

WORDS OF THE SEA TAKEN TO THE LAND

Raluca APOSTOL- MATEȘ¹

Alina BARBU²

¹Junior Lecturer, PhD "Mircea cel Batran" Naval Academy Constanta

² Lecturer PhD, Maritime University Constanta

Abstract: As teachers of ESP- maritime English, we deal with students who are adults having some acquaintance with English, and have to rely on their previous knowledge in order to acquire elements of vocabulary that is to build their communicative skills as professionals in the business. Our approach concentrates on teaching language in context. Being able to recognize and use elements of maritime English in their field increases our students' motivation.

Keywords: Maritime, Nautical idioms, sea, ship, etymology.

Introduction

There is no doubt regarding the nautical origin of some usual English phrases. Both native and non-native speakers make use of those phrases ignoring the fact that they originally come from the maritime world. In the hope that this approach will shed some light on the origin of some English phrases that are undeniably tied to the maritime environment, we have provided a set of mind maps that are extremely beneficial for students and teachers of maritime English.

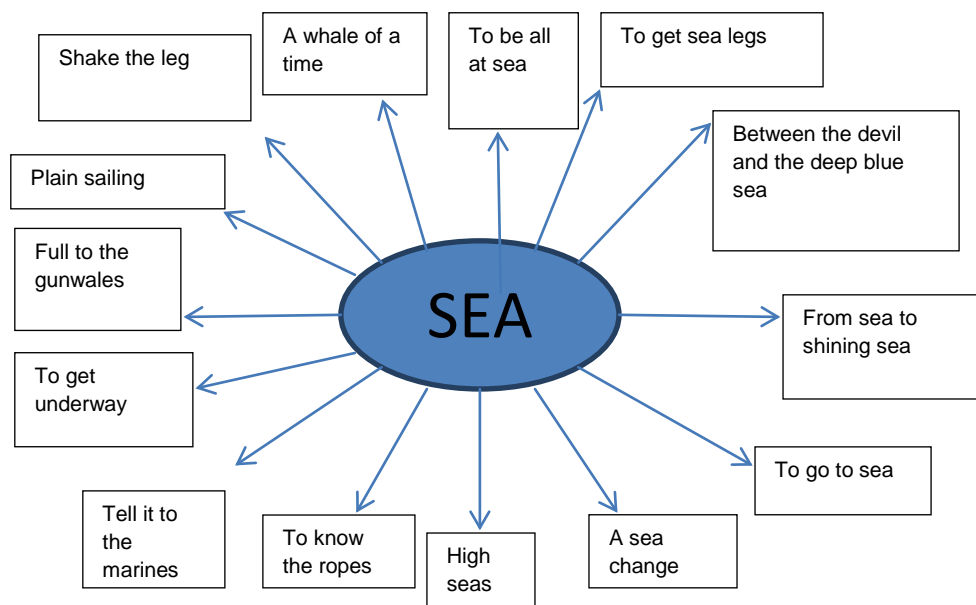
Content

Without the pretension of providing an exhaustive lexical chart of the word "sea", we shall nonetheless begin our paper by giving a hint as related to some very common-usage phrases that have an interesting nautical etymology.

from the days of sail when accurate navigational aids weren't available. Any ship that was out of sight of land was in an uncertain position and in danger of becoming lost.

If *you know the ropes*, you become fully acquainted with the methods required by a job and you become very much aware of how that job is done. Regarding this phrase there is some doubt about its origins. On the one hand, we have sailors who have to learn which rope rises which sail. On the other hand, we have the world of theater where ropes are used to raise scenery. Nonetheless, the nautical origin seems more convincing.

As for the phrase *between the devil and the deep*



For instance, *to get your sea legs*, means *to adjust to a new situation*, and it dates back to the days when sailing ships ruled the high sea. A new sailor was said to *have gotten his sea legs*, when he could walk steadily across the deck of a ship in stormy weather.

When one is *all at sea about something*, one is completely confused and bewildered. This is an extension of the nautical phrase "at sea". It dates

blue sea, which means *being faced with two dangerous alternatives*, one possible explanation points back to Greek mythology for an earlier version of the idea of being caught between evil and the sea. Homer's *Odyssey* refers to Odysseus being caught between Scylla (a six-headed monster) and Charybdis (a whirlpool).

Tell it to the Marines is the English counterpart for

the Romanian phrase "s-o spui lu' mutu!". It is obviously a scornful response to a tall and unrelieved story. It is another. More colorful and popular manner of *saying I don't believe your story; I refuse to be fooled*. As far as the origin of the phrase is concerned, it is often thought to refer to the US Marine Corps who are probably the best-known marines these days. Yet, as etymology has it, it actually refers to the Royal Marines in the UK Legend tells of a typically wise and experienced officer of the Maritime Regiment (the forerunner of today's Royal Marines) verifying a yarn about flying fish for the benefit of King Charles II in the 1660s. Unfortunately this version was proven to have been invented by the novelist W. P. Drury (a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Marines) in the 1900s. Another reference, more in keeping with the contemporary meaning of the phrase, is found in an anonymous work of naval fiction, *The Post Captain*; or, *The Wooden Walls well manned*: comprehending a view of naval society and manners (London: 1806). In this, Captain Brilliant, of HMS Desdemona, when a tale started to grow too tall for his taste, was given to saying, 'You may tell that to the Marines, but I'll be damned if the Sailors will believe it!'.
From sea to shining sea, meaning *from coast to coast* was actually taken from the lyrics of the song "America the Beautiful".

To go to sea means *to become a sailor*. A *sea change* is a synonym for a *major change or transformation*. *the open sea*; *the part of the ocean not in the territorial waters of any particular sovereignty, usually distant three miles or more from the coast line*. *High seas* belong to the legal domain and it means *the open sea*; the part of the ocean not in the territorial waters of any particular sovereignty, usually distant three miles or more from the coast line. The term *underway* means to be on a voyage (about a ship); the phrase "On the way" migrated to "underway", probably due to the influence of the Dutch word "onderweg", which translates into English as "underway" but to 17th century sailors must have sounded more like "on the way".

Full to the gunwales refers to a recipient which is *full to the brim; packed tight*. The phrase was first used as literal references to heavily loaded ships. The non-nautical use of the phrase didn't come about until the 20th century. A semi-figurative use was made of the phrase in the advertising for the 1944 Dorothy Lamour film, *The Fleet's In*: "... *and it's loaded to the gunwales with the funniest, friskiest entertainment*".

Shake a leg means *rouse yourself from sleep and get out of bed*. It was originally used as a wakeup call with the intention to infer "hurry up" and it seems to have been first used by an American poet, John Masefield was a trainee mariner on HMS Conway until 1891. He reported the full version of the morning call as:

Heave out, heave out, heave out, heave out!
 Away!

Come all you sleepers, Hey!

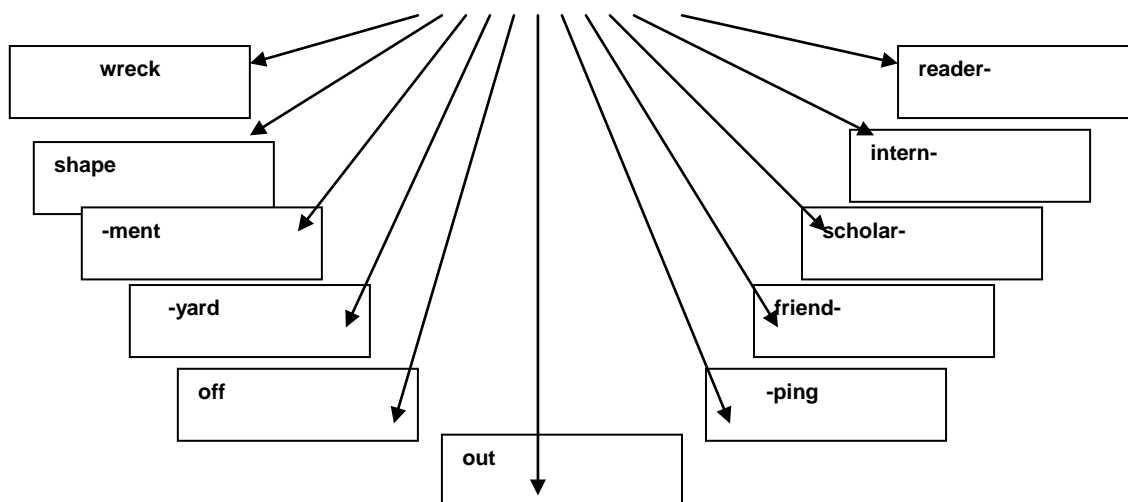
Shake a leg and put a stocking in it.

When we have a very enjoyable experience you may say *I had a whale of a time* with a clear reference to the largest mammal of the ocean clearly pointing at the amount of excitement.

Last but not least, *plain sailing* is a nautical phrase that has the literal meaning of "sailing that is easy and uncomplicated". It must be pointed out that "*Plane sailing*" is a simplified form of navigation, in which the surface of the sea is considered to be flat rather than curved, that is, on what mathematicians call a "plane surface". The plane method of approximation made the calculations of distance much easier than those of "Mercator's sailing", in which the curvature of the earth was taken into account. Thus, the ambiguity of spelling between *plane* and *plain* led eventually to the phrase *plain sailing*.

Another useful lexical field is the one connected to the word *ship*.

There are many words that have been formed with a prefix or a suffix around the word ship, as well as many idioms that are in usage on a daily basis. Teachers of maritime English might find it useful to adopt such an approach to teaching vocabulary.



As follows, we have presented an exercise which students of maritime English find extremely useful in order to improve their vocabulary.

Exercise: Read the following sentences. Choose the phrase which best illustrates the meaning and write it in the space provided:

- my ship comes
- sinking ship
- in ship shape
- jumped ship
- shipped out
- run a tight ship
- shipped off
- ships that pass in the night

1. You only meet a person once or twice by chance for a short time and then you don't see each other again. You are like _____.

(ships that pass in the night)

2. You leave a job or activity suddenly before it is finished, especially to go to work for someone else. You _____.

(jumped ship)

3. You control a business or other organization firmly and effectively. You _____. **(run a tight ship)**

4. Something that you say in order to tell someone that if their behavior does not improve,

they will have to leave. "If you don't shape up, you will be _____. **(shipped out)**

5. Something you would say about a company or organization which is failing: "This company is a _____. **(sinking ship)**

6. Something to describe the act of sending someone somewhere: "That employee is being _____. **(shipped off)**

7. Another way to say that when you are rich and successful you will do many things. "When _____, I will do many things." **(my ship comes)**

8. Something you would say to your men if you want them to leave the area clean and in order. "Leave the area _____. **(in ship shape)**

CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that one of the biggest issues for students of ESL in a Maritime University is that their learning motivation is low. For the most part, they rely on their knowledge of general English, underestimating the role of maritime terminology. This is totally wrong as there are plenty of words which have a different meaning altogether than the meaning they have in everyday usage (e.g. rake, cradle, galley

etc). Similarly, there are plenty of phrases that have been borrowed from the maritime field into everyday speech. Our paper has primarily focused on the latter, in the hope that learners will find it easier to expand their linguistic horizons.

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