English as an International Language in the Military: A Study of Attitudes

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Abstract

This paper reports on the findings of a national-based survey of perceptions and attitudes towards the use of English in the Spanish armed forces. Drawing on the theoretical assumption that knowledge of the social, textual and generic motives of professional communication is only available to expert members of a discourse community, the survey inquires into the discourse practices and procedures of the military community in Spain, their established ways of transmitting information in texts in English, the genre sets that they use and the communicative events they are involved in. Survey findings show that the growing internalization process undergone by the Spanish armed forces has been paired with the use of English as the lingua franca of international communication in this professional context. The important implications of the predominance of English as the workplace language for the personal and professional development of these professionals are discussed in the light of the results.

1 English as a Lingua Franca in International Contexts

The openness in international communication, in information exchange and knowledge dissemination has made English a shared language favoring the internationalization of professional activities. As such, it is also the language of international communication practices (Dewey, 2007; Giddens, 1999; House, 2003; Seidelhofer, 2001, 2004, 2005), particularly in academia (Belcher, 2007; Curry & Lillis, 2004; Ferguson, Pérez-Llantada & Plo, 2011; Pérez-Llantada, 2012). Yet, the dominance of English has raised controversy and debate whether viewed as a "lingua frankensteinia" (Phillipson, 2008), as a "Tyranosaurus rex" (Swales, 1997), as an "epistemicide" (Bennett, 2007), that is, as a threat to multilingualism and thus to the survival of local languages, or as "simply work" (Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010). Whatever their stance, these studies acknowledge that, in this global era defined by the growing interconnection of individuals and institutions, of local and global contexts, English has become the language for communication in international professional settings, as well as in academic and research exchange.

Not surprisingly, English also stands as the vehicular language for the Military, in an international geo-political scenario marked by the globalization of conflicts beyond national borders and consequently by the integration of armies in multinational and multicultural

coalition forces (Febbraro, McKee & Riedel, 2008; Stewart et al., 2004). For the Spanish armed forces this new international arena has meant their increasing participation in international military operations (since 1989 more than 100,000 military personnel have participated in international missions in four continents[1]), which has involved the deployment of an unprecedented number of troops and equipment and their integration in multinational structures (cf. *Fuerzas Armadas Españolas: Mejorando la eficacia operativa,* 2008). The present and, very likely, the envisioned future military scenarios are clearly ones of complexity: beyond traditional warfare, the military scene has gradually been taken, as Pierce and Dixon (2006) claim, by peace enforcement, peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Yet, winning the peace has shown to be more challenging than winning the war and it requires, Chiarelli and Michaelis (2005, July-August) argue, the implementation of full-spectrum operations:

> if there is nothing else done other than kill bad guys and train others to kill bad guys, the only thing accomplished is moving more people from the fence to the insurgent category—there remains no opportunity to grow the support base (p. 6).

In this open scenario, the latest international conflicts of Afghanistan or Iraq have confronted armies around the world with the strategic importance of managing information and therefore of transmitting the right message. To a large extent, military effectiveness seems to depend on successful communication with the local population and on the effective transmission of information. For the purpose of fighting not only insurgency, but also the battle of influencing public opinion, the new media can be seen as "weapons of mass communication", as the cover of the February 2008 issue of *NATO Review*, a well-known military magazine, very intelligently puts it. If, as the vision statement of the Spanish Army claims, "leading an army requires communicating and thus understanding that public information creates public opinion" (*Visión del JEME 2025*, 2010), modern warfare might have found a new answer to the question of whether the pen is truly mightier than the sword:

> Whether one chooses pen or sword may depend on whether one believes knowledge is power. That belief, in turn, may hinge on how knowledge is defined and power understood. Can the expression of ideas move others as swiftly, as effectively, as permanently as the use of force or the lure of riches? Does truth—or simply the command of ideas—provide leverage over others? Are ideas weapons? Conversely, can force inspire and persuade or only coerce? (Foster, 1996)

As the lingua franca of military communication, English can help facilitate the necessary interconnection between individuals and organizations, between the national and the international, between the local and the global. Essential for the understanding of the role of English as an international language are those studies (Poteet et al., 2008; Rasmussen & Sieck, 2012; Rasmussen, Sieck, & Smart, 2009; Sieck & Patel, 2007) which have interpreted the all-encompassing role of English as causing problems and barriers to adaptability, mainly because of the differences individuals bring together into coalitions: differences in natural and doctrinal languages, in technological capabilities, or in core competencies, and very specially, in cultural backgrounds, in their culture, values and norms. Even more complex and challenging is the strategic effort of communicating with the local population, frequently mediated by intercultural relations. The issue brings to the fore the close interrelation of language and cross-cultural competences, particularly significant for the military (Abbe, Gulik, & Herman, 2007; Hummel & Siska, 2011; Lunt, 2008; Stier, 2006; Watson, 2010).

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[1] http://www.defensa.gob.es/areasTematicas/misiones/

Of particular concern for military communication have also been claims about international security and about the vital consequences of the miscommunication problems caused by the lack of English proficiency in related professional domains, for example, international merchant marine (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010, 2011; de la Campa-Portela, 2005, 2006; Johnson, 1994; Vangehuchten, van Parys, & Noble, 2011) or civil aviation (Connell, 1996; Cushing, 1994; Kim & Elder, 2009; Orasanu, Fisher, & Davidson, 1997; Ragan, 2002; Rantanen & Kokayeff, 2002; Tajima, 2004; Verhaegen, 2001). This has led to the adoption of standardized languages such as the *Standard Marine Communication Phrases*[2] or the *Standardized Radio-Telephony Communication Terminology*[3], to regulate and thus to facilitate communication procedures.

The influential role of English as the lingua franca in the military workplace, in allied coalitions, in international security and in public communication, has meant the increasing pressure for professional internationalization in the Spanish armed forces. It has also made knowledge of English an essential professional competence, materialized in the requirement of having their level of English assessed and certified according to NATO STANAG 6001 in the Standard Language Profile (SLP) test (Vadász, 2011) thus greatly enhancing, or damaging, their chances for professional promotion. It finally means pressure for the academic training program of cadets, future practitioners of the discipline. The pressure for learning the language is not only a personal one, a matter of academic success, personal development or professional promotion and advancement; it is also essential for the growth of the organization: an officer can be seen as representing the whole army and the difficulties to participate in professional interaction in English would badly affect the institution.

Yet, despite the international relevance of the military institution, their discourse has been, to my knowledge, underresearched in applied linguistics, ESP or communication studies. The urge to research military discourse is more justified than ever after the creation of the Common European Higher Education Area, which seeks to make quality assurance standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe, and has recently led to the creation of the new *Centro Universitario de la Defensa* (the Defense University), CUD henceforth, at the Spanish Military Academy of Zaragoza, a public institution of higher education. Standardization initiatives have been increasingly implemented by allied armies across Europe and North America, where similar systems of higher education have been implemented for decades, which should result in better mobility and higher operability among allied countries (see, for example, *Los estudios de posgrado en las Fuerzas Armadas*, 2008; Romero Arrianza, 2006). The new educational system of the Spanish armed forces has also been adapted to the European standards, and the Class of 2015 will be the first Class in the Spanish armed forces history to receive a university degree, whose mission is to provide future officers with a dual civilian and military training, that is, academic training and scholarly/academic literacy background as well as military-specific professional competence.

The general goal of the new system of military training has been defined as to enable future officers to acquire the management and leadership skills to work in multidisciplinary groups and in multinational structures in a multilingual context[4]. In this scenario it seems essential that the role of English as an international language in the Military is fully understood.

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[2]   http://www.imo.org/
[3]   http://www.icao.int/
[4]   http://titulaciones.unizar.es/ing-org-industrial-cud/

Contributing towards this purpose, this paper uses a survey and interview-based study to examine the Spanish officers' perceptions and attitudes towards the English language together with the contextual factors of professional communication and the intercultural demands of the military profession.

2 A Nation-based Survey of Attitudes towards English

Survey- and interview-based studies have been employed to elicit attitudes, views or interpretations on the role of English lingua franca in academia (Hymes, 1972; Curry & Lillis, 2004; Pérez-Llantada, Ferguson & Plo, 2011), and in some professional contexts such as business (Holliday, 1995; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2007, 2008), the law (Bhatia, Garzone & Degano, 2012) or aviation (Kim & Elder, 2009). Underlying these studies is the common view that understanding communication cannot be separated from understanding the people who create it, that is, the communities or disciplines where communicative practices are embedded.

Drawing inspiration from these premises, the survey described below sought to provide a multi-perspective insight into the communicative practices of this professional community, assumed to be constructed from textual, generic and social perspectives (Bhatia, 2004). In this line, the survey was meant to provide text-internal information on the genres and communicative events in which this discipline engages (second set of questions) complemented with very valuable information on text-external features, that is, information into the disciplinary identity of this community, their attitudes, beliefs, values and motives (first set of questions). For this purpose the specific goal is to shed light into the perceived attitudes and views, into reasons and motives of language use, into the personal and professional motivation for learning English, ultimately trying to determine the relevance of English in their academic, professional or personal lives. It is finally expected that the analysis could eventually inform both future educational decisions and potential areas of research.

Because a holistic interpretation of the data was to be achieved, the survey was designed to integrate two stages of data gathering, a questionnaire complemented with follow-up semi-structured interviews and observations. The first question of the questionnaire was meant to elicit views on the importance of language competence for their professional and academic development or promotion. The next question sought to estimate the awareness of respondents of the relevance of English for their professional practice, and very specifically for the success of their participation in national and international missions (Question 2). The following questions asked the respondents about their level of English (Question 3), further exploring the difficulties they had experienced in contexts in which the language is used in the follow-up stage. As for their language learning experience, Question 4 inquired into the formal and informal language learning activities in which they have been involved. The second set of questions was intended to generate a catalogue of professional written and oral genres (Questions 5 and 6). The goal was to determine in which communication events, both written and oral (Questions 7 and 8), the Military most frequently resort to English for professional, academic or personal use, as well as to explore their audience, that is, both who they write or speak to, what they read and what or who they listen to.

Although the many advantages of other types of questionnaires and scales of measurement need to be acknowledged, for the first stage of this survey a structured questionnaire with two different scales was chosen. Likert-scaled questions with a four point scale (*very important /*

important / not very important / not important at all) were preferred for the question aimed at ascertaining attitudes towards the importance of English for the profession or with a five point scale, including a '*non applicable*' option, for the question on the success of military missions. For those questions which sought to measure perceptions regarding their level of English or the use of English in the profession, multiple option questions were used to reflect the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) also with a Likert scale (*excellent / good / intermediate / low / none* for the first one and *very important / important / not very important / not important at all* for the second one). On the other hand, for the questions on the genres and audiences of writing and oral communicative events most frequently employed and targeted, the use of non-scaled multiple-choice open-ended questions was expected to allow respondents to provide additional comments.

The nation-based questionnaire administered to the Spanish Army officers via their intranet, was answered by 421 officers. The use of a purposefully simple questionnaire, with a reduced number of questions written in Spanish, was meant to maximize easiness and thus to reach the largest number of respondents. The questions were specifically designed to enquire into the opinions compiled in the open-ended questions. The wealth of thought-provoking data obtained in the questionnaires was further extended in the follow-up interviews, answered by email or personally by 15 officers who had shown their willingness to participate.

The collection of information both in the surveys and the interviews was, however, affected by factors such as the uneven distribution of information in the army, mainly dependant on their fully hierarchical order, which not only meant the availability (or lack of it) of some high rank officers to respond the questionnaire, but also to encourage their subordinates to participate (or not to). Furthermore, the transition from a purely military training institution into an academically-oriented one, still in progress, has meant an undeniable challenge for this profession, for which an academic survey like this might not have caused some resistance. The singular nature of the military institution also emerged during the survey, particularly in the follow-up stage. Comments on some of the more controversial issues of deficiencies or communication misunderstandings understandably proved to be challenging for participants, whose code of honor demands not only discretion, but also acceptance and obedience of hierarchical discipline. The possible resentment provoked by the demand for English proficiency certification cannot be ignored either.

Although cognizant of the limitations of using a questionnaire for an attitudes survey, also of the potential problems of question choice or of desirability bias, the advantage of reaching a large number of people, particularly in the case of this nation-based investigation with the target population dispersed all over the country (some even in international posts), made a direct approach a quick, easy and efficient way of accessing the military discipline. However, the number of respondents, which can be viewed as representative of the target population, together with the large amount of information provided both in open-ended questions of the surveys and in the interviews, was considered satisfactory.

3 Towards an Understanding of English in the Military
With the aim of clarifying the opinions and attitudes expressed in the questionnaires and interviews, some basic biographical information about their rank was asked. Of the 413 respondents who answered this first question 82 were lieutenants, 128 captains, 93 majors, 78 lieutenant colonels, 27 colonels and 5 generals) and the 15 interviewees were 1 lieutenant, 2 captains, 4 majors, 5 lieutenant colonels and 3 colonels. A higher rank is associated with years

in service as well as with more demanding responsibilities. It also means a privileged position to reflect on military practices, experiences and views.

3.1 About the Importance of English

In response to Question 1 (*How important is English for the military profession*?), the data showed that current officers appear to be fully aware of the importance of English in their context:

	Total	%	Cumulative total
very important	197	47.40%	89.50%
important	175	42.10%	
not very important	26	6.30%	10.60%
not important	18	4.30%	
answered question	416		

Table 1. About the importance of English for the military profession.

References to English as essential, as a basic skill in the present world, compared with the acquisition of basic computing skills for example, abound among the informants' responses to open-ended questions and in the interviews. Despite the general perception, a cumulative 10.6% of the officers participating in the survey still considered English as not very important or not important at all. When asked about this percentage of officers who did not seem to find English important, one of the informants reflected on what he called a dichotomy between two clear-cut groups in the Army, those members of the Spanish armed forces involved exclusively in tasks carried out in Spain, without any multinational perspective, who do not seem to experience the need to speak any languages, and those who do. Although for some the secondary role of English in the profession could be associated with variables such as age, current job or a certain feeling of rejection caused by their lack of skills, the military community clearly links language competence to professional promotion, higher ranks, better jobs or more possibilities for professional development. This might correspond to the requirements for assessment and certification of linguistic competence in the Military in order to access certain ranks and positions, with the countless social, professional, economic or personal implications for the hierarchical Army rank system. The harm to professional future was clearly perceived by the informants, who seemed to feel the urge to enter the "*dynamics of the profession*", or else "*you have very little to expect from this profession*".

The need to use English was also felt to be associated with rank, since lower rank officers explained they were not so likely to use English–they restrict their activity to the command of their units–whereas higher rank officers most frequently tend to occupy higher responsibility posts of command which involve coordination of their work with other armies. It is also these higher ranks which are expected to transform the decisions made by superiors into commands to subordinates. Younger officers appeared to be aware of these future needs. As an example, the claim of one young captain who acknowledged that he does not need English at all in his present job, although he knows English will be "*essential, crucial*" once he starts taking part in international missions.

When asked about cadets' attitudes, as future professionals in this envisioned 21st century scenario, interviewees agreed that, like the large majority of future professionals, full awareness only comes with professional practice. Simply put: *they are still not aware of the*

professional challenges they are facing but as soon as they are given an operation command in English or they are ordered to make a presentation, they "wake up" (respondent #In3). Ratifying this claim, an internal survey showed that a cumulative percentage of 96.6% of cadets are aware of the importance of English (68.30% consider English as very important and 28.30% of them consider it important). The percentages are clearly higher than those of current officers: 47.40% think English is very important and 42.10% think it is important and the percentage of those who think it is not important is almost negligible. This seems to respond not only to the tendency of Spanish university students, as well as those in most countries around the globe, towards internationalization, but also to the growing awareness of the new role of the Spanish armed forces in the international geopolitical sphere.

The next set of questions concerned the use of English in their professional practice. The answers to Question 2 (*How important is English for the success of international missions?*), ratified by the interview responses, showed that language competence is related to their professional practice, particularly to whether that takes place in Spain or abroad. The growing importance of English in the military context cannot be separated from the participation of the Spanish armed forces in international operations. This requires their integration in multinational teams in which the vehicular language is mostly English, a fundamental factor for the consideration of the role of English:

	Total	%	Cumulative total
very important	247	59.10%	95.50%
important	152	36.40%	
not very important	16	3.80%	4.30%
not important	2	0.50%	
not applicable	1	0.20%	
answered question	418		

Table 2. About the importance of English for the success of international missions.

It is when referring to their participation in international missions that the decisiveness of English emerged in responses, not only for their possible personal or professional benefit (*if you can't speak English, you are lost*), but because those are very frequently life-threatening situations in which there is no time for a translator. A striking testimony came from an officer who reported his own experience when deployed in Iraq in 2004 where three American soldiers bled to death in their hands, while the Spanish control tower was struggling to communicate with the rescue helicopter. "*The lives of many soldiers are at stake*", he claimed (respondent # In8).

The challenge of communication in English in a multinational working environment was not only mentioned by Spanish officers. American officers with whom I had the opportunity of sharing the preliminary data obtained in this study corroborated those difficulties. Very tactfully they tried to be understanding (*American HQs can be very intimidating to an American officer. It must be even more so to foreign officers* – respondent # Am1) and willing to help foreign officers to integrate their workplace community. They, nonetheless, acknowledged the communicative challenge.

Another interesting issue arose in the follow-up opinions regarding the difficulties faced in the profession. However essential English is regarded as, lack of skills and the problems

experienced when using English in professional practice seem to be equally clear. Not unexpectedly, language competence deficiencies were referred to with a subtle tone of frustration, particularly when the issue of higher level certification requirements was mentioned. Officers, particularly older ones who did not have the chance of being trained in English in high school or in college, openly complained about feeling punished and having lack of motivation: the economic costs of courses, the burden for family life or professional damage are mentioned. Opinions thus seem to correlate the biographical data provided by respondents, most of them older officers with years in service. A comment very openly, perhaps bitterly, exemplifies this view:

> Although it is true that in the last 30 years the level of English among officers has improved a lot; it is also true that trying (unsuccessfully in most cases) to reach the bloody Level 3 has made people's lives a misery to a greater or lesser extent. The way things are going with the new Level 3 (Professional) and if things don't change, it seems that in the next 30 years the English level of officers will continue improving, which at the same time will make the lives of 100% of them a misery. IN SHORT, it is essential that common sense and realism regarding languages return to the Ministry of Defense, that they understand that "WHAT CANNOT BE, CANNOT BE AND IT IS ALSO IMPOSSIBLE" and no matter how miserable they make peoples' lives, impossible will continue being impossible. AMEN. (respondent # respondent Qu62)[5]

3.2 About their Level of English and the Learning Experience

A shared perception seems to pervade from the above comments, many officers did not seem to consider their level of English satisfactory. This self-perceived language lack of proficiency was only partially corroborated by the answers to question 3 (*How would you rate your level of English?*):

	excellent	good	intermediate	low	none
reading	14.85%	38.37%	34.65%	8.66%	3.47%
writing	5.24%	30.67%	46.63%	11.72%	5.74%
speaking	6.98%	32.42%	38.65%	15.71%	6.23%
understanding	10.97%	32.42%	36.66%	14.71%	5.24%
means	9.51%	33.47%	39.15%	12.70%	5.17%

Table 3. About their level of English.

The questionnaires showed that an average 42.98% view their level of English as excellent (9.51%) or good (33.47%), whereas 17.87% consider it to be low (12.70%) or non-existent (5.17%). When individual skills were considered, speaking and writing, that is, the production skills, were seen as comparatively weaker than reading and understanding, the reception skills. However, these perceptions did not totally match the data obtained in the interviews, where speaking, rather than writing, was reported as posing the greatest difficulties. Although

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5 As mentioned the survey was administered in Spanish but the quotes have been glossed in English. The original quote in Spanish is the following:

Si bien es cierto que durante los últimos 30 años ha mejorado mucho el nivel de inglés de los Oficiales; no es menos cierto que el intentar (sin éxito en la mayoría de los casos) obtener el maldito Nivel 3 le ha amargado la vida en mayor o menor medida al 50% de ellos. Tal y como se pone la cosa ahora con el nuevo Nivel 3 (Profesional), y si la cosa no cambia, todo apunta a que en los próximos 30 años seguirá mejorando mucho el nivel de inglés de los Oficiales, al mismo tiempo que se le amargará la vida, en mayor o menor medida, al 100% de ellos. EN DEFINITIVA, es imprescindible que el sentido común y el realismo en materia de idiomas vuelvan al Ministerio de Defensa; que comprendan que "LO QUE NO PUEDE SER, NO PUEDE SER, Y ADEMÁS, ES IMPOSIBLE" y que, por mucho que le amarguen la vida al personal, lo imposible no dejará de serlo. AMÉN. .

some unexpected references to difficulties with reading, felt as the most necessary and widely used skill, arose, it is with speaking and understanding that they seem to struggle most, because of their lack of fluency, which might even cause some embarrassing situations. Difficulties were attributed to the use of English in stressful situations or to the limitations to understand English speakers (native pronunciation and accents seem to be particularly problematic).

Interviewees acknowledged that many people might feel uncomfortable in these situations and it is precisely the awareness of the possible consequences of misunderstanding that leads them to employ a number of strategies. When asked in the follow-up questions about these strategies, some attempts about trying to write directly in English were incidentally mentioned. However, the practice of writing in Spanish first ("*I cannot think in English*" respondent # In15) and then translating into English was openly admitted. The help of electronic translators, dictionaries or, most frequently, of a native speaker with expertise in their area were encouraged if, as one of the respondents suggested, you want to avoid what he called "*grammatical disasters*". Some testimonies referred to those cases in which colleagues, even themselves, have tried to be accompanied by somebody who speaks English (an extra burden for those fluent in the language, one officer complains), or by an interpreter. This practice appears to be frequent in the military context, in which, because they have decision-making power, consequences can be serious as has been reported in other areas such as seafaring (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010, 2011; de la Campa-Portela, 2005, 2006; Johnson, 1994; Vangehuchten, van Parys, & Noble, 2011) and civil aviation (Connell, 1996; Cushing, 1994; Kim & Elder, 2009; Orasanu, Fisher, & Davidson, 1997; Ragan, 2002; Rantanen & Kokayeff, 2002; Tajima, 2004; Verhaegen, 2001).

In oral communication, difficulties in expressing one's thoughts were mentioned and with them the need to resort to shortcuts or to long and winding explanations. Occasionally, they admitted having even tried to avoid situations in which English needs to be used, whether in presentations, briefings or meetings. Speaking in public, and the frequent uncertainties and hesitations it implies, can damage some people's self-esteem, a clear handicap faced because of language deficiencies. They further acknowledged that the content of their presentation and even their professional image can be badly affected by poor oral skills ("*because you can't say what you know, it seems you do not know it*" respondent # In15).

Their awareness of perceived language deficiencies also extended to their perception of the audience's, either native or non-native speakers, reaction to their oral speech. Although felt as an understanding audience, the pressure to compensate lack of oral competence with better contents, or more attractive presentations seems to be, nevertheless, experienced. To remain on the safe side, avoiding sarcasm, irony or even humor ("*Do not try to tell jokes!*" respondent # In14) were strongly recommended by some of the interviewed officers.
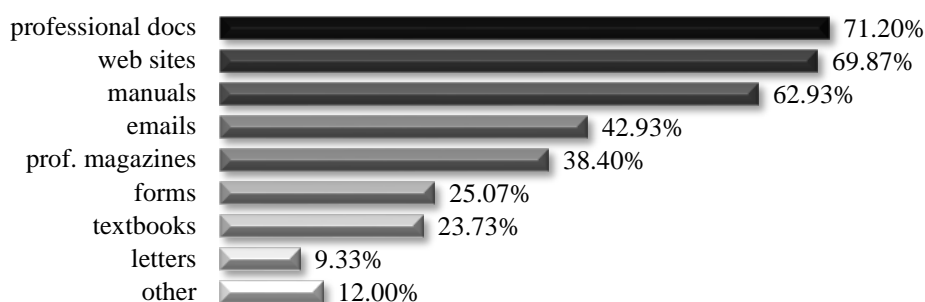
When asked about their learning experience, to how and where they learnt English (Question 4: *In what formal and informal learning activities have you participated?*), respondents seem to be skeptical, even critical, with the language teaching/learning activities in which they had taken part: more frequently language courses in Spain (67.50%) than courses abroad (29.30%), together with private lessons (55.30%) and, considerably less frequently, professional courses in English (19.90%). This was one of the open-ended questions, which explains the general perception of dissatisfaction with standard language learning activities underlying those responses which mentioned immersion courses or stays abroad, most

frequently designed for younger students with totally different skills and motivations. As professionals, and thus as adult, more mature, learners, causes might respond, they claimed, to cultural aspects, to the lack of a social perception of the need to speak English, or to the Spanish educational system itself, as compared to those of other countries, such as Germany or Scandinavia.
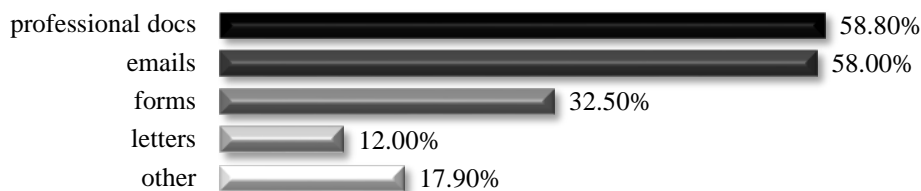
Improvement was seen as ideal, but not realistic by interviewees, who also tried to provide solutions. These might come from sustainable lifelong learning; efforts should, they suggested, target younger generations of learners rather than professional adults, thus starting in childhood and moving away from short courses or isolated activities. When referring to training the pressure to improve their level of English, frequently felt as tedious or demotivating, appeared as a challenge, particularly because of the personal implications it involves, and certainly not economically or professionally rewarded.

3.3 About Communicative Events in the Military

Responses to the final set of questions, addressing genres and communicative events in which the members of the Spanish armed forces engage (Question 5: *In your professional practice you use English for reading ...* / Question 6: *In your professional practice you use English for writing ...*), contributed to explore the rich repertoire of genres employed by the members of the military community in their everyday communication, which reflect their very diverse fields of interest and the large array of communicative motives behind them:

professional docs	71.20%
web sites	69.87%
manuals	62.93%
emails	42.93%
prof. magazines	38.40%
forms	25.07%
textbooks	23.73%
letters	9.33%
other	12.00%

Figure 1. About reading genres.

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professional docs	58.80%
emails	58.00%
forms	32.50%
letters	12.00%
other	17.90%

Figure 2. About writing genres.

As mentioned above, derived from their integration in multinational structures and organizations English emerges from the data as the lingua franca of allied forces. For the military community it is the language of the workplace, the language of the documents these professionals read and write in their working practice, a large array of professional documents (71.20% for writing/58.80% for reading) and forms (25.07%/32.50%), such as STANAGs, doctrine publications, norms or operational procedures, commonly used by allied countries. Connected with this growing international character of the Army could also be the use these professionals make of Internet resources for professional purposes, either for electronic purchases and transactions or for electronic communication, with team members or with suppliers. Hence, responses also showed the preference of reading and writing emails (42.93%/58.00%) over traditional letters (9.33%/12.00%) as a means of commercial and professional communication. Manuals, both traditional paper and electronic ones (62.93%) or textbooks (23.73%) were other frequently mentioned sources of information.

The high rate of consultation of web sites (69.87%) can be explained because these professionals are bound to work in an international environment requiring frequent contact with other armies or to be actually deployed to different parts of the world, which leads them to turn to online papers, TV stations (e.g., *BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera*), military journals (e.g., *Military Review*) or the websites of some international organizations like NATO or UN for information about the country or about the conflict in which they are or will very soon be involved. Also relevant for these professionals, particularly for those working in areas related to the ever-changing technological and scientific knowledge, is the need to update or enhance this knowledge on a variety of topics, such as defense, security, geopolitics, military history, international information, terrorism, other armies, etc.. This seems to lead them to search for information on the many fields of expertise in the Army, an institution comprising many different professional fields. For this reason, when asked to provide specific examples about the texts they write, a large number of topics were mentioned: whereas those assigned to engineering corps will look for information on recently developed equipment, materials, software or vehicles; those in the Artillery will read about newer weapons or about the weapons used by other armies, helicopter pilots will mention consulting flight protocols and the Medical Corps will search for information on, for example, rare diseases.

In response to the question of communicative events in which these professionals participate (Question 7: *In your professional practice you use written English in ...* / Question 8: *In your professional practice you use oral English in ...*), a number of written and oral activities were mentioned, involving different types of audiences and settings:
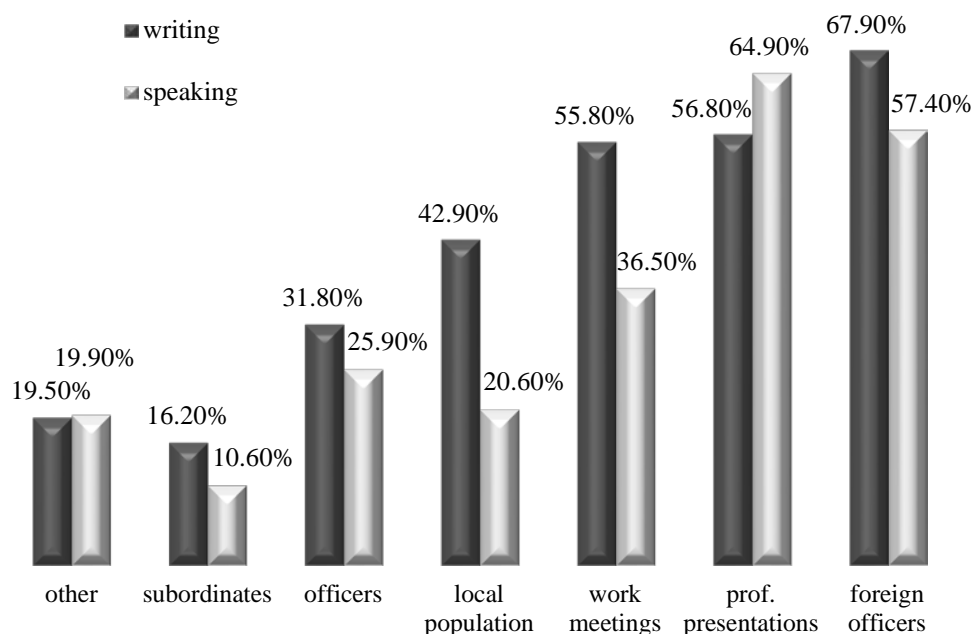
Figure 3. About their target audiences

The use of oral presentations (56.80%/64.90%) seems to correspond to the requirements of working in multinational teams, which, they claimed, certainly involves their participation in a large number of work meetings (55.80%/36.50%), frequently involving a large number of different intercourses with a myriad of readers and listeners, national and international, native and non native speakers. In their professional practice they engage in more or less formal interaction with foreign (67.90%/57.40%) and national (31.80%/25.90%) officers and subordinates (10.60% / 16.20%)–transmitting or translating orders down the command line was frequently reported. Depending on their area of specialization, they report the use of written or oral communication with control towers, radio instructions, telephone or email conversations or contact with local suppliers, workers or contractors. Highly decisive for the success of the army mission is, in the respondents' view, also the communication with the local population (25.90%/42.90%), particularly oral interaction with civilians in conflict areas.

Despite the primarily professional character of language use in the military context, the interviews also brought to the fore a clearly social dimension of language use. English was reported as the language of social contact both in formal and informal contexts. This is again a particularly specific disciplinary feature of this community, accustomed to frequent deployments and transfers, a routine in the military world, both for personnel and their families. Positions or courses abroad are highly encouraged, and rewarded, by the Army promotion system and therefore the high frequency of questionnaire references to oral and written communication with present or former international colleagues, with whom very frequently they have shared not only work in Headquarters, but also barracks, clubs and even

their leisure time. Some of the informants even claimed that because workplace communication seems to have fixed, more easily learnt sets of rule and conventions, they tend to have more difficulty when dealing with the social use of the language during their off-duty time, for booking hotels or restaurants, for shopping or for sight-seeing; in short, when involved in small talk.

4 English as an International language in the Military

The goal of this survey was to explore the attitudes of the Spanish military community towards communication in English. Interesting perspectives have emerged from the study, which have ratified the essential role of English as the lingua franca of the international missions in which the Spanish armed forces participate as members of coalitions. As a vehicular tool, it is the language of the workplace as well as the language of everyday, ordinary life while in missions. The survey has brought to the fore the officers' awareness of the importance of English, seen as an opportunity for more successful participation in international activities, whether military missions, work at international headquarters and coalition meetings, or for the advancement of their careers. Acknowledging their lacks and deficiencies, they clearly showed their concern for the professional and personal consequences of the need to improve their level of English or for the pressing urge for certification. English is, understandably, felt as a challenge, even a burden, involving a lot of professional and personal effort.

However, the reported difficulties (even the reluctance) involved in those communicative situations in which English needs to be employed were referred to in this study. As has been reported for the business context (Ferguson, 2011; Holliday, 1995; Kankaanranta & Louhiala-Salminen, 2010; Rogerson-Revell, 2007, 2008), the lack of linguistic confidence or the discomfort with language use might lead to evaluation and judgment, to apparent misconceptions of intellectual competency and (un)cooperation or to combative or defensive attitudes. This is also true of the Military, particularly if viewed, in line with the mentioned studies, as a high status elite decision-making organization of institutional relevance at the international level. Collaborative work in multinational and multidisciplinary teams is necessarily challenging since the language is primarily used to fulfill a task but through that to develop strategies and to build professional networks. It is the complexity of multilingualism in multinational companies that has been claimed by Ferguson (2011), as the cause, of language barriers which might lead to situations of marginalization and disempowerment, because, in Rogerson-Revell's words (2007: 118), "while people may well need to 'speak the same language' in such multilingual contexts, they may not necessarily 'speak the same way'". The army can be seen, if I may borrow Ferguson's image, a large multinational and multilingual company in which a diversity of ages, races and cultures, of motives, values and norms are involved. For the Military, at the global and at the local levels, that is, internationally as well as in nationally, the workplace appears to be not only the place for individual professional interaction, but also for institutional advancement and achievement; not only for personal promotion but, very importantly, also for showing and exerting national and as international power.

Added to the possible negative institutional consequences of poor command of English, as some of the testimonies about miscommunication problems showed, are the consequences for international safety, also reported in fields closely related to military activities, such as seafaring (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010, 2011; de la Campa-Portela, 2005, 2006; Johnson, 1994; Vangehuchten, van Parys, & Noble, 2011) and civil aviation (Connell, 1996; Cushing, 1994;

Kim & Elder, 2009; Orasanu, Fisher, & Davidson, 1997; Ragan, 2002; Rantanen & Kokayeff, 2002; Tajima, 2004; Verhaegen, 2001). A further (mis)communication difficulty also referred to in the study is the role of English as the lingua franca of communication with the local populations in conflict areas, whether in patrol missions, for work with interpreters or in daily contact, for example, and with that the concern of armies around the world, also of the Spanish armed forces (*Vision del JEME 2025*, 2010), of showing cultural awareness and sensitivity to local peoples and cultures. This poses a greater challenge for the Military since it is precisely the intercultural component that has been shown (Alptekin, 2002; Dewey, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004, 2005; Seidlhofer, Breiteneder, & Pitzl, 2006; Stadler, 2011; Vangehuchten, van Parys, & Noble, 2011, Watson, 2010) to cause most misunderstandings in communication. It is not only poor command of English, but also, as argued in these studies, ethnic, social and cultural factors that are undoubtedly decisive for intercultural communication.

The responses provided by officers themselves constitute a clear example of the link between the text and the discipline in the military community. The approach to the communicative practices of these professionals rendered valuable insights into their perceptions of both the text-internal and text-external features of military communication and thus of the correlation of communicative and professional practices advocated by Bhatia (2004, 2008). Both in the questionnaire open questions and in the follow-up interviews, the reference to their communication practices was intertwined with the reference to professional motives behind them. The study has thus allowed the connection of the single text with the wider picture of disciplinary and professional communication

Survey and interview findings have yielded a wealth of text-internal information about the genres employed by the military discipline in their professional written and oral communication but whose use can only be fully understood when interpreted in the light of disciplinary and socio-cognitive factors. By resorting to the perspective of military practices and procedures, military communication can be understood, as it is the case of many other international organizations, as requiring the participation of a large number of parties, each defined by their own regional and socio-cultural specificities, which would make the use of highly technical, standardized and conventionalized texts a necessity. This certainly must imply a higher level of complexity when writing reports, minutes, forms or oral presentations and thus when complying with the disciplinary conventions of those genres. Military communication involves not only lexico-grammatical, semantic or rhetorical constraints, but also a high socio-cultural component ruled by the need to standardize the procedures of different armies coming from totally different national backgrounds. If, as some informants claimed, standardization facilitates generic literacy once you are familiar with the genres, it also means that writing in the military is even more constrained than in other disciplines. For oral communication the diversity of audiences necessarily poses the challenge of coping with a diversity of socio-linguistic traits, of different accents and multinational multicultural features. The particular character of military life certainly forces their communication to address issues concerning not only adequate discoursal or format expectations, but also issues such as the level of formality, using the right tone, expressing beliefs, views and attitudes or dealing with cultural barriers.

This study has meant to be a process of discourse contextualization which has helped to understand why the military community constructs discourse the way they do (Bhatia, 2004, 2008, Swales, 1990). This insight into the situational and social factors that scaffold the

construction of military communication has provided a very helpful framework for interpreting the generic, lexico-grammatical or rhetorical resources of their oral and written communication in English, as well as for the development of pedagogical tools.

5 Some Pedagogical Considerations

Communication appears to be an inseparable part of professional military practice and conversely communicative expertise is an essential part of being a professional; it is also a decisive part of learning to become a professional. In their enculturation process into disciplinary knowledge and practices, cadets, as future officers, need to develop both academic and professional literacies, that is, the acquisition of the disciplinary literacies of the military profession, both of subject content and of the literacy of effectively communicating in English (Bhatia, 2004, 2008; Holliday, 1995; Johns, 1997; Pérez-Llantada, 2009; Swales, 1990). As this survey-based research into the military discipline has highlighted, an important vehicle for their future professional success is the acquisition of communicative competence in English. The enculturation into military communication should thus help these learners to familiarize first of all with the generic, lexico-grammatical and rhetorical resources of military discourse. However, the survey findings have contributed to ratify claims made in the mentioned studies about the fact that successful military communication requires the fulfillment of linguistic as well as socio-linguistic requirements. Thus understood, professional communication competence does not only involve a linguistic dimension but it also has an interpersonal dimension; it is not only meant to produce a linguistically correct message, but also to accomplish professional goals, to transmit a message but through that to transmit disciplinary values and beliefs.

In the military context communicative competence has been shown to go beyond words, which involves the consideration of the social context and social rules of use. The creation of a meaningful learning environment should thus be sensitive to the social implications of communication and of the different sociolinguistic contexts underlying language use and promote the development of adequate communicative strategies. In the case of the military, as the survey findings have shown, educational priorities should be accommodated to raise the learners' awareness of a context of intercultural communication. A successful language training program should be designed to prepare and better equip future officers of the Spanish armed forces to acquire the communicative proficiency which allows them to avoid fatal miscommunication errors, to successfully communicate with the local population and ultimately to adequately represent the military institution in the international arena. To do so, the stress should fall on effective communication, on the acquisition of flexible skills, on familiarity with both native and non-native accents, with different norms and standards rather than on the traditional pressure for lexico-grammatical accuracy and appropriateness. The focus should shift away from the idealized, even utopian, monolithic image of the native speaker's language and culture, which fails to recoil the status of English as a lingua franca, as an international language and thus reflect the cultural, social and linguistic transformations of the international order.

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