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**ENGLISH FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES IN THE CONTEXT OF MILITARY REFORM:  
TERTIARY LEVEL**

*The article deals with challenges of ESP training in the National Academy of the National Guard of Ukraine and the ways to meet them within the reform of higher military education in Ukraine; current situation is analyzed, the problem areas are determined and the prospects are outlined.*

**Keywords:** *competence, competencies, ESP, interoperability, military reform, Tertiary level.*

**Problem setting.** Taking into consideration the dramatic changes in the geopolitical situation in the world in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, interoperability between NATO member countries and their allies, as well as building joint capacity to meet emerging security challenges in the world at present, have defined priorities in the development of Ukrainian Armed Forces and the National Guard of Ukraine, emphasizing the role of the English language acquisition and standardization in the training of military and law enforcement personnel. English language proficiency has become not only beneficial for an individual military career but also a crucial factor of security issues in Ukraine.

The European Reference Framework defining key competences for lifelong learning singles out eight key competences, “among which here is also communication in foreign languages” [1, p. 19]. The official position of the Ukrainian President and authorities, alongside with the governmental projects are aimed at facilitating English language nationwide, thus setting new tasks in the military ESP classroom at Tertiary level and bringing up the necessity to reform the system of military training and education on the whole and foreign language training in particular.

During the years of Ukraine’s Independence there have been several attempts to reform the system of higher education, including approaches and attitudes towards learning and teaching foreign languages to improve the overall dramatic situation and the quality of English language acquisition at Tertiary level. Unfortunately, the outcome of those reforms was inconsistent and far from being desirable, leaving most Ukrainian specialists from various spheres of life, including military, beyond intensive international professional communication. As a result, according to English Proficiency Index 2015 Rankings Ukraine stands at №34 in the world, falling far behind some of the post-Soviet and former socialist oriented countries, such as Poland, Slovenia, and Estonia, which entered the top 10 [2], with each of them boasting high level of English language

proficiency among their military and law enforcement personnel.

Therefore, in 2016 we have to accept the fact that foreign language acquisition in higher educational institutions, especially in the military environment, has been either underestimated or addressed the wrong way. The situation with ESP training in the military institutions is critical; it requires immediate changes to be implemented on the basis of a thorough analysis of its background and profound research of the perspectives.

**Recent research and publications analysis.** The challenges of ESP training have been always attracting attention of scholars, scientists, and researchers in the field of Methodology, Pedagogy, Foreign Language Teaching, Psychology, and Philosophy, who developed the corpus of terminology, methods of study, and analytical tools to deal with the subject matter of this issue: Carter (1983), Dudley Evans and St. John (1998), Hutchinson and Waters (1987), Yogman and Kaylani (1996), Anthony (1997), Gatehouse (2001), Sifakis (2003), Hadley (2006), Tratnik (2008) and many more .

Still, military domain cannot boast of plenty publications on ESP issues. Back in 2002, Ian Arved Trapas stressed out interoperability as a key concept of global security, which is still true today, with common language increasing the effectiveness of multinational forces operational potential: “NATO membership requires interoperable staff procedures, communications systems, similar tactics, leadership principles and a shared military ethos in member countries. English language training has a high priority” [3, p. 85].

In 2012 H. Footitt and M. Kelly published their study on transformations in the military through education and training, including language training issues. They made direct connections between security-related areas and foreign language proficiency: “Within the army, however, the failure of personnel to understand orders effectively in whichever languages they were given could prove deadly” [4, p. 187]. Through detailed case studies

H. Footitt and M. Kelly explore the role of foreign languages in military alliances, in occupation and in peace building, and on the grounds of conclusion made by academic researchers and practitioners, they claim that English language serve as a tool to promote peace and stability in the world.

An article “Lacks and Problems Encountered in a Military English Communication Course” by Manjola Likaj examines difficulties faced by military English teachers in finding and designing communicative tasks and offers a holistic approach to language training [5].

A profound study on ESP in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the military environment as well, was conducted by Claire Whittaker and Brian Tomlinson, who edited a collection of essays related to the subject in the book “Blended Learning in English Language Teaching: Course Design and Implementation” in 2013. They present the blended model as the most beneficial and give reasons for blending supporting statements from the case studies [6].

Unfortunately, all existing studies examine specific situations with the military ESP in particular countries, which make them insufficient for comprehensive conclusion. This makes our current study relevant and timely, keeping the topic of the research within the field of academic interest of scholars and practitioners.

**The research objective** is to highlight the main challenges of reform in the military language training sector in Ukraine and the ways to improve the situation in the context of ESP training in the National Academy of the National Guard of Ukraine (NANGU).

**Key research findings.** Within the scope of our research we analyzed current situation with ESP proficiency in the military context and worked out a comprehensive approach to make the Concept on reforming military language training at Tertiary level work.

First and paramount, the Concept on Language Military Training will hardly boost foreign language proficiency of military personnel unless all those who are concerned learn the lesson from the failures of previous attempts and take urgent measures to improve the situation. As long ago as at the beginning of the millennium a British Council regional manager Claire Whittaker, while testing officers for a BC project in Kharkiv, was astonished to see that after having been studying English for so many years (at least 6–10 years in secondary schools, 4–5 years in Universities, additional 2–3 years as post-graduates), most Ukrainian officers could hardly cope with survival

level tasks in English. Today, almost a decade and a half later, dealing with various categories of personnel today, we can trace some improvement, but, unfortunately, the overall situation is still far from being desired. As we can see now, the only willingness of stakeholders, even supported by state regulatory acts, is not enough to make a U-turn in the minds of people towards completely different attitude to military ESP at all levels: learners–teachers–stakeholders. It’s the responsibility of each party in this tripartite partnership to combine their efforts in fostering such attitude that would make people adopt an idea of life-long learning naturally.

Second, we identified the main problem areas in teaching/learning ESP in the military context at Tertiary level in Ukraine and offer specific directions to go as the following:

1) Discrepancy between de jure and de facto concerning English proficiency level.

We can’t but admit that there is a huge gap between officially recognized by Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine level of English language proficiency and actual level of school leavers. As the research shows, military and law enforcement personnel in Ukraine are highly dependent on interpreters when dealing with English language in the professional context, which prevents them from full-scale performance, making them more vulnerable and less prompt in their actions. The problem goes back to pre-service period and the situation with English language training in secondary schools.

The main feature of any ESP course is that it is generally designed for intermediate or advanced students; even though it might be used with beginners, it assumes some basic knowledge of the language system with the learners. Let’s see how it works in our case. The discrepancy between the actual level of Ukrainian school-leavers English language proficiency and official requirements of Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine created a huge gap between the Tertiary level and secondary education. One of the British Council consultants on the Ukrainian higher education projects in English language teaching Rod Bolitho, who has been working on the Pre-Service Training Reform project as well as English for Universities project, points out that the level of English of the students at Universities is very low – at A1 or A2 at the best: “Not only were they unable to communicate in English but they don’t write in English, and there is no aspect of English which they feel comfortable with. And this of course is the result of eleven years of English at school” [7].

The same is true for first-year cadets in the NANGU. The level of English level proficiency they apply to the Academy with in most cases equals to 0+, with the best cases of A1, very rare A2. Still, the National Curriculum for Universities defines the entrance level of university applicants at B1 [8]. In reality, most school-leavers cannot demonstrate even survival level of English language proficiency.

On the other hand, the Tertiary level, in compliance with the Common European Framework of reference for language learning [9] must provide the graduates with the level of B2, even C1 for some specializations, which goes far beyond physical ability of a regular learner to master foreign languages within allocated by Curriculum academic time. In accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR) which estimates the rough number of guided hours for each level, learners should have approximately 180–200 hours of classroom instruction to reach A2 level; 350–400 for B1; 500–600 for B2; 700–800 for C1 (<https://www.britishcouncil.pt/en/our-levels-and-cefr>). It means that if first-year cadets start ESP course from 0+ level, they will require 350–400 hours to get to B1 level.

Until recently downsizing the number of academic hours was a general trend in teaching foreign languages in higher educational establishments in Ukraine. Thus before 2016, which was announced The Year of the English Language, the number of guided hours in the NANGU was cut down almost twice, from 316 to 180 hours. 2016 brought revival to military ESP courses in the NANGU giving an increase to classroom instruction hours up to 300 again. Today it's just the time to update the pattern of a military ESP course and its dynamics if we want to change the outcome of the course. And a big question is whether it's necessary to keep the whole of ESP course, which is aimed at Level 2 (STANAG 6001), mandatory for all cadets, including those who start from scratch or from 0+ level, and those who are not motivated or unwilling to learn English. Why not to learn the experience of French Gendarmerie School on how to help each learner make the best of the ESP course? After the Placement test in French Gendarmerie School first year cadets are streamed according to their English level into groups and the corresponding syllabus for instruction is authorized: absolute beginners with no English proficiency, as well as 0+ level, have 70 guided hours to get survival level during

the first year of studies, and another 70 classroom instruction hours in the second year to sustain Level 1 (STANAG 6001). Consequently, groups with initial Level 1 study for Level 2 during the whole of 140 guided hours in the first and second year of their studies. Higher entry levels give cadets an opportunity to consolidate Level 2 STANAG 6001 in the first year, and to choose from elective courses, e.g., to sign up for Advanced ESP course or to learn another foreign language. Thus graduates of French Gendarmerie School are certified at different levels of foreign language proficiency.

We believe that in our case such approach will increase efficiency of both learning and teaching military ESP courses in the NANGU. For instance, we could allocate 300 guided hours for general military part of the ESP course, making it mandatory for all cadets. On completing the first year all cadets will sit for progress test, which should result in streaming for the second year – those who make progress will move on to study for Level 2, and those who don't – will spend a second year mastering survival English in the military context. That would help cadets reach and sustain Level 1. Specialized ESP course should be included into elective part of Curriculum, which will give motivated cadets an opportunity to develop and sustain Functional level language proficiency during 150 guided hours in the third and fourth year of studies.

#### 2) Learner-related issues.

The main challenges the cadets are facing today during the course of ESP are mostly related to their entry level (see the paragraph above); shortage of self-preparation hours due to engagement in other activities – sports, service duties, extra-curricular activities, etc.; high involvement in spontaneous on-the-spot chores; low or lack of motivation.

Cadets do not share responsibility for their academic results with their tutors-commanding officers and teachers. The attendance of tutorials is extremely low which makes them inefficient. Besides, the tendency to cut the number of practical hours of military ESP courses, which had been quite common before last year, created a negative stereotype of ESP course, as the one, which is irrelevant for the military.

To promote personal responsibility of each learner for the results of his/her work, this academic year the faculty of the department of foreign languages of the NANGU introduced a learner's portfolio for the first-year cadets, where the results of progress tests are recorded twice during the module (mid-module Stop-and-Check

and final module score). This way the results of each learner are visualized, demonstrating progress or absence of progress in the ESP studies. Learners can attend tutorials Monday through Friday in the afternoon and work face-to-face with a teacher on a particular aspect of language training.

We believe that the pattern of progress tests should be standardized within the whole Academy, e.g. 5,10,15 week during the term, and the reporting system should be clear and transparent, with individual approach to low scores and failures, judging by the progress that has been achieved in comparison with the previous results. Those who failed the test for some reasons should be given a specific term, up to a fortnight, to take a test again to improve the results.

Now, motivation. That's an easy target. It's high time to stop blaming cadets for low motivation or its total absence. We can hardly remember an ELT conference, workshop or meeting where participants wouldn't talk about low intrinsic motivation for hours! Yes, it's a fact. In Ukraine lack of intrinsic motivation often results from secondary school practices and stereotypes concerning English language. Therefore, at Tertiary level it's mostly teachers' responsibility to create safe learning environment, communicative situations in which learners would overcome their fear of being wrong and would get interested in activities in the lesson. Such short-term interest to the subject would help learners develop intrinsic motivation.

Besides, we can always rely on the powerful impact of extrinsic motivation, giving successful learners opportunities to participate in joint exercises, like Rapid Trident for example; cadets exchange programs with other military or law enforcement training centres in Europe; elective certified courses that would grant them STANAG 6001 level upon graduation from the Academy.

### 3) Role of a teacher.

The main methodology in teaching ESP courses in the NANGU is based on communicative approach and active training methods which are aimed at developing skills and competencies comprehensively with the emphasis on speaking in the professional context.

Teaching ESP courses for military in the NANGU has had a long history with great contributions of the British Council managers and projects, such as Peacekeeping English Project and English for the Armed Forces. On the whole, the situation with English language teaching in the NANGU (at that time Institute of Interior Forces) at the end of XX–beginning of XXI centuries could be described as breakthrough, as soon as the

British Council managers, workshops and regular updates equipped English language instructors of the Academy with notions and practicalities of communicative methodology, including active training methods, task-based approach, critical thinking etc. Unfortunately, the projects coming to the end, the cooperation between the NANGU and British Council stopped.

To sustain the achieved results English language instructors had to seek for individual opportunities to keep up the level on their own, participating in international language training for peace support and security personnel ITPSSM (2007-2009), EUBAM (2011-2012), Polish border guards (2014). It's difficult to overestimate the value of such experience – the international team of English language teachers demonstrated the ways to achieve success in short-term ESP courses in the military and law enforcement context. All the projects were based on blended learning methodology, which have already proved its efficiency in military ESP training.

Not until 2016 did positive changes concerning professional development of military ESP instructors take place in the NANGU. We appreciate the fact that two of our colleagues had an opportunity to do professional development courses in Bulgaria and Slovenia, bringing back to the Academy fresh air of international training environment and the hope that this time the reform will work.

### 4) Experience of other countries.

We believe that it's crucial to study experience of European countries that have demonstrated successful patterns of efficient military ESP training, to learn their pros and cons and to implement the positive aspects into the NANGU. Within this article we outline briefly the main directions in the military ESP training in Poland, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia and Lithuania.

The Polish Armed Forces School of Languages (PAFSL). Nowadays PAFSL's mission is:

- teaching 5 months residential courses, 1-2 months specialized or remedy courses;
- preparing syllabuses for the didactic process in the military;
- preparing a theoretical basis for examining;
- preparing exam papers;
- administering STANAG 6001 exams in English, Russian, French and German languages at Levels 1-4;
- certification of candidates for posts abroad;
- training examiners and test constructors.

National Military University, Ministry of Defense, Bulgaria, provides English language training the following way:

- 700 classroom instruction hours during 5-year period of training, all cadets sit for STANAG 2-2-2-2;
- distant courses – 120 hours;
- ESP courses – 150 hours;
- intensive courses for officers – 480 hours during 3-4 months;
- non-intensive courses for officers on a regular basis.

Serbia, Military Academy, Ministry of Defense:

- The best cadets have an opportunity to sit for STANAG
- 360-hour intensive courses for officers during 3 months at STANAG 2, and STANAG 3.

Ministry of Defense, Macedonia, conducts 240-hour intensive courses for officers during 3 months (18 hours per week) from level B1 to B2, in some cases to C1 (2+).

Military Academy of Ministry of Defense, Lithuania, provides:

- basic course – 18 weeks; 540 hours with additional 60 hours of tutorials;
- STANAG 2 training course – 18 weeks; 540 hours with additional 60 hours of tutorials;
- STANAG 3 training course – 12 weeks; 360 hours with additional 65 hours of tutorials;
- All trainees sit for corresponding STANAG tests.

#### **Recommendations and Conclusions**

As a result of our research of the situation with military ESP training in the NANGU we come to the conclusion that for successful implementation of reform into military language training it is recommended:

- to introduce STANAG 6001-based Placement English test into the Curriculum to identify the level of successful candidates in the Academy (no proficiency – level 0, memorized proficiency – 0+, survival – 1, survival + – 1+, functional – 2); to make it mandatory for all first-year cadets before the beginning of the academic year, e.g. during Basic Combat Training in August, and to take the results into consideration while forming academic groups;
- to use experience of French Gendarmerie School – to teach general military ESP course in the first and second year as mandatory for all cadets, to stream groups according to their actual results, choose the syllabus for each particular academic group, provide STANAG 6001 Level 1 certification to all cadets at the end of the first/second academic year depending on their results; include specialized ESP course into elective part of the Curriculum of the third and fourth year cadets, providing those cadets who are not motivated, not successful or just unwilling to learn more English with extra time for any relevant military training activities;

- to allocate not less than 270–300 hours per ESP course for general military part and additional 120–150 hours for specialization;

– to start more ESP courses as extracurricular training for motivated and successful learner, e.g., English for Peacekeepers, ESP Terminology (basic to advanced), etc.;

– to conduct short-term (1-2 weeks) remedial courses for officers/ long-term (1–4 months) intensive courses for officers by request, e.g., STANAG 6001 training (Levels 1-2), Military Sustainment Course, Pre-deployment courses, etc.;

– to conduct on-line ESP courses for officers of the NANGU by request;

– to conduct Speaking Clubs for motivated cadets and officers by request;

– to use positive experience of international military language training, such as ITPSSM (British Council) 2007–2009, Common Border Common Language (EUBAM)2011–2012, where peer teaching, active learning methods and blended learning approach were successfully applied during short-term ESP intensive courses,

– to open Self-Access Centre (SAC) to help cadets and officers of the academy develop autonomous learning skills;

– to engage prominent English learners into international trainings/exercises, which will help boost motivation;

– to revive the practice of NANGU ELT professional development in the international environment (from 1 to 4 months long, every 5 years) in such places as Language School, Armed Forces of Canada; Defense Language Institute, Texas, USA; George C. Marshall Center, Germany; Universities of the UK; European military training centres, etc.;

– to create bank of materials from international trainings, and to make it open for all learners and teachers in the Intranet of the Academy.

#### **Conclusion**

Even minimum professional level of English language identified by STANAG 6001 allows the most efficient utilization of the expertise and resources provided by NATO member countries to Ukraine.

All this gives us the grounds to claim that foreign language training in the reforming of professional military education must be addressed comprehensively, considering both the lessons learnt from previous attempts to facilitate English language acquisition by the military, and positive experiences from other countries from particular military schools or courses.

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### **АНГЛІЙСЬКА МОВА ПРОФЕСІЙНОГО СПІЛКУВАННЯ У КОНТЕКСТІ ВІЙСЬКОВОЇ РЕФОРМИ: ВИЩА ШКОЛА**

*У статті розглядаються проблеми викладання англійської мови професійного спілкування у Національній академії Національної гвардії України та шляхи їх вирішення в межах реформування вищої військової освіти в Україні; проводиться аналіз поточної ситуації, визначено коло проблемних питань та окреслено перспективи розвитку.*

**Ключові слова:** компетенція, компетентності, англійська мова професійного спілкування, військова реформа, здатність до взаємодії, вища школа.

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### **АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК ДЛЯ ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНЫХ ЦЕЛЕЙ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ВОЕННОЙ РЕФОРМЫ: ВЫСШАЯ ШКОЛА**

*В статье рассматриваются проблемы преподавания английского языка для профессиональных целей в Национальной академии Национальной гвардии Украины и пути их решения; проводится анализ текущей ситуации, определен круг проблемных вопросов и намечены перспективы развития.*

**Ключевые слова:** компетенция, компетентности, английский язык для профессиональных целей, военная реформа, способность к взаимодействию, высшая школа.

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