

## Chapter 4

### Brazil: The Case for Language

Rogério de Almeida is a computer programmer working in his native city of Curitiba, Brazil. Raised in a lower-middle class home by parents who emphasized education, he was at the top of his class in high school and passed the difficult entrance exam for the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), one of the finest public universities in Brazil. Rogério studied at the UFPR for four years while also working in a part-time job at a computer store and graduated with a degree in computer science.

Shortly after graduating, Rogério accepted a job at Quantum S.A., a large company that manufactures computers. He is an ambitious and hardworking young man with a natural talent for information technology and mathematical analysis. In fact, his nickname at work is “Techie.” He is hoping to move up in Quantum and has taken advantage of training courses arranged by his supervisor in network engineering, privacy and password protection, and advanced programming.

One Monday morning at the end of July, when Rogério arrived at his desk, he opened his e-mail and read a message from his boss, Luciana Saliba. “Rogério, please meet with me at 10 am to discuss an exciting opportunity for you in the near future.”

Rogério was pleased to see this message and began speculating about what type of opportunity was awaiting him. He had the ability and the skills to do a wide variety of jobs, and he was certainly ready for a change, having been in his current position for two years. Maybe Luciana was going to give him a new position in software development.

At 10 o’clock, Rogério entered the office of his boss, who gave him a big smile and poured them some coffee. They chatted for a few minutes about their weekend activities. Then Luciana began to tell Rogério about the opportunity she had mentioned in her e-mail.

“Rogério, the company wants to send you to the United States to get a master’s degree in computer engineering. We will finance this degree, as well as pay all your living expenses, and hold your job for you for the two years it will take to complete the program. When you return, you will be promoted to the position of Manager of Software Research and Development. The school we decided on is the University of Texas at Austin, which has one of the finest master’s programs in systems engineering in the United States. The semester starts next month. Are you interested in this offer?”

Rogério was almost too surprised to answer Luciana’s question. His mind raced as he thought about what to say. For one thing, his English skills were quite weak, and although his spoken English was adequate, he could barely read or write in English. Of course, he could study English in Texas, but he would not be ready for graduate work for at least three months. And he could easily imagine a worst-case scenario: failing his classes and returning to Brazil in shame. Also, he was not so sure he wanted to leave

Brazil at this time, considering how close he was to his extended family, as well as his girlfriend, to whom he had recently become engaged.

On the other hand, maybe the computer engineering program wouldn't require much reading and writing. And certainly, he could recognize the great chance this would be to move up in the company. Rogerio knew that having a graduate degree was essential these days if he hoped for more than a mid-level position in his company.

Rogerio finally pulled himself together and turned toward his boss. He chose his words carefully. "Luciana, naturally, I am pleased with this suggestion, but I need a few days to think it over. Can you allow me some time? I'm most concerned about the problem with the English language. Unfortunately, I really can't read or write in English very well. How will I be able to enter graduate school next month? It just doesn't seem realistic. Perhaps I should study English here for three months before going to the States."

Luciana did not look happy with this response. "I'm sorry, Rogerio, but according to the company's human resource development plan, you need to enroll this coming semester and return in two years. Otherwise, we can't send you and will have to offer this benefit to another employee. As you know, the information technology industry is expanding and innovating on a daily basis, and we have to keep up with new developments, or else we'll lose our advantage in the market. The G4 computers are already in the works, and we are trying to keep our competitive edge. So it's next month in the U.S. or never."

Rogerio was silent. He couldn't find the words to tell Luciana how much he appreciated this opportunity but how little confidence he had that he could succeed in such a venture. Slowly, Rogerio got to his feet. "I'll think about this and get back to you later today, if that's ok," he said.

"Of course that will be fine," replied Luciana. "Be sure to let me know if you have any questions about the details. Austin is a lovely city, I've heard, and the university is first-rate. I'm sure that you would easily adapt to the intellectual environment there and find it comfortable. As for the problem with English, if it really is as serious as you said, perhaps you could find a tutor for the first semester. I can probably convince our president to pay for the language training by reminding him of what a valuable employee you are and will continue to be."

"Thanks, Luciana. You can't imagine how grateful I am that you have so much confidence in me, and I'll see you this afternoon with my answer." Then Rogerio walked out of the office and returned to his desk, where he thought about how he had always put off taking extra classes in English. What an advantage it would have been to him now if he had mastered the English language.

## **Discussion**

1. How long does it take on average for a non-native speaker of English to learn to read and write in English for academic purposes?
2. How easily could Rogerio overcome the problems he would face at the University of Texas?
3. What are the advantages for Rogerio of having a master's degree in computer engineering from the University of Texas?
4. What are the disadvantages for Rogerio of studying at the University of Texas?
5. What alternatives does Rogerio have at this time?
6. Should Rogerio enroll in the master's program at the University of Texas?
7. What would you do in this situation?

## **Case Study Report**

- I. Statement of the problem
  - A. Definition
  - B. Analysis
- II. Suggestions of possible solutions
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  - D.
- III. Evaluation of possible solutions
  - A. Advantages
  - B. Disadvantages
- IV. Selection of a solution
  - A. Choice
  - B. Justification