



HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NATO STANAG 6001 LANGUAGE STANDARDS AND COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK (CEF) AND THE COMPARISON OF THEIR CURRENT STATUS

Ekrem SOLAK*

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to shed light on the historical development of language studies in military and social context and to compare the current status of NATO Stanag (Standard Agreement) 6001 language scale with Common European Framework (CEF). Language studies in military context date back to World War II and the emergence of Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) can be considered the first initiative on this path. In 1976, NATO adopted a language proficiency scale related to the Interagency Language Roundtable's 1968 document and this scale was finally updated in 2003 and has been put into practice by member countries since then. On the other hand, in European context, language studies have undergone some changes since the signature of the European Cultural Convention in 1954. Finally, Common European Framework emerged for the standardization of language studies throughout Europe in 2001. When two scales are compared there are similarities in some aspects but minor differences especially in terminology and topics.

Key Words: NATO STANAG 6001 Language Standards, Common European Framework (CEF), the history of language studies in military context, comparison of military language studies with social language studies

NATO 6001 DİL STANDARTLARI İLE AVRUPA ORTAK DİL ÖLÇÜT ÇERÇEVESİNİN TARİHSEL GELİŞİMİ VE MEVCUT DURUMLARININ KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI

ÖZET

Bu makalenin amacı askeri ve sosyal bağlamda dil çalışmalarının tarihi gelişimine ışık tutmak ve NATO ile Avrupa Birliği Dil Standartlarını karşılamaktır. Askeri bağlamdaki dil çalışmaları 2. Dünya Savaşına dayanmaktadır ve bu konuda Ordu Özel Eğitim Programı ilk teşebbüs olarak değerlendirilebilir. NATO 1976 yılında Birimler arası Dil Kurulu'nun 1968 de kabul ettiği dil yeterlilikleri ilgili ölçeği benimsemiş, son olarak 2003 yılında bu ölçeği güncellemiş ve o zamandan buyana da üye ülkelerce uygulanmaya gelmiştir. Diğer taraftan, Avrupa bağlamında dil çalışmaları 1954'te Avrupa Kültür Anlaşmasının imzalanmasından buyana bazı değişiklikler geçirmiştir. Son olarak, 2001 yılında tüm Avrupa'da dil çalışmalarının standartlaştırılması ile ilgili olarak Avrupa Dil Standartları ortaya çıkmıştır. İki ölçek karşılaştırıldığında bazı yönlerden benzerlikler, fakat konular ve teknik terimler yönüyle de farklılıklar bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: NATO STANAG 6001 dil standartları, Avrupa ortak ölçüt çerçevesi, askeri bağlamda dil eğitimi tarihçesi, askeri ve sivil bağlamda dil eğitimi karşılaştırma

*Dr. Jandarma Okullar Komutanlığı Yabancı Diller Bölüm Başkanlığı Beytepe-Ankara. ekremsolak@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

NATO was established in 1949 and since then the military personnel of the member countries have been participating in many international joint operations in various parts of the world. Some of these missions are administrative duties and some others are combating ones requiring communication and co-operation with the members of other armed forces. The need for effective communication is particularly acute in these missions and operations where linguistic misunderstanding risk leading to mistakes, which might result in casualties.

Therefore, both NATO and member states have given importance to language learning and standardization activities by establishing professional organizations with educated staff in this field. In 2003, BILC which is a consultative and advisory body for language training matters in NATO, released a document on the standardization of language training and testing called NATO Stanag (Standard agreement) 6001 explaining the details of language proficiency levels that military personnel are supposed to have in order to participate in joint international missions. The NATO member countries deploying personnel to joint missions have been following the standards since 2003.

To follow these principles, governments allocate a large number of human and financial resources to language training and try to achieve the prescribed Standard Language Profile (SLP) through national systems. There are currently 48 nations using Stanag 6001 criteria in their language systems. They are supposed to establish their own training structure, design their syllabi and teaching materials, implement a testing framework, develop tests and monitor training outcomes.

As a kind of social version of NATO Stanag 6001 document, Common European Framework (CEF) is a guideline used to describe achievements of learners of foreign languages across Europe. According to an Intergovernmental Symposium held in Switzerland in 1991 on: 'Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe: Objectives, Evaluation, Certification', a CEF was needed to improve the recognition of language qualifications and help teachers cooperate generally in Europe. In 2001, a European Union Council Resolution recommended using the CEF to set up systems of validation of language ability.

I. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NATO STANAG 6001 LANGUAGE STANDARDS

A. Historical Background of Language Studies in Military Context

The history of language teaching in military context which goes back to the World War II began to be developed scientifically especially by the entry of the United States into World War II. At that time, the United States Army needed personnel who were fluent in some languages to work as interpreters, code-room assistants, and translators. The government entrusted some American Universities to develop foreign language programs for military personnel. With the participation of fifty five American Universities, the Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP) was developed in 1942.

The most important characteristics of this program was to use an informant, that is why it is sometimes known as the “informant method”, since it used a native speaker of the language. The informant served as a source of phrases and vocabulary and provided sentences for imitation and memorization which were the fundamentals of the method. There was also a linguist who did not necessarily know the language, however, was trained to extract basic structure of the language from the informant. Those courses were intensive programs and students studied 10 hours a day and 6 days a week.

The Army Specialized Training Program lasted only two years; however, it attracted considerable attention especially during the World War II. The program could be considered innovative in terms of the procedures used and the intensity of teaching rather than in terms of its underlying theory. On the other hand, it inspired several linguists on the value of an intensive, oral-based approach to the learning of a foreign language. These aspects of the method contributed to the development of Audio-lingualism which was a combination of structural linguistic theory, ASTP, contrastive analysis, aural-oral procedures and behaviorist psychology (Richards & Rodgers, 1997).

1.The Historical Development of the NATO Stanag 6001 Scale

During the 50s, the United States Government needed to specify the language ability of Government employees, but at that time, there was no standardized system in the academic

community. The Government wanted to develop its own to tackle this problem. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) formed an interagency committee that formulated a language scale ranging from level 1 to 6, but the scale was not as detailed as it is today. The scale was eventually standardized to six levels, ranging from 0 (= no functional ability) to 5 (= equivalent to an educated native speaker). In 1968, several agencies jointly wrote formal descriptions of the base levels in four skills – speaking, reading, listening, and writing. By 1985, the document was revised under the umbrella of the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) by including full descriptions of the plus levels that was adopted into the scoring system. Since then, the document has been known as “ILR Scale”, “ILR Guidelines”, or the “ILR Definitions” (Herzog, 2005).

In 1976, NATO adopted a language proficiency scale related to the Interagency Language Roundtable’s 1968 document. This aimed to respond to a need for defining language proficiency and to form a common understanding among member countries. In addition, authorities believed that it must be applicable to all languages and could be used by many different countries whether or not positions were military or civilian. At that time, it was thought this approach would help to meet the language needs when the great diversity of positions, tasks, and roles of military and civilian personnel were taken into consideration (Dubeau, 2006).

In the late 1990s, an opportunity emerged to update the scale with the accession of some countries after the collapse the Former Soviet Union. In 1999 a committee consisting of expert members from eleven participating countries reinterpreted the descriptors of the original 1976 STANAG. In 2000, the BILC Steering Committee approved the trial of the draft interpretation and the scale was trialed in 2000 and 2001 with participants from 15 countries who attended the first two installments of the Language Testing Seminar, in Germany (BILC Report, October, 2001). The NATO Standardizing Agency integrated the updated interpretation and published Edition 2, in 2003. In 2005, another similar international committee effort led to the development of plus levels which were added as an optional component to the six base level document in 2006 (BILC Steering Committee Minutes, June 2006). A plus level in this context is defined as proficiency that is more than halfway between two base levels and as

proficiency which substantially exceeds the base skill level but does not fully or consistently meet all of the criteria for the next higher base level.

B. Current Applications of NATO Language Issues and NATO Stanag 6001 Scale

Although English and French are official languages at NATO, English is the operational language and the teaching, testing, and using the English language within the NATO community have become more important because of the addition of new countries and increasing number of joint tasks such as peace support operations. Due to the vitality of the language issues, the Bureau of International Language Coordination (BILC) was established within the NATO Training Group (NTG) / Joint Services Subgroup (JSSG) as a consultative and advisory body for language training matters in NATO. The BILC has the following responsibilities:

- To review the work done in the coordination field and in the study of particular language topics through the convening of an annual conference and seminar for participating nations.
- To act as a clearinghouse for the exchange of information between participating countries on developments in the field of language training.
- To provide the sponsorship of STANAG 6001, Language Proficiency Levels. (www.dlielc.org/bilc/Constitution2004.doc).

It has been stressed at the BILC Conferences and Seminars that competency in English language skills is a pre-requisite for participation in exercises, operations, and positions to NATO Multinational Headquarters in all branches. The goal is to improve English language skills of all personnel who are to cooperate with NATO forces in Partnership for Peace (PfP) operations, exercises, and training with NATO staff. These individuals must be able to communicate effectively in English with added emphasis on operational terminology and procedures. Such goals state that nations should not only address special measures to increase in general the language proficiency of current officers and NCOs but also the integration of adequate language training as part of their normal career development to ensure adequate language proficiency for future officers and NCOs. (NATO Partnership Goal PG G 0355, Language Requirements, 2004). On the other hand, as an advisory body, BILC offers consultations on language training and testing issues, but

does not impose teaching and testing practices on participating nations and common testing practices are suggested. (www.bilc.org)

II. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

A. A Brief History of Language Studies in Europe

The Council of Europe has been active in the promotion of modern language learning and teaching since the signature of the European Cultural Convention in 1954.

The first initiative on language studies came in 1957, when a Committee of Experts was set up to plan the development of modern language teaching in Europe. The first Intergovernmental Symposium was held in Paris to launch *le Français fondamental*, a specification of a basic vocabulary and grammar for the French language. *Voix et images de la France*, a pioneering audio-visual course for adults learning French was also developed by the Centre de Recherche et Diffusion du Français (CREDIF). The French also pressed for the institution of a European Institute of Applied Linguistics on the American model, but the proposal was not accepted. Instead, the Council for Cultural Co-operation set up a major project in the field. This project involved all the educational committees of the Council for Cultural Cooperation. It held a series of Symposia (*Stages*) to promote:

(1) co-operation among the successive sectors of the educational system and among corresponding sectors in different European countries, (2) interaction between university language research and the language teaching profession; the establishment of applied linguistics as a recognized academic discipline and the institution of an International Association for Applied Linguistics (3) the development and use of audio-visual technology and methodology in language teaching.

A functional-notional model for specifying objectives was developed, which first set out the categories and language exponents of (1) functions performed by acts of speech in communication (e.g. explaining, questioning, apologizing, offering, congratulating, etc.); (2) general concepts (e.g. place, time, causality, etc.); (3) concrete, situation specific concepts (e.g. house, train, score, grill, etc.). The model was exemplified in respect of English in *The*

Threshold Level (Van Ek, 1975), which specified what a learner of a particular language needed to do and say in order to make their way about as independently in the foreign language environment.

The initial threshold level specification for English, together with the specification developed for French, provided the basic models which have been adapted for other languages in the light of their particular linguistic situation and further developed in the light of experience. The model has been extremely influential in the planning of language programmes, providing a basis for new national curricula, more interesting and attractive textbooks, popular multimedia courses and more realistic and relevant forms of assessment. A draft plan for a unit-credit scheme was prepared (Trim, 2001).

In this project the principles developed by the unit-credit group were applied in projects across the different sectors of general secondary, vocational and adult education, as well as in migrant education. A major Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member Governments, R(82)18, was prepared. Versions of the Threshold Level were developed for further languages and an intermediate objective *Waystage* (Van Ek and Alexander, 1977) was developed as the objective for the hugely successful Anglo- German multi-media production *Follow Me*. A full report on the work of the Council *Modern Languages 1971 – 81* was published. A series of 36 international workshops was held 1984 – 87 in which 226 animators worked with some 1500 participants on the many aspects of the communicative approach to language teaching and their incorporation into programmes of initial and in-service teacher training. This programme reached the classroom through many channels and was largely instrumental in achieving a broad consensus on the aims and methods of language teaching across member states (Trim, 2001).

In 1989, member states agreed a set of issues on which it would be useful to organize programmes of research and development. These were:

- an enriched model for specifying objectives
- making use of mass media and new technologies
- bilingual education
- the role of educational links, visits and exchanges

- learning to learn and the promotion of learner autonomy

There has been a rapid expansion in the membership of the Council for Cultural Co-operation following the political changes in Central and Eastern Europe around 1990. In an Intergovernmental Symposium in 1991, the mutual recognition of qualifications and communication concerning objectives and achievement standards would be facilitated if they were calibrated according to agreed common reference standards, purely descriptive in nature. Following several years' work by an authoring team and two revisions following consultation and field trailing, the Framework was published in English (Cambridge University Press), French (Hachette) and German (Langenscheidt).

III.THE COMPARISON OF NATO STANAG 6001 LANGUAGE SCALE AND COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK (CEF)

Both NATO Stanag 6001 scale and Common European Framework consist of “can-do” statements which candidates are supposed to have at different levels in four skills. NATO proficiency skills are broken down into six levels coded 0 through 5. In general terms, skills may be defined as follows:

Level 0	No practical proficiency
Level 1 -	Elementary
Level 2 -	Fair (Limited working)
Level 3 -	Good (Minimum professional)
Level 4 -	Very good (Full professional)
Level 5 -	Excellent (Native/bilingual)

Language proficiency will be recorded with a profile of 4 digits indicating the specific skills in the following order:

Skill A (US : L)	Listening	Skill B (US : S)Speaking
Skill C (US : R)	Reading	Skill D (US : W)Writing

This number of 4 digits will be preceded by the code letters SLP (PLS in French) which is to indicate that the profile shown is the Standardised (S) Language (L) Profile (P). (Example: SLP 3321 means level 3 in listening, level 3 in speaking, level 2 in reading and level 1 in writing).

As of Common European Framework there are mainly three levels as Basic, Independent and Proficient users and each level is divided into two as 1 and 2.

A	Basic User	A1 (Breakthrough)	A2 (Waystage)
B	Independent User	B1 (Threshold)	B2 (Vantage)
C	Proficient User	C1 (Operational Proficiency)	C2 (Mastery)

The following table indicates the comparison of two scales in detail.

Table 1: Comparison Chart of STANAG 6001 Levels with CEF

Scales	
STANAG 6001	CEF
Standardized agreement 6001 (1976)	Common European Framework
NATO & BILC	COE: Council of Europe
5555 Native/ bilingual	
4444 Fully Professional	C2 Mastery <hr/> C1 Effective Operational Proficiency <hr/> Proficient User
3333 Minimum Professional	B2+ Vantage+ <hr/> B2 Vantage <hr/> Independent User
2222 Limited Working	B1+ Threshold+ <hr/> B1 Threshold <hr/>
1111 Elementary	A2+ Waystage+ <hr/> A2 Waystage <hr/> Basic User

<http://www.campaignmilitaryenglish.com>

According to the comparison table, the elementary level in NATO 6001 scale is equal to basic user (Waystage) in CEF. As an upper level, limited working and minimum professional level in NATO 6001 can be considered as the same level with independent user (Threshold and Vantage) in CEF. Finally, fully professional level in 6001 scale matches with the proficient user

(Effective Operational Proficiency and Mastery) in CEF. The equivalent levels mentioned above are nearly the same on linguistic basis but sometimes the content and the terminology of the levels can be various because of the military subject matter in NATO document.

CONCLUSION

Correct usage of language is vital both in the military and social context for mutual understanding. Especially in military context, misunderstanding can sometimes result in casualties in multi-national operations. Therefore, military forces in many countries give special importance to the language training activities and they establish language schools in their countries and allocate much time and money for the training of their personnel both at home and abroad. On the other side of the medal, language training and standardization activities across Europe are primarily important for a complete integrity of the European Union. As the history of language studies are overviewed, it can be concluded that so many efforts are spent on language studies. In other words, language studies are one of the most important agenda of the military and civilian authorities. At this point, it can be cited that rules and standards are set and the next step is to put into practice these rules in the most feasible way. As a British proverb says Practice makes perfect.

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