

NILE Online TEAV course introduction FAQs

1. Aviation English	
1.1 What does the term <i>Aviation English</i> mean?	The term is, in fact, a misnomer. In most specific purpose language domains, the (name) + <i>English</i> refers to the language used in the whole domain – <i>Medical English</i> , <i>Maritime English</i> , <i>Legal English</i> , etc. In aviation this should be no different in that it could refer to ground staff, pilots, cabin crew, firefighters, etc. However, the term ‘Aviation English’ has become synonymous with the language used in radiotelephony between pilots & Air Traffic Control (ATC).
1.2 What do we mean by the term <i>standard phraseology</i> ?	Standard phraseology is a specialised code of restricted sub-language for use in routine situations between pilots and ATC; the ‘day to day’ language if you like. It is aimed at ensuring efficient and safe communications by pilots and controllers (ATCOs) to communicate with each other.
1.3 How can I learn more about ICAO <i>phraseology</i> and can I teach it?	<p>You should refer initially to ICAO Docs 9432 and 4444.</p> <p>NOTE: These documents are available from ICAO and are normally for sale.</p> <p>Normally ICAO stipulates that phraseology itself is taught by qualified ATC or flight instructors. Whilst we will look at how phraseology fits into pilot/ATC communication during the course it is only to contextualise the language you may be teaching. So you will not actually be trained to <i>teach</i> phraseology but you will, however become more familiar with and learn more ways to teach plain language in this type of communication.</p> <p>It is strongly advised that any teacher of English in this domain take a specific radiotelephony course to learn more about how the plain language you will be teaching fits in with the routine communication used by their learners. You should contact a local ATC unit (most have a training manager/Head of Training) and/or a flight school and discuss with instructors.</p> <p>Including phraseologies in an aviation English syllabus is highly recommended as it is an integral part of pilot/ATC communication. It should, however, be done so under the guidance of qualified operational personnel – instructors or acting pilots and /or controllers. When constructing the syllabus and developing material, language teachers should work with such operational experts to check and amend their course activities to reflect what is both appropriate and accurate for their learners.</p>
1.4 If there is phraseology, why do we need plain English in radiotelephony communication?	‘Plain language’ is defined as the <i>spontaneous, creative and non-coded use of a given natural language ... required by aeronautical radiotelephony communication</i> (ICAO, 2010). This means it the language used in non-routine or unexpected situations in pilot/ATC radiotelephony communication when standard phraseology is not sufficient to cover the events in any given situation.
1.5 Are the language training needs of air traffic controllers and pilots different?	Yes. Despite their common use of Radiotelephony communications, their concerns, areas of specialized knowledge and the variety of situations to which they are exposed are different.

2. ICAO – International Civil Aviation Organisation	
2.1 What is ICAO's role?	ICAO is part of the United Nations and is responsible for the governance of all matters related to civil aviation worldwide, including the Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs). As it has no judicial powers, national Civil Aviation Authorities are responsible for aviation policy in any given member state of ICAO.
2.2 Does ICAO accredit Aviation English tests?	<p>There was a system set up to evaluate and endorse tests for English in aviation, called <u>AELTS</u>. It is not certain at this moment whether the system is still operational.</p> <p>Tests of language proficiency are normally authorised and overseen by national CAAs, who may, however, interpret the LPRs and the concept of testing slightly differently. The advent of online testing has further complicated matters. Efforts to provide standardisation and harmonisation of all aspects of the LPRs are, however, ongoing with various groups at regional and international level as part of the evolution of the LPRs.</p> <p>We are not in a position to evaluate, recommend or comment on any one particular test for LP.</p>
2.3 Does ICAO accredit English language training in aviation?	<p>No. ICAO does have a training subsidiary <u>Global Aviation Training</u> which supplies courses for many different areas of aviation, but as far as we are aware, a course for training of English in aviation is not provided.</p> <p>Training for English is normally provided by private companies or individuals. Any prospective service provider should be thoroughly checked for their qualifications and experience, particularly their operational and technical background.</p> <p>NOTE: caution is advised by any service provider claiming things like “ICAO approved” or “ICAO training course....” or suggesting that any course is accredited by ICAO or any national CAA. Only those courses delivered by GAT have the right to use the ICAO name. Furthermore, national Civil Aviation Authorities do not normally endorse or accredit private training associations. If in doubt as to the claims of any such provider, clarification should be sought from your local CAA.</p>
2.4 How do the ICAO LPRs evolve and are kept up to date to reflect other changes in language theory or operational developments?	Helping the ICAO structure evolve takes time and must follow an approved process that would normally pass by its Assembly. This includes changes to the LPRs. That said, there are several working groups under the ICAO umbrella which focus on all matters related to the LPRs and include diverse stakeholder groups, such as national CAAs, ATC organisations and professional associations such as ICAEA, IFATCA, etc. Such working groups investigate and regularly discuss all LPR matters and put forward proposals to improve and manage the LPRs.
2.5 Do the ICAO LPRs only relate to English?	No. All users of radiotelephony communication must be tested for the language they use to communicate over the radiotelephone.

3. LPR testing	
3.1 Is there such a thing as an ICAO Aviation English test?	No. It is recommended to avoid any test service provider stating this.
3.2 What skills should a test of language proficiency in aviation evaluate?	<p>Speaking ability and listening comprehension only. Tests provided under the ICAO LPRs are not required to test writing and/or reading.</p> <p>The rating scale developed by ICAO requires testing in 6 language areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pronunciation</i> • <i>Vocabulary</i> • <i>Fluency</i> • <i>Structure</i> • <i>Comprehension</i> • <i>Interactions</i>
3.3 Is standard phraseology a requirement in an LPR test?	<p>Yes, as it forms part of the communication in which plain language proficiency is to be tested – the <i>construct</i>. That said, it is not the requirement of an LPR test to assess phraseology. This is a common misconception. Plain language for such communication cannot be tested in isolation. It cannot be tested either by way of an informal chat or a general-purpose language test. Such tests do not address the requirements of the ICAO LPRs. Phraseology should therefore be <i>included</i> but is not required to be explicitly tested.</p> <p>Any organisation that wishes to develop an LPR test that also assesses phraseology, is perfectly free to do so, but it is not mandatory under the LPRs. It could even be argued that, as there is no current requirement for recurrent testing of phraseology, it is actually good practice!</p>
3.4 Does LPR testing development differ from other types of language tests?	<p>Yes and no!</p> <p>A test under the LPRs must evaluate the required language of the specific operational communication for pilots and controllers. In this way it is a unique kind of contextualised test for a very specific purpose.</p> <p>However, any LPR language test should be developed and operationalised according to standard good practice in testing, such as that recommended by the Association of Language Testers Europe (ALTE). ALTE produce further guidelines for LSP testing here.</p>
3.5 What is the ICAO Rated Speech Samples Training Aid (RSSTA)?	The RSSTA was set up in the early days of the LPRs implementation and was aimed to provide some material for training raters.
3.6 Does the ICAO Rated Speech Samples Training Aid (RSSTA) provide good examples of testing practises or speech samples?	<p>As the RSSTA was set up in the early days of the LPRs implementation and mirrors only what was available at the time, some of the speech samples used may not be properly representative of good testing practices, for various reasons.</p> <p>Discussions have already taken place regarding updating this project to better reflect those test tasks required, but at this time, no further information is available.</p>

3.7 Can I be accredited as a <i>rater*</i> with the ICAO rating scale?	<p>Yes and no. GAT (ICAO training arm) does provide a rater* training course, however, we are not in a position to evaluate nor recommend this.</p> <p>Rater training in any language test, whether related to a rating scale for speaking or writing, is normally part of one specific test. Training is therefore provided by the test developer or provider and is intended solely for raters related to that test. It cannot by its nature be generic.</p> <p>As the ICAO rating scale has not been developed for use with any one specific test, it is advisable to make certain for which test any training is being given when researching any training providers. As NILE does not provide a test for assessment of English language proficiency in aviation, it does not provide such training either.</p> <p>* NOTE: The term 'rater' simply refers to someone normally qualified to rate a sample of written or spoken language that forms part of one test, or testing instrument. Such a person can also be referred to as an 'Assessor', 'Oral Examiner' and other such role where making the assessment is an integral part of their duties.</p>
3.8 Where does a pilot or ATCO show that they have the required language proficiency?	The language level of '4' or above is endorsed in the pilot or ATCO licence. Further information is available from your national ANSP (for controllers) or CAA (pilots).

4. Aviation English Teacher training	
4.1 Is the NILE course an official ICAO course?	<p>No. Such a course does not exist. It is, however, hoped that the current course may one day form part of the foundations for such an ICAO/GAT approved course.</p> <p>This NILE course does, nevertheless, follow recommendations and guidance material from ICAO Doc 9835 (Ch 7), Doc 9432, Doc 4444, Doc 10197, ICAO EUR Doc.46 (1.3.4 & appendix A) and ICAO Cir323 (Ch.4). It is also underpinned by published papers focussing purposefully on aviation English, as well as Language for Specific Purpose (LSP) literature.</p>
4.2 Are my qualifications sufficient to take part in this course?	<p>Ideally, a good start would be teaching or operational experience, as well as some knowledge of the basic principles of English Language Teaching (ELT). For those from an operational background, the reading list (see end of document) gives further suggested reading to help build up ELT knowledge.</p> <p>ICAO Cir323 states:</p> <p><i>The aviation English trainer needs to bring to the class a combination of specific language teaching skills and an understanding of the practical operational environment of the aviation community. The balance between these two areas will obviously vary from one person to the next, depending on their background; trainers can come from either a primarily linguistic or a technical background. However, they will require systematic grounding in the area with which they are less familiar. This may involve working in tandem initially with a specialist in the other field for an extended period of time. The training provider or institution needs to support them in this process of attaining across-the-board competency and to realize that it may be a lengthy process.</i></p>

	<p><i>In the case of staff with operational backgrounds (controller, pilot, etc.) coming to aviation English training, they will clearly have the great advantage of considerable familiarity with the day-to-day realities of aviation and radiotelephonic transmissions. However, it is important to remember that such staff will need formal training and qualifications in teaching English as a foreign language (e.g. TEFL/TESL certificate) before working in tandem with a fully qualified aviation language trainer; only then will they become fully effective in the classroom.</i></p>
--	---

5. Aviation English Training materials and curricula	
5.1 Are there recognised and established curriculum materials I can use to teach Aviation English?	<p>No. As in all specific purpose language training, a needs analysis should be carried out before any training starts and the curriculum, material and course work developed according to the learners' needs. That said, many airlines and ATC organisations do have their own material and training programmes developed by their in-house language and operational specialists. These would normally be specific to the organisation's own employees.</p> <p>Teaching Books</p> <p>Various books have been commercially produced over the years related to teaching English in aviation. Such books are still available although most seem not to have been updated since their original publication and would appear to be now somewhat out of date.</p> <p>It must also be noted that the material does not seem to relate to either pilots or ATCOs specifically and, as such, it may not be suitable for all students. They also appear very generic in nature and will not be directly related to any one group of students' own operational context. The value of such material is therefore thought to be limited.</p> <p>It is also notable that technical inaccuracies are apparent in most of these books.</p> <p>Teachers are thus advised to use such material with caution, and consult operational experts or instructors before use, particularly in relation to learners' own operational language and contextual communication.</p>
5.2 Where can I find materials to develop lessons?	<p>Such materials and how to source them will be discussed during the NILE course. As a general guideline, any material should be used with caution to ensure accuracy and adherence to given operational procedures and requirements of learners. Furthermore, all learners will have specific needs and any material should be specifically adapted for such needs.</p> <p>Those teachers <i>without</i> any operational background or limited technical knowledge should check any potential material with technical or subject matter experts. This not only ensures that learners and sponsors are getting the training they are paying for but is also an excellent way for teachers of English in aviation develop their technical knowledge. Site visits to operational areas and discussions with operational staff are highly recommended and can be an extremely valuable tool for teachers' professional development in any specific purpose language domain.</p>

<p>5.3 I've heard the terms, <i>ELE</i> and <i>SME</i>. What do they refer to?</p>	<p>Specific purpose language learning and testing is a domain which includes a combination of two groups of people, as mentioned earlier. Language specialists and operational specialists. These two groups are often referred to as <i>ELEs</i> and <i>SMEs</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>ELE</i> or <i>English Language Expert</i> is the term given to anyone working in a specific purpose domain and whose principal activity is language teaching or testing. • <i>SME</i> or <i>Subject Matter Expert</i> (Sometimes called an <i>OPE</i> or <i>Operational Expert</i>) is the term given to anyone working in a specific purpose language domain and whose principal activity is of an operational nature, such as a pilot or air traffic controller in aviation. <p>Both groups should work together to ensure that learning and testing correspond to the real-world needs of those being taught or tested. It is not the domain of one or the other specialist but a fusion of both their language and operational skills and knowledge.</p>
--	---

Recommended Pre-Course Reading

Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. White Plains, NY: Prentice Hall. Field, J. (2008). *Listening in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Frigional, E, Mathews, E, Roberts J., (ed.). (2019). *English in Global Aviation: Context, research and perspectives*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Green, A. (2014) *Exploring Language Testing and Assessment*, London: Routledge. Harmer, J. (2007). *The Practice of English Language Teaching*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.

Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for Language Teachers* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Paltridge, B. & Starfield, S. (2013). *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes*, Wiley-Blackwell.

Rubenbauer, F. (2009). *Aspects of Oral Communication in Aviation*. Aachen: Shaker Verlag. Thornbury, S. (2008). *How to Teach Speaking*. Harlow: Pearson Longman.