

Applied Linguistics has really taken off

Prof. Markus Bieswanger, Universität Bayreuth

Ever since the term *Applied Linguistics* was first used in the title of a journal about seven decades ago, it has meant many things to many people. To this day, Applied Linguistics is notoriously hard to define and a very dynamic field that keeps expanding and changing rapidly. The talk will first address the development of the field from its very beginnings to today and then move on to focus on concrete applied linguistic work on the use of English in aviation contexts. There are few pilots not familiar with the adage “aviate – navigate – communicate” and while it indicates that flying the plane is the number one priority, it also clearly lists communication among the three main tasks any pilot has to handle successfully. In most international flying, the use of what is often referred to as “Aviation English” (cf., e.g., Estival, Farris & Molesworth 2016) is recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and standard practice. It is important to note in this context, however, that Aviation English actually consists of two different specialized registers (cf. Bieswanger 2016). Responding to growing international air travel after the Second World War and in reaction to several accidents and incidents at least partly caused by controller-pilot miscommunication (cf., e.g., Cushing 1994; Jones 2003; Barshi & Farris 2013), the International Civil Aviation Organization developed a set of standards and recommended practices (SARPs) concerning language use in air traffic control communication (cf. ICAO 2007a; ICAO 2007b; ICAO 2016), which has been adopted by most countries world-wide and is referred to as “ICAO standardized phraseology” (ICAO 2016:5-1; Aviation English 1). Standardized phraseology, however, cannot cover every conceivable situation and while all stakeholders in air traffic control communication are encouraged to follow the SARPs whenever possible (cf. ICAO 2016:5-1; Prinzo et al. 2010:15f), switching to Aviation English 2, i.e. what the ICAO terms plain language, defined as “[t]he spontaneous, creative and non-coded use of a given natural language” (ICAO 2010:x), is occasionally inevitable. Based on material from authentic air traffic control communication, we will identify the various challenges the two types of Aviation English pose to different participants in air traffic control communication and demonstrate how Applied Linguistics can and should continue to play an important role in making aviation even safer by helping to constantly develop and improve air traffic control communication.

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