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SIMPLIFIED TECHNICAL ENGLISH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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SUMMARY

A. Timeline of SE/STE

- (1) Simplified English (SE) started in the late 1970s and was named Simplified English by the sponsoring agency, AECMA (Association of European Manufacturers), to improve aerospace maintenance instructions.
- (2) SE was made part of the Air Transport Association Publications Spec (ATA-100) in 1987 to control the language level in commercial aerospace technical writing.
- (3) The SE Guide was revised into its final form in 1995.
- (4) In 2004 AECMA joined other European rule-making organizations and was re-named AeroSpace Defence Industries of Europe (ASD). SE was re-named to Simplified Technical English (STE) and the SE Guide became the ASD STE-100 Specification..

B. Current Developments In STE

- (1) ASD'S S1000D Spec for current-technology publications has STE-100 as its default language control
- (2) S1000D will eventually replace ATA-i2200 (formerly ATA-100) as publications spec for both commercial and military technical writing.
- (3) ASD S1000D Spec compliance will motivate adoption of ASD STE-100 as the technical writing spec for land/sea/air programs (not only aerospace).

C. Future Plans For STE

- (1) The ASD STE Working Group in Europe is working with defense ministries to make ASD STE-100 more accessible to the military.
- (2) ASD is looking ahead to "generic" STE (not confined to aerospace topics).
- (3) Adjunct publications (user helps, Web access, and a thesaurus in development) are becoming available.

D. Implementation of STE In Industry

- (1) Software companies have made checker programs increasingly available to users of STE.
- (2) Challenges of STE for industry include access to training and difficulties with interpretation.
- (3) Off-shore outsourcing of technical writing introduces cross-cultural problems with STE. Nationalities which do not have English as their primary language can have trouble writing in STE; Some word choices will be incorrect or non-idiomatic. Internal helps within the STE Spec assume that the writer is familiar not only with the nuances of English but also with the technical details of the subject matter. This assumption is often false with overseas writing vendors.
- (4) STE assumes that the writer is in control of context. Automated STE approaches could benefit from attention to phrases, not just to words (this will keep writing in context and familiar idiom).