

IN THE BEGINNING

It was all the fault of the LSP (Languages for Special Purposes) conference in Bordeaux in 1983.

I attended the IVth European Symposium on LSP entitled "Today's Provision for Tomorrow's Needs" held at the University of Bordeaux. My friend and colleague Joan Bellec and I were teaching aviation English so I spoke on the subject "Teaching Radiotelephony". I fully expected to meet up with some kindred spirits in Bordeaux. But no, I was disappointed, not a single soul.

The only topic related in any way to aviation English on the programme was Edward Johnson of Wolfson College, Cambridge, speaking on "Seaspeak: an example of the use of computer techniques in linguistic research".

This was a felicitous meeting as it led to the sister of Seaspeak, "Airspeak".

But where were all the aviation English teachers hiding?

We knew they existed, we just had to get them to come out, come out from where-ever they were.

So we decided to organise an event on Aviation English Teaching ourselves.

Joan Bellec and I worked for the Centre de Linguistique Appliquée (Centre of Applied Linguistics - CLA) of the University of Franche Comté, Besançon, France teaching English to pilots and flight engineers in Paris for the French domestic airline, Air Inter.

Air Inter provided the venue, coffee breaks and lunch for our first meeting in their training centre near Paris Orly Airport.

We wrote to all the places in France where we thought there would be interest in our first Aviation English Teaching Forum and we were pleased to welcome 60 participants on the 24th of March 1984.

The programme opened with brainstorming in subgroups "What is Aviation English?" and the Forum lasted one day.

Encouraged by this success, we organised a second Forum in March 1985, lasting 2 days on the theme "Teaching and Technical Expertise".

Awareness of the importance of English in aviation was increasing.

ICAO recommendations for a new phraseology were implemented in France in January 1985. The French civil aviation authority (Direction Générale de l'Aviation Civile –D.G.A.C) set up an aural proficiency examination in English for those taking their line pilots' exam and English language testing became part of recruitment interviews for pilots of French airlines.

There were 53 participants at the second forum, including 8 specialists from various different professions in airlines and the aeronautic industry and English language teachers mainly from France, but also a few from other countries: Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Great Britain.

The theme of the two day programme of the third Forum was "Language Standardisation in Aviation" and the venue was the brand new Air Inter head office at Orly for the first day and the second day, which was a Saturday, we repaired to the ENAC (Ecole Nationale de L'Aviation Civile) examination centre building across the road. .

Probably due to the rising interest in English language proficiency in aviation, we became rather busy in the following years and the CLA team in Orly was joined by Ann Dufaux and Geraldine Vine.

Air Inter centralised their English language training in the new Orly HQ with an ambitious self-access computer-equipped language training centre called "Espace Langues".

The CLA team continued to teach face to face specialised aviation English for pilots, flight engineers and also courses for cabin crew.

It became clear to us that it would be useful to have a more official status as an organisation. Philip Shawcross also worked with Air Inter teaching mechanics and technical ground staff and along with Philip we decided to form an aviation English association under French law and so on 12th November 1991 the International Aviation English Association (IAEA) was inaugurated, with me as President and Philip as Vice President.

IAEA formalised the link with the CLA of Besançon with an agreement of cooperation. Here are a couple of extracts from this document:

Article 1:

Les deux parties contractantes envisagent une coopération dans le domaine de l'anglais aéronautique civil comme langue de spécialité, afin d'établir un lien permanent entre enseignants, chercheurs et professionnels dans ce domaine »

(The two signatories of this contract plan to cooperate in the specialism of aviation English in order to create a permanent link between teachers, researchers and aviation professionals.)

Article 2.2

Les deux partenaires s'engagent à développer:

les possibilités de rencontres entre les formateurs et les professionnels dans le cadre de séminaires et colloques

(The two partners agree to develop:

possibilities for meetings between language trainers and aviation professionals at seminars and Forums)

Later that month the 4th International Aviation English Forum entitled "Aviation English Standards" was held in a hotel which had conference facilities, situated just on the edge of the South of Paris, at Porte d'Italie.

The CLA and the local Besançon authorities for Franche Comté used the Forum to showcase their local produce – wines, cheeses, sausages, patés just the thing for a great aperitif at the end of the first day. I don't think we needed any dinner after that!

There were 80 participants, plus spouses whom we catered for with guided tours of Paris sites.

It was useful to have events on Friday and Saturday, thus allowing people Sunday for a bit of leisure before returning home.

This time we held the first AGM of the IAEA on the Sunday morning.

This was also the first time that a professionally printed version of Forum report was published thanks to the CLA in Besançon.

NEWSLETTER

In these days gone past computers were in their infancy – remember the code we had to type in for the first programmes, and the French telephone computer, Minitel? There was no Internet yet.

So Philip created the IAEA Newsletter. Edition 1 appeared in February 1993. Philip edited the first 5 issues, William Hope-Ross the next two, and then Jim Jenkin number 8. These Newsletters carried reports of the association events which had taken place as well as other articles.

(The Newsletters with event reports can be seen on the Events Archive on this site.)

MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership at first cost 150 French francs and entitled members to:

- A copy of each issue of the Newsletter
- Contribute to the Newsletter
- Attend all conferences, Seminars and Workshops (each event had different registration fees on top of the membership fee)

In 1993 the AGM agreed to raise the membership fee to 200 French francs.

In 1996 the AGM agreed to get a credit card for the Bank account, and to open a savings account at the same bank.

In 1994 we had 45 members and in 1996 there were 56.

NEW VENUES

In May 1993 we held our first event outside France, in Prague, and subsequently went to Helsinki, Bournemouth, Warsaw and Luxemburg.

NEW NAME

It took us some time to get round to fixing the name. IAEA was also used by the International Atomic Energy Association which had an increasingly higher profile in Europe as more atomic energy power stations were being built against a backdrop of local reticence. So we decided to add the word “civil” to our name, not with any wish to exclude the military, but merely to have a more exclusive name.

In the October 11th 2003 edition of the Journal Officiel de la Republique Francaise, under “Modifications”, paragraph 1743, we were re-baptised the International Civil Aviation English Association, the ICAEA for short, thus disassociating ourselves from all atomic activity.

NEW BUREAU MEMBERS

In 2003 Bozena Slawinska and Elizabeth Mathews became Vice Presidents, I was still President and Treasurer, and Philip was General Secretary and Vice President.

NEW PRESIDENT

At the Cambridge event in 2007 I resigned and Philip became President.

Fiona Robertson

ICAEA Honorary President