

Linguapeace Europe: more than just ESP

Jack Lonergan

University of Westminster, London UK

Background

Linguapeace Europe is an EU-funded project which focuses on the use of English by the military forces in the new Europe. As a particular example of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) with certificated outcomes, it provides an interesting case study, but the project is more than just ESP. It also offers insights into the sociological and military developments of contemporary Europe and beyond, reflecting both the changing geopolitical and societal realities of Europe, and the changing role of military forces in the world. Led by Bulgaria, the project includes representatives from Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Spain, with accreditation from the pan-European International Certificate Conference, and native speaker input from the United Kingdom. The website for this Leonardo da Vinci sponsored project (No BG/03/B/F/LA-166009) has more detailed information¹.

The significance of the *Linguapeace Europe* project

Linguapeace Europe is a project where the main focus is clearly on language use and materials development. However, underpinning the objectives of the project are various considerations concerning the role of the military in the new Europe which has emerged since immense changes in Eastern Europe and the enlargement of the European community. The project can be considered therefore from three aspects:

- geopolitical and societal change in Europe;
- the changing roles of the military today;
- developemnts in ESP.

Linguapeace Europe had its origins in a shorter more limited project involving Bulgaria and Slovakia, with the UK and the Netherlands. This first project *Linguapeace* (see website² for the main project results) attempted to bring about a change in thinking and in culture among the primary target groups, namely the uniformed personnel of the two former Communist states with aspirations to join the EU. The success of that project led to the current initiative, which embraces a far larger constituency of former communist states and a wider selection of existing NATO or EU countries.

Change in Europe

Membership of the EU imposes on the candidate states a wide variety of admission criteria which must be met. The most frequently reported tend to be financial matters or perhaps human rights issues. Behind these lies the role of the uniformed personnel in the countries concerned. The British concepts of policing by consent and a volunteer professional army are at one end of an EU-cline far removed from the control and use of the police and military in the former communist states.

Linguapeace Europe is not concerned with teaching participants to be soldiers: they have already received their own national training and are assumed to be experienced professionals. Rather the project uses the medium of English as the international language of peacekeeping to promote new ways of appreciating and experiencing the military role. It approaches this task by including within the language-training packages three elements:

- respect and empathy for the individual
- personal development
- cross-cultural awareness

Encouraging respect for the individual

Attitudes to the military vary widely throughout Europe. In some countries where everyone has a son or brother in the military, there is a rapport between the military and the civilians. In others, even though the same family relationships exist, there is no such bond, and the military have been seen as representatives of a hostile state. The communication between military and civilian can be strained and tense. For example, requests for identification cards (ID), commands to leave an area because of a prohibited demonstration, or orders to voters at election halls can be alienating and if disobeyed can lead to trouble. Through the medium of the *Linguapeace Europe* course materials, the target group will learn how to show empathy, how to address people more softly, how to elicit answers more gently, and in general how to establish phatic rapport with the civilian population. Apart from this being a desirable feature in an enlarged European Union, it is also necessary for international work, for example with refugees.

Personal development

Governments often face issues with military personnel which are difficult to handle within the traditional military training patterns. As far as human resources development (HRD) is concerned, military training is based on immediate need, offered to those that need it at the time of need. However, there are several scenarios where the individual needs personal handling, and perhaps an extra qualification for the future. For example, there may be a surfeit of military personnel; or they retire after 30 years of service and find it difficult to adapt to civilian life; or they wish to leave the services early, upsetting central HRD plans. *Linguapeace Europe* offers a new possibility to many members of the armed forces: gain a good language qualification and take your part in the new united Europe. This can help retention, especially where personnel wish to leave; it can offer the prospect of service with the UN or NATO; or it can help resettlement in the civilian community. Reports from the first *Linguapeace* project partners in eastern Europe shows that there is keen competition to become, for example, a UN policeman. This brings an enhanced salary for the overseas posting, as well as an opportunity to experience international co-operation at first hand, to have a significant addition to the curriculum vitae, and the chance to test one's mettle (and language skills) against a far greater group than available at home. A survey of over 25000 Norwegians who have volunteered for such service found these results:

*Various motives were given for seeking [service in the] United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Common reasons included to seek new experiences, excitement and danger (sensation-seeking), as was financial gain, since this type of service is well paid compared to work in the home environment.*³

In the British armed forces, many who gain a foreign language qualification (analogous to the ESP qualification being developed in *Linguapeace Europe*) transfer to an MA programme in International Liaison and Communication (MA ILC) in order to enhance their chances of employment after early retirement⁴.

Cross-cultural awareness

The idea of acquiring cultural knowledge through content-enriched instruction is now welcomed throughout Europe. The *Linguapeace Europe* materials try to make the diversity of Europe's societies accessible to the military of other countries by promoting cross cultural awareness and international understanding. A soldier or military policeman whose experience is limited to the home country - a newly democratic one after many years of totalitarianism - is likely to learn a great deal from observing and partaking with others in professional scenarios.

At a micro level, there are going to be apparent differences whose significance might be symbolic: uniforms, military music, or marching styles. An example happened on a project visit to Bulgaria during a national celebration. The Bulgarian battalions on parade lined the main square in Sofia; as the head of state passed to take the salute, each platoon gave a loud

Hurra!. But then, in a manner quite new to this observer, the shout was held on like an organ continuum underpinning the other shouts, until the whole parade ground was of one voice, in unison and deafening. Impressive and strange for us, yet ordinary to the Bulgarians - who of course nodded their heads somehow or other in agreement.

When it comes to language learning, the mindset of the non-linguist soldier can be a disadvantage. The good speaker of foreign language has to yield up something of his or her own behaviour and culture, to be partly assimilated into a different culture. For most military personnel, the idea of merging into a new culture has traditionally been actively discouraged. It is not the place of the fighting soldier to readily understand and empathise with the other side. The term fraternisation has only negative overtones, far removed from peace-loving brotherliness. Where troops once had a hostile role only, there are now many whose role is not offensive but is based instead on fostering international co-operation, even though this can be in dangerous circumstances. As soon as military personnel operate on an international stage, there are likely to be even greater cross cultural issues, such as religion, diet, dress and the role of men and women in society.

The changing roles of the military today

Military forces once meant only one thing: offensive forces for attack; defensive forces on alert between wars. The last 60 years have seen a major change in the role of the military in many countries. The apparent oxymoron slogan of the UK Ministry of Defence *Join the Army and Keep the Peace* has gained some truth, with military forces being used in a variety of scenarios which foster or require international co-operation.

Such tasks can include supervision of elections under UN auspices in newly emerging democracies; joint peacekeeping operations in alliances such as NATO; or the provision of aid at scenes of disaster. Even peaceful initiatives, however, may require armed force. For example, in order to carry out a peaceful mission such as refugee relief, troops may have to operate in four discrete areas:

- secure the territory with armed guards;
- set up an infrastructure for a distribution centre;
- receive and distribute food and medicines to the refugees;
- maintain control of the civilian population and the potential criminal looters.

Different peace-keeping tasks were categorised (Litz 1996)⁵ in the earlier days of UN peace-keeping, when such actions had a better reputation for success. The objective was to monitor the various degrees of stress which these (then) new activities caused in service personnel.

Table 1. Activities on Peacekeeping Missions (adapted from Litz 1996)

Levels of stress	Low	Moderate to High	High	Extreme
UN area of action	Sinai	Lebanon	Somalia	Bosnia
Characteristics	Firmly established peace.	Tenuous peace; Flare-ups of conflicts.	Inter-klan violence; Ongoing skirmishes.	Ongoing war; Genocide; Atrocities.
Context	Uncontested presence; Rules of engagement are clear and unequivocal.	Lightly armed troops out-armed; Peacekeepers are from small nations; Poor supplies; Use of force is severely restricted.	Somalia was unruly and unsafe; Ongoing life threat to UN-personnel from civilians.	UN personnel have little power, out-armed; Difficult to maintain neutrality.
Duties	Observe, monitor, report; Constabulary	Observe, monitor, report; Patrol; Provide buffer-zone;	Patrol, disarm; Provide humanitarian aide; Build infrastructure.	Provide buffer-zones and "safe" havens.

		Constabulary.	.	
Potentially traumatizing events	Accidents; Abductions; Assassination attempts	Sudden, unpredictable attacks; Hostage-taking; Witnessing violence.	Sniper attacks, Mines; Witnessing starvation; Violence.	Sniper, mortar attacks; Witnessing atrocity; Being held hostage.

English is not necessarily the language used in talking to the civilians concerned, but it is most frequently the language used for liaison among the international forces. When dealing with refugees and civilians in disaster zones, they will have to ask - even if through interpreters - for items such as ID cards, or information on family members. Being required to answer to these questions by soldiers is clearly distressing for people already in difficult circumstances. As this text is being edited, military forces are being used for disaster relief after the terrible tsunami of December 2004.

If there is a military conflict - with refugees mixed in with looters or guerrillas - then the force of military questions may need to be far stronger, but the distress for the civilians caught up in the situation remain painful. A practical example of sensitivity in such a situation might be to make a tape recorder less visible during a de-briefing session held with a refugee who, if genuine, is likely to have suffered from interrogations in the past.

Cultural awareness can also extend to understanding the cultures of similar organisations (such as an army) but from dissimilar cultures. The values of one nation are different than those of another, so that coping in emergency situations presents different challenges to the representatives of each nation. Just as nations have stereotypical characteristics, so too do the armed forces of those nations. An emergency scenario requiring improvisation offers a ready contrast between the solutions sought by a strict go-by-the-book approach of some and the make-do-and-mend approach of others. In many scenarios, the latter approach, adopted by armed forces with limited resources, can prove more useful. Anecdotal evidence in the press suggests that some foreign forces in Iraq are better than others at coping with local stress and conditions.

Developments in ESP

The use of English by the military of Europe in NATO, UN or other international contexts is clearly a case of ESP. The parameters of the *Linguaepeace Europe* project in developing materials for English for Peacekeeping include all the considerations outlined above, as well as the nature of the learners and the nature of the linguistic features of the language to be used. These developments are looked at briefly under the following headings:

- Military training and needs analyses
- Learners' needs and learner types
- Discourse objectives and course design
- Grammar as an enabling tool for communication
- Clines and courtesy
- Discourse grammar
- Conclusion

Military training and needs analyses

We have noted that military training is needs led. The training is functional, the outcomes are well defined in advance, and the learning pathway is also very clearly signposted. The training outcomes are measured in terms of operational efficiency. However, the vast majority of service personnel in Europe have little interest in learning foreign languages and even less interest in linguistic descriptions of language. All learning goal must be presented in terms of operational applications in terms recognisable to the learners. This means a list of military tasks and activities (cf. Table 1 above) rather than a list of structures, grammar items or vocabulary items. The working taxonomy of activities for the *Linguaepeace Europe* project is:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. taking witness statements and interrogations | 13. weather forecasting |
| 2. staffing checkpoints and border posts | 14. fostering human rights |
| 3. escorting civilians and refugees | 15. management of the multinational forces |
| 4. detention and confiscation | 16. desk research (intelligence), investigations |
| 5. providing humanitarian assistance | 17. helping civilian administrations |
| 6. giving first aid | 18. co-operation with local police forces |
| 7. observing movements, reconnaissance (recce) patrols | 19. telecommunications |
| 8. negotiations | 20. safety, health and hygiene |
| 9. logistics and supplies | 21. equipment of troops |
| 10. quarter making (establishing housing for troops) | 22. situation reports |
| 11. environmental protection | 23. coping in emergency (non-war) situations |
| 12. verifying ceasefires | 24. monitoring elections |

However, a communicative approach to language teaching with a content based curriculum requires more than a list of situations or topics. There needs to be an underlying linguistic framework to provide the cohesion necessary for a series of lesson units which may be cumulative but may also be used in a modular mode in order to meet the operational requirements of the troops.

Learners' needs and learner types

While the learners' needs must be expressed in language to which they can relate, the delivery must also be in a manner suited to the learning modes of the target groups. Military training is functional and incremental: learners are taught what they need to know and learn it to an acceptable level of performance. Just as with a civilian driving test, there is no need for grades of excellence or indeed any marker of success other than pass/fail. On the one hand this suggests some of the best aspects of pedagogy, namely clearly defined outcomes, well managed learning phases, periodic review, and suitable assessment of attainment. However, such training can be inflexible. Deviation from the prescribed norm is not encouraged, even though the teacher might think it fruitful. This negates some of the more positive aspects of the caring-and-sharing classroom and requires a focus and discipline in approach often absent from many published course books.

One of the aims of *Linguapeace Europe* is to provide training materials which meet learners' needs in terms of content, but also in terms of modes of delivery, learning, applicability, functionality, and validated outcomes. At the moment, many military academies in eastern Europe use general English textbooks which are just as suitable for UK-based summer schools for young adults, rather than anything specific to the tasks required.

Discourse objectives and course design

Learners whose understanding of work is successful task completion see language-related activities in their entirety. They have no immediate concern for the considerations of grammar or structures, although accurate lexis is important. Rather they have an instinctive understanding of language at discourse level. For example, a UN soldier using a foreign language to control an angry crowd is concerned with his communicative performance at discourse level: does he or she succeed in keeping the crowd in place? Success is gauged by the quality of the outcome, not by the quality of the language employed. Similarly, the performance of a soldier who has to negotiate (on behalf of the commander) with other members of an international team for the use of their resources will be measured by the success of the transaction, not by the quality of the language used. Clearly the language used must be at least adequate. If the accent, poor grammar, wrong choice of words, or general low level of comprehensibility means that the speaker cannot control the crowd or use the colleagues' resources, then the language is not good enough. The reason that it is not good

enough is that it has not enabled the task to be completed: this is a discourse level analysis and appraisal by the military - not a language learning appraisal at sentence or lexical level. The *Linguapeace Europe* project addresses this by identifying the language-related tasks in discourse terms. The contents of the language learning programme are described to the learners in terms of tasks, or more precisely communicative activities which require task completion. For each type of communicative activity there will be associated language items, including always the lexis defined by the theme or topic area. From the learners' point of view, the language items required for task fulfilment are the enabling devices for task fulfilment. Grammar and structures are not there in the ether waiting to be learned according to a pre-ordained syllabus; instead, tasks need completing, and the enabling tool for task completion is a knowledge of specific elements of language. Task-based military language training is based on immediate need, and the elements of language required are offered to those that need them at the time of need.

Grammar as an enabling tool for communication

If the type of discourse decides the grammar or elements of language to be used, then the speaker/writer must make different selections from the available grammar, depending on the discourse and communicative objectives. For a beginner, these choices are necessarily limited, so a progression of either language difficulty or of discourse objectives is needed to enable the learner to move from one display of communicative competence to another.

If we take the example of making a Situation Report about an accident, we see that there is set of lexical items which are likely to be involved, and this reflects the construction of the various lists of notions (general and specific) in the Council of Europe's specifications such as Waystage. We can consider items such as *accident, disaster, injured, dead, wounded, situation, serious, bad, ambulance, help* and the like. Possible utterances could be:

I am at the scene.

The situation is serious.

Five people are wounded.

Send help immediately.

This supposed speaker is limited to a few noun phrases, adverbs, and verb forms are limited to the simple present and the imperative. By adding lexical items and phrase level grammar the range of utterances can be expanded, perhaps to include

We need medical supplies/fresh water/blankets/first aid teams immediately.

This is an emergency/a disaster zone/a prohibited area.

The rescue teams are exhausted/very tired/poorly equipped.

Although the range of utterances has increased, the communicative ability of the reporter has not greatly increased; the text is still at an interim stage in terms of its discourse objectives.

To come closer to fulfilling the task of making a situation report more verb forms are needed than the *simple present* or *imperative* used. By adding a new verb form - the *present perfect* - the reporter can say:

There's been a serious accident.

A car has crashed into a petrol tanker.

Five people have been killed.

Similarly, the situation report is further improved by the addition of the *will future*:

The ambulance will be here in 5 minutes.

The wounded will be taken to the military hospital.

The discourse objective of making a situation report is dependent on the general and specific notions of the topic, but is realised in communicative terms by the grammatical set which is associated with that discourse, namely the *simple present*, *'will' future* and *present perfect*, with the *imperative* close by. We can note in passing that the use of active or passive voice is

not significant in terms of this discourse; and that the *present perfect* is introduced in a correct context, divorced from the *simple past* which does not feature in this discourse.

Clines and courtesy

A feature of the *Linguapeace Europe* project is the desire to train troops to interact sympathetically with civilians in a variety of situations. In the area of giving commands and making requests, military language does not normally admit to clines of politeness. The course design must make the learners aware that degrees of politeness are possible and in certain situations desirable.

Table 2. Clines of courtesy for civilians

Courtesy to civilians	
Stop!	Abrupt command
Do not do that!	Command
I'm afraid I can't do that.	Polite Command
You cannot come through.	Refusal
I'm sorry I can't let you through.	Apologetic refusal
We can't let you through if you haven't got a visa.	Giving reasons

The learners here appreciate the value and function of softeners such as *I'm sorry* or *I'm afraid*... (not literally here).

Discourse grammar

The target group for *Linguapeace Europe* understands what is meant by producing a situation report. They do not express what they achieve in discourse terms, which could be summarised as

- identify
- explain
 - what the situation is
 - what has happened
 - and what will develop

Although the soldiers are not interested in the use of active, passive and modal forms for their own sake, they are interested in acquiring language knowledge which allows them to fulfil their tasks.

The table below illustrates this further. Here are two discourse functions relevant to the military, which do not seem to be related when expressed in military terms. One is making situation reports; the other is describing suspects. As the table shows, the underlying linguistic exponents are the same: the differences lie in the lexical load. The steps labelled 1 - 5 give an indication of a progression in a language syllabus focussing on the achievement of discourse objectives.

Table 3. Similarities in discourse grammar exponents

Language examples	Discourse	Verb forms	Discourse	Language examples
This is an emergency. Three people are wounded. They are very tired.	Situation reports 1	Simple present	Describing suspects 1	He has long hair, and usually wears a red hat. He is armed.
Call an ambulance. Stand back. Clear the area.	Situation reports 2	Imperative	Describing suspects 2	Approach with care. Arrest on sight.

The ambulance will be here in 5 minutes. The wounded will be taken to the military hospital.	Situation reports 3	'will' future	Describing suspects 3	He will be in the village this evening.
There's been a serious accident. A car has crashed into a petrol tanker. Five people have been killed	Situation reports 4	Present Perfect	Describing suspects 4	He has escaped twice before. He has been sentenced to long jail terms.
The wounded should be taken first.	Situation reports 5	Modal	Describing suspects 5	If captured, he must be disarmed. We should have caught him by now.

It is worth noting that a native speaker in one of the situations above might start their discourse at any of the five levels given. They can be mixed up at will, and still effect the same discourse objective: no sequencing is required, and no sequencing implied. However, the pragmatics of language teaching pedagogy mean that the learner has to be confronted with the language in learnable chunks, and concomitant choices have to be made about what should precede what.

Conclusion

The earlier *Linguapeace* project published pilot resource materials called *At Ease: English for Peacekeeping*⁶ which took some of the considerations of ESP course design into account. Based on the linguistic analysis of the discourse required of the military, the *Linguapeace Europe* project is now developing a course design which has task fulfilment as the leading parameter. The military tasks are presented to the learners in terms which they understand. The grammatical load required to realise the discourse objectives of the tasks are presented as the necessary enabling tools which allow them to function professionally. This is a more attractive learning proposition for the military than just foreign language learning.

¹ See www.linguapeace-europe.net

² See www.linguapeace.net

³ *Peacekeeper Stress: New And Different?* by Weisaeth, L., Mehlum, L. & Mortensen, M. in "NCP Clinical Quarterly", 6(1): Winter 1996

⁴ See www.wmin.ac.uk/modleb and follow the links to MA ILC

⁵ *The Psychological Demands of Peacekeeping for Military Personnel* by Litz, B. NCP Clinical Quarterly 6(1): Winter 1996

⁶ *At Ease: English for Peacekeeping (Resource Book with CD)* by Lonergan, J. & Williams, R. ISBN 954-516-474-3 Lettera Publishers, Plovdiv 2003

The author

Jack Lonergan has a Chair in Applied Linguistics in the Department of Diplomacy and Applied Languages at the University of Westminster, London. He is Director of the UK Ministry of Defence Languages Examinations Board and has published numerous ESP textbooks. Jack Lonergan represents the university as a core partner in the *Linguapeace Europe* project.