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14. ABSTRACT

The Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) is used by the Special Operations Forces (SOF) community to assign personnel to language training. This report examined SOF operators and SOF leaders' attitudes toward the DLAB, including their perceptions of test fairness and accuracy. Results from survey responses and focus groups indicated that 38% of study participants considered the DLAB to be an accurate language learning aptitude tool and that it should be used for language assignment. Participants noted that perceptions of unfairness are likely due to lack of knowledge regarding what DLAB assesses and how it is used in the language assignment process, beliefs that the DLAB does not measure all aspects of language learning aptitude (or measures skills unrelated to language learning aptitude), or negative testing experiences (e.g., testing conditions). Implications, recommendations, and future directions, including the introduction of the DLAB 2, are also presented.

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DLAB, commercial tests, learning aptitude

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Special Operations Forces Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project: Defense Language Aptitude Batter (DLAB): Perspectives from the Field

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Assignment of personnel to a language for initial acquisition training is an important decision with many potential implications. It is important to assign individuals to languages in which there is high likelihood that they will succeed. If individuals are not correctly assigned, this can have financial, capability, and mission performance consequences. To assign individuals to language training, the United States military, including the SOF community, relies on the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB). Studies within the Department of Defense (DoD) have demonstrated the reliability (i.e., consistency) and predictive validity (i.e., predicting training outcomes) of the DLAB (Petersen & Al-Haik, 1976; Silva & White, 1993); however, studies within the SOF community found lower predictability (SWA Consulting, Technical Report #2009010616, Technical Report #2009010612; see Section II for further explanation). Statistical reliability and validity are important; however, if a test is not *perceived* to be reliable and valid, these perceptions could lead to negative test-taking behaviors and eventually undermine the test's statistical properties. It is equally important that test takers perceive that the test is accurate and fair to ensure that the test and its results are accepted and that individuals continue to engage in the testing process (e.g., not undermining it through lack of effort).

Perceived test accuracy (at face value, is the test measuring what it's supposed to be measuring?; face validity) is positively related to test motivation and attitudes toward tests (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). If individuals perceive the test as accurate prior to taking the test, then they are more likely to take the test seriously and put forth effort during test administration, preserving the test's psychometric properties (e.g., predictive validity for post-training proficiency). Additionally, research has shown that test fairness perceptions are related to factors other than how the individual performs on the test (Bauer, Maertz, Dolen, & Campion, 1998). These factors, called procedural justice factors, can influence test accuracy and fairness perceptions. Examples of procedural justice factors include having prior knowledge about the test before testing, having a chance to demonstrate skills on the test, and treatment experienced at the testing site.

To determine if the DLAB functions and is used as intended, the initial step is to assess perceptions of test accuracy and fairness. If findings indicate that the DLAB is perceived as inaccurate and/or unfair, it is important to identify procedural justice factors that may be contributing to these perceptions. These factors can identify opportunities for improvement in the use of the DLAB, optimizing its effectiveness for language assignment. The *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (LCNA) assessed, 1) perceptions of the DLAB's accuracy in measuring language learning aptitude (i.e., the test's perceived accuracy or test's face value), 2) perceptions about the DLAB's use for assigning individuals to languages (i.e., test fairness perceptions), and 3) potential factors that could influence SOF personnel's perception of DLAB accuracy and fairness.

Is the DLAB an accurate measure of language learning aptitude?
SOF personnel had mixed opinions regarding the DLAB's accuracy in measuring language learning aptitude. Personnel currently in the training pipeline (62%, *n* = 50) and SOF leaders (55%, *n* = 51) more frequently indicated that the DLAB accurately reflects language learning aptitude than SOF operators (46%, *n* = 411).

Should it be used to assign individuals to language?
SOF personnel also had mixed opinions regarding whether or not the DLAB should be used to assign individuals to language training. Sixty-two percent (*n* = 51) of personnel currently in the training pipeline and 71% (*n* = 65) of leaders indicated that the DLAB should be used to assign individuals to a language, compared to only 49% (*n* = 431) of operators. The higher percentage of leaders and current trainees indicating that the DLAB should be used for language assignment may be explained by their relative familiarity with how the test scores are used or should be used in the assignment process due to their current roles in the organization.

Based on whether or not the test is accurate, should it be used to assign individuals to language?
There were four groups of operator respondents:
- DLAB *is not* accurate and *should not* be used to assign individuals to language training (43%, *n* = 377)
- DLAB *is* accurate and it *should* be used to assign individuals to language training (38%, *n* = 330)
- DLAB *is not* an accurate reflection of their language learning aptitude but it *should* be used to assign individuals to language training (10%, *n* = 90)
- DLAB *is* an accurate reflection but *should not* be used to assign individuals to language training (8%, *n* = 73)

Respondents from the first two groups provided comments referencing their own experience with DLAB scores and subsequent language learning or performance (e.g., DLAB score matched their performance in a language; DLAB score did not match their performance in a language). Comments from those who said the test *is* accurate but *should not* be used for language assignment suggest that other factors should be taken into account in the language assignment process in combination with DLAB scores, including personal motivation to learn a particular language or previous experience in learning a language. Comments provided by respondents who indicated that the test *is not* accurate but *should* be used to assign revealed the perspective that the DLAB is the best (or only) available language learning aptitude measure.

What factors influence SOF personnel's perceptions of accuracy and fairness of the DLAB?
Given that some SOF personnel perceived the DLAB as inaccurate and/or unfair to use for language assignment, it is important to assess test taker reactions to determine *why* individuals hold these perceptions. Survey comments and focus group discussions revealed factors influencing the DLAB's perceived accuracy and fairness (see Section IV):
- No knowledge of what the DLAB measures or how it is used in the language assignment process prior to testing
- Perceptions that the DLAB does not measure all aspects of language learning aptitude
- Perceptions that the DLAB measures skills unrelated to language learning (i.e., test-taking skills)
- Perceptions or experiences that suggest DLAB scores are not used to assign individuals to language
- Negative testing experiences (e.g., testing conditions, administrative mistakes)

These factors align with factors identified by past research (Bauer et al., 1998; Bauer et al., 2001; Gilliand, 1993), including information known about the test prior to testing, the test providing an adequate opportunity to demonstrate skills and/or knowledge, and conditions and/or treatment at the testing site. These reactions contribute to test accuracy and fairness perceptions (Bauer et al., 1998). These factors should be addressed to improve operator and leader perceptions. Some of these factors are characteristics of the test and can only be addressed by improving or replacing the DLAB; others can be addressed through communication and consistent use and administration of the DLAB. SOF leaders can advocate for changes to the DLAB and/or seek alternatives, but leaders who control the DLAB administration and the use of scores for language assignment can achieve the most direct impact. These leaders can ensure effective administration and use of the DLAB, optimizing the predictive value of the test and improving resulting language assignments. The following recommendations provide ways to reduce or eliminate these factors.

First, all personnel who take the DLAB should be educated about what the DLAB measures and how it is used in language assignment prior to taking the test, especially if this can be done in such a way as to not compromise the DLAB's functioning. As described by Bauer and colleagues (1998, 2001), information known about the test contributes to an individual's perception of whether or not it is credible and fair. If an individual does not know what the test intends to measure or how it will be used, then their perceptions of the test's accuracy and fairness are likely to be negative. Survey comments indicated that some operators did not know what the test was supposed to measure prior to testing. These negative perceptions may influence their motivation to perform well on the test. It should be noted that explaining to test takers what the DLAB intends to measure and how it will be used in the language assignment process can lead to some test takers intentionally underperforming on the test as a strategy to avoid being assigned to a more difficult language. In this case, presenting the DLAB as one factor in the language assignment process might be most beneficial. One alternative strategy is to inform test takers of the purpose and use of the DLAB after they complete the test (i.e., debriefing). The debriefing strategy might improve perceptions of the test but does not address the pre-DLAB motivation issue. Also, the DLAB is often administered prior to individuals entering the SOF training pipeline or the SOF community. In this case, it is impossible to communicate the use of the DLAB in SOF language assignment or the importance of the test. However, this communication is possible when the DLAB is administered as part of the process in a SOF organization. Regardless, test takers need some information prior to testing to inform their motivation and engagement in the DLAB testing process.

Second, SOF personnel's perceptions about whether the DLAB measures all aspects of language learning aptitude and whether it measures abilities unrelated to language learning should be monitored. As indicated by Bauer and colleagues (2001), having a chance to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities on the test contributes to perceptions of its accuracy and fairness. If the test does not measure all aspects of what it is supposed to measure or if the test measures something unrelated to what it should be testing, then the test may be perceived negatively. For example, some operators reported that the DLAB does not measure all aspects of language learning aptitude (e.g., motivation or personal interest in a particular language), and some operators suggested that the DLAB measures aspects that are unrelated to the ability to learn a foreign language (i.e., test taking skills). These negative perceptions can be passed to individuals who have not yet taken the test, negatively influencing their motivation to engage in the

DLAB testing process and their resulting scores. The less accurate scores resulting from unmotivated test performance may undermine the statistical properties of the scores and the resulting language assignments. Although the DLAB testing program is controlled outside of USSOCOM, USSOCOM should communicate its testing requirements and feedback to the appropriate groups. An effective language aptitude test should not only have sufficient psychometric properties (validity and reliability) and predictive validity for SOF language training outcomes, but it should also include relevant factors and exclude irrelevant factors. Users should perceive the test as being an accurate predictor to maximize the effectiveness of its use.

Third, to preserve or increase perceived test accuracy and fairness, DLAB scores should be used consistently to assign individuals to language training. As indicated by Bauer and colleagues (2001), test administration and decision procedure consistency influence test perceptions. If the test is not consistently used for language assignment, then personnel may not take the test seriously because they anticipate that their test score will not be used in the assignment process. Some respondents indicated that the DLAB should not be used for language assignment because of credibility issues. If factors that negatively influence DLAB accuracy perceptions can be addressed then the fairness perceptions of the language assignment process should improve. Additionally, test takers may not perceive the language assignment process as fair because their DLAB scores are not used as originally intended. If other factors (e.g., previous language experience, current and future force requirements) are considered in the language assignment process or can override the DLAB in the assignment decision, the full assignment criteria and process should be communicated to personnel at the appropriate time in the process.

Finally, test takers should be provided with reasonable testing accommodations. Conditions and treatment at the testing site can influence whether test takers perceive the test as credible and fair (Bauer et al., 2001). For example, some operators reported that the temperature of their testing environment was too hot. Furthermore, some operators reported they did not receive adequate sleep the night before the test due to other training requirements. These factors can systematically impact individual test performance in groups that experience these constraints and, therefore, alter or undermine predictive validity. This can lead to inaccurate assignments and diminished credibility and fairness perceptions of the DLAB. If these administrative constraints are expected to occur in the future, research should be conducted under these constrained conditions to determine the impact on the predictive validity of the DLAB. Lastly, some operators reported test administration issues (e.g., test administrator not taking the test seriously or not providing clear test instructions). All test administrators should be trained to provide adequate testing instructions for test takers and maintain a neutral attitude about the test.

Although perceptions of the DLAB's accuracy and its use for language assignment were mixed, steps can be taken to improve perceptions of the DLAB. First, communicating the DLAB testing policy can educate personnel about when the test is typically administered, what the test measures, and how it is used in the SOF language assignment process. Second, encouragement of effective and consistent use of the DLAB for language assignment can assist in making sure that the test scores are used as described by the DLAB testing policy. If a test is effectively and consistently used, perceptions of the test's accuracy and fairness may improve. This leads to test takers engaging in the testing process and results in their test scores being accurate and representative of their language learning aptitude. Using accurate and representative scores

for language assignment leads to appropriate assignments and can provide the organization, the unit, and the individual with the best opportunity to succeed in the language domain.

Future Directions

The limited predictive validity of the DLAB and its age as an assessment led to funding for development of the DLAB 2. University of Maryland's Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL) is developing a new version of the DLAB (the DLAB 2) to incorporate new cognitive and non-cognitive measures (e.g., personality and motivation) that may predict foreign language aptitude. This new version should address some of the original DLAB's shortcomings which were identified by respondents in this study, such as the lack of motivation measures. If this test is eventually used by USSOCOM for language placement, then the DLAB 2's incorporation of motivation measures into the testing process may lead SOF personnel to perceive the test and language assignment process as more credible and fair. When the DLAB 2 is available, it should be validated for use with SOF personnel, if the test is feasible for administration within the constraints of SOF operational use. The initial validation report for the DLAB 2 is expected to be released in late 2010 and will accompany two other pilot studies. These reports were not available at the time of this report's completion.

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

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SECTION I: REPORT AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

DLAB: Perspectives from the Field **Report Purpose**

The Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) is used by the United States military to assign individuals to language training, such that lower scoring individuals are placed into languages that are less difficult for native English speakers to learn (e.g., Spanish, French, Italian, German) and higher scoring individuals are placed into more difficult languages (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Russian). In the Special Operations Forces (SOF) community, other factors are also considered in the assignment process, including prior experience in a language as well as current and future force requirements. Studies have demonstrated adequate predictive validity for the DLAB predicting post-training language proficiency within the Department of Defense (DoD) community (e.g., Silva & White, 1993), but less so in the SOF community (SWA Consulting, Technical Report #2009010616, Technical Report #2009010612; see Section II). Although a test's statistical properties are important, test taker *perceptions* of test reliability and validity are equally important to ensure that the test and its results are accepted and that individuals continue to engage in the testing process (e.g., not undermining it through lack of effort). To assess test taker perceptions of the DLAB, this study measured SOF personnel's perceptions of test accuracy (at face value, is the test measuring what it's supposed to be measuring?; face validity) and test use (i.e., should the test be used for language assignment?).

Research has demonstrated that perceived test accuracy influences attitudes toward tests and test fairness perceptions (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). This suggests that any preconceived notion that test takers have regarding a test's accuracy can influence how they approach taking the test. If individuals perceive the test as inaccurate then they may not take the test seriously, thereby undermining the tests' predictive qualities because their scores do not reflect their true ability. Furthermore, perceptions of the test may be communicated to others who have not yet taken the test, which could negatively influence their attitudes toward the test and how they engage in the testing process. Therefore, it is important to assess test taker perceptions of the DLAB to determine if SOF personnel perceive the DLAB as an accurate or inaccurate measure of language learning aptitude. Perceived test accuracy also influences perceptions of test fairness and fairness about how test scores are used (Bauer, Maertz, Dolen, & Campion, 1998; Bauer et al., 2001; Gilliand, 1993). If individuals perceive the test as inaccurate, then they will likely perceive the test and its use in a selection or assignment context as unfair.

Research has also shown that test accuracy and fairness perceptions are influenced by factors other than how the individual performs on the test (Bauer et al., 1998). Factors that contribute to fairness perceptions include having prior knowledge about the test before testing, having a chance to demonstrate skills on the test, and conditions or treatment experienced at the testing site. For individuals who may perceive the test as inaccurate and/or unfair to use for language assignment, these factors may contribute to their perceptions and should be identified and addressed. This suggests a diagnostic approach and the collection of test taker feedback.

To determine if test takers believe the DLAB functions and is used as intended, the initial step is to assess test taker perceptions of its accuracy and fairness. If findings indicate that the DLAB is perceived as inaccurate and/or unfair, it is important to identify factors that may be contributing to these perceptions.

This report focuses on SOF personnel's perceptions of the DLAB's accuracy and its use for assigning individuals to language training (i.e., test fairness perceptions). Factors that influence SOF personnel's perception of DLAB accuracy and fairness are explored as well.

This report presents the specific details and recommendations related to main findings identified by SOF operators and leaders who participated. The report is divided into five sections with a number of supporting appendices. Section II of this report provides background on the DLAB, studies related to its predictability, and preliminary information about the DLAB 2. Section III of this report addresses the questions, *do SOF personnel perceive the DLAB as an accurate measure of language learning ability* and *do they believe it should be used to assign individuals to language?* Section IV summarizes SOF operator and leader comments about the DLAB and identifies factors influencing the DLAB's perceived credibility in the SOF community. Section V concludes the report by integrating main findings from each section and providing implications and recommendations for action. The References section presents the research and other documents cited in this report. Appendix A details the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project (LCNA Project)*, and Appendix B provides an overview of report methodology, including participants, measures, and analyses. Appendix C includes survey comment themes, definitions, and examples.

LCNA Project Purpose

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

Relationship of *DLAB: Perspectives from the Field* to the LCNA Project

The *DLAB: Perspectives from the Field* report is a *Tier I* report that will be integrated with other *Tier I* reports, *Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT)* and *Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI),* into a *Tier II* report, *Testing/Metrics* (see Appendix A for the report structure). However, the final reports produced will be determined by the SOFLO and are subject to change.

SECTION II: DLAB BACKGROUND

What is the DLAB and what does it measure?

The Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) is a test that measures *ability* to learn a foreign language. DLAB scores can be used to predict the likelihood of an individual learning a foreign language within a structured training program. It utilizes an artificial language to measure three different abilities needed to learn and understand a foreign language: 1) processing of auditory phonetic material for recognition and recall, 2) grammatical sensitivity, and 3) capability to learn new associations (Silva & White, 1993). The DLAB items ask test takers to identify an accurate translation by applying artificial language grammar rules, matching pictures to phrases, and recognizing vowel stress patterns.

The DLAB has been used at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) since the 1970s and is used by other organizations in the Department of Defense (DoD), including the SOF community, for language training assignment (i.e., higher scoring personnel are placed into more difficult languages and lower scoring individuals are placed into less difficult languages). Studies within the DoD have demonstrated the DLAB's predictive validity (i.e., predicting post-training proficiency scores using DLAB scores; Silva & White, 1993) and construct validity (i.e., comparing the DLAB to other language aptitude tests; Petersen & Al-Haik, 1976). Additionally, the DLAB contributed significant incremental (i.e., additional) predictive validity beyond general aptitude (*g*) and beyond the Army Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB; Silva & White, 1993). However, studies within the SOF community (SWA Consulting, Technical Report #2009010616; SWA Consulting, Technical Report #2009010612) have found weaker predictability partially due the majority of SOF operators scoring at the same proficiency level (i.e., 1/1) after initial acquisition training, whereas the DoD community has a wider range of proficiency scores (e.g., 0 through 5 ILR). Range restriction undermines the predictability of DLAB scores for end-of-training language proficiency in the SOF community because most proficiency results are similar, therefore, a wide range of DLAB scores do not differentiate proficiency outcomes.

Despite its modest predictability, studies within the SOF community suggest that the DLAB is the most consistently predictive single indicator of language proficiency as measured by the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) and Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). These studies compared the DLAB to alternatives, such as the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) and the Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT)[1], to determine if other tests or combinations of tests could predict language proficiency measured by both the DLPT and the OPI. One study found that an AFQT-WPT composite produced DLPT rating prediction comparable to the DLAB (SWA Consulting, Technical Report #2009010616). Another study found that the DLAB was the best predictor of OPI ratings (speaking and listening) when compared to the AFQT and WPT (SWA Consulting, Technical Report #2009010612). The limited predictive validity of the DLAB and its age as an assessment led to funding for the development of the DLAB 2.

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[1] This test is now referred to as the Wonderlic Classic Cognitive Ability Test by the test developers; however, the test will be referred to as the Wonderlic Personnel Test (WPT) in this report.

How is the DLAB used in the SOF community to assign individuals to languages?

An operator's DLAB score determines the difficulty level of the language they will be assigned. Category I (e.g., Spanish, French, Italian) and Category II (e.g., German) languages share commonalities with the English language and, therefore, are considered less difficult for native English speakers to learn than Category III (e.g., Russian, Korean) and Category IV (e.g., Arabic, Chinese) languages. According to policy, the DLAB score should be used to determine into which category of language a trainee is assigned. SOF cutoffs for each language category are provided below (from USSOCOM M350-8, 2009):

- Assignment to a Category I language requires minimum DLAB score of **75**
- Assignment to a Category II language requires minimum DLAB score of **75**
- Assignment to a Category III language requires minimum DLAB score of **80**
- Assignment to a Category IV language requires minimum DLAB score of **85**

Some components may require higher minimum scores than those listed above. Additionally, some individuals may be waived into more difficult languages if they do not reach the DLAB score minimum for that category. However, most language assignments are based on the DLAB cutoff scores listed above with consideration of individual's native/heritage skills and prior language training/ instruction (USSOCOM M 350-8). Additionally, current and future military needs are also taken into account when assigning individuals to language training. As a point of comparison, the Department of Defense (DoD) cutoffs for the DLAB are listed below (from R11-6 Army Linguist Management):

- Assignment to a Category I language requires minimum DLAB score of **85**
- Assignment to a Category II language requires minimum DLAB score of **90**
- Assignment to a Category III language requires minimum DLAB score of **95**
- Assignment to a Category IV language requires minimum DLAB score of **100**

What is the DLAB 2 and how is it different from the original DLAB?

University of Maryland's Center for Advanced Study of Language (CASL) is developing a new version of the DLAB to incorporate new cognitive and non-cognitive measures (e.g., personality and motivation) that may predict foreign language aptitude. Additionally, the DLAB 2 eliminates redundant measures. The initial validation report is expected to be released in late 2010 and will accompany two other pilot studies. The CASL reports were not available at the time of this report's completion.

SECTION III: DLAB ACCURACY AND ITS USE FOR LANGUAGE ASSIGNMENT

Perceived test accuracy (at face value, is the test measuring what it is supposed to be measuring; face validity) is positively related to test motivation and attitudes toward tests (Hausknecht et al., 2004). If operators and/or leaders do not perceive the DLAB as accurate, then the test's credibility is at stake. This can lead to negative test taking behaviors and negatively affect test taker motivation, both of which can diminish the test's predictability. If test takers perceive a test as accurate, they may apply more effort in taking the test and take it more seriously than test takers who perceive the test as lacking credibility.

In addition to the DLAB's accuracy, it is important to capture the opinions of operators and leaders about using DLAB scores to assign individuals to language training, such that individuals with higher DLAB scores are placed into more difficult languages. Research shows that test fairness perceptions are related to factors other than how the individual performs on the test, such as test administration and decision procedure consistency, conditions or treatment at the testing site, and having a chance to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities on the test (Bauer et al., 2001).

This section presents SOF operator and leader perspectives on whether or not the DLAB is an accurate reflection of language learning aptitude and whether or not it should be used to assign individuals to a language. Opinions from the leader perspective provide a policy-driven view of using DLAB scores for language assignment, whereas the operator perspective provides insight into whether or not the language assignment process is considered fair and justified by actual test takers.

Research Questions

This section addresses the following questions:
- Do operators and leaders believe that the DLAB is an accurate measure of language learning aptitude?
- Do operators and leaders believe that the DLAB should be used to assign individuals to languages?

Main Findings

SOF personnel had mixed opinions on the DLAB's accuracy in measuring language learning aptitude and its use for language assignment. Overall, personnel currently in the training pipeline (62%, $n = 50$) and SOF leaders (55%, $n = 51$) more frequently responded that the DLAB is an accurate measure of language learning aptitude than SOF operators (46%, $n = 411$; Table 1, p. 14). This trend was also found for the use of DLAB scores for language assignment, such that 62% ($n = 51$) of those in the training pipeline and 71% ($n = 65$) of SOF leaders indicated that the DLAB should be used to assign individuals to a language, compared to only 49% ($n = 431$) of SOF operators (Table 2, p. 14). The higher percentage of leaders and current trainees indicating that the DLAB should be used for language assignment may be explained by their relative familiarity with how the test scores are used or should be used in the assignment process due to their current roles in the organization. Overall, these findings indicate that some SOF personnel are skeptical of the DLAB's accuracy and the appropriateness of using it to assign individuals to language.

Further analysis indicated there were four groups of operator respondents (Table 3, p. 15):

- DLAB *is not* accurate and *should not* be used to assign individuals to language training (43%, *n* = 377)
- DLAB *is* accurate and it *should* be used to assign individuals to language training (38%, *n* = 330)
- DLAB *is not* accurate but it *should* be used to assign individuals to language training (10%, *n* = 90)
- DLAB *is* accurate but *should not* be used to assign individuals to language training (8%, *n* = 73)

These four groups were used to segment and analyze the open-ended comments. Respondents from the first two groups provided comments referencing their own experience with the DLAB and subsequent language learning or performance (Table 4, p. 16). Comments from those who said the test *is* accurate but *should not* be used for language assignment suggest that other situational factors should be taken into account in the language assignment process in combination with DLAB scores, such as personal motivation to learn a particular language or previous experience in learning a foreign language. Comments provided by respondents that said the DLAB *is not* accurate but it *should* be used in language assignment reveal the perspective that the DLAB is the best (or only) available measure.

Whereas the largest group of operators indicated the DLAB *is not* accurate and *should not* be used, leaders had a slightly different view of the DLAB (Table 5, p. 17):
- DLAB *is* accurate and *should* be used for language assignment (51%, *n* = 47)
- DLAB *is not* accurate and *should not* be used for language assignment (25%, *n* = 23)
- DLAB *is* accurate but *should not* be used for language assignment (4%, *n* = 4)
- DLAB *is not* accurate but *should* be used for language assignment (20%, *n* = 18)

Overall, leaders more frequently reported that the DLAB *is* accurate and it *should* be used for language assignment than operators. However, their comments were similar to operators (Table 6, p. 18).

Detailed Findings

DLAB accuracy
Overall, SOF personnel were divided on their perspectives concerning the DLAB's accuracy of measuring language learning aptitude. Less than half of SOF operators (46%, *n* = 411) indicated that the DLAB *is* an accurate reflection of their language learning aptitude (Table 1, p. 14). Alternatively, respondents currently in the training pipeline more frequently indicated that the DLAB is an accurate reflection (62%, *n* = 50) than SOF operators (χ^2 = 7.20, *df* = 1, *p* < .01). Pipeline respondents may have based their response on their current language training experience and how their DLAB score predicted their current performance in the classroom. Also, these trainees may not have received an official proficiency test yet and may have no objective basis to judge the accuracy of the DLAB. Furthermore, SOF leaders more frequently indicated that the DLAB is an accurate measure of language learning aptitude (55%, *n* = 51) than operators (χ^2 = 4.45, *df* = 1, *p* < .05). Leader comments suggest that they based their responses on their personal accounts of DLAB scores and subsequent performance.

Table 1. DLAB Accuracy

Group	*n*	Yes	No
SOF operators	890	46%	54%
Pipeline	81	62%	38%
SOF leaders	92	55%	45%

Note. SOF leaders responded 'Yes' significantly more than SOF operators ($\chi^2 = 4.45$, *df* = 1, *p* < .05). Pipeline respondents reported significantly more 'Yes' responses than SOF operators ($\chi^2 = 7.20$, *df* = 1, *p* < .01).

Using DLAB for language assignment

Similar to DLAB accuracy responses, SOF personnel were split regarding whether or not the DLAB should be used to assign individuals to languages. Slightly less than half of SOF operators (49%, *n* = 431) indicated that the DLAB *should* be used to assign individuals to languages (Table 2, p. 14). Similarly, most leader (71%, *n* = 65) and training pipeline (62%, *n* = 51) respondents indicated that the DLAB *should* be used to assign individuals to languages. The higher percentage of leaders and current trainees indicating that the DLAB should be used for language assignment may be explained by their relative familiarity with how the test scores are used or should be used in the assignment process due to their current roles in the organization. Most operator responses indicating that the test should not be used for language assignment were expected because of the percentage of operators who indicated that the DLAB is not an accurate measure of language learning aptitude.

Table 2. Using DLAB for Language Assignment

Group	*n*	Yes	No
SOF operators	888	49%	51%
Pipeline	82	62%	38%
SOF leaders	92	71%	29%

Note. SOF leaders responded 'Yes' significantly more than SOF operators ($\chi^2 = 9.20$, *df* = 1, *p* < .05). Pipeline respondents reported significantly more 'Yes' responses than SOF operators ($\chi^2 = 5.60$, *df* = 1, *p* < .05).

Relationship between accuracy and assignment

Thirty-eight percent (*n* = 330) of operators indicated that the DLAB *is* an accurate measure of language learning aptitude and it *should* be used for language assignment (Table 3, p. 15). These respondents referenced their own experience with DLAB scores and subsequent language learning or performance (e.g., received low DLAB score and performed poorly in language training; received high DLAB score and performed well; Table 4, p. 16).

Forty-three percent (*n* = 377) of operators indicated that the DLAB *is not* an accurate measure and *should not* be used for language assignment (Table 3, p. 15). Many of these respondents referenced their own experience with DLAB scores and subsequent language learning or performance (e.g., received low DLAB score and performed well; received high DLAB score and performed poorly; Table 4, p. 16). Additionally, some respondents reported that motivation was not measured by the DLAB and it is an important component of one's ability to learn a language. Lastly, a few operators reported that they were not sure what the DLAB measured.

A subset of operators indicated that the DLAB does *not* accurately reflect language learning aptitude but it *should* be used to assign individuals to language (10%, $n = 90$; Table 3, p. 15). These respondents commented that the DLAB is the best available measure of language learning aptitude (Table 4, p. 16).

Additionally, a subset of operators indicated that the DLAB *is* an accurate reflection of language learning aptitude but it should *not* be used to assign individuals to language (8%, $n = 73$; Table 3). These respondents commented that the language assignment process does not take into account personal interest and motivation to learn a language (Table 4, p. 16) and that these factors should be incorporated into the language assignment process, if possible.

Table 3. Relationship between accuracy and language assignment—Operator responses

	Yes, DLAB accurately reflects language learning aptitude	**No, DLAB does not accurately reflect language learning aptitude**
Yes, should be used to assign	330 (38%)	90 (10%)
No, should not be used to assign	73 (8%)	377 (43%)

Note. Total $n = 870$; May not add to 100% due to rounding error

Table 4. Exemplar Comments for Each Combination of DLAB Accuracy and Use for Assignment Perceptions—Operator responses

	Yes, DLAB accurately reflects language learning aptitude	**No, DLAB does not accurately reflect language learning aptitude**
Yes, the DLAB should be used to assign individuals to language	"I have been blessed with an ability to learn languages since I was small. I score a 123 on the DLAB." "However well I can naturally speak the language i've learned, compared to my peers, I feel that our DLAB scores accurately represent our language learning" "The rate which I learned a language was what I expected after taking the DLAB." "I scored low which put me in a CAT one language. I have diffiuclty with the language so I believe the score was accurate." "My DLAB score seems to correspond with how well I feel I can pick up a language." "My DLAB score was very high, and I consider myself quick to understand the concepts underlying languages." "I scored a 136, and I am able to use 5 languages with varying degrees of proficiency."	"While I think it mis-indicated my personal aptitude, I do not know of another test/method for better determining aptitude." "What other tool do we use? If we have another means then I would prefer to drop the DLAB" "Unless there is a better test, it the only one for now....." "No other way to measure language aptitude." "Maybe the best thing out there." "Still better than nothing for aptitude." "I don't have a better way." "While I think it mis-indicated my personal aptitude, I do not know of another test/method for better determining aptitude."
No, the DLAB should not be used to assign individuals to language	"Prior experience, the individual's ethnicity and personal preference (motivator) should be considered when assigning languages." "I think it should be used in conjusnction with the language background of an individual." "I believe interest in a particular language is a factor which is ignored. Interest is a factor that I think would increase interest, focus and other factors which are important to learning proficiency." "I think an individuals interest in a culture and language should dictate his assignment to a language. Individuals who are interested in Chinese culture and Mandarin but do not score well on the DLAB will do much better in studying Mandarin than they would studying French, because they are interested in the language and culture." "In the end, diligence and persistence will always reign over a single, "cookie-cutter" test. Everyone has a bad day - failure happens to us all at time. However, it takes a conscious, focused effort to succeed at anything, specifically a language. There are very few 90-minute tests out there that will provide an accurate teset of one's will and determination to learn (and succeed at) a foreign language. The DLAB is not a definitive indicator."	"I scored 112 on the DLAB indicating that I have a high aptitude to learn a foreign language. I believe that this overestimated my ability." "I scored a 135 on my DLAB compared to fellow soldiers in my class that scored 95 or lower, yet achieved the same score (2 listening, 2 reading) on the DLPT after" "I learned English after learning to speak 2 other languages. I've taken the DLAB it showed that I don't have the ability to learn a language, how can that be possible when I speak close to 4 languages." "Because according to the DLAB I am unable to learn a language when in fact I have learned two seperate languages without much issue." "I scored poorly on the DLAB, but I did very well in high school with languages and in language school I did very well. according to the DLAB I shouldn't be able to learn any languages."

Note. Comments presented in this table are exemplar comments and do not represent comments from the entire survey sample.

For leaders, the relationship between accuracy and assignment ratings were similar to operators, although more leaders reported that the DLAB *is* accurate and *should* be used to assign personnel to language training (51%; Table 5, p. 17). Leader open-ended comments from all four groups were similar to operators (Table 6, p. 18).

Table 5. Relationship between accuracy and language assignment—Leader responses

	Yes, DLAB accurately reflects language learning aptitude	No, DLAB does not accurately reflect language learning aptitude
Yes, should be used to assign	47 (51%)	18 (20%)
No, should not be used to assign	4 (4%)	23 (25%)

Note. Total *n* = 92

Table 6. Exemplar Comments for Each Combination of DLAB Accuracy and Use for Assignment Perceptions—Leader responses

	Yes, DLAB accurately reflects language learning aptitude	**No, DLAB does not accurately reflect language learning aptitude**
Yes, the DLAB should be used to assign individuals to language	"People I have seen score well have an aptitude for languages." "From what I've seen most guys who do well on the DLAB can learn languages without too much difficulty." "I scored low on the DLAB the first time I took the test. The second time I barely past. I failed a language in High School and barely past Language school in SWC." "Soldiers who do better on the DLAB tend to do better on the DLPT, but it is not a perfect predictor." "One person in my language class (Arabic SOLT) initially had too low of a DLAB score to automatically be in my class. He had to talk with the class manager to get into the class, and he was the only one in my class to fail the class. His participation was more of a hinderance, because it used up a majority of the class time trying to get him to the same level as the rest of the 8-person class."	"It is an indicator. Better than nothing." "It's all we've got right now." "It is the only tool we currently have at our disposal" "Unless the soldier can demonstrate his aptitude in another way, or already has an existing language he can expound upon, teh DLAB shows at least a bacic measure of ability."
No, the DLAB should not be used to assign individuals to language	"Though the DLAB is a good barometer of the ability to learn a ANY language, some individuals are more attuned to the nuances of a specific language; this is not related to the DLAB score. A person with a score of 121 may be able to learn Korean quite easily (due to an affinity or interest in the language structure) yet struggle with French or Indo due to a lack of interest or affinity for the languages nuances." "Aptitude and the ability are completely different things."	"I know many individuals who have failed the DLAB but have gone on to learn categroy II and even category III languages. / / I have also noticed that some commands do not use the DLAB when selecting individuals for language training. The DLAB is supposed to be used to identify which particular level of language the student would most likely be successful in learning. I have seen individuals selected to learn Arabic when they scored an 85 on the DLAB. This is setting the Soldier up for failure and is wasting money and time that could be better spent training the soldier an easier, but just as important, language." "Antiquated test. I hold a proficiency rating of 3/3 in two languages and did not score exceptionally high on the DLAB." "Students with low DLAB scores have been enrolled and completed higher category languages." "Native speakers do not score well on the DLAB, yet speak the native language better than English."

Note. Some comments presented in this table are exemplar comments and do not represent comments from the entire survey sample (i.e., comments in the Yes/Yes and No/No quadrants). Comments in the No/Yes and Yes/No quadrants include all comments provided.

SECTION IV: COMMENTS ABOUT THE DLAB

Past research identified procedural justice factors that contribute to perceptions of a test's accuracy and fairness (Gilliand, 1993). These factors include information known about the test, chance to perform, treatment at the testing site, and consistency of test administration. Information about the test refers to explanation and communication about the test and how scores will be used prior to testing. Chance to perform refers to having the chance to demonstrate relevant knowledge, skills, and/or abilities on the test. Treatment at the test site refers to the degree to which test takers are treated with respect. Consistency of test administration refers to test administration and decision procedure consistency. These factors contribute to fairness and credibility perceptions of the test (Bauer et al., 1998) and are gathered by assessing test taker reactions to the test. Therefore, it is important to assess SOF personnel's reactions to determine if procedural justice factors influence the DLAB's credibility.

SOF operators and leaders provided comments about the DLAB's accuracy, its use for assignment, and other DLAB topics. Focus group discussions also provided perceptions of the DLAB and its use in the language assignment process. Examining these comments provides insight into whether test takers and others perceive the DLAB to be a credible measure of language learning aptitude.

Information about response rates for each open-ended survey item presented in this report is available in the Methodology section (Appendix B). Information about the focus group discussions presented in this report is available in the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003) and the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

Research Questions

This section addresses the following question:
- What factors influence operators' and leaders' perceptions of the DLAB's accuracy and its use in the language assignment process?

Main Findings

Operator and leader comments and focus group discussions indicated that the DLAB's accuracy may be negatively affected by multiple factors, including (Table 7, pp. 22-23):
- No knowledge of what the DLAB measures or how it is used in the language assignment process prior to testing
- Perceptions that the DLAB does not measure all aspects of language learning aptitude
- Perceptions that the DLAB measures skills unrelated to language learning (i.e., test-taking skills)
- Perceptions or experiences that suggest DLAB scores are not used to assign individuals to language
- Negative testing experiences (e.g., testing conditions, administrative mistakes)

SOF personnel should be educated about the DLAB and what it measures (i.e., potential to learn a foreign language) and how it is used in the language assignment process prior to taking the test. As described by Bauer and colleagues (1998, 2001), information known about the test contributes to an individual's perception of whether or not it is credible and fair. Several comments revealed that some operators did not know what the DLAB was supposed to measure. This is problematic because test takers cannot make accurate assessments of the test's credibility without knowing what the test is supposed to measure. Furthermore, without prior knowledge about what the DLAB measures, motivation to take the test and testing process seriously may be negatively influenced. However, this must be balanced with the possibility that some test takers will intentionally underperform on the test as a strategy to avoid being assigned to a more difficult language. One alternative strategy is to inform test takers of the use and purpose of the DLAB after they complete the test (i.e., debriefing). This debriefing strategy might improve perceptions of the test but does not address the pre-DLAB motivation issue.

SOF personnel's perceptions about whether the DLAB measures all aspects of language learning aptitude and whether it measures abilities unrelated to language learning should be monitored. As indicated by Bauer and colleagues (2001), having a chance to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities on the test contributes to perceptions of its credibility and fairness. If the test does not measure all aspects of what is supposed to be measured or if the test measures something unrelated, then the test may be perceived negatively. Some operators pointed out that the DLAB does not take into account other factors that could influence one's ability to learn a language, such as motivation and personal interest in a particular language. Furthermore, some comments suggested that the DLAB measures an individual's test-taking ability, which is not relevant to one's ability to learn a language. These findings suggest that some test takers do not perceive the DLAB as credible or fair because they do not think that it measures what it is supposed to measure. The DLAB 2 development is aimed at overcoming the deficiencies of the DLAB.

To preserve or increase perceived test fairness across the SOF community, the DLAB should be used consistently to assign individuals to language training. As indicated by Bauer and colleagues (2001), test administration and decision procedure consistency influences test perceptions. Comments revealed that some SOF personnel do not think that DLAB scores are used for assignment into language training. Many of these comments referenced a personal experience where an individual who scored low on the DLAB was placed into a difficult (i.e., Category III or IV) language class. If other factors (e.g., current and future force requirements, previous language experience) are incorporated into the assignment decision or can override the DLAB in the assignment decision, the full assignment criteria and process should be communicated to personnel at the appropriate time in the process.

Finally, SOF personnel should be provided with reasonable testing accommodations. Conditions and treatment at the testing site can influence whether test takers perceive the test as credible and fair (Bauer et al., 2001). For example, operators from USASOC reported that the temperature in their testing environment was too hot and that they did not have an adequate amount of sleep the night before the test due to other requirements. These factors can systematically impact individual test performance for those who experienced these testing environment constraints and, therefore, alter or undermine the predictive validity of the test, which can lead to inaccurate assignment and diminished perceptions of credibility and

fairness. If these administrative constraints are expected to occur in the future, research should be conducted under these constrained conditions to determine the impact on the predictive validity of the DLAB. Furthermore, other test administration issues were reported (e.g., test administrator not taking the test seriously or not providing clear instructions).

Detailed Findings

Operators and leaders provided comments relating to the DLAB's accuracy, its use in language assignment, and other specific feedback about the test (Table 7, p. 22-23). Overall, respondents commented on many factors that can influence an individual's perception of the DLAB as a fair and credible test. These factors, which were identified by analysis of the survey comments and focus group discussions, included:

- No knowledge of what the DLAB measures or how it is used in the language assignment process prior to taking it
- Perceptions that the DLAB does not measure all aspects of language learning aptitude
- Perceptions that the DLAB measures skills unrelated to language learning (i.e., test-taking skills)
- Perceptions of experiences that suggest DLAB scores are not used to assign individuals to language
- Negative testing experiences (e.g., testing conditions, administrative mistakes)

These factors align with factors identified by past research (Bauer et al., 1998, 2001; Gilliand, 1993). These factors, gathered from test taker reactions, include information known about the test, chance to perform, and treatment at the testing site. These reactions contribute to test accuracy and fairness perceptions (Bauer et al., 1998).

Table 7. Comment Theme Frequencies

	Overall	Operator	Leader
DLAB is accurate			
General comment that DLAB accurately measures language learning aptitude	**82**	64	18
Received high DLAB scores and performed well in language	**20**	15	5
General positive DLAB comment	**12**	7	5
Received low DLAB score and performed poorly in language	**12**	11	1
DLAB is inaccurate			
DLAB doesn't account for motivation/attitude/effort	**93**	75	18
General comment that DLAB inaccurately measures/fails to measure language learning aptitude	**58**	52	6
Received low DLAB score and does well in difficult language	**67**	61	8
General negative DLAB comment	**44**	38	6
Other factors that DLAB doesn't account for (e.g., study habits, learning strategies)	**43**	34	9
DLAB not based on a real language	**24**	22	2
Received high DLAB score and does poorly in difficult languages	**15**	14	1
Some people aren't good at taking tests	**10**	9	1
Testing condition issues with DLAB	**10**	10	0
DLAB doesn't test all aspects of language learning aptitude (e.g., does not consider grammar, conjugations, etc)	**5**	5	0
DLAB was more difficult than learning the language	**2**	1	1

Note. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

Table 7 (continued). Comment Theme Frequencies

	Overall	Operator	Leader
Other			
Suggestions regarding language assignments	**94**	76	18
Not relevant to the DLAB	**80**	76	4
Perceptions of what the DLAB tests	**48**	38	10
DLAB is the best/only available language aptitude test	**26**	17	9
Lack of knowledge about DLAB	**22**	21	1
DLAB scores aren't used to assign people to languages	**14**	11	3

Note. Some comments contained multiple themes. Therefore, the total number of codes assigned may be greater than the total number of comments.

As described by Bauer and colleagues (1998, 2001), information known about the test contributes to an individual's perception of whether or not the test is credible and fair. A test's credibility could be diminished by test takers' perceptions that the test measures something other than what it claims to measure, or that the test does not measure all components of what it claims to measure. An issue arises when test takers do not know what the test is meant to measure. Test takers must know what the test is measuring to help them evaluate its credibility and fairness. Otherwise, they will probably discredit the test. Some operators reported that they did not have knowledge of what the DLAB measured before they took the test. Exemplar verbatim comments are provided below.

> *"i have no idea how it is scored that was never explained in any way to me"*
> SOF Operator, USSOCOM Operational unit

> *"I do not understand the scoring of the DLAB"*
> SOF Operator, 4th POG

> *"I had no idea what this test is supposed to reflect."*
> SOF Operator, "Other" Operational unit

> *"I have no relevent opinion on this question. I have no idea how they use the results to assign personnel."*
> SOF Operator, 10th SFG

As indicated by Bauer and colleagues (2001), having a chance to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities on the test contributes to perceptions of its accuracy and fairness. If test takers think the test does not measure the entire scope of what is supposed to be measured, it may decrease the test's perceived credibility. Many operators and leaders said that the DLAB does not account for other factors that could influence an individual's language learning aptitude, such as motivation or personal interest in the language.

> *"Learning a foreign language really depends on the Soldiers motivation to learn the language. A Soldier can get a high score on the DLAB but have no interest in the language they are given to learn. If a Soldeir has no motivation to learn a language they are not going to retain it."*
> SOF Operator, 4th POG

> *"It does not account for work ethic. During language training I witnessed many students, who scored well on their DLAB, put forth little to no effort in learing their language"*
> SOF Operator, 4th POG

> *"DLAB scores do not accurately reflect language apitutde because motivation to learn is not measured."*
> SOF Operator, 95th CAB

> *"I know of individuals who have had low DLAB scores, but do very well in foreign language, because of previous experience in that foreign language. I also know of other individuals who have scored well on the DLAB, but have performed poorly in the*

assigned foreign language, because the language was assigned and there was no personal motivation.”

<div align="right">SOF Operator, DLI</div>

Just as credibility can be negatively affected by the test not measuring all the components of what it is supposed to be measuring, it can also be adversely affected by including irrelevant components. Some respondents said that performance on the DLAB is contingent upon having strong test-taking skills, which are unrelated to an individual's ability to learn a language.

“It did not make any sense. Some people just don't test well. That doesn't mean they can not learn.”

<div align="right">SOF Operator, 4th POG</div>

“Again this measure you ability to take a test. College grads do well and high school grads are lacking. The high school grads simply don't have the experience in takin test.”

<div align="right">SOF Operator, 7th SFG</div>

“Some people simply do not take tests well. Their results do not accurately reflect their aptitude.”

<div align="right">SOF Operator, USSOCOM</div>

“I think that it is a matter of who is good on a multiple choice test”

<div align="right">SOF Operator, 95th CAB</div>

Participant: *“Are you guys familiar with the DLAB?”*
Moderator: *“The DLAB, yes.”*
Participant: *“It's a made-up language.”*
Moderator: *“Yes.”*
Participant: *“I don't see why—I mean, some people just don't test well. I mean, honestly, some people just don't test well. They're really smart or something, but if you give it to them written in a test, they're like 'Huh.'”*

<div align="right">WARCOM focus group</div>

As described by Bauer and colleagues (2001), test administration and decision procedure consistency influences test perceptions. If test scores are not being used properly, test motivation may be negatively affected. Some operators reported that DLAB scores are not used as the policy stipulates to assign individuals to languages for training.

“It should be used but I got like a 73 and they gave me arabic so they don't use the DLAB for anything.”

<div align="right">SOF Operator, 5th SFG</div>

“I think this is fairly obvious. Don't assign Chinese or Russian to someone who barely passed the DLAB ... it's done all the time. I don't understand why.”

<div align="right">SOF Operator, USSOCOM operational unit</div>

> *"I did not score high, and still got a cat4 language. The test was worthless"*
>   SOF Operator, 5th SFG

> *"I do not believe that the DLAB is used to assign languages. I think that it has been more a needs of the Groups and what languages are native to those Groups that has been driving the languages that students learned while in training. This is speaking for 18 series guys only."*
>   SOF Operator, Deployed SO unit

> *"I have noticed that, on average, those with a higher DLAB score tend to do better than those with a lower score. Of course nothing is a better indicator than genuine enthusiasm to learn another language, and those Soldiers need to be identified, assessed, and trained accordingly."*
>   SOF Operator, 5th SFG

> *"Different learning styles may prevent students from being as successful during DLAB as they are during DLPT based on self study and motivation during the course work."*
>   SOF Operator, USAREC

> *"it doesn't gauge that some people learn language in different ways, and that also a persons interpersonal skills can make them much more effective, basically if your well liked the locals will also try harder to understand you and work with you"*
>   SOF Operator, MARSOC

Conditions and treatment at the testing site can influence whether test takers perceive the test as credible and fair (Bauer et al., 2001).Test takers need adequate testing conditions so they can take the test to the best of their ability. Some operators, all of which were from USASOC, reported that the temperature in their testing room was too hot. Also, some operators reported lacking sleep the night before the test due to other requirements. Other testing administrative issues were also reported, such as the test administrator not taking the test seriously or not providing clear instructions.

> *"I fell asleep when I took the DLAB because or inadquate facilities (the room was 100 degrees in the middle of a hot North Carolina summer) and because our drill sergeants did not let us get enough sleep the night before and the took us on a 8 mile run right before taking the test. The whole situation set everyone who took that test up for failure."*
>   SOF Operator, 4th POG

> *"I was tired and stressed when I took it in SFAS."*
>   SOF Operator, 4th POG

> *"The test was given under stressful condictions"*
>   SOF Operator, 7th SFG

"During the course of my DLAB I was unaware of a final section of the exam until very little time remained. As a result I was unable to adequately attend to the questions in this section and my score consequently suffered."

SOF Operator, 10th SFG

"I took it when I was a brand new LT; I didn't know what it was, and when the 'proctor' said, 'I don't care if you finish it,' we all left."

SOF Operator, ARCENT

"Many soldiers dont pay attention to the 'jargon mumbo jumbo' in the test after it has began"

SOF Operator, 10th SFG

"As far as the testing in school it's really not an accurate way to test somebody's ability to learn a foreign language given the situation, the way the testing is done, the focus to the student should be testing after that school situation where they're not training all day and coming to this test, haven't had time to go to sleep."

WARCOM focus group

SECTION V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Assigning individuals to an appropriate language for training is an important decision with many potential implications. If individuals are not accurately assigned, there can be financial and capability consequences for the organization, performance consequences for the unit and individual, and motivational consequences for the individual. If a person is not properly assigned, it is an ineffective use of time and money for the organization. For example, in the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC), if an individual is assigned to train in a language that is too difficult and fails to meet the proficiency standard, then additional financial and time investments are needed to raise that person's proficiency to an acceptable level for graduation or the total investment in that person's selection and training is lost (i.e., he does not finish the SFQC and does not enter SF). Furthermore, if assignment is ineffective, individuals may arrive at their unit without the proper language skills or with insufficient levels of skill to support their unit's mission. If individuals are placed into the wrong language or fail to achieve or maintain proficiency, then their skills and knowledge cannot be fully utilized in their unit. Again, ineffective language assignment has financial, capability, and mission performance consequences for SOF, the unit, and the individual. For example, if adequate language skills are not available, then the unit must utilize interpreters, which have financial and mission effectiveness consequences. Finally, trainees may become discouraged if placed in a language that is too difficult, or bored if placed in a language that is too easy. This may affect their motivation to learn the language, maintain the language, use the language on missions, and continue learning the language once at their unit.

The DLAB is currently used for language assignment in the SOF community. Although research shows the DLAB is a limited predictor of success in language training (e.g., SWA Consulting, Technical Report #2009010616, Technical Report #2009010612), it is the best single measure of language learning aptitude currently available. Until a better alternative is developed, the value of the DLAB must be optimized through effective use. Consistent and effective use will maximize the validity of the DLAB for language assignment and result in optimized outcomes for SOF, units, and individuals.

In addition to the statistical properties of the DLAB (i.e., reliability and validity), the DLAB needs to be *perceived* as an accurate measure by SOF operators and leaders so that its use for language assignment is perceived as fair. However, this study's findings show that some operators and, to a lesser extent, leaders, perceive the test as inaccurate. Reasons for their views include:
- No knowledge of what DLAB measures or how it is used in the language assignment process prior to taking the test
- Perceptions that the DLAB does not measure all aspects of learning language aptitude
- Perceptions that the DLAB measures skills unrelated to language learning (i.e., test-taking skills)
- Perceptions or experiences that DLAB scores are not used to assign individuals to language
- Negative testing experiences (e.g., testing conditions, administrative issues)

These factors align with factors identified by past research that influence test accuracy and fairness perceptions (Bauer et al., 2001, 1998; Gilliand, 1993). To change operator and leader perceptions of the DLAB, each of these factors needs to be addressed. Some of these factors are characteristics of the test

and can only be addressed by improving the DLAB; however, others can be addressed through communication and effective and consistent administration and use of the DLAB. Leaders in the SOF community can advocate for changes to the DLAB and/or investigate alternatives, but the SOF leaders who control the administration of the DLAB and the use of the test for language assignment can achieve the most direct and immediate impact.

First, personnel who take the DLAB need explicit explanation as to what the DLAB measures and how it is used in the assignment process prior to taking the test, especially if this can be done in such a way as to not compromise the DLAB's functioning. As described by Bauer and colleagues (1998, 2001), information known about the test contributes to an individual's perception of whether or not the test is accurate and/or fair. Survey comments indicated that some operators did not know what the test was supposed to measure prior to testing. This lack of knowledge could lead to negative perceptions about the DLAB, and these perceptions may influence test takers' motivation to perform well on the test. It should be noted that explaining to test takers what the DLAB intends to measure and how it will be used in the language assignment process can lead to some test takers intentionally underperforming on the test as a strategy to avoid being assigned to a more difficult language. In this case, presenting the DLAB as one factor in language assignment process might be most beneficial. One alternative strategy is to inform test takers of the purpose and use of the DLAB after they complete the test (i.e., debriefing). The debriefing strategy might improve perceptions of the test but does not address the pre-DLAB motivation issue. Also, the DLAB is often administered prior to individuals entering the SOF trainee pipeline or the SOF community. In this case, it is impossible to communicate the use of the DLAB in SOF language assignment or the importance of the test. However, this communication is possible when the DLAB is administered as part of the process in a SOF organization. Regardless, test takers need some information prior to testing to inform their motivation and engagement in the DLAB testing process.

Second, perceptions about whether the DLAB measures all aspects of language learning aptitude and whether it measures abilities unrelated to language learning should be monitored. As indicated by Bauer and colleagues (2001), having a chance to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities on the test contributes to perceptions of its accuracy and fairness. If it is perceived that a test does not measure all aspects of what it is supposed to measure or if the test measures something unrelated to what it should be testing, then the test may be perceived negatively. For example, some operators reported that the DLAB does not measure all aspects of language learning aptitude, such as motivation or personal interest in a language. Furthermore, some operators suggested that the DLAB measures an individual's test taking skills, which are unrelated to their ability to learn a foreign language. These negative perceptions can be passed to individuals who have not yet taken the test, negatively influencing their motivation to engage in the DLAB testing process and their resulting scores. The less accurate scores resulting from unmotivated test performance may undermine the statistical properties of the scores and the resulting language assignments. Although the DLAB and DLAB 2 testing programs are controlled outside of USSOCOM, USSOCOM should communicate its testing requirements and feedback to the appropriate groups. An effective language aptitude test should not only have sufficient psychometric properties (validity and reliability) and predictive validity for SOF language training outcomes, but it should also include relevant

factors and exclude irrelevant factors. Users should perceive the test as being an accurate predictor to maximize the effectiveness of its use.

Third, to preserve or increase perceived test credibility and fairness, DLAB scores should be consistently used for language assignment purposes. As indicated by Bauer and colleagues (2001), test administration and decision procedure consistency influences test perceptions. Some respondents indicated that the DLAB should not be used for language assignment because of credibility issues. If factors that negatively influence DLAB accuracy perceptions can be addressed then the fairness perceptions of the language assignment process should improve. A language assignment process that is effective and applied consistently will be perceived as accurate and fair. Although current and future force requirements may require that language assignments not be based solely on DLAB scores, consistent use of the DLAB and communication of its use should improve perceptions. SOF leaders have direct control over how the DLAB is used in the assignment process—regardless if it is the only factor or one of many used—and they should ensure the effective and consistent use of the DLAB or its alternative. If other factors (e.g., previous language experience, current and future force requirements) are considered in the language assignment process or can override the DLAB in the assignment decision, the full assignment criteria and process should be communicated to personnel at the appropriate time in the process.

Finally, test takers should be provided with reasonable testing accommodations. Conditions and treatment at the testing site can influence whether test takers perceive the test as credible and fair (Bauer et al., 2001). Specifically, some operators reported that the test room temperature was too hot. An easy fix would be to provide fans or an air conditioning unit for the testing rooms. Furthermore, some operators reported that they did not receive adequate sleep the night before the test due to other training requirements. Those responsible for the test takers should be aware of the testing date and provide operators the opportunity to rest the night before the test. These factors can systematically influence individual test performance in groups that experienced the constraints and, therefore, alter or undermine predictive validity. If groups differ on conditions, it could create two predictive profiles, obscuring the interpretation of the test's scores and the effectiveness of cut scores used for assignment purposes. If these testing administration conditions are expected to occur in the future, research should be conducted under these constrained conditions to determine the impact on the predictive validity of the DLAB. Lastly, some operators reported test administration issues, such as the test administrator not taking the test seriously or not providing clear test instructions. All test administrators should be trained to provide adequate testing instructions for test takers and maintain a neutral attitude about the test.

Although perceptions about the DLAB's accuracy and its use for language assignment were mixed, steps can be taken to improve these perceptions. Two key actions are to communicate the DLAB testing policy and to encourage effective and consistent use of the DLAB for language assignment within a SOF organization. Based on research in other areas, if a test is effectively and consistently used in an organization, then perceptions of its accuracy and fairness will improve. If perceptions improve, then test takers will engage in the testing process and test results will be more accurate and representative of individual aptitudes. If test results are more accurate, then the test's use for assignment will be more effective. In this case, if perceptions of the DLAB improve, test takers engage in the DLAB testing

process more seriously and the DLAB's predictive validity is optimized, then the language assignment will be more appropriate and effective, providing the organization, the unit, and the individual with the best opportunity to succeed in the language domain. SOF leaders should also continue to identify alternatives or supplements to the DLAB. When the DLAB 2 is available, it should be validated for use with SOF personnel, if the test is feasible for administration within the constraints of SOF operational use. Regardless of the DLAB's psychometric properties or specific use, it is currently the single most consistent test for language assignment, and SOF leaders should develop use policies that optimize its effectiveness.

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ABOUT SWA CONSULTING INC.

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

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

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

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

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

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APPENDIX A: ABOUT THE LCNA PROJECT

In 2003-2004, the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) sponsored the *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* to inform the development of a language transformation strategy in response to a GAO report (2003). This *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* collected current-state information about language usage, proficiency, training, and policy issues (e.g., Foreign Language Proficiency Pay, FLPP) from SOF personnel, SOF unit leaders, and other personnel involved in SOF language. The project used multiple data collection methods and provided the SOFLO with valid data to develop a comprehensive language transformation strategy and advocate for the SOF perspective on language issues within the DoD community.
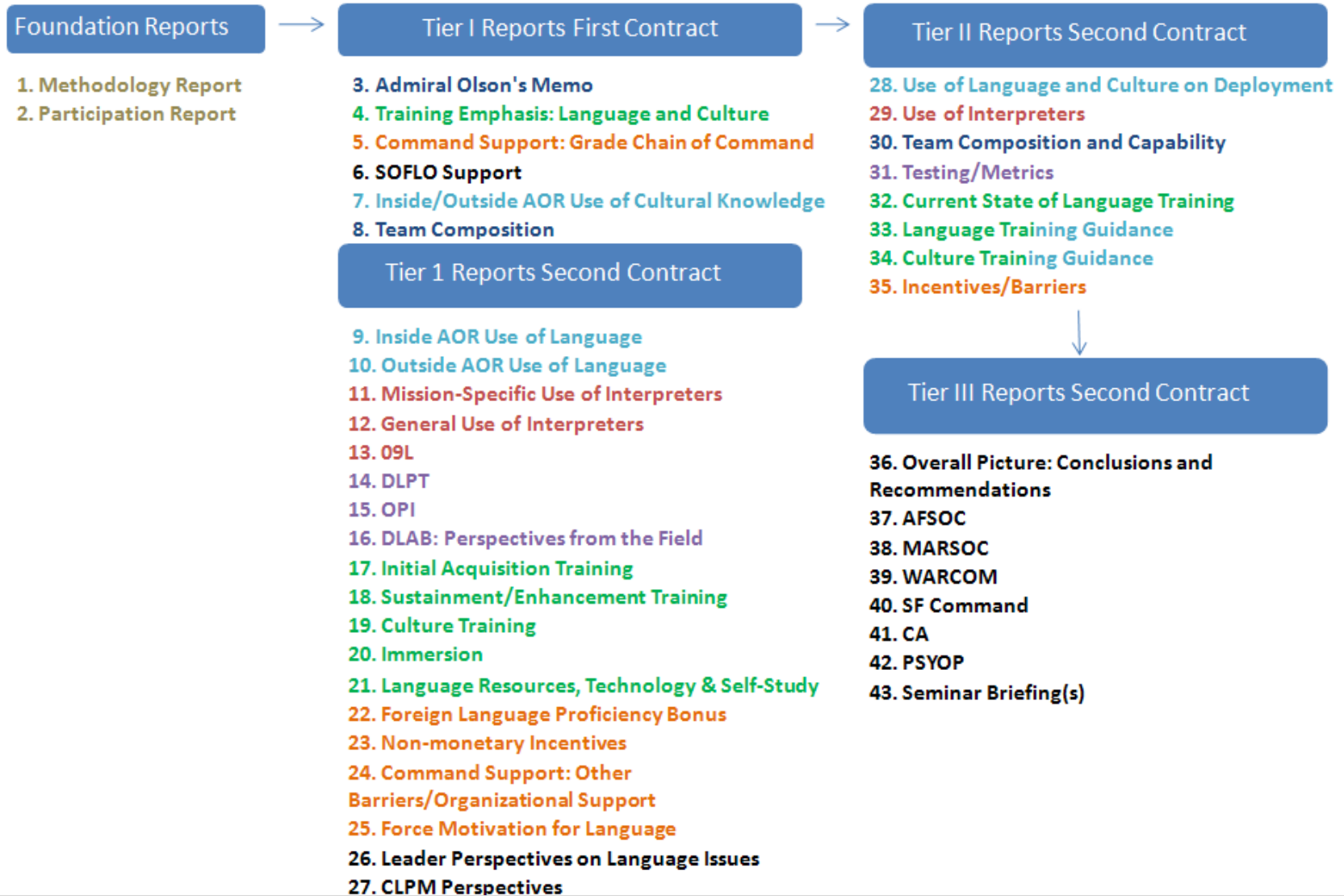
In a continuing effort to update knowledge of language and culture needs while informing strategic plan development, the SOFLO commissioned the *2009 SOF Language and Culture Needs Assessment Project* (LCNA) to reassess the language and culture landscape across the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) and develop a strategy for the next five years. Data were collected between March and November, 2009 from personnel in the SOF community, including operators and leaders. Twenty-three focus groups were conducted between March and June, 2009. A comprehensive, web-based survey for SOF operators and leaders was launched on 26 October and closed on 24 November, 2009.

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

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

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

Appendix A, Figure 1. Report Overview

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

Foundation Reports

1. Methodology Report
2. Participation Report

Tier I Reports First Contract

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

Tier 1 Reports Second Contract

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

Tier II Reports Second Contract

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

Tier III Reports Second Contract

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

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

APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY

Participants

Focus Group Participants
Twenty-three focus groups were conducted with 126 SOF personnel across the SOF community. Focus groups were conducted with Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC), Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), Naval Special Warfare Command (WARCOM), and United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC; see *Participation Report,* Technical Report #2010011003 for participant details). Section IV of this report presents focus group discussion related to perceptions of the DLAB (see *Methodology Report,* Technical Report #2010011002 for the focus group interview guide).

Survey Participants
Survey respondents received the operator version of the DLAB items if they indicated one of the following SOF community roles:
- SOF Operator
- SOF Operator assigned to other duty
- Currently in the training pipeline
- MI Linguist or 09L assigned or attached to a SOF unit

The focus of this report is on SOF operator and SOF leader perspectives, therefore, MI Linguist/09L perspectives are not included in this report.

Survey respondents received the leader version of the DLAB items if they indicated one of the following SOF community roles:
- SOF Unit Commander
- Command Language Program Manager (CLPM)
- Language office personnel
- Other civilian

The focus of this report is on SOF operator and leader perspectives, therefore, CLPM, language office personnel, and civilian perspectives are not included in this report. For further details on participation and attrition rates, please refer to the *Participation Report* (Technical Report #2010011003).

Measures

Survey respondents were given two closed-ended items and three open-ended items related to the DLAB. Whether operators and leaders were presented these items depended on their response to the following items:

Operators

- Have you taken the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB)?

Overall, 1,140 SOF operators (SOF operators or SOF operators assigned to other duty) responded to this item. Eighty-one percent (*n* = 920) of operators responded "Yes" to this item and so they received the DLAB follow up items. Operators that responded "No" were branched to the next survey section.

Leaders

- Are operators in your unit required to take the DLAB? (If yes, are you in a position to comment on the DLAB?)

Overall, 808 SOF leaders responded to this item. Eleven-percent (*n* = 92) of leaders responded "Yes, and I am in a position to comment on the DLAB" and, therefore, received the DLAB items. Leaders that responded "Yes, but I am not in a position to comment on the DLAB" (46%, *n* = 374), "No, operators in my unit are not required to take the DLAB" (24%, *n* = 194), or "Not applicable" (18%, *n* = 148) were branched to the next survey section.

Follow-up DLAB items

Operators and leaders who continued to the DLAB items received the following closed-ended items. Response options included "Yes" and "No" for each item.

- Do you think your DLAB score accurately reflects [your][2] language learning aptitude?
- Do you think that the DLAB should be used to assign individuals to language training?

Operators and leaders also received three open-ended items:

- Please explain why the DLAB does or does not accurately reflect [your] language learning aptitude.
- Please explain why the DLAB should or should not be used to assign individuals to language training.
- Use the space below to provide any specific feedback you have related to the DLAB.

Overall, at least 32% of the 890[3] operators and 58% of the 92 leaders who responded to the DLAB survey items provided at least one comment in the open-ended item fields.

- *Please explain why the DLAB does or does not accurately reflect [your] language learning aptitude.*
  - o Operator response rate = 32% (287 of 890)
  - o Leader response rate = 58% (53 of 92)
- *Please explain why the DLAB should or should not be used to assign individuals to language training.*
  - o Operator response rate = 30% (268 of 890)
  - o Leader response rate = 53% (49 of 92)

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[2] Words in brackets reflect item wording on operator version of the survey.
[3] 920 operators (SOF operators and SOF operators assigned to other duty) responded 'Yes' to the first DLAB item, *Have you taken the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB)?* However, 30 of these operators did not respond to the remaining DLAB items.

- *Use the space below to provide any specific feedback you have related to the DLAB.*
  - o Operator response rate = 5% (47 of 890)
  - o Leader response rate = 10% (9 of 92)

Analyses

All closed-ended items were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistics. To compare responses across groups of participants, inferential statistics (e.g., chi square tests) were used to determine if any observed differences are likely to exist in the broader population of interest. Among the groups compared included:

- Deployment history
- Language-coded position vs. not in a language-coded position
- Official/required language difficulty
- Proficiency in official/required language
- Grade (within E, WO, and O)

To analyze the focus group data and open-ended items (survey comments), two raters created a content code (i.e., theme) list based on available responses (see *Methodology Report,* Technical Report #2010011002 for details on qualitative coding). A primary rater then coded each response and a secondary rater coded 30% of the responses. Raters determined the consistency of codes applied between raters and discussed any disagreements to consensus. The frequency of occurrence for each theme is presented in this report.

For further details on these methods please refer to the *Methodology Report* (Technical Report #2010011002).

APPENDIX C: COMMENT CODE DEFINITIONS

SOF operators and SOF leaders were given the opportunity to provide comments in response to the following survey prompts:

- *Please explain why the DLAB does or does not accurately reflect [your]*[4] *language learning aptitude.*
- *Please explain why the DLAB should or should not be used to assign individuals to language training.*
- *Use the space below to provide any specific feedback you have related to the DLAB.*

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

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

DLAB is accurate
- Received low DLAB score and performed poorly in language
  - o Definition: Respondent references a personal or general occurrence of an individual who scores low on the DLAB and performs poorly in their assigned language.
    - ▪ "I scored low which put me in a CAT one language. I have diffiuclty with the language so I believe the score was accurate."
    - ▪ "I scored poorly on it and have struggled considerably learning a new language."
    - ▪ "I did not score all that well and was still assigned Arabic. I struggled while learning Arabic."
- Received high DLAB scores and performed well in language
  - o Definition: Respondent references a personal or general occurrence of an individual who scores high on the DLAB and performs well in their assigned language.
    - ▪ "I only know that in my own experience I tested well on the DLAB and tested better than all but one of my classmates after the language training received at SWC and can't think of anyone I've talked to that scored low on a DLAB yet was able to gain a high proficiency in a language after 4-6 months of training."
    - ▪ "I scored an 108 on my DLAB. Because of this, I was chosen to learn Modern Standard Arabic. I passed all tests during the language training phase on the first attempt. I like to believe the DLAB's level of accuracy is a honest assessment of ones ability to learn a new language."
- General comment that DLAB accurately measures language learning aptitude
  - o Definition: Respondent says that DLAB is an accurate measure of language learning aptitude without referencing personal or general occurrence of low scoring individual performing poorly/high scoring individual performing well.

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[4] Words in brackets reflects item wording on operator version of the survey.

- "I believe the test accurately reflects the students aptitude for learning languages."
- "I think that the DLAB accurately measures one's ability to think in the conceptual style that is required for learning a language. The way one learns languages can be quantified and measured by the DLAB."
- "The rate which I learned a language was what I expected after taking the DLAB."

DLAB is inaccurate
- DLAB doesn't account for motivation/attitude/effort
  - Definition: Respondent says that the DLAB does not account for an individual's motivation to learn a language.
    - "It doesn't measure effort or interest, the two biggest factors in success."
    - "It has no way to accurately apply a persons "want to learn". If a person wants to learn a specific language they will naturally try harder and do better than whan they score on the DLAB."
    - "Learning a foreign language really depends on the Soldiers motivation to learn the language. A Soldier can get a high score on the DLAB but have no interest in the language they are given to learn. If a Soldeir has no motivation to learn a language they are not going to retain it."
    - "DLAB scores do not accurately reflect language apitutde because motivation to learn is not measured."
- Received low DLAB score and does well in difficult language
  - Definition: Respondent references a personal or general occurrence of an individual who scored low on the DLAB and performed well in their assigned language.
    - "I learned English after learning to speak 2 other languages. I've taken the DLAB it showed that I don't have the ability to learn a language, how can that be possible when I speak close to 4 languages."
    - "According to my DLAB score I was supposed to be able to learn only a CAT 1 language. I was trained in a CAT 3 language and passed the DLPT with a 1/1."
    - "I had one of the lowest scores from my DLAB Test. I still got ARABIC and was on the Commadants List. An I'm the second best speaker on my Detachment. The best is a former MI guy who swithed to SF."
    - "Due to the fact I scored low on the DLAB and still qualified to speak Korean, which is a harder language than I should have been able to learn"
- Received high DLAB score and does poorly in difficult languages
  - Definition: Respondent references a personal or general occurrence of an individual who scored high on the DLAB and performed poorly in their assigned language.
    - "I went to DLI with a student who had a DLAB score of 135. He failed out of the class because of his inability to grasp the language. Our honor graduate had a DLAB score of 107."
    - "Scored high, had difficult time learning"

- "I scored high on DLAB but the harder languages are difficult for me to do more than memorize phrases."Other factors that DLAB doesn't account for (e.g., study habits, learning strategies)
    - o Definition: Respondent says that the DLAB doesn't account for additional individual differences or situational factors *excluding* motivation/attitude/effort.
        - "Different learning styles may prevent students from being as successful during DLAB as they are during DLPT based on self study and motivation during the course work."
        - "it doesn't gauge that some people learn language in different ways, and that also a persons interpersonal skills can make them much more effective, basically if your well liked the locals will also try harder to understand you and work with you"
        - "Tests ans mesurments are relative, and do not assess previous experiance."
- Some people aren't good at taking tests
    - o Definition: Respondent says that the DLAB measures test-taking ability or that the DLAB is not an accurate measure of language learning aptitude because it measures test-taking ability.
        - "Some people simply do not take tests well. Their results do not accurately reflect their aptitude."
        - "It did not make any sense. Some people just don't test well. That doesn't mean they can not learn."
        - "Again this measure you ability to take a test. College grads do well and high school grads are lacking. The high school grads simply don't have the experience in takin test."
- DLAB doesn't test all aspects of language learning aptitude (e.g., does not test one's understanding of English)
    - o Definition: Respondent says that the DLAB doesn't test all mechanical aspects of language acquisition.
        - "It cna help indicate who cna learn a language but Soldier's knowledge of English needs to be assessed as well. If one does not know what a past participle is in English how can one learn it in another language?"
        - "the DLAB reflects potential- but when you actually have to learn a real language you must know English rules first- not some made-up rules you learn for a few minutes. If you don't know English rules and the presentation is done using English rules to learn the new language rules- then it is hard…."
- DLAB not based on a real language
    - o Definition: Respondent says that the DLAB is not based on a real language or that the DLAB is not an accurate measure of language learning aptitude because it is not based on a real language.
        - "How can you assess ones ability to learn a language with some crazy made up language? I know people that are native speakers in a number of different languages and they came out of the DLAB with the same headache and confussion I had."

- DLAB was more difficult than learning the language
    - o Definition: Respondent says that the DLAB was more difficult than learning their assigned language.
        - ▪ "I found the DLAB far more difficult to understand than the target Language, Farsi in this case."
- Testing condition issues with DLAB
    - o Definition: Respondents say that they had test condition issues while taking the DLAB.
        - ▪ "The test was given under stressful condictions."
        - ▪ "During the course of my DLAB I was unaware of a final section of the exam until very little time remained. As a result I was unable to adequately attend to the questions in this section and my score consequently suffered."
        - ▪ "I fell asleep when I took the DLAB because or inadquate facilities (the room was 100 degrees in the middle of a hot North Carolina summer) and because our drill sergeants did not let us get enough sleep the night before and the took us on a 8 mile run right before taking the test. The whole situation set everyone who took that test up for failure."
- General comment that DLAB inaccurately measures/fails to measure language learning aptitude
    - o Definition: Respondents say that the DLAB does not accurately measure or fails to measure language learning aptitude, without referencing personal or general occurrence of low scoring individual performing well/high scoring individual performing poorly.
        - ▪ "The DLAB is more or less based on guessing."
        - ▪ "I scored a 135 on my DLAB compared to fellow soldiers in my class that scored 95 or lower, yet achieved the same score (2 listening, 2 reading) on the DLPT after language school."
        - ▪ "I do not see the corelation between the score and my ability to learn a language;"

Other comments about DLAB
- Perceptions of what the DLAB tests
    - o Definition: Respondent describes what he or she thinks the DLAB tests.
        - ▪ "Understanding the rules of a language in a short amount of time"
        - ▪ "It shows the ability to recognize pattterns and rules associated with languages."
        - ▪ "i think it just tests a persons capability to understand some language rules (usage of verbs/nouons/etc"
        - ▪ "the DLAB is a simple language based IQ test."
        - ▪ "IT GIVES YOU A MEASURE OF AN INDIVIDUALS ABILITY TO LEARN A PARTICULAR LANGUAGE."
- DLAB is the best/only available language aptitude test
    - o Definition: Respondent says that the DLAB is the best available or the only available language aptitude test.
        - ▪ "i guess it is as good a tool as any, i am not aware of any other test that measure aptitude."

- ▪ "You have to use some tool. It is better than shooting in the dark."
- ▪ "Something is better than nothing, and right now the DLAB is it."
- ▪ "No other way to measure language aptitude."
- Lack of knowledge about DLAB
  - o Definition: Respondent is confused or unsure about what the DLAB tests or how the DLAB scores are used to assign individuals to languages.
    - ▪ "I am uncertain as to just what the DLAB measures. No explanation has been provided to explain how the DLAB relates to a person's language apptitude."
    - ▪ "I have no relevent opinion on this question. I have no idea how they use the results to assign personnel."
    - ▪ "I don't understand how the DLAB works."
- DLAB scores aren't used to assign people to languages
  - o Definition: Respondent says that DLAB scores are not used to assign individuals to language within the SOF community.
    - ▪ "The DLAB had nothing to do with language assignment when I went through the language course."
    - ▪ "It should be used but I got like a 73 and they gave me arabic so they don't use the DLAB for anything."
    - ▪ "I did not score high, and still got a cat4 language…"
- Suggestions regarding language assignments
  - o Definition: Respondent suggests revision to existing language assignment process.
    - ▪ "Many individuals have only a limited ability to learn a language. Those individuals should be required to basic memorization or the target language and practice using language tools and interpreters."
    - ▪ "Blanket SF students with a basic language school. Let the Groups focus on language training improvements by selecting those individuals with the desire and ability to increase their capability."
    - ▪ "This is only a gage. The language selection of the SM should match the AOR regardless of DLAB scores."
    - ▪ "Provide the individual with the DLAB study guide (2 page guide). It increased my score 45 points."
- General positive DLAB comment
  - o Definition: Respondent provides a general positive comment about the DLAB.
    - ▪ "I would rather answer the above question with a "neither agree nor disagree". I think the DLAB will help prevent personnel with no aptitude for more difficult languages from having to suffer through a CAT 4 language unecessarily. I may be a fluke but I think there is some merit to the test."
    - ▪ "It at least provides some sort of basis to start assesing ones aptitude at language."
- General negative DLAB comment
  - o Definition: Respondent provides a general negative comment about the DLAB.

- ▪ "DLAB should only be one of several inidcators of possible aptitude. It is a VERY POOR stand-alone indicator."
- ▪ "Its an ineffective test"
- ▪ "The placement of soldiers by using the DLAB is not the best manner in which to do so."
- Not relevant to the DLAB
    - o Definition: Respondent provides a comment that is unrelated to the DLAB.