



The Design & Delivery of English Courses for Aviation Professionals at OISE Bristol, England, UK

Overview

This session initially gave an overview of the history of Oxford Intensive School of English's Aviation courses, which have been taught since 1992; and also introduced the school's academic philosophy of immersion in and confidence building with the English language. To promote rapid learning it is important that students are encouraged to experiment with new language and take part in a number of confidence-building activities throughout the course. These include debate/discussion; role-play; mini and full presentations. Important emphasis is placed on the need for the student to take responsibility for his/her learning through guided self-study sessions that also feature a consolidatory language performance activity.

The importance of addressing the individual student's language requirements through accurate needs analysis and subsequent tailoring of courses to include class and individual one-to-one study to address these needs was highlighted. This mix of class, individualised one-to-one study and supervised self-study periods can improve individual learning skills and maximise learning outcomes. Regular progress tests and reviews were found to ensure swift progress at the final testing stage.

Finally, examples of three courses currently run at the school were given. These courses provide initial English language training for newly qualified and established air traffic controllers and also refresher training for similar professionals who need to ensure their language skills are still rated at a minimum of level 4 on the ICAO scale. Future plans for pilot training and Aviation English instructor training courses were also mentioned along with the development of our own in-house testing system and service.

Immersion Course Classroom Activities

A typical immersion course is designed to improve English ability by exposing students to a variety of types and uses of English. It is recommended that to gain the maximum benefit from the course that students should only communicate in English during their course. Students stay with host families to maximize their exposure to English. No student is placed in a host family with another student with the same mother tongue. Classroom activities will typically target the following areas:

Fluency Activities:

- Speed, avoiding hesitancy
- Familiar and unfamiliar contexts
- Expressing abstract ideas
- Transition from rehearsed to spontaneous speech
- Skills in guiding the listener through complex argumentation
- Having a variety of language resources



Vocabulary Activities:

- Paraphrasing to cover vocabulary gaps
- Increasing the range of general and specialized, unusual, abstract subjects
- Use of partially acquired vocabulary
- Appropriacy
- Pronunciation
- Idioms - spontaneous use and appropriacy e.g. take off; make the runway

Grammar Activities:

- Tense accuracy
- Extended discourse
- Self correction, clarifying
- 'Residual errors' e.g. final 's'; is/are; these/those
- Complex structures
- Modals
- Connectives

Pronunciation:

- Individual sounds
- Stress, rhythm, intonation
- Word stress
- Does not obscure meaning
- World English dialect and accent ear training

Interaction:

- Appropriate responses and speed of response
- Taking conversational initiatives and authority
- Ability to sustain a long turn on a familiar topic
- Spontaneous and informative reaction to a wide range of situations
- Misunderstandings dealt with sensitivity and authority

Individualised Learning & Study Skills Focus

These classroom activities are supplemented by one-to-one work each week with a teacher-mentor to focus on particular individual weaknesses. Most teachers involved on the programme are TEFLQ i.e. educated to Master's or Diploma standard in EFL/ESL teaching and provide excellent focus upon pronunciation skills and overall communicative ability.

Contacts with Professionals & the Aviation Industry

Aviation professionals – air traffic controllers, pilots, engineers and technicians - are employed by the school to focus on real-world scenarios and case studies via seminars, talks and discussion of relevant topics.

Bristol is the home of Concorde and Airbus. Students are able to take an educational guided tour of these, with emphasis placed on interacting as much as possible with native speakers they meet.



Contacts with Native & Non-Native Speakers

Another successful feature of the courses has been the afternoon interview project, where students interview native and non-native speaker members of the public on an issue of their choosing, presenting their findings at the end of the course. Additionally, OISE Bristol also hosts international students on intensive General English and other immersion courses; students are encouraged to interact with them socially via the school social programme – 3 optional events per week – and formally via an interview project in-school to gain further ear training and interactive skills.

Typical daily timetable

Morning lessons are from 9.00 - 10.30 and 11.00 - 12.30:

- Aviation focus- speaking skills, simulation and role-play, documentaries and debate
- A visit from an English Air Traffic Controller to discuss ATC operations in the UK and to practice dealing with emergency situations.
- A pilot will provide a session on his career with emphasis on different airspace experiences and emergency situations
- Technical seminars from Concorde designers
- Presentations based on interview project (Assessment of Presentations in Final Week)
- Pronunciation
- World English/Accents & Dialects: students are exposed to non-native speaker English to improve understanding
- Discussion/Debate
- Speaking activities –Fluency focus
- Speaking strategies
- News Analysis
- Grammar
- Colloquial language focus – to improve comprehension strategies, particularly when in emergency situations.

Afternoon Classes are typically from 13.45 - 15.15; 15.30 - 17.00 and include:

- Tutorials (frequency at least once or more a week): Individual Language Needs Focus on Listening & Speaking skills; Presentation preparation
- Individual study skills - learning strategies to learn more effectively and become a more autonomous, responsible language learner. From classroom input and individual study plans (completed & revised weekly).
- Interview project - interviews with the local/ school population to improve confidence when speaking to native & non-native speakers
- Educational visits: Law courts, local newspaper, local BBC News studio visits with talks.



In addition, there are aviation- related excursions, for example:

- Airport ATC facility – including an opportunity to discuss ATC operations with Air Traffic Controllers
- [Concorde@Filton](#) including a tour of Airbus
- The Fleet Air Arm Museum – including a talk on the history of aviation

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