Objective

To (1) determine whether annual language proficiency testing is necessary by investigating patterns of language skill attrition, (2) identify language enhancement resources that best suit the Defense Intelligence Agency’s needs, particularly those resources available through the Joint Language University (JLU) website, and (3) determine whether supplementing the mandated Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) with more granular and job-relevant tests is feasible.

Findings

CASL researchers conducted a critical inventory of the JLU resources and found that the JLU:

- Has a wide range of materials available,
- Offers materials for learners at a variety of proficiency levels,
- Offers resources with both instructional content and language use opportunities, and
- Provides authentic foreign language materials.

However, the JLU:

- Provides insufficient structure to guide learners through the website,
- Lacks resources that include person-to-person interaction, and
- Offers few opportunities for task-based learning.

The JLU could provide a more cohesive language learning program by integrating its resources.

Relevance

The Department of Defense mandates that, to receive Foreign Language Proficiency Pay (FLPP), personnel must demonstrate language proficiency on DLPT listening and reading and Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) tests, according to agency standards. Personnel receiving FLPP must certify their reading and listening comprehension and speaking skills annually, even when they have maintained their DLPT/OPI scores over the course of many years and test administrations.

Our research may help resolve the following questions:

- How can personnel sustain and enhance foreign language proficiency in an agency that does not have an in-house language school?
- How can personnel sustain and enhance their foreign language proficiency without frequent, on-the-job foreign language use?
- How frequent and granular should foreign language proficiency testing be?

Better understanding of the effectiveness of online language training resources will enable agencies to make needs-based recommendations for employee language maintenance and enhancement. Additionally, if our research indicates that language skills are more stable than earlier thought, resources can be saved with less frequent testing.

Report

*Online resources for language maintenance and enhancement: A critical inventory of the resources available through the Joint Language University website* (February 2011)

For More Information

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