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**MOTIVATION IN ADULT LANGUAGE LEARNING:
RESEARCH REVIEW AND NAVY APPLICATIONS**

by

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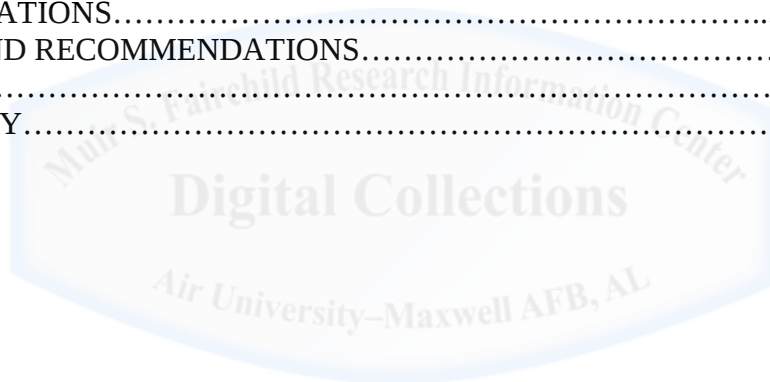
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Contents

	<i>Page</i>
ABSTRACT.....	4
INTRODUCTION.....	5
LITERATURE REVIEW ON MOTIVATION	6
Internal versus External Factors.....	6
Further Theories about Motivation.....	9
Needs Theories.....	9
Expectancy-value Theories.....	10
Goal-setting Theory.....	11
Equity Theories.....	11
Reinforcement Theories.....	12
Navy Motivational Incentives in Use Today and How to Improve Them.....	12
LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR GREATER MOTIVATION AND COMPETENCE	15
NAVY APPLICATIONS.....	19
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	24
NOTES.....	26
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	29



Abstract

During recent years, there has been a renewed emphasis on language acquisition and retention throughout the United States Military, whether due to responsibilities in the Global War on Terrorism or in theater security cooperation initiatives. To accomplish its part of these missions, the US Navy requires an experienced cadre of linguistic professionals in many languages, ranging from those widely spoken by allies or potential adversaries or low density, high demand languages spoken in remote corners of the world. To ensure the Navy has the requisite linguistic personnel, this research report delineates the numerous motivational factors that lead people to embark on a language learning journey, grouped as either intrinsic (internal to the learner) or extrinsic (an external reward system) factors. It also focuses on recommendations for recruiting intrinsically-motivated personnel, fostering a positive environment for current Sailors who desire to learn, and promoting the extrinsic factors within the force or in the community. In addition to describing these motivational factors, this paper details language learning strategies that Navy Sailors can use to make their efforts more effective and therefore more stimulating and motivating. All of these efforts will provide the nation with a stronger force that is ready to execute its duties across the range of military operations.

Introduction

If you can speak three languages you're trilingual. If you can speak two languages you're bilingual. If you can speak only one language you're an American. ~Author Unknown¹

Across the military over the past several years, there has been a renewed emphasis on language acquisition and retention, especially in response to the Global War on Terrorism and an increased focus on Theater Security Cooperation across multiple combatant commands. The US Navy has not been immune to the challenges of trying to develop an experienced cadre of linguistic professionals in low density, high demand languages or more widely-spoken languages such as Mandarin, Korean, or Spanish in order to accomplish these missions. The problem lies, however, in determining the motivational factors necessary to get Navy personnel to embark on a language learning journey outside of traditional, lengthy military language training, such as that offered at the Defense Language Institute. This paper will address these motivational factors, including Navy efforts at promoting language learning and how they apply to its institutional missions. Additionally, this paper will address some language learning strategies that Sailors can use to enhance their language learning, make this learning more effective, and help themselves stay optimally motivated. By focusing on motivational factors and strategies related to learning a new language, the Navy can obtain mission benefits through increasing overall acquisition and retention of a foreign language by its members.

Literature Review on Motivation

This literature review focuses on internal versus external factors, further theories about motivation, and Navy motivational incentives in use today.

Internal versus External Factors

From reviewing the established literature, there is a wide range of motivational factors that drive people to learn a new language (L2). First, there are *internal factors*, such as personal enrichment, a feeling of accomplishment, or a desire to have a new language so that someone can understand another culture more deeply. On an extreme end of internal motivation, *intrinsic motivation* is a strong driver of more complete learning success.² Humans are apt to put forth more effort and work to retain the information over the long term if they have a sense of enjoyment out of the process itself, instead of some expected reward from accomplishing the task or from outside pressures.³ This is a key element of language learning in that if the person desires to work on the language out of sheer enjoyment, he or she will put forth the effort to make the language a part of his or her DNA. Learning will not be a tedious exercise in labor, but it will be something that the person looks forward to each day.

In addition to internal factors, there are also *external factors* that motivate a person to learn, including a chance for a promotion or a new job, increased pay, recognition by others, etc. *Extrinsic motivation* is a term that addresses some of these external factors. It is defined as “doing something because it leads to a separable outcome.”⁴ Ryan and Deci noted that extrinsic motivation has a range of factors in its definition; as such, it is not always mutually exclusive with internal motivation. In fact, an example is that a student can feel that learning mathematics will help him accomplish his goal of becoming an engineer one day. This is not a case of the student learning for the sake of enjoying learning, but it is a case of his desire to achieve an

ulterior outcome after completing this process (see *instrumentality* later). A classic thought on external motivation is the fear of negative consequences levied by an authority figure.⁵ The extrinsic motivation scale, therefore, ranges from not being motivated at all and not fearful of consequences, to internalizing the task or rule as one's own. Once it is internalized as one's own, it becomes easier to use and more effective over the long term.

Extrinsic motivation can be cultivated to move it to the internalized side of the scale. For example, if a person feels that he is incompetent in a task, he will require more outside motivation in order to keep working on that task.⁶ An example of this could be the person who does not like mathematics simply because it is a difficult subject. If a teacher is able to determine a way to make math more understandable and assists the student closely, perhaps that student will not feel it is beyond his control and will internalize it more. The same can be said of language learning. Sometimes, the lexical, alphabetical, or other challenges of a foreign language may be overwhelming to a new student. By determining a way to make it more understandable (working at the lowest level, comparing it to relevant English forms, etc.), the teacher can create a sense of competence in the student that will lead to a more internalized form of motivation.

The need to identify with another group or culture also plays a role in motivation to learn a new language. When people have this "*integrative motive*," they will tend to work harder and longer on learning a second language because they have the desire to identify with the target culture that speaks that language.⁷ People are inclined to put forth more effort over the long term if they have positive views of the target language. If language learning becomes drudgery, or there is a negative view of those who speak the second language, then people will lose motivation and cease to work on developing those language skills. At the opposite end of this

spectrum is the desire to learn a new language because of its supposed *instrumentality* to the learner. This decouples the student's learning the language from the group that is associated with it.⁸ In some cases, people have a desire to learn but not to use their new skills in order to get to know people from a target culture. Along these same lines, Csizer and Dörnyei referenced Robert Gardner's previous social psychological research and noted that the perception of the target language's group was a motivating factor in selection and effort expended to learn that language.⁹ When one has a positive attitude toward the target group, he is more likely to have an effective language learning experience. Also, if he has a desire to know the culture better, his motivation increases.¹⁰

However, the literature indicates that integrative and instrumental motives are not the only reasons people embark on a second language acquisition journey.¹¹ Dörnyei tried to address the issue of this "false dichotomy (which) has prevailed so consistently in the L2 literature."¹² He mentioned the procedural aspects of some motivation studies giving rise to the cementing of the integrative/instrumental pair. For example, population samples in some studies consist of school children who are not affected as much by instrumentality (the promise of reward in their professional lives) as much as adults.¹³ Additionally, since the aforementioned Robert Gardner is a leader in the field of language learning research, he has had a profound impact on how everyone sees language learning motivation. His motivation test, "The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery,"¹⁴ concentrated on these two elements, integrative and instrumental motivational orientations, without placing emphasis on other orientations that he recognized to be factors; subsequently, this led to a cementing of the integrative/instrumental pair in scholarly thought and a narrowing of scholarly perspectives on motivation.¹⁵ To combat these somewhat constricted views, however, Dörnyei also noted there were other motivations

that researchers should explore, but researchers will need empirical evidence to support their theorizing.¹⁶ They can use research to broaden the view of motivation from just social psychological elements to “constructs rooted in other psychological fields and approaches.”¹⁷

Further Theories about Motivation

Additional theories of motivation are important to understand. These include (a) needs theories, (b) expectancy-value theories, (c) goal-setting theory, (d) equity theories, and (e) reinforcement theories.

Needs Theories

Oxford and Shearin noted several different theories which can be used to explain motivation to learn a new language. The first encompasses needs theories. People have needs that must be met, such as described by Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and those needs will drive them to perform certain acts or behave in a certain way.¹⁸ People who are fulfilling their physical needs in learning a new language are apt to be more motivated. An application of this thought would be having an immigrant thrust into an English-speaking society and having to learn the language quickly in order to survive. While having some support structure in ethnic communities, immigrants still could not live a full life without learning English; thus, they must put forth maximum effort for a long period of time. Such an effort would allow them to have a job, buy things, and generally interact in civil society.

The second part of needs theories is the need for achievement. As mentioned previously, a person’s internal drive is a key factor in whether or not he or she will have success in learning. Those who have an innate need to achieve will find that success in learning a new language will breed more desire to achieve and lead to more success. It is the exact opposite of a vicious cycle; it is, indeed, a positive cycle. However, there are many people who have a fear of failure as

well.¹⁹ That fear will motivate them to put forth the maximum effort to avoid being labeled a failure by their peers, superiors, or subordinates. It can also be a problem when people are put in situations where they believe they have no chance of succeeding. If a language is too hard, a person may shut down and not put forth the effort to continue on. Conversely, some people have a fear of success, of being seen as different from their peer group.²⁰ These people want to fit in at all costs. Knowing a second language can be a detriment to these people, but it would only be so if they broadcast it to their group. So they may still have a desire to learn, but they will do so in a quiet manner.

Expectancy-value Theories

The next set of theories noted by Oxford and Shearin relate to instrumentality or expectancy-value theories.²¹ People are motivated by the expectancy of success and the value which that success can provide, a theory of Atkinson.²² This is similar to the idea that if a language is too hard, people may not embark on trying to learn it. It could also be that if people see no value in learning a language, their motivation will be decreased. An application of this philosophy is if an English-speaking person is overwhelmed in the first few lessons of Japanese because it is so different from English, he may stop trying to learn it. He may drop out of the class physically (not attend anymore), or he may drop out mentally (fail to learn for the remainder of the semester). This loss of motivation is also apparent if this person feels that learning Japanese will do nothing for him in the long term. He may be taking the language to fulfill an undergraduate requirement with no intent on internalizing it. This could block him from more effectively learning the language and retaining it beyond a couple of months after the course ends. In Navy applications, this could be a problem if a Sailor were placed in a language course at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) that he did not desire or in which he saw no long

term benefit. For example, DLI may place a Sailor in the Korean course because of his Defense Language Aptitude Battery scores, but he may desire to learn Arabic because that would give him the opportunity to fight in the Global War on Terrorism. By not having a choice, this Sailor may not expend the necessary effort to learn Korean, and even if he is successful in completing the course, he may be a liability to his first operational command by not retaining what he has learned.

Goal-setting Theory

Along the lines of expectancy-value are goal-setting theory. People who set lofty goals, but ones that are achievable, are more likely to be successful.²³ This could be illustrated by a regular goal of learning two hundred words in a target language each week. Also, a goal could be setting a target date for being able to hold a conversation with a native speaker. As long as the goal is not too daunting, the learner will gain great motivation in a process to achieve that goal. Additionally, realistic goals can increase self-confidence in the ability to learn²⁴ and ensure the learner has further motivation to continue language studies.

Equity Theories

The third set of theories noted by Oxford and Shearin are equity theories. They relate to the expected outcome of learning a new language relative to the amount of effort expended.²⁵ In the previously mentioned examples of the Japanese-language student, if he does not expect to use the language in the future, he may not find learning it to be worth the effort. This idea is also something people see in other aspects of education. One of the complaints regarding taking advanced mathematics in high school is students do not feel they will ever use it in their adult lives; therefore, they put forth less effort and get less out of the class. Teachers must show them the areas where these courses are applicable in real life, e.g. engineering, computer science, or

computer modeling, so they will see the big picture and will see the benefits in learning it early. This directly parallels language learning in that some students must see that the benefits of learning the language balance the effort they would have to put forth.

Reinforcement Theories

The final set of theories which Oxford and Shearin discuss is called reinforcement theories. This is the idea that a person receives some sort of reward for success in language learning.²⁶ It can be an intrinsic reward, such as personal satisfaction of learning the task (see *intrinsic motivation* earlier), or an extrinsic reward, such as gaining praise or a monetary bonus (see *extrinsic motivation* earlier). Some people are motivated by the thought of getting something for their effort outside of just knowledge.

Now that I have described several theories in language learning motivation, I will address Navy-specific applications of those theories and endeavor to determine how the service can leverage motivation to enhance language learning in the overall force.

Navy Motivational Incentives in Use Today and How to Improve Them

There are several applications of extrinsic motivation that the Navy uses today in order to promote language learning in the force. One such external incentive is Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus Pay (FLPB).²⁷ Across the military, FLPB is used as an incentive for members to maintain proficiency in certain strategic languages, as determined by Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) scores. In some languages, members with a qualifying DLPT score receive a monthly bonus, regardless of their billet assignment, known as FLPB A.²⁸ In other languages, FLPB is only given if a member has the qualifying score and is in a billet requiring that language; this is known as FLPB B.²⁹ Either way, the military as a whole, and the Navy in particular, already recognize the need to reward members for their acquisition and retention of

key languages. Those who are motivated by an increase in a paycheck will work harder to raise their DLPT scores. Taking this to the extreme, those who are motivated in this way will purposely try to get the language that will afford them the highest FLPB amounts. That would be difficult if the person does not possess the aptitude to learn the more difficult languages, but nonetheless, it is plausible that some people will let this pay motivator drive them to enhance their performance on the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB), the test which determines which languages a person is allowed to pursue in official military education channels.

There is a negative side to the FLPB system, however. One of the key conditions of FLPB acceptance is the thought that a person is now “on the hook” for deployment if there is a need for his language skill in a conflict or disaster area, or he could be reassigned to a non-deployed position based on the needs of the Navy.³⁰ Those requirements can be de-motivators to some, leading them to avoid taking the DLPT or intentionally performing poorly so the Navy does not have an accurate record of their skills. It is incumbent on Navy leaders to ensure that language learning should not be a detriment, but that it should be a positive step for any member who wants to improve their lives.

Aside from FLPB, the Navy uses bonuses in recruitment strategies. Specifically, the Navy has targets for the number of enlistees with certain language backgrounds and provides enlistment bonuses to entice them to join.³¹ Also, the Navy focuses on certain communities, such as Spanish-speaking or Chinese-speaking, for enlistment targets. For example, in Fiscal Year 2007 stated quotas for heritage language enlistments were 200.³² This reflects a great desire on the part of Navy leaders to have personnel from these backgrounds in the service since this will broaden the reach of the force in different communities and in other countries.

The common thread of these two approaches to increasing language learning in the force is that both see external reward as the main encouragement. However, it is incumbent upon the Navy to find a way to promote intrinsic motivation among its members. The Navy can only do so much to encourage learning in an extrinsic or externally motivating way, but it can institutionalize it as a part of the force's culture by adding a block to performance evaluations that reflects a Sailor's pursuit of a foreign language. It can also increase the numbers of new accessions who have languages in their background or are pursuing them in a collegiate environment. The Navy's newest view on ROTC scholarships is indicative of this move because the service has made the specific decision to offer scholarships to those who are pursuing a language under the NROTC LREC program.³³ While the Navy still desires engineering and technical degrees, it does recognize the need to have officers with language skills from the most junior commissioned ranks.

Another aspect of motivation to enhance language learning in the Navy is that the Navy should focus on recruiting those who desire to learn a new language. While external rewards can attract those who may be unsure about whether to pursue another language, attracting personnel who are already intrinsically motivated to learn can enhance language learning in the force in a more profound way. If these intrinsically-motivated personnel are scattered throughout the service, working in different job specialties, they may pursue advanced studies on their own time and provide a ready pool of linguists and translators for commanders to tap as contingencies arise in expected or unexpected locations. Additionally, since time is such a limited commodity for Sailors today, commands could provide on-duty time for those who have a desire to start or continue with their language-learning experience. This is especially vital since it takes a large time investment in order to gain the proficiency required to use the second language effectively.

Language Learning Strategies for Greater Motivation and Language Competence

Now we must take a look at language learning strategies that Navy personnel can use to aid in their acquisition efforts. Since most people do not have much spare time, they must have efficient strategies that accomplish the learning task, sustain motivation, and promote language competence. In the long run, strategy use will help them and the service to place maximum effort into a worthwhile cause such as this. Oxford mentions several different ways to accomplish this in her book, *Teaching and Researching Language Learning Strategies*. One of the main tools she discusses is the Strategic Self-Regulation (S2R) model. In this model, a learner focuses on metastrategies and strategies in order to make language learning more efficient and effective. *Metastrategies* are the tools used to organize learning strategies into a process that is effective. To analogize the S2R model with a work environment, metastrategies are the “managers” of a project while strategies are the “workers” who accomplish the task of ensuring successful learning.³⁴ The metastrategies include: Paying Attention, Planning, Obtaining and Using Resources, Organizing, Implementing Plans, Orchestrating Strategy Use, Monitoring, and Evaluating.

The S2R model breaks down strategies into three broad categories: cognitive, affective, and sociocultural-interactive (SI).³⁵ See Figure 1. Cognitive strategies are those that focus on the actual acquisition of language and the way the brain performs this task, affective strategies focus on the emotional aspects of language learning (which include the important factor of motivation), and SI strategies enable the learner to look at how interacting and learning the cultural norms of a group can aid in language acquisition. Language learners in the Navy can apply aspects of each to their particular situation and become more effective.

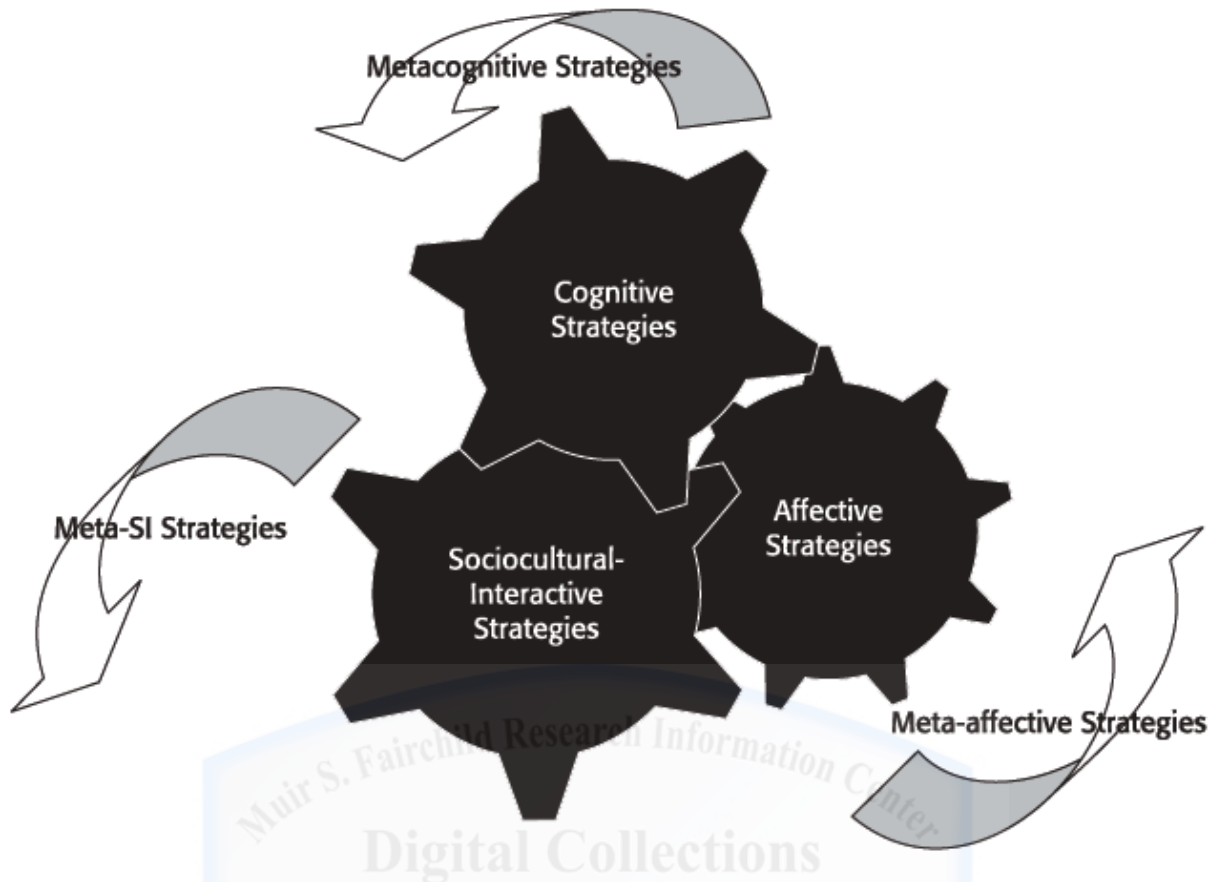


Figure 1. The S2R Model of Language Learning and Self-Regulation³⁶

A further aspect of this model is that each strategy has associated metastrategies that enable it to work more fluidly. As mentioned before, these metastrategies act as the “managers” of strategy-use, while the actual strategies act as the “workers” who get the mission accomplished. To refine the “manager” analogy further, metacognitive strategies act as “construction managers” while cognitive strategies act as “construction workers” to build mental frameworks or schemata.³⁷ In addition, the metastrategies help to determine whether the strategies are working or if the learner needs to modify his or her strategies. For example, a key metacognitive strategy is “Planning for Cognition.”³⁸ This includes a learner setting up a time to study his language and ensuring he has the proper materials available. This is especially important for Navy personnel because they work long days and have very little time to do

outside work. If a Sailor never plans a time for his language study, he will find it very difficult to get started. These metacognitive strategies help organize and control the use of cognitive strategies in the S2R model, such as using the senses to understand and remember, activating knowledge, reasoning, conceptualizing with details, conceptualizing broadly, and going beyond the immediate data.³⁹

An example of how these metacognitive and cognitive strategies can work together is in the case of the linguist who is trying to increase his DLPT score. In general, a higher DLPT score will garner increased bonuses and an increased chance of promotion; therefore, it can be in the linguist's best interest to work hard to increase his score. A metacognitive strategy in this case would be to obtain resources for cognition⁴⁰ such as videos, computer programs, audio cuts, or other media tools to enhance learning or to get printed materials in order to enhance reading skills. In concert with this metacognitive strategy, the Sailor will use the cognitive strategy of using the senses to understand and remember⁴¹ (e.g., using audio or visual clues in the material he has compiled to glean insight into nuances of the language). All of these will work together to ensure he makes the most of his language-enhancement efforts.

In addition to metacognitive strategies, there are meta-affective and meta-SI strategies as well. Meta-affective strategies act as the "electricity managers" and regulate the activity of "electricity workers" (affective strategies) in accomplishing language learning. This "electricity" is the person's emotional aspect (also known as "affect"), which can have a profound impact on his language-learning effectiveness. An example of a meta-affective strategy is Planning for Affect. Additionally, there are two affective strategies: activating supportive emotions, beliefs, and attitudes and generating and maintaining motivation.⁴² I will focus upon these strategies since they work as a team in language learning success. Since it is imperative for language

learners to maintain motivation in order for their language-learning efforts to be worthwhile, they must execute tactics within "generating and maintaining motivation" that contribute to furtherance of their goals. Additionally, by focusing on their attitudes and emotions, they will contribute to motivation as well. It is a symbiotic relationship that is key in learning in many subject areas, but especially language learning. Some of the tactics Navy language learners could use include maintaining positive thoughts, stress management techniques, relaxation techniques, eliminating boredom in learning, or keeping oneself fearful of failure in order to spur greater effort.⁴³ All of these motivational strategies can have the dual effect of (a) enhancing self-efficacy⁴⁴ (belief in being able to achieve a specific goal), which will make a person more comfortable about his or her ability to learn, and (b) promoting greater linguistic competence in the long run.

A military application of affective strategies could involve DLI instructors or Navy language program managers. For example, if a Sailor or student is demonstrating a seeming lack of motivation to continue learning (or in the case of a qualified linguist, failure to maintain proficiency in) his assigned language, instructors or managers could remind him of the loss of opportunity or pay that his failure would cause. This is an example of using the strategy of "generating and maintaining motivation" by affecting extrinsic motivation. The Sailor is reminded of the use of the language in his career or the loss of possible future rewards.⁴⁵ Positive uses of extrinsic rewards are also important.

The final set of metastrategies for language learning are meta-SI strategies. These metastrategies act as the "community managers" of "contexts, communication, and culture"⁴⁶ by facilitating and adjusting SI strategies to ensure the learner is able to use them in the most effective way. An example of a meta-SI strategy is Paying Attention to Contexts,

Communication, and Culture. These “community manager” strategies work to facilitate the efforts of SI strategies (interacting to learn and communicate, overcoming knowledge gaps in communicating, dealing with sociocultural contexts and identities), which ensure a person is aware of the cultural aspects of language and how he or she fits into the total conversation.⁴⁷ An application of a meta-SI strategy along with an SI strategy would be the idea of planning a situation where a Sailor who has learned Chinese could practice his language skills with a native speaker (meta-SI strategy: Planning for Contexts, Communication, and Culture; SI strategy: interacting to learn and communicate).

In sum, the individual Sailor who has a desire to learn a new language or to enhance his skills in a current L2 will serve himself well if he uses a few of the strategies and metastrategies listed in the S2R model. He can choose those which apply to him the best, and his language learning will be more effective and efficient. This will fulfill either those internal motivational factors that lead him to study a new language, or it will help fulfill those extrinsic goals that could increase his pay or position.

Navy Applications

There are many ways in which the Naval service can leverage both language motivation and expertise and put its language learners to good use. This is not just a Naval focus, but one that is emphasized in the *National Military Strategy of the United States* from 2011⁴⁸ and the *Quadrennial Defense Review* of 2010.⁴⁹ Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen’s point, in supporting national strategy, is that the military must place special focus upon partnership-building as a means to enhance security.

We will strengthen and expand our network of partnerships to enable partner capacity to enhance security. This will help reduce potential safe-havens before violent extremism

can take root. We will nest our efforts to build partner capacity with broader national security priorities, consolidate our institutional processes, and improve coordination across agencies. Military-to-military relationships must be reliable to be effective, and persevere through political upheavals or even disruption.⁵⁰

Specifically, the Chairman addresses building partner military capacity in Africa, South and Central America, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. In all situations, it will be incumbent upon US military personnel (and Naval personnel specifically) to develop a linguistic capacity that will allow for deeper understanding of those cultures with which the force will deal.

One of the primary means of using those who have acquired a second language is the series of programs known as “partnership stations.”⁵¹ There are currently two such stations operating, one in Africa (Africa Partnership Station or “APS”), and one in the South and Central America (Southern Partnership Station or “SPS”). APS has the primary purpose of enhancing the ability of local nations to defend their own territorial waters and prevent human, narcotic, weapons, or other types of trafficking.⁵² In order to accomplish this mission, APS executes a series of training and exercise scenarios with various African navies and coast guards, all for the purpose of enhancing maritime governance in some of the most impoverished areas on earth. In fact, the mission statement of APS reflects this goal:

This project is about enabling African nations’ militaries to stand on their own. Our goal is to empower African nations to stop maritime crime and the movement of illegal goods at sea on their own. To do that, we are working together to create a set of shared goals, including improving maritime security which will help ensure African coastal nations are better able to protect their own resources and citizens.⁵³

How can enhancing language learning ensure the continued success of APS? One of the most obvious issues facing any attempt to engage with a new nation is the language barrier. However, this can be overcome through a concerted effort of incentivizing and promoting language learning in the force. Since French is the official language in most of the nations of

West Africa⁵⁴ (as the United Nations defines the region⁵⁵), increasing the number of Sailors with French skills would be extremely beneficial to the program.

For SPS, the obvious languages which are required include Spanish and Portuguese. By ensuring large numbers of military personnel are conversant, and even fluent, in those languages, the US Navy can enhance its standing the Latin American world and ensure peace and stability. With the US having large numbers of native Spanish and Portuguese speakers, it would be beneficial for the Navy to focus recruiting in those areas where those languages are spoken.⁵⁶ Those areas include the southwestern states and agricultural regions where there has been a heavy influx of immigrants. By concentrating efforts there, the US will have a better chance at achieving success in its partnerships endeavors.

Another key requirement for language skill in the Navy is to support intelligence activities. The US must have the capability to understand foreign government or non-state actor actions in their own native languages as this can provide key insight into future strategies or operations. While the traditional languages such as Spanish and French thrive in American college enrollments,⁵⁷ others which are common in today's military environment which must be learned are not commonly taught.⁵⁸ These are known as less commonly-taught languages (LCTL's) and include such strategic languages as Russian, Chinese, Arabic, and others.⁵⁹ (Although Chinese appears in the list of LCTL's, enrollments in this language have increased substantially over the past several years at all levels of education in the US, including K-12⁶⁰ and college).⁶¹ Many US adversaries or strategic competitors speak these languages and will be those with which the Naval force will vie in the coming years. This includes GWOT, force-on-force (possibly China), protection of South Korea, containing aggressive states bent on upsetting the nuclear order (Iran, North Korea), and other missions. It is incumbent on the US to leverage

language-learning motivational factors to ensure its Sailors are developing those skills necessary to fight the nation's future wars (or, more importantly, to prevent them).

A second area within this realm would be to have personnel learn languages in order to support counterinsurgency (COIN) and tactical language requirements. When the actions of the single soldier on the ground can affect an entire strategic mission, it is important to try to avoid communications problems. Additionally, these small wars will require more than just the best weapons or the ability to kill. Beyond just language, culture must be understood, but knowing that people are saying certain things and really knowing what they mean can be essential in the furtherance of the mission. This is a capability that will take years to foster, but it is essential if the military is going to win wars and preserve peace.⁶²

A notable example where gaining language proficiency (and cultural proficiency) can help with COIN is the decision for religious leader engagement in Afghanistan. In this area, the US is undertaking a concerted effort to engage religious leaders in order to counter the violent religious ideology of the Taliban and anti-Afghan forces.⁶³ (One of the key personnel who participated in this program at the outset was a Muslim US Navy chaplain).⁶⁴ Because mullahs have such influence with local populations, their views on the US and the Government of Afghanistan can have a profound effect on how the populace reacts to coalition or government actions. They do not influence only religious thought; they are integral in other areas as well such as economics, development, and security.⁶⁵ It is imperative to ensure they support the government and its institutions and processes in order for COIN to be successful.⁶⁶ Since this engagement is so essential, a way to ensure a better result would be to have the US personnel well-versed in the local languages and customs. Engagement on a personal level can be more profound if an interpreter is not necessary. Additionally, both sides can avoid misunderstandings

by approaching the situation with knowledge of non-verbal communication. For example, gestures and body language can be incongruent with spoken communication depending on the cultures of the two participants.⁶⁷ This is evidenced by the “devil’s horns” gesture which is not offensive in most of US but is offensive many places in Europe. With language, culture, and custom taken into consideration, coalition forces can help foster a successful COIN environment. A concrete example of the value of this program was that a former Taliban mullah, in witnessing the act of Americans and Afghans praying together, changed his mind on working with American forces and decided it was possible after all.⁶⁸

A final requirement for having a force well-versed in foreign languages is to be able to conduct diplomacy on a grander scale. US Naval forces have access to many nations via port visits, and these are key ways to engage with nations. In 2010, USS TAYLOR (FFG-50) visited Murmansk, Russia, the first visit by a US Navy warship to that port since the end of World War II.⁶⁹ This is one example of an opportunity for a US Navy translator to engage with Russian officers and civic leaders. Much can be lost in translation, and the US should not rely on English to be the sole language of conversation. A Russian-speaking Sailor on the Navy team can properly translate the Russian language (including interpreting nuance), reducing opportunity for something to be misinterpreted. This illustrates the Navy’s strategy to ensure collaborative partnerships and enhance security,⁷⁰ a strategy which it could bolster by ensuring it populates the total force with those who have learned a second language.

Another way to use language learning as a force multiplier would be to take those who have learned a language and ensure they are recruiting in immigrant or ethnic communities in order to attract the next generation of Navy Sailors. Currently, approximately 20% of Americans speak a language other than English in the home,⁷¹ and this number can only be expected to

grow as more immigrants, legal and illegal, flood into the country and if second-generation immigrants fail to acquire English by living in isolated communities. Since the Navy has such diverse missions which require language skill, it would be more economical to recruit native speakers, thus avoiding the requirement to send someone to structured language training at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) or to provide someone with proprietary training software. With the high cost to send one Sailor to DLI for Chinese or Arabic training, for example, the Navy could reinvest that money in other programs, such as ship-building or maintenance, base modernization, or other personnel programs.

Summary and Recommendations

The Navy must make a concerted effort to promote language learning throughout the fleet, thereby leveraging the skills of Sailors in a wide variety of ratings in order to more fully prosecute the conflicts of the present and the future or to work in security cooperation that is so important for national security. It can achieve these efforts through providing proper incentives (including pay, bonuses, and promotions) or by fostering a desire to learn (supporting the intrinsic motivation of language learners). However, before a proper plan can be implemented, Naval leaders must know the motivational factors leading Sailors to study a second language, and then they must work to ensure any plan they develop takes those factors into account. One way to do this would be to canvass the fleet to discover who has a second language or desires to learn one. Then the Navy could survey those positive respondents and ask about their motivations for learning. After determining all of this, in order to set Sailors up for success, the Navy could institute an education program among its commands to inform them of language learning strategies that would ensure positive future results in terms of motivation and

competence. This program could also focus its recruiting efforts on those people who have demonstrated a desire to learn a second language or already have fluency or a working knowledge of one. All of these recommendations will provide a good start for dialogue for Navy personnel, and the service can help develop methods to increase language learning effectiveness and apply those across the force.



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