



Current Challenges in Military Language Education: Czech Perspective



Outline

1. Introduction

2. Historical background

3. Key challenges connected with foreign language education in the Czech military

4. Key challenges – how to respond?

5. Conclusion



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1. Introduction

1995: Ground Forces Inspector Major General Karel Kuba: „All Czech officers will achieve STANAG SLP3333 in English by 2000.“

In 2025, Czechia entered its 36th year after the Velvet revolution

For more than 2 decades kids have mandatory English language classes starting from the 3rd, later the 1st grade, L3 language in 7-9 grade. Continuation at secondary schools, depending on their type.

However, in 2025, approximately 40% of Czech soldiers did not meet the strict, universally applicable language requirements, which is why these requirements were waived!!!

So, where is the problem?

**I UNDERSTAND
EVERYTHING
but know NO word
of English**

**SOLDIER
ŠVEJK**





1. Introduction



Benefits of learning foreign languages:

- Communication skills
- Improving 1st language
- Cultural understanding
- Cognitive benefits, creativity
- Career opportunities
- Travel experiences
- Social connections
- Personal growth



1. Introduction



Problems connected with learning foreign languages:

- Motivation
- Consistency
- Time constrains
- Lack of Immersion
- Cultural and Linguistic Differences
- Vocabulary Retention
- Pronunciation and Accent
- Grammar and Syntax
- Fear of Making Mistakes
- Age and Cognitive Factors
- Learning Environment



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2. Historical background

Before 1989:

- Russian prioritized as the L2 (communist era),
- English and German also taught as L3 (limited access to resources and authentic language),
- Language education focused more on grammar and vocabulary acquisition;

After 1990:

- English emerged as dominant L2,
- Other languages also taught (German, Russian), but to a lesser extent,
- NATO accession, EU integration, business links, tourism;

Today:

- 34% Czech active English speakers but just 11% fairly good (13 % Russian, 20% German),
- 1/3 of the Czech population speaks just Czech,
- Multilingualism lower than in Western European countries,
- Limited exposure to authentic language (society diversity, mass media),
- According to some comparisons Czechs belong among the 3 EU members with the lowest level of foreign language competences.



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3. Key challenges in foreign language education

What are our main challenges today?

Global perspective:

- ... geopolitical tensions, economic inequality, climate change, migration, cybersecurity, pandemic preparedness, food and water security

NATO perspective:

- ... collective defense, global & interconnected security threats, strategic competition, international terrorism, interoperability, enlargement & integration ...

Czech Republic perspective:

- ... Eastern threat, economic stability, energy dependence, regional security, migration & integration, environmental issues, education system...

Czech education system perspective:

- ... funding and resources, teacher recruitment and retention, digital transformation, adaptability to change

Perspective of foreign language education:

- ... diverse learner profiles, technology integration, cultural awareness, retention & practical use, teacher training & support, globalization & English dominance

Czech Armed Forces perspective:

- ... modernization & funding, personnel recruitment and retention, integration with NATO, multinational cooperation...

What are the key challenges of foreign language education in the Czech Armed Forces???



3. Key Challenges of Foreign Language Education in the Czech Armed Forces

Reasons of underestimating language education:

Combat-centric tradition (tactical drills, weapon training or physical readiness prioritized over language drills)

Limited motivation among soldiers

Fragmented education system

Short-term approach (sustainment)

Cultural attitudes (insufficient proficiency levels, focus on English only)



3. Key Challenges of Foreign Language Education in the Czech Armed Forces

Policy

Balance of languages

Effectiveness and learners' motivation

Retention and practical use

Technology integration

Educators' recruitment and retention

Learners' diversity

Funds



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4. Key challenges – how to respond?

Policy

- What's our realistic goal? What are the priorities? What are the internal and external conditions? How do we reach our goal? What resources will be needed?
- What are language requirements for different categories of Armed Forces personnel?
- Stability, long-term approach (it's about people and their education and careers).

Balance of languages

- Policy related;
- English language centrism vs. the need of the military to communicate in different regions (neighboring countries, partner countries, potential enemy, regions of potential deployments).

Effectiveness

- Policy related; Reaching the set goals(s), focus on priorities;
- (Positive) motivation of learners/personnel;
- Cost-efficiency.

Retention and practical use

- Formal vs. informal learning;
- (Natural) exposure to foreign language at work/in normal life.



4. Key challenges – how to respond?

Technology Integration

- Technology as a tool supporting classroom activities (multimedia, gaming.....);
- Technology as a tool enabling for wider spectrum of learning forms incl. self-study;
- Technology as the cause of the degradation of certain communication skills.

Educators' recruitment and retention

- Compensation and situation in labor market;
- Personal development opportunities and leadership style;
- Work-life balance.

Learners' diversity

- Different generation groups;
- Different previous education levels;
- Different military experience, ranks;
- Growing differentiation of quality among high schools and partially also universities.

Funds (resources)

- Policy related, effectiveness related;
- Languages competence and language education taken for granted and not costly.



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Conclusion: English language competences of UoD Students

Faculty of Military Leadership																			
English language																			
	No. of students	No score	%	SLP 1	%	SLP 2211	%	SLP 2221	%	SLP 2222	%	SLP 3222	%	SLP 3322	%	SLP 3332	%	SLP 3333	%
1. class	160	5	3%	4	3%	14	9%	14	9%	41	26%	8	5%	40	25%	12	8%	22	14%
2. class	173	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	7	4%	57	33%	6	3%	41	24%	27	16%	33	19%
3. class	156	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	63	40%	9	6%	35	22%	19	12%	28	18%
4. class	164	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	87	53%	6	4%	28	17%	7	4%	36	22%
5. class	117	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	59	50%	1	1%	19	16%	17	15%	21	18%
Total	770	5	1%	5	1%	16	2%	22	3%	307	40%	30	4%	163	21%	82	11%	140	18%

Faculty of Military Technology																			
English language																			
	No. of students	No score	%	SLP 1	%	SLP 2211	%	SLP 2221	%	SLP 2222	%	SLP 3222	%	SLP 3322	%	SLP 3332	%	SLP 3333	%
1. class	151	1	1%	5	3%	10	7%	8	5%	40	26%	5	3%	52	34%	9	6%	21	14%
2. class	97	0	0%	1	1%	3	3%	3	3%	41	42%	3	3%	20	21%	6	6%	20	21%
3. class	75	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	39	52%	2	3%	11	15%	6	8%	16	21%
4. class	107	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	50	47%	1	1%	21	20%	12	11%	23	21%
5. class	88	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	54	61%	1	1%	14	16%	6	7%	13	15%
Total	518	1	0%	6	1%	13	3%	12	2%	224	43%	12	2%	118	23%	39	8%	93	18%



Conclusion: Second foreign language competences of UoD Students

Faculty of Military Leadership																	
L3 (French, German or Russian)																	
	No. of students	No score	%	SLP 1100	%	SLP 1110	%	SLP 1111	%	SLP 2111	%	SLP 2211	%	SLP 2221	%	SLP 2222	%
1. class	160	150	94%	2	1%	1	1%	5	3%	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%
2. class	173	145	84%	2	1%	5	3%	13	8%	3	2%	1	1%	0	0%	4	2%
3. class	156	85	54%	5	3%	8	5%	48	31%	4	3%	1	1%	2	1%	3	2%
4. class	164	7	4%	6	4%	13	8%	123	75%	2	1%	3	2%	4	2%	6	4%
5. class	117	0	0%	0	0%	2	2%	100	85%	0	0%	3	3%	3	3%	9	8%
Total	770	387	50%	15	2%	29	4%	289	38%	10	1%	8	1%	10	1%	22	3%
Faculty of Military Technology																	
L3 (French, German or Russian)																	
	No. of students	No score	%	SLP 1100	%	SLP 1110	%	SLP 1111	%	SLP 2111	%	SLP 2211	%	SLP 2221	%	SLP 2222	%
1. ročník	151	140	93%	0	0%	1	1%	8	5%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
2. ročník	97	91	94%	0	0%	0	0%	6	6%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
3. ročník	75	58	77%	2	3%	1	1%	12	16%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
4. ročník	107	15	14%	3	3%	4	4%	74	69%	3	3%	6	6%	2	2%	0	0%
5. ročník	88	6	7%	1	1%	1	1%	71	81%	1	1%	5	6%	1	1%	2	2%
Total	518	310	60%	6	1%	7	1%	171	33%	5	1%	11	2%	4	1%	4	1%



5. Conclusion

**"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."
Ludwig Wittgenstein**

**"A different language is a different vision of life."
Federico Fellini**

**WHY DID YOU
BRING THE
LADDER?**

**BECAUSE
I WANTED TO
REACH A HIGHER
LEVEL OF ENGLISH!**

