

BUILDING INTERCULTURAL LEADERS IN BANI MILITARY CONTEXTS: THE EVOLUTION OF ELT BEYOND LINGUISTIC ACCURACY

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Abstract: As organizations transition from the once dominant VUCA paradigm to the more volatile BANI framework – characterized by brittleness, anxiety, nonlinearity, and incomprehensibility – the communicative demands on linguistic functionality in intercultural contexts have shifted dramatically. Traditional English Language Teaching (ELT), with its emphasis on linguistic accuracy and native like proficiency, no longer equips future officers to navigate the fragile systems and ambiguous interactions that define the dynamics of contemporary military organizations. This article argues that in the academic military context, ELT must evolve into a form of intercultural leadership training that prioritizes meaning making, psychological safety, and adaptive collaboration. Drawing on the BANI model and Byram’s Intercultural Communicative Competence framework, the study looks at 5 military English manuals in use at “Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy (NBLFA), as course support materials for the semesters focused on military ELT. The main objective of the content-driven quantitative and qualitative analysis is to investigate how (and if) language teaching promotes and encourages the development of intercultural resilience. Based on the findings, the conclusions emphasize the imperative requirement that ELT should function as the connective tissue of resilient BANI military organizations, by proposing a theoretical training model that positions ELT as a “leadership-development ecosystem” that cultivates intercultural competence, adaptive communication, and cognitive agility, and calling on ELT practitioners to embrace their emerging role as trainers who prepare cadets for international professional experiences where communication is increasingly nonlinear, unstable, and difficult to interpret.

Keywords: ELT, intercultural leadership, BANI, Intercultural Communicative Competence, military

1. Introduction

BANI organizations are organizations that operate in environments defined by Brittleness, Anxiety, Nonlinearity, and Incomprehensibility. The framework was proposed by futurist Jamais Cascio [1], in his article *Facing the Age of Chaos*, published in April 2020, and describes the conditions shaping modern systems, institutions, and workplaces. Essentially, Cascio’s approach depicts an evolution of the older VUCA model, capturing the more chaotic, fragile, and psychologically demanding nature of today’s operational landscape. BANI organizations can be any type of institutions

– military, corporate, governmental, or humanitarian.

BANI military organizations are armed-forces institutions operating in environments characterized by the same four dimensions. Consequently, BANI military organizations have the following features:

- Brittle: Military systems, alliances, and communication channels can fail suddenly under stress, making resilience and redundancy essential.
- Anxious: High-stakes missions, information overload, and constant readiness create psychological pressure for personnel, requiring leadership

approaches that foster emotional stability and trust.

- Nonlinear: Small actions can produce disproportionate effects on the battlefield or in information operations, demanding adaptive decision-making rather than rigid command-and-control models.
- Incomprehensible: Complex geopolitical dynamics, ambiguous signals from adversaries, and culturally diverse multinational forces make communication harder to interpret, increasing the risk of misalignment or escalation.

In this context, the BANI framework highlights how modern military operations – whether conventional, hybrid, cyber, or peacekeeping – are shaped by rapid technological change, unpredictable threat patterns, and culturally diverse coalitions.

In BANI military organizations, English is not just a linguistic tool. It becomes a strategic capability for coalition interoperability, rapid meaning-making under pressure, culturally sensitive leadership and preventing miscommunication in high-risk environments. Against this background, English Language Teaching (ELT) must evolve from teaching grammar, vocabulary and language skills to cultivating intercultural leaders who can operate effectively in volatile, ambiguous, and culturally diverse military settings. In contrast to the traditional ELT paradigm, where mastering grammar and vocabulary seemed sufficient for operational communication, today's multinational missions demand far more than error-free sentences. Military personnel must navigate unpredictable coalition structures, rapidly shifting information flows, and culturally diverse teams where meaning is co-constructed under pressure. In such contexts, a narrow focus on correctness becomes a liability, obscuring the deeper intercultural competencies required for effective collaboration, trust-building, and adaptive decision-making across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Addressing these challenges requires a decisive shift in how ELT is conceptualized and delivered within military education systems. This involves reframing the classroom as a space where learners practice navigating ambiguity, interpreting diverse communication styles, and responding adaptively to culturally mediated conflict. In a BANI world, communicative competence is inseparable from cultural intelligence, emotional regulation, and the ability to co-create meaning under pressure. By integrating these dimensions into ELT, military institutions can prepare personnel not only to “speak accurately” but to collaborate effectively, lead inclusively, and operate with agility in multinational environments where clarity is negotiated, not guaranteed.

The article advances the thesis that, to foster genuine organizational resilience in BANI-shaped military environments, ELT must evolve into a form of intercultural leadership training that prioritizes meaning-making and psychological safety over the pursuit of native-like fluency. It argues that communication effectiveness in contemporary multinational missions depends not on perfect linguistic form but on the ability to build trust, navigate ambiguity, and co-construct understanding across cultural boundaries. Guided by this perspective, the article pursues the following three objectives:

O1. To examine how current military English teaching materials reflect – or fail to reflect – the intercultural communicative demands of BANI-shaped military organizations, using Byram's [2] ICC framework as an analytical lens.

O2. To investigate the extent to which existing ELT practices and materials at the NBLFA promote intercultural resilience, particularly the ability to navigate ambiguity, build psychological safety, and co-construct meaning in multinational settings.

O3. To argue for and conceptualize ELT as a strategic component of organizational

resilience in military education, positioning ELT practitioners as trainers who prepare cadets for nonlinear, unstable, and culturally complex international professional environments.

2. From Linguistic Accuracy to Intercultural Resilience

The conceptual shift from linguistic accuracy to intercultural resilience reflects a fundamental re-conceptualization of the objectives of ELT in military environments characterized by BANI conditions [3]. In such environments, the capacity to communicate with precision is no longer sufficient in itself; military personnel must also demonstrate the flexibility, cultural sensitivity, and strategic communicative awareness required to function effectively across radically different cultural frameworks. This transition has prompted a re-evaluation of pedagogical priorities within military ELT, moving the focus of instruction from the correction of grammatical error toward the cultivation of communicative resilience and intercultural competence [2, 4].

2.1. Fostering language clarity

One of the most consequential practical implications of this shift is the movement away from complex professional jargon toward the principles of Plain English in high-stakes military communication. Research in organizational communication has consistently demonstrated that the use of overly specialized or bureaucratic language in operational contexts increases the risk of misunderstanding, delays decision-making, and undermines the clarity of command [5], [6]. In multinational military operations, where interlocutors bring diverse linguistic backgrounds and varying degrees of English proficiency, the reliance on NATO-specific acronyms, technical terminology, and opaque institutional language compounds these risks significantly. ELT instruction that systematically exposes learners to Plain English principles – including the use of short sentences, active voice, and accessible

vocabulary – directly addresses this communicative vulnerability and supports operational effectiveness [7].

Alongside the move toward linguistic simplicity, ELT in BANI military contexts plays a crucial role in lowering what Krashen (1982) [8] termed the “affective filter” – the psychological barrier to communication raised by anxiety, inhibition, and fear of negative evaluation. In high-pressure operational environments, personnel may avoid seeking clarification or signalling misunderstanding due to concerns about appearing incompetent or undermining command authority. ELT instruction that explicitly normalizes clarification strategies – such as paraphrasing, reformulation, and structured checking for understanding – addresses this inhibition directly [9, 10]. By creating classroom environments in which the act of seeking clarification is treated as a mark of professional competence rather than linguistic inadequacy, military language instructors contribute to the development of communicative cultures in which accuracy and mutual comprehension are prioritized over the mere performance of fluency [11, 12].

The practical implementation of language clarity strategies within military ELT requires the deliberate integration of communicative tasks that simulate the conditions of real operational exchanges. Role-play activities modelled on briefings, debriefings, and situation reports provide learners with structured opportunities to practise concise, unambiguous expression while simultaneously developing their capacity to recognize and repair communicative breakdowns [11, 12]. Such tasks train personnel not merely to produce grammatically correct output but to monitor the communicative effectiveness of their language in real time – a skill that is indispensable in environments where the consequences of misunderstanding may be severe. Furthermore, instruction that draws explicit attention to the pragmatic dimensions of clarity, including the

appropriate use of hedging, signposting, and discourse markers, equips learners with the metalinguistic tools required to navigate the communicative complexity characteristic of multinational operational contexts [5, 7].

2.2. The teacher as intercultural mediator

The reconceptualization of ELT objectives in BANI military contexts has been accompanied by a parallel and equally significant transformation in the role of the language instructor. The traditional model of the language teacher as a transmitter of grammatical knowledge and an arbiter of linguistic correctness has given way to a more complex professional identity in which the instructor functions as an intercultural mediator – an agent capable of bridging the communicative and cultural distance between individuals whose assumptions, values, and communicative norms differ substantially [13, 14]. This transition is not merely a rhetorical reframing; it reflects a substantive shift in pedagogical priorities, classroom practices, and the criteria by which effective language teaching is evaluated.

As an intercultural mediator, the military ELT instructor assumes responsibility for creating learning environments in which cultural difference is treated not as an obstacle to communication but as a resource for its enrichment [15]. This involves moving beyond the transmission of cultural information – the provision of factual knowledge about the customs, beliefs, or communicative conventions of specific national groups – toward the development of intercultural attitudes and skills that enable learners to engage productively with unfamiliar cultural frameworks [16]. The mediating instructor models strategies for perspective-taking, encourages critical reflection on learners' own cultural assumptions, and designs tasks that require the negotiation of meaning across cultural boundaries.

This role is particularly demanding in the military context, where hierarchical structures, institutional norms, and professional identities may create resistance

to the kind of open, reflective dialogue that intercultural mediation requires. Instructors must therefore draw on both linguistic expertise and intercultural communicative competence – as theorized by Byram (1997) – which encompasses not only knowledge and skills but also the affective dispositions of openness, curiosity, and critical cultural awareness that underpin genuine intercultural engagement [2]. The development of these dispositions within military educational institutions requires sustained institutional commitment to intercultural education as a component of professional military training, alongside the cultivation of instructor competencies that extend well beyond the boundaries of traditional language pedagogy [17, 18].

In practical terms, the mediating role of the military ELT instructor manifests most visibly in the design and facilitation of intercultural learning activities that foreground the processes of cultural comparison, empathy, and negotiation. Instructors who adopt this role guide learners through structured encounters with cultural difference – whether through case studies drawn from multinational operations, simulations of cross-cultural communication scenarios, or reflective discussions that surface implicit cultural assumptions about authority, directness, or conflict resolution [15, 16]. These activities do not merely expose learners to cultural diversity as an abstract concept; they develop the practical intercultural skills required to manage ambiguity, suspend judgement, and sustain productive dialogue in the face of communicative tension. In this sense, the intercultural mediator does not replace the language teacher but expands the professional horizon of the role, integrating linguistic and cultural education within a unified pedagogical framework oriented toward the communicative demands of contemporary military leadership [13, 18].

3. Developing the “Intercultural Leader” in the Classroom

3.1. Methodology

The methodological approach that underlies the scaffolding of the research is built on three layers: the theoretical framework, which is based on Byram's ICC Model in BANI; the selection of the dataset, driven by the applicability of ELT instruction materials used in military higher education institutions (HEIs); the analytic design, specifically created for and adapted to the intersection of the two afore-mentioned elements, aimed at correlating the operationalized ICC dimensions with ELT activities and the specific tasks identified in the dataset.

3.1.1. Theoretical framework – Byram's ICC model in BANI

In the broader field of intercultural communication studies, Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) framework provides a foundational lens for understanding how language education can cultivate the adaptive, culturally aware professionals required in volatile BANI environments. Byram argues that effective communication across cultures depends not only on linguistic proficiency but on a multidimensional set of competencies – including attitudes of openness, cultural knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, the ability to discover and interact in unfamiliar contexts, and critical cultural awareness. These dimensions collectively position learners to navigate ambiguity, negotiate meaning, and mediate cultural differences – capabilities that are increasingly indispensable in organizations where brittleness, anxiety, nonlinearity, and incomprehensibility shape daily operations. By embedding ICC into ELT practice, educators can better prepare learners to function as resilient communicators who can interpret complex signals, bridge cultural frameworks, and maintain cohesion in diverse, high-stakes organizational settings.

In military contexts – especially multinational coalitions, joint operations, and peacekeeping missions – Byram's ICC framework becomes a strategic asset, supporting rapid meaning-making under pressure, culturally

sensitive leadership, conflict de-escalation, trust-building across diverse units, and effective communication in nonlinear, ambiguous environments. In other words, ICC helps transform language learners into intercultural operators capable of functioning in the brittle, anxious, nonlinear, and incomprehensible conditions that define modern military missions.

The military-adapted ICC model serves as the methodological backbone of this study, guiding both the analysis of existing ELT practices and the design of pedagogical interventions suited to BANI-era military organizations. Rather than treating intercultural competence as an abstract construct, the model operationalizes each of Byram's dimensions – Attitudes, Knowledge, Interpreting and Relating, Discovery and Interaction, and Critical Cultural Awareness – into observable communicative behaviours relevant to multinational military operations. This adaptation allows the research to evaluate ELT not solely on linguistic outcomes but on its capacity to cultivate operational openness, situational awareness, intercultural mediation skills, adaptive communication, and ethical judgment under pressure. Methodologically, the model informs the selection of classroom activities (e.g., simulations, role-plays, reflective debriefs, after-action reviews), the criteria for assessing learner performance, and the coding categories used in analysing classroom discourse and learner reflections. By aligning ELT tasks with the competencies required for interoperability and mission cohesion, the study positions the ICC framework as both an evaluative lens and a design tool. This ensures that the pedagogical recommendations emerging from the research are not only theoretically grounded but directly applicable to the communicative demands of BANI military environments, where clarity, cultural intelligence, and psychological safety are mission-critical.

3.1.2. Building the corpus – selection of the dataset

A content-driven analysis to address the research objectives of this paper has identified a number of 20 military manuals and workbooks in use as resources for English classes at the level of military higher education institutions in Romania and across military European HEIs. Of this number, the study examines 5 manuals and workbooks that are used in the Land Forces Academy, for military English classes during the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year, across all study programmes and military specialties. The resulting dataset is relevant in relation to the total number of the items in the corpus, representing 25%. Given that the main goal of the English Language discipline is to develop all four skills and prepare students

to function effectively in a professional context, i.e. the military, the contents of the manuals are largely focused on general military English (GME) and not particularly on branch-specific terminology. Moreover, one of the objectives of the study was to investigate the extent to which existing ELT practices and materials at the NBLFA promote intercultural resilience (O2), defined as an essential linguistic communicative ability. Therefore, starting from the premise that the manuals in the dataset are aligned with the objectives of the English Language syllabus, their selection was informed by both logical and pedagogical criteria.

A brief description of the selected manuals is presented in Table 1:

Table 1 Description of the manuals in the dataset

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY	MANUAL	SHORT DESCRIPTION
BASIC LEVEL	<i>BASIC MILITARY ENGLISH</i>	- a beginner-level collection of lessons on military terminology and basic vocabulary on the topics of: <i>Branches of the Army, Military Organization, Ranks and Appointments, Weapons, Military Vehicles, Leaders and Leadership</i> , etc.
	<i>BREAKTHROUGH</i>	- a military coursebook for beginners that teaches practical military topics such as: <i>Branches of the Army, Structure of the Army, Ranks and Appointments, Weapons</i> , etc.
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL	<i>CAMPAIGN 2 – English for the military</i>	- an intermediate-level military English coursebook that develops learners' communication skills through realistic military contexts, covering topics such as operations, equipment, command structures, and international missions.
	<i>READY, STEADY, GO - An Introduction to Military English Topics</i>	- a collection of exercises and practical activities, thematically organized into six chapters that cover concepts of intermediate military terminology: <i>Military Education, Military Uniforms and Equipment, Life on Base, Military Routines and Responsibilities, Military Training</i> , and <i>International Security Organizations</i> .
ADVANCED LEVEL	<i>CAMPAIGN 3 – English for the military</i>	- an advanced-level military English manual that covers more complex military communication focusing on mission planning and briefings, crisis and emergency situations, international cooperation,

		peacekeeping operations, security and risk assessment, and strategic coordination.
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A brief overview of each manual's level of difficulty and content has proven instrumental for progressively applying the analytic framework, enabling the systematic identification of tasks, topics, and instructional strategies, ranging from basic to intermediate and advanced, that correspond to the five ICC-based competencies.

3.1.3. Analytic design for a content analysis of military English manuals

Drawing on the BANI framework and Byram's ICC model, this study examines a dataset of military English manuals currently used at the NBLFA as core support materials for the semesters dedicated to military English instruction. By applying a content-driven analytic approach, the methodology seeks to determine the extent to which these materials promote the development of intercultural resilience – an

essential communicative capability in brittle, anxious, nonlinear, and often incomprehensible operational environments. The analysis focuses not only on linguistic content but also on the presence (or absence) of tasks, topics, and pedagogical strategies that align with ICC-based competencies, thereby assessing whether current ELT practices contribute to preparing learners for the intercultural demands of contemporary military operations.

Table 2 illustrates how the military-adapted ICC model directly informs the design of ELT activities intended to prepare personnel for communication demands in BANI military environments. Each ICC dimension is paired with pedagogical tasks that operationalize intercultural competence in ways that reflect real-world military challenges.

Table 2 Analytic design – operationalized ICC dimensions and their correlations with ELT activities and identified tasks

MILITARY-ADAPTED ICC DIMENSION	ELT ACTIVITIES	EXAMPLES OF TASKS (from consulted manuals)
ATTITUDES Operational Openness & Mission-Focused Empathy	- Perspective-taking tasks comparing different military cultures	Task 11/p.19 (speaking) – <i>Ready, Steady, Go</i> Task 7/p.21/Unit 2/Delta (writing) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Tasks 8 & 9/p.31/Unit 3/Delta (writing) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Task 4/p.81/Unit 8/Delta (speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Task 7/p.105/Unit 11/Alfa (speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Task 8/p.111/Unit 11/Delta (speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Task 8/p.111/Unit 11/Delta (speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Task 8/p.115/Unit 12/Alfa (speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Task 8/p.119/Unit 12/Charlie (speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i>
	- Role-plays requiring respectful negotiation with international interlocutors	Task 8/p.13/Unit 2 (speaking) – <i>Breakthrough</i> Task 7/p.41/Unit 6 (speaking) – <i>Breakthrough</i> Task 6/p.33/Unit 3/Echo (speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Task 4/p.103/Unit 10/Echo (speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i>
KNOWLEDGE Cultural & Operational Situational Awareness	- Lessons on coalition communication styles and hierarchy norms	Unit 8/pp.42-45 (vocabulary + 4 skills) – <i>Breakthrough</i> Unit 9 (Parts I and II)/pp.50-56 (vocabulary + all 4 skills) – <i>Breakthrough</i> Unit 2/pp.11-14 (vocabulary + all 4 skills) – <i>Basic Military English</i>

		Unit 9/pp.42-46 (vocabulary + all 4 skills) – <i>Basic Military English</i> Unit 2/pp.14-17/Alfa & Bravo (vocabulary + all 4 skills) – <i>Campaign 2</i>
	- Vocabulary work tied to joint operations, briefings, and SOPs	Unit 11/pp.52-54 (vocabulary) – <i>Basic Military English</i> Task 7/p.25/Unit 4 (vocabulary + reading) – <i>Breakthrough</i> Unit 9/pp.84-87 & 92-93/Alfa, Bravo & Echo (vocabulary + all 4 skills) – <i>Campaign 2</i> Tasks 2 & 3/p.26/Unit 3/Bravo (listening) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Tasks 2, 3 & 4/p.56/Unit 6/Bravo (listening) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Unit 9/pp.84-87/Alfa & Bravo (all 4 skills) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Unit 12/pp.116-117/Bravo (all 4 skills) – <i>Campaign 3</i>
	- Case studies of past multinational missions highlighting cultural cues	
INTERPRETING AND RELATING Intercultural Mediation in High-Stakes Contexts	- Simulated radio/briefing with ambiguous and conflicting info	Task 7/p.41/Unit 6 (listening) – <i>Breakthrough</i>
	- Clarify and reframe drills	Task 10/p.26/Unit 4 (listening) – <i>Breakthrough</i> Task 11/p.27/Unit 4 (speaking) – <i>Breakthrough</i> Unit 2/pp.20-21/Delta (all 4 skills) – <i>Campaign 2</i>
	- Mediation tasks resolving cultural misunderstandings in teams	
DISCOVERY AND INTERACTION Adaptive Communication in Dynamic Operations	- Nonlinear problem-solving missions	Task 6/p.41/Unit 6 (vocabulary) – <i>Breakthrough</i> Unit 2/pp.22-23/Echo (all 4 skills) – <i>Campaign 2</i>
	- Cross-unit collaboration tasks	Task 7/p.21/Unit 3 Part II (speaking) – <i>Breakthrough</i> Unit 4/pp.42-43/Echo (vocabulary + reading, writing & speaking) – <i>Campaign 2</i> Unit 7/pp.72-73/Echo (reading, writing & speaking) – <i>Campaign 2</i> Task 13/p.72 (speaking) – <i>Ready, Steady, Go</i> Tasks 4, 5 & 6/p.43/Unit 4/Echo (writing + speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Unit 6/pp.62-63/Echo (reading & speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Unit 7/pp.72-73/Echo (reading & speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Tasks 7, 8 & 9/p.123/Unit 12/Echo (speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i>
CRITICAL CULTURAL AWARENESS	- After-Action Reviews (AARs) focused on cultural assumptions	

Ethical & Strategic Judgment in Multinational Contexts	- Reflection journals on leadership choices in intercultural scenarios	
	- Analysis of ethical dilemmas in coalition communication	Tasks 6 & 7/p.53/Unit 5/Echo (reading & speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Unit 9/pp.92-93/Echo (speaking & reading) – <i>Campaign 3</i> Tasks 5/p.113/Unit 11/Echo (reading & speaking) – <i>Campaign 3</i>

The first dimension – *Attitudes* – described as Operational Openness and Mission-Focused Empathy – maps onto activities that encourage learners to decentre from their own military culture and engage with diverse perspectives, such as perspective-taking tasks comparing different military cultures and negotiation role-plays. These exercises cultivate the attitudes necessary for maintaining cohesion and trust in multinational operations.

The second dimension – *Knowledge* – framed as Cultural and Operational Situational Awareness – is supported through tasks that integrate coalition communication norms, joint-operations terminology, and case studies of past missions. These activities help learners build the cultural literacy and contextual understanding required for interoperability.

The third dimension – *Interpreting and Relating* – translates into ELT tasks that simulate high-stakes communication, such as ambiguous radio exchanges or briefing scenarios, where learners must clarify, reframe, and mediate meaning under pressure.

The fourth dimension – *Discovery and Interaction* – translated as Adaptive Communication in Dynamic Operations – is developed through nonlinear mission simulations and time-sensitive negotiation exercises that mirror the unpredictability of BANI environments. These tasks train learners to adjust their communication strategies in real time.

Finally, the fifth dimension – *Critical Cultural Awareness* – interpreted as Ethical

and Strategic Judgment in Multinational Contexts – is reinforced through reflective practices such as After-Action Reviews, leadership journals, and ethical dilemma analyses. These activities encourage learners to critically examine how cultural assumptions influence operational decisions. To deepen the analytical value of the design, a third column – Examples of Tasks (from the consulted manuals) – is introduced to capture how the competencies outlined in the military-adapted ICC model manifest in the actual teaching materials used at the NBLFA. While the first two columns establish the conceptual alignment between ICC dimensions and recommended ELT practices, this additional column grounds the model in empirical evidence by recording concrete tasks identified in the dataset. Including these examples allows the study to assess not only whether the manuals theoretically support intercultural resilience, but also how consistently and explicitly they operationalize ICC-aligned behaviours through real instructional activities. This column therefore functions as a bridge between theory and practice, enabling a more precise evaluation of the extent to which current materials foster the communicative adaptability, mediation skills, and cultural awareness required in BANI-era military contexts.

Together, the three layers of the analytic design facilitate the examination of how and if ELT can move beyond linguistic instruction to become a structured training space for developing intercultural leaders. By aligning classroom practice with the

competencies required in modern military operations, the model ensures that language training contributes directly to mission readiness, psychological safety, and coalition effectiveness.

3.2. Results and discussions

The quantitative analysis of the correlations between the ICC dimensions and the number of tasks that operationalize them has yielded the following results (Figure 1):

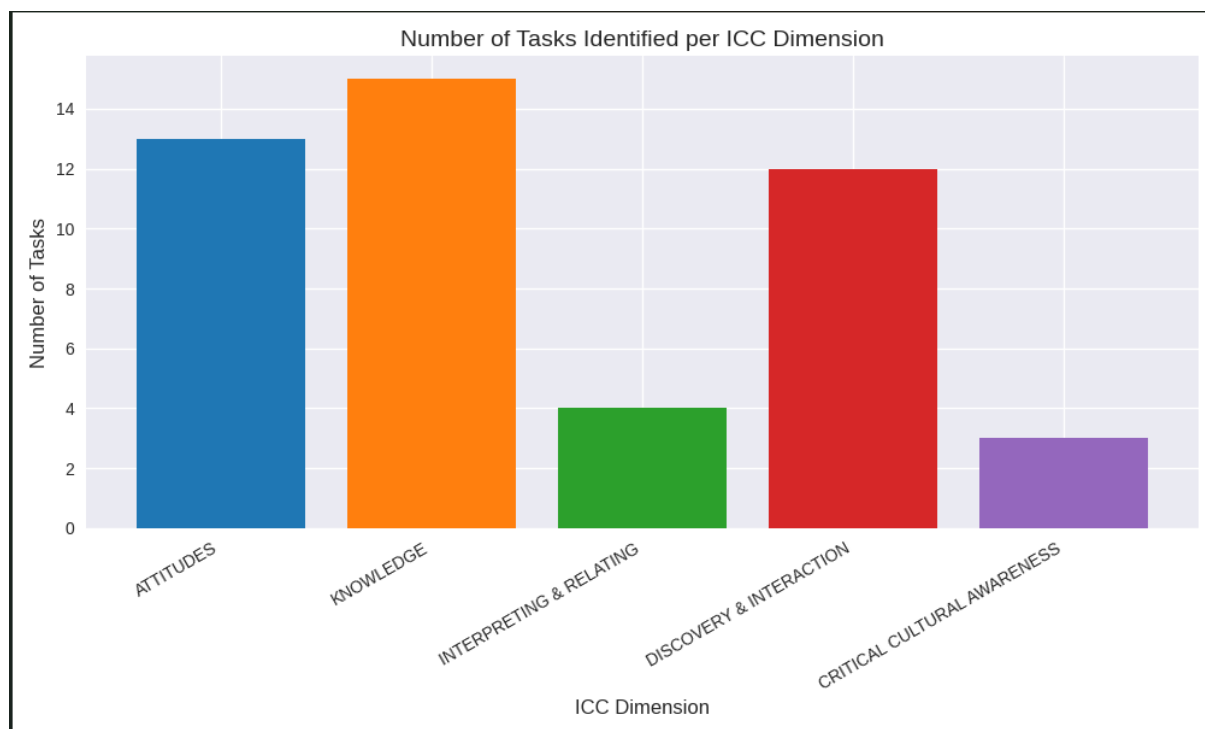


Figure 1: Quantitative analysis: summary of task counts
Source: the authors

Based on the quantitative results of the task distribution across the five military-adapted ICC dimensions, the qualitative interpretation reveals a clear imbalance in how intercultural competencies are operationalized in current ELT materials. The *Knowledge* dimension is the most extensively supported, with 15 identified tasks, followed closely by *Attitudes* (13 tasks). These two dimensions together account for over half of all identified tasks, reflecting a curriculum design approach that prioritizes operational terminology, coalition communication norms and empathy and openness in multinational contexts, all of which are foundational competencies for interoperability.

A moderate representation of the dimension *Discovery & Interaction* is reflected by the 12 identified tasks that target adaptive communication in dynamic operations. However, the high number of collaboration

tasks suggests that team based operational communication is well supported in ELT materials across all levels.

In contrast, *Interpreting & Relating* (4 tasks) is markedly underrepresented, with few activities targeting mediation, reframing, or ethical reasoning in multinational contexts. This uneven distribution suggests that while foundational and interactional competencies are well integrated, higher order intercultural judgment and mediation skills remain insufficiently embedded in existing ELT task design.

The critical gap has been identified in the area *Critical Cultural Awareness*. With only 3 tasks, this dimension is the least operationalized, indicating that ethical reasoning, cultural assumptions, and leadership reflection are rarely embedded in ELT tasks, despite their importance in NATO aligned training.

Furthermore, the distribution of the four language skills across the identified tasks shows a clear predominance of *Speaking* activities, which appear most frequently across dimensions such as *Attitudes*, *Discovery & Interaction*, and *Critical Cultural Awareness*. These speaking tasks typically support interactional competencies – role-plays, collaboration, negotiation, and ethical discussions – reflecting the communicative demands of multinational military environments. *Reading* and *Writing* tasks occur less consistently and usually in combination with other skills, often embedded in multi-skill units that introduce and focus on the assimilation of operational vocabulary or scenario-based problem-solving. *Listening* tasks are the least represented overall, appearing mainly in low-level activities such as simulated briefings or clarification drills. This distribution suggests that while the materials strongly emphasize oral communication, they provide more limited opportunities for learners to develop receptive skills – particularly listening – which are essential for accurate comprehension in high-stakes operational contexts.

Overall, the analysis shows that while the ELT materials provide uneven coverage of ICC-related skills – with strong representation of knowledge-building, attitudinal openness, and collaborative interaction, but far fewer opportunities for mediation or critical cultural reflection – many of the existing tasks hold latent potential for intercultural development. Several speaking-based activities, multi-skill units, and scenario-driven tasks could be adapted to meet ICC objectives, depending on the teacher's pedagogical approach and the specific composition of the learner group. This adaptability is particularly valuable in international semesters, where diverse cohorts naturally create authentic intercultural encounters that can enrich or transform the intended learning outcomes. In such contexts, even tasks not originally designed for ICC can be leveraged

to foster deeper cultural awareness, ethical reasoning, and operational empathy, provided they are framed and facilitated with intercultural intent.

4. Conclusions

The performed content-based quantitative and qualitative analysis of the selected military English manuals in use during English language instruction at NBLFA has revealed a limited presence of tasks that linguistically operationalize the higher-level ICC dimensions, such as mediation, adaptive communication and ethical judgement. These limitations indicate that current ELT pedagogy is insufficiently equipped to promote intercultural resilience, with particular focus on building the students' ability to navigate ambiguity, build psychological safety, and co-construct meaning in multinational settings. Consequently, we argue for conceptualizing ELT as a strategic component of organizational resilience in military education.

To this end, we propose a theoretical training model that positions ELT as a “leadership-development ecosystem” that cultivates intercultural competence, adaptive communication, and cognitive agility through four integrated components:

- (1) **Experiential Scenario-Based Learning:** Learners engage in simulations that mirror the brittleness, anxiety, nonlinearity, and incomprehensibility of real multinational operations. These scenarios foreground ambiguity, cultural diversity, and incomplete information, prompting learners to negotiate meaning, manage emotional responses, and co-construct solutions in English.
- (2) **Intercultural Communication Workshops:** Structured modules introduce frameworks such as cultural dimensions, communication styles, and conflict-management approaches, enabling learners to analyse interactions through an intercultural lens rather than a purely linguistic one.
- (3) **Reflective Practice and Metacognitive Training:** Guided reflection sessions help learners examine their assumptions, biases,

and communication patterns, fostering self-awareness and emotional regulation – key traits of intercultural leadership.

(4) Collaborative Leadership Tasks: Group projects require participants to assume rotating leadership roles, coordinate across cultural perspectives, and make decisions under pressure, reinforcing the link between language use, relational dynamics, and mission effectiveness.

Together, these components create a dynamic training model in which ELT becomes a platform for developing leaders capable of navigating the complex human terrain of BANI military contexts.

The pedagogical implications of the proposed model are rooted in a coherent integration of the adaptive potential of the findings of the study, which position ELT not merely as language instruction but as a leadership-development ecosystem. This structural re-conceptualisation will positively impact curriculum design and classroom practice, while enhancing teacher expertise. First, the integration of experiential scenario-based learning requires instructors to shift from controlled, accuracy-focused tasks toward dynamic, ambiguity-rich simulations that mirror the BANI characteristics of real multinational operations. This demands a pedagogy that tolerates uncertainty, foregrounds meaning-making over error correction, and encourages learners to manage emotional responses while negotiating culturally diverse perspectives. Second, the inclusion of intercultural communication workshops implies that teachers must be prepared to

explicitly teach intercultural frameworks – not as abstract theory, but as analytical tools that help learners interpret communication breakdowns, hierarchy norms, and conflict styles encountered in scenario work. Third, the emphasis on reflective practice and metacognitive training positions reflection as a core pedagogical routine rather than an optional add-on; teachers must facilitate structured debriefs, guide learners in examining biases, and cultivate habits of self-monitoring that support intercultural leadership. Fourth, collaborative leadership tasks require instructors to design group work that goes beyond cooperative language practice, embedding rotating leadership roles, decision-making under pressure, and culturally informed coordination.

To sum up, ELT has a tremendous potential to cultivate intercultural resilience by promoting communication, normalizing clarification strategies, and reframing the teacher's role from linguistic authority to intercultural mediator. Through nonlinear problem-solving tasks, simulations of virtual “culture clash” scenarios, and reflective practices that surface hidden cultural assumptions, ELT classrooms must become laboratories for developing the intercultural leader: a professional capable of decentring, negotiating ambiguity, and sustaining trust across diverse teams. We conclude that ELT functions as the connective tissue of resilient BANI organizations and call on ELT practitioners to embrace their emerging role as coaches who prepare teams for a world where communication is increasingly nonlinear, unstable, and difficult to interpret.

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