**Title**: Language Acquisition Dynamics in Polish-Ukrainian Intermediate Level Group

**Objective**: The presentation aimed to outline the characteristics of a unique bilingual military language training group, share experiences and challenges, and present best practices in language acquisition within a NATO context.

**Outline:** The theme of the 2024 NATO BILC conference highlighted the evolving needs in military training and language policy. In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Poland promptly extended support, including hosting Ukrainian soldiers at the Military Academy of Land Forces (AWL). The presentation focused on an intermediate English course designed for both Polish and Ukrainian military personnel, aimed at preparing them for the STANAG level 2 exam. This initiative was not only a means of support for the Ukrainian soldiers but also provided valuable insights into multilingual training within a NATO framework.

The course initially involved a group of 8 Polish and 6 Ukrainian soldiers, and in the following term, the group comprised 5 Polish and 6 Ukrainian participants. Both groups exhibited significant diversity in terms of age, language competence, and motivation. The soldiers' ages spanned from baby boomers to Generation Z, with varying initial language skills ranging from below STANAG level 1 to those already capable of passing level 2. Their motivations for learning English also varied, encompassing both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, and there were notable differences in their language aptitude.

The course was structured as an intensive program lasting five months, with six lessons per day, five days a week, and was facilitated by three rotating teachers. We adopted a flexible, adaptive teaching approach, drawing inspiration from Bruce Lee's philosophy of being like water. Despite having a structured curriculum, we adjusted our methods and techniques to suit the diverse needs of the group. The key textbooks used were English File Intermediate Fourth Edition and Campaign: English for the Military, with additional grammar support from Raymond Murphy's Essential Grammar in Use and English Grammar in Use. Interactive tools such as whiteboards, sound systems, and Microsoft Teams were employed to enhance learning and communication.

**Findings:** A primary concern was the integration of the mixed-nationality group. We implemented strategies such as seating arrangements and initial tasks focused on effective self-introduction to foster a cohesive group dynamic. These efforts helped the group members, despite their differences, to develop a positive, cooperative atmosphere. Common challenges included difficulties with grammar and pronunciation, but the group’s shared positive attitude facilitated a strong sense of community and collaboration.

The course presented numerous opportunities, including extensive language exposure and the natural necessity for communication, which fostered a task-oriented learning environment. However, there were also significant challenges, such as initial disparities in language skills and differing levels of learning capabilities, particularly with regard to pronunciation.

Our best practices included rotational teaching, regular short tests, and individual work, which proved to be effective strategies. Traditional methods, such as activities from Jill Hadfield's Intermediate Grammar Games and Advanced Communication Games, were both popular and effective, engaging students and promoting practical language use. Ready-made examples of speeches and exam answers were highly valued by the students, helping them transition from rote learning to active language application.

Although not all students achieved full STANAG level 2, the course facilitated significant progress. The students highly appreciated the instructions for further self-study, which enabled them to retake exams and continue advancing their skills shortly after the course. The integration of Polish and Ukrainian soldiers into a single language learning group underscored the importance of a supportive, motivating atmosphere. The course not only promoted linguistic skills but also fostered cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, which are essential in NATO’s multinational framework.

Moving forward, the AWL plans to continue and expand these courses, recognizing their value in enhancing military communication skills and strengthening bilateral relations between Poland and Ukraine. The unique dynamic of a mixed-nationality group provides a natural impetus for communication, and the importance of a positive, motivating atmosphere is crucial, especially in such an intensive and long-term course.

In conclusion, these Polish-Ukrainian courses are seen not only as an active form of support for the Ukrainian Army but also as a valuable opportunity to enhance the English language proficiency of both countries, making it a strategic military asset. Special thanks are extended to the teaching team and support staff at the Military Academy of Land Forces for their contributions and dedication to this initiative.