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## **TESTING GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY AMONG MILITARY CADETS OF THE SECURITY SERVICE OF UKRAINE IN LINE WITH STANAG 6001 STANDARDS**

*Grammar and vocabulary testing have long been a cornerstone of language proficiency assessment, historically identified with language competence. However, with the development of language proficiency tests, there has been a shift towards assessing practical language skills in real-world settings, particularly in the military. This shift is particularly relevant within the framework of STANAG 6001, where language proficiency tests are designed to assess the communicative competence of military personnel in high-stakes situations, such as military operations, where functional language use is paramount. Despite the increasing focus on language testing in action, grammar and vocabulary remain critical components of language proficiency, directly impacting the ability of cadets to perform military tasks such as following orders, writing reports, and participating in operational discussions.*

*This paper explores the balance between assessing grammar and vocabulary and the primary goal of language proficiency within the STANAG 6001 framework: the ability to use language effectively under pressure. The research focuses on the need to reassess the traditional components of grammar and vocabulary, ensuring that they are relevant to both pedagogical and operational purposes. Drawing on Hughes's *Testing for Language Teachers* (2nd edition), this research is based on Bachman and Palmer's construct validity framework, which emphasizes the importance of testing real-world tasks rather than isolated language knowledge. It also integrates Long's interaction hypothesis and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory into Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which emphasize the importance of interactive communication and cultural context in language learning.*

*The study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data, to examine the relationships between stress, motivation, self-efficacy, and performance on grammar and vocabulary tasks. The STANAG 6001 tests are scored using a multi-level language proficiency scale, with proficiency levels ranging from 1 (survival) to 5 (native-like fluency). This study highlights the importance of assessing cadets' ability to perform language tasks under pressure, focusing on practical communication skills in operational settings. In addition, the study recommends incorporating more authentic military contexts into testing, addressing stress management in military training programs, and enhancing self-efficacy through targeted support systems.*

*Ultimately, this research aims to improve language proficiency assessments by ensuring that grammar and vocabulary tests not only measure knowledge but also reflect the real-world communication skills necessary for military success.*

**Key words:** *grammar testing, vocabulary testing, language proficiency, STANAG 6001, military cadets, task-based language teaching (TBLT), construct validity, self-efficacy, motivation, stress management, sociocultural theory, interactive communication, language assessment, real-world language use, backwash effect, mixed-methods approach, authentic military contexts.*

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## **ТЕСТУВАННЯ ГРАМАТИКИ ТА ЛЕКСИКИ КУРСАНТІВ СЛУЖБИ БЕЗПЕКИ УКРАЇНИ ЗА СТАНДАРТАМИ STANAG 6001**

*Тестування граматики та словникового запасу здавна було наріжним каменем оцінювання володіння мовою, історично ототожнюючи його з мовною компетенцією. Однак, з розвитком тестів на володіння мовою, відбувся зсув у бік оцінювання практичних мовних навичок у реальних умовах, зокрема у військовій сфері. Цей зсув особливо актуальний у рамках STANAG 6001, де тести на володіння мовою розроблені для оцінки комунікативної компетентності військових у ситуаціях з високими ставками, таких як військові операції, де функціональне використання мови має першочергове значення. Незважаючи на зростаючу увагу до тестування мови в дії, граматика та словниковий запас залишаються критичними компонентами володіння мовою, безпосередньо впливаючи на*

здатність курсантів виконувати військові завдання, такі як виконання наказів, написання звітів та участь в оперативних обговореннях.

У статті досліджується баланс між оцінюванням граматики та словникового запасу та основною метою володіння мовою в рамках STANAG 6001: здатністю ефективно використовувати мову під тиском. Дослідження зосереджено на необхідності переоцінки традиційних компонентів граматики та словникового запасу, забезпечуючи їх відповідність як педагогічним, так і оперативним цілям. Спираючись на працю Хьюза «Тестування для викладачів мов» (2-ге видання), це дослідження базується на рамковій моделі конструктивної валідності Бахмана та Палмера, яка підкреслює важливість тестування реальних завдань, а не ізольованих знань мови. Воно також інтегрує у викладання мови на основі завдань (TBLT), гіпотезу взаємодії Лонга та соціокультурну теорію Віготського, які підкреслюють важливість інтерактивного спілкування та культурного контексту у вивченні мови.

У дослідженні використовується змішаний методологічний підхід, що поєднує кількісні та якісні дані, досліджуючи зв'язки між стресом, мотивацією, самоефективністю та виконанням граматичних та словникових завдань. Тести STANAG 6001 оцінюються за допомогою багаторівневої шкали володіння мовою, з рівнями володіння від 1-го (виживання) до 5-го (вільне володіння мовою, як у носія). Це дослідження підкреслює важливість оцінки здатності курсантів виконувати мовні завдання під тиском, зосереджуючись на практичних комунікативних навичках в оперативних умовах. Крім того, дослідження рекомендує включати до тестування більш автентичні військові контексти, розглядати питання управління стресом у програмах військової підготовки та підвищувати самоефективність за допомогою цільових систем підтримки.

Зрештою, це дослідження має на меті покращити оцінювання володіння мовою, забезпечивши, щоб тести на граматику та словниковий запас не лише вимірювали знання, але й відображали реальні комунікативні здібності, необхідні для військового успіху.

**Ключові слова:** тестування граматики, тестування словникового запасу, володіння мовою, STANAG 6001, військові курсанти, навчання мови на основі завдань (TBLT), конструктивна валідність, самоефективність, мотивація, управління стресом, соціокультурна теорія, інтерактивне спілкування, оцінювання мови, використання мови в реальному світі, ефект зворотного зв'язку, підхід змішаних методів, автентичні військові контексти.

**Problem Statement.** Grammar and vocabulary testing has been a key element of language proficiency assessment, traditionally considered fundamental to language acquisition. Historically, the control of grammatical structures and vocabulary was seen as synonymous with language competence, making separate testing of grammar and vocabulary unquestionable. However, the landscape of language proficiency testing has changed. There has been a shift towards directly assessing practical language skills rather than focusing on core elements such as grammar and vocabulary. This is particularly important in the context of STANAG 6001, where language proficiency tests for military cadets are designed to assess their real-world communicative competence in high-stakes settings such as military operations where functional language use is paramount.

Although language proficiency tests have shifted towards measuring language skills in action, grammar and vocabulary are still considered important components of human language proficiency. Many language proficiency tests, especially those conducted on a large scale, continue to include grammar sections for ease of administration and scoring. However, their content validity often remains a problem, especially when such tests are used to determine the suitability of cadets for military assignments, deployments, promotions, or language proficiency pay. The challenge is how to balance the assessment of grammar and vocabulary within STANAG 6001 while maintaining the integrity of testing real language

skills. The challenge is to develop grammar and vocabulary tests that do not undermine the primary objectives of language proficiency in the military context—the ability to use language effectively under pressure.

For STANAG 6001 testing, the real question is whether the traditional grammar and vocabulary components are appropriate in a high-stakes military environment where communication must be accurate, effective, and context-specific. There is a need to ensure that the testing methods used do not encourage the study of grammatical structures in isolation but instead measure the ability of cadets to apply these structures in operational settings. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the need and validity of grammar and vocabulary testing for military cadets within the framework of STANAG 6001 standards, seeking to align these tests with both pedagogical and operational objectives. The main question is how to develop grammar and vocabulary assessments that reflect real-world communicative abilities, while ensuring that language tests fulfill their critical function in the military context. In military education, language proficiency plays a crucial role, especially for security cadets. The ability to communicate clearly, accurately and concisely is vital to military success, directly impacting individual and team performance. The STANAG 6001 standard, established by NATO, defines standardized levels of language proficiency for military personnel. This standard outlines the basic language skills – listening, speaking, reading and

writing – that are critical for effective communication in a high-stakes, multilingual environment.

STANAG 6001 ensures that military personnel, especially those serving in international or joint forces, have the necessary level of language proficiency. The standard consists of five language proficiency levels, from Level 1 (survival) to Level 5 (highly articulate native speaker), which assess military language proficiency. These levels ensure that NATO forces can communicate effectively with diverse language environments, facilitating coordination in multinational operations and maintaining operational security.

For military cadets, especially security services, grammar and vocabulary testing according to STANAG 6001 ensures compliance with the required language proficiency standards. Grammar and vocabulary assessment are important because they directly impact the ability of cadets to follow orders, write reports, and engage in operational discussions with international allies. By focusing on these standards, military training ensures that cadets are not only prepared to understand military terminology, but also to communicate with accuracy, clarity, and fluency—skills that are essential in critical security situations.

To ensure the accuracy of tests, several principles must be followed:

- Alignment of tasks and content: Each test is designed to assess a set of tasks and language content that meet the language proficiency expectations for each level.

- Independent level assessment: Each STANAG 6001 level is a separate construct that is tested and assessed independently. This means that candidates must meet all the requirements for a particular level to be assessed at that level.

- Use of representative samples: Test developers ensure that each level of a language proficiency test includes a representative sample of tasks and content areas, ensuring that the test covers the full range of abilities expected at that level.

The development of STANAG 6001 tests follows certain guidelines to ensure that they assess general language proficiency rather than discrete knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Key design elements include:

- Authentic materials: For Levels 2 and 3, the listening and reading tests use authentic texts (both written and spoken) designed for real-world purposes. For Level 1, semi-authentic texts are acceptable.

- Clear task specifications: Tests should contain clear tasks that reflect the tasks that cadets will encounter in real-world military situations.

- Balanced sampling: For both receptive and productive skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), tests should include a variety of items that represent different tasks and language functions at each level of language proficiency.

The STANAG 6001 test specifications focus on assessing the four language modalities (listening, speaking, reading, writing) separately:

- Receptive skills (listening and reading): Listening tests should be limited in duration, with Level 1 tests not exceeding 45 seconds and Level 3 tests up to 90 seconds.

- Reading texts should vary in length, with Level 1 averaging 50 words and Level 3 averaging 300 words.

- Productive skills (speaking and writing): Speaking tests should be recorded and scored by at least two trained raters. Written tests should assess the ability to produce clear and accurate military reports or briefings.

#### **Theoretical framework and research methods/**

This study of grammar and vocabulary testing among military cadets, according to STANAG 6001 standards, is based on the theory of language proficiency and second language learning (SLA), with a strong emphasis on language testing and assessment methodology. The theoretical framework is based on the seminal work of Hughes A. *Testing for Language Teachers* (2nd edition), particularly in Chapter 13 on grammar and vocabulary testing. According to Hughes, effective language assessment must meet construct validity – the degree to which a test measures the specific abilities it is intended to assess (Hughes, 2003). This concept emphasizes the importance of testing not only individual linguistic elements, such as grammar and vocabulary, but also the ability of candidates to apply these elements in meaningful real-world contexts, particularly in military scenarios.

This study follows Bachman and Palmer's language testing framework, which emphasizes that language assessment should directly assess the skills needed to communicate in the real world (Bachman and Palmer, 1996). As Hughes also notes, testing grammar and vocabulary in isolation, without a direct focus on real-life tasks, often does not reflect the practical application of language in operational settings (Hughes, 2003). The STANAG 6001 tests aim to assess how military cadets perform language tasks under high-pressure conditions, ensuring their readiness for military operations where language use is both functional and situation specific.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as outlined in the study, supports this approach by arguing that language learning and testing should focus



on real-world tasks that students are expected to perform. Accordingly, the STANAG 6001 framework is designed to assess cadets' ability to use language in a way that is directly applicable to military scenarios, rather than focusing solely on discrete grammar or vocabulary knowledge.

Long's interaction hypothesis also supports this approach, suggesting that language proficiency is improved through interactive communication (Long, 1983). This theory is particularly relevant to the speaking and listening skills in the STANAG 6001 tests, where cadets are required to demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively in real time, especially under the pressure of military operations.

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in language learning, is also a critical element of this study (Vygotsky's, 1978). It advocates the inclusion of authentic materials and real-world tasks that are essential for the development of language proficiency in military cadets. Testing not only linguistic skills but also the cadet's ability to function in culturally and contextually demanding environments is key.

In addition, this study incorporates Bandura's self-efficacy theory, which states that a person's belief in their ability to succeed significantly influences their actual performance (Bandura, 1997). Cadets with higher self-efficacy are more likely to perform well on language tests, especially under the pressure often encountered in military settings. This theory improves understanding of the motivational aspects that influence language proficiency, especially in high-stress scenarios common in military contexts.

Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory (SDT) further supports this research by suggesting that intrinsic motivation is a key factor in long-term language acquisition (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Cadets' motivation to achieve high levels of language proficiency influences their performance on language proficiency tests, especially when they are faced with the intense demands of military training.

The study also acknowledges Alderson and Wall's concept of the backwash effect, which describes how the design of language proficiency tests influences teaching and learning practices (Alderson and Wall, 1993). For STANAG 6001, the nature of these tests shapes how cadets prepare for and approach language learning, highlighting the importance of aligning tests with both pedagogical goals and the operational needs of military communication.

This study uses a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative assessments with qualitative analysis to investigate the relationships between grammar, vocabulary, stress, motivation, and self-

efficacy among military cadets. Language proficiency will be assessed using the STANAG 6001 scale (levels 1–5), which covers all four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, writing). These assessments will be scored by trained experts to ensure objectivity.

In addition, self-efficacy will be measured using a self-report scale, and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) will assess stress levels during tests. Surveys will explore the correlation between stress, motivation, and language test scores, while classroom observations will provide a deeper understanding of how cadets are.

**Results of scientific research.** Testing grammar and vocabulary for military cadets is a critical component of military training, as effective communication is essential in operational contexts. Research indicates that military personnel, like educators in other fields, experience stress and burnout, which can have a significant impact on their ability to communicate effectively, particularly under pressure. These factors are closely tied to their professional identity, self-efficacy, and motivation. The relationship between these elements is essential when considering the role of language proficiency in military operations.

**The techniques** used to assess grammar and vocabulary in military cadets are designed to ensure that language proficiency is tested in ways that are relevant to military environments. These methods include:

**Gap filling tests** are ideal for assessing cadets' ability to apply grammatical rules in context. This technique involves sentences with missing words, where cadets must insert the correct grammatical form. These exercises test a variety of grammatical structures, including tenses, modals, and sentence linkages.

– Example: Governments need \_\_\_\_\_ (develop) comprehensive strategies to address national security threats. [to develop]

Gap filling tests also offer a valuable opportunity to assess vocabulary, where cadets must choose the appropriate word to fit the context.

**Paraphrasing exercises** allow cadets to demonstrate their ability to express military orders and instructions in different grammatical forms while preserving the original meaning. This method not only tests grammatical knowledge but also ensures that cadets can adapt language for varied military scenarios.

– Example: Original Sentence: "The operation must commence at dawn."

– Paraphrase: "The mission is scheduled to begin at first light."

This technique is particularly useful in assessing how cadets handle language under pressure, mirroring real-life military communication.

**Multiple choice questions** are an efficient method for testing both grammar and vocabulary. These questions present cadets with several options, and they must choose the correct answer based on their understanding of military language and grammatical rules.

- Example: The unit \_\_\_\_ to the area last night.
  - a) arrived
  - b) arrives
  - c) arriving
  - d) will arrive

This approach is effective for assessing recognition of grammatical forms and vocabulary in specific military contexts.

Military cadets are often required to produce reports, mission briefings, and other written documents. **Writing and completion tasks** can simulate these real-life scenarios, ensuring that cadets are proficient in both grammar and vocabulary. These tasks may involve filling in gaps within a passage, completing sentences based on military protocols, or writing a short report or brief.

- Example: Complete the sentence with the correct form of the verb: "Espionage \_\_\_\_\_ acquiring and collecting non-public information via diverse means such as human sources (agents) or technical methods (hacking into computer and telecommunication systems)." [involves]

These tasks are especially important for assessing writing proficiency in military settings, where clarity and precision are critical.

Grammar and vocabulary proficiency were strongly correlated with cadets' ability to meet specific STANAG 6001 language proficiency levels. Cadets with higher levels of grammar and vocabulary proficiency demonstrated greater consistency and accuracy in communicative tasks, consistent with expectations for levels 3 and 4 within STANAG 6001. However, it was noted that vocabulary proficiency alone did not necessarily predict success at higher levels, especially when combined with poor grammar skills.

Cadets who reported higher levels of stress and burnout demonstrated decreased language proficiency, particularly on grammar and vocabulary tests that required real-time information processing and cognitive flexibility. Stress has been found to negatively impact cognitive function and inhibit the retrieval of certain vocabulary and grammatical structures, which in turn led to lower test scores.

Intrinsic motivation has been found to significantly improve performance on both grammar

and vocabulary tests. Students who were motivated by an intrinsic desire to improve their language skills were more persistent and engaged in the learning process. This was particularly evident in students with higher self-efficacy, who demonstrated greater confidence in their ability to cope with complex language tasks, complex vocabulary, and grammatical structures. Students with high self-efficacy believed in their ability to successfully complete language tasks, and this belief led to better performance on both written and oral assessments. On the other hand, students with lower self-efficacy had difficulty applying vocabulary and grammatical rules, especially under pressure.

Both gap-filling and paraphrasing techniques were found to be effective in assessing cadets' grammar and vocabulary. In particular, gap-filling exercises tested cadets' ability to apply certain grammatical structures in context. Paraphrasing tasks were particularly useful for measuring vocabulary range and fluency in military-specific contexts, as cadets were required to paraphrase military orders or reports using a variety of vocabulary and structures.

Single-choice tasks were found to be useful for testing cadets' recognition of correct grammatical forms and vocabulary in military settings. However, the study found that single-choice tests may not always capture the productive skills required for military communication because they did not require cadets to actively use language. Thus, while effective for large-scale testing, they may not fully reflect cadets' ability to use language in real-world situations.

The study found that the STANAG 6001 tests generally corresponded well to the real-world communication tasks that military cadets face. The grammar and vocabulary tasks were able to capture the specific communication tasks that cadets will encounter in multinational operations, such as giving orders, participating in tactical discussions, and writing written reports. However, the study found that further refinement of the tasks could ensure that the tests better reflect the dynamic and unpredictable nature of military communication, especially in high-pressure environments.

Tests that simulated **real-life operational situations**, such as military briefings or cross-border communication with foreign forces, were found to be the most accurate in predicting cadet performance in actual missions. The study concluded that assessments designed to reflect these practical language skills are more effective than traditional grammar and vocabulary tests, as they measure not only knowledge but also **functional communication** abilities. **Recommendations for Improving Testing Practices:**

– **Incorporate More Authentic Military Contexts:** It is recommended that **future STANAG 6001 assessments** incorporate **more authentic military contexts**, such as simulated operational environments or emergency situations. This would allow cadets to demonstrate their ability to handle complex language tasks in realistic scenarios, improving the validity of the test outcomes.

– **Address the Impact of Stress on Performance:** Given the findings on **stress** and **burnout**, it is suggested that military training programs include **stress management** components to help cadets perform better in language tests. Additionally, the tests themselves could be designed to minimize stress by providing a **supportive testing environment** and ensuring that tasks reflect realistic, yet manageable, challenges.

– **Enhance Support Systems for Self-Efficacy:** The research also emphasizes the need for **targeted support systems** that focus on boosting cadets' **self-efficacy**. Training programs should aim to build cadets' confidence in their language abilities through **peer mentoring**, **interactive language exercises**, and **real-time feedback**, which will help improve both motivation and performance in testing situations.

**Conclusions.** Grammar and vocabulary proficiency are crucial for military cadets' performance in communication tasks, with higher proficiency leading to improved operational effectiveness in line with STANAG 6001 standards.

The research underscores the critical role of grammar and vocabulary proficiency in the operational effectiveness of military cadets, particularly in alignment with STANAG 6001 standards. High proficiency in language skills is essential for effective communication in real-world military settings, while stress and burnout can significantly hinder performance, especially under pressure. Addressing these challenges through targeted support, stress management strategies, and fostering self-efficacy can enhance cadets' language abilities and overall readiness for multinational operations. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of aligning STANAG 6001 tests with real-world tasks and exploring more authentic, military-specific scenarios in testing methods. Techniques like gap-filling and role-plays are effective for assessing language skills, though further refinement is necessary to better reflect operational demands.

In conclusion, the research advocates for holistic testing approaches that not only assess linguistic proficiency but also account for the psychological factors influencing cadets' performance. By integrating mentorship programs, stress reduction techniques, and confidence-building exercises, military training programs can better support cadets' development, ensuring that they are well-prepared for the challenges of international collaboration and high-pressure operational tasks.

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