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**A Corpus-Based Investigation into the Lexical Validity of the Hungarian
NATO STANAG 6001 Language Tests**

Thesis Summary

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Thesis Summary

Consultant: Várnainé Dr. habil. Kis Ilona

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1. THE SUBJECT OF RESEARCH

This thesis presents an investigation into the lexical validity of the Hungarian NATO STANAG 6001 language exam tasks. Since English is one of the official NATO languages and is most often used in communication, attaining high level of English proficiency is a must for many members of the armed services, which in many cases determines their advancement possibilities. In 1976, NATO adopted a language proficiency scale, which became a milestone in the military language assessment and has been used by the NATO members and Partner nations to evaluate the language proficiency of the military personnel.

In Hungary testing according to NATO STANAG 6001 descriptors started in 1996. In 2005 the exam developed by the Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University Testing Centre became accredited in Hungary. Since then thousands of officers, NCOs and civilian servants have been tested by the Testing Centre.

NATO STANAG 6001 Agreement aimed at ensuring clear understanding of the language proficiency of the military personnel for the purpose of meeting language requirements for international staff appointments, but it did not provide any practical testing tools leaving it to the member-countries to develop their own testing materials in each skill. Because of the expanding cooperation within NATO and between NATO and the PfP countries, the role of language proficiency has significantly grown, and accurate language assessment is of utmost importance. This thesis investigates to what extent the Hungarian examination according to the NATO STANAG 6001 standards reflects the needs of the test population.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of testing according to NATO STANAG 6001 standards in Hungary is to certify officers, NCOs and civilian servants for participation in peace support operations. That is why in my thesis the main research objectives are as follows:

- 1) to analyse to what extent the Hungarian NATO STANAG 6001 exam tasks reflect the needs of the target population. The analysis refers to only one aspect of the exam - its lexical validity.
- 2) using the corpus-based methods and computer tools, to develop a method for such analysis which can be applied to any specialized language examination.

- 3) to create a corpus based on peace support operations vocabulary, which can be used as a reference in language teaching and testing.

In accordance with the NATO STANAG 6001 Agreement, the language knowledge of the candidates is assessed in four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Because of the nature of the exam tasks for these skills, only reading and listening tasks contain the adequate written language sample suitable for the research purpose. This research is based on the exam materials used by the MZ NDU Testing Centre from Jan. 1, 2005 through Dec. 31, 2009. The materials have been used with the permission of the MZ NDU Testing Centre.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In order to achieve my research objectives I applied the following strategies:

- I revised the available literature on language testing, specialized language testing and peace support operations,
- I studied the Hungarian Government Decrees and regulations dealing with language testing,
- I also revised the reports covering the recent wars (Yugoslavia, Iraq, Afghanistan) as well as the materials used in preparation of the personnel for peace support operations,
- In my research I used the materials, documents and research projects of the Miklós Zrínyi National Defense University Testing Centre.

The main method in this research with the objective to investigate the lexical validity of the Hungarian NATO STANAG 6001 exam tasks is comparison of the corpus based on peace support operations to the vocabulary of the NATO STANAG 6001 exam tasks.

4. THESIS STRUCTURE

The chapters of this thesis are as follows. The first chapter introduces the NATO STANAG 6001 language requirements, gives an outline of the scale development, describes the BILC (Bureau for International Language Coordination) and its efforts in the area of coordination of the training and testing activities of the NATO members and the PfP countries. It also gives the rationale for introducing the NATO STANAG 6001 exam in Hungary and follows its development from its first days to present.

The second chapter describes the requirements the testing centres have to meet in order to maintain the high standard of their examinations. These requirements refer to the exam specifications, the development of the exam materials, the evaluation procedures, the conduct of the examinations, the statistical analysis, and the testing centres' PR strategy.

The third chapter introduces the corpus linguistics, since in my research I rely on its methods. The chapter provides a brief description of the corpus linguistics, its history, shows the efforts of the linguists in different parts of the world to modernize the linguistic research and describes the biggest English and Hungarian corpora. At the same time it illustrates the immense opportunities the corpus linguistics provides in language teaching and linguistic research.

Chapter four is devoted to the accomplished research with the aim to investigate the lexical validity of the Hungarian NATO STANAG 6001 language exam tasks. It describes the rationale for this particular research, deals with the question of the content validity and the lexical validity of the exam tasks, presents the detailed research procedure, the language samples used in the research, the computer program the research relies on and the outcome of the research.

Chapter five summarizes the research work and produces the recommendations for the applicability of the research and the future research projects.

5. THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH WORK AND FUTURE WORK

Since language proficiency plays a very important role for the Hungarian military in attaining the acceptable level of operational compatibility, the extent to which the vocabulary occurring in language exam materials reflects the needs of the test takers comes into the foreground. When adopted, NATO STANAG 6001 agreement aimed at ensuring clear

understanding of the language proficiency of the military personnel for the purpose of meeting language requirements for international appointments, but it did not provide any practical testing tools leaving it to the member-countries to develop their own materials. The purpose of this research is to investigate the lexical validity of the exam materials used in NATO STANAG 6001 exams in Hungary.

The main strategy of the research is comparing the vocabulary of the exam materials (STANAG corpus) to the vocabulary of the “real-world” relevant materials (Peace Support Operations corpus). The STANAG corpus was based on the language exam materials, while the basis of the Peace Support Operations corpus was based on the Internet materials covering the Bosnian, Afghan, and Iraqi military operations.

TextStat and MCAccess programs were used for the statistical analysis of the corpora and showing the relationship between the vocabulary of the two corpora.

The findings of the research support the author’s claim that

- the lexical validity of testing materials can be statistically determined
- the corpus linguistics methods can be successfully applied to investigating the lexical validity of testing materials,
- the lexical validity of the exam materials used by the MZ NDU Testing Centre from Jan. 1, 2005 through Dec. 31, 2009 is adequate.

As a practical outcome of the research, the author developed a method for the evaluation of the lexical validity of teaching and testing materials, created a Peace Support Operations corpus which can be used as a reference list in teaching and testing, as well as using concordances.

Because of certain limitations, this research investigated only one segment of the quality of the testing materials, their general lexical validity. The data-driven method for corpus comparison can be extended to further investigation in this area (different skills or levels) and other vocabulary studies.

CV

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2010	G.C. Marshall Center (Germany), Bureau for International Language Coordination Advanced Language Testing Seminar
2006	Defense Language Institute Instructor Development Section (Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, USA) Management Course
2001	G.C. Marshall Center, Bureau for International Language Coordination Language Testing Seminar
2000	Lancaster University (UK) Language Testing Training
2001	Lancaster University (UK) Language Testing Training
1998	Defense Language Institute Instructor Development Section (Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, USA) Materials Development Course
1996	Canadian Forces Language School (Ottawa, Ontario, Canada) Language and Methodology Course
1993-94	Defense Language Institute Instructor Development Section (Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, USA) Language and Methodology Course
1976 - 1981	Belinszkij Pedagogical University (Penza, USSR) MA in English and English Literature including a minor in Teaching of German as a Second Language

CAREER HISTORY

2001	Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University Testing Centre (Budapest) Head of STANAG Section
1999 (May - Sept.)	Miklós Zrínyi National Defence University Language Institute (Budapest) Acting Head of English Section
1996 – 1998	Miklós Zrínyi Military Academy English Department (Budapest) Head of English Section
1992 (Sept. – Feb.)	Miklós Zrínyi Military Academy English Department (Budapest) Acting Head of English Department
1990	Miklós Zrínyi Military Academy English Department (Budapest) English teacher
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