

## ***Linguapeace* - more than an English language programme**

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### **Summary**

*Linguapeace* is a language materials development programme directed at uniformed personnel in Eastern Europe. *Linguapeace* will improve language competence, but also develop other aspects of behaviour in the target audience, including:

- respect for the individual
  - fostering international co-operation
  - personal development
  - cross-cultural awareness
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*Linguapeace* is a project to develop English language materials for military and police personnel in Bulgaria and Slovakia. Funded by the Leonardo da Vinci II initiative of the European Commission, the linguistic content of the project suggests a particular example of ESP - English for the specific purpose of taking part in UN, NATO or similar peacekeeping operations. However, *Linguapeace* is also a project with wider implications at both personal and international level.

To elaborate on these implications, we might first consider the traditional military mindset with regard to language learning. Successful users of a foreign language (L2) are usually those who can adopt something of the target culture in their own thinking and manners when using the L2. The good L2 speaker 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: fraternisation has only negative overtones, far removed from brotherliness.

*Linguapeace* is project which attempts to bring about a change in thinking and in culture among the target group - in this case, the uniformed personnel of two former Communist states with aspirations to join the EC. The project attempts both to teach English and to offer new ways of thinking about, appreciating, and experiencing the military role in a multi-national operation.. Through a needs analysis, the project has so far identified 24 key areas (see the text below) where English is used as a *lingua franca* or a means of communication through interpreters with the local population.

### ***Respect for the individual***

Perhaps the most immediate change to brought about is the respect to be shown to individuals by the military personnel. When dealing with refugees and civilians in trouble spots, 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 an armed soldier is clearly distressing for people already in difficult circumstances. Through the medium of the course, 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. A practical example of this 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.

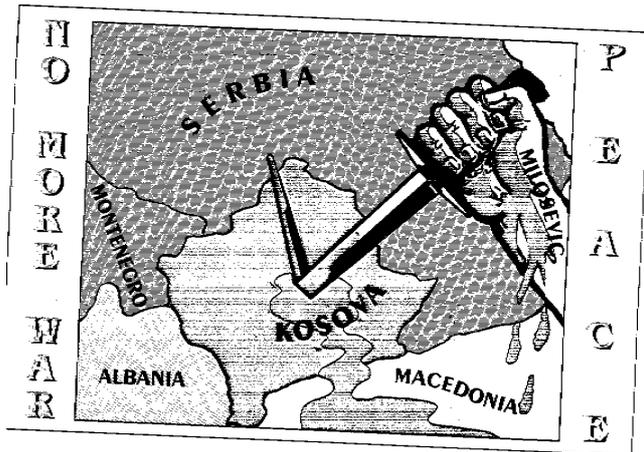
The needs analysis, conducted by the Dutch project partners, showed five main areas of activity where such considerations might apply:

1. taking witness statements and interrogations
2. staffing checkpoints and border posts
3. escorting civilians and refugees

4. detention and confiscation
5. providing humanitarian assistance (e.g.. through agencies)
6. giving first aid

### ***Fostering international co-operation***

Where troops once had a hostile role only, there are now many whose role is not offensive but instead geared to fostering international co-operation - albeit in dangerous circumstances. The illustration here is a postcard issued in Albania. The original has gaudy country colours, and bright red blood flowing from Kosovo and down the arms of the assailant - now a war crimes suspect on trial. This shows that although the manner in which military operations are conducted has changed, the underlying dangers are clearly there. [Take in graphic here]



In order to carry out a peaceful mission such as refugee food relief, troops may have to operate in four discrete areas:

- (i) secure the territory with armed guards; (ii) set up an infrastructure for a distribution centre;
- (iii) receive and distribute food and medicines to the refugees; (iv) maintain civilian control.

Tasks in these areas include many of those listed above, as well as

7. observing movements, reconnaissance patrols
8. negotiations
9. logistics and supplies
10. quarter making (establishing housing for troops)
11. environmental protection
12. verifying ceasefires
13. weather forecasting
14. fostering human rights

### ***Personal development***

It is a feature common to many armies that there is a problem with service personnel who retire from the forces. In some cases the trained staff leave too early, and upset the military human resources planning; in others, they leave after 30 years of service and find it difficult to adapt to civilian life. *Linguapeace* offers a new possibility to many members of the armed forces in eastern Europe: leave the forces with a good language qualification and take your part in the new united Europe. Reports from the project partners in Slovakia and Bulgaria show 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 first hand, a great development on the CV - compared with being a policeman or soldier in the homeland - and the chance to test one's mettle (and language skills) against a far greater group than available at home.

Other areas where the needs analysis shows that military staff on international missions (whether officers or not) may enhance their own personal development are

15. management of the multinational forces
16. desk research (intelligence), investigations
17. helping civilian administrations
18. co-operation with local police forces
19. telecommunications
20. safety, health and hygiene

### ***Cross-cultural awareness***

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. *Linguapeace* promotes this aspect of cross cultural awareness and international understanding. At a micro level, there are going to be apparent differences whose significance might be symbolic: uniforms, military music, or marching styles. In other spheres, the target group will see that there are alternatives (inferior, superior or just different) such as in the

21. equipment of troops.

At a different level the different paralinguistic features of the UN group will cause perhaps merry confusion. For example, the Bulgarian head nodding for *no* and shaking for *yes* is a well known puzzler for those new to the culture, and many of the points above will be combined in face-to-face communication, for example when

22. reporting

However, there are slight matters compared with engaging the will of the target personnel to see that there are other approaches to undertaking military and policing tasks, and that these are rooted in traditions quite different to those which have prevailed in eastern Europe for half a century or more. In this first example

23. coping in emergency (non-war) situations

there will be a ready contrast between the strict go-by-the-book approach of some nations 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.

In contrast, the next example

24. monitoring elections

might expose the target groups to concepts and practices which are relatively new or unproven in his or her experience. In my experience, listening to several Bulgarian battalions on parade for a state occasion was quite new. As the head of state passed to take the salute, each platoon gave a loud *Hurra!* But unlike a British equivalent, the shout was then held like an organ continuum underpinning the other shouts, until the whole parade ground was of one voice, in unison and deafening.

### ***Overview of usage***

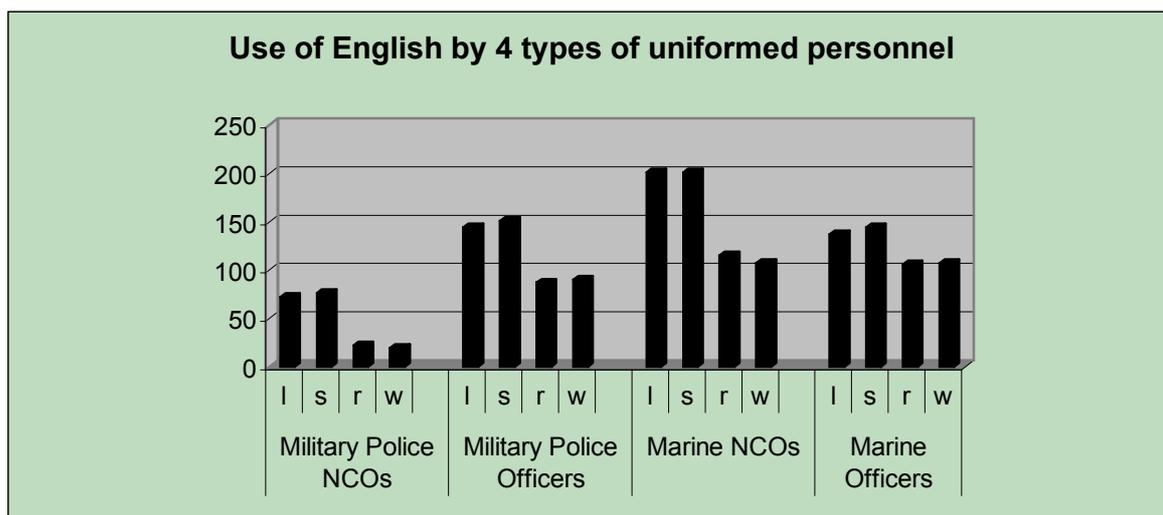
The following chart gives an indication of the number of occurrences of use of English for the above 24 tasks, divided into four types of personnel and four skill areas.

The skills are l = listening, s = speaking, r = reading, and w = writing, with integrated skills be broken into their discrete components.

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Take in graph here

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These data are extracted from the Dutch-led pilot needs analysis, carried out among those who have served on UN or NATO missions. The project will investigate this area in greater depth, and this usage will be reflected in the course materials.

**Contact details**

The project (LdV II No. BG/00/B/P/LA/132010) has a developing website (in four languages ) at [www.linguapeace.net/home](http://www.linguapeace.net/home).

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1 October 2001

approx. 1500 words