



ПЕДАГОГІЧНА АКАДЕМІЯ:  
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## ПРОФЕСІЙНА ОСВІТА

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### Foreign language training of cadet pilot-cadets and maintainer-cadets as a success factor for professional training abroad

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***Abstract.** The article addresses the growing necessity for foreign language proficiency among military cadets, especially in English, to meet international standards and ensure success in professional training abroad. The Ukrainian Armed Forces, recognizing the importance of language competence in the context of expanding global military cooperation and contribution to the global security, developed a roadmap for language training from 2021 to 2030. This roadmap*



*sets clear benchmarks for cadets to achieve language proficiency levels of SLP 1 to SLP 2 according to NATO's STANAG 6001 standards.*

*One of the main challenges highlighted in the article is the significant gap between the language competence of cadets upon entering military education and the expected proficiency levels upon graduation. Many cadets begin with low proficiency (SLP 0+ or 1), making it difficult to achieve SLP 2 or higher by the time they finish their education, especially with breaks in learning due to military service. The article advocates for implementing structured support systems, including peer collaboration, mentoring programs, and tailored language materials focused on aviation-specific tasks to rectify the above problem.*

*Additionally, the article emphasizes the importance of motivation, proposing a reward and punishment system to encourage language acquisition. This system could include public recognition, privileges, and leadership roles for top performers, while under-performers may face additional remedial sessions. The article also notes potential risks, such as inadequate resource allocation and resistance to the new systems. Ultimately, it calls for the creation of a motivating educational environment to support cadets in reaching the necessary language standards for their future professional roles.*

**Key words:** *cadets, learning environment, inner motivation, international standards, ESP-focused curriculum*



**Іншомовна підготовка курсантів-пілотів та курсантів зі спеціальностями технічного обслуговування як фактор успіху професійної підготовки за кордоном**

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***Анотація.** У статті розглядається зростаюча потреба у володінні курсантами іноземними мовами, особливо англійською, щоб відповідати міжнародним стандартам та забезпечити успіх у професійній підготовці за кордоном. Збройні Сили України, визнаючи важливість мовної компетенції в контексті розширення глобального військового співробітництва та внеску в глобальну безпеку, розробили дорожню карту мовної підготовки на період з 2021 по 2030 роки. Ця дорожня карта встановлює чіткі орієнтири для досягнення курсантами рівня володіння мовою від SMP 1 до SMP 2 відповідно до стандартів НАТО STANAG 6001. Однією з основних проблем, висвітлених у статті, є значний розрив між мовними компетенціями курсантів на момент вступу до військового*



*навчального закладу та очікуваним рівнем володіння мовою після закінчення навчання. Багато курсантів розпочинають навчання з низьким базовим рівнем володіння мовою ( СМР 0+ або 1), що ускладнює досягнення СМР 2 або вище на момент закінчення ЗВО, особливо з перервами у навчанні через виконання військових обов'язків. До вирішення цієї проблеми в процесі мовної підготовки пропонується впроваджувати структуровані системи підтримки, в тому числі, співпрацю з колегами, програми наставництва і спеціальні мовні матеріали, орієнтовані на специфічні для військової авіації завдання.*

*Крім того, в статті підкреслюється важливість мотивації, пропонуючи систему «винагород і покарань» для заохочення до вивчення мови. Ця система може включати публічне визнання, привілеї та лідерські ролі для тих, хто досягає найкращих результатів, тоді як ті, хто відстає, можуть зіткнутися з додатковими корекційними заняттями. У статті також відзначаються потенційні ризики, такі як недостатня наявність ресурсів і опір новим системам. Висвітлюється значення створення мотивуючого освітнього середовища для підтримки курсантів у досягненні мовних стандартів, необхідних для їхньої майбутньої професійної діяльності.*

***Ключові слова:** курсанти, навчальне середовище, внутрішня мотивація, міжнародні стандарти, навчальна програма з англійської мови професійного спрямування.*

**Introduction.** The expansion of international contacts requires an appropriate level of foreign language proficiency among personnel [1]. The need for foreign language proficiency among senior officials of the Armed Forces of



Ukraine has been emphasized repeatedly in military reports. For example, Lieutenant General Serhiy Korniychuk claims that learning a language should serve as motivation for those who aim for career advancement [2]. Lieutenant General Serhiy Nayev notes that knowing a language allows one to study documents in their original form and mentally align with the standards of Western partners [3]. Lieutenant General Ruslan Khomchak highlights that fluent English communication within the Armed Forces is currently problematic, but it remains one of the critical tasks for the future [4]. On the initiative of the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, a bill was submitted to the Parliament to grant English the status of the 'language of interstate communication'. According to this law, military personnel of officer ranks who serve under contract are among the categories of civil servants required to know English [5].

**The analysis of research works** shows that the issues of cadets' language proficiency and its role for overseas training is reflected in a number of works by both domestic and foreign scholars. In particular, the problem of the impact of English language proficiency on the career opportunities of Ukrainian military officers participating in training programs abroad as well as challenges, which cadets with poor proficiency face, are highlighted in the works by domestic researchers such as T. Andriyanova, K. Kaschuk, L. Kovalchuk, V. Krykun, O. Reznikova, N. Shalygina, L. Zakharova. Researcher and educator O. Lahodynskyi focuses his work on studying foreign language training systems in the UK and the US, and on implementing these international practices to enhance language education for the Ukrainian military [6]. An in-depth analysis of contemporary methods used to assess foreign language proficiency is conducted by N. Andriyanova, O. Velychko, K. Kaschuk [7]. The relationship between language proficiency and motivation, as well as strategies for its boosting, is



explored in the works of V. Krykun, O. Yefimova, and L. Zakharova. L. Zakharova highlights that motivation significantly increases when cadets recognize the link between English and their future profession, allowing them to deepen their specialized knowledge through language learning. V. Krykun emphasizes the role of adaptive learning, where incremental learning and continuous feedback create a personalized path based on the learner's motivation, experience, abilities, and perception style [9]. O. Yefimova underscores the importance of a learner-centered approach to fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, connecting it to life orientations and socio-psychological factors. The impact of the English language proficiency on professional military education outcomes is considered by some foreign scholars: J. Alderson, S. Adam, W. Baker & W. Jarunthawatchai, D. Graddol, S. Kim, E. Macaro, C. Tsai etc. For example, S. Adam extensively explores the issue of teaching military English, focusing on the specific language needs of military personnel for effective communication [8]. However, despite the close attention given to the problem of the relevance and significance of language proficiency for career advancement among military personnel, the issue of optimizing language training for future pilot-cadets and maintainers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine remains underexplored.

**The aim of the study.** The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of military pilot-cadets' language proficiency on the success of international training programs with a focus on identifying the challenges and strategies for improving English language acquisition within military education institutions. The article also seeks to explore how language training influences cadets' career advancement and their ability to integrate into international military environments while contributing to global security cooperation.



**Research results.** According to the Concept of Language Training in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine developed and approved a Roadmap for Enhancing Language Training in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (for 2021-2030). This roadmap sets clear, understandable, and mandatory actions, including changes to language proficiency requirements for senior non-commissioned officers and petty officers to SLP-1 (Standardized Language Profile Level 1) and for higher-ranked officers and positions with the 'lieutenant' rank and above to SLP-2. By the end of tactical-level military higher education in 2024, cadets must demonstrate foreign language proficiency at SLP 1. Later, this should progress to SLP 1+ and, from 2025, to SLP 2. Between 2022 and 2024, the language requirements for candidates in professional military education will increase. At the tactical level of military education (command-staff course L-2), candidates must have foreign language proficiency at SLP 1+ and, from 2024, SLP 2. By 2025, the percentage of foreign language instruction in each educational discipline should increase by 30%.

One of the key tasks for military institutions of higher education is to ensure that by 2030, graduates achieve language proficiency levels of at least SLP 2 [1, p. 13]. According to the Basic Principles of the Concept, the main goal of cadets studying English is to develop and improve their language skills in the military-professional sphere, according to the NATO STANAG 6001 language standards [1, p. 13]. Let us recall the criteria for speaking skills at levels 1 and 2, respectively:

- Level 1 – Survival Level: Candidates can maintain simple face-to-face communication in typical everyday situations. They can combine familiar, learned elements of the language, start, maintain, and end short conversations, asking and answering simple questions. Usually, they can meet simple,



predictable personal and living needs, satisfy minimal politeness requirements, and provide basic biographical information. Communication involves simple workplace tasks such as requesting goods, services, or help and expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Topics include basic needs like ordering food, finding accommodation, and shopping. Native speakers who are accustomed to speaking with non-native speakers often need to make an effort to understand the speaker by asking for repetition or relying on world knowledge. Candidates rarely speak fluently and can only maintain continuous conversation with rehearsed material. Frequent errors in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar often distort meaning. Time concepts are unclear, and the speech is characterized by pauses and hesitations.

- Level 2 – Functional Level: Candidates can communicate in routine social and work situations, describe people, places, and things, and talk about current, past, and future activities in full but simple paragraphs. They can compare, contrast, provide instructions, and answer expected questions. Candidates can handle casual conversations on familiar topics, such as work procedures, family, personal life, travel, and current events. They can interact with native speakers, though adjustments may be needed. Errors in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar sometimes distort meaning, but overall communication is appropriate for the situation.

The ongoing war places new demands on the foreign language proficiency of current and future specialists, as well as the timeframes for their training. Graduates of military higher education institutions who are preparing for professional training abroad (e.g., in the U.S.) must undergo general and/or specialized language training before follow-on training. Admission to general language courses is based on language proficiency levels set by the respective



military branches, which are determined by the ECL (English Comprehension Level) test [7]. For flight personnel, the minimum passing score is 80, while for technical personnel, it is 55. ECL scores do not directly correspond to STANAG 6001 levels but approximately align as follows:

- ECL 55 generally corresponds to SLP 2, indicating a pre-intermediate to intermediate level of language proficiency where the individual can understand and use English in most situations but may face challenges in complex communicative contexts.

- ECL 80 approximately corresponds to SLP 3, indicating a high level of language proficiency, where the individual can effectively communicate, understand complex texts and situations, and express thoughts in writing and speaking with few limitations.

These are general correspondences, but the specific level may vary slightly depending on the specific requirements of individual tests or training programs. Accordingly, the higher the initial score (level) of the candidate, the shorter is his/her training period and the faster he/she can start implementing invaluable experience in the military. Practically, recruiting the required number of specialists to study abroad in a foreign language, given the above, is quite problematic, so candidates often arrive for training without the required minimum score and the period of their training to achieve the minimum pass score for further specialized training significantly increases, and, unfortunately, for some this task is not feasible even with an increase in the period of training. One of the reasons for this situation is the time budget allocated for acquiring the appropriate level and often its shortage, given the gaps in the actual proficiency of the candidates for training. Therefore, the general guidelines for achieving each level are:



From level 0 to level 1 (SLP 1) – approximately 200-300 hours of instruction. This is the entry level where a person learns basic language skills for everyday situations.

From Level 1 to Level 2 (SLP 2) – approximately 300-500 hours of instruction. A person begins to understand more complex phrases, carry on conversations on professional topics, but may still have difficulty with more complex texts and conversations.

From level 2 to level 3 (SLP 3) – about 500-700 instruction hours. This is the highest level, when a person is fluent in professional topics, understands complex texts and uses the language confidently in different situations. With non-intensive training (2 hours per week), the process of moving up to level 2 can take several years (assuming the student's initial level is 1). It may take longer to reach higher levels (SLP 3-4), as they require a deeper understanding of complex grammar, vocabulary, and the ability to communicate fluently in a variety of situations.

Such a situation with the state of language competence of young professionals is not unexpected, but it is becoming particularly relevant in the current environment and requires a revision of approaches to cadets' language training and their motivation in learning a foreign language. In the light of the above, it should be noted that one of the reasons for the low percentage of military graduates with the desired SLP 2 is the huge gap for most of them between their level of language proficiency upon leaving high school or other educational institution (from close to 0 to 1) and the level expected of them after graduation from University (1+/2). Objectively, most cadets are unable to bridge this gap, often because of a long break in language learning, if enrollment in a university was preceded by contract service or participation in combat actions.



An effective solution to this problem would be to set the entrance requirements for language training of potential applicants at least at level 1. However, the practical implementation of this measure is quite problematic and may face resistance from the management of the higher education institutions, as it is likely to lead to a low enrollment of applicants. Obviously, in times of war, such a development is not acceptable for the personnel policy of the Armed Forces. In addition, when applying for some specialties, the priority requirements for applicants are that their physical fitness meets the necessary requirements.

Another way to address this issue and a rather powerful factor in improving cadets' performance is to improve motivation, i.e., a set of internal and external driving forces that encourage activity, set boundaries and forms of activity, and add focus aimed at achieving a specific goal, in this context, mastering a foreign language [9, p.13; 10; 11]. The development and sustainment of cadets' motivation for learning a foreign language depends on many factors. According to the researcher N. Aristova, there are four levels of motivation in learning English by students of non-linguistic specialties [13]. The first level is the lack of motivation, which is a negative intrinsic motivation to learn. The second level is low motivation to learn, which is outside of learning activities. The third level is medium motivation, which means positive extrinsic motivation to learn, which is outside of learning activities. And the fourth level is high motivation, i.e. positive intrinsic motivation to learn, which is embedded in students' learning activities. As practice shows, there are almost no cadets with the fourth level of motivation. Therefore, one of the priorities in today's conditions is, first of all, to create a motivating learning environment as the main direction that is crucial for the successful training of cadets. This means that the educational process not only transfers knowledge, but also forms a positive attitude to learning, promotes the



desire of cadets to learn and use the acquired knowledge in practical conditions. A successful motivating environment involves a number of key elements and, above all, critical resources: properly equipped classrooms (smart boards are ideal), printed and online learning materials, self-access classes, access to digital and other resources, sometimes as simple as internet and electricity.

Consultations with teachers are essential for fostering academic success and personal well-being among cadets. Regular counseling sessions provided by instructors or supervisors can help cadets resolve academic or personal challenges, thereby creating a strong sense of support. This is an important factor in reducing stress and increasing academic motivation. Moreover, individualized education allows instructors to tailor the learning process to the specific needs and capabilities of the cadets, which has proven to boost self-confidence and improve academic outcomes [14].

Peer support also contributes significantly to creating a motivating environment for language learning. Interaction between cadets is an important aspect of creating a supportive psychological climate. The peer support system allows cadets to exchange experiences, share knowledge and help each other in the learning process. Collaborative group work, joint problem-solving, and open discussions alleviate the burden of individual task and promote team cohesion, which is beneficial for both classroom-based and independent learning [15].

The buddy system has an especially significant impact on the process of learning a foreign language. This system pairs more experienced cadets with those who are at a beginner level or possesses weaker skills, assigning them as mentors. These mentors assist their peers in adapting to the training process, understanding the course requirements, and developing necessary skills. The buddy system not only facilitates knowledge transfer but also fosters a sense of



responsibility and leadership among mentors, reinforcing an environment of mutual support and motivation [16].

Another factor that contributes to the formation of cadets' interest in improving their own language skills is the relevance of the training materials. S. Adam [8] focuses on the problem of matching English language teaching materials with students' expectations, emphasizing the importance of the motivational component in the process of acquiring communicative competencies. Students need to understand their learning prospects, how to succeed, and how the knowledge gained during their studies is directly related to their future professional activities. For this purpose, the curricula should be adapted to the specific professional needs of the cadets. The benchmark for the curriculum relevance criterion in an aviation English course can be determined by how closely the curriculum is aligned with the real needs and career expectations of the cadets. Specific benchmarks include:

- compliance with ICAO standards [17]: the curriculum should meet the language training requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), in particular ICAO Level 4 or higher, which is the global standard for aviation personnel;
- coverage of operational scenarios: at least 80% of the course content should include scenarios, vocabulary and communication tasks directly related to real-life aviation operations (e.g., communication with air traffic controllers, emergencies, standard operating procedures);
- focus on language related to professional duties: the curriculum should reflect the specific language needs of the roles that the cadets will be performing (pilots, navigators, air traffic controllers). A guideline would



be that 70-80% of the course modules should focus on functional language use related to the cadets' career paths;

- feedback from industry professionals (SMEs): regular feedback from current or former aviation professionals can be included to confirm the relevance of the material. It may be a good idea to engage experts to develop an appropriate training program;
- integration of modern aviation technologies: integration of modern aviation technologies and tools (such as simulators, avionics and electronic communication tools) in at least 50% of the course exercises ensures that the program is relevant to current aviation practices.

Regular review of these benchmarks will allow for fine-tuning of the curriculum to ensure that it is relevant to the professional development of cadets in the aviation sector.

An effective factor in increasing cadets' motivation to improve their language proficiency is also the introduction of a motivational system of rewards and punishments [18]. The reward component in this system could include: achievement badges and certificates ('Best Speaker,' 'Top Scorer on Vocabulary Tests' etc.), promotion points or recognition in military evaluations, privileges, peer recognition, access to advanced learning materials or leadership roles – all of the above motivating continued effort.

The punishment component of the system could imply, in its turn, remedial training sessions, restricted privileges, additional duty assignments, progressive penalty system and removal from leadership or special programs.

Balanced approach is crucially important in implementation of the above system and ideally should work as a combination of immediate and long-term rewards and punishments with clear expectations and transparency.



By using a reward/punishment system tailored to the military environment, you can create a disciplined yet motivating atmosphere that reinforces English learning as a critical skill for professional success. The key is maintaining fairness, transparency, and alignment with their future roles in aviation or military operations.

**Conclusions.** Language proficiency, particularly in English, is crucial for military cadets' success in international training programs, significantly influencing their ability to comprehend materials and communicate effectively. The Ukrainian Armed Forces recognize the need for alignment with international standards, such as NATO and ICAO requirements, highlighting the importance of systematic language training. Enhancing motivation through clear career pathways, recognition, and the relevance of language skills is essential. Targeted English for specific purposes (ESP) materials tailored to the military context can facilitate better language acquisition. Developing support systems, such as peer mentoring and counseling, creates a conducive environment for overcoming language learning challenges.

Ongoing assessment and feedback are vital for refining curricula and teaching methods to meet cadets' needs. Significant gaps exist between cadets' initial language proficiency and the levels required for success in international settings, necessitating targeted efforts to address these gaps. Moreover, English proficiency is linked to long-term professional development; cadets who develop strong language skills are more likely to access international assignments and leadership roles. A comprehensive approach to language training in military education is essential to prepare cadets for successful careers in the global military environment.



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