

## **TEAM TEACHING-AN ERASMUS TEACHER MOBILITY EXPERIENCE**

**Carmen ASTRATINEI<sup>1</sup>**

**Aydin SIHMANTEPE<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Senior Lecturer, PhD, Naval Academy, Constanta

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, PhD Candidate, Piri Reis University, Tuzla Istanbul, Turkey

**Abstract:** *The main purpose of this article is to advance a research proposal on Maritime English cross-cultural development programme based on the results obtained during the student/teacher Erasmus exchange between Piri Reis University and “Mircea cel Batran” Naval Academy. First, the importance of Maritime English teaching in MET institutions will be highlighted. Then, the Erasmus programme and related literature will be reviewed. Next, a careful consideration will be given to the outcomes of Erasmus teacher as well as student mobility in terms of ME language gains (for students) and teaching methods (for teachers). Finally, conclusions will be drawn as to the benefits of the Erasmus programme.*

**Key words:** *Erasmus mobility, team-teaching, exclusive experience, positive impact, intercultural understanding*

### **Introduction**

The need for a common language at sea was felt as early as the 1970s, since most maritime accidents were alleged to have as major cause language difficulties. It has been decided that the language at sea will be English and thus, the Standard Marine Navigational Vocabulary (SMNV) was adopted in 1977, followed by a more comprehensive standardized language to cover all major safety-related verbal communications, the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP), 1997. Requirements for Maritime English usage as mandatory for officers and ratings on board ships are contained in the STCW78/95 (Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping) Convention. Nowadays, due to the ever growing number of mixed-nationality crews on board ships, the need for a common language and a cultural awareness training becomes imperative. Therefore, the MET (Maritime Education and Training) institutions all over the world are responsible for implementing Maritime English programmes which will meet the shipping industry requirements.

European projects, like SeaTalk, are working on a possible standardization of ME (Maritime English) syllabi, learning outcomes and competences derived from the whole process. In support of the similar syllabi idea, the Erasmus Programme provides a good opportunity for ME teachers as well as for students to share teaching/learning experience with host Erasmus countries.

### **What is Erasmus?**

The Erasmus programme was introduced almost twenty years ago as the EUs *flagship education and training programme* aiming at helping students to become internationally competent and well-prepared for job in an interrelated European economy. Erasmus statistics of the European Commission, show that nowadays “the overall majority of universities in Europe participates in Erasmus forming co-operations among universities that enable far more than 150,000 students to study abroad in one of the 33 participating countries”. Since 1997, also university teachers have the possibility to teach abroad in the framework of Erasmus. Nearly 8,000 teachers had this opportunity in the first year, the number increasing to 28,000 in 2008/9. An extensive research on Erasmus mobility outcomes, has been carried out by a team of researchers from the International Centre for Higher Education Research, University of Kassel, Germany. The main aim of the study was “the impact of Erasmus mobility on the professional career”. Thirty Western, Central and Eastern European countries have been involved in the study. There have been two phases. The first phase included five surveys: expert survey, former Erasmus students survey, a survey of former Erasmus teachers, of university leaders and an employers’ survey. The second phase was based on four study field-specific seminars including Chemistry, Mechanical Engineering, Sociology and Business Studies as professionally oriented study fields. The overall

conclusion of the study was a positive assessment of the Erasmus supported study period. This view has been sustained by all the parties involved in the study, i.e. experts (ministries of education, conference of rectors/presidents, organizations of employment agencies, and individual companies), former Erasmus students, former Erasmus teachers, university leaders. Furthermore, the feed-back from the experts and practitioners emphasized that “an intensification of teaching mobility would lead to a better embedding of the Erasmus study period in the whole course of studies of mobile students. This, as a consequence, would lead to an improved recognition of study achievements, reduce the prolongation of studies and eventually, with the integration of improved learning strategies, reinforce the overall professional value of the Erasmus study period abroad.” (Constanze Engel, p.15).

### **Own experience with Erasmus mobility**

First of all, I will describe my host country (Turkey) teaching assignment mobility. I will focus mainly on the team-teaching aspect, which I find most beneficial both for students and teachers. Most of the ESP scholars suggest team-teaching (the ESP teacher and the specialist lecturer) to solve the problem of how much the ESP teacher should know of the students’ specialism. Pauline Robinson (1991, p.88) starts the team-teaching subchapter with the following quotation from Johns and Dudley-Evans (1980, pp.7-8): “An overseas student’s failure to keep pace with his course or with his research is rarely attributable to ‘knowledge of the subject’ or ‘knowledge of the language’ alone: most often these factors are inextricably intertwined. If their work is separate, it is difficult for the subject teacher, and even more so for the language teacher, to take account of that intertwining. In the triangle of which the three angles are the student, the subject teacher and the language teacher, each needs a certain type of assistance and feedback from the other two”.

The two authors speak about their experiment in team-teaching of overseas postgraduate students of transportation and plant biology. They describe a pattern which they devised at the University of Birmingham. In the first term they focused on lecture comprehension and in the second, on writing examination answers. For the lecture comprehension sessions, the language teacher used the recorded specialist lecture for preparing a worksheet on it. The team-taught session focused on the students’ answers to the worksheet questions. The lecturer’s role was to cope with the content issues whereas the language teacher’s contribution was to help with language points. In the second term, the specialist lecturer developed selected examination questions to be discussed in terms of the content of the answer, while the language teacher was to provide help with linguistic and thematic structuring. Therefore, the role of the language teacher was to facilitate specialist lecture comprehension for students studying abroad.

My team-teaching experience at Piri Reis University was different from the example provided above. First, there was no need for lecture comprehension because Maritime English classes are carried out in a seminar format, which means a lot of interactive activities to be carried out. The size of the groups varies from 20 to 25 students, which can allow each student to actively participate in the seminar. During my first mobility, I taught two freshmen classes with whom I revised SMCP (Standard Marine Communication Phrases) for external communications. I used a video type of activity with pre-viewing, while viewing and follow-up tasks. The students enjoyed the activity and said it was useful for consolidating their knowledge for the exam. For my second mobility, I taught one freshmen class and two senior classes. For them, I prepared some SMCP revision practice tests and a group work activity to revise the emergency calls (Mayday, Pan-Pan and Securite. Again, the students enjoyed the activities which they found useful for their exam preparation. I think the success of my teaching assignment was enhanced by the presence of my Piri Reis colleague in class all through my performance. We are both Maritime English teachers but my colleague has the advantage of being a former sea Captain so, he has both the specialist knowledge and a very good command of

English. Considerations on the success of two teachers present in the classroom together will be based, for the time being, only on peer observations and students' verbal feed-back. Our co-operation was very fruitful ranging from class management (arranging students for group work activities), audio-video teaching aids operation to clarifications and specialist explanations provided by my colleague, i.e backing/veering direction of the wind, to make a lee, why *shifting* berth and not *changing* berth, using the cardinal point not the part of the ship-VTS (Vessel Traffic Service) instructions or warnings, etc. I highly advocate team-teaching, especially when the two teachers synchronize perfectly in turn taking, I mean they know exactly when and how to intervene during the class. What my colleague and I have in mind, is to initiate a research project on the impact of a sustained teacher/student Erasmus mobility on the professional development of the actors involved in the programme. Course evaluation forms will be administered to mobile students; the mobile students' exam results will be compared with the non-mobile students ones. We also think about co-operating with other Erasmus MET institutions for more data collection. We hope to succeed in carrying out this project and prove our point.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The Erasmus programme for Maritime English mobility, has proved to be beneficial for both students and teachers. The programme must continue and involve more Erasmus MET institutions. All Erasmus mobility outcomes should be disseminated through articles, workshops, conference procedures. Sharing experiences and ideas may lead to further developments within this important European mobility programme.

#### **REFERENCES**

- [1]Engel, C. (2010) "The Impact of Erasmus mobility on the professional career: Empirical results of international studies on temporary student and teaching staff mobility"  
<http://belgeo.revues.org/6399>  
(retrieved on 10 Juin 2014)
- [2]Robinson, P. (1991). "ESP Today: A Practitioner's Guide", Prentice Hall International (UK) Ltd.