

HOW MUCH MILITARY SPECIFIC SHOULD ‘STANAG 6001 ENGLISH WRITING TEST’ BE?

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Abstract

As Albania became a NATO member in April 2009, many Standardized Agreements were set in place in order to make its Army fully operational along with other militaries of member countries. One of such Agreements (Standardized Agreement 6001) is dedicated to language proficiency, as the medium which will make possible communication among military officers of different countries, languages, cultures and backgrounds. This communication is mainly written, therefore, testing Writing (together with the three other language skills) through STANAG 6001 test has gained great importance. The importance of such test is twofold: *first*, achieving successful communication is paramount in the NATO context where misinterpretations of messages due to lack of language proficiency may result in fatal circumstances; *second*, Albanian military officers undergo language testing extensive, because their test results are automatically translated into greater possibilities for career advancement. Due to their importance, such tests must be carefully designed, bearing in mind all aspects of language testing theory. The issues raised by this article are about content and construct validity of the STANAG writing test, when dealing with the issue of military background knowledge in the test content. The NATO descriptors do not provide a clear-cut solution to the question of background knowledge in the test; such knowledge is only referred to as ‘military flavor’. Therefore, although in a military context, STANAG 6001 is not purely ‘English for Specific Purposes (ESP) language test’. To help with tackling this issue, this article poses two research questions: *first*, what is the students’ perception about their performance when writing tests have more/less military content; *second*, what are the test results when the writing test has more military content, as compared to less military content. The results of this research showed that, although the perception of most students was that they would perform higher in a more military content writing test, in fact, this was true for upper-intermediate to advanced students, and that it did not matter for elementary to intermediate students. These findings will help the test section of Armed Forces Academy create a clearer picture as well as build a broader understanding of the STANAG Writing test design.

Keywords: *Standardized Agreement 6001, content validity, constructs validity, background knowledge, military flavor, English for Specific Purposes, military content*