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Teaching English using Delegator Teaching Style for Aviation Cadets: An Autoethnography

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Abstract

This autoethnography explores my five-year journey of employing a delegator teaching style to instruct English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to aviation cadets in an Indonesian aviation academy. It delves into the practical application of this student-centered approach within a highly specialized and often hierarchical training environment. Through personal narratives, reflections, and an analysis of classroom dynamics, this study examines the successes, challenges, and evolution of my pedagogical practice. Furthermore, it critically investigates the connection between the delegator teaching style and the facilitation of deeper learning, characterized by critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and self-directed learning, essential for the future careers of aviation professionals. The Indonesian socio-cultural context, the unique demands of aviation English, and the inherent characteristics of the cadets are interwoven throughout the narrative to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of this pedagogical experience. This work aims to offer insights for educators in similar specialized vocational settings, particularly within the Indonesian or Southeast Asian context.

Keywords: *Autoethnography; aviation English; delegator teaching style; deeper learning; English for Specific Puspose*

INTRODUCTION

The hum of the language laboratory, the crisp uniforms of the cadets, the faint scent of jet fuel that seemed to cling to the very air of the academy - these were the sensory markers of my professional world for five exhilarating and challenging years. I was an English language instructor at a prominent aviation academy in Indonesia, tasked with equipping future aeronautical communication officers, air traffic controllers, and aircraft maintenance engineers with the precise and critical English skills necessary for their demanding careers. This is not merely a recounting of those years, but an autoethnography - a journey inward to understand my experiences, biases, and growth as an educator, specifically through the lens of adapting the delegator teaching style.

Autoethnography, as Ellis et al. (2011) and Cooper and Lilyea (2022) define it, "seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)." My "culture" is the unique intersection of English language teaching, vocational training for a high-stakes profession, and the specific socio-cultural context of Indonesia. My "personal experience" is the narrative of my evolving pedagogical approach, my trials and triumphs, and the profound impact it had on both my students and himself.

My arrival at the academy six years ago was met with a fairly traditional teaching environment. English classes, while acknowledged as crucial - given that English is the lingua franca of international aviation (Ishihara & Prado, 2021) - often defaulted to a more teacher-centric, grammar-translation method, peppered with lectures on aviation-specific vocabulary. The cadets, bright and disciplined as they were, often seemed to be

passive recipients of information (Centola, 2025). ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) Document 9835, which outlines language proficiency requirements, loomed large, and the pressure to ensure cadets met these standards was immense. Yet, I felt a disconnect. Were they truly learning to use English in dynamic, unpredictable aviation scenarios, or were they merely memorizing phrases for an exam?

This unease led me to explore alternative pedagogical styles. Grasha's (2002) work on teaching styles particularly resonated with me. My categorization - Expert, Formal Authority, Personal Model, Facilitator, and Delegator - provided a framework for understanding different approaches. The delegator teaching style, characterized by its focus on developing students' ability to function autonomously (Ahmed et al., 2021), where students work independently on projects or as part of autonomous teams, and the teacher acts as a resource person available at their request, struck me as both daunting and incredibly promising for my aviation cadets. It seemed to align with the very nature of their future professions, which demand initiative, problem-solving, and effective teamwork under pressure (Talib et al., 2025).

The initial decision to steer my teaching towards a delegator model was not taken lightly. The Indonesian educational context, while evolving, often retains deep roots in hierarchical structures in which the teacher ("*guru*") is seen as the primary source of knowledge (Heong et al., 2023). Shifting responsibility to young cadets, who were already navigating a demanding, quasi-military training regimen, felt like a risk. Would they embrace the autonomy? Would my superiors understand this deviation from more traditional methods? Could I truly foster "deeper learning" - that elusive yet critical outcome where students master core academic content, think critically, solve complex problems, communicate effectively, work collaboratively, and learn independently (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012; Xu et al., 2023)?

This autoethnography aims to answer these questions, not through detached observation, but through a reflective and analytical recounting of my experiences. It will trace my journey: the initial hesitant steps, the inevitable turbulence, the moments of clear sky and smooth flying, and the ultimate impact of this pedagogical choice. It is a story of teaching English, but it is also a story of learning – my own learning about teaching, about my students, about the complexities of cultural interface in education, and about the profound connection between empowering students and enabling them to achieve not just surface-level proficiency, but deep, applicable understanding.

The narrative will unfold chronologically, yet thematically, exploring key phases and incidents that occurred over the five-year period. In this case, I will draw upon personal journals, lesson plans, student feedback (anonymized and used with ethical consideration for their privacy), and my memories, which, as autoethnography acknowledges, are a valid and rich source of data (Adams et al., 2015; Ortiz-Vilarelle, 2021). The aim is not to present a universally applicable model, but to offer a "story of experience" (Goodall, 2000; Humberstone & Nicol, 2019) that might resonate with, and perhaps inform, other educators navigating similar complex terrains. The ultimate goal is to illuminate how the delegator teaching style, even within the structured confines of an Indonesian aviation academy, can become a powerful vehicle for fostering the deeper learning essential for those who will one day take responsibility for safety in the skies.

METHOD

This study employed a pure autoethnographic design (Ellis et. al., 2011), which is fully appropriate for examining the author's five-year subjective experience teaching English to aviation cadets using the delegator teaching style. Autoethnography enables the

researcher, as both insider and participant, to systematically analyze personal experience for broader pedagogical insights. Data were collected from three sources over the 2019–2024 period. First, personal reflective journals were written weekly every Friday immediately after teaching sessions, using a digital diary (Google Docs with timestamps). Each entry ranged from 250 to 500 words in an unstructured narrative format, focusing on classroom events, teaching decisions, emotional responses, and perceived successes or challenges. A total of 240 journal entries were produced. Second, lesson plans and teaching materials were saved monthly as PDF files; each plan included learning objectives, activities aligned with the delegator style (e.g., group discussions, peer teaching), and post-lesson handwritten annotations by the researcher. Third, written student feedback was collected at the end of each semester via an open-ended form asking: *"What did you think about the teaching style used in this class? Please share your experience."* Although autoethnography typically has no sampling frame, the student feedback component involved 87 aviation cadets (54 male, 33 female, aged 19–22) across five cohorts.

Cadets were informed that their anonymous feedback might be used for reflective research purposes. The feedback forms were deposited in a sealed box, which the researcher only accessed after final grades had been submitted to ensure no coercion. As a part of the research ethics, written informed consent was obtained from all cadets, with guaranteed anonymity and the explicit right to withdraw without any academic consequence. All data were anonymized before analysis. Data analysis followed a transparent, manual six-step procedure. First, all raw data (journals, lesson plan annotations, feedback forms) were compiled into a single Microsoft Excel workbook, with each row representing one entry (dated and labeled by source). Second, open coding was conducted manually: I read all 240 journal entries and 87 feedback forms line-by-line, assigning initial codes (e.g., "cadets resist group work," "anxiety about losing control," "pride in student autonomy"). Third, axial coding grouped related open codes into categories: for instance, "cadets resist group work" and "teacher feels frustrated" merged into "resistance to delegation." Fourth, these categories were iteratively reviewed and collapsed into four final themes: (1) From control to trust (teacher's psychological shift), (2) Cadets' hesitancy to delegate (student resistance), (3) Negotiating authority (classroom power dynamics), and (4) Pedagogical outcomes (improved speaking confidence). No software was used; all coding was manual with color-coding in Excel to ensure tactile engagement with the data. Fifth, narrative analysis was overlaid on these themes to structure the five-year experience into a chronological story, identifying turning points (e.g., the semester when a cadet led a full session). Sixth, member checking was performed by sharing the final thematic map and narrative excerpts with two former colleagues and five former cadets. They were asked: "*Do these themes and stories resonate with your memory of that classroom?*" All seven confirmed strong resonance (100% agreement), with one cadet adding, "*I remember how hard it was to take charge at first*" – a quote that reinforced Theme 2.

A separate reflexive journal (150–200 words weekly) documented my assumptions and emotional states throughout coding. This detailed audit trail ensures reproducibility: another researcher could follow the same steps (Excel compilation, manual open/axial coding, theme consolidation, member checking) and arrive at comparable findings. All results are presented chronologically with verbatim excerpts from journals and student feedback.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Taking Off: Initial Forays into the Delegator Teaching Style (Years 1-2)

The first two years of implementing the delegator teaching style were a period of intense learning, experimentation, and frequent recalibration. I was, in many ways, learning to fly a new kind of aircraft, and there were moments when I felt he was piloting through thick fog without instruments. My cadets, accustomed to more direct instruction, initially met my attempts to delegate responsibility with a mixture of confusion, apprehension, and, in some cases, passive resistance.

The Indonesian Context: Respect, Hierarchy, and the "Guru"

Understanding the Indonesian cultural context was paramount. The concept of "*Bapak-isme*" (literally "fatherism"), where subordinates looked to their superiors for guidance and decisions, is prevalent in many Indonesian institutions (Bunahri & Hermawan, 2021; Mulder, 2000). In the classroom, this often translated to students expecting the teacher to be the undisputed authority, the primary dispenser of knowledge. My early attempts to say, "*Okay, cadets, here's the problem scenario related to miscommunication between a pilot and ATC during an emergency. In your groups, research standard phraseology, identify potential points of breakdown, and propose a communication protocol to prevent this. You have two sessions. I'm here if you need me*," was often met with blank stares or hesitant questions like, "*But Sir, what is the correct answer you want us to find?*"

This wasn't a lack of intelligence or motivation on their part; it was a deeply ingrained cultural script about the roles of teacher and student. My challenge was to reframe "delegating" not as an abdication of my teaching responsibility, but as a structured way of empowering them to construct their own understanding. I had to explicitly explain the *why* behind the delegator teaching style: that in their future roles as ACOs or ATCs, they would not always have a "Sir" providing the answers. They would need to rely on their training, their critical thinking, and their team.

I remembers one particular incident in his first year. I had assigned groups to develop a short English presentation on a chosen aircraft system, explaining its function and common English terminology associated with it. Instead of diving into research, most groups spent the first session trying to elicit from I exactly what I wanted the presentation to look like, down to the number of slides and the font size. My gentle redirection - "*The ICAO guidelines for clear communication are your primary reference for language. For content, your technical manuals are key. The structure? That's for your group to decide to best convey the information clearly and accurately*" - was a slow burn. It took several such projects for them to begin to internalize that the "guidance" I offered was more about process and resources than about prescriptive answers.

Designing Delegator Activities for Aviation English

The core of the delegator teaching style lies in the nature of the tasks assigned (Othman et al., 2024). These tasks needed to be authentic, challenging, and allow for genuine student autonomy and collaboration. Given the ESP nature of the course, focusing on aviation English, the tasks had to be directly relevant to their future careers.

Scenario-Based Problem Solving

This became a cornerstone. I would present realistic aviation scenarios involving English communication: a pilot facing unexpected weather deviations needing to coordinate with ATC, a maintenance engineer needing to explain a technical fault to an international colleague, and an air traffic controller managing a congested airspace with

multiple aircraft from different linguistic backgrounds. *Delegation:* Cadets, in small groups (often mixed between pilot, ATC, and engineering streams to foster inter-professional understanding), were tasked with analyzing the scenario, identifying communication challenges, researching ICAO standard phraseology and procedures, and then role-playing effective communication strategies. My role was to provide the initial scenario, clarify linguistic ambiguities if they were truly stuck (rather than simply providing vocabulary), and facilitate post-role-play debriefings. *Early Challenges:* Initially, groups would flounder, unsure where to begin. The perceived ambiguity of finding the best solution was unsettling. I learned to scaffold more effectively in these early stages, perhaps providing a list of potential resources (e.g., specific chapters in their technical manuals, links to relevant ICAO circulars) without dictating the content they should extract.

Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Longer-term projects also lent themselves well to the delegator teaching style (Chowdhury, 2015). *Example Project:* "The International Incident Investigation". Cadets were given a fictionalized air incident report (based on real-world examples, with names and locations changed). Their task, over several weeks, was to: (1) analyze the English language communication transcripts (which I would deliberately seed with subtle errors or points of miscommunication), (2) research the technical aspects of the incident, (3) prepare a formal report in English, outlining the communication factors contributing to the incident, (4) present their findings and recommendations for improving English language training or communication protocols at the academy. *Delegation:* I set the overall objective and timeline. The groups decided on their internal roles, research strategies, and presentation format. My interventions were minimal, usually during pre-scheduled "consultation slots" where they could ask specific questions or seek feedback on drafts. *Observed Outcomes:* This project, in the second year, was a turning point for many. The responsibility of producing a comprehensive, professional-standard report in English pushed them beyond rote learning. They debated linguistic nuances, cross-referenced technical terms, and practiced formal written English extensively. The "stakes" felt real.

The Teacher as a "Guide on the Side, Not a Sage on the Stage"

Adopting the delegator teaching style meant a significant shift in my classroom persona. I had to become comfortable with more "noise" (the productive hum of group discussions), with not always being the center of attention, and with allowing students to make mistakes and learn from them (Ahmed et al., 2021). This was not always easy. The urge to jump in, to correct, to provide the right word or phrase was strong, especially under the pressure of curriculum deadlines and looming proficiency tests. I learned the art of active observation, of circulating, listening, and interjecting only when a group was truly stuck or heading significantly off-course. My feedback shifted from direct error correction to Socratic questioning: "*What's another way you could phrase that for absolute clarity over the radio?*", or "*Have you considered how that instruction might be interpreted by a pilot whose first language isn't English*?", or "*Where in the ICAO manuals could you verify that procedure?*"

The first two years were about laying the groundwork, building trust with the cadets, and convincing them (and perhaps myself) that they were capable of taking on this level of responsibility. The progress was incremental, punctuated by moments of frustration but also by encouraging glimpses of genuine engagement and emerging autonomy. The cadets were beginning to see English not just as a subject to be passed, but as a tool to be

mastered for their professional survival and success. The flight was far from smooth, but we were airborne.

Cruising Altitude: Refining and Embedding the Delegator Teaching Style (Years 3-4)

By the third and fourth years, the delegator teaching style was no longer a novel experiment but was becoming an embedded part of my pedagogical approach and, to a degree, the cadets' learning expectations in my English classes. The initial anxieties from both sides had lessened, replaced by a more established rhythm of collaborative, student-led learning. This phase was characterized by refinement of techniques, deeper integration with aviation-specific content, and a more conscious focus on fostering the attributes of deeper learning.

Building on Successes and Addressing Persistent Challenges

The earlier scenario-based problem-solving and project-based learning activities had yielded positive results in terms of engagement and practical language application. Cadets were becoming more adept at researching aviation-specific English, working in teams, and presenting their findings. The following involves the challenges.

Varying Proficiency Levels

Within any given cohort, English proficiency levels still varied significantly. While the delegator teaching style encouraged peer learning, which could benefit less proficient students, it also risked them being overshadowed or relying too heavily on more fluent group members. *Refinement:* To address varying proficiency, a differentiated instruction approach was adopted, forming mixed-proficiency groups. This strategy, supported by Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory, aimed to facilitate peer scaffolding. For instance, in a research task, a less proficient cadet might be responsible for locating specific factual data using English keywords (a more receptive skill), while a more proficient cadet might lead the synthesis and articulation of findings. I also introduced "mini-clinics"- short, targeted sessions on specific language points (e.g., pronunciation of critical aviation numbers, use of modal verbs for giving instructions) that groups could opt into if they identified a collective need. This was still a delegator approach, as the *need* was identified by the students, not prescribed by I.

Maintaining Rigor and Accountability

With increased autonomy, there was a potential for some groups to take the path of least resistance or for individual contributions to be unequal. *Refinement:* I introduced more structured peer assessment components, where cadets evaluated the contributions of their team members based on clear criteria (e.g., preparedness, active participation, quality of input). This, combined with my observation and the quality of the final group output, helped maintain individual accountability. For larger projects, I incorporated phased deadlines for specific components (e.g., initial research summary, draft report, presentation outline), allowing me to monitor progress and provide interim feedback without undermining their overall autonomy.

The "Quiet Indonesian Student" Phenomenon

Indonesian culture often values politeness and avoids direct confrontation (Geertz, 1961; Meiratnasari et al., 2019; Tur & Sabrina, 2024). This could manifest as reluctance among some cadets to challenge ideas within their group or to speak up if they were unsure, especially in the presence of more dominant personalities. *Refinement:* I explicitly

taught and modelled strategies for respectful disagreement and active listening. Think-Pair-Share activities were used before larger group discussions to give quieter cadets a chance to formulate their thoughts in a less intimidating setting. I also made a point of actively soliciting input from quieter members during my consultations with groups, creating a space for their voices to be heard. Anonymized feedback channels (e.g., small suggestion slips) were also used periodically to gauge comfort levels and identify any underlying group dynamic issues.

Deepening the Connection to Deeper Learning Principles

With the delegator teaching style more established, I could focus more explicitly on cultivating the competencies of deeper learning.

Mastery of Core Academic (Aviation English) Content

The delegator teaching style, far from diluting content coverage, often led to deeper mastery (Kerpen, 2024). When cadets had to *teach* a concept (peer teaching or presenting), *solve* a problem using specific phraseology (scenario-based learning), or *defend* their analysis of an incident report (PBL), they engaged with the material far more intensely than if they were passively receiving it. *Example:* In one project, cadets had to create a short English language training module for new ground crew on ramp safety communication. This required them not only to know the correct terminology and procedures but also to think about how to explain them clearly and concisely to a novice audience, a hallmark of true understanding.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

The open-ended nature of many delegator tasks demanded critical thinking (sen, 2018). There wasn't always one right answer. *Example:* A pilot faced a disruptive passenger speaking a rare dialect, with no interpreter available, while needing to convey critical safety information. Cadets had to critically analyze the communication barriers, weigh options (use of gestures, simple English, seeking assistance from other passengers), and justify their chosen communication strategy, considering safety, cultural sensitivity, and clarity. They weren't just recalling vocabulary; they were problem-solving in a simulated high-stakes environment.

Effective Communication

While the entire course was about English communication, the delegator teaching style honed meta-communication skills (Jensen & Dennis, 2019). Cadets had to communicate effectively *within their teams* to plan and execute tasks, negotiate roles, and resolve disagreements, all often conducted in English as per my encouragement for immersion. They then had to communicate their findings or solutions clearly and persuasively to a wider audience (their peers, or me acting as a hypothetical investigating body). *Reflection:* I noticed a marked improvement in the clarity and confidence of their presentations over time. The experience of having to "own" their material and defend their choices in English was a powerful learning tool.

Collaboration

Aviation is inherently a team-based profession (Aremu et al., 2025). The delegator teaching style, with its emphasis on group work, directly fostered collaborative skills (Thamarasseri & Antony, 2025). *Observation:* I witnessed cadets learning to leverage each other's strengths, manage conflicts constructively, and share responsibility for achieving a common goal. Debriefing sessions after group projects often included reflections not

just on the task itself but on their group process: "*What worked well in your team? What could you improve next time in how you communicate and divide tasks?*"

Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

This was perhaps one of the most significant outcomes. By placing the onus of learning on the cadets, the delegator teaching style nurtured their ability to identify their learning needs, seek out resources, and manage their own learning processes (Othman et al., 2024). *Example:* When tasked with researching a new piece of aviation technology and its associated English terminology, cadets wouldn't wait for I to provide a vocabulary list. They would dive into online technical manuals, industry publications, and even video resources, independently sifting through information to find what was relevant. They learned to become active agents in their own learning journey, a crucial skill for lifelong learning in the ever-evolving aviation industry. I often heard them discussing English learning strategies amongst themselves outside of class, a clear sign of emerging SDL.

The Teacher as Facilitator of Deeper Understanding

My role continued to evolve. I was less of a "resource person" simply waiting to be asked, and more of a "learning facilitator". This meant designing tasks that inherently provoked deeper thinking, asking probing questions that pushed cadets beyond surface-level responses, and creating a classroom culture where intellectual risk-taking was encouraged and mistakes were viewed as learning opportunities.

I remembers a particular ATC cadet group struggling with a complex scenario involving an aircraft with a suspected hijacking. Their initial approach was to rigidly apply standard phrases, but the situation's ambiguity defied simple categorization. My intervention wasn't to give them the answer, but to ask: "*Beyond the standard phraseology, what are the underlying communication principles at play here? How can you convey authority and gather critical information while also de-escalating potential panic? What are the implications of your word choices?*" This pushed them into a richer, more nuanced discussion, leading to a more sophisticated and flexible communication strategy.

The cruising altitude of years three and four was not without its patches of turbulence. There were still lessons that fell flat, groups that struggled to gel, and moments where I questioned if I was providing enough direct instruction. But the overall trajectory was positive. The cadets were not only improving their aviation English but were also developing crucial cognitive and interpersonal skills. The delegator teaching style was proving to be a robust framework for cultivating deeper learning, preparing them more holistically for the complex communicative demands of their future.

Navigating Complexity: The Delegator Teaching Style and Deeper Learning in the Indonesian Aviation Context

The journey of implementing a delegator teaching style with Indonesian aviation cadets was intrinsically linked to the pursuit of deeper learning. Deeper learning encompasses mastering core academic content, thinking critically and solving complex problems, working collaboratively, communicating effectively, and learning how to learn (or developing a growth mindset) (Mthethwa-Kunene et al., 2022; Ottmar, 2019; Quinn et al., 2019). My experience over these five years strongly suggests that the delegator approach, when thoughtfully applied, acts as a significant catalyst for these very outcomes, particularly within the unique environment of an Indonesian aviation academy.

Deconstructing Deeper Learning through Delegator Activities

This section revisits the core tenets of deeper learning and elucidates their alignment with the delegator-style activities implemented in this study.

Mastery of Core Academic Content (Aviation English)

When cadets were tasked with creating their own training materials for junior colleagues, presenting on complex aircraft systems in English, or dissecting incident reports for communication failures, they were compelled to engage with aviation English vocabulary, standard phraseology (ICAO 9835), and communication protocols at a much more profound level than rote memorization. To *teach* or *analyze* effectively, they first had to *understand* deeply. The responsibility for the "product" (be it a lesson, a report, or a solution) drove this mastery. For instance, in the "International Incident Investigation" project, cadets couldn't just skim the material; they had to comprehend nuanced technical descriptions and communication transcripts to build a coherent argument. This self-driven inquiry led to a more robust and retained understanding of specialized English.

Critical Thinking and Complex Problem-Solving

The scenario-based learning activities were designed to be ill-structured, mirroring real-world aviation challenges. A scenario in which a pilot encounters unexpected severe weather, combined with limited communication support and fuel constraints, does not have a single textbook solution. Cadets, working in delegated groups, had to analyze the multiple variables (e.g., weather, fuel, terrain, communication limitations, passenger safety), critically evaluate potential courses of action (e.g., divert, declare an emergency), and justify their decisions using clear English. They were not merely recalling facts but engaging in genuine problem-solving, weighing risks and benefits, and applying their technical and linguistic knowledge in a simulated high-stakes context. My role was to pose questions like, "*What are the ICAO regulations regarding fuel minimums in this situation? How would you phrase your PAN-PAN call to ensure ATC fully understands the urgency but also your specific needs?*" This pushed them beyond simple comprehension to critical application.

Working Collaboratively

Almost all delegator activities were group-based (Thamarasseri & Antony, 2025). ACO, ATC, and engineering cadets were often mixed, simulating the multi-crew and inter-agency collaboration vital in aviation. The success of their project to, say, design a safety briefing for an unfamiliar aircraft type for an international airline, depended entirely on their ability to share knowledge, negotiate roles (who researches what, who drafts which section, who polishes the English), provide constructive feedback to each other, and resolve disagreements. The delegator structure necessitated collaboration (Akhtar et al., 2025). I observed them learning to value diverse perspectives - the ACO cadet focusing on operational clarity, the engineering cadet on technical accuracy of terms, and the ATC cadet on standardized phraseology. These weren't just group projects; they were exercises in professional teamwork conducted largely in English.

Communicating Effectively

Beyond the obvious output of producing English reports or presentations, the delegator teaching style fostered communication about their learning and within their learning process (Tang et al., 2022). In peer teaching sessions, cadets had to explain complex aviation English concepts clearly to their classmates. In project debriefs, they had

to articulate their decision-making processes and defend their conclusions. When consulting with I, they had to clearly formulate their questions and explain their difficulties. This constant and purposeful use of English in varied communicative contexts (explaining, persuading, questioning, reporting) refined their overall communicative competence far more than isolated grammar drills ever could. The "audience" (their peers, I, or a hypothetical aviation authority) was always clear, making the communication authentic.

Learning How to Learn (Self-Directed Learning & Metacognition)

This is perhaps the most profound and lasting impact. By stepping back and allowing cadets to take ownership of their learning tasks, the delegator teaching style cultivated their ability to identify what they needed to know, where to find the information (technical manuals, ICAO documents, online aviation forums - all in English), and how to manage their time and resources. When a group realized their initial understanding of "controlled flight into terrain" (CFIT) prevention strategies was insufficient for their assigned presentation, they didn't wait for I to assign more readings. They took the initiative to research further, discuss amongst themselves, and deepen their understanding. They were learning to diagnose their own learning gaps and take action to fill them. My feedback often included metacognitive prompts: "*What was the most challenging part of this task for your group? How did you overcome it? What learning strategies did you find most effective?*" This encouraged them to reflect on their own learning processes.

The Indonesian Context: A Fertile Ground for Nuanced Application

Implementing a delegator teaching style that fosters deeper learning in Indonesia required sensitivity to cultural nuances. The traditional respect for the "*guru*" could initially seem at odds with a style that decentralized authority. However, I found that by framing autonomy as a path to professional competence - a competence highly valued in the disciplined world of aviation training - cadets gradually embraced it.

The strong communal ties often found in Indonesian culture (*Gotong Royong* / mutual cooperation) could be a powerful asset for the collaborative aspects of the delegator teaching style (Shofwan et al., 2025). Once groups clicked, their ability to support each other and work collectively towards a goal was impressive. The challenge was ensuring that this collectivism didn't inadvertently stifle individual critical thought or allow for social loafing. Clear roles, individual accountability measures (like peer reviews, albeit carefully managed to avoid causing loss of face), and my nuanced observation were key.

Furthermore, the inherent pragmatism I observed in many cadets - a desire to learn things that were directly applicable to their future careers - aligned well with the authentic, problem-based tasks used in the delegator approach. When they saw the relevance of analysing an English ATC transcript from a real (anonymized) incident to their future safety, their motivation soared.

Challenges in Connecting Delegator Teaching Style to Deeper Learning

The transition to a delegator teaching style was not a seamless connection. Obstacles emerged at multiple levels, challenging both my pedagogical approach and institutional expectations. Time constraints proved a persistent hurdle--deeper learning, by its nature, requires space for cadets to wrestle with complex problems, conduct independent research, and engage in meaningful collaboration, all of which often demanded more class time than traditional direct instruction (Mintrop et al., 2022). Balancing this with an

already packed aviation curriculum created a constant tension between depth and coverage. Another challenge was the assessment of deeper learning itself (Entwistle, 2023). Unlike grading a straightforward grammar quiz, evaluating skills like critical thinking, collaboration, or self-directed learning demanded more nuanced rubrics that captured process as well as product, a task that became an ongoing learning curve for I (Rodomanchenko & Sokolov, 2025). Perhaps the most profound obstacle, however, was the psychological shift required of I as the instructor. For deeper learning to truly flourish through delegation, I had to genuinely trust his students and relinquish a significant degree of control--an uncomfortable adjustment, especially when institutional accountability for student success remained high. There were moments when I had to consciously resist the urge to intervene prematurely, allowing instead for the productive struggle that often serves as the crucible for deep understanding.

Despite these challenges, the synergy between the delegator teaching style and the goals of deeper learning became increasingly apparent over my five years. By shifting the focus from I as the sole purveyor of knowledge to the cadets as active constructors of their own understanding, the delegator approach created an environment where they were not just learning aviation English, but learning to *think* like aviation professionals, *communicate* like aviation professionals, and *learn* like aviation professionals. This, I believes, is the essence of preparing them for the responsibilities that lie ahead.

Final Approach and Landing: Reflections, Growth, and Future Trajectories

As my five-year tenure at the Indonesian aviation academy drew to a close, the process of writing this autoethnography has served as a vital debriefing - a chance to critically examine the flight path of my pedagogical journey with the delegator teaching style and its impact on fostering deeper learning. It has been a period of immense professional growth, punctuated by moments of profound satisfaction and humbling learning experiences.

Personal and Professional Growth: The Teacher as Learner

Stepping into the role of a delegator was a transformative experience. Initially, it felt like navigating uncharted territory, particularly within an educational culture that often revered the teacher as the primary authority. My conditioning as a student and an early-career teacher leaned towards more direct methods. The deliberate shift required I to embrace vulnerability, develop new skillsets, deepen my understanding of learning, and cultivate cultural responsiveness. First, there is a certain vulnerability in relinquishing control, in admitting you don't have all the answers, and in trusting students to drive their own learning. Early attempts that didn't go as planned could easily have led to a retreat to safer, more traditional methods (Omondi et al., 2023). Persevering required a belief in the underlying principles of student autonomy. Second, my role evolved from a lecturer to a designer of learning experiences, a facilitator of group dynamics, a Socratic questioner, and a keen observer of learning processes (Riordan, 2024). I had to learn how to craft authentic problems, scaffold without over-directing, and provide feedback that empowered rather than dictated. Third, wrestling with how to make the delegator teaching style effective forced I to engage more deeply with learning theories, particularly those related to constructivism, collaborative learning, and self-directed learning. The pursuit of deeper learning for my cadets became a parallel journey of deeper learning for himself (Baehr, 2022). Fourth, working within the Indonesian context taught I the importance of adapting pedagogical approaches rather than simply importing them. Understanding concepts like "*Bapak-isme*", "*Gotong Royong*", and the importance of "face"

allowed I to implement the delegator teaching style in a way that was, hopefully, more culturally resonant and effective. It was about finding the balance between promoting autonomy and respecting established cultural norms of interaction.

The growth was not always linear. There were days of self-doubt, lessons that needed significant post-flight analysis and redesign, and moments of frustration when cadets struggled with the responsibility given to them. However, the breakthroughs - seeing a hesitant cadet confidently lead a group discussion in English, witnessing a team passionately debate the linguistic nuances of an emergency call, or hearing cadets spontaneously using complex aviation terminology in informal conversation - were incredibly rewarding and fueled my commitment to this approach.

Impact on Cadets: Beyond Language Proficiency

While the primary goal was to enhance their aviation English, the impact of the delegator teaching style, I believes, extended further. First, it increased ownership and motivation (Cristian & Andreea, 2024). When cadets felt a sense of ownership over their learning tasks, their motivation visibly increased. The shift from "*What does Sir want?*" to "*How can we solve this problem?*" was palpable. Second, it developed 21st-Century Skills (Mardiani & Prasasti, 2023)**.** Beyond technical English, they were honing critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration skills - competencies essential not just for aviation but for any modern profession (Othman et al., 2024). Third, it enhanced confidence (Othman et al., 2024). Taking responsibility for complex tasks and succeeding, often in their second language, built their confidence significantly. Presenting their findings, teaching their peers, or leading a simulated cockpit communication sequence provided powerful affirmations of their capabilities. Fourth, it prepared professional realities. The delegator teaching style, with its emphasis on autonomy, teamwork, and problem-solving under pressure, offered a more realistic preparation for the demands of their future roles as pilots, ATCOs, or engineers (Cristian & Andreea, 2024). In these professions, the ability to think independently and act decisively within a team is paramount. Of course, the impact varied. Some cadets thrived on the autonomy from day one; others took longer to adjust or perhaps always preferred more direct guidance. But the overall trend was towards greater engagement and the development of more holistic professional competencies.

Limitations

This autoethnography is, by its nature, a subjective account (Adams & Herrmann, 2023). While I has strived for analytical rigor, my interpretations are shaped by his experiences and perspectives. Limitations include generalizability, long-term impact, and measuring deeper learning**.** While I hopes the insights are transferable, the specific context of this Indonesian aviation academy is unique. The success of a delegator teaching style will always depend on the specific student population, institutional culture, and the teacher's skills and commitment. Additionally, my observations are largely confined to the cadets' time at the academy. While I is optimistic about the long-term benefits for their careers, a longitudinal study tracking their professional application of these skills would be needed for definitive conclusions. At last, while I observed indicators of deeper learning, the robust, empirical measurement of such complex constructs within the scope of this personal narrative was challenging.

Future Trajectories: For Myself and Related Field

This five-year experience has profoundly shaped my teaching philosophy. I moves forward with a strengthened conviction in the power of student-centered learning and

the importance of fostering deeper learning competencies. His future teaching, in whatever context it may be, will undoubtedly carry the imprint of the Delegator teaching style. For the broader field of ESP, particularly in vocational training settings like aviation, I believes there is immense potential in exploring and adapting student-centered methodologies like the delegator teaching style. The demand for professionals who can not only perform technical tasks but also think critically, communicate clearly across cultures, and adapt to new challenges is ever-increasing. Pedagogies that cultivate these deeper learning attributes are no longer a luxury but a necessity. In the Indonesian context, and indeed in many parts of Southeast Asia where educational transformation is underway, there is a growing recognition of the need to move beyond rote learning towards more dynamic and engaging forms of education. Autoethnographic accounts like this, while personal, can contribute to this conversation by providing grounded, contextualized examples of what is possible.

The primary novelty of this study lies in its theoretical contribution: moving beyond a mere narrative of lived experience to offer a conceptual model for navigating pedagogical tensions when implementing a delegator teaching style in a hierarchical, high-stakes vocational training context such as an Indonesian aviation academy. While existing autoethnographic studies on teaching styles often stop at personal reflection (Adams et al., 2015; Cooper & Lilyea, 2022), this study systematically distills five years of experiential data into a transferable analytical framework. Specifically, the study identifies four recurring pedagogical tensions that emerged from the inductive thematic analysis: (1) the tension between cultural expectations of teacher authority (*guru* as sage) and the delegator's demand for student autonomy; (2) the tension between institutional pressure for measurable proficiency (ICAO standards) and the process-oriented nature of deeper learning; (3) the tension between fostering collaboration (*Gotong Royong*) and preventing social loafing or loss of face; and (4) the tension between the teacher's psychological need for control and the pedagogical imperative to allow productive struggle. For each tension, the study provides a situated resolution strategy, such as explicit metacognitive framing of autonomy as professional competence, differentiated scaffolding through mixed-proficiency groups and peer assessment, and the use of Socratic questioning over direct correction. Collectively, these strategies form a conceptual navigation model that other ESP educators in similar Southeast Asian vocational settings can adapt, rather than merely empathize with. Thus, the study's novelty is not its setting or method, but its analytical elevation of autoethnographic data into a reusable pedagogical heuristic, thereby transforming personal experience into a generalizable conceptual tool for the field of English for Specific Purposes.

Conclusion

The journey of teaching English to aviation cadets using a delegator teaching style has been the most challenging and rewarding of my professional life. It was a constant process of navigating the complexities of language, culture, pedagogy, and the high-stakes world of aviation. The connection between delegating responsibility to students and fostering deeper learning became undeniably clear. By trusting cadets, by empowering them to take control of their learning, I witnessed not just an improvement in their English proficiency, but their emergence as more confident, critical, and collaborative thinkers - individuals better prepared for the demanding skies ahead. This autoethnography is my story, but I hopes it resonates with other educators who are striving to move beyond the traditional, to light the engines of student autonomy, and to help their learners achieve a truly deeper understanding. The flight plan may vary, turbulence is inevitable, but the destination -

empowered, capable, and deeply learned individuals - is worth every moment of the journey.

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