

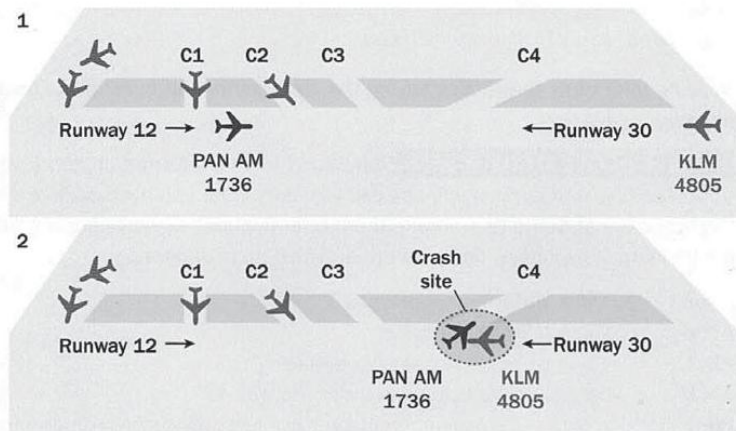
'We're now at take-off'

16a In pairs, describe the events in the two diagrams.

- b **1.35** In pairs, listen to a re-enactment of some of the exchanges between the two KLM pilots, the ATCO and the Pan Am pilot. Make notes about any communication errors you notice, e.g.

non-standard phraseology, absence of confirmation or clarification, ambiguity and call sign error.

- c Report back and compare and discuss your notes with the rest of the class.



ICAO FOCUS

“ A much-quoted case is that of the message ... by the First Officer aboard one of the two aircraft in the catastrophic collision at Tenerife (1977). His use of the phrase “We are now at take-off” was interpreted by the tower controller to mean that he was waiting at the take-off point. Subsequent events demonstrated that he in fact meant that the aircraft was already on the take-off roll. ”

Dr Jeremy Mell

- ◆ Why is the phrase *at take-off* ambiguous?
- ◆ What could or should the First Officer have said?
- ◆ Was the controller's response appropriate? What might he have said and done?
- ◆ Can you think of any other expressions in English which use *at* in this way?
- ◆ What do you think we can learn about RTF communications and the English language from this accident?