

ASSESSMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONGST PARKS,
RECREATION, AND TOURISM PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

ASSESSMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONGST PARKS RECREATION, AND TOURISM PROFESSIONALS

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The purpose of this study was to assess foreign language (FL) proficiency perceptions and motivations amongst individuals employed in the recreation, parks, and tourism (RPT) fields. The subjects of this study were California Travel Association (CalTravel) members to represent the tourism sector and California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS) members to represent the recreation and parks sector. This study was conducted through the Web-based survey application, Zoomerang. The results of the survey indicate that members of CalTravel and CPRS both agree that professionals in their fields should have a basic knowledge of FL vocabulary. Both CalTravel and CPRS members are motivated to learn a FL to become proficient in a non-English language. However, the majority of professionals do not use foreign languages on a weekly basis. It is recommended that RPT professionals located in California should have knowledge of 5-10 common words and basic vocabulary in a foreign language.

Keywords: foreign languages, CPRS, CalTravel, recreation parks and tourism professionals, language proficiency

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background of the Study

Foreign language skills are beneficial in numerous professions. In fact, most employees who can speak multiple languages receive higher wages due to the talent they bring to a company (Leslie & Russell, 2006). Bilingual and multilingual employees benefit their industries in several ways. First, their ability to speak with clientele in the client's

native tongue breaks down communication barriers and adds a sense of comfort for both parties. Second, Leslie and Russell (2006) noticed a direct correlation between foreign language proficiency and higher-quality customer service and management skills. Employees with knowledge in a foreign language aid in understanding the client's culture, which leads to fewer misunderstandings. Third, it is not likely that clients will be fluent in the host's language; however, the host's willingness to learn the clients' language will make them feel more welcome (Smith, 1989).

Although some professions request bilingual speakers, not all require their employees to have skills in foreign languages. Still, employers prefer to hire candidates who already speak a foreign language rather than train their employees to learn such a time-consuming skill (Leslie & Russell, 2006). For this reason, some individuals seeking employment decide to learn a foreign language to make themselves more marketable in their field. The tourism industry in particular tends to acknowledge the importance of speaking a foreign language. Many professionals in this industry possess foreign language skills because of the demand to communicate with international tourists.

Similarly, state parks attract many visitors from around the world, yet many state park employees do not speak foreign languages. For instance, public parks and recreation agencies in San Luis Obispo, California have been encountering an increase in clientele who speak languages other than English. If a lack of foreign language proficiency amongst parks and recreation employees exists, this could reveal a barrier to communication with visitors. For this reason, a study is useful to discover how proficient recreation, parks, and tourism employees are in foreign languages.

Several studies have focused on how students in the recreation, parks, tourism, and leisure field perceive the importance of learning a foreign language (Leslie & Russell, 2006). Yet limited information exists on how those students continue to use their foreign language skills once they pursue their careers. Therefore, it is beneficial to gain a full understanding of the need for foreign language skills from experienced employees in the field. Also, recreation, parks, and tourism (RPT) employers may gain a better understanding of how their employees perceive communicating with international clientele and other members of the populations they serve who do not speak English.

This information will be gathered from professionals who are members of the California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS) and the California Travel Association (CalTravel). This study will focus on RPT professionals in California because of its cultural diversity and the experiences available to clientele through recreation, parks, and tourism programs. California is known for its state parks, which “contain the largest and most diverse natural and cultural heritage holdings of any state agency in the nation” (California State Parks, 2001). However, many professionals assume that employees in the United States solely need to speak English. Seelye and Day (1992) argued “English is an international language, but it isn’t the international language” (p. 2). In reality, California exhibits a multitude of cultures and languages and represents the United States’ reputation as a “melting pot.” This study will serve to examine the potential need of foreign language skills amongst California’s tourism, recreation, and park employees.

Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Elite, Academic Search Elite, Hospitality and Tourism Complete, CAB Abstracts, Google Scholar, and Link +. This review of literature is organized into the following topic areas: motivations for learning foreign languages and careers using foreign languages.

Learning foreign language motives. The basis of motivation for foreign language learners (FLL) can differ greatly depending upon the goals they wish to achieve. These goals relate to different life stages. For example, motivations to learn a foreign language can differ greatly between professionals in the work force and students. Hence, the findings from these studies were organized by describing the different types of motivations behind learning a foreign language, and then the specific motivations for professionals in the recreation, parks, and tourism industry to learn a foreign language. Due to the variety of motivations that drive individuals to learn a foreign language, it is best to understand the different types of motivation by organizing them in some manner. Gardner and Lambert (1972) identified two main types of motivations: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Dörnyei (1990) also accepted the concept of integrative motivation amongst FLL. Integrative motivation is based on “a high level of drive on the part of the individual to acquire the language of a valued second-language community in order to facilitate communication with that group” (Dörnyei, 1990, p. 46) FLLs who are not immersed in a culture will be less likely to experience integrated motivation as opposed to second language learners who are immersed in a culture. Oxford and Shearin (1994) pointed out that this lack of cultural immersion can also negatively affect the level of

motivation that a FLL exhibits. Still, a FLL who continues to possess integrated motivation, regardless of their distance to the targeted language's culture, can achieve greater language proficiency.

Alternatively, Dörnyei (1990) argued that instrumental motivation is exhibited through FLL as a skill for mainly “pragmatic utilitarian benefits of language proficiency, such as a better job or a higher salary” (p. 46). Instrumental motivation drives most FLLs who gain language skills in academic settings or through some type of systematic training. For example, FLLs who engage in systematic training may purchase foreign language cassettes to practice their target language during their own leisure time. Dörnyei (1990) acknowledged that those who are instrumentally motivated to learn a language are just as driven to pursue a career by illustrating their unique competence through their foreign language proficiency. However, those who are solely motivated by extrinsic factors to acquire a foreign language do not acquire the same skill level as those who otherwise learn for intrinsic reasons (Oxford & Ehrman, 1995). Overall, the best way to learn a foreign language is to possess both instrumental and integrated motivation.

Instrumental motivation is also commonly referred to as extrinsic motivation. According to Dörnyei (1990) extrinsic motivation drives the learner with physical rewards such as higher pay or to meet employment qualifications. For example, a FLL who learns a foreign language to become better qualified for a career position is instrumentally motivated. Alternatively, integrated motivation is commonly referred to as intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is a type of motivation that drives a learner through personal value and accomplishments. Dörnyei notes that FLLs may simply want to challenge themselves with meeting a new goal or to broaden their personal view. Even

though these types of motivations differ greatly an individual reaches a higher level of FL proficiency by engaging in both types of motivation.

As previously mentioned, motivations differ for each FLL and may vary according to a life stage. Oxford and Erhman (1995) emphasized that “advantages of language learners at different ages are attributed to: one or more critical periods for language learning, prior experience in language learning, onset of formal operations, cognitive maturity, kind of input, affective factors, and socio-cultural factors” (p. 363). These factors indicate that FLLs can be inspired to reach higher goals as they reach maturity. For instance, a high school student who solely enrolls in a foreign language class as part of a graduation requirement may exhibit a low level of motivation. On the other hand, an adult who is interested in pursuing a different career path may exhibit more motivation to learn a foreign language. Regardless of a FLL’s life stage, the most important aspect is that the individual stays motivated. Seelye and Day (1992) insisted that a FLL can stay motivated by maintaining an enthusiastic attitude, being able to recognize opportunities, and demonstrating continuous effort. Motivation is essential for all FLLs to reach their language proficiency goals.

Each FLL possesses a unique set of motivating factors, which may only be known to that individual. Dörnyei (1990) was able to identify the following common motives: interest in foreign language and cultures, desire for new knowledge, desire to spend time abroad, and language learning as a new challenge. These motives are general enough to encompass FLL at any stage in life, but still some professionals may have instrumental motives. Dörnyei (1990) described instrumental motives “as a set of motives organized by the individual’s future career striving” (p. 65). Leslie and Russell (2006) agreed that

foreign language skills can enhance employment opportunities. For example, some professionals may be motivated to learn a foreign language to seek greater communication with a diverse target market. Other professionals seek to establish personal contacts abroad, and to assimilate to a language culture and industry (Edwards, 1945).

Similarly, Smith (1989) observed that bilingual individuals in a tourism oriented community usually have an advantage. Such rewards may be directed to individuals who possess foreign language skills, but benefit from their industry as a whole. Even though the tourism sector is more widely associated with employees who speak foreign languages, some employees in the parks and recreation sector are equally motivated to learn foreign languages. For instance, the County of Hawaii (2008) initiated a Limited English Program (LEP) through their parks and recreation department in order to provide services for all citizens of Hawaii. These new services are directed by a language access coordinator who implements the Language Access Plan (LAP) (County of Hawaii, 2008). The LAP ensures access to visitors who speak other languages than English by providing them with interpretive services. They also collect data about the foreign language skills that their new employees possess (County of Hawaii, 2008). Many parks and recreation employees may be motivated to learn foreign languages following Hawaii's example by overcoming communication barriers for recreation users. English has become the "official" language of many professions and international tourism. Still there are many professionals around the world who are not fluent English speakers. For this reason, employees in parks, recreation sector may be motivated to help others and provide equal opportunity for people who speak other languages than English. Anderson (2005), admitted "Little is known about the cultural competence levels of parks and recreation professionals and the level of training

they have, regarding providing recreation services to individuals from different cultural backgrounds” (p. 58).

Careers using foreign languages. The need for employees who speak foreign languages has been a widely explored topic due to the broad range of professionals who search for bilingual or multilingual employees. These findings illustrate many career opportunities ideal for candidates who possess foreign language proficiency. Thus, the literature has been organized by first explaining the types of careers that seek employees with foreign language proficiency, the benefits of bilingual or multilingual employees, and language proficiency amongst tourism employees.

Numerous professions seek candidates who possess foreign language proficiency. Bluford (1994) reasoned “As [the United States] becomes increasingly involved in foreign trade, tourism, and international cooperative ventures, the number of jobs open to fluent speakers of a foreign language increases” (p. 1). Career opportunities for candidates who possess foreign language proficiency vary greatly between language intensive positions to positions requiring minimal foreign language use. Bluford categorized such job opportunities as language-centered and language-related. The main difference between the two categories is that language-centered jobs utilize their foreign language as their primary skill and language-related jobs solely use their foreign languages to complement other skills. Another difference between the two categories is that few job opportunities exist for language-centered jobs, but there are abundant opportunities for language-related jobs (Bluford). Some of the many language-related career categories include: marketing and finance, clerical, government-based careers, and international organizations (Bluford).

The fact that there is a greater variety of professional opportunities that exist in the language-related category demonstrates that most fields benefit from foreign language-proficient employees. Seelye and Day (1992) suggest that using foreign languages in the workplace can overcome language barriers when working with clientele, as well as improve cultural understanding and appreciation. Also, an employee with greater proficiency in a foreign language receives greater career opportunities and benefits. Most candidates may learn a foreign language skill to improve their work efficiency, while also experiencing the satisfaction of overcoming a personal challenge. Grosse (2004) noted “The more [language] proficient, the more likely the respondent is to have received a competitive advantage” (p. 367). The many competitive advantages that employees proficient in a foreign language may receive include yet are not limited to: rewards, recognition, and personal satisfaction. Additionally, Fry and Lowell (2005) pointed out that “proficient bilingual workers have the highest average annual earnings and weekly wages of any language group” (p. 794). Unfortunately, for an employee to gain higher wages in the United States they first need to be fluent in English. Yet the most studied foreign languages in the United States are Spanish, French, German, and English (Infoplease, 2006). Moreover, the most frequently used foreign language varies according to career field. Therefore, those who live outside of the United States may refer to the list of the most used foreign languages which includes Chinese, Spanish, English, and Arabic (Infoplease, 2006).

Tourism is an example of an industry with numerous language-related jobs. Some tourism related jobs do not require their staff to be bilingual, yet foreign language proficiency enables employees to better communicate with their clientele and to be more

efficient (Edwards, 1945). Some of these tourism related employees may actually have a higher foreign language skill than necessary for their job yet these skills enhance their performance in jobs like bartending, and being a coiffeur (Cohen & Cooper, 1986). The tourism industry clearly recognizes the need for employees to have foreign language skills (Edwards). For this reason, in the past some tourism training programs provide trainees with language classes (Edwards). Some bilingual professionals may not speak a foreign language everyday; however, service related jobs such as flight attendants and passenger service staff “should be prepared to deal on many different professional levels in another language should the need arise” (p. 92). Candidates who possess foreign language proficiency have an advantage to pursuing careers in the tourism industry as hotel administrators, tour personnel, or as local guides.

Summary. This review of literature covered two topic areas: learning foreign language motives and careers using foreign languages. Motives allows for a better understanding of why people choose to learn a foreign language. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are necessary to learn a foreign language. Each FLL life stage may differ, yet seeking to reach foreign language proficiency is the end goal. Once FLLs possess foreign language proficiency, they will achieve personal rewards and the company will benefit from these skills. In fact, parks and recreation professionals who recognize the importance of communicating in various languages to their clientele have implemented interpretation services for their guests. Certain careers benefit from foreign language skills. A comparison of language intensive and minimum language use career opportunities determined that any level of foreign language competence enhances the work quality of the professional.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess foreign language proficiency perceptions and motivations amongst individuals employed in the recreation, parks, and tourism (RPT) field.

Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Does foreign language proficiency differ between the different sectors of RPT fields?
2. What are the motivations of individuals in the RPT field to learn a foreign language?
3. How often do employees in RPT fields use their foreign language skills?
4. What languages (other than English) are the most frequently used by professionals in the RPT fields in California?

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the following parameters:

1. Information on individuals employed in the RPTA field was gathered from California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS) and California Travel Association (CalTravel) members.
2. Foreign language proficiency and motivations were analyzed.
3. The data were collected during the spring of 2011.
4. Information for this study was gathered using an electronic survey.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

1. Not all subjects may currently be employed, thus the subjects for the study may not actually fit the qualifications of the study.
2. Subjects without access to the internet did not have the opportunity to participate in the study.
3. The email sent by the researcher to request participation may have been filtered into the recipients junk mail folder, thus precluding their participation.
4. Email addresses may have been changed or been spelled incorrectly.
5. Recipients may not check their email on a regular basis.
6. Due to their membership in either organization, subjects may present biased responses.
7. The instrument used in this study was not tested for validity or reliability.

Assumptions

The study was based on the following assumptions:

1. All subjects check their email on a regular basis.
2. The participants in the study actually met the minimum qualifications of the study by being a current member of CPRS or CalTravel.
3. Respondents clearly understood the directions and questions in the instrument.
4. Respondents were allowed sufficient time to complete the questionnaire.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

CalTravel. The California Travel Association (CalTravel) is the unified voice of the travel, tourism and hospitality industry. At CalTravel, California's travel-related businesses, through [Advocacy](#), [Collaboration](#) and [Education](#) (ACE) ensure the future health of tourism (California Travel Association, 2011).

CPRS. The California Park and Recreation Society provides career development, networking, resources and is the public advocate for California park and recreation professionals (California Parks & Recreation Society, 2011).

FLL. Foreign language learner is a person who gains foreign language skills in an academic setting or some type of systematic training while not living in the target culture (Dörnyei, 1990).

FL. Foreign language is any language other than English.

Language proficiency. A high level of foreign language skills which enables a

person to read, write, speak, and understand a foreign language.

Chapter 2

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to assess the need for foreign language proficiency amongst individuals employed in the recreation, parks, and tourism (RPT) field in California. The following sections describe the subjects, the instrument, the procedures, and the method of data analysis.

Description of Subjects

Members of the California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS) and the California Travel Association (CalTravel) were the subjects of this study. Members of both organizations consist of individuals employed in the recreation, parks, and tourism field. Both organizations were selected to be subjects of this study in order to represent the two different sectors: the tourism sector and the parks and recreation sector. Current membership in either CPRS or CalTravel was the minimum requirement that the subjects of this study needed to fulfill. CPRS is a professional interest organization consisting of more than 4,000 members. On the other hand, CalTravel has a much smaller association consisting of about 350 members. Subjects were obtained from a list of membership directories in order to attempt a census.

Description of Instrument

The instrument, created by the researcher, was a questionnaire measuring factors associated with the need for foreign language proficiency skills amongst recreation, parks, and tourism employees. The questionnaire was administered through Zoomerang.

Question one asked the subjects whether they were members of either CalTravel or CPRS. Question two asked if the subjects have foreign language skills and to specify the foreign languages. At the end of question two, an open-ended option was provided for the subjects that spoke foreign languages other than what was provided. Question three consisted of five statements that were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 4=strongly agree).

Question four provided the subjects with 17 statements regarding the need for foreign language proficiency skills amongst recreation, parks, and tourism employees. Some of the 17 statements addressed the type of foreign language skills the subjects believed to be necessary in their profession. Also, the 17 statements listed several foreign languages allowing the subjects to express what non-English language they perceived to be the most important in their field. Question five was an open-ended question, allowing the subjects to indicate a need for another foreign language that was not provided in question four. Question six asked the subjects to indicate how often they interact with non-English speakers by filling in the blank. The last five open-ended questions asked the following demographic based questions: years employed as a RPT professional, job title, place of birth, gender, and age.

Procedures and the instrument were reviewed and approved by the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee. With their approval, the researcher was required to provide each subject of the study with a consent form. This consent form was inserted into the top of the electronic questionnaire (see Appendix A). The consent form informed the subjects of the background of the study, the estimated time to complete the questionnaire, and psychological risks associated with the study. Finally, the consent form assured the subjects of their privacy (see Appendix B).

Description of Procedures

On Wednesday, April 6th, 2011, the researcher contacted Dr. Bill Hendricks, Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration department head. The researcher and Dr. Hendricks discussed when to distribute the electronic questionnaire to the subjects. On

Thursday, April 21st, 2011 the researcher forwarded the electronic email, containing the link to the web-based survey application to all the subjects. The cover letter informed the subjects of the content to the electronic questionnaire and instructed the subjects to follow the link to complete the survey (see Appendix A). On April 26th, 2011 a reminder email instructed the subjects to complete the survey by April 28th, 2011.

Thursday, April 21st, 2011 the email was forwarded to 1,405 subjects through a CPRS member list provided in the 2009-10 membership directory. The researcher forwarded the exact same email to 560 subjects through a list of email addresses directed to members of CalTravel. On Monday, April 26th a subsequent email was sent to all subjects reminding the participants of the questionnaire completion deadline.

Once the subjects completed the questionnaire, the researcher reviewed the results of the subjects who finished the questionnaire through the electronic Web-based survey program, Zoomerang. On May 1st, 2011 the researcher reviewed the total results of the questionnaire by accessing Zoomerang.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were downloaded from Zoomerang and entered into an Excel spreadsheet. The dependent variables included motivations to learn a foreign language, opinions regarding the need for foreign language proficiency, which foreign language is perceived to have the greatest need, and the frequency of foreign language use. The independent variable included whether the subjects were members of CalTravel or CPRS. The questionnaire was designed to answer four research questions.

Research question one examines if foreign language proficiency differs by the different sectors of the parks, recreation, and tourism field. This question was answered by mean scores using found within question four on the instrument. To compare CalTravel and CPRS a t-test was conducted on the 13 items. The second research question analyzed the motivations of the two sectors of individuals in the parks, recreation and tourism field to learn a foreign language. This question was answered using mean scores and T-test to determine differences between CalTravel and CPRS members. The third research question identified how frequently employees of RPTA use their foreign language skills. This was analyzed by calculating frequency and percentage from responses to question six on the instrument.

The fourth research question determined what foreign languages were the most frequently used by professionals. The last three items on question four on the instrument was tabulated for mean score, standard deviation, and a T-test was conducted to identify whether the most commonly used foreign languages differed between CalTravel and CPRS members. Also, the data extracted from question five on the instrument was tabulated for frequency and percentage in order to identify the most frequently used foreign languages.

Other demographic type variables included: job title, place of birth, and gender which were analyzed by tabulating for frequency and percentage. An age variable was analyzed using mean and range. These demographic items present characteristics of the subjects in the study.

Chapter 3

PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to assess foreign language proficiency perceptions and motivations amongst individuals employed in the recreation, parks, and tourism (RPT) fields. This study was conducted through the Web-based survey application, Zoomerang from April 21, 2011 to May 1, 2011. The researcher asked California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS) and California Travel Association (CalTravel) members to assess their perception of the need for foreign languages in their field. Of the 1,966 subjects who were contacted by email to participate in the study, 221 subjects completed the questionnaire (response rate = 12.88%).

Subject Demographics

This section presents demographic results including organization membership, birth place, gender and age. Participants were asked to specify whether they were members of CPRS or CalTravel. The largest percentage of participants (n=185, 84%) responded that they were CPRS members. Thirty-five participants (16%) indicated that they were members of CalTravel. The highest frequency of participants' job titles included directors (n=61, 27.6%) and supervisors (n=44, 19.9%). For a complete presentation of the findings, see Table 1. The highest frequency of participants (n=72, 32.6%) noted that they have worked as a tourism or recreation and parks employee between 21 years and 30 years of employment (see Table 2).

The majority of participants (n= 206, 93.2%) indicated that they were born in the United States. Twelve participants (n=12, 5.4%) indicated that they were not born in the United States. Of the 220 subjects participating in the study, females (n=121, 54.8%) outnumbered males (n=96, 43.4%). The youngest participants were 19 years of age and the oldest participants were 73 years of age. The average age of participants was 46.51.

Table 1

Employment Positions According to Frequency and Percentage

<u>Job Title</u>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Director	61	27.60
Supervisor	44	19.90
Manager	36	16.30
Coordinator	18	8.10
Other	20	9.00
CEO	11	5.00
Administration	06	2.70
Employee	06	2.70
Superintendent	05	2.30
Unemployed	01	0.50
Total	208	94.1

RPT Foreign Language Skills

Participants of this study were asked to indicate whether they possess any skills in a foreign language. If the participants did possess foreign language skill they were asked to indicate which language. The largest percentage of participants (n=129, 59.20%) indicated

that they did not possess any foreign language skills. Sixty-one subjects (28%) possessed Spanish foreign language skills. For a complete presentation of these findings see Table 3.

Table 2

Employment Length According to Frequency and Percentage

<u>Years Employed</u>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
1-10	53	24.00
11-20	52	23.50
21-30	72	32.60
31-40	34	15.40
41-50	2	0.90
Total	221	100.0

Foreign Language Motivation

Participants of this study were asked to indicate their motivation for learning a foreign language. The participants were asked to rate each motivation on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 4= strongly agree). Most participants who were motivated to learn a foreign language to become proficient in a non-English language (3.09 mean, 0.87 SD). The second highest rated motivation to learn a foreign language was for personal achievement (3.05 mean, 0.95 SD). The least motivating variables for participants to learn a motivation were for higher wages (1.90 mean, 0.87 SD) and employment qualifications (1.83 mean, 0.82 SD). A test was conducted to examine differences between CalTravel and CPRS members' motivations (see Table 5). The only significant difference was for “no

motivation.” CPRS mean scores were significantly higher than CalTravel. Also, CalTravel mean scores were higher for 9 of the 13 items regarding their motivation to learn a FL

Table 3

Foreign Language Skills According to Frequency and Percentage

Foreign language	<i>f</i>	%
No foreign language skill	129	59.20
Spanish	61	28.0
French	5	2.30
German	3	1.40
Japanese	2	0.90
Sign language	2	0.90
Spanish, German	2	0.90
Spanish, French	2	0.90
Chinese	1	0.50
Indian dialect	1	0.50
Persian	1	0.50
Russian	1	0.50
Philipino	1	0.50
Spanish, German, French, Italian	1	0.50
Spanish, Chinese, German, Swedish	1	0.50
Spanish, French, Japanese	1	0.50
Spanish, Arabic, Russian	1	0.50
Spanish, German, Italian	1	0.50
Spanish, Portuguese, Sign Language	1	0.50
Armenian, Turkish, Arabic, French	1	0.50
Total	218	100.0

Table 4

Combined Motivations to Learn a Foreign Language

Motivation	Mean	SD
Proficiency in non-English language	3.09	0.87
Personal achievement	3.05	0.95
New knowledge	2.99	0.88
Enable communication with non-English speakers	2.90	0.99
Culture	2.83	0.94
Travel abroad	2.67	1.03
Improve communication with international clientele	2.22	1.05
Graduation requirement	2.20	1.02
Improve communication with employees	2.06	0.93
Career advancement	2.03	0.91
Higher wages	1.90	0.87
Employment qualifications	1.83	0.82
No motivation	1.77	0.98

Table 5

Motivations to Learn a Foreign Language by Membership

<u>Motivation</u>	Membership		P-value
	CalTravel	CPRS	
Proficiency in non-English language	3.37	3.00	0.106
Personal achievement	3.17	3.02	0.555
New knowledge	3.26	2.90	0.118
Non-English speakers	2.78	2.93	0.561
Culture	3.11	2.74	0.137
Travel abroad	3.00	2.57	0.115
International clientele	2.53	2.13	0.150
Graduation requirement	2.37	2.15	0.421
Communication with employees	2.11	2.05	0.822
Career advancement	2.05	2.02	0.881
Higher wages	1.84	1.92	0.751
Employment qualifications	1.74	1.85	0.596
No motivation	1.17	1.92	0.003*

Perception of Necessary FL Proficiency

Participants were asked about the need for foreign language proficiency in their field. The participants indicated their agreement on a 4-point Likert scale (1=strongly Disagree, 4= strongly agree). The combined mean scores for each variable have been included in Table 6. CalTravel members agreed (mean=2.94) that there is basic need for FL proficiency in their field to have knowledge of 5-10 FL common words. CPRS members agreed (mean= 2.78) that professionals in their field should have knowledge of 5-10 FL common words. Similarly, CalTravel members agreed (mean=2.94) that it is necessary to

possess some FL vocabulary (see Table 7). Again, CPRS members was also in agreement (mean=2.85) that professionals in their field should possess some FL vocabulary. However, both CalTravel and CPRS members disagreed that it is necessary to possess a minor in a FL in their field. As shown in Table 7, there is no significant difference of FL Proficiency between CalTravel members and CPRS members

Table 6

Combined Foreign Language Proficiency

Proficiency	Mean	SD
Should possess some FL Vocabulary	2.87	0.76
Knowledge of 5-10 FL common words	2.81	0.85
Need Spanish skills	2.46	0.90
FL conversational skills	2.34	0.93
Should possess 1-2 years of FL education	2.25	0.89
No Proficiency	2.24	0.83
Need bilingual skills	2.02	0.84
FL literacy skills	1.72	0.72
FL fluency skills	1.69	0.70
Need Chinese skills	1.87	0.71
Need multilingual skills	1.74	0.70
Need German skills	1.66	0.61
Possess a minor in a FL	1.52	0.60

Table 7

Differences FL Proficiency by Membership

Proficiency	Membership		P-value
	CalTravel	CPRS	
Possess a minor in a FL	Mean 1.73	Mean 1.48	0.080
FL fluency skills	1.91	1.64	0.107
Need German skills	1.85	1.62	0.121
Need Chinese skills	2.06	1.82	0.132
No Proficiency	2.00	2.29	0.139
FL conversational skills	2.48	2.31	0.371
Knowledge of 5-10 FL common words	2.94	2.78	0.390
Need Spanish skills	2.59	2.44	0.399
Need bilingual skills	1.94	2.04	0.563
Need multilingual skills	1.82	1.73	0.572
Should possess some FL vocabulary	2.94	2.85	0.605
FL literacy skills	1.78	1.71	0.664
Should possess 1-2 years of FL education	2.27	2.25	0.892

Frequency of FL Use

Participants of this study were asked to estimate how often in a typical week they interact with clientele who are non-English speakers. The responses were grouped into the following categories: never, rarely, 1-2 times per week, 3-4 times per week, and 5 or more times per week. The majority of the participants (n=64, 29%) noted that they never interact with clientele who are non-English speakers. The second highest frequency (n=50, 23.90%) noted that they use their foreign language at least once or twice a week in order to interact with clientele who are non-English speakers (see Table 8).

Table 8
Weekly FL Use According to Frequency and Percentage

<u>Weekly Frequency</u>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Never	64	30.60
Rarely	33	15.80
1-2 times per week	50	23.90
3-4 times per week	24	11.50
5+ times per week	38	18.20
Total	209	100.0

Other FLs in RPT Fields

When respondents were asked whether there were other FL skills necessary in RPT profession, most participants (n=41, 43.2%) indicated that there were not. The responses were grouped into 20 different FLs including sign language (see Table 9). Sign language and French (n=5, 2.3%) were mentioned as additional languages. Other responses that were not illustrated in Table 9 indicated that the need for FL skills is dependent upon the following factors: community, location, demographics of population, and the position held.

Table 9

Other FLs in RPT According to Frequency and Percentage

Foreign Language (FL)	<i>f</i>	%
No Other FL than already mentioned	41	43.20
Sign Language	5	5.30
French	5	5.30
Arabic	4	1.80
Tagalog	4	4.20
Italian	3	3.20
Japanese	3	3.20
Korean	3	3.20
Russian	3	3.20
Asian	3	3.20
Cambodian	3	3.20
East Indian	2	2.10
Armenian	2	2.10
English	1	1.10
Dutch	1	1.10
Mien	1	1.10
Farsi	1	1.10
Ethiopian	1	1.10
Persian	1	1.10
Filipino	1	1.10
Portuguese	1	1.10
Total	95	100.0

Summary

The results presented in this chapter indicate foreign language (FL) proficiency perceptions and motivations amongst individuals employed in the recreation, parks, and tourism (RPT) fields are very similar. The results also presented a need for basic FL proficiency amongst RPT professionals. However, most participants do not use foreign language skills on a weekly basis. A detailed summary and a discussion of the findings will follow in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study provides an understanding of the need for foreign language proficiency in the recreation, parks, and tourism (RPT) fields according to CPRS and CalTravel members. FL proficiency provides professionals in the RPT fields with skills to communicate with diverse clientele. This concluding chapter will include the following: a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings including limitations, conclusions based on the research questions, recommendations, and future research.

Summary

Most fields benefit from foreign language-proficient employees because they are able to communicate with diverse clientele. Even though FL proficiency is not a required skill for most careers, it is a desired skill sought by most employers. The tourism industry is a leading example in providing their clientele with employees who possess FL proficiency skills (Edwards, 1945). Parks and recreation is another industry that serves international clientele, yet their employees are not widely recognized as possessing FL-proficiency skills (Anderson, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to assess the FL proficiency perceptions and motivations amongst individuals employed in the RPT fields. The subjects of the study were CPRS and CalTravel members. This study was conducted through the Web-based survey application, Zoomerang.

The findings indicate that CalTravel and CPRS members perceived there to be a basic need for FL proficiency. However, most participants indicate that they do not use foreign languages on a weekly basis. The participants lack motivation to learn a foreign language for both career advancement opportunity and to increase their wages. Most participants are motivated to learn a foreign language to gain proficiency in another non-English language and for their own personal achievement.

Discussion

The following section will examine the findings, draw conclusions, and make recommendations for California RPT professionals. This section will explore how the results of the study are related to previous research, discuss limitations and conclude with the study's contribution to the RPT field.

This study answers four research questions. The first research question addresses whether FL proficiency differs between the different sectors of RPT fields. The results reveal that foreign language proficiency does not significantly differ between the RPT sectors. In fact, both sectors share similar perceptions of the basic need for FL proficiency in their field. Both CalTravel and CPRS indicate that the knowledge of 5-10 common words and some FL vocabulary is necessary for their profession. For those participants who do possess foreign language skills they indicate that they have Spanish FL skills.

The second research question explores the motivations of individuals in the RPT field to learn a foreign language. The results show that CalTravel and CPRS members agree that they are motivated to learn a foreign language to gain proficiency in a language other than English and for personal achievement.

Third research question investigates how often employees in RPT fields use their FL skills. Both the majority of CalTravel and CPRS members indicate that they never interact with non-English clientele. The second highest frequency indicates that both sectors interact with non-English clientele once or twice per week. However, this result could be dependent upon the high level of job position that most participants have.

To answer the fourth research question of what FLs are most frequently used by professionals in the RPT fields in California, the results show that Spanish is the most frequently used FL.

The results are consistent with the previous literature indicating that professionals from both the recreation and parks sector and the tourism sector are intrinsically motivated to speak a FL. Also, the literature suggests that motivation is essential to reach FL proficiency (Seelye & Day, 1992). Similarly, the results to the study indicate that participants are motivated to learn a FL to gain proficiency in a language other than English and for their personal achievement. Also, RPT professionals are least motivated by extrinsic factors such as employment qualifications and to receive higher wages. Spanish is the most frequently spoken FL. The second most frequently spoken language is French. These results are similar to previous research which reveals that the most studied FLs are both Spanish and French (Infoplease, 2006). Previous research implies that employees who possess FL skills gain higher wages (Fry & Lowell, 2005). However, in this study the majority of respondents do not possess FL skills yet they have high level employment positions such as director or supervisor. This may signify that employment positions that have direct contact with their clientele may have a greater need for FL skills.

Several limitations are present in this study. The results of this study may not offer an accurate representation of both the tourism sector and the recreation and parks sector. The low response rate of Cal Travel members and the sampling procedures make it difficult to generalize the results to the greater population of tourism industry professionals. Only 35 CalTravel members participated in this study, which is not a representative sample.

Several limitations are derived from the written format of the survey questions. Open-ended questions were not specific enough which led to non-responses by many participants. One frequently skipped question was the third survey question which asked participants to answer the question if they speak a FL. Due to this assumed prerequisite; many who might have had some FL skill skipped the entire question. After the researcher received feedback from several confused participants the question was revised with a statement in parenthesis stating “if you do not speak a foreign language, please skip to item #4.” Therefore, many participants were not qualified to answer the third question.

Other open-ended questions were vaguely written which encouraged unclear and broad responses. Some participants even provided commentary instead of giving a precise answer to the question. For example survey question six asked “In a typical week how often participants interact with clientele who are non-English speakers.” The words “how often” left many responses unclear and some respondents disregarded the time frame of a typical week and answered by stating monthly. Other responses could not be measured such as “rarely and “seldom.” These results could have been used to describe the difference in how frequently each sector uses FLs yet due to the limitations this comparison was not made.

There are several improvements that RPT professionals can implement to improve communication with their clientele and employees. Even though most participants indicate that they do not speak foreign languages on a weekly basis other fellow RPT professionals who work directly with their clientele might do so. For this reason, each RPT industry should conduct a survey amongst their staff to gain a better understanding about the population they are serving. If there is a need for foreign language skills then the RPT field should provide basic FL courses for their employees. Since Spanish is spoken most frequently amongst RPT professionals located in California they may choose Spanish as their FL for the course.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. CalTravel and CPRS members agree that they are motivated to learn a foreign language to gain proficiency in a language other than English and for personal achievement.
2. Foreign language proficiency does not significantly differ between the recreation, parks, and tourism sectors.
3. The majority of CalTravel and CPRS members do not use their foreign language skills on a weekly basis.
4. The foreign language that is most frequently used by professionals in the RPT fields in California is Spanish.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Offer a FL basic Spanish vocabulary as part of training for RPT employment positions.
2. Conduct a FL clientele survey to gain a better understanding of the demographics of the clients they serve.
3. Conduct a FL frequency survey amongst additional employees in RPT field to understand which employees need a higher level of FL proficiency.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Foreign Language Proficiency Amongst Professionals

The purpose of this survey is to assess the need for foreign language proficiency amongst members of CPRS and CalTravel. For this reason, we are asking you to provide your honest feedback when answering these questions. Your responses will remain anonymous. Once again, we greatly appreciate your voluntary participation in this survey!

1. Which organization are you a member of? (Please only select one)
 - CALTRAVEL
 - CPRS

2. If you possess any skills in a foreign language please indicate which language. (Check all that apply)
 - No foreign language skills
 - Spanish
 - Chinese
 - German
 - Other:

3. For each item listed below, please indicate the extent you agree or disagree (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree) If you speak a foreign language, what motivated you to learn a foreign language.

	SD	D	A	SA
To become proficient in a language other than English	1	2	3	4
To meet employment qualifications		1	2	3
		4		
For personal achievement	1	2	3	4
To learn about another culture	1	2	3	4
To acquire new knowledge	1	2	3	4
As a skillful graduation requirement		1	2	3
		4		
For travel abroad	1	2	3	4
To improve communications with employees	1	2	3	4

To enable communication with non-English speakers	1	2	3	4
To improve communication with international clientele	1	2	3	4
To receive higher wages	1	2	3	4
For career advancement opportunity		1	2	3
4				
I am not motivated to learn a foreign language	1	2	3	4

4. For each item listed below, please indicate the extent you agree or disagree (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree) What level of need is there for foreign language proficiency skills amongst recreation, parks, and tourism employees?

	SD	D	A	SA
Do not need to possess any foreign language skills		1	2	3
4				
Need knowledge of 5-10 common foreign language words		1	2	3
4				
Should possess some foreign language vocabulary		1	2	3
4				
Should possess 1-2 years of foreign language education		1	2	3
4				
Possess a minor in a foreign language	1	2	3	4
Should acquire ability to read and write in a foreign language	1		2	3
4				
Should possess basic conversational foreign language skills	1		2	3
4				

Appendix B

Informed Consent to Participate

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A SURVEY OF THE NEED FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONGST TOURISM, PARKS AND RECREATION PROFESSIONALS

Senior project research on Foreign Language Proficiency Amongst Recreation, Parks and Tourism Professionals is being conducted by Brook Garnica in the Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration Department at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, under the direct supervision of Dr. Bill Hendricks. The purpose of the study is to assess the need for foreign language proficiency amongst members of CPRS and CALTRAVEL.

You are being asked to take part in this study by completing an online questionnaire. In order to complete the questionnaire you will need to follow the link <http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BXA4GFCUZ> that will direct you to the questionnaire through the electronic Web-based survey program, Zoomerang. Your participation will take approximately five minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also omit any items on the questionnaire you prefer not to answer.

There are no risks anticipated due to participation in this study.

Your responses will be provided anonymously to protect your privacy. Potential benefits associated with the study include personal assessment of skills as well as an understanding of the need for foreign language skills from experienced employees in the field. Also, parks, recreation, and tourism employers may gain a better understanding of their employees' perceptions of communicating with international tourists.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Brook Garnica at 805-358-1570 or bgarnica@calpoly.edu. If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Steve Davis, Chair of the Cal Poly Human Subjects Committee, at 805-756-2754, sdavis@calpoly.edu, or Dr. Susan Opava, Dean of Research and Graduate Programs, at 805-756-1508, sopava@calpoly.edu.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research project as described, please indicate your agreement by completing and returning the online questionnaire. Please print and retain this consent form for your reference, and thank you for your participation in this research.

