CHALLENGE

The Regional Proficiency Assessment Tool (RPAT) was commissioned by the Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO) to provide an understanding of the regional proficiency of the military workforce. As developed and prototyped by CASL, the RPAT will allow the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to assess, track, and manage the regional proficiency (RP) of its military personnel.

SOLUTION

CASL's RPAT prototype consists of the Data Collection Module, which gathers self-reported biographical information, and the Data Viewer, which displays this information to decision makers. Complex algorithms combine each individual's biographical data to provide an RP assessment for each of the DoD's world regions.

This year, CASL updated the RPAT with a broader collection of region-focused experiences, relaxed requirements for formal education, and clarified instructions.

CASL also conducted sensitivity and validity studies. Analyses (165 respondents; 48 also completed a follow-on survey) revealed measurable superiority in terms of sensitivity to native experience, breadth of ratings and scores, and association with self-rated RP. Ratings were dictated mainly by study and travel to the region and language skills rather than formal education, showing sensitivity to the most relevant skills and experiences. Construct validity analyses showed that breadth and depth of RPAT-assessed RP are moderately, positively related to cultural intelligence. Finally, 11 military experts read 45 biographical sketches and assigned RP ratings. Across the represented regions, the correlation between the aggregate expert ratings and the RPAT ratings was strong (rho = .72). Expert ratings are the current best practice of assessing RP, so the RPAT was valid against that criterion.

DMDC is scheduled to launch a production version of the RPAT in Spring 2016, making it available for DoD use.

WHAT IS REGIONAL PROFICIENCY?

Regional proficiency represents “an individual’s awareness and understanding of the historical, political, cultural (including linguistic and religious), sociological (including demographic), economic, and geographic factors of a foreign country or specific global region” (DoD Instruction 5160.70).

More at www.casl.umd.edu/RPAT