

## **Bridging content and EFL: a one-day ESP workshop for flight instructors**

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**ABSTRACT:** This workshop allows an ESP provider with limited specialized knowledge in the field of aviation to train English-speaking flight instructors in basic EFL communication strategies. While the present workshop is based on a Canadian model of flight instruction, it can be easily adapted to other jurisdictions.

**KEY WORDS:** Aviation English; flight instruction; English for Specific Purposes

### **1 Introduction**

The primary instructor is the most important teacher in any pilot's career. Every *ab initio* candidate looks up to his instructor, and most senior pilots recall vividly the formative influence exerted by their own primary instructor in the early weeks of training. An *ab initio* candidate spends many intense hours with the primary instructor, both on the ground and in the air. The present workshop takes advantage of that intense relationship. The ESP provider trains the flight instructor to compare and contrast flight training and language learning<sup>1</sup>.

Most EFL student pilots are extrinsically and instrumentally motivated to learn English. In the case of Chinese pilots, for example, airspace regulations and ICAO language proficiency requirements require students to demonstrate a level of proficiency in speaking and listening (ICAO 4; CLB 7-8; CEFR B2) necessary to interact with other traffic, crew, and controllers. Since students are instrumentally motivated to learn English and to work on a very tight timeline, they often underestimate the importance of clear interactions with inefficient, and sometimes, dangerous consequences.

Many Canadian flight instructors are English-only speakers, relatively young (20-25 years old), and at the beginning of their professional careers. Most are recent graduates themselves of the Transport Canada Flight Instructor Rating heavily indebted to the "demonstration and performance" model of instruction. This "see and do" pedagogy and tight timelines often lead instructors to underplay the communicative (as opposed to the imitative) aspects of training. ("Flight Instructor Guide — Aeroplane (TP 975) - Transport Canada," n.d.)<sup>2</sup>.

With all of these factors taken into consideration, the question that emerges is: how to equip less experienced instructors for effective communication with EFL students?

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<sup>1</sup>Acronyms:

CEFR: Common European Framework for Languages

CLB: Canadian Language Benchmarks

ESP: English for Specific Purposes; in this case English for Aviation

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FIG: Transport Canada *Flight Instructor Guide — Aeroplane*

ICAO: International Civil Aviation Organization

SMEs: subject matter experts; in this case the flight instructors participating in the workshop

<sup>2</sup> "Demonstration and performance" is a behaviourist model of training heavily indebted to the work of the educational psychologist Robert Gagne, who trained pilots for the American Air Force during World War II. Gagne's 'nine events of instruction' form the basis of most North American flight training.

## 2 Course Overview

SMEs who participate in this workshop will have prepared briefing objectives, outlines, and notes for lessons in the private pilot license program, as part of the Instructor Rating. These lesson plans, based on the SMEs own training experience as well as on the “demonstration and performance” method, usually ignore the particular needs of second-language learners.

The ESP provider will find an industry-relevant pedagogical overview in section 1 of the *FIG*, with which Canadian SMEs are also familiar. It is recommended that the ESP provider take advantage of this resource.

### *Timing*

The workshop can be completed in one day. It can equally be divided into two parts, with a natural break after section D.

#### Part A (10 min).

The ESP provider raises the issue of communication in aviation and reviews the content of the workshop with the SMEs.

#### Part B (30 min).

The ESP provider describes the traditional division of language learning in its four constituent parts: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The assessment rubric is introduced.

#### Part C (1 hour).

The SMEs watch a video-recorded briefing by a flight instructor experienced with second-language students. The video is played once. The assessment rubric is further described by the ESP provider. The video is played a second time, while SMEs assess the briefing using the assessment rubric. SMEs and ESP provider discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the “demonstration and performance” method for flight instruction and language instruction.

#### Part D – (30 min).

The class investigates the difficulties experienced by inexperienced flight instructors training students from another culture in those students’ second language. The ESP provider can frame these issues with reference to the *FIG* as well as reference to the affective domain of teaching, which the SMEs will understand as Human Factors.

#### Part E (60 to 90 minutes).

The SMEs work independently to adapt one part of a flight exercise briefing to the needs of second-language candidates. It is recommended that all SMEs work with various section of the same flight exercise (for example, ‘basic turns’), for the sake of coherence. ESP provider circulates and intervenes as appropriate. The written outlines of the adapted briefings are then circulated to other participants for peer feedback according to the assessment rubric.

#### Part F (up to 2 hours).

SMEs demonstrate the strategies they have applied to their briefings to the class. While the first flight instructor performs, the other participants assess his performance using

the assessment rubric. The whole class discusses its strengths and weaknesses. Each participant demonstrates in turn, with discussion after each performance.

Part G (15 mins, or as time permits)

The ESP provider reviews the assessment checklist with SMEs, and might discuss the role of experience in the briefing process

### **3 Course syllabus**

*Terminal objective:*

SMEs will demonstrate briefing strategies appropriate for pilot candidates who are not native speakers of English.

*Lessons:*

A – Articulate the assumptions about communication in aviation (15 min)

B – Review the four skills for learning and learning factors (45 min).

C – Assess a briefing delivered by a senior instructor (1 hour).

D – Discuss strategies for encouraging speaking, listening, and reading (30 min).

E – Develop or adapt part of a briefing using EFL-appropriate strategies (60-90 min).

F – Demonstrate teaching strategies to the group (up to 2 hours).

G – Discuss the role of experience in instruction (15 mins).

*Resources:*

EFL checklist, EFL assessment rubric, sample lesson plan (Appendix)

Video of Hudson River Ditching with audio (Youtube.com)

Video of instructor briefing (Youtube.com)

FIG <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/civilaviation/publications/tp975-menu-5494.htm>

### **4 Detailed Lesson Plan**

*A – Articulate the assumptions about communication in aviation (15 min)*

1. List the terminal objective and lessons on the whiteboard.

2. Write “Aviate, Navigate, Communicate” on the whiteboard. Ask participants for comments. Watch the video Hudson River Ditching. Discuss.

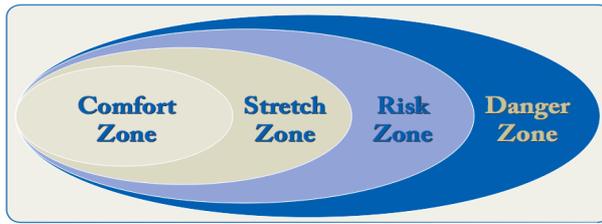
Notes for ESP provider: This is a universal adage in aviation. ‘Aviate’ is primary (we have to fly the aircraft first). Why do we underplay the importance of communication in aviation training?

Resources: Video Hudson River Ditching with audio

*B -- Review the four skills for learning and learning factors (45 min)*

3. List the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing. Ask SMEs for situations where the skill is activated (e.g., on the radio in the aircraft and in briefings, performing pre-flight calculations).

4. Draw figures 1.1 and 1.2 on the board. Compare development in flying skill and communication skill.



**Figure 1.1**  
Flight training model (Cook, 2007)



**Figure 1.2**  
Zone of proximal development (Lev, 2011)

Notes for ESP provider: Prompt SMEs to think about language skills in their professional context. Emphasize similarities between the ZPD and flight training model.

5. Ask participants to recall the 7 learning factors from the *FIG*. Which of these factors would most likely suffer in a second-language situation?

Notes for ESP providers: The learning factors are described in the *FIG*. Most vulnerable include readiness, relationship, effect, and recency.

6. Review the EFL assessment rubric. Ask SMEs for instances in their own training.

Resources: *FIG*, EFL assessment rubric

*C -- Observe and assess a briefing by a senior instructor (1 hour)*

7. Watch a senior instructor briefing a non-native-speaking candidate. Watch the video twice. Ask SMEs to assess the briefing using the EFL assessment rubric.

8. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the briefing.

9. If necessary, the video can be shown a third time.

*D -- Review strategies for learning (30 minutes)*

10. Distribute the EFL checklist and note its relationship with the assessment rubric. Continue the discussion from 8 (above), focusing on the human factors (e.g., Why is it hard to ask developmental questions? Why do instructors tend to finish students' sentences? How can you know if a student is ready to learn?).

Notes for ESP provider: use the developmental method (open questions and answers) as an example of a teaching strategy.

Resources: EFL assessment checklist

*E – Develop or adapt part of a briefing using EFL-appropriate strategies (60-90 min)*

11. Provide each SME with a copy of a sample flight exercise briefing lesson plan. Remind them to refer to the assessment checklist.

Note for ESP provider: SMEs will already be familiar with the process and objectives of the lesson plan, since they have done similar work for their Instructor Rating.

12. Assign each SME one section of the lesson plan.

13. Instruct the SME as follows: You have 30 minutes to adapt your part of the briefing. Your part of the briefing should last about ten minutes and include a threshold knowledge test, links in and out, safety considerations, and some kind of oral confirmation (assessment) at the end. Incorporate as many EFL strategies as possible. Use the EFL assessment checklist as a guide.

Notes for ESP Provider: SME can use the sample lesson plan provided in the appendix as a guide, or they may concentrate on a different flight exercise. Circulate and intervene where appropriate.

Resources: Sample flight exercise briefing lesson plan

*F – Demonstrate teaching strategies to the group (up to 2 hours)*

15. Distribute as many assessment rubrics to each SME as there are participants in the class. Assign a timekeeper to give a warning at ten minutes. Each presentation will last fifteen minutes.

16. Ask a volunteer to present the first briefing. You or another SME might take on the role of ‘student’ as appropriate. Observer SMEs assess the briefing using the assessment rubric.

Note for ESP provider: If the role of student is assumed by another SME, you should complete the rubric along with the observer SMEs.

17. At the end of the first briefing, discuss its strengths and weaknesses with the performer and the observer SMEs.

18. Repeat steps 16-17 until all SMEs have presented.

19. Discuss with the whole class which briefing strategies feel most natural.

Resources: Adapted lesson plans; assessment rubrics

*G – Discuss the role of experience in instruction (15 mins).*

20. Encourage discussion of the role of experience in successful briefings.

## **References**

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