

B09

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Standardising the assessment of writing in English across nations in the military

The presentation will share the work done by the members of MILSIG during its first year of existence.

As all NATO countries have adopted STANAG 6001 language proficiency levels for reporting language proficiency of their military personnel but the tests measuring language proficiency are developed by each member state individually and no anchor items or benchmark performances to standardise the assessment exist, one of the main aims the MILSIG set to itself was to work towards establishing a common understanding of these levels as operationalised in sample tasks and performances. Writing was chosen as the first skill to be standardised. A pilot study with 6 participating countries was set up with the aim of selecting sample scripts that have been written in response to a variety of prompts, demonstrate English language proficiency at STANAG levels 1-4 and could later be used as benchmark performances in assessing writing.

During the first stage, scripts from participating countries were collected, assessed and comments provided to explain the levels awarded. The analysis of the assessments and comments led to some negotiation as well as to dropping the scripts where agreement could not be reached and adding more scripts to the pool. After the reiteration of the process, 15 scripts were selected to demonstrate weak, standard and strong performances at the four levels as well as some typical problems.

The presentation will discuss the process of standardisation, the problems encountered and lessons learnt and will propose some steps to be taken to continue the process reaching out to more member states of NATO.