingly global environment (Adams, 1993).

One set of practitioners for whom language competence is important are managers who travel to other countries for extended periods of time. Knowing the local language enhances the ability of managers who travel to interact with the local business managers and incorporate the cultural differences into their business strategies (Cook, 2002). Even if English is spoken on extended trips or in the offices of expatriate assignments, it is essential that the traveling mangers know the local language. Explains Robin Elkins, senior manager of a relocation firm in Chicago, “If

expats [sic] can't interact with the locals in the markets and in the streets, they're missing a lot about the thinking and character of the local people. These experiences also influence expats' ability to assess situations back at work, and, without them, they will usually make wrong assumptions about the people they're managing" (Dolainski, 1997, p. 34).

In recent years, however, it is not only expatriates or managers who travel extensively who need to understand second or third languages and adapt to cultural differences. Increasing numbers of companies of all sizes have multilingual workforces (Clarke, 1999). In mid-sized and large multinational corporations where diverse teams work on projects together or in service organizations where customers come from a variety of cultures, good communication is a must. Even if the common language is English, communication among team members or with clients can be ineffective if it does not permit the informal information exchange and networking that are critical to both internal and external success (Charles, 2002).

It is not only in the private sector that language and cross-cultural competency is important. In the United States, a September 26, 2001 report of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence stated that language is the single greatest need in the nation's intelligence community. The report emphasized that some 80 federal agencies need proficiency in nearly 100 foreign languages (Malone et al., 2003). In January, 2002, the U.S. General Accounting Office reported that the lack of competence in foreign languages has hindered U.S. commercial interests, military operations, diplomacy, law enforcement, intelligence

operations and counter-terrorism efforts (Peters, 2002). In his opening remarks at the first National Language Conference in June, 2004, the U.S. Under-secretary of Defense said that the U.S. needs a permanent change in its approach to the peoples and cultures of the rest of the world. He stressed that our nation's inability to understand the rest of the world is a prime national security concern (Kellar, 2005).

The message of the1958 classic novel *The Ugly American* still rings true today with its illustrations of how critical it is to know the local language of those with whom one interacts (Lederer & Burdick, 1958). In one vignette, the United States government, vying with the Russians for influence in the fictional Asian country Sarkhan, sends a large shipment of rice to be circulated throughout the country. Although the American ambassador to Sarkhan is present when the bags of rice begin their journey and smiles with pleasure at seeing 10,000 Sarkhanese people on the docks, he does not understand the loudspeaker announcement that proclaims, "Here is the rice promised a short time ago by the Russian Ambassador, proving that Russia keeps her word" (Lederick & Berdick, p.35). Nor does he understand the words that are stamped onto each bag in Sarkhanese for every citizen to read: "This rice is a gift from Russia" (p.35).

The *Ugly American* provoked several initiatives designed to train U.S. citizens to function effectively in foreign environments. Shortly after the book was written, the Peace Corps, the Defense Language Institute, the Monterrey Language Institute, Middlebury College, and other similar institutions were established. They are still

very active in their attempts to, in the words of the Peace Corps mission statement, "…promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served and a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans" (Peace Corps, 2003, p.1).

Globalization is not only about business expansion and international relations; it is also about the increasing number of non-English speaking populations in cities and towns around the United States. In 2005, 1200 Somalis arrived in a small town in Maine. Currently, 23 percent of the public school children in Beverly Hills speak Farsi, and Southern states anticipate a 200 percent increase in their Spanish-speaking populations to occur between a census years of 2000 and 2010 (Kellar, 2005). It is becoming increasingly important for educators, health practitioners, and other service providers to be able relate to the increasingly diverse population of students, clients, and customers in their communities.

Despite concerted efforts since the 1960s on the part of language institutes and others to alleviate monolingual and monocultural understanding in the United States, a number of studies in the 1990s revealed that little progress had been made to produce language and cultural competency in the U.S. workplace (Fixman, 1990; Lambert, 1990; Walters, 1990). Employers listed language low on the list of skills assessed as important for hiring decisions. Guy (1992) found that language skills rarely played a role in decisions for promotion or reward, and Stone and Rubenfeld (1989) found that most U.S. high school and college students did not study second languages because they considered them to be too time-consuming and irrelevant.

According to educator Richard Tucker of the Center for Applied Linguistics, Americans have begun to realize that in order for the United States to hold its own in this increasingly global environment, we must be able to communicate in languages other than our own and understand the cultures with whom we interact (Tucker,1991). The President's Commission on Foreign Languages reported that "America's scandalous incompetence in foreign languages explains our dangerously inadequate understanding of world affairs" (1997, p.4). It declared the lack of foreign language proficiency among Americans a national crisis. The concern over America's lack of cultural competence grew after the events of September 11, 2001. Over the past several years, the U.S. Department of Education and the Department of Defense have stepped up their efforts through grants and the development of language and international studies centers to create proficient language speakers in hundreds of colleges and universities (Peters, 2002). The American Council for Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proclaimed 2005 as the "Year of Languages" to encourage the U.S. to put language in as core curricular subject in public education, with a strategic approach that encompasses kindergarten through 12th grade (Cutshall, 2005).

Integrating language learning into the formal K-12 and undergraduate curricula is a worthy pursuit. It is likely, however, that most English-speaking Americans will decide that speaking another language is important only when they believe they need a set of language skills for a defined, relevant purpose, usually in their adult lives. In a statement summarizing recent progress the United States has

made in the area of increased second language proficiency among Americans, the president of the University of Maryland's National Foreign Language Center (NFLC) stressed that the United States must "…break out of its current cycle of truncated foreign language learning and limited foreign language use [by shifting] attention to adult language use" (Lambert, 2001, p.351). He urged expansion of vocationally-oriented language instruction in acknowledgment that many adults could benefit greatly from learning and using foreign languages for work-related purposes.

Methods emerging over the past 20 years for teaching adults a second language to aid in their work, are, for the most part, grounded in adult learning theories that espouse the belief that adults learn best when they see relevance in the material to be learned and when they can immediately apply what they learn to their work and/or their life (Knowles, 1980). Pollitt suggests that training working adults in foreign languages is "greatly enhanced if [the language learning] is placed in the business context in which it is likely to be used" (1993, p. 48). Koch (1996) agrees, saying that for language classes for working adults, the context of the business of the learners needs to be woven into the learning in order to keep the learning meaningful and relevant to the learners and to effectively simulate the environments in which the learners would utilize the language. Contextualization provides the learner with an integration of business application and language accuracy that, together, provide greater benefit to both (Koch, 1996).

One form of language learning in context, often referred to as *language immersion*, insists on authenticity and relevancy as two essential ingredients and also accentuates the idea that language is a means of communication, not a subject in and of itself (Met, 1993). Sometimes referred to as *total relevance* programs, language immersion programs teach the regular school curriculum through the medium of a second language. Such programs are predicated on the belief that when second language instruction is integrated into the general school curriculum, students are given a meaningful context in which to develop language competency. Language learning results from using the language to perform authentic communicative functions across disciplines. In the words of Kinberg, “The target language is the medium of instruction, rather than its topic” (2001, p. 19).

In the last ten to fifteen years, the immersion concept has begun to move into areas of higher education and adult learning arenas. Adults make good candidates for language immersion, not only because they respond well to relevancy and authenticity, but also because adults have many experiences from which to make meaning of language. They are also able to make the conceptual and contextual bridges to produce effective communication (Charles, 2002). Language learning among working professionals can be described as a socio-cultural process, optimized in environments that encourage the use of the language in the context of every day work life (Koch, 1996).

In many adult language classes, even those adhering to the principles of language immersion exemplifying contextual relevance, the setting is necessarily contrived and simulated (Kinberg, 2001). In an effort to authenticate the experiences, to heighten the motivation, and to produce rewards inherent in successful real-life communication, a relatively new concept for adult learners has emerged over the last twenty years--the in-country immersion. Such programs, which began to appear in the 1980s throughout Europe and South America, provide language and culture classes in a country where the target language is spoken. In-country immersion programs usually last anywhere from one week to six months and most combine structured classes with planned and independent outings. Participants are usually encouraged to live with families chosen by program administrators to provide additional opportunities for the participant to use the language and experience the culture.

Advocates of the in-country immersion insist that the authentic culture provides more impact and more opportunity for faster contextual learning and, as a result, increased cultural competency. Enthusiastic endorsers of in-country immersion language programs claim that learners "*must* learn not only in *real* time but also in the *real* environment of the language in question" (Bryam & Fleming, p. 13).

In-country language learning has been shown, primarily through research of study abroad and exchange programs, to facilitate not only language learning per se, but also the appreciation and understanding of the natural environment in which

the language is used (Bryam & Fleming, 1994). Proponents of the in-country immersion believe that if one learns in true context, in a natural environment where the target language is spoken, the experience enhances language learning. Proponents suggest that the experience deepens the learner's appreciation for the people--their values, attitudes, and perceptions (de Courcy, 2002; Izzo,1991; Kinberg, 2001; Lu, 1998).

Contextual learning aids in the ability of the learner to communicate effectively and appropriately. The natural setting facilitates the learning, providing appropriate motivation and reward to sustain and heighten the learning and retention. There are some who caution that to be truly useful as a means for learning to function in the language, in-country immersions must be sufficiently long to allow the learners to integrate the learning into their functional routine, must be tailored to the customers' long term goals for using the language, and must be succeeded by continued prolonged usage of the target language (Clarke, 1999).

Purpose of Study

The intent of this study is to explore deeply the reflective impressions of individuals who participated in in-country language immersions as part of their efforts to learn a foreign language in order to be more effective in their work. The goal is to achieve a greater understanding of the effect of in-country language immersion programs on a particular type of adult--the working professional--who views knowledge of an additional language as a necessary life skill.

This qualitative study utilizes a purposeful sample of adult professionals who chose in-country language immersion as the means by which they attempted to learn a foreign language in order to help them in their careers. The study seeks to understand how the in-country immersion method enhanced the learners' appreciation of the target language as well as their use of the language as a professional tool. It also endeavors to understand the process by which in-county language immersion participants construct individual models of meaning in the social context of life.

Research Questions

The questions guiding the research are:

1. How do in-country language immersion learners believe the *in-country* aspect of the experience influenced their learning goals and helped them achieve those goals?
2. In what ways does the in-country immersion experience affect the learner’s appreciation for and the use of the target language?
3. How do in-country language immersion learners believe their self perception, worldviews, and effectiveness at work were influenced and changed by the immersion experience?

Conceptual Framework

Cognitive theory suggests that language learners are active participants in the learning process and that each learner creates unique and individual categorical representations of the target language (Kinberg, 2001). Teaching methodologies

evolving from cognitive theory draw upon the belief that the learner organizes information in categories that build upon old information (such as knowledge of the rules of a first language) to heighten understanding and retention and make new meanings (Gattegno,1976).

This study investigates how a selected group of individuals made meaning of languages they were learning for work-related reasons, through their experiences in immersion language programs in countries outside their home countries. The study is based in the social constructivist view of learning. Social constructivism blends psychology, philosophy, and anthropology to describe knowledge as “temporary, developmental, nonobjective, internally constructed, and socially and culturally mediated” (Twomey Fosnet, 1996, p.ix). A constructivist view of learning rejects the notion that knowledge is a finite or absolute state that can be reached through transfer from one individual to another in exact replication. In contrast, the constructivist view suggests that one internalizes knowledge uniquely, as a result of interaction with others (Gergen, 1995). Learning, according to social constructivists, is a “communal construction of reality” in which one learns through “engaging, incorporating, and critically exploring views of others," often constructing new interpretations of reality through that interaction (Gergen, p.34). Social constructivism suggests that adult learners be given the opportunity “for concrete, contextually meaningful experience through which they can search for patterns, raise their own questions, and construct their own models, concepts and strategies.

[The learning environment] in this model is seen as a minisociety, a community of learners engaged in activity, discourse, and reflection" (Twomey Fosnet, p.ix).

Employing the social constructivist theory to a study of in-country language immersion experiences does not require that we adopt the notion that linguistic meaning is totally subjective (Gergen,1995). In any language, there are rules of grammar and syntax and articulated definitions of words. Social constructivism recognizes, however, that meaning in language is context dependent; social constructivism places the human relationship in the foreground and acknowledges that to know a language for purposes of communication requires "interdependent action at a microsocial level" (Gergen,1995, p. 24).

Constructivism is fundamentally a psychological theory of learning, or epistemology, stemming from work of Jean Piaget (1073), Lev Vygotsky (1978) and, more recently, Ernst von Glaserfeld (1995). Their work focused on learning as a process that enabled new constructions – new perspectives – of reality, rather than a process that ultimately resulted in absolutes. "Rather than behaviors or skills as the goal of instruction, concept development and deep understanding are the foci; rather than stages being the result of maturation, they are understood as contractions of active learner reorganization" (Twomey Fosnot, p. 10).

Implied in this theory is the idea that human beings have no access to an objective reality since it is human nature to construct one's own version of reality, sometimes with extreme alteration of previous sense of reality or sense of self. In

von Glaserfeld's terms, "Knowledge is not passively received either through the senses or by way of communicators, but is actively built up by the cognizing subject" (1988, p.83). Knowledge is not a reflection of the world as it is; knowledge pertains "…to invariances in the living organism's experience rather than to entities, structures and events in an independently existing world" (Richards & von Glaserfeld,1979,p.40). Similarly, *perception* is not " the reception or duplication of information that is coming in from outside, but rather the construction of invariances by means of which the organism can assimilate and organize its experience" (p.40).

Gergen (1995) cautions that adhering too closely to von Glaserfeld's definition of knowledge and perception can lead to a view of knowledge as being definitive and limited, not from an exterior, or positive, source but rather from an interior source, the individual organism. Says Gergen, "If each of us is simply locked into our own experiences, constructing the world as we may, then all that we take to be 'the world' and all that we believe to be 'other person' are simply the products of our own design" (1995, p.5). Gergen urges the researcher grounded in social constructivist theory to add to the theory the pragmatic dimension that truth is evolutionary and adaptive.

Williams James, early 20th century medical doctor, philosopher, and psychologist, believed that the nature and essence of thoughts are as particular and peculiar as the varieties of personal consciousness attached to them (Woods and Murphy, 2002). James also acknowledged that the understanding of the world can be different at different points in time, even within one person. He spoke of the mind

as being constantly involved with and reacting to its environment, "streamlike" in its nature: "Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits…It is nothing jointed; a river or stream are the metaphors by which it is more naturally described" (James, 1977a, p. 33). Each person's stream of knowledge is different because each person tends to take notice of things not as they are, but as they are interpreted by the individual and as they are reinforced or contrasted with an individual's flow of experience.

The Jamesian mind is constantly processing, moving onward from one cognitive mooring point to another. "Experience is remolding us every moment, and our mental reaction on every given thing is really resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date" (James, 1977a, p. 29). For James, the very state of existence is perpetually creative and adaptive. For those who accept the thinking of James and Piaget, knowledge is not static; it develops, as does the possessor of knowledge, over time and through experience (Twomy Fosnet, 1996).

The idea that individuals, although unique, have similar ideas that are shaped by others into socially constructed truths, values, and beliefs has led to a branch of constructivism known as *social constructivism*, or *socially shared cognition.* Constructivists at this end of the spectrum propose that it is the interpersonal aspect of learning, rather than the intrapersonal aspect, that forms the basis of knowledge construction (Woods and Murphy,2002). Social constructivists tend to assume from the outset that cognitive processes are subsumed by social and cultural processes. In so doing, they agree with Vygotsky's (1979) contention that "the social dimension

of consciousness is primary in fact and time. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary" (p.30).

Whereas cognitive or psychological theorists analyze thought in terms of conceptual processes located within individuals, sociocultural theorists put the emphasis is on the social action and interaction of individuals (Cobb, 1992). It is in this interaction, *the rubbing of intellectual elbows,* that one forms opinions and derives, and constructs new meanings. Social constructivists focus on learning as sense-making as do the Piagetian or individualistic constructivists (Oldfather,1999). In contrast to the Piagetian constructivists, sociocultural constructivists locate learning in co-participation in cultural practice (Cobb, 1992). A community exists prior to and distinct from the individual, and individual knowledge is a by-product of the social sphere (Gergen, 1995).

One important difference in the individual constructivist theories and those of social constructivists is the way that language is viewed. Whereas constructivists like Piaget view language as signs and symbols used by individuals to express and communicate their thinking, sociocultural theorists view language as the *carrier* of knowledge, the conveyor of established meaning and of cultural heritage (Cobb, 1992). Through language, both spoken and symbolic (such as gestures and mathematical symbols or musical notes), we manipulate concepts, understand relationships and organize ideas (Oldfather, 1999). According to Wardhaugh (1990),

> If one language makes distinctions that another does not make, then those who use the first language will more readily perceive the differences in their

> environment which such linguistic distinctions draw attention to. If you must classify snow, camels and automobiles in certain ways, you will perceive snow, camels and automobiles differently from some one who is not required to make these differentiations (p.214).

The language we use is shaped by the community that speaks that language and our understandings derived from the use of that language is shaped by that same community. According to Oldfather (1999), “Language is entwined with thought and thus lies at the heart of our sense-making about the world. As our inner thoughts are rooted in language, they are inherently social, like language” (p.10).

Says Twomey Fosnot, “Since the process of construction is adaptive in nature and requires self-reorganization, cultural knowledge that is assumed to be held by members of the culture is in reality only a dynamically evolving, negotiated interaction of individual interpretations, transformation, and construction” (p.24). The interaction between internal and external worlds, between personal and social meaning, provides the basis for a social constructivist framework for this study of the collective in-country immersion experiences of selected individuals who learned a new language for business purposes.

Significance of Study for Research and Practice

This study has several implications for research and theory. It looks at a special form of experiential learning, the in-country language immersion, from the perspective of people who have engaged in this form of language training to aid them in their work. Through a social constructivist lens, the study explores the

meaning that the participants derived from in-country immersion experiences in their past. The participants spoke about changes in ability, knowledge, and their metacognitive awareness, or knowledge of self as a learner. They reflected upon ways in which the socially interactive dynamic environment inherent in their in-country experiences influenced their progress towards their own personal goals and contributed to their effectiveness at work as well as their evolving perception of self and world. This study builds upon adult learning theory and constructivist theories of second-language acquisition by adults. The results inform the research community about the role that an in-country language immersion can play in developing adult professionals into effective communicators with people from different cultures.

From the standpoint of practice, the study describes how working professionals made meaning of language and culture through in-country language immersion. The findings and conclusions may help working professionals gain a clearer understanding of the in-country language immersion experience and what it can to develop their competency in the globally diverse workplace. In addition to informing the would-be learner, the findings may serve as a reference to language immersion providers in the design of the in-country immersion experience for working professionals.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore what working professionals learned from in-country language immersion experiences, both in terms of knowledge of content (i.e. language and cultural understanding) and knowledge of self and others (i.e. altered sense of self or worldview). The intention is to explore experiences looking for meaning and impact on the individuals' work and personal lives rather than to prove, substantiate, or disprove existing theory. In order to provide a framework for the study, this chapter presumes that "…a thoughtful and insightful discussion of related literature builds a logical framework for the research that sets it within a tradition of inquiry and a context of related studies" (Marshall & Rossman,1999, p.43). This chapter 1) investigates research related to second language acquisition among adult learners, 2) explores the relationship of social constructivist theory to language learning, and 3) examines related studies in contextual language learning and in-country immersion.

Second Language Learning Among Adults

After World War II, government leaders and educators challenged all Americans to learn languages other than English. Despite the fact that the challenge was issued to all ages, primary focus on second language acquisition, both in terms of theory and practice, has been on children, and primarily in the K -12 classroom (Kinberg, 2001). This preoccupation with the child as learner comes in part from the fact that before the 1970's when Knowles and others began to look at the adult learner as distinctly different from the child, researchers and practitioners assumed

that the way humans learn as children is how they learn throughout their lives. Concurrent with growing evidence that adults do learn differently from children, some language acquisition researchers began to argue that adults could learn second language better than children because adults are more self-directed, have greater prior experience with language learning, and usually possess greater understanding of grammar and language structure (Scovel, 2001). Others postulated that adults could not learn languages as well as children because after puberty, people lose a unique physiological capacity for language that exists only during a *critical period* in development (Chomsky,1965; Lenneberg, 1967; & Scovel, 2001). Named the *Language Acquisition Device* (LAD) by Chomsky (1965) and described by Lenneberg (1967) as an innate genetic trait linked to cerebral plasticity, this capacity was believed to be a physical attribute in the brain which permitted children to acquire languages, especially the accents and physical forms of pronunciation (such as rolling the letter *r* on one's tongue) with greater facility than adults.

One implication of the critical period hypothesis (CPH) is that first language acquisition (FLA) and second language acquisition (SLA) must take place during this critical period or a person will be unable to become fully proficient. A second implication of CPH is that one's mastery of a second language will be relatively fast, successful, and qualitatively similar to one's first language ability *only if* the second language is acquired during this critical period. Scovel (2001) summarizes the research surrounding CPH as producing inconclusive evidence as to whether there

is a critical period for proficiency, but he suggests that there is probably a critical period after which most people have difficulty perfecting a native quality accent.

Some researchers influenced by Jean Piaget say that *after* a person reaches puberty, not before, is the ideal age to learn a second language. “It is [at puberty], “ says Brown (2000) “that a person’s brain becomes capable of abstraction, of formal thinking which transcends concrete experience and direct perception” (p. 61). Ausubel (1967) noted that adolescents and adults could profit from certain grammatical explanations and deductive thinking that would be lost on children who had not yet developed the mental capacities for formal operation and sequential thought.

Recent studies of adults suggest that adults can learn languages faster than children, because adults can apply past experience to their learning. Experiments with adult language learners have shown that they respond best to learning a language if they:

- have a good, practical reason why they need to learn the language;
- are given the opportunity to learn grammar and syntactical rules in a structured environment;
- have opportunities to communicate orally in the language in real-life or near real-life settings;
- are properly motivated to learn (Ellis, 1997; Foster, 1997; Taylor, 1975).

Theories surrounding successful adult language learning align well with basic adult learning theory espoused by Knowles. He suggested that adults:

- want to learn something because they *need* to learn something; they feel deficient and want to fill a gap in their knowledge or skill;
- like to apply their learning to their practice;
- are problem-centered as opposed to subject-centered;
- use their experience as a resource in learning new things;
- are self-directed, motivated by internal factors rather than external ones (1984, p.12).

Researchers who have studied second language learning among adults agree that the goal-oriented adult language learner--by nature self-directed and motivated --actively engages in the language assimilation process. (Banu, 1986; Ellis, 1997; Izzo, 1981). According to Ellis, good language learners have shown themselves to be learners who:

- take charge of their own learning;
- pay attention to form and meaning;
- streamline the assimilation of grammatical and syntactical rules;
- show awareness of the learning process and their own learning styles, adapting the latter to optimize the former; and
- maintain and reinforce their motivation to learn through the positive rewards that come with early successes in communicating to others in the new language (1997, p.76).

Clarke (1996) asserts that *all* adults who feel a need to use a new language in order to better accomplish their current or life's work, have a great capacity to be what Ellis calls *good* language learners. Clarke postulates that the adult's pragmatic use of past experience coupled with a felt need for new knowledge to apply to an immediate goal can speed the adult's comprehension of a new language. He stresses that for an adult, it is the relevant context that counts, not the linguistics of words, syntax, and grammar.

The ability to communicate through language begins with one's desire to be understood and to understand what others are saying. For an adult, the desire to learn a new language begins with a feeling that the current language(s) is (are) insufficient to accomplish a goal. Language learning, as in most learning in adults, begins, then, with a sense of need that motivates the learner to learn something new. Of all the affective (emotional) factors studied in relationship to SLA, motivation is the one that dominates the literature as the key to performance. In an extensive review of SLA literature, Crookes & Schmidt (1991) cited almost 100 definitions of motivation, grouped into 9 major categories. Scovel (2001) synthesizes the variety of terms into an overall theme of motivation in that it pertains to the emotional state of the learner in the areas of direction, persistence, and degree of desired behavior. Despite differences of opinion on exactly how to gauge or manipulate an individual's motivation, researchers generally agree that motivation prior to and during the learning process plays an extremely critical role in the learner's short-term and long-term success (Ellis, 1997).

It is normally assumed that a language learner's primary goal is "to be able to communicate in the target language" (Foster, 1997). The *motive*, then, is communication. Gardner and Lambert (1972) devoted considerable effort to differentiating the motivation to communicate into two subcategories, *instrumental* and *integrative*. Instrumental motivation they describe as having a goal to learn the language for a specific practical or professional reason. Examples of instrumental motivation for learning a language include obtaining a specific job, passing an exam, getting a good grade, or gaining access to nontranslated research in one's field of study. Integrative motivation, as the term implies, has to do with the person's interest in integrating into the culture represented by the target language group (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). An example of integrative motivation would be English-speaking Canadians' wanting to learn French in order to better understand Canada's history and to demonstrate a positive attitude towards Canada's French speakers (Ellis, 1997). Another example of integrative motivation would be the case in which someone falls in love with someone and *marries* into the language (Scovel, 2001).

Originally, it was assumed that the reasons for studying a language were very important in the learner's degree of success in learning, and further assumed that integrative motivation was more effective than instrumental reasons (Scovel, 2001). More recent work by Gardner (1991) provided experimental evidence that instrumental and integrative motivation correlate with each other and it is really the amount of motivation that matters, not the type. Others argue that the reasons at the outset of SLA are not as important as the types of motivation, related to *incentives*,

that exist throughout the learning process (Ellis, 1997; Skehan,1989; & Walqui, 2000).

Incentives were defined by Thomas Hobbes in 1640 as "anticipated events that are approached if pleasurable and avoided if painful" (Deckers, 2001, p.41). Incentives become the motivators, or sometimes, demotivators, in the learning continuum. Some incentives provide what Brown (2000) defines as *intrinsic motivation* which encourages the learner to pursue language learning for its own sake. Learning resulting from intrinsic motivation provides the learner with a sense of satisfaction and self-actualization or self-determination. Often it is the learning tasks--the process--that the learner finds rewarding (Ellis, 1997). The arousal and maintenance of curiosity, followed by the thrill of discovery and personal achievement, stimulates the learner to learn more. As Scovel suggests, “The joy is in the journey, not the destination” (2001,p.122). Ellen Foster (1997) agrees, adding that the rewards come mostly through a sense that one is becoming a new person, reintegrated in a new place that comes from bridging two cultures through two languages.

Similar to intrinsic motivation in its implications on instructional design is what Hermann (1980) calls *resultative motivation*, which has to do with the learner’s being motivated to continue learning because of the feeling of success that comes from successes along the way. Motivation can result from learning as well as cause it. As learners experience success, they may become more motivated to learn more.

Conversely, bad experiences in the learning process can be disincentives to learning more.

The challenge with language learning, say many researchers, is *staying* motivated, a problem that stems mainly from the attitude of the adult learner himself and from the attitudes of those around him. Children by nature are better able to cope with new culture, people, and surroundings; they are invariably more venturesome, less self-conscious, more flexible and spontaneous than adults (Giora,1972). The lowered inhibitions of a child facilitate second language learning because, unlike adults, children are willing to use a word incorrectly and to form new, grammatically incorrect expressions to make themselves understood. Adults, on the other hand, understand that there *are* rules and they put pressures on themselves to learn and comply to those rules in order to correctly communicate. Those in contact with children and adults learning a second language are much more tolerant of children's mistakes than they are of adults' mistakes. The communication demands placed on adults by themselves and others around them often can cause frustrations that de-motivate, rather than stimulate them to continue their efforts to communicate (Giora,1972).

Armed with a good grounding in grammar structure and with the desire and need to learn, the adult language learner can respond well to the early phases of learning a second language. It is during the difficult, often tedious, second stage of any skills-based learning that the learner and teacher alike must come up with ways to sustain the desire to learn, to maintain the need. According to Noels, Pelletier,

Clement & Vallerand (2000), intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are critical to the language learner, especially in this building stage.

Karen Yeok-Hwa Ngeow (1998) describes the optimal learning environment as one in which transfer--applying prior knowledge to new learning situations--and motivation--the impetus to create and sustain the striving to attain goals--are balanced and encouraged. Clarke (1996) suggests that the key to effective language acquisition among adults is to permit learners to draw upon their prior knowledge and experience as they reach a new sense of achievement and understanding through new, relevant knowledge.

Social Constructivist Theory and Language Learning

The constructivist theory of discourse portrays both comprehending and composing language as “the building, shaping and configuring of meaning” (Spivey,1995, p. 314). People construct meaning when they hear words uttered from others, filtering those words through their own context; they build their meaning on the basis of knowledge and prior experience that they bring to the task and develop when performing the task (Vygotsky,1978). Learners build their meanings on knowledge that is organized, structured, configured in some fashion (e.g. Spiro, 1980, Spivey, 1995). Making meaning of language, then, according to social constructivists, is metaphorically portrayed as a product --the product of cognitive activity performed in social acts of communication. It is portrayed as a kind of mental representation, a configuration of content that an individual generates while

processing--internalizing and comprehending--what is being communicated (Spivey, 1995).

Applying a constructivist framework to language learning puts the focus on active engagement and interchange between the learner and the teacher(s). The teacher in a constructivist model is usually not a person standing in front of the learner and feeding knowledge. In the constructivist model, that which teaches may be an individual defined as *teacher* or *instructor* but may also be fellow students, other people in the learner's environment, and a multitude of outside stimuli (Gould, 1996). Social constructivist theorists contend that it is through meaningful interaction with others as well as through relevant practice that language learners develop competence, fluency, and creativity in language use (Lu, 1998).

Most studies related to language learning, both those based on social constructivism and those framed in other social theories, have been conducted on children with the intent to shape and redefine K-12 instruction. Some of the findings related to children seem relevant to this study of adult language learning experiences. Heath (1983) found that for children to assimilate into their environments, to get along with people and to accomplish social goals, they need to learn their community's ways of language use and to internalize those ways in a personal, adaptive manner. Kaiden (1998) emphasized that language learners who are engaged in social interactive learning activate prior knowledge, construct new understanding, and use metacognitive strategies to monitor comprehension and meet their goals. Graves (1983) found that social activities integrated into the

language arts processes lead to better writing, reading, and spelling. The acts of talking, sharing and reconstructing meaning of self and surroundings can pull down barriers to communication and enhance communicative growth.

There has been one language acquisition study framed in social constructivism that was conducted on young adults. Sidamn-Taveau and Milner-Bolotin (2001) studied the use of project-based learning via virtual web-based trips by thousands of first-year Spanish students at a large southwestern university. Project-based learning is a comprehensive constructivist-based approach that engages students in the investigation and solutions of authentic problems. Its defining characteristics included the use of authentic materials and a focus on student-centered learning. In the project-based learning environment, the instructor serves as a facilitator who encourages and guides the learners. In the case studied by Sidamn-Taveau and Milner-Bolotin, the students produced authentic artifacts such as a travel itinerary that permitted them “to communicate their understanding of the lesson material while demonstrating their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real life situations” (2001, p. 64).

Constructivist theory maintains that learners play an active role in the construction of their own knowledge (Twomey-Fosnot, 1996). Affective factors such as motivation and learning styles and strategies also influence the learning process. The added dimension of *disequilibrium,* a term coined first by the early constructivist Piaget as the state the learner enters when the learner encounters something

abnormal, leads to reconstitution of the learner's reality and expands and deepens learning (Sidamn-Taveau & Milner-Bolotin, 2001).

In recent times, the influence of constructivism can be seen in classrooms for both children and adults (Oldfather, 1999). From the constructivist's standpoint, the tools of the traditionalists--lectures, note taking, memorization of facts--methods that *fill students' minds* with necessary information--have little value. Both the sociocultural and cognitive constructivists have encouraged the use of activity--experiential learning--in order for the learner to internalize knowledge derived from those experiences (Cobb, 1992).

Individual or cognitive constructivists have led the crusade to what is currently termed *child-centered*, or in the adult vernacular, *student-centered* learning environment. The emphasis in such environments is on self discovery and the drawing of individual conclusions. Experimentation, trial and error, and active problem-solving permit the learner to construct meaning and internalize knowledge (Stage, Muller, Kinzie, & Simmons, 1998). The purpose of education, according to cognitive constructivists, is not for the expert to transfer or deposit knowledge into the passive receptor (the learner's mind), but rather for the learner to make, recognize, and act upon assumptions and premises. A teacher's or expert's role in an educational environment is not as the well-known *sage on the stage* but rather as the *guide on the side*, whose role is to pose problems and to provide a setting from which the learner can have meaningful experiences.

In addition to believing that learning is an individual process and that each person's understanding comes from making meaning of experiences and stimuli, cognitive constructivists argue that new ideas and true innovation are more likely to materialize if a person is permitted to make his own discoveries (von Glaserfeld, 1995). Social constructivists are more likely to view a teacher as a resource who can, in much the same way as other resources such as written text or taped messages do, provide fodder for the learner's cognitive and social development. Instead of placing the expert as the learned sage who brings the learner to the state of knowledge acceptable for action (as the traditionalists do) or placing him outside the learner's sphere as simply a protagonist and problem poser (as the cognitive constructivists might), social constructivists place the teacher alongside the learner as a mentor and role model (Koch, 1996).

Clarke (1999) studied the language learning of British export managers and Koch (1996) conducted a case study of a pilot language class in a Master of Business Administration program in a U.S. institution. Their findings suggest that the trainer/teacher for second language communication in a work setting should understand the business function for which the language is being learned. Koch (1996) says that, generally, in the world of business and business schools, the approach for language training should be a contextual, but reductionist, model in which executives and executives–in–training are taught the key elements of language communication, but are not taught complicated tenses and grammar. Koch said, "Introducing the most common elements to avoid irregular verbs and

structures builds confidence and saves time" (1996, p. 5). He added, "Self-confidence and language speed can be achieved early on in language training if less than perfection is accepted as a tool to motivate and encourage experimentation" (p. 5). Koch is a firm believer in the idea that the cultural elements of the language are as important, if not more so, than the accuracy of speech and he adds that the cultural concepts should be couched in terms of economic and company-specific consequences rather than in terms of general living in the foreign environment.

Koch concluded that "…it is vital that the trainer have both language and business skills…[so that] when discussing [joint ventures] as a form of international market penetration, [the class] can understand not only the vocabulary but also the detailed business dangers entailed in such a contractual relationship" (p. 28). Koch does not advocate a quick fix as much as a targeted one that incorporate business context into the instructional design. Clarke (1999) emphasized that language training for adults is more helpful when it focuses on the cultural differences in daily practice of the particular line of business or function for which the language is being learned.

Gergen (1995) offered an interesting example of social constructivism at work in the field of medical education, a field that is arguably one in which the students must learn a new language. Gergen commented, "Traditional medical training is premised on the assumption that practical engagement should await the *filling of the mind*. Thus, [normally] three years of education may precede any significant engagement with the challenges of the medical practice" (p. 36). Yet, in a medical

school in Limburg, Netherlands, Gergen observed that incoming students are immediately placed, without the usual foundation-laying in the lecture hall, with a practicing doctor. As problems were encountered within the practical setting, they raised questions that students could not answer without inquiring into relevant resources (eg. books, journals, statistical charts). As these resources were sought out and incorporated, students gained further efficacy as apprentices, only to encounter further questions of practical significance that sent them back to the necessary resources. In this social constructivist example, the practicing doctor served as a role model, a sounding board, and a resource, but not as the sole resource from which students were expected to draw conclusions and build their own (unique) knowledge and skill. Like the master and the apprentice of yesteryear, the expert played the role of a mentor who both modeled and molded.

Constructivist research has examined how meanings can differ across different cultural perspectives and can also change over time as the meaning-maker adds experiences upon which to interpret (Di Sibio,1982; Spivey,1987). According to Lyddon, “Constructivism is an epistemological perspective based on the assertion that humans actively create the realities to which they respond” (1995, p.69). Lyddon posits that the human mind plays an active role “in organizing and recreating meaning by literally inventing rather than discovering reality” (p. 69). One’s cultural background is a critical factor in this process of socially constructing one’s unique reality. According to constructivism, people do not come to know the world in a passive stimulus-response interaction with the environment; rather, they actively

construct their understanding of the world as they interact with it (Lyddon, 1995). When people learn other languages, especially doing so within the context of a culture different from their own, they filter the experiences through existing beliefs and create new understandings of their own culture and that of others (Lee & Greene, 1999).

Contextual Learning and In-country Immersion

"Language learning is a socio-cultural process. To fully function in a particular language, one not only needs to understand the mechanics, such as the grammar, but also how to apply that language across various contexts, audiences, and purposes"(Lu,1998, p.3). Where and how adults learn a second language are important factors in their achievement. Studies over the past 10 to 20 years have shown that practicing a second language in the natural environment - or simulated natural setting - where that language is spoken is the best way to become at ease with the language and actually master it (e.g., Brecht and Robinson, 1993; de Courcy, 1997; Foster, 1997; Heath, 1986; Izzo, 1981; Wesche, 1979; Wong-Fillmore, 1983, 1989).

Recognition that the construction of knowledge is an active process that each individual learner must carry out has led to a greater emphasis on both using a natural setting and permitting the learner to take *ownership* of the learning (Gould, 1996). Requiring the learner to share in the responsibility for selecting tasks in which they will participate not only helps to engage the learner in the learning process but also acknowledges that each learner is different. Emphasizing the individual as well

as the interactive process of learning can increase intrinsic motivation for the learner (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992).

Some working professionals are turning to in-country language immersion programs as a means to learning a language to be more effective at work. In such programs, originated in the 1970's by the United States armed forces, learners live and study in the target community and are immersed in the target language and culture (Johnson & Swaim, 1997). According to Cook (2002), proponents contend that such programs help adults feel more comfortable with the language learning process, give them the relevance and reward they need to stay motivated, and accelerate their learning time.

Although in-country language immersion programs differ in significant ways from the language immersion in K-12 classroom, there are some major similarities in purpose and process. The primary goal of classroom immersion programs is to "enable students to communicate effectively within particular language communities with minority group members, or with individuals of foreign nationalities, and to communicate across linguistic and cultural boundaries" (Johnson & Swaim, 1997, p.6). These programs are by design student-centered and content-centered, not language-centered. They use the target language to teach a variety of subjects across a number of academic disciplines and are, as such, proficiency-oriented. Although there is no single, proven methodology for the proficiency-oriented immersion classroom, Hadley (1993) developed a set of five principles to guide others as they shape immersion curriculum:

Principle 1 - Opportunities must be provided for students to practice using language in a range of contexts likely to be encountered in the target culture.

Principle 2 - Opportunities should be provided for students to practice carrying out a range of functions (tasks) likely to be necessary in dealing with others in the target culture.

Principle 3 - The development of accuracy should be encouraged in proficiency-oriented instruction. As learners produce language, various forms of instruction and evaluative feedback can be useful in facilitating the progression of their skills toward more precise and coherent language use.

Principle 4 - Instruction should be responsive to the affective as well as the cognitive needs of students, and their different personalities, preferences, and learning styles should be taken into account.

Principle 5 - Cultural understanding must be promoted in various ways so that students are sensitive to other cultures and prepared to live more harmoniously in the target language community (p.77).

In general, methods, strategies, and activities which meet the criteria inherent in the above principles emphasize authentic, naturalistic learning of a second language. Understandably, in K-12 education, this learning is primarily limited to the classroom and, additionally, to a classroom in the learner's home country, not in a country where the target language is spoken. At the university level, however, this constraint can more easily be lifted. As American universities adopt more stringent graduation requirements for knowing a language, it may well be that before too long

they will adopt similar goals to higher education institutions in Britain, a nation that has established the philosophy that "language learners…*must* learn not only in real time but also in the natural environment of the language in question" (Bryam & Fleming, p. 13).

Most in-country immersions are not simply experiences in which students of a language simply immerse themselves in a culture and speak the language. They usually involve structured classes along with structured and unstructured activities that encourage students to use the language in real situations to build greater communication effectiveness (Lundine,1997). Such experiences encourage the learner to use the language in its cultural context. Proponents claim that if programs are properly managed, they can help learners understand the reasons that people from those cultures act and behave as they do. (Cormeraie,1999).

One value of in-country immersions is that they can permit learners to practice their language skills in context, in a real setting that provides immediate feedback and reinforcement in a real-life contextual setting. The in-country dimension adds the cultural elements and the contextual understanding necessary for effective communication between people of dissimilar national origins.

Another strength of such programs is that they contain many of the elements inherent in instructional games and simulations that often help learners accelerate and internalize their learning. Such instructional techniques are based on two important premises: 1) People learn better through active experience than passive listening; and 2) people learn better through interacting with one another

(Thiagarajan,1997). By using the language to accomplish real tasks in real-life experiences and receiving instant reward for being able to communicate, learners can increase retention and receive renewed motivation to learn even more. In-country immersions possess the qualities to provide reinforcement and relevancy that can enhance and speed up the language learning.

The case of the European railroad company Eurostar illustrates the way that students can be immersed in a culture in a context relevant for their business needs and emerge able to perform their jobs in a totally new language (Bath, 2000). When the company's senior executives agreed to merge British, French, and Belgian railways, they decided that it would be inefficient to put the drivers in French-English partnerships that would require two drivers to ride on each 6-hour round trip, when only one driver was needed to accomplish the trip. After deciding that there needed to be one common language among drivers and that it needed to be French, they contracted a team of language and railroad experts to design a customized language program specifically designed around passenger transportation. They also decided early on, with the input from several drivers, that a good portion of the course needed to be taught in France. During that portion of the 90-hour program, the non-French speaking railroad engineers lived individually with French-speaking families in France.

Through a combination of individual construction of meaning facilitated by social interaction and mentoring of French drivers, the British and Flemish-speaking drivers became adept in the French language in the context of French and Belgian

railway regulations. They were able to understand the technical features of a newly-designed and highly-complex training, driving techniques, and a myriad of other new and different items, all in a new and different language. The Eurostar example gives credence to the idea that in-country immersion language experience lends itself well as a vehicle for adult learners because of its potential to create a transformational learning experience in which the learner constructs new meaning of the language within the context of the purpose for which the learner is learning the language.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary focus of this study is on native English speakers who decided they needed to learn or improve a second language, and their understanding of the culture in which that language is spoken, in order to do better work. The purposes of this study are to (1) examine in-country language immersion for working professionals, within the framework of social constructivist theory, (2) provide a rich description of how the study's participants made meaning of the target language and culture through their in-county immersion experiences, and (3) develop, through constant comparative inductive analysis, a broader understanding of the figural aspects of in-country immersions utilized for the specific purpose of enhancing work-related effectiveness.

The study's purposes were accomplished through the use of a qualitative multiple-case study approach. This chapter presents the research genre, participant selection and description, data collection, and the inductive analysis methodology that was used to develop rich descriptions of the participants' experiences and their reflective impressions of those experiences. It also addresses issues of validity and reliability and discusses the researcher's role and biases.

Research Genre

This is a qualitative research project using multiple case studies of adults who participated in in-country immersion programs to enhance their ability to communicate in the target language in order to do better work. The intent of the

research is to elucidate the meaning ascribed to the experience by people who have had one to five years to incorporate the experience into their professional and personal lives. Its purpose is consistent with what Merriam calls “the key element in all qualitative research: understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants’ perspectives” (1998, p.6). It is also consistent with what Merriam asserts are the key philosophical assumptions upon which all qualitative research is based: reality is constructed by individuals and what one person believes is real is a result of individual interpretation of experience. “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, how they make sense of their world, and the experiences they have in the world (p.7).” Qualitative inquiry is appropriate for this study because it permits in-depth exploration of the meanings that professional men and women ascribe to their immersion experiences and their understanding of the ways in which those experiences have impacted their work lives. This study is intentionally retrospective, asking the interviewees to reflect upon their immersion experiences and the elements of the experience that shaped their understanding of the target language, the culture, and themselves, and made them more effective in their work.

The research questions for this study focus on what happened to the learners from the perspective of the learners. The questions led the responders to express how they believe their knowledge, self perceptions, and worldviews were influenced and altered by their in-country immersion experiences, and why. It was not my intent to answer quantifiable questions like *does?*--as in "Does an in-country immersion

contribute to the acquisition of a second language?" or *how much*?--as in "To what degree does an in-country immersion enhance the learning experience?" I wanted to ask questions that provide insight into the perceptions of the individual participants on such questions as *how* and *why*. For instance, the interviewees were asked to comment on *how* they believe their in-country immersion experiences affected their learning of a language and its culture and their ability to use the language in the context of their work life. They were also asked to reflect on *why* the immersion experience affected them in that way.

This research problem lent itself well to a particular form of qualitative research, the qualitative case study. Yin (1993) identifies the case study as an effective approach for studies in which *how* and *why* questions are being asked and Merriam (1998) identifies case studies as a suitable research design for studies that focus on process and evolution. Merriam also describes three distinguishing features of case studies as *particularistic*, *descriptive,* and *heuristic*. Case studies focus on a *particular* situation, program, or phenomenon. They are richly *descriptive*, incorporating the anthropologic technique of thick *description*, which means the complete, literal description of the object of study. They are *heuristic*, meaning that they illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study through explanation, evaluation, and development of relational threads.

The qualitative case study provides a way to investigate the complex relationships among multiple variables, variables that are often so complex themselves that it is impossible to isolate them or control for them. Case study can in

fact be differentiated from other forms of research design by what Cronbach calls “interpretation in context” (1975, p.123). While deeply exploring the case, the researcher attempts to uncover the interaction of significant factors (figural elements) that characterize the subject under investigation (Merriam, 1998).

Case study is appropriate, however, only if the phenomenon being studied is intrinsically bounded in that there is a finite limit, actual or theoretical, to the number of people who could be interviewed or to the number of observations that could be conducted (Merriam, 1998). Adelman, Jenkins, and Kemmis (1983) suggest that the bounded system, or case, can be a person, a program, or entity that is investigated in depth in order to achieve a full understanding of the phenomenon or experience being studied. Merriam suggests the case study as “a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon” that “offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences” (1998, p. 41).

The case study approach is an appropriate methodology for this study of the in-country language immersion experience. As the research questions suggest, I wanted to explore in depth what happens to a particular *category of person*--the working professional - who engages in a particular *type of program*--an in-country immersion -- with a *commonality of purpose*--to increase one’s knowledge of the target language and culture to be more effective at work. The study’s goal was more to investigate people’s reactions, impressions, and meaning making than it was to explore a particular immersion program or program methodology. As such, it can be

considered to be what Merriam (1998) calls a *psychological* case study, which focuses on the individual and the individual's reaction to something, rather than focuses on the thing, or the event, itself.

Since the main purpose of this study is to increase understanding of a type of experience from a variety of personal perspectives, it was appropriate to examine a variety of experiences of different people, each one a separate case. The multiple-case study involves collecting data from several cases and comparing and contrasting the data in order to ultimately make some observations about the human understanding and meaning ascribed to the phenomenon or event being studied (Merriam, 1998). In a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of multiple case studies, Yin (1989) notes that multiple-case studies are more robust and produce more complete and compelling information than do single-case studies, except in the situation where a single case represents a unique or critical test of a theory.

Participant Selection

To use the case method to study a phenomenon, there must be a finite set of possible cases (Merriam, 1998). The case population for this study encompasses all native English-speaking adult working professionals who have engaged in an in-county immersion to learn a foreign language to aid them in their work. For purposes of this study, *working professionals* are men and women who have completed at least an undergraduate degree and are pursuing careers that require specialized training or knowledge. I used a small purposeful sample of working professionals

who, when they agreed to participate in the study, asserted that they had decided to learn or improve their knowledge of a specific language to assist them in their career. They all had participated within the past five years in in-country language immersion programs between one week and three months in duration and they all asserted at the outset that they believed that they—and their work—benefited from the immersion experience. The outcome of the study is a rich description of the immersion experiences of the participants, what they felt they learned from those experiences, and their thoughts on why they learned what they did.

The Case Pool

This study was intended to explore in depth the perceptions of working professionals who engaged in in-country immersion experiences to increase their knowledge of the target language and culture to improve their effectiveness either in the job in which they were engaged at the time of the immersion or in a future position for which they were preparing at the time of the immersion. It was not my intent to examine a particular in-country immersion experience, or the learning of a particular language or culture. I did, however, feel it was important to draw upon cases with a set of common characteristics. I developed a short screening survey which asked the following six questions: 1) Are you over 18?; 2) Is English your first language?; 3) Was the main reason you participated in an in-country immersion to help you in your career? 4) Did this in-country immersion experience take place in or after 1999?; 5) Would you say that the immersion experience was generally a

positive experience that met or exceeded your reasons for participating in it?; and 6) Are you willing to be visited and interviewed by the researcher for about 1 hour? Those surveyed who answered *yes* to all of the questions became my participants.

My original hope had been to study cases from both the service sector (i.e. health care, education, and banking) and from what might be called the *mainstream business sector*—multinational and domestic corporations involved in producing and selling products and services throughout the world. I had initially intended to identify my cases from among English-speaking adults who had taken an oral proficiency exam called the OPI, or Oral Proficiency Interview. The OPI is based on proficiency guidelines set by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and administered by the Language Testing Institute (LTI) in New York City. During the proposal stage of this study, LTI's executive director had agreed to work with me to devise a way to contact recent takers of the OPI via email. As it turned out, their email contacts were primarily with administrators in academic institutions who arranged for OPI testing for their students, and we decided together that it was unlikely that we would reach people who would fit the criteria for my study using LTI's list.

A colleague put me in touch with the owner of AmeriSpan, a company that has been providing in-country language immersion experiences in foreign countries since 1993 and, since 2004, has had immersion locations in 29 countries (see Appendix A). AmeriSpan's owner agreed to send out an initial email inquiry to over

300 of his company's customers who had checked *may be contacted* on their evaluations at the end of their immersion experiences (Appendix B).

Amerispan staff had informed me that their clientele included a sizable percentage of working professionals from both the private and public sectors. As it turned out, those who responded to the initial email sent to former customers who had participated in immersions within the past four years were, for the most part, not from the corporate world. They were primarily from the public sector arena, with jobs in healthcare and education. In addition to the people who emerged from the Amerispan email, I also found participants from similar emails sent from the directors of immersion schools in Costa Rica to their former customers. Again, although the directors stated that they had business clients, of the three who responded to me as a result of those emails, two were from the service sector and one worked in the corporate sector. I have no way of knowing why their business clients did not respond to the email, nor did the Amerispan staff.

Because I am interested in the immersion language immersion as a business development tool, I did endeavor to find a few more mainstream business people for my study. I called several multinational companies and inquired of representatives in their training and/or human resource departments if they knew if any of their managers had participated in immersion language programs to prepare for expatriate and/or local positions. In all cases, I was told that the company did not pay for such experiences, that if managers participated in such programs, they were usually on their own, on vacation, and there were no company records on such

activities. I was told that there were times when in-country language training was paid for by the companies, but it was usually in the form of individual tutoring sessions or evening or weekend classes, taken on top of a regular work week. It became apparent in my conversations with company representatives that corporate channels would not readily lead me to appropriate candidates for my study, primarily because the data did not exist from which to pull candidates.

I did find two suitable cases by sending emails to current MBA students at a nearby business school. Although they were not employed at the time I interviewed them, they both had been employed previously to their enrollment in the MBA program. One of the students had embarked on in-country language immersion in order to use the language in the consulting job he held at the time of the immersion; the other endeavored to learn a second language to enable him to broaden his career opportunities upon graduation with an MBA degree.

Through the variety of methods described above, I ultimately accrued 13 people who fit my definition of working professional and who answered the screening survey questions affirmatively. I subsequently had to eliminate one of the original 13 because the interview transcription tape broke, and I did not feel that my notes and memory were sufficient to supply me with enough rich data for that case. I thought it was important to be uniform in my data collection approach, and I thought it might distort the analysis, especially the cross-case analysis, if I did an interview over entirely instead of going back to a subject for clarification or small additions.

Thus, I eliminated that person and subsequently had twelve participants for the study.

All of the people who participated in the study signed a consent form (Appendix C) that assured them that their identities would not be revealed and gave them options for the degree to which I altered the names of their work environments and their in-country immersion experiences. They were all permitted to withdraw from the study at any time.

Data Collection

I was interested in developing an understanding of a phenomenon through the compilation of experiences of a set of representative cases. I collected data on each case by conducting a taped, in-depth *interview* and asking interviewees to share with me a set of *collected mementos.*

The Interview

The primary research vehicle was an semi-structured and in-depth interview of each subject. Kvale defines the qualitative interview as a “semi-structured” process that “seeks to describe and understand the meaning of central themes in the life-world of the interviewee” through a process that captures “nuanced” descriptions of the participants’ experiences 1983, pp. 174-175). Marshall and Rossman (1999) describe the in-depth interview as a vehicle that captures the deep meaning that the individual places on personal experiences. The in-depth interview gives the participants an opportunity to articulate the meaning that they ascribe to

their lived experiences. The end result is rich description of the participants' perspectives of the phenomenon being studied.

Patton explains the value of the interview by reminding us that "we cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meaning they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things" (1990, p.196). Merriam (1998) describes the qualitative interview as questioning in a manner that permits individual respondents to define their worlds in unique ways. Rather than rigidly adhering to a set of pre-determined, identical questions, qualitative interviews are more open-ended and less structured, getting interviewee's reactions to their own realities rather than producing reactions to the researcher's pre-conceived notions of the world.

As Merriam warns, the interview can create potential risks and rewards for both the researcher and the interviewee. If the informants "feel their privacy has been invaded, they may become embarrassed, especially if they reveal things they had not planned to reveal" (1998, p. 214). If they are ill at ease, they may not give the researcher the *truth* (from the informant's perspective). On the other hand, if they are at ease and enjoy the interview and the inclusion in the research itself, they may even "gain valuable self-knowledge" (Merriam, 1998, p. 214) and aid in the creation of understanding for themselves and for the researcher.

Because the research design for this study involved interviews of several individual cases within a bounded sample, a certain level of systemization of data collection was necessary for continuity and relevance. Prior to the interview, I sent

the consent form contained in Appendix C to each participant, and I reminded them in an email or phone call about the mementos that I would ask them to include during the interview. I began each interview with a scripted introduction, referred to as the *Interview Introduction* in Appendix D 1. I then asked a set of prescribed, structured questions designed to collect comparable demographic data: age, line of work and role, level of education, languages learned in addition to first language, experience living and or working outside home country, reasons for using immersion, and self-assessed level of proficiency in the target language prior to the immersion (Appendix D 2).

As I moved into the discussion of the immersion with each case, I said to each person, "Please describe to me your in-country immersion and what you learned from it." During the course of the interview, I referred to my list of semi-structured questions in Appendix D 3, and asked them, or similar questions, as necessary. Having the questions as a guide but not forcing myself to use a particular set of words or order permitted me, as Merriam suggests, “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to generate new ideas on the topic” (1998, p.74). By asking questions that permitted the interviewees to describe what and how they learned and what their experiences meant to them, I was able to explore deeply the meaning of and the value of in-country immersion from the perspective of those I interviewed.

Collected Mementos

In the consent form and in email correspondence about two weeks prior to the interview, those who agreed to be in my study were told that during the interview they would be asked to show or describe five items that help illustrate what the subject learned from the in-country immersion experience. This compilation of artifacts, images or impressions, referred to in the study as *collected mementos,* helped the subject illustrate the impact and the meaning of the in-country immersion. Most of the collected artifacts were photographs taken during the immersion experience and some were actual objects, either purchased by the participants or given to them during the immersion. Some of the mementos were tales of memorable experiences or activities and others were sayings or stories read or heard by the subject either during or after the immersion. I took a digital camera to the interviews to capture the visuals when the people I interviewed showed me photographs or objects. In cases where the participants showed me digital pictures on their computers, they sent them to me as email attachments after the interview.

Time Commitment of Participants

The interactive nature of the qualitative method necessarily involves a willingness on the part of the participants to devote considerable time to the research process to insure richness and accuracy of data. When signing the consent form, participants acknowledged that their involvement was expected to involve about 2 hours: ½ hour to prepare for the interview by compiling the mementos to be shared during the interview; 1 hour for the interview (including the first section of

standardized questions), and ½ hour to review the interview transcript and profile I developed from what I learned from the interview and collected mementos. In a few cases, when I needed to clarify some items or ask a few more questions, I called or emailed the participants. In all cases, they were quite willing to elucidate as needed.

Data Analysis

I took a small audio recorder to every interview in order to tape the interview as unobtrusively as possible. Often, the participants had on their computers the photographs that served as their mementos and they willingly emailed me copies. When the photographs were on paper and when the mementos were actual objects, I took pictures with a digital camera. After every interview, I transcribed (or had transcribed) verbatim the audio portion of the interview and used the digital photos to help me describe as objectively as I could the visual mementos.

The written description of the mementos formed a kind of low-inference narrative of the non-verbal aspects of the interview. According to LeCompte and Preissle, “low-inference narratives provide [interviewers] with basic observational data: they are phrased as concretely and precisely as possible” (1993, p. 228). When a subject displayed the collected mementos, I added to the transcript a narrative of the display, in terms of what was shown (*photograph of X with family with whom he lived for five month*s) and how it looked (*showed them all standing very close together, arms around each other, smiling broadly in the front of a large table completely filled with main dishes, salads, and desserts*).

In addition to the more objective low-inference descriptors, I took notes during the interview and during my review of the audio and visual recording that included *high-inference descriptors*, which interpreted what I saw and heard. For example, when a subject shared with me that he kept the photo of the family with whom he stayed during his immersion experience *in his wallet, just behind the picture of his natural family*, I wrote an interpretive note about what that statement says about the importance the subject gives to the immersion family. These high-inference notations, written throughout the data collection process, served as the building blocks of analysis and interpretation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Called *theoretical memos* by Glaser & Strauss (1967), these records prefigured and speculated on the meaning of what was collected.

After I had conducted eight of the interviews, I began the coding process by going through each case and writing notes in the margins. I later used the notes to begin a coding list, which I used to code within and across cases. To help me refine my coding lists, I was assisted by two colleagues --one who had conducted a qualitative study for her doctorate in education about ten years ago, and another who was in the same program as I and in about the same stage in her dissertation. Each colleague read the same transcriptions and listed the categories that emerged for them. I then used their suggestions to refine my list, which I continued to refine as I coded and sorted the data.

My goal as I coded and sorted through the data was to come to an understanding of the individual cases and to recognize emerging trends and

similarities that link the different experiences together in some way. I recorded ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches, as well as noted patterns that emerged within one person's account of the in-country immersion as well as across several people's accounts. The intent of this process was not only to admit that who I am influences what I hear and how I interpret the data, but also to utilize the human aspect of qualitative research as a means to a better study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The transcribed interviews and memento descriptions, enriched by objective and subjective depiction of the contextual and visual elements of the interview, formed the base of material that I analyzed. These note-enhanced transcripts and mementos descriptions formed *rich data* that revealed to me as I went along, "pieces of evidence" that helped me make "analytical sense of what [I] studied." (Bogdan & Biklen,1992, p. 121).

Making analytical sense of the data in qualitative research requires a deliberate process of coding, pattern-matching, and inductive reasoning. Yin (1989) states that the objective of a multiple-case study is to a build a sense of the whole that emerges from the unique details of the individual cases. Merriam (1998) recommends a two-step process for data analysis of multiple-case studies: individual case analysis first and then cross-case comparative analysis. For this study, I used within-case and cross-case analysis and applied Glaser and Strauss's (1967) constant comparative method of data analysis.

This method, as Bogden and Biklen suggest in their discussion of Glaser's steps in constant comparison, is not so much a stepped or staged process as it is a

living, dynamic one of continuous searching for and redefining meaning (Bogdin & Biklin, 1992). Marshall and Rossman describe this dynamic process as an ongoing analysis that" demands a heightened awareness of the data" and an "openness to the subtle, tacit undercurrents of social life" (1999, p.154). The constant comparative approach provides an exciting opportunity to identify salient themes and patterns of belief and enlightenment leading to the integration of diverse experiences into a common thread of meaning.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) describe the constant comparative method of data analysis as a way to generate theory that emerges from the evidence. The process involves (1) designating coding categories and noting in the margins of transcripts when those categories occur and (2) constantly comparing the category codes “with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (p.106). Miles and Huberman define descriptive codes as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the description or inferential information compiled during a study” (1994, p.56). Descriptive coding permits the organization of data into categories with identifying properties. Merriam (1998) recommends making the data analysis and data collection a concurrent process by creating an initial category list after the first interview and then building onto the list after each subsequent interview. From this process, a master category list can be developed and modified as the interviews continue. This descriptive coding leads to the integration of categories and the identification of patterns. Glaser and Strauss (1967) stress that

coding be carried out in a staged process with time in between to allow the categories and properties to emerge.

After the initial categorization, I grouped related categories and identified patterns and congruencies that might explain the immersion experience and the meaning assigned to in-country immersion by those I interviewed. Miles and Huberman refer to this grouping of categories as *pattern coding* and assert that in multiple-case analysis, it "lays the ground work for cross-case analysis by surfacing common themes and directional processes" (1994, p.69). The final list of codes and categories that emerged as I analyzed within and across cases appears in Appendix E.

As I moved from one subject to another and began to categorize their responses and insights into categories, individuals interviewed later in the process sparked the need to return to people interviewed earlier and ask them questions that helped me compare and contrast their experiences to those of others who came after them in the interview sequence. In this way the multiple experiences helped me shape meaning about the collective experience in a way that an isolated case or one-time interviews of multiple cases would not permit. This looping of analytic induction and constant comparisons meshed well with the study's objective of pulling theory and insight out of the research, rather than using the research to illustrate or support existing theory.

Validity and Reliability of Research Design

For this study's findings to be credible, it is important that the research design and reporting methodology produce results that reliably reflect the experiences studied (Le Compte & Prissle, 1993). Inherent in all qualitative research, and most particularly in studies framed, as this one is, by social constructivist theory, is the idea that reality is an individual construct within a social context (Gergen, 1995). Lincoln and Guba define reality as "a multiple set of mental constructions…made by humans; their constructions are in their minds, and they are in the main, accessible to the humans who make them" (1985, p.295).

It is the intent of this study to reveal the experiences of the individuals studied and to reflect the collective meaning they have constructed within themselves as a result of in-country language immersion. Although the particular phenomenon studied is in-country immersion, it is not the intent of the study to isolate the immersion experience as a finite thing that has an absolute reality. From the outset, this study acknowledges that the effect of an immersion experience is unique to the individual who undergoes that experience. The study also acknowledges, however, that there are common threads of experience that can shape a better understanding of in-country immersion from the perspective of working professionals.

Human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). "In this type of research, it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present

a holistic interpretation of what is happening" (p. 203). Since the meaning of the phenomenon studied is to be revealed through the words and actions of those studied, it is important that the vehicles in place to construct the meaning are trustworthy. In other words, it is important that the research methodology stand up well under tests of internal validity to ensure that what is revealed is the truth, from the perspective of those studied.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) cite some characteristics of qualitative research, inherent in this study's design, that suggest it will have high internal validity. First, I categorized participants' comments in terms that emerged from their words, trying not to pigeonhole them in my own preconceived categories or variables. Second, I incorporated into the coding and analysis a system of reflection, introspection, and self-monitoring in such a way that exposed all phases of the research to continual questioning and evaluation. Specific strategies that I employed to enhance internal validity were *triangulation*, *member checks*, *outside expert review of coding and findings,* and *clarification of researcher assumptions and biase*s.

Triangulation is defined by LeCompte and Preissle as the "use of multiple methods of data collection so that data collected in one way can be used to cross-check the accuracy of data gathered in another way" (p. 48). Triangulation prevents the investigator from jumping to interpretative conclusions from data not rich enough to form accurate interpretations; it enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the course of the investigation (Glaser & Strauss,

1967). This study's data was drawn from multiple sources – a set of standardized background questions on each case asked prior to the interview; a semi-structured interview; and the display of artifacts - the collected mementos. It also used multiple cases. Yin (1988) states that the evidence from multiple cases is more robust than from single case studies. Also, the fact that several individuals interviewed early in the study were revisited by phone and email with subsequent questions decreased the chances for idiosyncrasies and permitted a fuller understanding of how the participants made sense of their immersion experiences.

The term *member checks* normally refers to taking data and tentative interpretations back to the participants and asking them if the results are plausible (Merriam, 1998). Often, participants are viewed almost as co-researchers and are asked to verify and validate their own data (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). When the participants of this study signed the consent form, they agreed to check their profiles and transcripts for accuracy, to affirm that what I wrote reflects accurately what they said. In deference to the assumption of constructivism-- that each person's reality is different from another's --I asked participants to review what I have construed as their own realities and meanings; I did not ask them to verify or validate the data exposed through other participants.

Three colleagues assisted me at two important stages of the study to provide some objectivity to the subjective processes of coding and presenting findings. One *outside expert,* a PhD in education who works in a nearby department and had conducted a qualitative study of a process of intervention for her dissertation, read

four of the interview transcripts and reviewed the mementos of those four cases, formed her own opinion on emerging trends and then compared them with mine. Another colleague with a graduate degree in business administration and years of experience working in other countries in both business and higher education also reviewed the four transcripts and mementos and critiqued my coding process. She and a third colleague critically reviewed drafts of my findings and conclusions chapters for both readability and plausibility. This third expert reviewer has a master's degree in cross-cultural education and has worked in the field of in-country language immersion both as a sales person and as a program manager. These two colleagues critiqued my work from the reader's perspective and identified areas they thought needed clarification or illumination.

Because this is a qualitative study, it does not attempt to claim that the study reveals universal truths about in-country language immersion that are dependable and accurate for other than the set of people interviewed. It is, after all, a multiple case study of a finite set of individuals who have very personal, and personalized, experiences. It should be remembered, however, that case studies of purposively chosen representative cases are intrinsically bounded in that there is a theoretical limit to the number of individual cases that fit the case criteria (Merriam, 1998). Multiple cases and the use of semi-structured interviews and constant comparison enhance the possibility that the study will have some degree of external validity. It is my hope that the findings will extrapolate to a wider population than simply those

interviewed (Miles and Huberman, 1994;Yin, 1994). The rich, thick description should allow readers to judge the applicability of the findings to their own situations.

Limitations of the Study

When I first conceived the idea for this study, it was my hope to achieve a better understanding of the in-country immersion experience as a form of managerial training in both manufacturing and service sectors for both private and public organizations. My initial plan was to interview business managers who had participated in language immersion programs in order to help them in their work. I was curious to see if the findings of a qualitative study of in-country language immersion experienced by working professionals would support the conclusions of researchers in the study abroad arena. These previous studies purported that learning a language in the language's natural setting enhances the language ability of the learner, and also the learner's appreciation of the people and the culture (de Courcy, 2002; Izzo; Kinberg, 2001; Lu, 1998).

Furthermore, I wanted to gain some insight into suppositions put forth by Pollitt (1993) and Koch (1996). They suggested that adults who want to learn languages for work purposes are better served if the language learning takes place in a compatible business context within the language's natural setting. Because of my long standing interest in developing U.S. managers into culturally adept globalists, I was particularly intrigued with the prospect of studying cases similar to individuals within Eurostar (Bath, 1999) and the Irish export businesses whose

employees participated in one-week immersion programs in France and Spain (Clarke, 1999). I was optimistic that although both of those studies were conducted with participants from countries other than the United States, it would be possible to uncover similar cases from this country. After some searching, however, it became apparent that finding such cases would be difficult.

As I explained earlier in this chapter, my search for *mainstream* business people who had embarked on in-country immersion for business purposes was unfruitful. Discussions with representatives in training and development divisions of U.S. companies revealed that language training through in-country immersion is rarely utilized by companies in a systematic way. If managers undertake such training, records are either not maintained or are not easily accessible. The study did ultimately involve five individuals from the corporate sector, but their decisions to engage in language learning were personal. They were not in corporate settings where they were encouraged by their supervisors to learn the target language. *Language proficiency* and *cultural competency* were not among skills sought, developed, and rewarded by their organizations. None of the study's participants was asked by an employer to learn to communicate in the language in order to improve on-the-job performance, nor did any of the companies pay for training. Only Cathy, who is self-employed, could be said to have been sponsored by her company. Even she described the experience as more of a personal expense of time and money for her own professional enrichment than as an organizational, strategic initiative.

The study was limited in its capacity to lend additional insight into the propositions of Pollitt (1993), Koch (1996) and Clarke (1999) concerning language learning for enhanced work performance. These researchers contended that work effectiveness would be greatly enhanced if the social setting and language classes of the in-country immersion were directly linked to the professional roles of the participants. Only one of the immersion programs described by the participants in this study was tailored to the participant's profession. In that particular program, the language learners were all medical doctors. They had language classes together and visited clinics and emergency facilities in the afternoons. The other participants in this study attended immersion schools that catered to different levels of language ability but did not tailor the vocabulary, resources, homestays, or outings to the specific jobs or industry sectors of their clients.

Researcher Perspectives and Beliefs

Although I have tried to reveal the impact of in-country immersions through the individuals who experienced them, I am aware that I conducted this study with several biases and assumptions that may have influenced the filter through which I processed the data. I came into this process with a bias towards the in-county immersion as an important ingredient of effective language use by professionals who study a second language in order to understand and communicate better with native speakers of that language. In the 1990's I co-founded and ran the MBA Enterprise Corps, an international organization that provides technical assistance to companies in countries converting from communism to capitalism and puts the business

consultants through an intensive 10-week in-country immersion program and then insists that the consultants *live like the locals* using the same language, living in similar housing, and making similar pay while they are providing assistance. Subsequent to creating and running the Enterprise Corps, I led the development of *Working Language*s, language and cross-cultural training programs for working professionals, which include short in-country immersions as part of the instruction.

From my experiences with the Enterprise Corps and *Working Languages,* I have come to believe that an in-country immersion provides a learning experience that cannot be equaled in a classroom. I knew from the outset that I would need to refrain from asking leading questions that simply reinforced what I already believed. I think, however, that my experience running these programs has given me an ability to appreciate and recognize themes and threads that emerge from the comments and backgrounds of my study's participants that others without similar experiences might have missed. To guard against being *too close* to the experiences the participants described, I consciously decided not to interview people whose immersion experiences were the result of a program I developed. Instead, I talked with people who had in-country immersion training provided by organizations other than my own.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This qualitative multiple case study was conducted to deepen the understanding of a particular type of learning phenomenon--the in-country language immersion--and its effect on a particular type of adult learner--the working professional who views knowledge of an additional language as a necessary life skill. The study was designed to provide insight into the manner in which professionals who participate in in-country language immersion come to use and understand the target language and incorporate what they learn into their lives. The questions guiding the study are:

1. How do in-country language immersion learners believe the *in-country* aspect of the experience influenced their learning goals and helped them achieve those goals?
2. In what ways does the in-country immersion experience affect the learner's appreciation for and the use of the target language?
3. How do in-country language immersion learners believe their self perception, worldviews, and effectiveness at work were influenced and changed by the immersion experience?

The findings are presented in this chapter in four parts. To provide a sense of the boundaries for the study's findings, the first part provides an overview of the people participating in this study and a general, composite description of the in-country immersion programs they experienced. The second part delineates the

inherent conditions of in-country immersion that facilitated learning among the study's participants. In this section, there is also a discussion of the factors that influenced the quality and degree of the progress the participants made in realizing their goals. The third part explores the changes that the participants believed resulted from the in-country immersion experience - changes not only in their language ability, but also in perceptions of themselves and their world. The fourth part introduces a conceptual model that describes and explains the phases of learning that the participants experienced in the course of learning languages through in-country immersion. Throughout the chapter, the participants' words are used when appropriate to illustrate and illuminate the findings.

Description of Study's Participants and Their Goals for Language Learning

Profile of Study Sample

This study explores in-country language immersion by probing the impressions of a group of individuals that the researcher believes well represent the existing population of U.S. working professionals who have utilized such programs to aid them in their work. The working professionals in this study engaged in in-country immersion to assist them in learning or improving a language for their immediate work or in their long-term careers. They believed that the in-country immersion had positively affected their understanding and use of the target language.

For purposes of this study, the term *working professional* denotes someone who has previously earned at least an undergraduate degree and is pursuing a career related to his or her academic area of study. This study's working

professionals had all completed undergraduate degrees. At the time of their interviews, five of the participants had also earned masters' degrees, two were earning master degrees, two were pursuing doctorates, and one was a medical doctor, specializing in emergency room medicine. At the time they decided to engage in in-country language immersion, ten of the twelve participants were working full time in professional roles and two were full-time students, one of whom was working part time in his field.

The study's participants were all adults (defined as over the age of 18) who shared an expressed need to learn a language, the method by which they chose to learn the language, and the view that the outcome of the experience was positive. They possessed a range of attributes that afforded some diversity to the case pool, allowing the researcher and readers of this study to draw conclusions about ways in-country immersion affects working professionals across different fields and in a variety of organizations. To give the reader an appreciation for the individual cases that provide the context for the meaning-making in this study, a summary of the profiles compiled from each interview is presented in Table 1. Narrative profiles are provided in Appendix E-1. The names of the participants as well as the people they referenced in their interviews have been changed to insure their anonymity.

Table 1 Participant Profiles

*** Legend appears at bottom of the chart**

Name **Age Category**	**Position Held Time of Immersion** **----------** **Time of Interview**	**Language Studied in Immersion** **----** **Level at Outset**	**Why Learn this Language?**	**Why Immersion?**
Art Over 40	Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) specialist ---------- same position	Spanish Adv. Beginner	To do better job, affinity with people	Wanted to improve accent through focus and proximity
Brian Under 30	Electrical engineer ---------- 2nd yr MBA student	Spanish Raw beginner	Desire for different work	To aid in traveling away from tourist areas; to reach fluency fast; traditional methods had not worked
Cathy Over 40	Mental health counselor ---------- same position	Spanish Adv. Beginner	To do better job	To be in culture where language is spoken; to focus on language
Connie Over 40	Work place ESL teacher --------- same position	Spanish Low Intermed.	To do better job, affinity with people	To focus on language; to be in culture where language is spoken
Daniel Between 30 and 40	Associate private practice psychologist and PhD student -------- same	Spanish Adv. Beginner	To do better job, affinity	Travel, adventure, traditional methods no good, wanted to learn quickly, wanted to think in language
David Between 30 and 40	Consultant within a large consulting co. --- same position, but with different	Spanish Raw beginner	Guilt, to do better job	Wanted learning to be fun, wanted to learn about culture, traditional methods not very effective

Table 1, continued				
Name **Age Category**	**Position Held At Time of Immersion** **----------** **At Time of Interview**	**Language Studied in Immersion** **----** **Level at Outset**	**Why Learn this Language?**	**Why Immersion?**
Edie Under 30	Human resources Performance consultant ------ same position	Spanish Adv. beginner	Thought it would help in career	To travel to Spanish-speaking country
Gloria Between 30 and 40	Administrator for education travel company --------- same position	Portuguese Adv. beginner	Do better job	To try out immersion, since she told clients it was best way to learn a language
Kevin Between 30 and 40	4th year medical student ---------- emergency room MD	Spanish Adv. beginner	Do better job	Travel, academic credit, traditional methods had not worked
Steven Between 30 and 40	Consultant within consulting co. -------- PhD student	Spanish Raw beginner	To be better prepared for new territory	Wanted the language all round him to be target language
Sylvia Between 30 and 40	Health educator --------- health educator	Spanish Mid intermediate	To do better job, affinity	To learn faster, to have language become part of life
Theo Under 30	Business consultant ---------- 2nd yr MBA student	Spanish Low intermediate	To do different work	More chance to practice, wanted to be forced to speak, wanted to learn fast

* HS = high school, C= college or university, O = other, not during formal education period
Participants were asked to give their age in the following categories: under 30, between 30 and 40, over 40

Reasons for Wanting to Learn Languages and Articulated Goals

All of the working professionals in this study had decided they needed to learn a language for practical, professional reasons. Eight of the twelve were studying the language to help them in the jobs they held at the time they embarked on immersion and four were learning the language for future work. All but one studied Spanish on their immersion programs. The one participant who studied a language other than Spanish on immersion chose Portuguese because the company for which she worked had recently expanded their operations to Brazil.

The primary goal of all twelve participants in this study was to be able to communicate effectively with native speakers of the target language. They wanted to understand what was being said to them, and they wanted to be understood when they spoke. For some, the desire to communicate in a foreign language came from a general sense that it was personally and professionally important to speak a language other than English, especially Spanish, since co-workers and clients were increasingly native Spanish speakers. Others wanted to be able to talk to colleagues and customers outside the United States. These individuals believed that being able to speak Spanish would significantly improve their opportunities in the global arena. Brian summed up the rationale for wanting to add proficiency in Spanish to his resume: "I figured that by being able to speak English and Spanish, I could pretty much go work anywhere."

Before embarking on in-country immersion, most of the participants were relatively new to the target language, with 9 out of the 12 describing themselves as *beginners* or *advanced beginners*. Two others said they were *low intermediates* and

one described herself as having been a *middle intermediate*. The beginners had hoped that after their first immersion experience they would be able to carry on rudimentary conversations of an every day, basic nature. On the immersion itself, they wanted to be able to talk with their home stay families and other local residents, follow simple directions, order from a menu, and ask for general information. Those with more advanced understanding of the target language described their primary desire in similar ways as the beginners: they wanted to be able to relate to native speakers on an everyday basis.

Learning the language as quickly as possible was another common goal. For some, the sense of urgency came from their feeling that opportunities for relating to clients and patients in the workplace were slipping past them. Others felt that if they were to get ahead in their careers, they needed to be able to note on their resumes that they were able to communicate in Spanish. The in-country immersion presented itself as an ideal way to concentrate on the goal to learn to speak the language quickly, and to come out being able to understand and be understood by native speakers.

Another important goal was to have a better understanding of the cultural values and beliefs of native speakers of the target languages. The participants believed that knowing more about the cultures where the target languages were spoken would help them communicate and work more effectively with their customers and colleagues from those cultures. Several participants, primarily those in health care, mentioned that they had plans to enlarge their client base. They thought that having a better sense of the cultural backgrounds of prospective clients

would help to both attract and retain new clients. It should be noted that this particular goal was one that was mentioned by many participants as a goal, but from their descriptions of their experiences, it is likely that the goal was one that was shaped and refined during the experience, rather than clearly articulated before the experience. Before their immersion experiences, their primary goal was clearly to learn the target language in order to better communicate.

Descriptions of Participants' In-country Immersion Programs

The working professionals in this study had all participated in language immersion programs at some point between one to five years prior to the start of this study. All of the programs in which the individuals in this study participated were similar in design. They took place in countries other than the participants' home country, the United States. All of the programs were arranged by immersion language schools. They consisted of formal classes, homestays with families contracted by the schools, culturally-related activities, and optional excursions.

Typically, formal instruction took place for about three to four hours each weekday morning in small, sparsely furnished rooms inside school buildings or in enclosed garden nooks on school grounds. Each 45-to-50-minute session was conducted with one instructor for two to three students. Often two instructors would rotate between two groups so that each group could experience different instructors over the course of the morning. Students were grouped by their ability to communicate in the target language, which was established at the outset of the

program through an assessment conducted by school personnel. The assessment usually consisted of an oral interview with a short written test.

The morning classroom instruction usually involved at least two hours of traditional language teaching, with explanations from the teacher about grammar and correct sentence structure, vocabulary drills, and pronunciation practice. Some of the schools used standard, published language text books, but most used books that they developed at the school, and most distributed handouts of grammar rules and verb charts. Teachers typically assigned written homework that students were expected to complete before the next day, with an expectation that to do the assignments would take about one to two hours outside of class.

It was customary for the morning classroom sessions to combine the more traditional methods of lecture and vocabulary drills with conversation and experiential practice. Most of the conversation took place in the classroom and combined the vocabulary and grammar covered that day or earlier in the week. The conversation was often about what was going on in the students' lives in the immersion country. Activities also often included some form of experiential learning such as games or role plays. Some of the instructors occasionally took the students out of the classroom for more authentic experiential learning in the surrounding community.

In the afternoons, for an extra fee, students could enroll in on-on-one instruction for a couple of hours or take small group conversation classes. Alternatively, they could participate in excursions to local cultural sites or take cooking or dancing classes that were arranged by the schools' administrators as part

of the regular instructional package. If they chose not to enroll in extra classes or participate in the planned activities, students often went off on their own, exploring the town and doing some shopping. On weekends, there were no language classes. Usually the schools arranged optional tours at varying prices so that students could visit cultural and historical sites or participate in local recreational activities such as sailing, snorkeling, or hiking.

Homestay families, sometimes referred to as *host families*, provided students with accommodations, breakfasts, and most dinners. It was made clear in promotional material as well as in contractual agreements between the schools and the families that homestays were to be more than simply room and board: homestay families were expected to interact with their immersion students, engage them in conversation, and give them a chance to participate in local daily life.

Effect of In-country Immersion on Goals and Achievement

This section discusses ways that in-country immersion helped the participants learn and move closer to their goals of effective communication with native speakers of the target languages. The first part discusses four aspects of in-country language immersion programs that the participants believed were the differentiating elements that made such programs more effective than alternative forms of language learning. The second part of this section discusses important personal and social factors that influenced the progress that participants made in meeting their goals.

Aspects that Influenced Language Learning and Goal Achievement

The primary goal of the participants in this study was to learn to communicate in a short amount of time in a given language with native speakers of that language.

Secondarily, the participants wanted to better understand the native speakers of the language and their cultures in order to relate to native speakers not only on the immersion, but also at work. The participants identified four aspects of in-country language immersion that contributed substantially to their belief that such programs were the best way for them to achieve their language learning goals: 1) in-country immersion allowed them to focus exclusively on learning the language, instead of adding the learning to existing daily work and life schedules; 2) in-country immersion forced them to use the language inside and outside the formal classroom; 3) the experience immersed them in the life of the target language, contributing an aura of excitement to the learning at the same time providing an authentic cultural context in which to learn to communicate; and 4) the costs of the experience (in terms of money, time, and intangible expenses) were low, in contrast to the benefits derived from the experience.

These four aspects of in-country language immersion drew the participants either intentionally or intuitively to embark on immersion as a way to reach their goals to speak with and be understood by native speakers. These features of in-country language immersion also helped keep the learners engaged and on track. Not only did they provide the initial motivation for choosing in-country immersion as the learning mode, they also encouraged active and whole-hearted participation in the learning experience. They provided the participants with the ongoing motivation--the sustained energy and resolve--to make substantial progress in meeting the goals they set for themselves. [These four aspects are described in more detail below,

followed by a graphic representation of their effect on working professionals during immersion, depicted in Figure 4.1.]

Exclusive Focus on Language Learning

The first important aspect of in-country immersion programs was that they allowed the participants to concentrate exclusively on learning the language. Most of the participants felt that a major problem with their earlier attempts to learn languages was that the instruction and learning had been inserted into very full, hectic schedules. In their regular daily routines in the United States, learning a foreign language was something the participants had *added* to their lives. In-country immersion enabled them to focus exclusively on learning the language. Choosing immersion came from being convinced that working on the language full time — doing nothing else but concentrating on learning the language — was the *only* way to learn. As Brian explained:

> Taking regular classes three nights a week [at home] is too time consuming for what you actually learn…you have to leave where you are, go to class, and then come back. And you still have to do your regular daily routine. In an immersion, it's intense…you learn a significant amount of language in a short amount of time. It's efficient and effective.

Going on an immersion meant going to a place where the purpose of life was learning the language. During their immersion experiences, participants were able to give language learning their complete attention. As Cathy said:

> It's your job to work on the language when you're down there. The phone isn't ringing and you're not feeling like "Oh, I really ought to do such and such

> instead of running over to class, I really ought to take this phone call…" It makes a huge difference that while you're there, that's your job. I was a hundred percent geared towards it.

Pressure to Speak the Target Language

In addition to giving participants the opportunity to focus exclusively on learning the language, the in-country immersion, both by formal and informal design, compelled people to do what they had set out to do--use the language to communicate. In the immersion schools, in the homes where they lived while on immersion, and in the streets, restaurants, and stores, they were *forced to speak* in the target language. Kevin said that the full-time exposure was energizing because it immersed him in an environment where he "…*had* to struggle to accomplish what [he] wanted to accomplish. There was no other choice."

To a great extent, pressure to speak came from the instructional design of the immersion language schools attended by the participants. With only two or three students in a class, it was practically impossible for any student to *hide in the background* or do little of the homework and expect the lack of effort not to be noticed by the teacher or the other students. Although the school's teachers usually used what could be described as *traditional* teaching approaches - describing grammar points and running pronunciation and vocabulary drills - they also engaged their students in conversation practice. Plus, their lessons, explanations, and answers to students' questions were almost always in the target language, even for the *raw beginners* who knew only a couple of words or scant phrases at the outset of their programs. Tony remarked, "We had two students per class. So I was with

another American guy. We spoke Spanish for the entire class. We didn't know much, but the teacher never spoke English. He said, 'I don't know English, so we're not going to speak English'…It was really all Spanish….four hours a day, every single day."

In the conversations and experiential segments of the formal instruction, the teachers usually engaged the students in conversation. Students talked about themselves and their lives back home and in the immersion country. During the classes at their immersion schools, they often practiced interactions similar to those they encountered on the streets and with their host families. Occasionally, as Steven related below, teachers would take the students out of the school and have them accomplish tasks such as making purchases, changing money at a bank, or getting somewhere by asking directions:

> You have an oral class, then a grammar class, and then it ends with a summary discussion which kind of combines everything. The first two are long classes and then you have kind of like a little recap. And the recap may be playing a game or talking about something or walking around town with your instructor, like "Today we are going to the flower market. Or today we are going to see the cathedrals."…One time I needed to buy shoes and I mentioned it in class, and then our teacher decided we would go to the market and I would have to buy shoes.

During the experiential practice, both in the classroom and out in the community, the instructors were usually in the background. They were there, as Art put it, "to make sure we spoke only Spanish." Steven remarked that the teachers

were also there "…to help you if you needed it." The teachers were in the background, to encourage and to assist, but the students were in the foreground, forced to communicate in order to accomplish tasks.

In addition to being forced to speak through the methods employed by the immersion school teachers, participants also had to speak the target language with their homestay families. The families were recruited and paid by the schools' administrators to provide not only a place to sleep and eat, but also to serve as an integral part of the learning process. Host families were expected to speak only the target language and to spend time with the students, not simply show them their living quarters and prepare meals for them to eat by themselves. It was in the homestays that people *had* to use the language to function in every day life. Tony found he was forced to speak from the moment he stepped foot in the home of his host family, greeted by his hostess:

> She spoke only Spanish. So, she started speaking to me and I was like "What are you talking about?" You know, she's trying to tell me like this is my bed. So, she took me inside, showed me my room….she didn't speak any English at all. She would say things to me in Spanish, and I would try to say to her in English what I thought she said, and she was like "I don't know what you're talking about." So, I was forced very quickly to try to remember some basic words that I knew in Spanish.

The families, for the most part, made it a point of engaging their student guests in the language of everyday life. They ate breakfast and most dinners together and watched television together, often soap operas or local game shows.

Usually, the homestays involved only one student. But even when there was more than one student, it was understood that in the house, and most especially at meals, the target language was the language spoken. In the first few days of an immersion experience, it was often the family that did most of the talking, as in Kevin's case, when they would "sit down for a meal and [his host mother] would sit there and smile and talk and try to engage me." Kevin's host father held forth whenever he was home: "He talked a lot. He would just sit and talk and talk and talk and talk. And he, I think, contributed to my learning Spanish just because he'd talk. If I didn't understand something he'd say, it didn't matter; he'd just keep talking."

The participants were engaged in the language and forced to listen to it and speak it in the formal aspects of the experience in the schools and in the homes. As well, whenever they went out on their own, to such places as restaurants, bars, and stores, they were encouraged by those with whom they came in contact to speak in the local language. Often, the people they encountered did not even know English, and it became a necessity to speak the local language to accomplish the task at hand.

As the participants moved about in the local environs and accomplished things such as taking the right bus and making a purchase, their achievements built their confidence and inspired them to keep trying. As Gloria said, "Doing those small tasks like going to the store, getting on a bus, asking what time it is and having someone ask you what time it is…Those are things that can give you really a sense of accomplishment and that you are sort of forced to do during your day."

Even those who went on the immersion with little to no ability in the language discovered that by being in an environment where the only way they could function was to communicate in the language, they managed, despite their limited ability, to do just that. Tony, who had never had any Spanish before he went on immersion, described being compelled to communicate during a weekend trip during his immersion program:

> I *had* to negotiate a price for the hotel rooms. I didn't have any reservations. So, I had to do that. I can recall having to negotiate with the guy. He wanted one price and I told him that was too high. I brought him down about a third. I asked him what the room contains, if it had air conditioning, or a fan, and then I had to ask about the restaurants, where was the best place to eat, how did I get into town. And even going about the town, we'd get lost and I'd have to ask directions a couple of times. I'd have to pull up to a bus stop and ask the old ladies directions... One time, I had to fill the gas tank up -- it's not self service-- so I had to tell them I wanted to fill it up. I had to do all of that in Spanish.

Doing nothing else but learning the language and being compelled to use it in and out of class on a daily basis accelerated the learning. The participants described being a bit shocked to realize after a few days that they were, as Gloria put it, "actually learning." They were doing what they had set out to do - communicate. It was not exactly by accident that they learned, and it certainly wasn't without effort, but it was fast and efficient, and the learners were impressed by their results. Their ability to understand and be understood by others early in the experience inspired

the participants to keep learning and using what they learned. Tony, who knew how to say *hello* and *beer* in Spanish before he went on his two-week immersion, described his progression from non-speaker to communicator that occurred within the first two weeks:

> When I was speaking in class, [at first] it took a really long time for words to come out. I would be thinking about the vocabulary or the conjugation. I could almost feel my brain working as I tried to say something to the professor. As the weeks went on, I would come into class, and my professor would ask how my day was, or how last night was, and instead of thinking, all the stuff would just come out. I am not sure how well I can explain it, but there were just less pauses when I spoke. I would say about four or five sentences at once and then realize "Wow, I just said all of that in Spanish."

Reminiscing about her experience, Edie said that her hope that she would be "forced to learn" was realized. She was convinced that she "learned more there in the two weeks being forced to talk with people than [she] did in the six to seven months of going to classes [a couple nights a week in the U.S.]" Being in a setting where one had to speak the language *all the time* was a condition of language immersion that greatly enhanced the possibility for the learners to achieve their communication goals within a short period of time.

Authentic Language and Culture

The participants in this study believed that the two aspects of in-country immersion discussed above--being able to focus on language learning and being forced to speak the target language --were two major factors contributing to their

success with in-country language immersion. Those two aspects of in-country immersion are not, however, unique to in-country language immersion. There are certainly programs in the United States where adults can go for extended periods of time where they can focus solely on language learning. In such programs, as in in-country language immersion programs, students take classes in small groups, and are required to speak the target language in and out of class. The participants in this study believed strongly that being *in* the country where the target language was the primary language made the first two aspects of language immersion more effective and powerful. They believed that immersion language programs in simulated target language environments would not have sustained their interest in learning nor provided as much incentive to use the language as did immersion programs in authentic target language environments. As Steven explained, "If you're in an immersion program in the States, I think that you'd cheat still. When you look out the window, the stop signs are in English and there's still too much familiarity." Art added, " Down there, you *have* to learn it, and you have to accomplish things, like getting around in a shopping mall, getting to class on time. Whereas in a simulated environment, you have like a safety net. I think that it has greater impact when it's real."

The participants believed that the authentic environment encouraged them to take risks with the language that they might not have taken as readily in simulated environments. Getting around in their immersion towns and taking side trips on weekends opened new opportunities to practice the language and added to the excitement that came with understanding, and being understood. It was exciting and

stimulating to find themselves in situations where the people they met knew no English and the only way to communicate with them was to speak their language. The authentic environment gave participants an opportunity to become acquainted with people by *using* the language of the people, and, as a result, getting a feel for the culture in a way that they could not have done as readily in the United States. They had opportunities to *feel* the culture by interacting in it, as Gloria's example illustrates:

> Well, one thing that I do…is that I observe people and what they are doing and notice things that I think are weird and wonder why they are doing it that way and I often ask about it later. I think the culture really would be very difficult to simulate. It is not just the language. It is the smells and the sights and the sounds and seeing how they sell these pirated CD's in these little ice cream carts everywhere. The amount of things that they sell on the beach, clothes and all kinds of things. I think that total immersion is being immersed in all the senses. I don't think that that can be simulated.

Participating in immersion language learning in countries where the events being discussed in their classrooms were actually happening deepened the participants' general cultural understanding as well as their appreciation of specific historical or events. For instance, discussing the financial crisis in a specific Latin American country in a Spanish language class in the United States could provide relevancy through current context, but being in the country *during* the crisis could galvanize the learning. Steven described such an experience: "One interesting thing about when we were there is that this was when their whole financial crisis was

going on. There were these parades in the streets and demonstrations going on all the time. People banging on their pots in the streets. We got a lot of insight into what the political situation was."

Being in the authentic environment added a stimulating and enlightening dimension to the experience. Even at times when nothing out of the ordinary was occurring in the immersion country — for example, political unrest or financial crises — things were usually new and different enough to make learning exciting. As Cathy explained:

> I really like new experiences 'cause I thrive on things that are new. So, that just increased the whole level for me, because there was something new and something exciting about being there and meeting new people and seeing different things. To me, that's a very exciting part of the whole experience. It gets my adrenaline going and makes me more enthusiastic.

Some of the opportunities for learning about the culture came from what Art called "the cultural overlay" which permeated daily life on immersion. The cultural aspects of the immersion countries made the immersion environment a *living laboratory*. Participants were aware that they could have learned something about the cultures from books and movies and other sources in language and culture classes in the United States. They believed strongly, however, after having experienced learning a language on in-country immersion, that being immersed in the real environment accelerated and improved their learning. As Sylvia put it, "I don’t think people that are just studying from a text book are going to get that kind of cultural experience…things like celebration, and parades and that sort of thing…I

mean, if you study here, you can't just take the weekend and take a trip and go to the Amazon. And they have food we'd never get here." She went on to say:

> People studying a language in the United States are never going to grasp the culture as much as they would if they lived [in that culture]. I mean, they might know what they are saying in the songs, but they might not actually grasp what is really going on. But if you haven't gone to the fiestas and the parties and the little salsa clubs in the country, it's not the same…being there gives you a whole different experience outside of the classroom experience.

Practicing the language in real situations gave the learners a chance to validate for themselves that they were actually learning how to communicate. Participating in the authentic culture of the language being learned provided something in addition to the personal validation of accomplishment; it provided insight into the cultural dimension of communication.

Low Cost of Program

The low cost of in-country language immersion was the fourth aspect that made it such an attractive and successful form of language learning for the study's participants. The relatively low cost of living in the countries where the immersions took place made it possible for schools to offer packages for instruction, homestay accommodations, and meals that the participants found very affordable. Many of the participants said that they enjoyed being able to combine intensive language classes and foreign travel at a price equal to or less than what they would have normally paid for a vacation trip anywhere. They referred to their experiences as *great*

bargains and stressed how little they paid to travel and learn a language at the same time.

Most of the participants acknowledged that the opportunity costs--what is given up relative to what is gained --were somewhat on the high side. Several remarked that although they felt strongly that knowing the language was important to their work, their supervisors and human resource managers did not necessarily share that sentiment. In most of the participants' work situations, their employers did not discourage their employees from learning foreign languages. They did not, however, encourage them to learn languages nor did they include language and cultural training as part of corporate or individual professional development strategies. Only one of the participants' employers paid the expenses for the immersion and counted the time on the program as work time. All of the other participants paid for the programs out of their own resources, and they counted the time away from work as paid or unpaid leave. Participants were aware that they had given up time on the job to go on their immersion programs. In some cases, they thought they may even have missed some chances for advancement or assignment of new tasks associated with greater responsibility. They admitted that they did make some sacrifices in their work in exchange for the immersion experience. They overwhelmingly believed, however, that what they gained long term both personally and professionally was worth much more than what they forfeited. The value of the experience, in their opinion, far outweighed the costs. As David said:

> If you're trying to climb the corporate ladder, and don't take this opportunity, you'll probably have a better car than me [sic], but I don't think you're going to

> get the same kind of personal satisfaction…like, when I'm seventy or eighty, and I look back on it, and say "That was an incredible experience…I loved that." I feel that way now. I would recommend it to anybody.

Summary of Aspects of Immersion that Influenced Language Learning, Goals, and Achievement

Four aspects of in-country immersion programs were vitally important in engaging the study's participants in learning and using the target language. The effects of these aspects on the learners, as depicted in Figure 4.1, were that: 1) they were able to focus on learning the language without distraction, as the exclusive purpose of their time on immersion; 2) they were forced to speak the language in the classrooms, with the families, and in the surrounding environment; 3) in those same settings, they were exposed to the culture and linked to it in a way that kept the experience new, engaging, and motivating; and 4) primarily because of the other three conditions, they felt that the benefits of the in-country immersion outweighed the costs.

Participants are:

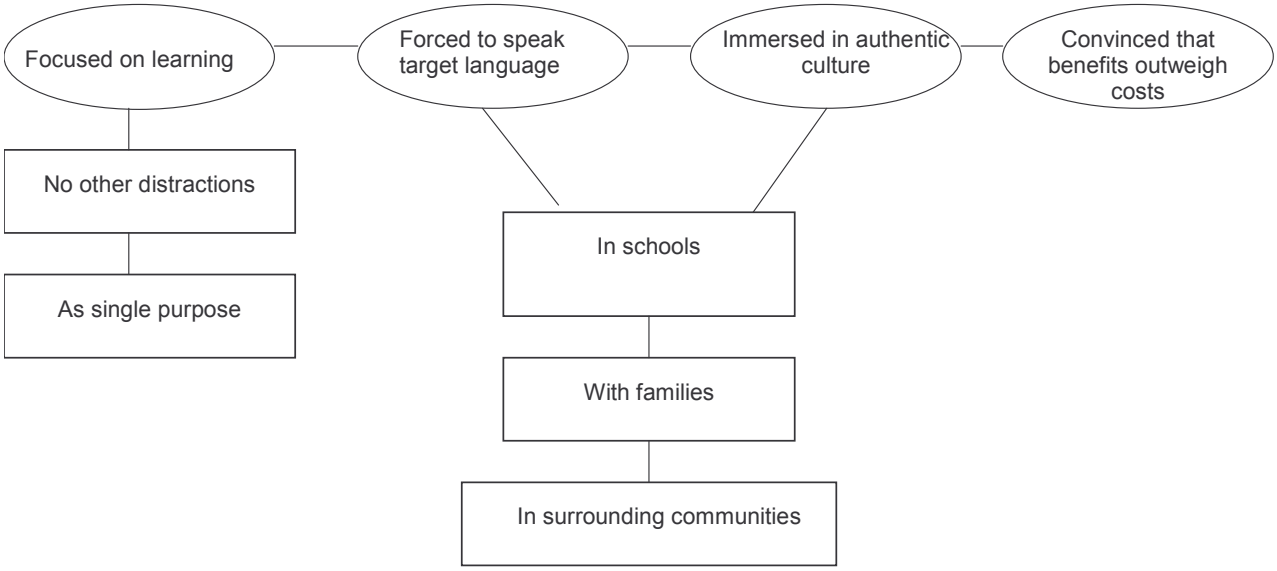


Figure 1. Effects of Four Primary Aspects of In-country Immersion on Adult Working Professionals

Factors that Influenced Progress and Goal Attainment

The previous section focused on four aspects of in-country immersion programs that provided not only the initial motivation for accomplishing goals, but also the framework for continued learning. Other factors greatly influenced the amount and direction of the progress the learners made towards their goals of communicating effectively with native speakers of the target language. These influential factors fell into two different categories: *personal/emotional* factors and *social/cultural* factors.

The *personal/emotional* factors relate to *emotional states of being* that the participants experienced, or gravitated towards, either through their own actions or by virtue of their innate individuality. The emotional factors that emerged as the most important to the progress of the working professionals in their immersion journeys were the following: *fear, self-doubt, familiarity,* and *comfort*. In some instances during each immersion, situations arose or were intuitively or actively sought out by the learners that invoked feelings related to these four emotions. These factors caused the learners to either move forward or backward in their progress towards their goals to communicate and understand.

The second set of factors, the *social/cultural* factors, also caused the learners to move forward or backward in their progress towards goal achievement. Unlike the personal/emotional factors, which were governed more by internal qualities of the participants, the social/cultural factors were shaped by people other than the learner. The social/cultural factors that emerged as having the most influence on the learners' progress were the teachers (both formal and informal), and the teaching (or mentoring/modeling) approaches of the teachers and other people in the school and in the community.

Both the emotional and social factors had the potential to move the learners forward or backward in the learning process, giving these factors bi-directional influence on a learner's goal accomplishment. Each influential factor could either advance or impede progress, depending on properties unique to the participant (i.e. personality, resolve, stamina, strength and skill) or on properties of the factor itself (i.e. stylistic qualities, dimensions, and degree). Both types of influential factors were

described by the participants in this study as having the potential to be very powerful propellents or deterrents of progress towards their learning goals. After a narrative description of the factors, illustrated with the participants voices, Tables 2 and 3 summarize the factors and provide examples of the positive and negative effects these factors had on the progress the learners made during their in-country immersions.

Personal Factors the Influenced Progress towards Goals

Fear. Fear, or the anticipation of fear, was either a debilitating inhibitor or an exhilarating propellant in the in-country language immersion experience. Participants often talked about occasions when fear either held them back or spurred them on in their efforts. Sometimes, they used synonyms of the word fearful such as *nervous*, *apprehensive,* or *anxious*.

Before the immersion experience began, fear was a factor more in the abstract than as a powerful and present reality. Fear of what lay ahead impacted the participants' decisions as to where to go on their immersions. For example, when the participants described the process they went through to choose an immersion site, they mentioned choosing places where they would feel safe. The talked about their search for immersion schools in safe neighborhoods in larger cities or in small towns. In many case, they looked for places where they thought they might not be too conspicuously foreign. In describing his Internet search for the ideal site, David said he finally settled on a place in the suburbs, in part because "it was out of the mayhem and the crime of the city." Art mentioned choosing a program that had a twenty-four hotline so his wife could reach him easily in case of emergency at home.

The fear that they might get distracted from their intended purpose of learning and practicing the language led many to choose immersion schools away from tourist spots that attracted large number of English-speaking tourists.

In the first few hours or days on site, fear played a more palpable role than in the pre-immersion period. In those early moments of immersion, fear had an obvious influence on people's progress. Fear often grabbed the participants when they were hit with the reality of the different life style they had chosen. David, whose concern about crime had led him to choose the suburbs, nevertheless felt a jolt of fear when he landed at the airport.

> Yeah, I was nervous…I got there and they were going to have someone pick me up. They were supposed to have my name on a card or something. So, I went through customs and there was someone waiting for me a in a little van, a ramshackle vehicle. I get into that. It was night time…about 11 o'clock at night and we started driving and almost got into an accident in the airport parking lot, and I'm like "Wow. I heard things were pretty crazy here." I mean, right off the bat, it was kind of like the Wild West.

Many of the participants recalled vividly those first few hours of their arrival in the immersion country when they were confronted with difference. Daniel spoke of "kind of bracing [himself]" as he made his way in a taxi whose driver was "grumpy" and drove "..like a maniac, going really fast and weaving all over the place," causing him to worry that they were going to get into an accident. When he willed himself to look out the window, he saw:

> tons of people out on the street. Very different than [sic] what you'd see here. I mean this place was hopping. There were vendors out on the street, people coming up and talking to me and trying to sell me stuff. I'm just thinking I need to protect my bags so no one steals anything from me, which is…I think that in terms of me being culturally biased, I was immediately aware that I am in a foreign place and worried about people taking advantage of me. Which, nobody did. But I could sense that I was a little nervous.

Even after participants had met their families and gotten their bearings in their new surroundings, they sometimes let fear keep them from venturing out and exploring their new environs, especially at night. Sometimes their awareness of how easily people could identify them as Americans, or at least as foreigners, made them reluctant to go out alone. They were afraid they would be, as Daniel put it, "ripped off" or as Edie said, "taken advantage of."

Fear often caused participants to forget what they had previously learned in the target language. Edie remembered arriving in her immersion city and waiting for a ride she thought had been arranged for her by someone at the immersion school. After about a half hour of waiting, she had become increasingly worried that the ride would not arrive. Her experience is a good example of the debilitating influence that fear could have on the ability to communicate:

> I was on my own. I literally was thrown into this situation. Like I said, that morning, I was waiting thirty minutes. I was sitting there and I just wanted to cry because I said, “Oh, my gosh, I am stuck somewhere and I don’t even know where I am supposed to go." …I was panicking. I couldn’t even speak to

> the people anymore because the phrases that I had learned from the airport to the hotel were not right anymore and I don't know what I was saying.

There were times, however, when fear provided the participants with the impetus to dig down deep and find a way to communicate. One of Kevin's experiences was clearly a case in which fear helped him find the way to express himself and reach new heights in his ability to communicate:

> The scariest or the worst was when three of us got in a taxi cab and we had gotten driven up to where we were going and the cab pulled away and it was maybe half an hour later that one of the guys that was with us realizes that he's missing his glasses case and in the glasses case is all his money. So we wound up going to another taxi that we see and I'm trying to express in Spanish what was going on. We've lost this thing, but I don't want to say that it's full of money. And so he gets on the radio and we can't quite hear everything on the radio. It's hard between the language barrier and the radio to really know what he's saying. I think I hear some things. And then the driver turns to us and says "Is there anything special about this case?" and we know he knows now. And we are like "Yeah, it's full of money." And we got it all back. That was a situation where I had to do most of the speaking and it was a little complex…but I figured it out.

In summary, fear was a powerful factor in the progress the participants made towards their goal to communicate in the target language. Fear could be a negative or a positive factor. There were times when the anticipation of fear caused people to make choices that eliminated some opportunities for them to practice speaking.

Sometimes fear catapulted them into a state of panic that caused them to forget some of what they had already learned. Other times, fear produced a sense of excitement and served as a stimulus to the immersion journey that vigorously propelled the participants forward in their efforts to communicate. Usually, the participants moved through their fear by squaring their shoulders, reassuring themselves that they could manage, often willing themselves to relax and make the most of it. Edie summed up the way she managed fear this way:

> Even when people were trying to take advantage of me, it was like they'd back off after a while and I just went with the flow and they'd say "Well, she is not too naïve" or "she did her research." I don't know what it was but they wouldn't persist after I said, "No, I am not giving you this and I am not doing it this way." …I felt okay because either way it went was going to be a good or bad situation and I knew that I was going to make the most of it.

Self-doubt. There were many times in the immersion journeys when feelings of self-doubt confronted the learners. Doubting one's ability to be able to handle the experience was akin to fear, but it manifested itself as a more subtle, persistent emotion rather than one charged with excitement. Self-doubt, when permitted by the participants to do so, could either derail them from their purpose, or, alternatively, provide them with incentive to push forward with new resolve. Before and during their experiences, many of them wondered if they would be able to accomplish their goals. Even after they had made it through the first night of newness and settled into their home stay situation, they often were uncertain of their ability to learn to communicate. Sometimes, rather than mastering those feelings of self doubt, they

succumbed to them, at least for a while. One of Kevin's experiences during his first few classes demonstrated how self-doubt caused people to shut down and not actively engage in trying to communicate:

> I don't know how to describe it really. You just kind of get tongue tied because you can't even think of what the next word is going to be….and if you can't even imagine how to go about the process, you don't even take the first step. I think ultimately, you don't want to appear stupid. You hate to start with two words and then just stop cold because you can't even think what the third or the fifth word is. And so it's just intimidating, it's a little bit anxiety provoking; it becomes a matter that it's just easier to be silent and sit there.

Often, self-doubt surfaced when people weren't sure if they would be able to do what they sensed they *had* to do. Gloria, by the time she participated in her immersion in Brazil, was a seasoned traveler who already spoke three languages well. Even she doubted her stamina, questioned her resolve to do what she had to do to successfully maneuver her way around Rio:

> The school was all the way across town in *el centro* in the central business district. So my first day of school [my hostess] accompanied me. She told me which bus to take and where to get off and what landmarks to look for. It took quite a while. The bus ride was thirty or forty minutes. It seemed like a long commute to me and I was thinking, "Oh, my God, how am I going to do this every day?"

Self-doubt was an emotional state that people entered both early on and later in the language learning process. Sylvia, who considered herself an advanced

intermediate in Spanish when she began her first immersion, described the doubt she felt when she began a job with a rural health clinic immediately following her three-month immersion in the immersion country.

> It took a lot of persuasion at the beginning of my job. I was really frustrated. I mean I remember just being in tears because I thought, "I'll never be able to do this project. I'll never be able to convince them that first of all sex and health education is important, especially in a third world country. That it works." There were certain topics that were so engrained in the minds of the professional staff about, for example, HIV…You know, all the myths…I mean, they were delivering babies, and the next moment, I'm talking to them about the possibility that the baby being delivered was a result of a rape. And they are like, "No, no, no, I am sure she wasn't raped. That's not what she said." But I was like, "You're not listening," because I was the one with the trained ear, I had worked in that field, but…it certainly took a lot of persuasion at the beginning.

Questioning their ability to do what they felt they were supposed to do was a common theme among the participants as they described their struggles to communicate. More often than not, they described an internal process in which they asked themselves, "How am I ever going to able to do this?" and then, somehow, they simply went on and did it. Sometimes it involved building others' trust, as Sylvia did in her work; other times, it involved a shift in one's own mental attitude, as in Gloria's case, when she took her long bus ride every day. She discovered that she saw so many interesting things because she went through wonderful parts of town.

She said, “It was a nice visual trip so I actually ended up not being bothered by the commute.”

Familiarity. Much of the allure of immersion came from the fact that the learning took place in another country, in a new and exciting environment. Being away from home, surrounded by unfamiliar language, food, sights, sounds, and smells, motivated participants to take risks, to try new things, to venture out into the new territory into which they had plunged. As they spoke of their experiences, it became apparent, however, that for each of them, there was such a thing as too much newness. At times they found relief in feeling--or actively seeking--familiar things or situations. When people began to feel overwhelmed, a feeling of familiarity could provide a sense of balance and provide a renewed sense of commitment.

Often, the surroundings or the host families, although new and strange, felt somehow familiar. Several of the participants spoke about feeling as if they belonged in the new environment, as if they were somehow linked to the people there. This feeling of belonging put participants at ease and encouraged them to speak. They found that *feeling at home* also encouraged them to talk about things that they might have kept to themselves otherwise. Edie described the peace of mind that the feeling of familiarity with her homestay family gave her: "My family was really nice and if I went back [there], I would request them again. The food, everything, was what I was already used to. It wasn’t that much of a difference from what my family does. What we cook and the music we listen to, the things that we talk about, church; the only difference was different denominations."

Discovering people in the new culture who shared a passion for the same hobbies, such as dancing, or music, or crafts, made strangers less strange and provided a familiar base for mutual discussion and enjoyment. For example, Kevin's love of music and familiarity with the guitar led to a quick bonding, a feeling of familiarity and kinship with the nephew of Kevin's homestay hostess:

> He was twenty-four years old give or take. A very nice guy and we actually hung out a little bit including going out for a beer on one or two occasions. We had a common interest which was music. He had actually studied classical guitar at the conservatory in San José, but his passion seemed to be more jazz guitar. He was pleased that we could speak the same musical language.

The idea of actively *seeking* familiarity entered interviewees' descriptions most pointedly when they talked about doing things they did *back home* or socialized with the other English speakers with whom they came in contact at the immersion school or elsewhere. These acts of gravitating towards the familiar could be soothing or stifling, energizing or draining.

On the soothing and refreshing side was the relief that people felt being able to take a break from the hard work of learning a new language in a new environment by speaking with other native English speakers. Tony said he thought there were two main reasons why he ended up speaking English and spending time with other students who spoke English:

> First of all, it was 8 - 12 in the morning, speaking Spanish all the time. I mean, I was quite frankly, mentally tired after we got done. I tried to speak the language, and I was constantly struggling to speak the language and try to

> understand. It was like a relief when you got out of class and were able to speak with people that spoke your language. The second thing was just the whole cultural aspect. I mean, since a lot of people were Americans, you could talk with them about similar things. You could talk about school, about work, about stuff that happens and you realized that with [the local inhabitants], it was kind of hard to just talk to them about something random.

This kind of familiarity--speaking English, spending time with other Americans--provided some relief from the hard work of learning to communicate in an unfamiliar language in an unfamiliar environment. When overdone, this taste of home could defeat the main purpose for being away from home in the first place - to communicate in the target language with native speakers. Tony described what was for many of the participants a common occurrence at their immersion schools. He talked about what would happen after classes in the break rooms, on field trips, and out on the town in the evenings: "We all lapsed into English. And I think that was a big negative about the program. We were learning Spanish, but once we got back into our English-speaking groups, we would speak English. The only time we spoke Spanish was when we were interacting with people who were from [the immersion country]."

Congregating with other English speakers was sometimes a choice made by the subjects, but it was more often than not something that happened as a result of the design or size of the school, or the composition of the homestay. In several cases, participants found themselves in situations similar to the one Connie encountered:

> By the time I got there, [the homestay host] had two other students already living there and by the time I left, he had another one…I don't like it when that happens, because there goes your Spanish immersion. You have to really struggle to not just fall into that deal where you're just talking to the other students in English.

Some participants commented that when they did things with English speakers, the familiarity and the camaraderie often won out over the commitment to speak only the target language. They described having felt that they would have *missed out* on something, or would have felt self conscious or *silly*, if they tried to speak the target language to an English speaker. In the homestay in which Connie lived with the other English speakers, she said one was a volunteer with similar interests to her own. She recalled:

> I ended up doing some different things with him, going out into the country in the afternoons. He was working for an afternoon program for some children, so I ended up doing that for a few days while I was there…which was fun…But it does put you in conversation that's not Spanish. It's hard for two Americans to say "OK, we're here in a strange new world and we're only going to speak in Spanish when we're together." You know, you've just got to share the experience.

In addition to speaking in English, many sought the familiarity of email. They mentioned finding *Internet cafés* near their schools or homestays and using them often. Daniel remembered his first day: "I went back home and had lunch and I also

went to the Internet Café to check out my email, and I sent out an email to a bunch of people just to say 'I'm here. I made it. And I'm having fun.'"

Doing things that felt familiar such as dancing, playing guitar, watching video games and television, and eating meals with family and friends helped put people at ease with their surroundings. Especially when they did familiar things with host families and people from the local community, the effect was positive, the momentum was forward. Even when the familiar grounding came from speaking English or sending an email, it could sometimes be positive, when it served, as Kevin put it, as "a little break in [the] educational stint." It was when the familiar pulled people away from interacting in the target language for a prolonged period of time or insulated them from meeting and speaking with native speakers that it put a backward spin on their progress.

Comfort. In much the same way that feelings of fear, self-doubt, and familiarity could propel people forward or backward in their learning journey, degrees in levels of comfort could also facilitate or inhibit progress. As was mentioned in the earlier discussion about fear, participants tended to select immersion locations where they would feel safe enough to venture out into the community. Being comfortable with the surroundings enabled them to take what might be called *comfortable risks,* which in turn helped them remain engaged and involved in the experience. Most everyone talked about how good they felt once they were settled into their homestays and their schools. When they felt comfortable, they were able to concentrate and focus on learning the language. They felt enough at ease to

practice speaking and listening. Comfort with their site and the people around them kept them on a positive learning trajectory.

Some degree of discomfort could also facilitate learning. Feeling slightly uncomfortable kept people alert and aware; it provided an edge to the experience that made people work harder and, as Daniel put it, "break through" to greater achievement and heightened awareness. Most participants described a number of instances during their immersion experience when they did things that they might not have done at home, things that would have made them feel uncomfortable or out of their normal element. For instance, Daniel attended a Lucha Libra wrestling match in Mexcio, even though it was, according to Daniel, "pretty weird." Gloria mentioned that it was important to feel "uprooted" and "to step outside your comfort zone" so that you could stay engaged by being "…filled up with the excitement and joy that comes from being somewhere new." Connie believed the overall learning was better if the immersion experience was what most of her friends and family would call *uncomfortable*. She chuckled, "My family thinks I'm crazy; you know, they think I have to suffer in order to enjoy."

Conversely, being too comfortable, too familiar with their learning environment, sometimes kept participants from taking the risks that improved their target language communication. Gloria said that being too comfortable with the surroundings or the people could "take the edge off" the experience. She said, "I think that when I felt too comfortable, it wasn't enough of a challenge."

Summary of Personal Factors Influencing Progress towards Goals

During each immersion program, situations arose, or were intuitively or actively sought out by the learners, that invoked feelings related to the following four emotions or emotional states of being: *fear, self-doubt, familiarity, and comfort*. These personal/emotional factors had appreciable influence on each individual's persistence and achievement. Their dynamic qualities could appreciably inhibit or facilitate the progress that participants made in achieving their goal to effectively communicate in the target language.

Sometimes fear, or the anticipation of fear, caused participants to avoid people or situations that might have afforded them opportunities to practice communicating in the target language. Other times fear drove participants into a state of panic in which they forgot some of what they had previously learned. When it had a positive influence on the participants, it produced a sense of excitement and served as a stimulus to the immersion journey. When it served as a positive influence, fear could vigorously propel the participants forward in their efforts to communicate. Similarly, feelings of self-doubt could cause participants to refrain from making an effort to speak or interact, or it could provide the impetus for new resolve and renewed courage to do what they felt they had to do to succeed.

In the unfamiliar and foreign environment of the immersion country, participants often gravitated towards people or situations that seemed familiar. Participating in familiar tasks or pursuing familiar hobbies with people in the surrounding often provided participants with a sense of contentment that revitalized and refreshed their efforts to learn and practice. Even occasional respites from the

intense newness of the target language and its environs—speaking a little English with other students or sending an email home—could be helpful in maintaining a positive attitude towards learning things new and different. When the participants sought too much familiarity by fraternizing with other Americans and speaking English often, they could seriously impede their progress in learning the new language and culture.

The amount of comfort that the participants felt or sought also influenced the amount of effort they made to learn and use the language in the context of their immersion environment. Some amount of discomfort provided incentives to try harder, but too much discomfort, like too much fear, could immobilize participants. Similarly, a certain amount of comfort helped provide an environment conducive to speaking and interacting. When participants felt too comfortable, they could become lazy and not push themselves to grow in their knowledge and skills.

Table 2 offers some examples of the effect that these four personal/emotional factors can have on adult learners participating in language immersion programs in foreign countries. The first part of the table focuses on the effects the factors can have when they positively influence progress towards goals; the second part focuses on what happens to the learner when the factors have a negative effect on progress.

Table 2 Personal/Emotional Factors of In-country Language Immersion

Factor	Examples of effect on learner when factor facilitates progress →
Fear	• finds courage to speak and be understood • takes risks and tries new things ventures out in strange territory with new resolve
Self-doubt	• overcomes self-consciousness with personal resolve • pushes aside indecisiveness and takes action • builds trust in self and from others by listening to and observing local sentiments
Familiarity	• feels at ease with immersion setting • feels close to home though away from home
Comfort	• feels at ease enough to take chances • if slightly uncomfortable, stays and alert and aware

Table 2, continued

Factor	**Examples of effect on learner when factor inhibits progress** ←
Fear	• forgets previously learned aspects of language • avoids certain situations that could have led to increased practice (i.e. stays indoors at night)
Self-doubt	• remains quiet in order not to sound foolish • questions ability to do what needs to be done • questions ability to establish trust with native speakers
Familiarity	• gravitates towards English speakers • reverts to English when not in class • returns to the same immersion site or homestay family on a second immersion program because it feels familiar
Comfort	• if too comfortable, becomes complacent and stops trying • if too uncomfortable, stops interacting

Social/Cultural Factors that Influenced Progress

Learning a language for the purpose of communicating with native speakers is a personal and individual achievement. It is also, by the very nature of *communication,* an interactive accomplishment that is shaped by the learner and by the person or persons who teach the learner to converse. This study's participants believed that all of the people with whom they came in contact were in some respect their teachers. They further believed that the way people approached and interacted with them made an appreciable difference in what and how they learned. The teachers (both formal and informal) and their teaching techniques (both intentional and unintentional) emerged as the social/cultural factors of the immersion experience that significantly facilitated or hindered the learning progress and goal achievement.

Formal teachers and teaching techniques. All of the study's participants attended language schools where they had at least three hours of small group classes daily. The small size of each class set the stage for intense, accelerated learning. The participants felt, however, that the teachers influenced the quality and degree of the learning as much as, if not more than, the small class size. They believed that effective classroom teachers were essential to an overall positive learning outcome. They were equally adamant that ineffective teachers severely hindered the progress they made towards their goals to effectively communicate with native speakers.

Participants characterized effective teachers as those who cared about their students and with whom their students felt a high degree of rapport. The participants

believed that the ability of teachers to establish rapport and create a motivational, successful learning environment came as much, if not more, from their personalities and teaching styles than from their level of intelligence or knowledge. Teachers who made the participants feel welcome, valued, unique, and special in turn made the participants *want* to learn. When the teachers respected the learners, treated them as intelligent, capable professional colleagues, the participants wanted to work hard. They tried harder to learn and to demonstrate what they had learned by actively engaging in conversation.

In addition to being receptive and encouraging, effective teachers employed techniques that kept participants interested and engaged. They gave students opportunities to demonstrate how much they were learning. Participants believed the highly effective teachers were those who brought *variety* to the learning process, encouraged *interaction in the target language*, and *utilized the surroundings* for both topical and experiential learning.

Participants stressed how important it was for them to have had teachers who utilized a variety of instructional approaches and provided diverse and abundant opportunities for practice. During the more structured times in class when the teachers introduced grammar concepts and reviewed such things as sentence structure and verb tenses, participants found it helpful when teachers compared the target language to English. It helped participants make meaning of the language if they could understand in what ways the language structure was similar to English, and how it differed. It also helped when they had different teachers during the day or at least during the week. Participants were less likely to become bored or fatigued

when they had different teachers, and hearing different accents helped prepare them better for interaction with people outside the classroom. The participants said they also stayed more engaged and learned more rapidly when teachers utilized a variety of materials such as interactive games, videos, music, and newspaper or magazine articles.

The exclusive, interactive use of the target language by the teachers was a major factor for the participants in accelerating language use and comprehension. Even when they were being taught difficult grammar constructions, they thought they internalized the lesson better if it were delivered and modeled in the target language. Most teachers in the immersion schools gave participants opportunities to practice conversing for substantial blocks of time during the formal class time. Participants stressed the importance of this particular teaching technique as essential for favorable learning outcomes. During these conversation periods, the teachers who modeled correct usage, rather than overtly correcting errors were the ones from whom the participants thought they learned best.

Effective teachers not only brought in authentic materials from the outside and provided non-threatening opportunities for conversation practice in the classroom setting; they also used the community as a *living laboratory*. Participants were adamant that such experiences took their learning to far greater levels than when they were taught only on school grounds. Connie provided an example of how teachers used the surroundings to help their students internalize what was covered in class:

> After the first week or maybe even during the first week, she said to me one day, “Do you need money?” because I had asked the question, "Which is the best place to change money?" And she said she'd take me there. So we left, and we went out and we walked down to the bank, and I changed my money by myself, and we talked about things all the way. We went to the market, we went to a bunch of places.

The ineffective teachers were the ones who seemed uninterested in the participants as people. They diminished the participants' desire to learn and converse. Participants described such teachers as rigid, un-encouraging, and unapproachable. Kevin recalled one teacher who "…would get frustrated with us, and in some ways he would challenge us, but it wasn't like 'Come on, I'm going to challenge you, you can do this,' it was more like 'God, we went over this yesterday. Come on.'" Such teachers were not inclined to change their teaching styles to fit their students' personalities, abilities, and learning styles. Cathy categorized these teachers as ones who adhered to "…their own agenda whether or not we understood or whether we were with them or not." She described one situation where the teacher was not connecting with her or the other two students in her group, and they all got to the point where they didn't even speak in class. She said that she became so disillusioned with the teacher that she didn't go to class the last day. When teachers made the participant feel unwelcome, seemed not to care about them, and did not adjust their styles to fit the learners, then participants often stopped learning or trying to learn.

Informal teachers and techniques. While they were not teachers in the formal sense, homestay families and others in the immersion environment taught the participants much about using the target language in its natural setting. Their demeanor and the manner in which they interacted with the participants had a profound impact on what, how, and how much the participants learned about the target language and the people who speak it.

Participants described good homestay situations as those in which the families made them feel welcome and valued. It was very important to the participants that the hosts were *nice*. Being nice meant being welcoming and encouraging and giving their immersion guests a good amount of their time and attention. As Kevin explained:

> I stayed in a family home with this one woman. She was terrific, very nice. She fixed my meals for breakfast and often for dinner…She was very accommodating and really took great care of me. I think that the interesting part was that we would sit down for a meal and she would just sit there and smile and talk and try to engage me. I think that I was very fortunate. I had a wonderful individual who they matched me up with for the homestay. Because she would just keep the conversation going and ask me questions and try to draw me out.

The participants were adults who for the most part had not lived in family situations, especially not as charges or subordinates, for many years. They appreciated and valued those families who seemed to care about them *as people*, and not as boarders. Although they were aware that they paid for the homestays

through their payments to the school, they were more likely to make more of an effort to communicate if they were treated as extended members of the family rather than as clients. In Edie's family, there were two children. The twelve-year old boy liked to play video games with her, and she remembered, "…the baby would come in and call me 'Amegita,' 'little friend'. By making her feel at home, the family contributed to her desire to communicate, and increased her efforts to understand, and be understood.

Homestay families that facilitated language learning and use among the participants were those who were encouraging and responsive and who taught by example. Kevin said, "It helped, absolutely, to have a positive response…and to be corrected very little, very little." His homestay hostess was "…someone who had good sense and balance; she might ask for a clarification if she just didn't understand, but more often than not she could kind of figure out what I was saying. And then, later, there might be a little bit more correction. So I had a very good teacher in her and she wasn't necessarily supposed to be my teacher."

Homestay families who spent time beyond the required meal times with the participants had a pronounced effect on the learning that too place. By getting to know their homestay guests and drawing them out as people, homestay families encouraged participants to not only speak, but also to learn something about their host families as people. This example, from Edie, reinforces the idea that relationships built upon language use, and vice versa. "The mother of the family was very open and they took me around and to a church and shopping with family. She sat on the porch with me at night and listened to me talk about my grandmother and

she talked about her family. It was all in Spanish because she didn't speak a lick of English."

Sylvia, who had gone on several in-country immersions offered examples of homestay experiences where the interactions were powerful and lasting. She said that not only did she make new and lasting friends, but she also was fortunate to have in them some of her best teachers. She recalled:

> I still keep in touch with them. I mean they're still there and they would help out now if I still needed their help. I think how I acquired the language is the right way for me. Every time I would live with a family, I would talk to them. I mean, it's not just that you're living there. I mean, the grandmother was there, and she'd become my gramma. And I would talk to her and find out what it was like when she was a kid…or whatever. Or find out about flowers she was growing, and how she used them as remedies. So that was very important.

Homestay families could also hinder language learning and use. There were some families whose manner and behaviors made participants feel uncomfortable or unwanted. More often than not, such families eroded participants' self confidence and their desire to communicate. Connie remembered one family who made her feel unwanted by comparing her to a previous homestay guest:

> I think they may have been disappointed that I was old…they had had an American woman stay with them…as I kept being told…who was just so wonderful [laughing a little bitterly]. She wasn't a teenager..I mean she wasn't like a twenty-year old…but I think she was a good deal younger than I. But….I had never been in a place where I felt less valued…

Some families came across as serving as homestay families primarily for the money they received from the immersion schools. Usually, such families did not encourage participants to engage in conversation or get involved in daily family life. As Sylvia put it, "You know, you were just there."

In addition to the immersion school teachers and homestay families, the people in the immersion communities were also important factors in the learning experience. While not teaching in the formal sense, they taught the participants by conversing with them. They gave participants many opportunities to witness and experience first hand cultural values and behaviors. As with the formal teachers and the homestay families, the attitude of the local inhabitants could either encourage or discourage participants to speak and interact. Brian provided an example of how people could facilitate learning by being encouraging and non-critical. As he traveled around Spain immediately following his two weeks in an immersion school, he discovered the joy of communicating with people who expressed pleasure in his attempts. "As long as I ended up saying approximately what I wanted to say they thought it was great, and they would say things like 'you speak Spanish very well,' or they called me 'una buena persona' and stuff like that. So, that was really good."

Being patient and encouraging were the qualities that distinguished these informal teachers as facilitators of the learning accomplished by the working professionals in this study. Connie remembered the support she received from people she met in her immersion town when she told them she was trying to learn Spanish. She said of the townspeople, "They were patient, and they would make it a

point to speak to us in Spanish." She recalled one man who took a few moments to explain a grammar point to her:

> He was selling something, I don't even remember what it was, and I remember wanting to say that we already had one, so he taught me the word for already…you have to say the "ya" because if you don't, you just say that we have one, and not that we already have one. I said "yo lo tengo" or something, and he said you have to say the "ya." And that really stuck with me. I think it was great.

Summary of Social/Cultural Factors that Influenced Progress

Learning a language through in-country immersion is by its nature an interactive, social process during which the learner is taught by members of the society in which the language is spoken. The social/cultural factors of the experience were those interpersonal factors that came from people and/or situations outside the individual learner. They had a major impact on how and what the participants learned. This study identified two primary social/cultural factors that had major influence on the progress the participants made in making meaning of the target languages and understanding the cultures in which the languages are spoken. These factors were the *teachers* - those from whom the participants learned - and their *styles and techniques* - the way they approached and interacted with their students or guests.

Both the formal teachers in the schools and the informal teachers in the host families as well as other people in the communities had a major influence over the progress that the participants made in their language learning journeys. If these

formal and informal teachers were caring and encouraging and showed an interest in the participants, they instilled in them heightened self confidence and increased desire to communicate. Teachers with *their own agendas* who were unable, or unwilling, to respond to the their students' needs and desires, could thwart the students' motivation and momentum. Similarly, the families or local residents who were impolite or indifferent could dampen their student residents' confidence and hinder their progress.

Table 3 provides examples of these social/cultural factors. The first section of the table gives examples of the factors that facilitated the progress that the participants made. The second section provides examples of ways these external factors could be detrimental to the progress that participants made during their immersion experiences.

Table 3 Social/Cultural Factors of In-country Language Immersion

Factor	Examples of factor as facilitator of progress →
Personal Style of Formal Teacher Techniques of Formal Teacher	• is encouraging and caring • treats each student as special, respected human being • corrects gently and infrequently • incorporates variety of materials into teaching • varies teaching approaches to fit learners and makes adjustments to fit students' needs and abilities • explains grammar points and differences and similarities between students' native language and target language • promotes and encourages interactive learning • utilizes surroundings for authentic practice
Personal Style of Informal Teacher Techniques Informal Teachers	• makes participant feel welcome • is attentive and encouraging • treats guest/visitor as member of community • engages guest in conversation • models common usage and corrects infrequently • speaks only the target language, even if he or she knows student's language • encourages participant to take part in daily life

Table 3, continued

Factor	Example of factor as inhibitor of progress ←
Personal Style of Formal Teacher	• has rigid and authoritarian demeanor • behaves in a superior fashion • points out faults, seems annoyed or frustrated with amount of progress students are making • compares one participant with another in class
Instructional Techniques of Formal Teacher	• employs regimented, rote learning approach in class • makes few adjustments to syllabus/agenda despite signs that students are having trouble grasping lessons • follows a prescribed text or set of materials, and brings little in from daily life or current events • makes limited use of surrounding community as teaching tool
Personal Styles of Informal Teacher	• treats participant as paying customer, as outsider • compares participant with former guests or visitors
Instructional Techniques of Informal Teacher	• uses participant's native language instead of always utilizing the target language • provides few opportunities for genuine interaction • emphasizes mistakes and corrects often, sometimes with disdain

Summary of Effect of Immersion Experience on Goals and Achievement

The findings indicate that language immersion in a country where the target language is spoken produces positive results for working professionals. In-country language immersion programs are compatible with the working professionals' goals to learn or improve a language in order to be more effective at their work. The foundation for attaining those goals is laid by four aspects of in-country immersions programs. First, individuals leave their regular everyday lives to focus solely on learning the language. Second, immersion participants are forced to speak the language in both the formal and informal instructional environment. Third, the participants are immersed in the authentic culture of the target language which can provide a context for understanding client and colleagues who come from those cultures. Fourth, the programs are inexpensive compared with the benefits derived from the cost. In this study, the quality and amount of the progress that the working professionals made in their immersion lives stemmed in part from those four critical aspects.

While four primary aspects of in-country immersion programs provided the foundation for successful goal achievement, other factors had a profound effect on the success of each unique experience. These factors, which influenced the quality and degree of progress the participants made towards their goals, were either predominantly personal (personal/emotional) or interpersonal (social/cultural). Varying both in the way they were constructed and the way they were received and processed by the participants, these factors had the potential to either facilitate or impede progress.

The personal/emotional factors with appreciable influence on each individual's persistence and achievement were *fear, self-doubt, familiarity, and comfort*. During each immersion program, situations arose or were intuitively or actively sought out by the learners that invoked feelings related to these four emotions. Fear or the anticipation of fear sometimes caused participants to avoid people or situations that might have afforded them opportunities to practice communicating in the target language. Sometimes fear catapulted them into a state of panic that caused them to forget some of what they had already learned. Other times, fear produced a sense of excitement and served as a stimulus to the immersion journey that vigorously propelled the participants forward in their efforts to communicate. In much the same way, self-doubt could cause participants to refrain from making an effort to speak or interact, or it could provide the impetus for new resolve and renewed courage to do what they felt they had to do to succeed.

At times, this study's participants found relief in familiar things or situations. When they performed familiar tasks or pursued familiar hobbies with the company of people from the local community, participants felt a contentedness, a joy that urged them on in their efforts to learn. Even occasional respites from the intense newness of the target language and its environs, such as speaking a little English with other students or sending an email home, could be helpful in maintaining a positive attitude towards learning things new and different. Too much familiarity, especially in the form of speaking English and fraternizing with other Americans, could seriously impede progress in learning the new language and culture.

Similarly, the amount of comfort that the participants felt or sought made a difference in the effort they made to learn and use the language in the context of their immersion environment. A certain amount of discomfort provided incentives to try harder, although too much discomfort, like too much fear, could cause people to retreat. Likewise, a certain amount of comfort was necessary to provide an environment that made the participants want to speak and interact, but they were afraid that if they were too comfortable, they might become lazy and not push themselves to grow in their knowledge and skills.

By its very nature, communicating in a language is a social skill. The experiences of the participants in this study emphasized that learning how to speak and to communicate effectively in a new language is greatly influenced and shaped by those with whom they interact. The interpersonal/cultural factors of the experience had a major impact on how and what the participants learned. These factors can be aggregated into two terms: *teachers* - those from whom the participants learned, and their *styles and techniques* - the way they approached and interacted with their students.

Both the formal teachers in the schools and the informal teachers in the homestays and surrounding communities had a major influence over the progress that the participants made in their language learning journeys. If these formal and informal teachers were caring and encouraging and showed an interest in the participants, they instilled them with heightened self confidence and increased desire to communicate. Teachers with *their own agenda* who were unable, or unwilling, to respond to the their students' needs and desires, could thwart the students'

motivation and momentum. Similarly, the families or local residents who were impolite or indifferent could dampen their student residents' confidence and retard their progress.

Influence of Immersion Experience on Perception of Self and Others

This section presents findings pertaining to the influence that the in-country immersion experience had on participants' views of themselves and their own culture as well as their view of people from cultures other than their own. It contains three parts. The first part describes the manner in which the study's participants felt that they themselves — or their opinions of themselves—changed as a result of their immersion experiences. The second part presents ways in which the immersion experience changed their view of their own culture, that of the immersion environment, and the culture in other parts of the world. The last part presents the participants' beliefs concerning ways that their effectiveness at work was affected by the immersion experience. As before, these key findings are supported and illustrated by the participants' voices.

Perception of Change in Self

Participants believed that the experience not only improved their ability to communicate in a foreign language but also changed *them*. They came away from the experience with *increased confidence* in themselves, not only with respect to their ability to communicate, but also in their ability to face challenges and take risks. They also came away with *altered personal goals* for language learning and, in most cases, for their lives in general.

Increased confidence

The in-country language immersion programs described in this study were intense experiences in which the participants were uprooted from their familiar home environments and routines and plunged into strange, new surroundings. All of the participants admitted to some degree of pre-program anxiety about how the experience would unfold. Two of the participants had never traveled outside the United States before their immersion experience. Only two had ever attempted to communicate in the target language beyond a U.S. classroom. They all recognized that by participating in immersion language programs outside the United States, they were putting themselves into challenging situations outside of their normal domain. What they discovered was that the immersion experiences built their self-confidence. They came away from the experience with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, as well as increased confidence in their potential to become effective communicators in the target languages.

Their first in-country immersion experiences proved to them that in-country immersions--at once intimidating and exhilarating--stimulated them to break through their fear and self-doubt and find the courage to succeed. Kevin's example of his transformation from intimidated non-speaker to confident conversant was typical of all the participants. When he began his program, Kevin would hardly attempt to speak. As much as he had wanted to learn Spanish, his feelings of intimidation in the first week of his immersion program almost overwhelmed him. He admitted, as he looked back on the experience, that during his first week on his immersion

program, he would have never thought that by the fourth week, he'd be the one to speak for others as they traveled around. He recalled:

> I was awfully surprised that not only was I willing to do it, but I seemed to have probably a little more confidence than my two traveling companions, so I'm the one who did it…So as we went about our daily restaurant, hotel, daily activity stuff, I wound up speaking Spanish a fair amount. It was probably a very important week for me in terms of starting to gain more confidence and feeling like, "Wow, I'm really speaking the language."

As Kevin's example suggests, participants' increased self-confidence came in part from their being impressed with their improvement during their time in the immersion country. They also felt differently about themselves, more sure of themselves. Daniel explained:

> When I found myself thinking a little more in Spanish, I don't know, I thought of myself differently, in a subtle way. Kind of like…breaking through. There is something about breaking through that barrier and knowing that I am somehow communicating in a foreign way that I've never done before. For one thing, it is exciting.

Not only did the immersion experiences raise their confidence in their ability to learn a new language; the participants believed that the immersion programs emboldened them generally and made them aware that they could accomplish much if they believed in themselves. Several of those interviewed spoke of the experience as being *life changing*. As described by Daniel, they "had a feeling of being changed inside," that the experience had "kind of opened up a whole new world." Edie put it

this way: "I think it [participating in an in-country immersion] made me stronger. By doing it once, I learned that I could do that again. Even though… I was petrified on that plane, I found out it was possible."

Several participants mentioned that their immersion experiences helped solidify their understanding of themselves as learners. The experiences in the classrooms and out in the surroundings reconfirmed their beliefs about how to optimize their learning. They realized that they learned best through intense, continuous practice in authentic environments where they felt encouraged to speak by both the circumstances and the people around them. The immersion experiences also reconfirmed and strengthened their conviction that they really could learn the target language.

Altered long-term goals

As impressed as they were with their rapid progress and their new levels of confidence in their capacity to learn, most of the participants went through a period during the immersion program, or shortly after their return to the United States, when they realized that they may have been unrealistic in the learning goals they had set for themselves. They realized that they had overestimated the speed at which they would learn, the amount they could learn in the compressed time period, and the degree of retention they would experience after their return. Daniel remembered that at the end of his week, he had felt like, "'Man. I am going.' You know, I felt like I was on. And I was thinking that when I got back, I was just going to start really getting fluent." But, when he returned to the United States, he experienced what others in the study said they experienced as well: "I knew I was improved, but then it went

away. I lost it. I kept it for, I would say, a month. And then I could tell that I wasn't thinking in Spanish quite as well anymore. I was translating more. That was a disappointment."

Sometimes the shift in their expectations regarding how much they could learn through immersion came when they had learned enough to realize how little of the language they actually knew. Often, when the beginners took their first bold steps among the local residents or the more advanced learners tried their hand at working for organizations in the immersion country, their opinions of themselves and their ability to communicate plummeted. As people ventured out and took more risks, they ran up against situations in which they felt they were over their heads. It was one thing to eat breakfast with families and purchase some food or a small gift for someone back home. It was another thing altogether to discuss politics or professional interests or profound feelings in the target language. Connie recalled an incident with her homestay host in which she wanted to explain that she was hurt and offended by the way they were treating her, but she didn't feel comfortable trying to express her feelings in Spanish. She thought she would make matters worse instead of provide an opportunity for mutual respect and understanding through open discussion.

Usually, participants changed their minds about their potential to become effective communicators when their encounters helped them begin to understand what it would take to become fluent enough to function effectively in the every day world. Almost all interviewees made some reference to shifting their short and long-

term learning goals early in their immersion experience. Theo's experience was typical:

> My goals changed after I got there. I realized a month was not enough for me to get fluent. I think I would have had to spend four or five months to really get a good grasp of the languages. [After the first week], my goal was just to get as much knowledge as I could, learn as much as I could about the country and the culture, and see a bunch of different sites. As far as the language was concerned, I decided I just wanted to be able to ask the right questions.

Almost all of the participants made some reference to shifting their goals, or at least their timeframe for achieving those goals, when they realized that it would take longer than simply a few weeks to become fluent. They were insistent, however, that they did not abandon their goals completely. In fact, the rewards that came with the experience inspired them to try harder, rather than to give up. All but three had returned for one or more immersion programs after the first one. Two of the three who had not yet returned mentioned during their interviews that they were in the process of making plans for another in-country immersion. All of them had maintained their enthusiasm for learning, their desire to learn, and their confidence in their ability to learn. The major change in their expectations came from their adoption of more realistic expectations of the time it would take to accomplish those goals.

The shift in goals, as with the heightened sense of confidence, was not only about language. In several cases, the immersion experience caused people to rethink some of their values related to life and work. Steven said he had more time

to think when he was participating in the immersion than when he was working as a corporate consultant. During his immersion experience, he changed his outlook on life's purpose. He said that meeting people with different perspectives helped him do some soul searching about his career and, ultimately, dramatically change his course away from business to an academic career. He remarked that during the immersion experience, "it all came together." Others, too, said that their ideas about what is important in life had been appreciably altered by the experience. Most mentioned that after their first immersion trip, they decided they needed to increase their international travel, spend more time with family and friends, and take more opportunities to try new things, just for the fun of it.

Changes in Cultural Perspectives

Being immersed in the natural environment of the language they were learning gave participants a chance to *live* in the language. The experience encouraged them to absorb the culture in a personal way. In reflecting upon their experiences, participants said they came away with an enhanced appreciation of the people and their national culture. As Theo remarked, "I would have to say that the reason I think I had a better understanding of the culture was not because I learned anything about the culture per se, but because I learned more about the people that are in the culture."

Often, in part because of their limited language ability and in part because of the newness of it all, the participants found themselves observing the culture with a heightened sense of awareness about what was going on around them. They learned much by simply listening and observing as they moved about in the

immersion setting. Gloria's words illustrate how much one could learn by paying attention to life around them:

> I would go down to the beach every day and have a beer and watch the sunset at one of the kiosks on the beach. The beach is really where the heart of this city is. I would listen to peoples' conversations around me and pick out words. I wouldn't be able to follow the whole conversation but…I liked watching the beach culture and the body culture.

Observing and listening, conversing with host families, socializing in the local communities, volunteering, and engaging in favorite hobbies were some of the ways that the people in this study immersed themselves in the cultures of the languages they were learning. They also traveled to remote spots on weekends and after the immersion programs. These interactive activities with and outside the immersion communities helped grow the participants' cultural awareness and understanding. Steven recalled, "After I had been there for about a month, maybe not that long, I started working at a refuge for street kids. On a personal level, I thought it would help my Spanish. I thought that it would be a rewarding experience helping some kids out." And, as it turned out, it was an experience that he said he will cherish always. Experiences similar to Steven's helped the participants gain new insights into the differences and similarities between themselves and the people in the immersion countries.

Although the programs were short, there was an intensity to them and an openness among the learners and the people around them that permitted the participants to develop insights and understandings that impacted both their private

and work lives. Edie, who had never been out of the United States before, was intrigued by the daily life and remarked how it made her appreciate how much of the life in big cities in the United States came from the people who "brought their culture with them." She recalled:

> Every destination that you take in the city was by bus, *guaguas*. There were beat up old caravans and they might have one really small donut tire and the rest bigger tires on them. They were packed with hundreds of people on them and there is no breathing room. It didn't smell that pleasant. It was a good experience [for me] because I was, like, "Oh my goodness, I have never had this before." Just to be in the midst of it all is so good for me. It was almost like being in New York. A lot of people and a lot of movement. When you go to New York and you see a lot of people from different countries you can see "Okay, that is why they may do things like this. That is why the music might be so loud because that is what they are used to doing in their own countries."

Participants enjoyed discovering what native speakers customarily did in their own countries. They were often struck with the sense that life seemed *simpler* than what they were accustomed to in the United States. People in the immersion countries had what Daniel called "just a different outlook on life." Many noted their impression that the people they lived with and met during their experiences were, as Cathy put it, "less up tight" than people in the United States. Cathy talked about how she enjoyed when people laughed and how comfortable they made her feel. During

the interviews, most everyone mentioned that the people made them feel welcomed and accepted and a part of their culture.

As they got to know the people in their immersion communities, the participants found themselves changing some of the views they had held before their immersion trips. For instance, Brian went to Spain with a predisposition that Spaniards would treat him with a certain amount of disdain if he did not get his Spanish "just right." What he discovered was that when he made an effort to speak that people showed obvious pleasure in his making an effort. They told him he could speak Spanish very well, even though he knew that wasn't true. He said the people were genuinely friendly and welcoming and they "just kind of took you in and enjoyed hanging out with you."

Participants were impressed with how much time people in the immersion countries spent with others. They not only spend time with family and friends, but also with people with whom they worked or with whom they conducted business. For example, Theo's family owned a store. Theo watched people come in and out, both to buy and sell things. He noted, "Business was much more based on personal interaction." He concluded from his observations that business there, as compared to business he was familiar with in the United States, was much more about the relationship than about the financial transaction. He explained:

> Like with the family in the store. People would drop by packaged goods. They knew these people and they would like talk with them for about 15 or 20 minutes before they'd take off. Business was much more like something among friends. Like it wasn't, " Here, I've got to drop off the milk and on to the

next person." It was much more communication, ask about the family and then they would stay for a little while and have a drink. I mean, it was pretty different from the way people in our country conduct business.

Several of the interviewees remarked that many of people in the immersion countries were what would be considered disadvantaged in the United States. Those interviewees remembered taking it for granted that people in those countries would wish they could live more like Americans. What they discovered was to the contrary. Many of the people they met did not seem to be at all dissatisfied with their lives; they did not yearn for something more or something different. They seemed content with what they had or didn't have. Often, even families considered to be middle class by local standards lived without cars, without dependable hot water in the bathrooms, and, sometimes, even without refrigerators. But, as Edie observed, "They didn't mind." Theo recalled that the sons in his homestay family were about the same age as he was. He said he had assumed that they would have aspirations similar to his own. He was surprised to learn from them that they had traveled little, even in their own country, and they had never visited the capital city, only about 50 miles from their home town. When he asked them if they hoped to move out of their village someday, perhaps work in the capital city, they had replied, "No, we're happy right here."

When the participants paid attention to the way people interacted and lived their lives, they became increasingly aware that people are not the same everywhere. They came to appreciate that not everyone strives for the same things that are considered important in the United States. Some of the insights they had

concerning differences in lifestyles led them to reflect upon their own values and lifestyles. For instance, Daniel, who was one of the two interviewees who had never traveled abroad before his immersion experience, said that the people he met on that trip "…weren't just in the same kind of rat-race-like life that they are here in the United States; [I found] I am attracted to that." He went on to describe the pleasure he had in adopting, at least for a short while, a life style that was not "so fixated on working, making money, buying things. Working making money, buying things. It's like they know there is so much more to living than that."

Some of the compassion and understanding the participants came to feel for the language and the people came from having the language shaped and modeled by native speakers. Some of the compassion and understanding came from seeing themselves and their own U.S. culture through the eyes of others. As summarized by David:

> Well, until you have actually experienced life in a country, I don't think you can really get to know it. You have to do like what I did. If you go as a tourist, you're going to get some sense, but if you actually live with a family, you're going to see first hand what people do, what they think, what they eat. It was great. I got a lot of great insight in to the United States from their perspective. It's invaluable.

Change in Perceptions of Effectiveness at Work

All of the participants in this study felt that their language ability was greatly improved as a result of having participated in in-country immersion programs. Back home in the workplace, they were not as impressed with their improvement in the

mechanics of the language as they were with their ability to communicate empathetically with native speakers who had moved from their home countries to the United States. Two major themes related to heightened empathy with non-English speakers emerged. The participants had a deeper appreciation for what it feels like to be a foreigner in an unfamiliar country. They also had a better understanding of some aspects of culture that could affect the values and behaviors of their colleagues, clients, and customers from other countries.

The working professionals in this study who returned to clients or colleagues from Spanish-speaking countries felt that their immersion experiences had made them more compassionate. After their immersion experience, they understood much better how uncomfortable and displaced one feels when nothing is familiar, when the language and customs are strange. After they returned, when they made an effort to speak with their clients in Spanish, to ask them where they were from and to ask them about their homes and their families, they noticed that their clients visibly relaxed. They realized that it helped, too, if they could demonstrate that they knew something about their clients' countries and cultures, as a result of their own experiences. Sylvia illustrated this point as she described her work with Mexican women in a health clinic in the U.S. city where she worked upon her return from one of her immersion experiences:

> I can relate to them by letting them know I've been there…I think it all helps that I've had those experiences. I'm not just someone who studied in a text book and thinks that because I've studied the language and acquired the language skill that I know what's best for these people. I can say that because

> I lived there, this is what I've seen...I think it really helps them feel comfortable.

Helping people feel comfortable was important to this study's participants after they returned from immersion, because they had realized during their experiences how much more willing they had been to speak if they felt comfortable among those with whom they were speaking. They had learned how important it was for them to feel welcomed and appreciated when in a strange setting. They induced from their own experiences that they could make non-English speakers feel more welcomed and appreciated by showing an interest in their language and by speaking it with them.

Those who attempted the language with clients and patients acknowledged that they were probably not greatly improved technically after their first immersion programs. They believed, however, that although their attempts were obviously flawed, the humility that they exhibited by attempting to use the language of their patients helped them establish rapport and trust. By attempting to build a personal relationship by communicating in their patients' language, they felt that they improved the care and service that they provided. Kevin's example of his use of Spanish in his work in an emergency room in a U.S. hospital illustrates how the returned immersion participants established faith and trust in their unpolished, but heartfelt, attempts to communicate:

> You could see that patient's anxiety level seems to drop. There have been plenty of times where I'll wind up apologizing for my low level of Spanish, or my inability to speak Spanish. And, almost every time when I'm expressing

> that sentiment, the patients or the family say, “Oh you speak very well, it’s fine.” And they are very complimentary and they appear to be very appreciative. And we all hear that when you go to another country, people just like the fact that you're trying. The fact that you're trying is almost good enough. And I think that’s true, for a lot of times when I see patients in the emergency department, they see that I’m going to the effort and it helps them and it gets me farther down the road to gaining their trust and helping them.

The participants who used the language on the job were quite aware that they were by no means fluent. They found, however, that the immersion experiences had helped make them willing and able to communicate in their new language. Art talked about being able to help the HR department in his organization by talking to a Mexican applicant. He said he "played an assisting role, kind of like an interpreter." Kevin said he was called upon often to speak Spanish with his Spanish-speaking patients, and he could tell that even though his Spanish wasn't perfect, he was able to put the patients at ease and "get most of their story" so that he could "order the necessary blood work, x-rays or urine samples, or whatever.” In his job in a community mental health center, Daniel often found himself in situations where he could help by speaking Spanish. He recounted a time, shortly after he had returned from his first immersion when a woman came in who had a drug problem and she only spoke Spanish. He said he felt he was able to explain things to her, in part, because he had developed an ability to interact, even though his Spanish still "wasn't all that good."

Those participants who did not have opportunities to immediately incorporate into their work what they had learned on immersion nevertheless felt they had learned much that would help them be more effective in their careers. They returned with heightened appreciation for the importance of trying to communicate in the language of their clients and for the ways in which cultural values impact both social and business behavior. For instance, their own experiences in Latino cultures had impressed upon them how important *trust* and *relationship* are in both personal and business transactions. As Theo said:

> I got to see how other cultures operate, and how they do business. I mean I haven't had a chance to use some of the knowledge I've learned, but just having had a chance to have to adapt to the culture and the way they do business I think could become a great benefit if I were to get a job with a multinational company.
>
> I realized that you can't use the same methods of doing business and business etiquette that you've used in your own environment and try to use that in a different environment in another country. For example, one thing I learned is that business in America is much more about details, like, 'Ok what can you bring to the table? OK I can bring x amount of dollars.' Things are clearly defined, and each person has his own responsibilities, but business [there] is a little bit more ambiguous; there aren't really clear lines of the delineation of responsibilities or lines of communication.

Summary of Influence on Perception of Self, Others, and Work

The in-country language immersion programs did not, in most cases, turn the participants of this study into fluent speakers of their target languages. They learned enough of the language to feel proud of what they accomplished and to feel comfortable using the language, even if imperfectly. The sense of all of the participants was that they had improved in their ability to speak and understand the languages they had studied on their in-country immersion programs. They remembered feeling proud of and often surprised by their ability to communicate early in their experiences. Many of them continued to use their newfound ability to interact in the language at work as well as in social situations when they returned to the United States

Despite their belief that the immersion experiences had improved their language skills, the participants also felt the immersion experience gave them a more realistic understanding of what it would take for them to become truly proficient. Rather than being daunted by the work still ahead of them, they were inspired by the encouragement they had received from native speakers both on the immersion and back in the United States. They had been instilled with desire to return for additional immersions and to continue to speak and practice at home.

The immersion experiences built their confidence in their ability to effectively communicate in the target languages even when they were not technically proficient. The experiences also shaped new insights about people and cultures of those languages. Participants developed an appreciation for the importance of building trust in order to provide effective service and do good business with people of other

cultures. They also learned much about themselves and the U.S. culture from the perspective of those with whom they came in contact during their immersion experiences. They came away from those experience with new resolve to build and earn the trust of their colleagues and clients both by *speaking their language* and by demonstrating their genuine like and concern for them.

Learning Phases of In-Country Language Immersion

This study explored the influences of in-country language immersion programs on learning goals, appreciation for the target language and culture, and views of self and world. The findings suggest that learning a language as a communication bridge between persons of different cultures is a complex process that involves more than learning correct grammar and vocabulary in ascending levels of complexity. While the learning outcome of the working professionals in this study certainly included increased language skill, it also involved changed perceptions of the learner toward native speakers of the language, and an altered sense of one's place within one's own culture and the culture in which the language was imbedded.

The multifaceted, multi-dimensional learning accomplished by the participants in this study during their immersion experiences came in three interrelated, non-sequential phases of *isolation*, *interaction*, and *integration*. The model in Figure 4.2 depicts the interrelation of the three phases of learning as experienced by the study's working professionals during their in-country language immersion experiences. The participants moved in and out of the phases throughout the course

of their immersion programs as well as in their work lives after they returned from immersion. Each phase could be as short as a few moments or as long as several hours or days. The participants passed through them multiple times during their immersion programs, no matter how long or short the program duration. Exactly what happened in each phase was determined to some extent by the personal/emotional and social/cultural factors unique to each person's experience. There were, however, characteristics of each phase that were recognizable and distinguishable as that phase's unique contribution to the learning process.

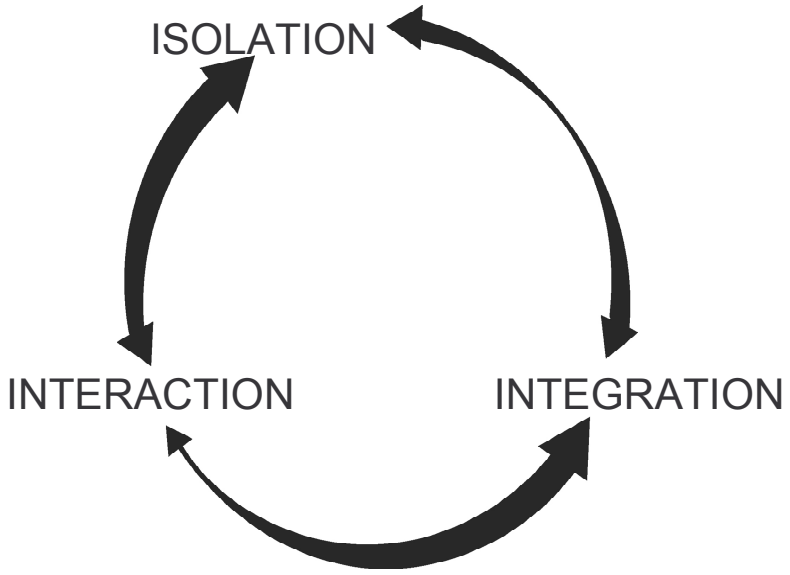


Figure 2. Model of Learning Phases of Working Professionals during In-country Language Immersion

Isolation Phase

The primary characteristics of the isolation phase were that the participants felt removed and apart from others; they were acutely aware of their difference from those others; they were very conscious of what they didn't know; and they were unsure if their learning goals were realistic or appropriate. The participants behaved similarly in their periods of isolation. They withdrew physically, often retreating to places where they could be by themselves. When they were in the presence of others, they usually said very little. Instead of talking, they observed, listened, and processed information.

They described feelings of emotional or intellectual separation from others which often included feelings of personal inadequacy, deficiency, and inferiority.

The isolation phase usually was the first phase that the participants entered at the outset of an in-country language immersion experience, even for those who began their immersion with some prior knowledge of the language. It was also a phase participants reentered after they had acquired some knowledge of the language and culture. In the early stages of learning the language, the isolation phase was characterized by a sense of inadequacy and deficiency that came primarily from not knowing the language at a basic level. Limited grasp of the language left participants feeling unable to express themselves accurately or appropriately in the target language. Later on, at higher levels of linguistic ability, the sense of separateness came primarily from cultural differences and disparate backgrounds between the participants and the people around them. During the isolation phase, no matter their degree of language expertise, participants felt

conspicuously inadequate and limited in their ability to understand and be understood by people from the language's primary culture. They felt like noticeable *outsiders* who were obviously (and often, uncomfortably) different from those from that culture.

The isolation phase was one in which people realized how much they didn't know. It was a phase of assessment, sometimes in the form of tests administered by others, but always of personal assessment, during which the learners critically scrutinized what they knew and what they wanted to know. Isolation was the phase when people questioned their abilities, grappled with self-doubt and fear, and actively or intuitively set their course and established their learning strategies. It was in this phase that participants felt their difference most pronouncedly--their difference from other learners, from native speakers, and, in different iterations of the phase, from the selves they thought they had been earlier in the learning process, or the selves they were striving to become. In the isolation phase, participants realized that their learning, although very much influenced and shaped by fellow learners as well as formal and informal teachers, was primarily their own responsibility. Sometimes in this phase, participants became a little overwhelmed with how much they felt they still had to learn in order to feel satisfied that they had learned enough to effectively communicate with native speakers.

Theo remarked that in the first couple days he usually sat by himself as he and the family watched television, and said little. Art, who said he thought that part of his reticence to speak came from the fact that he "felt kind of conspicuous because [he] was obviously an American," remembered feeling limited in his ability to

communicate and sometimes "kind of chickening out" during the early days of his immersion experience.

The perception of being isolated was not limited only to the early stages of the in-country immersion experience or among people who would be defined as raw beginners. Participants often reentered the isolation phase later in the language learning process, when they were good enough to carry on daily conversations, but felt incapable of talking about complex issues or feelings. Some of the same limitations that were felt early on, returned later in the learning journey. Brian lamented, "You can only speak so much, 'cause after a while you simply don't have the vocabulary to talk about something." Connie talked about how she handled the situation she faced when she thought she was being treated unkindly by her host family. She said that had a similar situation arisen in an English-speaking environment, she felt sure she would have known how to approach them and what to say to discuss and resolve the situation. She remembered feeling frustrated and angry with herself because she did not feel she knew enough to communicate her feelings with the family. Because she did not feel sure enough of herself, her solution was to say nothing at all.

Even people who would have been considered advanced speakers by normal language proficiency standards could find themselves in the isolation phase. For the more advanced speakers, it was the cultural differences that created a chasm of separation. Sylvia was in an isolation phase when she tried to get Latin American doctors and other professional clinical staff to entertain the idea that sex and health education is important. She found herself incapable of getting them to see her point

of view. She felt frustrated and very alone, very different from her co-workers. Although her ability to communicate in the language itself was quite good she nevertheless felt profoundly different from her colleagues. Her isolation came not so much from a gap in understanding caused by the language but from differences in cultural backgrounds.

In the isolation phase, all of the bi-directional emotional factors described earlier in this chapter played important roles. Fear, anxiety, and self-doubt, juxtaposed with a desire for comfort and familiarity exasperated the participants' inclination to retreat and withdraw. Often, however, introspection, assessment, and the desire not to be viewed as a failure came into play in the isolation phase, producing a desire to, as Daniel put it, "break out" of the self-created barrier or impasse. In many ways, the isolation phase set the stage for social interaction, which occurred in the interactive phase, or heightened awareness of self and capacity, which occurred in the integration phase. A reluctance or inability to talk in tandem with a desire to understand what was going on around them heightened their listening and observing. As people became aware that they were understanding more of what they heard and saw around them, they often became newly inspired to try to communicate.

The isolation phase had some danger of being a phase in which learners could decide they would never reach a point of suitable personal achievement. In such cases, the phase could cause learners to conclude that they had failed or would fail to reach their goals. When utilized, however, as a phase in which to consider the possibility of recalibrating goals and adjusting learning strategies, the

isolation phase prepared people for the other two phases of interaction and integration. Then it became a phase from which participants emerged ready to adjust goals, accrue new understandings, and interact with renewed insight, from a different vantage point.

Interaction Phase

Engaging in conversation and actively participating in life around them were the primary indications that immersion participants were in the interaction phase. Of the three phases, the interaction phase was by far the most social. In this phase, participants actively engaged in conversations with native speakers and sought out situations in which to practice and perform. They made concerted attempts to answer their teachers' questions, talk with their host families and people they met in the neighborhood, and orally explored concepts as well as physical surroundings. This interactive activity within the language's natural context was vitally important to build confidence and provided renewed motivation to learn more. Such encounters not only showed participants that they could be understood; they made the participants proud of themselves and provided them with incentives to keep on learning.

In the interaction phase, participants' reactions to both the personal and social factors of the experience had important consequences on their progress. In this phase, participants challenged their self-doubt and transcended their fear of feeling or sounding foolish. They communicated. They took risks with the language and pushed themselves to understand and be understood. Participants used words such as "exhilarated," "motivated," and "inspired" when describing how they felt

when they realized they were understanding and being understood. In the interaction phase, they often received positive reinforcement from both informal and informal teachers, which helped participants realize that they really were learning.

Instructional approaches in the immersion schools, as well as serendipitous activities that sprang out of the learners' own actions and explorations, moved people into the interaction phase. Conversing in small groups with the teacher, shopping with the teacher in the background or on one's own, managing the logistics for a weekend or post-immersion school trip were all examples of participants' engagement in the interactive phase of learning. Sometimes the interaction was in the form of reciprocal teaching and learning of new tangential skills. For example, Connie’s interest in weaving led her to a weaving instructor who knew no English. As she interacted with the instructor, she not only learned new ways to weave, she taught her teacher some English and at the same time learned new terms in Spanish. Several others described learning new words or new ways of doing things as they made an effort to go about their days alongside the people in the homestays and immersion communities. As they ventured out, tried new experiences, and explored their surroundings, they practiced and improved their ability to communicate and to understand the way of life around them.

The interaction phase occurred not only during the immersion itself. People also found themselves in that phase when they returned to work. Kevin and Daniel described numerous examples of interaction in their respective cases in an emergency room and psychology clinic. Sylvia actively sought the interactive phase by seeking out native Spanish speakers in the birth control clinics and rape

counseling centers where she worked upon returning from her several immersion experiences. The receptive reactions of the people with whom they interacted encouraged participants to communicate in the language. Often they were able to put people at ease in difficult circumstances simply by speaking with them in their native language. The positive, often grateful, responses they received encouraged them to remain in the interactive phase, even when they did not feel their language abilities were as good as they would have liked them to be. While in the interactive phase, they were willing to take risks with the language and speak, even if they did not feel they could communicate perfectly.

Integration Phase

In the integration phase, participants internalized what they were learning on a variety of levels and incorporated their new knowledge (of language, self, and others) into the context of their personal and professional lives. This was the phase where the participants personalized their learning and made meaning of both the language and the context for speaking it. This was the *ah hah* phase. In this phase, new awareness and new knowledge emerged. These awarenesses could come in the form of new understanding of the mechanics of the language or in the form of new understanding of self and others.

The most important characteristic of the integration phase was that it was a phase of introspection and interpretation. In the integration phase, people interpreted what they had felt in isolation or what they had understood or grasped in the interaction phase. They moved from realizing that their goals were unrealistic to setting new ones. They moved from giving direction to someone on the bus to

realizing that giving those directions was evidence that they were learning to communicate. They went from observing the way business was done in local shops to understanding some of the ways that cultural values and norms influence transactions and trade. They reflected upon and internalized concepts that were demonstrated all around them during the phases of isolation and interaction. They consciously acknowledged the differences and similarities of the values between their own culture and the culture of the immersion community. They internalized language and cultural lessons during this phase in ways that changed the way they approached the language and their own lives. During this phase, people acknowledged their limitations and recognized cultural differences that could influence their ability to effectively work with native speakers of the target language

While it was often an active phase of discovery, the integration phase was also an adaptive phase. It was the phase in which participants realized that it was going to take months or even years to reach the level of proficiency they had begun their programs professing they wanted to achieve. As such, it was the phase in which they reassessed and revised their learning goals.

Integration was also the phase when participants realized that they didn't need to wait until they were fluent to carry on meaningful conversations with others. In the integration phase, several of the participants became aware that the humility they exhibited by attempting to use the language, even when their delivery was flawed, could establish rapport and trust. Particularly those in health care and education went back to their jobs with a new understanding that they could put Spanish-speaking patients and clients at ease if they made an effort to speak with

them in Spanish. Demonstrating that they were willing to risk embarrassment from not being perfect enabled them to establish a feeling of trust with their clients. By building a sense of trust and rapport, they could in turn improve the care and service they could provide to their patients and clients.

It was in the integration phase that the participants reached new levels of understanding that they in turn incorporated into their way of being. Often in this phase, they reflected on what they learned and consciously changed their perceptions of themselves and others. For example, in the situation Sylvia faced with medical practitioners who resisted some of her ideas related to sex education and prenatal care, Sylvia went from an initial frustrated reaction to one of patient resolve. In the integration phase, she more thoroughly researched the reasons and philosophies of her colleagues that stemmed primarily from their cultural backgrounds and histories. She emerged with a plan that involved effecting change led by her colleagues, rather than pushed at them.

As in the isolation phase, primary attributes of the integration phase were reflection and contemplation. In the isolation phase, however, the participants were *struck* by the difference and often felt removed and different in their awareness of self and others. In the integration phase, the participants' reflections led them to a new level of appreciation for the difference, spawned from an increased degree of understanding. The new insights gained in the integration phase enabled participants to realign goals and methods and approaches that led to improved communication and satisfaction.

Summary of Learning Phases of In-Country Language Immersion

A conceptual model of the learning that occurs through in-country language immersion emerged from the descriptions of participants' experiences and the changes they attributed to those experiences. Rather than coming in distinct, sequential stages with prescribed sets of skills and abilities, the learning of the study's participants occurred in three interconnected and interrelated phases. These phases of *isolation, interaction,* and *integration* support the idea that language learning for the purpose of using it in one's work occurs in nonlinear, but interrelated, connected phases in which the learner matures in both skill and attitude. Table 4 delineates the characteristics of each phase.

In the isolation phase, participants felt separate and apart from others, even when they are not physically removed from others. They often felt profoundly deficient in their ability to communicate with native speakers. Sometimes, especially for raw beginners, this deficiency stemmed primarily from their lack of mechanical ability in the language. Often, however, for both raw beginners and more advanced speakers, the feelings of deficiency came from an acute awareness of differences in cultural perspectives and customs. Integration was in some ways similar to isolation, in that it was a phase where the individual was aware of his or her uniqueness. It was also a phase where rather than feeling inadequate or deficient, people felt adjusted. While they may not have felt entirely happy or content, they were at least reconciled to where they were in their learning journey. The integration phase was the one with the "ah hahs," where new understandings emerged and learning or life goals were altered. The interactive phase, which flowed from either isolation or

integration, was an active phase, as opposed to the other two more thoughtful and reflective phases. It was during the interactive phase that participants demonstrated what they had learned ─ both linguistically and culturally ─ by actively communicating with the people around them. The interactive phase was more obviously socially influenced than the other two phases, although all three phases were impacted by the dynamic relationship that existed between the learners themselves and their learning environment, which was comprised of other people and situations.

The interviewees described situations and encounters during their first immersions, as well as in subsequent immersions and later work experiences that indicated that they moved in and out of the phases as they grew and matured throughout their learning journeys. They also moved in and out of the phases no matter at what level they were assessed to be by traditional language learning measurements. Novices, intermediates, and advanced intermediates alike described their learning processes as ones in which they moved from one phase to another many times during their immersion programs, and also when they returned to their work settings.

Participants moved through the phases as they matured in the learning process. After intense periods of interaction, they might move into one of integration during which they reflected on their interactions and developed new insights about themselves, language, or other people. After interactions that were frustrating or disturbing, they sometimes withdrew into periods of isolation during which they contemplated and reviewed what had transpired. And too, they could move from

isolation into an integrative phase where they realigned their goals and purpose and put things into new perspective. At various levels of linguistic ability, the movement among the phases impacted and deepened their ability to communicate effectively with people from cultures different from their own. The interplay among the phases helped participants make meaning of the target language and incorporate what they learned into a feeling of enhanced competence in their personal and work lives.

Table 4 Characteristics of Learner during Learning Phases of Immersion

Phase	Disposition of Learner during phase
Isolation	• withdraws physically and/or psychologically from others • acutely aware of personal difference and limitations • observes and listens • often seeks familiarity and comfort • is aware of fears and self-doubts • questions learning goals
Interaction	• actively engages in conversation in target language • takes risks; confronts fears and self-doubts • feels a sense of pride and accomplishment • demonstrates learning to self and others
Integration	• reflects upon and interprets lessons learned • acknowledges and values differences between self and others • experiences increased appreciation for values and beliefs of native speakers • recognizes own potential for empathetic relationship with colleagues and clients • incorporate new insights into ways of being and interacting • adjusts learning goals

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This qualitative case study explored in-country language immersion as a way for working professionals to learn a language to enhance their effectiveness at work. The research aim was to provide some insight into the manner in which professionals who participate in in-country language immersion come to use and understand the target language and incorporate what they learn into their lives. Situated in the social constructivist view of learning, the study illustrates how the working professionals in this study were shaped into insightful communicators through their independent and personal processing of what they learned from others. The questions below guided the study:

1. How do in-country language immersion learners believe the *in-country* aspect of the experience influenced their learning goals and helped them achieve those goals?
2. In what ways does the in-country immersion experience affect the learner's appreciation for and the use of the target language?
3. How do in-country language immersion learners believe their self perception, worldviews, and effectiveness at work were influenced and changed by the immersion experience?

This chapter summarizes key concluding findings against the backdrop of related theory and research and discusses implications for practice and research.

Conclusions from Key Findings

The experiences of the 12 working professionals in this study suggest that in-country immersion programs have the potential to be more than simply programs for learning languages. These programs have the capacity to play an important role in the development of individuals who can effectively communicate and interact in global settings. What emerged from the study was the realization that effective in-country immersion programs are those that are developed and utilized with the following understandings:

- learning is influenced by others;
- setting and context are important;
- progress is influenced by individual/emotional factors;
- experience fosters motivation and enhances learning;
- learning is holistic and occurs in three non-linear phases; and
- intensity and focus are crucial;

Each of these understandings is summarized and discussed below against the backdrop of related theory and research.

Learning is Influenced by Others

The findings of this study are consistent with the constructivist proposition that language is shaped by the community that speaks that language (Cobb, 1992). People construct meaning when they hear words uttered from others, filtering those words through their own context; they build their meaning on the basis of knowledge and prior experience that they bring to the task and develop when performing the

task (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning through in-country immersion reflects the constructivist theory of discourse which portrays both comprehending and composing language as “the building, shaping and configuring of meaning” (Spivey, 314). Learners build their meanings on knowledge that is organized, structured, and configured in some fashion (e.g. Frederiksen, 1975; Spiro, 1980, Spivey, 1987). Making meaning of language, then, according to social constructivists, is metaphorically portrayed as a product--the product of cognitive activity performed in social acts of communication. It is portrayed as a kind of mental representation, a configuration of content that an individual generates while processing--internalizing and comprehending--what is being communicated (Spivey, 1995).

The experiences of the study's participants align with the social constructivist view that achievement of learning and understanding of both the language and the culture that shapes the language rests on purposeful and positive interaction with others. Social constructivist theory posits that learning is an active process by which one internalizes knowledge uniquely, as a result of interaction with others (Gergen,1995). What people learn during in-country immersion is greatly influenced by those with whom they interact. In the constructivist model of learning, teachers encompass more individuals than simply those defined as *teachers* or *instructors* (Gould, 1966). In an in-country language immersion program, individuals from whom the participants learn include the program designers, formal and informal teachers, other students, and people in the community at large.

The personal qualities and interaction styles of those individuals who serve as teachers in in-country immersion programs make a difference in the learning

outcome. Interaction with what the study's participants termed *good teachers* builds learner confidence and encourages participants to keep learning and speaking. Helpful to the learners are people who take an active interest in the learners as people, treat them with respect, and encourage them to interact with others in the community. On the contrary, formal and informal teachers who are unwelcoming in manner or actions or who are rigid and inflexible in their interactions with the learners can be negative influences on learning. The findings support the social constructivist view that in learning languages, the human relationship is in the foreground (Gergen,1995).

Setting and Context are Important

For the participants in this study, not only were the people in the immersion setting important in the learning process; the setting *itself* had a major impact on what people learned. The degree to which the environment stimulated the participants to take risks and participate in the life around them greatly influenced the depth and breadth of what they learned. Encounters within the learning community brought insights for the participants about the culture which shaped--and was shaped by--the language. The encounters also brought insights for the participants about their own culture, and their own place within their culture and the broader world.

Although only one of the participants in this study participated on an immersion that was designed specifically for people of the same profession, most of them referred to situations and encounters in the immersion country that helped them perform work or life functions with new appreciation. Several commented that

by observing life around them in their immersion environments, they came away with a greater awareness of the similarities and differences in the cultures they visited and their own. For the one whose immersion was tailored for him and others in the medical profession, the insights came from shadowing doctors in the immersion town, observing clinical interactions between patients and medical professionals. For others, insights came from noticing behaviors and attitudes that related to their own professional or personal interests. Several observed that in their immersion settings, business was more about building relationships than about transactions. Still others commented that they left their immersion experiences with a better understanding of how to put non-English speakers at ease when they encountered them in the United States. This new understanding, they believed, came not so much from learning the actual language of the people with whom they came in contact as from the empathy and camaraderie engendered from living among them. By moving around in the immersion communities and by observing and interacting within those communities, the participants learned much about how to effectively interact with others whose language and cultural backgrounds were different from their own.

These specific findings related to the community from which and in which working professionals learn in in-country immersion support the contention of adult learning theorists that the setting itself contributes to the learning and is in its own right, an instructional component (Gould, 1966). The social fabric of the experience is important, especially in providing the context for cultural understanding. It is through meaningful interaction with others as well as through relevant practice in authentic environments that language learners develop competence, fluency, and

creativity in language use (Lu, 1998). Being in an authentic natural environment of the target language provides opportunities for heightened awareness of the culture and for appreciation by the learner of what works in the target language's culture, and why it works. Observing and interacting in the target language's natural environment can cultivate a sense of solidarity within the learner and between the two cultures and produce more effective communication (Brunner, 1995).

Communication in a language involves interaction within the social context through a complex process of acculturation (Brown, 2000). The language itself, is, as Tusting says, "only part of what is going on" (2005, p. 41). The participants in this study emphasized how important it was that their learning took place in the authentic, natural environment of the language they were learning. Because they were learning the language to help them communicate with people whose first languages and home cultures were different from their own, it was extremely valuable for them to experience language learning within the context of the culture of the target language. They were able to learn from the environment simply by being immersed in it. By learning the language within the context that it is used, learners have a chance to "deal not only with the language but also the relationships between language and other elements of the social process: the relationship between language and the other processes going on in interaction at the micro level, and the role of language in the relationships between local communities and broader social processes" (Tusting, 2005, p. 42). The participants believed that by experiencing the language in the context of its natural, everyday environment, they were given good opportunities to understand more of the cultural underpinnings of the language that

shaped the values, beliefs and attitudes of the people from that culture. Getting to know the people and the cultures of the language helped them communicate better both during the immersion and afterward.

The experiences of the 12 people in this study corroborated the idea that there is value in placing adult language learners in a natural setting among native speakers of the language. Their experiences also suggest that learning outcomes are markedly affected by the composition of the learning community. These specific findings related to the learning community reflect the theory known as situated cognition which posits that knowledge and learning are intertwined with the context in which they occur. Posits Lave, “Knowledge in practice is the locus of the most powerful knowledgeablility in the lived-in world” (1988, p14). Proponents of situated cognition as the foundation for adult education maintain that people learn from their interacting within “communities of practice,” or, in other words, within their everyday work and life (Lave, 1988; Wenger,1998; Wilson, 1993). Situated cognitists suggest that adult training and development programs should intentionally utilize the real life work setting as the living laboratory. Lave (1988), an early advocate for conscious use of the setting as an active catalyst for learning stressed that everyone in the community -- the learner, fellow learners, and “just plain folks” – has value to add to the learning process. When settings and surroundings are utilized well, as in purposefully constructed and thoughtfully debriefed, learners can extrapolate useful and relevant knowledge that they can in turn integrate into their way of work and life.

In the language immersion programs described by the participants in this study, the communities of practice were neither the participants’ daily work settings

nor their daily life settings that they experienced in their daily lives in the United States. Nor, except in one case, were the other participants in their programs of like profession (unless by accident). The communities of practice were, simply, communities. Any insights that the participants pulled from the experience that related to their own work or exposed them to the type of people with whom they would interact back in their home environments were more by chance than by design. In their reflective accounts of their personal experiences, however, it was apparent that they derived insights from practicing in and experiencing the everyday life. The environment made appreciable difference in the complexity and richness of what people learned. When they expanded their learning environment by probing farther and deeper into the cultural context in which they were immersed, they emerged with deeper understandings of how to effectively communicate and interact with people from that culture.

Progress is Influenced by Individual/Emotional Factors

Language theorists who endorse the social constructivist, contextual approach to language acquisition do not propose that the responsibility for what is learned rests totally on the shoulders of those in the communities in which the learner is immersed (Scovel, 2001). Underlying social constructivist learning theory is the notion that individuals are responsible for their learning and construct their own unique knowledge. Others are indeed important, as is the context, but how the learner processes what the community has to offer is inextricably tied to the learner's own actions and reactions. In this study, the learning outcome for each individual

was dependent on how each person utilized his or her learning community to construct and articulate personal understandings.

The progress that participants made during their immersions had much to do with how they reacted to stimuli, the choices they made, and the ways they actively and intuitively manipulated the foreign territory through which they traveled. Some of the factors that influenced the progress made by this study's participants were personal, emotional ones. These factors were primarily linked to individual mental attitudes, personal choices, and responses that the participants made when encountering people or circumstances. The findings of the study support claims of language acquisition researchers that these personal/emotional factors contribute to learners' accumulation of language-related skills and knowledge. The study's findings differ somewhat with the contention among some researchers who claim that the personal/emotional factors with the most influence on learning outcome are *anxiety, motivation, prior subject matter experience,* and *learning strategies and styles* (Rothwell & Kazanas, 1992; Scovel, 2001; Walqui, 1999). The personal/emotional factors that emerged in this study as having a profound impact on progress towards learning goals were *fear (anxiety), self-doubt, familiarity* and *comfort*.

The experiences of the participants are consistent with Skehan's contention that "some anxiety (relative to no anxiety) may be beneficial and energizing, a nice amount of stimulation for activity" (1972, p. 115). Experiences of the study's participants were also consistent with Scovel's (2001) belief that excessive anxiety, on the other hand, can cause learners to behave with insufficient purpose or in ways

that thwart productivity and progress. For the study's participants, the strange and exciting encounters precipitated by unfamiliar people and surroundings had the potential to either provoke or retard learning. Sometimes fear, or the anticipation of fear, caused participants to avoid people or situations that might have given them opportunities to practice communicating. At times, fear caused them to panic and forget what they had learned. Other times, it produced a sense of excitement and stimulated rather than stifled communication. Some of the participants described times when fear actually helped them to take risks with the language and attempt to communicate when under normal circumstances, they would have been reluctant to try.

In addition to fear, anxiety, and self-doubt, the other emotional factors that emerged in this study as having important influence on persistence and achievement during the immersion process were related to feelings of familiarity and comfort. In the unfamiliar and foreign environment of the immersion community, participants often actively or intuitively sought people or situations that seemed familiar to them. Participating in familiar tasks or pursuing favorite hobbies or interests could bring a sense of contentment and encourage interaction. On the other hand, when participants dwelled in the familiar, such as spending much time only with other English speakers and speaking English, they could seriously impede their learning. Similarly, the amount of comfort participants sought or were provided could either inhibit or facilitate learning quality and substance.

All four of these personal/emotional factors--fear, self-doubt, familiarity, and comfort--contribute to sustained motivation that leads to active attempts to

understand and be understood in the target language. As will be discussed more thoroughly in the sections on implications for practice, these emotional factors should be acknowledged and addressed by both learners and program developers alike and factored into both individual learning strategies and instructional design.

Experience Fosters Motivation and Enhances Learning

The participants' experiences were consistent with current thinking of language learning theorists that learners must take charge of their learning and engage in effortful processes (both active and reflective) that facilitate the acquisition, retention, and use of the language. (Banu, 1986; Izzo, 1981; Ellis, 1997; Scovel, 2001). Their experiences emphasize that successful in-country language immersions represent *active* utilization of the principles of experiential learning. Kolb (1984) maintains that learning emerges from the transaction between the learner and the learning environment. He theorizes that experiential learning is a dialectical process between the concrete and the abstract, and between the active and the reflective. In-country immersion affords participants the opportunity to actively construct their understanding of the target language and the world shaped by that language (Lyddon, 1995). Recognition that the construction of knowledge is an active process of transaction and reflection has led to a greater emphasis in immersion programs on the use of active and interactive learning outside the classroom. Those experiences that participants remembered as particularly rewarding and lasting were ones in which they had been permitted to take *ownership* of the learning (Gould, 1996). These findings support the contention that requiring the learner to share in the responsibility for selecting tasks in which they participate

not only helps to engage the learner in the learning process but also acknowledges that each learner is different. Emphasizing the individual as well as the interactive process of learning can increase the learner's desire to continue learning (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992).

The study's findings are consistent with the prevalent assumption that adult language learners' primary reasons for wanting to learn a language is to be able to communicate in the target language (Foster, 1997). The experiences of the participants during their immersion programs helped sustain that initial motive. As they became more familiar with the people and culture of the language, they became increasingly motivated by the affinity they developed for the people in the target language community. Their initial motivation was what Garner and Lambert (1972) termed *instrumental motivation*, which they described as stemming from a desire to communicate in the language for practical, professional reasons. Through active transaction with native speakers, participants displayed increased signs of what Garner and Lambert labeled *integrative motivation*. They became increasingly interested in integrating into the culture of the target language. Their discoveries about the people and culture and their place among them spurred them into increased levels of exploration and interaction.

Originally, it was assumed that the reasons for studying a language were very important in the learner's degree of success in learning, and further assumed that integrative motivation was more effective than instrumental reasons (Scovel, 2001). More recent work by Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) provided experimental evidence that instrumental and integrative motivation correlate with each other and it is really

the amount of motivation that matters, not the type. The intensity and variety of experience that exist in in-country immersions provide ample opportunity for renewing and sustaining motivation. The arousal and maintenance of curiosity, followed by the thrill of discovery and personal achievement, stimulates the learner to learn more. Scovel said, “The joy is in the journey, not the destination” (2001, p.122). Ellen Foster (1997) agrees, adding that the rewards come mostly through a sense that one is becoming a new person, reintegrated in a new place that comes from bridging two cultures through two languages.

Learning is Holistic and Occurs in Three Phases

Although wanting to learn a language was the primary purpose that the participants in this study cited as their reason for participating in an in-country language immersion, what they articulated in their interviews was that they learned much more than language skills. Their experiences indicate that what adults learn through in-country language immersion programs encompasses more than improved language skills. The study’s findings agree with De Weert, Corthout, Martens, and Bouwen (2002) that learning by professionals for work purposes takes place in a holistic, adaptive manner in and through the communities in which the professionals develop and perform. The learning experiences that the participants of this study described were complex processes that involved more than learning correct grammar and vocabulary in ascending levels of complexity. The participants described learning that was holistic and deep, which involved developing insights about themselves and others. Their learning embodied the three defining characteristics of professional adult learning described by De Weerdt et al.: "It

concerns the total person; it emerges from the transaction between person and environment and it is ongoing" (De Weerdt, 2002, p. 25).

The participants in this study believed that what they learned about themselves and others, and about their own cultures vis a vis others, was as important, if not more so, than what they learned about the language itself. While the learning outcome of the working professionals in this study did include increased ability in the mechanics of the language, it also involved changed perceptions of the learner towards self and others.

As working professionals engage with in-country immersion programs, they question and alter their articulated goals. The professionals in this study began their experiences with the typical, narrowly defined standard terms associated with learning language skills. They had started out wanting to become *proficient* or *fluent* in the target language. At some point, they realized that learning language to better communicate with people from cultures shaped by that language is not only about correct and accurate articulation of the language. Being immersed in a different world, in a new language, developed in the participants new realms of understanding.

These new understandings changed the way the participants thought of themselves and others, and the way they managed their daily lives. The experiences shaped new meanings, not only in the form of new words and sentences, but also in the development of new understanding of self and world. Their experiences developed new understandings shaped by the communities in which the participants lived during their immersion programs. These understandings enabled the

participants to add a dimension of appreciation and empathy to their interactions with people from other culture, both during and after their immersion experience

The participants' discoveries about the nuances of effective communication were consistent with the words of the famous anthropologist Margaret Mead:

> I am not a good mimic and I have worked now in many different cultures. I am a very poor speaker of any language, but I always know whose pig is dead, and I know what people are talking about and I treat it seriously and I respect them, and this in itself establishes a great deal more rapport, very often, than the correct accent. I have worked with other field workers who were far, far better linguists than I, and the natives kept on saying they couldn't speak the language, although they said I could! (Cormeraie, 1995, p.85)

What Mead understood is that human interaction and respect, more than linguistic intelligibility, is necessary for active understanding between members of different cultures. For people who use in-country immersion to help them learn languages in order to communicate with colleagues and clients, the long-term learning goals are not solely connected to correct usage of the language in the classical sense (accurately reading, writing, speaking, and listening). The goals also include more subjective and subtle qualities of learning that have to do with understanding of values and norms, of both self and others. In-country language immersion programs are themselves relatively short in duration, ranging from one week to three months and averaging two weeks for the typical working professional. The effect of the programs goes well beyond the period of time of the programs themselves. As working professionals learn languages in the context of the culture of

those languages, they renegotiate their understanding of the language itself, as well as their capacity for understanding and utilizing the language. The learning process is a dynamic, evolutionary one that impacts the way people think about themselves and the way they go about their lives.

Learning a language in order to use it as a communication bridge between persons of different cultures is not necessarily a sequential process that progresses neatly from one level to the next. The learning experiences of the participants of this study suggest that learning from in-country immersion occurs in three non-sequential, interrelated phases of isolation, interaction, and integration. Each phase contributed in a different way to a person's comprehension of the language and its context.

The phases, although uniquely experienced by the individual learners, have distinguishing characteristics that can be summarized into one-word descriptors of each phase: *isolation, interaction*, and *integration.* The graphic model of the phases introduced in Chapter Four is reproduced below. As the model shows, the phases do not progress from one to another in a linear continuum. They are flow from one to another and can be entered more than once and in different patters.

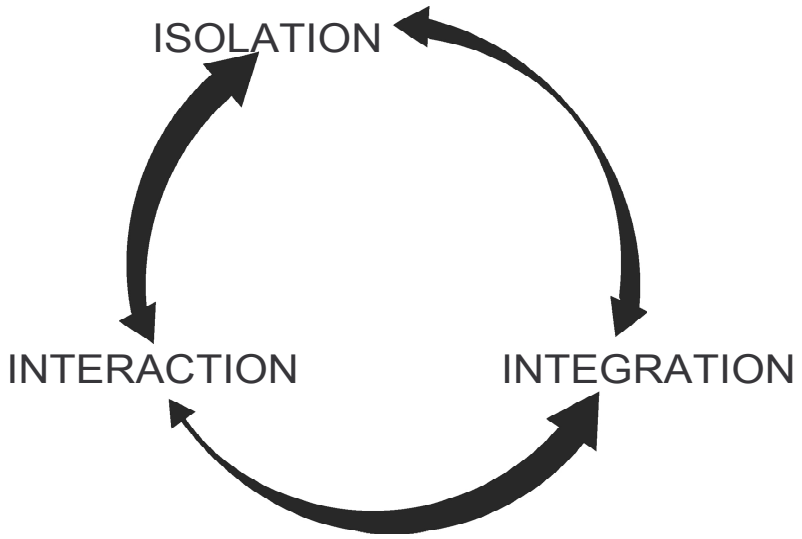


Figure 3 Learning Phases in In-country Language Immersion

In the isolation phase, learners feel their uniqueness. In this phase of detachment from active interaction, learners often try to make sense of their environment by listening and observing. They feel set apart from others and often withdraw physically and mentally from social interaction. They are keenly aware of how different they are from those around them and how little they know or understand. The isolation phase is one of assessment, both by the learner and those who teach them and often leads the learner to question his or her ability to accomplish set goals.

The interactive phase is one of active engagement and participation in life and conversation. It is in this phase that the others in the setting and the setting itself are demonstratively influential in shaping what is learned. Learners practice what they have learned in this phase and demonstrate for themselves and others what they know. The interactive phase correlates to the formative framework described by

Kolb (1984) as necessary to provide experiences from which learners can extrapolate meaning.

The phase in which learners extrapolate what they have learned and put the learning into their own context and frame of reference is the integration phase. In this phase, the individual internalizes language ability into a personal skill. It is also the phase in which learners make new understandings of self and others and incorporate those understandings into their professional and daily lives.

All three phases are impacted by the dynamic relationship that exists between the learners themselves and their learning environment, comprised of other people and situations. Those others share knowledge, model behaviors borne of the culture, and provide the learners with opportunities to grasp new language as well as new understandings of how to function effectively in the language. Their actions encourage as well as provoke responses among the learners that move them intermittently back and forth among the three phases of learning in a dynamic evolutionary learning process.

This model of the learning phases of in-country immersion is supported by a model of professional learning developed by De Weerdt, Corthouts, Martens, and Bouwen (2002). They maintained that professionals who engage in learning to help them in their work takes place in three distinct *moments.* They labeled these moments as *orientation, elaboration,* and *integration*. They described them as *non-linear* and dynamically intertwined.

These moments of professional learning are akin to the phases of learning that emerged through this study of working professionals engaged in in-country

language immersions. In the orientation moment of the DeWeerdt et al. model, participants acknowledge the gap between what they know and what they want to know. The learners, often with the help of other learners and facilitators, assess their strengths and deficiencies and delineate where they want their learning paths to head. In the elaboration moment, as in the interaction phase, learners actively engage learning activities. In both models, during the integration phase, or moment, participants adapt their new knowledge to their way of being, to their understanding of self and others, and incorporate that knowledge into the way they communicate and perform.

Both learning models acknowledge that learning is multi-faceted and shaped and influenced by others, although ultimately shaped for the individual by himself or herself uniquely and individually. The primary difference in the two models is that the orientation phase that De Weerdt et al. describe is a more explicitly collaborative phase between learners and those from whom they learn than in the in-country immersion programs in which this study's participants were engaged. The isolation phase in in-country immersion accentuates the solitary nature of the quest to communicate in a new and strange environment, especially when the learning environment itself is unfamiliar and the learners in any given learning group have little in common except the desire to learn a new language.

The in-country immersion experiences of this study's participants were relational journeys in which the variables that influenced and shaped the learning paths and outcomes were inextricably interdependent. These dynamically interrelated factors influenced the learners' progress--and their learning--throughout

their experiences. The learning that took place as a result of the movement among the phases resulted in a learning path that De Weerdt et al. said “can be seen as simultaneously an individual and a collective enterprise, which entails the continuous negotiations and creation of meanings from action and meaning brought into action" (2002, p. 32). Through a complex process of contemplation, interaction, and interpretation, the participants made meaning of the target language and realized for themselves enhanced competence.

Intensity and Focus are Crucial

In-country immersion programs are compressed, focused experiences in which the primary objective is for program participants to learn to communicate in the language spoken in the country where the immersion school is located. Programs combine 4 to 6 hours a day of classes with interactive practice during activities and in homes with local families. For busy people leading hectic lives, it is often difficult to focus exclusively on one project or goal when there are other conflicting demands on one’s time. It is difficult, too, to spend concentrated blocks of time in training or study when the demands of the job or home life are vying for attention. Immersion programs permit participants to concentrate on the single objective or learning a language in that language’s cultural context.

The intensity of the experience played an important role in what the participants learned as well. Accomplishing tasks such as getting from the airport with cab drivers who knew no English and living with strangers with unfamiliar customs, habits, and language catapulted the learners into a realm that forced them to learn in order to survive. While most admitted to being scared or at least

intimidated early on, they also acknowledged that the strangeness of the experience exhilarated and inspired them to learn and adapt.

The participants in this study were convinced that working on the language full time away from home was the *only* way to learn. They stressed that a primary appeal of in-country immersion was that they were able to focus on the task at hand - learning the target language and getting to know the people and the culture. By getting away from their normal environment and daily routine, they were able to concentrate exclusively and extensively on learning to communicate in the new language.

Implications for Practice

In-country immersion has excellent potential as a form of contextual, experiential learning that can shape working professionals into culturally competent communicators. The findings of this study demonstrate that comprehending the culture that shapes the language--the values, beliefs, and assumptions that form the social norms and behaviors--can lead to communication based on understanding the people *of* the language, not simply the language itself. An in-country immersion program provides a setting conducive to developing language skills for more effective communication with native speakers; it immerses the learner in every day life of the culture in which the job at hand is to listen, observe, speak, and understand. The combination of focused language training reinforced by opportunities to use and explore the language in its natural environment provides both structure and opportunity for individual exploration that together can enhance and strengthen the learning.

Contextual, experiential approaches to learning other languages that are grounded in social learning theories such as social constructivism and situated cognition emphasize the importance of the learner's active construction of knowledge and the interplay between new knowledge and the learner's prior knowledge (Met, 1993). The findings of this study as well as thoughtful review of the principles of social constructivism and situated cognition have contributed to a set of guidelines for producing effective in-country immersion programs. Delineated below, these five guidelines serve as a base for more specific recommendations, which follow afterwards, for practitioners and working professionals who are engaged in or contemplating in-country language immersion as a development tool.

Guidelines for In-country Language Immersion for Working Professionals

Guideline 1 - The in-country immersion should be structured in such a way to provide working professionals with opportunity to focus exclusively on learning the language within the nature setting of the target language.

Guideline 2 - There should be ample opportunities for participants to practice carrying out a range of functions (tasks) necessary for daily life in the target culture. Ideally, the practice should be, at least periodically, situated in an environment related to the participant's work.

Guideline 3 - The emphasis in the immersion classroom as well as in the surrounding environment should be on authentic engagement and variety. Accuracy should be encouraged, but not insisted upon or overemphasized. Teachers, both formal and informal, should actively model current usage of the language in the

authentic environment. As learners produce language, various forms of instruction and evaluative feedback can be useful in encouraging the learners to communicate effectively and in a culturally appropriate manner.

Guideline 4 - Program developers, as well as program participants, should be cognizant of the fact that learning a language in its natural context is a dynamic interactive process in which individual knowledge and meaning is shaped by and through others. The programs should be structured to permit the appropriate balance of personal/emotional and interpersonal/cultural factors so as to promote an optimal learning outcome for each unique learner.

Guideline 5 - It is important to recognize that the learning that takes place through in-country immersion comes in phases that are both non-sequential and holistic in nature. The experience can greatly influence the learner's understanding of self and world. To take full advantage of in-country immersions as learning experiences that affect the whole person, participants should be encouraged to reflect upon and articulate what they have learned about themselves and others. They should also be encouraged to consider how they plan to incorporate what they have learned into their work.

The findings of this study demonstrate that comprehending the culture that shaped the language—the values, beliefs, and assumptions that form the social norms and behaviors—can lead to communication based on understanding the people of the language, not simply the language itself. An in-country immersion program can provide a setting conducive to developing language skills for more effective communication with native speakers; it immerses the learner in every day

life of the culture in which the job at hand is to listen, observe, speak, and understand. The combination of focused language training reinforced by opportunities to use and explore the language in its natural environment can provide both structure and opportunity for individual exploration that together can enhance and strengthen the learning.

Using the guidelines above as a guide, the following suggestions are offered for improved effectiveness of in-country language immersion programs as professional development tools. These suggestions come primarily from my deeper understanding of how adults learn from in-country immersion programs that I have reached over the course of this study. They stem, too, from my burgeoning belief that such programs can be more profoundly effective for adult working professionals if their design is thoughtfully informed by theories of social constructivism, situated cognition, and experiential learning. These suggestions are offered for those who produce in-country language programs (immersion schools and teachers) as well as those who could benefit from them (professional individuals and their organizations).

Considerations for Immersion School Administrators and Teachers

The experiences of the working professionals in this study suggest that adults are best served by immersion schools where the administrators and teachers embrace the idea that the learning objectives for working professionals are far broader than simply learning the language. This study suggests that optimal results include both improved language skills and enhanced cultural understanding. Programs designers are urged to:

1. *Maximize the use of the cultural setting*. The overwhelming message of the findings of this study is one rooted in social constructivism and situated cognition: treat the entire immersion community as a living laboratory, a vibrant learning extension of the school. Every participant in this study emphasized how important it was that their learning took place in the authentic, natural environment of the language they were learning. Because they were learning the language to help them communicate with people whose first languages and home cultures were different from their own, it was extremely valuable for them to experience language learning within the context of the culture of the target language. The participants in this study believed that getting to know the people and the cultures of the language helped them communicate better both during the immersion and afterward. They felt they had developed an empathetic connection by being among the people. They also thought they could not have achieved that connection if they had studied the language in an isolated classroom with little to no exposure to the real world of the language.
2. *Pre-assess for more than just language skills*. The experiences of participants in this study demonstrated that working professionals who enroll in in-country immersion programs are interested in absorbing the culture as well as the language. If they acquire some understanding of the culture, they can communicate more effectively with native speakers. To optimize their learning, it would be helpful to understand what they know at the outset of the program about the people and the culture as well as what they know about

the language itself. According to Koch (1996), a well-designed language program for adults should include a pre-assessment of the targeted learners which measures not only language skills but also the learners' knowledge about and empathy towards the people who speak the target language. One instrument that has been seen to adequately assess attitude and empathy by some researchers (Koch, 1996), is the Attitudes/Motivation Test Battery, developed by Gardner (1985). Whether utilizing an existing instrument or developing questions on your own, the results of this study suggest that the learning experience of the working professionals will be greatly enhanced if what is taught reflects what the learners know at the outset. Assessment instruments should gauge not only knowledge of the language, but also what understandings the participants have pertaining to the cultural context of the language.

3. *Adapt the curriculum to fit the learners' goals and reasons for studying the language.* To meet student learning needs, inquire of them what work they do and ways in which they hope to incorporate what they learn in your program into their work. Knowing why a working professional is studying the language an provide important information for instructional design and program outcome. Linking content of classes, conversations, and outings to the ongoing practical pursuits of the student increases the chances that the learner will retain--and use--what he learns (Gergen, 1995).
4. *Cater to personal needs and learning styles of working professional students*. Aligning the subject matter and tasks with students' interests and preferred

learning styles can keep students engaged and motivated. In the assessment prior to class, assess personal learning styles and objectives and provide the information to the teachers to help them modify and adapt their approaches to fit their students. By adopting a learner-centeredness approach and utilizing the surroundings as a living laboratory, immersion schools and their teachers can encourage learners to take responsibility for their own learning. It is important, however, not to put the entire burden of learning on the students. As Pillay (2002) expressed, over-accentuating the learner-centeredness of learning can result in requiring learners to take too much responsibility for their own learning. Program planners and teachers need to provide students with the resources and the time they need to learn.

5. *Develop a program that provides learners with the appropriate balance of challenge, risk, and comfort to produce optimal levels of achievement.* Each person in an immersion program is different and their encounters in a real community can not be totally planned or prescribed to meet each person's styles and needs. It is important to create a program that permits individuals to encounter and work through appropriate levels of fear, self-doubt, comfort and familiarity to optimize their learning. Arranging and managing such an environment is a challenge, but, as attested by the experiences of some of the participants in this study, not impossible to do. It is important to set expectations that all participants and program staff understand and support. For example, establish policies that everyone speak the target language at all times. Ask students to take appropriate risks with the language in and outside

the school and to report on what they tried and what they learned from the experience.

6. *Offer a broad array of carefully planned resources (people and materials) and activities.* The findings of this study support the idea that the teaching comes from a variety of sources - the teachers, the people in the community, and other students. The learning, while achieved by the individuals, is shaped by those others. Both formal and informal teachers who are well chosen to be caring and encouraging of participants can instill in adult learners a heightened self confidence and increased desire to learn.
7. *Consider offering customized programs for professionals within the same field.* There is a growing sentiment among adult learning theorists that adults learn best when the learning environment is the one in which they live and work (Lave, 1988;Tusting, 2005; Wenger, 1998;Wilson, 1993;). Using the premise of situated cognition as a foundation for in-country immersion programs could lead to the development of programs where the learners would learn the language within the context of the work setting for which they are learning the language. For instance, business managers would learn the language with other business managers (from their own company or from similar ones) and experiential activities would take place in real work settings in the immersion community. Such purposeful construction of the learning environment would give the learners a chance to learn from those in like professions – their fellow students as well as the people with whom they interact in the immersion community.

8. *Post-test for language and cultural understanding.* As important as it is to assess people before they begin the programs, it is equally important for both learners and trainers/teachers to assess what has been learned. It is important to recognize that the learning that takes place through in-country immersion is holistic in nature, and includes new understandings of language mechanics as well of self and world. In addition to being given a post-program assessment of language skills, participants should be encouraged to reflect upon and articulate what they have learned about themselves and others. They should also be encouraged to articulate how they plan to incorporate what they have learned into their work.

Considerations for Human Resources and Senior Management

The immersion programs that the people in this study participated in were ones that they chose on their own. As was mentioned in previous sections, the communities in which they learned were, for the most part, generic communities of the culture, not ones that were specific to the participants' professions or functional areas. Even so, the participants often purposefully or intuitively linked what they were learning to their life and work. These findings suggest that in-country language programs as they exist now are already to some extent professional development programs. It may well be, however, with a bit more thoughtful design and debriefing, they can become powerful tools for developing culturally adept working professionals. The following suggestions are for senior administrators and human resource managers to consider as they contemplate the use of in-country immersion as a component of their organization's professional development.

1. *Involve would-be participants in language and cultural training in a organizational investigation into a variety of program options, including in-country immersion programs*. The cases in this study were all self-motivated individuals for whom the in-country immersion, and language learning itself, was a personal choice, and not a choice made in keeping with departmental or company strategy. This fact does not diminish the study's conclusions that in-country immersion has potential as a corporate training tool. It does presume a predisposition on the part of the employee in favor or in-country immersion that may not exist if a company imposes such programs on its employees as part of management training. One of the goals for this initial investigation of options would include setting realistic, attainable goals for employees. A second goal would be to establish organizationally approved options from which employees could choose to reach those goals.
2. *Identify an immersion school or schools whose senior administrators and lead teachers are willing to work with you to develop an immersion program that meets the needs of your organization and the individuals who are to participate in the program*. Drawing upon situated cognition theory that professional development is best realized when accomplished in and through communities of practice, it is likely that in-country immersion programs can be even more effective if they are designed to link to the nature of the participants' work and the environment in which they will use the language after the program. To more directly tie the

language and cultural learning to the participants' jobs, find a school that embraces the idea that the immersion experience is far more than the small-group classes, and that the potential learning environment is the entire community. It is Important to partner with a school where the administrators and teachers agree with the idea that using the environment does not simply mean making it available to the learners; it also means managing the access and the utilization of the surroundings, and incorporating what is learned *out there* into the participants' work lives.

3. *Develop a program that provides learners with the appropriate balance of challenge, risk, and comfort to produce optimal levels of achievement*. This study supports the idea that there are personal/emotional factors that influence the progress that a person makes towards goal achievement. Because each person is different and encounters in a real community can not be totally planned or prescribed, it is important to create a program that permits individuals to encounter and work through appropriate levels of fear, self-doubt, comfort and familiarity that optimize their learning. Arranging and managing such an environment is a challenge, but, as attested by the experiences of some of the participates in this study, not impossible to do. It is important to set expectations that all participants and program staff understand and agree to but also to be willing to adjust those expectations when necessary. For example, establishing policies that everyone speak the target language at all times and that everyone is

expected to stretch himself or herself to a productive (rather than destructive) limit can set the stage without dictating the performance.

4. *Pre-test and post-test at the organizational level and encourage immersion school to do so, too.* Thinking of in-country immersion as a professional development tool rather than simply as a language acquisition program not only paves the way for greater return on the investment in such a program; it also means that the goals and objectives for such a program should be woven into the career and personal planning of the individuals enrolled in such programs. Measuring, or at least gathering information on, the attitude and knowledge of the participants on the people and cultures of the target language before and after the program is important to gauging the extent to which the programs help the participants become more effective in their work.
5. *Value the learning by utilizing the employees' new knowledge and skills*. As with any professional development program, the learning is only really valuable if it is applied to ones' work and if performance is enhanced as a result. At the outset of the program and at the end, participants should be asked how they plan to incorporate their learning into their work. Ideally, about six months after the program, they - and those with whom they work - should be asked to assess how their approach and their results have changed after the program.

Considerations for Individuals Contemplating In-country Immersion

The experiences of the working professionals who participated in this study demonstrate the potential of in-country immersion as a powerful and effective way to learn to communicate in a foreign language for improved effectiveness at work. Key findings of the study emphasize that the success of in-county for each individual learner lies to a great extent on the attitude and actions of that learner before, during, and after the program. Working professionals who are contemplating in-country immersion are encouraged to take charge of their learning experience, as follows:

1. *Get involved in the selection of immersion school and site.*
2. *Make a commitment to focus on learning the language and its culture.*
3. *Make an effort to speak the target language only, and often.*
4. *Be aware of and manage the personal/emotional factors that can have major influence on your potential progress.*
5. *Make a point to utilize the learning opportunities that the setting provides.*
6. *Familiarize yourself with the three learning phases of isolation, interaction, and integration discussed in this study. Think of ways to identify which phase you are experiencing at any given time and also ways that you will utilize each phase to your advantage.*
7. *Keep a journal of your impressions, reflections, and insights that record what you have learned about the language, the people, the culture, and yourself*.

8. *During the program and at the end, make a list of what you have learned that you want to make an effort to incorporate into the way you go about your life and work.*

Implications for Future Research

This study delineates key findings reflecting past adult learning research framed by social constructivism and adult learning theory. In particular, the study provides insights into ways that in-country immersion serves as a form of holistic professional development for working professionals in careers that involve interaction with people with different languages and cultural backgrounds This study also suggests the need for further research. Below is a review of the research concepts supported and confirmed by this study, followed by a discussion of suggested questions emerging from the study that warrant further inquiry.

The study's participants suggested that their learning resulted to some extent as a result of individual effort, reflection, and internalization. Their learning was also greatly shaped by the people and situations that the participants encountered during their immersion programs. Their experiences indicate that language learning through in-country language immersion, consistent with social constructivist theory, is at once both individual and socially shaped. The findings are also consistent with research in language learning among adults: successful language learners are those who are in tune with their own learning styles and take responsibility for their own learning. This study confirms that learning is enhanced when emotional and social factors that can affect the learning progress are recognized and managed by learners and program developers alike. The study’s key findings emphasize that

learning through in-country language immersion affects the whole person and not simply his or her ability to perform the mechanics of the language. Those learning to communicate empathetically and relationally with others go through three dynamic, non-linear learning phases as they make meaning of the language in the context of the community in which they are learning.

In part because of the limitations of the study, discussed earlier in this chapter, and in part because any study conducted by a curious researcher always unleashes new questions, there are research questions to elaborate and build upon this study.

These questions are:

1. Is there any way to articulate holistic learning objectives and measurable outcomes which would encompass both the linguistic skills and changes in attitude and cultural understanding achieved through in-country immersion?
2. Is there an appreciable difference in the outcome of an in-country immersion when the experiences take place in countries with languages with non-Latin roots and with dramatically different cultures?
3. Is there an appreciable difference in the quality of the improved effectiveness when the in-country language immersion program incorporates elements of language and culture that are directly related to the learner's line of work?

4. What would be the composition of assessment tools that would accurately measure the holistic learning that takes place during in-country language immersion?
5. How would program delivery and results be affected if program designers and participants were aware of the three phases of learning?
6. How are the three phases of learning related to phases of culture shock that have been identified by cross-cultural specialists over the last two decades? To what extent does the intensity of in-country immersion experience accelerate the movement between the learning phases identified in this study and among the phases of culture shock?
7. In-country language immersion programs – even if acknowledged as broader than language acquisition alone -- still have as their core objective helping participants learn to communicate in the target language. It would be helpful to get a better sense of the minimal amount of time needed for participants in such programs to learn enough to effectively communicate in an everyday work environment. Is it possible to design a measurement/evaluation tool that could ascertain the minimal amount of time needed to move participants to levels of insight and skill that will make them more effective in their work?

REFERENCES

Adams, M. (1993). Speaking in tongues: Learning a second (or third) language may be an important key to professional success. *Successful Meetings,* 5, 71-74.

Adelman, C., Jenkins, D., & Kemmis, S. (1983). Rethinking case study: Notes from the second Cambridge conference. In *Case study: An overview*. Case Study Methods I (series). Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.

Ausubel, D.P. (1967). *Learning theory and classroom practice.* Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Banu, R. (1986). Child vs. adult in second language acquisition: some reflections. Watersol Working Papers, no.3. (ERIC Document Reproduction Services No. ED274207).

Bath, A. Language training keeps Eurostar on track. *Training & Management Development Methods*, *14(1),* 901-905.

Bogden, R.C. & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bryam, M.,& Fleming, M. (Eds.), *Language learning in intercultural perspective: Approaches through drama and ethnography.* Cambridge: University Press.

Brecht, R. & Robinson, J. (1993). Qualitative analysis of second language acquisition in Study abroad: The ACTR/NFLC project. *NFLC Occasional Papers*. Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University.

Brown, H. (2000). *Language learning and teaching*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Brunner, S. Language training-a a growing demand: How to choose a good supplier and evaluate training. *Training and Management Development Methods*, *9(1),* 4-8.Charles, M.& Marschan-Piekkari. R. (2002). Language training for enhanced horizontal communication: A challenge for MNC's. *Business Communication Quarterly*, *65(2),* 9 – 29.

Chomsky,N. (1965). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Clarke, W.M. (1999). An assessment of foreign language training for English-speaking exporters*. Journal of European Industrial Training*, 23(1), 9-15.

Cobb, P. Where is the mind? A coordination of sociocultural and cognitive constructivist perspectives. In C. Twomey Fosnot (Ed.), *Constructivism :Theory, perspectives and practice* (pp. 34-52). New York: Teachers College Press.

Cook, C. (2002). Language training: Speaking in tongues. *Director,* 56 (4), 55.

Cormeraie, S. (1995). Cross-cultural training: perceptions and personal growth. In G. Parker, and A. Rouxeville (Eds.),*TheYear Abroad: preparation, monitoring, and evaluation*. (pp. 61 – 75). London: Center for Information on Language Trainingand Research.

Cronbach, L.J. (1975). Beyond the two disciplines of scientific psychology. *American Psychologist, 30, 116-127.*

Crookes, D and Schmidt, R. (1991). Motivation and second language learning: Reopening the research agenda. *Language Learning*, 41, 469-512.

Cutshall, S. (2005). Why we need "The Year of Languages." *Educational Leadership, 62(4),* 20-23.

de Courcy, M. (1997) Four adults' approaches to the learning of Chinese. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, 20* (2) 67-93.

De Weerdt, S., Corthouts, F., Martens, H., & Bouwen, R. (2002). Developing professional learning environments: model and application. *Studies in Continuing Education,* 40 (1), 25-38.

Deckers, L. (2001). Motivation: biological, psychological, and environmental Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Di Sibio, M. (1982). Memory of connected discourse: A constructivist view. *Review Of Educational Research, 53,* 149-174.

Dolainski, S. (1997). Are expats getting lost in the translation? *Workforce*, 76(2), 32-39.

Ellis, R. (1997) *SLA research and language teaching*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (1997) *Second language acquisition*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

Fixman, C.S. (1990). The Foreign Language needs of U.S.-based corporations, *Annals AAPSS*, 511, 25-46.

Foster, Ellen. (1997). Transformative learning in adult second language learning . *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education,* 74, 33-40.

Frederiksen, C.H. (1975). Effects of context-induced processing operations on Semantic information acquired from discourse. *Cognitive Psychology, 7*, 371-458.

Gattegno, C. (1976). *The common sense of teaching foreign languages*. New York: Educational Solutions, Inc.

Gardner, R.C. (1991). Attitudes & motivation in second language learners. In A.G. Reynolds, (Ed.), *Bilingualism, multiculturalism, and second language learning* (pp. 43-64). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gardner, R.C. & Lambert, W.E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Gergen, K. (1995). Social construction and the education process. In L.P. Steffe & J. Gae (Eds.), *Constructivism in education* (pp. 3 - 15). Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erblaum Associates.

Giora, A.Z. (1972). Empathy and second language learning. *Language Learning, 22,* 111-130.

Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.

Gould, J.S. (1995). A constructivist perspective on teaching and learning in the Language arts. In C.Twomey-Fosnot (Ed.) *Constructivism: Theory, perspective and practice.* New York: Teachers College.

Graves, D. H. (1983). *Writing: Teachers and children at work.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Guy, B.S. (1992, March). *Dismantling self-imposed trade barriers revisited; the role of language development ten years later.* Paper presented at the meeting of Annual Eastern Michigan Conference on Languages and Communication for World Business and the Professions, Ypsilanti, MI.

Hadley, A.G. (1993). *Teaching languages in context*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Hancock, J. (1999). The language of success. *Director*, *53(4),* 35.

Hansman, C.A. & Wilson, A.L. (2002, May). *Situating Cognition: Knowledge and Power in context.* Paper presented at the 43rd annual meeting of the adult Education research conference, Raleigh, NC. (ED 478 969)

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hermann, G. (1980). Attitudes and success in children's learning of English as a second language: The motivational vs. resultative hypothesis. *English Language Teaching Journal, 34,* 247-254.

Izzo, S. (1981). *Second language learning: a review of related studies*. (Report No. ISBN-0-89763-058-0). Arlington, VA: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

James, W. The stream of thought. (1977). In J.J. McDermott (Ed*.), The writing of Williams James: A Comprehensive edition* (pp. 5- 75). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

James, W. Necessary truths. (1977). In J.J. McDermott (Ed.) *The writings of Williams James: A Comprehensive edition* (pp. 75-120). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Johnson, R.K. & Swaim, M. (1997). Immersion education. In Johnson & Swaim (Eds.),*Immersion Education: international perspectives* (pp. 1-18). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaiden, E. (1998). Engaging developmental readers in the social construction of meaning. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *41(6),* 477-480.

Keller, E. (2005). Wanted: language and cultural competence, *Public Management,* Jan/Feb, 6-9.

Kemper,C. (1998). Global training's critical success factors. *Training & Development, 52(2),* 35-38.

Kinberg, M. (2001). *Perspectives on foreign language immersion programs.* Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.

Knowles, M.S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge Books.

Koch, H. L. (1996). Middle managers targeted for second language training can be screened and educated more efficiently. *Journal of European Industrial Training*, *20(7),* 24 – 30.

Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kordsmeier, W., Arn, J., Rogers, B. (2000). Foreign language needs of U.S. businesses. *Journal of Education for Business* Washington, 75(3), 169-171.

Kvale, S. (1983). The qualitative research interview: A phenomenological and hermeneutical mode of understanding. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, *14(2),* 171-196.

Lave, J. (1988). *Cognition in practice: Mind, mathematics, and culture in everyday life.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lave, J. & Wenger, W. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lambert, R.D. (2001). Updating the foreign language agenda. *The Modern Language Journal,* 85 (iii), 345-360.

LeCompte, M.D. & Preisse, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research (*2nd ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Lederer, William & Burdick, Eugene (1958). *The ugly american*. Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, Inc.

Lee, M. & Greene, G.J. (1999). A social constructivist framework for integrating cross-cultural issues in teaching clinical social work. *Journal of Social Work Education*, *35(1),* 21- 39.

Lenneberg, E. (1967). *Biological foundations of language.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1990). Judging the quality of case study reports. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *3*, 53-59.

Lundine, Susan. (1991). Business people learning the language of potential clients *Orlando Business Journal*, *13:37*, 6 & 7.

Lu, Mei -Yu (1998). Learning Language in Social and Cultural Contexts, *ERIC Digest (ED423531).*

Lyddon, W. J. (1995). Forms and facets of constructivist psychology. In R.A. Neimeyer, & M.J. Mahoney (Eds.), *Constructivism in psychotherapy* (pp. 69-92).Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Malone, M.E., Rifkin, B., Christian, D. & Johnson, D.E. (2003, January). *Attaining High levels of proficiency: Challenges for language education in the United States*.Paper presented at the conference on global challenges and U.S. Higher education, Duke University, Durham, NC.

Marshall, C. & Rossman, G.B. (1999). *Designing qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S.B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Met, M. (1993). *Foreign language immersion programs*. Washington, DC: Center of Applied Linguistics.

Miles, M.B. & Huberman, A.M. (1994). Early steps in analysis. In Miles & Huberman (Eds.), *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (pp. 50-89). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Mondada, L. & Doehler, S. (2005). Second language acquisition as situated practice: Task accomplishment in the French second language classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review* 46(1), 461-490.

Ngeow, K. (1998). Motivation and transfer in language learning. (Report No. EDO-CS-98-11). ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, Bloomington, IN. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED427318).

Noels, K, Pelletier, L; Clement, R; & Vallerand, R. (2000). Why are you learning a second language? Motivation orientations and self-determination theory. *Language Learning, 50*(1), 57 - 85.

Oldfather, P. & West, J. (with White, J & Wilmarth, J). (1999). *Learning through children's eyes: Social constructivism and the desire to learn*. Washington, D.C.:American Psychological Association.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Peace Corps (2003). About the peace corps. Retrieved August, 2003 from http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=Learn.whatispc.mission

Peters, K. (2002). Lost in translation. *Government Executive*, *34(5),* 39-45.

Piaget, J. (1977). *Equilibration of cognitive structures*. New York: Viking.

Pillay, H. (2002). Understanding learner-centeredness: does it consider the diverse needs of individuals? *Studies in Continuing Education*, *24(1),* 88-102.

Pollitt, D. (1993). Language for business: How further and higher education are responding to the language training needs of industry. *European Business Review*, *93(5),* 44 - 49.

President's Commission on Foreign languages and international studies (1970). Strength through wisdom: A critique of U.S. capability, *Modern Languages Journal*, Spring.

Reppert, B. (2002). Training the tongue-tied. *Government Executive, 34(4),* 66-68.

Richards, J., & von Glaserfeld, E. (1970). The control of perception and the construction of reality. Dialectica, *33*, 37-58.

Rothwell, W. J. & Kazanas, H.C. (1992). *Mastering the instructional design process: A systematic approach.* (L. Nadler & Z. Nadler, Consulting Eds.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Scovel, T. (2001). *Learning new languages: A guide to second language acquisition.* Teacher Source Books. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Sidman-Traveau, R. & Milner-Bolotin, M. (2001). Constructivist inspiration: A project-based model for L2 learning in virtual worlds*. Texas papers in foreign language education, 6(1),* 63-82.

Skehan, P. (1989). Individual differences in second-language learning. (P.Meara, & P. Skehan, Series Eds.), *Second language acquisition*. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc.

Spiro, R. J. (1980). *Theoretical issues in reading comprehension : Perspectives from cognitive psychology, linguistics, artificial intelligence, and education.* Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum Associates.

Spivey, N.N. (1995). Written discourse: a constructivist perspective. In L.P. Steffe, & J.Gae (Eds). *Constructivism in education* (pp. 3- 15). Hillsdale, N.J Lawrence Erblaum Associates.

Stage, F.K., Muller, P.A., Kinzie, J. & Simmons, A. (1998). *Creating learning Centered classrooms: What does learning theory have to say?* Washington, DC: George Washington University.

Stone, G. and Rubenfield, S. (1989). Foreign languages and the business curriculum: What do the students think? *Modern Language Journal, 2(2),* 21-6.

Taylor, B.P. (1975). Adult language learning strategies and their pedagogical implications. *TESOL Quarterly, 9(4),* 391-399.

Tusting, K. (2005). Language and power in communities of practice. In D. Barton, & K.Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice: Language, power and Social context (*pp 37-54). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tucker, G. R. (1991). Developing a language-competent American society: The role of language planning. In A.G. Reynolds (Ed.), *Bilingualism, multiculturalism and second language learning* (pp.65-77). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Thiagarajan, Sivasailam (1996). Instructional games, simulations, and role-plays. In R. L. Craig, (Ed.), *The ASTD Training & Development Handbook* (pp.517-533).New York, NY: McGraw-Hill companies, Inc.

Twomey-Fosnet, C. (Ed.) (1996). *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives and practice.* New York:Teachers College.

Von Glaserfeld, E. (1995). A constructivist approach to teaching. In L.P. Steffe & J. Gale (Eds.), *Constructivism in education* (pp. 3-15). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erblaum Associates.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind and society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walqui, A (2000). *Contextual factors in second language acquisition*. ERIC Digest, *9*, 1- 4. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED444381).

Walters, P.G. (1990). The significance of foreign language skills for initial entry positions in international firms. *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, *1(3/4),* 71-83.

Wardhaugh, R. (1990). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Wells, G. & Chang-Wells (1992). *Constructing knowledge together; Classrooms of inquiry and literacy.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wesche, M. (1979). Learning behaviors of successful adult students on intensive language training. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 35(3),* 415-30.

Wilson, A.L. (1993). The promise of situated cognition. In S. Merriam (Ed.), *An Update on adult learning theory. New directions for adult and continuing education*, 57(pp. 71-80). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Woods, B.S & Murphy, K. (2002). Thickening the discussion: Inspecting Constructivist theories of knowledge through a Jamesian lens. *Educational Theory, 52(1)*43-59.

Wong-Fillmore, L. (1983). The language learner as an individual: implications of research on individual differences for ESL teachers. In J. Lindfors (Ed.), *Paper presented at the annual convention of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages,* Honolulu, HI.

Wong-Fillmore, L. (1989). Bridges or barriers? The role of schools in culturally diverse societies. In D. Phillips (Ed.), *The Impact of American Ideas on New Zealand's education policy, practices, and thinking* (pp.103-120). Wellington, New Zealand:New Zealand Council for Education Research.

Yin, R.K.(1993). Applications of case study research. In L. Bockman & D.J. Rog, (Series Eds.), *Applied social research methods: Vol. 34*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Yin, R. K. (1989). Case study research: *Design and methods*. In L. Bockman & D.J. Rog, (Series Eds.), *Applied social research methods: Vol. 5.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Description of AmeriSpan

AmeriSpan was created in 1993 by and for lovers of language, travel, and cultures. Starting as a two person operation with a passion for Latin America, we have grown to be one of the leaders in educational travel with over 18,000 past clients.

We started out as specialists in Latin America and have since applied our expertise to many other languages and regions. Collectively, our staff has traveled to more than 65 countries - every continent except Antarctica - and speaks 10 languages. We offer a variety of educational travel programs including language programs, volunteer/Internship placements, Academic Study Abroad and Specialized Programs such as SALUD, an AMSA-endorsed medical Spanish program.

AmeriSpan offers language immersion programs worldwide. We represent more than 80 schools where you can learn 20 different languages including Spanish, Italian, German, French, Portuguese, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Russian and others. We offer instruction for all language levels, from Beginner to Advanced speakers.

Countries

Argentina	Japan
Bolivia	Mexico
Brazil	Morocco
Canada	Panama
Chile	Peru
China	Portugal
Costa Rica	Puerto Rico
Dominican Republic	Russia
Ecuador	Spain
France	Switzerland
Germany	Taiwan
Guatemala	Thailand
Honduras	United Arab Emirates
Italy	Uruguay
	Venezuela

Appendix B1: Email of inquiry

Dear AmeriSpan customer:

We at AmeriSpan Unlimited commend you for your efforts to communicate in another language and congratulate you on your recent achievement on an AmeriSpan immersion program. The fact that you participated in immersion language learning says to us that you are committed to global communication, and we applaud your resolve.

Recently, we were approached by a doctoral student in the field of adult education who is doing her doctoral research in the area of second language acquisition by adults. The study, which is Lynne Gerber's doctoral dissertation in Training & Development at NC State University, is entitled "Experiences of In-country language immersion by individuals learning a second language to help them in their work." Ms. Gerber asked us if we could contact people like yourself to see if you fit the language learner profile she would like to study, and, if so, if you would be willing to participate in her study.

Specifically, she is looking for native English speakers who have learned another language in order to communicate to others in that language, as a part of their work. Additionally, she seeks people who learned this language, at least in part, through an in-country immersion in a country where the target language is spoken. Lastly, she seeks people who feel that their in-country immersion experience was a positive one that met or exceeded their expectations and contributed to their ability to be effective at work.

Although many people engage in language learning in countries where the language they are learning is spoken, few people have explored the affect of such experiences on the learner, from the perspective of the learners themselves. We are delighted that Ms. Gerber is curious to learn more about happens to the learner who engages in this form or language learning, and we are pleased that we may have among our customers some people who are willing to shed some light on the way the immersion experience has shaped and influenced their learning.

If upon completing the attached survey, you see that you fit the profile Ms. Gerber is seeking and are willing to be considered as a possible subject for this study, please complete the attached form and send it to Ms. Gerber by email at Lynne_Gerber@unc.edu or by fax at 919.962.8202.

Sincerely,

Marlo Goldstein, director of academic programs
Attachment: data form for consideration in study of in-country immersion

Appendix B 2: Data Form

Please fax or email to Lynne Gerber at 919.962.8202 or (Lynne_Gerber@unc.edu)

Your Name: _____

Please circle "yes" or "NO" to the questions below::

1. Are you over 18? Yes No

2. Is English your first language? Yes No

3. Was the main reason you participated in an in-country immersion to help you in your career? Yes No

4. Did this in-country immersion experience take place in or after 1999? Yes No

5. Would you say that the immersion experience was generally a positive one That met or exceeded your reasons for participating in it? Yes No

6. Are you willing to be visited and interviewed by the researcher for about 1 hour? Yes No

7. If you answered yes to the above questions and might be willing to participate in this study on the in-country language immersion experience, please return this form to Lynne Gerber within the next two weeks.

Appendix B 3: Reply Email to Those Not Fitting Profile

Dear _____:

Thank you for contacting me about your willingness to be considered for my study on in - country language immersions experiences by working professionals. Although your responses did not fit the profile for which I am searching, I do appreciate your getting back to me. I would be glad to share the results of my research with you, should you like a copy. I will contact you when the study is complete at your current email. If your email address changes in the mean time and you would like me to send you the results, please send me your change of address, by email to Lynne_Gerber@unc.edu by fax at 919.962.8202 or by mail to the address below.

Thank you.

Lynne Gerber

Doctoral Candidate, NC State University

200 Stags Trail

Chapel Hill, NC 27516

(919) 962 – 2684

Appendix B 4: Reply Email to Those Fitting Profile for Study

Dear _____:

Thank you for responding to the language immersion survey sent to you by AmeriSpan. Your answers indicate that you fit the profile for which I am searching for my research and that your experience would make an ideal case for my study.

Please read the description in the attached consent form for a better idea of the research study, the components of the data collection and your particular involvement in the study. If you agree that you match the subject profile and would be willing to participate in this study, please email me back with your mailing address so that I may send you a hard copy of the Consent Form for your signature and a postage paid envelope for your return of the form. In your reply email, please also provide me with a phone number where I can reach you and when the best time is for me to visit you.

I will then contact you by phone to discuss timing and to set up our visit. I look forward to talking with you soon and learning more about your experience with in-country immersion.

Sincerely,

Lynne Gerber Doctoral Candidate, NC State University

200 Stags Trail

Chapel Hill, NC 27516

(919) 962-2684

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

North Carolina State University

Title of Study : Experiences of in-country language immersion by individuals learning a second language to help them in their work

Principal Investigator Lynne Gerber, doctoral candidate Faculty Sponsor : Dr. Carol Kasworm

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the reflective perceptions and impressions of working professionals who learned a language to help them be more effective at work, with the aid of an in-country immersion. My hope is to gain insight into what the subjects in the study learned from their immersion experiences and the ways in which the experience impacted their effectiveness in their work.

INFORMATION

By signing the consent form below and agreeing to be one of the subjects, you are agreeing to participate in two activities and, if needed, to participate in a third, as outlined below.

An in-depth interview on your in-country immersion which I will conduct in your home or office, or at an alternate site that you suggest. I will personally audio tape the interview.

Time required: 1 hour

Collected mementos. For the interview, you will be asked assemble a collection of at least five items or anecdotes (can be pictures, objects, stories, important quotes, excerpts from your immersion journal, if you kept one) that represent what you consider to be important about the in-country immersion(s) you have experienced. During the interview, I will ask you to display or demonstrate these mementos; when applicable, and with your permission, I will photograph these mementos with a digital camera that I bring with me to the interview. Time required: ½ hour to decide upon mementos (the display time is included in the interview time)

Review of the transcript and researcher's biographical sketch. After I have interviewed you and reviewed the tape of the interview, I will transcribe the interview and write a profile of you. To help me assure the validity of my transcription and interpretation, I will ask that you review the transcript and profile for accuracy and provide me with feedback.

Time required: ½ hour

I will be using what is called a *constant comparative* form of data analysis in which I will be, as the term implies, comparing the experiences of each subject throughout the 6 months of interviewing. If comments of those with whom I talk after you take me in a new direction of exploration, I will return to you and ask if we can talk again, for no more than an additional 1/2 hour. I will ask you to review this second transcription for accuracy, as with the first interview. Time required: ½ hour for interview, ½ hour for review.

Total time required of participant who completes study: 2 hours (3, if re-interviewed)

RISKS

While discussing your in-country immersion experience, you might feel inclined to discuss issues others might consider sensitive, or that might make you feel emotional. I, the researcher, am committed to open inquiry. I do not intend to ask any sensitive questions and will terminate the interview at any time you decide to do so.

BENEFITS

By participating in this study, you will have an opportunity to reflect on your involvement in an in-country immersion and how it has impacted your ability to communicate and function in the international arena. You will most likely provide some helpful insights that will benefit individuals or companies who are seeking to engage in meaningful preparation for doing business with people form other cultures. Your answers might also help inform language immersion program developers and educational researchers.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Throughout the study and in subsequent written findings, your identity will be known only to you and to me. I plan to ask you from the outset of the study to provide yourself with a pseudonym, and all reference to you, from the label on the audio tape file to my coding notes and field notes, to the analysis, to the final write up, will be that pseudonym. If you wish, we will also change the name of your company and the organization through which you took the in-country immersion.

I will retain the files and corresponding coded notes and transcripts until this study is completed. At that time, I will notify you that I am ready to destroy those items, or describe to you how they might have future use and secure your new signed consent to permit me to continue to utilize them.

The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

COMPENSATION

No monetary compensation will be provided. I anticipate that all subjects will benefit from participation in this study because they will have an opportunity to reflect on an educational experience and through this reflection to gain better understanding of that experience. By better understanding this experience, subjects could potentially increase their own learning and their own self-awareness. Each participant a scrapbook costing under $30 as a thank you gift from the researcher following participation and a copy of the study upon its completion.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

N/A

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Lynne Gerber, at 200 Stags Trail Chapel Hill, NC 27516, or

by phone at (919) 962-2684or by email at Lynne_Gerber@unc.edu. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-1834) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-2148)

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Subject's signature_____Date _____

Investigator's signature_____ Date _____

Appendix D 1: Interview Introduction

What I'll tell you first is what my research questions are which will kind of give you a sense of what I'm looking at over all, and what I'm trying to answer by talking to 12 different people, of which you are one. First, I'm trying to get a sense of how the people I'm talking to believe that the in country aspect of their experience influenced their learning goals and the extent to which they achieved those goals. How did the fact that you were in a country where the language was spoken affect your attainment of your goals or maybe even what your goals were? Okay?

Secondly, I'm looking at ways the in country experience affected your appreciation for the language and also affected your ability to use the language.

And then finally I would like to look at how you believe your self-perception or your worldview and your effectiveness at work was affected by your immersion experience.

So that's basically what I'm looking at. I have a set of questions that are not really yes or no, but are pretty straight forward that I'm going to ask you first, and then basically I'm going to ask you to describe your immersion experience. In that part, if there are some things I think about that I want to make sure you tell me then I'll jump in and ask you something, but mostly I just want you to tell me about your experience. Okay?

Appendix D 2: Structured Survey Questions

Asked at the outset of the interview:

Are you between 18 – 30 30 – 40 over 40?

How many years of formal education have you had and what is your highest academic degree and field of study?

What is your first language?

What languages have you studied other than your first language?

Have you lived and or worked in countries other than the U.S.? If yes, where, for what reasons, and for how long?

What is your current position?

What position did you hold or were you preparing for when you participated in the in-country language immersion you are going to talk about today?

What language did you study during the in-country immersion, and why did you choose that language?

Why did you choose an in-country immersion as a form of language instruction?

What would you say was your level of ability to communicate in _____before you participated in the immersion?

___raw beginner ___advance beginner ___intermediate, low

____intermediate, mid ___intermediate, high ___advanced

Appendix D 3: Probing Questions

Probing questions for semi-structured open-ended interview (used as needed)

1. Describe the immersion program and what you learned from it.
2. Why did you participate in the immersion program?
3. What goals did you set for yourself at the outset of the immersion and how did the experience facilitate the attainment of those goals?
4. What were the biggest challenges you encountered during the program?
5. What factors contributed the most to the positive aspects of the experience?
6. What factors contributed the most to the negative aspects of the experience?
7. How did the immersion contribute to your learning the target language and the culture?
8. In what ways did the immersion inhibit your learning of the target language and the culture?
9. How did the immersion experience influence and/or contribute to your professional life in general and the work which you were doing or for which you were preparing at the time of the immersion?
10. How was your understanding – of the language, yourself, others—affected by your immersion experience?

11. Question used to lead into the collected mementos portion of the interview:
12. What mementos have you chosen to depict the meaning of the immersion experience and what do they mean to you?

Appendix E: Coding Terms

Reasons for SL - WhySL
Desire to do some different work (DW)
Thought it would help do better job (BW)
Feeling of insufficiency/guilt (I/G)
Affinity to those who speak language (Aff)

Why In-country Immersion? (WhyIM)
Wanted to Travel (Travel)
Adventure/Risk (Adv/Rsk)
Connection to culture (ConnCul)
Perceived compatibility of method (CompMet)
To focus on language (FocLan)
Wanted to be forced to speak (ForSpk)
Real (Real)

Language Learning:Facilitators/Inhibitors
Fear & Doubt (LL: F&D)
Comfort & Familiarity (LL:C&F)
Teaching Methods (LL: Methods)

Learning Phases (LP)
Isolation/disorientation (LPIso)
Interaction, communication (LPInteract)
Integration (LPIntergration)

New Insights and Understandings (I&U)
Self (I&U Self)
Others (places, people) (I&U,others)

Perceptions pertaining to effectiveness at work (PerWork)

Appendix F: Narrative Profiles of Participants

Art

Art is in his 50's and has a master's degree in business. He has studied Spanish, French and Finnish. He has never lived or worked outside the United States. At the time of the interview, and also at the time of his immersion experience, he was working as an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) specialist at a prestigious state university in mid-western United States. The language that he studied on the immersion was Spanish. He had taken advantage of a fee courtesy program at his university to take 4 semesters of Spanish in the classroom, but he wanted to become more fluent in speaking and thinking in Spanish. He also wanted to improve his accent, so he decided to go to a place where Spanish was spoken so that he could improve his oral communication skills. When he embarked on the immersion, he was evaluated as an advanced beginner.

Brian

Brian, an MBA student in his later 20's, has a BS in engineering. Prior to his immersion experience, he had studied German and Japanese: German for two years in high school and 1 year in college, Japanese for two years while he was working in Japan.

He lived in Japan for two years as part of the military. His last job, before he began studying full time for an MBA, was electrical engineer in California. When he went on the immersion program to Spain, he had just quit his job and was getting ready to come to the MBA program. When he entered the immersion program in Spain, he said he was a "raw beginner: who knew no Spanish.

Cathy

A mental health counselor in her mid-forties who believed that she could broaden her client base and serve a larger group if she could speak in and understand Spanish, Cathy decided to work on her Spanish by immersing herself in the language by going on immersion programs several times over a couple of years. When we talked, she had gone on two immersions, one in 2002 when she resolved to perfect her Spanish for her business, and one in 2004. She was making plans to go on a third one in a couple of months after we met.

Cathy's highest degree was a master's degree in community counseling. She had studied French for one year, a "long time ago" and had begun Spanish in her adulthood, primarily in community college and private tutorials. She had never lived or worked in countries other than the U.S. When she started down the path of immersion language learning, it was because she owned her own mental health counseling practice and "wanted to learn Spanish in order to use it with potential clients." She considered herself an advanced

beginner when she went on the first experience, and an intermediate low by her second one.

Connie

Connie began our interview by announcing that she was living proof that a person can learn a language as an adult. She proclaimed " I never studied a language until I was 61, except for a couple of years in high school. Way back then…I had two years of French and two of Latin in high school and then until age 61, nothing else…and then Spanish." Until the age of 61, Connie had been involved in a business career that was based on a double major in management and psychology and some MBA classes.

After she retired from corporate life, she worked and lived in Ecuador for 10 months and then later for another 3 months teaching English and then, still later 3 months in Mexico, again teaching English. In 2000, she went to China, planning to stay for 4 - 6 months to teach English, but she came home after 2 months because she had been in the hospital twice with a pinched nerve.

Most of her work experiences in her "post retirement career" were for volunteer organizations such as World Teach, affiliated with Harvard's School of International Development, in which she received living expenses but no salary. When we talked, Connie was an independent contractor in an adult education program in Virginia where she was teaching workplace ESL. She said that her work was "fascinating and wonderful." She said that she

had retired from a business career when she was 59 because she wanted to do something new and different. When she went on the immersion she talked with me about she was already an ESL instructor and she had been to Latin America before without any Spanish knowledge, but she decided it would help her profession if she learned some Spanish in a Spanish-speaking environment because she would have been where students were. When she began her immersion experiences, she was an advanced beginner.

Daniel

When we talked, Daniel was a 35-year-old native English speaker who had 4 years of undergraduate school, 2 years of graduate school, an additional year for a specialist graduate certificate, and he was in his third year of part-time doctoral program in psychology. He told me that when he was in high school, he was a very poor student who did not enjoy school very much and didn't have much interest in my studies, expect for Latin. He started taking it and made As. In his other courses, he was making Bs and Cs. He said he thought that it was because he felt an affinity with his Latin teacher that got A's in Latin, and when he got into college, it just seemed natural to go on with it. For a while he thought he might major in classics but he ended up not doing that. It wasn't until the year 2000 that he began to study Spanish, during his second year of his masters program.

When I met Daniel, he was an associate counselor at a private practice counseling center; he had never lived outside the United States, but since his

first immersion experience in 2001, he had traveled regularly to Spanish-speaking countries. At the time of that first immersion, he had one semester left of his graduate program. In the early stages of his master's degree, he had taken Spanish 101 and 102 and then he took Spanish 201 in which " they really expected you to just start speaking it." After that course ended, he began to take Spanish over the phone, and by the time entered the immersion program he had just finished the intermediate level of the phone program. He said that despite having been declared an intermediate by that program, he would have ranked himself as either low or middle beginner, and was similarly assessed by the school where he did his immersion. He said he could say "This is my name, this is my age, this is where I am from." But when he got into further conversation, he was "not good. "

David

David was 38 when we met at the large management consulting company where he worked. His highest degree was a BA in political science, and he had taken some MBA courses. He had studied high school Russian for two years and had "actually failed the New York state regent's exam for Russian and felt as if [he] had no talent language-wise at all ." He had lived in Germany for about 4 months, and London, England, for about 3 years, both times for work.

He was a consultant when he went on the immersion program he told me about, but he had "basically resigned" his position to do the immersion,

knowing that he "…could come back to it when [he] wanted to, either to the company or the industry." He said he "got the language bug" when he was in Germany, working as a consultant for a major German bank. He studied In Frankfurt, two nights a week, with two other American colleagues. Then, on a break from that project, he took a one-week program that included 6 hours of German instruction a day and several hours at night. When he returned to the states, about a year later, he took an intense Spanish course with five other students. That class met twice a week, after work, Tuesdays and Thursdays. His plan was "to take these classes, give my notice, and then go to Costa Rica."

He had decided to refocus on something more practical than German, because he was always seeing studies about the rising Spanish-speaking population in the U.S., so he figured that would be a more practical language and it was available. He said he was probably an advanced beginner in Spanish when he started his Spanish immersion.

Edie

Edie is in her early 30's and has an MBA in general business. She said she had studied French "for a little bit," and Spanish. At the time of the interview, she was a performance consultant in the training department of a large insurance company. Her position was housed in Human Resources. When she joined the company, her position had been as an individual consultant in the Telephone Counseling Center. When she went on the immersion, she had

just started in the training department. She didn't go on the immersion to help her immediately in her job, but more for personal satisfaction and to help her in her career and in her volunteer work in the southern town where she now lives.

She had begun to take Spanish in a school where she had lived before moving to the South, going twice a week to classes, but her goal all along was to be able to go to other countries where the language she was learning was spoken. She figured she needed to be able to speak a little bit before she was ready to go somewhere. Part of the reason she was learning was so that she could travel someplace and try to use the language when she felt comfortable enough with it. Plus, her grandmother and cousins speak Spanish fluently and her cousin was living in Puerto Rico and learning Spanish there. Just hearing her speak made Edie proud of her and she said to herself, “Okay, I want to speak Spanish too." She said that she was what she would consider an advanced beginner when she went on the immersion.

Gloria

Gloria is between 30 and 40. She has had about 17 years of formal education and holds a master's degree in intercultural communications. She has studied Spanish, French, Portuguese and Italian. She worked in Spanish in Guatemala for 8 months, had lived and worked in Spain for 6 months, in Peru for 3 months, and in Costa Rica for 8 months. French was the first language she had studied and she had studied it in school only, during 7th - 11th grades. She had one semester of Italian in college and had lived in Italy for four

months. She didn't feel that she had actually lived in Brazil, since her main experience there was for the 3-week language immersion that she described to me.

At the time that Gloria went on the immersion to Brazil, she was the director of academic programs for a company that connected people to language immersion programs around the world. She referred to the company's business as providing people with educational travel programs. She said that the reason she decided to go on an immersion program to work on her Portuguese was "because that is the product that I sell. I have been saying for years that that is the best way to learn a language and I decided to see for myself if I was right." She said that at the time she went on the immersion she was "somewhere between raw beginner and advanced beginner."

Kevin

Kevin is a 40-year American male who figured that he had had about 25 years of schooling, which culminated in his earning a medical degree. At the time of the interview, he was an emergency room physician in a large hospital, in his last year of residency. It was during his fourth year of medical school that he attended the immersion program he described to me. The program he attended was in Spanish and was set up specially for medical students and he received academic credit from his medical school for the program. His first language is English, and he had had some limited language

instruction prior to the immersion program in Spanish: 1 year of French in college and a couple of years of Spanish in high school.

Kevin said that although he had been born in Italy and lived there the first six months of his life, he really couldn't say that he considers himself to have lived in a country other than the United States, since he certainly could not remember anything about that experience as an infant.

He said that multiple factors contributed to his decision to go on the Spanish immersion program. First of all, it provided him with an opportunity to travel, which he wanted to do. Second, by making it a formal study he could travel and get academic credit at the same time, which was attractive to him. Third, he had realized that when he had "dabbled" in Spanish that "…it really didn’t take…" and he thought the immersion in a Spanish-speaking country might give him an opportunity to really learn some Spanish. He said that he would have assessed himself as an advanced beginner at the outset of the program.

Steven

Steven was in his early 30's and at the time I met him was studying for a PhD in environmental policy and international relations in a joint program with the School of Public Environmental Affairs and Political Science at a Midwestern university. He had an MBA and when he went on the immersion he was working as a strategy consultant for a well-known retail consulting company. His expectation, and that of his supervisors, had been to use his Spanish in

projects after his immersion experiences. The company currently does a lot of work in Brazil and in Mexico and some in Honduras and El Salvador and that he had gone to Honduras a couple of times prior to his immersion experiences. He thought that perhaps his knowing Spanish would have "come in handy at some point" because their work is retail and consumer products and they are moving more and more to Latin America. But he was not able to use Spanish as much as he had originally hoped when he returned to the company after the immersion.

Steven said that he has studied Spanish and German and that he had lived and worked in both Germany and Ecuador and Argentina (the latter two experiences were in conjunction with his immersion experiences that he talked about with me). His times in Germany were connected with his consulting work, and his stay was normally for about six weeks at a time, once a year for four years. He spent four months in Ecuador and two months in Argentina.

Steven's assessment of his language ability at the time that he did his first immersion was that he was a "raw beginner" despite his having studied Spanish in high school (some twelve years prior to the immersion). In assessing his ability to communicate orally in Spanish before the immersion, he said " I could count to 10." He said his Spanish teacher in high school was the wrestling coach who didn't really know Spanish himself.

Sylvia

Sylvia was 31 when I met her, had recently received her Masters in Public Health and was in the process of looking for a job in the health education field in a job that would permit her to use her Spanish. Although her first language was English, she had grown up speaking French in the home, because her father, who speaks 9 languages, said, "Let's speak French" and so, they did. She had formally studied French and Spanish, mostly Spanish. She had lived in Ecuador and worked for a year for CARE.

Sylvia talked to me about two immersions she had participated in; during both, she was combining the language training with positions that she held in Latin America, teaching and training in the public health area. She said that the first time in particular she "decided I was going to go study abroad to improve my Spanish for a job." She said that at the time of both programs she would have classified herself has being around an intermediate with the grammar. She said she "…didn't have any problem speaking, but with the grammar and the difficult things like the subjunctive and all of that, [she] she was more an intermediate, probably beginning intermediate.

Theo

Theo was in his late 20's who, after completing an undergraduate degree in a prestigious mid-western private university, had worked as a consultant for one of the big six consulting firms. His work was all domestic, nothing international. He had an undergraduate degree in Public Policy studies and

had decided, after working as a consultant for three years that he wanted to work for a multinational company doing business in Latin America, so he quit his job to pursue his Masters in Business Administration, to prepare for that career switch.

To further prepare for his post-MBA job, In the summer before beginning that program, he decided to improve his Spanish. He planned to look for work in the Fort Lauderdale, Miami area where Spanish is highly spoken and wanted to get better prepared to be a better candidate for a position in those areas.

Theo had lived in Trinidad and Tobago for 18 years and had worked there for his father's business when he was young, but since moving from there to the United States, he hadn't lived anywhere else. He had studied French for about a year and a half in high school and had studied Spanish in college.

He said that at the time of the immersion, he was "probably a low intermediate." He "knew some vocabulary, not a lot, and [he] knew present tense pretty well, but past tense needed refreshing, and the future needed to be refreshed. [He was] definitely was bad on the subjunctive."