



International Civil Aviation Organization

WORKING PAPER

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ASSEMBLY — 37TH SESSION

TECHNICAL COMMISSION

Agenda Item 34: Proficiency in the English language used for radiotelephony communications

**CUBAN EXPERIENCE REGARDING COMPLIANCE WITH
THE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY STANDARD**

(Presented by Cuba)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper is to provide information to the international community concerning the experience of the Republic of Cuba in achieving compliance with the ICAO language proficiency Standard.

Strategic Objectives:

This working paper relates to Strategic Objectives A and D.

References:

Annex 1 — *Personnel Licensing*
Doc 9835, *Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements*
Doc 9902, *Assembly Resolutions in Force* (as of 28 September 2007)

¹ Spanish version provided by Cuba.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The 32nd Assembly of ICAO, through Resolution A32-16, defined its policy on operational safety, establishing the Language Proficiency Rating Scale for Aeronautical Safety, as defined in Amendment 164 to Annex 1 — *Personnel Licensing* of the Chicago Convention, with Operational Level 4 established as the minimum proficiency level for aeronautical personnel.

1.2 In that respect, deadlines were established for application of the provisions concerning English language proficiency requirements, for both current and prospective license holders, and a deadline of 5 March 2008 was established for demonstration of such proficiency, as a mandatory requirement for licensing applicants or holders of pilot, air traffic controller or aeronautical station operator licenses.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE STRATEGY

2.1 The Republic of Cuba opted for a special and differentiated approach to the study and mastery of the English language through its National Strategy, organized and approved by the Civil Aviation Authority, the Cuban Institute of Civil Aeronautics (*Instituto de Aeronáutica Civil de Cuba – IACC*), standardizing language proficiency in the Cuban Aeronautical Regulations (*Regulación Aeronáutica de Cuba - RAC 1*), *Personnel Licensing*, which makes provision for the application of the Standard and its incorporation in aeronautical personnel licensing, and in *Legal Directives DJ 04/08*, certifying the National Language Group and *DJ 07/08*, approving the National Strategy for implementation of the Standard.

2.2 Once the National Strategy had been approved, implementation commenced with development spread over three stages, as follows:

- a) *First Stage*: Inventory and analysis of target population and of material and financial resources available;
- b) *Second Stage*: Development and implementation. Preparation of guidelines for project execution:
 - 1) study plan including three course programmes for different levels identified by the analysis:
 - Levels 1 and 2, Communication Course at Basic Level;
 - Level 3, Communication Course at Intermediate Level;
 - Level 4, Specialist Course in English for Aeronautics;
 - 2) training and methodological excellence for English teachers;

- 3) design of an examination system based on the specifications for the operational level defined in the *Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements* (Doc 9835); and
- c) Third Stage: Evaluation of Language Proficiency Level: Application of proficiency examinations and measurement of training impact.

3. RESULTS OF STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Two years ago, we arrived at the date specified in the Standards and the Cuban Authority for Civil Aeronautics declared its compliance with those Standards, as a result of the Standards Implementation Strategy, applied by the Aeronautics Authority through the English Language National Group.

3.2 The results achieved were encouraging. The Project Group's general aim to create a language teaching system that would function as a learning community and that would bring together individual teachers, groups of students and diverse classes throughout Cuba has been accomplished and has delivered consistent results nationally in terms of teaching quality and standardized proficiency levels.

3.3 The following facts bear witness to the results achieved. The performance of the Target Population of license holders, which included 556 pilots and air traffic controllers, was as follows:

- a) of 309 pilots tested, 306 achieved the Standard, that is 99.02 per cent. Of these, 294 attained Operational Level, that is 96.08 per cent and 12 achieved Level 5, representing 3.92 per cent;
- b) in the case of air traffic controllers, 244 out of a total of 247 achieved the Standard that is 98.78 per cent. Of these, 214 achieved Level 4, representing 87.70 per cent, 26 achieved Level 5, representing 10.65 per cent and 4 achieved Expert Level.

3.4 Notwithstanding the work carried out and the results achieved, we should not overlook the task of supervising and monitoring the strategy for implementation of the Standard among air transport operators and air navigation service providers and we must also continue to pursue methodological excellence and technical specialization (aeronautical phraseology) among each of the teaching sub-groups.

3.5 At this stage, we are prioritizing Periodical Refresher Courses in English for Aeronautics, which are taught annually to each license holder involved in the Standard so that they may practice and refresh their English periodically and thereby maintain the requirement for operational level proficiency or achieve a higher level among a greater target population.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Compliance with the new requirements for English language proficiency in the aeronautical industry has involved a significant investment of time and financial resources by license holders, air transport operators, air transport service providers, training centres, and the national economy. The Institute of Civil Aeronautics of Cuba has been involved in these changes and this investment, having

outlined its teaching policy in its National Strategy which, through various stages of progression, has achieved implementation and fulfilment of the Standard within the deadline established by ICAO.

4.2 This achievement has contributed to raising professional standards among aeronautical personnel and to the attainment of new skills among Cuban pilots and air traffic controllers, thereby improving communication efficiency, one of the areas in which it is possible to make a significant positive impact on operational safety, at relatively low cost and with moderate effort.

4.3 The most significant aspect of this strategy was that aeronautical personnel were not pressured, compelled or forced to take part, but rather, the strategy appealed to the innate sense of responsibility of all pilots and controllers who were encouraged to understand that an imperfect tool, such as language, must be used with utmost care and discipline and that its correct use is an important instrument for safety, just like any operational system, and that they should become as skilled and proficient in its use as they are in technical aspects of their work.

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