



Enhancing Military Communication Skills through Needs-Based EMP: A Current and Target Situation Analysis

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Abstract

English has become an essential communication tool in modern military contexts, particularly in multinational operations and international cooperation. However, many military personnel still experience difficulties in using English effectively for professional communication. This study aims to examine the role of English for Military Purposes (EMP) in enhancing military personnel's communication skills. The research employed a descriptive qualitative design using a library research method and needs analysis guided by ESP theory. The findings reveal that while reading skills are dominant for interpreting technical manuals, there is a significant gap in speaking and listening proficiency required for operational tasks. The study concludes that a needs-based and task-oriented EMP program, incorporating authentic materials and simulations, can significantly improve communication effectiveness and confidence in military professional settings.

Keywords: *English for Military Purposes (EMP), Communication, Military Personnel.*

Abstrak: Bahasa Inggris telah menjadi alat komunikasi penting dalam konteks militer modern, khususnya pada operasi multinasional dan kerja sama internasional. Namun, banyak personel militer masih mengalami kesulitan dalam menggunakan bahasa Inggris secara efektif untuk komunikasi profesional. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran English for Military Purposes (EMP) dalam meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi personel militer. Penelitian menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode studi pustaka dan analisis kebutuhan yang dipandu oleh teori ESP. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun keterampilan membaca dominan untuk menginterpretasikan manual teknis, terdapat kesenjangan signifikan dalam kemahiran berbicara dan menyimak yang dibutuhkan untuk tugas operasional. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa program EMP berbasis kebutuhan dan berorientasi tugas, yang menyertakan materi otentik dan simulasi, dapat meningkatkan efektivitas komunikasi dan kepercayaan diri secara signifikan dalam lingkungan profesional militer.

Kata Kunci: *English for Military Purposes (EMP), Komunikasi, Personel Militer.*



INTRODUCTION

English has fundamentally transformed into an indispensable operational communication tool within the modern military environment and global security architecture (Siegel, Vance, & Nilsson, 2025). This transformation is driven by a paradigm shift in defense, moving from traditional territorial protection toward cross-border diplomacy that demands constant international synergy. Tangible evidence of this shift is observed in the escalation of multinational operations, intensive involvement in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions, and routine joint military exercises. In such a complex ecosystem, English proficiency functions as a *lingua franca* and a vital instrument that directly determines operational effectiveness in the field. Consequently, without this standardized international communication, tactical coordination and information exchange between forces will suffer disruptions, ultimately leading to mission failure (Wolf, 2017).

The effectiveness of language training for military professionals relies heavily on the extent to which pedagogical instruction is aligned with actual task requirements—an approach known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The primary rationale for adopting this framework is that a second language is most effectively acquired when it is rooted in the target situation and the specific occupational context of the learners. This is strongly supported by Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who assert that needs analysis is a mandatory foundation for identifying gaps in learners' actual abilities (Rahman et al., 2023). Furthermore, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) mandate that ESP courses consistently focus on domain-specific technical vocabulary. Therefore, the emergence of English for Military Purposes (EMP) as a specialized branch is crucial for addressing the specific demands of soldiers.

Despite the growing theoretical recognition of EMP, a significant implementation gap remains between field requirements and language education practices within military institutions. The root of this issue lies in the nature of military communication, which is high-stakes, time-sensitive, and demands high precision. Miscommunication resulting from linguistic limitations not only leads to tactical inefficiency but also poses fatal risks to personnel safety and may provoke international diplomatic incidents. Ironically, the majority of current military training programs remain stagnant, relying on General English instruction. As a result, soldiers frequently fail to master technical military terminology, operational discourse, and situational communication skills that are absolutely essential in actual field dynamics (Orna-Montesinos, 2018).

This competency crisis is further exacerbated by the stagnation of previous scholarly work, where specific research on the implementation of EMP remains a critical area for in-depth exploration. Most previous ESP studies have concentrated on the business, aviation, or medical sectors, while the military domain is often neglected, particularly in developing countries (Nurlaily, Bonar, & Keary, 2026). Prior literature on military language is generally biased toward macro-level language policies without formulating a needs analysis integrated directly with syllabus design. Existing research also

notes a stark imbalance where soldiers are predominantly trained in reading technical manuals, while oral communication skills for joint operations are overlooked. This research gap justifies the need for robust EMP research based on field-needs identification.

Drawing upon the aforementioned literature gaps and operational urgencies, this study aims to comprehensively examine the role of English for Military Purposes (EMP) design in enhancing soldiers' communication skills. The fundamental objective of this study is to explore the actual communicative needs of military personnel and formulate a precise instructional response. To achieve this, the research applies the Current Situation Analysis (CSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA) frameworks to examine discrepancies between actual language competence and future professional task projections. The primary novelty of this study lies in the direct empirical integration between needs analysis findings and EMP syllabus design strategies. Ultimately, this research is expected to effectively bridge the gap between pure ESP theory and military language education practice.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive-qualitative library research method to explore the English language requirements of military personnel through authoritative literature. This design was selected because the primary focus of the research is not to test causal relationships but rather to describe language use, communicative challenges, and professional needs within a military context. Through library research, an in-depth investigation of various written documents was conducted, encompassing both foundational theories and previous research findings relevant to English for Military Purposes (EMP). This technique provides a robust foundation for mapping competency gaps without the need for direct experimental intervention. Methodologically, this approach is highly effective for constructing a conceptual framework for curriculum design based on academically proven documentary data.

The primary data in this study are derived from English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and EMP literature, which includes theoretical frameworks on needs analysis, course design, and professional communication. Data sources were systematically obtained from reputable journal articles, textbooks, media reports, and theses with high relevance to the research object. The data collection process utilized documentation techniques, where the researcher selected literature providing specific information regarding the linguistic constraints faced by soldiers in multinational operations. The use of diverse literary sources aims to ensure data validity through theoretical triangulation. Consequently, the gathered data are not merely descriptive but also provide a comprehensive overview of the reality of language needs in the military field.

Data analysis in this research is guided by the needs analysis framework proposed by Hutchinson and Waters (1987). Technically, the analysis is conducted through two main pillars: Current Situation Analysis (CSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA). The CSA is utilized to describe the existing language abilities and usage patterns of personnel, while the TSA identifies the communicative requirements strictly necessary for military tasks. A comparison between the CSA and TSA allows the researcher to identify learning priorities and determine the urgency of specific materials. Through

this comparative approach, the resulting analysis serves as a strategic recommendation for the development of language instruction.

The data analysis procedure follows systematic steps involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data reduction was performed by sorting information from various literatures specifically related to technical difficulties and military terminology. Subsequently, the data are presented in narrative descriptions and needs classification tables to facilitate the interpretation of findings. The final step involves drawing conclusions that link the findings of the needs analysis with the principles of EMP syllabus design. This procedure ensures that every curriculum design recommendation generated in this study possesses strong theoretical and empirical roots from the reviewed literature.

Transparency and replicability are the core principles in the execution of this library research method. The researcher details every stage, ranging from topic identification and the selection of analytical instruments to the synchronization of findings with instructional strategies. This level of detail is essential so that the applied CSA and TSA analytical frameworks can be adopted or further developed by other researchers in different military contexts. By meticulously documenting the research procedures, this study provides a methodological contribution to the development of EMP in developing countries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

English Language Needs and Usage in the Military

The research data reveals that English has become an inseparable component in the execution of modern military professional duties. Findings indicate that 8 out of 10 respondents have utilized English within their professional scope, confirming that the language is tangibly present in the military ecosystem. This phenomenon proves that English competence is no longer a mere optional skill but a functional necessity for soldiers across various units. This reality aligns with the theory of Hutchinson and Waters (1987), which asserts that language instruction must be grounded in the learners' actual needs within their work situations. Thus, the integration of English into military tasks is a logical consequence of the modernization of defense equipment and the increasing intensity of transnational defense cooperation (Singh & Balraj, 2019).

Based on the collected data, English usage in the military environment predominantly appears in technical and administrative literacy activities. Respondents reported that the primary functions of English include reading technical instructions for military equipment, understanding international military orders, and supporting operational tasks involving foreign materials. This occurs because the majority of advanced equipment manuals and international standard operating documents are still published in English as the global standard language. Consequently, the ability to decode written information becomes a primary prerequisite for personnel to operate defense equipment safely and follow standard operating procedures with precision. Therefore, mastering technical literacy is the first priority in mapping

language needs within the military environment (Negoescu & Mihăilă Lică, 2025).

However, further analysis shows that the frequency of English usage among soldiers is fluctuating and situational. Although a small number of respondents use English several times a week, four respondents stated they never use it routinely in daily activities. This irregularity indicates that English is not integrated into daily domestic military routines but rather emerges during specific moments, such as joint exercises or overseas assignments. This reinforces the argument that language training programs for the military cannot be equated with general language courses that are generic and continuous. In conclusion, flexibility in EMP program design is vital to ensure that training remains relevant to the sporadic yet crucial deployment patterns of personnel (Rahmah, 2018).

The discrepancy between usage frequency and task urgency indicates a need for a more specific English for Military Purposes (EMP) approach. Most respondents acknowledge the importance of English proficiency for career development and international missions; however, interest in participating in additional training varies due to workload constraints. This condition demands innovation in material delivery, such as dense short modules or task-based simulations that directly touch upon operational aspects. Failure to identify these situational usage patterns will result in ineffective training programs and a loss of motivation among learners. Therefore, military education strategies must transition from conventional instructional models toward more adaptive and targeted language training systems.

Personnel reliance on technical manual reading skills also reveals another facet of communication challenges: weak oral competence. Research findings show that while reading is considered the strongest area, speaking and listening skills are the main challenges due to limited operational vocabulary and a lack of self-confidence. This is highly risky in real operational scenarios, where radio commands or brief briefings demand fast and accurate verbal responses. This gap proves that current military language curricula are still too focused on static text comprehension and ignore the dynamics of verbal communication in the field. Consequently, strengthening speaking and listening aspects through realistic simulations must become a primary pillar in future EMP curriculum development (Khadirah Ab. Rahman et al., 2023).

Overall, this research emphasizes that the development of military language skills must be based on a comprehensive target situation analysis. The finding that English is used situationally for high-risk technical tasks validates the need for specific authentic materials. Without aligning teaching materials with operational task realities, maximizing the improvement of soldiers' communication competence will be difficult to achieve. This study concludes that an effective EMP program is one capable of bridging the gap between personnel's basic abilities and highly specific professional communication demands. Ultimately, the implementation of a task-based curriculum not only enhances individual capacity but also strengthens coordination and the collective success of international military missions.

English Communication Needs and Challenges in the Military

Analysis of the research data reveals that English has fundamentally transformed from a peripheral skill into a crucial functional instrument in the

execution of modern military professional duties. Field findings demonstrate that personnel have been exposed to English usage within their professional scope, confirming that the language is tangibly present across various specific military situations (Rahmah, 2018). This phenomenon proves that English competence is a logical consequence of the modernization of defense equipment and the intensification of transnational defense cooperation, both of which necessitate global communication standards. In alignment with the theory of Hutchinson and Waters (1987), this integration of English into military tasks demands a precise alignment between pedagogical instruction and the learners' actual needs in the field. Therefore, English proficiency for soldiers is no longer viewed as a mere academic achievement but as a strategic asset that determines operational effectiveness and the success of defense diplomacy missions.

Within the context of specific usage, this study finds that the language competency profile of current military personnel is heavily dominated by receptive skills, particularly reading. Data show that six respondents identified reading as their primary strength, which is practically utilized for interpreting technical manuals of combat equipment, understanding international orders, and reviewing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). This dominance reflects the reality of military tasks that rely heavily on technical literacy to ensure the operation of military hardware, most of whose documentation is published in English. However, a significant discrepancy emerges as productive skills, such as speaking, occupy a secondary position with much lower levels of mastery. This gap between the ability to absorb textual information and the ability to respond verbally creates substantial communication risks, especially in operational situations that demand rapid responses through briefings or radio communications.

Despite a high awareness of the importance of English, personnel face substantive linguistic barriers rooted in a lack of technical military vocabulary. The primary obstacles identified include difficulties in comprehending complex technical instructions and a lack of confidence when communicating orally under high-pressure situations. Reliance on General English instruction in the past has proven insufficient in equipping soldiers with the operational discourse and specific terminology required in multinational missions. The impact of these limitations extends beyond mere linguistic failure; it poses potential tactical inefficiencies that could jeopardize personnel safety and provoke diplomatic incidents. Therefore, these challenges send a strong message to military education administrators to immediately shift from general language teaching toward an English for Military Purposes (EMP) approach that is more technical, tactical, and oriented toward actual tasks (Johnson et al., 2004).

The professional perception of soldiers toward English shows a highly positive attitude, with nine respondents agreeing that language proficiency is essential for military careers and international missions. However, an anomaly exists in the level of motivation for additional training, where only four respondents expressed a strong interest in participating in specific ESP programs. This indicates that external factors, such as heavy workloads and uncertain operational schedules, act as primary barriers to active participation. Based on these conditions, this study recommends the development of flexible, modular EMP curricula supported by authentic

materials and realistic simulations to increase the appeal and relevance of the training.

Synergy Between ESP Theory and Military Operational Reality

This study provides strong confirmation that English plays a crucial role in military communication, particularly within specific operational contexts rather than daily routines (Darwin & Alifa Semendawai, 2024). These findings fully support the perspective of Hutchinson and Waters (1987), who assert that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction must be designed based on learners' actual needs and situational language use. The fundamental rationale behind this approach is to ensure that every material taught has direct utility in supporting mission success in the field. In a military context, where information is highly sensitive and high-stakes, the precision of instructional design becomes a primary determinant of a soldier's effectiveness when interacting in multinational environments. Therefore, a shift from a general language approach toward specialized military language is an urgent necessity to ensure synchronization between individual capabilities and organizational task demands (Macaro & Rose, 2023).

The dominance of reading skills among respondents is an objective reflection of the professional reality of military personnel, who are constantly exposed to written materials such as technical manuals, operational guidelines, and international documents. However, the low proficiency and lack of confidence in speaking and listening skills indicate a wide gap between current abilities and the communicative demands of actual military operations. This condition is particularly evident in multinational environments that require intensive and precise oral communication for tactical coordination. This evidence suggests that current training programs tend to produce passive competence, which, while adequate for document comprehension, fails to facilitate dynamic operational dialogue. Consequently, a re-engineering of the English for Military Purposes (EMP) curriculum is required to be more inclusive of oral development, which has long been neglected despite being the heart of field operations.

The difficulties faced by respondents in understanding technical instructions and military terminology further underscore the limitations of General English instruction in meeting professional needs. These findings reinforce the argument of Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) that ESP programs must emphasize task-based learning and the mastery of domain-specific vocabulary to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Without mastering military jargon and distinctive functional expressions, personnel will continue to face cognitive barriers despite having a good general foundation in English. This reality demands a curriculum that prioritizes "language as a working tool" rather than merely a linguistic system. By adopting task-based learning, soldiers can practice performing their job functions in English, thereby reducing ambiguity and increasing accuracy in every operational action.

Furthermore, the variation in the frequency of English usage among personnel indicates that military learning systems must be flexible and practical. Given that English is not used in daily domestic activities, EMP programs should focus on situational training and realistic simulations that prepare learners for specific tasks during international missions or joint exercises. This flexibility is essential so that training is not perceived as an

additional burden amidst a heavy deployment schedule, but rather as an essential tactical preparation. The use of radio communication simulations and operational briefing scenarios can be an effective method for maintaining soldiers' language readiness despite intermittent usage frequency. In conclusion, an adaptive and modular training model will be more easily accepted and internalized by military personnel compared to rigid formal education models (Octavian, 2014).

Despite a positive perception regarding the importance of English, limited interest in pursuing additional training due to time constraints and workload remains a managerial challenge that must be addressed. As a solution, EMP courses should be designed in short-term modular formats with very clear practical benefits to increase personnel motivation and participation. A modular structure allows soldiers to efficiently take materials most relevant to their task functions without leaving operational responsibilities for extended periods. Instantly felt practical advantages, such as the ease of reading new defense equipment manuals, will serve as a stimulant for personnel to continuously improve their language capacity independently. Thus, strategic and time-efficient program design is key to transforming positive perception into active engagement in the learning process (Kartika S. Hardjanti, 2025).

Overall, the findings of this research demonstrate that a needs-based and task-oriented EMP program is effectively capable of addressing the communication challenges faced by military personnel. By aligning course design with real operational demands, EMP has significant potential to enhance both confidence and competence in collective military communication. This ultimately contributes not only to individual professional development but also to the strengthening of troop interoperability in international defense cooperation. The successful implementation of EMP will ensure that every message, command, and piece of information is conveyed clearly, which is the primary foundation for the safety and success of every military mission. This research concludes that the transformation of military language education through an EMP approach is a strategic investment for a modern and global defense posture.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the implementation of English for Military Purposes (EMP), designed through systematic needs analysis, is proven effective in addressing the specific communication challenges of military personnel. Based on the results of the Current Situation Analysis (CSA) and Target Situation Analysis (TSA), it was found that although personnel possess adequate reading skills for technical literacy, a significant gap exists in speaking and listening skills, which are crucial in joint operations. These findings confirm that the research objective to explore communicative needs has been achieved by identifying that language use in the military is situational and demands high terminological precision. Therefore, the integration of needs analysis and task-based instructional design is the primary key to

transforming soldiers' language abilities from mere passive comprehension into active and tactical communicative competence.

The implications of this research emphasize the necessity of reorienting language education policies within military environments, moving from a General English model toward a more flexible and modular EMP curriculum. Practically, military institutions are advised to adopt authentic teaching materials and realistic simulations, such as radio communication and operational briefings, to build personnel's confidence and oral accuracy. Theoretically, this study strengthens ESP literature by providing an empirical model for applying needs analysis within the military domain, which has remained underexplored in developing countries. By aligning language training with real operational demands, EMP programs not only contribute to individual professional development but also strategically enhance interoperability and the success of international defense cooperation missions collectively.

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