
English Language Training at the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC)

So You Think You Know All About It; Do You Really?

By

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Commandant, DLIELC**

[This article has been designed for U.S. personnel in the military training community dealing with programs of English language training for international military students. It is published here for the general information of the entire security assistance community.]

Before you read this article, you need to do two things:

First, forget everything you have previously learned or understood about English language training, and

Second, be prepared to absorb some new information that may change your way of thinking.

Then, after reading this article, if you agree with the ideas it puts forward, will you help us spread the word?

Most people in the Security Assistance training community know that DLIELC is housed in a state-of-the-art language training facility at Lackland AFB in San Antonio, Texas. The new DLIELC campus opened in 1994 and includes 160 classrooms with cable and closed circuit television programming, VCR and video monitors, multimedia laboratories, a library, a learning center, a dining facility with an international menu, billeting for 475 officers and 276 enlisted personnel, and much more. But it is really the highly successful DLIELC language program which makes everything work. The DLIELC approach to language learning is everything from total immersion in English, meaning that students are exposed to English 24 hours a day, to tailored English for special purposes courses. Classroom instruction, which consists of six to seven hours a day, is student-centered and fast-paced. In small classrooms, students are expected to participate actively, not just sit back and read or learn about English.

DLIELC is committed to recent efforts to establish and ensure national standards for English language programs. With that intent, we are pursuing accreditation by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), an internationally known and respected organization of English as a Second Language professionals. With accreditation, TESOL, in conjunction with the Department of Education, will certify the high quality of our faculty, curriculum, administration, facilities, and student services.

At DLIELC, we are proud of our success and want to share it with others. Enthusiastic DLIELC specialists are available to travel to countries anywhere in the world in order to assist with establishing or improving English language programs.

Racing to New Frontiers! Check Out the Global Dynamics!

A few years ago nobody expected English language training to do anything other than build the student's English comprehension level, provide some specialized language skills, and get the student ready to successfully complete the standard MILDEP menu of available follow-on training.



A DLIELC Classroom

The tearing down of the Berlin Wall, the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, the emergence of fledgling democracies from the ruins of the Warsaw Pact, and the ethnicity-driven country formations have together fashioned unfathomed frontiers of tremendous consequence. For those of us in the training business, this has spawned a lexicon of strategies and ideas that even today we race to accommodate. You know them all too well: Coalition Warfare, Interoperability, Joint and Combined Operations, Peace Support Operations, United Nations Forces, NATO Operations, Partnership for Peace, Emerging Democracies, Free Markets, and Global Economy. The bottom line is that because of these new frontiers and their global dynamics, English language training is suddenly more important than we ever imagined.

Needless to say, DLIELC directly supports most of these new strategies with specially developed and innovative English language training programs and services. In addition to our usual clients around the world, we have sent language training experts to most of the countries within these new frontiers, such as the Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Cambodia, Mongolia, and Yemen, to name a few.

DLIELC has dedicated part of its curriculum staff to developing new courses and materials to address the English language concerns that result from the changing global dynamics. These include the English Skills for Staff Officers in Multinational Operations, the American Military



**NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR):
the official NATO languages are English and French**

English course, the four-year Nonintensive American Language Course for military academies and staff colleges, the English Language Proficiency Test (also known as a STANAG 6001 assessment), and other NATO and PFP programs.

In addition, DLIELC supports the George C. Marshall Center European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch, Germany and the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii, both of which have strategic theater curricula designed for uniquely regional student populations.

Facing Obstacles! Are you missing the Boat?

Before we talk about some of the exciting things taking place in the classrooms of DLIELC, let's speak frankly and directly about the obstacles that have been inadvertently placed in the middle of the English language highway, creating gridlock for training traffic.

First, a language lab is not an English language training program. A language lab is a piece of equipment that can be used to enhance an English language program. Not a single student will ever learn English from a language lab without trained teachers and the right curriculum materials. We have visited many places where host country officials have proudly shown us their English language program: nothing more than a newly-installed language lab! We need you to spread the word that spending training dollars on language lab equipment alone is pouring money down the drain.

Second, what about your book orders? Do you have a current Catalog of DLIELC Materials, Courses, and Support Materials? Do you realize that each year the catalog is updated with the new American Language Course materials you can order and new courses that have come on line at our resident campus? Have you coordinated with us to determine the materials and correct quantities to support the English language training programs run by the host country? The staff at DLIELC is more than willing to assist you with your orders for American Language Course textbooks, audio products, videos, and multimedia courseware.

Third, what do you know about the teaching skills of the host country instructors? Have they been trained to teach the American Language Course? What is the host country's plan to sustain a qualified instructor cadre? Even experienced instructors should be given additional training to maintain or improve their skills, especially in light of the fact that the American Language Course materials are continuously being updated. And more importantly, non-native English instructors should be programmed for refresher training so they do not lose their language proficiency. DLIELC has a variety of instructor and management courses that will help develop and upgrade the skills of the host country English language training staff. These issues and more that we have not addressed need to be weighed together to develop the right program. Let us hear from you. We will be glad to work with you.



Peer Teaching: Instructor Development

Pacing New Methodologies! Millennium Madness!

- **Interactive Multimedia**

At DLIELC, we are applying the latest technology to enhance today's English language training. We have made a commitment to utilize the latest technological innovations and are making the transition from audio labs to multimedia labs. This will enable students to learn and study English in an interactive, self-paced mode that provides direct feedback on their learning efforts. Our state-of-the-art learning center lets students continue their use of multimedia technology after regular class hours. This interactive multimedia instruction gives DLIELC students meaningful language activities that markedly improve their absorption and understanding of the English language.

- **Computer Literacy**

Many DLIELC students are required to develop computer literacy to assist their English language training. They learn how to use computers to write their research and academic



Interactive Multimedia Instruction

papers, develop PowerPoint presentations to accompany their briefing practice sessions, and conduct research using the Worldwide Web of the Internet. This dual learning methodology intensifies their English language training experience and, at the same time, provides them with skills that enable them to successfully navigate in the technology of the burgeoning information age.

- **Computerized Testing**

We are also taking advantage of emerging technologies to develop more powerful testing, measurement, and student assessment methodologies. We have successfully validated a revolutionary computerized adaptive form of the ECL test which will significantly reduce the time needed for testing. This adaptive form dynamically evaluates a student's response and automatically selects individualized subsequent questions that will best zero in on the student's proficiency level. In addition, we are moving quickly to implement an overall computer-delivered testing system which will incorporate sound and graphics to stimulate the student in Interactive Multimedia Instruction the test environment. In the very near future, DLIELC students will take their ECL tests and book quizzes at a computer workstation which will automatically deliver the test, grade the test, collect the scoring information, and develop statistical data for recordkeeping and analysis.

- **Video Teleconferences**

We have also initiated high-tech improvements to our procedures for collecting customer feedback. Video teleconferences conducted with follow-on training sites broaden access while reducing TDY costs, and we have implemented a paperless critique system which instantaneously retrieves and disseminates information through e-mail. Customer feedback is vital to our continuous improvement process and has contributed to improvements in curriculum, instruction, facilities, and services.



**Capt Zoltan Fuop, Hungary,
Student in Specialized English Training**

What do Today's Students Say?

Selected comments are provided below to demonstrate the thinking of a few of DLIELC's international students regarding some of the things discussed in this article.

"I believe DLIELC will help Hungary be a valuable member of NATO. When I graduated from the Academy in 1986, Russian was compulsory. To join NATO, officers need to speak English. It's especially important for air traffic controllers. When I go home, I will fly and be a controller. The Hungarian Armed Forces is small—that's why we are trained to do more than one task. After my training here, I can do more—fly and be an air traffic controller in English, too. By the way, the Chief of General Staff and the Hungarian Armed Forces and his Deputy are both former students of DLIELC."

"DLIELC has given me the best opportunity to learn about American culture, society, and the best conditions for studying English right here in America. DLIELC has a well-developed program and system of teaching English which includes well-educated and friendly teachers, well-prepared methodology, technical equipment (computers, library, learning center), class arrangement, and textbooks. Students study in small groups of five to seven people so the teaching process is student-centered and very effective."

On his role as an instructor teaching the American Language Course in Senegal. "My task was quite easy. What I had received, I gave back to my peers. It was easy for me to share my enthusiasm with them. I used to tell them, 'I have the answers to your problems. I have the solution to your problems', and I really knew I had the answers and solutions with the American Language Course Materials. I've never seen such results anywhere else. I really feel happy with the program. I want to thank all those who designed the program for I do feel it is designed for us."



**Col Pavel Stefka, Czech Republic,
Student in General English Training**



**Chief Master Sergeant Nguina Thiam, Senegal
Graduate of DLIELC's Instructor Courses**

About the American Language Course videotapes. After we finished with the regular lesson in the textbook, I used to tell my students, "Now I'm going to send you to the United States for one hour". and they loved it. I use videotapes to re-motivate my students to take them to the target culture because that is something important.

From a historical point of view, there was the West and East. Each had its own systems of logistics, supply, and command. Poland will soon be a member of NATO. We have been in Partnership for Peace, and it was a hard time for us because we have had to try new processing according to NATO standards. This means changing habits and customs. So DLIEC



**Lt Col Andrzej Mazur, Poland
Student in Specialized English Training**

is important because we learn military language and procedures and recognize other customs and how to act like Western officers. Here we learn military English and train to go back to Poland to teach English.

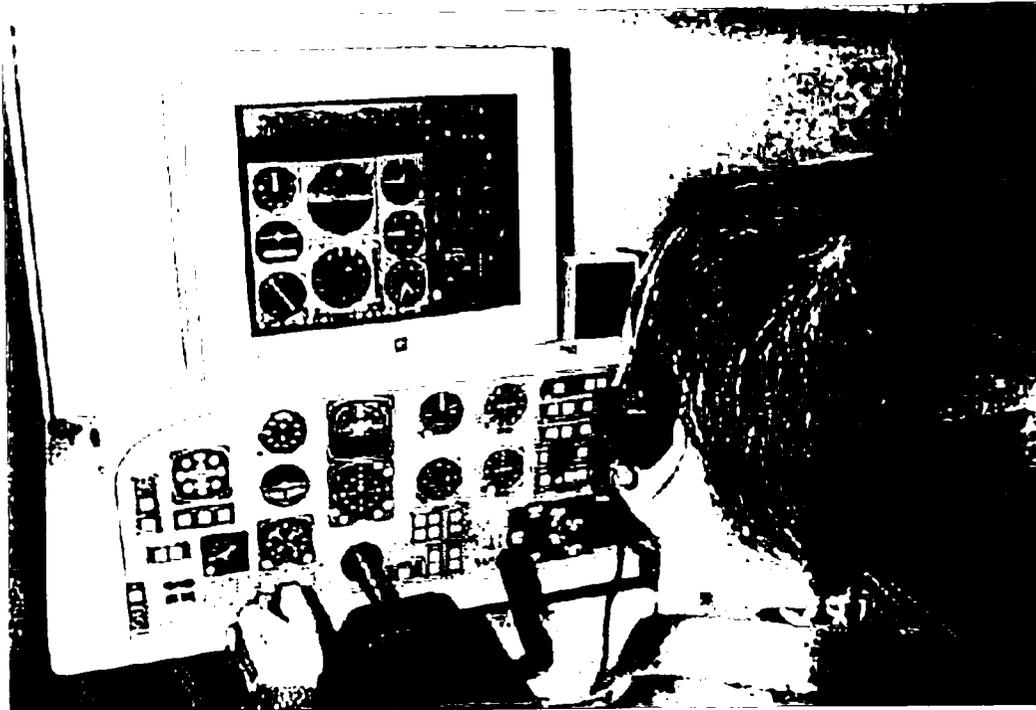
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING! WHAT DO YOU THINK NOW?

Has this article done anything so far to give you any new insights into the English language training of today? Let's talk about some other factors relating to an international military student learning English. We must remember that like any foreign language, studying English is a highly complex learning task. It takes time to learn a language and it involves so much more than memorizing vocabulary words, phrases, and perhaps some grammar rules.

Military training in the US is changing dramatically, and language training must change along with it. The modern aircraft equipment and weapons systems that international students are trained to operate today are so intricate, precise, and sophisticated that only error-free, split second communications guarantee safe and risk-free operation. Most professional military education offered by the military departments today is now presented through small group and seminar formats, in which pressure to keep up with US classmates can be very intense. Since the international student's language skills must measure up to these more demanding military training challenges, we must rigorously pursue a training and testing regimen that adequately prepares the student to meet these follow-on training demands.

Today, it is essential that international students be able to successfully perform the language tasks of their follow-on training. Take a look at some examples:

International aviation students, entrusted with multi-million dollar aircraft, must prove that they can communicate orally in English; therefore, in addition to the ECL, they are given an oral proficiency interview (OPI) to assess their speaking ability. Here's why we now test the speaking and listening skills of aviation students: During flight training, international aviators will be expected to understand and answer air traffic controllers, their instructor pilots, and possibly other aviators while at the same time flying high performing jets through increasingly-crowded airspace over populated areas.



Communicating While Task Saturated

Professional military education (PME) courses are becoming more challenging. Many of the today's PME students are required to read 50 pages each evening, write college or graduate level research papers, participate in high-level group discussions, and use computer software to prepare briefings and reports in English. While highly developed listening and speaking skills are critical for aviation students, PME students must also be very proficient in reading and writing English to keep up with the demands of their courses.

Today, it is also essential that international students be able to successfully perform the language tasks associated with follow-on assignments to support peacekeeping, interoperability, and the other highly complicated multinational scenarios in which they will be involved.

Advanced language skills cannot be acquired overnight, and they cannot be learned by giving students a word list or glossary to memorize. A greater emphasis on speaking and engaging in interactive activities during English language training is essential. Repeated practice along with accurate feedback for writing activities is also necessary. Academic writing involves not just punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure, but also the ability to analyze, organize thoughts, and skillfully support opinions. A need also exists to tie language activities to high tech equipment and military simulations in order to better prepare international students for the environment they will enter after language training. Conversational English is just not enough anymore.

In the past, the development of a host country English language self-sufficiency was a primary goal of our security assistance efforts. Today, with the level of sophistication required both at many of the follow-on training locations and in the complicated environments of the new frontiers, we can no longer simply start up an in-country English language program, walk



PME Student Conducting a Practice Military Briefing

away, and expect it to meet its goals. Today, the resources and skills of both the U.S. and its allies must be combined and partnerships must be formed in an effort to address the spiraling operational demand for English: the world's language.



English is the Language of Peace Support Peacekeeping Operations

DLIELC Points of Contact

| If you have questions about: | Contact: | Phone/e-mail |
|--|--|--|
| English Language Training Programs (ELTPs) DLIELC Advisors/Instructors for Overseas Assignments ELTP Development Consulting (ALC material/language labs/instructors) | Operations & Overseas Branch (DLIELC/LEOX) | DSN: 473-3783/3790 FAX: 473-5362 e-mail: LEOX@smtp.lak.aetc.af.mil COMM: (210) 671-3783 FAX: (210) 671-5362 |
| Programming of Students to DLIELC Course Description/Availability Scheduling Oral Proficiency Interviews | Training Operations (DLIELC/LEOXO) | DSN: 473-3342 FAX: 473-3700 e-mail: LEOXO@smtp.lak.aetc.af.mil COMM: (210) 671-3342 FAX: (210) 671-1893 |
| Ordering Texts, and Other Curriculum Materials from Catalogs Obtaining Catalogs | Logistics Branch (DLIELC/LERW) | DSN: 473-4711 FAX: 473-3063 e-mail: campbela@smtp.lak.aetc.af.mil COMM: (210) 671-4711 FAX: (210) 671-3063 |
| American Language Course Placement Tests or the ECL Test | Test and Measurement Section (DLIELC/LEACT) | DSN: 473-4889 FAX: 473-0211 e-mail: johnsonp@smtp.lak.aetc.af.mil COMM: (210) 671-4889 FAX: (210) 671-0211 |
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