Mission-relevant oral proficiency for CAS: STANAG 6001 L3 and ICAO L4

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OBJECTIVES

This work in progress set out to investigate English oral proficiency assessment in the close air support (CAS) context, by comparing two scales used for this purpose: ICAO and NATO STANAG 6001.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. To what extent are STANAG 6001 and the ICAO scale comparable?

RQ2(tentative).
When used to test the oral proficiency of NATO Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC), what are the relative merits of the two tests?

RESEARCH DESIGN

SCALE SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES

LINGUISTIC FUNCTIONS

ANALYSIS

JTAC TESTING

ANALYSIS

FIRST RESULTS

Table 1: Overall scale comparison

	NATO STANAG 6001	ICAO
Test purpose	Test the English proficiency of military personnel in NATO member states	Test the English proficiency of civilian aviation personnel in ICAO member states
TLU situation	Multinational, military English as a Lingua Franca	Multinational, aviation English as a Lingua Franca
Test type	General language proficiency test	General language proficiency test
Skills tested	All four skills	Listening and speaking
Assessment	Criterion-referenced, high-stakes, standardized tests, oral test: OPI	Criterion-referenced, high-stakes, standardized tests, oral test: scripted
Rating	Holistic	Holistic
Criteria	NATO STANAG 6001 ATrainP-5 Language Proficiency Levels	ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale (Doc 9835, 2010, Appendix A)
Can-do?	Yes	Yes ("able to", "produces…")
TLU in test	No, but...	Yes
Scale levels	0 – 5, plus-levels in between	1 - 6

 Main differences identified

1. Organization. ICAO lists **six sub-categories** to be rated: *pronunciation; structure; vocabulary; fluency; comprehension, and interactions.*

2. ICAO describes **discrete features** while 6001 is more general.

3. ICAO targets the **aviation** context, 6001 is more general.

4. ICAO defines what it means to be proficient *in the TLU context*.

5. Unlike 6001, ICAO does not use the native speaker reference, but explicitly mentions using English as a Lingua Franca (ELF).

6. Unlike 6001, ICAO explicitly describes **pronunciation**.

7. Unlike 6001, ICAO explicitly describes **language strategies**.
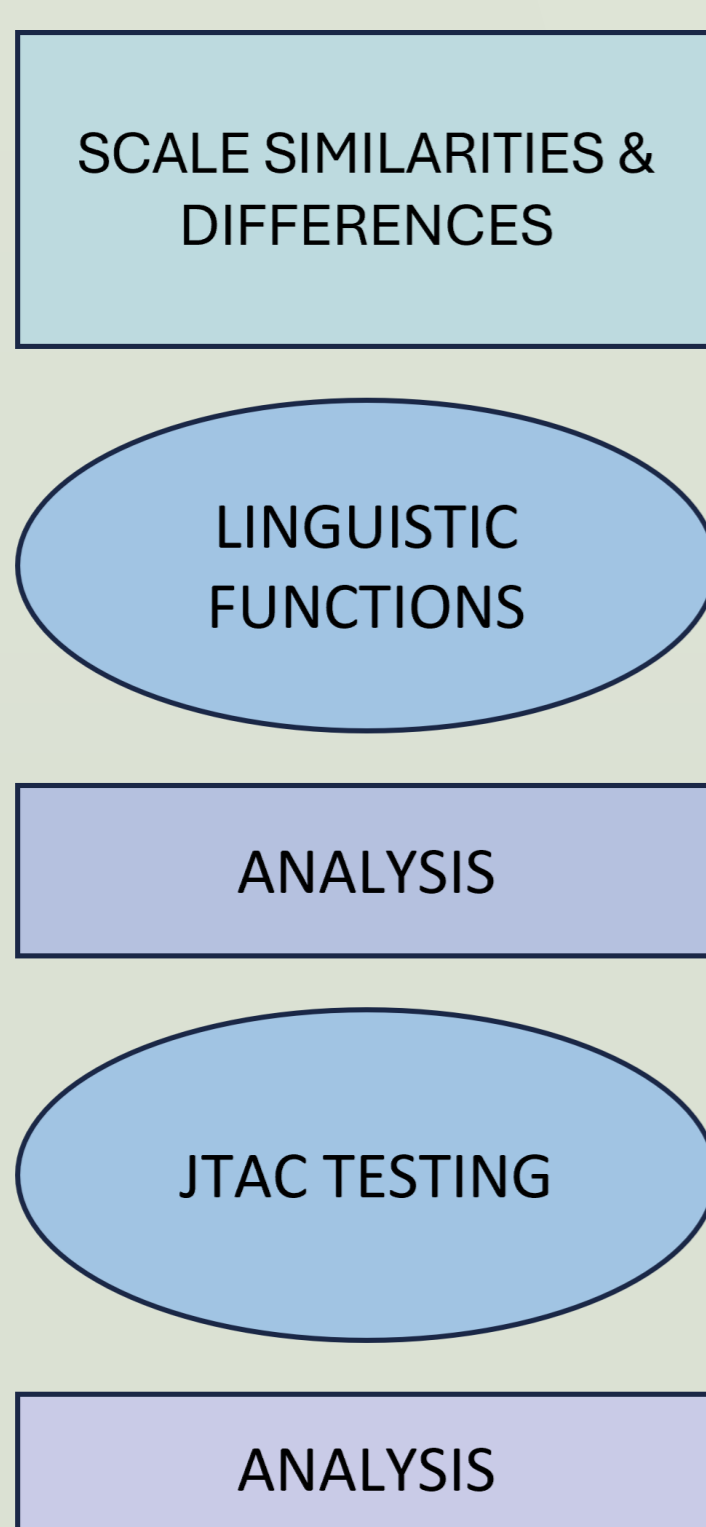
SO WHAT & NOW WHAT?

While our general comparison of scales indicates there is a good degree of similarity between them, the language functions described in STANAG and ICAO suggest there are clear differences between their respective constructs, which in turn will have implications for assessment.

The second phase of our study will consider this from the perspectives of alignment and construct validity.

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