Materials and Methods for Enhancing Oral English Communication: Learning from STANAG 6001

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Abstract
Clear and appropriate oral communication is essential in military English, both in order to understand and convey highly specialised content within units, and to ensure safety and intelligence when dealing with civilians and other allied or hostile members of foreign military forces (Howard 2001; Footitt and Kelly 2012; Orna-Montesinos 2013). The importance of oral production has resulted not only in NATO research projects on language learning and speech technology, but also in the concrete goals outlined in the extensive descriptions of 'floor' and 'ceiling' can-do and cannot-do statements and the demanding NATO STANAG (Standardization Agreement) 6001 criteria. These are considered of essential importance and lie at the base of specialised courses aiming at preparing foreign service members for STANAG 6001 proficiency tests and international missions where oral comprehension and production are of paramount importance in completing tasks, promoting international collaboration and safeguarding lives. The present study will focus on oral communication education and production in the military community (Pateşan and Zechia 2018) and in military English courses by evaluating three widely used textbooks that were introduced after STANAG 6001's standardising reform in 2000 in view of long-term international collaborations (Solak 2011; 2013) according to the listening and speaking requirements of STANAG levels 2 and 3. It will consider specific parameters, i.e. aims and approaches; methodology of the book; skills, activities and tasks; language type and content; cultural and social factors (Jodai 2012). To conclude, these findings will be discussed in relation to oral communication teaching within civilian ESP contexts.

Key-words: military English, oral production, STANAG 6001, ESP textbooks.

1. Oral communication in military language learning and STANAG 6001 assessments

Since the Second World War, language teaching, and oral communication in particular, has been considered essential in

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military English: during the war in fact, the United States Army sought out translators, code assistants and interpreters of various languages and developed courses that were initially based on the "informant method" (Solak 2013). This method employed an 'informant' who was a native speaker and instructed students on phrases and vocabulary that were imitated and memorised in collaboration with a linguist who did not know the language but endeavoured to extract the structure of the target language from the information provided by the informant (Solak 2013). Such an approach was aligned with concurrent foreign language research, which positioned the native speaker at the centre of the course and underlined the immediate importance of comprehending and speaking. In fact, these skills are essential in understanding and conveying highly specialised content within units, and in ensuring safety and intelligence when dealing with civilians and other allied or hostile members of foreign military forces (Howard 2001; Footitt and Kelly 2012; Orna-Montesinos 2013). The informant method was coupled with the contemporaneous introduction of the "Audiolingual Method" – also known as the "Army Method" – focusing on listening and speaking skills in the acquisition of natural everyday patterns in the target language. Learning was accomplished by means of conditioning and reinforcement, reflecting the union of structural linguistics and behavioural psychology (Abu-Melhim 2009). The development of these and other programmes, and the need to teach military English to allied service members, led to the foundation of the Bureau for International Language Co-ordination (BILC), a consultative and advisory institution for language training for NATO. The BILC was established in 1966 on the basis of the assumption that "competency in English language skills is a pre-requisite for participation in exercises, operations, and positions to NATO Multinational Headquarters in all branches" (Solak 2011: 39).

Throughout the decades, NATO has continued to invest in foreign language training by means of research groups on language learning and speech technology (both in general and in relation to foreign languages) because "language skills […] are now seen as critical operational capabilities – just as important as weapons – on the battlefield and across the entire array of

Departmental missions" (Department of Defense Summit 2007: 6). Its research has been further enriched by the integration of English language teaching with military cultural values that are reflected in the community's communicative patterns and collaboration activities. The latter represents the premises for the NATO STANAG (Standardization Agreement) 6001 Language Proficiency Levels, which were first established in 1976. The goal of STANAG 6001 tests is "to assess an individual's spontaneous abilities in frequently-occurring real-world communicative settings with the level of accuracy expected in those situation [*sic* situations] (BILC Best Practices 2019: 1)".

STANAG 6001 levels are indicated by an SLP (Standard Language Profile) four-digit code, where each number indicates the student's level in one of the four skills of linguistic competence: Skill A (Listening), Skill B (Speaking), Skill C (Reading), Skill D (Writing). The four skills are therefore tested both separately and "as separate steps in a hierarchy of increasingly difficult and complex communication tasks" (BILC Best Practices 2019: 2). Due to the extension of the 1111 – 3333 levels, in 2006, the NATO Standardizing Agency integrated the initial levels with 'plus levels', which are proficiency levels that are located more than halfway between two main levels. Later improvements by NATO include added names that better identify the main characteristics of each level: 1 (Survival); 2 (Functional); 3 (Professional); 4 (Expert); 5 (Highly articulate native). The figure below indicates the correspondence between STANAG 6001 and civilian language certificate levels.

FIGURE 1
Comparison chart STANAG 6001 – CEF – ALTE – ESOL – IELTS

Scales					Tests	
STANAG 6001 Standardized agreement 6001 (1976) **NATO: & BILC:**	**CEF** Common European Framework **COE:** Council of Europe		**ALTE** Scale **ALTE**: Association of Language Testers in Europe		**Cambridge ESOL** **Cambridge ESOL** Examinations. (formerly **UCLES**)	**IELTS** **The British Council, IDP & Cambridge ESOL**
5555 Native/bilingual					(DIPLOMA)	9
4 Fully Professional	**C2** Mastery	Proficient User	**5** Good User	Upper Advanced	CPE	8
	C1 Effective Operational Proficiency		**4** Competent User	Lower Advanced	CAE	7
3 Minimum Professional	**B2+** Vantage+	Independent User	**3** Independent User	Upper Intermediate	FCE	5-6
	B2 Vantage					
2 Limited Working	**B1+** Threshold+		**2** Threshold User	Lower Intermediate	PET	4-5
	B1 Threshold					
1 Elementary	**A2+** Waystage+	Basic User	**1** Waystage User	Elementary	KET	2-3
	A2 Waystage					
0 Unscaled	**A1** Breakthrough		**0** Breakthrough	Beginner		1
						0

Source: adapted from http://elcuk.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/CEF-JFLT-level.pdf.

In addition to emphasising the divergences between different frameworks, the BILC specifically points out that it is not possible to extrapolate a student's current language proficiency level from other language certificates and exams due to the military's unique requirements, standardised testing, and trained testers. Doing so would "inevitably introduce a misalignment that may overstate

the test candidate's proficiency level – which in turn can lead to inappropriate assignments, operational failures, and even loss of life" (BILC Best Practices 2019: 2). These high-risk circumstances further underline the importance of oral communication in emergency situations requiring fast action and equally fast and accurate communication through different channels and audiences. Therefore, as opposed to curriculum-based, achievement-based, and performance tests, where there is greater focus on writing and reading skills, in STANAG 6001 testing, Skills A (listening) and B (speaking) are the first to be noticed and tested. These skills in fact most closely assess an individual's 'spontaneous' communication abilities and are linked to his or her rank, role in international missions, and linguistic and assumed intercultural competence (Howard 2011).

Throughout the years and editions, further improvements have been implemented in the definition of the levels and related descriptors. In contrast with CEFR levels, which indicate only what the learner should be able to accomplish at each level in each main skill, STANAG 6001 levels, starting from Level 1 – survival, include 'floor' and 'ceiling' can-do and cannot-do statements describing all of the necessary achievements to pass the level and the remaining limitations that the learner needs to be aware of and tackle in the future (BILC Policy Recommendation). Furthermore, the skills are non-compensatory, meaning that the student must achieve the aspired level in all skills to be able to advance to the next level. The assessment of the skills is divided into multiple parts and tasks in order to ensure that the candidate is capable of fulfilling all of the requirements that are included in the descriptors of the level.

2. The role of textbooks in military language learning

Since the 2000s, NATO has increasingly focused on standardising and improving its military English courses upon recognising a significant lack of linguistic competence in Eastern Europe, where STANAG 6001 preparation courses have been potentiated. These military English courses reflect the military culture and community, so the teacher takes on the role of a leader, and "It is an instructor's connection with his or her students that creates the learning

environment" (Brânduşa-Oana and Dragomir forthcoming) and selects the most suitable textbook to prepare foreign service members for language proficiency exams and international missions and emergencies based on STANAG 6001 'floor' and 'ceiling' skills. In such a context, "Textbooks play a pivotal role in the realm of language teaching and learning and they are looked upon as an indispensable vehicle for foreign language learning [...] textbooks serve many roles in an EFL classroom, namely teacher, map, resource, trainer, authority, and ideology" (Naji Meidani and Pishgadam 2013: 84).

Textbooks are especially important for teaching oral communication because they map out the type and order of interaction that the learner will have to enact while promoting "social routinization" (Prabhu 1992 in Hutchinson and Torres 1994) to make the execution of individual and composite tasks and goals familiar and spontaneous. In fact, the aim of the instructions is to make military students act out conversational contexts to improve their "unrehearsed, general language communication ability" (Pateşan and Zechia 2018: 354) with individual peers, and the classroom enables them to perform flexibly in a variety of professional situations and registers and become aware of potentially misguiding or even dangerous mistakes in miscommunication. 'Routinization' is also familiar to military students, in that it recalls the drills, trial error and readjustment procedure that is typical of their training and readiness preparation; in turn, "Training ingrains semantic understanding, which should produce predictable responses to orders, necessary for military success" (Hawryluk 2010: 227). Moreover, social routinization and the task-based teaching that put it in practice respond to a common twofold limit in oral ESP teaching: lack of motivation due to the perception that communicating in the target language is difficult, and focus on form rather than meaning and use in detached, abstract circumstances (Marsakawati 2015).

Having introduced the STANAG 6001 language proficiency tests and the role of oral communication in military English courses, the present study will focus on oral communication teaching in military English textbooks following STANAG 6001's reforms in language proficiency training in 2000. This will be done by presenting the methods and aims underlying the analysis in section 3, and then

considering how listening and speaking skills are introduced and taught in three military textbooks in section 4. Section 5 will present reflections on how these approaches to teaching oral comprehension and production could be of use in a civilian professional learning environment.

3. Methodology and aims

The present study draws on mainstream ELT literature, and more specifically on textbook evaluation (Williams 1983; Cunningsworth 1995; Richards 2001), later presented in Miekley (2005) and Jodai (2012) and applies their criteria to explore oral communication (listening and speaking skills) in military textbooks, and more specifically their types of activities, participants, and assessment methods. Two particular levels (Intermediate, B1-B2 for the CEFR, corresponding to STANAG 6001 Levels 2 Functional – 3 Professional) were chosen for all textbooks because of their "added emphasis on operational terminology and procedures" (Solak 2011: 39). Accordingly, the analysis will be accompanied where necessary with references to the latest 'floor' and 'ceiling' descriptors for STANAG 6001 listening comprehension and speaking production levels 2 and 3 (NATO Standard ATrainP-5 Language Proficiency Levels 2016) to underline the relevance of the tasks and activities.

The study will focus on the three publicly available Level 2-3 textbooks that were published after the 2000 reforms of the STANAG 6001: *Campaign 2* (2005); *Command & Control* (2011); *Military English: Tactical and Peacekeeping Operations* (2019), in light of the revised criteria and the significant internationalisation of STANAG 6001 assessment requirements. By doing so, it will verify whether it is true that "each new generation of books is more comprehensive and more highly structured than the last" (Hutchinson and Torres 1994: 316) and how oral communication skills are taught in such a high-risk professional environment. This further justifies the choice of the intermediate level of competence, where students already have basic knowledge of the language and are therefore inserted into professional communicative contexts and directly confronted with urgent goals and functions. Such reasoning leads to the following research questions:

R1: How are listening and speaking skills introduced and practiced in military English textbooks?
R2: Are metadiscursive and intercultural communicative strategies related to oral communication included in military English textbooks?

To answer these questions, a small selection of the common textbook evaluation criteria that Jodai (2012) singled out by cross referencing previous studies will be observed for each textbook:
– aims and approaches
– methodology of the book
– skills, activities and tasks
– language type and content
– cultural and social factors.

4. Analysis of the textbooks

The present analysis will explore oral communication (listening and speaking skills) in three widely used military English textbooks following the 2000 STANAG 6001 reform in accordance with the previously listed criteria. It will do so by observing their approach to oral communication in individual units and the gradual development that accompanies the learner through the military English courses and increasingly demanding professional contexts that he or she will have to deal with.

The textbooks will be analysed and assessed separately in this section due to the different quantity and type of exercises presented. Such divergences are presumably based on the number of hours and intensity of the course at hand, as well as the learner's starting level and the specific military professional environment. The materials present a common core curriculum that reflects the homogenous STANAG 6001 requirements and objectives but implement different types of activities and in varying proportions to enhance learners' oral communication skills.

4.1. *Campaign 2* (2005)

The second volume of the *Campaign* military English course (hitherto referred to as "CAM") is positioned between the B1 (SLP 2222) and beginning of the B2 level (roughly SLP 3333) according

to the cover "from low intermediate to beyond level 2 of NATO's STANAG 6001 system of levels (equivalent to the Council of Europe's Threshold Level)". It is the only textbook that quantifies the number of hours recommended (200 total, of which 120 using the Student's Book and 80 the Workbook) and may be accompanied by the *Workbook, Teacher's Book* and Class Audio CD with the listening comprehension tracks. As opposed to the other textbooks, the transcripts of the listening comprehension texts are at the end of the volume like other ESP and ELT course books. CAM is composed of 12 units and characterised by a graphic and content-based layout that resembles that of civilian ESP courses. The unit's final aims are clearly indicated in the table of contents and at the top of the pages, and the instructions are formulated as very brief orders. All units are divided into five sections with the letters of the NATO alphabet: "Alpha", introducing the topic with an increasingly difficult reading and related comprehension questions and spoken exercise, a listening comprehension, and occasional exercises on pronunciation, functional English and writing; "Bravo", presenting a map, image or situation to discuss based on grammar, an explanation of the grammar rule with examples and related writing, listening comprehension and conversation; "Charlie", focusing on non-military situations using general English with reading and listening comprehensions, related questions and discussions; "Delta", on everyday military life and related vocabulary with reading and listening comprehension exercises, functional language and conversation; "Echo", revising and applying the content of the unit through reading and listening comprehension practice, as well as written and spoken production. This division allows the sections to maintain a solid structure while adapting the quantity and type of activities to the unit's goal and topic. Oral communication is present in all sections and frequent shifts between numerous interaction, situation and task-based activities make the lessons engaging by providing learners with opportunities to think critically about the most productive and appropriate communicative strategy.

The Charlie section in the middle, as opposed to the beginning or the end of each unit, uses non-military situations to enable learners to communicate and perform everyday actions in non-professional contexts. The related functional language is taught on a meta-discursive level, with explanations about their use, appropriateness

and register, so as to make students aware of consolidated, but often unspoken, practices in military communication:

requests: Could you complete this for me please, sir? (very polite)
Could you process this transfer application, corporal? (polite)
Can you make these copies for me? (neutral). (CAM, Unit 2)

This proves that military English also focuses on linguistic and pragmatic structures that are "important not only for proper communication but also to understand unspoken dynamics" (Strom et al 2012: 68). It also prepares learners for the speaking production level 3 goal: "Understands both explicit and implicit information in a spoken text. Can generally distinguish between different stylistic levels and often recognizes humour, emotional overtones, and subtleties of speech". Such skills indicate that the student is capable of distinguishing between the "literal meaning" of the listening and the speaker's "intended meaning" and understanding when the two are not aligned (Brown and Yule 1983: 56).

The Echo sections provide the opportunity not only to revise, but also elaborate on acquired oral production skills through open questions, case studies and realistic material (e.g., maps, grids, rules, orders). This leads the learner to connect various tasks within articulate stages that are typical of task-based learning and range from presenting a topic to explicitly planning for a final goal (pre-task), assessing the steps of the procedures (task) and outlining one's reasoning clearly and efficiently (language use) (Ellis 2002).

As far as interculturalism is concerned, the cover of the book emphasises that the topics and texts include "a variety of international military contexts, including the US, the UK, NATO and the UN". The peculiarities of linguistic varieties are marked in "World English" boxes and speaking tasks often involve brief instructions and questions on the student's personal preferences or customs in his or her own military and non-military culture:

Work in pairs. Make a list of differences in address forms between the British Army and your country's armed forces.
Now compare your list with the rest of the group. (CAM, Unit 2)

This, along with the variety of speakers in the listening exercises, enables service members to become aware of and accustomed to

various native and non-native interactions and develop relationship-building interactive skills, thus responding to the speaking level 2 goal: "Can interact with native speakers not used to speaking with non-natives, although natives may have to adjust to some limitations". The textbook was in fact prepared by officers from American, British, French and Spanish armies and is best aligned with the standardised internationalisation of the STANAG 6001 curriculum.

4.2. *Command & Control* (2011)

The *Command & Control* textbook (hitherto referred to as "C&C") is the shortest of the three and best suited for brief and intense courses; nevertheless, it endeavours to cover an extensive range of linguistic competence, from the equivalent of a basic A2 to a B1+ level. It is divided into three separate sections called "books", each containing 15 units dealing with increasingly difficult macro areas of interest and tasks, and may be accompanied by an audio CD for teachers containing the listening tracks and a downloadable app for students, which therefore enables the fewer hours in class to be compensated by self-learning and assessment. There is no reference whatsoever to grammar, which indicates that this military English course follows or is accompanied by general English courses and content (Vladi 2013), but the cover states that it is focused on "career focused vocabulary and contexts related to armed forces" and "step-by-step instructions" allowing learners to simulate realistic communicative situations. The importance of vocabulary as a means of providing the necessary elements for oral communication (Juhary 2013) may be seen in the table of contents as divided into "unit-topic" (name of chapter), "vocabulary" (noun phrases and the most extensive part of each unit), and "function" (indicated with a brief –ing verb phrase). As opposed to CAM, each unit follows a very similar order of tasks: reading and comprehension questions, vocabulary exercises, listening and speaking (instructions or conversation) exercises to read, note and use important vocabulary, in accordance with listening comprehension 2 requirement: "Shows ability to follow essential points of discussion or speech on topics in his/her special professional field", and then to check notes/labels or answer brief questions.

The speaking part of each unit is usually positioned at the end and consists in the learner's spoken enactment of the tasks that were dealt with in the unit to prove that he or she can accomplish the speaking production level 2 objective "Able to communicate in everyday social and routine workplace situations". This oral production activity is occasionally accompanied by extra vocabulary, which is intended to be integrated. This structure of tasks and activities recalls traditional approaches to language learning that rely heavily on the teacher's active role but also involves a learner's ability to distinguish essential information within discussions at level 2 listening where he or she "Only occasionally understands words and phrases of statements made in unfavourable conditions (for example, through loudspeakers outdoors or in a highly emotional situation). Can usually only comprehend the general meaning of spoken language from the media or among native speakers in situations requiring understanding of specialized or sophisticated language". The tasks are also therefore calibrated to enable students to be as productive as possible in disadvantageous circumstances.

It is also noteworthy that there is a certain development in tasks and student involvement starting from Unit 6 (Book 1) on "The Soldier's Life: Radio Basics". It focuses entirely on oral communication and the introduction of work in pairs where students are instructed to "act out […] using the procedure words" (C&C, Unit 6), and therefore proposes a simulation, more than a conversation, between colleagues. From this point on there is greater variety in activities and certain instances in which the "listening & speaking" section is articulated in multiple tasks requiring the student to manage a situation that is divided into different roles, registers and subjects like in the example below, which prepares for the speaking level 3 aim "Speaks readily and in a way that is appropriate to the situation":

Two soldiers have encountered a wounded soldier in battle. Listen to their conversation.
Listen again to the conversation. Using the words in the word bank, write down how the soldiers treat the patient. Then tell the class.
field dressing *airway* *breathing* *circulation*
Imagine you are a medic. Explain what your job involves. (C&C, Unit 9, original italics)

From this point there are many final speaking tasks requiring the student to explain something to the class and integrate the explanation with visual support related to the student's occupation by writing down coordinates and drawing maps or routes. Such instructions, depending on the subject that must be explained, accompany the learner in Books 2 and 3 from speaking production level 2 "Can confidently handle most normal, casual conversations on concrete topics such as job procedures, family, personal background and interests, travel, current events" to level 3 "Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with considerable ease" with short speeches and simulated press conferences. The latter objective is further elaborated in later units in which the student is occasionally asked to make predictions or discuss options in detail and prove that he or she "Can demonstrate language competence when conducting meetings, delivering briefings or other extended and elaborate monologues, hypothesizing, and dealing with unfamiliar subjects and situations". The way this is to be accomplished is not specified in the textbook but is the responsibility of the teacher and – by means of feedback – the other students. As a result, this particular textbook is simply a point of reference outlining the course content that leaves space for the subjects to flexibly adjust the rest of the lesson content. Book 3 changes the structure of the lesson by introducing the lesson with questions that prompt learners to provide background information and assess their knowledge on the topic before approaching the unit.

In C&C the spelling and vocabulary is that of American English without any reference to this choice or to any possible differences in varieties that the students may encounter. This implies that this textbook follows the international and standardised linguistic preferences of NATO and not that of the schools and English courses that the foreign students may have attended before or during military school. From this perspective, the textbook favours students' homogenous self-identification as part of an international community rather than a member of a foreign community and leaves all intercultural content to the instructor's discretion.

4.3. *Military English: Tactical and Peacekeeping Operations* (2019)

The final and most recent textbook, *Military English: Tactical and Peacekeeping Operations* (hitherto referred to as "TPO"), is the only

one that positions itself at an "intermediate/B1/STANAG 2" level and applies the conveyed linguistic skills to tactical and peacekeeping operations. The course includes a workbook and downloadable resources (pictures, photographs, maps, audio files and transcripts, briefing slides) for practical reasons, as the cover states: "It is especially designed for low resource environments with one-time internet access to download electronic resources which can be used by students on their smart phones, on tablet computers or projected from a class computer". TPO is more substantial in content, containing 200 two-page units divided into three "phases": "Phase 1" (56 units), a mix of general English, general military English and specialised military English by means of separate boxes called "Language reminders"; "Phase 2" (118 units), specialised military English; "Phase 3" (25 units), practising English to solve tactical and peacekeeping problems involving various military and civilian subjects such as interpreters, the media, and civil disturbances. The course's aims and outcomes – divided into interpersonal skills, professional skills, military copies, and grammar – are listed at the beginning of the textbook as a checklist and are part of the STANAG 6001 requirements that students should be able to accomplish. The tone of the instructions often resembles that of an encouraging teacher rather than a superior, with descriptions of situations to be simulated, how to collaborate with fellow students and what the teacher should do, as in the following example:

> The teacher should listen and prepare feedback on the language of the answers for the end of the game. Consider: were the answers clear? Were they grammatically correct? (TPO, Unit 121)

Grammar activities are gradually integrated with or substituted by interactive listening and speaking tasks or the language analysis of both written and oral production. The latter results in observing the intonation, pause, stress and pronunciation of words and phrases both individually and with colleagues and in determining what must be improved and practiced. Such activities respond to the Level 3 speaking skill aim "occasional errors in pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary are not serious enough to distort meaning, and rarely disturb the native speaker" and have the intent of making students reflect on the purpose of the rules that have been acquired, as may be seen in the following example:

Which of these examples are about plans?
1. I went shopping yesterday.
2. I'm going camping with my kids in the summer.
3. I'm thinking of going to the cinema at the weekend. Do you fancy coming? […] (TPO, Unit 32)

The textbook thus promotes fundamental metacognitive and linguistic awareness, for "the important skill that learners need to acquire is not the knowledge about how probable a certain feature is in a certain discipline, but rather, the ability to recognize, analyze, and/or estimate probabilistic variation in language features depending on the text encountered" (Antony 2011: 11). Moreover, it is part of STANAG 6001 level 3 listening and speaking skills assessments, as is the introduction of class activities that recreate difficult listening conditions (noises, distractions and lack of time) by asking students to speak at the same time, mingle questions or purposefully make mistakes that must be discerned. It is also the only textbook to distinguish between instructing students to either repeat information they have just heard in their own words, or to repeat it with the exact words that were previously used. The former instruction prepares students for listening comprehension level 2 requirement "Can reliably understand face-to-face speech in a standard dialect, delivered at a normal rate with some repetition and rewording, by a native speaker not used to speaking with non-natives", while the latter does the same for level 3 "Can follow accurately the essentials of conversations among educated native speakers, lectures on general subjects and special fields of competence, reasonably clear telephone calls, and media broadcasts".

In the first two phases, military English units are alternated with others on socialising in a military and civilian environment, and Phase 2 presents games, role plays, and simulations that are accompanied by language reminders and articulated into multiple tasks that cover all stages and surpass real-life situations by specifying that: "Remember: This is a speaking task to practice English as much as possible, not to solve the problem as quickly as possible" (TPO, Units 106-109 Survival Simulations Instructions). Phase 3 starts with a "prelude", consisting in a case study where students must discuss predictions and lessons learned, and therefore practice a variety of verb tenses and procedures. It then presents a "methodology note"

that must be followed in solving a series of "Tactical Problems" and "Peacekeeping Problems" that resemble complicated situations the student could face during a Level 3 STANAG 6001 exam or real-life circumstances. Interestingly, it is emphasised that the execution of these simulations does not follow a determined course but depends entirely on the student's choices and abilities. The learner therefore is only equipped with three tools: an abbreviation on how to proceed (E2D2PEF), a reminder on the mindset to adopt, and evaluation criteria for the audience. The first two are presented below:

E **Examine** the situation. Read the situation first, then check your understanding, with your colleagues.
2D **Discuss** and **Decide** on a course of action with your group colleagues.
2P **Prepare** to present. Script your presentation; practice; improve.
Present your solution to the class.
E Listen to the **Evaluation** of the presentation by the audience.
F Receive **Feedback** from the teacher.
Remember this is a language practice exercise. There are no right and no wrong solutions to the problems. There are different courses of action; some might be better than others but there is no key to check your solution against. (TPO, Methodology Note: E2D2PEF, original bold)

TPO therefore represents a point of reference not only in regard to what to do but how it should be done and the roles that teachers and fellow classmates should take on, and this principle applies to self-evaluation through specific instructions, where teachers display the correct answers:

Each student can go and read the OPORD notes and see if their own notes they made are accurate (or not). Check you have **all** the information required and that it is **all** correct. (TPO, Unit 172, original bold)

Another feature concerning oral communication that sets TPO apart is its emphasis on briefings throughout the course, to which a specific introductory page is dedicated. Here, four types of briefings are outlined (group briefings, one-slide and two slide briefings, simulation briefings, tactical and peacekeeping problem briefings), along with options for delivering them and the types of feedback to be received (public positive and private feedback from the teacher with a checklist). Practising briefings on a regular basis has the extra

benefit of enabling students to become accustomed to STANAG 6001 evaluation criteria:

> Remember you are working as a team: help the presenter to give their best performance. Practice your briefing. Then deliver your briefing to other students/the class. Be ready to answer questions. (TPO, Unit 91)

In doing so, the book unites interactional, situational and task-based activities and therefore multiple communicative skills: "Practice has demonstrated that the most workable interactive classroom activities are presentations, pair work, discussions, debates and written practice […] these activities need to be task oriented, so that they can help nurture students' problem-solving and creative abilities and give them experience in functioning in realistic contexts" (Brânduşa-Oana and Dragomir forthcoming).

Finally, from an intercultural standpoint, TPO makes no reference whatsoever to other variations of English and other cultures except for differences in British and American English spellings and vocabulary where present and relevant (although the latter prevails). This is presumably motivated by NATO's internationalisation and its desire to facilitate the passage between military English and English teaching: "In 2017 the annual conference took place in Vienna, Austria where BILC got two requests: to investigate the portability of NATO military language certification into civilian terms and vice versa and to decide if Language Education can be integrated into Military Training and Exercises more efficiently" (Pateşan and Zechia 2018: 354). The decision to exclude intercultural nuances here, as elsewhere, could also be due to the limited time and resources that the military has to dedicate to language courses in general, especially considering the rapidity with which the military's linguistic and communicative needs may change (Howard 2011).

5. Final considerations

The post-revision military English textbooks that have been explored in the present study are increasingly rich and articulated in the layout and structure of their units, as a result of the exponential growth in demand of military English courses and course books for foreign soldiers who want to pass the STANAG 6001 test in order to be

qualified to cover certain military roles. These textbooks and testing methods may provide insight for civilian language teaching and assessment as far as oral communication is concerned, both in terms of approaching the skill itself as a means of training spontaneous communication and of promoting its development throughout the students' learning experience. To answer R1*: How are listening and speaking skills introduced and practiced in military English textbooks?,* listening and speaking activities involving free and spontaneous elaboration are presented from the very beginning of the courses with great emphasis on accuracy and clarity, and an increase in complexity based on the degree of flexibility of the course. In this sense, CAM exercises oral skills in all sections of its units in order to practice speaking skills in all professional and social circumstances; C&C starts with very limited interaction due to the low starting level and then introduces role playing and simulation with the intent of integrating relevant vocabulary into oral communication; TPO is the most complete and articulated, in that its instructions even surpass the immediate communicative needs of the interactions it is preparing. C&C and TPO also train students to discern fundamental words and be able to both convey accurately heard and idiosyncratically elaborated information and therefore, in the latter case, "arrive successfully at a reasonable interpretation" (Brown and Yule 1983: 57).

As far as R2: *Are metadiscursive and intercultural communicative strategies related to oral communication included in military English textbooks?* is concerned, in all textbooks except C&C there is consideration of intercultural differences albeit from a different perspective. While TPO takes on a homogeneous and standardised stance, thus limiting itself to strictly necessary spelling and vocabulary peculiarities to enable students to avoid misunderstandings, CAM makes a point of creating a diverse linguistic environment that reflects the cultural and linguistic variety of international military forces and the need to train and educate soldiers in culture as well as in language (Watson 2010). The metadiscursive and pragmatic meaning (Yanxia and Chen 2019) that is presented and practiced in CAM is focused on register to ensure that students communicate in not only a grammatically but also a socially appropriate manner, and on the evaluation and self-evaluation of pronunciation, prosody and overall performance to educate on more subtle but essential levels of listening comprehension and spoken production. This

proves that the development of oral communication in military English textbooks reflects a progression in the skills that are most appreciated in the professional community:

> In the rapidly changing world that we currently live in, the target products that learners require can vary dramatically and evolve rapidly over time, especially after the learners enter the workplace. Therefore, developing the product-oriented knowledge skills of a narrowly defined, highly specialized discipline will provide learners with few of the skills that they are likely to need in the real world. On the other hand, training learners in the processes of observation, recording, and analyzing texts will result in a set of skills that are much more regular and stable, and more importantly, highly valued in the modern workplace. (Antony 2011: 3)

This confirms that military students must not limit themselves to passively understanding information, but rather master "active listening" and "interactive listening" micro-skills to understand how to listen, comprehend through background information and inference, and convey information on various levels (Likaj 2015).

In conclusion, these STANAG 6001 testing and teaching methods and materials could provide useful insight for civilian ESP environments for many reasons. Firstly, they could entail an overturn in the scale of priority skills with greater emphasis on oral communication, and therefore encourage students to master practical and spontaneous language use and analysis in view of speaking tests/interviews and real-life interactions (Pranculienė 2013). This could be further trained by means of an increasing 'routinization' of articulate activities, presented as complex situations and cases that must be solved by means of students' clear communication during tasks and their ability to decipher implicit meaning and to convey both verbatim and elaborated information. Furthermore, the strengthening of language proficiency test requirements following the NATO model with its non-compensatory level competence assessments would ensure students have satisfactorily practiced and integrated the use of all four language skills. This, in combination with the specification of 'floor' and 'ceiling' benchmarks in level descriptors would further assist students in assessing their own linguistic competence and determining which weak points must be addressed at that specific stage of their language learning process and in relation to which professional tasks.

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