

Edgewater College led an interactive workshop exploring the development of aviation English instructors.

The workshop took an experiential approach to exploring

1. The qualities of an ideal aviation English instructor
2. The difficulties in finding suitable aviation English language instructors
3. Solutions to these problems within a teacher-training framework.

The workshop was delivered by experienced teachers who are certified by the Irish Department of Education to train teachers. The trainers have also designed and delivered aviation English programmes.

The workshop was very well attended with latecomers something of a nuisance. We all divided into groups and set out the qualities of our ideal instructor. The various qualities were boarded. Then each group was given 2 cvs. One a very experienced EFL instructor with a huge amount of ESP experience, the other a retired pilot with a basic TEFL course. The TEFL course had no teaching practice other than microteaching.

The groups were asked to decide who they would hire and the conditions of the job were set out in the form of a newspaper add. The discussion was quite heated but unfortunately the former pilots in the room did not participate. The conclusion was that all groups would hire the EFL teacher.

We then went on to discuss the value of subject matter knowledge in English for special purposes. Some research was outlined in brief which suggested that any subject knowledge on behalf of the instructor was a hindrance to students' language acquisition. Other research was referenced which suggested that after 6 months teaching ESP a teacher becomes a content teacher rather than a language teacher. A further study was mentioned which suggested only an expert could teach ESP (the poorest research by the way). Unfortunately by this stage the room had become overcrowded and any group work was impossible-so we referenced the research on a slide and provided an e-mail where the research could be requested-to date not one person has requested the work.

The conclusion of the workshop were somewhat haphazard as the size of the room and the amount of people in it made movement impossible but the basic moos was EFL instructors over so called subject matter experts. It has to be noted that the majority of the group were English teachers. I did get some feedback on the use of pilots in an English class after the workshop.

If anyone wants a reference to the research they can contact mick@edgewater.ie