

**WHAT MAKES A GOOD AVIATION ENGLISH TEACHER? – AN INTERVIEW
WITH SIMONE SARMENTO**

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AVIATION IN FOCUS: Simone, what makes a good aviation English teacher?

Simone Sarmento: I think, from my experience, that an aviation English teacher, apart of course from being proficient in English, should have a lot of knowledge in the field. We do have to understand a lot because it is a very specific area, it involves, once you are not just speaking or just writing, because when pilots are speaking they are also doing a number of other things, so we have to take this into account when you teach. So a very good knowledge of the area is fundamental.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: How do you get this knowledge?

Simone Sarmento: Studying. participating in courses, visiting airline companies, reading about the area, I think nowadays aviation has become a much more popular area than it used to be. Reading about accidents, reading about things like Infraero, ANAC, things that are released in the news every day are much easier to get.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: Tell us something about your story how did you became a good aviation English teacher.

Simone Sarmento: Well, I'm not sure about the good, but anyway, I became an aviation English teacher because I was hired by VARIG. At that time VARIG had a language center and then we kind of learnt by doing, but it was much easier to acquire this kind of knowledge at that time, because we were surrounded by people from the area. So everybody was breathing aviation twenty four hours a day. And this is something mainly about pilots, they love what they do, so they talk about aviation all the time. I remember that we would take maintenance courses and would visit the hangars, the flight simulators, the workshops. This way we learnt a lot.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: Did you teach just pilots?

Simone Sarmento: No, pilots, mechanics, reservation agents, check-in agents, providers. But mainly pilots and maintenance technicians and mechanics.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: How did you prepare a lesson?

Simone Sarmento: At that time we would select a text and then from that text we would prepare a lesson, prepare the vocabulary, so on. And we had a team of English teachers that worked together. Later on I got to know about corpus linguistics and then we learnt a different way of describing the language. We could upload the whole digital manual inside a machine and then do a lot of qualitative and quantitative research to get to know more about the language.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: What tool did you use to help understanding and describing the language?

Simone Sarmento: I used Wordsmith tools but nowadays you have free access to other tools like AntConc which are available online.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: Have you ever used *Corpógrafo*?

Simone Sarmento: I did, but I think AntConc is easier, more user friendly. It depends on what you want to do, but it is for language description I believe.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: If a teacher asked you “*I want to be an aviation English teacher but I would like to have some academic background*” what course would you recommend?

Simone Sarmento: I have no idea, I don't think such a course exists, at least not in Porto Alegre.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: In the world maybe?

Simone Sarmento: Well, I'm not sure but nowadays in England you have a couple of language schools which offer this kind of training for aviation English teachers. After 2004, and with the ICAO English proficiency requirements, this kind of course has become much more popular and then you have more people talking about it. But I think that if you know about ESP (English for Specific Purposes), about methodology, about needs analysis and language description, but I think it is much more the needs analysis, in order to know the language that needs to be described. After that, you describe this language which, afterwards, will be taught by means of an appropriate methodology.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: It would be, somehow, a combination between ESP and Corpus Linguistics?

Simone Sarmento: I think Corpus Linguistics is inside ESP, I can't see ESP without Corpus Linguistics, I think it is the best marriage ever, much better than a General English course. To compile a course of General English is much more complicated. To compile a course for specific English is much simpler and much more effective because you know the kind of

outcome your students will have to produce, so it becomes much easier to work with that portion of language.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: What is the role of Terminology? I know you took a masters degree in Terminology, would you recommend that?

Simone Sarmento: Most certainly, I think it is also included in the ESP, I see Terminology very close to ESP in general, but it also terminology comes into the descriptive part of language, to describe a certain term in a certain area. All this knowledge related to specialized language is very useful.

AVIATION IN FOCUS: Thank you very much.

Simone Sarmento: You are welcome.