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## THE ROLE OF STANAG TESTING IN STRENGTHENING INTEROPERABILITY OF THE POLISH ARMED FORCES WITHIN NATO FORCES

ROLA EGZAMINÓW STANAG WE WZMACNIANIU PARTNERSKIEGO WSPÓŁDZIAŁANIA POLSKICH SIŁ ZBROJNYCH Z SIŁAMI NATO

### Abstract

In recent years, scientific and technological advances have changed the modern battlefield, giving rise to new weapons systems and battle strategies. Apart from the challenges posed by new means and methods of warfare, soldiers are faced with an increasing need to rely on their language skills while joining multinational operations. To succeed in an international military environment, bridging the language gap is a must since it contributes to building and strengthening interoperability with NATO forces. The following article is intended to discuss the role of STANAG tests in developing language competence of Polish soldiers as reflected in the language training framework programme for the Polish military, with a focus on the speaking ability. Most importantly, the article highlights the contribution of language testing according to STANAG 6001 to developing interoperability with the Allies, presenting the main phases of the process. In the final part, the authoress attempts to determine to what extent this contribution is really made.

**Keywords:** interoperability, language testing and assessment, language training programme, SLP, STANAG 6001

### Streszczenie

Ostatnie lata przyniosły ogromny postęp naukowy i technologiczny widoczny na współczesnym polu walki, pozwalający na wprowadzenie nowych systemów uzbrojenia i strategii prowadzenia działań zbrojnych. Oprócz wyzwań, jakie niosą ze sobą nowe środki i metody prowadzenia wojny, żołnierze stają przed coraz większą potrzebą wykorzystywania swoich umiejętności językowych, uczestnicząc w międzynarodowych operacjach wojskowych. Ujednolicenie kompetencji językowych jest warunkiem niezbędnym dla prawidłowego funkcjonowania w międzynarodowym środowisku wojskowym, przyczyniając się do wzmocnienia partnerskiego współdziałania z siłami NATO. Poniższy artykuł miał na celu omówienie roli egzaminów STANAG w rozwijaniu kompetencji językowych żołnierzy RP, co znajduje odzwierciedlenie w ramowym programie szkolenia językowego dla Polskich Sił Zbrojnych, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem doskonalenia sprawności mówienia. Artykuł podkreślił wkład systemu testowania językowego według STANAG 6001 w rozwój interoperacyjności z wojskami sojuszniczymi, przedstawiając główne fazy tego procesu. W końcowej części autorka podjęła próbę ustalenia, w jakim stopniu ten proces jest faktycznie osiągalny.

**Słowa kluczowe:** interoperacyjność, testy językowe, ocena znajomości języka obcego, szkolenie językowe, SLP, STANAG 6001

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Upon Poland's accession to NATO, the process of the transformation of the Polish armed forces, in compliance with NATO standards commenced, paving the way for a number of significant changes, including the area of language teaching, testing and assessment. As a member nation, Poland adopted the NATO Standardisation Agreement (STANAG 6001) on language proficiency levels "to be used as the common standard (construct) for language curriculum and test development, for recording and reporting Standardised Language Profiles (SLPs)"<sup>1</sup>. In consequence, the adoption of STANAG has triggered the implementation of a completely new system of language training and testing for the Polish military, with two main goals to be achieved. In the first place, it is supposed to considerably raise the level of Polish soldiers' language proficiency, defined by NATO as "an individual's unrehearsed, general language communication ability"<sup>2</sup>. As new opportunities opened up for the Polish military due to establishing long-term strategic cooperation with NATO forces, strengthening interoperability with the allied forces, through a successful use of the language in a multinational scenario, has become the primary objective. Bearing that in mind, for the purpose of language proficiency assessment STANAG tests have been developed.

The aim of the following paper is to demonstrate the impact of STANAG testing, as a tool for developing Polish soldiers' language proficiency, on strengthening interoperability with NATO forces. More specifically, an attempt shall be made to evaluate the degree to which this process is achieved by means of STANAG tests incorporated into the language policy for the Polish military. The research was conducted at the Department of Foreign Languages of the PAFU (the Polish Air Force University) whose mission is to provide the highest quality language education and testing for both the cadets and the air force military personnel. Participant observation method was predominantly used by the authoress based on her extensive experience in STANAG training and testing. Additionally, a detailed literature review was done on the basis of which the final conclusions were also drawn.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF STANAG

The fundamental assumptions of STANAG constitute the basis for the language training framework programme for the Polish military implemented by the academic and non-academic military language centres across Poland. In accordance with STANAG 6001, there are six language proficiency levels referred to as base levels (ranging from Level 0 – "No proficiency" to Level 5 – "Highly articulated speaker," respectively) identified in 4 skills ("listening", "speaking", "reading", "writing"), represented by the Standardised (S) Language (L) Profile (P). As SLPs encode a person's language

<sup>1</sup> NATO Standardization Agreement STANAG 6001, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> NATO STANDARD ATrainP-5 Language Proficiency Levels, p. 1-1.

proficiency level<sup>3</sup>, they are used for positional requirements/job descriptions as well as NATO/Partner Capability Targets for interoperability. Each base level is a threshold<sup>4</sup>. For the purpose of defining each proficiency level, detailed level descriptors are provided. STANAG tests, therefore, should be referred to as proficiency tests that measure an individual's general, real-world language ability, regardless of any training they had attended<sup>5</sup>.

Since the adoption of language proficiency levels by NATO in 1976, there have been a few updates on the format and content of STANAG. The subsequent editions of STANAG were enriched with Plus levels. Compared to Base levels, Plus levels indicate language proficiency that is more than halfway between the two base levels, yet it "does not fully or consistently meet all the criteria for the next higher base level"<sup>6</sup>. To be more precise, plus levels identify characteristic features of the next higher level on the scale but not sustained at that level. As STANAG tests measure a person's language ability according to the criteria of a standardized rating system (STANAG 6001), they should be viewed as criterion-referenced tests<sup>7</sup>. It was the year 2016 that brought the edition of STANAG currently in use. To ensure and promote the proper conduct of the standardization of language training, education and testing practices across NATO nations, the Bureau for International Language Coordination (BILC) was established, as a NATO organ concerned with language standards and competencies among NATO countries and partner nations<sup>8</sup>.

It must be stressed, however, that member states are not, in any way, obliged to follow a standardized curriculum. NATO does provide the common standard but the responsibility for developing language training and testing, compliant with the standard, lies solely with the member nations. The implementation of STANAG into the language training framework programme and the testing system for the Polish military highlights Poland's consent for "a priority need for a common language"<sup>9</sup>, with the ultimate goal of ensuring interoperability of NATO forces in a multinational scenario, in terms of language competence.

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. SLP 3232 should be understood as Level 3 in listening, Level 2 in speaking, Level 3 in reading, Level 2 in writing.

<sup>4</sup> As specified in NATO BILC: A Glossary of Testing Terms, 2022, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> A. Hughes, *Testing for Language Teachers*, Cambridge University Press 2013, p. 11-12.

<sup>6</sup> NATO STANDARD ATrainP-5 Language Proficiency Levels, p. 1-1.

<sup>7</sup> C. Weir, *Understanding and Developing Language Tests*, Prentice Hall 1993, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> See: R. Monaghan, *Language and Interoperability in NATO: The Bureau for International Language Co-ordination (BILC)*, p. 23-28, <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol13/no1/doc/Monaghan%20EN%20page2332.pdf> [accessed: 20.10.2022] and Terms of Reference (TORs) of the Bureau for International Language Co-ordination, [https://www.natobilc.org/documents/BILC%20Terms%20of%20Referen- ce%20Edition%201v2%20\(2016\).pdf](https://www.natobilc.org/documents/BILC%20Terms%20of%20Reference%20Edition%201v2%20(2016).pdf) [accessed: 20.10.2022].

<sup>9</sup> As developed by Lt Col Mauro Pergolesi for NATO Standardization, [https://www.nato.int/structur/ac/135/50years\\_nato/chapters/2\\_standardization.htm](https://www.nato.int/structur/ac/135/50years_nato/chapters/2_standardization.htm) [accessed: 20.10.2022].

### 3. LANGUAGE TRAINING AND TESTING OF THE POLISH MILITARY

The system of language training and testing of the Polish armed forces is based on normative documents<sup>10</sup> as well as the language training framework programme developed by the Central Examinations Board for Foreign Languages of the Ministry of National Defence. The guidelines and specifications provided in the documents are in line with the STANAG requirements, incorporating language proficiency level descriptors into the educational content of the framework programme. A huge emphasis is put on the key feature of STANAG, i.e. its functionality rather than theoretical concepts by making a reference to the three overlapping areas of a person's language ability. According to STANAG, these include "Content – what you can talk about, Tasks – what you can do with the language and Accuracy – How well you can use the language"<sup>11</sup>. Following another fundamental principle of STANAG – the range principle<sup>12</sup> it must be noted that each level should not be viewed as a point on a scale but rather considered to be a range of proficiency, with varying degrees of performances within the same level. A further element of the programme compatible with the STANAG assumptions is that each level subsumes the level below, in other words each higher level includes all the language elements /abilities of the lower level, as presented in Figure 1.

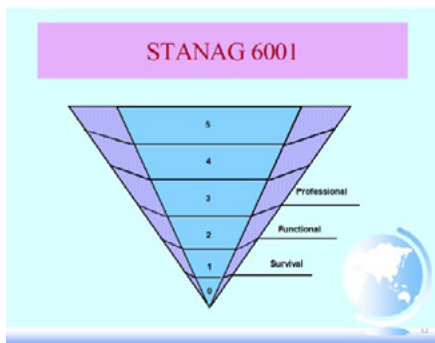


Fig. 1. STANAG Proficiency Levels Scales

Source: NATO BILC Handbook: English Language Teaching Faculty Development, 2020, p. 6.

In view of the above, cadet language training at the Polish Air Force University coincides with the pillars of STANAG, its main assumptions being included in the English language course syllabus. The teaching strategies and methods used in the classroom

<sup>10</sup> See: Decyzja Nr 73/MON Ministra Obrony Narodowej z dnia 26 maja 2020 r. w sprawie kształcenia i egzaminowania ze znajomości języków obcych w resorcie obrony narodowej, Warszawa 2020 and Decyzja Nr 175/MON Ministra Obrony Narodowej z dnia 14 grudnia 2021 r. zmieniająca decyzję w sprawie kształcenia i egzaminowania ze znajomości języków obcych w resorcie obrony narodowej, Warszawa 2021.

<sup>11</sup> STANAG 6001 for Non-Specialists, [https://www.natobilc.org/files/STANAG%20for%20Non-Specialists\\_Modified\\_June2013%20doc%20\(3\).pdf](https://www.natobilc.org/files/STANAG%20for%20Non-Specialists_Modified_June2013%20doc%20(3).pdf) [accessed: 20.10.2022].

<sup>12</sup> NATO BILC Handbook: Language Testing Seminar, 2000, p. 23.

are aimed at, alongside developing the overall language competence, preparing the cadets to achieve the required language level according to STANAG 6001 certified by the STANAG test. As a result, from the onset of the language education at the Department of Foreign Languages much effort is made to reduce and eliminate the level discrepancies among the cadets. Regardless of the selected field of study and specialization, the cadets are obliged to meet the same requirements, i.e. to obtain SLP 3232 upon the completion of study.

The first phase of the teaching process, then, is to turn “the Survival Speaker” of Level 1 or Level 1 plus<sup>13</sup> into a fully “Functional Speaker” of Level 2<sup>14</sup>. As the name suggests, Level 2 puts the candidates into a wide spectrum of everyday situations in which they are exposed to an issue that needs to be resolved. The speaking test takes the form of a roleplay with the examiner with all the prompts given in L2<sup>15</sup> to elicit appropriate responses and demonstrate a functional role of the language, i.e. a communicative ability (Figure 2a).

**CANDIDATE'S ROLE**

**You work at a NATO base.**

**A military police officer is asking you some questions about an incident.**

- duty, Nov 10 – yes, guard a uniform warehouse
- alarm system not work
- lock - broken / 5 battle dress uniforms missing /secure place/ time: 17.30
- report / Duty Officer

**The examiner starts by saying:**

**“Good morning, I need to ask you some questions.”**

**EXAMINER'S ROLE**

**You are a military police officer.**

**Ask them some questions about an incident.**

- ask if the soldier was on duty 10 Nov
- ask what happened
- request details: anything missing? /action taken? /time?
- ask what the soldier did next

**You begin by saying:**

**“Good morning, I need to ask you some questions.”**

Fig. 2a. A communicative ability – an example

Source: own work based on: Model Egzaminu z Języka Angielskiego Poziom 2, Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna Języków Obcych Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, <https://wsnjo.wp.mil.pl/pl/pages/modele-egzaminacyjne-2020-05-12-z/> [accessed: 20.10.2022].

<sup>13</sup> As specified in NATO STANDARD ATrainP-5 Language Proficiency Levels, p. 1-1.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p 1-1.

<sup>15</sup> A person's second language, a language that is not their native language, as opposed to L1.

In a follow-up stage, the candidates are expected to handle a couple of questions related to the roleplay topic, as shown in Figure 2b.

1. Have you ever witnessed or heard of a theft / a similar incident? What happened?
2. Why do some people commit a crime?
3. How can we protect ourselves from being robbed?

Fig. 2b. The roleplay topic – an example

Source: own work based on: Model Egzaminu z Języka Angielskiego Poziom 2, Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna Języków Obcych Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, <https://wsnjo.wp.mil.pl/pl/pages/modele-egzaminacyjne-2020-05-12-z/> [accessed: 20.10.2022].

In the whole test, assessment is made on the candidate’s ability to describe and narrate in major time frames, express opinion and ask and answer questions in a confident manner. These practical skills acquired by the soldiers may definitely be used later on in a real-life scenario during an assignment abroad. It must be remembered that in order to maximize speaking opportunities and increase the chances that the candidates will experience autonomous language use, speaking tasks should be characterized by authenticity, i.e. “they should have some relation to real-life language use”<sup>16</sup>.

The second phase – moving towards Level 3 – involves a shift from being “functional” to being “professional”<sup>17</sup> as a language user, therefore a huge step forward is noticeable in terms of language proficiency. Unlike level 2, which focuses on communication on concrete topics in daily social and routine workplace situations, the level 3 speaker is able to discuss issues at an abstract level in social and professional settings. In comparison with Level 2, more military flavour is added to the tasks given to the candidates as examination tasks. These include delivering a military briefing followed by a short question and answer session between the candidates, and a discussion on a topic given, with a couple of questions related to the issue, as presented in Figure 3.

**Briefing 1**

You have been deployed to a war-torn city in Africa. Your mission is to provide security and transportation assistance to the NGOs working in the city. However, you must be prepared to encounter acts of violence and the hostility of the crowd. Give a briefing on two possible courses of action describing the advantages and disadvantages of each of them. Recommend one and justify your choice.

Suggested ideas:

- using force in any form
- negotiating
- other

<sup>16</sup> S. Thornbury, *How to Teach Speaking*, Pearson Education Limited 2005, p. 89-91.

<sup>17</sup> As specified in NATO STANDARD ATrainP-5 Language Proficiency Levels, p. 1-1.

**Military**

The Polish armed forces are undergoing significant changes these days. Look at the list below. Discuss the following areas of change and decide which of them are the most and the least beneficial. Be ready to justify your choice.

**STRENGTHENING INTEROPERABILITY**

**CYBERSPACE DEFENSE FORCES**

**EQUIPMENT PURCHASE**

1. Military service is becoming more demanding than it used to be. Do you agree?
2. In the face of the Russian aggression, conscription should be re-introduced. Discuss.
3. What other changes should be implemented in the military?

Fig. 3. A discussion – an example

Source: own work based on: Model Egzaminu z Języka Angielskiego Poziom 3, Centralna Komisja Egzaminacyjna Języków Obcych Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej, <https://wsnjo.wp.mil.pl/pages/modele-egzaminacyjne-2020-05-12-z/> [accessed: 20.10.2022].

Taking the speaking tests in pairs is aimed at achieving an effective interaction between the candidates in which language functions of making recommendations, hypothesising, speculating or justifying opinions are to be demonstrated. As exemplified by the level 2 and 3 speaking test samples, language abilities expand as they are reaching the subsequent STANAG levels forming the ever-widening circle of language proficiency (Figure 4).



Fig. 4. The Ever-Widening Circle of Language Proficiency

Source: NATO BILC Handbook: English Language Teaching Faculty Development, p. 7.

Bearing in mind the SLP 3232 to be obtained upon graduation, level 3 in speaking is still not a formal requirement for the cadets. It must be noted, however, that the current trend is to increase the number of test takers among the cadets in the context of military threats of the contemporary world. Success in taking collective action by the Allies relies on soldiers' language proficiency. As mentioned before, it is always

the authenticity of the speaking tasks the soldiers are exposed to that make them autonomous language users, also in the other language skills<sup>18</sup>. In this way interoperability among forces is enhanced.

#### 4. INTEROPERABILITY VS. STANAG TESTS

NATO defines “interoperability” as “the ability for Allies to act together coherently, effectively and efficiently to achieve tactical, operational and strategic objectives”<sup>19</sup>. This means that units, forces, or/and systems from different NATO member states and partner nations operate together through sharing common doctrine and procedures as well as sharing each other’s bases and infrastructure, with the aim of fulfilling the common goal. None of these would be possible without establishing mutual communication within NATO forces. Speaking the same language, then, is a prerequisite for achieving the goals at all levels of command, language skills being a tool for NATO capabilities, “ensuring that countries are able to participate effectively in both NATO missions and wider Alliance activities as any other form of interoperability”<sup>20</sup>. As English is one of the two official NATO languages, standardization in the field of English language training and testing is needed, as stated previously, to guarantee a joint and smooth task fulfilment on the modern battlefield.

In view of the above, a detailed analysis shall be made whether STANAG tests, in the form developed for the Polish military, can really prove their usefulness for NATO-led operations with an active participation of the Polish armed forces. Taking into account that EU forces should be compatible with NATO forces, the same issue concerns EU-led operations. This poses a further question about the overall language competence of language users, i.e. Polish soldiers and, in consequence, reveals its role in avoiding possible misunderstandings or misinterpretations in a wide range of military activities, as verified against the STANAG system of testing.

In NATO operations and/or NATO working environments, Polish soldiers’ language skills are constantly put to test while performing daily duties or responding to any military activities with their foreign counterparts, in certain exceptional cases with adversaries. Although not much attention has been given in the article to Level 1 in the context of cadet military training and testing, it seems obvious that even “Survival” speakers – STANAG Level 1 certificate holder – can use their knowledge of English in day-to-day responsibilities, e.g. on a foreign mission. As specified in the NATO proficiency level overview, the ability to ask routine questions about name, destination and identification papers can prove useful at a checkpoint, whereas the capability to provide information in a short, simple conversation helps with tackling very basic organizational matters such as arranging transportation, accommodation or providing first aid support. Undoubtedly, based on the STANAG assumption that

<sup>18</sup> See: B. Machulska, *Short Texts for STANAG Examination Practice*, WSOSP, Dęblin 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Interoperability: Connecting Forces, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_84112.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_84112.htm) [accessed: 27.10.2022].

<sup>20</sup> M. Crossey, *Improving linguistic interoperability*, 2008, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions\\_22033.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_22033.htm) [accessed: 20.10.2022].



language competence demonstrated at level 1 is to “meet the speaker’s immediate personal needs”<sup>21</sup>, the nature and the number of professional tasks performed is very limited. Yet, even at this basic level, language contribution can be made while cooperating with the Allied forces.

At a tactical, operational and strategic level, language proficiency becomes an indispensable tool for the whole spectrum of military activities. The success of multinational military training exercises, Battle Staff Training (BST), kinetic operations or stabilization missions, which involve joint forces, depends on “how language is used to get the message through”<sup>22</sup>. Following an increased responsibility of assigned tasks, language requirements are getting higher to meet the needs of the modern battlefield.

The minimum language proficiency required for the military deployed in theatres of operation is Level 2 according to STANAG. In order to cooperate efficiently with other NATO forces in peacetime or wartime, a confident use of a functional language for everyday and routine work-related matters is necessary. At this point, reference can be made to the so-called “5-Wh Rule”<sup>23</sup>, commonly applied for giving factual account of events in different time frames as well as giving orders and operating instructions. Staff officers/combating unit officers are also tasked to deliver simple routine technical briefings. In addition, their language competence is sufficient to do some interpretation work while escorting foreign delegations, and to help them cope with some practical issues, including travel itineraries or accommodation. Polish soldiers also successfully demonstrate the correct use of English as a working NATO language and its understanding for giving, requesting and receiving information about e.g. troop movement or weather conditions by means of radio communication<sup>24</sup>.

The aforementioned practical language skills of Polish military personnel are, by all means, the ones tested at Level 2 STANAG oral examination, thus the Level 2 speaking test itself, in its concept and form, serves the purpose of developing the language competence necessary for building interoperability with NATO forces. It must be noted, however, that the knowledge of general English must be accompanied by specialized language to ensure more effective task accomplishment in strengthening relations with the Allied forces.

Polish soldiers participating in joint exercises or foreign missions, depending on a position they hold, are assigned tasks for which Level 3, according to STANAG, is required. Having mastered the language in the degree that allows for an accurate and effective communication in the professional setting, they take part in unplanned military discussions during formal meetings and protocol visits. Most importantly, they no longer deal with routine, familiar situations only. Instead, they are able to handle abstract topics/complex issues, speculate on the discussion outcome, or even read between the lines to draw conclusions<sup>25</sup>. As a result, Polish officers succeed in

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<sup>21</sup> STANAG 6001 Overview of Language Proficiency Levels, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> United States Army: Multinational Interoperability Reference Guide, 2016, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> *Who?/When?/What?/Where?/Why?*

<sup>24</sup> STANAG 6001 Overview of Language Proficiency Levels, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> STANAG 6001 for Non-Specialists, op. cit.

resolving specific problems during operations, i.e. operational issues, reconnaissance, planning, combat support, medical support, financial issues. They are clear and convincing in their choice of arguments for expressing and justifying opinion while delivering detailed technical briefings about complex military issues. Due to their wide area of expertise supported by a high level of English language proficiency, they are involved in a variety of advisory and analysis duties, in particular those related to tactical-, operational-, strategic-level information.

Language proficiency needed to fulfil these tasks is aligned with STANAG level 3 descriptors and demonstrated by STANAG Level 3 certificate holders. As presented above, depending on the scale of military endeavour and the individual's range of responsibilities within the operational environment in which a joint action is taken, the level of language competence constantly increases. At a basic "survival" level misunderstandings may occur quite frequently, a "functional" speaker's language is good enough to be generally understood, whereas language skills at a "professional" level cause no interference with conveying and following the intended message.

It should be highlighted that, in addition to the required language proficiency, some of the tasks mentioned above require specialized training, language training included. Undoubtedly, language skills are also of utmost importance for the air force since by its nature it is a combined venture where multinational cooperation is an indispensable condition. Yet, the STANAG training and testing system is aimed at developing and measuring general English proficiency in the military context. Unlike ICAO Aviation English courses followed by KSEJ or ELPAC tests, STANAG is not, in any way, a tool for testing aeronautical communication, and should not be treated as such.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

From the point of view of global security, in particular Poland's security in the face of the ongoing armed conflict in the region, the only way to effectively counteract the increasing military threats in the contemporary world is to build interoperability with all NATO forces and partner nations through conducting multinational exercises and BST as well as participating in joint peacekeeping operations and missions. Collective action taken on the present-day battlefield tests NATO's political, strategic, operational and tactical capabilities<sup>26</sup>, strengthening the Alliance's deterrence and defence potential. The response of the Allied forces to any form of potential military aggression is cooperation. Operating together in the NATO working environment gives Polish soldiers a perfect opportunity to exchange experiences with their military counterparts, as proven many times during the Iraqi mission, the Afghan mission, while fulfilling the Alliance commitments as part of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), the NATO Response Force (NRF) or during multinational exercises, e.g. *Anakonda*. In every single case, connecting forces enables member states to

<sup>26</sup> NATO political, strategic, operational or tactical levels of command as exemplified by NATO HQ Brussels, SHAPE Mons, JFC Brunssum or ACC Ramstein, respectively.

identify both best practices and lessons learnt. Full integrity of NATO forces can only be achieved through standardization in different areas, including language training. Language proficiency, as pointed out in the article, plays a vital role in joint operations. In its standardized form, i.e. following the common standard (in the form of language descriptors) for each language level as specified in the STANAG 6001 Agreement, it is used as a reference point to assess soldiers' language competence and readiness for performing specific military tasks in terms of their language skills. The higher language proficiency, the more responsible tasks assigned at a tactical, operational and strategic level. The success in achieving the goals largely relies on soldiers' language skills used on a daily basis at all levels.

The soldiers' knowledge of English is verified against the STANAG tests, thus both the training and the testing system adopted for the Polish military fulfils its role in preparing the Polish military personnel to act with their NATO counterparts in harmony to achieve the objectives at each level of command, without any serious flaws. However, as STANAG deals mostly with general English, with some military flavour added to its content, it should be accompanied by a specialized language training dedicated to a specific branch of the armed forces, being in line with the nature and complexity of the assigned tasks. Achieving the required language proficiency in STANAG is a prerequisite for undergoing specialized language training, and the combination of those two would make full contribution to building operational plans for air/naval/land forces/special forces cooperation on the basis of interoperability.

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from the above is that language competence is *condition sine qua non* for connecting NATO forces, fitting all the pieces together and acting as one organism on the modern battlefield, with the aim of ensuring effective and smooth task fulfilment. Multinational interoperability can only be enhanced by a common language policy of testing and training in compliance with STANAG, which Poland has successfully implemented for its military.

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