
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING: AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE

By

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"When an Argentine pilot lands his airliner in Turkey, he and the ground controller talk in English." (U.S. News and World Report, February 18, 1985)

The above statement illustrates the widespread use of the English language in the international arena. Moreover, this air-to-ground conversation may also have a security assistance component, in that one or both of the individuals may have acquired a major portion of their English language capability via a security assistance (SA) training program. Many former foreign military trainees (FMTs), who have participated in a course or courses of instruction as part of a U.S.-sponsored security assistance program, go on to positions in the civilian sector of their respective countries.

This article focuses on the importance of English language preparation in conjunction with the conduct of military training for foreign personnel. The process of English Comprehension Level (ECL) testing is described, and a checklist is provided for evaluating the effectiveness of in-country English language programs.

SA-sponsored training provided by the Department of Defense (DOD) to foreign military and civilian personnel is almost always conducted in English. Therefore, the first priority in the development of a successful training program must be English language preparation. The overseas U.S. Security Assistance Organization (SAO) is responsible for assisting host country military forces in developing and verifying the adequacy of their in-country language training program.

Foreign military trainees chosen for SA-sponsored training are selected from a country's total military personnel resources. Prior to their departure for U.S.-based training, FMTs must first be tested for English language competency in their home countries, and they are then tested again at their first training location in the U.S. The greater the English language proficiency of the FMT, the greater the potential degree of success in military training.

Procedures and policies concerning in-country English comprehension level screening/testing are provided in Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLIELC) Instruction 1025.15, Guidelines for Obtaining, Controlling, and Administering the English Comprehension Level (ECL) Test, dated 15 January 1984. The ECL serves as a measure of expectation of an individual's ability, as well as a means of establishing the base level proficiency considered essential for an FMT to enter and successfully complete a

particular course of instruction. The test and raw score conversion procedures were developed by DLIELC. Varying minimum level ECL test scores, based on a numerical scale of 0 to 100, are required for FMT entry into different DOD courses, based on the degree of language complexity employed in a given course. For example, at the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM), the minimum required score for all FMTs is an 80 ECL. However, for entry into DLIELC for English language training, a lower minimum score of 55 is required; this minimum score, however, applies only to FMTs funded under the grant International Military Education and Training (IMET) program. Thus, students entering language training at DLIELC through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program are exempt from meeting any minimum test score, although they must meet required minimums for all other DOD training courses. Finally, testing waivers have been provided for selected IMET-sponsored FMTs entering DLIELC from countries which lack internal capabilities for meeting the 55 ECL requirement. A listing of all required ECL minimum scores is provided in the Military Articles and Services List (MASL) for training, and such ECL requirements are also usually furnished in the military services formal school catalogs.

If a potential FMT fails to meet the required direct entry ECL minimum test score at his first training location, he is given the opportunity to be retested after three days have elapsed. A second failure implies that he would be unlikely to meet desired course objectives and would be unsuccessful in completing his programmed training. Such testing failures require that a decision be made in coordination with the training school, the SAO, the student's country, and the U.S. military department (MILDEP) concerned, to determine whether to send the FMT to DLIELC for additional language training, to have the FMT return to his country, or to waive the ECL requirement. Further language training, of course, involves additional costs, and also means the FMT must vacate his course enrollment, thereby reducing the number of students which might otherwise receive training. It further requires a rescheduling of the student into a later course. In any event, should the student either receive additional language training, or be returned to his country, the country will be assessed a cancellation penalty. Such penalties are charged to the country concerned any time a training space allocated to that country is not utilized through the fault of the country. The penalty assessed is 50% of the tuition price established for a particular course.

The Security Assistance Management Manual (SAMM) (DOD 5105.38-M) assigns the responsibility to the foreign country to ensure that prospective FMTs meet the ECL requirement for attendance at a particular course regardless of how or where the training is conducted. The SAMM further stipulates that with few exceptions DOD considers that most foreign countries have the required resources (e.g., public and private schools, commercial institutions, etc.) for providing sufficient English language training to meet the basic ECL requirement.

FMTs from English-speaking countries, such as Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, do not require English language training. Students from these countries are allowed to proceed directly to DOD courses without language testing. However, although English is the first, as well as the official, language in these and other countries, this is

not to say that some language problems do not exist. Various English language terms have different meanings from country to country. For example, in the process of conducting business in a formal meeting, Americans use the term "table" to mean a deferring of a discussion; in contrast, the British use the same term to mean the bringing up of an item for discussion. Many examples of the disparity in usage could be cited illustrating the need for some U.S. English language preparation by those FMTs for whom English is the native language.

Those countries in which English is the second language, or which have in-country English language training programs, must provide students with the appropriate communications skills to meet the prerequisite ECL when tested upon their initial arrival at a U.S. training facility. Students from the following such countries are exempt from in-country ECL testing, but must be tested at their first training location, and must achieve the required minimum ECL score for the courses in which they are enrolled.

Antigua-Barbuda	Guyana	Pakistan
Bahamas	Iceland	Papau New Guinea
Bangladesh	India	Philippines
Barbados	Israel	St. Lucia
Belgium	Jamaica	St. Vincent
Belize	Kenya	Sierra Leone
Botswana	Luxembourg	Singapore
Denmark	Malawi	Sri Lanka
Dominica	Malaysia	Sweden
Fiji	Netherlands	Uganda
Ghana	Norway	Zimbabwe
Grenadines		

Students from all other countries must be tested both in their home country and also at their first training location.

Significantly, in countries where public and private schools or commercial institutions do not provide English language training, the U.S. MILDEPs provide training through the use of special programs provided via the security assistance program, including language laboratories, tapes, books, instructor training and assistance, and direct instruction provided by the DLIELC.

Since policy and resources restrict the amount of English language training that can be provided for IMET students at DLIELC, it is imperative that a language training program be established in country. It may be a program incorporated into a nation's primary and secondary educational system; or it might be one established by a country's Ministry of Defense via a contract with a third country; or it could take the form of a security assistance sponsored training program in which the in-country SAO is primarily concerned. A principal task of SAO training officers is to impress upon their in-country counterparts the importance of potential FMTs meeting the ECL minimum score.

In working with host country counterparts, the SAO offers assistance in the form of survey teams, course materials, and hardware, as well as specialized training courses offered by DLIELC. These support services and procedures for requesting them are found in DLIELC 1025.1-M, Education and

Training: Support Services for In-Country English Language Training Programs, dated 1 September 1983.

Ultimately the key to the future success of FMTs in U.S. courses is the effectiveness of the in-country English language training program. The SAO can assist the host country in the development of an in-country language training program. To aid the SAO in support of an in-country training program, DISAM has developed the following checklist to help in an assessment of program status.

- Is English a required or elective course in the primary/secondary education system?
- Are there private organizations which provide English language training?
- Attitude of host country military towards English language training.
- Required/elective training required by Ministry of Defense/Military Department.
- Status of language laboratories.
- Location and state of operational capability.
- Number of English language instructors.
- State of training of instructors.
- Training materials available.
- Attitude of students towards unauthorized assistance on tests.
- Test Control Officer appointed and trained.
- Control of ECL test material.
- Familiarity with language training program procedures.

The overall responsibility for the development and maintenance of an adequate English language in-country program rests with defense officials within each country participating in a security assistance training program. The SAO, working cooperatively with host country officials and directed by procedures and directives developed for all concerned, can bring to fruition a successful English language training program--a part of security assistance.

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