

DIRECTIONS OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE OF THE ROMANIAN MILITARY PERSONNEL PARTICIPATING IN STABILITY AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

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Abstract

The identification and choice of directions for the development of intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military personnel participating in stability and support operations abroad can be approached starting from different criteria.

In our opinion, they refer to: components of intercultural communication competence; the different explanatory models of the intercultural communication competence; the sociological model of intercultural communication competence.

Keywords: intercultural communication competence; stability and support operations; directions of training and development of intercultural communication competence.

INTRODUCTION

The current operational environment, dynamic and complex, requires in addition to military forces, in general, and multinational forces, in particular, new capabilities of relational communication, adaptation and action that allow them to identify and combat hypothetical opponents acting on the basis of their ability to conventionally use combat actions related to unconventional types of combat. Given this context, intercultural communication, seen not only from an internal perspective as a vital and standard element to be achieved at the level of national contingents, but also as a tool of balance in establishing positive relations with all actors in the operational environment, from regional partners to the local population, becomes a vital requirement for the achievement of the objectives that the multinational military forces have in the whole spectrum of operations.

In this context, the military education institution has an important role in terms of training and developing the competence of intercultural communication of all Romanian military personnel who will participate in external missions, including stability and support operations.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Intercultural competences can be defined in general as adequate knowledge about certain cultures, as well as general knowledge about problems that arise when members of different cultures interact, maintaining receptive attitudes that encourage establishing and maintaining contact with different people, and the necessary skills interacting with others from different cultures.

Some of the common elements of intercultural competences in different cultures include respect, self-awareness/identity, looking at other perspectives/worldviews, listening, adapting and building relationships.

In a study (on 100 subjects) that questioned the importance of intercultural communication competence of Romanian military personnel participating in stability and support missions, the results were as follows:

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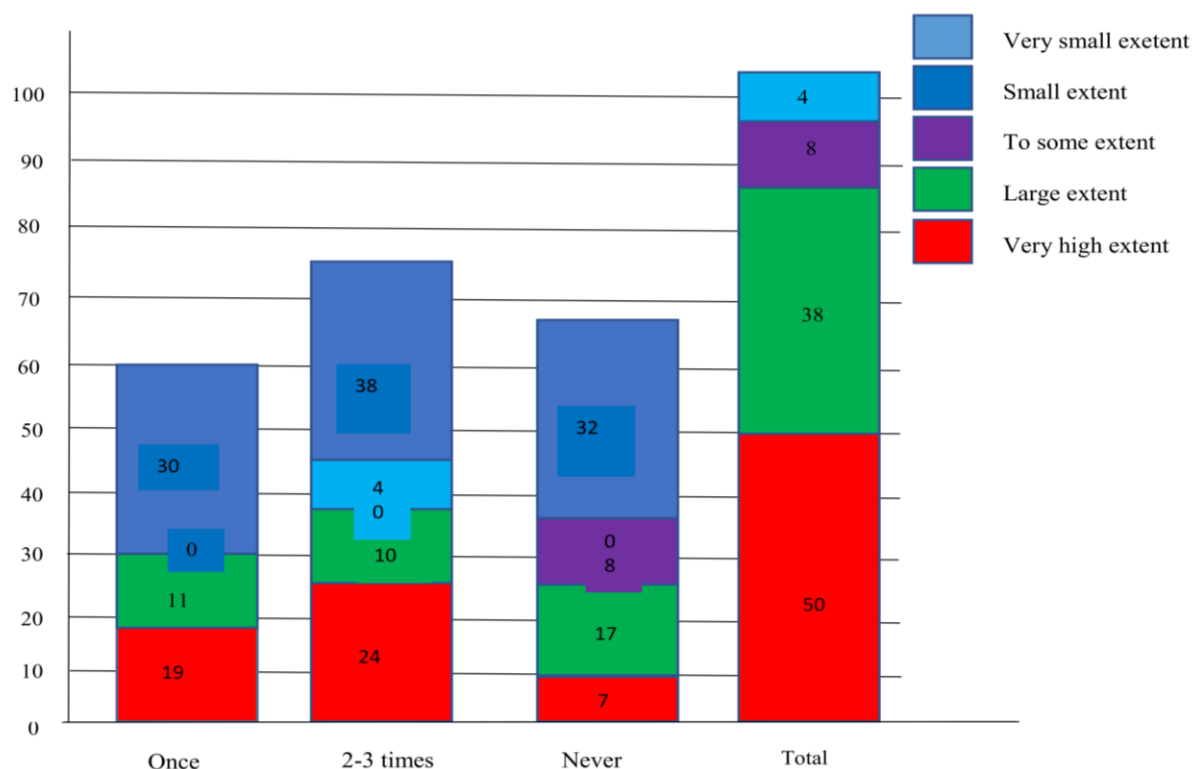


Figure 1. The correlation between the need for cultural communication competence and frequency of participation in external missions (Olar 2016)

According to the data in Figure 1, the respondents attach great importance to the need for intercultural communication competence. Thus, in proportion to 88.00% consider that such a competence is *necessary in a very high measure* (50.0%) and to a *large extent* (38.0%). Only 12.0% of them think to such competence as being something to *some extent necessary* (8.0%) and to a *small extent measure* (4.0%). It seems that experience does not play a significant role in appreciation the need for the intercultural communication competence of the participating Romanian military to stability and support operations. However, the analysis of their options according to the frequency of participation in missions shows that 63.30% of those who were once in the theater of operations appreciates that the existence of the intercultural communication competence is needed to a very large extent, while the military personnel that has been 2-3 times in theaters of operations make the same assessment in proportion of 63.15%.

Considering the data above, there are some directions of training and development of intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military personnel participating in stability and support operations used as a methodology for approaching these:

I. *Training and development directions according to the criterion "components of intercultural communication competence"*

Starting from the series of researches that have been carried out in this field and from the numerous conceptual models that have been proposed, we appreciate that the components that represent the essence of intercultural competence (*attitudes, abilities, knowledge, behaviors*) (Barrett 2021, 2-4) can be considered as it follows:

According to the criterion "*components of the competence of intercultural communication*" we will distinguish the following directions of development of this type of competence:

- *the direction of developing the attitudes of the Romanian military participating in stability and support operations* towards the constant, continuous and effective raising of the level of their competence of intercultural communication. These are attitudes favorable to the development of the intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military involved in stability and support operations abroad.

The formation and development of these attitudes are done through adequate methods of social, psychosocial, material and moral nature that the military institutions with attributions in the field permanently practice in the process of formation and professional development of their students (Radu 1991, 332-351). Following the transposition of this direction, the Romanian military must possess attitudes such as: respect and curiosity for other cultures, the desire to learn about other cultures, their openness to other cultures, the attitude to suspend their prejudices, the attitude of tolerance for ambiguity and appreciation of cultural diversity. In our opinion, it is about the development of attitudes favorable to the participation of the military in stability and support operations, on the one hand, and the elimination of negative ones on the other hand.

- *the direction of development of intercultural communication **skills** of the Romanian military* participating in stability and support operations is expressed by the set of capacities developed by them to raise the level of their competence of intercultural communication. Here, it is about both the innate skills and those acquired through learning by the Romanian military personnel. We note as part of these: the ability to listen to people from other cultures; interaction with these people; adaptation to other cultural environments; language skills, sociolinguistic and communication skills, including the ability to manage the ruptures of communication; to serve as an intermediary in intercultural exchanges; to find out information about other cultures; to interpret cultures and relate them to each other, empathy, multiple perspectives, cognitive suppleness; to critically evaluate cultural views, practices and products; awareness of communication, especially of differences in language conventions, including in one's own culture;

- *the cognitive direction for the development of the intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military* participating in stability and support operations is materialized by establishing the database and information necessary and sufficient for them to develop in a constant rhythm the intercultural communication competence. In essence, this direction aims to coordinate the efforts of actors involved in the process of developing intercultural communication skills of Romanian soldiers participating in stability and support operations in order to acquire an adequate volume of data and information useful for the upward evolution of their intercultural communication skills. Attention must be focused on transforming this data and information into knowledge that the military will be able to effectively and constantly add to the cognitive fundamental of their intercultural communication skills. It is known that not all data and information transmitted in the learning process automatically become knowledge (Muntean, Danaiața, Margea 2021, 1-3). In practice, only a part of this data and information becomes knowledge after its assimilation and logical memorization by the Romanian military.

Mainly, at the end of the training process, the Romanian military participating in stability and support operations must be in possession of some knowledge regarding: their cultural affiliation, knowledge of ways to communicate, especially of different linguistic and communication conventions in different cultures, knowledge of their own culture, especially knowledge of views, practices and products of certain cultural groups, general knowledge of culture, especially knowledge of the processes of interaction between cultures, societies and individuals, knowledge of the civilization and culture of the country in which their mission will take place;

- *the behavioral direction of developing the intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military* participating in stability and support operations refers to the acquisition of individual and collective behaviors in full consensus with the principles, values and national and international norms of humanitarian law, of general human rights.

We appreciate that the formation and development of behaviors in strict accordance with national and international legal norms are a guarantee of the success of fulfilling the missions entrusted to the Romanian military participating in stability and support operations abroad. Basically, it is about an effective and correct behavior of the Romanian military during intercultural meetings, manifested by flexibility in cultural and communication behavior, by orientation towards action, towards the willingness to act in stability and support operations to promote the common good, in particular by reducing prejudice, discrimination and conflict. Such behaviors are formed and developed through a set of social, psychosocial, material, moral, legal methods (Radu 1991, cap 15).

II. *Training and development directions according to the criterion "models of representation of the competence of intercultural communication"*

Starting from the criterion "models of representation of the competence of intercultural communication" (Byram, 2021, 2-5) we can refer to the following directions of development of this type of competences:

- *the direction of developing the **capacities** of the Romanian military participating in stability and support operations* abroad in order to constantly, permanently and effectively **raise the level of their intercultural communication competence**. This direction aims to increase the capacity of the military in the field of knowledge of what to do in stability and support operations regarding intercultural communication with the military of other armies participating in the same mission, with members of the International Red Cross, with members of volunteer organizations, with representatives of the local power and the population in the area. From a practical point of view, the development of this direction refers to the acquisition and manifestation by the Romanian military participating in stability and support operations of the following capabilities: curiosity and openness to other cultures; the ability to be tolerant of people from other cultures; the ability to trust one's own culture; the ability to overcome prejudices regarding people belonging to other cultures; the will to relativize one's own values, beliefs and behaviors; the ability to accept the other's perspective; the ability to reconsider his vision of the world. For this purpose, methods and techniques can be used to develop the necessary and sufficient skills of the Romanian military to help them perform their tasks effectively when participating in stability and support operations abroad;

- *the direction of developing the **capacities** of the Romanian military* participating in stability and support operations abroad **to know the realities they face during the fulfillment of such missions**. It is about the ability to know facts, events, people, both as individuals and as members of groups, as well as the ability to know the products of their activity, especially those they can meet in the theaters of stability and support operations. Also, it is about the development of the knowledge capacities by the Romanian military: of the general interactions between the societies and the individuals belonging to them; of the social processes in one's own society but also in the society in which the future mission can probably take place; of the way in which the population in the area of stability and support operations and not only perceives them; of the ways in which one can effectively relate to different people within the area of the stability and support operation. At the same time, the Romanian military must also develop the following types of skills: the ability to interpret a document or an event related to the culture of the country where the stability and support operations take place; the ability to explain such documents or events and relate them to one's own culture; the ability to predict how misunderstandings occur during stability and support operations; the ability to look at the culture and civilization of the country where the stability and support operations take place from different perspectives.

In our opinion, such capabilities are developed through the entire process of training and professional development of the Romanian military carried out in military education institutions;

- *the direction of developing the **capacity to learn, do and engage** of the Romanian military* participating in stability and support operations abroad in order **to amplify their competence of intercultural communication**.

In our opinion, this direction implies the development of the following types of capabilities in all Romanian military personnel: the ability to assimilate new knowledge from a new culture and the ability to accumulate given cultural practices; the ability to use operatively and effectively this knowledge during the execution of stability and support operations; the ability to use this knowledge under the constraint of real-time intercultural communication and interaction; the ability to evaluate, in a critical manner and on the basis of explicit criteria, the points of view, practices and products of one's own country and of the culture of the country where the stability and support operations take place.

We appreciate that such capabilities are formed and developed through the military training process and through the use of active learning methods such as the simulation method, the case study method, the modeling method or the role play method.

III. Training and development directions according to the criterion "sociological model of intercultural communication competence"

Based on the sociological model of intercultural communication competence, the following directions of action can be drawn for the development of intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military participating in stability and support operations abroad:

- the direction of **cognitive-informational development** of the intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military participating in stability and support operations abroad. This direction refers both to the development of the military's capacities to acquire knowledge about the culture and civilization of the country where the stability and support operations take place, and to the involvement of other psychic processes in the activity of developing the intercultural communication competence. It is about thinking, memory, language, attention, will and even temperament. On the other hand, we appreciate that this direction of developing the competence of the Romanian military concerns both the nature and the content of data and information transmitted, acquired and transformed into knowledge and skills through the professional development process carried out by military educational institutions;

- the direction of **affective-motivational development** of the intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military participating in stability and support operations abroad. In our opinion, this direction of development includes two interdependent and complementary components, namely: the affective component and the motivational component. The first component concerns the positive and negative emotional feelings that the Romanian military can experience while participating in stability and support operations. Our interest is, first of all, that negative emotional states be eliminated or, if this is not possible, that their effects be limited as much as possible. In addition, we believe that the positive feelings of the military regarding their participation in stability and support operations must be developed. To this end, one can go on developing the feelings of satisfaction regarding the fulfilled duty, the feelings of national pride regarding Romania's contribution to regional stability and not only.

The motivational component refers to the needs, motives, interests, aspirations, beliefs and ideals of the military participating in stability and support operations. They can be oriented in the sense of fulfilling the missions entrusted to the Romanian military personnel using both the intrinsic motivation and the extrinsic motivation that the commanders have at their disposal;

- the direction of **behavioral-action development** of the intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military participating in stability and support operations abroad. This direction of development refers to the development of individual and collective behaviors desirable in all Romanian military personnel involved in stability and support operations, on the one hand, and to the implementation of such behaviors, on the other hand. This double objective can be materialized through well-known learning methods, through exercises and field applications, as well as through the use of methods such as: modeling, simulation, case study, role play, synectics. In our opinion, the lessons learned on the occasion of the execution of similar missions by the Romanian military personnel also play a significant role. We appreciate that, regardless of the criterion chosen for designating the directions of action aimed at developing the intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military personnel participating in stability and support operations, our option must lead to the achievement of the following mandatory and cumulative objectives:

- training in the military personnel a high flexibility that translates into a rapid adaptation, without major dysfunctions to any new, unexpected and random situation that may arise during participation in stability and support operations;

- the development of creativity in all soldiers, meaning the ability to innovate, invent and create, while participating in stability and support operations in order to fulfill the tasks entrusted. We appreciate that the complex and dynamic intercultural situation during the stability and support operations requires the development and especially the manifestation of such a capacity in all the military personnel;

- all military personnel must achieve a high efficiency in fulfilling the specific missions entrusted within the stability and support operations. In addition, the development of these qualities,

through the training process in military educational institutions, makes the participation of the Romanian military in stability operations abroad to be distinguished by promptness, efficiency, continuity and full security for all involved.

CONCLUSIONS

The competence of intercultural communication is a result of personal, group and institutional efforts to train the skills of the Romanian military personnel. The article has focused on analyzing aspects related to the directions of training and development of intercultural communication skills of Romanian military personnel participating in stability and support operations, addressing broadly the directions of formation and development according to the criterion "components of intercultural communication competence", directions of formation and development according to the criterion "models of representation of intercultural communication competence" and directions of formation and development according to the criterion "sociological model of intercultural communication competence."

We appreciate that the formation and development of behaviors in strict accordance with national and international legal norms are a guarantee of the success of the accomplishment of the missions entrusted to the Romanian military personnel who participates in stability and support operations abroad. Basically, it's an effective and correct behavior of the Romanian military personnel visible during the intercultural meetings that is expected to manifest through suppleness in cultural communication, through action-oriented behavior, willingness to act within the framework of stability and support operations in order to promote the common good, in particular by reducing prejudice, discrimination and conflict.

Also these specific behaviors are formed and developed through a set of social, psychosocial, material, moral, legal methods that can contribute to the accomplishment of the mission entrusted.

In our opinion, establishing the criteria on the basis of which to choose the directions of action is necessary in the process of training the intercultural communication competence of the Romanian military personnel participating in stability and support operations because in this way objectives such as: - the selection of the most adequate scenarios regarding the possible and probable intercultural situations in which the Romanian military personnel participating in stability and support operations can be found and their introduction in the role-playing games and in the simulations performed in the military education institutions; - the effective use of new information and communication technologies in the intercultural communication competence formation process can be successfully achieved.

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