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TAKING THE GLOBAL PLUNGE:
USING IN-COUNTRY LANGUAGE IMMERSION
AS A HOLISTIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TOOL

ABSTRACT

This article explores the use of in-country language immersion as a holistic approach to producing culturally competent communicators of non-native languages. It begins by summarizing a study of the experiences of twelve working professionals who viewed foreign language competency as important to their effectiveness at work. The study's findings demonstrate how in-country language immersion can facilitate language and cross-cultural learning among motivated, focused adult learners. From the study emerged six factors of such programs that increase their potential effectiveness as forms of professional development and second language acquisition. Effective programs are those designed to utilize the six factors and permit adult language learners to move through three distinct and interrelated learning phases of isolation, interaction, and integration. The author concludes by prescribing a list of guidelines for optimizing the factors and the learning phases of in-country immersion in order to create language and cross-cultural competency in working professionals.

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 American 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. It is generally acknowledged in the business world that knowing the language of competitors, prospective clients, and partners can mean the difference between success and failure in this increasingly global environment.

It is not only in the private sector that language and cross-cultural competency is important. In the United States, a report of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (September 26, 2001) 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.). In January 2002, the US General Accounting Office reported that the lack of competence in foreign languages has hindered US commercial interests, military operations, diplomacy, law enforcement, intelligence operations, and counter-terrorism efforts (Peters). In his opening remarks at the first National Language Conference in June 2004, the US Under-Secretary of Defense said that the US 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 (Keller).

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, 1,200 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 the census years of 2000 and 2010 (Keller). 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.

Methods emerging over the past twenty 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). David Pollitt and Colin Mellors suggest 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" (48). Harold Koch 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 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).

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). 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 Margot Kinberg, “The target language is the medium of instruction, rather than its topic” (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 they are able to make the conceptual and contextual bridges to produce effective communication as they interact with others, and make meaningful use of the language. Language learning among working professionals can be described as a sociocultural process, optimized in environments that encourage the use of the language in the context of everyday work life (Koch).

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). 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 from one week to six months, and most combine structured classes with planned and independent excursions. 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.

The study summarized in this article was conducted to better understand the in-country immersion method and its effect on English-speaking adult learners who work—or plan to work—with people whose first language is not English. The study explored deeply the reflective impressions of twelve

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 purposes of this study were 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-country immersion experiences, and (3) develop a broader understanding of the figural aspects of in-country immersions utilized for the specific purpose of enhancing broadly defined work-related effectiveness.

The study's purposes were accomplished through the use of a qualitative multiple-case study approach. The case population encompassed all native English-speaking adult working professionals who have engaged in an in-country 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. The study utilized 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 of between one week and three months in duration and they all asserted at the outset that they believed that they—and their work—had benefited from the immersion experience.

The primary research vehicle was a semi-structured, in-depth interview of each subject. In addition to the interviews, participants were asked to bring or describe five items that helped illustrate what they had learned from the in-country immersion experience. This compilation of artifacts, images, or impressions—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. The transcribed interviews and memento descriptions, enriched by objective and subjective depiction of the contextual and visual elements of the interview, formed the basis for the study's conclusions.

The experiences of the twelve working professionals in this study suggest that in-country immersion programs have the potential to be more than simply programs for learning languages. The study's findings conclude that these programs have the capacity to play an important role in the development of individuals who can effectively communicate and interact in global settings. Emerging 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 against the backdrop of the study's findings as well as 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). People construct meaning when they hear words uttered by 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). 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 14). Learners build their meanings on knowledge that is organized, structured, and configured in some fashion (e.g., Frederiksen; Spiro et al.; Spivey). According to social constructivists, making meaning of language 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).

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). What people learn during in-country immersion is greatly influenced by those with whom they interact. In the constructivist model of learning, “teachers” refers to more individuals than simply those defined as teachers or instructors (Gould). 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 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). 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 people with whom they worked or with whom they conducted business.

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, 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 lifestyle that was not “so fixated on working, making money, buying things. It’s like they know there is so much more to living than that.” Some of the understanding the participants came to feel for the language, and the compassion they felt for the people in the immersion environment,

came from having the language shaped by native speakers. Some of their understanding and compassion came from seeing themselves and their own US culture through the eyes of others.

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, but 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.

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 town and taking side trips on weekends opened new opportunities to practice the foreign 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 in true context, 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.

Several participants 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 interact effectively with others whose language and cultural backgrounds were different from their own.

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). Underlying social constructivist learning theory is the notion that individuals are responsible for their learning and construct their own unique knowledge. Other people 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 the participants were personal, emotional ones. These factors were linked primarily 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 personal/emotional factors that emerged in this study as having a profound impact on the progress made by language immersion participants were *fear (anxiety)*, *self-doubt*, *familiarity*, and *comfort*.

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 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, par-

ticipants 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—contributed to the sustained motivation that leads to active attempts to understand and be understood in the target language.

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; Izzo; Ellis; Scovel). Their experiences emphasize that successful in-country language immersions represent active utilization of the principles of experiential learning. Kolb 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). 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). 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 and Chang-Wells).

The study's findings are consistent with the prevalent assumption that an adult language learner's primary reason for wanting to learn a language is to be able to communicate in the target language (Foster). 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 Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert 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 Gardner 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.

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. Thomas Scovel said, “The joy is in the journey, not the destination” (122). Ellen Foster 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 Sven De Weerd, Felix Corthouts, Herwig Martens, and René Bouwen 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 Weerd et al.: “It concerns the total person; it emerges from the transaction between person and environment and it is ongoing” (25).

The participants 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 toward 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 another culture, both during and after their immersion experience.

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.

Although uniquely experienced by the individual learners, the phases have distinguishing characteristics that can be summarized into one-word descriptors reproduced below. As the model in Figure 1 shows, the phases do not progress from one to another in a linear continuum. They all flow from one to another and can be entered more than once and in different patterns.

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

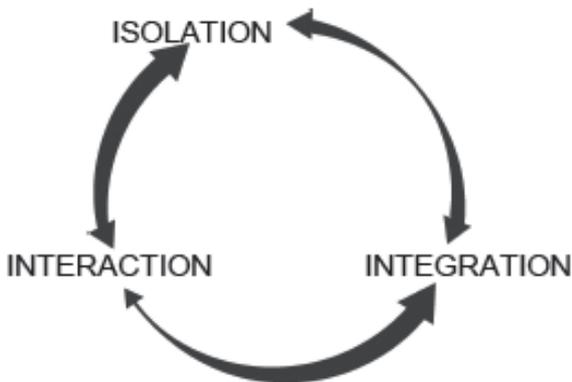


Figure 1. Learning Phases in In-country Language Immersion

they know or understand. The isolation phase is one of assessment, both by the learner and those who teach them, and it often leads the learner to question his or her ability to accomplish established 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 David Kolb 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, comprising other people and situations. Those others share knowledge, model behaviors inherent in the culture, and provide the learners with opportunities to grasp the new language as well as develop new understandings of ways to function effectively in the language. Their actions encourage, as well as provoke, responses that move the learners intermittently back and forth among the three phases of learning in a dynamic evolutionary learning process.

The in-country immersion experiences of the participants were relational journeys in which the variables that shaped the learning paths and outcomes were inextricably interdependent. These dynamically interrelated factors influenced the learners' progress throughout their experiences. The learning that took place as a result of the movement among the phases resulted in a learning path that De Weerd 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" (32). Through a complex process of contemplation, interaction, and interpretation, the participants made meaning of the target language and realized for themselves enhanced competence. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of the learner during the three phases.

TABLE 1
CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNER
DURING LEARNING PHASES OF IMMERSION

Phase	Disposition of Learner during Phase
Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • withdraws physically and/or psychologically from others • is acutely aware of personal difference and limitations • observes and listens • seeks familiarity and comfort • is aware of fears and self-doubts • questions learning goals
Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engages actively 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • incorporates new insights into ways of being and interacting • adjusts learning goals

INTENSITY AND FOCUS ARE CRUCIAL

In-country immersion programs are compressed, focused experiences in which the primary objective for program participants is to learn to communicate in the language spoken in the country where the immersion school is located. Programs combine each day four to six hours of classes with interactive practice during activities and speaking 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 a job or home life require appreciable attention. Immersion programs permit participants to concentrate on the single objective of 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 to a certain destination with cab drivers who knew no English and living with strangers with unfamiliar customs and habits catapulted the learners into an environment that forced them to learn in order to survive. While most admitted to being frightened 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 were convinced that acquiring language skills 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.

GUIDELINES FOR IN-COUNTRY LANGUAGE IMMERSION FOR WORKING PROFESSIONALS

In-country immersion has great potential as a form of contextual, experiential learning that can shape working professionals into culturally competent communicators. Our findings 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 the everyday 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). Our findings, 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. These five guidelines serve as a basis for instructors and working professionals who are either currently utilizing, or considering utilizing, in-country language immersion as a development tool.

Guideline 1—The in-country immersion should be structured in such a way to provide working professionals with an opportunity to focus exclusively on learning the language within the natural 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 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 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 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.

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