Language in Uniform

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Language Analysis and Training for Defence and Policing Purposes

Edited by

Helen de Silva Joyce
and Elizabeth A. Thomson

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INTRODUCTION

HELEN DE SILVA JOYCE
AND ELIZABETH A. THOMSON

As the title of this volume–*Language in Uniform*–suggests, language education and training are part of life for some men and women in uniform, whether they be in military or police roles. While it might not seem an integral component of military and police work, defence and law enforcement personnel are often called upon to manage domestic and international roles that require an understanding of languages other than their own. Law enforcement and security have become part of foreign affairs with police forces participating in international policing initiatives and military personnel engaging in international deployments, activities that require language education and training. In some cases, it is a language of international engagement, such as English or French, as in NATO operations. In other cases, it is the language of the country to which personnel are deployed. Around the globe, police and military personnel are also faced with language challenges in their domestic security duties, including interaction with overseas tourists and community members who speak any number of languages.

The approach to language learning, in these sectors, has typically been one of developing general proficiency. The view was that having a general command of a language, at either a functional and/or professional level, would provide the necessary underlying skills to manage any additional language demands within work contexts. This approach aligns assessment to proficiency rating scales that consist of sets of abstract statements about language performance that are grouped and graded into bands from minimal to advanced levels. It can be the case that such proficiency scales make no reference to context specific requirements such as those of military or police work.

Over the past three or four decades, teaching programs for overseas students and immigrants have developed robust Language for Specific

Purposes (LSP) approaches, such as English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Employment Purposes (EEP). More recently, it has been recognised that military and police personnel often need to perform specific and routine tasks, as described in the various chapters of this book. This recognition, coupled with budgetary constraints, has meant that organisations responsible for military and police language training have begun to adopt LSP approaches. However, LSP in defence and policing is relatively new and it is for this reason that this volume brings together recent LSP examples in the defence and security sectors from around the world. It includes examples from Europe, South East Asia, Australia and North America. The chapters represent different applications of LSP and range from lesson plans by individual teachers to institution-wide curriculum development at individual language training schools, as well as language advisory board and university research centre responses to LSP issues and testing standardisation.

The volume is divided into three parts. *Part 1–Discourse and needs analysis* focuses on the processes of discourse and needs analysis that provide the basis for curriculum design and development. *Part 2–Curriculum development* provides examples of LSP curriculum projects in English and languages other than English in both military and police contexts. *Part 3–Assessment* examines examples of proficiency assessment, skills assessment and competency-based assessment within military LSP language programs, noting the uneasy links between these kinds of assessment.

The volume opens with a joint chapter by **Mary Jo Di Biase** and **Francesco Gratton**, which details a project between the Italian Army Language School and the Italian Air Force. It offers a description of needs analysis for the highly specific English language requirement of calling in air support in a conflict zone. The project was in response to the need to improve the language capabilities of Italian Forward Air Controllers through the development of a task-based, performance test in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), based on a specific Military Operational English (MOE) course. The Forward Air Controller (FAC) provides guidance to close air support aircraft to ensure that air attacks hit the intended targets and do not injure friendly military personnel. The project involved conducting a needs analysis, visiting the Forward Air Controllers School, interviewing subject matter experts and undertaking qualitative studies to investigate possible interpretations of the new language proficiency requirements and their feasibility for this defence occupation, as established by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

(NATO). In addition, an innovative testing approach, using Google Earth to reflect authentic scenarios, was developed and validated for assessing specific speaking skills to comply with NATO proficiency requirements.

In the same vein, the second chapter by **Elizabeth Thomson** reports on another needs analysis of languages other than English (LOTEs) at the Australian Defence Force School of Languages (DFSL). More and more, Australian Defence Force personnel are deployed to countries where English is not the language of communication and Australian service personnel now conduct themselves in LOTEs with both military stakeholders and civilians. While the School had been offering general proficiency language courses for many years it had not conducted any formal analysis of workplace language requirements. The needs analysis process was triggered by a new requirement to align language training to the competency-based training system of the Australian Army. Serendipitously, this coincided with a directive from the 2009 Defence White Paper, which allocated money for flexible delivery and curriculum redesign. The chapter tracks the process of needs analysis for an LSP course aimed at operational engagement that was to be rolled out in numerous languages such as Indonesian, Arabic, Malay, French and Farsi.

The third chapter in Part 1, by **Ileana Chersan**, presents a lexicological analysis of the language of law enforcement. It addresses the specialised lexicon of law enforcement, which is viewed as an autonomous language variety arising from police work. Specialised terms have been identified using a conceptual approach based on categorisations of specialised vocabularies that have evolved in close connection with social and historical developments in police work. Three categories of terms are identified and illustrated–strictly specialised terms, borderline terms and common language terms. These terms are further described lexically, morphologically, semantically and stylistically, demonstrating that Law Enforcement English (LEE) is a fully-fledged English for Specific Purposes (ESP) branch of language education and training.

The final chapter in this section by **Helen de Silva Joyce** and **Elizabeth Thomson** outlines the linguistic analysis that underpinned the redesign of the LOTE courses for Operational Engagement at DFSL. This involved the use of Systemic Functional Linguistics to analyse the spoken and written texts used in operational tasks in deployment contexts. The discourse analysis identified the kinds of language used in military planning, noting a range of written and spoken genres that manage the

guidance, compliance and surveillance of military activities. The process revealed the roles that military language users play in joint, multilingual planning exercises and the lexicogrammatical features of the language of planning. These two kinds of analyses informed the initial design phase of the Operational Engagement course.

The chapters in the second part of this volume critique the implementation of curriculum design and development through a number of case studies. The chapter by **Jaclyn Gishbaugher** presents a case study of English language training for the Indonesian National Police that was conducted at the National Police Language Centre in Jakarta. The pilot program adopted an ESP framework and demonstrates that language for law enforcement is a distinct field of LSP. The development team was faced with the difficult task of motivating large numbers of beginner students of English around a curriculum built on current policing and possible future duties. These future duties may include participation in international missions with the United Nations, as part of Formed Police Units in Darfur, Sudan or as Police Advisors in either South Sudan or Haiti. In order to participate, all Indonesian Police Officers are required to pass an English language exam.

The chapter by **Sue Casey** presents a second case study, this time offering an example of a military LSP curriculum for LOTEs at DFSL. Following on from the needs analysis, as described in Part 1 Chapter 2, the paper describes the challenges faced by the design and development team in writing the outcomes statements arising from the needs analysis, sourcing and adapting authentic language texts, particularly in the area of military planning, and developing a scenario-based assessment plan. The experience at DFSL illustrates the need for close cooperation between military subject matter experts (SMEs) and civilian language professionals in order to produce an LSP course that is appropriate and which can address routine workplace language requirements across different deployment contexts, cultures and languages. The case study describes the process of design and development of an LSP course for operational engagement.

The chapter by **Terry Royce** focuses on a writing course for police officers working in a counter-terrorism policing context in Australia. The writing demands of this context involve researching information from a variety of sources and then preparing reports that serve different purposes including threat assessments, recommendations for tactical support units and reports. The readers of these documents, higher in the chain of command, require well-sourced and conceptualised documents that are

written succinctly. These writing demands reflect those in higher education research contexts and in this chapter the author describes how he adapted activities from a research literacies program in a university context to a professional writing course for police-officer researchers.

The fourth chapter in Part 2 by **Annette Nolan** discusses the challenges of facilitating the development of advanced learners of English in the Scandinavian military context. Her paper focuses on *meaningful interaction*, which relates to the military students' professional language needs and the immediate context of their learning in university programs. These programs include content instruction and military exercises in English on topics relevant to war studies within a Masters degree. Her paper describes a series of lessons taught at the Swedish National Defence College that bring together two program components, namely the need to understand the military content of their subjects in English and their professional English language workplace requirements. She describes how she used reading comprehension and the genre of presentation to develop a repertoire of questioning strategies for application in the defence workplace.

And finally, Part 2 concludes with a paper by **Helen de Silva Joyce**, **Beth Foster** and **Elizabeth Thomson**. As the title, *Professional development and curriculum change: perils and pitfalls* suggests, the paper focuses on the role of professional development in curriculum change. It focuses on a professional development (PD) program that was developed to support curriculum redesign and ensure that teachers were professionally ready to work with a new curriculum and to adopt a new approach to teaching. The depth of change meant that a front-on training course needed to be followed by ongoing PD, involving formal sessions, mentoring and weekly seminars, delivered at points of need and in response to evaluations of piloting of the new curricula. The chapter pays particular attention to one redesigned course–*Military Communications Skills*–and the PD designed in response to the characteristics of the teaching context and the need to bridge the knowing-doing gap that developed as a result of these characteristics and the extent of the change.

The final section of the volume is concerned with assessment and the challenges of assessing advanced levels of language, the impact of profiling learners for text reliability and the validity of proficiency testing. The chapters also address possible linkages between proficiency and competency-based assessment.

The first paper in this section is a collaborative effort by **Jana Vasilj-Begovic, Gerard Seinhorst, Martha Herzog, Mary Jo Di Biase, Dugald Sturges, Annette Nolan, Ulla Gudnason, Peggy Garza, Emilija Nesheva and Michael Adubato**. It examines the interpretation of the *Expert* level of the NATO Standardisation Agreement (STANAG 6001). This advanced level of proficiency is usually required in academic and professional settings and is considered beyond the language requirements of NATO positions that require English. In order to demonstrate that this level is above what is required of NATO positions, the grade was reviewed by a working group of NATO's advisory board, the Bureau for International Language Coordination (BILC). The review evaluated the descriptors, the learner profile and the knowledge and skills required at the *Expert* level and considered the implications of these for testing. During this process, the working group noted that despite the testing being proficiency-based in type, the tasks selected for testing tended to relate to topical domains associated with the profession of examinees, in this case, the military profession. This is due to that fact that productive skills are typically required for a specific purpose and audience. This reality, and the test samples presented in the chapter, point to the difficulties of testing for general proficiency at advanced levels, while attempting to avoid context or profession-specific content.

In contrast, the chapter by **Cathie Elder, John Pill, Kellie Frost** and **Cathy Bow** reports on a review of the possible linkages between the Australian Defence Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ADLPRS) and competency-based assessment. At DFSL, the shift from courses assessed through general proficiency scales to LSP competency-based courses and criterion-based assessment posed a challenge for testing practices and administrative recognition of language proficiency. The assessment of successful course participation had shifted to criterion-based assessment of tasks that simulate basic operational requirements or competencies in the field. This meant that the course competencies needed to be mapped against the ADLPRS scale. The chapter describes two small-scale empirical studies designed to test the linkage potential between the two approaches to assessment. While general proficiency scales are useful as a reference point for curriculum design, the study demonstrated that linking the outcomes of context-specific competency-based assessment to general proficiency scales is difficult to justify theoretically, and is potentially unreliable. Reporting of achievement, it would appear, is best done in course-specific terms.

The volume concludes with a paper on profiling second language reading abilities in a military context by **Fiona Daniels** and **Kate Weir**. It describes the development and evaluation of six tests, at three Standard Language Profile levels, designed to assess the reading ability of civilian and military personnel posted to a military headquarters. It offers advice, particularly to the low resource test designer, on how to produce reliable and valid reading assessments and what factors to consider when organising to pilot test items. The authors identify and discuss three factors that affect the validity and reliability of the tests designed to profile second language reading ability–text selection, the question format and the test takers. They offer insights into the usefulness of various methods of analysing test items and text readability for designing reading tests.

As the editors, we are grateful to Cambridge Scholars for agreeing to publish the volume and providing the opportunity to bring together a collection of papers that reflect the diverse work being done in the often overlooked LSP fields of defence, security and policing. It was only possible to produce this volume through the generosity and the dedication of the contributors who found time in their busy lives to reflect on their professional practice. We are grateful that they were willing to share their unique experiences with the language education and training community. We sincerely thank them for their efforts and patience. A thank you also needs to be extended to the employer organisations that gave permission for the authors to contribute their chapters to this volume and to copyright holders for permission to use their materials.

There is value in critiquing past processes to ensure future success. All language course design, development and implementation evolve, and improvements are made through ongoing trial and error, evaluations of student experience and workplace validation. Therefore, the curriculum work described in this book may now have been further developed, as courses have continued to improve and evolve. However, as language learning is more and more becoming an integral part of life in uniform, we hope that this volume extends the theoretical and practical understanding of LSP and adequately acknowledges the groundbreaking work that has been done and continues to be done with this approach in language teaching and assessment for defence, security and law enforcement purposes.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAL–advanced academic literacy

AAP-6–NATO glossary of terms

ABH–aggravated bodily harm

ADF–Australian Defence Force

ADLPRS–Australian Defence Language Proficiency Rating Scale

aka–also known as

ANA–Afghan National Army

AO–area of operations

ARO–Aliens Registration Office

ARV–armed response vehicle

ASLPR–Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale

BG–Brigadier General

BILC–Bureau of International Language Coordination

BPT–be prepared to

CAL–Centre for Army Lessons

CAS–close air support

CAV–cavalry

CBLT–content-based language teaching

CBT–cross-boundary team

CEFR–Common European Framework of Reference

CID–Criminal Investigation Department

CIMIC–civilian-military cooperation

CIS–communications and information systems

CLO–Course Learning Outcome

CO–Commanding Officer

COA–course of action

COY–company

CSWE–Certificates in Spoken and Written English

CT–counter terrorism

DCI–Detective Chief Inspector

DFSL–Defence Force School of Languages

DIISRTE–Department of Innovation, Industry, Science, Research Training and Education

DOB–date of birth

DSAT–Defence Systems Approach to Training

DTG–date time group

DTI–duty task inventory

DTM–Defence Training Model

D+27 1200HRS–Day of operation starts plus 27 days at 1200 hours (noon)

DWI–Driving while intoxicated

EAP–English for Academic Purposes

EFL–English as a Foreign Language

ESP–English for Specific Purposes

FAC–Forward Air Controller

FBI–Federal Bureau of Investigation

FOB–forward operating base

FPU–Formed Police Units

H–HR–the time the mission is to commence

ICITAP–International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program

IELTS–International English Language Testing System

INF– infantry

INP– Indonesian National Police

INTERPOL–International Criminal Police Organisation

IOT–in order to

ISLA–instructed second language acquisition

JMAP–joint military appreciation process

LEE–law enforcement English

LG–learner guide

LLD–learner-led discourse

LOG–logistics

LOTE–languages other than English

LPA–Language Proficiency Allowance

LSP–language for specific purposes

L2–second language

MA BACK BRIEF–D+28 1300–mission analysis back brief day of operation plus 28 days at 1 pm

MECH–mechanised

MET–Metropolitan Police Service

MLO–Module Learning Outcome

MOE–Military Operational English

NATO–North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NLT–no later than

NMB–D+30 1600–no move before day of operation plus 30 days at 4 pm

NSWPS–New South Wales Police Service

NTM–notice to move

OE–Operational Engagement

OED–Oxford English Dictionary

OET–Occupational English Test

OMLT–Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team

OPSO–operations officer

OGRP–orders group

PA–Police Advisers

PACE–Police and Criminal Evidence Act

QM–Quarter Master

QRF–Quick Reaction Force

RAAF–Royal Australian Air Force

ROE–Rules of Engagement

SFL–Systemic Functional Linguistics (model of language)

SLP–standard language profile

SME–subject matter expert

SMEAC–Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration and Logistics, Command and Signal

SOCO–Scenes of Crime Officer

SOP–Standard Operating Procedure

SSM–system/security support manager

STANAG 600 –NATO Standard Agreement 600 language scale

SNDC–Swedish National Defence College

TACON–tactical control

TBA–to be announced

TBH–Trafficking in human beings

TBLT–task-based language teaching

TLD–teacher-led discourse

TMPSS–Training Management Package Support System

TNA–training needs analysis

UN–United Nations

VET–vocational education and training

WNGO–warning order

PART 1:

DISCOURSE AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

CHAPTER ONE

INTERPRETING THE SPEAKING PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS OF FORWARD AIR CONTROLLERS

MARY JO DI BIASE
AND FRANCESCO GRATTON

Introduction

The design of tests for assessing communicative performance has been greatly influenced by current ideas about the role of language in communication and, in particular, by the implications of those ideas for the teaching and testing of languages for specific purposes. As Carroll (1980, 8) states:

> Few courses have been designed with the specific needs of particular learners in mind. Courses in *intermediate English* or *advanced English* are conducted indiscriminately for doctors, waiters, tourists and scientists. Even courses purporting to teach, say, *English for Doctors* may turn out to be language-based programs founded not on needs or job analyses but on educated guesses, and casual observations of the communicative activities of doctors, recognising that they have special needs but lacking the techniques needed to specify those needs.

Given that the purpose of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course is to enable learners to function adequately in a target situation, that is, the situation in which the learners will use the language they are learning, then the ESP course design process should proceed by first identifying the target situation and then carrying out a rigorous analysis of the linguistic features of that situation.

Nonetheless, this poses a challenge, even for native teachers of the language. The required English for specific purposes normally consists of

spoken and written discourse in academic or workplace settings, which is unfamiliar to most native and non-native speakers and thus requires specialised analysis and/or training. In fact, specific purpose language includes not only knowledge of a specific part of the language but also competency in the skills required to use this language and, needless to say, any claims in relation to teaching English for specific purposes are usually accompanied by claims in relation to assessing English for specific purposes.

This chapter focuses on a collaborative project between the Italian Army Language School and the Italian Air Force that responded to the needs to improve Italian Forward Air Controllers' language capabilities through the development of a task-based, performance test in English for Specific Purposes, based on a specific Military Operational English (MOE) course. The primary function of a Forward Air Controller (FAC) is to provide guidance to close air support aircraft to ensure that their attack hits the intended target and does not injure friendly troops (freedictionary.com – 22.9.13). The project involved carrying out a needs analysis, assistance visits to the Forward Air Controllers School, interviews with subject matter experts and qualitative studies to investigate possible interpretations of the new language proficiency requirements and their feasibility for this defence occupation, as established by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). Furthermore, a unique testing method, using Google Earth to reflect authentic scenarios, was developed and validated for assessing specific speaking skills, to comply with NATO's new proficiency requirements.

English for Specific Purposes (Forward Air Controller)

Assessing English proficiency following specifically focused courses poses unique challenges as all tests are developed for a purpose. As Douglas (2004: 1) points out, "there is a continuum of specificity from very general to very specific, and a given test may fall at any point on the continuum". The extent to which performance tests or language for specific purpose tests can approximate real-life settings is disputed. Some writers (e.g. Douglas 2004) argue for a continuum from direct to indirect tests, offering ways of approximating real life as closely as possible in test situations and introducing a category of semi-direct tests. Others (e.g. Bachman 1990) have argued that the actual test encounter is authentic in itself, underscoring the importance of construct validity in test construction, and have argued for a more precise analysis of the critical

features of communicative language use. According to this view, assessment becomes the testing not of authentic texts but of authentic features that underlie these texts.

Bachman (1990, 301) defines the real-life approach as the extent to which test performance replicates some specified non-test language performance. This approach seeks to develop tests that mirror the *reality* of non-test language use and its prime concern is the appearance or perception of the test, which may affect test performance and, ultimately, the accuracy with which the test performance predicts future non-test performance.

Task is defined as an activity or action that is carried out as a result of processing or understanding language. For example, drawing a map while listening to a tape or listening to an instruction and performing a command may be categorised as tasks (Richards and Rogers 1986, 289 in Nunan 2004, 2). As Douglas states (2004, 2), what is important is that the authenticity of the task is determined by the fact that it shares critical features of tasks, of interest to the test-taker, in the target language use situation, in this case the Forward Air Controller's theatre of operation. *Test construct* refers to the underlying language ability a test sets out to measure and the most important factor, when designing tasks, is the construct-related information that the test scores must deliver. Collaboration with the practitioners in the specialist area is paramount and a prerequisite for the design of a special purpose test (Douglas 2004, 3), as test developers must take into account the factors that dictate the type of task, that is:

- **the content** or how well the task represents the domain to be measured
- **the criterion** or how well test performance predicts the future performance or estimates current performance on some valued measure other than the test itself
- **the construct** or how well test performance reflects the underpinning ability to perform the task in accordance with the requirements of the job description

Background

NATO decision-makers decided to increase the required language proficiency levels of Forward Air Controllers from Level 2–*Functional*

ability to Level 3–*Expert* (NATO STANAG[1] 6001 ed. 4[2]). This followed a friendly-fire incident that occurred in 2009 due to miscommunication between a pilot and a Forward Air Controller (British Army, 2005).[3] The NATO Standardised Agreement regulating FAC operations in theatre, states that:

> English is the language to be used when controlling NATO aircraft. Therefore, FACs need adequate knowledge of and proficiency in the English language to the equivalent of NATO STANAG 6001 Level 3. The competency examination should be biased towards military, particularly FAC, terminology. LOs (Laser Operators) who are required to speak to aircrew will also adhere to this standard.
> (STANAG 3797 ed. 4 2009: 5)

According to STANAG 6001 ed. 4, candidates with this level of proficiency are defined as having the ability to support an opinion, hypothesise, analyse and hold their own on abstract topics such as science, technology, culture and economics. They are also able to communicate in their own professional fields in content domains such as briefings and meetings and in professional, formal and informal social contexts. At this level of English, the language user should be able to perform these language tasks in the specified domains accurately with only occasional errors that do not impede communication, albeit pronunciation is still obviously foreign. The following extract gives a clearer picture of speaking proficiency at this level.

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[1] A NATO Standardisation Agreement (STANAG) defines processes, procedures, terms and conditions for common military or technical procedures or equipment between the member countries of the alliance. The NATO states ratify a STANAG and implement it within their own military. The purpose is to provide common operational and administrative procedures and logistics, so one member nation's military may use the stores and support of another member's military. STANAGs also form the basis for technical interoperability between a wide variety of communication and information systems (CISs) essential for NATO and Allied operations. (http://en.wikipedia.org - 22.9.13)

[2] The NATO Standardised Agreement 6001 ed. 4 is the NATO document that describes language proficiency in 5 base levels from 0 to 5 adopted in partner nations in 1976. It derives from the Interagency Language Roundtable of Language Proficiency (ILR) of the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Government.

[3] March 2003, the U.S. Air Force investigation later stated that the fault was with both pilots' actions in the incident, including "cognitive" and "physical task overload, ineffective communication and failure to recognise identification panels by the two pilots".

> Able to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social and professional topics. Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with considerable ease. Can use the language to perform such common professional tasks as answering objections, clarifying points, justifying decisions, responding to challenges, supporting opinion, stating and defending policy. Can demonstrate language competence when conducting meetings, delivering briefings or other extended and elaborate monologues, hypothesising, and dealing with unfamiliar subjects and situations. Can reliably elicit information and informed opinion from native speakers. Can convey abstract concepts in discussions of such topics as economics, culture, science, technology, philosophy as well as his/her professional field. Produces extended discourse and conveys meaning correctly and effectively. Use of structural devices is flexible and elaborate. Speaks readily and in a way that is appropriate to the situation. Without searching for words or phrases, can use the language clearly and relatively naturally to elaborate on concepts freely and make ideas easily understandable to native speakers. May not fully understand some cultural references, proverbs, and allusions, as well as implications of nuances and idioms, but can easily repair the conversation. Pronunciation may be obviously foreign. Errors may occur in low frequency or highly complex structures characteristic of a formal style of speech. However, occasional errors in pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary are not serious enough to distort meaning, and rarely disturb the native speaker.
> (STANAG 6001 ed. 4, Speaking Level 3)

It is a common belief among language experts, well versed in the STANAG descriptors, that Level 3 across the four skills is not often attainable with instruction alone. The Bureau of International Language Coordination (BILC) [4] considers that additional substantial exposure, although it does not define this, to the target language is necessary to attain this level of proficiency (unpublished training material). However, considering this in relation to STANAG 6001 ed. 4 and STANAG 3797 ed. 4, cited above, which prescribe an FAC's language proficiency requirement, a contradiction arises. By definition, proficiency entails language behaviour independent of any instructional program but to attain a *professional level* proficiency (Level 3*)* that is "biased towards military, particularly FAC, terminology" (STANAG 3797 ed. 4 2009: 5) requires formal LSP training and instruction that focuses on the specific realm of professional interest.

Contrary to "an infinite number of unique instances … with a negotiation of meaning which makes up the normal domain of language

[4] BILC is NATO's consultative body on Language Training and Testing matters.

use" (Bachman 1990 in Douglas 2004, 13), the scenarios in which an FAC is involved dictate procedural phraseology made up of specific vocabulary, acronyms and phrases which make it possible to predict future English language communicative events between FACs and pilots. The role of a Forward Air Controller is of paramount importance in theatres of operation. The pivotal role of FACs is made clear in the STANAG 3797 mission statement which states that "[a] soldier from a forward position can deliver joint indirect fire and direct the actions of joint combat aircraft engaged in operations in close proximity to friendly fire". Typical tasks that a Forward Air Controller needs to perform include:

- advising ground commander and pilots
- planning Rules of Engagement (ROE) and Close Air Support (CAS) weapons capabilities
- making risk estimates of collateral damage implications
- requesting use and timely submission of air support
- analysing tactical situations and how the crew and the aircraft can contribute to determining the type of CAS
- describing weather conditions, terrain, urban environment and threats
- detecting targets based on ground commands
- providing situation updates

While performing these tasks, a Forward Air Controller communicates with pilots from coalition forces who are native and non-native speakers of English in a relatively short interval and, in many cases, under strong psychological stress. Rapid, accurate and intelligible communication, in highly delicate and precise military operations such as these, can mean the difference between life and death for friendly forces, just as much as prior military training.

The Project

Notwithstanding the contradiction outlined above, NATO member nations must adhere to the new language standards that create a higher demand on instructional programs. These demands include lengthier courses, increased staff numbers, prolonged absence of students from their main posts in order to attend language courses and budget-related issues. The decision to increase the proficiency level was made without first determining if this increase was attainable and, above all, realistic and necessary. Nevertheless, the Italian Army Language School, in collaboration with the Italian Air Force Language School, responded to this challenge by

carrying out a careful comparative analysis of STANAG 3797 and 6001 to find a possible application of the language requirements in the specific theatre of operation.

One of the first steps was to analyse both Standardised Agreements to find possible correspondences between what an FAC job entails and the language functions involved in this job. The job tasks of FACs were matched against the STANAG descriptors and Table 1.1 outlines the correspondences that were found.

STANAG 3797	**STANAG 6001 ed. 4**
Can name parts, tools and simple facts	Level 1 *Rehearsed speech* Level 2 *State facts*
Can determine step-by-step procedures	Level 2 *Instructions and directions*
Can identify why and when the task can be done and why each step is needed	Level 2 *Narration*
Can predict and resolve problems	Level 2 *Handle non-routine situations*
Can identify relationships of basic facts and state general principles	Level 2 *State facts*
Can analyse facts and draw conclusions	Level 2 *State facts*
Can evaluate conditions and make proper decisions	Level 2 *Handle non-routine situations*
Can evaluate Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) and Mission Reporting (MISREP) in terms of activity, location, time, munitions, number of tanks destroyed	Level 2 *Past narration*

Table 1.1–Correspondences between FAC job tasks and STANAG descriptors

The table shows how an FAC in a theatre of operation would really only require STANAG Levels 1 and 2 proficiency in the skills of speaking, reading and listening and a Level 1 in writing. The language functions required are describing, narrating in major timeframes and giving directions and instructions on predictable, concrete topics and domains. This was further confirmed by a needs analysis, conducted

through the use of questionnaires, with responses revealing that, especially in reading and writing, the level required could easily be STANAG 6001 Level 1. This is because the reading entails comprehension of *Special Instructions* and *Rules of Engagement* and writing tasks require FACs to check boxes in a predefined form with the option of adding comments in a small area through writing a loose collection of sentences.

The topical domains and language functions listed in STANAG 3797 do not align to Level 3 proficiency. The only reference to the Level 3 descriptor for speaking was in the need for *effectiveness,* with the STANAG 3797 job task–*Effective (flexible and responsive) communication*–aligning with the STANAG 6001 Level 3 descriptor–*Effective communication.* Therefore, it is clear that it is only in terms of accuracy, i.e. *effective* but also implying *ready,* that a correspondence with STANAG 6001 Level 3 descriptors exists. The question then remained as to how accreditation could be awarded without necessarily having to adhere to the strict, language requirements of Level 3 across the four skills as dictated in STANAG 3797.

A stakeholders' meeting was held at the Italian Army Language School in July 2011 to try to find a solution. The working group brainstormed around STANAG 6001 proficiency descriptors, investigating them in terms of content, task and accuracy. Typical of Level 2, the content areas for FACs remained in the realm of concrete, job-related areas and tasks that involved describing, narrating in three major timeframes, with a prevalence of present and future tenses, and stating facts. However, in terms of accuracy, no allowance could be made for errors that could distort meaning, which STANAG Level 2 still allows for. It was determined that FAC proficiency would be equivalent to STANAG Level 2 in terms of content areas and language functions but that FACs would need to perform the tasks in the content areas within STANAG Level 3 accuracy requirements:

> … reliably, effectively, clearly, in a way understandable to native speakers[5], pronunciation may be obviously foreign. However, occasional errors in pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary are not serious enough to distort meaning, and rarely disturb the native speaker.
> (STANAG 6001 ed. 4 Speaking level 3)

[5] Many of the communicative events that FACs are called upon to perform are with pilots who are native speakers of English.

It was with this definition of Level 3 speaking accuracy in mind that it was decided that FAC candidates would sit for a mono-level entry test to screen Level 2 proficient candidates in listening and speaking, as these two skills were felt to be the most important in the FAC's job. Subsequently, successful candidates would attend a five-week course in ESP, the completion of which would determine who would then attend the military course for FAC accreditation. Qualified instructors were selected and trained by subject-matter experts in the field. The latter also aided in the compilation of the teaching materials that needed to be authentic and unclassified. These materials included actual videos and presentations outlining the procedures that FACs would need to follow in the language. The course focused on specific descriptive language of the weather, terrain and weaponry, with special attention paid to phonetics and pronunciation, along with precision and accuracy in conveying instructions and descriptions to fictional pilots.

Assessing FAC Candidates

The test construct therefore consisted of measuring the speaking ability that FACs displayed when involved in performing tasks in target language use situations. The domain of content was specified precisely (Douglas 2004, 16) and determined the criterion for performance. Precise, detailed specifications for the speaking test were laid down and included not only the features of the specific purpose target language use situation, but also the criteria for assessing performance, as seen in Table 1.2 below.

As mentioned earlier, FACs are involved in scenarios in which procedural phraseology is standardised and predictable. A corpus of specific terminology, along with a list of most frequently used acronyms and phrases, was compiled through classroom observations, subject matter consultations and specific unclassified training material. The development of the corpus in a precise and accurate fashion was the basis on which an analytic scale was developed. The criteria reflected the construct of the test in terms of pronunciation (as per STANAG 3797 and equivalent to STANAG 6001 Level 3), richness and variety of specific vocabulary "with a bias toward military, especially FACs, terminology*"* (as per STANAG 3797) and promptness of performance. Accomplishment of task was not part of the assessment as it was felt that in paired speaking tests, a partner's proficiency could impact on the test-taker's successful completion of a task.

	Organisation of response	**Delivery**
5	The response is well organised with varied vocabulary used. The test-taker clearly covers all the salient aspects to perform task (e.g. weather conditions, terrain features, location, size, movement and description of objects – size, color, coordinates) readily and reliably.	The response is fluent, highly comprehensible, effective and accurate. Very few minor problems with pronunciation, stress and intonation that do not affect intelligibility. Effective use of specific vocabulary.
4	The response is organised with somewhat varied vocabulary used. The test-taker covers most of the salient aspects to perform task (e.g. weather conditions, terrain features, location, size, description of objects – size, colour, coordinates) in a fairly readily and reliable manner.	The response is generally fluent, comprehensible and accurate. Noticeable problems with pronunciation, stress and intonation do not generally affect intelligibility. Minor errors in vocabulary use.
3	The response is adequately organised with sufficient vocabulary used. The test-taker covers some of the salient aspects to perform task (e.g. weather conditions, terrain features, location, size, description of objects – size, colour, coordinates) in a somewhat ready and reliable manner.	The response is comprehensible but problems with pronunciation, stress and intonation may interfere with intelligibility at times. Many times, vocabulary is either inappropriate or limited.
2	The response is somewhat organised with some basic vocabulary used. The test-taker covers few salient aspects to perform task (e.g. weather conditions, terrain features, location, size, description of objects – size, colour, coordinates) in a sufficiently ready and reliable manner.	The response is comprehensible only when examiner asks for clarification and/or repetition. Serious problems with pronunciation, intonation and stress, along with long pauses and hesitation, interfere with intelligibility. Vocabulary is limited most of the time.
1	The response is a loose collection of rehearsed sentences/phrases. The test-taker fails to cover salient aspects to perform task (e.g. weather conditions, terrain features, location, description of objects – size, object, coordinates) in a sufficiently ready and reliable manner.	The response is very limited in that frequent errors in grammar and vocabulary completely impede communication. Vocabulary is insufficient.
0	Not assessable	Not assessable

Table 1.2–Criteria for assessing FAC speaking performance

Test Specifications

The speaking component of the assessment lasted 15 minutes and included a paired conduct of what is known as a *talk-on*, which is a communicative event in which an FAC and a pilot are engaged in a sequence in which the pilot and/or FAC:

1 reads again/acknowledges messages
2 requests information
3 offers information
4 requests information again
5 asks pilot or FAC to do something
6 controls, confirms and clarifies
7 approves or negates requests

Candidates were given instructions in their native language explaining how the test would be conducted, what their roles would be, what assessment criteria would be used, the time within which they had to perform each talk-on and that the exam would be recorded for accurate rating. Candidates had also received a copy of the test specifications well in advance. An assessor was present in the room and sat outside the candidate's line of sight. The assessor had a list of specific terminology and phraseology, which the test-taker should use in each talk-on. As the talk proceeded, the assessor recorded the terms and phrases used. These lists had been prepared beforehand and included the possible variety of descriptive language pertaining to each particular scenario. Furthermore, an analytic grid was created which reflected the construct in terms of richness of vocabulary, of organisational discourse and of effectiveness and precision in delivery, including pronunciation and stress[6]. The points on this scale ranged from 0 to 10, which were then added to other scores on the other components of the test. A cut score established at 70% determined the pass/fail on the entire test and qualified FAC participants for candidacy at FAC Italian Armed Forces School.

Procedure

A total of 24 FAC candidates attending a five-week course were paired according to previous experience as FACs in theatre. Each speaking test

[6] Both "effectiveness and pronunciation is obviously foreign" are key qualifiers in STANAG 6001 Level 3 accuracy descriptors.