AC FCL-2(4)
1 July 2025

CAAS
Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore

Advisory Circular

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

1. **GENERAL.** Pursuant to paragraph 88B of the Air Navigation Order, the Director-General of the Civil Aviation Authority (DGCA) may, from time to time, issue advisory circulars (ACs) on any aspect of safety in civil aviation. This AC contains information about standards, practices and procedures acceptable to CAAS. The revision number of the AC is indicated in parenthesis in the suffix of the AC number.

2. **PURPOSE.** This AC is issued to inform flight crew on the ICAO language proficiency requirements and to provide guidance to affected flight crew on how to comply with these requirements.

3. **APPLICABILITY.** This AC applies to all applicants and holders of Singapore professional pilot licence, private pilot licence (excluding those holding restricted private pilot licence) and holders of a foreign pilot licence who wish to convert to a Singapore equivalent.

4. **CANCELLATION.** This AC supersedes AC FCL-2(3) dated 6 March 2020. This revision clarifies English Language Proficiency assessment for the application of a Singapore licence in paragraph 3, including foreign pilot licence conversion.

5. **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This AC is effective from 1 July 2025.

6. **REFERENCES.** ICAO Annex I (Personnel Licensing) and ICAO Doc 9835, Manual for the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements.

7 **INTRODUCTION.** In line with the adoption of Amendment 164 to ICAO Annex 1 on 27 November 2003, CAAS implemented the language proficiency requirement for pilots. This stipulates that all holders of a Singapore professional/ private pilot licence shall demonstrate the ability to speak and understand the language used for radiotelephony communications in accordance with the ICAO holistic descriptors and language proficiency rating scale (at Level 4 or above).

The assessment of a person's language proficiency level is in accordance with a set of holistic descriptors listed in Appendix 1 to ICAO Annex 1, and a rating scale contained in Attachment A to ICAO Annex 1. The rating scale comprises six levels of language proficiency ranging from Pre-elementary (Level 1) to Expert (Level 6) across six areas of linguistic description: pronunciation, structure, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension and interactions. (Refer to Appendix 1 for the ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale).

8   MINIMUM LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVEL.

8.1   A holder of a Singapore private pilot or professional pilot licence (as required by SASP-1 and SASP-2) must demonstrate <u>at least</u> Operational Level (Level 4) proficiency in the ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale (Refer to <u>Appendix 1</u>) in the use of English language for radiotelephony communications in order to conduct international operations.

8.2   A holder of a Singapore pilot licence whose language proficiency is certified below Operational Level (Level 4) invalidates his/her pilot licence.

9   LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ASSESSMENT.

9.1   There are two types of assessment for English Language Proficiency (ELP):

(a)   Language Screening to assess if a candidate has demonstrated Level 6 proficiency and therefore need not undergo the AECT in sub-paragraph (b); and

(b)   Aviation English Competency Test (AECT) to determine a candidate's ELP levels.

9.2   Language Screening may be conducted on a candidate prior to his/her application for:

(a)   the grant of an initial Singapore pilot licence; or

(b)   a Singapore pilot licence through the conversion of a foreign pilot licence that has been endorsed with a Level 6 proficiency.

9.3   The following persons will need to undergo the AECT:

(a)   An applicant who was identified during the Language Screening to undergo the AECT;

(b)   An applicant for a Singapore pilot licence through the conversion of a foreign pilot licence that has been endorsed with a ELP lower than Level 6; and

(c)   A Singapore pilot licence holder who has to undergo re-assessment in accordance with paragraph 9.4.

9.4   A licence holder who attains language proficiency below the Expert Level (Level 6) would need to be re-assessed:

(a)   at least once every six years if the holder has attained ELP of Level 5; or

(b)   at least once every three years if the holder has attained ELP of Level 4.

10   CONDUCT OF LANGUAGE SCREENING.

10.1   The screening tool consists of 3 parts, namely observation of the candidate's language proficiency in radiotelephony communications and in normal conversation, as well as assessment of his language background.

10.2   An Authorised Flight Examiner (AFE), who has been authorised to conduct language screening, will observe the candidate's language proficiency in radiotelephony communications and normal conversation and assess the candidate for Level 6 proficiency in the six areas. Such observations may take place when the candidate undergoes a flight test or similar engagements with the AFE.

10.3   CAAS may, if there are concerns about the accuracy of screening, require a person who had been screened by an AFE to undertake the AECT for the purpose of re-assessing his proficiency.

11   CONDUCT OF AECT.

11.1   The AECT is conducted through an interview (of approximately 20 minutes) to determine the language proficiency level of the candidate. The test is conducted by two language testers from an authorised testing centre. A candidate who is required or intend to take the AECT are to contact Regional English Language Centre, exams@relc.org.sg, to make arrangements to take the test. The fees for AECT will be determined by the authorised test centre.

11.2   The test comprises the following three parts:

Part 1: Introduction (5 minutes)
In this segment, the candidate will be asked a few questions about himself and work. The aims are to establish rapport with the candidate and to serve as a warm-up for the next two segments.

Part 2: Situational Talk – Natural Language (10 minutes)
In this segment, the candidate would be asked to explain in natural language how he would react in a particular situation, such as a medical emergency during flight, or engine fire prior to descent. The tester will engage the candidate by posing the selected situation and may prompt the candidate, if necessary, during the discussion. The aim is to test the candidate's use of natural language rather than to seek a correct response to the given situation.

Part 3: Closing (5 minutes)
In the final segment, the tester will engage the candidate on an aviation-related topic before bringing the interview to an end. The focus of this segment is on the use of natural language.

11.3   During the test, the candidate will be assessed in the following six areas:

(a)   Pronunciation (includes an accent that is internationally intelligible);

(b)   Structure (relevant grammatical structures and sentence patterns);

(c)   Vocabulary (a wide range of vocabulary which is appropriate to the situation);

(d)   Fluency (includes spontaneity and appropriate speed of delivery);

(e)   Comprehension (includes ability to listen and understand others); and

(f)   Interactions (includes ability to manage the speaker-listener relationship effectively).

11.4   The overall language proficiency is based on the level reached in the candidate's weakest area. Failure to comply with descriptors in one category at a particular level indicates that the next lower proficiency level will be awarded. For instance, a candidate who is rated Level 4 for the category of Pronunciation but is rated Level 5 for all other categories will be given an overall proficiency rating of Level 4. Hence an individual must demonstrate proficiency at Level 5 in all categories in order to receive a Level 5, and so on for other higher levels.

12   APPLICATION FOR ENDORSEMENT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY.

12.1   The applicant can apply for the endorsement in the Civil Aviation Personnel Licensing System (CAPELS) (https://capels.caas.gov.sg) once the AFE or Language Tester has submitted the assessment in the system.

12.2   The language proficiency level, date of assessment and date of re-test (if applicable) will be annotated on licence.

ICAO LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY RATING SCALE

1.1 Expert, extended and operational levels

LEVEL	PRONUNCIATION Assumes a dialect and/or accent intelligible to the aeronautical community.	STRUCTURE Relevant grammatical structures and sentence patterns are determined by language functions appropriate to the task.	VOCABULARY	FLUENCY	COMPREHENSION	INTERACTIONS
Expert 6	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation, though possibly influenced by the first language or regional variation, almost never interfere with ease of understanding.	Both basic and complex grammatical structures and sentence patterns are consistently well controlled.	Vocabulary range and accuracy are sufficient to communicate effectively on a wide variety of familiar and unfamiliar topics. Vocabulary is idiomatic, nuanced, and sensitive to register.	Able to speak at length with a natural, effortless flow. Varies speech flow for stylistic effect, e.g. to emphasize a point. Uses appropriate discourse markers and connectors spontaneously.	Comprehension is consistently accurate in nearly all contexts and includes comprehension of linguistic and cultural subtleties.	Interacts with ease in nearly all situations. Is sensitive to verbal and non-verbal cues and responds to them appropriately.
Extended 5	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation, though influenced by the first language or regional variation, rarely interfere with ease of understanding.	Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are consistently well controlled. Complex structures are attempted but with errors which sometimes interfere with meaning.	Vocabulary range and accuracy are sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete, and work-related topics. Paraphrases consistently and successfully. Vocabulary is sometimes idiomatic.	Able to speak at length with relative ease on familiar topics but may not vary speech flow as a stylistic device. Can make use of appropriate discourse markers or connectors.	Comprehension is accurate on common, concrete, and work-related topics and mostly accurate when the speaker is confronted with a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events. Is able to comprehend a range of speech varieties (dialect and/or accent) or registers.	Responses are immediate, appropriate, and informative. Manages the speaker/ listener relationship effectively.
Operational 4	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation but only sometimes interfere with ease of understanding.	Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns are used creatively and are usually well controlled. Errors may occur, particularly in unusual or unexpected circumstances, but rarely interfere with meaning.	Vocabulary range and accuracy are usually sufficient to communicate effectively on common, concrete, and work-related topics. Can often paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary in unusual or unexpected circumstances.	Produces stretches of language at an appropriate tempo. There may be occasional loss of fluency on transition from rehearsed or formulaic speech to spontaneous interaction, but this does not prevent effective communication. Can make limited use of discourse markers or connectors. Fillers are not distracting.	Comprehension is mostly accurate on common, concrete, and work-related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. When the speaker is confronted with a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events, comprehension may be slower or require clarification strategies.	Responses are usually immediate, appropriate, and informative. Initiates and maintains exchanges even when dealing with an unexpected turn of events. Deals adequately with apparent misunderstandings by checking, confirming, or clarifying.

Levels 1, 2 and 3 are on subsequent page.

1.2 Pre-operational, elementary and pre-elementary levels

LEVEL	PRONUNCIATION Assumes a dialect and/or accent intelligible to the aeronautical community.	STRUCTURE Relevant grammatical structures and sentence patterns are determined by language functions appropriate to the task	VOCABULARY	FLUENCY	COMPREHENSION	INTERACTIONS
			Levels 4, 5 and 6 are on preceding page.			
Pre-operational 3	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are influenced by the first language or regional variation and frequently interfere with ease of understanding.	Basic grammatical structures and sentence patterns associated with predictable situations are not always well controlled. Errors frequently interfere with meaning.	Vocabulary range and accuracy are often sufficient to communicate on common, concrete, or work-related topics, but range is limited and the word choice often inappropriate. Is often unable to paraphrase successfully when lacking vocabulary.	Produces stretches of language, but phrasing and pausing are often inappropriate. Hesitations or slowness in language processing may prevent effective communication. Fillers are sometimes distracting.	Comprehension is often accurate on common, concrete, and work-related topics when the accent or variety used is sufficiently intelligible for an international community of users. May fail to understand a linguistic or situational complication or an unexpected turn of events.	Responses are sometimes immediate, appropriate, and informative. Can initiate and maintain exchanges with reasonable ease on familiar topics and in predictable situations. Generally inadequate when dealing with an unexpected turn of events.
Elementary 2	Pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are heavily influenced by the first language or regional variation and usually interfere with ease of understanding.	Shows only limited control of a few simple memorized grammatical structures and sentence patterns.	Limited vocabulary range consisting only of isolated words and memorized phrases.	Can produce very short, isolated, memorized utterances with frequent pausing and a distracting use of fillers to search for expressions and to articulate less familiar words.	Comprehension is limited to isolated, memorized phrases when they are carefully and slowly articulated.	Response time is slow and often inappropriate. Interaction is limited to simple routine exchanges.
Pre-elementary 1	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.	Performs at a level below the Elementary level.

Note.— The Operational Level (Level 4) is the minimum required proficiency level for radiotelephony communication. Levels 1 through 3 describe Pre-elementary, Elementary, and Pre-operational levels of language proficiency; respectively, all of which describe a level of proficiency below the ICAO language proficiency requirement. Levels 5 and 6 describe Extended and Expert levels, at levels of proficiency more advanced than the minimum required Standard. As a whole, the scale will serve as benchmarks for training and testing, and in assisting candidates to attain the ICAO Operational Level (Level 4).