

SOME FEATURES OF TEACHING THE SUBJECT "FOREIGN LANGUAGE (ENGLISH)" FOR SENIOR OFFICERS IN MILITARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

NARINE HARUTYUNYAN

Lecturer in the Foreign Languages Group of
the National Defense Research University of the Ministry of
Defense of the Republic of Armenia

DOI: 10.54503/2579-2903-2025.1-75

Abstract

In modern environments full of conflicts, the priority is for states to confront complex international challenges and deepen international cooperation. The involvement of states in forms of international cooperation is expressed in participation in joint military exercises, peacekeeping missions, and exchange of experience in educational and training programs. The effective involvement of personnel in these processes is ensured by sufficient knowledge of English.

In the process of transformation of the RA Armed Forces, the teaching of foreign languages, in particular the teaching of English, acquires strategic importance to analyze leading international experience, compare different approaches to warfare, and develop more effective models for the RA Armed Forces, which is impossible without knowledge of world experience. In the context of this reality, the teaching of English in military educational institutions acquires priority importance. It not only develops the language skills of military personnel but also contributes to professional progress and the expansion of international military cooperation. Officers must be able to communicate, analyze international experience, participate in joint military exercises, and improve their professional skills.

Therefore, teaching English in military educational institutions should be considered not only as language training but also as a means of strategic development that will contribute to the modernization of the RA Armed Forces and their integration into the international security system.

Keywords: challenge, military cooperation, international cooperation, training, SWOT analysis.

ՌԱԶՄԱՌՈՒՍՈՒՄՆԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՍՏԱՏՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐՈՒՄ ԱՎԱԳ ՍՊԱՅԱԿԱՆ ԿԱԶՄԻ «ՕՏԱՐ ԼԵԶՈՒ (ԱՆԳԼԵՐԵՆ)» ԱՌԱՐԿԱՅԻ ԴԱՍԱՎԱՆԴՄԱՆ ՈՐՈՇ ԱՌԱՆՁՆԱՀԱՏԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐ

ՆԱՐԻՆԵ ՀԱՐՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՅԱՆ

ՀՀ ՊՆ պաշտպանական ազգային հետազոտական համալսարանի
օտար լեզուների խմբի դասախոս

Համառոտագիր

Հակամարտություններով լի ժամանակակից միջավայրերում առաջնա-
հերթ է դառնում միջազգային բարդ մարտահրավերներին պետությունների
դիմակայումը և միջազգային փոխգործակցության խորացումը: Պետություն-
ների ներգրավումը միջազգային համագործակցության ձևերի մեջ արտա-
հայտվում է համատեղ զորավարություններին մասնակցությամբ, խաղա-
ղապահ առաքելություններում ներգրավվածությամբ և կրթական ու վերա-
պատրաստման ծրագրերում փորձի փոխանակմամբ: Այս գործընթացներում
անձնակազմի արդյունավետ մասնակցությունն ապահովվում է անգլերենի
բավարար իմացությամբ:

ՀՀ զինված ուժերի կերպափոխման գործընթացում օտար լեզուներ-
ի ուսուցումը, մասնավորապես, անգլերենի ուսուցումը ռազմավարական
նշանակություն է ստանում միջազգային առաջատար փորձը վերլուծելու,
տարբեր պատերազմավարման մոտեցումները համեմատելու և ՀՀ զինված
ուժերի համար առավել արդյունավետ մոդելներ մշակելու նպատակով, ինչը
հնարավոր չէ առանց համաշխարհային փորձի իմացության: Այս իրողությո-
ւյան համատեքստում անգլերենի դասավանդումը ռազմական ուսումնական
հաստատություններում առաջնահերթ նշանակություն է ստանում: Այն ոչ
միայն զարգացնում է զինվորականների լեզվական հմտությունները, այլև
նպաստում է մասնագիտական առաջընթացին և միջազգային ռազմական
համագործակցության ընդլայնմանը: Անհրաժեշտ է, որ սպաները կարողա-
նան հաղորդակցվել, վերլուծել միջազգային փորձը, մասնակցել համատեղ
զորավարություններին, կատարելագործել իրենց մասնագիտական հմտությո-
ւնները:

Ուստի՝ ռազմական ուսումնական հաստատություններում անգլերենի
դասավանդումը պետք է դիտարկվի ոչ միայն որպես լեզվական ուսուցում,
այլ նաև որպես ռազմավարական զարգացման միջոց, որը նպաստելու է ՀՀ
զինված ուժերի արդիականացմանն ու միջազգային անվտանգության հա-
մակարգում ինտեգրմանը:

Բանալի բառեր՝ մարտահրավեր, ռազմական համագործակցություն,
միջազգային փոխգործակցություն, ուսուցում, SWOT վերլուծություն:

Introduction

English language teaching is one of the mandatory academic subjects of the National Defense Research University of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia. It is taught within the framework of the “State Military Security” training course and the “State and Military Management” master’s program, to impart to the students such knowledge that will allow them to get acquainted with professional literature in English and communicate effectively on international platforms.

The students of this group are military personnel aged 35–50, who hold leadership positions in the operational and strategic circles of the armed forces and have experience in participating in combat operations. Due to the lack of use of a foreign language for many years, the majority of them are classified as A1–A2 levels according to STANAG 6001 standards (NATO BILC. Official site).

To overcome the challenges arising in the process of teaching English in these groups, it is necessary to develop a curriculum that will meet the needs and goals of the students. It should stimulate the development of foreign language skills, improve strategic communication, and strengthen the mastery of international military terminology. The learning process should include practical and applied approaches, ensuring the effective use of the language in a professional environment.

To ensure sufficient knowledge of the English language of the target group, it is necessary to develop the curriculum and the most effective teaching methods, taking into account the achievements of students and the challenges that may arise during the learning process. Now let us dwell in more detail on the advantages and disadvantages of students with age, combat experience, and high military positions in learning English.

Theoretical and Methodological Bases

In the theoretical and methodological literature on the process of learning a foreign language, certain learning challenges and advantages are highlighted. Let us note the most important of them (Mirjaliisa, 1996; Thomas, 2000; Birdsong, 2006; Brookfield, 2010).

Age-related benefits of learning:

- Discipline and high level of self-organization.

Officers with long service years, as a rule, follow clear rules and agendas, which contributes to a systematic and regular process of language learning.

- Motivations due to professional growth.

At this age, officers and soldiers often strive for career advancement, for which knowledge of a foreign language (especially English) is necessary, and they also realize its importance in civilian life.

- Rich life and service experience

The experience accumulated in communicating with people and solving non-standard problems contributes to the ability to find parallels between the military sphere and communicative situations in language learning, which facilitates the assimilation of the material.

- Ability to work under stress

Servicemen are used to taking responsibility for making decisions and can remain focused even under heavy workloads. This is an advantage when preparing for intensive courses and exams.

- A conscious approach to choosing teaching methods

Adult learners (especially military students) often have a clear idea of why they need English and how it will be used. This increases the effectiveness of independent learning (reading special texts, viewing military reports in English, etc.).

- Developed teamwork skills

Military personnel are accustomed to teamwork and effective communication, which is important when using group training methods.

Age-related challenges in learning:

- Age-related changes in memory and cognitive processes

After the age of 35–40, some cognitive functions, including the speed of memorization and the ability to process new information, begin to decline. This can make it difficult to master a large amount of new vocabulary and grammatical structures.

- Limited free time for learning

Servicemen aged 35–50 often face a shortage of time due to service and family obligations. This can make it difficult to carry out regular training and slow down the pace of progress.

- Difficulties in adapting to new educational technologies

Although military personnel are often proficient in modern information systems, some learners find it more difficult to adapt to online learning platforms, mobile applications, and interactive simulators.

- Fear of making mistakes and limitations in speaking

Adult students often have a fear of speaking a foreign language because they do not want to make a mistake or appear ignorant in front of their colleagues. In a military environment, this anxiety can be even more pronounced be expressed, due to hierarchy and high responsibility.

- Difficulty in using professional vocabulary in foreign languages

Military personnel use their professional language, including terms, abbreviations, and coded formulations. Switching to English equivalents and using both language systems in parallel can create confusion (Bloom, 1968; Cross, 2010; Falasca, 2011).

Benefits of training among military personnel with combat experience:

- High level of endurance

Participation in combat operations develops the military personnel's ability to strictly follow instructions and orders, as well as self-control and self-organization, which has a positive effect on language learning.

- Realistic approach to learning

Military personnel with combat experience value the practical application of what they have learned and focus on those language skills that are necessary for performing professional tasks.

- Experience in teamwork and group learning

Combat experience implies strong interaction within a group. During English training, this helps during group assignments, project work, and role-playing games

- Stress resistance and adaptability

Experience in participating in combat operations develops endurance and the ability to remain stable under stressful conditions. This can help military personnel adapt more quickly to intensive English courses and the burden of exams.

- Ability to react quickly and make decisions ability to make decisions

Combat experience develops the ability to react quickly, analyze situations, and make operational decisions. These abilities are applicable during language learning, where verbal communication requires quick thinking and reaction.

- High motivation to learn military terminology

After participating in international exercises or peacekeeping missions, servicemen appreciate the importance of English more highly for international cooperation and effective interaction with partner countries (Hoge et al., 2004).

Learning challenges among servicemen with combat experience:

- Post-traumatic stress and psychological consequences

Servicemen who have participated in combat operations may have post-traumatic stress disorder or related psychological problems, which can negatively affect the learning process.

- Difficulty adapting to the learning environment

For servicemen accustomed to combat conditions, it is difficult to return to the “classroom” learning format, which can reduce the effectiveness of learning.

- Transition between military terminology and common language difficulty

Long years of using military-specific terminology and abbreviations sometimes hinder the mastery of the general language. This can complicate the acquisition and correct use of English equivalents.

- Lack of time due to frequent business trips and training

Servicemen with combat experience often continue to serve with a high workload, which makes systematic learning of English difficult.

- High demands on themselves and the learning process

Servicemen with experience working in risky conditions are accustomed to quick results and strict discipline. This sometimes leads to high expectations for the pace of language learning, and a mismatch in expectations can reduce motivation.

- The risk of neglecting the general language when focusing on professional terminology

The desire to learn military terminology and professional language can sometimes lead to the neglect of everyday communicative language. This can create vocabulary gaps in general everyday communication (Hoge et al., 2004).

Benefits of training among officers holding high military positions:

- High discipline and self-organization

Discipline and time management skills formed in the military environment

make it possible to effectively distribute study time, maintain the study regimen, and complete tasks within the established deadlines.

- Realistic approach to training content

High-ranking officers focus only on those language skills that are directly applicable to their professional activities: when preparing reports, conducting international negotiations, or giving orders.

- Systematic thinking and analytical skills

High-ranking officers have developed analytical thinking, which contributes to the assimilation of the language, allowing them to perceive grammatical structures and new vocabulary in logical connections.

- Teamwork skills

High-ranking military personnel are used to working in a team environment and communicating effectively with colleagues. This supports English language learning through group projects, discussions, and practical simulations.

- Awareness of the importance of international relations

High-ranking military personnel are often involved in international cooperation processes (NATO, UN peacekeeping missions), which is a strong motivation for learning English.

- Ability to make quick decisions

Management work requires quick and accurate decisions, which is compatible with the development of oral communication in English when it is necessary to negotiate or make strategic decisions (NATO BILC; DLIELC).

Learning challenges among officers in high-ranking military positions:

- Time constraints and busy schedules

High-ranking military personnel often have very busy schedules, which reduces the time allocated for English learning.

- High expectations for the speed of learning

Military managers are used to achieving quick results, which can be inconsistent with the natural process of language learning and lead to a decrease in motivation.

- Fear of making mistakes and lack of self-confidence

Senior military personnel may avoid speaking English for fear of making mistakes, as mistakes are often viewed as a sign of weakness in a military environment.

- Predominance of military terminology

Senior military personnel are accustomed to using military terminology and abbreviations, which can make it difficult to master general English.

- Difficulty adapting to new technologies

Some military personnel have difficulty adapting to new learning platforms (e.g., online courses, and apps), which can slow down the learning process.

- Predominance of professional content

During English training, senior military personnel focus primarily on professional communication, neglecting the development of everyday conversational language (<https://vumo.mil.ru>).

Research Methods

Considering the challenges and benefits of learning presented above, we conducted an empirical study among senior officers. The study was conducted using a SWOT analysis, which allowed us to classify the challenges and benefits of learning English.

Results

The observed group has both strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The use of SWOT methodology makes it possible to analyze these factors, identify optimal solutions, and propose an appropriate strategy, taking into account the needs of learners and educational challenges (SWOT Analysis-Research Methodology).

SWOT analysis

1. Strengths

- Discipline and high level of self-organization
- Motivation for professional advancement
- Rich life and service experience
- High teamwork skills
- Awareness of the importance of international cooperation

Recommendations for the most effective use of strengths are:

- Development of a clear curriculum, which will include “a combination of physical and online courses”, ensuring maximum efficiency.
- Application of integrated courses, where training will include “Development of a clear curriculum”, “military professional materials, reports, strategic documents”.

2. Weaknesses

- Lack of time and overloaded schedule
- Fear of making mistakes and speech limitations
- Age-related and cognitive changes, the dominance of military terminology
- Difficulty adapting to new technologies

Recommendations for overcoming weaknesses are:

- Use of practical methods, for example, training based on strategic scenarios
- Encourage the free use of speech, for example, through Speaking Clubs and individual courses.

3. Opportunities

- Expanding international military cooperation
- Access to professional training programs
- Development of new educational technologies

Recommendation for making the most of opportunities is:

- Flexible curriculum that will allow military personnel to combine service and training.

4. Threats

- Lack of time

- Decreased motivation
- Psychological barriers

Recommendations to reduce threats is:

- Develop motivational mechanisms, such as competitive programs, and incentive methods (e.g., increasing opportunities for official advancement, training abroad).

SWOT analysis shows that English language teaching in military educational institutions should be adapted, integrated, and practical. It is necessary to use strengths and opportunities while responding to challenges and reducing threats.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the SWOT analysis, a targeted English language training program for senior officers in military educational institutions has been developed and proposed, which will help to more effectively overcome existing challenges and ensure high-quality training.

1. Main goal of the program

The main goal of the program is to increase the level of English language proficiency of senior officers, ensuring the language skills necessary for international military cooperation, diplomatic contacts, and the implementation of tactical programs (Galskova & Gez, 2006; Horwitz, 2010; Johnson, 2017). To achieve this goal, it is planned to:

1.1. General goals

- Provide the minimum necessary level of communication that will allow officers to participate in international exercises, negotiations, and military training programs.
- Increase the volume of professional vocabulary, including military orders, reports, diplomatic terms, and the language component of strategic analyses.
- Promote oral and written communication skills, which will allow officers to speak and write freely on topics related to the military sphere.
- Apply interactive and technological methods that will contribute to the organization of an effective and modern learning process.
- Make the training process more flexible, taking into account the workload and time constraints of military personnel.

1.2. Specific objectives

- Increase the English level of senior officers according to STANAG 6001 standards from A1-A2 to B1-B2.
- Focus on practical and applied language skills that are necessary during official communications, exchange of orders, drafting reports, and diplomatic contacts.
- Overcome psychological barriers associated with the fear of communicating in English, especially during oral speech.
- Use modern educational technologies, including online platforms, simulators, and applications related to military terminology.

- Apply group learning methods that develop team cooperation and communication effectiveness.

2. Thematic content

The English language training program should include three main components: general language skills, mastery of military language, and development of diplomatic and international contacts (Knowles, 1984; Galskova & Gez, 2006; Merriam et al., 2007).

2.1. General language skills

- Basic grammar and syntax (common word structures, verb forms, tenses).
- Speaking (everyday and professional dialogues, interviews,
- Listening skills (understanding reports, briefings, and orders).
- Written skills (compiling orders, reports, and official documents).

2.2. Military terminology and professional communication

- Military orders and reports (language of interaction at the command level).
- Tactical and operational terminology (targeted operations, chain of command).
- Linguistics of strategic and defense policy (terms of troop deployment, allied cooperation).
- Emergency communication language (disaster response, conflict management terminology).

2.3. International Relations and Diplomacy

- Negotiation (language of international cooperation, diplomatic terminology).
- Participation in conferences and international meetings (preparation of public speeches, presentation of reports).
- Official correspondence (formulation of documents within the framework of military diplomacy).

3. Organizational formats

English language teaching should be organized by combining group and individual training, and on-site and online courses, which will allow for more effective involvement of different learning formats (Litz et al., 2016; Zakharova, 2017; Tighe et al., 2019).

3.1. Teaching methods and formats

- Group training (groups of 6-10 people) focused on team tasks, debates, and situational exercises.
- Individual courses (in 1:1 format) – targeted training for senior military officers.
- Online learning (E-learning) – the possibility of independent learning through interactive platforms, simulators, and applications.
- Speaking Practice (Speaking Clubs, Role Plays), with an emphasis on professional communication.

3.2. Hybrid Learning Model

- Physical courses (classical learning format, classroom lessons).
- Online learning (E-learning, Moodle, Zoom, MS Teams), enabling officers to combine service and training.
- Use of technological platforms (Quizlet, Duolingo for Military, LingQ) for fast independent learning.

3.3. Assessment System

- Entry Testing (initial assessment according to STANAG 6001 standards).
- Ongoing Assessment (Progress Tracking System): continuous monitoring of students' progress.
- Final Exam: assessment of reports, speeches, and written work.

4. Conclusion

The presented curriculum is based on the results of the SWOT analysis and is designed to improve the language training of senior officers. It focuses on practical training, includes specific strategic and military terminology, and provides flexible teaching methods, which will dramatically improve the level of English proficiency and communication skills of military personnel.

References

1. Birdsong, D. (2006). Age and second language acquisition and processing: A Selective overview. *Language Learning*, 56, 9 – 49. <http://10.1111/j.1467-9922.2006.00353.x>, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227539526_Age_and_Second_Language_Acquisition_and_Processing_A_Selective_Overview
2. Bloom, B. S. (1968). Learning for mastery. Instruction and curriculum. Regional education laboratory for Carolinas and Virginia. Topical papers and reprints, N 1. Evaluation Comment, 1(2), 1–12. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED053419>
3. Brookfield, S. (2010). Critical reflection as an adult learning process. In book: Handbook of reflection and reflective inquiry, 215–236. 10.1007/978-0-387-85744-2_11
4. Cross, R. (2010). Language teaching as sociocultural activity: Rethinking language teacher practice. *The Modern Language Journal*, 94, 434–452. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2010.01058.x>
5. Falasca, M. (2011). Barriers to adult learning: Bringing the gap. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 51(3), 583–590. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ954482.pdf>
6. Hoge, C. W., Castro, C. A., Messer, S. C., McGurk, D., Cotting, D. I., Koffman, R. L. (2004). Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, mental health problems, and barriers to care, *N Engl J Med*, 351(1), 13–22. <https://10.1056/NEJMoa040603>, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15229303/>.
7. Horwitz, E. K. (2010). Foreign and second language anxiety. *Language Teaching*, 43(2), 154–167. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-teaching/article/abs/foreign-and-second-language-anxiety/3782D56F94F86BFA6765E5F32910DB39>
8. Johnson, D. (2017). The Role of Teachers in Motivating Students to Learn. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, 9, 46–49. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1230415.pdf>
9. Knowles, M. S. (1984). *Andragogy in action. Applying modern principles of adult education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
10. Litz, B., Maguen, S., Tankersley, A., & Hundert, C. (2016). Peacekeeping. In G. Fink (Ed.), *Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behavior* (pp. 401–404). Elsevier Academic Press. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2016-26280-050>
11. Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A*

- comprehensive guide. (3rd edition). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. <https://archive.org/details/learninginadulth0004merr>
12. Mirjaliisa Ch., M. (1996). Business negotiations: Interdependence between discourse and the business relationship. English for Specific Purposes, 15(1), 19–36, ISSN 0889–4906, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0889-4906\(95\)00029-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0889-4906(95)00029-1)
 13. Thomas, J. W. (2000). A review of research on project-based learning, The Autodesk Foundation. https://www.pblworks.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/A_Review_of_Research_on_Project_Based_Learning.pdf
 14. Tighe, E. L., Little, C. W., Arrastia-Chisholm, M. C., Schatschneider, C., Diehm, E., Quinn, J. M., & Edwards, A. A. (2019). Assessing the direct and indirect effects of metalinguistic awareness on the reading comprehension skills of struggling adult readers. Reading and Writing, 32, 787–818. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11145-018-9881-2>
 15. <https://vumo.mil.ru>, Официальный сайт Военного университета имени князя Александра Невского министерства обороны Российской федерации [<https://vumo.mil.ru>, Official site of the Military University named after Prince Alexander Nevsky of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation]. (Retrieved from: 10.01.2025).
 16. <https://www.dlielc.edu/> Official site of DLIELC. Defense language institute. English language center. (Retrieved from: 10.01.2025).
 17. <https://www.natobilc.org/en/info/about-us/>. "Official site of the Bureau for International Language Coordination". NATO BILC. (Retrieved from: 13.01.2025).
 18. <https://research-methodology.net/theory/strategy/swot-analysis/> SWOT Analysis- Research Methodology. (Retrieved from: 13.01.2025).
 19. Гальскова, Н. Д., Гез, Н. И. (2006). Теория обучения иностранным языкам. Лингводидактика и методика, Москва, Издательский центр «Академия». [Galskova, N. D., Gez, N. I. (2006). Theory of teaching foreign languages. Linguodidactics and methodology, Moscow, Academy Press.]. <http://learnteachweb.ru/articles/galskova.pdf>
 20. Захарова, Е. А. (2017). Методы обучения иностранному языку в историческом контексте и их значимость в современной практике иноязычного образования. Наука и школа, 3, 174–183. [Zakharova, E. A. (2017). Methods of teaching a foreign language in a historical context and their importance in modern practice of foreign language education. Science and school, 3, 174–183.]. <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/metody-obucheniya-inostrannomu-yazyku-v-istoricheskom-kontekste-i-ih-znachimost-v-sovremennoy-praktike-inoyazychnogo-obrazovaniya>

The article has been submitted for publication: 17.01.2025
Հոդվածը ներկայացվել է պատգրությամբ. 17.01.2025

The article is sent for review: 25.02.2025
Հոդվածն ուղարկվել է գրախոսությամբ. 25.02.2025

The article is accepted for publication: 31.03.2025
Հոդվածն ընդունվել է պատգրությամբ. 31.03.2025