



**WORKING PAPER**

**ASSEMBLY — 37TH SESSION**

**TECHNICAL COMMISSION**

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

**IMPLEMENTATION OF ICAO LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY  
REQUIREMENTS AND PROPOSALS THEREOF**

(Presented by the People's Republic of China)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

China has consistently made unremitting efforts to implement ICAO requirements for English language used for radiotelephony communications. Presently, the majority of China's pilots engaged in the international operations have met ICAO language requirements. China will continue its efforts to strive to meet ICAO language proficiency requirements by March 2011. However, due to the fact that a number of pilots are aging, and their basic English language knowledge is limited, it still foresees some difficulties in the improvement of their language proficiencies within a short period of time.

**Action:** The Assembly is invited to take into full consideration the specific difficulties currently existing in States, where English is not the mother tongue, when implementing the language proficiency requirements and recommend the postponement to of the deadline specified in Assembly Resolution A36-11 to 5 March 2014 or other transition measures.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objectives A and D.
<i>References:</i>	ICAO State letter AN 12/44.6-09/53

<sup>1</sup> Chinese version provided by the People's Republic of China.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 China attaches great importance to the implementation of the requirements contained in the relevant Annexes of the Convention on International Civil Aviation, and has long made unremitting efforts to implement ICAO requirements for English language used for radiotelephony communications. These efforts include development of regulations, examination system, English language training for air carriers and increased transparency in examination. The major international airports in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, etc. are actively implementing English language air-ground communications.

1.2 It would be greatly appreciated if the 37th Session of the ICAO Assembly could consider postponing the deadlines of introducing language proficiency requirements by three to five years, taking into account the specific difficulties currently existing in the developing countries.

## 2. CHINA SUPPORTS THE REQUIREMENTS CONTAINED IN RELEVANT ANNEXES OF THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION

2.1 *Amendments to requirements in relevant regulations.* As a Contracting State to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, China fully recognizes that national regulations must comply with relevant requirements in the Annexes to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, and meet the ICAO requirements on English language proficiency ratings for flight personnel. In this regard, the English language proficiency requirements for pilots engaged in international operations contained in the “Rules of Certification of Civil Aviation Aircraft Pilot, Flight Instructor and Ground Instructor” (CCAR-61) and the “Rules of Certification of Operation of Large Airplane Air Carrier”(CCAR-121), have been revised accordingly on 30 October 2006.

2.2 *Distribution of related guidance materials.* The “Requirements of Using English Language for Communications and the Limit on Deviation of Article CCAR-121.479” (AC-121-FS-024), as well as “Rules on Issues Regarding English Language Ratings by ICAO for Communications” (AC-61FS-2008-05R2), specifically define the limits on flight personnel’s deviation from English communication requirements and provides various organizations with directives and guidance in order to meet specific requirements in implementing English language training and examination.

## 3. ACHIEVEMENTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING AND EXAMINATION OF CHINESE FLIGHT PERSONNELS

3.1 The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) always attaches importance to English language proficiency of flight personnel. CAAC started to introduce an English language project for flight personnel back in 1996. The examination included three components: professional flight English language examination, analogue air-ground communication examination, and en-route flight testing. In order to complement the implementation of CCAR-61 and CCAR-121, having recognized the importance and urgency of the English language training for flight personnel, the airlines in China organized English language training in accordance with the requirements of ICAO and those of CAAC in 2007, with active participation of flight personnel. An English language training plan was initiated for pilots, with adequate

support in the areas of organizational structure, training staff and financial investment. In addition, each airline also trained a number of English language instructors and delivered English language instruction in a well planned and gradually progressive manner. In order to ensure that airlines continue their English language training, CAAC closely monitors the competencies of the English language training organizations and conducts certification of their competencies by experts. After years of hard work, the English language proficiency level of flight personnel has improved, the qualification rate for English language level four has increased steadily, thus laying a foundation for the airlines to meet the requirements of international operations and to use English language for communications at the Capital Airport.

3.2 *Development of English language examination system.* From 2006 to late 2008, through an open bidding process, the Australian Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) was selected as the English language examination provider for China's civil aviation flight personnel. During this period, China conducted independent research and developed the "CAAC Pilot English Proficiency Examination (PEPEC)", which was put into operation in February 2008. The system guaranteed fair and impartial delivery of examination, eliminated monopoly and influence of human factors, and maximized the objectivity of the subjective-based examination system.

3.3 *Development of English language examination material database.* Harmonized standards and specifications have been adopted for testing, and various academies, English language training organizations, including foreign English language training organizations, were invited to compile the examination database. A group of experts was organized to help review the examination papers. Presently, a number of examination papers have been compiled. In order to make the examination database more interactive with actual flight operations, a "flight operations-oriented, airlines-oriented, flight safety-oriented" principle was put forward in May 2009 for the establishment of the pilots English language examination system. According to the said principle, those airlines which have international operations, such as Air China, China Southern and China Eastern airlines, were invited to participate in the compilations of the examination database, and other airlines were also encouraged to actively involve themselves in the compilation program as well.

3.4 *Training of instructors and evaluators.* The marking of the examinations requires that instructors and evaluators possess a high level of professional knowledge not only in the discipline of civil aviation, but the English language proficiency as well. Therefore, from the very outset of the design phase of the examination system, training and selection mechanisms were developed for these two types of professionals. A number of training courses were conducted for flight English language instructors and evaluators in order to provide them with technical training required for selection as instructors and evaluators in this area. To ensure that the examination instructors and evaluators conduct examinations and evaluations in a fair and impartial manner, the system also established a quality assessment mechanism. By setting specific parameters, statistics of the quality of the work of these two types of professionals will be made available automatically by computer, through which the coefficient of the quality of work will be available, thus ensuring quality performance by instructors and evaluators.

3.5 *Transparency of the information in English language training and examination for air carriers.* In early 2010, information on the English language proficiency rating examination of flight personnel nationwide was circulated regularly to all airlines and training organizations every quarter. As of 30 June 2010, China has 17 508 air transport pilots, 9 844 of which have certificates of English language proficiency Class 4 attached to their licences. There are 1 161 additional new holders of Class 4 and above certificates in the second quarter of this year. The ratio of Class 4 and above certificates is 56.23 per cent, in which the number of personnel with Class 4 and above certificates are 1 972, 2 053 and 1 626, respectively for Air China, China Southern, China Eastern airlines.

**4. IMPLEMENTATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOR  
RADIOTELEPHONY COMMUNICATIONS AT FOUR  
AIRPORTS IN BEIJING, SHANGHAI AND GUANGZHOU  
IS PROGRESSING STEADILY**

4.1 *English language used for radiotelephony communications at Beijing Capital Airport.* In order to take concrete actions to fully implement ICAO requirements for English proficiency for flight personnel, the Chinese Government is actively promoting progress this direction. Since 5 May 2008, among the air carriers operating to and from Beijing Capital Airport (excluding charter flights and extra flights), at least 30 per cent (inclusive) of flights were requested to use English language for radiotelephony communications with every ATC unit in Beijing. As of 5 May 2009, the percentage of flights using English for communications has gradually increased to 60 per cent. After 5 May 2010, all flights operating to and from the Capital Airport use English language for radiotelephony air-ground communications. Today, this work is advancing steadily, and the English language proficiency for communications by flight personnel has substantially improved. Airlines and ATC units did a great deal of work in the areas of organization, planning, monitoring and verification, etc. thus ensuring a successful implementation of English language radiotelephony communications at the Capital Airport. To ensure the successful implementation of English language radiotelephony communications at the Capital Airport, numerous inspections were organized for airlines operating at the Capital Airport. The flights and personnel who failed to use English language radiotelephony communications were censured publicly, and corrective actions were requested from them.

4.2 In the light of lessons learned at Beijing Capital Airport with respect to the implementation of English language radiotelephony communications, full scale English language air-ground communications were launched at Shanghai Hongqiao Airport, Shanghai Pudong Airport and Guangzhou Baiyun Airport. As of 5 May 2010, the air carriers that have international operations to and from airports in Shanghai and Guangzhou are required to use English language for air-ground communications. Starting from 5 May 2011, at least 30 per cent of the domestic flights operating by air carriers to and from airports in Shanghai and Guangzhou will be required to use English language for air-ground communications; starting from 5 May 2012, at least 60 per cent of the domestic flights operating by carriers to and from airports in Shanghai and Guangzhou will be required to use English language for air-ground communications; starting from 5 May 2013, a minimum of 80 per cent of the domestic flights operating by carriers to and from airports in Shanghai and Guangzhou will be required to use English language for air-ground communications; 100 per cent of flights using English language for radiotelephony air-ground communications will be determined on the basis of progress achieved.

4.3 According to a long-term plan, China will eventually implement English language for air-ground communications at all international airports nationwide.

**5. CONCLUSION**

5.1 Though the majority of China's pilots who are currently engaged in the international operations have met ICAO language proficiency requirements, a small number of pilots are aging and their basic English language knowledge is limited. Some difficulties are still foreseen in the improvement of language proficiency within a short period of time.