

## **Aviation English training centers and their compliance with ICAO Doc 9835 requirements**

*The paper considers the activities of Aviation English training centers and their compliance with ICAO Doc 9835 requirements. The ICAO Language Proficiency Standard (ICAO Doc 7300, Annex 1) is taken into account. The author justifies the implementation of English language proficiency requirements.*

In 2010, ICAO issued the second edition of the Doc 9835. This second edition included additional guidance for civil aviation authorities and test service providers on processes for testing candidates in accordance with the ICAO LPRs. In June 2011, ICAO added an interactive map at <http://legacy.icao.int/fsix/lp.cfm> based on the information provided by States. This map provides a world view of the status of implementation of the language proficiency requirements and allows users to access implementation plans or statements of compliance.

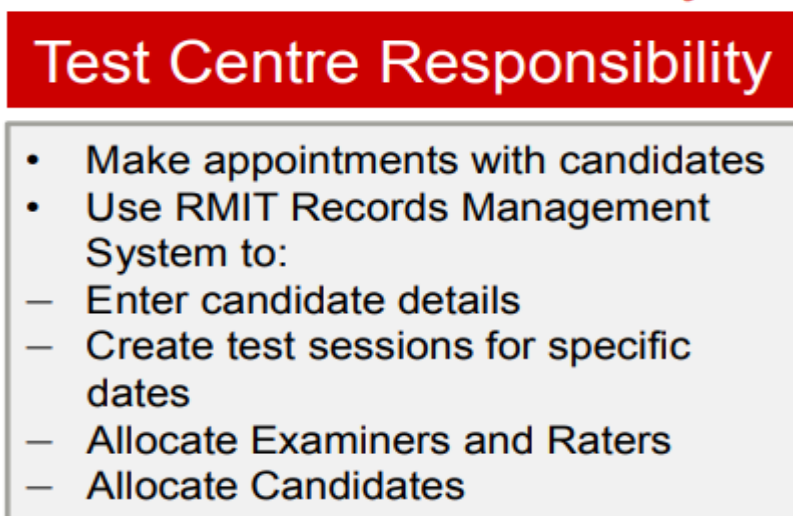
Language assessment and subject matter expertise can help to develop a valid and reliable testing solution. In this regard, there is a necessity to consider the main aspects to establish an efficient testing process for aviation personnel. These aspects are the following:

- Rationale for test development and how it meets the tests purpose
- Language test design and construct principles
- The target language and language domains used in the test tasks
- Methodology used to engage the test taker's areas of language proficiency
- Expertise of the test task
- Analysis methodology to evaluate test trial data to ensure consistent and reliable results are achieved

Contemplating all mentioned above, a question may arise – why is it necessary? To explain this, it would be a good idea to refer to history. They still talk about the horrific mid-air collision near New Delhi, India. November 12, 1996: A Saudi Arabian Airlines Boeing 747-100B enroute to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and a Kazakhstan Airlines Ilyushin IL-76, arriving at New Delhi, collided over the village of Charki Dadri, west of the city. All 349 passengers and crew on board both flights were killed, making it the deadliest mid-air collision in which there were no survivors. The Indian government's Lahoti Commission investigating the crash ruled that the ultimate cause of the collision was the failure of Kazakhstan Airlines Flight 1907 to follow ATC instructions. Moreover, the report stated the breach in operating procedure was due to the lack of English language skills by the Kazakhstani pilots.

Following the report, the Commission urged the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to develop language proficiency standards and recommendations. In 2000, ICAO formed the Proficiency Requirements in Common English Study Group. PRICESG included pilots, controllers, safety and linguistic experts familiar with the aviation world. ICAO adopted the Study Group's recommended standards for voice communications between pilots and air traffic controllers in March 2003; the standards became applicable in March 2008.

In order to conform to ICAO Language Proficiency requirements, pilots, air traffic controllers and all others who use English in Radio Telephony Communications on international routes must be at ICAO English Language Level 4 (Operational) or above. That is why an effective functioning of Aviation English training centers (test centers) should be provided, as well as their main responsibilities should be analyzed (see Figure 1).



**Fig. 1. Main responsibilities of Aviation English training centers (test centers)**

The International Civil Aviation Association has developed a set of Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs) and a Language Proficiency Rating Scale, which seeks to define proficiency in the language needed for aviation purposes at six different levels. Pilots, air traffic controllers and aeronautical station operators are required to achieve at least Level 4 on this scale (usually in English, the de facto language of international aviation) in order to be licensed to fly aircraft or control air traffic on international (cross-border) flights or to work in international operations.

Pilots and air traffic controllers' insufficient language proficiency has been a contributing factor to several incidents and accidents that have happened in the history of civil aviation (ICAO, 2010). As pointed out by Kim and Elder (2014), "a single piece of non-clarified information could have disastrous results in air traffic

control” (p. 133). For this reason, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a United Nations (UN) specialized agency, formulated the Assembly Resolution A32-16 in 1998, which urged the council to consider the matter of lack of proficiency in English by pilots and ATCs with a high level of priority and to complete the task of strengthening the regulations in order to obligate the Contracting States to take measures to ensure that pilots and ATCs would be proficient enough to conduct and understand radiotelephony communications in a safe way. The Proficiency Requirements in Common English Study Group (PRICESG) was established in 2000 in order to develop the ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs). In March 2003, the council adopted the Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) concerning the LPRs.

## Conclusions

The paper has proven the need for effective activities of Aviation English training centers and their compliance with ICAO Doc 9835 requirements. The ICAO Language Proficiency Standard (ICAO Doc 7300, Annex 1) has been taken into account. The author has justified the implementation of English language proficiency requirements in reference to the requirement for flight crew members and air traffic controllers to effectively communicate and prevent possible non-standard and emergency situations occurring due to lack of Aviation English language proficiency, which, in turn, may cause misunderstanding between pilots and air traffic controllers.

## References

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