




International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research
 Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 63-79, April 2022
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.21.4.4>
 Received Sep 14, 2022; Revised Mar 9, 2022; Accepted Mar 17, 2022

Aspects Influencing ESP Syllabus Design in Lifelong Military Education

Stanislava Jonáková , Mária Šikolová  and Magdalena Veselá 
 University of Defence, Brno, Czech Republic

Abstract. This paper aims to identify and compare aspects affecting English language syllabus design at military language centres in six NATO countries. Close attention is devoted to course syllabi for Level 1 (Survival; approximately corresponding to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) Level A2) and Level 2 (Functional; approximately corresponding to CEFR Level B1). The descriptive quantitative research, conducted in 2019, concentrated on determining which stakeholders participated in creating the English language syllabi presently in use and which critical aspects of syllabus design the creators considered in the process of their compilation. The findings reveal that active teacher participation is one of the most prominent characteristics of the entire syllabus design process in all of the institutions examined, which results from the specific nature of the courses focused on preparing learners for final English examinations in a military context. Integrated syllabi, which are product-oriented and teacher-led, are another defining characteristic typical for both levels in all institutions. The syllabi in the countries studied are designed similarly, considering such crucial aspects as the learners' entrance level, previous syllabus, exit requirements, and the type and length of courses. The study offers new insight into the organisational structure of courses at the elementary level, and an increase in the number of lessons in courses for Level 1 organised within the Czech army is strongly proposed.

Keywords: ESP; military environment; needs analysis; syllabus design

1. Introduction

In today's globalised world, knowledge of English is one of the essential prerequisites for success in various professional fields. Thus, ESP courses play a decisive role in the contexts of adult education and corporate training. As such courses are mostly provided for a specified period, criteria, for example, course effectiveness and financial costs, are commonly considered. Consequently, fundamental questions, e.g., *What is to be taught? How closely should it be specified and by whom? How should it be organised?* arise before designing any specialist course (e.g., Brown, 1995; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Widdowson, 2002). In this context, a syllabus, frequently defined as a document presenting information on

what topics or content are to be covered in the course of study (Ur, 1996, p. 185; Richards, 1990) is at play. However, views on the syllabus are not unanimous and range from highlighting to underestimating its importance and role in the teaching and learning process. On the one hand, its pragmatic and pedagogical efficiency is accentuated (Yalden, 1984, p. 14; also see Brumfit, 1984); on the other hand, there are adverse reactions against the syllabus as it seems “centralised, management-oriented, and predictive” (Candlin, 1984, p. 32). Nevertheless, as Hutchinson states, “a syllabus, particularly an ESP syllabus, also has a cosmetic role. Sponsors and students will want some reassurance that their investment of money and/or time will be worthwhile. If nothing else, the syllabus shows that some thought and planning has gone into the development of a course” (1987, p. 84).

Teachers of English at the Language Centre of the University of Defence in Brno concentrate on revising the existing course syllabi to align with the final exam requirements, which may decisively influence their adult learners’ future career prospects. Prompted by instructors’ teaching experience and students’ final exam results, changes are made. These alternations include introducing new commercial materials, modifying the current teaching materials, and creating task-based activities to develop productive language skills.

As military professionals in other NATO countries are also required to take final examinations in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001 (pp. 11–29), teachers of English in foreign military language institutions cope with similar problems related to the efficiency of preparation for these final examinations. To further improve the whole teaching process at the Language Centre of the University of Defence, English instructors decided to investigate how English language syllabi are designed by the workplaces of their international colleagues.

This study aims to identify and compare aspects affecting ESP syllabus design at military language centres in the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, and Bulgaria, in which the authors have professional contacts. The study concentrates on determining which stakeholders participated in creating the English language syllabi presently in use and which critical aspects of syllabus design the creators considered in the process of their compilation.

2. Literature review

In ESP, courses are run for a specific period and focus on learners’ particular needs related to their study or occupation (Brown, 2016, p. 5; Woodrow 2018, pp. 6-7); thus, content selection and sequencing are considered to be crucial syllabus design procedures (Graves, 1996, p. 3; Nation & Macalister, 2010, p. 82), and needs analysis is perceived to be the basis for ESP syllabus design (Dudley-Evans, 1998; Woodrow, 2018).

2.1. Needs analysis in an ESP context

In the ESP content selection process, different stakeholders take part in order to obtain relevant information about learners’ target needs, which Brown perceives as “whatever elements of the ESP majorities of all stakeholder groups (teachers, administrators, and so forth) want, desire, expect, and so forth”. As he further explains, “this broader definition still allows needs to be framed around what the

students need, but from various stakeholders' viewpoints, which will generally shape the needs into much more than just what the students want" (2016, p. 13).

To illustrate the complexity of identifying ESP learners' needs in terms of their professions, some examples of needs analysis research conducted on a narrower scale in local settings are presented. In the context of tertiary education, the studies conducted by Qaddomi (2013) and Lee (2016) focused on which language skills students will need the most in their future work. The data were collected at both universities using a questionnaire completed only by pre-experience students. Based on the findings, both institutions suggested that all language skills should be practised, emphasising the favoured skills (in Qaddomi (2013), listening and speaking, in Lee (2016), listening). Nonetheless, predicting by pre-experience learners which language skills will be the most beneficial for their future jobs is problematic as they may not know exactly which field they will enter and/or what responsibilities will be placed on them after graduation (also see Serafini et al., 2015, p. 21).

Unlike the studies above, factual and up-to-date information about university students' needs received from in-service learners, together with the opinions of pre-service learners and teachers of English, provides deeper insight into the required target needs. In research by Sari (2003) at Gülhane Military Medical Academy, the coursebook content was analysed on the assumption that the institutional goals may not wholly comply with the learners' immediate and future needs. In this context, target situation analysis carried out by three groups of respondents (students, teachers, and doctors) revealed that these groups had different priority language skills. Based on compromise, a new programme with three topic-based syllabi for three proficiency levels was created, focusing primarily on reading and listening skills but also incorporating speaking and writing activities (also see Alhuqbani, 2014; Hidayat, 2018). Another way of designing a syllabus for undergraduates at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University was demonstrated by Chan (2018), who applied a research-informed approach to identifying needs, together with an in-house needs analysis. Based on the findings, Chan incorporated elements of illustration, interaction, and induction into the syllabus, which contributed not only to learners' grammatical accuracy and fluency but also to their interactional skills (p. 38).

In contrast to the tertiary context mentioned above, compiling information about learners' target needs seems less difficult in the contexts of corporate training and adult education (Chan, 2018, p. 29). Based on teaching experience at dozens of multinational companies, Edwards (2000) considers student input crucial to the successful design of an ESP course in any context (p. 292). How significant domain experts' views (employees and their employers) are in terms of syllabus design may be presented in studies completed by Benavent and Sánchez-Reyes (2015), Cowling (2007), and Edwards (2000), who produced integrated syllabi based on in-depth target situation analyses. In a case study based on the target situation analysis involving teachers and domain experts, Cowling, for example, reported on an intensive syllabus for workplace courses at a Japanese company. The syllabus, consisting of notional-functional and content-based syllabi, enables employees to adapt current general English knowledge into business situations,

consider cultural issues when communicating with foreign businesspeople, and provide realistic (authentic) language examples (pp. 433–434).

Within the military context, Solak (2010) endeavoured to design a syllabus for the Advanced Level English Course at Gendarmerie Schools Command in Beytepe. Using questionnaires, an analysis of the course including course participants (officers and non-commissioned officers) and their teachers of English revealed a critical view of the course objectives, which did not match learners' expectations or institutional goals. Also, the course books were criticised, and it was suggested supplementing them with authentic materials or revising or replacing them entirely. The respondents called for an exam-oriented course in order to be trained in the skills necessary to achieve NATO STANAG 6001, Level 3 requirements. The outcomes formed the basis of a suggested multiple syllabus comprising elements of topic-based, task-based, skill-based, lexical, and structural syllabi (also see Park, 2015). A quasi-negotiated ESP syllabus to be applied in a programme for the military personnel who are or will be assigned abroad in the near future was developed by Yaşar (2015). The findings (e.g., a significant need for knowledge of military abbreviations and acronyms; developing language skills) were considered, together with the specific environment of multinational units in the Turkish Armed Forces.

Referring to the needs identified above, the authors concur with Brown, who states that “needs may be many things, but they should never be thought of as the truth. Hence, needs can at best be said to be sets of judgements and compromises justified by observation, surveys, test scores, language-learning theory, linguistics, or otherwise” (2016, p. 16). Moreover, as any syllabus actually used in the classroom is “continually reinterpreted and recreated by teacher and learners” (Breen, 1984, p. 47), ESP needs analysis is never a once-for-all activity. In practice, it is executed in different phases of the teaching process, typically with the emphasis on subjective learners' needs in order, for example, to increase learners' motivation, or to facilitate more effectively developing particular language skills (e.g., Chan, 2015; Todea & Demarcsek, 2017; Rebenko & Nikolenko, 2019; Shykhnenko & Nozhovnik, 2020).

The studies presented above point to the fact that the functional view of language is highly supported. In ESP courses, synthetic as well as analytic approaches to syllabus design (defined in detail e.g., in Hadley, 1998) can generally be combined. As a result, elements of several syllabi, such as functional, situational, lexical, topic-based, task-based and skill-based, commonly operate simultaneously. This eclectic approach seems to be the most rational as any syllabus should recognize the complexity of communication. In this context, Swan claims that the real issue is not which syllabus to put first, but how to integrate them into a sensible teaching programme (1985b).

2.2. ESP content sequencing

The sequencing of the content derived from a needs analysis is influenced by “the particular views of language, learning, and classroom conditions held by the syllabus designer” (Breen, 1984, p. 49). Criteria such as the learnability, teachability, simplicity and complexity of structures usually relate to the syllabus

representing a structural view of language. In contrast, usefulness, practicality, and frequency criteria are typical of the syllabus representing a functional view of language (also see Brown, 2016, pp. 48–50). Nonetheless, “the criteria themselves can never be strictly objective and they will be assumptions or good guesses rather than established facts about language learning, or classrooms” (Breen, 1984, p. 50).

As a core textbook frequently builds a strong basis for developing an ESP syllabus, its content map is commonly mirrored and syllabus designers more or less follow the structure of lessons in the textbook (e.g., Jonáková et al., 2019), which makes the whole process of sequencing a syllabus much easier.

Studies show that topics also provide a framework around which language skills, vocabulary, and grammar can be developed in parallel. The integrated syllabus designed by Cowling (2007), for example, includes nine topics covering areas of future Japanese workers’ needs, under which several communicative functions can be grouped. In the master’s thesis by Yaşar (2015), the suggested syllabus for multinational peacekeeping operations consists of ten units divided into three main areas called ‘Social’, ‘Military’, and ‘Other general’, and a topic for each of them includes, for example, ‘Skills’, ‘Context and Functions’, ‘Vocabulary’, and ‘Tasks’ (also see Solak, 2010).

On the other hand, some researchers go a step further and concentrate not only on identifying topics and target tasks relevant to specific groups of learners, but also on the cognitive and linguistic difficulty of the operations involved in the particular tasks. Based on a needs analysis, Park (2015) identified target situations and target tasks encountered in these situations, in which Korean naval officers are expected to use English (p. 36). They were viewed from their relative frequency, criticality and also difficulty in terms of mastering English. Based on the outcomes, the content specifics were provided, and suggestions for syllabus design were considered, with emphasis on improving speaking skills and adopting Communicative Language Teaching.

Unlike the research by Park, the study conducted by Malicka et al. (2019) offers an empirically supported basis for sequencing tasks according to their complexity. Based on the Task Complexity component of Robinson’s Triadic Componential Framework, the specific task characteristics in the domain of a hotel receptionist’s job were identified. The findings, in general, not only influence the sensible way of task sequencing, but also contribute to designing pedagogic tasks that may differ in levels of cognitive load. Nonetheless, as Ellis states “... there is no algorithm for selecting tasks and grading them in order to sequence them vertically and horizontally. ... So for the time being, and probably for a long time, syllabus designers will have to draw on their experience and intuition, informed by taxonomies such as Robinson’s, to decide how to sequence tasks” (2018, p. 469).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research objective and research questions

The present study’s objective was to identify and compare aspects considered in the syllabus design of ESP courses at elementary and intermediate levels currently used by various NATO countries’ militaries.

Specific research questions included:

1. Which critical aspects of syllabus design were taken into consideration when compiling the syllabi for elementary and intermediate level ESP courses presently in use?
2. Which stakeholders participated in the creation of the syllabi for elementary and intermediate level ESP courses presently in use?

3.2. Participants

The survey was conducted at the military language institutions of NATO countries in which the study authors maintain professional contacts (see Table 1). Participants were only teachers of English expressly involved in syllabus design of English language courses for elementary and/or intermediate levels, or who were directly responsible for syllabus design in the stated centres. In total 12 respondents took part, 2 from each country.

Table 1: Participating military institutions

Country	City	Military Institution
Bulgaria	Shumen	National Military University
Croatia	Zagreb	Croatian Military Academy "Dr Franjo Tudjman"
The Czech Republic	Brno	The University of Defence
Hungary	Budapest	National University of Public Service
Poland	Lodz	The Polish Armed Forces School of Languages
The Slovak Republic	Liptovský Mikuláš	Armed Forces Academy of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik

3.3. Instrument development

Having considered the research objective and questions, the authors decided to use a descriptive quantitative approach utilising a questionnaire as a research instrument, which ensured smooth and timely data collection from the respondents (Creswell, 2012). The authors could not find a pre-existing questionnaire suited to their research aims, so they created their own. In constructing the questionnaire, the authors drew upon theoretical principles concerning the construction of research instruments explained in the works of Pelikán (2004) and Chráska (2006).

The questionnaire was constructed in February 2019, and its content was based on a review of professional publications in the area of syllabus design. It consisted of 20 items and was divided into three sections. In the first section, the purpose of the survey was explained, and brief instructions were provided on how to complete it correctly. In the following section (4 items), questions pertained to the types of ESP courses, their length, the number of lessons, and the required exit language level. The last section (16 items) consisted of questions regarding the participants' direct involvement in syllabus design, the piloting of the syllabi, the factors considered in the syllabus-design process, the teaching materials, and the types of syllabi. The items were formulated primarily in the form of closed and semi-closed questions

and respondents were allowed to select more than one option. They could also express themselves freely and in more detail in the sections designated for commentary.

To guarantee the validity of the questionnaire, five foreign language teachers working at the Language Centre of the University of Defence were asked to evaluate the original 20-item version of the questionnaire in February 2019. They were selected on the basis of their long-term experience in questionnaire design. Based on their feedback, some items were reformulated for clearer understanding.

3.4. Data collection and processing

Questionnaires were distributed to respondents electronically on 13 March 2019 and completed by the end of September 2019. Therefore, all results and conclusions of the research are related to this date.

After data collection was completed, the answers to the items were transformed into data matrixes and processed with the use of Microsoft Office Toolbox. In cases in which exact data evaluation was not possible, a verbal assessment was done.

4. Results

4.1. Findings related to research Question 1

4.1.1. Data analysis regarding elementary level courses (Level 1 - SLP 1111)

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, all institutions run intensive ESP courses for SLP (Standardised Language Profile) 1111, defined as Level 1 proficiency in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As for other types of courses offered at this level, only the Czech Republic runs upgrade courses; Bulgaria and the Czech Republic run refresher courses, and Hungary and the Slovak Republic run non-intensive courses.

The length of intensive courses ranges among countries from eleven to twenty weeks. Similarly, the number of lessons per week varies among countries from 26 to 38. In all countries, one lesson lasts 45 minutes. The longest courses are offered in Poland (612 lessons), the Slovak Republic (570 lessons), and Hungary (520 lessons). In Bulgaria, courses last 480 lessons, and in Croatia as well as in the Czech Republic, they are 330 lessons long. In all countries except Croatia, courses culminate with the final examinations in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001.

The length of refresher courses run in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic is four weeks, and they include 120 lessons each. The upgrade course is offered only in the Czech Republic; it is seven weeks long (210 lessons) and finishes with the examination in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001. Non-intensive courses organised in Hungary provide eight lessons per week for 40 weeks (320 lessons), and participants are obliged to take the final examination in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001. The Slovak Republic holds non-intensive courses for twelve weeks, during which four lessons are taught per week (48 lessons).

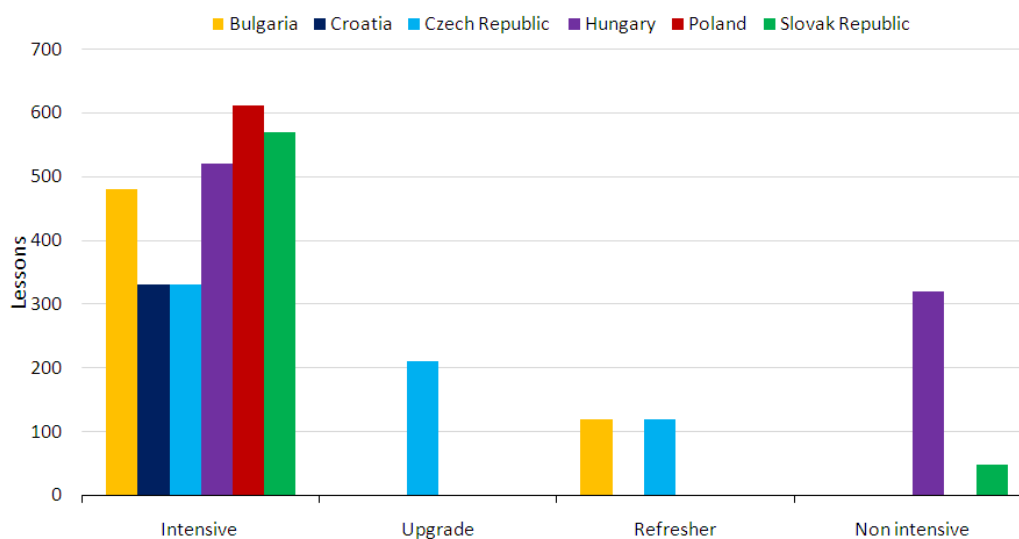


Figure 1: Types and length of SLP 1111 courses

As shown in Table 2 below, in the process of syllabus design, all countries took into consideration the previous syllabus, facilities, and resources available at the institution, as well as the length of the course. Regarding consideration of the students' entrance level, only the Czech Republic differed somewhat, as the students enter courses without having to fulfil any entrance requirements. Particular significance was given to familiarity with institutional exit requirements arising from the NATO STANAG 6001 descriptors. A thorough analysis of these descriptors led syllabus designers in the choice of content to focus mainly on concrete topics, functions, productive and receptive language skills, as well as vocabulary and grammar.

Table 2: Factors considered in syllabus design in SLP 1111 courses

Country	Student's entrance level				Previous syllabus				Facilities and resources				Exit requirement				Length of the course			
	A	SA	SD	D	A	SA	SD	D	A	SA	SD	D	A	SA	SD	D	A	SA	SD	D
Bulgaria	✓				✓				✓				✓				✓			
Czech Republic			✓		✓				✓				✓				✓			
Hungary		✓			✓				✓				✓				✓			
Croatia	✓				✓				✓				✓				✓			
Slovak Republic		✓			✓				✓				✓				✓			
Poland	✓				✓				✓				✓				✓			

A - agree, SA - somewhat agree, SD - somewhat disagree, D - disagree

In all countries, the syllabi were based on commercial textbooks, in-house teaching materials, and teachers' own materials. In Bulgaria, Hungary, and Croatia, the core teaching materials were selected by syllabus designers in cooperation with other in-house teachers and institutional management. In Poland, the central materials were chosen by syllabus designers in cooperation with other in-house teachers. On

the other hand, in the Slovak Republic, the primary materials were selected by syllabus designers in cooperation with the institution management. In the Czech Republic, the core materials were chosen only by head teachers who designed particular syllabi. In all countries, the syllabi were adapted to the content of the selected textbooks with an emphasis on General English. The level of importance of Military English varied among the countries from very important (Hungary, Croatia, Poland), to quite important (Bulgaria and the Slovak Republic), and unimportant (the Czech Republic).

Course participants in all countries are taught according to integrated syllabi, comprising mainly structural, situational, and skill-based elements, which is in full compliance with the requirements of the final examinations in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001 (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Types of syllabi in SLP 1111 courses

Country	Structural	Notional	Situational	Content-based	Skill-based	Task-based	Integrated
Bulgaria	✓		✓				✓
Czech Republic	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Hungary	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Croatia	✓		✓		✓		✓
Slovak Republic	✓		✓		✓		✓
Poland	✓		✓		✓		✓

4.1.2. Data analysis regarding intermediate level courses (Level 2 - SLP 2222)

Figure 2 below indicates that all countries run intensive ESP courses for SLP (Standardised Language Profile) 2222, defined as Level 2 proficiency in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Bulgaria and the Czech Republic also run refresher courses. However, only the Czech Republic offers upgrade and non-intensive courses. The length of the intensive courses ranges between eleven and twenty weeks and the number of lessons per week between 26 and 38. One lesson lasts 45 minutes in all countries. The longest courses are run in the Slovak Republic (570 lessons) and Hungary (520 lessons); in Bulgaria as well as in the Czech Republic the courses are of the same length (480 lessons). In Poland and Croatia, courses are shorter (360/330 lessons). With the exception of Croatia, intensive courses conclude with an examination in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001. In the Czech Republic, both upgrade and non-intensive courses culminate in mandatory examinations in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001. The refresher courses held in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic are between four and five weeks (120/150 lessons), respectively. The upgrade and non-intensive courses held in the Czech Republic are seven and ten weeks long (210/300 lessons), respectively.

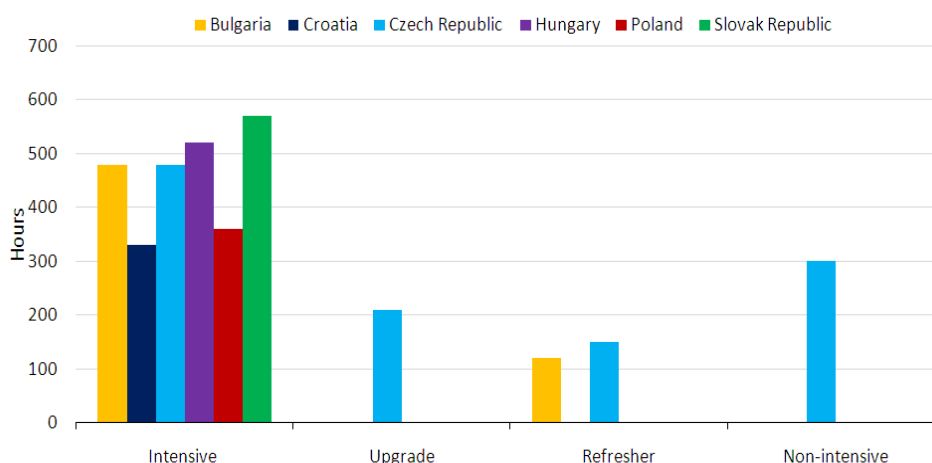


Figure 2: Types and length of SLP 2222 courses

As illustrated in Table 4 below, in the process of syllabus design, the previous syllabus, facilities and resources available at the institution, exit requirements, as well as the length of the course were taken into account in all countries. Syllabus designers comprehensively considered the descriptors of NATO STANAG 6001, which became the basis for content specification. In this context, all designers concentrated on the stated topics, grammar, and vocabulary. Except for Hungary, syllabus designers also focused on functions, accuracy, and fluency. In all countries, the syllabi were based on commercial textbooks, in-house teaching materials, and teachers' own materials. However, none of the syllabi included materials provided by students. In Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, and the Slovak Republic, the core teaching materials were selected by syllabus designers in cooperation with other in-house teachers and with the institutional management. In Poland, the materials were chosen by syllabus designers in cooperation with the institution management. On the other hand, in the Czech Republic, materials were selected by syllabus designers in cooperation with other in-house teachers. In all countries, the syllabi were adapted to the content of the selected textbooks with the emphasis on General English. As for the importance of Military English, it varied among the countries from very important (Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria), to quite important (Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics).

Table 4: Factors considered in syllabus design in SLP 2222 courses

Country	Student's entrance level				Previous syllabus				Facilities and resources				Exit requirement				Length of the course			
	A	SA	SD	D	A	SA	SD	D	A	SA	SD	D	A	SA	SD	D	A	SA	SD	D
Bulgaria	✓				✓				✓				✓				✓			
Czech Republic	✓				✓				✓				✓				✓			
Hungary		✓			✓				✓				✓				✓			
Croatia	✓				✓				✓				✓				✓			
Slovak Republic		✓			✓				✓				✓				✓			
Poland				✓	✓					✓			✓				✓			

A - agree, SA - somewhat agree, SD - somewhat disagree, D - disagree

All the language institutions placed emphasis on integrated syllabi, stressing mainly the elements of structural, situational, content-based, and skill-based syllabi, which is fully in compliance with the requirements of final examinations in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001 (see Table 5 below). In all countries except the Czech Republic, the syllabi were single level, not entirely considering different learners' entrance levels.

Table 5: Types of syllabi in SLP 2222 courses

Country	Structural	Notional	Situational	Content-based	Skill-based	Task-based	Integrated
Bulgaria	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Czech Republic	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Hungary	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Croatia	✓		✓	✓			✓
Slovak Republic	✓		✓		✓		✓
Poland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

4.2. Findings related to research Question 2

4.2.1. Data analysis regarding elementary level courses (Level 1 - SLP 1111)

Syllabi for elementary level courses were created predominantly by in-house teachers. In the Czech Republic, designers were only head teachers in charge of their courses who did not discuss the syllabi with other language teachers at the institution. In contrast, in Croatia and the Slovak Republic, the syllabi were designed by a team of in-house teachers. In Poland and Hungary, the syllabi were elaborated by both individual teachers and a team. Syllabi were produced by a superseding body together with a team of in-house teachers only in Bulgaria. With regard to working in a team, all countries expressed their satisfaction with mutual trust and good communication among the members, as well as with the institution management. Most of the participants were given creative freedom while working on the syllabi.

When asked what syllabus designers felt were the most serious risks in implementing the current syllabi, respondents from all countries identified two factors: too much content to be taught, and an insufficient entrance level of the learners. In view of this, syllabus designers teaching according to the syllabi would partially make some changes, especially by revising the current teaching materials.

4.2.2. Data analysis regarding intermediate level courses (Level 2 - SLP 2222)

The syllabi for the intermediate level courses were mostly created by teams of in-house teachers. Individual teachers produced the syllabus only in Hungary; in Bulgaria, the syllabi were designed by a superseding body, together with a team of in-house teachers. Concerning the teamwork to create the syllabi, respondents from all countries reported feeling satisfied with the level of mutual trust and good communication among the members and also with the institution management. The syllabi were discussed with other language teachers at all institutions.

With regard to the chief risk of implementing the syllabus, respondents from all countries included in the study voiced concern about 'too much content' to be taught. The insufficient entrance level was considered as a risk in Bulgaria, Croatia, and the Czech and Slovak Republics. Moreover, the Czech and Slovak Republics perceive overemphasis on students' preparation for lessons to be a risk. In addition, in the Slovak and Czech Republics, as well as in Poland, deviation from the syllabus by some teachers seems to be another potential drawback. Syllabus designers in all countries, except Bulgaria, indicated that they would implement changes by revising the teaching materials. In the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, these changes included enriching the teaching materials. In Croatia, syllabus designers would appreciate reducing the current teaching materials. Respondents from the Slovak Republic and Poland indicated that they desired more flexibility.

5. Discussion

The findings presented above reveal that learners' preparation for final high-stakes examinations is the most significant factor affecting content specification in ESP elementary and intermediate level courses. Unlike the studies mentioned in the Literature Review, it is a thorough analysis of the NATO STANAG 6001 descriptors which becomes the basis for selecting particular topics, functions, language skills, as well as vocabulary and grammar. The importance of such an approach to the choice of syllabus content was also justified in the research by Solak (2010), in which respondents (military professionals) called for an exam-oriented course in order to be trained in the skills necessary to achieve NATO STANAG 6001, Level 3 requirements.

The outcomes also show that in-house teachers play a decisive role in syllabus design for both levels, which results from the specific nature of provided language courses aimed at preparing learners for final examinations in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001. Syllabi are created mainly by teams of in-house teachers, whose work is characterised by open communication and creative freedom, and these syllabi are discussed with other language teachers at the institutions. Active teacher participation is one of the most prominent characteristics of the entire syllabus design process in the examined institutions. Also, the research conducted in Estonian and Czech military schools stressed the significance of language teachers' academic freedom relating to designing and following course syllabi, choosing appropriate teaching methods, and selecting suitable teaching materials (Piirimees et al., 2020, p. 237).

Integrated syllabi, consisting primarily of elements from structural, situational, and skill-based syllabi, are another defining characteristic typical for both levels in all institutions. Such syllabi are based on core commercial coursebooks commonly comprising vocabulary, grammar, topics, functions and skills, which are also considered the core in terms of preparation for the examinations in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001. In this context, textbook content maps are frequently reflected, and the structure of units followed. This finding is in line with the views of Edwards (2000) who advocates the use of commercial textbooks which can be

selectively used and efficiently adapted to the specific needs of particular students in an ESP context (pp. 293–295).

Regarding the NATO STANAG 6001 exam specificity, textbooks for both levels do not entirely meet the requirements for final exam preparation (e.g., an insufficient range of topics and communicative situations), so they are supplemented with in-house and teachers' own instructional materials. This result is consistent with Richard's opinion on teacher-generated materials in ESP classes as they are relevant to students' and institutional needs, reflect local content, issues, and concerns, and can be flexibly revised or adapted as required (2001, p. 261; also see Bouckaert, 2019). Noteworthy is the fact that no materials in use are provided by learners.

As can be seen, syllabi in the examined countries are designed in a similar way. However, a fundamental difference lies in the length of intensive courses for both levels. The shortest intensive courses for Level 1 are organised in the Czech Republic, and are attended by true and false beginners since no entrance tests are required. This course heterogeneity, together with low numbers of lessons, results in the fact that the pace of teaching is usually too fast for true beginners, and at the same time, it slows down the progress of false beginners. The insufficient course length also seems to have an undesirable effect on final exam results, mostly in receptive skills, as learners suffer from a severe lack of essential receptive vocabulary. Unsuccessful learners are generally offered an upgrade course, which often does not immediately follow completion of the intensive course, and in some cases, students may wait a couple of years to be enrolled in an upgrade course. As a result, a final exam success rate is not always satisfactory. Unlike the Czech Republic, the other countries studied provide Level 1 intensive courses with considerably higher numbers of lessons and do not run upgrade courses at all. It is reasonable to assume that this large course time allocation contributes to teaching and learning effectiveness as well as to a higher final Level 1 exam success rate. It may also be assumed that learners entering Level 2 courses more or less master English at the required entry level.

5.1. Limitations

The authors are fully aware of the research limitations as only a quantitative method in the form of questionnaires was used; hence, it was not possible to obtain relevant information in detail. Therefore, based on the current research findings, future research might draw attention to an analysis of existing teaching programmes of the language institutions included in this study (e.g., kinds of commercial textbooks and in-house materials in use; preferred teaching methods), the learners' level of English knowledge required at the beginning of the course, as well as gaining insight into entrance and final exam formats and final exam results.

5.2. Implications

Based on the facts mentioned above, the military course specificity decidedly influences the way of identifying learners' target needs as well as the role of in-house teachers in syllabus design. Consequently, an analysis of the NATO

STANAG 6001 descriptors should always be taken into careful consideration and English teachers' active participation promoted.

The authors also suggest increasing the number of lessons in intensive courses for Level 1 within the Czech Armed Forces. However, the question arises to what extent the current course length should be prolonged. Based on the in-house teachers' experience, suggestions usually range from two weeks (60 lessons) to four weeks (120 lessons). Nevertheless, determining the right length of intensive courses should be a subject of further discussion as participants do not prioritise long courses due to impacts on their private and professional lives (Rüter & Martin, 2021).

The proposed organisational change seems to positively affect the whole teaching and learning process, resulting in a higher final exam success rate. It may also be a precondition for attaining a more sufficient level of English and, consequently, a precondition for succeeding in follow-up Level 2 courses. Moreover, it may contribute to greater economic efficiency as upgrade courses for Level 1 (210 lessons) and preparatory courses for Level 2 (120 lessons) may not be needed. Nonetheless, this issue must be resolved principally at the macro-level (Ministry of Defence management) and meso-level (University of Defence management) as it may have a far-reaching impact on the operation of workplaces in the Czech Armed Forces.

6. Conclusion

The findings proved a crucial role of an analysis of the NATO STANAG 6001 descriptors in syllabus content selection. Furthermore, the results confirmed a key role of in-house teachers in syllabus design processes for both levels, which results from the specific nature of provided ESP courses mostly aimed at preparing learners for final examinations in accordance with NATO STANAG 6001. Integrated syllabi, which are product-oriented and teacher-led, are another defining characteristic typical for both levels in all institutions. The syllabi in the studied countries are designed in a similar way, taking into consideration key aspects such as the type and length of the courses, the learners' entrance level, the previous syllabus, and the exit requirements. In this context, the study offers new insight into the organisational structure of courses at the elementary level and an increase in the number of lessons in courses for Level 1 organised within the Czech army is strongly proposed. Nevertheless, qualitative research appears warranted to deepen knowledge about ESP syllabus design in a military context.

7. References

- Alhuqbani, M. N. (2014). Teaching English to Saudi Police Cadets: An Evaluation Study. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 5(5), 999–1008. <http://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.5.5.999-1008>
- Benavent, G. T., & Sánchez-Reyes, S. (2015). Target situation as a key element for ESP (Law Enforcement) syllabus design. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 173, 143–148. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.044>
- Bouckaert, M. (2019). Current Perspectives on Teachers as Materials Developers: Why, What, and How? *RELC Journal*, 50(3), 439–456. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0033688218810549>

- Breen, M. P. (1984). Process Syllabuses for the Language Classroom. In: *General English Syllabus Design: Curriculum and syllabus design for the general English classroom*. Pergamon Press Ltd.
https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/F044%20ELT-37%20General%20English%20Syllabus%20Design_v3.pdf
- Brown, J. D. (1995). *The Elements of Language Curriculum: A Systematic Approach to Program Development*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Brown, J. D. (2016). *Introducing Needs Analysis and English for Specific Purposes*. New York: Routledge.
- Brumfit, C. (1984). Function and Structure of a State School Syllabus for Learners of Second or Foreign Languages with Heterogeneous Needs. In: *General English Syllabus Design: Curriculum and syllabus design for the general English classroom*. Pergamon Press Ltd.
https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/F044%20ELT-37%20General%20English%20Syllabus%20Design_v3.pdf
- Candlin, C. H. N. (1984). Syllabus Design as a Critical Process. In: *General English Syllabus Design: Curriculum and syllabus design for the general English classroom*. Pergamon Press Ltd.
https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/F044%20ELT-37%20General%20English%20Syllabus%20Design_v3.pdf
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. 4th ed., Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Chan, C. S. C. (2015). How would an economist maximize effectiveness in language teaching subject to constraints? *Language Teaching Insights from Other Fields*, 57–68.
<http://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccw056>
- Chan, C. S. C. (2018). Proposing and illustrating a research-informed approach to curriculum development for specific topics in business English. *English for Specific Purposes*, 52, 27–46. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2018.07.001>
- Chráská, M. (2006). *Úvod do výzkumu v pedagogice [Introduction to pedagogical research]*. Olomouc: Palacky University.
- Cowling, J. D. (2007). Needs analysis: Planning a syllabus for a series of intensive workplace courses at a leading Japanese company. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26(4), 426–442. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2006.10.003>
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for Specific Purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. 7th ed., UK, Cambridge University Press.
- Edwards, N. (2000). Language for business: Effective needs assessment, syllabus design and materials preparation in a practical ESP case study. *English for Specific Purposes*, 19(3), 29–296. [http://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(98\)00029-5](http://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(98)00029-5)
- Ellis, R. (2018). Towards a modular language curriculum for using tasks. *Language Teaching Research*, 23(4), 454–475. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1362168818765315>
- Graves, K. ed. (1996). *Teachers as Course Developers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hadley, G. (1998). Returning Full Circle: a Survey of Efl Syllabus Designs for the New Millennium. *RELC Journal*, 29(2), 50–71.
<http://doi.org/10.1177/003368829802900203>
- Hidayat, R. (2018). A Needs Analysis in Learning English for Airline Staff Program. *English Education Journal*, 9(4), 589–613.
<http://jurnal.unsyiah.ac.id/EEJ/article/view/12516>
- Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-centred approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jonáková, S., Mocková, N., & Muto, F. (2019). Foreign language syllabus design in military education. *EDULEARN19 Proceedings*.
<http://doi.org/10.21125/edulearn.2019.0360>

- Lee, Ch. (2016). Principles and Practices of ESP Course Design - A Case Study of a University of Science and Technology. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 15(2), 94–105.
- Malicka, A., Guerrero, R. G., & Norris, J. M. (2019). From needs analysis to task design: Insights from an English for specific purposes context. *Language Teaching Research*, 23(1), 78–106. <http://doi.org/10.1177/1362168817714278>
- Nation, I. S. P., & Macalister, J. (2010). *Language Curriculum Design*. London: Routledge.
- NATO STANDARD 6001. <https://www.natobilc.org/files/ATrainP-5%20EDA%20V2%20E.pdf>
- Park, K. C. (2015). *A needs analysis of English for Korean naval officers*. IDEALS @ Illinois. <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/78565>
- Pelikán, J. (2004). *Základy empirického výzkumu pedagogických jevu* [Basics of empirical research in pedagogical elements]. Prague: Karolinum.
- Piirimees, A., Rozsypálková, J., & Boltovsky, M. (2020). Teachers' Understanding of Contemporary Approaches to Teaching and Learning. <http://doi.org/10.15405/epicepsy.20111.21>
- Qaddomi, H. A. (2013). English for Specific Purposes in Palestinian Context. Determining EFL Cadets' Needs at Al Istiqlal University. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(7), 1110–1122. <http://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.3.7.1110-1122>
- Rebenko, M., Nikolenko, O., & Rebenko, V. (2019). Listening Comprehension Proficiency Development of Information Technology Students in ESP Classroom. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 18(11), 245–264. <http://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.18.11.15>
- Richards, J. C. (1990). *The Language Teaching Matrix*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C. (2001). *Curriculum Development in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rüter, F., & Martin, A. (2021). How Do the Timing and Duration of Courses Affect Participation in Adult Learning and Education? A Panel Analysis. *Adult Education Quarterly*. <http://doi.org/10.1177/07417136211019032>
- Sari, R. (2003). A Suggested English Language Teaching Program for Gülhane Military Medical Academy. <https://silo.tips/download/a-suggested-english-language-teaching-program-for-glhane-military-medical-academ>
- Serafini, E. J., Lake, J. B., & Long, M. H. (2015). Needs analysis for specialized learner populations: Essential methodological improvements. *English for Specific Purposes*, 40, 11–26. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2015.05.002>
- Shykhnenko, K., & Nozhovnik, O. (2020). ESP Course Delivered to Personnel Working in Shifts for the State Emergency Service of Ukraine through a Student-Tailored Model. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 19(3), 295–309. <http://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.3.16>
- Solak, E. (2010). A Suggested Syllabus for the Advanced Level English Course at Gendarmerie Schools Command in Accordance with NATO STANAG 6001 Level 3 Perspective. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED553576.pdf>
- Swan, M. (1985b). A critical look at the Communicative Approach (2). *ELT Journal*, 39(2), 76–87.
- Todea, L., & Demarcsek, R. (2017). Needs analysis for language course design. A case study for engineering and business students. *IOP Conf. Ser.: Mater. Sci. Eng.* 200 012064.
- Ur, P. (1996). *A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Widdowson, H. G. (2002). *Aspects of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Woodrow, L. (2018). *Introducing Course Design in English for Specific Purposes*. New York: Routledge.

- Yalden, J. (1984). Syllabus Design in General Education: Options for ELT. In: *General English Syllabus Design: Curriculum and syllabus design for the general English classroom*. Pergamon Press Ltd.
https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/F044%20ELT-37%20General%20English%20Syllabus%20Design_v3.pdf.
- Yaşar, N. (2015). A Suggested Negotiated ESP Syllabus for Multinational Peacekeeping Operations within a Constructivist Perspective.
<https://dspace.gazi.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/20.500.12602/187983/b6c8b269648e8b1f8e396de0ebda5367.pdf;jsessionid=E9C0196E94264D65E5F63995F3D86C4B?sequence=1>