

# **Syllabus Design Theory into Practice**

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## **Summary**

This paper focuses on how to design and implement an Aviation English syllabus for Pilots and Air Traffic Controllers. It details the questions that need to be asked for any material writers or indeed any prospective purchasers of such materials to ensure they have appropriate and engaging training matter. Finally, the co-author of 'Aviation English' uses the forthcoming book to illustrate and provide practical examples of the theories advanced in this abstract.

## **Introduction**

There is a desperate need for trainers and instructors to locate teaching materials that can provide a basis for learning in the light of the ICAO English Language requirements of March 2008. In response to this growing demand there is an increasing amount of aviation English training material being produced. However there are certain fundamental principles of design and topic area that in many cases are either unknown or ignored..

## **Questions**

Before thinking about syllabus design and its practical application there are a number of questions that need to be answered.

### **Who?**

Are the trainees Pilots or Air Traffic controllers? Does it matter? Are they experienced or trainee/ab initio.

Will the students be learning as individuals or in groups? Do they know each other?

### **Where and when?**

Where will the studying take place? In the classroom or in the home? In a native English speaking country or non-native? Is there access to a computer and the internet? How do the shift patterns and irregular working hours of the aviation community fit into a schedule of language learning?

## **Why?**

As any instructor or teacher knows, a motivated student increases the chances of success. Is the ICAO requirement enough of a motivation. Do people want to learn English. What can we do to increase the motivation? Are the aims of communicating safely in the sky and reaching ICAO operational level 4 the same?

## **What ?**

What should be used as a source for the training/learning?

The two core skills for communicating effectively in the sky are speaking and listening and ICAO recognise this in their choice of language profile descriptors.

Reading and writing *skills* should not be taught. For example there is little use in teaching how to paragraph and order a large creative text. Writing can be useful as an aid to memory in language learning. Reading texts are essential to facilitate the learning of new lexis and language functions.

Pronunciation is of course vital in the understanding of a spoken language. But some 'mispronunciation' does not effect intelligibility.

Look at the descriptors to see what people need to get level 4 . While level 4 is not ideal, if everyone connected with flight communication attained it, there would be a lot less potential for miscommunication then there is at the moment.

There is a craft to material writing. There needs to be a little hook that will entice the learner to give them a reason to want to read, listen, speak or do. A reason beyond 'I'm doing this because I have to'.. It's not just the presentation of the language, it's what you do with the language. Language learners retain vocabulary much easier if the set of vocabulary has something in common. Ideally both grammatically and topically. For example a focus from a text on verbs of manipulation, push, pull, twist. etc

## **How ?**

Where to start? It's not enough to produce one isolated lesson. They need to fit together in a way that will cover all the language areas that are needed. Look at Document 9835 'The Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency'

You need to have a clear aim and objectives for what you are doing. This can be approached in a number of ways but *not* as a progression of grammatical tasks that some traditional course books take.

The aim is communication between aviation personnel in the air. What do you do to achieve this. What to focus on.... communication strategies, functions, lexical areas, non routine situations? What role if any will phraseology take?

## **Aviation English**

To illustrate one solution to these questions I will explain the contents of 'Aviation English' For further information please see the introduction in the sample unit.

There are four components of 'Aviation English'  
[www.macmillanenglish.com/aviationenglish/sample-unit.htm](http://www.macmillanenglish.com/aviationenglish/sample-unit.htm)

### **The coursebook**

#### **Audio CDs**

#### **An Interactive CD ROM**

#### **Teachers Book**

The coursebook is divided into 12 units with each unit containing four sections.

**Section 1** : Contains reading texts, which provide an introduction to the main theme of the unit, presentation of key lexis, and functional English where appropriate.

**Section 2** : Contains a listening/listenings some pronunciation work, additional lexis and functional English where appropriate.

**Section 3** : Contains a listening/listenings involving an R/T exchange which includes a mixture of phraseology and elements of the target language/functions from the preceding sections. The section threes are based around an Emergency or non-routine flight operation scenario. Further pronunciation work/functions are included where appropriate.

**Section 4**: This is an extension section which includes further practice and consolidation of language taught within the unit. It also includes a more explicit study of the structure that has been implicit in the preceding sections.

**The CD ROM** is also split into 12 units which match those of the main book. It has two sections.

Section 1 Contains further practice on Pronunciation and listening

Section 2 Contains animated interactive sequences where students have to use the language taught in the corresponding unit of the book in real time recorded sequences. They have the opportunity to compare their own speech to model responses and take the role of any of the characters in the recording

#### **Teachers Book**

As well as containing the listening scripts and answers, the teacher's book includes background information and advice to assist teachers (or self study students) in the delivery and context of the exercises of Aviation English.

We wrote 'English for Aviation' by the process below

- Think of non routine situation
- Brainstorm lexis/functions/strategies needed
- For each unit think about how the areas above can be taught
- Form syllabus

- Put together synopsis for each unit including type of text, language, vocabulary, pronunciation
- Check texts/ scripts with editors and operational personnel- ATC's and Pilots
- Trial and redraft
- Be flexible enough to make changes when necessary

## **Conclusion**

There are some things that will make the whole creative process easier.

Work as a team. It's helpful and necessary to have someone to bounce ideas off and to argue with. Finally we come back to questions. Constantly question what you are doing. For every single section of every single activity and piece of material that you write ask yourself what its purpose is and whether it fulfils that purpose.

For further information or any queries you may have about 'Aviation English' please contact Andy Roberts or Henry Emery and we will be happy to answer them.

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