

Aviation English for Co-Pilots: Fostering Communication Skills.

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Abstract: *This article explores the importance of English language training for assistant pilots in the field of aviation. It discusses unique communication demands mostly faced by co-pilots and effective ways of fostering their communication skills to enhance their safety and operational efficiency. Susan's course was taken as an example to teach this ESP context for assistant pilots, where problem-based language teaching was applied efficiently. This article takes into account each participant's weak points and ways of learning, which were identified through needs analysis. Additionally, specific course materials are projected to be prepared based on the needs of co-pilots. Placement and diagnostic tests are planned to be utilized to check the progress of participants.*

Keywords: *aviation, co-pilot, communication, vocabulary, listening, speaking, reading, writing, emergency, procedure, role-play, safety, assessment, training, flight, cultural nuances.*

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu maqola aviatsiya sohasida yordamchi uchuvchilar uchun ingliz tili ta'limining ahamiyatini o'rganadi. U ko-pilotlar duch keladigan o'ziga xos muloqot talablarini va ularning muloqot ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishning samarali usullarini muhokama qiladi, bu esa ularning xavfsizligi va operatsion samaradorligini oshirishga yordam beradi. Susanning kursi yordamchi uchuvchilar uchun ushbu ESP kontekstini o'rgatish uchun misol sifatida olib chiqilgan bo'lib, muammoni hal qilishga asoslangan til ta'limi samarali qo'llanilgan. Ushbu maqola har bir ishtirokchining zaif tomonlari va o'rganish usullarini hisobga oladi, bu esa ehtiyojlarni tahlil qilish*

orqali aniqlangan. Bundan tashqari, ko-pilotlarning ehtiyojlariga asoslangan maxsus kurs materiallari tayyorlangan. Ishtirokchilarning taraqqiyotini tekshirish uchun joylashuv va diagnostika testlari qo'llanilgan.

Kalit so'zlar: aviatsiya, ikki uchuvchi, aloqa, lug'at, tinglash, gapirish, o'qish, yozish, favqulodda holat, tartib, rol o'ynash, xavfsizlik, baholash, o'qitish, parvoz, madaniy nozikliklar.

Аннотация: Эта статья исследует важность обучения английскому языку для помощников пилотов в области авиации. Она обсуждает уникальные требования к коммуникации, с которыми сталкиваются помощники пилотов, и эффективные способы развития их навыков общения для повышения безопасности и операционной эффективности. Курс Сьюзан был взят в качестве примера для обучения в этом контексте ESP для помощников пилотов, где эффективно применялось обучение языку на основе решения проблем. В статье учитываются слабые стороны и способы обучения каждого участника, которые были выявлены в ходе анализа потребностей. Кроме того, подготовлены специфические учебные материалы, основанные на потребностях пилотов-ассистентов. Также использованы тесты на размещение и диагностику для проверки прогресса участников.

Ключевые слова: авиация, второй пилот, связь, словарный запас, прослушивание, говорение, чтение, письмо, чрезвычайная ситуация, процедура, ролевая игра, безопасность, оценка, обучение, полет, культурные нюансы.

Introduction

This English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course project has been designed for workers of the Aviation in Uzbekistan, with the goal of addressing their needs in English. The participants of this course are assistant pilots who

have strong extrinsic motivation to learn English to achieve better prospects at their workplace. They have to speak fluently, overcoming their anxiety in ATC communication, and understand foreign accents while having conversations with pilots from diverse cultures.

The ESP course should meet the specific professional needs of learners and objectives [1]. Therefore, I have chosen Susan Bosher's English for Cross-Cultural Nursing course as a framework for this Aviation English course. Susan's course integrates language skills and cultural competence, which is essential for pilots who work in various environments. As the nursing profession also depends on cultural diversity, Bosher's course serves as a good framework to integrate crucial language skills for aviation with culture.

A problem-based learning approach is integrated into this ESP project designed for copilots. PBL is integrated with task-based learning and communicative learning. Adopting PBL in this ESP course can help students to deal with real-world scenarios, such as emergencies and ATC communication with pilots from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. PBL is a student-centered approach, so applying it to the copilots can help them to communicate efficiently while presenting solutions to problems in emergencies, along with improving related language skills with fluency [11].

Literature review

Susan Bosher's course "English for Cross-Cultural Nursing" was chosen as a framework since it offers a comprehensive model that includes a number of elements that are also essential for pilots.

Bosher's course places emphasis on the need for specific language skills and cultural sensitivity, which are also requirements for pilots since they have to navigate in diverse environments and communicate with international crews.

Additionally, her course focuses on developing a range of skills, especially speaking in an authentic nursing context, which can serve as a strong model for the pilots' ESP course. I can learn from this model how to integrate academic and operational language skills effectively, including how to communicate clearly and understand different accents in high-pressure environments, emergency situations, and during flights.

It is essential to create a link between skills taught and the authentic context. This means that the course must align with culture as well. Boshers' course also emphasizes the essence of cultural sensitivity in nursing, similar to aviation. Pilots often have to communicate with international crews and follow ATC instructions. Therefore, this part of my chosen framework can help me incorporate cultural content in an Aviation English course, making pilots confident in having efficient communications with international crews.

Boshers' nursing course can help me create an efficient Aviation English course that addresses not only language skills important for pilots but also cultural sensitivity to avoid misunderstandings and enhance effectiveness in the global aviation field.

Research methodology

The students in this Aviation English course are pilots who have recently graduated from flight schools and airlines and are starting their careers as assistants, copilots to experienced pilots at UzAirways. There are 10 students in this group, and all of them have various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Some of them are bilingual, being able to communicate in both Uzbek and Russian, while others speak only Uzbek, and their accents differ since they are from diverse regions of Uzbekistan. Their age and gender distributions are as follows: eight 24-25-year-old males and only two 24-year-old female pilots, as it is not a common profession among women.

Lessons are held three times a week, and each lesson lasts two hours. Although the designed ESP course will last only two months, it is aimed at meeting all the course's objectives. All students in this group are extrinsically motivated since English helps them to achieve better job prospects, especially for safety and clarity, since all international flights use English as a lingua franca for Air Traffic Control communication, regardless of the country.

Most of the learners' English level is a strong intermediate, and all have completed English classes as part of their course back in their flight schools, where they were taught mostly focusing on technical vocabulary related to aviation. After graduating from flight schools, they took an external exam, which identified that their score is B1 in CEFR. They struggle with fluency and comprehension of different accents in high-pressure communication scenarios.

Learners in this ESP course demonstrate a range of strong points and skills that need to be improved. One of their strongest skills is listening, especially in understanding Air Traffic Control (ATC) instructions and audio recordings related to aviation. Most students, especially female ones are also quite confident while using common technical vocabulary of aviation although some of them lack confidence due to their shy personality. I try to motivate and encourage them to lower their affective filter, students cannot learn the language when they are anxious [8].

However, students face challenges in oral communication and writing. They struggle to speak fluently under pressure in role-plays related to emergency situations or when they communicate with people whose accents are unfamiliar. Additionally, learners mostly show poor performance in writing tasks, especially when they are asked to write incident reports. Some lack organization of the reports, while others make spelling and grammar errors or use long sentences instead of phrases.

There are several important language skills for pilots to develop to become masters in their roles, such as aviation vocabulary, listening skills, oral communication, and writing skills. Like other fields, aviation also has its own technical vocabulary, such as “altitude” and “mayday,” which carry specific meanings. Therefore, pilots must know these words to avoid misunderstanding in their duties. Additionally, pilots listen to Air Traffic Control (ATC) instructions, weather updates, and communicate with crew members; they also have to request assistance and give instructions, and command in emergencies, so pilots should master their listening and speaking skills to avoid dangers, understand different accents, and communicate clearly. Moreover, writing skill is also needed as pilots are required to write incident reports and journey logs. Since these documents are requested by aviation authorities, they must be clear and well-organized.

The Problem-Based Learning (PBL) approach will be adopted when I design an ESP course for assistant pilots. PBL is very effective in engaging students in problem-solving in the real world, which makes it suitable for aviation [11]. PBL is suitable for medicine. Many similarities can be observed in teaching English for medical purposes and aviation, especially for pilots, since in both fields, students have to deal with emergency situations and interact with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. My copilot students will benefit from working collaboratively and proposing solutions if I integrate PBL in my every lesson by presenting my learners with problems in emergency situations. This helps my students to enhance their language proficiency along with critical thinking and teamwork.

The problem-based approach has a number of advantages, such as being student-centered, demanding a high level of communication, and motivating. Since my learners lack fluency in speaking, applying this approach helps them to improve their communicative competence even in emergencies. Additionally,

PBL aligns well with current methodologies, such as task-based learning, collaborative, and communicative learning. Therefore, my assistant pilots can benefit from applying their skills in real-world scenarios by boosting their confidence and fluency.

By the end of the course, my learners will be able to:

- Use aviation vocabulary to talk about aviation plans and communicate about the cockpit interactions.
- Respond to air traffic control instructions and inquiries by using key vocabulary.
- Use polite language while interacting with colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Write accident and weather reports with appropriate vocabulary and genre.
- Use appropriate grammar structures in ATC communications to sound polite and accurate.

I am sure that these course aims require me to apply a problem-based approach. I will integrate a problem-based approach with task-based learning and communicative learning, as these methodologies shape the problem-based approach [2]. I will provide my assistant pilots with real-world-problem scenarios, such as a navigation failure in flight, ATC communication with a person with a different accent in an emergency, issue with a passenger from another culture, by focusing on both aviation-specific knowledge and language skills and meeting course objectives. I have my students actively participate in group role-plays with detailed instructions, as it helps to encourage collaboration [3]. Then, the learners present their solutions orally, which helps to boost their fluency and vocabulary related to aviation, along with meeting one of the objectives of the course.

Results and discussion

Using two or more methods to collect data for needs analysis increases reliability and validity [9]. Therefore, I plan to conduct a needs analysis using both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect enough data about my students', pilots' present situation, which in turn serves as essential information to design an ESP course for pilots.

I apply activities in class, such as a get-to-know-you, to collect information about students' background, age, gender, professional experience, and skills required for their duties [10].

Questionnaires can help to collect data from stakeholders since needs, wants, and lacks can be different between stakeholders and pilots. Additionally, interviews with students can help me to identify what students know and their preferred learning styles. Observations can also be very helpful in gathering data. I plan to do observations, analyzing tape-recorded communication of pilots with ATC. This helps me to identify the strong and weak sides of the pilots in my class.

The process of data collection takes place in assistant pilots' workplaces as well as in the classroom. Observing communications between captains and their assistants, copilots, during flights can also be very beneficial to design this ESP course [10]. In the classroom, I ask students to write various reports, such as discrepancy, incident, and flight ones, to check lexical resources, ways of organization, and grammar features to collect data about weak and strong points of their writing skills.

ESP materials include texts that are designed not for language learning purposes, but specifically for those who work in a special field. In other words,

the materials are authentic ones that can be modified or adapted to make them suitable for the level of the ESP course participants. Materials for ESP are not straightforward and sometimes cannot meet the communicative needs of learners, since they are designed to enhance knowledge of specialists. Several ways of making suitable authentic materials for the level of learners, such as extending, expanding, adapting, supplementing, and selecting them were suggested [6]. Additionally, there are several aspects that I will take into consideration while choosing authentic materials and modifying them to teach my assistant pilots, such as whether the topic is in the learners' interest, genre, register, grammar, vocabulary, and rhetorical function are suitable.

In-house materials are very needs-specific, although they are time-consuming and expensive. However, I plan to prepare specific materials suitable for the needs of my ESP participants while I also use course books with some modifications. I will prepare visuals to teach key vocabulary from week 1 on and flashcards to have students memorize and revise outside the classes. Additionally, since PBL is integrated into my classes, I plan to develop special recordings with different accents and ask students to have a conversation and prepare a presentation about accidents for emergencies. I will also create samples for writing reports, so students can produce their own based on my samples. Role-play cue cards will also be prepared to foster learners' communicative competence and make them resilient.

Authentic materials can sometimes be interesting; however, the grammar and vocabulary may be too complex, which cannot grab the learners' attention and lead to failure. Thus, adapting materials by adjusting, expanding, reordering, or extending them is very helpful while also keeping their authenticity. I will print out scripts of real ATC communications and modify them, making them suitable for the level of my learners, to give students a chance to practice real communications.

When the ESP course for copilots starts, I will use a diagnostic assessment to identify the strong and weak points of the learners. Diagnostic tests can be used as part of needs analysis to measure the progress of students. This assessment will consist of an aviation vocabulary test and listening comprehension tasks [5]. While the former assesses how well my assistant pilots know key vocabulary and phrases important for communication, the latter helps me to evaluate their ability to understand air traffic control instructions in different situations. These are formal assessment tasks as they consist of multiple-choice tests and questions that require short answers [6].

I will use formative assessments throughout the course to monitor students' progress and provide feedback. I will use simulated flight scenarios where learners participate in role-plays that replicate communications with air traffic control, especially in emergencies, as most of the learners in this group are quite shy and their fluency decreases in these cases. Then they immediately receive feedback to foster their improvement. It is essential to provide feedback on the productive skills of students since learners' success in these skills cannot be easily measured as in receptive skills. Additionally, I will include a peer review as part of formative assessments. Students will review one another's written reports, creating a supportive environment and promoting collaboration.

I will implement a summative assessment at the end of the course to determine whether learners have achieved the objectives of the course or not. This last assessment will include an oral presentation, an informal assessment task, where I can evaluate students' ability to communicate effectively regarding the content, and language use. Moreover, I will include written reports to assess their documentation and writing skills relevant to aviation.

I will apply different methods of assessment that include both formal and informal tasks to identify my learners' strengths and weaknesses, give feedback,

monitor their learning process, and determine whether the course has been meeting the objectives. Applying different methods of assessment, especially for writing, can help students gain confidence and increase their expressive abilities [3].

Conclusion

While working on this ESP project, I was able to shape my knowledge not only about the ESP but also how to design a syllabus itself. At first, I felt that ESP is a way similar to EGP; however, after delving into course readings, I realized their differences and understood that designing an ESP course requires a lot of effort and time.

I learned that before designing an English course for specific purposes, I have to gather enough data not only from participants but also from their employers. The requirements of stakeholders may be too high and not suitable for the needs of learners. Using a mixed-methods approach to gather data for needs analysis was outlined, as this approach can improve reliability and validity [7]. Additionally, the importance of collecting qualitative and quantitative data, and not only from students but also from their stakeholders, to shape what is needed and what is not before designing the ESP course. Therefore, understood the importance of using surveys and interviews along with observations to collect both quantitative and qualitative data by ensuring the validity of my findings. Interestingly, I will conduct needs analysis both in the workplace of my learners and in the classroom to design the ESP course effectively, taking into account both strengths and weaknesses of students.

The ESP course should meet the specific professional needs of learners and objectives. Choosing Susan Bosher's English for Cross-Cultural Nursing course as a framework for this Aviation English course helped me to enhance my knowledge. Susan's course integrates language skills and cultural

competence, which is essential for pilots who work in various environments. As the nursing profession also depends on cultural diversity, Boshers' course serves as a good framework to integrate essential language skills for aviation with culture.

The assessment strategy I used for copilots includes diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, since it is important the assessments' alignment with course objectives. Using both formal and informal assessments was also supported. It is also supported that diagnostic tests can serve as placement tests, while giving feedback fosters their improvement.

I used a problem-based learning approach for my ESP course designed for copilots. PBL is integrated with task-based learning and communicative learning. Adopting PBL in my ESP course can help my students to deal with real-world scenarios, such as emergencies and ATC communication with pilots from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. PBL is a student-centered approach, so applying it to my copilots can help them to communicate efficiently while presenting solutions to problems in emergencies, along with improving related language skills with fluency.

I also realized that designing materials is not straightforward and requires a lot of time. However, the authenticity of materials must be kept, although they are going to be modified. Several ways of making suitable authentic materials for the level of learners, such as extending, expanding, adapting, supplementing, and selecting them have been suggested. I plan to use different methods of modification from this list based on the interests and level of my learners. I plan to make the language and grammar suitable for learners of my ESP course.

Additionally, I understood that the ESP course will not last long and it is a cyclical process which must be updated quite a lot based on the results of diagnostic tests. Although I have designed a syllabus outline for the entire 2

months, I will update it after formative assessment and diagnostic tests, since new objectives should be added if previous ones have already been covered.

In conclusion, this ESP course was very helpful and informative. I was able to shape my knowledge about how to be a successful ESP instructor thanks to the course readings and class discussions. I realized the challenges I might face while designing the ESP project and how to deal with them to avoid failure.

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