

Sharing Resources for English Language Improvement in International Aviation



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Aviation is a strange hybrid industry in which public bodies, international organisations and private companies rub shoulders, co-exist and interdepend.

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The concept of an altruistic, co-operation between competing businesses is not well enshrined in modern commercial practice.

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ICAO Document 9835 concerning aviation communications and the use of English makes multiple references to such practices. It describes them in terms which indicate that they play an integral part in the success of the 'better language for better safety' ethos of the new SARPS.

Doc 9835 3.2.3

“When the original principles of radiotelephony communication were established, emphasis was placed on the requirement for international cooperation in developing a solution to the problems of voice communication”.

Doc 9835 3.2.3

Although the objectives laid out in the original document have been supplanted by advances in linguistic understanding, the call for close international cooperation remains.....

..... some English-speaking organizations, airlines or training centres, may wish to explore how they might provide cost-efficient English language learning opportunities to code share partners or other airlines at minimal cost.

Doc 9853 4.3.6

“Optimum aviation English training solutions are developed consistently over time, with committed and qualified individuals motivated to stay the long course of aviation English materials development and with continued support from Subject Matter Experts....

.....The role of aviation experts in the aviation language teaching environment is to guide the language teacher towards appropriate content material and to maintain a high degree of technical accuracy in the language learning materials”.

Doc 9853 4.3.6

Aviation experts with instructional experience will make the best “partners,” able to contribute most positively to the language training.

Doc 9853 6.5.1

Test development

Best practice in language test development can be said to occur when representatives from all stakeholders participate in the process: pilots, controllers, administrators, operational trainers and aviation language trainers, guided by and working with applied linguists with a specialist background in language test development.

Doc 9853 8.2.1

Materials Development

One of the particular challenges facing aviation English teachers is the relative lack of commercially available and high-quality aviation specific language learning materials. Until more and better quality materials are available, teachers will need to continue to develop their own materials.

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The licensing requirements for ICAO SARPS LPRs represent a need which exists entirely within the professional and commercial aviation operational environment.

However, this is a need which cannot be satisfied entirely from within that environment. The industry will need the help of specialists from outside the industry to undertake language training and testing, at least in the first instance.

Evidence of co-operative initiatives between the aviation industry proper and English language training providers, particularly in under-resourced regions, are difficult to find.

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An exception is the EU-South East Asia Civil Aviation Project, funded by the EU and the European Aviation Industry through ASD

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Another remarkable co-operative venture
is The International Civil Aviation
English Association or ICAEA

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ICAEA, because of a lack of funding, has not been able to provide a permanent on-line or other service to those needing help and advice. The framework is perfect, the execution is lacking.

Underfunded and under-resourced ICAEA has struggled to make the impact it deserved.

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The small body of dedicated Aviation English teachers which exists in the world today have had to wander like the proverbial albatross until, by great good fortune, they collided with a colleague or an enlightened employer.

Another several thousand teachers have found themselves pitched headlong into the aviation English training arena with a background of zero knowledge of the aviation industry and in many cases with a scant knowledge of advanced language teaching or testing procedures.

Many teachers done wonders in a short time and some have been lucky enough to have found excellent employers who have offered professional support.

These teachers and their employers deserve praise.

Others, have fallen among lacklustre and unenlightened employers who offer little support and, in any case, fail almost entirely to appreciate what the essence of English for Aviation teaching is all about.

Who is 'The Industry'?

"The Industry" means anyone who participates in or benefits from the exercise of civil aviation business. Airlines, airport operators, aircraft manufacturers, engine manufacturers, ground services companies, catering companies, aircraft leasing firms, commercial aviation training schools, and commercial (privatised) and state-run Air Navigation Service Providers who derive the greater part of their income from navigation charges on the industry as a whole.

A simple solution:

Ticket price is comprised of :

Outbound flight	170.00
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Fuel tax	20.00
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Fuel Surcharge	15.00
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Airport Security Tax	15.00
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Language Training Tax	1.00
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The Flightenglish Forum

The flightenglish forum

(flightenglish-subscribe@yahoogroups.co.uk)

is a purely voluntary, non-subscription, web-based, discussion group set up to gather together a group of like-minded language training experts and teachers who share ideas and discuss the solutions to problems.

It shares this aim with the ICAEA Web forum

(icaea_world-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

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How Can the Aviation Industry Help?

A first obvious step for the industry to take is to provide financial and material support, to the language training community which is, in the main, composed of individual trainers working in precarious circumstances.

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1. Set up or Sponsor training schemes for teachers of aviation English to increase the pool of qualified professionals
2. Intervene directly in the testing and training scene by setting up an industry-wide non-commercial oversight agency. (see the Association of Raters proposed by Henry Emery)

3. Co-operate with materials writers and test item writers by providing access to authentic aviation text. In particular, it is illegal in most countries to listen to or to record radio telephony transmissions.

This severely restricts the teacher who, firstly, wants to obtain a familiarity with radio telephony and phraseology and, secondly, the teacher who wishes to use authentic training examples in the classroom or the test item writer who wishes to make meaningful practice or real tests.

4. Be open to teachers requiring advice or help with the creation of materials.

5. Include in company or organisation websites an educational section containing English language materials designed by and for language teachers which can be freely copied and used royalty free.

Include samples of documents, charts, manuals, recorded interviews with company personnel.

Provide photos and diagrams free of copyright to help in the preparation of classroom materials.

Apart from anything else, this can be a powerful source of positive brand publicity

The language training and testing community did not cause the problematic situation which is going to happen on 5th march 2008 but it is, nevertheless, being asked to play a large part in the solution of it.

The industry as a whole may have to encourage publishers, especially in developing countries, to produce affordable materials for their home market by offering subsidies or guarantees.

Lastly, the industry must proactively enter the education field with English language enhancement programmes as a priority. This will involve opening doors to teachers and materials writers and the funding of language research in the specialist field of air ground communications.

This must be regarded as investment and not as expenditure. It is an investment in overall aviation safety but it is an investment also in communicative efficiency which will, in the end, reduce costs as well as saving human lives. It is an investment worth making.



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