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14. ABSTRACT SOF personnel operate around the globe. A comprehensive language strategy was needed to guide the allocation of resources. SOFLO sponsored the Special Operations Forces Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project to address this deficiency. This study consisted of focus groups conducted at units across the SOF community and several surveys conducted via the Web. From November 2003 to March 2004, 21 focus groups requiring approximately 3 hours duration each were conducted in order to evaluate the current state of foreign language usage and training in the SOF community. Surveys were designed to gather data from SOF personnel, unit leaders, and instructors. Three comprehensive, issue-oriented surveys were developed and deployed in July 2004 (<i>N</i> = 899). This is the final report for the project. Overall, the message from SOF personnel and unit leaders who participated in the study appears to be that the current system for providing language training and resources is not effectively meeting the needs of SOF personnel and their units. The results of the study point to the need for improvement in many areas, including language training effectiveness, allocation of language training time, command support, language testing, and language proficiency pay.					
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Special Operations Forces Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project: Final Project Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Special Operations Forces (SOF) personnel operate around the globe. Most SOF units are required to have multiple language capabilities and many SOF personnel have at least one required language to learn and maintain. Approximately 50% of the language billets in the Department of Defense (DoD) are in the SOF community. Given the increased operational demands of the *Global War on Terror* (GWOT), including the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the importance of having language-enabled SOF personnel with sufficient language skills to accomplish missions inside and outside their areas of responsibility (AOR) has never been more critical. SOF leaders must ensure that Soldiers, Airmen, and Sailors in the SOF community receive effective language training and resources to enable successful accomplishment of SOF tasks that require language skills. How do SOF leaders ensure that language resources are structured and utilized effectively to achieve this objective?

A comprehensive language strategy is needed to guide the allocation of resources to provide initial acquisition, sustainment, and enhancement training as well as tools and other resources across all SOF components. A recent U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report (2003) indicated that the current SOF language strategy was insufficient and that SOF needed a strategic plan for language capability. The first step in developing a strategy is assessing the current state. Data about the current state of language usage, proficiency, and training are required as well as projections of future mission requirements and training needs. This allows for *gap analysis* to inform strategic planning and resource allocation. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of current, comprehensive data on language usage and training effectiveness from the perspective of SOF personnel.

The Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) sponsored the *Special Operations Forces Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* to address this deficiency. This study 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 was designed to provide SOFLO with valid data to develop a comprehensive language transformation strategy and to support language-related advocacy for the SOF perspective within the DoD community. This study consisted of 21 focus groups conducted at units across the SOF community and several comprehensive issue-oriented surveys conducted via the Web. This technical report provides the details of and the integrated findings from this project (i.e., focus groups and surveys) as well as some broad recommendations based on those findings. This is the final report for the project. APPENDIX A provides details about the component technical reports that were integrated to create this final report.

Method

The *Special Operations Forces Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* included two primary data collection methods to achieve its objective: focus groups and surveys.

Focus Groups

The focus group study was commissioned in October 2003. From November 2003 to March 2004, 21 focus groups requiring approximately three hours duration each were conducted in order to evaluate the current state of foreign language usage and training in the SOF community. Focus groups were organized in three broad sections or question blocks. In the first block, participants were asked to describe ways in which they used foreign languages on the job. In the second, participants were asked to describe their previous language training experiences and indicate ways in which such training could be improved. In the third block, participants were asked break into teams and to prepare and

present a “decision brief” on language issues and solutions for their unit commander. The study covered the entire SOF community across Army, Navy and Air Force SOF units. Active Guard and Reserve units were included. The number of participants ranged from 3 to 11 per group, for a total of approximately 145 participants.

Surveys

The survey study was designed to collect data from SOF personnel, unit leaders (Unit Commanders, Senior Warrant Officer Advisors, Senior Enlisted Advisors, Staff Officers, and Command Language Program Managers), and instructors to be integrated with the results from the focus group study. The surveys were designed to confirm or disconfirm and expand upon the focus group findings with a larger number of participants. Three comprehensive, issue-oriented surveys were developed and deployed on the Internet in late July 2004.

Although the surveys were deployed for a limited time, we received a fair response rate for an issue-oriented survey (i.e., a longer survey that focuses on incumbents who are subject matter experts) from SOF personnel ($n = 1039$) and unit leaders ($n = 158$). Lack of Internet access, lack of an effective means to distribute the survey link to all SOF personnel (e.g., Navy), and project time constraints (i.e., shorter response window) impacted survey response. Too few instructors ($n = 7$) and Navy SOF ($n=1$) participated to obtain interpretable results, necessitating removal of those surveys. After removing any questionable respondent cases from the SOF personnel survey responses, 899 valid cases remained, with 857 indicating Army personnel and 41 indicating Air Force (AF; fairly high % of total AFSOF language professionals and language enabled personnel). Of the 857 Army personnel, 297 were SOF personnel, 56 were military intelligence organic to SOF units, 35 were SOF support, 325 were non-SOF language professionals, and 144 were non-SOF, non-language professionals. Of the 297 SOF personnel, 118 indicated that they were Reserve Component (RC) personnel.

Considering the constraints of the situation, the type of survey (i.e., a long issue-oriented survey) and the demographic similarity of the sample to the SOF population, we believe the response rate is sufficient and that the data are a useful source of inference about language issues in the SOF community, with the obvious exception of Navy SOF. Although this study clearly provides the best source of language-related data from SOF personnel and unit leaders, caution should be taken in applying the results of this study uniformly across all SOF units without first evaluating whether the findings are appropriate for the specific unit.

Summary of Findings

Findings from this project highlight several key issues that must be taken into account when developing an effective and comprehensive SOF language strategy. This section summarizes the key findings from the project, and the next section presents some broad recommendations. Although the main purpose of this project was to inform strategy development, we believe the findings suggest several specific recommendations that can be implemented as part of the strategy or as separate, complementary initiatives. We encourage SOF and DoD leaders to utilize the data gathered by this project to make meaningful changes.

Overall, the message from SOF personnel and unit leaders who participated in the study appears to be that the current system for providing language training and resources is not effectively meeting the needs of SOF personnel and their units. The results of the study point to the need for improvement in many areas including language training effectiveness, allocation of language training time, command support, language testing, and language proficiency pay.

The overall results also demonstrate the interrelatedness of the training, proficiency, language usage in the field, and mission outcomes. For example, a majority of SOF personnel reported that they felt unprepared in terms of language skills for their most recent deployments, especially if they were deployed outside of their traditional or War Plan AOR. Many of these personnel indicated that training and proficiency testing were not related to language usage on deployment and were ineffective. Also, personnel reported having difficulty fulfilling many of their language-related job/mission duties without heavy reliance on interpreters. Unit leaders reported that SOF personnel, even those who attended institutionalized language training, were not showing up at their units language-capable for their missions. Both SOF personnel and leaders indicated having problems with interpreters, including incidents when interpreters negatively impacted or degraded mission outcomes.

The point is that ineffective or insufficient training triggers a systemic domino effect. Ineffective or insufficient training leads to poor proficiency which leads to using interpreters to complete language-related mission tasks which can lead to degraded or negative mission outcomes if interpreters are not trustworthy or competent. Therefore, SOF decision makers should keep the systemic nature of the language issue in mind when developing the SOF language strategy and strategic plans. Focusing exclusively on one aspect of language will not solve the problem and is likely to have unintended effects across the system.

Below is a brief recap of some of the key findings from each of the seven sections of results.

1. Language Use on Deployment

- In terms of language usage, the frequency and importance of various language tasks and the level of language skill needed in the field depends heavily on SOF personnel type (Special Forces, AFSOC Aviation Advisors, CA Soldier, PSYOP Soldier, etc.), mission type, the language, and whether the mission is inside or outside the respondents' AOR.
- All groups indicated building rapport was among the most important uses of language skills, if not the most important use. AFSOF personnel were an exception; AFSOF personnel rated military-technical vocabulary as the most frequent and important use of language skills on deployment.
- SOF personnel deployed on DA and SR missions perceived a lesser need for high levels of proficiency than personnel deployed on UW, FID, PSYOP, and CAO missions.
- CLPMs and SOF personnel disagree slightly in terms of how language is used in the field.
- SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated that higher levels of proficiency would be ideal for language-related tasks and mission requirements. It should be noted that respondents indicated the level based on a list of language tasks/functions, and all the functions provided on this list would rate in a range between 1 and 3 on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale used within the DoD (see APPENDIX B for a Layman's Understanding of ILR Language Skill Level Descriptions).

2. Preparedness for Deployment

- Overall, across missions inside and outside of their AOR, SOF personnel have a low-to-moderate level of confidence in their language abilities and indicated that they felt

unprepared for their most recent deployments in terms of language and cultural understanding. Personnel who indicated being deployed outside their AOR reported feeling less prepared in terms of language and cultural understanding than those deployed inside their AOR. AFSOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their language abilities than ARSOF personnel. All SOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their ability to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain simple face-to-face conversations than in their ability to use military terminology or participate in informal conversations.

- Unit leaders expressed low levels of confidence in the language capability of their personnel in their official or required language. For example, only 37.3% of unit leaders indicated that the typical member of their personnel was able to speak effectively in their official or required language.
- Unit leaders expressed a low level of confidence in the language capabilities of their personnel for missions outside their official AOR.
- SOF personnel and unit leaders perceived a heavy reliance on interpreters to meet language-related mission requirements.
- Many SOF personnel and leaders reported encountering situations where the interpreter degraded or negatively impacted mission outcomes.
- SOF personnel and leaders perceived that pre-deployment training was largely ineffective in comparison to sustainment and enhancement and initial acquisition language training.

3. Language Training

- The diversity of language needs and language training programs across SOF components and units makes a one-size-fits-all training solution impossible.
- Many SOF personnel reported that language training was ineffective in preparing them for their most recent deployment.
- Overall, SOF personnel viewed language training as being moderately effective at best across training types (initial acquisition, sustainment and enhancement, pre-deployment) and sources of training, such as the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS), the unit's command language program (CLP), or Defense Language Institute (DLI).
- SOF personnel often indicated that they thought language training was pre-packaged and not customized to SOF needs or to how they used language on missions.
- SOF personnel reported that the curriculum (regardless of training type or source) often had errors.
- Unit leaders perceived that new personnel show up at their commands not mission-capable in terms of language. Leaders provided a negative evaluation of whether personnel can perform well in their normal AOR after receiving training at USAJFKSWCS or in the unit's CLP. Evaluation of SOF personnel trained at DLI was more positive.

- SOF personnel and leaders indicated that immersion following classroom instruction was an optimal language training strategy. In general, immersion was viewed very positively.

4. Motivation

- SOF personnel reported they are motivated to succeed in training because they want to do well on missions and they feel accountable to their team or unit for their language proficiency.
- The current Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP) system does not appear to motivate SOF personnel to acquire higher levels of proficiency.
- The current amount of FLPP is viewed as an insufficient incentive to overcome the barriers and constraints related to enhancing language proficiency for most SOF personnel.
- Testing is related to FLPP because FLPP is paid based on proficiency scores from the Defense language Proficiency Test (DLPT). Most SOF personnel do not believe the DLPT, which measures only reading and listening proficiency, is an accurate measure of their proficiency or of how they use language on their job/missions.
- Both SOF unit leaders and personnel perceived that the Defense Language Institute Oral Proficiency Interview (DLI OPI) is a better indicator of language proficiency than the DLPT because the DLI OPI measures speaking proficiency.
- Survey respondents indicated that language issues have little to do with their decision to re-enlist. However, reserve component (RC) personnel were more likely to indicate that language issues were related to their decisions to re-enlist.

5. Training Barriers and Organizational Support

- SOF personnel reported several major barriers to language training including: (1) a lack of command support for language training; (2) a lack of training resources, (3) a lack of time to dedicate to language training as a result of the current OPTEMPO; and (4) a lack of time due to training requirements for other SOF skills.
- SOF personnel indicated overall negative evaluations of their commands' support for language training.
- SOF personnel do not believe that their chains of command place enough emphasis on or provide the appropriate level of support for language training.
- It should be noted that MI linguists from non-SOF units who took the survey rated their commands similarly, indicating that this might be an issue across DoD.

6. Is Technology the Solution?

- In general, enthusiasm for technologies, such as distributive learning (DL), was not strong.

- Both SOF unit leaders and personnel deemed current technology-delivered training (TDT) unfit for the initial acquisition of a language and indicated that classroom training was more appropriate.
- Although TDT was not viewed favorably by most respondents, they indicated that TDT might be used effectively as a supplement to existing training, as a tool when no other training was available (especially relevant for reserve units), or as a quick train-up tool immediately prior to a mission or deployment.
- RC ARSOF (Army SOF) personnel had less experience with TDT, but more positive views of TDT. A possible explanation is that TDT enables RC personnel to receive training that would otherwise be inaccessible and creates more flexible training options than traditional classroom training at the reserve center.
- SOF unit leaders and personnel had unfavorable views of machine language translation (MLT) devices as a useful way to communicate and accomplish core SOF tasks.
- SOF unit leaders and personnel indicated that MLT would never eliminate the need for language-trained personnel.

7. Reserve Component Issues

- Although Active Component (AC) personnel reported some of the same issues, RC personnel indicated more profound problems, especially in the focus groups, with preparedness for language usage on deployment, official language testing, receiving FLPP, the availability of language training, and the availability of language resources (e.g., job aids).
- 55.9% of RC respondents to the survey indicated they had not participated in language training of any kind in the past four years, while 47.5% of RC respondents indicated that they had never received language training paid for or sponsored by the military or government. These findings can be compared to 44% of AC respondents who reported that they had not participated in language training in the past four years and 25.7% of AC respondents who indicated that they had never received language training paid for or sponsored by the military or government. The fact that RC personnel report having limited access to language training and resources may be driving their low perceptions of their preparedness for language tasks on deployment and of their confidence in their language abilities.
- Although it takes roughly the same amount of time and effort for AC and RC personnel of equivalent ability to acquire and maintain the same proficiency, systemic constraints related to training time and compensation (1/30th rule) for RC personnel put them at a huge disadvantage.
- These issues coupled with a lack of training resources and of flexible access to training resources can undermine motivation to train.
- Most RC personnel are severely constrained by geography and training time available which make them more willing to try DL or TDT options than active personnel.

- Additionally, most likely because of these barriers to training, RC personnel reported more dependence on interpreters for missions, which led to more reports of problems with interpreters.

The findings presented above were selected to summarize each content area of the study and are not meant to be exhaustive or a selection of the most important. Obviously, the MAJOR FINDINGS section in this report and the supporting technical reports (see APPENDIX A) provide a more comprehensive review of the results. Before presenting some basic recommendations, we would like to elaborate on a couple of points from above.

These findings point to several potential fundamental problems with SOF language training. The way language is currently taught is not consistent with mission-based language requirements according to experienced SOF personnel. Another fundamental problem is that language is not used in the same way across SOF personnel types and core SOF tasks, which indicates that pre-packaged, one-size-fits-all training programs will not adequately fulfill the needs of SOF personnel from different groups and for different core SOF tasks.

When customization and/or incorporation of job-specific role plays, situational training exercises (STX), or simulations into existing training are suggested as partial solutions, many language purists argue that a good foundation in the basic language is required first. Granted, basic, non-job-specific language training/instruction is required before the job-specific tasks and functions can be taught in most cases. There are many language tasks that require substantial, broad language proficiency (e.g., negotiations). However, this is not an excuse for failing to customize the training to the extent that it can be customized.

For example, if a unit is about to be deployed on a mission which will involve conducting searches, then the pre-deployment training for that unit should focus on the cultural information and language skills needed to conduct searches in addition to some basic survival language. Personnel can be taught the commands, common phrases, and culturally appropriate behaviors for the search situation. Then, personnel can practice these skills using role playing and STXs. This prepares them for their mission.

Additionally, it seems that the narrower the job or mission situation the more likely it is that personnel can be trained effectively to use language in that situation without having an extensive foundation in the language. Consider the situation of a Navy SEAL team taking a ship. According to Navy SEAL participants in the focus groups, their personnel only need to learn about 50-60 commands and responses to effectively cover the majority of the variance in behaviors encountered in the typical boarding situation. Of course, it should be noted that more proficiency would help address atypical situations. The main point is that the scope of the training should reflect the skill and proficiency demands of the language task and the constraints of the training situation.

Finally, this study was conducted in part as a response to a recent U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report (2003) which recommended that DL was a promising solution for overcoming time constraints associated with language training. Findings from this project suggest that DL and other technologies in their current forms are not perceived as being adequate to address the language issues raised by SOF personnel and leaders.

SOF personnel and unit leaders reported low opinions of the usefulness of technology in training beyond its use as a supplemental tool. Therefore, they will probably not embrace it as a solution unless it is a supplement to traditional training methods or without a substantial effort to change their opinions by demonstrating its value and effectiveness.

Currently, there are no peer-reviewed research studies in the fields of applied, educational, or industrial/organizational psychology (to our knowledge) that provide a scientific assessment of the effectiveness of using DL for acquiring or maintaining language skills in comparison to other delivery modes. Also, our results indicate that there are other problems associated with language training in addition to time constraints and lack of access to training that cannot be addressed by altering delivery mode alone. We caution against viewing DL as a “silver bullet.” Since no convincing evidence related to the efficacy of DL or TDT for the initial acquisition and sustainment of language (or lack thereof) exists, we advocate the use of caution in the adoption of DL and TDT solutions. If adopted, these solutions should be vigorously and scientifically evaluated. However, we also believe that DL and TDT may hold promise for the future. DL and other TDT are probably useful supplements to traditional training and, in the case of RC units where traditional training is not as accessible, DL and TDT are probably good options.

Recommendations

The main purpose of this project was to assess the current state of language usage, training, and other issues in the SOF community in order to provide data to inform the development of comprehensive language strategy as suggested by the GAO (2003) review of SOF language. However, in a number of cases, the findings point to specific recommendations that can be integrated into the strategy or that can be enacted as separate interventions to address more immediate issues. Additionally, we make some recommendations that need to be addressed through advocacy at the DoD level and, therefore, will not be impacted as much by the specifics of the SOF language strategy adopted. At any rate, the findings in this report should be used to develop a SOF language strategy regardless of whether or not our recommendations are utilized.

The recommendations are listed by the seven content areas in the MAJOR FINDINGS section. A key finding is listed and numbered (i.e., the first finding from Section 1 is numbered 1.1) and the related recommendations are presented below it bulleted and in italics. Please note that these recommendations are based on the responses from the individuals who participated in the focus group study and surveys. Therefore, these recommendations may or may not apply uniformly to all SOF units or personnel. However, we believe these recommendations are valid based on the data collected.

1. Language Use on Deployment

1.1 Results indicate that the importance and frequency of language tasks performed and skills utilized and the required level of proficiency varies somewhat according to SOF personnel type, unit, core SOF task, location, and language.

- *Language training should be customized to meet the needs of different SOF personnel types to the extent possible.*
- *The results support the notion that one-size-fits-all training solutions should be avoided.*
- *The results suggest that a modular approach to training might be beneficial. Modularity of training content would allow for more flexibility in instructional design to meet language-related operational requirements.*
- *Units and instructors should have freedom within parameters to customize the instruction to fit the unit's mission requirements or to accommodate the specific students in each language training event or class.*

- *Due to the limited time for pre-deployment training, customization is especially important in this context. SOF units focus language training for missions outside of SOF personnel's AOR by customizing training based on core SOF task type, mission location, and mission language as soon as this information is available. It is critical that this type of language training only focuses on training SOF personnel to perform the language tasks necessary for their deployment.*
- *Customization by core SOF task may make sense, especially for pre-deployment training. Based on the survey responses, below is a list of general suggestions for training content. However, it should be noted that some language tasks require substantial levels of skill and proficiency and cannot be trained in short periods of time.*

Direct Action (DA)

Important: Use of interpreters, listening skills, local dialect, speaking skills, slang/street language.

Moderately Important: Military-specific language.

Not as important: Writing skills, reading skills, formal language, and other job aids.

Unconventional Warfare (UW)

Important: Speaking skills, military-specific language, local dialect, slang/street language, listening skills, and use of interpreters.

Not as Important: Formal language, reading skills, writing skills, and other job aids.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID)

Important: Military-specific language, formal language, slang/street language, local dialect, speaking skills, listening skills, and reading skills.

Moderately Important: Other job aids.

Not as Important: Writing skills and use of interpreters.

Civil Affairs Operations (CAO)

Important: Slang/street language, local dialect, speaking skills, listening skills, and use of interpreters

Not as Important: Military-specific language, formal language, reading skills, writing skills, and other job aids.

Psychological Operations (PSYOP)

Important: Formal language, slang/street language, local dialect, speaking skills, listening skills, reading skills, and use of interpreters.

Not as Important: Military-specific language, writing skills, and other job aids.

1.2 All groups agreed that building rapport was among the most important function of language while on deployment, if not the most important.

- *Focus SOF language training on language skills and cultural information that prepares SOF personnel to build rapport (i.e., speaking, conversational listening, and cultural awareness). This might include role plays in class, STXs, field training exercises, or observing a demonstration by experienced, language-enabled personnel. Bottom line, SOF personnel language training needs to include practice related to building rapport.*

- *This finding supports the idea that language training and testing for SOF personnel should focus more on speaking and conversational listening skills.*

1.3 Many units conducting technical training (e.g., boat or aircraft maintenance) on FID missions, such as AFSOC Aviation Advisors and NAVSPECWARCOM Surface Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (SWCC) reported the heavy usage of military-technical terminology.

- *Training for these units should include the appropriate terminology for their jobs and missions. Military and technical vocabulary can often be embedded in training (pre-deployment or otherwise). Electronic lists/archives that include the correct pronunciation of the word or phrase can be developed as job aids as well. These lists/archives should be created in a standardized format and posted to the SOFLO web site for the benefit of the entire community.*

1.4 Many SOF personnel in the focus groups spoke of using language for force protection or tactical intelligence. This is a set of language tasks and a context that might be overlooked by instructors without military or SOF experience.

- *One focus of basic language training or pre-deployment training should be on the types of language tasks related to force protection or tactical intelligence (survival-level tasks). Using the force protection context as an impetus for learning these tasks may help SOF personnel who have not been deployed to understand their importance more thoroughly.*
- *This instruction should include basic speaking tasks (i.e., asking for directions; giving instructions), basic writing tasks (i.e., writing a list of supplies for a local guide to purchase), basic listening tasks (i.e., listening to conversations at a café or a radio broadcast), and basic reading tasks (i.e., identifying important documents; reading signs; reading graffiti to determine the climate toward Americans). However, it should be noted that some language tasks require substantial levels of skill and proficiency and cannot be trained in short periods of time.*

2. Preparedness for Deployment

2.1 Overall, across missions inside and outside their AOR, SOF personnel have a low-to-moderate level of confidence in their language abilities and indicated that they felt unprepared for their most recent deployments in terms of language and cultural understanding. Personnel who indicated being deployed outside their AOR reported feeling less prepared in terms of language and cultural understanding than those deployed inside their AOR. AFSOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their language abilities than ARSOF personnel. All SOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their ability to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain simple face-to-face conversations than in their ability to use military terminology or participate in informal conversations.

- *This finding suggests that SOF personnel did not receive the training they required for their recent missions. There are several potential reasons for this finding that could be driving these findings, including insufficient training content or time. SOF leaders and CLPMs need to ensure that the training meets the needs of personnel. This requires investigating this disconnect and identifying the issues and solutions on a case-by-case basis. Decision makers should not fall into the trap of thinking that more training time alone will be the solution. Although in many cases the time available for such training is constrained.*

2.2 Both SOF unit leaders and personnel expressed negative opinions about the ability of pre-deployment training to prepare personnel for mission success, especially on outside AOR missions.

- *Due to the limited time for pre-deployment training, customization is especially important in this context. Provide more focused language training for missions outside of SOF personnel's AOR by customizing training based on SOF core task, mission location, and mission language as soon as this information is available.*
- *It is critical that this type of language training only focuses on training SOF personnel to perform the language tasks necessary for their deployment. This includes the basic survival and force protection skills discussed earlier. If time is limited, train only the most critical language skills and contexts. Build demonstration and some practice of these critical skills and contexts into pre-deployment training. However, keep in mind that more language tasks cannot be trained in a short time period; therefore, training objectives should be realistic based on the constraints of the situation.*

2.3 Both SOF unit leaders and personnel indicated a heavy dependence on interpreters to accomplish missions inside and outside their AOR. Both also reported encountering problems with interpreters as well.

- *Due to the high dependency on interpreters for both inside and outside AOR deployments reported by many SOF personnel and units (with the exception of 7th Special Forces (SF) Group for inside AOR missions), SOF leaders must decide if this heavy dependence on interpreters is acceptable as a long-term strategy especially for deployments inside of the AOR. If not, SOF personnel or at least some personnel in a unit or on a team must be trained to higher levels of proficiency.*
- *Since interpreters are currently used heavily and will most likely be used to some extent in the future, incorporate instruction on how to select and use interpreters into training where appropriate, especially pre-deployment language training. Many personnel reported having no such training. Many of the reported issues with interpreters might have been lessened or prevented with such training.*

3. Language Training

3.1 SOF personnel reported that language training was ineffective in preparing them for their most recent deployment. Unit leaders indicated that personnel do not arrive at their command/unit mission-capable in terms of language. Overall, SOF personnel viewed language training as being moderately effective at best across training types (initial acquisition, sustainment and enhancement, pre-deployment) and sources (USAJFKSWCS, CLP, DLI).

- *These findings suggest the efficacy of language training in the SOF community needs to be evaluated. Keep in mind that these are perceptions. The best way to establish training effectiveness is through systematic analysis within and across language training programs, guided by a model of training effectiveness and linking specific individual data to specific training events. The on-going SOF Language Training Effectiveness Project was commissioned to systematically assess the efficacy of language training and to identify leverage points that SOF leaders and training developers can manipulate to improve the*

language proficiency in the community. SOFLO should continue this project to its logical conclusion.

- *CLPMs and unit leaders should work with training developers, providers, and instructors to ensure that the language-related needs of their personnel are adequately addressed in the program of instruction (POI) for all training events.*

3.2 SOF personnel indicated that language training was pre-packaged and not customized to SOF needs or to how they used language on missions. A one-size fits-all training solution is impossible based on the diversity of language needs and language training programs across SOF components.

- *To re-reiterate, it is important to customize language training so that it is appropriate to meet SOF personnel's deployment needs. Re-structure all types of language training (initial acquisition, sustainment and enhancement, and pre-deployment) so that the language that is taught in training is more aligned with the way language is currently used in the field.*
- *It is important to recognize the objectives of language training. If the goal of training is to develop functionally broad speaking skills (ILR 2 or higher), then provide language training that will develop personnel to this level. If the goal of training is to train SOF personnel to use language under a very specific set of circumstances (i.e., giving limited commands on a DA mission), then train the SOF personnel to use language that is important in that context. Keep in mind that more complex tasks require broader, more comprehensive training or education.*
- *It is important to hire instructors who understand how language is currently used in the target AOR, who have the ability to teach, and who are familiar with the military context. Being a native speaker of a language is not enough to ensure success. SOFLO should continue to support collecting instructor data as part of the SOF Language Training Effectiveness Project. This will help determine the instructor characteristics that impact language learning and proficiency.*
- *Units should provide qualified instructors with some ability to modify instructional materials or curricula to more effectively address student needs and the experience and ability levels of the students in the class.*

3.3 SOF personnel indicated that the curriculum (regardless of training type or location) often contained errors.

- *SOF leaders need to ensure the selection or development of up-to-date and error free curricula that reflect the way language is currently used in the AOR to which the training is relevant.*

3.4 Both SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated that immersion following classroom instruction was an optimal language training strategy.

- *Find ways to increase funding for immersion training.*
- *Due to the highly favorable opinions of immersion training, use this type of training as a reward for students who perform well in their classroom training or as an incentive to*

develop higher levels of proficiency in a select group of SOF personnel. Perhaps pick the best student in a class and send that student on immersion training.

- If it is not possible to fund OCONUS immersion training, consider using resources to fund CONUS immersion or iso-immersion to supplement classroom instruction. The Chinese CONUS immersion program (i.e., conducted in a Chinese community in the US, not in isolation in the US) run by the 1st SF Group is a program that receives favorable reviews from participants and appears to be well structured and supervised. It could potentially be a model for such programs.*
- Immersion training, regardless of location, must be planned and executed the same standards that other training events are. It must not be a “vacation.” It must be structured and rigorous training that is well supervised and has training objectives. Also, the students must have a sufficient base of proficiency prior to engaging in immersion training.*

4. Motivation

4.1 FLPP was viewed as ineffective by most SOF personnel in the study. The results suggest that the current system has insufficient incentive value to motivate personnel to overcome the situational constraints related to language and to develop higher levels of language proficiency. The procedures for allocating FLPP were viewed as unfair by SOF personnel. In addition, many SOF personnel expressed frustration with the substantial proficiency requirements needed to receive FLPP and indicated that the minimum proficiency level for receiving FLPP is not attainable by many SOF personnel because of constraints.

- DoD should revamp the current FLPP policy and system. The new FLPP process should be linked explicitly to DoD strategy for SOF personnel as well as for other language professionals and language enabled personnel. Specifically, this linkage should directly influence how monies are allocated to individuals by the FLPP process. Moreover, such a strategy should be clearly communicated to all language enabled personnel.*
- Pay FLPP for speaking proficiency as measured by a DLI OPI as well as for reading and listening as measured by the DLPT. SOF personnel should have the option of being paid FLPP for speaking proficiency (DLI OPI) only. Speaking and conversational listening were reported as the primary language skill modes by SOF personnel. However, SOF personnel should still be able to opt to take the DLPT to qualify for FLPP due to the fact that DLI OPI availability is currently limited.*
- If increasing language proficiency is the goal and FLPP is to serve as the primary DoD incentive to accomplish this, we recommend increasing the maximum amount paid for FLPP.*
- DoD should pay FLPP starting at lower levels of proficiency. This pay policy would provide incentive for language enabled personnel, especially enlisted personnel, to start climbing the ladder to higher proficiency or to maintain the skill they currently possess. Additionally, if these personnel are deployed outside of their normal AOR or required language (e.g., GWOT mission) and their proficiency decreases, such a policy would help ensure at least some maintenance of FLPP during this temporary decrease in proficiency.*
- DoD should pay higher FLPP amounts for critical languages, as determined by DoD language strategy and projected mission requirements.*

- *To recognize the additional time and effort required to maintain or enhance proficiency in more difficult languages, we recommend paying more FLPP for learning and maintaining more difficult languages.*

4.2 RC personnel reported more negative opinions of FLPP than AC personnel. Although it takes roughly the same amount of time and effort for active and reserve component personnel of equivalent ability to acquire and maintain the same proficiency, systemic constraints related to training time and compensation (1/30th rule) for RC personnel put them at a huge disadvantage.

- *DoD should pay full FLPP to RC personnel. If it cannot be paid as a monthly incentive pay because of legal reasons, then award it as a yearly bonus. The principles of learning and motivation apply equally to RC and AC personnel, and RC personnel often have more constraints/barriers to overcome. RC personnel deserve equal compensation for acquiring and maintaining a difficult skill.*

Detailed findings and recommendations related to FLPP based on data from this study can be found in a recent research report (see Surface, Poncheri, Dierdorff, Sebastianelli, & Shetye, 2004).

4.3 Testing is related to FLPP because FLPP is paid based on proficiency scores from the DLPT. Most SOF personnel do not believe that the DLPT is an accurate measure of their proficiency or how they use language on their job/missions. Both SOF unit leaders and personnel reported that the DLI OPI is a better indicator of language proficiency than the DLPT.

- *DoD leaders should ensure that the DLI OPI and DLPT meet the criteria for educational and psychological tests as established by the Standards for Education and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999). These data should be regularly reported as specified by the Standards.*
- *In addition to reliability and validity, the measures should be free from criterion contamination, should not be criterion deficient, and should be relevant to actual performance on the job.*
- *Predictive validity studies assessing the relationship between these proficiency tests and language-related job performance are needed.*
- *DoD should fund the development of more job-related measures of language skill proficiency and language performance, such as language-related work samples. This would not only result in better measures of language skill (i.e., the behavior measured by a method that more closely approximates its use on the actual job). This would increase perceptions of procedural fairness and, therefore, most likely improve the effectiveness of FLPP as a motivational tool (if based on this type of assessment).*

5. Training Barriers and Organizational Support

5.1 SOF personnel reported several major barriers to language training including: (1) a lack of command support for language training; (2) a lack of training resources, (3) a lack of time to dedicate to language training as a result of the current OPTEMPO; and (4) a lack of time due to training requirements for other SOF skills.

- *Units need to develop innovative training solutions to work around barriers.*
- *Provide resources and emphasis on integrating language practice/training into other training opportunities or simulations. For example, include language as a component of mission simulations or field training exercises.*
- *SOF leaders should ensure that command language programs are adequately funded to ensure that a variety of language resources are available. This is especially critical for reserve units that typically have little or no language training resources.*
- *SOFLO needs to ensure that CLPMs receive and disseminate information about the language training resources, tools, and job aids available to personnel.*
- *CLPMs and unit leaders should emphasize the importance of language training to personnel at every opportunity.*
- *The importance of language proficiency needs to be communicated at all levels. The command emphasis needs to begin at the highest levels and flow through all levels of leadership down to the personnel in the units. SOF leaders need to communicate that language is a serious priority.*
- *SOF leaders should consider making a minimum level of language proficiency a criteria for promotion.*

5.2 SOF personnel as well as MI linguists (not organic to SOF units) who took the survey indicated overall negative evaluations of their commands' support for language training.

- *Hold unit commanders/leaders accountable for the level of language proficiency and the effectiveness of language training in their units, not just for their personnel staying current on the testing requirements. Institute changes to the Officer Evaluation Reports (OER) of unit commanders/leaders that will ensure that language proficiency and training are taken seriously and given command emphasis. As they say, "what gets measured, gets done."*

6. Is Technology the Solution?

6.1 In general, enthusiasm for technologies, such as distributive learning (DL), was not strong. Both SOF personnel and unit leaders had unfavorable opinions of technology-delivered training (TDT) and indicated that it was more useful as a supplement rather than as a replacement for traditional classroom training.

- *SOF leaders should proceed with caution when considering the recommendation from a recent GAO report (2003) that the solution to the problem of insufficient time for language training is to incorporate distance/distributive learning techniques into the language training program. The results from this study indicate that the implementation of this recommendation may not be well-received by SOF personnel, particularly AC personnel. However, many SOF personnel indicated that DL or TDT might be a useful supplement to traditional training.*
- *Due to the fact that TDT is considered to be useful as a supplement to traditional classroom training, the use of blended learning (i.e., integration of classroom and computer-based*

instruction into the course design) might be an effective method to explore in the SOF community.

6.2 RC personnel tended to have more favorable opinions of TDT, possibly because this type of training could allow members of the RC to receive training that would otherwise be inaccessible.

- *DL or TDT options should be considered for RC personnel since they have limited access to other types of training and require flexible training options.*

7. Reserve Component Issues

7.1 55.9% of RC ARSOF personnel who responded to the survey indicated they had not participated in language training of any kind in the past four years, while 47.5% of RC respondents indicated that they had never received language training paid for or sponsored by the military or government. The fact that reserve component personnel reported having limited access to language training and resources may be driving their low perceptions of their preparedness for language tasks on deployment and of their confidence in their language abilities.

- *Provide more language training resources to RC units.*
- *Provide more flexible training options, such as DL or TDT, for reserve component personnel.*

7.2 RC personnel reported more dependence on interpreters for missions and more problems with interpreters on those missions.

- *Language training for RC personnel should emphasize training on how to select and use interpreters.*

7.3 RC personnel reported more negative opinions of FLPP than active component personnel. Although it takes roughly the same amount of time and effort for active and reserve personnel of equivalent ability to acquire and maintain the same proficiency, systemic constraints related to training time and compensation (1/30th rule) for RC personnel put them at a huge disadvantage. [repeated for emphasis]

- *DoD should pay full FLPP to RC personnel. If it cannot be paid as a monthly incentive pay because of legal reasons, then award it as a yearly bonus. The principles of learning and motivation apply equally to RC and AC personnel, and RC personnel often have more constraints/barriers to overcome. RC personnel deserve equal compensation for acquiring and maintaining a difficult skill.*

In Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is apparent that the improvement of foreign language proficiency in the SOF community to ensure sufficient language capability for current and future missions is a complex, systemic issue that needs to be addressed. The results suggest there is a language proficiency gap between the current level of proficiency reported and the level of proficiency that SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated as being optimal for mission requirements. The task of ensuring sufficient language capability in SOF is further complicated by the fact that there are many factors or variables that influence language acquisition and maintenance—OPTEMPO, organizational support, and resource availability to name only a few—and many of these factors are often in a state

of flux. The diversity of language requirements, needs and issues across SOF units and missions is also a challenge to addressing the language proficiency gap. However, as the results of this study point out, the language issue definitely needs to be addressed in a systemic way, and SOF language capabilities need to be improved to close this gap. From the reports of SOF personnel and leaders, it appears that SOF units have only enough language proficiency to “get by” on some current missions and that they require interpreter support for most missions. Furthermore, the findings suggest that most SOF units would have even more difficulty in effectively meeting the language-related requirements of their missions if interpreters were unavailable or not allowed.

The results of this study do not present any “silver bullets” to magically fix all that ails SOF language, only data on the current state of language usage, training and related issues in the SOF community. As our findings show, SOF language is a multifaceted, complex system, and addressing language issues in the SOF community will not be easy. Simplistic plans and one-size-fits-all solutions will not resolve the problems identified here. We agree with the GAO report (2003) that a more comprehensive SOF language strategy is needed to guide solutions. The data from this project can be used by SOF leaders to inform the development of a comprehensive language strategy. The goal of this strategy should be to guide language-related activities and policies in the SOF community to ensure sufficient language capabilities to effectively accomplish future mission requirements. The strategy should be flexible enough to encompass the diversity of SOF units and missions and to adapt to future changes in mission or language requirements.

We encourage SOF leaders to utilize the findings in this report to develop a SOF language strategy that will transform language capabilities of the SOF community to more effectively meet the needs of current and future missions. We sense this is a critical point for the SOF language program, and SOF leaders must act now. By making fundamental changes to the current SOF language strategy based on the findings/recommendations from this study, SOF leaders can ensure that personnel are adequately prepared to most effectively accomplish the language-related requirements of their missions.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

To aid the reader who might not be familiar with all the acronyms and abbreviations used in this report, we have included the following table.

AFSOC	Air Force Special Operations Command
AFSOF	Air Force Special Operations Forces
AOR	Area of Responsibility
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ARSOF CA AC	Army Special Operations Forces Civil Affairs Active Component
ARSOF CA RC	Army Special Operations Forces Civil Affairs Reserve Component
ARSOF PSYOP AC	Army Special Operations Forces Psychological Operations Active Component
ARSOF PSYOP RC	Army Special Operations Forces Psychological Operations Reserve Component
ARSOF SF AC	Army Special Operations Forces Special Forces Active Component
ARSOF SF RC	Army Special Operations Forces Special Forces Reserve Component
CA	Civil Affairs
CAO mission	Civil Affairs Operations mission
CAT I Interpreter	Category I Interpreter: Local hire, not vetted; or U.S. Citizen, not vetted
CAT II/III Interpreter	Category II/III Interpreter: US citizen with a secret/top secret clearance
CAT I/II Language	Less difficult languages to acquire for native English speakers. Examples: French, Spanish, Italian, German (includes romance languages, etc.)
CAT III/IV Language	More difficult languages to acquire for native English speakers. Examples: Cantonese, Japanese, Arabic, Dari, Pashto, Turkish, Vietnamese (includes many tonal languages, Arabic dialects, East-Asian countries, etc.)
CBT	Computer-Based Training
CLP	Command Language Program
CLPM	Command Language Program Manager
CONUS	Continental United States; in this case, refers to iso-immersion or immersion which takes place in the continental US.
CP mission	Counter Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction mission
CT mission	Counterterrorism mission
DA mission	Direct Action mission
DL	Distance/distributive Learning
DLI	Defense Language Institute
DLPT	Defense Language Proficiency Test
DoD	Department of Defense
FAO	Foreign Area Officer
FID mission	Foreign Internal Defense mission
FLPP	Foreign Language Proficiency Pay
GS	“General Schedule” position; This refers to a Civilian Government Employee
GWOT	Global War on Terror
HUMINT mission	Human Intelligence mission
IAT	Initial Acquisition Training
IO mission	Information Operations mission
MI	Military Intelligence
MLT	Machine Language Translation

NAVSCIATTS	Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School
NAVSPECWARCOM	Naval Special Warfare Command
NAVSPECWARCOM SWCC	Naval Special Warfare Command Surface Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen
Navy SEAL	Naval Special Warfare Sea, Air, Land combat forces
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
O	Officer
OCONUS	Out of the Continental United States; in this case, refers to immersion which takes place outside the continental US.
OER	Officer Evaluation Reports
OPI	(Defense Language Institute) Oral Proficiency Interview
OPTEMPO	Operations Tempo
POI	Program of Instruction
PSYOP	Psychological Operations
PSYOP mission	Psychological Operations mission
SET	Sustainment/Enhancement Training
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOFLO	Special Operations Forces Language Office
SOFTS	Special Operations Forces Tele-Training System
SR mission	Special Reconnaissance mission
STX	Situational Training Exercises
SWOA/SEA	Senior Warrant Officer Advisor/Senior Enlisted Advisor
TDT	Technology-Delivered Training
UC	Unit Commander
USAF	United States Air Force
USAJFKSWCS	United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
UW mission	Unconventional Warfare mission
VRT	Voice Response Translator
WO	Warrant Officer

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Special Operations Forces (SOF) personnel operate around the globe. Most SOF units are required to have multiple language capabilities and many SOF personnel have at least one required language to learn and maintain. Approximately 50% of the language billets in the Department of Defense (DoD) are in the SOF community. Given the increased operational demands of the *Global War on Terror* (GWOT), including the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the importance of having language-enabled SOF personnel with sufficient language skills to accomplish missions inside and outside their areas of responsibility (AOR) has never been more critical. SOF leaders must ensure that Soldiers, Airmen, and Sailors in the SOF community receive effective language training and resources to enable successful accomplishment of SOF tasks that require language skills. How do SOF leaders ensure that language resources are structured and utilized effectively to achieve this objective?

A comprehensive language strategy is needed to guide the allocation of resources to provide initial acquisition, sustainment, and enhancement training as well as tools and other resources across all SOF components. A recent U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report (2003) indicated that the current SOF language strategy was insufficient and that SOF needed a strategic plan for language capability. The first step in developing a strategy is assessing the current state. Data about the current state of language usage, proficiency, and training are required as well as projections of future mission requirements and training needs. This allows for *gap analysis* to inform strategic planning and resource allocation. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of current, comprehensive data on language usage and training effectiveness from the perspective of SOF personnel.

The Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) sponsored the *Special Operations Forces Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* to address this deficiency. This study 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 was designed to provide SOFLO with valid data to develop a comprehensive language transformation strategy and to support language-related advocacy for the SOF perspective within the DoD community. This study consisted of 21 focus groups conducted at units across the SOF community and several comprehensive issue-oriented surveys conducted via the Web. This technical report provides the details of and the integrated findings from this project (i.e., focus groups and surveys) as well as some broad recommendations based on those findings. This is the final report for the project. APPENDIX A provides details about the component technical reports that were integrated to create this final report.

It should be noted that a variety of funding and contracting issues delayed this project and several pertinent changes bearing directly on SOF language have begun since the conclusion of data collection for this project. Significantly, the proficiency standard for Special Forces (SF) was raised from 0+/0+ to 1/1/1, and the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has taken steps to standup a SOFLO at USSOCOM relieving the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) of those responsibilities.

Statement of Approach

Having a strategy and linking operations to that strategy is critical for the success of any organization. A strategy can encompass different scopes—organization, unit, mission, task, process, or product/service. In the most basic terms, a strategy should specify the what (objectives, content), who (personnel, groups), where (locations), how (resources and activities), and when (time goal) at the level specified. The strategy should look both externally and internally for impetus, constraints, and

opportunities. The strategy should guide all action within its scope, including the allocation of resources. Research has shown that lack of strategic alignment is one of the reasons why many training programs fail to achieve the desired results (Tannenbaum, 2002). Given the importance of language skills to GWOT and other missions, it is critical that a strategy be developed to optimize the outcomes of language training and, therefore, the levels of language proficiency available in the field for missions.

In the case of SOF language, external and internal forces were indicating the need for the re-development of the strategy. The gap between the current levels of language proficiency and the language capabilities needed for current & future mission success should drive the development of a new language strategy for SOF. The strategy must reflect the diverse nature of SOF components and their missions as well as constraints, such as, the career-lifecycle of each type of SOF and OPTEMPO. The strategy must specify how to develop and maintain the required proficiency across SOF components and missions. Once a comprehensive strategy is developed, it should be used to guide the allocation of resources to training, maintaining, and supporting the language capabilities throughout the SOF community. Finally, the implementation of the SOF language strategy should be evaluated periodically against its goals.

The first step in developing the SOF language strategy is to collect information about the current state of SOF language usage, proficiency, and training. Therefore, the needs assessment study detailed in this report was required to gather first-hand input from SOF personnel to inform the development of a SOF language strategy.

Needs assessment techniques can be used for the identification and specification of problems or performance gaps in any number of situations (Swanson, 1994; Zemke, 1994). Organizations can utilize the results of the analysis to select the most viable solution or solutions to the problem, which may or may not include training. At the strategic level, needs assessment can be used to support the development of a strategy to address problems and opportunities. Multiple techniques can be used to accomplish needs assessment in most organizations—surveys, focus groups, interviews, records/policy reviews, and observations. Each technique has strengths and weaknesses. The best needs assessment strategy is to utilize multiple methods to gather data in order to gain a more complete picture of the situation (McClelland, 1994; Swanson, 1994). The realities of the project and organization as well as the data requirements should guide the selection of techniques. Research has shown that a needs assessment is often skipped by organizations because organizational representatives believe they “know” the problem and all its issues already. The failure to perform a thorough needs assessment/analysis has led to many programs and initiatives not achieving their stated objectives. Additionally, a needs assessment can increase the acceptance and credibility of the program or strategy.

In the case of the *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project*, three needs assessment techniques were used: (1) review of organizational records, policy, and requirements; (2) focus groups with SOF personnel; and (3) surveys of SOF personnel, command language program managers (CLPM), and unit leaders. These techniques were selected because they build upon each other to provide a more complete view of the situation and they allow for the opportunity to cross-validate findings. The review of organizational records, policies and requirements as well as missions and constraints related to language was used to develop the focus group study’s protocol and content (see the METHOD section for more details). Although important in their own light, the findings from the focus groups informed the development of the comprehensive, issue-oriented language surveys. This allowed for the cross-validation (i.e., the ability to confirm or disconfirm) of findings from the focus groups with a larger sample of SOF personnel. This report integrates the findings of the focus groups and surveys to provide information for SOF decision makers.

Report Overview

The report is divided into several major sections: (1) INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW (this section); (2) METHOD; (3) INTERPRETING THE RESULTS; (4) MAJOR FINDINGS; and (5) RECOMMENDATIONS. These sections are fairly straightforward in terms of content. Consult the TABLE OF CONTENTS for page numbers of the sections, subsections, and section tables and figures. The INTERPRETING THE RESULTS section provides the reader with an overview of the format used to present the results and the interpretation of the numbers presented in the section tables and figures. We recommend that reader review this section prior to reading the findings and, especially, before reviewing the tables. In addition, readers who may be unfamiliar with all the acronyms and abbreviations used in this report can refer to ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS REPORT for reference. This section can be found after the TABLE OF CONTENTS.

Please address any questions or comments about this report and project to Dr. Eric A. Surface (see APPENDIX C for contact information).

METHOD

The *Special Operations Forces Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* was designed to collect valid data from SOF personnel, unit leaders, and other stakeholders in order to inform the development of a comprehensive language strategy for the SOF community. The study included two primary data collection methods to achieve this objective: focus groups and surveys. This section provides information on the focus group study and the Web-based surveys including protocol and participants.

Focus Group Project

Procedures

The focus group study was commissioned in October 2003. From November 2003 to March 2004, 21 focus groups requiring approximately three hours duration each were conducted in order to evaluate the current state of foreign language usage and training across the SOF community. These groups were conducted by psychologists (Drs. Eric Surface and Lori Foster Thompson) provided by the Army Research Institute (ARI) through the Consortium Research Fellows Program (CRFP) and by SOFLO personnel. The units were tasked to provide participants and facilities for the focus groups.

Audio recordings were made of each session and were subsequently transcribed. These transcriptions were then content analyzed. Due to technical difficulties, the recordings for two transcriptions were not available. However, notes made by the session moderator were edited and content analyzed in place of the literal transcriptions. In addition, the quality of the audio recordings was poor at times resulting in some loss of information.

Focus group discussion was roughly organized around a script utilizing three one-hour time blocks with a short break between each segment:

The first block discussed instances in which language training has been used in a field setting, instances when additional or better language training would have been useful, what level of language proficiency is typically required, and types of tasks that involved use of a foreign language.

The second block discussed focus group members' foreign language training experiences. Specific topics mentioned were (1) when in the course of SOF training should language training occur, (2) what types of language training are most/least effective, (3) what are some of the barriers or things that keep SOF personnel from maintaining or enhancing language skills, and (4) which things would motivate SOF personnel or make it easier for them to take advantage of language training.

The third block took a different format. In this block, focus group members were given 20 minutes to prepare a presentation based on one of two templates. Generally speaking, these presentations involved best practices for language training (sequencing, type of training, etc.) and ways to overcome barriers to language acquisition.

The content analysis of the transcripts was overseen by Dr. Adam Meade, a psychology professor at NC State University, to ensure an independent analysis and interpretation of the data. A grounded theory (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) approach was used to content analyze the data from the focus groups described above. Grounded theory is designed to facilitate the process of discovering meaning by making use of iterative categorical coding of the data (Willig, 1999). Grounded theory

provides two primary advantages over other qualitative methods: (1) the use of categorical coding allows for traditional quantitative analysis of the data, and (2) by coding in an iterative manner, categories can be created, revised, and ultimately grouped in a hierarchical manner in order to optimally summarize the data, or if so desired, to derive theories regarding the structure of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

For further information regarding the focus group methodology and findings, see *SOF language transformation strategy needs assessment project: SOFLO focus group data analysis technical report* (Meade, 2004).

Participants

In total, 145 individuals participated in focus groups ranging in size from 3 to 11. Members of SOF units met for three hours to discuss their use of foreign languages in field settings, their previous training experiences with foreign languages, and ways to make the training process more applicable and useful to SOF units in the field. Basic summary statistics of military service appear below:

	Average	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Length of Military Service	13.6	7.0	1	35
Length of SOF Service	8.1	7.0	.5	32

Of these 21 focus groups, 14 were Active Component (AC) SOF units and 7 were Reserve Component (RC) units. Specifically, three units (one AC and two RC) represented Psychological Operations (PSYOP), eight (six AC, two RC) represented Army Special Forces (SF) units, two (both AC) represented Air Force (AF) Special Operations, four (one AC, three RC) represented Civil Affairs (CA), two (both AC) represented Navy Sea, Air, & Land (SEAL) units, one (AC) unit represented Naval Special Warfare Command Surface Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (NAVSPECWARCOM SWCC), and one (AC) represented Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS).

Survey Project

Procedures

The survey study was designed to collect data from SOF personnel, unit leaders [Commanders, Senior Enlisted Advisors/Senior Warrant Officer Advisors (SWOA/SEAs), Staff Officers, and Command Language Program Managers (CLPMs)], and instructors to be integrated with the results from the focus group study. The idea was for the survey to confirm or disconfirm and expand upon the focus group findings with a larger number of participants.

Three comprehensive, issue-oriented surveys were developed and deployed on the Internet in late July 2004. By issue-oriented, it is meant that the survey focused in depth on a defined content area (i.e., language) which necessitated the inclusion of a large number of items. Longer surveys tend to have higher “dropout” rates; therefore, we expected some reduction in sample size. Additionally, in the case of an issue-oriented survey, responses from subject matter experts who know the content area well are desired, which narrows the population of potential respondents. In the current surveys, we were interested in the responses of SOF personnel who had been deployed in the past four years, had some language proficiency, and had received military-provided language training.

One survey was developed specifically for SOF personnel. Although the majority of the survey content was the same for each respondent, the survey used several branching items to tailor the items received to the background of each participant. The purpose of these questions was to enable individuals to take a more focused, specific survey based on their individual experiences. For example, we were able to capture the experiences of SOF personnel deployed outside their area of responsibility (AOR), while allowing others who had not been deployed outside of their AOR to omit that section of the survey. This branching technique provided us with more accurate information about SOF personnel and helped to reduce the length of the survey for some participants. A second, parallel survey was developed and administered to unit leadership. The content for the unit leadership survey varied significantly depending on the respondent's subpopulation, as in the operator survey. The CLPMs received more items than the other respondent groups. A third survey was also developed with the intention of capturing perceptions from instructors. Unfortunately, too few instructors participated ($n = 7$) to obtain interpretable results, necessitating the removal of that survey. Lack of Internet access and project time constraints (i.e., shorter response window) impacted the response on all three surveys. In addition, there was not a consistent way to notify individuals across the SOF community about the survey, other than by providing a link to the survey via Army Knowledge Online (AKO). It was especially difficult to contact members of the Navy, which is reflected in the very low response rate from Navy personnel ($n = 1$).

Data were collected during July and August of 2004 via a web-based survey. The official launch of the survey was on Wednesday, July 21, 2004. An email notification was sent to SOF personnel once the survey was available online. They received this notification through official email channels. SOF personnel were instructed to follow a link to the Army Knowledge Online (AKO) website. After logging in to their AKO accounts, the link for the survey could be found on the front page of AKO website. The explanation of the link stated:

"The Special Operations Foreign Language Office (SOFLO) has created an online survey to capture your experiences on how the Army tracks language requirements. [Take the survey.](#)"

The survey took approximately 45 minutes to complete and was available to respondents for approximately two weeks. Several e-mail notifications and reminders were sent to SOF personnel during the time that the survey was available online. The official end date for the survey was August 9, 2004 at 12 midnight.

Participants

Although the surveys were deployed for a limited time, we received a fair response rate for an issue-oriented survey (i.e., a longer survey that focuses on incumbents who are subject matter experts). The *SOF Operator Survey*¹ had 1,039 respondents and the *Unit Leadership Survey* had 158 respondents. Unfortunately, too few instructors participated ($n = 7$) to obtain interpretable results.

*SOF Operator Survey*¹. After removing any questionable respondent cases, there were a total of 899 respondents to the SOF Operator Survey. Forty-one of these respondents indicated that the Air Force was their branch of service, 857 indicated the Army as their branch of service, and only one individual indicated the Navy as his branch of service. Once again, the fact that there was only one Navy respondent is most likely due to the fact that it was difficult to notify members of the Navy that the survey was available. Of the 41 respondents from the Air Force, the majority of respondents (29) were Air Force Special Operations Forces (AFSOF) personnel. The remaining respondents were classified as AFSOF other (this group included the following classifications: Military Intelligence

¹ Other SOF and non-SOF personnel responded to the *SOF Operator Survey* in addition to SOF operators.

(MI) Airmen assigned to a SOF unit, non-SOF linguists, SOF other, and non-SOF other). Of the 857 respondents from the Army, 297 were SOF personnel, 56 were military intelligence organic to SOF units, 35 were SOF support, and 325 were non-SOF language professionals. Of the 297 Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) personnel, 118 indicated that they were Reserve Component (RC) personnel. The ARSOF personnel who responded were categorized as being SF, CA, or PSYOP personnel in active or reserve components. Of the 297 ARSOF personnel who responded, 120 were SF AC personnel, 48 were SF RC personnel, 14 were CA AC personnel, 46 were CA RC personnel, 45 were PSYOP AC personnel, and 24 were PSYOP RC personnel.

Unit Leadership Survey. There were a total of 158 unit leadership respondents. This group included individuals classified as unit commanders, senior warrant officer advisors/senior enlisted advisors (SWOA/SEAs), staff officers, and command language program managers (CLPMs). Of the 158 unit leadership respondents, 57 were unit commanders, 16 were SWOA/SEAs, 58 were staff officers, and 27 were CLPMs.

One hundred and fifty-two respondents indicated Army as their mother service (96.2%). Four of these respondents indicated they were Army Civilians specifically. Three respondents indicated that they were in the United States Air Force (1.9%). Two respondents classified themselves as DoD Civilians (1.3%) and only one respondent indicated “Other” as their classification (0.6%). Nearly half (45.5%) of the unit leadership survey respondents indicated they were members of the Reserves/National Guard.

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

This report is designed to provide an integration and overview of the major findings from the *Special Operations Forces Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project*, which included a focus group study and several Web-based surveys as the primary data collection methods. There are six other technical reports that provide detailed information about and results from the focus group study and the surveys. APPENDIX A presents an overview of each report and directs the reader to these documents. The primary goal of this report, the Final Project Report, is to present the findings that are comparable across the focus groups and surveys, providing empirical data from multiple sources and perspectives (i.e., SOF personnel, leaders, CLPMs). However, highly meaningful or unique findings from either of the sources are included as well. Therefore, the results included in this report are considered to be the most broad and meaningful results.

The remainder of this section presents information about the format of the MAJOR FINDINGS section and metric scale of the results reported in this section. This information is provided to aid the reader in locating, interpreting, and using the results of this project.

The design of this technical report allows the reader to locate information quickly and without confusion. The MAJOR FINDINGS section is divided into sections that reflect the important issues from the focus groups and surveys: (1) Language Use on Deployment; (2) Preparedness for Deployment, (3) Language Training, (4) Motivation, (5) Training Barriers and Organizational Support, (6) Is Technology the Solution?, (7) Reserve Component Issues. Within each section there are the following divisions: (1) Abstract; (2) Discussion; and (3) Summary of Selected Findings. The abstract provides an overview of the content of the section and a summary of the main findings discussed in the section. The discussion section provides a more detailed analysis of the survey results and refers to tables presented at the end of each section. This section may include rational analysis of the results in addition to descriptive discussion. The Summary of Selected Findings provides a brief overview of findings from the focus groups and surveys related to the topic. This section is not meant to be an exhaustive listing of the findings. Some findings might have been presented in the discussion section; other findings might not have been. APPENDIX A provides information on the component technical reports that contain the micro-level results from the studies.

Tables with survey results are presented at the end of each section to support discussion and provide more detailed data on important issues. These tables are labeled using a two digit system separated by a period. The first digit is the section in which the table is located, while the second digit is the number of the specific table in the section. For example, the fourth table in Section five is titled, "Table 5.4." The data reported in section tables are either in the form of frequencies, percentages, or 100 point means. The table should provide an indication of what type of data is presented. The footnotes of the section tables provide detailed information about what is presented in each of the tables. Additionally, a listing of tables in each section can be found in the TABLE OF CONTENTS.

Unless the findings are specifically referred to as percentages or frequencies, the findings presented in this report are means based on a 100-point scale. **In general, higher averages are better, unless otherwise noted. There are a number of items that were negatively worded. These items, which are marked, should be interpreted as lower numbers being better.**

In an attempt to aid interpretation, the following table presents the interpretation of the 100-point agreement scale used for most items on the surveys. Remember the interpretation of agreement or lack of agreement as positive or negative depends on the wording of the question. Therefore, be careful to read the question thoroughly before interpreting the data.

Interpreting Responses on the 100-point scale	
100	If every participant responded “strongly agree” for the item, then the survey item mean would be 100.
75	If every participant responded “agree” for the item, then the survey item mean would be 75. Also, this number could result from a mixture of responses where the majority of the responses were “strongly agree” and “agree.”
50	If every participant responded “neutral” for the item, then the item mean would be 50. Also, this number could be the result of the “strongly disagree” and “disagree” responses being equally balanced with the “strongly agree” and “agree” responses.
25	If every participant responded “disagree” for the item, then this the survey item mean would be 25. Also, this number could result from a mixture of responses where the majority of the responses were “strongly disagree” and “disagree.”
0	If every participant responded “strongly disagree” for the item, then the survey item mean would be 0.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings from the *SOF Language Transformation Strategy Needs Assessment Project* are presented in the following seven sections. These findings integrate several important themes from both the focus groups and surveys. The first section, 'Language Use on Deployment' presents findings regarding SOF personnel and unit leader perceptions of the way language is currently used on deployment. The second section, 'Preparedness for Deployment' presents perceptions regarding how well SOF personnel are prepared for deployments in terms of their level of language proficiency and their ability to meet the language-related mission requirements. The third section, 'Language Training' presents findings regarding evaluations of various types of language training (initial/acquisition, sustainment and enhancement, and immersion) from various sources (i.e., US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School; USAJFKSWCS). The fourth section, 'Motivation' discusses and presents findings regarding the potential impact of motivation on the effectiveness of language training. This section covers several topics related to an individual's motivation to perform well in training, such as official language testing and FLPP. The fifth section, 'Training Barriers and Organizational Support' presents perceptions regarding barriers to language training and organizational support of language training. The sixth section, 'Is Technology the Solution?' uses data collected from this study to respond to a recent report from the United States General Accounting Office (GAO; 2003) which recommended that the solution to the problem of insufficient time for language training is to incorporate distance/distributive learning techniques into the language training program. Finally, the seventh section, 'Reserve Component Issues' outlines issues related to language use, language training, and other related topics specific to reserve component personnel.

SECTION 1: LANGUAGE USE ON DEPLOYMENT

Abstract

Overall, perceptions of the importance and frequency of various language functions are dependent on SOF type, mission type, the respondent's official or required language, and whether the mission is inside or outside of an respondents' AOR. All groups agreed that building rapport was among the most frequently used and important functions of language while on deployment. This finding further implies the importance of both speaking and conversational listening skills, since these language skills are related to building rapport. Both SOF personnel and unit leaders agreed that high levels of language proficiency would be ideal for typical tasks and duties on their missions. Further exploration revealed that the level of proficiency SOF personnel indicated as ideal for missions was dependent on mission type. For example, SOF personnel engaged in direct action (DA) and special reconnaissance (SR) core tasks on their missions indicated a lesser need for high levels of proficiency than personnel deployed for unconventional warfare (UW), foreign internal defense (FID), psychological operations (PSYOP), or civil affairs operations (CAO) core tasks. There is also evidence of a slight disconnect between CLPMs and SOF personnel in terms of their perceptions of how language is used on deployment.

Discussion

One of the main goals of this project was to determine how SOF personnel use language in the field. It is very important to understand how language is used in order to develop training programs that fulfill these needs. The major finding for this part of the project was that the elements of language that are used frequently and considered to be important on deployment are highly dependent on the SOF type, mission type, the mission language, and whether the mission was inside or outside of the respondents' AOR.

In the context of the survey, participants were asked to rate the importance and frequency of various types of language tasks. These findings are presented in Figures 1.1-1.6 for a variety of subgroups. For most SOF personnel, averaged across missions and languages, ‘Building rapport’ was typically indicated as the most frequent and important function of language while on deployment (See Table 1.1 for a description of language functions). This confirmed the finding from the focus group study that having enough proficiency to build rapport is highly important. Further exploration revealed that this finding did not hold for all groups. AFSOF personnel rated ‘Military-technical vocabulary’ as the most frequent and important function of language (See Figure 1.2). Also, within ARSOF, PSYOP AC personnel rated ‘Basic reading tasks’ as the most frequently used and ‘Basic listening tasks’ as the most important function of language, while PSYOP RC personnel responded consistently with SOF personnel overall and indicated that ‘Building rapport’ was the most frequent and important function of language. This finding suggests that within SOF, language is used very differently depending on one’s classification and mission. There is also evidence of a slight disconnect between CLPMs and SOF personnel regarding how language is currently used. While SOF personnel gave high ratings of frequency and importance to ‘Basic reading tasks’ and ‘Basic listening tasks,’ CLPMs gave lower ratings of importance and frequency to these functions. This finding is important because it shows that CLPMs and SOF personnel may have different perceptions regarding how language is currently used in the field. To reiterate, regardless of some differences between SOF personnel groups, ‘Building rapport’ was consistently rated as a frequent and important use of language. Due to the fact that ‘Building rapport’ involves speaking and conversational listening skills, these language skills should be emphasized in language training.

Given the current demand for the Arabic language, Figures 1.7 – 1.10 present findings regarding the importance and frequency of a variety of language functions for ARSOF personnel overall (i.e., SF, CA, and PSYOP) and for SF, CA, and PSYOP personnel who indicated some level of proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic. There were not a sufficient number of AFSOF personnel who indicated speaking Modern Standard Arabic to present their results in this report. However, AFSOF personnel responded very similarly to ARSOF personnel with the exception of ratings of importance and frequency for ‘Basic listening tasks’ and ‘Basic reading tasks,’ which were basically reversed in their position in the ranking of language functions. There were some important differences between the groups of ARSOF personnel (i.e., SF, CA, and PSYOP), which further supports the finding that language is used differently depending upon SOF type and the mission language. For example, ARSOF Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel assigned higher ratings of frequency and importance to ‘Basic reading tasks,’ ‘Basic listening tasks,’ and ‘Basic writing tasks’ when compared with SF Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel. On the other hand, SF Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel assigned higher ratings of frequency and importance to ‘Military-technical vocabulary,’ ‘Street/slang language’ and ‘Giving commands.’ CA Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel assigned the lowest ratings of importance and frequency to ‘Military-technical vocabulary,’ ‘Giving commands,’ and ‘Street/slang language’ and also assigned lower ratings of importance and frequency to many of the other language functions, including ‘Building rapport’ when compared with other ARSOF personnel. Modern Standard Arabic proficient PSYOP personnel assigned higher ratings overall to all language functions when compared with the other ARSOF personnel groups. Modern Standard Arabic proficient PSYOP personnel assigned higher ratings of importance and frequency to ‘Basic reading tasks’ and ‘Basic listening tasks’ when compared with the other ARSOF groups, but lower ratings of frequency and importance to ‘Military-technical vocabulary’ and ‘Giving commands’ when compared with SF personnel.

Figure 1.11 presents findings for ARSOF personnel who reported proficiency in other GWOT languages [i.e., Dari, Indonesian, Pashtu, Persian-Farsi, Tagalog (Filipino), and Urdu]. These languages were grouped together for analysis because of the small numbers of SOF personnel in each language. The findings for these languages are very similar to findings for Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel in terms of the most frequent and important and least frequent and important language functions, although the order in the middle changes. These findings all lend support to the fact that even within a language (i.e., Modern Standard Arabic) language is used differently depending upon SOF type.

Another important finding was that type and level of language skills necessary on deployment is also highly dependent on the mission type. Both SOF personnel and CLPMs indicated that a high level of proficiency, labeled as ‘Advanced Communication’ would be ideal for typical tasks and duties while deployed (See Table 1.2 for a description of proficiency levels and See Table 1.4 for these findings). It should be noted that respondents indicated the level based on a list of language tasks/functions, and all the functions provided on this list would rate in a range between 1 and 3 on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale used within the DoD (see APPENDIX B for a Layman’s Understanding of ILR Language Skill Level Descriptions). When asked to indicate the highest level of language proficiency that would be needed for their unit’s typical tasks and duties, unit leaders indicated that either ‘Advanced Communication’ or ‘Complex Communication’ would be needed. These findings suggest that both SOF personnel and members of unit leadership believe that higher levels of language proficiency are ideal for mission success.

Further exploration revealed that the level of proficiency SOF personnel indicated as ideal for missions was dependent on mission type. For example, SOF personnel engaged in DA and SR core tasks on their missions indicated a lesser need for high levels of proficiency than personnel engaged in UW, FID, PSYOP, or CAO core tasks. Also, the frequency with which different elements of language were used on the most recent deployment was shown to be highly dependent on the type of mission. Table 1.3 illustrates these differences. For example, military-specific language was used very frequently for FID core tasks, but not as frequently for CAO or SR core tasks. These findings are important because knowing a unit’s typical mission type could lead to training that focuses on the language needs relevant to these missions or to customized pre-deployment or “survival” training prior to other “atypical” missions.

The use of language on deployment was also dependent on whether the deployment was inside or outside of an respondents’ normal AOR. SOF personnel reported that higher levels of proficiency were needed for deployments inside of their AOR than for deployments outside of their AOR. SOF personnel and unit leaders also indicated that personnel were less prepared for deployments outside of their normal AOR than they were for deployments inside of their AOR.

Summary of Selected Findings

Language functions on deployment

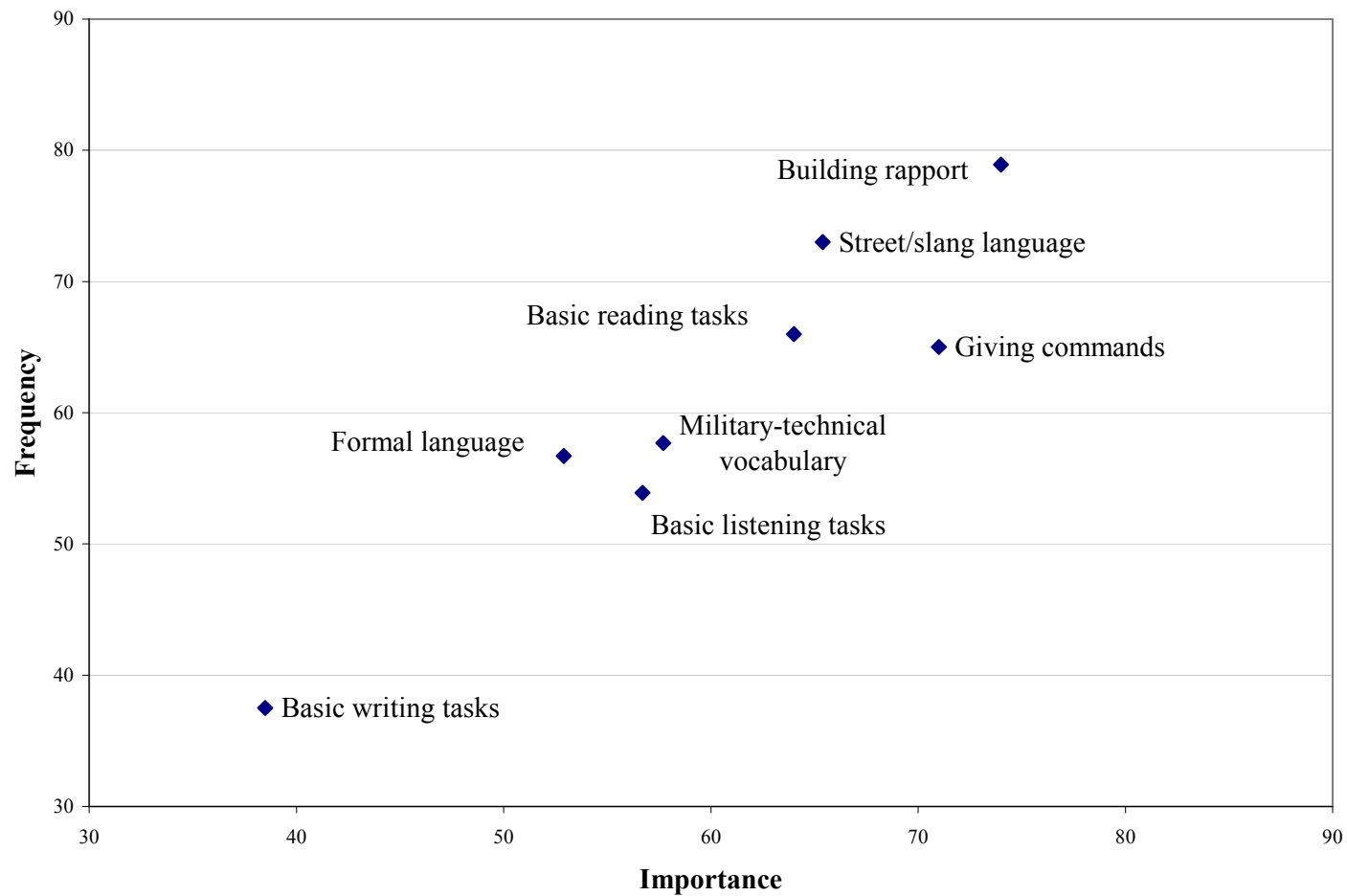
- ARSOF personnel and CLPMs indicated ‘Building rapport’ as the most commonly used and most important language function while on deployment.
- AFSOF personnel indicated that ‘Military-technical vocabulary’ was the most frequent and important function of language.
- The fact that AFSOF personnel indicated that ‘Military-technical vocabulary’ was the most frequent and important function of language is most likely due to the fact that AFSOF

- personnel who participated in the surveys primarily engage in missions that involve training and teaching others, which require the use of this type of vocabulary.
- SOF personnel and CLPMs indicated ‘Basic writing tasks’ as the least frequently used and least important language function. ARSOF personnel indicated ‘Basic writing tasks’ as the least frequently used and least important language function. AFSOF personnel indicated that ‘Giving commands’ was the least frequently used function of language, while using ‘Slang/street language’ was rated as the least important.
 - Within ARSOF, PSYOP AC personnel differed from the other subgroups in that they rated ‘Basic reading tasks’ as the most frequently used and ‘Basic listening tasks’ as the most important function of language. PSYOP RC personnel, however rated ‘Building rapport’ as the most important and frequent function of language, which is consistent with findings for SOF personnel overall.
 - AC unit leaders rated ‘Giving commands’ and using ‘Military-specific language’ as occurring more frequently and being more important than RC leaders.
 - ARSOF personnel who indicated proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic assigned different ratings of importance and frequency to various language functions depending upon their SOF type (i.e., SF, CA, and PSYOP).
 - SF Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel assigned higher ratings of frequency and importance to ‘Military-technical vocabulary,’ ‘Street/slang language’ and ‘Giving commands.’
 - CA Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel assigned the lowest ratings of importance and frequency to ‘Military-technical vocabulary,’ ‘Giving commands,’ and ‘Street/slang language’ and assigned lower ratings of importance and frequency to many of the other language functions, including ‘Building rapport’ when compared with other ARSOF personnel.
 - PSYOP Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel assigned higher ratings overall to all language functions when compared with the other ARSOF personnel groups. PSYOP Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel assigned higher ratings of importance and frequency to ‘Basic reading tasks’ and ‘Basic listening tasks’ when compared with the other ARSOF groups, but lower ratings of frequency and importance to ‘Military-technical vocabulary’ and ‘Giving commands’ when compared with SF personnel.
 - ARSOF personnel who indicated proficiency in other GWOT languages [i.e., Dari, Indonesian, Pashtu, Persian-Farsi, Tagalog (Filipino), and Urdu] assigned similar ratings of importance and frequency for the most and least frequently used and important functions when compared with Modern Standard Arabic proficient personnel, although there were differences in the middle of the distribution of language functions.
 - Unit leaders indicated that their personnel were more able to listen effectively in their official or required language than write, read, or use formal speech effectively. SOF personnel agreed that ‘Listening tasks’ were used frequently on deployment.
 - More than 90% of SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated that it would be ideal to have a level of communication that can be classified as intermediate or higher. It should be noted that respondents indicated the level based on a list of language tasks/functions, and all the functions provided on this list would rate at or above a 1+ on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale used within the DoD (See APPENDIX B for a Layman’s Understanding of ILR Language Skill Level Descriptions).
 - The majority of SOF personnel and CLPMs indicated that ‘Advanced Communication’ would be ideal for typical tasks and duties on deployment. Unit leaders indicated that ‘Advanced Communication’ or ‘Complex Communication’ would be the highest level of proficiency needed for their unit’s typical tasks and duties.

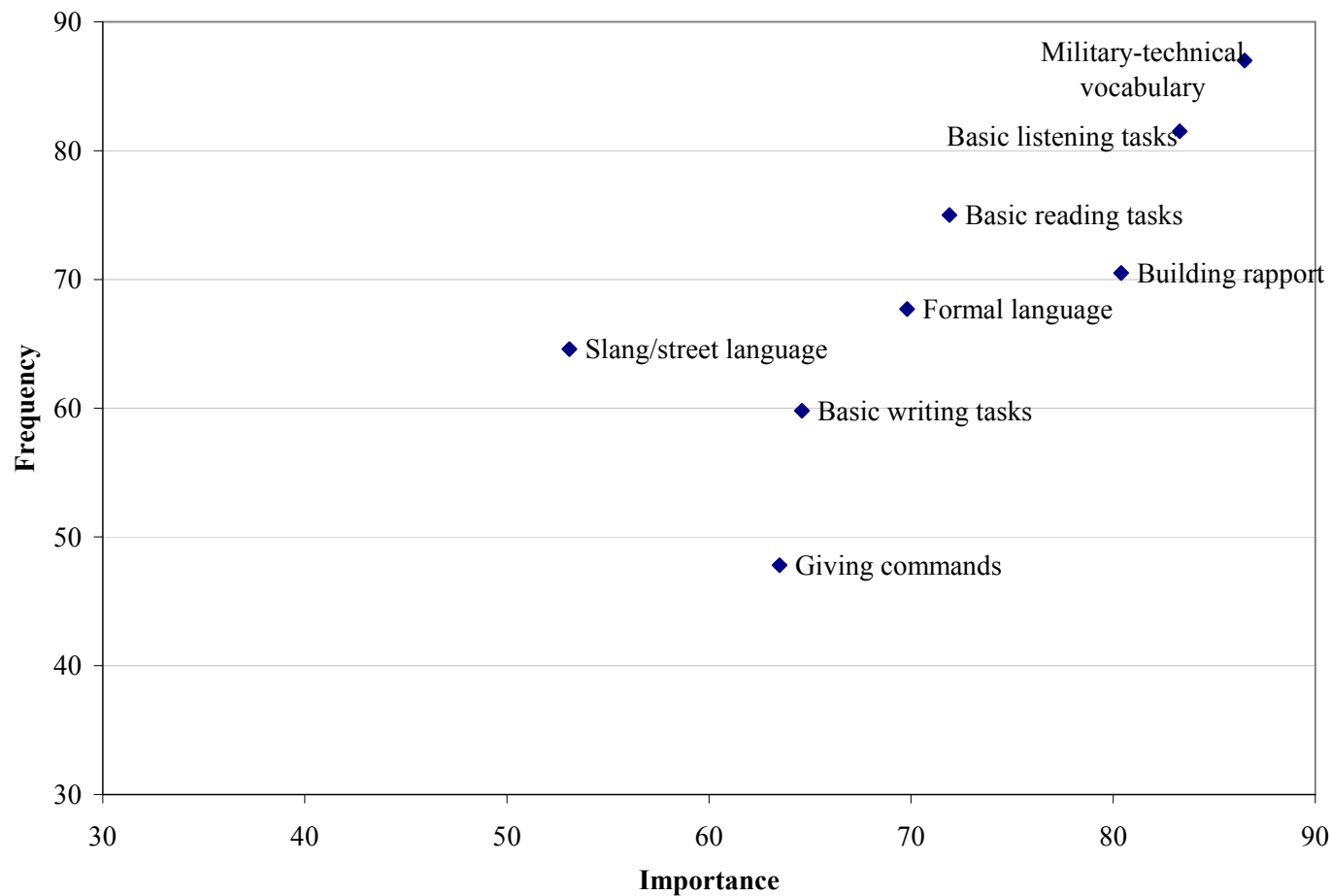
Primary missions on deployment

- Unit leadership and SOF personnel indicated CAO and PSYOP core tasks as two of the most common SOF core tasks on their missions on deployment inside of their AOR. AFSOF personnel primarily engaged in FID and CT tasks, while ARSOF personnel engaged in PSYOP, CAO, FID, and UW tasks. It should be noted that these results are probably driven by the participation levels of different SOF components (i.e., SF personnel engaged in a wide variety of core tasks, while CA personnel primarily engaged in CAO core tasks, and PSYOP personnel primarily engaged in PSYOP core tasks).
- AFSOF personnel primarily engaged in FID and CT core tasks for missions inside their AOR, and FID core tasks for missions outside their AOR.
- ARSOF personnel primarily engaged in a wide range of missions for deployments inside their AOR, and UW and CAO tasks for missions outside their AOR.
- SOF personnel indicated that a higher level of proficiency was needed for missions inside their AOR than for missions outside their AOR.
- Unit leaders indicated the need for more training for deployments outside of their AOR.
- For unit leadership, the most common SOF core tasks on deployments inside of their AOR were CAO and PSYOP tasks, although SWOA/SEAs indicated UW as the most common SOF core task on their mission. It should be noted that these results are probably driven by the participation level of different SOF components.
- Unit leaders responded negatively to items that described their personnel's proficiency and ability on deployments outside of their AOR. SOF personnel also reported being less able to meet language-related requirements for missions outside of their AOR.

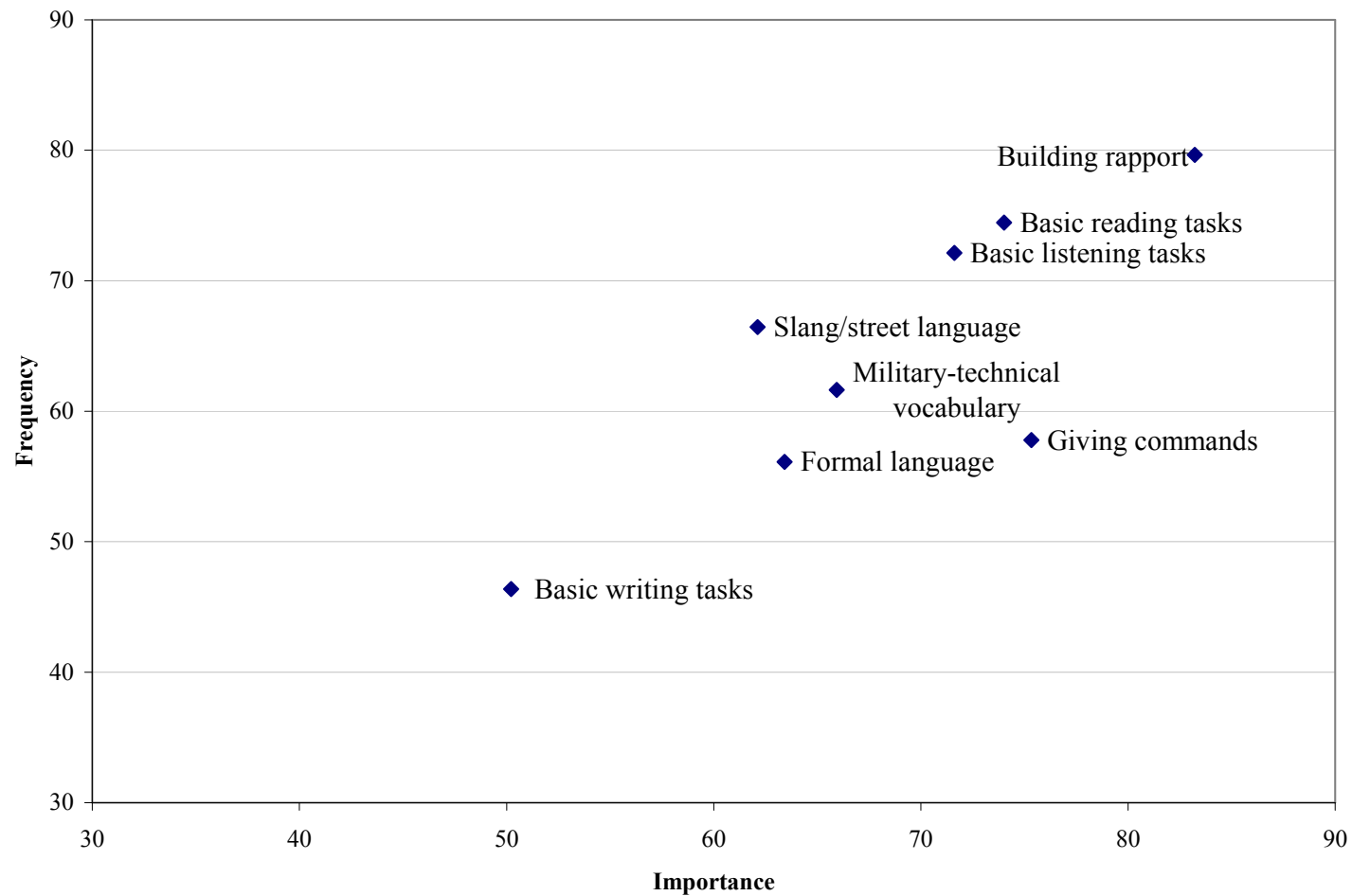
More specific findings regarding results presented in this section can be found in the supporting technical reports (See APPENDIX A for details).

Figure 1.1 General Language Requirements: Command Language Program Managers²

² The values in this graph are 100-point means.

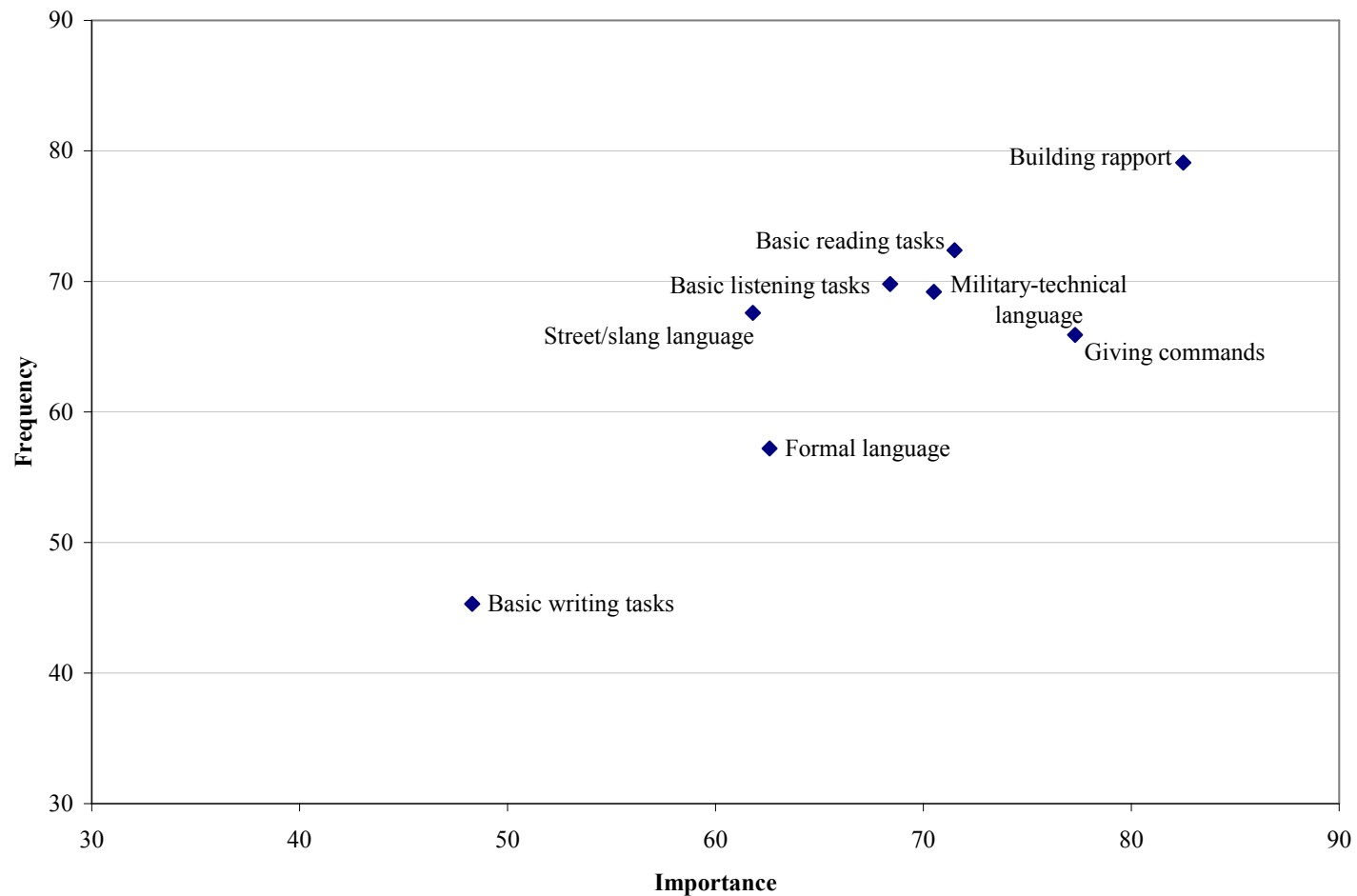
Figure 1.2 General Language Requirements: AFSOF Personnel³

³ The values in this graph are 100-point means.

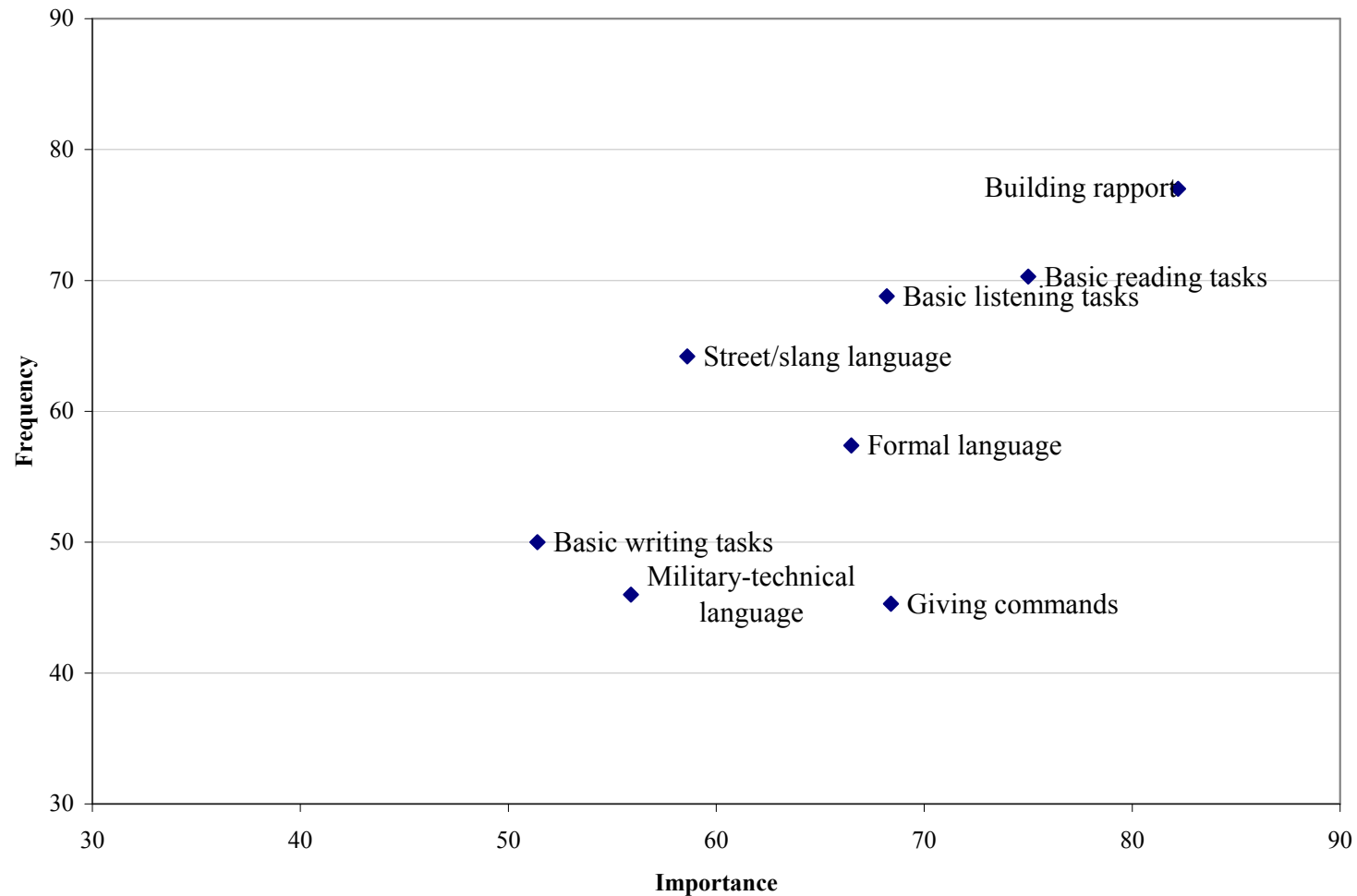
Figure 1.3 General Language Requirements: ARSOF Personnel⁴

⁴ The values in this graph are 100-point means.

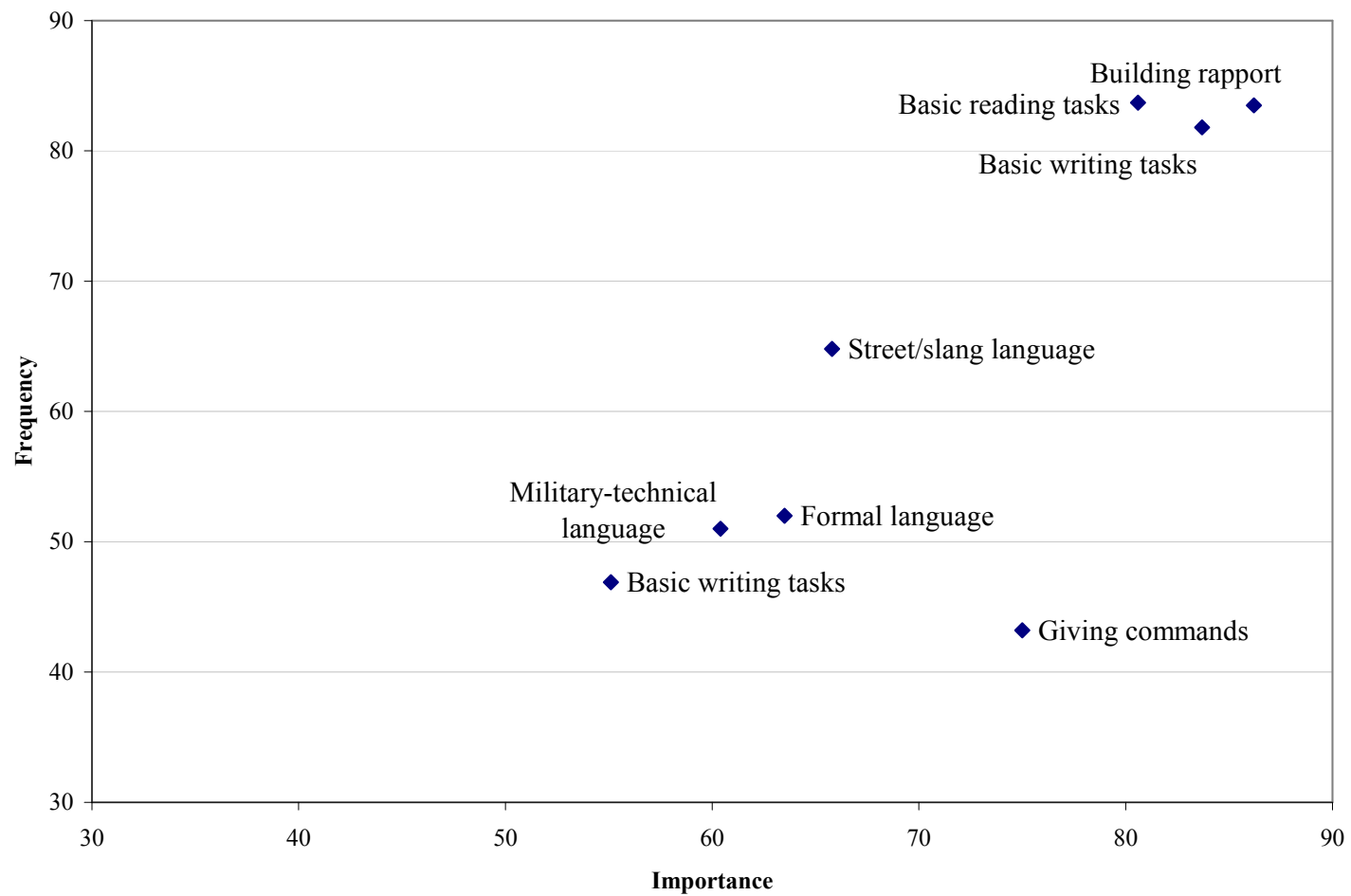
Figure 1.4 General Language Requirements: ARSOF SF Personnel⁵



⁵ The values in this graph are 100-point means.

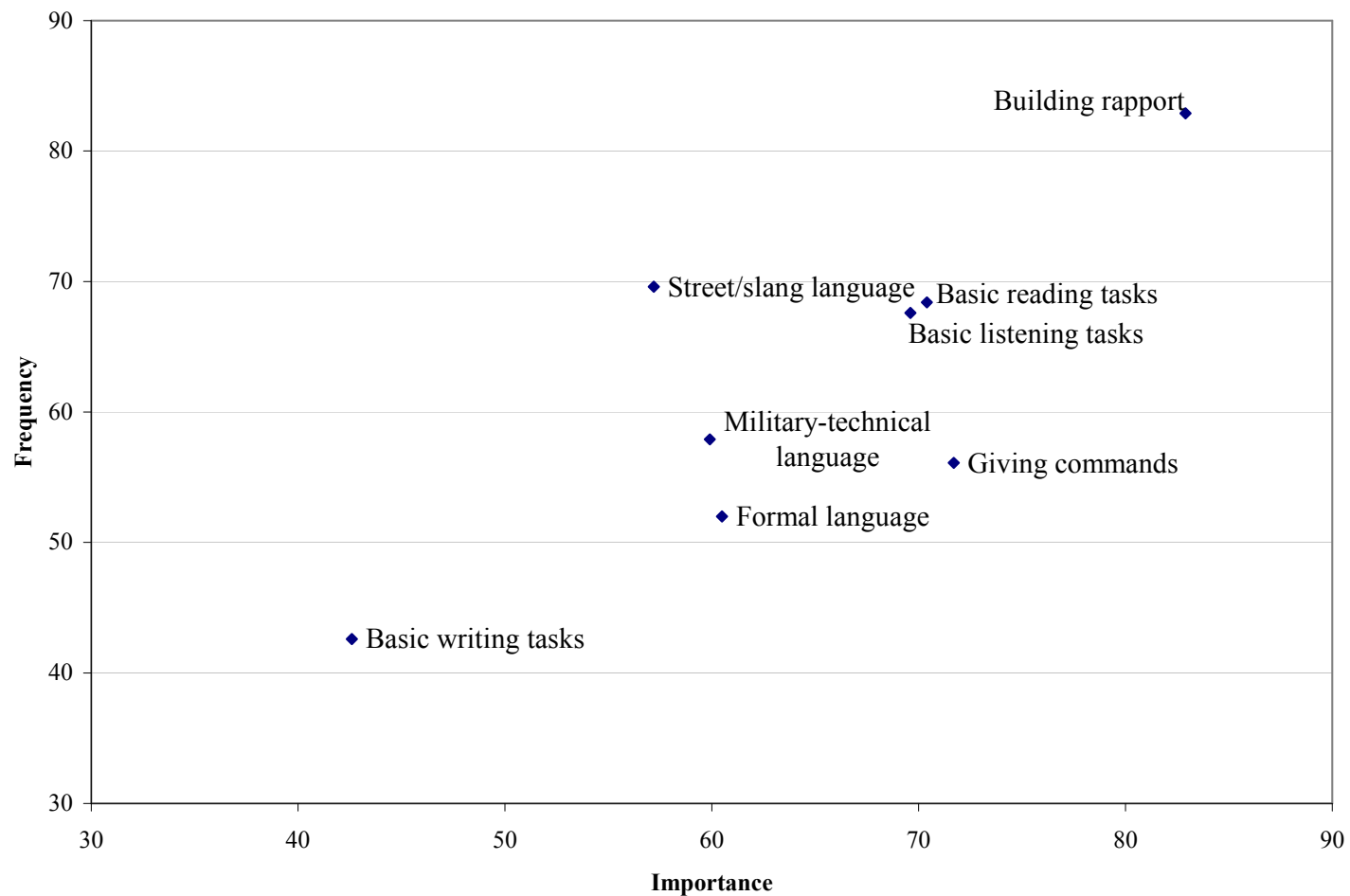
Figure 1.5 General Language Requirements: ARSOF CA Personnel⁶

⁶ The values in this graph are 100-point means.

Figure 1.6 General Language Requirements: ARSOF PSYOP Personnel⁷

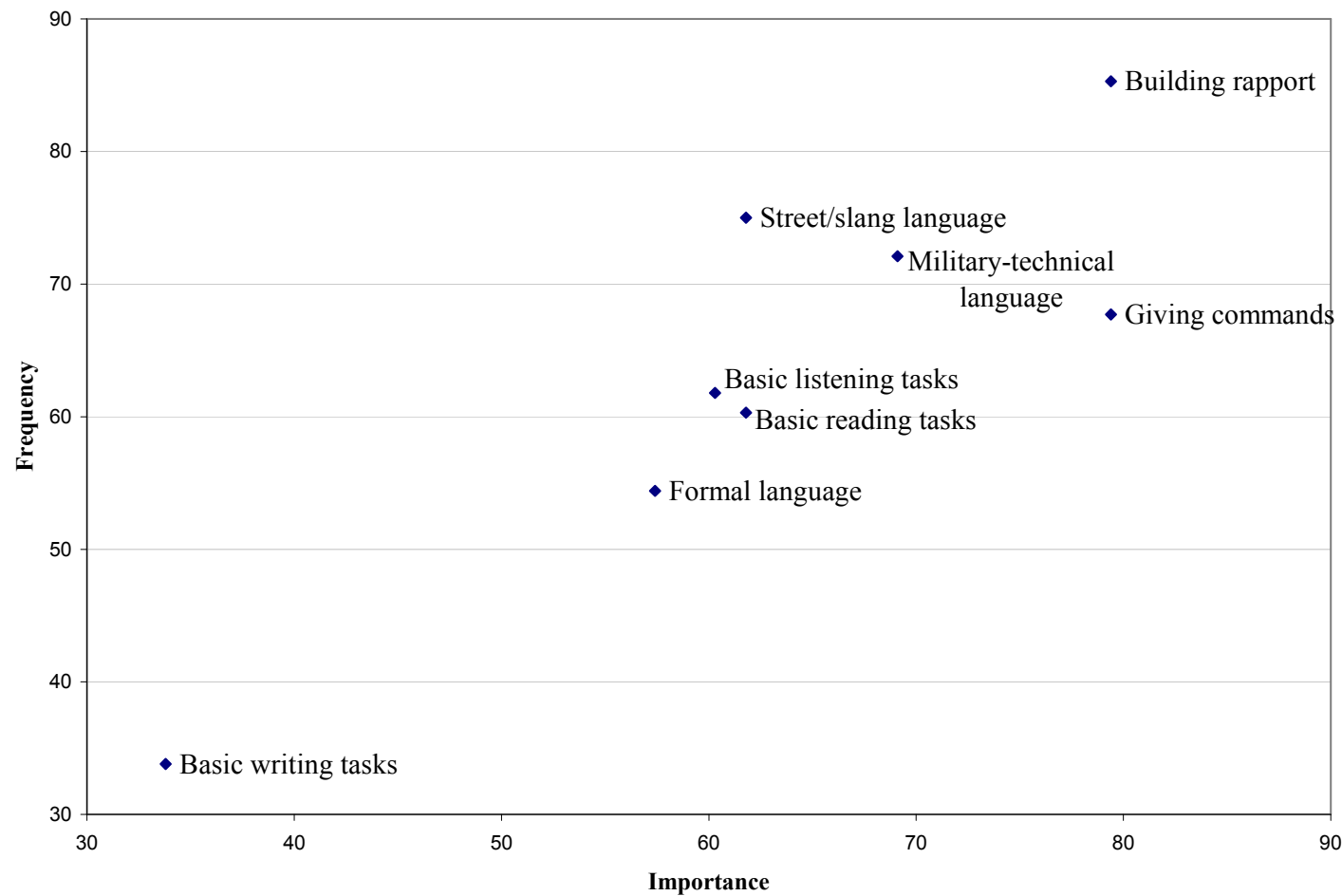
⁷ The values in this graph are 100-point means.

Figure 1.7 General Language Requirements: ARSOF Modern Standard Arabic Only⁸



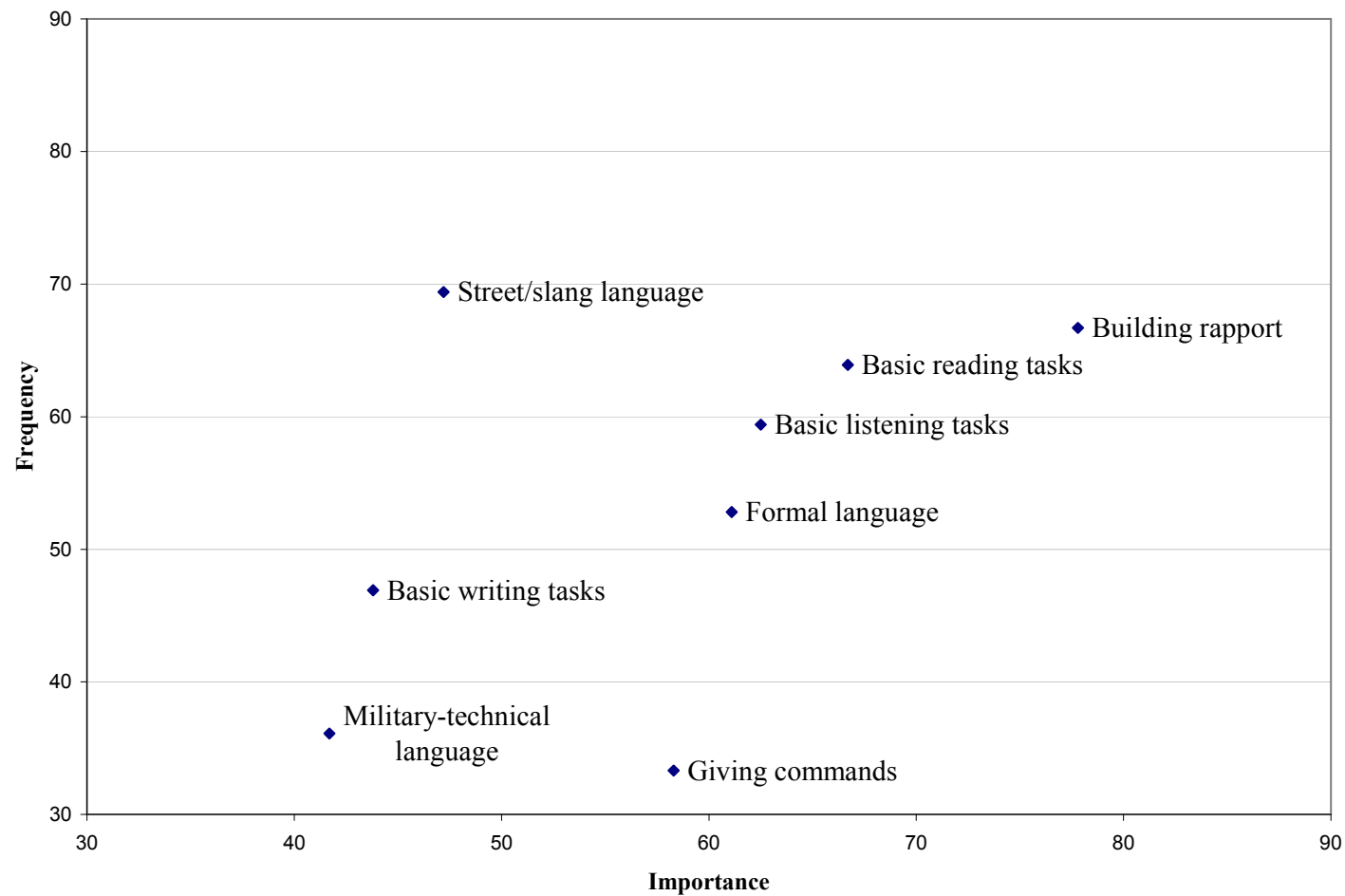
⁸ The values in this graph are 100-point means.

Figure 1.8 General Language Requirements: ARSOF SF Modern Standard Arabic Only⁹



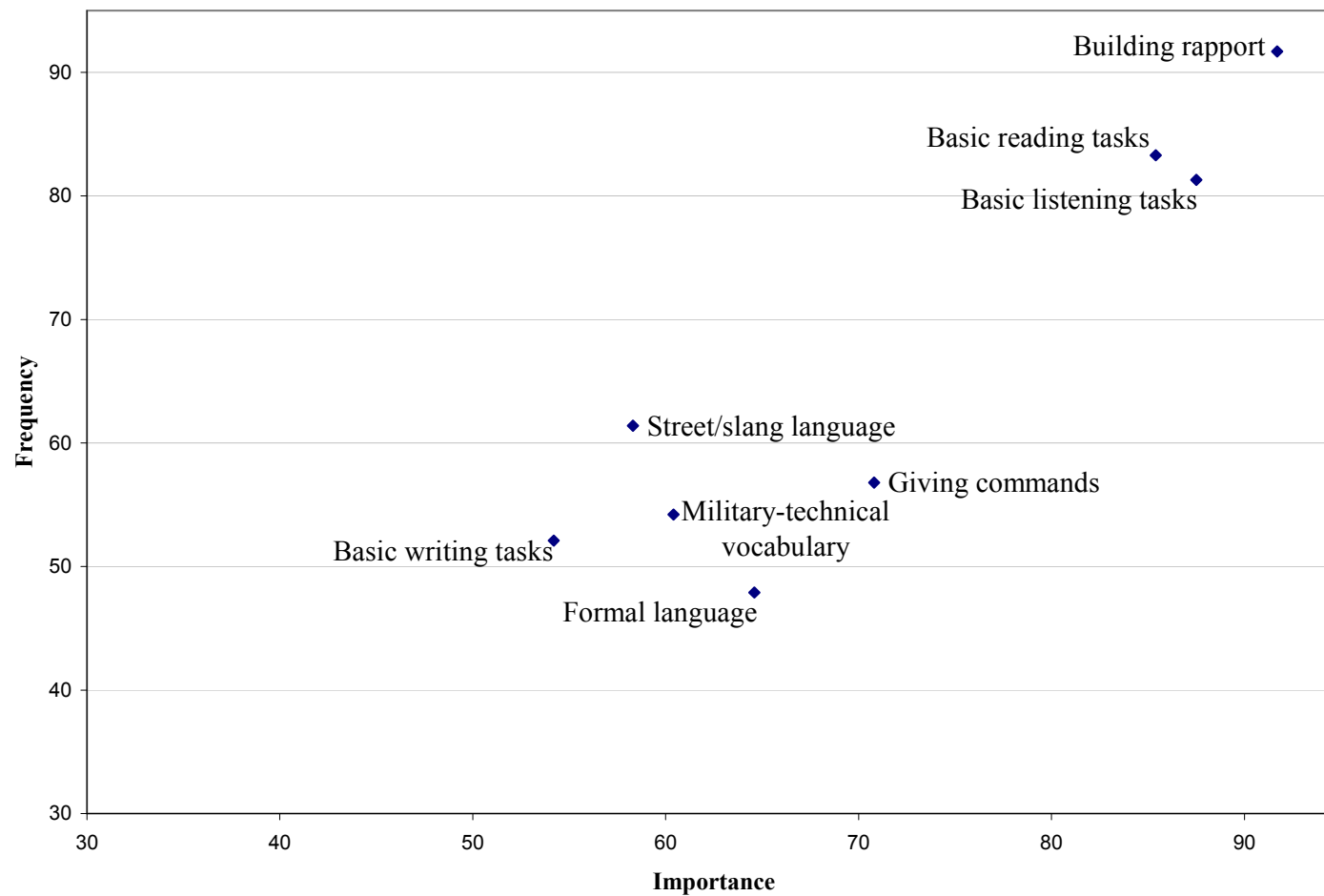
⁹ The values in this graph are 100-point means.

Figure 1.9 General Language Requirements: ARSOF CA Modern Standard Arabic Only¹⁰



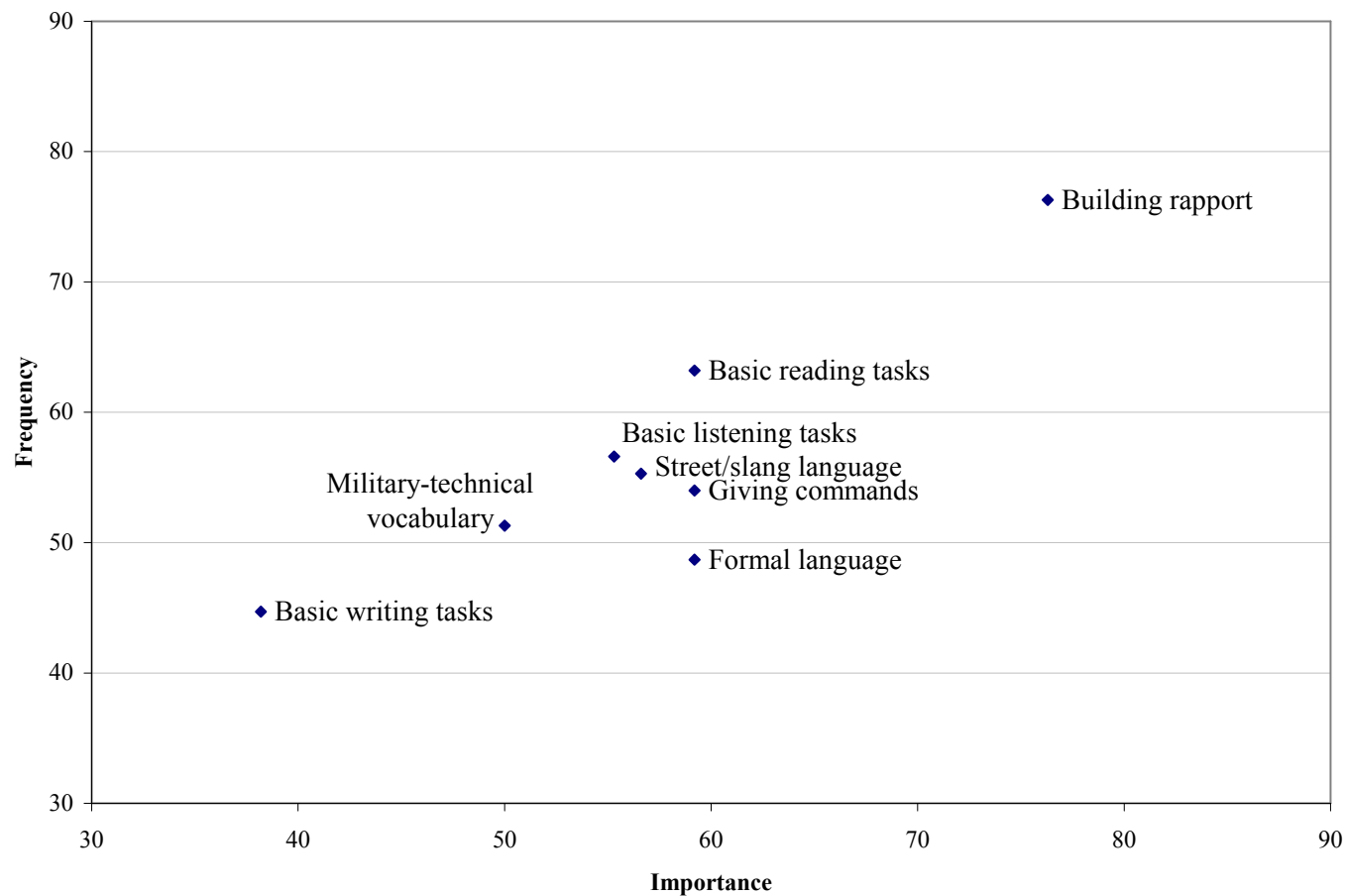
¹⁰ The values in this graph are 100-point means.

Figure 1.10 General Language Requirements: ARSOF PSYOP Modern Standard Arabic Only¹¹



¹¹ The values in this graph are 100-point means.

Figure 1.11 General Language Requirements: ARSOF personnel who indicated some level of proficiency in other GWOT languages¹²



¹² The values in this graph are 100-point means. Other GWOT languages include: Dari, Indonesian, Pashtu, Persian-Farsi, Tagalog (Filipino), and Urdu. There were no AFSOF personnel who indicated speaking one of these languages. There were not enough SF, CA, or PSYOP respondents to warrant a separate presentation of their results.

Table 1.1 Deployment language function examples

Language Function	Example situation on deployment
Slang/street language	Asking for directions from or giving important instructions to the typical person you encounter while deployed [who is most likely not formally educated in many AORs].
Giving commands	“Get down!” or “Drop the weapon!”
Formal language	Giving a thank you speech to local country leaders/hosts or conducting business negotiations with officials.
Building rapport	The initial meeting with the local militia leader.
Military-technical vocabulary	Training local mechanics, policemen, or soldiers.
Basic reading tasks	Identifying important documents, reading signs/graffiti, and navigation.
Basic writing tasks	Making written arrangements (contracts) with local officials, writing an operations order, or writing a list of supplies for a local guide to purchase.
Basic listening tasks	Listening to conversations at a café or a radio broadcast to determine local support for your presence.

Table 1.2 Explanation of proficiency levels

Level of Language Proficiency	Explanation
None	None
Basic	Asking directions; reading street signs or a map; giving basic commands; using simple common courtesy phrases and questions ("tourist guide" phrases); limited knowledge of the culture.
Intermediate	Asking and responding to questions beyond the standard "tourist guide" phrases; limited conversation/dialogue; listening and understanding the typical radio/TV broadcasts or conversation; getting the gist of newspaper headlines or articles; working knowledge and understanding of the culture.
Advanced	Extended dialogue/conversation on a variety of topics; reading important documents or the local newspaper with a good understanding; listening and understanding most conversations or broadcasts; and ability to understand culturally appropriate humor and metaphors.
Complex	Negotiations; persuading others with complex issues or thoughts; writing contracts or complex messages; reading very sophisticated or technical materials; complete comprehension of conversations and broadcasts; confidence in all levels of conversation; and ability to use culturally appropriate humor and metaphors.

Table 1.3 Ratings of Frequency for Use on Most Recent Deployment by mission type for SOF Personnel.¹³

	<i>DA¹⁴</i>	<i>SR</i>	<i>UW</i>	<i>FID</i>	<i>CAO</i>	<i>PSYOP</i>	<i>CT</i>	<i>IO</i>	<i>FP</i>	<i>Intel.</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>P & A</i>	<i>Con</i>
	[Mean values on 100-point scale]¹⁵												
Military-Specific language	51.1	39.3	60.0	75.9	33.8	42.6	58.9	47.5	62.5*	62.5*	25.0*	37.5*	50.0
Formal Language	33.3	42.9	45.0	54.7	46.7	55.6	50.0	50.0	25.0*	62.5*	25.0*	50.0*	45.0
Slang/Street Language	56.8	46.4	56.9	62.5	57.9	65.3	58.9	60.0	75.0*	87.5*	75.0*	37.5*	70.0
Local dialect	58.3	42.9	60.0	59.2	59.2	69.4	50.0	57.5	62.5*	100*	50.0*	37.5*	60.0

¹³ This category includes personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.¹⁴ Mission types are abbreviated as follows: Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Civil Affairs Operations (CAO), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Counterterrorism (CT), Information Operations (IO), Force Protection (FP), Miscellaneous Intelligence (Intel.), Other, Planning and Administration (P&A), and Contracting or Miscellaneous (Con).¹⁵ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 1.3 Ratings of Frequency for Use on Most Recent Deployment by mission type for SOF Personnel¹⁶ (con't).

	<i>DA¹⁷</i>	<i>SR</i>	<i>UW</i>	<i>FID</i>	<i>CAO</i>	<i>PSYOP</i>	<i>CT</i>	<i>IO</i>	<i>FP</i>	<i>Intel.</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>P & A</i>	<i>Con</i>
	[Mean values on 100-point scale]¹⁸												
Speaking skills	57.1	46.4	71.9	79.7	63.8	74.5	75.0	60.0	75.0*	62.5*	50.0*	50.0*	80.0
Listening skills	60.7	53.6	75.6	83.6	67.8	77.6	75.0	72.5	75.0*	100.0*	50.0*	50.0*	80.0
Reading skills	34.5	39.3	44.9	56.0	39.2	57.8	50.0	42.5	50.0*	62.5*	25.0*	37.5*	50.0
Writing skills	22.5	39.3	29.5	43.1	24.3	40.4	36.5	20.0	0.0*	25.0*	0.0*	37.5*	30.0
Job Aids	17.9	42.9	34.3	50.4	30.3	32.1	29.2	22.2	0.0*	25.0*	0.0*	25.0*	35.0
Interpreters	70.5	60.7	71.7	41.7	87.2	77.0	45.8	67.5	87.5*	100.0*	75.0*	50.0*	75.0

¹⁶ This category includes personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.¹⁷ Mission types are abbreviated as follows: Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Civil Affairs Operations (CAO), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Counterterrorism (CT), Information Operations (IO), Force Protection (FP), Miscellaneous Intelligence (Intel.), Other, Planning and Administration (P&A), and Contracting or Miscellaneous (Con).¹⁸ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 1.4 Level of proficiency ideal for Unit typical tasks and duties

	<i>CLPM</i>	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁹
	% ²⁰	%
None	11.1	1.6
Basic Communication ²¹	3.7	5.8
Intermediate Communication ²²	29.6	25.7
Advanced Communication ²³	37.0	44.4
Complex Communication ²⁴	18.5	22.6

¹⁹ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

²⁰ All numbers in this table are represented as percentages of total responses for this item.

²¹ Example: Asking directions, reading street signs, giving commands, using simple courtesy phrases, limited knowledge of culture

²² Example: Asking and responding to more complex questions, listening to and understanding TV and radio broadcasts, understanding newspaper headlines

²³ Example: Extended dialogue/conversation on a variety of topics, reading important documents/newspapers, understanding culturally appropriate metaphors

²⁴ Example: Negotiations, persuading others with complex issues, reading very sophisticated or technical materials, complete comprehension of conversations and broadcasts.

SECTION 2: PREPAREDNESS FOR DEPLOYMENT

Abstract

Overall, SOF personnel have a low-to-moderate level of confidence in their language abilities and indicated that they felt unprepared for their most recent deployments in terms of language and cultural understanding. Personnel who indicated being deployed outside their AOR reported feeling less prepared in terms of language and cultural understanding than those deployed inside their AOR. AFSOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their language abilities than ARSOF personnel. All SOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their ability to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain simple face-to-face conversations than in their ability to use military terminology or participate in informal conversations. From these and other findings (e.g., heavy dependence on interpreters), it appears that SOF personnel are struggling to meet mission-based language requirements. Furthermore, in terms of language, SOF personnel reported being less prepared for deployments outside of their AOR than inside of their AOR and unit leaders also expressed low levels of confidence in the language capabilities of their personnel for missions outside of their AOR. In order to meet the mission-based language requirements, SOF personnel rely heavily on interpreters, even though many reported encountering situations in which interpreters have contributed to negative mission outcomes. The focus groups captured several critical incidents where interpreters compromised or degraded the mission outcome. SOF personnel's reported inability to meet the language requirements of their missions without interpreters seems to be at least partially attributable to ineffective or insufficient training. Both SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated negative opinions of the efficacy of language training, particularly pre-deployment language training. SOF personnel agreed that more substantial language training should have been provided prior to their deployment.

Discussion

The findings reported in the previous section revealed that SOF personnel use language differently on deployment depending on their SOF personnel type and their mission type. This suggests that a one-size-fits-all solution for SOF language training is not sufficient. Further exploration of personnel's reports regarding confidence in their proficiency, their feelings of preparedness on their most recent deployments, and their evaluation of the efficacy of language training while on deployment suggests that language training in its current state is not adequately meeting SOF personnel's needs.

SOF personnel reported having difficulty meeting language requirements on missions. Findings show that SOF personnel were not highly confident in their language skills beyond the basic conversational level (See Table 2.1). AFSOF personnel were more confident in their ability to use military terminology, to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements, and to participate in informal conversations than ARSOF personnel. ARSOF personnel were more confident in their ability to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations than they were in their ability to use military terminology or participate in informal conversations. Furthermore, SF AC, SF RC, and CA AC personnel indicated somewhat higher levels of confidence in their language skills than CA RC, PSYOP AC, and PSYOP RC personnel (See Table 2.2). Unit leaders also expressed low levels of confidence in their typical personnel's language capability in their official or required language. For example, only 37.3% of unit leaders indicated that the typical member of their personnel was able to speak effectively in their official or required language. Even fewer (19.6%) unit leaders indicated that the typical member of their personnel was able to use military or technical language effectively (See Table 2.3).

In addition to having only moderate levels of confidence in their abilities, SOF personnel also indicated a general lack of preparedness in terms of language and cultural understanding for their most recent deployments both inside and outside of their AOR, which is shown in Table 2.4. Across SOF types, SOF personnel felt less prepared for recent deployments outside of their AOR than for recent deployments inside of their AOR. Unit leaders also indicated lower levels of confidence in their unit/command's language ability on deployments outside of their AOR (See Table 2.7). Within ARSOF, SF AC, SF RC, and PSYOP RC personnel reported being more prepared in terms of language and cultural understanding than CA RC and PSYOP AC personnel (See Table 2.5). There were also important differences observed between AFSOF and ARSOF personnel for deployments inside of their AOR. AFSOF personnel indicated being more prepared than ARSOF personnel for these deployments in terms of language and cultural understanding. Overall, SOF personnel reported being more prepared in terms of language and cultural understanding on their most recent FID mission than for other mission types (See Table 2.6). The lack of confidence in language abilities coupled with reports of lack of preparedness suggests that personnel are disadvantaged in terms of meeting mission-based language requirements. Since SOF personnel reported using their language skills consistently, providing sufficient, high-quality pre-deployment training would most likely transfer into the field as improved language preparation and performance. Additionally, the majority of unit leaders indicated that outside their AOR deployments had negatively impacted proficiency on their primary AOR languages.

Another important finding reveals that one way SOF personnel are dealing with their lack of proficiency on deployment is through heavy reliance on interpreters. Tables 2.8 and 2.9 present information regarding SOF personnel's attitudes toward interpreters and unit leadership's attitudes toward interpreters. The findings reveal that most SOF personnel believe that interpreters are essential for mission success and that they cannot be effective on their missions without using interpreters. The focus groups revealed one exception. Members of the 7th SF Group (South America) reported rarely using interpreters inside their AOR. One senior NCO basically said if Soldiers cannot speak Spanish, we can't use them. Both SOF personnel and members of unit leadership agreed that their units were too dependent on interpreters, due in part to their lack of proficiency. SOF personnel expressed somewhat favorable opinions of the interpreters that they used in terms of their interpreter's trustworthiness and competence, particularly on deployments outside of their AOR. However, while opinions of interpreters were generally favorable, SOF personnel also observed situations where interpreters compromised the mission outcome. Unit leadership agreed with this observation. These findings suggest that SOF personnel may be more willing to view interpreters positively and overlook negative experiences with interpreters because they believe that interpreters are essential to mission success (i.e., they consider it a cost of doing business without sufficient organic capabilities). SOF personnel also indicated that they would be less likely to use interpreters if they had a higher level of language proficiency. This finding was confirmed by focus group results which showed that individuals with low proficiency are more likely to rely on interpreters. Additionally, the focus group results highlighted that language proficiency is important even when using interpreters. Language proficiency helps SOF personnel choose trustworthy and competent interpreters and also allows the individual to determine if the interpreter is interpreting correctly. For example, by hiding the skill of the most proficient individual from the interpreter SF A-Teams were often able to vet their interpreters and determine if they had agendas counter to the mission. Findings indicate that training on how to select, vet, and use interpreters should be provided since there is such a strong reliance on their services.

The obvious explanation for why SOF personnel are unable to meet mission-based language requirements is that their training is not preparing them for their missions. However, it is difficult

to determine if this finding results from insufficient quantity of training, quality of training, or both. Issues such as OPTEMPO and competing training requirements may be preventing effective training. After being deployed, SOF personnel expressed slightly negative attitudes when evaluating the effectiveness of their training. Overall, SOF personnel had negative opinions toward the training they received prior to their most recent deployment. Based on their experiences while deployed, SOF personnel thought that more substantial language training should have been required (See Table 2.10). SOF personnel also indicated that they had particular problems speaking and listening to local people while on deployment. This finding is interesting because the focus group and survey results that were discussed in Section 1 revealed that training should focus primarily on speaking and listening skills. These results support that current training does not provide sufficient preparation on these skills. Further examination of evaluations by training type (i.e., initial acquisition, pre-deployment) revealed that personnel whose most recent training experience was pre-deployment training in a language outside of their AOR had highly negative opinions of that training (See Table 2.11). Unit leaders also agreed that pre-deployment training was not effective in preparing personnel to do well on missions. SOF personnel expressed more neutral opinions about the effectiveness of initial acquisition training in preparing them for deployment and the most positive evaluations of sustainment and enhancement language training in preparing them for deployment. These findings suggest that there are particular problems with pre-deployment language training in preparing personnel for deployment most likely because this type of training is not sufficient in duration for personnel to reach the 'Advanced Communication' level needed for typical tasks and duties described in Section 1 of this report. Additionally, this pre-deployment training may not be customized sufficiently to the language skills and context of the mission. For example, pre-deployment training that focused on ordering/buying food is of little use while conducting a DA mission, where training that provided in instruction in giving commands such as, "Drop the weapon!" would be very useful. Data collected from the surveys and focus groups could be used to make pre-deployment training more mission-relevant and effective.

Summary of Selected Findings

Beliefs about Proficiency

- SOF personnel were not very confident in their language abilities beyond basic conversational skills, although AFSOF personnel were more confident than ARSOF personnel in their language skills overall.
- Within ARSOF, RC personnel were about equally confident in their language abilities when compared with AC personnel, except that SF AC personnel reported being less confident than SF RC personnel. When comparing all ARSOF subgroups SF AC, SF RC, and CA AC personnel reported being slightly more confident in their language skills than CA RC, PSYOP AC, and PSYOP RC personnel.
- Within ARSOF, PSYOP personnel had somewhat lower levels of confidence when compared to the other SOF types.
- Unit leaders expressed low levels of confidence in their typical personnel's language capability in their official or required language. For example, only 37.3% of unit leaders indicated that the typical member of their personnel was able to speak effectively in their official or required language.

Preparedness for Deployment

- In general, SOF personnel felt unprepared in terms of language and cultural understanding for their most recent deployment.
- SOF personnel felt more unprepared if the deployment was outside of their AOR than if the deployment was inside of their AOR.
- AFSOF personnel indicated that they were more prepared for their most recent mission in terms of language and cultural understanding than ARSOF personnel.
- SF AC, SF RC, and PSYOP RC personnel reported feeling more prepared in terms of language and cultural understanding than CA RC and PSYOP AC personnel.
- Within ARSOF, RC personnel reported feeling less prepared for their most recent deployment in terms of language and cultural understanding than AC personnel.
- Overall, SOF personnel reported being more prepared in terms of language and cultural understanding on their most recent FID missions than for other mission types.

Dependency on Interpreters

- SOF unit leadership and personnel agreed that their units are highly dependent on interpreters.
- SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated an increased dependency on interpreters for missions outside their AOR when compared with missions inside their AOR.
- Unit leaders were more likely to indicate experiencing problems with interpreters, while SOF personnel were more favorable in their views in terms of trustworthiness and competence.
- Reserve component personnel, in both unit leadership and SOF personnel groups, reported stronger dependency on interpreters than AC respondents, as well as a higher indication of problems on missions due to interpreter usage.
- ARSOF personnel indicated a stronger dependency on interpreters than ARSOF other (i.e., SOF support, MI Soldiers assigned to a SOF unit, and SOF other) respondents.

Training Effectiveness on Deployment

- When evaluating their training effectiveness as a result of experiences on deployment, SOF personnel responded from slightly negatively to slightly positively regarding their preparedness for deployment.
- SOF personnel indicated that they encountered situations on deployment where they could have used additional language training.
- As a result of training, SOF personnel believed that they were better able to perform reading and rapport-building tasks. However, personnel reported problems with performing listening and speaking tasks on deployment.
- Both SOF unit leadership and personnel expressed negative opinions regarding the ability of pre-deployment training to prepare personnel for mission success, especially on outside AOR missions.
- Within ARSOF, PSYOP personnel were the most negative when rating how well their training prepared them to perform mission-related tasks.

Focus Group Findings

- Members of the 7th SF Group (South America) reported rarely using interpreters inside their AOR.

- SF A-Teams were often able to vet their interpreters to determine if they had agendas counter to the mission.
- Focus group respondents reported frequent use of both local and military-provided interpreters.
- Focus group respondents reported that interpreters are essential for mission success.
- Focus group respondents reported several issues with interpreters. They indicated that interpreters can compromise mission success and emphasized the importance of proper selection of interpreters to ensure that they are trustworthy and competent.

More specific findings regarding results presented in this section can be found in the supporting technical reports (See APPENDIX A for details).

Table 2.1 Beliefs about Proficiency

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ²⁵	<i>AFSOF</i> ²⁶	<i>ARSOF</i> ²⁷	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ²⁸	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ²⁹	
	[Mean values on 100-point scale] ³⁰				
I feel confident in my ability to use military terminology in the language required by my AOR assignment.	49.0	60.2	47.8	49.7	44.8
I feel confident in my ability to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations on familiar topics in my required AOR language.	68.4	76.9	67.6	67.9	67.0
I feel confident in my ability to participate in informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics in my required AOR language.	52.9	62.1	51.9	51.9	52.0

²⁵ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

²⁶ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

²⁷ Respondents from this group indicated they were Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

²⁸ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

²⁹ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

³⁰ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 2.2 Beliefs about Proficiency: Findings from ARSOF Personnel

<i>ARSOF Personnel</i> ³¹	<i>Non-SOF Linguist</i> ³²	<i>Non-SOF Other</i> ³³	<i>SF AC</i>	<i>SF RC</i>	<i>CA AC</i>	<i>CA RC</i>	<i>PSYOP AC</i>	<i>PSYOP RC</i>
			[Mean values on 100-point scale] ³⁴					
I feel confident in my ability to use military terminology in the language required by my AOR assignment. 47.8	71.1	61.5	52.3	51.0	51.9	40.3	42.1	40.2
I feel confident in my ability to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations on familiar topics in my required AOR language. 67.6	85.7	77.2	67.5	71.9	73.1	63.6	67.6	63.0
I feel confident in my ability to participate in informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics in my required AOR language. 51.9	77.4	71.0	52.3	59.4	55.8	47.2	49.4	45.5

³¹ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

³² Non-SOF Linguists are non-SOF MI, FAO, or other non-SOF language-coded positions.

³³ This category contains respondents who were non-SOF affiliated and in non-language-coded positions.

³⁴ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 2.3 Unit Leader's Perceptions of their Typical Personnel's Language Capabilities in their Official or Required Language

	<i>Unit Leadership</i> <i>(N = 157)</i>
	%³⁵
Able to speak effectively	37.3
Able to listen effectively	41.8
Able to read effectively	29.7
Able to write effectively	12.7
Able to use formal speech ³⁶	13.9
Able to use slang (street language) effectively ³⁷	27.2
Able to use military or technical language effectively ³⁸	19.6

³⁵ All numbers in this table are represented as percentages of total responses for this item.

³⁶ Examples: Give a thank you speech to local country hosts or conduct business negotiations with officials.

³⁷ Examples: Ask directions or give important instructions to the typical person on the street.

³⁸ Examples: Training local vehicle mechanics or policemen.

Table 2.4 Language Use on Most Recent Deployment by SOF Personnel type³⁹

	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ⁴⁰	<i>AFSOF</i> ⁴¹	<i>ARSOF</i> ⁴²	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ⁴³	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ⁴⁴
Across deployments		[Mean values on 100-point scale]⁴⁵			
I was well prepared for this deployment in terms of language and cultural understanding.	43.6	61.5	41.5	44.4	36.3
I used my language skills frequently while on this deployment.	67.5	95.5	64.4	64.8	63.9
Inside AOR					
I was well prepared for this deployment in terms of language and cultural understanding.	52.0	66.3	49.8	49.5	50.7
I used my language skills frequently while on this deployment.	78.2	95.8	75.6	75.3	76.5
Outside AOR					
I was well prepared for this deployment in terms of language and cultural understanding.	28.4	37.5*	27.9	32.6	23.2
I used my language skills frequently while on this deployment.	48.5	93.8*	46.3	38.8	53.7

³⁹ Respondents to this question indicated that they had been deployed with a SOF unit within the past four years.

⁴⁰ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

⁴¹ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

⁴² Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

⁴³ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

⁴⁴ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

⁴⁵ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 2.5 Language Use on Most Recent Deployment by ARSOF type⁴⁶

	<i>ARSOF Personnel</i> ⁴⁷	<i>SF AC</i>	<i>SF RC</i>	<i>CA AC</i>	<i>CA RC</i>	<i>PSYOP AC</i>	<i>PSYOP RC</i>
Across deployments		[Mean values on 100-point scale] ⁴⁸					
I was well prepared for this deployment in terms of language and cultural understanding.	41.5	46.8	29.1	44.4	38.4	36.7	50.0
I used my language skills frequently while on this deployment.	64.4	67.5	60.0	53.1	66.4	58.9	69.2
Inside AOR							
I was well prepared for this deployment in terms of language and cultural understanding.	49.8	51.7	60.0	58.3*	41.7	41.3	53.9
I used my language skills frequently while on this deployment.	75.6	75.7	88.9	91.7*	69.2	71.6	75.0
Outside AOR							
I was well prepared for this deployment in terms of language and cultural understanding.	27.9	33.9	17.6	37.5	34.6	25.0	25.0*
I used my language skills frequently while on this deployment.	46.3	44.2	50.0	30.0	63.5	27.8	37.5*

⁴⁶ Respondents to this question indicated that they had been deployed with a SOF unit within the past four years.⁴⁷ This category includes individuals categorized as SF AC, SF RC, CA AC, CA RC, PSYOP AC, and PSYOP RC.⁴⁸ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 2.6 Language Use on Most Recent Deployment by Mission Type for ARSOF Personnel⁴⁹

	<i>DA</i> ⁵⁰	<i>SR</i>	<i>UW</i>	<i>FID</i>	<i>CAO</i>	<i>PSYOP</i>	<i>CT</i>	<i>IO</i>	<i>FP</i>	<i>Intel.</i>	<i>Other</i>
Across deployments	[Mean values on 100-point scale] ⁵¹										
Preparedness	27.6	41.7	36.3	55.6	38.8	41.0	45.0	31.3	50.0*	12.5*	45.8*
Usage	56.9	35.7	57.4	81.1	61.4	61.9	65.6	68.8	75.0*	50.0*	75.0
Inside AOR											
Preparedness	43.8	75.0*	46.2	60.6	42.1	45.8	47.2	20.0	25.0*	50.0*	75.0*
Usage	62.5	75.0*	78.9	83.8	69.1	72.7	71.4	75.0	75.0*	100.0*	75.0*
Outside AOR											
Preparedness	15.9	25.0*	31.5	15.0	35.5	25.0	25.0*	50.0*	-	-*	16.7*
Usage	52.5	20.0	45.8	60.0	54.2	29.6	25.0*	58.3*	-	-*	75.0*

⁴⁹ This category includes individuals categorized as SF AC, SF RC, CA AC, CA RC, PSYOP AC, and PSYOP RC.

⁵⁰ SOF core task types are abbreviated as follows: Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), Civil Affairs Operations (CAO), Psychological Operations (PSYOP), Counterterrorism (CT), Counterproliferation of WMD (CP), Information Operations (IO), Force Protection (FP), Miscellaneous Intelligence (Intel.), and Other.

⁵¹ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 2.7 Unit Leadership attitudes toward deployments outside of their unit's AOR

<i>Unit Leadership</i>	
	[Mean values on 100-point scale]⁵²
Our operators can perform language-related tasks outside of the AOR at the same level as they do inside the AOR.	18.4
Pre-deployment language training has been successful in getting our operators to achieve the necessary language proficiency.	27.2
These deployments outside of the AOR have definitely degraded my unit's primary language proficiencies in the AOR language.†	59.2

⁵² All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

† A high value for this item indicates a more negative attitude, while a low value for this item indicates a more positive attitude.

Table 2.8 Attitudes towards interpreters by SOF type

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ⁵³	<i>AFSOF</i> ⁵⁴	<i>ARSOF</i> ⁵⁵	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ⁵⁶	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ⁵⁷	
	[Mean values on 100-point scale] ⁵⁸				
If I were more proficient in my current or official language, I would be less likely to rely on interpreters.	76.7	91.7	75.8	72.0	81.3
In my experiences, I have observed situations where interpreters have compromised the mission outcome. †	62.0	54.2	62.2	58.6	67.3
I use interpreters only when advanced/high levels of proficiency are required.	41.2	53.1	40.4	38.9	42.4
It would have been useful to receive training on using interpreters prior to deployment.	64.2	66.7	63.8	61.8	66.8
Interpreters are essential for carrying out missions.	72.6	59.4	73.4	72.3	75.0

⁵³ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.⁵⁴ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.⁵⁵ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.⁵⁶ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component⁵⁷ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component⁵⁸ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

† A high value for this item indicates a more negative attitude, while a low value for this item indicates a more positive attitude towards interpreters.

Table 2.8 Attitudes towards interpreters by SOF type (cont.)

	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ⁵⁹	<i>AFSOF</i> ⁶⁰	<i>ARSOF</i> ⁶¹	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ⁶²	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ⁶³
		[Mean values on 100-point scale]⁶⁴			
I feel our unit is too dependent on interpreters. †	71.4	57.1	71.8	67.7	77.6
My unit frequently uses interpreters when deployed inside the normal AOR.	70.8	64.3	71.0	69.7	73.0
I can be as effective on my missions without an interpreter.	29.7	32.1	29.2	32.1	25.0
In my experience, most interpreters were trustworthy.	59.0	53.6	59.5	61.6	56.6
In my experience, most interpreters were competent.	63.1	67.9	63.1	64.2	61.5

⁵⁹ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

⁶⁰ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

⁶¹ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

⁶² Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

⁶³ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

⁶⁴ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

† A high value for this item indicates a more negative attitude, while a low value for this item indicates a more positive attitude towards interpreters.

Table 2.9 Unit Leadership's attitudes toward interpreters

<i>Unit Leadership</i>	
	[Mean Values on 100-point scale]⁶⁵
In my experiences, I have observed situations where interpreters have compromised the mission outcome.	58.1
I feel my unit/command is too dependent on interpreters.	68.1
My unit/command would depend less on interpreters if we had higher levels of language proficiency.	82.7
The use of interpreters enhances mission success in my unit/command.	71.2
My unit/command has experienced no issues or problems when using interpreters outside the normal AOR.	35.9
My unit/command frequently uses interpreters when outside the normal AOR	86.9
My unit/command uses interpreters more frequently outside the normal AOR than inside the normal AOR.	71.8
My unit/command has experienced no issues or problems when using interpreters outside the normal AOR.	35.9

⁶⁵ All figures in the table are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a five-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated. See INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 2.10 Training Effectiveness on Deployment by SOF-type

	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ⁶⁶	<i>AFSOF</i> ⁶⁷	<i>ARSOF</i> ⁶⁸	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ⁶⁹	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ⁷⁰
		[Mean values on 100 point scale]⁷¹			
The language training I received prepared me for situations that I commonly encountered while deployed or on the mission.	49.6	53.9	49.2	46.4	54.9
As a result of language training, I had no problem(s) speaking with local people, asking directions, giving commands, and reserving lodging.	43.5	45.5	43.2	42.3	45.1
As a result of language training, I had no problem(s) building rapport/trust with local people.	50.6	52.3	50.4	47.6	56.2
As a result of language training, I had no problem(s) reading street signs, warning markers, graffiti, important documents, and news.	49.6	58.3	48.9	48.8	49.2
As a result of language training, I had no problem(s) listening to local people, answering their questions, and following local news programs.	38.8	47.9	38.0	38.7	36.5

⁶⁶ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

⁶⁷ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

⁶⁸ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

⁶⁹ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

⁷⁰ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

⁷¹ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 2.10 Training Effectiveness on Deployment by SOF-type (cont.)

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ⁷²		<i>AFSOF</i> ⁷³	<i>ARSOF</i> ⁷⁴	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ⁷⁵	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ⁷⁶
		[Mean values on 100 point scale]⁷⁷			
While deployed, I encountered situations where I felt that more substantial language training should have been required. †	76.9	78.9	76.6	73.8	82.5
I was taught in the most up-to-date form of the language (i.e., how the language is currently used).	49.1	53.9	48.7	45.8	54.4
While deployed, I found that I received incorrect information during language training. †	40.7	29.2	41.4	40.7	42.8

⁷² This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.⁷³ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.⁷⁴ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.⁷⁵ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component⁷⁶ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component⁷⁷ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

† A high value for these items indicates a more negative attitude, while a low value for these items indicates a more positive attitude toward training effectiveness.

Table 2.11 Training Effectiveness on Deployment by Training Type

	<i>Initial Acquisition</i>		<i>Sustainment/Enhancement in AOR Language⁷⁸</i>		<i>Pre-deployment in Outside AOR Language⁷⁹</i>	
	<i>SOF Personnel⁸⁰</i>	<i>ARSOF⁸¹</i>	<i>SOF Personnel</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF Personnel</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>
	[Mean values on 100 point scale]⁸²					
The language training I received prepared me for situations that I commonly encountered while deployed or on the mission.	49.1	49.3	55.7	55.0	39.5	39.2
As a result of language training, I had no problem(s) speaking with local people, asking directions, giving commands, and reserving lodging.	44.1	44.7	55.6	55.1	21.2	21.1
As a result of language training, I had no problem(s) building rapport/trust with local people.	53.1	53.3	56.9	56.9	34.6	34.2
As a result of language training, I had no problem(s) reading street signs, warning markers, graffiti, important documents, and news.	51.0	50.7	60.4	59.8	25.7	25.7
As a result of language training, I had no problem(s) listening to local people, answering their questions, and following local news programs.	38.1	38.2	50.0	48.9	20.5	20.4

⁷⁸ Sustainment/Enhancement training in official or required AOR (Area of Responsibility) language.

⁷⁹ Pre-deployment training in language outside AOR (e.g. GWOT language)

⁸⁰ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

⁸¹ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

⁸² All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 2.11 Training Effectiveness on Deployment by Training Type (cont.)

	<i>Initial Acquisition</i>		<i>Sustainment/Enhancement in AOR Language⁸³</i>		<i>Pre-deployment in Outside AOR Language⁸⁴</i>	
	<i>SOF Personnel⁸⁵</i>	<i>ARSOF⁸⁶</i>	<i>SOF Personnel</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF Personnel</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>
	[Mean values on 100 point scale]⁸⁷					
While deployed, I encountered situations where I felt that more substantial language training should have been required. †	79.9	77.9	70.2	69.9	82.7	82.2
I was taught in the most up-to-date form of the language (i.e. how the language is currently used).	47.6	47.8	53.8	52.3	45.5	46.1
While deployed, I found that I received incorrect information during language training. †	40.3	41.1	37.7	38.1	48.7	49.3

⁸³ Sustainment/Enhancement training in official or required AOR (Area of Responsibility) language.⁸⁴ Pre-deployment training in language outside AOR (e.g. GWOT language)⁸⁵ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.⁸⁶ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.⁸⁷ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

† A high value for these items indicates a more negative attitude, while a low value for these items indicates a more positive attitude toward training effectiveness.

SECTION 3: LANGUAGE TRAINING

Abstract

When discussing their previous language training experiences in the focus groups and on the survey, SOF personnel described a diverse collection of courses and programs, ranging from six-month initial acquisition courses to one week survival courses. Because most language training in SOF units (i.e., command language programs, CLPs) is done on a “when we have the time basis,” it is difficult for many SOF units to establish a standardized, systematic language program. However, some command language programs (CLP) have been successful in doing so. The diversity of language training needs and programs in SOF makes a one-size-fits-all solution for improving language training/proficiency impossible. However, some consistent trends have emerged. Given the fact that a substantial number of SOF personnel indicated they felt unprepared on their most recent deployment in terms of language (see Section 2), the efficacy of language training in the SOF community needs to be evaluated. However, it should be realized that these data (from the surveys and focus groups) are limited “red flags” that provide initial evidence. The best way to establish training effectiveness is through systematic analysis within and across language training programs, linking specific individual data to specific training events. The on-going *SOF Language Training Effectiveness Project* was commissioned to systematically assess the efficacy of language training.

Where the last section reported that SOF personnel did not hold favorable views of the efficacy of language training on deployment (Tables 2.6 and 2.7), this section reports perceptions of curriculum and instructors related to the respondents’ initial acquisition and most recent sustainment and enhancement training experiences. There were several trends found in this data. SOF personnel viewed language training as being moderately effective at best across training types and sources (e.g., United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, USAJFKSWCS). SOF personnel often indicated that they thought language training was pre-packaged and not customized to the need of SOF or to how they used language on missions. Additionally, SOF personnel reported the curriculum often had errors that were usually discovered on deployment at inopportune times. One of the most alarming findings was that unit leaders reported that new personnel arrived at their command not mission-capable in their language, which is consistent with responses from SOF personnel who reported that language training was not appropriate for their needs and that they felt unprepared in terms of language and culture on their most recent deployment. Both SOF leaders and personnel have very positive opinions of immersion training as a method for sustainment and enhancement language training. Most focus group participants and many survey respondents suggested OCONUS immersion following classroom training as the optimal training situation. Finally, the majority of unit leaders believe that “language proficiency sustainment is as important as physical fitness training” and that language training is still a viable even with the current OPTEMPO.

Discussion

Since findings in Section 2 indicate that SOF personnel hold lackluster evaluations of the mission-related preparation and efficacy provided by the language training they received, it is essential to determine which characteristics of training are contributing to these negative evaluations and adjust them to better prepare SOF personnel. Generally speaking, most models of training effectiveness include groups of factors, such as individual differences (e.g., cognitive ability), that influence the outcomes of training (learning, proficiency, transfer, job performance, etc.). In this section, we asked respondents about two other factors that influence training outcomes—curriculum and instruction—because if the students are reporting that their courses

are not preparing them for missions these two factors are the most likely places to start investigating. SOF personnel were asked to provide specific evaluations of the instruction and the curriculum for their initial acquisition training experience, their most recent sustainment and enhancement training experience, and their most recent immersion experience if they had one. Unit leaders provided evaluations of initial acquisition language training, sustainment and enhancement language training, and immersion training, while CLPMs provided specific evaluations of the instructors and curriculum in the CLP.

Findings show that evaluations of the instructors and curriculum for initial acquisition and sustainment and enhancement language training are generally positive, although a common complaint was that training is not customized for SOF needs (See Tables 3.1-3.4). For both initial acquisition and sustainment and enhancement training, a majority of SOF personnel reported that they viewed the curriculum as “pre-packaged” and not customized to SOF. If the curriculum is not customized to SOF, then it can impact proficiency in two ways. First, it might not cover the skills necessary to do the job or mission. Second, if it is viewed as not being job-related, then personnel may not be motivated to take it seriously. If training is not viewed as useful, it becomes easier to write language training off as just another waste of time. The operative question is: why they do not consider it customized to their needs. Is it because the examples in the instructional materials are not related to the job? Or, is it because speaking skills are not the focus of the class? Or, is it because the people designing the curriculum are not in touch with language usage in the field? These are questions that are difficult to answer without the evaluation of specific programs. This is one of the objectives of the *SOF Language Training Effectiveness Project*. However, we do have some data that might shed some light on these findings.

Although SOF personnel indicated that sustainment and enhancement training (which for the most part takes place in the unit’s CLP) was not customized to SOF needs, CLPMs were more likely to indicate that language training in the CLP was customized to SOF needs (See Table 3.5). Interestingly, there were sharp contrasts between the responses of RC and AC CLPMs regarding their attitudes about the instructors and curriculum in the CLP. RC CLPMs tended to have more negative attitudes toward the instructors and the curriculum than AC counterparts. In terms of the degree to which the CLP curriculum was customized to meet SOF needs, RC CLPMs disagreed that the curriculum in the CLP is customized to meet SOF needs, while AC CLPMs strongly agreed that it is customized to meet SOF needs. If the responses of AC personnel and CLPMs on the SOF-specific customization of sustainment and enhancement training are compared, a large gap between the views of SOF personnel and CLPMs becomes apparent. This finding should be investigated further to determine the source of this disconnect because CLPMs have the responsibility for developing the point of instruction (POI) and scheduling training. If the CLPMs and SOF personnel hold different beliefs about requirements, this could impact the efficacy or at least the evaluation of the training.

SOF personnel reported unfavorable evaluations of the curriculum when asked about its coverage of the vocabulary necessary for their jobs and missions. In the focus groups, SOF personnel often reported the need to know the slang/street level language instead of the formal, educated version of the language because most of the people they deal with are not educated. Both initial acquisition and sustainment and enhancement training were rated low to moderate on their coverage of job-, mission-related vocabulary and slang or street language with sustainment and enhancement training being rated slightly more positive. These findings might offer a partial explanation as to why SOF personnel reported being unprepared on their most recent deployment. Additionally, SOF personnel indicated that training materials were often in error. Some focus group respondents provided critical incidents of discovering these errors in the field or of learning they could have been taught the wrong dialect.

In evaluating initial acquisition language training, unit leaders indicated that new personnel show up to the command not mission-capable in their language (See Table 3.6). Likewise, SOF personnel indicated that their instructors for initial acquisition language training did not incorporate SOF considerations into their teaching objectives, which may explain why unit leaders perceived that they did not arrive at the unit mission-capable. This may be related to many other factors as well. Additionally, both SOF unit leaders and personnel had more positive evaluations of training at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) than training at USAJFKSWCS, although the majority of SOF personnel surveyed were ARSOF personnel and received initial acquisition training at USAJFKSWCS (See Tables 3.6-3.8). Students who received training at USAJFKSWCS indicated that the curriculum did not cover their needs regarding mission-related vocabulary (remember, this evaluation is based on the Soldier looking backwards to training), and that there was more emphasis placed on 'Formal language' and less on 'Slang/street language.' This finding is especially important because ARSOF personnel indicated that slang/street language was used more frequently on deployment than formal language (See Section 1 of this report). This suggests that initial acquisition training at USAJFKSWCS may not focus on the language skills most important for ARSOF personnel. Based on focus group comments and survey responses, USAJFKSWCS would be well served to integrate job-related role plays or simulations into their language classes and to introduce more military vocabulary and "street" language. However, it should be considered that USAJFKSWCS might provide a good initial start at developing language and that CLPs fail to continue this development. More research, especially longitudinal research, is needed.

Additionally, ARSOF personnel (specifically ARSOF AC personnel) were more likely than AFSOF personnel to report that the materials used for their initial acquisition language training contained errors (See Table 3.2). However, there was a more positive evaluation from ARSOF personnel regarding the materials used for their sustainment and enhancement curriculum (See Table 3.4). ARSOF personnel indicated that all sources of initial acquisition training had issues with errors in training materials (see Table 3.8). DLI received the best rating but it was fairly negative. These findings suggest that materials used for language training need to be reviewed and updated. In the focus groups, we heard comments that lead us to believe that most curricula have errors. They reported many of these errors are related to the fact that language is constantly in flux and the curriculum developers/instructors often have not been in the country where the language is used for a long period of time.

Most SOF personnel indicated that they received sustainment and enhancement language training at their unit (See Tables 3.9-3.10 for these findings). Unit leaders indicated that sustainment/enhancement training was important. In fact, unit leaders indicated that language proficiency sustainment was as important as physical fitness training (See Table 3.11). However, unit leaders also indicated that they did not have enough resources to dedicate to sustainment/enhancement language training and that more command emphasis needs to be placed on language training. Unit leaders reported being dissatisfied with the quality of their CLP and agreed that the chain of command needs to invest more command attention to sustaining and enhancing language proficiencies and that more money needs to be invested in the CLP (See Table 3.12).

The clear winner from the focus groups and surveys in terms of the preferred training methodology was immersion. All groups had very high opinions of immersion training and its effectiveness in preparing SOF personnel for deployment, although very few personnel reported having participated in immersion training. This is most likely due to the high cost associated with immersion training and the high OPTEMPO. In the focus groups, some personnel indicated that

past abuses of the immersion program may have led many commanders to be skeptical of its practical benefits. However, SOF personnel who had participated in immersion training agreed that their language proficiency improved significantly as a result of their immersion training. Both SOF personnel and unit leaders also agreed that OCONUS immersion training is more valuable than CONUS immersion training. However, SOF personnel also realized that OCONUS immersion was not always feasible, and suggested that CONUS iso-immersion or other types of immersion training would be useful and effective alternatives. Many SOF personnel acknowledged that a minimal level of proficiency should be required before a member of SOF personnel can go on immersion. Many SOF personnel in the focus groups suggested classroom instruction followed by immersion as an optimal training strategy. In the focus groups, when asked to present a decision brief to improve language proficiency in their unit, many of the groups included a requirement for periodic immersions.

Summary of Selected Findings

Initial Acquisition Language Training

- Most SOF personnel surveyed received their initial acquisition training at USAJFKSWCS, while a smaller percentage received training at DLI and in their CLP.
- Unit leaders indicated that new personnel arrived at the unit not mission-capable in their AOR language, and that students who received training at DLI (Monterey) were more prepared than those who received training at USAJFKSWCS. This was confirmed by SOF personnel.
- SOF personnel indicated that they believe that the curriculum was prepackaged and not customized to SOF considerations. Training in the unit and USAJFKSWCS were rated more favorably in this area than training at DLI.
- In rating the initial acquisition curriculum, students who received training at DLI evaluated their training more positively than students who received training at USAJFKSWCS. Those students who received training at USAJFKSWCS were more likely to indicate that the curriculum did not cover their needs regarding mission-related vocabulary and that the materials contained frequent errors.
- In evaluation of their initial acquisition language training, SOF personnel indicated that their instructors often failed to adequately incorporate SOF considerations into their teaching, which might explain the apparent lack of preparation when arriving at the unit perceived by unit leaders.
- SOF personnel also indicated that their instructors were knowledgeable and encouraged students to speak in the target language.
- SOF personnel agreed that the emphasis in their initial acquisition language training was on 'Formal language' rather than 'Slang/street language.'
- ARSOF RC personnel rated their curriculum and instructor higher than ARSOF AC personnel for initial acquisition language training.

Sustainment and Enhancement Language Training

- Most SOF personnel received sustainment and enhancement training in their unit's CLP.
- Within ARSOF, there were discrepancies between SF AC and SF RC personnel in their evaluation of sustainment and enhancement training that was not observed for the other SOF personnel types (i.e., CA and PSYOP).
- SOF personnel indicated that they believe that the curriculum was prepackaged and not customized to SOF considerations.

- RC CLPMs tended to have a more negative attitude towards instructors and the curriculum in the CLP than AC CLPMs.
- RC CLPMs disagreed that the curriculum in the CLP is customized to meet SOF needs, while AC CLPMs strongly agreed that it is customized to meet SOF needs.
- SOF personnel agreed that the emphasis in their sustainment and enhancement language training was on 'Formal language' rather than 'Slang/street language.'
- For the most part, ARSOF RC personnel rated their curriculum and instructor higher than ARSOF AC personnel for sustainment and enhancement language training.
- Unit leaders indicated that they did not have enough resources to dedicated to sustainment and enhancement language training and that more command emphasis needs to be placed on language training.
- Unit leaders reported being dissatisfied with the quality of their CLP and agreed that more command emphasis and money need to be invested in the CLP.
- RC leaders disagreed more strongly than AC leaders that they are satisfied with the quality of their CLP.

Immersion Training

- Unit leaders indicated that immersion training would be the best mode of instruction for sustainment and enhancement training.
- Both SOF unit leaders and personnel agreed that immersion training is an effective way for personnel to acquire and maintain language skills.
- Both groups agreed that OCONUS immersion training was more valuable than CONUS immersion training but thought that CONUS immersion was better than no immersion.
- Immersion was viewed as more effective following some sort of classroom training.
- Although results indicated a very positive attitude toward immersion, most unit leaders indicated that their unit did not frequently engage in immersion training and the majority of SOF personnel reported that they had never participated in military-provided immersion training.
- Very few AFSOF personnel or ARSOF RC personnel had participated in immersion training.
- SOF personnel indicated that they believed selection for immersion is unfair, a finding especially pronounced by ARSOF RC personnel.
- Focus group participants often blamed the lack of immersion training on funding and on a few salient cases of abuse ruining the immersion opportunity for everyone.

More specific findings regarding results presented in this section can be found in the supporting technical reports (See APPENDIX A for details).

Table 3.1 Instructor characteristics for Initial Acquisition Language Training

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ⁸⁸		<i>AFSOF</i> ⁸⁹	<i>ARSOF</i> ⁹⁰	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ⁹¹	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ⁹²
Instructor		[Mean values on 100 point scale] ⁹³			
My instructor was effective in preparing me to use my language skills.	71.4	79.2	71.0	64.7	83.1
It was clear that the instructor incorporated SOF considerations in his/her teaching objectives.	47.8	41.7	48.1	46.8	50.6
My instructor utilized current examples from TV, movies, radio, magazines, and newspapers to teach the language.	66.7	79.2	66.1	60.6	76.9
My instructor was knowledgeable about how the language is currently used.	76.4	91.7	78.8	75.6	85.0
The instructor encouraged students to speak in the target language.	82.3	87.5	82.1	77.0	91.9

⁸⁸ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.⁸⁹ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.⁹⁰ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.⁹¹ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component⁹² Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component⁹³ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 3.2 Curriculum characteristics for Initial Acquisition Language Training

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ⁹⁴	<i>AFSOF</i> ⁹⁵	<i>ARSOF</i> ⁹⁶	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ⁹⁷	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ⁹⁸
Curriculum	[Mean values on 100 point scale] ⁹⁹			
The primary emphasis of the curriculum was on the formal language. 74.6	75.0	74.6	73.4	62.5
The curriculum included slang and/or street language. 39.4	29.2	40.0	35.5	53.8
The materials used in training were free from error. 35.8	50.0	35.0	34.9	50.0
The curriculum included instruction and practice in all four skill modalities (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening) 70.4	83.3	69.7	65.3	58.8
The curriculum covered the vocabulary necessary for my job and missions. 48.6	45.8	48.7	44.2	56.3
The curriculum was pre-packaged and not customized to SOF. † 60.6	66.7	60.3	60.5	58.8
The course would have been more effective if we had covered less content in more detail. † 52.9	58.3	52.6	56.3	50.0

⁹⁴ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.⁹⁵ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.⁹⁶ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.⁹⁷ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component⁹⁸ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component⁹⁹ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

† A high value for these items indicates a more negative attitude, while a low value for these items indicates a more positive attitude toward the curriculum.

Table 3.3 Instructor characteristics for Sustainment and enhancement Language Training

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁰⁰		<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF AC</i>	<i>ARSOF RC</i>
Instructor		[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹⁰¹			
My instructor was effective in preparing me to use my language skills.	69.3	75.0	68.4	69.8	64.3
It was clear that the instructor incorporated SOF considerations in his/her teaching objectives.	46.3	25.0	49.1	53.4	35.7
My instructor utilized current examples from TV, movies, radio, magazines, and newspapers to teach the language.	69.8	90.6	66.8	66.3	68.3
My instructor was knowledgeable about how the language is currently used.	82.7	96.9	80.5	79.6	83.3
The instructor encouraged students to speak in the target language.	84.6	100.0	82.2	80.1	88.3

¹⁰⁰ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

¹⁰¹ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 3.4 Curriculum characteristics for Sustainment and enhancement Language Training by SOF type

	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁰²	<i>AFSOF</i> ¹⁰³	<i>ARSO</i> ¹⁰⁴	<i>ARSO</i> AC ¹⁰⁵	<i>ARSO</i> RC ¹⁰⁶
Curriculum		[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹⁰⁷			
The primary emphasis of the curriculum was on the formal language.	66.1	77.8	65.1	66.2	62.5
The curriculum included slang and/or street language.	50.6	55.6	49.7	48.0	53.8
The materials used in training were free from error.	53.8	69.4	51.5	52.0	50.0
The curriculum included instruction and practice in all four skill modalities (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, and listening)	61.9	69.4	60.7	61.5	58.8
The curriculum covered the vocabulary necessary for my job and missions.	51.5	41.7	53.2	52.0	56.3
The curriculum was pre-packaged and not customized to SOF. †	56.9	72.2	54.6	53.0	58.8
The course would have been more effective if we had covered less content in more detail. †	55.0	52.8	54.6	56.5	50.0

¹⁰² This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.¹⁰³ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.¹⁰⁴ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.¹⁰⁵ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component¹⁰⁶ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component¹⁰⁷ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

† A high value for these items indicates a more negative attitude, while a low value for these items indicates a more positive attitude toward the curriculum.

Table 3.5 CLPM Feedback on Instructor and Curriculum Characteristics

	<i>CLPM</i>	<i>Reservists/ National Guard</i>	<i>Active Duty</i>
	[Mean Values on 100-point scale]¹⁰⁸		
Instructors are willing to customize course material if students request specific mission-related instruction.	77.8	65.9	96.4
Instructors have the freedom to customize the course materials or bring in other materials as supplements.	70.9	61.4	85.7
Our instructors are native speakers.	77.9	67.5	92.9
The teaching skills of our instructors need to be improved.	45.8	52.3	35.7
Instructors are up-to-date with the current form and usage of the language they teach.	75.0	65.9	89.3
Instructors are proficient enough in English to be effective.	79.2	70.5	92.9
The curriculum focuses mostly on speaking.	66.7	52.3	89.3
The curriculum is customized to consider SOF needs.	68.3	43.8	96.4
The curriculum is structured to get students to pass the DLPT.	40.3	47.7	28.6

¹⁰⁸ All figures in the table are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a five-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated. See INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 3.6 Unit Leadership evaluation of Initial Acquisition Language Training

<i>Unit Leadership</i>	
	[Mean Values on 100-point scale]¹⁰⁹
Operators show up at my command mission-capable in their language.	27.7
Operators can perform well in our normal AOR after receiving training at DLI (Monterey, CA).	69.1
Operators can perform well in our normal AOR after receiving training at USAJFKSWCS.	43.0
Operators can perform well in our normal AOR after receiving training in the Unit's Command Language Program (CLP).	38.9

¹⁰⁹ All figures in the table are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a five-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated. See INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 3.7 Instructor Characteristics for Initial Acquisition Language Training according to Source of Training

<i>Source of Training</i>										
	<i>DLI in CA¹¹⁰</i>		<i>DLI in DC¹¹¹</i>		<i>USAJFKSWCS</i>			<i>Unit/Command Language Program (CLP)</i>		
	<i>SOF Personnel¹¹²</i>	<i>ARSOF¹¹³</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>
My Instructor	[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹¹⁴									
Is effective in student preparation	87.5	87.5	62.5*	62.5*	66.1	100.0*	65.7	80.8	75.0	84.4
Incorporates SOF considerations	37.5	37.5	37.5*	37.5*	49.7	100.0*	49.1	53.9	30.0	68.8
Uses T.V., movies, radio to teach etc.	81.8	81.8	62.5*	62.5*	61.8	100.0*	61.3	75.0	75.0	75.0
Was knowledgeable on current language	78.4	78.4	37.5*	37.5*	78.7	100.0*	78.5	92.3	90.0	93.8
Encourages speaking in the target language	93.2	93.2	87.5*	87.5*	92.3	100.0*	77.9	90.4	85.0	93.8

¹¹⁰ Defense Language Institute (at Monterey, California). There were no responses from AFSOF personnel regarding this source of training.

¹¹¹ Defense Language Institute (in Washington, DC). There were no responses from AFSOF personnel regarding this source of training

¹¹² This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

¹¹³ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

¹¹⁴ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 3.8 Curriculum Characteristics for Initial Acquisition Language Training according to Source of Training

Source of Training										
	<i>DLI in CA</i> ¹¹⁵		<i>DLI in DC</i> ¹¹⁶		<i>USAJFKSWCS</i>			<i>Unit/Command Language Program (CLP)</i>		
	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹¹⁷	<i>ARSOF</i> ¹¹⁸	<i>SOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>
Curriculum	[Mean values on 100 point scale] ¹¹⁹									
Emphasis was on formal language	84.5	84.5	62.5*	62.5*	71.8	25.0*	72.4	78.6	85.0	75.0
Included slang and street language	50.0	50.0	25.0*	25.0*	35.8	0.0*	36.2	48.2	35.0	55.6
Materials were free from error	41.7	41.7	50.0*	50.0*	33.6	25.0*	33.7	38.5	55.0	28.1
Included all four skill modalities	88.1	88.1	87.5*	87.5*	65.2	75.0*	65.1	73.2	85.0	66.7
Covered necessary vocabulary	61.9	61.9	62.5*	62.5*	43.7	25.0*	43.9	57.1	50.0	61.1
Pre-packaged and not customized to SOF †	75.0	75.0	37.5*	37.5*	57.9	25.0*	58.2	58.9	75.0	50.0
More effective if less content in more detail †	41.7	41.7	25.0*	25.0*	55.9	100.0*	55.4	53.6	50.0	55.6

¹¹⁵ Defense Language Institute (at Monterey, California). There were no responses from AFSOF personnel regarding this source of training.

¹¹⁶ Defense Language Institute (in Washington, DC). There were no responses from AFSOF personnel regarding this source of training.

¹¹⁷ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

¹¹⁸ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

¹¹⁹ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 3.9 Instructor Characteristic for Sustainment and enhancement Language Training according to Source of Training

	Source of Training								
	<i>DLI in CA</i> ¹²⁰			<i>DLI in DC</i> ¹²¹			<i>Unit/Command Language Program (CLP)</i>		
	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹²²	<i>ARSOF</i> ¹²³	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>
My Instructor	[Mean values on 100 point scale] ¹²⁴								
Is effective in student preparation	85.0	87.5*	83.3*	75.0*	75.0*	-	68.1	70.0	67.8
Incorporates SOF considerations	25.0	12.5*	33.3*	25.0*	25.0*	-	47.9	30.0	49.5
Uses T.V., movies, radio to teach etc.	95.0	100.0*	91.7*	100*	100.0*	-	67.4	85.0	65.6
Was knowledgeable on current language	95.0	100.0*	91.7*	100*	100.0*	-	82.1	95.0	80.6
Encourages speaking in the target language	95.0	100.0*	91.7*	100*	100.0*	-	84.2	100.0	82.4

¹²⁰ Defense Language Institute (at Monterey, California).¹²¹ Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Washington, DC.¹²² This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.¹²³ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.¹²⁴ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 3.10 Curriculum Characteristic for Sustainment and enhancement Language Training according to Source of Training.

<i>Source of Training</i>										
	<i>DLI in CA</i>			<i>DLI in DC</i> ¹²⁵		<i>Self-Study</i> ¹²⁶		<i>Unit/Command Language Program (CLP)</i>		
	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹²⁷	<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>	<i>SOF</i>	<i>AFSOF</i>	<i>ARSOF</i>
Curriculum	[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹²⁸									
Emphasis was on formal language	75.0	100.0*	62.5	100.0*	100.0*	75.0*	75.0*	64.1	66.7	64.7
Included slang and street language	45.8	25.0*	56.3	75.0*	75.0*	37.5*	37.5*	51.1	62.5	49.6
Materials were free from error	55.0	62.5*	50.0	75.0*	75.0*	37.5*	37.5*	54.4	70.8	52.4
Included all four skill modalities	66.7	87.5*	56.3	100.0*	100.0*	50.0*	50.0*	60.7	58.3	60.9
Covered necessary vocabulary	45.8	25.0*	56.3	25.0*	25.0*	37.5*	37.5*	53.3	50.0	54.0
Pre-packaged and not customized to SOF †	70.8	75.0*	68.8	75.0*	75.0*	75.0*	75.0*	53.7	70.8	52.4
More effective if less content in more detail †	54.2	37.5*	62.5	50.0*	50.0*	62.5*	62.5*	54.0	58.3	53.2

¹²⁵ There were no responses from ARSOF personnel regarding this source of training¹²⁶ There were no responses from AFSOF personnel regarding this source of training¹²⁷ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.¹²⁸ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 3.11 Unit Leadership evaluation of Sustainment and enhancement Language Training

<i>Unit Leadership</i>	
	[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹²⁹
Language proficiency sustainment is as important as physical fitness training.	74.4
With the current OPTEMPO, language sustainment training for operators is no longer a viable option.	41.7
My unit has an effective Command Language Program (CLP) for sustainment/enhancement training.	37.4
My unit conducts a sufficient number of sustainment and enhancement courses to ensure all operators have access to language training.	35.4
My unit provides sufficient resources for operators to maintain their language proficiency.	50.7
Operators are given the option to use duty time to study their language to maintain personal proficiency.	44.1

¹²⁹ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 3.12 Unit Leadership Evaluation of CLP Language Training

<i>Unit Leadership</i>	
[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹³⁰	
Operators who cannot do well in our CLP probably do not have the ability to use their language in the field.	60.7
More money needs to be invested in the CLP.	74.1
The chain of command needs to invest more command attention to sustaining/enhancing language proficiencies.	79.4
Our CLP ensures we have operators with the necessary level of proficiency for our missions.	41.5
Missions can be accomplished without optimal language skills.	51.0
Cultural knowledge is not critical to the mission.	13.5
Official language training is essential for mission success.	80.9
I am satisfied with the quality of our CLP.	35.6
When operators are involved in a language course, they are off limits for non-critical details.	57.4

¹³⁰ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

SECTION 4: MOTIVATION

Abstract

SOF personnel are primarily motivated to do well in training because they want to succeed on missions and they feel accountable to members of their team or unit for their language proficiency. The current Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP) incentive system does not appear to motivate SOF personnel to acquire high levels of proficiency. FLPP is viewed as having little, if any, incentive value by SOF personnel who have not received FLPP in the past four years. The current amount of FLPP is viewed as insufficient to overcome the barriers and constraints related to enhancing language proficiency for most SOF personnel. SOF personnel indicated that increasing the amount of FLPP and paying FLPP for lower levels of proficiency would improve the likelihood of sustaining and enhancing language proficiency. Another factor that impacts the efficacy of FLPP is the use of the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) to determine the amount of proficiency pay. The majority of SOF personnel do not believe the DLPT is an accurate measure of their proficiency, while unit leaders indicated a more favorable view of the DLPT. However, both SOF unit leaders and personnel reported believing that the Defense Language Institute Oral Proficiency Interview (DLI OPI) is a better indicator of language proficiency than the DLPT. This relates to earlier findings that speaking and conversational listening were important language tasks for SOF personnel. On a related note, survey respondents indicated that language or language-related issues had little to do with their intentions to re-enlist or not re-enlist.

Discussion

One possible explanation for why training is perceived as not preparing SOF personnel for their missions is that training may not be customized to meet SOF needs (See Section 3: Language Training). Another possibility is that the training does not provide sufficient instruction or practice to develop the requisite levels of proficiency. In other words, are we training the correct content for the mission, are we spending enough time training it and are we training it in an effective manner? However, there is also the possibility that training is not effective because of motivational issues. Lack of motivation can impact learning in a training program, the effort spent maintaining proficiency after formal training and the level of preparation for and proficiency on deployments. SOF personnel and unit leaders reported that language skills are important to mission success and that language training is important in developing and maintaining these skills. Furthermore, SOF personnel reported that they are motivated to perform well in training and on language-related job tasks. However, their motivation appears to come primarily from a desire to succeed on missions and a sense of accountability to team members for their language proficiency, not from the current FLPP system. FLPP, as reported by SOF unit leaders and personnel is ineffective as an incentive to develop higher levels of proficiency.

Both SOF personnel and unit leadership agreed that language training is highly important. In examining the elements that motivate SOF personnel to perform well in language training, the findings revealed that the number one reason SOF personnel are motivated to perform well in training is to do well on missions. SOF personnel are also highly motivated to perform well in training because they are accountable to their team and because language training will make a good addition to their resume. However, FLPP was identified as being only moderately motivating (See Table 4.1). These findings have several implications. First, there is an inconsistency in terms of motivation. SOF personnel are most motivated by the desire to do well on missions, but they perceive their training is not effectively preparing them to perform well on missions. Second, the fact that SOF personnel are more motivated by the desire to perform well

on missions as opposed to the possibility of receiving FLPP suggests that the current incentive system is ineffective as a motivator. A recent paper provides a detailed discussion of FLPP from the perspective of the SOF personnel who participated in this study, including recommendations for improving the incentive system (Surface, Poncheri, Dierdorff, Sebastianelli, & Shetye, 2004).

Findings regarding FLPP show that this incentive system is not having the motivational effect that was intended because FLPP is seen as unfair, unreliable, insufficient, and difficult to attain (See Table 4.2). Not surprisingly, findings show that both SOF personnel who have received FLPP in the past four years and members of unit leadership who currently receive FLPP viewed it as being more motivating and fair than SOF personnel who have not received FLPP in the past four years and unit leaders who do not currently receive FLPP. The focus group participants expressed frustration with the substantial proficiency requirements needed to receive FLPP and indicated that the minimum proficiency level for receiving FLPP is not attainable by many SOF personnel. In addition, unit leadership also expressed negative attitudes toward FLPP as an effective incentive (See Table 4.3). Survey respondents were asked about ways to make FLPP more motivating and the two most common responses were to increase the amount of FLPP and to provide more time and resources for language training. The focus group participants suggested providing FLPP for lower levels of proficiency, offering more pay for proficiency in difficult languages, or providing more training (e.g., immersion training) as a reward for maintaining language skills. It is obvious from these suggestions that the structure of the current incentive system does not meet the needs of SOF personnel. Additionally, our results demonstrate that perceptions of skill-based pay incentives are impacted by access to training as well as the amount of the monetary incentive. Providing an incentive to maintain or develop language proficiency and not providing the training opportunities to achieve the necessary proficiency to obtain the incentives creates a major disconnect in policy and could be viewed as unfair.

Attitudes regarding FLPP are closely related to attitudes toward the DLPT. Currently, FLPP is allocated based on one's DLPT score. The DLPT assesses reading and listening ability, but not the same reading and listening ability that personnel use on deployment. Recall from Section 1 that the language abilities assessed by the DLPT are considered to be academic in nature while SOF personnel indicate a need for language skills that are more related to the tasks they perform on deployment (i.e., using more informal language, such as street/slang language).

Interesting findings emerged regarding attitudes toward the DLPT (See Tables 4.4 - 4.6). While SOF personnel indicated the DLPT did not accurately measure their language proficiency (or at least the language proficiency they use on the job), SOF unit leaders had a more positive view of the DLPT. However, both SOF personnel and unit leadership indicated that the DLPT does not measure language ability as it is used on deployments by SOF personnel. These findings are interesting because they imply that SOF personnel and unit leadership may conceptualize the definition of "proficiency" differently or that they have differing views of how DLPT scores translate into language performance in the field. Findings from unit leadership indicate that while unit leaders believe that the DLPT is not a perfect measure, it allows them to determine who will perform well on missions. The finding that unit leaders find the DLPT to be a good measure of proficiency may reflect the fact that unit leadership needs some way of determining which personnel will perform well on language-related mission requirements, and the DLPT is the only measure widely enough used to accomplish this goal. Despite the fact that both groups believe that the DLPT is not related to language use on deployment, members of unit leadership place a strong emphasis on the DLPT because it is a requirement. SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated that the DLI OPI is more related to mission performance than the DLPT. This finding is not surprising since the DLI OPI assesses speaking proficiency, a primary skill used on deployment. These findings suggest that the DLI OPI is a more appropriate test of language

proficiency than the DLPT for SOF personnel. One encouraging note is that unit leaders indicated they are likely to send highly proficiency personnel for more training. This attitude is needed among leaders if SOF is going to develop higher levels of organic language capability.

Despite the perceptions that the current language training program is not adequately addressing the needs of all SOF personnel, SOF personnel do not have intentions of leaving SOF based on issues related to language and language training (See Table 4.7). Overall, intent to re-enlist in SOF is high. However, some SOF personnel expressed intentions to leave SOF for other higher paying civilian jobs related to language. It is important that unit leadership pay attention to this as a potential issue so that valuable personnel do not decide to leave the organization.

Summary of Selected Findings

Motivation

- SOF personnel and unit leaders reported that language skills are important to mission success and that language training is important in developing and maintaining these skills.
- SOF personnel indicated that they were motivated to do well in training because they want to succeed on missions and because they feel accountable to their team for their language proficiency.
- SOF personnel indicated that they were only moderately motivated to do well in training because they want to receive FLPP.

FLPP

- SOF unit leaders and personnel expressed negative attitudes toward FLPP as an effective incentive.
- SOF personnel strongly agreed that the procedures for allocating FLPP are not fair.
- SOF unit leaders who currently receive FLPP and SOF personnel who have received FLPP in the past four years reported that it was more motivating and the procedures were more fair than those unit leaders who do not currently receive FLPP and members of SOF personnel who have not received FLPP in the past four years.
- SOF personnel expressed frustration with the substantial proficiency requirements needed to receive FLPP and indicated that the minimum proficiency level for receiving FLPP is not attainable by many SOF personnel because of constraints (see Section 5).
- Within ARSOF, RC personnel had more negative opinions toward FLPP than AC personnel.
- Providing FLPP for lower levels of proficiency, offering more pay for proficiency in difficult languages, or providing immersion training as a reward for maintaining language skills were suggested as ways to improve the motivating effect of FLPP and increasing proficiency.
- Providing an incentive to maintain or develop language proficiency and not providing the training opportunities to achieve the necessary proficiency to obtain the incentives creates a major disconnect in policy and could be viewed as unfair.

DLPT

- SOF personnel do not believe the DLPT is an accurate measure of their proficiency, while unit leadership indicated that the DLPT was a good indicator of proficiency
- SOF unit leaders and personnel disagreed somewhat that the DLPT was related to what personnel do on deployment.

- SOF personnel and unit leaders felt that the DLI OPI was a better indicator of proficiency than the DLPT.
- SOF personnel's attitudes toward the DLPT did not appear to influence their motivation to do well on the test.
- Unit leaders reported that they encourage personnel to do well on the DLPT and stay current with its requirements. SOF personnel also indicated that their chains of command placed emphasis on taking the DLPT, but not necessarily on the score achieved.
- AFSOF personnel expressed more positive views than ARSOF personnel about the DLPT's relatedness to mission performance and the seriousness with which they take the test.
- Within ARSOF, AC personnel had lower opinions of the DLPT's relatedness than RC personnel. However, both AC and RC personnel reported taking the test quite seriously.

Language and Attrition

- Regarding attrition, respondents indicated that language requirements and language compensation have little to do with one's intentions to leave SOF.
- AFSOF personnel indicated that language concerns played a slightly larger role in their decisions to leave SOF than ARSOF personnel.
- AFSOF personnel were more likely to indicate that they had considered leaving SOF to pursue a higher-paid civilian career.
- Within ARSOF, RC personnel were more likely to indicate that they had considered leaving SOF due to language-related issues. This was especially true for the PSYOP RC personnel subgroup.
- Unit leadership's evaluation of RC personnel was that they had lower intent to leave, while by their own report, RC personnel had higher intent to leave than their AC counterparts.

More specific findings regarding results presented in this section can be found in the supporting technical reports (See APPENDIX A for details).

Table 4.1 Motivation to Train

	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹³¹	<i>AFSOF</i> ¹³²	<i>ARSOF</i> ¹³³	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ¹³⁴	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ¹³⁵
		[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹³⁶			
I want to succeed in language training so that I will do well on missions.	85.6	89.3	85.2	83.0	88.7
I am motivated to succeed in language training because I want to receive FLPP.	57.0	65.7	56.4	56.4	56.5
I am motivated to succeed in language training because I am accountable to my team for my language abilities.	76.8	88.5	75.6	73.4	79.1
I would be more motivated to perform well in language training if it was a criteria for promotions or would be used in future decisions about my job.	57.0	57.7	57.1	54.4	61.4
Language training will make a good addition to my resume.	75.6	83.7	74.9	71.0	80.8

¹³¹ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

¹³² Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

¹³³ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

¹³⁴ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

¹³⁵ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

¹³⁶ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 4.2 Attitudes toward Foreign Language Proficiency Pay for Those Who Have Received and Have Not Received FLPP

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹³⁷			<i>AFSOF</i> ¹³⁸ <i>ARSOF</i> ¹³⁹ <i>ARSOF AC</i> ¹⁴⁰ <i>ARSOF RC</i> ¹⁴¹							
			[Mean values on 100 point scale] ¹⁴²							
Have you received FLPP in the past four years? ¹⁴³	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
FLPP motivates me to acquire a new language during personal time.	67.1	47.1	71.4	45.0	66.4	47.2	67.0	46.2	65.0	48.5
FLPP motivates me to maintain my current level of language skills during personal time	72.4	45.8	82.1	43.8*	71.0	45.8	73.8	42.8	65.0	50.0
Procedures for allocating FLPP are fair.	55.7	41.3	64.3	35.7	54.4	41.6	58.9	44.7	45.0	37.1
Procedures for allocating FLPP are straight-forward and simple.	58.3	46.9	71.4	46.4	56.3	46.9	65.1	51.7	36.6	39.9
I believe the amount of FLPP I receive reflects the effort I have put into learning a language.	39.2	35.1	39.3	37.5	39.1	34.9	45.6	33.1	25.8	37.3

¹³⁷ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.¹³⁸ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.¹³⁹ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.¹⁴⁰ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component¹⁴¹ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component¹⁴² All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.¹⁴³ Respondents were asked if they have received FLPP in the past four years. “Yes” responses were analyzed separately from “No” responses to provide contrast.

* This data is based on fewer than five responses.

Table 4.3 Unit Leadership's attitudes toward FLPP

		<i>Currently Receive FLPP¹⁴⁴</i>		<i>2nd Language¹⁴⁵</i>		<i>Level of Command</i>	
<i>Unit Leadership</i>		<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>03-06</i>	<i>07-010</i>
		[Mean values on 100 point scale] ¹⁴⁶					
The procedures for assigning FLPP uphold the intent of motivating proficiency.	55.0	65.0	51.7	55.1	55.0	54.6	63.1*
FLPP provides a sufficient incentive for operators to maintain their language proficiency on their own time.	42.3	49.3	40.3	43.4	38.3	40.9	42.9*
FLPP is an effective incentive for most of the operators in my command.	43.9	51.5	41.9	44.6	44.6	41.6	52.5*

¹⁴⁴ Unit leaders were asked if they currently receive FLPP (Foreign Language Proficiency Pay).

¹⁴⁵ Unit leaders were asked if they were proficient in a language other than English.

¹⁴⁶ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 4.4 Relatedness of DLPT to Required Job Skills

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁴⁷	<i>AFSOF</i> ¹⁴⁸	<i>ARSOF</i> ¹⁴⁹	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ¹⁵⁰	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ¹⁵¹	<i>Taken DLI OPI</i>	<i>Not Taken DLI OPI</i>	<i>Low DLPT Proficiency</i> ¹⁵²	<i>High DLPT Proficiency</i> ¹⁵³
	[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹⁵⁴							
The content of the DLPT is clearly related to what I do during deployment. 36.4	45.8	35.6	32.0	43.0	37.0	36.0	30.5	42.4
My DLPT scores accurately reflect my ability to use language while on the job. 43.2	52.6	42.6	38.2	51.6	44.5	42.2	34.2	52.3
Operators who perform well on the DLPT are more likely to successfully use language in the field. 57.1	56.6	57.3	54.0	63.8	57.9	56.5	54.8	59.0

¹⁴⁷ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.¹⁴⁸ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.¹⁴⁹ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.¹⁵⁰ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component¹⁵¹ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component¹⁵² DLPT scores from 0 to 1+ were considered low proficiency.¹⁵³ DLPT scores from 2 to 3 were considered high proficiency.¹⁵⁴ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 4.5 SOF Personnel's attitudes toward the DLPT

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁵⁵	<i>AFSOF</i> ¹⁵⁶	<i>ARSOF</i> ¹⁵⁷	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ¹⁵⁸	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ¹⁵⁹	<i>Taken DLI OPI</i>	<i>Not Taken DLI OPI</i>	<i>Low DLPT Proficiency</i> ¹⁶⁰	<i>High DLPT Proficiency</i> ¹⁶¹
	[Mean values on 100 point scale] ¹⁶²							
If my score on the DLPT is too high, my chain of command will take unfair advantage of me. 31.3	29.2	31.6	31.6	31.4	30.9	31.5	33.8	28.7
I marked the same answer for every question on the DLPT to get it over with quickly. 12.5	2.8	13.3	16.2	7.5	9.9	14.4	18.2	7.0
I have memorized the answers to the DLPT since it never changes. 15.2	8.3	15.6	17.2	12.2	13.4	16.4	16.4	14.7
The OPI (<i>Oral Proficiency Interview</i>) is more related to mission performance than the DLPT. 62.9	50.0	63.4	60.9	68.3	62.5	63.5	62.7	63.6

¹⁵⁵ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.¹⁵⁶ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.¹⁵⁷ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.¹⁵⁸ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component¹⁵⁹ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component¹⁶⁰ DLPT scores from 0 to 1+ were considered low proficiency.¹⁶¹ DLPT scores from 2 to 3 were considered high proficiency.¹⁶² All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 4.6 Unit leadership's attitudes toward the DLPT

<i>Unit Leadership</i>	
	[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹⁶³
DLPT scores are a good indicator of how well someone did in their training.	55.1
DLPT scores allow me to predict whose language abilities are good enough for deployment.	52.9
The content of the DLPT is clearly related to what our operators do when they are deployed.	33.4
The OPI is more related to mission performance than the DLPT.	65.9
The operators DLPT scores are very important to me.	58.4
I encourage the operators to study and do well on the DLPT.	76.0
I think that testing scores should be used to make promotion decisions for operators.	47.9
If one of my operators achieves a high score on the DLPT, I will be likely to send him/her for more advanced training.	75.8
I encourage operators in my unit/command to stay current with the testing requirements.	81.0

¹⁶³ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 4.7 Intention to Leave SOF

	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁶⁴	<i>AFSOF</i> ¹⁶⁵	<i>ARSOF</i> ¹⁶⁶	<i>ARSOF</i> <i>AC</i> ¹⁶⁷	<i>ARSOF</i> <i>RC</i> ¹⁶⁸	<i>Tenure (yrs in SOF)</i> ¹⁶⁹			
						<i>0-4</i>	<i>5-8</i>	<i>9-16</i>	<i>17+</i>
		[Mean values on 100 point scale] ¹⁷⁰							
I intend to leave SOF if I am unable to get the language training I need.	22.8	26.0	22.4	17.6	30.3	27.3	20.8	21.4	21.0
I have considered leaving SOF to pursue a job in the civilian world where my skills will be highly compensated.	41.2	49.0	40.2	37.1	45.6	45.2	37.3	42.6	40.0
I intend to leave SOF if language requirements are increased.	18.6	22.0	18.4	17.9	19.1	18.6	16.7	20.9	22.0
I am likely to re-enlist in SOF. ¹⁷¹	72.0	70.7	72.2	71.9	72.8	69.9	77.3	69.2	70.2
My decision to re-enlist in SOF is based in part on issues relating to language proficiency.	36.0	39.1	35.4	27.6	48.4	42.3	40.2	30.1	25.0

¹⁶⁴ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

¹⁶⁵ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

¹⁶⁶ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

¹⁶⁷ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

¹⁶⁸ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

¹⁶⁹ Respondents were asked to indicate their total number of years of tenure with SOF.

¹⁷⁰ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

¹⁷¹ These values are presented prior to transformation. In order to include this item in calculations, however, the responses were reverse-scored.

SECTION 5: TRAINING BARRIERS AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

Abstract

SOF personnel reported several major barriers to language training, including a lack of command support for language training, a lack of training resources, and a lack of time to dedicate to language training as a result of the current OPTEMPO and time spent training other SOF skills. SOF personnel indicated overall negative evaluations of their chains of command regarding their support for language training. SOF personnel do not believe that their chains of command place enough emphasis on or provide the appropriate level of support for language training. It should be noted that MI linguists (not organic to SOF units) who took the survey rated their command similarly, indicating that this is an issue across DoD. Interestingly, unit leadership provided overall negative evaluations of their chains of command regarding their support for language training as well. These findings suggest a pervasive, systemic issue that impacts the attainment and maintenance of language proficiency. SOF personnel believe that unit leadership should provide more time and support for language training. SOF personnel, especially ARSOF RC personnel, indicated that they would put more effort into language training if the resources were more accessible.

Discussion

In addition to exploring motivational problems as an explanation for a lack of training effectiveness, training can be impacted by the perceived or actual organizational support for training (or lack thereof) or by other barriers to training, such as limited time or resources. Findings show that there are many barriers to training that must be overcome in order for training to be available and effective for all SOF personnel. In addition, findings show that command support of language training needs to be strengthened in order to overcome many of these barriers. Many of these barriers will vary from unit to unit, but the results suggest that some issues are pervasive across DoD and/or the SOF community.

The most common barriers to language training reported by SOF personnel responding to the survey were the lack of command support for language training, the lack of training resources, and the lack of time to dedicate to language training as a result of the current OPTEMPO (See Tables 5.1 - 5.3). Findings from the focus group confirm these as common barriers and provide some additional insight. Focus group results show that the current OPTEMPO is a barrier to language training because there is a general lack of time to dedicate to language training, which is further constrained by the fact that SOF personnel must receive training or re-certify periodically in many other SOF skills. Additionally, focus groups results showed that language training courses and resources are not always available to SOF personnel or are not flexible enough to accommodate personnel when they are available for training. This is compounded by recent GWOT missions that have typically taken the focus off the unit's AOR (i.e., personnel operating outside their official language) further decreasing time available for training in their official AOR language. Unit leadership responses to the survey also support these findings. Unit leaders indicated that there are not enough sustainment and enhancement courses to ensure that all personnel have access to language training. However, they asserted that sustainment and enhancement language training is still often a viable option despite the current OPTEMPO.

In addition to these barriers to training, SOF personnel do not believe that their chains of command place emphasis on or provide support for language training (See Table 5.2). Specifically, ARSOF personnel expressed more negative evaluations of their chains of command than AFSOF personnel. While AFSOF personnel agreed that their chains of command care about

their language proficiency, ARSOF personnel slightly disagreed. Focus group respondents expressed opinions consistent with ARSOF personnel regarding command support of language training. The overall message from the focus groups was that unit commanders do not place emphasis on or provide support for language training.

Both SOF unit leaders and personnel were asked to rate their unit/command on specific aspects of their command's organizational support or language (e.g., finding ways to increase time for language training) by assigning a letter grade (i.e., A, B, C, D, or F) to each of these areas (See Table 5.3). For all categories, for both SOF unit leaders and personnel, the majority of grades assigned were either D's or F's. This finding points to the fact that one of the biggest barriers to language training is related to lack of command support at multiple levels. Additionally, MI personnel (not organic to SOF units) who completed the survey indicated the same views about their commands. These two findings suggest that the issue of language-related support is systematic in the DoD as well as the SOF community. Although still largely unfavorable, the areas that received more favorable grades were placing emphasis on taking the DLPT on time and providing language learning materials. Areas of command support that were of greatest concern overall were encouraging the use of language during non-language training, finding ways to increase time for language training, and providing recognition and awards related to language training. Based on these findings and findings regarding barriers to training, unit leaders should find ways to focus energy on providing more time and resources for language training while maintaining testing standards. Although this is a challenging assignment, many focus group respondents believed it could be accomplished. Additionally, providing official recognition for superior language proficiency in the units seems like an easy reward that will motivate some individuals.

In attempt to address potential ways to overcome barriers to language training, focus group respondents were asked if it would be useful to integrate language training into existing training for other SOF skills. Participants generally thought that this would be a good solution if all personnel spoke the same language or if it was incorporated into pre-deployment training. However, this solution was less practical for some groups. For example, SF A-Teams may be composed of speakers of 3 to 5 different languages, which may prevent members of these groups from conducting non-language training exercises in the target language. Interestingly, since many intact units are receiving pre-deployment training in GWOT languages, this integration may be more feasible for those languages in the future. Based on previously discussed results, this integration into pre-deployment training might improve the efficacy of the training experience.

Summary of Selected Findings

Barriers to Training

- SOF personnel indicated that the most common barriers they faced were a lack of command support for language training, a lack of training resources, and a lack of time to dedicate to language training.
- SOF personnel reported that the current OPTEMPO and the need to receive training in many other SOF skills contributed to the lack of time to dedicate to language training.
- SOF personnel reported that language training courses and resources are not always available to SOF personnel or flexible enough to accommodate SOF personnel.
- AFSOF personnel were less likely to report that time constraints affected them when compared with ARSOF personnel.

- Within ARSOF, RC personnel reported being willing to obtain further training if barriers were removed.
- Within ARSOF, RC personnel reported a greater willingness than AC personnel to shift some of their training allocated to other SOF skills to increase time for language training.

Support for Training

- SOF personnel do not believe that their chains of command place enough emphasis on or provide the appropriate level of support for language training.
- MI linguists who took the survey and unit leadership indicated overall negative evaluations of their chains of command as well, which suggests that this is an issue across the DoD community.
- ARSOF personnel indicated more negative evaluations of their chain of command in terms of organizational support than AFSOF personnel.
- Unit leaders were somewhat more likely to report favorable ratings of their unit/command than SOF personnel.
- Unit leaders and SOF personnel provided more favorable (although still largely unfavorable) ratings of their chains of command related to their ability to provide language learning materials and place emphasis on the DLPT.
- SOF personnel assigned the lowest ratings regarding how well their chains of command provided recognition and awards related to language training, found ways to increase time for language training, and encouraged the use of language during non-language training.
- Two of biggest complaints from SOF personnel regarding organizational support were that there needs to be more time for language training and that the command needs to encourage the use of language during non-language training.
- Unit leaders believe that they are doing a satisfactory job of providing support for language.
- Unit leaders indicated areas where they would like to improve in terms of providing support, but indicated constraints, such as the lack of resources or command emphasis, to do so.
- CLPMs indicated that their unit/command leadership speaks to the importance of language training and also indicated that they are aware that their provision of resources to personnel has an impact on the command's reputation.

More specific findings regarding results presented in this section can be found in the supporting technical reports (See APPENDIX A for details).

Table 5.1 Attitudes toward Barriers to Training

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁷²	<i>AFSOF</i> ¹⁷³	<i>ARSOF</i> ¹⁷⁴	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ¹⁷⁵	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ¹⁷⁶
	[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹⁷⁷			
Maintaining proficiency in my core SOF skills does not leave time for maintaining appropriate language proficiency. 50.3	40.4	51.3	52.1	50.0
With the current OPTEMPO, sustainment/enhancement training in my official language is impossible. 55.4	36.5	57.3	61.8	50.0
I would put more effort into language training if the resources were more accessible. 74.5	74.0	74.5	68.1	84.1

¹⁷² This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

¹⁷³ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

¹⁷⁴ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

¹⁷⁵ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

¹⁷⁶ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

¹⁷⁷ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 5.2 Attitudes toward Command Support of Training

	<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁷⁸	<i>AFSOF</i> ¹⁷⁹	<i>ARSO</i> ¹⁸⁰	<i>ARSO</i> AC ¹⁸¹	<i>ARSO</i> RC ¹⁸²
		[Mean values on 100 point scale]¹⁸³			
My chain of command cares about my language proficiency.	46.1	64.8	44.4	45.7	42.3
I am often pulled out of language training for non-critical details.†	60.1	47.4	61.1	63.5	56.7
My chain of command will make the sacrifices necessary to ensure that I sustain my language proficiency.	36.6	52.0	35.3	35.2	35.4

¹⁷⁸ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

¹⁷⁹ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

¹⁸⁰ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

¹⁸¹ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

¹⁸² Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

¹⁸³ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

† A high value for this item indicates a more negative attitude, while a low value for this item indicates a more positive attitude toward command support of training.

Table 5.3 Organizational Climate and Support

		Unit Leadership	SOF Personnel
Percentage of Respondents Choosing Each Grade ¹⁸⁴			
Allocating duty hours to language training or practice	A	5.8	3.8
	B	8.1	13.3
	C	27.9	25.9
	D	31.8	24.1
	F	25.3	32.9
Encouraging the use of language during non-language training	A	5.2	2.5
	B	13.6	9.8
	C	22.1	25.2
	D	33.8	27.4
	F	25.3	35.0
Encouraging the use of language when not deployed ¹⁸⁵	A	5.9	-
	B	11.1	-
	C	26.1	-
	D	30.1	-
	F	26.8	-

¹⁸⁴ All values reported in this table are percentages of the total response for an item. Blank responses were not included in these calculations.¹⁸⁵ SOF personnel were not asked to respond to this item.

Table 5.3 Organizational Climate and Support (cont.)

	<i>Unit Leadership</i>	<i>SOF Personnel</i>
	Percentage of Respondents Choosing Each Grade¹⁸⁶	
Placing command emphasis on language proficiency	A	10.4
	B	18.8
	C	21.4
	D	33.8
	F	15.6
Providing support to help you acquire and maintain enough proficiency to qualify for FLPP	A	6.6
	B	15.2
	C	26.5
	D	30.5
	F	21.2
Providing recognition and awards related to language	A	4.6
	B	7.8
	C	23.5
	D	30.7
	F	33.3

¹⁸⁶ All values reported in this table are percentages of the total response for an item. Blank responses were not included in these calculations.

Table 5.3 Organizational Climate and Support (cont.)

		<i>Unit Leadership</i>	<i>SOF Personnel</i>
Percentage of Respondents Choosing Each Grade¹⁸⁷			
Providing language learning materials.	A	12.4	4.1
	B	23.5	17.4
	C	32.7	31.2
	D	20.9	27.4
	F	10.5	19.9
Ensuring quality language instruction is available.	A	13.1	5.0
	B	19.6	14.5
	C	28.8	26.5
	D	22.2	30.3
	F	16.3	23.7
Ensuring pre-deployment training is available.	A	13.2	4.7
	B	21.1	12.3
	C	30.3	28.0
	D	21.7	30.8
	F	13.8	24.2
Placing command emphasis on taking the DLPT on time.	A	20.4	23.7
	B	21.1	17.7
	C	25.0	24.9
	D	19.7	17.0
	F	13.8	16.7

¹⁸⁷ All values reported in this table are percentages of the total response for an item. Blank responses were not included in these calculations.

Table 5.3 Organizational Climate and Support (cont.)

		Unit Leadership	SOF Personnel
Percentage of Respondents Choosing Each Grade ¹⁸⁸			
Finding ways to increase time for language training.	A	2.6	2.2
	B	11.2	7.3
	C	36.8	26.8
	D	28.3	27.8
	F	21.1	36.0
Ensuring that personnel in language training are not pulled for non-critical details.	A	5.9	4.7
	B	15.0	8.5
	C	28.1	36.5
	D	28.1	21.5
	F	22.9	30.0
Ensuring sufficient job aids or interpreters are available for operators on deployment. ¹⁸⁹	A	12.7	-
	B	30.0	-
	C	30.7	-
	D	11.3	-
	F	15.3	-

¹⁸⁸ All values reported in this table are percentages of the total response for an item. Blank responses were not included in these calculations.¹⁸⁹ SOF personnel were not asked to respond to this item.

SECTION 6: IS TECHNOLOGY THE SOLUTION?

Abstract

A recent report from the United States General Accounting Office (GAO; 2003) recommended that the solution to the problem of insufficient time for language training is to incorporate distance/distributive learning techniques into the language training program. SOF personnel were explicitly asked about technology-based solutions, like distributive learning (DL), in the focus groups and on the surveys. In general, enthusiasm regarding these technologies was not strong. Results suggest that SOF unit leaders and personnel believe these techniques are more appropriate as supplements rather than replacements from traditional training methods. Strong opinions for and against the use of technology were found. Personnel, especially in the focus groups, indicated skepticism as whether these technologies could be effective for initial language acquisition. Many SOF personnel indicated that DL and other technology solutions might be more useful for language maintenance or for quick pre-deployment preparation. Many SOF personnel reported that they believed DL was code for “do it on your own time.” Reservists seemed to view DL and technology-delivered training (TDT) more positively than did active personnel. Interestingly, unit leaders who reported using TDT were more likely to indicate that classroom instruction was more useful for initial acquisition of a language and that TDT is most effective as a supplement to classroom instruction. Both SOF unit leaders and personnel had strong opinions about the use of machine language translation (MLT) devices. Both groups had low opinions of its efficacy and its ability to eliminate the need for language-trained personnel. However, unit leaders were slightly more optimistic about the future of the technology.

Discussion

Findings from previous sections have shown that one of the obstacles associated with language training is the lack of time dedicated to language training. This is primarily a result of the current OPTEMPO, other competing training requirements, and the lack of training options that are flexible enough to accommodate the availability of SOF personnel. One possible solution to this problem was proposed in a recent GAO report that explored the possibility of DL as a way to overcome barriers to training evident in the SOF community. The recommendation from this report was to incorporate DL approaches into the language training program as a way to provide SOF personnel with more access to language training. Results from this project suggest that while DL may seem like a promising prospect for overcoming the barriers to training, that there are limitations to its usefulness in the eyes of most SOF personnel.

This study explored attitudes toward DL, TDT, and MLT devices and found that these techniques were not well received by SOF unit leaders and personnel, particularly AC personnel. RC unit leaders and personnel expressed somewhat more positive opinions toward DL, TDT, and MLT most likely as a result of the increased time and resource constraints that these groups face. Interestingly, unit leaders who reported using TDT were more likely to indicate that classroom instruction was more useful for initial acquisition of a language and that TDT is most effective as a supplement to classroom instruction. The overwhelming message from this project is that while TDT and MLT options may be useful supplements to language training, these options are viewed as not being able to replace live instructors or language-trained personnel. Findings from this study showed that SOF personnel believe TDT is not appropriate for the initial acquisition of a language although it can be useful for sustainment and enhancement or as a supplement to classroom instruction. Overall, although the results of the TDT questions are not overly negative, they are not positive for the future of TDT as a language training method in active component SOF units. The results suggest that SOF personnel are skeptical as to whether these techniques

will be useful for them, especially in the active component and the initial acquisition context. The results, especially from the focus groups, suggest that SOF personnel will most likely be resistant to using TDT unless they can be convinced of the relevance and efficacy as the technology relates to their individual situations.

Both SOF unit leaders and personnel had strong opinions about the use of MLT. Both groups had low opinions of its efficacy and its ability to eliminate the need for language-trained personnel regardless of whether or not they had actually used the technology. Personnel who had used MLT reported a slightly lower view of its efficacy. Both SOF unit leaders and personnel indicated that they believed MLT was not an effective way to communicate in general and that it was not effective for the SOF core tasks that require language. However, unit leaders were slightly more optimistic about the future of the technology.

Additionally, the results suggest that other training options are perceived as being more palatable and effective than DL or TDT solutions. For example, many participants indicated that CONUS iso-immersion would be a better supplement for classroom instruction. Other suggestions included incorporating language training with other types of training or having designated days or times when only the unit's official foreign language would be spoken. It appears that DL and TDT is viewed primarily as a useful supplement to existing training or useful tool when more formal training is not available. However, the results suggest that moving completely to TDT might be problematic.

Summary of Selected Findings

TDT

- Both SOF unit leaders and personnel deemed TDT unfit for the initial acquisition of a language and indicated that classroom training was more appropriate.
- Although TDT was not viewed favorably by most respondents, they indicated that TDT might be used effectively as a supplement to existing training, as a tool when no other training was available (especially relevant for RC units), or as a quick train-up tool immediately prior to a mission or deployment.
- ARSOF RC personnel who responded to the survey had less experience with TDT, but more positive views of TDT. A possible explanation is that TDT enables RC personnel to receive training that would otherwise be inaccessible and creates flexible training options.
- Unit leaders reported that TDT is not well-received by SOF personnel and that they are reluctant to use it.
- SOF personnel indicated that trainees were more likely to utilize TDT when they are motivated and if it was scheduled (i.e., on duty time), rather than on their personal time.

MLT

- SOF unit leadership and personnel had unfavorable views of MLT as a useful way to communicate and accomplish core SOF tasks.
- SOF unit leadership and personnel indicated that MLT would never eliminate the need for language-trained personnel.
- Personnel who have used MLT had more negative opinions of its efficacy, but were more optimistic about the future of MLT.
- Unit leaders were slightly more favorable than SOF personnel about the future of MLT.

Solutions for Overcoming Barriers

- SOF personnel indicated that other training options (i.e., CONUS iso-immersion) would be more effective than DL or TDT.
- Other suggestions included incorporating language training with other types of training or having designated days or times when only the unit's official foreign language would be spoken.

More specific findings regarding results presented in this section can be found in the supporting technical reports (See APPENDIX A for details).

Table 6.1 Attitudes Regarding Technology-Delivered Training (TDT)

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁹⁰	<i>AFSOF</i> ¹⁹¹	<i>ARSOF</i> ¹⁹²	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ¹⁹³	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ¹⁹⁴
[Mean values on 100 point scale] ¹⁹⁵				
I believe that classroom training is more useful than TDT for the initial acquisition of a language. 75.6	76.6	75.5	73.9	79.2
I would be likely to use TDT options if they were available. 66.9	68.3	66.8	62.7	75.4
I believe that TDT means that I will be completing training on my own time/at home (e.g. not duty time). 63.8	54.7	67.9	65.6	72.9
I believe that TDT is used most effectively when supplementing classroom instruction. 78.0	73.4	78.3	76.4	82.4

¹⁹⁰ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

¹⁹¹ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

¹⁹² Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

¹⁹³ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

¹⁹⁴ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

¹⁹⁵ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 6.2 Attitudes Regarding Technology-Driven Training (cont.)

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ¹⁹⁶	<i>AFSOF</i> ¹⁹⁷	<i>ARSOF</i> ¹⁹⁸	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ¹⁹⁹	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ²⁰⁰	
	[Mean values on 100 point scale] ²⁰¹				
I would be more likely to use TDT if it was scheduled (i.e., on duty time) versus when it is on my own time (i.e., not duty time).	74.5	75.0	74.5	73.5	76.7
I believe that TDT is an effective way to learn language skills.	52.4	57.8	52.0	50.6	55.0
I believe that TDT is an effective way to sustain/enhance my language skills.	66.8	68.8	66.7	63.6	73.3
I believe that TDT is only effective when trainees are motivated.	75.4	84.4	74.6	72.1	79.9

¹⁹⁶ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.¹⁹⁷ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.¹⁹⁸ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.¹⁹⁹ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component²⁰⁰ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component²⁰¹ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 6.3 Attitudes toward Machine Language Translation (MLT)²⁰²

<i>SOF Personnel</i> ²⁰³	<i>AFSOF</i> ²⁰⁴	<i>ARSOF</i> ²⁰⁵	<i>ARSOF AC</i> ²⁰⁶	<i>ARSOF RC</i> ²⁰⁷	
[Mean values on 100 point scale] ²⁰⁸					
I believe MLT is an effective way to communicate.	39.3	32.1	40.1	39.0	42.4
I believe that MLT is effective for the SOF core tasks I conduct that require language capability.	38.1	25.0	39.3	38.2	41.9
I believe that MLT shows promise for the future.	49.8	42.9	50.7	50.3	51.4
I believe that MLT cannot replace language trained operators.	76.9	84.4	76.2	76.2	76.3

²⁰² Respondents to this set of questions indicated that they had used some form of MLT device. Examples include the Phraselator, Voice Response Translator (VRT), and S-Minds. A total of 62 respondents indicated they had used MLT, while 344 indicated they had not.

²⁰³ This group includes SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy.

²⁰⁴ Respondents from this group indicated they were Air Force Special Operations Forces personnel.

²⁰⁵ Respondents from this group indicated they were either Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations personnel.

²⁰⁶ Army Special Operations Forces Active Component

²⁰⁷ Army Special Operations Forces Reserve Component

²⁰⁸ All figures in the tables are 100-point means. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses on a 5-point scale. For further information on how these scores were calculated, see INTERPRETING THE RESULTS.

Table 6.4 Technology-Delivered Training (TDT)²⁰⁹

	<i>Unit Leadership</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Have you ever used TDT?²¹⁰		
I believe classroom training is more useful than TDT for language acquisition.	82.1	67.6
I believe TDT is most effective when supplementing classroom instruction	80.0	72.2
I believe TDT is an effective way for operators to learn language skills.	54.2	53.9
Using TDT is the only way to squeeze sustainment training into the Ops/Training cycle.	41.1	51.9
TDT Learning should be the central component of a good CLP's options.	44.3	47.2
TDT will not be effective until the command gives it more emphasis.	68.2	73.2
Our command primarily views TDT as a resource for operators to use during their off-duty time.	60.9	57.0
TDT is well-received by operators.	51.3	52.2
My unit/command is reluctant about using TDT.	46.4	46.1

²⁰⁹ TDT includes computer-based training, video teleconferencing, distance/distributive learning, and self-paced language learning software.

²¹⁰ Unit Leadership was asked if their unit/command used TDT for language training.

Table 6.5 Machine Language Translation²¹¹

Have you ever used MLT?	<i>Unit Leadership</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
I believe that MLT is an effective way to communicate.	39.9	41.1
I believe that MLT is effective for the SOF core tasks I conduct that require language capability.	39.3	40.9
I believe that MLT shows promise for the future.	61.5	55.8
I believe that MLT cannot replace language-trained operators.	87.2	76.7

²¹¹ Machine Language Translation: examples include the Phraselator, Voice Response Technology, S-Minds, etc.

SECTION 7: RESERVE COMPONENT ISSUES

Abstract

From the focus groups with RC personnel and their survey comments, it is apparent that RC ARSOF personnel face many obstacles and challenges to acquiring and maintaining language proficiency and often sacrifice aspects of their personal lives to serve in the military. Most of these obstacles and challenges are similar to those faced by AC personnel but amplified by their status and situations as RC personnel (e.g., large travel distances to some reserve centers where the training is conducted). Although AC personnel reported some of the same issues, RC personnel indicated more profound problems, especially in the focus groups, with preparedness for language usage on deployment, official language testing, receiving FLPP, the availability of language training, and the availability of language resources (i.e., job aids). 55.9% of RC ARSOF personnel who responded to the survey indicated they had not participated in language training of any kind in the past four years. The fact that RC personnel report having limited access to language training and resources may be driving their low perceptions of their preparedness for language tasks on deployment and of their confidence in their language abilities. Although it takes roughly the same amount of time and effort for AC and RC personnel of equivalent ability to acquire and maintain the same proficiency, systemic constraints related to training time and compensation (1/30th rule) for RC personnel put them at a huge disadvantage. These issues coupled with a lack of training resources or flexible access to training resources can undermine motivation to train. Because of the need for flexibility training resources, RC personnel are more willing to try DL or TDT options than AC personnel. Additionally, most likely because of these barriers to training, RC personnel reported more dependence on interpreters for missions, which lead to more reports of problems with interpreters.

Reservist Participants

A total of 356 Army reserve component personnel completed our survey (i.e., total number includes SOF support personnel, MI Soldiers not assigned to SOF units, and other non-SOF respondents). 118 of those respondents were ARSOF personnel. Of the 118, 40.7% were SF personnel, 39% were CA personnel, and 20.3% were PSYOP personnel. Seven focus groups were conducted with reserve units representing SF (19th and 20th Groups), CA, and PSYOP with approximately 56 participants. It should be noted that all SOF reserve component personnel who participated in this study were Soldiers, so ARSOF will be used instead of SOF when referring to the collective group.

Discussion

RC Soldiers are highly utilized in the ARSOF community. Any differences between RC and AC soldiers in issues related to language must be recognized and incorporated into a SOF language strategy if it is to be effective. The major areas of concern for personnel and unit leaders in ARSOF RC units included: preparedness for language use on deployment, official language testing, FLPP, and access to language training. For example, in terms of language use on deployment, RC personnel reported feeling unprepared for deployments outside their AOR (i.e., GWOT missions) in terms of language and cultural understanding, more so than AC personnel. RC personnel reported similar levels of confidence in their language abilities when compared with AC personnel. Additionally, both RC personnel and leaders indicated a higher dependence on interpreters than AC personnel and leaders. AC personnel were slightly more likely than RC personnel to rate their interpreters as competent and trustworthy. RC unit leaders indicated that their units had more problems with interpreters than AC leaders did. These findings suggest RC

Soldiers had slightly more difficulty than AC Soldiers using language and interpreters on deployment. This may be related to other findings, such as, the lack of availability of language training and resources.

47.5% of RC Soldiers who participated in the survey reported they had never received any language training paid for or sponsored by the military or government (i.e., no initial acquisition, pre-deployment survival training, etc.). 55.9% of RC personnel had not received any language training in the past four years. These findings can be compared to 44% of AC respondents who reported that they had not participated in language training in the past four years and 25.7% of AC respondents who indicated that they had never received language training paid for or sponsored by the military or government. Two related findings were that RC personnel reported a lack of resources available for language training and lack of command support for training. These two issues were reflected in the survey and focus group data repeatedly. Even when asked, “Are there any issues related to proficiency and testing specific to being a reservist that were not covered in the survey?,” 40 of the 64 ARSOF RC responses were related to providing more training opportunities and resources and more command emphasis on proficiency (see Table 7.1). The relationship between command emphasis and resource availability is an obvious one. This lack of resources is unfortunate. In comparison to AC personnel, ARSOF RC personnel indicated that they would put more effort into language training if the resources were more accessible. ARSOF RC personnel agreed more than their active component counterparts that they would be willing to sacrifice some of the training time allocated to their other SOF skills in order to shift it to language training. Results from the focus groups show that some RC personnel would be motivated to study language on their own time if the resources were available. This supports the notion of providing DL resources to RC personnel when other forms of training are not available.

In terms of language training, RC personnel expressed consistently higher ratings of their instructor and their training curriculum for initial acquisition language training than AC personnel. The same general pattern was observed when SOF personnel evaluated their sustainment and enhancement language training (i.e., usually training conducted in the unit). Although RC personnel receive little training, they seem to be moderately satisfied with the quality of the training they do receive, slightly more so than AC personnel. However, RC leaders expressed some differences of opinion with personnel regarding initial acquisition and sustainment and enhancement language training. When evaluating initial acquisition language training RC leaders disagreed more strongly than AC leaders that personnel arrive at their command mission-capable. Additionally, RC CLPMs had more negative evaluations of sustainment and enhancement language training in their unit than AC CLPMs. Findings from the focus groups show that RC units have less access to sustainment and enhancement language training than AC units. RC units reported not only having limited time to maintain proficiency, but also a lack of resources available for them to do so.

RC personnel’s responses were difficult to interpret with regards to evaluation of immersion training, due the extremely small number of RC personnel who had received immersion. Their general attitudes indicate that RC personnel felt strongly that selection for OCONUS immersion was unfair, and that immersion training should be a part of regular training. RC personnel in unit leadership also indicated that their unit does not frequently send personnel on immersion training, further highlighting that RC personnel often have difficulty gaining access to this type of training

When asked about their experience with TDT, AC personnel were more likely to have used TDT than RC personnel. However, RC personnel had more favorable opinions of the role technology could have in future training. RC leaders also expressed more favorable opinion of TDT than AC leaders. Findings from the focus groups show that this is most likely due to the added flexibility

of a TDT course, which makes training more widely accessible. RC units who participated in the focus groups further explained that their distance from the reserve center prohibits them from participating in certain language training options, such as language training on non-drill weekends or using language lab resources. The availability of TDT or DL would help members of these units to overcome these barriers. When evaluating command support, RC personnel indicated that their chain of command was not supportive of language training, especially regarding the allocation of duty hours for training and placing emphasis on the DLPT. Providing flexible resources and opportunities for RC units, such as bringing Soldiers on active duty to complete DL initial acquisition training (e.g., Special Operations Forces Training System, SOFTS), might be part of the solution.

Concerning official language testing, RC personnel had slightly more favorable opinions of the DLPT than AC personnel. ARSOF RC leaders also had more favorable opinions of the DLPT than active duty leaders. RC personnel like the DLPT more than AC personnel even though RC personnel have limited access to administrations of the DLPT. Access to testing was a major frustration expressed by some RC units in the focus groups as well. RC personnel believe that the DLI OPI more accurately reflects what they are assigned to do when deployed. This is consistent with the views expressed by AC personnel.

In general, ARSOF RC personnel were far less positive than AC personnel in their evaluation of FLPP. This is due in large part to the prorating of FLPP pay for reserve component personnel (1/30th rule). Focus group findings revealed that RC units are resentful of the low dollar amounts of FLPP that RC personnel receive. RC units also indicated frustration with the fairness of FLPP procedures, such as the complexity of filing the paperwork and not receiving FLPP even when they qualified. This was an issue that was repeated during every RC component focus group. Additionally, ARSOF RC personnel reported difficulty obtaining enough training to increase their proficiency to the required level to be eligible for FLPP. When asked about the motivating effect of FLPP, ARSOF RC personnel indicated that the best way to increase the impact of FLPP would be to provide more training resources. This demonstrates that perceptions of skill-based pay incentives are impacted by access to training as well as the amount of the monetary incentive. Providing an incentive to maintain or develop language proficiency and not providing the training opportunities to achieve the necessary proficiency to obtain the incentives creates a major disconnect in policy and could be viewed as unfair.

An important finding in relation to language and attrition is that RC personnel agreed more highly than AC personnel that language played a role in their decision to leave SOF. Also, RC personnel reported a greater intention to leave SOF than AC personnel. RC leaders reported that RC personnel had lower intent to leave, while by their own report, RC personnel had higher intent to leave than their AC counterparts.

Although our results suggest additional language training and resources are needed across SOF, it is apparent that RC personnel in ARSOF have more of a need, which should be addressed, especially if the ARSOF RC units will continue to be utilized heavily in support of GWOT missions.

Summary of Selected Findings

Language Use on Deployment

- ARSOF RC personnel felt less prepared for their most recent deployment than AC personnel.

- ARSOF RC personnel indicated similar levels of confidence in their language abilities when compared with AC personnel, although SF AC personnel were less confident than SF RC personnel in some areas.
- RC personnel, in both leadership and SOF personnel groups, had stronger dependency on interpreters than their AC counterparts, as well as a higher indication of problems on missions due to interpreter usage.

Language Training

- 55.9% of RC respondents indicated that they had not participated in language training of any kind in the past four years, while 47.5% of RC respondents indicated that they had never received language training paid for or sponsored by the military or government.
- ARSOF RC personnel reported that there was a lack of resources available for language training and a lack of command support for language training.
- ARSOF RC personnel reported being willing to obtain further training if barriers were removed and reported a greater willingness to shift some of their training allocated to other SOF skills to increase time for language training.
- ARSOF RC personnel were slightly more satisfied than AC personnel with the limited training they do receive.
- For the most part, ARSOF RC personnel rated their curriculum and instructor consistently higher than ARSOF AC personnel overall for both initial acquisition language training and sustainment and enhancement language training.
- RC leaders were more likely than AC leaders to indicate that personnel did not arrive at their command/unit mission-capable in terms of language.
- RC CLPMs had more negative evaluations of sustainment and enhancement language training in their unit than AC CLPMs.
- Very few ARSOF RC personnel participated in immersion training and most RC personnel thought that selection for immersion training was unfair.
- RC leaders disagreed more strongly than AC leaders that their unit frequently sends personnel on OCONUS immersion training.

Technology and Training

- ARSOF RC personnel had less experience with TDT and MLT, but more positive views of both. A possible explanation is that TDT enables RC personnel to receive training that would otherwise be inaccessible.
- RC leaders expressed more favorable opinions of TDT than AC leaders.

Command Support

- ARSOF RC personnel indicated that their chain of command was not supportive of language training, especially regarding the allocation of duty hours for training and placing emphasis on the DLPT.
- ARSOF RC personnel indicated a need for more flexible resources and opportunities.

Official Language Testing and FLPP

- ARSOF RC personnel and RC leaders had more favorable opinions of the DLPT than AC personnel and leaders.
- RC personnel reported limited access to administrations of the DLPT.

- RC personnel believe that the DLI OPI more accurately reflects what they are assigned to do when deployed, which is consistent with opinions from AC personnel.
- ARSOF RC personnel had more negative opinions of FLPP than AC personnel.
- ARSOF RC personnel did not feel that FLPP procedures were fair or reflected their effort.
- ARSOF RC personnel reported difficulty obtaining enough training to increase their proficiency to the required level to be eligible for FLPP.
- ARSOF RC personnel indicated that the best way to increase the motivating effect of FLPP would be to provide more training resources.

Intentions to Leave

- ARSOF RC personnel and AFSOF personnel were more likely to indicate that they had considered leaving SOF to pursue a higher-paid civilian career than ARSOF AC personnel.
- ARSOF RC personnel agreed more highly than AC personnel that language played a role in their decision to leave SOF and reported a greater intention to leave SOF.
- RC leaders reported that RC personnel had lower intent to leave, while by their own report, RC personnel had higher intent to leave than their AC counterparts.

More specific findings regarding results presented in this section can be found in the supporting technical reports (See APPENDIX A for details).

Table 7.1 Open-Ended Responses to Special Reservist Issues

Are there any issues related to language proficiency and testing specific to being a reservist that were not covered in the survey?			
Category of Response	Example Responses ²¹²	Frequency	
		Army RC Personnel	ARSOF RC Personnel
Pay reservists equal FLPP	FLPP needs to be the same for RC; not pro-rated. It still takes the same time to maintain proficiency. Reservists are required to maintain the same proficiency as active duty soldiers but are given only a sum proportionate to the number of drill days we work in a given month. The end result is we study and learn the same but get paid only 1/6 the money.	30	10
Provide more training opportunities	Our states will not pay for DLI. I strongly desire to attend Language training, but there is no established route for me to pursue to achieve this as a Guardsman. time allocated to language training during drill weekends or annual training	53	23
Provide more training resources	Yes, I had to buy my own Arabic refresher materials from the Mon.Language Institute. Would really like better access to money for traing without my state stealing and equipment for other NON SOF units in the state.	20	9
More access to DLPT administrations	In my former unit, DLPT testing was at the initiative of the individual soldier to make arrangements and drive the 3 hours to nearest military base to take the test. Prior to the first deployment to OEF we recieved DLI basic language tapes.	16	2
More access to immersion	Yes, as I stated, we have a requirement to be able to speak Arabic but cannot get slots for CONUS immersion training because we are not SOF or MI but we still have the requirement based on our OPFOR mission.	6	3
More structure for FLPP allocation/ training slots	There is no language policies prior to deployment at all, even though interaction with the populace will be a requirement of my duty position(I have been alerted for deployment for OIF within the next 90 days...)	9	3
Command emphasis on proficiency	No command emphasis on language skills is present within our National Guard unit. I am a member of the HHC of one of the 15 enhanced brigades with members currently deployed to the central Asian theater. Being SF National Guard there are many language training avenues available to me but getting the command to approve and pay for it could be problematic	19	8
Other	The survey should address reservist that want to employ their language skills while maintaining civilian status and NOT risking deploying more often than a non-linguist. Having a foreign language skill does not have any impact to most resevist. They are not being recognized.	32	6

²¹² These comments are transcribed directly from the survey responses. No changes in grammar in content were made, except where noted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

The purpose of conducting the *SOF Language Transformation Needs Assessment Project* was to evaluate the current state of language usage and training in the SOF community in order to provide SOF leaders with data to develop an effective and comprehensive SOF language strategy. Findings from this project highlight several key issues that must be taken into account when developing this strategy. This section summarizes the key findings from the project and the next section presents some broad recommendations. Although the main purpose of this project was to inform strategy development, we believe the findings suggest several specific recommendations that can be implemented as part of the strategy or as separate, complementary initiatives. We encourage SOF and DoD leaders to utilize the data gathered by this project to make meaningful changes.

Overall, the message from SOF personnel and unit leaders who participated in the study appears to be that the current system for providing language training and resources is not effectively meeting the needs of the personnel and their units. The results of the study point to the need for improvement in many areas including language training effectiveness, allocation of language training time, command support, language testing, and language proficiency pay.

The overall results also demonstrate the interrelatedness of the training, proficiency, language usage in the field, and mission outcomes. For example, a majority of SOF personnel reported that they felt unprepared in terms of language skills for their most recent deployments, especially if they were deployed outside of their traditional or War Plan AOR. Many of these personnel indicated that training and proficiency testing were not related to language usage on deployment and were ineffective. Also, personnel reported having difficulty fulfilling many of their language-related job/mission duties without heavy reliance on interpreters. Unit leaders reported that personnel, even those who attended institutionalized language training, were not showing up at their units language-capable for their missions. Both personnel and leaders indicated having problems with interpreters, including incidents when interpreters negatively impacted or degraded mission outcomes.

The point is that ineffective or insufficient training triggers a systemic domino effect. Ineffective or insufficient training leads to poor proficiency which leads to using interpreters to complete language-related mission tasks which can lead to degraded or negative mission outcomes if interpreters are not trustworthy or competent. Therefore, SOF decision makers should keep the systemic nature of the language issue in mind when developing the SOF language strategy and strategic plans. Focusing exclusively on one aspect of language will not solve the problem and is likely to have unintended effects across the system.

Below is a brief recap of some of the key findings from each of the seven sections of results.

1. Language Use on Deployment

- In terms of language usage, the frequency and importance of various language tasks and the level of language skill needed in the field depends heavily on SOF personnel type (Special Forces, AFSOC Aviation Advisors, CA Soldier, PSYOP Soldier, etc.), mission type, the language, and whether the mission is inside or outside the respondents' AOR.
- All groups indicated building rapport was among the most important uses of language skills, if not the most important use. AFSOF personnel were an exception; AFSOF personnel rated

- military-technical vocabulary as the most frequent and important use of language skills on deployment.
- SOF personnel deployed on DA and SR missions perceived a lesser need for high levels of proficiency than personnel deployed on UW, FID, PSYOP, and CAO missions.
 - CLPMs and SOF personnel disagree slightly in terms of how language is used in the field.
 - SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated that higher levels of proficiency would be ideal for language-related tasks and mission requirements. It should be noted that respondents indicated the level based on a list of language tasks/functions, and all the functions provided on this list would rate in a range between 1 and 3 on the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale used within the DoD (see APPENDIX B for a Layman's Understanding of ILR Language Skill Level Descriptions).

2. Preparedness for Deployment

- Overall, across missions inside and outside of their AOR, SOF personnel have a low-to-moderate level of confidence in their language abilities and indicated that they felt unprepared for their most recent deployments in terms of language and cultural understanding. Personnel who indicated being deployed outside their AOR reported feeling less prepared in terms of language and cultural understanding than those deployed inside their AOR. AFSOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their language abilities than ARSOF personnel. All SOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their ability to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain simple face-to-face conversations than in their ability to use military terminology or participate in informal conversations.
- Unit leaders expressed low levels of confidence in the language capability of their personnel in their official or required language. For example, only 37.3% of unit leaders indicated that the typical member of their personnel was able to speak effectively in their official or required language.
- Unit leaders expressed a low level of confidence in the language capabilities of their personnel for missions outside their official AOR.
- SOF personnel and unit leaders perceived a heavy reliance on interpreters to meet language-related mission requirements.
- Many SOF personnel and leaders reported encountering situations where the interpreter degraded or negatively impacted mission outcomes.
- SOF personnel and leaders perceived that pre-deployment training was largely ineffective in comparison to sustainment and enhancement and initial acquisition language training.

3. Language Training

- The diversity of language needs and language training programs across SOF components and units makes a one-size-fits-all training solution impossible.

- Many SOF personnel reported that language training was ineffective in preparing them for their most recent deployment.
- Overall, SOF personnel viewed language training as being moderately effective at best across training types (initial acquisition, sustainment and enhancement, pre-deployment) and sources of training, such as the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS), the unit's command language program (CLP), or Defense Language Institute (DLI).
- SOF personnel often indicated that they thought language training was pre-packaged and not customized to SOF needs or to how they used language on missions.
- SOF personnel reported that the curriculum (regardless of training type or source) often had errors.
- Unit leaders perceived that new personnel show up at their commands not mission-capable in terms of language. Leaders provided a negative evaluation of whether personnel can perform well in their normal AOR after receiving training at USAJFKSWCS or in the unit's CLP. Evaluation of SOF personnel trained at DLI was more positive.
- SOF personnel and leaders indicated that immersion following classroom instruction was an optimal language training strategy. In general, immersion was viewed very positively.

4. Motivation

- SOF personnel reported they are motivated to succeed in training because they want to do well on missions and they feel accountable to their team or unit for their language proficiency.
- The current Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP) system does not appear to motivate SOF personnel to acquire higher levels of proficiency.
- The current amount of FLPP is viewed as an insufficient incentive to overcome the barriers and constraints related to enhancing language proficiency for most SOF personnel.
- Testing is related to FLPP because FLPP is paid based on proficiency scores from the Defense language Proficiency Test (DLPT). Most SOF personnel do not believe the DLPT, which measures only reading and listening proficiency, is an accurate measure of their proficiency or of how they use language on their job/missions.
- Both SOF unit leaders and personnel perceived that the Defense Language Institute Oral Proficiency Interview (DLI OPI) is a better indicator of language proficiency than the DLPT because the DLI OPI measures speaking proficiency.
- Survey respondents indicated that language issues have little to do with their decision to re-enlist. However, reserve component (RC) personnel were more likely to indicate that language issues were related to their decisions to re-enlist.

5. Training Barriers and Organizational Support

- SOF personnel reported several major barriers to language training including: (1) a lack of command support for language training; (2) a lack of training resources, (3) a lack of time to dedicate to language training as a result of the current OPTEMPO; and (4) a lack of time due to training requirements for other SOF skills.
- SOF personnel indicated overall negative evaluations of their commands' support for language training.
- SOF personnel do not believe that their chains of command place enough emphasis on or provide the appropriate level of support for language training.
- It should be noted that MI linguists from non-SOF units who took the survey rated their commands similarly, indicating that this might be an issue across DoD.

6. Is Technology the Solution?

- In general, enthusiasm for technologies, such as distributive learning (DL), was not strong.
- Both SOF unit leaders and personnel deemed current technology-delivered training (TDT) unfit for the initial acquisition of a language and indicated that classroom training was more appropriate.
- Although TDT was not viewed favorably by most respondents, they indicated that TDT might be used effectively as a supplement to existing training, as a tool when no other training was available (especially relevant for reserve units), or as a quick train-up tool immediately prior to a mission or deployment.
- RC ARSOF (Army SOF) personnel had less experience with TDT, but more positive views of TDT. A possible explanation is that TDT enables RC personnel to receive training that would otherwise be inaccessible and creates more flexible training options than traditional classroom training at the reserve center.
- SOF unit leaders and personnel had unfavorable views of machine language translation (MLT) devices as a useful way to communicate and accomplish core SOF tasks.
- SOF unit leaders and personnel indicated that MLT would never eliminate the need for language-trained personnel.

7. Reserve Component Issues

- Although Active Component (AC) personnel reported some of the same issues, RC personnel indicated more profound problems, especially in the focus groups, with preparedness for language usage on deployment, official language testing, receiving FLPP, the availability of language training, and the availability of language resources (e.g., job aids).
- 55.9% of RC respondents to the survey indicated they had not participated in language training of any kind in the past four years, while 47.5% of RC respondents indicated that they had never received language training paid for or sponsored by the military or government. These findings can be compared to 44% of AC respondents who reported that they had not participated in language training in the past four years and 25.7% of AC respondents who

indicated that they had never received language training paid for or sponsored by the military or government. The fact that RC personnel report having limited access to language training and resources may be driving their low perceptions of their preparedness for language tasks on deployment and of their confidence in their language abilities.

- Although it takes roughly the same amount of time and effort for AC and RC personnel of equivalent ability to acquire and maintain the same proficiency, systemic constraints related to training time and compensation (1/30th rule) for RC personnel put them at a huge disadvantage.
- These issues coupled with a lack of training resources and of flexible access to training resources can undermine motivation to train.
- Most RC personnel are severely constrained by geography and training time available which make them more willing to try DL or TDT options than active personnel.
- Additionally, most likely because of these barriers to training, RC personnel reported more dependence on interpreters for missions, which led to more reports of problems with interpreters.

The findings presented above were selected to summarize each content area of the study and are not meant to be exhaustive or a selection of the most important. Obviously, the MAJOR FINDINGS section in this report and the supporting technical reports (see APPENDIX A) provide a more comprehensive review of the results. Before presenting some basic recommendations, we would like to elaborate on a couple of points from above.

These findings point to several potential fundamental problems with SOF language training. The way language is currently taught is not consistent with mission-based language requirements according to experienced SOF personnel. Another fundamental problem is that language is not used in the same way across SOF personnel types and core SOF tasks, which indicates that pre-packaged, one-size-fits-all training programs will not adequately fulfill the needs of SOF personnel from different groups and for different core SOF tasks.

When customization and/or incorporation of job-specific role plays, situational training exercises (STX), or simulations into existing training are suggested as partial solutions, many language purists argue that a good foundation in the basic language is required first. Granted, basic, non-job-specific language training/instruction is required before the job-specific tasks and functions can be taught in most cases. There are many language tasks that require substantial, broad language proficiency (e.g., negotiations). However, this is not an excuse for failing to customize the training to the extent that it can be customized.

For example, if a unit is about to be deployed on a mission which will involve conducting searches, then the pre-deployment training for that unit should focus on the cultural information and language skills needed to conduct searches in addition to some basic survival language. Personnel can be taught the commands, common phrases, and culturally appropriate behaviors for the search situation. Then, personnel can practice these skills using role playing and STXs. This prepares them for their mission.

Additionally, it seems that the narrower the job or mission situation the more likely it is that personnel can be trained effectively to use language in that situation without having an extensive foundation in the language. Consider the situation of a Navy SEAL team taking a ship. According to

Navy SEAL participants in the focus groups, their personnel only need to learn about 50-60 commands and responses to effectively cover the majority of the variance in behaviors encountered in the typical boarding situation. Of course, it should be noted that more proficiency would help address atypical situations. The main point is that the scope of the training should reflect the skill and proficiency demands of the language task and the constraints of the training situation.

Finally, this study was conducted in part as a response to a recent U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) report (2003) which recommended that DL was a promising solution for overcoming time constraints associated with language training. Findings from this project suggest that DL and other technologies in their current forms are not perceived as being adequate to address the language issues raised by SOF personnel and leaders.

SOF personnel and unit leaders reported low opinions of the usefulness of technology in training beyond its use as a supplemental tool. Therefore, they will probably not embrace it as a solution unless it is a supplement to traditional training methods or without a substantial effort to change their opinions by demonstrating its value and effectiveness.

Currently, there are no peer-reviewed research studies in the fields of applied, educational, or industrial/organizational psychology (to our knowledge) that provide a scientific assessment of the effectiveness of using DL for acquiring or maintaining language skills in comparison to other delivery modes. Also, our results indicate that there are other problems associated with language training in addition to time constraints and lack of access to training that cannot be addressed by altering delivery mode alone. We caution against viewing DL as a “silver bullet.” Since no convincing evidence related to the efficacy of DL or TDT for the initial acquisition and sustainment of language (or lack thereof) exists, we advocate the use of caution in the adoption of DL and TDT solutions. If adopted, these solutions should be vigorously and scientifically evaluated. However, we also believe that DL and TDT may hold promise for the future. DL and other TDT are probably useful supplements to traditional training and, in the case of RC units where traditional training is not as accessible, DL and TDT are probably good options.

Recommendations

The main purpose of this project was to assess the current state of language usage, training, and other issues in the SOF community in order to provide data to inform the development of comprehensive language strategy as suggested by the GAO (2003) review of SOF language. However, in a number of cases, the findings point to specific recommendations that can be integrated into the strategy or that can be enacted as separate interventions to address more immediate issues. Additionally, we make some recommendations that need to be addressed through advocacy at the DoD level and, therefore, will not be impacted as much by the specifics of the SOF language strategy adopted. At any rate, the findings in this report should be used to develop a SOF language strategy regardless of whether or not our recommendations are utilized.

The recommendations are listed by the seven content areas in the MAJOR FINDINGS section. A key finding is listed and numbered (i.e., the first finding from Section 1 is numbered 1.1) and the related recommendations are presented below it bulleted and in italics. Please note that these recommendations are based on the responses from the individuals who participated in the focus group study and surveys. Therefore, these recommendations may or may not apply uniformly to all SOF units or personnel. However, we believe these recommendations are valid based on the data collected.

1. Language Use on Deployment

1.1 Results indicate that the importance and frequency of language tasks performed and skills utilized and the required level of proficiency varies somewhat according to SOF personnel type, unit, core SOF task, location, and language.

- *Language training should be customized to meet the needs of different SOF personnel types to the extent possible.*
- *The results support the notion that one-size-fits-all training solutions should be avoided.*
- *The results suggest that a modular approach to training might be beneficial. Modularity of training content would allow for more flexibility in instructional design to meet language-related operational requirements.*
- *Units and instructors should have freedom within parameters to customize the instruction to fit the unit's mission requirements or to accommodate the specific students in each language training event or class.*
- *Due to the limited time for pre-deployment training, customization is especially important in this context. SOF units focus language training for missions outside of SOF personnel's AOR by customizing training based on core SOF task type, mission location, and mission language as soon as this information is available. It is critical that this type of language training only focuses on training SOF personnel to perform the language tasks necessary for their deployment.*
- *Customization by core SOF task may make sense, especially for pre-deployment training. Based on the survey responses, below is a list of general suggestions for training content. However, it should be noted that some language tasks require substantial levels of skill and proficiency and cannot be trained in short periods of time.*

Direct Action (DA)

Important: Use of interpreters, listening skills, local dialect, speaking skills, slang/street language.

Moderately Important: Military-specific language.

Not as important: Writing skills, reading skills, formal language, and other job aids.

Unconventional Warfare (UW)

Important: Speaking skills, military-specific language, local dialect, slang/street language, listening skills, and use of interpreters.

Not as Important: Formal language, reading skills, writing skills, and other job aids.

Foreign Internal Defense (FID)

Important: Military-specific language, formal language, slang/street language, local dialect, speaking skills, listening skills, and reading skills.

Moderately Important: Other job aids.

Not as Important: Writing skills and use of interpreters.

Civil Affairs Operations (CAO)

Important: Slang/street language, local dialect, speaking skills, listening skills, and use of interpreters

Not as Important: Military-specific language, formal language, reading skills, writing skills, and other job aids.

Psychological Operations (PSYOP)

Important: Formal language, slang/street language, local dialect, speaking skills, listening skills, reading skills, and use of interpreters.

Not as Important: Military-specific language, writing skills, and other job aids.

1.2 All groups agreed that building rapport was among the most important function of language while on deployment, if not the most important.

- *Focus SOF language training on language skills and cultural information that prepares SOF personnel to build rapport (i.e., speaking, conversational listening, and cultural awareness). This might include role plays in class, STXs, field training exercises, or observing a demonstration by experienced, language-enabled personnel. Bottom line, SOF personnel language training needs to include practice related to building rapport.*
- *This finding supports the idea that language training and testing for SOF personnel should focus more on speaking and conversational listening skills.*

1.3 Many units conducting technical training (e.g., boat or aircraft maintenance) on FID missions, such as AFSOC Aviation Advisors and NAVSPECWARCOM Surface Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (SWCC) reported the heavy usage of military-technical terminology.

- *Training for these units should include the appropriate terminology for their jobs and missions. Military and technical vocabulary can often be embedded in training (pre-deployment or otherwise). Electronic lists/archives that include the correct pronunciation of the word or phrase can be developed as job aids as well. These lists/archives should be created in a standardized format and posted to the SOFLO web site for the benefit of the entire community.*

1.4 Many SOF personnel in the focus groups spoke of using language for force protection or tactical intelligence. This is a set of language tasks and a context that might be overlooked by instructors without military or SOF experience.

- *One focus of basic language training or pre-deployment training should be on the types of language tasks related to force protection or tactical intelligence (survival-level tasks). Using the force protection context as an impetus for learning these tasks may help SOF personnel who have not been deployed to understand their importance more thoroughly.*
- *This instruction should include basic speaking tasks (i.e., asking for directions; giving instructions), basic writing tasks (i.e., writing a list of supplies for a local guide to purchase), basic listening tasks (i.e., listening to conversations at a café or a radio broadcast), and basic reading tasks (i.e., identifying important documents; reading signs; reading graffiti to determine the climate toward Americans). However, it should be noted that some language tasks require substantial levels of skill and proficiency and cannot be trained in short periods of time.*

2. Preparedness for Deployment

2.1 Overall, across missions inside and outside their AOR, SOF personnel have a low-to-moderate level of confidence in their language abilities and indicated that they felt unprepared for their most recent deployments in terms of language and cultural understanding. Personnel who indicated being deployed outside their AOR reported feeling less prepared in terms of language and cultural understanding than those deployed inside their AOR. AFSOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their language abilities than ARSOF personnel. All SOF personnel reported higher levels of confidence in their ability to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain simple face-to-face conversations than in their ability to use military terminology or participate in informal conversations.

- *This finding suggests that SOF personnel did not receive the training they required for their recent missions. There are several potential reasons for this finding that could be driving these findings, including insufficient training content or time. SOF leaders and CLPMs need to ensure that the training meets the needs of personnel. This requires investigating this disconnect and identifying the issues and solutions on a case-by-case basis. Decision makers should not fall into the trap of thinking that more training time alone will be the solution. Although in many cases the time available for such training is constrained.*

2.2 Both SOF unit leaders and personnel expressed negative opinions about the ability of pre-deployment training to prepare personnel for mission success, especially on outside AOR missions.

- *Due to the limited time for pre-deployment training, customization is especially important in this context. Provide more focused language training for missions outside of SOF personnel's AOR by customizing training based on SOF core task, mission location, and mission language as soon as this information is available.*
- *It is critical that this type of language training only focuses on training SOF personnel to perform the language tasks necessary for their deployment. This includes the basic survival and force protection skills discussed earlier. If time is limited, train only the most critical language skills and contexts. Build demonstration and some practice of these critical skills and contexts into pre-deployment training. However, keep in mind that more language tasks cannot be trained in a short time period; therefore, training objectives should be realistic based on the constraints of the situation.*

2.3 Both SOF unit leaders and personnel indicated a heavy dependence on interpreters to accomplish missions inside and outside their AOR. Both also reported encountering problems with interpreters as well.

- *Due to the high dependency on interpreters for both inside and outside AOR deployments reported by many SOF personnel and units (with the exception of 7th Special Forces (SF) Group for inside AOR missions), SOF leaders must decide if this heavy dependence on interpreters is acceptable as a long-term strategy especially for deployments inside of the AOR. If not, SOF personnel or at least some personnel in a unit or on a team must be trained to higher levels of proficiency.*
- *Since interpreters are currently used heavily and will most likely be used to some extent in the future, incorporate instruction on how to select and use interpreters into training where*

appropriate, especially pre-deployment language training. Many personnel reported having no such training. Many of the reported issues with interpreters might have been lessened or prevented with such training.

3. Language Training

3.1 SOF personnel reported that language training was ineffective in preparing them for their most recent deployment. Unit leaders indicated that personnel do not arrive at their command/unit mission-capable in terms of language. Overall, SOF personnel viewed language training as being moderately effective at best across training types (initial acquisition, sustainment and enhancement, pre-deployment) and sources (USAJFKSWCS, CLP, DLI).

- These findings suggest the efficacy of language training in the SOF community needs to be evaluated. Keep in mind that these are perceptions. The best way to establish training effectiveness is through systematic analysis within and across language training programs, guided by a model of training effectiveness and linking specific individual data to specific training events. The on-going SOF Language Training Effectiveness Project was commissioned to systematically assess the efficacy of language training and to identify leverage points that SOF leaders and training developers can manipulate to improve the language proficiency in the community. SOFLO should continue this project to its logical conclusion.*
- CLPMs and unit leaders should work with training developers, providers, and instructors to ensure that the language-related needs of their personnel are adequately addressed in the program of instruction (POI) for all training events.*

3.2 SOF personnel indicated that language training was pre-packaged and not customized to SOF needs or to how they used language on missions. A one-size fits-all training solution is impossible based on the diversity of language needs and language training programs across SOF components.

- To re-reiterate, it is important to customize language training so that it is appropriate to meet SOF personnel's deployment needs. Re-structure all types of language training (initial acquisition, sustainment and enhancement, and pre-deployment) so that the language that is taught in training is more aligned with the way language is currently used in the field.*
- It is important to recognize the objectives of language training. If the goal of training is to develop functionally broad speaking skills (ILR 2 or higher), then provide language training that will develop personnel to this level. If the goal of training is to train SOF personnel to use language under a very specific set of circumstances (i.e., giving limited commands on a DA mission), then train the SOF personnel to use language that is important in that context. Keep in mind that more complex tasks require broader, more comprehensive training or education.*
- It is important to hire instructors who understand how language is currently used in the target AOR, who have the ability to teach, and who are familiar with the military context. Being a native speaker of a language is not enough to ensure success. SOFLO should continue to support collecting instructor data as part of the SOF Language Training Effectiveness Project. This will help determine the instructor characteristics that impact language learning and proficiency.*

- *Units should provide qualified instructors with some ability to modify instructional materials or curricula to more effectively address student needs and the experience and ability levels of the students in the class.*

3.3 SOF personnel indicated that the curriculum (regardless of training type or location) often contained errors.

- *SOF leaders need to ensure the selection or development of up-to-date and error free curricula that reflect the way language is currently used in the AOR to which the training is relevant.*

3.4 Both SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated that immersion following classroom instruction was an optimal language training strategy.

- *Find ways to increase funding for immersion training.*
- *Due to the highly favorable opinions of immersion training, use this type of training as a reward for students who perform well in their classroom training or as an incentive to develop higher levels of proficiency in a select group of SOF personnel. Perhaps pick the best student in a class and send that student on immersion training.*
- *If it is not possible to fund OCONUS immersion training, consider using resources to fund CONUS immersion or iso-immersion to supplement classroom instruction. The Chinese CONUS immersion program (i.e., conducted in a Chinese community in the US, not in isolation in the US) run by the 1st SF Group is a program that receives favorable reviews from participants and appears to be well structured and supervised. It could potentially be a model for such programs.*
- *Immersion training, regardless of location, must be planned and executed the same standards that other training events are. It must not be a “vacation.” It must be structured and rigorous training that is well supervised and has training objectives. Also, the students must have a sufficient base of proficiency prior to engaging in immersion training.*

4. Motivation

4.1 FLPP was viewed as ineffective by most SOF personnel in the study. The results suggest that the current system has insufficient incentive value to motivate personnel to overcome the situational constraints related to language and to develop higher levels of language proficiency. The procedures for allocating FLPP were viewed as unfair by SOF personnel. In addition, many SOF personnel expressed frustration with the substantial proficiency requirements needed to receive FLPP and indicated that the minimum proficiency level for receiving FLPP is not attainable by many SOF personnel because of constraints.

- *DoD should revamp the current FLPP policy and system. The new FLPP process should be linked explicitly to DoD strategy for SOF personnel as well as for other language professionals and language enabled personnel. Specifically, this linkage should directly influence how monies are allocated to individuals by the FLPP process. Moreover, such a strategy should be clearly communicated to all language enabled personnel.*

- *Pay FLPP for speaking proficiency as measured by a DLI OPI as well as for reading and listening as measured by the DLPT. SOF personnel should have the option of being paid FLPP for speaking proficiency (DLI OPI) only. Speaking and conversational listening were reported as the primary language skill modes by SOF personnel. However, SOF personnel should still be able to opt to take the DLPT to qualify for FLPP due to the fact that DLI OPI availability is currently limited.*
- *If increasing language proficiency is the goal and FLPP is to serve as the primary DoD incentive to accomplish this, we recommend increasing the maximum amount paid for FLPP.*
- *DoD should pay FLPP starting at lower levels of proficiency. This pay policy would provide incentive for language enabled personnel, especially enlisted personnel, to start climbing the ladder to higher proficiency or to maintain the skill they currently possess. Additionally, if these personnel are deployed outside of their normal AOR or required language (e.g., GWOT mission) and their proficiency decreases, such a policy would help ensure at least some maintenance of FLPP during this temporary decrease in proficiency.*
- *DoD should pay higher FLPP amounts for critical languages, as determined by DoD language strategy and projected mission requirements.*
- *To recognize the additional time and effort required to maintain or enhance proficiency in more difficult languages, we recommend paying more FLPP for learning and maintaining more difficult languages.*

4.2 RC personnel reported more negative opinions of FLPP than AC personnel. Although it takes roughly the same amount of time and effort for active and reserve component personnel of equivalent ability to acquire and maintain the same proficiency, systemic constraints related to training time and compensation (1/30th rule) for RC personnel put them at a huge disadvantage.

- *DoD should pay full FLPP to RC personnel. If it cannot be paid as a monthly incentive pay because of legal reasons, then award it as a yearly bonus. The principles of learning and motivation apply equally to RC and AC personnel, and RC personnel often have more constraints/barriers to overcome. RC personnel deserve equal compensation for acquiring and maintaining a difficult skill.*

Detailed findings and recommendations related to FLPP based on data from this study can be found in a recent research report (see Surface, Poncheri, Dierdorff, Sebastianelli, & Shetye, 2004).

4.3 Testing is related to FLPP because FLPP is paid based on proficiency scores from the DLPT.

Most SOF personnel do not believe that the DLPT is an accurate measure of their proficiency or how they use language on their job/missions. Both SOF unit leaders and personnel reported that the DLI OPI is a better indicator of language proficiency than the DLPT.

- *DoD leaders should ensure that the DLI OPI and DLPT meet the criteria for educational and psychological tests as established by the Standards for Education and Psychological Testing (AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999). These data should be regularly reported as specified by the Standards.*

- *In addition to reliability and validity, the measures should be free from criterion contamination, should not be criterion deficient, and should be relevant to actual performance on the job.*
- *Predictive validity studies assessing the relationship between these proficiency tests and language-related job performance are needed.*
- *DoD should fund the development of more job-related measures of language skill proficiency and language performance, such as language-related work samples. This would not only result in better measures of language skill (i.e., the behavior measured by a method that more closely approximates its use on the actual job). This would increase perceptions of procedural fairness and, therefore, most likely improve the effectiveness of FLPP as a motivational tool (if based on this type of assessment).*

5. Training Barriers and Organizational Support

5.1 SOF personnel reported several major barriers to language training including: (1) a lack of command support for language training; (2) a lack of training resources, (3) a lack of time to dedicate to language training as a result of the current OPTEMPO; and (4) a lack of time due to training requirements for other SOF skills.

- *Units need to develop innovative training solutions to work around barriers.*
- *Provide resources and emphasis on integrating language practice/training into other training opportunities or simulations. For example, include language as a component of mission simulations or field training exercises.*
- *SOF leaders should ensure that command language programs are adequately funded to ensure that a variety of language resources are available. This is especially critical for reserve units that typically have little or no language training resources.*
- *SOFLO needs to ensure that CLPMs receive and disseminate information about the language training resources, tools, and job aids available to personnel.*
- *CLPMs and unit leaders should emphasize the importance of language training to personnel at every opportunity.*
- *The importance of language proficiency needs to be communicated at all levels. The command emphasis needs to begin at the highest levels and flow through all levels of leadership down to the personnel in the units. SOF leaders need to communicate that language is a serious priority.*
- *SOF leaders should consider making a minimum level of language proficiency a criteria for promotion.*

5.2 SOF personnel as well as MI linguists (not organic to SOF units) who took the survey indicated overall negative evaluations of their commands' support for language training.

- *Hold unit commanders/leaders accountable for the level of language proficiency and the effectiveness of language training in their units, not just for their personnel staying current*

on the testing requirements. Institute changes to the Officer Evaluation Reports (OER) of unit commanders/leaders that will ensure that language proficiency and training are taken seriously and given command emphasis. As they say, "what gets measured, gets done."

6. Is Technology the Solution?

6.1 In general, enthusiasm for technologies, such as distributive learning (DL), was not strong. Both SOF personnel and unit leaders had unfavorable opinions of technology-delivered training (TDT) and indicated that it was more useful as a supplement rather than as a replacement for traditional classroom training.

- *SOF leaders should proceed with caution when considering the recommendation from a recent GAO report (2003) that the solution to the problem of insufficient time for language training is to incorporate distance/distributive learning techniques into the language training program. The results from this study indicate that the implementation of this recommendation may not be well-received by SOF personnel, particularly AC personnel. However, many SOF personnel indicated that DL or TDT might be a useful supplement to traditional training.*
- *Due to the fact that TDT is considered to be useful as a supplement to traditional classroom training, the use of blended learning (i.e., integration of classroom and computer-based instruction into the course design) might be an effective method to explore in the SOF community.*

6.2 RC personnel tended to have more favorable opinions of TDT, possibly because this type of training could allow members of the RC to receive training that would otherwise be inaccessible.

- *DL or TDT options should be considered for RC personnel since they have limited access to other types of training and require flexible training options.*

7. Reserve Component Issues

7.1 55.9% of RC ARSOF personnel who responded to the survey indicated they had not participated in language training of any kind in the past four years, while 47.5% of RC respondents indicated that they had never received language training paid for or sponsored by the military or government. The fact that reserve component personnel reported having limited access to language training and resources may be driving their low perceptions of their preparedness for language tasks on deployment and of their confidence in their language abilities.

- *Provide more language training resources to RC units.*
- *Provide more flexible training options, such as DL or TDT, for reserve component personnel.*

7.2 RC personnel reported more dependence on interpreters for missions and more problems with interpreters on those missions.

- *Language training for RC personnel should emphasize training on how to select and use interpreters.*

7.3 RC personnel reported more negative opinions of FLPP than active component personnel. Although it takes roughly the same amount of time and effort for active and reserve personnel of

equivalent ability to acquire and maintain the same proficiency, systemic constraints related to training time and compensation (1/30th rule) for RC personnel put them at a huge disadvantage. [repeated for emphasis]

- *DoD should pay full FLPP to RC personnel. If it cannot be paid as a monthly incentive pay because of legal reasons, then award it as a yearly bonus. The principles of learning and motivation apply equally to RC and AC personnel, and RC personnel often have more constraints/barriers to overcome. RC personnel deserve equal compensation for acquiring and maintaining a difficult skill.*

In Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is apparent that the improvement of foreign language proficiency in the SOF community to ensure sufficient language capability for current and future missions is a complex, systemic issue that needs to be addressed. The results suggest there is a language proficiency gap between the current level of proficiency reported and the level of proficiency that SOF personnel and unit leaders indicated as being optimal for mission requirements. The task of ensuring sufficient language capability in SOF is further complicated by the fact that there are many factors or variables that influence language acquisition and maintenance—OPTEMPO, organizational support, and resource availability to name only a few—and many of these factors are often in a state of flux. The diversity of language requirements, needs and issues across SOF units and missions is also a challenge to addressing the language proficiency gap. However, as the results of this study point out, the language issue definitely needs to be addressed in a systemic way, and SOF language capabilities need to be improved to close this gap. From the reports of SOF personnel and leaders, it appears that SOF units have only enough language proficiency to “get by” on some current missions and that they require interpreter support for most missions. Furthermore, the findings suggest that most SOF units would have even more difficulty in effectively meeting the language-related requirements of their missions if interpreters were unavailable or not allowed.

The results of this study do not present any “silver bullets” to magically fix all that ails SOF language, only data on the current state of language usage, training and related issues in the SOF community. As our findings show, SOF language is a multifaceted, complex system, and addressing language issues in the SOF community will not be easy. Simplistic plans and one-size-fits-all solutions will not resolve the problems identified here. We agree with the GAO report (2003) that a more comprehensive SOF language strategy is needed to guide solutions. The data from this project can be used by SOF leaders to inform the development of a comprehensive language strategy. The goal of this strategy should be to guide language-related activities and policies in the SOF community to ensure sufficient language capabilities to effectively accomplish future mission requirements. The strategy should be flexible enough to encompass the diversity of SOF units and missions and to adapt to future changes in mission or language requirements.

We encourage SOF leaders to utilize the findings in this report to develop a SOF language strategy that will transform language capabilities of the SOF community to more effectively meet the needs of current and future missions. We sense this is a critical point for the SOF language program, and SOF leaders must act now. By making fundamental changes to the current SOF language strategy based on the findings/recommendations from this study, SOF leaders can ensure that personnel are adequately prepared to most effectively accomplish the language-related requirements of their missions.

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APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF OTHER REPORTS

SOF Overall Survey Report (Technical Report # 20040605)

Purpose

The purpose of this report was to integrate survey responses from unit leadership and SOF personnel to determine consistencies and inconsistencies in their attitudes toward language use on deployment, interpreters, deployments outside of their AOR, language training, official language testing, FLPP, technology, organizational support, and attrition.

Participants

There were a total of 327 SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy who responded to the SOF Operator Survey. The majority, 90.8% were personnel from the Army, while 8.9% were from the Air Force, and only one respondent was from the Navy.

Unit leaders who responded to the Unit Leadership Survey comprised four groups, unit commanders, senior warrant officer advisors/senior enlisted advisors (SWOA/SEAs), staff officers, and command language program managers (CLPMs). There were a total of 158 unit leadership respondents, 57 were unit commanders, 16 were SWOA/SEAs, 58 were staff officers, and 27 were CLPMs.

Selected Findings

- Unit leaders were more likely to indicate experiencing problems with interpreters, while the SOF personnel were more favorable in their views.
- SOF personnel do not believe the DLPT is an accurate measure of their proficiency, while unit leaders expressed a slightly more favorable view of the DLPT.
- SOF unit leaders and personnel indicated that increasing the amount of FLPP would increase its motivating effect, while SOF personnel also indicated that increasing time and resources for training would increase the motivating effect as well.
- Unit leaders believe that the current OPTEMPO makes sustainment and enhancement language training only a slightly less viable option while SOF personnel believed it to be one of the biggest barriers to language training.
- Both SOF unit leaders and personnel expressed negative opinions regarding the ability of pre-deployment training to prepare personnel for mission success.
- CLPMs and SOF personnel held disagreeing opinions related to whether or not language training was customized to meet the needs of SOF personnel, with personnel reporting a much more negative view.
- SOF unit leaders and personnel considered distributive learning (DL) and technology-delivered training (TDT) to be ineffective overall but did indicate that it might be a useful supplement to traditional training.

Unit Leadership Survey Report (Technical Report # 20040604)

Purpose

The purpose of this report was to present findings from a survey designed and administered to members of unit leadership. This group included individuals classified as unit commanders, senior warrant officer advisors/senior enlisted advisors (SWOA/SEAs), staff officers, and command

language program managers (CLPMs). The survey attempted to gather information regarding attitudes toward language use on deployment, interpreters, deployments outside of their unit/command's AOR, language training received by members of their unit/command, official language testing, FLPP, technology, organizational support, attitudes toward SOFLO, and attrition intentions by members of their unit/command.

Participants

There were a total of 158 unit leadership respondents, 57 were unit commanders, 16 were SWOA/SEAs, 58 were staff officers, and 27 were CLPMs.

Selected Findings

- All unit leadership groups indicated that their units were too dependent on interpreters and agreed that the personnel in their unit would depend less on interpreters if they had higher levels of language proficiency.
- Unit leaders do not believe that personnel arrive at their command mission capable in their AOR language after receiving initial acquisition language training.
- Many unit leaders were dissatisfied with the quality of their CLP and believe that more money needs to be invested in the CLP.
- Immersion training was indicated as the best mode for sustainment and enhancement language training.
- Unit leaders placed a high level of importance on DLPT scores, but did not believe the DLPT is highly related to mission performance. This is most likely because it is an official requirement.
- Unit leaders did not believe that FLPP was an effective motivator for personnel, although they agreed that the procedures for assigning FLPP uphold the intent of motivating proficiency.
- Unit leadership groups agreed that technology-delivered training (TDT) should not be used as a replacement for classroom training, although it would be a useful supplement for classroom training.
- CLPMs indicated that their unit/command leadership speaks to the importance of language and also indicated that they are aware that their provision of resources to personnel has an impact on the command's reputation.

SOF Operator Survey Report (Technical Report # 20040603)

Purpose

The purpose of this report was to highlight and compare findings from SOF personnel in the Air Force, Army, and Navy regarding attitudes toward language use on deployment, interpreters, deployments outside of their AOR, language training, official language testing, FLPP, technology, organizational support, and attrition.

Participants

There were a total of 327 SOF personnel from the Air Force, Army, and Navy who responded to the SOF Operator Survey. The majority, 90.8% were personnel from the Army, while 8.9% were from the Air Force, and only one respondent was from the Navy.

Selected Findings

- SOF personnel indicated that the most frequent and important use of language skills on deployment was ‘Building rapport.’ AFSOF personnel indicated that ‘Military-technical vocabulary’ was the most important and frequently used function, while ARSOF personnel indicated that ‘Building rapport’ was the most important and frequently used function.
- AFSOF personnel felt that they were prepared for their most recent mission, but ARSOF personnel did not.
- ARSOF personnel were more likely than AFSOF personnel to report frequent use of interpreters both inside and outside of their AOR.
- SOF personnel who received FLPP had higher evaluations of its fairness, simplicity, and ability to motivate when compared to personnel who did not receive FLPP, although their opinions were still neutral.
- SOF personnel evaluated their instructor for initial acquisition language training and sustainment and enhancement language training positively, although they disagreed that the instructor incorporated SOF considerations into his/her teaching objectives and indicated that the curriculum was not customized for SOF needs.
- While AFSOF personnel agreed that their chain of command cares about their language proficiency, ARSOF personnel disagreed.

Air Force Operator Survey Report (Technical Report # 20040602)*Purpose*

The purpose of this report was to present findings from Air Force respondents to the survey designed and administered to collect data related to language usage, training, issues, and policies from SOF personnel. Some specific areas assessed were attitudes toward language use on deployment, the use of interpreters, language training efficacy, official language testing, FLPP, technology, and organizational support for language. Although the survey was designed for and targeted specifically to SOF personnel, there were a small number of other respondents including an MI Soldier assigned to a SOF unit, non-SOF linguists, SOF other, and non-SOF other respondents. Due to the small number of respondents in these categories, they were combined into one group, which is labeled AFSOF other and presented in the report to serve as a comparison with AFSOF personnel.

Participants

There were a total of 41 respondents from the Air Force to the SOF operator survey. The majority of respondents (29) were AFSOF personnel. The remaining respondents were classified as AFSOF other.

Selected Findings

- ‘Military-technical language’ was rated as important and used frequently by AFSOF personnel on deployments.
- AFSOF personnel are fairly confident in their ability to satisfy minimum language requirements. AFSOF personnel are less confident in their ability to use military terminology and conversational skills.
- AFSOF personnel expressed neutral opinions toward the DLPT. However, low opinions of the DLPT’s relatedness to missions did not translate into lower motivation to do well on the test.

- AFSOF personnel suggested increasing the amount of training provided and measuring speaking ability as good ways to improve the FLPP system.
- AFSOF personnel felt only moderately competent in performing basic tasks, and did not feel competent performing more complex language tasks on deployment as a result of their language training.
- AFSOF personnel indicated that although their command cares about their language proficiency, that there was a lack of command support for language training.

Army Operator Survey Report (Technical Report # 20040601)

Purpose

The purpose of this report was to present findings from Army respondents to the survey designed for and administered to SOF personnel regarding attitudes toward language use on deployment, interpreters, deployments outside of their AOR, language training, official language testing, FLPP, technology, organizational support, and attrition. Although the survey was designed for and targeted specifically to SOF personnel, there were respondents from several other groups. Responses from ARSOF other respondents, which included SOF support, SOF other, and MI Soldiers assigned to a SOF unit and responses from non-SOF linguists were presented in this report in order to serve as a comparison with ARSOF personnel.

Participants

There were a total of 857 respondents who indicated that the Army was their mother service. Of the 857 respondents from the Army, 297 were SOF personnel, 56 were military intelligence organic to SOF units, 35 were SOF support, and 325 were non-SOF language professionals. The ARSOF personnel who responded were categorized as being SF, CA, or PSYOP personnel in active or reserve components. Of the 297 ARSOF personnel who responded, 120 were SF AC personnel, 48 were SF RC personnel, 14 were CA AC personnel, 46 were CA RC personnel, 45 were PSYOP AC personnel, and 24 were PSYOP RC personnel.

Major Findings

- ARSOF personnel rated 'Building rapport' as the most frequently used and most important language function while on deployment. However, PSYOP AC personnel rated 'Basic reading tasks' as the most frequently used and 'Basic listening tasks' as the most important language function while on deployment.
- ARSOF personnel showed a much stronger dependence on interpreters than ARSOF other respondents.
- ARSOF RC personnel reported feeling less prepared than AC counterparts in terms of language and cultural understanding.
- RC personnel tended to have higher regard for the DLPT than AC personnel, although both AC and RC personnel felt it was important to do well.
- ARSOF personnel believe that they could have used more training before deployment, and that they were only moderately effective in their communication skills as a result of training.
- SF RC and PSYOP RC personnel had lower opinions of their command's support for language than their AC counterparts. CA AC personnel had lower opinions of their command's support for language training than CA RC personnel.

- ARSOF other respondents assigned the most negative ratings of their command when compared to other groups. Non-SOF other respondents assigned more negative ratings when compared to non-SOF linguists and ARSOF personnel.

SOFLO Focus Group Data Analysis Technical Report (Technical Report # 20040501)

Purpose

The purpose of this report was to present findings from a series of 21 focus groups that were conducted in order to evaluate the current state of foreign language usage and training across the SOF community. Focus groups lasted three hours and topic areas that were covered included the way language training has been used in the field, types of tasks and proficiency needed on deployments, experiences with language training, and suggestions for improving training and overcoming barriers to language proficiency. These focus group results served as a basis for the development of the SOF Operator Survey.

Participants

There were a total of 145 individuals participating in focus groups which ranged in size from 3-11 individuals. Of these 21 focus groups, 14 were AC SOF units and 7 were RC units. Specifically, three units (one AC and two RC) represented PSYOP, eight (six AC, two RC) represented Army SF units, two (both AC) represented AFSOF, four (one AC, three RC) represented CA, two (both AC) represented Navy SEAL units, one (AC) unit represented Naval Special Warfare Command Surface Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen (NAVSPECWARCOM SWCC), and one (AC) represented Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS).

Selected Findings

- Having enough conversational language proficiency to build rapport was reported as important by SOF personnel.
- The diversity of missions and areas of operation within the SOF community presents challenges for language training and sustainment. Even within Special Forces, there are distinct differences in language usage and requirements across the various Groups. This makes a one-size-fits-all solution problematic.
- Issues in dealing with interpreters were reported frequently.
- Frustration with the substantial proficiency requirements needed to receive FLPP was reported.
- Language learning tools or training options are not always available to personnel or flexible enough to accommodate their schedules when they have time to train. The availability of tools and training options is not uniform across SOF.
- Unit commanders do not necessarily place emphasis on and provide support for language training.

APPENDIX B: LAYMAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF ILR LANGUAGE SKILL LEVEL DESCRIPTIONS

1. Listening proficiency:

0+ level = understands with difficulty even native speakers who are used to dealing with foreigners; familiar with short memorized utterances or formulae

1 level = understands very simple conversations consisting mostly of questions and answers; requires repetition, rewording, slower-than-normal speech

2 level = understands conversations about everyday topics, e.g. personal information, current events, etc.; understands native speakers not used to dealing with foreigners although some repetition and rewording are necessary

3 level = understands all speech in a standard dialect, e.g. conversations, phone calls, radio/TV broadcasts, public addresses; understands inferences; rarely has to ask for paraphrasing or explanations

4 level = understands all styles and forms of speech pertinent to professional needs; may have trouble with extreme dialect, some slang, and speech marked by inference

5 level = all forms and styles of speech understandable and is equal to that of a well-educated native listener

2. Speaking proficiency:

0+ level = can use memorized questions and statements; severely limited even with native speakers used to dealing with foreigners

1 level = can create with the language, e.g. ask and answer questions, participate in short conversations; familiar with everyday survival topics and courtesy requirements

2 level = able to fully participate in casual conversations; can express facts, give instructions, describe, report on and provide narration about current, past, and future activities; familiar with concrete topics, e.g. family, interests, own background, work, travel, and current events

3 level = can converse in formal and informal situations, resolve problem situations, provide explanations, describe in detail, offer supported opinions and hypothesize; familiar with practical, social, professional, and abstract topics; only makes sporadic errors in basic structures

4 level = can tailor language to fit audience; can counsel, persuade, negotiate, represent a point of view, and interpret for dignitaries; familiar with all topics pertinent to professional needs; nearly equivalent to an educated native speaker

5 level = speaking is equivalent to an educated native speaker

3. Reading proficiency:

0+ level = recognize numbers, isolated words and phrases, names, street signs, office and shop designations

1 level = understands simplest connected prose, e.g. simple narratives of routine behavior and highly predictable descriptions; sometimes misunderstands even simplest text

2 level = understands simple, factual, authentic frequently recurring material, e.g. recurring news items, social notices; can locate and understand main ideas and details in material written for general reader

3 level = understands authentic prose on a variety of unfamiliar subjects, e.g. news stories, routine correspondence, materials in his/her professional field; can almost always interpret material, relate ideas, and make inferences

4 level = understands all styles and forms of prose relevant to professional needs or for the general reader whether printed or legibly handwritten; proficiency is nearly that of a well-educated native reader

5 level = understands all prose at the level of a well-educated native reader

Note. This information is a summary of the ILR Language Skill Level Descriptions provided by Mark Overton (see Appendix D: Interagency Language Roundtable Language Skill Level Descriptions of the *Personnel Selection and Classification: Army Linguist Management* report for a more detailed description of these ILR levels).

APPENDIX C: ABOUT SURFACE, WARD, & ASSOCIATES

Surface, Ward & Associates (SWA) is an organizational research and consulting firm based in Raleigh, NC. Since 1997, SWA has been applying the principles, research, and methods of industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology to assist organizations and their employees in enhancing their performance, solving work-related problems, and addressing workplace issues. SWA consults and conducts research in areas related to (1) training and development, (2) performance measurement and management, (3) organizational effectiveness and development, (4) human resources development and management, and (5) work-related language proficiency, performance assessment, and training. Our firm is lead by I/O psychologist Dr. Eric A. Surface, who has conducted research and consulted on these issues since 1995.

SWA is structured as a consulting and research network, allowing our core personnel to utilize numerous associates around the country with specialized expertise as needed on a project-by-project basis. SWA has two principals, three part-time employees, and numerous contractors who work on client projects. Our clients have included: Building Construction Products Division, Caterpillar, Inc; North Carolina Cooperative Education Association; seven divisions and the North American staffing organization of IBM; the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL); the United States Special Operations Command (USASOC); and the Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO).

One of SWA's areas of specialization relates to the measurement of foreign or second language proficiency and the evaluation and effectiveness of foreign or second language training, training tools, and job aids in work contexts. In this area, SWA holds contracts with Special Operations Forces Language Office (SOFLO) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Currently, SWA is evaluating the effectiveness of language training across the SOF community for SOFLO and conducting a study of the effectiveness of ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) rater training. SWA recently completed the large-scale *SOF Language Needs Assessment Project* and several small archival data studies related to the predictive validity of language aptitude and proficiency tests used by the military. SWA previously completed reliability studies of the ACTFL OPI and ACTFL Writing Proficiency Test (WPT). The results of the OPI reliability study were published in the *Foreign Language Annals* (see Surface & Dierdorff, 2003), and much of our other language-related work has been presented at conferences, including the Department of Defense Language Conference.

Our commitment to conducting model-based research and data-based consulting and to using cutting-edge methodologies sets us apart from many other firms. Being trained as scientist-practitioners, we realize that our clients benefit from having the best quality data and analysis in order to make solid, data-driven decisions. Our goal is to provide our clients with the best research and consulting possible given the constraints of their situations to enhance their mission or business objectives. For more information, about Surface, Ward & Associates, please contact our lead principal, Dr. Eric A. Surface.

Contact Information:

Dr. Eric A. Surface
Principal
Surface, Ward & Associates
116 N. West Street
Suite 230
Raleigh, NC 27603
919.836.9970
919.341.2778 (Fax)

esurface@swa-consulting.com