



Media Release

Saving lives through language

More than 2100 people have been killed in at least 10 reported plane crashes caused by miscommunication since 1976.

That equates to one life lost every week for the past 40 years.

In fact, 80 per cent of all air crash incidents occur because of human error.

Now, the study of linguistics has been applied to aviation to help reduce the prevalence of miscommunication during high stress situations.

Dr Dominique Estival, a Western Sydney University linguist, pilot and author of the book *Aviation English*, said native English speakers had a responsibility to adjust and accommodate for non- English speakers within the aviation industry.

Aviation English refers to the language that was developed for pilots and air traffic controllers.

The book offers a guide to language that could potentially save lives through better communication and understanding that results in increased aviation safety.

“Aviation communication has implications for flight safety and the training of pilots and air traffic controllers,” Dr Estival said.

“The study of aviation communication sheds light on our understanding of English, and differences between native English speakers and speakers of English as a second language in high risk situations.

“Effective communication is paramount in ensuring the success of the global aviation industry.”

Qantas flight training manager, Captain Matthew Gray, said the book offered a new age of training tools to better teach the next generation of aviators.

“During pilot training, we are taught to use the correct terminology when communicating with other aircraft and air traffic controllers,” he said.

“However, many barriers to communication exist, particularly when non-standard conditions are experienced, or when communicating with agencies where English is the second language.

“For the first time we have a book that offers the tools to successful communication and explores in detail the importance of not just what to say, but how and when to say it, taking into account all the barriers we encounter in operations.”

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