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ON THE REQUIREMENTS OF A FUTURE COMMON CORE SYLLABUS FOR MARITIME ENGLISH

The paper deals with the linguistic feature of Maritime English and presents a survey of currently available textbooks and other teaching material (deck and marine engineering) with a view to provide some elements for the construction of a common core Maritime English syllabus. In this respect some view of possible further research are offered.

1. INTRODUCTION

Defining the purpose and scope of contents for the syllabus of any language for specific purposes is one of the most difficult tasks for course designers. The perennial questions arise again and again as to who and what to rely on in designing the syllabus. The question, however, is not whether 'one or the other' but rather that of extent to which the two are intertwined. Should we therefore trust, on the one hand, seemingly the most trustworthy - i.e. experienced authorities on the subject-matter such as teachers of Maritime English, most frequent users of Maritime English on board ship (ship masters and officers), VTS or VTIMS operators etc., or shall we base our decisions on the what is accessible to assessment, i.e. syllabuses, handbooks, textbooks etc. already available, some of these in the form of accepted, more or less recommendable, or even mandatory standards?

To make appropriate and valid decisions, a careful study of both approaches is necessary. In this paper an attempt is made first at delimiting the scope of English used for maritime purposes. The paper also provides a brief survey of Maritime English instruction as it is taught and learnt worldwide under a number of national and international syllabuses. This is closely related to an authors' view of the so called needs analysis (Robinson 1991). Finally a proposal is made of the necessity to set up the objectives and methods of undertaking an internationally-based research into Maritime English users' needs, the study of the scope of Maritime English syllabus and the role of general English within Maritime English.

2. MARITIME ENGLISH – NATURE, SCOPE AND LIMITS

In terms of users' needs two terms and concepts should be given particular attention: *maritime communications* and *user-friendliness*. The former lexicalizes a well established notion in the maritime industry and is well known and highly exploited amongst both experts and laymen in the field. It is due to this fact that, for the purpose of this report, one should discuss this term within the framework of the basic notions belonging to the same lexical field related to maritime safety communications. Thus it will also be dealt with as referring to other members of the same lexical set (cf. *standard* vs. *restricted language; language for specific purpose, restricted language; maritime English,* and *IMO standard marine navigational 'vocabulary'*).

The language of maritime communications is a particular subset of any human language (English, in terms of international maritime communications, and for the purpose of this report) whose lexical component (vocabulary: lexical items, collocations, lexical sets, and phrases) and grammatical structure (syntactic and discourse features):

a) are appropriate to the requirements and restrictions of specific communication situations in navigation, both at sea and in port,

b) meet the communicative needs and linguistic capabilities of users (participants) in conveying and exchanging messages within outboard or inboard communications, and

c) meet the communicative, pragmatic and semiotic setting of maritime discourse

The language of maritime communication therefore forms a part of the speaker's and/or receiver's linguistic and communicative competence enabling him/them to make a proper selection from his linguistic inventory to ensure maritime safety and effective interaction at any time in any maritime-related situation, irrespective of any disturbances in the communication channel.

The latter term, *user-friendliness*, is a relatively recent lexical development, a very productive and widely used neologism stemming out of the development of modern technology causing inadequacies and difficulties in the man-machine interrelations and interactions. When faced with new or other ships, the modern navigator, is often aware, for example, of the inadequacies of symbolic representations of various controls in the bridge equipment (cf. the so-called 'knobology' problem: e.g. press-buttons, keys, levers, knobs, on/off-switches, selector switches). This is particularly embarrassing for pilots when, after boarding a ship, they have to familiarise themselves instantaneously with the navigation and communications equipment, which often varies from ship to ship and from manufacturer to manufacturer.

Maritime English therefore represents a variety of English language (not a separate language), chosen and adopted by the general maritime community and, occasionally, expressly recommended for use by seafarers, to achieve effective communication in everyday life on board, ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communication, and in performing other jobs and duties related to all aspects of maritime traffic and shipping.

Though Maritime English has been the subject of extensive discussion and, occasionally, in-depth analysis for many years now, it seems that no definition of Maritime English has been offered that could be both comprehensive and satisfac-

tory for all the purposes and needs. But isn't it the fate, after all, of many fundamental concepts in any discipline or study!?

Maritime English is now frequently written in capital letters to designate that this concept has reached a high degree of lexicalization and thus become a well established term, Any analysis and definition of Maritime English must start from the notion of languages for specific purposes, which, as Widdowson (1998:3) rightly claims, is a form of English 'peculiar to the range of principles and procedures which define a particular profession'. He further adds that the 'S of ESP links language with purpose and establishes the association' with a particular discipline. In questioning the specificity of any ESP variety he notes that *all uses* of English, and this is also true of any other language, are specific. Therefore, the question is reverted: i.e. ESP, like Maritime English, is not a deviation form and ideal, sacred, unchangeable 'general' English (a view frequently shared by laymen). It is quite the opposite: we subdue our own, general language to the particular requirements of our communicational intent or purpose in a given surrounding at a particular time by choosing or shaping the surface language form to suit our purpose. Or, as Widdowson again puts it: 'I am being as specific as I can about the point I want to make'. Therefore, in a pragmatic sense, all language use is specific. But, what is so specific about it, then? Let us leave aside the specific, but relatively limited number of easily mastered lexical items called technical terms. Is the syntax of any maritime text, dialogue, or VHF communication any different from the syntax of other 'non-specific' texts? Of course, not. We can only talk about different frequencies of generally recognizable syntactic structures (e.g. questions, verb or noun phrases) in different texts under different circumstances obtaining in various contexts of situation. Furthermore, what is specific about Maritime English, or any ESP, is the peculiar distribution of certain lexical elements in collocations, the so called high collocational potential of a particular lexical item (general or specific) which we are all intuitively well aware of but which become only too obvious in the lists of collocates obtained by any tools of modern corpus linguistics. One final formal, and easily retractable, feature of Maritime English is the high incidence of polysemy arising as a result of the use of some of the most frequent general English terms used in specific maritime environments. But, these again are the features shared by all kinds of ESP's.

What, then, is specific about Maritime English as compared to other ESP's? The only plausible answer that comes to mind is the vocabulary and a range of language structures offered by common (or general) English which the speaker or user of Maritime English selects from his communicative (linguistic) competence and assigns as being appropriate to the particular maritime context of situation in the process of communication. This leads us to discourse analysis and pragmatics as the two fields of applied linguistics that appear to be worthy of further studying. Therefore, discourse features and pragmatic information retrievable from recorded maritime dialogues or conversations, not only VHF but also on-board and on-shore conversations between speakers involved in everyday widely conceived maritime activities, as well as written texts of the various maritime-related registers (navigation, technology, marine engineering, law, shipping business, communication technology, etc.), need to be further studied. This involves identification of such features, their linguistic description (on the discourse and pragmatic level) and possibly normalisation on an international level, i.e. within IMLA. Finally, all these studies would be futile unless the provided for a possibility of making such elements of Maritime English available to the ease of learning and teaching, a fea-

ture not easily achievable in the case of restricted forms or standards of Maritime English such as SMNV, SeaSpeak or SMCP.

In creating the policy and setting standards for learning Maritime English world-wide, in order to cover the most different uses of Maritime English, for most different users of the same language, it is therefore necessary to start from the top, i.e. the widest and deepest knowledge or competence of English for maritime purposes, down to the lower steps on the scale of linguistic competence in English, i.e. those that F. Weeks (1997) calls:

- standard English (i.e. highest degree of competence in general English)
- 'standard English with 'belonging' English (standard/general English with some knowledge of maritime English),
- maritime business English
- technical English
- standard communication phrases (IMO SMCP)
- communications English specifically for use over voice radio,
- 'survival English' for shipboard use (as tested by ICS)[1]

It can be clearly seen that if a modern seafarer, or the *European graduated seafarer* as he is now often termed (cf. CAMET meetings), is to be granted an opportunity of reaching a bachelor of science degree (during pre-service, in-service, or after abandoning sea career), he should also meet very high requirements in his communicative competence and expertise in English. This, however, requires undertaking a thorough research in the needs of such a future seafarer along with a needs analysis (Hutchinson & Waters 1987) for the seafarers requiring various degrees of limited mastery of (Maritime) English as proposed above by Weeks (1997). The analysis should cover the needs analysis involving both vocational and academic maritime education and training of the future seafarer and subsequently assign various degrees of knowledge and competence requirements in English of the seafarers as one descends the scale of jobs and duties (see the English language requirements for seafarers carrying out duties on the operational and management levels in STCW 1995).

3. MARITIME ENGLISH SYLLABUS AND STCW REQUIREMENTS

Seafaring is one of the oldest and by far one of the most international activities. This very traditional trade is governed by a well-established common practice, customs, codes, rules and regulations. In it, every communication either written or oral is carried out in English. Therefore, the English language is considered a kind of *lingua franca* at sea. It is used on board among ever-present multinational crews, but also in communications with other ships and shore based services. This peculiar language, which has about 20% -30 % of ESP character and the rest of it being general language, is usually referred to as Maritime English.

Since seafaring encompasses a wide range of activities as for instance: navigation, astronomy, business and economy, law, medicine, cargo work, seamanship, shipbuilding, but also technical sciences such as physics, chemistry, mathematics,

[1] The ordering here has been changed to suit the downward principle of difficulty of learning

mechanics, thermodynamics and many others, it is not easy to frame up the language field and strictly define its borderlines.

All standards for training certification and watch-keeping of seafarers have been contained in STCW and its subsequent Annexes and Codes. The knowledge and competence of the English language is no exception to this. Since the Convention terminology has sustained some changes with reference to the Code, it is first necessary to define some new terms[2] that did not exist in the previous basic text. Those define the meanings of *standard of competence, management level personnel and operational level personnel.* While the term *standards of competence* only generally defines the set performance criteria, the other two precisely tell us that the designed English language syllabuses have been tailored for deck management and operational level personnel.

In order to precisely understand the meaning of each term, the following STCW Code definitions have been used.

1. "Standard of competence" means the level of proficiency to be achieved for the proper performance of functions on board ship in accordance with the internationally agreed criteria as set forth herein and incorporating prescribed standards or levels of knowledge, understanding and demonstrated skill;

2. "Management level" means the level of responsibility associated with:

2.1. serving as master, chief mate, chief engineer officer or second engineer officer on board a seagoing ship, and

2.2. ensuring that all functions within the designated area of responsibility are properly performed;

3. "Operational level" means the level of responsibility associated with:

3.1. serving as officer in charge of a navigational or engineering watch or as designated duty engineer for periodically unmanned machinery spaces or as radio operator on board a seagoing ship, and

3.2. maintaining direct control over the performance of all functions within the designated area of responsibility in accordance with proper procedures and under the direction of an individual serving in the management level for that area of responsibility;

COMPETENCE, KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING, AND PROFICIENCY	METHODS FOR DEMONSTRATING COMPETENCE	CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING COMPETENCE
Use and understand the Standard Marine Navigational Vocabulary as replaced by the the English IMO Standardi Marine Communication Phrases and use of English in written and oral form to understand meteorological information and messages concerning ship's safety and operation, to communicate with other ships and coast stations and to perform the officer's duties also with a multi-lingual crew.	English language of evidence Adequate knowledge of instruction language to enable the officer to use charts and other nautical publications Communications are clear and understood	Examination and assessment of English language navigational obtained from publications practical relevant to the safety of the ship are correctly interpreted or drafted

[2] STCW Code 1995.

The Table[3] below offers additional information, yet only presenting the guidelines for further elaboration of detailed English language syllabuses.

Maritime English Books and Other Teaching Material

Following some incomplete results of MARCOM project a list of Maritime English books, teaching materials, video and audio cassettes will be available shortly. It reveals that as many as 87 monolingual and bilingual books are currently in use all over the world. The research has also shown that ME lecturers use some 20 different video tapes developed exclusively for that purpose and an assortment of almost 300 videos mainly of Videotel, London production. Some 9 CD–ROMs of which only two developed for ME purposes[4] also contribute to raising overall language learning standards. All major IMO editions are also found in CD versions, some of them being used as supplementary source of language information, mainly for very specific purposes. Some English language lecturers have recently started making use of internet sites of relevant importance. Eventually, a number of specialised journals, magazines, charts, log books, shipboard cargo and safety documentation, company standing orders, notices to mariners, sailing directions etc. are normally in use.

Most of the books are dedicated to either ME for deck officers, and only a small number of them are designed for marine engineering officers. However, there are few books containing both deck and engineering texts. Among them descriptive and narrative texts largely prevail while dialogues are much rarer.

The level of Maritime English books range from basic (Sarkis, R: 1986) to low intermediate (Blakey: 1987) and upper intermediate (Katarzynska:1998)[5] . Irrespective of the levels, however, the majority of books designed for learning of Maritime English suffer from poorly designed, demotivated and uninventive exercises. This only proves that in some unprivileged countries a book is not a team work product.

There are five books well known among all ME lecturers. More experienced lecturers will remember the good old *Seafaring in English* (Bell 1969) with well dramatised texts and rough Bosun's tape recorded voice. An old and slightly outdated, but a very good book was also the Wavelength (Weeks 1986). Our younger colleagues, especially from some Mediterranean countries extensively make use of Blakey's English for Maritime Studies (1987). Two books in common use for communication purposes are the Seaspeak (Weeks et al. 1988) and Anglosea[6].

Almost every seafaring nation has its author(s) and its book(s) or a selection of texts used by Maritime college attendants. Those are tailored to the best of author's knowledge which does not always mean that they fully cover the vocational contents, satisfy international requirements imposed on seafarers for an efficient exchange of information, conduct of safe procedures and in carrying out of on-board routine jobs and extraordinary duties, especially in the circumstances of ever present multi-national crews.

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[3] Table A-II/1 Part 6 of 11 parts
[4] Center for Technology (1997) CD-ROM of IMO SMCP Part IV/ Chapter D, Passenger Care
[5] See Supplement 1
[6] ibid.

Interesting enough, some small nations like Slovenia and Croatia[7] have a number of valuable books covering both deck and engine sections. On the other hand great nations as France and Italy have no adequate books of Maritime English. Germany, Poland, Spain and China fall among the group of countries with largest ME book production.

Since all seafarers perform the same kind of duties, share the same or similar social environment and they all have to comply with the same international regulations, it is a must that some serious incentive be made towards the unification of the learning objectives and to a high congruence level of English language teaching issues. Prospective books, videos, audio cassettes, CDs should become a common heritage of all maritime nations. The books should include the same core syllabuses, cover all levels, be accompanied by all available supporting aids and tools, have professionally designed exercise (not necessarily by the author himself but with his assistance), and last but not the least be attractive (e.g. Headway). This process should be dynamic and follow all language and technological requirements .

4. RESEARCH PROPOSALS FOR MARINE ENGINEERING ENGLISH

The current situation of sources for the study of Marine Engineering English compared to those for Maritime English (for Deck Officers) is rather unfavourable for the former. This means that an incomparably fewer number of books, teaching materials video and audiocassettes, and CD are available on market. Being aware of an increasingly important role played by engineers on board modern ships nowadays, it is necessary to direct further research to lexical and language studies in both written and oral communications. Those would include:

a) Minimum lexical requirements for an efficient engine room operation. Those should incorporate knowledge of standard technical terms related to machinery, equipment and accessories, abbreviations, the terminology describing conditions, wear rates assessment, on requesting spares etc.

b) A limited number of verbs to denote engine room activities covering machinery operation, condition ascertaining, maintenance, repair work and safety

c) The formation and structure of multi-word lexemes, such as compound nouns

d) Most productive suffixes and prefixes

e) The study of language elements typically used in engineering discourse.

The research should lead to a common core teaching material of Maritime English for Marine Engineers. It should partly follow the approach exhibited by Yagi Takeshi's Marine Engineering Practical English Conversation, Kaibundo.

That very rare book that offers an insight to Marine Engineering occurrences through dialogues is a valuable example of a collection of very versatile and useful dialogues. Unfortunately, it has no exercises at all.

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[7] See Supplement 2

It is no doubt that written communication presents an almost totally neglected area. Since the common practice imposed by shipping companies, as well as some international regulations, such as ISM Code, have turned marine engineers into paperwork handlers, some future research should concentrate on designing a Standard Marine Engineering Phrase Book that would encompass common phrases used in all kinds of forms and covering the fields of major engineering responsibilities, such as monitoring, maintenance an operation.

Finally, major diesel engine producers should be enhanced to produce CDs for on line training use. Those are user-friendly tools for ME students. A first trial has been done by B&W.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS ON THE NEEDS ANALYSIS AND FUTURE RESEARCH INTO MARITIME ENGLISH

Needs analysis for seafarers' knowledge and competence in Maritime English will have to pursue two direction in the future:

- strict needs related to safety of navigation (deck & engineering)
- the much wider needs of the 'European graduated seafarer'

As far as the former is concerned, there is no doubt that the existing standards on maritime English as laid down in the IMO Standard Marine Communications Phrases (1997), as well as in other current recommendations on the use of such standards, are of such a nature as to ensure, in combination with other factors of navigational safety, efficient communication at sea. These standards have been subject to continuous improvement and upgrading, building first on the earliest ITU recommendations on radiocommunications, encompassing later the basic concepts and terminology of the Collision Regulations, and integrating finally the requirements of a number of IMO conventions and other documents laying down, mainly implicitly, and in the case of the 1995 STCW Convention also explicitly, the standards on the form and use of maritime English for the safety of navigation. However, for a better analysis of this, restricted type of mMaritime English legitimate recording of maritime communications and the study of post-accident transcripts will be required. Thus, an internationally accessible corpus of maritime VHF communication, both in transcripts and voice form, should be made available, not only for pedagogical but also for research purposes.

A possible syllabus for the European graduated seafarer will further require the creation and permanent maintenance of an on-line global maritime corpus in the form of a computer-based maritime language and lexical database, under the guidance of the International Maritime Lecturers' Association (IMLA). This would enable comparable research into all aspects of maritime language communications. Continuation of the MARCOM project and IMLA workshops seem to be an appropriate place for discussing the achievements and advances in such a project.

Hovewer, since real communications often considerably differ from the recommended standards in SMNV and SMCP, further research should be undertaken into the nature of maritime English with respect to the changing speech communities both on board (e.g. multi-purpose crews) and on shore. This should include discourse analysis and the study of pragmatic values of maritime communication

not only of VHF communication standards but also of all sorts of maritime-realted communication in the widest sense of the word.

Therefore the research into the needs of a graduated seafarer should combine the knowledge of general English and its interaction with English for specific purposes, which in turn is only possible by a pragmatic study of maritime conversation and discourse/texts (not only safety-oriented) to cover all aspects of maritime activities.

For this purpose legitimate recording of maritime communications and the study of post-accident transcripts will be required (cf. Pritchard 1998). Also, the creation and permanent maintenance of an on-line global maritime corpus in the form of a computer-based maritime language and lexical database, under the guidance of the International Maritime Lecturers' Association (IMLA), may be most useful. This would enable comparable research into all aspects of maritime language communications. IMLA workshops seem to be an appropriate place for discussing the achievements and advances in such a project.

Experience shared by most teachers of Maritime English has shown that there is a direct link and interdependence between the competence in general English and in Maritime English and that most successful communicators at sea are those persons whose competence in general English is the highest. This makes the requirement for a future study of the role of general English in the overall syllabus in maritime communications even more plausible. Not only user's needs but also contents and methodology of teaching should be studied further in order to arrive at a common core mixture of general and ESP (Maritime) English for future seafarers at all levels of STCW competence, shipboard, company or adminstrative responsibility, This is the assignment which most of us will be aready to pursue. We are confident that Maritime English teachers will be ready to take part in such projects and that they will be willing to serve as first assessors of their results.

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Sažetak

O ZAHTJEVIMA ZA BUDUĆIM ZAJEDNIČKIM NASTAVNIM PLANOM I PROGRAMOM POMORSKOGA ENGLESKOG JEZIKA

U radu se raspravlja o jezičnim značajkama pomorskoga engleskog jezika i daje se pregled postojećih udžbenika i drugih nastavnih sredstava (namijenjenih službi palube i stroja na brodu), kako bi se dobile osnove za izradu zajedničkoga nastavnog plana i programa pomorskoga engleskog jezika. Primjereno tome, dan je i pregled mogućih budućih istraživanja u tom smjeru.