

# TEST OF ENGLISH FOR AVIATION (TOEFA)

*Mr. William Aranda*  
*Aeronautical Training Expert*  
*Corporación Peruana de Aeropuertos y Aviación Comercial (CORPAC S.A.) - Peru*

## **Introduction**

The Test of English for Aviation (TOEFA) has been developed to measure the competences in the English language of Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers and Aeronautical Station Operators, in the specific abilities of speaking and understanding this foreign language and according to the parameters settled down in the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) rating scale for language proficiency and their holistic descriptors.

The previously mentioned aeronautical personnel, should demonstrate to the Civil Aviation Authority of the corresponding State, their ability to speak and to understand the language used for the radiotelephony communications; starting from November 27, 2003 for the case of Air Traffic Controllers and March 5, 2004 for Pilots of airplanes and helicopters.

Starting from March 5, 2008 the demonstration of these competences will be an obligatory requirement for the applicants and personnel that maintains a license of Pilot, Air Traffic Controller or Aeronautical Station Operator, as well as the respective periodic evaluations that will be carried out, according to the level reached by the one evaluated.

The minimum level of proficiency for the aeronautical personnel is the Operational Level (level 4), settled down in the ICAO Linguistic Competence Rating Scale.

Considering the importance of the aeronautical phraseology, the exam TOEFA also contemplates this aspect, for Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers and Aeronautical Station Operators.

## **Design of the Exam**

### **Objective**

The exam is designed to measure the level of proficiency of the English language, in the abilities of speaking and understanding, at an agreed minimum level, of the aeronautical personnel that take part in the radiotelephony communications, with the purpose of contributing to the security and regularity of the air traffic in the international environment in which the personnel carries out the typical functions of their professions.

For this reason, there is a special emphasis in the use of the foreign language before the operational procedures, according to the holistic descriptors pointed out in the ICAO Linguistic Competence Rating Scale; although the level of theoretical and/or practical knowledge of the English aeronautical phraseology is also evaluated.

### **Holistic descriptor 1: Pronunciation**

The evaluation is carried out by means of an interview, with open questions, so that the candidate demonstrates that he is able to make himself understood, with a dialect or accent intelligible for the aeronautical radio-communications. The pronunciation, rhythm and intonation are evaluated, as well as the grade of interference with the easiness of understanding.

### **Holistic descriptor 2: Structure**

Considering that the abilities of the language that are evaluated are referred to the oral production of the English language, the practical application of the grammatical structures is evaluated, when the candidate answers to the questions formulated by the language tester, during the interview.

Consequently, the correct use of the pertinent grammatical structures is measured, as well as the structures of the sentences and the appropriate use of the functions of the language, according to the scenario in which they are used.

### **Holistic descriptor 3: Vocabulary**

This parameter is also evaluated through the interview. The extent and precision of the vocabulary used by the candidate is measured, with the purpose of communicating efficiently about the variety of familiar and not familiar topics that are used during the communication with the language tester. Also, it is evaluated the capacity of the candidate to use the appropriate vocabulary to manage successfully in unexpected circumstances.

### **Holistic descriptor 4: Fluency**

The fluency of the candidate to communicate is evaluated through the oral interactions with the tester, as well as the dialogues that are generated after listening to the audio cassettes. It is also evaluated the capacity of the candidate to make himself understood with detail and with natural fluency, as well as the stylistic effects, accent and conjunctions used to achieve an effective communication, about familiar, not familiar or unexpected situations.

### **Holistic descriptor 5: Understanding**

The candidates listen to dialogues and real communications of native speakers of the English language, from audio cassettes, and they explain to the language tester, using the foreign language, the scenario or situation that he/she has just listened to; with the purpose of measuring their grade of understanding of the language and of the linguistic variants (dialects and accents) or tones that are intelligible for the international community of aeronautical users.

During the oral interaction that takes place between the candidate and the tester, after listening the tape, it is still evaluated the pronunciation, structure, vocabulary and fluency descriptors, to verify the competences and to obtain a more precise information about them.

### **Holistic describer 6: Interactions**

It is evaluated the capacity of the candidate to interact with easiness in unexpected situations, as well as its easiness to capture verbal and not verbal indications and to respond appropriately to them, by means of immediate, appropriate and informative answers that allow him to manage the relationship speaker/receiver efficiently, verifying, confirming or clarifying appropriately, when it becomes necessary.

The language tester presents situations and unexpected scenarios to verify the consistency and coherence of the answers of the candidate, according to the outlined scenario, what also allows the tester to confirm the capacity of the understanding of the candidate and his ability to interact appropriately.

## **Theoretical Evaluation of Aeronautical Phraseology**

The candidates (Pilots, Air Traffic Controllers and Aeronautical Station Operators) take a written test, with official aeronautical terminology that is used in the aeronautical radio-communications, with the purpose of measuring their grade of knowledge of aeronautical technical English.

The questions, of short-answer type items, correspond to instructions or terminology used by the Air Traffic Control Services and they are formulated in Spanish so that the candidates respond to them appropriately in English. Some definitions are also included in English that are answered by means of multiple-choice questions.

### **Practical evaluation of Aeronautical Phraseology**

This evaluation is only for Pilots and consists on the dictation of four Air Traffic Control clearances, using the Aeronautical English Phraseology, that are copied by the candidates and then read back immediately, one by one, to measure the accuracy of the read backs and the practical application of the knowledge and necessary tools for an efficient performance in the aeronautical radio-communications in English.

The clearances used are adapted from published Standard Instrument Departures Standard Arrivals or Route clearances, so pilots are familiar with the names of locations, radio navigation aids, routes or any other clearance element, according to the location where the examination is performed.

### **Scope and Depth of the TOEFA Exam**

The scope and depth of the TOEFA exam is in accordance with that specified by the requirements of Linguistic Competence of ICAO.

For this reason, the scope of the evaluation is given by those "abilities to speak and to understand" that are specified in the Annex 1: Licenses to Personnel.

The depth of the evaluation is defined by the Holistic Descriptors and the Standards for the Operational Level 4 of the ICAO Linguistic Competence Rating Scale.

Therefore, the candidates will demonstrate that they:

- a) communicate effectively in voice-only (telephone/ radiotelephone) and in face-to-face situations;
- b) communicate on common, concrete and work-related topics with accuracy and clarity;
- c) use appropriate communicative strategies for the exchange of messages and to recognize and to solve misunderstandings, in a general or work-related context;
- d) manage successfully and with relative easiness the linguistic challenges presented by a complication or unexpected situation that occurs within the context of a routine work situation or communicative task with which they are familiar; and
- e) use a dialect or accent that is intelligible for the aeronautical community.

### **Demonstration of Competences**

The aeronautical personnel will demonstrate their competences in the English language for aeronautical communications, according to that specified in the amendments to the Annex 1: Licenses to Personnel, of ICAO, agreed in the Council of Air Navigation on March 5, 2003.

Consequently, the required minimum level is the one that corresponds to the Operational Level (level 4) of the ICAO Linguistic Competence Rating Scale. The TOEFA exam has been designed to evaluate the accomplishment of the ICAO levels of proficiency.

### **Scoring of the TOEFA Exam**

It is required for candidates to obtain as minimum the level 4 **in all** the holistic descriptors of the ICAO Linguistic Competence Rating Scale to pass the evaluation satisfactorily.

This is determined based on the performance of the candidates during the interview with the language tester, as well as their level of understanding of the material used to evaluate their level of understanding of the foreign language, based on that specified in each one of the levels of the ICAO Linguistic Competence Rating Scale and their holistic descriptors.

For the theoretical evaluation of Aeronautical English Phraseology in English the minimum grade to pass is 80 over a possible total of 100 points.

The minimum passing grade of the practical evaluation of Aeronautical English Phraseology, for Pilots, is also 80 over a possible total of 100 points. For each error made in the read back of the Air Traffic Control clearances, the candidate is penalized with two points; that is to say, he should not make more than 10 errors to obtain a satisfactory grade.

### **Duration of the TOEFA Exam**

The oral interview, including the part of understanding, by means of cassettes of audio, has an average duration of 20 minutes and is carried out in an individual way.

The theoretical evaluation of Aeronautical English Phraseology lasts 30 minutes as maximum and it can be administered individually or in groups.

The practical evaluation of ATC clearances is only administered for Pilots, and has an approximate duration of 10 minutes.

### **Availability of the TOEFA Exam**

The TOEFA Exam is copyrighted and is administered by its author, Mr. William Aranda Arrese, with who should communicate the Civil Aviation Authorities and organizations that want to apply it to the aeronautical personnel that should demonstrate the accomplishment of the ICAO Linguistic Competence requirements.

The TOEFA exam can also be applied with the purpose of evaluation of results of a training process that has as objective to provide the necessary competences for an efficient performance in the aeronautical communications, when the English language is used for this purpose.

### **Person of Contact**

To obtain further information about the Exam TOEFA, contact:

**Mr. William Aranda Arrese**

Aeronautical Training Expert

Telefax: (511) 414-1431

Phone: (511) 626-1149

Mobile: (511) 9707-4067

e-mail: waranda@corpac.gob.pe; waranda59@hotmail.com

-----