

The Need of Introductory Maritime English Course for Non-Native English Speakers

N. Demydenko

*PhD, Head of ESP Department, Kyiv State Maritime Academy, Ukraine,
nademar@gmail.com*

Abstract The article purposes to analyse methodological, linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects of up-to-date Maritime English teaching/learning materials for beginners in Navigation and Marine Engineering.

The strategy of teaching in the countries where English is not the native language is of upper priority for ESP departments of Maritime Universities. The contents, structure, quantity and quality of exercises involved or topics chosen, self-assessment materials and tests of the Course Books for Elementary and Pre-Intermediate students may be of some interest for practical teachers. It is supposed that the new ideas will result in higher national and international standards of MET. Inspired by the participation in Leonardo da Vinci MarTEL Project, Kyiv State Maritime Academy initiates the discussion of varieties of Maritime English (ME) Course Books applied on a local level and suggests inter-national or multinational projects in creating ME materials for beginners.

Keyword: *ME materials, non-native speakers, Course Book for beginners*

1. Introduction.

Kyiv State Maritime Academy located in the capital city of Ukraine represents all-national challenge in the spheres of Navigation, Marine Engineering, Maritime Law, Water Transport Management which requires its continuous development. It is foreseen that in the nearest future Kyiv State Maritime Academy becomes the educational and science-research centre with multiple sophisticated infrastructure of the European level. Academy's mission: is to provide higher educational services in the fields of Navigation on Marine and Inland Waterways and Power Plant Installations to various groups of population of Ukraine from different areas and regions (close or distant from the capital city), thus giving the opportunity to receive Bachelor or Master Degree and corresponding qualification certificates. Supporting the traditions of training seafarers, the Academy responds to the all-national demand of the younger generation in Water Transportation. As the latest experience shows the Academy's graduates and postgraduates correspond to the up-to-date requirements in qualification of different ranks and professions working both onboard and onshore. In 2009 Kyiv State Maritime Academy joined the project MarTEL (UK/07/LLP-LdV/TOI-049). It's known that Ukraine occupies the 5th place in the world in manpower for different ranks and specialities working on multiple flagged vessels. The participation of the Ukrainian higher educational institution in this project comes to be the proof of international co-operation in order to reduce merchant vessels incidents and accidents caused by the human factor in the situations of Maritime English communication failure on board ships among the members of international crews. The purpose of MarTEL (Maritime Tests of English Language) is creating of world-wide supported Maritime English standards as well as producing the corresponding teaching/learning and assessment materials. The goals of the Project also include the establishment of Maritime English standards sets similar to those existing in General English – TOEFL, IELTS. In other words, the project purposes to create the system of Maritime English proficiency assessment tests on the basis of the model course developed by IMO (IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases) for all ranks and specialities of merchant vessel crews. Shipping is considered to be one of the most important and dangerous sectors of world economy; therefore, the safety of

seafarers, cargoes and vessels are of utmost priority for the shipping industry. Deficient or faulty communication on board a vessel is one of the major reasons of incidents and accidents. Shipping risks elimination mainly depends on how the Maritime English standards are observed by all participants of this economy's sector: government, shipowners, crewing companies, etc. The MarTEL Project partners have been working at Maritime English tests both for deck and engineering departments (ratings and officers). Much attention is being paid to dissemination of the standards, the problem of training of the teachers' staff, distance and e-learning in the system of Maritime English teaching/learning practical activities, implementation of the pilot project for the establishment of Maritime English Certification Centre, etc. (search for the detailed information at www.maritime-test.org). Participation in the MarTEL Project gives the opportunity to analyse all aspects of Maritime English functioning and to draw the conclusion about the necessity of taking them into account when developing national and international standards including the design of effective Maritime English teaching / learning materials.

2. ME teaching materials-Current situation.

This article has been written owing to another article analysing the present situation concerning the requirements to students' language proficiency, as well as availability of efficient ME Course Books, assessment materials, all necessary supplements and aids being in use of any ME teacher. Captain Li Fei from Shanghai Maritime University (the Internet, "7 ACTUALITY OF OUR COLLEGIAL MARITIME ENGLISH EDUCATION AND THE MEASURE OF BETTERMENT", 2009) insists on "uniform professional English teaching materials" and makes emphasis on the fact that the teaching materials are the most important elements in the process of seafarers' training.. He says that the quality of all teaching materials relies on the contents selected for the teaching process of the students of navigation, in particular. This opinion of Captain and of MET practitioner from China has much in common with the thoughts of ME teachers from different countries. The problem seems to be international and is not the sequence of specific features of a native language of Maritime students. Hence, this situation demands detailed and profound study in order to work out a set of methodological instructions for all Maritime Universities. It's necessary to describe not only the object of education (topics, texts, exercises, etc.) but also the way of how all this is prepared for work and then used and assessed in class. The HOW becomes more important alongside the WHAT should be taught to our students nowadays. Domination of skills development over knowledge delivery is being obvious. This is the sphere of practical methodology which usually has great achievements in non-English speaking countries but depends a lot on national tradition existing in the system of education. Different methods, approaches and techniques used by practical specialist lecturers and language teachers sometimes result in insufficient language proficiency which provides negative effects on students and trainees. Unfortunately, it happens in case of seafarers who have a rare opportunity of using ME for professional purposes in the process of studying thus comparing their language proficiency with that of other members of a multilingual crew. Here comes the point of coordination between professional and language teachers and a very sensitive matter such as methodological priorities of each of the parties. This is the core idea of any corporative research activities: Who does what? What are the domains of professional teachers and those of language teachers? How is this performed in different MET institutions all over the world? In fact, there are so many questions which should get their answers, that the problem of up-to-date efficient practical ME materials corresponding to international standards for different ranks and professions of crew members should be considered and solved as quickly as possible. Some ideas are suggested to start the exchange of opinions concerning the reasons and consequences observed in the field of practical teaching and teaching materials, in particular. We hope this discussion will make possible to analyse all aspects of Maritime English in use and to draw conclusions about the necessity of taking them into account when developing the basics of Maritime English methodological concept.

2.1. Linguistic aspect

Researchers emphasize on the global nature of English (Global English, International English), call English *lingua franca* (C.Cole, P.Trenkner) for the people who work in multinational surrounding. Maritime English is considered to be an operational and working language, the language with some

restrictions if the functional characteristics are concerned in the specific area of merchant marine transportations (R. Ziarati). The linguistic analysis indicates the availability of considerable lexical “burden” of special terms, quite a short list of grammar structures, strikingly serious set of phonetic peculiarities in Maritime English use. Specific features of ME cause certain difficulties in mastering the system of maritime terms in which a term is not only a language unit; but represents a notion belonging to the special sphere of knowledge. In case all these linguistic factors are taken into account in university curricula, it is possible to foresee that they have a chance of being successfully used for effective training of would-be deck and engineering crew members. Still, as many professionals think, Maritime English is not the whole English language which is required for communication in different spheres of life. The idea of co-relation of General English and Maritime English comes around when developing various teaching/learning materials (study books, tests for self-assessment, in particular) that meet all vital needs of Maritime students.

2.2. Methodological aspect

The most serious platform for practical researches is ESP -English for Specific Purposes. After the revolution in linguistics, when it was found out that any language analysis presumes the study of actual communication materials, it became obvious that the methodological aspirations should be focused exceptionally on the students’ needs, meaning that the professional needs acquire priority (development of skills for employment). Students’ skills – listening, speaking, writing, reading combine the competence which is defined sufficient or insufficient for their professional activities. It’s necessary to create the base of teaching/learning materials, the one that is adequate in the system of higher education. ME if a fundamental subject taught and studied for many years. In this case the methodological platform of ME department has to be created and submitted as mission of the educational institution. Nowadays this methodological concept is the reflect of the latest achievements in linguistics, IT and psychology. Since Maritime English is a specific function of the English language, the step-by-step academic course must be developed in order to cover all possible working situations at sea when English is used in oral or written form. This course may hardly comprise some old (but still being in use) approaches and techniques, for example, abundant exercises in translation or memorising words. Instead, lots of communicative tasks should be suggested for students’ skills development.

2.3. Psychological aspect

Discussions on the problem of proper method selection have proved that the best one is the method which is the most adequate for the student and his vital interests. Variety of tasks, learning materials, study packs as well as sufficient level of the student’s motivation guarantee the openness of both the student and the teacher, evoke the response to real communication and the interest to the future profession. Therefore, in a classroom the most efficient is oral and written communication which is professionally motivated, i.e. connected with multiple functions of Maritime English used at sea. Teacher’s goals concentrate on finding out the materials which correspond the student’s level of the language proficiency and which are interesting from the point of view of their future occupation. Quite often some ME teachers feel it difficult to change their manner of teaching for more advanced style or think it’s inappropriate to start using the Internet as a source of original information delivered in an authentic form. In these situations the students experience lack of skills which are very important for them in the context of their individual work such as skills of searching for information and adopting it for personal needs or tasks. It shows how the trainer’s qualification and personality are important for the students especially when they are restricted in their right to choose a teacher. It’s a universal truth that the best teacher is the one who teaches his students how to learn and provides any help possible on this way.

2.4. Socialising

It is known, that the labour market is the best factor for motivating students in the process of their studies. In the industry of water transport this problem is being solved through acquiring by students and graduates of real communication experience in international crews when some incidents of intercultural and interconfessional nature may take place. Moreover, sociolinguistic and sociocultural aspects combine with specific labour conditions on a merchant vessel, climatic and weather factors in everyday work of seafarers, their working under pressure, isolation in long voyages, health problems,

etc. Together with the special seafarers' status all this requires extreme concentration and hard work in the course of their professional training including Maritime English proficiency, thus, making them achieve the highest level of professional competency in order to avoid risks at sea.

3. The new type of a Maritime English Course Book as an Option for the Problem Solution

Having acquired the latest experience in the field of Maritime Education and Training findings, the ESP Department of Kyiv State Maritime Academy has made an attempt of developing a Course book for ratings. "*The Introductory Maritime English Course*" is intended for the first- and second-year students - non-native English learners who are about to commence their Maritime academic career through a Bachelor Degree in Navigation or Marine Engineering. Three influences behind the development of the Course book and as such its contents and the form are taken into consideration. These are

- a) the lack (or absence) of professional Maritime experience of the students,
- b) the lack (or absence) of Maritime English language proficiency,
- c) the lack of General English language competency.

The study book is supposed to meet the interests and requirements of the future seafarers in a new sphere of knowledge and practical skills whereby the coordinated work of English language teachers and specialists' teachers is required. We hope that the Course fills in the current gaps and adds new necessary requirements by combining English language and Maritime specialist skills with the existing General English language foundations. So, it's blending of General and Maritime English which seems to be rather efficient at the very beginning of seafarers' training. The functional approach has been used which is linguistically correct and proves to be the only one to reach the goals.

3.1. The Structure of the Course Book

The Course contains 17 Units:

- 1) Introducing Oneself.
- 2) Discussing Personal Details: Occupation.
- 3) Discussing Personal Details: Country. Language. Nationality.
- 4) Describing Places and Locations.
- 5) Discussing General Information about People: Home. Family. Education. Likes and Dislikes.
- 6) Discussing One's Occupation: Functions. Duties. Daily Routine.
- 7) Describing Motion and Direction. Asking for Directions.
- 8) Describing Living and Non-Living Objects (1).
- 9) Describing Living and Non-Living Objects (2). Giving Definitions.
- 10) Describing Processes.
- 11) Describing Changes and Results.
- 12) Describing the Whole and Its Parts.
- 13) Describing Comparisons.
- 14) Describing Ways of Doing Things: Active and Passive Actions.
- 15) Describing Past Events.
- 16) Discussing Future Actions.
- 17) Revising. Summarising. Testing.

Each Unit is represented by descriptions of teaching goals and learning outcomes in *Language Skills Development, Maritime English Professional Competence, General English Language Competence*. Each Unit has a strict structure consisting of tasks, a series of exercises, self-assessment materials, supplementary materials, comments and keys. The concept of The Course presumes that both General English and Maritime English sources should be used in the process of learning. It certainly helps to broaden the potential skills of the language use in different life situations including professional ones.

'*The Introductory Maritime English Course*' has been designed according to IMO Model Course, 2001 and the latest SCTW amendments. In connection with seafarers' job related concept of the Course it's worth noting the following:

- a) the Course is cent percent ESP language issue meaning the profound linguistic research of oral and written texts on the speciality and presuming the scope of ME functions in real-life situations onboard ship,
- b) since language teachers are not competent in navigation, marine engineering, maritime law or water transport management, the contents of the Course has been verified through the expertise of specialists whose advice has been taken into account with gratitude,
- c) translation as one of the methods widely used in MET till now is practically excluded from the Course as a teaching goal just because this language function doesn't "work" in real-life situations in multilingual crews, in particular. Among the series of exercises proposed one may find the task "Find equivalent in your native language" which acquires quite a new sense compared to translation. The English-Russian-Ukrainian ME Vocabulary attached to the Course comprises 1200 entries to be used by the students in the process of fulfilling individual work and, later on, performing their duties onboard,
- d) the materials used in the Course are mainly adaptation of real life situations and scenarios with references provided. The exercises have been developed specifically for maritime students. Self-assessment materials take into account the idea of the MarTEL Maritime English Language Standards. The Course contains tasks purposing the individual work of students: notes, reports, PowerPoint presentations, etc.
- e) the basics of Business English are present in the Course book as the most important elements ensuring proper communication of seafarers. These include personal letters, Application form, Resume, Cover letter, emails, faxes, Incoterms, Logbook, list of seafarers' certificates, role-plays on interview, telephoning, etc.
- f) one of the peculiarities of the suggested teaching material is extensive reading (both in class and at home). Different types of texts (definitions, descriptions, explanations, narrations, persuasions and others) are studied with various tasks attached (reading for detail, for a gist; scanning, skimming). Assuming the fact that the Course book has been developed for the students mostly with Elementary Level of English language proficiency, the first Units contain short texts as well as series of micro texts purposed for fast reading. Longer texts are meant for advanced students who use the information for reports and presentations,
- g) multiple functions of English are represented by small talks, conversations to develop skills of asking for and giving information, expressing excuse, refusal, surprise, suggesting help, inviting people to do something, etc.
- h) SMCP being the central part of the Course are suggested for word stock study, role play tasks and accompany most of the topics: emergency situations, bunkering operations, etc.

3.2. The Introductory Course contains the following Maritime English topics

- 1) Introducing Oneself. Filling up personal documents; types of documents; interviews.
- 2) Letters, numbers, colours. Maritime code words. Times at sea and at shore. Languages, nationalities, flags.
- 3) Maritime jobs and professions. Functions and duties.
- 4) Places and locations. Countries, water bodies. Other geographical names. Maps and charts. Longitude, latitude.
- 5) A ship: dimensions, particulars, parts, structure, functional zones.
- 6) Types of vessels.
- 7) Motion and directions: navigation, propulsion, engines.
- 8) Engineering: types of a vessel's equipment.
- 9) Running the vessel. The bridge. The engine room.
- 10) Watches and Watch keeping.
- 11) SMCP: on-board, external. Orders and commands. VHF radio.
- 12) Daily routines of the crew members.
- 13) Weather and climate, weather forecast, natural disasters.
- 14) Emergency situations.
- 15) Safety equipment and its location.
- 16) Steering, mooring, anchoring. Piloting.
- 17) Ports and port infrastructure. Administration, customs, sanitary inspection, etc.
- 18) Navigational aids: buoys and lighthouses.

- 19) Cargoes: types; loading/discharging operations.
- 20) Shipping documents (basics).
- 21) Checking supplies.
- 22) Incidents and accidents. Injuries. First aid.

4. Conclusion

1. The international cooperation in developing the methodological principles of Maritime English teaching should be based upon clear understanding of stratification of the national educational macro levels, especially in the secondary education, to make the transit to the higher professional education as smooth as possible. Teaching materials for beginners should be of special concern since the training in Maritime English takes a number of years. University education including ME differs from vocational training in its main aspects - duration and fundamental character. Qualification certification in ME should be foreseen for all levels of education and should be based on strict national and international standards requirements. It's advisable that the English language proficiency levels developed in Europe (The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment) be lapped on Yardstick of ME performance levels. Still, according to C. Cole and P. Trenkner, "When developing this Yardstick the authors deliberately did not include the identification of Maritime English communication requirements of the different shipboard rating ranks, i.e. the STCW Convention Support Levels, but restricted themselves to the personnel covered by the STCW Convention Operational and Management Levels educated and trained at higher MET institutions. The shipping industry, however, may wish to have a Yardstick available for shipboard rating ranks, too. In this case an appendix would need to be developed, together with the industry, as the Maritime English requirements set out in the STCW Convention (Part A, Chapter II, Table A-II/4 and A-III/4) regarding ratings are comparatively vague and need to be considered in the STCW Convention review. Furthermore, requirements concerning general English language proficiency have not been included explicitly as in the authors' understanding a certain command of general English is a basic prerequisite in this respect (c.f. IMO SMCP 2002)".

2. The development of the methodological aspect of ME training appears to be necessary in order to meet the two ends in the process of ME training: the status of a Beginner, Elementary Student, a Non-User (an Intermittent User, a Limited User) and that of a Pre-Intermediate Student, a Modest User, an Effective User. The "blending" of General English and Maritime English in one course book makes possible to quicken the ME training purposing to implement the primary job-related notions for ratings. The Course Book as a whole is intended to support a) Learner's Strategy ("The learners come to the class with a specific interest for learning. They are in charge of developing English language skills to reflect their native-language knowledge and skills") and b) Teacher's Strategy ("The teacher will need to look for content specialists for help in designing appropriate lessons in the subject matter field she is teaching"). So, "The focal point is that English is not taught as a subject separated from the students' real world (or wishes); instead, it is integrated into a subject matter area important to the learners". (L. Fiorito)

References

- [1] Cole C., Trenkner P., "The Yardstick for Maritime English STCW Assessment Purposes" Proceedings of IMLA 16th Conference, pp 163-173
- [2] Fiorito L., *Teaching English for Specific Purposes(ESP)* www.usingenglish.com › ... › [Articles](#) (2010)
- [3] MarTEL (Maritime Tests of English Language) www.maritime-test.org
- [4] Demydenko N., "International Standards of Maritime English as a Means to Improve Safety at Sea" Journal of Marine Technology and Environment, Vol. I, (2010), 91-94
- [5] Ziarati M., Ziarati R., Calbas B., Moussley L. "Improving safety at sea by developing standards for Maritime English", IMLA, 2008.