The Ab-Initio Aviation English Teacher: Developing Skill Sets for Trainers of Aviation English

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The Ab-Initio aviation English teacher – a way forward

Neil Bullock

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The ab-initio Teacher

• Why technical language training is different
• Language & communication
• Teacher’s role in AE
• What can we do?
• What more can we do?
Would you let an uncertified … ?

There is no internationally recognised certification for a language trainer who trains pilots and ATCOs how to use a second language on the radiotelephone!!

I FIX AIRBUSES, ME!!

Why not???? Teachers can teach a technically specific language without a specific qualification!
So what’s wrong with my CELTA...?

For the same reasons that general English exams are not acceptable for assessing aviation language competence!

It is a very technical domain, it’s not just about the language.

So why are normal teaching qualifications not sufficient? Surely anyone who speaks a language can teach a language (9835, 7.3.2)?

- Initial training: 12-48 months
- Pilots: 4-5 years
- ATCO: 3-4 years
- Engineer: 4-5 years
- Teacher: 4 weeks
If we apply conventional wisdom...
Thus ...

• Professional activity that requires specialized training
• a complex blend of skill, knowledge and cultural awareness, combining physical components with mental and communicative processes. (9835, 7.3.2)
Training Pilots & ATCOs

• Because aviation language training is so **highly technical and specialized**, a language trainer needs a somewhat **lengthy apprenticeship** in order to gain familiarity with the **technical requirements** of radiotelephony communications. There are relatively **few language trainers who are adequately prepared** to manage the technical requirements of training pilots and air traffic controllers. When an organization has access to such trainers, their **value** to the organization should **not be underestimated**, as they may be **difficult to replace**.

(9835 - 7.7)
Aviation and its various domains

- Passenger management
- ATC
- Cabin Crew
- Weather
- Maintenance
- Ground Crew
- Heavy traffic
- Unfamiliar airports
- Automation events
- Missed approaches
- Terrain
- Similar call signs
- Time pressure
- Flight diversions
- System malfunctions
And the communication
More than just language...

Can I go to the toilet, please?

PLEASE, MATE, BUNG US SOME DOSH FOR THE DOG AND BONE!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND. I ONLY SPEAK ENGLISH!
What can we do?

- Studies – DELTA, MA, PhD
- Training Programmes
- Teaching & Testing Organisations
- Conferences
- Forums
- Networking
- Site visits & Familiarisation
- Work experience
- Sourcing technical/linguistic expertise.
What more should we be doing?

• 2-3 weeks with trained trainers
• Recognised certificate
• Inclusion of institutional stakeholders
Ab-initio Aviation Teacher Training - Base components

- The communication of your learners
- Discourse analysis of real-life communication
- Language proficiency & the ICAO Scale
- Interplay - phraseologies & plain language
- Authentic & general materials
- Using technology in learning
- Enhancing technical knowledge
- Needs analysis
- Curriculum development
Level 2 components

- Multi-tasking roles & code switching
- Referential & functional language
- Strategic, pragmatic skills, accommodation
- Speaking **AND** listening
- English as a multi-national language
- Accent variation and effect
- Inter-cultural competence
- Honorifics & register
- Assessment, test development
Benefits for aviation

• Context – communication – language
• Greater exposure to all components
• Skills for real-life (NOT the exam!)
• Contextualised > relevant > motivating
• Validate language training
Life is like Riding a Bicycle

to keep your balance you must keep moving.
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