Aligning Language Learning with Professional Development: How to Teach Military Leadership in Language Classes?

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Background

The cultivation of leadership competencies is integral to the professional development of officer cadets. In order to provide sustained, cross-curricular support for the development of future military leaders, the Estonian Military Academy has introduced and adopted a military leader competency framework (MILTIC-model) grounded in the principles of manoeuvre warfare and mission command.

Premises

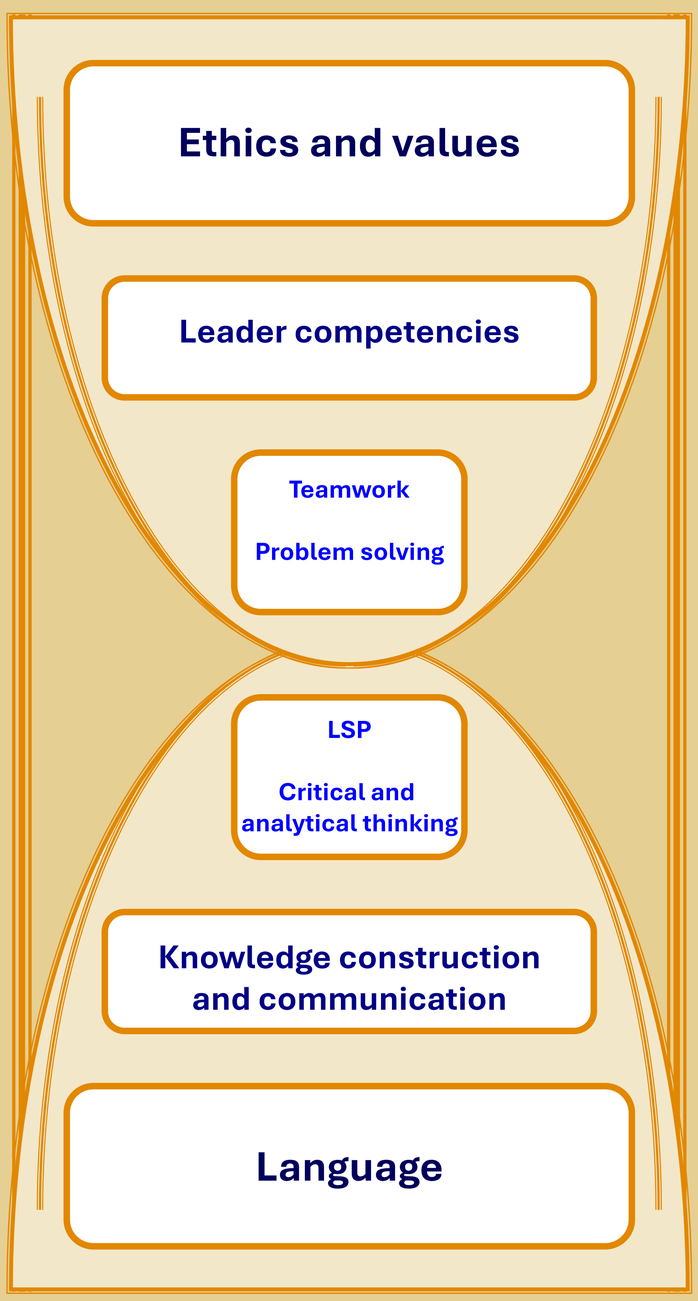
- Language is fundamental to all aspects of military leadership and professional education.
- Language underpins communication, decision-making and professional practice.
- Language learning contributes to the development of these transferable skills.

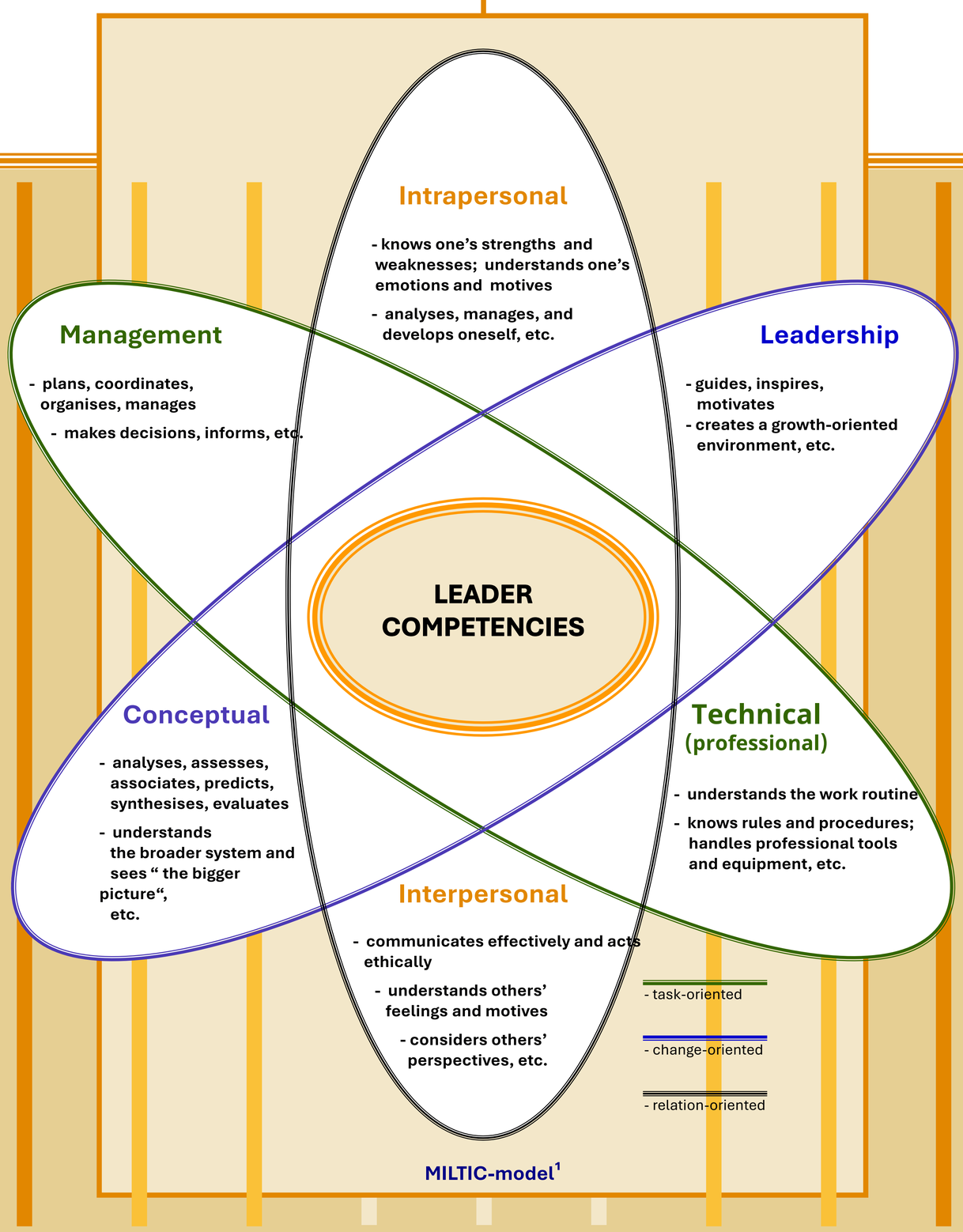
Research problem

While the competencies identified in this framework are inherently transferable across the curriculum, limited attention has been paid to their integration into language course syllabi and to their systematic development through language training.

Aim

The aim of the research project "The Development of Military Leader Competencies in Language Learning and Teaching" is to investigate the potential of the language classroom as a meaningful context for the development of military leadership competencies.

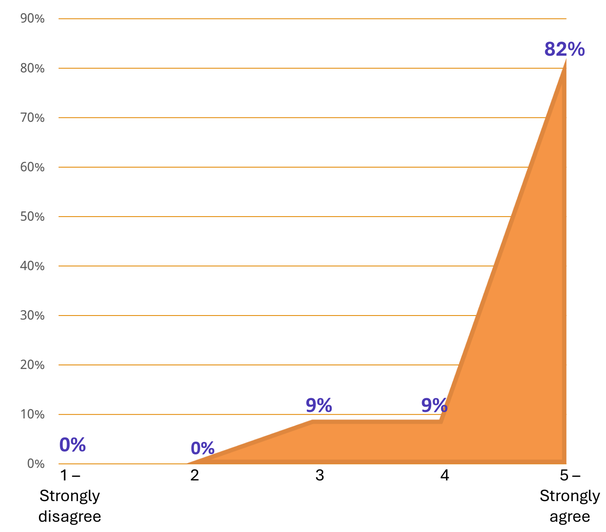




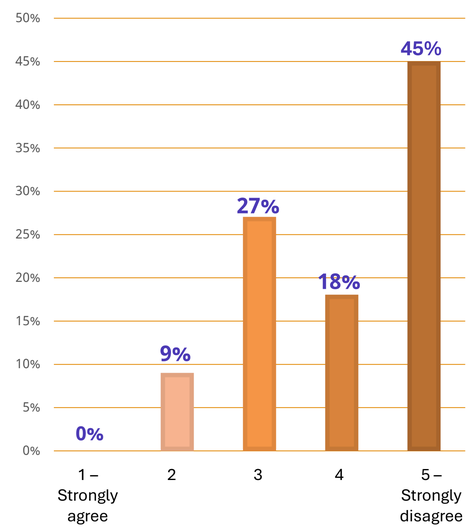
MILTIC-model[1]

Current findings[2]

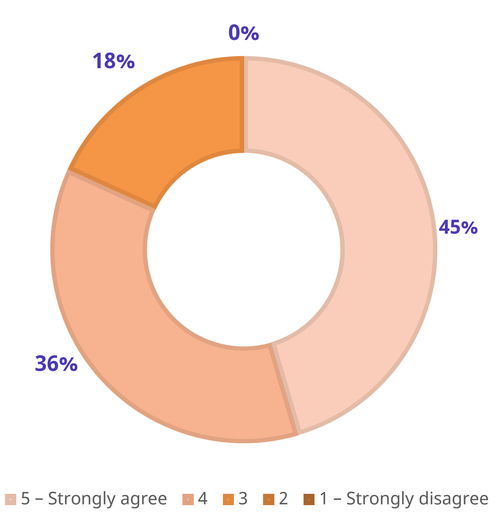
- Pilot questionnaire: development of interpersonal (communication and teamwork) and intrapersonal (self-management and self-reflection) competencies (MA students, Russian A1)



Classroom conversations build communicative self-confidence



Group work helps to understand content better and encourages active participation



Language learning helps to develop planning and self-reflection skills

[1]Säälik, Ü.; Ermus, A.; Männamaa, I.; Toom, L.; Kasemaa, A. 2020. "Kaitseväelise juhi pädevusmudel ". In *Sõjateadlane (Estonian Journal of Military Studies), (14),* p. 25.
[1]Säälik, Ü. 2022. „Military Leader's Identity, Role, And Competencies: Interrelated Aspects of Leader Development". In *The Defence Horizon Journal*, Oct 24, 2022. https://tdhj.org/blog/post/military-leader-identity-role-competencies/. Accessed 24.09.2026
[2]Hainoja, A.; Sirkel, K. 2025. "Language Learning as Leadership Training? Rethinking Adult Language Education through the Lens of Soft Skills". In *18th International Conference "Innovation in Language Learning". Proceedings*, pp. 452-457.