

The Changing Perspective of Foreign Language Training in the Military  
with Regard to Recent Innovations

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I. Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests, respectable colleagues, it is a great honor for me to deliver a speech to you. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on this occasion of the 25th anniversary of BILC. It is very obvious that you, every member of BILC, did much and worked hard to contribute to the activities conducted in BILC every year.

We are living in a rapidly changing world. The innovations in the field of technology and science will bring us a different perspective of life and language itself. But regardless of how rapidly the world is changing, there are certain realities that we cannot avoid at all. While defining language Chrystal (1987/369) has said:

*There is no doubt that language is a prerequisite for mutual understanding and cooperation between nations. Foreign Language Learning promotes understanding, tolerance, and respect for cultural identity, rights and values of others, whether abroad or at home in minority groups. People become less ethnocentric, as they come to see themselves and their society in the eyes of the rest of the world, and encounter other ways of thinking.*

In this presentation, I plan to give a changing perspective of foreign language training in the military in terms of recent innovations. What are these innovations? As I mentioned above, the world brings us the technological advancements and puts us into a world of changes. These new developments and innovations are Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaties, Arms Control Verifications, and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europa (CSCE). With all these subject matters I will cover mainly the perspective on Foreign Language Teaching and Learning (FLTL).

A. Foreign Language Training in the Military

In the Military a target is set for foreign language teaching and it is thought that every institute, foundation or school is responsible for teaching the personnel a language that will meet the requirements of the military in any field of activities in the procedure of education and for training them in accordance with technological advancements and scientific developments. Hence, in foreign language classes, the students and Educated Military Adult Trainees (EMATs) are provided with both technical and essential terminological concepts.

In our Military High Schools the general objectives of foreign language teaching are as follows:

1. In a four-year education from the preparatory classes to the last grade, to teach a foreign language to the students within a step by step procedure by improving their four language skills and by having them use these skills throughout their educational process.

*\*This paper was presented at the BILC - Bureau for International Language Co-ordination Conference held in İstanbul-Turkey and published in the Conference Report Book (1991) pp. 15-30*

2. To train and enable them to speak the language at a normal rate of speaking and to understand the spoken language.
3. To train them to express their feelings, thoughts and ideas in the target language.
4. To educate them in the foreign language in order to render them capable of tolerating cultural aspects other than their own, thus internalizing these foreign cultural values without prejudice.
5. Finally, the school tries to enable them to progress in their language learning activity on their own by helping them to develop positive attitudes towards learning the language independently.

As for the Military Academies several measures are taken into consideration in order to design a language learning project. This is not an individual language learning program but the cadets are expected to achieve a basic level of proficiency:

1. to follow a conference, a speech, a discussion etc.,
2. to explain a complex military activity or mission in the target language,
3. to carry out military instructions in the target language,
4. to comprehend and follow the technological and scientific developments through communication media,
5. to use their interlanguage in social interaction as required,
6. to make progress in language learning towards an occupational level,
7. to be able to meet the optimum requirements of the occupational activities.

In the Military Language Schools (Army, Navy and Air Force) Educated Military Adults (EMAs) are trained in different languages such as English, French, German, Russian, Bulgarian, Greek, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish (for foreign military personnel only).

In the Army Language School (ALS) the languages mentioned above are taught, whereas in the Navy Language School German is taught and in the Air Force Language School only English is taught. In the ALS the objectives in teaching these languages can be listed as follows:

1. to train the personnel in the target language in order to enable them to cope with expected possible tasks abroad,
2. to give prior education in foreign language training for the follow-on courses abroad,
3. to teach and give practice of military terminology as required.

The main objective of the ALS is to train the EMAs for the expected international posts and long/short term courses. The course contents in foreign language teaching are based on the acquisition of the target language up to a certain level as well as on the accomplishment of four

language skills: listening and reading comprehension, speaking and writing.

#### B. Foreign Language Training Policy

The Foreign Language Teaching Policy in the military with regard to EMAs is to enable them to have proficiency in essential language learning and to provide them with required task-based courses for the international posts. But teaching English in the military has the prior importance and most of the courses are based on English language learning. In the ALS, the EMAs are trained in both intermediate and advanced phases of English. Most of the EMAs, having succeeded in foreign language learning, may take part in the *General English Proficiency Examination* (GEPE) conducted by the military in several languages every year. The personnel, who have made a satisfactory score in the GEPE, in accordance with STANAG 6001, will be assigned to international duties.

Specifically the Foreign Language Teaching Policy in the military is to provide the personnel with a language, which is mostly English in terms of several aspects. In the ALS, language teaching is a post-school training and due to many reasons we have to integrate our objectives of language teaching and training of EMAs parallel with the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) of the Council of Europe. The following components are the ones that comprise our language training objectives in the military:

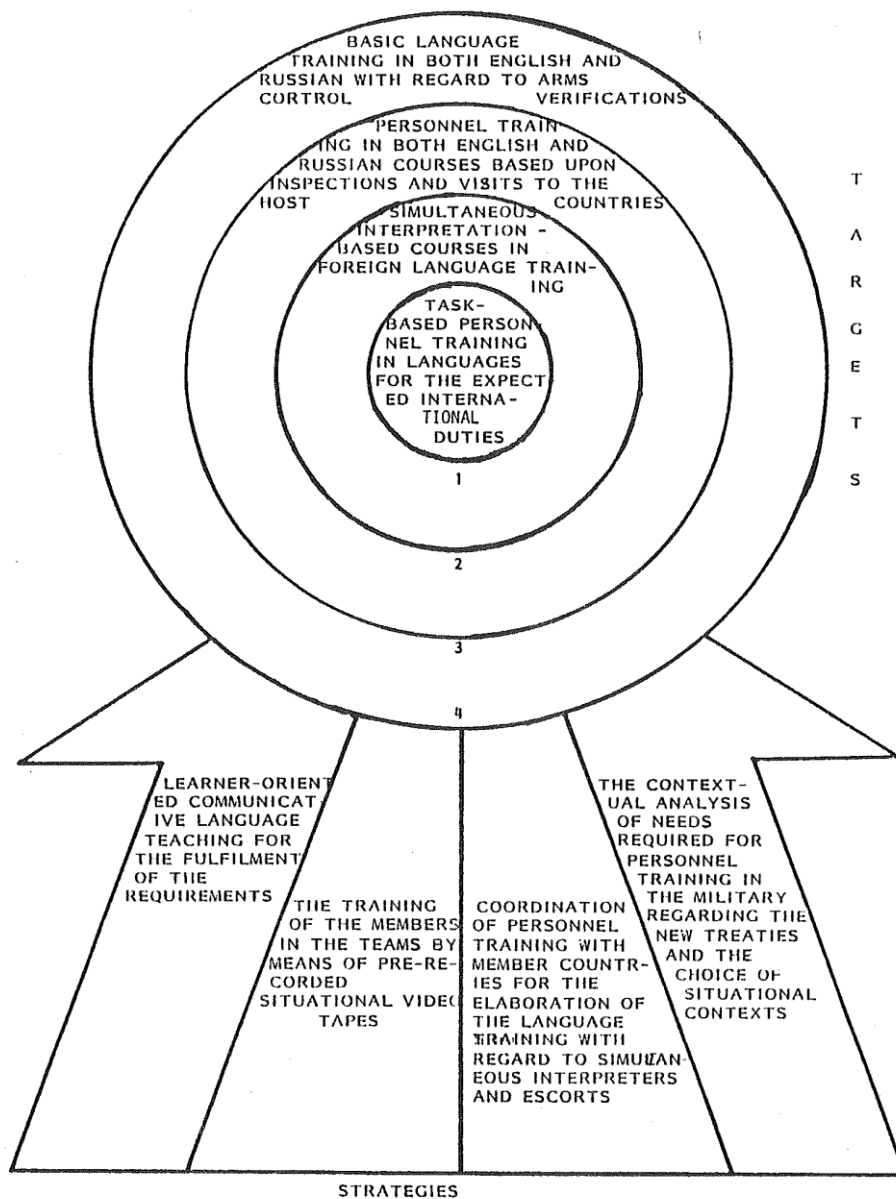
1. The arrangement of effective learning in adult language education in keeping with the requirements of the military.
2. The development of a means of information exchange on the innovative practices in the field of adult education.
3. The establishment of a network for the expertise, materials and documentation in terms of *Duty-Oriented Foreign Language Learning* (DOFLL).
4. The implementation of a DOFLL for future purposes in the military.
5. The integration of specific objectives for DOFLL with plans for personnel development, social skills and cultural interests.
6. The implementation of a military language training program to render the EMAs and other personnel capable of reaching a certain level of language proficiency (STANAG 6001 Level three) and to enable them to carry out military tasks.

#### II. New Targets and Objectives in Language Training in the Military

The changes in the world are now being effective in the curriculum design of foreign language teaching in schools and institutes in the military; and the objectives of foreign language training are also based upon these innovations. Turkey's participation in *Confidence and Security-Building Measures* (CSBMs) will carry some responsibilities and therefore, in-country language training and a syllabus for EMAs' should be renewed. In this respect, the course contents, the personnel foreign language training program, curriculum design and new requirements for foreign language training would be based on these new developments.

In the military, upon these changes, we strictly believe that we have to implement new measures for courses in essential foreign language training. These innovative changes will also bring a new perspective to language teaching in the military and it would be a new area of Foreign Language Teaching for Specific Purposes in the Military (FLTSPM).

The following figure might be useful in explaining the new targets and strategies that we should be able to implement and carry out for personnel training and to change the curriculum so that it might meet the requirements of the future activities in foreign language manipulation.



#### A. Needs Analysis

The answer to the question "What should we teach?" entails an analysis of needs in the language teaching and learning activity. Anyone who designs a syllabus on materials and instructional techniques in language learning should make his own assumptions about the nature of language and the process of learning and teaching. These assumptions will also be helpful in the implementation of the targets and in defining the strategies of a foreign language course.

The assumptions below will help us point out the needs of our trainees in a language training procedure for some specific purposes:

1. The course content that will be utilized.
2. The goals that will be achieved in foreign language teaching and learning.
3. EMAs' orientation of language teaching for international treaties which have been implemented so far.
4. The linguistic ability chosen seems to be most effective in foreign language teaching.
5. The most important language skills having prior importance in language teaching phenomena.

Having taken the needs into consideration, it is impossible to avoid such topics in the course content in order to participate in the treaties being under the control of participating countries. As far as I am concerned, the activities in START, SALT, INF and so on will not only provide effective verification of the obligations of the treaty, but will greatly increase the mutual confidence that is essential for a sound strategic relationship as well. Consequently, the language will play a crucial role in national and international affairs in these subject matters.

A detailed analysis of needs will be based upon the following subject matters regarding the course content for training the members of teams for inspection and Arms Control regime as follows:

1. On-site inspections
2. National technical means of verification
3. Verification objectives
4. Information exchange
5. Vocabulary and phrases for INF inspections
6. General inspection phrases
7. Everyday terminology
8. Safety terminology
9. Colloquial terms for treaty terminology

10. Colloquial terms and phrases

11. Nuclear and space talks, negotiations on chemical weapons

Besides, regarding the course content, any member of a team might be in need of such vocabulary and terminology as in the circumstances he is exposed to. The terminology will be helpful if it is designed in English, Russian, Bulgarian or also in German. The Turkish General Staff (TGS) established an Arms Control Verification and Disarmament Group and the personnel working in this group are being trained on the subject matter. For those people, who will be assigned to posts abroad, the course content both in English and Russian might include the following:

1. informal conversation topics such as family, transportation, money, sports, the weather, travelling, food, and culture,
2. military service; conditions of service, training, active service experience,
3. service abroad; conditions, requirements, circumstances,
4. local conditions; environment, pollution,
5. military equipment,
6. current political developments,
7. health,
8. the communication media.

We have to consider the list above separately in teaching English, Russian, Bulgarian and German. The order of the topics might be changed according to the language taught and the country concerned. These are the necessary components that will make up a course and the expected syllabus, that would be designed, could be based upon both Military Terminology and the original context of treaties on Arms Control and INF verifications etc.

B. The Analysis and Renewal of the Curriculum in Terms of Innovations

The EMAs are trained in the language schools in the Military and most of them learn primarily English and some of them are trained in Russian, French, Bulgarian, Arabic, Greek and Persian. So far it has been obvious that we train the EMAs in the Language Schools in order to render them proficiency in English Comprehension Level (ECL) tests. In addition to that, the EMAs are also trained in the basic military terminology. In teaching English in the ALS, the American Language Course (ALC) books are used and I believe, those books help them increase their listening and reading comprehension levels and prepare them for ECL tests. The courses, conducted in the ALS are not task-based courses either.

In view of Turkey's participation in Arms Control Verification, and INF treaties, our curriculum should be renewed and also national and international cooperation on the language(s) that will be manipulated in the treaties, negotiations, and inspections should be considered so that we have a sound agreement on language teaching and learning.

In the teaching of essential English, we have so far followed ALC books based on the audiolingual method. This method does not give satisfactory results because the course is not designed for the EMAs' communicative use of the target language. The ALC books have been revised by the Defense Language Institute, English Language Center (DLIELC), Curriculum Development Section, but the ALS has not received those books yet. The revised versions of those books have been designed for communication purposes and the course is designed for adult military students. In *Familiarization with the New American Language Course Module*, it is said that the course books are designed to provide the students with a realistic language relevant to their life-style. In these books, the student is given step by step instruction from the basics of survival English to the level of fluency and communicative proficiency.

Every language teaching method has merits as well as points in which it fails. This is true of the recent communicative approach. That is why we prefer to use an eclectic method in which the effective points of the other language teaching approaches can be used. In the audio-lingual method, near native language is encouraged by helping the learner overcome his native language habits and learn new habits in the target language. In the communicative approach, the student will become communicatively competent so that he uses the target language appropriately in a given social context, and the student will also manage the process of negotiating meaning with interlocuteurs.

In the renewal of foreign language teaching curricula in the military (mostly for teaching English, Russian and Bulgarian) we have to pick out a selected vocabulary, and the course content will be directly related with treaty language(s). This type of language will sometimes be formal and at times informal. But the purpose is to set up a course which will manipulate communicative ability in these languages. The communicative ability can be based on some common words and phrases mentioned in the *INF Inspector's Reference Aid* and the *INF and Arms Control Glossary*.

Therefore the goal that EMAs should achieve at the end of such a course are as follows:

1. to reach at least Level Two (Plus) or Three (STANAG 6001),
2. to carry out formal and informal conversations,
3. to follow military technical and tactical instructions,
4. to be familiar with the terminology and to be able to use them in social and military contexts appropriately,
5. to comprehend and participate in the use of conversational terms for inspections,
6. to be proficient enough in using the target language for occupational purposes,
7. to write short reports and accounts of the activities.

For the achievement of the required goals in foreign language teaching, task-based courses are set up and the objectives are manipulated for accomplishing the expected task abroad.

1) Task-based Courses

In the design of the curriculum, the task-based courses will be taken into consideration at the very beginning because this foreign language teaching process is necessary for the achievement of the objectives. In a task-based course, the trainees will learn the foreign language for the fulfilment of the task and consequently the actual foreign language learning activities are designed through scenarios prepared in advance. So, for the accomplishment of this purpose, there might be different situations and contexts through which the foreign language learning activities are conducted. The following items might be considered as the bases and purposes of the task-based courses:

1. helping learners perform the task through the manipulation of the target language,
2. making them familiar with the activities through authentic materials,
3. orienting them on the task-related activities conducted in different military areas,
4. enabling them to use necessary military instructions for the completion of the tasks.

Having listed the purposes of the task-based foreign language course, the choice of activities in the course format will surely be more significant than its manipulation. In fact, the communicative approach will be utilized in teaching the target language. Yet, the personnel, who have attained the necessary fundamental instructions of the target language, will be instructed communicatively. So, the activities chosen for oral communication in the target language might be listed as follows:

1. meeting and welcoming the team members from each participating country,
2. giving a brief information on the on-going activities in the military installation,
3. delivering speeches on military activities being at issue,
4. developing socially-contextualized conversations between members,
5. discussing and exchanging ideas on the treaties agreed upon recently,
6. carrying out conversations concerning the military fields,
7. declaring contacts being under process between the military institutions,
8. exchanging ideas between academics and experts in the military studies and related topics,
9. having cultural and sportive events between members of armed forces.



The subject matters above might possibly be the guidelines of a course format for a task-based instruction in the military for the achievement of the proficiency Level Three as required by STANAG 6001.

## 2) The Use of Situational Video Tapes for Communicative Purposes

Having pointed out the objectives of foreign language teaching in the military, the trainees are expected to undertake some linguistic functions in the target language which the courses are based on. These functions will mostly be designed for oral communication skills rather than writing and reading. The prerecorded situational video tapes will help us carry out the foreign language functions for oral interaction. These video tapes, recorded during on-site inspections in any participating country, might be a guide for sample communication media in oral interaction. For instance, the actual situations recorded both in English and Russian will be a real setting in order to get the EMAs acquainted with the social, military environment during the in-country foreign language training. The pre-recorded video tapes might also include situational dialogs and authentic materials pertaining to real life environments.

Our target group in teaching a foreign language will be the personnel who will participate in INF Inspections and Arms Control Verifications. The use of pre-recorded video tapes for the purpose of helping learners' achievement of oral interaction and the instructional aims of these tapes are quite clear. First of all, the tapes might include a military drill, activity, briefing, the phases of inspection and some other different situational activities during the visits to the host countries.

The language function expected of these video tapes is to familiarize the personnel with the military situations and the terminology used in actual context and interaction.

With these situational, pre-recorded video tapes, the EMAs will have to be systematically trained to achieve the various language functions such as oral communication, listening comprehension and the manipulation of contextual vocabulary in the target language. The following scenarios might be used as samples for situational video tapes on a task-based course format in foreign language training for specific military purposes:

SCENARIO 1

I. Communicative Purposes

A short briefing on the arrival of on-site inspection groups.

II. Setting

In a briefing room on a military base or at the headquarters of the host country.

Participants

Members of inspection teams from participating countries.

Topics

The overall purpose of the military activity; organisation, information about inspection areas in the host country.

Channel

Addressing a group of professional military people in a formal atmosphere.

III. Stages of Interaction

A welcoming speech, introducing oneself and the others formally, explanations on the inspection plan.

Expected Trainee Input

Listening to the briefing, understanding the content, asking questions if necessary.

## SCENARIO 2

### I. Communicative Purpose

Detailed questions about the arms during on-site inspections.

### II. Setting

On-site inspection area in the host country and on a military base.

#### Participants

The members of teams from the host and participating countries, escorts and simultaneous interpreters.

#### Topics

Verifications of the arms control treaties, inspection procedure in the area declared in advance.

#### Channel

Face to face oral interaction.

### III. Stages of Interaction

Explanation of the requirements in the treaties, confirmation of the activities conducted on the base. Reaffirmation of the data notified in advance, carrying out instructions in formal and informal language, confirmation or disagreement about the information given.

#### Expected Trainee Input

Following up formal and informal conversations, taking part in conversations as an interpreter or escort or a team member, making closing remarks.

### SCENARIO 3

#### I. Communicative Purpose

Leave taking and closing remarks after on-site inspections.

#### II. Setting

The commander's office or a briefing room at the headquarters.

##### Participants

The commander of the base in the host country. The visiting members of participating states for on-site inspections. Inspection team members of the host country, interpreters and escorts, correspondents, press agencies etc.

##### Topics

Satisfactory outcomes of INF inspections in the host country. A genuine verification report on arms control. The follow-on negotiations of future plans of disarmament. Some comments on the host country's consideration of negotiations.

##### Channel

Face to face interaction.

#### III. Stages of Interaction

Closing remarks by the member countries. Social interaction within a military environment. Discussion on the disagreed item of the negotiations.

##### Expected Results of the Trainees' Input:

Paraphrasing, expressing thanks and appreciation. Summarizing, expressing agreement or disagreement. Leave-taking from the base and host country.

### III. The Design of Oral Proficiency-Based Foreign Language Training

In learning the target language English, Russian or Bulgarian, the trainees should achieve the proficiency Level Two (plus) or Three (STANAG 6001) in oral communication in accordance with the principles of the communicative approach. The Oral Proficiency-Based Foreign Language Training (OPBFLT) in the military has not been set up as a different course yet. But I believe we have to have an evaluation and training criteria for oral proficiency. For the communicative purposes we might use authentic materials such as video tapes, situational contexts designed to serve the purpose, treaty scripts, vocabulary and also terminology. The foreign language teaching principles and the materials or components might be synchronized as required. Diane Larse-Freeman (1986/132) explains the use of the target language a great deal through communicative abilities such as games, role plays, and also in problem solving tasks. The predominant activity in learning a foreign language is to use the target language communicatively in order to be successful in the manipulation of Oral Interaction.

Simultaneous interpreters and escorts might also be trained for the purpose of simultaneous translation. However, they should accomplish oral communication activities in a different context and manipulate the target language for task-based purposes in interpretation and escorting services during inspections and verifications.

#### A. The Effective Domain in Principle

In designing OPBFLT, the effective domain in principle is that it should be a learner-oriented and task-based course. Our goal in training the members of the team for Inspections and Arms Control Verification is to enable them to carry out the duties and to utilize the target language communicatively. Besides, the EMAs are also responsible for learning the strategies of communication and for overcoming the terminological difficulties. The final principle in training the escorts and simultaneous interpreters is to have them follow the procedure in accordance with Perkins and Oller's (1980/86) description of the five levels of overall proficiency of the oral interview; so they will:

*be able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations or practical, social and professional topics.*

The guidelines which will be effective in principle will lead us to Level Three in the acquisition of oral communication skills in the target language.

#### B. Linguistic Concepts

The concepts can be viewed as functions and notions of the target language. The functions that the EMAs will need to learn are describing, identifying, explaining, giving information and making short comments etc. These functions will be based on their foreign language communication ability. As for the notions of the target language we might have specific notions that directly determine our choice of individual topics and general notions which are specific and appropriate to a large variety of topics and situations of the target language with regard to the context of the syllabus.

### C. Testing and Evaluation

Testing and Evaluation is a very important phase of foreign language teaching in the military, because the criteria covering the level of proficiency the EMAs should achieve is the process of evaluation of language learning aptitude.

The EMAs' testing and evaluation is carried out by the TGS through the GEPE and also through similar tests in the other foreign languages. They are conducted in order to select the personnel who will satisfy the objectives set in respect to the criteria defined in advance and these objectives are drawn out from the task requirements. This type of examination will be a proficiency-based test because they will be evaluated in four language skills separately. The GEPE conducted in the military every year might not be elaborate enough for choosing the personnel for tasks such as simultaneous interpretation and escorting services. This examination and its evaluation will consequently be a job-related activity and the examinees will be evaluated in accordance with STANAG 6001 for Level Three and such a test would rather be the evaluation of speaking performance.

### IV. Conclusion

In this presentation, I have tried to cover some changing foreign language training objectives in the military concerning task-based courses which are having the objectives of recent treaties and Arms Control Verifications. Which possible activities would be put in action for the implementation of new plans that will be based on essential foreign language training in the military has also been emphasized. However, the main idea is to touch upon these following points:

1. to be in cooperation with member countries in BILC on such issues in order to have an integration on the improvement of a new curriculum,
2. to exchange foreign language teaching and training programs with leading countries which have developed such programs, and also to work in close cooperation with member countries,
3. to exchange ideas about how to accomplish testing and evaluation on this type of language training,
4. to teach the target language/languages, that will be manipulated in common activities, up to a certain level so that the personnel could be able to fulfill their duties,
5. to conduct foreign language teaching, if required, in the target country in which controls and verifications will be carried out.

Thus, the teaching and training of foreign languages will be conducted through task-based courses and Oral Proficiency should be achieved in accordance with STANAG 6001.

A brief foreign language teaching process concerning the Military High Schools, Military Academies and specifically the Army Language School has been touched upon. The guidelines given in this presentation might not completely include the overall foreign language teaching objectives; but they might be the milestones of our objectives. The

workshops will help us produce a more detailed view of in-country foreign language teaching and of further discussion of verifications, objectives and clarification of actual targets.

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