

UNIVERSITY OF DEFENCE LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROJECT RESULTS

Jiří DVORSKÝ*, Miroslav HRUBÝ*

*University of Defence in Brno, Czech Republic

Abstract: *The paper deals with the University of Defence language education project main results. The main part of this project was realised during the year 2005, but the work on it continues up to the present. It was aimed at the detailed language needs analysis of military professionals and according to the acquired results the new English language teaching methods based on the use of ICT and distance learning ideas were suggested and evaluated. The paper gives the basic information on the project; experience gained during the time of its solution and achieved results. The authors also want to present a brief description of further intended steps leading to wider multimedia involvement.*

Keywords: *English, ICT, multimedia, studying, teaching.*

The language training of the Faculty of Military Technology (FMT) students at the University of Defence (UoD) in Brno is organized by the Language Training Centre (LTC), which provides the English language education in the bachelor, master and doctoral study programmes. Contrary to civilian universities, where language studies are from the very beginning focused mainly on mastering the general English and later on terminology typical for the particular branch, the language training at the University of Defence has the following specific features:

- It is compulsory for all students of the University of Defence to study English as the main means of communication within the NATO alliance.
- The required level of the language skills is strictly stated by the career order for each single position in the Czech Armed Forces.
- The requirements for single levels of language skills are defined by the NATO STANAG 6001 norm.

The fulfilment of the growing language training requirements is a very demanding process. The bachelor graduates are nowadays expected to achieve SLP 3333 (SLP-Standardized Language Profile), which is the assessment of the language skills according to

NATO STANAG 6001 norm in the following order: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students, who started their studies before September 2006, had to achieve SLP 2222 before their graduation. The reason for this new demanding requirement is the fact that our students as the future military and technical specialists are expected to communicate with their NATO counterparts about general, political and professional matters without any problems.

If the LTC UoD wants to cope with these challenges, it must:

- Adapt the language training to real life requirements.
- Search for and find suitable alternative forms of the language training support. According to our opinion the sensitive and functional implementation of the information and communication technologies (ICT) into the language training process is the best solution.

The project called “Improvement of the Content and Teaching Methods of the English Language at the University of Defence” [2] was divided into two partial tasks and their goals were stated as follows:

Task 1 was called “The Innovation of the English Language Curriculum at the FMT

UoD” and its goal was to make a deep language needs analysis of the military professionals - FMT UoD graduates.

Task 2 was focused on “The Use of the Study Portal of the University of Defence for the Language Skills Development Support”. Here the goal was to offer a proposal of the use of this Study Portal, to design and prepare the individual elements of support that would make the independent language skills development possible (using the chosen software). Here we adopted the method of application of the chosen software (ToolBook II Instructor 8.5) on creation of the interactive study tasks with permanent respect to pedagogical model based on the interactive approach to language training.

The starting point for the solution of this task was a thorough language needs analysis of the military professionals. The questionnaire was focused on facts concerning their practical use of the English language. This research was carried out in cooperation with the Research Department of the Personnel Section of the Ministry of Defence in Prague that provided us with the representative sample of military professionals with regard to strictly stated criteria. As a result we addressed military professionals in positions with bachelor or master degree requirements, men as well as women, all age groups, etc. This sample was acquired in 41 military units. We sent there 760 questionnaires with the rate of return of 93%. This information has become the basis for the English language curriculum innovation, which was recently certified according to Common European Reference Framework requirements.

The Study Portal of UoD should effectively facilitate the process of reaching these newly stated goals. By solution of the Task 2 the English language teachers wanted to test the new teaching methods effectiveness with the use of ICT.

“The System of the English Language Studies Support” [1] has been developed since the beginning of 2005 with the aim to help effectively in mastering all language skills that are tested as a part of the NATO STANAG 6001 test (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing). It was also decided to pay attention

to “Grammar” and “Military English” support.

This system will be gradually filled (loaded) with so-called primary elements of support (PES). Each PES can be seen as an object that involves:

- Description (specification) of the element.
- Attributes of the element (identification, author, date of up-dating, etc.).
- Content of the element.

These uniquely identifiable objects form the basic level of the system. Each PES belongs to some concrete category of one of the six sections of support. Logically correct design of categories for particular sections of support has become an important part of the whole system conception. Each category in each of the six sections of support is represented by a certain number of PES. The number of PES in particular categories will be changed (in the lifetime of the system) as well as single PES that were created according to given rules using different software – in our case it was initially MS Word and later ToolBook II Instructor.

Each of PES was complemented by the opponent review, where interactivity, didactic and graphic design was assessed.

Further work on this project [2] can be summarized as follows:

- To introduce the software to new possible participants in the projects, esp. students.
- To continually up-date existing multimedia elements of support and test their functionality at the Study Portal of FMT UoD.
- To propose the possibilities of study materials customisation to the individual students needs.

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