

Trends and Challenges in Aviation English: A Literature Review in English for Specific Purposes

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Article Information

Received: July 08, 2025

Accepted: August 11, 2025

Published: October 03, 2025

Keywords

Aviation English, Aviation, Communication, Education, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Language

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the progress and ongoing issues in Aviation English, using the perspective of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It focuses on language, teaching, technology, and cultural understanding. Employing an integrative approach, the review systematically synthesizes the results of peer-reviewed studies, reports, and authoritative articles based on their year of issue to reflect a modern-day scenario. The findings are categorized into three themes: specialized communication needs, intercultural competence, and pedagogical innovations, including the use of corpus-based resources and mobile applications. Remaining challenges were also noted, including insufficient teaching resources, shortfalls in teacher training, and the inadequacy of standardized testing, including ICAO's Language Proficiency Requirements. Future studies should use content that fits the culture, better ways to assess, and include views from people within the industry. By establishing cross-disciplinary collaborations that identify and formulate training based on industry needs, English-language aviation education can be an effective formal education contribution to international communications, safety, and inclusivity in aviation.

INTRODUCTION

Air travel is a globalized industry that involves the effective interaction between aviation professionals of various origins and cultures. English, which has become the lingua franca of aviation, is important in terms of safety and efficiency and for effective functioning (Ragan, 1996). Nevertheless, the nature of aviation communication, the specialized lexicon, the standard phraseology, and the communication in non-native cultures for instructional purposes (cultures among the members of the crew) pose serious problems to both aviation ESP instructors and learners (Cheraghi *et al.*, 2024; Hazrati, 2015). This review summarizes the results of research in this field, indicating general patterns and deficiencies in our knowledge of a specific area. Good English language skills increasingly play an important role in flight safety, which is a recurring theme in the literature (Pazyura, 2016). This overview reflects the major implications of cross-cultural language errors and the importance of well-founded language programs. In addition, the review also discusses how developments in technology and demographic changes in the aviation labor force affect trends, issues, and future directions in the teaching of Aviation English. The integration of technology, specifically ICT tools, has revolutionized vocabulary-learning methods in ESP courses (Cheraghi *et al.*, 2024). This same tendency is observed in the creation of mobile learning applications geared towards particular aviation student groups (Pratama, 2024). This tendency is also displayed by the emergence of mobile-based learning applications, which are designed to meet the needs of special groups of aviation students (Pratama, 2024). Nevertheless, the integration of these innovative technological tools in practice also poses various challenges, such as instructor

training and the selection of an appropriate digital resource (Secer *et al.*, 2015). This review uses thematic analysis to organize the findings into broad areas, including approaches to teaching, use of e-learning, education technology, intercultural communication, and assessment. It also points out the lack of knowledge in the area, including the lack of specialized teaching materials and innovative assessment strategies. Through the triangulation of results from a range of sources, the method provides a reasonable and thorough examination of the dynamically changing linguistic needs and teaching challenges in Aviation English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Linguistic Landscape of English for Aviation

Aviation English is not monolithic but has a range of specializations with vocabulary, discourse, and communication needs that are context-specific to that air transport domain (Ragan, 1996). Radiotelephony phraseology phrases such as "cleared for takeoff" and "standby" & "attention all personnel" are used by air traffic controllers and pilots too, as we are trained to use precise radiotelephony phraseology; in stressful conditions some (especially aircraft marshalling signals and spoken commands by air traffic controllers) could mean life or death (Teaching and Assessment in Global Aviation English, 2025; Pazyura, 2016). Uncertainty in communication puts lives at risk (Hazrati, 2015), underscoring the critical need for system standardization and language training (Alderson, 2009). Domain language and phrasing in aviation maintenance documentation are essential for maintaining operation safety (Prado *et al.*, 2023). The ground-handling staff also need outstanding communication skills to handle the baggage,

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passenger service, and aircraft preparation effectively and safely (Seswanto, 2017). Specialized English language textbooks for ground-handling staff and a corpus for aircraft maintenance documentation testify to the growing awareness of these distinct linguistic demands (Seswanto, 2017; Prado *et al.*, 2023). This variety requires ESP course designers to take the dimensions of context sensitivity into account so that instruction addresses the particular language needs of each sector of aviation (Rashid & Teslenko, 2020). Furthermore, the linguistic issues are not limited to the technical terms and terminology; they are also rooted in the field of intercultural communication (Hazrati, 2015). According to Hazrati (2015), cultural differences may significantly affect how people communicate, particularly in a global industry such as aviation, where people from various backgrounds collaborate together. This calls for a fusion of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) training into Aviation English courses (Furyanto & Rochmawati, 2023; Hazrati, 2015), an emerging trend in the domain (Turney, 2004). Nevertheless, the successful implementation of ICC training in the current curriculum while still prioritizing aviation-related language is relatively challenging (Furyanto & Rochmawati, 2023). ICAO's Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs) have been adopted to address these concerns. It now provides a set of descriptors designed to establish a uniform language standard that should be reached by aviation personnel (Pazyura, 2016; Teaching and Assessment in Global Aviation English, 2025). Nonetheless, the effectiveness and adequacy of such requirements are permanently challenged (Alderson, 2009; Tavares Monteiro, 2019), and some research does call for more context-specific forms of assessment, which might be beyond the confines of standardized testing (Tavares Monteiro, 2019).

Problems in Aviation English Teaching and Learning

There are several factors that contribute to the successful teaching and learning of Aviation English. One of the most popular topics in the literature is the availability of good-quality direct teaching materials in aviation, which are still insufficient (Suriani *et al.*, 2023; Nugraha *et al.*, 2023). The majority of available books published do not include specific linguistic features, which the pilots and flight attendants have to perform to manage the flight (Nugraha *et al.*, 2023), both for terminology and procedure; otherwise, they need instructors to make their materials suitable to their job, which is costly and time-consuming (Suriani *et al.*, 2023). This also becomes one of the reasons to conduct the innovation of material development, such as corpus-driven material development (Nugraha *et al.*, 2023), which is a development that uses authentic data to make student materials interesting and relevant. The application of the former one is intended for a collection of aircraft maintenance documents in building a trilingual glossary and a visual dictionary (Prado *et al.*, 2023). Good training and in-service professional development for the instructor are vital too (Teaching and

Assessment in Global Aviation English, 2025; Suriani *et al.*, 2023). High-quality teaching depends not only on high proficiency in English but also on high-level competency in the aviation context (Aisyah & Jumaroh, 2023). The collaboration between ELT teachers and aviation professionals additionally helps in bridging the theoretical and practical implementation of aviation-based language teaching (Aisyah & Jumaroh, 2023; Suriani *et al.*, 2023). This effort includes several actions in instructor education, training the instructor to deal both with domain knowledge and with a set of pedagogical tools for the teaching of Aviation English (Costa & Damião, 2020). Shortcomings in instructors' aviation knowledge and difficulties in students' language levels and motivation have been determined to be important obstacles to effective teaching (Secer & Sahin, 2014; Valiyeva, 2022). It serves as a reminder that instructors require ongoing practice not just to learn what to teach, but how to adhere to it. Learners' types were also highly correlated with learning performance. The motivation of the students, previous English proficiency levels, and learning styles also influence the effectiveness of the instruction (Secer & Sahin, 2014; Valiyeva, 2022). Instructors' needs analysis should be done to find out the needs of the learners so that proper instruction can be provided for them (Hidayani, 2018; Karimi & Sanavi, 2014). The educational requirements of students depend on the types of roles and responsibilities they take on within the aviation industry (Hidayani, 2018; Karimi & Sanavi, 2014). For example, a study has been conducted into the reading demands of aviation management trainees (Kaur *et al.*, 2022) and the needs of students in air transport management to acquire vocabulary (Ginusti & Ariebowo, 2023). These results highlight the necessity of conducting a needs analysis in providing curriculum to tailor the instruction to the linguistic needs of the targeted student population (Kaya, 2021). In addition, knowledge of generation-specific learning preferences, for example, for Gen Z students who want to be flight attendants (Praditha *et al.*, 2024), is necessary for well-grounded and effective work with learning materials.

Teaching Methodologies Trends: Communicative Approaches, Technology Integration, and Innovative Pedagogies

Ever since, the teaching of Aviation English has developed considerably. There seems to be an increasing move towards a communicative approach, with mentions that crew-to-crew communication is being established in the aviation industry (Nugraha *et al.*, 2023; Rashid & Teslenko, 2020). This approach also includes role play, simulation, and real communication tasks in order to improve both student fluency and confidence (Rashid & Teslenko, 2020; Seswanto, 2017).

Technology development also played a role in this matter, supporting the application of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and corpus linguistics (Cheraghi *et al.*, 2024; Nugraha *et al.*, 2023). CALL

materials may offer opportunities for students to exercise interactively, to personally obtain feedback, and to utilize plenty of learning materials (Cheraghi *et al.*, 2024; Pratama, 2024). Importantly, mobile learning applications are now being offered to support aviation students' education. (Pratama, 2024). Corpus linguistics allows teachers to use real language data, helping them identify vocabulary and grammar patterns that support the creation of better teaching materials (Nugraha *et al.*, 2023). The use of corpora is also becoming more accepted in motivating material design, signaling a trend toward data-driven curricular design in the future (Nugraha *et al.*, 2023).

There is growing interest in the adoption of new teaching methodologies. The significance of the integration of serious games in the Aviation English syllabus is also observed by many of us at the moment, as the use of them has the potential to foster students' motivation and retention (Dinçer, 2023). One innovative means of providing those more advanced skills and learning competency is through problem-based learning (PBL) (Hong, 2023). PBL encourages learners to apply and transfer learning to real-life situations that result in better understanding and problem-solving, especially for the aviation industry (Hong, 2023). "Team teaching" has also been discovered to lead to better learning and inclusivity in quality teaching (Rochmawati *et al.*, 2024). They even allow for the team of multiple tutors that share cognitive knowledge and therefore are able to address diverse learning styles and target multiple learning difficulties (Rochmawati *et al.*, 2024).

Furthermore, the availability of authentic videos for warm-up purposes is reported to have favorable effects in terms of student motivation and engagement (Sahin *et al.*, 2016; Secer *et al.*, 2015). However, difficulties remain in curricula design, technological constraints, and content selection for audio-visuals (Sahin *et al.*, 2016). The teaching objectives of higher vocational education are to ensure the integrity of the courses and to set the teaching objectives according to the requirements of the various civil aviation positions (Mengdi, 2023).

Testing Difficulties: ICAO LPRs, Oral Proficiency Testing, and the Case for Holistic Assessment

Evaluating Aviation English is especially difficult due to its technical and context-specific demands. The International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) language proficiency requirements (LPRs), while they offer standardization through assessment, have been criticized for being too narrow in scope to accurately reflect real-life aviation communication (Alderson, 2009; Tavares Monteiro, 2019). The standardized nature of these tests may be less able to capture the sociocultural complexities of both intercultural communication and context-mediated language use (Alderson, 2009; Tavares Monteiro, 2019). This attitude has led to an appeal for an evaluation approach that is broader, with a more fluid consideration of the traditional test (Tavares Monteiro, 2019). Although the design of the oral proficiency tests

for aviation (OPTA) is a step in the right direction (Moder, 2016), concerns about inter- and intra-linguistic fairness and validity for individuals with various first languages still persist (Moder, 2016). Lastly, the evaluation of radiotelephony communications seems to be based on the multidimensional concept of proficiency which includes the theoretical and pragmatic aspects of competence that are related to intercultural communication (Tavares Monteiro, 2019). Emphasizing the need for assessments that include linguistic and non-linguistic competencies, Tavares Monteiro (2019) underscores that functional communication in aviation goes beyond the use of correct grammar and vocabulary. The discrepancy between the vocational school graduates' level of English language skills and the requirements of the industry indicates the necessity of revising the curriculum and the testing system (Hidayani, 2018). One of the major concerns is how to equip students with the language competence required in the workplace, particularly for those pursuing specific career paths (Hidayani, 2018).

Intercultural Communication and Diversity: Cultural Difference and Inclusiveness

Given the international nature of the airline profession, stronger emphasis should be devoted to intercultural communication skills. Linguistically and culturally diverse professionals in the aviation industry need to effectively communicate with each other and with passengers from across the globe (Hazrati, 2015; Turney, 2004). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that culture can have an enormous impact on communication and, consequently, facilitates misunderstandings (Hazrati, 2015). Therefore, it is an urgent need to integrate ICC training into Aviation English courses (Furyanto & Rochmawati, 2023; Hazrati, 2015). Nevertheless, the adaptation of ICC teaching models into aviation English materials faces some hurdles (Furyanto & Rochmawati, 2023). Furthermore, the development of language tests and language training should incorporate the linguistic diversity (gender and cultural background) of aviation (Turney, 2004).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Adopting a synthesis of research approach and a guided method of integrative review, this review is concerned with research that has been conducted into English for Aviation within the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework. A systematic search and review of research and case reports published in peer-reviewed journal papers, conference papers, and other credible data sources was employed. This review specifically focuses on research that addresses the linguistic, pedagogical, technological, and intercultural aspects of English for Aviation. Standard academic databases explored include Google Scholar, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, ERIC, and ResearchGate. Emphasis was on recently published works (2015 and above) to target the recent trends and challenges. Early reports were also analyzed for a historical discussion. The findings are categorized

into themes of pedagogical approaches, the use of technology, intercultural communication and assessment, and analyzed accordingly. It raises issues requiring further attention, especially the call for appropriate educational resources to enable innovative methods of testing. The triangulation of the data from different sources results in an approach that can be more useful to reflect the linguistic needs and the pedagogical challenges in Aviation English, which have progressed over time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Researchers should pay attention to developing improved educational resources that are culturally relevant and cater to the linguistic requirements of the aviation industry. Another potential area for future research is dealing with the influence of pedagogical innovation, such as PBL (Hong, 2023) and team teaching (Rochmawati *et al.*, 2024), on performance. Developing better assessments to ensure that Aviation English training effectively prepares candidates for the needs of the global aviation community is fundamental (Alderson, 2009; Tavares Monteiro, 2019). Further research is needed to address individual learning challenges among high school students (Secer & Sahin, 2014), university students (Valiyeva, 2022), and learners from diverse cultural backgrounds (Turney, 2004).

The increasingly heterogeneous profile of aviation trainees emphasizes the importance of research, which takes into account that trainees have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For example, high school students starting a course of studies related to aviation may have a need for basic language support, while students at a university level may need more advanced situation-based communication training. Furthermore, it is important to develop and confirm the validation of more complete efficacy measures taking into account intercultural communication and nonlinguistic competences (Tavares Monteiro, 2019). Narrowly designed current standard tests for the aviation domain are known to lack the dynamic nature of actual aviation communication, accounting for such elements as stress, fatigue, and cultural influence. Augmenting these tools with real-world, aviation-specific components may help bridge the gap between standard assessments and actual communicative demands. For instance, integrating flight simulation into assessments could enhance the reliability of testing learners' readiness for professional practice by evaluating language use under realistic stress conditions.

The technology and development of new teaching strategies may well shape the future direction of Aviation English teaching (Cheraghi *et al.*, 2024; Pratama, 2024; Hong, 2023; Rochmawati *et al.*, 2024). AR and VR are now being used in aviation training to make lessons feel more real. It's one of the ways technologies are helping people learn better.

The issues identified in this review need to be addressed to improve safety, efficiency, and communication in the international aviation community. Aviation stakeholders, language educators, and technology developers can

collaborate to accelerate the creation of customized resources and training.

Specialized corpora and textbooks are still needed to meet the specific linguistic requirements of aviation communication (Prado *et al.*, 2023; Seswanto, 2017). These can be resources such as sector-relevant modules on language, interactive e-books, and multimedia resources that can engage learners more personally. Research into what works for teaching specific aspects of ICC in an aviation context, as well as a comparison of teaching approaches, constitutes an essential area for future research (Furyanto & Rochmawati, 2023).

Given the international nature of aviation, the ability to understand and navigate cultural differences is a critical professional competency. It would be advantageous to study how intercultural communication can be included in technical aviation education. Role-play and cross-cultural training enable aviation workers to build language and social skills to handle aviation challenges.

CONCLUSION

This review points out the importance of Aviation English in ensuring global aviation safety and efficiency, emphasizing its intricate linguistic and intercultural demands. Two key trends are evident: a shift towards communication-focused practices and the integration of technology, such as mobile learning tools and augmented reality, into language instruction. Intercultural competence is crucial for effective communication in aviation, necessitating innovative teaching methods like problem-based learning and tech-supported approaches. Despite advancements, challenges persist in material development, instructor training, and assessment practices. Many existing resources overlook the aviation context, which points to the importance of data-driven materials. Effective instruction requires educators with both linguistic and aviation expertise to foster interdisciplinary collaboration. The ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs) have faced criticism for their limited applicability in real-world contexts and the lack of adaptable assessment methods.

The review advocates for personalized training informed by comprehensive needs analyses, addressing the diverse linguistic needs within aviation. Longitudinal studies on creative instructional methods and their impact on professional performance could offer insights into improving Aviation English education. Collaboration among instructors, linguists, and practitioners is vital to adapt training to aviation's evolving demands. Bridging these gaps with innovation and inclusivity can enhance communication, boost safety, and better prepare the global aviation workforce.

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