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Aviation English Training in China: Current Trends, Challenges, and Future Directions

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Xiaoning Guo
Current Trends and Challenges
Training Program

• 4-year college degree education targeted for high school graduates, with 2.5 years of ground theory training and 1.5 years of flight training domestically or internationally.

• Occupational training targeted for college graduates with compacted 6 months of ground theory training and then approximately 1 year of flight training aboard or domestically.
• Curriculum indicates that student pilots in their 2.5 years of ground theory study spend 2 hours daily either on General English or Aviation English or both. Weekly time ratio between aviation English and general English is 1:1.

• However, when it comes to routine English conversations, their instructors point out that their performance are not quite satisfactory whether it is GE based or AE based.
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CEIR: College English Intensive Reading
Listening comprehension and oral proficiency are foci of concern by civil aviation schools in China since these two abilities are a prerequisite and foundation for pilots’ smooth radio communication with air traffic controllers.
Pronunciation

• Students’ Intelligibility and comprehensibility are still being complained by their flight instructors.

• AE teachers follow ICAO LPR as a standard in pronunciation, phraseologies and terminologies.

• Super-segmental feature should be put into focus along with segmental features.
Comprehension Abilities

• Air ground communication “articulate with extra clarity often tend toward syllable-timing with grammatical word made prominent, and an even rhythm throughout.” Crystal (1995).

• Syllable-based rhythm is easier to acquire for Chinese AE learner and often helps them comprehend sound track of real time air-speak.
Comprehension Abilities

• Rate of speech and varieties of dialects pose some major problems for student pilots.

• Pilot English Proficiency Examination in China: 100-120 words per minute

• Controllers in US: 150 or more.

• Coping with dialect of English in China and abroad
• Plain English challenge the Chinese student pilots to the utmost difficulties in real-life non-routine situation.

• A Chinese student pilot’s experience

• Expansion of vocabularies of AE and how words learnt in classes can be activated and put into effect in real air-speak environment.
Template Sentences

• We have difficulty in ...

• We have difficulty in controlling cabin pressure.

• We have a ... problem.

• We have a cabin altitude problem. (flight control, avionics)
02

Future Directions
• Construction and application of corpus in AE are in upswing in China

• Construction of AE corpus in the field of students’ oral test performance
Simulating RT Environment

Aviation English teaching and learning platform to be developed based on flight simulator.

Advantages: 1 encourage pilot to learn by doing and speaking
2 provide authentic and engaging learning environment
3 targeted language are incorporated into flight mission
Thank You