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Development of professional communication in English (experience of Ukrainian military officers)

Desarrollo de la comunicación profesional en inglés (experiencia de los militares ucranianos)

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Abstract


The purpose of the research is to analyse the development of professional communication in English among Ukrainian military personnel. To achieve this goal theoretical methods of cognitive science were used, particularly, analysis, synthesis, comparison, abstraction, and content analysis. The results substantiate that due to the training opportunities in the European countries and the United States, it was possible to prepare significant reserves to counter Russian troops. Acquiring necessary language skills for foreign training required the introduction of new standards to internal training of military personnel. An important step was the launch of the STANAG 6001 standard, which aims to unify the training of officers, cadets, and other military personnel in order to achieve a high level of language competence. The project approach expanded the application of this standard providing with new prospects. Creative projects are characterised by discussion and agreement on


Resumen


El objetivo del artículo es analizar el desarrollo de la comunicación profesional en inglés entre el personal militar ucraniano. Para lograr este cometido, se utilizaron métodos teóricos de cognición científica, en particular, el análisis, la síntesis, la comparación, la abstracción y el análisis de contenido. Los resultados corroboran que, gracias a las oportunidades de formación en países europeos y en Estados Unidos, fue posible preparar importantes reservas para contrarrestar a las tropas rusas. La adquisición de los conocimientos lingüísticos necesarios para la formación en el extranjero exigió la introducción de nuevas normas para la formación interna del personal militar. Un paso importante fue la introducción de la norma STANAG 6001, cuyo objetivo es unificar la formación de oficiales, cadetes y demás personal militar para alcanzar un alto nivel de competencia lingüística. Las posibilidades de esta norma se revelan mediante el uso de un enfoque por proyectos. Los proyectos creativos se caracterizan

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the results and the form of their presentation. The conclusions emphasise that training military personnel in foreign language communication during a full-scale war was a significant challenge for all participants in the educational process.

Keywords: language competence, English, military training, education.

Introduction

Professional communication in English is the key to success in the globalised world today. It opens up a lot of opportunities for personal and professional growth, improves the chances of success in today's environment, and enables effective interaction around the world. Moreover, new opportunities appear for a particular military specialisation that has been left out of the general process of globalisation so far.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014 drew the attention of Ukrainian government circles to the problem of qualitative reform of the Armed Forces, the main goal of which was to integrate them into the structures of the North Atlantic Alliance, the army structures of the European Union, etc. to adopt best practices in countering terrorist, hybrid and military threats. Already at this stage, difficulties arose with the adaptation of Ukrainian servicemen, as language training in military higher education institutions of Ukraine was not of paramount importance. Besides, after February 2022, when the Kremlin regime decided to launch an overt military aggression, another problem arose with the new high-quality training of the military staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Fulfilling the obligations of the Budapest Memorandum, the governments of the European countries and North America organised training for military personnel, exercises on the use of advanced military equipment, weapons, physical and moral training, coordination, etc. This process has re-emphasised the need for language training and the acquisition of appropriate communication competencies. First of all, it was about the use of English, as it is currently the language of international communication and education. Thus, it enabled further improvement of theoretical and practical training of the Ukrainian military.

The peculiarities of improving professional communication among the military, the development of this process, and the potential difficulties and challenges that need to be further

por el debate y el acuerdo sobre los resultados y la forma de presentarlos. En las conclusiones se subraya que la formación del personal militar en comunicación en lenguas extranjeras durante una guerra a gran escala supone un reto importante para todos los participantes en el proceso educativo.

Palabras clave: competencia lingüística, inglés, formación militar, educación.

addressed constitute a topical issue of the present research. This field of research deals among others with the development of relevant recommendations in order to perfect the level of the English language proficiency among Ukrainian military officers. Addressing these issues is also an important area for research related to the development of potential recommendations for improving the situation with the level of English language proficiency among military personnel.

Ukraine has received support from various international actors, including military assistance and advisors from countries like the United States and NATO member states. Effective communication with these international partners is crucial for coordinating military operations and leveraging support. Strong language competency is essential for ensuring smooth collaboration. In the context of Russian-Ukraine war, Ukrainian military personnel must be able to communicate with and gather information, which requires language skills to understand important information and knowledge. Also, in modern conflicts, propaganda and information warfare play a significant role. Ukrainian military personnel need strong language skills to counter disinformation and effectively communicate the Ukrainian government's position to both domestic and international audiences. Ukrainian military personnel may receive training from foreign militaries or attend international military academies. Proficiency in the languages commonly used in these training programs is crucial to ensure that Ukrainian military personnel can benefit from these opportunities.

Therefore, the purpose of the article is to analyse the development of professional communication in English among Ukrainian military personnel. The realisation of this goal involved addressing particular issues: analysing the specifics of the application of the STANAG 6001 standard and the possibilities of improving the language

competence of military personnel using available tools, techniques and methods as well as applying creative approach to the educational process.

Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

The problem of developing professional competence of military specialists is multidimensional and multifaceted, as evidenced by the intensification of research efforts in the field of forming a new generation of professional military personnel. To begin with, it is worth delving into the fundamental concept underlying this study: professional communication. Professional communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, and other communicative interactions aimed at achieving specific professional goals or objectives (Groysberg, 2012). The book "The Art of Communication" (Hanh, 2013) describes the

importance of conscious communication in personal and professional life. At the same time, Kohnen (2008) focused on effective communication techniques in critical situations that can be valuable in a professional environment.

According to the results obtained by modern scholars, namely Kozyar et al., (2020), professional communication of military personnel has its own characteristics and requirements, as it is extremely important for the effective functioning of the armed forces. Modern literature proves that professional communication in the military sphere involves the use of specialised vocabulary, terminology, and speech structure that are characteristic of this field of human activity (Prontenko et al., 2019). The main characteristics of professional communication of military personnel include several important aspects (See Table 1).

Table 1.

Main characteristics of military personnel professional communication

Aspect	Explanation
1. Specialised language	The use of terms, concepts and phraseology that are typical for the military sphere (Dariusz, 2017)
2. Clarity and precision	Soldiers must understand their instructions, orders, and other information clearly and precisely. Misunderstood commands can lead to danger to life and limb.
3. Discipline	Military personnel must adhere to military discipline in communication. This includes accuracy in the transmission of information, timeliness of tasks, and responsibility for words and actions (Kravchenko et al., 2022).
4. Confidentiality	In a military environment, confidential and classified data is often discussed. It is important to maintain confidentiality and not disclose classified information.
5. Listening skills	Military communication includes the ability to listen and understand others. This is especially important during combat operations and when working together as a team.
6. Adaptability	Military personnel must be able to adapt their communication style to different situations and audiences. They may communicate with their subordinates, superiors, partners, etc.
7. Stress tolerance	Military personnel often find themselves in stressful situations, and it is important to keep their cool and communicate effectively even under high pressure.
8. Ability to cooperate	Military personnel often work in teams, and their communication should contribute to a common goal and coordination.
9. Ethics	It is important adhering to ethical norms and standards in all types of communication, including with subordinates, colleagues, and civilians
10. Commitment to the mission	Military communication should contribute to the achievement of the mission and tasks assigned to the military forces.

Source: compiled based on literature analysis Elmhurst & Adler (2004); Oleniev et al., 2021; Prontenko et al., 2019; Kos (2020), Kustinsky (2022).

All these characteristics are important for ensuring the effectiveness and security of military service.

At the same time, based on the essential characteristics of professional competence, researcher Krykun (2018) identifies the value-motivational, cognitive, operational, and subjective components of the formation of a professional serviceman. According to Samoilova & Serhiienko (2021), this term is also clearly related to communicative competence - the ability to interact effectively with other people through speech, written communication, non-verbal means (gestures, facial expressions) and other means of communication in order to convey and understand information, ideas or feelings (Samoilova & Serhiienko, 2021). Communication competence includes a range of skills and abilities such as listening, speaking, writing, interpersonal skills, and cultural sensitivity. For the military, communication competence is particularly important for several reasons. First, it is important for security. Military operations often require precision and

clarity in communication to avoid mistakes and misunderstandings that could lead to danger for military personnel (Safonova, 2020). The modern literature has repeatedly emphasised that the command process is important for military personnel (Kustinsky, 2022). However, communicative competence helps to ensure co-operation and co-ordination between different members of the team. A high level of communicative competence is particularly important in understanding instructions and orders, as it is important that soldiers understand and follow the orders and instructions given to them by their superiors. This can affect the successful completion of tasks. Overall, communication competence helps to ensure that soldiers interact effectively both within internal military structures, as well as with civilians and other military formations, which can lead to improved overall military operations and security (Harbar, 2019). A detailed review of the current literature suggests that communicative competence of future professionals includes three fundamental components (See Figure 1).

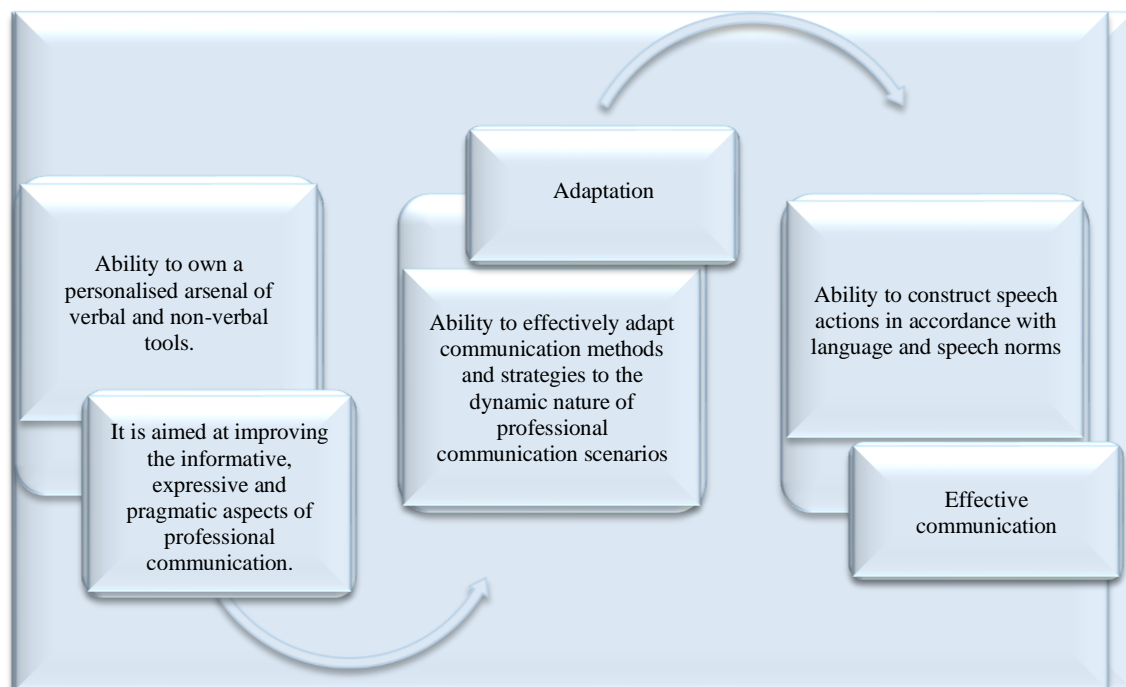


Figure 1. Main Components of communicative competence.
Source: compiled by the authors

Furthermore, the term “foreign language communicative competence.” is worth paying attention. Modern scholars, in particular Samoilova & Serhiienko (2021), argue that it is an integral facet of a person's professional communicative competence. This includes proper mastery of language, speech, and socio-

cultural competencies. The development of foreign language communicative competence depends on a “knowledge to practice” approach, which is cultivated in a carefully created communicative environment loaded with values. The foreign language competence is an important capability for the military, especially in the

context of global operations and cooperation with other countries and international partners (Verbytska & Kuzo, 2021). Foreign language competence includes the following aspects of language proficiency, interpretation, intercultural sensitivity, communication and cooperation, and information security. In modern hybrid warfare, the ability to communicate effectively with other military personnel and partners from other countries is key to achieving common goals and coordinating actions (Antonian & Popovych, 2021). When working with other countries, it is important to adhere to the rules of confidentiality and protection of classified data, even in international communications. Foreign language competence helps military personnel to interact with other countries, creating opportunities for cooperation, information exchange, and achievement of common goals in important operations and initiatives. This contributes to the security and effectiveness of military efforts.

Methodology

A number of theoretical methods of pedagogical research, including analysis and synthesis, were used to achieve the research goal. The analytical method was used to assess the current state of English language teaching among military personnel and the results of the implementation of new educational standards that meet modern challenges. The research was also based on the method of abstraction, which involves moving from the analysis of general theoretical positions to the formation of specific recommendations and generalisations. At the same time, the comparative method was used to identify the main problems in the formation of professional communication in English during the training of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and the importance of organising international cooperation, which is extremely relevant in the Ukrainian context, was traced.

The prognostic method was used to study the issue of further changes in the establishment of English language teaching processes for the acquisition of relevant communicative competencies. In addition, the article was based on the principles of critical analysis, which makes it possible to assess the possibilities of introducing innovative teaching methods. An important stage in the study was the content analysis of professional scientific literature, which made it possible to identify vulnerabilities in the existing education system and the best international practices. In general, content analysis is a valuable research method used to

systematically analyze textual or visual data, providing insights into various aspects of a given topic. In the context of the development of professional communication in English among Ukrainian military officers, content analysis was be a useful tool to investigate the relevant scientific literature and extract meaningful information. The content analysis began with a systematic search for relevant articles in academic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and military or pedagogical journals. The selection criteria for articles included:

1. Relevance. Articles had to address the development of professional communication in English among Ukrainian military officers.
2. Publication Date. Articles published from 2004 to 2023 were included to ensure relevance to contemporary practices.
3. Language. Only articles published in English or Ukrainian were considered.
4. Credibility. Preference was given to articles published in peer-reviewed journals and those authored by experts in the field.
5. Scientific. Preference was given to specialized scientific articles, not to popular scientific ones.

Thus, using the content analysis helped to identify problem areas in the functioning of military vocational education and the overall level of language competence.

Results

The Russian regime's military aggression against Ukraine has opened a new chapter in the training of Ukrainian servicemen, who had to be qualitatively superior to the more numerous enemy. Moreover, along with mastering new European and American equipment and updating tactical training, qualitative changes also affected the system of training and education introduced in Ukrainian military institutions (Kanova, 2023). Focusing on the best examples of modern NATO education has led to the development and implementation of new standards in education, including those for improving language training. The war led to the fact that on the government-controlled territory of Ukraine, education was initially conducted remotely, which in 2023 changed to the blended education with the use of distance learning in the frontline areas. However, this approach is not the most appropriate for students of higher military educational institutions, as they need to learn practical military skills and acquire abilities and apply them in military situations (Dariusz, 2017). It

should be stated that English-language training for future military personnel is becoming very relevant, as Ukraine's international partners (the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, etc.) provide organised intensive training for Ukrainian military personnel.

The challenge posed by the need to improve practical language training has led to structural changes in the system of English language instruction among military personnel and officer training.

In the context of international education, the prerequisite for enrolling in courses at educational institutions abroad is a high level of English proficiency, a requirement assessed through standardized language testing. Notably, this assessment adheres to the STANAG 6001 standard, as referenced by Antonian and Popovych (2021). STANAG 6001, developed and utilized by NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) member states' military forces, plays a pivotal role in standardizing English language proficiency expectations for military personnel.

STANAG 6001 sets forth comprehensive standards and criteria for evaluating military

language skills, encompassing the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. These established norms serve the paramount purpose of fostering uniformity in communication among military personnel hailing from diverse NATO member states, as emphasized by Kornyska et al. (2023).

A distinguishing feature of STANAG 6001 is its hierarchical structure, delineating proficiency levels from "A" (beginner) to "C" (advanced). Significantly, for many military occupations, the foundational benchmarks often revolve around the B1 and B2 levels. Military personnel engaged in or aspiring to partake in international operations or collaborate with foreign allies invariably encounter prerequisites that demand a specific level of English language proficiency, aligning with the standardized criteria dictated by this pivotal standard.

It should be emphasised that a high level of foreign language proficiency at SMR-2, in accordance with the international standard STANAG 6001 on the level of language competence of military personnel (See Table 2) is one of the mandatory requirements for members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, especially officers.

Table 2.
Requirements for mastering English according to the new educational standards

Requirement	Characteristics
Competence-based	Servicemen, cadets, and officers should have knowledge of the basic aspects of the English language at all levels, including phonetic, morphological, lexical, and syntactic aspects. They should understand the rules for the construction of different types of sentences - narrative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory - and be able to use grammatical structures and the rules for their application.
Terminology	It is important to have knowledge of the terminology related to military affairs and weapons used by NATO member states. Servicemen and women also need to become familiar with specific terminology for professional communication with their European and American counterparts.
Communicative	It is important to know the socio-cultural peculiarities of communicating in English with foreign-speaking colleagues. Ukrainian military personnel should be familiar with the language culture, history, and context of countries and organisations where English is used as an official or working language. Particular attention is paid to intensive foreign language courses in higher military educational institutions, as they play an important role in the development of professional foreign language competence.

Source: Krykun (2018), Ostanina et al., (2023)

The implementation of the basic principles of foreign language training based on the North Atlantic Alliance STANAG 6001 standard in the MoD involves two stages of implementation during the period from 2019 to 2030. At the first stage (to be implemented in 2019-2024), it is planned to continue measures aimed at developing and strengthening (optimising) the

system of foreign language training for the personnel of the AFU (Kanova, 2022). The second stage (planned for 2025-2030), include steps to gradually introduce the requirement for professional English proficiency to be made compulsory for personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine who are promoted to positions related to the use of English in their official activities

(Kanova, 2022). It is also envisaged to increase the number of military units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which will be on par with the relevant military units of NATO member - states.

The ongoing implementation of the STANAG 6001 standard is anticipated to yield significant improvements in communicative competence and the mastery of fundamental English language skills and knowledge, as noted by Kharitonenko (2022). The development of communicative competence in English encompasses a multifaceted set of competencies.

1. Linguistic Competence. Central to this development is linguistic competence, denoting the ability to effectively employ language tools and comprehend language materials, along with a grasp of the rules governing their usage. Researchers underscore the pivotal role of linguistic competence in this context.
2. Thematic Competence. A complementary component is thematic competence, defined as the understanding of foreign language information pertaining to specific topics or fields of knowledge. Proficiency in this area enables individuals to navigate domain-specific discourse with ease, as highlighted by Didenko et al. (2021).
3. Pragmatic Competence. Equally vital is pragmatic competence, which pertains to the capacity to construct coherent and meaningful speech, facilitating the conveyance of information and articulation of thoughts. This aspect is considered integral to effective communication, as emphasized by Didenko and colleagues (2021).
4. Socio-Cultural Context Awareness. Beyond linguistic aspects, a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural context in which English is employed is deemed essential. This awareness extends to comprehension of cultural norms, characteristics, and communication conventions. It equips individuals with the ability to foster mutual understanding and navigate language challenges that may arise due to misinterpretation or incomplete grasp of English, an aspect underscored by Kanova (2023).

As this new standard, aligned with practices in NATO member states, continues to gain traction, it is poised to foster the evolution of effective learning and growth within English language environments. The amalgamation of these competencies represents a new echelon of

foreign language proficiency, a prerequisite for adept task execution and successful communication in English-speaking foreign environments.

Ways to improve professional communication among Ukrainian military personnel in English: the pedagogical aspect

In order to implement distance and blended learning technologies, foreign language teachers in higher military educational institutions should have computer literacy, which goes beyond simple orientation in computer basics and involves the ability to perceive, create, exchange, distribute, and use educational material using modern technologies. The computer literacy of foreign language teachers allows achieving the goals of the educational process, in particular, it increases the motivation of military personnel, helps to achieve learning objectives, develops cognitive and creative skills, and stimulates active participation in local and global network communications (Kanova, 2023). Teachers' level of computer literacy is based on their practical skills in selecting and using appropriate technologies to solve specific tasks in distance learning. However, the effective implementation of blended learning technologies requires the active involvement of academic staff, who play a key role in the development and maintenance of distance learning courses. At the same time, it is important to take into account that some teachers may be conservative and resistant to the use of new technologies (Mushyrovskya et al., 2022). Therefore, in addition to conducting appropriate outreach, it is necessary to create motivational approaches to encourage academic staff to actively use blended and distance learning technologies.

The use of a project approach is also important (Zinchenko et al., 2023). Creative projects do not require a set structure; they only require discussion and agreement on the results and the form of their presentation. These outcomes can be creative products, films, newspapers, videos, holidays, games, expeditions, and other forms of expression. Delivering the results of a creative project can include creating a script for an outline for a piece of writing, a research article, a video, a report, etc. Training military personnel in the field of foreign language communication during a full-scale war poses great challenges for both officers and cadets of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and teachers of military education institutions. The role of teachers has changed - they have become not only language transmitters but also designers who help to form a

comprehensive understanding of the subject matter by military personnel, psychologists who can identify and respond to the emotional state in the context of language communication, mentors who provide practical advice and promote the development of English language learning skills (Kanova, 2023). It is also important to use creativity to help unlock the potential of the individual and stimulate creativity and comfort for learning.

Teachers who represent the culture of English-speaking countries design relevant tasks and promote the development of reading and comprehension skills (Jalilbayli, 2022). To optimise the methodological adaptation of language training of military personnel to the process of military professional training for complex information systems, it is also necessary to provide adequate motivation, psychological support, and psychological support for this process, contributing to the development of the volitional sphere, self-regulatory skills and abilities of military specialists.

Discussion

The development of professional communication in English among Ukrainian military personnel may face various challenges. Some of them are related to structural problems in Ukrainian education (Didenko et al., 2021). In general, there is a low level of English language proficiency. As a result, military personnel may not have sufficient knowledge, especially in terms of professional communication. This can complicate the exchange of information with foreign colleagues and partners (Zinchenko et al., 2023). Structural changes in the area of specialised language training and education for officers, cadets, and enlisted personnel will require additional funds. However, the lack of resources to provide high-quality language training may be problematic. For this reason, training materials, courses, and trainers might be unavailable or limited (Kanova, 2023). Besides, some servicemen and women may not see a direct link between English language proficiency and their professional duties, resulting in low incentives to learn a foreign language.

Resolving these challenges demands concerted efforts and a multi-pronged approach. Notably, scholars propose various avenues for enhancing the cultural and communicative English competence of military personnel, each contributing to the creation of a more cohesive and proficient team (Kozyar et al., 2020; Kanova, 2023).

1. Interviews and Collaborative Work. Engaging in interviews and collaborative work on communication forms a solid foundation. These interactions foster understanding, promote active participation, and encourage open dialogue within the team.
2. Joint Training and Team Building. Joint training initiatives and team-building exercises not only enhance technical skills but also nurture effective teamwork and inter-personal relationships. These experiences fortify the bonds among military personnel.
3. Special Events and Training. Organizing special events, such as tests and training in novel methods of communication within English-speaking environments, can serve as a pivotal learning platform. These events expose military personnel to practical scenarios that demand effective English communication.
4. Corporate Trainings and Creative Tasks. Integrating corporate trainings and creative tasks introduces a dynamic element to the learning process. These activities stimulate innovative thinking, promoting adaptability and skill development.
5. Psychological Training and Sports Competitions. Psychological training empowers military personnel with the tools to handle high-pressure situations and enhance mental resilience. Concurrently, sports competitions instill discipline, teamwork, and physical fitness, reinforcing holistic development.
6. Fostering a Positive Environment. All these measures underscore the imperative of fostering a positive environment that fosters strong interpersonal relations within the military team. To effectively nurture a culture of interpersonal relations, attention must be paid to several key aspects:
 - a) Motivation: Instilling motivation to enhance communication quality among personnel is paramount.
 - b) Active Participation: Creating situations that encourage active participation and interaction among servicemen is crucial.
 - c) Role Development: Providing an environment that supports the development of individual roles in communication within the team is integral.

In summary, this holistic approach not only addresses the challenges at hand but also propels the military team toward higher cultural and communicative competence, ultimately

strengthening their collective capabilities and harmonious working relationships.

It should be stated that application of STANAG will provide necessary conditions for improvement of the English language proficiency. Moreover, new standard criteria and methods for measuring foreign language proficiency are being developed (Kanova, 2023). Promoting international communication in line with STANAG 6001 enables effective interaction of military personnel from different countries, especially those participating in international military operations or exercises. In the long run, this will improve the coordination and security of military operations, and in the current Ukrainian reality, it will also provide opportunities for training in the European countries, Canada, and the United States. In addition, a high level of English language proficiency can increase the competitiveness of a serviceman in the labour market and contribute to his professional growth both in the Armed Forces and in civilian life (as many modern servicemen are mobilised from the reserve). Therefore, further application of NATO standards in the training and development of additional language competencies among Ukrainian military personnel will significantly improve on the solution to the problematic issues noted by scholars.

Conclusions

Summarising all the mentioned above, it should be pointed out that the formation of a communicative culture in English involves the development of flexibility and fluency in using various means of communication. This process can be defined as a system that controls the relationship within the military team and helps to improve required skills for further learning and communication, which is important for the integration of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to the North Atlantic structures. The process of improving the communicative English language competence of military personnel is based on organising joint work, holding team-building events and teaching new methods of communication in an English-speaking environment.

STANAG 6001 can contribute to further improvement of the level of English language proficiency among military personnel. In particular, new standardised criteria and methods for measuring foreign language proficiency are being developed ensuring consistency and clarity in assessment. Therefore, the further use of

NATO standards in the training and development of additional language competencies among Ukrainian military personnel will facilitate the solution of problematic issues in the process of their language training.

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