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Working Group 2
Aviation English teacher training

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About 20 people from both teaching and operational backgrounds attended this working group and provided input on the 6 topics below.

Aviation English teacher training has several different components, some practical, some more theoretical. More than many areas for which language is taught, effective Aviation English teacher training requires commitment to a continuous learning process on the part of the teacher, given the complexity and very wide range of fields that are addressed in flight operations. No purely theoretical curriculum will provide the teacher with the sort of first-hand experience required to conduct communicative aviation language teaching with sufficient face validity.

TOPIC 1: On-the-job exposure to an aviation environment

INTRODUCTION: Given current safety restrictions in a post 9/11 world, physical access to flight deck and control centre environments for observation and recording has become extremely difficult. This report suggests a number of ways in which direct experience can be acquired by teachers.

OBJECTIVES: Acquire sufficient familiarity with pilots / controllers operational environments to be able to understand the relevance and implications of radiotelephony communications and to provide students with a credible interface.

- Establish partnerships with airlines and ANSPs in order to facilitate access to authentic operational situations, documents, expertise and recordings.
- Use flight and ATC simulators
- Follow ab initio or type qualification ground school courses / air traffic controller training courses
- Request national Authorities to facilitate access to operational environments for teacher training purposes
- Set up personal exchange programmes between universities and airlines / ANSPs / training centres whereby language teaching organisations provide a certain amount of language training free of charge in exchange for places within professional training courses and operational situations
- Make sure that teachers familiarize themselves with the specific conditions in which their own students work
- Familiarize teachers with the issues involved in operating with multi-cultural crews
- Organise presentations to be given by pilots and controllers to teacher training classes.
- Ensure that teachers are fully aware of the high stakes of training for and testing for proficiency and the effect this may have on students' behaviour and attitudes

NOTE: Should levels of exposure to operational environments by Aviation English teachers be standardised in terms of time spent and the nature of the familiarity?

Even if ICAO is unable to endorse Aviation English training, is there not a case for ICAO defining the standards and content of an Aviation English teacher training course?

Regulating Authorities have a responsibility for keeping the Aviation language training industry up to date.

TOPIC 2: Aviation English teacher theoretical training curriculum

INTRODUCTION: The fundamental general education and EFL standards laid down in Doc. 9835 are prerequisites which should be complied with. However, Aviation English teachers can be effectively trained from either EFL or operational backgrounds.

OBJECTIVES: Acquire sufficient knowledge of aviation operational environments and technology to be able to use aviation materials effectively for language teaching purposes.

Content:

- A certain amount of R/T
- In-flight procedures
- Standard phraseology and plain language
- Aviation language continuum
- Meteorology, avionics, aircraft construction, aerodynamics, airframe, airspace, ground operations, IFR/VFR, flight plans, airport infrastructure, types of control, navigation, engines, security, safety, flight phases, hydraulics, electrical generation, flight controls, operational hazards, health, charts, professional associations, etc.
- Acronyms
- Human factors
- Social / cultural awareness
- The regulatory environment: ICAO and national civil aviation Authorities.
- ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements, Rating Scale and Holistic Descriptors
- ICAO LPR Speech Sample CD
- Aviation industry publications
- Resources: bibliographies, web sites, training and safety videos, ICAEA

Attitudinal and behavioural aspects

- Incite curiosity and promote lifelong learning
- Demonstrate ways in which teachers can learn from their students and establish a partnership in which different types of knowledge are exchanged
- Define the qualifications and characteristics of the profile of a good Aviation English teacher trainer
- Give language teachers practice working with subject matter experts

NOTE: Initial training should not be in too much depth as the scope of knowledge is very wide, but effective Aviation English teaching does require understanding of the relevance of communicational situations, which in turn requires in-depth knowledge to be acquired over time. The initial training should, therefore, provide a robust framework within which further knowledge can be assimilated and made meaningful.

Formal teacher training should be prepared and consolidated by a rational curriculum of self-study.

TOPIC 3: Continuation training and apprenticeship techniques

INTRODUCTION: As mentioned above, a satisfactory grasp of subject matter can only be acquired over time and the initial Aviation English teacher training can only be designed as a general introduction with a view to priming the new teachers' ongoing learning.

OBJECTIVES: Provide a structured, rational framework for teachers to pursue their familiarisation with the aviation environment.

- Provide teachers with 'logbooks' to enable them to track the subject matter and materials they should be familiar with
- Deliver 'follow-up' tutorials / coaching to structure self-access study
- Assign lower level competency groups to less experienced teachers

- Organise teaching in tandem with less experienced teachers working with senior teachers
- Phase in new teachers
- Use a modular approach so that teachers gradually become familiar and proficient with different parts of the course.
- Enhance awareness of Quality Assurance issues and means of monitoring / auditing the standard of training delivery over time
- Emphasize the importance of maintaining the standards of induction for new teachers

NOTE: There was no consensus on the requisite duration of teacher training.

Aviation English teacher training should be self-regulated / monitored.

TOPIC 4: Specific linguistic awareness

INTRODUCTION: The use of language in Aviation is not like its use in other fields of activity; the stakes in terms of safety are so much higher and the criteria of proficiency are different from those practised in general or business English.

OBJECTIVES: Allow new Aviation English teachers to adapt to the specific characteristics of Aviation English and assess their students according to purely communicative criteria.

Content:

- Realize that only spoken language is being addressed
- Develop a communicative approach to language teaching
- Constantly refer back to the criteria of the Rating Scale
- Recognize that native-speaker idiomatic speech is not a model to be achieved
- Emphasize pronunciation
- Identify the various communication functions used in R/T, e.g. giving orders, acknowledging, clarifying, paraphrasing, requesting etc.
- Analyze the structure, duration and rate of formulaic speech
- Accommodate different pronunciations when they are not an obstacle to unambiguous communication

Strategies:

- Employ retired pilots and controllers
- Use both applied linguists and aviators in the same training programme

TOPIC 5: Types of practical teacher training exercise

INTRODUCTION: No Aviation English teacher training programme can be satisfactory without an extended period of actual teaching practice, repeating different types of exercise, under the guidance of an experienced teacher.

OBJECTIVES: Ensure that trainee Aviation English teachers are able to combine and apply their specific knowledge to practical classroom teaching situations and the preparation of lessons.

- Prepare lesson plans
- Develop exercises using recordings
- Observe other teachers and give feedback
- Identify source materials
- Train to assess linguistic ability in operational terms and with reference to ICAO Rating Scale.
- Identify learning objectives in Aviation English
- Create learning benchmarks
- Practise developing and delivering communicative lessons from raw materials

- Analyze teaching objectives
- Conduct full-scale classes in a controlled environment
- Video training sessions for subsequent analysis and comment
- Work in pairs with more experienced teachers or with peers

NOTE: Trainee teachers should be assessed during their training and before qualification using a detailed checklist of proficiency criteria.

Qualification may be conditional upon remedial study or practice.

TOPIC 6: Blended learning and student monitoring

INTRODUCTION: Given the limited availability of both pilots and controllers to follow classroom sessions, distance learning will in most cases be an important component in an Aviation English curriculum. Teachers will need to be able to coordinate and manage learning systems comprising both classroom time and distance learning in various forms.

Furthermore, with large numbers of learners involved, often in different locations, monitoring and following up learners will be a significant part of teachers' roles.

OBJECTIVES: Provide teachers with awareness of the issues involved in coordinating conventional classroom teaching with various forms of distance learning (resource centre, group work, CBT, WBT etc.) in terms of content, complementarities, follow-up, monitoring, use of LMS etc.

- Identify skills best addressed in classroom and distance learning
- Recognize the specific features and opportunities offered by the components of blended learning
- Gain awareness of hazards in all-classroom and all-online learning
- Appreciate varying individual learning styles and difficulties
- Design systems to assess interim progress
- Study techniques for facilitating students working together
- Identify ways of creating a supportive social environment to enhance learning, not just self-study

NOTE: It is important to remember that access to modern computer technology is very unequal throughout the world. Training systems which rely heavily on hi-tech may be quite inapplicable in some regions of the world.

Teachers should be reminded that successful and sustainable learning will require a supportive learning environment in which the whole organisation is involved and which takes into account as closely as possible the students' working conditions and constraints.