The end-users' perceptions of test content: Is it working?

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The end-users’ perceptions of test content: Is it working?

Angela Garcia
To present *Santos Dumont English Assessment*

To point out some of our concerns regarding our testing instrument

To show the main questions we asked pilots in an online survey we conducted this year in order to check what we need to improve
SDEA is the only approved test for civilian pilots in Brazil.

SDEA was developed and is managed by the Brazilian Civil Aviation Authority.

Its results range from level 1 to level 5.

It consists of an oral interview which takes approximately 30 minutes.

Each test is rated by at least two primary raters, an ELE and a SME. A third rater determines the final level in case there is a pass/fail difference between the two ratings.

Today we have 9 accredited centers throughout the country.

Approximately 10% of the ratings are checked at ANAC.
The CAA is responsible for the appeals process.

We are a team of 41 examiners.

From December 2007:

- 13,815 pilots have been tested;
- 29,542 tests have been delivered;
  - 106 Levels 1
  - 968 Levels 2
  - 8,786 Levels 3
  - 14,257 Levels 4
  - 4,490 Levels 5
  - 935 Levels 6 (only granted until September 2013)
Part 1: Aviation Topics
Part 2: Interacting as a Pilot
Part 3: Unexpected Situations
Part 4: Picture Description and Discussion
Part 1: Aviation Topics

- 7 general questions related to aviation, to the candidate’s professional experience or daily activities as a pilot.

**PART 1 – AVIATION TOPICS**

Part One: “Aviation Topics”. In this part, you have to answer seven questions related to aviation.

1) Tell me a little bit about your experience as a pilot.

2) What do you usually do before flying?

3) Tell me a little bit about the aircraft you are *(were)* flying (if pilot is not currently working).

4) How did you learn aviation English?

5) What aircraft do you dream about flying in the future? Why?

6) In your opinion, what are the good aspects of being a pilot? And the bad ones?

7) From your point of view, what can a pilot do to try to avoid accidents?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow-up questions, if necessary:</th>
<th>Can you tell more about that?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where? / What?</td>
<td>Have you ever been in/through this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you say that again, please?</td>
<td>situation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you give an example/some</td>
<td>Has it ever happened to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>examples?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Thank you. This is the end of Part One.
Part 2: Interacting as a Pilot

Role play: The candidate interacts with the Air Traffic Control as a pilot in 3 different situations. Each situation consists of 2 recordings.

**Situation 1**

You have just taken off from Miami Airport. Listen to Miami Tower and read back.

Wait for 3 seconds for test taker to take notes if necessary.

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**TRACK 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANAC 123, [MAINTAIN RUNWAY HEADING], [CLIMB TO SEVEN THOUSAND FEET], [SQUAWK FOUR FOUR THREE SEVEN]. CONTACT MIAMI DEPARTURE ON FREQUENCY [ONE TWO TWO POINT FOUR]. [4]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum interaction: “Maintain runway heading, climb to 7,000 ft, squawk / transponder 4437 and contact Miami Departure on 122.4”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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If the candidate did not interact with ATC as the pilot:

You are supposed to interact as if you were the pilot.

If the candidate asks for a second repetition:

You can only ask for one repetition.

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Now, your main altimeter and the stand-by one are showing different indications and you decide to maintain the same altitude you are flying at now. Call Miami Departure to report the situation and inform intention. Then interact appropriately.

Minimum interaction: “Miami Departure, I have unreliable altimeter indications. Request to maintain present altitude, ANAC 123.”

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**TRACK 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANAC 123, [MAINTAIN PRESENT ALTITUDE], THERE IS NO TRAFFIC IN THIS SECTOR. CONFIRM YOU HAVE [UNRELIABLE ALTIMETER INDICATIONS]. [2]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum interaction: “AFFIRM, I have unreliable altimeter indications. Maintaining present altitude, ANAC 123.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 3: Unexpected Situations

Task: The candidate listens to 3 different communications between a pilot and an air traffic controller. He/She has to report everything he/she understood and answer a question related to the audio. Then, in the end of Part 3, they have to compare the 3 situations in terms of severity.

Situation 1) Listen to Situation number One:

PILOT: MIAMI CENTER, ANAC 123, WE ARE NOW [EXPERIENCING VERY STRONG TURBULENCE] [AT FLIGHT LEVEL THREE ZERO ZERO]. [A PASSENGER IS INJURED]. [REQUEST RETURN TO JFK]. [4]

TRACK 8


Now tell me, in your own words, everything that the pilot and the controller said.

Wait for interaction

How can a pilot avoid a bad weather situation when overflying the ocean?
**Santos Dumont English Assessment**

**Part 4: Picture Description and Discussion**

**Task:** The candidate needs to describe a picture and answer three questions related to it.

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**Part 4 – Picture Description and Discussion**

Part Four, “Picture Description and Discussion”. In this part you have thirty seconds to look at the picture and then describe what you see. After that, I will ask you three questions. Are the instructions clear?

Show the picture to the test taker. Wait 30 seconds.

You may start now.

1) This picture was taken in 1957. Air traffic has increased a lot since then. What do you think are the main problems in relation to air traffic nowadays?

   **Rephrase, if necessary:**
   What are the problems with air traffic today?

2) What actions for the future would you suggest to be implemented to sort out these problems?

   **Rephrase, if necessary:**
   How can these problems be solved?

3) To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?
   “It was much easier to fly an airplane in the past than it is nowadays.”

   **Rephrase, if necessary:**
   How much do you agree with this statement?
   “It was easier to fly an airplane in the past than it is today.”

**Follow-up questions, if necessary:**
- Can you say that again, please?
- Can you give an example/some examples?
- Can you tell more about that?
- Can you explain it better?
- Have you ever been in/through this situation?
- Has it ever happened to you?

This is the end of the test. Thank you very much for coming.
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Final Reporting Form

TEST ID:
AZU 270

RELATÓRIO DE AVALIAÇÃO
Santos Dumont English Assessment

1. FUNDAMENTAÇÃO

2. OBJETIVO

3. ATIVIDADE

4. AVALIAÇÃO

5. Conclusão

6. Interações

Nível A1: Iniciante

Nível A2: Avançado

Nível B1: Proficiente

Nível B2: Avançado

Nível C1: ABC

Nível C2: Expert

Número total de Informações: 16/40

Assinado: [Assinatura]

Data: [Data]

ANEXOS: Relatório da Avaliação da ANAC, Avaliação Individual SNE, Plano de Ações, etc.

[Signature]

[Signature]
Main concerns and challenges

- There is no specific test for helicopter pilots
- There is no live interaction (role play) between the candidate and an air traffic controller
- Pilots might find some of the tasks irrelevant to their job
- There is need to recycle the test versions more frequently
What result did you last receive on the test overall?
How much experienced do you consider yourself to be in relation to flying international flights?

- Extremely experienced: 6.7% (114)
- Very experienced: 24.0% (408)
- Somewhat experienced: 29.0% (494)
- Little experienced: 17.4% (296)
- Almost not experienced or not experienced at all: 23.0% (391)
In your opinion, what is the importance of evaluating pilots and controllers’ plain English?

- Extremely important: 54.3% (843 respondents)
- Very important: 29.1% (452 respondents)
- Somewhat important: 12.8% (198 respondents)
- Little important: 3.1% (48 respondents)
- Not important: 0.6% (10 respondents)
- Not sure: 0.1% (1 respondent)
Main questions:

- In your opinion, how much does the test measure what is described in the ICAO rating scale?
- In general terms, do you consider the test to be adequate for testing (Pronunciation/Structure/Vocabulary/Fluency/Comprehension/Interactions) according to the ICAO rating scale?
- In your opinion, does the test assess the abilities described in (a)/(b)/(c)/(d)/(e)? (holistic descriptors)
Main questions:

The main objective of the ICAO LPRs is to assess pilots’ ability to communicate effectively with the air traffic controllers in non-routine situations using plain English.

- How well does the test meet this requirement?
- How well does Part 1 meet this requirement?
- How well does Part 2 meet this requirement?
- How well does Part 3 meet this requirement?
- How well does Part 4 meet this requirement?
Main questions:

→ Overall, do you think SDEA’s content is relevant for the purpose of evaluating pilots’ plain English in the context of pilot/air traffic controller communications?

→ Overall, do you think SDEA’s tasks are appropriate for the purpose of evaluating pilots’ plain English in the context of pilot/air traffic controller communications?
Main questions:

- How much confidence do you have in the result of the test?
- Has the implementation of SDEA encouraged you to improve your English?
- In your opinion, what has been the impact of the implementation of SDEA on communications safety?
1) How relevant is each part of the test to the pilots’ job?

2) What is working? What is not working?

3) Is there a relationship between pilots’ attitude (the survey results) and what we can see in terms of test design, test tasks etc.? What might be the reasons why the pilots have responded the way they did?

4) How can SDEA be improved?

You are welcome to share your experience: 5) What are your perceptions of test content in relation to the test you work with or you are most familiar with?
I am going to present some significant changes that we are making in the test.
Any questions?

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