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Ministry  
of Defence

Joint Doctrine Note 1/13  
**Linguistic Support to Operations**



Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre

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## **Joint Doctrine Note 1/13**

# **Linguistic Support to Operations**

Joint Doctrine Note 1/13 dated March 2013  
is promulgated

as directed by the Commander Joint Forces Command and Chiefs of Staff



Head of Air and Space and Doctrine

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The Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre  
Ministry of Defence  
Shrivenham  
SWINDON, Wiltshire, SN6 8RF

Telephone number: 01793 314216/7  
Military Network: 96161 4216/4217  
Facsimile number: 01793 314232  
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E-mail: DCDC-DocEds@mod.uk

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## Preface

1. **Background.** Language capability enables *understanding* and helps deliver influence. Current and emerging doctrine has insufficiently addressed our language capability. We need a contingent language capability to replace the current Operation HERRICK-focussed model. The Defence Language and Cultural Capability Management Board recognises that Defence has maintained only a modest standing language capability and this is not well placed to support operational planning or high readiness deployment needs. Moreover, we have been inherently slow to build capability for enduring operations. We need a capability model that maximises our limited resource and responds to changing demands, particularly for contingent operations.
2. **Purpose.** JDN 1/13, *Linguistic Support to Operations* aims to capture relevant governance and joint linguist practice. It is the first step to evolving our capability and doctrine so they are consistent with future Defence needs.
3. **Audience.** This JDN is targeted at;
  - a. **Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) and Joint Forces Headquarters (JFHQ).** Joint staff must understand how we generate language capability as well as how we use and manage it at the operational level.
  - b. **Commanders.** Commanders must understand how our language capability contributes to operations. They must also appreciate the characteristics of linguistic support.
  - c. **Language capability managers.** Staff who manage standing, or operational linguist capability, must understand the linguist contribution to the whole capability.
  - d. **Linguists.** Linguists must understand best practice and how they are best managed.
  - e. **Component leads.** Single Services are responsible for force generating low-level linguists<sup>1</sup> for operations and adapting joint

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<sup>1</sup> Defined at paragraph 203.

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guidance for component and tactical use. When acting as the lead component for a particular operation, they may be responsible for implementing a joint framework for linguist capability.

4. **Structure.** We have used a joint approach. Although the majority of the capability will likely be used in a Land environment, the needs of other components are also discussed.
  - a. Chapter 1 tells us how language capability contributes to Defence output. This includes the importance of language capability, the relationship with cultural capability, language capability governance and military tasks requiring language capability.
  - b. Chapter 2 explains how we generate language capability. This includes linguist standards, structural challenges for language capability, challenges for contingent capability and a future capability model.
  - c. Chapter 3 covers the characteristics of military linguists, locally-employed civilian linguists and other contracted linguists.
  - d. Chapter 4 explains how we should employ linguists. This includes staff and capability coordination. It also looks at operational planning considerations.

### **Linkages**

5. JDNs 1/09, *Significance of Culture to the Military*, 1/12 *Strategic Communication*, Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 04, *Understanding*, JDP 3-40 *Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution* (Chapter 3) and lower-level doctrine describing influence activities recognise the importance of language as an enabling capability. JDN 1/13 is also linked with:
  - a. **NATO ALingP-1 *Linguist Support for Operations***. The UK has ratified this hybrid policy/doctrine document. Its scope is limited to NATO-led operations and anticipates the existence of separate, but compatible, national policies and doctrine. ALingP-1 focuses on employing professional linguists within a NATO operational

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b. **Army Field Manual (AFM) Volume 1 Parts 9 and 10 *Tactics for Stabilisation Operations and Countering Insurgency***. This publication considers how we use linguists at the tactical level. Part 9 provides the most detail. However, its focus is on locally-employed civilians linguists with minimal discussion of military and contract linguists. Moreover, it fails to address, in detail, language capability across all staff functions and in the planning cycle.

c. **JDP 2-03, *Culture and Human Terrain***. This emerging doctrine will provide an important context for linguistic support.<sup>2</sup>

6. We welcome any comment or observation you may have on this JDN. DCDC remain overall custodian, but detailed feedback can be addressed to: SO1 DOLSU, Trenchard Lines, Upavon, Wiltshire, SN9 6BE. Telephone 01980 615358.

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<sup>2</sup> JDP 2-03, *Culture and Human Terrain*, is due to be promulgated in 2013.

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## Linguist Support to Operations

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The contribution of language capability to Defence

## **Chapter 1 – The contribution of language capability to Defence**

‘If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.’

Nelson Mandela

### **The importance of language capability**

101. Over the last 20 years our Defence language capability has evolved as a result of almost continuous major deployment. From 2014 the capability may be less driven by current operations and must increasingly reflect the needs of standing tasks and contingent operations. The 2010 *Strategic Defence and Security Review*, and most recently the *International Defence Engagement Strategy*, emphasise the importance of prevention, defence diplomacy (security cooperation) and the centrality of influence. Language is a critical enabler to each of these aspects and Defence Strategic Direction articulates the context for language capability.

102. The ability to communicate with the populations, combatants, authorities and other actors in an area of operations is essential. This requires effective linguistic support, and providing that capability is a critical consideration in our planning process. We must provide linguistic support in sufficient quality and quantity, and at an appropriate level of security clearance.

103. Deployed forces must develop understanding and exert influence. Increased emphasis on decentralised operations requires greater localised situational understanding to exploit initiative and opportunities. Linguistic capability contributes to this situational understanding and enables key relationships to be forged.

### **The relationship with cultural capability**

104. We often couple culture and language together, which suggests a combined capability. This is not necessarily so, but there are similarities that can be maximised through a single staff focus. Cultural understanding is



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The contribution of language capability to Defence

fundamental to the analyse/plan/execute/assess cycle, whereas language enables communication. Linguists may have some cultural skills in their second language, however, a generic cultural capability (particularly at the lower level) is not particularly language-dependent. Cultural experts can be supported by linguists who are not cultural specialists.

105. To deliver greater synergy we must reinforce the links between culture and language. Accordingly, by April 2014 the Defence Operational Languages Support Unit (DOLSU) should become the Defence staff for culture and language requirements. At the same time, the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit (DCSU) will assume the lead for providing high-level augmentee linguists across Defence.

### **Language capability governance**

106. Although language is considered a Defence capability, operational components have their own needs. Consequently, we need the following:

- a Defence framework;
- a joint lead for capability development; and
- general principles for managing and employing linguists to maximise our scarce resource.

Joint coordination of linguists will extend into theatre. This will be a joint task force headquarters responsibility. In their absence a lead component will coordinate operational-level linguist resources according to joint principles.

107. Language capability governance is in transition. From April 2013, culture and language capability responsibility will transfer to Headquarters Joint Forces Command under Director Joint Warfare. Headquarters Joint Forces Command will use the Defence Operational Languages Support Unit as its cultural and language requirements staff. Headquarters Joint Forces Command is also the training requirement, and training delivery, authority. It will discharge this latter function through the Defence Academy.

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The contribution of language capability to Defence

108. The principal capability delivery units will be the:

- Defence School of Languages; and
- Defence Cultural Specialist Unit (assuming the rationalisation of responsibilities described above).

These units may be re-titled in due course.

### **Military tasks requiring language capability**

109. **Standing tasks.** Military language capability to support standing military tasks is drawn from a pool of linguists from three sources.

- Defence Intelligence.** Single Services provide language-trained intelligence operators to support continuous intelligence gathering, analysis and intelligence preparation of the battlespace. This is a core capability that may be reinforced to support particular operations.
- Defence diplomacy (security cooperation).** This area contributes to the *prevent* output. It includes arms control, NATO and EU staff, and attaché activity, along with single-Service exchanges, loan service and overseas staff college students. Such activity underpins the UK's ability to engage key foreign actors through strategic communication in a timely fashion. This helps build long-term relationships and enables understanding at the strategic level. The recently published *International Defence Engagement Strategy* provides clear direction on the defence contribution to cross-government foreign policy objectives. This will have implications for linguistic capability and liaising with embassy staff.
- Miscellaneous.** Linguists can be sourced from: single-Service and Defence School of Languages instructors; Defence Export Support staff; language scholars; close protection teams; embassies and other appropriate sources.

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110. **Operations.** Supporting operations is the highest priority linguist task. Higher-level linguist capability<sup>1</sup> is provided by a mix of military, contract and locally-employed civilian linguists. However, in some instances uniformed personnel must be used. For example, we may need personnel at high-readiness with appropriate military experience, security clearance and competence to operate in non-benign environments. Low-level capability, requiring limited training, is delivered on demand as pre-deployment or mission-specific training by force-generating components. This JDN focuses on the higher-level requirement, which includes the ability to force-generate at lower skill levels.

111. **Contingent capability.** As we draw down from enduring operations, our language capability must respond to the renewed challenge of supporting contingent operations. Existing capability will address some needs, but the number and competence of linguists will, without intervention, inevitably deteriorate over time. Experience of current operations, emerging doctrine implications (such as influence, understanding, soft power) and new threats may demand more in-date linguists in a greater variety of languages. Chapter 2 explores how such a capability may be generated in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Higher-level linguists are professional, level 3 or potentially strong level 2 graduates from a level 3 course. Level 3 is typically achieved after about 15 months of training for non-European languages. Language competence levels are described in Chapter 2.

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Generating language capability

## Chapter 2 – Generating language capability

One language sets you in a corridor for life. Two languages  
opens every door along the way.

Frank Smith

201. This chapter outlines language capability standards. It also explains how this capability should be generated to support operations.

### Standards

202. It is Defence policy that language capability should conform to NATO STANAG 6001 Edition 4. STANAG 6001 is a scale of language proficiency that describes what a linguist ought to be able to understand, or do, in listening, speaking, reading and writing at a given level; it is summarised at Table 2.1. For example, a NATO level 3 linguist is required to attain a level 3 or higher standard in all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to achieve a standardised language profile (SLP) of 3333.<sup>1</sup> The UK takes a pragmatic approach and offers a balanced syllabus tailored to specific requirements. For example, Defence recognises the importance of listening and speaking for operational purposes. It therefore expects SLP 3321<sup>2</sup> as the minimum outcome for a level 3 operational military linguist.

203. Level 1 and below are lower-level linguists, usually trained during pre-deployment, or mission-specific, training. Level 3 and above are higher-level linguists who are trained over an extended period. They are able to provide a quick, reliable capability, including simple translation and interpretation. More demanding tasks are likely to be assigned to more able civilian linguists. Level 2 linguists can be employed as higher-level linguists at risk, particularly if trained on a level 3 course. Military linguists are rarely found above Level 3<sup>3</sup> and do not have civilian professional interpretation or translation skills. There is no Defence requirement for military linguists at Level 5. If professional interpreting and translation skills are required, then we will contract specialist linguists.

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<sup>1</sup> Level 3 in all four skills.

<sup>2</sup> Level 3 in listening and speaking, Level 2 in reading, and Level 1 in writing.

<sup>3</sup> Very few military linguists are trained to level 4. Most of those who are, lapse to level 3 or below over time if they do not keep up their skills. Most personnel with ethnic language skills are below Level 3 in either English or the second language.

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Level	Tasks/Functions	Content/Topics	Accuracy
0	No functional ability.	None or isolated words.	Unintelligible.
0+ UK Basic	Can make short utterances and ask very simple questions using memorised material and set expressions.	Immediate needs: greetings, personal details, numbers, time, common objects, commands.	Understandable with difficulty, even to a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners.
1 Survival	Can create sentences; begin, maintain and close short conversations by asking and answering simple questions; satisfy simple daily needs; resolve basic situations.	Everyday survival topics and courtesy requirements.	Intelligible with some effort to a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners; often mis-communicates.
2 Functional	Can describe people, places and things; narrate current, past and future activities in full paragraphs; state facts; give instructions or directions; ask and answer questions in the workplace; deal with non-routine daily situations.	Concrete topics such as own background, family, interests, work, travel and current events.	Understandable to a native speaker not used to dealing with foreigners; sometimes mis-communicates.
3 Professional	Can converse in most formal and informal situations; discuss abstract topics; support opinions; hypothesize; deal with unfamiliar topics and situations; describe in detail; clarify points.	Practical, social, professional and abstract topics, particular interests and special fields of competence.	Speaks readily, with only sporadic non-patterned errors in basic structures. Errors almost never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.
4 Expert	Can tailor language to fit the audience; counsel, persuade, negotiate, represent an official point of view, advocate a position at length. Can express subtleties and make culturally appropriate references.	All topics normally pertinent to professional needs.	Nearly equivalent to a well-educated native speaker. Speech is extensive, precise, appropriate to every situation with only occasional errors.
5 Articulate native	Functions in a manner that is equivalent to that of a well-educated native speaker.	All subjects.	Performance equivalent to that of a well-educated native speaker.

**Figure 2.1 – Levels of language proficiency**

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Generating language capability

204. Language skills acquired outside of Service training are valuable. This favourable recruiting factor should be recorded by the Defence Operational Languages Support Unit. However, such individuals require extra training and formally assessed in the vocabulary, contexts and processes of the military to become employable military linguists.

### **Structural challenges for language capability**

205. Defence language capability is principally a collection of individual capability but other defence lines of development remain important. Notably, military linguists must be volunteers as motivation is critical to learning a language and maintaining minimum deployed performance standards.

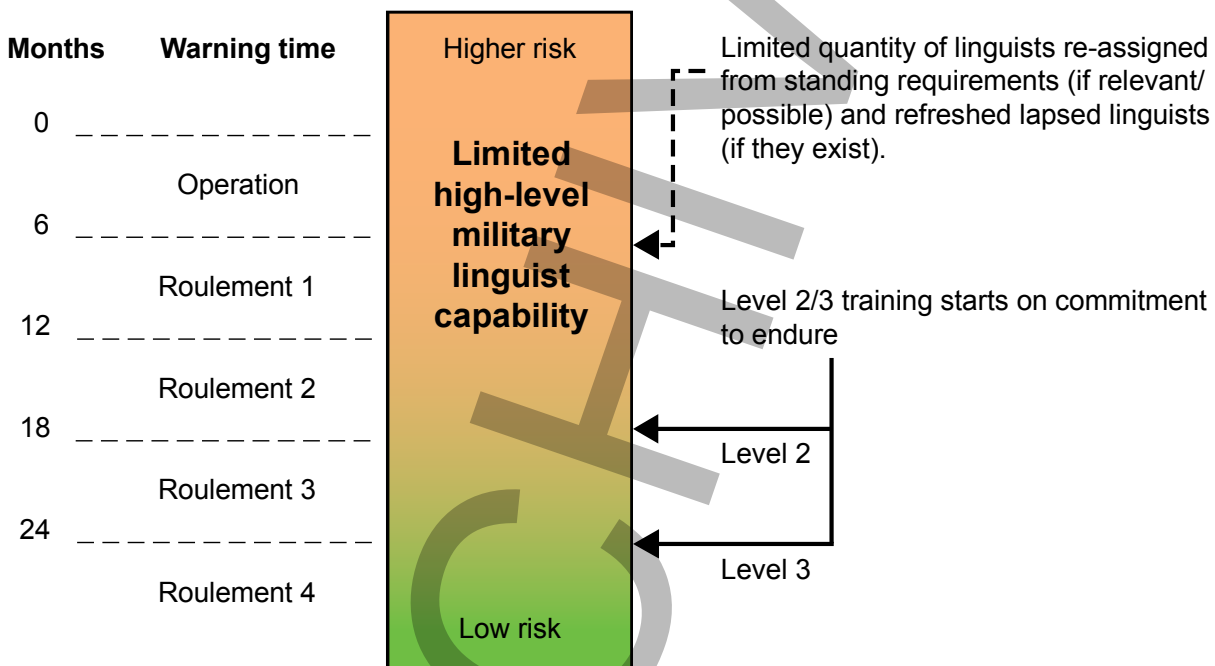
- a. **Training.** A resourced training requirement is essential. Many linguists must be trained from scratch and existing linguists require refresher training to maintain skill levels. Training capacity will be an essential element of contingent capability to: refresh lapsed linguists; generate low-level linguists in volume; and meet demands for less-common languages.
- b. **Equipment.** While language may be a human-centric capability, technology to support linguists on operations is sufficiently able and mature to address some general operational needs and intelligence requirements. We should exploit emerging technical solutions, including: voice recognition software; machine translation (to rapidly screen documents or generate first draft texts); and other communication aids (for example, speaking dictionaries, phrase books and dictation systems). Linguist support capability is required on both deployed and non-operational networks, including scanners, foreign language keyboards, fonts and office applications.
- c. **Personnel.** We may need to change our career management, force generation, remuneration mechanisms and the way we integrate reservists to meet the linguist capability requirement. Service as an augmentee higher-level military linguist potentially impacts career development and competitiveness, which can limit the number of volunteers applying for training and employment as linguists.

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### Challenges for contingent capability

206. **Current capability model.** Contingent operations may be one-off or enduring. The initial deployment of an enduring operation has similar linguistic challenges to one of limited length. Initial operations demand high-readiness military linguists, as civilian capability may be slow to initiate and build up. Mature, lower intensity operations may offer increased access to civilian linguist capability, but this does not remove the military linguist requirement. Figure 2.2 illustrates the challenge of generating higher level linguists for enduring operations, with capability risk reducing over time as more linguists are generated to the required level.



**Figure 2.2 – Generating linguistic capability challenges**

207. **Future capability assumption.** It is assumed that we will not plan to meet deployed contingent operational linguist requirements from those assigned to other military tasks (for example, linguists in support of an operation or in between deployments). Although expediency may dictate otherwise, we should plan to meet contingent requirements from a pool of linguists held at varying readiness and skill levels, drawn from regular forces or the Reserve. The pool of linguist assets must be actively managed at, or above, minimum levels for a chosen degree of risk.

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208. **Short notice requirements.** Defence may require linguists at short notice. Operational requirements will be staffed through Permanent Joint Headquarters/MOD and resources identified by the Defence Augmentation Cell with advice from the Defence Operational Language Support Unit. This unit has visibility of all declared language skills, can short-list personnel and provide current employer details. Some tasking may be achieved by direct negotiation between requirement sponsors and linguist owners. Formal staffing through single Service chains will be necessary for more demanding requirements.

**A future capability model**

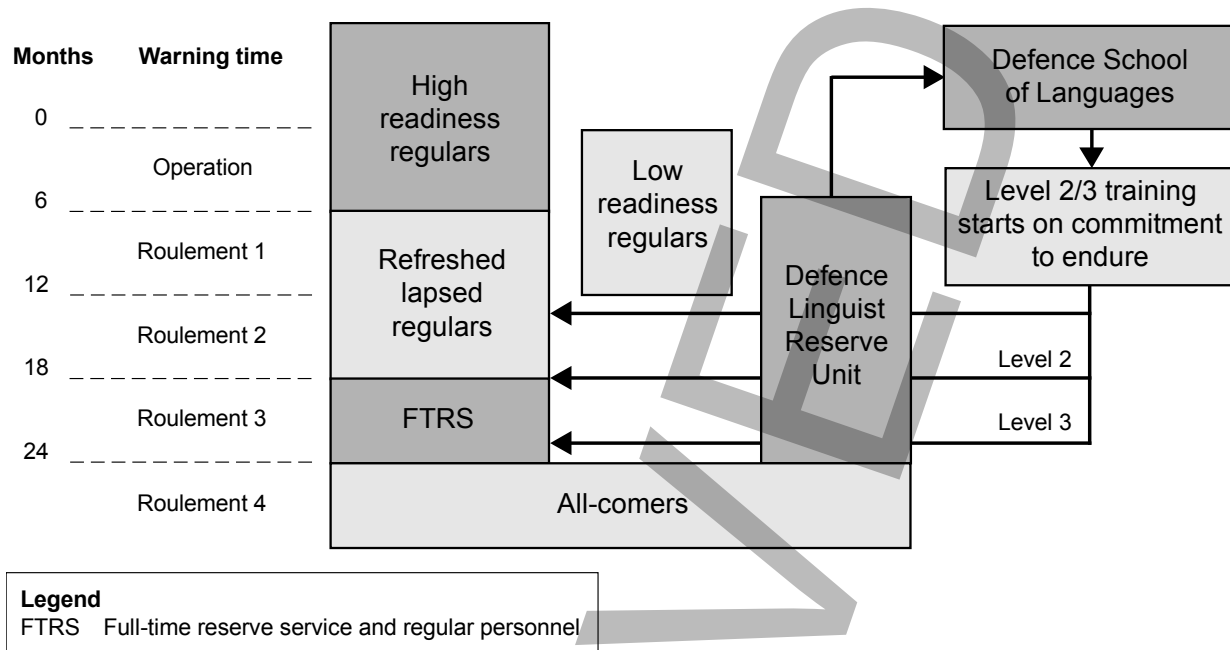
209. The contingent requirement will include languages most likely to be required to support future operations. It must also support pre-emptive activity that manages contingent risk such as defence diplomacy, capacity building and upstream engagement. English may be a prevalent international language, but understanding and using other relevant languages are essential to campaign conduct at all levels and enduring operational success. It is desirable to have a fully planned contingent capability in more common, high-use languages such as Arabic, French and Spanish.

210. Future contingent capability should be based on the wider pool of linguists generated for standing tasks, maximum visibility of all linguistic skills (whether obtained through Service training or through other means) and a mechanism to address shortfalls. This will require recruiting and/or training a number of extra linguists (regular and reserve) to address any shortfalls against agreed risk. Figure 2.3 shows a future contingent capability model that could provide a suitable mechanism to meet operational requirements.



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**Figure 2.2 – The future linguist capability model**

211. It is assumed that a dedicated, career linguist capability (beyond teaching and intelligence specialists) is unsustainable in current human resource models.<sup>4</sup> It is also unlikely to be an economic solution to contingent requirements.

212. **High readiness needs.** To meet high readiness requirements, a limited number of volunteer regular personnel (from all Services) with existing language skills should follow a conventional career path, but be at variable readiness to support operational planning and initial operational deployments. Eligibility would most likely be within the OR3-OF3 range to ensure that they have the experience and maturity for tactical employment as a subordinate in-role linguist. Niche employments may be available for higher ranks. The volunteer would be released immediately on activation by a competent joint authority. The volunteer would also be required to attend mandatory skill training each year, possibly up to four weeks.

213. **High readiness capability shortfalls.** Where there are insufficient linguist assets available to meet high readiness contingent requirements, a

<sup>4</sup> Proposals exist to enhance the culture and language capability through: improved career management within a wider influence context; optimised training; and educational opportunities with a regional focus.

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scheme is required to recruit regular personnel with existing language skills, or to sponsor in-Service language training in required languages. The latter solution would need to be quantified annually through analysis, but may be resourced to a ceiling of 25 personnel<sup>5</sup> at any one time based on contingent and risk analysis.

214. **Early roulement needs.** Further high-level language training to support operations will not start until a strategic commitment is made to continue an operation. The desired number and quality of military linguists will take time to generate. Thus we need a solution to meet early roulement needs. This may be in the form of a reserve Defence Linguist Pool or alternatively through the coordination of existing single Service units. The pool's size and organisation would flex in response to periodic requirement and asset analysis. Members would be recruited in priority languages, with relevant civil occupations and noting candidate's availability to deploy or otherwise provide support. A key role would be to support training deliverers in establishing and teaching high-volume training at all levels in new and current operational languages. This may be a short notice requirement. The pool may also provide some of the required contingent cultural capability. There may be potential for more innovative reserve mechanisms, Defence Civil Service and outsourced training contributions. Full-time service by the reserve and volunteer reserve (with existing languages and cultural skills, or for training prior to deployment) should be facilitated through full-time reserve service engagements.

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<sup>5</sup> This is an illustrative figure to indicate a likely scale of ambition.

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Linguist characteristics

## Chapter 3 – Linguist characteristics

Words can kill before arms.

Nilotic proverb

301. This chapter outlines the characteristics of different types of linguists. It describes how we can best select and employ them for interpretation and translation tasks.

302. **Interpretation.** Different types of interpretation may be needed depending on the level of interaction (strategic, operational or tactical) and the operational requirement. Liaison, or situational interpreting, is most common at the tactical level, for example, interpreting for commanders on the ground and lower-level meetings. At the operational level and above, simultaneous and consecutive interpreting are more common. This requires professionally trained higher-level interpreters.

303. **Translation.** We may need to translate documents that could range from operational staff work, to general, military, technical and legal documents. High-level translation, particularly that with legal or technical content, requires input or oversight from a professionally trained translator with knowledge of the particular vocabulary.

### Military linguists

304. Trained military personnel will be employed when security, force protection or deployability considerations preclude the use of civilian linguists. Higher-level military linguists will be required from the earliest stages of military planning through deployment to, and eventual withdrawal from, a theatre of operations. The scale of provision depends on:

- our need to interpret between the military force and other parties;
- whether the environment is friendly or hostile;
- the language of allied, coalition or supporting partners; and
- the nature of the operational theatre.

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Linguist characteristics

305. Military linguists combine military skills and linguistic ability. They can be used to complement other deployed linguist capability. The deployed force should have a number of military linguists who can:

- screen, employ, deploy and assess the performance of any civilian interpreters;
- replace local staff if necessary, when security, military or political considerations require interpretation or translation of sensitive information;
- deal with a military vocabulary beyond the scope of the local interpreters; and
- support and inform the planning and execution of information activities.

306. Higher-level military linguists should be used in that role full-time, though planned employments may combine linguist skills with a specific operational role (such as media operations or liaison). Tempting though it may be to exploit other coincidental military skills found in a military linguist, it is essential that they are not misemployed in roles where their language skills are not fully exploited.

307. As well as linguistic training, military linguists must undergo pre-deployment training. This will depend on their role in the area of operations and previous military experience. The time required to undertake military pre-deployment training must be factored into deployment planning timelines, along with any requirement for refresher or dialect training.

308. MOD personnel with appropriate training may have command of relevant language(s). However, individuals with appropriate national or ethnic backgrounds, whether UK based or locally employed, may have greater understanding, particularly in the areas of slang, idiom and colloquialisms.

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Linguist characteristics

### **Locally-employed civilian linguists**

309. People living in the area of operations may be recruited to work as linguists provided the local population is prepared to accept such employment. These individuals will be native speakers of at least one of the local languages, and have a strong knowledge of the local environment, conditions and cultural practices. They may have knowledge of government structures, local personalities and officials, and can be invaluable in making contacts and other arrangements. These individuals are not usually professionally qualified as linguists, but may be professionals or students from the local area with a strong knowledge of the local language. Their ability to communicate in English may be variable. They are unlikely to be familiar with military vocabulary and contexts, nor professional interpreting and translation techniques. Commanders should use military linguists to oversee the recruiting and assignment process, conduct further training, and ensure quality control.

310. Planners must consider not only their contractual and moral responsibilities to the interpreter, but also the associated security implications and employment restrictions.

- Locally-employed interpreters cannot normally obtain any security clearance nor have access to classified oral or written information.
- They will be largely conditioned by their social network, loyalties and associations, and may support one of the parties to a conflict.
- They may be vulnerable to pressure or threats against themselves or family members.
- Their employment can upset the fabric of local society.
- Female interpreters may have difficulty operating within local gender norms.
- Interpreters may be given a status and pay scale that challenges seniority within a household.
- Key primary skills may be temporarily removed from the community (for example, teachers who are bi-lingual).
- They may exploit their relationship with their employer to further their own agenda or interests.

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Linguist characteristics

- It may also be difficult to provide locally-employed civilians with the same level of protection as other civilian or military personnel.

### **Other contracted linguists**

311. Civilian contractors (who may be sponsored reserves) can be initiated and managed from the UK to provide additional linguistic support. This allows us to source linguists in languages where we lack military linguist capability. They are likely to have high-level language standards (in both the target language and in English) and professional training in interpreting and translation. Their contractual documents must be written carefully to ensure that they meet the required English and the target language standards.

312. Other civilian linguist contractors can be grouped into two categories: **UK/allied nation** and **third-country nationals** (for example in Iraq, where nationals of other Arabic-speaking countries were recruited through Kuwait).

a. **UK/allied nation.** Civilian contractors in this category can be security cleared and employed where classified or sensitive information is handled. The time required to recruit, train and security clear a contractor linguist can be prolonged (at least six months depending on the level of clearance required).

b. **Third-country nationals.** The capacity to recruit third-country nationals depends on the location of the conflict and the proximity to suitably qualified speakers of the host nation language/s. They are unlikely to be security cleared, which limits their employability. They can, however, provide a significant uplift in linguistic capacity and regional understanding.

When sourcing suitable civilian linguists, recruiters should remember that working within a military context requires physical and mental robustness.

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## **International linguist standards**

313. Advisory bodies for contracted civilian linguists include the International Federation of Translators (FIT), the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and Red T. These organisations have published a guide<sup>1</sup> to linguist rights, responsibilities and practices to inform civilian linguists and their employers. Such guidance is a benchmark and represents reasonable employment aspirations, especially concerning duty of care (both psychological and physical) and professional development. They do not represent a binding legal position and the offered terms and conditions of service may not be able to fully match the benchmark. Both sides will need to agree the extent to which a civilian linguist applies non-intervention, impartiality and confidentiality guidelines if the safety of UK personnel is at risk.

### **The experience of an Iraqi locally-employed civilian 'Terp' Operation TELIC<sup>2</sup>**

'Many people who were educated rushed to be interpreters with the foreign forces but they were disappointed by the low wages the forces gave them in return for their risky job. For me, I joined the forces as interpreter because I was walking with friends in the market in the wake of the invasion; I saw two British military trucks on the high street in our own town and there were many local people and children gathering around them. The forces tried to talk with the people but were unable because no one spoke their language. At that moment, I felt that though these forces were invaders, the people needed their help in securing their lives and livelihood after Saddam. My friend, who was with me, persuaded me to translate and interpret for the people and the forces so that they understood each other and why they came to our town.

I was given no training as an interpreter, but I liked being an active and helpful link between my local people, the institutions in Basra and the British forces there. By doing so I liked helping my country come back to life again after Saddam.

<sup>1</sup> *Conflict Zone Field Guide*, downloadable at <http://aiic.net/page/3853>.

<sup>2</sup> Bonner H, *A Fine Balance; The Wartime Interpreter as Narrative Mediator*, University of Manchester, 2012. pages 68-72.



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I disliked the local people looking at me as a traitor and ignoring me as a helpful communicative tool between them and the forces. I disliked the violent means used by the forces to subdue anyone resisting them. I think they were not able to understand that they were foreign forces in an Arabic-speaking country.

I wanted to raise the local people's awareness that Iraq is our country and it needs our help to come back to life in such a situation of war. Without our help and cooperation, Iraq would not be able to restore its life after Saddam and the invasion. Iraq, I think, deserves our cooperation because we are its citizens. There were moments when the forces raided houses suspected of hiding weapons and pistols. They raided these houses at night when the families were asleep; children, infants, women, old people were asleep. The forces didn't tell me that what we were going to do before we left the base in tanks. The forces destroyed the gate of the house, breaking the doors of the houses, and got inside the bedrooms and the private rooms of people where they slept and this created a pain and sorrow and sadness I will never forget all my life. This is not acceptable to our Iraqi religious tradition and ethics, to rush and break inside someone's house without permission, even in a great emergency such as a war. I felt at that moment that I have made a mistake in working with the military forces, rather than other non-military ones, to help my people. Women were without veils and uncovered which is against my religious, familial and traditional values for me to see them in this situation: humiliated, crying and forcefully pushed into one room. At that moment, I understood why the local people call us 'traitors'; we are traitors not of our countries but of our morals, ethics and religion. I hated myself and my job.

My neutrality was often challenged. Once, local people pushed me to talk to the forces about returning their pistols and Kalashnikovs because they said they would not use them again. I did not want to do this because I agreed with the British Forces, who thought that leaving weapons in the hands of the locals would result in violence and chaos. I said I would talk to the forces and see what they would do, but in the end they refused to hand back the weapons.'

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Employing linguists

## Chapter 4 – Employing linguists

If language is not correct, then what is said is not what is meant; if what is said is not what is meant, then what must be done remains undone; hence there must be no arbitrariness in what is said. This matters above everything.

Confucius 551-479 BC

401. This Chapter gives guidance to those who use linguists. It also looks at the relevance of linguist capability to operational headquarters.

402. **Users.** Personnel working with linguists should be briefed on the roles, responsibilities and limitations of linguists. If appropriate, they should be briefed or trained in how to work effectively with both professionally qualified interpreters/translators and other linguists. Users may work with linguists who do not have professional qualifications and should adapt the complexity of their language accordingly. Some linguists may not have a security clearance and users must adhere to operational security protocols. Where a linguist is used, his role is to convey accurately to each side the speech or text from the other. Linguists are not necessarily cultural specialists, even though they may have some cultural capability.

### Linguist staff and capability coordination

403. **Multinational operations.** When operating under a NATO chain-of-command, or when using NATO doctrine as the operating framework for a coalition operation, we will conform to NATO guidance on linguistic support as set out in ALing-P1. This will be particularly relevant when we are the lead or framework nation with responsibility for capability standards and coordination. This JDN is consistent with ALing-P1 which focuses on support to higher-level operational headquarters and professional civilian capability. The UK national contingent will use its own linguistic capability as determined by the commander. National differences must not undermine the functional linguistic interface with the operational chain of command.

404. **Language focus in a headquarters.** Language is a J3 function. An operational headquarters must have a staff focus for language issues. Depending on the complexity and scale of the operation, that focus may have

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additional responsibilities (such as culture or influence). For an enduring medium-scale operation, a SO2 (Culture and Language) should be established at the Permanent Joint Headquarters and in the deployed 1\* headquarters. The post acts as functional head of language capability or the Head of the Linguistic Service in a NATO context. It is likely that the deployed SO2 Language and Culture will be an augmentee from a single Service education branch.

405. **SO2 Language and Culture's role.** The SO2 Language and Culture in theatre should have authority to functionally manage linguists and advise the commander on language and cultural issues. Duties include:

- prioritising and coordinating all linguist assets;
- advising the commander and all staff branches on operational linguist capability and effects;
- providing professional advice on local linguist recruiting, training and release;
- acting as the headquarters' lead for military English language training initiatives;
- acting as Theatre Designated Officer for contracted, non-local linguists;
- acting as the Theatre point of contact for language and linguist J1 issues;
- improving linguist pre-deployment training;
- leading quality assurance processes on all linguist assets, propagating best practice throughout theatre; and
- acting as an interpreter/translator when necessary.

### **Commander's considerations**

406. Linguists are scarce resources that must be coordinated at the highest level. Sufficient higher-level military linguists should be force-generated to assign one to each major unit as the senior primary linguist. This will ensure that linguist management functions can be assured. The command of individual linguists will vary with operational circumstances, but will be

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monitored by a strong functional chain to ensure that linguists are used to best effect.

407. Commanders will require high quality personal interpreting and translation services, particularly to support key leader engagement. A UK-sourced contracted linguist with appropriate security clearance is most appropriate for this role.

408. Commanders must lead the way in not expecting their linguists to provide support beyond their competence, in both the target language and in English. Strong language skills cannot compensate for lack of understanding and experience in military affairs in both civilian and junior military linguists. Such linguists cannot be relied on to act as the commander's independent agent, nor to faithfully render complex military concepts and terminology between languages.

409. Military linguists will often work very closely with local nationals and friendly foreign forces. Proximity, close personal relationships and an inherent cultural sensitivity allows military linguists to attune to the mood of partner nation personnel. Where there is a risk of 'green-on-blue' incidents, either due to cultural misunderstanding, hostile influence or internal rogue elements, military linguists may provide an early indication of rising risks and threats.

### **Joint staff considerations**

410. **J1.** Known language competencies at Level 1 and above are recorded and visible on the joint personnel administration system. Qualified military linguists on eligible operations can be paid under the Defence Operational Languages Award Scheme administered by the Defence Operational Languages Support Unit. Qualification payments are made automatically on receipt of confirmed exam results. Daily deployed active use awards are authorised by this unit after the end of an individual's deployment. Clear contract terms and conditions must be set for contracted linguists to balance a linguist's employment aspirations with military and theatre reality. Legal and provost functions are likely to need civilian expert linguists.

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411. **J2.** Intelligence organisations and staff often have embedded linguists trained in intelligence matters. These linguists will not normally be coordinated by SO2 Language and Culture. Augmentee linguists may be assigned to intelligence functions such as human and signals intelligence.

412. **J3.** SO2 Language and Culture should be part of J3, using that staff chain to advise the commander and seek approval for rebalancing linguist assets. Training of, and operating alongside, indigenous forces will require interpreters. Strategic communication, media operations and psychological operation functions are likely to be assigned dedicated military linguists and/or cultural specialists. Military English language training may be part of a campaign plan.

413. **J4.** Subject-competent civilian linguist support will be required to facilitate materiel and service contracts. Military linguists used for these functions will need technical and contract vocabulary.

414. **J5.** J3 and J5 are likely to be served by a military cultural specialist who may have some relevant language skills. However, SO2 Language and Culture should provide language capability advice during all elements of the operational cycle.

415. **J6.** While communication traffic may be language-oriented, linguist support to J6 is likely to be focussed on facilitating the interface between military and local civil communication systems.

416. **J7.** Although military linguists should be pre-trained prior to deployment, formal linguist familiarisation with local dialects and accents may be necessary. This may justify extended handovers or longer deployment overlaps. Civilian linguists will require extensive briefing/training in military processes and vocabulary before employment. Military linguists, in particular those with recent experience, should support pre-deployment training to familiarise commanders with the capability and contribute to collective training in a variety of roles.

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417. **J8.** The resource management focus of J8 may include contractual responsibilities discussed in the context of J1 and J4. The requirement for linguists familiar with local commercial practice favours the employment of civilian linguists.

418. **J9.** Civil-military cooperation will be a significant element of enduring operations and language will be a key-enabling capability. The range of tasks and diplomatic skills favours employing civilian linguists.

### Component considerations

419. Although linguists operate in a predominantly land environment, language capability is relevant to the other components both on operations and undertaking military tasks in non-operational environments (such as those outlined in the International Defence Engagement Strategy). Components must be prepared to interface with the joint language-capability framework and conform to emerging doctrine. If a component is leading an operation, other components will expect language capability issues to be directed and staffed in conformance with joint doctrine.

420. All components must consider their particular linguistic requirements where they differ from joint staff requirements. Each component may have its own tactics, techniques and procedures that require particular guidance for linguists. Much common best practice for employing individual linguists, can be drawn from Army Field Manual Volume 1, Part 9, *Tactics for Stabilisation Operations*.

421. **Maritime.** The maritime environment offers particular challenges, given the variety of languages that may be encountered in transit, at support locations and in large areas of operation. Ships are unlikely to be able to maintain dedicated linguists on board (other than in support of intelligence). Nor are they likely to maintain a capability in more than the most common maritime languages. However, in a larger task force, or with amphibious operations in mind, language requirements must be addressed.

422. **Air.** The air component can rely on English as the language of international aviation. They still, however, provide linguists to support intelligence-gathering platforms, rear-based exploitation and wider Defence

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and other government department intelligence requirements. The air component must address its needs to support overflight, basing, operational liaison and ground protection. At the operational level, linguists and cultural specialists can assist with campaign assessment and the impact of air operations on local populations.

423. **Special Forces.** Special Forces maintain a degree of in-house language capability and in trusted supporting organisations. However, larger or more complex operations may require augmentation with additional higher-level linguists. This requires early planning to facilitate the appropriate security clearance processes.

### **Operational planning considerations**

424. Linguistic support must be organised and planned before an operation. Careful analysis and study must determine and prioritise the languages and dialects that are, or may be, needed. Defining those languages as far in advance as possible will enable timely training of personnel or recruiting of personnel with a prior knowledge of the necessary languages. (Such personnel may require military training, additional language training and/or training in linguistic functions). Joint Forces Command, Permanent Joint Headquarters and Director Special Forces must be consulted to shape the operational requirement.

425. Once the decision is taken to conduct an operation, planners must give early and full consideration to determining the languages and dialects. A linguistic estimate can then be conducted. Distinctions between dialect and language boundaries may be superficial, and the favouring of a particular language may have political as well as cultural connotations. A language subject matter expert should form part of any reconnaissance conducted prior to an operation taking place.

426. The nature and quantity of the services required must be determined as soon as possible. This should identify the type of linguist most suited for the role and its requirements. These may change as the operation evolves, terminates or endures.

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427. Operational planning timeframes challenge the force generation of linguists. Due to the lengthy timelines in generating and training linguists to deploy, unpredictable short notice changes can be difficult to implement and may result in an unfilled requirement or redundancy of linguists in training. Changes in operational tempo, the likely timescale of the operation, and planning for recovery should be considered from the outset of planning.

428. There is no standing linguist reachback capability to support deployed forces, other than the Defence School of Languages and Defence Operational Languages Support Unit. Neither organisation is established for the role, nor can they provide significant, or sustained, support to theatre tasks. Rear-based support to operations may require a reachback capability; for example a UK-based facility manned by contracted linguists and supplemented by available military linguists. Source material would be processed into required products by human linguists with information technology support and shared through military networks. This would:

- provide linguist services that may not be possible in theatre;
- provide surge support; and
- release in-theatre linguists for higher priority face-to-face tasks.

**Understanding military linguistic capability**

This vignette illustrates linguists' limitations and temper employers' expectations. Those familiar with the Latin alphabet and a European language encountered at school will often overestimate military linguists' ability, particularly in unfamiliar and stressful situations. The ability to distinguish the similarities, differences and military implications in a second language between, 'there is a bomb in the market' and, 'there may be an unexploded device near the shops' may be a significant competence threshold for an assured level of capability, characteristic of a level-3 linguist. Consider the following quote:

*'L'accent du pays où l'on est né, demeure dans l'esprit et dans le cœur, comme dans le langage.'*

Rochefoucauld, 1679.



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- A basic linguist would find this impossible to translate.
- A level 1 linguist would recognise some words, but would not be able to grasp the theme or meaning.
- A level 2 linguist should be able to translate word for word, possibly needing a dictionary, but would not be guaranteed to understand the sense being expressed, nor articulate it quickly. The formal, historic grammar and spelling may distract.
- A level 3 linguist should be able to reflect both the sense and the detail of the quote, perhaps needing a short time for the best translation.
- A level 4 linguist should be able to quickly achieve something similar to the accepted translation, 'The accent of one's birthplace lingers in the mind and in the heart as it does in one's speech.'
- A level 5 professional linguist may offer, 'Once a Yorkshireman, always a Yorkshireman' in an appropriate context, to convey a culturally relevant idiom in English, rather than just a direct translation.