

BOOK REVIEW



UNPACKING THE SPECIALIZED LANGUAGE IN AVIATION ENGLISH

Eric Friginal, Malila Prado and Jennifer Roberts (Eds.). TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT IN GLOBAL AVIATION ENGLISH (2025), Bloomsbury. 288 pp., ISBN 978-1-35041-182-1 (HBK); 978-1-35041-184-5 (EPUB); 978-1-35041-183-8 (PDF).
<https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350411852>

Aviation English (AE) is a specialized domain of English used within the aviation industry to ensure clear, efficient, and safe communication in international airspace (Aiguo, 2007; Ishihara & Prado, 2021; Treadaway & Read, 2025). As a broad and versatile field, AE plays a crucial role in facilitating the interaction between pilots, air traffic controllers, cabin crew, and ground staff. The field's scope encompasses a wide array of topics, including language proficiency standards, aviation communication protocols, and language assessment strategies. AE's contributions to society are profound, as its effective use directly influences aviation safety, operational efficiency, and international collaboration. Historically, AE has shaped the evolution of global air travel, providing a standardized framework for communication that ensures mutual intelligibility in a diverse, multinational environment. This significance of AE emphasizes its influence on daily life, where millions of people use air travel for different reasons. AE also consists of various subdisciplines (e.g., flight operations, airport management, and air traffic control). The complex and in-depth features of its terminology demonstrate the urgent need for accuracy and clarity, with a highly regulated lexicon to make sure that every word or phrase can express critical information without any misunderstanding. Regarding the discourse characteristics, AE possesses strict rhetorical conventions, especially in radiotelephony communication, where any phrases and pronunciations must be used to ensure safety and avoid any ambiguities. Nevertheless, the field deals with a research gap in exploring how these conventions work across diverse foreign settings and how they are taught to learners at various

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levels of proficiency. This gap has led to the emergence of scholarly work aimed at filling this void, with this book edited by Eric Frigal, Malila Prado and Jennifer Roberts serving as a timely and valuable publication. The book centers on the rhetorical conventions in AE research articles, offering both theoretical perspectives and authentic approaches to enhance the teaching and assessment of AE proficiency in aviation professionals internationally.

The book is structured into 13 chapters, each highlighting unique insights into the various aspects of AE. It starts with introducing the advancements in AE teaching and assessment practices, followed by a critical exploration of the challenges in standardizing aviation language proficiency tests. The following chapters delve into the growth of aeronautical English listening tests, the importance of role play in language training, and placement assessments for beginning-level students. The book also includes teaching practices for aviation language as a human factor, certified professional development for teachers, the application of politeness markers in communication, and the use of corpora in teaching aviation maintenance English. The final chapters focus on invaluable contributions from research groups such as the Brazilian Aeronautical English Research Group (GEIA), and offer an overview of the increasing demand for aviation professionals and the corresponding demand for specialized language training. Hence, these chapters offer an invaluable insight on the difficulties and innovations in the field of AE.

In the first three chapters, recent advancements in AE teaching, curriculum and assessment have concentrated on enhancing test design, particularly in the lower proficiency levels, to increase communication safety in aviation. Chapter 1 sheds light on the development in global AE teaching and assessment. It explores the important dimensions of AE language in terms of diverse roles and communication demands, and highlights the significance of language training for safety and efficiency. Chapter 2 examines the difficulties of standardizing aviation language testing (Language Proficiency Requirements testing) by featuring the limited expertise in LPR test design and the demand for greater collaboration between academia and regulatory bodies. Chapter 3 explores the growth of aeronautical English listening tests for pilots, emphasizing the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) language proficiency criteria. It highlights the significance of defining the test construct to accurately assess listening abilities in radiotelephony communications, considering both language skills and contextual factors.

In the following four chapters, diverse teaching methods, especially role play and task-based approaches, have been carried out to improve the authentic communication skills of aviation professionals. Chapter 4 discusses the application of role play in aviation language training and assessment, emphasizing its effectiveness in promoting communicative language skills. Despite its proven benefits in language teaching, the implementation of role play in aviation contexts remains under-investigated and under-utilized. Chapter 5 examines the challenges and recent advances in developing AE assessments, particularly for beginner-level

learners. It highlights the lack of standardized tools for lower proficiency levels and underscores the need for effective placement assessments that can support AE learners at different stages of development. Chapter 6 presents the difficulties of teaching AE, highlighting the complexity of language proficiency in the safety and communication setting. It focuses on the criteria for teaching practices that go beyond grammar, integrating authentic scenarios with cultural, technical, and procedural factors. Chapter 7 sheds light on the demand for certified professional growth for AE teachers, featuring the importance of languages for specific purposes (LSP) in aviation. It highlights the importance of contextualizing language learning in the authentic aviation activities for effective communication and safety.

From Chapter 8 to Chapter 10, the authors show how the growing global need for qualified professionals has increased the demand for AE training that meets international communication standards. Chapter 8 explores the application of politeness markers in aviation communication, focusing on how the language of radiotelephony guarantees clarity and safety. It centers on the standard phraseology and deviations in unfamiliar contexts with a focus on the accuracy in aviation language training. Chapter 9 delves into task-based explorations for flight training language standards, addressing the significance of English for safety practices. It identifies the intricacies among pre-service pilots to understand academic and field-oriented English registers, featuring the demand for complete English language proficiency assessments. Chapter 10 examines the increasing need for qualified professionals and English training, as well as the importance of raising learner awareness in AE to ensure safety and effective practices in the aviation industry.

From Chapter 11 to Chapter 13, the volume highlights research initiatives such as Brazil's GEIA group that have made a significant contribution to enhancing the AE teaching and practice. Chapter 11 discusses the benefits of collaborative approaches to English training with a focus on Brazil's expanding aviation industry. It underscores the need for stronger partnerships to improve the English proficiency of air traffic control officers, given the country's linguistic and operational complexities. Chapter 12 examines the use of corpora in teaching English for aviation maintenance and emphasizes the crucial role of English for specific purposes (ESP). It demonstrates the value of using language instruction to ensure the aviation-specific language criteria of learners, addressing vocabulary, grammar, and professional communication in aviation maintenance. Chapter 13 delves into GEIA's efforts to strengthen mutual practices between pilots and air traffic controllers, supported by Brazil's Department of Airspace Control. It also highlights GEIA's international reputation for promoting research and training in aeronautical English.

One notable strength of this book is its comprehensive coverage of the various dimensions of Aviation English. The volume addresses different topics, such as language proficiency requirements, the importance of English in aviation safety, language testing, and pedagogical strategies. This holistic approach allows readers to understand the complex relationship between language and the aviation industry.

For instance, Chapter 13 emphasizes the work of GEIA, a Brazilian research group that has greatly contributed to improving language proficiency in aviation. It offers an in-depth analysis of how local research efforts can impact global standards in aviation language proficiency, making the chapter a valuable teaching and learning resource for both practitioners and researchers. Similarly, Chapter 9, which focuses on task-based needs analysis for flight training language proficiency, provides important insights into how language proficiency influences flight training. By bridging the gap between academic English and the highly specialized communication required in aviation, the book offers a comprehensive understanding of the language needs of pre-service pilots.

Another important strength of the book lies in its focus on empirical research and data-driven perspectives. The chapters that address language testing and training practices offer evidence-based strategies for aviation professionals to deal with the actual difficulties. Chapter 7, for example, reports on the crucial role of establishing a professional development framework for aviation English instructors based on the ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements (LPRs). These evidence-based frameworks provide actionable strategies that can be used in authentic settings, combining theoretical knowledge and real-world applications for industry practitioners. Moreover, the empirical perspectives shown in Chapter 6 on teaching practices for pilots and air traffic controllers illustrate how effective communication skills can be developed in authentic aviation settings. The research-backed teaching methods reported in this chapter provide potential approaches that can be directly used in aviation language training programs.

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Last but not least, the book also succeeds in offering a global perspective while recognizing the crucial role of local settings in aviation language teaching and testing. Chapter 11 examines the unique difficulties Brazil faces in ensuring English proficiency among its aviation workforce. It discusses localized solutions, including partnerships between military organizations and universities, tailored to discuss the particular needs of Brazil's aviation sector. This global-local incorporation expands the book by acknowledging the various settings in which aviation English training and testing take place, and emphasizes how such localized efforts can contribute to the global standardization of aviation language proficiency. This aspect of the book confirms the idea that effective aviation communication requires both global standards and local solutions to respond to the regional needs and challenges.

Although the book makes a valuable contribution to the field, two areas could be further strengthened to improve its applicability. Firstly, its limited global scope may overlook the unique language difficulties faced by aviation professionals in specific regions (e.g., Africa, Southeast Asia, and parts of the Middle East), where cultural and educational contexts differ significantly. The book could benefit from wider regional insights and case studies that emphasize how aviation English programs are adapted to local settings. Secondly, the book pays insufficient attention to the specific difficulties faced by non-native English speakers in aviation.

Non-native learners often struggle with fluency, pronunciation, and understanding aviation-specific jargon, particularly in high-pressure contexts. A more in-depth exploration of how these learners can be supported, both in terms of teaching strategies and assessment methods, would be valuable. Addressing these gaps would make the book more comprehensive and relevant to a wider range of aviation professionals and educators globally.

Taken together, the book provides a rich, timely, and multifaceted exploration of AE, emphasizing both the theoretical and authentic dimensions of English teaching, assessment, and use within the sector. The editors and contributors provide a thorough examination of key topics, combining practical teaching methodologies with global perspectives, making this volume a valuable resource for researchers and practitioners alike. Moreover, by linking language proficiency with safety, the book underscores the critical role of effective communication in aviation, contributing to the ongoing development of AE training and assessment worldwide.

[Review submitted 18 Apr 2025]

[Revised version received 31 Oct 2025]

[Accepted for publication 3 Nov 2025]

Reviewed by **HUU-CHANH NGUYEN**

University of Health Sciences

Viet Nam National University Ho Chi Minh City

Viet Nam

nguyenhuuchanh06@gmail.com

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