



International Civil Aviation Organization

**WORKING PAPER**

A41-WP/308

TE/123

1/8/22

**(Information paper)**

**English only**

**ASSEMBLY — 41ST SESSION**

**TECHNICAL COMMISSION**

**Agenda Item 33: Other issues to be considered by the Technical Commission**

**CONSIDERING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (ICC) IN PLACE OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (CC)**

(Presented by Iran (Islamic Republic of))

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The current working paper invites the 41st Assembly of ICAO to consider the pivotal importance of ICC in aviation communication training as well as language proficiency requirements. It argues that ICC is far more important than CC which pinpoints interrelations embedded in language, thought and culture and underscores that the required competency in aviation communication should not only take linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic components into account but also (inter) cultural aspects of communication which would ultimately prevent misunderstanding in communication and advance communication teaching and learning methods.

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to Strategic Objectives on Safety
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Not applicable
<i>References:</i>	Doc 9835, <i>Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements</i> Canale & Swain (1980) Hofstede (1980) Fantini (2005) Lussier et al. (2007) Hazrati (2015)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 As a framework, ICAO has proposed communicative language teaching (CLT) focusing on communicative competence as a central concept to accentuate aviation frontlines (Pilots-ATCOs) ability to understand and use language appropriately in operational environments and presented language proficiency requirements (LPRs) as an international benchmark to assess the level of language proficiency. *Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language proficiency Requirements* (Doc 9835 2004) stipulates that based on communicative competence model, the LPRs rubric comprises six skills as criteria inter alia:

- 1) vocabulary;
- 2) grammar/ structure;
- 3) pronunciation/ accent;
- 4) fluency;
- 5) comprehension; and
- 6) Interaction.

1.2 The skills are assessed on a rating scale from 1 to 6 in a holistic fashion. According to Doc 9835 (2010), at least level 4 should be achieved by the applicants in the radiotelephony context in order to be considered qualified.

1.3 According to the paragraph 2.3.2.1 of Doc 9835 (2010), the definition of “communicative competence” has been presented by applied linguists in the 1980s, which implies that “communicative competence” contains linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences.

1.4 Doc 9835 (paragraph 2.3.2.2) confirms that linguistic competence refers to meaningful application of the linguistic features of a specific language. It can be divided into four distinct subskills including:

- a) lexical (single words, fixed expressions);
- b) grammatical (rules of syntax, morphology);
- c) semantic (meanings, meaning relationships); and
- d) phonological (sounds, syllable structure, sentence stress, rhythm, intonation).”

1.5 Paragraph 2.3.2.3 in Doc 9835 (2010) states that sociolinguistic competence encompasses comprehending social context in which the language is being used. This involves being sensitive to or being able to make appropriate use of markers of social relations, politeness conventions, register differences, dialect and accent.

1.6 Based on paragraph 2.3.2.4 in Doc 9835 (2010), Pragmatic competence refers to a number of skills used to make or give meaning to language in a given situation or context.

## 2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The notion of Communicative Competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) is composed of four sub-competencies: 1) grammatical competence, 2) sociolinguistic competence, 3) discourse competence and 4) strategic competence.

2.2 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) has been defined as the ability to communicate appropriately and effectively in diverse cultural contexts, which entails complex of skills to perform when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from the others. It has been set up on but is not identical to “Communicative Competence” plus “Cultural Awareness” (Fantini, 2005).

2.3 According to Byram (1997), ICC depends upon certain attitudes, knowledge and skills in addition to linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence. It covers Cognitive, behavioural and affective domains in communication (Lussier et al. 2007).

2.4 In an accident on August 2, 1976, a Boeing 707 cargo flight departed Tehran to Seoul. But after a while due to a wrong turn collided with the mountain. “Deviation from Standard Instrument Departure (SID) Chart and drifting to the right instead of left” was recognized as the reason of accident.

The transcription of the conversation between air traffic controller and Korean pilot indicates how the accident happened as follows:

ATC -PILOT: “follow SID11”

PILOT- ATC: “What is SID11?”

ATC - Pilot: “Standard Instrument Departure11”

Pilot action: Silence

2.5 Despite the fact that the pilot was aware that his message was not received by ATC, he did not ask for more information (Hazrati, 2015). According to Hofstede (1980), Korea is located in a “high power distance” area, which implies the pilot must have treated himself as subordinate and hence did not express his doubt, not asking for clarification. This example underlines the importance of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) while it is not one of the scoring criteria in ICAO LPR.

## 3. CONCLUSION

3.1 Since language, culture and cognition are inextricably tied up with each other and aviation communication may involve aviators from different cultural backgrounds, it would be sensible to take a comprehensive approach in aviation communication training and assessment. In this regard:

- a) ICAO is suggested to consider Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in place of Communicative Competence (CC) in Doc 9835, *Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language proficiency Requirements*;

b) ICAO is suggested to add “Intercultural Sensitivity” as the seventh substantial skill to the current six language skill areas specified in the ICAO Rating Scale and Holistic Descriptors encompassing:

- 1) pronunciation;
- 2) structure;
- 3) vocabulary;
- 4) fluency;
- 5) comprehension; and
- 6) interactions.

— END —