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Modeling of Maritime English Course for ETOs

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Abstract. The article aims at finding the points of change in Maritime English for ETOs to suit the needs of the students, industry and IMO requirements. The already existing course built in accordance with the recommendations provided in the Model course 3.17 by IMO is reviewed in terms of different aspects and some suggestions for the linguistic part are given.

Key words: Maritime English; ETOs; language skills

1. Introduction

Electro-technical Officers (ETOs) are becoming a very significant part of ship crews, as the numbers of electrical devices as well as the level of automation on board are constantly increasing which means that ETOs are to attend almost all navigation, communication, environmental, propulsion, auxiliary systems on board. In 2010, the Manila amendments of the Standards for Training Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) including the qualification requirements for ETOs were adopted. In 2014, a study program on Electrical engineering was introduced at Lithuanian Maritime Academy (LMA). In addition, the Model Course 3.17 Maritime English by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) was first introduced in 2015. Since 2016, the Maritime English course for ETOs has been modified according to the Model Course 3.17 at LMA and it is conducted so far. After a few years it is possible to review the work done and evaluate the course in terms of the alumni reports and the professionals' evaluation of the material and themes given in terms of their relevance to the overall ETOs training program and their professional development.

Therefore, the research questions raised in this work are: which topics and assignments are the most relevant to the Maritime English course for ETOs?

The aim of the research is to specify the topics and assignments that would meet the STCW requirements for the professional use of Maritime English by the ETOs.

The objectives are to review some aspects of the ME course for ETOs evaluation, to analyze the topics and tasks for the development of various language skills.

The research methods used are the analysis of scientific literature and qualitative research. The qualitative type of study was selected since the amount of the ETOs being prepared is quite limited.

2. Course evaluation aspects

The requirements for an ETO position were formulated by the players in maritime field such as shipping administrations, representatives of large shipping companies, etc. Thus, it can be stated that the requirements of the STCW for ETOs represent the requirements of the shipping industry. ETOs need to gain 18 competencies, that can be divided into "three functions: 1) electrical, electronic and control engineering; 2) maintenance and repair; 3) controlling the operation of the ship and care for persons on board" (Mindykovski, 2014). Maritime English (ME) course for ETOs should also include the above to fulfil the requirements for using the professional language in the electrical engineering field.

The first two functions are on focus in this paper, meanwhile the third one is developed through the ME course common for all naval study programs called "Introduction to Maritime English".

The course evaluation can include different aspects, including the course delivery, curriculum content and materials, course mission and goals, achievement tests, student learning outcomes. The respondents could be current students, alumni, teachers, who deliver the course or their peers, potential future students' employers (Vidakovic et al., 2022).

2.1. Topics for the ME studies

According to the Model Course 3.17, the Lexical approach should be used for vocabulary teaching, i.e., not single words but meaningful "chunks" of lexis should be memorized. (p.130) So the vocabulary should be presented in profession-specific texts related to marine electrical engineering.

This work concentrates on the topics to be selected and types of tasks given to the students, i.e., the content of the course and types of assignments to develop different language skills. As the topics analyzed dictate the content of the course (vocabulary to be learned, texts to be read, etc.), it is important which of them are given more importance during the ME course.

The research was conducted to analyze the lecturers who deliver professional subjects' evaluation of the Maritime English for ETOs themes in terms of their relevance to the whole process of the development students' professional skills and competences. As most of professional subject lecturers have practical experience in the field of electric engineering or electronics, they can also evaluate whether the professional topics are well related to the modern professional field of the study program.

2.2. Assignments to develop language skills

The course mission and goals are expected to be quite clear (i. e. to provide sufficient terminology and practice of professional English language skills to operate successfully in English speaking workplace). Referring to the Model Course 3.17, the underlying practice of the Communicative Approach is based on "language as a practical tool for communication; student-centered teaching; <…>, students taught by active involvement; learning tasks reflecting real life communication" (p.111). The assignments to develop all four language skills were selected referring to these principles.

The delivery of the course and measuring students' achievements were not analyzed in this paper.

The outcomes of the course were measured in the unstructured interview with the graduates of the study program who continue their careers as ETOs on board seagoing ships.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Relevance of the content topics

The respondents were selected using convenience method: lecturers teaching professional subjects of Electrical and Electronical Engineering The survey was conducted online by

delivering the questionnaire to the respondents. Lithuanian Maritime Academy (LMA) alumni were interviewed on their progress regarding ME use on board.

The survey questionnaire was formed based on the presently delivered topics in the Maritime English course for ETOs and the respondents had to mark the relevance of the topics for the development of ETOs' professional skills.

Six requests to fill in the questionnaire were sent, and 3 responses received. The lecturers had to mark the relevance of the topics according to the 5-point Likert scale. The results showed that all topics were relevant to some extent, no irrelevant ones were given. The results are presented in the form of "Relevant" (answers were "very relevant" or "relevant") or "Less relevant" (answers "average relevant" or "not very relevant") format. Double marking indicates that the evaluations varied.

Table 1. Relevance of the Maritime English topics for ETOs' professional competencies.

Bold – relevant; *italics* – variable replies.

Topic	Relevant	Less relevant
Electrical machines theory (Faradays, Kirchhoff's, Ohm's laws, circuits)	x	
Motors and drives	x	x
Cables and electrical materials	x	x
Circuit breakers (also HV)	x	
EPS (emergency power systems)	x	
DP (dynamic positioning) systems	x	x
Alarm, monitoring and control systems	x	x
Communication systems	x	
Navigation systems		x
*PLCs (programmable logic controllers) **	x	x
Generators and alternators	x	
Semiconductors		x

The most relevant themes are marked in bold. It is interesting that motors have variable relevance, as they are mentioned in the topic on electrical theory and machines, as well as a part of automated system s (actuators and drives).

Dynamic Positioning (DP) is generally used in research ships and drilling vessels [5]. As the area of the topic application is limited, this might not be the No. 1 topic to be analyzed with electrical Engineering students, but a relevant one for additional tasks.

The open question was given at the end of the questionnaire on the suggestion of topics for ME studies.

The answers entailed propositions to teach automation topic as a general phenomenon and then go deeper into the theme, by analyzing separate components of the automated systems: sensors, microprocessors, actuators (monitoring, alarm, control systems) and drives.

3.2. Relevance of the assignments for developing language skills

The study subject lecturers were also given a list of sample assignments aimed at the development of all four language skills: writing, reading, listening, speaking. The assignments were selected so that there were two assignments for one language skill (except Reading) and they were quite different in terms of being close to the authentic or real-life assignments. The difference in the results was the selection between "Very relevant" and "Relevant"; the relevance of the tasks was recognized by the professional subject teachers. The results are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. The relevance of the assignments for the language skills development

Assignments	Very relevant	Relevant
Reading: summarizing the written text in written or oral form		x
Reading: marking the sentences (T/F) based on the extract from the original manual	x	
Reading: answering questions about the text and finding correct definitions and/or translations of the terms given		x
Listening: understanding the description of troubleshooting steps	x	
Listening: understanding a lecture		x
Writing: writing a description of the electrical equipment operation and/or maintenance		x
Writing: writing a report about a fault and/or request for the service of the electrical equipment	x	
Speaking: describing the operation of an electrical device		x
Speaking: describing a fault by phone to the service provider	x	

It can be concluded from the Table 2, that typical activities which require less Maritime English teachers' knowledge of the professional issues were valued lower than those that do. The most relevant assignments (marked in bold in Table 2) are related to real-life situations (e. g. a phone conversation with the service provider, reading original manuals, writing a request for services).

They resemble the most real-life situations the ETOs may face performing their duties. However, they also require from the lecturer of Maritime English more specific knowledge from the field of Electrical Engineering to ensure interactivity in communication with the student and respond to the situation in appropriate way.

Another method to deal with the situation is to use Blended learning approach, as suggested by M.Dževerdanovič et. al. (2021) when the ME for ETOs classes are taught in parallel with the professional subjects.

3.3. The outcomes of the ME course for ETOs

The interview was conducted with two alumni of Marine Electro-technical and Electronics Engineering program who continue their careers as ETOs on board seagoing vessels successfully. It showed that the graduates are content with their Maritime English skills obtained during their studies. They use dictionaries and correspondence samples for writing spares orders, replies to requests, and reports.

The question what challenges they have been facing with Maritime English now the replies were negative from both respondents: they noted that they did not lack the terminology of electrical or electronics engineering for reading, understanding, and interpreting operating manuals.

One of the respondents pointed out, that he had difficulties in understanding the scientific texts for his final Professional Bachelor's thesis, but there are no challenges related to Maritime English in his present ETO's position.

4. Conclusions

The research insights suggest reformulation of content topics to make the professional side of the ME for ETOs course content more comprehensible and coherent with the studies of professional subjects of the Marine Electrical Engineering study program.

All assignments that were provided for the evaluation of lecturers, have been relevant to the development of ETOs' professional competences. Nevertheless, the ones that have been related to the use of authentic literature or more real-life situations, were ranked higher for their relevance.

It can be concluded that the ME course for ETOs (students of Electrical and Electronics Engineering) develops competences and language skills necessary for their successful work on board a seagoing vessel.

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