

Changing Perspectives on Aviation English Training
University of Warsaw, June 25th & 26th 2015

Report on proceedings

Introduction:

Following our last European event in Paris in 2013 ICAEA was invited by Dr. Anna Borowska of the Aviation Communication Research Centre (ACRC) of the the University of Warsaw to organize an event in Warsaw. ICAEA accepted this offer and Adrian Enright (ICAEA Vice-President) and Anna Borowska worked together to organize “Changing Perspectives on Aviation English Training”. Planning got underway in earnest in November 2014 and by the end of January we had an almost complete programme and a talented list of speakers. During this period (November – February) the ICAEA website was severely hacked causing us a lot of frustration and most probably a loss of potential registrations for Warsaw in that ultimately we received a total of only 47 registrations. On the more positive side these did come from 19 countries from across the globe, from New Zealand to Brazil. There were 5 ‘no shows’.

5 students from the university assisted during the event and we are grateful for their help and active participation. Our special thanks to August Borowski who took all the photographs. We also thank Bozena Slawinska and Fiona Robertson (both ICAEA) who provided much needed support.

Proceedings:

This ICAEA event followed our preferred format of morning presentations followed by the speakers moderating afternoon workshop sessions for groups of about 20. This provides maximum interaction for all participants and encourages debate. The event programme is available on this web page.

The speakers’ presentations, list of participants and some photographs are also displayed on the web page.

Comments from speakers

“It was a good event and you did a great job running things. I know it's a lot of work behind the scenes - thanks for doing such a great job of keeping ICAEA on the road.”

“I thought the conference went well and I enjoyed meeting up with some new and (metaphorically) old faces too!”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the forum, and agree that despite numbers being down it was a successful conference. I love being able to participate and chat with and learn from fellow attendees, so the low attendance was not an issue for me. As you said, quality, not quantity.”

“Yes, I was expecting more participants. One reason could be the maturity of the Europe aviation sector where the need for English language training may not be as great as we see with our clients in Asia and Latin America.

I found the venue for the presentations quite challenging which meant that my presentation was not as engaging as I would have liked. I did not see the hand-held microphone and thought I needed to be “tethered” to the podium. That could be one reason that I was able to keep the time:-). I would have liked to have had more time for the workshop. It seemed as if we just got started and then it was time to end. I would have also liked to have seen a break between each workshop. I believe it was confusing for the participants with two unrelated workshops back to back. “

“It is my great pleasure to be part of the wonderful community of aviation English educators. And thank you for your kind and encouraging attitude to everyone.”

A survey has been distributed (04.07.15) to participants to the Warsaw event and when we have feedback we will make additional comment. In the meantime we have identified

Things that went well:

- early recruitment and commitment of speakers (January 2015) meant that an almost complete programme was available four months in advance,
- we introduced an Early-bird system of payment to which about 50% subscribed. This allows us to have a more accurate estimate of attendance and assists planning,
- our event format of morning presentations and afternoon workshops as an extension of the presentations worked well again and seems to be appreciated by participants,
- effective time-keeping by speakers and workshop moderators avoided overruns and short breaks,
- interaction in discussion and panel sessions by the participants (the smaller numbers helped here to create a more intimate atmosphere),
- ICAEA sponsored a reception at the end of the first day and also the coffee breaks.

Areas for improvement:

- improve efforts to attract exhibitors. Not a must for an event but it is an opportunity for those involved in selling and producing teaching materials for example to showcase their products to a specialist audience,
- more time for the workshop sessions e.g. 45 minutes instead of the allotted 30 minutes as some felt time here was too short,
- although only 4 people attended both Istanbul and Warsaw events (just 6 weeks between the two) ICAEA should think in the future to plan more time between events that are geographically close even though the topics were not the same. Note: sometimes it is at the request of the host and/or availability of facilities that dictate the timing of events.

Conclusion:

Down on numbers but retaining quality of presentation and discussion. As one commentator noted “the need for English language training (in Europe) may not be as great as we see with our clients in Asia and Latin America.” Certainly proficiency in aviation English in Europe is at a generally high level compared to other regions but this is no excuse for complacency and hopefully our participants, no matter how experienced they are, will have taken away new ideas and have made new friends in the aviation English community.

ICAEA is committed to promoting development and understanding of the use and effective application of English in aviation.

Adrian Enright
ICAEA Vice-President

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