

**TEST OF ENGLISH FOR AVIATION PERSONNEL
TO MEET ICAO LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS**

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The article is devoted to the actual problem of the assessment of English language proficiency of aviation personnel. The paper presents an English language test, which is used for professional pilots and air traffic controllers.

Keywords: aviation personnel, language proficiency, oral interview, plain English, test.

Присвячено актуальній проблемі вимірювання англomовної комунікативної компетенції фахівців авіаційної галузі. Подано тест з англійської мови, придатний для професійних пілотів та авіадиспетчерів.

Ключові слова: авіаційний персонал, мовна компетенція, розмовна англійська мова, тест, усне інтерв'ю.

Introduction

The Test of English for Aviation Personnel (TEAP) has been developed for air traffic controllers and pilots with purpose to assess English language proficiency in accordance with ICAO Doc 9835 and against the ICAO English Language Proficiency Scale. The TEAP is available at levels 3 (Pre-operational), 4 (Operational), 5 (Extended) for air traffic controllers (Tower/Ground, Approach, En-Route), pilots (Fixed-Wing aircraft, Helicopter), flight engineers, radio operators, navigators.

In 2007 the TEAP was evaluated by a Panel of stakeholders for national endorsement purposes and was accredited by the State Aviation Administration of Ukraine as a test to be used for assessment of English language proficiency of pilots and air traffic controllers for licensure process to meet the new ICAO language requirements.

The TEAP is administered by Training Center of Further Professional Education AEROLINGUA, LLC. – an establishment authorized by the State Aviation Administration (SAA) of Ukraine as a provider of English language training and testing services.

The AEROLINGUA certificate on the TEAP results is accepted by the SAA of Ukraine for license endorsement purposes. Since the first sitting for the TEAP in 2007 more than 3000 candidates have been tested including aviation personnel from Ukraine and other countries (Belorussia, Poland, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Lebanon).

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The TEAP complies with best testing practices and addresses the specific requirements of aviation operations [Doc 9835, 6.2.2].

Its design, development and administration has been providing with participation and under the supervision of Dr., Prof. Olena Petrashchuk, director of AEROLINGUA Training Center, and Chief of Aviation English Department of National Aviation University.

The TEAP consists of Listening Test and Speaking Test.

Both Tests are separate and can be performed in any sequence.

Before the testing procedure all candidates are informed about the purpose of the test, test constructs to be measured, test structure and content, scoring method.

The candidates are exposed to the TEAP materials, namely Listening Test sound files and an answer sheet, Speaking Test is conducted within an oral interview framework including an examiner's/interlocutor's sample questions, sample cue card with Task A, audio recordings as part of Task B (voice-only) and the cue card, photos with aviation image.

TEAP Listening Test

Purpose: To assess aural comprehension ability against the language proficiency criteria contained in ICAO LRT Scale and the ICAO Holistic descriptors of operational language [SARPS Annex 1, Attachment A to Annex 1].

Definition of construct: The test construct in listening is defined as an individual's ability to comprehend details of a message/information being received through an aural channel with and without background noise. The background noise simulates difficulty of comprehension which might be a case in voice-only settings of real world aeronautical communication [1].

The Listening Test consists of three sections and 4 tasks – Section 1 (2 tasks), Section 2 (1 task) and Section 3 (1 task). There are 30 questions in the test. Before the test starts the candidates are given 3 min to fill in the cover sheet with the personal information in native language. Then they have 5 min more to look through Questions 1–30 in all tasks which are provided on a paper answer sheet. The candidates are also provided with pencils and erasers to write down the answers and do corrections if needed.

Time allotted for performing the Listening Test constitutes 16 min. When the test is over the candidates have 2 min more to check their answers.

Listening Test Section 1 and Section 2 are based on short radio telephony simulated and authentic transmissions featuring interacting speakers; Listening Test Section 3 is based on narration of a single English native speaker beyond aeronautical communication (see table).

The Listening Test format

Section 1	Section 2	Section 3
2 pieces of R/T exchanges between a pilot and a controller	1 piece of R/T exchanges between a pilot and a controller	Single speaker's narration
Task 1: labeling of statements with letters P (pilot) or C (controller)	Task 3: multiple choice from 3 alternatives indicated by A, B, C (circling the chosen letter)	Task 4: 'Yes'-'no'-'not given' answers filling in the empty box next to the statement
Task 2: completion of the statement by putting down one word or numbers		

The sound file is delivered from CD via tape recorder/computer, each piece of the audio material is played once. Text language is as specified in Doc 9835, Appendix B Language of aeronautical Radiotelephony communications.

Simultaneously with listening to the recordings the candidates are writing down the correct answers on the paper answer sheet.

In Sections 1 and 2 a candidate will be expected to understand gist and details of a radio telephony communication between English speaking (with at least two different accents) controller and pilot in routine and non-routine situations and in optimum and complicated (background noise) conditions.

In Section 3 a candidate will be expected to identify correctly specific factual information contained in a narration of a single speaker. The comprehension checks are presented in the same order as the details or information is presented in audio materials.

Corrections are permitted.

TEAP Speaking Test: Oral Interview

Purpose: To assess speaking ability to use plain English in aeronautical communication against the language proficiency criteria contained in ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale and the ICAO Holistic descriptors of operational language [2].

Definition of constructs: The test construct in speaking is defined as an individual's ability to use plain English as a natural language in spontaneous, creative and non-coded manner.

The plain English is a non-phraseology language used by participants in radiotelephony communications when standardized phraseology is not appropriate [1].

Speaking Test is a one-on-one oral interview guided by an examiner's/interlocutor's questions and supported by printed, aural and visual prompts.

The candidates are given a choice of topics (through questions and prompts) and an opportunity to perform at their best.

Following a standardized examiner/interlocutor frame, a specially trained examiner/interlocutor facilitates the interaction, asking questions, instructing and setting the tasks.

Due to possibility of the method of interview to be an effective means of elicitation of unrehearsed spontaneous speech an examiner/interlocutor applies interlocution strategies to guide a candidate's oral discourse to become measurable against the ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale.

Thus the interview is relatively flexible in its content (questions asked) and delivery (number of questions and their difficulty), allowing for adaptation and customization appropriate to the level of oral discourse and operational environment of an individual candidate.

It consists of three parts – Part 1, Part 2 (Task A, Task B) and Part 3.

Part 1 – warm up guided by an examiner's/interlocutor's questions.

Part 2:

Task A – a candidate is given a printed card and is asked to speak on a specific topic (unusual/emergency situation) related to his/her area of professional activity; the candidate's speaking is guided by 3 prompts printed on a card and, if needed, by an examiner's/interlocutor's questions; the candidate is given 1 min to focus on the topic and prompts;

Task B – voice-only communication: the candidate listens to short exchanges on unusual/emergency situation and is asked to comment on it.

Part 3 – the candidate is asked to describe a photo with aviation image related to their area of professional activity; the photos are given in sequence and may be guided by an examiner's/interlocutor's questions.

Language and communicative functions of the conversation during the interview are specified by Doc 9835, Appendix B 'Language of Aeronautical Radiotelephony Communications'.

During the oral interview with an examiner/interlocutor:

In Part 1 the candidates are expected to interact with an examiner/interlocutor by responding immediately, accurately and appropriately to the an examiner's/interlocutor's verbal questions on common and work-related questions; to speak briefly about him/herself and his/her work place/area of aviation operations activities. They are given an opportunity to speak spontaneously on issues related to their personal life and work area of professional activity.

In Part 2 the candidates are expected to demonstrate oral discourse guided by printed and aural prompts on an unusual/emergency situation. They are expected to speak spontaneously and accurately on issues related to non standard situations according to the topic in the cue cards/sound file.

In Part 3 the candidates are expected to demonstrate oral discourse guided by visual prompts. They are expected to give detailed description of a photo and to supplement the description with their comments/opinion/ on the situation/event depicted.

Throughout the whole interview for minimum operational level the candidates are expected to be able to:

- speak fluently on common, concrete and work-related topics;
- produce oral speech in stretches of language at an appropriate tempo;
- confirm, negotiate, clarify if needed
- understand a communicator by responding immediately, informatively and appropriately;
- use fillers, connectors appropriately;
- take turn to maintain/initiate interaction;
- paraphrase if needed;
- continue to communicate effectively in unexpected turn of events or when confronted with linguistic or situational complication;
- keep fluency though it may be slower and clarification strategies may be used;
- communicate accurately with proper pronunciation, intonation, range of vocabulary and good control of basic grammatical structures;
- provide information relating to present, past or future events;
- provide information concerning necessity, feasibility, capacity;
- express agreement/disagreement, appreciation, opinions;
- describe events, people, place, sequence of events, procedure or process;
- compare, explain, justify, assess, present, instruct, advise, approve, permit, etc.

Total time allotted per one candidate is up to 20 minutes (Part 1 – 4-5 min, Part 2 – 7-8 min, Part 3 – 6-7 min).

At the beginning of the interview the candidate fills in an interview protocol with personal data and signature. In Speaking Test candidate's oral answers are fixed via digital audio recorder for further assessment in accordance with the ICAO Rating scale.

The candidates' individual files (documents + test results) are kept 3 years for candidates with level 4 and 6 years for candidates with level 5 in both electronic and paper formats.

Scoring methods

The TEAP use two methods of scoring – objective and subjective.

Objective method is used for assessment of the Listening Test results. The candidate's answers are compared with key/right answers; number of correct answers is calculated as a sum of scores.

The scoring of Listening Test is performed by a marker trained by AEROLINGUA. The results of the scoring are put down at a special space on the answer sheet cover page.

Subjective method of scoring is used for assessment of the Speaking Test results. It is based on individual judgment of a specially trained rater. Normally two raters accredited by AEROLINGUA conduct rating of an oral speech sample. In case of any disagreement other raters are involved.

During the interview a candidate produces a series of exchanges both short and extended ones. The candidates gain no credit for rehearsed language. Oral discourse is of reciprocal and linear format up to 20 min at length.

Oral speech samples are assessed against six descriptors of language profiles in the ICAO Rating scale. The candidate's speaking ability is scored on pronunciation structure, grammar structure, vocabulary range, fluency, comprehension and interaction within the constructs defined individually for Level 3, 4 and 5 according to the ICAO Rating scale. The raters use standard protocols to record evidences of inaccuracy, errors, etc. They are guided by instructions on rating process. The candidates receive an overall rating

equivalent to that of the lowest rating achieved in any one of the six features [1, 3, 4].

Conclusions

Therefore the oral speech measurement is a key issue for language performance assessment against the ICAO Rating scale. The tool of measurement – Speaking Test – should be valid and reliable in accordance with the high stake test requirements so that the Test could provide reliable results.

For this purpose the Speaking Test is to be designed with a proper balance between the real world speaking situations and speaking situations in testing settings

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Received 13 March 2012.