



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of the Environment,
Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC

Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA
Safety Division - Flight Operations

FOCA ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY EXAM FOR PILOTS

ICAO LEVELS 4 and Levels 4,5 and 6

GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

In accordance with the recommendations of ICAO Doc 9835

EU compliant

Fifth Edition (December 2018)

DOC 02.05

Published under the authority of the Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation ©2008-2018

1. Introduction

This document gives details to candidates¹ about the FOCA English Language Proficiency exams in Exams Centres in Switzerland. It details information about the exam format, how the result is determined, as well as how to prepare for such an exam.

The exam system operates under Swiss law and fulfils the requirements of EU regulation n° 1178/2011 (para. EASA Part.FCL.055) of 3rd November 2011, AMC1 FCL.055, AMC2 FCL.055 and AMC3 FCL.055.

The system also follows the *Principles of Good Practice for Testing* as well as the recommendation for testing systems given by the Association of Language Testers Europe (ALTE) and the International Language Testing Association (ILTA).

The system is owned and managed by the Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA). All associated documentation, licensing and administrative material remain strictly the property of FOCA.

The exams assess a pilot's plain English language proficiency and his/her use of phraseologies in an aviation context and include a Listening Comprehension test and a Speaking Ability test. The Speaking Ability test includes two parts: a voice-only interaction role-play and a face-to-face oral interaction.

General language qualifications such as Cambridge First Certificate, TOEFL, IELTS, BULATS, etc., are not valid for assessing language proficiency in aeronautical communications as they do not test the specific purpose language required for aeronautical communications according to the ICAO rating scale and EASA regulations.

Candidates should also note that the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages, whilst also having 6 levels (A1, A2, etc.), is not suitable for language assessment in aviation as it relates neither to the required language nor context of aeronautical communications.

¹ Candidate/Test-Taker is the person taking the test.

2. Exam Administration

There are four Exam Centres available where pilots can take the Language Proficiency exams in Switzerland: Zurich and Lausanne, where both Level 4 and Level 4/5/6 exams are available, and Bern and Locarno, where only Level 4 exams are available. Contact details, venues and dates for the exam sessions are published on the FOCA website.

NB: Before enrolling for the language proficiency exams, applicants must have first passed both the theoretical and practical parts of the radiotelephony exam.

The person responsible for the exam centre will acknowledge receipt of a candidate's application as soon as possible by e-mail. The deadline for applications is 10 working days before the published exam date. The final timetable will be sent out to the candidates as soon as possible after this deadline. Applications received after the deadline will be considered only if there is a vacant place on the schedule and, where no place is available, the application will be considered for the next available session. Applicants are responsible for giving themselves enough time to prepare for the exam and should bear this in mind when enrolling.

Candidates must arrive no later than 10 minutes before the exam start time so that all paperwork can be completed. Candidates who arrive at the test centre after the exam has started will not be allowed to enter the examination room. All candidates must bring a valid ID and have it checked by one of the two Assessors before entering the exam room.

In the interests of test security Candidates will be asked to store **all** personal belongings away from the exam area. This may be in a separate room where possible. Candidates must completely switch off all personal electronic devices and these devices must remain switched off for the duration of the exam. Pens will be provided for the exam and note-taking is allowed, but only on the candidate's answer sheet in the spaces provided.

Candidates seen to be using a recording device, suspected of cheating, or acting in an inappropriate manner which may affect the professional and safe conduct of the examination, will be immediately disqualified, given a *no-pass* result and asked to leave the examination centre. Any such cases, or other risks to test security will be notified to FOCA as soon as possible, for further action.

FOCA will invoice candidates after the exam has taken place, by post. Candidates who do not arrive for their planned exam or who cancel less than 5 working days before the exam date, are noted as 'no-show' on the application form and will be charged an administration fee by FOCA.

3. The Language Proficiency Exam

3.1 Listening Comprehension Test

All exams

The Listening Comprehension test assesses a Candidate's ability to understand both specific and global information provided via recordings of communications related to unexpected/unusual situations in aeronautical operations. The recordings may be radio communications between pilots and Air Traffic Control, or face-to-face/telephone discussions. Each recording is played twice and has multiple-choice questions, each question having four possible answers, only one of which is correct. Candidates have time to read the questions and choose their answers in between the recordings. Candidates should mark their chosen answers with an 'X' on the answer sheet. There are spaces on the answer sheets to write notes if required.

Candidates take the Listening Comprehension test as a group and an Invigilator is always present during this test. Before the first recording starts, candidates hear instructions and a sample recording. The questions for the sample recording are on the candidate's question sheet. The recordings are played from one main computer operated by an Invigilator and each candidate listens to the recordings through headphones connected to this computer.

All materials are in English and are handed out by the Assessors before the exam begins. Each candidate receives a document containing multiple-choice questions and an answer sheet. At the end of the test **all** test papers must be handed in to the Invigilators. Once all candidates have left the exam room, answer sheets will then be marked.

Level 4 exam

There are five recordings at level 4 and each recording has two multiple-choice questions. The test takes approximately 25 minutes.

Level 4/5/6 exam

There are three recordings at level 4, three at Level 5, and three at Level 6. Each recording has three multiple-choice questions and the test takes about 50 minutes.

3.2 Speaking Ability Test.

Candidates take the Speaking Ability test individually with two Assessors. The test is divided into two parts and is recorded.

3.2.1 Part 1 – Voice-only interaction (VOI)

In the Level 4 exam, this part takes approx. 10 minutes, and in the Level 4/5/6 exam, approx. 15 minutes.

In the VOI, the candidate plays the role of a pilot during various phases of a simulated flight and interacts with the Interlocutor who plays the role of an Air Traffic Controller or another person during an operational situation. There is no visual contact between the candidate and the Interlocutor.

The candidate receives oral instructions by one of the Assessors before being given the material for the tasks.

In this material the candidate has a written sheet of instructions, as well as details of the flight and the current ATIS information, together with information and prompt photographs for each task. Aerodrome and visual approach charts are also given for reference. Candidates have a short time to prepare and should read all the material carefully.

During this part of the test, the events are continuous and happen in the order they are written on the sheet. They happen both on the ground and in the air. Candidates may pause between events where necessary, and take notes on the paper provided by the Assessors.

In order to ensure effective communication, candidates must use standard phraseology where required and plain language where necessary. The ability to communicate successfully in transition from standard phraseology to plain language and vice-versa is an important feature of pilot/ATCO communication in non-routine or unexpected situations.

A sample video of the speaking test is available on the FOCA website as well as prompt material which can be downloaded to help candidates become familiar with the exam tasks. These are available at:

<https://www.bazl.admin.ch/bazl/en/home/specialists/training-and-licences/pilot/radio-telephony-and-language-proficiency-test/language-proficiency-tests.html>

NOTE:

Candidates should note that this test is not a formal assessment of standard phraseology. However, as this is an integral part of aeronautical communications, and, therefore, an issue of aviation safety, EASA regulations state that National Aviation Authorities must check a candidate's use of standard phraseology in addition to plain language.

There is no *pass* or *fail* decision on phraseology in this test. However, a candidate may be observed as having *marginal* or *insufficient* command of standard phraseology where the Assessors see that the candidate's performance includes one or several of the following items:

- continuous use of non-standard or incorrect phraseology
- use of plain language where standard phraseology should be used
- omission of safety critical information (Runway, QNH, etc)
- incorrect or abbreviated readback of clearances
- omission of PAN and/or Mayday calls during emergency and urgency situations

In the case where this observation is *insufficient* the candidate will be **obliged** to undergo a Radiotelephony refresher course (**not** the Radiotelephony exam) and send the course certificate to FOCA no later than 12 months following the date of the exam. Failure to do so will result in FOCA revoking radiotelephony privileges from the candidate's licence. Candidates observed as *marginal* for their use of Radiotelephony will be **recommended** to undergo a Radiotelephony refresher course within 12 months following the date of the exam.

Candidates are free to choose at which approved training organisation (ATO, DTO...) they take a refresher course, but any course should include the basics of standard phraseology for all phases of flight, including emergency and urgency situations.

3.2.2 Part 2 – Face-to-face interaction (F2F)

In this part of the exam, Candidates interact with an Assessor in the role of an Interlocutor.

- **Level 4 exam** (10-12 mins approx.) - the candidate is given prompt material and has a short time to look at it before being asked to describe it.
- **Level 4/5/6 exam** (14-16 mins approx.) - the candidate is given prompt material and has a short time to look at it before being asked to describe it as well as make comparisons and contrasts about it.

The candidate may keep the material while talking about it and should describe the content and any related subjects **as fully as possible**, not simply give a list of objects in the photograph. After this, the Interlocutor will ask the candidate a variety of questions related to communications in non-routine and/or unexpected situations they could encounter as a pilot. Questions given are all appropriate to the pilot's operational domain.

Candidates should answer **all** questions **as fully as possible**. Candidates are not assessed on technical knowledge or opinion but on how well they can express themselves in English. Both Assessors will take notes and assess the candidate's performance.

3.3 Expert Speaker Assessment

Any pilot licence holder, or trainee, who considers that English is his first and primary language or that he is a 'native' English speaker, may apply for an 'Expert' speaker assessment at one of the Level 4/5/6 exam sessions. In this assessment the candidate first takes the speaking test component of the Level 4/5/6 exam. He/she then listens to a recording graded at Level 6 and must answer questions on it. A decision will then be made by both Assessors as to whether the Candidate is at Level 6 or not. If the Assessors evaluate the candidate below Level 6, then the Candidate will be invited to remain and take the Level 4/5/6 exam Listening Comprehension test and the result will be determined as in section '4' below.

To apply for an 'Expert' speaker assessment in English, the applicant, as recommended by ICAO, must include evidence of his considered English speaker status with his application. This may typically be:

- a) place of birth and early residence;

- b) the language(s) used during childhood in the family, in the community and in education;
- c) long periods of residence (with proven participation) in communities where the language is used socially, professionally or in education;
- d) extended periods of language study or higher education diplomas;
- e) very high scores in general language tests.

Other documentation will be considered on its merit by the Exam Centre Head. The decision of the Head of Centre is final.

An applicant for the 'Expert Speaker' assessment will be invited to take the normal Level 4/5/6 test in order that his/her language proficiency can be fully assessed where:

- the Exam Centre Head sees evidence in any communication that the Applicant's actual language proficiency may not match the Expert Speaker level being claimed.
- there is insufficient evidence to support the applicants claim of having Expert Speaker proficiency.
- during the Expert Speaker Assessment, the two Assessors come to the conclusion that the candidate's language proficiency is not at Expert Speaker level.

4. The Test Result

In accordance with ICAO Doc9835, a candidate's final level of language proficiency is the **lowest** of the six language areas of the ICAO Rating Scale to be assessed. There is no average or aggregate level. The 6 areas are:

- Pronunciation
- Fluency¹
- Vocabulary
- Structure
- Comprehension
- Interaction

¹ In the ICAO Rating Scale *Fluency* refers to the (natural) flow of language. It is **not** used to describe the general abilities of someone's language proficiency, e.g.: "*He is fluent in Spanish*".

Candidates normally receive their provisional exam result (pass/no pass) on the day of the exam and only when **both** parts of the exam have been completed. In the case where the two Examiners are unable to reach a decision on a candidate's speaking ability, then the recording of the test will be referred to a 3rd Assessor. Once the 3rd Assessor has completed the assessment, the final level will be communicated to FOCA. The 3rd Assessor's decision is final.

4.1 Pass result

Level 4 exams:

Candidates with a **pass** result have demonstrated language proficiency at a minimum of Operational Level 4 in all parts of the exam.

The Assessors may give feedback to the candidate on their performance where deemed necessary. Candidates should take time to listen to this feedback and ask any questions where necessary.

Level 4/5/6 exams:

Because of the complexity of determining language proficiency levels for each of the 6 language areas of the ICAO rating scale, only an intermediate 'pass'/'no-pass' result is given to the candidate on the day of the exam, once both parts of the exam have been completed. The intermediate result simply means that the Assessors have been able to determine whether the candidate has performed sufficiently in the exam to be given a minimum level 4, or not. Candidates should not put Assessors under pressure to give a precise level.

Candidates who achieve an intermediate pass result will subsequently be given a level 4,5 or 6 based on the lowest level of the 6 language areas of the ICAO rating scale demonstrated during the exam. FOCA will send the candidate a completed copy of the exam enrolment form, with the detailed results, together with a new licence (where required) by post no less than 10-15 working days after having received the paperwork from the Exam Centre Head. The result is only valid once having been recorded in the FOCA database.

For more detailed information on how a final language proficiency level is determined see section 5, below.

4.2 No-Pass Result

Candidates who achieve a *no-pass* result in one or both parts of the exam shall not conduct flights where use of the **radiotelephone** is required. In Switzerland this means contact with ATC and AFIS as well as blind calls in a Radio Mandatory Zone (RMZ).

❖ In Switzerland contact with FIS, communications on frequencies for special purposes and blind transmissions at uncontrolled AD are not affected but pilots must still use standard phraseology!

Pilots should refer to [AIC 008/2017 A](#) (English) or [AIC 006/2017 B](#) (German/French) for further guidance.

Candidates who do not pass the exam must sign their application form to acknowledge that they have seen the result and that they are aware of their restrictions.

Candidates should note that signing the form only indicates that they have been given the result. It does not indicate that they agree with it.

The Assessors will give feedback on the candidate's performance in the case of a *no-pass* result. Candidates should take time to listen to this feedback and ask any questions where necessary.

Candidates wishing to appeal against the final result shall follow the instructions given on their enrolment form.

4.3 Re-Testing

All candidates who achieve a *no-pass* result in an exam centre who wish to re-take the exam should normally do so in the same exam centre. Any exception must be approved by FOCA. Candidates should also make sure that their application form for the exam to be re-taken is accompanied by the forms from all previous exams showing the fail result(s).

Candidates who achieve a *no-pass* result in the Level 4/5/6 exam and who wish to retake the exam shall do so in the same exam centre, but are not obliged to retake the Level 4/5/6 exam. They may, if they wish, enrol for the Level 4 exam only.

Candidates repeating a failed test must re-take **both** components of the exam and there is no time limit for the re-taking of the exam. There is no limit either on the number of times a candidate can re-take the exam.

Candidates should be aware that where they achieve a particularly low score in the Listening Comprehension test or where several areas in the Speaking Ability test are below Level 4, it is advised that they undergo some training before re-taking the exam.

5. Your Language as a Candidate

The following information is offered as a guide to exam candidates only. Candidates requiring further advice should seek help from a language specialist/teacher suitably qualified in the domain of English in an operational aeronautical context and ensure that any training covers the ICAO recommendations and EASA requirements.

5.1 The language profile

The components that make up language proficiency are, to a large degree, interdependent. That means elements of one area are linked to, and have an effect on, those of another. A limited range of *vocabulary*, for example, may affect *fluency* and *interaction*.

Levels of proficiency can also differ between components (eg: Level 5 for Pronunciation, Level 4 for Interaction), which would mean that a candidate's Language proficiency profile crosses two or more levels. The final level, as mentioned in '**4 – The Test Result**', is based on the lowest level of the profile, rather than a single linear mark.

Levels of language proficiency also vary from person to person and so one person's profile will differ from another's. See the two examples below.

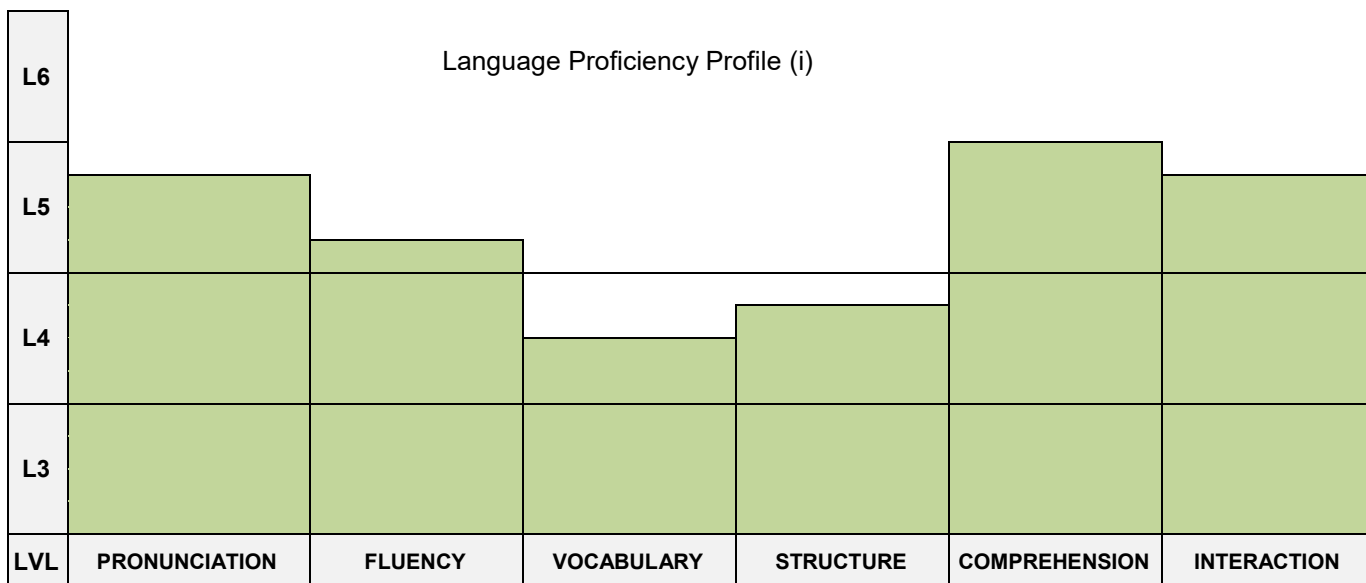


Fig.1

In the language proficiency profile above, even though Pronunciation, Fluency, Comprehension and Interaction are at Level 5, Vocabulary and Structure are only at Level 4, therefore the final result is **level 4 = pass**.

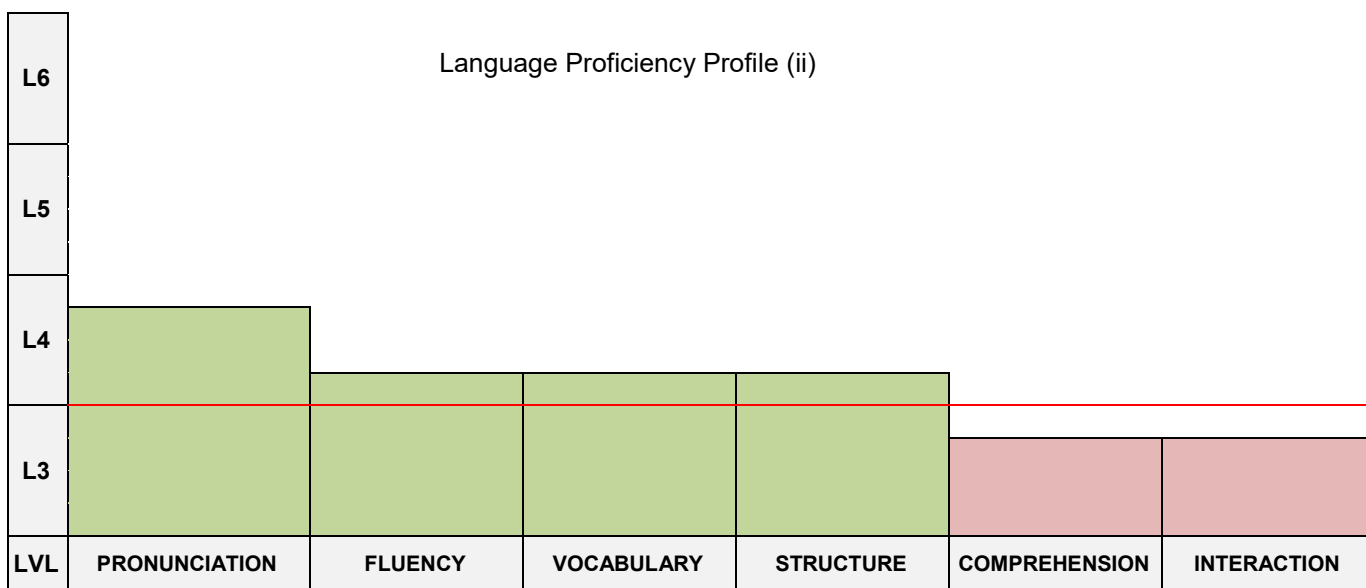


Fig.2

In the language proficiency profile above, even though Pronunciation, Fluency, Vocabulary and Structure are at Level 4, Comprehension and Interaction are below Level 4, therefore the final result is **level 3 = no-pass**.

5.2 Pronunciation

When speaking, ensure that you articulate your speech well and speak slowly enough to be able to do this. Take care also over longer words with many syllables as the stress patterns may change from one word form to another, e.g.: *PHOtograph* but *phoTOGrapher*. Clarity and articulation should therefore be practiced. If words are not physically formed (enunciated) correctly then it can be difficult for a listener to distinguish them.

If you are uncertain about how to pronounce certain words, many online dictionaries offer the possibility to hear how a word sounds.

5.3 Fluency

Whilst you should aim to fully reply to all questions in order to demonstrate as wide a range of language as possible, you must speak at an appropriate speed to be understood. Speaking fast is *not* necessarily a sign of good language proficiency! When you speak fast it is often difficult to understand because of the effect on pronunciation and fluency. You should speak at a constant speed rate fast enough to include as much appropriate language as possible. 100-120 words per minute is an acceptable rate of speech.

You should also aim to link phrases and sentences into coherent and fluent language. Short sentences, too many pauses and too much hesitation lead to poor fluency and may well result in a lower score.

5.4 Vocabulary

You should show a good range and *accuracy* of your vocabulary in both general AND aviation related contexts but you should avoid using words and phrases where you are uncertain of their meaning. Colloquial and idiomatic expressions may be used in the face-to-face part of the Speaking Ability test, and can be indicative of a higher level, but candidates should note, however, that such language should never be used during communication between pilots and ATC.

When you cannot find the word in English, you should also be prepared to explain your ideas using other words (paraphrasing). Successful paraphrasing is a key difference between level 3 and 4 vocabulary. A consistent inability to paraphrase will result in a lower grading. You should also avoid using or transposing words from your own language, even if they have the same spelling or pronunciation as in English, as they may not have the same meaning.

5.5 Structure

For Level 4 exams, test takers are judged on their ability to demonstrate a good level of basic grammatical structures consistently. In Level 4/5/6 exams, candidates are also assessed on their use of complex structures. Most good English course books will cover basic grammar up to Intermediate level whilst complex structures are usually covered from Intermediate to Advanced level.

5.6 Comprehension

The ICAO rating scale has only a small margin of tolerance when evaluating comprehension. The reason for this is that if a person fails to understand one vital piece of aeronautical communication, particularly an instruction from ATC, it could have very serious consequences.

Remember to ***listen carefully to each*** question the Assessor asks; in turn and do not reply before he/she has finished. Pay particular attention to the question word, "*Who?*", "*When?*", "*Which?*", etc. If the reply does not match the question, then it will be marked down as inappropriate, and possible miscomprehension. Repeated miscomprehension will almost certainly result in a lower grade. The Assessor **must** see from your answer that you have understood the question.

Here is an example of an answer that, although linguistically accurate and using relatively high level vocabulary, does not correspond to the question:

Q. "How important is it that you check the weather before departure?"

A. "Yes, every pilot should check the weather. You need to correctly check all the METARs and TAFs thoroughly and to look on the Internet or utilise other sources. Not only that, but ensure you check out weather charts, too"

This does not answer the question. The question looks for **the extent to which it is important** and the reason why, not specific items on a "must do" checklist. A list of things is often not accepted as an answer, as not only does it not answer the question, but it does not provide a good enough language sample with which to assess language proficiency. A good answer might be:

A. "It is extremely important, simply because if you don't know what the weather is going to be like then this could have serious consequences, such as running into low cloud, fog, being caught in turbulence or CBs. You really are putting your life at risk by not checking the weather. You also need to calculate your fuel, flight time, etc. This could be affected by strong winds. If you don't have enough fuel to divert when running into bad weather, you will have serious problems. Yes, checking the weather is one the most fundamental parts of good airmanship"

If you are uncertain of the meaning of a question, you must ask for a specific word to be explained or for the whole sentence to be repeated. You are assessed on your ability to clarify, confirm and interact in managing communication effectively, so you should not be afraid to ask when in doubt. This is a positive point.

5.7 Interaction

In addition to the points mentioned above, you should aim to maintain the dialogue with the Assessor, but note that simply talking a lot and giving a lot of language does not, alone, necessarily, indicate a good level of proficiency. If the structure or vocabulary is incorrect, the fluency is poor, or an answer is given that is not appropriate to the question, then this is not proficient language and you will be rated accordingly.

Specifically rehearsed language should not be used in an oral exam as it may be contextually incorrect, could well come across as unnatural and/or it may not match the overall evidence of the rest of your language skills.

6. Preparation for you as the Candidate

You should prepare fully for this exam, as you would for any exam, and give yourself a minimum of 4 weeks to do so before the exam date.

Sample material has been made available by FOCA to help candidates prepare for the exam. This includes a sample video of the Speaking Ability test, including the simulated flight, and a sample version of the Listening Comprehension test (both Level 4 and Level 4/5/6), which can be downloaded together with the relevant question and answer documentation. The material is downloadable at:

<https://www.bazl.admin.ch/bazl/en/home/specialists/training-and-licences/pilot/radio-telephony-and-language-proficiency-test/language-proficiency-tests.html>

6.1 Listening Comprehension

In addition to the above online material, there are commercially available books for learning English in an aviation context, and you are encouraged to make use of these in any preparation. You should practise the listening exercises in order to get used to listening to recordings and identify specific and general information. You may also initially find it useful to listen to the recordings from the books' CDs and read the recording scripts in the books at the same time. This may help you identify specific vocabulary or terms that you may not immediately identify when listening alone.

Listening to English language radio, TV or films is also beneficial and there are many English learning Internet sites available with listening practice exercises, including English in an aviation context.

6.2 Speaking Ability

Candidates should practise their spoken English, if possible, in an aviation context. A good way of practising and learning aviation vocabulary is to think in English before, during and after a flight. Briefing, aircraft checks, navigation, aerodrome facilities, weather, etc., are all occasions to practise English in the aviation domain. Candidates should also practise explaining words and their meanings for when they can't find a specific word (paraphrasing).

As advised above, candidates looking for an English teacher who has experience in teaching language in an operational aeronautical context should ensure that any training covers language for aeronautical communications in accordance with ICAO recommendations and EASA regulations.

7. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING A GOOD LEVEL OF SPEAKING ABILITY IN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY.

| GENERAL | |
|---------------|---|
| ✓ | Practise speaking and listening to friends and colleagues whose first language is English. |
| PRONUNCIATION | |
| ✓ | Make sure your pronunciation is clear. Practice speaking multi-syllable words to get used to changing stress patterns. |
| ✓ | Remember that plural and 3 rd person 's' are almost always pronounced in English. |
| STRUCTURE | |
| ✓ | Learn all areas of basic grammatical structure up to the end of Pre-Intermediate Level. Complex structures should also be revised and practiced if aiming for a Level 5 or 6. |
| ✓ | A good grammar book will give you guidelines and details on correct grammar structure and use. |
| FLUENCY | |
| ✓ | Give full answers to questions, not just lists of words or short sentences. |
| ✓ | Speak at a normal speed. Pauses should not be too long. Use expressions to fill thinking time (<i>That's an interesting question. I've never thought about that before.</i>). Avoid too much hesitation and try not to use too many fillers (<i>um...errr....ahh..... pff...</i>) |
| ✓ | Use discourse markers (<i>but, so, finally, firstly, secondly, however, on the other hand, etc.</i>) to link your phrases and sentences. |
| VOCABULARY | |
| ✓ | Explain a word in English using descriptive vocabulary if you can't remember the actual word you want. |
| ✓ | !! Be careful: a word in your language may not have the same meaning in English. If you are not sure, then describe what you mean using other words. |
| COMPREHENSION | |
| ✓ | Listen carefully to the instructions and the questions during the test. Wait for the Interlocutor to finish the question and answer appropriately. If the Interlocutor asks the same question again, maybe while emphasising a word or phrase, it could be that your answer did not correspond to the question. See it as a chance to review your answer. |
| ✓ | If you are not certain of a word or a whole question, ask the Interlocutor to repeat the word or question. |
| INTERACTION | |
| ✓ | Maintain interaction by giving as much information as you can. |
| ✓ | Ask for clarification to help you to understand a question or certain words. |
| ✓ | Make sure your answers correspond exactly to the question. Even if you talk a lot but your answers do not correspond to the question your answers will be noted as inappropriate. |

8. ICAO Rating Scale (ICAO DOC 9835 / EASA AMC2 FCL.055)

Expert, Extended and Operational Levels

| LEVEL | PRONUNCIATION ASSUMES A DIALECT AND/OR ACCENT INTELLEIGIBLE TO THE AERONAUTICAL COMMUNITY. | STRUCTURE RELEVANT GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES AND SENTENCE PATTERNS ARE DETERMINED BY LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS APPROPRIATE TO THE TASK. | VOCABULARY | FLUENCY | COMPREHENSION | INTERACTIONS |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| EXPERT 6 | Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation, though possibly influenced by the first language or regional variation, almost never interfere with ease of understanding. | Both basic and complex grammatical structures and sentence patterns are consistently well controlled. | Vocabulary range and accuracy are sufficient to communicate effectively on a wide variety of familiar and unfamiliar topics. Vocabulary is idiomatic, nuanced, and sensitive to register. | Able to speak at length with a natural, effortless flow. Varies speech flow for stylistic effect, e.g. to emphasize a point. Uses appropriate discourse markers and connectors spontaneously. | Comprehension is consistently accurate in nearly all contexts and includes comprehension of linguistic and cultural subtleties. | Interacts with ease in nearly all situations. Is sensitive to verbal and non-verbal cues, and responds to them appropriately. |
| EXTENDED 5 | Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation, though influenced by the first language or regional variation, rarely interfere with ease of understanding. | Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are consistently well controlled. Complex structures are attempted but with errors which sometimes interfere with meaning. | Vocabulary range and accuracy are sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete and work related topics. Paraphrases consistently and successfully. Vocabulary is sometimes idiomatic. | Able to speak at length with relative ease on familiar topics, but may not vary speech flow as a stylistic device. Can make use of appropriate discourse markers or connectors. | Comprehension is accurate on common, concrete, and work related topics and mostly accurate when the speaker is confronted with a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events. Is able to comprehend a range of speech varieties (dialect and/or accent) or registers. | Responses are immediate, appropriate, and informative. Manages the speaker/listener relationship effectively. |
| OPERATIONAL LEVEL 4 | Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation but only sometimes interfere with ease of understanding. | Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are used creatively and are usually well controlled. Errors may occur, particularly in unusual or unexpected circumstances, but rarely interfere with meaning. | Vocabulary range and accuracy are usually sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete, and work related topics. Can often paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary in unusual or unexpected circumstances. | Produces stretches of language at an appropriate tempo. There may be occasional loss of fluency on transition from rehearsed or formulaic speech to spontaneous interaction, but this does not prevent effective communication. Can make limited use of discourse markers or connectors. Fillers are not distracting. | Comprehension is mostly accurate on common, concrete, and work related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. When the speaker is confronted with a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events, comprehension may be slower or require clarification strategies. | Responses are usually immediate, appropriate, and informative. Initiates and maintains exchanges even when dealing with an unexpected turn of events. Deals adequately with apparent misunderstandings by checking, confirming, or clarifying. |

Pre-Operational, Elementary and Pre-Elementary Levels

| LEVEL | PRONUNCIATION ASSUMES A DIALECT AND/OR ACCENT INTELLEIGIBLE TO THE AERONAUTICAL COMMUNITY. | STRUCTURE RELEVANT GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES AND SENTENCE PATTERNS ARE DETERMINED BY LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS APPROPRIATE TO THE TASK. | VOCABULARY | FLUENCY | COMPREHENSION | INTERACTIONS |
|----------------------|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| PRE-OPERATIONAL 3 | Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation and frequently interfere with ease of understanding. | Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns associated with predictable situations are not always well controlled. Errors frequently interfere with meaning. | Vocabulary range and accuracy are often sufficient to communicate on common, concrete, or work related topics but range is limited and the word choice often inappropriate. Is often unable to paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary. | Produces stretches of language, but phrasing and pausing are often inappropriate. Hesitations or slowness in language processing may prevent effective communication. Fillers are sometimes distracting. | Comprehension is often accurate on common, concrete, and work related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. May fail to understand a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events. | Responses are sometimes immediate, appropriate, and informative. Can initiate and maintain exchanges with reasonable ease on familiar topics and in predictable situations. Generally inadequate when dealing with an unexpected turn of events. |
| ELEMENTARY 2 | Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are heavily influenced by the first language or regional variation and usually interfere with ease of understanding. | Shows only limited control of a few simple memorized grammatical structures and sentence patterns. | Limited vocabulary range consisting only of isolated words and memorized phrases. | Can produce very short, isolated, memorized utterances with frequent pausing and a distracting use of fillers to search for expressions and to articulate less familiar words. | Comprehension is limited to isolated, memorized phrases when they are carefully and slowly articulated. | Response time is slow, and often inappropriate. Interaction is limited to simple routine exchanges. |
| PRE-ELEMENTARY 1 | Performs at a level below the Elementary level. | Performs at a level below the Elementary level. | Performs at a level below the Elementary level. | Performs at a level below the Elementary level. | Performs at a level below the Elementary level. | Performs at a level below the Elementary level. |

Note.—The Operational Level (Level 4) is the minimum required proficiency level for radiotelephony communication. Levels 1 through 3 describe Pre-elementary, Elementary, and Pre-operational levels of language proficiency respectively, all of which describe a level of proficiency below the ICAO language proficiency requirement. Levels 5 and 6 describe Extended and Expert levels, at levels of proficiency more advanced than the minimum required Standard. As a whole, the scale will serve as benchmarks for training and testing, in assisting candidates to attain the ICAO Operational Level (Level 4).