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Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC

Federal Office of Civil Aviation FOCA
Division Safety Division - Flight Operations

FOCA ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY TEST FOR PILOTS

HANDBOOK FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSORS

In accordance with the recommendations of ICAO Doc 9835

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INTRODUCTION

This manual is intended as a reference document for language assessors working for the Swiss Federal Office of Civil Aviation (FOCA). The information aims to assist Language Assessors become familiar with the different aspects of language assessing and, in particular, the language components used in the ICAO rating scale. It includes background information on the ICAO recommendations and EASA legislation as well as Swiss national legislation relevant to the system for assessing pilots' language proficiency in an aeronautical context in Switzerland.

It supports all material given during Language Assessor training courses and refresher workshops and provides a central reference document for all Language Assessors.

It remains the property of FOCA and must not be used for any other purpose than for which it is intended, or sold to 3rd party beneficiaries.

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This version replaces all previous versions of the same title.

NB: The term 'he' is used in this document to refer to a person in the general and gender-neutral sense. The person referred to (Assessor, Test Taker, etc.) is generic and may be male or female. The term is used for simplification and avoids the additional specifying of 'he/she' or 'they' each time the reference is used.

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Amendments from previous version

Page	Subject	Notes
All	Handbook completely revised	October 2015
31	Question Techniques : first paragraph amended	October 2016
34	De-briefing : all paragraphs amended	October 2016
34	Paragraph "Evidence of language proficiency" added	October 2016
41	Paragraphs "Good fluency", "Poor fluency" and "Phrasing" amended	October 2016
43	Paragraph "Word order (Syntax)" deleted	October 2016
44	Paragraph "Adverbial phrases" moved to chapter 7 "Structure"	October 2016
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54	Paragraph "Adverbial phrases" added	October 2016
55	First title amended	October 2016
67	Answers to questions 7 and 12 amended	October 2016
68	Question 13 amended, new questions added	October 2016
23	Application of Flight school removed	May 2019
24	Reccurent Testing in Flight	Dez 19
34	Evidence of LP	Dez 19

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CHAPTER 1

ICAO RECOMMENDATIONS &

EASA REQUIREMENTS

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ICAO – IMPLEMENTATION OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR AERONAUTICAL COMMUNICATIONS

The following documentation is listed for the benefit of all stakeholders required to use this assessor handbook. All stakeholders should familiarise themselves with relevant details.

ICAO PUBLICATIONS (referred to in ICAO Doc 9835)

Convention on International Civil Aviation (Doc 7300)

Annexes to the Convention on International Civil Aviation

- Annex 1 — Personnel Licensing
- Annex 6 — Operation of Aircraft
 - Part I — International Commercial Air Transport (Aeroplanes)
 - Part III — International Operations (Helicopters)
- Annex 10 — Aeronautical Telecommunications
 - Volume II — Communication Procedures including those with PANS status
- Annex 11 — Air Traffic Services

Procedures for Air Navigation Services

- ATM — Air Traffic Management (Doc 4444)

Manuals

- Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements (Doc 9835, second edition 2010)
- Human Factors Training Manual (Doc 9683)
- Manual of Radiotelephony (Doc 9432)
- Safety Management Manual (SMM) (Doc 9859)

Circulars

- Guidelines for Aviation English Training Programmes (Cir 323)
- Language Testing Criteria for Global Harmonization (Cir 318)

Summary of the implementation of language proficiency requirements for aeronautical communication

The following summary has been written to highlight the key points of the language proficiency system. It is an overview only and Assessors requiring further information and/or clarification relevant to the system in Switzerland should contact FOCA.

1. Introducing international aviation language proficiency requirements

In four major aviation accidents investigators found a common element: insufficient English language proficiency on the part of the flight crew or a controller had played a contributing role in the chain of events leading to the accident.

Use of standardised phraseologies.

ICAO standardised phraseology has been developed to cover many circumstances, however it cannot address all pilot and controller communication needs. It is widely acknowledged by operational and linguistic experts that no set of standardised phraseologies can fully describe all possible circumstances and responses. Linguistic research makes it clear that there is no form of speech more suitable for human communication than natural language.

It was a concern **over lack of plain language proficiency and incorrect use of standard radiotelephony phraseology that** led to ICAO setting up a review of language requirements.

The study group responsible brought together operational and linguistic experts with backgrounds in aviation (pilots, air traffic controllers and civil aviation authority representatives), aviation English training and applied linguistics.

Amendments to Annex 10 and the PANS-ATM (Doc 4444) regarding the harmonization of radiotelephony speech and improvement in the use of standardised phraseology became applicable on 1 November 2001. Amendments to Annexes 1, 6, 10 and 11 and the PANS-ATM were adopted by the ICAO Council in March 2003.

2. Language proficiency and language acquisition

Language proficiency is not merely knowledge of a set of grammar rules, vocabulary and ways of pronouncing sounds. It is a complex interaction of that knowledge together with a number of skills and abilities. In this, it is substantially different from many of the other subjects in education and training.

Oral language proficiency refers to:

- the performance of a skill based on underlying competences as opposed to the simple reproduction or display of learned knowledge;
- the performance of a complex skill resulting from the integration in real time of a number of sub-skills constituting communicative competence.
- It includes linguistic, pragmatic and strategic language skills.

ICAO Operational Level 4 is considered to be the minimum level acceptable to ensure safe operations.

3. Aeronautical radiotelephony communications

Whilst there is a safety case for efficient and concise communications in the whole of the aeronautical environment, the ICAO language proficiency requirements refer only to aeronautical radiotelephony communications. This is a specialised subcategory of aviation language corresponding to a limited portion of the language uses of only two aviation roles — air traffic controllers and flight crews. It includes ICAO standardised phraseology and the use of plain language.

Aeronautical radiotelephony communications can be characterised as follows:

- they require speaking and listening skills, but not reading and writing.
- they are highly context-dependent.
- the absence of a visual/kinetic channel puts increased reliance on clear and accurate speech.
- only one speaker can transmit a message at any one time.
- the acoustic conditions where communication takes place is generally poorer than in face-to face communications.

Phraseology

Standardised ICAO phraseology has the specific technical function of ensuring efficient and safe communications. Informal jargon, jargons from other specialised fields of activity (for example, military) or anything else that may make comprehension more difficult, should be avoided. Standardised phraseology should therefore provide the tools for communication in most of the situations encountered in the daily practice of ATC and flight.

Plain language

Despite a well-established all-encompassing safety culture in aviation, the unexpected happens and in these cases, where phraseology provides no ready-made form for communication, pilots and controllers must resort to *plain language*. This is the spontaneous, creative and non-coded use of a given natural language, although constrained by the functions and topics (aviation and non-aviation) that are required by aeronautical radiotelephony communications, as well as by specific safety-critical requirements for intelligibility, directness, appropriateness, non-ambiguity and concision.

4. ICAO SARPs concerning Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs)

The key changes brought about by the Annex 10 amendments were:

- stipulating the use of ICAO standardised phraseology where required.
- clarifying that both phraseology and plain language proficiency may be required;
- strengthening the provisions that English be made available in international operations.

The emphasis is now placed on the importance of ICAO standardised phraseology and has established the need for plain language proficiency as a fundamental component of radiotelephony communications.

In upgrading a provision to a standard it is stipulated that radiotelephony communications shall be conducted either in the language of the station on the ground or in English, and that English shall be made available when pilots are unable to use the language of the station on the ground¹.

It is also clarified that the language of the ground station may be different from the national language of the State, and that States in a particular region may also agree that a regional, common language be used¹. However, English shall always be available at those stations serving routes and airports used by international air services.

¹ This is not a reference to what are sometimes referred to as "ICAO languages". ICAO designate certain such languages for administrative and documentation purposes only.

SARPS also determine that:

- all languages must be governed by the same proficiency requirements. The provisions also introduce evaluation requirements that apply equally to flight crews² and air traffic controllers, as well as, in varying degrees, to aeronautical station operators, navigators and flight engineers.
- an implementation date of 5 March 2008 was set for flight crews², air traffic controllers and aeronautical station operators involved in international operations.
- personnel who demonstrate language proficiency below Expert Level 6 on the ICAO Rating Scale shall be formally evaluated at regular intervals.
- licensing authorities shall determine the way in which language proficiency is to be demonstrated.

The ICAO LPRs consist of a set of holistic descriptors and the ICAO Rating Scale.

- The holistic descriptors provide characteristics of proficient speakers and establish context for communications.
- The Rating Scale describes the discrete features of language use.

(“Holistic” refers to the features of communication as a “whole”, in contrast to the descriptors in the Rating Scale which instead highlight individual, discrete features of language use for assessment.)

The LPRs are applicable to the use of both phraseologies and plain language.

It is not possible to make an overall correlation between the ICAO rating scale and those scales used for more general purpose English language testing.

5. Implementation

National Civil Aviation Authorities (NCAAs) are responsible for the oversight of language proficiency assessments when issuing a licence or rendering valid a licence issued in another State. They should ensure that language assessments required for licensing purposes are conducted in a manner that provides valid and reliable results concerning the level of proficiency of the prospective licence holder. NCAAs should develop procedures to collect and analyse language test/assessment results and analyse the safety occurrence reporting system, as well as any other safety data, as regards language proficiency.

6. Language testing criteria for global harmonisation

Language testing for licensing purposes is high stakes. It shall comply with best practices and address the specific requirements of aviation operations.

The overriding concern of high-stakes test is interpreted in terms of validity and reliability. Practicality is a third fundamental test consideration. All tests should be evaluated in terms of their validity, reliability, and practicality based on documented evidence.

- **Validity** indicates the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure.
- **Reliability** refers to the stability of a test. Evidence should be provided that the test can be relied upon to produce consistent results.
- **Practicality** refers to finding an appropriate balance between the resources required to develop and support a test. Such practicality shall take into account the needs of **all** stakeholders in the process.

The ICAO language proficiency requirements state that testing should focus on speaking and listening proficiency.

Test tasks that resemble real-life activities are most suitable. A narrow interpretation would aim to closely replicate radiotelephony communications, including the extent of plain language needed in unusual, unexpected or emergency situations.

Proficiency tests that are administered directly may use face-to-face communication in some phases of the delivery but should include a component devoting time to voice-only interaction.

The final score for each test-taker is the lowest of the ratings in each of the six ICAO language proficiency skills on the rating scale and **not** the average or aggregate of these six ratings.

Test questions and prompts shall be held in confidence, and not be published, used for training, or provided to test-takers prior to the test event.

Evaluation sheets and supporting documentation should be filed for a period of no less than the full validity period of the language proficiency endorsement in the licence.

² LPRs do not apply to pilots of sailplanes or balloons.

Raters should demonstrate language proficiency of at least ICAO Extended Level 5 in the language to be tested. If the test is designed to assess ICAO Level 6 proficiency, raters should demonstrate language proficiency at ICAO Expert Level 6.

EASA AIRCREW REGULATION

EASA is the European Union Authority in aviation safety. The main activities of the organisation include the strategy and safety management, the certification of aviation products and the oversight of approved organisations and EU Member States (including Switzerland).

Commission Regulation (EU) No 1178/2011 of 3 November 2011 laying down technical requirements and administrative procedures related to civil aviation aircrew pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 216/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council (EASA Part-FCL)

FCL.055 Language proficiency

- (a) General. Aeroplane, helicopter, powered-lift and airship pilots required to use the radio telephone shall not exercise the privileges of their licences and ratings unless they have a language proficiency endorsement on their licence in either English or the language used for radio communications involved in the flight. The endorsement shall indicate the language, the proficiency level and the validity date.
- (b) The applicant for a language proficiency endorsement shall demonstrate, in accordance with Appendix 2 to this Part, at least an operational level of language proficiency both in the use of phraseologies and plain language. To do so, the applicant shall demonstrate the ability to:
 - (1) communicate effectively in voice-only and in face-to-face situations;
 - (2) communicate on common and work-related topics with accuracy and clarity;
 - (3) use appropriate communicative strategies to exchange messages and to recognise and resolve misunderstandings in a general or work-related context;
 - (4) handle successfully the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events which occurs within the context of a routine work situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar; and
 - (5) use a dialect or accent which is intelligible to the aeronautical community.
- (c) Except for pilots who have demonstrated language proficiency at an expert level, in accordance with Appendix 2 to this Part, the language proficiency endorsement shall be re-evaluated every:
 - (1) 4 years, if the level demonstrated is operational level; or
 - (2) 6 years, if the level demonstrated is extended level.
- (d) Specific requirements for holders of an instrument rating (IR). Without prejudice to the paragraphs above, holders of an IR shall have demonstrated the ability to use the English language at a level that allows them to:
 - (1) understand all the information relevant to the accomplishment of all phases of a flight, including flight preparation;
 - (2) use radio telephony in all phases of flight, including emergency situations;
 - (3) communicate with other crew members during all phases of flight, including flight preparation.
- (e) The demonstration of language proficiency and of the use of English for IR holders shall be done through a method of assessment established by the competent authority.

Acceptable Means of Compliance and Guidance Material to Part-FCL (Annex to ED Decision 2011/016/R)

AMC1 FCL.055 Language proficiency

General

- (a) The language proficiency assessment should be designed to reflect a range of tasks undertaken by pilots but with specific focus on language rather than operational procedures.

- (b) The assessment should determine the applicant's ability to:
 - (1) communicate effectively using standard R/T phraseology;
 - (2) deliver and understand messages in plain language in both usual and unusual situations that necessitate departure from standard R/T phraseology.

Note: refer to the 'Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements' (ICAO Doc 9835), Appendix A Part III and Appendix B for further guidance.

Assessment

- (a) The assessment may be subdivided into three elements, as follows:
 - (1) listening: assessment of comprehension;
 - (2) speaking: assessment of pronunciation, fluency, structure and vocabulary;
 - (3) interaction.
- (b) The three elements mentioned above may be combined and they can be covered by using a wide variety of means or technologies.
- (c) Where appropriate, some or all of these elements may be achieved through the use of the R/T testing arrangements.
- (d) When the elements of the testing are assessed separately, the final assessment should be consolidated in the language proficiency endorsement issued by the competent authority.
- (e) The assessment may be conducted during one of the several existing checking or training activities, such as licence issue or rating issue and revalidation, line training, operator line checks or proficiency checks.
- (f) The competent authority may use its own resources in developing or conducting the language proficiency assessment, or may delegate this task to language assessment bodies.
- (g) The competent authority should establish an appeal procedure for applicants.
- (h) The holder of a licence should receive a statement containing the level and validity of the language endorsements.
- (i) Where the assessment method for the English language established by the competent authority is equivalent to that established for the assessment of use of the English language in accordance with AMC2 FCL.055, the same assessment may be used for both purposes.

Basic assessment requirements

The aim of the assessment is to determine the ability of an applicant for a pilot licence or a licence holder to speak and understand the language used for R/T communications.

- (1) The assessment should determine the ability of the applicant to use both:
 - (i) standard R/T phraseology;
 - (ii) plain language, in situations when standardised phraseology cannot serve an intended transmission.
- (2) The assessment should include:
 - (i) voice-only or face-to-face situations;
 - (ii) common, concrete and work-related topics for pilots.
- (3) The applicants should demonstrate their linguistic ability in dealing with an unexpected turn of events, and in solving apparent misunderstandings.
- (4) The assessment should determine the applicant's speaking and listening abilities. Indirect assessments, of grammatical knowledge, reading and writing, are not appropriate.
- (5) The assessment should determine the language skills of the applicant in the following areas:
 - (i) pronunciation:
 - (A) the extent to which the pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation are influenced by the applicant's first language or national variations;

(B) how much they interfere with ease of understanding.

(ii) structure:

(A) the ability of the applicant to use both basic and complex grammatical structures;

(B) the extent to which the applicant's errors interfere with the meaning.

(iii) vocabulary:

(A) the range and accuracy of the vocabulary used;

(B) the ability of the applicant to paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary.

(iv) fluency:

(A) tempo;

(B) hesitancy;

(C) rehearsed versus spontaneous speech;

(D) use of discourse markers and connectors.

(v) comprehension:

(A) on common, concrete and work-related topics;

(B) when confronted with a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events.

Note: the accent or variety of accents used in the test material should be sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users.

(vi) interactions:

(A) quality of response (immediate, appropriate, and informative);

(B) the ability to initiate and maintain exchanges:

(a) on common, concrete and work-related topics;

(b) when dealing with an unexpected turn of events.

(C) the ability to deal with apparent misunderstandings by checking, confirming or clarifying.

Note: the assessment of the language skills in the areas mentioned above is conducted using the rating scale in AMC2 FCL.055.

(6) When the assessment is not conducted in a face-to-face situation, it should use appropriate technologies for the assessment of the applicant's abilities in listening and speaking, and for enabling interactions (for example: simulated pilot or controller communication).

Assessors

It is essential that the persons responsible for language proficiency assessment ('assessors') are suitably trained and qualified. They should be either aviation specialists (for example current or former flight crew members or air traffic controllers), or language specialists with additional aviation-related training. An alternative approach would be to form an assessment team consisting of an operational expert and a language expert.

(1) The assessors should be trained on the specific requirements of the assessment.

(2) The assessors should not test applicants to whom they have given language training.

Criteria for the acceptability of language assessment bodies

To ensure an impartial assessment process, the language assessment should be independent of the language training.

(1) To be accepted, the language assessment bodies should demonstrate:

(i) appropriate management and staffing;

(ii) quality system established and maintained to ensure compliance with, and adequacy of, assessment requirements, standards and procedures.

(2) The quality system established by a language assessment body should address the following:

- (i) management;
 - (ii) policy and strategy;
 - (iii) processes;
 - (iv) the relevant provisions of ICAO or Part-FCL, standards and assessment procedures;
 - (v) organisational structure;
 - (vi) responsibility for the development, establishment and management of the quality system;
 - (vii) documentation;
 - (viii) quality assurance programme;
 - (ix) human resources and training (initial and recurrent);
 - (x) assessment requirements;
 - (xi) customer satisfaction.
- (3) The assessment documentation and records should be kept for a period of time determined by the competent authority and made available to this competent authority, on request.
- (4) The assessment documentation should include at least the following:
- (i) assessment objectives; (ii) assessment layout, time scale, technologies used, assessment samples, voice samples;
 - (iii) assessment criteria and standards (at least for the levels 4, 5 and 6 of the rating scale mentioned in AMC2 FCL.055);
 - (iv) documentation demonstrating the assessment validity, relevance and reliability;
 - (v) assessment procedures and responsibilities:
 - (A) preparation of individual assessment;
 - (B) administration: location(s), identity check and invigilation, assessment discipline, confidentiality or security;
 - (C) reporting and documentation provided to the competent authority or to the applicant, including sample certificate;
 - (D) retention of documents and records.

Note: refer to the 'Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements' (ICAO Doc 9835) for further guidance.

AMC2 FCL.055 Language proficiency

Rating scale

(see pages Appendix 3A and 3B of this Handbook)

AMC3 FCL.055 Language proficiency**Specific requirements for holders of an IR
Use of English language**

- (a) The requirement of FCL.055(d) includes the ability to use the English language for the following purposes:
- (1) flight: R/T relevant to all phases of flight, including emergency situations.
 - (2) ground: all information relevant to the accomplishment of a flight:
 - (i) be able to read and demonstrate an understanding of technical manuals written in English, for example an operations manual, a helicopter flight manual, etc.;
 - (ii) pre-flight planning, weather information collection, NOTAMs, ATC flight plan, etc.;
 - (iii) use of all aeronautical en-route, departure and approach charts and associated documents written in English.
 - (3) communication: be able to communicate with other crew members in English during all phases of flight, including flight preparation.
- (b) Alternatively, the items in (a) above may be demonstrated:
- (1) by having passed a specific examination given by the competent authority after having undertaken a course of training enabling the applicant to meet all the objectives listed in (a) above; or
 - (2) the item in (a)(1) above is considered to be fulfilled, if the applicant has passed an IR, MPL or ATPL skill test and proficiency check during which the two-way R/T communication is performed in English;
 - (3) the item in (a)(2) above is considered to be fulfilled if the applicant has graduated from an IR, MPL or ATP course given in English or if he or she has passed the theoretical IR or ATPL examination in English;
 - (4) the item in (a)(3) above is considered to be fulfilled, if the applicant for or the holder of an IR has graduated from an MCC course given in English and is holding a certificate of satisfactory completion of that course or if the applicant has passed a MP skill test and proficiency check for the issue of a class or type rating during which the two-way R/T communication and the communication with other crew members are performed in English.
- (c) Where the examination methods referred to above are equivalent to those established for the language proficiency requirements in accordance with AMC1 FCL.055, the examination may be used to issue a language proficiency endorsement.

CHAPTER 2

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY EXAMS

FOR PILOTS IN SWITZERLAND

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Introduction

In accordance with ICAO recommendations and EASA legislation for language proficiency testing in aeronautical communication mentioned in section 1, all candidates in FOCA language proficiency exams are tested for their Speaking Ability and Listening Comprehension only.

The final result is the lowest level achieved of the two parts based on the ICAO rating scale for language proficiency in aeronautical communication. A candidate must achieve a minimum of level 4 in both parts of the exam to pass. If a candidate scores below level 4 in one part of the exam they will be given a *no-pass* result. Further details and the implications for the candidate are given below.

The LP exam is available:

- In Exam Centres
- Combined with a flight

The information given about exams in Switzerland in this manual refers to the English language proficiency exams only. Details of LP exams for Swiss national languages can be obtained from the examiners for radiotelephony exams or directly from FOCA.

A list of language assessors for LP exams combined with a flight as well as information on exam timetables, application forms and sample test material for the exam centres is available on the FOCA website at:

<https://www.bazl.admin.ch/bazl/de/home/fachleute/ausbildung-und-lizenzen/experten-fuer-pilotenpruefungen.html>

Exam Centres

Language Proficiency exams for pilots in English in Switzerland take place at one of the four nominated Test centres:

- Zurich – Eastern Switzerland (Level 4 and Level 5/6)
- Romandie – Western Switzerland (Level 4 and Level 5/6)
- Bern - Swiss plateau (Mittelland) (Level 4 only)
- Ticino – Southern Switzerland (Level 4 only)

All exams dates are published annually on the FOCA website. Assessors working in the centres will receive additional training to be able to carry out additional tasks and a separate Test Centre document detailing all information relative to the test centre operation. Other Assessors and pilots requiring any further information about the exams should contact their nearest Head of Centre as detailed on page 3.

Level 4 exams

- Pilots may revalidate or renew their Level 4 in an LP exam session at any FOCA RTF centre
- Pilots taking their initial English LP exam **must** first have passed their radiotelephony exam in English (both theory and practical classroom test).
- Licence holders with an English language proficiency endorsement that has expired for more than 3 years must renew their endorsement in a FOCA exam centre.
- All candidates shall take *both* components of the test. This also applies to those candidates re-taking a failed test. The result will be given to the candidate only once both parts of the test have been completed.

Higher Level Exams

Holders of an English Level 4 endorsement in their licence wishing to achieve a level higher than 4, may apply to take the higher level exam at one of the two FOCA exam centres that provide such exams.

Holders of a level 5 endorsement in their licence wishing to achieve a level 6 or who wish to re-validate or renew a level 5 endorsement must do so at a higher level exam session in one of the two FOCA exam centres. A level 5 endorsement **cannot** be renewed or re-validated combined with a flight.

Result

Candidates who achieve a minimum of Level 4 in the higher-level exam will be given a *pass result* and their licence will be endorsed with a specific level. This level will be: 4, 5 or 6 based on whichever level is the lower of the two parts of the exam.

No-Pass Result

Candidates who do not achieve a minimum of Level 4 in one or both parts of the higher-level exam will be given a *no-pass* result. The same restrictions apply to all test takers who achieve a *no-pass* result in the higher-level exam as with the Level 4 exams.

All candidates who achieve a *no-pass* result in the higher-level exam, who wish to re-take the exam, shall do so at a **Level 4 exam session** and this should normally be in the same regional exam centre. Candidates shall re-take **both** parts of the exam.

Expert Speaker Assessment

Any FOCA licence holder, or trainee pilot, who considers that English is his first language or that he is a 'native' English speaker, may apply for an 'Expert' speaker assessment at one of the higher level test sessions.

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 Head of Centre.

Recurrent Testing In Flight**General**

In order to save time and money, licence holders with an English level 4 endorsement in their licence that is still current, or with an expiry date of less than 3 years, have the possibility to take the Level 4 exam in English combined with a flight. The exam must still include both Listening Comprehension and Speaking Ability.

The assessment would normally be done during a check ride that the candidate would need to do anyway for the acquisition, revalidation or renewal of a class, type or instrument rating. One example is a skill test, proficiency check, or training flight for the revalidation of a SEP class rating. For practical and logistical reasons airline pilots may combine the language proficiency check with **any** flight.

A pilot is free to choose anyone of the language assessors from the existing list published on the FOCA website. The Assessor must ensure that at least one in the cockpit is qualified and authorised to fly the class or type of aircraft for which the flight is to be performed. In case a non-flying Assessor performs the language proficiency check from a jump seat or as a passenger he can maintain a listening watch to the radio at all times in order to fully assess the pilot's language as if he were a pilot/examiner flying.

NB: If the assessor is not qualified and authorised to fly the aircraft, then the candidate must hold all the relevant ratings, including a valid L4 endorsement, i.e: the assessor can only re-validate a current level 4, but not renew an expired LP endorsement. The only exception to this is if a flight instructor or examiner, holding a valid Level 4, is responsible for the flight (as PIC), then the assessor may carry out a renewal of an expired Level 4.

Assessors asked to take the LP check from the jump seat must have the relevant operational RTF experience to fully assess the pilot's language skills in flight.

Part 1: Listening Comprehension and Use of Standard Phraseology**Purpose of the flight**

The purpose of the flight is to check the pilot's ability to understand and follow ATC instructions and to communicate effectively during all phases of the flight, in both familiar/usual and unexpected/unusual situations, by using correct standard phraseology and in transition to and continued use of plain language where necessary.

Flight content

If possible, either the departure aerodrome and/or destination **should** be located in a CTR. The en-route part of the flight should also, where possible, include entry/crossing of an airspace requiring ATC clearance, for instance crossing of a civil or military CTR/TMA.

In **all** cases the pilot must have the opportunity to demonstrate that he/she is able to handle successfully the linguistic challenges presented when confronted with an unusual situation or unexpected turn of events in communication with ATC.

Flight duration

FOCA does not establish any minimum flight time for the purpose of assessing the pilot's language skills. It is the Language Assessor's responsibility to conduct a flight that is sufficiently long enough to meet the requirements and check the pilot's ability to communicate in different situations as detailed above.

Aircraft versus simulator

The most realistic and, therefore, the best scenarios will be encountered during flights on aircraft and with real ATC contact. There may, however, be situations where there is no alternative but to conduct the flight on a simulator. In this case, the Language Assessor shall play the role of ATC and, as far as possible, present the pilot with linguistic challenges he would or could meet during a real flight.

Observing the use of standard phraseology

An integral part of the exam is the use of standard phraseology in radiotelephony (RTF) communications, but it must be remembered that this is NOT an radiotelephony exam and the final decision for a Test Taker's Language proficiency assessment and grading are to be judged only on plain language skills.

However, in the case where the Assessor notices that the overall standard of RTF used during flight compromises safety and/or safe operational communication is not sufficiently effected (e.g.: non-standard, incorrect, or lack of standardised phraseology usage), then he must note this on the result sheet (updated FOCA Form 69.530) as follows:

If the Test Taker makes a few minor errors (for instance call sign in the wrong place) but is able to communicate effectively at all times, then the Assessor will tick the box '**RTF sufficient**'.

If the Test Taker makes errors that influence effective communications but not safety (for instance incomplete initial call), then the Assessor will tick the box '**RTF marginal**' and tell him at the end of the exam that he is **recommended** to participate in an RTF Refresher course as soon as possible.

If the Test Taker makes errors which may affect safety (for instance using ambiguous plain language instead of using standard phraseology, or using safety-critical incorrect phraseology such as "ready for take-off"), then the Assessor will tick the box '**RTF insufficient**' and tell him at the end of the exam that he is **required** to participate in an RTF Refresher course as soon as possible and send the course certificate to FOCA within 12 months from the language proficiency exam date.

RTF observation should include all phases of the flight as follows:

Departure:

- Taxi/aerodrome procedures
- Aerodrome departure procedures

Enroute:

- Enroute procedures (including entering airspace D or C respectively crossing CTR/TMA)
- Abnormal/emergency procedures (simulated unexpected/unusual situations)

Approach and landing:

- Aerodrome arrival procedures
- Landing/taxi procedures

For each of the six phases the Assessor shall tick the appropriate box (traffic light) on page 1 of the assessment sheet. The meaning of the traffic lights is:

	RTF sufficient
	RTF marginal
	RTF insufficient

The overall RTF evaluation (final result) shall be based on the following grading scale:

Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient	Sufficient	Marginal	Marginal	Insufficient	Insufficient	Insufficient

Examples: If the Test Taker's RTF performance is marginal in 2 of the 6 flight phases or insufficient in 1 of the 6 flight phases mentioned on the previous page, the final result for the RTF observation is 'RTF sufficient'. If 3 phases are marginal or 1 insufficient and 1 marginal, the final result is 'RTF marginal'. Any worse performance leads to the final result 'RTF insufficient'.

The Test Taker's RTF performance does not affect the result of the language proficiency exam.

Part 2: Testing speaking ability (on ground)

This part of the exam should take place as soon as possible after the flight and in a suitable location to enable the candidate to perform as he would under normal exam conditions in an exam centre. Premises used for such exams should be free from external noise and interruption. The examiner and candidate should also be alone in the room. The exam must not be conducted in an area with public access, such as a coffee room or an openly accessible training room.

The speaking ability component of this exam in exam centres is always recorded for legal reasons. It is also recommended that assessors carrying out this examination combined with a flight record the speaking ability component. They should, however, obtain the consent of the candidate first. Advice on conducting of the speaking ability interview for exam centres and recurrent testing in flight is detailed in Chapter 3.

Authorised Assessors receive exam material from FOCA for use during this part of the exam combined with a flight. This material is strictly confidential and shall be kept in a secure place at all times. Assessors should familiarise themselves fully with all material before carrying out an exam.

The material includes:

- A full set of photographs for all types of licence.
- 3 question banks covering the following areas of a pilot's licence :
 - PPL(A)/CPL(A) VFR/IFR Single Pilot
 - CPL(A)/ATPL(A) VFR/IFR Multi Pilot
 - PPL(H)/CPL(H)/ATPL(H) VFR/IFR (Single Pilot and Multi Pilot).

There are more than 100 questions in each of the 3 banks, relative to the areas of unexpected situations in operational aeronautical contexts as described in ICAO Doc 9835.

The question banks ensure a wide variety of questions. This allows the Assessor to evaluate how a Test Taker can deal with unexpected linguistic complications and it reduces the need for material renewal. It also allows the Assessor to vary and target questions according to the Test Taker's experience and responses without the need for non-standard follow-up questions.

The procedures for the speaking ability exam on the ground should be carried out as follows :

1. Before the exam, the Assessor should choose a photograph suitable for the pilot's flying experience. He should also be familiar with the questions in the relevant bank.
2. Once the Assessor has performed the pre-briefing, he/she will invite the TT to look at the photograph and to describe it as fully as possible. When the Assessor is satisfied that the TT has given sufficient information (max. 2 minutes), the TT should be asked the two questions linked to the picture (on the first pages of the question bank). Once the two questions have been answered, the Assessor should take the picture back from the TT.
3. The Assessor should then ask the TT a series of questions from the bank related to the TT's role in aviation. He should vary the subject area for all questions and also avoid asking again the questions linked to the photograph. The length of the interview, including the picture description should be a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 minutes.

4. Once the Assessor has concluded the exam the TT will be asked to wait outside the examination room to allow the Assessor time to complete his evaluation and final decision. When ready, the Assessor will call the TT and give him the results for RTF observation and Language proficiency, including feedback where necessary. If the overall result of the RTF observation is 'RTF marginal' or 'RTF insufficient', or if any part of the LPC is failed, then the Test Taker must sign the exam paper (FOCA form 69.530, in the respective box).
5. Assessors shall maintain documented evidence of each assessment on behalf of FOCA including assessment notes of the speaking ability test as well as recordings (where possible), and ensure that all documentation as well as material and equipment is stored in a secure place not accessible to any third party.
6. Assessors should ensure that the completed exam paperwork, together with the Assessor's invoice, is sent to FOCA no later than three days after the exam.

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CHAPTER 3

ASSESSING SPEAKING ABILITY – THE ROLE OF THE ASSESSOR

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Assessing Speaking ability – the Role of the Assessor

Preparing the Candidate

- The Pre-Briefing should always be carried out in English.
 - The Assessor should always ensure the candidate is fit and well enough to take the exam.
- The Candidate should always be reminded of the following points:
 - Examination time (10-15 minutes).
 - Minimum requirements for a pass (Level 4 for **each** of the 6 areas of the ICAO scale).
 - He should give as much language as possible.
 - He is not being tested on technical items or personal opinions.
 - He should ask and clarify where necessary. This is seen as a positive point.
 - He should explain a word or phrase using other words when unable to find the exact word(s).
 - There is no *right* or *wrong* answer, but the answer should be appropriate to the question.
- What the candidate can expect from you.
 - You will take notes (positive **and** negative items!) to help decide the result and give feedback.
 - Result (pass/no pass) will be given as soon as the assessor's decision is made and any debriefing will follow.
 - Allow the candidate to ask questions before the exam starts.

During the exam

The Assessor should....

- Be relaxed.
- Maintain regular eye contact with the candidate.
- Continue note taking throughout the exam.
- Allow the candidate time to speak.
- Only interrupt the candidate where necessary.

The Assessor should take care of his own behaviour, in particular:

- Body Language.
- Verbal and non-verbal cues.
- Assessment signals (avoid "good" "great").
- Be neutral, but still professional and human.
- Use the given list of questions (see *Question Techniques* below).
- The delivery speed of his/her own language (approx. 100 words/minute).
- Instructions – they should be clear.
- Emphasising and stressing words when confirming or repeating.

The Assessor should also be careful **not to intervene** when a candidate...

- Shows limited technical knowledge.
- Gives a personal opinion.
- Takes time to think and formulate an answer (but not too long).
 - NB:** A sign that the Candidate is going to continue talking is a filler ("er", "um") followed by an intake of breath.

The Assessor must not:

- react in a negative way to any answers given.
- give words when the candidate cannot find or remember them.
- give translations or accept non-English words.
- accept body language from the candidate.

Question Techniques

The Assessor should ask the questions exactly as they are written on the question sheet and should vary the question subjects throughout the exam. Assessors should also vary the questions from exam to exam and not use their 'favourite' questions or the same questions for each candidate. The familiarity of domains will differ from candidate to candidate and varying the questions ensures that the depth of a candidate's vocabulary is tested as much as possible and that all candidates are treated fairly.

Personal follow-up questions should only be used when necessary, for example to clarify a point or to get the candidate to expand on a short answer. Assessors should, however, avoid follow-up questions on technical knowledge, personal opinions or sensitive subjects.

An Assessor should also:

- Try to elicit a language sample from the candidate if no answer (*Would you like me to repeat the question?*) or an inappropriate answer (*Let me just ask you the question again.*) is given.
- Repeat a question verbatim the first time.
 - Paraphrase **ONLY** after this first verbatim repeat.
 - If no suitable answer is given after repeating, paraphrasing and/or clarifying then move on to the next question. This should be noted as **one** instance of lack of comprehension, i.e. an Assessor should **not** count lack of comprehension for each repeat, paraphrase or clarification by the Assessor.
- Clarify what the candidate means if they use non-English words or transpose words from their 1st language, e.g. *“immatriculation”* instead of *“registration”*, or *“my meaning”* instead of *“my opinion”*, but do not give translations. It is an **English** exam. The ability for a candidate to paraphrase is an important component of the Level 4 criteria for Vocabulary.

If further questions are needed to follow up a short answer or lack of information, an Assessor may also formulate his/her own questions. However it is very important that an Assessor:

- Has allowed candidate time to think and respond appropriately
 - 10 seconds is acceptable for thinking time.
- Ensures questions are valid, appropriate and relevant.
- Avoids closed questions (that give "yes" or "no" or single word answers).
- Avoids technical questions or potential lists.
- Elicits ideas, opinions, reason or hypothesis.
- Asks only short and concise questions.
- Uses level 4 language.

Use	Example
Opinion	<i>Why is flying such a passion for some people? What do you think is the best way to improve language skills?</i>
Reason	<i>What qualities make a good pilot and why? Why do you think there are two Police cars behind the aircraft?</i>
Cause	<i>Why do you think the rate of incidents has increased recently? What was the reason for this incident?</i>
Ideas	<i>How do you keep up to date with changes in aviation? What do you think the people at the front of the aircraft are doing?</i>
Hypothesis	<i>What could be the consequences of bad language training? If air traffic continues to increase what will be the effect on the major airports?</i>
Feelings	<i>How do you usually feel after a flight? Why do you think people are afraid of flying?</i> ▶ Take care to avoid 'negative' ideas that could provoke an emotional influence on the candidate. E.g. <i>“Tell me about an aircraft accident you remember!”</i>

Here is a list of suitable and non-suitable question forms for follow-up questions.

Examples of open question forms ☑	Examples of closed, invalid or inappropriate question forms ☒
What, in your opinion, are the main reasons / factors for.....?	<i>Is that correct/right/ok?</i>
Why do you think that	<i>Do you need more clarification?</i>
What do you think X is doing? (Follow up with <i>Why / Why not?</i>)	<i>Does that help you out?</i>
Can you explain why.....?	<i>Is there any other information that you need?</i>
How could something like this happen?	<i>Is there something you are looking for?</i>
Why is this information important?	<i>Why does it rain?</i>
How do you think this happened?	<i>Is flying good fun?</i>
What could be done to prevent / improve.....?	<i>Do you like Concorde?</i>
What do you think caused this incident?	<i>Is it fun to fly supersonic?</i>
What might be the reason for.....?	<i>How long have you been flying?</i>
Could you describe what is happening here?	<i>Is it far from your house to the nearest airport?</i>
Why does X?	<i>Do women make better pilots?</i>
How would you feel if.....?	<i>What if you fail this exam?</i>
Tell me how you think this happened?	<i>Are you nervous today?</i>
In what circumstances would you.....?	<i>What do clouds do?</i>

Note taking

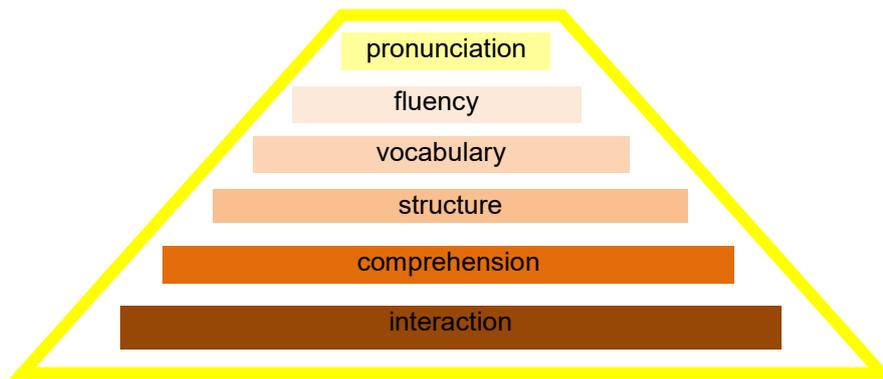
Assessors should take as many notes as possible. The more notes and evidence that are taken, the easier it is to give a full and comprehensive feedback, particularly in the case of a *no-pass*. Notes should be as concise as possible but comprehensive enough to note a candidate's strong and weak points. Shorthand or symbols are preferred, as are the many abbreviations regularly used in aviation (VOR, LSZH, WX).

- ① *A note-taking template together with optional symbols is included in Appendix 2 to this document. The form is intended as a guide for Assessors only.*

How language is assessed

Even though the process of hearing and identifying speech follows a normal pattern, shown in the table below, assessing must include all 6 language components at the same time and not in isolation or in any specific order. Each of the 6 language components is described in full in the following chapters.

Assessors must therefore write down their notes as they are listening to the candidate and cross-reference these with the rating scale only after the interview has finished and the candidate has left the room.



Deciding the result

- Use the Rating Scale descriptors in the scale adapted by FOCA (See Appendix 3B) including the ‘additional information’ underneath which has been taken from DOC9835 as well as from direct experience within the examining system. The adapted rating scale also includes percentages relative to adverbs of frequency (*sometimes, often, etc.*) which has been taken from an idea initially used by Eurocontrol in the ELPAC exam for air traffic controllers. The original ICAO rating scale is also included (see Appendix 3A) for information.
- Don’t go by ‘gut feeling’, base your decisions on facts.
- Be objective and don’t give benefit of the doubt!
- Be factual in feedback language – “*You said that...*” “*You showed that...*”, “*You replied...*” “*You didn’t...*”. Avoid the use of subjective expressions such as: “*I feel*”, “*I think*”, “*you may have*”, “*it’s possible*”.

De-briefing

- Be sure to give them the result immediately (*pass, no pass*) – avoid the word *fail*.
 - “*Congratulations, you have passed!*”
 - “*I’m sorry to tell you that the result is a ‘no pass’. You did not reach Level 4 in all 6 criteria*”.
- In the case of a *pass*:
 - Congratulate the candidate and allow them to ask any questions.
 - If the current endorsement is likely to expire before the licence can be re-issued, see below (Evidence of language proficiency).
- In the case of a *marginal pass*:
 - Tell the candidate the areas where they received a marginal pass.
 - Give feedback on why these areas were assessed as marginal.
 - Ensure that advice is given on how a candidate can improve their language proficiency. (see Appendix 4).
 - Allow them to ask any questions.
 - If the current endorsement is likely to expire before the licence can be re-issued, see below (Evidence of language proficiency).
- In the case of a *no-pass*:
 - Firstly, give feedback on the areas passed. There may have only been one area below Level 4.
 - Secondly, give your objective evidence about the areas assessed below Level 4 (not passed).
 - Then, give advice on language improvement (see Appendix 4) and allow any questions.
 - Advise candidate of his licence restrictions – no flights for which the use of the radio telephone is required.
 - Advise candidate that he must return to the same examiner for the re-test.
 - Ensure that he signs the form to acknowledge receipt of the exam result in the case of a *no-pass* result.

Evidence of language proficiency

If the current endorsement is likely to expire before the licence can be re-issued, the Assessor is not permitted to sign the licence.

EASA states that pilots required to use the radio telephone shall not exercise the privileges of their licences and ratings unless they have a language proficiency endorsement on their licence. The endorsement shall indicate the language, the proficiency level and the validity date.

CHAPTER 4

ASSESSING SPEAKING ABILITY –

PRONUNCIATION

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PRONUNCIATION

- **Pronunciation refers to the production of sounds that we use to make meaning. It includes attention to individual sounds such as: *intonation*, *enunciation* (the physical formation of spoken language) *phrasing*, *stress*, *timing*, *rhythm*, and how the voice is projected (voice quality).**

Why is pronunciation important?

The way we speak immediately conveys something about ourselves to the people around us. Learners with good pronunciation in English are more likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, whereas learners whose pronunciation is difficult to understand will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect! Many adult learners find pronunciation one of the most difficult aspects of English to acquire, and need explicit help.

Stress

Stress refers to the prominence given to certain syllables within words. It is signalled by volume, force, pitch, change and syllable length. One noticeable feature of English is the reduced nature of unstressed syllables. Thus, not only are stressed syllables longer, louder, more forceful and at a different pitch, but unstressed ones are often different in quality.

Stress is important at three different levels:

- word level – multisyllabic words have one or more syllables that are stressed.
- sentence level – the most important words tend to be stressed.
- contrastive stress – the most important words carry greater stress.

Consider the example below:

- “He was **TOLD** **NOT** to **ENT**er the **RUN**way!”
- “**GO** ar**OUND**, I say ag**AIN**, go ar**OUND**!”

The stressed syllables are marked with capital letters. Each two-syllable word in this utterance must have one syllable that is stressed. This is word level stress, and it is fixed for any word, although there are some variations between different varieties of English.

Those words which are more important for communicating the speaker’s meaning, usually the content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) tend to be stressed, while those which are less important, usually the grammatical words (prepositions, articles, auxiliary verbs), are unstressed. In addition, one of these stressed syllables or words is usually more important than the others, and this is called the ‘*tonic*’.

The tonic is important because it changes according to the speaker’s intended meaning. So if the speaker wanted to emphasise the fact that it is the *runway* rather than the *taxiway* ‘**RUN**’ of runway would be more strongly stressed than other stressed syllables in the words spoken. If, however, the speaker wanted to emphasise the fact that he remembers telling him, then he could stress *told*. Here we see how important pronunciation is when deducing meaning from how the sound is made and subsequently spoken.

Rhythm

An important aspect of stress is, in fact, an *absence* of stress. It is often failure to unstress syllables appropriately that makes learners’ pronunciation difficult to understand because, unlike other languages, English tends to maintain a rhythm from stressed syllable to stressed syllable by unstressing, and therefore reducing, the syllables in between. This rhythm gives English its characteristic pattern – words are often run together when spoken, rather than stressing all syllables.

The reduced vowel - *schwa* /ə/ is very common in English and deserves special attention. In our example, the ‘a’ in *was*, the ‘er’ in *enter* and *the* between enter and runway would all be pronounced with a *schwa*. This pronunciation accentuates the stressed syllables. This sound is spoken similar to a soft /uh/ such as **banana** *bən’ar’nə* and **photographer** *fə’toh’grə’fə*.

Intonation

In English we link and blend sounds between words in a way which is quite distinctive from that of other languages, and these features help us to manage the patterns of stress, unstress and pitch change. Learning to pronounce the sounds of English in natural speech is a crucial part of learning pronunciation in English. Learners, in whose first language certain sounds are rare, or not fully pronounced, may have difficulty with particular sounds, sound combinations or with putting particular sounds in particular positions (the /th/ sound for French speakers, for example).

Segmental aspects of pronunciation

Consonants are made by causing a blockage or partial blockage in the mouth and these are usually described in terms of:

- Where the sound is made in the mouth, or *place of articulation* (tongue, hard palate, alveolar ridge).
- How the sound is made, or the *manner of articulation* (tongue between teeth, air forced out /th/ sound).
- Whether or not the vocal cords vibrate, or *voicing*. (/z/ voiced sound becomes /s/ un-voiced sound when vocal cords don't vibrate and air only is forced out).

Vowels are usually described in terms of:

- Length, although remember that length depends on stress, and that even short vowels in English may seem rather long when stressed (for example – “*three thousand*”)
- The position in the mouth in which they are made (in terms of their position from high to low and front to back)
- The degree to which the lips are rounded, spread or neutral.

English may have many more vowel sounds or longer vowels than learners are used to in their first language and so learners may need a lot of careful listening to vowel sounds, and to think about how to distinguish them, as well as where in the mouth they should make them. An important issue which is not always treated in the reference texts is that adult learners will already have ‘drawn the boundary’ of what counts as a particular sound in a slightly different place or manner in their first language. An example of this would be the characteristic French /r/ (*arrive*) sound compared with the English sound (*arrive*). Sometimes there are two separate sounds capable of distinguishing differences in meaning in English, but not in the learner’s first language.

An example would be the distinction that is made in English between /l/ and /r/, which is not made in the same way in Chinese. The converse may also be true – that is, English may only have one sound, where their first language has two, as in the so-called light /l/ (in ‘*land*’) and dark /l/ (as in ‘*roll*’) in English. Russian distinguishes these as two separate phonemes. Another difficulty may arise when learners do not have the English phoneme at all in their first language and they need to learn it from scratch, although this seems to present less of a problem for learners in the long term.

Assessing Pronunciation

Although pronunciation is one of the first elements of speech that a listener processes, it is not always easy to assess pronunciation as objectively as other language areas. Assessors therefore should be looking for a global percentage where pronunciation interferes with **ease** of understanding, not just the understanding itself. The harder it is to understand someone’s pronunciation the more difficult the communication is going to be.

Caution should also be shown when assessing a candidate whose own first language strongly influences his pronunciation in English. If the assessor is used to hearing the candidate’s first language then this influence on his pronunciation should be taken in a more global context against how much poor or mispronunciation would interfere with the ease of understanding for someone who is *not* used to hearing the candidate’s first language. The nearer an assessor is to the 25% limit for Level 4 in interference with ease of pronunciation in a candidate’s language he is used to hearing, the more likely someone not used to the candidate’s first language will have difficulty in ease of understanding of more than the 25%. ICAO clearly states that pronunciation should be intelligible to an “*international community of aviation users*”.

Frequent Problems Areas in Pronunciation

Problem area	Examples
Mispronunciation of vowels	<i>Examiner (mine), Climate (KI-ee-matt), Moun-tay-neous, Gauge (gorge), Critt-eh-ria, reh-cently, Floo (flow), Horih-zun (horizon)</i>
Incorrect syllable stress	<i>pho-to-GRAPH-er / APP-uh-rent / In-for-MAT-ive / EX-peh-rience</i>
Missed Schwa (the “uh” unvoiced vowel sound):	<i>Accu-ray-t, Com-fuh-tay-ble, veg-eh-tay-ble / moun-TAY-nee uss /</i>
Logical consonants	<i>Legs/Legislation, Jear/gear</i>
First language enunciation	<i>“Th” becomes Z, D – French and German ; “L/R” sound – Asia; “B/V” sound – Spanish</i>
Swallowed, garbled syllables	<i>Vocab-ree (vocabulary)</i>
slurring, mumbling	<i>incoherent and / or unintelligible pronunciation - poor enunciation</i>

CHAPTER 5

ASSESSING SPEAKING ABILITY –

FLUENCY

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FLUENCY

- **Typically fluency can be described as the flow of a language. It is the smoothness and ease of how someone speaks.**
- **Good fluency is not the same as being 'fluent' in a language. The word 'fluent' is often used to indicate a general high level of proficiency but is often subjective and unsubstantiated.**

Good fluency should include:

- ✓ Stretches of coherent language.
- ✓ Appropriate and logical phrasing.
- ✓ Few hesitations.
- ✓ Consistent use and variation of discourse markers.
- ✓ An appropriate tempo.

Poor fluency can include:

- ✗ Short pieces or chunks of unlinked or incoherent language.
- ✗ Simple unlinked or incoherent phrasing.
- ✗ Hesitations and long pauses.
- ✗ No or limited use of basic discourse markers (and, but).
- ✗ Speaking too fast / too slow.
- ✗ Distracting fillers (just sounds – er, hmm, uh-huh, pfff, aah, etc.).

Tempo of speech delivery

A slow delivery of speech is evidence of poor fluency and could well inhibit communication and lead to frustration on the part of the listener as the speaker is attempting to produce language. In an unexpected or non-routine situation, speech delivery should be at a speed quick enough to convey the required information so that the listener can understand what is happening without too much effort. The ICAO Rating Scale calls this an **appropriate** speed at Level 4. ICAO recommend an maximum speed of 100 words per minute.

Assessors should also be aware that speakers with high levels of proficiency often speak too fast, leading to poor fluency and difficulty in comprehension for the listener. When assessing a candidate at such levels, assessors may find it necessary to advise the candidate on the need to adapt their language, particularly when communicating with non-native speakers, or in an unexpected (particularly an emergency) or non-routine situation.

Hesitations and pausing

These are natural phenomena of normal speech delivery. Rarely do people speak with such fluency as TV newsreaders or someone giving a keynote address. However, too much hesitation and pausing normally indicate poor fluency. At lower levels of proficiency this is often due to lack of vocabulary or uncertainty over correct structural forms. Assessors should limit acceptable 'filler free' thinking time (or *silences*) to about 10 seconds. Much longer and a candidate should be prompted to see if they would like the question repeated.

Fillers

As with hesitations and pausing, fillers are a natural element of speech in all languages. However, too many fillers lead to poor fluency, and can be very distracting.

- Candidates at lower levels are more likely to use non-lexical fillers, such as: *um, er, ah, hmm*, i.e. noises, rather than actual words.
- Candidates at higher levels are more likely to use lexical fillers (actual and coherent words or groups of words known as *hedging*) such as: *like, you know, well, you see, I mean, That's a good question!* etc.

Whichever fillers a candidate uses, they should not distract the listener from the ease of listening.

Phrasing

In addition to the points mentioned above, good fluency includes appropriately linked phrases using discourse markers or connectors.

Sentences should include at least one clause, i.e.: words containing a finite verb, with subject and time conjugation, to give sense and meaning. A phrase is part of a sentence that does not contain a finite verb, i.e. an action that is conjugated to reflect person, number and time.

- Clause: *Pilots are encouraged to discuss all technical issues*
- Discourse Marker *and*
- Phrase: *other matters relevant to flight safety.*

Lists of clauses and phrases without key information as well as chunks of unlinked and/or incoherent language make fluency, and ultimately communication, very difficult. In weaker candidates this is evident with a lot of hesitation and use of fillers, missing words and incorrect word order. Coherent meaning and thus effective communication is often difficult to achieve and should be graded accordingly.

Even native speakers of a language simply do not always use coherent and structural phrasing, and this can inhibit good fluency. Though they may have a very high level of vocabulary and use correct grammatical structure, their speed of delivery (too fast) and what we could call, the cultural effect (constructive fillers, incomplete clauses and phrasing), may make for poor fluency. This is particularly noticeable in younger people. It is not uncommon to miss out key elements of a sentence that would otherwise ensure really good fluency, simply because the related speech is relatively informal.

Non-native speakers may pick up this style of speaking quite quickly when studying a language in the same country, as a lot of the time outside the classroom will be taken up with social, and thus informal, activities. Students may feel a lot more at ease in speaking like this, as they may feel less constrained by the rigours of specific and rigid language learning in the classroom. The same is also likely with people whose parents or partner speak the language being learned. Informality will usually prevail over formality in the house!

This can therefore often be easy for an examiner to hear but, conversely, difficult to assess. For higher level testing, examiners, if in doubt, should consult with a native speaker examiner or linguistic specialist to see if a candidate's fluency problems are linked to inherited informal speech or are evidence of a lower overall language level. Evidence of the former would be where a high level and range of vocabulary (idiomatic, nuanced and sensitive to register) and grammatical structures are used with relative ease and spontaneity. Evidence of the latter is often found in hesitation, pausing, poor sentence structure, a limited vocabulary range and the use of too many fillers.

Speakers may not even be aware of the fact that they are doing this, and even when rating a candidate for Level 6 in fluency, examiners should make the candidate aware of this particularly where a high speed of delivery is noted. It is partly for this reason that ICAO have documented in DOC9835 that native speakers should adapt their language accordingly when talking to non-native speakers. It is also not uncommon to find that non-native speakers often find communication with other non-native speakers easier than with native speakers, partly for the reason of high speed of delivery leading to poor fluency and difficulty in comprehension.

Whatever the reason, good fluency in spoken language should flow like a river. Phrasing and sentences should be coherent and cohesive to ensure effective communication.

Discourse markers

Discourse markers (these are words like 'however', 'although', 'nevertheless') are referred to more commonly as 'linking words' and 'linking phrases', or 'sentence connectors'. They may be described as the 'glue' that binds together pieces of speech. They may also show the listener which way the speaker is going with his discourse.

Without sufficient discourse markers in a piece of speech, discourse cannot seem logically constructed. Connections between the different sentences and phrases and, as such, rational meaning, would be more difficult to understand.

Care must also be taken, however, to avoid overuse of discourse markers. Using too many of them, or using them unnecessarily, can make a piece of speech sound too heavy and 'artificial'.

What are the different discourse markers that can be used?

There are many discourse markers that express different relationships between ideas. The most common types of relationship between ideas, and the sentence connectors that are most often used to express these relationships, are given in the table below. The discourse markers in the table are generally used **at the start of a phrase or clause**.

There are two particular features of the sentence connectors indicated above:

- Sentence connectors can be used to begin a new sentence or a new clause.
- Some sentence connectors can be placed in different positions within the sentence – 'initial position' (e.g. **because** he is ill, he needs to rest') and 'mid-way position' at the start of another clause (e.g. He must rest, **because** he is ill).

How can sentence connectors be replaced in order to increase variety in language output?

In language output, some time should be spent ensuring a sense of variety. In order to do this, the following may be useful:

The use of conjunctions as well as or instead of sentence connectors.

A conjunction is a word like 'and', 'but', etc., which is used to join two ideas together into a complex sentence. Unlike sentence connectors such as 'however', etc., a conjunction cannot be used at the beginning of a sentence and must come at a mid-point, at the end of one clause and the beginning of another. It is usually possible to rephrase a pair of sentences that use a sentence connector by using a conjunction instead. For example, instead of saying 'John had an ATPL, however, Francis had a CPL', it might actually be more natural to say 'He had an ATPL, but Francis only had a CPL'. Similarly, instead of saying 'English is hard; therefore, one must spend a lot of time practising it', we can say: 'English is hard, so one must spend a lot of time practising it.' These are simple examples, but the principle of paraphrase can be extended to other, more complex sentences.

The use of conjunctions at least some of the time.

Words like 'and' and 'but' may seem boring, but they help to lighten the style. This in turn helps speech to sound less pompous and formal. In any case, it is often helpful to use a variety of structures rather than just saying things in one way. Certainly at higher levels Assessors look for greater variety of discourse markers in speech, rather than just 'and' and 'but'.

Assessors should, however, note that candidates at lower levels may have rehearsed certain 'extra' discourse markers when preparing for the exam. These may stand out as unnatural or with limited vocabulary range in the rest of the discourse. Conversely, it can also be tedious to listen to someone who uses too many discourse markers.

It can also be helpful to omit discourse markers if they do not serve any useful purpose. Knowing when to omit the discourse marker is a subtle aspect of language use and comes with more practice and wider reading. Native speakers and non-native speakers at higher levels often do this in natural informal speech and it is not always easy to either notice or assess.

Typical discourse markers and their uses:

Type of relationship	Sentence connectors	Position within clause/sentence
Adding something	<i>moreover; in addition; additionally; further; further to this; also; besides; what is more.</i>	Initial position
Making a contrast between two separate things, people, ideas, etc.	<i>however; on the other hand; in contrast; yet.</i>	Initial position
Making an unexpected contrast (concession)	<i>although; even though; despite the fact that; in spite of the fact that; regardless of the fact that.</i>	Initial position: Starts a second/ sub-ordinate clause
Saying why something is the case	<i>because; since; as; insofar as.</i>	Initial position: Starts a second/ sub-ordinate clause
Saying what the result of something is	<i>therefore; consequently; in consequence; as a result; accordingly; hence; thus; for this reason; because of this.</i>	Initial position
Expressing a condition	<i>if; in the event of; as long as...; so long as...; provided that...; assuming that...; given that....</i>	Initial position: Starts a second/ sub-ordinate clause
Making what you say stronger	<i>on the contrary; as a matter of fact; in fact; indeed.</i>	Initial position

Frequent Problems Areas in Fluency

Examples	Explanation
<i>People....in place..... customers.... For buying.</i>	Just words - no phrases or complete sentences
<i>I see .. er, airplane, vehicles...er.. men... Clouds.... Plane landing...</i>	Just a list – no phrases
<i>There is a man..... Walking..... I think,..er...er.. old man. Takes dog..... Near airport.</i>	Accurate although, no discourse markers. Several key words missing in constructing sentences.
<i>The bird is er .. ah .. er .. flying. He is er.. um.. er.. approaching the... He has ... been er... in a tree.</i>	Lots of very distracting fillers, although the phrases are formed correctly.
<i>Firstly the men... the flightcheck the flight before and in the final stage they have been in their pre-flight because it is necessary.</i>	A long sentence with discourse markers and some grammatical errors but inappropriate word order and phrasing make it difficult to clearly comprehend meaning.
<i>Before to entering into his....before to ...landing to take offhe leaves... take off...before.....the situation on the radio is good.</i>	Uncertainty of vocabulary and correct grammatical forms make coherent phrasing and sentence structure almost impossible

CHAPTER 6

ASSESSING SPEAKING ABILITY –

VOCABULARY

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VOCABULARY

Vo · cab · u · lar · y .. is

- **the group of words used by or known to a particular people or group of persons.**
- **a list or collection of the words or phrases of a language, technical or specific field (aviation, medicine, business), usually arranged in alphabetical order and defined.**
- **the culturally evolved words of a language.**

Words

A word can be described as:

« *minimal meaning bearing unit* » (Walker 2012)

« *smallest unit of language that can be used by itself* » (Bolinger/Sears 1981)

Uses of words

Lexical words: Nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs = words that give content and information and that can be modified.

Grammatical words: articles, pronouns, prepositions, determiners, connectors = words that add structural functions to lexical words and cannot generally be modified or used as stand-alone lexis.

Compound nouns: sequences of nouns giving specific meaning to one *head* noun:

eg: *air traffic control tower / runway threshold markings*

These typically follow different forms in other languages and are often mis-translated:

German – where several words form one: *Geschwindigkeitsbeschränkung* (speed limit)

French – where the word *of* is translated as a linker: *la sécurité des aéroports* (airport safety)

Fixed sequences (often referred to as collocations): fixed sequences of lexical and grammatical words giving specific lexical meaning:

eg: *to make a blind call on the frequency; to carry out a missed approach procedure; very light turbulence; in the area; a lot of traffic; during the whole or part of the flight.*

As with compounds, these can often be mis-translated by using vocabulary or syntax from the speaker's first language. It is very important that learners practice collocations in aviation, particularly where they are recognisably defined, such as in ICAO glossaries, and, therefore, used regularly.

Correct use allows contextualisation and reduces the amount of guesswork. It also avoids problems where collocational conventions are different in the speaker's first language. Listening and reading are very important to exposing learners to collocations and not just single lexical words.

Misuse of adjectives in collocations can often change the meaning which can cause problems for listeners. In aviation, weather is a particular area which causes some confusion.

Eg: **heavy** turbulence instead of severe
heavy wind instead of strong.

Assessing

Some areas of language, particularly vocabulary, do not always sound 'correct'. They seem instinctively wrong. Assessors should bear in mind that speakers will have been influenced not only by where they have learned their language, but also by the seemingly endless evolution of the English language on a global scale today. Many areas of the world are developing their own regional versions of English. Care should therefore be taken when assessing to not immediately penalise a candidate for something that appears wrong but is perfectly understandable. In this situation an Assessor may like to ask the candidate to clarify a certain word or phrase.

Typically American and British English have many variations and it is not unusual to hear a candidate referring as such to a *highway* (US) instead of a *motorway* (UK) or a *subway* (US) instead of a *Metro* (European English) or *Tube* (UK).

Semantic sequences: spontaneous sequences of lexical and grammatical words used to infer and produce certain abstract ideas, eg:

... *and things like that...*

... *that's a good question!*

... *as far as safety management is concerned*

... *it looks to me like... no, hang on... it could be...*(opinions)

General

The importance of vocabulary:

- An extensive vocabulary aids oral expression and communication
- Reading can help increase a learner's vocabulary range and therefore is a very useful activity for those who need to increase their range of spoken vocabulary.

A candidate should not only demonstrate a good range of vocabulary, but should be able to discuss work and aviation related topics relatively easily. He should also be able to paraphrase where he is unable to find a particular word.

Range and accuracy

The inability to find words is something all speakers encounter at some point. Using the wrong vocabulary when communicating can of course offer some very funny exchanges, but in an operational aviation environment lack of vocabulary and the inability to convey the correct message can have serious, often fatal consequences.

In an exam a candidate may use words from his first language where he knows the assessor speaks this same language. The candidate may even ask for a translation or use an incorrect interpretation from their own language thinking, or perhaps guessing, that it is the same in English. When communicating on the radio one cannot assume the person to whom they are talking will know their first language. It is imperative that vocabulary is unambiguous.

When asked for a direct translation, Assessors should not give the word but should ask the candidate to use other English words to describe what he is trying to say. A Level 4 candidate should be able to paraphrase successfully in order to convey his message when not able to find or use correctly the words. Inability to do so should be noted each time. Where errors occur assessors should note the word(s) used incorrectly. Consistent difficulty with paraphrasing should be judged carefully against the percentages in the rating scale, as inappropriate word choice and limited range would indicate a level lower than 4. Assessors should, on the other hand, also note down successful attempts at paraphrasing to show where a narrower range of vocabulary does not inhibit accurate communication of the message.

- Some good examples of paraphrasing taken from actual exams are:

gauges/instruments

"The little round things in the cockpit that tell you what speed you are doing and how high you are"

rubber dinghy & ditching

"The small object like a boat which you put in the aeroplane that you inflate for landing on water"

fingerdock/air bridge

"The moving passage that passengers use to get from the main terminal to an aircraft"

Help in assessing a candidate's range and accuracy

The following lists give Assessors an overall guideline to help in deciding whether a candidate has produced a sufficient and accurate enough range of vocabulary:

Weaker candidates

- Notable hesitations
- Brief reasons and explanations only
- Consistent difficulty finding words
- Difficulty talking about daily topics
- Brief reasons in simple forms
- Familiar and everyday life language only
- Difficulty engaging in interactions
- Difficulty in exchanging personal information
- Inaccurate transposition from own language

Stronger candidates

- Normally demonstrates spontaneity
- Short but detailed descriptions
- Not too much searching for words
- Sustains views / ideas
- Responds to hypothesis
- Varies subjects
- Relative ease with dialogue
- Little irritation/frustration
- Can orally convey mixed emotions

Frequent Problems Areas In Vocabulary

Problem area	Examples
Word derivation / form - Misuse of prefixes/ suffixes - Misuse of gerund/participle	<i>Impossible / Incertain Fly - Flight / downwinds - downdrafts; interesting / interested</i>
False friends	<i>Sensible – Sensitive / Travel – Journey / Eventually - Finally</i>
Plural forms - misuse	<i>Persons / Peoples / Childs / Aircrafts</i>
Cultural variation	<i>Highway / Subway (US/UK)</i>
Irregularities	<i>Sheep / Fish</i>
Collocations (words that go together)	<i>Take a coffee / the car of my brother / the news are good</i>
L1 interference/ transposition	<i>Immatriculation / remind v remember / humouristic / attentive</i>
Countable / Uncountable	<i>Informations / advices</i>

Some common vocabulary errors among German and French speakers:

People often say...	but it is better to say...
As a pilot, I win a lot of money We win a lot of money doing private charters	As a pilot, I earn a lot of money. We make a lot of money doing private charters (to win is only for competitions e.g: Loto)
We were six persons waiting to board	There were six of us waiting to board (describing number of people present)
There are 10 persons in the room, 3 womans , 3 mens and 4 childs	There are 10 people in the room, 3 women , 3 men and 4 children (irregular plurals)
The travel to Toronto took about 9 hours	The journey to Toronto took about 9 hours (travel is not usually used as a noun)
Mark is my old chef , but now he is the Responsible of HR	Mark is my old boss , but now he is the Head of HR (false friend: chef = head of a kitchen. Responsible = adj in EN.)
She cries a lot, she is very sensible	She cries a lot, she is very sensitive (false friend: sensible = demonstrating intelligence)
When I get my pause , I usually take a coffee.	When I get my break , I usually have a coffee. (at work use 'break' & use have for food and drink)
Actually John is giving a presentation	At the moment John is giving a presentation (false friend: actually = in fact)
We profit from the good weather to go flying	We make the most of / benefit from the good weather to go flying (false friend : profit from usually has negative meaning)
They engaged 15 new pilots	They took on / hired / employed 15 new pilots (Engaged is not used in English in this sense)
Our formation takes 6 months	Our training takes 6 months (formation in EN = shape/structure)
Me meaning is that ...	My opinion is that ... (incorrect transposition from D = meine Meinung)
They are searching a fleet replacement	They are looking for a fleet replacement (searching EN = sthg lost / difficulty)
We made a fly to Bern	We made a flight to Bern (confusion of word form fly = verb; flight = noun)
I appreciated my PPL training	I enjoyed/liked my PPL training (incorrect transposition : appreciate = see the value of sthg)
Marc passed his LPC exam today. He will get the result next week.	Marc took/had his LPC exam. (false friend: pass = to succeed)
We cleared customs at the barrier The security border of the airfield	Barrier = a horizontal structure to prevent unlawful access. Fence = a vertical structure delineating an area. Border = the limit between two countries. Boundary = the outer horizontal limit of a land area.
I did my acrobatic training at Yverdon in a CAP10	I did my aerobatic training.... (false interpretation: Acrobatics is a physical action often seen in the circus)
I can see the immatriculation on the aircraft.	I can see the registration on the aircraft (false transposition: immatriculation is not an English word)

CHAPTER 7

ASSESSING SPEAKING ABILITY –

STRUCTURE

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STRUCTURE

- **Structure is the logical order of words and language based on grammatical rules in order to give specific meaning and make communication logical and understandable to another person. Grammatical errors often occur in both native and non-native speakers. For language assessment these errors are broken down into local errors and global errors.**

Errors

Level 4 candidates should have a good command of **basic** grammatical structures. These are the structures that are taught at the first 3 of 6 levels when learning a language (*beginner, elementary* and *pre-intermediate* stages) and are normally sufficient to talk in simple language about life and to describe in simple meaning times, places and events. The less one is able to correctly use basic structures the more problems one will have in correctly communicating a message.

Few candidates make no grammatical errors, even at higher levels, but any errors should not interfere with meaning. In effect, this means that errors are made but someone can still understand the basic elements of the language used. These are classed as **local** errors

eg: *Much of other colleagues has troubles with this engines.*

Where errors interfere with meaning, that is, where errors make it difficult or impossible to work out exactly what a person means then these are referred to as **global**.

eg: *It's a time who the man will put this to his home and I will do it that just now.*

Assessing

Assessors should write as much of the sentence as possible to identify where structural errors are *local* or *global*. Continuous examples of global errors are more likely to indicate a lower level candidate. The Assessor's comprehension should be clear and he should not guess what a candidate says. If in doubt, an Assessor must clarify.

On the note-taking sheet, it may be of use for assessors to highlight local errors in one colour and global errors in another (preferably, red).

Assessors should also be aware that a command of *basic* structures is only what is required to be demonstrated for Level 4. A candidate may demonstrate complex structures but these are not specifically tested at Level 4.

NB: A list of *basic* and *complex* structures is included in Appendix 1 to this document.

Many errors in speech, particularly in structural forms, originate from the natural tendency to translate directly from the speaker's mother tongue or other commonly used language. This is true for both speaking and listening skills and is a normal part of learning and use of another language. Such translation techniques are usually noticeable at lower levels of proficiency and become less obvious as a learner's proficiency increases. They may also be occasionally evident in higher levels where errors have not been corrected over time (*fossilised* errors – eg: *I am living here since*). Assessors should therefore be careful not to see isolated inappropriate structural forms as evidence of a lower level.

The common errors noted in this chapter are indicative of those made regularly by speakers of French and German as a first language. The list is intended only as a guideline for assessors.

Grammatical structure and sentence patterns

Assessing language should also differentiate between *grammatical forms* (verb conjugation, correct determiners, pronouns, prepositions, etc.) and *sentence patterns* (word order).

Consider the following sentence:

"If he seems extremely unhappy it may be because he's just failed his language proficiency exam!"

Here the sentence is made up of three clauses:

*If he seems extremely unhappy
it may be*

because he's just failed

... and a final phrase (with no finite verb)
his language proficiency exam

Here, both sentence structure and grammatical structure are correct. The first two clauses are linked to the third with a conjunction *because* acting as a discourse marker. The sentence could be spoken with relative ease by a non-native speaker who has at least a moderate understanding of English.

We can clearly understand from the grammatical structure and vocabulary:

that the sentence is **conditional** (*if*)
that it refers to another **person** (*he*),
there is **possibility** (*may be*)
descriptive (*unhappy*)
actions (*seems, be, failed*)
object (*language proficiency exam*)

However, if we keep the word order but include some **local** grammatical errors the meaning is perhaps more difficult to deduce.

"If he not seem too happy should be he failed his Language Proficient exam"

Here we can still more or less deduce meaning although it may take some minor clarification. (*should / may ; negative meaning ; past v just + present perfect*).

Of course the meaning and, thus communication, breaks down even further with **global** structural errors. But the point here is that even with grammatical errors, syntax (word order) errors are not severe enough to really impede communication.

However, if we reverse the situations and retain correct grammatical structures, but demonstrate syntax errors, we can see that it is much more difficult to achieve successful communication.

"If it ... may be .. his language proficiency exam ... er ... unhappy ...failed he's extremely .. er .. because he seems just...yeah"

Even though grammatically the short phrases are more or less correct, illogical word order (as well as hesitation and use of fillers) makes listening difficult and comprehension for the listener hard to achieve. Unambiguous meaning and coherent communication are thus difficult to achieve.

Adverbial phrases

Further problems connected to word order come from incorrectly placed adverbs and adverbial phrases (words or phrases that describe adjectives and verbs). These¹ normally come at the beginning or end of a sentence or clause, whereas single word adverbs would come before an action (frequency)², after an action (intensity)³, or before an adjective⁴.

Examples:

- *We go flying every second Thursday of the month*¹, or
- *Every second Thursday of the month we go flying.*

Both are correct, but **NOT**: ~~*We go every second Thursday of the month flying.*~~

Here *go flying* is an action in itself and cannot be split. Non-native speakers often find word order of adverbial phrases difficult.

- *He often² instructs new student pilots.* **NOT** ~~*He instructs often new pilots.*~~
- *The Airbus landed heavily*³. **NOT**: ~~*The Airbus heavily landed.*~~
- *Concorde made a very*⁴ *loud noise.* **NOT**: ~~*...Concorde very made a loud noise.*~~

This is not an exhaustive list of adverb rules, and assessors should consult a good grammar book for further reading.

Frequent problem areas in Structure

Problem area	Examples
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Tenses – incorrect time use	<i>Yesterday I go to work / I see Mike tomorrow</i>
incorrect conjugation of auxiliary verbs/participles	<i>He have eat his dinner / She did ate</i>
Incorrect use or omission of subjects	<i>He do his homework, go to town tomorrow,</i>
Modal verbs – incorrect conjugation and use	<i>He must to work ... / We should to go ...</i>
Incorrect use of negative syntax	<i>She don't can fly / I fly not to Zurich</i>
Articles – inclusion of zero / omission	<i>I worked all the day / She is teacher</i>
Prepositions – Misuse Omission Inclusion where not used	<i>He goes in Spain / In this moment He say me / I listen the radio She ask to him / he told to her</i>
Pronouns – misuse	<i>using he/she for the impersonal it</i>
Adverbs of time and adverbial phrase order.	<i>He lives there since two years He all the time is very busy</i>
Conditionals – incorrect conjugation	<i>I will go if he will tell me</i>
Relative pronouns	<i>Incorrect uses of who/which</i>

Grammatical Structure: common errors

People often say...	but it is better to say...
All the day / night / week / year	All day / night / week / year (no article before general time period)
it has wings large and a fuselage long	it has large wings and a long fuselage (word order noun + adjective)
It's depend of... or It depends of...	it depends on... (impersonal subject + dependant preposition)
I am studying English since 2004 KLM operate from here since 1997	I have been studying English since <u>2004</u> KLM have operated from here since <u>1997</u> (present perfect + since = start of period)
It is raining during 2 days She works for BA since 6 years	It has been raining for 2 days She has worked for BA for 6 years (present perfect + for = period up to now)
The people are travelling more these days	People are travelling more these days (general idea ⇒ all people = no article)
I listen the approach frequency	I listen to the approach frequency (add dependant preposition)
She speaks English good She speaks well English	She speaks English well She speaks good English (well is adverb describing the action good is adjective describing the noun)
I saved money for to buy my first plane	I saved money to buy my first plane (for is not used before an infinitive)
He said me / he spoke me	He said to me / he spoke to me (say / speak + indirect object)
He told to me to descend She asked to me to expedite my climb	He told me to descend She asked me to expedite my climb (tell / ask + object)
Concorde made much noise	Concorde made a lot of noise (uncountable nouns = a lot in positive sentence)
We spent 2 months to do our en-route training	We spent 2 months doing our en-route training (to spend time doing something)
I must to show my security pass to get into work	I must show my security pass to go into work (no preposition after must)
She went in Germany with Lufthansa	She went to Germany with Lufthansa (go + to a country/region, not 'in')
I like very much doing aerobatics	I like doing aerobatics very much (adverb phrase normally after object)
What means 'Visual approach'?	What does 'Visual Approach' mean ? (object question needs auxiliary 'does')
How much costs an A380?	How much does an A380 cost ? (object question needs auxiliary 'does')

We fly to Irkutsk one time by week	We fly to Irkutsk once a / per week (once, twice, three times, four times, etc. + a or per)
The news / informations / advices / researches are good	The news / information / advice / research is good (uncountable nouns are not plural)
That's the woman which missed the flight	That's the woman who missed the flight (relative pronoun 'who' with people)
The tug who hit the aircraft.....	The tug which hit the aircraft..... (relative pronoun 'which' with things)
I am born in 1960	I was born in 1960 (passive sense)

CHAPTER 8

ASSESSING SPEAKING ABILITY –

COMPREHENSION

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COMPREHENSION

- ***The ability to understand and deal with a situation, facts, etc.***
- ***Lack of comprehension is perhaps one of the most unforgiving in pilot/ATC radio communications as failure to understand one critical item could have potentially fatal consequences.***

General

Comprehension may come from global understanding or it may come from specific words. Assessors should be aware that just because a candidate replies to a question they may not necessarily have understood the question.

One example:

Q. *“Would you like to work at a larger airport?”* (to a candidate who works at a small regional airport)

A. *“Er.. yes! At a larger airport you are just people and a number SWR123, DLH456. Here you know Urs the Instructor, Willie the student,..... It is family”*

In this example the candidate answered in the affirmative – that, yes, he *would* like to work at a larger airport and then gave a reply which indicated the negative – you are just a number, here (at the small airport) we are family. This was a clear example of miscomprehension of the question.

Assessing

Assessors should therefore be very careful to ensure that a candidate’s reply matches the question asked. If not he should try to ascertain whether this is due to one word or the question as a whole.

A single word should be paraphrased and then judged a second time. Remember that a question should be repeated verbatim once, then paraphrased, before moving on. A candidate who simply replies that he doesn’t know or can’t answer should still be given the opportunity to try again but lack of clarification strategies should be noted and assessed accordingly.

Assessors should also be aware of their own language when repeating and/or paraphrasing. Avoid words such as: *“Do you understand?” “Did you not understand the question?”*. Simply advise the candidate *“Let me just ask you the question again..!”* .. dropping the pitch at the end of the sentence and if necessary stressing the word or words the candidate may have misunderstood in order to highlight them. Then, if the candidate still does not give an appropriate answer, paraphrase.

If the assessor thinks that there might be a lack of comprehension, the candidate should be judged **only** after having had the question repeated, and then paraphrased (one word or full sentence) or clarified in order to give the assessor a full opportunity to see whether or not the candidate fully understood the question. If a candidate gives an appropriate and relevant answer to the question at any time before the next main question is asked then the candidate should be judged as having understood the question. An Assessor should not judge a candidate for lack of comprehension for each repeat, paraphrase and/or where necessary, clarification, of the same question.

When paraphrasing, assessors should be careful not to downgrade their own language to Level 3, nor use inappropriately high levels of vocabulary or inappropriate register. A candidate should demonstrate that he can understand level 4 questions.

Detailed information on question techniques is included in chapter 3, *The Role of the Assessor*.

Frequent Problems Areas In Comprehension

Problems with comprehension where the candidate does <i>not</i> provide an answer.		
Common miscomprehension with clarification	Assessor Strategy	
<i>Sorry, can you repeat the question....</i>	First repeat, and then paraphrase if necessary. If still nothing, mark as lack of comprehension and move on.	
<i>Sorry, I don't understand...</i>	Paraphrase word or sentence as appropriate	
<i>What do you mean by... ?</i>		
Problems with comprehension where the candidate provides an answer.		
Question	Inappropriate answer	Possible Reason
How long is your journey to work?	<i>My journey is 8 hours. I start at 9am and finish at 5pm.</i>	Candidate misunderstood the word “<i>journey</i>” and didn't pick up the preposition <i>to</i> which usually refers to movement.
Do you like operating out of controlled aerodromes?	<i>No I prefer big airports.</i>	Candidate has confused “out of” i.e.: based at, as meaning “away from”
Do you prefer single or twin-engined aircraft?	<i>Yes, I do.</i>	Candidate has not picked out the option “<i>or</i>”

CHAPTER 9

ASSESSING SPEAKING ABILITY – INTERACTIONS

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INTERACTION

When two or more people or things communicate with or react to each other.

- *There should be interaction between the Examiner and the Candidate.*
- *The questions are intended to encourage Candidate interaction.*
- *The Candidate interacted well with the Examiner.*

General

Radio communications between pilots and ATC must be two-way and include clarification strategies where there is a lack of comprehension. A long silence must be followed up, as an inappropriate silence may convey an inability to understand.

A reply must also be appropriate to the question asked and should convey sufficient relevant information to form cohesive and effective interaction.

Assessing

A candidate's reply should be:

- *Immediate* – allow max. 10 seconds thinking time then note time taken (see **Fluency**).
- *Appropriate* – does it correspond to the question? (see **Comprehension**). A candidate may give an answer but if it does not correspond to the question, then it is inappropriate.
- *Informative* – Is there enough language in the answer to fully answer the question? If a candidate answers with single word or very short answers then it cannot be informative (See **Vocabulary** and **Fluency**).

'Waffling Technique'

Assessors should be careful of a candidate who talks a lot, but does not answer appropriately or informatively due to linguistic inaccuracies (vocabulary and structure), lack of comprehension and/or poor fluency. There is a tendency for some people with a certain degree of confidence to assume that saying a lot is a sign of linguistic ability – more is better. This is not always the case. Verbosity can often hide linguistic weaknesses, such as inaccuracies or miscomprehension, which can make cohesive and successful interaction difficult. Candidates should therefore be judged according to **all** the language areas of the rating scale, to ascertain if this is indeed the case.

Clarification and Maintaining Dialogue

Where a candidate is able to check, confirm and/or clarify, this should be noted and assessed accordingly (See **Comprehension**). Assessors should also note where a candidate is not able to maintain the exchange. This, again, is linked to Fluency.

As problems with interaction normally originate from other linguistic areas, examples given in the previous sections may also need to be taken into account when assessing poor interaction.

Assessors again may find lack of interaction easier to write in symbol form, particularly where no answer is given or where clarification strategies are used.

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CHAPTER 10

FAQs

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Frequently Asked Questions

Below are a list of questions frequently asked by pilots, instructors and assessors alike. It is not an exhaustive list nor does it aim to answer every question, but it should help assessors answer many of the questions asked in relation to Language Proficiency testing.

Assessors are asked to read and familiarise themselves with the questions and answers below. Any further queries regarding LP exams and licensing should be directed to the contacts at the beginning of this document.

Q1	Is there a list of authorised Swiss Language assessors?
A	<i>Yes. The list is published on the FOCA website</i>
Q2	Where are exam sessions published?
A	<i>On the FOCA website.</i>
Q3	Are all categories of pilots required to demonstrate language proficiency?
A	<i>No. The language proficiency requirements do not apply to balloon and glider pilots.</i>
Q4	Can a pilot take his LP exam without first having RT privileges?
A	<i>No. The candidate must be familiar with the ICAO standard phraseology and associated ATC procedures. Some parts of the LP exam contain elements of standard phraseology.</i>
Q5	Is a sailplane pilot flying a touring motor glider (TMG) required to demonstrate language proficiency?
A	<i>No. If the TMG is endorsed in a glider pilot licence, then it is considered to be a sailplane and not an aeroplane.</i>
Q6	What level of language proficiency must a pilot have to pass his language proficiency exam?
A	<i>A minimum of Level 4. The linguistic requirements are described in the ICAO Rating Scale.</i>
Q7	How long is the language proficiency endorsement valid for?
A	<i>Level 4: According to EASA FCL.055: 4 years (ICAO recommendation: 3 years); Level 5: 6 years, Level 6: unlimited validity.</i>
Q8	Can any pilot take the language proficiency check in English at Levels 5 & 6?
A	<i>Yes, but see pages Chapter 2 for conditions.</i>
Q9	Is it only native speakers who can achieve Level 6?
A	<i>No. The minimum requirements for a Level 6 are defined in the ICAO rating scale. Any candidate who fulfils these requirements will receive Level 6. On the other hand there might be native speakers who don't fulfil the requirements for Level 6, for instance if their pronunciation and/or fluency is not intelligible to an international aeronautical community.</i>
Q10	Are the language proficiency requirements applicable to English only?
A	<i>No. They apply to any language used in aeronautical communications.</i>
Q11	Can a Level 5 & 6 exam be taken during a check flight?
A	<i>No. ATC communications should be short and concise, using standard phraseology as far as possible and simple, basic plain language if required to deviate from standard phraseology. Levels 5 and 6 require certain linguistic skills which are neither necessary, practicable nor desirable in an aeronautical communication environment and therefore cannot be tested during a flight.</i>
Q12	Can Cambridge or other non-aviation related exams be accepted as proof of language proficiency?
A	<i>No. Such general language exams do not test the specific purpose language required to be used in the domain of aeronautical communications. Furthermore they do not use the grading criteria of the ICAO rating scale which is intended expressly for such specific purpose language.</i>

	<i>Additionally, there is no requirement for recurrent testing in general purpose language and so there is no evidence that such an exam has any relevance to a person's actual level of language proficiency, even in general language.</i>
Q13	In the higher-level exam, if a pilot does not achieve level 5 or 6 does he 'fail' the exam?
A	<i>No, provided that he demonstrates at least Level 4 in all 6 areas.</i>
Q14	How often can a LP check be repeated, following a 'no-pass' result?
A	<i>As often as necessary.</i>
Q15	Can a pilot use his own native language on the radio without RT privileges?
A	<i>No. He must hold RT privileges in all languages he uses in ATC communications.</i>
Q16	How much in advance can a pilot revalidate his LP endorsement?
A	<i>Max. 12 months in advance.</i>
Q17	Can a FOCA Language assessor assess holders of foreign pilot licences?
A	<i>Theoretically, yes. The problem is that there is still no harmonisation/standardisation in this domain. Some Authorities accept foreign LP certificates under certain conditions only – or not at all. Foreign licence holders should therefore consult the competent Authority before enrolling for the exam.</i>
Q18	Can a Swiss licence holder take the LP exam with a foreign Language assessor?
A	<i>If the Swiss licence holder lives and/or works abroad: yes. Results from EASA Member States are accepted for endorsement of L4 or 5 max., results from third countries are accepted only for endorsement of L4, due to lack of harmonisation/standardisation in this domain. Applicants for a L6 must take the exam in a FOCA exam centre. Swiss licence holders who are resident/work in Switzerland should take the exam with a Language assessment body/Language assessor approved by FOCA.</i>

CHAPTER 11

APPENDICES

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Appendix 1 – Basic versus Complex structures

BASIC STRUCTURES:

Articles

the, a, an, no article.

Adverbs of frequency

always, generally, usually, often, rarely, sometimes, never, occasionally, frequently, in general, mostly.

Pronouns

He, she, him, her, etc.

Prepositions of place and time

At the holding point; *At* time 55.

In ten minutes; *In* the cockpit.

On stand 4; *On* Wednesday.

Comparatives and superlatives

Big/bigger/biggest, more /less beautiful, best/worst.

Fillers

actually, basically, anyway, listen, I mean, let's see/let me see, like, oh, now, okay, so, well, you know, you see, you know what I mean, it is true, of course.

Discourse Markers

But, still, and, by the way, besides, another thing is, on top of that, so, then, firstly, secondly, etc., first of all, in the first/second place, finally, in the end, in short, on the other hand.

Modal verbs

can, must/must not, have to/don't have to, should, would, could, might.

Numbers (cardinal and ordinal)

one, two, three, first, second, third, etc.

Passive voice

The service is operated by KLM

The new terminal was opened in 2008

Question words

What? Who? Which? Why? Where? When? How?

Tenses

Present Simple: *I fly every weekend.*

Present Continuous: *We are descending to 3500ft.*

Past Simple: *I flew to Amsterdam last week.*

Past continuous: *I had an air miss while I was flying to Paris last week.*

Present Perfect Simple: *I have never landed in Moscow.*

Present Perfect Continuous: *I have been flying seaplanes since I was 30.*

Future forms:

↙ *Will (conditional, possibility, definite state):*

- *If the ILS is out of service we will do a visual approach.*
- *We will probably fly to Italy next summer.*
- *She will be in Budapest next Friday night.*

↙ *Going to (intention): After point alpha, we're going to track north and climb to FL60.*

↙ *Present simple (fixed event times): The flight leaves at 1900 tomorrow night.*

↙ *Present Continuous (arrangements): We're flying to Istanbul later this afternoon.*

There is, there are - present, past & future.**1st Conditional**

If + present + will

Determiners

Much, many, some, any.

Countable/uncountable nouns & Plurals

Baggage, news, information, light/lighting, sign/signage, aircraft/aircraft, person/people.

COMPLEX STRUCTURES:**Dependant Prepositions**

Depends on, interested in, agree with, easy to

Verb + Infinitive / Gerund

Remember to do/doing, manage to do, imagine doing, stop to do/doing.

Adverbs

apparently, incidentally, frankly, rightly, honestly, physically, morally, scarcely, etc.

Adverbial clauses of time (and sentence placing)

As soon as, three times a year, at the end of the week, no sooner, by this time tomorrow.

Relative clauses & pronouns

That, who, which, when, etc.

2nd and 3rd Conditionals

If + past + would

If + past perfect + would have.

Modal verbs (past)

Should, might, could + have + verb in the past participle form.

Could v was able

Compound nouns

Fuel stop, 10-year wait, Air Traffic Control, runway edge lights.

Phrasal Verbs

Take off, put up, see through, take down.

Reported speech (+ tense / adverb change)

He said that up until then he had not seen John

TensesPast perfect simple: *He had flown with Crossair for 5 years before joining Easy Jet.*Past Perfect continuous: *We had been waiting for 3 hours when the weather finally cleared.*Future continuous: *We will be flying at 34,000ft.*Future perfect simple: *By the time we arrive in Keflavik we will have flown for 8 hours.*Future perfect continuous: *At the end of this year, he will have been flying for 32 years.***Past Habits**

Used to, would

Appendix 2 – Note taking & converting evidence into the result

The forms below are intended as a guide for Assessors only. They should be used recto verso.

TT Name:		Date:
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
PICTURE		
	Q1	
	Q2	
	Q3	
	Q4	
	Q5	
	Q6	
	Q7	
Q8		

Language Area	Key Points of Rating Scale								
<u>PRONUNCIATION</u>	Interference with ease of understanding								
	Rarely	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Often	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Notes:								
<u>FLUENCY</u>	Appropriate tempo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transition rehearsed speech to spontaneous	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Effective communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fillers not distracting	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Notes:								
<u>VOCABULARY</u>	Range	<input type="checkbox"/>	Accuracy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paraphrase	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Notes:								
<u>STRUCTURE</u>	Basic (well controlled)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local errors	<input type="checkbox"/>	Global errors	<input type="checkbox"/>			
	Notes:								
<u>COMPREHENSION</u>	Mostly accurate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clarification	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Notes:								
<u>INTERACTIONS</u>	Immediate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Informative	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Initiates & Maintains dialogue	<input type="checkbox"/>					
	Notes:								
RTF OBSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sufficient	<input type="checkbox"/>	Marginal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Insufficient			
Speaking Ability Exam	PASS	<input type="checkbox"/>	FAIL	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listening Comprehension Exam	PASS	<input type="checkbox"/>	FAIL	<input type="checkbox"/>
FINAL EXAM RESULT						PASS	<input type="checkbox"/>	FAIL	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 3A – ICAO Rating Scale (ICAO DOC 9835 / EASA AMC2 FCL.055)

Language proficiency rating scale: Expert, Extended and Operational Levels.

LEVEL	PRONUNCIATION <small>ASSUMES A DIALECT AND/OR ACCENT INTELLIGIBLE TO THE AERONAUTICAL COMMUNITY.</small>	STRUCTURE <small>RELEVANT GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES AND SENTENCE PATTERNS ARE DETERMINED BY LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS APPROPRIATE TO THE TASK.</small>	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 emphasise 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.

Language proficiency rating scale: Pre-Operational, Elementary and Pre-Elementary Levels.

LEVEL	PRONUNCIATION ASSUMES A DIALECT AND/OR ACCENT INTELLIGIBLE 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).

ICAO Holistic Descriptors & Rating Scale

ICAO Holistic Descriptors

- a) Proficient speakers shall communicate effectively in voice-only (telephone/radiotelephone) and in face-to-face situations.
- b) Proficient speakers shall communicate on common, concrete and work-related topics with accuracy and clarity.
- c) Proficient speakers shall use appropriate communicative strategies to exchange messages and to recognize and resolve misunderstandings (e.g. to check, confirm, or clarify information) in a general or work-related context.
- d) Proficient speakers shall handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected turn of events that occurs within the context of a routine work situation or communicative task with which they are otherwise familiar.
- e) Proficient speakers shall use a dialect or accent which is intelligible to the aeronautical community.

The Rating Scale

The scope and focus of the ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale are specific and unique in several important ways:

- a) the ICAO Rating Scale addresses **only spoken language** (speaking and listening); it does not address reading and writing skills.
- b) the ICAO Rating Scale has a distinct aeronautical radiotelephony focus; it addresses the use of language in a work-related aviation context, voice-only communications, using strategic competences for safe communications in case of complications or unexpected turn of events, and emphasizing intelligibility in an international community of users.
- c) ICAO Operational Level 4 does not target high degrees of grammatical correctness or native-like pronunciation. Grammar, syntax, vocabulary and pronunciation are judged primarily to the extent that they do not interfere with effective oral communication.
- d) the final rating is not the average or aggregate of the ratings in each of the six ICAO language proficiency skills **but the lowest of these six ratings**.

Levels 1 to 3 of the Rating Scale have been provided in order to assist Contracting States in setting language proficiency standards for recruitment and training purposes, whereas Levels 4 to 6, in addition to providing the minimum operational standard (Level 4), also provide the basis for determining intervals between recurrent formal evaluation or dispensation from the need to be re-evaluated.

It should also be noted that the descriptors for Expert Level 6 exceed the demands of aeronautical radiotelephony communications. Level 6 has a very wide coverage since it is intended to account for most first-language speakers with native or native-like proficiency as well as second- or foreign-language speakers with a high level of proficiency. **Attainment of Level 6 should be considered as being beyond the realistic expectations of most second- or foreign-language learners.** Furthermore, **it is not an indispensable requirement** for successful aeronautical communication.

It is important to note that the Rating Scale does not refer to native or native-like proficiency, resulting from a principled decision that **native speech should not be privileged in a global context**. All participants in aeronautical radiotelephony communications must conform to the ICAO proficiency requirements, and there is no presupposition that first-language speakers necessarily conform. An additional reason for avoiding the use of the term native language or referring to a native speaker is because of the proven difficulty in defining just precisely what a native speaker is.

It is assumed that anyone awarded a particular rating level demonstrates proficiency better than the descriptors contained in each level below. Failure to comply with descriptors in one category in one level indicates that the next lower proficiency level should be awarded. A person's **overall proficiency rating is determined by the lowest rating assigned in any of the language proficiency skills of the rating scale**. This is essential because the Operational Level 4 descriptors were developed as the safest minimum proficiency skill level for aeronautical radiotelephony communications. A lower score on any one feature indicates inadequate proficiency; for example, pilots with Operational Level 4 ratings in all areas except pronunciation may not be understood by the air traffic controllers with whom they must communicate. In summary, an individual must demonstrate proficiency at Level 4 in all categories in order to receive a Level 4 rating.

A cautionary note: some descriptors at the higher levels of the rating scale refer to the ability to use complex structures or idioms. These statements should not be considered as a contradiction of the requirement to adhere to standardised phraseology in its published form when the situation demands this.

Irrelevance of correlation with other existing language proficiency rating scales.

A number of well-known and widely available English language tests exist. It is tempting to correlate the new ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale with results from these existing tests, so that the ICAO requirements can be moved into a familiar context. It would certainly be convenient if an ICAO Operational Level 4 could be said to be “equal” to a certain score on any number of existing tests.

Since its publication in March 2003, a number of attempts have been made to establish a correlation between the ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale and other widely used English language rating systems (e.g. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), and Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)). Although some qualified general correlations may be made in certain areas of language use, it is not possible to make an overall correlation.

Tests are usually different from one another in what they set out to evaluate. For example, many popular and available tests do not test speaking proficiency, a requirement for any testing designed to meet ICAO requirements. Other tests may include a speaking and/or listening element but are designed to test speaking proficiency in a different context such as university academics or office/business communications. The ICAO Rating Scale was developed with the specific requirements of pilot and air traffic control communication in mind and an assessment process has to address these features of the ICAO descriptors. Other rating scales or test scores, including those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, may at best provide useful information for initiating a training process in that they will indicate the point of departure for progression towards Level 4 on the ICAO Rating Scale.

The Rating Scale as adapted by FOCA

It is clear from using the ICAO rating scale that inclusion of such adverbs of frequency (sometimes, often, etc.) is very subjective and open to individual interpretation. In the interests of objectivity and standardisation FOCA decided to adopt a similar system as Eurocontrol have done with their ELPAC test for Air Traffic Control. A system of given percentages has therefore been included to most of the adverbs and adverbial phrases of frequency used in the rating scale descriptors. This additional tool ensures that assessors work with a much more objective framework within which to rate test takers' language proficiency. The percentages refer specifically to those adverbs and adverbial phrases used in the rating scale descriptors.

It must however be noted that any human assessment retains some degree of subjectivity and the Assessors should not set out to interpret the percentages too rigidly. They are included to help in making the overall assessment as objective as possible.

The adapted rating scale as used by FOCA is shown on the following pages and includes one page for each of the six language areas. The scale includes additional information given in ICAO Doc 9835 relevant to each language area and from observations in test operation and development in Switzerland. This additional information supplements the rating scale and further helps assessors to achieve standardised and objective rating of test takers' language proficiency.

Appendix 3B – FOCA adapted rating scale

Pronunciation

The six levels of pronunciation descriptors are applicable at all levels to native and non-native speakers. This implies that native English speakers may demonstrate Elementary Level 2 proficiency if their regional dialect is so localized that it is not readily understood by those outside of that particular region. On the other hand, speakers whose speech patterns clearly identify them as non-native speakers (having a so-called “accent”) may demonstrate Expert Level 6 proficiency, as long as this meets the criterion of “almost never” interfering with ease of understanding.

Level 3 (Pre-operational)	Level 4 (Operational)	Level 5 (Extended)	Level 6 (Expert)
Pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation and frequently (26-60%) interfere with ease of understanding.	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation, but only sometimes (11-25%) interfere with ease of understanding.	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation, though influenced by the first language or regional variation, rarely (5-10%) interfere with ease of understanding.	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation, though possibly influenced by the first language or regional variation, almost never interfere with ease of understanding.

Additional information from ICAO 9835 (2nd Edition 2010)

Accent at this Pre-operational Level 3 is so strong as to make comprehension by an international community of aeronautical radiotelephony users very difficult or impossible.

Native or second language speakers may be assessed at this level in cases where a regional variety of the language is not readily understood.

Observed elements that influence pronunciation at this level:

- *swallowed/missed syllables*
- *poor enunciation*
- *mumbling / slurring.*
- *regular mispronunciation of vowels & consonants.*
- *incorrect syllable stress.*

Operational Level 4 speakers demonstrate a marked accent, or localised regional variety of English. Occasionally, a proficient listener may have to pay close attention to understand or may have to clarify something from time to time.

Operational Level 4 is the minimum level of proficiency determined to be safe for air traffic control communications.

It is important to remember that pronunciation plays the critical role in aiding comprehension between two non-native speakers of English.

Extended Level 5 speakers demonstrate a marked accent, or localised regional variety of English, but one which rarely interferes with how easily understood their speech is.

An Expert Level 6 speaker may be a speaker of English as a first language with a widely understood dialect or may be a very proficient second-language speaker, again with a widely used or understood accent and/or dialect.

The speakers’ accent or dialect may or may not identify them as second language users, but the pronunciation patterns, difficulties or “mistakes” almost never interfere with ease of understanding.

Expert speakers are always clear and understandable.

Fluency			
<p><i>For our purposes, fluency is intended to refer to the naturalness of the flow of speech production, the degree to which comprehension is hindered by any unnatural or unusual hesitancy, distracting starts and stops, distracting fillers (em ... huh ... er ...) or inappropriate silence. Levels of fluency will be most apparent during longer speech in an interaction. They will also be affected by the degree of expectedness of the preceding input which is dependent on familiarity of the discourse.</i></p>			
Level 3 (Pre-operational)	Level 4 (Operational)	Level 5 (Extended)	Level 6 (Expert)
<p>Produces stretches of language, but phrasing and pausing are often (60-89%) inappropriate.</p> <p>Hesitations or slowness in language processing may prevent effective communication. Fillers are sometimes (11-25%) distracting.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Can make limited use of discourse markers or connectors. Fillers are not distracting.</p>	<p>Able to speak at length with relative ease on familiar topics but may not vary speech flow as a stylistic device.</p> <p>Can make use of appropriate discourse markers or connectors.</p>	<p>Able to speak at length with a natural, effortless flow. Varies speech flow for stylistic effect, e.g. to emphasize a point.</p> <p>Uses appropriate discourse markers and connectors spontaneously.</p>
Additional information from ICAO 9835 (2nd Edition 2010)			
<p><i>The slowness of speech flow at this level is such that communication lacks concision and efficiency. Long silent pauses frequently interrupt the speech flow.</i></p> <p><i>Speakers at this level will fail to obtain the confidence of the assessor.</i></p> <p><i>Observed elements that influence fluency at this level:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• frequent lists of words.</i> <i>• many short unlinked clauses or phrases</i> <i>• a lot of long pausing & hesitations</i> <i>• constantly distracting fillers</i> 	<p><i>Speech rate at this level may be slowed by the requirements of language processing, but remains fairly constant and does not negatively affect the speaker's involvement in communication.</i></p> <p><i>The speaker has the possibility of speaking a little faster than the ICAO recommended rate of 100 words per minute if the situation requires.</i></p>	<p><i>Rate of speech and organization of discourse at this level approach natural fluency.</i></p> <p><i>Under appropriate circumstances, rates significantly higher than the ICAO recommended rate of 100 words per minute can be achieved without negatively affecting intelligibility.</i></p>	<p><i>Fluency at this level is native like or near native-like.</i></p> <p><i>It is notably characterised by a high degree of flexibility in producing language and in adapting the speech rate to the context of communication and the purposes of the speaker.</i></p>

Vocabulary			
<p><i>Vocabulary includes individual words and fixed expressions. Vocabulary can be classified by the domains of meaning to which it refers. A list of vocabulary domains related to aviation communications is found in Appendix B of Doc.9835. While memorizing phraseologies is neither an acceptable means of demonstrating language proficiency nor an effective or recommended language learning strategy, it is undeniable that context is a relevant factor in language proficiency. Therefore, learning or testing that focuses on, or is designed to elicit vocabulary related to, aeronautical radiotelephony communications is preferable.</i></p>			
Level 3 (Pre-operational)	Level 4 (Operational)	Level 5 (Extended)	Level 6 (Expert)
<p>Vocabulary range and accuracy are often (60-89%) sufficient to communicate on common, concrete or work related topics, but range is limited and the word choice often (60-89%) inappropriate. Is often unable to paraphrase successfully in lacking vocabulary.</p>	<p>Vocabulary range and accuracy are usually sufficient (60-89%) to communicate effectively on common, concrete and work related topics. Can often (60-89%) paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary in unusual or unexpected circumstances.</p>	<p>Vocabulary range and accuracy are sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete and work-related topics. Is sometimes (11-25%) idiomatic. Paraphrases consistently and successfully.</p>	<p>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.</p>
Additional information from ICAO 9835 (2nd Edition 2010)			
<p><i>Gaps in vocabulary knowledge and/or choice of wrong or non-existent words are apparent at this level. This has a negative impact on fluency or results in errors which could lead to misunderstandings.</i></p> <p><i>The frequent inability to paraphrase unknown words in the process of clarification makes accurate communication impossible.</i></p> <p><i>Observed elements that influence vocabulary production at this level:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>false friends</i> • <i>first language interference</i> • <i>wrong word form</i> • <i>lack of linguistic exposure</i> 	<p><i>An Operational Level 4 speaker will likely not have a well-developed sensitivity to register. A speaker at this level will usually be able to manage communication on topics related to the aeronautical environment, but may sometimes need clarification.</i></p> <p><i>When faced with a communication breakdown, an Operational Level 4 speaker can paraphrase and negotiate meaning so that the message is understood.</i></p> <p><i>The ability to paraphrase includes appropriate choices of simple vocabulary and considerate use of speech rate and pronunciation.</i></p>	<p><i>Extended Level 5 speakers may display some sensitivity to register, with a lexical range which may not be sufficient to communicate effectively in as broad a range of topics as an Expert Level 6 speaker.</i></p> <p><i>A speaker with Extended proficiency will have no trouble paraphrasing whenever necessary.</i></p> <p><i>NOTE: Assessing use of idiomatic language may help in the overall grading but is not specifically a requirement. The fact that someone does not use idiomatic language may not be an indication that their vocabulary is lower than Level 5.</i></p>	<p><i>Level 6 speakers demonstrate a strong sensitivity to register.</i></p> <p><i>Another marker of strong proficiency seems to be the acquisition of, and facility with, idiomatic expressions and the ability to communicate nuanced ideas. As such, use of idioms may be taken into account in assessment procedures designed to identify Level 6 users in a non-radiotelephony context.</i></p> <p><i>This is not however intended to imply that idiomatic usages are a desirable feature of aeronautical radiotelephony communications. On the contrary, use of idioms can be an obstacle to intelligibility and mutual understanding and should therefore be avoided by all users in this environment.</i></p>

Structure			
<p><i>Relevant grammatical structures and sentence patterns are determined by language functions appropriate to the task. Users may refer to the communicative aeronautical language functions, to the list of controller communicative tasks and to the classification of basic and complex structures in ICAO Doc.9835 for guidance. Language teaching specialists generally categorize grammatical errors into two classes: “global” and “local”. Global errors are those which interfere with meaning; local errors are those which do not interfere with meaning.</i></p>			
Level 3 (Pre-operational)	Level 4 (Operational)	Level 5 (Extended)	Level 6 (Expert)
<p>Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns associated with predictable situations are not always well controlled. Errors frequently (60-89%) interfere with meaning.</p>	<p>Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are used creatively and are usually (60-89%) well controlled. Errors may occur, particularly in unusual or unexpected circumstances, but rarely (6-10%) interfere with meaning.</p>	<p>Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are consistently ($\geq 90\%$) well controlled. Complex structures are attempted but with errors which sometimes (11-25%) interfere with meaning.</p>	<p>Both basic and complex grammatical structures and sentence patterns are consistently ($>90\%$) well controlled.</p>
Additional information from ICAO 9835 (2nd Edition 2010)			
<p><i>A weak command of basic grammatical structures at this level will limit available range of expression or result in errors which could lead to misunderstandings.</i></p> <p><i>Observed global errors come from:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • omission of subjects • singular/plural confusion • mis-conjugation of verbs • wrong tense use • wrong use of pronouns • incorrect use of prepositions, articles, & uncountable nouns 	<p><i>Operational Level 4 speakers have good command of basic grammatical structures.</i></p> <p><i>They do not merely have a memorized set of words or phrases on which they rely but have sufficient command of basic grammar to create new meaning as appropriate.</i></p> <p><i>They demonstrate local errors and infrequent global errors and communication is effective overall. Level 4 speakers will not usually attempt complex structures, and when they do, quite a lot of errors would be expected resulting in less effective communication.</i></p>	<p><i>Level 5 speakers demonstrate greater control of complex grammatical structures than Level 4 speakers and may make global errors from time to time when using complex structures.</i></p> <p><i>The critical difference between Level 4 and Level 5 requirements concerns the use of basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns compared to the use of complex structures.</i></p> <p><i>At Level 5, the structure descriptors refer to consistent control of basic structure, with errors possibly occurring when complex structures and language are used. Level 5 speakers will have a more sophisticated use of English overall, but will exhibit some errors in their use of complex language structures, but not in their basic structure patterns.</i></p>	<p><i>Expert Level 6 speakers do not demonstrate consistent global structural or grammatical errors but may exhibit some local errors.</i></p>

Comprehension			
<p><i>This skill refers to the ability to listen and understand. In air traffic control communications, pilots rely on the clear and accurate information provided to them by controllers for safety. It is not sufficient for air traffic controllers to be able to handle most pilot communications; they must be ready for the unexpected. Similarly, pilots must be able to understand air traffic controller instructions, especially when these differ from what a pilot expects to hear. It is during complications in aviation that communications become most crucial, with a greater reliance upon plain language. While comprehension is only one out of six skills in the Rating Scale, it represents half of the linguistic workload in spoken communications.</i></p>			
Level 3 (Pre-operational)	Level 4 (Operational)	Level 5 (Extended)	Level 6 (Expert)
<p>Comprehension is often (60-89%) accurate on common, concrete and work-related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users.</p> <p>May fail to understand a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events.</p>	<p>Comprehension is mostly ($\geq 90\%$) accurate on common, concrete and work-related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Comprehension is accurate on common, concrete and work-related topics and mostly ($\geq 90\%$) 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.</p>	<p>Comprehension is consistently ($\geq 90\%$) accurate in nearly all contexts and includes comprehension of linguistic and cultural subtleties.</p>
Additional information from ICAO 9835 (2nd Edition 2010)			
<p><i>Level 3 comprehension is limited to routine communications in optimum conditions.</i></p> <p><i>A pilot or controller at this level would not be proficient enough to understand the full range of radiotelephony communications, including unexpected events.</i></p> <p><i>Observed difficulties in comprehension at this level are where a candidate fails to comprehend repeated and paraphrased sentences.</i></p> <p><i>Paraphrased isolated words not understood would indicate gaps in vocabulary, rather than global comprehension and may be more easily clarified.</i></p>	<p><i>As with all Operational Level 4 descriptors, comprehension is not expected to be perfectly accurate in all instances. However, pilots or air traffic controllers will need to have strategies available which allow them to ultimately comprehend the unexpected or unusual communication.</i></p> <p><i>Unmarked or complex textual relations are occasionally misunderstood or missed. The descriptor of Operational Level 4 under "Interactions" specifies the need for clarification strategies. Failure to understand a clearly communicated unexpected communication, even after seeking clarification, should result in the assignment of a lower proficiency level assessment.</i></p>	<p><i>Level 5 users achieve a high degree of detailed accuracy in their understanding of aeronautical radiotelephony communications.</i></p> <p><i>Their understanding is not hindered by the most frequently encountered non-standard dialects or regional accents, nor by the less well-structured messages that are associated with unexpected or stressful events.</i></p>	<p><i>Level 6 users achieve a high degree of detailed accuracy and flexibility in their understanding of aeronautical radiotelephony communications regardless of the situation or dialect used.</i></p> <p><i>They further have the ability to discern a meaning which is not made obvious or explicit ("read between the lines"), using tones of voice, choice of register, etc., as clues to unexpressed meanings</i></p>

Interaction			
<p><i>Because radiotelephony communications take place in a busy environment, the communications of air traffic controllers and pilots must not only be clear, concise and unambiguous, but appropriate responses must be delivered efficiently and a rapid response time is expected. The interactions skill refers to this ability, as well as to the ability to initiate exchanges and to identify and clear up misunderstandings.</i></p>			
Level 3 (Pre-operational)	Level 4 (Operational)	Level 5 (Extended)	Level 6 (Expert)
<p>Responses are sometimes (11-25%) immediate, appropriate and informative. Can initiate and maintain exchanges with reasonable ease on familiar topics and in predictable situations.</p> <p>Generally inadequate when dealing with an unexpected turn of events.</p>	<p>Responses are usually (60-89%) immediate, appropriate and informative. Initiates and maintains exchanges even when dealing with an unexpected turn of events.</p> <p>Deals adequately with apparent misunderstandings by checking, confirming or clarifying.</p>	<p>Responses are immediate, appropriate and informative.</p> <p>Manages the speaker/listener relationship effectively.</p>	<p>Interacts with ease in nearly all situations.</p> <p>Is sensitive to verbal and non-verbal cues and responds to them appropriately.</p>
Additional information from ICAO 9835 (2nd Edition 2010)			
<p><i>The interaction features at this level are such that communication lacks concision and efficiency.</i></p> <p><i>Misunderstandings and non-understandings frequently leading to breakdowns in communication.</i></p> <p><i>Observed problems in Interaction at this level include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>answers which do not match the question</i> • <i>systematic lack of information</i> • <i>extended time to formulate reply</i> • <i>inability to clarify</i> • <i>inability to maintain dialogue</i> 	<p><i>A pilot or air traffic controller who does not understand an unexpected communication must be able to communicate that fact. It is much safer to query a communication, to clarify, or even to simply acknowledge that one does not understand rather than to allow silence to mistakenly represent comprehension.</i></p> <p><i>At Level 4, it is acceptable that comprehension is not perfect 100 per cent of the time when dealing with unexpected situations, but Level 4 speakers need to be skilled at checking, seeking confirmation, or clarifying a situation or communication.</i></p>	<p><i>Interactions at this level are based on high levels of comprehension and fluency. While skills in checking, seeking confirmation and clarification remain important, they are less frequently deployed.</i></p> <p><i>On the other hand speakers at this level are capable of exercising greater control over the conduct and direction of the conversation.</i></p>	<p><i>Expert speakers display no difficulties in reacting or initiating interaction.</i></p> <p><i>They are additionally able to recognise and to use non-verbal signs of mental and emotional states (for example, intonations or unusual stress patterns). They display authority in the conduct of the conversation</i></p>

Appendix 4 – Strategies and Guidelines for Language Improvement

Measures a Candidate can take to improve his/her language in specific areas

Candidates who do not pass their LPC exam or where the Assessor feels that one or more language areas are borderline Level 3/4 should be given the opportunity for language improvement in their debriefing. Language Assessors should read the following pages to help pilots prepare for any required learning. The information is offered as a guideline from which the Assessor can give general advice to a candidate. Candidates should always seek further advice from an English teacher or, where possible, an aviation English specialist. The English Teachers Association of Switzerland has a list of Regional Co-ordinators on its website www.e-tas.ch from which candidates can source teachers in their area. Candidates should always ensure that teachers are aware of the content and requirements of all six areas of the ICAO scale as well as the candidate's own linguistic areas where improvement is required in order to pass the exam. Assessors should keep any notes and be prepared to pass on all relevant information to a language teacher where appropriate.

Pronunciation:

Practise listening to English Radio – BBC, Voice of America, podcasts or watching English TV is very good practice at listening to how native speakers pronounce words. Listening exercises in specific textbooks as well as simultaneously reading the texts is also a good method of assimilating sounds with words. Pronunciation and word formation with a teacher should be encouraged where the teacher can correct specific pronunciation errors. A teacher should also do a proper pronunciation evaluation to ascertain specific areas that can be improved. Specific sounds and pronunciation work can be done using commercially available textbooks.

Fluency:

Practice speaking with a teacher and with friends and colleagues who speak English. Ask for specific conversation lessons and talk about subjects that you like and are interested in, particularly aviation. Teachers should practice use of discourse markers and make the student speak as much as possible. Learners should practice recounting events they have experienced in order to assimilate themselves with processing the relevant vocabulary and grammatical structures.

Vocabulary:

Read as much as possible and note new words in the text. Try to learn five new words a day. Practice using them in conversation and writing them in sentences. Encourage a teacher to get you to use these new words as much as possible. Pilots should be encouraged to practice and think about vocabulary in English when in all stages of flight – from briefing to landing. Basic topics include weather, aerodrome facilities, terrain & topography, aircraft parts and likely unexpected situations.

Structure:

Practise grammar and sentence formation with a teacher and a good grammar book and read as much as possible to get used to seeing correct sentence structure and patterns. A structure evaluation should also be done with a teacher. Pilots should again think of aeronautical situations and what grammatical structures they would use, particularly in unexpected situations – tenses & verbs used (Present simple and continuous, past simple & continuous, immediate future), prepositions, plurals and uncountable nouns and reported speech.

Comprehension.

Group and 1:1 conversation practice are particularly important because the student has to listen. Listening to Radio, podcasts and watching TV will also help in practice of understanding language. All aviation English books have listening exercises with CDs included. Students should use these as much as possible.

Interaction:

Group and 1:1 conversation practice will help improve interaction. Teachers should be encouraged to elicit as much language as possible from students to help practice vocabulary and grammar learned. Students should also be encouraged to use phrases to give opinions, agree and disagree, as well as comparing and contrasting. Students should be encouraged to use clarifying strategies and to maintain dialogue. Teachers should ensure that this is not neglected at the expense of other language areas.

ICAO Recommendations for Training

The following extracts are taken from ICAO Doc.9835 Chapter 7

Language Learning Overview

Language training may be necessary for radiotelephony users who are:

- speakers at levels below Operational Level 4 for whom the language is a foreign language (these users will be trained intensively with a view to improving or raising their starting level of proficiency).
- speakers at Operational Level 4 or above for whom the language is a foreign language (these users will be trained extensively with a view to maintaining their acquired level of proficiency).
- speakers for whom the language is a second language or native language (these users will be trained with a view to correcting or attenuating unintelligible features of their speech).

Language training initiatives in an aeronautical context may include one of the following actions:

- hiring a language instructor.
- purchasing training materials.
- purchasing a training package that includes instructors and their training materials.
- attending schools in another country.

Language proficiency training must be clearly distinguished from test preparation. **All** test takers should undergo a brief period of familiarization with a given test format prior to taking a proficiency test. The purpose of such familiarization is to cancel the negative effects on language performance of engaging in unfamiliar tasks in the context of a test.

Proficiency training must be conducted independently of a test format and should adequately address the six skills in the ICAO Rating Scale, particularly those identified as needing special attention, but not to the detriment of the other areas. Trainers should ensure that students are adequately prepared in all language areas to be tested. Training will also aim to go beyond the test and provide the extensive practice that is necessary to consolidate language skills, build confidence and ensure adequate safety margins when operating in stressful conditions.

Background to Language Learning and Language Training

Language is more complex than people often think. The common thought that children learn new languages more easily than adult learners is not totally substantiated. Studies indicate that under the same circumstances adults, however, have learning strategies that enable them to make better progress than young children. Other influential factors that can play an important role are age, personality, access to the language, or motivation.

There is no quick and easy solution to language learning and those wishing to learn a language should be careful to avoid promoters of so-called “new methods for quick and easy language learning”. Language training is a professional activity that requires specialised and qualified training, particularly in an aeronautical context, which is content specific. Language training is further distinguished from other teaching activities because of the complex blend of skill, knowledge and cultural awareness, combining physical components with mental and communicative processes.

There are no substitutes for effort and time to learn new languages. Learning activities should be efficient, effective and relevant to the objectives of the learner. Language trainers should effectively communicate how language works and should organize and deliver interesting and engaging lessons, and to accurately assess proficiency. Classroom activities must encourage and allow the learners to interact with the language.

In aviation, trainers should not only fulfil the requirements above but should have as a minimum, a basic operational knowledge of the aeronautical environment. This must be supplemented with a good knowledge of the role of radiotelephony and face-to-face communication in an operational context. Language proficiency in aviation is an intricate interplay of knowledge, skills and competence, requiring much more than memorization of vocabulary items. Memorization of ICAO phraseologies alone does not constitute language proficiency and is an unsafe practice. Aviation language training for pilots and air traffic controllers, then, necessarily includes a broader focus on aviation-related language.

Learners should therefore carefully investigate programme qualities as well as trainer experience and abilities before committing resources and should ensure from any training organisation or individual that any training undertaken fulfils the criteria mentioned above.

Course Content and Delivery

Pilots and controllers who need to comply with ICAO Operational Level 4 may require anything up to 400 hours of aviation language training if they only have a very basic knowledge of the language at the beginning of their aviation language learning. Content-based, safety-focused language training therefore has a number of benefits for the pilots and controllers because it doubles the value of required language learning time by pairing language lessons with important safety content and increases safety awareness. It also provides high-interest topics in the language lessons, increasing learner motivation.

Language training programmes can be delivered in a variety of ways. Blended solutions frequently provide the optimum solution. Traditional classroom training, where trainer and learners are brought together in the same location at fixed times, remains a significant option. In this case attention should be paid to maintaining group size within the range of 4 to 12 learners if spoken interaction is the primary skill to be developed. One-to-one training formats may be chosen for specific needs such as remedial training in specific skill areas or to overcome individual learning difficulties. Immersion training for short periods in a host country where the language is spoken needs to be carefully prepared and linked to the achievement of defined objectives.

Trainer-led programmes can be extended beyond the classroom by means of telephone and Internet links between trainer and learner(s). Even greater flexibility, efficiency and productivity are provided by computer-based and self-help training solutions. The important point to remember, however, is that the computer is another tool to support training, not a new way of training. Computers can facilitate live, trainer-to-student interaction but are not yet able to replicate interaction that requires speaking as well as listening ability, particularly in the context of plain-language radiotelephony communications.

Training Time And Environment

- **Time.** Time spent on language learning tasks has an obvious impact. The more time individuals are immersed in language learning activities, the more quickly they acquire language skills.
- **Personality.** While it is not possible to generalize the effect of personality on language learning, evidence suggests that certain personality traits which facilitate language learning might increase an individual's success, e.g. being unafraid of appearing foolish and being willing to take risks.
- **Learner style.** Researchers have concluded that learners differ in their preferred learning styles and make better progress when the methodology used matches their preferred learning style. Programmes can accomplish this by offering an array of adaptable learning options.
- **Motivation.** Learners with high levels of personal motivation may learn more efficiently than learners with obligated motivation.

Students and administrators often want to know how long it will take for a student to progress from point A to point B. It is impossible to predict with great accuracy how long any one individual will require given the large number of factors which impact language learning. However, some general guidelines can be drawn from research and from practical experience. One informal rule of thumb in the field of language training for academic purposes holds that between 100 and 200 hours of language learning activities are required for any measurable improvement in ability. Other research indicates that approximately 16 weeks (600-700 hours) of intensive study focusing solely on listening and speaking proficiency are required for a language learner to progress from one level to the next.

Training Programme Best Practices

Whether organizations elect to develop their own internal language programme or to subcontract with a third-party language training provider, initial and ongoing programme evaluation will be an important aspect of quality control. In selecting a language training-provider, it is important to note that language training is very much an unregulated industry, with only very recent efforts being made to accredit language training programmes in Europe, the United States and Canada. There is no universal licensing examiner authority regulating language teacher training or certification, and programme and trainer quality vary greatly.

~ End ~