

ON-LINE SECOND YEAR DECK MARITIME ENGLISH-COURSE EVALUATION

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Abstract: *First, the importance of Maritime English in the context of globalization leading to a growing number of multicultural crews on board ships will be discussed. Then, the need for a common communication language on board ship stipulated by several IMO conventions as a result of various maritime incidents caused by communication breakdowns or misinterpretations will be also approached. Afterwards, SMCP (Standard Marine Communication Phrases), which has become mandatory for all seafarers, will be mentioned as well as the task of MET (Maritime Education and Training) institutions which is to thoroughly teach the marine standard vocabulary through properly designed courses. Eventually, the paper proposes to present the second year deck on line course: topic of each unit, structure per unit, knowledge and final unit tests. The course evaluation, which was both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (the learners` free comments), will be presented in graph form accompanied by commentaries.*

Key words: *maritime English terminology on board and external communication*

Introduction

The ever growing employment of multicultural crews has given rise to such issues as communication problems which may affect the safety of the crew and cargo. Therefore, the need for a common standardized language to be used in ship to shore, shore to ship, ship to ship and on board ship communication, has become imperative. Communication must be simple, precise and unambiguous so as to avoid confusion and error. Communication breakdowns may cause misunderstandings leading to maritime incidents, accidents and near-misses. In the light of these requirements, in 1973 the IMO Maritime Safety Committee agreed that a common language should be used for navigation purposes and that that language should be English. Consequently, the Standard Marine Navigational Vocabulary had been compiled. It was adopted in 1977 and amended in 1985. In 1992 the IMO Maritime Safety Committee instructed the IMO Sub-Committee on Safety of navigation to develop a more comprehensive standardized safety language taking into consideration the changing conditions in modern seafaring and covering all major safety-related verbal communications. As a result, in 1997 the Maritime Safety Committee adopted the Draft of the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) which was compiled:

- to assist in the greater safety of navigation and the ship
- to standardize the language used in ship-to-ship, ship-to-shore, ship-to-VTS and on board multilingual crews.

-to assist maritime training institutions in meeting these objectives

The SMCP meets the requirements of the STCW (Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping) Convention, 1978, as revised, regarding verbal communications. These standard phrases should be used as often as possible in preference to other wording of similar meaning.

Maritime English for second year deck students-course description

The course has been designed to familiarise the students with the ship structure and the naval equipment on board. There are ten units comprising a quite detailed description of ship parts and their function within the ship operation. Therefore, the topics covered in the course are: Unit 1 Ship Structure (terms related to the main parts of the ship, focussing on the difference between General English terms and their Maritime English equivalents, e.g. GE window-ME porthole; GE wall-ME bulkhead). Unit 2 Ship`s Dimensions presents the main dimensions which must be taken into account when operating a ship (e.g. LOA-Length Overall, LBP-Length Between Perpendiculars, beam, draft, etc). Unit 3 Directions-Position on Board Ship refers to Maritime English terms used in maritime context when speaking about location and directions (e.g. GE along-ME fore and aft, GE across-ME athwartship, etc). Unit 4. Propulsion, Steering and the Bridge mainly deals with Standard Wheel and

Engine orders(“Midship”, “Steady as she go”, “Hard-a-port”, “Full ahead”, “Dead slow astern”). Unit 5 Naval Equipment: Ground Tackle-Deck fittings. In this unit, the students are familiarised with the anchoring installation, deck fittings and tools necessary on board for repairing operations. Unit 6. Naval Equipment: Signal Lights, Flags, Bells and Six-Watches, Colreg Rules. Significance of the Signal Flags and some Colreg Rules related to signalling are explained and illustrated. Unit 7. Seamanship-Different Types of Rope. The title is self-explanatory i.e. the main topic of this unit is ropes: classification, characteristics and uses. Mooring ropes and their functions, when the ship is made fast, are also mentioned. Unit 8. Manning-Traditional Organizaton of a Ship`s Crew presents a traditional crew including Officers, Petty Officers and Ratings. Unit 9. Life-Saving Appliances describes the characteristics and the purposes of the personal LSA and lifesaving craft. Unit10. Fire-fighting describes different types of equipment used for putting out fires which may have various causes.

Each unit has the following structure:

-Vocabulary-accounting for 25% of the grade per unit

-Knowledge-accounting for 30% of the grade per unit

-Grammar-accounting for 5% of the grade per unit

-Final self-test-accounting for 40% of the grade per unit.

For illustration, we present Unit 1 Ship Structure:

<https://adl.anmb.ro/course/view.php?id=755§ion=1->

Course evaluation

At the end of the first semester, we have carried out a quantitative evaluation as well as a qualitative one. For the former, the students had to qualify the course offering and the maritime English teacher having to select among Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Undecided, Agree and Strongly agree, for the course qualification and Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Good Excellent, for the maritime teacher qualification. Then there were some additional questions like: Please state your opinion on the main benefits and/or drawbacks of an on-line course; Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve the structure and content of this course?; What is your opinion about the best course type? (the students had to select among traditional course, Online-class access only or On-line and traditional teaching at class and home access for assignments and training quizzes); Other comments? The students were asked to state freely their opinions and suggestions anonymously.

Here is the course evaluation form:

Course Evaluation Form

Course Offering

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1) - The sequencing of the knowledge input and the learning activities is adequate for the topics presented in the course :

Response	Average	Total
Undecided	12%	2
Agree	71%	12
Strongly Agree	18%	3
Total	100%	17/17

2

2) -The practice test and the end of unit self-test are meant to reinforce the knowledge acquired throughout the course :

Response	Average	Total
Undecided	6%	1
Agree	71%	12
Strongly Agree	24%	4
Total	100%	17/17

3

3) -The tests within the lesson help you consolidate the information presented in the course :

Response	Average	Total
Disagree	6%	1
Undecided	12%	2
Agree	59%	10
Strongly Agree	24%	4
Total	100%	17/17

4

4) -Diagrams are used to illustrate or clarify information presented in the course :

Response	Average	Total
Strongly Disagree	6%	1
Disagree	6%	1
Undecided	6%	1
Agree	47%	8
Strongly Agree	35%	6
Total	100%	17/17

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5) -The illustrated glossary helps you preview the content of each unit :

Response	Average	Total
Disagree	12%	2
Undecided	12%	2
Agree	47%	8
Strongly Agree	29%	5
Total	100%	17/17

6

6) -Evaluation is objective and accurate:

Response	Average	Total
Disagree	12%	2
Undecided	24%	4
Agree	59%	10
Strongly Agree	6%	1
Total	100%	17/17

The Maritime Teacher

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1) - Knowledge of the subject matter:

Response	Average	Total
Satisfactory	12%	2
Good	65%	11
Excellent	24%	4
Total	100%	17/17

8

2) - Ability to get the message across:

Response	Average	Total
Unsatisfactory	6%	1
Satisfactory	6%	1
Good	47%	8
Excellent	41%	7
Total	100%	17/17

9

3) - Ability to make the students actively participate in the course:

Response	Average	Total
Poor	6%	1
Satisfactory	6%	1
Good	53%	9
Excellent	35%	6
Total	100%	17/17

10

4) - Responded well to student questions:

Response	Average	Total
Unsatisfactory	6%	1
Satisfactory	12%	2
Good	47%	8
Excellent	35%	6
Total	100%	17/17

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5) - Established positive rapport with students:

Response	Average	Total
Unsatisfactory	12%	2
Satisfactory	6%	1
Good	35%	6
Excellent	47%	8
Total	100%	

Course evaluation data interpretation

The overall appreciation of the course in point of sequencing, tests, visual graphs, glossary and evaluation was positive. Only two students totally disagreed with this type of course. The Maritime teacher received good and excellent qualifications for their knowledge of the subject matter, ability to get the message across, ability to make the students actively participate in the course, ability to respond well to students` questions and to establish positive rapport with students. Only two respondents considered the Maritime teacher`s performance as unsatisfactory.

The students` free commentaries on the additional questions were in line with their qualifications stated in the evaluation form. The overall opinion was that the on-line course is very good because “you can accumulate a lot of information in a short time”, you have the opportunity to be exposed to different accents, which is very important

having in view the ever growing number of multi-national crews, you can study at home as well. Special mention has been made about the importance of the Romanian-English glossary and the glossary quiz. The fact that there are several possible attempts for the knowledge tests has been a great plus for the on-line course Also the diagrams, and videos were very beneficial for the understanding and consolidation of the maritime English terms knowledge. Very few respondents declared that they prefer the traditional class courses and that they are totally against this type of course.

Some of the respondents made very pertinent suggestions for the course improvement such as: new topics to be introduced, i.e. meteorology fundamentals or tools and fittings. Speaking practice which could be implemented in the form of teacher-student interaction in real life using a microphone and earphones was another important proposal suggesting also the means of achieving this. More listening and video practice has been suggested as well.

CONCLUSIONS

On considering the students` opinions and suggestions our final conclusion is that the on-line course is a modern, state-of-the-art means of teaching and learning, which has become very popular among young adults. The system permits them to work at their pace, to access the programme from home, but at the same time to resort to the Maritime teacher for clarifications. Most of the respondents were in favour of the on-line course carried out in the resource centre. The presence of the Maritime English facilitator is beneficial for the learners as he/she can answer their questions at all times or can suggest them ways of solving the tasks. On-line courses represent the future of education without excluding the teacher`s very important role.

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